Canonical Power: A "Tactical" Approach to the Use of the Christian Canon in P. Berlin 954

Joseph E. Sanzo, Washington

On February 20, 1899 a worker of Ulrich Wilcken discovered a tightly folded piece of papyrus (2 cm x 1 cm) at Herakleopolis Magna, which was intended to be worn as an amulet (P. Berlin 954 hereafter). Wilcken provided an edition of P. Berlin 954 two years after its discovery, assigning it to the 6th century CE. The amulet was later recollected by Carl Wessely and then by Karl Preisdanz, who included it in his two-volume collection, Papyri Graecae Magicae. What is notable about this amulet is that it is part of a small corpus of so-called Christian "magical" texts, many of which employ citations from the Christian "canon." It is the purpose of this paper to provide

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2 Wessely, 434. Unfortunately, shortly after its discovery, the manuscript was burned in a fire. (Preisdanz, 237; Meyer and Smith, 43).
4 Wessely, 29.
5 In this essay, I intentionally avoid the problematic designations "magic" and its frequent counterpart "religion." While a complete treatment of the nuances of the "religion" vs. "magic" discussion goes beyond the scope of this paper, a couple of words are in order. In addition to the perennial problems associated with the definitions and distinctions of the terms "magic" and "religion," this dichotomy often impedes the investigator from comparing like phenomena in the opposite category: "magical" texts are compared with other "magical" texts and "religious" texts are compared with other "religious" texts. Furthermore, the designation "magic" often gives the impression that the phenomena are explained when they are merely labeled. Rather than employing this problematic dichotomy, I prefer to operate from the general observation that there are texts (or portions of texts) in the ancient Mediterranean which, according to their authors or conjurers, mediate transcendent power and those which do not.

6 Much of my thinking with respect to the issue of canon has been impacted by the work of David L. Dungan. David L. Dungan, Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) Dungan, taking a "comparative religions perspective," has argued that the "formation" of a "canon" is an extremely rare event, only occurring three times in history: (1) fourth-fifth century "orthodox" Christianity [the Old and New Testaments], (2) seventh-eighth century Islam (the canonization of the Qu’ran under Caliph Uthman), and (3) canonization of halakha in third-century Rabbinic Judaism. He argues that the "official" actions of Constantine in his edict to Eusebius, requesting fifty copies of sacred scripture (Eusebius, ed. Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). Dungan, taking a "comparative religions perspective," has argued that the "formation" of a "canon" is an extremely rare event, only occurring three times in history: (1) fourth-fifth century "orthodox" Christianity [the Old and New Testaments], (2) seventh-eighth century Islam (the canonization of the Qu’ran under Caliph Uthman), and (3) canonization of halakha in third-century Rabbinic Judaism. He argues that the "official" actions of Constantine in his edict to Eusebius, requesting fifty copies of sacred scripture (Eusebius, ed. Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). Dungan, taking a "comparative religions perspective," has argued that the "formation" of a "canon" is an extremely rare event, only occurring three times in history: (1) fourth-fifth century "orthodox" Christianity [the Old and New Testaments], (2) seventh-eighth century Islam (the canonization of the Qu’ran under Caliph Uthman), and (3) canonization of halakha in third-century Rabbinic Judaism. He argues that the "official" actions of Constantine in his edict to Eusebius, requesting fifty copies of sacred scripture (Eusebius, ed. Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007)].
an updated English translation of P. Berlin 954 as well as to develop and illustrate a recent approach to "magical" media, applying it specifically to the use of the Christian canon in this sixth century CE exemplar.

**Translation and Occasion of P. Berlin 954**

To date, there have been two English translations of P. Berlin 954. The first was published by George Milligan in 1910. This translation's strength was also its weakness: faithfulness to Wilcken's edition. While Wilcken, and consequently Milligan, was able to construct the phrase "εν ἡμηρίαν" and the word "βιβλιακος" in line 26, he did not recognize them as the *incipits* ("beginnings") of the Gospels of John and Matthew and neither passage was included in his German translation. Milligan followed suit in his English translation. The second translation, which utilized the superior Greek edition of Preisendanz, was offered by Marvin Meyer in 1999. While the Gospel *incipits* are extant in Meyer's English translation of P. Berlin 954, Meyer's version unfortunately included a translational element which fundamentally altered the situation of the amulet as I will be discussing later. A new translation of P. Berlin 954, therefore, is required before discussion of its content can proceed on solid ground.

