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MARKUS VINZENT

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Orientalia
Critica et Philologica
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PEETERS

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Historians, Bishops, Amulets, Scribes, and Rites: Interpreting a Christian Practice

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ABSTRACT

The year 2015 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Association Internationale d'Études Patristiques (AIEP) / International Association of Patristic Studies (IAPS). It is an opportune moment to reflect on the intersection of scholarly disciplines and approaches in the field of patristics today. To do so, I shall draw on my current research programme, an investigation of the ways in which the customary practice of making and wearing amulets became 'Christian'. At first glance, it may appear that the practice has little to do with patristics, except in so far as it elicited comment or disapproval from ancient church authorities. However, the material record reveals a more complex dynamic, since scribes who prepared amulets were familiar with Christian prayer, liturgy, and scriptures. The evidence presses one to reflect on what it meant to be 'Christian' in Late Antiquity and on how purveyors of amulets received and modulated institutional modes of expressing what it meant to be 'Christian'. The evidence also obliges one to draw on the many disciplines or sub-fields that currently constitute the field of patristics, illustrating how indispensable they are to the interpretative process.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Association Internationale d'Études Patristiques (AIEP) / International Association of Patristic Studies (IAPS).¹ Michele Pellegrino first proposed the creation of an association during the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies in 1963. After a few years of informal discussion and consultation, the Association was founded at a colloquium convened at the Sorbonne on 26 June 1965, with a provisional Executive Committee comprising Henri-Irénée Marrou, President; Jacques Fontaines, Secretary; Pieter G. van der Nat, Treasurer; and Kurt Aland and Frank L. Cross, Vice-Presidents. Finally, during the Fifth International Conference on Patristic Studies in 1967 the Association was formally constituted with a duly elected Executive Committee and Council. Thus the

¹ On the circumstances in which the Association was founded, see Adolph Martin Ritter, 'The Origins of AIEP', in Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Theodore de Bruyn and Carol Harrison (eds), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies* (Turnhout, 2015), 195-207. On the subsequent history of the Association, see Angelo Di Berardino, 'The Development of AIEP/IAPS', in *ibid.* 209-20.

Association's connection with this conference goes back to its very beginnings. I therefore welcome the occasion to acknowledge what this conference has given to the life of the Association over the years.

When the Association was established, it resolved not to take the place of institutions, publications, and conferences already in existence.² Consequently its members gather in various national, regional, and international conferences, as well as in scholarly meetings on specific topics. On the whole this arrangement has worked well, since it responds to the scholarly interests, cultural ties, and economic circumstances of members around the world. But we do need to meet one another, not only to attend to the business of the Association but, more importantly, to enliven collaboration and friendship. This conference has been, and remains, the venue where most of the Association's members meet each other. Only the Directors, Mrs Frost, and their many collaborators truly know what it takes to organize this meeting and publish its proceedings. But we are in their debt, as we have been to their predecessors. So on behalf of the Association, I say, 'Thank you'.

When I was invited to give this lecture, my first thought was to review the thirty-eight issues of the *Bulletin d'information et de liaison* published by the Association between 1968 and 2014.³ As I perused the entries over the years, it was interesting to see the work of scholars first appear and then develop, and to observe trends or currents in research. It was also interesting to see what disciplines or areas of study were covered. The first issue of the *Bulletin* listed research under three general headings: 'histoire', 'langue et littérature', and 'auteurs'. Although the sub-headings, determined by the interests of the members at that time, were not comprehensive, they still encompassed multiple disciplines or sub-fields, such as 'hagiographie', 'liturgie', 'art et archéologie', 'prosopographie', 'papyrologie', and 'études de mots (grecs et latins)'.⁴ In 1980, when publication of the *Bulletin* resumed after a seven-year hiatus, the general headings had become four: 'histoire du christianisme ancien', 'langues et littérature chrétiennes', 'la Bible et les Pères', and 'auteurs et textes' – a structure that has endured to this day. The organization of sub-fields was more systematic, and the scope of many of the sub-headings had become broader.⁵ For example, the plurality of ancient Christianity was acknowledged with 'histoires des communautés chrétiennes' (expanded to 'histoire des communautés, des institutions, des périodes, des régions' in the next issue) and 'liturgies' (previously singular, now plural). The rubric for theology both widened and

² Article 1 of the Statutes, adopted in 1965.

³ The first four were published in 1968, 1970, 1971, and 1973. Publication resumed with no. 5 in 1980. Since then a *Bulletin* has been published every year. However, the enumeration is not continuous, since in some years an *Annuaire* is published in addition to a *Bulletin* and gives its own number in the series.

⁴ *Bulletin d'information et de liaison* 1 (1968), 3.

⁵ *Bulletin d'information et de liaison* 5 (1980), 3.

shifted from 'Christologie' to 'histoire des doctrines'. Oriental languages were explicitly recognized with 'histoire des langues classiques et orientales' (expanded to 'histoire des langues et des littératures classiques et orientales' in the next issue). 'Christianisme et Judaïsme' and 'textes gnostiques' (expanded to 'gnose, manichéisme, etc.' in the next issue) made their début under the general heading 'la Bible et les Pères'. And the afterlife of the field was acknowledged in 'Patristique et Humanisme, Renaissance et Réforme' ('Patristique et Moyen Âge' being added in the next issue). In 1982 'christianisme et société dans l'Antiquité tardive' appeared.⁶ Since then there have been only a few changes to the structure of the *Bulletin*, though the number of studies recorded has increased substantially.

In short, already in its earliest years the field of study that the Association was founded to advance comprised multiple disciplines, interests, and approaches. Over time these disciplines, interests, and approaches have become more numerous, multi-faceted, and inter-related. This is how we, collectively, constitute the field, since the *Bulletin* is simply a record of the current publications and projects of the members of the Association. The current constitution of the field in fact reveals how indispensable the sub-fields are to understanding the peoples, cultures, and movements that we study. This is, I expect, an unexceptional observation, one to which most of us would readily assent because we in fact rely on the work of our colleagues in many areas that lie outside our own expertise. Nevertheless, I am prompted to make it by a chance remark made after I gave a paper about a year ago on the subject that will be the focus of my lecture – what we can learn from incantations and amulets with Christian elements about the 'lived' expression of Christian devotion in late antique Egypt.⁷ A colleague (and friend) remarked afterwards (half in jest): 'You don't do patristics!' The comment took me by surprise, but it also started me thinking, as unexpected questions or remarks from our audiences often do. What do incantations and amulets have to do with patristics, or vice versa?⁸

⁶ *Bulletin d'information et de liaison* 7 (1982), 3.

⁷ By 'incantations' I mean texts that appeal to or adjure supernatural powers to heal, protect, constrain, or avenge, and by 'amulets' I mean objects that are worn, affixed, or deposited for healing, protective, or propitious purposes. Since amulets may be written with texts (such as passages from scripture) that are not, strictly speaking, incantations, I use both terms in what follows.

⁸ The following abbreviations are used in this paper: *PGM* = *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, ed. Karl Preisendanz and Albert Henrichs, 2 vols, 2nd ed (Stuttgart, 1974-1975); *Suppl. Mag.* = *Supplementum Magicum*, ed. Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini, 2 vols, *Papyrologica Coloniensia* 16 (Opladen, 1991-1992). Papyrological editions are abbreviated according to John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, Sarah J. Clackson, Alexandra A. O'Brien, Joshua D. Sosin, Terry G. Wilfong and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, <<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>>, July 2015. When an item in *PGM* or *Suppl. Mag.* was previously published in a papyrological edition, the reference is given in parentheses after the reference to *PGM* or *Suppl. Mag.*

If one takes into consideration discourse on 'magic', 'magicians', incantations, and amulets in early Christian literature, the answer to that question is: 'Quite a lot'. Since incantations and amulets were widely used in the ancient world, they and their purveyors appear with some frequency in the discourses of elites. There is now a substantial body of literature on not only what Christian writers say about incantations and amulets,⁹ but also the design and effects of their rhetoric on the subject,¹⁰ whether that be to disqualify an opponent, as in the case of, say, Irenaeus;¹¹ or to distinguish Christian exorcism from contemporary sorcery, as in the case of Origen;¹² or to establish the boundaries of Christian conduct, as in the case of Augustine and John Chrysostom;¹³ or to contrast the power of an apostle or saint from that of a magician or sorcerer, as in apocryphal acts and saints' lives.¹⁴

⁹ For overviews see Norbert Brox, 'Magie und Aberglaube an den Anfängen des Christentums', *TThZ* 83 (1974), 157-80; Francis C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 19 (Tübingen, 1984), 316-448; Hennie F. Stander, 'Amulets and the Church Fathers', *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 75 (1993), 55-66; Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London, 2001), 273-321; Silke Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* (London and New York, 2007).

