RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUE PAPYRI

3RD–12TH CENTURY EGYPT

Edited by
Mattias Brand and Eline Scheerlinck

Religious Identifications in Late Antique Papyri

This volume provides novel social-scientific and historical approaches to religious identifications in late antique (3rd–12th century) Egyptian papyri, bridging the gap between two academic fields that have been infrequently in full conversation: papyrology and the study of religion.

Through eleven in-depth case studies of Christian, Islamic, "pagan," Jewish, Manichaean, and Hermetic texts and objects, this book offers new interpretations on markers of religious identity in papyrus documents written in Coptic, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. Using papyri as a window into the lives of ordinary believers, it explores their religious behavior and choices in everyday life. Three valuable perspectives are outlined and explored in these documents: a critical reflection on the concept of identity and the role of religious groups, a situational reading of religious repertoire and symbols, and a focus on speech acts as performative and efficacious utterances.

Religious Identifications in Late Antique Papyri offers a wide scope and comparative approach to this topic, suitable for students and scholars of late antiquity and Egypt, as well as those interested in late antique religion.

Mattias Brand, PhD (2019), Leiden University, is postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zürich. His first book*, Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans in Kellis: Beyond Light and Darkness*, was published in 2022. Apart from his work on Manichaeism, Brand works on the role of historians in the study of religions (forthcoming in the *Journal of Religious History*) and on a large comparative project about the transformation of religious practices within ancient and contemporary houses.

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Preface

The present volume draws its origins from the 2017 conference "Late Antique Religion in Practice: Papyri and the Dynamics of Religious Identification" of the Leiden University Papyrological Institute (together with papyrologists in other institutes known as "Papyrology-Plus") in collaboration with the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion. The conference was hosted by the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and the University Library and co-sponsored by LUCSoR, Legaat Plug, and Leiden University Fund (LUF). We are grateful for their support, without which we would not have been able to bring together this group of international scholars. Special thanks are due to Cisca Hoogendijk, Koen Donker van Heel, and Albert de Jong, for entrusting us with the conceptualization, organization, and publication of this conference. Thanks to Diana Haibucher for her editorial assistance. We greatly enjoyed the discussions with the participants of the conference, and we thank the current contributors for their time and patience while preparing for publication. Some contributions could not be included, for a variety of reasons, while other contributions have been solicited later on. In particular, we would like to thank Petra Sijpesteijn and Joseph E. Sanzo for their involvement at an earlier stage of this project.

Our desire to bring together social-scientific theories with the current historical and philological practices in the field of papyrology proved to be challenging, and therefore we are excited to see how the contributors have wrestled with our theoretical input at various stages. With Karl Popper, we believe that scholars "are not students of some subject matter, but students of problems". These problems and shared overarching questions constitute the heart of this volume. The diversity in responses and approaches bring additional flavor to this project. We hope to have provided the scholarly community with a set of thought-provoking problems, as well as approaches to potential answers, asking for further reflections rather than providing definitive answers.

February 2022
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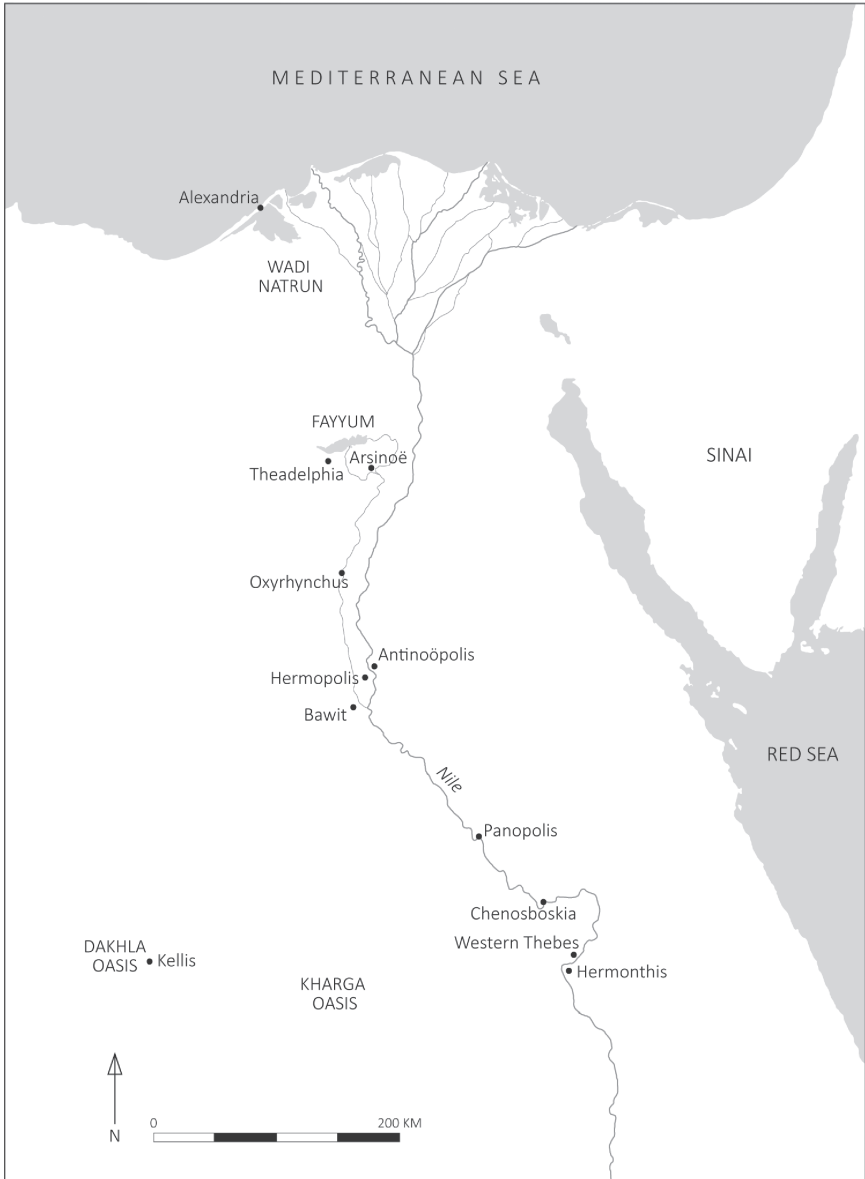
Figure 1.1 Map of Late Antique Egypt by Tineke Rooijakkers.

1 Introduction

Theorizing Religious Identification in Late Antique Papyri

Mattias Brand

Ancient papyri seldom reveal the religious background of their authors or audience at first glance. Specific religious identities and settings are rarely self-evident, whether in personal letters, business accounts, copies of ritual texts, or so-called literary manuscripts. Naturally, one would assume that the intended audience of such texts had no need for any explicit religious identification; it was part of their situated knowledge. Since modern scholars no longer share this knowledge, we tend to look for markers of religious identities or indicators of religious groupness, hoping that they might allow us to bring the papyri into conversation with the larger narratives and specific religious communities in late antique Egypt.

Fortunately, the papyri sometimes offer glimpses into religious dynamics that would otherwise be invisible. They tell us something about the ordinary people involved in the Melitian schism; we learn more about the daily affairs of a Christian bishop; we observe Jews living amongst other religious believers in an everyday village context; and we follow the ordering of the sacrificial sheep for the Great Offering Feast after Ramadan.[1] Such little vignettes are of great importance, as they add additional—and sometimes conflicting—voices to the established religious narratives of late antiquity. The papyri present us with perspectives *from below*, sometimes challenging established historical reconstructions, and often supplementing them by shedding light on the role of religious identification and individual religious action within everyday life.[2]

Identifying religious actors in papyri is, unfortunately, only occasionally possible. When historians and papyrologists do make identifications, their attempts are frequently contested by other scholars, or even outrightly rejected. Sometimes the wish to pinpoint a religious label appears to be stronger than the papyrological basis.[3] Apparent contradictions, caused by inconsistencies, fragmentary transmission, and dual usage of terminology, often hamper the completion of simple one-to-one identifications with visual and linguistic markers. Despite these obstacles—or maybe even because of them—modern scholarship has been very interested in the religious connotations of papyrus language, whether it provides background to the rise of Christianity, the impact of the Arab conquest, or connection between transregional traditions or communities and localized religious practice.[4] This has led scholars to develop a growing body of highly specialized philological studies, aimed at identifying the various religious communities of

late antiquity in papyrological sources. Are Jews really invisible in papyri after the Alexandrian riots of 38 CE? Can we find Christians in the papyrological record before Constantine's fourth-century rise to power? Who would have uttered seemingly monotheistic phrases used for Egyptian deities?[5] How did the Arab conquest affect the religious communities of Egypt? Answering such questions is a daunting task, often hampered by the sheer complexity of ancient language use and the "inherent incompleteness" of ancient documentary papyri.[6]

This volume therefore takes as its starting point the need for explicit theorizing. All historical interpretation of ancient papyri is permeated with theorizing, as it involves our modern categorizations of data, our critical terminology (frequently in English, French, German, and Italian), and our research questions. Implicit or informal theorization runs the risk of falling prey to unreflective forms of commonsense assessment that has more in common with folk categories than with the deliberately chosen tools of historical and papyrological craft.[7] Theorizing entails both a critical reflection on the inherited concepts and an attempt to bring particular observations into a broader conversation, thereby transcending the historical and material corpus. It is the aim of this volume to engage in theorizing and to contribute specifically to the question of religious identification in papyri from late antique Egypt. What do we mean when we say we are looking for identity markers of a particular religion? How does one move from a material, philological, or historical observation to the application of a religious label? The contributions in this volume will engage these questions, examine case studies, offer solutions, and test the application of insights from social-scientific theories on late antique papyri.

Within this volume, we will encounter contributions on papyri in Jewish, Christian, Manichaean, "pagan," and Islamic settings, covering ground from the third to the twelfth century CE. This broad scope includes examinations of the use of Aramaic to express a Jewish affiliation, hierarchical and polite speech norms between Muslims and Christians, the formal classification of individuals as Christians in a period of persecution, Christian differentiation practices in amulets, rhetorical identifications with philosophical or "pagan" expertise, and much more.[8] By juxtaposing a variety of case studies, this volume will provide ample ground to apply, test, or criticize social-scientific approaches to religious identification, thereby not only contributing to a fuller, more nuanced, understanding of the past but also offering building blocks for the development of historically grounded theory in the academic study of religion.[9] One of the tasks given to the contributors was to reflect on the possibility of a *situational* approach to religious identification that bypasses the paradigm of coherent competing groups or communities (which we will call groupism). Rather than taking the postulation of groups at face value, we propose to take into account shared religious practices and the fluidity of everyday life. Ancient individuals negotiated, contested, invoked, and, at times, performed religious and social identities.[10] Religious labels were never only stable name brands to be applied to individual papyri or their authors, devoid of a processual and evocative meaning: groups and identities had to be made real.

Before delving into the proposed situational approaches to religious identification, let us consider one personal letter on papyrus, which has been a matter of ongoing debate as scholars attempt to apply religious labeling. This example shows the profound difficulty of applying modern religious labels to late antique papyri.

Applying Religious Labels

P.Harr. 107 is a Greek personal letter with some marked religious language. It starts with a greeting formula:

> many greetings in God. Before everything I pray to the Father the God of Truth, and to the Paraclete Spirit, that they may preserve you in soul and body and spirit.
>
> (P.Harr. 107.3–9, transl. Gardner, Nobbs, Choat)

The initial editor, J. Enoch Powell, as well as some early commentators, considered P.Harr. 107 a Christian letter, maybe even one of the earliest Christian letters known at the time.[11] After the publication of the Kellis papyri in the 1990s, however, P.Harr. 107 was reclassified as a Manichaean letter because of the combination of a prayer to "the Father, the God of Truth" and a tripartite division of body, soul, and spirit,[12] features common in the Manichaean letters from Kellis. The Manichaean interpretation was subsequently challenged by David Martinez, who pointed to the Egyptian Christian liturgy as the source of these religiously marked phrases. While this may be true, as the phrase "God of Truth" is frequently used in the fourth-century *Prayers of Serapion*, the exact phrase "the Father, the God of Truth" stands out by its frequent Manichaean usage.[13] Presumably, therefore, Christians and Manichaeans participated in the same linguistic repertoire, leading to a typical dual usage of language that hampers any attempt to reach a strict classification of two neatly defined religious groups.[14] Martinez's observation, however, was not the end of the interpretative journey of P.Harr. 107, as Iain Gardner recently returned with a forceful rebuttal defending the Manichaean background of the letter. Gardner argues that similar language in P.Harr. 107 and the Kellis letters derived from Mani's own style in his canonical *Epistles*, fragments of which have been transmitted in various ancient languages.[15] A careful comparative reading of P.Harr. 107, the Kellis letters, and the fragments of Mani's *Epistles* indeed shows enough significant similarities for P.Harr. 107 to be understood as deriving from a Manichaean background, even though some members of the audience may only have noticed the Christian overtones.[16]

As this brief example shows, it is far from self-evident that specific religious communities made consistent use of discernible and distinct religious phrases or formulas in their documents. Even potentially tradition-specific documents, like biblical manuscripts, probably had a wider readership beyond what is commonly taken as the community's boundaries.[17] Manichaeans and Christians were not the

only religious communities with blurry boundaries and shared religious repertoires. In a widely cited article, Ross Kraemer has highlighted the shared religious language and iconography of Jews and Christians, which makes it "difficult for scholars in the twentieth century to distinguish, in absence of more explicit evidence, between Jewish tuna and Christian fish."[18] Jewishness in papyri is often invisible, as Jews "lived in the same neighborhoods, spoke the same language, used mostly the same names, and followed the same daily patterns as many of their non-Jewish neighbors."[19] The imperceptibility of Jewish lives is mirrored by comparable problems identifying Christians, "pagans," Manichaeans, Muslims, and others, which should make us hesitant to attribute indexical, or exclusive, religious labels to ancient papyri.

The increasing critique on the notion of well-defined and sharply differentiated religious groups in late antiquity is an additional obstacle for the religious classification of papyri. Many scholars in recent years have expressed skepticism regarding the existence of fixed boundaries between groups, or have even questioned the very nature of religious groups outside of the scholarly imagination.[20] From this perspective, it becomes highly problematic to classify papyri, authors, scribes, or the intended audience as directly reflecting a Christian, Manichaean, Jewish, Islamic, or "pagan" community background.[21] An alternative, critical approach is imperative.

A Situational Approach to Religious Identifications in Late Antique Papyri

The situational approach proposed in this introductory chapter aims to readdress methods of religious identification by temporarily sidelining the notion of coherent religious communities and focusing on the situations in which religiously marked language was used. What was the function of the prayer to the "Father, the God of Truth" in the setting of P.Harr. 107? To outline this approach and introduce the entire volume, this chapter will highlight three valuable perspectives: the first related to theories of religious group-identity formation, the second related to individual behavior in specific situations, and the third related to speech acts as performative and efficacious utterances. The subsequent sections will introduce questions raised by individual contributors to the volume, connecting larger theoretical frameworks with more specific papyrological studies.

Part I A Shift in Focus: Moving Identity Away from Groupism

The first addition to our conceptual toolbox consists of a set of critical reflections on the concept of identity and the role of social and religious groups. While scholars studying late antique religious identities have mostly avoided reified and essentialized notions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, it is not always exactly clear in those studies what constitutes an "identity."[22] Sociologists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have rightfully pointed to the fact that this concept came to designate radically different dynamics and ideas, and therefore lost most

(if not all) of its intellectual usefulness.[23] Rather than holding on to the concept of identity, Brubaker and Cooper propose a number of alternatives, closely distinguishing between a) the assumed sameness of a collective, b) the self-identification of actors with a collective, c) the psychological self-understanding of individuals, and d) formal categorization by outsiders (e.g., the state).[24] While the latter process is central to some of the contributions in this volume (Cromwell, Papaconstantinou, Huebner), what surfaces more often is the self-identification of individuals with imagined communities. From this perspective, religious identification points not to something all people have, or ought to have, but to the process by which they align their social presentation with a religious narrative, category, or group. This situational action has to be distinguished from what Brubaker and Cooper call self-understanding and from Frankfurter's interior notion of identity (Chapter 2). Outward identification with religious signs, practices, or ideas may not correspond one-to-one with someone's inner feelings or self-understanding. Situational factors, such as the fear of persecution or the desire for upward social mobility, affect self-presentation. A further distinction has to be made in the process of scholarly classification that uses specific textual or para-textual features as its basis. Scholarly classification uses extant evidence when positing formal categorization or indicating self-identification, but it is not necessarily limited to either of these social processes. For instance, it is doubtful whether the author of P.Harr 107 would have understood our modern differentiation between Christians and Manichaeans.[25]

   Religious identification was only one of many options available to individuals, who could also self-identify along ethnic or social lines, for example, according to village affiliation or family connections. In his influential monography, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE*, Éric Rebillard questions the centrality of religious identities as primary markers for the behavior of individual Christians. He argues that most individual behavior in this period was not primarily defined by religious norms as preached from the pulpit but first and foremost characterized by the dynamics of *multiple* previous socializations, expectations, and interpretive schemes.[26] Locating agency in the individual, he suggests that individuals made (un)conscious choices between various identifications, depending on the situational needs. While religious leaders, like the early Christian bishops whose work he examines, had strong views on the centrality of the religious identity and its behavioral norms, the actual choices of ordinary people varied. Ordinary people—those without formal religious roles—activated alternative sets of identifications and acted just as easily upon the expectations of their civic identities. Exactly when and how religious "groupness" (the event or feeling of connectedness with a religious group) mattered in daily life and in group formation will have varied from person to person. Rebillard immediately stresses that this does not justify labels like "semi-Christians," a normative judgment occasionally made by religious leaders. Rather, we need to recognize that "religious affiliation was given salience only intermittently and that it had no unique relevance in determining Christians' behavior."[27]

   Behind Rebillard's dynamic approach of group identification stands a contemporary sociological critique on *groupism*, Rogers Brubaker's term for "the

tendency to take discrete sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis."[28] Rather than thinking in terms of demarcated groups, Brubaker proposes that scholars identify events or situations in which feelings of groupness are particularly relevant. This dovetails nicely with the sociology of the individual of Bernard Lahire, who suggests following individuals through several life domains to see them switching between multiple sets of previously acquired dispositions, according to the need of the situation. Such dispositions can be activated, according to Lahire, depending on

> the social micro-situation (e.g. interaction with a particular actor, a certain situation, permitting schemes or habits to be actualized that are inhibited in some other type of interaction and/or with some other actor), on the domain of practices (e.g. applying in relation to food consumption different cultural schemes from those applied in relation to cultural consumption), on social universe (e.g. doing in the family or leisure world what one cannot do in the professional world), on the social group (e.g. doing in a certain social group what one would not do in some other social group), or again on the moment in the life cycle.[29]

Reading religious phrases, formulas, and symbols in papyri in light of such complex overlapping factors constitutes the core of what we are calling the situatedness of religious identifications. With Rebillard and Lahire, we look for instances in which a religious identification was activated, used, or considered salient enough to be put into writing.

The three contributions in the volume's first part illustrate this shift in focus towards the individual, but the authors also reflect on the validity of Brubaker's criticism of groupism for the ancient world. David Frankfurter's contribution starts with a critique of a monolithic concept of Christian identity. Distinguishing between "exterior identity," which designates identification with a social group, and "interior identity," which is a sense of inner commitment, he stresses that the latter is often postulated on the basis of exterior identifications in names, texts, objects, or architecture. The problem with current studies of the Christianization of Egypt lies in the "interpenetration of these two notions of identity in scholarly models" (p. 30), which equates the presence of Christian material with the internalization of Christian identities. Rather, Christian papyrological fragments, names, institutions, or architecture should not directly be taken as evidence for "internally identified" Christians. Christianization consisted of various ways of materially engaging with the idioms and frameworks of symbolic resources, which offered performative power to the external realization of Christianity. By stepping back from the groupism paradigm, Frankfurter detaches the individual's self-understanding from the institutional and textual developments that we have come to include in the category of Christianity. After disentangling the two notions of "identity," papyrological fragments with Christian texts no longer reflect an informative mode of reading in which the content became absorbed into

an internal Christian identity. Rather, these fragments reflect a performative mode, since the texts were frequently used in amulets, oracles, and as paradigmatic stories for healing. Thus, the papyri contribute to our understanding of distinct Christian practices, but they help us to understand the "exigencies of local experience and tradition," rather than individual internal conversion as conceptualized in the early twentieth century (p. 37).

Profound questions about boundary crossing feature prominently in Arkadiy Avdokhin's chapter on late antique papyri containing hymnic texts. Critically examining the interpretative history of two manuscripts (P.Berl. 9794 and P.Louvre N 2391), Avdokhin argues against the idea of group-specific hymnic texts that could subsequently be shared between religious communities. Rather than allocating agency to religious communities, he favors a simpler model, which focuses on the individual agency of a ritual expert who draws upon a multitude of repertoires. The textual and conceptual similarities between the "prayer of apostle Peter and other apostles" in P.Berl. 9794, the end of the hermetic *Poimandres*, and an inscribed amulet have to be understood without an appeal to distinct and internally coherent groups that come to share texts and practices, but rather as testimony to the repertoire of ritual experts compiling efficient and efficacious manuscripts. Likewise, the interpretation of P.Louvre N 2391, the so-called Mimaut papyrus, does not require the often made appeal to syncretic religious communities, but it showcases the modus operandi of ritual experts who were socialized in a Christian educational system, as seen in the integration of ideas and vocabulary from Hermas's *Shephard*. In Lahire's terminology, the dispositions and modes of thought that derived from classical and Christian *paideia* left a recognizable—although not explicitly reflected—imprint on the newly composed hymnic invocation of Helios, found in P.Louvre N 2391.

Arietta Papaconstantinou challenges the postulation that Jews are absent—or "invisible"—from the papyrological record after the 115–117 CE revolts. By carefully examining three types of evidence (self-indexing, external reference, and circumstantial evidence), she argues that the selection of sources strongly affects the reconstructed history. The low number of explicit references to Jews is not only the result of chance and the survival of evidence, but it may be caused by a deliberate strategy of a vulnerable community. Some Jews concealed their Jewishness out of fear of repercussions, living with the traumatic memory of repression. The social and political circumstances thus led to a lesser salience of an explicit Jewish identity, or to a deemphasis in communication with outsiders. Since Greek and Coptic papyri reflect the presence of organized Jewish communities throughout late antiquity, Papaconstantinou reexamines the perceived invisibility of the Jews. This requires a re-evaluation of the distinctiveness of personal names, since onomastics are usually taken to reflect the Christian adaptation of biblical names. While Jewish people may have adopted a strategy of concealment that included non-distinctive personal names, scholars may be able to discern between Jews and Christians by detecting the clustering of certain types of rare biblical names. Papaconstantinou's reading of these clusters of rare names, combined with the little we do know about the geography of Jewish communities and the inclusion of

data from Hebrew and Aramaic texts, results in a less minimalist reconstruction of Jewishness in late antique Egypt. Turning the issue on its head, she suggests that high levels of biblical names among Christians could also point to the proximity with Jews, as assimilation is a multi-directional social process. Lifting the "cloak of invisibility," therefore involves a thorough examination of *all* the sources and a fundamental reorientation of interpretative frameworks.

Part II The Quotidian Turn: Individuals in Everyday Situations

The religious world of ordinary people lies at the heart of the so-called quotidian turn in the academic study of religion. Proponents of this turn to everyday life, such as sociologists working on lived religion and ancient historians examining "lived ancient religion," focus on the creative agency of individuals beyond, outside, and even inside institutionalized forms of religion.[30] They have stressed that despite the institutional and social embeddedness of religion, ancient individuals had a certain latitude to appropriate elements from various religious traditions in their lives.[31] For papyrus sources, this means that we should treat specific formulas, words, symbols, and phrases less as identity markers and more as speech patterns belonging to the cultural toolkit, or repertoire, of ancient individuals. The second set of social-scientific theories undergirding this volume, therefore, is of a sociolinguistic nature.

The central socio-linguistic question, "Why did this speaker say it this way on this occasion?" is deeply relevant if you consider religious identification as a situational process.[32] The intended audience and the social meaning of words, concepts, and expressions are generally considered important factors defining the choice of words. Allan Bell has treated speech variation as "audience design," which occurs when the speaker accommodates the addressee or is occasionally influenced by the possible presence of listeners.[33] Studying the audience design of Jewish, Christian, Manichaean, or Islamic letters requires reflection on the possible presence of eavesdroppers. Would the authors have phrased their message differently if they had the impression that outsiders, such as imperial agents, read their letters? Or could their letters have been the result of this cautious shaping all along?[34]

Apart from considering the intended audience of documents, academic scholarship has focused on the educational setting in which a religious repertoire may have been taught. The scribal habit of abbreviating certain religious names and titles in Greek and Coptic texts (*nomina sacra*) probably belonged to a Christian "sociolect" and was presumably learned in scribal training.[35] In sociolinguistic terms, this habit reflects "communities of practice": mutual relationships sustained around shared social practices.[36] This type of in-group language may have derived from communal social practices, for example, religious rituals where liturgical texts were read out loud or chanted repeatedly. While it is possible that participants strategically adopted linguistic elements from these religious settings, and maybe even used them as a secret code inaccessible to outsiders, sociolinguistic studies point out that it is more likely that they bent their linguistic variations

toward those who shared in the communal practice.[37] One of the defining factors determining the characteristics of language use, therefore, was where and with whom considerable amounts of time were spent.

The metaphor of the toolkit or repertoire helps us to conceptualize the plurality of dispositions and socializations of individuals, as well as the various situations that asked for individuals to activate previously learned language and behavior. People can draw upon multiple repertoires, put certain elements into practice, and neglect others. When people use these tools from the toolbox, they adapt linguistic phrases, formulas, and symbols for new purposes, thereby creating a myriad of resources and strategies that then result in a new social and cultural toolbox. As practice-theorists remind us, "through their activities, individuals internalize cultural symbols and meanings," and at the same time, through these activities "they also reproduce and transform these symbols and meanings in the social world."[38]

The various repertoires acquired over a lifetime provide individuals with multiple metaphors to understand and articulate their life's setting and choices. According to sociologist Ann Swidler, people prefer such multiplicity because it helps them to approach difficult situations from various angles, with the possibility of shifting to other metaphors when they feel it necessary, a process she calls "strategies of network diversification."[39] Scholars of religion have also observed these strategies of network diversification, and the process by which this multiplicity can disappear, by scrutinizing the way interlocutors *played* with identities and tried them out before wholeheartedly embracing a particular group identification.[40] In other words, the usage of a repertoire of a community of practice, as such, does not express the total commitment of an individual, but rather a gradual familiarity with or strategic use of a set of linguistic practices that are commonly associated with certain narratives, norms, practices, or groups.

AnneMarie Luijendijk directly relates to these themes by focusing her chapter on late antique neighborhood relationships in Egyptian villages and towns. The neighbors of Christians would know considerably more about individual behavior than modern scholars, with the limited insight we get from sifting through papyrological and archaeological sources. It is unlikely that regular religious practice would remain unnoticed. In her examination of three papyrological vignettes, Luijendijk highlights the occasional activation of a Christian identity and the relationship with the neighbors. In Dionysius of Alexandria's letter to Fabius, we read how inhabitants of Alexandrian neighborhoods identified Christians and turned to violence. Everyday circumstances like sharing dwellings, gossiping in the courtyard, and passively overhearing each other's lives constituted core components of a Christian categorization by others. Read through the lens of modern anthropology, the existence of such "intimate violence" may shed light on social cohesion of Christians as a group. This casual reference to Christians robbed by their neighbors, however, does not mean that they had to conceal or guard their religious identity and practice: "it certainly was not a secret: the neighbors knew who were Christians" (p. 109). A recommendation letter by presbyter Leon sheds light on the network ties outside of the neighborhood. The letter contains several textual and paratextual features that conveyed a Christian identification in

a setting where pre-established situational knowledge was absent: identification required documentation. The procedure of locating local Christians suggests that the traveler had to inquire actively before he could hand over his recommendation letter. Finally, the archive of flax merchant Aurelius Leonides shows the dynamic of multiple identifications, as his Christian affiliation (established by his possession of a school copy of a Christian text and his association with a church lector) remained unactivated in his business documents. Together, these three settings shed light on the locality and visibility of early Christian lives in the papyri.

Sabine R. Huebner highlights four early Christian papyrus letters, of which three directly relate to the Heroninus archive (Theadelphia, Fayum) from the first half of the third century, showing how Christianness could play a role, even when it was not the individual's most relevant identification. Two of the four papyri show that a Christian affiliation did not necessarily imply opting out of civic duties and ambitions. In fact, at least one case sheds light on formal categorization, as it involves a man labeled by the municipal officials as "Christian" in a list of candidates for liturgical duties in Arsinoe. The label *chrestianus* may have been used as an indicator of his profession, which would make him a local clergyman or even a bishop. Regardless of this designation, the man was listed in a relatively high position on the list of potential candidates. Two other letters derive from a well-to-do family, holding local civic offices and serving as managers for the imperial elite. Letter P.Bas. 2.43, the oldest Christian documentary papyrus, dating back to the 230s CE, is a case in point, as the letter itself is filled with everyday concerns, but ends with a distinct Christian repertoire.[41] The greeting and well-wishing "in the lord," one of the typical phrases found in a Christian repertoire, combined with an abbreviated form of κυρίῳ, one of the most common *nomina sacra*, pinpoint a Christian identity. Reading through other letters of the same author, Huebner shows that he may have used a Christian repertoire for people he knew were also Christians (either deliberately or unreflectively as in-group language), while employing neutral formulas in his business correspondence. A different type of Christian self-identification is found in a mutilated papyrus letter from a merchant who includes names and ecclesiastical titles of high-ranking Christian clergy members in a type of *name dropping* that reveals that his long-distance trade relationships were supported by his connections with Alexandrian clergy. All four early third-century papyri thus highlight the dynamics of situational identifications in a largely non-Christian, well-to-do section of society.

Paula Tutty's contribution relates to the years after the rise to power of Constantine, a period heavily marked by Christian normative discourse. She examines the monastic letters found in the cartonnage material of the Nag Hammadi codices in order to understand the multiple social identities of monks and the way different authors either compartmentalized or integrated these identities. The sixteen letters associated with monks highlight the centrality of economic interactions. Referencing Bernard Lahire's work, Tutty compares monks who centralized their monastic vocation with those who retained familial and social obligations that occasionally conflicted with monastic commitments. Correspondence between

the monk Sansnos and others shows him as a man of high standing who received pleas for assistance, but also reveals close personal interactions and strained relationships. The linguistic variation between the use of Greek and Coptic also suggests that authors made deliberate language choices, although the underlying deliberations escape us. Contrary to previous interpretations, Tutty places these authors within an organized network of monastic communities, presumably part of—or influenced by—the Pachomian Federation. This is strengthened by a number of letters which include references to former monks, evince a wider circle of acquaintances, and detail family obligations for faithful monks, all features returning in normative Pachomian and Shenoutan regulations concerning family. The letters, moreover, show potential instances of interaction with non-Christians, revealing how social and economic ties and commonalities take precedence over religious differentiation, and this even when the correspondent was female, which was in tension with monastic prohibitions from later periods. From the perspective of plural belongings, these monks put on their habit without expunging their previous experiences and socializations, carrying these with them into their monastic vocation and reactivating these dispositions whenever situations required it. Monks were "fully rounded and complex human beings" with families, past experiences, and ample skills and dispositions that were not necessarily in line with their prescribed monastic identity (p. 158).

Susanna Wolfert-de Vries, in the final chapter of this section, examines an Aramaic-Greek marriage contract known as the Ketubba of Cologne, drawn up in Antinoopolis on 15 November 417 CE for the wedding of Samuel and Metra. Contrary to all expectations, the contract is written in Aramaic script, with the first two lines in the Greek language, thus combining features that are infrequently found together in early fifth-century Egypt. Although previous interpretations of this marriage contract have considered it to be highlighting one out of two reified cultural registers, Wolfert-de Vries prefers a more dynamic perspective, looking at it through the lens of sociolinguistic theory, which allows her to stress the combination of Palestinian rabbinic—or more generally Jewish—practices and Graeco-Egyptian customs. As the *ketubba* is the only extant Aramaic Jewish marriage contract from this period, it is noteworthy that both the Aramaic and the Greek are employed with considerable skill. The multi-cultural situatedness of the couple (or their scribe) is stressed by the explicit reference to the "customs of . . . Israel," a phrase that remains elusive, but shows a strategy of self-differentiation that is combined with a thorough knowledge of Egyptian legal customs. From this perspective, it would be a mistake to try to classify the marriage contract—or the individuals involved—in either one of the cultural containers. The contract was valid within a Jewish *and* a Graeco-Egyptian context, as the scribe ingeniously wove together the two legal repertoires. As a result, the bride would receive the same sum under both legal systems if the marriage was ever dissolved. The *ketubba*, therefore, is the result of careful negotiation of religious and local identification, specific legal needs, and an act of social differentiation that set Samuel and Metra apart from most of their direct neighbors.

Part III Performance, Audience, and Efficacy

The final set of related questions and approaches is focused on the postulated efficacy of words, phrases, and symbols, as well as their performative setting. Rather than focusing on the potential connection between speech acts and religious communities, we will reconsider speech acts as social performances. Performative utterances, as famously outlined by J.L. Austin, are not merely statements, but they do something in themselves.[42] The christening of a child and the pronouncement of a marriage are but two examples of speech acts that directly change a status or situation. In his well-known *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin discerned two categories of performative speech acts: illocutionary and perlocutionary. Illocutionary speech acts accomplish in the world what they declare verbally (such as informing someone of something). Perlocutionary speech acts are utterances that bring about change in other actors, either because someone is convinced by words or because the utterance leads directly to a behavioral response.[43] This framework could help us move beyond seeing linguistic formulas in papyri as "meaningless, stereotypical elements that betray an ultimate lack of originality and creativity."[44] Jacques van der Vliet has stressed that the public, audible reading of formulaic text during commemoration events serves to reinforce the social cohesion of groups.[45] In these settings, he argues, words do not merely reflect or represent communities of practice, they "reproduce and reinforce social cohesion. Reciting the texts, listening to them, and joining in with prayers and hymns conveys and strengthens a sense of belonging to the same social and religious group."[46]

Speech acts are also central to the work of Wade Wheelock, who conceptualized ritual speech acts in the following way: "to engender a particular state of affairs and at the same time express recognition of its reality," for example, by declaring bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ.[47] In late antique Egyptian sources, this recognition and redefinition of reality is found in so-called *historiola*—brief narratives recited in a ritual that, through their ceremonial declarative speech, "bring into being a potency in the mythic narrative that can be applied to the situation at hand."[48] This mechanism and its efficacy have been studied in the context of ancient magic and ritual but have had little impact outside these fields. What would happen if we reconsidered some of the often-used formulas in papyrus letters as performative language? What was the perceived efficacy—or effect—of formulas in legal texts? In P.Kellis I Gr. 48, for example, a female slave was set free in the presence of a Christian priest. The situation was made more remarkable through the use of a combination of the formulas "because of my exceptional Christianity" and the traditional "under Zeus, Earth and Sun."[49] While we may ask about the connotations of these phrases and their connection to religious identities, we suggest reconsidering them in light of the setting (i.e., the presence of a priest), as well as the function (i.e., how these formulas contributed to actual change in the slave's status).

Another potential application of speech act theories lies in a re-evaluation of the function of scriptural allusions or citations in documentary papyri, such as letters

and accounts.[50] Ewa Wipszycka has recently highlighted the function of biblical recitation in monastic piety, and Malcolm Choat has listed all known instances of biblical quotation and allusion in fourth-century letters.[51] It is well-known that Christian monks used biblical texts within their spiritual exercises to shape and reshape the human mind and combat demons, thereby fundamentally altering their social world.[52] Likewise, scholars have examined Qur'an quotations in papyri to trace the Qur'an's *Sitz im Leben*, as well as its use in legal and amuletic contexts.[53] From the perspective of speech act theories, it remains important to see that quotations and allusions receive authority from a demarcated religious source, but they were also frequently used in a more performative manner, bringing-into-being rather than informing or signaling.

Relationships were the most common thing brought into being through words. Apart from a direct illocutionary power, words had a perlocutionary function: they could bring people together or separate them. Politeness strategies were therefore of fundamental importance. As part of an implicit information game, authors strategically employed extensive formulas and phrases belonging to politeness strategy, to establish or frame a smooth working relationship in which the interaction could take place.[54] Many of these epistolary politeness formulas are known from exercise letters.[55] In particular, structural parallels from Arabic, Greek, and Coptic documentary letters show how authors used politeness strategies to reduce potential social friction, maintain existing social bonds, and foster new ones. Eva Mira Grob distinguishes between "strategic politeness," which is oriented towards the specific needs of participants, especially the desire to be approved by others, and "conventional politeness," which stresses the participation in—and approval of—a formal linguistic and cultural community of practice.[56] Religiously marked politeness strategies followed both paths. They played a large role in defining relations and nourishing group bonds, but authors also employed certain words, phrases, and self-designators to present the relationship in a favorable light and to create a favorable situation for the author.[57]

In the first chapter of this section, Benjamin Sippel highlights the situational decisions revealed by the representation of a member of the Egyptian priesthood—a class of particular interest because they were socialized by distinct narratives and practices. He aims to compare situations in which they used these religious narratives, signs, and practices and in which they opted for alternative repertoires. Specifically, Sippel discusses the literary and religious choices of Aurelios Ammon, who belonged to an urban elite family in Panopolis. In three different documents, Ammon presented himself in different roles, as a) a well-educated son with affinities for Stoic philosophy, b) a *scholastikos* well-versed in classical and philosophical texts, and c) as an Egyptian priest. As rhetorical constructions, some of these texts were clearly meant to be performed (read out loud during family gatherings in Panopolis), highlighting the author's learned status. Ammon's reference to Tyche in one of his letters is therefore not primarily a religious identification, but part of a rhetorical nod to the Stoa. In fact, Sippel argues that previous assertions that interpret the subtle references to Egyptian gods as connoting a personal religious identity have more to do with modern expectations than with

ancient realities. Another document, a letter of complaint, sketches a situation in which Ammon used his Egyptian priestly dress to gain favorable response, but was mistreated nevertheless. Following this individual through several documents allows for a situational analysis of scenes in which Ammon opted to present himself in various ways to different audiences, showing the flexibility of religious identification even when associated with a priestly office.

Eline Scheerlinck's chapter examines the social and intertextual background of four episcopal cursing letters from the tenth to twelfth centuries CE. While traditionally thought of as the result of the diminishing legal authority of the bishop within Islamic Egypt, the curse and excommunication letters attest to the ongoing social importance of bishops. Cursing and excommunication, as well as the use of biblical citation and the appeal to an ecclesiastical authority, are not reflecting waning authority, but rather belong to a longstanding Coptic documentary tradition. In fact, the seventh-century bishop, Abraham of Hermonthis, employed the same rhetorical strategies, cursing and excommunicating rogue priests in dense biblical language. Scheerlinck, however, also points to an important difference. In contrast to Bishop Abraham, the early medieval bishops do not seem to know the names of the perpetrators of the crimes, presumably because they lost the legal power to investigate crimes within the Islamic framework. Placing these letters with curses and threats in their performative setting, Scheerlinck highlights the *intended* and *unintended* effects of cursing letters within early medieval Christian communities in Egypt. One intended effect is the creation of groupness, confirming group beliefs and bonds through oral performance in church. An important—and thus far overlooked factor—is the double-edged nature of excommunication threats. If the community disrespected the ban, it could potentially erode the authority of the bishop, with the unintended effect that his words became empty threats. The efficacy of the speech acts therefore not only depended on the authority of the speaker but also on the "fit" with the situation and the audience's response.

Jennifer Cromwell's chapter raises questions about the impact of the Arab conquest of Egypt on the way religious expressions were used in written communication in Coptic and examines evidence provided in the papyri on the relationship between the local population and new rulers. The identification of Christians and Muslims in the Coptic sources is difficult and only sometimes made possible by labels such as *Saracen*, *amir*, or *mawla*, which indicate an Islamic affiliation. The use of Coptic, moreover, is not a simple indicator of religious background, but must be seen within the local dynamic in light of other social factors. Likewise, scholars have attributed changes in formulaic expressions to religious change and/or specific religious motivations, but in several cases, Cromwell identified a significant shift. She argues that, in some cases, the Coptic phrase "in the name of God the First" corresponded with Islamic designators used for God, while a Coptic equivalent of the *salaam* greeting "Peace be upon you" also appeared in more than twenty letters. Interestingly, it also occurs in letters between Christians, showing Christian adaptation to Muslim religious expressions, rather than directly corresponding to religious group boundaries. In addition to these formulas, the use of particular types of oblique strokes was a post-conquest scribal innovation, but

it was not used along religious group lines; Christians used them, just as Muslims used crosses for similar supra-linguistic marking. The use of oblique strokes was not religiously neutral, but signified a connection with the new Muslim officials and marked documents with an authoritative status. Reading a selection of these Coptic letters through the lens of politeness studies leads Cromwell to a more relational perspective, which also explains why certain letters of Muslim officials to their subordinate Christian recipients did not require introductory formulas. Muslim officials employed a rather abrupt, imperative style, while Christians strategically used more conventional politeness formulas, took self-humbling actions, and utilized terms of respect when addressing Muslim authorities. Such scribal choices may have resonated with religious differentiations, but other membership categories, like ethnicity and social status, should not be overlooked in the analysis of situational interaction in early Islamic Egypt.

In the final contribution, Przemysław Piwowarczyk examines the use of biblical quotations by the monk Frange, an eighth-century hermit. These quotations are classified according to two basic functions: authority and communality. First, biblical citations were used to establish authority, reducing the likelihood of difficult questions or challenges and settling the case. Second, they served to create a sense of communion or communality with the audience, binding author and recipients together. Drawing upon Allan Bell's model, we can consider Frange's use of scriptural quotations as an example of *audience design*, in which the situational features influenced his choice of words. While in many cases, Frange's biblical learning was dormant, it became *activated* according to the specific needs of the author in the various situations he was involved in. Within the situations of activated biblical learning, Piwowarczyk detects two patterns. He finds that when quotations were used as a vehicle of community, it is safe to assume the recipient was a monk himself; when the quotations express authority, no trace of the recipient's monastic identity could be discerned. Frange therefore drew on the Bible in different ways for respective audience members in light of communication purposes. Some of the quotations in Frange's letters lead to questions about the innovative nature of Frange's citation practice: how was the interpretation of the biblical passage affected by the overall content of the letter? Some eye-catching letters include strategic decontextualization of scripture, in which the meaning of the biblical passage is "secularize[d]," but its sacred authority retained (p. 257). Such flexibility shows how Frange took advantage of his audience's biblical competence *or* ignorance, broadening his interpretative framework for the time being to include his own—often economic—aims.

Demarcations and Limitations

Despite its wide scope, this volume cannot include all relevant material. The papyrological corpus under study is mostly restricted to documentary texts, including personal letters, business accounts, legal and administrative texts, and scribal notes. At the same time, we realize that any attempt to differentiate the ancient papyrological record into documentary, religious, and literary sources is destined

to fail, as many texts fit into more than one category. Some personal letters, such as those discussed by Sippel in Chapter 9, had an exquisite literary touch. Similarly, fragments of literary or religious texts could be used for ritual or protective purposes.[58] Avdokhin's chapter on hymnic texts, for example, moves beyond the formal category of documentary texts. Both examinations attribute the composition of religious and liturgical texts to experts who were involved in other scribal activities, thereby homing in on the individuals behind papyrological sources.

The temporal delimitation of "late antiquity" has not been dogmatically forced upon all the contributions, as the period itself has been ever expanding chronologically since its inception.[59] Although we would consider the period between 284 and 641 CE as the core of the late antiquity period, we have included studies on material deriving from the third to the twelfth century CE. As will become clear, a broad range of *comparanda* is useful, even *because of* the changing religious and cultural circumstances of late antique and early medieval Egypt.

A final introductory remark should perhaps address the ongoing debate concerning the appropriateness of using "religion" and "religious" for the ancient and "late ancient" world. Scholars in the last decades have argued that the concept of religion is modern, tarnished by Western Protestantism and colonial history, and therefore carries unwanted baggage into our reconstructions of antiquity.[60] Although we see the value of such historiographical reflections, we will embrace both the noun religion and the adjective religious as modern designators referring to a bundle of social practices, structures, narratives, and ideas related to communication with postulated supernatural beings.[61] This broad and substantive definition should be flexible enough to include examples from the various centuries discussed in this volume and specific enough to be productive for analytical purposes. What exactly is entailed by a religious label, and to what extent we should use our modern classifications as background of the papyri we read, remains an open question for all contributors to answer.

Notes

1 On papyri and the Melitian schism, see P.Lond.VI 1914, studied in H. Hauben and P. van Nuffelen, eds., *Studies on the Melitian Schism in Egypt (AD 306–335)* (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2013). The daily affairs of a bishop are discussed by A. Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty: Christian Clergy at Oxyrhynchus (C. 250–400)," in *Beyond Priesthood: Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire*, eds. R. Gordon, G. Petridou, and J. Rüpke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 103–26. On Jews, see for example P.Oxy. XLIV 3203, which is briefly discussed in R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 277. The sacrificial sheep are mentioned in SB VI 9576. P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Arabic Papyri and Islamic Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 463.
2 A. Jördens, "Communicating with Tablets and Papyri," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World*, ed. M. Peachin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 227–47. Papyri have been especially helpful in the study of ancient gnosis and Manichaeism. C. Römer, "Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2009), 623–43. An identification of the "Arian party" is made in L. H. Blumell, "PSA 4.311: Early Evidence for 'Arianism' at Oxyrhynchus?" *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 49 (2012): 277–96.

3 See for example the wide range of interpretations of Paniskos's formulaic prayer "before all the gods" (P.Mich III 214.5–6), with as most improbable option a Manichaean background. Discussion and literature in M. Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 110–11; L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 24–25.

4 See for example the contributions in P. Arzt-Grabner and C. M. Kreinecker, eds., *Light from the East: Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010); S. R. Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); P. M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

5 A. M. Nobbs, "Formulas of Belief in Greek Papyrus Letters of the Third and Fourth Centuries," in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, eds. T. W. Hillard, R. A. Kearsley, C. E. V. Nixon, and A. M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University and William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 233–37.

6 T. S. Richter, "Coptic Letters," *Asiatische Studien* 62, no. 3 (2008): 740. Fundamental steps in the study of Christian identifications in papyri have been made by M. Naldini, *Il Cristianesimo in Egitto: Lettere private nei papiri dei secoli II—IV* (Fiesole: Nardini Editore, 1998 [1968]); G. Tibiletti, *Le lettere private nei papiri greci del III e IV Secolo D.C.: Tra paganesimo e cristianesimo* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1979); E. Wipzsycka, "Remarques sur les lettres privées chrétiennes des IIe—IVe siècles: (à propos d'un livre de M. Naldini)," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 18 (1974): 203–21; A. Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord. Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for Harvard Theological Studies, 2008); Choat, *Belief and Cult*.

7 L. H. Martin, "Epilogue: The Jabberwocky Dilemma: Take Religion for Example," in *Theorizing "Religion" in Antiquity*, ed. N. Roubekas (Sheffield: Equinox, 2019), 422–23 on theorizing ancient religion.

8 Lumping all Greco-Roman and Egyptian religions together under the header of "paganism" is profoundly flawed. I use "pagan" here only as a heuristic label, with appropriate hesitation. Sippel's chapter will highlight the multiplicity behind this— often normative—label. T. Jürgasch, "Christians and the Invention of Paganism in the Late Roman Empire," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition and Coexistence in the Fourth Century*, eds. M. R. Salzman, M. Sághy, and R. L. Testa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 115–38.

9 J. Rüpke, "Religious Agency, Identity, and Communication: Reflections on History and Theory of Religion," *Religion* 45, no. 3 (2015): 344–66.

10 On fuzzy boundaries and the shared practices of Jews and Christians, see Y. Furstenberg, "Introduction: The Shared Dimensions of Jewish and Christian Communal Identities," in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Y. Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1–21; M. Salzman, M. Sághy, and R. L. Testa, eds., *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

11 H. I. Bell, "Evidences of Christianity in Egypt During the Roman Period," *Harvard Theological Review* 37, no. 2 (1944): 197. This date and the classification as Christian was endorsed in C. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1 n.2. Bagnall's critique on the designator "Christian letters" as "baptizing letters" misses the obvious referential meaning. These religious labels are heuristic classifications corresponding to modern categories. R. S. Bagnall, "Review of 'Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri'," *Bulletin of the*

American Society of Papyrology 43 (2006): 207. Cf. R. S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

12 P.Harr. 107.4–12. Other variations are found in P.Kellis V Copt. 25.12–26, 29.7–13, 31.12–16, 32.19–24, 62.1–15 (?), 63.1–10 (?), 65.7–14, 71.4–9, 72.4–5. I. Gardner, A. M. Nobbs, and M. Choat, "P. Harr. 107: Is This Another Greek Manichaean Letter?" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 131 (2000): 118–24.

13 Among others, the God of Truth is mentioned in 1 Keph. 20.30, 23.32, 25.13, 38.33, 39.32, 41.1 and 10, 81.29, 100.10, 151.20, 181.4, 217.16 etc. For more references, see W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979 [1939]), 117. Specifically, he points out that "the God of Truth" occurs ten times in the liturgical traditions of the fourth-century *Prayers of Serapion*, to which I would add that it is also used in the works of other Ancient Christian authors, like Eusebius, Athanasius, and Epiphanius. D. G. Martinez, "The Papyri and Early Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 602. The expression ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθειας (Psalm 30.6 LXX) occurs more often in patristic authors (such as Eusebius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, but also the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*). A TLG search (accessed May 2017) lists at least 30 exact matches.

14 Choat, *Belief and Cult*, 137.

15 I. Gardner, "Once More on Mani's Epistles and Manichaean Letter-Writing," *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 17, no. 2 (2013): 291–314.

16 I have argued elsewhere that Gardner's comparison with Mani's own Epistles is most convincing concerning the phrase "the Father the God of Truth," but less so in his examination of the tripartite formula. Gardner's examples do not contain tripartite but only dipartite divisions. The copy found at Kellis contains a dipartite division with body and spirit, omitting the soul (P.Kellis VI Copt. 53, 12.9–11). M. Brand, *Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans in Kellis* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 80–85. See some of my earlier observations in M. Brand, "Speech Patterns as Indicators of Religious Identities: The Manichaean Community in Late Antique Egypt," in *Sinews of Empire: Networks in the Roman Near East and Beyond*, eds. H. F. Teigen and E. Heldaas Seland (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 105–19.

17 As evidenced by a section of Psalm 9 (LXX) found in a house in Kellis with strong connections to the Manichaean community. K. A. Worp, "Psalm 9.22–26 in a 4th-Century Papyrus from the Western Desert in Egypt," *Vetus Testamentum* 66, no. 3 (2016): 1–6. His argument about the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament psalms is problematic, see N. A. Pedersen, R. Falkenberg, J. M. Larsen, and C. Leurini, *The Old Testament in Manichaean Tradition. The Sources in Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, New Persian, and Arabic* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), xv, xxxviii–xxxix.

18 R. S. Kraemer, "Jewish Tuna and Christian Fish: Identifying Religious Affiliation in Epigraphic Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (1991): 142.

19 G. Bohak, "Good Jews, Bad Jews, and Non-Jews in Greek Papyri and Inscriptions," in *Akten des 21. internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, ed. B. Kramer (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1997), 111; S. J. D. Cohen, " 'Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not': How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?" in *Diasporas in Antiquity*, eds. S. J. D. Cohen and E. S. Frerichs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 1–45.

20 Sarah Rollens has, for example, pointed to the modern intellectual legacy of early Protestant theology, German nationalism, and Romanticism behind our notions of coherent communities. S. E. Rollens, "The Anachronism of 'Early Christian Communities'," in *Theorizing "Religion" in Antiquity*, ed. N. Roubekas (Sheffield: Equinox, 2019), 307–24. Heidi Wendt reconceptualized early Christian leaders such as Paul, Marcion, Justin, Valentinus, and Irenaeus within the framework of self-authorized freelance experts competing amongst each other, rather than as representatives of nascent Christian groups. H. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts*

in the Early Roman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Cf. J. Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 296–326, 327–63. One of the shortcomings of many of these studies is their exclusive focus on the textual and discursive construction of groups, giving rather little thought on the smaller recursive practices that would have established them in everyday life.

21 J. H. F. Dijkstra, "A World Full of the Word: The Biblical Learning of Dioscorus," in *Learned Antiquity: Scholarship and Society in the Near-East, the Greco-Roman World, and the Early Medieval West*, eds. A. A. MacDonald, M. W. Twomey, and G. J. Reinink (Leuven: Brepols, 2003), 135–46.

22 See the cautious remarks concerning the difference between "looking for criteria" and interpreting "markers of identity" in Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord,* 30. On "identity" in the study of late antique religion, see K. B. Stratton, "Identity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. B. S. Spaeth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 220–51.

23 R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1.

24 Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," 17.

25 A point forcefully made in B. Lincoln, "Theses on Method," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1996): 225–27, at no. 13. On the strong interconnections between Christians and Manichaeans, see J. BeDuhn, "Manichaean Biblical Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, eds. P. M. Blowers and P. W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 399–414.

26 E. Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (London: Cornell University Press, 2012) is building upon sociological studies by R. Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 163–89; B. Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

27 Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 95.

28 Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," 164, shows strong parallels with the critique of Campany on religions as "entities (of a certain metaphorically imagined kinds)". R. F. Campany, "On the Very Idea of Religions (in the Modern West and in Early Medieval China)," *History of Religions* 42, no. 4 (2003): 291.

29 Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, 57. See also, B. Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions. Towards a Sociology at the Level of the Individual," *Poetics* 31 (2003): 329–55.

30 M. B. McGuire, *Lived Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); N. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); T. A. Tweed, "After the Quotidian Turn: Interpretive Categories and Scholarly Trajectories in the Study of Religion Since the 1960s," *Journal of Religion* 95, no. 3 (2015): 361–85; J. Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning 'Cults' and 'Polis Religion'," *Mythos* 5 (2011): 191–203.

31 R. Raja and J. Rüpke, "Appropriating Religion: Methodological Issues in Testing the 'Lived Ancient Religion' Approach," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1, no. 1 (2015): 11–19.

32 A. Bell, "Back in Style: Reworking Audience Design," in *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*, eds. P. Eckert and J. R. Rickford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 139. For a linguistic approach to papyri, see the contributions in T. V. Evans and D. Obbink, eds., *The Language of the Papyri* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

33 Bell, "Back in Style." Returning to his earlier "Language Style as Audience Design," *Language in Society* 13, no. 2 (1984): 145–204.

34 A. Verhoogt, "Dictating Letters in Greek and Roman Egypt from a Comparative Perspective" (Unpublished Working Paper, 2009). I am drawing upon P. Brown and C. Fraser. "Speech as a Marker of Situation," in *Social Markers in Speech*, eds. K. R. Scherer and H. Giles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 33–62; A.

Mische and H. C. White, "Between Conversation and Situation: Public Switching Dynamics Across Network Domains," *Social Research* 65, no. 3 (1998): 695–724.

35 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 61; H. Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 78; P. Treblico, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 12.

36 P. Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity in Belten High* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 34–41 and 223–24.

37 The former has been argued for the earliest phases of the use of Coptic. E. D. Zakrzewska, "L* as a Secret Language: Social Functions of Early Coptic," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt: Al-Minya and Asyut*, eds. G. Gabra and H. N. Takla (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), 185–98. See also R. S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 75–94 on the relation between Greek and Coptic. The latter is most commonly observed by contemporary sociolinguists, for example, in the distinction between the language use of "church ladies" and "porch sitters," in C. Mallison and B. Childs, "Communities of Practice in Sociolinguistic Description: Analyzing Language and Identity Practices Among Black Women in Appalachia," *Gender and Language* 1, no. 2 (2007): 173–206.

38 H. Kupari, *Lifelong Religion as Habitus: Religious Practice among Displaced Karelian Orthodox Women in Finland* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 10; M. Polyakov, "Practice Theories: The Latest Turn in Historiography?" *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 6 (2012): 218–35; S. B. B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (1984): 144–57. This recursive and re-creative nature of tradition is central in the work of Giddens, Bourdieu, Sahlin, Sewell, and others.

39 A. Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 183.

40 T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 312 describes how newcomers in the magical milieu gradually adopt an identity as magicians through a gradual "interpretive drift" by which they begin to see themselves and the world through this group identification.

41 Published in S. R. Huebner, W. G. Claytor, I. Marthot-Santaniello, and M. Müller, eds., *Papyri of the University Library of Basel, II* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 182–88.

42 J. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); W. T. Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 1 (1982): 49–71.

43 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 109–20.

44 As phrased by J. van der Vliet, "'What Is Man?': The Nubian Tradition of Coptic Funerary Inscriptions," in *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture*, eds. A. Lajtar and J. van der Vliet (Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2011), 182, who rejects such an understanding.

45 Van der Vliet, "'What Is Man?'," 185–6.

46 Ibid., 186.

47 Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language," 58.

48 D. Frankfurter, "Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 611; Also his, "Narratives That Do Things," in *Religion: Narrating Religion*, ed. S. I. Johnston (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference, 2017), 95–106.

49 Translation and discussion in K. A. Worp, ed., *Greek Papyri from Kellis I* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995), 140–42, where he considers the text in light of the conventions of a *manumissio in ecclesia*.

50 There is ample attention for the use of biblical and liturgical material in amulets. J. E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014); T. S. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); J. van der Vliet, "Christian Spells and Manuals from Egypt," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 322–50; T. S. de Bruyn and J. 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.

51 E. Wipszycka, "Biblical Recitations and Their Function in the Piety of Monastic Egypt," in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, ed. M. Choat and M. Giorda (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 213–19; M. Choat, "Echo and Quotation of the New Testament in Papyrus Letters to the End of the Fourth Century," in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, eds. T. J. Kraus and N. Tobias (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 267–92; Choat, *Belief and Cult*, 74–83.

52 F. Vecoli, "Writing and Monastic Doctrine," in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, eds. M. Choat and M. Giorda (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 165–86; D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

53 See the contributions in A. Kaplony and M. Marx, eds., *Qurʾān Quotations Preserved on Papyrus Documents, 7th–10th Centuries: And the Problem of Carbon Dating Early Qurʾāns* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

54 E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 10 and passim.

55 Collected in M. Hasitzka, *Neue Texte und Dokumentation zum Koptisch-Unterricht* (Vienna: Hollinek, 1990), no. 109–83; Studied in Richter, "Coptic Letters," 739–70; E. M. Grob, *Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters on Papyrus: Form and Function, Content and Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 121–23.

56 Grob, *Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters*, 121–23.

57 Particularly the Manichaean terminology used in some of the Kellis letters. Brand, *Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans in Kellis*. In this context, Patrick Reinard's application of actor network theory may be mentioned, even though it does not directly relate to any of the religious features of papyri. P. Reinard, *Reinard, P. Kommunikation und Ökonomie. Untersuchungen zu den privaten Papyrusbriefen aus dem kaiserzeitlichen Ägypten* (Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2016), 28, 873–76 for the application on P.Kellis I Gr. 66.

58 See especially the critique in W. Clarysse, "Literary Papyri in Documentary 'Archives'," in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World*, eds. E. van't Dack, P. van Dessel and W. van Gucht (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 43–61.

59 Peter Brown originally took late antiquity as the period from 150 to 750 CE. P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (New York: Norton, 1972). Other scholars opted for a more restrictive demarcation from the period between Diocletian tetrarchy and the Arab conquest. S. Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284–641: The Transformation of the Ancient World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007). Or even an expansion to the entire first millennium. G. Fowden, *Before and after Muḥammad: The First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). Reflections in H. Inglebert, "Concluding Remarks: The Birth of a New Short Late Antiquity," in *Late Antiquity in Contemporary Debate*, ed. R. Lizzi Testa (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 215–27; T. E. Hunt, "Religion in Late Antiquity—Late Antiquity in Religion," in *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. J. Lössl and N. Baker-Brian (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 9–30.

60 B. Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); C. A. Barton and D. Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How*

Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). Both studies are building on T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991 [1963]).

61   Following M. A. Davidsen, "The Religious Affordance of Fiction: A Semiotic Approach," *Religion* 46, no. 4 (2016): 524; M. Riesebrodt, *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 75. Supernatural does not exclude the postulated powers located within the natural world.

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Part I

Problematizing Religious "Identity" and the Identification of Religious Groups

2 Christianization, "Identity," and the Problem of Internal Commitment

Egypt III–VI CE

David Frankfurter

Introduction

How do we talk about the spread of Christianity? Merely as a function of documents, artifacts, and archaeological remains? Or do these things point to something bigger: an institution, a religion? Invariably the category *identity* arises, in the sense of people's self-conception as Christian, as opposed to "Jewish" or Greco-Roman or Alexandrian or the like. In modernity, beset by matters of immigration and models of assimilation, we are especially captivated by notions of identity—so much so that we invariably retroject our modern notions of identity into antiquity. Religious identity has always had two dimensions: an *interior* one, that sense of inner commitment and primary location of the self, dictating choices in the world; and an *exterior* one, the social group (e.g., "the Christians") with which individuals claim to identify: "a group's identity indicates the sameness which makes the individuals of a given group recognizable as a group, and which makes the group recognizable as the same group in different times and circumstances"[1] (although recognisability should not be taken to imply an external coherence or consistency beyond what is imagined by invested insiders).

It is this *exterior* sense of Christian identity that is the easier to discuss and assess historically and archaeologically, especially for late antiquity. Over the second and third centuries CE the evidence for a Christian institution mounts in papyri and texts, showing ecclesiastical ranks, a common interest in books and textuality, and an internal argot. While the textual record for this period also bears witness to an astounding diversity in beliefs, practices, social structures, and relationships to Judaism, still we can talk about a Christianity in a general, flexible sense—an historical generalization that takes into accounts both efforts to unify "the" *ekklēsia* and those characteristically sectarian impulses to segment off.[2] Christianity then amounts to an external identity, if a very fluid and ad hoc one, that might be overshadowed or displaced by other types of affiliation.

But can we say anything about Christian identity for this period in the *internal* sense—the historical notion that an individual might locate herself as "Christian" as opposed to "heathen" or "Jew" and thereby make a point of avoiding public animal slaughters (or synagogues) and engage in certain cross-related practices? For some scholars the very doctrines preserved in early Christian literature imply

a coherent internal identity. That is—they assume—the psychological and ethical shifts one is supposed to undergo in joining a Christ-congregation would put one at odds with a quotidian world of *thysia*, synagogue, and everyday devotions to folk gods. One could not engage Christian identity without eschewing the practices that made up the civic religions of the Roman empire: "Christianity was digital rather than analogue: people were either Christian or pagan."[3] In this perspective the internal Christian identity is predicated on the personal assimilation of (some idealized version of) "Christian teachings"; there is no room for the kind of diversity or creative agency that would question the kind of consistency imagined as axiomatic of Christianness.[4]

For modern scholars of religion the essential notion of a psychological/ethical shift, a "conversion," in the early Christian period, is an anachronism born of Reformation ideology and should *not* be inferred from ancient sources.[5] Membership in a Christ-congregation would not have precluded other sorts of cultural/religious practices over the course of the day, week, or year.[6] "Christian identity" is thus an idiosyncratic thing: *perhaps* engagement of an orthopraxy, *perhaps* merely wearing a cross-amulet, *perhaps* the enthusiastic experience of Christian liturgy. As Jörg Rüpke has argued, an individual's religious identity should not be understood as *adherence to* a preexisting community, but rather as a "notion of belonging," a form of self-classification that may well have little to do with others' notions of the same group or with an ecclesial structure we infer from ancient texts.[7] Indeed, it may involve the wholesale, wishful invention of a group.[8]

The problem I raise here for the historical discussion of the spread of Christianity is the *interpenetration* of these two notions of identity in scholarly models. For example, the spread of the *institution*—the actual trappings of "groupness"—is often taken to imply the spread of individual identities; while the sense of individual identity fostered or merely promoted in the early texts is taken to imply a uniform *ekklēsia*, a collective body composed of individuals imagined to be inspired by these texts. The impact of edicts and persecutions is thought to affect both internal identity ("I feel persecuted as a Christian") and external identity ("as the persecuted ones we constitute the true *ekklēsia*"). But both dimensions fall prey to anachronistic modelling ("If I were a Christian living in Oxyrhynchus under Decius, what would I do?") and even theological assumptions: the image of *core* Christian commitments, for example.

I would like to suggest that the problem here lies in the word identity itself, which tends to privilege internal feelings even while scholars use it to speak about larger social trends. Thus, in this chapter, while acknowledging the sporadic and diverse growth of a *social and cultural entity* Christianity, with a number of salient characteristics, over the third and fourth centuries, an entity with which people *variously* engaged imaginatively and performatively, I will challenge the internalist notion of identity: that is, the notion that external artifacts and documents, or even situations (edicts, sacrifices), should be taken to imply *particular* internal dispositions and commitments. Ultimately, following sociologists Brubaker and Cooper, we would best abandon the category identity entirely, for the term usually implies a single determinative tradition or ideology dictating

individual agency rather than the flexibility and variation typical to individuals in culture.[9]

I will be pursuing this challenge to the category identity through a discussion of a series of materials that bear on stages in the Christianization of Egypt. What do these materials actually reflect about membership, adherence, participation, or practices in some form of Christianity? What could it have meant to engage oneself and one's family with the institution and the frame of reference associated with the church, monastery, or holy man in the vicinity? What difference did it make if one engaged the institution as an individual or family or as part of a village? On what parts of life would such an engagement have an impact—for example, did participating in Christian practices influence one's participation in more traditional, local forms of religious devotion? I ask this question in particular because our usual model for someone's counting as a Christian is that she is not "pagan," that she has repudiated whatever counted as "paganism"—I use these terms ironically—and has embraced Christianity totally. If a "Christian" continued to participate in traditional festivals, paid homage to a couple of traditional gods, and decorated the house and livestock with traditional *apotropaia*, then what exactly are we calling "Christian": a state of mind or a preponderance of practices?

Christian Identity in Antiquity: The Problem

In fact, recent studies of the Christianization and the demography of Christianity through at least the fifth century shows exactly this scenario. Ramsay MacMullen and Christopher Jones show people across the "Christian" empire happily maintaining sacrifices and celebrating old gods while also showing up at churches and saints' shrines.[10] Theo de Bruyn shows ritual experts developing a Christian amuletic tradition out of scripture and pre-Christian strategies both.[11] Éric Rebillard goes even further in his *Christians and Their Many Identities* in second- and third-century North Africa: he argues for an "*intermittency* of Christianness": that individuals engaged idiosyncratic aspects of Christianity in different moments of life.[12] That intermittency explains how individuals could attend sacrifices and the arena, do *puja* before their household *lares*, dance at saints' festivals, and pay a modicum of attention to a leader in a church—activities that would appear inconsistent to that leader *and* to the modern historian of Christianity. For Rebillard, Christianness is not only *not* an exclusive identity, it is only one of a number of religious identities.

Some have proposed that persecutions and religious edicts inspired oppositional Christian identities of the internal sort. Are not the martyrologies consistent about Christians' aversion to *thysia* and imperial cult? Yet sermons show otherwise (in the guise of complaint): that there was considerable variation in response to imperial cult or persecution. Moreover, imperial edicts did *not* impact all places in the same way,[13] while *ekklēsiai* were hardly uniform in their embracing of martyrdom ideology.[14] Thus it is really untenable to imagine a uniform Christian identity as an embattled and persecuted minority averse to civic *thysia* from the second into

the fourth century. Some participants in the Christian institution may well have felt these sentiments, but not all.

And for the fourth and fifth centuries, whatever the vitality of traditional Egyptian cults, the *Christianity* of that time should be considered awash with phenomena that were of a mixed, local religious character: not "paganism" but traditions of "Christian" folk. I am talking about the continued veneration of older sacred places, traditional ways of imagining new authorities and venerating new sacred places, and continued celebration of older festivals. Even in the fifth century a Christian healing charm might specify the "Lord God" as "lord of *all* the gods"[15]; while still in the sixth century an oracle ticket might be directed to the "God of the Christians," as if the client identified him as connected with another people.[16] This vagueness, this fluidity, should be presumed in any reconstruction of Christianization in Egypt or any other region of late antiquity. That is to say, we cannot start our modelling of the spread of Christianity with assumptions about uniform comprehension, self-definition, commitment, or practice—an identity as singularly "Christian," in other words.

Thus this chapter seeks to critique the implications for an internal Christian identity across a range of artifacts that have been used to document and portray the spread of Christianity in Egypt: Christian scripture fragments, the adoption of Christian names, a Christian institutional structure, and Christian buildings. While each of these areas reflects in some way the expansion of a social phenomenon Christianity, to what extent do they pertain to some measure of internal commitment?

Scripture Fragments

What are the implications for a distinctively Christian identity from the papyrological remains of texts normally associated with Christianity: gospels (including Thomas and unnamed), Revelation, Shepherd of Hermas, Psalms and other Old Testament texts (with or without *nomina sacra*), martyrologies, hymns, and so on? If we can no longer speak of a common "canon" of Christian scripture, or even of "sacred" scripture, can we not say that these texts demonstrate some institutional efforts to construct distinctively Christian stories (in gospels and apocalypses), distinctively Christian rituals (in liturgical texts), and distinctively Christian modes of behavior (in the occasional Pauline and Patristic texts)? And would not a progressive social engagement on the part of families with this distinctively Christian realm of performance and folklore not indicate some form of identity? These conclusions would seem the least one could get from the profusion of Christian texts.

And yet this basis of "identity" largely depends on a model for the use of these fragments—of Revelation or John or Psalm 34—as *informative*, rather than *performative*, modes—as offering intellectual content for mental consideration rather than as materials to engage physically. Since Judge's 1987 essay "The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri," and now especially with the work of Wasserman, Jones, De Bruyn, and Sanzo, we are learning that scripture papyri functioned as

amulets in a great number of cases—25% between the fourth and sixth centuries, according to Judge—and that, in general, books themselves and their extracts held material value in the world of religious practice.[17] Sanzo's study of scripture amulets in particular demonstrates that the very idea of a gospel involved a book of paradigmatic stories that could be invoked or inscribed in abbreviated form for healing or protection.[18]

Thus we might say that involvement of any sort with Christianity (in any of its forms) did imply a unique engagement with *textuality*: heavenly texts, oracles, scripture amulets, and so on. However, a religion as distinctively textual as Christianity may not necessarily translate into an internal identity. Mary Beard has pointed out the many ways that the mediation of religion in Roman Egypt was assuming a textual form in multiple domains: *Sortes astrampsychi*, *proskynēmata*, ticket oracles, membership lists and calendars, and even the Decian *libelli*. Thus all around formative Christianity, in Beard's words,

> writing could form a symbolic defining center of the individual's place in [the other religious] traditions [of the Roman world]. Much of this kind of writing may very rarely have been read; and much of it was no doubt written on behalf of illiterates. . . . In this context, the act of reading was of secondary importance—lying far behind the symbolic power of the written word.[19]

Textuality, even material textuality, was a distinctive feature of Christian practice, but that does not warrant the inference that the *contents* of those texts, their "informative" or semantic meaning, dictated Christians' perspectives and dispositions that textuality translated into a particular religious identity

Onomastic Statistics: The Naming of Children

Most historians of Roman Egypt are familiar with the methodology that Roger Bagnall adopted in 1982 to gauge the speed of Christianization over the fourth century. From the names in documents securely dated to various points between the third and fifth centuries, Bagnall extrapolated how many parents would have chosen to give their children Christian names—those of martyrs, biblical figures, or Christian emperors. Then, presuming such choices indicated the *parents'* "conversion" from so-called paganism to Christianity, Bagnall proposed from the documents at hand the *percentage* of the population of Egypt that, at each point, was Christian. In 2013 Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse validated the method but adjusted the documentation and the selection of names that might count as Christian. In so doing they confirmed Bagnall's conclusion that the fourth century saw a sharp rise in the number of Christians—for Bagnall, exponential; for Depauw and Clarysse, gradual—from about 20% of the Egyptian population before Constantine to about 70% by the end of the fourth century, steadily increasing through the fifth century. In general, these results reflect what historians would have presumed about the religious character of Egypt under a Christian empire.[20]

So one can hardly object either to the general outline of religious change or to the methodology and its particular insights into what "Christianization" at the family level might mean in practice. Given patristic reports of religiously motivated name changes in the first three centuries (Acts 13.9; Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.25.14; *Mart.Pal*. 11.8), it would seem that this aspect of social self-representation—one's name—might be an area for adjustment and signaling. But what are the implications of one's name for one's internal religious identity or religious allegiance? To be sure, an increasing number of Pauls and Victors and Mariams in the village will reflect the presence of a Christianity broadly conceived, whose stories have begun to inspire people in the vicinity. In this sense, onomastics reflect identity in its external sense: a tradition's cultural presence. But do they reflect any necessary dispositions or practical consequences of an internal Christian identity?

Taking the methodology seriously as Bagnall justified it, we should be inquiring about two contexts for engaging Christianity through name choices: that of the parents and that of the children. As for the parents, the "agents of naming," what range of interests might precipitate the bestowal of Christian names on children? That is, why use the name of *that* martyr, emperor, or apostle? By what ritual means (e.g., candles, dice, shrine requests) was the name divined, with what implications for the child's fortune? These questions pertain to the cultural presence of Christian tradition more generally. Second, with regard to the children, what range of *practices* could their Christian names reflect or imply? Do they go to regular liturgies, or visit monks, or wear scripture amulets, or sleep in old temples for mantic dreams, or burn lamps annually for Isis—or all these kinds of practices at the same time?

Neither of these contexts—the choices of the parents nor the lifestyle of the children—should be imagined as "conversion" in its common (and, indeed, Protestant-inflected) sense: a cataclysmic and unidirectional shift in worldview and social identity. Religious allegiance as it pertained to the engagement of Christianity, as Ewa Wipszycka has written extensively, was a family matter, often in the context of community and village—and often, we may add, as a function of the impact of a particular saint's shrine.[21] Moreover, as Malcolm Choat has pointed out, the meaning of the name and the practices it might imply will change considerably from one generation to another.[22]

So while choosing Menas over Sarapammon for one's son does indicate some kind of historical shift, it is a shift in cultural options and domestic strategies, not of "Christianity" over "paganism"—not of "religious identity" in some modern sense. Naming your child after a saint or a prophet could reflect a dream your wife had at a local saint's shrine, the instructions of a holy man, or the results of guided lot-throwing on a festival day.[23] It could indicate the parents' hope for magical protection or simply a name that sounded up-to-date and modern.[24] Some Christian names might seal a baptism, but their function in life might be far from "sealing" a set of orthoprax commitments: they may be treasured, borne as blessings, marks of prestige, or simply a family connection to some martyr-shrine. Given the great range of practices, materials, shrines, and anxieties that revolved

around pregnancies in late antique Egypt, there seems to me no reason to look at naming as any more historically portentous than as a way of signifying fortune.[25] As a mark of "external identity," a name might well indicate an affiliation with a Christianity broadly—or locally, or idiosyncratically—conceived, but it says little to nothing about internal identity: about the practices or the limits to practices conceived of as "Christian."

Accoutrements of Institution: Evidence for Ecclesiastical Organization and Communication

The evidence for networks of bishops, priests, deacons, and so on communicating to each other in formulaic letters that refer to established local *ekklēsia,* begins in the late third century and, of course, increases over the fourth century. Bagnall perceives in these letters "a network to the village level, an extensive clergy, and enough worshippers to sustain the structure" already by this time.[26] Based on the common Christian literary genre the "letter of introduction," which individuals bore between one *ekklēsia* and another, Bagnall infers a "self-consciousness" as Christian—that "Christians of the first three centuries were acutely aware of themselves as a distinct group, even if individuals within the group existed in a complex . . . of other ties."[27] AnneMarie Luijendijk likewise deduces broader social implications from administrative documents in her close study of Christian officials in late third-century Oxyrhynchos. Formulaic language, common *nomina sacra*, administrative ranks, and so on reflect Christianity's broad networks and distinctive scribal practices—an insider's argot, as it were.[28] References in some letters to how, and with what texts, initiates are training before admission to some Christian status furthermore "show an historical development of the modes of Christian self-identification that we see becoming crystallized by" the late third century.[29]

While both Bagnall and Luijendijk are commendably careful to avoid the word "identity," the category hovers around their conclusions. So we may ask: does their evidence point to anything like a distinctive *internal* Christian identity in the late third and early fourth centuries CE? The limitations of literacy in the ancient world make it difficult to extrapolate beyond the world of the writers—that is, to infer anything about the laity from this globalizing administrative language: the language of travel, the language of introduction. As Judith Lieu has demonstrated, the literary/epistolary construction of Christian self-hood over the first three centuries was a self-contained project of a literate elite.[30]

Such materials as Christian letters show the extension of the institution and its literate expressions to what we may call the reification of a Christian self—a component "I." But this Christian self emergent in texts serves not as *evidence* for an internal Christian identity among the laity or clergy, but as an institutional idiom. In this sense, the epistolary materials from the third and fourth centuries bear *not* on a growing *internal* identity (or routes to its formation), but on a symbolic framework for those participating in *ekklēsiai*—a framework for Christian selfhood that was *offered* but not uniformly *adopted*. Catechetical programs, for example,

imagined the reformation—one might even say "conversion"—of the individual as a particular type of Christian with internal ethical and sensory proclivities.[31] There is little evidence that such "internally identified" Christians actually came about, but the programs existed nonetheless.[32] Thus, as programs, as frameworks, they did not govern or "form" internal self-definition, but offered *possible* idioms, strategies, and myths to think with, much like scripture itself. Rather than a self-enclosed, consistent, and inevitable series of rules for the formation of the self, we might call these idioms and frameworks a symbolic resource.[33]

Infrastructure: A Christian Landscape

The last body of evidence usually taken to recommend a new Christian identity in the culture is the new Christian infrastructure of churches, monasteries, and shrines that arose among and apart from the dilapidated temples of the old order. The remains of churches at Philae, Denderah, and Luxor; the extensive excavations of monasteries at Atripe, Wadi Natrun, and Abydos; the pilgrimage shrine remains at Apa Mena and Antinoë; and the brilliantly restored Red Monastery Church—all these structures reflect a very different religious landscape by the sixth century CE. One might well speak of the materialization, or even "realization," of Christianity in the form of architecture, and certainly this realization would recommend a Christian identity in its *external* sense: a material infrastructure recognizable to people both engaged with and avoidant of the religion.[34] But it is an interesting question whether this evidence might in any way bear on an *internal* "Christian identity."

For one thing, by the fifth century the temples themselves were empty shells, so identity could not have been articulated in terms of the *choice* of church over temple. For another thing, as novel as were many of the Christian architectural forms, many of the most impressive buildings (like the Shenoute monastery and its church) sought a spectacular monumentality that in many ways followed from a landscape of monumental temples. (Indeed, a good number of churches were sited so as to refract an existing temple's traditional monumentality.) So it was a landscape that developed upon a prior infrastructure of monumentality.[35]

One might imagine that an internal identity would have been cultivated through the local legends that some churches promoted about the annihilation of a heathen cult in advance of the building of a particular Christian building: "we, as Christians, belong to the very soldiers of Christ who vanquished the sacrifices of the heathens right here"—as it were.[36] But would such legends inculcate an actual *Christian* identity or, rather, local pride in a foundation legend?

So perhaps, again, it is not identity in its internal sense that we find in these particular artifacts and legends of early Egyptian Christianity, but *frameworks* for different kinds of Christian experience. For example, a sixth-century list of liturgical visits in Oxyrhynchos involves at least twenty-five different churches in that town.[37] These churches functioned not as mere edifices of Christian authority, but as sources, waystations, and sites for liturgical performance. Processions like the ones in this papyrus crossed towns, united towns and peripheral shrines, and

in some cases processed through the countryside as well. Sometimes they gave visibility to a Christian institution, other times to liturgical sounds and materials, and other times they simply articulated a local or ecclesiastical calendar. A protective amulet also from Oxyrhynchus shows how this very network of shrines constituted a pantheon of divine powers, for it is especially the local saints whom the amulet calls upon for protection: not only "Our Lady the Mother of God and the glorious archangels" but also "the holy and glorious apostle and evangelist and theologian John and St. Serenus and St. Philoxenos and St. Victor and St. Justus."[38] My point is that these performative contexts presupposed Christian buildings—they are, in a way, responses to Christian infrastructure. Yet it is not "identity" we find in these responses but a material framework for various dimensions of Christian practice: action, performance, sensation.

Beyond Identity: What Did Christianization Impart?

This chapter has been arguing that we should not think about Christianization as a process that created internal identity. After Rebillard's work, this should not be a hard sell, although most generalizations about Christianization do indeed suggest that people shifted cognitively and ethically from heathendom to Christianity— a generalization that tends to recapitulate early twentieth-century notions of "conversion."

But if Christianization did not involve conversion in this individualistic sense— the consolidation of a new, internal identity—then what was it as an historical process? My goal in this chapter has been to offer a more nuanced sense of religious change than a shift in internal religious identity, which by now should be a dubious, unnecessary, and even anachronistic area for gauging meaningful religious shifts. Towards advancing this goal, I now want to propose three models for thinking about the historical process and the construction/imagination of a Christianity identifiable in space and time.

The first model, exemplified in my 2018 book *Christianizing Egypt*, shifts the whole issue of identity to, instead, the creating of local agency, "crafting" a meaningful Christianity in the local sphere. Christianization was not a single cultural process but the cumulative effects of multiple religious worlds or social sites, actively integrating symbols, stories, ideas, and language from Christianity with the exigencies of local experience and tradition. These religious worlds include monastic scribes and holy men; terracotta, stone, and textile craftsmen; village mortuary specialists; the attendants of saints' shrines; even agents of the domestic sphere—those women and men who journey out to holy sites in the landscape to secure fortune in the home and who bring to a saint's festival traditions of dancing and votive agency. These different religious worlds drew not on some general catechetical Christianity, but on whatever was local or seemed authoritative; and in drawing together various Christian traditions with other local traditions, they became, in a way, crucibles for various Christian forms: amulet making, ticket oracles, terracotta figurines, tombstones with ankh crosses, and liturgical and apocalyptic texts.[39] Here, external Christian identity inevitably takes shape and

evolves, but in a local or regional sense (rather than, say, in the global sense of modern Pentecostal Christianity).

A second model focuses on the various traditions of Christianity itself—stories, virtues, charismatic services, monastic forms, texts that imply Christian selves—that locally impacted these religious worlds. And these varied materials lead me to the work of the sociologist Anne Swidler. Swidler conceptualizes culture itself not as a single script for insiders' behavior, but as a range of possible *strategies for action*.[40] Thus historians ought to envision a religion in the process of acculturation *not* as a fixed set of customs or maps for behavior, nor even a "structure of identity," but in the forms of ideas, stories, and symbols—often quite inconsistent—that we draw upon, improvise from, select, and reject according to circumstances. Christianity in late antique Egypt offered a variety of possible strategies—scripture, ecclesiastical authority, stories of the Virgin Mary—strategies that one might, but not always, draw upon, but more often in a non-exclusivist way.

