

THE CRUCIFIED BOOK, TEXTUAL AUTHORITY AND THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

by

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DEDICATION

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Fr. David W. Johnson, S.J., Ph.D.

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## LIST OF ABBEVIATIONS

### Ancient Sources

<i>I En</i>	<i>I Enoch</i>
<i>Abr.</i>	<i>Philo, De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Ab urb.</i>	<i>Livy, Ad urbe condita</i>
<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Irenaeus, Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Adv. Mc.</i>	<i>Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem</i>
<i>Adv. Val.</i>	<i>Tertullian, Adversus Valentinianos</i>
<i>Adv. Prax.</i>	<i>Tertullian Adversus Praxeam</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	<i>Josephus, Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Tacitus, Annales</i>
<i>Ant. rom.</i>	<i>Dionysius, Antiquitates romanae</i>
<i>Ap. Jas.</i>	<i>Apocryphon of James</i>
<i>Aug.</i>	<i>Suetonius, Divus Augustus</i>
<i>AZ</i>	<i>Avodah Zara</i>
<i>Ber</i>	<i>Berakhot</i>
<i>B.J.</i>	<i>Josephus, Bellum Judaicum</i>
<i>BB</i>	<i>Bava Batra</i>
<i>BM</i>	<i>Bava Metzia</i>
<i>BQ</i>	<i>Bava Qamma</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Chron</i>	<i>1 or 2 Chronicles</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Damascus Document</i>
<i>Comm. Jn</i>	<i>Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>Philo, De vita contemplativa</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
<i>Cor</i>	<i>1 or 2 Corinthians</i>
<i>D.</i>	<i>Justinian, Digest</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Justin Martyr, Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
<i>Dan</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>Philo, De decalogo</i>

Deut	Deuteronomy
<i>Diss.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Dissertationes</i>
<i>Div. inst.</i>	Lactantius, <i>Divinae institutiones</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Pliny, <i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Ephesians</i>
<i>Epi.</i>	Martial, <i>Epigrammata</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	Horace, <i>Epistularum</i>
Eruv	'Eruvin
Exod	Exodus
Gen	Genesis
<i>GenR</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
Git	Gittin
<i>Gos. Truth</i>	<i>Gospel of Truth</i>
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiae</i>
<i>Hist. Aug.</i>	<i>Historia Augusta</i>
<i>Hist. rom.</i>	Cassius Dio, <i>Historia romana</i>
<i>Ind.</i>	Lucian, <i>Adversus indoctum et libros multos eminentem</i>
<i>Is. Os.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De Iside et Osiride</i>
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Asenth</i>
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
Kel	Kelim
Kgs	1 or 2 Kings
<i>L.A.E.</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
<i>LamR</i>	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>De legatione ad Gaium</i>
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Aristeas</i>
<i>LevR</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>
<i>Lib. Prop.</i>	Galen, <i>De libris propriis</i>
Lk	Luke
M	Mishnah
Meg	Megillah
Men	Menahot
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Moses</i>

MQ	Mo'ed Qatan
<i>Noct. att.</i>	Aulus Gellius, <i>Noctes Atticae</i>
<i>Nat.</i>	Pliny the Elder, <i>Naturalis historia</i>
Neh	Nehemiah
<i>Num.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Numa</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Pan.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Philadelphians</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	Origen, <i>De principiis</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	Philo, <i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i>
Qid	Qiddushin
<i>Ref.</i>	Hippolytus, <i>Refutatio omnium haeresium</i>
Sam	1 or 2 Samuel
Sanh	Sanhedrin
Shab	Shabbat
<i>Sent.</i>	Paulus, <i>Sententiae</i>
<i>SifreDeut</i>	<i>Sifre Deuteronomy</i>
Sir	Sirach
<i>Smryn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Smyrnaeans</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Stromateis</i>
T	Tosefta
<i>T. Abr.</i>	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>
Taan	Ta'anit
Tem	Temurot
<i>Trall.</i>	Ignatius, <i>Letter to the Trallians</i>
<i>tranqu.</i>	Seneca, <i>De tranquillitate animi</i>
<i>Tib.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Tiberius</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
<i>Vit. Virg.</i>	Suetonius-Donatus, <i>Vita Virgilii</i>
Yad	Yadaim
Zech	Zechariah

## Modern Sources

<i>AnBoll</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>GCS</i>	Griechische christliche Schriftsteller
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome</i>
<i>MTSR</i>	<i>Method and Theory in the Study of Religion</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTP</i>	Old Testament Pseudepigrapha
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives on Religious Studies</i>
<i>SC</i>	Sources chrétiennes
<i>SecCen</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
<i>SPh</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
<i>SPhilo</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

## INTRODUCTION

In his polemic *Against Marcion*, Tertullian posed the following question: "I say that my gospel is the true one; Marcion that his is. I affirm that Marcion's gospel is adulterated; Marcion that mine is. Now what is to settle the point between us?"<sup>1</sup> Marcion (c. 85-160 C.E.) argued that an evil demiurge authored the Jewish scriptures. Consequently, he rejected the texts comprising the Hebrew Bible along with the non-Pauline epistles and the gospels now canonical. Instead, he put forth his own gospel text, a variation of Luke, which he claimed was not written by a human. Marcion's dualist cosmology and theory of sacred book made him a frequent target for ecclesiastical ridicule—rumors circulated that his own father, a bishop in Sinope, disowned him for seducing a virgin. His contemporaries referred to him as the firstborn of Satan. Antithetical to Marcion's single, heavenly gospel, Tertullian (c. 160-220 C.E.) accepted only a few gospels, authorized through their antiquity and historical legitimacy.

Although the two men never met—Tertullian was born in the west, in Carthage, as Marcion was dying in the east—Marcion's ideas about scripture provided an opportunity for Tertullian to contemplate broader concerns about holy writing. Tertullian flourished in Carthage at the end of the second century, when the first Latin translations of biblical books were just beginning to circulate.<sup>2</sup> Tertullian himself did not have a complete Latin Bible, but,

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1. Tertullian, *Adv. Mc.* 4.4. *Ego meum dico verum, Marcion suum; ego Marcionis adfirmo adulteratum, Marcion meum. Quis inter nos determinabit?* (CCSL 1:549).

2. As Claudio Moreschini and Norico Norelli observe, "We are often reminded that Muslims call Christians

like other educated men, made his own translations from the Greek. With multiple Latin translations circulating, one had to wonder, which versions were correct and which corrupt?<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, Tertullian wrote *Against Marcion* at a time when he aligned himself with a group of Christians who sought guidance from new prophets.<sup>4</sup> Tertullian argued that their new prophecies agreed in every way with the gospels, but provided up-to-date behavioral guidelines to make the old books relevant for the second-century Christian. Tertullian belonged to a panel that authenticated copies of the older prophecies of Montanus, Maximilla, and Priscilla, and approved the utterances of new prophets in his own community. Between the new Latin translations and new prophecies, Tertullian himself was often faced with the questions he had asked of Marcion: What information is true? Which books are adulterated?

The debate Tertullian constructed with Marcion provides only one example from the empire-wide discussions on the authority of text and the nature of sacred books. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 180 C.E.), leaving Rome for Gaul, a Northern backwater of the Empire, declared that the number of gospel books could be neither more nor less than four.<sup>5</sup> In the east, Tertullian's contemporary Origen (c. 184-253 C.E.) pondered the question, what is a Gospel?<sup>6</sup> A generation earlier, Justin Martyr had defined gospels as "memoirs of the Apostles,"<sup>7</sup> but Ori-

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and Jews 'peoples of the book.' But while the importance of the Bible at the spiritual level is something accepted by all of Christianity, it was utterly decisive for Latin Christianity." Claudio Moreschini and Norico Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 1:318.

3. Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 1:319-323.

4. *Adv. Mc.* 1.29.4.

5. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.11.8.

6. Origen, *Comm. Jn* 1.5.

7. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 66.3; 67.3-4. Also *Dial.* 99-107. See Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels:*

gen was not satisfied with a genre classification. He contended that the role of an evangelist was not merely to retell the events of Jesus' life, "how the Saviour healed a man blind from birth, or raised a stinking corpse from the dead, or to record whatever incredible things he has done."<sup>8</sup> Rather, gospels were "hortatory and intended to build belief in the activities of Jesus." Using this working definition, he reasoned, "anything was written by the Apostles may be called gospel." Origen anticipated dissension on this point: "One might object that the Epistles are not called 'gospel,' and that we should not give the title gospel to all the writings. But we reply that many times in scripture that, when there are two of something called the same name, the name is applied to one more strongly than the other." Twenty years after Irenaeus had vehemently insisted that there were only four gospels, Origen mused, many books were gospel but some more so than others.

Origen, Irenaeus, Marcion, and Tertullian's reflections point to a larger, cross-cultural discussion taking place within the Roman Empire about the precise definition of a book. The physical transformation from scroll to codex introduced practical considerations leading Romans to question what constitutes a "book." Christian and Jewish groups also contemplated the purpose of their own literary enterprises; if some books are to be distinguished from others and considered sacred, surely they must have extraordinary characteristics. In what Mar-

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*Their History and Development* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 37-44.

8. Origen, *Comm. Jn* 1.5. ἐπὶ ἐξετάσωμεν τί τὸ ἔργον τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ, ὅτι οὐ πάντως διηγήσασθαι τίνα τρόπον ὁ σωτὴρ τυφλὸν ἀπὸ γενετῆς ἰάσατο, ὀδωδότα νεκρὸν ἀνέστησεν ἢ τι τῶν παραδόξων πεποίηκεν, οὐκ ὀκνήσωμεν, χαρακτηριζομένου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ καὶ ἐν προτρεπτικῷ λόγῳ τῷ εἰς πιστοποίησιν τῶν περὶ Ἰησοῦ, εὐαγγέλιόν πως εἰπεῖν τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων γεγραμμένα. Ἄλλ' ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ ἀποδόσει, τῷ ἀνυποφέροντι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐπιγεγράφθαι τὰς ἐπιστολάς εὐαγγέλιον ὡς οὐ καλῶς πᾶσαν τὴν καινὴν διαθήκην εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν ὀνομασάντων, λεκτέον ὅτι πολλαχοῦ τῶν γραφῶν δύο τινῶν ἢ πλειόνων τῷ αὐτῷ ὀνόματι ὀνομαζομένων κυριώτερον ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐτέρου τῶν λεγομένων κεῖται τὸ ὄνομα. Cécile Blanc, ed., *Commentaire sur saint Jean*, SC 120 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 66-68.

tin Jaffee has described as a "struggle over the relative primacy of the sacred book"<sup>9</sup> Jews and Christians had a variety of ideas about its scope and definition.<sup>10</sup> They deliberated over questions such as: Where do they come from? Who wrote them? How many are there? Why do we read them? How should we read them?

This dissertation focuses on the way Valentinus, a Greek speaking Egyptian<sup>11</sup> scholar teaching in Rome<sup>12</sup> in the mid-second century, answered these questions. I investigate the way he approached issues of authentication of sacred texts, their authorship, and the the role of oral and written traditions. I examine fragments of his writings as cited in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* alongside the *Gospel of Truth*, a second-century text composed in Greek and preserved in two fourth-century Coptic codices of the Nag Hammadi library. I focus on the *Gospel of Truth* because it is a book about books. A dominant motif in the *Gospel of Truth*, the book appears in wonderfully strange scenes, including a striking description of Jesus wrapped in a scroll, nailed to the cross, reading aloud the contents of his own heart as he dies. I argue that through such representations of the written word, and the questions those representations posed, the *Gospel of Truth* promoted the conception of books as living documents, permitting the generation of religious books by multiple authors as new sources

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9. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE-400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

10. For an illuminating example, see Blossom Stefaniw, *Mind, Text, and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, and Evagrius Ponticus* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2010).

11. In *Pan.* XXXI 2:2-3 Epiphanius claimed he came from Paralaia, in *Strom.* VII 106:4, Clement called him a Phrebonite.

12. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III 4:3. Οὐαλεντῖνος μὲν γὰρ ἦλθεν εἰς Ῥώμην ἐπὶ Ὑγινοῦ ἠκμασε δὲ ἐπὶ Πίου καὶ παρέμεινεν ἕως Ἀνικητοῦ. "Now Valentinus came to Rome during Hygenus, was at his prime during Pius and remained until Anicetus." Rousseau and Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies*, SC Nos 100, 101 152, 153, 210, 211, 263, 264, 293, 296 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965-82). A passing reference to his students in Justin's *Dial.* placed him in Rome around 155. See *Dial.* 35.6.

of revelatory authority. This theory of living books presented one "canonical experiment" amidst diverse ideas about the holy book.

Before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library, we knew a text called the *Gospel of Truth* had existed because Irenaeus reported that "the [Valentinians] call something written by themselves the 'Gospel of Truth.'"<sup>13</sup> Scholarship studying the Nag Hammadi texts necessarily confronts two questions: Are the two Nag Hammadi texts beginning with the words "the gospel of truth is joy" the same text Irenaeus referenced? Did Valentinus himself author this text? The Nag Hammadi texts exhibit Valentinian features: a misguided spiritual child of the Father created the material world; the divine plan for salvation is executed through the historical appearance of the Savior; the Savior is both a model and agent of salvation.<sup>14</sup> Although a few scholars have questioned whether the text under discussion is the text Irenaeus referenced, I side with Einar Thomassen's eloquent evaluation of the question: "The probability that there existed two independent works, one entitled 'The Gospel of Truth' and the other accidentally beginning with the same words, and both of them 'gnostic,' must be regarded as very slim indeed."<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, Irenaeus' statement does not provide conclusive evidence that Valentinus himself wrote the text. Stylistic similarities between the text and fragments of Valentinus' writings preserved in the works of others suggests the possibility but it is impossible to

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13. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III 11.19. *Siquidem in tantum processerunt audaciae uti quod ab his non olim conscriptum est Veritatis Evangelium titulent...* (SC 210:172-174).

14. The elements of Valentinian spirituality are comprehensively described in Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians,"* NHMS 60 (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 133-193. Salvific ritual is also a prominent feature of many Valentinian texts, but overt references to baptisms and bridal chambers are absent in the *Gos. Truth*.

15. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 147.

confirm.<sup>16</sup> However, for my purposes, the stakes of this question are low. What if the *Gospel of Truth* was written, not by Valentinus, but by one of his students, Ptolemy or Heracleon? The fragments of Ptolemy and Heracleon's writings suggest that they too acknowledged the insufficiency of written texts to adequately convey divine truths and considered the spiritually elect's logic qualities. In his letter to Flora, Ptolemy argued that even the Torah was not perfect and in need of revision. Heracleon claimed that Christians could advance their spirituality, comparing this transformation to "a voice changing into a word."<sup>17</sup> While this dissertation accepts the possibility of his authorship, I suspect that further research on the works of Ptolemy and Heracleon proper would yield a similar understanding about the workings of sacred textuality.

One aim of this study is to understand the significance of the *Gospel of Truth* for the community that produced the text. The *Gospel of Truth* is more mystical meditation than strict historical narrative. This literary style has prompted scholars to regard the text as a sermon or homily, and not "gospel" in the sense of a divine, revelatory text.<sup>18</sup> However, the representations of the written word in the *Gospel of Truth* together with the Valentinian fragments suggest that the text would be regarded as revelatory for the community. As a promotion of living—sacred books, both person and text, oral and written—the *Gospel of Truth* addresses itself as much as any other book. In its most dramatic scenes, it could be described as

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16. For Valentinus' authorship, see H.C. Puech and G. Quispel, "Les écrits gnostiques du Codex Jung," *VC* 8 (1954): 22-38. For arguments against Valentinus' authorship: Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins*, WUNT 65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 339-65.

17. Fragment of Heracleon 5 on John 1:23=Origen, *Comm. Jn* 6:20-21.

18. See, for example, Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginning of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958; 2nd ed., 1963), 310.

an autobiobiography—a self-portrait of a sacred text, from which we can understand the broader Valentinian perspective on holy books. In the text, the figure of Jesus appears as both an oral and written document. He transcribes his textual self onto the hearts of a select spiritual class of people. The elect are invited to read this book, distribute it, and expand it with their own writings. Books manifest in the hearts of the spiritual elect. The many ways Valentinus conceptualized the book—as an oral text, book of heart, embodied scroll, written document—suggest that Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth* should be thought of not just as a sermon but as one of these expanded books. As Origen said, "There are many things that can properly be called 'gospel'" and the *Gospel of Truth*, for some Christians, was one of them.

I am also interested in demonstrating that Valentinus, a marginal figure in our common historical narrative about the development of Christianity, was not historically marginal. His theories about books and the personified written word engage with Jewish and Christian debates about sacred books and also align with Greco-Roman concepts of text and authorship. The non-Christian elements in texts like the *Gospel of Truth* are often (problematically) explained as Neoplatonic, a characteristic of texts often referred to as gnostic. This observation has guided Ismo Dunderberg's recent monograph on Valentinian thought and his illuminating assessment of the problem:

The ways scholars have defined the core of Gnostic thought have guided their reading of Valentinian sources. Because of this approach, topics...such as moral exhortation, views about emotions, and critical analysis of power and society, have not received the attention they deserve on the basis of how large they loom in the original sources. None of these features has been regarded as constituting the distinct essence, or the "spirit," of Gnosticism: hence the lack of interest in them in scholarship on Valentinian teaching.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1.

Dunderberg persuades us to read the Nag Hammadi texts, particularly those now classed as "Valentinian," in light of Greco-Roman culture. However, he leaves a discussion of the *Gospel of Truth* out of his monograph, so my study aims to take up Dunderberg's challenge to consider the text's narrative in its broader late antique milieu, exploring how Greco-Roman culture shaped the *Gospel of Truth*'s perspective on the written word.

Yet, Valentinus thinking is also nestled between reified Jewish and Christian theories of sacred book—today, Christians and Jews form separate textual communities.<sup>20</sup> Christians read Gospel; Jews read Torah. In the second century, when Christianities and Judaisms were fundamentally indistinguishable, efforts to differentiate between Judaism and Christianity<sup>21</sup>—and between Christianity and heresy<sup>22</sup>—played out through a developing self-consciousness over the significance of books. In the context of Greco-Roman logos speculation, Jews located the divine intellect in their sacred Torah, whereas Christians found the logos in the body of Christ.<sup>23</sup> In addition to debates about which books to read, increasing textual production indicates that as Christianity became more literary, Judaism sought distinction by retreating from overt textual production into an oral tradition recorded in writing.<sup>24</sup> Differentiation between

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20. For the concept of textual community—individuals aligning themselves with a group based on the preferences they exhibit to particular texts—see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

21. Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 126.

22. On this point, see David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 112-137.

23. Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 128-130.

24. See Guy Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, *Studies in the History of Religions* 70 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 79-91. The second century in particular was a time of such intense textual production, modern scholars have diagnosed Christianity during this period with "acute logorrhea." William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22.

Jewish and Christian books might even be found in the Christian adoption of the codex in the face of Jewish preference for the scroll.<sup>25</sup> Valentinus' sacred book is positioned between the Jewish schema (torah, oral, scroll) and the Christian (gospel, written, codex). He used many names to refer to sacred book: Gospel, teaching, edict, book of the heart. He did not choose between oral or written format, or even among the many texts in circulation—Jewish, Christian, or other philosophical texts. The *Gospel of Truth* even depicted Jesus' body as a scroll, not a codex. Valentinus' sacred book is suspended between the book traditions that gradually distinguished Christianity and Judaism.

Finally, the evidence of Valentinus is compelling because, as different book traditions eventually separated Judaism and Christianity, the existence of strong book traditions is often used to distinguish Judaism and Christianity from other faiths. The Qu'ran distinguished Jews and Christians from others by calling them "people of the book," a phrase acknowledging a shared value with Islam on the centrality of written, revelatory text. At the end of the nineteenth century, Ferdinand Max Müller appropriated this phrase for religious studies as he discussed "the aristocracy of book religions" of the world.<sup>26</sup> (Ironically, both Christians and their opponents acknowledged the un-aristocratic features of Christian books. Celsus criticized the crude koine of the gospels; Lactantius worried that potential Christian converts would be put off by the gospel "fairy tales for little old ladies.")<sup>27</sup> In the field of early Christ-

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25. Colin H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45-57. Roger Bagnall's recent study has seriously questioned whether Christians really did prefer the codex. See Roger Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 70-90.

26. F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion. Four Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution with Two Essays on False Analogies and the Philosophy of Mythology* (London: Longmans, Gren and Co., 1882), 52-58.

27. *Div. inst.* 5.1.26-27. Cf. Moreschini and Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, 324.

ian studies, Christianity is considered "literary movement from its inception."<sup>28</sup> The evidence of Valentinus exhibits the breadth of book traditions we must consider when applying the moniker "people of the book."

Rather than presuming the centrality of the revelatory text and Marcion as the instigator for a closed canon, my dissertation joins studies that view early Christianity as a laboratory for a variety of "canonical experiments."<sup>29</sup> The early Christian Papias made known his preference for the "living voice" instead of writings. While it would be inaccurate to describe Valentinus as "anti-book," he observed a fundamental insufficiency of language to convey divine truths. The *Gospel of Truth's* concept of living book presented a viable alternative to the holy book as Christianity developed. Various Jewish and Christian groups "struggled over the relative primacy of the sacred book." The *Gospel of Truth* presented a multifaceted answer to this struggle.

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In five chapters, I examine the *Gospel of Truth* from many angles—its Roman milieu, Second Temple Jewish pre-history, the perspective of its contemporary opponents, and finally alongside later rabbinic texts.

The first chapter, "An Ontology of Roman Books," examines how Romans thought about books, and shows that they discussed and defined books in ways that resembled people. Poets and prose authors described their compositions in terms of the human body, providing

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28. Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 11.

29. Christoph Marksches, "The Canon of the New Testament in Antiquity," in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond*, ed. M. Finkelberg, G.G. Stroumsa (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), 175-194. David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*," *HTR* 87 (1994): 395-419.

important context for Valentinus as a Roman author and for his own theories of people as books. At the same time, I also demonstrate that Christian and non-Christian approaches to the written word were not fundamentally different. Roman intellectuals joined Jews and Christians in their deliberations on the role of the book, codifying its physical properties, debating essential reading lists and considering the immutable qualities of writing.

Chapter Two, "Is it Written?" studies the variety of representations of books in Second Temple Jewish texts. Despite being known as people of the book, several Jewish texts conveyed suspicion about written precepts and were pessimistic about the abilities of human language to convey divine information. The insufficiency of human language led some authors, including Ben Sira and his grandson, to encourage translation and commentaries as viable sources of Torah. Philo also displayed embarrassment about a written Torah. He put forth a concept of sacred book that included both holy book and holy person, locating scripture in the bodies and compositions of righteous individuals. The presence of skepticism towards the written word in these texts locates Valentinus in the web of Jewish intellectual history.

The third chapter, "The Passion of the Book," shifts focus to the *Gospel of Truth* and Valentinus' fragmented writings. I examine the way these texts depict books and writing and find that Valentinus described a "book of the heart" that could be found in the writings from authors of all affiliations and also on the hearts of the spiritually elect. His representations of the written word promoted the idea of a living document, an idea expressed most dramatically with the depiction of Jesus as a crucified scroll. I also examine the placement of the *Gospel of Truth* in its fourth-century codex and demonstrate that the compiler continued Valentinus' open canon of continued revelation. Far from being a fringe notion, Valentinus'

open canon is found in the Jung codex and also in the complaints of contemporary Christian leaders.

In the fourth chapter, "Canon Formation and the Heresiologists," I examine Valentinus' ideas about sacred books from the perspective of his critics and demonstrate that Valentinus' Christian opponents were cognizant of his theory of book, even as they disparaged it. Christian heresiologists represented Valentinian diversity of expression as chaos. Irenaeus actively rejected the concept of an open canon of living books in favor of a four-fold Gospel. Tertullian knew that Valentinus argued for the existence of a divine spark within each member of humankind, and made off-color remarks about the spermatik logos found inside each Valentinian heretic. Yet these efforts to distinguish themselves from other Christians demonstrate how close the proponents of orthodoxy were to their opponents intellectually, and how their heresiological discourse formed their orthodox positions.

The fifth and final chapter, "Rabbis Who Published and Perished," compares Valentinus' theory of sacred books to the rabbinic concept of Oral Torah. I argue that Valentinus' views about the relationship between the oral and the written cohere to the thinking on the form, function, and nature of the sacred book that eventually became the prominent feature of rabbinic Judaism. Early rabbinic discussions about Torah scrolls were informed by their likeness to the human body—Torah scrolls were compared to human bones for legal purposes, could stand in for a person to form a quorum, and were also buried with the bodies of righteous Jews. I then examine two Talmudic narratives of scholars dying wrapped in Torah scrolls. Like the *Gospel of Truth*, which promoted its idea of living documents by portraying the central leader as an executed scroll, similar rabbinic bibliomorphoses provided visual lessons about their concept of sacred book that included both an oral and a written Torah. The

similarities between Valentinus and the diverse corpus of rabbinic literature show how mainstream Valentinus' ideas about books were: if Valentinus presumed no boundary between holy books and holy people, rabbinic texts showed books could become people and people could become books.