¹⁰ Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York, 2007), 107-41; Dayna S. Kalleres, 'Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The Re-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies', in Kimberly B. Stratton and Dayna S. Kalleres (eds), *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (New York, 2014), 219-51.

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.13.1, 1.23.1, 1.23.4, 1.23.5, 1.24.5, 1.25.3, in *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies, Livre I, Tome II*, ed. Adelin Rousseau et Louis Doutreleau, SC 264 (Paris, 1979), 186-8, 312, 318, 320, 330, 336. See Guilia Sfameni Gasparro, 'Eretici e maghi in Ireneo: l'accusa di magia come strumento della polemico anti-agnostica', in Rossana Barcellona and Teresa Sardella (eds), *Munera amicitiae: studi di storia e cultura sulla tarda antichità offerti a Salvatore Pricoco* (Soveria Mannelli, 2003), 471-501.

¹² Origen, *Cels.* 1.6, in *Origène, Contre Celse*, Tome I, ed. Marcel Borret, SC 132 (Paris, 1967), 90-2; *Cels.* 6.38-40, in *Origène, Contre Celse*, Tome III, ed. Marcel Borret, SC 147 (Paris, 1969), 270-6. See Guilia Sfameni Gasparro, 'Origène e la magia: teoria e prassi', in Lorenzo Peronne with P. Bernardino and D. Marchini (eds), *Origeniana octava: Origen and the Alexandrian tradition / Origène e la tradizione alessandrina. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 2003), I 733-56.

¹³ Augustine, *Serm.* 318.3 (PL 38, 1439-40); *Serm.* 328.8 (PLS 2, 801); *Serm.* 335D.3-5 (PLS 2, 778-80); *Serm.* 360F.7, in *Augustin d'Hippone, Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*, ed. François Dolbeau, Collection des Études augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 147 (Paris, 1996), 215; John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 8 in *Col.* 5 (PG 62, 357-8); *Hom.* 12 in *1 Cor.* 7 (PG 61, 105-6).

¹⁴ Gérard Poupon, 'L'Accusation de magie dans les Actes apocryphes', in François Bovon *et al.* (eds), *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres: christianisme et monde païen*, Publications de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Genève 4 (Geneva, 1981), 71-85; Jan N. Bremmer, 'Magic in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles', in *id.* and Jan R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 1 (Leuven, 2002), 51-70; H.J. Magoulias, 'The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons', *Byz* 37 (1967), 228-69; John Wortley, 'Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity', *GRBS* 42 (2001), 289-307; S. Trzcionka, *Magic* (2007), 43-5, 88-91, 148-51.

As you might anticipate, this discourse is usually critical of the practice and its purveyors.¹⁵ When the use of incantations comes up in polemical writing, Christian writers (like their non-Christian counterparts) typically highlight the harmful and reprehensible forms of the practice: coercive and antagonistic incantations meant to handicap a competitor, obtain a lover, arouse sexual desire, avenge a wrong, and the like.¹⁶ When the desired end is not so evidently objectionable, as with amulets meant to protect from evil or heal from sickness, the problem lies ultimately in the demonic agents behind these techniques, who alternately deceive or ensnare people by their power.¹⁷ For bishops and councils striving in the fourth and fifth centuries to extricate Christians from ambient mores,¹⁸ amulets and their makers are outside the boundary demarcating what is Christian.¹⁹ Christians who use or make amulets have not adequately separated themselves from the thinking, customs, and social networks of their contemporaries (and their supposedly former selves).

But the sermons of bishops and the lives of saints show that the marking and maintaining of boundaries was a dynamic, interactive, and unsettled process. Chrysostom gives us the following imaginary dialogue with a Christian mother who applies an incantation to her sick child:

Tell me, then, if someone says: 'Take him [the sick child] 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, there is no idolatry, but only incantation', she says.²⁰

And in one of several sermons where Augustine compares those who refuse an amulet when they are gravely ill to the martyrs of times past,²¹ he has family and

¹⁵ For the most part, incantations and amulets are subsumed under the larger discursive fields of 'magic' and 'sorcery'; for overviews, see F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus* (1984), 316-448; Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 57 (Berlin, 2011), 273-336.

¹⁶ E.g., Tatian, *Orat.* 17, in *Tatiani Oratio ad Graecos*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich, PTS 43 (Berlin, 1995), 36; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 1.43 (CSEL 4, 29).

¹⁷ F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus* (1984), 330, 336-8, 349-50, 356, 373-4, 378-81, 404-6, 418, 425-6, 431-2; B.-C. Otto, *Magie* (1995), 299-304.

¹⁸ M.W. Dickie, *Magic* (2001), 257-62.

¹⁹ E.g., *Trad. ap.* 16.14, in *Der koptische Text der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts*, ed. Walter Till and Johannes Leipoldt, TU 58 (Berlin, 1954), 12; see Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, 2002), 12. *Const. apost.* 8.32.11, in *Les constitutions apostoliques*, Tome III, ed. Marcel Metzger, SC 336 (Paris, 1987), 238. *Can. Hipp.* 15 (PO 31.2, 368-70); see P.F. Bradshaw, M.E. Johnson and L.E. Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 19. C. Laod., *Can.* 36, in Périclès-Pierre Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IV^e-IX^e s.)*, vol. 1.2, *Les canons des synodes particuliers* (Vatican, 1962), 145. Ferrandus of Carthage, *Breu. can.* 110, in *Concilia Africae a. 345-525*, ed. Charles Munier, CChr.SL 149 (Turnhout, 1974), 296.

²⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8 in Col.* 5 (PG 62, 358).

²¹ See n. 13 above.

friends attending at the bedside defend customary practices by saying that people who use or offer such remedies are Christians, no less:

But the one who says, 'I won't do it' ... well, he gets this answer from the one who is suggesting it: 'Do it, and you'll get well. So-and-so and Such-and-such did it. What? Aren't they Christians? Aren't they believers? Don't they hurry off to church? And yet they did it and got well. So-and-so did it and was cured immediately. Don't you know Such-and-such, that he's a Christian, a believer? Look, he did it, and he got well'.²²

In the end, bishops like Augustine and Chrysostom meet their people part-way and accept, if not recommend, Christian substitutes for customary practices, such as making the sign of the cross, wearing a gospel (or rather, a portion of the gospel), or keeping a gospel by one's bed.²³ Saints and monks, too, are reported to use similar means to combat demons and help people: making the sign of the cross,²⁴ reciting scripture,²⁵ applying water or oil that has been blessed.²⁶

Informative and revealing as these sources are, their discourses are *about* people who make or use amulets. They are unavoidably partial as witnesses to the practices of Christians. If we are seeking a more complex understanding of what Christians did and how they viewed what they did, we must reach outside of the world as it is constructed in any one discourse. Thus, when reading early Christian sources, we may juxtapose the perspectives and insights gained from different genres, or we may read between the lines or against the grain, interrogating our sources and our readings of them.²⁷ When material evidence exists

²² Augustine, *Serm.* 335D.3 (PLS 2, 778); English translation: *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Part III, *Sermons*, vol. 9, *Sermons 306-340A*, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, 1994), 230.

²³ John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 72 in *Mt.* 2 (PG 58, 669); *Stat.* 19.14 (PG 49, 196); Augustine, *Tract. Io.* 7.12.1, in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV*, ed. Radbodus Willems, CChr.SL 36 (Turnhout, 1954), 73. See Peter Stockmeier, *Theologie und Kult des Kreuzes bei Johannes Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Kreuzes im 4. Jahrhundert*, Trierer Theologische Studien 18 (Trier, 1966), 240, 248-51; H.F. Stander, 'Amulets' (1993), 65-6.

²⁴ E.g., Athanasius of Alexandria, *V. Anton.* 35.2-3, 78.5, in *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine*, ed. Gerard J.M. Bartelink, SC 400 (Paris, 2004), 230, 334; Jerome, *V. Hil.* 3.8, 8.8, in *Jérôme, Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus, Hilarion)*, ed. Edgardo Martín Morales and Pierre Leclerc, SC 508 (Paris, 2007), 222-4, 234.

²⁵ Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York, 1993), 122-5; David Brakke, 'Introduction', in Evagrius of Pontus, *Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, Cistercian Studies Series 229, trans. David Brakke (Collegeville, 2009), 14-23.

