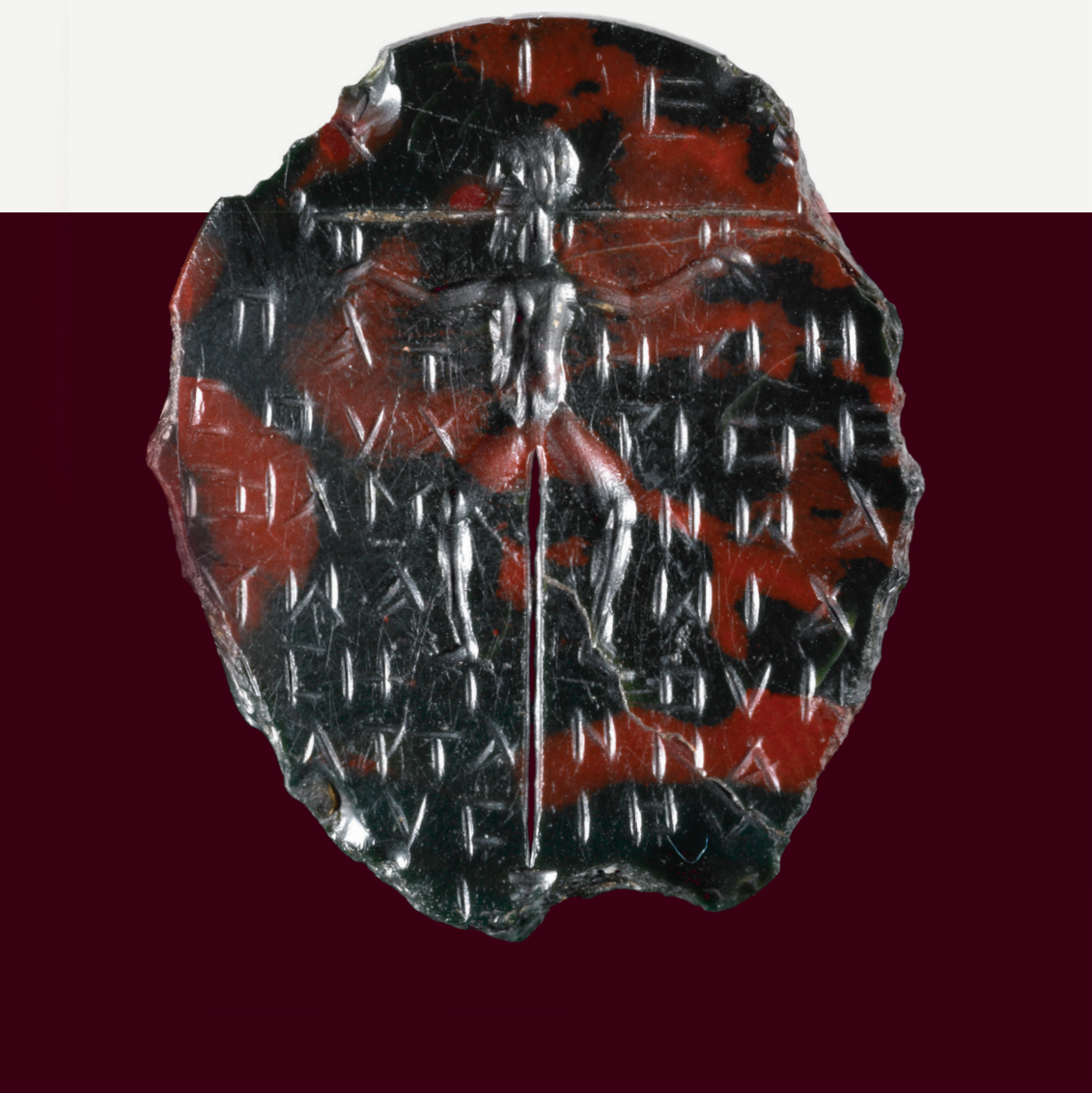
RITUAL BOUNDARIES

Magic and Differentiation in Late Antique Christianity

JOSEPH E. SANZO



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—Dante, *Inferno*

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Ritual Boundaries

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Magic and Differentiation in Late Antique Christianity

Joseph E. Sanzo

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For Lex, Zack, Asher, and Violet

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PREFACE

Although *Ritual Boundaries* is my second monograph, its origins predate my first book (*Scriptural Incipits from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014]). As is the case with many research endeavors, its beginning was a matter of happenstance. From 2008 to 2010, I was studying for my doctoral exams at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The sources and academic literature of two of my exam fields (i.e., early Jewish-Christian relations and ancient magic) drew my attention to the fact that several so-called "magical" objects (see Introduction) appropriated anti-Jewish invective as part of their ritual texts. Moreover, I quickly discovered that this particular interface of magic and religious differentiation during late antiquity had not made any sizable impact on the scholarship devoted to early Christianity, early Judaism, early Jewish-Christian relations, or late antique magic. I was able to explore this peculiar link between early Jewish-Christian relations and ancient magical studies during the 2009–10 academic year, when I was fortunate enough to receive an award through the Graduate Research Mentorship Program at UCLA (under the supervision of one of my doctoral advisors, Raʿanan Boustan). As part of this program, I wrote a paper that brought together these two fields by analyzing a late antique amulet from Egyptian Babylon (P.Heid. inv. G 1101), which highlighted the motif of the persecuting "Jews." A version of this paper was eventually published in the Festschrift for S. Scott Bartchy, my other doctoral advisor (Sanzo 2014b). Needless to say, the overlaps and relationships between ancient magic and early Jewish-Christian relations—as well as the significance of these respective fields of inquiry for late antique religious history, more generally—have continued to motivate my research, figuring into a coauthored essay with Raʿanan Boustan (Boustan and

Sanzo 2017) and forming the analytical center of my European Research Council Project (*Early Jewish and Christian Magical Traditions in Comparison and Contact*; grant agreement no. 851466 EJCM), of which this book is a part. Despite the title, therefore, this book began with religious boundaries (see chapter 2).

But again, as the title implies, *Ritual Boundaries* is about more than this relationship between magic and religious differentiation. The late antique magical objects also disclose the manifold ways early Christians negotiated the limits of rituals, texts, materials, images, and traditions, to name just a few issues. These other kinds of "boundaries," which indeed play important roles in this book, likewise reflect lines of research that have precedents in my earlier work. For instance, my exploration into the domains of magical objects beyond the written word began with a paper I wrote for a 2013 conference organized by Christopher Faraone at the University of Chicago ("Ancient Amulets: Words, Images and Social Contexts"). That paper, which dealt with the relationships between words and images in a Coptic spell for exorcism (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796) that includes a visual depiction of the crucifixion scene (see chapter 4), was later published in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* (Sanzo 2015). My work on this topic eventually led me beyond the word-image interface to other dimensions of magical objects, such as materials, formats, and performances (see Sanzo 2016 and chapter 3). This interest in magical practice beyond scribal boundaries (traditionally understood) also stood behind my presentation at the 2019 Oxford Patristics Conference, which investigated a jasper gem (BM 1986,0501.1) that includes a brutal image of Jesus on the cross (see chapter 4). My research into the boundaries between proper and improper rituals in late antique (Christian) imagination was published as an essay in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* (Sanzo 2019b). A modified version of this essay appears as Chapter 1 of this book. In short, the central concerns of *Ritual Boundaries* have followed—or perhaps haunted—me from graduate school until the present day.

The broader themes of this book carry significance for fields of scholarly inquiry well outside the study of late antique magic and even beyond early Christian studies. I have, therefore, designed *Ritual Boundaries* to appeal to as large of an academic audience as possible. This intended readership has required me to modify my normal writing habits in two primary ways. First, the reader will quickly discover that the vast majority of ancient Greek, Coptic, Hebrew, or Syriac words and phrases have been transliterated. My transliterations follow the conventions specified in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Kutsko et al. 2014). There are, however, a few places where I felt that transliteration would be too confusing or too cumbersome for the specialist in ancient magic. I have, therefore, written these select words or phrases in the appropriate scripts. Second, I have used the English translations of the titles for ancient and late antique literary sources except in a few instances in which I thought that the English titles would cause more confusion (e.g., references to the *Didache* and to Talmudic tractates).

The publication of my book coincided closely with the publication of the first volume of *Papyri Copticae Magicae* (Dosoo and Preininger 2023). Although this first volume—and subsequent volumes—will no doubt constitute the new authoritative collection of Coptic magical materials, the short publication time between our respective books meant that, unfortunately, I was only able to incorporate into my monograph the editors' work on Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 (see introduction). It should go without saying that I am very grateful to Korshi Dosoo and Markéta Preininger for sharing the proofs of their analysis, edition, and translation of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9.

In addition to this act of scholarly generosity, *Ritual Boundaries* also benefited from the kind encouragement, financial support, and scholarly wisdom of numerous people and institutions. First, my work on this book would not have gone forward without the financial and administrative support of several universities, research institutions, and their representatives. In this vein, I am eternally grateful to Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony (Center for the Study of Christianity, Hebrew University of Jerusalem); Martin Hose, Loren Stuckenbruck, and Knut Backhaus (Distant Worlds: Munich Graduate School for Ancient Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München); John Burden and Peter Scott (Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Warwick); Marianna Catinella, Andrea Rudatis, and the late Marco Ceresa (Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice); and Eric Schmidt, Joel Kalvesmaki, and Jyoti Arvey (University of California Press). The European Research Council also deserves special mention for funding my research team and for providing a means by which scholars like me, whose research falls outside the disciplinary "mainstream," can find permanent academic positions. The amazing opportunities and assistance that these people and institutions have given me have allowed me to pursue my research.

This book also tremendously profited from countless interactions with other scholars. As is probably already evident from the words above, the mentorship and now friendship of Raʿanan Boustan has been one of the highlights of my academic career. Raʿanan's impact on my way of thinking about (late antique) religion is nothing short of profound. Several other scholars have offered me vital input on the themes of this book or have supported my career with letters of recommendation, collaboration, and the like: especially, S. Scott Bartchy, Gideon Bohak, Theodore de Bruyn, Jacco Dieleman, Christopher Faraone, David Frankfurter, Richard Gordon, Nils Hallvard Korsvoll, Sofie Lunn-Rockliffe, Yonatan Moss, Claudia Rapp, the late James M. Robinson, Flavia Ruani, Ortal-Paz Saar, Jacques van der Vliet, Maude Vanhaelen, and Lorne Zeleck. In addition, a range of scholars were gracious enough to read earlier versions of this book (or parts of it) and provide informative—and sometimes critical—comments: Alessia Bellusci, Raʿanan Boustan, Mattias Brand, Jan Bremmer, Dylan Burns, Rivka Elitzur-Leiman, David Frankfurter, Blake Jurgens, Paolo Lucca, Ágnes T. Mihálykó, Michele Scarlassara, and Sandrine Welte. Their invaluable input improved virtually every page of this monograph.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unending support. I will forever be grateful to my parents, Emanuel Joseph Sanzo (1936–2021) and Sharon Kay Sanzo (1940–2022), neither of whom, unfortunately, saw the publication of this book. Although they were not academics (and did not always understand the academic life), my parents always offered me care, encouragement, and laughter. I miss them both every day. Most of all, I thank my loving wife, Lex, and our three children, Zack, Asher, and Violet, who, to varying degrees, endured the linguistic, cultural, and practical challenges of following me around the world—from Los Angeles to Jerusalem to Munich to Coventry to Los Angeles (again) to Venice to Vittorio Veneto. This book would not have been possible without their love and patience. I, therefore, dedicate *Ritual Boundaries* to them with all my heart.

Vittorio Veneto, Italy, July 2023
Joseph Emanuel Sanzo

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of biblical books and Talmudic tractates follow the conventions specified in Kutsko et al. 2014.

ACM	Meyer, Marvin W., and Richard Smith, eds. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
ANF	Robert, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. 1885–87. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
ARG	*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*
ASAE	*Annales du service des antiquités de l'Egypte*
ASE	*Annali di storia dell'esegesi*
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
GMPT	Betz, Hans D., ed. 1996. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
GRBS	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
MTSR	*Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*

NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NKGW	*Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und der Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen*
PGM	Preisendanz, Karl, ed. 1973. *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. 2 vols. Rev. ed. A. Henrichs. Stuttgart: K G Saur Verlag.
Stud.Pap.	*Studia Papyrologica*
Suppl.Mag.	Daniel, Robert W., and Franco Maltomini, eds. 1990–92. *Supplementum Magicum*. 2 vols. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Introduction

At the turn of the fifth century CE, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) delivered a sermon on John 1:34–51, the seventh in his homiletical series on the fourth gospel.[1] In this sermon, the bishop of Hippo directed his ire against a now unknown local blood festival that had apparently piqued the interest of some of his North African congregants.[2] Augustine responded in kind to this ostensible threat to Christian purity, constructing a complex argument that highlighted through various examples the demonically inspired tactic of blending heathenism with Christianity. Among the examples he noted was the deceptive use of Jesus's name on tied ritual objects or amulets (*ligaturae*), a practice he regarded as a clever and potent form of ritual subterfuge:

> For evil spirits contrive certain semblances of honor for themselves that they may in this way deceive [*decipiant*] those who follow Christ. To such an extent, my brothers, that they [i.e., demons] themselves, who seduce [*seducunt*] through tied ritual objects [*ligaturas*], through spells [*praecantationes*], and through the artifices of the enemy, mingle [*misceant*] the name of Christ in their spells; because they are no longer able to seduce Christians so that they may give their poisons, they add some honey so that what is bitter may lie hidden in that which is sweet and may be drunk to ruin. To such an extent that I know that at one time the priest of that Pilleatus used to say, "Even Pilleatus himself is a Christian." Why is this, brothers, except that Christians cannot otherwise be seduced?[3]

This discussion of amulets utilizes a range of metaphors (e.g., representation, mixture, disguise, and mislabeling) that, taken together, vividly illustrates how demons attempt to draw believers away from their god. From a historical perspective, Augustine's criticisms of this hypothetical group of the deceived also disclose a certain level of knowledge of actual late antique ritual practice; the extant amuletic record from this period provides countless examples of the apotropaic and curative use of Jesus's name.[4]

At the same time, his use of the verb *miscere* ("to mingle") in this context raises questions of historical significance that evade simple answers. From whose perspective was Jesus's name mingled? Did the demons/practitioners, the unsuspecting Christians, and Augustine have the same interpretation of the Jesus-incantation interface? In short, would all parties have agreed that a mixture of magical/heathen and Christian elements had taken place? Apparently not. Although Augustine and the deceitful demons/practitioners that he envisioned both seemed to have capitalized on a religious, ritual, or communal difference between the respective worlds of Jesus and incantations—though from diametrically opposing religious postures and motivations—the Christians who acquired such objects did not presumably recognize this difference, at least not in the same way. That these Christians were in Augustine's mind "deceived" (cf. *decipere*) and "seduced" (cf. *seducere*) by this supposed trick meant that they conceptualized ritual and religious taxonomies *differently* than did he and his wicked counterparts. In fact, while Augustine insists that such believers were now outside the faithful sheepfold, the believers themselves apparently perceived no tension between their amuletic practices and their Christian identities.[5] According to Augustine, these hypothetical (Christian) people would disagree with his condemnatory assessment, boldly proclaiming, for instance, "I did not lose the sign of Christ."[6]

Despite its rhetorical framing and clear theological biases, Augustine's discussion of *ligaturae* reveals an ideological bifurcation centered around the proper boundaries of Christian practice.[7] In so doing, this anecdote hints at the diverse visions of the limits of Christianity and Christian idiom that existed in late antiquity, especially as it relates to the (textual) objects, rituals, and crises of quotidian life.

Ritual Boundaries investigates the manifold ways in which late antique Mediterranean people—mostly Christians—engaged through their everyday practices with notions of similarity and difference, good and evil, and propriety and impropriety, specifically in relation to religious belonging, ritual practice, and the limits of texts (e.g., between words, images, materials, and gestures; between authoritative traditions). It seeks to accomplish this goal through detailed readings of late antique amulets (of various types and materials) and *grimoires* and, to lesser extents, curse tablets and other kinds of practices and texts associated with healing, exorcism, and cursing. Although the rituals and objects at the center of this study are typically deemed "magical," this book is *not about magic*, per se; instead, the book uses ostensibly magical objects to reorient how we map the contours of textuality as well as religious assimilation, cooperation, and especially differentiation during late antiquity in so-called "lived religion" more generally.[8]

This latter emphasis on differentiation in late antique "lived religion" (see discussion below) neither operates according to a model of historical inquiry that facilely divides elites from non-elites[9] nor harks back to a now bygone era in late ancient Mediterranean studies, whereby the writings and perspectives of church

fathers, monks, rabbis, and emperors were privileged to such a high degree that they totally eclipsed the panoply of complexities and contradictions in late antique lived reality. Often oriented around "great thinkers," this defunct approach to history allowed the voices of a select few to drown out or frame those of Christians from a range of social strata. Indeed, a discrete distinction between elites and non-elites, coupled with a literary source-focused model of (ancient) history, carries serious consequences for our reconstructions of the past, as historians have long noted.

In the opening chapter of *The Cult of the Saints* (1981), Peter Brown demonstrated that the scholarly study of the late antique cult of the saints had, up until that time, been fundamentally shaped by a two-tiered model of religious change, specifically organized around the categories "elites" and "non-elites."[10] For the likes of Edward Gibbon (1737–94), who wrote under the influence of David Hume (1711–76), this two-tiered model—in its nascent form—resulted in a devaluation of the religion of late antiquity; according to this view, the greatest sin of the late antique elites was their permissive attitude toward "popular" or "vulgar" religion.[11]

By the early 1980s, the two-tiered model appeared under a different guise. Brown writes the following: "We have developed a romantic nostalgia for what we fondly wish to regard as the immemorial habits of the Mediterranean countryman, by which every 'popular' religious practice is viewed as an avatar of classical paganism."[12] If the "modernism" of Gibbon's era brought with it contempt for the "popular" or "vulgar" religion of the masses, the "postmodernism" of Brown's day romanticized that non-elite religiosity. With a two-tiered model still at its center, this newer approach to religious history, in Brown's estimation, emphasized continuity over change to such a great extent that it obscured unique developments in late antiquity, including especially the rise of the cult of the saints. Brown appropriately noted that developments in late antique religiosity could not be so easily divided according to an elite versus non-elite dichotomy because "they worked slowly and deeply into the lives of Mediterranean men of all classes and levels of culture."[13]

Despite Brown's trenchant criticisms, the two-tiered model—and its accompanying distinction between elites and non-elites—has proved to die hard in late antique studies. In fact, I contend that an even newer kind of two-tiered model—likewise accompanied by a "romantic nostalgia" for "non-elite" religion—has had a considerable influence on scholarship in the intervening years since 1981. Although Christian continuity with Jewish, indigenous, pagan, or heathen practices still constitutes a robust field of scholarship (though not necessarily for the same problematic reasons it did in the early 1980s),[14] many scholars of late antiquity now adopt a two-tiered approach to religious boundaries and identities that casts non-elites and elites into positive and negative lights respectively. The late antique Christian masses are said to have enjoyed a great degree of amicability with their non-Christian neighbors, which reflected or resulted in "messy," "fluid,"

"blurred," "porous," or "permeable" boundaries. This generally peaceful posture, so we are told, stands in marked contrast with the suspect predilections of the "orthodox" Christian elites (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, John Chrysostom, and Augustine), who were preoccupied with religious and ritual differentiation and establishing clear-cut boundaries between Christians and a host of Others (e.g., Jews, Pagans, heretics, and magicians).[15] This two-tiered understanding of inter-religious interaction—which, to be sure, is in large measure a response to the earlier "great thinkers" models (see above) or conflict-oriented reconstructions (see conclusions) of early Christian history—has not only penetrated the study of early Christian literature; it has also made a deep impact on the fields of Christian (and Jewish) archaeology and art history.[16]

Fortunately, a few recent studies have destabilized aspects of this bifurcated view of religious interaction among early followers of Jesus and their neighbors. Geoffrey Smith has argued that some ostensibly "heretical" texts, such as the *Testimony of Truth* (from the Nag Hammadi archive), betray an interest in religious differentiation—even appropriating the genre of the heresy catalogue.[17] In a quite different scheme, Heidi Wendt has reframed *both* early Christian heresiologists, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, *and* their heretical interlocutors (e.g., Marcion and Valentinus) as "freelance religious experts," vying for social, economic, and ritual capital and attempting to marginalize one another along the way.[18] Finally, a complex view of early Jewish-Christian relations—as reflected in literary sources primarily from the first two centuries CE—has emerged from a 2018 collection of essays dedicated to Joel Marcus.[19] As the editors of this volume—aptly titled *The Ways that Often Parted*[20]—note, this collection of essays "cumulatively illustrates how a variety of ways not only parted but also intermingled—early and late, intentionally and accidentally, over and over again."[21]

What emerges from these recent works is a portrait of a competitive world of early Christian intellectual voices—not confined to traditional conceptions of orthodoxy—competing with one another and, more importantly for the concerns of this book, framing and maligning one another through manifold discourses of religious, ritual, and cultural alterity. Yet, although this research has usefully contributed to the study of early Christian differentiation by situating early literary writers within a robust agonistic context, the analytical parameters of these studies (and the sources they discuss) leave views of religious difference among the late antique Christian masses—including Christian ritual specialists and their clients, who cut across the ostensible boundaries between "elites" and "non-elites"—for the most part unaddressed.

Ritual Boundaries attempts to address directly the issues of religious, ritual, and textual difference among such Christians with the help of magical artifacts (e.g., apotropaic, curative, exorcistic, and imprecatory objects), supplemented at times with select patristic and monastic sources that condemn or discuss these ritual materials. This "magical" evidence (see below) is particularly useful for assessing

the issue of differentiation among the Christian masses—again, not confined to some putative category of "non-elites"—in part because these sources provide a direct glance into the quotidian lives of believers and in part because amulets and similar technologies are often presented (erroneously in my view) as one of the premiere examples of cultural, religious, and ritual blending. Consequently, these sources are often held up as an "obvious" domain of late antique social existence in which the desire for ritual and religious difference was unimportant, unknown, or even unimaginable.

Although one cannot necessarily posit a general portrait of conceptions of religious and ritual differentiation among such Christians on the basis of select magical objects and early Christian texts, attention to this evidence undermines two partly overlapping presuppositions in late antique studies that have reinforced many of the claims for blurred boundaries or the lack of concern for difference among these believers: First, that shared symbols, spaces, practices, and the like necessarily imply friendly exchange or a lack of rigidly demarcated boundaries; and second, that taxonomies of Christian symbols, rituals, and social contexts among the Christian masses corresponded in a one-to-one fashion with those articulated in ancient Christian literary sources and, by extension, in modern scholarly studies. The challenging of these presuppositions ultimately supports my contention that the impulse to differentiate, malign, and slander was much more widespread in late antique Christianity than scholars now generally acknowledge. By demonstrating that ritual and religious differentiation and invective infiltrated diverse social strata in late antique lived contexts (see especially chapters 1 and 2), *Ritual Boundaries* further disrupts the hard-and-fast distinction between elite and non-elite religion that Brown began to deconstruct over forty years ago.

But magical objects not only testify in interesting ways to ritual and religious boundaries. They also offer us interesting portraits of other kinds of relationships, for which the metaphor "boundary" and related terms have been used. Indeed, political/geographical metaphors, such as "boundary," "limit," and "border," have provided—and continue to provide—productive analytical frameworks for investigating and understanding the combinations, fusions, and ruptures at the interstices of texts, images, materials, and bodies. As I will illustrate in chapter 3, the magical objects help expand our notions of the relationships—or "boundaries," if you will—among and between these latter categories in early Christian lived religion.

In so doing, the magical evidence helps us reimagine late antique religious experience and contributes to the study of late antique books, reading practices, and the so-called "New Philology." The classic works produced by scholars, such as Colin Roberts, William A. Graham, Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, Harry Gamble, and Roger Bagnall, have usefully detailed ancient reading habits (for instance, silent reading), the important role and prices of codices in early Christianity, and the necessity to move beyond purely textual analyses of manuscripts, to

name just a few important contributions.[22] This research has proved to be indispensable for the study of early Christianity and late antiquity more generally by promoting and illustrating an approach to manuscripts and texts that takes into consideration all the features of the object in/on which the words were written.[23]

The use of the extant magical record to better understand the history of books and reading is a line of methodological inquiry still in its infancy.[24] Nevertheless, this nascent area of research promises to make a considerable impact on the study of textual artifacts and their reception since magical objects engage with domains, such as textuality, materiality, and visuality, in unexpected and creative ways (see chapters 3 and 4). The complex interaction of these domains becomes especially evident when one examines from a synthetic perspective the several recent monographs and collected volumes that have usefully drawn attention to the intersections of ancient magic and ancient scribal culture,[25] material culture (and archaeology),[26] authoritative traditions,[27] and visual culture,[28] to name just a few. Although such volumes tend to focus on only one dimension of ancient magical objects, the magical artifacts themselves are typically not confined by our notions of text, material, image, and the like. As we will see in chapter 3, one late antique Christian amulet, P.Oxy. 8.1077, seeks to achieve ritual efficacy by merging verbal, visual, material, and performative dimensions. This amulet and others thus help us gain a better understanding of the text-material-support interface by underscoring the diverse entanglements of texts, on the one hand, and the materials, formats, images, and ritual performances contiguous with them, on the other.

Such combinations can also shed light on the diverse ways people engaged with authoritative traditions, such as the Bible, in late antique lived religion. As I will also highlight in chapter 3, even the Jewish and Christian practitioners who cited the same biblical passage (MT Ps 91:1 = LXX Ps 90:1) reveal different mergers of text, materiality, body, and performance through the ritual and material formats at their disposals. An incantation bowl penetrated the human senses with this sacred tradition differently—and required different kinds of gestural performances to read and write the text—than an amuletic armband or a pendant or a ring. Biblical reception and the religious experiences it engendered were not merely or purely textual phenomena.

Attention to the interface of word and image, in particular, can also yield important insights into historical developments, hermeneutical complexities, and scholarly rubrics associated with well-established authoritative traditions in late antique lived religion. For instance, there has been a recent trend in scholarship to push a triumphal interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus as a visual symbol to an earlier period of late antiquity.[29] An early magical gem now housed in the British Museum (BM 1986,0501.1), whose image has been understood as preserving a triumphal interpretation of the crucified Jesus, has served as a kind of linchpin of this new scholarly position; however, as we will see in chapter 4, scholars have not taken into sufficient consideration contextual developments in both Christianity

and in magical practice during late antiquity when assessing this gem's visual and verbal characteristics. Attention to these developments allows us to reassess the word-image interplay on the gem and, consequently, to recontextualize the gem's presentation of Jesus in dialogue with ancient beliefs about the restless dead.

But this early gem's negative presentation of Jesus's crucifixion was not the end of the story. In fact, an early seventh-century CE exorcistic spell written in Coptic (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796), which gives us the most elaborate late antique presentation of the crucifixion of Jesus through both word and image on a magical artifact, presents Jesus's death in highly triumphal terms. Accordingly, the coordination of the verbal and visual domains on these two late antique magical artifacts reveals two completely different understandings of the crucifixion of Jesus: Jesus's crucifixion as a triumphal death and Jesus's crucifixion as a shameful death. By giving voice to the visual-verbal interplay in these sources, we not only reveal a range of possible interpretations to this foundational Christian myth in late antique lived contexts. In so doing, we also gain insight into historical developments in the magical use of Jesus's death during "late antiquity" and undermine the simple scholarly application of generic terms, such as "(ritual) power": in both cases, the crucifixion of Jesus was certainly perceived to be "ritually powerful"; however, the respective power dynamics in these sources were grounded in diametrically opposite perspectives toward the (untimely) death of Jesus.[30]

Ritual Boundaries thus seeks to insert the so-called "magical" evidence into diverse scholarly discourses in late antique studies. It is my hope that this book will contribute to a growing body of scholarship that has recognized the importance of this material evidence for our understanding of late antique religion and culture and will, therefore, help move magic out from the margins of late antique studies to a more central position in the field.[31]

TERMINOLOGY

The academic study of late antique religion and magic has been marked by a preoccupation with terminology. Studies abound with detailed discussions of "religion," "magic," "Christianity," "Judaism," and the like. Although I will nuance, rearrange, and mix up many of these and other terms throughout the book, there are several scholarly categories—albeit with overlapping traits—that interact with some of my fundamental concerns and thus warrant extended introductory discussions. As will become evident in these terminological analyses, the continuities, partial overlaps, and, of course, ruptures among and between late antique and scholarly taxonomies are important to highlight and, therefore, represent prominent points of discussion throughout this study. In this sense, *Ritual Boundaries* also addresses the complex and ever-changing boundaries between scholars and the late antique sources they investigate.

Magic

My insistence on the use of the term "magic" in this study might strike some as odd, unnecessary, or even flat-out wrong. After all, what is "magic"? How might we distinguish "magic" from other spheres of ancient social existence (e.g., "religion" and "science")? To be sure, I certainly appreciate the well-established problems with the term, including the following: imprecision in scholarly usage; outmoded biases against the category (e.g., coercive magic vs. supplicative religion); its theological and colonial vestiges; differences between the English rubric "magic" (or its equivalents in other modern languages) and ancient terminology (e.g., *mageia*); and the considerable overlaps between "magical" rituals and "religious" rituals in late antique social reality.[32] But the heuristic utility of "magic" is not *necessarily* impeded by these problems;[33] nor, more importantly, is it *necessarily* contingent on new definitions that creatively navigate around such shortcomings.

In this vein, I will not offer any definition of "(late antique) magic." Instead, the specific parameters of my study require that I reframe the issue of terminology entirely through a set of guiding questions that prioritize taxonomy over against definition: what scholarly *category* can most usefully illuminate the overarching concerns of this particular study? And what is the most useful way to *engage with* that category, again for this particular study? My answers to these two questions are: (1) magic and (2) from a scholarly oriented perspective.[34]

Specifically, I approach the category magic here primarily as an inherited analytical rubric, which, on account of longstanding scholarly convention, intuitively gathers together certain objects, rituals, and concerns. "Magic" has in fact been the dominant term used to label and frame apotropaic, curative, exorcistic, and imprecatory sources and their primary objectives, as is evident from the titles of the volumes in which most of these textual objects have been published and (re-)edited: for instance, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (cf. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*);[35] *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies;*[36] *Supplementum Magicum;*[37] *Ancient Christian Magic;*[38] *Amulets and Magic Bowls;*[39] *Magic Spells and Formulae;*[40] *Testi della magia copta;*[41] *Papyri Copticae Magicae*.[42] Even those who deny the heuristic utility of the term recognize its stubborn persistence in scholarly discourses about the objects and concerns in these collections.[43] In short, there is a high level of agreement in scholarship concerning the objects, texts, and concerns that have been classified as "magic."

The consistency in the scholarly classification of magical items, however, stands in marked contrast to the manifold ways scholars have *defined* magic. Is it an irrational form of pseudoscience (in the tradition of Sir James George Frazer)? Or should we follow Émile Durkheim in thinking about magic as mostly a private action? Is it a replacement or substitute for science in instances in which there is insufficient technological development (as Bronisław Malinowski has argued)? None of these definitions—nor the others that have been offered—have satisfied

scholars because they either restrict the evidence too much or are too general to illuminate many research questions.[44]

This heuristic difference between taxonomy and definition is, of course, applicable to terms other than magic. Brent Nongbri makes a similar observation about religion when he writes, "When I ask my students to define religion, they generally respond with a wide range of conflicting definitions, but they usually can agree on 'what counts' as religion and what does not."[45] But, rather than this being a problem (as Nongbri seems to suggest), there is much value in this basic agreement, especially for certain scholarly pursuits. Much like Nongbri's students, I am relatively confident that, if I were to give scholars of antiquity a list of texts, objects, and the like (e.g., amulets, liturgies, legal proceeding, prayers, and medical tractates) and tell them to place these terms into categories, such as religion, magic, science, and law, I would find a considerably high degree of agreement. Yet, if I told those same scholars to define "religion," "magic," "science," or "law," I would get several completely different responses.

To summarize, there has never been scholarly agreement about the proper *definition* of magic, but scholars tend to agree on how magic fits within a *taxonomy* of late antique phenomena (i.e., which sources and concerns are in the category "magic," and which are outside it). All inherited theological and cultural biases notwithstanding, this well-established taxonomic tradition in late antique studies apropos of magic can serve as an important point of orientation *for certain research questions*. A scholarly oriented taxonomic approach to magic is especially fruitful for my purposes since my broader argument is that select qualities associated with this rubric *in scholarly imagination* have structured the way that *scholars* have approached the sources deemed magical and their implications for late antique religious history.

Magic—like all our research categories—has a host of contiguous attributes in scholarly usage.[46] Among the attributes of ancient and late antique magic that reside at the analytical center of this study are its supposedly "syncretistic" (see below), non-normative, and/or boundary-blurring character. Such descriptors are everywhere in scholarly literature and, in some cases, fundamentally structure academic discussions about magic. The assumption that ancient and late antique magical objects (almost) always resisted clear-cut boundaries not only frames the study of (ancient) magic itself—that is, the problem of separating magic from religion, science, and so on—but it also orients the perceived appropriateness or applicability of the scholarly use of magical artifacts to address other kinds of premodern boundary demarcation, including the lines between Christians and various religious and ethnic Others.

One of the principal contentions of this book is that the sources behind the scholarly rubric "magic" were often concerned with religious and ritual boundaries and even with what we might call identity. By attending to the specific ways in which some of these objects constructed clear-cut boundaries, we can thus

recalibrate how we talk about late antique religious and ritual boundaries more generally, especially as it relates to so-called lived contexts. In short, I will take this scholarly constructed corpus of "magical" materials, which is often seen as irrelevant for questions of late antique boundary demarcation, religious and ritual differentiation, and notions of text and reading, and I will apply that corpus to those very academic discourses. Magic is precisely the best overarching category for the larger task at hand.

Two qualifications, however, are in order: First, one should *not* get the impression from these introductory words that the assumptions behind the construction of the scholarly corpus of magical objects were *completely* disconnected from the world of late antiquity and its key terminology (e.g., *mageia*). There are in fact important correspondences between the taxonomies of scholars and those operative in the late antique world, including in both the magical and literary records. Beginning in late antiquity, we start to find groupings of ritual practices and practitioners, especially by Christian authors, in ways that align quite closely with our notions of magic (at least in its negative sense).[47] This is especially evident in the canons of ancient church councils. In addition to an early Coptic version of the *Apostolic Tradition*, which lists a range of ritual experts to be excluded from baptism unless they repent (e.g., magicians, fortune tellers, and those who make amulets), there is a late fourth- or early fifth-century CE Phrygian canon that has been falsely attributed to a single Council of Laodicea.[48] This canon reads:

> Those who are of the priesthood, or of the clergy, ought not be magicians [*magous*], enchanters [*epaoidous*], numerologists [*mathēmatikous*], or astrologers [*astrologous*]; nor ought they make what are called amulets [*phylaktēria*], which are chains for their own souls. Those who wear [amulets], we command to be cast out of the Church.

Such ecclesiastical canons demonstrate that Christians had begun by the late fourth or early fifth century CE to conceptualize illicit ritual activities and their practitioners as a distinctive threat.

We also find that the practice of writing *charaktēres* was common in the various kinds of objects and texts we call "magical" (e.g., the Greek Magical Papyri, amulets, *defixiones* [curse tablets]), but was rarely—if ever—found in other kinds of objects. Ancients seemed at times to be highly aware that this scribal practice was a distinctively ritual phenomenon. For instance, several magical objects, including P.Haun. III 51 (= *Suppl.Mag.* 23), a fifth-century CE Greek amulet for healing that I will discuss in chapter 3, not only inscribes *charaktēres*, but also invokes these *charaktēres* by name. We read, "Holy inscription and mighty *charaktēres*, chase away the fever with shivering from Kalē, who wears this *phylakterion*." The high authority that ritual practitioners invested in this scribal practice was not lost on the Christian critics of ancient amulets. Thus, Augustine writes the following:

> Among superstitious things is whatever has been instituted by men concerning the making and worshiping of idols, or concerning the worshiping of any creature or any

> part of any creature as though it were God. Of the same type are things instituted concerning consultations and pacts involving prognostications with demons who have been placated . . . These are the endeavors of the magic arts [*magicarum artium*] . . . Here also belong all the amulets . . . whether these involve incantations [*praecantationibus*], or certain secret signs called "characters" [*caracteres*].[49]

In other words, both ancient practitioners and those who criticized them attest to the ritual significance of this scribal practice for the range of objects, texts, and practices we call "magical."

But, of course, most late antique practitioners did not consider their rituals to be magical in any way, shape, or form.[50] This manifest disjuncture between long-standing scholarly convention, on the one hand, and native understandings in the late antique artifacts themselves, on the other, can *occasionally* interfere with analysis. This *occasional* interference leads us to our second qualification: although magic remains the overarching category for the book as a whole (for the reasons specified above), the research questions that inform individual discussions in the chapters at times require a different way of classifying the sources. As we will see in chapter 1, it is helpful to recast certain "magical" objects as "religious" to facilitate their comparison with select monastic and patristic sources that have similar approaches to illicit or harmful ritual. Although both ostensibly magical and religious materials slander certain rituals as evil, illicit, or harmful, the scholarly bifurcation of the sources into the categories "magic" and "religion" has often given the impression that the negative presentations of ritual in these respective sources are fundamentally dissimilar: practical anti-magical rituals versus theological/ideological condemnation of magic. By placing the magical objects under the same category as patristic sources (in this case, "religion"), we can dissociate them from a purely pragmatic framework and thus better contextualize their rhetorically, culturally, and theologically sensitive strategies for combatting rituals considered wicked.

As I hope to illustrate throughout this study, the heuristic utility of analytical categories such as magic for the study of the late antique world is ultimately contingent on their explanatory power *for specific scholarly pursuits*.[51] In my estimation, therefore, our taxonomies must remain flexible and open to adjustment, reconfiguration, and even deconstruction, thereby allowing us to balance our driving research aims, among other things, with the scholarly presuppositions and traditions operative in each instance.

Amulet

As noted above, *Ritual Boundaries* will draw from the published corpora of late antique amulets, which, given their additional magical designation, have been largely ignored in the study of late antique boundary demarcation.[52] Accordingly, the cross-cultural anthropological term "amulet" appears in this study as a rubric to discuss a range of ancient and late antique ritual practices and objects (see below)

and, occasionally, to translate native words, such as *amuletum, ligatura, periapton/periamma*, and *phylaktērion* (*phylaktēria* [plural]).[53] Much like magic, the noun amulet has recently been subjected to considerable scrutiny in late antique studies. Since I have predicated my approach to magic—and, by extension, amulets—on a relatively high degree of scholarly agreement, it is important to engage critically with the growing scholarly trend to reconsider the functions of objects previously designated as amulets.

In their seminal checklist of early Christian amulets and formularies, Theodore de Bruyn and Jitse Dijkstra put forth a series of criteria or characteristics that they used to help identify objects as amulets.[54] In particular, they assessed the objects based on the presence of the following features:

> adjurations or petitions, esoteric words [*voces magicae*] or signs [*charaktēres*], letters or words arranged in shapes, strings of vowels, short narratives that relate events associated with the divine world to the matter at hand [*historiolae*], and phraseology often found in charms and spells.[55]

In addition to these features—the taxonomic complexities of which they duly note—de Bruyn and Dijkstra also highlighted other kinds of characteristics that can be used to help identify an amulet, such as the use of certain biblical traditions (e.g., LXX Ps 90 and the Lord's Prayer) or evidence of rolling or folding.[56] With these diverse criteria in mind, they divided the relevant manuscripts into three groups that progressively descend in their probability of amuletic design: (1) certain; (2) probable; and (3) possible.[57] It is worth noting that Dijkstra and de Bruyn did not challenge the amuletic status of any of the objects at the center of my analysis.

More recently, Peter Arzt-Grabner and Kristin De Troyer have provided a more critical approach to this topic, emphasizing the necessary presence of clear "magical" elements (e.g., invocations, *charaktēres*, and *voces magicae*) to justify a "certain" amuletic rating. Consequently, Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer take issue with de Bruyn and Dijkstra's claim that the presence of a relevant biblical passage could, in and of itself, be indicative of amuletic design.[58] For Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer, such biblical passages could theoretically reflect a range of functions, including:

> a short text that somebody wanted to keep and read from time to time, be it as a prayer or just a beautiful poetic text; or it may have been a scribal exercise from a practicing priest or student, or an ornamental piece produced at school, maybe to be used as a gift for a beloved person.[59]

Armed with this more "exclusive" approach, Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer argue that some of the objects that Dijkstra and de Bruyn considered amulets should be reclassified. Although most of the artifacts that they reclassify are not relevant for my purposes, one object whose amuletic status they dispute plays a role in this study: P.Oxy. 8.1077 (cf. chapter 3). Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer argue that there is no "hard evidence" that P.Oxy. 8.1077 was designed to be an amulet.[60] They

therefore entertain other interpretations for this artifact. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer ask:

> Is it not possible that this sheet of parchment . . . could have been a text about Jesus' healing power, artificially designed in an educational context or as a gift for another person, e.g., someone with medical skills?[61]

They continue:

> And as the producer put so much effort into the careful display of so many features, some of them unique, we have to ask why he or she did not attach a single certain magical marker, e.g., a magical character or a *vox magica*?[62]

Although Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer are willing to classify this artifact as "possibly produced as an amulet," they do not find any clear evidence indicating that it should be classified among the objects that were "certainly" amulets.

To a large degree, my taxonomic approach to the category "magic"—and, consequently, "amulet"—sidesteps Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer's recent challenge to the amuletic status of P.Oxy. 8.1077 and any specific designation one might assign to this artifact moving forward: although some scholars might follow Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer in disputing—on papyrological or other grounds—the claim that P.Oxy. 8.1077 was originally designed to be an amulet, there is no doubt that commentators over the past century have consistently referred to this object as an amulet and placed it in collections devoted to amulets and "magic."[63] And it is precisely this *long-standing* scholarly classificatory tradition that informs my principal use of nomenclature and my guiding research questions. Nevertheless, it is useful to engage with Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer's analysis of P.Oxy. 8.1077 since it raises much larger questions about the functions of manuscripts in antiquity more generally. In particular, their essay is a useful starting point for discussing the possibility that an object might have served multiple functions for a single user.

Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer appropriately note that scholars have often taken a "magical" or "amuletic" function of P.Oxy. 8.1077 (and other objects) for granted. From their perspective, such scholarly assumptions are unwarranted or at least premature because the scribe behind this manuscript has not included any "magical" markers (e.g., *charaktēres* or *voces magicae*). They therefore postulate other possible functions for this artifact (e.g., as an educational aid or a gift). One thing worth noting about their assessment of P.Oxy. 8.1077—as well as that of prior commentators—is the operative assumption that there is only *one answer* to the question of function; an object is *either* an educational device *or* an amulet *or* a gift. Yet, while it is likely that most objects were designed with one *primary* use in mind, it is worth asking if the nature of the late antique evidence compels us to classify and conceptualize manuscripts in such monofunctional terms.

There is strong evidence suggesting that objects often served multiple functions—at least for their users. The late antique literary record is replete with descriptions of situations in which, for instance, gestures and artifacts typically

associated with devotional, liturgical, or educational activities also served on occasion apotropaic or curative functions; whether we think of Saint Antony's gesturing of the cross to thwart "magic" (*mageia*) and "poison" (*pharmakeia*)[64] or Saint Augustine's praise of the man who sought healing by placing his head on a gospel artifact (see chapter 1),[65] the extant evidence from late antiquity makes it abundantly clear that objects and practices could serve a range of functions depending on their context.[66] On a theoretical level, this multiplicity of functions finds resonance with the sociological work on multiple identities by scholars, such as Bernard Lahire, who have demonstrated how individuals can align themselves with different groups depending on the situation and context.[67] Within this line of scholarship, individuals do not possess a single identity, but activate different "identities" (e.g., religious, civic, and familial) depending on the circumstances at hand.[68] Manuscripts, objects, and even ritual gestures seemed to have worked in a similar way.[69]

The apotropaic or curative extension of certain practices and objects, in particular, might relate to the penetration of disease and the demonic into multiple areas of early Christian life. In addition to biblical traditions of healing and demonic battle (e.g., the healings and exorcisms of Jesus and his followers)[70] and metaphorical titles with curative connotations ascribed to Jesus (e.g., *sōtēr* and *iatros* [cf. Mark 2:17]), apotropaic/exorcistic concerns and healing were embedded into the very fabric of early Christian ritual culture. Exorcism, for example, was part of the early rites of baptism,[71] and the liturgy included requests for the healing of the sick.[72] Furthermore, as the research of David Brakke, David Frankfurter, and Dayna Kalleres (among others) has shown, demonic struggle thoroughly informed virtually every aspect of late antique life, especially in monasteries (where much of the scribal training and activity took place).[73]

Although late antique manuscripts, objects, and gestures probably functioned in a range of ways in lived practice, my scholarly taxonomic approach to amulets is not arbitrary since most of the objects under consideration in this study seemed to have *primarily* served apotropaic or curative functions. In fact, many of these objects self-identify using terms such as *phylaktērion*. Although P.Oxy. 8.1077 does not include any "magical" symbols like *charaktēres*, there are good reasons to think that it was *primarily* created and used as an amulet. This relatively small artifact (11.1 cm × 6 cm) was not only folded; its text also has a very strong emphasis on healing. For instance, the scribe has modified the Matthean title to read "curative Gospel According to Matthew,"[74] and he provides a modified citation of Matt 4:23–24, which emphasizes diseases even more than the biblical text does. I consider it more likely that it was *primarily* designed for curative purposes (i.e., an amulet) than for an educational context or as a gift for a someone with "medical skills," as Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer have hypothesized. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that, given the multifunctionality of objects in the late antique world, my analysis does not go forward under the assumption that P.Oxy. 8.1077 or any of the objects

I address were made solely for curative or apotropaic concerns or were used only as amulets. To state the matter a bit differently, we might reasonably assume that a papyrus inscribed with a biblical healing narrative about Jesus, such as P.Oxy. 8.1077, might have had a given function when worn at church; however, it is likely that same object served a totally different function when the carrier was sick or afraid of demonic attack.

