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Abstract and Keywords

Although "magical" amulets are often overlooked in studies of early Christian material culture, they provide unique insight into the lives of early Christians. The high number of amulets that survive from antiquity, their presence in domestic and mortuary archaeological contexts, and frequent discussions of amulets in Late Antique literary sources indicate that they constituted an integral part of the fabric of religious life for early Christians. The appearance of Christian symbols on amulets, beginning in the second century and occurring with increasing frequency in the fourth century and afterward, reveals the increasing perception of Christian symbols as ritually potent among Christians and others in the Roman Empire. The forms, texts, and images on amulets reveal the fears and hopes that occupied the daily lives of early Christians, when amulets designed for ritual efficacy if not orthodoxy were believed to provide a defense against forces that would harm body and soul.

Keywords: amulet, symbol, ritual, magic, orthodoxy

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IF late Roman amulets are to be believed, then the dangers stalking early Christians and their neighbors were manifold and omnipresent. The texts and images on amulets offer protection from disease, pain, aggressive magic, physical attack, and demonic onslaught, as well as other threats to body and soul. Such apotropaic objects were particularly employed when the dangers were beyond the control of individuals, states, or institutions, and when the precise threat was as yet unknown. The texts, forms, and images employed on amulets give shape to the thoughts and concerns that occupied the waking hours and anxious nights of early Christians—subjects that rarely appear in more public artistic media.

Importantly for the study of early Christianity, protective amulets display what are thought to be some of the earliest appearances of distinctively Christian symbols, some dated as early as the late second to third century, where they appear alongside Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Jewish names and symbols. The appearance of Christian symbols among other ritually potent, religiously diverse symbols suggests the gradual emergence of a popular perception that the Christian God and associated celestial beings, saints, names, and symbols were effective when deployed for defense against maleficent forces. Parallel to the spread of Christianity, amulets dated to the fourth through sixth centuries typically feature more prominent, and often exclusive, uses of Christian symbols, names, and texts. The eventual dominance of Christian symbols on Mediterranean magical amulets in the Late Antique period suggests that the greatest number of consumers came to regard Christian symbols as the most effective means to protect the bearer from harm.

The syncretistic and "magical" character of many amulets with Christian symbols, names, and ritual texts should not be understood to indicate that such objects were exceptional or marginal to the lives of early Christians. The large number of amulets that (p. 352) survive in multiple forms, the frequent discussions of such objects in Roman and Christian texts, the descriptions of amulets in books of magic, and the discovery of such objects in household contexts suggest that amulets formed part of the fabric of the daily lives of Christians and other Romans in Late Antiquity, as de Bruyn discusses in a recent study (2017, 1–42). Amulets thus open a window into quotidian religiosity in the late Roman world, where dangers were countered with wearable objects containing words and images of ritual power employed for their perceived efficacy—and not necessarily their religious orthodoxy.

Although amulets hold significant potential for the study of the everyday lives of early Christians, two factors present significant challenges for interpretation. First, most amulets in museums and private collections are unprovenanced and thus lack archaeological context. Indeed, some of the best-known gemstone and bronze amulets have been circulating in collections since the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and have only a reported region of acquisition (Bonner 1950). In cases where amulets come from archaeological excavations, many were published in the early to mid-twentieth century, when such objects did not merit much attention from excavators and thus commentary on the context of their discovery is minimal (e.g., Davidson 1952, 244–45, nos. 1947–53; 260, nos. 2100–4). More recent excavations, such as those in the latter twentieth century at Anemurium in present-day Turkey, have paid closer attention to the contexts in which amulets were discovered (Russell 1995). The continued contextualization of excavated amulets will likely enhance our understanding of how early Christians and other Romans used such objects.

The second, related challenge in the use of amulets in the study of early Christianity is dating them. While some amulets, such as those from Anemurium, can be dated from archaeological context (Russell 1995), and some unprovenanced gemstone amulets can be dated from the appearance of historical figures such as Roman emperors (Spier 2007a, 11–14), most are dated on stylistic grounds. Style-based dating of amulets tends to place

amulets within a fairly broad chronological range, typically one to two centuries. The stylistic dating of amulets can also be rather circular and self-confirming. Thus, the dating of unprovenanced amulets is often open to challenge and interpretation. However, it appears likely that further discoveries of amulets in secure archaeological contexts will continue to refine the dating of such objects and consequently offer enhanced opportunities for the use of amulets to better understand Christianity, magic, and everyday religiosity in Late Antiquity.

