

“For our Lord was pursued by the Jews...”: The (Ab)Use of the Motif of ‘Jewish’
Violence against Jesus on a Greek Amulet (P. Heid. 1101)**

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On February 25, 2004, Mel Gibson’s film, *The Passion of the Christ*, was released in theaters throughout the United States of America. Its violent images, anti-Semitic representation of the Jews, and historical infelicities and inaccuracies immediately aroused the ire of film critics, activists, and historians of the ancient world. One of the more astute essays written in response to Gibson’s film was penned by the honoree of this volume, my Doktorvater and friend, S. Scott Bartchy.¹ Scott’s article not only appropriately highlighted Gibson’s disregard for history (e.g., the early dating of Is. 53 in the opening frame and the portrayal of Pilate as a pensive ruler) and for the writings of the New Testament (e.g., the lack of reference to Jesus’ concern for the poor and the additions to the passion story based on the meditations of Anne Catherine Emmerich [1774–1824]), but it also offered his readers a very personal critique of the *Passion*; his confession of feeling “emotionally abused” while watching Gibson’s depiction of the crucifixion deftly captured the emotions felt by many of us who suffered through this film.² Moreover, Scott appropriately highlighted the social implications of disassociating Jesus from his Judean roots within the film’s twenty-first century American context—not

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¹ Bartchy, “Where is the History in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*?” 313–28.

² Bartchy, “Where is the History in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*?” 319.

to mention its vivid depiction of the Jews as bloodthirsty villains.³ But then again, it is not surprising that Scott would write an article that so beautifully melded critical scholarship with a heart-felt concern for the personal and social impacts of Gibson's *Passion*. Indeed, through his teaching and publications Scott has modeled for many of us how to unite the study of antiquity with concerns for social justice in our own time. Scott's life and work thus provide a point of contrast—and Mel Gibson's film, a point of complement!—to the artifact at the center of the following essay: an amulet from late antique Egypt inscribed with an accusation of Jewish violence.

I. Introduction

Scholarship on the role of boundary demarcation in the construction and maintenance of early “Christian” identities has blossomed in recent years. Much of this scholarly discourse has centered on the boundaries between “Christians” and “Jews” in their nascent interactions with one another. Contrary to earlier portraits of “Judaism” and “Christianity” as discrete religions after a definitive “parting of the ways,”⁴ historians of religion now talk of a continued and messy negotiation of identity between members of the Jesus movement(s) and ethnic Jews, with points of unity and rupture throughout Late Antiquity.⁵

In response to the porous boundaries that imperfectly separated “Jews” and “Christians” in social reality, followers of Jesus deployed various themes in their writings to establish and maintain clear distinctions between “their” communities and “Jewish”

³ Bartchy, “Where is the History in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*?” 318.

⁴ See especially Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways*.

⁵ See especially the various essays in Becker and Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted* and Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

communities.⁶ Perhaps the most common theme was that of the “Jewish violence” against Christ and his followers.⁷ Foreshadowing Mel Gibson’s *Passion*, many early Christian writers depicted the “Jews” as a violent lot—one that was especially preoccupied with seeking out the “true” followers of God.

This motif found its way into an unexpected venue, P. Heidelberg inv. G 1101 (hereafter P. Heid. 1101), a fifth-or sixth-century C.E. amulet that was discovered near ancient Egyptian Babylon.⁸ The following formula is part of the amulet’s complex ritual to heal eye migraine and eye discharge:

For our Lord was pursued by the Jews (Ἰουδαέον), and he came to the Euphrates River and stuck in his staff, and the water stood still. Also you, discharge (ῥεῦμα), stand still in the name of our Lord, who was crucified, from head to toe-nails ...⁹

⁶ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 1–33.

⁷ The motif of Jewish violence against Christ was not only ubiquitous in early Christian discourses, but it also shaped how specific characteristics (e.g., blindness and pride) that Christians attributed to Jews were conceptualized. On this point, see Shaw, *Sacred Violence*, 287–88.

⁸ For the *editio princeps*, see Maltomini, “Cristo all’Eufrate,” 149–170. For subsequent editions, see Rupprecht, *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten*, no. 12719; *Suppl. Mag.* 1: 90–96, no. 32.

