

JOSEPH E. SANZO

Scriptural *Incipits*
on Amulets from
Late Antique Egypt

*Studien und Texte zu
Antike und Christentum*

84

Mohr Siebeck

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Joseph E. Sanzo

Scriptural *Incipits* on Amulets
from Late Antique Egypt

Text, Typology, and Theory

Mohr Siebeck

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For
Lex, Zack, and Asher

Preface

Scriptural Incipits is a revision of my doctoral thesis, “In the Beginnings: The Apotropaic Use of Scriptural *Incipits* in Late Antique Egypt,” which I completed in Fall 2012 in the Department of History at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). This book is a study of the opening lines and/or titles (*incipits*) of “biblical” books and texts found on amulets and related items (i.e., inscriptions on grotto walls) from late antique Egypt. Although the *incipits* were one of the most frequently deployed ritual tactics in late antique Egypt, they remain, by and large, an untapped resource for scholars of late antique ritual culture. Accordingly, this project attempts to build upon and expand scholarly understanding of the relationship between authoritative traditions (esp. the “Bible”) and ancient ritual language. This study, however, also supports and contributes to other domains of inquiry concerning the ancient world, including, *inter alia*, the reception of scripture in antiquity, “New” and “Old” Testament textual criticism, and ritual theory. Thus, I hope this book will be a useful resource, not only for specialists of late antique amulets, but also for scholars of ancient history and religion more generally.

This project has benefited greatly from the encouragement and support of many people. First of all, I must thank the members of my dissertation committee: S. Scott Bartchy, Raʿanan Boustán, Jacco Dieleman, Ronald Mellor, and Claudia Rapp (now of the Universität Wien). One could not ask for a more supportive and helpful committee. The detailed comments of Professors Boustán and Dieleman, in particular, have improved almost every page of this project, both in terms of style and substance. Of course, I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in this book.

Aside from the members of my dissertation committee, several people at UCLA deserve mention. I have greatly enjoyed my interactions – both academic and personal – with several (former) graduate students in the Departments of History and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, especially Kevin Scull, James Petitfils, A. Josiah Chappell, Patrick McCollough, A. Sue Russell, and Emily Cole. Thanks are also due to Carol Bakhos, Undergraduate Faculty Advisor for the Study of Religion IDP, for giving me the opportunity to teach undergraduate classes in religious studies.

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Jerusalem, Israel, December 2013

Joseph Emanuel Sanzo

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AAT</i>	<i>Atti della Reale Accademia delle scienze di Torino</i>
<i>ACM</i>	Meyer, Marvin W. and Richard Smith, eds. <i>Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power</i> . San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994.
Aland, <i>Repertorium</i> 1	Aland, Kurt, ed. <i>Repertorium der griechischen christlichen Papyri</i> . Vol. 1, <i>Biblische Papyri: Altes Testament, Neues Testament Varia, Apokryphen</i> . Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1976.
<i>AnPap</i>	<i>Analecta Papyrologica</i>
<i>APF</i>	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete</i>
<i>APIS</i>	<i>Advanced Papyrological Information System</i> . An online database of papyri, hosted by Columbia University. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/projects/digital/apis/
<i>ASAE</i>	<i>Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Annali di storia dell'esegesi</i>
<i>BASP</i>	<i>The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists</i>
<i>BIFAO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BKT</i>	Berliner Klassikertexte aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>DGRG</i>	Smith, W. ed. <i>A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography</i> . London: AMS, 1873.
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EEFAR</i>	<i>Egypt Exploration Fund, Archaeological Report</i>
<i>GMPT</i>	Betz, Hans D., ed., <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JGRChJ</i>	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>LAAA</i>	<i>Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology</i>
<i>LDAB</i>	<i>Leuven Database of Ancient Books</i> . An online database of Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Demotic literary and documentary materials. http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/index.php
<i>MDAIA</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des kaiserlich deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung</i>
<i>NETS</i>	The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies. <i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under that Title</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