The Form and Function of Amulets

The English word "amulet" comes from the Latin *amuletum* (pl. *amuleta*), a term uncommon in Latin literature but one that Pliny employs to describe an object worn for defense, particularly against sorcery, *veneficiorum amuleta* (Pliny *H.N.* 29.19, Lewis and Short 1955, s.v. "amuletum"). Although the origins of the Latin term are unknown, the (p. 353) existence of the Arabic cognate *hamalet* suggested to Flinders Petrie, in one of the earliest modern studies of amulets, that the Romans may have borrowed the term from the Carthaginians (Petrie 1972, 1). Pliny's use of the Latin term is semantically similar to the widely used Greek term φυλακτήριον (pl. φυλακτήρια), which is rooted in the Greek verb φυλάσσω, "to guard," and is found in numerous instructions for making amulets in the Greek Magical Papyri, on lamellae (folded pieces of papyrus or metal), and in literary sources (Liddel, Scott, and Jones 1996, s.v. φυλακτήριον n. 2, n. 3). Other terms in use among early Christians and their neighbors include the Greek περίαπτα and περιάμματα, terms that describe objects tied around the body, including pieces of colored thread (Bonner 1950, 3–4). A few examples of Aramaic amulets written on soft metal, dated to the fifth to sixth centuries, refer to themselves as a קמיע טב, oporp" rer amulet" (Naveh and Shaked 1985, 45 no. 2, 55 no. 4). While Christians and other Romans appear to have worn a wide variety of objects as amulets, those that survive with Christian symbols, names, images, or ritual texts can be divided into several main types. These types include carved gemstones, engraved bronze or other hard metal amulets, and lamellae worn for protection. To these we should add pilgrimage souvenirs that depict holy sites, biblical stories, and holy men for the reason that some pilgrimage souvenirs could also be worn for protection and healing and, in some cases, souvenirs utilized imagery familiar from other forms of magical amulets, such as the Holy Rider and Chnoubis images (Vikan 1984, 81–86).

The earliest examples of amulets with Christian symbols and texts belong to the category of late Roman "magical" amulets. Such amulets date primarily from the second to sixth centuries, and those with Christian words and symbols appear as early as the late second century and occur in greater numbers in the third and fourth centuries (Delatte and Derchain 1964, 283–87; Michel 2001, 1:279–87; Spier 2007a, 14). Third- and fourth-century amulets with Christian symbols frequently feature them in combination with Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish sacred names, ritual terms and formulae, symbols, deities,

and allegorical representations. Although overt references to pagan deities on amulets diminished over time, amulets continued to employ esoteric words and images alongside well-known Christian symbols into the Middle Ages and beyond (Skeemer 2006).

Most Late Antique magical amulets feature Greek texts, although there are examples of papyrus and metal lamellae written in other languages, in particular Aramaic, Coptic, and Latin. In some cases, the ritual efficacy of the Greek text is enhanced by the use of other languages, in particular Aramaic or Hebrew (Bonner 1950, 39–44). However, in some cases, the second language is either poorly executed, merely asserted, or completely fabricated. For example, an amulet made for a certain Christian named Epiphanius asserts that it will adjure "in Hebrew," but what follows is a vaguely Semitic phrase of uncertain meaning (Jordan and Kotansky 1996, 167–71). The ritual efficacy of amulets is often enhanced by the use of vowel repetitions, invocations of angels, magic words, palindromes, and esoteric ring-signs or *charakteres* (Bonner 1950, 11–13; Cline 2011a, 66–74; Gager 1993, 3–12; Kotansky 1991; Versnel 2002). Secondary sympathetic symbols such as the suffering or "evil" eye and other images that reinforce the intention (p. 354) of the primary image and sacred names often appear on the reverse side or outer edges of the amulet (Bonner 1950, 97–100).