²⁶ E.g., *Hist. mon.* 1.12, 1.16, in *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, ed. André-Jean Festugière, SH 34 (Brussels, 1961), 12-5; Palladius, *H. Laus.* 12.1, 18.11, 18.22, in *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, ed. Cuthbert Butler, Texts and Studies 6.2 (Cambridge, 1904), 35, 51, 54-5; Shenoute, Acephalous work A14, §§255-59, in *Shenute: Contra Origenistas*, ed. Tito Orlandi (Rome, 1985), 20; Jerome, *V. Hil.* 20.2, 22.6, 32.2, SC 508, 266, 274, 294.

²⁷ See, e.g., the essays in K.B. Stratton and D.S. Kalleres, *Daughters of Hecate* (2014), Part II.

and is relevant, we may juxtapose the witness of the literary record with the witness of the material record. In either case, we may encounter contradiction, incoherence, or simple gaps, as well as corroboration or complementarity.²⁸ And in both cases – but perhaps more obviously in the latter case – we are motivated to turn to a wider array of disciplines and expertise to arrive at a more complete view of the practice described from a partial perspective by any one of our given sources. This, at least, has been my experience as I turned from the literary sources to the material record to understand what people did when they produced or used amulets in the increasingly Christian world of late antique Egypt.

We have many examples of incantations and amulets with Christian elements among the papyri and parchments of Egypt.²⁹ What we find is, not surprisingly, a mix. Let us consider, for the moment, only protective or healing amulets written in Greek. Some correspond to the substitutes prescribed above. They are written with passages from scripture, particularly those known to protect, such as LXX Ps. 90,³⁰ the Lord's Prayer,³¹ and the opening words or other passages from the gospels or the psalms³² – and these often in combination. Often such scriptural passages are recited along with an invocation, petition, or adjuration.³³ Occasionally the incantation takes the form of a Christian prayer devoid of customary forms of adjuration.³⁴ But usually the incantation incorporates one or more customary adjurations. Sometimes the idiom is entirely Christian.³⁵ Other times it is not: Christ is invoked alongside a Greco-Egyptian

²⁸ With regard to material evidence, see Robin M. Jensen, 'Integrating Material and Visual Evidence into Early Christian Studies: Approaches, Benefits, and Potential Problems', in B. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, T.S. de Bruyn and C. Harrison (eds), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first Century* (2015), 549-69.

²⁹ Theodore S. de Bruyn and Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, 'Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets', *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011), 163-216.

³⁰ Juan Chapa, 'Su demoni e angeli: il Salmo 90 nel suo contesto', in Guido Bastianini and Angelo Casanova (eds), *I papiri letterari cristiani: atti del convegno internazionale di studi in memoria di Mario Naldini, Firenze, 10-11 Giugno 2010* (Florence, 2011), 59-90. In the list at the end of this excellent overview, the cross-references to T.S. de Bruyn and J.H.F. Dijkstra, 'Greek Amulets' (2011), were based on an enumeration prior to publication; they cannot be relied upon.

³¹ Thomas J. Kraus, 'Manuscripts with the Lord's Prayer – They Are More Than Simply Witnesses to That Text Itself', in Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (eds), *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 2 (Leiden, 2006), 227-66; Brice C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (London, 2016), 77-127 (nos. 4-14).

³² Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 84 (Tübingen, 2014).

³³ E.g., BKT VI 7.1; MPER N.S. XVII 10; PGM P5b (P.Oxy. VIII 1151); PGM P5c (P.Cair. Cat. 10696); PGM P9 (BGU III 954); PGM P17 (P.Iand. I 6) = P.Giss.Lit. 5.4; P.Köln VIII 340; Suppl. Mag. I 26 = BKT IX 206; Suppl. Mag. I 29 (P.Princ. II 107); Suppl. Mag. I 36.

³⁴ E.g., PGM P9 (BGU III 954); Suppl. Mag. I 31 (P.Turner 49) = BKT IX 134.

³⁵ E.g., Suppl. Mag. I 22 (P.Amst. I 26); Suppl. Mag. I 25 (P.Prag. I 6).

deity,³⁶ or is simply named in what is otherwise an altogether traditional adjuration.³⁷ Often the visual features are Christian: crosses, staurograms, christograms,³⁸ ΧΜΓ.³⁹ But customary visual and oral elements – esoteric words, sounds, shapes, and signs – can also be present.⁴⁰ And, of course, the entire pool of materials that have survived from the period includes customary Greco-Egyptian incantations and amulets of various kinds without any Christian elements.

This material gives us a more concrete, variegated idea of the sorts of inscribed amulets Christians and their non-Christian neighbours might have worn. Since they are written by people and for people living at the time, they bring us closer to what some people, at least, did to protect themselves or others from evil and sickness. They reveal something of the interactive process of altering the production and use of amulets within an increasingly Christian context. More precisely, they reveal how scribes from various backgrounds worked within traditions available to them to reproduce or create incantations that they and their clients believed would remedy the problem at hand. As Rubina Raja and Jörg Rüpke observe in the first issue of *Religion in the Roman Empire*, a new journal dedicated to exploring the concept of ‘lived ancient religion’, ‘most of the evidence at our disposal is best to be interpreted neither as “authentic” individual expression nor as institutional “survival”, but as media, as the result of a “culture created in interaction”’.⁴¹

The scribes who prepared incantations and amulets were inevitably shaped and constrained by the culture, norms, habits, rituals, and reciprocities of the social groups to which they belonged.⁴² They were moulded by schooling and scribal training,⁴³ as well as, in some cases, employment as a writer of docu-

³⁶ E.g., *Suppl. Mag.* I 34.

³⁷ E.g., PGM P6a (*P.Oxy.* VIII 1152); *Suppl. Mag.* I 20.

³⁸ T.S. de Bruyn and J.H.F. Dijkstra, ‘Greek Amulets’ (2011), Table 1, last column.

³⁹ E.g., *MPER* N.S. IV 11 (above verses from the Psalms); PGM P3 (*P.Osl.* I 5) (above an incantation; see below); P.J. Sijpesteijn, ‘Weiner Melange’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 40 (1980), 91-110, 94-6 (above an incantation); Brent Nongbri, ‘The Lord’s Prayer and ΧΜΓ: Two Christian Papyrus Amulets’, *HTS* 104 (2011), 59-68, 64-8 (alone).

⁴⁰ E.g., PGM P3 (*P.Osl.* I 5); PGM P11; *P.Köln* VIII 340; *P.Oxy.* LXV 4469; *SPP* XX 294; *Suppl. Mag.* I 20; *Suppl. Mag.* I 21 (*P.Köln* VI 257); *Suppl. Mag.* I 23 (*P.Haun.* III 51); *Suppl. Mag.* I 27.

⁴¹ Rubina Raja and Jörg Rüpke, ‘Appropriating Religion: Methodological Issues in Testing the “Lived Ancient Religion” Approach’, *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1 (2015), 11-9, 17.

⁴² On the social confines of individual religious practice in antiquity, see Fritz Graf, ‘Individual and Common Cult: Epigraphic Reflections’, in Jörg Rüpke (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2013), 115-35, 131-3; Greg Woolf, ‘Ritual and the Individual in Roman Religion’, in *ibid.* 136-60, 153-5; Johan Leemans, ‘Individualization and the Cult of the Martyrs: Examples from Asia Minor in the Fourth Century’, in *ibid.* 186-212, 206-7.

⁴³ For overviews see Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, *American Studies in Papyrology* 36 (Atlanta, 1996); *ead.*, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, 2001).

ments or a copier of books, or clerical or monastic formation. Some had technical expertise in the preparation of remedies; they had become more or less familiar with customary forms of invocation and adjuration, whether by oral transmission or from written sources. Some were also familiar with the phraseology of Christian prayer, either by participating in services or from liturgical books. And again, some were intimately acquainted with the scriptures, probably as a result of the daily routine of scriptural reading, recitation, and prayer.⁴⁴ All these circumstances and qualities had ramifications. The scribe who wrote incantations in a wholly Christian idiom or who turned to scripture for protective passages was evidently working within different social and cultural parameters than the scribe who wrote customary incantations with sporadic Christian elements or in a mainly Greco-Egyptian idiom. Moreover, even within such putative groups we find considerable diversity.

How these variables might play out in the production of an incantation or amulet, and the interpretative choices that the final products pose for us today, can be nicely illustrated by a few examples. I have selected three groups of amulets that manifest different facets of the dynamic intersection between incantations, scribes, and rites. The first raises questions about what it meant for someone or something to be 'Christian'. The second requires us to think about the traditions scribes worked with (or within) and how they modulated those traditions, at times inadvertently. The third obliges us to confront two different ways scribes incorporated a Christian ritual in an incantation and to explore what that difference might signify.