My translation of P. Berlin 954, followed by the Greek edition of Preisendanz, is as follows:

to the definition of canon helps me make a clear distinction between the otherwise confused and ambiguous terms "canon" and "scripture(s)." Since P. Berlin is dated to the 6th century CE, I will use the term "canon" to refer to any quotations from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. For a recent discussion on the issues associated with the "formation" of the Christian canon, see the essays in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).


7 It is likely that his inability to associate the Gospel *incipits* with P. Berlin 954 was occasioned by his reconstructions "κοιν" (instead of *ημι*) after "ἐν ἡμηρίαν" and "κα" (instead of *κα*), after "βιβλιακος".

8 ACM 18.

9 The Gospel *incipits* were reconstructed by Wessex. Preisendanz agreed with Wessey's reconstruction and included them in his edition. It is the edition of Preisendanz (not Wessey), however, which provided the basis for Marvin Meyer's English translation. It is noteworthy that Preisendanz, who had several problems with Wessey's reconstructions (see notes 14-16, and 18 below), agreed with Wessey on the *incipits*.

10 Commenting on the unusual Greek vocative ὥτι in Greek texts from Roman Egypt, Robert Ritner writes, "The usage is not irreverent" in PGM (as elsewhere in Greek contexts); rather it translates the standard Egyptian address 'O God,' used (usually) throughout rituals and funerary texts. Robert K. Ritner, *Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: Anfange und Niederlagen der römischen Welt*, II. 18.5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 3333-3339, pp. 3333-3363. I have, therefore, utilized the observation of Ritner in my translation of P. Berlin 954.

11 The identity of St. Serenus is shrouded in mystery. Serenus is mentioned in another apotropaic (or to ward off evil) text (P. 5.6) in connection with St. Philoxenus, St. Biskorus, St. Justin and "all the saints." (lines 46-50). There are at least three saints from late antique Egypt by the name Serenus. Two are mentioned in Eusebius' *Church History* as disciples of Origen. Eusebius writes, "After Platarch, the second martyr among the pupils of Origen was Serenus who gave through fire a proof of the faith which he had received... the fifth from the same school proclaimed as an athlete of piety was another Serenus, who, it is reported, was beheaded, after a long endurance of torments." (Eusebius, *Church History*, vi. 4). Eusebius, *Church History*, trans. J. E. L. Dalby (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932). In addition to the two Saints mentioned by Eusebius, John Cassian visited a Nitria abbot in 395 by the name of Serenus. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri Part X* (England: Oxford University Press, 1915), 35. It is likely that the St. Serenus mentioned three times (lines 4: 28-29, 53) in a calendar of church services from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. 1357), is the same Saint Serenus as is found in P. Berlin 954. This is because of the date of P. Oxy. 1357 (6th century), its location (Oxyrhynchus: approximately 100 miles from Herakleopolis) and the association of St. Serenus with St. Philoxenus and St. Biskorus to which both P. Oxy. 1357 (lines 24-27, 38, 58-59) and P. Philoxenus (line 20 for Biskorus) and the apotropaic tradition of P. 5b. 46-48 attest. Grenfell and Hunt consider it more likely that one of the disciples of Origen is present in P. Oxy. 1357. (Ibidem, 35).