## CHAPTER ONE: AN ONTOLOGY OF ROMAN BOOKS

ἄφες τὰ βιβλία. Μηκέτι σπῶ. Οὐ δέδοται.  
Away with the books! May I no longer be drawn in. It is not permitted.

—Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* II.2<sup>30</sup>

### I. What Would Plato Do?

Marcus Aurelius penned the second book of his *Meditations* in his army tent during a military campaign among the Quadi. He wrote therapeutically on his combat tours; bloody battles with these Germanic tribes turned his thoughts to death. The emperor exhorted himself to do away with his books, likening them to the gore and bones of a dying body. These introspective musings reflected his priorities: although Marcus Aurelius spent most of his life fighting foreign wars, he always presented himself more as a philosopher than soldier. He wore the distinctive cloak and beard, required his army to change into civilian garb before entering Rome, and, when not battling Parthians or Germans, attended lectures of the philosopher *du jour*. He was famous for his ability to recite philosophy, "always having the words of Plato on his lips,"<sup>31</sup> and in *Meditations*, his lips echoed Plato's words about books.

Plato, despite his own prolific writing, argued that written expression was inferior to oral communication. He articulated the dangers of committing thoughts to writing in the *Phaedrus*, claiming: "This is the case with words too. On one hand you would think that they

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30. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, ed. and trans. C.R. Haines, LCL 58 (1916; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 27.

31. *Hist. Aug.* 27.7. *sententia Platonis semper in ore illius fuit, florere civitates si aut philosophi imperarent aut imperantes philosopharentur.* *Historia Augusta*, trans. David Magie, LCL 140 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 190.

speak intelligently but if, desiring to learn, you ask something of the words, it signifies the same single thing forever."<sup>32</sup> At best writing was an inferior record of oral expression and at worst, an impediment to learning and knowledge. Plato warned authors that their works could never be a reliable or permanent monument and called any expectations that writing could be something more than a memory prompt "simple-minded" (εὐθείας). Plato's ideas maintained a presence in imperial Rome. Marcus Aurelius ruled an empire swept by a Greek revival. As Rome re-embraced classical culture Attic Greek became fashionable, oratory grew into a form of entertainment, and students studied Platonic writings, regarding Rome as the ideal city-state and Marcus Aurelius its philosopher king.<sup>33</sup> Marcus Aurelius tried to avoid his own books as Plato would have done. He was a product of a conflicted literary environment that eschewed the written word while mimicking the rhetoric of Greek authors in a growing body of new compositions;<sup>34</sup> although a prolific reader, Marcus Aurelius derisively likened books to continually regurgitated air.<sup>35</sup>

Such sentiments have helped generate a historical narrative that distinguishes Romans on one hand and Jewish and Christian traditions on the other, on the basis of books: Christians and Jews had sacred books; Romans did not. Ancient histories of Rome's

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32. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275e-276b. Ταῦτόν δὲ καὶ οἱ λόγοι. δόξαις μὲν ἂν ὡς τι φρονοῦντας αὐτοὺς λέγειν, ἐὰν δέ τι ἔρη τῶν λεγομένων βουλόμενος μαθεῖν, ἔν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταῦτόν αἰεὶ. C.J. Rowe, trans., *Plato: Phaedrus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wiltshire, England: Aris & Phillips, 1988), 124.

33. On this "second sophistic" movement and the revival of Greek culture and literature, see P.E. Easterling, "Books and Readers in the Greek World: The Hellenistic and Imperial Periods," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, ed. P.E. Easterling and B.M.W. Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38-39.

34. On the Greek nature of Imperial Rome's literary culture, see G.W. Bowersock, D.C. Innes and E.L. Bowie, "The Literature of the Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, ed. P.E. Easterling and B.M.W. Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 642-714, especially pages 655-658.

35. Marcus Aurelius compared books to breath, or "air and not even that always the same, but every minute belched forth and again gulped down." Θέασαι δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, ὁποῖόν τί ἐστιν ἄνεμος. οὐδὲ αἰεὶ τὸ αὐτό, ἀλλὰ πάσης ὥρας ἐξεμούμενον καὶ πάλιν ροφούμενον. (Haines, 28).

founding days noted that Romans buried or burned their religious books. On these incidents, Bernhard Lang remarked: "It certainly reflects how the Graeco-Roman world felt about sacred scriptures: they had little use for texts in a religion in which custom and oral tradition shaped the ritual procedure."<sup>36</sup> The fact that Romans had no religious books suggests that Romans harbored hostility to religious text, or, at best, were indifferent to religious text.<sup>37</sup> Any form of writing in Roman religion appeared strictly functionalist—"recording sacrifices, priests' names, inventories... Pagan groups had religious texts, but they were not venerated to the extent of Jewish and Christian holy writ."<sup>38</sup> In the civic cults, priestly duties may have included meticulous record keeping, but the difference was that, "they had no written works which established their tenets and doctrine, or provided explanation (religious exegesis) of their rituals or moral prescription for their adherents."<sup>39</sup> In such comparative narratives, it appears that Romans did not make use of books the way Jews and Christians did. The oral and continuous revelation of Roman prophets contrasts with the written, closed canon of Christian revelation: prophecy was the closest approximation to the Christian book<sup>40</sup> and

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36. Bernhard Lang, "'The Writings': A Hellenistic Literary Canon in the Hebrew Bible" in *Canonization and Decanonization*, ed. Arie van der Kooij, et al., (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1998), 55.

37. Megan Hale Williams and Anthony Grafton's *The Monk and the Book*, 43.

38. Alan Bowman and Greg Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13.

39. Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (1998; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1: 284. Another scholar contrasted Christianity, a "religion of the book," with Roman religion as a "religion of writing." See J. Scheid, "Les archives de la piété. Réflexions sur les livres sacerdotaux," in *La mémoire perdue. A la recherche des archives oubliées, publiques et privées, de la Rome antique*, ed. C. Nicolet (Paris: Sorbonne, 1994), 173.

40. David Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 2-57. Comparative studies have yielded statements such as this: "A polytheist might read one prophetic book against another to decide if one, the other or both were true; such a polytheist might also read a book as a kind of history or as a literary model. A Christian or Jewish reader, who already knew that the revelation in a canonical book was true, might try to reconcile two different versions...." (Potter, 60).

Christians would have found lax "canonical" statements about what to read "unfathomable."<sup>41</sup> As scholarship has collapsed many differences between Christian and Roman practices, the presence of a fixed collection of authoritative texts has remained a feature distinguishing between entities that, in recent years, have begun to appear more and more alike.

A comparative approach is by definition interdisciplinary yet, in the last decade, new research in literacy and book history has reworked the narrative of the role of books in the individual disciplines. From the classical studies perspective, the picture of Roman literary culture has been revised.<sup>42</sup> These efforts have made us more aware of the Roman interest in the materiality of the book, its value both as an object and also as a marker of prestige brought to the author.<sup>43</sup> Far from attitudes of indifference or hostility, Romans esteemed books as containers which preserved the immortality of the author.<sup>44</sup> Studies of the Roman social context of reading have demonstrated that Romans regarded writing as a different kind of expression than orality that could extend the words of an author beyond acquaintances to anonymous audiences.<sup>45</sup> Studies in religion of the Roman empire have also rethought the value and role of

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41. Tomas Hagg, "Canon Formation in Greek Literary Culture," in *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture*, ed. Einar Thomassen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 109. On Quintillian's prolegomena to his "canonical" reading list of Greek and Latin works, Hagg claims, "No theologian, ancient or modern would express himself in such relaxed terms." In chapter three, we see that Valentinus articulated his idea of canon in very relaxed terms.

42. Three major studies include: Sean Alexandre Gurd, *Work in Progress: Literary Revision as Social Performance in Rome* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); William Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, ed., *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

43. P. Lardet, "Les conditions de la mise en texte," in *Lieux de savoir*, ed. C. Jacob (Paris: Albin Michel Press, 2007), 509. Also, Mathilde Cambron-Goulet, "The Criticism—and the Practice—of Literacy," in *Orality, Literacy and Performance in the Ancient World*, ed. Elizabeth Minchin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 202-205.

44. Florence Dupont, "The Corrupt Boy and the Crowned Poet: or, the Material Reality and the Symbolic Status of the Literary Book at Rome," in *Ancient Literacies*, 161.

45. Joseph Farrell makes the point that oral "performance was not a good way to get to know literature." Books allowed works to circulate to anonymous audiences rather than being restricted to recitations of small audiences.

books. There has been more recognition that works of certain authors—Homer, Plato, Epicurus—functioned for some groups in ways similar to Torah for Jews or the "canon" for Christianity.<sup>46</sup>

Recent investigations into the nature of canon within the discipline of early Christian studies also call for the comparative narrative to be revised. Rather than assuming Christianity was marching towards a closed canon, new studies have demonstrated that a canon of authoritative, divinely inspired texts was not a foregone conclusion, particularly in the first and second centuries.<sup>47</sup> Early Christians held a variety of positions about the role of books in their religious world: some maintained a tradition of live, open prophecy; many groups preferred a live teacher to a text; others adopted books, perhaps accepting only a few, more often recognizing books of many philosophical affiliations. The minority who expressed preference for a limited number of sacred texts became dominant in the third century; but in the second century, their preference was not the only, most popular, or foregone conclusion for early Christianity. Christians harbored no clear or unified expectations about their movement's texts, how many there were, or who could write one, let alone any practices for the adoration of the gospel book that became popular in the middle ages.

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See Joseph Farrell, "The Impermanent Text in Catullus and Other Roman Poets," in *Ancient Literacies*, 212.

46. Polymnia Athanassiadi, for example, has argued that Neoplatonists "created a whole hierarchy of scriptural holiness" with Plato's works and later commentaries. This enterprise was part of a trend that included the collection of the New Testament and creation of the Mishnah. One might even think of the Chaldean Oracles as the "Bible of Neoplatonists." See Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Canonizing Platonism: The Fetters of Iamblichus," in *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture*, ed. Einar Thomassen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 129.

47. Most recently and comprehensively, David Brakke, "Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and David Brakke (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 263-280. In addition to *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation*, two additional volumes have contributed to the revision of canon history for early Christianity: Margalit Finkelberg and Guy Stroumsa, ed., *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2003). Also Einar Thomassen, ed., *Canon and Canonicity*.

These new studies within individual disciplines demonstrate that the current comparison between Roman and Christian books advances a canonical agenda before its time. They further suggest that Roman ideas about books might be useful for understanding the development of Jewish and Christian books. In this chapter, I investigate how Romans thought about books and show how they discussed and defined books in ways that resembled people. This is interesting in its own right, for the book history of the Roman Empire, but also provides an important framework for understanding Valentinus as a second century Roman intellectual and his theory of Jesus as a book. Valentinus was not the only Roman to argue for equivalence between body and book; there is a long tradition of non-Christian sources, some directly contemporaneous to Valentinus, that discuss books as if they were people. In the following pages, I consider how books shaped the material and cultural landscape of second century Rome, demonstrating that Romans considered books an important part of their founding heritage. They were caught up in the same bibliomania that captured Jewish and Christian authors. As Jews and Christians were considering the nature of their own books, Romans too began questioning what constitutes a "book." Their answers defined books increasingly in terms of personhood: legal scholars described books in technical terms as bodies, as extensions of their authors, and as clothing; authors thought of books as children; a bad reader could then wear the clothing poorly or abuse the author's offspring (a talented reader, on the other hand, figuratively transformed into a book.) Romans considered many genres of writing as bodies: edicts and wills operated as the voice of one *in absentia*, and could be killed in the case of their physical destruction. These documents were considered more authoritative than oral testimony. Moreover, their attendant infallibility resembled and may have even shaped the authority Jews and Christians gradually attached to their own holy books. As a

whole, this chapter describes the elements of Roman book culture that sculpted Jewish and Christian ideas of sacred books.

## II. Did Romans Like Books?

Whatever Romans might have said about books in efforts to appear Greek, the city landscape told a different story.<sup>48</sup> A tourist in second-century Rome would have been struck by the presence of several libraries standing among the grand municipal structures of the Capitoline and Palatine hills.<sup>49</sup> Wandering around the Capitoline hill, the tourist might stumble upon Rome's first public library, the brain-child of Julius Caesar. Caesar had been inspired by his visit to Alexandria's famous library and wanted a similar resource in his own city. Although he did not live to see its construction, the military hero Asinius Pollio, consul around 40 B.C.E. and himself an author, realized Caesar's vision and built the first library of Greek and Latin texts somewhere near the Forum.<sup>50</sup> Walking south-east to the Palatine hill, our tourist would pass two more public libraries that Trajan had constructed, one in the Temple of *Divus Augustus*, and a second attached to his new palace complex, *Domus Tiberiana*.<sup>51</sup> Walking further east, at the Temple of Apollo, the tourist could explore the collections of Greek and

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48. Although I am restricting my discussion to the city of Rome, similar things could be said of many cities in the empire. See Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 109-123. Most ancient authors also made their way to Rome at some point in their literary career.

49. For a general picture: Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 61-108. For references to ancient sources: T. Keith Dix, "'Public Libraries' in Ancient Rome: Ideology and Reality," *Libraries and Culture* 29.3 (1994): 282-296. Also, Dix, "Public Libraries in the City of Rome: From the Augustan Age to the Time of Diocletian," *MEFRA* 118.2 (2006): 671-717. George W. Houston, "Tiberius and the Libraries: Public Book Collections and Library Buildings in the Early Roman Empire," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 43.3, 247-269. On the symbolic nature of the library, see Yun Lee Too, *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

50. Pliny, *Nat.* 7.30.115. No physical evidence of this library remains.

51. Suetonius, *Tib.* 7.4; Aulus Gellius, *Noct. att.* 13.20.7.

Latin books in the Palatine Library, which Julius Caesar also had commissioned and Augustus built after his death.<sup>52</sup> Augustus also constructed an additional library in his sister's temple, the *porticus Octaviae*.<sup>53</sup> Circling back to Vespasian's forum, the tourist would find another library in the Temple of Peace, which Vespasian built to commemorate his conquest of Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> By the end of the first century, no fewer than five large public libraries dotted downtown Rome.

Venturing to the other end of the forum, the tourist would have been awestruck by the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*. This grand new library, built in Trajan's forum between 107-113, housed Rome's largest collection of books in two chambers; a vast collection of Greek literary works, estimated at 10,000 rolls in dense rows of bookshelves, faced its twin library of Latin volumes. To consult books in both languages, a reader had to cross a forty-meter portico, admiring Trajan's victory column that stood between the twin collections. Simultaneously, Rome's intellectual and military achievements were impressed upon any library patron. If our visitor had ventured to Rome to make a name for himself, he might start at this library.<sup>55</sup> He might want to compare his literary efforts to works recently published, or to look for a job as a librarian (a low level government position, but a means for advancement for those without family connections).<sup>56</sup> If he wanted to hear the latest literary developments, he could attend a public recitation in one of the cozy niches on the Latin side of Trajan's library.

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52. Suetonius, *Jul.* 44.1-3.

53. Suetonius, *Aug.* 29.3. There is some debate about whether Augustus established this library (as Suetonius claimed) or whether Octavia did it herself (see Ovid, *Aras Amatoria* 1.69-70). See Dix, "'Public Libraries,'" 291n6.

54. Aulus Gellius, *Noct. att.* 5.21.9; 16.8.2.

55. Raymond J. Starr, "The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World," *CQ* 37 (1978): 213-223. Cf. Dix, 294n25.

56. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 95-98.

Even on the chaotic city streets, our tourist would find evidence of Rome's literary interests. He would see statues of philosophers and statues of politicians who wanted people to think they were philosophers holding a scroll in one hand, positioned on the pedestals, arches, and niches around the city.<sup>57</sup> In the forum, the visitor would encounter Romans mimicking their philosophical statues by carrying a scroll under one arm in order to appear educated; authors complained loudly and frequently about this habit.<sup>58</sup> The tourist could also browse the collections of the numerous booksellers along the *Vicus Sandaliarius*, to the east of the forum, where Galen claimed most of the city's book stores were located.<sup>59</sup> Or he could drop by one of the small libraries attached to minor temples and sanctuaries scattered around the city. Our visitor might end a dusty day of sightseeing in one of Rome's decadent bath houses, enjoying its steam room, prostitutes, and library.<sup>60</sup>

Romans built books into the physical landscape of their city, and also into the foundational history of Rome. They considered the consultation of prophetic books a traditional component of state religion and exhibited interest in the secret books of other cults. Second century authors expressed evident interest in Roman books as they described their city's past and present. Plutarch (c. 45-125 C.E.) and his Latin counterpart Tacitus (c. 55-116) observed that religious texts were a foundation of the Roman Republic and continued to influence the

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57. For a description of the Roman world of statues, see Yaron Z. Eliav, Elise A. Friedland and Sharon Herbert, *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology and Power* (Leuven and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 1-12.

58. For example, Lucian, *Ind.* 18.

59. Galen, *Lib.Prop.* 1.

60. The remains of Trajan's bath, constructed at the beginning of the second century, include evidence of a library. Remains of the baths of Caracalla also survive. A gravestone also records the existence of a slave named Onesimus, who was a steward (*vilicus*) of the Greek library of the baths. See Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 97.

empire in which they both lived. Tacitus indicated that consulting the books of oracles was one of three customary components (in addition to prayers to gods and sacred banquets) for appeasing the gods after a disaster.<sup>61</sup> Plutarch, the Greek intellectual who held a life-long fascination with all things Roman, was compelled to explain why Roman state religion lacked ritual books. According to Plutarch, Romans *did* at one point possess such books. Romulus' successor and second king of Rome, Numa (753-673 B.C.E.), composed several books during his long reign, including twelve books of Roman priestly lore and twelve of Greek wisdom. Numa possessed the only copies and drilled their contents into the minds of his priests. Confident in his priests' abilities, and nervous about the books falling into ignorant hands, he insisted that he be buried with his books and that their contents be perpetuated only by memory.<sup>62</sup> Two coffins were buried at his funeral: one contained the body of King Numa, the other contained his books. When a storm uncovered the two coffins four hundred years later, Numa's coffin was found empty, but the other contained the perfectly preserved books. The *praetor* Petilius read the books and "took them to the legislative body, saying that it did not seem to him that making the writings available to the masses was either legal or approved by

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61. Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.1. *Et haec quidem humanis consiliis providebantur. Mox petita dis piacula aditque Sibyllae libri, ex quibus supplicatum Volcano et Cereri Proserpinaeque, ac propitiata Iuno per matronas, primum in Capitolio, deinde apud proximum mare, unde hausta aqua templum et simulacrum deae perspersum est; et sellisternia ac pervigilia celebrare feminae, quibus mariti errant.* Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. John Jackson, LCL 249 (1913; repr. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 282. Livy also records this practice in the republican era. See *Ab urb.* 21.62; 25.12; 34.55.

62. Plutarch, *Num.* 22.2. *πυρὶ μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔδοσαν τὸν νεκρὸν αὐτοῦ κωλύσαντος, ὡς λέγεται, δύο δὲ ποιησάμενοι λιθίνας σοροὺς ὑπὸ τὸ Ἴανοκλον ἔθηκαν, τὴν μὲν ἑτέραν ἔχουσαν τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ἑτέραν τὰς ἱερὰς βίβλους ἃς ἐγράψατο μὲν αὐτός, ὡσπερ οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων νομοθεταὶ τοὺς κύρβεις, ἐκδιδάξας δὲ τοὺς ἱερεῖς ἔτι ζῶν τὰ γεγραμμένα καὶ πάντων ἕξιν τε καὶ γνώμην ἐνεργασάμενος αὐτοῖς, ἐκέλευσε συνταφῆναι μετὰ τοῦ σώματος, ὡς οὐ καλῶς ἐν ἀψύχοις γράμμασι φρουρουμένων τῶν ἀπορρήτων...ἀναγνῶναι μὲν αὐτὰ λέγεται Πετίλιος στρατηγῶν τότε, πρὸς δὲ τὴν σύγκλητον κομίσει, μὴ δοκεῖν αὐτῷ θεμιτὸν εἶναι λέγων μηδὲ ὄσιον ἔκπυστα πολλοῖς τὰ γεγραμμένα γενέσθαι: διὸ καὶ κομισθεῖσας εἰς τὸ Κομίτιον τὰς βίβλους κατακαῆναι.* Plutarch, *Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 7 (1914; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1967), 378-380.

the gods. Wherefore the books were brought to the *comitium* and incinerated." In his rendition of the narrative, Plutarch emphasized that ritual books were one of the original bricks that built Roman religion but the citizens of the Roman Republic chose collectively (burning the books on the stage of Republican governance) not to preserve these ancient texts.

According to its ancient historians, the Sibylline books almost suffered a similar fiery fate under the last of its seven kings, Tarquinius (535-496 B.C.E.). The Sibyl Amalthea approached Tarquinius about purchasing nine books of Sibylline prophecy for a large sum. Tarquinius thought the old woman mad, and laughed at the price tag of 300 gold pieces. He continued to laugh as she burned three of the books but demanded the same sum of money. After burning three more books, Tarquinius was no longer laughing. At the urging of his priests, he purchased the remaining three books for the original asking price of 300 gold pieces.<sup>63</sup> This foundational story explained how the Sibylline Books came to Rome, and also gave a reason for the lack of texts in its religious landscape.<sup>64</sup>

Although this narrative has suggested to some that Romans preferred burning books to reading books,<sup>65</sup> ancient Romans expressed opposite sentiments; Dionysus of Halicarnassus observed, "In a word, it is said that the Romans guard no item, hallowed or holy, as they do the Sibylline oracles."<sup>66</sup> From the monarchy through the imperial era, the books were kept under strict supervision. King Tarquinius initially placed these books under the care of two

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63. See Dionysus, *Ant. rom.* 4.62.4-5; Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.6.

64. For a thorough history of the Sibyls, their prophecies and texts, as well as references to all the relevant ancient sources, see H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

65. Cf. Lang, "The Writings': A Hellenistic Literary Canon in the Hebrew Bible," 55.

66. Dionysus, *Ant. rom.* 4.62.4. συνελόντι δ'εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν οὕτω Ῥωμαῖοι φυλάττουσιν οὔθ' ὄσιον κτῆμα οὔθ' ἱερὸν ὡς τὰ Σιβύλλεια θέσφατα. Dionysus of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, trans. E. Cary, LCL (1939; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 466.

priests (*duumviri*) and two public slaves. Only these four men were allowed to consult the books. When one of the trustees, Marcus Acilius, tried to copy the texts for his own purposes, he was sewn into a leather sack with a dog, rooster, snake, and a monkey and thrown into the sea. Such severe punishment, usually reserved for only the worst of crimes, parricide, reflected the deep connection between these books and the *Patria*.

With the overthrow of the monarchy, the Sibylline books came under senate control. To symbolize the victory of the new government, the books were placed in a stone chest and deposited in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the patron deity of the Republic. A larger priestly college, the *Decemviri Sacris Faciundis*, cared for the books, consulting and interpreting them in times of crisis. The books remained in the temple until both were destroyed by a fire in 83 B.C.E. Eight years later, the senate made efforts to replicate their contents, sending ambassadors to the Roman countryside to collect existing copies. Portions of the oracles were found preserved in both local temples and in the possession of private individuals. After these retrieval efforts, the senate declared all Sibylline books to be property of the state.<sup>67</sup>

Under Augustus and subsequent imperial rulers, the books faced further regulation. Augustus outright banned private citizens from owning portions of Sibylline books. In part, this was an effort to curb the generation of false Sibylline oracles. We can guess that new texts were brought forward often—a priestly college was in charge of determining which texts were authentic and which were false. During Augustus' reign, the college even examined and approved of a newly discovered Sibylline book.<sup>68</sup> In other reforming efforts, the

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67. Dionysus, *Ant. rom.* 4.62.4-5; Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.6.

68. Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.12.4.

books came under tighter imperial control. Augustus had priests make new copies made of the worn books in sequestered isolation such that no private citizen could see the text).<sup>69</sup> The *decemviri* had expanded to include fifteen members and Augustus included himself in this *quindecemviri* who could directly consult the books. He also transferred the Sibylline books to the temple of Apollo, the deity associated with the imperial cult.<sup>70</sup> The decision to consult the books became the emperor's prerogative: Nero made great show of consulting the books to appease the population after the city burned. On the other hand, during severe flooding in Rome, a senator suggested that they consult the books but Tiberius refused.<sup>71</sup>

The tight imperial control exerted over these books suggests their potentially subversive, and therefore alluring qualities. Romans exhibited fascination with books in a religious context. Plutarch's research into the new religious movements of his day indicated that books were a feature that attracted members to a particular group. In his own writings, Plutarch liked to note whether groups possessed texts, or lacked them, and why. On the Pythagoreans, he remarked:

This is the reason, it is said, why the doctrines of the Pythagoreans are not set down in writing, but their memory and instruction is interpolated without writing for those who are worthy. And when the practice of the difficult and unspoken methods of geometry are spoken to any unworthy people, it is said that the gods punish the lawless and impious deed, shown by a great and collective disaster.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Cassius Dio, *Hist. rom.* 54.17.2.