Our first group consists of amulets against scorpions, an ever-present danger in Egypt and a long-standing target of phylacteries.⁴⁵ We have three amulets from Oxyrhynchus, *PGM XXVIIIa-c* (*P.Oxy.* XVI 2061-3),⁴⁶ that use the same basic formula: an invocation, 'Hôr Hôr Phôr Phôr Iaô Sabaôth Adônai Salaman Tarchi (in various permutations), followed by an adjuration, 'I bind you, Artemisian scorpion'. They are written quickly and sometimes carelessly by different scribes from the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴⁷ Obviously this was a customary incantation against scorpions that was passed on orally, to judge by

⁴⁴ On daily services observed by clergy and laity (as well as monks), see Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, 1993), 31-56. On monastic recitation of scripture, both private and communal, see *ibid.* 57-91.

⁴⁵ Marcus N. Tod, 'The Scorpion in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 25 (1939), 55-61; Ildikó Maaßen, 'Schlangen- und Skorpionbeschwörung über die Jahrtausende', in Andrea Jördens (ed.), *Ägyptische Magie und ihre Umwelt*, PHILIPPIKA - Altertumswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen / Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures 80 (Wiesbaden, 2015), 171-87.

⁴⁶ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and Harold I. Bell (eds), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 16 (London, 1924), 274.

⁴⁷ Images at <www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk> (Oxyrhynchus Online). For the assigned dates, see *P.Oxy.* XVI, p. 274.

the phonetic and variable spellings of the scribes. One of the scribes wrote a line of three crosses at the head of the incantation.⁴⁸ The cursive writing of this amulet, which has been assigned to the sixth century, is typical of scribes who wrote documents of various types – contracts, receipts, and the like.⁴⁹ Producing amulets may have been one of many writing tasks for which this scribe was employed.⁵⁰ If so, what significance did the invocation have for the scribe? Should we infer from its repeated use in amulets over several centuries that the string of names no longer evoked notions of particular deities but was simply an effective chant against scorpions?⁵¹ And then, what was the salience of the three crosses for the scribe? By the sixth century it was common to precede the first line of a letter or a document with a cross.⁵² Were crosses, too, now customary, like the incantation?⁵³ Should we infer from the crosses that the scribe was a Christian? What, in fact, did it mean to be ‘Christian’? These are all questions raised by the composition and execution of this amulet. They require us to make choices that will, inevitably, shape our interpretation of the artefact, its producer, and the context of production.

We have another amulet of this type that is more elaborate, *PGM P3 (P.Oslo I 5)*.⁵⁴ It consists of the ‘Hôr Hôr’ sequence, an extended adjuration binding the Artemisian scorpion to protect a house and its inhabitants from various threats ‘in the name of the most high God’, a series of *voces magicae*, and a Christian

⁴⁸ *P.Oxy.* XVI 2063.1.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., *P.Col.* VIII 244 (sixth century) in Hermann Harrauer, *Handbuch der griechischen Paläographie*, Bibliothek des Buchwesens 20, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 2010), I 455-7 (text 256), II 246 (plate 242).

⁵⁰ John G. Gager (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York, 1992), 123 n. 12.

⁵¹ For instances of Greco-Egyptian names that have lost their original meaning in Jewish amulets, see Gideon Bohak, ‘Some “Mass Produced” Scorpion-Amulets from the Cairo Genizeh’, in Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton and Anne Fitzpatrick (eds), *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 132 (Leiden, 2009), 35-49.

⁵² On initial crosses in letters, see Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus*, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 39 (Leiden, 2012), 43-4, 310-1. For initial crosses in documents, see, e.g., H. Harrauer, *Handbuch* (2010), I, texts 215, 227, 234, 237, 242, 244, 248-9, 250-1, 254-5.

⁵³ For two quite different amulets headed by three crosses (one with only Christian elements, the other with Christian and Greco-Egyptian elements), see Dierk Wortmann, ‘Neue magische Texte’, *BaJ* 168 (1968), 56-111, 106 (P.Köln inv. 521av); Dierk Wortmann, ‘Der weisse Wolf: Ein christliches Fieberamulett der Kölner Papyrussammlung’, *Philologus* 107 (1963), 157-61, republished in *Suppl. Mag.* I 34.

⁵⁴ Samson Eitrem and Anton Fridrichsen, ‘Ein christliches Amulett auf Papyrus’, *Forhandlinger i Videnskabselskabet i Christiania* 1 (1921), 3-22; Samson Eitrem, ‘A New Christian Amulet’, *Aegyptus* 3 (1922), 66-7; Friedrich Preisigke (ed.), *Sammelbuch Griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten*, vol. 3 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1926-1927), 69 (no. 6584); Ulrich Wilcken, ‘Referate’, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 7 (1924), 67-160, 113; Samson Eitrem (ed.), *Papyri Osloenses*, vol. 1: *Magical Papyri* (Oslo, 1925), 21.

injunction. The incantation is carefully written in a fairly regular, informal semi-cursive hand that has been assigned to the fourth or fifth century.⁵⁵ There are no phonetic spellings or orthographical irregularities. In fact, the hand could well have been used to copy books.⁵⁶ The scribe almost certainly copied the incantation from an exemplar because the names in the invocation are spelled correctly and the *voces magicæ* replicate a series found in another amulet.⁵⁷ At the head of the text the scribe wrote ΧΜΓ, a Christian sequence whose precise meaning remains a matter of dispute,⁵⁸ but often appears at the top of letters and documents in late antique Egypt.⁵⁹ The concluding injunction reads: ‘Be on guard, O Lord, son of David according to the flesh, the one born of the holy virgin Mary, O holy, most high God, of the Holy Spirit. Glory to you, O heavenly king. Amen’.⁶⁰ The text ends with a series of Christian symbols, α+ω ϣ Α+Ψ W ιχθϋς.⁶¹ The phrasing of the injunction, identifying the ‘son of David’ with ‘the most high God’, is in keeping with Alexandrian christology in the fifth century.⁶² Whoever added the injunction to the customary incantation – whether the writer of the amulet or the writer of the exemplar – must have been familiar with invocations or acclamations of the Egyptian church, possibly from a liturgical book, not just from attending services. Should we infer, therefore, that the writer was a Christian cleric? We surely cannot rule out

⁵⁵ Image at <<http://ub-prod01-imgs.uio.no/OPES/jpg/303r.jpg>> (Oslo Papyri Electronic System).

⁵⁶ Compare, e.g., Guglielmo Cavallo and Herwig Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period: A.D. 300-800*, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 47 (London, 1987), 46-7 (no. 19a; *PSI* XIV 1371, mid-fifth century).

⁵⁷ Robert W. Daniel, ‘Some ΦΥΛΑΚΤΗΡΙΑ’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 25 (1977), 145-54, 150-3; *Suppl. Mag.* I 15.1-5 comm.

⁵⁸ For bibliography and discussion, see F. Mitthof (ed.), *Griechische Texte XVI: Neue Dokumente aus römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Verwaltung und Reichsgeschichte*, Corpus Papyrorum Raineri XXIII (Vienna, 2002), 217 (*CPR* XXIII 34.1 comm.); B. Nongbri, ‘The Lord’s Prayer and ΧΜΓ’ (2011), 66-8.

⁵⁹ F. Mitthof, *Griechische Texte XVI* (2002), 218; L.H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians* (2012), 47-8, 311.

⁶⁰ Lines 8-11: φύλαξον, κύριε, υἱὲ τοῦ Ἰδαυῖδ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ τεχθεὶς ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου ἸΜαρίας, ἄγιε, ὑψίστε θεέ, ἐξ ἁγίου πνεύματος, δόξα σοι, ἰ οὐράνιε βασιλεῦ. ἀμήν.

⁶¹ The cross between the uncial *alpha* and *omega* is in the form of an Egyptian life-sign (*crux ansata*); the left, right, and lower arms of the cross are triangular, whereas the top arm is clearly round. On the use of the Egyptian life-sign by Christians in Egypt, see Maria Cramer, *Das altägyptische Lebenszeichen [ankh] im christlichen (koptischen) Ägypten: Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Studie*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden, 1955).