12 It is important to note that there was not always a negative association with the term " daemon." Lamblichus classified "daemon" in the second position (next to gods) in his taxonomy of entities ranging from the divine to the human. These intermediary beings carry a largely positive image for Lamblichus. He wrote concerning them, "...it [ daemon] is not a primary initiator of action, but submits itself to the service of the good will of the gods it follows, revealing in action their invisible goodness, while likening itself to it..." (Lamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 1.5). Lamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, et al. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Furthermore, while the term "daemon" does not necessarily carry a positive connotation in PGM (cf. PGM IV. 1227-64), there are instances in which these beings are depicted as beneficiary. For example, PGM I. 1-42 refers to itself as a spell "for acquiring an assistant daemon (παραιτήριον προερχόμεν καθημερινον)." Kotanský has contended that the respective demoniologies
unpleasantness and remove every sickness and every malady from me in order that I might be healthy and [able] to speak the Gospel-prayer [of health]. Our Father, who resides in the heavens, may your name [be holy], may [your] kingdom arrive, may [your] will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive our debts as we also [we] forgive those who are indebted to us, and do not bring us into temptation, Lord, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the glory [for]ever... and the [one] of those [three]. In the beginning was the Word. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham. Oh Light of light. True God, grant me, your servant, light graciously. Saint Serenus, beg for me that I may be completely healthy.

Δέσποτα, Θεὲ παντοκράτωρ... ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἁγίας Σερενίας, ἵνα καὶ τὸ ἐν τῷ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐν τῷ τῷ τοῦ Ιησοῦ... ἐν τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τῷ τ

of the “Jewish” and “Greek” worlds created a bifurcation of adjurations in which the “Jewish” created an “exorcistic ritual” and the “Greeks” implemented a ritual in which the “daimon” could be called upon for assistance. When later “Greek” texts implement “exorcistic” rituals (e.g., PGM IV, 1227-64), they were borrowing from their Jewish neighbors. Roy Kotansky, “Greek Exorcistic Amulets,” in JEM 243-277. Ultimately derived from the “Jewish” demonological tradition via “Christianity.” I have decided to translate this noun as “demon” and not use the transliterated form.

14 Wesely reads καταφαλήγησαι.
15 Wessely’s edition, following that of Wilcken, reads οἴκονομος.
16 It should be noted that the masculine or neuter phrase in Matthew 6:13, which is replaced in P. Berlin 954, is adjectival, not nominal. Hence, it is possible that the original text read “τῆς ποιμένος.”
with these demons, but has not been taken over by them. 31 Meyer, on the other hand, has translated lines 4-9 of this amulet as follows: "I, Silvanus son of Sarapion, pray and bow [my] head before you, and ask and beseech that you drive out of me, your servant, the demon of witchcraft..." 32 Meyer’s use of the phrase “drive out of me” gives the reader the impression that this text presumes that Silvanus had already become a victim of demonic possession.

In response to Meyer’s translation, it should be noted first that the usual Greek verbs for an exorcistic context in the New Testament and the so-called “magical” corpora are ἔβαλλας, ἔμπορίζω, ἔμπροχα, φιέγω, and ἔλαυνο (in conjunction with βίος). 2 2 The verb ἔμπορίζω usually carries the notion of “chasing” or “pursuing.” Secondly, the desire on the part of the author 2 3 of P. Berlin 954 to make a distinction between the need to chase away (ἐβάλλεις ἐμί) the demonic entities and the removal of any physical ailments (ἔψεις ἐμί), captured by the Matthean formula (Matt. 4:23; 9:35), suggests that he felt that he did not yet require a demon to be removed from his body. 2 4 Finally, even in the earliest period, the Christian understanding of exorcism included the idea that the “possessed” would be out of his or her mind and hence, without the faculties of rational discourse necessary to carry out the prescribed formula. 2 7 An “exorcistic” occasion of P. Berlin 954 is, therefore, improbable.

A “Tactical” Approach to P. Berlin 954

In what follows, I would like to build on a recent approach to apotropaic texts and other related material, proffered by H. S. Versnel. He has suggested an examination of the “magical” material, 2 8 which pays close attention to the various “strategies” employed by the authors of such media. 2 9 The advantage of this approach is that it allows the “modern” investigator to interact with texts like P. Berlin 954 within the pragmatic context out of which they arose. 30 That is to say, the procedure is to follow PGM IV, 1277-64, a papyrus for “driving out” (ἐβάλλεις ἐμί) demons, in which the formula is to be said by someone other than the victim of possession. Instead, the practitioner is to say the prescribed formula over the head of the victim. The same procedure is followed in PGM IV, 3077-86.