The third model I propose is based on the work of anthropologist Birgit Meyer. In this light Christianization should be conceptualized as the integration of new *sensational forms* in Egypt. A sensational form is a kind of regimen for interacting *through* material media, "shaping and framing . . . the body and the sense as harbingers and an index of the divine."[41] This model offers another dimension of the strategies that Christianity put in place for individuals' and communities' negotiation: not just crosses, but dispositions towards crosses; not just books or writing, but a particular sensory awe at these materials; not just familiarity with liturgical chants and the invocation of angels, but ways of hearing or smelling that made these verbal media all the more distinctive; and not just the social intuition of the holy man, but the whole process of approaching him, beholding him, smelling him, beseeching him. All these sensational forms construct notions of "Christian" in the worlds of their participants. To be sure, many of these sensational forms had roots in the Egyptian past, yet it was Christianity that introduced them as the means for grasping and engaging the religion.

So it is the creative agency of particular social sites, various strategies for action and the stories that motivate them, and the material and sensational forms that orient religious life that, altogether, constitute the subtle dimensions in which Christianization, or any religious change, takes place. Moreover, we should not speak of an endpoint, a *teleos* at which the culture counts as "Christian" and all the people identify internally as "Christian"; for Christianization in any dimension is an ongoing process, a series of negotiations in various local worlds, responding to history and local circumstances.[42]

What value has the concept of identity across these three models? At the very least, we see that Rebillard's idea of intermittent Christianness should be carried forward many centuries. Multiple sources depict non-Christians visiting Christian holy men and shrines through at least the fifth century, and by the time Winifred Blackman was doing her fieldwork in the nineteenth century monks and sheikhs represented complementary ritual experts for everybody.[43] In situations of conflict with others, such as those hagiographical texts (and some sermons) offer glimpses of, "Christian" might serve as a rallying term for a kind of latent solidarity,

mobilized against imagined heathens and heretics at historical moments, but in no way a permanent position of identity.[44]

Conclusion

We are best not reifying a religious identity as something distinctive, dominant, uniform, and essential in early Christianity. What it meant to participate in Christian activities during the third, fourth, fifth, and later centuries is a complex question, and its discussion must presume diversity and demand both methodological flexibility and the recognition that the *local* was the primary space of religion.

We cannot deny that *some* participants gained a particular enthusiastic or contemplative commitment to the religion, its practices and promises (perhaps in the course of renunciation, monasticism, or, in later periods, joining a confraternity). Nor can we deny that *some* participants could have developed a primary or secondary fictive kinship identity based on ritual practices like baptism or myths explored in *ekklēsia*. Nor can we deny that, as a result of repudiating Jewish and/or Greco-Roman(/Egyptian) civic practices, *some* participants came to articulate or embrace an alternative, presumably internal, self-definition—with labels like *christianoi*, *adelphoi*, or *esphragismenoi*—that may (or may not) have dominated their day-to-day lives.[45] But conceptualizing these highly contextual forms of individual commitment, self-definition, or fictive kinship must begin with particular texts, social practices and habitus, and internal argot, not presume some monolithic concept of Christian identity or imagine that all Christians conducted their lives in the shadow of persecution.[46] If Christianity and Christianization come down to local agency, to the development and internalization of a folklore of strategies, and to a sensory regime, then Christian self-definition must arise in those contexts as a range of experiments in social strategy and religious performance.

Thus I have argued for the critical description of an *external* Christian identity, a *social* phenomenon developed and practiced in diverse performative, pedagogical, and ritual settings and reflected in sources as varied as apocalypses, martyrologies, letters, and amulets. While we never can presume historically that such self-conception guided the totality of private life and self-conception, we can accept it as something one "put on" or engaged in certain circumstances and abandoned in others. In this sense, the external identity (as Christian or as member of an *ekklēsia*) is akin to Brubaker and Cooper's notion of "self-identification": the active, contextual process of declaring one's inclusion in a perceived (and often dialectically constructed) group.[47] Self-identification has the merits of allowing individual agency in the assertion and performance of affiliation, but it does not presuppose the internal coherence, beliefs, or ethics of the group with which a person self-identifies.

Notes

1 Anders-Christian Jacobsen, "Identity Formation through Catechetical Teaching in Early Christianity," in *Conversion and Initiation in Antiquity: Shifting Identities—Creating*

Change, ed. Birgitte Secher Bøgh (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 204 (summarizing Stachel, "Identität" [2005]).

2 Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66–84.

3 M. Depauw and W. Clarysse, "Christian Onomastics: A Response to Frankfurter," *VC* 69, no. 3 (2015): 328.

4 See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 77–104; Compare Rives' more nuanced model of distinctive Christian ideological features: J. B. Rives, "Christian Expansion and Christian Ideology," in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. W. V. Harris (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 15–41.

5 On the legacy of Reformation ideology in modern reconstructions of Christian distinctiveness in the Greco-Roman world see Jonathan Z Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

6 Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

7 Jörg Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 13–15.

8 See, e.g., Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 12–17.

9 Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1–47.

10 Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Christopher P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

11 Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

12 Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 93; Éric Rebillard, "Becoming Christian in Carthage in the Age of Tertullian," in *Conversion and Initiation in Antiquity: Shifting Identities—Creating Change*, ed. Birgitte Secher Bøgh (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 47–58.

13 Ewa Wipszycka, "Considérations sur les persécutions contre les chrétiens: Qui frappaient-elles?" in *Poikilia: Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes-Études en Sciences sociales, 1987), 397–405.

14 For example, compare the polemic against martyrdom in the II CE *Gospel of Judas* 37–43 with the exhortation to martyrdom in the later III CE *Apocalypse of Elijah*, on which see David Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 145–55.

15 *Suppl. Mag.* 1.20.

16 SB 18.13250; Marvin Meyer, ed., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 1999), no. 34; See Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte, des Byzantins aux Abbassides: l'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, Monde byzantin (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001), 339.

17 E. A. Judge, "The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri," in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, eds. E. W. Conrad and E. G. Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 339–49; Tommy Wasserman, "P78 (P. Oxy. XXXXIV 2684): The Epistle of Jude on an Amulet?" in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, eds. Thomas J Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 137–60; Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*, STAC 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Brice Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from*

Late Antiquity (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Theodore De Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); See also Robin Lane Fox, "Literacy and Power in Early Christianity," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, eds. Alan Bowman and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 126–48.

18 Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*.

19 Mary Beard, "Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion," in *Literacy in the Roman World*, ed. Mary Beard (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1991), 48.

20 M. Depauw and W. Clarysse, "How Christian Was Fourth Century Egypt? Onomastic Perspectives on Conversion," *VC* 67, no. 4 (2013): 407–35, following Roger S. Bagnall, "Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change in Early Byzantine Egypt," *BASP* 19 (1982): 105–24; Roger S. Bagnall, "Conversion and Onomastics: A Reply," *ZPE* 69 (1987): 243–50.

21 Ewa Wipszycka, "La christianisation de l'Égypte aux IVè-VIè siècles. Aspects sociaux et ethniques," *Aegyptus* 68 (1988): 117–65.

22 Malcolm Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 53.

23 See Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 364–67; Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 201–8. On names following local gods' oracular pronouncements or, conceivably, appearances in dreams following a festival, see Jan Quaegebeur, "Tithoes, Dieu Oraculaire?" *Enchoria* 7 (1977): 103–8.

24 See, e.g., Peter van Minnen, "A Change of Names in Roman Egypt after A.D. 202? A Note on P. Amst. I 72," *ZPE* 62 (1986): 87–92.

25 See David Frankfurter, "Onomastic Statistics and the Christianization of Egypt: A Response to Depauw and Clarysse," *VC* 68, no. 3 (2014): 284–89.

26 Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 275; cf. 283–86.

27 Ibid., 281.

28 AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Harvard Theological Studies 60 (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, 2008), 107–24, 229–30.

29 Ibid., 229, cf. 118.

30 Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

31 Susan Ashbrook Harvey describes a pedagogy of bodily sensation she argues created a Christian identity in late antiquity, although the evidence seems to come predominantly from literate Christian leaders: "Locating the Sensing Body: Perception and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, eds. David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 140–62.

32 Jacobsen, "Identity Formation."

33 See also King, "Which Early Christianity?" 73.

34 Cf. Jitse H. F Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion: A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298–642 CE)*, OLA 173 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 47–48.

35 David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 237–41.

36 See Jacques van der Vliet, "Bringing Home the Homeless: Landscape and History in Egyptian Hagiography," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, eds. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 39–55.

37 P.Oxy 1357; see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "La Liturgie Stationnale à Oxyrhynchos Dans La Première Moitié Du 6 è Siècle. Réédition et Commentaire Du P.Oxy XI 1357," *Revue Des Études Byzantines* 54 (1996): 135–59.

38 P. Oxy 1151, ll. 40–50; Meyer, ed., *Ancient Christian Magic*, no. 16; see AnneMarie Luijendijk, "A Gospel Amulet for Joannia (P. Oxy. VIII 1151)," in *Daughters of Hekate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, eds. Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 420–21.

39 Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*.

40 Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986): 273–86; Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

41 Birgit Meyer, "How to Capture the 'Wow': R. R. Marett's Notion of Awe and the Study of Religion," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22 (2016): 20.

42 For example, the relocation of the cult of the saints within monastery walls around the time of the Muslim conquest would have represented an enormous shift in the *orientation* of Egyptian Christianity: Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 308; Arietta Papaconstantinou, "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?" in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 355–57.

43 Shrines: e.g., Jean Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean* (Paris: Editions De Boccard, 2006), chaps. 28–29, 31.2, 32, 54.6; Holy men: Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 75–76; Modernity: Winifred Blackman, *The Fellāhīn of Upper Egypt, Their Religious, Social and Industrial Life to-Day with Special Reference to Survivals from Ancient Times* (London: Harrap, 1927).

44 See, e.g., David Frankfurter, "'Things Unbefitting Christians': Violence and Christianization in Fifth-Century Panopolis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2000): 273–95; Aude Busine, "From Stones to Myth: Temple Destruction and Civic Identity in the Late Antique Roman East," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6, no. 2 (2013): 325–46.

45 Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri*, 47–50.

46 King, "Which Early Christianity?" 71–74.

47 Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," 14–15.

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3 A Song-Sharing Service? Hymns, Scribal Agency, and "Religion" in Two Late Antique Papyri*

Arkadiy Avdokhin

Introduction

At some point during his initially hopeful but eventually catastrophic sojourn in Antioch in AD 362–363, the emperor Julian became entangled in a standoff with a devout Christian widow Publia and the group of ascetical virgins she led. Julian's wrath was stirred by the choir of virgins spitefully singing psalms as he was passing Publia's estate. Julian proceeded to take Publia on the challenge. Summoned to his court and offered the chance to repent, she persevered as leader of the local Christian community and went through a sort of minor martyrdom suffering physical abuse on her ears as organs involved in Christian music-making.

This narrative, classically presented in Theodoret's *Church History*, enjoyed wide dissemination in late antiquity and beyond, as its subsequent recasts in purely hagiographic forms, and currency in Byzantine art, suggest.[1] The rhetoric of the account hinges on the ideas of an intimate connection between specific ritual texts, on the one hand, and religious identities, on the other. It also highlights tight links between group identity (belonging to a Christian community in late antique Antioch) and individual agency in structuring hymnic rituals (Publia's arrangement of psalm-singing by virgins). In this chapter, I will approach similar dynamics of personal agency and religious group identity as presumably expressed in hymn-centered enactments. I will look at two late antique ritual manuals from papyri and explore how much they can be construed as products, and evidence, of religious groups, and indeed "religions" or, rather, of individual ritual agency at work in putting them together, and to ritual use.

The concepts of hymnic texts as a watershed between religious communities loomed large in late antique thinking about Christians and "pagans" as distinct, and conflicting, groups; to a significant degree, they are also part of today's scholarship. These and similar ideas informed the creation of such texts as e.g. Hippolytus's Greek account of Valentinian "Gnostics" expressing their "heretical" teaching through hymns.[2] Doctrinal strife between various Christian groups (conventionally known as the clash between the "orthodox" and "heretics") also involved the taking of sides in discussions of acceptability of particular liturgical texts. John Chrysostom's "anti-Arian" hymnody in early fifth-century Constantinople, the clash between anti- and pro-Nicene groups around which form

of trinitarian incantation to use in liturgy in fourth-century Antioch, or Meletian hymns in late antique Egypt ridiculed in heresiological writings for their presumed idiosyncrasies all attest to these widely spread perceptions of religious identities of late antique Christians centered around hymns.[3]

Ultimately, early Christian thinking about religious group identity as strongly manifested in, and mediated through, hymns resonated with the famous *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle, which postulated a fundamental connection between ritual texts and doctrine. This assumption of an intimate link between liturgy, including hymns, and boundaries between religious groups has remained mostly unchallenged in modern academic thinking, although identity formation in prayer and hymnody has been increasingly scrutinized in recent scholarship.[4]

In what follows, I will address some of the modes of religious self-fashioning that were anchored to ties between hymnody and group identities by looking at late antique ritual artefacts (P. Berol. 9794 and P. Louvre N 2391) that contain hymnic texts shared between communities of (orthodox) Christians, "Gnostics", and "Hermetics". I will scrutinize academic assumptions of ritual agency and group identity behind the two papyri manuals, including the performance of hymns, and explore the crossover of hymnic texts copied onto them across the boundaries of "religions". As I will discuss, the two papyri can be usefully analyzed as drawn up by individual "ritual experts" who could be variously affiliated in terms of their "religion". The conventional interpretation of these artefacts and texts as produced, and circulating, within distinct, if syncretistic, religious groups rests on tacitly embraced assumptions about religious *communities*—Christian, "Gnostic", "Hermetic" etc.—as coherent actors shaping cultic practices, texts, and manuscripts. In contrast, positing individual agency of religious experts behind these texts could allow us to work on fewer assumptions that go beyond the material and the singularity of artefacts and texts that we possess. I will suggest that transition of specifi c hymnic texts from "Hermetic" traditions to "Christian" manuscripts, "Gnostic" material artefacts, and back may be better interpreted in terms of individual agency involved in purveying ritual manuals containing hymns. At the same time, this approach may also offer more flexibility in unpacking the social dynamics of individual participation, and variation, of cultic enactments and experiences.

Before I turn to my two case studies, a brief recapitulation of the ongoing scholarly re-assessment of "religious communities", their collective identities, and the individual agency of ritual experts may be helpful. A more thorough discussion of these methodological issues would require a dedicated study; besides, readers of this volume will find further theoretical discussion in the other contributions.

From communities and "religions" to individual agency

In recent studies of religion (including late antique), scholars have turned an increasingly critical eye on the analytical procedures that prioritize, and indeed presume the existence of such reified religious groups as "Christians" (including internal subdivisions into "orthodox" vs. "heretics"), "pagans", "Gnostic", and "Hermetic" as firmly identifiable cultic and intellectual communities.[5] The

academic dismantling of presumed religious groups in late antiquity has generally followed earlier, and broader, criticism of "groupism" by sociologists in the early 2000s, most centrally by Rogers Brubaker.[6] In early Christian studies, a salient critique was offered (in a lesser known but a very well-argued article by Stanley Stowers) of the widely held assumptions about "Christian *communities*" (emphasis added) as the ultimate reality that stood behind the extant texts of the New Testament and subsequent late antique Christian writers.[7]

A more vigorously theoretical distancing from conceptualizations in terms of groups as the central actors in late antique religious change is visible in the growing body of studies working with the "lived religion" framework. Pioneered in Jörg Rüpke's seminal project on "Lived Ancient Religion", this methodological focus has been increasingly embraced by scholars who look at late antique religion and the importance of individual agency in it.[8] Independently from these methodological developments, David Frankfurter, in his seminal studies of the significance of individual ritual expertise in late antique Egypt, has been going in a similar direction.[9] The results of his research have had a massive impact (including critical reactions) on the study of "magic" in late antiquity and are immediately relevant to my discussion here.[10]

Most recently, there has been a series of important publications in which a good case is made that "(freelance) ritual/religious experts" as *individuals*—rather than the communities for which they presumably stood and spoke—lay at the heart of key religious shifts in the later empire well beyond Egypt. As Heidi Wendt and Heidi Marx-Wolf have argued, the individual agency of loosely (or non)-affiliated intellectual entrepreneurs shaped early Christian, as well as Neoplatonic, theological discussion in late antiquity.[11] A recent edited volume on priesthood seen as an instance of religious entrepreneurship has been another important milestone on this methodological route.[12]

Alongside problematizing religious "groupism" in late antiquity, the concept of distinct "religions" as allegedly self-evident, clear-cut entities has itself been considerably challenged.[13] It has been shown that the construction of the Christian *religio*, as opposed to Judaism and "heresies" as wrong religions, was a significant element of early Christian discursive self-definition in the course of which "religion" was being disembedded from race, power relations, and the diversity of localized practices. The modern notion of religion, including its academic uses, draws heavily on this originally partisan discourse-making and its conceptual ramifications.[14] Although I will not engage with the relevant theoretical approaches on a large scale, the critical distancing from the labels like "Gnostic" or "Hermetic" that imply self-conscious and internally congruous communities will underpin my discussion.

In what follows, I will seek to problematize the centrality of "religious communities" behind ritual artefacts and their value as evidence of shared hymnic texts on such artefacts. I will particularly rely on the concept of ritual experts as appropriated in the studies of Wendt and Marx-Wolf, and on Frankfurter's insight into scribal ritual expertise in late antique Egypt. Ra'anan Boustan and Joseph E. Sanzo's recent reconsideration of lexical signs of religious group identity in

ritual artefacts informs the questions I ask about the two papyri's idioms and their implications for the scribes' religious commitments.[15]

P. Berol. 9794: a hymn between "religions" and scribal agency

P. Berol. 9794 is a third- to early fourth-century papyrus with four elaborately phrased hymnic petitions inscribed on it.[16] Opening with a heavily fragmented liturgical address, it contains, almost in their entirety, further three extensive hymn-like prayers. I will focus on hymn-prayer three (lines 43–52). The scribe singled the piece out by framing it as "another" prayer or hymn, as well as by providing a title for it—"prayer (προσευχή) of the apostle Peter and other apostles". I will give here the opening part of the hymn on which I will concentrate:

> Holy (ἄγιος) is god who has shown (ὁ ὑποδ]είξας) me, from his intellect (ἀπὸ τοῦ νοός), life and light . . .
>
> holy is god (and father o)f all, holy are (you who) exists from the beginning, holy
>
> is god who i(s kno)wn from his own (γινώσκε]ται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων) . . ., holy is
>
> god who knows ev(erything and cont)ains (περιδέ]χεται) everything, holy are you god
>
> who put to(gether everyth)ing by means of the word/reason (ὁ λόγῳ συ[στησάμενος τὰ πάντ]α), holy are you who(se) nature did not become
>
> obscure (οὐκ ἐμαύρωσεν), holy are you whose entire na(ture is a cause for pra)ise, holy are you who are stronger than every power, holy are you who are larger . . ., holy are you who exceed praises. Accept m(y wor)ds from my soul and heart,
>
> which are directed (ἀνατεταγμέμας) towards you, o unutterable (ἀνεκλάλητε), unspoken one (ἄρρητε), who is pronounced in
>
> silence (σιωπῇ φωνούμενε).[17]

A closely similar version of the same hymn also surfaces on an artefact that has been traditionally interpreted as produced and used within a "Gnostic" community. The inscribed amulet from the British Museum contains a slightly garbled version of a couple of lines from the "extended Trishagion" that is present both in *Poimandres* and on P. Berol. 9794.[18] The gem-like amulet features an image of "the upper half of a youthful male figure", who "resembles that of Apollo or Helios", and is possibly "a gnostic type of Christ".[19]

The close similarities between the hymn from the papyrus and a passage at the end of *Poimandres*—a theological dialogue from the corpus of "Hermetic"

writings—have attracted significant academic attention.[20] The parallels are structural and lexical. The structural similarities are visible in the litany of invocations stemming from the Greek word ἅγιος, "holy", which makes the piece essentially an extended "thrice-holy" hymn (*trishagion*).[21] Specific lexical similarities include the invocations in "holy is god and father of all" (ἅγιος ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων) (line 45 of papyrus, *Poimandres* 31.1) and "holy are you, the one who is stronger than every power" (lines 48–49, where the papyrus reads "every hierarchy", with the jumbled word form δυνάστεως; *Poimandres* 31.9). Following the *hagios*-centered litany are prayers that also share much in their wording, e.g. the plea to accept (δέξαι) the enactments performed by the ritualist (λογικὰς θυσίας ἀγνὰς in *Poimandres* 31.12, μου τὰς φωνάς in line 50 of the papyrus) that "are directed from the soul and head towards you, the unutterable, the unspoken one, the one who is pronounced in silence" (lines 50–51, *Poimandres* 31.13).

Because of its close affinities with the "Hermetic" *Poimandres*, P. Berol. 9794 has featured regularly in studies of complex, and overlapping, religious group identities in late antiquity. The papyrus is deployed to construct a narrative that purports to tell a story of distinct religious "groupisms"—Christianity, (Egyptian) "paganism", "Hermetism", and "Gnosticism". In this narrative, the papyrus is construed as offering a glimpse into the cultic practices of religious groups as presumably coherent actors of production, and use, of the ritual artefact. Richard Reitzenstein's seminal discussion of the papyrus speaks of "communities" (*Gemeinde*) that are presumably manifest in the mixed religious language of the papyrus that, for him, attest to their syncretistic yet shared-within-group belief systems and rituals.[22] Other interpretative strategies have included the denial of complexity, mostly achieved by envisaging a resolutely Christian scribe, totally unaware of the hymn's "heathen" pedigree.[23] This reading, however, equally hinges on the premise of solid religious groups that supposedly assert their presence through the production of singularly Christian liturgical manuals such as P. Berol. 9794.

The academic parlance of religions and communities is pervasive in later studies, as e.g. in the wide-ranging synthesis attempted in Garth Fowden's monograph on the "late antique pagan mind", where the papyrus is discussed as presenting a "link with the philosophical Hermetica".[24] The same approach is reiterated in Jonathan Schwiebert's study of ritual meals in early Christianity, where the hymns from the papyrus are assimilated with "Valentinian prayers". For Schwiebert, there is a peculiarly "Gnostic" "eucharistic logic" in the prayers—a perspective not at all unlike thinking in terms of the Christian *lex orandi, lex credendi*.[25]

However, rather than construing the papyrus and the hymn it contains as encapsulating ideas and rituals shared across a number of internally coherent "syncretistic religions", the artefact can tell a different—probably a more likely—story, one of individual ritual agency. It could have been produced by scribes variously (if at all) accommodated in religious groups, who had a sufficiently good command of the biblical text and would also eagerly draw on wider liturgical and devotional traditions coming from Christian sources.[26] We have seen such scribes navigating the rich disarray of multifarious religious traditions and ingeniously re-arranging ritual

debris behind late antique ritual manuscripts.[27] The scribe(s) who was/were putting together P. Berol. 9794 apparently sought to offer a selection of authoritative texts for prayer and meditation, including the (pseudo-epigraphic) prayer of the apostles. In this context, by including into the manual a hymn that apparently had significant popularity (featuring as it does in *Poimandres* and on another ritual artefact, from among the extant evidence), the scribe(s) would simply be making the best of the ritual traditions available to them. It is hardly likely that the scribe(s) thought of the hymnic piece as belonging to a distinctive, let alone dissident, community, "Gnostic" or otherwise. Seen outside of religious groups and their presumably solid boundaries, P. Berol. 9794 can be best understood as an honest attempt by the scribe to compile an efficacious assortment of ritual texts. The individual agency of the scribe(s) therefore served as a crucible (to borrow Frankfurter's fortunate wording) for putting together what for the manuscript's intended users/audience would have been a highly functional assemblage of devotional and liturgical texts.[28]

I will now turn to a papyrus where the sharing of ritual songs seems to have gone in a different direction. The next ritual manual is also different in that it does not bear easily readable signs of Christian presence, and was, as I will discuss, copied within a cultural and religious context where Christianity was intentionally avoided. The analysis of the scribal agency that I offer, however, reveals that the "religious experts" who compiled the text were, at least to a certain degree, thinking in the idiom that was shaped by unmistakably Christian writings.

P. Louvre N 2391: archaizing paideia or religious plurality?

I will now focus on the so-called Mimaut papyrus (P. Louvre N 2391 = PGM III, 548–557).[29] I will submit that although, as argued in recent scholarship, P. Louvre N 2391 was compiled by highly educated bilingual scribes as a cultural statement of their mastery of ancient, and ostensibly non-Christian, cultic traditions, the idiom of a hymnic invocation of Helios it contains relies on a specific, and locally influential, Christian text. The issues of culture and class (paideia), as reflected in the papyrus, are therefore entwined with those of religion as important ingredients of the scribes' personal profiles and contribute to their role as formative actors of ritual practices in late antique Egypt.

The texts copied onto the Mimaut papyrus are addressed to Helios in his various avatars. Among the many ritual procedures described in the text are manipulations with a body of a cat as well as addressing the deity as "cat-faced" (αἰλουροπρόσωπος θεός, l. 4–5). I will focus on lines 550–558, column XVII of the papyrus as a part of a larger section "encounter with Helios" (σύστασις πρὸς Ἥλιον) (lines 494–611):

> Come to me in your holy circuit of the holy spirit (περιστροφῇ
> τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος),
>
> creator of all, o god of gods, lord of all (παν|τὸς κτίσ{κ}τα, θεῶν θεέ,
> κοίρανε ⟨παντός⟩,

who has divided by your own divine spirit

the universe; first from the firstborn you

appeared, created carefully, from water

that is turbulent, the one who created all
(ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσσας):

abyss, earth, fire, water, air, and in turn

ether and roaring rivers, red-faced moon,

heaven's stars, morning stars, the whirling planet,

it is by your counsels they attend all things.[30]

The hymn is made compositionally distinct in the manuscript. It is framed by a string of *voces magicae* coming before it; it is also the last segment written by the first scribe who compiled this part of the papyrus (Scribe A in Edward O. D. Love's recent analysis of the palaeography and codicology of the manuscript).[31] The hymn therefore serves as a climax of a substantial part of the prescribed ritual sequence. The passage has structural features of Greek hymns and possibly a rhythmic pattern (dactylic hexameters, if not quite regular). It is printed as a "magical hymn" in modern editions (including its obviously erroneous reattribution as a hymn to Pan, based on bold conjectures, in Ernst Heitsch's collection) and discussed as such in scholarship.[32]

    P. Louvre N 2391, typically for most other artefacts within PGM, is usually discussed as an array of ritually oriented "magical" texts (whichever etic term would be found more suitable—incantations, spells, etc.). The origin of these texts is manifold, with lexical and conceptual elements traceable to various Jewish, Egyptian, and Hellenic literary and cultic traditions.[33] The multi-layered character of such "magical" artefacts (to use the term in a heuristically useful manner rather than engaging in the complex, and ongoing, discussions of its appropriateness)[34] has traditionally been analyzed as indicating their purveyors', and users', syncretistic beliefs at the intersection of Jewish, Christian, and indigenous Egyptian traditions.[35]

    Recently, Edward Love, in a departure from the academic consensus about monastic scribal agency behind the majority of late antique "magical" artefacts from Egypt, has suggested that such objects could be products of the often bilingual (Greek and Demotic/Coptic) educated elites who were keen to engage with the ritual lore of earlier times. They would have had exclusive access to ancient manuscripts due to their double linguistic expertise, which enabled them to infuse papyri manuals with erudite knowledge of this sort.[36] However, unlike the vast majority of late antique artefacts edited and discussed as instances of "Christian magic" (featuring heavy reliance on biblical and liturgical language, presence of Christian acronyms like *XMΓ*, etc.), the idiom of P. Louvre N 2391 bears no signs of recognizably Christian credentials.[37] This absence makes the papyrus similar to

such ritual artefacts as e.g. the so-called "Great magical papyrus of Paris" (PGM IV = LDAB 5564). Love's interpretation, interestingly, taps into broader recent discussions of archaization and antiquarianism in late antiquity as a means to make self-conscious statements of culture and class by educated elites (which, incidentally, may sometimes be an attractive way out of the notorious "pagan vs. Christian" conundrum).[38]

Given that it is rather plausible that the manual was compiled by distinguished members of the *pepaideumenoi*—the educated elites with an archaizing slant (which does not, in and of itself, preclude them from being institutionalized ascetics)[39]—it is particularly intriguing that elements of Christian idiom are still present behind the ostensibly non-Christian façade of the hymnic invocation.

While Ljuba M. Bortolani in her recent commentary on "magical hymns" did make a cursory acknowledgement of traces of "Judeo-Christian" vocabulary in the hymnic invocation, her methodology mostly relies on itemizing linguistic parallels to the wording of "magical hymns" in "Hellenic", "Egyptian", and "Judeo-Christian traditions" rather than unpacking the historical and religious implications of this amalgamation.[40] As I will discuss, however, the phrasing of the hymn, rather than vaguely gesturing towards a generic "Judeo-Christian vocabulary", specifically follows a text of particular local prominence in late antique Christian Egypt—Hermas's *Shepherd* (second half of the second century AD).[41]

Helios is invoked in lines 551 and 554 as "creator of all" (παντὸς κτίστα) and as someone "who created all" (ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσσας).[42] The invocation opens a catalogue of Helios's "virtues" (a traditionally hymnic arrangement), and therefore sets the perspective for his subsequent depiction. This vocabulary finds most immediate parallels in the *Shepherd*'s ideologically central passages, where the emphases on the language of creation, and creator, of all (ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας καὶ ποιήσας) are paramount. Both features prominently in the so-called "first commandment" (ἐντολή) that describes Godhead:

> First of all, believe that God is one, who created and completed all things (ὁ θεός, ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας) and made everything (καὶ . . . ποιήσας) that exists out of that which did not, who contains all things but is himself, alone, uncontained.[43]

Shepherd's specific teaching, and wording, of the principle of *creatio ex nihilo* was widely known to Greek-speaking Christian communities and individuals, as the reception of this particular episode was strong among theologians and heresiologists. In Egypt, the *Shepherd* is exceptionally well attested in papyrological record already by the fourth century AD (more than twenty papyri are extant).[44] The book was scriptural, as it was copied, and read, as part of the New Testament.[45] This strongly suggests that the idea of creation, and creator, as specifically phrased in the *Shepherd* would be well known in Egypt in the epoch when P. Louvre N 2391 was compiled.

It is also significant that *Shephard's* idiom of creation came to enjoy broad popularity in subsequent theologians long before it ceased to be perceived as part of

the universally accepted scriptural canon. Earlier Hellenistic formulations along similar lines are arguably far less relevant to the late antique Egyptian context. More importantly, their wording, while vaguely resembling similar addresses elsewhere in PGM and epigraphy that are generally attributable to what has been termed "megatheism" in recent scholarship,[46] was made recognizable mostly through the impact of the *Shepherd*, which developed these and similar theological ideas.[47] Last but far from least, the syntactic arrangement of the Greek phrase "the one who created all" (ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας) present in both the papyrus invocation of Helios and in *Shepherd*'s "first commandment", relies on a shared use of a peculiar participle-based structure (definite article + object + participle). This would have been a recognizable sign of hymnic diction (*Partizipstil*, in Eduard Norden's memorable discussion) specifically inspired by biblical (both Old and New Testament) streaks of poetic style.[48]

What can these forcefully present elements of Christian thinking and phrasing say about the compilers of the manuscript? The learned scribes (working in conjunction or in succession) of P. Louvre N 2391 apparently sought to present a manual of ancient "magic", marshalling as they did the exquisitely learned, if emotionally stark, ritual elements they could have drawn from a variety of sources. This collection of recondite and offputtingly lurid ritual lore is ostentatiously lacking indications of "Christian magic" powerfully present in a significant proportion of late antique ritual artefacts. This, I suggest, indicates the intent on part of the purveyors of the manuscript to produce a collection with an authentically ancient feel, conceptually and linguistically placed beyond the engulfing Christian idiom. Despite this cultural effort, however, a fundamentally Christian—virtually scriptural—element of thinking and style did make its way into the hymnic invocation of Helios that had a strategic position in the entire manual. It is less significant whether the scribe personally authored the hymn or copied it in its existing form, possibly altering the text. In the resulting manuscript, which is the modern scholar's, as well as the late antique "potential practitioner's" (to borrow Love's terminology)[49] ultimate ritual and material reality, Helios is seen through a Christian lens and invoked in scripturally inspired vocabulary.

A conjecture about the path through which Christian wording made it into the artifact can be offered. Alongside the possibility of deliberate inclusion by "syncretistically" minded scribes, an almost unintentional memory side effect could be responsible. In case the scribes of P. Louvre N 2391 had not been otherwise exposed to Christian discourse, they would have encountered Christian texts, notwithstanding their own religious commitments, in the context of schooling and scribal learning, as papyrological evidence strongly suggests.[50] Speaking of the deity in lexical, but also unavoidably theological, Christian and biblical terms, therefore, could be an unwitting corollary of the fact that Christian idiom had become part of how the skill of writing was obtained. Intriguing *comparanda* to engagement with scriptural and pastoral idiom in genres and context that were professedly antiquarian comes from epigraphy. Late antique learned inscriptions can also exhibit awareness of Christian idiom, if not earnest belief.[51] The "gymnastics of mind"[52] that shaped the scribes' intellectual background, in which

scriptural elements were regularly present, ensured that elements deriving from Christian writings were seamlessly embedded into linguistic and conceptual scaffolding of the invocation of Helios.

P. Louvre N 2391 therefore casts in high relief the paramount role of the scribes' personal profile in shaping what is typically read as religion-based group identity. Conceiving of the artefact, its producers, and users in terms of religious "groupisms" would entail imagining them as engaged in a self-conscious effort to produce *communal*, if peculiarly "syncretistic", ritual and belief systems. In this case, we would probably be speaking of a community of antiquarian-minded "pagans" adding a zest of Christian theology into the already heady mix of their "syncretistic" beliefs and ritual praxis. Focusing on the scribes' agency, however, can open up other interpretative opportunities. In a sense, despite their best effort to make a negative statement of communal religious identity by foregoing elements of Christian(ized) "magic" in their ritual manual, the inevitable idiosyncrasies of the scribes, rooted as they were in their schooling, may have proved decisive in bringing the parlance of creation from nothing as almost a glitch in their personal memory-into-text mechanics.

As a concluding aside, can we say that the resulting artefact was a vehicle of "Christianization" of late antique ritual? I think it would be better to say that the borderline may have already been made irrelevant, as scribes' thinking and writing patterns had already become hybrid in terms of linguistic and mental skills, shaped as their *paideia* was by Christian writings. In the emerging synthesis, introduced through the scribes' cultural—physical, mental, and religious—agency, what mattered, I suggest, was not so much *what* one purported to say and enact, but rather *how* one went about it. The modus operandi of ritual experts was increasingly "Christian" in the sense that patterns of speech and thought (as well as possibly of the ritual act) were provided, however unwittingly, by the engulfing pool of texts produced within ritual context of liturgical enactments in churches and monasteries by individuals who had links to church structures. How much, and whether, these individuals were themselves freelance ritual, and intellectual, entrepreneurs, rather than affiliated leaders of institutionalized Christian communities, is a different question.

Final thoughts: the individual agency of late antique song-sharing

P. Berol. 9794, as I have argued, is an artefact where the scribe(s) sought to put together a highly useable collection of liturgical prayers. In doing so, they did not think that specific ritual texts in any meaningful way "belonged" in religious communities and bore their conceptual or ritual imprint. Quite the contrary, their individual agency in producing the liturgical manual was the force that brought the manuscript, in its material and textual coherence, into existence, rather than "religious communities" that somehow gave rise to these texts as well as to the resulting artefact. P. Louvre N 2391 is an artefact conceived as an intellectually driven collection of ritual texts that would lay ostensibly outside of the remit of Christian

discourse and practices. The text that the ritual manual offered, however, is entangled in an unlikely scriptural idiom and thinking. As I have suggested, a plausible interpretation is to see this entanglement as a memory effect in scribes who had been exposed to Christian language as part of their training that left a recognizable imprint on the textuality, and ultimately materiality, of the ritual object.

These two manuscripts illustrate the complex cultural construction of "religion" of (erudite) scribes as the "assemblers" of culture as it was actually practiced (to use Frankfurter's designation) and constantly re-invented, *through* textual and material artefacts, in late antique Egypt.[53] The resulting plurality of ideas, idioms, and the ritual practices they encode may not necessarily imply "plural actors" in the sense of Bernard Lahire.[54] Interpretation along these lines would inevitably be tangled in the big narratives of Christianization, conversion, and group and individual identities in the course of late antique religious change. Rather, a flatter ontology—to use the increasingly fashionable concept of another Francophone theorist—of individual actors may be preferable.[55] What I have attempted in this chapter, is to offer a more economical, almost phenomenological, appropriation of the lens of individual agency (alongside a mixture of other approaches, of course) as, hopefully, the one that stands a chance to navigate around some of the pitfalls of (the) big narratives.

Sharing sacred songs, as we see it happening through these two ritual manuals, would be a usual thing in late antique religions, particularly once we look beyond the "religions" and discover the singularity of the people making them happen.

Notes

* The results of the project *The Borderland between the Secular and the Ecclesiastical in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period: Rus' and Western Europe* carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2022 are presented in this work.
1 Theodoret, *Church History* 3.19 (Léon Parmentier, Günther Hansen, *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 2 [Paris: Editions de Cerf, 2009], 153–6). For the episode, see also Publia's Synaxarion commemoration on 9 October based on Theodoret's account. For the reception of the account in Byzantine art, see e.g. the depiction of Publia at Julian's court in the *Menologion* of Basil II (976–1025), C. Vat. Gr. 1613 (open-access images available at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613). For the episode, see Jens-Uwe Krause, *Witwen und Waisen in römischen Reich, 4: Witwen und Waisen im frühen Christentum* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1995), 66–73.
2 For the "Gnostic" hymn as seen by a Christian heresiologist, see Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.37.6–9 (Miroslav Marcovich, *Hippolytus: Refutatio omnium haeresium* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986]), 252–4).
3 For John Chrysostom's hymn-centered stand-off with non-Nicene ("Arian") partisans in Constantinople, see Socrates, *Church History* 6.8 (Pierre Périchon, Pierre Maraval, *Socrate de Constantinople: Histoire ecclésiastique*, livres IV–VI [Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2006], 294–8); for the non-Nicene bishop Leontios' doxology challenged by the Nicene group led by Diodore and Flavian *ca* AD 346, see Theodoret, *Church History* 2.24 (Léon Parmentier, Günther Hansen, *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 1 [Paris: Editions de Cerf, 2006], 445–52), Sozomen, *Church History* 3.20.9

(Joseph Bidez, André-Jean Festugiere, Bernard Grillet, and Guy Sabbath, *Sozomene: Histoire ecclésiastique*, livres III–4 [Paris: Editions de Cert, 1996], 174); Meletian hymnody is sarcastically portrayed in Theodoret's *Compendium of Heretical Fables 4.7,* and castigated in (pseudo)-Athanasius' *Canon* 12 (Williams Riedel, W. E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria. The Arabic and Coptic Versions* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1904], 24).

4 The bibliography is large. Seminal for modern scholarship on the connection between prayer and doctrinal ideas is Josef A. Jungmann, *Die Stellung Christi im liturgischen Gebet* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1925), which has recently found a programmatic response and expansion in *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Trinity, Christology, and Liturgical Theology*, ed. Brian Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008). See also Rebecca Lyman, "Lex orandi: Heresy, Orthodoxy, and Popular Religion," in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles*, eds. Sarah Coakley, David A. Pailin, and Maurice Wiles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 131–41; Sarah Coakley, "Prayer, Politics and the Trinity: Vying Models of Authority in Third–Fourth-Century Debates on Prayer and 'Orthodoxy'," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66 (2013): 379–99, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930613000197. For prayers, hymns, and identity see e.g the interesting collection Reidar Hvalvik and Karl O. Sandnes, eds., *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

5 For a recent reconsideration of the "pagan vs Christian" divide, see Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). Similarly to the redrawing of the map that relies on a binary differentiation between "pagans" and Christians, discussion of "heresy" and "orthodoxy" in recent scholarship has seen a drastic change of perspective, see the seminal monograph of Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque: IIe–IIIe siècles*, vols. 1–2 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985) and more recent studies, e.g. *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). For a dramatic reconsideration of "Gnosticism", see the now classic Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); David Brakke, The *Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). The putative coherence of "Christians" as a group, or network, of individuals has been equally problematized in scholarship, although unlike "Gnostics" and other groups noted earlier, "Christians" would be a more identifiable entity, thanks to their eager self-fashioning as such. For a pertinent analysis of assumptions about irreversible post-conversion change in structuring allegedly coherent Christian communities in late antiquity, see David Frankfurter's chapter in the present volume.

6 See the seminal discussion in Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity without groups," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (August 2002): 163–89, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975602001066 that has gained substantial traction in sociology of religion well beyond its original thematic and chronological scope.

7 Stanley Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23, no. 3 (2011): 238–56, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006811X608377.

8 For programmatic presentations, see Jörg Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning Cults and Polis Religion," *Mythos* 5 (2011): 191–206; Jörg Rüpke, *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). esp. Ch. 8 "Lived Religion: The First to Second Centuries AD". Individual agency in ancient religion has been in focus of a number of important collections of studies that follow this methodological premices, see e.g. Jörg Rüpke, ed., *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014);

Éric Rebillard and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015); Martin Fuchs, Antje Linkenbach, Martin Mulsow, Bernd-Christian Otto, Rahul B. Parson, and Jorg Rüpke, eds., *Religious Individualisation: Historical Dimensions and Comparative Perspectives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

9 See David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians'," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Allan Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159–78, and now his major monograph *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), *passim*, but especially Chapter 6 "Scribality and Syncretism: Traditions of Writing and the Book."

10 Alongside general acceptance, see also the criticism of Frankfurter's idea of the purveyors of magical artefacts from late antique Egypt as predominantly monks in the recent monograph by Edward O. Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods: The Bilingual (Old Coptic-Greek) Spells of PGM IV (P. Bibliothèque Nationale Supplément Grec. 574) and their Linguistic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Context in Late Roman Egypt* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

11 Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Heidi Marx-Wolf, *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority: Platonists, Priests, and Gnostics in the Third Century C.E.* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

12 Richard L. Gordon, Georgia Petridou, and Jörg Rüpke eds., *Beyond Priesthood: Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

13 Among key studies are Daniel Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion," *Representations* 85, no. 1 (2004): 21–57, https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2004.85.1.21, Jeremy M. Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). A useful historiographical overview, with further bibliography, is offered by Thomas E. Hunt, "Religion in Late Antiquity—Late Antiquity in Religion," in *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity,* eds. Josef Lössl and Nicholas J. Baker-Brian (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 9–30.

14 The classic expositions are Talal Asad's monograph *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) and later publications, e.g. "Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's 'The Meaning and End of 'Religion'," *History of Religions* 40, no. 3 (2001): 205–22, https://doi.org/10.1086/463633; see also John Z. Smith's always pertinent analysis in "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–84 and, more recently, Edwin A. Judge, "Was Christianity a Religion," in *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays*, eds. E. A. Judge and James R. Harrison (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 404–9; Schott, *Christianity, Empire*. Cf. also Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society from 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179.

15 See Raʿanan Boustan and Joseph Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magic, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review* 110, no. 2 (2017): 217–40, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816017000050, where the two scholars critically discuss the scholarly convention to classify artefacts group-wise into "Christian", "Jewish", "Gnostic" etc. on the basis of idiom and *nomina sacra*. Cf. 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, https://doi.org/10.2143/BASP.48.0.3209297; Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*: *Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

16 BKT VI.6.1 = van Haelst 772, re-edited in Wessely, *Monuments*, no. 2, 429–33; Eduard Nock and André-Jean Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum,* t.1. (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1960), xxxvii, 18 (in the *apparatus criticus* of the hymn's variant in *Poimandres*—see below); Maria Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1985), no. 81, 204–9; Reinhold Merkelbach and Maria Totti, *Abrasax: ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts*, Bd. II (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 123–30. For images of the papyrus, see https://berlpap.smb.museum/02737/, where an early date of 3rd c. AD is given.

17 My translation of lines 43–52 of the badly damaged papyrus in general follows a synthetic reading of the restorations offered in Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte,* 124, with a few more conservative omissions.

18 BM OA.9960/56489: www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_OA-9960.

19 Campbell Bonner, "Liturgical Fragments on Gnostic Amulets," *Harvard Theological Review* 25, no. 4 (1932): 362–67, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000021337, at 365 and 362.

20 Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig; B. G. Teubner, 1904), 147 *f*; Richard Reitzenstein and P. Wendland, "Zwei angeblich christliche liturgische Gebete," *Nachrichten der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse* (1910): 324–29; in subsequent scholarship, the parallel has been often evoked in discussions of the Hermetic and Gnostic "influences" on early Christianity—see e.g. Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte*, vol. 1 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978), 56, 110; Brian McNeil, "A Note on P. Berol. 9794," *Numen* 23, no. 3 (1976): 239–40, https://doi.org/10.1163/156852776X00148; Ola Wikander, "Old Testament Prototypes for the Hermetic Trishagion in Poimandres 31—and Support for an Old Conjecture," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013): 579–90, https://grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/14749, esp. 582–4. See also Nock and Festugière's commentary (note 16) and further bibliography in notes 21–27.

21 Technically speaking, the piece is an *hendekakis-hagion*, to borrow Merkelbach and Totti's witty qualification—see Totti, Merkelbach, *Abrasax*, 123. For *trisagia* that derived originally from Jewish liturgy and travelled in various religious directions, including into such early Christian authoritative texts as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, see Birger A. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Corpus Hermeticum I (Poimandres)," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: Presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, eds. Roel van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 336–48, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004295698_020, at 342–5.

22 Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* 147 *f*; for "Hermetic communities", see 35–36, 159–60, 213–16.

23 Wilfred L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels,* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), n. 2 p. 3.

24 Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 84.

25 Jonathan Schwiebert, *Knowledge and the Coming Kingdom: The Didache's Meal Ritual and Its Place* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 228.

26 The fourth prayer is a pseudo-epigraphic address to the apostles and contains invocations of Jesus Christ, as is also the fifth. Among other potential Christian references, alongside the artistic parallels of the male figure and early types of beardless Christ is also the abbreviation on the obverse that could be a *nomen sacrum* E(ICOYC) X(PICTE) C(ΩTHP). For a stimulating re-reading of a "Gnostic" gem as a more Christian artefact than has been conventionally allowed, see Roy Kotansky, "The Magic 'Crucifixion Gem' in the British Museum," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 57 (2017): 631–59, https://grbs.library.duke.edu/article/view/15935.

27 The bibliography is large; see the references in note 15 above, and Joseph E. Sanzo, "Wrapped Up in the Bible: The Multifaceted Ritual on a Late Antique Amulet (P. Oxy.

VIII 1077),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24, no. 4 (2016): 569–97, https://doi. org/10.1353/earl.2016.0044 (with earlier literature).

28 For scribes’ activity, and manuscripts, as “crucibles” of late antique religion and culture, see the entire Chapter 6 “The Scriptorium as Crucible of Religious Change” in David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), a cognitive metaphor that he retains in his more recent writings, e.g. David Frankfurter, “Sortes, Scribality, and Syncretism: Ritual Experts and the Great Tradition in Byzantine Egypt,” in *My Lots are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*, edited by AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 211–32, https://doi. org/10.1163/9789004385030_012, at 212.

29 Louvre N 2391/LP 1690, https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010001517 (with images) = van Haelst 1075 = LDAB 5738. For an English translation, see Hans D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 18–36. A partial re-edition (only the hymn ll. 198–228) is in Lucia M. Tissi, “Edizione critica, traduzione e commento dell’inno magico 5 PR (PGM III 1989–228),” *Analecta Papyrologica* 25 (2013): 175–208 (with a facsimile image).

30 The most up-to-date edition of the hymnic passage is to be found in Ljuba M. Bortolani, *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 140; I follow her rendering of the text. Translation, with modifications, from Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri*, 32–33.

31 Edward O. D. Love, “The ‘PGM III’ Archive: Two Papyri, Two Scribes, Two Scripts, And Two Languages,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 202 (2017): 175–88. These new insights do not, however, preclude my discussion of the hymn, as its coherence is not challenged by the reconstituted physical boundaries of the papyrus’ elements.

32 In PGM, the passage is edited and discussed as a self-standing hymn to Helios, presumably derived from earlier literary circulation, following Ernst Heitsch’s bold, and hardly justifiable, textual interventions (as e.g. reading *Πάν* in the opening line of the hymn) in his *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Bd. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 180; see also Merkelbach, Totti, *Abrasax*, 1–33 (with commentary). This and other hymnic passages found in PGM are approached as separable hymns and collectively treated as a category of “magical hymns” in most scholarship, see Harald Riesenfeld, “Remarques sur les hymnes magiques,” *Eranos* 46 (1946): 153–60; their separable nature and independent literary “merit” is assumed in William D. Furley, “Praise and Persuasion in Greek Hymns,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 29–46, at 39–42; Ernst Heitsch, “Zu den Zauberhymnen,” *Philologus* 103, nos. 1–2 (1959): 215–36, https://doi.org/10.1524/phil.1959.103.12.215; Franz Graf’s, “Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual,” in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, eds. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 188–213 (see esp. the selection of hymns and prayers from PGM in the Appendix). For a recent overview of “magical hymns” which does not abandon the fundamental lens of their independent literary value and treat them as an identifiably “Greek” element in the “syncretistic” makeup of PGM, see I. Petrovic, “Hymns in the Papyri Graecae Magicae,” in *Hymnic Narrative and the Narratology of Greek Hymns*, eds. Andrew Faulkner and Owen Hodkinson (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 244–68, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004289512_014.

33 For a commentary (mostly concerned with religious backgrounds behind specific concepts and wording in the hymn), see José L. C. Martínez, “Dos himnos ‘mágicos’ al Creador: edición crítica con introducción y comentario,” *MHNH* 3 (2003): 231–50, at 240–50; Bortolani, *Magical Hymns*, 141–50. For a good discussion of the history of PGM as a corpus, see now R. Gordon, “Compiling P. Lond.I 121: PGM VII in a Transcultural Context,” in *Cultural Plurality in Ancient Magical Texts and Practices: Graeco-Egyptian Handbooks and Related Traditions*, eds. by Ljuba M. Bortolani, W. Furley, S. Nagel, and J. F. Quack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 91–123, at 91–94.

34 For "magic" as a useful/useless analytical category, the bibliography is immense; for a synthesis and further references, see David Frankfurter, "Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 3–20, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004390751_002 (and also other contributions to the volume).

35 For a critique of this view, see Boustan and Sanzo, "Christian Magicians."

36 Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods*.

37 Christian (*Christlische*) magical papyri were singled out as a sub-corpus already in Preisendanz's seminal edition—see PGM, Bd. II, 209–32, as opposed to "pagan" (*Heidnische*) ones printed on pp. 1–208; a dedicated book-size collection of translated Coptic texts is *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, eds. Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Secondary literature is large and constantly growing. A classic overview is David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *Aufstief und Niedergang der römischer Welt*, Bd. II.23.1, eds. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1980), 507–55, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110860436-016; more recent treatments include de Bruyn and Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets"; Walter M. Shandruk, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31–57, https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2012.0003; Boustan and Sanzo, "Christian Magicians"; an up-do-date synthesis is offered in Joseph Sanzo, "Early Christianity," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 198–239. Monograph-size studies of the use of New Testament in amulets: Joseph Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Brice C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*.

38 Although Alan Cameron does not adopt archaization/antiquarianism as a methodological lens on the vast material that he covers in his magisterial *Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) (he does not typically invest in terminological casuistry), his is a vision in which the classicizing literary and artistic output in late antiquity was driven by the urge to cast messages in traditional forms rather than to give expression to religious traditionalism ("paganism"). For different takes on antiquarianism in late antique literary and intellectual enterprise, see Michael Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London: Routledge, 1995); Duncan E. MacRae, "Late Antiquity and the Antiquarian," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1, no. 4 (2017): 335–58, https://doi.org/10.1525/sla.2017.1.4.335; for classicizing poetry as a literary product of the *pepaideumenoi* who could be variously affiliated in terms of religion, see Gianfranco Agosti, "Greek Epigram in Late Antiquity," *A Companion to Ancient Epigram*, ed. Christer Henriksén (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019), 597–614 (a recapitulation of numerous earlier studies of the same scholar, with further bibliography); Robert Shorrock, *The Myth of Paganism: Nonnus, Dionysus and the World of Late Antiquity* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011). Antiquarianism has been elaborated as a lens on patterns in late antique architecture in various regions; for Aria Minor, see Rojas, "Antiquarianism in Roman Sardis," in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Alain Schnapp, Lothar von Falkenhausen, and Peter N. Miller (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 176–200; Philip Niehwöhner, "Byzantine Preservation of Ancient Monuments at Miletus in Caria," in *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas im Kontext spätantiker Memorialkultur*, eds. Jonas Borsch, Olivier Gengler, and Mischa Meier (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2019), 191–2016; for Western regions, primarily Rome, see Charlos Machado, "Religion as Antiquarianism: Pagan Dedications in Late Antique Rome," in *Dediche sacre nel mondo greco-romano: diffusione, funzioni, tipologie*, eds. John Bodel and Mika Kajava (Roma: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2009), 331–54, Ralf Behrwald, *Die Stadt als Museum? Die Wahrnehmung der Monumente Roms in der Spätantike* (Berlin: Akademie, 2009).

39 This is particularly plausible in light of what we increasingly know about scribal practices of late antique monks in the region who rather likely had wide-spanning literary—if not outwardly devotional—interests in such less-than-orthodox texts as the Nag Hammadi codices—see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) for an influential recent synthesis and further bibliography. For monks as the most typical scribes behind ritual manuscripts and artefacts in late antique Egypt, see also Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, section "Monastic Scribes and the Mediation of Christianity," 189–97; Frankfurter, "Sacred and Liturgical Speech," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 617–21.

40 See Bortolani, *Magical Hymns*, 141–45 for ἅγιον πνεῦμα and παντὸς κτίσ{κ}τα / ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσσας. She also has a dedicated section on "Judaeo-Christian vocabulary" in her conclusions on pp. 349–51; see also remarks for specific hymns passim, as e.g. on the invocations κύριε and ἄγγελε πρῶτε ⟨θε⟩οῦ in the hymn to Apollo-Helios (PGM I 296–327, 341–47) on pp. 64–65, 67; on the names of archangels Μιχαήλ and Γαβριήλ, see p. 68 (on the latter as indicator of (non)-engagement with "Jewish" traditions, see the analysis in Boustan, Sanzo, "Christian Magicians", with further bibliography). See Sanzo's perceptive criticism of Bortolani's methodology in his review of her monograph in *Gnomon* 90 (2018): 693–96.

41 For the *Shepherd*, still indispensible is the introduction and commentary by Carolyn Osiek and Helmut Koester, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); see also the notes below for more recent bibliography.

42 For "magical hymns" to creators, see Martínez, "Dos himnos 'mágicos'."

43 *Shepherd* 25.7. Translation from *The Apostolic Fathers* vol. 2, ed. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 237.

44 For *Shepherd*'s presence in early Christian Egypt, as well as its scriptural status, see the masterful discussion, with further bibliography, in Malcolm Choat and Rachel Yuen-Collingridge, "The Egyptian Hermas: The Shepherd in Egypt before Constantine," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, eds. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 191–212, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004194342_009. For more recent insights into papyri with the *Shepherd*, see Dan Batovici's ongoing research, e.g. his "A New Hermas Papyrus Fragment in Paris," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 62, no. 1 (2016): 20–36, https://doi.org/10.1515/apf-2016-0002, and "Two Notes on the Papyri of the Shepherd of Hermas," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 62, no. 2 (2016): 384–95, https://doi.org/10.1515/apf-2016-0030.

45 For the *Shepherd*'s changing, and eventually lapsing, canonical status in late antique Egypt, see Choat, Yuen-Collingridge, "The Egyptian Hermas", and the useful overview in Dan Batovici, "The Shepherd of Hermas in Recent Scholarship on the Canon: A Review Article," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 34, no. 1 (2017): 89–105.

46 The term is appropriated in Angelos Chaniotis, "Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults," in *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, eds. Stephen Mitchell and Peter van Nuffelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112–40, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511730115.010 (see also other chapters in the volume, with bibliography). Among the manifold manifestations of "megatheism", or the cultic veneration of supreme deity in imperial non-Christian and non-Jewish ("pagan") contexts, belong such appellations to a god that focused on her or his exalted, superior, or expressly unique status among other divinities as e.g. the epigraphically attested invocations of Zeus-Sarapis as παντοκράτωρ or ὕψιστος—see the seminal discussion in Emil Schürer, "Die Juden im bosporanischen Reiche und die Genossenschaften der σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὕψιστον ebendaselbst," *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 1 (1897): 200–225; more recent publications on the important topic include Stephen Mitchell's treatments in his "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos Between Pagans, Jews, and

Christians," in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, eds. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 92–97 and *"Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos,"* in *One God,* 167–208. For papyrological evidence, see Timothy M. Teeter, "Theos Hypsistos in the Papyri," in *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologen-Kongresses*. Wien, 22–28. Iuli 2001, ed. Bernhard Palme (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 675–78.

47 *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*, 103–4.

48 Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913), 202–3. For a recent discussion, see Charles Cosgrove, "The Syntax of Early Christian Hymns and Prayers Revisiting Relative and Participial Styles for Making Assertions about a Deity," *Early Christianity* 9 (2018), 158–80, https://doi.org/10.1628/ec-2018-0010.

49 Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods*, 231 (see also the entire Chapter 7 for an interesting theory of types of practitioners behind PGM).

50 For the vast, and increasing, presence of Scriptural texts in school curricula in late antique Egypt, as evidenced in papyri exercises, see Scott Bucking, "Christian Educational Texts from Egypt: A Preliminary Inventory," in *Akten des 21 Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin, 13.—19.8. 1995*, eds. Bärbel Kramer, W. Luppe, H. Maehler, and G. Poethke (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1997), 132–38; Jutta Henner, "Der Unterricht im christlichen Ägypten," in *Christliches mit Feder und Faden: Christliches in Texten, Textilien und Alltagsgegenständen aus Ägypten*, eds. Jutta Henner, Hans Förster, and Ulrike Horak (Wien: OVG, 1999), 51–54; AnneMarie Luijendijk, "A New Testament Papyrus and Its Documentary Context: An Early Christian Writing Exercise from the Archive of Leonides ('P.Oxy.' II 209/q 10)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010): 575–96; Nathan Carlig, "Christianisme et paideia dans l'Égypte byzantine: l'apport des papyrus scolaires grecsde nature composite profane et chrétienne (fin du IIIe–VIIe/VIIIe siècle)," in *Pratiche didattiche tra centro e periferia nel mediterraneo tardoantico*, eds. Gianfranco Agosti and Daniele Bianconi (Spoleto: Fondazione centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2019), 261–83; Jennifer R. Strawbridge, "A School of Paul? Pauline Texts in Early Christian Schooltext Papyri," in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, eds. Matthew R. Hauge and Andrew W. Pitts (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 165–77.

51 See e.g. Agosti, "Greek Epigram in Late Antiquity" (with full bibliography); Arkadiy Avdokhin, "'Pagan' and Christian Idiom: An Epigraphic Case Study," in *Language and Culture in Early Christianity: A Companion*, eds. Tim Denecker, Mathieu Lamberigts, Gert Partoens, Pierre Swiggers, and Toon Van Hal (Leuven: Peeters, 2022) (forthcoming).

52 Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

53 For scribes as "assemblers" of a Christian culture "as syncretists by virtue of their regular practices", see Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 210.

54 Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011). For the application of Lahire's lens in the study of late antique Christianity, see e.g. Rebillard, *Christians and their Many Identities*.

55 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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4 Lifting the Cloak of Invisibility

Identifying the Jews of Late Antique Egypt

Arietta Papaconstantinou

The revolts of 115–117 were a watershed in the history of the Jewish community of Egypt. Trajan's ruthless repression left a strong impression in contemporary sources and paved the way for what Martin Goodman has called Hadrian's "final solution" some 18 years later.[1] Indeed, Appian maintained that in his time (referring to AD 117), "the Roman emperor Trajan was exterminating the Jewish race in Egypt."[2] The historiographical tradition on Judaism in Graeco-Roman Egypt has traditionally focused on the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods and rarely gone beyond Hadrian—the foremost example being Joseph Mélèze Modrzejewski's classic *The Jews of Egypt from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*. Ancient historians are routinely wary of sweeping statements like Appian's in their sources, especially when other ancient sources are a little more nuanced. In this case, however, the papyri were seen as a complement that confirmed Appian's account. In the first volume of the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, which in 1957 initiated the collection of all published Jewish papyri, Victor Tcherikover wrote:

> We are fairly safe in assuming that in many places the Jewish population was totally annihilated, while in others some Jewish families may have survived. An *argumentum ex silentio* confirms our supposition: Jews vanish almost entirely from our sources.[3]

In his *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Roger Bagnall discussed this lack of visibility in the sources, but without coming to a definite conclusion about the extent of the damage:

> There is no way of estimating the extent of the slaughter and enslavement inflicted on the Jewish community by the Roman authorities, but it was decisive and permanent. Whatever remained is largely invisible in the documentation, and the one criterion generally used to identify Jews in the period after 117, nomenclature, cannot bear the weight put upon it.[4]

Thus for Bagnall, the absence of evidence is not categorical evidence of absence: this invisibility, however, makes it impossible to write even a cursory history of the Jewish community between 117 and the fourth century, when unequivocal

evidence for Jews in Greek papyri appears again. Tcherikover saw that as a resurgence, "the beginning of a new development, reflecting the social and cultural atmosphere of the 'Middle Ages' rather than that of the classical world."[5]

What I would like to do here is not to discuss the presence or not of Jews between 117 and the Arab conquest, an exercise that has been attempted several times already from different vantage points,[6] but rather—in line with the volume's focus—to explore the criteria used to attempt to identify them in the sources. It is possible to classify the extant usable evidence into three broad categories:

a) Self-indexing. As Bagnall notes in the passage earlier, personal names have been very prominent in research as a marker. Indeed, personal names are a blatant form of self-indexing, although they do not always index what historians are trying to find. I shall come back to personal names more at length later. There seems to be no self-indexing within letters or documents of the sort that has been taken apart so diligently concerning pre-Constantinian Christians, something which contributes to the impression of a lack of evidence. Only the case of an oath "by Har Gerizim" (μὰ τὸν Ἀργαριζίν), the Samaritan holy precinct, in a fifth-century letter can be seen as an equivalent form of self-indexing by the author.[7] Visual self-indexing, on the other hand, has been generally neglected. As it is not documentary, visual evidence has not made it into the conversation, except when accompanied by text in the case of inscriptions. Linguistic change and the renewed use of Hebrew for intra-communal communication is also an important form of self-indexing.

b) External reference. Most of the evidence from Greek papyri falls into this category: individuals mentioned in transactions or registers who are explicitly identified as Jews in the relevant documents. From the fourth century to the eighth, I have counted 25 late antique papyri describing one or more individuals either as Ἰουδαῖος (14 times, from the fourth to the sixth century), Ἑβραῖος (9 times, from the late sixth century onwards), or Σαμαρίτης (3 times, in the fifth and sixth centuries). The total of these occurrences is 26 because one document of 569 describes an individual both as Ἑβραῖος τῷ ἔθνει and as Ἰουδαῖος.[8]

c) Proxy and circumstantial evidence. The most obvious are the existence of texts identified as Jewish and the presence of synagogues. Texts, especially in Greek, have been a contested area, but the rising awareness among classical papyrologists of texts in Hebrew has significantly modified the picture. Of course the renewed use of Hebrew also has important implications beyond its role as an indicator of the presence of Jews, as indicated under item a).

All that evidence has mostly been known and used for some time now. Because of disciplinary boundaries, however, it has not been systematically brought together, and a number of historiographical traditions and assumptions have guided the analysis of what evidence has been collected or identified. What follows is not an exposition of that evidence, but an attempt to weigh the relevance of each of the three categories. I shall focus more at length on the issue of self-indexing, which

is not only central to this volume but also the one that has been most routinely dismissed as "impossible." First, however, I shall briefly present some thoughts on the historiography of the question.

Historiographical ambiguities

In a recent article, Tal Ilan took apart Tcherikover's approach to the source material gathered in the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum (CPJ)* and the narrative underpinning it.[9] The wish to create a story of cultural assimilation followed by destruction, which they explicitly compared to the rise of European anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and its aftermath, led Tcherikover and his collaborators to ignore texts that were not in Greek and to give much less weight to the period after 117. In the words of Ilan,

> This is where in the 1950s, when Tcherikover and his colleagues wrote their commentary on this corpus, they thought the story should end. Thus, they were really not very interested in telling us the rest of the story. For them there was no possibility for a Jewish revival on Egyptian soil.[10]

The impression that Jewish life collapsed after 117 is in fact strongly—if not primarily—a function of the lack of high literary evidence in Greek and of references in the canonical Graeco-Roman sources. In most cases, the Hellenized Alexandrian community of the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods has dominated the scholarly horizon of Egyptian Judaism, and the end of that literary high culture has been linked to the events of 117. Yet as Ilan notes, the break in literary activity happened well before 117 and is most probably connected to the rise of Christianity rather than to political events.[11] High culture still maintains a tenacious hold on the way historians understand and construct the life of "communities." I shall attempt to show that if we compare like with like, papyri taken alone give a much less dramatic picture.

Moreover, next to texts in Greek making reference to Jews, there are also the texts in Aramaic and Hebrew that Tcherikover chose to exclude from the *CPJ*. According to him, the choice of Hebrew as a language of communication was a deliberate strategy "aiming at the abolition of foreign habits and their replacement by a national mode of life,"[12] and this Hebraisation marked a new start: "The Jewish community in Egypt underwent a profound change, turning definitely from the Graeco-Roman form of organization and adopting the Jewish one."[13] The juxtaposition of Tcherikover's very interesting thoughts on the Hebrew and Aramaic texts and their importance for understanding forms of communal organization with his contention that "the community" was annihilated show that he was mainly thinking of the Hellenized community and not of Jews in general.

Yet the evidence provided by Hebrew and Aramaic papyri is crucial, because as Ilan points out, they are the most obviously *Jewish* texts[14]—and thus not only attest to Jewish presence but offer an inside view. A group of Hebrew and Aramaic papyri in the Bodleian Library, including one found in Oxyrhynchos in 1897, was

published in 1903 by A.E. Cowley, and he tentatively dated most of them to the sixth century or earlier.[15] In 1915, he published another group of papyri found in the 1905 Oxyrhynchos excavation, for which he gave an approximate date of around 400. At least one of the Oxyrhynchos fragments, however, may date as early as the third century.[16] More texts have been published since, including the well-known *ketubah* of 417 from Antinoopolis,[17] and they are, of course, essential for understanding Jewish life in Egypt in the period between 117 and the Geniza.[18]

What is perhaps the most striking aspect of these documents is their variety. Alongside literary texts we find Hebrew and Aramaic also used for everyday communication—even sometimes simple greetings—and business transactions, and used by both men and women.[19] This has sometimes been attributed to immigration from Palestine, which is also used to explain the resurgence of the Jewish community—especially as several Palestinian Jews are mentioned in papyri. Yet the simplest explanation is surely Tcherikover's, namely that after the various calamities of 117 and 132, the Jewish communities of the area should "cling together," as he put it.[20] The renewed use of Hebrew and Aramaic and the development of a more distinctly Jewish identity in writing would have been a natural development of that proximity, reinforced by real and perceived external enmity.[21]

Disappearance or contraction?

The *CPJ* created a received truth which has colored scholarly approaches to the question ever since. On the whole, Greek evidence has primed in most of the scholarship, and the verdict of "invisibility" has remained uncontested. Yet even here, when one looks more closely, things seem less clear-cut. Let us look at some (very) raw numbers (meaning indicative numbers, not properly weighed statistics) with the help of the Duke Database.[22]

The term ἑβραῖος in different forms appears nine times, all after AD 150—in fact all in the sixth century and after. As for ιουδαῖος, it appears 182 times from the third century BC to the eighth century AD. After AD 150 we have only 30 hits, while there are 152 before AD 150. The latter number, however, includes more than 70 documents from a single find, documenting the levy of the Jewish tax in Edfu (*O.Edfu*). Without this bulk find, the number would be closer to 90 occurrences (which include several non-Egyptian documents, but not enough to skew the overall balance). If we calibrate these numbers by century, we have an average of 20 per century before AD 150 and 6 per century after AD 150. Thus even with a very crude calibration, the period after AD 150 (and thus after 117) has in fact yielded a centennial rate that is a little less than one third (0.3) of the centennial rate before AD 150. Within the period AD 150–800, the distribution is indeed tilted towards the later centuries, mainly the fourth century and after. The proportion is around 2:1, however, not as stark as it has been made to sound, and once again, this is attenuated if we calibrate this by the length of time covered: 14 occurrences in a century and a half, against 26 for a period of five centuries.

Thus by taking the time factor into account even in a very cursory way, the contrast in the documentation appears to be much less pronounced than has been

commonly stated. This certainly deserves a more thorough statistical analysis, but my aim here is rather to point out some methodological blind spots than to conduct a new study of the evidence. In any case, although there is indeed a contrast between the two periods, which is an indication of a certain contraction, that contrast is milder than seems at first sight and does not really point to annihilation or extermination.

Numbers of individuals mentioned in papyri are not population numbers, and this for a number of reasons—not least the very haphazard conservation of the documents and their not-very-representative distribution. There can also be more historically significant reasons, however—and this is where the issue of visibility comes in. It is not surprising, historically speaking, that the activation or indexing of a given identity should diminish drastically after a traumatic event, most often as part of a conscious or subconscious strategy of dissimulation and/or assimilation. Thus instead of assuming annihilation, we could be asking, with Guy Stroumsa, whether the fall in numbers is not the sign that the Jews of Egypt went "underground, disappearing only from our limited field of vision."[23] Cases of persecuted minorities adopting a less visible identity are abundantly documented historically and have been the subject of numerous studies.[24] For late Roman Egypt, it is impossible to document a similar phenomenon because of the less exhaustive nature of our sources, but such a reaction, at least in the century or so after the events, is not at all unlikely. I shall come back to this issue more at length when discussing self-indexing. This, of course, is not to deny the ruthlessness of the repression: that is precisely why such dissimulation would have been felt necessary. An event can be traumatic, however, without wiping out an entire population.

Visible communities

Circumstantial evidence is perhaps the least affected by choices of visibility or invisibility. There is also relatively little of it, but it bears some weight. For example, the oft-noted discussion in the Babylonian Talmud regarding the acceptability of reading the bible in Coptic is more significant than a simple anecdotal reference to Jews in Egypt. It not only offers evidence of the presence of a community but also shows that it had connections with rabbis elsewhere and that it must have included a good proportion of native Egyptians.[25] Moreover, it could also point to a tendency towards outward assimilation, as speaking Coptic and using Coptic bibles would make a community less conspicuous than doing so in Hebrew. There are indications that Jewish versions of the Greek bible circulated in the Theban area and that some of the Coptic translations of Old Testament books followed them rather than the Septuagint.[26] Although some such Coptic versions were used unambiguously by Christians, their existence could also point to precisely the type of communities alluded to in the Talmud.

The bulk of the material in *CPJ* III (which covers late antiquity) is made up of external references to Jews, which also dominate in the Greek papyri published since then. Even though they are not very high in numbers, many reflect the presence of organized communities and not merely isolated individuals carrying out

transactions or paying tax. It is therefore important to calibrate those references, noting whether they are collective or individual, or whether they otherwise imply a substantial presence.

For Oxyrhynchos, for example, we know there was a community already in the late third century, which had the necessary funds (14 talents of silver) to manumit a Jewish female slave and her children.[27] A document like this does, indeed, show that in the late third century "Jews appear again," but it also does more than that. A fully constituted community does not appear out of thin air, and its existence and relative financial ease indicate an institution that has been in place for some time. Tal Ilan has in fact argued that Jews could have come to Egypt from Palestine as a result of the Bar Kokhba revolt—some of them possibly returning to Egypt after having fled to Palestine in 117.[28] A *bouleutes* from Ono in Syria Palestine is mentioned as "father of the community" in 291, another indication of closer links with Palestine after 117.[29] In particular, new leaders could have come from Palestine, as it is likely that the leadership of the Egyptian community was the most heavily targeted group during the repression. The heads and the elders of a community (*kneseth*), as well as its members, are also mentioned in one of the Hebrew fragments found in 1905, a late fourth-century (?) letter sent to another community, presumably that of Oxyrhynchos where it was found.[30]

Although in 291 the term "συναγωγὴ" was used to describe a community rather than a building, this had changed by the fifth century. The existence of such a building in Alexandria is attested to by a group of individual dedications inscribed on two columns and a lintel, as well as a fragmentary plaque.[31] In the sixth century there was also a synagogue building on the lands of the Apions, who rented it out to the community. Their accounts record a payment towards the rent by "Lazar the Jew."[32] The fact that the building was not owned by the community and that it was in the countryside rather than the city could indicate that it was not the only synagogue in the Oxyrhynchite.

There is another collective reference to "the Jews" in Oxyrhynchos, in a list of payments that indicates they had "private" land and were involved in the production of goatskins and hides.[33] A fourth-century text from Oxyrhynchos mentions the κεφαλαιωτὴς of the Jews, as does a fifth- or sixth-century text from the Hermopolite.[34] The term can have different meanings, but here it appears to mean the head of a guild, which is a status that was attributed to the Jews collectively.[35] This becomes clear from a seventh-century ostracon from Edfu which lists the Jews among several other established bodies (captives, tapestry makers, and couriers) as contributors of *munera*.[36] Something related to "the Jews" also appears in a letter of unknown provenance dated 21 May 316, which is far too fragmentary to yield more information; yet it is again clear that the reference is to a group that was clearly identified by the author. Finally, a sixth-century sale for future delivery of 121 wine jars that held five "Jewish sextarii" each is again a sign that there was a well-constituted Jewish community with its own weight standards and sufficient consumption to warrant the production of specially made recipients.[37]

Collective external references to Jews are generally pragmatic. What is more difficult is to discern a pattern for the direct indexing of individual Jews in

transactions. In most cases where this happens they are transacting with non-Jews, and the epithet serves to mark their religion or ethnicity (at least once, the two are treated as separate). That does not mean, however, that every transaction between a Jew and a non-Jew identified the former as such. Non-indexing, especially in the case of informal transactions or when there was no ambiguity as to the person's identity, may well have been the norm. One would also presume that transactions between Jews did not use such markers and have therefore remained largely undetected. The divorce agreement *P.Herm.* 29 between two Samaritans, however, does mention their religion, even though both parties belong to the same group. This could be because the deed was drawn up by a non-Jew (or a non-Samaritan) and was to be registered in the Hermopolite archives. Religion was also important in matters of marriage and divorce, so its chance of being mentioned in such circumstances was certainly higher.[38]

Self-indexing

Virtually all the cases already cited would have involved some form of self-indexing, since even external reference to an identity necessarily means that identity is somehow embraced and stated, however minimally. Writing in Hebrew and Aramaic was one such form of Jewish self-indexing among contemporaries, even if for scholars it is primarily direct evidence. Contrary to the use of the Hebrew alphabet on public inscriptions, using the language in letters and documents or reading literary texts in Hebrew would have functioned mainly internally, as a sign of recognition between members of a community. The self-referential expression "our brothers the members of the community" in the Hebrew letter from Oxyrhynchos reflects this sense of belonging.[39]

One of the most obvious forms of self-presentation or indexing was not verbal, but visual. The use of identifiable Jewish symbols on objects of use or other media indicates the existence of a specific material culture referring to this identity. That material culture may have remained partly private: objects such as oil lamps, for instance, which are the most common finds with religious symbols in general, cannot tell us much about how far outside the domestic sphere this identity was advertised. Even lamps, however, were produced industrially, and it is unlikely that workshops specialized exclusively in the production of Jewish lamps, which implies that ordering or buying such lamps would have been a form of self-indexing, at least locally. Between the entirely private and the public are objects that were used within the community, for instance, during religious rituals or feasts. Breadstamps or incense burners with representations of menorahs would probably fall in this category[40]: a form of collective or mutual self-indexing within a given group, but not to outsiders.

Other visual signs were much more public. Objects of personal adornment such as pendants representing a menorah were a clear statement of identity.[41] The same is true of Jewish wine merchants who surrounded the dipinto of their name with a menorah on their amphorae.[42] The menorah was also used publicly on funerary inscriptions, where it appeared as an identifier, sometimes along with the lulab.[43]

They are sometimes accompanied by text in Hebrew—either just the name of the deceased[44] or a Hebrew prayer.[45] A Hebrew prayer could also be written on a mummy label, which, although more private than a stela, was nevertheless not entirely internal to the community.[46]

I shall now come to the criterion Bagnall saw as the one most commonly used, namely onomastics. Now names are a notoriously unreliable indicator of identity, especially at a distance of 15 centuries or more, because although their choice is always a form of identity statement, it is practically impossible to know which of several identities one is targeting with a personal name. Among other things, names could signify social status, regional origin, family history, or patronage bonds: they did not always unequivocally index religious or communal affiliation. In many societies they follow a restrictive set of conventions, deviations from which can be highly significant in terms of intra-group relations. It is impossible to know the degree of constraint for most historical societies, however, and this one in particular, as we have no written meta-narratives about traditional naming practices. Despite their unreliability, however, personal names remain universally recognized as a form of identity display and assignment.[47] Like language, they are quintessential modes of social positioning and self-ascription and are therefore difficult to dismiss when looking for such markers.

Until the rise of Christianity, it is possible to consider with a relatively high degree of certainty that biblical names found in documents referred to Jews. It is generally admitted that this criterion is no longer as reliable after Christians started using conspicuously Old Testament names, broadly from the fourth century onwards. Even before the rise of distinctively Christian anthroponyms, however, individuals with biblical names represented only a section of the Jewish population: the others bore common Greek, Roman, or even Egyptian names—in other words, they participated in the onomastic *koine* of their time. After biblical names started being used by Christians too, the use of Graeco-Roman and Egyptian names did not stop—and presumably neither did the use of biblical names. Nevertheless, the adoption of Old Testament names by Christians made Jews more invisible, because what used to be their distinctive names were distinctive no longer.

It is important to note at this point that the non-distinctiveness of personal names carries as much value as their distinctiveness. As I mentioned earlier, the choice to participate in the onomastic *koine* rather than mark oneself out can be a strategy of dissimulation and/or assimilation intended to conceal or suppress an identity perceived as dangerous or problematic or, more positively, to adopt a desired identity.[48] This is an especially common occurrence in the case of beleaguered communities who feel under threat.[49] The maintenance of dual names that are used in different circumstances, like a sort of diglossia, are also a common practice,[50] well known in Egypt in the case of Egyptians adopting Greek alternative names and also attested among Egyptian Jews. Closely linked to this is the practice of translating names from their original language into the dominant one—another practice that was common in Graeco-Roman Egypt.[51] Such names are often indistinguishable from those of the dominant language,

especially when they refer to virtues, like Eusebios, or gifts of god, like Theodotos or Dorotheos.

So, can one use names at all? In a famous article of 1982, Roger Bagnall used onomastics to assess the pace of the Christianisation of Egypt during the fourth century. He used the names found in documents with precise dates and defined a number of criteria that allowed him to identify Christian names. He observed that by the end of the century, those names had become dominant. A recent article (2013) by Willy Clarysse and Marc Depauw, based on what is now a broader digitized dataset of names, broadly corroborated Bagnall's calculations and curves marking the pace of growth of Christian names. The initial article, as well as the follow-up by Clarysse and Depauw, sparked several objections, which are mainly focused on definitional issues, as well as on the inherent difficulties of using quantification with papyri.[52]

Bagnall had defined Christian names as follows: Old and New Testament names; names formed on the Egyptian word *ntr*, "God"; names of Christian emperors; names based on abstract nouns and adjectives of theological content; and names of saints and martyrs. Without entering the discussion on Christianisation per se, I would like to discuss the first category of names in more detail, and more specifically the Old Testament names. Ewa Wipszyska only objected to the inclusion of Apollos as a biblical name[53]; Clarysse and Depauw discuss the category more fully, mainly regarding possibilities of statistical distortion. All seem to accept without discussion Bagnall's statement regarding the possibility of Old Testament names being Jewish:[54]

> 1) Old Testament and New Testament names. Many of these were also in use by Jews, but the drastic decrease in Jewish population in Trajan's suppression of their revolt, plus the fact that all of the documentation I am dealing with comes from the chora and not from Alexandria, leads me to exclude the possibility that these names are those of Jews. If a handful are, the results will not be altered in any substantial way. Among these names are (from the Old Testament) Aaron, Abraham, Daniel, David, Elias, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Miriam, Moses, Rebecca, Samuel, Susanna.[55]

For his purposes, Bagnall was right: Jews were without doubt not numerous enough to slant his results and do not affect his conclusions on Christianisation, with their revision of 1987. Nevertheless, the question of whether they represented only "a handful" and whether they were largely absent from the valley are assumptions that have now been shown to need some nuancing. There is a certain circularity in interpreting all potentially Jewish names as non-Jewish on the basis of a lack of Jewish presence in documents, if the possibility of identifying Jews in documents has been preemptively negated.

Yet it is a crucial point, because it bears on the perceived identity, if not the perceived *existence*, of Jews in Egypt. It does not affect how we study the Christianisation of the country, since the very notion of Christianisation is generally understood as a seesaw with traditional polytheism at the other end.[56] Judaism

has generally been left out of the equation, since it occupied the margins of both the pagan and the Christian religious landscapes. It is indeed true that after the rise of specifically Christian onomastics there were no longer any names that can be identified as unequivocally "Jewish." It is, however, deterministic always to resolve this ambiguity in the same direction. Moreover, this may well be only a historian's problem, while for contemporaries some names had a more Jewish connotation than others and were not chosen by Christians. We shall never know for sure, of course, but I do think it is not a lost cause.

As Clarysse and Depauw demonstrated, the large datasets at our disposal today make lists of names easier to produce and treat. There are several avenues one can take to attempt a finer analysis of that material. The various pointers I shall indicate next are, of course, underpinned by an assumption which is the opposite of the one that has long dominated, namely that there *were* Jewish communities in Egypt, including in the valley, throughout late antiquity and that they were to a large extent the descendants of the ones who went through the events of 117, even if migration also played a role in their revitalization. One must also take into consideration the possibility that at least some of that "migration" consisted of refugees from 117 returning home after things had settled down.[57] Taking this view means that some elements of the documentation can be interpreted differently, because ultimately, we only find something in our sources if we look for it.

The first criterion I would like to bring forth is based on Clarysse and Depauw's Table 4 and Table 9 (see Figure 4.1). These show the temporal distribution from the third century BC to the eighth century AD, respectively, of the biblical names used by Bagnall, and of other Christian names they have added, some of which are Old Testament names.[58] They note that the majority of those names become popular after AD 300, and some only appear after that date. This, to them, "confirms the validity of their use as indicators of the Christian faith of the parents when naming the child."[59] It is true that the appearance and/or popularity of those names from the fourth century onwards is attributable to the rise of Christianity, but this does not mean that they always reflect Christian affiliation. After all, these were now names that Jews could use as part of a onomastic *koine*, like they had used Gaius and Achilles before, precisely because Old Testament names were not exclusively Christian.