⁶² The phrase ‘son of David according to the flesh’ echoes Paul’s usage at *Rom.* 1:3. For Cyril of Alexandria’s interpretation of the phrase in documents submitted to the imperial court prior to the Council of Ephesus, see, e.g., Cyril of Alexandria, *Thds.* 26, 44-5, in *Concilium universale ephesenum*, ed. Eduard Schwartz, ACO 1.1.1.1 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), 58-9, 72. See also his explanation of the children greeting Jesus with the acclamation ‘Hosanna to the son of David’ (*Matth.* 21:9) at Cyril of Alexandria, *Arcad.* 108, in *Concilium universale ephesenum*, ed. Eduard Schwartz, ACO 1.1.1.5 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927), 89, where he explains how appropriate it is that the ‘son of David’ is acclaimed as Lord and God (as in the doxology in our papyrus).

that possibility. Certainly the symbols that frame the incantation – XMG and $\alpha+\omega$ ⚡ $\text{A}+\text{W}$ $\overline{\text{I}\chi\theta\upsilon\varsigma}$ – point to a generally Christian milieu. What then do we make of the combination of the customary and the Christian in this instance? The detail of the incantation and the care and accuracy of the transcription suggest that the customary and Christian elements had more than a perfunctory salience. What does this particular combination tell us about what it meant for someone or something to be ‘Christian’?

The next set of incantations illustrate how traditions are altered in the process of transmission, complicating the interpretative process. Each amulet has an acclamation that appears to simplify or alter doxological traditions known to us from literary sources. Each prompts us to think about the milieu that the scribe inhabited, how doxological traditions were formed and transmitted in that milieu, and how interaction between scribe and tradition created the particular cultural product that we have before us.

My first example is an amulet against fever from Oxyrhynchus, *PGM* P5a (*P.Oxy.* VI 924).⁶³ It is written in a compressed semi-cursive that Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, the papyrus’ first editors, assigned to the fourth century.⁶⁴ It was prepared for a certain Aria, described in the incantation as ‘a slave of the living God’ whose faith, according to the incantation, is one of the reasons she should be protected from fever.⁶⁵ The acclamation appears at the end of the text in a visual scheme.⁶⁶ In the centre of the scheme is a cross with *alpha* and *omega* in the two lower quadrants. At the left end of the line is the *nomen sacrum* for ‘Jesus’ in the genitive ($\overline{\text{I}\omega}$); at the right end, the *nomen sacrum* for ‘Christ’ in the genitive ($\overline{\chi\upsilon}$). Between these two *nomina sacra* are the words ‘Father, Son, Mother’ (πατήρ υἱός μήτηρ). Above the line there is a hole in the papyrus; the missing text ends in *iota sigma*. Below the line, on either side of the cross, are the words ‘Holy Spirit’ (with ‘Spirit’ written as a *nomen*

⁶³ Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt (eds), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 6 (London, 1908), 289-90; Magali De Haro Sanchez, ‘Le vocabulaire de la pathologie et de la thérapeutique dans les papyrus iatromagiques grecs: fièvres, traumatismes et “épilepsie”’, *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 47 (2010), 131-53, 135. The transcription by Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment (eds), *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources* (Waco, 2015), 341-3 (no. 94), and the new edition by Franco Maltomini, ‘PGM P 5a rivisitato’, *Galenos*, 9 (2015), 229-34, appeared after this manuscript was completed.

⁶⁴ Image at M. De Haro Sanchez, ‘Le vocabulaire’ (2010), 136.

⁶⁵ Lines 9-11: $\text{καὶ κατὰ τὴν πίσ- | τιν ἀπὲς ὅτι δούλη ἐστὶν | τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος}$. The expression ‘slave of the living God’ is used of Daniel in Theodotion’s translation (*Dan.* 6:21) (and later commentaries quoting that version) and of Thekla (by herself) in *A. Paul. et Thecl.* 37, in *Acta apostolorum apocrypha post Constantinum Tischendorf*, vol. 1, ed. Richard A. Lipsius (1891; repr. Hildesheim, 1972), 235-71, 263. More common in amulets, with and without Christian elements, is the expression ‘slave’ of God. See, e.g., *PGM* XII.71; *PGM* XIII.637; *PGM* P5b.10, 29 (*P.Oxy.* VIII 1151); *PGM* P5c.4, 10 (*P.Cair.Cat.* 10696); *PGM* P6d.4; *PGM* P9.8, 29 (*BGU* III 954).

⁶⁶ Lines 14-8.

sacrum: $\overline{\pi\nu\alpha}$ ἄγιος [read ἄγιον]), and below that is the name ‘Abraxas’. Circling the left, top, and right sides of the cross are six dots, and flanking the scheme are the seven vowels written vertically in two columns, $\alpha \varepsilon$ (traces only) $\eta \iota$ along the left and $\omicron \upsilon \omega$ along the right

This arrangement, which Grenfell and Hunt characterized as ‘Gnostic’ but did not translate, has been read in two ways. Carl Wessely rendered it: ‘Père de Jésus. Fils. Mère de Christ’,⁶⁷ which is how it has been read in recent transcriptions of the text.⁶⁸ Karl Preisendanz, on the other hand, proposed [δύναμι] ις for the word in the lacuna, which he read together with Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ, yielding: ‘Power of Jesus Christ. Father, Son, Mother’.⁶⁹ Preisendanz’s reconstruction, which in my view had the stronger palaeographical basis,⁷⁰ has now been confirmed with the publication of two additional amulets written by the same scribe and bearing the same scheme.⁷¹ What is the import of this outcome? Well, instead of a rare early witness to the Marian epithet ‘Mother of Christ’, we have the triad ‘Father, Son, Mother’. The question is, what are we to make of ‘Father’ and ‘Mother’ on either side of ‘Son’? It has been suggested that ‘Mother’ refers to the Holy Spirit.⁷² But then why is the Holy Spirit named in the next line?

A supreme heavenly triad is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Sethian traditions,⁷³ and in some versions of the Sethian system, the Holy Spirit is presented as a figure immediately below the supreme triad,⁷⁴ as in our papyrus.

⁶⁷ Carl Wessely, ‘Les plus anciens monuments du christianisme écrits sur papyrus II’, PO 18 (1924), 341-509, 402.

⁶⁸ M. De Haro Sanchez, ‘Le vocabulaire’ (2010), 135; L.H. Blumell and T.A. Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus* (2015), 342.

⁶⁹ PGM P5a.15.

⁷⁰ At line 14 one can make out the lower left corner of *delta* at the beginning of the gap and the upper right tip of *mu* at the end of the gap: δ[ύνα]μις; see, e.g., the initial *delta* in δεδοξασμέν[ον] at line 13 and the *mu* in καθημε- at line 3. The intervening space is sufficient for five letters. At line 15 the larger size of the *nomina sacra* $\overline{\iota\omega}$ and $\overline{\chi\upsilon}$ suggests that they should be read together and not in continuous sequence with the intervening words. Moreover, ἡ δύναμις [Ἰη]σοῦ Χριστοῦ appears along with staurograms, each with $\alpha \omega$, above an adjuration against sickness in another amulet, *Suppl. Mag.* I 22.1 (*P. Amst.* I 26). See now F. Maltomini, ‘PGM P 5a rivisitato’ (2015), 233.

⁷¹ *P.Oxy.* LXXXII 5306 and 5307, edited by Franco Maltomini and published in 2016 after the manuscript of this paper was completed.

⁷² Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith (eds), *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco, 1994), 39; for supporting evidence, see Roberta Mazza, ‘P.Oxy. XI, 1384: medicina, rituali di guarigione e cristianesimi nell’Egitto tardoantico’, *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 24/2 (2007), 437-62, 449-50.

⁷³ Alexander Böhlig, ‘Triade und Trinität in den Schriften von Nag Hammadi’, in Bentley Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2, *Sethian Gnosticism*, Studies in the History of Religions 41 (Leiden, 1981), 617-34; John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition*, Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section ‘études’ 6 (Leuven, 2001), 60-4.

⁷⁴ J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism* (2001), 288.

The members of the Sethian triad are given various names,⁷⁵ but in one Christianizing strand of the tradition, they are identified as Father, Mother, and Son.⁷⁶ Normally Mother is in the second position,⁷⁷ unlike the sequence in our papyrus. But there are exceptions. In *Melchizedek* (NH IX,1) 5.23-6.10, ‘a basically Christian work which has been Sethianized’,⁷⁸ the first three acclamations in a ‘thrice holy’ litany are addressed to the Father of All, an incomplete name that appears to refer to the Son, and the Mother of the aeons, Barbelo.⁷⁹ In the end, however, we must admit that in its simplicity and its sequence, the triad in our papyrus does not correspond exactly to the more elaborate Sethian litanies.