Ritual

The word "ritual" also warrants an introductory discussion. Despite the problems scholars have identified with the term "ritual," I think that this anthropological rubric can be analytically productive.[75] I use "ritual" in this study in three partly overlapping ways. First, although the term "ritual" could in fact apply to a range of phenomena in the late antique Christian world,[76] "ritual" is used in the majority of cases in this study as a synonym for "magic" or "magical" and thus in reference to the amulets and handbooks, as well as their texts, practitioners, and clients (with the implicit caveat that such texts, objects, practices, and people also participated in other domains of ancient social existence [see the discussion of magic above]). This usage of the term, which more or less follows scholarly convention in the study of late antique magic, is especially operative when I use phrases such as "ritual practice" and "ritual practitioner."[77]

Second, "ritual" in this book occasionally takes on a more specific sense, denoting the activities, practices, gestures, or performances at play in the magical objects. This usage stands behind phrases such as "the rituals, texts, objects, and concerns that we call 'magical.'" This juxtapostion of the term "ritual" with these other rubrics, however, is not meant to imply a discrete distinction between domains, such as texts, beliefs, and rituals; rather, such lists are designed to stress for heuristic purposes the diverse dimensions that make up—or could make up—the categories "magic," "religion," and the like. In this way, the specific sense of "ritual" also applies to contexts that could be alternatively characterized as "magical" (improper) or "religious" (proper) depending on the viewer's perspective. Consequently, the term "ritual" offers a more neutral starting point for my discussion of perceptions of alterity, impropriety, and harm in the quotidian practices slandered in both literary and material sources—evidence I eventually classify together under the larger comparative rubric "religion" (see chapter 1).[78] In those few instances in which I have decided to translate ancient terms (e.g., *mageia*) in such slanderous texts with the rubric "magic" for brevity's sake, the reader should understand this rubric to mean "improper ritual practice."

Finally, the word "ritual" is used in this study to underscore a broader discursive context. This latter sense stands behind the heuristic distinction I make between "ritual boundaries" (see chapter 1), which engages with late antique views and stereotypes of proper and improper practices to deal with sickness, demonic struggle, and interpersonal conflict, and "religious boundaries" (see chapter 2),

which focuses on the perceived boundaries between Christians and non-Christians (especially "Jews"). The reader should not intuit from the structural division between ritual and religion in this book any interest on my part in reifying the (Protestant) ritual-belief binary or the thought-action distinction; nor does this division signal my participation in the myth-ritual debate.[79] Instead, this division is designed to highlight, through two key examples, how early Christians erected, maintained, and promoted boundaries between themselves and diverse kinds of Others in their everyday lives.

Syncretism

Despite the criticisms leveled against syncretism in the field of religious studies more generally, this category is ubiquitous in scholarly descriptions of the language found on ancient and late antique magical artifacts.[80] As one scholar has put the matter, "if syncretism is to be found anywhere, it is in the world of ancient magic."[81] In most cases, the term is merely applied (sometimes in scare quotes) to objects whose thematic content crosses the idealized and well-defined scholarly boundaries between Egypt, Greece, Rome, Judaism, Christianity, paganism, or gnosticism.[82] Others, however, have attempted to bring more specificity to the phenomenon of syncretism in ancient and late antique magic or situate this rubric within a more robust theoretical and methodological framework.

Carla Sfameni has examined the "extraordinarily complex mixture" of religious elements in select PGM texts and magical gems, arguing that they reflect "a particular kind of syncretism with clear enotheistic [*sic*] tendencies."[83] In particular, Sfameni draws on the work of scholars, such as Françoise Dunand and Pierre Lévêque,[84] and thus contextualizes the juxtaposition of various divine names (e.g., Iaō Sabaōth, Abrasax, Agathos Daimōn) in the late antique magical texts and objects within a broader henotheism in Roman Egypt, whereby devotion to one god did not necessarily preclude the use of or reverence for other divinities.[85] These elements, for Sfameni, cannot be separated into their constituent parts because they fit together into a coherent "world system" or "Hellenistic religious syncretism" that is tailored to the practical orientation of the magician's craft.[86] From this perspective, therefore, the syncretism behind the magical objects from late antiquity is a sound whole based on the mixture of "elements of different religious traditions in order to reach a specific aim."[87]

Although Sfameni's broader claims about (1) a single, coherent "Hellenistic religious syncretism" that (2) found particular expression in a discrete domain of late antiquity (i.e., magic) are unconvincing, her basic contention that objects, which seemingly invoke entities from "different religious traditions," should not be reflexively understood as a mere hodgepodge of independent elements is well taken.[88] As I will detail in chapter 2, many Christian magical objects reveal an already existing absorption or assimilation of "foreign" elements into the

practitioner's exclusionary configuration of Christianity and, accordingly, demand that we recalibrate our scholarly usage of categories, such as "Christian" and "Jewish," especially as it relates to late antique lived religion.

David Frankfurter has recently developed, through a series of publications, what I regard to be the most robust approach to and able defense of the category "syncretism" for the study of late antiquity, including for the academic study of the rituals, objects, and concerns we would call magical.[89] Eschewing the fallacy of "pure" religions that has been one of the problematic hallmarks of syncretism in past usage, Frankfurter rectifies this term as follows:

> Syncretism should cover the ongoing process by which a religious tradition—in the form of lore, materiality, authority, and charismatic figures—is indigenized and rendered comprehensible in particular cultural domains.[90]

Central to Frankfurter's understanding of syncretism is the notion of "agency"—a term that is meant to denote the active and creative reinterpretation, reworking, and distribution of cultural elements toward a particular objective.[91] From this perspective, syncretism represents an "ongoing process," whereby one can never say, for instance, "a culture or town 'is Christianized.'"[92]

This nuanced approach to syncretism can fruitfully highlight the ever-shifting forms of religious traditions, such as Christianity, across time and space. As Frankfurter demonstrates, the late antique ticket oracle that addresses Saint Leontius's god at his Christian shrine in Tripolis is not tantamount to a persistence or "survival" of some "pagan" antecedent but stands as a testament to a particular manifestation of "Christianization" in a local context.[93] Such instances of syncretism could function, for example, as a means by which "Christianity gained legitimacy, authority, and quotidian relevance in Egypt."[94]

But, as useful as this general model is for tracing the manifold manifestations of "Christianization" over the *longue durée*, such visions of syncretism and agency have difficulty accounting for the late antique taxonomies operative in specific texts. As a result, this approach can obscure exegesis and, by extension, can even augment historical analysis; the possible connotations, associations, and valences of the diverse religious building blocks in a given text are, by and large, eclipsed by a single analytical rubric.[95] Accordingly, syncretism in this view *tends* to conflate what I would regard as two discrete modes of agency: the active or intentional application of difference, foreignness, or exoticism to one's ritual text, on the one hand, and the ritual use of an already indigenized or assimilated component that happened to originate in a different cultural or religious context, on the other.[96] As we will see below, this basic distinction is necessary for understanding the ritual poetics of certain magical texts. Was Iaō Sabaōth, for instance, a "Jewish" or a "Christian" divine name for a given practitioner? Did such a distinction matter for his ritual purposes? In at least some cases, the scholarly mislabeling of such a moniker—or the automatic or general application of an analytical rubric, such as

"syncretism," to its use—can fundamentally invert the conception of ritual purity that the practitioner was trying to promote.

To be sure, Frankfurter is highly attuned to the instability of ancient notions of "Christianity" and of other categories as well as to how such ideas might conflict with our inherited scholarly taxonomies. Commenting on practices like the so-called "Land of Egypt" oracle, Frankfurter writes the following:

> it is only the modern Egyptologist or historian who recognizes the peculiar "Egyptianness" of these materials and tries to disentangle them from their contexts to stand alone as "survivals," for the texts themselves show no awareness of engaging non-Christian or repudiated religious traditions, nor is there evidence of others'—reformers'—censure of these kinds of interests or texts . . . We must be careful about isolating material as somehow "more Egyptian," as "survivals," when there is no evidence that the scribe himself thought he was moving into an archaizing or heathen mode of composition.[97]

Frankfurter's words against isolating the textual elements in a given text based on origins not only resonate to a degree with Sfameni's approach (see above), but they also gesture toward a methodological point on Christian magic that Raʿanan Boustan and I noted in another venue (and that I will develop further in chapter 2): unless there are reasons to think otherwise, elements that appear on a Christian magical artifact that seem to us to reflect diverse religious traditions should be treated as part and parcel of a Christian system.[98] As I will underscore throughout this study, it is precisely this disjuncture between ancient and scholarly taxonomies that has played a fundamental role in promoting the idea that religious and ritual boundaries were only an "elite" concern; the automatic application of a single term—in this case, "syncretism"—to every instance in which a late antique artifact juxtaposes elements that seemingly represent different ancient "religions" can obfuscate—and has obfuscated—these and other taxonomic issues and, consequently, distorts our vision of late antiquity.

Indeed, attention to questions of taxonomy is not merely useful for addressing a few ritual texts. As I also attempt to show in chapters 2 and 3, the portrait gleaned from the taxonomically focused hermeneutic that orients my analysis also provides insight into the fluctuating dynamics of religious and ritual similarity and difference in late antiquity more generally. In so doing, this approach to symbolic reception and its concomitant results undermines a central methodological tenet in late antique studies—namely, that a single artifact juxtaposing elements that originated in different religious communities (necessarily) signals blurred boundaries or even friendly relations between such communities. As we will see, divine and angelic names that originated in "Hebrew" or "Jewish" contexts could form integral parts of magical texts that bolster or construct ritual purity through harsh invective against the "Jews." At stake in this analysis is nothing short of our basic conception of the boundaries between religious groups in late antiquity, at least in lived contexts.

Given the focus of my study on questions of religious differentiation, as well as the hermeneutical and historical generality intrinsic to the category "syncretism," I will limit my use of this term to only those situations in which it is clear or likely that the practitioner *intentionally* played on the foreignness or exoticism of religious differences in his texts, without, of course, implying notions of incoherence or "mere mixture."[99] By contrast, I will employ the term "assimilation" to refer to those instances in which the word, divine name, or concept used has (mostly) lost its original meaning for the practitioner as a result of its absorption into a new (dominant) cultural context. This distinction follows in part a methodological schema articulated by the historian of Japanese religion Michael Pye (see discussion in chapter 2).[100]

Lived Religion

Though emerging out of earlier French sociological research on *la religion vécue*, the first phase of what might be usefully deemed "lived religion" is often identified with the work of Robert Orsi.[101] This initial phase of research on lived religion was focused primarily on North American religious traditions, with particular attention to the everyday practices and rituals of ordinary believers.[102] Subsequent work expanded the analytical scope and highlighted, to a greater degree, personal religious experience,[103] often framed in contrast to the proscriptions about proper religious behavior and belief of "official" religious institutions.[104] More recent scholarship has, for instance, underscored the role of the body and embodiment[105] and the problems associated with defining "religion" within the context of daily habits, rituals, and the like.[106]

In *Ritual Boundaries*, I will use the term "lived religion" in two principal ways, neither of which relies on the elite–non-elite binary. On a general level, I will use this term as a shorthand for what we typically deem "religious" as it relates to issues of daily life in late antiquity.[107] In light of the analytical parameters of the book, I will especially attend to quotidian concerns connected with health, demonic attack, and interpersonal conflict. In this general sense, the late antique artifacts, rituals, and concerns scholars deem magical constitute a subspecies of "lived religion." On a more specific level, I will draw on scholarship that has disaggregated this term to help identify, clarify, and analyze a range of cultural strategies in everyday existence during late antiquity.

My more specific usage of the rubric "lived religion" is based in large part on the research developed by the project, "Lived Ancient Religion" (LAR), funded by the European Research Council (2012–17). The LAR project was explicitly designed to provide a strong theoretical and methodological grounding to this field of study, with particular attention to evidence from the ancient world (which is important for our purposes). In a series of publications, this group, led by Jörg Rüpke, has offered a new approach to the category "lived religion." They organized the concept around four key overlapping concepts. First, the team highlighted the category "appropriation," which they defined as the contextual deployment of

existing cultural elements for individual or group aims.[108] Their second concept was "competence," which referred to specialized or professional knowledge and skills that could be utilized in a wide range of private and public performative contexts.[109] The third term, "situational meaning," operated from the assumption that "religious meanings" in antiquity were contextual and thus not contingent on ostensible worldviews.[110] Finally, the team underscored "mediality," which focused on "the roles of material culture, embodiment and group-styles in the construction of religious experience."[111]

Scholars working within and in express dialogue with the LAR project have made considerable progress in the study of ancient religion, especially as it relates to materiality or "mediality." For instance, Emma-Jayne Graham's work on hand votives from mid-Republican Italy has synthesized the research of thinkers, such as Bruno Latour on Actor-Network theory and Oliver Harris and Craig Cipolla on "assemblages" (i.e., how sensory/emotive qualities of material objects merge with human bodies, thoughts, and actions), and has accordingly underscored the ways in which people and "things" become "entangled" within various kinds of dependent relationships.[112] As Graham notes:

> religion [can be studied] as a form of embodied knowledge which is both produced and "felt" through the lived performance of activities and movements that encompass both the human body and the rest of the material world.[113]

Although the four dimensions of lived religion that the LAR team has underscored inform various discussions throughout the book, I frontally engage with their approach—and that of their colleagues, such as Emma-Jayne Graham—in chapters 2 and 3, especially attending to the categories "situational meaning" and "mediality." These respective dimensions help me assess the question of religious identity among the Christian amulets (chapter 2) and illuminate salient features of the religious experiences that some amuletic rituals engendered (chapter 3).

KEY THEMES AND SOURCES

I will engage with a range of themes and draw from multiple sources—including literary texts and various types of material objects. That said, one motif and one artifact play recurring roles in this book.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Ancient crucifixion and its derivative symbols have recently become quite fashionable topics in early Christian studies and adjacent disciplines. In addition to a sourcebook of extrabiblical evidence for ancient crucifixion,[114] the past decade or so has witnessed the publication of sizable monographs devoted to related topics, including the archaeological and literary evidence for ancient

crucifixion[115] and perceptions of the cross and crucifixion in antiquity.[116] Collectively, these studies have greatly developed the work of earlier pioneers on the subject, such as Martin Hengel[117] and Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn,[118] and have thereby complicated the nature of (Roman) crucifixion—Jesus's and otherwise—as a historical phenomenon and as a subject of ancient (Christian) imagination and reflection.

Ritual Boundaries places considerable emphasis on the theme of the crucifixion of Jesus for two primary reasons. First, the crucifixion of Jesus—and its contiguous symbols—emerges as one of the main biblical themes used in late antique magic. Again, many late antique ritual experts clearly thought that the crucifixion of Jesus was relevant for their rituals. In chapter 4, which is specifically oriented around the theme of the crucifixion, we will engage with what is probably the most extensive reflection on Jesus's crucifixion in a so-called magical context: Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 (= ACM 132)—a seventh-century CE Coptic spell for exorcism.[119] Indeed, the practitioner creatively engages with the crucifixion on multiple levels: he makes reference to a prayer that Jesus is supposed to have said on the cross, a prayer that juxtaposes details from various sections of the canonical gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew (including the reference in Matthew's gospel to the dead coming out of their tombs); he details a conversation between the crucified Jesus and a "unicorn" (*papitap nouōt*), whom Jesus ultimately rebukes and casts away; and he incorporates a drawing of the crucifixion scene into this spell, which includes images of the crucified Jesus and the criminals (who are labeled Gēstas and Dēmas [cf. *Gospel of Nicodemus* (*Gos. Nic.*) 9:5; 10:2]).[120] As I will argue in chapter 4, the triumphal presentation of Jesus's crucifixion in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 stands in marked contrast to the presentation of a magical jasper gem now housed in the British Museum (BM 1986,0501.1), which includes an image of Jesus on the cross in profile. In my estimation, the violent way Jesus is depicted on this gem is best explained in comparison with the broader restless-dead motif, whereby, among other things, those who had died violently (*bi[ai]othanatoi*) were understood as particularly useful to invoke for magical purposes.

But of course not all practitioners fixated on the crucifixion to the degree found in these two objects. In some cases, the crucifixion could be incorporated into a much broader portrait of the life of Jesus. For instance, several amulets reference the crucifixion as part of their engagement with a creed—whether a preexisting creed or an invented creed. Thus, P.Turner 49 (= *Suppl.Mag.* 31) cites a modified version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, whereas P.Haun. III 51 (= *Suppl. Mag.* 23), a fifth-century CE Greek amulet (see chapter 3), incorporates the crucifixion into an otherwise unknown creed: "†Christ was born, amen. *Christ was crucified, amen*.[121] Christ was buried, amen. Christ arose, amen." The ritual efficacy associated with the combination of these elements from the life of Jesus was almost

certainly linked in some way to the authority that practitioners—and presumably also their clients—invested in proclamations of the Christian faith within contemporary liturgical contexts.[122]

This broader usage of the crucifixion simultaneously hints at the second reason for the emphasis on Jesus's death in this study. The centrality of the crucifixion to early Christian life also meant that Jesus's crucifixion, crosses, and the like carried for the faithful a wide range of valences and penetrated diverse social, visual, and performative contexts. It is not surprising, therefore, that the magical use of the crucifixion intersected at times with different types of boundaries, including the conceptual distinctions between words, images, materials, and gestures (chapters 3 and 4) and the symbolic division between Christians and Jews (chapter 2).

Leiden, Ms. AMS 9

One of the most remarkable magical sources that have come down to us is a sixth- to eighth-century CE Coptic codex that addresses healing, exorcism, and various kinds of protection. It is now known as Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 (a.k.a. P.Anastasy 9; see fig. 1).[123] This papyrus codex of fifteen folios (14.5 × 22 cm with a thickness of 5.3 cm),[124] which is complete with an ornamental leather cover, was originally part of the Anastasi collection; however, it is now housed in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. Given its scribe's wealth of knowledge about Christian traditions and his fierce defense of a form of Christian normativity (see chapters 1 and 2), I agree with those scholars who have postulated that this object was created by a monk.[125] The codex consists of a series of texts, which are written in Sahidic Coptic:[126] the self-titled *Prayer of Saint Gregory*; an anonymous text, which might be usefully titled, "Hear my exorcism";[127] the *Letter of Abgar to Jesus*; the *Letter of Jesus to Abgar*; the prayer of Judas Cyriacus from the *Finding of the Holy Cross*;[128] a list of the names of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; a list of the names of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste; the gospel incipits; and LXX Ps 90:1–2.

As we will see throughout this study, the practitioner behind this codex was especially concerned with religious and ritual differentiation. He not only sought to differentiate this object—which he at times calls a *phylaktērion*—from the world of harmful rituals; he also tried to distinguish his brand of Christianity from the "Jews"—alternatively labeled as the "People of Israel." On account of its preoccupation with religious and ritual purity and distinction, this Coptic codex will play a major role in my analysis, figuring prominently in the discussions in chapters 1 and 2. It is also worth noting that its penetration into diverse ritual and religious discourses necessitates that I situate it comparatively not only within the category "magic" (see chapter 2), but also within that of "religion," especially in my analysis of harmful ritual in chapter 1 (see discussion of magic above).

FIGURE 1. Coptic magical handbook. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9. Courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden (Netherlands). Creative Commons Use.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Ritual Boundaries is divided into four chapters that are organized into two partly overlapping sections. In part I ("The Discursive Boundaries of Rituals and Groups"), I treat the discursive boundaries between good and evil rituals (chapter 1), on the one hand, and those between Christians and Jews, on the other (chapter 2). This section makes one of the principal claims of the book—namely, that late antique Christians from diverse social strata often drew hard-and-fast distinctions between proper and improper rituals and between Christians and religious Others in their quotidian rituals; however, they understood those boundaries in ways that did not always match late antique literary and modern scholarly taxonomies.

Part II ("The Discursive Boundaries of Texts and Traditions") emphasizes the boundaries operative within the ritual itself and across authoritative traditions. In chapter 3, I examine the interface of words, images, things, and bodies on a collection of magical objects, which range from a set of artifacts from both Christians

and Jews that incorporate MT Ps 91:1 (= LXX Ps 90:1) to a late antique papyrus amulet that seems to prescribe the ritual gesturing of the cross. I trace the ways in which these magical objects would have merged human bodies with material artifacts and sacred text. Chapter 4 addresses the relationship between magic and tradition in quotidian life, investigating two opposing perspectives toward a specific authoritative tradition: the crucifixion of Jesus. One object envisions Jesus's death as the ultimate manifestation of God's power over death itself, while the other numbers the crucified Jesus among the restless dead.

Ritual Boundaries draws from materials I have published in other venues: chapter 1 is a modified version of an article from *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* (2019); chapter 2 significantly develops and expands ideas I have published both independently and with Ra'anan Boustan;[129] and chapter 4 draws on some of my conclusions from an article published in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* (2015). Although some of the materials found in this book were published previously in different contexts, the overall portrait painted in the chapters of *Ritual Boundaries* addresses a consistent theme that is fundamental to our reconstructions of late antiquity; this book unearths a late antique world, in which the drawing, managing, policing, and reimagining of boundaries between and among groups, rituals, traditions, texts, objects, and even bodies was at the forefront of quotidian religion. What emerges from the following pages is a religious landscape oriented around everyday concerns that is both familiar and foreign to our sensitivities—sometimes expected, sometimes exotic, sometimes disturbing.

PART I

The Discursive Boundaries of Rituals and Groups

1

Ritual Boundaries in Late Antique Lived Religion

Augustine's polemic against the blood festival mentioned at the beginning of this book also includes another detail that testifies to the difficulty of distinguishing proper from improper rituals based on the phenomena themselves. Although, as we have seen, the bishop of Hippo castigates as un-Christian the "mingling" of Jesus's name on *ligaturae*, he also lauds the Christian who places a "gospel" (*evangelium*) by his head for healing. We read:

> When you have a headache, we commend you if you put the gospel by your head and do not hurry to an amulet [*ligaturam*] . . . we rejoice when we see that a man, confined to his bed, is tossed by fever and pain and yet has placed no hope anywhere else except that he put the gospel by his head, not because the gospel was made for this but because it has been preferred to amulets. (*Tractates on the Gospel of John* 7.12)

In this text, we see how Augustine bestows praise on these hypothetical Christians because they trust solely in the healing properties of a gospel artifact and, therefore, reject *ligaturae*—presumably *ligaturae* that "mingle" Jesus's name into an incantation (see introduction).[1] While we might perceive as odd Augustine's seemingly arbitrary distinction between a ritual object inscribed with the name of Jesus and incantations, which is suspended from one's body, on the one hand, and a gospel artifact placed at one's head, on the other hand, this distinction makes a great deal of sense from his theological and social perspective: for Augustine, mixture fell squarely within the domain of the devil and his minions; a gospel artifact represented a "pure" artifact that supported ecclesiastical ritual idiom and, moreover, did not require ailing Christians to visit practitioners who might influence them in theologically unsavory ways.[2]

Augustine's rhetorical bifurcation of these practices simultaneously epitomizes an important theme in the study of (Christian) antiquity: narratives and statements against harmful or improper ritual or "magic." This so-called "discourse of

ritual censure" penetrated numerous genres and cultural contexts and in fact constituted one of the primary discursive registers through which ancient writers promoted, maintained, and reflected their social identities.[3] Although this theme has impacted diverse areas of ancient and late antique studies,[4] several helpful surveys of late antique Christian discourses against harmful or "magical" rituals, in particular, have emerged over recent years.[5] These more recent studies largely reject the approach of prior researchers, such as Alphons A. Barb, who took Christian literary testimonies against improper ritual at face value and thus allowed these polemical sources to shape researchers' portraits of late antique apotropaic and curative practices.[6]

Scholars now tend to drive a firm wedge between the perspectives of late antique actors who slandered rituals that they considered wicked and those who performed such rituals. For instance, Theodore de Bruyn presupposes this dichotomy in the very structuring of his monograph on late antique Christian amulets, formally separating his study of the statements against certain ritual practices and the like by patristic, monastic, and other Christian writers from his analysis of the amulets themselves.[7] David Frankfurter draws a firm distinction between literary depictions of local ritual specialists and the actual rituals of those practitioners, even claiming that "we should not assume any overlap" between these two kinds of sources.[8] More recently, Megan Nutzman has utilized the elite–non-elite binary to frame these respective views of ritual healing practice, relegating the concern for differentiation solely to the realm of the "elites":

> the distinction between "religious" cures and "magical" cures . . . is a reflection of the rhetoric of ancient elite authors who sought to define their religious traditions by excluding certain rituals and practitioners.[9]

As the words of Nutzman imply, the scholarly distinction between literary and material forms of evidence on this issue is not merely related to their respective genres, interests, and occasions, but it is also often framed in dialogue with an elite–non-elite binary. In short, ritual practice itself and normative accusations against improper ritual are typically understood as reflecting two distinct ideological domains of ancient social discourse.[10]

This division between normative discourses—Christian and otherwise—on the one hand, and the material evidence of ritual practitioners, on the other hand, is useful insofar as it reminds us that this polemic was not designed to characterize ritual practices and their practitioners in an accurate fashion. Nevertheless, the strict adherence of scholars to this binary has obfuscated the great extent to which some early Christian practitioners promoted their own taxonomies of ritual difference, which were framed in highly theological, polemical, and normative ways. Indeed, there are cases in which the worlds of ritual practice and fierce invective against harmful ritual intersect.

This chapter focuses on one of the clearest examples of such intersection during late antiquity: *The Prayer of Saint Gregory* in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9.[11] By highlighting the ways the practitioner behind this codex navigated the distinction between proper and improper ritual in light of his late antique Mediterranean contexts, I hope to make a broader statement about the nature of ritual boundaries in late antiquity.[12]

AT THE INTERSECTION OF CHRISTIAN RITUAL PRACTICE AND THE SLANDER OF IMPROPER RITUAL: *THE PRAYER OF SAINT GREGORY* IN LEIDEN, MS. AMS 9

A considerable body of scholarship has argued that many of the figures who procured Christian amulets and participated in other ostensibly "Christian magical" rituals in Egypt operated within the social and spatial orbits of churches or monasteries.[13] This growing consensus is based on close readings of the creedal,[14] biblical,[15] and liturgical language[16] found on the ritual artifacts, conciliar and patristic condemnations of priests and monks for creating such objects,[17] and even archaeological discoveries *in situ* of *grimoires* in monasteries.[18] Przemysław Piwowarczyk, however, has recently argued that scholars have been too quick to identify a monastic/priestly setting for many of these sources.[19] Piwowarczyk points to selected literary texts and selected material objects (e.g., P.Berol. inv. 11347), which, he claims, seem to envision laypeople as ritual practitioners. He also emphasizes the absence of explicit information connecting many apotropaic and curative objects to monasteries.[20] Although scholars will no doubt continue to debate the precise proportion of ritual objects that were created by monks/clergy or by laypeople, David Frankfurter seems to be on the right track when he concludes that many Coptic apotropaic, curative, and divinatory objects from late antiquity "point to the overlapping social worlds of saint's shrine, church, and monastery—the spatial centers of Christianity in the late antique Egyptian landscape."[21]

The general shift in the social locus of ritual practice from indigenous temple functionaries toward Christian monks and clergy during late antiquity facilitated mergers of old and new cultural competencies—ritual, theological, among others. Aggregations of these competencies or literacies could at times crystalize in unexpected and even counterintuitive ways—at least relative to our inherited taxonomies.

One such unexpected manifestation appears in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 (see fig. 1). My analysis will focus on its opening text, the so-called *Prayer of Saint Gregory*, situating it within the contexts of both ancient ritual objects and invective against improper ritual. As we will see, this object betrays qualities that prompt us to contextualize it comparatively *both* in reference to sources and concerns typically deemed "magical" *and* to those usually placed under the category "religion." Although I am not the only scholar to observe this codex's emphasis on

improper ritual,[22] my alternating taxonomic approach to it highlights to a much greater degree how even the very Christians whose ritual practices might draw ecclesiastical accusations of improper or illicit practice could promote clearly demarcated and theological sensitive notions of good and evil rituals—analogous to what we find in patristic and monastic sources. Accordingly, I will argue that ostensible "magicians" and their "magical" artifacts, such as Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, were not merely the objects or victims of discourses against improper, negative, or illicit ritual; they were also participants in such discourses, promoting their own taxonomies of ritual practice to the exclusion of those of their rivals. This point, I will further argue, carries implications for how we might imagine discourses of illicit, improper, and harmful ritual working in late antique quotidian religion.

Ritual Practice in *The Prayer of Saint Gregory*

In the *Prayer of Saint Gregory*—a text, for which we have later Greek exemplars[23]—we find a first-person Christian tradition (attributed to a certain 'Gregory'), which is explicitly called a "prayer" (*euchē*) and an "exorcism" or "adjuration" (*eksorgismos* [read: *eksorkismos*]). The text begins as follows:

> A prayer and an adjuration which I wrote, I, Gregory, the servant of the living God, so that it might be an amulet [*phylaktērion*] to all who will take it and read it . . . (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, 1–6)[24]

As is well known, the first-person narrative was one of the means by which ritual experts achieved efficacy.[25] In the case of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, the practitioner assumed the identity of a Christian authoritative figure named Gregory. This Gregory, who is hailed in the text as a saint,[26] could be Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89) or perhaps even Gregory Thaumaturgus (ca. 212–ca. 270).[27] Whatever the case might have been, there are other pseudepigraphic Coptic spells in which the practitioner—or the prospective client—takes on the identity of an authoritative person or preternatural entity. For instance, Brit. Lib. Or. 5987, a Coptic spell that probably dates from the seventh or eighth century CE, reads, "For I am Mary, who is hidden in the appearance of Mariam. I am the mother who has given birth to the true light."[28] Another sixth- or seventh-century CE Coptic practitioner takes on the personae of several angelic and divine entities, including Michaēl, Ouriēl, Iaō, Sabaōth, Gabriēl, and Abrasax.[29]

The labels our practitioner uses to describe *The Prayer of Saint Gregory* are worth noting; as we have already seen, he explicitly claims that his "prayer" or "exorcism" becomes an "amulet" (*phylaktērion*).[30] Yet, despite this initial claim of transformation, the practitioner continues to call his text a *prayer* (*euchē* and its cognates), even when it is clearly used as an amuletic object; the specialist notes not only that his "prayer" can be read[31] and recited,[32] but that it can also be deposited

(or placed)[33] and worn (or held),[34] and has the capability to deflect the violent actions of the "magician" (*magos*) back against him.[35] As is clear from this text, the practitioner conceptualized prayers and *phylaktēria* as overlapping on textual, material, depositional, and functional registers.[36]

This practitioner's emphasis on the language of prayer no doubt worked in dialogue with his well-informed Christian faith, evinced by a rather impressive knowledge of global Christian traditions about God and biblical history. In addition to the various Christian texts included in the codex (e.g., the Abgar-Jesus correspondence; the prayer of Judas Cyriacus), he also uses numerous Christian expressions, such as "the servant of the living god,"[37] the "Holy Trinity [*trias*],"[38] "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"[39] and the "holy, consubstantial [*homoousion*], and life-giving Trinity."[40] Moreover, we find the following summary of the exodus and Decalogue narratives, which are bracketed by adjuration formulae:[41]

> I adjure all you, every act of violence [*ᵉnčinqonᵉs nim*], by the great name that is glorious, God almighty—the one who brought his people out from the land of Egypt with a strong hand and an exalted arm, the one who struck Pharaoh and all his power, the one who spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai as he gave his law and his commandments to the children of Israel and he caused [them][42] to eat manna—that you flee far away, and you do not return at all to stand in the place in which this prayer is placed. (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 4r, ll. 5–26)[43]

This practitioner's knowledge of several (extra-)canonical Christian texts, Christological and Trinitarian expressions, and the exodus story and Moses's reception of the Decalogue suggests that, if not a monk, he at least had considerable training in biblical traditions. In either case, the practitioner's substantial religious education allowed him to use, for instance, biblical traditions as historical precedents for the might of God, whose name supported his protective ritual.

Discourse Against Illicit Rituals in *The Prayer of Saint Gregory*

As part of the *Prayer of Saint Gregory*, the practitioner also discusses the negative rituals that his *phylaktērion* counteracts. What I find particularly interesting about this discussion is how the practitioner frames these negative rituals. For instance, he deems the improper ritual activities of the *magos* both demonic (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 6r, ll. 13–14) and as an operation of the devil (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 7r, ll. 18–19). The practitioner also emphasizes the theme of evil. We read that his amuletic prayer will "undo every working [*energia*] that comes about by evil [*ponēros*] people, that is sorceries [*ᵉmmᵉntreferhik*], and enchantments [*ᵉmmᵉntrefmoute*], and bindings [*henmᵉntrefmour*] of people through terrible sicknesses . . ." (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, ll. 7–14).[44] In this passage, the practitioner slanders as evil the people who engage in harmful ritual practices against a

possible user of his *phylaktērion*. In another section of this text, he applies the category "evil" to the actions or objects themselves, requesting that the person in possession of this *phylaktērion* be spared from "every evil thing and every evil" (*hōb nim ᵉmponēros auō epethoou nim* [Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 4r, ll. 2–4]).

Beyond the link to evil and the demonic, Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 also connects harmful ritual with ethnic alterity.[45] The practitioner explicitly lists Persians, Chaldeans, Hebrews, and Egyptians among the unsavory characters whose rituals he aims to counteract: "whether it is . . . a Persian man, or a Persian woman, or a Chaldean, or a Chaldean woman, or a Hebrew, or a Hebrew woman, or an Egyptian, or an Egyptian woman, and in short whoever it is" (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 3r, l. 26–3v, l. 7).[46] Of course, the Egyptian men and women mentioned here would have presumably possessed a different kind of alterity for this *Egyptian* practitioner; in light of his overtly Christian way of framing ritual practice more generally, I consider it likely that "Egyptian" here connoted "non-Christian" Egyptian practitioners.[47] In any case, the practitioner's list no doubt operated synecdochically, encompassing all possible harmful experts by way of reference to a few ethnic exemplars, as is especially evident from the inclusion of the final phrase "whoever it is" (*petentof pe*).

The practitioner also provides a considerable list of the harms, which these troublemakers cause, including not only "magic" (*ᵉmᵉntmagos*), but also actions that "cause terror and torments and dumbness and deafness and speechlessness . . . and all types of pain" (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 4v, ll. 9–21). As we will see below, this list of potential troubles reflects widespread fears about the nature of harmful rituals in the ancient world. The practitioner also seems to be drawing on popular ideas about evil ritual—and perhaps even lived experience—when he enumerates the various places that the *magos* might practice his craft or deposit harmful objects. He asks God to do away with violent deeds directed against a place, which has been bound with a ritual object, whether that object is:

> hidden in its foundations, or in its extended places, or in its entrance or in its exit, or in the door, or in the window, or in the bedroom, or in the yard, or in the dining room . . . or in any place. (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 2v, ll. 4–20)

Although the final, all-encompassing phrase, "in any place" (*hᵉn topos nim*) would have sufficed, this practitioner—as we have already seen—has invested considerable value in the writing of lists.[48] In this passage, it is clear that he assumes the domestic sphere is particularly susceptible to attack. That this fear was widespread in Egypt and beyond is evident from the other practitioners, who expressed the need to protect the house.[49] To offer just one example, P.Oxy. 8.1152, a late fifth- or early sixth-century CE amulet from Oxyrhynchus that we will discuss in more depth in chapter 2, reads: "Hōr, Hōr, Phōr, Elōei, Adōnai, Iaō, Sabaōth, Michaēl, Jesus Christ. Help us and this house [*kai toutō oikō*]. Amen" (fig. 2).[50]

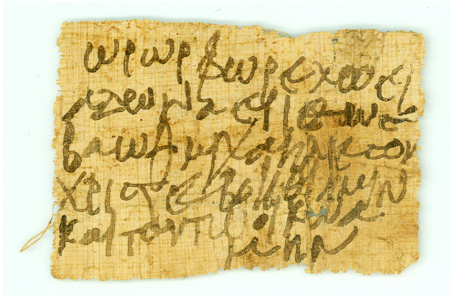

FIGURE 2. Greek amulet for protection of a house. P.Oxy. 8.1152. Special Collections, Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary.

DISCOURSES AGAINST WICKED RITUALS AND RITUAL PRACTICE IN EVERYDAY LIFE: LIVED RELIGION AT THE INTERSECTION OF RITUALS, GRECO-ROMAN LITERATURE, AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

It is useful at this point to situate our Coptic practitioner within the world of claims against illicit, evil, or harmful ritual practice. Taxonomies and accusations of improper ritual in antiquity were disputed within and across various social, literary, and institutional contexts. As I hope to demonstrate, the distinction in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 between the practitioner's positive *phylaktērion* and adjurations, on the one hand, and the incantations, idols, sorcery, and bindings of the evil, demonic *magos*, on the other hand, demonstrates how the diverse cultural competencies of practitioners might crystalize into taxonomies of good and evil ritual, which, while differing to varying degrees from those expressed in patristic, monastic, and conciliar sources, were still clearly demarcated and theologically oriented.

This practitioner's claim that his prayer could be used as a *phylaktērion* placed him within a robust early Christian debate about the proper boundaries of ritual practice. Indeed, the term "*phylaktērion*" was evaluated in various ways within early Christian imagination. Much like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, many Christian papyrus and parchment amulets from Egypt and many Christian amuletic gems from various regions of the ancient Mediterranean use "*phylaktērion*" as a self-designator.[51]

On the other side of the spectrum, we have already seen that the Phrygian canon—falsely attributed to a single Council of Laodicea (see introduction)—condemned the production of *phylaktēria* by clericals and priests and demanded excommunication for their users.[52] In addition, an early sixth-century Coptic copy of the so-called *Apostolic Tradition*[53] bars from baptism a host of illicit ritual practitioners, ranging from the *magos* to "the one who makes *phylaktēria*."[54] To be sure, not all early Christian literary texts took such a negative view of *phylaktēria*.

Presumably this more tolerant perspective was related to the mostly beneficial functions of *phylaktēria* (despite the negative or imprecatory effects they might have on rival practitioners [see discussion below]). Commenting on Matt 23:5, where Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for drawing attention to themselves by, among other things, broadening their *phylaktēria*,[55] Jerome and John Chrysostom both make a comparison between the Pharisees and the curative/prophylactic uses of gospel objects by women.[56] While these authors do not frame this ritual practice in a particularly favorable way, they also do not forbid congregants from using biblical artifacts for prophylactic or curative purposes.[57]

Although the self-identification of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 as a *phylaktērion* launched the practitioner and his object into a cultural fray, his slandering of negative ritual merged less controversial discourses within and across material and literary sources. His claim that the rites of the *magos* fell squarely within the realm of the devil and his demonic minions certainly resonated with global Christian discourses about harmful ritual. This theme is present in the words of several late antique patristic writers. As early as Justin Martyr, we find the connection between demons and the world of *mageia* and its cognates:

> For we forewarn you to be on your guard, lest those demons [*daimones*] whom we have been accusing should deceive you, and quite divert you from reading and understanding what we say. For they strive to hold you their slaves and servants; and sometimes by appearances in dreams, and sometimes by magical impositions [*magikōn strophōn*], they subdue all who make no strong opposing effort for their own salvation.[58]

What Justin regarded as improper ritual activity constituted for him one of the primary ways demons deceive believers. The demonic association continued to characterize the denunciation of improper ritual throughout late antiquity, making its way into the work of writers like Tertullian of Carthage (160–220 CE), Origen of Alexandria (184–253 CE), Arnobius of Sicca (255–330 CE), and, of course, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE).[59]

This demonic-ritual interface was also a persistent motif among ancient practitioners. A wide array of sources from the Mediterranean and ancient Near East includes "counter-magical" incantations, which link rituals harmful for their clients with evil spirits and demons. Although examples are not in short supply, we might consider a certain Jewish Babylonian Aramaic incantation bowl now housed in the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem that requests Goray son of Buzanduk and his family be spared from a host of malevolent forces, including: "all evil spirits, demons, plagues, devils, afflictions, satans, bans, tormentors, spirits of barrenness, spirits of abortion, sorcerers, vows, curses, magic rites, idols, wicked pebble spirits, errant spirits, shadow spirits, liliths . . . and all evil doers of harm."[60] This bowl—and many others from late antique Mesopotamia—stand alongside Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 in promising protection from the intersecting worlds of harmful ritual and malicious spiritual attack.

The association of evil ritual with a host of ethnic Others—including Persians, Chaldeans, Hebrews, and Egyptians—also transcended the ostensible divide between the worlds of practitioners, early patristic writers, and Greco-Roman writers in general. James Nathan Ford and Ohad Abudraham have recently published a lacunose Syriac incantation bowl (T27983) written in Manichaean script, which utilizes ethnic categories to organize ritual practices considered harmful to the client, emphasizing, for instance, the Arab, Persian, and Jewish origins of witchcraft (*ḥrš*').[61] Likewise, the redactor behind the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* participated in the far-reaching ethnographic stereotype linking Egypt with magic when he placed on the lips of the fictional Clement the following words:

> I shall proceed to Egypt, and there I shall cultivate the friendship of the hierophants or prophets, who preside at the shrines. Then I shall win over a magician by money, and entreat him, by what they call the necromantic art, to bring me a soul from the infernal regions, as if I were desirous of consulting it about some business.[62]

As David Frankfurter has noted, this third- or fourth-century text merely provides a Christian version of an Egyptomania already well embedded in literary imagination, evident in the writings of Lucian, Apuleius, and others.[63] We might say that Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 presents an even later version of this tradition.

The practitioner's resonance within and across Greco-Roman and Christian contexts is also found in his description of the signs that might indicate the operation of a harmful ritual. As I noted above, he emphasizes that the negative rituals, which his *phylaktērion* counteracts, inflict a wide range of harms, including those that affect communication (esp. "speechlessness" [*hen^{e}m^{e}ntatšače*]).[64] The belief that imprecatory utterances could alter speech was central to the ritual texts of several curse tablets, especially those concerned with influencing judicial rulings. For instance, a curse tablet from Athens dating to around 300 BCE includes the following words:

> Theagenēs, the butcher/cook, I bind [*katadō*] the tongue and soul and speech [*logon*] that he is practicing. Purrias, I bind the hands and feet and tongue and soul and speech that he is practicing . . . Dokimos, the butcher/cook, the tongue and soul and speech that they are practicing . . . If they lay any counterclaim before the arbitrator or the court, let them seem to be of no account, either in word or in deed.[65]

As is clear from such curse tablets, practitioners believed they could negatively impact the speech abilities of individuals, so that they could not, among other things, perform properly in court.

The idea that there were harmful rituals, which could affect one's speech, also crept into early Christian literary imagination. Jerome mentions in his *Life of Hilarion* that a young man wielded an amatory spell against a young Christian girl, with whom he was smitten. We learn that, on account of the spell, "the virgin went mad, threw aside her veil, tore her hair, gnashed her teeth, and shouted the name of the young man [*inclamare nomen adolescentis*]" (21.4). Like the practitioner

behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, Jerome's tale presupposes that spells could alter one's bodily movements, including speech. Indeed, according to this story, the young girl was unable to control her verbal utterances—involuntarily calling out the name of her curser—up until the moment Hilarion exorcized the spirit inside her.