A significant portion of magical amulets feature divinities, angels, and demons that appear in so-called gnostic texts, such as the name Abrasax (Delatte and Derchain 1964, 23–42). Magical amulets also depict deities that are peculiar to amulets and similar esoteric media, such as the cock-headed *anguipede* with Roman breastplate and a shield that is often emblazoned with Ἰαώ, a Greek vocalization of YHWH (Bonner 1950, 1–44; Michel 2001, 1:374). The presence of such names and deities led early scholars of the objects to label many such amulets "gnostic," but as Campbell Bonner noted in his seminal work, the appropriateness of the term seems doubtful, in that the amulets do not appear to reflect the beliefs of any one religious system, gnostic or otherwise (Bonner 1950, 1–2). Rather, the guiding principle of amulet design appears to be the perceived efficacy of particular names and symbols for a specific purpose rather than adherence to a religious system (Janowitz 2002, 1–18). The use of Christian symbols in the late second and third centuries and the subsequent appearance of distinctively Christian amulets in the fourth century and afterward reflect the emergence of consumers for whom Christian symbols, words, and stories were uniquely powerful.

Magic and the Ritual Power of Amulets

Amulets and similar objects appear to have been familiar items in the lives of ancient Greeks and Romans (Faraone 1999, 5–17). The popularity of such objects has led some to question the utility of the terms "magic" and "magical" when discussing such phenomena, given that "magic" suggests deviant, non-normative phenomena (Meyer and Smith 1994, 1–5). There are a number of distinctive features of such objects, however, that can justify the usefulness of "magic" and related terms to describe amulets—even if we should understand such "magical" practices to be part of the quotidian experiences of most residents of the Roman Empire. For example, textual evidence from the Roman period suggests there were specialists in the esoteric knowledge necessary to craft such objects, the word *magus/i* was used to designate such specialists, the word *magica* was used to describe their craft, and the makers of amulets and related objects were perceived as a threat by some authorities (Cline 2011a, 153–55; Dickie 2001; Frankfurter 2002, 159–78; Graf 1997, 20–117). Thus, Romans appear to have understood amulets as sources of ritual power distinct from more formal, liturgical means of accessing divine aid.

That is not to say that liturgical and amuletic sources of power did not sometimes overlap. The Synod of Laodicea's (c. 360) ban on clerics making amulets suggest that priests may have been the creators of some "magical" amulets, and the same synod's prohibition of Christians wearing amulets, which it describes as "prisons for their souls," (p. 355) indicates that some parishioners may have sought to avert harm both through the church and by means of magical amulets (Cline 2011a, 142–45). The reaction of the council at Laodicea may have been due to the Jewish ritual formulae of some amulets, as well as their frequent use of angel names and other potentially Christian ritual formulae in combination with invocations of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian deities—all of which are attested on amulets from the period (Cline 2011a, 145–153). However, the synod's anathemas of both the priestly making of such objects and Christians' wearing of them reveals the manner in which Christian authorities attempted to distinguish between legitimate clerical and liturgical sources of ritual power, on the one hand, and the illegitimate extra-ecclesiastical means of summoning divine aid, on the other—even as the two practices overlapped in the lives of Late Antique Christians.

In general, the use of esoteric names and symbols and the language of adjuration found on magical amulets distinguish them from more public and liturgical types of ritual invocation, such as those found on public inscriptions. However, this distinction does not always hold. Most famously, the Miletus archangel inscription depicts amulets on the outside of the theater, which was incorporated into the defensive walls of the Late Antique city. The highly visible inscription uses images of amulets, esoteric ring-signs, vowel sequences, and other potent, ritual enhancements to call upon archangels to protect the city and its inhabitants—most likely in order to avert disease or plague (Cline

2011b). Thus it would appear that in some cases, in certain circumstances, "magical" means of protection could be used in public ways to protect the public.

Indeed, although the Synod of Laodicea testifies to Christian authorities' opposition to amulets, certain amulets came to have church approval, such as pilgrimage souvenirs, wearable relics, and Christian symbols like the cross (Vikan 2010). Indeed, Clement of Alexandria's second-century testimony indicates that some authorities appear to have believed that amulets were not only tolerable but necessary for a Christian's well-being—although Christians should only use amulets with appropriately Christian symbols (Spier 2007a, 15). Clement's approval of some amulets coupled with the rejection of others finds parallels in Augustine, John Chrysostom, and other fourth- and fifth-century church fathers as well; such Christian authorities generally approved of their congregants using amulets with biblical texts but not amulets that featured pagan or mixed religious names and imagery (Stander 1993). That such eminent theologians should trouble to speak on the dangers of syncretistic amulets suggests that many in the congregation probably utilized such "magical" amulets.