There are in those tables, however, also biblical names that were present before AD 300, and even in the Ptolemaic period. This shows that they were names traditionally borne by Jews, and thus very likely to have been used by them after AD 300 as well. Four of those names—Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Simeon—were in continuous use since the second century BC, while Samuel and Martha also appear early, but are much rarer and are not continuously attested. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph became very popular among Christians, but their status as traditional Jewish names will certainly have meant that they were also commonly used by Jews. Simeon remains rare throughout the period, as do Samuel and Martha.

The rareness factor is, I believe, an important one. It reflects the balance of numbers and could indicate names that were perceived as Jewish and thus not borne by Christians. In Clarysse and Depauw's tables we consistently find Rebecca and

Table 4 Per mille of the total number of Greek DUKEREF entries for Old and New Testament names, from the 3rd cent. BC until the 8th cent. AD. Figures smaller than 0.05 per mille have been rounded off to zero and thus appear as '—'.

%0 of DUKEREFs	−3	−2	−1	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Aaron	—	—	0.1	—	—	—	0.4	0.4	1.5	0.9	2.0
Abraham	—	—	—	0.1	—	—	0.3	6.3	14.5	11.8	8.3
Daniel	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	3.2	2.3	2.9	3.3
David	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.4	2.3	3.3	8.7
Elias	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.8	1.8	2.4	2.6	2.5
Isaac	—	0.1	0.3	0.5	—	—	1.3	10.2	13.0	8.1	11.7
Jacob	—	0.2	—	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.3	4.6	8.8	4.5	5.8
Joseph	—	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	—	0.5	9.9	12.3	9.9	7.3
Miriam	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.4	0.2	0.7
Moses	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.8	3.2	0.9	1.0	1.3
Rebecca	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.4	0.3	0.2
Samuel	0.2	0.1	—	—	—	—	—	2.8	1.5	0.8	2.8
Susanna	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2
Andreas	—	—	—	0.2	—	0.1	0.6	2.9	4.3	2.6	9.3
Apollos	—	0.3	1.6	1.2	0.8	1.0	2.4	6.6	23.4	4.5	1.0
Bartholomeus	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.6	2.5
Johannes	—	0.2	—	0.1	0.3	0.1	2.3	29.4	49.8	40.7	36.5
Maria	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.1	0.9	3.9	7.0	6.3	2.0
Martha	—	—	0.9	—	—	—	0.1	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.5
Mattheus	—	—	—	—	—	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.7
Paulus	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.5	7.7	14.5	12.2	10.4	7.0
Petros	—	—	—	—	—	0.2	2.0	11.0	11.8	9.2	13.5
Stephanos	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.1	0.4	1.0	0.7	0.8	5.1	11.4	5.0
Sion	—	—	—	0.1	—	—	—	1.5	1.0	0.9	1.0

Figure 4.1 Overview of frequency Christian names.

Source: Tables 4 and 9 from W. Clarysse and M. Depauw. "How Christian was Fourth-Century Egypt? Onomastic Perspectives on Conversion." *Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013): 407–35.

Table 9 Per mille of the total number of Greek DUKEREF entries for other Christian names, from the 3rd cent. BC until the 8th cent. AD.

%0 of DUKEREFs	−3	−2	−1	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Anastasios	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.3	2.0	4.0	1.0
(Mi)chael	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.4	0.4	1.1	5.3
Christo . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.4	3.0	4.5	1.7
Epiphanios	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.7	—
Georgios	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.3	10.1	29.9	25.9
Henoch	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.3	4.1	5.4	11.7
Ieremias	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.3	4.3	4.6	2.8
Kosmas	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	0.6	2.4	11.4	11.2
Kyriakos	—	—	—	—	—	—	6.7	0.4	4.0	2.9	3.2
Makarios	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	2.7	4.5	6.4	8.4	13.7
Menas	—	—	—	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	2.8	21.4	31.4	17.7
Sergios	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.2	0.3	2.1	7.9	1.7
Sim(e)on	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.4	—	—	0.1	0.4	1.5	3.0
Thomas	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.3	1.3	2.2	6.2
Zacharias	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	1.3	2.2	10.8	12.0

Figure 4.1 (Continued)

Susanna under 1‰ and Miriam and Martha under 2‰, as well as Aaron, except in the eighth century, when the name nevertheless remains under 3‰. Symeon is under 1‰ until the seventh century, then under 2‰ until 700 and under 3‰ in the eighth century; Samuel, and surprisingly perhaps, Elias, are also consistently under 3‰. Some other rarely attested Old Testament names, not listed by Clarysse and Depauw, are Benjamin, Esdras, Jonathan, Judas, Leah, Reuben, Ruth, Sarah, and Solomon.

It is important to note, however, that Clarysse and Depauw only treated the Greek documents. The onomastics in Coptic documents have been left aside, presumably because they are not part of the database. The documents from the Theban area alone can considerably modify this picture, because they display a strong inclination towards Old Testament names in the local population. We see Susanna, Samuel, Sarah, and Solomon more often, but Jonathan, Leah, and Reuben just as rarely, and Symeon and Rebecca marginally more. We also find Esther, Judith, and Zebedee, names that do not appear in the Greek documents.[60]

It is, of course, difficult to conclude much from the rareness of names alone, even combined with their use prior to Christianity, especially without having taken regional distribution into account. However, there are two more pointers I think are important.

First there are the names of the Jews clearly identified by external reference from the fourth century onwards. Of 26 names of individuals described as Jews, 14 are Old Testament names. The most common is Joseph (four) followed by Abraham and Jacob (three each). Enoch, Eleazar, Joab, Judas, Isaac, Levi, Manasses, Moses, Rebecca, Samuel, and Simon appear once. We also have two with Semitic names (Aurelios Hanan and Johannes), one virtue name (Eusebios), and one gift-of-God name (Theodotos), which although in Greek, can be translations of Hebrew equivalents. The remaining names are either Greek or Egyptian— what Bagnall had called "neutral." Even though this sample cannot be statistically representative, it is striking—and consistent with my earlier comments—that the most common names are also common among Christians and that among the rest we also find several that are common Christian names (Moses, Enoch, Isaac), but also some that are on the rare side (Symeon, Samuel, Rebecca, Judas, Joab, Levi).

A final criterion that can be brought into play is the clustering of Old Testament names, especially within families. This can be tricky, considering the popularity of some of those names among Christians. I would contend, however, that the clustering of names that are known to have been used by Jews in late antiquity and that are otherwise rare, even if the cluster includes some more common names, is more likely to come from a Jewish milieu—especially if it is found in a place where Jewish communities are otherwise attested. Below I present some cases that illustrate this approach.

P.Cair.Masp. I 67089, which Leslie MacCoull described as a "Cinderella story," is in fact an affidavit testifying the free status of a woman called Martha, who was born of free servants in the author's household.[61] The following family tree (Figure 4.2) shows the onomastic pattern of her family, all born in the service of the same household, except her grandparents, who entered the previous master's service with an agreement.
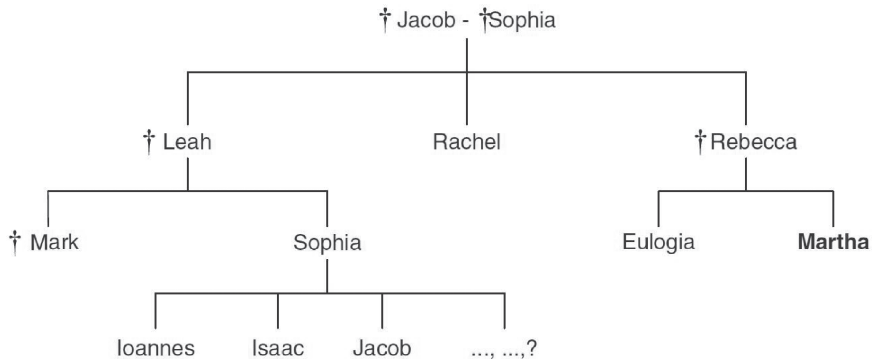
Figure 4.2 Martha's family tree.

The first thing to note, considering what has been said earlier, are the names of the three sisters, the daughters of Jacob and Sophia. Although the parents have names that by the sixth century can be considered the new neutral, Rebecca, and especially Leah, are much rarer. Rachel is also not a very common name, although more so than Rebecca. Leah died "with her son," possibly in childbirth. Her daughter Sophia was named after her grandmother, married a free man, and had four children, for whom all preserved names can be classified as neutral. Rebecca's daughters were named Eulogia, also neutral, and Martha, another of the rare names. We are told that Rachel and Eulogia chose a monastic life, which has led scholars to consider this was a Christian family. In the context of domestic service to a Christian family, however, boundaries could be very fluid. It is not impossible that young servile women found in conversion and the adoption of an ascetic life a way out of their status, something for which historical examples abound. Marrying a free man may also have meant a Christian and involved a change in religious affiliation. It is, of course, impossible to be sure, but the possibility should be considered.

There are a few other cases of women called Leah. One is Aurelia Leah, daughter of Dioskoros and Leah, who signs a debt acknowledgement in 449 to the *riparios* of Hermoupolis.[62] We know Jews took the name Dioskoros; as for Leah, these are two of a total of seven attestations in Greek (spelled Λία or Λεία). Interestingly, the *amanuensis* is called Aurelios Pinoution, son of Annas (Hanan, or possibly Ananias)—one neutral and one relatively rare name. The other cases of Leah are one who is a daughter of David appearing in an eighth-century register in Aphrodito[63]; another is the mother of David, son of Abraham, who signs a land lease in 545 or 560 in the Hermopolite[64]; yet another Leah in the Hermopolite, daughter of Ammonios and ?, was party to a contract in 544[65]; and finally in Arsinoe in 546, an

Aurelia Martyria, daughter of Phoibammon, has as her alternative name Leah.[66] This last practice is, as we have seen, typical of a double cultural allegiance and may well indicate someone from a mixed marriage.

Another interesting case is a settlement agreement from seventh-century Thebes between George, also known as Elisha, son of Peter, and Mishael and Rebecca, and their son, "another Elisha" (Ἐλισαῖος ἄλλος), regarding a debt owed by the former to the latter.[67] The document is witnessed by Apa Petros as well as Jonathan, son of Ioa(?), and Esdras, son of Isaac. Μιζαὴλ and Ἔσδρα are quite rare names, as is Elisha. The names are more common in Thebes than elsewhere, but in this case there is also another element: while the declaration made by George and the signature of Apa Petros are preceded by crosses, the declaration of Mishael and Rebecca are not, and neither are the signatures of Jonathan and Esdras. The fact that George uses Elisha as an alternative name could here too point to a mixed family, which could also explain not only why as a Christian he borrowed from Jews but also why a substantial part of the debt was written off by the creditors. Interestingly, Peter's brother had married a woman named Martha, also one of the rare names we identified.

An analysis of rare Old Testament names along those lines could be more rewarding than what has been attempted to date. This is not the place to carry out that investigation systematically, but I believe clusters of rare names, combined with what we know of the geography of Jewish communities and integrating the data from texts in all languages, including Hebrew and Aramaic, would allow us to draw a clearer picture. In a majority Christian country, where Old Testament names were in vogue among Christians, names will never stand as proof in the strong sense. Bagnall's statement that it is "much more likely that biblical names in post-Hadrianic documents are a sign of Christianity"[68] remains true, but the degree of that likelihood is a function of the balance of numbers—and I hope to have shown that that balance was not as unfavorable to the Jews as was once thought.

Conclusion

The argument I have made in this chapter is twofold. First, departing from what I shall call the perfect correlation approach, where the number of references reflects the number of people, I suggest that different types of evidence can have considerably different weight in terms of what type of presence they imply and that non-indexing and invisibility are not necessarily only a matter of chance and survival of evidence but also a matter of strategy, especially for vulnerable communities.[69] Enough evidence has accumulated over time to indicate that Jews continued to live in Egypt in communal form, most probably adopting a low profile during the early decades after the tragic events. And second, I propose to push the analysis on onomastics in a way that should allow us to reach higher levels of likelihood than previously as to the potential communal affiliations of the individuals bearing Old Testament names. Beyond this, it is also possible to bring other contextual factors into play. The high levels of Old Testament names

among Christians in some areas (they are indeed by no means equally distributed throughout Egypt) could themselves point to proximity with Jews. Assimilation did not necessarily happen in a single direction in the framework of local communities, where permeability was no doubt the norm. Thus even though invisibility is not only in the eye of the beholder, but in all likelihood reflects strategies of disimulation and assimilation, it can be reduced to some extent if we look through the right lens, avoiding foregone conclusions.

Notes

1 M. Goodman, "Trajan and the Origins of Roman Hostility to the Jews," *Past & Present* 182 (2004): 27–28, referring to the crushing of the Bar Kochba revolt and the expulsion of the Jews from Judaea. As for the revolt of 115–17 CE, it marked "the total elimination of the Jewish communities of these regions" (10).

2 Appian, *Civil Wars* II 90: ὅπερ ἐπ᾽ ἐμοῦ κατὰ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορα Τραϊανόν, ἐξολλύντα τὸ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Ἰουδαίων γένος; Arrian (*Parthica*, fr. 79) is more nuanced: "Trajan was determined above all, if it were possible, to destroy the nation entirely, but if not, at least to crush it and stop its presumptuous wickedness."

3 *CPJ* I, p. 93; see also, p. 92: "The results could easily be foreseen: they amounted to the almost total extermination of the Egyptian Jews." Still recently, this is strongly asserted in W. Clarysse, "The Jewish Presence in Graeco-Roman Egypt: The Evidence of the Papyri Since the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, eds. A. Salvesen, S. Pearce, and M. Frenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 319–20.

4 R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 276; his assessment of the situation between 117 and the fourth century is even more nuanced in R. S. Bagnall, "The Reappearance of a Jewish Community in Egypt," in *Roman Egypt: A History*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 203–6. See also the comments in I. F. Fikhman, "Les Juifs d'Égypte d'après les papyrus publiés depuis la parution du 'Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum' III," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (1996): 223–29.

5 *CPJ* I, p. 93. This has been the standard narrative among papyrologists—except, as indicated, Bagnall—ever since: see Clarysse, "Jewish presence," 320.

6 See among others E. J. Epp, "The Jews and the Jewish Community in Oxyrhynchus: Socio-Religious Context for the New Testament Papyri," in *New Testament Manuscripts. Their Texts and Their World*, eds. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3–40; G. G. Stroumsa, "Jewish Survival in Late Antique Alexandria," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, eds. R. Bonfil, O. Irshai, G. G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 257–70; T. Ilan, "The Jewish Community in Egypt Before and After 117 CE in Light of Old and New Papyri," in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Y. Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 203–24, esp. 214–16 for the period from 117 CE to the fourth century; M. M. Piotrkowski, "'Literary Jews:' The Jews of Oxyrhynchus in Light of Non-documentary Texts on Papyrus," in *Sources and Interpretation in Ancient Judaism: Studies for Tal Ilan at Sixty*, eds. M. M. Piotrkowski, G. Herman, and S. Dönitz (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 143–73.

7 *P. Heid*. IV 333 (unknown origin, 5th century).

8 *P.Ross.Georg*. III 38 = *CPJ* III 511 (Antinoopolis, first half of 569); see l. 4 and 7 respectively.

9 Ilan, "The Jewish Community," esp. Part I, "How Jewish Is *CPJ*?" 203–10.

10 Ilan, "The Jewish Community," 210.

11 Ibid., 212–13. This is also the suggestion made by Mélèze Modrzejewski in his afterword to *The Jews of Egypt from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), but placing the process after 117. Stroumsa, "Jewish survival," 259, cites Arnaldo Momigliano telling him (orally) that the Jews stopped writing in Greek "because of the Christians." There is a substantial literature on this subject, which I shall leave aside here as I am focusing on other aspects.

12 *CPJ* I, p. 102; see now N. de Lange, "The Revival of the Hebrew Language in the Third Century CE," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 342–58.

13 *CPJ* I, p. 101.

14 Ilan, "The Jewish Community," 204–6.

15 A. E. Cowley, "Hebrew and Aramaic Papyri," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 16 (1903): 1–8.

16 According to Ada Yardeni, cited by T. Ilan, "An Addendum to Bagnall and Cribiore, Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: Two Aramaic Letters from Jewish Women," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, eds. A. Salvesen, S. Pearce, and M. Frenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 406, n. 31, in her re-edition of the text.

17 C. Sirat, P. Cauderlier, M. Dukan, and M. A. Friedman, *La Ketouba de Cologne* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1984). See also C. Sirat, *Les papyrus en caractères hébraïques trouvés en Égypte* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1985) and the chapter by Susanna Wolfert—de Vries in this volume. The collection of Jewish (and Christian) literary papyri in J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris: Publ. de la Sorbonne, 1976) contains Greek texts only, and complements *CPJ* and the Hebrew material for our period.

18 These texts, as well as Greek papyri published since *CPJ* III, have now been published by Tal Ilan and Noah Hacham as *CPJ* IV (2020). See the overview of the Hebrew and Aramaic material in Ilan, "The Jewish Community," 221–24.

19 See now the two letters written by women in Ilan "An addendum."

20 *CPJ* I, p. 101.

21 See in general de Lange, "The Revival of Hebrew."

22 These numbers reflect the state of the Duke Database in 2019 when this chapter was submitted, and they have not been updated with evidence from new publications.

23 Stroumsa, "Jewish Survival," 258.

24 For an overview and discussion see H. Sözer, *Managing Invisibility: Dissimulation and Identity Maintenance Among Alevi Bulgarian Turks* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

25 Megillah 18a (composed in the fifth or sixth century AD). The existence of Jewish scriptures in Egyptian is also mentioned in tractate Shabbat 115a, probably of similar date. The following chapter by Susanna Wolfert—de Vries discusses the embeddedness of Jews within the Egyptian legal and cultural landscape.

26 See A. Papaconstantinou, "La prière d'Anne dans la version sahidique du *Premier livre des Règnes*: quelques témoins méconnus," *Adamantius* 2 (2005): 227–31; A. Salvesen, "A Well-Watered Garden (Isaiah 58:11): Investigating the Influence of the Septuagint," in *"Translation Is Required": The Septuagint in Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. R. J. V. Hiebert (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 191–208. By Jewish, I mean not the Septuagint, which was very early on appropriated as the Greek Christian bible. The Greek speaking Jewish communities favoured other translations, most notably Aquila, several which is attested by several fifth- and sixth-century papyri; see for ex. LDAB 3469 = Van Haelst 203 (6th c.) and LDAB 3268 = Van Haelst 74 (5th/6th c.), both from the Cairo Geniza. The different versions could, of course, also have been disseminated through Origen's *Hexapla*.

27 *P.Oxy*. IX 1205 = *CPJ* III 473, dated 14 April 291. As Tcherikover notes, the document also shows that the community had a legal existence and could act as a party in a contract: *CPJ* I, p. 100.

28 T. Ilan, "Julia Crispina of the Babatha Archive Revisited: A Woman Between the Judean Desert and the Fayum in Egypt, Between the Diaspora Revolt and the Bar Kokhba War," in *Gender and Social Norms in Ancient Israel, Early Judaism and Christianity: Texts and Material Culture*, eds. M. Bauks, K. Galor, and J. Hartenstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019): 269–76.
29 *P.Oxy*. IX 1205, 8–9: πάτερ τῆς [συναγωγῆς].
30 Cowley, Notes, 210 and pl. XXVII; see *CPJ* I, 101.
31 W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With an Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), no. 15–17, 19.
32 *P.Oxy*. LV 3805, 56 (after 566): δ(ιὰ) Λάζαρ Ἰουδαίου ὑ(πὲρ) ἐνοικίου τῆς συναγωγῆς δημ(οσίῳ) νο(μισμάτιον) α κερ(ατίου) δ´; "Lazar" was a popular abbreviation of Eleazar (see Piotrkowski, "Literary Jews," 155 n. 49).
33 *P.Oxy*. XVI 2037, 28 (=*CPJ* III 510; Oxyrhynchos, 4th quarter of the 6th c.).
34 *P.Oxy*. LXXXIII 5364 (Oxyrhynchos, 4th c.); *SPP* VIII 1299 (=*CPJ* III 506; Hermopolite, 5th or 6th century). See also the unpublished papyri cited in C. Balamoshev, "The Jews of Oxyrhynchos Address the Strategos of the Nome: An Early Fourth-Century Document," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 47 (2017): 30, and the Yale papyrus published there (pp. 32–3), dated 17 August 309.
35 Balamoshev, "The Jews of Oxyrhynchos," especially the introduction p. 28–31 and the commentary to l. 5, p. 36–7.
36 *SB* XIV 11844 (Edfu/Apollonos Ano, 7th century); see the commentary to l. 5 in J. Gascou, "Ostrakon grec tardif de l'IFAO," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 78 (1978): 230.
37 *P.Ant*. I 42 (=*CPJ* III 508; village of Lenaiou, Antinoopolite, 542).
38 *P.Herm*. 29 (=*CPJ* III 513; Hermopolis, 586). See also Wolfert—de Vries in this volume.
39 A. E. Cowley, "Notes on Hebrew Papyrus Fragments from Oxyrhynchus," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 2 (1915): 210.
40 The Royal Ontario Museum holds a fourth-century limestone breadstamp with a menorah (inv. no 910.152.1), and the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst in Berlin holds a wooden one, probably from Hermopolis, dating to the fifth or sixth century: see C. Fluck, G. Helmecke, and E. O'Connell, eds., *Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs* (London: The British Museum, 2015), 213, no. 249. Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions,* no. 134 is a fourth-/fifth-century incense burner now in the Brooklyn Museum.
41 Fluck, Helmecke, and O'Connell, *Egypt*, 21, no. 10.
42 *CIJ* II 1439 = *SB* I 1157 = Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions,* no. 21. The name Ἰουλιανοῦ is written around a menorah. It is tempting to imagine this being one of the containers measuring five "Jewish sextarii" (see above, p. 74 and n. 37).
43 See Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, nos. 118 (al-Minya), 119 (Antonoopolis), 131 (unprovenanced).
44 Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, no. 118.
45 Ibid., no. 119.
46 Ibid., no. 133 (unprovenanced).
47 See the general remarks by S. Lieberson, "What's in a Name? Some Sociolinguistic Possibilities," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 45 (1984): 77–87 and the systematic overview by E. Aldrin, "Names and Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, ed. C. Hough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 382–94; a case study showing the complexity of naming choices is B. Vernier, *Le visage et le nom. Contribution à l'étude des systèmes de parenté* (Paris: PUF, 1999).
48 Lieberson, "What's in a Name?" 81.

49 General remarks in Aldrin, "Names and Identity," 388. Studies of the phenomenon in Central and South Asia are T. Rahman, "Personal Names of Pakistani Muslims: An Essay on Onomastics," *Pakistan Perspectives* 18 (2013): 33–57; T. Rahman, "Names as Traps: Onomastic Destigmatization Strategies in Pakistan," *Pakistan Perspectives* 19 (2014): 9–25; R. R. Mehrotra, "Name Change in Hindi: Some Sociocultural Dimensions," *Anthropological Linguistics* 21 (1979): 205–10; A. Dil, "A Comparative Study of the Personal Names and Nicknames of the Bengali-Speaking Hindus and Muslims," in *Studies on Bengal: Papers Presented at the Seventh Annual Bengal Studies Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 28–30, 1971*, ed. W. M. Gunderson (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1975), 51–71. It is also documented among Jews after the Holocaust in Europe as well as immigrant Jews in the United States; see A. Beider, "Discontinuity of Jewish Naming Traditions," *Avotaynu* 28, no. 2 (2012): 43–53; K. Fermaglich, " 'Too Long, Too Foreign . . . Too Jewish': Jews, Name Changing, and Family Mobility in New York City, 1917–1942," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 34 (2015): 34–57; Lieberson, "What's in a Name?" 81–82; E. S. Shapiro, "World War II and American Jewish Identity," *Modern Judaism* 10 (1990): 65–84.

50 See for example M. F. L. de Barros, "The Muslim Minority in the Portuguese Kingdom (1170–1496): Identity and Writing," *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 13 (2015): 18–35; Lieberson, "What's in a Name?" 81.

51 See for example Παρηγόριος as a Jewish name, a translation of Menachem: Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, no. 143, the epitaph of an Alexandrian in Macedonia; G. H. R. Horsley, "Name Change as an Indication of Religious Conversion in Antiquity," *Numen* 34 (1987): 2–3.

52 See, in order of publication: R. S. Bagnall, "Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change in Early Byzantine Egypt," *BASP* 19 (1982): 105–24; E. Wipszycka, "La valeur de l'onomastique pour l'histoire de la christianisation de l'Égypte. À propos d'une étude de R.S. Bagnall," *ZPE* 62 (1986): 173–81; R. S. Bagnall, "Conversion and Onomastics: A Reply," *ZPE* 69 (1987): 243–50; Horsley, "Name Change"; J.-M. Carrié, "Le nombre des chrétiens en Égypte selon les données papyrologiques," in *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique*, eds. Hervé Inglebert, Sylvain Destephen, and Bruno Dumézil (Paris: Picard, 2010), 147–57; W. Clarysse and M. Depauw, "How Christian Was Fourth-Century Egypt? Onomastic Perspectives on Conversion," *Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013): 407–35; D. Frankfurter, "Onomastic Statistics and the Christianization of Egypt: A Response to Depauw and Clarysse," *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014): 284–89; W. Clarysse and M. Depauw, "Christian Onomastics: A Response to Frankfurter," *Vigiliae Christianae* 69 (2015): 327–29.

53 Wipszycka, "La valeur de l'onomastique," 175.

54 I concentrate here on Old Testament names, leaving aside cases where names have been observed to be at least partly preferred by Jews in late antiquity. See for example, J.-L. Fournet and J. Gascou, "À propos de PSI IX 1061 descr.: Le nom du saunier et une formation méconnue d'anthroponymes féminins," *ZPE* 135 (2001): 146–49, where Jewish milieus appear to have a soft spot for composite names starting with Κύρα-.

55 Bagnall, "Religious conversion," 110.

56 This is not the place to discuss that conception, which a large body of recent research on religious change would find flawed: see A. Papaconstantinou, "Introduction," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond*, eds. A. Papaconstantinou, N. McLynn, and D. Schwartz (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), xv–xxxvii and David Frankfurter's chapter in this volume.

57 See Ilan, "Julia Crispina," who suggests that the Bar Kokhba war in 133 may well have prompted the 117 Egyptian refugees to Palestine to return home.

58 Clarysse and Depauw, "How Christian," 415 (Table 4) and 420 (Table 9).

59 Ibid.

60 See W. C. Till, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1962).

61 L. S. B. MacCoull, "A Cinderella Story from Byzantine Egypt: P.Cair.Masp. I 67089 and III 67294," *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 380–88. On this document, of which there are two copies, see the introduction and translation by Youval Rotman in J. Keenan, J. Manning, and U. Yiftach-Firanko, *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest: A Selection of Papyrological Sources in Translation, with Introductions and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 467–69, no. 9.3.3. It is dated to the first half of the sixth century.

62 *P.Flor*. III 313 (Hermoupolis, 12 August 449).

63 *P.Ross.Georg*. IV 18 (Aphrodito, early 8th c).

64 *SB* XIV 12052 (Hermopolite, 2 November 545 or 560).

65 *P.Athen.Xyla*. 9 (Hermopolite, 19 January 544).

66 *CPR* VIII 61 (Arsinoe, 27 March–27April 546).

67 *SB* I 2137 (Thebes, 6th/7th c.); see J. Urbanik, "Compromesso o processo? Alternativa risoluzione dei conflitti e tutela dei diritti nella prassi della tarda antichità." *SYMPOSION 2005 Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte (Salerno, 14.—18. September 2005)*, ed. E. Cantarella (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 397–98; note that this document is not *I.Louvre* 9 as stated by Urbanik, following the Duke Database and Trismegistos (still in 2019): *I.Louvre* 9 is a reedition of *SB* I 2237: the ostracon from Thebes is not in the Louvre, but in the Victoria Museum for Egyptian Antiquities in Uppsala.

68 Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 276.

69 See also the argument made by Petra Sijpesteijn for the first three centuries after the Arab conquest in her "Visible Identities: In Search of Egypt's Jews in Early Islamic Egypt," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, eds. A. Salvesen, S. Pearce, and M. Frenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 424–40.

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Part II

Reconstructing Situational Religious Identifications

5 Did Early Christians Keep Their Identity Secret? Neighbors and Strangers in Dionysius of Alexandria, Presbyter Leon, and Flax Merchant Leonides of Oxyrhynchus[1]

AnneMarie Luijendijk

Introduction

Did Christians keep their identity a secret? There is an interesting tension in the study of Christian identity in antiquity: On the one hand, modern scholars can only seldom recognize Christians, apart from clergy, through external markers of identity in papyrus documents, and on the other, small clues in primary sources indicate that most contemporaries could distinguish Christians in their surroundings.

Recent scholarship on Christian identity has argued—correctly, I think—that Christians were indistinguishable from their neighbors in many respects and that the rhetoric of texts exaggerates differences between groups.[2] Indeed, a person perched on a shady bench in an ancient city, watching the crowds pass along, would not be able to pick out Christians just by their appearance (nor, for that matter, Jews or people who had just made obeisance to Sarapis).[3] Yet scholarship on Christian identity can give the impression that Christians kept their identities secret and that it was difficult to recognize Christians in antiquity because they were not recognizable by outside markers.[4] Applying the work of German sociologist Georg Simmel on secrecy to the early Christian *Letter to Diognetus*, Emiliano Urciuoli argues there is a "Christian urbanity", with "shifting combinations of secrecy and publicity as structural characteristic of urban social relations".[5] I interpret this differently. The concept of being strangers in this world does not involve keeping one's identity as a Christian hidden; it is a religious otherness.[6] In reality, this view reveals more about our limitations as historians: we have only written sources and archaeology. What we miss is the real-life encounters between contemporaries in antiquity. As Eva Wipszycka has noted, Christians did not and could not keep their identity hidden from their neighbors.[7] At least at the local level, people knew who in the neighborhood were Christians.

Determining the religious identity of the people we encounter in documentary papyri has presented a challenge for scholars for a long time, and I will not rehash

the scholarship here.[8] Recent scholarship in the social sciences and in the study of religion may put the question of religious identity in antiquity in a different light.

Insights from social science help to explain the bias in our documents. Building on the work of Rogers Brubaker, Bernard Lahire, and other sociologists, Éric Rebillard in his 2012 book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity*[9] argues that, unlike the impression given in ancient Christian sources, for Christians in the Roman world, their religious identity as a Christian was only one aspect among many different identities that people—in the case of his book, the inhabitants of Carthage, North Africa—could activate in particular circumstances.[10] This is a particularly relevant observation, since scholars of early Christianity often consider the "Christian" aspect of the subjects they study to be the all-consuming, defining part of identity. Rebillard cautions modern historians that most of our sources present the point of view of bishops.[11] Reading these sources "against the grain" can mitigate this bias, as it brings out the viewpoints of the audience.[12] Similarly, many documentary papyri regarding Christians also derive from ecclesial milieus and therefore contain a certain bias.

In her influential book on *Christian Identity*, Judith Lieu notes that identity entails "recognition by self and others".[13] I will explore both sides of identity here, namely: How is Christian identity activated, and how do others recognize that identity in antiquity, and in turn, how do we recognize identity as scholars today? I do so by examining three different moments of activation of Christian identity in three vignettes through the writings of three different men: a bishop, Dionysius of Alexandria; a presbyter, Leon of Oxyrhynchus; and a flax merchant, Leonides, from the same place. Fragments of the writings of Dionysius are preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Church History*, and papyrus documents from Leon and Leonides were found on the Oxyrhynchite trash heaps. The geographical distribution of the papyrological evidence due to the climatological circumstances means that almost no papyri from the humid regions of Alexandria and other sites in the Delta are preserved, only those that made it up the Nile.[14] The vignette from third-century Alexandria, gleaned from an ancient letter (although not a letter preserved on papyrus), serves as backdrop to the other two vignettes, which are based in two small papyrus dossiers from the middle Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus that provide complementary perspectives on the dynamics of Christian identity.

I will proceed as follows: I will first examine issues of identity through a comment in Dionysius of Alexandria's letter to Fabius relating to neighbors, suggesting that at a local level people were aware of who was a Christian. Then I will discuss a letter of recommendation by a presbyter called Leon, including his use of a biblical allusion and choice of handwriting. The letter makes clear that Christian identity needed to be specified when people traveled outside of their neighborhood and encountered strangers. Lastly, I will turn to the archive of flax merchant and Christian Aurelius Leonides as a case in which we can see multiple identities at work, including religious and mercantile; however, in the documentary evidence, these identities remain separate.

For my methodology, I place my historical approach in conversation with a variety of social scientific approaches.

Dionysius of Alexandria and Identifying Christian Neighbors

In a letter addressed to Bishop Fabius of Antioch, the Alexandrian bishop Diony-
sius recounts violence in his city against Christians in the mid-third century, on
the eve of the Decian persecution: war-like events that left the city "as if taken
by an enemy".[15] Almost as an afterthought, in a subordinate clause, Dionysius
mentions that the Christians were attacked by their neighbors. Dionysius's aside
suggests that neighbors could distinguish who were Christian among them, or in
Lieu's words, that this aspect of the identity of Alexandrian Christians was rec-
ognized by others.

From the author of the letter, Dionysius of Alexandria, also called Dionysius the
Great, remains an elusive figure. Although he was bishop for sixteen years of one
of the most important cities in the Roman Empire from 248 to 264 CE, little is
known about him.[16] His works are not transmitted independently,[17] but segments
of several of his letters, including this one to Fabius, are preserved thanks to Euse-
bius, who embedded them in his *Church History*.[18]

From Dionysius's description, we can infer that the Christians at Alexandria
were attacked by their neighbors in an act of mob violence: "Then, in concert,
they all rushed to the houses of the god-fearing, and each of them fell upon those
they knew to be their neighbors (καὶ οὓς ἐγνώριζον ἕκαστοι γειτνιῶντας), led
them out, robbing and plundering them".[19] But how did these Alexandrians iden-
tify their Christian neighbors? Was that difficult or self-evident? Did Christians
attempt to keep that part of their identity hidden? Or did they actively proselytize,
bringing up their faith in God and Jesus in social encounters? Did these neighbors
discover that there was a Christian or Christians next door accidentally or through
explicit, direct conversation with them?

In *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, I dis-
cussed markers of Christian identity in papyrus documents,[20] and in his publica-
tions on second- and third-century Carthage, Rebillard discusses external markers
of Christian identity, including dress, names, and gestures to find out whether and
how Christians were identifiable.[21] I add here to that discussion something that
is difficult to observe in literary and papyrological sources but that this passage
in Dionysius of Alexandria presupposes, namely that neighbors were able to rec-
ognize Christians.[22] Wipszycka has repeatedly pointed out that the societal situ-
ation of Egypt was such that Christians were known by their neighbors.[23] These
Christians, as Rebillard phrases it, "were identifiable in their proximate social
contexts".[24] In order to show how exactly that happened, I must take a closer look
at the living situations of Roman Egypt. The intimacy of sharing houses and par-
ticipating in life on the street in the neighborhood abound with social interactions.

Evidence for habitation patterns in Roman Egypt suggests that residents of its
densely populated ancient cities and towns knew little of the kind of privacy that
modern Western culture values. We can picture the living situations in ancient
Egyptian cities through a host of papyrus documents relating to the residential
market and the ancient housing bureaucracy, such as contracts for the rent and
sale of houses, tax receipts, and documents relating to legal disputes.[25] These

documents take us to avenues and alleys, wealthy estates, and large apartment complexes of up to seven stories in height.[26]

Around a third of the population shared parts of a house with another household, that is, their neighbors. This can be deduced, for instance, from contracts for the sale or rental of a house and wills, documents that often specify different small sections of houses.[27] Living conditions must have approximated those in tenement houses. Although it is problematic to directly project living circumstances in modern Egypt back to antiquity, ethnographer Hani Fakhouri makes several observations in his 1985 study of the Darb El-Ahmar neighborhood in Cairo that resonate with the information we can glean from ancient cities. Fakhouri describes part of the housing stock in the neighborhood as old (pre-twentieth century) low-rise houses of two to three levels, where "tenants live in one- or two-room units and share the bathroom with their neighbors".[28] These apartments lacked water, sewers, and electricity. In these complexes, the courtyard (*hosh*) serves important practical and social functions, such as a gathering place, especially for women. Additionally, water for the entire building is located in the courtyard, which requires residents to collect and then to carry water up to their apartments. When the men work outside the house, women do laundry and prepare food in the central courtyard. In addition to the social interactions in the courtyard, Fakhouri notes that "the street pattern of living reinforces individual social networks and encourages communal social interaction".[29]

Demographic studies have concluded that a common form of living was (and still is) the so-called *frérèche*, multiple brothers and their families living together.[30] Although the architecture of the Egyptian house, in contrast to the Roman house, suggests at first sight a desire for seclusion,[31] these houses were actually quite permeable, because they were inhabited by multiple households and families.[32] Just as the contemporary Cairene *hosh*, the courtyard in ancient housing complexes also functioned as a communal space in which work took place and in which we can imagine different forms of socializing among neighbors.[33]

That inhabitants of these ancient cities were aware, at least in a general way, of who lived in their neighborhoods appears in directions for delivery penned on ancient letters. These instructions presuppose that the addressees can be located through landmark buildings and by asking around.[34] For instance, a third- or fourth-century papyrus, roughly contemporary with Dionysius's letter, provides directions for delivery, probably in Alexandria (Figure 5.1):

> Directions: to the (dwelling) of Berenicianus opposite the Nanaion, where the bath of Claudianus (was), but the house of the Tullii is now. Ask there for Theon, son of Ammonas, former secretary of Phokion, but who is now (secretary of?) the secretary of his estate.
>
> (SB XVI 12550 = P.Oslo inv. 1621)[35]

Another third-century document with delivery instructions for letters from a certain Rufus brings into full view the urban reality of Alexandria with monumental
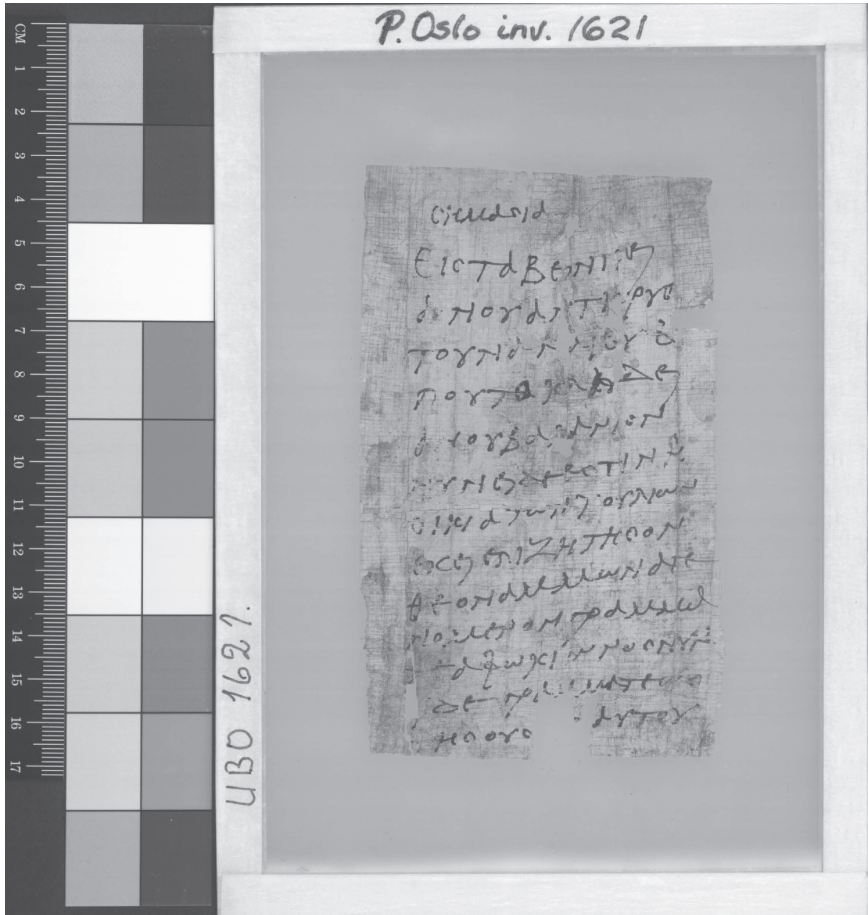
Figure 5.1 SB XVI 12550 = P.Osl. inv. 1621. Courtesy of the University of Oslo Library Papyrus Collection.

civic and religious architecture, buildings for work and leisure, and high-rise apartment complexes:

> Directions for the letters from Rufus. From the Moon Gate walk until the granaries and when you have arrived at the first street, turn left behind the thermae, where there is a . . . and go westwards. Go down the steps and up . . . and turn right and after the precinct of the (temple), on the right there is a seven-story house. On the top of the gatehouse there is (a Tyche?) and opposite a wickerwork shop.[36] Inquire there or from the concierge and you will be informed. Call . . . he will answer you.
>
> (P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719)[37]

These delivery instructions reveal the mind map of the ancient city with its land-marks, such as gates, temples, and workshops; personal contact with people on the streets and in the buildings; and lack of street names. The fact that ancient streets are referred to not by street name but by buildings or people evokes a different sense of the inhabited space.[38]

Within the city, neighborhoods were socially and ethnically diverse.[39] But the inhabitants of these neighborhoods, avenues and alleys, were less distinct than we may think or than the rhetoric of literary texts wants readers to believe.[40] Applying Pierre Bourdieu's insights on *habitus*, they ate food from the same markets, they wore similar clothes, they conducted business, they encountered each other in courtyards and on the streets, they perceived the noises from nearby apartments, and they even shared their houses.[41]

Living in the embrace of their walled city with its shared dwellings and court-yards, the inhabitants of an ancient city must have been aware of the lives of their neighbors in intimate detail, just as people do today in similar living situations, with their joys and annoyances.[42] In tight-knit societies, people constantly obtain information about their neighbors, actively, through conversations and gossip,[43] and passively, by overhearing and observing daily patterns. And so the inhabitants of Alexandrian neighborhoods could identify Christians next door.

The Christian Neighbors

The Alexandrian Christians must have been a diverse group. In a different letter, addressed to Domitius and Didymus, Dionysius details the social composition of the martyrs in his congregation: "men and women, young and old, maidens and older women, soldiers and private citizens, of every sort and every age, prevailed in the con-tests and received crowns, some by enduring beatings and fire, others the sword".[44] In other words, he claims that this group was all-inclusive; a depiction fraught with sym-bolic and theological connotations. Analyzing Dionysius's descriptions of different forms of punishment suffered by individual members in his entire preserved episto-lary corpus, Aline Rousselle identifies both *honestiores* and *humiliores* among the vic-tims.[45] This corroborates very generally Dionysius's characterizations in his letter to Domitius and Didymus of a community comprising different social classes of people.

However, the attack Dionysius describes to Fabius seems to have involved well-off members of the community. Dionysius writes that "the more valuable of their treasures [the perpetrators] set aside for themselves, but what was less valu-able and anything made of wood they threw into the street and lit on fire".[46] Thus regarding the economic situation of these Christians, we glean from Dionysius that at least some are relatively well to do. Indeed, according to Wipszycka, elite Christians overall were persecuted more severely.[47] We will see next how that played into the situation painted by Dionysius.

The Alexandrian Mob

Who were these neighbors? And in what neighborhoods of the city did this take place?[48] Dionysius supplies little information on the specifics of the event and

provides no details on these assailants, besides that they are neighbors residing in Alexandria. In his account, the mob remains amorphous, anonymous. Rousselle notes plausibly that they can be Greeks and Egyptians.[49] But the city was home to a diverse population economically, socially, and ethnically.[50]

In the literature, Alexandria has long had the reputation of being a particularly violent city, a stereotype against which William Barry cautions.[51] Nevertheless, Dionysius's narrative of the attack against the Alexandrian Christians stands in a long history of collective violence in this city, from violence against Jews in 38 CE and 116–117 CE, to the religious, inner-Christian conflicts of the fourth and fifth centuries and the murder of the pagan philosopher Hypatia.[52]

In Dionysius's words "even those whom they each recognized as neighbors" (καὶ οὓς ἐγνώριζον ἕκαστοι γειτνιῶντας) his shock at the acts of violence committed by acquaintances comes through. As Stanley Tambiah observes, this is a common sentiment among those who have suffered under this kind of violence.[53] Rousselle qualifies the violence described by Dionysius as ritual violence of executions for sacrilege common in Greek cities in Greece proper and in the Greek East.[54] Multiple scholars refer to this event as a pogrom.[55] However, in this Alexandrian instance, as Jakab notes, "only" four people were killed.[56]

In different contexts and in different places harrowing acts of collective violence have happened throughout human history, often committed by people who live in the same neighborhoods.[57] Such "intimate violence" is a frightening part of the anthropology of violence.[58] According to sociologist Roberta S. de la Roche, "*The collectivization of violence is a direct function of strong partisanship*. Strong partisanship occurs when (1) third parties *support one side* against the other and (2) are *solidary* among themselves".[59] This insight applies to a certain extent to both sides in the Alexandrian conflict. Just like the Christians, the opponents were a socially cohesive group. These neighbors may have responded to the behavior of their Christian housemates rather than to their beliefs; especially the fact that the Christians did not participate in the festivities and sacrifices surrounding the celebrations of the millennium of the founding of Rome in 247–248.[60] Both Wipszycka and Jakab attribute significance to the economic circumstances of the Christians that Dionysius alludes to. According to Wipszycka, wealthy Alexandrian Christians were denounced by fellow elites for breaking ranks[61]; according to Jakab, they were attacked by poor Egyptians who acted out of class violence and hatred of the Romans.[62] Dionysius's description does not help to decide this matter. Of greater interest is the fact that Christians and their neighbors must have been relatively similar such that the assailants knew their victims personally. Christians also used such attacks to shore up and protect their community. Rebillard argues that North African Christian authors exaggerate the role of the mob in reports of popular hatred so as to strengthen the unity and community among Christians.[63] In a similar fashion, Dionysius uses the violent events he explicates in several of his letters to create solidarity in his community: In his letter to Fabius, he appeals to a common enemy as instigator of the violence[64] and wrote about it at length to the Antiochean bishop. The fact that his letter is preserved suggests that this was part of a larger propaganda campaign.[65]

That Christians could be, and at times were, prosecuted did not mean that they carefully guarded that part of their identity. Those with whom they shared

courtyards and apartment complexes were aware of their leanings. Indeed, other sources suggest that Christians actively proselytized. The fact that we can detect only few Christians in documentary sources is not because they kept secret identities, but because of the nature of papyrological evidence. In summary, mob violence against Christian neighbors indicates local knowledge and a Christian identity recognizable by others.

The archaeological record gives a similar impression as Dionysius's letter. At roughly the same time as in Alexandria houses of Christians were plundered by their neighbors, to the West of North Africa, in Carthage, Christian graves were destroyed. This means, as Rebillard observes, that Christians did not choose to be buried in special Christian cemeteries, but rather in mixed ones.[66] For others to ruin those places, it also means that these graves were openly and recognizably Christian or that the grave vandals knew that the deceased buried there were Christians.

In one sense, the discerning neighbors to which Bishop Dionysius alluded, whoever they may have been, are outsiders; outside of the Christian fellowship. Yet at the same time they are also quite literally insiders: they share the same city, neighborhood, perhaps even the same housing complexes as the Christians.

We now leave the neighborhood in order to embark on travel to foreign places with Christian letters of recommendation or introduction. Our understanding of the local situation is useful here: In such a close-knit society, outsiders, travelers who expect and need hospitality, must be vouched for and properly introduced.

Rejoicing with Presbyter Leon

The second vignette centers around presbyter Leon and several letters of recommendation from his desk, found at Oxyrhynchus, a city in middle Egypt.[67] We will focus here on the best-preserved letter from Leon, now housed in the Rare Books and Manuscript collection at Princeton University. It involves a letter of recommendation on behalf of a man called Ammonius and reads:

> Leon, presbyter, to (his) fellow-servants in every place, presbyters and deacons, beloved brothers in the Lord God (with *nomina sacra*), rejoice with joy. Our brother Ammonius who is coming to you, receive him in peace, through whom I and the ones with me greet you (plural) and the ones with you (plural) gladly in the Lord (*nomen sacrum*). I pray for your (plural) health in the Lord God. Emmanuel is my witness. Amen (99).
>
> <div align="right">(P.Oxy. VIII 1162)[68]</div>

Leon's letter is a small piece of papyrus with fifteen short lines of text, expressed in standard phrases. It is dated by paleography to the fourth century.[69] The back is empty; there is no address. Opening the letter reveals a larger world of early Christian identity practices and networks. This letter forms part of a small subset of papyrus documents that are worded very similarly.[70] One of these, P.Oxy. LVI 3857, may also come from Leon.[71] The practice of traveling with a letter of introduction from a clergy member is documented from the second half of the third century and continues into the fourth century.

Joyful Presbyter Leon

Who was Leon? As a name, Leon is neither rare nor common, and thus it is difficult to determine whether our Leon appears in other papyrus documents.[72] It is also not a recognizably Christian name. Another letter of recommendation found at Oxyrhynchus, PSI IX 1041, from the third-century Oxyrhynchite bishop Sotas addressed to Paul, is written on behalf of six men, including one by the name of Leon.[73] But it is impossible to determine whether this is the same person as the exuberant presbyter Leon from P.Oxy. VIII 1162. Leon self-identifies as a presbyter (Λέων πρεσβύτερος), that is a member of the Christian clergy. While in other cases Christian letters of introduction are communications between bishops, it is not unusual that such documents involve presbyters.[74] Leon's use of Greek indicates that he has obtained a certain level of education.[75] At this time, in the third or fourth century, it is unlikely that the role of presbyter is a fully paid function, as Sabine Hübner has shown[76]; therefore, Leon probably engaged in other activities that may have left traces in the papyrological record. If so, we cannot identify him. When Christian clergy members appear in the papyrological record, often their ecclesiastical title takes the place of a patronymic, which further hinders identification beyond their Christian function.[77] We only know Leon as the presbyter.

In this letter of recommendation, Leon employs multiple markers of Christian identity; he signals his Christian identity visually through the use of *nomina sacra*, isopsephisms, and (as we will see next) scriptural allusions. With all these indications of Christian identity, this letter is an excellent example of a formal Christian letter of recommendation.[78]

In addition to a schoolbook specimen of a Christian letter of recommendation, presbyter Leon's letter is also one of the happiest papyrus documents I know. Not only does Leon conclude the letter with the words ἡδέως ὑμᾶς προσαγορεύεσθαι ([we want] to greet you gladly)[79] but already in the opening greeting Leon wrote χαρᾷ χαίρειν, "rejoice with joy". By including this expression χαρᾷ χαίρειν in his letter, Leon makes a move that is both subtle and creative, as he adds just one word to the common greeting in ancient letters: χαίρειν. Ancient letter writers often conclude the prescript with the infinitive χαίρειν. This is normally translated as "greetings" ("so-and-so to so-and-so, greetings"), but literally means "to rejoice". Receiving a letter in antiquity, just as today, was often a reason for gladness, and writers generally express that by χαίρειν (conversely, we can also relate to the angry complaints about not receiving mail, a frequent topic in ancient papyrus letters).

By adding the word χαρᾷ to the standard χαίρειν, Leon transforms the common letter opening of his time to a scriptural allusion that harkens to Isa 66:10: πάντες οἱ ἀγαπῶντες αὐτήν, χάρητε χαρᾷ, "all who love her (i.e., Jerusalem) rejoice with joy!" In the Christian (New) Testament, 1 Thess. 3:9 and John 3:29 contain similar combinations of this verb and noun.[80] Ignatius of Antioch also opens his *Letter to the Ephesians* this way: πλεῖστα ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ καὶ ἐν ἀμώμῳ χαρᾷ χαίρειν, "most greetings in Jesus Christ and in blameless joy".[81] But the expression χαρᾷ χαίρειν did not become a standard phrase in Christian epistolography. In papyrus

letters, this combination occurs only one other time, in SB X 10466.[82] This suggests Leon's agency in this adaptation, whether he used the expression as a biblical allusion or adopted it from another letter.

To fully appreciate the meaning of these two words χαρᾷ χαίρειν in Leon's letter, the printed edition of the letter in volume VIII of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* does not suffice. We have to examine the papyrus itself (Figure 5.2). In line 5 Leon wrote the words χαρᾷ χαίρειν over the entire width of the papyrus with strikingly large letters, at about twice the size as the other letters.[83] (This is not a change of hand, but the same hand.) The *mis-en-page* gives the impression that Leon's personality (or that of the writer of the letter) shines through. The presbyter Leon, the sender, expresses a Christian identity, as is fitting for this genre of letters intended to prove the Christianness of travelers, who were also the letter carriers, to other Christians in, at times, distant places. But in this letter, Leon does so emphatically, with multiple markers of identity, including nomina sacra, biblical allusion, and isopsephism.

Leon chose this same large handwriting that he had used with the χαρᾷ χαίρειν to pen the conclusion at the end of his small epistle, ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς εὔχομε (read εὔχομαι) ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ [θ](ε)ῷ, "I pray for your (plural) health/I pray that you (plural) may be well in the Lord God". The large letters are not a lack of experience in writing but done deliberately, to draw visual attention to the phrases and to create a distinct layout for the letter. The biblical allusion and oversized script make me
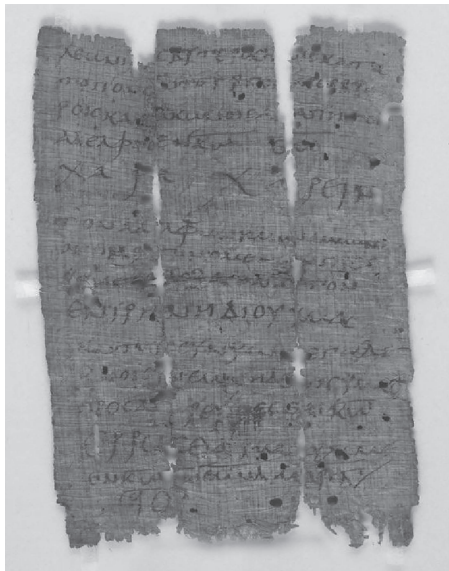
Figure 5.2 P.Oxy. VIII 1162 = Princeton AM 4107; Letter of Leon. Courtesy of Princeton University.

wonder whether Leon here visually, with his handwriting, refers to the apostle Paul's assertions at the end of his letter to the Galatians that he writes in his own hand with large letters.[84]

Ammonius

In contrast to the modern letters of recommendation, but as is customary in ancient letters of recommendation, Ammonius, the subject of Leon's letter (P.Oxy. VIII 1162), receives little attention in the text. He is indicated as a brother, which means that he has passed through the catechumenate and will therefore be received "in peace" (ἐν εἰρήνῃ), that is, with the ritual kiss of peace by those awaiting his arrival at his place of destination. As a person, he links the sender and recipients through his travel. Ammonius is a very common name in Greco-Roman Egypt[85]; other Christian men with this name are known but cannot be identified with this one.[86]

I wonder how Ammonius identified the Christian community or group where he wanted to be received. What did he do when he arrived in a place and needed to find local presbyters or deacons to present his letter from Leon? If Christians did not stand out physically, whom would he ask where to go? Would he have received instructions for delivery like those we examined earlier, with mention of landmarks and names of persons? Would he ask around for the local clergy and receive information from their neighbors? Leon does not specify this in his letter.

Another Christian letter contains directions for delivering it into the hands (εἰς χεῖρας) of the bishop, in this case bishop Theodotus of Laodicea (PSI IV 311.)[87] The sender assumes that the letter carrier can locate the bishop and deliver the document to him in person. But how he would find him within the city is left open in the otherwise detailed written instructions—presumably by asking around or by traveling with another person familiar with the local geography and social scene.

In Leon's letter to his fellow clergy members, insider and outsider roles are reversed: The unspecified phrase "presbyters and deacons at every place" makes me doubt that Leon was personally acquainted with the addressees.[88] Nevertheless, Leon considered these unknown clergy insiders. Unless they become problematic, meetings with neighbors do not leave traces in the written record.[89] When people leave the neighborhood, they are more likely to appear in the historical record. Letters of recommendation document intended encounters between (in this case) Christians in other localities among people that are strangers to each other. The fact that they were unacquainted with each other is evidenced by the required documentation and thus we know about them.

This vignette of Leon and his circle illustrates well the possibilities and limits of papyrological evidence for a marker of Christian identity: Leon appears in one document as a presbyter with a full array of markers of Christian identity; perhaps we see him also in two other papyri, but here the case is already shaky. However,

we cannot find him in other papyri precisely because we do not know anything else about him. We only see Leon as a presbyter because that is how we know him. The evidence can easily become circular.

Leon's correspondence is the papyrological equivalent of a prescriptive Christian text. It is firm and obvious in its Christianness—which makes sense for a Christian letter of recommendation by a presbyter. Leon ostentatiously asserts his Christianness and, by implication, that of Ammonius, which is the explicit goal of such Christian letters of recommendation. At first, it would appear that Leon asserted his identity as a Christian only; however, it is because we cannot find or identify him in other papyrus texts without additional information that we do not know anything else about his other identities. In such a case, we see a real bias in the papyrological evidence.

In the case of Leon the presbyter, it was clear that he was a Christian. The emphatic activation of identity markers was fitting in the context of a letter of recommendation, even its purpose. But this reveals only a partial side of life in Oxyrhynchus or traveling to another place in antiquity. As this letter shows, when trying to understand social situations, both in literary sources and in documentary papyri, we are confronted with the opinions and prescriptions of bishops. Many of those who appear to be Christians in letters and documents are clergy, and the majority of those are bishops.[90] Just as the literary record is skewed towards clergy,[91] so too is the documentary record. It only allows us to recognize those Christians for whom it matters to activate their Christian identity. In many cases, those are clergy—bishops, presbyters, nuns, monks, and other Christians communicating with them. Other activities and interactions remain mostly outside of our purview. An exception is the case of Leonides, to which we turn now.

Leonides: Flax Merchant and Christian

If we accept the argument that Christianness is not an exclusive aspect of identity, can we see different aspects of identity in papyrus documents? As we noticed in the case of Leon, this can be difficult to determine and even circular. The case of Aurelius Leonides forms an exception in which we can see the different aspects of his identities. It confronts us also with the serendipity of our knowledge. Aurelius Leonides, son of Theon, was an inhabitant of Oxyrhynchus in the first half of the fourth century. From his archive of thirteen or fourteen papers, we learn that he was a flax merchant and leading member of the local flax guild.[92] In most of Leonides's documents, only his identity as a flax merchant is discernable. One of the documents, a receipt, preserves Leonides's signature—his name written in his own handwriting (ὁ αὐτὸς Λεωνίδης [σε]ση(μείωμαι), P.Oxy. XLV. 3262) (Figure 5.3).

But there is so much we do not know about him: we do not know when he was born and when he died. His father's name was Theon, but we do not know his mother's name or family situation. Did he have a wife? Did they have children? If
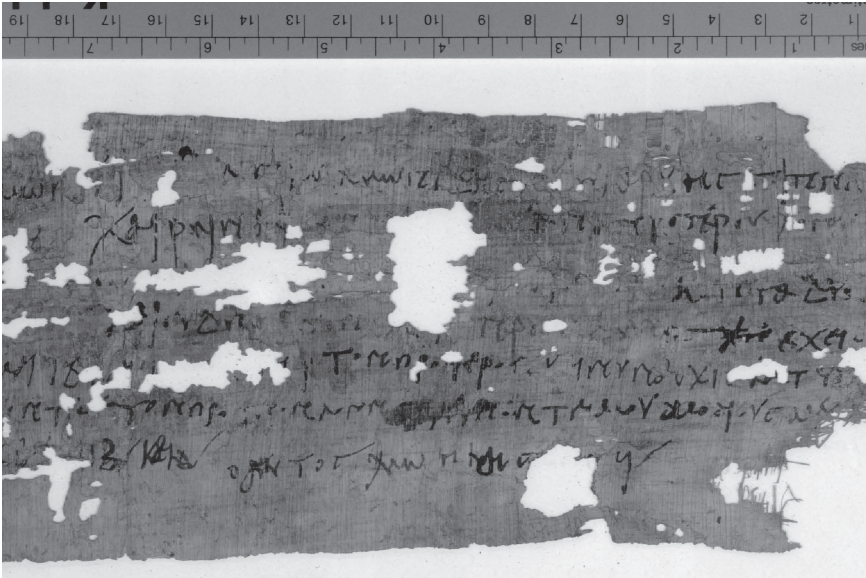
Figure 5.3 P.Oxy. XLV 3262. Image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society and the University of Oxford Imaging Papyri Project.

so, how many? We know that he was a Christian only because he had tied a school copy of a Christian text, the first seven verses of the Epistle to the Romans, to his documents into a small bundle (Figure 5.4). It is possible that a second Christian text belonged to his papers also: Geoffrey Smith and Brent Landau argue that a papyrus with a yet to be unidentified apocryphal gospel, P.Oxy. II 210, was written by the same person as the page with the epistle to the Romans (P.Oxy. II 209.)[93]

Nothing in the business papers suggests that Leonides was a Christian. He partners with a certain Ammonius, son of Copres, whom we know from another document to have been the reader of a village church (P.Oxy. XXXIII 2673); however, in the business documents Ammonius is not identified as such.[94] In other words, there is no overlap between the mercantile and Christian identity in these business documents. Leonides (and Ammonius) activated their multiple identities separately. It was the archaeology of papyrology that made the identification of the Roman section as belonging to Leonides's business archive possible. Only then did it become clear that Leonides was a Christian in addition to being a flax merchant.[95]

Evidently, when Christians do not activate their Christian identity in their documents, we as scholars cannot recognize them in papyri. Hence, the large debates in papyrological scholarship about what constitutes Christian (or, for that matter,
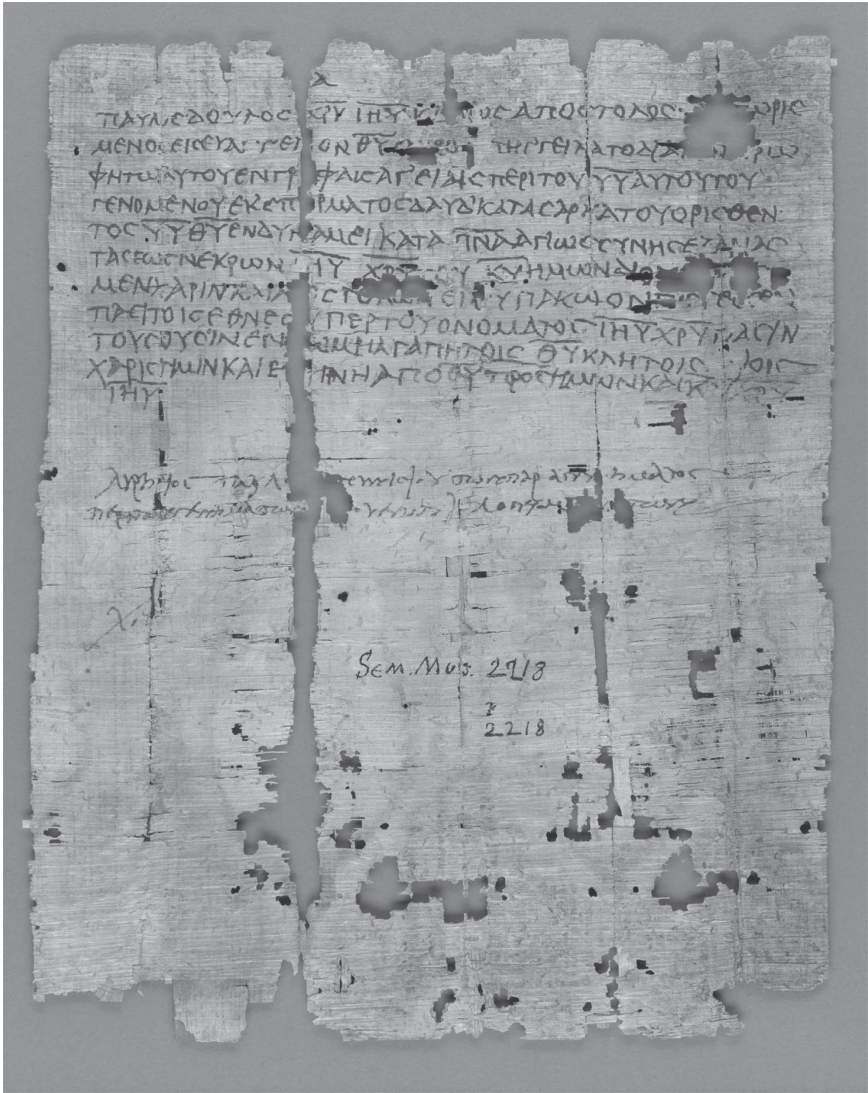
Figure 5.4 P.Oxy. II 209 = MS Gr SM2218. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Jewish) identity. Leonides did not activate this aspect of his identity in his busi-
ness documents, just as he also did not indicate his family status beyond his pat-
ronymic, because it was not relevant in the context. Dionysius of Alexandria's
offhand comment in his letter to Fabius discussed earlier indicated that people
in the neighborhood knew where Christians lived. Although Leonides does not

signal his Christianity in his business letters, his neighbors probably knew about it, and so too did the fellow members of his flax guild, just as they would have known about his family.

Conclusions

The three encounters with Christian men in this chapter provide complementary examples of the dynamics of identity. They illustrate the situations in which Christian identity is activated and, at the same time, where it is not. An offhand comment by Dionysius of Alexandria in a letter to his Antiochean colleague Fabius indicated that at the local level Christians did stand out as such among their neighbors, even though he did not specify how they activated their Christianness. It certainly was not a secret: The neighbors knew who were Christian. However, when Christians traveled, they needed to establish in detail their allegiance to the community through a letter of recommendation. This again has nothing to do with secrecy, but with gaining access to a social network and hospitality. When Ammonius went on a journey beyond his neighborhood and local Christian community, he brought along a letter from a local clergy member, Leon, that ascertained his Christian identity. But locally, in his hometown and neighborhood, Ammonius was known by his neighbors as Christian, whether he wanted it or not. Those neighbors, in turn, may not have known exactly what his Christianness entailed or what level of affiliation to the community he had. The intention of the letter of recommendation is to spell that out for the host community. Leon self-identifies as presbyter and uses visual clues and in-group language to shore up his credentials. The letter establishes an identity with a Christian community where the traveler is still unknown and relies on the network of the clergy and the church. But it does not specify how Ammonius is able to locate Christians at the place of destination; presumably he inquired by word of mouth about Christians who stood out in the neighborhood. The third man, Leonides, son of Theon, engaged in business activities in the flax trade and left behind a trail of documents. He also possessed various works of Christian literature. His partners in the flax guild and his neighbors probably knew that he was a Christian. One of his partners was even a reader in a local church. But in the preserved documents, their Christian and mercantile identities never overlap. Not because this was confidential, but because it was not relevant.

   Our source material and documentary evidence are not only biased in their historical portrait of the Christian aspect of identity but also in their largely male presentation of aspects of identity. My examples in this piece included the writings of three men. As is well known, it is even more difficult to see women, whether in literary sources or in documents. There were, of course, plenty of Christian women—about half of all Christians.[96] Dionysius mentions Quinta, a Christian woman killed in the violence; a letter of recommendation that is very similar to that of Ammonius (but lacking the beginning) is written on behalf of a woman called Germania (P.Oxy. LVI 3857); Leonides's female relatives remain invisible.

In our papyrus documentation from the period before the Great Peace, it is often not clear who is a Christian because this identity does not matter all the time. If people have different identities and if they activate these identities in different, but fitting, situations, then we can identify Christians only in situations where this identity is activated. That seriously skews our picture. For papyrological evidence, it means that we often see interactions with clergy (especially bishops).[97]

Part of the dynamics of identity is that we as historians do not have access to daily encounters or observations from daily patterns of life. This has nothing to do with appearance or secret practices. When we reflect on Christian identity or try to determine what kinds of religious and social identities the ancients could and would activate, our scholarly observations are limited. But contemporaries and neighbors knew who were Christians (and apparently who were not) through means that we can no longer access. Our colleagues who are ethnographers can live embedded among the people they study and thus gather "local knowledge", but all we as historians have access to are written sources and archaeology. Identity is transmitted through word of mouth or even facial expressions, and thus more subtle behaviors are among the things we as historians cannot reconstruct. Even so, we are lucky to have cases in which we can see vignettes of people from long ago, Christians and others, both in their neighborhoods and on the road.

Notes

1 My thanks go to the organizers of the wonderful conference in Leiden, Mattias Brand, Eline Scheerlinck, and Cisca Hoogendijk; to my research assistants, Nathan Johnson, JP O'Connor, and Andrea Peecher; and to Wayne Bivens Tatum, librarian at Princeton University. My scholarship has benefited greatly from the use of papyrological databases: Trismegistos, Papyri.info, and HGV, and I thank the people and institutions that make them possible; see Mark Depauw and Tom Gheldof, "Trismegistos: An Interdisciplinary Platform for Ancient World Texts and Related Information," in *Theory and Practice of Digital Libraries—TPDL 2013 Selected Workshops*, eds. Łukasz Bolikowski et al., vol. 416, Communications in Computer and Information Science (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 40–52.
2 As, for instance, in the Letter to Diognetus. See also Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), e.g., 177.
3 See, e.g. AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Harvard Theological Studies 60 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 25–55; Éric Rebillard, "Conversion and Burial in the Late Roman Empire," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, eds. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, Studies in Comparative History. Essays from the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 61–83; Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012); Éric Rebillard, "Everyday Christianity in Carthage at the Time of Tertullian," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 2 (2016): 91–102; Éric Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 3, no. 1 (2017): 119–34.
4 For instance, Douglas Boin suggests that followers of Jesus in the first decades after his death are invisible because "many of them lived in the closet, and that's why we

cannot find them." It seems to me that this invisibility is due to the small numbers of Jesus followers in this period and more generally our inability to detect people from antiquity beyond the very elite. Douglas Boin, *Coming Out Christian in the Roman World: How the Followers of Jesus Made a Place in Caesar's Empire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 43. Boin also argues that Christians "made a conscious decision to 'tone down' their Christianity when in public", 44. I don't disagree with Boin's claim that Christians were "code-switching" (44) and attempting not to "rock the boat" (43). My point is that even when they did that, their neighbors would still know. Rebillard is more nuanced: "the religious affiliation of Christians is known only in their proximate social contexts. Christians do not live in a separate world. On the other hand, they do not seem to declare their religious identity in public encounters except to other Christians and, when they do, it seems to be in a Christian gathering. Does this suggest that they did not experience the need to declare their religious identity in public contexts where it was not directly relevant? Before reaching such a conclusion, we need to ask another question: are Christians in Carthage afraid of being identified as Christians by the general population during the second and third centuries?" Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," 129. As I will elaborate on later, our concept of private or public does not apply to an ancient neighborhood.

5 Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli, "Urban Distances: Christians; Guidelines to Secrecy and Discretion," *Religion and Urbanity online* (January 1, 2021): 13. He adds: "In no other script of the time did Christ-believers happen to reveal themselves in such a quintessentially urban manner: we see part of them but not all, and what we do not see of them we either get along without or make it up", 18.

6 See, for instance, Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity*, *Aliens and Sojourners* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

7 "Écartons tout de suite une hypothèse . . . selon laquelle les chrétiens, avant l'époque de Constantin, auraient généralement évité de manifester leur foi dans leurs lettres, de peur que celles-ci ne tombent entre les mains des païens, les exposant ainsi aux persécutions. Cette explication est certainement fausse. Étant donné le caractère du culte traditionnel, ceux qui s'abstenaient d'y participer étaient tout de suite repérés. En outre, il faut tenir compte du fait qu'en Égypte, pour des raisons géographiques, le tissu de l'habitat était extrêmement serré, si bien que personne ne pouvait s'échapper aux regards des voisins. On n'avait pas besoin de contrôler le contenu des lettres pour savoir si quelqu'un était ou non chrétien"; Wipszycka, "La christianisation de l'Égypte aux IVe -VIe siècles. Aspects sociaux et ethniques," 119–20.

8 For an overview of the scholarship, see, e.g., Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 25–55. See also studies by, among others, Roger Bagnall, Lincoln Blumell, Malcolm Choat, Eldon Epp, Mario Naldini, Ewa Wipszycka.

9 Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," *European Journal of Sociology/ Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 163–89; Rogers Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference*, Reprint ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*.

10 "Christianness was only one of a plurality of identities available to be activated in a given situation"; Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 92. See also Rebillard, "Everyday Christianity in Carthage at the Time of Tertullian."

11 See especially the discussion on evidence, Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 5–6. And: "by introducing the notion of 'religious significance', the modern historian adopts the point of view of the bishops, who constantly forced the distinction between religious and secular on their congregations. Indeed, it is crucial to distinguish between the availability of a category membership and its activation"; Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 96.

12 "It is my contention that sermons and pastoral treatises participate in processes of communication that leave direct and indirect traces in the texts themselves, and that the practice of 'symptomatic reading' or reading 'against the grain' allow us to recover these traces;" Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 6. On reading against the grain, as a hermeneutics of suspicion, see also, for instance, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Text and Reality - Reality as Text: The Problem of a Feminist Historical and Social Reconstruction Based on Texts," *Studia Theologica—Nordic Journal of Theology* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 1989): 19–34; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Study Guide : Reading against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

13 Lieu's "rudimentary definition of identity" is "that it involves ideas of boundedness, of sameness and difference, of continuity, perhaps of a degree of homogeneity, and of recognition by self and others"; Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 12.

14 An interesting Christian from Alexandria is Antonius Dioscoros, son of Origen the Alexandrian (SB XVI 12497 and P.Mil.Vogl. VI 287); see Sabine R. Huebner, "Soter, Sotas, and Dioscorus before the Governor: The First Authentic Court Record of a Roman Trial of Christians?" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12, no. 1 (2019): 2–24. The epithet "Christian" means that others recognized and identified him as Christian.

15 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.5 (GCS 9.2, 602).

16 Attila Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie: réexamen des donnés biographiques," *Recherches Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 32 (2001): 3–37. See also C. L. Feltoe, *The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* (Cambridge: University Press, 1904).

17 Wolfgang Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandria. Das erhaltene Werk. Dionysiou leipsana*, Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur, Bd. 2. Abteilung Patristik (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1972). See also Michel Van Esbroeck, "Nouveaux fragments arméniens de Denys d'Alexandrie," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 50 (1984): 18–42. There is also a pseudonymous correspondence between Dionysius and Paul of Samosata, see Manlio Simonetti, "Sulla corrispondenza tra Dionigi di Alessandria e Paolo di Samosata," *Augustinianum* 47 (2007): 321–34.

18 About the chronology of the letters, see Yves Tissot, "Le rapt de Denys d'Alexandrie et la chronologie de ses lettres festales," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 77 (1997): 51–65. Lincoln Blumell shows that "Eusebius has faithfully transcribed this letter [namely that to Novatian] and that it is a genuine copy of Dionysius' original letter to Novation"; Lincoln Blumell, "A Note on Dionysius of Alexandria's Letter to Novatian in Light of Third-Century Papyri," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 14, no. 2 (2011): 357, 360. This insight is relevant for the larger correspondence.

19 Dionysius *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.5 (GCS 9.2, 600). Translation of Eusebius unless otherwise noted by Jeremy M. Schott, *The History of the Church: A New Translation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

20 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*.

21 Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries." See also Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*.

22 This is also what we can read between the lines in Pliny's mention of the anonymous accusations of Christians in his correspondence with Emperor Trajan: Propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens, "A note was put up without author containing the names of many people". Pliny to Trajan. While Trajan warns against the anonymity of the accusers ("Information without the accuser's name subscribed must not be admitted in evidence against anyone"), what is relevant for this inquiry is the fact that there was someone who claimed to know numerous Christians. Ep. 10.96.5, (LCL 59, Book X, p. 286; OCT [ed. R. A. B. Mynors], 338).

23 "Le type d'habitat y était tel que tous vivaient entassés dans les villes ou des villages où la densité des constructions permettait à chacun de tout savoir de son voisin", Ewa

Wipszycka, "Considérations sur les persécutions contre les Chrétiens. Qui frappaient-elles ?" in *Poikilia. Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant*, eds. Marcel Detienne et al. (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences soc., 1987), 399. See also her quote in the epigraph of this piece.

24 Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," 119. Rebillard makes this comment in relation to Tertullian, *Scap.* 5.2, a passage that suggests that in Carthage in the year 212 the situation was similar to that in Dionysius's Alexandria: Tertullian "warns that persecution of Christians would devastate Chartage 'as everyone would recognize among [the victims] relatives and friends'"; Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," 119.

25 Domestic dwellings occur in several different types of documents: "relating to property transfers . . ., taxation documents, . . . documents relating to legal disputes, the process of building, and in topographical descriptions;" Richard Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 58. See also Geneviève Husson, *Oikia: le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Egypte d'après les papyrus grecs* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1983).

26 It is common for houses to have one to four stories; Alston, 58. At least one building had seven stories (P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719). This building was located in Alexandria instead of Hermopolis as was previously thought; see Jean Gascou, "La σημασία P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 et le paysage urbain d'Alexandrie," *Chronique d'Egypte* 87, no. 174 (2012): 308–18.

27 In Philadelphia, "36 per cent of houses had multi-household occupancy"; Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 72. And: "in some villages, and possibly in cities as well, a third of houses were shared between different households and families, yet the architectural design of houses was not conducive to occupation by separate communities"; Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 94.

28 Hani Fakhouri, "An Ethnographic Survey of a Cairene Neighborhood: The Darb El-Ahmar District," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 22 (1985): 122.

29 Ibid., 122. Fakhouri comments on the "medieval characteristics" of the living circumstances in this neighborhood, and notes that "the residents' cognitive views of their physical surroundings, especially their interpretation of public space and its use, are still influenced by medieval cultural traits which still influence their social interaction." Moreover, "the people of that residential area share historical, ecological, and sociocultural experiences. The information not only reflects on their style of living, but also sheds light on the diversity and cultural mosaic of the city of Cairo as a whole;" Fakhouri, "An Ethnographic Survey," 127. Medieval and nineteenth-century Cairo had socially cohesive neighborhoods, but we cannot easily project this back to antiquity. However, the fact that population in antiquity was much less mobile than we are today, and thus less likely to travel beyond the neighborhood, would indicate that the social cohesion of the ancient neighborhood was larger just because people navigated a smaller circle. So Alston, noting that modern means of travel therefore make people socially less dependent on their neighborhood; "We no longer depend on our neighbours for significant personal relationships, but can travel outside the local district"; Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 168. Alston 168. In ancient times, that was very different.

30 Roger S. Bagnall and Bruce W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt*, vol. 23, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy, and Society in Past Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62–63. See also Sabine R. Huebner, *The Family in Roman Egypt: A Comparative Approach to Intergenerational Solidarity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sabine R. Huebner and Geoffrey S. Nathan, eds., *Mediterranean Families in Antiquity: Households, Extended Families, and Domestic Space* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2017). In his 1985 study, Fakhouri encountered nuclear families and joint families, of "paternal grandparents, the parents and unmarried off-spring, and some married sons and their children".

These are social and economic units, "sharing food and space accommodations"; Fak-houri, "An Ethnographic Survey," 124.

31   At the Egyptian town of Karanis, "high, barred and shuttered windows and locked and bolted doors face any visitors. Architecturally, the division between house and street seems emphasized;" Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 67. According Alston, "Roman Egyptian houses seem to reflect status, yet the house does not appear to have been a major centre of social activity. Rather . . . the house tended to be a place of seclusion." And: "There also appears to have been an emphasis on extended fami-lies;" Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 86.

32   "As the house has proved to be permeable, not an isolated fortress protecting and imprisoning, so the family seems also permeable, just one element in a network of overlapping powerful social relationships. The nuclear family was special, but other bonds, to the extended family, to the co-residents were also important"; Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 96.

33   Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 53 and 59–61. It is not clear to me whether the gender division described by Fakhouri was already practiced in antiquity.

34   See R. W. Daniel, "Through Straying Streets: A Note on Cημαcὶα-Texts," *ZPE* 54 (1984): 85–86; Stephen Llewelyn, "The Εἰς (Τὴν) Οἰκίαν Formula and the Deliv-ery of Letters to Third Persons or to Their Property," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 101 (1994): 71–78; S. R. Llewelyn, "The Function of the Σημασία-Texts, P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 and SB XVI 12550," *ZPE* 104 (1994): 230–32; Nikolaos Gonis, "Some More Elaborate Epistolary Addresses," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 136 (2001): 116–18. Also Roger Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC–AD 800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Eldon Jay Epp, "New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts and Letter Car-rying in Greco-Roman Times," in *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 383–409; P. M. Head, "Named Letter-Carriers Among the Oxy-rhynchus Papyri," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (2009): 279–99; Paul Schubert, *The Bearers of Business Letters in Roman Egypt*, Papyrologica Bruxellensia 41 (Leuven: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth/Peeters, 2021), 26–27.

35   Translation based on Martha H. de Kat Eliassen, "Three Papyri from the Oslo Col-lection," *Symbolae Osloenses* 56 (1981): 103–4; Daniel, "Through Straying Streets," 85–86.

36   The word κυρτοπλοκεῖον is not attested elsewhere; Rea translated it as "basket-weaving shop"; P.Oxy. XXIV 2719, 111.

37   J. Rea, "P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719", in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1968, 111. My translation is based on the revised edition in Gascou, "La σημασία P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 et le paysage urbain d'Alexandrie," 309–10. The city is Alexandria, not Hermopolis, as in ed. princ.; so Gascou, "La σημασία P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 et le paysage urbain d'Alexandrie".

38   On the absence of street names in ancient cities, see Malcolm Choat, "The City in Roman Egypt: The Evidence of the Papyri," in *The First Urban Churches 1: Methodo-logical Foundations*, eds. James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 83.

39   Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 173. Alston provides a thorough evaluation of the evidence for the neighborhoods of Alexandria, including a lengthy discussion of sociological scholarship on neighborhoods. See his chapter 4: "Streets, Districts and Neighbourhoods," 128–84.

40   Also, for instance, Lieu: "beyond the world of persecution and its literary construction stand the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of ideas of the gods or of death held in common across boundaries, which suggest a shared identity between those we wish to label pagans, Jews, *or* Christians, a shared identity that our texts seek to deny"; Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 143.

41 In another letter to the Alexandrian Christians, Dionysius writes about the plague, shared by Christians and pagans alike, again implying that they all lived close together: "war and famine took hold, which the Gentiles endured along with us". According to Eusebius, in caring for their neighbors, the Christians contracted the disease from them (ἀπὸ τῶν πλησίον); *Hist. eccl.* 7.22.5, 7 (GCS 9.2, 680).