This ‘irregularity’ may be compared with another one. It appears in a papyrus assigned, like the one we just considered, to the fourth century, *PGM P16* (*P.Ross. Georg. I 23*).⁸⁰ The text is an appeal to God for help against a certain Theodosios – a Christian instance of a type of incantation called a ‘prayer for justice’.⁸¹ Across the top of the papyrus the scribe wrote the acclamation: ‘Holy Trinity, holy Trinity, holy Trinity’. The prayer – if one accepts the first editor’s reconstruction⁸² – is addressed to the Lord ‘through the martyrs’. The petitioner bewails the suffering he or she has borne at the hands of Theodosios: ‘Nothing but hostilities have I suffered from his tyrannical behaviour ... Such wrong has he done to me!’ The petitioner’s only hope is ‘the power of God and the testimony for us through the saints’; he or she pleads with God to stand by him or her rather than with Theodosios. The appeal concludes with a trinitarian confession: ‘For there is

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 255-301.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 284-90.

⁷⁷ E.g., *Ap. John* (NH II,1 9.10-11; BG 2 19; NH III,1 13.15-6), in *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502.2*, ed. Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, NH(M)S 33 (Leiden, 1995), 54-5; *Gos. Eg.* (NH III,2 41.9; NH IV,2 50.25-6), in *Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2: The Gospel of the Egyptians (The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit)*, ed. Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, NH(M)S 4 (Leiden, 1975), 54-5.

⁷⁸ J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism* (2001), 101.

⁷⁹ *Melch.* (NH IX,1 5.23-7), in *Melchisédek (NH IX,1): oblation, baptême et vision dans la gnose séthienne*, ed. Wolf-Peter Funk, trans. Jean-Pierre Mahé, comm. Claudio Gianotto, Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section ‘textes’ 28 (Laval, Louvain, and Paris, 2001), 72, with 132. See J.D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism* (2001), 176-7.

⁸⁰ P. Jernstedt, ‘Christliche Beschwörung’, in Gregor Zereteli and Otto Krueger (eds), *Literarische Texte, Papyri russischer und georgischer Sammlungen* (P.Ross.-Georg.) 1 (Tiflis, 1925; repr. Amsterdam, 1966), 161-3. Image at <<http://papyri.info/apis/hermitage.apis.21>> (Papyri.info).

⁸¹ Henk Versnel has argued for and analysed this class of incantations in numerous publications, *inter alia*, H.S. Versnel, ‘Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers’, in Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York, 1991), 60-106; *id.*, ‘Prayers for Justice, East and West: Recent Finds and Publications since 1990’, in Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón (eds), *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept. – 1st Oct. 2005* (Boston, 2010), 275-354.

⁸² Lines 2-3: διὰ τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων [ν εὔχομαι τῷ] | κ(υρί)ῳ. The scribe’s writing would have to be compact (as in line 1) for the proposed reconstruction to fit in the remaining space, assuming that the right edge of the papyrus originally extended at least as far as it does at line 5.

only one Lord, [only one] God, in the Son [and] in the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, amen'.⁸³ Below this the scribe wrote three amens, three staurograms, and three-fold 'Lord', something we see in other incantations.⁸⁴ Originally there was more writing, but the papyrus breaks off.

Now, orthodox Christian parlance would lead one to expect the confession to read 'in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit',⁸⁵ not 'in the Son and in the Father and in the Holy Spirit'. What should one make of the irregular order here, unique even among amulets with trinitarian acclamations and doxologies?⁸⁶ Was it simply a 'slip'? If so, who would have made such a 'slip'? Not a Christian cleric, presumably; it is hard to imagine a cleric altering the order of such an established doxology. Was the scribe unfamiliar with Christian parlance? Possibly; but even so, the scribe is still knowledgeable enough to begin with a three-fold acclamation to the 'holy Trinity'. If the fourth-century date assigned to the papyrus is correct,⁸⁷ this itself is significant. Could the sequence be a melding of the usual form of Christian doxology prior to the Arian controversy, whereby praise was offered through the Son to the Father in the Holy Spirit, with a coordinate form adopted in reaction to that controversy?⁸⁸ In Egypt the older form of doxology can be found in the mid-fourth-century euchologion attributed to Sarapion.⁸⁹ But toward the end of the fourth century that form of doxology was combined with or replaced by a coordinate form, praise now being offered to the Father 'through and with' the Son or simply 'with' the Son.⁹⁰

⁸³ Lines 19-23: ὅτι μόνος κύριος, [μ]όν[ος] | θεός ἔστι ἐν [υ]ῖῳ [καί] | ἐν πατρὶ καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύ- | ματι καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἑὼνα[ς] | εἰς τῶν ἑὼνας, ἀμήν, correcting the first editor's reading ἐν τῷ πατρὶ at line 21.

⁸⁴ For three amens, see *P.Bon.* I 9.8; *P.Köln* IV 171.8; *P.Köln* VIII 340, side a, fr. B.13. For three staurograms, see *PGM* P19.6 (*PSI* VI 719); *Suppl. Mag.* I 27.6; *Suppl. Mag.* I 34 head of text; *Suppl. Mag.* I 59v.1 (*P.Ups.* 8); Csaba A. La'da and Amphilochios Papatomas, 'A Greek Papyrus Amulet from the Duke Collection with Biblical Excerpts', *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 41 (2004), 93-113, 97-8 (P.Duke inv. 778r.1, v.26); Wortmann, 'Neue magische Texte' (1968), 106 (P.Köln inv. 521av.1). For three-fold 'Lord', see *Suppl. Mag.* II 61.3 (also a prayer for justice).

⁸⁵ See, e.g., Theodoret of Cyr, *Exp. rect. fid.* 2, 7, in *Corpus apologetarum Christianorum saeculi secundi*, ed. J.C.T. Otto, vol. 4, 3rd ed. (Jena, 1880), 4-6, 26.

⁸⁶ For amulets with the regular trinitarian sequence, see, e.g., *BKT* VI 7.1.1; *PGM* P5d.1-2 (*P.Lond.Lit.* 231); *PGM* P10.40-1; *PGM* P12.1, for whose text see now Cornelia E. Römer, 'Gebet und Bannzauber des Severus von Antiochia gegen den Biss giftiger Tiere, oder: Maltomini hatte recht', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 168 (2009), 209-12; *PGM* P15a.17-22 (*P.Ross.Georg.* I 24); *PGM* P19.5-6 (*PSI* VI 719); *Suppl. Mag.* I 21.1-2 (*P.Köln* VI 257); *Suppl. Mag.* I 31.4 (*P.Turner* 49) = *BKT* IX 134; *Suppl. Mag.* I 36.1.

⁸⁷ P. Jernstedt, 'Christliche Beschwörung' (1925 = 1966), 161; compare G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands* (1987), 26-7 (no. 9a; P.Cornell inv. II 38, 388 CE).

⁸⁸ Alfred Stuiber, 'Doxologie', *RACH* 4 (1959), 210-26.

⁸⁹ Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*, 2nd ed., trans. A. Peeler (Staten Island, 1965), 23-4, 150-1.

⁹⁰ J.A. Jungmann, *The Place of Christ* (1965), 184-6, 192-3; Jean Michel Hanssens, *La liturgie d'Hippolyte: documents et études* (Rome, 1970), 190-1; Geoffrey J. Cuming, *The Liturgy of St Mark*, *OCA* 24 (Rome, 1990), 79.

However one answers these questions, the papyrus is evidence of how ‘non-official’ formulations vary from ‘official’ ones. Anomalies like the simplified Sethian acclamation or the irregular trinitarian doxology press us to think about what happens to official idioms when they are absorbed and reiterated by adherents or observers of a tradition. What sort of lives did official idioms in fact have in everyday practices and why did they take the shape they did? Somehow these formulations entered the vocabulary of these scribes, perhaps by participation in a community and its rituals, perhaps by more indirect channels. We may posit association with or derivation from an official idiom and its ritual context, but did the writers experience such resonance or affiliation? Perhaps; perhaps not. We cannot know. For the writers of these amulets, the acclamation or doxology was valid and powerful as it was phrased.

My final set of amulets is a pair that each begin with an acclamatory form of the second article of the Christian creed. I have argued elsewhere that these sorts of acclamations derive from Christian rituals of exorcism; that christological summaries, already used in ad-hoc exorcisms in the second century, continued to be so used in later centuries.⁹¹ If this is correct, these amulets constitute rare witnesses to the phrasing of such acclamations. We know, as well, that one of the reasons the faithful were exhorted to learn the creed from memory was so that they would be able to recite it when they were assailed by the devil or beset by illness.⁹² So it is not surprising that a form of the creed is recited in amulets against fevers and evil spirits.⁹³

One amulet, *Suppl. Mag.* I 35 (*P.Batav.* 20),⁹⁴ assigned to the sixth century, reads as follows: ‘Christ was proclaimed in advance. Christ appeared. Christ suffered. Christ died. Christ was raised. Christ was taken up. Christ reigns. Christ saves Vibius, whom Gennaia bore, from all fever and from all shivering,

⁹¹ Theodore S. de Bruyn, ‘What Did Ancient Christians Say When They Exorcised Demons? Inferences from Spells and Amulets’, in Wendy Mayer and Geoffrey D. Dunn (eds), *Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Essays in Honour of Pauline Allen* (Leiden, 2015), 64-82.