⁹ The extant Greek text: ...[.]... αντω...ρ...[.]ενια εις τη (read τι) αν θελις (read θελεις or θελης)· αγιος αγιος ηρ... τόνδε ει τήνδε (mag. signs)[.]... ορθω... ος ορκίζω (read ορκίζω) σε τον Τουμηηλ Ηλ, ος ορκίζω (read ως ορκίζω) σε, ρεῦμα[.] (magic signs).....ατ... αλεντ ..ου,υκκατα παχύ ήτε (read είτε) λεπτόν ήτε (read είτε) άρμυρό[ν] (read άλμυρόν) ήτε (read είτε) δρυμύτατον (read δριμύτατον), ορκίζω (read ορκίζω) σε κατά τον λεγόντων (read τών λεγόντων)· αγιος αγιος αγιος [κ(ύριο)ς] Σαβαωθ ο θεός, ο θεός Αδοναι Αοθ, άποθεραπέυσατε οφθαλμού[ς] από ήμικράνου (read ήμικρανίου) και παντύου (read παντοίου) ρεύματος αύτον (read αύτών) · ο γάρ κύριος ήμον έδ[ι]όκεντο (read ήμών έδιώκετο) από τον Ιουδαέον (read τών Ιουδαίων) και έλθεν (read ήλθεν) εις τον Εύφρατιν (read Εύφράτην) ποταμ[δ]ν και έπιξεν τιν (read έπηξεν την) ράβδον αυτού και ξεστη το ύδρο (read ύδωρ)· και σύ, ρεῦμα, στη[θι] όν[ό]ματι{ν} κ(υριο)υ ήμον (read ήμών) του σταυρεθέντος (read σταυρωθέντος) από κεφαλις (read κεφαλής) μέχρι ονύχων (read ονύχων) .[.]νεε Μιχαηλ, Γαβριηλ, Ουρηηλ (read Ουρηηλ), Ραφαηλ, λυε, λυε πόνους, λυε, ήδ[η] ήδη ταχύ (mag. signs). English translation: “...for what you wish. Holy, holy, holy, protect (?) a certain man or a certain woman (mag. sign)...I adjure you by Toumêêl Êl, for I adjure you, discharge (mag. sign)...thick or thin or salty or very bitter, I adjure you by those who say “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaôth the God, the God Adonai Aoth”; heal the eyes from migraine and every sort of discharge from them. For our Lord was pursued by the Jews, and he came to the Euphrates River and stuck in his staff, and the water stood still. Also you, discharge, stand still in the name of our Lord, who was crucified, from head to toe-nails...Michaël, Gabriël, Ourêël, Raphaël, undo, undo the pains, undo, now now, quickly (mag. signs).” Text and translation are based on *Suppl. Mag.* 1: 92. It does not seem that P. Heid. 1101 was originally tailored to a particular individual (cf. “a certain man or a certain woman” [τόνδε ει τήνδε]); if it was not, it should be classified among those “master texts” that were subsequently used as applied amulets (e.g., Schmidt 1). Of course, it is also possible that this phrase was accidentally copied from a formulary, as Daniel and Maltomini suggest (*Suppl. Mag.* 1: 92).

This passage is an example of what scholars call a *historiola* (i.e., a short narrative used for ritual power).¹⁰ This particular *historiola* operated on the basis of a direct and explicit analogy between the stilling of the Euphrates River and the cessation of eye discharge. In other words, the ritual specialist has explicitly merged the realm of Jesus' miraculous act at the Euphrates River with the world of his or her (potential) client. Accordingly, this is a variation of a special sub-class of *historiolae*, known in scholarship as the *similia similibus* formula (i.e., "just as...so also....").¹¹

Of particular significance for the concerns of this paper is the opening phrase of the ritual narrative, "for our Lord was pursued by the Jews." Why did the ritual specialist introduce Jesus' miraculous act at the Euphrates River with this accusation of attempted Jewish violence? In the discussion to follow, I will merge insights from recent scholarship on the theme of "Jewish" violence against Jesus and his followers with research on ancient amulets in order to determine the ritual function of the reference to attempted Jewish violence on P. Heid. 1101. With the help of this cross-disciplinary synthesis, I will argue—albeit tentatively—that this portrayal of the Jews was intended to establish the proper religious affiliation of the client.

II. "For our Lord was pursued by the Jews": Beyond Source Criticism

On account of the peculiar content of this *historiola*, the little scholarship that has been devoted to it has been almost exclusively confined to source-critical aims. For instance, the amulet's original editor, Franco Maltomini, found a source-critical solution to this

¹⁰ See especially Frankfurter, "Narrating Power," 457–76.