42 "Neighbours are simply people who live near one another . . . and while this propinquity can provide a context for neighbourly relations to form and flourish, living in close proximity to others—even those with whom friendly greetings are exchanged—can also generate a host of annoyances, disputes, complaints and occasional open hostility"; Lynda Cheshire, Robin Fitzgerald, and Yan Liu, "Neighbourhood Change and Neighbour Complaints: How Gentrification and Densification Influence the Prevalence of Problems Between Neighbours," *Urban Studies* 56, no. 6 (2019): 1094. If modern anthropological observations are applicable to the living situations in Greco-Roman Egypt, I suspect that living in these densely populated neighborhoods resemble what anthropologists observed, for instance, in Indonesian long houses on Borneo, see Christine Helliwell, "Space and Sociality in a Dayak Longhouse," in *Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*, ed. Michael Jackson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 128–48. Helliwell concludes that "the space marked off by internal *lawang* partitions is not a 'private' one, radically separated from the equivalent ones on either side in the way that the space within an English terraced house might be. . . . This evidence points not to the autonomy of the household, but to the *mutuality* of interhousehold relations: not to the opposition of household and community, but to a complex merging of the two" (p. 141).

43 Tertullian's comments suggest that people gossiped about those who had converted to Christianity, see Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," 119–20 with reference to Tertullian, Apol. 3.1. That does not mean that the identity was kept secret; it means that it was noteworthy. On gossip as a (gendered) discourse, see Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

44 Dionysius to Domitius and Didymus; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.11.20 (GCS 9.2, 662).

45 Aline Rousselle, "La persécution des chrétiens à Alexandrie au IIIe siècle," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 52 (1974): 235–45.

46 *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.5 (GCS 9.2, 602).

47 Wipszycka, "Considérations sur les persécutions contre les Chrétiens," 400–3.

48 In the Roman period, neighborhoods were called *amphoda* and had important functions in the Roman bureaucracy: "Amphoda are important points of reference for the identification of a person, both regarding tax revenue lists and other compilations like the list of members of the gymnasium. Whether these city quarters had any equivalent in the physical reality of the town or were just administrative labels is still unclear"; Wolfgang Müller, "Urbanism in Graeco-Roman Egypt," in *Cities and Urbanism in Ancient Egypt*, eds. Manfred Bietak, Ernst Czerny, and Irene Forstner-Müller, vol. LX, Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 236. See also Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 128–84.

49 "La population qui massacre les chrétiens peut être composée de Grecs et d'Egyptiens de la ville d'Alexandrie"; Rousselle, "La persécution des chrétiens à Alexandrie au IIIe siècle," 236.

50 William D. Barry, "Aristocrats, Orators, and the 'Mob': Dio Chrysostom and the World of the Alexandrians," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 42 (1993): 101. According to Barry, "the remarkable ethnic diversity of the city (including Greeks, Italians, Syrians, Libyans, Cilicians, Ethiopians, Arabs, Bactrians, Scythians, Persians,

and Indians"; Barry, "Aristocrats, Orators, and the 'Mob'", 101. (He does not mention Egyptians and Jews here).

51 Barry argues that at least in Dio Chrysostom's Alexandrian oration, "the evidence of collective violence is scant in the oration, suggesting perhaps that the Alexandrians observed certain limits to their celebrations and demonstrations"; Barry, "Aristocrats, Orators, and the 'Mob'," 101. The main point of his piece is that we cannot interpret Dio's oration as evidence that the Alexandrians were particularly violent.

52 There is a robust literature on this topic, see especially: Barry, "Aristocrats, Orators, and the 'Mob'," 82–103. Barry argues that Dio Chrysostom does not so much accuse the Alexandrians of being violent and riotous but rather of being frivolous, by reading the speech in context. On the Jewish riots and violent oppression in 38 CE, see for instance, Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, 219–35, "Conflict in Alexandria"; Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1997); William D. Barry, "Popular Violence and the Stability of Roman Alexandria, 30 BC—AD 215," *Alexandrian Studies in Memoriam Daoud Abdu Daoud (Bulletin de La Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie 45)* (1993): 19–34; Ramsey MacMullen, "The Historical Role of the Masses in Late Antiquity," in *Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary*, ed. Ramsey MacMullen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 250–76; Carlos Galvao-Sobrinho begins his contribution on "Embodies Theologies: Christian Identity and Violence in Alexandria in the Early Arian Controversy," with a quote from Nicephorus Callistus: "The mob . . . massed into the agora. . . . The very people who dwelled under the same roof . . . were taking arms against each other, using their tongues for spears, sinking their teeth into one another". The reported incident happened "in the early 320s, just before Nicaea", "in the wake of the controversy over the teachings of Arius" (in *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices*, ed. H. A. Drake [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006], 321). In this case, the violence is among Christians.

53 "A searing question that seems repeatedly to be voiced by victims of violence in various parts of the world in the course of recent ethnic and ethnonationalist conflicts is how it is that persons known to them, persons who had been their neighbors and sometimes reckoned as friends, with whom they had shared various kinds of exchanges and reciprocities, could suddenly turn upon them and inflict terror and violence--arson, homicide, torture, rape, mutilation, robbery, displacement and flight—upon them?" Tambiah asks: "How do we understand the shift and the dynamics by which friends and neighbors are 'suddenly' transformed into enemies and aggressors?;" Stanley J. Tambiah, "Friends, Neighbors, Enemies, Strangers: Aggressor and Victim in Civilian Ethnic Riots," *Social Science & Medicine* 45, no. 8 (1997): 1177. Tambiah's topic is ethnic violence.

54 Rousselle, "La persécution des chrétiens à Alexandrie au IIIe siècle," 236. On the ritual aspects of violence, see also the seminal article by Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 59 (1973): 51–91; Natalie Zemon Davis, "Writing 'The Rites of Violence' and Afterward," *Past Present* 214 (2012): 8–29.

55 For example, Wipszycka, "Considérations sur les persécutions contre les Chrétiens," 400. It is anachronistic to classify these instances of local violence as "pogroms". The scale of violence and murder and the long history of Christian hatred against their Jewish neighbors stands in no comparison to the Alexandrian violence described by Dionysius.

56 Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie," 6; Attila Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina: evolution sociale et institutionnelle du christianisme alexandrin (IIe et IIIe siècles)*, 2e édition corrigée, Christianismes anciens 1 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), 229.

57 See, for instance, Jan Gross's book about a Polish village during the Holocaust where the Polish half of the population of the village gruesomely murdered the Polish-Jewish half; Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

58 Jeffrey S. Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

59 Roberta Senechal De La Roche, "Why Is Collective Violence Collective?" *Sociological Theory* 19, no. 2 (2001): 128, emphasis original.

60 Dionysius is very explicit that this violence took place before the Decian persecution, so 248–49, this is during the time of the Roman millennium festivities, see also Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina*, 228–29; Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie," 7.

61 Wipszycka, "Considérations sur les persécutions contre les Chrétiens," 400–3.

62 Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie," 7; Jakab, *Ecclesia alexandrina*, 229–30. « à la lumière de la lettre de Denys nous pouvons présumer que la population déchargeait sa haine contre les Romains sur les chrétiens», 230.

63 Éric Rebillard, "Popular Hatred Against Christians: The Case of North Africa in the Second and Third Centuries," *Archiv Für Religionsgeschichte* 16, no. 1 (2015): 283–310.

64 "The persecution that occurred among us did not begin with the imperial edict, but anticipated it by a whole year, the prophet and creator of evil in this city, whoever it was, was ahead of the game, and set in motion and instigated the Gentile mobs against us beforehand, rekindling the locals' superstition" (*Hist. eccl.* 6.41.1 [GCS 9.2, 600]).

65 Similar to Rebillard's suggestion that Christians exaggerated violence and used the instances to shore up unity and community among themselves; Rebillard, "Popular Hatred Against Christians."

66 Rebillard, "Conversion and Burial in the Late Roman Empire," 73.

67 Perhaps as many as half a million papyri have been found at the ancient garbage heaps of Oxyrhynchus, and roughly 10,000 literary and documentary papyri from this find are currently published, as one learns from LDAB and HGV searches. Christian papyri make up a fraction of the texts from Oxyrhynchus. The earliest Christian literary papyri date palaeographically to the second century. Christians can be recognized in documentary sources from Oxyrhynchus from the middle of the third century onward. Christian papyri until roughly the year 400 (minus Septuagint manuscripts) are collected in Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment, eds., *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

68 Λέων πρεσβύτερος τοῖς κατὰ τόπον συ\ν/λιτουργοῖ[ς] πρεσβυτ[έ-]ροις καὶ διακώνοις ἀ[γ]απητοῖ[ς] ἀδελφοῖς ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ θ(ε)ῷ χαρᾷ χα[ί]ρειν. τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Ἀμμώνιον παραγινόμενον πρὸς ὑμᾶς συνδέξασθαι αὐτὸν ἐν ἰρήνη, δι' οὗ ὑμᾶς καὶ τοὺς σὺν ὑμῖν ἐγώ δε καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἡδέως ὑμᾶς προσαγορεύεσθαι κ(υρί)ῳ. ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς [ε]ὔχομε ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ [θ](ε)ῷ. Ἐμμ(ανουὴ)λ μάρτ(υς). (ἀμήν) (written with *koppa theta*); ed. princ. Arthur S. Hunt, P.Oxy. VIII 1162, 266–67. See also, for example, Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 559–63, no. 149; AnneMarie Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty: Christian Clergy at Oxyrhynchus (c. 250–400)," in *Beyond Priesthood: Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire*, eds. Richard L. Gordon, Georgia Petridou, and Jörg Rüpke (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 112–13.

69 P.Oxy. VIII 1162, 266. The papyrus measures 12.5 (h) x 9.2 (w) centimeters. Many papyrus letters are fairly modest in size; on dimensions of letters, see Antonia Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World 500 BC—AD 300*, Materiale Textkulturen 12 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), Appendix II, 337–45.

70 Chan-Hie Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation*, SBLDS 4 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on Paul, 1972), 231, no. 76.

71 Lincoln Blumell and Thomas Wayment propose that P.Oxy. LVI 3857, another Christian letter of recommendation with a similar phrase to P.Oxy. VIII 1162 also was sent by Leon but penned by someone else because of the different handwriting. Unfortunately, because the opening section is broken off, the identification with Leon remains tenuous. The letter reads in translation: "to my beloved brothers and fellow ministers in every locality. Receive in peace our daughter Germania, who is coming to you, because she needs help. Through her I and those with me greet you and those with you. Emmanuel. Amen. I pray for your health in the Lord, beloved brethren"; P.Oxy. LVI 3857, edited by M. G. Sirivianou. This letter for Germania constitutes important evidence for Christian women, especially since women are so often absent from documentation. Another letter of recommendation, SB XVI 12304 from papas Heraclides also overlaps partly with Leon's letter; for the edition, see Kurt Treu, "P. Berol. 8508: Christliches Empfehlungsschreiben aus dem Einband des koptisch-gnostischen Kodex P. 8502," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 1982, no. 28 (2009): 53–54.

72 A search on the Trismegistos database reveals that the name Leon appears 306 times. 217 people were known by that name. "The name Leon (Λέων) is Greek and is the name for "Lion". The name was associated with bravery and courage"; Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 476, no. 132.

73 This Leon is described as a "catechumen in the beginning of the Gospel" (Λέωνα καθηχούμενον ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, PSI IX 1041, lines 10–11) probably just beginning his education in Christian scriptures; see, for instance, Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 116–17; Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 472–76, no. 132, esp. 476, note to ll. 10–11. Another Christian letter mentions a Leon in the greetings section; P.Oxy. XVII 2156, late 4th, early 5th cent.

74 For instance, a letter from the presbyters of Herakleopolis to bishop Sotas, P.Oxy. XXXVI 2785, or a letter asking a bishop to write a letter of recommendation to the village presbyters; P.Berl. Sarisch. 11 (fourth cent.), "Christliches Empfehlungsschreiben," 94–101.

75 Leon displays a knowledge of Greek that we frequently see in papyrus documents, marked by the contemporary pronunciation (for instance, writing ἵρηνη for εἰρήνη, εὔχομε for εὔχομαι, etc.).

76 About the social position of the clergy, Hübner concludes that both those belonging to the lower ranks of the clergy and deacons and priests often did their clerical duties in addition to secular professions, especially as craftsmen and traders. They did not belong to the wealthy merchant families, although some came from more well-to-do families of the urban middle class. Among the more well-off clergy, Hübner notes that these are presbyters; on the other hand, the subdeaconate appears to have been the highest achievable ecclesiastical rank for men who occupied lower positions as simple workmen; Sabine Hübner, "Der Klerus in der Gesellschaft des spätantiken Kleinasiens," Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium, Bd. 15 (Thesis doctoral— Universität, Jena, 2005), 105.

77 Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty," 121–22.

78 On these, see, for example, Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation*; Kurt Treu, "Christliche Empfehlungs-Schemabriefe auf Papyrus," in *Zetesis. Album amicorum door vrienden en collega's aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. E. de Strycker* (Antwerpen and Utrecht: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1973), 629–36; M. G. Sirivianou, P.Oxy. LVI 3857, 114–15; Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 81–124; Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, on letters of recommendation, esp. 465.

79 Hunt supplies θέλομεν with the infinitive; P.Oxy. VIII, 267.

80 See Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 562, l. 5.

81 The expression is slightly different, with the preposition ἐν and the adjective ἀμώμος.

82 SB X 10466 = P.Genova I 26 (PUG I 26) "Frammento di lettera cristiana.")

83 Hunt noted that "There is considerable variation in the size of the writing, ll. 5, 9, 12 and the word ἐρρῶσθαι in l. 13 being especially conspicuous", but didn't comment further on it; Hunt, P.Oxy. VIII 1162, 266. Blumell and Wayment conclude that these changes in size "seemingly serve no discernible purpose within the letter"; Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 560, no. 149.

84 Gal. 6:11: "See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!" (Ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί.) Cf. Philm. 19: "I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand". 1 Cor. 16:21: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand". See also Deutero-Paul: 2 Thess. 3:17: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write". On this, see Chris Keith, " 'In My Own Hand': Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul," *Biblica* 89, no. 1 (2008): 39–58; Steve Reece, *Paul's Large Letters: Paul's Autographic Subscription in the Light of Ancient Epistolary Conventions* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

85 A search in Trismegistos People for "name = Ammonios" gives 4,067 attestations: for people with this name, 2,922 attestations (updated July 2, 2019.) The name occurs throughout Egypt from the third century BCE to the eighth century CE. For Oxyrhynchus alone, there are 547 men known with this name.

86 For instance, during the time of the Great Persecution, in 304, an Oxyrhynchite village church had a reader named Aurelius Ammonius, son of Copres, who must have been Christian (P.Oxy. XXXIII 2673.) Another instance of a Christian man called Ammonius appears in P.Congr. XV 20, a letter from Colluthus to Ammonius with a *nomen sacrum*. We are evidently hampered here by the lack of precise dating of the letters, but even so, there is nothing to either prove or disprove an identification between these occurrences of the name with the Ammonius from Leon's recommendation.

87 On the historical significance of this letter as likely evidence for an Arian fraction at Oxyrhynchus, see Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 512–23, no. 142.

88 If he knew them by name, it seems to me that he would have addressed them as such, as happens in other letters of recommendation, e.g., Sotas to Peter (PSI III 208); Sotas to Paul (PSI XI 1041); the presbyters of Herakleopolis to Sotas (P.Oxy. XXXVI 2785.)

89 E.g., a petition from Diemous, daughter of Colluthus, detailing the theft of "two gold bracelets . . ., a gold figure of Bes, and two large silver bracelets" from her terrace. She suspects her neighbor, Heras, son of Kalathus, and his employees of stealing them, "because my house is easy of access from the house of Heras"; P.Oxy. X 1272 (144 C.E.).

90 See Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty."

91 Regarding the implications of this bias towards the perspective of the clergy in literary sources, Rebillard notes: "Because the nature of our sources, for the most part written by the clergy, scholars have tended to frame their questions in terms of Christian interactions, and, unsurprisingly, they have arrived at conclusions delimited by Christian considerations"; Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 3.

92 AnneMarie Luijendijk, "A New Testament Papyrus and Its Documentary Context: An Early Christian Writing Exercise from the Archive of Leonides (P. Oxy. II 209/P10)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010): 575–96. See also Geoffrey S. Smith and Brent C. Landau, "Canonical and Apocryphal Writings Copied by the Same Scribe: *P.Oxy*. II 209, *P.Oxy*. II 210, and the Archive of Aurelius Leonides," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 95, no. 1 (2019): 143–60.

93 Smith and Landau, "Canonical and Apocryphal Writings Copied by the Same Scribe."

94 Luijendijk, "A New Testament Papyrus and Its Documentary Context," 587–88.

95 Peter van Minnen fruitfully combines archaeology and papyrology in several of his publications, see, for instance, Peter Van Minnen, "House-to-House Enquiries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Roman Karanis," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (1994): 227–51; Peter Van Minnen, "Archaeology and Papyrology: Digging and Filling Holes?" in *Tradition and Transformation. Egypt Under Roman Rule*,

eds. Katja Lembke, Stefan Pfeiffer, and Martina Minas-Nerpel (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 437–74.

96 For studies on Christian women in papyri, see, e.g., Erica A. Mathieson, *Christian Women in the Greek Papyri of Egypt to 400 CE*, Studia Antiqua Australiensia v. 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014); AnneMarie Luijendijk, "'Twenty Thousand Nuns': The Domestic Virgins of Oxyrhynchus," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt. Al-Minya and Asyut*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany Takla (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2015,) 57–67; Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "Women as Readers of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 26, no. 3 (2018): 463–94.

97 See Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty". The only other datum is the highly complex and debated topic of onomastics. As Rebillard showed for Carthage, we run the risk as scholars of accepting that bias as historical fact.

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6   Χρηστιανὸς ἔστιν

Self-Identification and Formal Categorization of the First Christians in Egypt

Sabine R. Huebner

The Christian Landscape of Roman Egypt

When towards the end of the 19th century hundreds of thousands of papyri turned up on the antiquities market or during excavations in Egypt, scholars were immediately aware of the potential of these documents for the study of the history of early Christianity. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Egypt, with its large Jewish community, was among the first missionary successes, and a community is said to have existed in Alexandria since the middle of the 1st century. The hundreds of thousands of everyday documents from the beginning of the common era that were suddenly available for study promised a window into a world that lay in the darkness of history: the first decades and centuries of the Christian mission. Who were the first Christians? How did they live? How did the mission happen? Scholars interested in the study of the earliest Christian epoch in Egypt were, however, quickly disappointed by their first examination of the papyrological materials: Only a handful of documentary papyri that somehow pointed to the presence of Christians in the Egyptian hinterland dated to a time before the 4th century. While the earliest epigraphic references to Christians in other regions of the empire, such as Asia Minor, Greece and Italy, originate from the middle of the 2nd century,[1] the first papyri that mention Christian names; Christian forms of greeting; *nomina sacra*; or indications of ranks within the Christian community such as catechumen, a baptized person or clergy among the papyri date to the 3rd century, and there rather to its final decades—and still the identification of some of these as Christian is dubious.[2] Only from the late 3rd century and increasingly into the 4th century do we find growing evidence of Christian individuals and Christian congregations. The papyrus finds therefore appear to point to a relatively late Christianization of the Egyptian hinterland compared to many other provinces of the Roman Empire. Most scholarly attention has been devoted so far to the Christian evidence from the district of Oxyrhynchus.[3] Oxyrhynchus was located about 160 km southwest of Cairo on the Bahr Yusuf (Joseph's Canal), a branch of the Nile that connects the Nile with the Fayum. Oxyrhynchos was a prosperous city and the capital and administrative center of the Oxyrhynchites district—excavations starting in the late 19th century unearthed hundreds of thousands of papyri mostly written in

Greek from the Roman and late antique period. AnneMarie Luijendijk has shown in her monograph *Greetings in the Lord. Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* how much we can learn by a close analysis of the documents about the social identity and self-identification of the first Christians. By careful analysis she managed to identify a certain Sotas as bishop of Oxyrhynchus. Papa Sotas appears in letters dating to the last decades of the 3rd century. In Sotas's archive, we also find mentions of the first Christian presbyters originating from Heracleopolis.[4] The recently published edition of the *Historia Episcopatus Alexandriae* that survived in an Ethiopian translation confirmed Luijendijk's assumption that a certain Sotas was in fact ordained as bishop of Oxyrhynchus by Maximus, patriarch of Alexandria from 264 to 282 CE.[5] Furthermore Blumell and Wayment collected all published documentary and literary papyri that relate to Christianity at Oxyrhynchus before the 5th century CE.[6]

While Oxyrhynchus and its district attracted a lot of scholarly attention, surprisingly other equally well or even better documented administrative districts (nomes) of Egypt have been relatively understudied. This is all the more surprising for the Arsinoite nome. For three quarters of our papyri from the 3rd century, a century which is usually considered the crucial period of Christian expansion, come from Arsinoe and its surrounding villages. The Arsinoite nome founded by the Ptolemies and later developed by the Romans was one of the most fertile regions of Egypt. It was, above all, thanks to the Fayum that Egypt was known as the granary of the empire.[7] The Fayum is situated in a natural depression that was annually flooded by Nile water via a natural channel, the Bahr Yussuf, or the Joseph canal. This is not actually a canal but a natural branch of the Nile that carries water used to irrigate the Fayum depression and empties into Lake Moeris.[8] The wealth and fertility of the region depended on this connection to the Nile. Careful water management ensured that all fields received enough water and fertile soil from the Nile without raising the lake level too much and thus reducing the amount of cultivable land.[9] The villages and towns in the Arsinoite nome flourished during the Roman period under the peace and political stability that Augustus had brought to the empire. Apart from wheat, a wide variety of crops such as wine, cotton, linen, and papyrus were grown here and traded all around the Roman Empire as well as farther east. It was probably environmental change that led several villages at the outskirts of the Arsinoite to be abandoned by the 4th century CE.[10] The sites remained largely untouched until the 19th century, when sebakh diggers started removing the ancient debris as fertilizer for their fields. Thousands of papyri, artifacts of daily life, and mummified human remains have come to light, as did hundreds of mummy portraits and archaeological remains of village buildings. While the majority of papyri from the Oxyrhynchite were excavated from the rubbish mounds of the metropolis Oxyrhynchus itself, the papyri from the Arsinoite instead come from the dozens of villages at the outskirts of the district, which were reclaimed by the desert in late antiquity. This material by far exceeds the evidence for the Oxyrhynchite nome for the first three centuries of Roman rule. If anywhere, then, we should search among the evidence from the Arsinoite nome for Christians.

According to Eusebius, flourishing Christian communities with presbyters and teachers were spread over the many villages in the Arsinoite nome around the middle of the 3rd century. The Alexandrian bishop Dionysius, who was in office from 248 to 264 CE, had to personally travel to the Arsinoite nome in order to end a schism that had affected the churches in the Arsinoite villages "for a long time", as Dionysius says himself. A man named Coracion who is given the title of leader (ἀρχηγὸς) and introducer (εἰσηγητής) of teachings had propagated the millennialist doctrines of a certain Bishop Nepos and had attracted many followers in the district. It remains unclear, however, whether Nepos had been a bishop of the Arsinoite or some other district. The Alexandrian bishop Dionysus thus found it necessary to gather the presbyters, teachers, and lay Christians from the surrounding villages of the Arsinoite and to set out, in a three-day conference, the errors of Nepos's teachings. Coracion himself took part in the three-day conference with the Alexandrian bishop and left convinced by the latter's arguments and reasoning. This anecdote implies a thriving Christian community in the Arsinoite around the middle of the 3rd century. From the Ethiopic history of the Alexandrian church, we know that the Alexandrian bishop Theonas (in office from 282 to 300) appointed a certain Philippus as bishop for the Arsinoite district sometime at the end of the 3rd century.[11] Of course, it is entirely possible that the Alexandrian bishop Dionysius whose appointments are lost in the codex of the Alexandrian church history had already installed a bishop for the Arsinoite in the 250s or early 260s, who simply lived through the entire 18-year episcopate of Maximus (264–282) and thus did not need to be replaced. Many scholars have wondered, for instance, whether Nepos, the so-called 'bishop of the Egyptians', who was active sometime in the first half of the 3rd century, and Hierax, likewise entitled 'bishop of the Egyptians', a contemporary of Dionysius around the middle of the 3rd century, were not in fact bishops of the Arsinoite.

We are particularly well informed about the running of the major landed estates in the Arsinoite thanks to the so-called archive of Heroninus, the largest archive of papyri ever found for the Roman period. Heroninus was a manager on the large estates of Aurelius Appianus from 249 to 268. The roughly 1,000 papyri that belong to the Heroninus dossier come from the ancient town of Theadelphia, which was located in the northwest corner of the Fayum.[12] While multiple studies on the economy have been published based on the Heroninus papyri, the possibility of using this vast archive for studying the sociocultural and religious background of 3rd-century Egyptian society has not been considered so far. The Heroninos administration routinely used the blank verso of significantly older documents for their business notes, and some of these earlier notes indeed feature correspondence between locals who identify themselves—or are identified by outsiders—as Christians.[13]

In addition to onomastics, it is primarily the private letters on papyrus that provide the first indications of Christians in the Egyptian population through Christian greeting formulas, invocation, prayers, or reminiscences of New Testament literature.[14] However, an unambiguous classification is not always easy and always provides material for scholarly controversy. The private letters allow us for the first time we get to grips with how ordinary Christians of Roman Egypt referred to their religious beliefs in various circumstances. They did not belong to the rank of the

church fathers and bishops of the provincial capital, but originated from the middle and upper strata of the regional districts in the Egyptian hinterland—ordinary people, family fathers and mothers, landowners, city councilors, businessmen, clerics of smaller congregations, and even local bishops who played no role on the world stage of Christianization and are not mentioned in our contemporary historical accounts.

Self-identification as Christian

A very mutilated papyrus from the Arsinoite belonging to the Amherst collection has long been considered to be the earliest Christian autograph on papyrus and has been included in the collections of early Christian letters on papyrus.[15] It is a letter sent by an Egyptian merchant who had set out from the Arsinoite to Rome. He wrote a long letter in three columns to his business partners back home—whom he calls his brothers—and gives specific instructions to sell grain and bread and also to buy linen in the Arsinoite and to bring it to Alexandria (Figure 6.1). In the 3rd century, the Arsinoite nome was—as mentioned above—a major grain and linen producing center.
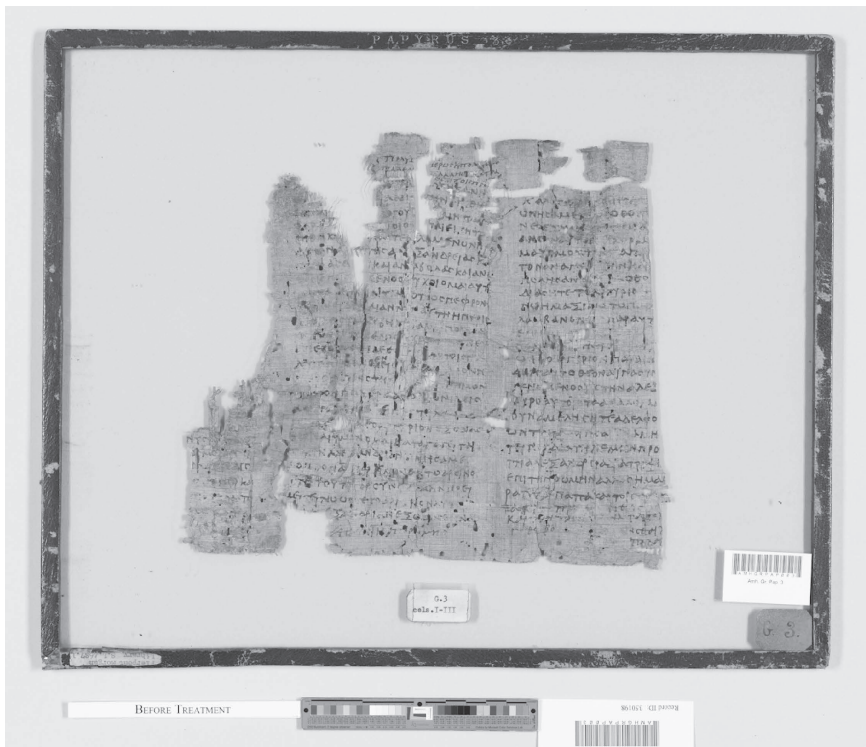
Figure 6.1 *P.Amh*. I.3 recto (= *SB* 6.9557): Business letter of an Egyptian Christian to his "brothers" in the Arsinoite nome. The Morgan Library & Museum. Amh. Gr. Pap. 3. Purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) in 1912. Photograph: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Column II

of the ann[ona?] . . . deliver the barley . . . from the same reckoning, and it did not
consider the same thing, which indeed had been said . . . when the deposits were
sent to him from Alexandria. And although I have resorted to pretexts, delays and
postponements, I do not believe that he wished it so without reason. But though
this overflow which has occurred may not now make a settlement of accounts pos-
sible, yet, to do what is proper, I will gladly take upon myself the payment. But if
they . . . sold again the bread, . . . in a short time come to the . . . Nilus and to the
father Apollonis in A . . . t . . . a. And they have written that the money should be
paid to you immediately. Do you therefore bring it to Alexandria, after you have
bought linen from you in the Arsinoites. For this I have agreed with Primitinus that
the money shall be paid to him in Alexandria. [In the year?] On the 8th of Pauni
from Rome.

Column III

You did well, then, [brothers], to buy the linen. . . . Some of you should take the . . .
and depart with the linen to Maximus the Papas, and . . . the reader. And [in Alex-
andria] sell that linen, and pay the money out to Primitinus, or Maximus the Papas,
for which you shall receive a receipt from him. And he shall take the surplus, the
proceeds of the bread you sold and the money for the linen, into custody for the
hands of Theonas, so that when I have come with [God?] to Alexandria, I may find
it for my tasks. So, brothers, do not neglect to do this quickly, so that Primitinus
does not have to stay in Alexandria because of my appointment, although he would
like to sail to Rome, but so that, as it has benefited us through the relationship with
the Papas and the most venerable elders around him, I may pay him thanks and do
everything harmoniously for you and Agathoboulos. I wish you all well.[16]

The brothers were instructed to sell the items and to deposit the proceeds with
a certain Primitinus or with the *papas* Maximus. *Papas* was an early Christian
term for a bishop, which makes it tempting to identify the bishop of Alexandria
Maximus in office from 264 to 282 with this *papas* Maximus and thus to assign
this letter to the third quarter of the 3rd century CE. The title 'reader' (ἀναγν[ώσ]
της) further indicates that we are dealing with clerical titles of office and men from
the clergy of the Alexandrian church. The name of the 'reader' is lost, but it might
have been one of the other two men mentioned alongside Maximus: Primitinus or
Theonas. Bishop Maximus's successor was actually a certain Theonas, in office
from 284 to 300 CE. The letter also mentions a Dionysius in the first surviving
fragmentary lines of the letter, which could refer to Pope Dionysius of Rome, in
office from 259 to 268, or to Maximus's predecessor Dionysius, the Alexandrian
patriarch from 248 to 264 CE. The letter writer might have had an agreement with
the former Alexandrian bishop and the current one to handle his business transac-
tions. If this is the case, we can conclude that the Alexandrian clergy was playing
a highly significant socioeconomic role in the second half of the 3rd century for
the members of its community, but possibly also outsiders, by expediting financial

transactions and holding deposits. Luijendijk has shown that a similar role was assigned to the bishop of Oxyrhynchus, Sotas, around the same time.[17]

Unfortunately, prosopographical research has not allowed us yet to identify the other individuals mentioned in the letter. They are named Nilus, 'father' Apollonius, and Agathoboulus and might have been leading members of the Christian community in the Arsinoite.[18] That the letter was directed to a Christian community in the Arsinoite is corroborated by the fact that the empty verso of the letter was later reused to copy small sections of Hebrews 1:1 and Genesis 1:1–5.[19]

The letter writer, whose name we do not know, uses neither a Christian marker such as *nomina sacra* nor any other characteristic Christian formulae, reflections from the Bible, or distinctive Christian greetings or prayers—at least not in the badly mutilated part of the letter which survives. The wish to arrive safely 'with God' in col. III l. 14 is merely a conjecture of the editors and not a clear hint that the author was a Christian—monotheistic expressions are widespread in papyrus letters from this period.[20] Furthermore, the appellation of his business partners in the Arsinoite as 'brothers' is not a certain reference to Christianity—it was common already in pre-Christian times to refer to acquaintances and business partners like this.[21] The letter writer rather identifies himself as a Christian by his high-profile Christian acquaintances, such as the papas Maximus and his clergy. As mentioned, papas was a reference for a bishop among Christians, not a term used by pagans for a Christian leader. The letter writer's reference to "the Papas and the most venerable elders around him" then is a clear indication that our traveling businessman from the Arsinoite was a Christian himself.

The second letter I would like to discuss here is a private letter on papyrus, housed for more than 100 years in the papyrus collection of my home university, the University of Basel (*P.Bas*. 16, re-edited as *P.Bas*. 2.43). The date and origin of this papyrus were thought to be unknown, but based on prosopographical research, I recently was able to assign to it a provenance, that is from Theadelphia in the Fayum, and a *terminus ante quem* of 239 CE (Figure 6.2).[22]

The letter on the *recto* from a certain Arrianus to his brother Paulus runs as follows:

> (First hand): Greetings, my incomparable lord brother Paulus. I, Arrianus, salute you, praying that all is as well as possible in your life. [Since . . .] menibos was going to you, I thought it necessary to salute you as well as our lord father. Now, I remind you about the gymnasiarchy (?), so that we not be troubled here. For Herakleides is unable to. . . . For he has been named to the city council. . . . Therefore . . . but send me the fish sauce too, whichever you think good. Our lady mother is well and salutes you as well as our wives and sweetest children and our brothers and all our people. Salute our brothers [. . .]genes and Xydes. All our people salute you. (Second hand:) I pray in the Lord that you fare well.

While Arrianus's letter to his brother Paulus is on the front, sometime later the largely blank reverse of the papyrus sheet was reused as part of the business
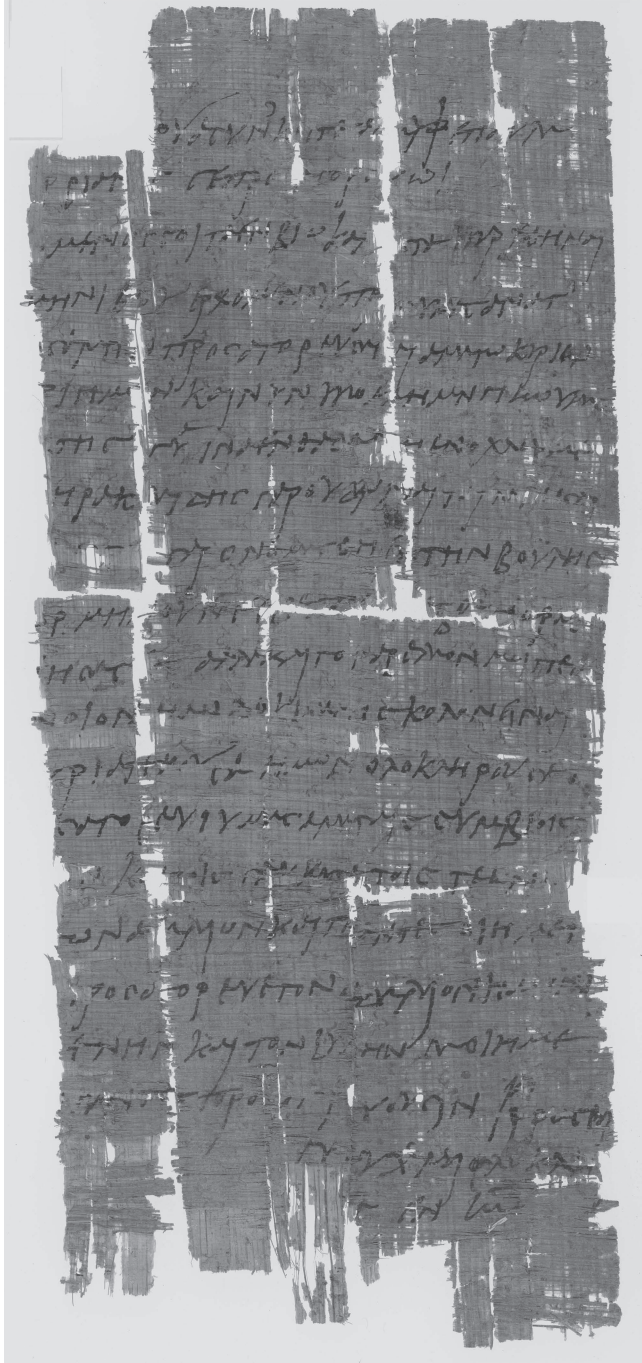
Figure 6.2 *P.Bas*. II 43: Letter from Arrianus to his brother Paulus. University of Basel. Photo: Peter Fornaro.

correspondence of the Heroninos administration.[23] Heroninos was a manager (*phrontistes*) on the large estates of Aurelius Appianus in Theadelpheia from September 249 to summer 268. The roughly 1,000 papyri that belong to the Heroninus dossier come from the ancient town of Theadelphia, which was located in the northwest corner of the Fayum. The Heroninos administration routinely used the empty backside of significantly older documents for their business notes.[24]

The address 'brother' is presumably literal and not to be taken as a reference to Christianity, as also other family members are mentioned, such as their father, mother, brothers, wives, and other relatives.[25] The letter stands out of the mass of private letters from the Roman period, however, by virtue of its closing greeting. The standard "I pray for your health" (ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι) as the final greeting that occurs most frequently in private letters is expanded here with a Christian *terminus technicus*.[26] Arrianus wishes his brother well-being 'in the Lord' (ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι ὁλοκληρ[οῦν]τα ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ) and abbreviates ἐν κυρίῳ to ἐν κω, with a horizontal stroke over the abbreviated form—in sum what modern scholars have called a *nomen sacrum*.[27] The *nomen sacrum* in *P.Bas.* 2.43 refers to the Lord, which is one of the earliest and most commonly attested *nomen sacrum* in the literary Christian texts.[28]

Arrianus's knowledge of the *nomen sacrum* notation can only be attributed to an independent reading of the Holy Scriptures. The earliest examples with *nomina sacra* contractions are found in Christian literary papyri, such as copies of the Gospel of John, which are dated tentatively to the late 2nd century.[29] AnneMarie Luijdendijk has termed these *nomina sacra* used in private letters "visual markers of Christian identity".[30] Luijendijk suggests that Christians using *nomina sacra* in their everyday writings were members of the clergy, since they were the ones who often owned New Testament literature and read it to the catechumens.[31] What is certain is that Arrianus had enjoyed a thorough Christian education, including instructions on the scribal system of *nomina sacra*, and through the use of a *nomen sacrum* in the final greeting formula he hints as his beliefs shared with the addressee, his brother Paulus.

While the Arsinoite businessman reveals his Christianity because he had intimate knowledge of the highest Alexandrian dignitaries and apparently had business relations with them for years as well, we learn something about Arrianus's Christianity because he uses a formula common in worship and an abbreviation common only in New Testament texts in his farewell greeting. In the correspondence of both men, their Christianity is not in the foreground, only casually they touch this point—be it that they refer to the venerability of the Alexandrian high clergy or weave a reference to God into their greeting to their brother.

The persons mentioned in this letter, Arrianus, Paulus, and Heracleides, are known from other papyrus documents in the Heroninos archive.[32] We know, for instance, that Heracleides was a member of the local *boulé* of Arsinoe; held several civic offices in his hometown, among them the high priesthood of the city; and also functioned as chief administrator in the village of Theadelphia of the estate of Aurelius Appianus (239–267 CE), a member of the imperial elite.[33] Since a papyrus document from 239 CE shows Herakleides acting as city councilor

of Arsinoe (*P.Flor*. 1.21), *P.Bas*. 2.43, our Christian letter that speaks of his appointment to the city council, must date earlier, that is sometime to the early or mid-230s. The *terminus ante quem* of November 239 CE confirms Wilcken's paleographic analysis and renders *P.Bas*. 2.43 as the oldest Christian documentary papyrus, at least 30 to 40 years earlier than the earliest Christian papyri from Oxyrhynchus.[34]

Arrianus, the author of the Basel letter, appears in other documents acting in his function as overseer of a large estate.[35] In a letter, he introduces a new tenant to the manager of an estate or to a local official (*SB* 6.9439 sent from Philadelphia found in Karanis). As in the Basel letter, Arrianus closes his letter again with: ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι (l. 6/7). However, here it is without the addition of ἐν κ(υρί)ῳ: "From Arrianus. Hierax, the person who delivers to you this letter of mine, has become a tenant of ours. Accordingly, don't trouble him. I pray for your health. At Philadelphia, year."[36] Here he follows the expected style, sending greetings as his pagan peers would. In his correspondence thus, Arrianus employs a situational approach. He includes an indubitably Christian formula in his letter to his equally Christian brother and uses the expected neutral formulae in business matters. His religious identity was probably not flexible, but he aligned well with whom he wanted to share his religious identity.

It has often been surmised that Christians stood out as a group because they refused to take part in offering and because they did not pay the usual honors to the emperor disqualifying them for positions in the army or public administration. This Christian family, however, led an entirely worldly life, at least to the outside, in no way distinguishable from their pagan peers bearing all the marks of a provincial elite: a higher education, landed wealth, services as managers for the imperial elite, and prestigious political positions in the metropolis of Arsinoe.[37] These Christian brothers managed to combine their Christian faith with public duties—two ways of life that were seen by many Christian contemporaries as mutually exclusive. These Christians, when dealing with their gentile neighbors, corresponded in the expected style without any reference to any particular religion. When corresponding among each other, however, they used visual signs to remind each other of their shared faith.

Identifications of Christians by Outsiders

P.Bas. 2.43, which provides evidence for the existence of a second-generation Christian family in the 230s, is not the only reference to Christians in the first half of the 3rd century from the Fayum. The other text I want to discuss in this chapter shows several parallels to the one just discussed.[38] The papyrus was found as well in the Fayum and is housed today in the National Library of Vienna. The text is dated based on paleographic analysis, as well to the first half of the 3rd century; it originates as well from the metropolis Arsinoe and was later recycled by the Heroninus administration in Theadelphia. Finally, it also shows a Christian involved in civic administration.[39] There is one important difference, however, between the

Figure 6.3 *SB* XVI 12497: List of nominations to liturgies. Papyrussammlung der öster-
reichischen Nationalbibliothek.

two texts. While Arrianus self-identified himself as a Christian by using a *nomen sacrum*, Dioscorus in this new text is called by the municipal officials a "Christian" (Figure 6.3).

The text consists of a list of candidates for various liturgies of Arsinoe and was drawn up by officials in the civic administration of the metropolis Arsinoe in the Fayum.[40] In 253 CE, the papyrus was reused by the Heroninos administration in Theadelphia. The text on the verso has not been edited yet, but contains "a rough money account".[41] No 'Aurelius' precedes the names of the prospective liturgists on the lists, which might or might not point to a date before 212 CE.[42] Liturgies were compulsory public services which often involved financial responsibilities, since individuals had to make good any shortfall out of their own pocket.[43] The text was composed in three hands: the first official drew up a list with candidates' names and their property, a second official added further qualifying descriptions for each candidate, and the third official then went through the list and ranked the candidates according to suitability for the liturgy. The list includes at the bottom a candidate named Antonius Dioscorus, son of Origenes from Alexandria. His Roman *gentilicium* "Antonius", as well as his Alexandrian origin, make Dioscorus stand out from the list of urban shopkeepers and craftsmen of moderate means who are listed beside him in this document. A second official later added

further information to the names on this list, such as the profession of the candidate and other personal characteristics. To the three men's names listed before Antonius Dioscorus, the scribe added: "Isidorus, a good man, a manufacturer of oil", "Theodorus, son of Isidorus who lives in the—building", and "Ammonius, a blabbermouth, a construction worker".[44] For Dioscorus, however, the scribe did not list a profession or address, but rather described him as follows: ἔστ(ι) Διόσκορος Χρηστιανὸς, or "Dioscorus is a Christian". The third official then went through the list and ranked Dioscorus to the second rank.[45] Ammonius, the blabbermouth, landed only on the seventh rank.

The mentioning of this *chrestianus* Dioscorus is interesting in multiple regards, as for the spelling of *chrestianus*, for its very early occurrence, for the attested Christian being of Alexandrinian origin and thereby probably foreign to the region, and the fact that he carries the Roman *gentilicium* Antonius.

The designation *chrestianus* is attested only three more times among the papyri of the 3rd century and each time is used as a formal categorization by pagan outsiders, not as a self-identification of Christians. *Chrestianus* is twice used in governmental correspondence referring to official questioning of Christians (*P.Oxy.* 42.3035 from 256 CE [an order to arrest] and *P.Oxy.* 43.3119 from ca. 260 CE [in official correspondence]). In one instance it is used as reference to an individual who stood out by his Christianity (*SB* 12.10772, a letter from Sarapammon to his mother and sister referring to Sotas, the Christian).[46] While his fellow pagan citizens refer to Sotas as "the Christian", he is addressed by other Christians as *papas*, the familiar name for father and *terminus technicus* for bishop. And not only in the 3rd century but also still in the 4th century, the word *chrestianus*/Christian does not occur as self-identification among the papyri, as Malcolm Choat has observed.[47]

Coming back to Antonius Dioscorus, what did these pagan officials mean when they referred to Dioscorus as Christian? Luijendijk concludes that *chrestianus* was used as a means to distinguish an individual from others of the same name and must refer to their profession.[48] This explanation would also hold for our Dioscorus *chrestianus* here. While the second official who added further specifics for each candidate gives their professions or the location where they lived, for Dioscorus he just adds "Dioscorus is a Christian", apparently in the belief that his superior whose task it was to rank the candidates would know now which Dioscorus was meant. The official scribe might have actually considered Christian to be a characterization as well as a profession or an office. As Luijendijk has suggested for Sotas of Oxyrhynchus, in this case ἔστ(ι) Χρηστιανὸς ("he is Christian") might have signaled at least for the pagan scribe that Dioscorus belonged to the local Christian clergy.[49] AnneMarie Luijendijk suggested in 2008 that Sotas the *chrestianus* was the bishop of Oxyrhynchus.[50] Her assumption has been recently confirmed by the *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria* whose edition was published by Bausi and Camplani in 2017. It lists a Sotas as bishop of Oxyrhynchus ordained by Maximus, the patriarch of Alexandria from 264 to 282 CE. If *chrestianus* was used by the Roman authorities to refer to an official position

or profession and if Sotas, the *chrestianus*, was a bishop, it lies at hand to assume that Dioscorus in the Arsinoite was in fact also a member of the Christian clergy and potentially a bishop.[51] Should we thus see in Dioscorus the first bishop of Arsinoe? Bausi and Camplani's *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria* does not help us any further here, since the pages with the names of those men that were appointed as bishops in the first half of the 3rd century are lost. Dioscorus's origin in Alexandria would, however, fit with the practice that the patriarchs usually appointed trusted men of their circle as bishops for the rural districts.[52]

Conclusions

The four documents I discussed here have been found in the district of the metropolis Arsinoe in Middle Egypt. All four documents belong to the second and third quarter of the 3rd century CE, and all four papyri reflect the 'situatedness' of religious identification. The earliest evidence of Christians in the Egyptian countryside points to the well-traveled, well-read local landed elite and illuminates the early spread of Christianity beyond Alexandria to the metropoleis in the Egyptian hinterland. Two of these four documents show that Christians at that time were not hindered from taking over public offices in their hometown. In fact, they were called upon along with their pagan fellow citizens of some means; their financial situation was decisive, not their faith.

Our Christian businessman traveling from the Arsinoite to Rome who composed the first letter under discussion was a citizen of the Roman Empire, well-versed in the geography of the Roman Mediterranean, a merchant doing long-distance trade, connecting the production centers of grain and textiles in the Egyptian hinterland with the Mediterranean capitals of Alexandria and Rome, but the few surviving fragmentary lines of his letter also imply that he was a Christian because he uses the help of the Alexandrian clergy for his business transactions, is on familiar terms with several of the most high-ranking members of the Alexandrian church, and calls the Alexandrian bishop with the Christian form of endearment *papas*, as only Christians, but not pagans, would have done it. The Christian brothers, Paulus and Arrianus, in the second letter under discussion originated from the ranks of the local ruling order, the *curiales*. Paulus himself was considered for the gymnasiarchy, and Arrianus appears in other documents as manager on the estate of the imperial elite. The family's wealth was based on large estates around the village of Theadelphia, and the family had the disposition to pay for a higher education for their sons. Arrianus's deliberate use of the *nomen sacrum* in a letter to his brother shows his familiarity with Christian manuscripts—he must have had these gospels in his hands and read them, as just having heard them would not have imparted knowledge of the abbreviations.[53] When writing to his pagan peers—the third letter under discussion in this chapter—he omits, however, any reference to his faith. The brothers had multiple ways of self-identification, not only their religion, but also their role as brother, father, or son; their education, social status, public offices, expectations of peers, geographical

origin, and ethnicity gave them a choice of various identities, which as I have tried to show, these Christians activated depending on the situation or even in one and the same situation.

And also for the Roman authorities many factors came into play when placing a Christian person into categories. The Christian Antonius Dioscorus, son of Origenes from Alexandria, mentioned in the fourth papyrus discussed, is identified by the Roman authorities by his name and father's name, by his Roman *gentilicium* and thereby Roman citizenship, his origin in Alexandria, and his wealth. One of many other factors that set him apart is his Christianity, which ranked for the officials as some sort of profession, presumably because he was holding an official position in his Christian community. All these factors were considered and weighed against each other when making a decision as to whether Dioscorus would be a good candidate to take care of the water towers and fountains of Arsinoe. Apparently, the responsible official preferred a Christian of good family over a garrulous construction worker also mentioned in this list.

Considering our scant knowledge about the spread of Christianity to the Egyptian hinterland in the 3rd century, the letters discussed here considerably expand our knowledge about the social background of the first Christians of Egypt and the situatedness of their Christian identity.

Notes

1 S. R. Huebner. *Der Klerus in der Gesellschaft des spätantiken Kleinasiens* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 2005); R. S. Bagnall et al., *Graffiti from the Basilica in the Agora of Smyrna* (New York: Institute for the Study of the Ancient World; New York University Press, 2016).

2 M. Naldini, *Il cristianesimo in Egitto: lettere private dei papyri dei secoli II-IV* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1968); E. Wipszycka, "Remarques sur les lettres privées chrétiennes des IIe—IVème siècles: À propos d'un livre de M. Naldini," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 18 (1974): 203–21. For a full overview see S. R. Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chap. 1.

3 A. Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012); L. H. Blumell and T. A. Wayment, eds., *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015); A. Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty: Christian Clergy at Oxyrhynchus (c. 250–400)," in *Beyond Priesthood: Religious Entrepreneurs and Innovators in the Roman Empire*, eds. R. L. Gordon, G. Petridou, and J. Rüpke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 103–26.

4 *P.Oxy.* 36.2785. See Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 94–102.

5 Luijendijk, "On and Beyond Duty."

6 Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*.

7 P. Davoli, "The Archaeology of the Fayum," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. C. Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 152–53.

8 After H. I. Bell, "Evidences of Christianity in Egypt During the Roman Period," *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944): 185–208.

9 Until the 2nd century BCE the Fayum was known as "the nome of the Lake". It was renamed by Ptolemy II *Arsinoites nomos* after Queen Arsinoe II. Its capital was called in Ptolemaic times Krokodilopolis or Ptolemais Euergetis. Eventually Arsinoiton Polis 'city of the Arsinoites', 'Arsinoe' for short, became the common name.

10 S. R. Huebner, "Climate Change in the Breadbasket of the Roman Empire—Explaining the Decline of the Fayum Villages in the Third Century CE," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 4 (2020): 486–518.

11 A. Bausi and A. Camplani, "The 'History of the Episcopate of Alexandria' (HEpA): Editio minor of the fragments preserved in the Aksumite Collection and in the Codex Veronensis LX (58)," *Adamantius* 22 (2016): § 21.12.14.

12 Relevant publications: B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations for Papyri in the Fayum: The Position of Lake Moeris," *Archaeological Report: Comprising the Work of the Egypt Exploration Fund and the Progress of Egyptology During the Year 1898–1899* (1899): 8–15; O. Rubensohn, "Aus griechisch-römischen Häusern des Fayum," *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 20 (1905): 1–25; M. Sharp, "The Village of Theadelphia in the Fayyum: Land and Population in the Second Century," in *Agriculture in Egypt from Pharaonic to Modern Times*, eds. A. K. Bowman and E. Rogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159–92.

13 D. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt. The Heroninus Archive and the Appianus Estate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7.

14 Ghedini, *Lettere Cristiane*; Naldini, *Il cristianesimo*; Wipszycka, "Remarques"; Tibletti, *Le lettere private*; Blumell, "Is *P.Oxy.* XLII 3057 the Earliest Christian Letter?" in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, eds. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); M. Minehart, "P. Oxy. XLII 3057: Letter of Ammonius. The [Mis]identification of an Oxyrhynchus Papyrus [as the Earliest Christian Letter]," in *Actes du 26e Congrès international de papyrologie. Genève, 16–21 août 2010*, ed. P. Schubert (Geneva: Droz, 2012), 543–48.

15 *P.Amh.* 1.3 *recto* = *SB* 6.9557. See G. Ghedini, *Lettere Cristiane dai papyri greci del III e IV secolo* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1923), 69, n° 4; Naldini, *Il cristianesimo*, 6.

16 Based on the German translation by P. Guyot and R. Klein, *Das frühe Christentum bis zum Ende der Verfolgungen. Vol. II: Die Christen in der heidnischen Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), 45–46.

17 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 136–44.

18 Cf. *P.Oxy.* 12.1495 from the early 4th century for the Christians Nilus and Apollonius. From Eusebius' Church History we know of an Egyptian bishop named Nilus who suffered death by fire in the persecution under Diocletian in 304 CE (Eus. *H.E.* 8.13.5).

19 Further texts on the same papyrus: *P.Amh.* 1.3b-c.

20 M. Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth Century Papyri* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 104–5; M. Choat and A. Nobbs, "Monotheistic Formulae of Belief in Greek Letters on Papyrus from the Second to the Fourth Century," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 2 (2001–2005): 36–51.

21 E. Dickey, "The Greek Address System of the Roman Period and Its Relationship to Latin," *The Classical Quarterly NS* 54 (2004): 500–1 states, "From a classical perspective, one would expect that letters . . . containing ἄδελφε or ἀδελφή would be addressed to brothers and sisters (as are all surviving examples of ἄδελφε and vocative ἀδελφή from the classical period). Yet such is very far from being the case; many, probably most, papyrus letters containing ἀδελφέ were sent outside the family, usually on business, and both κύριε and ἀδελφέ can clearly be used in contexts without special intimacy, affection, or respect."

22 S. R. Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament*, chap. 2.

23 In *P.Ryl.* 245 (3rd century CE) we are dealing with a letter from the known city councilor of Arsinoe, Arius, son of Herakleides, to Lucretius. Unfortunately, this letter is not dated.

24 Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism*, 7.

25 See E. Dickey, "Literal and Extended Use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri," *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004): 131–76.

26 For almost the same closing line in a letter by bishop Dionysius of Alexandria (248–264/5) (Eus., *H.E.* 6.45): ἐρρῶσθαί σε ἐχόμενον τῆς εἰρήνης ἐν κυρίῳ εὔχομαι. Cf. Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 357.

27 Choat, *Belief and Cult*, 119–25; R. S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 24. See also L. W. Hurtado, "The Origin of the *Nomina Sacra*: A Proposal," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 655–73; Choat and Nobbs, "Monotheistic Formulae," 39.

28 Cf. R. C. Nevius, "On Using the Nomina Sacra as a Criteria for Dating Early Christian Papyri," in *Atti del XXII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*, eds. I. Andorlini, G. Bastianini, M. Manfredi, and G. Menci (Florence: Istituto papirologico 'G. Vitelli', 2001), 1046. *Nomina sacra* for *Iesous*, *pater*, and *huios* were added to the canon only later. The earliest examples of *nomina sacra* among the documentary papyri date to the later 3rd century (*P.Alex*. 29 from 350–375 CE; *PSI* 3.208 from 250–325 CE; *PSI* 9.1041 from 250–325; *P.Oxy*. 36.2785 from 250–330; *PSI* 15.1560 from 250–399; *SB* 16.12304 from 275–325; *P.Oxy*. 8.1162 from 300–399; *P.Oxy*. 56.3857 from 300–399 CE. See Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 81–151; Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 50 n. 112). Thus, the Basel letter with a date in the 230s CE is not only the earliest known Christian private letter but also the earliest known evidence for a *nomen sacrum* in Egyptian documentary source material.

29 *P.Oxy*. 50.3523 (Joh. 18:36–19:7); *P.Ryl*. 3.457 (Joh 18:31–33; 37–38). The latter was bought on the antiquities market, so its provenance from Oxyrhynchus is not secure.

30 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 78.

31 Ibid., 66.

32 Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament*, chap. 2.

33 Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism*, 63–66.

34 *P.Flor*. 1.21 from 29. Nov. 239 CE; *P.Lond*. 3.1170 V from 259 CE; *P.Strasb*. 5.391.

35 *SB* 6.9439 and *BGU* 4.1030: ἐκεῖ γάρ εἰμι ματὰ (μετὰ) Ἀρριανοῦ ἐπίγοντες (ἐπείγοντες) τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ τοὺς τέκτονας. We often see the custom of a father and his son possessing similar-sounding names, such as, Heroninus and his son Heronas. In this case, Arius would also have been Paulus's father, with whom he traveled to Arsinoe or Alexandria when *P.Bas*. 2.43 was written. Cf. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism*, 65.

36 Arrianus once again appears in a letter from a certain Maximus, who calls Arrianus his brother (*P.Wessely Pragenses Inv. Gr.* III 8 + 574 verso found in Theadelphia, edited by Naim Vanthieghem).

37 Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism*, 71.

38 *SB* 16.12497. See A. D. Lee, *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 43.

39 P. J. Sijpesteijn, "List of Nominations to Liturgies," in *Miscellanea papyrologica in memoria di H.C. Youtie (Pap.Flor. VII)*, ed. R. Pintaudi (Florence: Gonnelli, 1980), 341–47; P. van Minnen, "The Roots of Egyptian Christianity," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 40 (1994): 71–85.

40 The list of nominees for various liturgies is written in the same hand as another list of nominees likewise originating from the municipal administration of Arsinoe and found in Theadelphia as part of the Heroninos archive. It is broken in two fragments (*P. Prag*.1.14 and *P.Laur*. 2.24 = *SB* 16.12498), which have been dated as well on paleographic analysis to the first half of the 3rd century CE.

41 *P.Lond*. 3.1263 descr. p. lxix.

42 It could simply have been that something 'eisin de Markoi Aurelioi' stood on top of the list. Cf. R. Pintaudi, ed., *Miscellanea papyrologica in memoria di H.C. Youtie (Pap. Flor. VII)* (Florence: Gonnelli, 1980), 341.

43 N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 177–84.

44 Van Minnen, "The roots of Egyptian Christianity," 75.

45 For a detailed discussion of this text, see Sijpesteijn 1980, 341, and Van Minnen, "The Roots of Egyptian Christianity," 74–77.

46 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 38 and 141: "As a marker of identity, the epithet indicates that one stands out as "Christian." Cf. Lactantius with regard to Jesus' epithet "Christ", which the "ignorant" change into "Chrestus" (*Div. Inst.* 4.7.5).

47 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 40; Choat*, Belief and Cult*, 47.

48 D. W. Hobson, "Naming Practices in Roman Egypt," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 26 (1989): 173: "Where specification is required, the letters far more often refer to a person by occupation than by patronymic."

49 In *PSI* 14.1412, l.10 from the third quarter of the 3rd century CE, the likely pagan author of the document refers to Sotas, the bishop of the Oxyrhynchite, as "the Christian" (δι<ὰ> Σώτου τοῦ χρησια[. . .]. Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 138, and 180–81.

50 Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord*, 136–44.

51 See also *P.Oxy.* 42.3035 for a warrant of arrest by the Roman officials of Petosorapis, son of Horus, *the Chrestianus*.

52 Huebner, *Der Klerus*, 253–58.

53 According to the Gospel of John, this uncommon expression refers to Jesus himself (Joh. 6:55–56). Here, Jesus says: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." (ἡ γὰρ σάρξ μου ἀληθής ἐστι βρῶσις, καὶ τὸ αἷμά μου ἀληθής ἐστι πόσις. ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ).

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7 From the Sacred to the Profane

Evidence for Multiple Social Identities in the Letters of the Nag Hammadi Codices

Paula Tutty

Introduction

The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices had an enormous impact on the study of early Christianity and their contents, a set of unique religious works, still have the ability to provoke controversy in debates over religious orthodoxy. However, within the cartonnage material used to stiffen the covers of Nag Hammadi Codex VII, another highly significant find was laid bare, a collection of letters written to and from a community of monks.[1] A further one, and possibly two, monastic letters were found in Codex VIII, and a fragment of a letter that plausibly comes from a monastic milieu was discovered in Codex XI.[2] Unlike so many collections of early monastic letters, these have a known provenance, thanks to their reuse by the creators of a set of codices who lived not far from Graeco-Roman Chenoboskia in Upper Egypt.[3] They are predominantly written in Greek, with five, or perhaps six, in Coptic. As Malcolm Choat reminds us, "The letter is both foundational and critical to the articulation of the monastic movement in Egypt."[4] The correspondence of the Nag Hammadi monks thus becomes important not only for their association with the Nag Hammadi Codices but because they give insight into the daily lives of monks as experienced in fourth-century Upper Egypt. In examining such letters, we are therefore brought close to the activities and personal inclinations of a group of people who lived out a monastic vocation at a time when the movement was still in a state of formation. What, then, can these letters tell us about these individuals and the complexities of their everyday lives? How successfully did they make the transition from secular life to that of the monk, and how was the role of monk perceived at a time when monasticism was still a new phenomenon?

In order to answer questions about monasticism in general and, more specifically, to gain insight into the individual lives and aspirations of early monks, I have turned to the Nag Hammadi cartonnage letters, and other similarly dated monastic correspondence, as a way of exploring aspects of the individual lives of early monks and nuns.[5] Letters as a source of information have their own limitations, and it cannot be claimed that the tiny body of evidence examined within this chapter is in any way representative of the entire fourth-century monastic

experience. Nevertheless, even the small sample discussed here has the ability to give insight into the personal lives and possible motivations of several of the individuals who either self-identified or were identified as monks and nuns. In order to provide a structure for my enquiries, I have made use of social theories developed within the work of Bernard Lahire and, in particular, his writing on plural belonging.[6] Within the letters written to and from monks, I have looked for evidence for the possession of multiple social identities and the extent to which these appear to have been compartmentalized and/or integrated by different individuals. The letters of early monastic figures have traditionally been examined for the information they are able to give regarding the monastic lifestyle, but by viewing them through the lens of social theory, we can begin to situate the activities and thoughts of these individuals within the complex social world that they inhabited, rather than focusing solely on their identities as holy men and women.

A Brief Overview of the Nag Hammadi Cartonnage Letters

It is not possible to know when exactly the letters of the Nag Hammadi cartonnage were written, as not one of the letters carries any indication of date. Three documents that were found within the same covers as the majority of the letters (Codex VII) are dated to November 341, November 346 and October 348 CE, respectively.[7] These thus provide a *terminus post quem* towards the end of 348 CE for the production of the cover of Codex VII. How old these documents were when they were reused as cartonnage material is still a matter of some speculation.[8] The dates in the documents do not necessarily have a relationship to the age of the monastic correspondence found with them, and it is theoretically possible that the dated documents were discarded at a much earlier period than their reuse. The official documentation found in *P.Panop.Beatty*, for example, are dated to 298 and 300 CE.[9] It was not until forty years later, in 340 CE, that the scrolls containing these documents were pasted together and reused in order to make a codex containing tax receipts for the Alopex family.[10] This certainly reminds us not to be over-reliant on dates obtained in this manner, although, given our historiographical knowledge of the development of both monasticism and Coptic, it is unlikely that any monastic correspondence from Egypt could plausibly be dated to an era earlier than the second quarter of the fourth century. It seems likely therefore that dates of composition for the letters are reasonably close to the dates found in the cartonnage material, suggesting that the letters were written around the early to mid-fourth century. Over what period the letters were written is not possible to know, and the subject material does not provide any clues in this respect. It may be that the letters were written over a few months or even over many years.

Whilst it cannot be stated with absolute confidence that the letters discovered within the Nag Hammadi cartonnage material are all products of a monastic context, a number of clues point to such an origin in many instances. In several letters, the phrase "all the brothers who are with me/us/you" would certainly seem to suggest a monastic community. However, some caution is needed here, for, as Malcolm Choat reminds us, this phrase can be found in a wide variety of Christian

contexts and even appears in secular writings.[11] More confirmatory evidence can be found in three letters that are more evidently from a monastic milieu.[12] In two letters the actual term 'monk' is used,[13] and in letter G67 there is a reference to a 'monachion,' unknown elsewhere but used here as a term that appears to designate the place where a monk, or group of monks, lived.[14] Uncertainty remains, but the internal clues found in the letters would suggest that many, if not all, the letters that survive from Codex VII come from one group of monastic letters. Initially, thirteen letters from the cartonnage of Codex VII of the Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC) were allocated by scholars to a possible monastic milieu.[15] In their 2015 reappraisal, Lundhaug and Jenott argued for the inclusion of two, or perhaps three additional letters.[16] In 2017, Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka produced a list of sixteen letters from the NHC cartonnage that "certainly come from a monastic milieu."[17] There are then at least sixteen letters from the NHC cartonnage material that have received recognition as having some form of association with monks. As a high proportion of the letters refer to a monk named Sansnos, it may be the case that this letter collection originally formed part of his personal archive.[18] In many ways, therefore, this collection of letters acts as information on the life and activities of this one individual and his varied relationships with fellow monks and other clergy.

Economic mundanities take center stage in many of the letters, a fact that might suggest that business was a central preoccupation in the life of these monks.[19] Sheep are sheared and goats are reared (G66), animal skins are required and dates are given in exchange (G70), chaff is bought and sold (G68, G72), boats carrying produce come and go (G72, G67). In this respect they are quite typical of any monastic correspondence, as economic necessity was the driving force of late antique monastic life.[20] S. R. Llewellyn noted, for example, that of the seventeen documents used by Edwin Judge in 1981 as witness to fourth-century monasticism in his article 'Fourth-Century Monasticism in the Papyri,' fifteen indicated a close involvement of monastics with property.[21] There are hints within the letters that indicate that this was a relatively affluent community, such as their ownership of boats.[22] Possessing a boat could certainly act as a wealth indicator in late antique Egypt—as Chrysi Kotsifou points out, it was unlikely that most of the population of Egypt had recourse to a boat in this period.[23] G67, as I noted earlier, makes reference to a monastic dwelling (τὸ μονάχιον), and this letter also contains hints of relative affluence when we discover that the sender directs the recipient to use both boat and asses to transport grain to the monastery, stating, "put the small quantity of grain on the boat; make him transport it to the monastery with your asses and put it in the storage bin (*or* vessel)."[24] Often the amount of goods that needed to be moved was considerable. So, for example, in G68, the monk Sansnos is asked to secure ten cartloads of chaff for Harpocration, an undertaking that would have proved quite expensive due to the cost of hiring a cart. The fact that these instructions are sent in the form of a letter from a possible superior also suggests that the monks in question are not autonomous but form part of a community or network of communities, where written instructions were important due to the complexities of the management of property and land. It is against this backdrop

that the letters need to be set. These monks do not appear to be a loosely con-
nected group of hermits, but rather, members of a relatively sophisticated organi-
zation with several links to the outside world, including, as the letters tell us, the
local Christian community and its bishop.[25] Moreover, the find site for the NHC
was in an area dominated by Pachomian monasteries, and the possibility of a
connection between this community and the Pachomian Federation is also highly
plausible. Even if the monks of the cartonnage letters were not actually members
of a Pachomian monastery, it would be easy to envisage how the Pachomian rules
and organizational methods may have exerted a strong influence on this and other
monastic communities in the locality.

Lahire and the Question of Multiple Identities

Bernard Lahire's work on plural belonging builds on the concept of habitus, as
developed by Pierre Bourdieu, in order to discuss plurality in upbringing and
social standing.[26] The usefulness of Bourdieu's theories in helping us to explore
the social status of early monasticism has already been recognized by Mariachiara
Giorda, who uses Bourdieu's term 'subfield' (*sous-champ*) when describing the
status of fourth- and fifth-century monks in Egypt.[27] Bourdieu noted how habitus
is a product of social conditions, in particular upbringing, and, as such, often
adjusts to the society that produces it.[28] *Habitus* produces dispositions that prompt
individuals towards certain actions and behaviors. Lahire critiques Bourdieu by
asking questions regarding both the formation and actualization of dispositions
in the individual. He suggests that each person develops a broad array of dispo-
sitions which differ in their stability and strength and which may be capable of
deployment in a variety of situations.[29] Bourdieu too states that dispositions are
transposable,[30] but for Lahire dispositions are not merely transposable (depend-
ing, of course, on the disposition and the possibility of transference) but are also
capable of being switched on or off in differing social situations, particularly when
individuals are placed in a plurality of contexts.[31] Lahire notes that "the activation
of a particular disposition can be conceived of as the product of the interaction
of (relation between) internal and external forces."[32] In differentiated societies,
people develop a plurality of belonging and may therefore participate in a number
of differentiated universes, ranging from those that are considered enduring to
those that demand only an occasional or temporary investment.[33] As an example
of plural belonging, Lahire discusses the lives of authors in his work *La condi-
tion littéraire: la double vie des écrivains*. The vast majority of French writers
receive little support from their literary activities and need instead to additionally
take on economically viable jobs. The authors in Lahire's research profess a love
for their writing, to the extent of sacrificing marriage, love and family. As Lahire
points out, such authors "constitute a somewhat particular but non-marginal case
of social pluri-membership."[34] The authors may love their writing, but are reliant
on income earned outside the literary field. Lahire, noting that "toute context per-
tinent d'activité n'est pas un champ,"[35] prefers instead to talk about their involve-
ment in the literary 'game.' The idea of plurality was further developed by Lahire

in his work *The Plural Actor* (*L'homme pluriel*). As the status of the plural actor changes, they move between various identities and activate and deactivate these identities according to changing situations. But such transitions are not always easy to make, and the result can be an inner conflict as people can become torn between different facets of their lives, particularly if there is a strong dissonance between them.[36]

In 2012, Éric Rebillard drew on Lahire's notion of the individual's "internal plurality" in order to discuss to role of individuals within the Christian communities of late antique North Africa.[37] In his analysis, Rebillard noted that being "Christian" was only one of many identities that people in the late antique world could hold. As a result, people who identified as "Christian" only intermittently gave salience to this fact and were frequently involved in groups that had no connection with their sense of Christian identity.[38] How we therefore classify Christians becomes problematic, particularly in view of Rebillard's understanding that many 'Christians' also retained affiliations to other religious groupings. He notes the various attempts made to categorize Christians, including in particular Alan Cameron's "five overlapping Categories" of Christians and pagans. This ranges from the extremes of fully committed pagan or Christians to the large group of people in the middle who "resist straightforward classification."[39] Cameron's attempt at classification usefully reminds us that religious affiliation is a complex matter. However, as Rebillard notes, if individuals only intermittently profess a religious identity, then even this sophisticated attempt at classification becomes less valid in view of the multiple identities and adherences that could be held by any one person, including, very importantly, their status within secular society.[40]

Monks, as individuals, would have felt differing motivations and impulses that eventually led to a commitment to undertake a monastic way of life. Like any number of Lahire's authors, it may well be that many perceived their monastic vocation as central to their lives, and perhaps, at their most enthusiastic, they considered themselves willing to undergo extreme sacrifices to embrace such ideals. It is likely that other monks and nuns saw their lifestyle choice in a different light, spurred on by a pragmatic attitude that was linked to issues such as economic necessity or a desire for a higher level of personal freedom. A large number of monastic figures never actually went anywhere new as they continued living at home, often carrying on with their professed trade, but in a way that allowed them to remain secluded within their dwelling places.[41] This inevitably meant that any professed self-identity as a practitioner of a monastic way of life was always in danger of being pushed to the background when circumstances dictated. Whatever the differing motivations of these early monastics may have been, and however dedicated they felt themselves to be, nearly all monks and nuns would have participated in the secular world to some extent, either due to their economic activities or as a result of social necessity. To some extent, most monastics remained tethered to societal, and often familial, obligations and plural identities. Over time, personal desires and life goals flux and change, so it cannot be assumed that all monks and nuns maintained their vocation for their whole lives, nor that they continually practised extreme forms of asceticism, whatever

their original motivations may have been. This is certainly the case in modern society, where there can be found numerous examples of people who have made the choice to renounce their monastic vows. To what extent individual monks and nuns were able to successfully integrate their plural identities, and over what length of time, was largely dependent on the extent to which they either upheld or came into conflict with the societal codes that they encountered and the relative congeniality of the prescriptions that were put upon their monastic lifestyle. Turning to the evidence in the letters allows us to explore this point further, as it gives first-hand evidence for the ways in which the lives of individual monks interplayed with the social world around them and the consequences this had for their sense of self-identity and feeling of personal wellbeing.

The Monks of the Nag Hammadi Cartonnage and Their Personal Relationships

As I noted earlier, the monk Sansnos is central to the discussion of multiple identities in this chapter. Sansnos is addressed in several ways; in G68 Harpocration calls him ἀγ[απ]ητῷ μου πατρὶ (my beloved father), in G72 he and Psatos are labelled μοναχοῖς (monks) by Poteria and in G78 the priest Zaccheus writes 'to the priest Sansnos' (Σανσνῶτι πρεσβυτέρῳ). In his 1981 introduction to the Nag Hammadi cartonnage material, John Shelton, confronted by such a variety of salutations, expressed doubts these could all be the same man, particularly as G69 is written *by* Sansnos.[42] However, as Malcolm Choat points out, both Apa John and the Theban monk Frange seem to have kept copies of their own letters, and it is just as possible that these are indeed the same man rather than a group of several people, all named Sansnos.[43] Hugh Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, in their description of the life and activities of the community, note how highly active Sansnos was, with responsibilities inside and outside of his community, involved as he is in settling conflicts, procuring and supplying commodities, dealing with food supplies and organizing livestock. However, he apparently has a superior, as we find that Makarios, when writing to Sansnos (G76), refers to him as [τῷ ἀγ]απητῷ υἱῷ, 'his beloved son.'[44] It may be that this is a reference to a purely filial relationship, but there is also a strong likelihood that Makarios is indeed senior to Sansnos. Lundhaug and Jenott suggest that his involvement in many duties and activities may be because he held the office of monastic administrator (*oikonomos*).[45] A study of the correspondence to and from Sansnos is therefore particularly enlightening when discussing multiple social identities. The status of Sansnos prior to his becoming a monk is unknown, but, like so many of the very early monks, he would have needed to 'self-fashion' himself in a role that had yet to become fully consolidated. To do so, he would have needed to draw upon the 'dispositions' and competencies that he had previously gained through his education, upbringing and earlier experiences, adapting them to fit the challenges of this new lifestyle. As Lahire reminds us, variation in the behavior of individuals is due to the plurality of dispositions and competencies that each individual might have and the variety of the context of their actualisation.[46] How Sansnos behaves in the

role of monastic organizer may not therefore necessarily conform to any ideal laid out in the yet to be consolidated rules of Pachomius or Shenoute, for example, or in the descriptions to be found in the monastic literature.

Sansnos is evidently a man of some standing in the locality.[47] Like other eminent holy men of the period, Sansnos receives pleas for assistance. The letter of Harpocration (G68) is very telling in this respect, as it states,

> To my beloved father Sansnos, from Harpocration, very many greetings in the Lord. Make Peter, who is harassing brother Appianus through Paphnoutios' people in the matter of the payments, hold off for a few more days until they find an opportunity to come to you and settle their problem, because that is what they have asked.[48]

Harpocration's apparent belief that Sansnos has the power and authority to deal with this situation would suggest a man of some significance, not only within his monastic community but also in the local area. The fact that Sansnos received a letter from three priests asking him to receive people bearing a letter from the local bishop would also attest to his occupying a position of responsibility.[49] He is, further, the person who was presumed to have the ability to find a large amount of chaff and to procure it. Is this authority due to Sansnos's role as a priest or is it due to personal charisma, or perhaps social standing, or a mixture of the three? However, if Sansnos does indeed have a superior, then it is significant that even an apparently authoritative figure such as Sansnos may not always have the power to shape his immediate world in the way he prefers. An indication of the fact that Sansnos may have sometimes found aspects of his life less than ideal is to be found in a letter written by Sansnos to another monk, Aphrodisios (G69), in which he berates Aphrodisios for neglecting to send food to 'the youths' (Figure 7.1)

This show of irritation, although not unusual in letters of the period, is uncharacteristic in the surviving letters written by monks, and it is therefore all the more insightful for what it might be telling us regarding the relationship of Sansnos with Aphrodisios.[50] It might be assumed that the relationship between the two was strained. However, a further letter has survived that appears to be written by the same Aphrodisios to Sansnos (C5), which is very different in tone. Here, Aphrodisios makes a number of highly personal remarks regarding his illness and asks Sansnos to fulfil some financial dealings for him. If these are indeed the same pair of monks, then the two letters are revealing in regard to what they tell us about the differing temperaments of the two individuals and their complex personal relationships. Sansnos, acting in a position of authority, appears to us a very different person from the Sansnos depicted in the letter of Aphrodisios, suggesting a shift in identity dependent on the role undertaken. On the back of the letter of Aphrodisios to Sansnos is another letter, this time written by a monk named Daniel (C4). In this letter Aphrodisios is likewise seen in a very different light, as Daniel professes him to be a pious and wise elder. Daniel speaks affectionately to Aphrodisios, writing about his great concern on account of Aphrodisios's poor health. In many ways, this is a letter replete with the type of religious thoughts and sentiments that
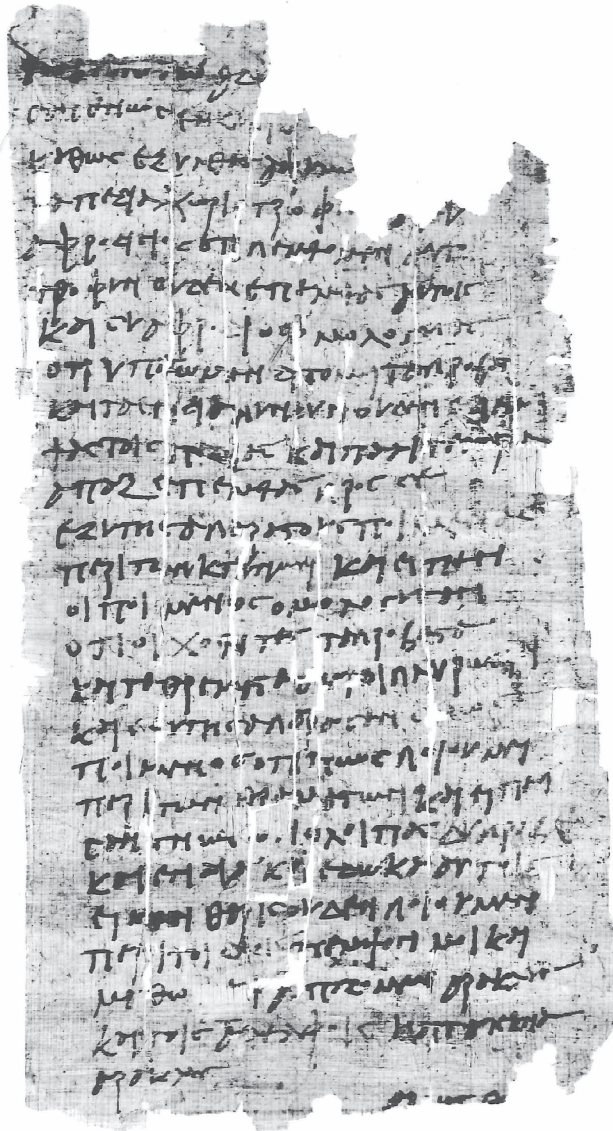
Figure 7.1 The letter of Sansnos to Aphrodisios (*P.Nag.Hamm.* 69). Courtesy of UNESCO.

can be discovered in many examples of monastic literature. Perhaps, therefore, this is just empty rhetoric, echoing phrases that are to be found a thousand-fold in monastic hagiography. Even if this is so, both this letter and that of Aphrodisios to Sansnos imply the existence of the type of familial brotherhood that would be expected to exist in a community in which the members lived apart from their biological families. It is possible that Aphrodisios did indeed at times struggle to perform his practical duties, as he did not possess the competencies expected for such a demanding role. However, in his identity as a fellow monk and 'brother,' he is viewed affectionately and even spoken of with some reverence. In a similar vein, Sansnos the administrator may be expected to write in a way that is at odds with his identity as a close colleague, something that could lead to additional conflicts during the times when both roles demanded different behaviors.