70. The question of when the books were moved to the temple is a matter of debate. Cf. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy*, 149-150. Nevertheless, Parke has observed that imperial-era authors associate the books with Apollo and not Jupiter. See Parke, 141.

71. See Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.76. *Eodem ano continuis imbribus auctus Tiberis plana urbis stagnaverat; relabentem secuta est aedificiorum et hominum strages. Igitur censuit Asinius Gallus ut libri Sibyllini adirentur. Renuit Tiberius, perinde divina humanaque obtegens....* (Jackson, 3:372).

72. Plutarch, *Num.* 22.3 ὃ λογισμῶ φασι μηδὲ τοὺς Πυθαγορικοὺς εἰς γραφὴν κατατίθεσθαι τὰ συντάγματα, μνήμην δὲ καὶ παιδευσιν αὐτῶν ἄγραφον ἐμποιεῖν τοῖς ἀξίοις. καὶ τῆς γε περὶ τὰς ἀπόρους καὶ ἀρρήτους λεγομένας ἐν γεωμετρίας μεθόδους πραγματείας πρὸς τινὰ τῶν ἀναξίων ἐκδοθείσης, ἔφασαν ἐπισημαίνειν τὸ

Plutarch related this detail about the Pythagoreans as he narrated the tale of King Numa. Numa's concerns about books, Plutarch argued, continued with the mystical Pythagoreans of his own time. His aside also reflects the expectation that groups *would* provide precepts in writing. In addition to the increased literary activity among Jews and Christians at this time, other groups produced sacred books of their own. Plutarch also wrote about the Isis cult, which enjoyed empire-wide popularity in the second century. The use of sacred books of Egyptian wisdom for initiation rituals led to a pervading sense of intrigue and mystery.<sup>73</sup> It has even been suggested that these books contributed to the popularity of Isis worship and early Christianity in the second century.<sup>74</sup> In such an environment, Plutarch found the Pythagoreans' lack of books anthropologically distinctive.

The written precepts of religions drew widespread interest. Who had books? Who did not? Who wrote them? Why? In Christian discourse, this discussion manifested in debates among thinkers such as Tertullian, Marcion, and Valentinus about what "gospel" was perceived to be. But an even more basic question arose in a legal context.

### III. What is a Book?

As Roman jurists outlined inheritance laws concerning libraries, they too asked what constitutes a book. In the second century of the common era, the answer to this question was not obvious. The legal definition of book was complicated by multiple, rapidly changing

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δαιμόνιον μεγάλῳ τινὶ καὶ κοινῶ κακῶ τὴν γεγεννημένην παρανομίαν καὶ ἀσέβειαν ἐπεξερχόμενον. (Perrin, 380).

73. Plutarch, *Is.Os.* 2. This cult maintained a close association between body and book: Isis's adversary Typhon repeatedly shreds her sacred books and scatters them to the winds. Isis then collects the fragments, and just as she collected and pieced the body Osiris back together, she restores her writings.

74. Beard, North, Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1:284.

formats: the codex, an ancient format resembling the modern paperback, grew more popular than the scroll, and by the end of the second century, surpassed the scroll as the dominant format. Papyrus, cheaper and more widely available than vellum, became the material of choice.<sup>75</sup> Books existed in other formats as well, including early forms of codices of wooden and wax tablets. In the midst of these changes, jurists participated in the debate about what a "book" was. To execute a will, to interpret a declaration like, "I bequeath my son 100 books," jurists had to make precise the phrase "one book." For this, the jurists approached questions of wide relevance; they considered material books in every possible form: complete books, books with no ending, books not yet begun, books with many parts, books owned by the deceased, and books written by the deceased. Their legal reasoning elucidates that Romans thought about books in terms of the human body.

Gnaeus Domitius Annianus Ulpianus (c. 170-223 C.E.), a Roman jurist whose legal career roughly coincided with Valentinus's life, defined the book in his judicial rulings on inheritance law. Books and personal libraries appeared as a common line item in wills. However, because books were published with a range of materials and multiple formats, an opportunistic would-be-heir could exploit the ambiguity of the term "book" (*liber*) to revise the original intentions of the testator. By providing a legal definition of a book, Ulpian resolved ambiguities and closed loopholes attached to bequeathing books and libraries. As he clarified ambiguities of inheritance law, Ulpian provided a legal definition of a book. His legal opinion, preserved in Justinian's *Digest*, begins:

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75. On the book trade in the Greco-Roman world, see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 83-92. For estimations of book prices, Roger S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50-69.

Under the designation of "books" (*librorum*) all rolls (*volumina*)<sup>76</sup> are included, whether they are made of papyrus, parchment, or any other material whatsoever; even if they are written on bark (as is sometimes done), or upon any kind of prepared skins, they come under the same appellation. If, however, they are in codices (*in codicibus*)<sup>77</sup> of leather, or papyrus, or ivory, or any other substance, or are composed of wax tablets, will they be considered to be due? [Let us see.] Gaius Cassius says that where books are bequeathed, the skins (*membranas*)<sup>78</sup> are also included. Hence, it follows that everything relating to them will be due if the intention of the testator was not otherwise.<sup>79</sup>

Ulpian's edict was not simply an attempt to explain the difference between a book and a manuscript.<sup>80</sup> His ruling took up the legal challenge of explaining the general concept of book in light of diverse examples. Ulpian began with the easiest case; *liber* designated *volumina*, or rolls—the most recognizable form of a book. Rolls could be made from a variety of textiles, which Ulpian listed: rolls made of papyrus (*charta*), parchment (*membrana*), and various bark products (*philyra* and *tilia*) all counted as *liber*. His list of textiles moved from the common to the rare, evidenced by his own aside, "sometimes scrolls are made of bark." From rolls, Ulpian moved to codices. Interestingly, Ulpian took for granted that codices were to be included in a legacy of books; he did not ask if the term *liber* encompassed codices as well as

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76. I use Alan Watson's translation of this law but offer several modifications. Here, Watson has translated *volumina* as "volumes" which does not convey that these units were specifically rolled. Cf. Alan Watson, trans., *Digest of Justinian*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 1:88-89.

77. Watson's translation renders this: "if books are bound." Although I agree with Watson's insinuation that Ulpian is discussing book covers, I have modified the translation to make more clear that Ulpian has moved from rolls to codices.

78. Watson has translated this as bindings, but Gaius Cassius was probably talking about protective leather pouches used to store individual scrolls.

79. Justinian, *D.* 32.50. *Librorum appellatione continentur omnia volumina, sive in charta sive in membrana sint sive in quavis alia materia: sed et si in philyra aut in tilia (ut nonnulli conficiunt) aut in quo alio corio, idem erit dicendum. Quod si in codicibus sint membraneis vel chartaceis vel etiam eboreis vel alterius materiae vel in ceratis codicillis, an debeantur, videamus. Et Gaius Cassius scribit deberi et membranas libris legatis: consequenter igitur cetera quoque debebuntur, si non adversetur voluntas testatoris.* Kriger and Momsen, ed., *Institutiones Digesta*, 16th ed., (Berlin, 1954), 451.

80. C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of Codex*, 30.

rolls, but instead asked whether the covers of codices were due when books are due. (*Quod si in codicibus sint membraneis vel chartaceis vel etiam eboreis vel alterius materiae vel in certis codicillis, an debeantur, videamus.*) Although the Latin is ambiguous, leaving open the identity of the subject when it asks "are they due," the precedent Ulpian cited demonstrates that he was asking about covers of codices and not codices themselves. He referred to the legal opinion of an early first century jurist, Gaius Cassius, who claimed "if [books] are bequeathed also are its skins." (*deberi et membranas libris legatis*). Gaius Cassius, living before the codex became popular and well-known, likely referred to a protective covering for a scroll when he described the *membranas libris* (literally: skin for the book). Citing Gaius Cassius allowed Ulpian to make room for the new, developing book technology in older law. Ulpian considered these leather pouches for scrolls analogous to protective covers of codices. These covers could be valuable in their own right—Ulpian mentioned ivory as a material—and might become contested objects between heirs.

Although Ulpian simply assumed codices counted as books, his colleague Paulus<sup>81</sup> thought it necessary to describe exactly how this increasingly popular format fit into existing law. Like Ulpian, Paulus included texts written on all kinds of materials as books. However, his pithy two-sentence *sententia* indicated that his primary interest was clarifying whether *codex* counted as *liber*. Paulus legislated: "When books are bequeathed, rolls of papyrus, skins, and bark are included, and codices as well. By the term 'books' not only rolls of leaves of paper, but any writing bound (*certo fine concluditur*) in anything is understood."<sup>82</sup> It ap-

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81. It is not possible to establish concrete dates for Iulius Paulus, only an approximation of the late second/early third century on the basis of predecessors he cited in his own edicts and mentions in *Hist. Aug.* 11 and 18. See R. Knütel, "Paulus, Iulius," in *Juristen: Ein biographisches Lexikon von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Stolleis (Munich: Beck, 2001), 489-491.

82. Paulus, *Sent.* 3.6.87. *Libris legatis tam chartae volumina vel membranae et philyrae continentur; codices*

pears that Paulus actually judged a book by its cover: the second sentence defined books as "any writing bound in anything"<sup>83</sup>— an apt description of a codex.

The jurists defined the book by its physical characteristics and not its textual content. Paulus only addressed the external trappings of a book and Ulpian deliberately avoided determining or enumerating books based on words written in them. His edict continues:

If someone has bequeathed one hundred books, we shall give him one hundred rolls, not a hundred of what someone has measured out by his own ingenuity to suffice for writing a book. For instance, if he should have the whole of Homer on one roll, we shall not count this as forty-eight books, but shall take the whole roll of Homer to be one book. If Homer's works are bequeathed and the set is incomplete, as many cantos as can be found will be due.<sup>84</sup>

Ulpian counted as one book, one physical book, irrespective of its divisions.<sup>85</sup> If all the cantos (*rhapsodiae*) of Homer were confined to one roll, it "counted" as one book. He negated the claim that one roll could be considered forty-eight books—the number of books contained in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined.<sup>86</sup> Nor did Ulpian entertain the possibility that one roll of Homer comprising both epics might be considered two books. Ulpian's discomfort in legis-

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*quoque debentur: librorum enim appellatione non volumina chartarum, sed scripturae modus, qui certo fine concluditur, aestimatur.* S. P. Scott, *The Civil Law*, 17 vols. (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), 1: 296.

83. The idea that a book was anything with writing contained in anything would be meaningful for readers of the *Gospel of Truth*, who would confront Jesus "wrapped" in a book.

84. *D. 32.50* continues: *1. Si cui centum sint legati, centum volumina ei dabimus, non centum, quae quis ingenio suo metitus est, qui ad libri scripturam sufficerent: ut puta cum haberet Homerum totum in uno volumine, non quadraginta octo libros computamus, sed unum homeri volumen pro libro accipiendum est. 2. Si Homeri corpus sit legatum et non sit plenum, quantaecumque rhapsodiae inveniuntur, debentur.* (Momsen, 451).

85. Pace Albert Henrichs, who has argued that "a book's identity was more precisely defined by its textual contents than by its physical form or the material on which it was written." See Albert Henrichs, "'Hieroi Logoi' and 'Hierai Bibloi': The (Un)Written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece," *HSCP* 101 (2003): 210.

86. Romans would have understood this because the division of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into twenty-four books each was done by the third century B.C.E. On this point see, Richmond Lattimore, trans. and ed., *The Iliad of Homer* (1961; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 14.

lating intellectual property rights is evident—he refused to rule on "what someone has measured by their own ingenuity to suffice for writing a book." (Unlike contemporary debates about the authenticity of religious books, the legal arena avoided debates provoked exactly by the way certain texts were measured by their contents).

Instead, Ulpian restricted his discussion to the physicality of the book. This line of inquiry incurred its own challenges, prompting questions about the external boundaries of a book and its internal requirements. His edict continues:

In a legacy of books, the bookcases are not included, as Sabinus writes. So does Cassius; for he says that parchments with writing on them are due, but added that neither boxes nor cases nor other receptacles for the books are due. But what Cassius writes of blank parchments is true. For neither are blank papyri due in a legacy of books, nor when papyri are bequeathed will be books due, unless by any chance we should here be impelled by the testator's wishes, for instance, if someone should happen to have left papyri in these terms, "my entire papyri," when he had nothing other than books, as one scholar to another; for then nobody will doubt that books are due, because many people commonly call books papyri. What then if someone has bequeathed blank papyri? Parchments will not be included, nor any other writing material, nor yet books that have begun to be written.<sup>87</sup>

Ulpian asked, what demarcates the book? At the beginning of his edict, he had already decided that covers were included in the category *liber*. If book covers, which stored the contents of the book were included, what about other containers? What about their storage boxes?<sup>88</sup> Or the bookcases that held books? Ulpian did not include these in a legacy of books,

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87. Justinian, *D.* 32.50. 3. *Libris autem legatis bibliothecas non contineri Sabinus scribit: idem et Cassius: ait enim membranas quae scriptae sint contineri, deinde adiecit neque armaria neque scrinia neque cetera, in quibus libri conduntur, deberi.* 4. *Quod tamen Cassius de membranis puris scripsit, verum est: nam nec chartae purae debentur libris legatis nec chartis legatis libri debebuntur, nisi forte et hic nos urserit voluntas: ut puta si quis forte chartas sic reliquerit "chartas meas universas", qui nihil aliud quam libros habebat, studiosus studioso: nemo enim dubitabit libros deberi: nam et in usu plerique libros chartas appellant. Quid ergo, si quis chartas legaverit puras? Membranae non continebuntur neque ceterae ad scribendum materiae, sed nec coepti scribi libri.* (Momsen, 451).

88. A Roman statue of Sophocles provides a replica of these boxes. Cf. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient*

drawing the outer boundary of a book at its cover. What about a book's internal requirements? Ulpian had just distanced himself from judging a book based on its contents, but here he noted that blank papyri did not count as a book. To be included in a legacy of books the material object had to have some kind of writing on it. But how much? "Books that have begun to be written" were excluded from an inheritance. What about books that were mostly written? Or not quite finished? This final category stimulated Ulpian's legal imagination:

This brings us to no bad question: if books have been bequeathed, are unfinished books to be included? I think they are not, any more than what is not yet fully woven is included in the description of clothes. But books fully written out, though not yet hammered or ornamented, will be included. So will books not yet glued together or corrected; and even parchments not yet bound together will be included.<sup>89</sup>

The class of "unfinished books" presented a grey area: if a book was not complete, its author had not approved it for publication, and it should not be circulated by an heir. On the other hand, the value of an heir's inheritance risked diminishment. Roman inheritance law was designed to protect the rights of the heir,<sup>90</sup> and most of Ulpian's edict reflects this priority. Until now, he interpreted the term *liber* generously—if one inherited a library, books of all materials were included. If codices were part of a legacy of books, the valuable covers were included. If the "books of Homer" were bequeathed, a generous interpretation of the will was to be

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*World*, 107.

89. *Unde non male quaeritur, si libri legati sint, an contineantur nondum perscripti. Et non puto contineri, non magis quam vestis appellatione nondum detexta continetur. Sed perscripti libri nondum malleati vel ornati continebuntur: proinde et nondum conglutinati vel emendati continebuntur: sed et membranae nondum consutae continebuntur. 6. Chartis legatis neque papyrum ad chartas paratum neque chartae nondum perfectae continebuntur.* (Momsen, 451).

90. On this point, see Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C.- A.D. 250* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 103-130.

upheld and the heir should receive as many books of Homer as the testator possessed. Yet here, he excluded unfinished books, limiting the value of an inheritance.

Ulpian's legislation prohibiting the inheritance of unpublished books indicates that the ruling was put in place to protect authors, not the incumbent heir. Ulpian relied on analogy to clarify his position: unfinished books were like unfinished garments. His comparison was not isolated but reflects how Romans regarded books, which were often compared to garments—even the *Gospel of Truth* would describe the book as a garment Jesus "put on." In section five, we will see how readers wore books like garments, which some wore well, and others not so well. For authors, on the other hand, Romans used a different metaphorical system to describe books in terms of the human body: authors thought of their books as progeny. This was not a big conceptual leap. The terms for various parts of the book drew from basic anatomy vocabulary. Romans named parts of scrolls with parts of the human body: in addition to the *membrana libris* (skin of the book) Gaius Cassius mentioned, books had a *frontis*, its face, which was polished with pumice, and decorated knobs attached at the end of scrolls, *umbilicis* (navel). Authors continued this conceptual system as they regarded their own works, exhibiting problems that could have informed Roman legal thinking about books.

#### **IV. Author and Book**

Jurists and authors held fundamentally different stakes in books. Legal discussions focused on books as physical objects. The priorities of the author, on the other hand, focused on a book's contents. Nevertheless, legal thinking on the physical boundaries of the book addressed authorial concerns. Ulpian's rulings on unfinished books respected the challenges authors faced as they completed and published their own works. Authors such as Galen,

Pliny, and Clement described authorship as an opportunity for immortality, to circulate themselves around the empire without regard to distance or time.

From the author's perspective, a work represented the best of themselves.<sup>91</sup> The gradual process of Roman publishing ensured that an author could put her best book forward. Publishing a book in Imperial Rome was a more involved process than simply putting thoughts to paper (or dictating them to a scribe) and subsequently having slaves make copies. To publish (*publicare*) meant to let go of personal control over your writing and make it public. This occurred through a rigorous peer-reviewed five-stage process. Most authors dictated their thoughts to a scribe then later read over the transcript. After correcting errors, the author would host an intimate gathering of friends to hear the work and provide suggestions. The collaborative publication process helped authors produce a polished text.<sup>92</sup> In addition to pointing out factual errors, reviewers might suggest a stronger word or more convincing rhetorical structure. After further revisions, the author held several public readings before producing the final version of the text. The thorough vetting, culminating in a final public reading, fixed the text.<sup>93</sup> An author had properly "let go" of the composition once it was published. The published book then circulated beyond familiar people to

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91. As Thomas Habinek has put it, "writing amplifies the persona of the writer." See Habinek, "Situating Literacy in Rome," in *Ancient Literacies*, 121. Habinek also addresses this issue more in depth in *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

92. Alexander Gurd has examined what it meant for Roman authors to revise their work. He demonstrated that some authors viewed this communal publishing process as fundamentally republican in its opportunity for the entire community to participate in the composition. In contrast, some poets of the empire used this process to produce their own perfect text. See Alexander Gurd, *Work in Progress*, 1-22.

93. Rex Winsbury, *The Roman Book: Books, Publishing and Performance in Classical Rome* (London: Duckworth, 2009), 102. For the Greek counterparts to Latin publishing terms, see B.A. van Groningen, "ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, 16, no. 1 (1963): 1-17.

anonymous audiences across the empire.<sup>94</sup>

While the Roman publishing process ensured a best-possible final written draft, it could not protect the author from post-production modifications, plagiarism, and theft: although authors could hope that their finished books would not be altered, they should expect that they would be. Authors often attached pleas, threats, or curses to their documents to discourage readers with editorial urges from making changes. Some relied on the reputation of an established author and modified the text to suit new purposes. John's ominous warning at the end of Revelations to any reader tempted to amend the text was probably not a "Kanonisierungsformel,"<sup>95</sup> but instead an effort to discourage a common practice. Others attached their own names to another's books; Martial taunted a book thief to steal his manuscript while it was still "without a cover" and publish it under his own name. "Go ahead, take it," he urged, "no one will know a thing."<sup>96</sup> A third form of literary misconduct involved attaching the name of a famous author to one's own work in order to attract readers.

This was the situation in which the physician and philosopher Galen of Pergamum (129 C.E.- 217 C.E.)<sup>97</sup> found himself once his reputation spread. He wrote an entire treatise,

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94. In this respect, a book was fundamentally different from orality, not a shadow of it. Published books were meant for anonymous audiences. On this point, see Joseph Farrell, "The Impermanent Text in Catullus and Other Roman Poets," in *Ancient Literacies*, 212.

95. F. Hahn, "Die Sendscheiben der Johannesapokalypse: Ein Beitrag zur Bestimmung prophetischer Redeformen," in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt*, ed. G. Jeremias, H.W. Kuhn, and H. Stegemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1971), 361.

96. Martial's *Epi.* 1.66. Martial points out that it is difficult to steal published works, but unpublished poems, "if its face is not yet pumiced, nor decorated with knobs and without a cover, buy it: such books I have; nobody will know a thing." *Sed pumicata fronte si quis est nondum nec umbilicis cultus atque membrana, mercare: tales habeo; nec sciet quisquam.* Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 94 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1:66.

97. The exact date of Galen's death is unknown but approximated somewhere between 210 and 217. See R.J. Hankinson, ed., "The Man and His Work" in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge

titled *On My Own Books*, to document his literary activities in the face of identity theft. A trip to a bookstore in downtown Rome inspired the composition of this treatise. While browsing newly published titles, Galen witnessed an exchange between customers, one of whom had just purchased a book titled "Galen the Doctor." The other customer, struck by the strange title, looked at the opening pages and tore up the dedication, swearing, "this is not Galen's style, and the title is false."<sup>98</sup> An aspiring doctor had attempted to publish his own clumsy prose under Galen's name. Although pleased that he was so well known one could recognize his manner of speaking, and that he was famous enough that someone would want to steal his work,<sup>99</sup> Galen composed *On My Own Books* in response, listing all the texts he authored, explaining the reason he wrote them, naming his intended audience, and noting any subsequent editions. He was able to trace the origins of any corruptions, explaining how readers in other countries published his books under their names and "mutilated" his work, adding, changing, and excising as they wished.

As Galen traced the corruptions of his own work, he made clear the stakes of Ulpian's ruling about unfinished books. Ulpian excluded such documents from an inheritance; Galen's own literary history demonstrated why: it was precisely when the owner died that these books were most vulnerable to theft.<sup>100</sup> Without fail, textual corruption occurred when Galen's

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University Press, 2008), 25n1.

98. Galen, *Lib.Prop.* prologue. οὐκ ἔστι λέξις αὐτῆ Γαληνοῦ καὶ ψευδῶς ἐπιγράφεται τοῦτι βιβλίον. For the Greek edition, see C.G. Kühn, ed., *Claudii Galeni opera omnia* (1830; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung), 19:9.

99. Johnson, *Readers and Reading in the High Roman Empire*, 85.

100. On his deathbed, Virgil too requested that his unfinished *Aeneid* manuscript be burned. When his friends refused, Virgil asked that they at least not publish anything that he would not have published himself. This request was also denied. His *Aeneid* was published postmortem with several verses left unfinished. See Suetonius-Donatus, *Vit. Virg.* 15-16.

unpublished works passed from deceased to heir. Galen had written a few books just for friends or pupils who were unable to attend his lectures and demonstrations. He stated that these books were not intended for publication, but simply notes with no title, given to the students and friends who asked for them. He also permitted his students to record his lectures in writing, encouraging them to take notes on his demonstrations to use as reference works when they did not have access to Galen himself. Galen did not consider these notes he wrote for friends, or notes his students took, to be published books. Galen never published his work *On the Bringing Up of Blood*. It was a record of a lecture he had written against Martialis, a competing doctor. Galen was surprised to find this little lecture, composed for a specific polemical purpose and in the spirit of professional rivalry, circulating widely. A friend had taken down the lecture as a transcript and died. The heir to his friend's library thrust his lecture into circulation.

A similar fate met Galen's *On the Motion of the Chest and Lungs*, which he wrote for a student who was returning home after studying with Galen in Rome. The young man died, and years later, Galen came across the work with a new preface and different author. Galen's own notes on Chrysippus' *Book of Syllogistic* were also published after someone asked a household servant to hand them over and then later released them into circulation. Perhaps the unsanctioned circulation of Galen's unpublished manuscripts even provoked Roman legislation prohibiting the inheritance of unfinished books. As Marcus Aurelius' personal physician and a public speaker on the itinerant doctor circuit, Galen was a familiar face in Rome. One can imagine he complained about these instances in aristocratic environments, where he may have encountered a young Ulpian, Paulus, or other legal scholars. In any case, Galen spent time documenting these instances and re-editing his altered work. There is no

indication he was concerned about correcting medical misinformation; his efforts seem motivated by the preservation of his own legacy.

Many Roman authors were sensitive to the posterity of authorship. The politician Pliny (61-112 C.E.), who often advocated in judicial courts with Tacitus,<sup>101</sup> addressed the monumental implications of authorship more explicitly. In one of his letters, he encouraged his friend Octavius to publish his poetry. Pliny underscored the expediency: Octavius' verse was already circulating orally. To guarantee that his own name would always be attached to his work, Octavius needed to compile a volume before others claimed authorship. After assuring Octavius that his work would be well received, and scolding him for habitual procrastination, Pliny urged him to publish, reminding him that he should "have an eye towards mortality, from which you can free yourself with this one monument." Octavius should not count on friends publishing his poetry after death. Pliny warned Octavius that should he die with the poetry unpublished, the words will "like vagabonds, find someone else to utter them."<sup>102</sup> A published volume of poetry was supposed to ensure his immortality. However, it seems that Octavius' laziness prevailed, or that Pliny's estimation of his verse was off, because no poems or other mention of Octavius survives.