NKGW	<i>Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und der Georg-Augusts-Universität zu Göttingen</i>
PGM	Preisendanz, Karl, ed. <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> . 2 vols. Rev. ed. A. Henrichs. Stuttgart: K G Saur Verlag GmbH & Co, 1973.
Rahlfs and Fraenkel, <i>Verzeichnis</i>	Rahlfs, Alfred and Detlef Fraenkel. <i>Verzeichnis der griechischen Handschriften des Alten Testaments</i> . Vol. 1.1, <i>Die Überlieferung bis zum VIII. Jahrhundert</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004.
<i>Rec. de Trav.</i>	<i>Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes</i>
<i>Rev. Arch. Septuaginta</i>	<i>Revue archéologique</i> Rahlfs, Alfred. <i>Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes</i> . Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935.
<i>Stud.Pap. Suppl.Mag.</i>	<i>Studia Papyrologica</i> Daniel, Robert W. and Franco Maltomini, eds. <i>Supplementum Magicum</i> . 2 vols. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–92.
TM	<i>Trismegistos</i> . An online database of papyrological and epigraphical resources dealing with Egypt and the Nile valley between roughly 800 BC and AD 800. http://www.trismegistos.org/index.html
<i>ThR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
van Haelst, <i>Catalogue</i>	van Haelst, J. <i>Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens</i> . Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976.
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
Wessely, “Monuments”	Wessely, C. “Les plus anciens monuments du Christianisme écrits sur papyrus (II).” In <i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> . Vol. 18. Ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau. Paris: Firmin-Didot et C ^{ie} , Imprimeurs-Éditeurs, 1924, 399–512.
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Critical Signs¹

[]	Lacuna
< >	Omission in the original
()	Resolution of a symbol of abbreviation
{ }	Cancelled by the editor of the text
` `	Interlinear addition
αβγδ	Uncertain letters
....	Illegible letters

¹ These critical signs (and the language describing them) are based on P. W. Pestman, *The New Papyrological Primer* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), back cover.

Introduction

Late antique Egypt was a dangerous place. Egyptians during this period – like their forefathers – not only regularly confronted hazards of nature (e.g., snakes, crocodiles, scorpions), but they also combated a wide range of physical ailments (e.g., fevers, eye problems, insomnia, swelling, teeth problems). In addition, various new traditions – which for convenience might be labeled collectively as “Christian” – appropriated, modified, and expanded ancient Egyptian demonology into a robust system that permeated the landscape; numerous categories of unruly demonic forces were associated with (and blamed for) the calamities of life.¹ As a result, late antique Egyptians faced a bleak plight, one that conflated visible suffering with an underlying invisible realm that was highly complex and intimidating.

In order to deal with this dire situation, many Egyptians turned to local or itinerant ritual specialists, who were entrusted with providing the desired healing and/or protection on account of their specialized knowledge of the arcane. These experts not only mastered – or better yet, helped to construct – taxonomies of the demonic, but they also manufactured various ritual devices (e.g., tokens, amulets) to thwart the attacks of such otherworldly foes.

Fortunately, many of these devices have survived from antiquity to the present. This rich material has allowed scholars to construct a more complete (and more complex) portrait of the religious landscape of late antique Egypt than can be painted simply by ancient literary sources. Moreover, the multiplicity of extant papyri, parchment, and other media used as amulets has made the study of ritual artifacts (and the texts contained therein) a vibrant field of inquiry in its own right.

Ritual specialists in late antiquity utilized a variety of tactics to assist with the concerns of their clients. One of these tactics – the one at the forefront of this study – was the use of initial phrases/titles (typically called *incipits*) from books, psalms, or famous sections of the scriptures.² Among the more com-

¹ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), esp. 273–77. For the prominence of demons in the broader Byzantine world (with an emphasis on Egypt), see Anastasia D. Vakaloudi, “ΔΕΙΣΙΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ and the Role of the Apotropaic Magic Amulets in the Early Byzantine Empire,” *Byzantion* 70 (2000): 182–210.