In fact, the few controlled excavations of amulets indicate that such objects constituted part of everyday household religion. As James Russell describes in this summary of the excavation of a Late Antique domestic structure at Anemurium in present-day Turkey, a silver phylactery, a bronze oval Holy Rider amulet, a bronze amulet with the evil eye attached, and a glass paste amulet with the trisagion were found in the context of mixed household objects, coins, and pottery dated to the late sixth and early seventh centuries (Russell 1995, 46–47). Russell compares the assemblage to tombs excavated in Jordan and Palestine, where similar collections of household goods and apotropaic material have been found. For Russell, both the tombs and the household assemblage at (p. 356) Anemurium suggest that amulets formed part of the miscellany of useful objects in everyday life, much like the pots and other instruments that made up household material culture in the late Roman world. The excavation of a late Roman house at Butrint, in Roman Epirus Vetus, also suggests that amulets formed part of household and portable religious experience in Late Antiquity. There, in separate areas of the Triconch Palace, excavators found three amulets in stratified fifth- to sixth-century contexts: one depicting a snake-legged figure, one a bird, and one a cross in a circle. In addition, the excavators found a Holy Rider amulet in the excavation debris from the house (Mitchell 2007, 289–97). As John Mitchell has noted, the amulets from Butrint reveal something of the "everyday practices, beliefs, and mind-sets" of the occupants (Mitchell 2007, 289). Thus, while relatively few amulets come from datable, stratified contexts, those amulets do suggest that such objects were not employed by self-consciously deviant heretics or magicians but by ordinary Romans utilizing commonly available but ritually potent objects to thwart the powers that might do them harm.

Christian Words and Symbols on Gems and Bronze

A significant number of surviving amulets with Christian words and symbols were made from semiprecious gems or hard metals such as bronze. Since the mid-twentieth century, several comprehensive studies, museum exhibitions, and (more recently) web resources have enhanced our understanding of these types of amulets. Campbell Bonner laid the framework for subsequent studies with his *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Greco-Egyptian* (1950). Bonner's work consists of a systematic study of nearly four hundred metal and gemstone amulets held in European collections such as those at the British Museum and France's Bibliothèque Nationale, American collections such as those at the University of Michigan and the Walters Art Gallery, and numerous smaller and private collections. His study offers brief descriptions of each amulet, photographs, and lengthy chapters that analyze and categorize the major types of magical amulets, their probable origins, their purposes, and the religious influences on their creation. His work was a significant departure from the antiquarian research that characterized earlier publications and catalogs. Bonner's book remains a useful guide, and, significantly for the present chapter, his chapter on Palestinian, Syrian, and Christian amulets considers several types of amulets with Christian names and symbols, including early depictions of the cross, particular saints, scenes of the Annunciation, and Holy Rider types. The last is worthy of extra comment here.

The Holy Rider type makes up one of the largest subgroups of amulet produced on hard metal and gemstones. The earliest forms are usually dated to the third century and feature a mounted warrior sometimes identified as Solomon spearing a prostrate woman or demon (Bonner 1950, 208–12). The rider is typically surrounded by the (p. 357) inscription εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά ("one God who conquers evil"). Such amulets often feature the first words of Psalm 90 (Septuagint) in Greek and frequently invoke archangels by name, as well as Iao Sabaoth. Some are enhanced by the addition of the suffering eye on the reverse, referred to in the *Testament of Solomon* 18:39, a first- to fourth-century text that probably originated in a Jewish context before subsequent Christian reworking (Duling 1983, 945–57). The reverse sides of such amulets are often labeled σφραγὶς θεοῦ ("seal of God") in apparent reference to Solomon's seal ring, which granted him the power to imprison demons, according to post-biblical legend (*Testament of Solomon* 1:5–7). Not all rider amulets correspond precisely to this type, however. In the example in Figure 19.1, from Cyzicus in Asia Minor and dated to the late third century, the rider (presumably Solomon, as named in the inscription) spears a demon while accompanied by an angel, and the amulet is inscribed with the following formula (after Sorlin Dorigny 1891, 287; Cline 2011a, 152–53):

Μιχαήλ Γαβριήλ Οὐριήλ Ῥαφαὴλ διαφύλαξον τὸν φοροῦντα
Ἅγιος Ἅγιος Ἅγιος
ΠΙΠΙ *RPSS*
Ἄγγελος Ἀρααφ φεῦγε μιμισμένη Σολομών σε διώκι

Michael, Gabriel, Ouriel, Raphael, guard the bearer [of this amulet]
Holy, holy, holy

Figure 19.1 Illustration of Holy Rider amulet from Cyzicus.