These counter-rituals in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds represent a phenomenon that even transcends the division between antiquity and contemporary societies. As M. Reyes-Cortez has noted about the "magical practices" associated with the cult of Santa Muerte in Mexico City, Mexico:

> Cemetery workers and visitors believe in two methods of defense against magic and occultism: they can destroy the objects or the animals used, thereby disrupting the associated magic causing no further harm or, if the magic has already taken its toll they can combat black magic with white.[66]

This battle between black magic and white magic provides a rough analogue to many of the rituals operative in the objects mentioned above. It is not surprising, therefore, that scholars of antiquity have tended to understand the counter-rituals on objects, such as Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, as being by and large in dialogue with a kind of cross-cultural and pragmatically oriented notion of "magic": In other words, if a ritual helps the client (even if it harms someone else), it is presented as positive; if someone else's ritual harms his client, that ritual is framed as negative. In short, this perspective assumes that practitioners' views of ritual practice were primarily—or exclusively—determined by the practical needs of their clients and could change accordingly.

This interpretation is not without supporting evidence. Yuval Harari has recently highlighted how the overlaps between protective and aggressive magic in the Jewish incantation bowls from Mesopotamia suggest that practitioners served a dual function for clients:

> On the one hand, they [the practitioners behind the bowls] functioned as agents of harmful magic in the service of whoever wanted to harm another. On the other, they offered protection from such acts of witchcraft with the same linguistic and ritual means, but this time to offset the witchcraft. We need not assume that the same writer was responsible for both aspects in any particular case, but in the broad social perspective reflected in the bowls, as professionals skilled in the activation of ritual power in the service of the individual, they served the interests of both parties.[67]

The textual overlaps between apotropaic, curative, and imprecatory incantation bowls from Mesopotamia are quite intriguing and lend credence to the idea that *some* practitioners might have created both protective and aggressive bowls. Indeed, the ways in which the *phylaktērion* is presented in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 reveal how the concerns of positive rituals for healing and protection could intersect with those of more negative rituals; his *phylaktērion* is said to "undo" or "destroy" (*bōl ebol*) the harmful actions of the rival practitioner and to send back

that practitioner's harms against him (see Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, l. 7; 3r, l. 15–3v, l. 7). In short, his *phylaktērion* is a blessing to his client and a curse to his rival.[68] Nevertheless, a purely pragmatic interpretation of the counter-ritual testimonies on such objects frames a priori their approaches to ritual differentiation *solely* within the ostensible world of "magic"—understood here as an almost cynical, yet discrete sphere of (ancient) social existence in which religious beliefs or identities were irrelevant or unimportant (see also chapter 2).[69]

But, as we have seen, the practitioner behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 not only shares a good deal with ancient practitioners; he also finds kindred spirits among early Christian writers, framing his statements against certain rituals in a highly theological way. For instance, he calls his *phylaktērion* a "prayer" (*euchē*); he draws on well-known Trinitarian and Christological phrases and Christian textual traditions; and he associates other practitioners with demons and the devil and calls them and their rituals "evil" (*ponēros*), placing that evil in direct contrast to his Christian ritual practice. This theological dimension should not necessarily be surprising since, as I noted above, much scholarship over the past couple decades has shown that Christian ritual experts during late antiquity were often monks, priests, and others operating within or on the margins of Christian institutions, such as monasteries and churches. Again, in my estimation, our practitioner was likely a monk—or at least trained in a monastery.

Like many early Christian writers, this practitioner presumably drew from a host of traditions about evil rituals that cut across the ostensible worlds of early Christian literature, Greco-Roman literature, and ritual practice itself. And, like these Christian writers, he framed his presentation of negative ritual in Christian theological terms. In short, he fully participated in what is traditionally called "anti-magical discourse." It is no wonder, therefore, that, although the practitioner's promotion of his *phylaktērion* put him in direct opposition to the taxonomies of improper ritual found in the Canon of Laodicea and the Coptic copy of the *Apostolic Tradition*, his theologically oriented distinction between his *phylaktērion* and the harmful rituals of the *magos* aligns quite closely with the presentations of certain Christian heroes' counter-ritual activities. As we've already seen in the introduction to this book, the highly influential fourth-century *Life of Antony* attributes to Antony the following words: "Where the sign of the cross is made, magic (*mageia*) wastes away and poison (*pharmakeia*) does not work."[70] Much like Antony, who is here said to have rendered *mageia* and *pharmakeia* ineffective by virtue of his ritual gesturing of the cross, the practitioner behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 seems to have understood his "prayer" (*euchē*) or "amulet" (*phylaktērion*) to be an antidote to harmful rituals. Consider also Macarius of Egypt, who, according to one tradition, was said to have counteracted a love spell that turned a young girl into a mare with a combination of prayer, genuflection, and *materia magica* (i.e., sacred oil).[71] This confluence of speech (specifically prayer), gesture, and material

in Macarius's story is not altogether different from the way *The Prayer of Saint Gregory* is said to have worked as a protective device.

Of course, one might productively frame the counter-ritual materials in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 and in these and other Christian (monastic) texts together within the domain of "magic."[72] But, for the purposes of this chapter, there is heuristic utility in placing all these sources under the category "religion" to stress their emphases on ritual differentiation and boundaries. Differences in genre notwithstanding, the counter-rituals in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 align with those described in the monastic literary texts—at least insofar as they map early Christian symbols, materials, and gestures vociferously hailed as proper, legitimate, and God-fearing onto long-standing Mediterranean counter-ritual paradigms. In this way, we might say that in all these sources discourse against rituals deemed wicked were simultaneously linked to—and contrasted with—alternative and "proper" practices.

By attending to this merger of anti-harmful-ritual testimony and ritual practice itself, we can better contextualize and understand discourses against improper ritual in late antique quotidian life. The Coptic practitioner's promotion of his *phylaktērion* was in no way in conflict with his firm distinction between proper and improper rituals. To state the matter somewhat differently, he did in fact presuppose a concept that resembles our category "magic" (in its negative sense), but it did not encompass the recitation, suspension, or deposition of a *phylaktērion* (in contrast, again, to certain ecclesiastical voices).[73]

Of course, Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 is unique because it gives us an extraordinarily clear expression of a strongly demarcated Christian taxonomy of proper and improper rituals, which conflicts with conventional portraits of early Christian ritual practice. Nevertheless, this Coptic codex seems to reflect a broader trend in late antiquity. For instance, the practitioner behind Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 (see also chapter 4) distinguishes his text from harmful rituals such as "sorcery" (*pharmako*) and "magic" (*magia*), as well as from demons.[74] Likewise, P.Vindob. K 8302 promises the client deliverance from anything evil, including any "potion or magic or a drug" (*hik eite magia eite pharmagia*).[75]

Yet, similar to the practitioner behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, the scribes who crafted objects, such as Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 and P.Vindob. K 8302, framed their anti-ritual invective in highly Christianized terms. In Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, the practitioner includes within his text, for instance, a prayer of Jesus on the cross (ll. 1–10) and an image of the crucified Jesus (ll. 53–59) that draw from biblical and parabiblical traditions (see chapter 4). Much like the scribe behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, this practitioner was well-steeped in various Christian texts. The practitioner behind P.Vindob. K 8302 used the Abgar-Jesus correspondence as a basic literary template for one of his spells (P.Vindob. K 8302[a]) and incorporated into his text a *historiola* based on the crucifixion of Jesus (P.Vindob. K 8302[a] ll. 2–4), as well as various Christological formulae, such as the "Jesus Christ" (e.g., P.Vindob. K 8302[a] ll. 4, 6, 24) and "our Lord Jesus Christ" (P.Vindob. K 8302[a] ll.

10–13).[76] Like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, these other spells follow the patristic and monastic writers in framing their rituals in highly Christianized ways.

Yet, also like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, their thematic, ritual, and scribal features would have placed their versions of Christian ritual at odds with those of many patristic and conciliar voices; both objects, among other things, draw from the long-standing practice of inscribing *charaktēres* on ritual texts when they incorporate rings around the letters of select divine names (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796, ll. 53–59; P.Vindob. K 8302[a], ll. 6–8).[77] As we have already seen in the introduction, Augustine explicitly condemned the use of such "*caracteres*," emphasizing their demonic origin and their association with the "art of magic" (*magicarum artium*).[78]

Alongside the evidence gleaned from such ritual objects, which might have been created by monks or local church functionaries, literary texts occasionally suggest that alternative taxonomies of ritual practice could even be held by users of these ritual materials. In other words, belief in rigid ritual boundaries seems to have permeated diverse Christian social strata and therefore was not limited to some putative category of "elites." In *Homily 8 in Colossians 5*, John Chrysostom includes a hypothetical conversation he has with a Christian woman, who uses an "incantation" (*epōdē*): "Tell me, then, if someone says, 'Take him to an idol's temple, and he will live,' would you allow it? 'No' she says. 'Why not?' 'Because he is urging me to commit idolatry. 'In this case,' she says, 'there is no idolatry [*eidōlalatreia*], but only incantation [*epōdē*].'"[79] If we focus on the perspective of this hypothetical woman, the passage seems to corroborate what we find in the material record: people who participated in what certain patristic writers regarded as improper rituals could themselves have clearly demarcated notions of proper versus improper ritual, which were at least partly impacted by normative Christian traditions. Indeed, for this hypothetical woman, participation in the temple cult constituted an illegitimate, idolatrous practice. We do not find here an absence of normative Christian ritual, but a different configuration of it from the one Chrysostom promoted.

It is, of course, not surprising that those participating in rituals sometimes deemed evil in late antique literary sources would appropriate the symbols and idioms of early Christian institutions. Theodore de Bruyn has persuasively demonstrated the great extent to which practitioners drew on the symbols, rituals, and idioms of what he calls "the institutional Christian culture."[80] But, if we examine the evidence with an eye toward broader Mediterranean discourses of proper and improper ritual, many of the extant "magical" objects reveal another kind of ecclesiastical impact; they gesture toward a world in which at least some late antique ritual practitioners and participants were also influenced by *Christian normativity itself* (even if they adhered to different versions or configurations of that normative Christian discourse). Accordingly, individuals whom ancient patristic or monastic writers or contemporary scholars might call *magoi*—or

clients of *magoi*—could themselves happily condemn *mageia* and *magoi*, complete with the usual claims of demonic influence or exotic ethnic origin. Evidence of this kind reveals the coexistence of *different configurations* of the boundaries between proper and improper ritual, which were no less vehement or clearly demarcated than those promoted by many late antique literary authors.[81] These diverse, yet clearly demarcated, configurations of ritual practice should prompt us to consider a broader methodological point: what appears to be blurred boundaries between proper and improper ritual relative to our inherited categories should not necessarily be taken to imply blurred boundaries—or a lack of interest in ritual differentiation—in our ancient sources.[82]

As a corollary to this point, the objects and texts that I have discussed seem to shed light on the proliferation of discourses against evil ritual in late antiquity. Such discourses penetrated the overlapping worlds of ecclesiastical and political leaders, local practitioners (whether monks or priests), and parishioners; a rigid distinction between "elites" and "non-elites" does not seem to apply to this issue. These various actors constructed taxonomies of ritual difference in dialogue with several, at times intersecting, cultural competencies—theological, ritual, ascetic, and the like. The boundary between proper and improper ritual was, in effect, being negotiated within and across multiple social strata.

To be sure, condemnations of harmful practices in these material sources do not focus on legal arbitration. What is more, the particular taxonomies of local practitioners or parishioners would probably not have had as broad an impact or influence as those operating more directly or officially within institutional centers of Christianity.[83] Nevertheless, the denunciations of harmful ritual in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 and related texts suggest that *discourses* of ritual censure, including theologically informed claims of improper ritual behavior, were probably regular features of late antique quotidian life.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this chapter focused on Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, a Coptic papyrus codex that demonstrates how developments at the intersection of late antique ritual practice and anti-ritual discourse might reveal themselves in late antiquity. Its Egyptian practitioner drew from a repository of traditional tropes against *magoi* (e.g., their foreignness, their harmful practices, and demonic influence), many of which also made their way into early Christian literary traditions against improper ritual. His ritual practice likewise reflects his adroit ability to navigate the intersection of early Christian and traditional Mediterranean discourses. He not only incorporated into his codex a wide range of Christian idioms and insisted on referring to his text as a "prayer" (*euchē*)—which he attributed to a Christian authority—but he also made use of long-standing invocatory formulae and assumed the validity of

well-established traditions regarding the recitation, deposition, and suspension of textualized objects.[84]

The negative approach to improper ritual found in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 is especially worth noting since it carries broader implications for the study of late antiquity. Despite the claims that his prayer could function as an "amulet" (*phylaktērion*)—thus placing him in direct opposition with, for instance, those behind the so-called "Council of Laodicea" and the Coptic copy of the *Apostolic Tradition*—the practitioner operated according to strict distinctions between proper and improper ritual. This Coptic codex ought to remind us, therefore, that Christian objects, which appear *to us* to blur the boundaries between "religion" and "magic," might in fact simply reflect different configurations of proper and improper ritual—no less stringently demarcated than those promoted in patristic, monastic, and conciliar sources. Indeed, as heirs to local ritual practices, Christian idioms, and both traditional Mediterranean and Christian discourses of ritual censure, individuals operating within or on the margins of monasteries and churches could integrate invective against *mageia* and the like into their Christian healing, exorcistic, and apotropaic rituals without any hint of intellectual tension or contradiction. All indications suggest that, despite the claims of certain Christian literary writers, local specialists often viewed their amulets and spells as falling squarely within the world of Christianity (on this point, see also chapter 2). For them, *mageia* was the antithesis of what they were doing; it therefore needed to be condemned and combatted. The verbal strategies and contexts that Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 embodies thus give palpable expression to the multiple discursive worlds behind and created by statements against harmful rituals.

2

Religious Boundaries in Late Antique Lived Religion

The monk and theologian Sophronius (ca. 560–638 CE), who served as patriarch of Jerusalem toward the end of his life, recounted in his encomium to Cyrus and John a brief tale of a paralytic named Petros who hailed from Herakleion.[1] As a man desperate for healing, Petros sought the help of these martyrs. Cyrus and John instructed him in a dream to go to a baptismal pool called Jordan (named after the river in which Jesus received his baptism) and wash his hands—a gestural nod to "the consumption of the vivifying flesh and blood of Christ."[2] But, unfortunately for Petros, there was a problem. As a faithful anti-Chalcedonian follower of Theodosius of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, such a Christological acknowledgement was apparently tantamount to a rejection of his faith.[3] Whichever specific eucharistic issue informed the Chalcedonian–anti-Chalcedonian divide in this passage, Sophronius lamented that Petros initially refused the martyrs' orders and "cursed the Council of Chalcedon."[4]

Stubbornly persistent in his alleged heresy, Petros is said to have disobeyed the instructions of the martyrs not once, but several times. In the end, however, the pain proved to be too great. Racked with physical torment, Petros finally consented to their demands. Sophronius further notes in passing that Petros's (repentant) shift in attitude was accompanied by an arousal of his theological curiosity; he asked the oneiric martyrs to explain why they were committed to the Chalcedonian faith. They staunchly replied that "the belief defined by the Council of Chalcedon was orthodox and it was a doctrine of divine inspiration." Readers are left reassured that the formerly recalcitrant Petros took these words to heart, piously shunning his heretical past in obedience to the martyrs and, consequently, receiving a curative reward: "[Petros] executed the martyrs' orders and regained health as a salary for his piety."

This theological and parenetic narrative discloses important information about the perceived—or at least rhetorical—relationship between healing and

religious boundaries in some circles of late antique Christianity.[5] Healing in this and related stories was contingent on religious identity and boundary markers: doctrinal purity was curative; heresy was pathological.[6] Mariangela Monaca has captured the sentiments of Sophronius and his ilk in a more negative formulation: "Who does not believe 'properly' cannot obtain physical healing."[7] But how pervasive were such beliefs in late antiquity? Did a similar conception of the interface of healing and boundary demarcation penetrate the concerns of everyday religion? Did the Christian practitioners responsible for healing in local, quotidian contexts think that religious boundaries were at times important—or even necessary—for ritual efficacy? What did their clients think about such boundaries? Finally, if, in fact, these ritual actors considered religious boundaries between Christian insiders and Others to be important or necessary for curative—and, we might add, apotropaic and even imprecatory—purposes, how did they configure those boundaries? Such questions reside at the analytical center of this chapter.

In this chapter, I argue that religious boundaries—especially apropos of the "Jews"—played an important role in quotidian rituals for healing, protection from demons, and other contexts deemed magical. Yet, I will also contend that the boundaries promoted within these ritual contexts were configured differently than those that ancient patristic and monastic writers promoted and scholars have generally assumed. Consequently, the magical evidence demonstrates that clear-cut religious boundaries between Christians and Others were not simply a concern of "elite" ecclesiastical writers but penetrated diverse social strata—analogous to what we saw for late antique ritual boundaries (chapter 1).

MAGIC AND RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES?

There is a strong tendency in scholarship to situate the policing of—or even concern for—religious boundaries solely within the world of ecclesiastical (and rabbinic) elites. Responding to the then prevailing "parting-of-the-ways" model, for example, Daniel Boyarin emphasized that, while the religious borders between Jews and Christians were drawn in myriad ways, the concern for constructing, maintaining, and enforcing religious boundaries was inextricably linked to one's position within political and social hierarchies. He writes, "just as the border between Mexico and the United States is a border that was imposed by strong people on weaker people, so too is the border between Christianity and Judaism."[8] Likewise, Paula Fredriksen gives voice to this binary in her magisterial study of Augustine's approach to the Jews when she asks:

> Why does there seem to be so little correspondence between the ways that Christian literate elites wrote about Jews and the ways that actual Christians and Jews (and pagans as well) interacted socially within the matrix of the Mediterranean city?[9]

She clarifies this interaction further when she characterizes anti-Jewish literary traditions as "unquestionably abusive" and "Jewish-Christian social relations" as "by and large cooperative and irenic."[10] This dichotomy is also often tacitly operative when scholars contrast the perspectives of Christian difference found in patristic sources with "social reality"—a rubric typically understood as reflecting "messy," "fluid," "blurred," "porous," or "permeable" boundaries between religious "communities."[11]

As we have already seen, magic tends to be understood in the study of late antiquity as one important domain of ostensibly "non-elite" social life. Accordingly, amulets and other types of curative, apotropaic, and imprecatory rituals are not typically associated in scholarship with the concern for clearly demarcated religious boundaries. Éric Rebillard has recently engaged with these kinds of rituals as part of his theoretical analysis of multiple identities in early Christianity.[12] According to Rebillard, the world of late antique amulets and ritual healing practices constituted a domain of social existence in which "Christianness was not the principle on which Christians acted."[13] To be sure, Rebillard's claim has some supporting evidence. As he notes, Augustine seems at times to characterize believers, who use amulets and other ritual technologies designed to assist with temporal needs, as bifurcating their allegiances (e.g., *Exposition on the Psalms* 41.3–4). Rebillard paraphrases Augustine's caricature of their supposedly misguided reasoning: "Let God be worshipped with a view to eternal life, and the Devil be worshipped for this present life."[14]

Nevertheless, Rebillard's approach to this aspect of lived religion is not without problems. His thesis about the lack of "Christianness" in magical contexts not only stands in considerable tension with the extant material record (see chapter 1 and the discussion below), but it also does not accurately describe the entire panoply of early Christian literature; many literary sources claim that "Christianness" in fact figured quite prominently in the Christian use of amulets and similar rituals. As we have already seen, Augustine also claimed that practitioners could *only* deceive Christians into engaging in harmful ritual practices by using Christian idioms. In other words, the occasions of Augustine's writings could result, on the one hand, in claims that Christians separated their Christian identities from forbidden practices and, on the other hand, in the idea that "Christianness" facilitated Christian participation in such rituals. Such inconsistencies and tensions within and between the literary and material records ought to give us pause when relying heavily on literary sources in the construction of ancient lived religion.[15] Taking the material record as one's starting point not only provides a less mediated and contrived picture of quotidian religion, but it also raises new questions to ask of our literary sources.

Of course, specialists in material culture have likewise tended to characterize magical practice as disinterested in policing religious boundaries. In fact, Vicky A.

Foskolou seems to capture the opinion of most scholars interested in late antique amulets when she writes the following in her analysis of apotropaic and curative gems, which she also aligns with the social sphere of magic:

> in the pluralist religious environment of the Late Roman period in which these objects were created and the corresponding magical practices developed . . . [there was a] "blur[ring]" [of] the boundaries between the various religious traditions of the day. As far as magic is concerned a contributing factor in this erosion of religious boundaries was the notion that using some foreign elements, such as a foreign language, or symbols from another religious tradition, gave the magical practices greater prestige and grandeur and ultimately made them more effective.[16]

According to Foskolou, late antique ritual artifacts reflect a "pluralist religious environment," in which religious boundaries were "blurred." Although much of the evidence at face value seems to lend credence to the portrait that Foskolou articulated, the idea that practitioners intentionally mixed the idioms of "foreign" religious traditions or reflect "blurred boundaries" represents only one possible explanation for the state of the extant material.

The primary assumptions that buttress scholarly views of the relationship between religious difference, identities, and boundaries, on the one hand, and magic, on the other hand, can be reassessed by attending to the category "situational meaning," as proposed by the LAR project (see introduction). The LAR team has illuminated this dimension of lived religion as follows: "religious meanings were not generated by world-views but by the complex interplay of interests, beliefs and satisfactions in specific situations."[17] For my present purposes, it is useful to inquire into the nature of "religious meanings" within the Christian sources deemed magical. In short, did the beliefs, circumstances, and exigencies associated with the objects scholars have traditionally classified as magical at times work in dialogue with the promotion or maintenance of religious identities, differences, and boundaries?

I contend that religious differentiation and related concepts could in fact figure quite prominently within late antique Christian magical rituals; however, those boundaries are difficult to perceive since they differed—albeit to varying degrees—with those promoted in the literary record. Not unlike the disagreement between Augustine and his congregants on the relationship between ritual and Christianity (see introduction), the extant magical evidence—when placed in dialogue with certain patristic and monastic texts—underscores competing visions of the proper boundaries between the "Christian" and the "non-Christian." The prevailing scholarly impulse to frame Christian amulets in terms of religious mixture, blurring, syncretism, and the like is implicitly predicated on a very specific conception of Christian language and, by extension, non-Christian language. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the boundaries of ancient "Christian" language, especially as it pertains to amulets.

AMULETS AND THE SYMBOLIC LIMITS OF CHRISTIANITY

The adjective "Christian" constitutes one of the primary identifiers used to describe the textual elements found on late antique amulets. But what, in fact, is a "Christian" element? In their catalogue of amulets and formularies (see introduction), de Bruyn and Dijkstra detailed the limits of Christian language on such objects as follows:

> *nomina sacra* . . . crosses, staurograms, or christograms; letters or cryptograms often used in a Christian context; Trinitarian, Christological, Mariological, and hagiographical references; acclamations or sequences from the Christian liturgy; quotations and allusions from Christian canonical and apocryphal scriptures; and Christian narratives or *historiolae*.[18]

As this quotation lays bare, de Bruyn and Dijkstra generated their list of "Christian" elements based on the correspondence between amuletic language and expressions of Christianity in other social domains of late antiquity. This correspondence approach to the label "Christian" for the collection and analysis of amulets is by no means unique to their study. In fact, Walter Shandruk defines Christian language in virtually identical terms to de Bruyn and Dijkstra:

> What will be meant by "Christian" here is any mention of Jesus (Christ) or other prominent New Testament figures, quoting of or reference to the New Testament or Christian Apocrypha in general, doctrinal or liturgical statements such as Trinitarian doxologies and the trisagion, and the presence of manifestly Christian symbols such as crosses, christograms, and the like.[19]

These studies render explicit more or less the parameters of Christian language implicit in many other collections of "Christian amulets," including those found in important volumes, such as *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (PGM), *Supplementum Magicum* (*Suppl.Mag.*), and Meyer and Smith's volume *Ancient Christian Magic* (ACM).[20] In short, the adjective "Christian," when used for collecting and analyzing amulets, has typically been constructed at the intersection of amuletic language and more official—or better yet, idealized—notions of Christian language.[21]

This approach to the label "Christian" has yielded some impressive results, including the collection of numerous amulets and handbooks with overlapping idioms.[22] What is more, several studies using this approach have deftly demonstrated how the advent of Christianity onto the Egyptian landscape, for instance, induced shifts in amuletic language.[23] But, as most scholars are quick to point out, the language on many objects does not correspond to such idealized conceptions of Christianity. Even a quick perusal of the extant amulet record would reveal a proliferation of amulets, which include both idealized "Christian" symbols *and* elements which fall outside of that idealized category (e.g., Abrasax, Adōnai, Iaō Sabaōth, and *charaktēres*).

Although examples are not in short supply, consider P.Oxy. 8.1152 (fig. 2), a late fifth- or early sixth-century Greek amulet, the text of which we have already seen (see chapter 1): "Hōr, Hōr, Phōr, Elōei, Adōnai, Iaō, Sabaōth, Michaēl, Jesus Christ. Help us and this house. Amen."[24] In this text, Michaēl the Archangel (e.g., Revelation 12:7–12) and Jesus Christ—whose onomastic pedigrees barely require an introduction—are listed together with sacred names of diverse cultural origins: "Hōr" and "Phōr" are most likely references to the Egyptian god Horus, with the Greek *phi* in the name "Phōr" reflecting the combination of the Coptic masculine definite article (*p*) and the Coptic letter *hori*;[25] "Elōei" likely derives from the Hebrew expression *ʾēlî* (meaning "my God");[26] "Adōnai" is also an originally Hebrew expression (meaning "my Lord"), and it has traditionally been used by Jews as a spoken substitute for the written name of God (YHWH)—also known as the Tetragrammaton; similarly, the name Iaō is probably a Greek rendering of the Tetragrammaton itself;[27] when Iaō is placed alongside Sabaōth (as here), it typically carries its original association with the Tetragrammaton and, together with Sabaōth, thus means, "Lord of Hosts"—a phrase that, within the Septuagint (or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible), is usually written with the combination *Kurios Sabaōth*.[28]

Scholars—operating according to idealized notions of "Christian" language—have tended to divide the elements that occur on such amulets into the categories "Christian," on the one hand, and "Jewish" and "pagan" (or some equivalent), on the other. For instance, de Bruyn and Dijkstra explicitly claim that P.Oxy. 8.1152 invokes both a "Christian" name (i.e., Jesus Christ) and "Graeco-Roman and Jewish powers."[29] In his more recent analysis of such objects, de Bruyn has preferred the more general term "customary" to describe these and other "non-Christian" elements.[30]

Yet the juxtaposition of religious elements of ostensibly diverse cultural origins on objects, such as P.Oxy. 8.1152, involves complex social dynamics that demand further methodological reflection. Indeed, as intuitive as it might be, the impulse to divide the language on a given object into multiple categories of religious or ethnic affiliation—based primarily on origins—obscures several possible orientations toward similarity and difference from the perspectives of late ancient practitioners.[31] Indeed, should we assume that an originally "Jewish" element (e.g., Iaō), for instance, retained its "Jewishness" or Otherness in the minds of practitioners regardless of the temporal and social contexts in which they operated? Similarly, a general model of syncretism—such as the one outlined by David Frankfurter (see Introduction)—might help us trace the broader processes by which religious elements of diverse cultural backgrounds were "indigenized" and "rendered comprehensible in particular cultural domains"; however, syncretism in this general sense likewise has limited explanatory power as an interpretive or hermeneutical tool. The application of a single rubric (syncretism) to the objects created during the vast temporal period we call late antiquity (e.g., approximately from the second to

the seventh or eighth centuries CE) runs the risk of conflating the diverse symbolic dynamics—and, consequently, conceptions of religious similarity and difference—at play at an early stage of the indigenization process with those operative after that indigenization process was well underway or even completed. Should syncretism apply *both* to situations during "late antiquity" in which Christian practitioners viewed elements like Iaō as Jewish or Other *and* to those (later) contexts in which they were seen as fully "Christian"? If so, syncretism possesses limited utility for understanding individual texts and objects. If not, which term should we use to classify the use of elements once they are (mostly) indigenized? The issues at the center of this discussion are not trivial; nor are they merely a matter of nomenclature. As we will see below, the ways in which select ritual objects conceived of religious similarity and difference have bearing not only on how we interpret the language of specific ritual objects but also on how we reconstruct perceptions of religious differentiation in late antique lived religion.

Interpreting Religious Language on Late Antique Magical Objects: Exoticism, Syncretism, and Assimilation

When analyzing the religious language on a given late antique magical object and assessing that language for questions of religious boundaries, we should first of all take into consideration the interpretive framework that Foskolou explicitly highlighted and that de Bruyn and Dijkstra seem to presuppose. According to this perspective, the apparent juxtaposition of different traditions in fact reflects the intentional usage of elements of otherness on account of their perceived foreignness or exoticism or for some other unknown reason—an approach to religious language that has at times also been associated with the category "syncretism" in scholarship on ancient magic.[32] It must be stressed at the outset, however, that this particular syncretistic model is fundamentally predicated on well-defined distinctions between religious or ethnic entities and involves the (conceptual) crossing of religious or ethnic boundaries. To state the matter a bit differently, syncretism in this sense does not stem from blurred boundaries but from clearly delineated notions of insiders and outsiders.[33] In fact, it is precisely that cultural distance that creates the attraction in the first place. But this attractiveness tends to be temporally limited, often confined to moments of initial contact between religious traditions—that is, when one can most clearly see the differences between "us" and "them." Unfortunately, syncretism in this exoticized sense is quite difficult to identify in the primary sources; therefore, *clear* evidence for it in late antique ritual practice is limited.

To be sure, some late antique ritual objects seem to reflect a situation in which the exoticism, foreignness, or Otherness of elements played an active role in the creation of ritual efficacy. For example, we can observe this social phenomenon on the magical artifacts that explicitly mark the "Hebrew" origin of a given term.[34] We might also cite in this regard a late antique Mesopotamian incantation bowl,

which was once part of the vast private collection of Shlomo Moussaieff (M163). As part of its lengthy incantation, which is written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, we find the following adjuration:

> and by the name of Jesus [*ʾyšw*], who pressed the height and the depth by his cross, and by the name of his exalted father, and by the name of the holy spirits/his holy spirit [*rwḥy*] forever."[35]

The foreign or even exoticized character of this Trinitarian reference is quite likely, not only given the primary language used (Jewish Babylonian Aramaic) and its inclusion of certain Hebraisms that were uncommon outside Jewish contexts, but also in light of the text's unusual orthography. For instance, the name "Jesus" is spelled *ʾyšw* and not the expected *yšw* (i.e., without the initial aleph) or *yšwʿ*. As Dan Levene (the bowl's original editor) and Shaul Shaked have noted, this oddly spelled reference to Jesus appears to be a phonetic rendering of the Syriac *Īšōʿ*.[36] In addition, Levene postulated that, although the extant consonants *rwḥy* correspond to the plural form (i.e., *rūḥê* ["spirits"]), one might reconstruct the text of the bowl as *rwḥy<h>*, thus reflecting the Syriac *rūḥēh* (meaning "his spirit").[37] Levene, Shaked, and others have reasonably concluded that the text on this bowl most likely reflects a situation in which a Jewish practitioner wrote down as best as he could a Trinitarian formula, which he learned from a Christian Syriac context.[38] If this hypothesis is in fact correct, then it would imply that this Jewish practitioner intended to incorporate foreign—in this case "Christian"—elements into his ritual text.[39] Consequently, we might productively characterize the text of this bowl as an instance of syncretism (in the exoticized sense noted above).

But, again, clear instances of intentional appropriations of elements from other religious groups are exceedingly rare. It is telling that Gideon Bohak and Lynn LiDonnici were only able to find a few certain instances in which the practitioners behind the Greek Magical Papyri intentionally made reference to exotic "Jewish" elements.[40] And this difficulty persists to an even greater degree when trying to find clear instances of Jewish foreignness or exoticism—for instance, on the later Christian amulets (i.e., since such elements were even further removed from their original cultural contexts).[41] In the end, the usage of syncretism to interpret individual objects tends either to conflate diverse possible approaches to religious similarity and difference under a single rubric or to involve the automatic presumption of intentional appropriation in cases where elements of diverse cultural or religious origins appear together. Both tendencies can interfere with our interpretations of some early Christian magical texts and, as I will argue below, with our reconstructions of the perspectives on religious boundaries in late antique lived religion.

Such problems require us to consider explanatory models and frameworks other than syncretism or exoticism for understanding conceptions of religious similarity and difference on many of the extant early Christian magical objects.

We might in theory take our cue from Rebillard's analysis of the literary record (see above) and thus postulate that the juxtaposition of elements that originated in diverse contexts reflects a lack of "Christianness" or the inapplicability of religious identities in such magical contexts. But can we in fact extrapolate from the mere appearance of shared religious elements of diverse cultural origins on a given object that these elements possessed no religious associations or that its practitioner did not appreciate religious boundaries or difference? As we already saw in chapter 1, early Christian practitioners often juxtaposed "customary" elements with biblical texts, liturgical formulations, creedal statements, and the like. Such evidence renders claims about a lack of "Christianness" or the absence of religious identities in magical contexts unconvincing.

Any discussion of the relationships between religious boundaries, religious identities, and elements of diverse cultural origins must take into consideration the dynamic and unstable nature of religious symbols. The meanings of words, images, and other cultural and religious elements can radically shift over time and across space. As Matthew Canepa has noted about the meaning of objects:

> Different objects could have different meanings according to how they are used by new owners and users and interpreted by the differently conditioned eyes of the new host society.[42]

We have already seen how even the name "Jesus" could carry significantly different meanings as it was deployed by practitioners from different regions—and, presumably, different religious groups (see also chapter 4). In an essay on the category "syncretism," Michael Pye underscored the complex and ever-shifting meanings at play when elements of diverse cultural origins are juxtaposed with one another in a given setting.[43] As part of his analysis, Pye characterizes syncretism as "a *temporary* ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts" that tends to find resolution, especially "after a long period or cultural history or repeatedly in the experience of individuals."[44] In this model, "assimilation" emerges as one form of resolution of syncretism that is characterized by "the outright dominance of one strand of meaning by another."[45] This approach to "assimilation"—as a subsequent resolution of an earlier syncretism—provides a useful conceptual framework for thinking about similarity and difference in early Christian magic, as it invites us to take seriously the possibility that certain symbols (e.g., Iaō Sabaōth), which perhaps had their origins in foreign religious or ethnic contexts, could lose those specific associations and undergo a complete theological transformation after they had entered into a dominantly Christian ritual setting. Consequently, this model reveals that the application of idealized notions of the rubrics "Christian" and "non-Christian" to the late antique magical evidence not only presupposes the very thing that it must prove, but, in so doing, also significantly limits the range of possible religious meanings that might be attached to certain symbols at a given time and place. Over time and under the

right conditions, a "non-Christian" element could become a fully "Christian" element. To interpret or label such an element as "non-Christian" (e.g., Jewish, pagan, or "customary") could fundamentally invert its meaning on an object.

The appreciation of such symbolic shifts not only provides a useful hermeneutical lens through which we might view anew the language on specific ritual objects, but it also carries implications for the question of religious boundaries in late antique lived contexts. Instead of assuming that Christian ritual objects, which deploy widely shared cultural/religious/magical elements, reflect an intentional appropriation of "Otherness" ([conceptual] "boundary crossing") or a lack of recognition of or appreciation for religious or ethnic boundaries on the part of their practitioners ("blurred boundaries"), the dynamic and ever-shifting nature of religious symbols prompts us to entertain an alternative explanation: such Christian practitioners recognized and appreciated differences between religious or ethnic groups but understood the culturally shared elements as fully part of their Christian identities—or, at the very least, not reflecting a different religious tradition. It is important to note that this latter scenario involves neither "boundary crossing" nor "boundary blurring" from the perspectives of the practitioners. The practitioners, in this view, simply operated according to different definitions of Christianity than ancient Christian writers promoted (and contemporary scholars have generally assumed), thus merely giving the false impression of crossed or blurred boundaries. Unfortunately, the vast majority of extant amulets and the like from late antiquity (e.g., P.Oxy. 8.1152 [see above]) do not offer sufficient evidence to allow us to trace their practitioners' conceptions of religious similarity and difference. That said, selected magical objects and literary sources suggest that many practitioners and their clients held to discrete religious boundaries, even if they conceived of those boundaries in ways that do not fully align with our inherited taxonomies.

RITUAL PRACTICE AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE: THE MATERIAL RECORD

Some ritual practitioners engaged in explicit forms of religious differentiation, while configuring their religious boundaries in ways that might seem counterintuitive to us. Probably the clearest manifestation of this phenomenon can be found in practitioners' uses of anti-Jewish invective, specifically the appropriation of the Christian belief that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. The idea that the "Jews" were categorically culpable for the death and persecution of Jesus and his early followers played a prominent role in early Christian imagination, figuring into biblical gospels (e.g., John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), (pseudepigraphical) letters (e.g., Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 15; the Abgar–Jesus correspondence [see discussion below]), dialogues (e.g., *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* 41.17), pseudepigraphical gospels (e.g., *Gospel of Peter* 2.5–4.12; 12.50, 12), homilies (e.g.,

Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover* 72, ll. 505–8; 73, ll. 520, 524; 96, ll. 711–16), and even early Christian hymns.[46] This vituperative trope of the murderous or persecuting Jews was part of a much broader negative presentation of the Jewish people, which even spilled into early intra-Christian disputes; the label "Jews" could thus at times be used as a metaphorical or taxonomic lens through which early Christians might view and characterize their internecine opponents and, therefore, distinguish themselves from various Christian Others, such as Arians or Chalcedonians.[47] In sum, the purpose of evoking the category "Jews"—whether socially, historically, or metaphorically framed—was by and large to define, maintain, or enforce Christian boundaries.[48]

We have already seen that scholars have tended to associate the negative portrayal of the Jews—and the boundary demarcation it implies—with "elite" Christian circles. Yet, as Raʿanan Boustan and I have already highlighted in another venue, anti-Jewish invective, especially the accusation of Jewish violence against Jesus, was used on amulets from late antique Egypt.[49] For instance, P.Heid. inv. G 1101 includes the following *historiola:*

> For our Lord was pursued by the Jews [*Ioudeon*], and he came to the Euphrates River and stuck in his staff, and the water stood still. Also you, discharge, stand still from head to toe-nails in the name of our Lord, who was crucified . . . (ll. 8–11)[50]

Perhaps drawing on the exodus story, the practitioner behind this fifth- or sixth-century healing amulet from Egyptian Babylon contextualizes his brief analogical narrative with a reference to the antagonistic Jews, who are said to have pursued Jesus to the Euphrates River.[51]

Practitioners also strengthened the anti-Jewish sentiments found in preexisting traditions—for example, Abgar's pseudepigraphical letter to Jesus. As part of this letter—in which Abgar, king of Edessa, requests healing from Jesus—Abgar references Jesus's problems with the Jews. The Eusebian version of this letter records Abgar's words as follows: "I heard that the Jews are mocking you, and wish to ill-treat you."[52] A late fifth-century CE healing amulet from Oxyrhynchus, Egypt (P.Oxy. 65.4469) intensifies this anti-Jewish invective: "for I have heard that the Jews murmur against you and persecute you, desiring to kill you."[53] If we return to Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, we can find an even stronger version of this tradition in the practitioner's version of Abgar's letter to Jesus:

> I heard that your nation rejected your lordship, being wicked and envious, and they persecute you, and they do not want to let you reign over them, being ignorant of this: that you are the king [of] those in the heavens and those upon the earth, who gives life to everyone. And what indeed is the people of Israel? The dead dog, because they have rejected the living God. For indeed, they are not worthy of your holy gift. (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 11v, l. 16–12r, l. 7)

In this passage, the Jews are not merely blamed for persecuting Jesus; they are even compared with a "dead dog" (*ouhor etmoout*). The language of dogs here resonates

with the sentiments of some late antique patristic writers, who might also associate Jews with dogs as part of a strategy of religious differentiation.[54] Much like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, John Chrysostom's first *Discourse Against Judaizing Christians* includes the following words:

> Although those Jews had been called to the adoption of sons, they fell into kinship with dogs; we who were dogs received the strength through God's grace to put aside the irrational nature . . . they [i.e., Jews] became dogs, and we became children.[55]

In this passage, the negative—perhaps impure (see below)—connotations associated with dogs stands alongside the positive image of children to facilitate Chrysostom's construction of an ironic, temporal, and vituperative acrostic: those (Jews) who were supposed to be children became dogs; those (Christians) who were dogs became children. The practitioner behind Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, therefore, appropriated for his ritual purposes a dark, supercessionist motif that was part of late antique boundary demarcation in other Christian contexts.

But the anti-Jewish invective in the Abgar text worked in dialogue with an untitled composition from Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, which proclaims:

> Rejoice, all you creatures, for the Lord rose from the dead on the third day and he freed the entire race of Adam, and he despoiled the Jews, who were ashamed of what they had done. (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 10r, ll. 4–12)[56]

In this case, the Jews (*nioudai*) are specifically blamed for the murder of Jesus, and God has punished them for this act—presumably a reference to the subsequent suffering of the Jewish people (e.g., the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and their expulsion from Jerusalem and Egypt).[57] A similar emphasis on the act of betraying Jesus is found on Brit. Lib. Or. 5986, a late antique Coptic curse, in which we find references made to various biblical characters, mostly antagonists:

> Let me watch Victor Hatre and David his son, let me watch him, being inflicted by the spirit of the world. You must bring upon them all the sufferings of Job. O god, you must bring down Papnoute from his height. Abandon him to demons. Number them with Judas on the day of judgment. *You must liken them to those who have said, "His blood is upon us for three generations.*" You must liken them to Cain, who murdered Abel [his] brother.

There are many interesting aspects to highlight about the particular coordination of characters in this curse (e.g., the references to Judas and Cain). For our present purposes, however, it is worth highlighting that the practitioner writes that God should liken Victor Hatre, Papnoute, and his son David "to those who have said, 'His blood is upon us for three generations.'" I think it is likely that the reference here is to the Jews, who, from the perspectives of the gospel writers, violently called for the death of Jesus instead of Barabbas. In Matt 27:20–27, we read:

> Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want

> me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (NRSV)

In this passage, we find the presentation of what many scholars consider to be an unlikely situation; Pontius Pilate—a man known for violently suppressing uprisings—is persuaded to put an innocent man to death to appease a Jewish mob.[58] Notwithstanding the tradition's dubious historical grounding, the practitioner seemed to have believed in this biblical account; much like what we find in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, the practitioner predicates ritual efficacy on early Christian notions of the Jewish culpability for the death of Christ—and, perhaps even deicide—which played an important role in early Christian boundary construction vis-à-vis the Jews.[59] The ritual logic seems to be as follows: may Victor Hatre, Papnoute, and his son David be subjected to the destruction that characterized God's punishment of the Jews for their role in the death of Jesus.

Despite their interests in distinguishing Christians from Jews, several of the practitioners who made these artifacts did not construct the boundaries in the same ways as patristic writers (or modern scholars). On Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, for instance, the practitioner utilizes divine names, such as Iaō, Adōnai, Elōei, Elemas, and Sabaōth (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 9–10; 3r, 5–6; 8v, ll. 14–15; 9v, 19–20), which we might say have "Jewish" or "Hebrew" origins and, as we have seen in our discussion of P.Oxy. 8.1152, scholars have often labeled "Jewish." Other objects likewise use divine names, such as Iaō Sabaōth and Elōe (P.Heid. inv. G 1101, l. 6; P.Oxy. 65.4469, ll. 39–40). Although de Bruyn does not discuss Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 in this regard, he does note that the so-called "customary" elements in P.Oxy. 65.4469 were "deemed to be entirely appropriate as resources for healing incantations."[60] But, if we set aside the idealized limits between "Christian" and "non-Christian" (or "customary"), I think we can make an even stronger claim: given the interest of these practitioners in religious differentiation—specifically against Jews (however understood)—it seems likely that they considered these names simply to be Christian.[61] This identification is almost certain in the case of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, where we read in the *Prayer of Saint Gregory* the following words: "I entreat you, O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, god of gods, king of all kings, the imperishable, unpolluted, uncreated, untouchable, morning star, the hand that rules, Adōnai Elōei Elemas Sabaōth" (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 1–10).[62]

The assimilation of such names into a Christian theological system can be found in many other late antique Egyptian amulets and spells. For instance, Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796—an early seventh-century Coptic spell for exorcism that we have already seen (see chapter 1; see also chapter 4)—calls Jesus "the force

[*dynamis*] of Iaō Sabaōth." Again, this reconceptualization of originally Jewish or Hebrew terms in such Christian artifacts should not necessarily be surprising since such elements probably did not come directly from Jewish practitioners but likely came into Egyptian Christian ritual culture via Egyptian ritual culture more generally, within which these names circulated for generations (as is evident from the Greek Magical Papyri).[63] It is no wonder, therefore, that the symbolic limits of exclusionary versions of Christianity in lived religion extended well beyond idealized portraits of "Christian" language—whether ancient or scholarly.