27 E.g., Mark 5: 1-20; Mark 9:14-29. This idea also seems to be implied in PGM IV, 1277-64, a papyrus for “driving out” (ἐβάλλεις ἐμί) demons, in which the formula is to be said by someone other than the victim of possession. Instead, the practitioner is to say the prescribed formula over the head of the victim. The same procedure is followed in PGM IV, 3077-86.

28 See n. 5 above.

29 H. S. Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words,” in Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 105-158. A similar approach was taken up by Steve Weintraub in his study of the tactics employed by the Jews to ensure their “cultural survival.” Steve Weintraub, Surviving Sorcery: Cultural Persistence in Jewish Antiquity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). Weintraub provides three categories which are meant to encompass “most” of the tactics he discusses: “Appeasement and Synonyms,” “Resistance,” and “Flight, Concealment, Deflection.” (Ibid., 7-8). What is valuable about Weintraub’s study for the concerns of this essay is that he properly situates the tactics of the Jewish people within the larger Greek and Roman military world. He writes, “Greek and Roman military theorists, developing a science of strategy and tactics, identified a whole assortment of tricks or ruses by which a weaker army could overcome the advantages of a stronger foe...” (Ibid., 7). Jews developed analogous tactics to preserve their rituals, in some cases probably under the influence of Greek and Roman strategic thinking.” (Ibid., 7). The Greek and Roman military world also may have provided the metaphorical framework (linguistic and hence, conceptual) for the Christian amuletic tradition. For instance, P 21 (lines 351–) reads, θεραπεύει με εκείνη τη γυναίκα και θεραπεύει έμμε εκείνη τη γυναίκα from every male and female demon and from every στρομπτικός and from every name...” The amuletic tradition seems to part of a larger “combative” approach to the demonic realm found in early Christian monastic culture (especially in Egypt). For an important recent study of this approach, see David Brakke, Demons and the Making of the Mask: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

30 One should see caution however, in this endeavor. For the exegetical use of the term “magic” can provide for much confusion as is illustrated by E. A. Judge, “The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri,” in Perspectives on Language and Text, ed. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 339-349, p. 348. After correctly relating the “magical” use of the Christian scriptures
say, the author of P. Berlin 954 and other authors of apotropaic media
tried to improve their plights or the plights of their clients
through a variety of "techniques" in order to mediate
transcendent power.\(^{31}\) While I find Versnel's approach fruitful for analysis of
the Christian amulet tradition, I would like to expand on his work by
providing the groundwork for a more coherent taxonomy.\(^{32}\) In order
to proceed, the term "strategy" requires nuance, especially as it relates
to the location "tactic."

Though in common parlance, and even in scholarship, "strategy" and
"tactic" are often interchangeable, it is helpful to suggest at least a
provisional distinction between these terms and, more importantly,
their taxonomical relationship to one another. While acknowledging
considerable overlap between the categories of "strategy" and
"tactic," John Drogo Montagu writes, "Strategy produces the master
plan, which determines the tactics and formulates their objective."\(^{33}\)
In this essay, I follow Montagu in using the term "strategy" to
designate the "master plan" of the author: his decision to make an
amulet to combat a demonic threat. His "tactics," on the other hand,
relate to his decision to utilize invocation, quote passages from the

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\(^{31}\) Ray Katansky appropriately writes, "From a purely psychological point of view, to
a person who is thus racked with pain or wasting away with fever, any and all
techniques for empowering an amulet were acceptable." (Idem, 148-149).

\(^{32}\) Though Versnel implements an outline of his various "strategies," the taxonomical
relationship between the first "strategy," which describes the (sometimes intentional)
"arbitrariness" and "ambiguity" of the so-called voce magicae, the second "strategy,
which employs various "informal" analogies (e.g., comparison, simile, parable),
and the third "strategy," which utilizes various "formal" techniques (some
"comprehensible" and others nonsensical) to form an analogy with the "other" (i.e.,
"magical") world, remains unexplained and unclear. (Versnel, 112-141). In all
fairness to Versnel, the purpose of his essay was to show the creative (or "poetic")
nature of the "magical" material and hence, the multiplicity of options (both "magical"
and "logical") from the vantage point of this world at the disposal of the practitioner
and/or composer. (Idem, passim).