² In this study, I focus my attention on the use of scriptural texts for apotropaic and curative purposes. I, therefore, do not treat the divinatory use of scripture during late antiquity. For discussions of this latter use of scripture, see e.g., Stanley E. Porter, “The Use of Herm-

mon *incipits* in the extant record are the initial phrases and/or titles of one or more of the four Gospels, Septuagint Ps 90 (MT Ps 91; hereafter LXX Ps 90), and the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9). BKT VI 7.1 (*nos.* 3 and 26), a sixth-or seventh-century CE Greek amulet from the Fayum, offers a clear example of this ritual tactic:³

In the name of the F(athe)r a(nd) of the S(o)n and of the Holy S(piri)t; (LXX Ps 90:1) The one who dwells in the help of the Most High <will> abide in the shelter of the L(or)d of Heaven; (Jn 1:1–2) In the beginning was the Word and the Word was wi(th) <God> and the Word was G(o)d; he was in the beginning with G(o)d; (Mt 1:1) (The) book of the generation of J(esu)s C(hris)t, S(o)n of D(avi)d, S(o)n of Abr(aham); (Mk 1:1) (The) beginning of the Gospel of Jesus C(hris)t S(o)n of G(o)d; (Lk 1:1) Inasmuch as many have undertaken to arrange a narrative; (LXX Ps 117:6–7) The L(or)d is my helper a(nd) I will not fear. What will a h(uma)n do to me? The L(or)d is my helper, and I will look upon my enemies; (LXX Ps 17:3) The L(or)d is my foundation, a(nd) m[y] protection, a(nd) my deliverer; (Mt 4:23) The L(or)d J(esu)s went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues a(nd) preaching the gospel of the kingdom a(nd) healing every sickness and every malady; The body and blood of C(hris)t spare your slave (δούλου), the one who wears this phylactery; Amen; Alleluia; † A † O †⁴

The ritual specialist here has utilized several *incipits* (LXX Ps 90:1, Jn 1:1–2, Mt 1:1, Mk 1:1, Lk 1:1) along with an invocation of the Trinity, citations of three other scriptural passages (LXX Ps 117:6–7, LXX Ps 17:3, Mt 4:23), a request for protection through the “body and blood of Christ,” and ritual symbols.

But the use of *incipits* in the ritual world of late antique Egypt was by no means uniform. On artifacts, such as P. Anastasy 9 (*nos.* 5 and 29), the *incipits* are embedded within a long and complex ritual. In other cases, they are the only recognizable written element on the ritual device. For example, the text on P. Mich. 1559 (*no.* 7) simply consists of the opening lines of the four Gospels in the “canonical order” and unknown ritual symbols.

Further complicating matters is the wide range of textual boundaries, which have been or could be classified as *incipits*. Indeed, in the extant amuletic record, possible candidates for an *incipit* designation include citations that range from a single word to an incomplete phrase to an extended passage. Unfortunately, the absence of an extensive and focused collection of scriptural *incipits* has obscured their diversity. One of the objectives of this project,

neia and Johannine Papyrus Manuscripts,” in *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, ed. Bernhard Palme (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 573–580; Bruce Metzger, “Greek Manuscripts of John’s Gospel with ‘Hermeneiai,’” in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A.F.J. Klijn*, ed. Tjitze Baarda et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1988), 162–69.

³ The italicized numbers refer to the survey of scriptural *incipits* in Chapters 3 (*nos.* 1–25) and 4 (*nos.* 26–63).

⁴ Translation adapted from Meyer in *ACM*, 34–35, no. 9.

therefore, is to provide a preliminary survey of the ritual artifacts with scriptural *incipits* (including the texts of the *incipits* in their original languages).