Language Choice and Identity in Monastic Letters

An examination of language choice in the Nag Hammadi cartonnage letters raises several questions in regard to self-identity and language utilization within this particular monastic setting. As I noted previously, the letters of the monks were written mainly in Greek with only a small number written in Coptic. As Roger Bagnall has pointed out, there is no evidence of code switching in this corpus of letters.[51] It is, however, worth noting that the monk Sansnos received and sent correspondence in both Greek and Coptic. We do not have to assume that he was born in the area around Chenoboskia or its environs.[52] The name 'Sansnos' is of Egyptian origin, but we know nothing regarding the background of this Sansnos, nor do we have any details of his previous social status beyond the fact, according to the evidence found in his surviving letters, that he was seen as some form of authority figure by certain people living in the local community. The vast majority of the population who lived in Upper Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period were likely to have used Egyptian as their first language, and it may well have been the sole language for the majority of people. Greek was the language of officialdom, but exposure to the Greek language and any ability to make use of it as a vehicle for everyday communication would have varied immensely from person to person, dependent as this was on several factors, including personal status, occupation, gender, and educational opportunities. Sansnos may have been a fluent Greek speaker and may even have received enough education to write in, or at least read, Greek. The fact that the majority of letters written to Sansnos are in Greek would certainly suggest that he had no difficulties in searching out some person to read these letters to him, whatever his own abilities in the matter. Individual name choices can in themselves provide clues about the personal preferences of families, their connections and their social context, and the names that appear in the monastic letters are a mixture of Egyptian and Greek in origin. Greek names do not necessarily imply any form of Greek belonging, but in a society where membership of elite organizations was strictly hereditary, people who claimed Greek origin would have been highly likely to assert this through their use of Greek names for their children.[53] In contrast, the use of Egyptian names almost

certainly implies membership of a family that defined itself as native Egyptian. Those who claimed to be 'Greek' through lineage had, at best, very tenuous links to ancestors who were Greek immigrants that had settled in Egypt centuries ago and who, over time, had most probably intermarried into Egyptian families. The fact that most of the monastic letters are written in the Greek language has little or no connection to the matter of ethnicity, but rather, it demonstrates that the senders were using the conventions of the period by writing in the language of officialdom. The Greek correspondence found within this particular archive contains, in the main, material that is secular in nature, with the only indication of religious affiliation coming in the final salutation when the senders profess to pray for each other using the conventional statement, ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς εὔχομαι πολλοῖς χρόνοις, "I pray for your health for many years," or variations thereof. Beyond this, there is no direct discussion of religious matters or any form of theological reflection.[54] It is only when we turn to the Coptic letters that information can be gleaned concerning the personal lives of the monks and their own preoccupations. In Coptic letter C4, written by Daniel to Aphrodisios, Daniel expresses concern for the sick Aphrodisios. In letter C5, the letter Aphrodisios writes on the verso of the letter of Daniel, the tone is again more personal, as Aphrodisios expresses his fears to Sansnos about his health and possible demise. It is not possible, with such a small selection of letters, to state with any certainty that Coptic was the preferred language for personal matters in this group of monks, but it is worth noting that the surviving Coptic letters are more intimate. Does Daniel use Coptic in this instance merely because he (or his associates) could not write in Greek, or does it imply that Coptic was the lingua franca of the community whereas Greek was the language of external and internal business? Hints that some monks did make such deliberate choices in language use in monastic communities can be found within other monastic letters. In the fourth-century letter of Kallistos to Apa Paieous on the subject of the Melitian persecutions, for example, Kallistos writes in Greek, although the idiosyncrasies present in the letter imply that he uses it in a way that is highly influenced by the speaking of Egyptian.[55] Perhaps Kallistos does indeed speak Greek in a manner that has been heavily influenced through its contact with Egyptian, but it seems more likely that Egyptian is his preferred language but that he desires to write in Greek on this particular occasion. Why he would choose to do so remains uncertain; is this merely the preference of the scribe, or has the use of Greek a more serious import? A case of code switching in another fourth-century letter, that of Apa John to a certain Paul (*P.Amh*. II 145), also raises interesting questions in this respect. The body of the letter is written in Greek, but John adds a postscript in Coptic.[56] It has been suggested that this is due the fact that John's first language is Egyptian, but other possibilities come to mind—such as that perhaps the use of Coptic in this case is an acknowledgment instead of the language preferences of Paul, combined with a desire to show personal warmth, rather than an assertion of self-identity. This possibility would certainly accord with the fact that another letter to Apa John, that of Psois (*P.Herm.Rees* 7), is written in extremely poor Greek, despite the fact that Psois himself is patently from a native Egyptian background.[57] Could this choice be related to the subject matter,

given that Psois is begging for help regarding the threat of military conscription, or is this an acknowledgement of John's possible preference for Greek due to his status or personal background? The question of identity, whether a consciously created self-identity or an externally imposed identity, has central import in such a discussion. Many caveats arise here regarding the role of the scribe and social conventions, but in the case of the monks of the Nag Hammadi cartonnage letters, it could be claimed that they voiced their fears and sent out spiritual guidance in the traditional language of Egypt rather than Greek precisely because this was the language of their everyday communication. This would certainly reflect the fact that the contents of the NHC were likewise translated and written in Coptic, a deliberate choice made by the collators of the volumes.

Societal Ties

In several of the Nag Hammadi cartonnage letters greetings are sent to various family members and friends, implying that the monks belong to a wider circle of acquaintances that extends beyond the monastic community. Sansnos, for example, sends greetings to "Haraklus and the brothers and the children of Haraklus" in G69.[58] The letter of Chenophres to Phenpsetymes (G70), which does not identify him as a monk but certainly as a Christian,[59] states, "Look after Boais and be nice to her daughter. Point out Boais to my son Pebos."[60] The letter writers here are demonstrably not socially isolated, but remain linked to other family and friends in a way that may have at times impacted and perhaps even conflicted with other aspects of their lives, particularly if they were also monks. The Nag Hammadi cartonnage letter collection is small and does not provide examples in this respect, but if we turn to the accounts of fourth-century monastic life provided in monastic literature, such conflict is readily apparent. In the Pachomian letter of Ammon, for example, a monk called Amaeis is rebuked by his superior, Theodore, for fantasizing about sex with a 'lawful wife' and a successful career in the military. Ammon notes that, four months later, Amaeis left to become a soldier but, fittingly in Ammon's eyes, died of a protracted illness.[61] This yearning for a 'normal' life and the fact that joining a monastery may not have been viewed as a permanent lifestyle choice is here posed as a moral weakness that will be punished by God. This may be the ideal promoted in hagiographical literature, but references to 'former monks' found in the papyrological record attest to the fact that monks did give up their vocation, either to return to their place in society or to take up a new role within the Church. So, for example, in a letter appointing a replacement for Apa Paeious, one witness is the 'former monk Proous' (*P.Lond.* 1913).[62]

Monks who remained faithful to a monastic calling could still be called upon to assist with family obligations despite the fact that monks were actively encouraged to see their monastic community as their replacement family. Layton, when commenting on changes in lifestyle for entrants to Shenoutean monasteries, stated that

It reflects nothing less than erasure of the monk's old life that was rooted in his biological family, work, economy, village, and status, and its total

replacement by an entirely different world, a new family (as it were), a new job, a very different economy, a new community, and a bizarre new framework of roles and patterns.[63]

The need to restrain monks from too close contact with family thus became a concern for the whole monastic community. Various examples of rules prohibiting interaction with family are known to exist. In the Shenoutean *Canons*, for example, monks were told that, "Furthermore, if their mother or their sister or their daughter runs to them in their desire to [greet] them, [they] shall not let them kiss them freely. For it is a shameful thing for monks to kiss their mothers or their sisters or their daughters."[64] The implication here is that monks and nuns may have been separated from their families, but the many admonishments given out by Shenoute are evidence of the fact that the inmates of this particular federations were simply unable and/or unwilling to overcome the desire to show their family members affection. It was simply not possible for these monks and nuns to refuse to recognize their identity as parent or child, despite the fact that it conflicted with their monastic identity in a way that could incur various punishments, up to and including banishment from the monastery. In contrast, monks who did not live in such tightly controlled coenobitic communities continued to play a part in the lives of their families, as witnessed by an adoption record involving a monk and his nephew dated to 381 CE (*P.Lips*. I 28).[65] In a society where family ties were a vital component of a personal support network, it might have been viewed as highly unwise to sever familial bonds completely. The papyrological evidence for later centuries contains ample evidence to show that monks and nuns did continue to communicate with their families, actively oversaw their own properties and made wills that provided for family members in ways that are in direct contrast with the idealized roles and detached living styles described in the hagiographical literature.

Some surviving descriptors of monastic behavior act as a reminder that individual monks could act in ways that we would not associate with any idealized description of monasticism, including examples where family tensions are highly evident. In a mid-fifth-century petition sent from Spania near Oxyrhynchus (*SB* IV 7449), Aurelia Nonna writes to Theodoros, bishop of Oxyrhynchos, complaining that her nephew, a monk called Alypios, had physically attacked her over a possible marriage alliance for her daughter.[66] Alypios, in his self-appointed role as family patriarch, had proposed that Aurelia's daughter should be given in marriage to another male relative—something that was opposed by the mother and perhaps (although the wording used here is obscure) by the daughter. The main point of the letter is an accusation stating that Alypios, enraged at the refusal of his marriage proposal, had beaten his aunt and tore her clothes, hinting perhaps at some form of subliminal sexual impropriety. Domestic abuse of this nature is a common feature of such petitions, shocking as it might seem to a modern reader. What is more interesting here is that Aurelia Nonna makes the point that Alypios behaved "in defiance of his cloth."[67] Male violence towards women was fairly commonplace, and even considered necessary on some occasions, but the stress here is on the unacceptability of such an action by a person wearing distinctive monastic garb.

The need for monks to wear a form of distinctive 'uniform' is emphasized in the writings of Pachomius, and it was an act that was clearly viewed as an important rite of passage, integrating novices into monastic communities and, by extension, excluding the outsider.[68] An early reference to the specific clothing worn by "virgins consecrated to God" (i.e. nuns) was made in the edicts issued by the Emperor Theodosius in 394 CE. This insisted that mimes and actors should not publically dress as such.[69] Choat gives two examples of letters assigned on palaeographical grounds to the late third or early fourth century letters that discuss behavior fitting for the wearing of what is referred to as the πρόσχημα.[70] It cannot be claimed with any certainty that this is a reference to a monastic garment in this instance, but it is at the very least some form of specific religious dress worn by Christians. The concept of having no shame for one's cloth (σχῆμα) is a theme that also occurs in another fourth-century letter (*P.Neph.* 7) in which the monk Paphnutius stands accused of lying and refusing to pay a debt.[71] The reference to the habit in both cases would appear to denote that it was a badge of identity that was linked to associated societal mores. It is further suggested that monks may also have shaved their heads in recognition of their office—a commonplace tradition in Egypt, particularly for members of the pagan priesthood.[72] Monks were thus highly visible and set apart—something that acted as a constant reminder to both the individual and the public of their status. However, the extent to which clothes make the man is open to debate, and the examples given earlier certainly demonstrate that people's behaviors are not to be judged on one single aspect of their lives. The extent to which monks chose to adhere to the recognized norms would inevitably be compromised by external factors that might wield a greater influence in any chosen course of action.

As mentioned earlier, Lahire draws attention to the dissonance that can arise between differing roles that might be assigned to our plural identities. It may well also have been the case that some monks, however ardent, may simply have lacked the necessary dispositions needed to achieve their perceived religious ideals.[73] Monks unable to either attain or maintain the stringent standards alluded to in descriptions of early monastic life are likely to have become frustrated at their perceived lack of success. Some evidence to support this assertion can be found in Evagrius's *Antirrhetikos*, which records hundreds of the thoughts that troubled monks as they struggled with their vocation.[74] Monks were worried about their ascetic regimes,[75] the problems arising from getting old and irrepressible sexual urges.[76] Long accustomed to living in extended families, they found the separation unbearable; many dwelt longingly on memories of family meals shared long ago.[77] So, for example, a remedy is sought "against the thought that entices us to see the city, my family, and my loved ones there."[78] As I discussed earlier, not everyone stayed the course; a number of monks became ex-monks and returned to their families or to other forms of religious service. This was not an avenue open to all, particularly those who lacked an alternative place of refuge or who became a monk out of dire necessity. Others may have found the lifestyle highly congenial, particularly when we consider that wide variations existed in regard to place and circumstances. Monks could, and did, move from place to place, and

anyone who struggled to live as a lone hermit could remove themselves to the more secure, if more rigid, setting of the coenobium, if this was preferred.

Monks and the Other

A particularly interesting, if brief, letter, for both its contents and its monastic location, is G72. This was written in Greek and sent to the monks Sansnos and Psas (or Psatos) from a woman with the unusual name of Proteria.[79] She writes,

> Sansnos and Psas, monks, from Proter(ia) greetings, If it is possible where you are, seek out a little chaff for my asses, because they are short of it and I can't find any to buy here. If you find some, write to me about the price, how much it is per wagon-load of chaff so that the boat can come.[80]

The letter is in the flowing, ligatured hand of an experienced writer, suggesting that either Proteria was a fluent writer herself or that she had access to a competent and experienced scribe.[81] What is particularly significant here is the way in which Proteria addresses the monks, as she does not use any customary form of polite address but is curt and to the point. Whilst this lack of polite formality may have become acceptable in later centuries, it is not the norm for the fourth century, when the use of introductory formulae and farewells in letters was virtually universal.[82] There is nothing in the letter to suggest that Proteria is a Christian; she does not praise the godliness of the monks, nor does she demand any Christian prayers of intercession. The relationship must be cordial enough, as she is able to call upon the monks in question to transact business for her. However, her patent lack of reverence for their status is revealing. Is what we see here evidence for a practical relationship based only on mutual need between members of two very different sections of the community? Proteria makes mention of a boat. If this is her possession, then we may assume, due to the expense of boat ownership, that she is reasonably wealthy. What does her lack of polite address tell us about the social position of these monks outside of their Christian world? If she is some form of female kin, then why address her relatives so formally using only their status as monks? Is she perhaps a fellow monastic, an abbess, writing briefly and informally to the brother house? If Proteria is not a Christian, then this letter could throw an interesting light on Christian–pagan relationships at this period. It is certainly very different from the antagonism shown to pagans in the later letters of Apa Shenoute, someone who vented his wrath on *Hellenes* such as the hapless landowner Gesios for their pagan practices.[83] The values of the society in which the monks of the NHC cartonnage lived cannot, however, necessarily be equated with the accepted societal values of those living in Shenoute's era. The monastic letters of the Nag Hammadi cartonnage were written by people who lived perhaps as much as two generations earlier, at a time when Egypt was inhabited by a relatively small population of Christians. Monks of the early fourth to mid-fourth century would have grown up alongside numerous relatives and neighbors who were pagans and may well have once been pagans themselves.[84] Bagnall has calculated

that just after 313 CE, the percentage of people who were Christian was under 20 per cent, doubling in number in the ten years following Constantine's acquisition of Egypt in 324 CE. By the early fifth century, Christians are calculated as making up 80 per cent of the population.[85] These numbers may be disputed, but assuming that the monastic letters of the cartonnage were written in the second quarter of the fourth century, it would still be highly likely that the monks of this community were living within a population in which somewhere between a third and a half of people still identified themselves as pagans.[86] It may be that some monks went to great lengths to avoid any social interaction with non-Christians, but it would have been very difficult to avoid any form of social contact with pagans in a society that was still in a state of religious flux, particularly if the pagan in question was a near relative. It is likely that many monks consciously, or perhaps subconsciously, either chose to ignore the fact of pagan 'belonging' or never even perceived it as an issue worthy of comment. In reflecting on this scenario, we are reminded of the social context described by Rebillard in his writing on internal plurality when he discussed second-century Christians who made pagan sacrifices yet still retained their sense of Christian belonging.[87] If indeed Proteria was a pagan, then this could be an instance in which social and economic ties are seen to take precedence over any potential religious scruples, if indeed these even existed.

A further important question is raised here in regard to the fact that two self-identifying and identified monks willingly receive and retain a communication from a woman. In hagiographical literature, monks are notorious for their attempts to avoid all contact with women. Are we then to view this letter as an aberration based on a mutual understanding that the rules governing society can be ignored in certain circumstances and within certain relationships? As we have seen in the letter of Aurelia Nonna quoted earlier, monks were not above engaging in highly physical contact with women if the occasion arose. In the case of the monk Alypios, his social role as an authoritative male seems to have overridden any regard he may have given for societal expectations regarding his monastic status. Perhaps, in the case of Proteria, the social ties that bound the local community together required the two monks to assist her in her quest for chaff, regardless of any theoretical monastic prohibitions. However, there are several surviving fourth-century letters in which Christian women write freely to monks, such as Valeria's letter to Apa Paphnutius[88] and the letter of Leuchis to Apa John.[89] The letter of Leuchis is particularly interesting as it has been suggested, albeit on highly speculative grounds, that the Apa John in question is none other than the famous John of Lycopolis, someone who famously refused to meet with any woman.[90] It is possible that the norms regarding monastic correspondence with women differed from those that governed physical meetings. Even so, whatever strictures may have existed in this matter, written or unwritten, the complex nature of late antique society with its multiplex social ties would have made it more difficult for such meetings to be avoided in real life. Such meetings may well have resulted in internal and external conflicts that were difficult to resolve, and several stories exist that discuss sexual improprieties that came about as a result of such encounters—acting as a warning to younger monks who continued to meet with

female relatives or strangers. These stories should be regarded rather as affirmation that such encounters were common and even welcomed by those who retained elements of other identities that were formed within close-knit communities.

Conclusion

An elderly man, who had served as a teenage soldier in the battle of Monte Casino, once gave an interview on television, where he reflected on his intense past experiences. He noted how they could not be simply cast off, in the way we might take off our clothes or remove a shirt.[91] His acknowledgment is a reminder that fragments of our earlier experiences are carried within us and even if we consciously set out to change our lifestyles and behaviors, we can never entirely discard our former selves or remain unmarked by past events. This was also true of the monks who were the first adopters of a monastic way of life in late antique Egypt—they too could not easily escape personal ties or evade all social obligations. Taking on the monastic habit did not mean that fourth-century monks and nuns could remove essential aspects of their personalities or delete their past. Lahire's writings on plural belonging help us to make better sense of the complexities of life for fourth-century monks—these people should not be judged merely as 'monks' or 'nuns,' but account needs to be taken of earlier experiences and phenomena that controlled and formed their personal identities. Perhaps they had once been spouses, parents, officials, beggars, soldiers, or any other of the multiple spheres of existence that could be found in the late antique world. The result was that these men and women had a variety of dispositions that had been created through their unique upbringings and previous socialization experiences. In their new setting, some dispositions were turned off in order to conform to the demands of monastic life, but they could be likewise turned on when they were needed, such as when dealing with urgent family and social obligations. In taking on identities, monks expressed themselves in the terms associated with their new role. In the letter of Daniel to Aphrodisios, for example, Daniel makes an acknowledgement of his struggle to be the 'perfect' monk. This may be considered a mere rhetorical flourish, but it still acts as an indication of how Daniel desired to be viewed within his chosen vocation. Daniel continues his letter in a highly flattering tone, asking Aphrodisios to remember Daniel in his prayers and envisioning Aphrodisios as a 'blessing.'[92] It seems hard to believe that this is the same Aphrodisios who is rebuked by Sansnos for incompetent administration skills, but it is precisely within such discordant perceptions that we are able to gain a glimpse of the differing facets of Aphrodisios's identity. The letters of monks such as Daniel, Aphrodisios and Sansnos and the complaints of women such as Aurelia Nonna throw different lights onto the world of early monasticism and act as illustrations of the ability of people to both potentially switch between various identities and to compartmentalise them, according to time and circumstance.

We do not know any details of the social background of the monks of the Nag Hammadi cartonnage, although the letters may allow us to make some surmises, nor do we know how fitted they were, or were perceived to be, in regard to their

chosen lifestyle. As Lahire reminds us, it is possible to transpose our dispositions and competencies, but not all of them might be suitable for the idealized life of a monk or nun. In the *Paralipomena*, for example, Pachomius rebukes a monk who sees a way of making a profit for the monastery from the sale of wheat.[93] It is an interesting story, as not only is it a general rebuke against money making but it is also a reminder that monks did sometimes possess skills and dispositions that were not necessarily considered desirable in a monastic setting. To what extent new monks and nuns were able to integrate their various identities and the extent to which conflicts arose would have been dependent on the individual's dispositions, the overlap inherent in their situations and other elements such as upbringing and education. The earliest monks and nuns, who were products of many different environments and cultural backgrounds, cannot therefore be described merely in terms of their vocation, but should be viewed instead as fully rounded and complex human beings whose preferences and interconnections must be taken into consideration when attempting to interpret their actions and personal motivations.

Notes

1 The cartonnage material was edited and published in John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton, *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers*, NHS 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1981). For the facsimiles, see James M. Robinson, *The Facsimile Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices: Cartonnage* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).
2 Codex VIII, C15, C16; Codex XI G153. For convenience I follow the designations given by Barnes, Browne and Shelton, designating Greek papyri from the cartonnage with G and Coptic papyri with C. These are a stand-in for the designations *P.Nag. Hamm.* (= G1 etc.) and *P.Nag.Hamm.Copt.* (= C1 etc.).
3 The materials found within the cartonnage points to a location in this region (Barns et al., 11.). For an overview of early letter collections and individual letters mentioning monks see Malcolm Choat and Mariachiara Giorda, "Communicating Monasticism: Reading and Writing Monastic Texts in Late Antique Egypt," in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, eds. Malcolm Choat and Mariachiara Giorda, TSEC (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
4 Malcolm Choat, "From Letter to Letter-Collection: Monastic Epistolography in Late-Antique Egypt," in *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80.
5 For an overview of surviving fourth-century monastic letters from Egypt see, Malcolm Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus from Late Antique Egypt," in *Writing and Communication in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, eds. Malcolm Choat and Mariachiara Giorda (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 17–72; Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 44–62; Malcom Choat, "The Archive of Apa Johannes: Notes on a proposed New edition," in *Proceedings of the 24th International Congress of Papyrologists, Helsinki 2004*, eds. Tiina Purola, Jaakko Frösén, and Erja Salmenkivi, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum (Helskinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 2007), 153–79.
6 In particular, Bernard Lahire, *La culture des individus: dissonances culturelles et distinctions de soi* (Paris: Éditions la découverte, 2004); Bernard Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions. Towards a Sociology at the Level of the

Individual," *Poetics* 31 (2003): 329–55; Bernard Lahire, *La condition littéraire: la double vie des écrivains*, Textes à l'appui (Paris: Découverte, 2006); Bernard Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2011).

7   G63, G64 and G65, respectively, see Shelton, "Introduction," 4–5.

8   Recent radiocarbon analysis of Codex I's leather cover suggests a date of production that is likely earlier than that of Codex VII (Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 10–11). For the results of the radiocarbon analysis of the cover of NHC I, see Hugo Lundhaug, "Dating and Contextualising the Nag Hammadi Codices and Their Texts: A Multi-Methodological Approach Including New Radiocarbon Evidence," in *Texts in Context: Essays on Dating and Contextualising Christian Writings of the Second and Early Third Century*, eds. Jos Verheyden, Jens Schröter, and Tobias Nicklas, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 319 (Leuven: Peeters, 2021), 126–32.

9   Theodore C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*, Chester Beatty Monographs (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1964); Theodore C. Skeat, "Papyrus from Panopolis in the Collection of Sir Chester Beatty," in *Proceedings of the IX. International Congress of Papyrology: Oslo, 19th-22nd August, 1958*, ed. Leiv Amundsen, Vegard Skånland, and International Congress of Papyrologists (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1961), 194–99. See also the comments on the cartonnage of Codex Papyrus Berolinensis 8502 and other evidence for dating in Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 9–11.

10 In fact, this was not a codex in the strictest sense, but a group of loose leaves gathered together without any evidence of binding. The receipts were written in different hands. Eric Turner gives several examples of such reuse and notes intervening dates of between a few months and 100 years (Eric G. Turner, "Recto and Verso," *JEA* 40 [1954]: 102–6).

11 Choat notes several examples of letters between clergy where this address is used. So, for example, *PSI* III 208 where this greeting is sent to Sotas, bishop of Oxyrhynchus and *P.Grenf.* 1173 in a letter sent from one presbyteros to another (Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus," 47–48).

12 Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 47.

13 G72, from Proteria to two 'monks' (μοναχοῖς) and C8, which is written from a man who self-identifies as a monk (ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ).

14 τὸ μονάχιον. As this is the only instance in which the term is used, its specific meaning cannot be ascertained beyond its use as a form of monastic dwelling place.

15 In 2000 Ewa Wipszycka concluded that thirteen cartonnage letters were monastic, G67, 68, 69, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78 and C4, 5, 6, 8 (Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks," 171–91).

16 G73, C7 and perhaps G79. Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 129, n.110.

17 Wipszycka's updated list = G67, 68, 69, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79 and C4, 5, 6, 7, 8. C15 from Codex VIII (note the exclusion of G71). Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka, "A Monastic Origin of the Nag Hammadi Codices?" *Adamantius* 23 (2017): 437. Cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 129, n.110.

18 G68, G69, G72, G75, G76, G78, C5, C8. G69 also refers to another Sansnos, 'the Shepherd.'

19 The economic life of the community is further described by James E. Goehring, "The Provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices one more," in *Studia Patristica XXXV, Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Held in Oxford 1999: Ascetica, Gnostica, Liturgica, Orientalia*, eds. Maurice F. Wiles, Edward Yarnold, and Paul M. Parvis (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 234–56.

20 For descriptions of monastic economics see the writings of Ewa Wipszycka, in particular chapter X 'questions économiques' in Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, JJP Suppl. 11 (Varsovie: Warsaw University, 2009). Also, Ewa Wipszycka, "Economics of Egyptian Monasticism," *JJP* XLI (2011): 159–263.

21 S. R. Llewellyn. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980–81* (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1992), 189; Edwin A. Judge, "Fourth Century Monasticism in the Papyri," in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology, New York, 24–31 July 1980*, eds. Roger S. Bagnall et al., American Studies in Papyrology (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 613–20.

22 G77 for example, requests that Sansnos keep 'the boat' ready for visitors (G77.10–11).

23 Chrysi Kotsifou, "Papyrological Evidence of Travelling in Byzantine Egypt," in *Current Research in Egyptology*, eds. Christina Riggs and Angela McDonald, BAR Int. Series (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000), 60–61.

24 δέδωκ() εἰς τὸ πλοῖον [τὸ]ν ὀλίγον σῖτον. ποιήσῃς αὐτὸν μεταϰ[ομί]ζεσθαι εἰς τὸ μονάχιον διὰ τῶν ὑμετέρω[ν] ϰτηνῶν ϰαὶ θεῖναι αὐτὰ εἰς σιρόν (6–10)

25 Instructions to greet visitors from an unnamed bishop are relayed to Sansnos in G77.

26 Habitus is the cognitive system of structures that internally represents external structures. It consists of thoughts, beliefs, interests and understanding of the world around us. Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Nice, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 169–73.

27 Mariachiara Giorda, "Familles du « monde », familles monastiques. Une économie du capital dans l'Égypte chrétienne (Ve-VIe siècles)," *ASSR* 17 (2015): 263–87. Also, Roberto Alciati and Mariachiara Giorda, "Famiglia cristiana e pratica monastica," *ASE* 27/1 (2010): 265–90.

28 Pierre Bourdieu and Antoine Spire, *Si le monde social m'est supportable, c'est parce que je peux m'indigner* (La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube, 2002), 18.

29 Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions," 338–40.

30 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 53.

31 Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions," 346;—*The Plural Actor*, xi.

32 Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions," 351.

33 Bernard Lahire, "The Limits of the Field: Elements for a Theory of the Social Differentiation of Activities," in *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, eds. Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez, Routledge Advances in Sociology (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 83.

34 Ibid., 83.

35 Trans. "Not every pertinent context of activity is a field," Bernard Lahire, "Champ, Hors-Champ, Contrechamp," in *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu: dettes et critiques*, ed. Bernard Lahire, Poche/Sciences humaines et sociales (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), 32.

36 Lahire, *The Plural Actor*, 36–41.

37 Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

38 Ibid., 92–93.

39 Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 176–77. Quoted in Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 95.

40 Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 95–97.

41 Ewa Wipszycka, "Le monachisme égyptien et les villes," *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994): 1–44.

42 John C. Shelton, "Introduction," in *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers*, eds. John W. B. Barns, Gerald M. Browne, and John C. Shelton, NHS 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 8–9.

43 Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus," 35–36.

44 [τῷ ἀγ]απητῷ υἱῷ Σανσνῶτι [Μα]κάριος ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ χαίρειν.

45 Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 129–30.

46 Lahire, *La culture des individus: dissonances culturelles et distinctions de soi*, 14.
47 See the discussion in Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins*, 48–53.
48 [τῷ] ἀγ[απ]ητῷ μου πατρὶ Σανσνος Ἀρποκρατίων πλ(εῖστα) ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ χαίρειν. Πέτρον τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα τῷ ἀδελ[φῷ] Ἀππιανῷ διὰ τοὺς περὶ Παπνού[τιον] τῶν ἐκφορίων ἕνεκεν ποίησον ὀλίγας ἔτι ἀνασχέσθαι ἡμέρα[ς] ἕως ἂν καιρὸν εὕρωσι ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σὲ καὶ ἀπαλλάξαι τὸ καθ' ἑαυτούς. οὕτω γὰρ ἠξίωσαν. What τῶν ἐκφορίων refers to in this instance is uncertain. Shelton translates this as 'rents' Barns et al., *Greek and Coptic Papyri*, 62–63.
49 G77, the bishop in question is not named.
50 E.g., καθὼς ἐξῆλθας ἀφ' ὑμῶ[ν πρὸς] τὰ πεδία χωρὶς τροφῆ[ς κ]αὶ σύ, Ἀφροδισιος, ὅτι πέμψομεν αὐτοῖς τροφήν, οὐδὲν ἔπεμψας αὐτοῖς. "As you too left us for the boys without food, Aphrodisios, because we shall send the food, you sent them nothing. As Shelton notes, the tone of this letter is very different to the reverent and pious letter in Coptic sent to Aphrodisios by Daniel, Shelton, "Introduction," 9.
51 Roger S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East, Sather Classical Lectures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 88.
52 Chenoboskia is mentioned in G1 an oil workers' agreement in Codex 1, G31, a fragment from Codex V, and G153, a letter from Codex XI. Few places are specifically mentioned with any certainty in Codex VII, apart from Techthy, a village in the Diospolite nome and Tenturiton Polis (modern Tentyra or Denderah), both in G64. For the location of Techthy and its relationship to Chenoboskia see, Fritz Mitthof, *Ein spätantikes Wirtschaftsbuch aus Diospolis Parva: der Erlanger Papyruskodex und die Texte aus seinem Umfeld (P. ERL. DIOSP.)*, Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete (München: K. G. Saur, 2002), 5.
53 Yanne Broux, "Creating a New Local Elite: The Establishment of the Metropolitan Orders of Roman Egypt," *AfP* 59 (2013): 142–53.
54 G66, G67, G69, G70, G77, G79, The variation, ἐρρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς εὔχ[ο]μαι ἐν Κ(υρί)ῳ is found in G71 in a letter from two presbyteroi. Similarly the presbyteros Zaccheos writes [-ca.?- ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔ-]χομαι, ἀγαπητὲ ἄδελφε in G78.
55 H. Idris Bell and Walter E. Crum, *Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy: Illustrated by Texts from Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, ed. Frederick George Kenyon (London: British Museum, 1924), 53–4. Also, Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus," 67.
56 ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲡⲁⲩⲗⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲡⲉⲕⲏⲉⲓ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲭⲟⲉⲓⲥ.
57 Or, perhaps his scribe struggles, but the name Psois is Egyptian and he must have wished to send a letter in Greek. This letter has been used by Constantine Zuckerman to suggest that the Apa John mentioned here is the famous John of Lykopolis. Constantine Zuckerman, "The Hapless Recruit Psois and the Mighty Anchorite, Apa John," *BASP* 32, no. 3–4 (1995): 183–94.
58 ἀσπάζομεν Ἀρακλῦς καὶ τοις ἀδελφοις καὶ τὰ τέκνα Ἀρακλῦς.
59 The phrase "Greetings in the Lord" and the nomen sacrum are employed by the writer.
60 καὶ φιλοπόνησον τὴν Βοαῖς καὶ θάλπισον τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτῆ. δῖξον Πεβῶτος \τον υἱῷ μου/ τὴν Βοάιν.
61 The Letter of Ammon, trans. in Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian koinonia II: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules*, CSS 46 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 84.
62 Bell and Crum, *Jews and Christians*, 49–50.
63 Bentley Layton, "Rules, Patterns, and the Exercise of Power in Shenoute's Monastery: The Problem of World Replacement and Identity Maintenance," *JECS* 15, no. 1 (2007): 63–64.
64 ⲉϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲉⲣϣ[ⲁ]ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲏ ⲧ[ⲉ]ⲩⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲡⲱⲧ [ⲉϩⲟ]ⲩⲛ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲉ[ⲩⲟⲩ]ⲱϣ ⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧ[ⲟϥ ⲧⲉⲩ]ϣⲉⲉⲣⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ[ⲩⲁⲥⲡ]ⲁⲍⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛ[ⲉⲩ]ϯⲑⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ[ⲩ]ϯⲡⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲟ[ⲩ] ⲡⲁⲣⲣⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲭⲉⲟⲩϣⲡⲉ ⲡⲉ. ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲅⲉⲛⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲏ ⲛⲉⲩⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲏ ⲛⲉⲩϣⲉⲉⲣⲉ. Bentley Layton, *The Canons of our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute*, OECS

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 197. Codex XL 136–37 = EG-C C.G. 9257r.—v.

65 Cf. Caroline T. Schroeder, "Children and Early Monasticism," in *Children in Late Ancient Christianity*, eds. Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 318–21.

66 Idris Bell, "The episcopalis audienta in Byzantine Egypt," *Byzantion* I (1924): 139–44. For the fourth-century date see, Robert M. Frakes, *Contra Potentium Iniurias: The Defensor Civitatis and Late Roman Justice*, Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte (München: Beck, 2001), 212–13. Also, *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt*, eds. James G. Keenan, Joseph Gilbert Manning, and Uri Yiftach-Firanko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 257–58.

67 συνάπτεσθαι, π[αρὰ] τὸ σχῆμ[α].

68 Paul Dilley, *Monasteries and the Care of Souls in Late Antique Christianity: Cognition and Discipline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 92–94.

69 Theodosian Code 15.7.12. 1.4.4.

70 *P. Gron*. 17–18 (Choat, "Monastic Letters on Papyrus," 22–23).

71 Bärbel Kramer, John C. Shelton, and Gerald M. Browne, *Das Archiv des Nepheros und verwandte Texte*, Aegyptiaca Treverensia (Mainz am Rhein: v. Zabern, 1987).

72 Rules concerning head shaving are discussed in the Pachomian *Praecepta*, 97.

73 Lahire, "From the habitus to an individual heritage of dispositions. Towards a sociology at the level of the individual," 337.

74 David Brakke, trans., *Evagrius of Pontus Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons* 229, CSS (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009). Its use as evidence for the temptations and frustrations of monastic life are discussed in David Brakke, "Making Public the Monastic Life: Reading the Self in Evagrius Ponticus' Talking Back," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, eds. David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 222–33.

75 *Ant*. 1.14, 15, 19, 22, 26, 59, 65.

76 *Ant*. 2.11, 23, 25, 45, 55, 63.

77 *Ant*. 6.7, 43, 44, 53. *meals,* 1.30, 36, 38–41.

78 *Ant*. 6.53. Trans. by Brakke, *Evagrius of Pontus Talking Back: A Monastic Handbook for Combating Demons*, 145.

79 Ewa Wipszycka, "The Nag Hammadi Library and the Monks: A Papyrologist's Point of View," *JJP* 30 (2000): 182–83.

80 Σανσνῶτι καὶ Ψάτος μοναχοῖς Προτηρ[ία] χέρ(ειν) εἰ δυνατὸν παρ' ὑμῖν ἐστιν τὸ ἐραυνῆσαι ὀλίγον ἄχυρον πρὸς τὴν ὑπηρεσίαν τῶν ἐμῶν κῶν διότι ὑστεροῦσι, καὶ οὐχ εὑρίσκω ἐνταῦθα ἀγοράσαι. ἐπὴν δὲ εὕρητε, πέμψατέ με ὑπὲρ τὴν τιμην ὅτι πόσον τὴν ἅμαξαν ἀχύρου, καὶ ἵνα ἔρχεται τὸ πλοῖον.

81 Roger S. Bagnall, Raffaella Cribiore, and Evie Ahtaridis, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC-AD 800* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 206–7.

82 Malcolm Choat notes that letters without introductory formulae, or even names, can be found at Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga and Apa Apollo at Bala'izah, but these examples date to the sixth to eighth century. Choat does remind us, however, that the earliest copies of the Pachomian letters (Chester Beatty Ms. W. 145) do not employ standard introductions or farewells. As the example from Nag Hammadi seems to demonstrate, such formulae were clearly not always considered necessary when writing to members of a monastic community even at this early date (Choat, "From Letter to Letter-Collection," 84–86).

83 For a discussion of the relationship between the pagan landowner Gesios and Shenoute see, Stephen Emmel, "Shenoute of Atripe and the Christian Destruction of Temples in Egypt: Rhetoric and Reality," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, eds. Stephen Emmel, Johannes Hahn, and Ulrich Gotter, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 161–201;

Ariel G. López, *Shenoute of Atripe and the Uses of Poverty: Rural Patronage, Religious Conflict, and Monasticism in Late Antique Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 11–12.

84 Pachomius for example, had pagan parents, a fact alluded to several times in the *vitae*, see e.g. SBo. 3; G^1 2; G^1 25; G^1 112.

85 Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 281.

86 For various calculations see, Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse, "How Christian Was Fourth Century Egypt? Onomastic Perspectives on Conversion," *VG* 67, no. 4 (2013): 407–35; Roger S. Bagnall, "Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change in Early Byzantine Egypt," *BASP* 19, no. 3–4 (1982): 105–24; Keith Hopkins, "Christian Number and Its Implications," *JECS* 6, no. 2 (1998): 185–226.

87 Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 34–60.

88 No. 1926 in Bell and Crum, *Jews and Christians*, 100–20.

89 *P.Herm.Rees* 17, trans. In Bagnall et al., 204.

90 On the identification of Apa John with John of Lycopolis see, Zuckerman, "The Hapless Recruit Psois," 183–94.

91 Timeline, www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oM7OAcWBtQ at 47.10 (accessed 06/02/2022).

92 C4.24–28.

93 *Paralipomena* 21 in Veilleux, *Pachomian koinonia II*, 47.

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8 Religious and Local Identifications in the Jewish Marriage Contract From Fifth-Century Antinoopolis

Susanna Wolfert-de Vries

Introduction

Long ago, in fifth-century Antinoopolis, a man named Samuel proposed to Metra. For this occasion, on 15 November 417 CE, a contract was drawn up so that both partners, and their families, knew what their obligations were during the marriage and what they were entitled to in the event that the marriage ended. In this case, Samuel promised Metra that he would take care of her according to the custom of Israel, and in turn Metra agreed to honour Samuel according to these customs. When everything was set for the wedding, Metra's mother, Ester, provided her with a modest dowry. From Samuel Metra received a bridal gift. These items together were Metra's *ketubba*. This *ketubba* she would get back the moment the marriage ended. The document was signed, and then it was probably time to celebrate.[1]

This marriage contract is one of the best-preserved papyri testifying to the revival of Aramaic, and with it the presence of Jews, in late antique Egypt.[2] It is widely accepted that the sparse evidence of Jewish presence in late antique Egypt reflects the enormous impact of the Kitos war on Jewish life in Egypt: the Jewish communities were decimated, and recovery was only slow.[3] The marriage contract, and several other smaller Hebrew and Aramaic fragments in the Jewish script, indicate that there was a recovery of Jewish life in Egypt in the fourth century CE.[4] Earlier research on these recovered communities has been undergirded by a number of generic explanations about the connection between the language choice and important aspects in the identity of these communities. For example, previous studies have explained the revival of Aramaic from the idea that Jewish communities in Egypt were nationalistic or heavily influenced by rabbinic Judaism, felt marginalized by Christians, or consisted of migrants.[5]

This volume's focus on groupism and identity challenges earlier approaches to post-revolt Judaism in Egypt, because most of the earlier mentioned accounts consider the Hebrew and Aramaic papyri in Egypt as the products of one large Jewish community.[6] Thus, Christians, rabbis, or Palestinian Jews were treated as homogenous groups collectively responsible for the use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Egypt, leaving no room for internal variation or individual agency. What happens here is what Roger Brubaker meant with *groupism*, namely: "the tendency to take

discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constitutes of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.”[7] As a consequence, the explanations disregard individual preferences, local situatedness, and the internal plurality of communities.[8] This means that these explanations also hardly take into account that individuals can have multiple affiliations besides just a religious identity.[9]

This chapter re-examines the relation between the marriage contract's language and the social and religious identity of those who were involved in its creation.[10] In doing so, I pay particular attention to the question of what it means that some of the phrases and words in the Aramaic contract are Greek. The aim of the chapter is to gain a better understanding of the interplay of religious affiliation with other affiliations that may have influenced the situation behind the construction of the text, particularly its wording and focus. To assess the sociohistorical situation behind the text and its language, I will draw on the insights of William Croft's sociolinguistic theory that considers linguistic change as an evolutionary process, on the one hand,[11] and a more traditional comparative sociohistorical approach, on the other. I will argue that the document reveals that the immediate living environment defined the lives of these Antinoopolis residents, and it shows how they made careful considerations in the way they presented themselves to the outside world.

Reading the *Ketubba* of Cologne

The *ketubba* of Cologne provides an interesting case of language choice in Egypt from the perspective of sociolinguistics, because two languages alternate in the document. At first sight, the document appears to be entirely written in Aramaic, but the first two lines are Greek written in Aramaic script, and the dowry list employs many Greek words. Before proceeding to examine the relation between the language of the document and its sociohistorical context, it is important to provide an overview of how the languages alternate in the document, and after that, to give an overview of how the relationship between the languages was explained in earlier scholarship.

The papyrus reads and translates as follows[12]:

1.   [הופאטיאס הונוריאו אוג[אòֹׂ[ט[אò [טוֹ]א הנדאקאטון
2.   [קאי פלאויאו קונס[טאֹנֹ[טיֹ]אֹו קומיטוס טוא מֹגאלוא
3.   [פריפֿסֿטאטאו קאיֹ[פאטריקיאו בשתה שתיתֹ[ת[ֹֹה שֹׁבֹוֹעֹֹה
4.   [. . . . .]ה בריח כסליו בעשֹרין בה באֹרֹֹבֹעֹה בשוֹבֹתֹֹה
5.   [בעיר] אנטינו לפרוֹטאטי דתיבאיס אנה שמ[ואל בֹ]רֹ סֹמֹפטיֹ
6.   [מן]סוס ושרי באנטינו אמרֹת וֹבעית מן דעתי מן צֹבֹיֹוֹ[ני]
7.   [נפשי] למסב לי יאת מיטרא ברת לעזר מן אלכסנדריא וֹשֹ[ריה]
8.   [באֹנֹט]ֹינו בתולתה לאתה כנימוס [כ]ֹלֹ בֹנֹת ישראל וֹאֹנֹֹה אֹמֹֹר[ֹת]
9.   [שמו]אֹֹל בר סמֹפטי חתנה דאנה [זן ומפרנס]
10.   בתולֹת[ֹה] כ[לתה
11.   בקושטֹ[ֹה והיא] קֹ[בל]ֹֹת לֹמֹ[ה]וֹ[ֹי] מֹוֹק[ֹרה יֹ]ֹֹתֹֹה

‫.12 לשמואל {ברת} בר סמפטי בדכו וב[קדו]שה וב[טהרה כנימוס בנת]‬

‫.13 ישראל צֹנֹיעתה הכדין אפרן יתֹ[ה] [[לעזר]] אסתֹר אמֹהֹ [ ]‬

‫.14 לאוקון הולוסטימ[א] פלֹגו [די]נ[ר] קֹ[ו]לֹאבֹומֹאפורין אנזרבֹוֹן [המישה]‬

‫.15 גרֹמסין תרתי סטכוון דכתן חמשֹה גרמסין זוגין תרתין‬

‫.16 [פל]גֹו דֹיֹנֹ[ר] ירֹיֹן   באלאנרין חֹד פלגו דֹ[ינר]‬

‫.17 [פר]יֹזומא   [פלגו די]נֹר זוֹגֹ ד[אֹלֹיֹן פלגו דינר זוג דפסקיאה פלגו‬

‫.18 דינר [ז]וֹן   וֹן דינרֹ חֹד זוג זֹונארין פלגו גרמה סלק סכום‬

‫.19 חושבֹן מֹ[ניא דע[מֹרא ודכתנה עם קדֹיטס דידה[ו]ן תשעֹה דינרין ופלג‬

‫.20 ותרי דֹ[ינר]יֹן [דהב] יֹהֹבֹת לֹלֹתֹה תעבד לה שאירין וחתנה שמואל בר סמפטי‬

‫.21 יהב למיטרא כלתה לעסק הדנה א[]לֹי דדהב סלק סכום‬

‫.22 ע[ם] קֹדֹיטס דמניא שתשרֹ דינרין   חללין וחלֹיֹן‬

‫.23 כתובה למיטרא ברֹת לעזר ואחריין וערבין וכל [מה דההוא קני וכל מה]‬

‫.24 דהוא עתֹיד לֹמֹקני בין נכסין בין קרקעין ממֹ[שכנין]‬

‫.25 וייהֹוֹוֹן אחריין [ו]עֹר[בין] למזונין ולתכסין ול[]   ותרין שטרי]‬

‫.26 פרניה אתכתוֹ[ן בינ]יהוֹן] ואתיהֹב חֹד ל[שמואל בר סמפטי]‬

‫.27 בֹ[ע]לֹה דמיטֹ[רא]   ואתיהֹב חד [ללעֹ]זֹר‬

‫.28 ביר‬

‫.29 שלום   ש‬

‫.30 אנה שמו[אל בר סמפטי קבלת עלי כל] מה דכתיב [ומפרש בהדן שטר מראש ועד סוף]‬

‫.31 בישראל‬

‫.32 ממרומֹך‬

1. [In the consulship of Honorius Aug]ustus for the eleventh time
2. [and] Flavius Cons]tantius comes, the most
3. [magnificent, and] patricius in the sixth year of the sabbatical cycle
4. [. . . . .], in the month Kislev, on the twentieth (day) in her, on the fourth (day) in the week
5. [in the city] Antinous, the most splendid of the Thebaid, I, Samuel son of Sampati,
6. [from] sos and inhabitant of Antinous state and ask of my own mind and of my choice
7. to take Metra daughter of Leazar from Alexandria, inhabitant
8. [of Antinous], virgin, as wife according to the law of all [the daughters] of Israel and [I state],
9. [Samu]el son of Sampati, the bridegroom, that I [will sustain and maintain],
10. the virgin, the bride
11. in honesty, and she [agrees] to [honour]
12. Samuel {daughter} son of Sampati in purity, and in [holi]ness and in [cleaness according to the custom of the daughters?]
13. of Israel who are modest and thus [[Leazar]] Ester, her mother, will provide a dowry for her:
14. a warp-threaded [tunic (or bag)], a half denarius; a long hooded cloak in the Anazarbe style, [five]
15. grams, two linen tunics, five grams; two pairs of . . .
16. [a half denarius]; . . .; one bath-towel, a half d[enarius]

17. [a g]irdle, [a half de]narius; a pair of . . ., a half denarius; a pair of fasciae[13]; a half
18. denarius; [a p]air of . . ., one denarius; a pair of ceintures, a half gram, the total amount
19. of the [woo]len and linen g[oods] with their container?[14] is nine-and-a-half denarii
20. and two denarii of gold [she gave to the bride to make bracelets for herself] and the bridegroom Samuel son of Sampati
21. gives to Metra, the bride, [] a bridal gift, . . . of gold, the total amount
22. with the container? of the goods is sixteen denarii, round and pure,
23. *ketubba* for Metra daughter of Leazar and they are guaranteed and sureties and all that he possesses and all that
24. he will acquire whether property[15] or land are [pledged for]
25. and the things that are guaranteed and sureties (are) for sustanance and garments and for [and two documents]
26. of the marriage settlement have been written [between them] and one is given to [Samuel son of Sampati]
27. the [husband] of Met[ra] and one is given to [Leazar]
28. ?[16]
29. Peace[17]
30. I, Samu[el son of Sampati, accept personally all] that has been written [and specified in this contract from beginning to end]
31. In Israel
32. ??

In this text, Greek is thus sometimes added to a text that is otherwise written in Aramaic. If we take a closer look at the language of the contract, we can summarize it as follows. The document begins with the introduction of a consular date in Greek written in Aramaic script. Another Jewish date follows in Aramaic. The document continues in Aramaic with the marriage proposal and the nuptial obligations of bridegroom and bride. Then the dowry is introduced by an Aramaic verb derived from the Greek term *phernê*. The very detailed dowry list includes the weight and the value of each item. The items in the dowry list, such as clothing and bracelets, are mainly rendered to by their Greek name, while the underlying grammatical structures remain Aramaic. This suggests that here Greek cultural vocabulary was adapted to the Aramaic lexicon. Samuel adds to this dowry a bridal gift, indicated by the Greek *hedna*. The total sum of the dowry and the bridal gift together are called *ketubba* by its Aramaic term.[18] The *ketubba* is vouched for with all Samuel's current and future possessions guaranteeing, amongst other things, Metra's food and clothing. The document is signed by (presumably) the scribe, the groom, the father of the bride, and witnesses. All these concluding parts are in Aramaic.

State of Scholarship

Having provided an overview of the text of the marriage contract, this section will discuss how this document was contextualized in previous research. This goes

to show that how one values and interprets the language of the contract was also previously an important factor in reconstructing the sociohistorical background of the document. The divergent opinions in the literature on the relationship language, content, and legal context of the marriage contract highlight the need for further investigation. Broadly we can distinguish three different perspectives on the sociohistorical background of the document.

The first scholars to edit the *ketubba* of Cologne argued that the Aramaic contract evinced the vitality of Palestinian rabbinic Judaism in Egypt. In other words, they believed that the choice of Aramaic in what they considered a traditional *ketubba*, a Jewish marriage contract, indicated that Egyptian Jews were looking to the rabbis in Palestine for an example. This interpretation dovetailed with the idea that generally the use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Egypt must have been due to the Egyptian Jewish communities' strong ties to Palestinian rabbinic Jewry.[19] The use of Greek was attributed to purely local cultural influences, and emphasis was placed on the otherwise authentic Jewish character of the text.

A broader perspective has been adopted by S.R. Llewelyn, who argues that each language, Greek and Aramaic, was used to indicate separate marital traditions that were mixed in the contract. Like the editors of the first edition, he contends that Aramaic was used to describe the Palestinian rabbinic customs, such as the day of the week on which the bride married, while Greek was used for originally Greek and Egyptian customs, namely the dowry and marital obligations. From this mixture of martial practices, he concluded that the marriage contract should be understood in the light of evolving marital practices, in which practices were adopted from surrounding cultures. This was possible because Jewish marriage contracts did not necessarily have to follow one specific legal system.[20]

Contrary to these previously mentioned hypotheses, Joëlle Beaucamp points to the similarities between the *ketubba* of Cologne and contemporaneous Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts. One of the most eye-catching similarities was the practice of concluding the marriage based on handing over a dowry that was precisely defined in the accompanying dowry list.[21] Beaucamp even omits the Jewish context entirely and considers the contract a typical example of Byzantine Graeco-Egyptian marital legislation, without noting the characteristics of the *ketubba* that are not typically Graeco-Egyptian, for example, the use of the Aramaic language and Jewish terminology such as *ketubba*.

Overall, these studies show the importance of considering various aspects of the sociohistorical context in which the document could have functioned. However, especially the first and third study reviewed here remain narrow in focus, dealing only with one specific cultural context in which the contract could have functions. These interpretations create a dichotomy between two reified cultural registers, Palestinian rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Egyptian world. Neither the idea that the contract is exclusively the product of Jews influenced by Palestinian rabbinic practices nor the hypothesis that the contract fully reflects Graeco-Egyptian marital customs does full justice to the blend of customs that the contract shows.

The fact that one document could be studied using either the prism of Palestinian rabbinic Judaism or that of Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts strongly supports Llewelyn's conclusion. In light of the perceived interplay of marital

practices deriving from both Palestinian Jewish customs and Graeco-Egyptian practices, it is indeed conceivable that the document is the result of the mixing of multiple culturally different practices. Several other studies confirm the hypothesis that marital practices and related legislation develop and change over time.[22]

However, Llewelyn's conclusion, correct as it may be, leaves many questions about the contract unanswered. For instance, it remains unexplained how the influence of Graeco-Roman legislation relates to the assumed traces of rabbinic influence and whether one of the two, the Palestinian or Graeco-Roman, traditions was more important than the other. Put differently, one might ask how the various dispositions or multiple identities of the married couple and their scribe relate to each other in this contract (see the introduction to this volume). Llewyn's article provides no further insights into the cultural preferences and self-perception of the ones involved in the drawing up of this contract.

The earlier studies are limited in that they do not convincingly explain why certain parts are in Aramaic and other parts in Greek. Also, Llewelyn has no further explanation for the blend than that there was influence from Greek legislation and that Aramaic was reserved for the religious sections only. A closer reading of our document reveals, however, a much more complex situation. As this chapter will show, Aramaic was not only used when religious aspects are at stake, as it also intertwines with Greek. This suggests that the separation between the two languages is certainly not absolute. All in all, the cultural and linguistic interrelationship between Greek and Aramaic in the Cologne *ketubba* is considerably more intricate than previously maintained. Viewing the document as a more complex composite will result in a broader and more accurate interpretation of the religious and linguistical situation behind this marriage contract.

A Sociolinguistic Approach

As we have seen, there is no doubt that the language of the contract is closely connected to its content. The choice of language reflects how the ones involved in its creation presented themselves to their environment. By applying the sociolinguistic theory as developed by William Croft, I will analyse the interaction of Greek and Aramaic in the contract more carefully. William Croft's theory on language mixing as evolutionary process is particularly helpful for the analysis of the *ketubba,* because the contract clearly shows the mixing of languages but lacks any clear sociohistorical context.[23] This theory enables us to reconstruct part of that context, as it distinguishes between different levels of language mixing and relates these different levels to the extent to which one language society is willing to adapt to another language society. The theory provides insight into the level of language mixing and the social implications thereof, as the outcome of the analysis reflects to what extent the speaker is prepared to assimilate or wants to exclude oneself from the other language society.[24] Such insight thus provides a welcome basis for understanding the sociohistorical background against which this document was written.

Before turning to applying the theory, I will first introduce the theory in more detail. William Croft's sociolinguistic theory focuses on the relation between what he calls the "heritage society" and the "adoptive society." Each of these societies uses its own languages. Croft defines the heritage society as one's native society. Traditionally, this society uses the ancestral, or heritage, language. The society with which the heritage society comes into contact is the adoptive society. By adoptive society, then, Croft means the society from which linguistic elements are adopted.

In settings of language contact, where the heritage and adoptive society meet, heritage societies may have to decide whether to *maintain* their language or to *shift* towards the language of the adoptive society. According to Croft, maintenance is likely to occur if the heritage society has no identification with the adoptive society, while a shift occurs in those cases when the heritage society has no particular identification anymore with the heritage society. Because maintenance and shift are considered the opposite ends of a continuum, the extent to which a heritage society is prepared to shift or to maintain may vary across that spectrum.

Croft provides the following observations as to how patterns of maintenance and shift are being played out in practice and how they can be recognized. In order to analyse the level of language interaction, Croft distinguishes between two types of linguistic units, so-called *linguemes*. These two types of linguemes are *substance linguemes* and *schematic linguemes*. Substance linguemes are linguistic units that carry both form and meaning, for instance, nouns or meaning carrying morphological features. By contrast, schematic linguemes carry either form or meaning but never both. This is the case with underlying grammatical structures.

The pattern Croft discerns in cases of language maintenance is that if foreign elements are adopted into the heritage language, these elements mostly concern substance linguemes. The most commonly adopted substance linguemes in cases like this are non-basic vocabulary, for instance, cultural vocabulary. In cases of maintenance, most of the basic vocabulary, such as standard verbs and frequently used nouns, continues to derive from the heritage language. This pattern of adoption that is thus prevalent in cases of maintenance of the heritage language is likely to occur when heritage societies perceive themselves as different from the adoptive society. These heritage communities are typically associated with tightly knit communities.

In contrast to cases of maintenance, in which the adoption of foreign elements is often limited to substance linguemes, one of the characteristics of a language shift towards the adoptive society is the adoption of grammatical patterns from this surrounding society. Next to schematic linguemes, also much vocabulary of the adoptive society is embraced in cases of a language shift. In extreme cases of shifting towards the adoptive society, one also expects that most of the basic lexicon is derived from the adoptive language. The adoption of so many elements, both substance and schematic linguemes, is possible because the heritage communities responsible for this are typically more open to the influences of the society that surrounds them.

From this, it is clear, then, that Croft argues that there is a relationship between the pattern of adoption and the attitude of the heritage society toward the adoptive society. According to Croft, mixing languages should be considered a positive act of identity.[25] By this he means that the linguemes that speakers use are indicative of the community to which they feel they belong or with which they wish to be associated.[26] It is the adoption of non-basic vocabulary that characterizes positive acts of identity. Even if only a small amount of non-basic vocabulary is used, for instance, in the case of language maintenance, this points to a positive act of identity. By contrast, a negative act of identity means that a speaker does everything in his power to underline that one is not part of the adoptive society.[27]

It is precisely because of this connection Croft makes between the pattern of adoption and the self-image of the heritage society that his theory is interesting to apply to the *ketubba* of Cologne. Applying the theory to the *ketubba* of Cologne contributes not only to understanding the language interaction in the contract but also helps to reflect on its social implications. For the *ketubba*, this is important because the contract has so little direct context. In fact, we don't even know for sure what the language situation is that it reflects: Greek in an Aramaic context or Aramaic in a predominantly Greek context.

Croft distinguishes four situations in which he determines whether there is language maintenance or shift based on the level of adoption of elements derived from the adoptive language by the heritage society. If we translate this into the possible language situations behind the *ketubba*, these would be the following four scenarios: 1) appropriated Aramaic but maintenance of Greek, 2) appropriated Aramaic and shift towards Aramaic, 3) appropriated Greek but maintenance of Aramaic, and 4) appropriated Greek and shift towards Greek.

The first two scenarios consider Greek the heritage language. The Aramaic of the *ketubba* could then show that this Greek heritage community came into contact with or identified to some extent with an Aramaic community, the adoptive society. The distinction between these first two scenarios is that one ends in maintenance and the other in a shift. In the first case, that means that Greek, as the heritage language, remains the dominant language. In the second case, however, where the contact leads to a shift, the Aramaic of the adoptive society becomes dominant. In the other two scenarios, Aramaic is the heritage language and encountered a Greek-using adoptive society. The same is true for these scenarios as the two earlier, namely that one scenario results in language maintenance while the other results in a language shift. Thus, in the third situation, this Aramaic-Greek contact leads to the maintenance of the heritage language Aramaic, while in the fourth situation, the Aramaic-Greek contact leads to a shift towards the Greek used by the adoptive society.

Using the adoption patterns Croft distinguished, we can now examine which pattern we observe in the *ketubba* and so determine which scenario is most likely to apply to the *ketubba*. We begin by discussing the first scenario and what we expect to see in the papyrus if the papyrus fits this scenario. If the papyrus fits the first situation, in which the heritage community tries to maintain its native-language Greek, according to Croft's theory, one expects the basic vocabulary to

be Greek and non-basic vocabulary to be Aramaic. The language analysis of the papyrus has already shown that this is not the case in the *ketubba*, because in the document the non-basic vocabulary tends to be in Greek and the basic vocabulary in Aramaic. Even if the contract were to represent a beginning stage of a borrowing process, the Aramaic numerals and a verb such as 'to give' suggest that this is not a likely scenario.

If the second scenario applies to the contract, in which the heritage community is shifting to Aramaic, one expects the occurrence of the type of basic Aramaic vocabulary found in the *ketubba*. However, in this scenario many of the grammatical inflexions and structures should still be in Greek. This is not the case in the *ketubba* of Cologne, because the use of Greek grammar is strictly limited to the Greek preface of the document. Therefore, Croft's linguistic theory suggests that this second scenario is not reflected in the papyrus.

The third possible scenario, namely a community focusing on maintaining their Aramaic heritage in a Greek society, presupposes the occurrence of Aramaic basic vocabulary, Aramaic grammatical inflexions, and non-basic Greek vocabulary, especially in the form of borrowings and loan words. Looking at the interaction between Greek and Aramaic in the *ketubba*, this scenario would fit the contract reasonably well. The reason therefore is that this scenario dictates that syntactically and morphologically the *ketubba* is Aramaic just as its basic vocabulary, such as numbers and frequently used verbs, for instance, 'to give.' By contrast, Greek should in the form of borrowed non-basic vocabulary, such as the names of the dowry items. All this seems to apply to the body of the *ketubba*.

The fourth situation, where there is a shift towards the Greek adoptive society, is again less likely, because this would require the inclusion of quite a bit of Greek vocabulary. Moreover, this scenario also prescribes that the grammatical inflexions and grammatical constructions are partly those of the heritage society. One could argue that this is the case in the *ketubba*, at least to some extent. However, Croft's theory specifies that basic vocabulary also becomes Greek in this scenario. Because the basic vocabulary is predominantly Aramaic, this scenario is improbable.

In light of the analysis of the *ketubba*'s language, it is conceivable that the third scenario applies to the *ketubba*. This implies that we are witnessing an Aramaic heritage community that is interacting with an adoptive community in which Greek is common. This also has implications for the sociohistorical setting of the contract, because according to Croft's theory, such heritage communities are focused, socially inward-looking communities. The focus of the heritage society on maintaining its heritage language suggests that such group underlined their distinctiveness as a so-called positive act of identity. However, they were not aimed at excluding the adoptive society and adopted elements from it.

These findings about the basic attitude of the Aramaic users toward the non-Aramaic environment need further refinement. Given that this is the only known extant Aramaic Jewish marriage contract of this period, there is no way to ascertain how representative it is. We do not know if any fixed linguistic or religious community was involved here. Yet a legal contract like this is unlikely to have

existed in a vacuum, for several people were involved in its creation: the bride, the groom, their families, a scribe, and witnesses. The sociolinguistic analysis suggests that at least the ones involved preferred in this case the use of the Aramaic language. They may have used the language to underline that they were Aramaic users amidst the Greek-using world, emphasizing their clearly distinctive character through their choice of language. However, it is quite possible that in addition to language, other factors may have played a role in the decisions made in the contract, such as religious and legal considerations. Therefore, I will now turn to more closely analysing the interaction between these dispositions to provide more insight into the self-presentation of the individuals involved in this contract. This goes to show that while emphasizing their Jewishness, they were also deeply rooted in the Graeco-Egyptian society. I will do this by further contextualizing a selection of the most striking phrases in the contract.

The Date

The first sentence of the *ketubba*, showing that those involved in this contract were navigating between local Greek customs and Palestinian Jewish customs, is the double date with which the contract begins. As I noted earlier, the contract begins with a consular dating in the Greek language written down in Aramaic script. Thereafter comes a Jewish date namely, "in the sixth year of the sabbatical cycle [. . . . .], in the month Kislev, on the twentieth (day) in her, on the fourth (day) in the week." The chosen construction of a double dating may indicate that the scribe of the contract on the one hand concurred with a common Graeco-Egyptian practice and on the other hand, with the Jewish dating distinguished himself from his Graeco- Egyptian environment on the basis of religious identity.

It is conceivable that the scribe employed the consular date that was widely used between 284 and 641 CE[28] to seek legal validation from the Roman authorities. We observe the same phenomenon in contemporary Coptic documents that also modelled their dates after Greek examples.[29] These scribes sometimes faced the problem of Greek having a higher legal status.[30] In general, the use of a double date is a recurring custom in Egyptian papyri throughout the ages. This can be seen in, for instance, a Roman date in Latin preceding Greek texts[31] and double dates in the much earlier Aramaic Elephantine papyri.[32] That we also find this practice in the *ketubba* thus possibly underlines the Graeco-Egyptian character of the document.

However, the writer clearly also wanted to emphasize that the contract was in accordance with the Jewish calendar. In doing so, the scribe made it clear that the contract had to have legal status not only in the Graeco-Egyptian environment but also in a Jewish context. Yet it remains unclear what the precise details of this Jewish context were, for the order of dating used, namely the month followed by the week, is not usually found in Jewish Palestinian marriage contracts.[33] Although we cannot determine whether the deviation from the usual Palestinian Jewish dating was intentional or accidental, this may also mean that although the

writer seems to identify with Palestinian Jewish praxis, he may have been relatively distant from the customs there at the same time. Consequently, he may have chosen his own wording, of which we do not know if it was sometimes used more broadly by Jews in his environment.

Customs of Israel

This same image of a writer who, on the one hand, seeks connection with the Graeco-Egyptian environment but, on the other, emphasizes the document's Jewish character follows from the use of the phrase "customs (כנימוס) of . . . Israel."[34] Although we cannot read the exact phrase because the papyrus is illegible in the two places where the phrase is used, this phrase points to a typical characteristic of Jewish marriage contracts.[35] Such references 'to the custom of' are known from the second-century Jewish marriage contracts from the Judaean desert. Although the Jews did not invent the use of the expression 'the custom of,' they are the group to continue its use.[36] This is all the more confirmed by the fact that the use of the expression continues in later Jewish marriage contracts, as found in the Cairo Genizah.[37] Because the phrase does not appear in contemporary non-Jewish Greek marriage contracts, the expression can be considered a characteristic of Jewish marriage contracts. As in other Jewish contracts, the phrase provides a referential framework for the marital obligations of the spouses.[38]

The inclusion of the phrase 'according to the custom of' also implies that one could choose from several options.[39] The phrase not only underlines the awareness of other practices but also testifies to a multicultural environment. The reason for this is that the use of the phrase 'the custom of' ties in with contemporary Greek marriage contracts which often include a clause that the marital conditions are 'befitting' for a spouse.[40] What exactly is 'befitting' is not always further specified, and people may have assumed this to be known. By further specifying the conditions in the *ketubba*, the writer clarifies what terms apply to this marriage. In this case, the scribe apparently wants to emphasize that the marital obligations deviate from the generic 'what is befitting' customary in their non-Jewish environment by framing the conditions as Jewish. This is notable because these Jewish terms do not necessarily differ from what was a common provision in Greek contracts, namely to provide the wife with all necessities.[41] The writer thus sets Jewish customs apart, while there is no absolute opposition to Graeco-Egyptian obligations.

The writer may have had several reasons for including this reference to 'the customs of' so explicitly. On the one hand, the phrase could emphasize identification with a specific geographical or religious group, while, on the other hand, the reference could set the persons involved apart from the non-Jewish environment.[42] Although we do not know exactly which customs of Israel the writer is referring to, he does make it clear that the marriage concluded by this contract agrees with Jewish praxis in Israel. Apparently, that was a more important message to convey than to suggest compliance with the marital conditions of the non-Jewish environment.

Phernê

This suggests that there was a diffuse boundary between what was presented as Jewish and local customs. All this suggests that religious identity and a local rootedness in Egypt go hand in hand in this contract. However, there are even more striking examples in the contract that show a religious sauce being poured over things that are otherwise characteristic of contemporary Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts. This is primarily evident in the following analysis of the relationship between the terms *phernê*, *hedna*, and *ketubba*.

In the *ketubba* of Cologne, the dowry list is an important part of the contract as a financial settlement on which the marriage is based, just as this is the case in other contemporary Greek and Jewish marriage contracts. However, the way the dowry list was set up and the word with which it was introduced, the root *prn*, indicates that here, too, the writer was deliberately seeking the connection between Graeco-Egyptian law and his Jewish background. This is mainly evidenced by the extensive dowry inventory in the *ketubba* meeting in every respect the requirements of the *phernê* as used in Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts as of the second century.[43]

It has been convincingly demonstrated that from the second century onward the dowry list became more extensive and detailed than in the period before. This change came about because of the introduction of a new provision in the second century that required a spouse to return the original objects at the time the marriage ended. The motivation behind that provision was that spouses could no longer dispose of the objects whenever they wanted, something that apparently occurred regularly. As a consequence of this provision, items such as golden jewellery had now to be returned in equal weight and form.[44] Therefore, it became important to record very precisely the physical items, their individual weight and value, in a dowry inventory, the *phernê*. It is for this reason that marriage contracts from this period onwards contain long detailed dowry inventories in which mainly jewellery and clothing were delivered under the *phernê*.[45]

The dowry inventory as recorded in the *ketubba* of Cologne resembles these detailed inventories called *phernê* in Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts, because the list in the *ketubba* also contains valued clothing and jewellery. This is the reason why the use of the verb *prn* in the *ketubba* to introduce the dowry items in their environment associated with *phernê* seems hardly coincidental. In light of the content of the dowry list, it is conceivable that here we find a clear example of the use of a type of dowry inventory that was common in their Graeco-Egyptian environment. That dowries had long been included in Jewish marriage contracts may have contributed to the acceptance of the Graeco-Egyptian *phernê* in the Jewish context in which the contract should also be read.[46] In addition, it may have helped that the term *phernê* was probably already known in Jewish circles from the Septuagint, where it translated as *mohar*, and generally, in Aramaic, it was often used in the meaning of *ketubba*.[47] It is clear, then, that Palestinian Jewish and Graeco-Egyptian customs largely coincide here, but the choice for the detailed dowry list in the style of the Graeco-Egyptian *phernê* of the fourth

century strongly suggests that in this case the contract especially joins in with local legal practices.

Hedna

The *phernê* is not the only legally charged term originating in the Graeco-Egyptian environment that forms the basis of the financial part of the marriage contract. The use of legal terms to name the financial side of the marriage is also evident from the use of *hedna*. Like *phernê, hedna* is another legal term that demonstrates that the contract interacts with two legal systems.[48] In Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts, the *hedna* is a prenuptial gift that appears as of the fourth century CE.[49] During this century, this gift by the husband to the bride gained popularity, and the marriage and divorce papyri of the sixth century show that it was ubiquitous in Egypt, as well as in Antinoopolis.[50] In these contracts, the gift is always a marriage gift by the husband which is given at the time of the marriage or shortly after that.[51] Divorce contracts show that the *hedna* was one of the financial affairs next to the dowry and dowry additions that had to be settled upon divorce.[52]

The strong legal significance and consequences of *hedna* in this period is evidenced by a fifth-century law in the Theodosian Code suggesting that the bridal gifts and the dowry often went to the same person in the case of divorce.[53] The law entailed that a wife initiating divorce was only allowed to keep her dowry and the nuptial gifts if she could prove that her husband wronged her. If the husband initiated the divorce, he could retain the dowry and his gifts only if he could prove his wife had not behaved properly. If a man wanted to dissolve the marriage because of disagreement rather than his wife's sinful character, the woman had the right to keep the gifts and the dowry.[54] The observation that the *hedna* was considered the wife's legal property is further supported by the husband's acknowledgement of the *hedna* as a debt to her, just as the dowry was considered a debt.[55] The divorce contracts as well as the Theodosian Code confirm that in general women were not allowed to take more from the household than what they brought in and received as a bridal gift at the beginning of the marriage.[56]

There are several similarities between the *hedna* as used in the *ketubba* and other Graeco-Egyptian papyri that make it unlikely that the author of the ketubba meant a different payment than the *hedna* as discussed earlier. This is especially so because *hedna* is a legal term with legal implications. The three main similarities are that 1) the gift was given at the time of the marriage,[57] 2) it concerns a gift from the husband to his wife, and 3) the gift becomes part of the wife's property at the beginning of the marriage. The latter is suggested by adding the *hedna* to the total sum of the 'ketubba for Metra' in the marriage contract.

All this points to a situation in which not only the name of a contemporary bridal gift was used but that also the legal meaning of the term applied to the text. The choice for *hedna* was thus the result of a conscious decision to concur with the marital gift commonly used in their Egyptian environment. In fact, what we see in the contract is an implementation of the law that considers the dowry and gift a debt that must be paid back if the marriage is dissolved. If the Jews involved

in the drawing up of the Ketubba of Cologne knew other dowry constructions that were commonly used amongst Jews, they would undoubtedly have been aware of the different juridical status of marital gifts, such as dowry additions.[58]

Ketubba: *A Combination of the* Phernê *and the* Hedna

Whereas the use of *phernê* and *hedna* suggest that legally the focus of the contract is on Graeco-Egyptian legislation, our final examination of the word *ketubba* will show that in the use of this term, Graeco-Egyptian praxis is integrated into what is presented as a traditional Jewish marriage contract. There is no doubt about the cultural connotations of the term *ketubba* that is used in the *ketubba* of Cologne to describe the total sum of the dowry and the bridal gift. This term, along with the phrase 'customs of Israel,' is one of the clearest indications that the contract originated in a Jewish context. However, when we look more closely at the function of the *ketubba* in this contract, we find that the term functioned as a bridge between the Graeco-Egyptian legislation and what should be a valid Jewish marriage. The harmonizing use of the term *ketubba* allowed this contract to function in both a Jewish and Graeco-Egyptian context.

The following hypothesis is based on one meaning of the word *ketubba* in particular, namely that of a debt. More specifically, *ketubba* can be a marriage settlement indicating an amount that the wife should receive at the time the marriage is dissolved. In the academic literature, there are various definitions of this settlement, such as "the sum of money payable by the husband or his estate to his wife on the dissolution of the marriage"[59] or "an 'endowment pledge' and 'a divorce payment' to be paid in the event of dissolution due to death or divorce."[60] The word *ketubba* sometimes also refers to two other types of payments, namely the dowry and the dowry addition.[61]

One of the most important aspects of the *ketubba* in the *ketubba* of Cologne that helps us determine what *ketubba* means exactly in this contract is that it has a monetary value in this case, namely the total sum of the *phernê* and the *hedna*: "sixteen denarii, round and pure, [?] *ketubba* for Metra daughter of Leazar." Because the *ketubba* represents a monetary value, it is unlikely that it refers to the marriage contract itself, although it could refer to the main financial agreement that is the marriage settlement. It is equally unlikely that *ketubba* means dowry in this context, because, as we have noted, the dowry and *hedna* had different legal statuses. For this reason, if *ketubba* were the dowry, one would expect the *hedna* to have been excluded from the total sum.[62]

Another decisive factor in determining the meaning and function of *ketubba* in this case is an important similarity that exists between the *hedna*, *phernê*, and other Jewish *ketubbot*. These payments have in common that they are debts that must be paid when the marriage is dissolved. The *ketubba*, then, is the amount that the husband is supposed to pay his wife only if the marriage ends, just as the *phernê* and *hedna* were only returned to the wife in the event that the marriage ended unless she had misbehaved. It is probably that during her marriage the

woman already owned her *hedna*. Both in a *ketubba* and in the Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts, property acquired after the marriage was not included unless otherwise stated. This suggests that the effect of the financial agreements, on the one hand the *ketubba* and on the other the combination of the *hedna* and *phernê*, was actually the same in the case of divorce. After all, in both cases, if she had not misbehaved, the wife was entitled to the sum promised in her marriage contract.

Based on these findings, I conclude that the definition of *ketubba* as a debt that the husband must pay at the time the marriage ends fits the description of the *ketubba* as the total amount of the *hedna* and *phernê*. By summarizing these two otherwise typically Graeco-Egyptian financial agreements as *ketubba*, the scribe transformed the payment into a document that was recognized as a proper Jewish marriage settlement. This may have made the contract legally valid in both a Jewish and non-Jewish context. In a Graeco-Egyptian court, the judge would have heard all the necessary information: a date, the *phernê*, and the *hedna*. Even though he would not have been able to understand the total value, which was in Aramaic, he would know which procedures to follow. Likewise, in case of a conflict, a Jewish court could also rule on the dispute on the basis of the *ketubba*. In both scenarios, Metra would receive the same sum: under Graeco-Egyptian law, she would be paid her bridal gift and dowry; in a Jewish setting, she would be given her *ketubba*. By linking *ketubba*, *phernê*, and *hedna*, the writer shows that there were no strict religious and cultural boundaries and that he was able to harmonize different dispositions.

Conclusions

The sociolinguistic and sociohistorical comparative analysis reveals that, on the one hand, the people who drew up this contract were very well integrated in Antinoopolis, being able to use local legislation and to harmonize it with Jewish legal terminology, while on the other hand, the choice of language ensured that they did not fully blend with the environment. This shows that the contract is much more than a mixture of customs, but rather a deliberate composition that carefully navigates between Jewish and Graeco-Egyptian laws which had as a result that the contract could function in different legal contexts. Because the leading financial agreement is completely based on the laws of the Graeco-Egyptian environment, it appears that the author has made a real effort to present the contract as an acceptable Jewish marriage contract. He has done this by what I would call appropriating, or 'Judaizing,' the formula and legal terms by integrating them into a marriage settlement called *ketubba* and referring to the customs of Israel.

Our examination has thus demonstrated that the contract is the product of a group that has a strong religious identity of its own but is also strongly rooted locally. The use of local Graeco-Egyptian legal terminology in the *ketubba* of Cologne places the document unmistakably amid the Graeco-Egyptian environment in which it was written. Even if such local rootedness is caused by external factors—for example, having to comply with the laws in force in Egypt—it

remains that the people involved were very familiar with local legislation and willing to embed this repertoire in one of the most important documents of their family history. The contents of the document show that the roots in Graeco-Egyptian society were stronger than reflected by the Aramaic language of the document and the attempt to frame it as Jewish.

Yet there is ample evidence to suggest that they did emphasize their own distinctive Jewish character. As we have seen, the contract is literally framed as a Jewish contract by the addition of the Jewish date, by references to Israel, by interpreting the payments as the *ketubba* marriage settlement, and by distinguishing it from the Greek contracts by writing it in Aramaic. In sum, then, it is primarily their choice of language and the attempts to match what one would expect from a Palestinian Jewish marriage contract. All this clearly evinces that they were constantly negotiating with their Jewish and Greek-Egyptian surroundings. Their choice of language, literally visible in the Aramaic script, would have made this document distinct from all contemporary Greek-Egyptian documents. In this respect, the linguistic choice may well have been used to create a distance between Greek-Egyptian practice and that preferred by the authors of the contract. This follows especially from Croft's theory that, as we have seen, suggests that when a heritage community comes into contact with an adoptive society, language maintenance may reflect social distance. This scenario seems applicable to the contract, which shows the pattern of the third scenario discussed in this chapter: an Aramean heritage community interacting with a Greek adoptive society. The heritage community adopts some elements but focuses on preserving its own language. This could mean that the author of the *ketubba* was well integrated but eager to be recognized as socially distinct.

All this leads us to some concluding remarks about different dispositions an Egyptian Jew might have had. The marriage contract of Samuel and Metra not only reflects affiliation with Palestinian Jewish praxis but also attests to the local negotiation of different social affiliations. On the one hand, there is a local, legal identification, perhaps to create a valid marriage contract in Egypt. On the other hand, religious motivations and possibly a different geographical background played an essential part in the construction of the document. They would possibly not have bothered to call it a *ketubba* and to write it in Aramaic if it was not relevant to them to do so. Yet they could go to a local court if they wanted a divorce, which had nothing to do with their religious preferences. Samuel and Metra were not all averse to combining local Graeco-Egyptian with their religious repertoire. The existence of their contract underlines that it was very well possible to fill out the details of a contract according to religious repertoires that were not necessarily shared by most of one's neighbors. However, just as the formulation of the contract was not accidental, the combination of various legislations was not coincidental either. Such combinations were deliberately pursued to be able to join in with religious customs, on the one hand, and locally used customs, on the other. Both aspects of life, one's neighborhood and religious preferences, were considered important.

Notes

1　C. Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986).
2　It is a combination of various elements that suggest the Jewish context of the document. These include the choice of the word *ketubba*; the use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic; the use of the Jewish script; and the names of the people involved, especially Leazar, Samuel, and Ester.
3　A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, ed., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. I. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), xx and 86–93; A. Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 151–57; R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 277; T. Ilan, "The Jewish Community in Egypt Before and After 117 CE in Light of Old and New Papyri," in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 203–24; W. Clarysse, "The Jewish Presence in Graeco-Roman Egypt: The Evidence of the Papyri Since the Coprus Papyrorum Judaicarum," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, eds. Alison Salvesen, Sarah Pearce, and Miriam Frenkel. Vol. 110 of Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 320; M. Pucci Ben Zeev, "The Uprisings in the Jewish Diaspora," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96–99.
4　Ilan, "The Jewish Community," 203–24; T. Ilan, "An Addendum to Bagnall and Cribiore, Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt: Two Aramaic Letters from Jewish Women," in *Israel in Egypt: The Land of Egypt as Concept and Reality for Jews in Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period*, eds. Alison Salvesen, Sarah Pearce, and Miriam Frenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 397–416; M. M. Piotrkowski, "'Literary Jews': The Jewish Community of Oxyrhynchus in Light of Non-documentary Texts on Papyrus," in *Sources and Interpretation in Ancient Judaism: Studies for Tal Ilan at Sixty*, eds. Meron M. Piotrkowski, Geoffrey Herman, and Saskia Dönitz (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 143–73; E. J. Epp, "The Jews and the Jewish Community in Oxyrhynchus: Socio-Religious Context for the New Testament Papyri," in *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 25–26.
5　Victor Tcherikover claimed that the use of Hebrew by the Jews in late antique Egypt ought to be seen as evidence of nationalistic sentiments within these communities. V. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 94–111. Colette Sirat et al. propose that Jews in Egypt were majorly inspired by rabbinic, Palestinian Judaism. Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 9. Alan Bowman suggested that the language shift from Greek to Hebrew was a Jewish reaction to their increasing marginalization by the Christians. A. Bowman, *Egypt After the Pharaohs*: *332 BC—AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 129. Both Meron Piotrkowski and Cyril Aslanov argued that among the Jewish population there were many immigrants. Piotrkowski, "'Literary Jews'"; C. Aslanov, "Judeo-Greek or Greek Spoken by Jews," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, eds. B. Robert, O. Irshai, G. G. Stroumsa, and R. Talgam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 385–98.
6　Except for Piotrkowski, who focuses on Oxyrhynchos.
7　R. Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," *European Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (2004): 164.
8　Stowers raised the issue of internal plurality concerning early Christianity. Groups are not as uniform and static as often was assumed by scholarship. S. Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 238–56.
9　E. Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). See also Bernard Lahire who has

discussed the plurality of the actor, meaning the various dispositions one can have, in B. Lahire, *The Plural Actor* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

10 Since this Aramaic fragment is only one of several Aramaic fragments from Egypt, I assume that there were Jews in Egypt who were proficient in Aramaic. Therefore, the choice of Aramaic is not necessarily just a result of the custom of drafting these types of contracts in Aramaic in contemporary Israel.

11 W. Croft, "Mixed Languages and Acts of Identity: An Evolutionary Approach," in *The Mixed Language Debate: Theoretical and Empirical Advances*, eds. Yaron Matras and Peter Bakker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003). This theory was also applied to Coptic in E. D. Zakrzewaska, "L* as Secret Language: Social Functions of Early Coptic," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takia (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015), 185–98.

12 Transcription by Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 20–21. Also in: J. Lieu, "A Jewish Deed of Marriage," in *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1986–87*, ed. S. R. Llewelyn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 82.

13 Bundles or bandages.

14 I follow here Lieu. The word probably derives from κάδδιχος or κάδιον both from κάδος (vessel). Lieu, "A Jewish Deed," 83.

15 Possibly movable property, sometimes cattle.

16 Lieu suggest "son of". Lieu, "A Jewish Deed," 83.

17 Or: greetings, well-being.

18 This is borrowing: "the adoption of any linguistic element (not only lexical items) into one language from another. The items function in the recipient language as native elements". Mullen in A. Mullen, "Introduction: Multiple Languages, Multiple Identities," in *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, eds. Alex Mullen and Patrick James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19. Cultural vocabulary is easily adopted, see Zakrzewaska, "A Bilingual Language Variety," 118–19. Similar practices of adopting the names of clothing from the environment are seen in marriage contracts found in the Cairo Genizah. See for a detailed study of a Lydian contract: J. G. Krivoruchko, "Notes on the Dowry Items in the Mastaura Marriage Deed," *Qinzei Qedem—Genizah Research Annual* 13 (2017): 9–51.

19 Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 9. This claim was renewed by Lieu in: Lieu, "A Jewish Deed," 84.

20 S. R. Llewelyn, "A Jewish Deed Some Further Observations," in *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1986–87*, ed. S. R. Llewelyn (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 97.

21 J. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e-7e siècle). Vol. II: Les pratiques sociales* (Paris: de Boccard, 1992), 109.

22 See, for instance, U. Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements*: *A History of the Greek Marriage Document in Egypt. 4th Century BCE - 4th Century CE* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2003). Examples of works on Jewish contracts: M. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine*: *A Cairo Geniza Study. Vol. I: The Ketubba Traditions and Vol. II: The Ketubba Texts* (Tel-Aviv: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1980); J. G. Oudshoorn, *The Relationship Between Roman and Local Law in the Babatha and Salome Komaise Archives: General Analysis and Three Case Studies on Law of Succession, Guardianship and Marriage* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), esp. chapter 6, 378–438; M. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

23 Croft's theory has been applied to ancient texts in a study to the development of Coptic by Ewa Zakrzewaska, "'A Bilingual Language Variety' or 'the Language of the Pharaohs'? Coptic from the Perspective of Contact Linguistics," in *Greek Influence on Egyptian-Coptic: Contact-Induced Change in an Ancient African Language*, eds.