\(^{33}\) John Drogo Montagu, *Greek and Roman Warfare: Battles, Tactics and Trinkets* 
(London: Greenhill Books, 2006), 25. Richard Smith, in personal correspondence,
has also been very helpful in clarifying this distinction for me.

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The Metonymic Use of Incipits as a Sub-Tactic — John 1:1 and Matthew 1:1 in P. Berlin 954

After the lacuna which probably included a form of the doxological ending of the Lord’s Prayer, P. Berlin 954 likely contained the introductory phrases of John and Matthew. The use of such Gospel incipits was commonplace in the annulants and other apotropaic material from the ancient “Christian” world. It is my intention in this section to explain how the author of P. Berlin 954 used the introductory phrases of the Gospels to mediate the transcendent power inherent in the canon.

David Frankfurter has provided a cross-cultural and cross-temporal survey of materials, which implement a phenomenon known to scholars as historiologia. The term is used to designate a “paradigmatic” narrative, which is to be recited or inscribed for the purpose of transferring the power associated with that narrative from the “mythic dimension” into the “human dimension.” As part of his detailed discussion of the practice, theory, manner of perceived efficacy, etc., of historiologia, Frankfurter briefly touched on the use of canon in “ritual contexts.” Three elements of this treatment are particularly germane to my discussion. First of all, influenced by the approach of Gerardus Van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade, Frankfurter asserted that citations of “scripture” can be understood as historiologica. Second is his thesis, contra Van der Leeuw and Eliade, that the “power,” after which the historiologia seeks, is not power as an abstraction; rather, it is the “narrative power” associated with the “paradigm” or “precedent” of the event “narrated.” Thirdly, he correctly observed that there is usually an analogical relationship between the passages of “sacred scripture,” which are cited, and the concerns of the apotropaic medium. Frankfurter argued that the citations of the Gospel incipits, however, are an exception to this procedure. It is in response to this final point that I will commence my discussion.

At first glance, the apparent absence of analogy between the incipits and Silvanus’ apotropaic situation seems to substantiate Frankfurter’s thesis. Neither John 1:1 nor Matthew 1:1 has any mention or allusion to apotropaic concerns. Furthermore, given the emphasis on “light” in the latter portion of P. Berlin 954 (lines, 27-28), one would not expect a quotation from John 1:1, but from John 1:4-5: “in Him [i.e., Jesus] was the Life and the Life was the light of men; and the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.” Yet if we understand the Gospel incipits as pointing toward something larger, the picture changes.

One alternative to conceiving of the Gospel incipits as irrelevant to the concerns of Silvanus would be to suggest that the composer believed these quotations mediated metonymically the power of these Gospels and used them accordingly. That is to say, by tapping into the introductory phrases of the Gospels of John and Matthew through quotation, the annulat was able to mediate the power of these Gospels in their entirety in a minimal amount of space. This “sub-tactic” (a.k.a. pars pro toto) has been widely recognized in scholarship on annulats, though the insights of Frankfurter’s discussion on historiologica have not been brought to bear in any of the previous analyses. In light of Frankfurter’s discussion of “power” in the historiologica, we can note that the metonymic use of the incipits in P. Berlin 954 would give Silvanus access to all of the “narrative power” associated with all of the individual pericopes of the Gospels of John and Matthew not simply some generic power affiliated with the Gospels or the “Bible.” A couple of examples of the metonymic use