In sum, the artifacts discussed above attest neither to a crossing of the boundaries between Christians and Jews nor to a blurring of boundaries between these ostensible groups; instead, they merely reflect that names, such as Iaō, Adōnai, and Sabaōth, had lost their "Jewishness" and were assimilated into the practitioners' exclusionary Christian ritual idiom. Accordingly, these artifacts present a different *version* of the boundaries between Christianity and Judaism than early patristic writers promoted and many contemporary scholars have assumed. It is important to highlight again that, while the boundaries of Christian language differed from those promoted in ecclesiastical literature (and assumed in contemporary scholarship), these religious boundaries were no less strictly defined. By all accounts, these practitioners conceptualized the "Jews" as completely distinct from their own religious tradition.[64]

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENTIATION AND RITUAL PURITY

We have just seen how late antique Christian practitioners were, at times, highly interested in religious differentiation and boundary demarcation—albeit in ways that did not completely align with what we find in many patristic and monastic texts. An important question, however, remains: *why* were they so interested in religious boundaries? How might boundary demarcation relate to ritual efficacy? In short, what was the "situational meaning" that resided at the intersection of magical ritual and religious differentiation?

The story of Sophronius mentioned at the beginning of this chapter might offer us a clue. Sophronius tells us that Petros was not able to receive healing until he abandoned his anti-Chalcedonian heresy. In other words, theological purity was inextricably linked to curative efficacy.

When we examine the texts, objects, and rituals we identify as magical, we find a similar approach to the relationship between various forms of purity and efficacy. As Miriam Blanco Cesteros and Eleni Chronopoulou have appropriately noted:

> To be pure, usually as the result of carrying out an established purification procedure, was seen as a precondition of contact with deities, who had to be approached with the greatest caution . . . the magical tradition demonstrates the same preoccupation with purity. The surviving testimonies of magical practice exhibit a special

> concern with purity and purification, considering them as essential for the execution of the spells.[65]

In many magical artifacts, we see purity functioning as a prerequisite or preparation for the ritual itself. PGM I. 290–291 reads: "[You must refrain] from all unclean things and from all eating of fish and from all sexual intercourse, so that you may bring the god into the greatest desire toward you . . ."[66] In this text, we can presume that the practitioner assumed that ritual efficacy was impeded by certain foods and sexual intercourse—not to mention "from all unclean things [*apo pantōn mysarōn pragmatōn*]."

It is noteworthy that there is evidence in the Coptic record that ritual purity was especially important when divine names, such as Adōnai and Elōi, were used for apotropaic or curative purposes. For instance, we are told in the *Discourse on Saint Michael the Archangel* that cryptograms connected with Adōnai (ⲱϫⲍ[ϥ?]) and Elōi (ⲱⲙⲉ), which form part of a "covenant" (*duathukē*),[67] can be used as an amulet (*phylaktērion*);[68] however, on account of their power, the text explicitly instructs the reader that they cannot be placed in a location with defilement (*sōōf*).[69]

But purity was not always conceived of in relation to material things (e.g., food), physical contact (e.g., sex), and depositional spaces. Scholars like Ivana Petrovic and Andrej Petrovic have argued that purity extended to the moral, intellectual, and mental spheres—what is sometimes called "purity of the mind."[70] For instance, we read in an inscription at the entrance of the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus a phrase that might be translated as "purity is to think religiously correct thoughts."[71] Yair Furstenberg has likewise noted that Second Temple Judaism developed a similar pattern concerning the interfusion of ritual and moral forms of impurity. As he puts it, "the blurring between the two types of impurity is characteristic of a wide range of Second Temple sources and found a variety of ritual expressions during that period."[72]

Religious definition and the policing of religious boundaries was a central concern during late antiquity. Averil Cameron has convincingly argued that the late antique world witnessed "a competitive process of system construction, a persistent impulse towards definition."[73] Within this competitive and definitional context, purity became increasingly associated with religious affiliation and, perhaps more importantly, with religious differentiation, especially within ritual contexts. As Moshe Blidstein has noted, early Christian baptismal rites functioned as sites at which internal and external forms of purity, including the removal of demons and the maintenance of religious difference, played out.[74] Symbolic language associated with purity, such as washing, was mixed with notions of the removal of sin and the rejection of and protection from demonic intrusion.[75] According to Blidstein, these intersecting forms of purity took place within a social context, in which similarities between Christian baptism and Jewish ritual washing were apparent and thus in need of differentiation.[76] It is not surprising, therefore, that

early Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr and the author behind the *Epistle of Barnabas*, framed their views of baptism in contrast with Jewish purification rites.[77] This point usefully dovetails with Furstenburg's observation that one of the governing assumptions behind early Christian baptism—namely, that all those seeking to get baptized must undergo an exorcism (whether as a simple procedure or in a multistep process)—implies that those who were not part of the community of believers were demonically unclean.[78] In other words, communal and traditional boundaries marked, among other things, the line between the (spiritually) pure and the impure.

Given the importance of purity within a range of ritual and Christian contexts, more generally, it is worth noting that a type of purity, which we might usefully called "traditional" or "communal" purity, infiltrated early Christian magical rituals in a significant way. David Frankfurter has explained how such notions of purity—along with others—related to utterances directed toward divinities ("directive utterance") in magical objects:

> In the case of the directive utterance, which includes prayer and magical command, the speaker's mind-set, preparation, traditional status, and purity are of paramount importance since the force of that utterance explicitly comes from that "I" who says the words.[79]

Some objects draw particular attention to the client's Christian faith as a prerequisite for ritual efficacy. For example, a group of amulets from Oxyrhynchus, Egypt written to protect female clients from various fevers and chills use a shared formula that underscores the clients' faith.[80] Thus, P.Oxy. 6.924 reads: "You shall do these things [graciously] and completely, first on account of your will and also *on account of her faith* [*kata tēn pistin autēs*], because she is a handmaid of the living god . . ."[81] These words are followed by a series of divine names (the Trinity and, interestingly, Abrasax).[82] The inclusion of divine names seems to suggest that *pistis* in P.Oxy. 6.924 extended to all dimensions of the client's Christian faith (however that faith might have been configured), including the rejection of heresy and improper social relations.[83]

In sum, the Christian magical objects inherited views of purity that transcended physical, ritual, theological, and communal boundaries and that were directly relevant to ritual efficacy. As part of this broader Mediterranean context, religious differentiation and ritual purity could at times merge, especially within late antique Christian circles. The anti-Jewish invective that we find on protective and curative objects, such as P.Heid. inv. G 1101, P.Oxy. 65.4469, and Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, seems to fit within this larger Christian framework; ritual efficacy was apparently grounded in the broader Christian notion that God was more likely to heal or protect those with proper beliefs and who did not violate religious or communal boundaries (cf. the story of Sophronius of Jerusalem above). Moreover, it is worth noting that each of the magical artifacts highlighted in this discussion

employs at least one directive utterance, thus bridging this material with David Frankfurter's thoughts on traditional purity (see above). In short, the practitioners behind these artifacts seem to be operating from the assumption that God, on whom they are directly calling, would have been more likely to grant their clients' requests because they were pure Christians, not tainted by any association with the Jews.

RITUAL PRACTICE AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE: THE LITERARY RECORD

The extant magical evidence suggests that practitioners often held to well-defined notions of religious insiders and outsiders. In fact, many objects seem to have predicated their notions of efficacy on this very idea. But what about their clients? Is there any clear evidence that the clients, who visited ritual experts, appreciated religious boundaries? To address this issue, it is useful to look at the literary evidence describing clients from various regions of the Mediterranean, which can supplement the material evidence from Egypt. Although the proscriptive comments about Christian ritual clients are diverse in their presentations and condemnations and occur in very rhetorical contexts, some do in fact offer insight into the question of religious differentiation—especially if we bear in mind the idea drawn from the material record that Christians could still hold to clear-cut religious boundaries even if they configured those boundaries in ways that disagreed with certain patristic and monastic writers.

We have already noted how the Christians whom Augustine envisioned in his homily on the Gospel of John were so committed to the symbols of Christianity (in that case, the name of Jesus) that practitioners could trick them into engaging in rituals by simply incorporating Jesus's name into their incantations (see introduction). Not surprisingly, therefore, ritual specialists associated with local Christian institutions likewise seem to have had a special appeal to believers. When Shenoute of Atripe inquired into the reasons why believers thought objects, such as snakes' heads, crocodiles' teeth, and fox claws, possessed healing powers, he was apparently told, "It was a great monk who gave them to me, saying 'Tie them on you [and] you will find relief.'"[84] The reader should also recall the canon falsely attributed to a single Council of Laodicea, which implies that Christian clergy often served as ritual functionaries (e.g., *magoi, epaoidoi, mathēmatikoi*, and *astrologoi*) for their local parishioners and, accordingly, provided them with applied ritual objects (*phylaktēria*).[85] Although self-identifying Christians certainly did not visit Christian practitioners exclusively (see below),[86] many Christians seemed to have attributed to Christian heroes and institutional representatives a certain charisma that was inextricably linked to religious identification.[87]

Perhaps more importantly, even in cases in which patristic writers complain about Christian clients crossing spatial and social boundaries to procure amulets

and other healing devices, these writers do not typically claim that such Christians failed to distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian more generally. By contrast, patristic writers at times even stress that such Christian clients framed their distinctions between the Christian and the Other in quite vitriolic terms. In his eighth *Discourse Against Judaizing Christians*, for instance, John Chrysostom sets up the following hypothetical conversation between a Chrysostom-approved believer and one who visits synagogues for various ritual practices, which we later learn included the purchasing of ritual healing objects:

> Say to him [i.e., the Judaizer], "Tell me, do you approve of the Jews for crucifying Christ, for blaspheming him as they still do, and for calling him a lawbreaker?" If the man is a Christian, he will never put up with this; even if he be a Judaizer times without number, he will never bring himself to say: "I do approve.'" Rather, he will stop up his ears and say to you: "Heaven forbid! Be quiet, man." Next, after you find that he agrees with you, take up the matter again and say: "How is it that you attend their services, how is it you participate in the festival, how is it you join them in observing the fast?" [88]

In this hypothetical conversation, Chrysostom presupposes that, despite their predilection for visiting synagogues and participating in other so-called "Jewish" rituals, the Judaizers would agree (1) that Jews are separate from Christians and (2) that they are culpable for the death of Jesus and for blaspheming against him.[89] The underlying problem for Chrysostom in this passage is, therefore, not a lack of religious differentiation, per se. Instead, he is upset that the Judaizers configured their Christian identities in accordance with a different interpretation of what *he* regarded as intrinsically Jewish rituals and spaces.[90]

In sum, much of the literary evidence—like much of the material evidence—suggests that "Christianness" often played a major role in amuletic rituals. In some instances, "Christianness" was even placed in opposition to categories of "non-Christianness" (e.g., the Jews). Taken together, the extant evidence not only supports the idea that Christian idioms and Christian ritual experts were particularly attractive to Christian users of amulets; it also implies that even the very Christians who seemingly crossed religious boundaries to procure amulets and other ritual objects often operated according to clearly defined and vituperative notions of religious insiders and outsiders.

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENTIATION ACROSS DIVERSE SOCIAL STRATA

It is useful at this point to step back and reflect on the broader implications of the foregoing analysis for the question of religious differentiation across diverse social strata in late antique Christianity. The material and literary evidence that I have discussed suggests that religious differentiation and even outright slander could be operative in contexts in which Christians shared symbols, rituals, and spaces

with other groups—even the very groups who bore the brunt of their invective. This point carries implications for how we ought to understand the relationship between cultural symbols and religious identities in late ancient lived practice. The anti-Jewish ritual objects—which simultaneously incorporate names like Iaō and Sabaōth—ought to prevent us from *automatically* concluding either that cultural symbols retain their original associations or that shared elements remain religiously "neutral." Concerning the latter conclusion, we would do well to keep in mind that *common* is *not generic*. Despite our knowledge that Iaō and Sabaōth might be described as originally "Jewish"—yet subsequently shared among various traditions—practitioners behind objects like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 operated within a context in which these names were assimilated into their exclusionary Christian taxonomies. In short, such practitioners neither marked these names as exotically "Jewish" nor considered them to be religiously neutral; they were unequivocally Christian.

The literary evidence examined as part of this analysis suggests that many of those who used amulets also had a strong sense of Christian affiliation and held to discrete distinctions between the Christian and the non-Christian. This literary evidence likewise implies that clearly demarcated religious identities could even apply to those who crossed social and spatial boundaries—at least relative to the taxonomies expressed in patristic and monastic literature. Despite his attempt to slander the Judaizers (however real such a group might have been), Chrysostom insists that those who used amulets and participated in what Chrysostom considered to be "Jewish" festivals were keen to frame distinctions between Christians and Jews in highly inflammatory ways. To be sure, it is quite unlikely that such "Judaizers"—if, again, there was such a group in reality—would have viewed these festivals as specifically or exclusively "Christian" (as seems to have been the case with the Christian use of names, such as Iaō Sabaōth, on ritual objects). Nevertheless, Chrysostom makes it abundantly clear that participation in "Jewish" festivals in no way stifled anti-Jewish sentiments.

The literary evidence describing amuletic clients thus matches the material remains of practitioners in an important way: both sets of evidence point to late antique religious agents, who clearly distinguished religious insiders from outsiders, yet framed their boundaries quite differently from those found in patristic and monastic writings—and, for that matter, in many later scholarly analyses. As we saw in chapter 1, what seems to be blurred boundaries from our perspective—or from the perspectives of early Christian literary sources—should not necessarily be taken to imply a lack of interest in differentiation in our ancient material evidence.

Once we take into serious consideration, first, that the connotations and associations of religious symbols could dramatically shift over time and, second, that shared symbols, spaces, and rituals could simultaneously coexist with fierce invective and religious differentiation, then much of the evidence used to suggest blurred boundaries or even friendly relations in lived religion among groups such

as Jews and Christians (e.g., the municipal function of synagogues; the proximity of crosses to *menorot* in public spaces; and the use of ostensibly "Jewish" and "Christian" elements on amulets) is completely recast and only raises further questions. Most important, how, if at all, did spatial and symbolic overlap or sharing relate to participants' taxonomies of religious similarity and difference? Indeed, such data do not intrinsically point to a particular kind of social relationship or to a specific approach to differentiation (or lack thereof) in lived religion. One must prove on additional grounds that exoticism or blurred boundaries or friendly relations (or, for that matter, clearly distinct religious identities) were operative, taking into account the complex dynamics of symbolic reception over time and across region (see also chapter 3). Unfortunately, most sources offer insufficient evidence to demonstrate the operation of these social dynamics or the underlying intercultural realities in lived contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have provided evidence, which suggests that interest in religious differentiation extended well beyond the realms of patristic writings, heresiologies, and other so-called "elite" Christian contexts.[91] With the LAR rubric "situational meaning" in mind, we saw that the fundamental concerns of apotropaic and curative rituals could at times work in conjunction with notions of distinct religious boundaries. I am not arguing, however, that clearly demarcated religious boundaries—or even invective—always or often resulted in religious violence or conflict.[92] The layout of the late antique city, local customs, imperial pressures, economic needs, and a range of quotidian concerns required interreligious contact and discouraged Christians from engaging in open conflict with local non-Christians.[93]

Nevertheless, although most late antique Christians did not compose—or even read—anything like a heresiology or *adversus Ioudaios* text, the less rosy picture of interreligious discourse that emerges from the magical objects and related literary sources suggests that the exclusionary and abusive sentiments behind such genres would have had a much broader appeal than is commonly acknowledged in current scholarship. As was the case with notions of harmful ritual (see chapter 1), the magical evidence also demonstrates that, while purveyors and users of amulets and similar ritual technologies articulated religious boundaries that only partially overlapped with those disclosed in patristic and monastic texts (on theological, lexical, and communal registers), the vitriolic tone with which such ritual actors voiced their well-defined religious boundaries could match in intensity the invective found in other normative ecclesiastical contexts.

PART II

The Discursive Boundaries of Texts and Traditions

3

Words, Images, Materials, and Gestures

A certain ritual specialist practicing his craft in Oxyrhynchus during the early seventh century CE created one of the most intriguing extant objects from late antiquity (P.Oxy. 8.1077; see fig. 3).[1] This parchment amulet, which measures 11.1 × 6 centimeters, was folded and then cut to create a series of fifteen octagons, fourteen of which were inscribed with a portion of Matt 4:23–24 organized into cross-shaped patterns.[2] The central octagon, however, includes an image of a person, whom most scholars have appropriately interpreted as the client.[3] In a prior venue, I have argued that this amulet was designed in such a way that the client (image) would be wrapped through the (performative) folding of the object in the overlapping authoritative traditions of Matt 4:23–24 (text), the crucifixion (the format of the text), and the resurrection (the octagonal shape of the material artifact).[4]

In addition to this interesting amulet on parchment, a sixth- or seventh-century CE amulet made from hematite (Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.190.491; figs. 4 and 5) seems to have engaged with the client's ailment (probably a bleeding problem) across textual, visual, and material registers. First, the gemstone, which measures 4.8 × 3.6 × 1 centimeters, includes an image of Jesus with the women who had an issue of blood (bowing before him)—a story found in Mark 5:25–34 (= Matt 9:20–22; Luke 8:43–48). This narrative connection is reinforced through a *historiola*, which is taken directly from the Markan account: "And the woman was in a flow of blood and going through much suffering and spending without being healed but rather trembling."[5] This quasi-biblical text on the obverse of the pendant works in dialogue with the text on the reverse, which is inscribed around an image of the woman as an orant (with plants to her right and left) and which reads: "The spring of her blood was dried in the name of her faith."[6] Given the presence of the biblically based story, the text on the reverse, and the nature of the image, the use of hematite is almost certainly intentional: hematite—also known as "blood stone"—was associated with bleeding issues in the ancient world. Such bleeding issues ranged from nose bleeds to bleeding associated with

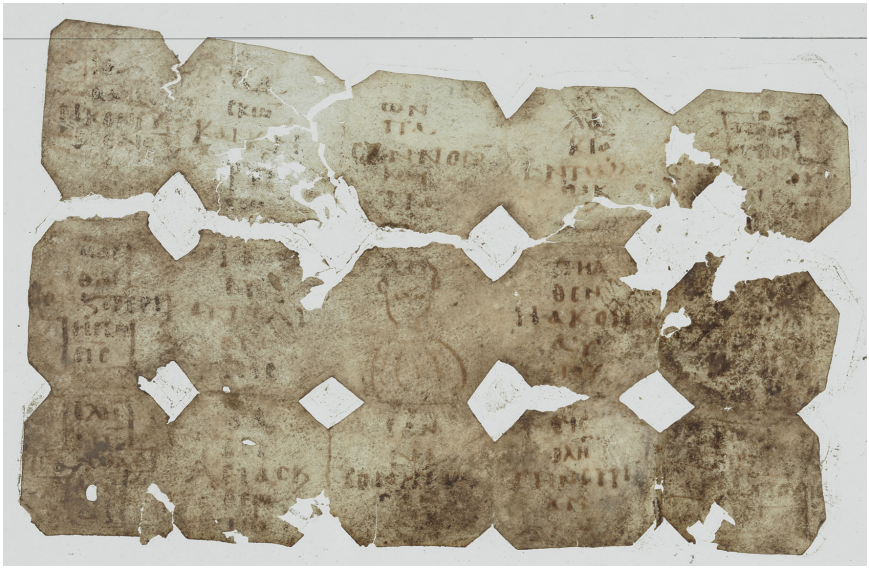

FIGURE 3. Greek amulet with Matt 4:23, 24 written in cross shapes inside octagons, with an image of the client in the central octagon. P.Oxy. 8.1077. Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Trexler Library, Muhlenberg College.

childbirth to uterine problems more generally. In fact, the connection with blood was so strong that PGM XII. 410 uses the phrase "snake's blood" (*haima oph[e]ōs*) as a code word for hematite.[7] Hematite was used as the material for another gem, which was created for uterine bleeding and which includes the text "Thirsty Tantalus, drink the blood!"[8] The interface of text, image, and material suggest that this Christian gem was likewise produced to address some kind of uterine bleeding.[9]

These fascinating objects exemplify some of the ways in which practitioners crossed, merged, and reconfigured the boundaries between and within verbal, visual, material, and performative domains.[10] They also raise larger questions about how practitioners' creative mixing and reimagining of these domains impacted reading practices, bodily dispositions, religious experiences, and communal boundaries. How did the material characteristics of these objects affect the meaning of the words or images? What types of (performative) gestures or bodily movements would have been necessary to read these texts in light of those material properties? How did such mergers of text, image, material, and bodily movement impact religious experiences, especially when sacred texts were involved? Can such textual-material-bodily interfaces provide a site for comparing the ritual experiences of late antique people from different religious communities or even attest to intercultural contact in lived religion?

In this chapter, I will examine a range of artifacts that, much like the two amulets highlighted above, adroitly navigated within and around our assumed boundaries between words, images, materials, and bodily gestures. I begin with an

FIGURE 4. Amuletic pendant (obverse) with text and an image of the woman from Mark 5:25–34. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number: 17.190.491 (obverse). Image in Public Domain.

FIGURE 5. Amuletic pendant (reverse) with text and an image of a woman with arms raised in the orans position. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number: 17.190.491 (reverse). Image in public domain.

analysis of a collection of Jewish and Christian magical objects that incorporate the same biblical passage (MT Ps 91:1 = LXX Ps 90:1) into their rituals and that involve complex interactions between words, images, materials, and bodily movements. I then turn my attention to the literary and material evidence for gesturing the cross in apotropaic and curative contexts. As part of these analyses, I reflect on how the objects speak to broader discussions about late antique intercultural interaction, religious experiences, and reading practices.

MT PS 91:1 (LXX PS 90:1) ON JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN AMULETS: INTERCULTURAL CONTACT, READING, AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

MT Psalm 91 (LXX Ps 90) was the most commonly used biblical text in ancient apotropaic and curative practice.[11] In ostensibly "early Jewish" contexts, one can find this psalm incorporated into a leather scroll from Qumran (11Q11), which most scholars have appropriately interpreted as exorcistic or apotropaic in function.[12] Ida Fröhlich is probably correct when she speculates that this object was not an amulet given its large size (approx. 71 × 9.5 cm) and absence of folding; instead, she argues it was most likely "a library copy, used as a manual for appointed days, in special liturgies against physical harms and sicknesses brought by demons."[13] This psalm also had a long afterlife in early Jewish and Christian narrative and ritual contexts.[14] In fact, its impact on early Jewish discourses on demons and sickness was so significant that this psalm was even nicknamed "the song of the afflicted" or the "song against the demons" within rabbinic circles.[15]

Given the popularity of this psalm among early Jews and Christians, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that the incipit (or opening line) of this psalm, in particular, found its way into various ritual contexts during late antiquity. The text of this incipit according to the Masoretic text might be translated as follows: "Who abides in the shelter of the Most High shall stay the night in the shadow of the Almighty."[16] The Septuagint version requires a slightly different translation: "He who dwells in the help of the Most High will reside in the shelter of the God of heaven."[17] Several Egyptian amulets (in both Greek and Coptic) incorporate LXX Ps 90:1 (the equivalent to MT Ps 91:1) into their texts, often in conjunction with the incipits of the four canonical Gospels.[18] To mention just one example, the practitioner behind BKT VI. 7.1—a sixth- or seventh-century CE Greek amulet from the Fayyum—listed (after a brief Trinitarian invocation) the incipit of LXX Ps 90 followed by the incipits of each of the canonical Gospels in the order John, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.[19]

In this section, I will focus on the magical use of this psalmic incipit on three groups of late antique objects: amuletic armbands from various parts of the Mediterranean; incantation bowls from Mesopotamia; and late antique amuletic pendants and rings, which likely come from Palestine. I will attempt to show that, when approached both in isolation and in comparison, these respective corpora

not only reveal inter- and intracommunal contact among Jewish and Christian practitioners, but they also hint at complex confluences of text, format, materiality, and even bodily movement as it relates to biblical reception among practitioners and their clients. In so doing, these three groups contribute to our reconstruction of late antique reading habits in lived religious contexts, as I will emphasize in the conclusions to this chapter.

Armbands

Thanks to the important cataloguing work of Thomas J. Kraus, we know that LXX Ps 90:1 was used apotropaically in various material settings during late antiquity, including lintels and sarcophagi from Syria.[20] Building on the work of Jean Maspero and Gary Vikan, Kraus has also catalogued a series of Greek amuletic metal armbands, which circulated widely within Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Cyprus and date to the mid-sixth or early seventh century CE.[21] At least twenty-five of the extant armbands divide the text of LXX Ps 90:1 into a series of units, which were placed in between medallions with visual representations from the life of Christ or with apotropaic images and symbols.[22] One of the best preserved exemplars is a silver armband now housed at the Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of Missouri (no. 77.246; see fig. 6), which divides up the entire text of LXX Ps 90:1[23] and places it in between medallions (dia.: 7.9 cm each) with images from the life of Christ (e.g., the annunciation, Jesus's baptism, the women at the tomb; and the ascension).[24] The armband also includes a range of other symbols and images (e.g., a Medusa-headed serpent, *charaktēres*, and the *pentalpha* [medallion 4]), which scholars have typically—though not unproblematically—identified as "non-Christian" (see chapter 2). Other armbands juxtapose scenes from the life of Christ with more abbreviated versions of LXX Ps 90:1, stopping after the sigma in *skepē* or "shelter" (SB I 1574a),[25] after the genitive *tou hypsistou* or "of the Most High" (SB I 1575),[26] or even halfway through a misspelled version of *boētheia* or "help" (SBI 1576).[27]

As several scholars have noted, the images found on these armbands strongly suggest that their practitioners were heavily involved in—or influenced by—not only contemporary ritual practice, but also by the early Christian pilgrimage trade.[28] Indeed, beginning shortly after the Edict of Milan (313 CE) and waning around the time of Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, Christian pilgrims flocked to sacred sites in Jerusalem, Egypt, and Asia Minor and acquired a host of ritual objects (e.g., tokens, flasks, and rings) that, inter alia, displayed visual cycles from the life of Christ.[29] Among the most common biblical scenes found on such objects are the annunciation, the assumption, and the crucifixion of Jesus—the very scenes that proliferate on the armbands.[30]

Despite the close relationship between the other pilgrimage artifacts and the armbands, the latter clearly developed into a robust and international tradition of their own. In fact, Gary Vikan has organized the armbands into three distinct categories, with one class stemming from Egypt and two classes coming from

FIGURE 6. Silver amuletic armband with scenes from the life of Jesus. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, inv. no. 77.246.

Syria/Palestine/Cyprus.[31] Whatever number of rubrics one prefers, two points seem clear: first, all textual, material, and visual differences notwithstanding, the presence of similar, closely overlapping, and in some cases nearly identical exemplars suggest that these armbands were probably manufactured in workshops.[32] Second, their parallels in text and format (especially LXX Ps 90:1 written in between often the same Christological scenes on medallions) suggest that these workshops—or individual artisans from these workshops—interacted with one another, resulting in a far-reaching ritual practice in the Eastern Mediterranean.[33]

It is no wonder, therefore, that a mid-sixth- to mid-seventh-century CE armband (Israel Museum, Jerusalem 2010.65.381; fig. 7) now housed in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, strongly implies that at least some Jewish practitioners were aware of the Christian armbands.[34] Since the armband was not uncovered through a controlled archaeological dig, we are forced to rely solely on internal, textual, and comparative features to reconstruct its original religious and geographical contexts.[35] As we will see, the armband's original editor, Nancy Benovitz, has sensibly hypothesized that it was created by a Greek-speaking Jew, who probably came from Egypt or Palestine.[36]

Although there are no images on the armband (see below), the texts on it are written across eight medallions (four small medallions [dia. approx. 2.7 cm each] and four larger ones [dia. approx. 3.0 cm each]) and eight "narrow, lozenge-shaped links [h. 1.5 each; one partially missing]" that connect the medallions.[37] The Greek inscriptions on the armband consist mostly of biblical texts from Deuteronomy

FIGURE 7. Amuletic armband bearing a conflation of the first two paragraphs of the Shema in Greek. Egypt or Israel, mid-sixth–mid-seventh century, silver. Height 3.2 cm, present diameter 7.4 cm. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Bequest of Dan Barag, Jerusalem 2010.65.381. Photo © the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Elie Posner.

that correspond to the Shema (i.e., Deut 6:4–9; a conflation of Deut 6:5–9 and Deut 11:13–21), which especially have affinities with the translation of Aquila.[38] What is particularly interesting for our purposes is that the armband may have also included a citation from MT Ps 91:1; Benovitz has offered a reasonable—though tentative—reconstruction of the armband based on the presence of a few extant letters, which seem to make up the final portion of the verse (i.e., "of the sky he will lodge").[39] Based on the fact that Deut 6:5 follows this possible citation of MT Ps 91:1, Benovitz has reasonably speculated that the current lacuna in the artifact originally contained the first portion of MT Ps 91:1 preceded by Deut 6:4 (on the connection between these two passages, see the discussion below).[40] Furthermore, on account of the various passages cited, which were deployed in rabbinic ritual contexts, Benovitz has appropriately argued that this armband represents a rabbinic Jewish "adaptation of the common Christian model."[41] In a more recent venue, Benovitz has contextualized this armband further:

> its lack of Christian iconography and the fact that it is inscribed with the Shema indicate that its owner was probably a Jew . . . who wished to adapt an apotropaic prestige item used by his Christian neighbors to his own faith by infusing it with the powerful verses of the Shema.[42]

As Benovitz highlights, this artifact seems to show that ritual armbands constituted a site for interaction and sharing between and among early Jewish and Christian practitioners. I will return to the broader implications of this instance of intercultural exchange in the conclusions to the book.

Incantation Bowls

The armbands were not the only type of magical artifact in which this psalmic incipit was placed in a complex relationship with other authoritative traditions. There are several incantation bowls, which juxtapose the incipit of MT Ps 91 with Deut 6:4 in an every-other-word pattern.[43] Since these bowls are relatively unknown among scholars of Christian antiquity, it is worth highlighting in detail some of their textual features. One bowl, which probably dates to the sixth or seventh century CE, was published as Bowl 11 in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked's important 1985 edition of amulets, magic bowls, and texts from the Cairo Genizah (hereafter AMS, bowl 11).[44] Naveh and Shaked explain that this bowl was discovered together with a Syriac bowl six kilometers north of Baghdad by a Yugoslavian engineer, who then took both bowls to Belgrade.[45]

The lacunose text on this bowl is written from the outside inward and was designed for a certain Khusrau son of Izdān-dukh. Although the bowl seems to have been designed primarily as a healing object, its text also challenges our heuristic distinctions between curative, apotropaic, and anti-magical functions, including a list of problems that range from "pains and illness" to "mighty spells" to a concluding statement "and all evil things."[46] The bowl also has an image, which, as Naveh and Shaked note, seems to be "a human figure with two smaller drawings to the left."[47]

In order to achieve ritual efficacy, the practitioner cites three biblical passages: Zech 3:2, followed by an every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1, both of which are cited in full:

> שמע יושב יישראל בסתר יהוה עליון אלהינו בצל יהוה שדי אחד יתלונן
>
> Hear/ He who dwells/ Oh Israel/ in the shelter/ the Lord/ of the Most High/ our God/ in the shadow/ the Lord/ of the Almighty/ [is] one/ will abide.

In addition to MT Ps 91:1, which, as we have seen, was commonly used in apotropaic settings in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds, the other two passages—especially Zech 3:2—are well attested among the extant bowls; in his recent survey of biblical texts found on the published incantation bowls, Nils Korsvoll lists twelve bowls that cite Zech 3:2 and three that make use of Deut 6:4.[48]

The every-other-word pattern of the entire first verse of MT Ps 91:1 and the entire formula from Deut 6:4 is likewise found among the unpublished bowls in an anonymous private collection, which James Nathan Ford is currently editing.[49] The every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1 appears in toto in lines 11–12 of JNF 119, with only slight orthographical variations from our bowl and the Masoretic text.[50] That these bowls would have orthographical variations from one another—and from the Masoretic text—is not altogether surprising; as Matthew Morgenstern has stressed, the bowls frequently utilize non-standard orthography (especially the deployment of *matres lectionis*), presumably reflecting the spoken language.[51]

Cyrus Gordon published another incantation bowl (ZRL 48) that preserves this basic pattern.[52] Gordon did not provide a specific date for this bowl, but simply noted that incantation bowls date broadly from the third to the seventh centuries CE.[53] Although Gordon mentions nothing about the bowl's provenance, he does note that, at the time of publication, this bowl was housed in the now-closed Zion Research Library (Boston, Massachussetts). This bowl is written to protect the family of a certain Min-Malka, daughter of Immay, their heirs, and their possessions from the rabbinic arch-demon and angel of death Samael—further qualified as "the Satan"—as well as from various ritual attacks. The incantation opens with Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1 in the every-other-word pattern. In contrast to AMS, bowl 11, however, the citations of these passages are considerably abbreviated: they are condensed to only two words each ("Hear/ He who dwells/ Oh Israel/ in the shelter").[54] Similarly, another bowl that James Nathan Ford is preparing for publication (JNF 207) includes only four words from each verse in its every-other-word pattern.[55] In both cases, it is clear that the practitioners cited these words metonymically since the words themselves are rather meaningless without reference to a larger body of text.[56] Unlike AMS, bowl 11, ZRL 48 places the text of Zech 3:2 at the end of the incantatory text.

The final incantation bowl at the center of our discussion (Aaron bowl B) is part of the collection "David Aaron" (formerly London's Aaron Gallery).[57] Like AMS, bowl 11, the text on this bowl is written from the outside inward. The incantation was written on behalf of a certain Yezid bar Oni and is designed to protect him and all his possessions and animals—including his pigs!—from a host of malevolent forces, including "the evil eye of Satan," Lilith, and various kinds of demons. At the end of his incantation, the practitioner cites Zech 3:2, followed by Num 9:23, and then the every-other-word alternation of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1:

שמע יושב ישראל בסתר לעלון אלהינו בטל יהוה שדי אחד יתלנו

Hear/ He who dwells/ Oh Israel/ in the shelter/ [the Lord]/ of the Most High/ our God/in the shadow/ the Lord/ of the Almighty/ [is] one/ will abide.

Two observations about the practitioner's approach to these biblical texts are worth noting. First, in addition to several orthographical oddities, the practitioner seems to have made a mistake in his implementation of the every-other-word pattern: he has included two words in a row from MT Ps 91:1[58] and leaves out the first Tetragrammaton from Deut 6:4. Second, his particular combination of passages is intriguing. In addition to several bowls, which cite Num 9:23 either independently or in combination with other biblical texts, there is an incantation bowl in Isbell's edition (bowl 35), which includes Num 9:23; Zech 3:2; and Deut 6:4.[59] This practitioner, therefore, seems to have combined two magical biblical traditions that are attested in the extant record: the sequence Zech 3:2, Num 9:23, and Deut 6:4, on the one hand, and the sequence Zech 3:2 and Deut 6:4 together with MT Ps 91:1 in the every-other-word pattern, on the other.

Metal Amuletic Jewelry

A final corpus of materials, which might be classified as "jewelry," serves as a kind of bridge between the armbands and the bowls.[60] Rivka Elitzur-Leiman has recently published a group of pendants and rings—all made of silver—that juxtapose in Hebrew the opening line of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1.[61] Again, the fact that they did not come from a controlled archaeological dig means that, unfortunately, we must rely on internal/textual features in reconstructing their original locations and dates.[62] In the words of Elitzur-Leiman:

> Though this amuletic jewelry did not come to light in properly documented archaeological excavations, the shapes of the letters, the design, and the magical content of the inscriptions suggest that they were made in the land of Israel in the sixth or seventh century [CE].[63]

These artifacts thus present one more example of the analytical limitations and challenges associated with artifacts whose provenance and provenience are unknown or poorly attested.[64]

First, a fifth- or sixth-century CE leaf-shaped pendant from Israel (6 cm [h] × 4.5 cm [w]), now part of the Braginsky Collection in Zurich, features an *ouroboros* with three bulbs at the meeting point. The *ouroboros* surrounds a text that begins with the now-familiar intertwining of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1,[65] which is followed by a star-shaped symbol or magical character. The remainder of the text consists of Deut 6:5–7 and Prov 18:10. As Elitzur-Leiman notes, this pendant was designed to be worn on the chest.[66]

Another pendant in this group (5.5 cm [h] × 4.2 cm [w]), now part of the David and Jemima Jeselsohn Collection in Zurich, is inscribed on both sides with a loop that is adorned with six bulbs in a kind of grape cluster.[67] Its visual and verbal features on the obverse side resemble in many ways the prior example: the presence of bulbs; a dotted border, which is probably an *ouroboros*;[68] and the every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1. All similarities to the pendant from the Braginsky Collection notwithstanding, there are important differences: in addition to several differences of text and format (e.g., the second pendant has text on both sides, begins with MT Ps 138:2, and includes two other verses from MT Ps 91 [vv. 5–6]), this amuletic pendant also dons images of a scorpion, a demon's face, and a star. The texts on the two sides also seem to have been prepared by different artisans and, consequently, might suggest a secondary amuletic usage.[69]

Two rings from Israel likewise attest to the every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1. The first ring (2.6 cm [h] × 2.3 cm [w]) includes in its bezel the Deut 6:4–MT Ps 91:1 combination; however, in this case, the artisan uniquely incorporates Lev 1:1 into the formula. The unprecedented use of the (slightly modified) incipit of Leviticus ("And God [MT: "the Lord"] called Moses and spoke to him from the meeting tent, saying") seems to suggest that the practitioner was metonymically gesturing beyond these words to (portions of) the book

FIGURE 8. Amuletic ring with the every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1. Israel, sixth–seventh century, silver and gold. Height 2.2 cm, width 1.9 cm. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Gift of Jeannie and David Hendin, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum | 2020.15.21. Photo © the Israel Museum, Jerusalem by Elie Posner.

of Leviticus or, perhaps more generally, to relevant Mosaic traditions.[70] In either case, the text continues with a citation of MT Ps 55:8[71] and concludes with the phrase "Amen Selah," a common expression on late antique Jewish amulets and spells.[72] The top of the bezel in its current state displays a "wavy decorative silver element," while the lower half bears traces of an embellishment that perhaps framed the entire bezel.[73]

The text on the second ring (2.2 cm [h] × 1.9 cm [w]), which is now housed in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (see fig. 8), consists solely of the Deut 6:4–MT Ps 91:1 pattern followed by "a rounded line above which appear five vertical lines adorned on each side with three dots."[74] Elitzur-Leiman entertains the possibility that this lacunose drawing originally depicted in part a demonic face.[75] It is worth noting that, much like Aaron bowl B (see above), the practitioner has deviated from the every-other-word pattern, inscribing two words in sequence from MT Ps 91:1 (*ʿelyôn bəṣēl*); however, in the case of the amuletic ring (in contrast to Aaron bowl B), this sequence is followed by two words from Deut 6:4 (*ʾĕlōhênû yy* [= YHWH]). It is also worth noting that the artisan behind this ring has left out the final word from each of the two verses.

Comparative Analysis at the Intersection of Text, Material, Gesture, and Experience

Engaging with these respective corpora side by side raises some interesting questions and analytical horizons, especially since all the objects—albeit in different ways—engaged with the very same biblical verse (MT Ps 91:1 [= LXX Ps 90:1]), and, with the possible exception of the Jewish amuletic armband, divided up and interspersed this passage with other authoritative traditions. To be sure, despite this point of commonality, these objects could differ concerning the material

support (e.g., armbands, pendants, or bowls); orthography; the length of the citation; whether—and which—images were juxtaposed with the biblical text (see below); the specific biblical texts accompanying MT Ps 91:1 (= LXX Ps 90:1); and whether the practitioner made mistakes in his implementation. Of course, these relatively minor differences need not imply that these objects and practices developed in isolation: we might reasonably hypothesize some kind of chain of influence not only between the Christian and Jewish amuletic armbands but also between the incantation bowls and the amuletic jewelry; I consider it unlikely that the Deut 6:4–MT Ps 91:1 pattern would emerge on both the incantation bowls and the amuletic jewelry by mere coincidence. It is, however, more difficult to establish a connection between these latter Jewish ritual technologies and the Christian amuletic armbands (though, of course, this is a possibility to consider).

As interesting as such philological, descriptive, and genealogical observations on these materials might be, they only offer us a limited portrait of lived religion. In order to address other important questions, such as those having to do with the relationships between magical ritual, images (or lack thereof), and biblical text, as well as the kinds of (religious) experiences and bodily entanglements that these objects engendered, we must compare them using other—albeit more speculative—analytical and hermeneutical approaches.

To begin, it is worth underscoring the different ways these objects engaged with the interface of text and image. Although the bowls might include an image in the center and the pendants and rings might be bordered by an *ouroboros* or include other images, none of the ostensibly "Jewish" objects follow the armbands in placing visual depictions of biblical scenes in between the words of MT Ps 91:1. Instead, we find the words of Deut 6:4. This preference is perhaps most apparent in the case of the Jewish amuletic armband (see above), which seems to have been otherwise based on Christian precedents. Why not replace the New Testament scenes on the medallions, for instance, with a scene from the Hebrew Bible or with a menorah, a *lulav*, an *ethrog*, or even zodiacal signs—visual elements that have been found on other Jewish magical objects and in synagogues?[76] We can only speculate as to why the artisan behind this armband might have preferred to inscribe a series of biblical texts over against images; however, four possibilities—which are not necessarily mutually exclusive—could account for the state of the evidence. First, it is possible that the absence of images on the Jewish armband merely reflects a lack of artistic specialization. As scholars have long noted, artifacts such as gems, curse tablets, and, we might add, armbands would have required different kinds of specializations (e.g., cutting the object, inscribing the text, and drawing the images).[77] This scholarship has shown that, although a single individual might have had proficiencies in each of these specializations, we might also envision a situation in which multiple artisans worked in collaboration on a given object. From this latter perspective, it would certainly be possible that there was no person available to draw images on the Jewish armband. Consequently, only texts were inscribed.

But if we allow for the possibility that the presence of only text on the Jewish armband was not simply a reflection of the absence of a specialist and was, therefore, intentional on some level, we might entertain a second option. It is possible that the practitioner simply preferred biblical text over and against images taken from the Bible or other Jewish performative contexts.[78] Despite his predilection for the Greek text (in particular, the translation of Aquila), his armband resonates in this regard with the Jewish Babylonian incantation bowls, which likewise adopt a *textual approach* to biblical tradition and not the image-oriented approach to holy writ found in the Christian armbands (see below). In this vein, Matthew Morgenstern has recently discussed a Jewish incantation bowl that cites Deut 6:4, followed immediately by MT Ps 91:1.[79] If Nancy Benovitz's reconstruction of the armband is correct, the armband would follow the same basic pattern as found on this bowl.

This preference for a textual approach to the Bible might have worked in dialogue with a third, more general explanatory framework: although there was considerable diversity in terms of the ways Jews and Christians engaged with visual culture during late antiquity, there does seem to be a general difference in attitude between Jews and Christians toward art that could explain the Jewish preference for text in this case; the didactic, devotional, and pilgrimage dimensions that presumably buttressed the visual depictions of Jesus in the Christian amuletic armbands would probably not have resonated to the same degree with their Jewish counterparts—even if the images were "Judaized." As Lee Levine has noted:

> One would be hard pressed to make a case for comparable complex doctrines among Jews [as among Christians] which might have required the assistance of narrative or symbolic art. Admittedly, it has been suggested at times that synagogue art might have been intended to illustrate one or another aspect of Jewish liturgy (e.g., the zodiac signs mentioned in some *piyyutim*, the *'Aqedah* narrative read at least several times annually, or an eschatological theme). Even if such a claim is entertained, it would be of an entirely different order than the situation envisioned for the contemporary Christian context.[80]

A fourth explanation could be that the practitioner wanted to dissociate his armband as much as possible from the religious or communal associations with the Christian exemplars. As we saw in chapter 2, shared practices and intercultural contact do not necessarily reflect amicable relations; a Jewish practitioner or client who might have been inspired by a particular Christian ritual technology would not necessarily have wanted to associate his ritual with Jesus or with Christianity more generally. Because the images on this armband would have been relatively small in light of the size of the medallions (i.e., dia. approx. 2.7 cm for the small ones; dia. approx. 3.0 cm each for the large ones), the practitioner might have feared that a depiction of a biblical scene, a *lulav*, an *ethrog*, or zodiacal signs would be confused (by other Jews or by God) with Christian imagery, especially since the outward design of the artifact itself is otherwise indistinguishable from the Christian

exemplars. From this perspective, the written word in the medallions would have also been a *visual* strategy, in the sense that it would have communicated—irrespective of its biblical content—(*Jewish*) *text* instead of (*Christian*) *image*.