In light of this diversity, various questions follow: what is the best way to think about the category *incipit*? What are the functions of these *incipits*? Do *incipits* from different texts function in different ways? Do these *incipits* make reference to material beyond the “words on the page”? If so, how vast is this implied corpus? It is an additional aim of this investigation to explore such questions, as they have not been addressed in sufficient detail in previous scholarship.⁵

To be sure, the use of *incipits* has not gone unnoticed in analyses of ancient ritual practices. In fact, many scholars have observed the utilization of *incipits* in apotropaic and curative rituals. Yet discussions of this phenomenon have routinely been confined to passing references within analyses of other aspects of late antique ritual texts and practices. In other words, while it has been mentioned several times, the use of *incipits* on amulets has not been subjected to a sustained and extensive study.

This lacuna is unfortunate on account of the abundance of artifacts that made use of opening lines as part of their rituals. There are over fifty ritual artifacts, which I have identified, that contain or may contain *incipits*. This profusion of *incipits* on apotropaic and curative devices demonstrates that they were a well-established tactic in the arsenal of late antique ritual specialists. Analysis of the use of *incipits* on amulets, therefore, is crucial for understanding ritual practice in late antiquity more broadly.

To illustrate the lack of sustained reflection on this ritual tactic and to highlight the need for the present investigation, I now synthesize the references to *incipits* within scholarship. I then isolate a few formative presuppositions that I believe need to be reconsidered. This brief survey will set the stage for the remainder of the project.

I. Survey of Scholarship

Theories on the ritual use of the *incipits* have generally fallen into one of the following categories: (1) the view that the *incipits* have protective or curative power, generally conceived, and (2) the view that the *incipits* functioned *pars pro toto* (though various terms have been used). Within the latter category, there are two general views: (a) those who have argued that the *incipits* referred to the “scriptures,” more generally, and (b) those who think that through the *incipits* the ritual specialist invoked a particular biblical corpus

⁵ I will approach these questions from the perspective of the ritual specialist – not from the perspective of the client – since the client’s knowledge of the text(s) on his or her amulet cannot necessarily be taken for granted.

(e.g., the Gospels), biblical book (e.g., the Gospel of John), or smaller biblical unit (e.g., a psalm).

The first approach to the *incipits* in ritual contexts has been simply to assert that the initial words and/or titles possess (an undefined) ritual power. For instance, pointing to the use of the Gospel *incipits* in P. Mich. 1559 (no. 7) as an example of the “many talismanic φυλακτήρια containing only the titles and first words of biblical texts,” David Frankfurter asserts that these *incipits*, originally used as classificatory rubrics, eventually were imbued with independent ritual power.⁶ Though speaking of both the *incipit* of LXX Ps 90 and the Gospel *incipits*, Marvin Meyer seems to presuppose a similar perspective in the introduction to his English translation of the Robert Nahman Coptic Amulet (nos. 13 and 36): “[t]he opening portion of Psalm 91 [=LXX Ps 90] and the incipits of Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark are quoted for their protective power.”⁷ In this reading, the *incipits* do not reference a larger body of material (whether textual or not), as is the case with other theories (see below), but possess power in and of themselves.⁸

⁶ *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 40 n. 27. These words on the Gospel *incipits* nuance Frankfurter’s thesis in this section that the title, “The Apocalypse of Elijah,” did not serve as an indicator of the genre of apocalypse. It should be noted that despite Frankfurter’s claim of the prevalence of apotropaic and curative devices with only *incipits* of “biblical texts,” P. Mich. 1559 (no. 7) and P. Berol. 22 235 (no. 6) represent the *only* examples of such artifacts. While the Thebaid Grotto Chapel Walls (nos. 14 and 55) have the *incipits* of the Gospels and of various psalms (LXX 31, 90, 111, 118, 127), this artifact also contains two lists of names, the latter being a list of “Jewish” prophets. What is more, it is misleading to assert that P. Mich. 1559 consists solely of Gospel *incipits*. As the editor of P. Mich. 1559 notes, there are ritual symbols in the lower margin of the artifact (Gerald Browne, *Michigan Coptic Texts* [Barcelona: Papyrologica Castroctaviana, 1979], 44). For a reiteration of this approach to the Gospel *incipits* in a more general discussion of ritual power, see Frankfurter’s introduction to “Protective Spells” in *ACM*, 105.