(After Sorlin Dorigny 1891, 287)

PIPI RPSS
Angel Araaf! Flee, hated one! Solomon pursues you!

The reverse of the amulet in Figure 19.1 depicts the evil eye, perhaps about to be made to suffer by a lion, which is also trampling a woman, presumably the Angel Araaf speared by Solomon on the obverse and commanded to flee in the inscription. The reverse appears to depict solar and lunar deities while using the Trisagion from Isaiah 6:3 (Septuagint) to (p. 358) increase the efficacy of the call for protection. Thus, the amulet combines ritual elements drawn from Judaism and Greek religion.

While it is possible that a Christian wore the amulet pictured in Figure 19.1, there is nothing uniquely Christian about it. However, the material collected by Bonner also shows how the Solomon-type rider amulet was adapted to include distinctively Christian symbols and imagery. In Figure 19.2, the obverse of an amulet said to have been purchased in Syria depicts the Holy Rider spearing a female monster, and it employs symbols found in other examples of the type (Bonner 1950, 324; Bohak 1995, no. 32).

Figure 19.2 Christian Holy Rider amulet purchased in Syria (KM 26119, Bronze Amulet).

(Photo: Courtesy of Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan)

The image of the rider displays clear similarities to the Solomon amulet in Figure 19.1, but in this case the Christian identity of the rider is signaled by cross on the spear. In addition, the reverse features Christ enthroned in the heavens surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists, along with magical *charakteres*, the Trisagion, Psalm 90 (Septuagint), a lion, a crab, and other ritual enhancements.

There are many additional examples of Christian Holy Rider figures on amulets, where the features that distinguish them from the earlier Solomon type are the spear with the cross and a composition strongly evocative of later medieval depictions of St. George and similar warrior saints. One remarkable example of an amuletic bracelet or armband that appears in Bonner's study and was reportedly purchased in Syria features four medallions, one of which depicts a Christian Holy Rider in a manner much like the amulet in Figure 19.2. However, the bracelet combines the Holy Rider with one medallion engraved with the opening verse of Psalm 90 (Septuagint) and images associated with pilgrimage sites in Palestine: the Virgin and Child and the women at the tomb (Bohak 1995, no. 33; Bonner 1950, no. 321). The bracelet amulet thus combines a traditionally Jewish apotropaic biblical verse and a Christianized version of the Jewish Solomon amulet with the ritual power of the images of pilgrimage sites in the Holy Land.

(p. 359) The decades following Bonner's publication have witnessed several scholarly publications of museum collections of late Roman magical amulets (Delatte and Derchain 1964; Michel 2001; Philipp 1986; Zwierlein-Diehl 1992), catalogs of special exhibitions featuring amulets (Bohak 1995; Israeli and Mevorah 2000, 159–65; Maguire et al. 1989, 209–17; Spier 2007b, 227–32), well-illustrated studies of particular types of Late Antique amulets (Jones 2016; Naveh and Shaked 1985; Spier 2007a), English translations of ancient instructions for making amulets and related paraphernalia (Betz 1986; Meyer and Smith 1994), and the Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database, which aims to make the entire world corpus of magical gems available to the public on line. Due partly to such detailed publications, amulets have featured prominently in many late twentieth- and twenty-first-century studies of magic and ritual practices in the Roman world, a trend that seems likely to continue as scholars continue to examine the religious and social contexts of such objects (Bohak 2008; Faraone 2018; Kotansky 1991; Longenecker 2015, 100–105; Smith 1977, 61–62; Vikan 1984).