¹¹ On the *similia similibus* formula, see Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 8–10. Daniel and Maltomini note that the analogical connection is established in P. Heid. 1101 by the phrase, "καὶ σὺ" (*Suppl.Mag.* 1: 95; cf. Maltomini, "Cristo all'Eufrate," 165).

historiola in the ninth-century C.E. *Jordansegen* tradition.¹² The ritual artifacts in this tradition share a basic *similia similibus* formula, usually to stop a hemorrhage: as the Jordan River stopped before Jesus, so may the hemorrhage stop. Maltomini conceded, however, that this solution cannot account for the references to the Euphrates River and to the Jewish pursuit of Jesus.¹³

Building on the work of Maltomini, Gianfranco Fiaccadori suggested that the Eusebian version of the correspondence between Abgar, king of Edessa, and Jesus could have been the source for the references to the Euphrates River and to the Jewish pursuit of Jesus.¹⁴ Fiaccadori highlighted that, in this version of the correspondence, the boundary of Edessa is specifically marked off in reference to the Euphrates River. Moreover, Eusebius notes that the Jews were threatening Jesus.¹⁵ Despite these similarities, however, in the Eusebian version of this correspondence Jesus declines Abgar's request to travel to Edessa and perform the healing; instead, it is the disciple Thaddeus who heals the Edessan king. Faced with this rather significant tension in the data, Fiaccadori entertained the novel possibility that P. Heid. 1101 preserves a version of this tradition in which Jesus actually makes the trip to Edessa.¹⁶

While the source-critical endeavors of Maltomini and Fiaccadori have offered interesting and creative solutions to the potential sources behind P. Heid. 1101, they have left an important issue insufficiently addressed: even if we concede that the practitioner utilized the Abgar/Jesus correspondence as a source, we have yet to explain why that

¹² Maltomini, "Cristo all'Eufate," 152–56. For texts representative of the *Jordansegen* tradition, see Ebermann, *Blut- und Wundsegen in ihrer Entwicklung*, 24–35; *Suppl.Mag.*, 91 n. 2.

¹³ Maltomini, "Cristo all'Eufate," 156.

¹⁴ Fiaccadori, "Cristo all'Eufate (P. Heid. G. 1101, 8 ss.)," 59–63.

¹⁵ Fiaccadori, "Cristo all'Eufate (P. Heid. G. 1101, 8 ss.)," 61.

¹⁶ Fiaccadori, "Cristo all'Eufate (P. Heid. G. 1101, 8 ss.)," 63.

practitioner isolated and selected the persecuting-Jew motif, in particular, for his or her ritual. Why was this motif chosen and what was its function?

Making the question of function even more pressing is the dislocated nature of the accusation of attempted Jewish violence within the overall formal structure of the *historiola*. The phrase, “for our Lord was pursued by the Jews,” is technically not part of the *similia similibus* formula; it does not have a corresponding analogue in the second portion of the formula.¹⁷ Thus, the identification of its function within the ritual is of paramount importance. Does the phrase merely establish the narrative setting for the ritual analogy or was it intended to accomplish something more?

Suggesting an additional function for this phrase in the ritual of P. Heid. 1101 is its likely activation of what John Miles Foley has called “traditional referentiality.”¹⁸ This term refers to the numerous associations within a given social context that are evoked through the performance of a well-known authoritative tradition. Foley argued that even a short or paraphrased reference to such a tradition calls to mind multiple associations with it.¹⁹ Building on the work of Foley, H. S. Versnel has shown that this kind of metonymic transfer is frequently operative in “magical” contexts.²⁰

Indeed, the theme of the Jewish persecution of Jesus and Christians was a well-established and authoritative tradition in Late Antiquity. Moreover, its usage typically served a specific social function. Thus, I believe we can gain insight into the primary

¹⁷ According to Maltomini, Kurt Treu observed the dislocated nature of this phrase within the incantation, stating that it did not seem to serve a magical function (“Cristo all’Eufrate,” 156).

¹⁸ Foley, *Immanent Art*, esp. 38-60.

¹⁹ Foley, *Immanent Art*, 7.

²⁰ Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm,” 124. Derek Collins has been critical of the appropriateness of “traditional referentiality” for the “magical” use of Homeric traditions (*Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 108).

ritual function of the Jewish pursuit of Jesus on P. Heid. 1101 by examining the use of this motif within the social world of Late Antiquity.