⁹² Ambrose, *expl. symb.* 9, in *Ambroise de Milan, Des sacrements, Des mystères, Explication du symbole*, ed. Bernard Botte, SC 25 bis (Paris, 2007), 56-8. I am grateful to Gillian Clark for bringing this to my attention. In both East and West, catechumens preparing for baptism memorized the creed and recited it in a rite prior to their baptism; see Paul L. Gavilyuk, *Histoire du catéchuménat dans l’Église ancienne*, trans. Françoise Lhoest, Nina Mojaïsky and Anne-Marie Gueit (Paris, 2007), 208-9, 231, 298-9, 304.

⁹³ In addition to the two discussed below, see *Suppl. Mag.* I 31 (*P.Turner* 49) = *BKT IX* 134, an amulet against fever, headache, every malignity, and every evil spirit, which opens with the second article of the creed.

⁹⁴ P.W.A.Th. Van Der Laan, ‘Amulette chrétienne contre la fièvre’, in E. Boswinkel and P.W. Pestman (eds), *Textes grecs, démotiques et bilingues (P. L. Bat. 19)*, *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava* 19 (Leiden, 1978), 96-102 (volume now abbreviated as *P.Batav.*).

daily, quotidian, now now, quickly quickly'.⁹⁵ Each statement of the acclamation is preceded by a staurogram (*tau-rho* or ✠) and given its own line, replicating visually, as it were, the action of signing oneself with the cross and then proclaiming the creed.⁹⁶ The entire text is preceded and followed by a line of seven crosses (only four remain from the top line). The scribe wrote in a practiced, though untidy, cursive hand.⁹⁷ The combination of the staurogram with Χριστός written as a *nomen sacrum* ($\text{✠}\overline{\chi\varsigma}$) shows the scribe to be at ease with Christian conventions: a single stroke rises from the bottom left of the *rho* to form the cross bar of the staurogram and the diagonal of *chi*.

We may compare this amulet with a similar one assigned to the fifth century, *Suppl. Mag.* I 23 (*P.Haun.* III 51).⁹⁸ It has a bipartite structure. The first part has an acclamatory creed similar to the one we have just seen. It culminates in the injunction: 'You too, fever with shivering, flee from Kale, who wears this phylactery'.⁹⁹ The scribe, who wrote in a rather deliberate upright majuscule hand,¹⁰⁰ inadvertently drops a few letters in these lines.¹⁰¹ He also writes 'Christ' out in full, but this may not be significant, since in documents and letters scribes did not always use *nomina sacra*. The second part of the amulet has a drawing of a stele, with the letters *sigma* and *eta* (ζςς ζς ηη η) written inside, flanked by two eight-pointed stars, one of the more common esoteric symbols (*charaktêres*) used in incantations.¹⁰² The invocation accompanying these visual elements reads: 'Holy stele and mighty *charaktêres*, chase away the fever with shivering from Kale, who wears this amulet, now now now, quickly quickly quickly'.¹⁰³ In Greco-Roman Egypt, stelae engraved with dei-

⁹⁵ Lines 1-14: ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) προεξ[ηρύχθη] | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) ἐφάνη | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) ἐπαθεν | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) ἀπέθανεν | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) ἀνγέρθη | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) ἀνελήμφθη | ✠ Χ(ριστὸς) βασιλεύει | Χ(ριστὸς) σώζει Οὐίβιον, | ὄν ἔτεκεν Γενναία, | ἀπὸ παντὸς πυρετοῦ | καὶ παντὸς ῥίγους | [] ἀμφημερινοῦ, | καθημερινοῦ, | ἡδὴ ἡδη, ταχὺ ταχὺ.

⁹⁶ For the action of signing and reciting, see, e.g., Ambrose, *expl. symb.* 3, 8, SC 25 bis, 48, 56.

⁹⁷ E. Boswinkel and P.W. Pestman, *Textes grecs* (1978), plate XIV.

⁹⁸ TAGE Larson and Adam Bülow-Jacobsen (eds), *Papyri Graecae Haunienses. Fasciculus tertius (P. Haun. III, 45-69): Subliterary Texts and Byzantine Documents from Egypt* (Bonn, 1985), 31-7; *Suppl. Mag.* I 23.

⁹⁹ Lines 1-9: ✠ Χριστὸς ἐγεννήθη, ἀμήν. | Χριστὸς ἐσταυρόθη, ἀμήν. | Χριστὸς ἐτάφη, ἀμήν. | Χριστὸς ἀνέστη, ἀμή<ν>. | γεγέρθη κρῖνε ζῶντας | καὶ νεκρούς. φύγε καὶ σοί, | ῥιγοπυρέτιν, ἀπὸ Καλῆς | τῆς φορούσης τὸ φυλ<α>κτῆ- | ριον τοῦτο.

¹⁰⁰ T. Larson and A. Bülow-Jacobsen, *Papyri Graecae Haunienses* (1985), 31 and plate III.

¹⁰¹ Supplied at n. 99 between angled brackets.

¹⁰² For an introduction to *charaktêres*, see Richard Gordon, 'Signa nova et inaudita: The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs (*charaktêres*) in Graeco-Egyptian Magical Texts', *MNH: Revista internacional de investigación sobre magia y astrología antiguas* 11 (2011), 15-44; *id.*, 'Charaktêres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention', in Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser (eds), *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Florence, 2014), 253-300.

¹⁰³ Lines 10-7: ἀγία | στήλη | καὶ εἰς- | χυροὶ χαρακτῆραις, ἀπο- | διδύχεται τὸ ῥιγοπύρετον | ἀπὸ Καλῆς τῆς φορούσης | τὸ φυλακτῆριον τοῦτο, | ἡδε ἡδε ἡδε, ταχὺ ταχὺ ταχὺ.

ties and inscribed with hieroglyphs, found in temple courts and other public places, were widely regarded as sources of protection and healing.¹⁰⁴ The power attributed to these objects is apparent, for instance, from recipes for incantations that name a temple stele as their source or, more often, refer to the incantation that is to be spoken or written as a ‘stele’.¹⁰⁵ The amulet we are considering attests to this graphically and ritually by drawing and then invoking an inscribed stele.¹⁰⁶ It was also customary to invoke *charaktêres* directly to perform the desired task. The practice is attested most frequently in curse tablets,¹⁰⁷ but also surfaces in another amulet against fever with Christian elements.¹⁰⁸

Both of these amulets in fact employ a customary adjuration, as the phrasing of the injunction with its accelerating formula – ‘now now, quickly quickly’ – shows. But the second amulet is more obviously syncretistic than the first. (I use ‘syncretistic’ in the sense proposed by David Frankfurter to refer to an assemblage of symbols and discourses that is an expression of indigenous agency, often experimental, in maintaining and developing meaning in a context of cultural change.¹⁰⁹) We could regard the second amulet as an instance of a purveyor or a client hedging their bets by invoking both new and old sources of protection.¹¹⁰ But is the combination of Christian and Greco-Egyptian invocations *just* a technique? Could it also reflect socially shared but inarticulate notions of what is appropriate in a given situation, whereby an Egyptian might have combined ethnic custom with Christian devotion without perceiving a shift in religious register, much the way that Augustine and Chrysostom describe, but with disapproval?¹¹¹ We would like to know how these two invocations resonated with peoples’ senses of who they were and how they should conduct themselves in a collectivist, traditional society.¹¹² The

¹⁰⁴ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, 1998), 47-9.

¹⁰⁵ For ‘stele’ referring to source: *PGM* VIII.41-3. For ‘stele’ referring to incantation: *PGM* IV.1115, 1167, 2567-9, 3245-7, V.95, 422-3, XIII.54, 61, 127, 131-2, 425, 566-7, 684-5, 688.

¹⁰⁶ See Jitse H.F. Dijkstra, ‘The Interplay between Image and Text on Greek Amulets Containing Christian Elements from Late Antique Egypt’, in Dietrich Boschung and Jan M. Bremmer (eds), *The Materiality of Magic*, *Morphomata* 20 (Munich, 2015), 271-92, 278-80.

¹⁰⁷ See the references at *Suppl. Mag.* I 21.10-12 comm.

¹⁰⁸ *Suppl. Mag.* I 21 (*P.Köln* VI 257).