⁷ *ACM*, 115.

⁸ For other examples of scholars who have either stated or implied that the Gospel *incipits* possess an inherent protective power, see Walter E. Crum, “La magie copte: Nouveaux textes,” in *Recueil d’études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion à l’occasion du centenaire de la lettre à M. Dacier* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne H & E. Champion, 1922), 537–44, at 544; Angelicus Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, 3 vols. (Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique reine Élisabeth, 1930–31), 3: 210; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 238. In various contexts Robert Daniel and Franco Maltomini have stressed the ubiquity of the *incipits* in ritual contexts without further comment. For instance, see Robert Daniel, “A Christian Amulet on Papyrus,” *VC* 37 (1983): 400–404, at 400; Robert Daniel and Franco Maltomini, “From the African Psalter and Liturgy,” *ZPE* 74 (1988): 253–65, at 262; idem, *Suppl. Mag.* 1: 108; Franco Maltomini, “340. Amuleto con NT Ev. Jo. 1, 1–11,” in *Kölner Papyri (P. Köln)*, vol. 8, ed. Michael Gronewald, Klaus Maresch, and Cornelia Römer (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 82–95, at 87.

Attempting to provide a more explanatory account of the ritual use of the *incipits*, most scholars have looked to the *pars-pro-toto* model, a phenomenon that I will situate within the semantic domain of metonymy in Chapter 1. Once again, David Frankfurter's name comes to the fore. As part of an essay that has now become the classic synthetic treatment of *historiola* (i.e., the use of [short] narratives for ritual power), Frankfurter explicates the use of the *incipits* for ritual power as follows: "...the 'power' inherent in sacred scripture could be tapped simply by writing gospel *incipits*."⁹ In this expression of Frankfurter's thoughts on the Gospel *incipits*, he seems to suggest that they provide a means for attaining an "inherent" power associated with the "scriptures" as an entire entity. Thus, implicit in his words is a part-for-whole relationship between the Gospel *incipits* and the "scriptures" (=Bible?).¹⁰

Not all scholars identify the implied reference behind the *incipits* in such broad terms. As part of his analysis of P⁷⁸, an amulet that makes use of Jude 4–5, 7–8, Tommy Wasserman has offered a brief analysis (in a footnote) of the ritual function of the Gospel *incipits*.¹¹ He writes, "...the incipit represented *the whole Gospel in question*, which in turn was perceived as having a special power for protection, exorcism or healing."¹² As evidence for this "special power" associated with the Gospels, Wasserman points to the lacunose opening line of P. Rain. 1 (=PGM 2: 218–19, no. 10), which has been

⁹ "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul A. Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 457–76, at 465.

¹⁰ Close to Frankfurter's position here is that of Claudia Rapp, who explicitly states that the use of scriptural "extracts" (=incipits?) in the archaeological record operates "*pars pro toto*," capturing the power of the entire "Word of God" ("Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity," in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. W. E. Klingshirn and L. Safran [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 194–224). Rapp writes, "[w]e see the use of extracts from scripture, *pars pro toto*, to evoke the power of the *entire* Word of God in the recommendation to write psalm verses on storage jars to prevent wine from turning sour, and in the Bible verses written on the walls of monks' cells in Egypt in order to preserve the holiness of the space and its inhabitant" (idem, 2002). Likewise, Don C. Skemer seems to allude to the use of Gospel *incipits* when he writes, "[b]rief quotations embodying the word of God and the promise of divine protection could function as life-saving textual shields and powerful weapons against demons" (*Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* [University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006], 84 [emphasis mine]).

¹¹ T. Wasserman, "P⁷⁸ (P. Oxy. XXXIV 2684): The Epistle of Jude on an Amulet?" in *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Texts and Their World*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 137–60.