The idea that a book could continue to promote an author, even after death, traversed religious affiliation. Clement, writing in the Roman metropolis of Alexandria around the time Ulpian and Paulus were beginning their legal careers, considered his own writing a personal memorial, one he was not sure he deserved— his writing was "weak when compared

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101. Helmut Krasser, *Der Neue Pauly*, s.v. "P. Caecilius Secundus."

102. Pliny, *Ep.* 2.10. *Habe ante oculos mortalitatem, a qua adserere te hoc uno monumento potes.... ut erroneus aliquem cuius dicantur invenient.* Pliny, *Letters and Panegyricus*, trans. Betty Radice, LCL 55 (1962; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 104.

with that spirit, full of grace, which [he] was privileged to hear." Although he, like Galen, considered lectures superior to books for pedagogical purposes, he carefully weighed the advantages of writing: memory was unreliable, writing could be fixed. His *Stromateis* would not allow knowledge to fade from human memory with the passage of time. Instead, it offered permanence. Clement considered the *Stromateis* his "progeny of the soul."<sup>103</sup> In this respect, his thinking about books aligned with the thinking of other Roman writers; authors regarded their books as children, living texts they could give birth to, raise, correct, and leave as a legacy. But the Roman Empire could be a dangerous place for children, especially when they left the possession and protection of home.

## **V. Reader and Book**

Pliny's correspondent Octavius might have been justified in his reticence to publish his poetry. Once released to the public, literary creations were vulnerable not just to theft or mutilation, but also to the readers who could do damage of their own. As Plato had observed, good books always manage to find the worst readers, those who would miss the original intent of the writing. He advocated against putting one's thoughts down in writing and some Romans grafted this ideal onto legends of their own: Numa and Pythagoreans avoided books for the same reason. However, authors used a different strategy to protect their thoughts. They lamented the damage a bad reader could cause, and outlined practices of good reading, which led to proper comprehension. As they did this, they drew further comparisons between body and book, relying on metaphors of books as children, prostitutes, and clothing.

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103. Clement, *Strom.* 1. Οἱ μὲν γε παῖδες σωμάτων, ψυχῆς δὲ ἔγγονοι οἱ λόγοι. Clement, *Stromateis*, trans. Marcel Caster, SC 29, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1931), 41.

Releasing a literary work to anonymous audiences was like letting a child leave home. Like foundlings without parental supervision, they might wind up a pet (*deliciae*) of a household available for everyone's enjoyment, a temple prostitute or slave.<sup>104</sup> Horace (65-8 B.C.E.) expressed related concerns, writing a letter to his own book eager to be published and "go abroad." Horace described what his book could expect if it, at present shown only to a few, were set out for sale. He spoke to his book as a child vulnerable to rapacious readers: if the book traveled to Rome, it would spend its youth "caressed" (*carus*) and "groped by the hands of the rabble," (*contrectatus minibus vulgi*) until worn out and left to be eaten by "feasting, lazy grubs," (*pasces inertes tineas*). After a time, the book would be set aside, ignored. If the book was lucky, it might spend its old age "teaching boys the basics," in Utica, Ilerda, or some other remote Roman colony, (*senectus occupet docentem pueros elementa in extremis vicis*). After years of such misuse, the book would become a poor monument to its author; if anyone bothered to ask, the book could only describe "the son of a freedman who extended my wings beyond my nest."<sup>105</sup>

In Rome a century later, Martial (c. 40-104 C.E.) imagined a similar fate for his own book as he looked at the final manuscript. Martial described his book properly "dressed"—pumiced, hammered, and decorated—in garb that made a work seductive to readers. Martial asked: "Where, oh, where are you going, my book, garbed in Sidonian refinement?"<sup>106</sup> His

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104. On the dismal existence of foundlings and orphans in the Roman home, see Paul Veyne, *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 79. Victoria Rimell has observed, "books are often pictured as slaves, a class of people who conceptually didn't have any physical boundaries, and could legally be used, beaten, penetrated or killed by their masters." Victoria Rimell, *Martial's Rome: Empire and Ideology of Epigram* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 25.

105. Horace, *Epist.* 1.20.

106. Martial, *Epi.* 11.1. *Quo tu, quo, liber otiose, tendis cultus Sidone non cotidiana?* (Shackleton Bailey, 3:2).

book was likely going to the libraries attached to the many temples scattered around Rome: Martial listed possible escorts for the evening, naming the gods Apollo, Europa, and Jason, all of whom had shrines in the city. The Palatine Library in the Temple of Apollo might be the most prestigious venue but, Martial warned, Apollo would not be a good company because he only read memorials. In less reputable temple libraries, such as the shrines of Europa or Jason, the book might have more luck finding a reader or two. However, these readers would probably only open the book to shake out its worms and only after gossiping about Scorpis and Incitatus, the champion charioteers of the day. Martial anticipated how readers would defile his book, becoming dirty as it was read.<sup>107</sup>

In a second epigram, Martial hoped for his book to please many audiences; after being plied with wine and greased with the fragrant oils of Cosmus (a famous perfume maker), the book would "play with boys, and make love to girls..."<sup>108</sup> For the readers' part, Martial expected them to encounter his books in the same manner they might a prostitute or exotic dancer—he compared a performance of his poetry to a Spanish dancer playing castanets. Martial predicted the reaction of the audience: "Oh! How often will you strike your garments with a rigid phallus;"<sup>109</sup> even one with the temperament of republican officials Curius and Fabricius, famous for their austerity and asceticism, would be aroused.

The authors' comparison of publishing their books to prostitution perhaps reflected universal artistic temperament about selling (out) their works. But authors also detailed

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107. *Epi.* 10.93.6. On this passage, and how Martial discusses his own poetry as social transmission of sickness and contagion, see Rimell, *Martial's Rome*, 21-28.

108. *Ibid* 11.15. *ludat cum pueris, amet puellas.* (Ker, 2:248).

109. *Ibid* 11.16. *O quotiens rigida pulsabis pallia vena, sis gravior Curio Fabricioque licet!* (Shackleton Bailey, 3:16).

exactly how readers did harm and they explained this in terms of the human body: Epictetus (55 C.E. -135 C.E.), studying in Rome around the time Martial was having fits about publishing his poetry, described casual reading in similar terms to interacting with the dead and described books as "corpses." He warned his students: "For what purpose do you want to read? Tell me! If you turn to it to beguile or to learn something, you are cold and miserable."<sup>110</sup> In his treatise *The Ignorant Book Collector*, the "Syrian" Lucian of Samosata (125-180 C.E.) voiced similar sentiments about casual reading, replacing death imagery with sexual innuendos. Lucian decried the aristocracy's penchant for creating personal libraries; this little work mocked an unnamed book collector, who thought his hobby made him seem educated. Lucian described suggestively the way his ignorant book collector read: "Of course, you might read, looking deeply at the books with your eyes, and, yes by all means, you might read some, running lightly over them, your eyes outstripping your mouth..."<sup>111</sup> Lucian implied that just as the reader failed to "know" the book, the reader equally failed to know the book's contents.

In addition to sexual imagery, Lucian also drew on book as garment language. If, for Ulpian, an unfinished book was like unwoven clothing then, for Lucian, a badly-read book was like ill-fitting apparel. He argued that book collecting and causal reading made no more

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110. Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.4. ἢ τίνος ἔνεκα θέλεις ἀναγνῶναι; εἰπέ μοι. εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ καταστρέφεις τὸ ψυχαγωγηθῆναι ἢ μαθεῖν τι, ψυχρὸς εἶ καὶ ἀταλαίπωρος. Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian*, ed. and trans. W.A. Oldfather, LCL 218 (1928; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 314. The language of death is present in the Greek: I have translated ψυχαγωγηθῆναι "beguile" but it can mean "to lead souls to the underworld" and often appears in contexts meaning to conjure the dead or mislead the living. Additionally, I have translated ψυχρὸς "heartless," but it generally describes cold things, particularly corpses.

111. *Ind.* 2. σὺ δὲ ἀνεωγμένοις μὲν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾳς τὰ βιβλία, καὶ νῆ Δία κατακόρως, καὶ ἀναγιγνώσκεις ἔνια πάνυ ἐπιτρέχων, φθάνοντος τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τὸ στόμα. (Harmon, 176). William Johnson has pointed out Lucian's sexually suggestive language in this passage in his *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire*, 160.

sense than a double amputee with an expensive shoe habit. Lucian met such a man (he traveled extensively around both east and west edges of the empire) and recounted the tale of a wealthy Syrian who lost both his feet through an unfortunate accident. The man had wooden feet made and learned to walk again, however, "he did this laughable thing: he would buy the prettiest boots of the newest cut and exerted the utmost effort for them, in order that his wooden feet be adorned with the most beautiful sandals!" Lucian compared the Syrian, who drew attention to his own deformity with his fancy sandals, to a book collector, whose extensive personal library only revealed his illiteracy. Lucian accused the book collector: "Is it not the case that you are doing these things, being lame and with the smarts of a fig-tree, you are buying gold slippers in which even a sure-footed person could just barely walk around in?"<sup>112</sup>

Intelligentsia of all religious affiliations complained about reading without understanding. Lucian's objections also found voice in a later work from the east. A talmudic passage compared the generous way a renowned sage of Israel performed a eulogy to the indifferent reaction of a Babylonian sage to the death of a lesser scholar: "Resh Lakish delivered a eulogy for a certain rabbinical student who was often in the land of Israel. He used to teach twenty four rows of students. He said, Woe! The land of Israel has lost a great man!" On the other hand, the Babylonian sage gave an unmoving response: when asked to deliver the funeral address for such a man who "used to repeat halachoth, Sifra and Sifre and Tosefta," Rabbi Nahman asked rhetorically, "How shall we deliver a eulogy. Woe. A basket

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112. *Ind.* 6. ἐκεῖνο δὲ γελοῖον ἐποίει, κρηπίδας γὰρ καλλίστας ἔωνεῖτο νεοτμήτους ἀεὶ, καὶ τὴν πλείστην πραγματείαν περὶ ταύτας εἶχεν, ὡς καλλίστοις ὑποδήμασι κεκοσμημένα εἶη αὐτῷ τὰ ξύλα. οὐ ταῦτα οὖν καὶ σὺ ποιεῖς χωλὴν μὲν ἔχων καὶ συκίνην τὴν γνώμην, ἠνούμενος δὲ χρυσοῦς ἐμβάτας, οἷς μόλις ἂν τις καὶ ἀρτίπους ἐμπεριπατήσειεν; (Harmon, 182).

of books has been lost."<sup>113</sup> Yet this passage also demonstrates, as Rashi has argued, the value of reading for understanding shared with Roman intellectuals. The deceased student in the land of Israel, while he could only recite halachoth, also had sufficient command of the material to teach a large class of students. The Babylonian student, on the other hand, although he could recite from several sources, could not explain what he read, and consequently, was nothing more than a "bag of books."

Many intellectual circles maligned poor reading practices in terms of damaged human bodies. On the other hand, proper reading practices united the book with the body of the reader to even a medicinal advantage—Epictetus insisted, "But if you restore [reading's] necessity, what is it but a happy life?"<sup>114</sup> Idealized reading was an exercise in philosophical virtue.<sup>115</sup> Epictetus urged students not to spend too much time memorizing the works of others, instead advocating that they should write their own books to sort out their own thoughts.

Epictetus' exhortation prompted the question, how shall we then read? Good reading practices involved absorbing a literary work until it became part of the reader's being. Early in the first century, Seneca had encouraged depth over breadth, suggesting that it was more fruitful for a reader to "surrender yourself to a few authors rather than wander through many"<sup>116</sup> and learn the work by heart. Lucian echoed these sentiments. He wanted the reader

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113. Meg 28b. ריש לקיש ספדיה להווא צורבא מרבנן דשכיח בארעא דישראל דהוי תני הלכתא בכ"ד שורתא אמר ווי חסרא ארעא דישראל גברא רבה ההוא דהוי תני הלכתא סיפרא וסיפרי ותוספתא ושכיב אתו ואמרו ליה לרב נחמן ליספדיה מר אמר היכי נספדיה הי צנא דמלי סיפרי דחסר תא חזי מה בין תקיפי דארעא דישראל לחסידי דבבל

114. *Diss.* 4.4.5. εἰ δ' ἐφ' ὃ δεῖ ἀναφέρεις, τί τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἄλλο ἢ εὐροια; (Oldfather, 315).

115. Reading as philosophical exercise also appears in Egyptian monasticism. See Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews, and Christians* (London, Routledge, 2000). cf. Williams and Grafton, *The Monk and the Book*, 43n53.

116. Seneca, *tranqu.* 9.4-5. *multoque satius est paucis te auctoribus tradere, quam errare per multos.* Seneca, *Moral Essays*, ed. John W. Basore, LCL 254 (London and New York: Heinemann, 1932), 2:216. On this

to understand the work on the content level, sentence level, and philological level; the reader should know the work better than the author himself. Lucian expected readers to master the arguments and defects of a text, and "understand completely the virtue and failing of each phrase, whether the arrangement of words has been executed by the author according to the standards of correctness and which are adulterated, base and spurious."<sup>117</sup> Such mastery of a particular work signified that one had subsumed the book into his being and had, quite literally, become the book. Martial found such a reader in one Pompeius Auctus, who knew Martial's works by heart, down to the letter. Subsequently, Martial declared Pompeius Auctus "was not a reader of my works but the book itself."<sup>118</sup>

## VI. Testaments

The way Romans talked about books indicates that books preserved the person of the author—as a monument, offspring, and personal possession. The written document could preserve the thoughts of the author as long as it was understood correctly, and there were steps both author and readers could take to make sure that happened. The slow, grueling publishing process ensured that the final written document offered the best version to circulate to anonymous readers. Threats and curses attached to books deterred some readers from altering or appropriating the book as their own work. Some authors kept a close eye on their writings even after they were released to the public, correcting textual corruptions as

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passage also see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 14 and n 203; also Williams and Grafton, *The Monk and the Book*, 41.

117.*Ind.* 2. Οὐδέπω δὲ τοῦτό μοι ἰκανόν, ἦν μὴ εἰδῆς τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν ἐκάστου τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων καὶ συνίης ὅστις μὲν ὁ νοῦς σύμπασι, τίς δὲ ἡ τάξις τῶν ὀνομάτων, ὅσα τε πρὸς τὸν ὀρθὸν κανόνα τῷ συγγραφεὶ ἀπηκριβῶται καὶ ὅσα κίβδηλα καὶ νόθα καὶ παρακεκομμένα. (Harmon, 176).

118.*Epi.* 7.51. *non lector meus hic... sed liber est.* (Shackleton Baily, 2: 118). On Martial's idea of books living on the tongues of readers, Remell, *Martial's Rome*, 26-28.

they appeared. Readers also played a key role in the preservation of the author. Bad readers abused an author's progeny or neglected it. With their books forgotten, the authors were too. The best readers ensured the immortality of the author, able to discern the original intent and "wear" the book well. As we will see, in the *Gospel of Truth*, Jesus "puts on the book" and is "wrapped" in the book, indicating that he had perfect mastery of its contents.

Despite expressed interest in preserving the intent of the author, literary practice was for the reader. Books were a means for a reader to improve her philosophical, moral, and intellectual abilities. Ideally, one did not read simply to know what an author thought on a particular topic. A struggle through a difficult text was supposed to yield personal insights and development. The book itself was not supposed to be an object of interest, but a means to this end. Such a position would appear as a stark contrast to Christian and Jewish groups, who placed infallible written texts at the center of their world. In the following chapters, I will question whether this is an accurate understanding of Jewish and Christian groups through the second century, but here I want to make a note about Roman ideas of infallible writing that may have influenced Jewish and Christian thinking about sacred texts. There is evidence that Romans possessed an equivalent concept of authoritative text in which the written format exerted more authority than spoken discourse.

In a recent study, Elizabeth A. Meyer has argued that *tabulae*, wooden tablets coated in wax, possessed unique capabilities and efficacy as objects. *Tabulae* were used in ceremonial contexts. In their earliest attested function, they were primarily used to communicate with gods. This practice then extended into the legal realm. *Tabulae* were used to display edicts publicly, and, in the private sector, used to compose a will (*testamentum*). These documents had final authority in any legal situation and were utilized

to address this issue of proof. In such cases, the written documents superseded oral testimony.<sup>119</sup> Meyer offers a compelling example with Apuleius' *Apologia*. In this testimony, Lucian's contemporary Apuleius (c. 125-180 C.E.) defended himself in a North African court against the charges of practicing magic and of murdering his step-son. Against claims that he married his wife Pudentilla—mother of the murdered Pontianus—for money, he insisted that Pudentilla's will be opened as irrefutable evidence. Apuleius promised that the court would find Pontianus named sole heir and that he, Apuleius, was not even mentioned in the will. As Meyer has observed, "Pudentilla is still alive and could presumably testify to her own change of heart about her son; but this is not nearly as effective as breaking open her sealed will and reading her intention to the court..."<sup>120</sup> Her written will held more authority than her oral testimony.

Edicts as written documents held a similar infallible authority: edicts could function as the voice of the emperor in an empire too vast for him to oversee in person. To publish an edict was to enact it as law. If the law was not written down or the *tabula* not established in a public place, it was as if the law never existed. Josephus described a policy towards Jews that was not implemented because it had not been written on *tabulae* and taken to the *aerarium* for publication.<sup>121</sup> To destroy the document put the law in jeopardy—Roman jurists debated whether or not a law became invalid if the *tabula* had been defaced.<sup>122</sup> Legal documents such as edicts and wills held power not just *vis-à-vis* their contents but as ritual objects

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119. Elizabeth A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216.

120. Meyer, 240-241.

121. *A.J.* 14.221. cf. Meyer, 111.

122. *D.* 2.1.7.2.

in a way that resembles the significance Christians and Jews began to attach to their religious texts.

Would such a relationship between the legal and religious be apparent to an ancient reader? Meyer has argued that the cosmic importance of *tabulae* for communicating with Roman deities contributed to their later efficacy in the legal realm. The comparison between the authority of a Roman legal document and the authority of Jewish and Christian sacred texts might seem arbitrary, but it is also one that ancient Christian texts themselves have made. In the *Gospel of Truth*, Jesus read from a book of divine wisdom, an action the text described as "publishing an edict on the cross." Likewise, Irenaeus of Lyon also described the body of Jesus as an edict.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps the connection between the power of legal documents and the development of religious texts is most evident in the term Christians began to use at the end of the second century to refer to their own collections of texts.

The term "New Testament" must have resonated as new law for Christians under the legal fist of Rome. The traditional explanation for the term's origins relies on the concept of covenant:<sup>124</sup> in the Torah, God made a covenant with his people and the prophet Jeremiah predicted that days would come when God would make a new covenant (ברית חדשה) with his people.<sup>125</sup> The Septuagint rendered the Hebrew phrase "καινή διαθήκη." This is the phrase Pseudo-Paul used when he quoted the passage of Jeremiah in his letter to the Hebrews. The problem is that the word διαθήκη often designated will and testament and has a secondary

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123. *Adv. haer.* 5.9.4.

124. See Wolfram Kinzig, "καινή διαθήκη: The Title of the New Testament in the Second and Third Centuries," *JTS*, ns 45.2 (1994): 519-545.

125. Jer 31.31.

meaning of covenant or alliance.<sup>126</sup> Early Jewish and Christian writers used the term with both nuances; even the collection of books now called "καινή διαθήκη" used the word with both meanings. However, it was not applied to religious texts until the third century. Neither Irenaeus or Justin used it to describe books; a few citations appearing in Clement's *Stromateis* are at best ambiguous.<sup>127</sup> Marcion may have been the first to make a connection between religious writing and testaments: he called his book *Antithesis* "καινή διαθήκη," linking his own writing with the idea that wills and testaments were both written.<sup>128</sup>

Whether or not Marcion was a major player in the development of a canon, this attestation, coupled with some evidence from Latin authors, indicates the concept of New Testament had less to do with covenants and more to do with legal documents. This becomes more clear when διαθήκη is translated into Latin as *testamentum*, a word that always means will and testament and carries zero connotation of covenant. The Vulgate translation of Jeremiah's ברית חדשה is *foedus novum*, or new covenant. However, in Pseudo-Paul's letter to the Hebrews, the same phrase from Jeremiah becomes *novum testamentum*. The first Christian to apply the term *novum testamentum* to a collection of books (and not a description of the relationship between God and his people) was Tertullian, a Latin Lawyer turned Christian.<sup>129</sup> The point is, by the time *novum testamentum* and καινή διαθήκη were applied to a specific collection of books, will and testament, not covenant was understood. This suggests that the

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126. Wolfram Kinzig has traced the use of the term New Testament in the Greek and Latin writings from the first through third centuries. He has argued that Christians began to understand the term as will/testament and not covenant, which yielded "a whole new series of theological metaphors and associations." See Wolfram Kinzig, "καινή διαθήκη," 519.

127. Cf. *Strom.* 1.44.3; 3.71.3; 4.134.4; 5.85.1; 7.100.5. Kinzig, 529n47.

128. Kinzig, 529.

129. See *Adv. Prax.* 15.1; 31.1. Cf. Kinzig, 530.

authority legal documents carried in the Roman Empire (which Romans themselves had imported from a religious context) contributed to the development of Jewish and Christian writings into collections of books that possessed efficacy as objects and infallibility as texts.

This claim provokes questions about the influence of Second Temple Judaism, which is often credited with a particular attachment to the book imported into early Christianity. In the next chapter, we will see that, far from having a uniform notion of sacred book and divine text, Jews of the Second Temple harbored a variety of views towards the written word. Not all of these views were favorable.

## CHAPTER TWO: IS IT WRITTEN?

ויקראו בספר בתורת האלהים מפרש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא

So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense so that the people understood the reading.

—Nehemiah 8:8<sup>130</sup>

### I. A People of the Book?

The chronicles of Ezra-Nehemiah recount the gradual return of the Jewish elite from exile in Babylonia: the Jews began to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed fifty years earlier. Economic tactics and the stonewalling tactics of political opponents slowed construction of the temple.<sup>131</sup> But a century later, the construction complete, the Second Temple provided a visible marker of Jewish presence. Once the city walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, Judaism was rebuilt too, with a people, a city, a religious center. To mark the occasion, Ezra read aloud the entire Torah in the presence of the nation as a reaffirmation of the covenant with its deity. With this reading, the Oxford Annotated Bible asserted, "Israel reconstitutes itself as the 'people of the book,' with scripture, specifically the first five books of the Bible.... becoming authoritative for communal and personal life."<sup>132</sup> Judaism had a people, a city, a temple, and, with Ezra's reading, a book. So goes the biblical legend of how Jews became a people of the book.

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130. Rudolf Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Editio funditus renovata adjuvantibus H. Bardtke [et al.] cooperantibus H. P. Rüger et J. Ziegler ediderunt K. Elliger et W. Rudolph. Textum Masoreticum curavit H. P. Rüger. Masoram elaboravit G. E. Weil (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977), 1444.

131. Ezra 4:4-5, for example, records efforts of the natives to thwart the reconstruction process by intimidation and bribery.

132. NRSV 671.

History describes a gradual process of canonization, rather than a symbolic instant at which the Jews became a "people of the book."<sup>133</sup> Historical questions include: Which books were included in the canon? When?<sup>134</sup> The basic textbook model goes like this: based on the evidence of Ezra-Nehemiah, the five books of Moses can be described as canonical by 400 B.C.E.; descriptions of a collection of the "Law and Prophets"<sup>135</sup> in the Sirach indicate that the Prophets were canonized c. 200 B.C.E.; the date for canonizing the Writings c. 90-100 C.E. is derived from the "Council of Javneh."<sup>136</sup> More recent research into canon formation has demonstrated that canonization involved not only deciding which books to read and which to ignore, but also required a shift in how a book, once canonical, was regarded.<sup>137</sup> Changes in perspective accompanied a text's canonization. Talmudic debates and medieval commentaries demonstrate that Jews began to regard the Torah scroll itself as an *axis mundi*,<sup>138</sup> Chris-

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133. The Arabic phrase *Ahl al-Kitāb* (people of the book) colloquially meant "literate" in contrast to those who could not read. In the Quran, the phrase describes possessors of scripture, Jews and Christians, and their affinity to Islam in this regard, in contrast to tribal religions that did not possess written precepts. See *Encyclopedia Islamica*, s.v. *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Modern scholarship has re-appropriated this phrase in the field of Ancient History (to describe Jews and Christians in contrast to Greco-Roman oral religious traditions) and in the field of Comparative Religious Studies to describe Abrahamic religions in contrast to Eastern religions.