¹⁰⁹ David Frankfurter, ‘Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt’, *J ECS* 11 (2003), 339-85, 343.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., *Suppl. Mag.* I 34.

¹¹¹ On the difference and tension between the *habitus* or practice of people and the ideology and rules of normative discourse (drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu), see Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge, 2007), 11-20, especially 17-8.

¹¹² See Mikael Tellbe, ‘Identity and Prayer’, in Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (eds), *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, WUNT 336 (Tübingen, 2014), 13-34, 13-7; Yitzhak Hen, ‘The Early Medieval West’, in David J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2015), 183-206, 197.

invocations certainly suggest a more complex layering of identities than normative discourse allowed, since both the Christian credo and the ‘holy stele and mighty *charaktères*’ were salient for the scribe (and, possibly, the client) of the second amulet.¹¹³ Although we cannot know how these two scribes viewed what they were doing, we must allow for the possibility that both of them regarded themselves and their remedies to be ‘Christian’. Christian expression is not delimited by normative discourse and practice, even if it may be shaped by and related to them.

In the past few decades there has been something of a turn toward ‘lived religion’ among scholars working in various disciplines of religious studies in Europe and North America.¹¹⁴ The approach has its roots in post-World War II efforts to describe the diverse religious practices of people who belonged nominally to an established religious tradition and to understand how these practices related to formal institutional practices (and vice versa).¹¹⁵ This was followed by efforts to understand what it means to be ‘religious’ when most of the population stop participating in formal religious activities but many people nevertheless continue to be religious in individual or new ways, as is the situation in Europe and North America.¹¹⁶ The approach has been motivated, as well, by dissatisfaction with measures of religious identity or activity used in quantitative surveys that do not capture the multi-faceted ways in which people are religious.¹¹⁷ The result has been studies that combine ethnography – close description of what people, as individuals or in groups, do and say when they are acting, implicitly or explicitly, in a religious manner – and conceptual reflection – a critique of concepts previously used to describe people’s activities

¹¹³ For an analysis of situations in which Christian identity was not salient or did not take precedence, see Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca, 2012), 1-5, 74-9.

¹¹⁴ Some of the principal contributions can be found in David D. Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, 1997); Nancy T. Ammerman (ed.), *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford, 2007); Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford, 2008); Guiseppa Giordan and William H. Swatos, Jr. (eds), *Religion, Spirituality, and Everyday Practice* (Dordrecht and New York, 2011). See also Mary Jo Neitz, ‘Lived Religion: Signposts of Where We Have Been and Where We Can Go from Here’, in G. Giordan and W.H. Swatos, Jr., *Religion, Spirituality, and Everyday Practice* (2011), 45-55.

¹¹⁵ Daniëlle Hervieu-Léger, ‘“What Scripture Tells Me”: Spontaneity and Regulation within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal’, in D.D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America* (1997), 22-40, 22-4.

¹¹⁶ D. Hervieu-Léger, ‘“What Scripture Tells Me”’ (1997), 24-7; Nancy T. Ammerman, ‘Introduction: Observing Modern Religious Lives’, in N.T. Ammerman, *Everyday Religion* (2007), 3-18, 3-4. On the resilience of official religious institutions and norms, however, see Isacco Turina, ‘From Institution to Spirituality and Back: Or, Why We Should Be Cautious About the “Spiritual Turn”’, in G. Giordan and W.H. Swatos, Jr., *Religion, Spirituality, and Everyday Practice* (2011), 181-9.

¹¹⁷ M.B. McGuire, *Lived Religion* (2008), 3-5; N.T. Ammerman, ‘Introduction’ (2007), 6.

and a search for concepts that do so more adequately.¹¹⁸ As it is now applied to antiquity, the approach seeks to bring into full relief how people's religious practices are located in everyday activities, expressed in bodily acts, engaged with material objects, embedded in social settings and groupings, different for women and children than for men, related to but not determined by institutional religious activities, drawing on ethnic traditions, eclectic and incoherent and pragmatic.¹¹⁹

Such description of everyday practices, I would submit, is valuable in and of itself, for past cultures as well as present ones. The amulets discussed above illustrate how the study of everyday practices can enrich and complicate our understanding of how Christians embodied, expressed, and shaped belief and practice in Late Antiquity. Because the incantations are idiosyncratic and specific, as well as formulaic and patterned, they reveal dimensions of individuality that are part of the ongoing activity of reproducing or reshaping a traditional practice. At the same time they provoke questions – sometimes questions that are ultimately unanswerable – about the dynamics of religious activity and expression in Late Antiquity. Amulets that combine, in different ways, Greco-Egyptian and Christian elements lead us to ask what salience those elements might have had, who might have written them, and why they might have written them as they did. If the only amulets against scorpions we had were the three from Oxyrhynchus that reproduce the commonplace 'Hôr Hôr' incantation, we might answer such questions differently than we would when confronted with the comparable but more elaborate amulet in the Oslo collection, which has a more pronounced and deliberate Christian frame. We can no longer recover the circumstances in which this 'innovative de-traditionalization' of a customary formula happened,¹²⁰ but we have the evidence that it occurred and, what is more, a trace of the doxological idiom of the milieu in which it occurred. The second set of amulets remind us that in everyday practice acclamations were likely simple and possibly 'irregular' in comparison to their counterparts in liturgical books or theological treatises. They also press us to think about where the acclamations might have originated, since acclamations acquire authority through their proclamation in collective gatherings, and how they might have been 'individualized'. So too, amulets that incorporate an acclamatory Christian

¹¹⁸ See, e.g., David D. Hall, 'Introduction', in D.D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America* (1997), vii-xiii; Robert Orsi, 'Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion', in *ibid.* 3-21; N.T. Ammerman, 'Introduction' (2007), 5-15; M.B. McGuire, *Lived Religion* (2008), 11-6, 185-213.

¹¹⁹ R. Raja and J. Rüpke, 'Appropriating Religion' (2015), 13-5. See, e.g., the essays in Virginia Burrus (ed.), *Late Ancient Christianity, A People's History of Christianity 2* (Minneapolis, 2005), and Derek Krueger (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity, A People's History of Christianity 3* (Minneapolis, 2006).

¹²⁰ On the social process of 'innovative de-traditionalization', whereby individuals depart from traditional norms in their actions, see Jörg Rüpke, 'Individualization and Individuation as Concepts for Historical Research', in J. Rüpke, *Individual* (2013), 3-38, 7-8.

creed lead us to ask where and why such creeds were recited by Christians (for protection or to exorcize) in order to understand how they might have made their way into amulets. And here too, the amulet which combines a creedal acclamation with an invocation of a stele and *charaktères* invites us to reflect on why the scribe juxtaposed two idioms and whether the shift had any religious significance for the scribe. We may posit explanations with more or less confidence, but in the end the questions a practice raises about what we are studying and the assumptions we bring to that study may be the most valuable dividend a practice pays us as students of ancient Christianity.

I would like to conclude by returning to where I began, the fiftieth anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies and the scope of its field of study. I have argued that investigation of everyday practices not only belongs to the field of study but is indispensable to it, since such practices expose the complexity of Christian devotion and identity, which were shaped by various collectivities and customs, including but not limited to institutional Christian instruction and ritual. I would add that this sort of inquiry inevitably draws on the array of disciplines, approaches, and expertise that constitute the field of patristics. Thus the study of amulets – their writing, formulation, and wearing – takes one into the domains of ancient culture, papyrology, palaeography, liturgical studies, scripture studies, homiletics, hagiography, ritual studies, and more. And this is merely illustrative of what is true for much of our work.

It is worth noting that many of the areas of study that we rely upon to populate the world of Late Antiquity and understand what people thought and did at that time have been part of the life of the Association since its inception. Obviously, the field has not stood still. Disciplines that have long been a part of the field have evolved, and disciplines that traditionally have not been a part of the field are making their presence felt. If anything, the field is more diverse now than it was fifty years ago, as one can see from accounts of the state of the field given at a conference held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Association.¹²¹ Our institutional histories, linguistic competencies, confessional identities, cultural interests, and theoretical proclivities – to name only a few features – generate differences in our work that the classification system the Association uses to record our research does not and never will capture. Nevertheless, I trust that the founders of the Association would have been pleased to see how durable their concept of the field as an interdisciplinary one has been, even if they could not have anticipated all that we now collectively bring to bear on the field. Theirs is a resilient and capacious legacy.¹²²

¹²¹ B. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, T.S. de Bruyn and C. Harrison (eds), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first Century* (2015), 55-193.

¹²² The above article draws on material discussed in more detail in Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford, 2017), esp. 95-6, 131-2, 207-10, 223-5, reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.