III. The Ritual Function of the Jewish Pursuit of Jesus on P. Heid. 1101

The decision to introduce this *historiola* with the Jewish pursuit of Jesus was not made in a vacuum; rather, the motif of the “violent Jews” played an important role in the early Jesus movement’s attempt to create and maintain its distinctive identity. Whether taking the form of Jews persecuting “Christians,” as in the so-called ἀποσυνάγωγος passages from the Gospel of John,²¹ or of the Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ, as in the accusations of deicide by Melito of Sardis in *Peri Pascha*,²² the theme of Jewish violence was frequently used to construct, preserve, and clarify religious difference.²³ The message was simple: *we* are fundamentally distinct from *those people*, who murdered *our* Lord and his followers.

There is compelling evidence that this social dimension of the persecuting-Jews motif made an impact on the ritual world of late antique Egypt. For example, the previously mentioned Abgar/Jesus correspondence, which highlights the Jewish persecution of Jesus, is the most widely attested “extra-canonical” tradition in this context.²⁴ In fact, to speak of it as “extra-canonical” is misleading, as one Coptic amulet juxtaposes the *incipit* of Jesus’ letter to Abgar with the *incipits* of the four Gospels.²⁵

²¹ John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2 (cf. Rev 2:9; 3:9; *Mart. Pol.* 12.2; 13.1; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 10.9).

²² E.g., *Peri Pascha* 72, ll. 505–8; 73, ll. 520, 524; 96, ll. 711–16. For commentaries on these passages, see Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 199–240.

²³ Fredriksen, “What Parting of the Ways?” 35–63; Frankfurter, “Violence and Religious Formation,” 142–43.

²⁴ On the importance of the Abgar tradition for apotropaic contexts, see Drioton, “Un apocryphe anti-arien,” 306–26; Skemer, *Binding Words*, 96–105.

²⁵ Brit. Lib. Or. 4919(2) (Sanzo, “Brit. Lib. Or. 4919[2],” 98–100).

The Jewish hatred and persecution of Jesus is highlighted most forcefully in Abgar's letter. According to Eusebius, the Edessan king wrote, "I heard that the Jews are mocking you, and wish to ill-treat you."²⁶ An even more incendiary version of this statement can be found on P. Oxy. 4469, a fifth-century C.E. Greek amulet: "for I have heard that the Jews murmur against you and persecute you, desiring to kill you."²⁷ The prominence of this authoritative tradition within apotropaic contexts indicates that many practitioners were exposed to literature in which the theme of Jewish violence against Jesus was used to clarify religious boundaries.

Moreover, accusations of Jewish violence were incorporated into many other kinds of texts and contexts in late antique Egypt. For example, Athanasius of Alexandria offers the following advice to Marcellinus in a letter, "should you wish to censure the treachery of the Jews against the Savior, [recite] the second psalm."²⁸ In addition, this rhetorical tactic penetrates two pseudepigraphical dialogues between Egyptian "Christians" and "Jews": the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zachaeus* (e.g., 35, 130) and the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquilla* (e.g., 41.17).²⁹ Also, during the Easter season, congregants were likely to hear repeatedly of the Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ.³⁰

²⁶ "καὶ γὰρ ἤκουσα ὅτι καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καταγογγύζουσί σου καὶ βούλονται κακῶσαί σε" (*Hist. eccl.* I. xiii. 8). Translation by Kirsopp Lake in Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 89.

²⁷ "[x]αὶ γὰρ ἤκ[ου]σα ὅτι Ἰαουδεοὶ κα[ταγο]γγύζουζίν σου κ[αὶ διώ]κουσίν σε βουλόμενοί σ[ε ἀπο]κτ[εῖναι]" (Maltomini, "4469. Letter of Abgar to Jesus [Amulet]," 122–29). Translation based on Maltomini, "4469. Letter of Abgar to Jesus [Amulet]," 126. It should be noted that P. Oxy. 4469's version of Abgar's letter has many affinities with the Syriac tradition of the same letter (Maltomini, "4469. Letter of Abgar to Jesus [Amulet]," 124).

²⁸ *Ep. Marc.* 15.

²⁹ Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*. In addition, an anti-Jewish dialogue is extant (in lacunose form) on a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (Hunt, "2070. Anti-Jewish Dialogue," 9–14).

³⁰ This can be seen in the sermons of Augustine in North Africa (e.g., *Serm.* 218–229 and *Tract. ep. Jo.* 1–10). For the connection between the North African liturgy and Egyptian Babylon, evident from a Latin amulet that was discovered with P. Heid. 1101 (P. Heid. L 5), see Daniel and Maltomini, "From the African Psalter and Liturgy," 253–65.