134. Useful summaries of the history of scholarship on the canon debate include: Lee Martin MacDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., "Introduction," in *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 3-20; Also Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Hadīth Canon* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2007), 20-46. On the history of scholarship on New Testament canon formation: Harry Y. Gamble, "The New Testament Canon: Recent Research and the Status Questionis," in *The Canon Debate*, 267-294.

135. Sir prologue.

136. Jack P. Lewis has traced the origins of the Jamnia council hypothesis, which claims a group of rabbis met at the academy in Javneh to close the canon. He has found the council to be an invention of Heinrich Graetz, based on his reading of m.Yad 3:5 and deposition of Rabbi Gamaliel in Javneh. See Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1893; repr., 1956), 2:342-344; Jack P. Lewis, "Jamnia Revisited," in *The Canon Debate*, 146-162.

137. This line of questioning asks what "canonical" really means. Stephen B. Chapman, "Second Temple Jewish Hermeneutics: How Canon is Not an Anachronism," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, ed. Jörg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, David Brakke, Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2011), 281-96.

138. On medieval developments see Marianne Schleicher, "Artifactual and Hermeneutical Use of Scripture in Jewish Tradition," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Library of

tian sources attest to similar thinking on the Gospels—as objects they not only contained the divine word, but also moderated human interaction with the divine presence.<sup>139</sup>

If canonical authority indicates that some books were perceived differently from other books, there was not unanimous agreement about what the authority was and what it meant. Instead, there were a variety of ideas about the ontology of the sacred book. This chapter places Second Temple Jewish texts in this culture-wide discussion about what a book was and how a divine book worked. While the previous chapter addressed the ontology of Roman books, this chapter examines Jewish ideas about the format, function, and value of the written word. Because textual authority rested on assertions that a book's contents replicated a portion of a heavenly book, this chapter begins by surveying these types of heavenly books, then investigates the various claims Jewish texts made about their own abilities to replicate the contents of such books. While some texts maintained that humans had direct access to the heavenly books themselves, others claimed that human efforts were inherently deficient—the opening quotation demonstrated that sacred books were incomprehensible to most people without an interpreter, and for similar reasons, texts such as the *Wisdom of Ben Sira* and the *Letter of Aristeas* authorized abridgments and translations as viable reading material for the pious. Philo further liberated Jewish law from the Torah scroll in favor of the "soul" of scripture, found in the embodiment and allegorical writings of select individuals. Many Jewish texts extended the sacred book beyond the boundaries of a physical document into the

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Second Temple Studies 70 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 48-65.

139. For example, Caroline Humphries, "Judging by the Book: Christian Codices in Late Antique Legal Culture," in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2007), 151. Also Dorina Miller Parmenter, "The Bible as Icon," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture*, 289-310.

bodies of teachers, and their written and spoken commentaries. Exploring these traditions will provide context for Valentinus' ideas about sacred books in the next chapter.

## II. God's Library

An ancient religious text's authority rested on its claims to represent the contents of divine books.<sup>140</sup> In the next chapter, we will see the *Gospel of Truth* made claims of its own divine origin by drawing on Jewish concepts of heavenly books. Earlier Jewish writings asserted their authority as divinely authored texts: The Mosaic Torah drew on two sources to explain the origin of its decrees and statutes—Exodus 31:18 described the legal tablets Moses brought down from Sinai as tablets inscribed personally by the deity. An alternative narrative, Exodus 34:27-28 asserted that Moses took divine dictation and wrote them. (Later rabbinic traditions argued that the deity possessed a physical copy of these laws in heaven, before dictating them to Moses.)<sup>141</sup> Second Temple Jewish texts that elevated Enoch as their central protagonist also claimed to transmit the contents of heavenly tablets, which Enoch accessed on trips to heaven. In addition to heavenly tablets, many Jewish authors surmised that God had other books as well—texts that recorded the names of the righteous, deeds of humanity, and also books that had supernatural powers.

Jewish texts of diverse provenance attest to the concept of a Book of Life, a document that served as a registry, recording the names of individuals who were destined for eternal life. This text worked like a guest list; one's name could either be added to this book or

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140. An early work on heavenly books in the ancient Near East has even argued that these books were metaphors for earthly books. Humans imagined the books that existed in heaven based on the types of books they used for their own administrative purposes. Leo Koep, *Das himmlische Buch in Antike und Christentum: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur altchristlichen Bildersprache* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1952), 1-136.

141. *LevR* 19:1.

removed from it. An early attestation, Psalm 69:29, explained the mechanics of the book: "Let them be erased from the book of life; let them not be written among the righteous."<sup>142</sup> *Jubilees*, a third century B.C.E. Hebrew text that attracted diverse readership from the inhabitants of Qumran to late antique Christian chronographers,<sup>143</sup> warned that those who broke God's covenant would be erased from the Book of Life and their names written down in the Book of Destruction.<sup>144</sup> In addition to the Hebrew literature, the Book of Life is also found in Hellenistic literature. *Joseph and Aseneth* was composed to explain how a seminal Jewish patriarch such as Joseph could marry the daughter of an Egyptian priest. This text absolved Aseneth of her idol-worshipping ways because she had been written in the Book of Life, her name listed first in the roster of the righteous.<sup>145</sup> Other texts to make use of the concept include the Gospel of Luke, which praised the seventy proselytizers whose names were written in heaven.<sup>146</sup> The *Gospel of Truth* also used a variation of this idea, describing those who received Jesus' teachings favorably as having a "living book of the living" written in their hearts.

Related to the Book of Life was the Book of Deeds, which contained the details of each individual's actions, both good and evil. This book served to determine whether one was admitted to heaven on the basis of good deeds outweighing the bad. The prophet Isaiah identified the deity as the one who "erases your transgressions,"<sup>147</sup> (מחה פשעֵיךְ) implying they

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142. ימחו מספר חיים ועם צדיקים אל-יכתבו. (Kittel, 1150).

143. For these citations, See Hermann Röscher and August Dillman, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1874; reprint Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1970), 252-382.

144. *Jub.* 30:22.

145. *Jos. Asen* 15:4.

146. *Lk* 10:20.

147. *Isa* 43:25. (Kittel, 742).

had been recorded in a book. Texts referred to this book in judiciary contexts: in an apocalyptic vision, the prophet Daniel saw a divine figure consult such a book as part of legal proceedings against a symbolic giant beast.<sup>148</sup> The contents of the book led to the beast's condemnation. *Dream Visions*, the Maccabean era installment of the Enoch epic, described such a book being used in similar legal contexts.<sup>149</sup> *Jubilees* depicted Enoch as the writer of the book of deeds—taken up to heaven, he now bides eternity recording the evil deeds of humankind.<sup>150</sup> The *Testament of Abraham* portrayed Abel as its keeper and described the giant dimensions of the Books of Deeds. Four angels assisted him: one in charge of recording righteous deeds, another responsible for writing down evil acts, a third angel weighed the souls, and a fourth wielded a fiery trumpet.<sup>151</sup>

Divine books possessed not only divine words, legal records, and history, but also supernatural physical powers. These "Books of Action"<sup>152</sup> traversed earthly and divine realms and represented one way the deity could intervene in human affairs. The prophet Zechariah described a flying scroll that came whizzing down from heaven as "the curse that goes out over the whole land."<sup>153</sup> (האלה היוצאת על-פני כל-הארץ) Isaiah 8:1-4 detailed the deity's command for the prophet to take a large tablet and write Maher-shalal-hash-baz and have the tablet notarized by a priest. The creation of this tablet instigated the birth of this child, whose existence precipitated Assyria's conquest of Samaria. Leslie Baynes has provocatively de-

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148. Dan 7:9-11.

149. *I En.* 89:61-64.

150. *Jub.* 4:23.

151. *T. Ab.* recension A 12.

152. As described by Leslie Baynes, *The Heavenly Book Motif in Judeo-Christian Apocalypses, 200 B.C.E.-200 C.E.* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2012), 54-58.

153. Zech 5:1-4. (Kittel, 1068).

scribed the tablet's function: "The speech of the Lord is written, and the written words are made flesh in the person of Isaiah's son."<sup>154</sup> The divine word made flesh became a central concept in early Christianity, and the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Truth both described its efficacy in no uncertain terms. On the word made flesh, the Gospel of John insisted: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."<sup>155</sup> Instead of word made flesh, the *Gospel of Truth* envisioned a divine book made flesh, claiming: that "nothing could have appeared among the ones who believed in salvation, if that book had not come into the midst."<sup>156</sup>

### III. The Lying Pen of Scribes

To what extent was humanity capable of accessing these heavenly books or replicating their contents? Plato had been pessimistic on this question, positing the existence of an ideal book that remained completely removed from our world. Human attempts at writing only produced deeply deficient copies. Jewish texts conveyed similar anxieties about human capacities to transmit divine messages in writing. These texts considered questions such as: How should a text's claims to be a heavenly document be evaluated? What characteristics supported a document's authenticity? How accurate was the book as a copy?

The recovering of hidden, lost books was a popular way to introduce and authenticate new texts and their contents.<sup>157</sup> Their discovery explained why the material had not been

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154. Baynes, *The Heavenly Book Motif*, 54.

155. Jn 1:3. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. Bruce Metzger, et al. eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998), 312.

156. *Gos. Truth* 20:6-7. ἐμπελαγε θουγανῆ δβαλ εἰν νεει νῆταγῆρογτογ ἀπογχεει ἐνεῖμπεχει ἐτμητε νῆσι πιχῶσμε ἐτῆμεγ. Harold Attridge and George W. MacRae, S.J., "The Gospel of Truth," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)* Nag Hammadi Studies Series XXII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 86.

157. For a brief history of scholarship on this topic, as well as a comprehensive selection of ancient examples,

known before and their secret status implied esotericism and a kinship with heavenly books. A rediscovered book narrative allowed Josiah, king of Judah from 640-609 B.C.E., to enact controversial religious reforms. As 2 Kings tells it, when King Josiah ordered an audit of the temple treasury, the high priest found a book of the law, long lost and forgotten in storage.<sup>158</sup> After reading the book, King Josiah understood why his kingdom had been plagued with bloodshed. He tore down local altars, burned idols, and banned mixed marriages. He banished male prostitutes from the Temple. He tightened admission requirements for the priesthood and strengthened its power. He re-instituted the celebration of Passover, which had not been kept "since the Judges ruled Israel."<sup>159</sup> These religious reforms Josiah instituted based on the contents of the discovered book eased the suffering of the nation, authenticating this hidden book.<sup>160</sup> He read aloud the entire document in front of all the people of Judah, reaffirming his people's covenant with the deity.<sup>161</sup>

Re-discovered hidden books were vulnerable to accusations of inauthenticity or forgery (for similar reasons, Sibylline books reappearing in the Roman Empire were subject to rigorous examination). The prophet Jeremiah, active during Josiah's reign, leveled this accusation against the writings under temple control, perhaps even directly against Josiah's discovered book. Jeremiah was a vocal critic of the monarchy and priesthood; banned from the temple, he stationed himself outside its precincts, publicly predicting the future suffering of

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see A.J. Droge, "The Lying Pen of the Scribes: Of Holy Books and Pious Frauds," *MTSR* 15 (2003): 128-14.

158. The discovery of the book of Deuteronomy is recounted in 2 Kgs 22:1-23:27.

159.2 Kgs 23:22.

160. It has even been argued that the appearance of this book should not be regarded as a legal code but as a sign from heaven and functioned as a written oracle as many books did in Near Eastern governments. See Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Writing as Oracle and as Law: New Context for the Book-Find of King Josiah," *JBL* 127, no. 2 (2008): 223-239.

161.2 Kgs 23:2.

the nation.<sup>162</sup> He questioned the authenticity of the books the temple guarded, asking, "'How can you say, 'we are wise and the law of the LORD is with us,' when in fact, the lying pen of the scribes has falsified it?'"<sup>163</sup> Jeremiah's proposed alternative to these written documents were the living words of the deity channeled through the prophets. During the reign of Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, the deity commissioned Jeremiah to write a new composition. This book, ostensibly as an alternative to the scribal documents, represented the oral communications of the deity and visions of Jeremiah. Unlike the hidden book of the temple, which Josiah had authenticated by a propheticess, the authority of Jeremiah's book came from his own identity as a living prophet.

Later Jewish compositions exhibited similar skepticism about humankind's ability to communicate divine matters in writing. The *Similitudes of Enoch* argued that mortals were inherently incapable of writing religious precepts.<sup>164</sup> This portion of *1 Enoch* described one of Enoch's tours of heaven. On this excursion, Enoch received hidden wisdom about the future of the righteous and sinners, both human and divine. He also met the evil angels, who induced humans to sin: Yeḳon and Asb'el encouraged the angelic children to couple with humans, Gader'el showed humans how to make weapons, Kasadya wrought physical harm,

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162.Cristiano Grotanelli's article "On Written Lies" provides a brief history of scholarship on this passage. The general consensus is as follows: during Josiah's reign, a new holy book was introduced. This book may have been Deuteronomy. The text of Jeremiah was produced by a prophet writing after Josiah's time and needs to be explained in the context of the temple find. Grotanelli argues that this passage should be read as an endorsement of prophetic utterances needed to validate a written Torah. See Cristiano Grotanelli, "On Written Lies," in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond*, ed. Margalit Finkelberg (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2003), 53-62. While most scholars have argued that Jeremiah was addressing Josiah's discovery of the book in the temple directly, Richard Elliot Friedman has claimed that the Kings narrative was written by Jeremiah as a later edition. Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible* (New York: Summit Books, 1998), 149.

163.Jer 8:8. איכה תאמרו חכמים אנהנו ותורת יהוה אתנו אכן הנה לשקר עשה עט שקר ספרים (Kittel, 798).

164.The date of *Similitudes* is not firmly established, but estimated to have been composed between 100 B.C.E.-100 C.E. For discussion and its dating to after the Parthian invasion, see Gabriele Boccaccini, "Finding a Place for the Parables of Enoch within Second Temple Jewish Literature," in *Enoch the Messiah Son of Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 263-289.

opening an Enochic Pandora's box of snakebites and physical pain. Other evil angels revealed cosmic secrets, including the divine name. Pineme'e taught humans the secrets of writing and how to use writing materials. On this particular offense, *Similitudes* commented, "On this account, there are many who have erred from eternity to eternity, until this very day. For human beings are not created for such purposes to take up their beliefs with pen and ink."<sup>165</sup> In the logic of this portion of the Enoch pentalogy, humans were not meant to write. Writing was an activity reserved for angels, a secret activity which Pineme'e wrongly leaked to humanity.

In general, the various compositions comprising *1 Enoch* are united by the idea that writing should be a heavenly and not a terrestrial enterprise. The *Epistle of Enoch* described the problems accompanying the human acquisition of writing technology—God's law became vulnerable to corruption, alteration, and outright fabrication. The text predicted that individuals would change the "words of truth," a term that designated Torah,<sup>166</sup> to suit their own purposes. They would put forward alternative compositions in its stead, books written by human authors with artistic license—characteristics that compromised their integrity as authorities on divine matters. The text complained: "Sinners will alter and copy the words of truth, and pervert many and lie and invent great fabrications, and write books in their own names.

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165. *1 En.* 69:10, emphasis supplied. Vanderkam and Nickelsburg have asserted, "This passage seems to be a general critique of writing versus orality and not such a concern about erring texts as such.... Nonetheless, a polemic against writing as such seems odd in a written text that stands in a corpus that elsewhere celebrates writings and their scribal authors. Possibly this polemic derives from an oral stage of the tradition (note the singularity of 40:8) and paradoxically it has been taken into a written text." For translation and commentary, see George Nickelsburg and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary of the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 302-303.

166. Attestations of the phrase "words of truth" appear in *1 En.* 99:2 and *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Gad* 3:1; *T. Ash.* 5:4) and modify "covenant" and "Law" in these instances. For this reason, Nickelsburg has convincingly argued that the phrase here also refers to Torah. For translation and commentary, see George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 2001), 532.

Would that they would write all my words in truth (in their own names)<sup>167</sup> and neither remove nor alter these words, but write in truth all that I testify to them."<sup>168</sup> Humans should not participate in the composition of authentic holy books, the *Epistle* argued. As an alternative to the sinners' fabricated literature, the text promised: "To the righteous and pious and wise, my books *will be given* for the joy of righteousness and much wisdom. Indeed, to them the books *will be given*, and they will believe in them, and in them all the righteous will rejoice and be glad."<sup>169</sup> The *Epistle's* position is consistent with the way other portions of *1 Enoch* depicted heavenly books. In other Enochic compositions, divine books dropped down from heaven—Enoch received "books of zeal and wrath as well as the books of haste and whirlwind,"<sup>170</sup> not written by human hands.

Enoch's own compositions similarly asserted their authority as copies of heavenly tablets and divine dictation. Enoch was qualified to write them because he read the tablets while touring heaven and copied directly from them.<sup>171</sup> The *Book of the Watchers*, the first installment of the Enoch series, claimed to record Enoch's first tour of heaven: "This is the book of the words of righteousness and the chastisement of the eternal Watchers, in accordance with how the Holy and Great One commanded in this vision."<sup>172</sup> His second heavenly journey resulted in additional compositions. The angel Uriel accompanied Enoch as he visited the ends of the earth. Enoch personally witnessed the gates of heaven open, and watched

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167. This parenthetical remark is likely a dittography. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 531n11b.

168. *1 En.* 104:10-11. (Nickelsburg, 531).

169. *1 En.* 104:12-13, emphasis supplied. (Nickelsburg, 531).

170. *1 En.* 39:2 (Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 107).

171. *1 En.* 81:1; 106:19. (Nickelsburg, 333 and 537).

172. *1 En.* 14:1. (Nickelsburg, 251).

the stars come out of them. He counted the gates and meticulously recorded which stars came out of which gates. He produced an astronomical composition, co-written with the angel, who "showed me all things and wrote them down for me—also in addition he wrote down their names, their laws and their companies." These writings about the heavenly luminaries gained authenticity through Enoch's eyewitness experience and also by angelic co-authorship. Every document the *I Enoch* tradition endorsed claimed supernatural origins—"words of truth" resided in heaven and the proper way to retrieve them entailed going up to heaven to copy directly from God's heavenly tablets.

The Mosaic Torah presented a conflicting position: words of truth were pointedly "not in heaven, that you should say, 'who will go up to heaven for us and get it for us so that we may hear it and do it.'"<sup>173</sup> The differences in the way the two lawgivers received their books is striking: Enoch went up to heaven to retrieve it; Moses climbed a mountain and received tablets "written by the finger of God."<sup>174</sup> Three Mosaic sources wove an authenticating discourse around these tablets. The Elohist author of Exodus claimed that the tablets Moses carried down the mountain were the "work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets."<sup>175</sup> The Priestly source, which avoided such anthropomorphic representations of the deity, presented Moses as a scribe who penned written copies of the deity's oral instruction.<sup>176</sup> In the Deuteronomist version, Moses recited the law to the people, then wrote it down and placed it in the custody of the priests. The priests were instructed to

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173.Deut 30:12. לא בשמים הוא לאמר מי יעלה לנו השמימה ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשנה (Kittle, 341). The second injunction in this passage, "nor is it across the sea" probably refers to the Near Eastern myth about Gilgamesh journeying across the sea to find eternal life.

174.Exod 31:18. כתבים באצבע אלהים (Kittel, 139); also Exod 24: 12, 32:16; Deut 5:22.

175.Exod 32:16. והלחת מעשה אלהים המה והמכתב מכתב אלהים הוא חרות על-הלחת (Kittel, 141).

176.Exod 34:27-28.

hold regular readings of the law to remind the people of the covenant with their God.<sup>177</sup> Together, the Mosaic narratives presented the case that there were no more books in heaven—the word of God resided with the Jewish nation, in their mouths, in their hearts, and with their priests.

The book of *Jubilees* offered a compromise between the Mosaic and Enochic ideas about written precepts. This text, which later Christian authors dubbed the "little Genesis" to describe its relationship to the first book of the Pentateuch, circulated in Jewish and Christian circles; the several copies found at Qumran, and multiple references in the works of Christian chroniclers, testify to the importance of the book across many varieties of Judaism and Christianity.<sup>178</sup> The text positioned itself between the Mosaic claim that divine information was no longer in heaven, but represented in the writings placed in the care of priests, and the Enochic insinuation that revelatory writings could be introduced if one had access to the deity's heavenly tablets.<sup>179</sup> *Jubilees* presented itself as an authority equal to Torah by framing its contents as information Moses received on Sinai. It also aligned itself with the Enochic idea

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177. Deut 31:1-9.

178. See Annette Reed, "'Revealed Literature' in the Second Century B.C.E.: *Jubilees*, 1 Enoch and the Prehistory of the Biblical Canon," in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), 94-98.

179. Florentino Garcia Martinez argued that the heavenly tablets in *Jubilees* functioned in a way similar to the concept of Oral Torah for the Rabbis. The tablets permitted instruction that had no foundation in the biblical texts. Florentino Garcia Martinez, "The Heavenly Tablets in the Book of Jubilees," in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, ed. M. Albani et al., TSAJ (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 243-59. More recent research has demonstrated that the contents of the heavenly tablets in *Jubilees* were not meant to supplement Mosaic Torah, but to downgrade its importance: Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Martha Himmelfarb, "Torah, Testimony and the Heavenly Tablets: The Claims of Authority of the Book of Jubilees," in *A Multiform Heritage (Festschrift Robert A. Kraft)*, ed. B.G. Wright (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 19-29; Hindy Najman, "Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and its Authority Conferring Strategies," *JSJ* 30 (1999): 379-410; Gabriele Boccaccini, "From Movement of Dissent to a Distinct Form of Judaism: The Heavenly Tablets in Jubilees as the Foundation of a Competing Halakah," in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2009), 193-210.

that holy books were copies of the heavenly tablets in God's library. *Jubilees* opened with the story of its own origins and, in this narrative frame, the deity commanded Moses three times to write.<sup>180</sup> Moses wrote so his "descendants might see [God has] not abandoned them on account of all the evil which they have done...."<sup>181</sup> He wrote to record the rebelliousness of his people.<sup>182</sup> He wrote to record all that "happened at the beginning and what will be at the end."<sup>183</sup> The Angel of the Presence read heavenly tablets to Moses while he wrote at the Israelite camp. This emphasis on writing indicated that the text's author was sensitive to the notion of written precepts, viewing "authority as bound up with writtenness."<sup>184</sup>

Although it considered Moses its central revelatory figure, *Jubilees* acknowledged the possibility and validity of other compositions. The text recognized Enoch's status as scribe, who possessed first-hand knowledge of the heavens. *Jubilees* reported the transmission of Enochic books: Enoch recorded the oral testimonies of angels and delivered them directly to humans. He wrote books of astronomy, testimonies and descriptions of his heavenly journeys. Levi and his descendants were entrusted with this library, passed down through the patriarchs.<sup>185</sup> All of these books recorded portions of the heavenly tablets in God's library. Additionally, the text endorsed a book of Noah as a revelatory and authoritative text. *Jubilees* explained that after the flood a fraction of evil spirits were permitted to remain among hu-

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180.O.S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Commentary," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:35-142.

181.*Jub.* 1:4 (Wintermute, 52); Cf. Exod 34:27.

182.*Jub.* 1:7; Cf. Deuteronomy 31:27.

183.*Jub.* 1:26 (Wintermute, 54).

184.Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), 62. Also, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, "Jubilees and 1 Enoch and the Issue of the Transmission of Knowledge" in *Enoch and Qumran Origins*, 100.

185.*Jub.* 4:17.

mankind and, as demons led the sons of Noah astray, angels provided Noah with secret information on how to combat these evil creatures. God permitted an angel to dictate means of defeating the demons: "Noah wrote everything in a book just as we taught him according to every kind of healing. Thus the evil spirits were restrained from following the sons of Noah. He gave everything which he wrote to Shem, his oldest son, because he loved him much more than all of his sons."<sup>186</sup> The resultant Book of Noah provided a method of defeating demons.

*Jubilees* was also consistent with *I Enoch's* claim that "humans were not made to take down their beliefs with pen and ink." For these texts, the authority of a book was confirmed by the presence of a divine agent. A book produced in the absence of such a figure caused problems. Thus, when Cainan, Shem's grandson, discovered some writing engraved on a stone, he "copied it down, but he did not tell about it because he feared Noah would be angry."<sup>187</sup> Cainan had discovered an old astrological tablet, which his ancestors had engraved. This tablet was a relic of the Watchers' seduction of humankind—it imparted angelic secrets of sun omens and signs of heaven. Cainan transcribed these illicit writings and relied on their contents to build the doomed city of Babel.<sup>188</sup> With this narrative, *Jubilees* showcased the dangers of writings authored by humans.

In general, *Jubilees* was optimistic about human books' abilities to transmit the contents of the heavenly books. For *Jubilees*, certain humans had unique opportunities to relay information about the divine when invited by angels. Under such circumstances, a book pur-

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186. *Jub.* 10:13-14 (Wintermute, 76).