[References included here]
of sacred literature from antiquity (non-Christian and Christian) will both contextualize and complicate the evidence from P. Berlin 954. An apotropaic bowl in Jewish Aramaic, discovered 700 meters north of Kadhimain (near modern-day Baghdad), contains a curious detail. After the description of the problems from which the author would like protection, a series of three passages from the Hebrew Bible are quoted to convey power (Zach. 3:2; Deut. 14 and Ps. 91:1). Zach. 3:2, which describes the rebuke of Satan by YHWH, and Deut. 14:7 (the Shaddai) are logical choices: the former describing what the composer would have God do and the latter is a passage which proclaims the monotheistic nature of God. The third reference, Ps. 91:1 (LXX Ps. 90:1), is unexpected. The passage reads, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." What is curious about this reference is not necessarily its inclusion (the protection of the Almighty is appropriate to be sure), but rather the exclusion of other more relevant portions from that psalm. For instance, Ps. 91:3-4 reads: "For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler" (NRSV). I believe that it is likely that the practitioner quoted Ps. 91:1 metonymically, perhaps to consolidate space, and would thus have perceived to have access to the "narrative power" of the entire Psalm. There is also evidence from the later Coptic amuletic tradition, which attests to the metonymic use of the "canon." In a 7th century CE amulet, P. Michigan 1559, the incipits of all four Gospels in "canonical order" occur in tandem with "magical symbols." The incipits of all four Gospels in "canonical order," followed by a repetition of the Matthean incipit, are also present in P. Berlin 22235. The inclusion of the introductory words of each of the four Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke, in these texts shows, I believe, unequivocally that the authors are calling upon the "narrative power" associated with all of the individual pericopae of each of the four Gospels. The occurrence of all four Gospels in P. Michigan 1559 and P. Berlin 22235, however, raises an important question about P. Berlin 954: why are the Gospels of Mark and Luke missing? It is important to note that as we move into the Coptic period, the identity of the "ritual expert" began to change in direct correlation to the growing number of Egyptian "Christians." In a recent article, Frankfurter has attempted to analyze "ritual experts" in terms of "local" or "peripheral" proximity to given communities. As part of

47 AMB, bowl 11.
48 Naveh and Shaked, 180-181.
49 The practice of proclaiming the name and titles of God is common in the apotropaic tradition (e.g., P. Berlin 954; P. 8; P. 12; P. 14; P. 16).
50 Translation by Naveh and Shaked, 185.
51 That the whole Psalm is relevant for apotropaic concerns is evident from its use in 11Q14 VI.3-15. 11Q14 VI.3-15 is the fourth and final apotropaic "psalm" in 11Q14. The apotropaic context of these four "psalms" can be seen from 11Q14 V.4.11: An incantation in the name of YHWH, invoke at any time the heavens. When he comes to you in the night, you will go into him: Who are you, [oh offspring of] man and of the seed of the holy one? Your face is a face of [delusion] and your horns are horns of delusion; you are darkness and not light, [injustice] and not justice [...] the chief of the army, YHWH [will bring] you [down to the] deepest [sheol], [and he will shut the] two bronze gates through which no light penetrates, and the [sun] will not [shine for you] that rises upon the just man... Donald W. Parry and Emmanuel Tov ed. The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For a general treatment of these "psalms," see Emile Puech, "Les Psaumes D'Avainches du Rituel d'Exorcisme (11Q14)," in Sepulvral, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran. Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Oslo 1998, ed. Daniel K. Falk, Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eileen M. Schuller (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 160-181. For the use of the first few words of Ps. 91 in apotropaic contexts, see H. Gittler, "Four Magical and Christian Amulets," LT 40 (1990), 365-374, 372-73.
52 This seems to be the case with the text of Shevaas Zutari according to Oxford 1531. The author quotes the first verse of Ps. 1-5 and immediately follows the quotation with the words, "all of the psalm" (1531, 79).
53 MCT 12.
his treatment, Frankfurter contended that “the extensive corpus of Coptic amulets and grimoires reflects local Christian priests and monks.” With the help of cross-cultural models, Frankfurter has shown that among these “quasi-institutional literati” two particular elements endemic of their ecclesiastical position make them ideal “ritual experts”: (1) “their literacy, particularly in the texts and scripts of the Great Tradition,” and (2) “their official or quasi-official status as designated representatives...of the Great Tradition.” In light of Frankfurter’s research, two of the most obvious explanations for the absence of the inquisitor of Mark and Luke become problematic: (1) ignorance of Mark and Luke and (2) the perception of the special apotropaic appropriateness of the Gospels of John and Matthew. It is highly improbable that a literate 6th century CE “Christian” priest or monk would be ignorant of the Gospels of Mark and Luke. First of all, the imperial edict of Constantine to issue fifty copies of the Christian “scriptures” seems to have marked a significant shift toward a creation of a Christian “canon.” This is indicated by the emergence of “canonical” lists and the presumption of an “orthodox” collection of Christian sacred texts by the time of Augustine’s De doctrina Christiana, completed c. 426 CE. That the four Gospels figured prominently in this new “canon” is evident from their presence in the fifteen “undisputed lists” of “canonical” books, dating from the 4th and 5th centuries CE and covering a wide geographical distribution. Hence, there is good reason to suggest that by the 6th century CE the four-fold Gospel tradition was an important element of the “orthodox” as well as many “unorthodox” churches throughout the Christian world, including Egypt. Finally, that all four Gospels were known by at least certain composers within the amuletic tradition of Egypt is indicated by P. Michigan 1559 and P. Berlin 2235, the aforementioned Coptic amulets which employ all four Gospel inquisitor in the “canonical order.” Ignorance of Mark and Luke, therefore, on the part of the author of P. Berlin 954 is quite unlikely. Another possible explanation for the absence is that the Gospels of John and Matthew would be perceived to be more appropriate for an apotropaic occasion than Mark and Luke. The problem with this solution, however, is that in the Gospel of John the exorcisms of Jesus are extracted, and his healings, in contrast with the Synoptic Gospels, are preeminently signs designed to bring people to faith in Jesus as the Mesiah and Son of God. When we turn to Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus’ role as exorcist and healer are diminished from that of the Gospel of Mark. Matthew excludes the story of the demon in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mk. 1:23-27) and does not include an exorcistic story until 8:24-34. In the end, any priest or monk remotely familiar with the Gospel material would not find anything particularly special about the Gospels of John and Matthew for an apotropaic occasion and, had this been the motive for the