Furthermore, much of the extant manuscript evidence for texts that utilize this invective from other regions of the ancient Mediterranean comes from the sands of the Egypt. In other words, although originally written elsewhere, these texts were active *in Egypt*. For instance, as several scholars have noted, the theme of Jewish violence plays a particularly important role in the Gospel of John—one of the most popular Gospels in Egypt during Late Antiquity.³¹ Beyond the numerous manuscripts of John and the other canonical Gospels, the aforementioned *Peri Pascha* by Melito of Sardis is extant in at least three manuscripts from late antique Egypt.³² In addition, the so-called “Gospel of Peter,” which has a particularly strong emphasis on the Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus, is extant in multiple manuscripts from this region and period.³³

To be sure, the label “Jews” in these texts may not have always referred to ethnic Jews. For instance, a common tendency of early heresiologists was to associate “heretics” with “Jews”—whether juxtaposing “Jewish” and “heretical” characteristics or simply using the term “Jews” to identify a heretical body.³⁴ In Egypt, the label “Jews” was deployed metaphorically in various “inter-Christian” disputes, including those between so-called Nicene Christians and Arians³⁵ as well as between pro-Chalcedonians and anti-

³¹ E.g., Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews in the Fourth Gospel,” 341–56; Freyne, “Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self,” 117–43.

³² P. Chester Beatty XII (Bonner, *The Homily on the Passion by Melito Bishop of Sardis*, 1–180; Hall, “The Melito Papyri,” 476–508); P. Bodmer XIII (Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer XIII*; idem, “Un nouveau manuscrit de l’homélie ‘Peri Pascha’ de Mélicon,” 139–41); P. Oxy. XIII 1600 (Grenfell and Hunt, “1600. Treatise on the Passion,” 19–21).

³³ P. Cair. 10759 (Bouriant, *Fragments du texte grec du livre d’Énoch*, 137–42); P. Oxy. XLI 2949 (Coles, “2949. Fragments of an Apocryphal Gospel[?],” 15–16; cf. Lührmann, “POx 2949: EvPt 3–5 in einer Handschrift des 2./3. Jahrhunderts,” 216–26); P. Oxy. LX 4009 (Lührmann and Parsons, “4009. Gospel of Peter?” 1–5). It is also possible that a fragment from the Fayûm (P. Vindob. G 2325) contains portions of the Gospel of Peter, but this is more unlikely (Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 375).

³⁴ Cameron, “Jews and Heretics—A Category Error?” 345–60; Boyarin and Burrus, “Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? 433–36.

³⁵ Brakke, “Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria,” 453–81.

Chalcedonians.³⁶ It should be stressed, however, that this metaphorical usage of the “Jews” was also designed to establish or maintain religious difference.

Identifying the specific source(s) or reference(s) behind the *historiola* in P. Heid. 1101 is beyond the concerns of this essay. What interests me is that the practitioner was part of a religious and scribal culture that was immersed in the rhetorical construct of the “violent Jews” for defining its religious boundaries.³⁷ It seems likely, therefore, that this social function was *evoked* through “traditional referentiality” and *invoked* in some way when the practitioner included the Jewish pursuit of Jesus on the amulet.

But the likely presence of this type of evocation raises an important question: what function would boundary demarcation and identity construction serve in a ritual healing context? In order to address this issue, it is important to observe a distinction that David Frankfurter has drawn between the “*historiola* proper,” where the power comes by virtue of the narrative itself, and the “clausal *historiola*,” where the narrative supports a directive utterance (e.g., a command).³⁸ As part of the “clausal *historiola*” category, a *similia similibus* formula thus operates in association with the contiguous command or directive utterance. Since such a command requires the speaker to make demands on the god or gods, its efficacy—at least in part—is dependent upon speaker’s traditional status.

As Frankfurter notes:

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.³⁹

³⁶ E.g., Stephen of Heracleopolis Magna (*Panegyric on Apollo* 9, trans. and ed. K. H. Kuhn, 14–16).

³⁷ Wilson notes that Christians used the term “Jew” mostly as a marker of boundaries (“‘Jew’ and Related Terms in the Ancient World,” 157–71).

³⁸ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 469.

³⁹ Frankfurter, “Narrating Power,” 467. For the importance of proper traditional status as it relates to the failed exorcism in Acts 19: 13–17, see Bates, “Why Do the Seven Sons of Sceva Fail? 417–18.