Eitan Grossman, Peter Dils, Tonio Sebastian Richter, and Wolfgang Schenkel (Hamburg: Widmaier Verlag, 2017), 115–61. She shows that applying the theory can result in interesting insights in the interaction of languages in ancient society and the social consequences thereof.

24 Croft, "Mixed Languages," 41.

25 The concept of acts of identities was introduced by R. B. LePage and A. Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

26 LePage and Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity*, 65.

27 Ibid., 66–67. In cases of language maintenance, there is usually a positive act of identity. There is, however, one exception, namely when language maintenance takes the form of a so-called secret language. A secret language is characterized by the preservation of the basic vocabulary of the heritage language only. These languages tend to adopt many foreign linguistic elements, but these elements occur in a form unrecognizable and incomprehensible to the adoptive society. In other words, the speaker of a secret language is explicitly aimed at excluding outsiders, namely members of the adoptive society.

28 J. H. F. Dijkstra, "A Bilingual Report of Proceedings with the First Consular Dating to 433 C.E. in the Papyri," in *Sixty-Five Papyrological Texts: Presented to Klaas. A. Worp on the Occasion of this 65th birthday*, eds. F. A. J. Hoogendijk and B. P. Muhs (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 203; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 328.

29 Zakrzewaska, "'A Bilingual Language Variety'," 145.

30 S. J. Clackson and A. Papaconstantinou, "Coptic or Greek? Bilingualism in the Papyri," in *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt from the Ptolemies to the Abbasids*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 95–99.

31 Dijkstra, "A Bilingual Report," 205–27.

32 See for instance TAD B3.7 in B. Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English. Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 223.

33 One would expect the reverse order: day of the week, day of the month and then the year. M. A. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine: A Cairo Geniza Study. Vol. I: The Ketubba Traditions* (Tel-Aviv: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1980), 98–99.

34 In two documents of the Cairo-Genizah סומינכ is found (JMP (*Jewish Marriage in Palestine)* 13:5 and 34:5). In both instances, the nomos is combined with Yehudim. In 4:15 מיש ימסוניכ refers to the proper behavior of Jewish wives. Ibid., 165, 186.

35 In the *edition princeps* three suggestions were made: the customs of the house, daughters, or law of Israel. Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 38–39.

36 An Edomite Aramaic marriage contract of the second century BCE, which is not distinguishably Jewish, already mentioned that the bride was given to the husband "according to the custom (סומנ) of the daughters of [Edom(?)] E. Eshel and A. Kloner, "An Aramaic Ostracon of an Edomite Marriage Contract from Maresha, Dated 176 B.C.E.," *Israel Exploration Journal* 46, no. 1/2 (1996): 11–12. The reference "according to the Roman customs" is found in a later Palestinian (non-Jewish) papyrus as well. P. Ness 18 refers to "in accordance with Roman custom," which is relevant given that it was found in a military context. C. J. Kraemer, ed., *Excavations at Nessana 3: Non-Literary Papyri. Vol. 3 of Princeton Legacy Library* 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 54, 58, 63.

37 See Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine*, 186 and 474–75.

38 Oudshoorn, *The Relationship Between Roman and Local Law*, 378–436, esp. 434–35. She has also noted that these references to customs related to ethnicity, geographical areas, or cultures are not known from non-Jewish Greek marriage contracts.

39 See note 36.

40 Eshel and Kloner, "An Aramaic Ostracon," 11–12.

41 One fascinating Greek marriage contract which lacks the dowry mentions that the husband has to provide his wife with all necessities according to his ability instead of his

means (P. Oxy XLIX. 3500). See further J. Evans-Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 122–29.

42 See, for instance, Oudshoorn on "the customs of the Galileans" and "Greek customs" in the Jewish papyri. Oudshoorn, *The Relationship Between Roman and Local Law*, 382–85 and 422.

43 The term *phernê* was already used in Graeco-Egyptian marriage contracts in the earlier Ptolemaic period, but it was different from the later dowry inventories. During the Ptolemaic period, the husband was liable for the total value of the dowry. The preservation of the dotal objects had no priority. Therefore, these marriage contracts often only recorded the total value of the dowry, but the objects themselves were not necessarily specified. Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements*, 114–15, 123.

44 Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements*, 152–53, 163–64, 179–82. See also Evans-Grubbs, who has noted that valuing items that had no monetary value had no advantage for men, see *Women and the Law*, 127.

45 Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements*, 153–57, 161–62.

46 Already in Elephantine: for example, document 15 in A. Cowley ed., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), xxx; Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 42.

47 Two instances in which the word is used in the Babylonian Talmud both refer to a dowry BT Ket 67a and BT Ket 54a in Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine*, 78. Friedman has shown that in the Palestinian rabbinic sources and Palestinian marriage contracts of the Cairo Genizah, the word *phernê* is often used in the sense of *ketubba*. The meaning of *ketubba* is, however, ambiguous: bride price, the marriage document, or the principal payment. The marriage contracts of the Cairo-Genizah often use the word *phernê* in the meaning of marriage contract. Ibid., 40.

48 Previous scholarship has made various suggestions regarding this legal phrase: it has been equated with the Babylonian *tirhatū*, Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne*, 16. Others interpreted it as "the purchase of the bride, the mohar, a bride price," J. Evans-Grubbs, "Marrying and Its Documentation Documentation in Later Roman Law," in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and Its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400–1600*, eds. P. Reynolds and J. Witte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 82–83. It is also considered as "merely one of the characteristics the *ketubba* has in common with contemporary Greek marriage contracts," Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance*, 107.

49 Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements*, 6, 51, 175; Evans-Grubbs, "Marrying and Its Documentation," 81n165. Grenf. II 76 (305/6 CE), P. Sakaon 38 (312 CE), P. Oxy, LIV. 3370 (334 CE), P. Cairo Preis.2 (362 CE), P. Lips. 41 (later fourth century), P. Lond. V 1651 (363 CE). One of the earliest attestations of the *hedna* alongside a dowry is P.Vindob. Bosw. 5 (=SB 26 16502).

50 P. Iand. Inv. 507 = SB 13886, dated 489/90. SB XII: 11075 and BGY XIII 2328 might be marriage contracts as well. Evans-Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 295n113. Evans-Grubbs, "Marrying and Its Documentation," 82n169. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance*, 106–16, esp. 112.

51 B. Anagnostou-Cánas et al., "Chapter 4 - The Family," in *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt from Alexander to the Arab Conquest: A Selection of Papyrological Sources in Translation, with Introductions and Commentary*, eds. J. G. Keenan, J. G. Manning, and U. Yiftach-Firanko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Presss, 2014), 174.

52 Marriage contracts: P.Cair. Masp 3 67310dupl (Antinoopolis 566 CE—573 CE); P.Lond 5 1711dupl (Antinoopolis 566 ce—573 CE); P.Ness 3 18 (537 CE). Divorce contracts: P. Cair. Masp. 1 67121 (Aphrodites Kome 573 CE); P.Cair. Masp. 2 67153 (Antinoopolis 568 CE); P.Cair. Masp. 2 67154r (Antinoopolis 527 CE—565 CE); P. Flor. 1 93 = Chrest. Mitt. 297 = Fontes iuris Romani antejustiniani (FIRA) (2nd ed.) 3 22 and duplicate:

Lond. V. 1713 (Antinoopolis 569 CE); P Herm 29 = P.Herm. 29 = SB VI 9278 = C.Pap. Jud. III 513 (Hermopolis 586 CE); P Ness 3 33 (Nessana 501–600 CE); P. London V 1712 (Antinoopolis 569 CE).

53 Cod. Theod 3.16.2. Evans-Grubbs, *Women and the Law*, 204–5. In case there are no children: Novel 35.8–9, in which half of the gift is to be returned to the parents of the husband. Ibid., 188.

54 Cod. Theod 3.16.2. Ibid., 204–5. In case there are no children: Novel 35.8–9, in which half of the gift is to be returned to the parents of the husband. Ibid., 188.

55 This seems the case in P. Lond.V.1711 + P.Cair.Masp. III.67310. C. A. Kuehn, "A New Papyrus of a Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract: P.Berol Inv. No. 21334," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 97 (1993): 105–9. The document seems to be drawn up after the marriage and only relates to the marital gift and not to the dowry Evans-Grubbs, "Marrying and Its Documentation," 83; J. Rowlandson, ed., *Woman and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

56 J. Beaucamp, "L'Égypte byzantine: biens des parents, biens du couple?" in *Eherecht und Familiengut in Antike und Mittelalter. Herausgegeben von Dieter Simon*, ed. S. Dieter (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992), 70.

57 Anagnostou-Cánas et al., "Law and Legal Practice," 174.

58 See on Jewish marital gifts, R. Katzoff, "Donatio Ante Nuptias and Jewish Dowry Additions," *Papyrology of Yale Classical Studies*, ed. Naphtali Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

59 Satlow, "Reconsidering the Rabbinic Ketubah Payment," 133.

60 H. M. Cotton, "Marriage Contracts from the Judaean Desert," *Materia Giudaica Bollettino dell' Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo* 6 (2000): 2.

61 M. Satlow, "Reconsidering the Rabbinic Ketubah Payment," in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 133. None of these descriptions suggests that a *ketubba* should be equated to a bride price, which has long been the primary interpretation of the rabbinic *ketubba* ibid.; Cotton, "Marriage Contracts from the Judaean Desert," 2–3.

62 Theoretically, the latter is possible if they treated the *hedna* differently from their Egyptian neighbors. This would then go against contemporary Graeco-Egyptian legal praxis. Given that legal validation was sought also by the double dating of this contract, this suggests that this is unlikely.

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Part III

Performance and Audience

9 Aurelios Ammon from Panopolis

On Hellenistic Literary Roles and Egyptian Priestly Cloth

Benjamin Sippel

As Mattias Brand pointed out in his introductory remarks, people respond to generic situations according to individually acquired dispositions. Following an agent through his or her life thus exposes a broad range of different, at times even self-contradicting, actions, as people model their responses to situations according to changing personal experiences, norms, and other factors. Speaking in this regard about patterns and strategies of identification, religious officials are interesting objects of study, because they are trained in a distinctive set of narratives and practices and are expected to represent these in specific situations. Yet there is a life beyond religion, where other social roles are either overlapping with the role of a religious expert or not even close to any religious matters. In short, religious identities are just one set of roles that religious officials choose in order to present themselves in everyday life. This chapter seeks to determine the situatedness of religious identities in the identification habits of religious experts by examining in which situations they preferred the use of religious narratives, signs, and practices—and where they opted instead for other cultural content. The study will reveal that choices of specific roles were, on the one hand, determined by such individual factors as age, familial relations, or personal experiences. On the other hand, norms of literary genres, preferences of specific peer groups, and social conventions limit the degree to which these factors may come into play. A case study of an Egyptian priest shall illustrate these crucial dynamics of self-identification.

Born into an endogamous family structure, Egyptian priests were primarily educated in their native language, literature, and cult practice. During their time of service, they were obliged to abide by certain rules of behavior and dress code, spending their time with people of similar socialization.[1] In other words, they were definitive experts in Egyptian religion and formed a distinctive status group. Yet Egyptian priests were not locked in a bubble full of Egyptian gods and narratives, but they shared space with Greek cult practitioners, Roman military officials, Hellenized urban elites, and Jewish communities, as well as many other groups, small and large. Therefore, they certainly did not permanently act in terms of Egyptian religious tradition, but appropriated formulas and patterns of identification that were common in interaction with agents of different social and cultural backgrounds. Each time they did so, they produced not a precise copy of a given scheme, but adapted formulas to their own abilities and knowledge.

Closer examination of such situations may therefore offer a better understanding of sociocultural interaction in late antique Egypt.

Unfortunately, there is generally little historical evidence of the patterns of self-identification that Egyptian priests applied in everyday life. For late antiquity, however, the papyrus archive of Aurelios Ammon from Panopolis provides a formidable source of such material: Ammon was born in the early fourth century. As an inhabitant of Panopolis in Upper Egypt, he grew up in a prosperous and diverse cultural environment with a longstanding Hellenistic tradition. For example, the priestly scribes of Panopolis engaged in Greek literature early and adapted certain genres, such as the invective, to Egyptian literature. Later, during Ammon's time, the council of Panopolis organized a number of athletic games, and the cityscape featured monumental buildings in the Hellenistic style. Panopolis was also the home of the famous fifth-century poet Nonnus.[2] Ammon's father, bearing the Egyptian name Petearbeschinis, served as priest of the local main god Pan. A son of Petearbeschinis' first marriage, Ammon's older half-brother Horion later held the office of an *archiprophet*, the highest priestly rank achievable for Egyptians. The family surely belonged to the local elite, as they owned large plots of land and slaves, and they were friends with important local civic office-holders. Moreover, they were even part of imperial elite circles, since Ammon's older full-brother Harpokration joined the court of Roman emperors as panegyrist.[3] As such, Ammon may thus not be comparable to low-ranking priests from remote, rural areas. But he may illustrate a certain type of urban religious official who frequently adopted elements of Hellenism, depending on situational necessities and his preferences and abilities.

The following pages examine three situations in which Ammon opted to appear as a person with a distinct cultural education and status. (1) As a young man, he wrote a letter to his mother, making use of Stoic philosophy. (2) Years later, he prepared drafts for a petition addressed to the prefect of Egypt, in which he described himself as "*scholastikos*" while quoting Classical Greek texts and Neoplatonic thinking. (3) During a visit to Alexandria, he approached a Roman official in order to complain about certain issues. While facing the official, he was dressed in his priestly cloak. Sociolinguistic examination of all three scenes will explain Ammon's situational choices of specific roles and shine a light on the interplay between given schemes of identification and individual variations based on personal knowledge and abilities. But first, some general remarks on Ammon's archive and his priestly office are called for.

The man playing roles on stage: Ammon's archive and his priestly office

From 1968 to 1971, the papyrological collections of the Universities of Durham and Cologne independently acquired more than a hundred fragments of documents, letters, and literature that either mention a certain Ammon from Panopolis or were written by his hand. It soon turned out that these papyri could be joined to other pieces from the Instituto Papirologico G. Vitelli in Florence.[4] Today, several

dozen texts are edited in two volumes (P.Ammon I and II), while lots of papyri still await their publication. As almost all texts came to light over the course of a few years, it seems likely that they were found together in one spot, even though they cover a period of nearly a whole century and deal with only one family. As this is already a strong indication that the papyri were kept together in antiquity, the editors of the second volume of papyri were, moreover, able to show that at least a number of texts concerning drafts of a petition were folded into each other and were preserved in that way, up until the convolute was dispersed among the three collections. Ammon was most likely the last keeper of the archive, as it contains lots of texts concerning primarily himself, as well as some documents from his parents regarding taxes and land property he may have inherited.[5]

Although none of the texts published so far designate Ammon by a priestly title, there are convincing indications to assume he was indeed a priestly official of Egyptian cults: First, Ammon's father was of priestly descent, so he fulfilled a main criterion to register and serve as cult official.[6] Second, Ammon stated in a drafted petition that he was mistreated by a Roman official while he wore his "holy dress" (ἅγιον σχῆμα). The scene will be discussed more extensively later on. The editors of the respective text point out that in later periods, σχῆμα specifically meant the official attire of clerks, though in Ammon's time it was still a more general term for an official dress.[7] Thus he apparently wore his "holy" priestly clothes in front of the Roman official. Third, an unpublished receipt states that a certain Agathos paid taxes in kind in 326 A.D. through a priest named Ammon. The papyrus belongs to the acquisitioned papyri of Ammon's archive; hence one may conclude that Ammon the priest and Ammon the archive keeper are identical.[8] His descent, his "holy dress", and the (unpublished) reference to a respective title make it plausible to see Ammon as an Egyptian priest.

Role 1: the well-educated son writes a letter to mom back home

In or soon after 324 A.D.,[9] Ammon travelled to Alexandria where he sought to discuss issues with the Roman authorities concerning the succession of his deceased half-brother, the former *archiprophet* Horion. Yet after staying in the city for at least several weeks, he was unable to meet the Roman *archiereus* who was on a journey through the Delta region. In this situation, Ammon wrote to his widowed mother Senpetechensis back in Panopolis to keep her updated about recent events (P.Ammon I 3). Measuring 75 × 24.5 cm and containing six columns with more than thirty lines each, it is the largest private letter preserved from antiquity, even though the left part of the papyrus is badly damaged. The text proceeds through several topics: At first, Ammon responded to a previous letter by his mother, who had had problems with a tax collector; thus we learn that the letter is part of a larger correspondence. He continued with a report about recent events in Alexandria, where he was waiting for the *archiereus* to secure the *archipropheteia* for his half-nephew, son of the deceased antecessor. While waiting for the *archiereus*, he met his brother Harpokration, who was embarking on an important journey overseas

and promised to approach the emperor himself concerning the *archipropheteia*. Both brothers were also requested by a "ruler of the Ethiopians" (presumably one of the last rulers of the Meroitic Kingdom), who sought to get in touch with the Roman emperor.[10] After returning briefly to the topic of the *archipropheteia*, Ammon discussed another earlier letter of his mother. Apparently, she lost or mismanaged a part of his paternal inheritance. Continuing with instructions regarding the management of the familial property, Ammon closes the letter with greetings to members of his household. Undoubtedly, Ammon wrote the letter as a son to his mother, but also as a young head of the household to a widowed woman.

Its distinct visual appearance makes clear that this was no ordinary letter: The whole text was written in a neat hand with balanced layout over a large page, while sentences and words are consistently punctuated and the content proceeds carefully from topic to topic (see Figure 9.1). Hence it must have been composed in an extensive drafting process. Indeed, Peter van Minnen was able to prove that Ammon copied his drafts line by line: Occasionally he skipped to the wrong line, forcing him to correct initial letters, or words, several times. As van Minnen

Figure 9.1 Detail of Ammon's letter to his mother (*P.Ammon* I 3, col. ii-iii). Image by Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, P.Duk.inv. 177r.

argues, one has to imagine Ammon as a young man who was raised in an elite family; while his older brother embarked on a journey to the court of the Roman emperor, Ammon himself travelled to Alexandria in order to take care of family issues. Hence, he may have intended to impress his peers at home with his intellectual skills.[11] Going one step further, it is conceivable that Ammon's letter was read aloud[12] to a larger audience, though it was formally addressed only to his mother: William A. Johnson points out that shared reading events were distinctive practices of elite communities in the high imperial period.[13] As most private letters on papyrus only very rarely expand beyond the most necessary information and are instead kept as short as possible, Ammon's phrasing should rather be understood as a rhetorical performance which aimed at a familial, or even a public, audience in Panopolis. In other words, Ammon sought to present himself as part of an urban elite educated in Greek language and culture.[14]

If this analysis is accurate, an examination of Ammon's cultural and religious references within the text seems promising, as they were meant to present him in a certain way to his audience. Especially his references to Tyche, the Greek goddess of fortune, are of interest, since they have been interpreted by previous scholars as possibly originating from Gnostic or Egyptian tradition. The first of two references starts after a gap in the second column, where Ammon explains to his mother how Tyche affects their family and all mankind:

> Tyche holding sway over all and determining all things to all men, tying to those cycles that are above us the (cycles) that are with men, which are sometimes good, sometimes bad. Just as now this cycle is harsh to us, but soon a better cycle is coming for us. Surely you realize, Mother, that from the first month of my absence from my homeland I wanted to return again to you, but Tyche did not so decree but decided that I remain absent from my homeland for some time. Consider therefore, that as you [have borne without?] despair the necessity of Tyche, so bear [the present circumstances]. Consider that nothing is in our power. And take care of yourself and I shall look after our affairs. And understand that [Tyche?] again is going to resolve all other affairs [for us]. Therefore you must be of good heart (though) reckoning, Mother, that the cycle is unendurable. Nevertheless, let us be calm.[15]

Later on, Ammon praised Tyche in the third column for his brother's success, again stressing the concept of a "cycle" of ups and downs:

> <I want> you [to] know this too, that with great honor Harpokras is about to return to his own homeland. And Tyche has again begun to raise him up, that cycle always produces (vel sim.) equality. And whenever the cycle is pressed down completely, it (or Harpokration) drops to a low level, and whenever it is pushed up (vel sim.), it (or Harpokration) rises up again to a high level.[16]

The editors William Willis and Klaus Maresch suggested that Ammon's reference to Tyche relates to the "Cycle of Fortune", as described in the so-called

Asclepius-Apocalypse of the Gnostic *Corpus Hermeticum*.[17] Yet the passage of the *Corpus Hermeticum* that the editors cite does not fit well with Ammon's usage of the concept, as the tractate in the Corpus predicts that Egypt, full of blasphemy and vice, will be smashed by wars and plagues, only to arise again in harmony.[18] Similar prophecies are legion in late Egyptian literature, for example, in the *Lamb of Bokchoris* or in the so-called *Potter's Oracle*.[19] But the fate of Egypt is not at all thematized in Ammon's letter. Moreover, the cited passage of the *Corpus Hermeticum* does not even mention Tyche/Fortuna![20] As the two texts therefore have almost nothing in common, the Corpus Hermeticum is perhaps the least likely source for Ammon to reference.

The editors do admit, at least, that Ammon might have been inspired by other texts, such as the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, which mention a similar concept of Fortune.[21] Peter van Minnen, in turn, argues that the "Cycle" may refer to the zodiac, given the astronomical references on public and private monuments in Panopolis, and he proposes that Ammon's "religion centers on 'fortune' and the idea that men do not shape their own destiny".[22] Van Minnen's categorization of a religious context is appealing, because Egyptian wisdom literature such as the famous P.Insinger, also found in Panopolis, considers the world to be determined by divine power: Each of the twenty-five lessons collected in P.Insinger ends with the advice that "Fate" (šy) and "Fortune" (sḥn) follow god's leadership.[23] Yet both interpretations, those of the editors and those of van Minnen, rely only on vague textual correlations either to Gnostic literature or to local, but much earlier, inscriptional evidence. Digging deeper in Ammon's archive offers another explanation, based on his own preferences.

Although he was not a panegyrist like his older brother Harpokration, Ammon appreciated Greek culture too. Accordingly, he was in possession of a version of Homer's *Odyssey*,[24] and he copied an index of Greek philosophers, including Thales of Miletus; representatives of the classical Academies; and famous Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans.[25] In texts from 348 A.D., he even described himself as a "*scholastikos*", meaning a person educated in Greek culture.[26] Seen from this angle, Willis and Maresch were on the right track with their remark about the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, as these apply Stoic philosophy. The context of Stoicism indeed matches Ammon's letter very well, because the determining role of Tyche for one's life is heavily emphasized in the Stoic school. In addition, Stoic physics considers all existence as cyclical.[27] The young Ammon was apparently in favor of Stoicism and chose narratives of this philosophy to add to his rhetoric. The references to Tyche and a "cycle" may thus be related to the Stoa.[28]

Yet Stoicism was only one element of Ammon's argumentation, which makes several different attempts to cheer up his peers at home. At the end of the letter, Ammon speaks explicitly about "consoling" (παρηγορεῖν) his mother. Unfortunately, the passage is heavily damaged.[29] Three lines below, he speaks about consoling another "mother":

> This same thing I enjoin also my revered mother Makaria,[30] if indeed she has not forgotten us; and I have often enjoined her both when I was present and

through letters when I was away, consoling my mother until with the gods' help we may meet her.[31]

As the family was in trouble regarding the *archipropheteia*, Ammon's consoling words were indeed appropriate to the situation. At the same time, consolation was an important rhetorical exercise in both the Greek and the Christian tradition. Cassius Dio, for example, saw consolation as a central element of philosophical practice.[32] Hence, Ammon's attempts to cheer up his addressees were, first and foremost, appropriate behavior for a son towards his mother. The way he styled himself in doing so, however, by referring to Greek philosophy, was a demonstration of his intellectual abilities.

The last sentence in the quotation, "until with the gods' help we may meet her", is just one of several instances throughout the text in which Ammon mentions unspecified gods in singular and plural. Basically, he states each time that success depends always on the gods' goodwill: His brother Harpokration "is dear to the eternal gods" and will therefore find success on his journey, and Ammon will soon return to his mother if "the gods [are] willing".[33] In a quotation, again, Harpokration says about those who oppose the succession to the *archipropheteia* by Ammon's nephew: "Let those hostile to the gods therefore learn their own fate".[34] Later on, Ammon states that he prayed for his mother's health, while "the gods who see all things are my witnesses".[35] Shortly afterwards, he repeats: "I pray for your health, honored Mother".[36] In the light of these remarks, Peter van Minnen called Ammon's family "the tip of a quickly melting pagan iceberg" and stated that the archive "offers a unique insight into the religious stance of a fourth-century family of pagans".[37] Yet it is crucial to distinguish standardized phrases from individual expressions of belief before drawing such a conclusion.

The text belongs to the literary genre of letters, and Ammon was certainly aware of all kinds of standard formulas. For instance, the final words of column six ("I pray for your health", ἐρρῶσθαί σε εὔχομαι) are clearly a commonplace phrase, as the same wording is frequently written in many more private and official letters from Egypt.[38] The references to the dependence on the gods' goodwill are likewise commonplace and especially unspecific, as these occur for all sorts of deities.[39] More individual remarks can be found, on the other hand, in the phrase of "those hostile to gods" (οἱ θεοῖς ἐχθροί), which Harpokration used. Yet this is not an expression of religious belief, but of literary knowledge, as this formula occurred already in archaic and classical Greek literature as, for instance, in works of Hesiod, Sophocles, Hipponax, and Aristophanes. Even though the expression was used in Ptolemaic times occasionally in epigraphy and literature to denounce insurgents to the crown,[40] Harpokration, as an ascending orator, was certainly more acquainted with the classical references. The same holds true for the passages referring to Tyche that, as we have seen, originate apparently from Ammon's preference for Stoic philosophy rather than from personal belief. The letter is thus not an expression of a distinct religious identity of Ammon or Harpokration, but instead gathers commonplace phrases and elements of Greek literature and philosophy.

Ammon ends his letter with greetings to several members of his household that are largely lost in lacunae. These greetings may have provided a perfect occasion for reading the letter aloud or for handing it around to those mentioned. In any case, Ammon was successful in impressing his peers, since the letter was stored in the family's archive.

However, Ammon reused the blank verso of his letter later in his rather informal handwriting, noting down an extensive register of landholdings. As the register seems complete, the damage on the left edge of the recto, where once the first column of the letter was situated, must have occurred earlier than the secondary use of the verso.[41] One may wonder what happened to the papyrus in the meantime. There are at least two likely explanations: (1) Ammon discarded his letter and cut it apart, deeming it not precious anymore or (2) the left part broke off by accident, hence Ammon used the remaining part for his register. As the lost left part of the text has not yet been found among the acquisitions of the collections of Durham and Cologne, it may either have gone lost earlier, or it still awaits its discovery in the, in this regard, largely unexplored collection in Florence. It is therefore too early to draw any conclusions about Ammon's appreciation and handling of the letter. Anyway, his interest in Hellenism continued, and perhaps evolved, as will be shown in the next scene.

Role 2: the middle-aged *scholastikos* drafts a petition

About twenty years after Ammon wrote to his mother, more precisely in 348 A.D., he was again on a journey to Alexandria in order to fix familial issues: His older brother Harpokration had died abroad, and some slaves, which he had left back in Alexandria, had escaped and been caught by a certain Eugeneios, who subsequently claimed ownership over them. As a result of the following dispute between Ammon and Eugeneios, the slaves had been seized by the *katholikos*, a Roman official responsible for fiscal and inheritance issues, since they were part of Harpokration's legacy. Both Ammon and Eugeneios were asked to appear for trial at the official's court, hence Ammon's journey to Alexandria. Soon after his arrival, he started drafting a petition.[42]

The preserved drafts are of very different style and length, illustrating how Ammon's argument developed from sketch to sketch. In a first attempt, it seems, he addressed the *katholikos* directly.[43] In between, he also wrote in the name (and perspective) of a certain Komon who was originally appointed by Harpokration to keep his slaves during his absence.[44] In the end, however, Ammon decided to address the province's highest instance directly: the prefect of Egypt.[45]

Taken together, the fragments P.Ammon II 41 and P.Ammon II 44, which can be joined based on their content, form the largest single draft. The text is addressed to the prefect of Egypt. It starts with an extensive *praefatio*, followed by a report of Harpokration's journey that depicts his stations as *curator* and *procurator* in cities of Greece, among other things. Afterwards, Ammon narrates how he learned about the events in Alexandria and how he tried to get the slaves back and negotiate with Eugeneios, supported by several friends. Then the papyrus breaks off.

Though the text is still incomplete, it deserves special attention, as Ammon uses a couple of allusions that were intended to evoke a certain picture of his person in his addressee's imagination. It is noteworthy that at this stage, he was not caring much about layout. Instead, it seems that Ammon was noting down his thoughts to select and put them in order later on (see Figure 9.2).

The most obvious literary role which Ammon played during the whole conflict was that of a *scholastikos*, meaning a person educated in Greek grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy.[46] The first time he called himself a *scholastikos* was in an earlier letter which he wrote shortly after he had learned about his brother's death and the fugitive slaves: He introduced himself there as "Aurelios Ammon, son of Petearbeschinis, *scholastikos*, from Panopolis of the Thebaid". The letter was addressed to a friend (a councilman and ex-magistrate of Panopolis) whom he appointed to make his claims against Eugeneios, as Ammon himself was not able to go to Alexandria because he was busy with agricultural issues.[47] In the petition he drafted after his arrival in Alexandria, in turn, Ammon emphasized that

Figure 9.2 Ammon continued his concept notes for the petition to the prefect (*P.Ammon* II 41) at the margins of a text he wrote some days earlier (*P.Ammon* II 30). Image by Duke University, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, P.Duk.inv. 1278r.

he, like all persons educated in philosophy and letters, prefers a life in peace and harmony but that the circumstances forced him to write a petition.[48] Accordingly, later passages sometimes invoke works of classical Greek authors such as Lysias[49] or Demosthenes[50] in order to demonstrate his *paideia*.

At one point, he referred to Neoplatonic philosophy as well, namely when he narrated his brother's fate: "I expected that he would return soon. Unnoticed from us, however, the Daimon made our reasoning at that time dependent on foolish hopes".[51] A detailed report on Harpokration's stations in the Mediterranean follows, then Ammon states that his brother died unexpectedly abroad, as "Daimon allotted [this end] to him from the beginning".[52] Contrary to the letter that Ammon wrote to his mother, it was not Tyche who was made accountable for Harpokration's success or failure, but a personal Daimon. The editors of that draft noticed that Ammon referred to Plato's Phaedo, which mentions the same concept and was also cited by Neoplatonists like Plotinus and Sallustius: the concept of a personal, tutelary genius that casts the lot ($\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\iota\nu$) of one's fate.[53]

But still, why not Tyche, why Plato's Daimon this time? The answer is twofold. On the one hand, this was no consoling letter and Stoic wisdom therefore no proper choice. On the other hand, Neoplatonism was quite popular among intellectuals at the time. What young Ammon once deemed suitable to impress his peers in Panopolis was perhaps not an adequate reference to make for a middle-aged *scholastikos* who was petitioning the prefect of Egypt. Obviously, Ammon sought to impress upon his addressee the feeling that they belonged to the same elite, based on their similar education.

In addition to literary allusions, Ammon tried to establish a feeling of community by evoking shared memories: Playing the name-dropping game, he told in a later passage of the draft that his claims were supported by his nephew Apollon, a poet, who had once given a public lecture in presence of the prefect, who had at the time still been governor of Upper Egypt.[54] Perhaps this remark was intended to let Ammon's letter circulate in the prefectural office, as the prefect himself certainly did not read all petitions addressed to him personally, but only a selection.[55] A distinct family identity was, apart from a cultural Hellenistic identity, thus quite helpful for Ammon's argumentation and its visibility at the prefect's office.

Yet Ammon deleted any reference to Greek literature, philosophy, or past reading events in later drafts, as he had apparently been advised to reduce the text to a short description of events, appropriate for the genre of petitions. In what seems to be the last draft, the report of events was substantially cut down from previously more than seventy lines in P.Ammon II 41 + 44, to just thirty lines of similar length in P.Ammon II 45.[56] Given his struggle to decide about the addressee, as well as about the perspective and length of his petition, Ammon was certainly not an expert in legal issues.[57] His initial idea to add plenty of references to Greek literature and philosophy, as well as calling his friends and relatives by name, indicates, however, that he was used to such references in written narrations. The drafts therefore offer us a glimpse into Ammon's habits of self-representation in other situations.

Still, we have not yet seen any clear link to a religious identity in Ammon's writings. The only reference that has previously been interpreted as hinting at Egyptian religious tradition is the mention of Agathos Daimon at the beginning of the *praefatio* addressed to the prefect:

> Filled with happiness were the [people], o lord, . . . at the time when you, inspired by [Tyche and] the gods' foresight, and ruling with Agathos Daimon, governed the land of the Thebans, and we seemed blessed and enviable to the Lower Egyptians and all the other humans, as we were prosperous to be with such a ruler, and neither was the appointment of an equal guardian and leader seen before, nor is it expected to be seen afterwards. Succeeding to our happiness are now the inhabitants of the most magnificent city, but also I for myself reckon to resort again to a share of this happiness, since it is fated for me to be set, while pleading my case, under such a ruler and judge, whose inimitable judgment has been on display by the example of different nations both before and now.[58]

It would be tempting to see Agathos Daimon as an *interpretatio graeca* of Shai, the Egyptian god of fate. Since Shenoute of Atripe complained several decades later about the continuing popularity of Shai in Panopolis, one may argue that Ammon inserted here a subtle reference to the god of his hometown.[59] However, the whole *praefatio* is fueled by the language of Roman imperial ideology in that it calls the prefect "guardian and leader" (κηδεμών καὶ προστάτης), as well as "ruler and judge" (ἄρχων καὶ δικαστής) of different nations (ἔθνη). All of these were essential functions attributed to Roman rulers. The same is true for the reference to Tyche, who had long been an embodiment of the will and action of the Roman emperors in official formulas.[60] Agathos Daimon also had a long tradition in Roman formulaic and figurative expression as an incarnation of either Alexandria or of emperors such as Nero.[61] In other words, Agathos Daimon may or may not have been an *interpretatio graeca* of Shai in the eyes of Ammon's contemporaries. In the given context, he stuck to the conventions of Roman administrative language and would not have aimed to make subtle (or subversive) references to Egyptian gods. Any such assumption reveals more about our own expectations in regard to Egyptian religious officials and their respective utterances than about ancient reality.[62]

All in all, the discussed draft of a petition bears no sign of a religious role that Ammon might have played to construct an identity. Beyond the literary context, however, he will certainly have had multiple opportunities and incentives to appear as a religious official. One of these will be discussed in the following section.

Role 3: a proper dress code for complaining

So far, one may get the impression that Ammon rather avoided being publicly recognized as an official of Egyptian cults or member of a priestly family. However,

a single, short remark in another drafted petition (P.Ammon II 47) casts strong doubt on this assumption. The respective text is still related to the dispute about Harpokration's slaves,[63] but describes a different conflict: At the time as Ammon arrived in Alexandria, he approached a Roman official, asking for help regarding wage claims, perhaps related to the fugitive slaves. But instead of granting help, the official mistreated Ammon who, in turn, sought to complain about his treatment in a petition. The papyrus is heavily damaged, and it is not even clear whether Ammon submitted anything in that case at all. Neither the identity of the official who attacked Ammon nor the identity of the addressee of this text can be determined with certainty.

The text is characterized by many corrections and insertions. As it is just a short fragment, its translation is given here in full length for further discussion:

> [he] ordered [me] to appear at the office, a man throughout inculpable and unblemished, who came to him because of my unavailing demands of wages . . . and he produced a show that to see was neither endurable for the sufferer, nor tolerable for the spectators, to bear in gentle silence the spectacle that a man, devoted to philosophy and literature and practicing a peaceful life, is assaulted by some *officialis* (ὀφικιαλίος) . . . and in my holy dress [I] was drawn hither and thither and [terrified] although having done nothing wrong. As those standing around have seen [this], . . . not to bear such a spectacle patiently. Therefore, as I have been insulted in this way, I appeal forthwith to your most majestic court, o lord, where I demand . . .[64]

In this draft, Ammon once again styled himself as a peaceful and educated *scholastikos*. Yet back then in the office, he was clothed in his "holy dress" (ἅγιον σχῆμα). In other words, Ammon entered the room in a priestly cloak, thus appearing as an official of Egyptian religion.

It is necessary to point out that Egyptian priests were not obliged to wear their dress off duty. Thus, Ammon chose his cloth intentionally, perhaps aiming at an impressive entrance to the office. Going one step back, he brought his cloak all the way from Panopolis to Alexandria, several hundred kilometers downwards along the Nile! Yet his original intention was to deal with Eugeneios regarding the slaves of his deceased brother at the court of the *katholikos*—not to participate in Egyptian cult rituals. Thus it is obvious that Ammon planned from the beginning to appear as an Egyptian priest in front of other persons, calculating that it would offer him a benefit in conflict scenarios. At least while drafting this petition, he was still convinced that mentioning his dress would be a good idea. Perhaps this indicates that his strategy to wear a priestly dress was in the past more successful than in the present case.

Unlike literary allusions, which require specific knowledge from the addressee, official dresses are visible to everyone and unfold an optical effect even when the spectator does not know the exact affiliation of the dressed person or the meaning of each and every detail. In short, official fashion was impressive and perceivable as such without deeper knowledge of the specific meaning of a dress. Moreover,

people in pre-modern societies owned considerably few clothes, and some dresses have even been passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, clothes were much better identifiers of people and their status than bodily attributes.[65] But perceptions of a proper dress code differ. As we have seen, the Roman *officialis* was not impressed by Ammon's dress. And that surrounding witnesses were upset about his mistreatment is merely what Ammon wants his addressee to believe. Perhaps the Roman official perceived his dress code as impious or pretentious, as a slight to his own role as an administrative official, and thus treated him with violence—but that is just speculation. In any case, Ammon was aware that his dress had a certain effect on everyone in the scene.

It is not reported how Ammon expressed himself at the office. But styled as a priest, he might have preferred language he was used to in this role: Cognitive research has shown that wearing extraordinary dress, such as priestly vestments, evokes a distinct self-perception of those who are clothed in it, resulting in changed patterns of acting and speaking.[66] One may wonder if Ammon even shaved his hair, as priests were obliged to during their service.

It seems that the disgust of Emperor Constantius II. (337–360 A.D.) toward pagan cults at this time did not affect cult officials in the choice of their public dress.[67] Indeed, Ammon was less affected by the taste of an emperor than guided by his own experiences when selecting a certain dress. Perhaps an entrance dressed in a priestly cloak worked well when Ammon approached officials in Panopolis. Nevertheless, the mistreatment in the Alexandrian office forced him to reconsider his strategy, as drafts of his petition addressed to the prefect do not mention anything that might point towards a priestly identity. Instead, he chose to emphasize his role of a *scholastikos*, though in later versions he deleted even that identity. It seems that the events in Alexandria taught Ammon a serious lesson in conventions of dress code when faced with the Roman juridical apparatus.

Conclusion: revisiting Ammon's set of roles

The chapter has sought to determine in which situations religious practitioners either chose or disregarded religious identities as part of a broad range of roles in order to present themselves to others. Therefore the dynamic interplay between individual dispositions and normative frames was examined, emphasizing how people adapt schemes of identification to their own abilities, preferences, and experiences. Egyptian priests are of special interest in this regard, since these religious officials were educated and socialized in particularly distinctive communities. Closer examination of their individual choices and variations of roles was meant to bring further light into sociocultural interaction in late antique Egypt. The archive of Aurelios Ammon from Panopolis provided the only, though formidable, case study for this enterprise. As a member of a priestly but also urban and even imperial elite family, Ammon represents a kind of urban, upper-class religious official. His archive allowed for the analysis of three different scenes in which he opted to appear in a certain way. The results of this study are threefold: It illuminates a general pattern of situational identification, reconsiders previous

interpretations on Ammon's religious utterances, and points to an underexplored perspective in research on religious identity in late antiquity.

In each scene, Ammon was eager to gain acknowledgement from his addressees: his mother and peers in Panopolis, the prefect of Egypt, and the unspecified Roman *officialis*. To that end, he sought to present himself each time in the way he deemed most appropriate, based on his experiences in regard to given situational frames. Growing up as the younger brother of a successful orator and being on an important mission for the sake of his family, the aspiring student of Hellenism opted for a carefully written letter to his widowed mother at home, enriching the text with philosophical wisdom and rhetorical finesse. As a precious object clearly intended to impress a familiar audience with his intellectual skills, it was stored in the family's archive thereafter. Years later, Ammon was so accustomed to the literary role of a *scholastikos* that he intended in the first instance to write in that manner also to the prefect of Egypt, thereby seeking to create a community between them, based on shared education and memories. After several drafts, and certainly hours of writing, he changed his tone in favor of a short and sober description, finally aligning with the genre of petitions and court documents. In sharp contrast to his appearance in written form, Ammon planned to impress a Roman official in person by appearing in his priestly dress, perhaps encouraged by encounters that had been beneficially affected by wearing his cloak in the past. Nevertheless, his attempt failed spectacularly. Hence it becomes clear that all utterances of self-identification were attempts to get the best out of a situation. Depending on previous success or misfortune, Ammon kept, varied, or dropped respective strategies.

All three scenes illustrate that Ammon was, on the one hand, educated in Hellenism, but on the other hand, also willing to appear publicly as a priest of traditional Egyptian cults. Moreover, he was making strategic decisions as to which of these roles suited the context. In some instances, he leads the modern reader on a merry chase: Since he spoke of gods and fate in the letter to his mother or mentioned Agathos Daimon in a draft of the petition addressed to the prefect, one is tempted to interpret these passages as references to Egyptian religion. Some scholars have even declared Ammon's archive a source for late antique pagan religion. Yet attempts to categorize his references should always consider both philological comparison and Ammon's point of view: A close reading of the texts has shown that the passages in question were mostly commonplace phrases in letters or references to Greek philosophical thinking and Roman imperial ideology—not utterances of a distinct religious identity. Of course, there is a certain chance that Ammon may have meant some references to gods as expressions of Egyptian religion, but the texts make it impossible to substantiate this.

Although Ammon often styled himself as a thoroughly Hellenized figure in his texts, he appeared very differently when he was dressed in his priestly cloak and with shaved hair. Apart from members of the educated elite, relatively few people were able to grasp literary allusions or to appreciate a flawless Greek oration. But nearly everybody was able to recognize hairstyles and official dresses such as cloaks or uniforms, as especially the latter were not easily accessible and thus clear signs of distinction in several regards. Yet clothing and hairstyle, which were

once omnipresent in ancient everyday life, are now almost completely invisible to the modern eye. Ammon's report about his mistreatment in the office is one of few documentary references to a situational dress code of people just below the highest social strata of the Roman Empire.

In light of Ammon's complaint, a couple of questions emerge. For instance, how were priestly cloaks or uniforms of soldiers perceived by contemporaries? Were there different regional patterns, i.e., did a priestly dress code work better in Panopolis than in Alexandria as a means of impressing spectators? How could an Egyptian priest interested in Hellenism adopt Greek hairstyles when he was obliged to shave frequently? Unfortunately, however, all these questions point beyond the scope of this chapter and will have to be addressed another time.

Notes

1 On priestly families in rural communities of the Roman Fayum, cf. B. Sippel, *Gottes-diener und Kamelzüchter: Das Alltags- und Sozialleben der Sobek-Priester im kaiser-zeitlichen Fayum* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020).

2 K. Geens, "Hellenism as a Vehicle for Local Traditions in Third-Century Egypt: The Evidence from Panopolis," in *Faces of Hellenism: Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean (4th Century B.C.–5th Century A.D.)*, ed. P. van Nuffelen (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 289–319; P. van Minnen, "The Letter (and Other Papers) of Ammon: Panopolis in the Fourth Century A.D," in *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, eds. A. Egberts, B. Muhs, and J. van der Vliet (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 178–82; W. H. Willis and K. Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon Scholasticus of Panopolis (P.Ammon): Volume I: The Legacy of Harpocra-tion* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 4–6.

3 van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 182–88; K. Maresch and I. Andorlini, *Das Archiv des Aurelios Ammon (P.Ammon): Band 2,A Text* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schön-ingh, 2006), 16–22.

4 Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, ix–xi; van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 177–78; K. Geens, "Archive of Aurelios Ammon, Scholasticus, Son of Petearbeschinis," in *Leuven Homepage of Papyrus Collections*, ed. P. van Nuffelen (Leuven: Trismegistos, 2004), 1; Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 15.

5 Geens, "Archive of Aurelius Ammon," 3–4.

6 Since 120 A.D., the Roman administration supervised enrollment to the priestly status class and granted access to temple offices only to those physically examined by the Roman *archiereus* and of priestly descent by both parents. There is evidence, however, that physical and intellectual qualifications were more important criteria than a strict lineage, cf. J. F. Quack, "Ämtererblichkeit und Abstammungsvorschriften bei Priestern nach dem Buch vom Tempel," in *Genealogie: Realität und Fiktion von Identität*, ed. M. Fitzenreiter (London: Golden House Publications, 2005), 97–102. As such, Ammon's father was in any case able to teach and prepare him for a priestly office.

7 P.Ammon II 47, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 144.

8 P.Duk.inv. 198, cf. van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 184.

9 For a discussion on dating the letter between about 324 and 330 A.D., cf. van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 193–95.

10 On Ammon's and Harpokration's contacts to Ethiopians, cf. Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 21; van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 191.

11 van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 188–89.

12 On both silent and loud reading habits in antiquity, cf. S. Busch, "Lautes und leises Lesen in der Antike," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 145 (2002): 1–45.

13 For an extensive discussion on this topic, cf. W. A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

14 On the value of classical knowledge for late antique elite families, cf. I. Uytterhoeven, "Know Your Classics: Manifestations of 'Classical Culture' in Late Antique Elite Houses," in *Faces of Hellenism: Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean (4th Century B.C.—5th Century A.D.)*, ed. P. van Nuffelen (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 321–41.

15 P.Ammon I 3, col. ii, l. 8–20. All translations of P.Ammon I 3 by Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, occasionally with amendments by van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," as summarized in BL XIII, 5. However, in this passage the editors' translation has been changed from "Fortune" back to "Tyche" for consistency.

16 P.Ammon I 3, col. iii, l. 14–8. Again "Fortune" has been substituted with "Tyche," cf. endnote above.

17 Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 40.

18 Corp. herm., *Asclepius*, 24–7. For commentary on the passage, cf. M. M. Miller, *Die Hermetischen Schriften: Corpus Hermeticum* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2009), 323–25.

19 F. Hoffmann and J. F. Quack, *Anthologie der demotischen Literatur* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007), 181–83; 192–93.

20 Though most tractates of the Corpus Hermeticum are written in Greek, the sermons of Asclepius are recorded in Latin. However, Fortuna is mentioned in Corp. herm., *Asclepius*, 19.

21 Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 40 refers to M. Aur., *Med.* 9, 28.

22 van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 189–90.

23 J. F. Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III. Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 116.

24 P.Ammon II 26.

25 P.Ammon I 1, cf. Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 7–10. The index was probably compiled during his visit to Alexandria in 348 A.D.: Peter van Minnen argues that the "flaky ink" and Ammon's "broad hand" in the index coincide much more with his drafts of a petition to the prefect of Egypt in 348 A.D. than to his fine writing in the earlier letter, cf. van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 187–88.

26 Regarding Ammon's self-description as *scholastikos*, cf. below in section "Role 2".

27 For an overview on Stoic theology, determinism, physics, and schools in Imperial times, cf. K. Algra, "Stoic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 153–78; D. Frede, "Stoic Determinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 179–205; M. J. White, "Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 124–52; C. Gill, "The School in the Roman Imperial Period," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 33–58.

28 One may wonder if Egyptian priests had a special affection for Stoic thinking, as the famous Egyptian priest and later teacher of Nero, Chaeremon of Alexandria, was renowned as a Stoic philosopher. For a collection of fragments regarding his reception in antiquity, cf. P. W. van der Horst, *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

29 P.Ammon I 3, col. vi, l. 9.

30 Certainly Makaria was not Ammon's real mother. Their exact relation cannot be determined, however, since "mother" just like "father", "brother", "sister", "son", and "daughter" did not only describe familial relations but were, especially in letters, also titles for close friends, cf. S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 72.

31 P.Ammon I 3, col. vi, l. 12–6.

32 T. S. de Bruyn, "Philosophical Counsel Versus Customary Lament in Fourth-Century Christian Responses to Death," in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*, ed. W. Braun (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 166–70; Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 142–44.

33 P.Ammon I 3, col. iii, l. 13–7; also in col. iv, l. 27–8.

34 P.Ammon I 3, col. iv, l. 21–2.

35 P.Ammon I 3, col. v, l. 15–6.

36 P.Ammon I 3, col. vi, l. 17.

37 van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 182. Similarly Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 5–6; F. Feder, "Ammon und seine Brüder: Eine ägyptische Familie aus Panopolis (Achmim) im 4. Jh. zwischen ägyptisch hellenistischer Kultur und Christentum," in *Genealogie: Realität und Fiktion von Identität*, ed. M. Fitzenreiter (London: Golden House Publications, 2005), 106–7.

38 F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter of the Epistolary Papyri (3rd c. B.C.–3rd c. A.D.): A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc., 1976 [1923]), 69.

39 Cf. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, passim for examples from different times, places, and individuals in polytheistic as well as in Christian context.

40 A.-E. Veïsse, "L'expression 'Ennemi des Dieux': Theoisin Echtros," in *Faces of Hellenism: Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean (4th Century B.C.–5th Century A.D.)*, ed. P. van Nuffelen (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 169–77.

41 On the secondary usage, cf. Willis and Maresch, *The Archive of Ammon*, 20.

42 P.Ammon II 32–46, cf. for the whole story Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 16–22.

43 P.Ammon II 38.

44 In one of these drafts, P.Ammon II 35, hand and grammatical characteristics changed after the first three lines from Ammon to another writer, maybe Komon himself, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 63. Was Komon with Ammon in Alexandria? Did they draft the petition together?

45 The order of drafts is discussed in Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 43–50.

46 For a discussion of the term, which is not to be misinterpreted as "advocate", cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 21.

47 P.Ammon II 27.

48 P.Ammon II 41, l. 9–11.

49 P.Ammon II 41, l. 35, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 108.

50 P.Ammon II 46 recto, l. 12, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 139.

51 P.Ammon II 41, l. 21–2.

52 P.Ammon II 41, l. 33–5.

53 Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 108 with a reference to Plat. *Phaid*. 107d.

54 P.Ammon II 41, l. 56–8.

55 On the initial processing of petitions, cf. B. Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86–92; on the administrative role of the staff of officials such as the prefect of Egypt, cf. R. Haensch, "Le rôle des officiales de l'administration provinciale dans le processus de decision," *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 11 (2000): 259–76.

56 P.Ammon II 45, l. 1–30.

57 Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 21–2.

58 P.Ammon II 41, l. 1–9. Similar the introduction of P.Ammon II 37, l. 1–8.

59 van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 182; 197. As he wrote his article before 2002, van Minnen was not able to know the second edition of texts that was published in 2006 and which added several fragments from Florence to this group of drafts. Hence he still assumed that the *praefatio* was addressed to the *katholikos*. Yet in 2006, Maresch and Andorlini discovered that the large introduction that mentioned

Agathos Daimon was in fact addressed to the prefect of Egypt, not to the *katholikos*. Perhaps van Minnen would have drawn different conclusions if he had known this detail.

60 S. Pfeiffer, *Der römische Kaiser und das Land am Nil: Kaiserverehrung und Kaiserkult in Alexandria und Ägypten von Augustus bis Caracalla (30 v. Chr.—217 n. Chr.)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010), 300–1. There is a lacuna in the previously cited passage of the *praefatio*, "Tyche" is only suggested by the editors. "Tyche" is indeed not preserved in this or any other text drafted in this conflict. Yet the editors suggest this reconstruction, as they note that Tyche and foresight (πρόνοια) occur as a pair in other sources, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 105. Even if later editions were to refute this restoration, however, the argument about Ammon's reference to Roman imperial ideology in the *praefatio* would still stand.

61 Pfeiffer, *Der römische Kaiser*, 92–3, 97–8.

62 Another misinterpretation of Ammon's words by placing too much emphasis on his priestly ancestry occurred in the discussion of the letter to his mother: Ammon quoted his brother, who called the adversaries of their nephew to become an *archiprophet* "those hostile to the gods" (P.Ammon I 3, col. iv, l. 21, see also earlier in the section "Role 1"). One of the first assumptions was that he might have meant Christians opposing traditional Egyptian priests. This claim was later, correctly, doubted by van Minnen, "The Letter of Ammon," 191.

63 Ammon later inscribed the verso of this papyrus with drafts of the previously discussed petition to the prefect, now edited as P.Ammon II 36. Moreover, Ammon mentioned in another draft (P.Ammon II 34) that he was exposed to "*hybris*" upon his arrival in Alexandria. If P.Ammon II 34 describes the same incident that is discussed here, then P.Ammon II 47 was an early draft, written by Ammon shortly after his arrival in order to negotiate at the court of the *katholikos* and before he decided to address the prefect of Egypt, cf. Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 141.

64 P.Ammon II 47.

65 P. von Moos, "Das mittelalterliche Kleid als Identitätssymbol und Identifikationsmittel," in *Unverwechselbarkeit: Persönliche Identität und Identifikation in der vormodernen Gesellschaft*, ed. P. von Moos (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004), 123–46.

66 R. Gugutzer, *Leib, Körper und Identität: Eine phänomenologisch-soziologische Untersuchung zur personalen Identität* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, 2002).

67 Maresch and Andorlini, *Das Archiv*, 144.

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10 "The Curses Will Be Like Oil in Their Bones"

Excommunication and Curses in Bishops' Letters Beyond Late Antiquity

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Introduction

The setting is the tenth or eleventh century CE, in the neighborhood of El Ashmunein (Hermopolis Magna), some 300 km down the Nile from modern-day Cairo. Someone had broken into the house of a woman, the mother of Sawep, and had stolen two chickens, a rooster, and a quantity of grain and flax.[2] On a different occasion, also around the tenth or eleventh century and also in the area of El Ashmunein, a goose and goslings, some tools, and a quantity of wheat had been stolen from the house of another woman, Girampolis. We do not know if these crimes were connected—they could have happened years or decades from each other—but they did elicit a similar response from the local bishop at the time of each of the crimes: on both occasions, the bishop wrote a letter. After stating that the crime had been reported to him, he hurled threats of curses at the unknown thieves:

> Whether man or woman or person from the village who knows the matter of this wheat, these tools, this goose and these goslings, he will be under the curse of Law and the prophets by the mouth of the 318 bishops gathered in Nicaea and those who were gathered in Ephesus and by mine, I, the most humble: He will smite them how He smote Sodom and Gomorrah. They loved cursing, it will belong to them; they did not desire the blessing, it will flee away from them. The curses enter their bowels like oil in their bones.[3]

While these curses were directed at the thieves, they were pronounced in the presence of a much wider audience: the local Christians who were the addressees of the bishop's letter. What strikes the modern reader are the heavy threats and harsh punishments, especially in comparison to the minor nature of the offence: the theft of some livestock, foodstuffs, and tools. This letter is one of four letters constituting the focus of this chapter. All four letters were written on paper between the tenth and the twelfth century CE by Egyptian bishops addressing Christian communities in various places in Egypt.[4] Every letter is a reaction to crimes committed in the communities, and the bishops use excommunication and curses as punishment for those crimes.

This chapter has a dual focus. The first focus is on the curse letters in the context of change and continuity in the judicial and social role of local—and especially ecclesiastical—authorities in late antique and Islamic Egypt. In the tenth to twelfth century, Egypt was a society characterized by legal pluralism. The judicial power of the Christian bishops had shrunk considerably since the seventh century as an Islamic legal system and infrastructure took over the most important juridical structures. However, extra-judicial mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration remained important, and local authorities such as bishops continued to play a major role in them. How do the letters discussed in this chapter reflect this shift, this decrease in judicial power of the bishops? Are the accumulated curses from Scripture and threats of excommunication in the letters a result of the loss of power of the bishops to dole out worldly punishments, and does the pettiness of the crimes reflect the same loss of judicial power, as has been suggested?[5] In that respect, this chapter will make the following arguments. (1) The language of threats of punishment by excommunication or scriptural curses is not solely a phenomenon of letter writing by bishops from the tenth century onward. The language in the bishops' letters is embedded in Coptic documentary language from before the acceleration of Islamicization of Egypt, e.g. in eighth-century legal documents and in late antique magical papyri that feature parallel threats of excommunication and references to curses from Scripture. Moreover, letters from ecclesiastical authorities from late antiquity show that the use of Scripture, and references to curses and excommunication, was a common epistolary device of ecclesiastic and monastic authorities, bishops in particular, from before the Arab conquests. Furthermore, these bishops also dealt with minor crimes, instances of small theft, and problems with morality in their communities: the crimes reacted to by the bishops in the tenth-century to the twelfth-century letters were not necessarily less important than the problems handled by the pre-Arab conquest bishops. Therefore, neither the nature of the crimes nor the use of curses from Scripture or excommunication as punishment in the letters is necessarily a reflection of the bishops having lost their judicial power as a result of the development of the Islamic legal system in Egypt. On the contrary, the language of the letters is well embedded in Coptic documentary tradition of using the authority of Scripture to be effective. (2) At the same time, it is possible to find one indication of the bishops' decrease of judicial authority in the letters studied in this chapter, namely in the procedure of crime reporting and investigating. While there is evidence that pre-Islamic bishops had the authority and apparatus to have crimes investigated, their tenth-century to twelfth-century counterparts writing the letters studied in this chapter seem to be at a loss as to who were the perpetrators of the crimes in question. The curse letters seem to show that the bishops had lost power and infrastructure with regard to the investigation of crimes in their communities.

The second focus of this chapter is on the situations in which these curse letters performed their role. I argue that the excommunicatory language in the letters is not only informative but also performative. The letter is the curse. At the same time, I will nuance this performative aspect, as some of the proclamations

of excommunication seem to be conditional: redemption is possible if the perpetrator comes forward. The letters were meant to be read out loud, and as such I will focus on their oral performance and aural reception by the audience. This raises the question what the intended or unintended effects of the letters would have been. While we do not know about the aftermath of any of the cases, I will argue that the performance of the letters might have created group cohesion or groupness (the event or feeling of connectedness with a religious group) within the Christian audience, confirming the bishop's authority, which was one of the bishops' goals in sending the letters. However, a comparison with contemporary evidence in a Jewish context shows that the letters might also have had an opposite effect: they might have undermined the authority of the bishop.

Christian religious authorities in a changing legal landscape

The initial context for most of these episcopal documents is tenth-century Egypt, a period in which the Arab rulers had established a strong Islamic administration and legal system. For about 50 years after the conquest of Egypt, in the years 639–642, the indigenous elites, including the religious leadership, kept their power and functions in local society, while the highest offices were now occupied by the Arab-Muslim rulers. The local elites continued to play an important role on a local level in the Arab-Muslim administration after this initial period through their responsibilities in the collection of taxes. Most clerical and non-clerical local elites, moreover, maintained the judiciary autonomy which they had enjoyed in the late Byzantine period. Bishops continued to handle cases of theft by sending the thieves to prison. There is evidence of bishops who could sentence people to episcopal-controlled prisons.[6]

From late antiquity onwards, monks and clerics with authority in their community could take on a role of mediator, be it through personal or informal means or by more formal mechanisms. An example of the former is the monk Frange, who lived in eighth-century Western Thebes. He was called upon by his correspondents to resolve conflicts or to help in difficult situations.[7] More formal mechanisms are found in the so-called "protection letters" for people who had fled from their village. These documents allowed a person in trouble to return to the village without having to face the consequences of legal prosecution or imprisonment.[8] These protection letters were predominantly issued by village officials, but there is evidence that priests and heads of monasteries were asked to issue such protection letters and that they did so. Village officials asked monastic elites to issue a protection letter for a third party and promised to uphold it.[9] Clerics also used their authority to exclude from service local authorities who did not respect an issued protection letter. This is especially visible in a Coptic letter from the seventh or eighth century written by the priest Johannes to two local authority figures.[10] They had issued a protection letter, but had broken their promise of protection. As a result, they were excluded from attending church services until they settled with the victim. The temporary exclusion from service is reminiscent of

the punishment given by the seventh-century bishop Abraham of Hermonthis of abusive members of his community by exclusion from service (see later).

From the eighth century onwards, the Arabicization and Islamicization of Egypt's administrative and legal systems accelerated. As a part of these processes, the judiciary power of local elites shifted more towards conflict solving by mediation and arbitration, while Arab-Muslim state representatives gradually became exclusively responsible for official sentencing and punishing.[11] Subsequently, non-Muslim Egyptians started to turn more and more to the Muslim legal authorities, which helped further erode the judiciary role of the bishops.[12]

Within the context of the diminishing legal authority of the bishop, the four letters under examination present us with an alternative Christian episcopal authority in reaction to crime. These reactions includes bans, curses, and threats of excommunication against perpetrators of a certain crime which had been reported to the bishop. They attest to the ongoing, if changed, social role of bishops in the Egyptian Christian communities with regard to the solving of problems and expectations of justice of the local population.

The letters

The first of the four letters was cited at the beginning of this chapter. It was sent by Daniel, the bishop of El Ashmunein (Hermopolis Magna, Coptic: Shmoun) in central Egypt. A second letter was also sent by a "most humble" bishop of Shmoun, whose name is lost.[13] Interestingly, this second letter is almost identical to the first in its structure, formulas, and phrasing, with only minor differences. They have both been dated to the tenth or eleventh century. Read alongside each other, it stands out that both letters are addressed to "my beloved, whom I love in the Lord", i.e. the Christian community. The crimes committed within these communities were similar as well: a theft of livestock and grain from a woman's house. In response, the authors of the letters curse the seemingly unknown perpetrators of the crime, albeit conditionally:

> With God . . ., by the mercy of God, the humble bishop of the Christ-loving city Shmoun and its whole nome. My beloved, whom I love in the Lord, greeting. The Lord bless you, with every spiritual and heavenly blessing, and your sons and daughters and everything that is yours. Amen. Thereafter, the matter reached us that the house of the mother of Sawep was entered into and that was taken an artaba of wheat, 6 quarts of flax, 2 chickens and a rooster. Now, whether it be man or woman or stranger or person from the village who took them and does not reveal them, he will be under the curse of Law and the prophets. And by the mouth of my humility: He will smite them, how He smote Sodom and Gomorrah, He will bring down upon them the curses of the Apocalypse and the plagues of the Book of Job and the curses of the 108th Psalm. The curses will be like oil in their bones. They loved cursing, it will belong to them; they did not desire the blessing, it will flee away from them. I mean anyone that shall have taken the corn and the flax and the chickens and

shall not reveal them unto such as have known them, he. . . . And the blame-less tongue shall go free. Because of assurance.

(. . . ?)

A third letter is almost entirely written in Arabic.[14] In fact, only the designation of the sender of the letter as "the most humble Abraham" is written in Coptic. It has been dated to no later than the tenth century and was sent by the bishop to the Christian community of the region of Bawit.[15] The bishop excommunicates and curses someone who inflicted evil magic on a third party. The letter states that the victim, a priest, was disturbed by magic in the house where he was married.[16] Again, the bishop does not address the perpetrators by name, presumably because he does not know their identity:

> In the name of God, the merciful and all knowing. Everyone standing around, hearing what is in this letter, should know. Then, all of the Christian people of the place of Bawit, the holy brethren, the teachers, and the deacons, the obedient, the sowers, the farmers, the non-clerics, and all the people, may God bless them and their houses and their actions, by all heavenly blessings, by the order of the people who perform satisfying works. May they know that [a report] reached Qalāya [regarding] our father Ibrāhīm Salamūn about someone who disturbed him, with the case of magic in his house in which he was married. So let whosoever carried it out and did it be [placed] under pro-hibition/interdiction (manūʿ) and excommunication (hirm) and let his lot and portion be one with that of Judas who was outcast from amongst the apostles, and [let him be] under the wrath which came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. May God's peace be on all of them and may God's grace cover all of them.

The fourth letter was sent, probably in the twelfth century, by Daniel, bishop of Al-Fayyum (Coptic: Piam), to the people of a village in the region.[17] The bishop bans (*šôôt ebol*) everyone who picked certain plants, called *šoukre*, which belonged to the property of certain ecclesiastical or monastic properties. Apparently, another illicit activity has been going on, as the bishop curses anyone who will throw ashes (or dust) on the rubbish heaps:

> With God. Daniel, by the mercy of God, the humble bishop of the city of Piam, writes to the people who dwell at Peljisôôk. To begin with, may the Lord bless you, and your sons, and your daughters, your fields, your beasts, and all that belongs to you, both the things of the field and those of the vil-lage: may the peace of God be granted (to you), (and) be as a wall to you on all sides. May He appoint a good power that governs well over the whole face of the earth. May He grant that His mercy and His peace abide in His churches. May He increase the fruits of the earth, may they be unblemished (and) without any defect. May He reconcile us and forgive us our sins and (those) of all Christian people. Amen. For the rest, my beloved sons, I was informed that they have plucked the shoukre of the? of the Virgin and of

that of Apa Papnoute. Furthermore, my sons, every soul which plucked the shoukre of the? will be excluded by the mouth of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of the 318 bishops who assembled at Nicea, by the mouth of the 12 venerable Apostles, by the mouth of the Holy Virgin Mary, by the mouth of the 24 Elders, by the mouth of Peter the Apostle, by the mouth of all the Saints, and by my mouth, I, Daniel, bishop of the city of Piam. Whosoever shall cast ashes/dust on the rubbish heaps, may the curses of Judas be upon his house, and his house be as that of Judas himself, may the curses of the Apocalypse be upon his house. Whoever shall desist and shall not cast ashes/dust on them, shall be absolved by the mouth of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and by my own mouth, and all the people shall be absolved. Amen.

The letters all follow the same structure. After an opening address to the recipients or audience of the letter, the bishop gives blessings, again directed to the audience of the letters, often including their children and their possessions. *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, in particular, opens with a long list of blessings. After these blessings, the sender, the bishop, states the reason why he is writing the letter: a certain crime has been committed and has been reported to the bishop. This crime is described in some detail, including the names of the victims and, in the case of the two letters concerning theft, a list of the stolen goods. The bishop then gives his reaction to these reports by cursing and banning the perpetrators or threatening to do so. In none of the four cases are the perpetrators named. Presumably, they are not known by the bishops. The letters end on a more positive note, with blessings and in some cases assurances for the innocent.

   As stated in the introduction, the first focus of the chapter is to examine how the curse letters under study can be understood as reflecting the changed position of the bishops. To that effect, I will first discuss how religious and biblical language, including excommunicatory language and curses, were embedded in late antique religious communication and in the Coptic documentary tradition. Thereafter, I will discuss the relationship between the changing judiciary power of the bishops and their letters by using the comparative example of two dossiers of seventh-century Egyptian bishops.

Scripture in documentary Coptic traditions

In their curse letters, the bishops draw on Scripture, both the Old and New Testament, to provide authority and forcefulness to their letters. This strategy was common in late antique letters, as many Christian leaders employed biblical quotations and allusions to bolster authority or frame situational requests. Specific allusions to curses are found, for example, in Pope John VIII's warnings in the Council of Ravenna in 877, when he used the exemplum of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple from the New Testament who were struck dead because they cheated God and lied about it, to threaten people who would plunder church property.[18]

We also come across quotations of and references to Scripture as a rhetorical device in the letters written by monks and clerical authorities preserved in the papyrological record. One of the most proliferate letter writers in the papyrological record is the eighth-century monk Frange, whose variegated use of Scripture quotations, discussed in detail by Przemysław Piwowarczyk in this volume, does not include curses or references to cursed biblical figures. This specific rhetorical strategy is, however, attested to in the letters of the seventh-century bishop Abraham of Hermonthis, who draws upon both New and Old Testament for his curses and exempla.[19] Two of his letters will be discussed later. Monastic and clerical authoritative figures, including popes and bishops, used language and examples from Scripture to give authority and poignancy to their messages and their decisions, regardless of whether they addressed monks or non-monastic and non-clerical members of their community.

Scripture and the curses therein appeared also outside the communications from "holy men". Biblical language pervades the formulary of Coptic legal documents.[20] Pious phraseology is attested in testaments, donation deeds, and sale contracts, frequently in the invocation, but also often in clauses which aim to make certain that the stipulations in the document would be respected.[21] Sometimes, these clauses threaten exclusion from the holy oath of the Christians or the kingdom of God. In some contracts from the late seventh and eighth century, a stipulation was included which protected one of the parties in biblical words but, even more importantly, by invoking the exempla of Ananias and Sapphira, like Pope John VIII cited earlier, and Judas:

> Above all, if one of my children or my heirs, either monk or layman, stranger or servant, should dare [to transgress this agreement], primarily this one shall not benefit any thereby but first he shall be estranged from the holy oath that serves him, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and you shall subject him to the fearful tribunal of Christ to be judged for this action, and he shall suffer the lot of Ananias and Sapphira, and he shall suffer the lot of Judas, he who betrayed the Lord in all.[22]

Language and curses or references to cursed figures from Scripture were thus embedded in the Coptic documentary practice,[23] but they were also part of the language of Coptic magical texts. In fact, some of the curses in the curse letters also appear in magical papyri. A passage from the *Papyrus Lichacev* reads[24]: "You must bring upon them the anger of your wrath and your raised arm. As you cursed Somohra and Komohra through the anger of your wrath". This resembles some of the curse letters. In both letters from Shmoun (*SB Kopt.* II 938 and *P.Ryl.Copt.* 267) and in the Arabic curse letter (*P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde*) the bishops refer to the cursing of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. As in the legal document cited earlier, Judas appears in the magical texts: "Number them with Judas on the day of judgment".[25] Similarly, the bishop sending *SB Kopt.* IV 1778 wrote "may the curses of Judas be upon his house, and his house be as that of Judas

himself", while *P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde* reads "let his lot and portion be one with that of Judas who was outcast from amongst the apostles".

Biblical language, including references to curses, was used as a rhetorical device in letters by ecclesiastical authorities in late antiquity, and this is also reflected in the Coptic papyrological record. Furthermore, this language permeated late antique Egyptian written culture, as it is attested in different types of writing, such as legal documents and magical texts. The scribes and magical experts of late antiquity referenced the same biblical curses which we find in the letters of the tenth-century to twelfth-century bishops. The cursing and excommunicatory language of these bishops was thus fully embedded in Coptic documentary tradition. The following paragraph will focus again on the bishops and the relationship between their reactions to the report of a crime (the letters) and their position in society. I will use comparative evidence from the dossiers of seventh-century, pre-Islamic era Egyptian bishops to show in which ways the later bishops' curse letters might and might not reflect their senders' relative lack of judiciary power.

Daniel vs. Abraham: comparison with seventh-century bishops

In the context of the development of law and jurisdiction in early Islamic Egypt, recent studies have read *P.Ryl.Copt.* 267, one of the two curse letters sent by a bishop of Shmoun, as a glaring example of the eroded power of bishops in comparison to the past.[26]

> Within their own domains local authorities continued to play a role both in ecclesiastical and rabbinical courts and as mediators with higher (Muslim) authorities. By the end of the tenth-eleventh century however a bishop *could only threaten a thief with curses* if he did not return the goods he had stolen.[27]

The use of curses is linked to the lack of actual power of the bishops: "the calling down of the divine wrath also draws attention to the lack of other levers at his disposal".[28] In other words, the bishops used these "impressively thunderous threats" because they did not have the authority to assign a worldly punishment to the thieves.[29] Moreover, attention is drawn to the minor importance of the crime in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 267.[30]

The threats of excommunication and the accumulation of terrible curses in reaction to petty crime in the letters are thus interpreted by Petra Sijpesteijn as a direct reflection of the judicial powerlessness of the bishops, who can only threaten with spiritual punishments, as they do not have the authority to dole out worldly punishments any longer.[31] I would like to make some remarks to both nuance and add to this interpretation of the letters. The crimes to which the bishops are reacting seem to have been indeed minor petty crimes: two thefts of animals and household goods, a moral matter related to magic and marriage, and damage to church property. However, this kind of minor crime or misdemeanor related to daily life in the community had been the domain of episcopal jurisdiction since late antiquity, as

we can read in the dossiers of the bishops Abraham of Hermonthis and Pesynthios of Coptos.[32] Thus, in that respect the letters themselves do not actually signal a change in area of judicial authority of the bishops.

Bishops threatening with a punishment of excommunication and/or curses was not new. Excommunication or bans—in various degrees—were among Bishop Abraham's favorite ways of punishing and controlling his community, rogue priests in particular.[33] Two letters, both written on ceramic potsherds that have been attributed to his dossier, contain curses and biblical exempla that are reminiscent of the later bishops' letters. In one of the letters, Bishop Abraham relates how poor people have come to him to complain about a certain Psate who is ill using them.[34] As a response, Abraham likens Psate to Judas and to various kings of Israel from the Book of Kings, implying that the same fate will befall Psate that had befallen those cursed figures from the Bible. A second letter is more explicit. It is fragmentary but has been attributed to Bishop Abraham and mentions a certain Zacharias. It is not clear whether Zacharias is a victim of a crime, a perpetrator, or whether he plays another role. The letter contains a reference to *aforismos*, a technical term for excommunication, as well as the following sentences containing curses: "blot him out and the curse of Deuteronomy enter into his house and blot him out and all the curses of Scripture come upon him and blot him out".[35] Because of the fragmentary state of the ostracon, we do not know the nature of the crime that triggered the response with the curses. It is probable that one or more curses preceded the phrase, but those have been lost. Similar to the bishops from the tenth to twelfth centuries, Abraham mentions books from Scripture, or Scripture in general, as a resource of curses to befall the perpetrator. I have discussed how the use of Scripture was embedded in the communication by monastics and ecclesiastics, but here we see the seventh-century bishop Abraham using not only excommunication but also the accumulation of curses—or biblical exempla of cursed evil and unjust figures—in pretty much the same way as his later counterparts. Although Abraham's curse letters only constitute a tiny part of his correspondence, they show how excommunicating and cursing were a part of a bishop's toolbox since before the Arab conquest of Egypt. This nuances the causal connection between the eroded judicial authority of the tenth-century to twelfth-century bishops and their resort to excommunication and cursing as punishment and suggests that they continued a longstanding episcopal practice.

There is one, previously overlooked, aspect of the curse letters that seems to point to the bishops' loss of power in the administration of justice in comparison to their late antique counterparts. In none of the later letters does the bishop name the perpetrator of the crime, but rather issues his punishments to "whoever did this". This strongly contrasts with the evidence from the dossiers of the bishops Abraham and Pesynthios, which show that they had the authority to investigate crimes.[36] Bishop Abraham sent his disciplinary letters to the culprits themselves, not, as is the case in the later letters, to an entire village. Only in the case of his letter about Psate, discussed earlier, did Abraham send it as an *engkuklema*, a circular letter, which strengthens the continuity with the later letters, but again, he did point to Psate as the punished community member. The fact that the bishops in

the later letters do not point to an exact perpetrator for the crimes reported to them does not necessarily mean that they were ignorant about the identity of the perpetrators, but it does seem likely that if the bishops had known, they would have at least named the culprits by name in their letters. If the bishops were ignorant of the culprits' identities, this might point to the bishops having lost their power to investigate crimes in the four centuries since the Arab conquest of Egypt.

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the curse letters in their historical context and related them to the evolution of the social role of the bishop in the centuries after the Arab conquest of Egypt. In second section of this chapter, I will zoom in on the situations behind the letters. I will try to gauge the effect that the oral performance of the letters would have had on their addressees and larger audience, village communities or rather Christian communities within the villages. While we do not know the aftermath of the particular situations, I will propose and discuss some possible intended and unintended effects of the letters.

Performative aspect of the letters

Before I turn to the possible intended and unintended effects of the bishops' letters, I will discuss the performative function of the letters, which was twofold. Firstly, these letters were meant to be read out loud publicly to the community. This is put explicitly in *P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde*: "Everyone standing around, hearing what is in this letter, should know", but can be assumed for the other letters as well, since they are addressed to communities rather than individuals. In fact, these letters, similarly to inscriptions, can be seen as "'voiced texts', texts that although written down were intended for oral delivery and, indeed, realize their full communicative function only when being performed".[37] However, I would argue that these letters do not only have a communicative function but also a performative function in the sense that they are not only saying something but also performing the actual change they intend to convey. Secondly, the letters are not only informing the addressees about the bishops' reactions to the crimes, namely excommunication and curses, they are performing the curses. The same can be said about the blessings that open the letters. The oral performance of the letters strengthens this performative aspect: when the letters were read aloud, the addressees were blessed, excommunicated, and cursed in front of a community. This could subsequently also translate to social exclusion or prestige, but the initial efficacy lies in the recipients' belief that the speech acts "become real", not unlike the reality of a marriage after the oral performance of certain ceremonial formulas.[38]

Speech act theories remind us that the efficacy of speech utterance depends on the perceived authority of the speaker and the "fit" with the situation.[39] The orality of performative authority is visible in the expression "by the mouth of" in the three Coptic curse letters. The expression is used in combination with a reference to a curse or excommunication and can refer to the bishop himself: "And by the mouth of my humility: He will smite them, how He smote Sodom and Gomorrah" (*P.Ryl. Copt.* 267), "whoever . . . will be excluded by the mouth of the Father and

the Son and the Holy Spirit, . . . and by my mouth, I, Daniel, bishop of the city of Piam" (*SB Kopt*. IV 1778). As is shown by the second example, the bishops also use the "mouth" and authority of others to perform their punishments. In *SB Kopt*. II 938 and *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, the bishops invoke the authority of historical groups of bishops: those at the Council of Nicea and those at the Council of Ephesus. Since these two councils were the first and third ecumenical council of bishops, respectively, they carried the authority of the united religious past. Bishop Daniel, writing about damage done to church property in *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, has the longest and most impressive list of claimed authority. He invokes the presence of biblical and religious figures to introduce his own position:

> by the mouth of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of the 318 bishops who assembled at Nicaea, by the mouth of the 12 venerable Apostles, by the mouth of the Holy Virgin Mary, by the mouth of the 24 Elders, by the mouth of Peter the Apostle, by the mouth of all the Saints, and by my mouth, I, Daniel, bishop of the city of Piam.

In this instance, the presence of Peter alongside the apostles as a group is relevant, since traditionally, Peter was considered the source of a Christian bishop's right to excommunicate.[40]

Since the four episcopal curse letters derive from the tenth to the twelfth century, their performative power stems from a context in which biblical language has permeated society. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, allusions to Scripture feature extensively in legal and magical texts: two corpora that share a performative function with our curse letters.[41] Curses in letters, legal documents, and magical texts do not "perform" in exactly the same way, however. Magical texts represent the most straightforward case: their text, read out loud, can perform the magic. The curses in legal documents are put in as deterrents against breach of contract, so their performance is conditional on something that has not happened and might never happen. In the letters, however, the excommunication or cursing was sometimes effective and sometimes threatened or conditional. The letters also combine these different modes of cursing and excommunication. For example, in *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, whoever picked the plants is effectively excommunicated, while the bishop only threatens with the curses of Judas and the curses of the Apocalypse for those who in the future would throw ash on the rubbish heaps. The curses of Judas and the Apocalypse were thus conditional on something that had not happened yet, in a similar way to the curses of Ananias and Sapphira in the legal document cited in the first part of this chapter (*P.CLT* 1).

Intended and unintended effects of the letters

What were the desired effects of the letters? The most obvious objective of the bishops sending the letters must have been related to the crime in question: they wanted to solve the problem brought to their attention. In *P.Ryl.Copt*. 267, the intention of the bishop is made clear: he wants the perpetrator to confess and/

or return the stolen goods. The letter states twice that the culprit will be cursed if he does not "reveal" the stolen goods. In *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, the bishop also offers a way out to escape from the curse, namely if people decide not to throw ashes or dust on the rubbish heaps. Consequently, the bishop may have hoped to scare the villagers away from continuing the practices that they were engaged in. However, such an option is not given for the people who picked plants on church property—they are excommunicated without opportunity for redemption. *P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde* does not mention an opportunity for redemption at all. *SB Kopt*. II 938 is so strict that not only is the culprit the target of the curse but also anyone who knows about the matter. This could indicate that the goal of the letter was to put pressure on the community so that the culprit would be brought forward. This communal approach may also have stood behind the curses associated with the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, cited in three of the four letters. It is possible that the bishops used this exemplum to convey the threat to the whole community, rather than only singling out the perpetrator. Again, this might have helped by putting pressure on the community to help bring the guilty party forward.

Communication does not stop with the intended meaning. Even if the villagers did not understand all the biblical references, during the reading of the letters they would have heard repeated expressions with the word "curse" (*sahou*). This word "curse" or "curses" is repeated several times in every letter, which may have already had the desired effect. However, the villagers might have understood the biblical references in the letters. The curses and biblical references did not come out of thin air. Already from the third century onwards, Coptic translations of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament circulated throughout Egypt. Some of these liturgical papyri contained hymns and prayers for private consumption, and it has been suggested that others were used for communal readings in church services for the community.[42] The reference to the 108th Psalm in the two letters from the bishop of Shmoun (El Ashmunein) probably had some resonance, as the Psalter was not only the fundament of monastic prayer but was also recited during the Eucharist.[43] Except for the quotation from the 108th Psalm, the letters draw upon and refer to biblical texts, rather than quote actual passages from Scripture. They either refer to a whole book of the Bible, such as the previously mentioned Book of Revelation or to the Book of Job, the Pentateuch (Law), and the sequence of Old Testament books. The bishops also refer to the names of cursed exempla such as Judas and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Given the fact that both the Old and New Testament are attested to have been read in Egypt at the time, it is possible that the audience would have been able to understand the context of these references. As we have discussed, curses and references to Scripture in general were not used by bishops alone, but were embedded in Coptic documentary culture, as we find them in legal documents and magical texts.