¹² "P⁷⁸ (P. Oxy. XXXIV 2684)," 150 n. 44 (emphasis mine); see also idem, "The 'Son of God' was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1)," *JTS* 62 (2011): 20–50, at 24 n. 15. The "power" associated with the Gospels is also highlighted by E. von Dobschütz, "Charms and Amulets (Christian)," in *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, ed. Shailer Mathews and Gerald Birney Smith (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), 3:413–30, at 425.

reconstructed to read: “[ὀκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τῶν τεσσάρων εὐαγγ]ελίων τοῦ υἱοῦ...” (“[I adjure you according to the four Gosp]els of the so[n...]”).¹³ In Wasserman’s view, one should not look beyond the particular Gospel, from which the *incipit* is taken, or the entire Gospel corpus (if all four Gospels are present) for the “whole” that was intended.

Multiple scholars have taken a similar position with reference to LXX Ps 90:1. For instance, as part of his analysis of the *incipit* of LXX Ps 90 in PSI VI 719 (*no.* 32 [see also *nos.* 10 and 58]), E. A. Judge asks, “[i]s the writer reminding Christ (or the devil? – who is supposed to read these things?) that the opening words are to do duty for the lot?”¹⁴ Likewise, in his commentary on MT Ps 91 (=LXX Ps 90), Erich Zenger observes that “entweder Teile aus Ps 91 (meist Ps 91,5–6 oder 91,10–13) oder der Anfang (Incipit) des Psalms (*als Substitution für den ganzen Psalm*) geschrieben standen.”¹⁵

It is not surprising that some scholars have drawn a connection between the conceptual referent of the Gospel *incipits* and that of an *incipit* of a psalm (esp. LXX Ps 90:1). For instance, in a very helpful survey of amulets that utilize “biblical” citations, Theodore de Bruyn not only echoes the position of Wasserman on the Gospel *incipits*, but also ties this restrictive part-for-whole usage to the ritual use of psalmic *incipits*: “...biblical texts [can be] cited *in abbreviated form as a cipher for an entire text*, such as the *incipits* of the gospels or the opening words of the verses of a psalm.”¹⁶ In his analysis of the use of LXX Ps 90:1 in the so-called “Bous-amulets,” Thomas J. Kraus also suggests a similarity in ritual practice between LXX Ps 90:1 and the Gospel

¹³ Ibid. It should be highlighted that Wasserman does not provide any mention or indication that this opening line has been reconstructed on the basis of only a few letters. I discuss the implications of P. Rain. 1 for understanding the Gospel *incipits* in Chapter 1.

¹⁴ “The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri,” in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen’s Sixtieth Birthday July 28, 1985*, ed. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 339–49, at 341.

¹⁵ “Psalm 91,” in *Psalmen 51–100*, ed. F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 626 (emphasis mine). In his analysis of the “magical” use of the Psalms in the *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim*, Bill Rebigier utilizes the *pars-pro-toto* model to explain the use of the first or second verse from a psalm for the ritual (“Die magische Verwendung von Psalmen im Judentum,” in *Ritual und Poesie: Formen und Orte religiöser Dichtung im alten Orient, im Judentum und im Christentum*, ed. Erich Zenger [Freiburg: Herder, 2003], 265–81, at 270).

¹⁶ “Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List,” in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 145–90, at 149 (emphasis mine). More recently, de Bruyn (with Jitse H. F. Dijkstra) has reiterated this view of the Gospel *incipits* using similar wording (“Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets,” *BASP* 48 [2011]: 163–216, at 172). See also G. S. Smith and A. E. Bernhard, “5073. Mark I 1–2: Amulet,” in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. LXXVI, ed. D. Colomo and J. Chapa (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 2011), 19–23, at 20.

incipits.¹⁷ In this view, both the *incipits* of Gospels and the *incipits* of individual psalms are expressions of a more general ritual practice, *pars pro toto*.