The practitioner's preference for the Aquila translation might also signal on a textual level an interest in distancing the ritual from Christian associations; despite its limited role in rabbinic literature (e.g., as useful for difficult words), many Christian authors imply that Aquila's translation proliferated in Jewish circles and, moreover, believed it was a marker of Jewishness.[81] To be sure, some Christians seem to have used or tolerated this translation;[82] however, most Christians preferred the Septuagint, and some Christian writers, such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Epiphanius of Salamis, even thought that Aquila intentionally obscured prophecies about Jesus.[83] From this latter patristic perspective, Aquila's translation was a *Jewish* translation. Unfortunately, the extant evidence makes it difficult to measure the extent to which Jews recognized Aquila's translation to be a marker of religious difference from Christians; however, if our practitioner was aware of Christian views of this translation, we might imagine that its use on the armband would signal clearly to God that the ritual was not tainted by any Christian pollution, which could impede ritual efficacy (see chapter 2). Of course, it is also possible that this was the only Greek translation of which he was aware. Although all solutions to the practitioner's decision to choose text over image will remain speculative, further research into this matter is no doubt a desideratum.

As it relates to the incantation bowls and amulets, the presence of Deut 6:4 in this every-other-word format is more easily explained in reference to broader trends in early Jewish magic, especially in Babylonia. In addition to its presence on various incantation bowls, Deut 6:4 was also included among the texts in the early Jewish *tefillin* or "phylacteries," which, as Yehudah B. Cohn has observed, often carried an apotropaic value.[84] The particular word-alternating pattern of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1 also makes a great deal of formatting sense; Deut 6:4 and the first line of MT Ps 91 both consist of six words (when fully written out in Hebrew), thus forming an equal alternating arrangement. It is interesting to note in this regard that, even in the abbreviated versions of this pattern on the texts of the two bowls mentioned above (ZRL 48 and JNF 207), the practitioners chose to select an equal number of words from each biblical passage.

To appreciate better the implications of these objects for understanding late antique lived religion (in the specific sense [see introduction]), it is worth extending this comparative analysis to the relationships between biblical text, materiality, and bodily movement or gesture. One promising avenue of research relates to the implications of this text-artifact-body interface for the religious experiences that presumably took place when engaging with these objects. To account for this experiential and material dimension, it is useful to consider the category "mediality," as described by the LAR project (see introduction). The LAR team used the term "mediality" to capture how "the focus on communication (both vertical and

horizontal) required specific concern with the roles of material culture, embodiment and group-styles in the construction of religious experience."[85]

Some scholars working within this framework have stressed the interaction between the senses and material things in ancient lived religion. For instance, Emma-Jayne Graham has drawn particular attention to senses, such as sight, touch, and smell, in her analysis of the religious experiences behind Roman votive hands. She writes:

> a votive hand might . . . be handled, smelled, and viewed in various ways, potentially being gripped with differing degrees of force, and possibly even presented balanced on an outstretched palm, a gesture that because of the model's weight would be felt in the muscles of the arm and the upper body, as well as impacted upon balance and movement.[86]

Graham's words invite us to imagine the diverse ways magical objects might have elicited certain kinds of religious experiences across a range of senses. Since the objects discussed above engaged with MT Ps 91:1/LXX Ps 90:1 through different material interfaces, this discussion helps us construct a robust approach to biblical reception that moves beyond mere textuality.

Toward this end, it is worth reflecting comparatively on the kinds of body-text engagements that bowls, armbands, pendants, and rings would have engendered; the individuals engaging with MT Ps 91:1 through these respective media would have experienced the passage in a range of ways. At a basic level, for instance, we can observe that the armbands and incantation bowls required rotation in order to read their texts. Although this is a more general feature of texts on media like incantation bowls, this tactile engagement with the text was part of the ritual performance. To be sure, the armbands and bowls would have necessitated different kinds of movements and gestures of rotation: an armband required a counterclockwise movement to read it via the contortion of one's arm or the removal of the object; a bowl would need to be set on one's lap (or on the floor or other surface) and rotated clockwise or counterclockwise, depending on the direction of the spiral writing.

To take another example, the armbands, pendants, and rings would presumably have made a longer physical impact on the wearer than the incantation bowls—exerting their weight on the finger, arm, or chest. The fact that these objects were made of silver would have also affected their exertion on the body diversely in light of environmental and climatic changes: for instance, the thermal affects that these objects would have imposed on human bodies would have been different depending on the time of day/night or the season of the year (not to mention topography); simply put, we might assume that the physical sensations of wearing a silver armband or pendant outside at night in the dead of winter would not have been the same as at midday during the dog days of summer. Following in the tradition of Graham, one might also cautiously consider how additional senses (e.g., smell

and taste) associated with these and similar objects might have exerted themselves diversely on their clients.[87]

But these objects would have also functioned as a kind of biblical extension of the body itself. In this vein, archeologists, anthropologists, cognitive scientists, and philosophers have highlighted the various entanglements of material objects and human bodies, which can result in situations in which objects serve as extensions of the person; we might think of the classic examples of the soldier with a sword or the visually impaired person with a walking stick. One might usefully ask in these cases where the human self ends, and the object begins. Lambros Malafouris has noted:

> if there is such a thing as the embodied self, then it is a self that constantly projects and extends itself beyond the skin actively engaging and incorporating its material surroundings via the interface of the body.[88]

For Malafouris, therefore, the "self" is not limited by biological boundaries but extends into the material world. Another scholar who has worked in conjunction with the LAR project, Heather Hunter-Crawley, has drawn on the work of Malafouris and others to demonstrate how "both cognitively and historically, objects can become parts of living bodies."[89] Hunter-Crawley uses these theoretical insights to demonstrate the diverse ways in which late antique humans merged with iconography, souvenir dust, tokens, and the site, more generally, of Qal'at Sem'ān—the most important pilgrimage complex devoted to Symeon the Stylite on the route through northern Syria to the Holy Land.

This notion of the extended self is particularly useful to "think with" as it relates to the study of late antique amulets; such objects were designed to be worn on the body, exerting themselves physically on the client perhaps daily for an extended period of time. All differences between rings, armbands, and pendants notwithstanding, it is worth highlighting that MT Ps 91:1/LXX Ps 90:1—in conjunction with the other authoritative traditions—merged with the human body in tactile, cognitive, and presumably visceral senses in each of these cases; they were worn on the body. By contrast, the bowls—much heavier than the armbands—could likewise have imposed themselves physically in some way on the client (though presumably for a much shorter time). The material artifacts, in this case, were not designed to be worn, but to be deposited somewhere.[90]

In summary, the magical corpora at the center of this section highlight the extent to which both Christians and Jews interacted with sacred traditions within and across the domains of text, image, material, format, and body in their everyday rituals, even as they adapted such aspects to reflect their religious and ritual proclivities, more generally. Whether or not one can appropriately posit a direct line of communication between the specific Jewish networks behind the objects with Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1, on the one hand, and those behind the Christian amuletic armbands, on the other, the Jewish amuletic armband published by

Nancy Benovitz demonstrates that armbands could facilitate interactions between Jewish and Christian practitioners. From an experiential and material perspective, we have also seen how objects might exert themselves on and merge with practitioners and ritual participants in ways that transcend religious boundaries in lived contexts, yet, at the same time, help shape the ways individuals experienced their authoritative traditions in practice.

There are many implications of this type of analysis for the study of late antiquity. Perhaps most important, the haptic and material dimensions central to ancient religious experiences necessitate a simple, but significant shift in the editing of ancient textual artifacts: the inclusion of the *weight* of the object in our editions. By attending to this dimension of the ancient and late antique material artifacts, we can better assess the interface of body, object, and text and their implications for lived religion. It would, therefore, be useful if archaeologists, papyrologists, epigraphers, and others working with textual objects consistently included weight alongside other basic information (e.g., size, text, material).

But attending to the bodily movements and dispositions required to read these objects does not fully exhaust the range of possible ways that bodies and texts might have merged in late antique magical texts. In the section that follows, I will draw from the literary record to help identify and contextualize the ritual gesturing of the cross on selected magical objects.

GESTURING THE CROSS IN LIVED RELIGION

As we have already noted, the material properties of certain objects necessitated gestures and bodily movements. In other cases, however, the gestural component seems to have played a more central role in the ritual performance. In this section, I will examine the signing of the cross on ancient amulets and related contexts. By focusing on this cruciform gesture—which is especially highlighted in late antique Christian literary sources—we gain further insight into the ways in which human bodies became entangled with texts, materials, and the like in lived religion.

Crosses and related markings constituted some of the most pervasive symbols in ostensibly magical contexts during late antiquity.[91] Several interrelated forms occur in the extant magical record, including the *crux immissa*; the so-called "tau cross"; the christogram; and the staurogram. These symbols could be used to mark off the beginning of a text or an invocation[92] or a biblical citation.[93] They could also be used to separate elements within a magical text, such as alpha-omega formulations[94] and repetitions of the ΧΜΓ-formula.[95] While the number of crosses could vary, the extant evidence reflects a tendency to include either one cross or sets of three or seven crosses.[96]

Of course, the ubiquity of crosses and the like on amulets has not gone unnoticed by scholars of antiquity. Lincoln Blumell, Brice Jones, and Gillian Spalding-Stracey have emphasized the broader scribal contexts in which these symbols

circulated, as well as their symbolic and artistic valences.[97] Accordingly, they have drawn appropriate connections between amulets and other scribal technologies as it pertains to the particular forms (e.g., shapes, sizes, etc.) of crosses and related symbols. Indeed, these symbols proliferated in late antiquity in a wide range of material contexts, including chancel screens, column capitals, grave monuments, coins, jewelry, literary manuscripts, documentary letters, and textiles.[98]

I would like to build on this scholarship by highlighting another dimension of these symbols: most notably, their possible function within a performative setting. In the tradition of Malafouris, Graham, and Hunter-Crawley, I will be asking how magical objects (and their various attributes, including their texts) might have interacted with the performers' bodies. Of course, these kinds of readings of ancient religious experiences rest on a relatively high degree of speculation; however, they are important because they force us to ask important questions about religious performances and experiences.

Identifying if and how an amuletic ritual was performed is a challenging endeavor. Nevertheless, the extant record suggests that the scribal or visual uses of crosses occasionally merged in complex ways with the ritual performance and the materiality of the object. For instance, the text of a papyrus object from Oxyrhynchus, Egypt (P.Oxy. 81.5260), which dates between the fifth and sixth century CE, consists of the so-called "Hymn to the Cross," a text known from a range of early Christian literary sources.[99] Based on several material and textual characteristics (e.g., it was never part of a codex; it has traces of folding, which likely implies wearing), the editors of this manuscript reasonably concluded that its primary function in antiquity was amuletic.[100]

What is particularly striking about this artifact is how the practitioner has modified the text of this hymn. In place of the Greek word *stauros* (or "cross") throughout this text, the ritual specialist has inserted a staurogram. Within its performative context, therefore, the practitioner would have needed to say "*stauros*" each time he came across this scribal mark. The editors of the papyrus have thus translated this text as follows:

> [O cross,] hope of the Christians; [o cross] resurrection of the dead; [o cross,] guide of the blind; [o cross,] way of those who have gone astray; [o cross,] consolation of the poor; [o cross,] bridle of the rich; [o cross,] destruction of the arrogant; [o cross,] victory against the Devil; [o cross,] instructor of infants; . . . o cross, symbol of righteousness; o cross, release of the oppressed; o cross, guardian of infants; o cross, head of men; o cross, fulfillment of the old; o cross, light to those sitting in darkness; o cross, the eternal shield; o cross, law of the lawless; o cross, proclamation of the prophets; o cross, [??] of the apostles; o cross, self-control of the monks; o cross, covering of the naked; o cross, security of the inhabited world.[101]

In this amulet, the cruciform symbol has been integrated into the ritual performance as a verbal cue, applying the cross as an "eternal shield" against threats, such as the one posed by "the devil." At the same time, the fact that the piece of

papyrus was probably worn suggests that the material thing would have exerted itself on the wearer, reminding and perhaps recreating this performance in his or her daily life. In this vein, it is interesting to note that this papyrus artifact is relatively large, measuring 24.2 × 18.5 centimeters; therefore, its physical impact on the body would have been greater than most amulets.

But unfortunately, not all ritual objects with crosses mark out so clearly the presumed relationships between scribal and performative domains. Nevertheless, the material record—especially when understood through the lens of select literary sources—seems to suggest that so-called magical rituals occasionally incorporated crosses into their texts not only as verbal cues (as in P.Oxy. 76.5073 mentioned above) but also as gestural cues, telling the practitioner or client to sign the cross for his or her curative or protective benefit.[102]

There is evidence—albeit limited—supporting this conclusion. First of all, several literary texts imply that this ritual gesture was ubiquitous in early Christianity.[103] Early Christian writings, such as the *Acts of Thomas* and the works of Tertullian of Carthage, indicate that gesturing the cross figured not only in eucharistic and baptismal celebrations but also in a wide range of everyday contexts (e.g., in bathing). The testimony from Egyptian monasticism suggests that, although we must allow for a certain level of exaggeration as it pertains to these testimonies, the ritual gesturing of the cross in fact played a significant role in early Christian quotidian life.[104]

Of particular significance for our concerns is the use of the cross gesture in healing and protective contexts. Again, the literary evidence is instructive in this regard. As Saint Antony once boldly proclaimed in a text we have already seen several times: "where the sign of the cross is made, magic [*mageia*] wastes away and poison [*pharmakeia*] does not work."[105] In close dialogue with Athanasius's account, Jerome described Hilarion as one who healed by various means, including gesturing the sign of the cross.[106] Hippolytus underscores the importance of gesturing the cross in struggles against demons and the devil: "By sealing the forehead and eyes with the hand, we turn aside from the one who seeks to destroy us."[107]

The *Life of Aaron*, an approximately sixth-century CE monastic travelogue and collection of tales about monks, is particularly instructive in this regard.[108] For instance, we learn in *Life of Aaron* 46 that a monk named Macedonius used the sign of the cross to heal a camel, whose leg was broken. The narrator tells us that Macedonius gave the following instructions to a young deacon named Isaiah: "'Go and bring me some water in a basin.' . . . and then 'Sprinkle it on its leg while saying, "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.' And he made the sign of the cross [*sphragize*][109] over it just as he had told him. Its leg was fixed as if it had not been broken at all." A similar performative context associated with the Coptic verb for signing the cross (*sphragize*) is found in *Life of Aaron* 104, in which the monk Aaron brings the father of a young boy back to life in part through the gesturing of the cross. Again, the protagonist of the story gives specific instructions

to the participants in the narrative. He tells the narrator, who was apparently on the scene, "Bring me some water in order that he may take it and sprinkle it over him in the name of Christ . . ." The narrator then tells us that Aaron "made the sign of the cross [*sphragize*]" over the water and gave it to the boy, saying "Take it and sprinkle it" over his father. We learn that once this performative action was complete, the man arose, eventually paying homage to Aaron, who then corrected the boy and his father to direct their homage to God. In the *Life of Aaron* 114, the verb *sphragize* is also used for Aaron's gesturing of the sign of the cross to heal a rich man, whose eyes had been blinded. Again, the monk instructs the participants to bring a basin of water, which is used to wash the face of the rich man—a ritual action that leads to the recovery of his sight.

In addition to passages in which the verb *sphragize* is used, the *Life of Aaron* also describes a situation in which a tempting demon, who had presented himself as an angel with a golden staff, is caused to disappear after Apa Aaron draws a cross on the ground (*afšōl^{e}h noust(au)ros epkah*).[110] The verb here (*šōl^{e}h*) means in essence to "mark" or "trace the line of" something, and it was also used to signify the gesturing of the cross on one's forehead.[111] Finally, we might mention in passing *Life of Aaron* 19, which reads, "in the same way everyone who will raise his hands after the model of the cross [*ptupos mpest(au)ros*] of Christ will defeat all his enemies just as Moses did, who defeated Amalek by raising his hands."

Of course, the miraculous accounts of the signing of the cross in many—and perhaps all—of these literary texts served larger purposes in the narratives. For instance, in the *Life of Aaron* the story about the broken camel's leg dealt with strife among people who were otherwise friends, whereas the story in which Aaron draws the cross on the ground is about the various manifestations of demons and their desire to tempt the faithful. But this literary evidence demonstrates at least two points worth highlighting. First, these sources show that within the world of late antique Egypt signing the cross was considered to be effective against the overlapping domains of illness, demons, illicit/harmful ritual, and the actions of one's enemies. Second, and more important for our present concerns, the story from the *Life of Aaron* in which Aaron draws the cross on the ground in order to thwart the temptations of a demon hints at a simple but important point—namely, the act of inscribing a cross was at once scribal and gestural (*Life of Aaron* 96).

The interface of the material, visual, and textual dimensions of some magical objects required the physical gesturing of the cross with one's body. This gesture, for example, seems to have been operative in P.Oxy. 8.1077 (fig. 3), mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Again, the practitioner behind this amulet has cut the piece of parchment into fifteen octagons, and inscribed a modified version of Matt 4:23–24 (with title) in cross shapes into all but one of the octagons; in the central octagon, an image of an individual—presumably the client—is drawn.[112] What is worth highlighting for the present discussion is that the cross shapes not

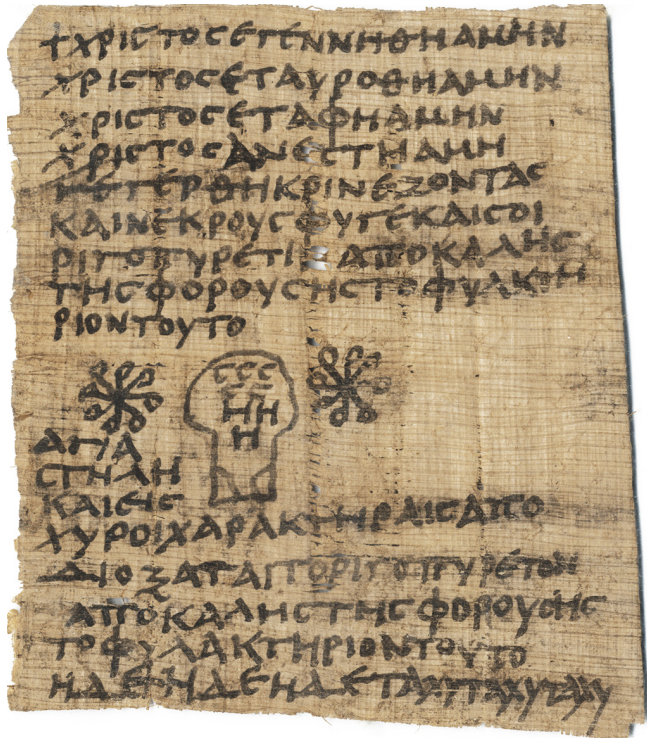

FIGURE 9. Greek amulet with a cross followed by a creedal-like formula. P.Haun. III.51. Courtesy of the Papyrus Haunienses Collection.

only provided the viewer with visual depictions of the cross but they also required the (human or divine) reader to gesture the cross with his or her head when reading the biblical passage.

This gestural context might help us better understand the function of crosses on certain artifacts. In particular, an emphasis on gesture can, I believe, help us understand the use of the cross on P.Haun. III 51 (*Suppl.Mag.* 23; fig. 9). A gestural explanation not only resonates with the literary and material evidence I just mentioned; it also works with this practitioner's particular approach to visual signs.

P.Haun. III 51 has been dated by its original editor, Tage Larsen, on paleographical grounds to the fifth century CE.[113] This fifth-century CE date has remained unchallenged by subsequent commentators, including Robert Daniel, Franco Maltomini, and Theodore de Bruyn.[114] Its provenance is unknown, except that, as is the case with many late antique Christian amulets, it comes from Egypt. Theodore de Bruyn described the scribal hand as "upright majuscule," which resonates with Larsen's original description of the hand as a simple but not unknown

Byzantine uncial (the so-called Bibelstil).[115] I will present here a translation of P.Haun. III 51, which is only slightly modified from that of Daniel and Maltomini:

> † Christ was born, amen. Christ was crucified, amen. Christ was buried, amen. Christ arose, amen. He was woken to judge the living and the dead. You too, fever with shivering, flee from Kalē, who wears this phylactery [drawing and mag. Signs]. Holy inscription and mighty *charaktēres*, chase away the fever with shivering from Kalē, who wears this phylactery. Now now now, quickly quickly quickly.

Most scholarship has understandably focused on the opening creedal formula. While it does not correspond exactly to any known creed, it resembles the second article of contemporary creeds (e.g., the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed), creedal formulas found in roughly contemporary exorcistic contexts (e.g., those found in Justin Martyr and Origen), and those operative in later exorcisms, such as the ones in the collections of Vassiliev and Delatte.[116] Scholars have especially highlighted the juxtaposition between this otherwise "orthodox"-sounding creed and the presence of "customary" elements—to use de Bruyn's nomenclature. This research has especially emphasized in this regard the second portion of the incantation, which includes invocations of the "holy inscription" (or stele) and "mighty *charaktēres*" as well as the formula "now now now, quickly quickly quickly," versions of which are ubiquitous in the extant magical record.[117]

Although I agree that P.Haun. III 51 is in fact quite interesting for reflecting on questions of Christianization, religious identity, intercultural contact, and the like, I will focus on an issue that has received much less—if any—attention: the implications of the material qualities, scribal markings, and possible performative gestures of and behind P.Haun. III 51 for understanding lived religious experience in late antiquity. In my discussion, I will contend that the cross at the beginning of the text was a performative cue for a ritual gesture.

A few points are worth noting about the text of P.Haun. III 51. The practitioner behind this healing amulet includes a cross at the beginning of the text—immediately before the list of important events from the life of Jesus that are organized into a creedal-like formula. But he or she has also incorporated other visual elements into the text—namely, two *charaktēres* and a drawing the practitioner deems a "holy inscription" (*hagia stēlē*) with five *sigmas* and three *etas* inscribed inside. What I would like to highlight here is that, beyond drawing these other elements, the practitioner also explicitly mentions them in the text. In fact, he or she personifies *and* even invokes them: "Holy inscription and mighty signs, chase away the fever with shivering from Kalē, who wears this *phylaktērion*." Accordingly, these signs were not merely visual; they were integrated into the ritual performance. In this vein, an independent verbal reference to the cross as a symbol is conspicuously absent; the creedal reference to the crucifixion is part of the creed and not marked in any kind of relationship to the cross at the beginning of the text. In light of his or her preference for incorporating visual elements

into the ritual performance, I find it unlikely that he or she simply skipped over the cross. In other words, every textual detail seems to have figured into the performance.

Given the well-established tradition of gesturing the cross for healing (as reflected in the literary sources) and the scribe's particular approach to visual images, I tentatively suggest that, beyond its visual value, the inscribed cross constituted a performative cue for the practitioner to gesture the sign of the cross before reading his or her invented creed. This gesture would have reinforced the confessional and presumably liturgical connotations of this statement of faith—not to mention lend an air of authority to his or her invented creed. In this way, the amuletic object probably became "entangled" with the body of the performer on multiple levels: the performer touched the papyrus object; viewed its text; read and thus heard its words; and even manipulated his or her bodily movements to reflect a symbol on the text.

CONCLUSIONS: THE MAGIC OF READING AND THE READING OF MAGIC

The objects discussed in this chapter reinforce the well-known idea that reading was—and is—not simply a matter of words. As has long been noted, the material forms, performative contexts, and bodily dispositions on/through which a reader engages with texts fundamentally shapes the social practice we call reading. Reading, in the words of Laura Sterponi, "positions one in a web of culturally stipulated relations between bodies, minds, and texts as artifacts and symbols."[118] Shifts in material support, therefore, can significantly impact the ways people encounter specific texts and their notions of textuality more generally.[119]

As we have seen throughout this chapter, magical objects magnify the contingency of text and reading on material support. For instance, the bowls, rings, pendants, and armbands required different forms of physical activity to read MT Ps 91:1/LXX Ps 90:1, including diverse modes of rotation. The formatting of the objects could also impact reading practices: objects that used the every-other-word juxtaposition of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1—and, in one case, also Lev 1:1—disrupted sequential reading of their texts; the cruciform layout of Matt 4:23–24 on P.Oxy. 8.1077 also augmented reading in various ways (see also below).

Yet simultaneously, these late antique magical sources also invert, rearrange, and blend the very boundaries between texts, images, materials, performances, and bodies.[120] Objects such as armbands, rings, and pendants merged biblical texts with their readers/viewers in ways that codices, scrolls, and even incantation bowls typically did not; wearers of these objects engaged with a ritual technology that not only impacted them physically (e.g., the weight of the objects and fluctuating temperature of silver) but also made the biblical text an extension of their bodies. Moreover, the magical objects linked texts, materials, and images in different

ways: the armbands communicated their Christian content through visual images, while the Jewish armband *displayed* authoritative tradition—and perhaps religious difference—through mere text; the octagonal shape of the material artifact and the cruciform design of the written word not only conveyed textual content on P.Oxy. 8.1077 but the latter required the reader to sign the cross with his/her head while reading the text; the hematite material and the image of the woman being healed by Jesus were for all intents and purposes textual on Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.190.491; the cross on P.Haun. III 51 was not only a scribal mark but probably also a gestural cue. At a general level, many of these objects also required their readers conceptually to map biblical texts, among other things, onto the worlds of long-standing ritual designs (e.g., the *ouroboros* on a pendant; the magical character on a Christian armband) and performative settings (e.g., the liturgy via Deut 6:4 or gesturing the cross; Christian pilgrimage via scenes from the life of Christ). In this vein, we might also consider the life of the amulet or of the ritual practices contained therein: the transmission from one ritual specialist to another or from a parent to a child could have imbued the object, text, or tradition with a personal, familial, or communal story that transcended the words on the page.[121]

In short, the magical objects demonstrate that, at times, material supports could be texts and texts could be something else. In each of these cases, the performer encountered or experienced the Bible—or Jewish or Christian tradition—in ways that engaged the body and bodily senses. In the following chapter, we will likewise see how diverse traditions—via images and words—could bleed into perceptions of biblical lore.

4

From Torture to Triumph

The Crucifixion of Jesus in Early Christian Lived Religion

A tenth-century CE Coptic magical handbook self-titled "The Praise of Michael the Archangel" (P.Heidelberg Kopt. 686) prescribed a healing ritual involving water and oil to stop various kinds of sufferings, ailments, and demonic attacks of an envisioned client.[1] Although this parchment handbook falls outside the temporal parameters of this study, one of its sections usefully highlights several aspects of Jesus's crucifixion that we will discuss over the course of this chapter. Beginning on page 12 of this parchment codex, we find the following words:

> I adjure you today by the image of the cross upon which you were lifted up for the salvation of the whole race of humankind, which is what has obliterated all the power of the devil and all demons, who attack the children of humankind. I adjure you today by the first tear that came forth from the eyes of the father, and came down over the head of your holy son Jesus Christ, at the time when he was hanged on the cross for the salvation of all humankind. I adjure you today by the crown of thorns that was placed upon your head, and the five nails that were driven into your body, and the spear thrust that pierced his side, and his blood and water that came forth from him upon the cross. I adjure you today by the three breaths that you blew into the hands of your father upon the cross, which are Elōei Elemas Abaktani Sabaōth. I adjure you today by the three days that he spent in the tomb and his resurrection from the dead, and the cloth with which he was covered, Jesus Christ, the son of god in truth. I adjure you today by your holy resurrection, and the three breaths of life that you blew into the face[s] of your holy apostles. Come to me today, O Lord Jesus Christ, in the flesh that you have borne, and bless the water and the oil that are before me, and breathe down on them, filling them with the holy spirit, so that all the suffering that is [in] his body may come out of N. child of N.[2]

This portion of the spell includes several remarkable details. For instance, the practitioner invokes the *image* (*typos*) of the cross, which seems to be either a cross or a crucifix. In either case, this "image" is framed in triumphal terms: "[it] has

obliterated all the power of the devil and all demons, who attack the children of humankind." Yet, the spell immediately turns from triumphal imagery to the suffering and death of Jesus upon the cross: we find, for example, references to "crown of thorns" (*klam ešanti*) placed upon Jesus's head (l. 197); the "five nails [*nibt*]" that were driven into Jesus's body (l. 198); the "spear" (*lonkhi*) that punctured Jesus's side (l. 199); and the blood and water that came from the crucified Jesus (l. 200).[3] The practitioner's enumeration and recitation of the details from the crucifixion story seem to have been designed to reconstruct mythically that event for the client's benefit. As anthropologists from different regions of the world have shown, the enumeration of parts in ritual contexts often has the effect of reconstruction.[4]

For this tenth-century CE practitioner, the crucifixion of Jesus represented an event that, once vividly recalled, provided a means for healing a client. The ostensible "power" of this event, however, was not framed in abstract terms; the spell was thought to work by drawing the potential client into a narrative world.[5] The various details of Jesus's crucifixion are connected with the suffering (*hisi*) of the client through bookending: references to the suffering of the potential client occur immediately before and immediately after this section (l. 189; l. 210). Consequently, Jesus's suffering and death, which "obliterated all the power of the devil and all demons," provides a specific analogical precedent for combating Satan's attacks on the potential client.[6]

The twin emphases on triumph and suffering presented in this tenth-century CE Coptic handbook align with two approaches to the crucifixion found on earlier artifacts from diverse regions of the Mediterranean. In this chapter, I focus on such artifacts. I argue that the objects reflect these two diametrically opposed ways of using Jesus's crucifixion, which likewise gesture toward developments in the visual representation of the crucifixion in early Christianity. On the one hand, like P.Heidelberg Kopt. 686, some objects deployed the crucifixion as a mythic precedent for their god's eventual triumph over the domain of death, which could be applied through analogical reasoning to the client's immediate concerns. On the other hand, the crucifixion could be understood as an event that relegated Jesus to the category *bi(ai)othanatoi* (i.e., those who had died violently) and therefore made him particularly susceptible to the manipulation of the practitioner. These objects not only testify to the diverse ways the crucifixion was understood in antiquity; they also disclose historical developments in late antique magical practice and complicate simplistic understandings of magical/ritual "power."

JESUS'S CRUCIFIXION AS A TRIUMPHAL MYTHIC EVENT

Although the extent to which early Christian visual culture engaged with triumphal connotations with the cross remains a matter of scholarly dispute (see discussion below), early Christian *writers* could frame Jesus's crucifixion as a triumphal event. Of course, it is difficult to overstress the importance of Constantine—as well as his mother and his biographers—in spreading the idea that the cross and

Jesus's crucifixion were symbols of triumph.[7] Nevertheless, there were in fact pre-Constantinian writers who tried to frame the cross and Jesus's crucifixion in a more positive light. Operating within the nascent Jesus movement, the Apostle Paul, for instance, "boasts" (cf. *kauchaomai*) in the cross and uses it as a symbol of the new creation (Gal 6:14).[8] It is unsurprising, therefore, that Paul places imagery of the crucified Jesus at the center of his message to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2:2).

Other writers whose texts were subsequently collected in the New Testament likewise stressed a triumphal approach to the crucifixion—or at least to his death. Hebrews 2:14 reads:

> Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil. (RSV [slightly modified])

The Gospel of Matthew highlights several preternatural events that took place at the moment of Jesus's death, including the dead coming out of the tombs (Matt 27:52–53).

This triumphal dimension to the crucifixion continued in subsequent generations among certain followers of Jesus. The *Epistle of Barnabas*, written in the early second century CE, includes a story that resonates with the concerns in chapter 3, whereby Moses and the people of Israel were aided in victory every time Moses configured his hands and body to form the shape of the cross.[9] Melito of Sardis, writing later in the second century CE, drew particular attention to this triumphal aspect of the crucifixion of Christ, which was simultaneously framed by a supersessionist history of Israel (see Chapter 2).[10] As part of his treatise, Melito emphasized the triumphal element of Jesus's crucifixion:

> It is he who, coming from heaven to the earth because of the suffering one, and clothing himself in that same one through a virgin's womb, and coming forth a man, accepted the passions of the suffering one through the body which was able to suffer, and dissolved the passions of the flesh; and by the Spirit which could not die he killed death the killer of men.[11]

Melito's words here highlight the irony—already present in the biblical texts—that Jesus's death killed death (cf. "he killed death the killer of men").[12] He also structures his statements into a quasi-creed; Melito tersely captures in seriatim fashion significant elements pertaining to Jesus's soteriological mission: the preexistence of Jesus; his incarnation; and his death. But Melito was not alone in seeing crucifixion as a killer of death. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Cyril of Alexandria likewise picks up on the biblical irony associated with the crucifixion: through Jesus's death, death itself is destroyed.[13]

The belief in the capacity of Jesus's cross to conquer death was likewise applied to situations in the here and now. As part of his criticism of those who turn to coins that have been repurposed as amulets[14] as well as to other amuletic objects used for curative purposes, John Chrysostom highlights the healing quality of the

cross, whose power conquers death, hell, and the power of the devil.[15] The cross, in this reading, renders the pursuit of healing via amulets and ritual formulae foolish and wicked.

But Chrysostom betrays a level of ignorance regarding the extent to which devotion to the cross overlapped with amuletic practice; objects such as P.Heidelberg Kopt. 686 imply that the intimate thanatological and soteriological relationship between Jesus and his followers fostered by the cross also impacted rituals and ritualized objects for healing, demonic struggle, and the like. The mythic blurring of the events at Calvary with concerns of clients stands at the heart of many of the references to the crucifixion on amulets and other magical objects from late antiquity. In short, the crucifixion was considered to be a rather potent myth for quotidian life. As David Frankfurter has usefully noted about the role of myths for concerns in the here-and-now: "not only through *historiola* but also through talismanic iconography and scripture quotations a 'myth' might convey power to present human situations."[16] In this section, I especially attend to a particular Coptic spell, in which Jesus's crucifixion figures as a triumphal event that could be applied to the immediate needs of a client.

A Coptic exorcistic spell that can be probably dated to the early seventh century CE constitutes what is arguably the most extensive reflection on Jesus's crucifixion in a late antique magical context.[17] Like P.Heidelberg Kopt. 686, this earlier spell was designed to apply to a potential client the paradigmatic power of Jesus's triumph over death and the devil. Despite this practitioner's emphasis on the crucifixion, however, his evocation of the crucifixion myth transcends the pages of the "Bible," making use of various traditions that are presented on both visual and verbal registers.

This spell, Brit. Lib. Or. 6796 (4), 6796, was written across two sheets of papyrus—the first measuring 34.5 × 24 centimeters, the second measuring 34.5 × 25 centimeters (see fig. 10)—and consists of sixty-five lines of text. It was likely part of a collection—or, as Marvin Meyer called it, a "portfolio"—of four spells, now all housed in the British Library.[18] This lengthy spell for exorcism has several sections that directly reference the crucifixion of Jesus.[19] For instance, the text begins with a prayer spoken by the crucified Jesus:

> The prayer of Jesus on the cross "Elōei [Elōei La]m[a Saba]ktani Marmarimari," that is "God, my god, why have you abandoned me?" Some of them [s]aid, "Elias," others, "Jeremias." One of [t]hem took a sponge and dipped it in vinegar, and he [Jesus] took a taste. He said, "My father, all things have been com[plet]ed," and at once he gave up the spirit. Heaven opened, the earth quaked, and the bo[nes] of those who had d[i]ed arose. In their bodies they went to Jerusalem, and they went [back] into the tomb.[20]

The balance of this prayer seems to have been taken from the canonical gospels, especially the passion account from the Gospel of Matthew (cf. the heavens opening, the earthquake, the resuscitation of the dead in Jerusalem [cf. Matt 27:51–53]).[21] This is not to say that all the elements derive from Matthew's version of the

FIGURE 10. Second page of a Coptic spell with images of the crucified Jesus and the two criminals. Courtesy of the British Library Board. Brit. Lib. Or. 6796.

Passion: the reference to the words of abandonment (cf. LXX Ps 21:1) could come from either Matt 27:47 or Mark 15:35; "Marmarimari" (as wel as its cognates) appears on several spells from late antique Egypt;[22] the juxtaposition of "Elias" and "Jeremias" is reminiscent of the reference to Elijah and Jeremiah in Matthew's version of Peter's confession of Christ (Matt 16:13); the sponge with vinegar can

be found in all four gospels (Matt 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:29); the reference to completion does not correspond to any specific gospel passage, but it might allude to the words of the crucified Jesus in John 19:30 ("It is finished") or Luke 23:46 ("Father, into your hands I commit my spirit").

Of course, one must be sensitive to the possibility that these elements were not taken directly from the Bible—whether through written or oral communication—but came to the practitioner through an intermediary source (e.g., another amulet, the liturgy, or other textual, oral, or performative context). Nevertheless, the lack of a close parallel to this particular juxtaposition of biblical traditions makes the unmediated relationship between this spell and the Bible the most likely scenario.[23]

The practitioner's likely use of biblical literature notwithstanding, it should be stressed that not all crucifixion references align so closely with the biblical tradition. We have already seen the use of the name "Marmarimari," which is most likely imported from contemporary magical practice.[24] In addition, the practitioner includes a conversation between the crucified Jesus and a "unicorn" (*papitap nouōt*):

> I [Jesus] looked down and saw a unicorn, who was lying on a golden field, the one [the unicorn] who is named Sappathai. He spoke to me, saying, "Who are you? If thus you stand in this body or this flesh, you have not been given into my hand." I spoke to him saying, "I am I[sra]ēl Ēl, the force of Iaō Sabaōth, the great power of Barbaraōth." So he hid himself from before me.[25]

In this conversation, the crucified Jesus rebukes the one-horned beast, thus suggesting that this animal is his enemy. It is possible that the selection of the "unicorn" for this combative role was occasioned by the presence of unicorns in LXX Ps 21:22–23, which reads: "Rescue my soul from the sword, and from a dog's claw my only life. Save me from a lion's mouth, and my lowliness from the horns of *unicorns* [Greek: *monokerōtōn;* Coptic: *nanitap ᵉnouōt*]."[26] It should be recalled that the practitioner has already engaged with the incipit of this particular psalm (via the Gospel of Matthew), when he proclaimed the words, "Elōei [Elōei La]m[a Saba]ktani Marmarimari"—that is "God, my god, why have you abandoned me?" (ll. 2–3).

The practitioner also notes in a subsequent section of the spell that the father spoke over the head of the crucified Jesus. We read, "By the power of the six other names that the father uttered over the head of his beloved son when he was hanged upon the cross, saying," 'My true name is Pharmen, Eiboubar, Sikh, Takh, Saba, Khirinou'" (ll. 23–26).[27] In this case, the practitioner has invented a scene in which the father plays a direct role in Jesus's crucifixion—a fact that might have brought a certain theological resolution to the abandonment motif inherited from Matthew's citation of LXX Ps 21:1.

In what is arguably the most interesting aspect of this spell, the practitioner draws the crucifixion scene with the two thieves and various names written in "ring script" around the scene (see fig. 10).[28] An extended discussion of this drawing is in order given its intricacy and its significance for tracing the visual history of the magical use of Jesus's crucifixion. As one might expect in light of the other

sections of the spell, Jesus is visually highlighted in the center of the scene. Jesus's cross is drawn according to the *crux immissa* (i.e., Latin cross) form, with vertical (a.k.a., *stipes*) and horizontal (i.e., *patibulum*) rectangular beams wide enough to include, respectively, the drawings of his body and his arms with hands inside (see discussion below). Jesus has a circular head with what seems to be hair, the crown of thorns, or a nimbus around it.[29] The practitioner has drawn Jesus without a beard (though there are a series of dots around his jawline) and has connected the vertical line of his nose to his eyebrows.[30] As we will see below, this latter feature is something that Jesus shares with one of the crucified criminals at his side. Above his head is a crown with the first three vowels of the Greek/Coptic alphabet (*aeē*). As Robert Yelle has observed, the progression of sounds from alpha to omega moves physically from the lips to the throat—a ritual feature, interestingly, that ancient Mediterranean magic seems to have shared with Tantric mantras.[31] There is thus reason to think that the repetition of vowels in sequence, which was ubiquitous in ancient magical practice,[32] represented divine speech and even mimicked the act of speech or communication itself.[33]

Although notions of divine speech were probably operative in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, I think we can gain more specific insight into the meaning of the vowels for this particular practitioner by examining his thoughts on the vowels on the other spells from the "portfolio." We learn from one of the other spells that the vowels empowered the father's creation of the sea (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[2], [3], [1], ll. 65–69) and are tattooed on the father's chest (Brit. Lib. Or. 6794, ll. 40–42).[34] It is likely that such connotations informed his or her usage of the vowels. The practitioner has also inscribed in the upper portion of the *stipes* the title "the King" (*prro*), presumably referring to the moniker ("king of the Jews") given to him in the canonical gospels (cf. Matt 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19–22).

Jesus's body consists of a rectangle (i.e., the torso) placed in the *stipes* with two arms formed by rectangles, which are placed inside the *patibulum*. Of particular significance is the manner in which Jesus is crucified; in contrast to a gem that I will discuss in the next section, Jesus's wrists are depicted as both tied and pierced (with two holes).[35]

The practitioner behind Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 apparently made a mistake when drawing Jesus's legs; in this drawing, the bottom portions of the cross and Jesus have been transposed: Jesus's body transitions into the plinth of the cross and his legs protrude from the right and left sides of the *stipes*. Accordingly, Jesus's legs are not pierced, but instead extend outward. By all indications, Jesus is depicted naked in the drawing—an apparent reference to the gospels' citation of LXX Ps 21:19 (cf. Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:23), portions of which, as we have seen, figure prominently in this spell. In presenting Jesus as naked, the practitioner departs from his other drawing of Jesus in Brit. Lib. Or. 6795, in which Jesus is clearly clothed.

The two crucified criminals reside, respectively, at the right and left of Jesus. There are several differences between the depiction of Jesus and that of the two criminals. The crucified criminals are considerably smaller than Jesus. Furthermore, both criminals are depicted with their arms protruding from their necks and extending circularly to their hips, whereas Jesus's arms were drawn straight and fixed to the *patibulum*. Although the images of the hands are a bit difficult to decipher in detail, it seems that the practitioner depicted the criminals' hands untied and without piercings. Again, such a depiction stands in contrast to the image of Christ. Furthermore, in apparent contrast to Jesus, the practitioner seems to have clothed the criminals and has drawn three circles on the lower portion of their garments. Finally, the practitioner did not make the same transpositional error with the depictions of the criminals as he or she did with that of Jesus; the clothed legs of the criminals are clearly distinguished from the plinths of their crosses. It should also be noted, however, that, as with Jesus, the criminals' legs are not tied or pierced, but extend outward.

The criminals also differ from one another. Although their heads and hair are similar, their eyes, noses, and mouths differ considerably from one another. Perhaps most importantly, the line indicating the nose of the figure on the viewer's right is connected to his eyebrows (like Jesus); by contrast, the nose on the face of the figure on the viewer's left is disconnected from his eyes. In addition, the figure on the viewer's left is lower than the figure to the viewer's right. The facial variations and respective positioning of these figures is likely related to their personas. In this vein, it is significant that above each of the two figures is a name: the figure on the viewer's left is named Gēstas; the figure on the viewer's right is labeled Dēmas.

The canonical gospels do not provide the names of the criminals; the Gospel of Luke, which offers the most extensive account of the criminals, does not name either individual, but it does note that one of them derided Jesus and the other repented:

> One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him [Jesus] and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? We indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man [Jesus] has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He [Jesus] replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39–43; NRSV)

It is unlikely that "Luke" was aware of the names of these figures and simply decided to leave them out; the names are probably a later tradition. In either case, it seems clear that, for the writer/redactor of the third gospel, the names were not as important as the fact that one of these figures recognized the true identity of Jesus and repented during his final moments.