One of the first catalogs to follow Bonner's publication was Alain Delatte and Philippe Derchain's study of over five hundred magical amulets in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (1964). Their study included two examples of amulets that featured unambiguously Christian names and imagery alongside other words and images of ritual power. One invokes "Christos" on the obverse, accompanied by an image of three men inside a colonnaded structure, while the obverse features a snake-legged figure with a gorgonlike head (Delatte and Derchain 1964, 285, no. 406). The second example features a crucified man and invokes [υ]ἱέ [?], πατήρ, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ ("Son [?], Father, Jesus Christ") on the obverse, accompanied by letters and words of power, while the reverse features the name "Emmanuel" among other esoteric invocations (reading adapted from Spier 2007a, 73, no. 43; Delatte and Derchain 1964, 287, no. 408). Derchain, in the same year as the catalog's publication, argued in a separate publication that the gem with the crucifixion dated approximately to the third century, possibly as early as the second, which would make the amulet the earliest surviving depiction of the crucifixion of Christ (Derchain 1964, 109–13). Josef Engelmann has challenged the authenticity of the amulet (Engelmann 1981, 293–94), but most have accepted its authenticity and the second/third-century date, including Michel, the author of the

catalog of the British Museum, the institution that currently holds the amulet, as well as Roy Kotansky, who confirms Felicity Harley and Jeffrey Spier's reading of the inscription (Kotansky 2017, 631–59; Michel 2001, 1:283–84, no. 457; Spier 2007b, 228–29, no. 55). Harley and Spier have speculated that the amulet may indicate that depictions of the Crucifixion were common in more public contexts in the second and third centuries, although no such early depictions survive, with the earliest surviving public depiction of the Crucifixion, that at Santa Sabina at Rome, dated to the 430s. The appearance of the crucifix, cross, anchor, fish, and other Christian symbols on possibly second- and third-century gems, pendants, rings, and similarly amuletic items suggests that such symbols could have appeared on private and household objects prior to their use in public art. However, because most such potentially early examples are unprovenanced, such interpretations remain highly speculative.

(p. 360) One of the major limitations of Bonner's study, as well as more recent research, is the difficulty in dating gemstone and bronze amulets. Some have been circulating in European collections since the Renaissance; others have been purchased from antiquities dealers and brought into museums and private collections in Europe, North America, and the Middle East in the last two hundred years. In his 2007 study *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems*, Jeffrey Spier describes the history of collecting such objects from the Renaissance until the modern era, noting the frequent selling of fraudulent amulets to enthusiastic collectors and the gradual emergence of a more scholarly approach to collecting and analysis (Spier 2007a, 1–9). In the past century or so, some collections belonging to Europeans and North Americans have been acquired by museums such as the Bibliothèque Nationale's Cabinet des Médailles, the Vatican, the Walters, and the British Museum. Recently, the Israel Museum received a collection of amulets and similar material from a private collector that it plans to publish online in the near future. Other collections remain private.

Unprovenanced gemstones and bronze amulets are dated by comparing their shape, style, letter-forms, and religious content with the relatively few amulets and gems that can be more securely dated. Considerable progress has been made in this type of typological and stylistic dating since Bonner's publication. For example, Spier, in his illustrated study of over one thousand early Christian and late Roman engraved gemstones, establishes a method for dating unprovenanced gemstone amulets using such criteria (Spier 2007a, 11–14). Similarly, S. Michel in her comprehensive study of over six hundred "magical" amulets in the British Museum's collection (with line drawings and photos) appears to use criteria such as the style, content, and previous studies to provide an approximate date for unprovenanced amulets (Michel 2001). Most amulets dated by comparisons of style and content are placed within a range of one hundred to two hundred years, as in the case of the crucifixion and Holy Rider amulets examined in this chapter.