provided by Hahneman, are as follows: Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 3.25.1-7); Catalogue in Codex Claromontanus; Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures 4.33); Athanasius (Festal Epistle 39); Mommase Catalogus; Epiphanius (Panarion 76.5); Apostolic Canons 85; Gregory of Nazanzus (Carmen de versu scripturae libros 12.31); African Canons: Jerome (Epistle 53); Augustine (On Christian Doctrine 2.8.12); Ambrose (Ambrosius to Seleucus 289-319); Rufinus (Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed 36); Pope Innocent (Letter to Eusebius); Syrian Catalogue of St. Catherines. It should be observed that not all of these lists agree with respect to other books of the “canon”; thus, in the fifth century and beyond there were various "canons" throughout the "Christian" world.

48 See Twelftree, 169 and Blomberg, 305.
49 This story is included in the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 4:31-37).
selection of incipits, would probably have included the Gospel of Mark.

A potential solution to this question may be found by returning to the phenomenon of metonymy. Could these Gospel incipits function as a metonym for the entire Gospel tradition? It may helpful to examine a couple of "collections" of Gospel incipits, which date from the approximate period of P. Berlin 954. In P. Florenz 719, the author quotes the entire first verse of John, followed by the first verses of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The incipits of the four Gospels occur in the same order in P. Berlin 6906. It should be noted that these texts arrange the Gospel incipits in the following order: John, Matthew, Mark, Luke. That there were multiple arrangements of the canonical gospels, popular among ancient Christians, is also evident from the so-called "Western order" (of which the manuscripts D, W, X are the principle representatives), which is as follows: Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. Thus it is very possible that there was a textual tradition circulating in Egypt which reflects the order of P. Florenz 719 and P. Berlin 6906. If indeed these texts bear witness to an alternative order, the quotations from the Gospels of John and Matthew (the first two in the quartet) in P. Berlin 954 may be functioning as a metonym for the entire Gospel tradition. If this metonymic use is understood, Silvanus would have been able to access to the "narrative power" associated with all of the individual elements of the entire Gospel tradition, presumably the "miracle," "healing," and "exorcism" narratives in particular.

While any solution to this problem must remain tentative, the metonymic explanation has the advantage of accounting for the

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67 P. 19. The text also cites Ps. 91:1 and Matt. 6:9.

68 Wessely, 412. This collection of canonical passages also includes other elements of the Gospels and psalms (e.g., Ps. 91:1).