What happened in the specific situations? Were the letters successful in resolving the conflict? Unfortunately, we do not know if the culprits indeed came forward and repented. However, the letters were intended to serve another purpose,

namely to confirm or strengthen the authority of the bishop in the communities by directly bringing his words into the everyday situations of the villages. The crimes reported to the bishops would have provided an excellent opportunity for the bishops to establish and restate their authority over the mundane affairs of life. The communities are the actual addressees of the letters, not the unknown culprits. This was partially the result of the bishops' ignorance of the identities of the culprit, but the fact that the letters contain lengthy blessings to the community makes it clear that the letters as a whole were intended to address and affect the entire community, rather than the perpetrators of the crimes alone.[44] Moreover, as "voiced texts", the letters could have had the effect of creating groupness (the event or feeling of connectedness with a religious group) in the community. The oral performance of the letters would have happened in a ritual setting: in a church, with the Christian community listening. In the same way as has been argued for the ritualized reading of epitaphs, the reading of the religious community leader's communications, including the references to Scripture, could have established and sustained religious groupness by confirming group beliefs and reiterating the social cohesion of insiders.[45]

At the same time, the letters might have had the opposite effect: they could have eroded the authority of the bishop. Excommunication and cursing could have far-reaching consequences, for example through social, economic, and religious exclusion and isolation. The effect of such speech acts, or even only the threat of excommunication, should not be underestimated. The goal of excommunication was the purification of the excommunicatee and the community and to reaffirm the boundaries of the community.[46] The excommunicatee was supposed to repent and return or be frightened enough by the threat not to need excommunication. Yet in studies of premodern and early modern Jewish communities, excommunication or communal ban as a punishment has been shown to be a "double edged sword".[47] When the excommunicatee has strong ties outside of the religious community or when others within the community do not respect the ban, this erodes the effectiveness of the excommunication, as well as the authority of the excommunicator—in the case of the curse letters, the bishops. In tenth-century to twelfth-century Egypt, where Islamicization had been well underway for at least a century, excommunication might not have had very strong social or economic consequences for the excommunicatee. Moreover, if nobody knew who the culprit was or unwilling to point them out, the excommunication would have no effect whatsoever, as the culprit would have been able to escape the ban. In his study of excommunication in the seventeenth-century Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam, Yosef Kaplan has shown that while the leaders of the Jewish community were quick to excommunicate, they also wanted to have the excommunication rescinded as soon as possible.[48] Often, they would only issue a threat of excommunication, without actually breaking the bonds of the community.[49] There is a similar attitude in the curse letters, where the bishops pile up excommunications and curses, although these are often only threats, or conditional, but also offer opportunities for redemption.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined four letters from tenth-century to twelfth-century Egypt in which bishops wrote to Christian communities to bless, curse, excommunicate—or threaten to do so—and redeem. The occasion for writing such a letter was the report of a crime committed in the community. The reaction of each bishop was intended as a solution for the problem that was brought to him. By addressing the (unknown) culprits and at the same time the community as a whole, the bishops' letters were instruments to manipulate the community, so that the culprits would come forward, or be made to come forward, and repent. At the same time, the letters proved a good opportunity for the bishops to restate their presence, their authority, and their role as leaders of the Christian communities to whom they were writing. In the letters, the bishops used threats of excommunication and curses to provide justice and redress for the victims. The effectiveness of such an approach can be called into question, and moreover, could have had the added undesired effect of eroding the bishops' authority, rather than strengthening it. If the bishops' threats were not heeded or the excommunication proved inconsequential due to the excommunicatee's ties outside the religious community, neither bishop nor victim would get what they wanted. The fragility of these tenth-century to twelfth-century bishops' authority as sources of justice and redress in their communities was compounded by the development of the administration of justice in Egypt in the centuries after the Arab conquest. Local, including ecclesiastical, authorities had lost most of their judiciary power as Islamic legal institutions developed. That leaves the question: why do we have these letters? Why did the victims, or their representatives, turn to the bishop to report the crime? Why would the crimes have been reported to the bishop if some form of redress was not expected from him? By this time, Christians (and Jews) could—and did—turn to official Muslim courts to solve legal issues. In the situations presented by these letters, another choice was made. The answer to these questions must lie in the specific situations behind the letters. In the case of *P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde*, the crime was connected to magic, which would explain the involvement of a religious leader. In *SB Kopt*. IV 1778, the bishop aims to punish people for doing damage to church property, which again makes his involvement clear. The two other letters, however, deal with more mundane break-ins and thefts of property. In those cases, it is more difficult to understand why exactly the bishop was asked to step in and provide justice, especially as they do not even seem to know the identity of the culprits. We do not know the immediate context of the letters—e.g. whether or not they were effective or whether the victims also went to a Muslim court with their complaint—but the particular circumstances must have made the authority of the bishops appealing to the victims or their representatives. The apparent contradiction brought up by these questions can be seen as a reflection of the legally pluralistic society of tenth-century to twelfth-century Egypt. Individuals used the different options that they had for seeking redress, and the institution of the bishop, with his authority to excommunicate, curse, and redeem, was still considered to be one of those ways to justice.

Notes

1 This chapter emerges from research done in the context of the project "Embedding Conquest: Naturalising Muslim Rule in the Early Islamic Empire (600–1000)", directed by Petra Sijpesteijn and funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 683194. I owe a debt of gratitude to several people, first and foremost to Mattias Brand for valuable feedback, corrections, and suggestions. This chapter has benefited greatly from feedback and discussions at two Leiden conferences: "Late Antique Religion in Practice: Papyri and the Dynamics of Religious Identification" (9–11 November 2017), organized by Mattias Brand, Cisca Hoogendijk, Koen Donker van Heel, and myself, and "Acts of Excommunication in the Late Antique and Early Islamicate Middle East" (12–13 March 2020), organized by Edmund Hayes. All remaining errors and shortcomings are my own.

2 *P.Ryl.Copt*. 267. Coptic papyrological sources are cited according to the Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets, available online at http://papyri.info/docs/checklist. Arabic papyrological sources are cited according to the Checklist of Arabic documents, available online at www.naher-osten. lmu.de/isapchecklist.

3 *SB Kopt*. II 938.

4 I consider the bishops the "writers" of the letters in the sense that they are addressing the recipients of the letters, although it is entirely plausible that the letters were actually dictated by the bishop and written by scribes.

5 Petra Sijpesteijn, "Establishing Local Elite Authority in Egypt Through Arbitration and Mediation," in *Transregional and Regional Elites. Connecting the Early Islamic Empire, The Early Islamic Empire at Work, Volume 1. Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East 36*, eds. Hannah-Lena Hagemann and Stefan Heidemann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 387–406; Petra Sijpesteijn, "Policing, Punishing and Prisons in the Early Islamic Egyptian Countryside (640–850 CE)," in *Authority and Control in the Countryside. From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th—10th Century)*, eds. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre, and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 547–88.

6 Sijpesteijn, "Policing," 576, n. 156.

7 *O.Frange*, 18.

8 Walter Till and Herbert Liebesny, "Koptische Schutzbriefe," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 8 (1938): 71–146; Alain Delattre, "Les 'lettres de protection' coptes," in *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, ed. Bernhard Palme (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 173–77. On the process of requesting and receiving a protection letter: Eline Scheerlinck, "Procedures of Protection. Coptic Protection Letters and Village Life," in *Acts of Protection in Early Islamicate Societies*, eds. Edmund Hayes and Eline Scheerlinck. Special issue, *Annales Islamologiques* 54 (2021): 15–30.

9 In two surviving letters, bishop Pesynthios of Coptos (599–632) is asked by a village official to issue a protection letter for a third party: *P.Katoennatie* 658/1 and *O.APM* Inv. 3871, published in Jacques van der Vliet, "A Letter to a Bishop, Probably Pesynthios of Coptos (died AD 632) (*O.APM* Inv. 3871)," in *The Workman's Progress: Studies on the Village of Deir el-Medina and Other Documents from Western Thebes in Honour of Rob Demarée,* Egyptologische Uitgaven 28, eds. Ben Haring, Olaf Kaper, and René van Walsem (Leuven: Peeters and Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2014), 255–60.

10 *O.CrumST* 394.

11 This process is examined in detail in Sijpesteijn, "Establishing"; Sijpesteijn, "Policing."

12 Uriel Simonsohn, *A Common Justice. The Legal Allegiances of Christians and Jews Under Early Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

13 *P.Ryl.Copt.* 267.

14 *P.ReinhardtKirchenbann-Urkunde.*

15 The fact that the letter was written in Arabic has been used to argue that by this period a majority of Christians were thought to have understood Arabic. Alain Delattre, Boris Liebrenz, Tonio Sebastian Richter, and Naïm Vanthieghem, "Écrire en arabe et en copte. Le cas de deux lettres bilingues," *Chronique d'Égypte* 87, no.1 (2012): 170–87.

16 The English translation I use was provided to me by Edmund Hayes and Abdullah Alhatlani, for which I am most grateful.

17 *SB Kopt.* IV 1778.

18 Elizabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1986), 14–15.

19 For the use of biblical citation by another seventh-century bishop, Pesynthios of Coptos, *see* Renate Dekker, *Episcopal Networks and Authority in Late Antique Egypt. Bishops of the Theban Region at Work* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 268–72.

20 Leslie MacCoull, "Coptic Documentary Papyri as a Historical Source for Egyptian Christianity," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, eds. Birger Pearson and James Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 42–50.

21 *See also*, e.g., *P.CLT* 5 ll. 125–32.

22 *P.CLT* 1 ll. 82–89. *See also*: "if anyone . . . goes to law against you, it shall not avail him anything, but above all he shall be a stranger to the holy oath of the Christians, which is observed, and the fate of Ananias and Sapphira shall befall him" (*P.KRU* 13, Theban area (Phoibammon monastery), date: 733).

23 Maged Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics After the Arab Conquest*. Library of Middle East History 45 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 155–56.

24 *Papyrus Lichacev*, fourth or fifth century, transl. M. Meyer in Marvin Meyer, Richard Smith, and Neal Kelsey, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, New ed., with a new afterword (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

25 *London Oriental Manuscript* 5986, transl. R. Smith in Meyer, Smith, and Kelsey, "Ancient Christian Magic."

26 Sijpesteijn, "Establishing"; Sijpesteijn, "Policing."

27 Sijpesteijn, "Policing," 582–83 (my italics).

28 Sijpesteijn, "Establishing," 388.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 The idea of excommunication—cursing, as a related mechanism, can be added to this—as a weapon of the weak has been developed in literature on the seventeenth-century western Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities in Amsterdam: Yosef Kaplan, "The Social Functions of the 'Herem' in the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century," in *Dutch Jewish History*. *Vol. I. Proceedings of the Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands: November 28—December 3, 1982, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem*, ed. Jozeph Michman (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University and Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Institute for Research on Dutch Jewry, 1984), 115.

32 Dekker, *Episcopal Networks*, 218–19 (and *passim*): Bishop Pesynthios was involved in cases of cattle theft in a village. He mediated through his network, but the villagers felt he had not done enough to help them.

33 Dekker, *Episcopal Networks*, 190–93.

34 *O.Crum.* 71.

35 *O.Crum.* 78.

36 For an example of this, *see* the cattle theft case in the dossier of bishop Pesynthios: Dekker *Episcopal Networks*, 218–19 and *passim*.

37 Jacques van der Vliet, "'What Is Man?' The Nubian Tradition of Coptic Funerary Inscriptions," in *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture*, eds. Adam Łajtar

and Jacques van der Vliet (Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2011), 183, with bibliography in n. 39.

38 John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

39 Wade Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 1 (1982): 53.

40 Based on Jesus's words to Peter in Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." For a discussion of excommunication in the Gospels, *see* Vodola, *Excommunication*, 56.

41 On the performative function of magical texts: H. S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm. An Essay in the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 105–58. On the performative function of excommunication letters in tenth-century to thirteenth-century Jewish communities as documented in the Cairo Genizah: Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 207.

42 Ágnes Mihálykó, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri: An Introduction* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 273 n. 87.

43 Mihálykó, *Liturgical Papyri*, 25 n. 83. Two of the letters mention "the curses of the Apocalypse". The Book of Revelation knew particular popularity in Egypt, more so than in other areas of the medieval Christian Middle East. While this popularity is generally attested in the period from 500 to 1500, the cursing letters provide evidence of this popularity for the tenth and twelfth centuries: Thomas Schmidt, "The Last Book: Revelation, Commentaries, and the Making of the New Testament" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2020), 297–301.

44 For the link between curses and blessings as expressions of the authority of ritual experts, *see* David Frankfurter, "Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 5, no. 1 (2005): 157–85.

45 Van der Vliet, "What Is Man?" 186.

46 Véronique Beaulande, *Le malheur d'être exclu? Excommunication, réconciliation et société à la fin du Moyen* Age (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2006).

47 Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, 200–36; Moshe Yaghur, "The Double-Edged Sword of Excommunication: A View from the Cairo Geniza Documents," in *Acts of Excommunication in the Late Antique and Early Islamicate Middle East*, ed. Edmund Hayes. Special issue, *Al-Masaq* (forthcoming). The concept of the double-edged sword comes from Kaplan, "Social Functions."

48 Kaplan, "Social Functions," 124.

49 Ibid., 130.

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11 Religious Expression and Relationships Between Christians and Muslims in Coptic Letters from Early Islamic Egypt

Jennifer Cromwell

Introduction

In the years 639–642, Egypt was conquered by the Arab armies only a decade after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, when Islam was still in its formative period. Throughout the later seventh and eighth centuries, Egyptian society underwent numerous changes in terms of its religion, language, and administration, including the gradual replacement of local officials with Muslims throughout the Nile Valley and the increasing use of Arabic in written communications and the administration.[1] The written record of the first century of the new rule is dominated by official communiqués—in Arabic, Coptic, and Greek—concerning the organization of tax collection and other impositions. In addition to their activities connected with the state's fiscal policies, Muslim officials also appear in a judicial capacity as arbitrators in legal disputes between Egyptian Christian villagers.[2] Against this background of paperwork, the purpose of the current study is the examination of the impact of the conquest in the realm of religious expression in written communication in Coptic (the indigenous Egyptian language) and the evidence that Coptic letters provide concerning the nature of the relationship between the local population and its new rulers.

 The available body of Coptic letters is rather limited, a fact that may reflect the publication history of such texts as much as it does the use of Coptic in early Islamic Egypt.[3] The first part of this chapter ("Identifying Christians and Muslims") discusses the issues involved in identifying Christians and Muslims in the written record. Following this, I discuss potentially overt expressions of religious identity, including formulaic and supra-linguistic elements, as well as the very use of Coptic itself ("Religious Expression and Epistolary Practice"). The final section ("Letters Between Christians and Muslims: Individual Behavior and Group Membership") focuses on identifiable letters between Christians and Muslims and the socio-linguistic repertoires utilized by the individuals involved, in particular politeness strategies, asking whether the identity of the authors is reflected in the use of language. The case studies are examined in their situational contexts, emphasizing the often multiple overlapping identities at play—religion,

ethnicity, secular authority—and how particular identities, in this case religious, can be discerned within this multi-layered world.

Identifying Christians and Muslims

In order to discuss the relationships between Christians and Muslims, it is first necessary to identify them in the sources.[4] After the conquest, the designation *Saracen* (Σαρακηνός[5]) is used only to refer to the Arab conquerors. However, its attestation, especially in Coptic, is mostly limited to documents from Aphrodito.[6] In the lack, then, of labels to identify members of different groups, the identification of Muslims in the sources is restricted to onomastics and titles, such as *amīr* (ἀμιρᾶ).[7] One mode of identification of recent converts to Islam is the use of *mawlā* after the name of converts.[8] It has been suggested that the use of Coptic between Muslims may be another indication of recent conversion, with Coptic being used by Egyptians who had changed their religion but had not yet learned Arabic.[9] In her re-edition of *CPR* II 228 (now *P.Gascou* 24), a letter between Abū ʿAlī and Yazīd concerning various business and personal matters, Boud'hors returns to this question. Other than an inability to communicate in Arabic, the use of Coptic may have been retained for functional purposes such as business communications (whereas Arabic was required for religious or judicial matters). It is also possible that one of the individuals involved, the sender or the recipient, had limited knowledge of Arabic but did have access to somebody who could read Coptic to him. Sociolinguistic reasons for the use of Coptic rather than Arabic need to be explored further before any conclusions about the ethnicity and religious background of those who wrote in Coptic can be drawn.[10]

In sum, identifying the religious and ethnic background of the individuals involved and the relationship between them is a complex task. The absence of clear expressions of religious conversion (e.g., *mawlā*) does not mean that somebody was not a convert. Nor is the use of Coptic between Muslims in quotidian contexts indicative of the conversion of one or both parties; other social actions may be in play. As the letters discussed in detail later emphasize, the seeming familiarity between writers and recipients may reflect sociolinguistic strategies more than they do real-life relationships.

Religious Expression and Epistolary Practice

Many letters and other documents begin with an invocation "In the name of God" (Coptic ϩⲙ ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ; Greek ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ and σὺν θεῷ), which, as has been noted by other scholars, is a neutral monotheistic expression that is appropriate between individuals of different religions.[11] Following the conquest, σὺν θεῷ is characteristic of administrative documents issued by Muslim officials and becomes more common than ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ.[12] However, it is questionable whether such changes should be attributed to religious motivations. Other post-conquest epistolary practices may provide evidence of the impact of religious expression.

A common neutral monotheistic expression that occurs regularly in Coptic letters may also be founded in Muslim religious formulae. The "*salām*-greeting", bestowing peace upon the other party, is a standard salutation among Muslims: "Peace be upon you."[13] The Coptic equivalent is attested in more than twenty letters in two main forms: ⲧⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲛⲉⲕ "Peace to you" (*P.Fay.Copt.* 19.1) and ⲧⲉⲣⲏⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲛ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ "Peace to you from God" (*P.Lond.Copt.* I 1165.2) (alternatively ⲧⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧ(ⲉ) ⲛⲏⲕ, "Peace of God to you"; *P.Mich.Copt.* III 12.2).[14] In the majority of cases, these expressions—both the invocation and peace-greeting—occur in letters between Christians, and so their use is not determined by the religious identity of sender or recipient. However, the use of such formulae reflects up to a century or more of language contact, providing an environment for the adaptation of Muslim religious expressions into Coptic in such a way that they were palatable to Christians.[15]

In addition to these formulae, supra-linguistic indicators of religious expression also occur in correspondence from the post-conquest period, specifically the use of oblique strokes rather than crosses to frame content (i.e., to mark the beginning and end of a letter, account, etc.). Early Coptic text editors, including Jakob Krall and Walter Crum, observed the use of such strokes in documents involving individuals with Muslim names, noting that Muslim witnesses employed oblique strokes while Christians used the cross. Sebastian Richter has since provided a more detailed examination of these marks, noting that their use is not determined strictly by religious confession: the oblique strokes occur also in texts between Christians; crosses are used in texts that involve Muslims; crosses and oblique strokes occur in the same text.[16] This statement was most recently echoed by Lajos Berkes, who stated that the double strokes are not to be understood as a religious act, whether marking confession or highlighting conflict.[17]

While the distribution of such non-linguistic marks cannot be used to comment upon the identities of the parties involved, nor as an indication of the nature of the relationships between the parties, the introduction of the strokes is nevertheless certainly a post-conquest scribal innovation. Its earliest occurrences in Coptic texts—where dates can be assigned (even approximately)—is in tax demands from the eighth century; all the other relevant documents are typically dated broadly to the eighth or ninth centuries. These tax demands are issued from the office of Muslim pagarchs, and the first occurrences are probably all from the important city Hermopolis (el-Ashmunein). This practice subsequently occurred in private documents, not all of which involve Muslims.

To say that the use of the strokes was always a religiously neutral act is, in terms of the current discussion, to miss the point. Rather, the practice was initially introduced by Muslim officials in administrative documents and over the following decades it was adopted more widely. By swapping crosses for strokes, apart from removing an overt Christian symbol, it introduced a symbol that could be identified as an official mark. Even if the following text could not be read by everybody, the oblique strokes may well have served as a non-linguistic feature of documents, marking their official status, linking them with the non-Christian rulers, and therefore imbuing the document with greater authority. Regardless of

the later loss of this symbolic function and its application becoming more com-
monplace among scribes, the introduction of the marks should be viewed in this
light—the original intention was one based on religious and administrative func-
tions, even if neither of these points were issues consciously considered by scribes
writing a century later.

Letters Between Christians and Muslims: Individual Behavior and Group Membership

Only a small number of letters between Muslim officials and Egyptian Christians
exist, yet those that do survive provide evidence for individual and group behav-
ior. One of the most striking of texts is a short letter written from a Muslim official
to an individual from Titkooh (in the Hermopolite nome), *P.Mich.Copt*. III 15.
This letter concerns tax collection, possibly in connection with the monastery of
Apa Apollo at Bawit, in which case the recipient clearly belongs to a Christian
community. It is short but complete, with the address written on the verso. Double
oblique strokes mark the beginning of the letter (see figure 11.1). In this case,
this non-linguistic marker is vital, as the letter lacks any epistolary framework:
if it was not for the address on the verso, the context for the letter would be lost.
However, the framework informs us that the letter is written from Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd
al-Raḥmān to one Theodore.[18]

The language of this missive is strong. While a detailed linguistic analysis of
the text—and the other texts under discussion—will not be undertaken here, a
few of the key features need to be noted in order to convey the strength of the
language used.

> // ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲧⲛⲉⲉⲓⲙⲉ ϫⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲧⲱϣ ⲥⲉⲣⲏⲛⲉ | ⲉϫⲱⲕ ⲉ . . . . ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲧⲟϣϥ | ⲉϫⲱⲕ ⲁⲛ
> ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉϥϯ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ϩⲁⲣⲧⲱⲛ | ⲗⲟⲓⲡⲟⲛ ϯ ⲡⲧⲱϣ ⲡⲉⲕⲉϩⲁⲅⲓⲛ ⲟⲩⲟⲧⲥϥ | ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϫⲓⲧϥ
> ⲉⲡⲉⲓ ⲉⲕϣⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲥⲁ ⲟⲩⲟϭⲛϥ | ⲉⲗⲁⲁⲩ ϩⲓⲱⲱϥ ϣⲁⲓⲧⲛⲟⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲧⲉϣⲁϥϭⲉⲛⲧⲩ | ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ
> ⲛⲉⲕⲕⲥⲥⲉ

> "// So you know that I have appointed Serenos over you to [. . .]. I have
> not appointed him over you so that he may pay anything on your behalf. So
> then, pay the stipulated amount (as) your instalment. Collect it and bring it!
> If you seek to break anything concerning it, I will send one who will extract
> it from your bones."

The closing threat is clear. It is also consistent with the tone of everything else
that is written. The abrupt opening tells the recipient, Theodore, that what follows
simply informs him about the actions that Ibrāhīm has taken. Only *P.Ryl.Copt*.
322 otherwise begins in this manner (ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲕⲉⲓⲙⲉ ϫⲉ "So you know that . . ."), but
the address in that letter is lost and the identities of the individuals involved are
unknown.[19] Nevertheless, it also concerns tax payment and it shares other linguis-
tic features with our text, notably the use of imperatives that are not modified by
politeness markers.[20] In *P.Mich.Copt*. III 15, Ibrāhīm issues a series of orders in
quick succession: "pay . . . collect . . . bring", without any need to mitigate these
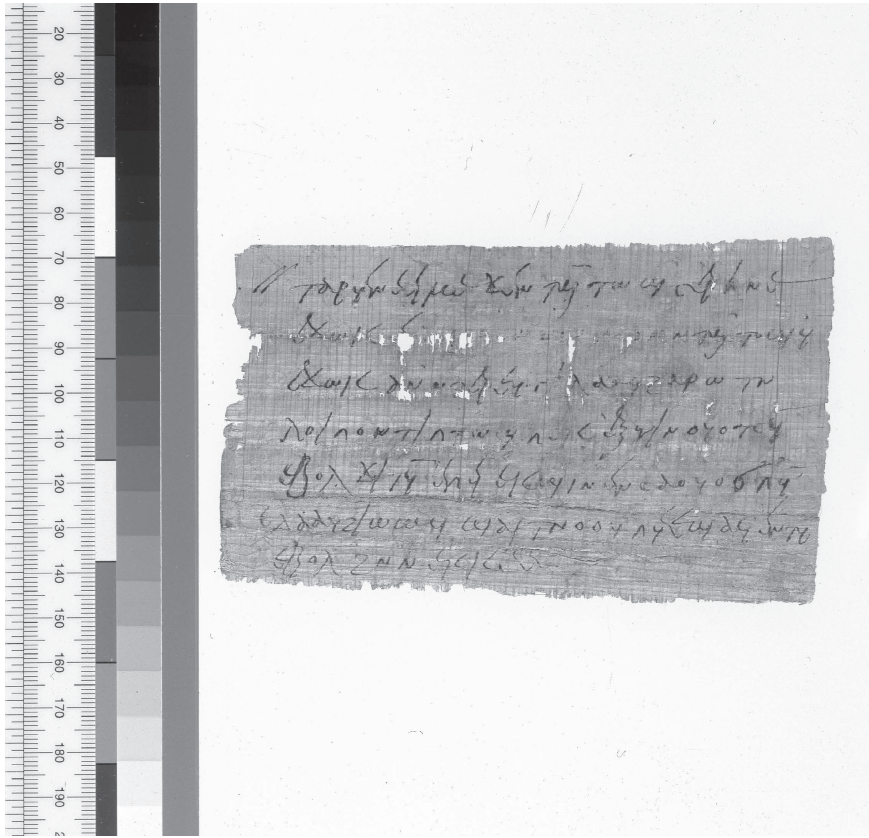
Figure 11.1 P.Mich.Copt. III 15. Image courtesy of the Papyrology Collection, University
of Michigan Library.

impositions. Finally, Ibrāhīm uses emphatic constructions (the so-called "second
tense") to clearly set down the reason for Serenos's appointment. The use of such
constructions is rare in non-literary texts, and their utilization here leaves no room
for ambiguity.

The tone of this letter is especially stark when compared with other short notes
from Muslim officials. In *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324, Muḥammad b. *NN* writes perhaps to
a Victor—the address is damaged and there is no opening address in which the
parties would be clarified. Despite the lack of an address, Muḥammad begins
with the reason why he is writing, namely that he has been informed that a vil-
lage headman is embezzling tax funds. As in *P.Mich.Copt.* III 15, an individual is
assigned to take control of the situation, but the appointment is not binding and
instead rests on the decision of Victor: ⲉⲕⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲁⲁϥ ⲛⲁⲡⲉ "if you so wish, appoint
him headman". The letter continues with advice about how Victor should proceed
ⲉⲕϣⲁⲛⲧⲟϣϥ "if you do appoint him".

These two letters therefore provide parallel case studies. They have several features in common: they are from a Muslim official to a local Egyptian Christian, the texts are outlined by oblique strokes (with no crosses), they have abrupt beginnings, and both concern taxation. However, Muḥammad's letter lacks the aggressive tone employed by Ibrāhīm. Some of these features, for example, the strokes, are imbued with indirect religious expression, but are the curt tones indicative of relationships between Muslims and Christians or are other dynamics responsible for the behavior recorded therein? Certain contexts are lacking. *P.Mich.Copt.* III 15 is from the Hermopolite nome, to which region *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 is also attributed, but neither text is dated.[21] The relative date of the two documents is therefore unknown, which may potentially reveal changing relationships between the groups involved. Furthermore, no other texts are known from either Ibrāhīm or Muḥammad with which their behaviors—and any consistency or lack thereof in the nature of their discourse—in these situations can be compared. However, what is essential is that while these letters are from Muslims to Christians they are also from superiors to subordinates. They both concern official, not personal matters. It is not difficult to see in Ibrāhīm a frustrated and increasingly angry official who is responding to a persistent non-payment of taxes.[22] In this light, the religious membership of the parties is secondary to the hierarchical administrative relationship between them.

As noted, one key problem is the lack of other letters involving these parties from which their behavior can be contextualized. Dossiers of individuals do exist, but rarely involving correspondence with the same second parties. The documents involving Severos son of Bane, a Christian official in the Hermopolite nome, seem to offer an opportunity to study individual interactions.[23] However, only one letter, *P.Ryl.Copt.* 346, provides direct evidence of relationships. It shares several features in common with the letters discussed previously, especially the lack of an opening address: the address on the verso suffices to identify the parties, and the letter lacks any phatic (i.e., performative) component but commences immediately with the issue at hand. Hišām b. Bilāl writes to Severos, reprimanding him for his harsh treatment of certain men who are buying fodder and instructs him on how to proceed. The instructions are issued through a series of unmitigated imperatives, although the tone throughout is matter-of-fact.[24] Notably, it is Severos' own actions, presumably against other Egyptians, which is being upbraided.

The structure and language of both *P.Mich.Copt.* III 15 and *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 stand in marked contrast to *CPR* II 237, a letter from Ṣāliḥ to Chael son of Johannes, in which the latter is instructed to collect and deliver money.[25] This letter is framed by standard epistolary formulae (the invocation, a greeting, and wishes for good health); politeness markers (ⲁⲣⲓ ⲡⲛⲟⲩϭ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩϥ, literally "do the great good thing"); and terms of endearment (ⲡⲁⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ ⲛⲥⲟⲛ "my beloved brother"). Is this familial tone simply dependent on the personal situation of the individuals involved? Could Ṣāliḥ be a convert and his use of "my beloved brother" indicates a long-standing relationship extending back to when the two men were members of the same religious group, or is it simply a mark of respect?[26] Such language and use of formulae are instead characteristic of letters written by Christians to Muslims.

In *P.Ryl.Copt.* 285, Zacharias writes to the *amīr* Rašīd b. Ḫālid, a senior official who is well-known from a number of papyri as the pagarch of Hermopolis (and at a different stage of his career, as pagarch of Heracleopolis).[27] This letter is short, damaged in several areas, and concerns the taxation of a Hermopolite village. Zacharias addresses Rašīd as ⲡϥⲅⲛⲏⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥ "his sincere friend". Sebastian Richter noted of this exchange and the use of crosses at least at the end of the text (rather than oblique strokes) that Zacharias was probably a Christian, but the friendship between the two men was evidently real enough that he did not need to abandon his writing habit in honor of the senior Arab-Muslim official.[28] This use of "friend" (φίλος) only otherwise occurs in *P.Lond.Copt.* I 1281, in which Johannes writes to ⲡⲁⲫⲓⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲁⲓⲏⲩ ⲁⲡⲟⲩ ⲉⲓⲥⲏⲁⲕ "my esteemed friend Abū Isḥaq". However, as Abū Isḥaq is subsequently addressed by the designation ⲧⲕⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲓⲏⲩ "your esteemed brotherhood", his identity is unclear, and one wonders if he is an Arab Christian (Apa Isaac).[29] Regardless of Abū Isḥaq's identity, in *P.Ryl. Copt.* 285 a literal reading of the address perhaps misses the point. While it is entirely possible that Zacharias enjoyed a cordial relationship with Rašīd, reading the letter within the framework of politeness studies, notably facework, leads to a different interpretation. The behavior of the parties is linked to the concept of 'face': for successful communication, it is necessary to adhere to the expectations of the social dynamics involved. The metaphor of friendship appeals to Rašīd's positive-'face', as Zacharias is dependent on Rašīd's goodwill. Stressing the importance of the relationship through the use of friendship terminology is part of Zacharias's politeness strategy in order to ensure that his needs are met.[30]

A different strategy is adopted in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 321, written from Prashe to an unnamed *amīr*. Prashe identifies himself as "your servant" (ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲉϭⲁⲟⲩⲟⲛ) and the subject matter is delicate, concerning taxes and a carefully worded complaint concerning the strong handling that Prashe has faced from the *amīr*'s representative Muḥammad, who exerted considerable pressure on the collection of a tax instalment. As Prashe notes, "We were brought in and put in irons because of this issue!" (ⲁⲩⲃⲓⲧⲛ ⲉϩⲟ[ⲩ]ⲛⲡⲉ ⲁⲧⲓ ⲡⲉⲛⲓⲡⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲛ ϩⲁ ⲡⲉⲓϩⲱϥ). Relationships certainly do not seem to be friendly, but taxation and the resulting fugitive problem, which is also raised in this letter, were serious matters and strong action was undertaken to counter the problem.[31] Prashe asks the *amīr* for instructions for how to handle the situation. Prashe's subordinate position is clear, and his use of epistolary formulae emphasize this relationship. "Your servant" is a common formula from Middle Egypt and is not reserved for Christians addressing Muslims, but can be used by anybody writing to a superior.[32]

Again, the question is how to read the nature of the relationships. Are the most important dynamics religious, ethnic, or occupational, or are these interactions the sum result of the nested identities of the individuals involved? While the dossier of letters between Muslims and Christians is relatively small, a number of features are consistent between them. The three letters from Muslim officials, *P.Mich. Copt.* III 15 and *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 and 346, lack epistolary frameworks typical of Coptic letters: they have no opening address (the address on the verso suffices to identify the parties involved) and no greetings or other socially performative

elements. Instead, the content commences immediately, and imperatives are used throughout (only in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 is there any mitigation of impositions). In this light, *CPR* II 237 stands in marked contrast, as it employs all the features that the other three letters lack. The language of this letter more closely resembles that of *P.Ryl.Copt.* 285 and 321, written from Christians to Muslims.

Politeness frameworks, as mentioned earlier, can be used to better understand the language of these letters. The approach of Sachiko Ide, in which the phenomenon exists on a continuum from conventional to strategic politeness, is especially useful in this context.[33] Of particular note in Ide's work, based on non-Western languages and social conventions, is the focus on role and status: "in a society where group membership is regarded as the basis of interaction, the role or status defined in a particular situation . . . is the basis of interaction".[34] Group membership is the basis for interaction, together with role structures (relative status, power relationship) and situational constraints (i.e., formal or non-formal settings). In this light, the interactions and individual behaviors are determined by the parties' membership of different groups (e.g., religious: Muslim and Christian), their different status (senior officials to subordinates), and the formal situation. This framework reflects well the multiple overlapping identities of the parties involved.

The use of "his sincere friend" and the self-humbling "your servant" in the letters are part of the strategies employed to reduce friction and help ensure that objectives are achieved. Conversely, letters written in the opposite direction draw upon a different set of verbal strategies, to express the senders' desire to be unimpeded.[35] Strategic politeness in each case is utilized, albeit for different purposes. Characteristic of the letters written from Muslims is the lack of conventional politeness, which is used in the letters from Christians and reflects the understood role and status of the senders—hence the use of greetings, formal terms of address, and established epistolary formulae.[36]

Conclusion

The Coptic letters from Muslims to Christians and from Christians to Muslims reveal a range of discourse strategies, depending on the objectives of the individuals involved. The language used by Muslim officials is markedly different from that of Christians writing to Muslims. In sum, the former is characterized by an abrupt style, replete with imperatives, and lacking in politeness markers (with one exception, which more closely conforms with standard Coptic epistolary practice). In contrast, letters from Christians exhibit conventional politeness strategies, including full use of formulae, politeness markers, self-humbling actions, and terms of respect and endearment. But in these cases, is the different religious background of the parties the reason for the language of their interactions?

In his study of early Christian identities, Éric Rebillard raises the question of when and how 'Christianness' was a basis for group formation (and therefore behavior).[37] Along this same vein, the question can be redirected towards the seventh to ninth centuries and when 'Muslimness' became a basis for group formation and behavior in Egypt. Particularly during the first century of rule, against the

larger historical context of the building of a new empire and the development of Islam, which aspect of the new rulers' identity was key in their behavior towards Egyptians? Three key category memberships are salient: ethnicity (Arab versus Egyptian), religion (Muslim versus Christian), and occupation (rulers versus subjects).[38] The nested identities of the parties involved means that it is difficult to isolate which group membership is activated in each situation. For example, in *P.Mich.Copt*. III 15, is Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's aggressive language purely the result of his frustration with late tax payments (and so he functions in his occupational category membership), or are his feelings exacerbated by his lack of shared ethnic and religious membership? That is, is his individual behavior in this situation determined only by the current circumstances or is it also grounded in group identity? As has already been stated, the letters from Muslims to Christians all concern taxation, and so the situations behind the speech acts are determined by fiscal objectives in these cases.

Removed from their social context, it is possible—and easy—to read the tone of these letters as being religiously motivated, revealing religious tensions and aggressions between the ruling Muslims and the majority Christian population. However, by focusing on the "social logic of the text", we can "locate texts within specific social sites that themselves disclose the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discourse at any given moment."[39] Only in doing so can we appreciate the situated language use contained within the letters. These letters are therefore the sum of their linguistic realities—their use of formulae, grammatical constructions, titles, supra-linguistic features—and the social reality in which they were written. These letters simultaneously reveal the group expectations and individual behaviors of the individuals involved, providing an insight into the complex multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment within which they were produced.

At present, with the relatively limited dataset of Coptic letters between Christians and Muslims, it is difficult to discern where and when religion was used as the principal motivation for selecting certain options within the writer's toolkit. However, the current study should be understood as a starting point for future work. Not only is it entirely possible that more relevant documents will come to light, but documents in Arabic and Greek need to be incorporated within this analysis. On the basis of a larger, multi-lingual dataset, the ways in which individual and group identities find expression within a multi-layered world can be identified, through a holistic examination of socio-linguistic repertoires and situational contextualization of the evidence itself.

Notes

1 On these changes, see Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "New Rule over Old Structures: Egypt after the Muslim Conquest," in *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, ed. Harriot Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule", in *Egypt and the Byzantine World 300–700 AD*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2 On the latter point, see Jennifer Cromwell, "Western Thebes and the Arab Administration of Pre-Abbasid Egypt," in *Christians and Muslims in Early Islamic Egypt: Sources and Interpretation*, ed. Lajos Berkes (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), and Mathieu Tiller, "Dispensing Justice in a Minority Context: The Judicial Administration of Upper Egypt under Muslim Rule in the Early Eighth Century," in *The Late Antique World of Early Islam: Muslims among Christians and Jews in the East Mediterranean*, ed. Robert G. Hoyland (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2015). For studies on individual Muslim officials, see, for example, Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and references in n. 27 later.

3 Putting aside the number of Coptic non-literary texts that remain to be published in collections around the world, a major issue that has impeded the study of the published body of texts is the nature of their publication, which often comprises partial transcriptions without complete translations and limited commentary, rendering them particularly difficult (if not impossible) for non-specialists to use.

4 After the conquest, the relationship is also between Egyptians and Arabs. For much of the seventh and early eighth centuries, Egyptian and Arab mostly equates to Christian and Muslim, but such a division is over simplistic and obscures the range of identities that individuals held. As such, throughout this study I discuss difference in religious rather than ethnic terms, and return to the question of nested identities in a later section.

5 For the many Coptic orthographic variants, see Hans Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* (Berlin–New York: De Gruyter, 2002), 717.

6 *P.Lond*. IV 1509.2.5, 1510.3, 1518.8, and 1521.11. Other than its occurrence in dating formulae (*P.KRU* 70.5, 91.2), the designation occurs in a letter from Bala'izah (*P.Bal*. 216.10) and an eleventh century annal concerning the Nile flood (*CPR* II 1). Greek attestations of the designation (before and after the conquest) are gathered in Philip Mayerson, "The Word Saracen (Σαρακηνός) in the Papyri," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 79 (1989).

7 Using onomastics is not, however, always clear-cut. Many popular names, especially those of the Hebrew prophets, could be used by Christians and Muslims alike (e.g., Joseph/Yūsuf and Abraham/Ibrāhīm), and the traditional Coptic writing of these names is not always distinct from the transcription into Coptic of the Arabic equivalent; see Marie Legendre, "Perméabilité linguistique et anthroponymique et anthroponymique entre copte et arabe: L'example de comptes en caractères coptes du Fayoum fatimide," in *Coptica Argentoratensia. Textes et documents Troisième université d'été de papyrologie copte (Strasbourg, 18–25 juillet 2010)*, ed. Anne. Boud'hors *et al*. (Paris: de Boccard, 2014), 348 and Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 106–7. On the title *amīr* and especially the use of *dux* (δούξ), see Federico Morelli, "Duchi ed emiri: il gioco delle scatole cinesi in PSI XII 1266/P. Apoll. 9," in *E sì d'amici pieno. Omaggio di studiosi italiani a Guido Bastianini per il suo settantesimo compleanno. I. Papirologia–Egittologia*, ed. Angelo Casanova *et al*. (Florence: Edizioni Gonnelli, 2016).

8 It should be noted that *mawlā* indicates social dependency that does not only include conversion but also enfranchisement; on its range of meanings, see Arent Jan Wensinck and Patricia Crone, "Mawlā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. Peri Bearman *et al*. (Leiden: Brill, 2012). On conversion, evidence from Arabic papyri for *mawālī*, and references to lists cataloguing converts, see Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 165–7. Individual converts in Coptic and Greek papyri occur in namelists, contracts, and documents concerning taxes. Clément Onimus, "Les *mawālī* en Égypte dans la documentation papyrologique Iᵉʳ–Vᵉ s. H," *Annales islamologiques* 39 (2005), 100–6 collects most attestations of *mawālī* in papyri from the seventh to eleventh centuries, but omits several individuals occurring in Coptic documents. Five *mawālī* in Coptic documents are known to me, only two of whom Onimus lists (those in *CPR* IV 111 and 168c): 'Abd Allāh *mawlā* 'Alī (ⲁⲡⲇⲉⲗⲗⲁ ⲙⲉⲟⲩⲗⲁ <ⲁ>ⲗⲓ; *CPR* XII 32.4);

Abū Ṯābit *mawlā* Yazīd (ⲁⲃⲟⲩ ⲑⲉⲃⲓⲧ ⲡⲙⲁⲩⲗⲉ ⲓⲉⲍⲓⲇ; *CPR* IV 111.1.3); Ḥayrūn *mawlā* Mûch (ⲭⲁⲓⲣⲱⲛ ⲙⲁⲩⲗⲉ ⲙⲱⲭ; *CPR* XII 32.29); Suwayd *mawlā* Tzwein(?) (ⲥⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲧ ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲍⲟⲩⲉⲉⲓⲛ; *CPR* IV 168e.7); al-*mawlā* Abū Hilāl (ⲁⲗⲙⲁⲩⲗⲉ ⲁⲡⲟⲩ ⲅⲏⲗⲁⲗ; *CPR* IV 168c.2). Maged S. A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (London–New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 104 also identifies a number of converts in Coptic letters, namely Muḥammad in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 and Hišām b. Bilāl in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 346. In neither case, however, is there anything within the respective texts to support the identification of the two men as converts, and Mikhail provides no arguments in support of his statement. Both documents are discussed further below.

9   Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Spätkoptische Rechtsurkunden neu bearbeitet (III): P. Lond. Copt. I 487 – arabische Pacht in koptischem Gewand," *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 33 (2003), 223: "Diese koptisch schreibenden Personen mit arabischen Name dürften doch wohl zum Muhammedismus übergetretene Kopten sein." Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Coptic Letters," *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 62, no. 3 (2008), 752: "Could Coptic have been used during a certain period by converts from Christianity to Islam who had changed their names but not yet their tongues?"

10 In addition to *P.Gascou* 24, five other Coptic letters survive that were written between Muslims: *P.Lond.Copt.* I 580 (between ʿAlī b. Sāsī and Aḥmad, sending greetings to *NN* b. ʿAbd Allāh and Ibn Ḥasan), 584 (between Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh and Abū Yaḥya, mentioning ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār), 591 (from Dāwūd to Yaḥya), 598 (from Sulaymān to ʿAlī), and *SB Kopt.* II 884 (between ʿUṯmān and ʿAlī). Boud'hors in her introduction to *P.Gascou* 24 also lists *BKU* III 478, but this is rather a school text, as described by its original editor (and indicated by its subsequent publication as *P.Rain.Unterricht Kopt.* 165), based on the repetition of the address at least five times (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲥⲁⲓⲉⲓⲧ ⲉⲓⲥϩⲉⲓ ⲉⲓϣⲓⲛⲓ, "I Saʿīd write, greeting . . ."), after which several personal names are written, including Shenoute and Qāsim.

11 Most recently, see Anne Boud'hors' introduction to *P.Gascou* 24; see also Richter, "Spätkoptische Rechtsurkunden neu bearbeitet (III)," 226. In contrast, see the clear miaphysite invocation at the beginning of Coptic legal documents (e.g., ἐν ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ζωοποιοῦ ὁμοουσίου τριάδος πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος "In the name of the holy and life-giving consubstantial Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"); for variations of which see Roger S. Bagnall and Klaas Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 100–1.

12 Federico Morelli notes this fact concerning σὺν θεῷ in his commentary to *CPR* XIX 26.1; ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ θεοῦ is especially common in the seventh century Edfu (*P.Apoll.*) and Palestinian (*P.Ness.*) archives and the early eighth century correspondence from the governor Qurra (e.g., the tax demands *SB* I 5638 and 5644–5654, and *SB* XVIII 13218). It is tempting to see in the increasing use of σὺν θεῷ a scribal change influenced by Muslim religious expression, but further work on the distribution of the invocations is required to confirm this point.

13 On its use in Arabic letters, see Eva M. Grob, *Documentary Arab Private and Business Letters on Papyrus. Form and Function, Content and Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 27.

14 The examples given are a random selection from those cited in Förster, *Wörterbuch*, 232–33, indicating the variation found (discounting variation created by dialect and the number of recipients, i.e., singular or plural). The greeting also occurs in Greek texts from the post-conquest period; for example, see its use in letters issued by the Muslim official Zubayd b. Ḥudayğ to the Christian pagarch of Edfu, Papas, including *P.Apoll.* 7.4 (καὶ εἰρήνη ὑμῖν) and 8.5 (καὶ εἰρήνη σοι).

15 I do not include here Arabic formulae found in late Coptic letters, such as those from the eleventh century Teshlot archive, for which see Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Arabische Lehnworte und Formeln in koptischen Rechtsurkunden," *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 31 (2001), 82–5.

16 Richter, "Spätkoptische Rechtsurkunden neu bearbeitet (III)," 223–30. Note that a small number of texts need to be added to the thirty that Richter compiled in his study—the majority of these marks are not noted in their editions, and are only discoverable through reexamination of the original documents themselves (and so more examples may be added to this list over time): *CPR* IV 14 (tax receipt, signed by ʿAbd Allāh; double oblique strokes before the invocation σὺν θεῷ); *O.Vind.Copt.* 121 (account; double oblique strokes at the beginning of the text on both faces of the ostracon); *P.Mich.Copt.* III 15 (letter from Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, which is discussed further below; double oblique strokes at the beginning of the text and before the address on the verso); *P.Ryl.Copt.* 118 (tax demand, issued by Yazīd b. Saʿīd; small double oblique strokes at the beginning of the text); P.Mich.inv. 3383, published in Lajos Berkes, "Griechisch und Koptisch in der Verwaltung des frúharabischen Ägypten: Ein neues ἐντάγιον," in *Byzanz und das Abendland II. Studia Byzantino-Occidentalia*, ed. Erika Juhász (Budapest: Eötvös-József-Collegium, 2014) (tax demand, name of official lost; double oblique strokes at the beginning).

17 Berkes, "Griechisch und Koptisch in der Verwaltung des frúharabischen Ägypten," 192.

18 On the reading of the name Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, which was not read by the original editor, see Alain Delattre, "Le monastère de Baouît et l'administration arabe," in *Documents and the History of the Early Islamic World*, ed. Alexander T. Schubert and Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 47.

19 In his edition, Walter Crum notes: "I find only two letters commencing thus elliptically", *P.Ryl.Copt.* 321 and *P.Lond.Copt.* I 1156. However, in the first case the letter is replete with epistolary formulae and ⲙⲛⲛⲥⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲧⲉⲕⲙⲛⲧϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲓⲙⲉ "Afterwards, so that your lordship knows . . ." opens the body of the document, i.e., its abruptness is mitigated by the epistolary framework and use of conventional politeness. In the second case, the document does begin with the same construction but the choice of verb, the intent, and subsequently the tone is different: ⲧⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲙⲟ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲉⲉⲩⲕⲗⲉⲉⲓⲁ ⲛϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ "So that I may inform your esteemed Lord". In each of these two cases, the communications are from subordinate to superior and the function of the construction is not the same as that in *P.Mich.Copt.* III 15 and *P.Ryl.Copt.* 322. Grammatically, this use of the construction is unusual (as pointed out to my by Matthias Müller [Basel/Oslo], whom I thank for his discussions with me on both this point and others connected to this paper). It may be that an elliptical use is intended, as implied by Crum, i.e., "[This is a message] so that". Alternatively, it may be an attempt to translate into Coptic the words of the official in question, originally spoken in Arabic, and that this particular use of the construction does not conform with our standard understanding of it, which is based primarily on its literary use.

20 For example, ⲛⲡⲉⲣⲟⲩⲁϩ ⲛⲁϭⲁⲓ ϩⲛ ⲛⲉⲕϭⲓϫ "Do not lay down my letters from your hands!" (line 4) and ϭⲱⲡ ⲟⲩⲣⲉϥⲣⲟⲉⲓⲥ . . . ⲧⲟϣϥ ⲉⲕⲩⲣⲓⲁⲕⲟⲥ "take a watchman . . . assign him to Cyriacus" (lines 7–8).

21 *P.Ryl.Copt.* 324 concerns the village Pma-Neurashei. This location is not otherwise attested, but is included as a Hermopolite toponym in Marie Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite: Toponymes et Sites* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 212. The letter is dated Thoth 22, but there is no further dating information (not even to an indiction cycle).

22 In this respect, it would be especially interesting to compare Ibrāhīm's language to that of the governor Qurra b. Šarīk in his letters to the pagarch Basileios, which typically concern payment arrears; for which, see most recently Arietta Papaconstantinou, "The Rhetoric of Power and the Voice of Reason: Tensions between Central and Local in the Correspondence of Qurra ibn Sharīk," in *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power. Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Research Network Imperium & Officium. Comparative Studies in Ancient Bureaucracy and Officialdom. University of Vienna, 10–12 November 2010*, ed. Stephan Procházka *et al*. (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015).

23 Nikolaos Gonis is currently preparing a new study of Severos's dossier.

24 Three brief orders, *P.Lond.Copt*. I 1167, 1168, and 1169, were issued to Severos to provide camels; none of the documents have an address, and the very nature of the texts means that no information is provided that would enable a study of the individuals and relationships involved. Despite the similarity in their content, note that each document utilizes crosses and oblique strokes in different ways to frame the text (highlighting the lack of systematic usage of these strokes).

25 What the money is for is not stated; it may be a coincidence that the amount involved (one-third of a *nomisma*) is a common poll-tax payment instalment.

26 The use of "brother" does not necessarily indicate a biological relationship, but is used in a range of situations denoting hierarchical relationships (cf. the use of familial designations, brother and father, in monastic communities). Jelle Bruning (Leiden) suggested to me that the lack of a patronym for Ṣāliḥ may be of significance. However, it is not uncommon for Muslim officials to be named in Coptic documents without patronyms. For example, in legal documents from western Thebes that record the role of local Muslim officials as arbitrators, no patronyms are included for the men involved, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (*P.KRU* 42), 'Amr (*P.KRU* 25), and Sulaymān (*P.KRU* 8, 52); see further Cromwell, "Western Thebes and the Muslim Administration of Pre-Abbassid Egypt". In the case of Ṣāliḥ, the lack of a patronym obscures whether or not he may be a convert.

27 On Rašīd, see most recently Gesa Schenke, "Rashid ibn Chaled and the Return of Overpayments," *Chronique d'Égypte* 89 (2014), in which he is addressed as the representative of the state treasury. Nikolaos Gonis is currently preparing a new study of Rašīd's career.

28 Richter, "Spätkoptische Rechtsurkunden neu bearbeitet (III)," 230.

29 The use of the abstract noun "brotherhood" (ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲟⲛ for ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲥⲟⲛ) may support this identification. The letter itself concerns flax production and Johannes discusses with Abū Isḥaq the issue of finding dealers for the resulting tow and also asks him to pay him a visit before he begins the fast. The content and language of *P.Lond.Copt*. I 1128 seems to be one between individuals of equal status. A shared Christian group membership seems to be confirmed through the request for news about a number of individuals: Justinus, Mecurius (a deacon), Victorine, and Poureihe.

30 The application of politeness studies to ancient texts is a relatively recent approach, although one that is being successfully applied to texts in different languages. Note in particular Grob, *Documentary Arab Private and Business Letters*, especially 121–3, which utilizes this approach in the study of Arabic letters on papyrus. For case studies from earlier phases of the Egyptian language, see especially Kim Ridealgh, "Polite like an Egyptian? Case Studies of Politeness in the Late Ramesside Letters," *Journal of Politeness Research* 12, no. 2 (2016); for the pioneering works in politeness studies, see further references therein.

31 The Aphrodito corpus provides direct evidence of fugitives and their rounding up by Muslim officials stationed in the Nile Valley; see for example *P.Lond*. IV 1518. The content of Prashe's letter echoes in many respects the trilingual declaration *P.Cairo Arabic* III 167, which addresses complaints directed to senior officials that the tax administrator 'Amr b. 'Attas and his staff had assigned taxes unfairly. Another official, Yazīd, called together the local headmen and after investigation asked for a declaration that neither 'Amr nor his staff had oppressed them and that they were ready to pay any fine if one of them should declare in public that he had been oppressed. It is not too difficult to argue that oppression had actually occurred in this situation, but headmen were encouraged to declare to the contrary.

32 On the formula "it is your servant" in Coptic documents, see Alain Delattre "La formule épistolaire copte « c'est votre serviteur qui ose écrire à son Seigneur »," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 51, no. 1 (2005).

33 Sachiko Ide, "Formal forms and discernment: two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness," *Multilingua* 8, nos 2–3 (1989), moved politeness studies

away from Western-centric languages and interpretation to incorporate non-Western languages, specifically Japanese, in which formal linguistic forms (honorifics) exist alongside social conventions that dictate polite behavior (*wakimae*). Particular to *wakimae* (best translated in English as 'discernment') is the verbal and non-verbal demonstration of one's sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions. On this basis, Ide advocates the discernment aspect and volitional aspect of politeness (alternatively, conventional and strategic politeness). The former is the socially prescribed norm, employing formal linguistic forms, while the latter is used for personal intention and is realized by verbal strategies.

34 Ide, "Formal forms and discernment," 241; see also p. 243, on the problems inherent in viewing "supposed universal phenomena of linguistic politeness with only one eye", whether a Western eye based on individualism and tradition of emphasizing rationality or a non-Western eye in which politeness is associated with proper behavior that complies with social conventions.

35 The distinction between the two goals conforms with the concepts of positive face and negative face, respectively; for which see Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13.

36 In terms of the application of politeness studies, considerable further work is required, e.g., examination of letters between individuals belonging to the same group but of different social status, whether Christian or Muslim and written in Coptic, Greek, or Arabic. The early Islamic Egyptian setting adds the multi-lingual aspect to the study of politeness, which also needs to be taken into consideration. For example, are the abrupt beginnings of the letters *P.Mich.Copt*. III 15 and *P.Ryl.Copt*. 324 and 346 reflective only of politeness strategies, or do they also reflect different epistolary traditions?

37 Eric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 7 and chapter 2.

38 These three category memberships are the same as those highlighted by Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 4 for his discussion of early Christianity.

39 Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990), 85.

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12 Social Contexts of the Biblical Quotations in the Letters of Frange[1]

Przemysław Piwowarczyk

Introduction

Frange was a monk living in the first half of the eighth century in a hermitage located in the pharaonic tomb TT 29 in Western Thebes. He held a position of authority within a wide network of monks, ecclesiastics and laity.[2] Once, he is even addressed with reverence as "fatherhood," by a group of authors, of which at least one was a presbyter.[3] The source of his prominence, however, remains obscure. It might have been based on postulated spiritual power. Indeed, he was regarded as an effective intermediary before God, but he may have been perceived as an even more powerful man of God, as one of the letters might suggest that Frange possessed supernatural knowledge of the hidden things.[4]

A major issue for research on biblical quotations in Frange's dossiers is that he was an active book copyist,[5] although not all the biblical books were present in his personal library. In one letter he asks for Genesis, in another for Kings. In both cases, he explicitly mentions that he would like to read them.[6] This makes clear that in his interest in biblical texts Frange was not only motivated by his professional interest but also by his personal devotion. It is probable that he made some notes and excerpts from the books he read since he was obliged to give back the books he had borrowed.[7] We may indeed have one or two of those excerpts.[8] They might have served as a handy aid for keeping the chosen scriptural quotations at hand before memorizing them.

In the edition *O.Frange*, there are around five hundred letters, fragments of letters and exercises written by Frange himself.[9] There are also a few letters of Frange found in other locations in Western Thebes.[10] All of them are in Coptic. Many of his letters are essentially requests and demands for food, clothes, writing materials, etc. In such pieces of correspondence, he regularly makes use of threats[11] and promises of prosperity[12] and even long life,[13] linking the catering of daily products to the good health and spiritual peace of his suppliers. Many of them were non-monastics, as greetings conveyed to their spouses and children indicate.[14]

In Frange's dossier, we may single out the set of letters with biblical citations, quotations, echoes and allusions. This set is the largest among those which originated in Western Thebes. Moreover, it is the product of a single person about

whom we know relatively much. Therefore, it offers an excellent opportunity to examine how monastic authors employed biblical references in their daily correspondence.

The Theban area in the eighth century was almost exclusively Christian and predominantly, if not wholly anti-Chalcedonian.[15] Around this time, all the Christians had at least a certain degree of cultural competence to use the Bible as one of the tools of the general Christian sociolect. Presumably, they had acquired a basic disposition already within their upbringing, followed by regular participation in church services, while others may have become more acquainted with biblical reasoning during clerical or monastic education. The case of Frange shows that such dispositions, acquired during the process of socialization, standardized to some extent,[16] could be activated by various individuals with a different frequency and engagement.[17] Indeed, the Christian sociolect—and the role of biblical reasoning associated with it—differed in particular actualizations.

This contribution argues that the extent and type of biblical references in Frange's letters belonged to his individual style and was applied depending on the context. First of all, however, when it came to letter writing, Frange's Christian identity was not prevalent, which is evident in the light of the numbers of biblical quotations (see p. 251). The contextual character of Christian identity ("individual heritage of dispositions"—to use Bernard Lahire's phrase) was fully acknowledged and presented on late antique African sources by Éric Rebillard.[18] With the help of the Theban letters on ostraca, we can show this plurality on an individual level.

In most documentary letters, the Christian phraseology (biblical references are only part of it) remains inactivated. Who came to the fore is Frange as *homo oeconomicus*—ordering, exchanging or producing goods. In many cases, even when biblical (or generally Christian) socialization marks occur, they are subordinate to a purely economic context. Frange also expressed himself as a family member or a close associate. We see him as a singular who is necessarily plural in nature—to use Lahire's catchy phrase.[19] Particular dispositions came into play in different contexts. In my contribution, I focus on cases in which Frange activates his habitus of Bible expert, but let us remember that this disposition was probably dormant most of the time.

In Lahire's model, the context is what matters. In letter writing, as in acts of communication in general, the critical contextual factor is an audience. At this point, it is helpful to refer to Allan Bell's "audience design" model. According to Bell, a writing (or speaking) style is not invariably tied to a particular individual. It is shaped for and in response to the audience: "it marks inter-personal and inter-group relations" and as such is audience-focused."[20] This model primarily serves the analysis of oral communication, but it seems justified to apply it to the frequent and recurrent letter exchange within a tight network of individuals,[21] which is the case of Frange's correspondence. In light of Bell's model, it is acceptable to look into Frange's use of biblical quotations not as a coherent body, but rather to investigate them in the light of the situation's needs (context).

As for Theban ostraca, we have to deal not with a single act of communication (via a letter on an ostracon) but with the links of a much longer communication

chain, extended in time and engaging both written and oral media. If so, the differences in the use of the Bible in Frange's letters undoubtedly hint at different audiences. In the private letters written on the ostraca, which were not supposed to widely circulate,[22] the relation between rhetorical strategy and the desired reaction on the part of a particular recipient (or recipients) is direct. As the recipients of a given letter were usually individuals already known to Frange, it is reasonable to maintain that he could activate those among his inherited dispositions that fit his audience best.

Functions of the biblical references in the Christian letters

A quotation, as with all other rhetorical devices, works not only on a textual level but is directed towards an audience, with the aim of interfering with the social context in which an author and his listeners or readers are involved. It provokes actions through words.

   Christopher Stanley, who analyzed the use of quotation in the letters of Paul the Apostle, distinguished two main audience-centered functions of the scriptural references. Firstly, quotations from Scripture belong to the category of "arguments from authority" and as such

> are generally used to anticipate and/or close off debate regarding a statement made by a speaker/author in direct speech. . . . In this case the authority of the source is implicitly transferred to the argument of the speaker/author, thereby reducing the likelihood of question or challenge. In most cases, however, the argument from authority plays only a subsidiary role for the speaker.[23]

Such quotations are usually provided when the superior position of the author is not taken for granted, and it is necessary to use authoritative text to enhance his authority. Such use of quotation is a vehicle of authority. Secondly, "quotations can also serve to create or enhance a sense of communion between speaker and audience."[24] When the audience is perceived by a speaker as favorable, quotation strengthens the bond between them; in the opposite situation, the quotation may create the common space of shared values. Such use of a quotation is a vehicle of a community sense.

   Although the nature of Paul's correspondence does not fit that of the Theban monks in terms of its original purpose or of its impact on the Christian community, the division made by Stanley remains useful for the analysis of Frange's letters. Within the corpus of Frange's correspondence, quotations from the Scripture, whether primarily bearing a sense of authority or community, might be directed toward clearly defined change in the social network (directed toward a change) or toward maintaining its status quo (directed toward continuity).

   The third aspect of the biblical quotation, which is relevant for how it affects the audience, is how the overall content of the letter transforms the meanings of the given passage, which the listeners/readers were beforehand accustomed to. To fully appreciate the innovative potential of Frange's handling of the Bible and

get an initial feeling for how his audience would have understood the biblical passages, we have to consider the broad background of monastic exegesis and local interpretations current in Western Thebes. In my analysis, the meaning of the passage in its original scriptural context is of minor importance.

As a result of the differentiation made earlier, the analysis of scriptural quotations in Frange's correspondence rests on three sets of alternatives characterizing the use of quotations in a given piece of correspondence: vehicle of authority vs. vehicle of community, directed toward change vs. directed toward continuity and rooted in tradition (widely shared or local) vs. innovative (see Table 12.1).

An author may refer to the Bible in a couple of ways. In this chapter, I follow distinctions made originally by Bruce Harris[25] but subsequently adapted with some modifications by other scholars, most notably in the recent studies of biblical quotations in Christian letters by Malcolm Choat and Lincoln Blumell.[26] If there is an introductory formula which identifies the following words as the Scripture, we may call it a "citation"; if the words of the Scripture are given without such a formula, we have a "quotation"; and if there are only single words (sometimes paraphrased) taken from the Bible, we can call them echoes.[27] To that, I would add an allusion, which occurs when a biblical episode is referred to but the words of the Bible are not given.[28] When I refer to all the types of scriptural references altogether, I simply call them "quotations." Here, I do not deliberate over the question of unconscious usage of biblical echoes and allusions, since it is not pertinent to the specific passages in Frange's letters.

Biblical quotations in Frange's dossier

In twenty-five letters and epistolary exercises, Frange uses all types of scriptural quotations twenty-six times in total.[29] Those twenty-five letters constitute only a tiny portion of Frange's preserved correspondence (around five hundred pieces, as already stated). Although the amount of letters with biblical quotations does not seem to be high either in absolute numbers or as a percentage of the dossier as a whole, a comparison with other published corpora of Theban ostraca proves the exceptionality of Frange's approach to making use of the Scriptures.

In the letters found in TT 29 (and edited as *O.Frange*) but written by other monks, we have four more letters with such material.[30] Among the ostraca edited in *P.Mon.Epiph.* biblical quotations and clear allusions appear in fourteen letters,[31] in the dossier of Abraham of Hermonthis in ten letters[32] and in *O.Saint-Marc* only thrice.[33] Both *O.Frange* and *O.Saint-Marc* were edited by Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel. Therefore, the relative abundance of the biblical quotations in the former is not a matter of the editors' particular interest or sensitivity. The relatively frequent references to the Bible reflect Frange's personal predilections and significantly differ from the epistolary standards of Theban monastic milieu.

Frange sporadically also refers to Shenoute[34] and some of the sayings from the *apophthegmata* tradition,[35] but the scriptural quotations overshadow other references.

Table 12.1 Schematic representation of the potential socially relevant characteristics of biblical quotations

Quotation as a vehicle of authority						Quotation as a vehicle of a sense of community					
Directed toward change			*Directed toward continuity*			*Directed toward change*			*Directed toward continuity*		
Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative

Five or six among those twenty-five letters could be classified as exercises (*O. Frange* 385+485,[36] 402, 433, 434, 440, 442). Nevertheless, because they also contain epistolary phrases, they are included in the study. In the case of exercises, the texts grouped together on one shard might not be connected in terms of content and logical relation. This seems to be the case in the majority of Frange's exercises.

In thirteen cases, the biblical quotations are introduced by the formula unambiguously identifying the following words as the Scripture. In two other pieces, the preserved text of a letter begins in the middle of a quotation, so the presence of an introductory formula cannot be determined (*O.Frange* 568, 603). Some of those introductory phrases are themselves taken from Scripture, falling into the class of biblical allusions.[37] Although such quotations (precisely "citations") are not uncommon in the private letters from the Theban region (see appendix), it may be a phenomenon restricted in space and/or time,[38] as Lincoln Blumell was unable to find any citation among the letters from Oxyrhynchus after the beginning of the fifth century.[39] In the sixth and seventh centuries, even the echoes appear only rarely.

Eleven quotations are not introduced by identifying formula (*O.Frange* 164, 165, 186, 205, 238, 385+485, 402, 433, 434, 440, 442). Of the eleven texts, six are the previously mentioned writing exercises. The five unintroduced quotations come from the Psalter (*O.Frange* 186, 385+485, 433, 434, 440, 442). Among them, there are four exercises (*O.Frange* 433, 434, 440, 442). *O.Frange* 165 is not a verbal quotation, but rather a paraphrase ("echo") neatly interwoven into the body of the letter. In *O.Frange* 205, a short quotation deprived of wider context stands at the beginning of the letter, preceded only by a sign of the cross.

Quotations from the Psalter are not identified as Scripture in Frange's letters. In the Theban material, however, Psalms are sometimes introduced with formulas that make such an identification explicit—for example, in *P.Mon.Epiph.* 115, where the broad term "Holy Scriptures" is further supplemented by the name of David.[40] It is widely known that Psalms constituted a fundamental element of the monastic prayer. Many, perhaps the majority, of monks knew them by heart.[41] Mastery of the psalms belonged to the basics of monastic education and religious practice.[42] The memorized Psalter served as a commonly recognized and shared treasury of expressions and imagery. The phrases and ideas taken from the Psalter might be treated as an essential part of the monastic in-group language. In light of this fact, it is no surprise that quotations of the psalms do not need any markers of identification in monastic correspondence.

The question is rather why Frange identifies the provenance of other biblical quotations. The approach of monastic authors is not unified in this aspect. On the one hand, it is easy to find monastic texts compiled almost entirely from biblical phrases provided with no introductory formulas (e.g. *Liber Horsiesius*). In the early Christian epistolography, such a way of quoting the Bible was predominant. The letters from the fourth-century dossier of the Melitian monastic leader Nepheros may serve as an example.[43] On the other hand, introductory formulas do appear very early: *P. Lond.* III 981 is an example.[44] In the Theban region, Abraham

of Hermonthis indicates the provenance of the words of the Bible without exceptions. The reason was the official (or semi-official) character of Abraham's correspondence, strictly connected with his episcopal authority. The bishop strived to underline the biblical fundaments of his office.[45]

The audience design approach suggests an answer, namely, that Frange adapted his style to his addressees. When his authority or group identity hinges on the authority of the Bible, the recognition of Scripture becomes a crucial issue and occupies a central point in his persuasive strategy. In each case, he had to predict if the disposition (to use Lahire's vocabulary) of the recipient already socialized in the Biblical culture was active enough to recognize the Scripture or if it demanded some further clarifications. If not, he introduces scriptural quotations as "language resources . . . from beyond the immediate speech community."[46]

Let us look at the case studies. The following section lists and examines how Frange used Scripture as a vehicle of authority, sometimes even interpreting beyond what was common in eighth-century monastic discourse. The section after that subsequently delves into the instances where Frange used biblical quotations as a vehicle of community sense.

Quotations as a vehicle of authority

O.Frange 45, ll. 2–9

I am surprised about you (and) I am amazed at a matter you could do, (that) you scorned it. As it is written in the Scripture: "He who disdains a matter, he will be disdained" (Prov 13: 13). You (pl.) ashamed me like a dog when you did not produce a little needle for me.

At the beginning of the letter, Frange did not clarify that the needle is what he requests. He used an indefinite article and the general term "a matter" to match his words up to the biblical sentence. As the Bible does not clarify what "a matter" is,[47] Frange actualized the passage in line with his personal needs. He did not write as an exegete, but as a businessman. Another case of actualization of Prov 13:13 is an inscription from Deir Abu Hennes attributing the sentence to Gregory of Nyssa without recognition of its biblical origin. In a clarification following the sentence, "a matter" is interpreted as sin or good depending on one's deeds.[48] Within Bell's model, both Frange's letter and the inscription would count as an initiative style shift by which the subject initiates the change in the situation.[49] Most probably, the addressee of this letter was not aware of an innovative reinterpretation of the passage. Frange focused on an explicit identification of its scriptural origin, which was the central message he intended to convey.

Some of the quotations used by Frange are also attested in other letters from the Theban area.

O.Frange 162, ll. 1–11 (see Figure 12.1)

Disobedient Azarias! ⳨ The Lord has said to his disciples: "Who listens to you (pl.), listens to me" (Luke 10:16). Now, if I send for you many times,

(and) you do not obey me once and do not come to me for my meeting with you in my case. What is the necessity for you to come to me at all?

The analogy used by Frange is a striking one. He equates his authority over Azarias with the authority Jesus bestowed upon his disciples. Azarias is expressly called disobedient (ⲁⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄) and so linked directly to the wording of the biblical passage. From Frange's point of view, disobedience to him is tantamount to disobedience to God himself.

The same quotation from Luke can be found in a similar context in one of the letters of Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis. In this letter, he admonishes certain owners (or leaseholders) of a fishing area to allow the poor to catch the fish. If not, he threatens to exclude them from the Eucharist.

P.MoscowCopt 80, ll. 32–36

When a magistrate wrote unto you (pl.), you (pl.) fulfilled his command forthwith. And again: "Who listens to you, listens to me, who refutes you, refutes him, who has sent me."[50]

The equation of the bishop's authority with that of apostles is well-rooted in the Christian tradition, but Frange's claim cannot be explained this way.

In the same letter of Abraham, the bishop enumerates the biblical examples of God's punishment for disobedience: "God cast Pharaoh into the sea because of disobedience, the leprosy of Naaman clave unto Gehazi because of disobedience, God took the kingdom from Saul because of disobedience. For every sin that is in the Scriptures is (the fruit of) disobedience."[51] Such language is also present in the legal documents. In the penalty clause of a sale agreement made in Jeme in 833, "the fate of Ananias and Sapphira shall befall him," the one who would dare to question the agreement before the court.[52]

Frange does not use an enumeration, but in one of his letters, he also alludes to the archetypical punishment from the Bible.

O.Frange 173, ll. 1–12

✝ If God will receive my prayers, I believe you (fem.) will die quickly [---] I suffer in my heart [---] may he suffer [---] in Hell [---] Two brothers in the Scripture slew a city of men because of their sister, since she was humiliated because of it [?---]

The text is badly mutilated, and the letter's content is far from clear. Frange refers to a situation that is well known to his addressee and does not give any details. However, it is not clear how the story of Dina, Jacob's sons, and the destruction of Shechem from Gen 34:1–27, to which Frange alludes in this letter, is analogous to the situation of the female recipient of the missive. Most probably—as an allusion to the biblical narration suggests—she was involved in a sexual transgression, but it is not clear whether the punishment should fall upon her or upon the

perpetrators. The biblical counterpart of the recipient would be the raped Dina rather than the murderous sons of Jacob, but in the Bible, Dina is not condemned, as seems to be in the case of Frange's female correspondent.

The story of the rape of Dina was only seldom referred to by the fathers of the Church[53]; it was also not part of the liturgical readings, and one could come across it only through personal study. In the case of Frange, we precisely know that he had Genesis in hand and was interested in its content, as he writes to David: "Have mercy and send us a book of Genesis in order for us to read it too."[54] Did Frange assume that the female recipient of the letter had such profound biblical erudition? Presumably not. I suppose that he did not expect it at all. It was enough to point at the authoritative text for his purpose without further clarification. Such a limited agenda might suggest that the situation behind this scriptural reference was much more complex (and Dina's sin much more problematic).

Let us look at the other quotations exerting Frange's authority, where the context is more explicit than in the case earlier.

O. Frange 165

⳨ When I sent to you as (to) a brother, Peloustre, you turned out of us, you did not respect our shame and you did not come to us, running together with the world which will pass away together with everything in it (1 John 2:17). Do according to God. If Kurikos (does) not find oil, give him a little and he (will) bring it to us when he comes.

The sentence from 1 John 2:17 is one of the most commonly quoted passages in monastic literature.[55] Usually, it is referred to in its direct, most obvious, meaning, as an exhortation to a renunciation of the possessions and tribulations of worldly life. It also appears in monastic discourses about spiritual life as a call to concentrate on God alone.[56] Frange uses this well-known phrase in an innovative manner, not in line with its biblical meaning and monastic tradition, replacing God by himself and his personal needs. Peloustre, to whom the letter is addressed, was certainly not a monk: he had a wife and children and was able to deliver wheat and oil to Frange. It cannot be ruled out that he was a priest, but the harsh tone of Frange's letter makes it improbable. He was almost certainly a layperson, so probably unable to recognize Frange's innovative approach to Scripture.

A particularly blatant example of the use of Scripture with a persuasive aim is a reference to the prologue of John's Gospel:

O. Frange 120, 18–32 (see Figure 12.2)

⳨ My brother Lazarus, as your love reached the mountain of Jeme, I beseeched your brotherly lordship: "Make for me a little čat (which) takes an angeion". You said: "I will produce it". It is written in the Scripture: "The word was

God" (ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡϣⲁϫⲉ)". Now I beseech you to do it in respect of God, salvation of your soul, and salvation (or good health) of your children. Do not let anything else concern you. As this tablet came to your hands, produce a *čat* and give it to David.

The same biblical quotation has been used in another letter, written in the first half of the seventh century by Matthew and addressed to priest Moses, who lived in the same hermitage as Frange, but one hundred years earlier.

O.Frange 652, ll. 6–7, 10–14

You told me: "I (will) write it (i.e. a book) for you during this Pascha. . . . Have pity and send it to me that I can see it, and the word (will) not be broken. The word is God. You are cheating and repudiating God.

In the letter, the reference to John 1:1 is apparent; however, it is not introduced by any formula identifying it as Scripture. Matthew omits the preterit conversion morph *ne* (present in the biblical text and in Frange's letter—it could be compared with *presens historicum*). He aimed to actualize and dramatize the biblical passage. The innovative use of the same biblical passage over about a century proves that either the Theban monastics in general or exclusively the monks living in this particular hermitage developed a local, cross-generational style of referring to the Bible in business communication.

   Perhaps the most striking example of decontextualization of the Scriptures is a letter in which Frange reproaches a woman for inaccuracy in measuring lentils. Unfortunately, the letter is preserved only partially.

O.Frange 168, ll. 1–5

It is said in [the Gospel]: "In the measure [in which you will measure], it will be measured [for you (pl.)]" (Matt 7:2). Now the measure of [lentils[57] . . .] you (fem) goes to [---][58]

This admonition taken from Matthew is another one of the most commonly quoted passages in monastic literature. It was frequently used as moral or disciplinary instruction,[59] not in a commercial context.[60] However, it seems that Frange is the one who simultaneously tried to secularize the meaning of the passage and retain the sacred authority of its original. He took advantage of his biblical education (one of his dispositions—to use Lahire's language) to impose authority over his correspondent (Bell's audience), who was not able to launch an exegetical counterinitiative against manipulated (also in terms of the ancient Christian exegesis) use of the Scriptures.

   The last letter of reproach with a biblical quotation is badly damaged. The context of the introduction of the biblical passage remains unclear, but most probably, the edge of critique points against the female recipient of the letter.

O. Frange 174, ll. x+2–8

[as sister---] You (fem.) do not obey my words. Now, you (will) be satisfied. It is written: "Who boasts [him]self, let him [boast] himself in [the Lord]" (1 Cor 1:31).

Summing up the cases, if Frange wanted to exert influence or force the addressee into action, he always explicitly identified the words of the Bible.

Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis did the same when, in his circular letters, he clarified the sources of disciplinary decisions. In a few cases, Abraham further added references to the divine authority behind them: "Not mine are these words but John the Apostle's, who said,"[61] "It is not I who speak these words but the Holy Ghost who hath spoken them, as it is written,"[62] or "It is not I that put forth this text but the holy Apostle is who puts it forth."[63] The ultimate authority of the Bible as the source of the bishop's disciplinary decision resounds in the words of excommunication: "And the curse of Deuteronomy (shall) enter into his house and blot him out and all the curses of Scripture (shall) come upon him and blot him out"[64] and similar formulas in various kinds of legal documents.[65]

Frange, who acted as a private individual, is not always so explicit. His strategy varied depending on how Frange presupposed the knowledge of the Scriptures possessed by his correspondents. He strived to find the best way to reach his goal by taking advantage of their biblical competence or ignorance. Such flexibility could make him even more successful than Abraham with his legalistic approach to quoting the Bible.

Quotations as a vehicle of a sense of community

In a letter to a revered monk Apa Paul, Frange expresses his disappointment over some actions taken by the former and then describes his current difficulties resorting to scriptural quotation.

O. Frange 8, ll. 10–3

It is written in the Apostle: "I want you (pl.) to be free of troubles" (1 Cor 7:32), especially that the time is difficult.

Isaiah of Scetis associates this passage with the idea of renunciation of this world: "Our beloved Lord Jesus, knowing that unless a person is free from all anxiety, his intellect is unable to ascend the cross, ordered him, therefore, to cut off all that attracted him or oppressed his intellect and to descend from the cross."[66] The sense of the biblical passage as inferred by Frange cannot be determined with certainty, but the general idea of maintaining internal peace in the face of spiritual or worldly difficulties—which is what Frange probably meant—fits the general content of the letter. The message might, however, be more subtle. Frange might be indirectly suggesting that Paul, whose superiority is overtly recognized in the

letter, should change his mind to take Frange's wishes into account, as only then will his soul be at peace.

In a letter to brother Isaac, who was probably somehow superior to him (although the general mood of the letter does not imply that it was very formal dependence, as the words "you are the great brother over me" may suggest), Frange quotes two biblical passages.

O.Frange 14

☩ At the beginning of my humble letter I write and I greet my beloved brother Isaac [---] God. I did for you [---]. Have pity and forgive [me once] again, as it is written in the Scripture: "Leaving what is behind me, I am reaching what is before me" (Phil 3:13). Come south to me as [---]. If you want it, I will do it to you and I will write to you because you are the great brother over me. You are (the one) who orders in everything according to God (and) according to the world, as it is written in the Scripture: "Man looks at the face, God looks at the heart" (1 Kgs 16:7 LXX). That means I want you more than (any other) man in the mountain.

   Give it to my brother Isaac from Frange +

In monastic literature, Phil 3:13 frequently appears,[67] describing the way of ascesis,[68] holiness and perfection.[69]

A slightly altered quotation from 1 Kings 16:7 as an exhortation to visit is attested in another letter of Frange, only the end of which is preserved.

O.Frange 568, ll. x+8–13

[---] God looks at the hearts [---] Man, however, looks at the faces. Come (pl.) to talk with the brother for the benefit of his soul.

In the case of the reference to the Book of Kings, Frange certainly had them in his hands since he asks for "two books of the Kings for me to read them."[70] It is easy to imagine that Frange found the quoted passage in one of the books he had borrowed, wrote it down or memorized it as a useful rhetorical device to be used in his correspondence.

In the letter to Pelos, Frange uses a biblical metaphor to express his desire to see his brother and lord.

O.Frange 186, ll. 7–13

Believe me, I Frange, the sinner: "As the thirsty soil looks for water" (Ps 142:6 LXX), that is how I long for you (and) I want to see you to fill out the joy.

The unknown author uses the same imagery taken from the psalm in the letter *O.CrumVC* 54, addressed to an esteemed monk ("holy fatherhood"): "God

knoweth, like a thirsty land that longeth for water, even so have I thirsted for thy holiness."[71] As in the case of *O.Frange* 186, an allusion to Psalm 142 has not been introduced by any reference to Scripture. A subtle allusion to the same passage is to be found in *BKU* 290.[72] A very similar use of the incipit of Psalm 41:2 (LXX),[73] resembling Psalm 142 in its wording, is attested in *P.Mon.Epiph.* 106.[74] In the last two cases, the letters are addressed to Epiphanius, and as in Frange's letter, no introductory formula is given. The phraseology of those two psalms was widely recognized and perhaps even belonged to a staple of monastic in-group language expressing longing and desire to visit. Its currency was not limited to the Theban area, but it had already appeared in a similar context in the Christian (not Manichaean!) letter from the fourth century, *P.Kell.Copt.* 124.[75]

The last example, *O.Frange* 38, seems to be designed only to tighten the ties between monastics.

O.Frange 38, ll. 2–11

☦ At the beginning of my humble letter, I write, I greet, and I kiss my beloved (pl.), who bear the Word, the only true God. I fall before your (pl.) angel, who gathers you in the community of apostles of Christ in unity, as it is written: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

The quoted passage was usually highlighted in the heat of the theological debates.[76] Frange uses it, however, to describe the unity of the monastic community. The echo of John 10:30 also sounds in *O.Frange* 327, l. 10, in which a monk expresses his unity with another monastic (David or Paul—the text is partially lost) with the statement "I and he, we are one" (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟϥ ⲁⲛⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ).

Conclusion

When we go back to the model presented in the introductory part, we can try to match the biblical quotations of Frange with the given categories (see Table 12.2). Unfortunately, only less than half of the twenty-three letters give us enough context to determine the function of biblical quotations, but some provisional conclusions may be drawn, nonetheless.

In all the letters in which the context is preserved and the addressee could be safely recognized as a monastic, Frange uses the quotation as a vehicle of a sense of community; on the contrary, when the quotation expresses authority, no traces of the monastic identity of a recipient could be discerned (it cannot, however, be excluded).

We do not know much about Frange's biblical education. He activates his biblical dispositions relatively often in his personal style, even compared with other prominent monastics of Western Thebes. His audience, as a whole, had at least a minimal level of biblical education. However, referring to the Bible, he draws on different uses of quotation to respond to different groups in his audience.[77] When he addresses monastics, there was no need to indicate Scripture as the source of

Table 12.2 Overview of the use of biblical quotations in the letters of Frange

Quotation as a vehicle of authority						Quotation as a vehicle of a sense of community					
Directed toward change			Directed toward continuity			Directed toward change			Directed toward continuity		
Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative	Rooted in a wider monastic tradition	Rooted in a local monastic tradition	Innovative
45	120, 162	165, 168, 173?, 174?, 238?						14, 186	8?		38

the quotation. In the case of non-monastics, the introductory phrases are used to identify the Bible as the primary source of authority. It is almost certain that many recipients of Frange's letters cannot verify the quotations he provided. Nobody in eighth-century Thebes would deny the truth of biblical words. However, Frange was aware that some were well-versed in the Bible to appreciate the wordplay or subtle allusion or to recognize a bold reinterpretation (either with an appreciation or disapproval). In contrast, others would have no idea of the biblical provenance of his words when not explicitly introduced.