At least four larger issues follow from this brief survey of scholarship. First, one must note the brevity of these treatments of the ritual operation of the *incipits*. Of course, these comments were made *en passant* and were ancillary to the primary concerns of their authors. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the ritual use of the *incipits* is routinely confined to a one-clause “analysis.” I do not think that such simple statements concerning the *incipits* are sufficient to describe accurately this ritual tactic. To be sure, as will become evident in the analysis to come, many of the amulets that utilize the *incipits* are lacunose, thus leaving this material with little context. Furthermore, the other elements preserved on these artifacts are often difficult to interpret. That said, while these limitations may preclude definitive solutions to the *incipits*, they should not inhibit sustained and focused analysis, especially since these limitations are generally characteristic of many ritual practices and artifacts from antiquity. In light of the frequent use of scriptural *incipits* in the extant amuletic record, a detailed analysis of this phenomenon is a paramount desideratum.

Second, though the brief statements made by various scholars give the illusion of cautious observation, such accounts are not without undefended presuppositions. While the approach taken by Frankfurter and Meyer has a certain appeal on account of its simplicity, upon closer consideration I find it unhelpful for understanding the ritual use of the *incipits*. To claim, as does Meyer, that a textual element on a protective charm has protective power has little explanatory value. What item on a protective charm does *not* have protective power? Frankfurter’s claim that the Gospel *incipits* were classificatory rubrics that eventually carried ritual power may have interest as an example of different uses of the titles/opening phrases of the Gospels in late antiquity, but it hardly explains what ritual specialists sought to gain from citing the Gospel *incipits*. These claims bypass the central question: why were these words believed to have a protective/ritual power? In other words, what are these *incipits* “doing” on the ritual artifact?

What is more, this position ignores the referential quality inherent in an *incipit*. An *incipit* is the *beginning of a textual unit*. Thus, implicit in the notion of an *incipit* is the *intentional connection* between the “words on the page” and the contiguous unit. In this vein, it is imperative to isolate two phenomena

¹⁷ “Βουσ, Βαινχωωχ und Septuaginta-Psalm 90? Überlegungen zu den sogenannten ‘Bous’-Amuletten und dem beliebtesten Bibeltext für apotropäische Zwecke,” *ZAC* 11 (2007): 479–91. Kraus writes, “...analog zu den Evangelienanfängen auch der Psalmenanfang den kompletten Text impliziert” (idem, 487); cf. idem, “Septuaginta-Psalm 90 in apotropäischer Verwendung: Vorüberlegungen für eine kritische Edition und (bisheriges) Datenmaterial,” *BN* 125 (2005): 39–73, at 44 n. 18.

that are frequently conflated: (1) the intentional use of the beginning of a textual unit *as the beginning of a textual unit* and (2) the use of a relevant passage for protection or healing that happens to correspond to the beginning of a textual unit. As will become evident over the course of this project, the identification of an *incipit* (at least from the vantage point of the ancient ritual specialist) is not always a simple task, especially when only one opening line is present and that opening line could be relevant as an independent scriptural unit against demons and/or sickness (e.g., LXX Ps 90:1).¹⁸

Although the *pars-pro-toto* position, whether asserted or assumed, represents a step forward in addressing this problem, adherents to this position have ignored the relation(s) between the “parts” and their “whole(s).” The reader is confronted with explicit or implicit evocations of the adjectives “whole” or “entire” without any justification or explanation. In fact, such assertions involve assumptions that require extended commentary. Are all part-whole relationships the same? What is the relationship between the “Bible,” the “Gospels,” or a given psalm and their respective constituent parts? Is it legitimate to assume that an *incipit* of a psalm or of the Lord’s Prayer would have the same kind of relation to its “whole” as the *incipits* of the Gospels?

Third, and perhaps even more basic, is the question concerning whether the scriptures (or individual sub-corpora) were approached or thought of as “wholes” within apotropaic and adjacent contexts; this question has not been addressed sufficiently. What do passages from scripture look like on amulets and related artifacts (e.g., the walls of a grotto)? While scholars have noted the ubiquity of the use of individual units of scripture against demons and/or sickness, a connection between this unit-based mode of scriptural citation and the ritual use of *incipits* has not been explored.