187. *Jub.* 8:2-4 (Wintermute, 70).

188. *Jub.* 8:2.

portedly conveyed a portion of the heavenly tablets of God's library. The heavenly tablets in *Jubilees* were not the equivalent to Torah, but consisted of many concepts of heavenly books, including the Book of Destiny and Book of Life. By utilizing the heavenly tablets, *Jubilees* acknowledged the authority of other revelatory figures, apart from Moses. The author of *Jubilees* further implied the Mosaic compositions were authoritative, but not complete copies of the heavenly tablets. These tablets permitted the author of *Jubilees* to expand upon the Torah without claiming to alter it, in a manner similar to the concept of Oral Torah.<sup>189</sup> *Jubilees* even hinted at its own superiority to Mosaic Torah because it included additional matter.

#### **IV. Torah—Abridged and Translated Editions**

To be authoritative—reliable, at least—a terrestrial book had to have some security measures: immutable stories of its own creation, names of people on earth who are legitimate heirs to the story, for example. In short, books had to contain a convincing narrative of their divine authority to reinforce their claims to authenticity and accuracy. But there is room for error at all stages of transmission, and once put into circulation, their content risked further distortion. How could the book ensure that the reader understood its contents correctly? Plato had argued that a reader's efforts to comprehend a written document only generated misunderstanding. It was impossible for a reader to be sure that she understood the meaning of the text correctly. Moreover, texts always managed to find the worst readers, "getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally those who have no business with it."<sup>190</sup> Jewish texts observed similar difficulties with reading comprehension. Ezra-Nehemiah had rec-

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189. Martinez, "The Heavenly Tablets in the Book of Jubilees," 258.

190. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275e. κυλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἐπαίουσιν, ὡς δ' αὐτῶς παρ' οἷς οὐδὲν προσήκει, καὶ οὐκ ἐπίσταται λέγειν οἷς δεῖ γε καὶ μὴ. (Rowe, 124).

ognized that even when the law was read, the listeners required interpretation so that they understood the sense.<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, many Jews did not understand Hebrew, necessitating interpretive Aramaic translations in the synagogues of Palestine, and translations of the Torah into Greek for the Jews of Alexandria. But translation was a touchy subject. Could another language capture the Hebrew accurately? Did one need to read the Torah in its original language, Hebrew a holy tongue? Answers to these questions reflected various definitions of the sacred book. Those who endorsed translations and abridgments saw the role of the sacred book as a tool to obtain wisdom, not as the incarnation of wisdom itself.<sup>192</sup> The *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, his grandson's essay, and the *Letter of Aristeas* found Torah in written form but also manifest in nature, oral instruction, and Greek cultural practices. No text could yield a completely comprehensible path to wisdom and humans were unable to acquire wisdom in its entirety. Consequently, these authors argued that one could grow in wisdom by reading Torah, an abridgment or translation, because all reading experiences were deficient.

Ben Sira's ideas about the nature of the Law and how knowledge was acquired were well known. The *Wisdom of Ben Sira* or *Sirach* was composed in Hebrew in Jerusalem at the beginning of the second century B.C.E. and his grandson later translated the text into Greek. Its proverbial contents combined with promises of divine retribution place the text into the category of Jewish wisdom literature. The *Wisdom of Ben Sira* was a popular work: com-

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191. Neh 8:8.

192. The first Jewish texts to attest to a pre-existent Torah were *Targum Neofiti* and *Genesis Rabbah*, but the earlier scholarship had attributed the first-ness to the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*. On this, Eckhard Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1985), 69-92. Gabriele Boccaccini has argued on the basis of the following passages, among others, that Ben Sira did not equate Wisdom with Torah, but instead claimed Torah was the best tool to acquire wisdom: Sir 4:16-18; 6:18-19, 24-29, 37. Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 81-83.

plete manuscripts survive in Greek, Syriac, and Latin indicating that early Christian circles read the text. Quotations of *Ben Sira* appearing in Rabbinic literature from the *taanaim* to medieval thinkers, in addition to the many fragments found in the Cairo Geniza, also attest to its wide circulation—its ideas were familiar to many Christians and Jews.

Ben Sira's view of Torah was closely connected to his view of wisdom and its place in the world. He defined wisdom as a primordial entity, emitted from the mouth of God before creation.<sup>193</sup> (Similarly, in the *Gospel of Truth*, the Son was "spoken forth" from the mouth of the father). Wisdom covered the entire earth like a mist. (The *Gospel of Truth* also envisioned our world engulfed in a mist—of error—not wisdom). Although wisdom governed the entire workings of humanity, it took up permanent residence among the people of Jacob. For Ben Sira, wisdom was a divine gift bestowed on those who loved and feared the deity. Obedience to the law was the primary marker of one who possessed these qualities and identified those eligible to receive the gift of wisdom.<sup>194</sup> It was diluted over the whole earth, but was found in concentrate among the people of Jacob. Wisdom described how she flourished after "taking root in a glorified people, in the portion of the Lord, his inheritance."<sup>195</sup> She thrived like observable natural phenomena—likened to growing trees, fragrant temple incense, and fruitful grapevines. Yet wisdom itself was overabundant—wisdom warned, "The ones who eat of me will hunger still; the ones who drink of me will thirst still."<sup>196</sup>

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193.Sir 24:3. Alfred Rahlfs, ed. *Septuaginta, editio altera* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 2:337-471.

194.Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 82-84.

195.Sir 24:12. καὶ ἐρρίζωσα ἐν λαῶν δεδοξασμένω, ἐν μερίδι κυρίου, κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ. (Rahlfs, 418).

196.Sir 24:21. οἱ ἐσθιοντές με ἔτι πεινάσουσιν, καὶ οἱ πίνοντές με ἔτι διψήσουσιν. (Rahlfs, 418).

Like wisdom, the book of the covenant was also defined by natural abundance. Referring back to the trees, temple incense and grapevine, Ben Sira claimed:

All these things are the book of the Covenant of God the Most High, the Law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob. It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits. It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time. It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage. The first man did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her. For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her council deeper than the great abyss.<sup>197</sup>

Ben Sira identified the book of the covenant with manifestations of wisdom in the natural world. The fruits of wisdom, the trees, sacred incense, the vines, "all these things are the book of the covenant." The book itself could not contain the wisdom it possessed. To extend Ben Sira's metaphor, if wisdom was a flourishing, fertile farm among the people of Jacob, it was an overgrown jungle in the Torah. Wisdom literally overflowed from the parchment. Ben Sira charged himself with making order from the chaos. Ben Sira, an advanced student, could inundate himself with Torah. Comparing himself to a canal, he allowed himself to be flooded through study of scripture until his "canal became a river and river a sea."<sup>198</sup> His own book channeled the flood of Torah to "again make instruction shine like the dawn.... and pour out teaching like prophecy." His study of diluvian scripture yielded a condensed guide for the intermediate student of Judaism who would be overwhelmed by reading Torah directly. Divine wisdom was located in the book of Torah, but the contents of the book could be dis-

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197.Ibid. 24:23-29. ταῦτα πάντα βίβλος διαθήκης Θεοῦ ὑψίστου, νόμον ὃν ἐνετείλατο ἡμῖν Μωσῆς κληρονομίαν συναγωγᾶς Ἰακώβ. ὁ πιμπλῶν ὡς Φισῶν σοφίαν καὶ ὡς Τίγρις ἐν ἡμέραις νέων, ὁ ἀναπληρῶν ὡς Εὐφράτης σύνεσιν καὶ ὡς Ἰορδάνης ἐν ἡμέραις θερισμοῦ, ὁ ἐκφαίνων ὡς φῶς παιδείαν, ὡς Γηῶν ἐν ἡμέραις τρυγῆτοῦ. οὐ συνετέλεσεν ὁ πρῶτος γνῶναι αὐτήν, καὶ οὕτως ὁ ἔσχατος οὐκ ἐξιχνίασεν αὐτήν· ἀπὸ γὰρ θαλάσσης ἐπληθύνθη διανόημα αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ βουλή αὐτῆς ἀπὸ ἀβύσσου μεγάλης. (Rahlfs, 418-19).

198.Ibid. 24:31. ἰδοὺ ἐγένετό μοι ἡ διῶρυξ εἰς ποταμόν, καὶ ὁ ποταμός μου ἐγένετο εἰς θάλασσαν. (Rahlfs, 419).

titled into his work that depicted Hellenistic values as the "gist" of Torah. His text instructed readers on how to love and fear God based on his own readings of Jewish texts. Ben Sira did not claim there was one reading experience of the Torah. Because it was too vast to comprehend, he could produce an abridged version that would allow less academically advanced students to learn Torah as well. He claimed one could learn Torah without actually reading Torah. Even if one could read these books, no one could comprehend wisdom completely: "The first man did not know her fully, nor will the last one fathom her."<sup>199</sup> For this reason, an abridged Torah was equally useful for advancing in study.

If an abridged Torah advanced one's acquisition of wisdom, what about a translated Torah? This was the question Ben Sira's grandson took up in the introductory essay he composed for the Greek translation of his grandfather's work. The grandson moved from Judea to Egypt "in the thirty-eight year of Euergetes' reign,"<sup>200</sup> or 132 B.C.E. (He was writing directly in the wake of the Septuagint translation commissioned by Euergetes' father, Ptolemy Philadelphus.) The grandson claimed that salvation was tied specifically to texts; reading allowed one to "make greater progress in living according to the law."<sup>201</sup> For this reason, the grandson placed primacy on the reading of the texts. He described a threefold division of humankind: "Readers," "lovers of learning," and "those outside." His grandfather was a reader, who could engage directly with the "law, prophets and other writings of our ancestors." (τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πατρίων βιβλίων) His grandfather's composition

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199.Ibid. 24:28. οὐ συνετέλεσεν ὁ πρῶτος γνῶναι αὐτήν, καὶ οὕτως ὁ ἔσχατος οὐκ ἐξιχνίασεν αὐτήν. (Rahlfs, 419).

200.Ibid. prologue. (Rahlfs, 378).

201.Ibid. prologue. ὅπως οἱ φιλομαθεῖς καὶ τούτων ἔνοχοι γενόμενοι πολλῶ μᾶλλον ἐπιπροσθῶσιν διὰ τῆς ἐνόμου βιώσεως. (Rahlfs, 377).

was aimed at the "lovers of learning," who required an interpreter (like Ben Sira) to condense Torah into manageable pieces. Similarly, the grandson's essay and translation were aimed at lovers of learning who could not read Hebrew. In this way, translation and abridgment were conceptually linked. Furthermore, the grandson compared his own translation efforts to the Septuagint translation—he asked for his readers' patience with his translation, explaining that no translation is ever perfect, not his nor any translation of "the law, prophets and the rest of the books, which differ not a little read in their original language."<sup>202</sup> Yet he maintained that the text was still worth reading, just as Ben Sira's work was valuable if one could not comprehend the Torah directly. Likewise, a Greek Torah that could be read was preferable to an incomprehensible Hebrew Torah. For Ben Sira and his grandson, no book could comprehensively describe divine wisdom; all texts were deficient. Because the text was a vehicle to wisdom, a deficient vehicle was better than none at all.

The *Letter of Aristeas*, a composition roughly contemporary to Ben Sira and his grandson, also addressed the validity of a translated Torah. The *Letter of Aristeas* was composed in the second half of the second century B.C.E. probably in Alexandria. It described the events surrounding Ptolemy II Philadelphus' decision to finance and produce a Greek translation of the Jewish law books for keeping in the library in Alexandria in the mid third century B.C.E. (283-247). The text was framed as epistolary correspondence between Aristeas, a servant of the Pharaoh, and his brother Philocrates. However, although Aristeas narrated in the first person, scholars unanimously agree that the text was written by a Jew.<sup>203</sup>

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202. Ibid. prologue. οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Εβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῆ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν. οὐ μόνον δὲ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ νόμος καὶ αἱ προφητεῖαι καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων οὐ μικρὰν ἔχει τὴν διαφορὰν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λεγόμενα. (Rahfs, 378).

203. See R.J.H. Shutt, "Letter of Aristeas: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1985), 2:7-11.

The author's agenda was to promote the Septuagint as a valid version of the written Torah. However, unlike Ben Sira's grandson—who acknowledged that translations were implicitly inferior—in Aristeas' account of the translation of the Jewish writings, the author argued that the Greek version held equal status to the Hebrew original.

Whereas Ben Sira's grandson claimed all translations differ from the original, Aristeas claimed that the Greek translation in Alexandria perfectly captured the Hebrew. The message of Aristeas was clear: the Greek version of the law was to be seen as an equal to the Hebrew original. There were no disagreements. In fact, in the entire document, there were no disagreements between Hebrew and Greek text *or* culture. In a highly idealized description of cross-cultural exchange, Aristeas detailed the easy negotiation between Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, and Eleazer, the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem. Eleazer wanted all the Jewish slaves of Egypt freed. Ptolemy readily agreed and paid their ransom from his own pocket, noting that he should have done so sooner. Eleazer acknowledged that the blame for the enslavement lay with the Egyptians and not Ptolemy himself.<sup>204</sup> Aristeas traveled to Jerusalem with extravagant gifts, which the temple leaders graciously accepted.<sup>205</sup> Seventy Jewish translators of the priestly class were sent to Egypt, where they were housed in a lavish mansion and greeted with a seven day kosher feast. Ptolemy passed over Egyptian authorities and invited one of the Jewish priests to say grace.<sup>206</sup> Over the course of the seven day feast, Ptolemy asked each guest a philosophical question all of which were answered in Greek philosophical fashion yet in perfect harmony with Jewish law. Each answer pleased

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204.*Let. Aris.* 12-27.

205.*Ibid.* 51-82.

206.*Ibid.* 185.

the Pharaoh more than the last. The compatibility between Greek and Jewish culture was definitively proven with the central event of the text—the perfect translation of Torah from Hebrew into Greek. The equivalence between the Hebrew and Greek versions was underscored by repeating a familiar scene. When the translation was finished, it was read publicly before the Jewish population for approval, according to the pattern established by Josiah in *2 Kings* 22 and then Ezra in *Nehemiah* 8.<sup>207</sup> The message of *Aristeas* was that the Greek translation was perfect, the equal of the Hebrew version, just as the practice of Greek *paideia* fulfilled the practice of Jewish law.

The author of *Aristeas* even presented text-centeredness as an attribute of Greek, not Hebrew culture. Aristeas described the circumstances surrounding the translation, beginning with Ptolemy's negotiations with the high priest Eleazar to provide translators in exchange for freeing all Jewish slaves. Eleazar was initially reluctant to send translators to Egypt and tried to dissuade the Greek ambassadors from going ahead with the project. "Hearing is better than reading," he argued.<sup>208</sup> Ptolemy, on the other hand, was a book collector. He enlisted a librarian named Demetrius to build his collection and amassed 200,000 works. Demetrius promised to increase his collection to a half-million volumes. The Egyptian king also spent enormous amounts of money to translate the Jewish writings, so eager was he to collect these books. Upon welcoming the Jewish translators to Egypt, he bowed seven times before the scrolls.<sup>209</sup> Ptolemy, like all kings, has the entire law written out, as a king is supposed to do

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207.Ibid. 310-311.

208.Ibid.127.

209.Ibid. 176.

during his reign as described in Deuteronomy. From the comparison of cultures in *Aristeas*, one might identify the Egyptians, not the Jews, as a "people of the book!"<sup>210</sup>

## V. Torah—The Expanded Version

The first century philosopher Philo of Alexandria argued that wisdom, instead of overflowing from the Torah, lay hidden beneath the text and required excavation.<sup>211</sup> Philo accepted the view that the Greek and Hebrew versions were perfectly equivalent; he was reading the Septuagint and his own exegesis was prompted by specific words in the text of Torah rather than efforts to explain the essence of the text as Ben Sira had done. Philo's exegetical methods reflected his view of holy books that extended beyond the text of Torah to include the writings and bodies of righteous individuals.

Philo adopted the Stoic notion of a Natural Law governing the universe and claimed that the laws contained in the first five books of Moses were its perfect constitution.<sup>212</sup> Consequently, by observing nature correctly or by reading Jewish scripture and living according to its rules, one could live a righteous life. Philo's equation of Jewish and Natural law would have appeared paradoxical to other ancient philosophers.<sup>213</sup> Contemporary philosophical

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210. Dries De Crom has identified two layers of authority in *Aristeas*, a text-centered "Greek" authority and a community-centered "Jewish" authority. See Dries De Crom, "The Letter of Aristeas and the Authority of the Septuagint," in *JSP* 17.2 (2008): 141-160.

211. On Philo's allegorical methods, see David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 73-126.

212. On the concept of Natural Law, see Richard McKiraham, "The Nomos-Physis Debate," in *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary*, 2nd edition (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 405-426. On the role of the Stoics, Gisela Striker, "Origins of the Concept of Natural Law," in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 209-220. Cf. Hindy Najman, "A Written Copy of Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?," *SPhilo XV* (2003): 54.

213. Hindy Najman, "A Written Copy of Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?," 54-63.

texts had defined Natural law as the antithesis to written precepts, yet Philo claimed that Torah was its perfect expression. "The law corresponds to the world and the world to the law," he claimed. How could Philo reconcile the unwritten Natural Law with a written Torah? Hindy Najman has reconciled Philo's paradox in the following way: "Just as the Pentateuch contains rules but is not reducible to a code of writing, so too the Pentateuch is written but is not reducible to a piece of writing."<sup>214</sup> Even so, Philo's writing reflects embarrassment about Torah's writtenness. He made efforts to diminish the importance of Jewish law as a written document and promoted homilies and patriarchs as important sources of the law.

Philo diminished and ignored any iconic significance attached to the Torah scroll itself, instead emphasizing that the books of the law were simply written records of oral proclamations. He called the text of the law "oracular responses written in the holy books of Moses,"<sup>215</sup> underscoring that their veracity came from their status as oracles and not written documents. When he referenced other scriptural writings as law, he also ignored the written in favor of the oral as "legislation written in the holy books."<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, Philo described Moses like any ancient author, a "sacred historian"<sup>217</sup> (ιεροφάντης), the best among many Mediterranean chronographers.<sup>218</sup> And, like other authors of the Roman world, Moses garnered posterity through his books. The Torah was "left behind as a wonderful memorial

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214. Najman, "A Written Copy of Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?," 62.

215. e.g. *Cher.* 124. χρησιμοὶ γάρ, οὗς ἐν ἱεραῖς βίβλοις Μωυσῆς ἀνέγραψεν, οἱ μαρτυροῦντές εἰσι. (Colson 2:82); Also *Moses* 2:188.

216. *Decal.* 1: 154. χρῆ δὲ μηδ' ἐκεῖνο ἀγνοεῖν, ὅτι οἱ δέκα λόγοι κεφάλαια νόμων εἰσὶ τῶν ἐν εἴδει παρ' ὅλην τὴν νομοθεσίαν ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς βίβλοις ἀναγραφέντων. (Colson, 7:82); Also *Virtues* 95.

217. *Virt.* 201. (Colson, 8:286).

218. *Mos.* 2:46. (Colson, 6:470)

to his wisdom," a physical memory of the words.<sup>219</sup> Philo consistently avoided thinking of Torah as a written document, claiming that holy books could not simply be "writing on paper to be ruined by bookworms."<sup>220</sup> He considered all written manifestations of natural law deficient: "As for the beauty of creation's design, no one, neither poet nor prose writer, would be able to commemorate it accurately. For creation exceeds both speech and hearing, being too great and majestic to adapt to the sensory organs of any mortal."<sup>221</sup>

Philo restricted the use of the physical Torah scroll to a mnemonic device after Moses himself was gone. For example, Philo claimed that Deuteronomy 17:18, which required each king of Judea to write out a copy of the Torah, was mandated not because it was important to possess a scroll of law, but because the king would better master its contents. Philo explained: "[God] wants the laws to become glued to the soul. Now the laws slip away in a rush from one reading them, but they are impressed and take up residence in the soul of the one copying them leisurely."<sup>222</sup> Any written copy of the law was valuable only as representation of an interior Torah stamped on the soul. As such, this passage echoed the sentiments of Roman authors, who argued that reading was insufficient for mastery. As Martial remarked

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219. *Mos.* 1:4. θαυμάσια μνημεῖα τῆς αὐτοῦ σοφίας ἀπολέλοιπε. (Colson, 6:278).

220. *Abr.* 11. οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ, διότι γραφῆς καὶ μνήμης ἄξιος ὁ εὐελπις, οὐ τῆς ἐν χαρτιδίοις ὑπὸ σιτῶν διαφθαρησομένοις, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐν ἀθανάτῳ τῇ φύσει, παρ' ἧ τὰς σπουδαίας πράξεις ἀναγράφτους εἶναι συμβέβηκεν. (Colson, 6:10).

221. *Opif.* 4. τὸ μὲν οὖν κάλλος τῶν νοημάτων τῆς κοσμοποιίας οὐδεὶς, οὔτε ποιητῆς οὔτε λογογράφος, ἀξίως ἂν ὑμῆσαι δύναίτο. καὶ γὰρ λόγον καὶ ἀκοὴν ὑπερβάλλει, μείζω καὶ σεμνότερα ὄντα ἢ ὡς θνητοῦ τινος ὀργάνοις ἐναρμοσθήναι. (Colson and Whitaker, 1:8); Hindy Najman has argued that this passage describes the written Torah as a physical representation of creation, not as a document detailing written precepts. See Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 81. It has been suggested that Philo is deliberately echoing Plato's language in *Phaedrus* here. See David Runia, *On The Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2001), 104.

222. *Spec.* IV 160. Βουλόμενος ἐγκολληθῆναι τῇ ψυχῇ τὰ διατεταγμένα γενέσθαι τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἀναγινώσκοντος ὑπορρεῖ τὰ νοήματα τῇ φορᾷ παρασυρόμενα, τῷ δὲ γράφοντι κατὰ σχολὴν ἐνσφαγίζεται καὶ ἐνιδρύεται. (Colson, 8:108).

about one who was familiar with his writings, "He became the book himself."<sup>223</sup> Similarly, for Philo, the king likewise learned the law until it took up residence in his own body.

Like other authors in the Roman world, Philo compared the king copying and studying the law to a love affair. Horace had compared his readers to adolescent boys patronizing an aging prostitute.<sup>224</sup> Martial described his books as high end escorts and Spanish dancers, who wound up in the hands of lascivious readers.<sup>225</sup> Philo too compared reading the law to falling in love. He predicted that spending time with the law increased affection just as spending time with individuals can develop into love: "For lingering intimacy renders a pure and clean friendship not only towards people but also to types of writings worthy of love."<sup>226</sup> Many regard books as good company—for Horace and Martial, books provided one kind of intimacy; for Philo, Torah provided deep friendship resembling more David and Jonathan than senators and Spanish dancers.

Philo employed another familiar metaphor to describe Torah. As Philo described how God created the world, he claimed that the deity, like a craftsman, created a sketch in his mind, built a model, then created a world perceptible to the senses:<sup>227</sup>

Whenever a city is built for the sake of the great ambition of a king or some ruler making claims to autocratic power, being a brilliant mind and wanting to show off his prosperity, there comes some educated man, and architect and perceiving the opportunity and perfect timing of the matter, diagrams first in his own mind nearly all the parts of the future finished city—the temples, gymnasia, prytania, markets, the harbor, shipyards, the order of

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223.*Epi.* 7.51.

224.*Epist.* 1.20.

225.*Epi.* 11.15.

226.*Spec.* IV: 161. αἱ γὰρ μακροχρόνιοι συνήθειαι φιλίαν ἄδολον καὶ καθαρὰν οὐ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ἰδέας ἀξιεράστους γράμματα ἀποτελοῦσι. (Colson, 8:108).

227.*Opif.* 19. (Colson and Whitaker, 1:16).

the walls, the placement of the homes and the public buildings. Then, impressing in his own heart as on wax each place, he bears a noetic picture of the city, which he stirs up in his innate mind and perceives their character. As a good workman does, looking at the model, he begins to construct it from wood and stone, the corporeal parts coming to resemble each part of the incorporeal ideas. One must conjecture similar things about God—when deciding to build the mega-state he first thought of its buildings, from which he made a noetic world, then completed the perceptible one, using the noetic one as a model.<sup>228</sup>

Philo's description of the construction of a city closely follows his ideas about creation. The world was created by the laws of nature. In line with his platonic world-view, Philo maintained the existence of noetic ideals and sensible manifestations of these ideals. Unlike other Platonists, however, Philo rejected the notion that the sensible experience was a corruption of the ideal. He adopted the Stoic notion that, like its ideal, creation was good because of the divine gifts bestowed upon it. For Philo, our sensible world was a copy of the intelligible world, which was modeled on the inaccessible, ineffable thoughts of God. Similarly, the written law of Moses was a copy of the law of nature, modeled on the image in God's mind.