Frange uses Scripture mainly to exert influence over the recipients of his letters. His way of dealing with Scripture seems, at times, highly innovative against the broad tradition of monastic literature, even though two cases show that sometimes it was rooted in the local Theban practices, and the publication of the new material may bring into light more comparanda. The use of Scripture as support for worldly demands and as a powerful device of reproach and threat is not recorded in the edifying monastic texts, but the so-called canons of Abba Moses (of Abydos) give us a glimpse into the reality of monastic life, in which holy words were used for secular reasons daily. It says:

> Let your hearts be firm (cf. Jas 5:8). Keep yourselves, brethren, from exchanging harsh words among yourselves, or a word which would hurt your brother, especially a word from the scripture. I have heard that someone exchanges words in such a manner. Shall we not bring anger from God unto ourselves, O arrogant haters of one another, when we use scripture as a weapon? Henceforth, when one shall dare to utter a word from the scripture in this way to his neighbour to anger him, he who dwells in this holy place and your entire congregation shall find it fit to curse him.[78]

The *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* also shed light on the rhetorical usage of Scripture in a mundane way:

> Abba Ammoun of Rhaithou asked Abba Sisoes: "When I read the Scriptures, my mind is wholly concentrated on the words so that I may have something to say if I am asked." The old man said to him: "That is not necessary; it is better to enrich yourself through purity of spirit and to be without anxiety and then to speak."[79]

As we have already seen, Frange used the Scriptures precisely as a weapon to hurt his brothers, even though we do not know whether he learnt the relevant passages particularly for this purpose.

Frange was not the first monk who used the Bible in such a way: he had an eminent predecessor in the person of Shenoute, who, according to Stephen Emmel, was "mixing formal rhetoric and biblical quotations and reminiscences with what seem to be everyday colloquialisms and lower-register informality."[80] It is even possible that Shenoute, whom Frange read and excerpted, had contributed to how the latter dealt with the Scripture.[81]

A careful reading of Frange's letters proves that there was nothing like a uniform way of quoting the Bible among Theban monastics. At a microscale of individuals, we can see that the monk actualized his style concerning a given context, mainly the aim to achieve and the addressee. There is no data to generalize about all the monks, but the range of modes of quoting the Bible in a case study of Frange proved that such an individualized approach reveals a diversity of communicational contexts in which the Scriptures might have been applied by the Theban monks. Depending on them, the monks used to activate one or another set of dispositions, acting as a disciple, or brother, or commissioner or debtor—the multifarious faces of *homo oeconomicus* are, to be honest, the most common contexts in which biblical socialization took place, at least in writing.

Appendix

Frange's letters with biblical quotations or allusions

O.Frange	Biblical passage	Recipient	Introducing formula	Frange's text	Biblical text	Type according to Harris' typology; function in the immediate context	authority/ community change/continuity tradition/ innovation
8	1 Cor 7:32	"my father Paul"	ϥⲥⲏϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉϩⲉ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ϫⲉ "It is written so in the Apostle"	ϯⲟⲩⲉϣⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ ⲉⲇⲣⲉⲧⲛ̄ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲣⲟⲟⲩϣ	ϯⲟⲩⲉϣⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ϣⲱⲡⲓ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲣⲟⲟⲩϣ[82]	Citation; exhortation	Community, continuity, wider tradition
14	Phil 3:13	"my brother Isaac", "great brother over me"	ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ [ϫⲉ] "It is written in the Scripture"	ⲉⲓ]ⲕⲱ ⲛⲥⲱⲓ̈ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲡⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲉⲓ̈ⲡⲱ[ⲣ ⲇⲉ] ⲉⲛⲁϩⲟ	ⲉⲓ̈ⲡⲱϣ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲡⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲉⲓⲡⲱⲣ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲛⲁϩⲟ	Citation; request for forgiveness	Community, change, innovation
14	1 Kgs 16:7 (LXX) = 1 Sam 16:7	"my brother Isaac", "great brother over me"	ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ϫⲉ "It is written in the Scripture"	ⲉⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉⲡϩⲟ ⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉⲡϩⲏⲧ	ⲉⲣⲉⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉⲡϩⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲉϥϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉⲡϩⲏⲧ	Citation; expression of desire	Community, change, innovation
38	John 10:30	apa Job, presbyter and the head (ⲁⲡⲉ); apa Paul, presbyter	ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ "As it is written"	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ	ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲙⲛ̄ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ	Citation; praise for recipients	Community, continuity, innovation
45	Prov 13:13	unknown	ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ϫⲉ "As it is written in the Scripture"	ⲡⲉⲧⲕⲁⲧⲁⲫⲣⲟⲛⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϣⲱⲃ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲕⲁⲧⲁⲫⲣⲟⲛⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ	ⲡⲉⲧⲕⲁⲧⲁⲫⲣⲟⲛⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩϣⲱⲃ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲕⲁⲧⲁⲫⲣⲟⲛⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ[83]	Citation; reproach and threat	Authority, change, innovation
120	John 1:1	Lazarus (with wife and children)	ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ϫⲉ "It is written in the Scripture"	ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡϣⲁϫⲉ	ⲛⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲡϣⲁϫⲉ	Citation; reproach and threat	Authority, change, local tradition
162	Luke 10:16	Azarias	ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ϫⲉ "The Lord said to his disciples"	ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲉϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ̈	ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲉϥⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ	Citation; reproach	Authority, change, local tradition
164	Josh 23:14	Peloustre (non monastic)	none	ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲧⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧϩⲓϫⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁϩ	ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲧⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧϩⲓϫⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁϩ[84]	Quotation, description	Authority, change, wider monastic tradition
165	1 John 2:17	Peloustre (non-monastic)	none	ⲙⲛ̄ⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ϩⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ̄	ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛⲕⲉⲉⲡⲓⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ	Verbal echo; reproach	Authority, change, innovation

168	Matt 7:2	unknown woman	ⲁⲩϫⲟ]ⲟⲥ ϩⲙ̄[ⲡⲉⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ϫ]ⲉ̣ "It is said in [the Gospel"	ϩⲙ̄ⲡϣⲓ[ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲓ ⲙⲙ]ⲟⲩϭⲥⲉⲛⲁϣⲓ [ⲛⲏⲧⲛ ⲙⲙⲟϥ	ϩⲙ̄ⲡϣⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲛⲁϣⲓ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄	Citation; reproach	authority, change, innovation
173	Gen. 34:1–31	unknown woman	ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ "In the Scripture"			allusion; reproach or even condemnation	authority, change, innovation (?)
174	1 Cor. 1:31[85]	unknown woman	ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϫ[ⲉ	ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲩϣⲟⲩ [ⲙⲙ]ⲟⲩ ⲙⲁⲣⲉϥ [ϣ]ⲟⲩ[ϣ]ⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ [ϩⲙ̄ⲡϫ]ⲟⲉⲓⲥ	ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲩϣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ⲙⲁⲣⲉϥϣⲟⲩϣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟϥ ϩⲙ̄ⲡϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ	Citation; unclear, exhortation to prayer?	authority, change, innovation (?)
186	Ps 142:6[86]	"brotherly lord Pelos"	none	ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲕⲁϩ ⲉϥⲟⲃⲉ ⲉϥϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲩ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩ	ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲕⲁϩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁϩⲣⲁⲕ[87]	Verbal echo; expression of desire	Community, change, innovation
205	Gen 15:5	unknown	none	ϭⲱϣⲧ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲡⲉ	Sahidic text not published; Bohairic text: ϫⲟⲩϣⲧ ⲉⲡϣⲱⲓ ⲉⲧⲫⲉ[88]	Verbal echo?	
212	1 Thess 5:14	unknown (the text has a monastic context)	ⲡⲛ]ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ 'God says/said'	†ⲥⲃⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓ[ⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ	†ⲥⲃⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲁⲧⲥⲃⲱ	quotation	
238	Matt 28:18	Unknown	none	ⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲧⲱϣ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲓϫⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁϩ	ⲁⲩ† ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲉⲝⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲓϫⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁϩ	verbal echo; reinforcement of a message	Authority, change, innovation (?)
385+485	Ps 112:5–6 (LXX)	"your Holiness", "your Love of God", monastic or ecclesiastical authority	none	ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲱⲕⲣⲁⲧⲱⲣ ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧϫⲟⲥⲉ ⲉⲧϭⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉϫⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲑⲃ̄ⲃⲓⲏⲩ	ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲏϩ ϩⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧϫⲟⲥⲉ ⲉⲧϭⲱϣⲧ ⲉϫⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲑⲃ̄ⲃⲓⲏⲩ	quotation	
402	2 Tim 4:5	none, epistolary exercise	none	ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ϣⲡ̄ϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲡϩⲱⲃ ⲙ . . .	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ϣⲡ̄ϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓⲡϩⲱⲃ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ	quotation	

(Continued)

O.Frange	Biblical passage	Recipient	Introducing formula	Frange's text	Biblical text	Type according to Harris' typology; function in the immediate context	authority/ community change/continuity tradition/ innovation
433	Ps 98:6	"my beloved brothers who love God"; exercise	none	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲁ[ⲁⲃ] ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲙⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲏⲗ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ	quotation	
434	Ps 98:6	none, epistolary exercise	none	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲍⲛⲛⲉϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲙⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲏⲗ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ	quotation	
440	Ps 98:6	"your holy Fatherhood"	none	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ [---] ⲛⲉϥϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ ⲁⲩ[---] ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲡⲉⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̄.[---	ⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲙⲛ̄ⲁⲁⲣⲱⲛ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉϥⲟⲩⲏⲏⲃ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲁⲙⲟⲩⲏⲗ ⲍⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲣⲁⲛ	quotation	
442	Ps 106:22	none, epistolary exercise	none	]ⲱⲱⲧ ⲱⲱⲧ ⲛⲟⲩ[	ⲙⲁⲣⲟⲩⲱⲱⲧ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲑⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥⲙⲟⲩ	quotation?	
493	Mark 14:7	presbyter John	[ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡⲭⲟ]ⲉⲓⲥ ⲍⲙ̄[ⲡⲉⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗ]ⲓⲟⲛ ϫⲉ "In the Gospel, the Lord said"	ⲛ̄ⲟ̄ⲏ[ⲕⲉ ⲛⲙⲙⲏ]ⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓϣ [ⲛⲓⲙ	ⲛ̄ⲟ̄ⲏⲕⲉ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲏⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲟⲓⲉϣ ⲛⲓⲙ	citation	
568	1 Kgs 16:7 (LXX) = 1 Sam 16:7	brother or Pson	The beginning of the quotation is missing.	ⲡⲛⲟⲩ[ⲧⲉ] ϭⲱϣⲧⲉⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧ ⲙ̄[. . . ⲛ]ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲣⲱ ⲉⲩϭ[ⲱϣⲧ] ⲉⲛ̄ϩⲟ	ⲉⲣⲉⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϭⲱϣⲧ ⲉⲡϩⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲧⲟϥ ⲉϥϭⲱϣⲧ ⲉⲡϩⲏⲧ-	quotation; expression of desire (?)	
581	Phil 4:12	the exact nature of the text unknown because of its poor state of preservation	ϩ]ⲙ̄{ⲁ}ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ "in Apostle"	ϩⲛϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲧ̄ϫⲁⲛ̄ⲧ [---] ⲉϣⲱⲧ[	ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲧ̄ϩⲟⲛⲧ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲥⲉⲓ ⲉϩⲕⲟ ⲉⲣ̄ϩⲟⲩⲟ ⲉϣⲱⲱⲧ	citation	
603	2 Tim 4:5	unknown, the exact nature of the text unknown because of its poor state of preservation	Beginning of the text lost	ⲛⲧⲟⲕ [ⲇⲉ] ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓ̈ⲙϣ̄ⲡϩⲓ̈ⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓϩⲱⲃ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ	ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲏⲫⲉ ϩⲛ̄ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲱ̄ϩϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲣⲓϩⲱⲃ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ	quotation?	

Introductory phrases in the Theban letters outside the dossier of Frange

[---]ⲧⲁϥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ *O.Frange* 668 (Luke 6:37)

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲉ ⲧⲗⲉϫⲓⲥ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲟⲥ *O.Crum ad* 1 (the quotation not preserved; probably preceded the phrase)

ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϫⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲉⲡ̅ⲛ̅ⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁ[ⲃ] ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ *O.Crum* 74 (Ps 43:2 LXX)

[ⲉⲡⲓ]ⲇⲏ ⲡⲉⲧⲧⲥⲃⲱ ϫⲱ ⲙ[ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ *O.Frange* 774 (Gal 2:6)

ⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ⲉⲡⲇⲉⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲛⲟⲙⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ *P.Lond.Copt.* I 467v (probably reference to Deut 28)[89]

[---]ⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ϫⲉ *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I 59/1 (1 John 5:17)

ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ⲅⲁⲣ [ϩⲛ̅]ⲧⲉϩⲉ ϫⲉ (or ⲛ̅ϯϩⲉ ϫⲉ) *BKU* 318 (Ps 75:4 LXX, echo), O.Berlin inv. P 12491 (unidentified quotation and Matt 6:24 = Luke 16:13), *SBKopt.* II 906 (Matt 5:9)

ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϫⲉ *O.Crum* 52 (1 Kgs 20:31 = 3 Kgs 21:31 LXX), *O.Crum* 73 (Matt 5:32, Luke 16:18b, and Mark 10:12), *O.Crum* 258 (1 John 3:17), *O.Crum* 485 (1 Thess 3:10b), *O.Frange* 636 (Prov 19:4), *O.Frange* 752 (2 Cor 11:12), *P.Mon.Epiph.* 210A (Matt 12:50)

ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ⲛ̅ϯϩⲉ ϫⲉ *O.Crum* 72 (Matt 5:32 paraphrase), *O.Crum* 73 (Johannine paraphrase based on 1 John 2:4, cf. Krause, *Apa Abraham*, 374, n. 68; after ⲁⲩ[ⲱ] ⲟⲛ ϫⲉ follows John 8:32b)

ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ⲛ̅ⲧⲓϩⲉ ϩⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉϥⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 110 (Mattt 5:14)

ⲉϥⲥⲏϩ ϩⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲣⲁ[ⲫⲏ] *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I 62/2 (1 Thess 4:9 or 5:1)[90]

ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲛⲁϥ ϫⲉ *O.Crum* 71 (Matt 26:24 = Mark 14:21)

ⲕⲁⲗⲱⲥ ⲁϥϫⲟⲥ ⲛⲟⲓ ⲡⲉⲯⲁⲗⲙⲱⲇⲟⲥ ⲇⲁⲩⲉⲓⲇ ϫⲉ *SBKopt.* II 861 (=*BKU* 92) (Ps 37:12 LXX? Job 19:14? paraphrase)

ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ [ϫⲉ] *O.Crum* 71 (John 13:18), *O.Crum* 484 (formula partially reconstructed, quotation not preserved), *P.MoscowCopt.* 80 (Ps 80:14–15 LXX)

ⲛⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ϫⲉ (...) ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ϫⲟⲟⲥ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 348 (2 John 8, paraphrase)

ⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϩⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲁⲓⲱϩ[ⲁ]ⲛⲛⲏⲥ ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ (. . .) ⲛⲉⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉ *O.Crum* 73 (1 John 5:17)

ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫ[ⲏⲧⲏⲥ . . . .] *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I 52/1 (unidentified quotation)

ⲛⲟⲉ [---]ⲉⲓⲇ,[91] ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϩⲙⲡⲉϥⲉⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 143 (Matt 18:6, after quotation)

ⲛⲑⲉ ⲟⲛ ⲛⲧⲁϥϫⲟⲟϥ [ⲛ]ϭⲓ ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ ϫⲉ (. . .) ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ [ϫⲉ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 434 (1 Cor 13:4 and 1 Thess 5:14)

ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ϫⲉ *O.Crum* 84 (Jas 1:25)

ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲫ[ⲏⲧⲏⲥ---] . . . ϫⲉ *O.GournaGórecki* 23 (Ps 33:16 LXX)

ⲡⲉⲛϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ ϫⲉ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 143 (Matt 5:37)

ⲡⲥⲟⲫⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲡⲁⲩⲗⲟⲥ ϫⲟⲟⲥ *P.Mon.Epiph.*143 (Phil 2:7–8)

ⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲅⲁⲣ ϫⲱ ⲙⲙⲟ[ⲥ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 108 (Lam 1:4–5)

ϥⲥⲏϩ ⲟⲛ ϫⲉ *P.Mon.Epiph.* 434 (Prov 14:29)

"[The] holy [scripture], speaking [by the mouth (?) of] David"[92] *P.Mon.Epiph.* 115 (Ps 45:2 LXX; Jas 1:12)

Figure 12.1 O.Frange 162 (O. 292484). A letter from Frange to Azarias with a quotation of Luke 10:16; photograph ©ULB, Mission archéologique dans la nécropole thébaine.
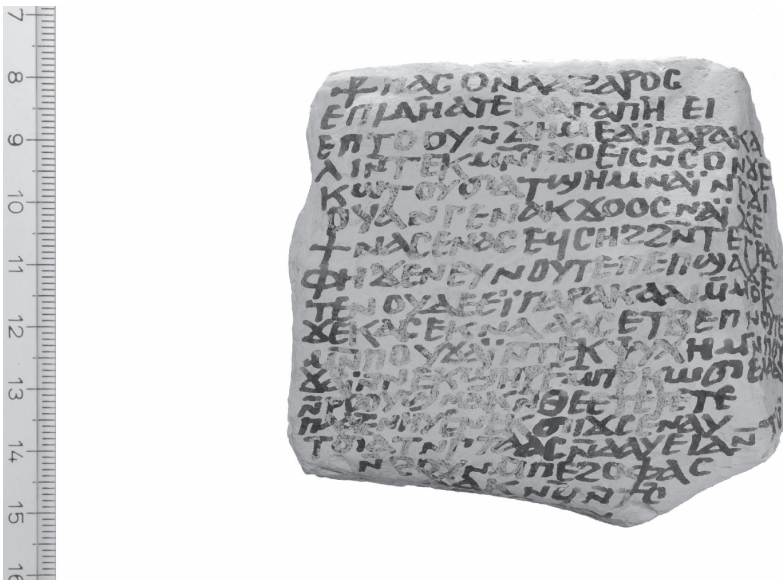
Figure 12.2 O.Frange 120 (verso) (O. 292534). A letter from Frange to Lazarus with a quotation of John 1:1; photograph ©ULB, Mission archéologique dans la nécropole thébaine.

Through the biblical figures but without referring them directly to the Scripture: *O.Crum* 71 (Matt 27:25b, Matt 28:13), *P.Mon.Epiph*. 114 (Luke; quotation not preserved)

Without introductory formula: *BKU* 290 (Ps 142:6 LXX), *O.Crum* 71 (Matt 26:67), *O.Crum* 258 (Eph 6:24), *O.Crum* 371 (Ps 67:31–33), *O.CrumVC* 54 (Ps 142:6 or Job 29:23), *O.Frange* 349 (Phil 12), *O.Mon.Phoib*. 8 (Matt 22:37 = Luke 10:27), *O.Saint-Marc* 45 (Matt 27:4),[93] *O.Saint-Marc* 206 (Luke 10:21), *O.Saint-Marc* 361 (Ps 1:1),[94] *P.Mon.Epiph*. 106 (Heb 10:31; Ps 41:2 LXX), *P.Mon.Epiph*. 109 (1 Peter 2:25, Matt 4:23 or 9:35,[95] 2 Tim 4:6), *P.Mon.Epiph*. 201 (Jas 5:16); *P.Mon.Epiph*. 307 (Luke 18:2), *P.Mon. Epiph*. 434 (2 Thess 1:3, Rom 15:4), *P.MoscowCopt*. 80 (Luke 10:16).

Notes

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2 Chantal Heurtel, "La petite monde de Frangé: une microsociété dans la région thébaine au début de VIIIe siècle," in *"Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages . . .": Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine*, eds. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn (Brussels: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 163–74.

3 *O.Frange* 347. Abbreviations of papyri and papyrological instruments after *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets*, accessed February 10, 2022, https://papyri.info/docs/checklist.

4 *O.Frange* 320, l. 7: "Your Love knows my thought (ⲅⲛⲱⲙⲏ). God knows that if you do not have pity and do not help me, and do not send something in my favour—God is my witness—I will leap into the canal or into the pit to die. However, I believe God and your Love that you have power to make this issue clear". Anne Boud'hors, *O.Frange*, vol. 1, 221, translates ⲅⲛⲱⲙⲏ as "état d'esprit". It is, of course, possible to see here instead a metaphor of a close relationship between the correspondents and reference to Frange's good acquaintance with the details of the case related by the author of the letter in the previous messages or during a personal meeting.

5 *O.Frange* 76, 79, 108, 109; Anne Boud'hors, "Copie et circulation des livres dans la région thébaine (VIIe—VIIIe siècles)," in *"Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages . . .": Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine*, eds. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn (Brussels: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 149–61, esp. 156–57.

6 *O.Frange* 72, 73.

7 *O. Frange* 73, l. 10.

8 *O.Frange* 220 (Rom 14:10–13), maybe also *O.Frange* 119 (2 Tim: 2:3–4).

9 The exact number is difficult to obtain due to the deplorable state of some pieces. The highest possible number would be five hundred and twenty-four.

10 They are listed in *O.Frange*, vol. 1, 33–5. None of them include biblical quotations. Additional pieces are published in Katherine Blouin, "Frange and Moses to Matthaios (O. Col. inv. 100): Another Piece of the Frange Dossier," *APF* 57 (2001): 73–78; Anne Boud'hors, "Pièces supplémentaires du dossier de Frangé," *JCS* 13 (2011): 99–112.

11 *O.Frange* 59, ll. 12–3: ⲉⲕⲁⲙⲉⲗⲉ ⲡⲉⲕϩⲏⲧⲛⲁϩⲓⲥⲉ ("If you delay, your heart will suffer"); see also *O.Frange* 61, 68, 128, 130, 177.

12 *O.Frange* 66, ll. 17–19: ⲡⲉϩⲏⲧ ⲛⲁⲙⲧⲟⲛ ⲉⲭⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲃⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ("the heart will be in the great peace with regard to the cattle"), see also *O.Frange* 83, 84, 128.

13 *O.Frange* 110, ll. 24–5 ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ †ⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲛ̄ⲁϩⲉ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ̄ ("May God give you a long life").

14 *O.Frange* 93, 102,111, 120, 127, 136, 146, 163.

15 There are no traces of the Jews; see *P.Mon.Epiph.*, vol. 1, 144. Muslims are also virtually absent in the letters, although pagarchs of Hermonthis bearing Arabic names, so probably Muslims, are mentioned in some documents from the eighth century, see *P.KRU* 45 (AD 740), 70 (AD 750), 106 (AD 735).

16 The letters from the dossier of Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis show that he expected deacons and presbyters to memorize gospels. For the monks at least the liturgical psalms, which enable them to take part in a common synaxis, should be regarded a minimum standard.

17 Bernard Lahire, "From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions: Towards a Sociology at the Level of the Individual," *Poetics* 31 (2003): 340, 343.

18 Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), passim, but explicitly at p. 33.

19 Lahire, "From the Habitus," 343–44.

20 Allan Bell, "Back in Style: Reworking Audience Design," in *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*, eds. Penelope Eckert and John R. Rickford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 142.

21 So, we may ignore the role of overhearers or non-typical members of an audience in the act of communication.

22 However, many letters by Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis were of circular character. They mainly concerned moral misbehaviors or the exclusion of some individuals from the communion. They were expected to be read in public during the service.

23 Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 13.

24 Ibid.

25 Bruce F. Harris, "Biblical Echoes and Reminiscences in Christian Papyri," in *Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of Papyrologists, Oxford, 1974*, eds. Peter Parsons, John R. Rea, and Eric G. Turner (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1975), 155–60.

26 Malcolm Choat, "Echo and Quotation of the New Testament in Papyrus Letters to the End of the Fourth Century," in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, eds. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 267–92 (esp. 268); Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians. Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 208–31.

27 "Verbal echoes" by Harris; Note a different meaning of "echo" in part of recent scholarship: Stanley E. Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 29–40 (esp. 36–40). Such a meaning of "echo" is roughly tantamount to the notion of "allusion" as I use it the current study.

28 Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," 30–36; Porter's definition of an allusion "as involving the indirect invoking of person, place, or literary work" (p. 33) is roughly tantamount with Harris's "reminiscences."

29 There are also other letters that may include some distant echoes of the Scriptures, but since possible scriptural traces are limited to single and non-specific words, I do not take them into consideration, see, e.g., *O.Frange* 51, ll. 11–15: ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲭⲁⲣⲉⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ (cf. Ps 52:6 LXX ⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲕⲉⲉⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲉϥⲁⲣⲉⲥⲕⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ). In the most cases, the biblical references were identified by original editors; however, in case of *O.Frange* 205 and 385+485, they were noticed by Alain Delattre and Naïm Vanthieghem, "Trois ostraca coptes de Hambourg," *JCS* 16 (2014): 109. References in *O.Frange* 164 and 238 were identified by me.

30 *O.Frange* 636, 652, 752, 774.

31 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 114, 115, 143, 201, 210a, 307, 348, 434, 459.

32 *O.Crum* 71, 72, 73, 74, 84, 484, 485, ad 1; *P.MoscowCopt.* 80; P. Berlin inv. 12491. Martin Krause (*Apa Abraham von Hermonthis: Ein oberägyptischer Bischof um 600*, vol. 1, -[Ph.D diss., Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 1956], 27) lists only nine pieces because he does not include ad 1, where only an introductory phrase is preserved.

33 *O.Saint-Marc* 45, 206, 361.

34 *O.Frange* 216, 217. The latter might be a scribal exercise. Shenoute was quite a popular author among Theban monastics, see Esther Garel, "Lire Chénouté dans la région thébaine aux VIIe—VIIIe siècles," in *Études coptes XIV. Seizième journée d'études, Genève 19–21 juin 2013*, eds. Anne Boud'hors and Catherine Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2016), 183–92.

35 *O.Frange* 215, probably also *O.Frange* 24. There was a collection of *apophthegmata* called "Paradise of the Fathers," mentioned several times on the Coptic ostraca, see *O.GurnaGórecki*, 61.

36 This piece may be not an exercise; a possible address is not preserved.

37 ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ ϫⲉ: "As it is written" (Rom 3:10). Another formal expression of biblical origin is "who writes by his hand" signaling direct involvement of Frange as a scribe, Anne Boud'hors, "Copyist and Scribe: Two Professions for a Single Man?" in *Scribal Repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Early Islamic Period*, eds. Jennifer Cromwell and Eitan Grossman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 286.

38 Biblical quotations in private letters generally appear rather rarely; G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1977* (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1982), 157–58, counts only two quotations and seven clear verbal echoes; he also gives eleven "conjectural reminiscences." To this should be added P.Berl. inv. 13889 = *SB* XII 11144, Kurt Treu, ed., "Ein Papyrusbrief mit Pauluszitaten (Berlin P. 13889)," in *Studia Evangelica, Vol. VI: Papers presented to the Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies held at Oxford, 1969*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), 533–36; Horsley's list has been substantially supplemented by Choat, "Echo and Quotations," 267–92. Choat counts eight letters with citations, five with quotations or clear allusions and twenty-seven with a biblical "word or phrase in religious context." Some other examples, limited to Oxyrhynchus, are given by Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 208–31.

39 Blumell, *Lettered Christians*, 218.

40 Crum gives only the English translation of this badly mutilated passage: ["The] holy [scripture], speaking [by the mouth?] of David."

41 *Precepts* 140: "There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of the Scriptures. [One should learn by heart] at least the New Testament and the Psalter," Armand Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia, Vol. 2: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1982), 166; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 26.3 (monk Heron recites from memory sixteen psalms and other biblical books). In the *Sayings*, Psalms is the most often quoted Old Testament book (William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 245).

42 *P.Rain.UnterrichtKopt.* 188, 189, 196. Identification of school exercises is almost always prone to be contested. On excerpts from Psalms on ostraca, see A. Delattre, "Ostraca des Musées de Berlin portant des extraits des Psaumes en copte," in *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung. Eine Festgabe für das Neue Museum*, ed. Verena M. Lepper (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 387–98. Delattre (ibid., 387, n. 2) reckons more than eighty already (2012) published Theban ostraca with the excerpts from the Psalter.

43 *P.Neph.* 4, l. 30 (1 Tim 6:11); 7, l. 6 (1 Tim 6:1); 11, II. 6 –7 (1 Tim 1:15; 4:9); see also *P.Heid*. I 6 = *SB* I 2266 (Prov 10:19, an echo).

44 *P. Lond*. III 981, l. 5: καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῇ γραφῇ (4th century). The letter is written by a deacon to "the most pious father John," probably a bishop. The biblical text is an altered passage from Isa 31:9. Choat, "Echo and Quotation," 284, indicates eight cases of letters with introductory formulas up to the end of the fourth century.

45 See fn. 32; cf. Renate Dekker, *Episcopal Networks and Authority in Late Antique Egypt: Bishops of the Theban Region at Work*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 264 (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 196–7.

46 Bell, "Back in Style," 147.

47 LXX ὃς καταφρονεῖ πράγματος.

48 On the inscription, see Alain Delattre, "L'apophtegme de Grégoire de Nysse au Deir Abou Hennis," *Aegyptus* 83 (2003): 223–7.

49 Bell, "Back in Style," 146.

50 Own translation based on Crum, *P.Mon.Epiph.*, vol. 1, 173.

51 Trans. Crum, *P.Mon.Epiph.*, vol. 1, p. 173.

52 *P.KRU* 13, ll. 56–7, trans. Leslie S. B. MacCoull, "Coptic Documentary Papyri as a Historical Source for Egyptian Christianity," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, eds. Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 49. Coptic literature abounds in allusions to biblical punishments. Probably they were recognizable as such, even if a wider biblical context remained unknown for common Christians. Among many examples are homilies: Ps.-Athanasius, *On the Labourers in the Vineyard*, E. A. W. Budge, ed. and trans., *Coptic Homilies in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1910), 332 (trans.); Ps.-Tehophilus, *Sermo De cruce et latrone* 9, Alin Suciu, ed. and trans., "Ps.-Theophili Alexandrini Sermo de Cruce et Latrone (CPG 2622): Edition of Pierpont Morgan M595 with Parallels and Translation," *ZAC* 16 (2012): 220 (trans.).

53 But cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.14.

54 *O.Frange* 73, ll. 7–10: ⲁⲣⲓⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ⲛⲅ̄ϫⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲧⲉⲛⲉⲥⲓⲥ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲙ̄ϭ̄ϩⲱⲱⲛ.

55 Pachomius, *Epistula* 4.4, ed. Amand Boon, *Pachomiana Latina: Règle et Épitres de S. Pachome, Épitre de S. Théodore et Liber de S. Orsiesius. Texte latin de S. Jérôme* (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1932), 87; *Vita Hilarionis* 18; versio Coptica, Francesco Rossi, ed. and trans., "Vita di sant'Ilarione e Martirio di sant'Ignazio vescovo d'Antiochia," in *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Series 2, vol. 38 (Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1888), 30 (text) and 85 (trans.); Isaiah of Scetis, ed. Augoustinos monachos, *Tou osiou patros imōn abba Isaiou Logoi kth'* (Jerusalem: Typois ieroi koinou tou Panagiou Taphou, 1911), 122; Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, Coptic version, 5, Antoine Guillaumount, ed. and trans., *L'Asceticon copte de l'abbé Isaie* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1956), 9 (text) and 57 (trans.): ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉϥⲉⲡ̄ⲑⲩⲙⲓⲁ; *Sancti Antonii Abbatis patris nostri, sermones XX ad filios suos monachos* 16, ed. Abrahamus Ecchellensius, Patrologia Graeca 40 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1858), 973 (this "sermon" deals with "bona diligentia"); outside Egypt see John Cassian, *Collationes* 23.8.2.

56 *Sancti Antonii Abbatis patris nostri sermones*, ed. Ecchellensius, 973–4: Evigilemus ergo, filii mei dilectissimi, constituamusque nobis bonam diligentiam in domo mentis nostrae; Pachomius, *Epistula* 4.4, ed. Boon, *Pachomiana Latina*, 87: Vigilate et uidete quomodo ambuletis?; *Vita Hilarionis*, ed. Rossi, "Vita di sant'Ilarione," 30: ⲡⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ (i.e. Hilarion) ⲇⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲙⲟⲥⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲣⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲉⲛⲉⲧϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲩϭⲓⲣⲟⲟⲩϣ ϩⲁⲇⲁⲡⲁⲛⲏ ⲏ ⲟⲩϣⲧⲛ ⲕⲉϩⲱⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲓ̈ⲙⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲛ ϫⲉ (1 J 2:17 follows).

57 This conjecture ⲛ(ⲁ)ⲣϣⲓⲛ ("lentils") is almost certain in light of *O.Frange* 167 which, according to Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel (*O.Frange*, 142–3), deals with the same transaction concerning this product. I thank Anne Boud'hors for help in understanding the context of this letter.

58 Due to the extent of restorations, I give here the text of edition in full: ⲁⲩϫⲟ]ⲟⲥ ϩⲙ̄[ⲡⲉⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ϫ]ⲉ ϩⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲓ [ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁϣⲓ ⲙⲙ]ⲟϥ ⲥⲉⲛⲁϣⲓ [ⲛⲏⲧⲛ ⲙⲙⲟϥ ⲧ]ⲉⲛⲟⲩ ϣⲁⲧⲙⲁϫⲉ [ⲛ(ⲁ)ⲣϣⲓⲛ. .] ⲉⲣⲃⲱⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲡ[---].

59 Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 84; John Cassian, *Collationes* 24.26.11; *Vita Pachomii* S², Armand Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia, Vol. 1: The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1980), 447; *Instituta* 18, Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol. 2, 174; *Testamentum Horsiesi* 7.16, Armand

Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia, Vol. 3: Instructions, Letters, and Other Writings of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1981), 175 and 181; Shenoute, *A priest will never cease*, David Brakke and Andrew Crislip, trans., *Selected Discourses of Shenoute the Great: Community, Theology, and Social Conflict in Late Antique Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 142; Shenoute, A26, Brakke and Crislip, *Selected Discourses*, 230, 263.

60 Although the issue of a proper grain measure used by the Church is present in the ecclesiastical legislation (*The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria* §§ 19 and 21, eds. Wilhelm Riedel and Walter E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria: The Arabic and Coptic Versions* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1904], 28–29; *Canones Hippolyti* § 38, ed. René-Georges Coquin, *Les Canons d'Hippolyte*, Patrologia Orientalis 31.2 [Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1966], 418–19), I was unable to find this scriptural reference in that context.

61 *O.Crum* 73, ll. 13–5: [ⲛⲟ]ⲅⲓ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϫⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲁⲓⲱϣ[ⲁ]ⲛⲏⲥ ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ, trans. *O.Crum*, 14.

62 *O.Crum* 74, ll. 9–14: ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲉ ⲛⲓϣⲁϫⲉ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲉ ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲁ̄ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁ[ⲃ] ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲁϥ ⲉⲧⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲏϩ, trans. *O.Crum*, 14

63 *O.Crum* ad. 1, ll. 2–3: ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲉ ⲧⲗⲉⲝⲓⲥ ⲁⲗⲗⲉ ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲩⲟⲥ, trans. *O.Crum*, 14–5.

64 *O.Crum* 78, ll. 2–7: ⲛϥⲃⲟⲧϥ ⲉ[---]ⲡⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲛⲡⲧⲉⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲛⲟ[---] ⲛⲃⲱⲕ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲏⲓ ⲛϥⲃⲟⲧϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲥⲁϩⲟⲩ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲉⲅⲣⲁⲫⲏ ⲉⲓ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϫⲱϥ ⲛϥⲃⲟⲧϥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲣϩⲟⲧⲉ ϩⲏⲧϥ, trans. *O.Crum*, 16.

65 For example. *P.CLT* 2, l. 22, 6, ll. 40–1; note especially a developed list of curses in *P.Ryl. Copt.* 267 (not from Thebes, but from Bishop of Ashmunein).

66 Isaiah of Scetis, *Discourse* 21, John Chryssavgis and Pachomios Penkett, trans., Abba Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002), 154.

67 *Vita Antonii* 7, ed. Gérard Garitte, *S. Antonii vitae versio Sahidica* (Paris: Typographeum Reipublicae, 1949), 12 (Coptic text); *Vita Pachomii* G¹, 15, 49, ed. François Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae Graecae* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1932), 10 and 32 (Greek text), trans. Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol. 1, 307 and 331; *Vita Graeca* G¹ 15 is parallel to S³ (SBo 19), ed. L. Théophile Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae Sahidice scriptae* (Paris: Typographeum Reipublicae, 1933), 109, trans. Veilleux*, Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol. 1, 43; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 20; this passage from the *Lausiac history* is referred to by Isaiah of Scetis, *Discourse* 23, ed. Augoustinos, *Tou osiou patros imōn abba Isaiou Logoi*, 142 (Greek text); Guillaumont, *L'Asceticon*, 21 (Coptic text); Chryssavgis and Penkett, Abba Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, 173 (English translation of the Greek text); John Cassian, *Collationes* 20.8.11.

68 *Vita Antonii* 7, ed. Garitte, *S. Antonii vitae versio Sahidica*, 12: ⲛⲧⲟϥ (i.e. Anthony) ⲇⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲙⲉϥϣⲡ ⲙⲡⲉⲭⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲧⲁϥⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛⲉ, ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲙⲙⲏⲛⲉ ϩⲱⲥ ⲛⲧⲁϥⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲁⲥⲕⲏⲥⲓⲥ ϣⲁϥϫⲡⲟ ⲛⲁϥ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲛⲟϭ ⲙⲡⲣⲟⲕⲟⲡⲏ ⲉϥⲙⲉⲗⲉⲧⲁ ⲙⲡⲉϩⲣⲏⲧⲟⲛ ⲙⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲛⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ ϫⲉ (Phil 3:13 follows).

69 Cf. for example: *Vita Pachomii* G¹ 15, ed. Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae Graecae*, 10: διδαχθήσομαι λοιπὸν τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν πορεύεσθαι (Phil 3:13 follows; parallel passage in S³: ϯⲛⲁⲧⲥⲁⲃⲟ ϩⲱ ⲉⲙⲟⲟϣⲉ ϩⲓⲧⲉϩⲓⲏ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ) and G¹ 49, ed. Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae Graecae*, 32: εἰς τελειότητα (Phil 3:13 precedes).

70 *O.Frange* 72, ll. 9–11: ⲧ̄ⲥ̄ⲛⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲣ[ⲟ] ⲛⲁϊⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲗϥⲟⲩ. It remains unknown which of the four Books of Kings from LXX (and Coptic Bible) he exactly had in mind.

71 *O.CrumVC* 54, ll. 5–9: ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁϩ ⲉϥⲟⲃⲉ ⲉϥϭⲱϣⲧ ϩⲏⲧϥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲁⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲓⲉⲓⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲕⲙⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ, trans. *CrumVC*, 28.

72 *BKU* 290, verso, 3–6: ⲁⲓ̈ϫⲱⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲉⲙⲁⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲓ̈ⲉⲓⲃⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲕ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲉϣⲁⲕⲉⲓⲃⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ("I long for you very much and I am thirsty for you as you are thirsty for water"). It is a letter from John to Epiphanius.

73 E. A. W. Budge, *The Earliest Known Coptic Psalter: The Text, in the Dialect of Upper Egypt, Edited from the Unique Papyrus Codex Oriental 5000* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1898), 46: ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉⲟⲩⲅⲉⲉⲓⲟⲩⲗ ⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϭⲱ ϩⲓⲭⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛϩⲟⲛⲃⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲣⲉⲧⲁⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲙⲉ ⲛⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲕⲡ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ.

74 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 106,9: ⲙⲙⲟⲩ ⲧⲁⲓ̈ ⲧⲉ ⲑⲉ ⲉϯⲉⲡⲉⲓⲑⲉⲓ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲟ.

75 *P.Kell.Copt.* 124, ll. 23–6 ⲉⲛⲥⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲛⲟⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁϩ ⲉϥⲁⲓⲃⲉ ⲉⲩϭⲁϣⲧⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙ[ⲟ]ⲩ ⲛϩⲱⲟⲩ

76 Shenoute, *I am amazed*, Brakke and Crislip, *Selected Discourses*, 79.

77 Frange uses a so-called style axiom, Bell, "Back in Style," 145.

78 Mark Moussa, "The Coptic Literary Dossier of Abba Moses of Abydos," *Coptic Church Review* 24 (2003): 89.

79 Sisoes 17, Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: An Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1984), 216.

80 Stephen Emmel, "Coptic Literature in the Byzantine and Early Islamic World," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300–700*, ed. Roger Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 91.

81 On the Bible in Shenoute's rhetorical strategies see, Heike Behlmer, "Do Not Believe Every Word Like the Fool . . . !': Rhetorical Strategies in Shenoute, Canon 6," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 1–12; Heike Behlmer, "Die Bibel im koptischen Mönchtum der Spätantike," in *Zwischen Exegese und religiöser Praxis: Heilige Texte von der Spätantike bis zum Klassischen Islam*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 163–71; Heike Behlmer, "The Use of the Psalms in Shenoute's Tractate He Who Sits Upon His Throne," in *From Gnostics to Monastics: Studies in Coptic and Early Christianity in Honor of Bentley Layton*, eds. David Brakke, Stephen J. Davis, and Stephen Emmel, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 263 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 315–30.

82 The text of the New Testament according to George W. Horner, ed., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911–24.

83 William H. Worrell, ed., *The Proverbs of Salomon in Sahidic Coptic according to the Chicago Manuscript* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 41.

84 Herbert Thompson, ed., *A Coptic Palimpsest Containing Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Judith and Esther in the Sahidic Dialect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 119.

85 In 1 Cor these words are a quotation from Jeremiah 9:23; however, the wording of the Coptic text of Jeremiah differs slightly, so we are certain that Frange is quoting from Corinthians.

86 All references to Ps according to LXX.

87 The text of the Psalter according to Budge, *The Earliest Known Coptic Psalter*.

88 Paul de Lagarde, ed., *Der Pentateuch koptisch* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867), 29. Sahidic text of this passage is contained in the unpublished MS of a lectionary from the White Monastery.

89 Papyrus bought at Luxor but might originated from Edfu.

90 Identification by Anne Boud'hors, "Reedition de O. Brit. Mus. Copt. I, pl. LXII, 2 (Inv. 14246). Lettre d'Ananias a Frange," *Chronique d'Égypte* 95 (2020): 345–46.

91 Crum translates "The Lord," so a print error is possible and it should be read [---]ⲉⲓⲥ.

92 The Coptic text is not given. Crum gives siglum Ps 45:1, but most probably he meant the next passage.

93 The text is only partially preserved.

94 See the precedent note.

95 Identification by Alain Delattre, "À propos de deux réminiscences bibliques dans des lettres coptes," *Chronique d'Égypte* 189 (2020): 184–85.

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13 Concluding Remarks

"The Artificers of Facts"

Mattias Brand

> The scholar does not recognize solidity and permanence as characteristic of the facts with which he earns his daily bread. These are of a different order. He has seen them made and remade. He has himself made them and remade them. He has seen worn-out and dilapidated facts discarded and replaced by new, freshly turned facts. He has seen them changing their shapes, their sizes, their complexions as scholars grow in knowledge, skill, and subtlety. He knows them, to be sure, as the pivotal points round which sweeps the whole intellectual life of man, but nevertheless shifting position and changing contour under its impact. These are facts as the papyrologist knows them to be.[1]

In the 1962 Henry Russel lecture at the University of Michigan, Herbert C. Youtie explored the work of papyrologists. What do they do? Surely, he suggested, they make editions of papyri, but what is the work underlying such significant contributions to the study of the ancient world? Papyrology for the papyrologist is, according to Youtie, an almost "hidden task," a "self-consuming labor" that leaves little trace as it is "absorbed into literature or history."[2] Unpacking these statements, he portrays the papyrologist as a connoisseur, skilled at overcoming the inherent hindrances of reading and reconstructing an ancient text: lacunas, illegible scribbles, elusive language use, and a total lack of situational information. These factors hamper the reconstruction and interpretation of a text; indeed, there is rarely a text that can be fully and plainly read and rendered intelligible to modern readers. Focusing on the frustration of the individual scholar, Youtie stresses that

> total success and total failure are the extreme points of his [or her] experience. Between them lies a vast number of partial successes and partial failures, resting always on his [or her] inability to maintain the flow of meaning through a document, or put in another way, to grasp the intention of the ancient writer.[3]

Therefore, the papyrologist is an artisan who is building on the expertise of previous generations as well as his or her colleagues'. Youtie's papyrologist is an "artificer of fact," fully aware of the constructedness of his or her reconstructions.

All authors of the foregoing contributions to this volume reflected upon the constructedness of reconstructions—although on a more interpretative level than Youtie had in mind. By engaging with theoretical insights from the academic study of religion, sociology, and sociolinguistics, contributing authors revisited instances of religious identification found in late antique papyri, both from well-known and previously unacknowledged sources, and reflected on the interpretive schemes that modern scholars employ in their efforts to render these texts intelligible. The variety of positions taken within these chapters reflects the diverse nature of the papyrological corpus as well as the expertise, background, and focus of the individual authors. This concluding chapter aims to draw together some of their observations and point out instances of underlying tension. Rather than summarizing the findings of my colleagues, I would like to use my privileged position as an editor to highlight particularly interesting insights and connect them with relevant social and historical theories, hopefully prompting further research.

Where Markers Fail

It will come as no surprise that the contributors to this volume aim to nuance the existing criteria for detecting and establishing the religious backgrounds of papyri and their authors. There seems to be no simple one-to-one correlation between religious affiliation and language use: a hymn addressing Helios shares religious language and doctrine with the early Christian *Shepherd of Hermes*, Jesus is described as the force of Iaô Sabaôth, Christians address each other with the Coptic equivalent of the Islamic *salām* greeting, and an Egyptian priest clothes himself in the literary and religious language of a *scholastikos*.

The use of personal names is perhaps one of the most contested markers of a Christian, Jewish, or Islamic identification. In this volume, Papaconstantinou has stressed how difficult it is to use Jewish names as a firm indicator of Jewishness. It is only through a correlation between rareness and clustering that specific names can be classified as Jewish rather than Christian. Frankfurter, following his earlier debates with Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse, stresses that onomastic change only reflects the cultural presence of a "great tradition," as names may have been given as a blessing, a mark of prestige, or a family connection to a martyr-shrine. The ambiguous results of using onomastics for religious identification is most striking in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus (P.Oxy. XLII 3035), in which the president of the city council orders the arrest of someone with a traditional theophoric name ("Petosorapis, son of Horos"), who is then labeled as "a Christian."[4] Petra Sijpesteijn voices the same caution against using onomastics as firm evidence for religious identification in Arabic papyrology, "as it is not clear how consciously names were chosen and whether an Arabic or even a Muslim name signifies a sense of Arab or Muslim identity or whether it represents merely an attempt to join the new ruling class."[5] Specifically, therefore, one could wonder what exactly we claim to know about someone when his or her name is recognized as Christian or Islamic. Names, like other markers of religious identity, should be recognized as having backgrounds and aims tied to unique situations,

which are often invisible to the modern scholar and should be thought of in terms of nested, layered processes of identification.

Groupism

This volume started with Rogers Brubaker's challenge to rethink common assumptions of postulated social and religious groups. In most earlier scholarship, religious groups or communities were considered "the pivotal points round which sweeps the whole intellectual life of man," to once again use Youtie's characterization.[6] Rethinking groupism entails a fundamental critique of the assumption that there must be a "tight fit between a writer and a highly coherent social group with commonality in belief and practice."[7] In many of the contributions, therefore, the focus shifts away from groups and moves towards scribal activity. In some instances, scribes seemed to draw upon religious repertoires without associating the items from these repertoires with bounded groups, or they explicitly drew alternative religious boundaries. For other contributors, it is a step too far to let go of the notion of religious groups as social facts fueling our interpretation of ancient papyri. Luijendijk and Huebner both use textual and linguistic markers as indicators of a Christian background, while Cromwell and Papaconstantinou stress the ambiguity of phrases carrying religious and ethnic connotations. As editors, we have decided to foster this diversity of approach, accepting a variety of responses to the challenge of groupism.

Frankfurter starts this volume with the most radical questioning of a religious group. Rather than taking the existence of a Christian group for granted and tracing its imprint on a wide array of texts and objects, he suggests that the external artifacts and documents do not imply an internal Christian self-identification. Specifically, he states, "a religion as distinctively textual as Christianity may not necessarily translate into an internal identity" (p. 33). Applying this perspective to one of Luijendijk's case studies, one could wonder whether the presence of the school copy of a Christian text in the archive of Aurelius Leonides is enough to label him as a Christian (p. 107). He may have owned a copy of this text for future reuse because he associated it with direct efficacy and supernatural powers or because he wished to keep it for general educational purposes.[8] Leonides's association with a reader in a village church supports a Christian classification, as does his potential connection to a papyrus containing an apocryphal gospel, but from Frankfurter's perspective, the question of what the label "Christian" should mean to us remains. Does it imply that Leonides thought of himself as a Christian, went to church, or rejected traditional sacrificial practice? Luijendijk's reading of Leonides's business documents shows the fragility behind such questions, as they do not contain any other hints of Christianity. There is an interpretative leap between identifying a businessman in a leadership position of a professional association who also owned a school copy of a Christian text and concluding that a Christian could hold a leadership position in a professional association in early fourth-century Egypt; it remains a matter of debate whether such a leap is legitimate.

Potential answers to this debate take us back to specific texts, as well as to our modern conceptualization of religious groupness. Luijendijk has argued in an earlier publication that Leonides's Christian text was a writing exercise for practicing contractions and *nomina sacra*. The seven different *nomina sacra* in this short passage would have helped Leonides "gain experience in recognizing and writing this widespread Christian scribal custom."[9] Huebner's identification of "the oldest Christian documentary papyrus" is partly based on the same argument. P. Bas. 2.43 is labeled as a Christian letter because it contains a striking early example of a *nomen sacrum*, which is usually taken as "an explicit sign of Christianity."[10] Adding to this characterization, one can wonder if the *nomen sacrum* was included deliberately as a Christian self-identification or unreflectively as part of in-group language resulting from socialization within a Christian community or Christian scribal education. In contrast to Frankfurter's skepticism, Huebner states with conviction that the authors "used visual signs to remind each other of their shared faith" when corresponding with other Christians (p. 132). The *nomen sacrum*, in Huebner's interpretation, corresponded to a specific, externally located religious group's educational setting, in addition to an interior identity and "beliefs shared with the addressee" (p. 131).[11]

Piwowarczyk extends the influence of educational settings on all Christians by stating that all eighth-century Christians "had at least a certain degree of cultural competence to use a Bible as one of the tools of the general Christian sociolect"— including scriptural knowledge and biblical reasoning—that was "acquired during process of socialization" and was "standardized to some extent" (p. 249). In addition to considering Luijendijk's and Huebner's emphasis on *nomina sacra* in scribal education, I believe that we should also take Piwowarczyk's observations as a starting point for further examination in two directions. First, I wonder about the standardized processes of socialization between the third and eighth century in Egypt. Can we assume that biblical stories and vocabulary would have penetrated everyday life to the extent that ordinary individuals reflected such knowledge in automatized dispositions? Avdokhin reflects on the same question when he highlights the unintentional memory side effects of an increasingly Christian text-based scribal education. How should "the fact that Christian idiom had become part of how the skill of writing was obtained" inform our inquiry (p. 53)? When (if at all) did Egyptian Christians start to attend liturgical gatherings?[12] Could biblical and liturgical literacy have been the result of frequent participation in liturgy? If so, would it not be fruitful to draw upon modern psychological or sociological research to examine the formative effect of regular participation in liturgical gatherings on interior identities?

The two contributions that center on Jews in late antique Egypt further complicate the question of religious groupness by discussing linguistic variations and Jewish ethnic connections to the Roman province of Palestine. Both Wolfert-de Vries and Papaconstantinou work with the postulated existence of demarcated Jewish communities, but vary in their characterization of such entities. Papaconstantinou's scope is wide, examining all potential criteria that can be used to identify Jews. She suggests that the absence of evidence may have been the result of a

deliberate group strategy of concealment: some Jews went underground after turbulent political events and subsequent social circumstances. The use of Hebrew and Aramaic in papyrus letters may have functioned mainly internally, marking an insider status and feeling of belonging without broadcasting a religious group identity. Wolfert-de Vries places less emphasis on the existence of Jewish groups as determinative forces for behavior, but rather considers the use of Aramaic and Hebrew as a strategic choice of individuals and families. The Aramaic marriage contract from Antinoopolis was an attempt to appeal to two legal contexts. The curious mixture of repertoires in the *ketubba* is therefore, first and foremost, the result of a situational choice; it presented the marriage in a form acceptable to a Graeco-Egyptian court, while simultaneously appropriating Jewish marital praxis. Keeping the analysis simple, Wolfert-de Vries does not take the Jewishness of the document and its script as reflecting an entire religious community in fifth-century Egypt, but rather as the practice of a well-integrated couple who still wished to be socially distinguishable.[13]

One way of navigating the tension between Jewish groupism and more situational identification can be found in the contemporary fieldwork of Iddo Tavory in an Orthodox neighborhood in Los Angeles. His ethnographical study of the Orthodox Jewish residents shows an experiential density in which Jewishness is frequently activated by beggars, non-kosher smells, non-orthodox Jews, profane objects and pictures, and Orthodox neighbors looking for a minyan. Drawing upon interactional studies, Tavory stresses that "Orthodox Jews in the neighborhood were constantly *summoned*, brought into both interaction and existence as inhabiting a specific identification category."[14] On the one hand, Orthodox Jewishness can be seen as an identification category that is stable and preexisting; Tavory calls this the "maximalist position," in which an identity is always present and is unveiled in the summoning. On the other hand, Orthodox Jewishness can be seen as a membership category that is evoked and sustained in interaction; Savory calls this the "minimalist position," in which selfhood is seen as contingent and situational. "In the first case," Tavory explains, "summoning brings forth a preformed self; in the second, the act of summoning and its acceptance co-construct the summoned self within the act."[15] A workable moderate position would recognize the situational dynamic in which late antique Jews are summoned, while simultaneously taking into account that the acceptance of a summons means to embrace a set of normative expectations concerning behavior within and beyond the situation. In other words, Metra, Samuel, and their families activated—and appealed to—an identification that carried meaning beyond the immediate legal action of getting married (Wolfert-de Vries, p. 176). While we do not know how Jewish their everyday lives looked (the critique on postulated groupism and a correlation between exterior and interior identification reminds us to critically examine this assumption), it would be a mistake to see this situation as only an isolated and short-lived episode. Rather, summoning leads to "intersituational" identifications and classifications based on previous situated choices. The neighbors and witnesses of Metra's and Samuel's lives may have started to think about the couple in Jewish terms during or after the wedding, expecting certain predictable patterns of behavior that carried the double connotation of Jewishness and Greco-Egyptian society.

Expectation management is one of the core functions of ancient letters. Expectations were managed in epistolary formulas, introductory greetings, and other politeness strategies; these literary devices placed personal and business letters within the framework of a new or existing relationship. Letters, therefore, shed light on intersituational practices by which the author tried to establish a framework for future interactions. Piwowarczyk illustrates this point in his analysis of how quotations of and allusions to biblical texts contribute to the creation of a "common space of shared values" (p. 250). Likewise, Cromwell shows how authors used expressions that carried an impression of familiarity and friendship to establish social connections. These phrases and formulas were not meant as self-identification, but rather aimed for what the sociologists Cooper and Brubaker called a sense of commonality and connectedness: "'Commonality' denotes the sharing of some common attribute, 'connectedness' the relational ties that link people."[16] One does not have to look very far to realize that the strategies used to establish commonality and connectedness in some late antique letters may not have always served their purpose. It remains highly questionable whether the citation of John 10:30 ("I and my Father are one") in O.Frange 38, ll. 2–11 actually succeeded in evoking groupness. The Manichaean usage of prayer formulas directed towards "the Father, the God of Truth" has to be evaluated along the same lines, keeping in mind the different connotations of the phrase for various audiences (Brand, p. 3). Cooper and Brubaker suggest that commonality and connectedness only lead to groupness when they are supplemented by a feeling of belonging. Such feelings are alluded to in some of the politeness strategies in the papyri, but their setting within hierarchical administrative relationships suggests something else. As Cromwell shows, the use of phrases such as "sincere friend" and the self-humbling "your servant" in letters between Islamic officials and local Egyptians after the seventh century are part of "the strategies employed to reduce friction and help ensure that objectives are achieved" (Cromwell, p. 239). The phrases that aimed for connectedness probably did not contribute to any type of groupness, although they may have allowed the author to maneuver a situation in his or her favor. Scheerlinck's analysis of episcopal cursing and excommunication letters from the Islamic period in Egypt also highlights the risk authors undertook when they designed their letters with a very specific audience and aim in mind. As with other letters appealing to commonality or connectedness, the episcopal letters may have failed to achieve their intended purpose. The bishop's curse and threat of excommunication could backfire and thereby fundamentally affect his authority and role within the local Christian community. Scholars must therefore pay attention to potential rhetorical aims behind phrases, formulas, and other politeness strategies, while also acknowledging our uncertainty of the audience's response.[17]

Situations

If religious identification was situational and politeness formulas were employed strategically by authors to frame relationships and ensure certain objectives, then what were these situations and objectives? When was religious affiliation considered to be a salient category? Two contributing authors have accepted Lahire's

proposal to follow individuals through various stages of life in depth. Sippel addresses the letters and business accounts of an Egyptian priest throughout his life, treating them as documents that reflect the needs of a particular situation. He argues that the Egyptian priest presented himself to his familial audience in Pano-polis by using religious repertoire and clothing to achieve a favorable response. In one situation, the priest Ammon's aim was to impress his peers and to evoke a specific self-perception in speech and dress, not to express a distinct religious identity. Two other situations involved conflict, a trial, and a petition to the gover-nor. The violent response to Ammon's self-presentation in Egyptian priestly dress shows that wrong representational choices may have had heavy consequences, especially since visible identity markers are less easy to overlook. This situation-ality of Ammon's social and religious roles may come across as *strategic*, but probably derived from the desire to "present himself each time in the way he deemed most appropriate, based on his experiences" in previous situations (p. 206). Sippel's analysis also stresses the urban and upper-class background of Ammon's letters and petitions, placing him and his family in a setting shared with very few *ordinary* individuals of his time.

Tutty explicitly refers to Lahire's "sociology of the individual" when she high-lights the prominent role of the monk Sansnos in at least sixteen letters from the Nag Hammadi Codices' cartonnage material. These letters show Sansnos in vari-ous settings, with associated variation in language use and terminology. Particu-larly interesting is a situation in which a female (possibly non-Christian) author addressed two monks without any visible reverence for their status, conveying the impression of a practical economic relationship outside the frames of religious identification. One wonders whether the entire archive of Frange would show him involved in similar situations. Further examination of the text by Frange without biblical quotations can potentially offer a broader framework to evaluate the acti-vation of religious and monastic identities in light of situational needs. This analy-sis, in turn, could be compared with Tutty's observation that the fourth-century monks had dispositions that were "turned off in order to conform to the demands of monastic life," while certain family and social situations asked for the reactiva-tion of these dispositions (p. 157). Transition periods and the sudden reactivation of family socialization sparked tension, as seen in various monastic regulations.[18] A broader reading of early monastic letters from this perspective will probably provide an alternative interpretation to religious identification, since monasticism has commonly been perceived in terms of the totalizing demands described in prescriptive and literary texts.

One pivotal fact to observe regarding the situational activation of religious identities is that religiously marked language is relatively absent in legal and busi-ness documents. Cromwell, for example, points out that Islamic elites addressing Egyptian subjects—regardless of their religion—usually employed strong and abrupt language, many imperatives, and no politeness markers. This may have had more to do with social hierarchy than religious differentiation, but Hueb-ner made a similar observation about business transactions. She states that situa-tions with non-Christian business partners did not call for an activated religious

identification, as he "follows the expected style sending greetings as his pagan peers would" (p. 132). This situational decision was strategic, according to Huebner, and "his religious identity was probably not flexible" (p. 132). Thinking about religious identification as *domain specific* also aids the analysis of a Manichaean repertoire in the letters from Kellis, in which religious identification was largely confined to family letters and almost entirely absent in economic transactions and business letters.[19] The distinction of business vs. private letters is, however, treacherous, as many of the so-called private letters contained information related to the exchange of essential economic and financial goods. The two most religiously marked Manichaean letters from Kellis (one even appealing to the "Light Mind") easily straddle the business/private dichotomy. Both contain requests for the financial and material support of the elect and are embedded within prayer formulas (P.Kellis V Copt. 31 and 32). Their religiously marked language has a fundraising purpose. Anastasia Maravela has also observed this rhetorical function in the scriptural discourse of early Christian letters:

> Early Christian writers of private letters made skillful use of the appropriate rhetorical means to achieve their ends (debt cancellation, forgiveness for moral transgressions, etc.) no matter how trivial their everyday affairs or how modest their rhetoric may appear when compared to literary products.[20]

Indeed, biblical quotations in letters could be adapted specifically for fundraising purposes, although allusions and quotations designed for a specific audience only served a persuasive purpose when the author and recipient both considered the text authoritative.[21] Piwowarczyk helpfully stresses the potential pitfalls of using quotations—what Scheerlinck calls the "double-edged" quality of quotation use. The use of scriptural quotations or allusions may have established a common space of shared values and fostered a sense of community, but it is just as likely that quotations were used to enhance the authority of the author, thereby alienating correspondents, rather than bringing them together. Further comparative work could analyze how threats with a religious background worked in different societies, juxtaposing Frange's Christian (early Islamic) setting with the tenth- to twelfth-century setting of Scheerlinck's curse and excommunication letters.

   The final set of contributing authors considers the deliberate audience design of letters in relation to questions of secrecy and concealment, which seem to play a major role in the modern assessment of the absence of religiously marked phrases. Frankfurter strongly resists a narrative that says Christian group identification was affected by persecution, as if "persecutions and religious edicts inspired oppositional Christian identities of the internal sort" (p. 31). Modern studies of Islamic migrants, however, have shown how classification and stereotyping can stimulate increased religious groupness, as well as a stronger Muslim self-identification.[22] Maltreatment and formal classification by outsiders may have similarly affected Christian, Jewish, Manichaean, and "pagan" self-identification, but detecting this process in the papyrological record is difficult. Luijendijk echoes an earlier publication by Ewa Wipszycka in stating that it would have been impossible for

Christians to keep their religious identity concealed in a local village setting: no one could escape the eyes of the neighbors.[23] On the other side of the spectrum, Papaconstantinou includes concealment in her explanation of the continuing—yet less visible—presence of Jews in Egypt. Likewise, earlier examiners of the Manichaean letters from Kellis have stressed a background of religious persecution.[24] The editors of the Coptic papyri described the personal letters as "written against a backdrop of persecution (ⲇⲓⲱⲅⲙⲟⲥ 22.73) in their authors' lives."[25] Indeed, one letter warns the recipients, "Do not let it stay with you, it may fall into somebody's hands."[26] While it is tempting to relate this passage to religiously motivated persecution, it is more likely that difficult economic or family situations played a role.[27] Literary and hagiographical narratives of suffering and persecution have shaped our expectations of Manichaean, Christian, and Jewish lives in certain periods.[28] The papyri may attest to situations of religious maltreatment, but this does not fully confirm insider narratives. People may have practiced concealment occasionally, but we should not imagine that individuals and families were afraid of being identified by the general population as Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Manichaean, or "pagan."[29]

Multiple Identities and Crossing Group Boundaries

While reflecting on the various positions in this volume regarding religious identities, I was reminded of Amartya Sen's warning against the "conceptual confusion" by which "multidimensional human beings [are turned] into one-dimensional creatures."[30] The Nobel Prize laureate states: "To see a person exclusively in terms of only one of his or her many identities is, of course, a deeply crude intellectual move."[31] In ancient history, however, this deeply crude intellectual move is one of the few tools we have to describe and analyze ancient religiosity. The contributors to this volume have all stressed the various ways this move is made in antiquity and modern scholarship. Their main message is not a rejection of specific research focus, but rather a caution against overemphasizing the religious identities and a much-needed warning that our focus and the documentary record are skewed towards religiosity, concealing instances characterized by unactivated religious identities.

Separate from instances of self-identification, many contributors have pointed to official labeling of individuals in papyri (Huebner, Luijendijk, Cromwell, and Papaconstantinou). Most frequently, these labels connected individuals with their occupation or position, rather than directly pinpointing an interior religious identification. Documents with fiscal and administrative objectives sometimes labeled individuals as Christians, as in the case of Dioscorus, which was similar to Jewish identifications in sixth- and seventh-century texts. The "crude move" in these instances of formal classification is not the result of the conceptual confusion Sen warned against. Rather, they point to the multiple identities of ancient individuals. Luijendijk, Huebner, and Tutty have explicitly examined the multiple identifications of Christian elites. In their local environments, they could be called upon for civic duties in which their financial or social status was the salient membership

category, rather than their religious standing. The multiplicity of social roles—or multiple dispositions, to use Lahire's terminology—does not come as a surprise, but it does stand in tension with the totalizing religious voices of late antiquity. Papyrology, as no other discipline, is able to highlight the fuzzy messiness of everyday life, thereby countering a tendency to regard late antiquity as "an exotic territory, populated by wild monks and excitable virgins and dominated by the clash of religions, mentalities and lifestyles."[32] By placing religious identifications among other roles and membership categories, we remind ourselves that the study of late antiquity "is always structured by ideological commitments. Not least of these is the commitment to integrate 'religion' as a central component of the lives of people in the late antique past."[33]

Amuletic texts, in which Seth and Jesus could be called upon in the same sentence, have traditionally provided the most striking instances of religious group boundary crossing. During the 2017 conference on religious identifications in late antique papyri, Joseph Sanzo analyzed Jewishness in amuletic texts and urged us to rethink the connection between our modern classifications and the ancient connotations of words, phrases, and symbols. What we immediately recognize as Jewish may well have been seen as Christian or used generally as powerful and efficacious names. It may be fruitful to extend Sanzo's observations, which unfortunately could not be included in the final version of this volume, to the study of biblical and Qur'anic quotations in amuletic texts.[34] Although modern readers tend to take quotations from the Qur'an as direct markers of an Islamic background, Ursula Bsees suggests that ancient peoples perceived the quotations to be efficacious because of the Kufi script and its association with the new Arab rulers of Egypt.[35] In these instances, scholars label a text within a modern category, while ancient connotations may have been strikingly different. Avdokhin's criticism of the groupism in studies of hymnic manuscripts dovetails with these remarks on religious boundary crossing. When scholars classify segments of hymnic text that reuse, borrow, or travel and assume that these texts cross the boundaries between religious communities, it is primarily about modern taxonomies, rather than about ancient group borders and the intentions of scribes. Avdokhin's alternative focus on scribal agency requires fewer assumptions about religious and hymnic communities. It helps to distinguish more clearly what Brubaker called "categories of analysis" and "categories of practice," without denying the potential impact of songs on the formation of religious groupness. As with amuletic texts and repertoires, hymnic collections were the result of scribal compilation, a process that Avdokhin describes as "intellectually-driven collection of ritual texts" (p. 54) and that was presumably based on the perceived efficacy of the texts and the desire to display erudite knowledge.

Opportunities

As I look back on this volume and the conference that preceded it, I see some topics that could be further developed in future studies on the crossroads of papyrology, history, and the study of religion. The infrequency of substantial discussions

on the visual and material characteristics of manuscripts stands out. If religious identifications depended on situational factors, the material characteristics of manuscripts may shed light on the context of texts. The folding of a papyrus, the use of paratextual features, and the outline and handwriting of the text provide basic information about the performative dimensions of writing, transmitting, reading, and composing a letter.[36] Cromwell's examination of the introduction and use of oblique strokes is a case in point. While these strokes were not solely used by Muslims, as previously thought, they are nevertheless a post-conquest scribal innovation that connoted the official status of a document, "linking them with the non-Christian rulers, and therefore imbuing the document with greater authority" (p. 234). Arabic legal documents from the same period sometimes contained handwritten marginal notes that added Qur'an quotations and formulas expressing the personal devotion of the scribe. The author added these marginal notes and quotations as a call upon God to hold him responsible for the correctness of the document. Usually placed at the beginning of the text, just before the witness signatures, in the judge's remarks, or after the name of the scribe, the notes authenticated the documents without making them the full equivalent of a legal contract. In at least one instance, the marginal note "God is enough for me, and He suffices" (P.Vente 6.1) may have replaced a human witness in the sale of a slave girl.[37] The perlocutionary function of this formula was further stressed by its position and handwritten format. Likewise, in Luijendijk's analysis of Leon's letter, the strikingly large letters convey significance. It is through the incorporation of such visual and material features that papyrus texts become the most valuable sources for the study of situational communication.

Several contributions touch upon "visual self-indexing" in clothing and other commodities, such as oil lamps. Tutty refers to the shaved heads of Pachomian monks, following the example of earlier "pagan" Egyptian priests, and Papaconstantinou notes extant pendants representing a menorah or similar symbols on funerary inscriptions. Sippel ends his chapter with some excellent questions about dress code and the unspoken expectations about priestly hairstyles and shaving, opening the door for further historical questions about visual and situational identification.

One limitation of the present volume is that it numerically favors the study of ancient Christianity. While we set out to present a broad comparative perspective, the majority of contributors draw upon texts from the wider ancient Christian tradition. This pattern is indicative of the state of the field, as papyrologists' fascination has long been closely associated with Christianity and the history of the Bible. The late nineteenth-century papyrologists Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt expressed this fascination when they wrote about the newly discovered biblical fragments at Oxyrhynchus as those "papyri which we most desired to find."[38] As a result of this history, large numbers of Christian texts have been published, although some were reinterpreted and reclassified over the last few decades (as the example of P.Harr. 107 shows). This widening perspective beneficially shaped the contributions to this volume, which include discussions of Manichaeans, Gnostics, Jews, and "pagans," as well as Muslims and Christians from the early

medieval period. For comparative reasons, we would also like to highlight the importance of the growing field of Arabic papyrology.[39]

Despite open questions, this volume's content gives ample opportunity for comparative reflection. What were the differences and similarities in the self-identification of Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Manichaeans? How do the various disciplines engage with the manifold identification processes in papyri? Having already stressed the prominent place of Christianity within the study of papyri, it is only fair to focus on the other religion that would come to fundamentally define Egyptian society: Islam.

A deep chasm divides the study of Greek and Arabic papyri. While Greek papyri pertaining to Christianity have been the object of study since the nineteenth century, Islamic papyri from Egypt have only recently taken the limelight. No specific archaeological missions set out to find Arabic papyri to study Islam as Grenfell and Hunt set out to find Greek papyri to study the Bible. As a consequence, fewer Arabic papyri have been published, and the number of specialists remains relatively small. Scholars took important steps to rectify the situation by founding the International Society for Arabic Papyrology in March 2002 and publishing the Arabic Papyrology Database in June 2004.[40] Due to these circumstances, scholars studying papyri that contain early references to Islam have been aware of multiple religious and linguistic settings in late antique Egypt and have frequently integrated Greek, Coptic, and Arabic in their analysis.[41] Novel insights about the Arabization of late antique Egypt and the relationship between Christians and Muslims will therefore continue to shape our perspectives of religious interaction and identification.[42]

During the conference that inspired this volume, Petra Sijpesteijn examined the use of *tasliya* formulas in Arabic letters, which she marked as an indicator of Shia identification. While at first glance, one sees the Islamic connotations of blessings for the Prophet and his family, a recent study of marked Islamic formulas shows that Christians appropriated and adapted Islamic formulas in Arabic letters, even employing the *basmala* formula, "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate."[43] Likewise, it stands to reason that the most common blessings, such as "May God bless Muhammed, his servant," were used widely and were used not only by Muslims.[44] Specific additional phrases concerning the family of the Prophet may have been used to create groupness and express a specific religious stance, as Sijpesteijn suggested, especially since the Islamic world after the ninth century had grown into a global network.

The use of Arabic and the inclusion of Islamic formulas was not exclusive to Muslims. In the almost 900 Jewish letters from the Cairo Genizah written in Arabic, Hebrew, or Aramaic, 54 letters employed the formula "in your name, oh Merciful," which has Aramaic roots but reverberates with the Islamic *basmala*.[45] The *basmala* was used in 37 Jewish letters in Arabic, suggesting that "for a Jewish writer of the 11th century, writing an Arabic-script letter meant accepting the *basmala* when writing to another Jew, just as it was used addressing a Muslim."[46] In contradistinction to the dual usage of the Islamic *basmala*, as Karin Almbladh concludes, the relative infrequence of introductory formulas in Jewish letters

could mean that using such formulas was perceived as Islamic.[47] A minority of the Arabic Jewish letters written in Hebrew script contain significantly more quotations from the Tanakh, sometimes replacing the *basmala*.[48] Daniel Potthast has suggested that "their scribes tried to ensure their peculiar Jewish identity in a double way—not only by writing Arabic in Hebrew script, but also by eliminating all references to other religions."[49] The Christian letters from the same period are much harder to identify, as they did not use any different script and frequently adopted Islamic formulas. At times, Christian authors added signs or phrases connoting a specifically Christian identification, such as the sign of the cross or a formula addressing "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."[50]

The religious differentiation in Arabic letters, however, has to be evaluated diachronically in light of the Arabization of Egypt and the ongoing negotiation between the Egyptian population and their Arab overlords. Potthast's analysis of 780 Arabic letters from the seventh to tenth centuries suggests that letters written during and after the ninth century begin to lack signs of specific religious identification. Jews, Christians, and Muslims employed monotheistic formulas that did not contain the more explicit markers found in eighth-century letters. Potthast concludes that only a small number of scribes felt the need to highlight their religion by using special formulas, qur'anic quotations, or Coptic or Hebrew script.[51] In fact, only a very small number of letters cited the Qur'an, suggesting that it "did not play an important role in the matters of daily life with which the letters were concerned."[52] While this observation dovetails with Rebillard's observation that Christian identity was only infrequently salient in late antique North Africa, it does not indicate a decreasing importance of religion. Rather, it reminds us of the leap that is required to apply a "groupism" research focus to the epistolary and scribal habits of late antiquity and warns us of the ever-present risk of overinterpretation.

***

We hope to have shown how religious identifications and our academic classification of texts and people are, as Youthie described, like "facts" being "made and remade" by papyrologists. Throughout this volume, we have seen such religious identifications "changing their shapes, their sizes, [and] their complexions as scholars grow in knowledge, skill, and subtlety."[53] This volume is therefore an invitation to take up the challenge of situational religious identification, to rethink current approaches to personal and group identity, and to incorporate more social-scientific insights into the study of late antique papyri.[54]

Notes

1 H. C. Youtie, "The Papyrologist: Artificer of Fact," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 4 (1963): 32.
2 Ibid., 21.
3 Ibid., 24. Compare this description with the more recent characterization of Paul Schubert: "the task of a scholar who undertakes the edition of a papyrus resembles that of a detective." P. Schubert, "Editing a Papyrus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 197.

4 D. G. Martinez, "The Papyri and Early Christianity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 604.

5 P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Arabic Papyri and Islamic Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 463.

6 Youtie, "The Papyrologist," 32.

7 S. K. Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 248.

8 In an earlier study, Luijendijk places the text in the context of Christian scribal education. A. Luijendijk, "A New Testament Papyrus and Its Owner: P.Oxy. II 209/P10, an Early Christian School Exercise from the Archive of Leonides," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010): 583.

9 Luijendijk, "A New Testament Papyrus and Its Owner," 583.

10 S. R. Huebner, *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 22.

11 R. Cribiore, "Education in the Papyri," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 320–37; J. R. Strawbridge, "A School of Paul? The Use of Pauline Texts in Early Christian Schooltext Papyri," in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, eds. M. R. Hauge and A. W. Pitts (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 173–75.

12 See the critical questions about the size of (early) church buildings in R. Macmullen, *The Second Church. Popular Christianity AD 200–400* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

13 Interestingly, there is still one passage in which Wolfert-de Vries designates Metra, Samuel, and their families (and associated scribes) as "the Jews involved in the drawing up of the Ketubba of Cologne" (pp. 179–80).

14 I. Tavory, *Summoned. Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 6.

15 Ibid., 9.

16 R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 20.

17 Piwowarczyk's remarks concerning O.Frange 173 are another case in point. Although the text cites (or alludes to) the Old Testament story of Dina's rape, employing it to condemn a female recipient, Piwowarczyk notes that she cannot have been expected to know the story.

18 B. Layton, "Rules, Patterns, and the Exercise of Power in Shenoute's Monastery: The Problem of World Replacement and Identity Maintenance," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2007): 45–73.

19 M. Brand, "Speech Patterns as Indicators of Religious Identities: The Manichaean Community in Late Antique Egypt," in *Sinews of Empire: Networks in the Roman Near East and Beyond*, eds. H. F. Teigen and E. Heldaas Seland (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 105–19.

20 A. Maravela, "Scriptural Literacy Only? Rhetoric in Early Christian Papyrus Letters," in *Proceedings of the 28th Congress of Papyrology, Barcelona 1–6 August 2016*, eds. A. Nodar and S. Torallas Tovar (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2019), 174.

21 E.g. P.Lond IV 1915, P. Oxy VIII 1161, SB Kopt III 1310.

22 See the literature cited in R. Brubaker, "Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 1–8.

23 E. Wipszycka, "La christianisation de l'Egypte aux IVe—VIe siècles. Aspects sociaux et ethniques," *Aegyptus* 68 (1988): 117–20. Malcolm Choat takes a similar position on the possibility that fourth-century pagans attempted to conceal their religious stance. M. Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 20–21, and 143.

24 J-D. Dubois, "L'implantation des manichéens en Égypte," in *Les communautés religieuses dans le monde greco-romain*, ed. N. Belayche (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 295; Explicitly in I. Gardner and S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 110 stating "members of the sect migrated to the Dakhleh Oasis to avoid persecution."

25 I. Gardner, A. Alcock, and W. P. Funk, *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis. Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1999), 81.

26 P.Kellis V Copt. 31.54, tr. Gardner. Moreover, the observed anonymity of some of the letters "can at least in part be explained as a deliberate policy employed by a community under threat of persecution." Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis. Volume 1*, 207. In recent publications, Gardner has attributed the anonymity to the Manichaean epistolary tradition.

27 M. Brand, *Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans in Kellis* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 113; C. Römer, "Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Papyri," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 641.

28 Brand, "In the Footsteps of the Apostles of Light." Huebner sees more connections between the papyrological record and the persecution narratives. S. R. Huebner, "Soter, Sotas, and Dioscorus before the Governor: The First Authentic Court Record of a Roman Trial of Christians?" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12, no. 1 (2019): 2–24.

29 Paraphrasing E. Rebillard, "Expressing Christianness in Carthage in the Second and Third Centuries," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 3, no. 1 (2017): 129 who concludes that "there is little basis for the claim that the known cases of 'persecution' are only the 'tip of the iceberg' and that daily persecution is the rule."

30 A. Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 174.

31 Ibid., 175.

32 A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395–600* (London: Routledge, 1993), 6.

33 T. E. Hunt, "Religion in Late Antiquity—Late Antiquity in Religion," in *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. J. Lössl and N. Baker-Brian (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 20.

34 See therefore his earlier J. E. Sanzo, "Prayer and Incantation on Early Christian Amulets: Authoritative Traditions, Ritual Practices, and Material Objects," in *Civilizations of the Supernatural: Witchcraft, Ritual, and Religious Experience in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Traditions*, ed. F. Conti (Budapest: Trivent, 2020), 99–116.

35 U. Bsees, "Qurʾānic Quotations in Arabic Papyrus Amulets," in *Qurʾān Quotations Preserved on Papyrus Documents, 7th–10th Centuries: And the Problem of Carbon Dating Early Qurʾāns*, eds. A. Kaplony and M. Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 119. This can be observed in P.Utah.Ar. 342. W. M. Malczycki, "A Qurānic Amulet on Papyrus: P.Utah.Ar. 342," in *Documents and the History of the Early Islamic World*, eds. P. M. Sijpesteijn and A. T. Schubert (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 240.

36 On the "referential dimension", see E. M. Grob, *Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters on Papyrus: Form and Function, Content and Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), xvii, and 100–4. The ERC project "Everyday writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt: A socio-semiotic study of communicative variation" at Ghent University will examine some of these variations in more depth. K. Bentein and Y. Amory, "Everyday Writing in Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Egypt: Outline of a New Research Programme," *COMSt Bulletin* 5, no. 1 (2019): 17–27.

37 L. Sonego, "Qurʾān Quotations in Papyrus Legal Documents," in *Qurʾān Quotations Preserved on Papyrus Documents, 7th–10th Centuries: And the Problem of Carbon Dating Early Qurʾāns*, eds. A. Kaplony and M. Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 93.

38 Cited in L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 5n17. For this Christian history of papyrology, as well Grenfell and Hunt's popularity and their approach to the excavation of Oxyrhynchus, see B. Nongbri, *God's Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

39 See later. In particular, the studies in Kaplony and Marx, ed., *Qurʾān Quotations Preserved on Papyrus Documents*.

40 Arabic Papyrology Database www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp (accessed March 2020). An important publication is the *Checklist of Arabic Documents,* www.naher-osten.lmu.de/isapchecklist (Last Update 23 July 2019) by Petra M. Sijpesteijn, John F. Oates (†), Andreas Kaplony, Eva M. Youssef-Grob and Daniel Potthast.

41 P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Arabic Papyri and Islamic Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. S. Bagnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 452–72; P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Multilingual Archives and Documents in Post-Conquest Egypt," in *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ʿAbbasids*, ed. A. Papaconstantinou (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 105–26; P. M. Sijpesteijn and A. T. Schubert, eds., *Documents and the History of the Early Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

42 P. M. Sijpesteijn and L. Sundelin, eds., *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); P. M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

43 K. Almbladh, "The 'Basmala' in Medieval Letters in Arabic Written by Jews and Christians," *Orientalia Suecana* 59 (2010): 59.

44 For a list with references, see D. Potthast, "Qurʾān Quotations in Arabic Papyrus Letters from the 7th to the 10th Centuries," in *Qurʾān Quotations Preserved on Papyrus Documents, 7th–10th Centuries: And the Problem of Carbon Dating Early Qurʾāns*, eds. A. Kaplony and M. Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 50–51.

45 Almbladh, "The 'Basmala' in Medieval Letters," 47.

46 Ibid., 48.

47 Ibid.

48 Potthast, "Qurʾān Quotations in Arabic Papyrus Letters," 69–70.

49 Ibid., 70.

50 Almbladh, "The 'Basmala' in Medieval Letters," 59.

51 Potthast, "Qurʾān Quotations in Arabic Papyrus Letters," 50 and 73. It is, for example, noteworthy that the most distinctive Islamic boundary marker, the second part of the *sahada*, stating that Muhammed is God's messenger, is not attested in papyrus letters.

52 Potthast, "Qurʾān Quotations in Arabic Papyrus Letters," 65. This decreasing trend in explicit religious identification—and increasing usage of monotheistic phrases—can be compared and contrasted with the increasing explicit Christian connotation of the ambiguous formulas "god knows" and praying "night and day" in the fourth century. A. M. Nobbs, "Formulas of Belief in Greek Papyrus Letters of the Third and Fourth Centuries," In *Ancient History in a Modern University*, eds. T. W. Hillard, R. A. Kearsley, C. E. V. Nixon, and A. M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University and William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 233–37.

53 Youtie, "The Papyrologist," 32.

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