The tradition about the criminals expanded during late antiquity. *Gos. Nic*. provides an interesting parallel to the account given in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796. For

instance, *Gos. Nic*. reads: "and let Dysmas and Gestas, the two criminals, be crucified with you [Jesus]." *Gos. Nic*. 10:2 integrates these characters into the narrative structure of Luke's Gospel:

> one of the criminals [i.e., Gestas] . . . said to him, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us." But Dysmas responded [to Gestas] . . . "have you no fear of God? . . . We deserve our fate, for we are being punished appropriately for our actions. But he did nothing wrong." And he [Dysmas] said to Jesus, "Remember me, Lord, in your kingdom." And Jesus said to him [Dysmas], "Truly, truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The use of the similar names Gestas and Dysmas in *Gos. Nic*. clearly indicates that this text stands in either a direct or indirect traditional relationship with Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796.[36] This relationship also helps explain the facial similarities between the repentant Dēmas and Jesus (in contrast to unrepentant Gēstas) and the positioning of the two criminals on the exorcistic spell (i.e., the image of Dēmas is both higher and closer to Jesus than that of Gēstas).[37]

But the details that extend beyond the canonical accounts are not limited to the drawings. Encircling the upper portion of the crucified Jesus are a series of names written in ring script: Jesus Christ, Bēth Bētha Bētha, Iaō Sabaōth Adōnai Elōeiu, Michaēl, Gabriēl, Raphaēl, Suriēl, Asuēl, Raguēl, and Saraphuēl. The significance of these names is known from earlier sections of this spell or through references in other spells from the practitioner's portfolio. Thus, we have already encountered the name Iaō Sabaōth in Jesus's conversation with the "unicorn" (ll. 21–22): "I am I(sra)ēl Ēl, the force of Iaō Sabaōth, the great power of Barbaraōth."[38] Accordingly, Iaō Sabaōth is the name of the father. The use of Elōeiu after Iaō Sabaōth Adōnai might *prima facie* appear to stand in a relationship with the words of abandonment found in LXX Ps 21:1 (via Matt 27:47). Yet, this same clustering of names occurs in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(2), (3), (1), l. 39: "'O true hidden god, hear me today . . . They fear [his holy name, which] is Iaō Sabaōth Adōnaei Elō[ei].'"[39] Elōeiu is, therefore, best understood as one of God's names. The sequence Bēth Bētha Bētha most likely refers to the names of the twenty-four presbyters from Revelation (cf. Rev 4:4, 10–11; 5:8–14; 11:16–18; 19:4).[40] In Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(2), (3), (1) we find the following invocation: "by the power of the 24 presbyters, whose names are Bēth, Bētha[a], Bēthai . . ." (ll. 43–44).[41] Finally, the practitioner requests in a prior section of Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 that the seven archangels come with Jesus to the client's aid: "I adjure you, father . . . that you send me Jesus Christ and the seven archangels, whose names are Michaēl, Gabriēl, Suriēl, Asuēl, Raguēl, Raphaēl, Saraphuēl" (ll. 40–45). Thus, these angels work alongside Jesus in bringing about the efficacy of the exorcistic ritual.

The sudden shift in script, however, also demands attention. In a prior venue, I have argued that this shift was a way of including the named entities and angels into the visual scene of the crucifixion without having to draw them.[42] In support

of this thesis, I pointed to the visual function of *charaktēres*, which are closely related to this ring script;[43] the concerted effort on the part of the practitioner to place the names in ring script close to the crucified Jesus, as is evident from crowded positioning of the names (esp. the writing of Saraphuēl); and the bleeding of verbal elements into visual elements on another spell from the practitioner's portfolio (Brit. Lib. Or. 6794). In accordance with my earlier thesis, it is also worth noting that the practitioner drew rings on the left and right corners of the upper portion of the *stipes* and on the upper and lower corners of both the left and right sides of *patibulum*. The inclusion of rings on the cross thus connects this drawing visually with the names written in ring script around the crucifixion scene.

Despite the emphasis on the death of Jesus, the crucified Christ is presented in a rather triumphal way. This triumphal dimension is evident in various parts of this spell. The practitioner reproduces the Matthean detail, in which the moment of Jesus's death is coterminous with several preternatural events (e.g., the opening of heaven, an earthquake, and the raising of the dead in Jerusalem). Jesus's death, therefore, signifies for this practitioner a triumph over death itself. As we have already noted, this triumphal motif was well grounded in several "Christian" contexts by the seventh century CE. This triumphal motif is also reiterated in Jesus's communication with the "unicorn" (*papitap nouōt*). In this section (ll. 10–23), the crucified Jesus deems himself the "force" (*dynamis*) of Iaō Sabaōth and the "great power" (*tnoq ᵉnqom*) of Barbaraōth. This self-proclamation even has the ability to cast away the "unicorn"—presumably an emissary of the devil. What is more, the Father proclaims six names, which are said to possess power (*qom*), over the head of the crucified Jesus.

In conclusion, the practitioner behind Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 has creatively engaged with the crucifixion story, incorporating and adapting prior aspects of this tradition while simultaneously inventing new dimensions to this story. Thus, this practitioner exemplifies the fact that conceptions of the crucifixion in late antique magical practice were shaped in dialogue with various traditions—biblical and otherwise.[44] We have also seen that for this practitioner Jesus's death clearly represents a triumph over death; his death not only affects nature; it also causes the dead of Jerusalem to come out of their graves.

Although many magical objects do not specify the presumed interpretation of Jesus's crucifixion, it is likely that this triumphal understanding of the crucifixion was relatively widespread.[45] Such a widespread understanding of the triumphal dimension of the crucifixion would help to explain how a triumphal interpretation of the crucifixion tradition could find its way onto the Jewish-Babylonian-Aramaic incantation bowl from Iraq (Moussaieff 163), which I discussed in chapter 2.[46] As we have already seen, this incantation bowl included the following formula: "'In the name of I-am-that-I-am YHWH Sabaōth and in the name of Jesus [*ʾyšw*] who pressed the height and the depth by his cross and in the name of his exalted father and in the name of the holy spirits/his holy spirit for ever and ever" (lines 29–30).[47] Shaul Shaked argued that the inclusion of the crucifixion tradition and the

Trinitarian formula on this bowl were occasioned by the religious identity of the cursed—a certain Isha son of Ifra Hurmiz.[48] Shaked contended that Isha's non-Iranian name supports the idea that he was in fact a Christian. As a result, the deployment of Christian language on this bowl was designed to turn Isha's god against him.[49] While Shaked's hypothesis on this particular bowl is reasonable, it should be noted that subsequently published Jewish-Aramaic incantation bowls have demonstrated that many of the bowls' practitioners put a great amount of stock in Jesus as a healer and miracle worker.[50]

Whatever reason led to the appearance of the crucifixion motif on this particular bowl, the particular interpretation of the crucifixion is what interests us for the present discussion. Moussaieff 163 explicitly recalls that Jesus "conquered" or "pressed" (cf. the verb *kvś*) the height and the depth by his cross. For this presumably "Jewish" practitioner,[51] therefore, Jesus's death signified victory over pernicious elements, including most probably astrological and demonic threats.[52] Despite its provenance, this bowl's presentation of Jesus's crucifixion resonates with the message found in the Coptic spell—and in the early Christian writers—mentioned above.

While a triumphal understanding of the crucifixion played an important role in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796—as it did in several Christian literary texts—it was not the only way of invoking the death of Jesus. In the discussion that follows, we will see that practitioners could have a radically different view of the meaning and significance of Jesus's death for protection in this life. The comparative portrait that emerges from the analysis of these objects testifies to the range of ways that (Christian) people might engage with Jesus's (untimely) end in their lived practices.

JESUS'S DEATH AS TORTURE

The prominence of a triumphal dimension to the crucifixion in certain contexts should not distract us from the broader negative connotations the crucifixion—and, by extension, Jesus's death—might have had in antiquity. In this section, I argue that the negative association with Jesus's crucifixion also made an impact on the magical evidence. In particular, I contend that an artisan who worked on an early gem most likely would have understood the crucified Jesus as falling squarely within the world of "restless dead."

Although, as we have seen, the crucifixion could possess connotations of triumph in certain early Christian contexts, early followers of Jesus also had to contend with the negative connotations associated with their Lord's manner of death.[53] Paul of Tarsus conceded that Jesus's crucifixion constituted a "stumbling block" for Jews and a sign of "foolishness" for gentiles (1 Cor 1:23).[54] Probably writing sometime in the second century CE,[55] Ignatius of Antioch reiterated this association: "My spirit is a sacrificial offering bound to the cross, which is a scandal to those who do not believe but salvation and eternal life to us."[56] It is not surprising, therefore, that the early apologists had to spill considerable ink justifying

FIGURE 11. Jasper gem with an image of the crucified Jesus. BM 1986,0501.1. Courtesy of the British Museum. ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

to their (imaginary) "Jewish" and "pagan" opponents and interlocutors why their Lord died on a cross.[57]

Fortunately, recent scholarship on crucifixion has begun to consider the presentation of crucifixion and crosses on so-called magical objects.[58] Among the most important objects discussed in this burgeoning area of study is a green and reddish-brown jasper gem, which was formerly part of the private collection of Roger Pereire, but, as of 1986, has been housed in the British Museum (BM 1986,0501.1; fig. 11). Philippe Derchain originally published this amuletic gem in 1964,[59] and it

has found its way into several important collections and analyses of gems in subsequent years.[60] Although the provenance of the gem is unknown, it likely originates from somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean (probably Turkey or Syria).[61] The gem measures approximately 3.0 × 2.5 × 0.6 centimeters, and scholars have reached a general consensus that it should be dated to the late second or early third century CE.[62] If this dating can in fact be maintained, the gem would preserve the earliest extant visual depiction of the crucified Jesus.[63]

The text on this jasper gem consists of various inscriptions around (and on the reverse side of) an image of the crucified Jesus. The deciphered inscriptions include: (obverse) "O Son, Father, Jesus Christ"; the seven Greek vowels;[64] a misspelling of *artanē* ("suspension[-beam/rope]");[65] (reverse) Iōe; a version of Emmanuel (*Emanauēl*); and variants of known *voces magicae*,[66] such as *[I] adatophōth* (cf. *Badētophōth*)[67] and *[A]straperkmēph* (cf. *Satraperkmēph*).[68] The crucified Jesus appears on this amuletic gem affixed to a tau-cross—also known as the T-cross or *crux commissa*—with his hands outstretched and suspended below the *patibulum*. He is bound with two vertical lines per hand (presumably indicating rope or other kind of binding material).[69] In terms of his physical features, Jesus is depicted in profile, bearded, naked, and with long hair. Furthermore, his bent feet are not attached to the *stipes*, but extend out from this vertical beam. As several scholars have noted, the positioning of Jesus's legs on the gem implies the presence of a bar or seat—known as a *sedile*—upon which he would have sat.[70]

As one might expect, the depiction of the crucified Jesus on this early object has received considerable scholarly attention. Scholars, especially Felicity Harley-McGowan, have noted the extreme brutality associated with Jesus's death on the gem. For instance, she underscores that the implied *sedile* would have in actual crucifixions "increased the naked victim's pain and humility, and prolonged his death."[71] Although Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 likewise presents Jesus as unclothed, the specific positioning of Jesus's legs on the gem draws particular attention to his nudity. Harley-McGowan stresses that the gem's anomalous preoccupation with nudity "emphasizes Jesus's subjection to a brutal death."[72] This brutal and shameful presentation of Jesus's nudity works alongside the depiction of his hands, which, as Simone Michel has noted, are displayed in a powerless position.[73] In fact, the limpness of Jesus's arms might even indicate that he is depicted here as already dead. In either case, Jeffery Spier and Felicity Harley-McGowan seem to be on the right track when they stress, in a coauthored analysis of this gem, that the presentation of Jesus (especially the position of his legs and his nudity) "is wholly antithetical to the triumphal symbolism of the crucified Christ seen in subsequent representations in Christian art."[74]

Quite surprisingly, therefore, several scholars have understood this image as gesturing toward the theme of Jesus's bravery and, ultimately, his victory or triumph. Commenting on the gem's "magical function," Harley-McGowan concludes that Jesus was "upheld for his magical prowess in defeating evil powers and

overcoming the brutality of the cross"[75]—an interpretation reiterated in Harley-McGowan's and Spier's joint analysis of the gem.[76] According to this line of scholarship, the crucifixion of Jesus here metonymically evoked the entire story of the cross, in which Jesus eventually "overcame a horrific death."[77]

This interpretation of the gem has made a considerable impact on subsequent scholarship.[78] For instance, Roy Kotansky takes this triumphal interpretation as the basis for his reconstruction and interpretation of the gem's text: he postulates a reconstruction of the word *lusiou* in l. 8 of the obverse and proposes that it should be translated as "redeemer";[79] he also attempts to situate this gem within a liturgical or baptismal performative context (specifically within a Marcosian Christian context).[80]

The impact of the triumphal interpretation of the crucified Christ has also extended to research on the social role of the cross in early Christianity. This gem has functioned as a central piece of evidence for the contention that Christians did not shy away from visual depictions of the crucifixion in the pre-Constantinian period—a position that stands in opposition to conventional scholarly wisdom about early Christian depictions of Jesus's death.[81] Indeed, Harley-McGowan—as well as scholars like Bruce Longenecker, who have followed her lead—relies in large measure on this gem to support the claim that Christian devotion to the crucified Jesus as a *visual* symbol of triumph, victory, or pride proliferated in the pre-Constantinian period.[82]

But some have begun to question the triumphal interpretation of this gem and, consequently, its place in the history of early Christian art. Most importantly, Allyson Everingham Sheckler and Mary Joan Winn Leith have countered Harley-McGowan's contention that the brutality on the gem should be understood as an affirmation of Jesus's power, arguing instead that "the legs of the frontal nude figure splay painfully open over the vertical upright of the cross and call to mind emasculation by impalement."[83]

Sheckler's and Leith's skepticism toward the gem's triumphal presentation is not necessarily novel; a non-triumphal interpretation lurks in the background of the original edition of the artifact. Although Derchain emphasized the brutality of the crucifixion[84]—and, accordingly, drew a connection between the object's efficacy and its presentation of violence (*Gewalt*)[85]—he did not assign a triumphal quality to this brutality. Instead, he mentioned in passing that the presentation of the crucifixion of Jesus on the gem is best situated within the context of ancient magical rituals that invoke those who had died violently.[86] Unfortunately, his hypothesis has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves.[87] Indeed, in my judgment, Derchain's hypothesis makes the best sense of the evidence.

In this section, I will outline a more sustained argument for Derchain's claim that Jesus was invoked by the creator of the gem as one who died violently. In particular, I will situate this gem within its social and visual contexts, taking into consideration both ancient Mediterranean perceptions of crucifixion and analogous pictorial representations of crucified individuals—especially Jesus. In so

doing, I will also expose problems with an undifferentiated notion of "*late antique* magic"—with an emphasis on the temporal adjective "late antique"—and undermine this gem's role in support of the scholarly claim that a triumphal view of the crucifixion was common in pre-Constantinian Christian art.[88]

BM 1986,0501.1 and "Late Antique" Magic

In support of her triumphal interpretation of the British Museum gem, Harley-McGowan claims that such an understanding of Jesus's crucifixion was operative "in magical circles in Late Antiquity."[89] In one sense, she is absolutely correct. In addition to Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, several late antique gems and related material objects depict images of the crucified Jesus in a way that suggests their makers understood his death in triumphal terms.[90] Notable in this regard are two carnelian gems, which might date as early as the mid-fourth century CE and which depict Jesus with his twelve apostles on either side.[91]

But the phrase "late antiquity" is misleading in this regard. It is worth noting that Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 serves as Harley-McGowan's principal exemplar for her claim that a victorious version of Jesus's crucifixion was common in "late antiquity."[92] Although a triumphal understanding of the crucifixion of Jesus was certainly prominent in post-Constantinian ritual practice, it is less clear that it played a major role in earlier periods of "late antiquity" (especially in the late second or early third century CE). This point should not be surprising since late antique ritual practice underwent several important transformations from the late second/early third century CE to the mid-fourth century CE and beyond.[93] In addition to the cessation of crucifixion as a form of execution during the reign of Constantine, the locus of ritual expertise over this period increasingly shifted toward the overlapping environments of monasteries, churches, and shrine complexes (see discussion in chapter 1).[94] These new contexts would no doubt have altered the significance of Jesus's crucifixion for healing, exorcism, and the like. In other words, the mere identification of "magical circles" during "late antiquity" does not adequately reflect the radically different social contexts in which the Coptic spell, on the one hand, and the Greek gem, on the other hand, circulated. On Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, the practitioner's use of Coptic and his considerable knowledge of the gospel material (and presumably apocryphal traditions) strongly suggest he was a Coptic priest or monk (or at least someone with some ecclesiastical or monastic training). Although the British Museum gem may very well have been created by a follower of Jesus,[95] there is no clear indication of its derivation from a Christian priest—and it is unproductive to talk about full-fledged monasticism in the late second/early third century CE.[96]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the British Museum gem does not display any of the key biblical or parabiblical features found in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, which would clearly demonstrate to us that its creator understood the crucifixion of Jesus in triumphal terms. To be sure, these objects do share certain basic

similarities—for instance, the depiction of Jesus as crucified; the use of Jesus's name; the vowels; and the hanging of Jesus's and the thieves' legs.[97] Nevertheless, given their disparate temporal, regional, and linguistic contexts—and, presumably, their considerably different social understandings of crucifixion—we cannot necessarily conclude that even these basic elements would have carried the same connotations or associations for their respective practitioners. An important question, therefore, naturally poses itself: how did ritual practitioners operating within the environs of the pre-Constantinian Mediterranean principally understand those who had died by crucifixion?

Jesus among the Restless Dead

In order to address the question of crucifixion in pre-Constantinian Mediterranean contexts, we need to consider the larger context of the restless dead (i.e., those who had suffered violent deaths [*bi[ai]othanatoi*], untimely deaths [*aōroi*], or who did not receive funeral rites [*ataphoi*]).[98] These overlapping groups of restless dead played considerable roles in rituals for healing, protection, cursing, and divination. As Sarah Iles Johnston has properly noted, "the marginal status of *aoroi* and *biaiothanatoi* would both facilitate interaction with the living and make them easier prey for the practitioner—they were neither impeded nor protected by the walls of the Underworld."[99]

Traditions about the restless dead penetrated numerous ancient material and literary contexts.[100] For instance, this idea finds expression in the extant magical record. The restless dead—including, but not limited to, those crucified—are explicitly incorporated into spells from the so-called Greek Magical Papyri.[101] In addition to the image of the *akephalos* (a headless entity associated with violent death) in PGM II. 166,[102] this corpus includes a spell that is self-titled "Spell of Attraction of King Pitys over any skull cup" that adjures Helios in order to grant the adjurer power over the spirit of a "man who died a violent death [*biothanatou*]."[103] Another spell from the Greek Magical Papyri attributed to King Pitys (PGM IV. 2145–2240) explicitly lists "a criminal who has been executed [*sphagenti hapsamenos*]," into whose "wound" (*plēgē*) the adjurer might insert an iron lamella inscribed with select Homeric verses. In addition, PGM V. 73–74, a spell for catching a thief, includes an arcane reference to "criminal wood [*panourgikon xylon*]," which some scholars have reasonably interpreted as referring to the wood from a *patibulum*.[104]

The close relationship between crucifixion—as a particular form of violent death—and magical praxis is also clear in the literary record. For instance, Pliny the Elder knew about the use of crucifixion nails in the healing of those plagued by a quartan fever (*quartanis*)—a type of malaria also referred to in many of the extant amulets.[105] Apuleius evokes a broader Latin poetic tradition—which includes the likes of Lucan—when he underscores that the workshop of the Thessalian witch Pamphile boasted not only "metal tablets with undecipherable inscriptions" (*ignorabiliter laminis litteratis*)[106] but also "nails from the crucified, flesh still clinging to them" (*carnosi clavi pendentium*).[107] The belief in the power of *ousia* related to

crucified individuals even made its way into the traditions attributed to tannaitic rabbis. We learn that at least some Jews ascribed special healing properties to crucifixions, using crucifixion materials (e.g., nails) as *materia magica* in their rituals (*m. Ŝabb*. 6:10).[108]

Given the widespread belief in the power of the restless dead, we should not be surprised that at least some self-identifying Christians were aware of the ritual use of these poor souls—and, accordingly, used this social knowledge to support their rhetorical invective against the heterodox. The redactor behind the so-called Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* recounts Simon Magus's confession that he manipulated the soul of a child who was violently slain to help him complete his "magic art" (*arte magica*).[109] Tertullian underscores the ritual use of the restless dead, reproducing what seems to be common tropes that "sorcerers" (*magi*) invoke spirits and cause apparitions of the dead to be made manifest and that they "kill children to make an oracle speak."[110] Although the slanderous claims of the Pseudo-Clementine writer and Tertullian are largely a rhetorical fiction, the basic connection they draw between the souls of the dead—including those who experienced untimely and violent deaths—and ritual practice reflects broader social assumptions and supports what we find in the material record.

The social relationship between ritual practice and crucified criminals, in particular, no doubt also worked in conjunction with broader negative associations with crucifixion in the pre-Constantinian Mediterranean world. Attention to other extant Roman depictions of crucified criminals makes this point crystal clear. One of the most famous depictions of a crucified entity was discovered in a room on the Palatine Hill (near the Circus Maximus)—the so-called Palatine or Alexamenos graffito.[111] This graffito is particularly interesting since the figure on the tau-cross has a donkey head in left profile (cf. the image of Jesus on the British Museum gem), with an inscription below that might be translated as "Alexamenos worships [his] god."[112] Scholars have interpreted these details alternatively as a direct mockery of the "Christian" crucified god or as reflecting a "pagan" caricature of Jewish and Christian devotion to an alleged donkey god.[113] In either case, this caricature of a crucified person—which has visual parallels to the British Museum gem—is clearly meant as a mockery (presumably of Jesus). Accordingly, this object brings into sharper relief the shameful connotations of crucifixion in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Indeed, crucifixion was not merely a painful and violent death; it was also considered a particularly shameful form of death, especially during the pre-Constantinian period in which it was implemented. Commenting on the humiliating and protracted spectacle of ancient Roman crucifixion, Kathleen M. Coleman writes:

> Crucifixion [which involves] a lingering death that lasts hours if not days, does not offer the same spectacular appeal as the other "aggravated" death penalties that were commonly imposed: burning and beasts. But the actual moment of death may be relatively insignificant in relation to the satisfaction spectators derived from witnessing preliminaries that culminated in the hoisting of the body onto the cross.[114]

Cicero famously claimed that even the word "cross" itself (*nomen ipsum crucis*) was so shameful that Romans and free men should remove it from their "thoughts . . . eyes . . . and ears."[115] It is no wonder, therefore, that Celsus emphasized that Jesus's death by crucifixion implies that he was "punished to his utter disgrace" (Origen, *Against Celsus* 6.10).

The manifest nakedness of Jesus on the British Museum gem should draw our attention to the sexual connotations associated with this form of ancient punishment. Drawing cross-culturally on instances of torture in Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s, David Tombs has argued in several essays that sexual humiliation—and perhaps even physical sexual abuse—played a key role in the construction of public shame in ancient Roman crucifixions.[116] In addition to the canonical gospels' emphasis on the stripping of Jesus's clothes—which, to be sure, largely derives from MT Ps 22:18—other ancient authors allude to the sexual abusiveness of ancient crucifixion.[117] For instance, Seneca notes that some forms of crucifixion in Bithynia involved the impalement of genitals (*alii per obscena stipitem egerunt*).[118] We can attend to the function of sexual humiliation—especially, the forced removal of clothes—within the overall semiotics of spectacle in Roman crucifixion. This form of execution conveyed a strong social message of shame to Mediterranean viewers, whose patriarchal contexts promoted male sexual power and domination—the antithesis of the naked crucified man.[119] As Tombs notes, the sexual shame associated with ancient crucifixion would have even reverberated after the victim's death and could serve as a kind of *damnatio memoriae*.[120]

To be sure, as we have seen, select writings of early Jesus followers framed the cross in heroic or triumphant terms or imply that believers venerated the cross as a symbol of their faith.[121] Yet, as Robin Jensen has recently noted, the early Christian veneration of the cross—as a visual symbol—by and large applied to plain crosses (i.e., not to those with brutal images of the suffering Jesus).[122] Moreover, the *texts* of certain early followers of Jesus could even ground their Christology in dialogue with the shameful connotations of the crucifixion; the scribe behind the *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* clearly interprets the crucifixion of the substitute for the "living Jesus" as an act of shaming him. The relevant portion of the crucifixion story in this text reads:

> I [Peter] said, what do I see, Lord? Is it really you they are seizing, and you are holding on to me? And who is the one smiling and laughing above the cross? Is it someone else whose feet and hands they are hammering? The Savior said to me, "the one you see smiling and laughing above the cross is the living Jesus. The one into whose hands and feet they are driving nails is his fleshly part, the substitute for him. They are putting to shame [*eueire ᵉmmof ᵉnsrah*] the one who came into being in the likeness of the living Jesus. Look at him and look at me."[123]

Given the shameful connotations with the crucifixion that persisted even among some followers of Jesus, it is perhaps no surprise that the *Martyrdom of Pionius*

reports a tradition in which certain Jews claim that Jesus died as one violently slain (*hōs biothanēs*).[124] Although we should approach the claim of such a Jewish tradition with a degree of skepticism, this text makes it abundantly clear that at least some early Christians recognized that Jesus's particularly brutal form of punishment could relegate him to the realm of the restless dead within then-contemporary social imagination.

The presentation of Christ in a third- or fourth-century CE Greek spell for "releasing from bonds" (PGM XIII. 288–295) might provide another piece of direct evidence that this social understanding of Jesus and his crucifixion made its way into early "late antique" magical practice. In the GMPT, Morton Smith translated the opening of this spell as follows: "For release from bonds: Say, "Hear me, O Christ [*Chrēstos*], in torments; help, in necessities, O merciful in violent hours [*en hōrais biaiois*] . . ."[125] His translation of this spell was based on the work of editors such as Karl Preisendanz, who interpreted the adjective *biaios* ("violent") as modifying *hōrais* ("hours") and therefore "corrected" this adjective to read *biaiois*.[126] Eleni Pachoumi, however, has recently argued that *Chrēstos* ("Christ") is most likely the antecedent of *biaios*.[127] According to Pachoumi, the adjective *biaios* should be understood as framing Jesus within the context of the restless dead.[128] Pachoumi's translation of this opening phrase thus reads, "Releasing from bonds. Say, 'Hear me, Chrestos, in tortures, help in necessities, pitiful in times (throughout the years), who died violently [*biaios*] . . ."[129] With this revised version of the spell in mind, Pachoumi concludes that Jesus's violent manner of death was not an incidental detail, but played an important role in releasing "the prisoners from their iron bonds."[130] Although the text of this spell poses many challenges to editors and translators, Pachoumi's interpretation of *biaios* has the significant advantage of not requiring an emendation to the original text. Consequently, this spell seems to offer further support for my broader contention that many people—including ritual practitioners—who were near contemporaries of the artisan behind the British Museum gem would have understood the violent crucifixion of Jesus in connection with the restless-dead tradition.

To state the matter in reverse: few late second- or early third-century CE Mediterranean people would have used a vivid image of a person, who experienced the brutality and sexual humiliation of crucifixion, to convey triumph for healing, protection, and the like. In light of the ubiquity of the restless-dead motif during this period, many—if not, most—people operating within a ritual context would have probably understood such an image as depicting a soul particularly susceptible to manipulation. In my estimation, the carver of the British Museum gem was not an exception to this rule. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that a variant of *astraperkmēph*—one of the gem's *voces magicae*—is likewise found in a spell from the Greek Magical Papyri, which calls on a soul of one who died prematurely.[131]

In sum, I have attempted to develop Derchain's passing claim that the creator of the British Museum gem most likely approached Jesus's crucifixion with an eye

toward the restless dead motif. This interpretation is supported by the gem's visual emphases on Jesus's nakedness and his brutal crucifixion, as well as its dating to the early part of "late antiquity." Consequently, although the British Museum gem is an important artifact for understanding the early imagery of Jesus, this object's depiction of the crucified Jesus does not lend support to the contention that pre-Constantinian followers of Jesus used visual imagery of his crucifixion in a triumphal way; nor does it justify textual reconstructions of the gem, which highlight the soteriological qualities of Jesus's death.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have witnessed two completely different visions of the crucifixion of Jesus from the period generally referred to as "late antiquity." In addition to contributing to our understanding of biblical reception in lived religion more generally (see the book's conclusions), these two perspectives highlighted two possibilities for how Jesus's crucifixion could figure into rituals deemed magical: as a triumphal precedent for demonic struggle in the here and now and as a mechanism for manipulating an entity who was subjected to a painful, humiliating, and untimely death. These differing visions of Jesus's death carry implications for a range of broader issues in the study of late antique lived religion. For instance, the comparative approach to the two artifacts at the center of this analysis reveals important developments in the visual history of the crucifixion: the visual presentation of the suffering Jesus in the late second-/early third-century CE gem in the British Museum was part of a well-established restless-dead motif that penetrated several contexts typically labeled "magical," especially in the period before Constantine outlawed crucifixion; by contrast, the British Library spell reflected a later context in which the domain of ritual practice had largely shifted to monastic and ecclesiastical contexts and in which actual crucifixion was a distant social memory. Accordingly, the two objects undermine an undifferentiated notion of both "late antiquity" and ritual/magical "power."[132] Although both ritual artifacts supported ritual efficacy with visual references to the crucifixion of Jesus, they crafted that authoritative tradition in dialogue with fundamentally different ideas about that mythic event. This manifest difference ought to prevent scholars who engage with (late) ancient magical texts from assuming, among other things, that common expressions like "ritual power" or "magical power" constitute sufficient explanations in and of themselves for a given ritual practice. They also demonstrate the complex ways early Christian traditions could be mapped onto preexisting traditions: Jesus's crucifixion on spells, such as Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, did not merely replace ancient classical ideas about the crucifixion-magic relation; they added an entire set of theological, textual, visual, and ritual layers to this long-standing relationship.

Conclusions

This book has attempted to illustrate what might be gained if we allow late antique magical objects to speak to a range of scholarly discourses on early Christian boundaries. As we have seen throughout this study, the diverse late antique objects, rituals, and concerns we identify with the term "magic" constituted sites on which Christians—and, occasionally, Jews—from a variety of social classes articulated, negotiated, and transgressed the limits within and between rituals, communities, texts, images, materials, bodies, and traditions.

The magical objects carry implications for how we might conceptualize broad and long-standing categories, such as Jewish and Christian—or pagan, for that matter—for the study of late antique lived religion. Although I think we can productively talk about Jewish and Christian traditions—at least on some level—the extant evidence demands that we set aside *idealized* notions of Judaism and Christianity when interpreting late antique objects from quotidian life. While the use of MT Ps 91:1 on the incantation bowls in chapter 3 might be unproblematically conceptualized as a Jewish ritual practice, other objects reflect more complex dynamics of religious assimilation, cooperation, and differentiation. Indeed, as we learned from the Jewish amuletic armband from the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, elements that had their origins in Jewish contexts could be reappropriated by Jews in light of their interaction with Christian ritual technologies.

The historical oscillation of MT Ps 91:1/LXX Ps 90:1 within and across Jewish and Christian ritual practices simultaneously gestures toward the complex—and often counterintuitive—configurations of Christianity and Judaism that we find on other magical objects. As I have highlighted, the mere use of terms like "syncretism" or "exoticism" cannot adequately account for these complexities. Indeed, claims about syncretism in the study of ancient magic have often been contingent on an essentializing view of symbols and language, whereby a particular symbol/term (e.g., a cross, a menorah, Jesus, Iaō Sabaōth) is thought to be intrinsically or inextricably connected with a religious group (i.e., Christians and Jews). When

two elements identified with two different idealized communities (e.g., Jesus and Iaō Sabaōth) appear on a single object, therefore, claims of syncretism, exoticism, or blurred/crossed boundaries abound.

But, as we have seen, symbols change their meanings, connotations, and associations as they move into different contexts. Accordingly, *both* Jesus *and* Iaō Sabaōth could at times be completely within the realm of Christianity (see chapter 2); there was no mixture or blurred boundaries—at least not from the perspective of the practitioner. In other words, "common" does not imply "generic." It is thus unsurprising to find Jesus and Iaō Sabaōth on a single artifact—such as Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, for example—*as well as* invective against the "Jews." Objects like Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 demonstrate that originally Jewish symbols could radically change their reference points across time and space, in some cases being fully absorbed or assimilated into new (exclusionary) Christian contexts and thus without any trace of "Jewishness."[1] This point ought to inform the way we isolate and classify elements with rubrics such as "Jewish" or "Christian"—or "pagan," for that matter. A particular element (e.g., a divine name, a biblical or liturgical tradition, or a ritual symbol) could acquire different values or connotations depending on its context (e.g., ritual, regional, temporal, communal, and experiential).

The portrait of clear-cut boundaries in lived religion that emerged from the first two chapters also carries implications for scholarly discussions on power, heresy, and orthodoxy. Historians of early Christianity have by and large abandoned the model of Christian theological conflict—most famously articulated by Walter Bauer—whereby heresy and orthodoxy were understood and treated as discrete essences.[2] Instead, scholars now generally follow in the Foucauldian tradition of Alain Le Boulluec, attending to the discursive strategies of the principal early Christian heresiologists (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, and Augustine, e.g.).[3] Although this discursive approach represents an important stride forward, the focus on a relatively limited number of early heresiologists has inadvertently reinforced the idea that interest in religious differentiation fell within the purview of a small, cloistered group of Christian thinkers.

But the magical objects can offer insights into discursive dimensions of what we might call orthodoxy and heresy in lived religion. As we have seen, many late antique Christian ritual practitioners utilized elements derived from Christian "orthodoxy," including biblical texts, creeds, and Trinitarian formulations. Of course, such "heretical" appropriations of "orthodox" language have not escaped the attention of historians of religion, sociologists, and other theorists. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose work on orthodoxy, heresy, and doxa has been influential in late antique studies,[4] emphasized that the heretical power of figures such as sorcerers necessarily relies on the "authorizing language" of orthodoxy; however, he situated such appropriations of "authorizing language" within a model of (tacit) defiance or protest, whereby practitioners might wield such language against their (elite) orthodox antagonists.[5] In the tradition of Bourdieu, George

Zito's discursive analysis of heresy concludes that heretical use of orthodox language "articulates, or threatens to expose, the contradictory dialectical meanings necessarily contained in any ideological thesis that has obtained a measure of institutional support and is therefore an orthodox way of speaking about the world."[6] This view of orthodoxy and heresy, therefore, assumes that the heretical use of authorizing language will be directed against the orthodox or the powerful.

What if, by contrast, the "authorizing language" consists of ideas designed to marginalize other less powerful or deviant groups? The magical objects that deploy anti-magic and anti-Jewish invective (see chapters 1 and 2) in fact demonstrate that "sorcerers" and their clients, who might be condemned as evil or "heretics" for their ritual practices, did not always direct authorizing language—or marshal their intellectual forces—against people in positions of obvious political and social power. Instead, they sometimes appropriated the slanderous rhetoric of orthodoxy and directed it against other marginalized groups (i.e., other magicians and Jews). These objects thus show that the same individuals whom certain ecclesiastical or conciliar texts condemned as wicked on the basis of their ritual practices could, within those very practices, represent orthodox power against other groups, who were marginalized on account of their own ritual practices or religious affiliations/ethnicity. Accordingly, these magical objects imply that many individuals in late antiquity were positioned within global hierarchies of religious and cultural power in such a way that they *simultaneously* embodied the domains of the "orthodox" and the "heretical"—albeit in relation to different discursive categories. Although certain figures in prominent social and political positions stood at the acme of all or at least most cultural taxonomies—and thus represented "orthodoxy" or power pretty much across the board—the ideas and practices of many individuals seem to have placed them in differing positions within various ancient hierarchies of religious and cultural difference. In some areas and social relationships, they were powerless and "heretical"; in others, they were powerful and "orthodox."

On a methodological level, we have also seen how magical sources can illuminate and reorient our understandings of literary texts. Although I have drawn on a range of literary texts to contextualize certain magical rituals, practices, and texts, I have also highlighted instances in which the magical record can raise new questions to ask of patristic and monastic literature. In chapter 1, for instance, we saw how the magical record—alternatively understood as the "religious" record—can help situate early Christian testimonies against illicit ritual within a broader tradition, which included long-standing anti-magical statements in ritual contexts typically deemed magical. In addition, the magical objects demonstrate the diverse ways that people, who were slandered for their ritual practices (chapter 1) or for crossing religious boundaries (chapter 2), could articulate clear-cut boundaries and differentiation. Accordingly, the magical objects can help us reinterpret literary sources, especially in order to understand the nature of ritual and religious boundaries in lived religion.

The magical objects also give us insight into lived dimensions of authoritative traditions—including the Bible—not readily apparent in the literary sources. David Brakke has usefully attempted to shift the discussion away from canonical development toward a discursive analysis of diverse scriptural practices.[7] I think that the magical objects can play an important role in this attempt to trace scriptural practices—a point that Brakke himself noted as a future area of study.[8] As I have underscored in a prior venue, the amuletic evidence demonstrates that the Bible in ritual contexts was typically not conceptualized as a "whole" or an "entirety"; rather, it was thought of as a repository of thematic units or fragments—an approach to authoritative tradition that seemed to have crossed the lines between Christians, Jews, and even what we might call for convenience "pagans."[9] This approach to scripture both presupposed and promoted a vision of sacred literature, whereby authoritative tradition was linked to individual units (e.g., stories or passages) of scripture that were ordered in a hierarchy of relevance for specific concerns (e.g., healing, exorcism, and even cursing).[10] In so doing, these materials demonstrate that lists, groupings, or collections of biblical *passages* could be as important for certain purposes as those of biblical *books*.

But the evidence assessed in *Ritual Boundaries* illuminates additional layers of biblical practices and reception. On the one hand, we have seen in chapters 3 and 4 how biblical traditions could be read and experienced across textual, visual, material, bodily, performative, and communal boundaries. A particular biblical tradition, such as the crucifixion of Jesus, could merge in lived religion with stories and details known from later Christian texts (e.g., the use of elements from the *Gos. Nic.* or related tradition in Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796) or from other ritual contexts (e.g., the restless-dead motif in BM 1986,0501.1).

But the performers in magical rituals also read and experienced the Bible beyond the limits of texts or oral tradition. The diverse ways late antique magical objects interacted with human bodies has led us to consider research on the relationship between objects and bodies, more generally. As I noted in chapter 3, the LAR project and some of its associates, like Emma-Jayne Graham and Heather Hunter-Crowley, for example, have productively drawn on material cultural studies in order to construct a more robust understanding of ancient religious experiences and practices.

These material and affective qualities of magical objects have a bearing on our discussion of scriptural practices. We saw that the material forms through which ritual participants encountered sacred literature necessitated physical movement (e.g., rotating and gesturing) and facilitated diverse fusions between their bodies and the biblical text itself through physical contact (e.g., by wearing rings, pendants, and armbands) and by placing the client within the biblical artifact through visual, textual, material, and performative strategies (e.g., P.Oxy. 8.1077).[11] In short, the magical objects exerted themselves on and fused with practitioners and ritual participants, concomitantly reflecting and shaping scriptural practices and ways of

reading in lived contexts. Biblical "reading" in these objects transcended the limits of words, images, materials, and gestures. The magical evidence thus suggests that in lived religion the Bible was not always merely a text but could be an invitation to a multisensory, interactive experience.

As I noted in chapter 3, this multisensory dimension of ancient lived experiences simultaneously necessitates a methodological shift in the editing of (late) ancient artifacts. Although scholars would do well to observe all haptic aspects of the artifacts they are editing, they should especially attend to—and specify in their editions—the *weight* of the object. This relatively simple and straightforward change in the discipline could yield significant results in the study of premodern lived religion.

In the end, the magical evidence offers us a direct glimpse into the diverse configurations of rituals, symbols, and texts in the everyday lives of late antique Christians. These configurations, which worked in dialogue with a range of quotidian concerns, interests, and contexts (e.g., healing and demonic onslaught), manifoldly aligned with or diverged from the portraits and caricatures of lived practices expressed in the late antique literary record and presented in our inherited scholarly narratives. In this way, the magical artifacts demand that our taxonomies of late antique lived religion account for the ever-changing contours of similarity and difference, foreignness and familiarity, and, consequently, Christianity and Other.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. *Tractates on the Gospel of John 7* (Rettig 1988). All translations of *Tractates on the Gospel of John* in this book have been taken from Rettig 1988 (unless otherwise specified).

2. On this blood ritual, see e.g., La Bonnardière 1965, 46–50; Berrouard 1969; 1977, 883–84.

3. *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 7.6.5 (Rettig 1988, 159–60 [slightly modified]).

4. See, for instance, Sanzo 2017, 236n43.

5. Lietaert Peerbolte 2021; Sanzo 2017, 236–37.

6. *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 7.7.4: An forte dicat: Non perdidi signum Christi.

7. To be sure, as I noted above, Augustine's words were primarily designed to discourage Christian/heathen exchange in another domain (i.e., the blood festival).

8. This emphasis on differentiation and difference will inevitably entail reflection on conceptions of sameness. As Adam B. Seligman and Robert P. Weller have noted, "Determining sameness implies determining difference; one cannot happen without the other" (Seligman and Weller 2019, 6).

9. For this critique of the category "lived religion" in scholarly usage, see Albrecht et al. 2018.

10. Brown 1981, 1–22.

11. Brown 1981, 13–17.

12. Brown 1981, 20.

13. Brown 1981, 21.

14. For instance, David Frankfurter has, in recent decades, put forward a compelling portrait of Christian appropriation of local religion during late antiquity (e.g., Frankfurter 1999, 2009 2018). On the category "syncretism," which has played an important role in Frankfurter's scholarship, see the discussion later in the introduction.

15. For discussions of this scholarship, see chapters 1 and 2.

16. E.g., Crawford 1999, 168–77; Elsner 2003, 117; Nutzman 2022. Even Robin Jensen, who, in her study of the Dura-Europos synagogue, acknowledges the likely presence of common artisans behind frescos on Jewish and Christian buildings, still describes the symbolic overlaps in Dura-Europos as reflecting "blended religions and ethnic groups" (Jensen 1999, 159).

17. Smith 2014, 87–130.

18. Wendt 2016.

19. Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen, 2018. See also Schröter, Edsall, and Verheyden, 2021.

20. This is a wordplay on the edited volume by Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted* (Becker and Reed, 2007). Yet, as the editors of this more recent volume note about Becker's and Reed's now classic collection, "the cumulative findings of the following essays in fact provide additional evidence for the argument their [Becker's and Reed's] volume makes" (Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen 2018, 4).

21. Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen 2018, 3.

22. Roberts 1977 (cf. Roberts and Skeat 1983); W. Graham 1987; Cavallo and Chartier 1999; Gamble 1995; Bagnall 2009.

23. See, for instance, the excellent results achieved by the recent Paratexts of the Bible project at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2014–0: ParaTexBib, accessed August 31, 2023, https://www.manuscripta-biblica.org/. See also Lied and Lundhaug 2017.

24. See Sanzo 2016; Leipziger 2021. Harry Gamble only provides a brief (approx. five-page) discussion of "The Magical use of Christian Books" (Gamble 1995, 237–41). Jeff Childers penned a contribution to the collection *Snapshots of Evolving Tradition*, in which he examined a "divinatory Bible" written in Syriac (Childers 2017). For a discussion of the state of research, see chapter 3.

25. De Haro Sanchez 2015.

26. Boschung and Bremmer 2015; Gordon, Simón, and Piranomonte 2021; Wilburn 2013.

27. Boustan, Dieleman, and Sanzo 2015; Jones 2016.

28. Kiyanrad, Theis, and Willer 2018.

29. Longenecker 2015, 100–105; Harley 2001, 137.

30. On the problems with a general understanding of "power" as it relates to ostensibly magical objects, see Sanzo 2014a, 65–69.

31. E.g., Bohak 2012; de Bruyn 2017; Frankfurter 2018; Nutzman 2022.

32. See Sanzo 2020a, 28–29.

33. On this point, see already Versnel 1991.

34. Of course, questions of taxonomy have long played a major role in religious studies, in general, and in the study of late antiquity, in particular (e.g., J. Z. Smith 1982, 1–18; Saler 1993). My taxonomic approach to magic in this book resonates quite closely with the words of Jonathan Z. Smith on religion: "Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization" (J. Z. Smith 1982, xi).

35. PGM; GMPT.

36. Faraone and Torallas Tovar 2022.

37. Daniel and Maltomini 1990–92.

38. Meyer and Smith 1999.

39. Naveh and Shaked 1985.

40. Naveh and Shaked 1993.

41. Pernigotti 2000.

42. Dosoo and Preininger 2023.

43. E.g., J. Z. Smith 1995, 16–17; Aune 2007, 231–32; Otto 2013, 319.

44. For a helpful introduction to the theories of magic of James George Frazer, Émile Durkheim, Bronisław Malinowski, and others, see Styers 2004.

45. Nongbri 2013, 15.

46. Bernd-Christian Otto has noted many such semantic and theoretical notions of magic (Otto 2017).

47. For an overview of this development, see Sanzo 2019a, 214–26.

48. See Sanzo 2019a, 221–23.

49. *On Christian Doctrine* 2.20.30 (trans. Robertson 1958, 55 [slightly modified]). For a less negative literary description of this ritual and scribal practice, see Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 11.22.