Philo was not the only Jewish thinker to contemplate the deity as a craftsman working from a plan. *Genesis Rabbah*, an early exegetical midrash, claimed that God consulted the Torah when he created the world. The text compared Torah to a blueprint that God the craftsman followed:

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228. *Opif.* 17-19. ἔπειδ' ἂν πόλις κτίζεται κατὰ πολλὴν φιλοτιμίαν βασιλέως ἢ τινος ἡγεμόνος αὐτοκράτοῦς ἐξουσίας μεταποιουμένου καὶ ἅμα τὸ φρόνημα λαμπροῦ, τὴν εὐτυχίαν συνεπικοσμοῦντος, παρελθὼν ἔστιν ὅτε τις τῶν ἀπὸ παιδείας ἀνὴρ ἀρχιτεκτονικὸς καὶ τὴν εὐκρασίαν καὶ εὐκαιρίαν τοῦ τόπου θεασάμενος διαγράφει πρῶτον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποτελεῖσθαι πόλεως μέρη σχεδὸν ἅπαντα, ἱεῖα, γυμνάσια, πρυτανεῖα, ἀγοράς, λιμένας, νεωσοίκους, στενωπούς, τειχῶν κατασκευάς, ἰδρύσεις οἰκιῶν καὶ δημοσίων ἄλλων οἰκοδομημάτων· εἴθ' ὥσπερ ἐν κηρῷ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῇ τοὺς ἐκάστων δεξάμενος τύπους ἀγαλματοφορεῖ νοητὴν πόλιν, ἧς ἀνακινήσας τὰ εἶδωλα μνήμη τῇ συμφύτῳ καὶ τοὺς χαρακτῆρας ἐτι μᾶλλον ἐνσφραγισάμενος, οἷα δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, ἀποβλέπων εἰς τὸ παράδειγμα τὴν ἐκ λίθων καὶ ξύλων ἄρχεται κατασκευάζειν, ἐκάστη τῶν ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν τὰς σωματικὰς ἐξομοιωῦν οὐσίας. τὰ παραπλήσια δὲ καὶ περὶ θεοῦ δοξαστέον, ὡς ἄρα τὴν μεγαλόπολιν κτίζειν διανοηθεὶς ἐνένοησε πρότερον τοὺς τύπους αὐτῆς, ἐξ ὧν κόσμον νοητὸν συστησάμενος, ἀπετέλει καὶ τὸν αἰσθητὸν παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκεῖνον. (Colson and Whitaker, 1:14-16).

Another matter: The word (*'amon*) means workman (*'uman*). The Torah says, I was a tool of the Holy One, blessed be he. As is the custom in the world, when a flesh-and-blood king builds a palace, he does not build from his own mind, but from the mind of the craftsman. Now the craftsman does not build from his own mind, but he has documents and tablets to know how he should make the rooms and doorposts. So the Holy One, blessed be he, looked into the Torah when he created the world. As scripture says, "the Lord made me as the beginning of his way."<sup>229</sup>

This passage described a deity consulting the Torah, as a craftsman consults blueprints and diagrams, to create the world. The similarities with Philo's analogy of God as an architect have suggested to some a neoplatonic influence on rabbinic thought. However, there are important differences between the metaphors that make this unlikely.<sup>230</sup> The Philonic passage described building as a three stage process; first, the craftsman made a sketch in his own mind, then he translated the sketch into a model, then built the city. These three stages corresponded to Philo's understanding of creation. First, God sketched in his own mind, from which he created the noetic world, then finally made one visible to the senses. The passage from *Genesis Rabbah* did not document the creation of an ideal world.<sup>231</sup> Instead, the deity looked at the Torah, described as a physical book through its comparison to the craftsman's documents (*διφῆρα*) and tablets (*πίνακες*). *Genesis Rabbah* envisioned God reading the Torah, a book, in his act of creating.

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ד"א אמוֹן אומן התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנתו של הקב"ה בנוהג שבעולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטין אינו בונה אותה מדעת. עצמו אלא מדעת אומן והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא דיפתראות ופינקסאות יש לו לדעת היאך הוא עושה חדרים היאך הוא עושה פשפושין כך היה הקדוש ברוך הוא מביט בתורה ובורא את העולם והתורה אמרה בראשית ברא אלהים ואין ראשית אלא תורה היאך דרכו *GenR* 1:2. J. Theodor and Ch Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Wahrmann 1965).

230. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 198-208, especially 200.

231. Urbach, *The Sages*, 200.

Unlike the rabbinic passage, which emphasized that the craftsman did not build from his own mind, Philo insisted that the architect build *only* from his own mind. Absent from the rabbinic passage is any reference to the creation of an ideal world. Also absent in the Philo passage are references to written documents. Instead, Philo thought of creation in terms of images, not written documents.<sup>232</sup> The architect possessed an impression (τύπους) of the city sealed upon his soul as on wax. The architect "carries a picture" (ἀγαλματοφορεῖ)<sup>233</sup> of the city in his mind. When the architect built the sensible city, he conjured up the images (εἶδωλα) of the model (παρᾶδειγμα) engraved in his mind. In *Genesis Rabbah*, the deity consulted a document to create the world; in the Philo passage, God worked from images, not a book.

In some of his other writings, Philo demonstrated similar efforts to downplay the written format of Jewish books. Several books not included in the final collection of the Jewish scriptures were mentioned in the scriptures themselves. Philo did not refer to most of them because they appear outside the Pentateuch and Philo primarily restricted his biblical exegesis to those five books.<sup>234</sup> However, the Pentateuch did mention a "Book of Generation of Heaven and Earth" and a "Book of Generations of Man" and Philo found himself explaining

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232. *Opif.* 18-19. εἶθ' ὡσπερ ἐν κηρῷ τῇ ἐαυτοῦ ψυχῇ τοὺς ἐκάστων δεξάμενος τύπους, ἀγαλματοφορεῖ νοητὴν πόλιν, ἧς ἀνακινήσας τὰ εἶδωλα μνήμη τῇ συμφύτῳ καὶ τοὺς χαρακτήρας ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐνσφραγισάμενος, οἷα δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, ἀποβλέπων εἰς τὸ παρᾶδειγμα τὴν ἐκ λίθων καὶ ξύλων ἄρχεται κατασκευάζειν, ἐκάστη τῶν ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν τὰς σωματικὰς ἐξομοιῶν οὐσίας. τὰ παραπλήσια δὴ καὶ περὶ θεοῦ δοξαστέον, ὡς ἄρα τὴν μεγαλόπολιν κτίζειν διανοηθεὶς ἐνενόησε πρότερον τοὺς τύπους αὐτῆς, ἐξ ὧν κόσμον νοητὸν συστησάμενος, ἀπετέλει καὶ τὸν αἰσθητὸν παραδείγματι χρώμενος ἐκείνῳ. (Colson and Whitaker, 1:16).

233. David Runia had argues that this verb invokes the image of statues in temples or being carried in processions. Plato used this verb to describe Socrates carrying divine statues within himself (*Symposium* 215b). See Runia, *On the Creation*, 141.

234. Yehoshua Amir, "Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Writings of Philo," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 422-423.

what Moses must have meant by these books.<sup>235</sup> Modern scholars have argued that these books actually introduced books that once existed separately and were subsumed into the Genesis text.<sup>236</sup> When Philo confronted these books, he insisted that they were allegorical books. In his exegesis of Genesis 5:1, which mentioned "the Book of Generation of Heaven and Earth," Philo argued that this book was not really a book at all:

"This is the book of the generation of heaven and earth, when they came into being." This is the perfect logos creating according to the number seven. It is perceptible by the senses as the beginning of the creation of the mind arranged according to ideals and the intelligible arranged according to ideals, as much as it is possible to say so. And he [Moses] called the logos of God a little book, in which it happened that the formation of all other things is written and inscribed.<sup>237</sup>

When Philo was confronted with material books, he distanced them from their materiality by allegorizing the object. Philo claimed that Moses was being metaphorical when he called the logos a "book." Playing on the polysemous meaning of logos, as divine active reason and also meaning simply "word," he implied that creation was similar to the process of composition. Both transferred intellectual ideas into sensible experiences. He used the word *συστάσεις*, (to create or compose) to describe the logos, suggesting that the act of creation was an act of writing—the Book of Generation of Heaven and Earth was the logos "composing" the cosmos.

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235. See *Leg.* 1.19; *Abr.* 11.

236. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. J.H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 68. Cf. Edgard W. Conrad, "Heard but Not Seen: The Representation of 'Books' in the Old Testament," *JSOT* (1992): 47-48.

237. *Leg.* 1.19. "Αύτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὅτε ἐγένετο." οὗτος ὁ κατὰ ἑβδομάδα κινούμενος τέλειος λόγος ἀρχὴ γενέσεως τοῦ τε κατὰ τὰς ιδέας νοῦ τεταγμένου καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὰς ιδέας τεταγμένης νοητῆς, εἰ οἷόν τε τοῦτο εἰπεῖν αἰσθήσεως. βιβλίον δὲ εἶρηκε τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγον, ᾧ συμβέβηκεν ἐγγράφεσθαι καὶ ἐγχαράττεσθαι τὰς τῶν ἄλλων συστάσεις. (Colson and Whitaker, 1:156-158).

Philo made a similar move concerning the "Book of Generations of Man" mentioned in Genesis 5:1. The "Book of Generations of Man" was not a physical book. Philo described: "For which reason, being desirous to deliver an admirable panegyric on the hopeful man, the sacred historian tells us first, 'that he hoped in the father and creator of the universe,' and adds in a subsequent passage, 'This is the Book of the Generations of Men.'"<sup>238</sup> By men, Philo argued, Moses meant "men of hope," a virtue that described certain men who followed the law spontaneously. Philo imbued this Book of Generation of Man, like the Book of Generation of Heaven and Earth, with a metaphorical sense, signifying the offspring of these men: "Not inappropriately, but entirely correctly, he called it the Book of Generation of True Man because one of good hope is worthy of being written and remembered, not on pages to be ruined by bookworms, but in the one of immortal nature, in which excellent deeds are written and collected."<sup>239</sup> In this way, Philo redefined the "Book of Generations of Man"—the book itself signified the lineage of the patriarchs, who could not be ruined by bookworms.

For Philo, the Law of Nature could be found in the content of Torah and also be found embodied in certain individuals.<sup>240</sup> Living a life harmonious with nature defined a righteous life. Jewish scripture, as the best written description of natural law, provided one model for a righteous life. The patriarchs provided another. Key figures in the Hebrew Bible intuitively followed Jewish law despite living before Moses received the law on Mount Sinai. Like scripture, they too constituted Natural Law, "being neither acquaintances or pupils of anyone

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238.*Abr.* 9.

239.*Abr.* 11. εὖ μέντοι καὶ τὴν βίβλον γενέσεως τοῦ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀνθρώπου προσεῖπεν, οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ, διότι γραφῆς καὶ μνήμης ἄξιος ὁ εὐελπὶς, οὐ τῆς ἐν χαρτιδίῳ ὑπὸ σητῶν διαφθαρησομένῳ, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐν ἀθανάτῳ τῇ φύσει, παρ' ἧς τὰς σπουδαίας πράξεις ἀναγράφτους εἶναι συμβέβηκεν. (Colson, 6:10).

240.Aaron P. Johnson, "Ancestors as Icons: The Lives of the Hebrew Saints in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*," *GRBS* 44 (2004): 258.

nor having been taught proper behavior and speech by teachers, but as earwitnesses and self-taught, embrace conformity to nature, accepting nature herself as the most ancient law, their whole lives being legislation."<sup>241</sup> Even Moses, Philo asserted, could not have written out God's law if he did not already possess its innate meaning.<sup>242</sup> Philo even called these biblical characters "living and rational laws."<sup>243</sup> As such, each patriarch acquired symbolic value for Philo as an archetypal model of living law.<sup>244</sup> Anyone seeking to live a virtuous life in accordance with the laws of nature could look to them as examples of living laws. Additionally, the other nations could look to the Jewish people for a living example of living laws because they "accept the words of law as divine oracles and, being taught this lesson from an early age, they bear a stamp of the ordinances on their souls"<sup>245</sup>

Among the Jewish people, Philo also identified "some who are as icons of the archetype of scripture, modeled from the beautiful and good virtue of wise men."<sup>246</sup> Philo found a community of these embodied laws in the Therapeutae, whom he described in detail in his treatise *On the Contemplative Life*. In Philo's understanding of the movement, this Egyptian ascetic group living on the shores of Lake Mareotis practiced a version of living scripture. In their desert monastery, the Therapeutae studied "the laws and divine oracles given through the

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241. *Abr.* 6. ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ οὔτε γνώριμοι καὶ φοιτηταὶ γενόμενοι τινῶν οὔτε παρὰ διδασκάλους ἅ χρῆ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν ἀναδιδασθέντες, αὐτήκοοι δὲ καὶ αὐτομαθεῖς, ἀκολουθίαν φύσεως ἀσπασάμενοι, τὴν φύσιν αὐτῆν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν, πρεσβύτατον θεσμὸν εἶναι ὑπολαβόντες ἅπαντα τὸν βίον ἠννομήθησαν. (Colson 6:6).

242. *Mos.* 2.11.

243. *Abr.* 5. οἱ γὰρ ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι γεγονάσιν. (Colson 6:6).

244. *Prob.* 62-63.

245. *Legat.* 210. θεόχρηστα γὰρ λόγια τοὺς νόμους εἶναι ὑπολαμβάνοντες καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας τὸ μάθημα παιδευθέντες ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀγαματοφοροῦσι τὰς τῶν διατεταγμένων εἰκόνας. (Colson and Barp, 10:108).

246. *Prob.* 62. καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἔτ' εἰσὶν ὥσπερ εἰκόνες ἀπὸ ἀρχετύπου γραφῆς, σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν καλοκάγαθίας, τυπωθέντες. (Colson, 9:46).

prophets and hymns and all kinds of other things with which knowledge and piety are increased and perfected."<sup>247</sup> This practice translated into an extensive library:

Also they have writings of ancient men, who, being leaders of the sect, left behind many monuments of nature in allegorical form, which they treat as some sort of archetype, they mimic the manner of this similar sect, with the result that they do not just contemplate but create odes and hymns to God in all kinds of meters and melody, which they inscribe with the grandest rhythms.<sup>248</sup>

The Theraputae possessed books unique to their community and composed additional texts as well. The group composed during their Sabbath celebrations, which Philo depicted as highly idealized symposiums that replaced academic ego and opulent feasting with genuine intellectual inquiry and simple fare. During these dinner parties, "explanations of the sacred scriptures are delivered by mystic expressions in allegories, for the whole of the law appears to these men to resemble a living animal, and its express commandments seem to be the body and the invisible meaning concealed and lying beneath the plain words resembles the soul..."<sup>249</sup> For the Theraputae, scripture blended text and interpretation, the oral and the written, into what Philo could only describe as a living, breathing beast! The Torah was a living animal, with the written text corresponding to the beast's body, the allegorical interpretation to the soul. Allegorical readings uncovered the soul of the text that no single document could contain. As such, scripture included not only the written text but also included his allegorical

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247. *Contempl.* 25. ἄλλα νόμους καὶ λόγια θεσπισθέντα διὰ προφητῶν καὶ ὕμνους καὶ τὰ ἄλλα οἷς ἐπιστήμη καὶ εὐσέβεια συναύξονται καὶ τελειοῦνται. (Colson, 9:126).

248. *Contempl.* 29. ἔστι δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ συγγράμματα παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν, οἱ τῆς αἰρέσεως ἀρχηγέται γενόμενοι πολλὰ μνημεῖα τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἀλληγορουμένοις ιδέας ἀπέλιπον, οἷς καθάπερ τισὶν ἀρχετύποις χρώμενοι μιμοῦνται τῆς προαιρέσεως τὸν τρόπον. ὥστε οὐ θεωροῦσι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιοῦσιν ἄσματα καὶ ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεὸν διὰ παντοίων μέτρων καὶ μελῶν, ἃ ῥυθμοῖς σεμνοτέροις ἀναγκαίως χαράττουσι. (Colson, 9:128-130).

249. *Contempl.* 78. ἅπαντα γὰρ ἡ νομοθεσία δοκεῖ τοῖς ἀνδράσι τούτοις εὐοικεῖναι ζῶν καὶ σῶμα μὲν ἔχειν τὰς ῥητὰς διατάξεις, ψυχὴν δὲ τὸν ἐναποκείμενον ταῖς λέξεσιν ἀόρατον νοῦν. (Colson 9:160).

readings. Assigning the soul to the allegorical even suggests that these interpretations were a better representative of scripture than scripture itself.

## **VI. Conclusions**

Jewish texts put forth a variety of positions about what a divine book was and how it operated. These views correspond to a historical record that documents a variety of Jewish collections of authoritative books. For instance, *Jubilees* claimed that authoritative information lay in a multitude of books. The number of copies found in the caves at Qumran is likely demonstrative of the text's importance for that community. There were eight copies of *Jubilees* found in the caves of Qumran, alongside at least one copy of every text now comprising the Hebrew Bible (except Esther), and numerous other Jewish compositions. This extensive corpus matched the message of *Jubilees*, which suggested that portions of God's heavenly tablets were not just found in the Mosaic Torah, but in other books as well.

The testimony of first century C.E. sources indicates that other Jewish groups also approved of numerous texts in pursuit of divine wisdom. Philo located the divine law not only in the books of the Hebrew Bible, but also in the writings and bodies of righteous individuals. His *On the Contemplative Life* described this idea of holy book in action, detailing the reading practices and extensive, homemade library of the Therapeutae. While later Christian and Rabbinic thinkers would condemn the possession of "other books" as heresy, for Philo and for other first century Jewish authors, "other books" was simply a distinguishing characteristic of a particular sect. For example, as Josephus described the characteristics of Judaism's four major philosophies, he noted in a neutral matter that the Essenes (unlike the Sadducees,

Pharisees and Zealots) possessed their own books, which they kept secret from outsiders.<sup>250</sup> The first century author who penned 4 Ezra described a similar two-tiered system of public and secret books. 4 Ezra narrated seven apocalyptic visions of Ezra the scribe while he was captive in Babylon. In the final vision, Ezra heard God speak from a burning bush, commanding him to restore the Torah. Thusly anointed as the new Moses, Ezra appointed five scribes to copy down his words. They produced ninety four books—twenty-four books for everyone and an additional seventy only for the wise.<sup>251</sup>

Other Jewish writers downplayed the centrality of written precepts. The *Similitudes* of Enoch warned that humans were incapable of writing down their beliefs accurately. The text warned humanity to leave writing to the angels because human efforts inevitably led to error. *Similitudes'* position finds voice in other Jewish compositions. *The Life of Adam and Eve*, a first century C.E. Hebrew text with a complicated recension history, linked human writing with human death.<sup>252</sup> This text narrated the life of Adam and Eve after they were expelled from Eden and their attempts for redemption. In this text, the possibility was offered that if each stood neck deep in a river for a time that their wrongdoing would be forgiven. The serpent tempted Eve a second time, and exiting the river too early, she forfeited salvation. *The Life of Adam and Eve* also depicted the dying proclamations of the primordial couple. In many ways, their deathbed testimonies were identical; they both told their children about Paradise. But Eve instructed her children to make tablets and record the lives of their parents.<sup>253</sup>

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250. Josephus, *B.J.* 2.8.7.

251. *4 Ezra*, 14:45-48.

252. Eric Jager, "Did Eve Invent Writing? Script and the Fall in 'The Adam Books'" in *SPh*, vol. 93, no. 3 (1996): 229-250.

253. *L.A.E.* 50.

This detail serves as the text's editorial on the value of writing: Adam did not instruct his children to write down his testimony; this instruction came from the woman, the one who got humankind expelled from Eden then squandered a second chance to return.

This view of writing is echoed in the work of a contemporary Jewish figure. In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul distinguished the living law of the heart from the dead letter of the law.<sup>254</sup> The best written precepts, according to Paul, were "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of the human heart."<sup>255</sup> Paul envisioned a disciple's heart as a figurative text, a living "letter of recommendation, written on the heart to be known and read by all men."<sup>256</sup> Paul was one of several voices to distance Jewish law from its book format and literal meaning. Philo privileged the soul of scripture, found in the bodies and compositions of righteous individuals. But, Philo insinuated, one did not need to consult a document at all. One could also look to select individuals as examples of living laws of nature, intuitively practicing Jewish law. Both holy book and holy person could embody the law. The next chapter explores the importance of this idea for the *Gospel of Truth* and Valentinian thought.

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254.2 Cor 3:6. cf. Jager 235.

255.2 Cor 3:3.

256.2 Cor 3:3.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE PASSION OF THE BOOK

Ἐκαστος γὰρ τις ἀπὸ μέρους τοῦ σπερματικοῦ θείου λόγου τὸ συγγενὲς ὀρῶν καλῶς ἐφθέγγετο.  
For each man, seeing the innate connection from portions of the divine spermatic Word, spoke well.

—Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*, xiii<sup>257</sup>

### I. The Spermatic Word

Justin Martyr employed the term "spermatic logos" to signify the bits of the divine logos that had been scattered (σπειρῶ) among men. For Justin, these glimmers of the divine logos appeared in the writings of certain Greek philosophers, in their affinity to nascent Christian morality and theology. For example, Justin found spermatic logos in Socrates: although executed by "demons" he attempted to unmask, "by means of the Word" Socratic writings put these demons to shame. In the Christian tradition, Justin argued, similar demons were defeated "by the same Word, morphed and made man, also called Jesus Christ."<sup>258</sup> Justin intimated that the Logos present in the Socratic written word was the same Logos incarnate in the flesh of Jesus.<sup>259</sup>

Justin's spermatic logos provided one solution to the problem of a remote, inaccessible deity. Other forms of logos speculation occurred throughout the Roman Empire. Earlier, Philo had conjectured that true divinity was discernable through the logos masquerading as

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257. See Justin Martyr, *Saint Justin: Apologies: Introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentarie et index*, ed. A. Wartelle (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987), 216.

258. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 5. Οὐ γὰρ μόνον Ἑλλησι διὰ Σωκράτους ὑπὸ Λόγου ἠλέγχθη ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν βαρβάροις ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ Λόγου μορφωθέντος καὶ ἀνθρώπου γενομένου καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κληθέντος . (Wartelle, 216).

259. Mark Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *J ECS* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 278.

an "angel of the Lord." The Gospel of John claimed that the "word became flesh," situating the logos in the body of Jesus. The rabbis, on the other hand, located the logos only in the Torah.<sup>260</sup> In contrast, Justin's spermatic logos was not restricted to book *or* flesh. He recognized the spiritual seed of humanity through a myriad of external manifestations of the spermatic logos. Although best articulated in the Hebrew Bible and some early Christian writings, divine truths theoretically could be found in any book.

Justin's contemporary, Valentinus, put forth a similar position. Although there is no evidence that they actually knew one another, Justin Martyr and Valentinus were colleagues in Rome and were preoccupied with similar foundational questions. Valentinus lived in a bookish age. He composed the *Gospel of Truth* during a frenzied writing period in late antiquity. The second century was a time of such intense textual production, modern scholars have diagnosed Christianity during this period with "acute logorrhea."<sup>261</sup> As Christianity became more book oriented, Judaism sought distinction by retreating from overt textual production into an oral tradition recorded in writing.<sup>262</sup> This model implies that textual communities emerged not just by *which* books they chose, but by *what* the books represented. With the *Gospel of Truth*, Valentinus did not just introduce a new text, he declared his stance on the role and symbolism of holy books in general. He identified a spiritual elect among humanity, who possessed books "written in the heart," waiting to be published. Valentinus made his most complete exposition of this theology in the *Gospel of Truth*. His gospel, on one level, was a text about writing—it talked about books all the time. Through these representations

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260. Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 128-130.

261. William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 22.

262. See Guy Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, 63-64.

of book, the *Gospel of Truth* argued for the "living document" perspective on the sacred book—holy writings were not fixed but were found in multiple formats from a variety of authors. This idea was expressed most dramatically with the depiction of Jesus as a crucified scroll. The passion was a call for all spiritual Christians to read this book, distribute it, and develop it with their own writings. Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth* might be thought of as one of these expanded books.

The book imagery in the *Gospel of Truth* reflected Valentinus' confounding of flesh and book. If, for the Rabbis, "Torah supersedes logos" and, for John, "logos supersedes Torah,"<sup>263</sup> Valentinus was not compelled to choose. He located the logos both in the flesh and in the written text. These he regarded as inseparable. Instead of identifying the elect through the spermatic logos, Valentinus described his congregants as spermatic books, with latent texts written upon their hearts. The Gospel of John had located the logos in the speaker; the written text was secondary. Valentinus was able to maintain focus on textuality by merging the holy text and person. Unlike early rabbinic logos speculation, Valentinus had no problems with this kind of plurality. The rabbis might have restricted the logos to the text of the Torah in order to eliminate ideas about two powers in heaven,<sup>264</sup> but Valentinus could tie the logos to many texts (and to many powers in heaven, or in Valentinian parlance, "aeons in the Pleroma.")