It should be emphasized that, in addition to the imperative within the *similia similibus* formula, P. Heid. 1101 includes at least one—and probably two—other imperatives and three adjurations, which use the formula “I adjure you” (ὀρκίζο [read ὀρκίζω] σε). This reliance on appeals to the various divine representatives would have required the status of the speaker or client to be impeccable.

It is in this performative context that the primary ritual aim of the accusation of attempted Jewish violence should be situated: it showcased the “orthodoxy” or proper “Christian” status of the client through a rejection of any “Jewish” affiliation—whether the “Jews” in mind were ethnic Jews or metaphorical Jews. In other words, it was a strategy of differentiation. I maintain that by displaying the proper traditional status of the party involved, the practitioner believed he or she could better the chances that the transcendent entities would listen to the various appeals for healing.⁴⁰ This, in turn, would have increased the likelihood of the client receiving the desired result—the cessation of eye migraine and eye discharge and the accompanying pain.

IV. Conclusions

In this brief essay, I offered a new approach to the *historiola* in P. Heid. 1101, which synthesized insights from the fields of early Christian studies and ancient magical studies. The social function of the motif of Jewish violence against Jesus and his followers during Late Antiquity served as an interpretive lens for understanding the ritual function of the narrative’s opening phrase (“for our Lord was pursued by the Jews”). I argued that the motif of attempted Jewish violence in P. Heid. 1101 was not used simply to establish the

⁴⁰ The status of the client was also likely improved by the other traditional elements in the text (e.g., the proper angelic representatives and the Trishagion).

setting of the *historiola*, but it was also used to demonstrate the traditional purity of the client through a rejection of a “Jewish other.”

Beyond merely explicating the ritual language of a particular *historiola*, this essay models the kinds of interpretive questions that can be raised when the contested nature of “Christianity” during Late Antiquity is placed at the forefront. I argue that an emphasis on the contested nature of “Christianity” will also lead scholars of ancient magic to challenge some of the governing taxonomies in the field. Indeed, scholarship on amulets has not adequately appreciated the complex ways practitioners constructed “orthodoxy”; rather, scholars have typically used ecclesiastical literature as the metric for organizing “Christian” and “Jewish” (and “Pagan”) ritual practice.⁴¹ Prototypes of “Christianity” based on other domains of Late Antiquity are thus imposed on amuletic language. As a result, scholars often divide the language on a single amulet into two or more discrete categories—“Christian and “non-Christian” (sometimes divided into “Jewish” and “Pagan”).⁴² But are such divisions consistent with the ways practitioners expressed their ritual and religious identifications or “orthodoxies”?

P. Heid. 1101 demonstrates rather acutely the disjuncture between scholarly and ecclesiastical taxonomies, on the one hand, and the categories operative in applied ritual contexts, on the other hand. For instance, despite the practitioner’s negative presentation of the “Jews” (i.e., as the pursuer of the protagonist Jesus Christ), he or she invokes positively various angels/entities (Adonaei, Sabaôth, Michaël, Êl, Toumêêl, Gabriêl, Ourêêl, and Raphaêl), which are typically labeled “Jewish” by scholars of ancient

⁴¹ On this tendency in scholarship, see Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*, 10–14.

⁴² E.g., de Bruyn and Dijkstra, “Greek Amulets,” 180–81; Shandruk, “Christian Use of Magic,” 31–57.

magic.⁴³ Certainly these “good” characters were not understood as “Jewish” within the overall logic of the ritual; rather, contrary to their origins, the angels/deities are clearly part of the same religious tradition as Jesus—what might be labeled “Christian” for convenience. Bifurcating the language of P. Heid. 1101 into “Jewish” and “Christian” domains thus fundamentally misrepresents—indeed, inverts!—the way the practitioner has constructed “orthodoxy” in the ritual.⁴⁴

Taking seriously the manifold ways practitioners constructed and expressed their “orthodoxies” will lead us to construct anew the boundaries between “Christian,” “Jewish,” and “Pagan” ritual practices. Moreover, as I hope to have illustrated in this essay, attention to the negotiations of “orthodoxy” on amulets can also lead to new hermeneutical possibilities.

⁴³ E.g., LiDonnici, “According to the Jews,” 88; de Bruyn and Dijkstra, “Greek Amulets,” 180–81; Hunt, “1152. Christian Amulet,” 253.

⁴⁴ For other amulets that challenge the boundaries between “Judaism,” “Christianity,” and “Paganism,” see, for example, *GMA* 45, *GMA* 53, *PGM* P2, *PGM* P5a, *PGM* P6a, and *PGM* P7.

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