50. To be sure, there are a few spells in the Greek Magical Papyri that align themselves with terms such as *mageia* (see Otto 2013, 337–38); however, such spells are atypical in this regard.

51. Alberto Marradi made a similar point about the function and utility of classification within "scientific enterprises" more generally (Marradi 1990, 154–55).

52. A recent and notable exception is Nutzman 2022. Although Nutzman's study provides a wealth of important information (e.g., the importance of water to late antique Palestinian healing practices), discussions of boundaries in her book are largely framed by a firm distinction between elites and non-elites. For discussion, see chapter 1.

53. See Kotansky 2006.

54. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011.

55. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, 168.

56. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, 172.

57. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, 184–215.

58. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018.

59. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 16.

60. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 18.

61. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 18.

62. Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 18.

63. E.g., Hunt 1911a; ACM 33; Biondi 1979, 112; de Bruyn 2008, 66; de Bruyn 2011, 168; de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, no. 19.

64. *Life of Antony* 78.5.

65. *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 7.12.

66. As the work of Paul Mirecki, Iain Gardner, and Anthony Alcock on P.Kell.Copt. 35 illustrates, a single object could serve as letter with "the extra function of a magical sourcebook" (Mirecki, Gardner, and Alcock 1997, 10). For the earlier Mediterranean evidence, see Faraone 2018.

67. E.g., Lahire 2011; cf. Brubaker 2002.

68. Éric Rebillard has fruitfully applied this research to the study of early Christianity (Rebillard 2012); however, as we will see in chapter 2, Rebillard's particular application of this approach to ancient "magic" is not without problems.

69. See, for instance, Canepa 2010, 19.

70. See, for instance, Bazzana 2020.

71. See, for instance, Kelly 1985.

72. The Markan Liturgy, for instance, included requests for healing using the same biblical formula as that found in P.Oxy. 8.1077 (i.e., from Matt 4:23) in, among other contexts, the Synapte (Cuming 1990, 13) and the intercessions that are part of the Anaphora (Cuming 1990, 23). See also the two prayers for the sick in P.Monts.Roca (fol. 155b l. 23 and 156a ll. 13–14). For a discussion, see Mihálykó 2021, 180.

73. Brakke 2006; Kallares 2015; Frankfurter 2018. See also Elm and Hartmann 2019. This wide diffusion of ideas about diseases and demons into diverse spheres of late antique social existence necessitates a caveat to this discussion: my use of term "multifunctionality" here ought not imply a clear distinction between domains, such as education, magic, and religion; instead, these respective functions are heuristic, approximating areas of concern that, while overlapping considerably in late antiquity, are useful to separate for analytical purposes.

74. Brice Jones notes that we should probably understand this title as meaning, "the good news *about* healing according to Matthew" (B. Jones 2016, 62 [emphasis in original]).

75. On the difficulties in identifying ritual in archaeological contexts, for instance, see Fogelin 2007.

76. See, for instance, Uro 2016.

77. E.g., Frankfurter 2002.

78. For a similar approach to ritual for such analyses, see Frankfurter 2019a, 6.

79. For an overview of the problems with such binary relationships in the history of scholarship, see Bell 1992, esp. 19–66.

80. For the problems and complexities involved with the use of the term syncretism, see Shaw and Stewart 1994; Baird 1971, 126–54; Cassidy 2001.

81. Van der Horst 2007, 177.

82. E.g., Bonner 1950, 22–42; GMPT, xli–lii; Brashear 1995, 3422; Harviainen 1993. As Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart have aptly noted, "Simply identifying a ritual or tradition as 'syncretic' tells us very little and gets us practically nowhere, since all religions have composite origins and are continually reconstructed through ongoing processes of synthesis and erasure" (Shaw and Stewart 1994, 6).

83. Sfameni 2001, 188, 191.

84. Dunand 1975; Lévêque 1975.

85. Sfameni 2001, 192, 198.

86. Sfameni 2001, 198.

87. Sfameni 2001, 199.

88. This idea is developed further in Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

89. Frankfurter 2018; Frankfurter 2021.

90. Frankfurter 2021, 129–30.

91. Cf. Sfameni 2001, 199. See also discussion above.

92. Frankfurter 2021, 131.

93. ACM 65.

94. Frankfurter 2021, 133. Jitse Dijkstra has been critical of the emphasis on continuity intrinsic to Frankfurter's use of syncretism (Dijkstra 2021, 7).

95. The same criticism applies also to Sfameni 2001. To be sure, Frankfurter utilizes terms, such as appropriate and archaism, as hermeneutical tools; however, these terms are undertheorized and not programmatically applied to the primary source material in any substantial way.

96. Luther H. Martin seems to presuppose a similar difference when he distinguishes between "intentional syncretisms" and "sets of naturally selected, transmitted tokens" (Martin 2001, 399).

97. Frankfurter 2018, 230.

98. Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

99. On this point, see Pye 1994, 220.

100. Pye 1994.

101. E.g., Orsi 1985.

102. See also D. D. Hall 1997. For useful historical overviews of the study of lived religion, see Knibbe and Kupari 2020; Denzey Lewis 2021.

103. E.g., Ammerman 2007; Sessa 2018.

104. E.g., McGuire 2008, 12.

105. E.g., McGuire 2016.

106. E.g., Knibbe and Kupari 2020.

107. For an overview of daily life in late antiquity, see Sessa 2018.

108. Albrecht, Degelmann et al. 2018, 570.

109. Albrecht, Degelmann et al. 2018, 570

110. Albrecht et al. 2018, 570

111. Albrecht et al. 2018, 570. The team also placed considerable emphasis on the category of "religious agency," by which they meant "a special type or aspect of the capacity to act in the historical societies under consideration, which results from . . . communication with non- or superhuman addressees" (Albrecht et al. 2018, 158). Such agency manifests itself in two interacting ways: "the powers ascribed to non- or superhuman addressees . . . and the resultant modification of human action" (159).

112. E. Graham 2020. Cf. Latour 2005; Harris and Cipolla 2017.

113. E. Graham 2020, 212.

114. Chapman and Schnabel 2015.

115. Cook 2014.

116. E.g., Spalding-Stracey 2020; Jensen 2017; Chapman 2008.

117. See especially Hengel 1977.

118. See especially Kuhn 1982.

119. For the *editio princeps*, see Kropp 1931a, 47–50 (J); Kropp 1931b, 57–62 (XV).

120. For a discussion of this practitioner's creative use of biblical traditions, see Sanzo 2015.

121. *Christos estathrothē* (read: *estaurōthē*), *amēn*.

122. On the relationship between magic and liturgy, see e.g., Van der Vliet 2011.

123. For the *editio princeps*, see Pleyte and Boeser 1897, 441–79. All translations of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 in this book have been taken from Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 112–71 (unless otherwise specified). I also follow the pagination of Dosoo and Preininger, who have corrected the pagination found in ACM 134. On the incorrect pagination of ACM 134, see also Sanzo 2019b, 232n8. For the dating of this handbook, see Petrucci 1995; Szirmai 1999, 43n6; Sanzo 2019b, 236; Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 111.

124. Images of this entire artifact are available through the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. See "Collectiezoeker," Rijksmusem van Oudheden, accessed August 31, 2023, http://www.rmo.nl/collectie/zoeken?object = AMS+9.

125. On the possibility that it might have been part of a monastic library, see de Bruyn 2017, 87; Boeser 1922, 531.

126. On some of the problems associated with the titles of these texts in the original edition and in subsequent translations, see Sanzo 2014a, 82n31 and n. 32.

127. The phrase, "Hear my exorcism" (*sōtᵉm epaeksorgismos* [read: *epaeksorkismos*]), is repeated several times throughout this short text after a command to come (e.g., 7v, ll. 22–23; 8v, ll. 1–2, 7; 9r, ll. 11–12).

128. For a recent discussion of the *Finding of the Holy Cross*, see Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 161.

129. Sanzo 2014b; Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

1. RITUAL BOUNDARIES IN LATE ANTIQUE LIVED RELIGION

This chapter has been adapted from Sanzo 2019b, with permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press.

1. On the likelihood that these envisioned artifacts were not entire codices, but collections of passages from the Gospels, see e.g., de Bruyn 2011, 160; Stander 1993, 57; Sanzo 2014a, 164.

2. Sanzo 2017. On the significance of semiotics, language, and speech communities for understanding Augustine's approach to improper ritual or "magic," see Markus 1994, 124.

3. For the lexeme "discourse of ritual censure," see Frankfurter 2005a, 257.

4. E.g., Dickie 2001; Stratton 2007.

5. Frankfurter 2005a; Thee 1984, 316–448; Stander 1993; Flint 1999; de Bruyn 2017, 17–42; Sanzo 2019a; Nutzman 2022, 181–208.

6. E.g., Barb 1963.

7. De Bruyn 2017, 17–42. The title of this chapter, which includes a wealth of useful information, is "Normative Christian Discourse."

8. Frankfurter 2019a, 7. I have also divided sources in this way in my publications (see e.g., Sanzo 2014a, 161–65).

9. Nutzman 2022, 148. In fact, the section in which Nutzman discusses such testimonies in depth is titled "Part IV Elite Rhetoric."

10. Of course, such a dichotomous posture is not limited to early Christian studies. As part of his deconstructive analysis of the category "magic" for the study of antiquity, Bernd-Christian Otto drew a firm distinction between what he calls the "discourse of exclusion" (i.e., using "magic" in its negative sense and by outsiders) and the "discourse of inclusion" (i.e., the self-referential use of "magic" terminology among the insiders). See Otto 2013, 319–39 (cf. Otto 2017, 44–50).

11. See the introduction for a basic description of this artifact.

12. I thus use the phrase "ritual boundaries" to denote perceived distinctions between proper and improper or positive and negative rituals. This usage stands in marked contrast to the way in which some scholars of religion have discussed boundaries as it relates to ritual, which could denote the movement "in and out of the ritual moment" (see Seligman and Weller 2019, 27).

13. E.g., Frankfurter 1997, at 128. On monasteries as a locus for the production of late antique "magical" materials, see Frankfurter 2002, 167–70; Brakke 2006, 226–39.

14. E.g., Horsley 1983, 114–19; Sanzo 2016, 591–92 (see also chapter 3).

15. The use of biblical texts on amulets from late antiquity has become a burgeoning field of study in recent decades. See, for instance, Biondi 1979; Judge 1987; de Bruyn 2011; Sanzo 2014a; B. Jones 2016.

16. For a recent discussion of the use of liturgical elements on Greek amulets, see de Bruyn 2017, 184–234.

17. E.g., Council of Laodicea, Canon 36. On the problems with assuming a single Council of Laodicea, see de Bruyn 2017, 39. See also Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon §41. See also Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon §71–72; Shenoute of Atripe, Acephalous work A14§§ 255–59 (Orlandi 1985, 18–20).

18. P.Cairo 45060; Kropp 1931a, vol. 1, no. K; Winlock and Crum 1926, 21, 207.

19. Piwowarczyk, forthcoming.

20. For instance, Piwowarczyk questions the monastic origin of P.Berol. inv. 11347, emphasizing its lack of correspondence to other monastic sources.

21. Frankfurter 2019b, 215.

22. See also the brief but useful discussion of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 in van der Vliet 2019a, 258–59.

23. See Strittmatter 1930–32; Van der Vliet 2019b, 329.

24. Modified translation of Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 113.

25. On such "ego-proclamations," see Mirecki 2001, 176.

26. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 7v, l. 13. He is also called "the servant of the living God" (*ph^{e}m-hal mpnoute eton^{e}h*), which, as I argue, forms part of his considerable knowledge of early Christian traditions and terminology (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, ll. 3–4).

27. On the identification of Gregory in this manuscript, see Meyer and Smith 1999, 311. See also Boeser, who is skeptical that one can identify the intended Gregory (1922, 531). Van der Vliet contends that we should envision here Gregory Thaumaturgos (2019b, 329).

28. Translation by Smith in ACM 70. For the *editio princeps* (and the proposed date), see Crum 1905, 418–20.

29. P.Macq. I 1 (P.Macq. Inv. 375), p. 8, ll. 17–27 (*editio princeps:* Choat and Gardner 2013).

30. Peter Arzt-Grabner and Kristin De Troyer have recently noted that the emphasis of *phylaktērion* falls not on its suspended quality (in contrast to *amuletum* and *periapton/periamma*) but, more generally, "to the power attributed to [the object]" (Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 6). As we have seen above, the canon from the so-called "Council of Laodicea" condemns *phylaktēria* and demands that those who make use of such objects be excommunicated. On the placement of *phylaktēria* within the wider ancient Mediterranean world of protection, see Faraone 2018, 185–87.

31. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, l. 6.

32. E.g., Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 19–21; 2r, ll. 24–26; 3r, l. 10–11; 3v, ll. 25–26; 4v, ll. 26–27.

33. E.g., Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 27–28; 3r, l. 11–12; 4r, ll. 25–26; 4v. l. 26–5r, 2. 1; 7r, l. 28–7v l. 1.

34. E.g., Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 21–22; 3v, l. 27–4r, l. 1.

35. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 3r, l. 15–3v, l. 7.

36. On the relationship between prayer, magic, and religion, see Graf 1991, 188–213. See also Sanzo 2020b.

37. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, ll. 3–4; 4v, ll.1–2. In Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 2v, ll. 24–25, we find a similar phrase: "[Gre]gory, the servant of Jesus [Christ]." See also Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1r, l. 28–1v, l. 1.

38. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 7r, ll. 12, 13–14; 7v, l. 5. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 also includes an extended Trinitarian statement: "O Father and Son and Holy Spirit who exist in unity, and a unity is a trinity; he is a single divinity in three hypostases and a single lordship and a single rule and a single power and a single energy and every authority, and a single person, and a single baptism, a single lord, a single god, the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit" (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 6v, ll. 12–28). In addition, *The Prayer of Saint Gregory* concludes with the following acclamation: "Let the Holy Trinity be with us, the glory and honour and greatness and the power of the consubstantial and life-giving Holy Trinity, now and at all times, forever and ever, amen" (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 7v, ll. 5–12). On the use of Trinitarian formulae on Greek amulets, see de Bruyn 2017, 195–97.

39. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 1v, ll. 2–3; 4v, ll. 5–6.

40. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 7v, ll. 8–10.

41. Theodore de Bruyn emphasizes that practitioners often frame "a customary incantation by incorporating Christian elements at the beginning or the end" of the ritual text (de Bruyn 2017, 91). In the case of Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, however, the practitioner has framed a "Christian" narrative with "customary" incantations.

42. Although the text reads "*aftrefouōm*" (literally "he caused him/it to eat"), it seems likely—both from the immediate context and from the biblical reference—that the people of Israel ("them") not a person such as Moses ("him") was in mind. I thus follow the translation of Richard Smith (ACM 134) here over against the translation in Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 125.

43. Modified translation of Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 125. This rather positive presentation of the "children of Israel" (ⲛϣⲟⲩⲣⲉ ⲙⲡⲛ̅ϩ̅) stands in marked contrast to the fierce anti-Jewish invective in other parts of this codex (esp. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 11v, l. 16–12r, l. 7; 10r, ll. 4–12). On this anti-Jewish invective, see Chapter 2.

44. Modified translation of Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 113.

45. Cf. Juvenal, *Satires* 3.58–78.

46. In the Coptic text, the practitioner has accidently included the reference to male Persians twice (Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 3r, ll. 25–26; l. 27). On the association of Chaldeans and Egyptians with the inventors of astrology and occult sciences among Greek-speaking people, see Costanza 2019, 90. Jews were also commonly associated with improper ritual activity (e.g., Augustine, *City of God* 22.8; Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* 8.5). By the time our practitioner was writing, the Persians had long been linked to the ritual via the μαγ-stem (see Bremmer 1999, 2–4). See also Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 30.1–13. On ethnic alterity and magic more generally, see Faraone 2018, 8–9.

47. It is also possible that Egyptian ritual practice here was also associated with the Pharaonic specialists who opposed Moses (Ex 7:11, 22)—a trope that circulated widely in late antique Jewish and Christian contexts (and beyond). See, e.g., the Damascus Document (CD, col. V.18), Josephus, *Antiquities* 2.286; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 30.2.11; 2 Tim. 3:1–8, 13; Apuleius, *Apology*, 90; Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.50.

48. Of course, this practitioner was by no means alone in the value he attributed to the list. For the use of lists in ancient magical contexts, see R. Gordon 1999.

49. On the home as a perceived space of vulnerability and thus in need of protection during late antiquity, see Frankfurter 2018, 54–63.

50. Hunt 1911b, 253.

51. E.g., P.Haun. III 51; P.Heid. inv. G 1386; P.Köln inv. 851.

52. See also Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 3.6.127, on the alleged incompatibility of amuletic practice and Christianity. For discussion, see Nutzman 2022, 202.

53. Till and Leipoldt 1954, 12.

54. *Apostolic Tradition* 16.14; Till and Leipoldt 1954,12. On the tradition of prohibiting practitioners of inappropriate rituals from participating in baptism and catechesis in late antique and early medieval Christianity, see de Bruyn 2017, 36–37.

55. This is the only New Testament passage in which the term *phylaktēria* occurs and the first attested instance in which the Greek *phylaktēria* are equated with the Jewish *tefillin* (Cohn 2008, 110). On the apotropaic function of *tefillin* in antiquity, see Cohn 2008; Fagen 1992, 368–79.

56. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4.23.5; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 72. For discussion of these passages, see Sanzo 2014a, 161–65.

57. On this point, see especially Sanzo 2019a, 235–36; Calhoun 2019.

58. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 14:1–3 (translation taken from Marcus Dods and George Reith in ANF 1:167). See also Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 26.2, 4; 56.1; *Second Apology* 5; *Dialogue with Trypho* 85.3.

59. E.g., Tertullian, *The Apparel of Women* 1.2.1, 2.10.2–3; Origen, *Against Celsus* 6.40; Arnobius of Sicca, *Against the Pagans* 1.43; Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.20.30. For a useful discussion of this motif in early Christian literature, see Flint 1999.

60. Naveh and Shaked 1993, 115 (bowl 15).

61. Ford and Abudraham 2018, 77–78. This practitioner occasionally confuses the *khet* and the *he* and therefore uses both the spellings *ḥrŝ'* as *hrŝ'*.

62. Pseudo-Clement., *Rec.* 1.5 (translation taken from Frankfurter 1999, 218).

63. Frankfurter 1999, 218. Cf. Lucian, *The Lover of Lies* 34; Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 2.27–29. See also Graf 1997, 218–20.

64. Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, 4r, l.27–4v, 21.

65. Translation taken from Gager 1992, 131–32 (no. 44).

66. Reyes-Cortez 2012, 124.

67. Harari 2017, 248.

68. On the overlapping worlds of curses and blessings, see Frankfurter 2005b.

69. For the claim that religious identities were not "activated" in ostensibly magical contexts, see Rebillard, 2012, 73. See also discussion in chapter 2.

70. *Life of Antony* 78.5 (translation taken from Wortley 2001 [slightly modified]). Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 47–48. For the influence of the Antony tradition on subsequent *vitae*, see, for instance, Harmless 2004, 97–100.

71. *History of the Monks in Egypt* (Greek) 21.17 (see also Palladius, *Lausiac History* 17.6–9). For discussion of the differences between the accounts of this story in the *History of the Monks in Egypt* (Greek) and in Palladius, see Frankfurter 2001, 480–81. For discussion of the differences between the Greek and Latin versions of this story, see Cain 2016, 262–65.

72. See, for instance, Frankfurter 2001.

73. It is important to note that other late antique practitioners occasionally classified *phylaktēria* and *mag(e)ia* under a single category of ritual practice. In fact, the practitioner

behind Brit. Lib. Or. 1013A, an eighth-century CE amulet that includes a binding spell for a dog, uses both *phylaktērion* and *magia* to describe his own ritual activities (Brit. Lib. Or. 1013A, ll. 14, 20). For the *editio princeps* of Brit. Lib. Or. 1013A, see Erman 1895, 132–35 (= ACM 123).

74. Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, ll. 34–40 reads: "cast out every unclean spirit of the defiled aggressor, from a hundred years downward and twenty-one miles around, whether a male demon [*temon* (read: *daimōn*)] or a female demon [*temon* (read: *daimōn*)], whether a male potion [*pharmako ᵉnhoout*] or a female spell [*magia ᵉnshime*], or a demon that is empty, ignorant, defiled" (Sanzo 2015, 92). The notion of female and male *magia* can also be found on Brit. Lib. Or. 1013A. For male and female (evil) spirits, see P.Berol. 11347 v, ll. 6–9.

75. Stegemann 1934, no. XLV; ACM 61. For a brief discussion of this artifact and a short list of other spells against harmful rituals, see Choat and Gardner 2013, 103.

76. The other spell also includes several Christian elements—for example, a reference to Lazarus (l. 30) as well as the following phrase, "for the seal of Jesus Christ is written upon my forehead, and the power of the holy spirit is what will protect me" (ll. 32–34). Both spells on this artifact end with the phrase, "Jesus Christ, help!" (ll. 24, 44).

77. For a helpful analysis of *charaktēres*, see R. Gordon 2014.

78. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 2.20.30.

79. Translation taken from de Bruyn 2017, 29.

80. De Bruyn 2017.

81. The insistence in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9, in particular, on normative and clear-cut boundaries between proper or improper ritual also resonates with the approach to clear-cut boundaries between religious insiders and outsiders articulated in this codex. For further discussion, see chapter 2.

82. Jacques van der Vliet appropriately notes that "magical" objects were probably not "perceived by the practitioners themselves and their clients, that is from an 'emic' point of view, as magic. Many of the texts were even written with the express purpose of counteracting *mageia, hic*, or whatever kind of ritual behavior was believed to be harmful" (2019b, 331).

83. On the relationship between institutional power and cultural influence in Judaism, see Boustan, Kosansky, and Rustow 2011.

84. For a useful analysis of continuity and innovation in early Christian uses of *charitēsia*, see de Bruyn 2015.

2. RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES IN LATE ANTIQUE LIVED RELIGION

1. Sophronius of Jerusalem, *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* 39. For a useful discussion of the issues related to the transmission of the work of *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*, see Neil 2006.

2. There is a lacuna in the Greek version at this point (cf. Fernández Marcos 1975). The Latin implies that Petros was asked to partake of the Eucharist (*mysteria Christi quae illic sunt accipe*). On the problems of transmission of the Greek text (and revisions), see Duffy 1984, 77–90. For all translations of this text, see E07546: Sophronius of Jerusalem, University of Oxford, April 28, 2019, https://figshare.sds.ox.ac.uk/articles/online_resource/E07546_Sophronius_of_Jerusalem_in_his_Miracles_of_the_Saints_Cyrus_and_John_recounts_how_Kyros_and_Ioannes_Cyrus_and_John_physician_and_soldier_martyrs

_of_Egypt_S00406_healed_and_converted_two_heretics_followers_of_the_sect_of_Theodosius_an/13915016.

3. Although the text offers us few details on what precisely was at stake in this eucharistic/Christological statement, Sophronius here might be drawing on the claim—supposedly promoted by Julian of Halicarnassus—that Severus of Antioch believed the eucharistic body of Christ was corruptible; in the words attributed to Julian by Severus himself, "[Severus believed that] the divine body consecrated upon the holy altars and the cup of blessing are the food and drink of corruption" (Severus of Antioch, *Against the Additions of Julian* 2 [trans. Moss 2016, 75]). Based on such a caricature of Petros's alleged master, it would follow from Sophronius's perspective/rhetoric that Petros would find the notion of the "vivifying flesh and blood of Christ"—and the incorruptibility that it tacitly implies—unacceptable. As Yonatan Moss demonstrates, Julian's alleged claim about Severus was not entirely false (cf. Moss 2016, 78–81); according to his reading, Severus recognized the impassibility and immortality of Christ's eucharistic body only in reference to Christ's postresurrection body (Moss 2016, 79). Teasing out the assumed logic of Severus's position on this point, Moss writes, "if the eucharistic body, or certain aspects of it, were judged to correspond to Christ's body *prior* to the resurrection, it would indeed not be considered impassible or immortal" (Moss 2016, 79).

4. See also Fernández Marcos 1975, 163–64. On the significance of the Eucharist for the healing narratives in *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* more generally, see Csepregi 2005.

5. On the pro-Chalcedonian message of *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*, see Monaca 2017, 296.

6. E.g., Sophronius of Jerusalem, *The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John* 12, 36, 37, 38.

7. Monaca 2017, 295.

8. Boyarin 2004, 1.

9. Fredriksen 2011, 367.

10. Fredriksen 2011, 368.

11. On the problems associated with notion of "communities" in the first centuries of the Jesus movement, see Stowers 2011.

12. Rebillard 2012.

13. Rebillard 2012, 73.

14. Rebillard 2012, 72.

15. Rebillard is, of course, aware of the biases of his literary sources. He claims, however, that the biases in sermons and pastoral treatises can be overcome because they "participate in processes of communication that leave direct and indirect traces in the texts themselves, and that the practice of 'sympathetic reading' or reading 'against the grain' allows us to recover these traces" (2012, 6).

16. Foskolou 2014, 346.

17. Albrecht et al. 2018, 570.

18. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, 169. De Bruyn follows the same basic taxonomy of "Christian elements" in his monograph (de Bruyn 2017).

19. Shandruk 2012, 46.

20. Preisendanz 1973, vol. 2, 189–208; Daniel and Maltomini 1990, vol. 1, 55–112; ACM.

21. For an alternative view, see already Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

22. E.g., ACM; de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011; Wessely 1924, 1946.

23. E.g., Frankfurter 2018; de Bruyn 2017.

24. Hunt 1911b, 253

25. For this proposal, see de Bruyn 2017, 91.

26. Arguably, the most famous usage of this expression comes from MT Ps 22 (LXX Ps 21), where it occurs as the opening of the psalmist's plea to God: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (MT Ps 22:2) The Gospels of Matthew and Mark place a transliteration of these Hebrew words on the lips of the crucified Jesus (Matt 27:46 = Mark 15:34).

27. Iaō—occasionally in conjunction with other supernatural names, such as Abrasax—is sometimes depicted visually on amulets and gems in conjunction with the anguipede (i.e., an entity with snake legs) with a chicken head and an armored torso (Pleše 2006, 188n42)

28. E.g., 1 Sam. 15:2; Is 1:9; 2:12; 5:7, 9, 16, 24.

29. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, 181–82. See also Hunt 1911b, 253. Simon refers to the names on P.Oxy. 8.1152 as a "Jewish-Christian" formula (Simon 1986, 344).

30. De Bruyn 2017, 89–138. This Christian-customary distinction informs de Bruyn's innovative synthetic analysis of the symbolic and scribal features of late antique amulets and, consequently, supports his contention that practitioners stood in varying social proximities to what he calls "the institutional Christian culture." See also the analysis of *PSI* I 29 (= PGM XXXV) in Dijkstra 2021, 21.

31. For a similar emphasis on *what counts as* the same/different—as opposed to what *is* the same/different—within religious contexts, see Seligman and Weller 2019.

32. See Bonner 1950, 18. On the distinction between the exotic and the foreign as it relates to the Middle Byzantine Empire, see Walker 2012, xx. Unfortunately, the magical materials typically provide us with insufficient evidence to determine if exoticism or mere foreignness was operative in a given case (see examples later in this chapter).

33. This notion of difference between insiders and outsiders was even part of the folk etymology of "syncretism" offered by Plutarch (*Moralia*, "On Brotherly Love" 2.490). For discussion, see Seligman and Weller 2019, 2–3.

34. For instance, the phrase "for the word is Hebrew" (*ho gar logos estin hebraikos*) appears on a ritual artifact (cf. Perdrizet 1928, 76). See also PGM III. 119, where we find the following adjuration: "I adjure you by the Hebrew language/sound" (*kata tēs hebraikēs phōnēs*).

35. The translation has been slightly modified from the *editio princeps* (Levene 1999). The bowl was later republished in Levene 2003, 120–38.

36. Levene 1999, 301; Shaked 1999, 314.

37. Levene 2003, 138. Shaked argued that *rwḥy* "is almost certainly a misunderstanding" of *rūḥēh* (Shaked 1999, 314).

38. Levene 2003, 137; Shaked 1999, 314. Bohak writes the following about this bowl: "One Jewish practitioner, living in Sasanian Babylonia, apparently saw nothing wrong with incorporating Jesus, the Cross, and a Trinitarian formula—all of which he probably learned from a Syriac-speaking Christian—in his incantation bowl" (Bohak 2008, 278).

39. As I will also note in chapter 4, Shaked argued that the Jewish practitioner used this Trinitarian formula in order to turn the Christian client's god against him (Shaked 1999, 316).

40. LiDonnici 2007; Bohak 2003.

41. For an analysis of the difficulties involved in identifying syncretism in this exoticized sense on late antique Christian ritual objects, see Boustan and Sanzo 2017, 223–24.

42. Canepa 2010, 12.

43. Pye 1994.

44. Pye 1994, 221–22 (emphasis mine).

45. Pye 1994, 220.

46. E.g., the so-called Arxometha paides hymn, l. 15 (see Grassien 1997, 52–54); P.Gen. inv. 157. I am grateful to Ágnes T. Mihálykó for drawing my attention to these sources.

47. On this point, see Brakke 2001; Cameron 2007; Sanzo 2014b, 93.

48. See Wilson 2004.

49. Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

50. Translation adapted from *Suppl.Mag.* 1:92, no. 32. For the *editio princeps*, see Maltomini 1982.

51. For source-critical analyses of this phrase, see Maltomini 1982, 152–56; Fiaccadori 1986; Mazza 2007, 444–45. Concerning its anti-Jewish invective, see Sanzo 2014b.

52. *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13.8–9 (trans. Lake 2001, 89).

53. Maltomini 1998. The paleographical features of this amulet have recently been illuminated by Landau, Harrington, and Henriques 2019, 64–67. Through their careful paleographical analysis, the authors were able to show that the practitioner's use of *skylēnai* was most likely relying on the Eusebian tradition (Landau, Harrington, and Henriques 2019, 67).

54. This tradition has a long and complex history. Dogs inhabited a liminal space within early Jewish and Christian imagination. On the one hand, they were used as pets. On the other hand, they were also seen as unclean because they were known to be scavengers (Van de Sandt 2002, 231–33). Among the early followers of Jesus—who, as much scholarship has noted, are best understood within the context of Second Temple Judaism—one finds the usage of dogs to indicate those beyond the boundaries of the community of believers. Concerning *Didache* 9:5, which uses the phrase, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs" (see also Matt 7:6), Huub van de Sandt notes the following: "The dogs represent the gentiles in their impure state. The admittance of gentiles to the holy food would amount to the release of sacrificed things . . . to stray street roamers consuming the unclean and uneatable waste of human beings" (Van de Sandt 2002, 238; see also Blidstein 2017, 116). The extent to which dogs could be framed as unclean animals within early Christian imagination is evident from P.Oxy. 5.840, where Jesus allegedly says to a Jewish high priest named Levi: "Woe unto you, O blind ones, who do not see! You have washed yourself in these running waters where dogs and pigs have wallowed night and day . . ." The comparison made between dogs and pigs in reference to a Jewish high priest certainly demonstrates the extent to which ancient Jews—at least from the perspectives of certain Christians—associated dogs with impurity.

55. *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* 1.2.1–2. For the comparison of the Jews with dogs in the high Middle Ages, see Stow 2006.

56. Cf. ACM 51, ll. 15–21: "through the name and the nails that were driven into [?]the body of Manuel, our Nuel, our god on the cross, by the Jews . . ." For the *editio princeps*, see Alcock 1982.

57. The Syriac *Doctrine of Addai* recounts an anti-Jewish tradition, in which Pontius Pilate later killed Jewish rulers in Palestine. According to this tradition, King Abgar, upon

hearing of this news, "rejoiced greatly over the fact that the Jews had received just punishment" (trans. Howard 1981, 81).

58. Cf. Fredriksen 2007, 171–72.

59. E.g., Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover* 72–99, esp. 96; cf. Wilson 1986.

60. De Bruyn 2017, 157.

61. To be sure, de Bruyn is fully aware that idioms and symbols change their meanings over time. In the conclusion to his useful scribal-symbolic analysis of P.Heid. inv. G 1101, de Bruyn writes the following: "The configuration of this amulet (as well as others) reminds us that elements that at one time might have been distinctive and specific to a particular cultural group can be taken up by other cultural groups or become part of a transcultural vocabulary, so that, once they are 'naturalized' within those cultural systems, they become weak or polyvalent indicators of identity" (de Bruyn 2017, 115). De Bruyn is certainly right concerning the naturalization of cultural elements in new contexts, and the new meanings they might acquire in those settings. But I think this statement on naturalization has much broader implications for the study of late antique amulets (see the discussion later in this chapter).

62. Modified translation of Dosoo and Preininger 2023, 115.

63. On the use of Iaō (and related names) in Greek and Coptic magical traditions, see Fauth 2014.

64. Whether these practitioners were directing their invective against contemporary, historical, or metaphorical Jews is at least in part linked to the question of the size of the Jewish population in late antique Egypt. Although it is likely that the number of Jews in late antique Egypt was higher than previous generations of scholars have estimated, contemporary scholars still face several methodological challenges in reconstructing the Jewish presence with any degree of accuracy. For a recent and promising way forward on this issue, see Papaconstantinou 2023.

65. Blanco Cesteros and Chronopoulou 2020, 281.

66. Translation by E. N. O'Neil in *GMPT*, 10.

67. *Duathukē* should be understood here as the "secret book" that is transmitted by the author (Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017, 73).

68. For a discussion and translation of this text, which is putatively attributed to Timothy of Alexandria, see Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017, 73. The cryptograms ⲱ̅ϫ̅ϛ̅ and ⲱⲙⲉ̅ are used to refer, respectively, to Adōnai and Elōi on the western wall of the so-called Northwestern Annex to the monastery on Kom H at Dongola (see Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017, 72).

69. The text reads: "[It] will not be deposited in a place where there is defilement, for great is the power of these wonderful names" (Łajtar and Van der Vliet 2017, 73).

70. Petrovic and Petrovic 2016.

71. ἁγνεία δ᾽ἐστὶ φρονεῖν ὅσια (trans. Petrovic and Petrovic 2016, 38n16). Cf. Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food* 2.19. Jan Bremmer has dated the inscription from the Epidaurean Asclepieion to the "turn of our era" (2002, 108).

72. Furstenberg 2016, 369–70.

73. Cameron 1995, 156.

74. Blidstein 2017, 107–34.

75. Blidstein 2017, 234–35.

76. Blidstein 2017, 134.

77. Blidstein 2017, 114–20.

78. On this distinction in early Christian views of baptism, see Furstenberg 2016.

79. Frankfurter 1995, 467. For the importance of proper traditional status as it relates to the failed exorcism in Acts 19:13–17, see Bates 2011, 417–18.

80. P.Oxy. 6.954; P.Oxy. 82.5306, P.Oxy. 82.5307.

81. Grenfell and Hunt 1908, 289–90; translation by Marvin Meyer in ACM, 39–40. Although P.Oxy. 82.5306 and P.Oxy. 82.5307 also originally included the phrase, "*on account of her faith* [*kata tēn pistin autēs*]," they differ from one another—and from P.Oxy. 6.954—in several ways. That said, the fact that all three amulets close with the same formula ("Power of Jesus Christ! Father, Son, Mother, Holy Spirit. AŌ. Abrasax. a e ē i o u ō" [written in similar ways within and around a cross]) suggests they were created by the same practitioner or were created in a common workshop.

82. Some heresiological writings suggest that Basilides considered Jesus to be the offspring of Abrasax (e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.24.3–7). There is evidence from the Anna-Perenna-Nymphaeum at Rome suggesting that Jesus could in fact be regarded as the son of Abrasax. For discussion, see Blänsdorf 2015, 298.

83. See Boustan and Sanzo 2017, 237. In my opinion, the emphasis on traditional purity especially comes to the fore in the objects that use pre-existing creeds or invent Christian creeds. For instance, P.Turner 49 (= P.Berlin 21230; *Suppl.Mag*. 31; ACM 14), a late fifth- or early sixth-century CE Greek amulet designed to heal fever, shivering, and headache, probably cites the second article of the Constantinopolitan Creed (a.k.a. the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). We have already seen, P.Haun. III 51 (see also chapter 3), which begins with a series of Christological statements that are arranged into a creedal-like formula: "Christ was born, amen. Christ was crucified, amen. Christ was buried, amen. Christ arose, amen. He has woken to judge the living and the dead." We might intuit behind the creedal amulets an implicit level of religious differentiation. That is to say, the practitioners were highlighting traditional purity to the exclusion of other possible versions of religious identification.

84. All translations of this text have been taken from Frankfurter 2003, 375. For the Coptic text, see Shenoute, *Acephalous work* A14, §§255–59, in Orlandi 1985, 18–20. For discussion, see Frankfurter 2018, 69–74; Dosoo 2021, 51–52.

85. Council of Laodicea, Canon 36. See also Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon §41.

86. On this point, see also Nutzman 2022, 117–48.

87. On the charisma of Christian ritual experts, see Frankfurter 2002, 160–61, 169, 173.

88. *Discourses Against the Judaizing Christians* 8.5.4. Translation taken Harkins 1979, 221.

89. Although Chrysostom presents this discussion in hypothetical terms, it is likely that Jewish practitioners prepared ritual objects for Christian clients. As Gideon Bohak has noted, "It is only in the Christian world that Jews are singled out for magical activities, and the archaeological record might show that in some cases Jewish magicians produced amulets for Christian clients" (Bohak 2012).

90. On the ideological dimensions of Chrysostom's approach to Christian and Jewish spaces, see Shepardson 2014. Of course, this perspective on Christian interaction with Jews—and ritual practitioners—was not limited to John Chrysostom. For instance, Isaac of Antioch warns, "He who eats with magicians, let him not eat the body of the Lord. He who

drinks with soothsayers, let him not drink the book of Christ. *He who eats with Jews, may he have no part whatever in the world to come*. For these three classes of people will be cast into the fire. Whoever has dealings with them shall, like them, have Gehenna for his portion" (trans. taken from Simon 1986, 357n357).

91. On the exposure of catechumens to heresiological tropes, see Perrin 2017, 75–128.

92. Alongside Chrysostom's description of the Judaizers, Sozomen notes that the feast at Mamre involved a non-violent assemblage of Jewish, Christian, and Heathen participants (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.4). For useful discussions of this passage, see Frankfurter 2005a, 274–75; Nutzman 2022, 71–74.

93. On the complex relationship between local dynamics, global religious discourses, and religious violence, see Fredriksen 2007; Sanzo and Boustan 2014; Dijkstra and Raschle 2020.

3. WORDS, IMAGES, MATERIALS, AND GESTURES

1. Hunt 1911a.

2. On the amuletic designation of P.Oxy. 8.1077, see the discussion in the introduction.

3. E.g., de Bruyn 2008, 66; Jones 2016, 63; Dijkstra 2015, 286; Sanzo 2014a, 97.

4. Sanzo 2016.

5. Translation taken from Preininger 2023; cf. Tuerk 1999, 25. That the Markan account of this healing story was primary is indicated by the reference to spending much money and the emphasis upon suffering (Tuerk 1999, 26n2).

6. The meaning of the image of the orant is not clear in this case. It is possible that it signifies the woman in a prayer of thanksgiving or, alternatively, as requesting healing. Grabar notes that "the Romans had used the same orant to signify *pietas*" (Grabar 1968, 11).

7. For discussion, see Blanco Cesteros 2021, 45.

8. Cited in Faraone 2018, 94–95 (with image).

9. To be sure, there are gems that use hematite for other ailments, such as sciatica and stomach issues. Nevertheless, the strong connection with blood, in general, and the reference to Mark's story of the woman with blood (in both the image and text), in particular, point to a uterine or gynecological concern.

10. There has been a long-standing recognition in scholarship that ancient and late antique magical objects were not merely texts. Toward this end, practices that are ubiquitous in the extant magical, such as *voces magicae* (or *voces mysticae*) and *charaktēres*, have been properly understood as creatively interacting with (late) ancient ideas about words, images, and sounds (e.g., Versnel 2002; Cox-Miller 1986; Frankfurter 1994; R. Gordon 2014; Németh 2021). Monika Amsler has recently situated the *voces* within a complex of ancient approaches to *technē* as a "method" of effecting change in the world (Amsler 2021).

11. Kraus 2018. For Judaism, see especially Rebiger 2010, 268–71.

12. E.g., Puech 1990, 1992, 2000; Bohak 2008, 108–11.

13. Fröhlich 2013, 39.

14. E.g., Matt 4:6 (= Luke 4:10–11). For ritual contexts, see Kraus 2005, 2007b.

15. See *y. Šabb*. 6:2 [8b]; *y. ʿErub*. 10:11 [26c]; *b. Šebu*. 15b. For a discussion of the rabbinic terms used to describe this term, see Duling 1975, 239.

16. Translation taken from Vreugdenhil 2020, 151.

17. Adapted from Pietersma 2009, 593.

18. E.g., Leiden, Ms. AMS 9; PSI VI 719; Robert Nahman Coptic Amulet. P.Vindob. Inv. G 348; and P.Oxy. 16.1928 juxtapose large portions of LXX Ps 90 with the Gospel incipits.

19. *Editio princeps* Krebs 1892, 118–20 (no. IV).

20. E.g., Kraus 2005, 2005/2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2018.

21. The archaeological remains of the so-called Maʿagan Mikhael B shipwreck testify to a robust trade network within and across the Levant, Egypt, and Turkey during the seventh and eighth centuries CE (see Cohen and Cvikel 2018). This pattern of trade could thus provide insight into how the armbands were distributed throughout the Mediterranean. Further study on this matter is certainly a desideratum. I am grateful to Donata Zambon for bringing this source and issue to my attention.

22. E.g., Maspero 1908; Kraus 2009; Vikan 1982, 1984, 1991/1992.

23. The extant text of this incipit reads as follows: ὁ κατοικον (= κατοικῶν) ἐν βοιθια (= βοηθείᾳ) τοῦ <ὑ>ψίστου ἐν σκεπι (= σκέπῃ) τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ οὐ[ρα]ν(οῦ).

24. One of the medallions also includes the phrase, "Jesus, God, the one who conquers." On the conquering God and related formulas, see the useful analysis in Nutzman 2022, 15–37.

25. *Editio princeps* Maspero 1908, 250–51 (no. II).

26. *Editio princeps* Maspero 1908, 250–51 (no. III).

27. *Editio princeps* Strzygowski 1904, 331–32 (no. 7025).

28. E.g., Vikan 1982, 41.

29. They also depict images of saints and other heroes of the faith (see Vikan 1982).

30. As several scholars have noted, these objects (as well as the Jewish pendants that I will discuss later in this chapter) have affinities with the so-called Samaritan amulets from the Byzantine period (e.g., Margain 1984; Pummer 1987).

31. Vikan 1991/1992.

32. Jean Maspero had already highlighted this point in his seminal article on these armbands (Maspero 1908, 250).

33. Like the texts on the bowls and on the extant papyrus and parchment amulets from Egypt, the length of the psalmic incipit on the Greek armbands can vary from a couple words to the whole first verse to nearly six verses (Vikan 1991/1992, 35). In this regard, the armbands reflect a much larger ancient trend, whereby the biblical text could be expanded, abbreviated, or modified depending on the individual concerns of the practitioner or client or on the limitations of the physical artifact at his or her disposal (cf. Sanzo 2014a, 52).

34. Benovitz 2016; cf. Benovitz 2021.

35. On this point, see Nongbri 2022.

36. On the Greek-speaking (Egyptian or Palestinian) Jewish origin of this artifact, see Benovitz 2021, 41. Unfortunately, little is known about the provenience and provenance of this armband. It was part of a collection that was donated to the Israel Museum in 2010 through the bequest of the late Dan Barag (Benovitz 2021, 5).

37. Benovitz 2016, 143.

38. Benovitz 2016, 157.

39. Translation taken from Benovitz 2021, 42.

40. Benovitz 2021, 40.

41. Benovitz 2016, 161–62. This contention is reinforced by the lack of images on the object (see discussion later in this chapter) and the fact that these passages were common on rabbinic *tefillin* (see Cohn 2008, 70).

42. Benovitz 2021, 40–41.

43. Although there are only three examples that have been published, James Nathan Ford is currently editing others. While the every-other-word pattern of Deut 6:4 and MT Ps 91:1 seems to have been preferred by Jewish practitioners, there is at least one extant Jewish Babylonian Aramaic incantation bowl that includes the entire Shema (Deut 6:4) followed by the entire first verse of MT Ps 91 (see Morgenstern 2021, 51 [with image on 53]). For a brief summary of the other ancient and even modern Jewish magical texts that incorporate the every-other-word pattern, see Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 45.