Fourth, some scholars maintain that the *incipits* allow ritual specialists to tap into a “power” inherent in the “Bible,” the “Word of God,” or the “Gospels.” This view of power, however, leaves several questions unaddressed. What is the nature of this biblical “power”? In other words, what kind of “power” does the “Bible” and its respective corpora possess without reference to a particular artifact or to some biblical content (e.g., a particular story, saying, or character)? Moreover, does the extant amuletic record support the assumption that ritual specialists employed undifferentiated power in particular apotropaic or curative rituals? I will demonstrate that, in addition to carrying little descriptive utility, the view that the “Bible” or its sub-corpora possess an inherent and undefined power conflicts with the preference for particular precedent or paradigm in the deployment of myths for protection and/or healing in antiquity.

¹⁸ Pointing to the themes of angelic protection and preparation, Smith and Bernhard argue that the opening words of Mark could have apotropaic relevance in and of themselves (“Mark I 1–2: Amulet,” at 20).

II. Toward a New Approach to the Scriptural *Incipits*

In a previous venue, I adopted a different approach to the *incipits*, in general, and to the Gospel *incipits*, in particular.¹⁹ Focusing my attention on P. Berlin 954 (=BGU III 954), a text I will discuss in the survey to follow (*no. 15*), and taking into consideration the nature of *historiolae* (see discussion in Chapter 2), I argued that it was individual elements from the Gospels (especially healing and exorcistic elements) that were the intended conceptual antecedent of the two *incipits* on that artifact (i.e., Jn 1:1 and Mt 1:1).

The present investigation will expand and develop my prior thesis along three fronts. First, I will examine a broader corpus of artifacts, taking into consideration all *incipits*, not only the Gospel *incipits* on P. Berlin 954/BGU III 954 (*no. 15*). Second, I will draw upon linguistic theory in order to challenge the *pars-pro-toto* model as a general scheme for understanding the ritual semantics of the *incipits* and to offer a more helpful approach to this phenomenon.²⁰ Third, I will situate my analysis of the ritual use of *incipits* within the broader context of ancient scriptural usage in apotropaic and related contexts.

In this study, I contend that the scriptural *incipits* on the amulets from late antique Egypt do not reflect a single and homogenous form of metonymy. Instead, the *incipits* reflect at least two different kinds of metonymic transfers, *pars pro toto* (“part for whole”) and *pars pro parte/partibus* (“part for part/s”). These two designations correspond roughly to two types of contiguous scriptural items, *single-unit texts* and *multiunit corpora*. These technical terms refer to the complexity of the likely scriptural object that the *incipit* indexes. Thus, the *incipit* of a single-unit text is the first line/title of a single discrete saying, narrative, or psalm; the *incipit* of a multiunit corpus is the first line/title of a scriptural item or items that consist of multiple narrative and/or apophthegmatic parts.

Thus, in the specific case of the apotropaic and curative artifacts from late antique Egypt, the single-unit texts correspond to individual psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, and to other individual sections from the scriptures. Multiunit corpora, on the other hand, are represented in the present investigation by the “Bible” (or “Word of God”), the Gospels, and larger biblical “books” (e.g., the New Testament letter to the Hebrews). In short, my thesis is that the complexity of the scriptural unit, which is contiguous with a given *incipit*, played

¹⁹ “Canonical Power: A ‘Tactical’ Approach to the Use of the Christian Canon in P. Berlin 954,” *Saint Shenouda Coptic Quarterly* 4 (2008): 28–45, at 44.

²⁰ I must concede that in my article I assumed a *pars-pro-toto* model without sufficient grounding in metonymic theory and without reference to broader trends in scriptural usage within the late antique Egyptian ritual world (Sanzo, “Canonical Power,” 39).