Prayers and Stories on Metal Lamellae, Papyrus, and Parchment

The Christian character of amulets and their users is often easier to determine on longer-form amulets made from materials such as soft metals, parchment, or papyrus. Such amulets could be inscribed with tailor-made formulae, requesting that a specific person be protected from a particular threat or disease. The material could then be folded and placed in a cylinder to be worn around the neck, punctured and sewn with a necklace cord, or attached to a person in some similar fashion. Folded-media amulets such as these tend primarily to utilize textual invocations as their primary means of enacting protection, although such amulets sometimes feature vowel repetitions, Christian symbols such as the cross, and other "magical" symbols such as *charakteres* to increase the efficacy of the written invocation. Amulets of this type that draw from the Christian tradition to effect protection and healing frequently use quotations from (p. 361) the New Testament (especially the opening verses of the gospels), the Septuagint (especially Psalm 90 [= Masoretic Text 91]), liturgical formulae, and historiolas (short retellings) of biblical stories, in particular healing stories. The amulets thus demonstrate the ritual power of narrative and the apotropaic potency of represented speech, aspects of Roman-era magic that Frankfurter (1995) and Foskolou (2014) have examined in detail. As one would expect of the longer-form medium, such amulets provide more detailed and specific information about those seeking protection than gemstones. One fourth-century papyrus amulet, for example, uses a detailed ritual formula and calls upon the power of Jesus Christ, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Mother (of Christ?), and Abrasax to guard a woman named Aria from the "one-day chill," among several other types of fevers (Meyer and Smith 1994, 39–40, no. 15 [= Preisendanz 1928, 2.212; = Oxyrhynchus 924]). The details on such amulets are a potentially rich source of information about the societies that created and used them, and modern scholarship has only begun to explore their potential as resources for social and cultural history. For example, amulets like Aria's can reveal what diseases early Christians and other Romans suffered from and feared, and they can offer a potential window into the gendered nature of amulet use, along with other, related lines of investigation.

Unlike engraved gems, a significant number of lamellae and papyrus amulets come from known archaeological contexts, such as Oxyrhynchus, or from more modern excavations. Roy Kostansky's 1994 publication of such texts of known provenance remains a valuable collection. His work demonstrates the geographic range of such amulets across the Roman Empire between the first and fifth centuries and the manner in which such amulets drew from diverse religious traditions, in particular Judaism, in order to increase their effectiveness. Kostansky's study also reveals the appearance of Christian symbols and words in the fourth century and afterward, no doubt because of their perceived efficacy, as in invocation of the "One God and his Christ" at the end of an otherwise

Jewish-seeming Great Angelic Hierarchy amulet discovered in a tomb at Beirut (Kotansky 1994, 270–300).

A number of Christian folded-media amulets employ parts of the liturgy, Gospel historiolas, and/or Gospel incipits—that is, the opening words of one, some, or all four of the canonical Gospels. Most amulets of this type are dated by style and letter forms to the fifth to sixth centuries, although a few examples have been dated as early as the third to fourth century and as late as the eighth century (Jones 2016; de Bruyn 2017). Although traditionally excluded from consideration as witnesses to texts in critical studies of the New Testament, Brice Jones (2016) has explored the potential use of incipits and other New Testament texts in the critical study of the New Testament. Indeed, as Jones's study argues, scripture-quoting amulets provide valuable witnesses to early versions of the New Testament, and as his study suggests, their use as evidence for early liturgies and canon formation appears ripe for further investigation. Additionally, Jones's study and other, previous publications of such amulets provide powerful evidence for the apotropaic use of the Trinitarian and creedal formulae and Christian scriptures, the Gospels in particular, indicating that scriptural texts took on powers that exceeded the explicit meaning of their words (e.g., *IG* 4.204 in Cline 2011b, 63; Kotansky 1994, 301–5; Meyer and Smith 1994, 41–42, no. 17 [= Preisendanz 1928, 2.219–20]). For example, on (p. 362) one of the amulets in Jones's study that quotes the beginning of all four Gospels as well as other parts of the Bible, some quotations of scripture make sense in a request for protection, such as the quotation of the beginning of the ever-popular Psalm 90 (Septuagint), Matthew 4:23 and its description of Jesus healing "every infirmity," and Psalm 17:3 (Septuagint) and its affirmation that God is a refuge (Jones 2016, 65–71, no. 2). However, Gospel incipits are harder to explain in an amuletic context, if we expect the text to say something related to healing or protection or contain a sympathetic historiola. This is especially true of the opening of Luke, which describes the Gospel author's methods of investigation. As the amulet has it in Jones's translation, "Since many have undertaken to set down an account . . . " (Jones 2016, 66). Outside of their New Testament context, such words would not seem to inspire confidence in their protective power or engage a deity in sympathetic healing or protection. However, in this case the amulet is using the opening lines of Luke as an apotropaic symbol in itself rather than as a sympathetic historiola or to invoke or coerce names of power. The belief in, and use of, the power of sacred texts unrelated to the specific meaning of the words that are quoted finds analogies in the symbolic use of scripture in other religions that rely upon a canon of scripture (Graham 2005, 8200–1). The symbolic employment of Gospel texts in apotropaic amulets is thus reflective of the representational power of the Gospels within the Christian community and the possible use of the Gospel texts in this fashion among non-Christians as well.