44. Naveh and Shaked 1985, 184–87 (= AMS, bowl 11).

45. Naveh and Shaked relate the following story: "Dr. L. Y. Rahmani of the Israel Department of Antiquities received photographs of the two bowls from Dr. Vidosava-Neda Nedomački, curator of the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, and referred them to us for study. The information supplied by Dr. Nedomački was that the two bowls were found in 1912 by a Yugoslavian engineer, Janko Milošević, who was working on the building of a railway at a place specified as being 700 meters north of Kadhimain, which lies 6 km. north of Baghdad. The finder, who supplied this information, took the bowls with him to Belgrade" (Naveh and Shaked 1985, 180–81).

46. As we have already seen in chapter 1, such summary statements are common in late antique magical texts.

47. Naveh and Shaked 1985, 186. The presence of such an image on an incantation bowl is not altogether surprising; as Naama Vilozny has demonstrated, the images on the incantation bowls more generally show a particularly close affinity with Sasanian art and primarily depict human figures, hybrid figures, and animals—with a few that depict ritual practitioners (Vilozny 2013, 30).

48. Korsvoll 2018. Of course, these numbers would grow substantially if the numerous unpublished bowls were taken into account.

49. I am grateful to Professor Ford for providing me the text of this unpublished bowl.

50. E.g., *yôšîb* (JNF 119) instead of *yôšēb* (AMS, bowl 11); *yiśrāʾēl* (JNF 119) instead of *yi(y)śrāʾēl* (AMS, bowl 11).

51. Morgenstern 2013, 40. The biblical citations on AMS, bowl 11—and on the JNF bowl, for that matter—are exemplary in this regard as they have numerous orthographical irregularities, at least when compared to the Masoretic text. The practitioner behind AMS, bowl 11 spells the initial word of MT Ps 91 as *yôšēb* (with a *vav* as a *mater lectionis*), whereas the Masoretic text simply uses the *holam* without the *vav*. Of course, it is possible that this practitioner was relying on another textual tradition. Indeed, this *mater lectionis* appears in *Midrash Tehillim* 91 in two locations. That said, although dependence on another literary tradition is possible, Morgenstern's theory about spoken language best accounts for the particular orthography in this bowl.

52. C. H. Gordon 1978.

53. C. H. Gordon 1978, 231.

54. שמע ישב ישראל בסתר

55. I am grateful to Professor Ford for allowing me to see the text of this unpublished bowl.

56. On the metonymic use of such incipits of single-unit texts, see Sanzo 2014a, 165–68.

57. Geller 1986, 101–17, Aaron Bowl B.

58. I.e., *ʿelyôn* followed immediately by *bəṣēl*.

59. There is also another bowl with Num 9:23 and Zech 3:2 (Müller-Kessler 2005, bowl 14).

60. My use of the term "jewelry" for these objects is based on the nomenclature of Rivka Elitzur-Leiman (Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 44).

61. Elitzur-Leiman 2021. Elitzur-Leiman also acknowledges the existence of an additional pendant that she does not publish in this collection (Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 44). For the purposes of my discussion, I will limit my analysis to only those that Elitzur-Leiman published.

62. On the importance of provenance for the study of late antique magical objects, see e.g., Nutzman 2022, 16.

63. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 44.

64. Cf. Nongbri 2022.

65. שמע יושב ישראל בסתר ייי עליון אלהינו בציל ייי שדיי אחד יתלונן

66. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 44.

67. For the use of the so-called grape cluster pattern of vowels on the PGM, see Faraone 2012.

68. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 48.

69. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 48.

70. For the use of the incipits of such multi-unit texts, see Sanzo 2014a, 151–65.

71. Concerning its current location, Elitzur-Leiman provides the following note: "private collection, Europe" (Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 49).

72. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 49.

73. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 48.

74. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 49.

75. Elitzur-Leiman 2021, 49.

76. See, for instance, Harari 2017, 233; Fine 2010, 87–96; Levine 2000, 561–79.

77. Nagy 2015, 211; Ogden 1999, 55–60.

78. Biblical scenes were found on the Dura Europas synagogue. For images, see Dura-Europos: Excavating Antiquity project website, synagogue paintings and Gute's copies, Yale University Art Gallery, http://media.artgallery.yale.edu/duraeuropos/dura.html.

79. Morgenstern 2021, 51 (with image on 53 [below]). James Nathan Ford (Ford 2016) has also recently published an incantation bowl with Deut 6:4 followed by the phrase, "One is in heaven and on earth" and then MT Ps 91:1 (written both forward and backward). For descriptions of this bowl (JNF 124), see Waller 2022, 55, 73, 135.

80. Levine 2000, 566–67.

81. See Labendz 2009.

82. Although Jerome uses this translation when it serves his purposes (e.g., *Epistle* 32), he prefers the Septuagint and even explicitly takes issue with Aquila's translation on several points (e.g., *Epistle* 57). For discussion, see Labendz 2009, 383–86.

83. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.1; Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measurements* 15–16.

84. Cohn 2008.

85. Albrecht et al. 2018, 570.

86. E. Graham 2020, 226.

87. Although the objects in this analysis do not mark smell in any clear way, we know from other sources that smell could in fact play a significant role in practices we call magical (see especially Ager 2022). There is also evidence that amuletic gemstones—especially those made of hematite—were occasionally consumed, thus bringing the sense of taste into play in ostensibly magical contexts (see Faraone 2018, 94).

88. Malafouris 2008, 1997.

89. Hunter-Crawley 2020, 266.

90. On the spatial implications of the depositional contexts of the bowls more generally, see Ahuvia 2018, 248.

91. E.g., BKT VI 7.1; P.Oxy. 8.1077; P.Oxy. 8.1151; P.Mich. 1559.

92. See also, for instance, Egger collection ostracon (= ACM 6); PSI inv. 365; P.Oxy. 8.1151; BGU III: 954; P.Iand. I 6; Zereteli-Tiflis collection, 24 (= ACM 23); London amulet from the Edward collection, University College (= ACM 24); P.Vienna G 19929 (= ACM 28); Brit. Lib. Or. 6794 (= ACM 129); P.Prag. I 6 (= *Suppl.Mag*. 25 [reconstructed]); P.Princ. II 107.

93. E.g., BKT VI.7.1; P.Oxy. 8.1151.

94. E.g., Amsterdam 173 (= ACM 12); P.Oxy. 6.924; P.Oslo 1.5 (= PGM, P3).

95. E.g., P.Oxy. 16.1926 (= ACM 32); Harris 54 (= ACM 33). On the phrase ΧΜΓ, see Tjäder 1970; Llewelyn 1998; Nongbri 2011.

96. De Bruyn 2017, 64.

97. Blumell 2012, 43–46; B. Jones 2016; Spalding-Stracey 2020.

98. For a recent survey of a range of contexts in late antique Egypt, in which crosses proliferated, see Spalding-Stracey 2020. On the role of the crucifixion in early Christian visual culture, see chapter 4.

99. *Editio princeps* Landau and Hoklotubbe 2016. For the patristic sources, see Landau and Hoklotubbe 2016, 9–10. See also Suciu 2012, 196–97.

100. Landau and Hoklotubbe 2016, 11.

101. Translation by Landau and Hoklotubbe 2016, 14 (slightly modified).

102. A possible gestural function of crosses on an amulet (P.Oxy. 8.1151) was mentioned twice in passing in Arzt-Grabner and De Troyer 2018, 14, 31; however, the authors do not develop a substantial argument in support of this possible function.

103. In addition to the texts discussed later in this chapter, see also, for instance, Chrysostom, *Homily 8 in Colossians* 5; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechical Lectures* 13.36. For discussion, see Nutzman 2022, 205.

104. E.g., *Acts of Thomas* 50; Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 8; *On the Crown* 3.

105. *Life of Antony* 78.5 (trans. taken from Wortley 2001, 304).

106. Jerome, *Life of Hilarion* 3.8, 8.8.

107. Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 42:4 (trans. taken from Spalding-Stracey 2020, 99).

108. For a recent edition of this text (with an English translation), see Dijkstra and Van der Vliet 2020.

109. As noted in the Coptic Dictionary Online, one of the principal meanings of *sphragize* is "to make the sign of the cross." See Coptic Dictionary Online, https://coptic-dictionary.org/entry.cgi?tla=C10656.

110. *Coptic Life of Aaron* 96 (Dijkstra and Van der Vliet 2022, 118).

111. See Crum 2005, 562.

112. Sanzo 2016.

113. Larsen and Bülow-Jacobsen 1985, 31–37, no. 51.

114. *Suppl.Mag*. 23; de Bruyn 2017, 207.

115. De Bruyn 2017, 210.

116. Vassiliev 1893; Delatte 1927.

117. Larsen and Bülow-Jacobsen 1985, esp. 32; de Bruyn 2017, 207–10.

118. Sterponi 2008, 558.

119. E.g., Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 2; Sanzo 2014a, 61–64.

120. This is in no way to deny the interesting work by scholars, such as Jaś Elsner, on the reading of images (Elsner 2007). On the challenges of writing a history of reading in the premodern world, see Krauss, Leipziger, and Schücking-Jungblut 2020, 2.

121. On this point, see Sanzo 2015, 89. See also the so-called Lydian and Phrygian "confession inscriptions," which Andrew Henry has appropriately framed as "public testaments to the god's willingness and ability to work miracles to fix daily problems" (Henry 2020, 109). These inscriptions contain aretologies that might include personal stories of prior miracles from the person's life. For discussions of these inscriptions, see Henry 2020, 108–15 (and literature cited).

4. FROM TORTURE TO TRIUMPH: THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LIVED RELIGION

1. *Editio princ*eps Kropp 1966.

2. Translation by Marvin Meyer in ACM 135 (slightly modified).

3. See also Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 30.3: demons cast out "by the name of Jesus Christ, crucified under Pontius Pilate." For discussion, see de Bruyn 2017, 206.

4. Field and Blackhorse 2002; Tambiah 1968, 191.

5. On the importance of narrative and precedent in ancient magic, see Frankfurter 1995. As it relates to the role of precedent in images, see Grabar 1968, 10–11.

6. This emphasis on precedent is also highlighted in an earlier section of this spell: "I adjure you by the signs and wonders that he worked in the middle of the whole inhabited world, in the name of Jesus. The dead arise in the name of Jesus. The demons come out of a person in the name of Jesus. The lepers are cleansed in the name of Jesus. The blind can see in the name of Jesus. The lame can walk in the name of Jesus. The one who is paralyzed can arise, his foot can move, in the name of Jesus. Those who do not talk can speak in the name of Jesus." Such references provide a precedent for the calls for healing "in the name of Jesus" that the spell is making.

7. Christ's crucifixion and the cross itself increasingly emerged as topics of discussion, reflection, and even pride after Constantine became a patron of Christianity. The emerging cult of the cross in Jerusalem that followed played a considerable role in the eventual prominence of the cross as a Christian symbol. See Jensen 2017, 56–61.

8. Joseph Hellerman (2005) has argued that Paul places Jesus's crucifixion at the end of his reversal of the Roman *cursus honorum* (the formal hierarchy of public offices within the Roman aristocracy) in the so-called *Carmen Christi* (Phil 2:6–11). Hellerman calls this reversal the *cursus pudorum* ("course of ignominies"). In this way, Jesus's submission to the dishonorable death of crucifixion exemplified the reversal of Roman values that stood at the center of Paul's model of community.

9. *Epistle of Barnabas* 12:2. For discussion, see Longenecker 2015, 62. On the dating of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, see Ehrman 2003, vol. 2, 6–7.

10. See Lieu 1996, 199–240.

11. *On the Passover* 66 (trans. Hall 1979, 35).

12. *Apekteinen ton anthrōpoktonon thanaton*. See also Hippolytus of Rome, *On Christ and Antichrist* 59, in which he labels the cross a "trophy over death" because of the symbolic connection to Christ's Passion.

13. *Commentary on John* 4.2.

14. On the use of repurposed coins as amulets, see, for instance, Morrisson and Bendall 2012.

15. Chrysostom, *Instruction to the Catechumens* (PG 49:240).

16. Frankfurter 1995, 465.

17. *Editio princeps* Kropp 1931a, 47–50, no. J. For subsequent English translations, see ACM 132; Sanzo 2015, 91–93.

18. The other three spells in this practitioner's portfolio are: Brit. Lib. Or. 6794; Brit. Lib. Or. 6795; Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(2), (3), (1). The common origin of these spells is demonstrated both by their handwriting and by drawings (see Kropp 1931a, xi; ACM, 275). In addition, the other three spells in the portfolio seem to refer to the same client: "Severus son of Joanna" (Brit. Lib. Or. 6795; Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[2], [3], [1]) and "Severus son of Anna" (Brit. Lib. Or. 6794).

19. For a detailed analysis of the creative engagement with the crucifixion tradition on Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796, see Sanzo 2015.

20. Translation by Sanzo 2015; cf. ACM 132.

21. For the argument that the author was working from the biblical tradition and not a subsequent collection of biblical sources, see Sanzo 2015, 72–74.

22. E.g., P.Heidelberg Kopt. 681; P.Moen 3; Hay 1 (= London Hay 10391); P.Michigan 593.

23. Sanzo 2015, 74.

24. See Pleše 2006, 171 for discussion.

25. This is a slightly modified version of Marvin Meyer's translation (ACM 132).

26. I am most grateful to Richard Kieckhefer for originally drawing my attention to this parallel.

27. Translation mine.

28. Richard Gordon uses the name *signe pommeté* for this particular script (2014, 270).

29. The drawing of Christ with a nimbus was in fact quite common in late antique magic, as attested by its frequency on the magical armbands. It is possible that the circle surrounding Jesus's head is hair; however, on Brit. Lib. Or. 6795—another spell from this same practitioner's portfolio—Jesus is clearly depicted without hair.

30. The connection of Jesus's nose to his eyebrows is also present in Brit. Lib. Or. 6795—one of the other spells from this same practitioner's portfolio.

31. Yelle 2013, 49–50.

32. See, e.g., Faraone 2018, 179–82.

33. See Cox-Miller 1986; Frankfurter 1994, 199–205; Versnel 2002, 116.

34. Another Coptic spell, P.Rylands 103, also uses the motif of the vowels being branded on the father's chest (Kropp 1931a, 211–12; ACM 115). For a discussion of tattooing in antiquity, see C. P. Jones 1987.

35. For practical purposes, Romans often tied the hands on the *patibulum* (Jensen 2017, 10). As Jensen succinctly puts the matter, "Nailing through the palms would have been useless as a means of fixing a person to the cross, as the structure of muscle and bone is too fragile to support the body's weight" (2017, 10).

36. The fact that the names differ slightly does not pose a problem, as there were several variations and spellings of these names in late antiquity. See Kim 1973.

37. This onomastic connection with the *Gospel of Nicodemus* is interesting to note since there was a competing tradition (e.g., Ps-Evodius of Rome, *Homily on the Passion and Resurrection;* Ps-Theophilus of Alexandria, *Homily on the Cross and the Good Thief*) in which the roles are reversed: Dēmas (Dysmas) emerges as the "bad" thief, while Kestēs (Gēstas) is identified as the "good" thief. For a useful discussion of this tradition as it relates to Vienna K 4856, see Förster 2008, 406. Alin Suciu and Enzo Lucchesi have identified this manuscript as a portion of Ps-Theophilus of Alexandria, *Homily on the Cross and the Good Thief* (Suciu 2012, 186; Lucchesi 2009). I am thankful to Dylan Burns for drawing my attention to this issue.

38. The name Iaō Sabaōth is also found in ll. 14–15 of Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796: "the cloud of light, which stands before Iaō Sabaōth."

39. Cf. Brit. Lib. Or. 6796 (2), (3), (1), l. 99. For the combination Iaō Sabaōth Atōnaei (read: Adōnaei) used to "destroy" (*bōl ebal*) a host of demonic and magical threats, see P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685 4.1 (Meyer 1996, 15). On the use of the words of abandonment as a divine name, see Kropp 1930, 128, §218.

40. This meaning of Bēth Bētha Bētha was already observed by Angelicus Kropp (1931b, 62).

41. See also Brit. Lib. Or. 5525 and P.Iand. 9A, ll. 2,9–3,2. P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685 invokes the Lord "by the salvation [of] your 24 bodiless elders, whose names are 'Bēth Bētha Rouēl . . ." (5.12–15). Later in P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685, the names Bēth Bētha Bēthanei are associated with the nine guardians that are to be worn (15.19–24). See also "Bēth, Bētha, Bētha" on Hay 1 (= London Hay 10391, ll. 2–4; ACM 127; Zellmann-Rohrer 2022, 79–110), where they are likewise called guardians.

42. Sanzo 2015, 82.

43. For the relationship between *charaktēres* and the ring script (a.k.a. *signe pommeté*), see R. Gordon 2014, 270.

44. On this point, see Sanzo 2014a, 84–90. Of course, not all practitioners synthesized as many traditions as the one behind Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796.

45. This is evident in the Christian magical tradition from gems, such as Brit. Mus. PE 1895,1113.1. For discussion, see Harley-McGowan 2011.

46. Levene 1999.

47. Levene 1999, 290 (slightly modified); Levene 2003, 120–38.

48. Shaked 1999, 314–316. The bowl was commissioned by two brothers, Mihlad and Baran, sons of Mirdukh.

49. Shaked 1999, 316.

50. Moussaieff 155, line 12 (see Levene 2003, 110–115). James Nathan Ford is also working on several Jewish-Aramaic incantation bowls in which Jesus is mentioned. I am grateful to Professor Ford for sharing a handout from his presentation at the 2014 Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Paris.

51. Shaked notes, "Not only are the language and script the same that we know exclusively from Jewish writings, but the language contains a number of Hebraisms, some of them inadvertent, that could only be perpetrated by Jewish writers" (1999, 131).

52. Moussaieff 163 seems to understand the merism "height and depth" in cosmological terms. Immediately preceding the Trinitarian reference, the lacunose curse on Moussaieff 163 reads: "and may they [Mihlad and Baran, sons of Mirdukh] reign upon the earth, and may they press and trample under and be victorious over this Isha son of Ifra Hormiz. And may they block up his lot and his fate and his stars and his star signs and his bindings and his idols." In this vein, it is worth noting that the specific pairing of "height" and "depth" (cf. *hypsōma* and *bathos*) had a relatively widespread usage within Greek astrological discourse. This astrological dimension also seemed to have impacted the juxtaposition of these terms in several early Christian texts that reconfigured this astrological framework in light of the life and mission of Jesus. For instance, these concepts are framed in a negative light and are juxtaposed with language of conquering in Rom 8:37–39. Subsequent Christian commentators on this passage framed *hypsōma* and *bathos* in different ways. Origen of Alexandria, for instance, understood *hypsōma* and *bathos* as containing entities who might cause harm (*On First Principles* 3.2.5). It is clear that he understands these entities as superhuman and menacing, and thus presumably demonic. Other early Christian commentators, such as Gregory of Nyssa, integrated height and depth language into their broader theological views on the cosmological impacts of the crucifixion (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Cat.* 32 [for discussion, see Jensen 2017, 33]; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Christ. Res. Or.* 1). The term *bathos* also plays an important role in so-called "Gnostic" cosmology (e.g., Bruce Codex, *Untitled Treatise* 3 [Schmidt 1978, 216–19]).

53. Robin Jensen appropriately deems the crucifixion "an almost incomprehensible paradox" (2017, 24).

54. As Robin Jensen underscores, the Pauline epistles demonstrate that the cross was an obstacle to belief in Jesus (2017, 5).

55. On the difficulties of dating the epistles of Ignatius of Antioch, see, e.g., Schmithals 2009; Bremmer 2021.

56. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 18.1, trans. Ehrman 2003, vol. 1, 237. All translations of the epistles of Ignatius come from Ehrman 2003, vol. 1 unless otherwise stated. Stressing Jesus's suffering on the cross, Ignatius continues, "He was born and baptized, that he might cleanse the water by his suffering [*tō pathei*]" (*Epistle to the Ephesians* 18.2); cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 36.4.4–6.

57. E.g., Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 21–22, 46, 55; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 31, 40, 86, 89; Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.68, 2.47, 7.16–17, 7.53, 6.34–39. For discussion, see Jensen 2017, 15–20.

58. E.g., Harley (= Harley-McGowan) 2001; Harley and Spier 2007; Harley-McGowan 2011; Harley-McGowan 2018, 2019; Chapman 2008, 178–85; Cook 2014, 129 passim; Longenecker 2015, 100–105; Sanzo 2015; and Jensen 2017, 76–79 passim.

59. Derchain 1964, 109–13; Delatte and Derchain 1964, 287, no. 408 (the images are inverted here). Because of the ritual language on the object (see the discussion later in this chapter) and its material properties (esp. its small size and the use of jasper, which was often believed to possess healing properties [see Faraone 2018, 97–99]), most scholars have concluded that the object was used as an amulet for healing or protection. To be sure,

Kotansky questions the "magical" function of the object—at least in the imagination of its first carver (see the discussion in note 88 below)—in his recent article, arguing that it was principally used in a "baptismal" or "liturgical" context (2017, 655–57); however, Kotansky's assessment fails to take into consideration the materiality of the object (i.e., that it was made from jasper), and he does not offer an adequate explanation for why an engraver with a purely "baptismal" or "liturgical" function in mind would have incorporated the seven vowels (which are found on the same side as the image of the crucified Jesus [see the discussion later in this chapter]).

60. E.g., Delatte and Derchain 1964, 287, no. 408; Michel 2001, 283–84; 2004, 126, 302 (under "31.4. Kreuzigung"); Dinkler 1967, 75–76; Harley and Spier 2007, 228 (no. 55). The gem is also included in the immensely useful database, the Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database, http://www2.szepmuveszeti.hu/talismans/cbd/815?multiple_cond = and &description1 = Jesus.

61. Kotansky 2017, 632. The authenticity of this British Museum gem has been the subject of some controversy. Josef Engemann argued in 1981 that the gem was a modern forgery (1981, 293). Engemann contended that Christians did not incorporate the crucified Jesus into their art until the Constantinian period. More recently, Jutta Dresken-Weiland and Bruce Longenecker have responded in separate publications to Engemann, arguing that the particular depiction of the crucified Jesus on the British Museum gem reflects knowledge about ancient crucifixion only recently acquired (Dresken-Weiland 2010, 34; Longenecker 2015, 102). For instance, Jesus's arms are depicted as tied to the cross (not nailed to the cross). The idea that crucified criminals could be tied to the cross only gained considerable traction after the publication in 1985 of a first-century ossuary, which contained the bones of a crucified man named Yehohanan who had a nail in his ankle but not in his arms (Zias and Sekeles 1985). The lack of evidence for the piercing of Jesus's arms on the British Museum gem implies that he would have been tied to the cross. The ossuary itself was not discovered until 1968, four years after Derchain's *editio princeps* of this gem. Longenecker thus appropriately concludes, "The crafter of this gem was not . . . a modern forger; instead, the gem's crafter was acquainted with the ancient procedures of crucifixion because he himself was an ancient" (Longenecker 2015, 102). Much to his credit, Engemann—based primarily on the response of Jutta Dresken-Weiland—has changed his position on the British Museum gem and now considers it to be authentic. See Engemann 2011, 209.

62. E.g., Derchain 1964, 112; Smith 1978, 61 (dated to ca. 200); Harley 2001, 146; Michel 2001, 283 (no. 457); 2004, 126; Kotansky 2017, 632.

63. Harley and Spier 2007, 228; Harley 2001, 146. See also Michel 2001, 283.

64. Although the middle horizontal bar of the epsilon is missing (thus, visually, a square sigma), Harley and Kotansky are certainly correct in reading these letters as intending the Greek vowels (Harley 2001, 127; Kotansky 2017, 642).

65. As Kotansky notes, *artanē* does not denote the act of hanging "since feminine nouns in -αvη are always instrumental nouns" (2017, 644).

66. Bruce Longenecker describes these ostensibly "non-Christian" words on the gem as "used to assist the potency of the magic being pronounced by the user of the amulet" (2015, 101). On the problems with classifying elements on ritual objects with "Christian" vs. "non-Christian" language, see chapter 2 above; cf. Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

67. E.g., PGM XIII. 176. Harley disputes that Badatophōth was intended here (2001, 129). In my estimation, however, Badatophōth was the likely reference (see also Kotansky 2017, 650). On the meaning of this name, see Bevilacqua 2010, 38.

68. Meaning "Great Satrap Kmeph" (e.g., PGM XII. 185). See Michel 2004, 124 (and literature cited in n. 658).

69. "Crucifixion" (*stauros* and its cognates) could refer to the practice of tying someone to a cross (without piercing). Such a conception of crucifixion could stand behind this particular object, as there are no particular indications of piercing. On the various forms of "crucifixion" in antiquity, see Samuelsson 2010.

70. E.g., Smith 1978, 61; Harley 2001, 142. In their coauthored analysis, Jeffery Spier and Felicity Harley likewise observed that Jesus's legs are presented in profile, "bent at the knee and hanging open loosely, as though he is seated on a bar or peg" (2007, 228).

71. Harley 2001, 142. In this regard, the image of Jesus on this gem has affinities with a crucified woman on a graffito inscribed on the wall of a *taberna* in Puteoli (dating to the second century CE). Like the image of Jesus on the British Museum gem, the woman is depicted on a tau cross with her legs bent (presumably sitting on a *sedile*). Unlike in the depiction of Jesus, however, her legs are shown nailed to the *stipes*. The identification of the figure as female derives from an inscription above the figure's left shoulder, which reads, "Alkimila." For discussion, see Cook 2012, 92–98; Jensen 2017, 11. Cook concludes that this graffito was probably designed to depict a historical crucifixion (2012, 98). On the unlikelihood of Romans using the *sedile* for the crucifixion of Jesus, see Jensen 2017, 10.

72. Harley 2001, 136. She properly emphasizes that this presentation of nudity is not related to the "Graeco-Roman concept of nudity utilized to denote divinity" (2001, 136). She is also certainly correct when she notes that the gem emphasizes the nudity of Jesus to an especially high degree; however, her claim that the gem includes a mark that might indicate genitalia is unconvincing (eadem). I found no clear evidence for such a mark in my autopsy of this gem on July 30, 2019.

73. Michel 2001, 283.

74. Harley and Spier 2007, 228 (no. 55). See also Harley-McGowan 2011, 218.

75. Harley 2001, 137. See also, Michel 2004, 125.

76. Harley and Spier note that the nakedness of Jesus on this gem "may be regarded as affirming Jesus's spiritual power, witnessed in the fact that he overcame the brutality of the cross and thereby defeated evil powers" (2007, 228).

77. Harley 2001, 141, 145. In partial agreement with Harley-McGowan, Michel contends that suffering is not shown; only triumph over death is present (Michel 2001, 125).

78. To be sure, Harley does not necessarily like the language of triumph. Concerning the "realism" operative in this gem, she writes, "the presentation of the naked victim in strict frontality before the viewer does not elicit a sense of triumph as it does in the Christian pictorialisations of Jesus's crucifixion in the fifth century" (Harley 2001, 120). Nevertheless, I employ the adjective "triumphal" to capture her interpretation of the gem as depicting Jesus ultimately "overcoming" and "defeating" death and evil.

79. Despite his claim that the right diagonal line of the lambda is "plainly visible in enlarged photos" (Kotansky 2017, 647), my autopsy of this gem in the British Museum on July 30, 2019, revealed no trace whatsoever of this letter. Kotansky's reconstruction of *lusiou*, which seems to have been based exclusively on photographs, and his translation of it

("redeemer") are thus largely reliant on a preconceived triumphal understanding of this gem's passion account.

80. Kotansky also contends that the gem was composed with an eye toward meter (2017, 651–55). Kotansky's claim is problematized by several words that do not fit any metrical pattern. He must postulate, therefore, that, among other things, *huios* was conceived with an initial digamma and with a diareses above the iota in mind. I remained unconvinced by Kotansky's hypothesis about meter.

81. As Snyder writes, "There is no place in the third century for a crucified Christ, or a symbol of divine death. Only when Christ was all powerful, as in the iconography of the Emperor, could that strength be used for suffering redemption and salvation" (2018, 64).

82. Longenecker 2015, 100–105. Harley-McGowan cites this gem as evidence that "the positive view of Jesus and crucifixion . . . first finds visual expression . . . in the sphere of Greco-Roman magic" (2019, 105). Harley notes, however, that this positive perspective manifested differently in "early Christian art," writing, "whilst magic gems would seem to require the specification of Jesus's suffering, which he endured in the process of his defeat of evil, early Christian art only showed the final triumph, completely rejecting any signs of suffering along the way. Hence Jesus's defeat of evil in his victory on the cross was paramount to both, but expressed visually in opposite ways" (Harley 2001, 140).

83. Sheckler and Leith 2010, 72n19. In response to Sheckler and Leith's criticisms, Harley-McGowan has doubled down, attempting to explain away the violent imagery as merely reflecting the "reality" of ancient crucifixion (Harley-McGowan 2019, 106). I remain unconvinced by Harley-McGowan's interpretation in this regard. I must admit that Scheckler and Leith's speculation that the image was probably designed to "frighten away" demons (Scheckler and Leith 2010, 72n19) is also unconvincing.

84. Derchain referred to this brutality as its *Realismus* (1964, 112–13). I disagree with Derchain's (and Michel's) assertion that the efficacy of the gem depended on its exact representation of Jesus's execution. On the problems with the assumption that ancient practitioners had to reproduce accurately some original myth, see Sanzo 2014a, 145–46; Sanzo 2015.

85. Derchain 1964, 112.

86. Derchain 1964, 112. The significance of this relationship between the "untimely dead," Jesus's crucifixion, and ancient magic has not been completely lost on other historians of early Christianity. Although he does not specifically discuss the British Museum gem, Herold Remus, for instance, proposed in 1982 that the magical use of Jesus's crucifixion ought to be understood in dialogue with the adjuration of those who have died untimely or violent deaths. He writes, "The cross, in word and sign, so prominent in Christian preaching, teaching, eucharist, baptism, blessing, exorcism, and healing, not to mention apologetics addressed to outsiders, could easily be associated by pagans with the *ousia*—parts of corpses, or objects associated with persons who had suffered violent deaths—that were commonly employed in the practice of magic. The rationale underlying their use was that souls thus forced to depart their bodies before their time lingered on and were accessible with their special powers to those who possessed *ousia*" (1982, 139). Although Remus's assumption that the use of *ousia* associated with Jesus's cross would be solely within purview of "pagans" is completely unjustifiable, the relationship he draws between the untimely death of Jesus and ritual efficacy helps contextualize the brutal depiction of Jesus on the British Museum gem. For the possible applicability of the restless dead for early conceptions

of the deaths of Jesus and John the Baptist, see Aune 1980, 1545. It is also possible that PGM XIII. 288–295 connects Christ (*Chrēstos*) with the restless-dead tradition. For discussion, see the analysis later in this chapter.

87. Although Simone Michel ultimately concluded that the gem presents Jesus in a triumphal way, she has likewise emphasized this context of violence to explain the "realism" of the crucifixion on this object (2004, 125). For Michel, the ostensible *Realismus* ultimately supports a more symbolic (*zeichenhaften*) function of the crucifixion (2004, 125). But her underlying assumption about the relationship between "magical" efficacy and faithful representation is unconvincing. This perspective stands in contrast to a tremendous body of ancient evidence and, consequently, a growing consensus in ancient magical studies that practitioners could creatively modify texts and traditions in dialogue with their immediate context, their interests, and the material supports they were using.

88. Although the number of artisans behind this gem remains a point of scholarly contention, this chapter proceeds from the perspective that there was only one practitioner behind this gem. Derchain argued that the gem reflects a single hand (1964, 109). Harley has changed her position on the number of hands involved in the production of this gem. Initially (2001), she sided with Derchain, contending that there was a single carver—though noting some differences between the inscriptions on the obverse and the reverse. She writes, "the carving style on both sides of the gem is uniform and seemingly executed by the one hand. As an aside it is interesting to note that the letters on the obverse face are more sharply defined than those on the reverse. This may simply be due to the fact that the tool used for the letters on the obverse became blunt in the process of carving the first half of the inscription . . ." (2001, 121). Harley-McGowan (now) and Kotansky, however, contend that the object in its current state is result of the efforts of multiple artisans (e.g., Harley-McGowan 2011, 217; Kotansky 2017, 635). Roy Kotansky has argued that the text, inscription, and material properties (e.g., it has breaks, which might suggest it was broken off from a ring or similar device) on the reverse of the gem betray the work of another carver (Kotansky 2017, 635). Although the hypothesis that there were two specialists behind this gem is not unreasonable, I found little evidence necessitating such a conclusion when I conducted an autopsy of it on July, 30, 2019. Whatever differences between the hands might exist could be explained by the dulling of the tool used (see Harley 2001) or by the fact that the carver had to navigate around the image of the crucified Jesus on the obverse, but not on the reverse. In either case, I think that the context of the restless dead is fitting for both the original carver (i.e., the one who created the side with the image of the crucified Jesus) and, especially, for a possible second crafter (i.e., the one who was responsible for the inscriptions on the reverse of the gem). As I note in this chapter, the obverse of the gem contains the seven vowels (though in modified form) and, among the decipherable inscriptions on the reverse, are the foreign names *Badētophōth* (god of the second hour; e.g., PGM XIII. 176) and *Satraperkmēph* (Great Satrap Kmeph; e.g., PGM XII. 185), variants of which are known from other magical texts, including at least one that calls on a soul of a person who died prematurely (PGM CVII. 1–19).

89. Harley 2001, 141. Accordingly, Harley concludes that both the British Museum gem and Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 constitutes objects "on which the power of the crucified Jesus is called upon" (Harley 2001, 145).

90. For possible examples (minus, of course, the British Museum gem), see esp. Spier 2007; Harley-McGowan 2011; Harley-McGowan 2018.

91. British Museum PE 1895,1113.1 (the so-called "Constanza gem") and Nott Gem (current location unknown). For discussion, see Harley-McGowan 2011, 214–15. The nimbis on the Constanza gem indicates its post-Constantinian date (Harley-McGowan 2011, 215). Also relevant in this regard is a gem with a naked figure attached to a cross, with an inscription that reads, "Orpheus Bakkikos" (Spier 2007, 178 [no. X94]). Its interpretation—including the suggestion that it depicts Jesus—and its authenticity have been disputed. For discussion, see Jensen 2017, 79.

92. Harley 2001, 141.

93. On the importance of taking into consideration historical developments and shifts in early Christianity for the interpretation of Christian visual culture, see already Grabar 1968, xlix–l.

94. David Frankfurter has clearly demonstrated that these contexts played a major role in early Christian ritual practice. See, e.g., Frankfurter 2018.

95. I do not agree with those who find the presentation of Jesus on this gem to be necessarily pointing to a non-Christian practitioner. For the view that the carver was "pagan," see Derchain 1964, 111; Harley 2001, 146; Harley and Spier 2007, 228–29. Harley-McGowan goes so far as to draw a dichotomy between "magical" gems and "Christian" gems: "the unique nature of the iconography [of the British Museum gem] befits the often radical creativity of magical gems, unlike Christian gems whose designs are conservative by comparison" (Harley 2001, 142). She further contends that this gem presents "a perception of the crucified Jesus's power that extends beyond the parameters of Christianity in Late Antiquity" (Harley 2001, 131). On this point more generally, see chapter 2 above.

96. This artifact probably predates Saint Antony (though it is possible that it was created when Paul the Hermit was still alive). In either case, the carver would not have had exposure to the kind of monasticism operative during the time when Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796 was created.

97. On the parallels between the British Museum gem and Brit. Lib. Or. 6796(4), 6796—the significance of which, in my estimation, is highly exaggerated—see Harley 2001, 143, 145.

98. For discussion, see Johnston 1999; Alfayé and Natalías 2021. Cf. *Theodosian Code* 16.5, which, as part of its condemnation of illicit rituals, mentions the phrase, "by summoning the spirits of the dead." For the persistence of the restless dead in our contemporary world, see Reyes-Cortez 2012, 113: "My research established that the perception was that magic was empowered and its strength was derived from the assistance and communication with the world of the *animas*, 'the dead'. Such relationships are directly connected to the location of spirits and spaces that they roam or in which they might reside in high numbers or to spirits who suffered a turbulent or uneasy death."

99. Johnston 1999, 78. Similarly, Daniel Ogden notes about Apuleius's account (*The Golden Ass* 9.29–31) of a spirit invoked by a Thessalonian witch at the behest of a miller's wife (against her own husband): "[t]he ghost's resentment at [the mourning of its own death] renders it restless and exploitable for magical purposes" (2002, 153).

100. For discussion, see especially Johnston 1999. My use of the term "manipulation" is in no way meant to allude to James Frazer's broad claim that "magic" is the realm of manipulation, whereas religion is the realm of supplication (Frazer 1911, 220–23). Nevertheless, as it pertains to the use of the restless dead in the magical record in particular, the term "manipulation" is fitting.

101. In addition to those discussed later in this chapter, see also PGM IV. 1390–1495, a love spell of attraction that draws on heroes, gladiators, and others who have died a violent death (*biaiōn*). I am grateful to Dylan Burns for highlighting this reference.

102. On the *akephaloi*, see Harrauer 2006.

103. PGM IV. 1928–2005, at l. 1950. Eleni Pachoumi has argued that these and other spells not only sought to manipulate the soul of the deceased but also presuppose that their bodies would be resurrected (2011). The question of whether or not the practitioner envisioned a resurrected body, however, extends beyond my present concerns. On the redactional layers of PGM IV—and, therefore, the likelihood that these ritual elements predate the manuscripts we possess—see LiDonnici 2003.

104. For this view, see Hengel 1977, 7; Delgado 2001, 80, col. 1 (translates "*panourgikon xylon*" as "madera de un patíbulo"); Cook 2014, 102n240. See also PGM IV. 333–34, which reads: "deposit [the tablet] at the coffin/grave of a person who has died prematurely or by a violent death [*para aōrou ē biaiou thēkēn*]."

105. He writes, "These [ritual experts] also wrap up in wool and tie round the neck of quartan patients a piece of a nail taken from a cross, or else a cord taken from a crucifixion . . ." (Pliny, *Natural History* 28.11.46, trans. W. H. S. Jones 1963, 35 [slightly modified]). For a discussion of malaria in ancient magical contexts, see Lane 1999; Alfayé and Natalías 2021, 47.

106. Daniel Ogden has reasonably suggested that, despite the obvious literary contrivances, the reference to these metal tablets with undecipherable inscriptions probably refers to *defixiones* with *voces magicae*, which are in fact well attested from antiquity (2002, 145). For collections of such ancient *defixiones*, see e.g., Gager 1992; Audollent 1904; Wünsch 1912; Jordan 1985a; Jordan 1985b; Jordan 2000.

107. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 3.17 (trans. taken from Ogden 2002, 142 [emphasis mine]). Lucan describes a Thessalian female ritual expert named Erichtho who collected for her rituals, among other unsettling substances, "iron driven into the hands" (*insertum manibus chalybem*)—a phrase that almost certainly refers to crucifixion (see Cook 2014, 112–13). According to Lucan, Erichtho also scraped the remains off crosses (Lucan, *The Civil War* 6.507). For analyses of these tropes, see Ogden 2002, 124–25.

108. The text, which records a disagreement between Rabbi Yose and Rabbi Meir, reads: "They may go out [on the Sabbath] with the egg of a hargol [= a kind of locust], and with a tooth of a fox, and with the nail of the cross for the sake of healing—so says Rabbi Yose. But Rabbi Meir says even in an ordinary day it is forbidden, because of the 'ways of the Amorite'" (translation taken from Chapman 2008, 182). At the very least, this passage betrays knowledge of the magical use of crucifixion nails and probably reflects a practice among certain Jews (Chapman 2008, 182–84). It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that a spell from the later Cairo Genizah prescribes "a nail from the wood of someone crucified" for a love spell. T-S Arabic 44.44 (2/17–20); Naveh and Shaked 1993, 220–22 (no. 23); see also Chapman 2008, 183. Archaeologists have also discovered crosses in ostensibly Jewish magical contexts. These crosses might in fact have had some kind of reference to crucifixion, thus overlapping in some capacity with the use of nails in rituals for healing. For debate about the function of these crosses, see Dinkler 1951, 1962; Chapman 2008, 178–82. A ritual understanding of crucifixion might also stand behind the Palestinian Talmud's claim that the eighty witches of Ashkelon, who fell victim to the plot of Simeon ben Shetaḥ, were eventually executed by means of crucifixion (*y. Ḥag* 2.2 [77d-78a] and *y. Sanh*. 6.9 [23c]). For useful discussions of this story, see Bohak 2008, 394–95.

109. *Recognitions* 2.13 (cf. *Homilies* 2.26).

110. Tertullian, *Apology* 23.1 (trans. Glover 1931, 123). See also Tertullian, *On the Soul* 56–57 (see Ogden 2002, 149–51).

111. For discussion, see Longenecker 2015, 73–76 (and the literature cited there).

112. On the translation of this graffito, see Hengel 1977, 19.

113. Jensen 2017, 12–14. For the accusation that Christians worshipped the head of a donkey or a donkey god, see Tertullian, *Apology* 16; *To the Heathen* 1.11; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 28.7–8.

114. Coleman 1990, 56. For crucifixion as a spectacle, see also Cook 2012; Jensen 2017, 10–11.

115. Cicero, *For Rabirius on a Charge of Treason* 16.

116. Tombs 2017, 69–71.

117. In addition to the forced removal of Jesus's clothes, Tombs underscores the commonness of sexual abuse in ancient prisons and thus speculates that Jesus's crucifixion might have been "preceded by other forms of sexual violence, such as rape with an object or other physical forms of sexual assault or mutilation" (2017, 69).

118. Seneca, *On Consolation: To Marcia* 20.3. For Tombs, such ancient testimony matches what we find in more recent accounts of torture, where the genitals are the focus of the physical pain. Cf. Tombs 1999.

119. Tombs 1999, 101.

120. Tombs 2017, 76.

121. E.g., Phil 2:8–10; Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 21–22, 46, 55; Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.47, 7.16–17, 17.53, 6.34–39.

122. Jensen 2017, 16. As Jensen further notes, "when [the cross] does eventually appear, it continues to refer more to Christ's conquest of death than to his mode of death. The cross will remain empty, devoid of the body of the Savior, for many more years. The cross as a reference to Jesus's victimization, physical suffering, or humiliation will not emerge until much later" (2017, 48).

123. *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* 81.7–24, trans. Meyer 2007, 495–96. For a commentary on this passage, see Luttikhuizen 2003. See also *Acts of John* 97; *Gospel of Philip* 64.

124. *Martyrdom of Pionius* 13.3.

125. GMPT, 180 (= PGM XIII. 288–290).

126. See, for instance, the emendation in PGM XIII. 290.

127. Pachoumi 2010, 43–46.

128. Pachoumi 2010, 45.

129. Pachoumi 2010, 30.

130. Pachoumi 2010, 45.

131. *Perkmēm* can be found in PGM CVII. 1–19.

132. On this point, see also Frankfurter 1995, 465; Sanzo 2014a, 65–69.

CONCLUSIONS

1. On this point, see also Sanzo 2014b; Boustan and Sanzo 2017.

2. Bauer 1934.

3. Le Boulluec 1985. For more recent scholarship, see Cameron 2003; Brakke 2010; Berzon 2016.

4. Arnal 2008. See also King 2008.

5. Bourdieu 2013, 159–71. Bourdieu has also been influential in religious studies more generally (e.g., Berlinerblau 2001).

6. Zito 1983, 129.

7. Brakke 2012.

8. Brakke writes, "The so-called magical papyri use scriptural texts to invoke supramundane beings and to make things happen in the social and physical worlds. These practices should be studied alongside the enforcement of an authoritative canon and in continuity with the liturgical use of texts in the official church context" (2012, 280).

9. Sanzo 2014a, 171–76. The use of incipits could also carry a host of associations. For instance, the use of the four Gospel incipits on the four walls of tombs were associated with the four cardinal points (cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.2.8; for discussion, see Łajtar and van der Vliet 2017, 79).

10. Sanzo 2014a, 54–69.

11. Many amulets, whose texts also include the name of the client, identify that person as the "one who wears the amulet." As we saw in chapter 3, P.Haun. III 51 includes the words, "Holy inscription and mighty signs, chase away the fever with shivering from Kalē, who wears this *phylaktērion*." Similarly, P.Köln inv. 851 states, "Jesus Christ heals the shivering and the fever and every illness of the body of Joseph, who wears this *phylaktērion*—the quotidian and tertian." In both these cases (and many others could be mentioned), the text of the amulet fuses the object with the identity of the person; they are now identified on objects suspended from their bodies as the ones who wear those objects.

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