The amulet from Jones's collection just described draws exclusively from biblical and liturgical material, and one can observe a tendency among folded-media amulets with biblical and liturgical quotations to avoid overt references to non-Christian deities (as in Meyer and Smith 1994, 31–48). However, numerous Late Antique folded-media amulets combine Christian symbols and names of power with traditional symbols of ritual power and invocations of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian deities, as on the sixth-century amulet

that uses a cross, along with invocations of Aphrodite, Sabaoth, Adonai, and Horus, to protect a house from vermin (Meyer and Smith 1994, 48–49; Preisendanz 1928, 2.209–10 [= Oxyrhynchus 1060]). As with bronze and gemstone amulets, the folded-media amulets are often syncretistic, combining crosses, New Testament texts, and Christian liturgical formulae with ritually powerful, but non-Christian, names and symbols. The guiding principle behind such amulets appears to be the perceived efficacy and power of the scriptures, stories, names, and symbols employed rather than orthodoxy.

Conclusion: The Power of Holy Symbols, Holy Words, and Holy Sites

In addition to gemstones, bronze pendants, and folded-media amulets, pilgrimage souvenirs were used as amulets for personal protection and healing. As Gary Vikan has convincingly demonstrated, representations of pilgrimage sites in Palestine appear as (p. 363) apotropaic and medicinal symbols on bracelets and other objects, alongside images drawn from the repertory used in Greco-Egyptian magical amulets, in particular the image of Chnoubis (Vikan 1984, 74–77). Clay and metal (typically pewter or lead) souvenir flasks known as ampullae were made with holes or rings that would enable them to be worn. The best-known of these types of souvenirs are the clay St. Menas flasks from Egypt, clay flasks from the church of St. John in Ephesus, and the silver and pewter flasks of the Monza/Bobbio type that apparently depict holy sites in Palestine (Grabar 1958; Vikan 2010). Such objects could be used to contain holy oils, sediment, or other secondary contact relics from the pilgrimage destination. Thus, the apotropaic efficacy of the objects was determined by both the images and invocations depicted on them as well as the holy materials they carried.

Although there is evidence for the production and trade in pilgrimage souvenirs earlier in the Roman period (Cline 2014; Elsner 1997), the peak production of such Christian pilgrimage souvenirs appears to be during the fifth and sixth centuries, when, incidentally, the Piacenza Pilgrim provides one of the most detailed descriptions of how such objects were used to gather holy oil in Jerusalem (*Itin.* 18–20). Other textual evidence reveals how souvenirs from holy sites and persons could be used to cure illness and injury (Vikan 1984, 70–86; 2010, 42–53). Although medicinal cures, protection from metaphysical attack, and Holy Land souvenirs might at first seem to be unrelated, they have a logical connection based on early Christian theories of disease, which held demons responsible for many physical ailments, as evidenced in Solomon's legendary ability to cast out the demons associated with various illness (*Testament of Solomon*). Pilgrimage souvenirs functioned as empirical proof of the manifestation of divine power on earth, and the ritual power they contained was believed to be able to banish disease-causing demons and other evils from their presence.

While the form and content of amuletic pilgrimage souvenirs is distinct from gemstone and bronze pendants and folded-media amulets, they participate in a shared assumption that ritually potent presentational symbols, in the form of words, images, stories, and contact relics, can protect those who bear them. The representation of pilgrimage destinations and saints alongside other symbols on such objects reveals the evolving character of ritually potent, distinctively Christian apotropaic symbols among Christians and their neighbors. The use of pilgrimage souvenirs and relics as amulets thus represents a distinct phase in the amuletic use of a Christian apotropaic vocabulary that began with the appearance of Christian names of power, images, texts, and stories on gemstone amulets in the second and third centuries and continued to evolve with the use of Christian texts and symbols on folded-media amulets. The increasing frequency of Christian symbols on amulets in various forms during the fourth century and afterward illustrates the rise in the perception of Christian symbols as ritually potent among the Roman population. The number of amulets that survive from antiquity, their discovery in household and funerary contexts, and the frequent discussions of such objects in Late Antique sources indicate that they were not marginal objects but rather formed part of the everyday religious lives of early Christians and other residents of the late Roman world, designed to keep evil and harm at bay by the most effective means available.

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