This chapter demonstrates that, although quickly anathemized, Valentinus was not a marginal Christian thinker. His ideas about divine revelation and the generation of wisdom

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263. Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 129.

264. Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 70-71 and Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 140.

texts placed him at the center of an ongoing debate within the Jewish-Christian network about the authority of new holy writings. On the one side, the rabbis later limited the logos to the Torah. On the other side, Justin had affirmed the presence of the logos in pagan writings (in contrast, Josephus, for example, only tolerated them as charming but defective)<sup>265</sup> and consequently made room for new Jesus-centric compositions to take on the characteristics of Torah. Valentinus continued Justin's idea. The role of the book in the *Gospel of Truth* suggests that Valentinus presumed an open canon, endorsed continued divine revelations and widespread generation of holy texts.

## II. The Joyful Gospel

Many religious texts exhibit self-consciousness. New holy books justify their authority. Newly authored books claiming to be old explain why they appeared. Oral traditions explain their unbroken chain of sources. The *Gospel of Truth* was no different. Every book had its story and the *Gospel of Truth* opened by telling its own. The book's subtle etiology reflected its author's position within a Jewish and Christian matrix. On one hand, the *Gospel of Truth* did not claim authority by conventional means. Unlike other texts, it not been narrated secretly to a single person, hidden in heaven or a temple. On the other hand, Valentinus drew on traditional sources to design a textual concept that explained the origins of the gospel he preached. He utilized an interpretive tradition of Proverbs 8 as logos speculation to describe his idea of a heavenly book and savior, which he then subtly equated with his own composition. In the dynamics unfolding below, as the *Gospel of Truth* narrated its own history, the

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265. On this point, see Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II. 40.

text became representative of a pre-existent supernatural book and claimed for itself the status of holy document.

However, the first line of the text raised a conceptual difficulty: did the *Gospel of Truth* claim the kind of status that Jews gradually assigned to Torah and was later attached to the canonical gospels, or even demonstrate an awareness of itself as a holy writing? The text opened with the ambiguous phrase, "The gospel of truth is joy...." Yet it is not clear whether the word εὐαγγέλιον, as the part of the first line of the work, was also its title, or if the term referred simply to the contents of the text.<sup>266</sup> Although Irenaeus had accused Valentinians of having their own gospel and particularly a text called the *Gospel of Truth*, the general trend in scholarship has been to diminish the significance of the term gospel in the first line of the text. As one scholar has argued, "the work is sermon and has nothing to do with the Christian genre properly called gospel (e.g. the Gospel of Mark)."<sup>267</sup> Others have concluded, "the term 'gospel' here, in any case, is not a technical term for a literary genre. Rather it refers to the contents of the work, the proclamation of the revealer's message."<sup>268</sup> The text is marked as a deviant expression of early Christian thought with claims like, "The Valentinian entries, the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Gospel of Philip* have no ties to the genre 'gospel.'"<sup>269</sup>

However, the question should be asked, why would they? There should not be any expectation of a consistent idea of gospel in the second century. Valentinus was not writing in

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266. Bentley Layton has translated the opening line: "The proclamation of the truth is a joy for those who have received grace from the father of truth...." On the use of the term euaggelion, he remarked, "proclamation" (Gk. euaggelion): the Greek word can be translated also "gospel." The title plays on this double meaning. Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: a New Translation with Annotations and Introductions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), 253.

267. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 251.

268. Attridge and MacRae, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 106.

269. PHEME PERKINS, "What is a Gnostic Gospel?," *CBQ* 71.1 (2009): 106.

an age of a fixed canon or fixed definition of gospel. Justin Martyr had described the gospels simply as the "memoirs of the Apostles."<sup>270</sup> Ignatius of Antioch used the term gospel regularly to designate both the written documents that competed with Jewish scriptures<sup>271</sup> and also the oral teachings of Jesus, Paul, and contemporary Christian leaders.<sup>272</sup> Ignatius also suggested that the body of Jesus crucified functioned as gospel, replacing Jewish scriptures as the "archives" of the nation.<sup>273</sup> Even the champion of orthodoxy—Irenaeus of Lyons—who claimed there were only four gospels, did not use term gospel consistently to designate written texts.<sup>274</sup> When Origen composed his commentary on the Gospel of John in the early third century, he claimed that although there were only four gospels, all of the writings of the church should be considered gospel.<sup>275</sup> The range in which early Christian thinkers used the term indicates that the choice concerning "what counts as gospel" was not made at the time of a text's composition. Gospel, as a technical term for a revelatory sacred book, was applied retroactively. Consequently, there is no reason to think that the *Gospel of Truth* was separate from Christian discussions about what gospel was supposed to be.

Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth* might not have been gospel in the "classical" sense of the term, if such exists, but that does not exclude the possibility that gospel meant something more than "announcement." He made grander claims about the idea of gospel than the ones

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270. For example, Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 66:3.

271. For his use of the term to designate written documents, see *Smyrn.* 5 and 7.

272. For Ignatius' use of the term to designate oral teachings, see *Phil.* 5, *Tral.* 10, and *Eph.* 12.

273. See *Phil.* 8. William R. Schoedel argues persuasively that the term "archive" in this context refers to the writings we now call the Old Testament. William R. Schoedel, "Ignatius and the Archives," *HTR* 71, no 1/2 (1978): 97-106.

274. Annette Reed notes that even Irenaeus used the term both ways. See Annette Reed, "Ευαγγελιον: Orality, Textuality and the Christian Truth in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*," *VC* 56 (2002): 11-46.

275. See Origen, *Comm. Jn* 1.5.

presented in, for example, John or Luke. Valentinus' gospel was not a corrective eyewitness account or one of many books about "what Jesus said and did."<sup>276</sup> For Valentinus, Gospel served a revelatory function. He modeled these revelatory mechanics on the wisdom figure in Proverbs 8, in which wisdom "speaks" as the consort of God. Reading Genesis 1 together with Proverbs 8, he proposed a definition of gospel that included wisdom, word, savior and book. Many circles, diverse in their thinking—Ben Sira, *Genesis Rabbah*, Philo, the Gospel of John—had read these two texts together to consider how wisdom manifest in their communities as a text, as a body, or in Valentinus' case, both. The wisdom figure of Proverbs had several distinctive characteristics, These traits included an eternal, preexistent nature, a physical proximity to the Father, the capacity for joy, and revelatory function. In the opening lines of the *Gospel of Truth*, thought to function as a prologue, he blended the identity of several divine entities—Father, Word, Savior, Gospel—in his own reading of Genesis 1 together with Proverbs 8. The text opens:

The gospel of truth is a joy (τιηληλ) to the ones who receive grace from the father of truth to come to know it/him through the power of the word, which was cast out from the Pleroma, which is in the thought and mind of the father. This is he who is called the savior, which is the name of the work he will do. He is the salvation of they who became ignorant of the father, while the name of the gospel is the revealing of the hope, which is the thing that is found for the ones who seek it/him.<sup>277</sup>

From its first words, "The gospel of truth is joy," the text engaged with the Proverbs 8 tradition. Several scholars have noted that the description of the *Gospel of Truth* as "joy" appeared

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276. As claims Jn 21:25.

277. *Gos. Truth* 16:31-17:4. The English text of the *Gospel of Truth* in this chapter is my translation of the critical edition by Harold Attridge and George W. MacRae, S.J., "The Gospel of Truth," 55-122. πεγαγγελιον ν̄τμε ογτεληλ πε ν̄νεει ν̄ταρχι π̄ρματ̄ αβαλ ριτοοτ̄ῑ μ̄πιωτ̄ ν̄τε τ̄μνε ατρογσογ̄ων̄ῑ ρ̄ν̄ τ̄β̄αμ̄ μ̄πιωδεχε ν̄ταρῑ εβαλ ρ̄ν̄ πιπληρωμᾱ πεεῑ ετ̄ρ̄ν̄ πιμ̄εεγε̄ ογαρᾱ πινογ̄ς̄ ν̄τε̄ πιωτ̄ ετε̄ πεεῑ πε̄ ετογ̄ωδεχε̄ αρ̄ᾱ ρ̄ε̄ π̄σωτηρ̄ επ̄ρεν̄ μ̄φ̄ωβ̄ ετ̄ρη̄ᾱεῑϋ̄ πε̄ ᾱπ̄σωτε̄ ν̄νεεῑ ν̄ταρ̄ρ̄ ᾱτ̄σογ̄ων̄ῑ πιωτ̄ επ̄ιρεν̄̄ δε̄ [μ̄]πεγαγγελιον̄ πε̄ πογ̄ων̄ε̄ αβαλ̄ ν̄τε̄ τ̄ρελῑπ̄ῑς̄ επ̄σῑνε̄ πε̄ ν̄νεεῑ ετ̄κ̄ωτε̄ ν̄σω̄ϋ̄. (Attridge and MacRae, 82).

in the *Odes of Solomon*,<sup>278</sup> and must therefore reflect an intellectual kinship. However, if we consider the widespread hermeneutical interest in Proverbs 8, the shared terminology likely has roots in that text, which described wisdom experiencing the presence of the Father as "delight," (מעשעי) and "rejoicing" (משחח).<sup>279</sup> The Septuagint rendered the Hebrew terms as προσχαίρω and εὐφραίνομην, respectively. The Coptic term in the *Gospel of Truth*, τηληλ, was likely a translation from the original Greek εὐφραίσύνη, the noun form of εὐφραίνομαι.<sup>280</sup> The description "joy" associated the gospel with the the wisdom figure as the "daily delight" of the deity.

The text also alluded to creation as a cosmic disaster spawning ignorance of the Father. The *Gospel of Truth* described a "fog of error" engulfing the world that precluded regaining this lost knowledge. In certain Christian texts, "error" described a devious wisdom, the divine emanation Sophia, who impeded humanity's search for true wisdom, gnosis. Her presence as a "fog" in this text suggests a negative evaluation of wisdom surrounding "the earth like a mist before taking root among the people of Israel," as Ben Sira had described. For Ben Sira, wisdom flourished among the Israelites, nourishing and being nourished by Torah. In the *Gospel of Truth*, error "manifests in fiction, preparing a powerful and beautiful substitute for truth."<sup>281</sup> The text depicting the Word/Savior as the antidote to this error coupled with Valentinus' engagement with Proverbs 8 as it unfolds below strongly suggests that this "fiction" referred to Torah.

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278. Hans-Martin Schenke, *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 33. See *Odes of Solomon* 7.

279. See Prov 8:30-31.

280. Crum, s.v. τηληλ.

281. *Gos. Truth* 17:18-19. Coptic. In the Greek, plasma can mean "fiction or fabrication." Cf. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 253n17f.



object of the search? As feminine nouns, hope and truth are ineligible, but the gospel/Father/name are all possible objects designating the item "found for the ones who seek it/him." The noodles of pronouns in the *Gospel of Truth*, perhaps intentionally, left the reader with the sense that divine actors, including the gospel itself, form one tangled plate of spaghetti.

Valentinus often made these elusive associations in his writing, confounding subject and object. As Anne McGuire has observed, "Through its language and myth, the *Gospel of Truth* blurs or dissolves distinctions."<sup>285</sup> Through its ambiguous modifiers, the prologue "created a loose equation between logos and Gospel,"<sup>286</sup> as both served revelatory functions. In its body, the *Gospel of Truth* attached several epithets to the person of the savior—name, word, "living book of the living," or sometimes simply "book"—confounding the boundaries between Jesus, word, gospel, and physical books. The text assigned qualities to the Jesus-word-gospel-book that Proverbs 8 associated with wisdom. The proverbial wisdom claimed in Proverbs 8, "Before the mountains were planted, I was produced when he had not yet made the earth and fields."<sup>287</sup> Likewise, the book in the *Gospel of Truth* preceded creation: "since before the foundation within the All, it resided among the incomprehensible ones."<sup>288</sup> The "foundation of the All" was Valentinus' terminology for creation—Valentinus described the aims of Jesus' ministry as a teacher, for example, as, "in this manner, the word of the father reaches down among the All, which is the fruit of his heart and an impression of his wish. He

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285. Anne McGuire, "Conversion and Gnosis in the Gospel of Truth," *NT* 28, 4 (1986): 350.

286. Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest*, SBL.DS 166 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 21.

287. Prov 8:25.

288. *Gos. Truth* 20:1.

himself endures the All."<sup>289</sup> The idea of a foundation before the All demonstrates that "the book is pre-existent like the word itself."<sup>290</sup>

Moreover, both Proverbs 8 and the *Gospel of Truth* described a close physical proximity between their respective revelatory figures and the Father. The proverbial wisdom resided "beside [the deity] like a little child." In the *Gospel of Truth*, the book was "written in the thought and mind of the Father,"<sup>291</sup> demonstrating physical overlap between the Father and his book, which was not "of the earth."<sup>292</sup> The Son-as-book resided with the Father, so close that, when "the father reveals his bosom, his bosom is the Holy Spirit, which reveals its secret. Its secret is the Son."<sup>293</sup> (In another confounding of subject and object, Valentinus located the Son-as-book in the Father's bosom, not to reveal the Father, but so that the Father could reveal the Son!) In their own readings of Proverbs 8, both the Gospel of John and rabbinic midrashim came to similar conclusions: the Gospel of John signaled a comparable relation between the Father and Son, placing Jesus in "the bosom of the Father."<sup>294</sup> A later<sup>295</sup> rabbinic text placed Torah, also present at creation and the "delight" of the Father, also in his bosom—"Nine hundred and seventy generations before the world was created, the Torah was

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289. *Gos. Truth* 23:30.

290. Grobel, *A Valentinian Mediation*, 61.

291. *Gos. Truth* 19:36. Jacques Menard has argued that this line demonstrates a melding of Semitic and Hellenistic thought. See *L'Evangile de Verite* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1972), 89.

292. Kendrick Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth: A Valentinian Mediation on the Gospel* (New York: Abington Press, 1960), 61.

293. *Gos. Truth*, 24:13-14.

294. Jn 1:18.

295. The idea of Torah in the bosom of the Father is also already alluded to in *GenR* 1:1 E.—"The word means 'teacher' in line with the following: 'As a teacher carries the suckling child.'" (Num 11:12). Jacob Neusner, trans., *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 1.

written and lying in the bosom of the Holy Blessed One."<sup>296</sup> The Gospel of John and rabbinic traditions exhibited common interpretive tendencies, placing wisdom turned flesh and book, respectively, in the bosom of the Father.<sup>297</sup> Valentinus participated in this interpretive tradition.

In the *Gospel of Truth*, the word as savior and book was fundamental to creation. In a radical continuation of Genesis' creation narrative (אלוהים אמר), Valentinus emphasized that language was the mechanism of creation.<sup>298</sup> The Father wrote the names of the elect into the living book of the living, an act that "caused them to exist" in the presence of the Father. Valentinus also personified divinity as a talking head—"truth is in the mouth of the Father, the tongue is the Holy Spirit."<sup>299</sup> The Father, the mouth of truth, possessed the anatomical capabilities to "speak forth" the Son, who, having received the epithet living book of the living, was essentially recited into the world. Eliot Wolfson has argued in light of the ubiquitous references to the book and the "living book" that "the *Gospel of Truth* preserves an alternative incarnation to the Gospel of John,"<sup>300</sup> and the alternative Valentinus presented to a logos becoming flesh was a logos becoming book. However, Valentinus did not present the book as an alternative to the flesh, but a concept of book encompassed in the flesh—Jesus existed as both flesh and book. Whereas Jewish intellectuals transformed wisdom into the figure of the Torah, and John transformed wisdom into the figure of Jesus, Valentinus permitted both

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296. Judah Goldin, trans., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, Yale Judaica Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 126-27. As cited in Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 297 n.7.

297. On this point, see Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 128-130.

298. The idea of language, and moreover the book, as a mechanism for creation can also be found in the second century mystical work, *Sefer Yetsirah*.

299. *Gos. Truth*, 27:1-6.

300. Wolfson, "Inscribed in the Book of the Living" *JSJ* 38 (2007): 266.

transformations. He transfigured the "knowledge of the Father" into a pre-existent book and Jesus, seen most clearly as Jesus crucified as a living scroll—a literal "living book of the living."

### III. The Crucified Book

How does divine knowledge become accessible to humankind? In line with the middle platonian speculation of his age, Valentinus hypothesized that the logos traversed boundaries that humans could not cross.<sup>301</sup> In the *Gospel of Truth*, the divine logos became an expert on knowledge of the Father, residing with the Father as both Son and book. After leaving the Pleroma, the logos incarnate dispersed this knowledge of the Father in the material world as a "guide," and "teaching in classrooms." Valentinus considered the crucifixion to be the most authoritative lesson on the subject; "Oh, such a great teaching!"<sup>302</sup> he exclaimed. Valentinus regarded this as the decisive lesson so, in the *Gospel of Truth*, he told the story twice.<sup>303</sup> The logos is depicted crucified once in mythic time as the Son, and once in historical time as a book. The twice-told crucifixion preserved the dual nature of the divine logos as both Son and book. The crucifixion, as a sort of last lecture and summation on knowledge of the Father, was imparted both orally and in writing.

The dual format of the logos incarnate and crucified made a statement about the concept of "good news" as a medium. Just as Valentinus' gospel could not be confined to a single book, Jesus as the book was not restricted to a single format. The good news published

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301. On the logos in middle platonian thought, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 43-51.

302. *Gos. Truth*, 20:29.

303. *Gos. Truth* 18:11-31; 20:10-38.

on the cross was imparted first orally, then as a written document. The goal of Valentinus' work was to spread the knowledge of the Father and in the *Gospel of Truth*, the gospel was presented initially as an antidote to primordial error that concealed that knowledge. As error obscured humanity's knowledge of the Father with a dense fog, the Son came forth to combat ignorance. Error tried to impede the Son by crucifying him, but this only allowed the Son to disseminate an inner knowledge to a select population. In the second crucifixion scene, the Son is crucified as a book, publicizing the knowledge of the Father for all humanity. These two passion scenes continue the troubling of the boundary between person and book, and indicate that the authoritative good news was not a choice between oral *or* written; instead the boundary was not so clear. This is reflected in the unique phrase "living book of the living"—a good news both flesh and text. The first crucifixion scene depicted an oral transfer of knowledge of the Father from the Son to the elect. Set in mythic time, Jesus appeared as a piece of fruit of the tree of knowledge. However, the fruit of the tree did not impart knowledge of good and evil, but knowledge of the Father.<sup>304</sup> Jesus, as the ultimate health food, imparted a secret knowledge directly into the elect, those who ingested him:

Because of this, error became angry at him. She pursued him; she was distressed by him. She became idle. He was nailed to a piece of wood. He became the fruits of the knowledge of the father. Now he did not cause ruin because he was eaten. But the ones who ate him, he allowed them to exist. They inwardly rejoiced in the discovery. Now he found them within him and he they found within them.<sup>305</sup>

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304. Grobel, *A Valentinian Mediation*, 53.

305. *Gos. Truth* 18.22-31. ετβε πει αςβωλκ̄ αραϋ̄ ν̄σῑ ϖ̄πλανη̄ αςπωτ̄ ν̄σωϋ̄ αςρ̄ωϋ̄ ν̄ρητ̄ϋ̄ αςοϋ̄ωσ̄ϋ̄ αϋαϋτ̄ϋ̄ αϋϋ̄ε̄ αϋϋ̄ωπε̄ ν̄νοϋ̄τ̄ᾱρ̄ ν̄π̄ις̄αϋ̄νε̄ ν̄τε̄ π̄ωτ̄ ν̄ταϋ̄τεκο̄ σε̄ εν̄ δε̄ ᾱροϋ̄αμ̄ϋ̄ νεν̄τᾱροϋ̄αμ̄ϋ̄ δε̄ αϋ̄ϖ̄̄ νεϋ̄ ᾱτροϋ̄ϋ̄ωπε̄ αϋρεϋ̄ε̄ ν̄ρη̄ν̄ῑ ν̄ρη̄ν̄π̄ις̄ῑνε̄ ν̄ταϋ̄ ν̄χε̄ νεε̄ῑ ν̄ταϋ̄ϋ̄ϋ̄ν̄τοϋ̄ ν̄ρητ̄ϋ̄̄ αϋ̄ω̄ ν̄ταϋ̄̄ αϋ̄ϋ̄ν̄τ̄ϋ̄̄ ν̄ρη̄ν̄τοϋ̄̄. (Attridge and MacRae, 84).

This rendition of the story explained how knowledge of the Father was imparted to humankind before the incarnation. As fruit nailed to a piece of wood, Jesus became a new representation of the tree of knowledge. Consistent with one interpretive strain in late antiquity, here, Genesis 3 was reinterpreted in a positive light. As the "fruit" Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the snake in the Garden of Eden, who claimed, "You shall not die but become like gods." Those who ate the fruit did not die. Instead, they "consumed" knowledge, becoming marked as spiritually elect. As Philo claimed some patriarchs had followed the law before the events on Sinai, here, Valentinus explained how select individuals received knowledge of the father before the historical life of Jesus. Valentinus also continued Paul's hermeneutical efforts, which had brought together the deuteronomic law of the man cursed because he "hung from a tree" with Jesus' crucifixion.<sup>306</sup> This scene further merged Deuteronomy 21:23 with the passion, as Jesus was "nailed to wood" this time as an epistemological statement: the description of Jesus as "fruit of knowledge of the Father," reflected Valentinus' definition of wisdom as acquaintance with the inaccessible deity. He typified knowledge of the Father as interior knowledge. This wisdom involved perceiving the divine within oneself and recognizing it in others—"Now he found them within him and he they found within them." This example of a concept termed the "dialectics of mutual participation,"<sup>307</sup> prevalent in early Christian texts, required divinity and humanity to uphold one another. Wisdom, in this passage, as a private, inner knowledge, was imparted directly from teacher to student. The passion scene should be regarded as a "revelatory act,"<sup>308</sup> in which the identity of the Father is

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306. Gal 3.13.

307. Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 52.

308. Attridge and MacRae, *Nag Hammadi Codex*, 50.

made known—in this passage, "Jesus and the gospel are one: it is nailed to a tree in his person."<sup>309</sup> Jesus, as the vehicle for that knowledge, functioned as a living gospel, which he orally imparted to individuals.

In contrast, the knowledge imparted in the second passion scene was in public and written form. The wisdom of the living book became available to everyone, and, significantly, was published in a book medium. Jesus, in this passion, became a living, self-publishing, speaking, physical book:

Because of this, by his<sup>310</sup> agency Jesus appeared. He rolled himself up<sup>311</sup> in that book and was nailed to a tree and published the edict of the father on the cross. Oh! Such a great instruction of this sort! Gliding down to death, while eternal life clothes him. After he divested himself of perishable rags, he took on himself imperishability. It is that which is not possible for anyone to take from him. After setting out onto the empty paths of fear, he left the power of those who were naked by the power of forgetfulness. He was knowledge and completion, reading out the contents of the heart...<sup>312</sup>

Structurally, this image of Jesus as book divided the gospel into two parts: the preceding primeval cosmic history, and the subsequent salvation of humankind—an example of the author's technique of "blending cosmic history into human history."<sup>313</sup> Such a time warp served a valuable purpose: the crucified book, present at first in mythic time (in the Garden of Eden)

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309.Grobel, *A Valentinian Meditation*, 53.

310.It is unclear whether this should be "his own agency" or "his agency" (that of the father). This is representative of the ambiguity of pronouns in this text that Standaert has noted.

311.ⲥⲁⲗⲉⲓ: This verb can mean either "clothe" or "roll up." This verb choice (ⲥⲱⲗ) by the Coptic translator indicates that Valentinus, in the second century, presumed a scroll format for his sacred book. The verb choice runs directly counter to claims that from its inception, "Christianity was a religion of the paperback." See Stromsa, *End of Sacrifice*, and the scholars he cites on this point.

312.*Gos. Truth*, 20.22-37. ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲁⲛⲉ̅ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̅ⲥⲓ ⲓⲛ(ⲥⲟⲩ)ⲥ ⲁⲓⲓⲃⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲭⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧ̅ⲙⲉⲩ ⲁⲓⲁⲓⲧ̅ⲓ ⲁⲓⲱⲉ ⲁⲓⲧⲱⲃⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲁⲓⲧⲁⲓⲃⲙⲁ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲱⲧ ⲓ̅ⲓ ⲡⲉⲥⲧ(ⲁⲓ)ⲣⲟⲥ ⲱ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̅ⲛⲁⲃ ⲛ̅ⲥⲱ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲉⲓⲃⲁⲧ ⲉⲓⲥⲱⲕ ⲙ̅ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲡⲓⲧ̅ⲛ̅ ⲁⲡⲓⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲉⲡⲓⲱⲛⲉ̅ ⲛ̅ⲁⲛⲛⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲟ ⲓ̅ⲓⲱⲱ ⲉⲁⲓⲃⲱⲱ ⲙ̅ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲡ̅ⲗⲉ ⲉⲧⲧⲉⲕⲁⲓⲧ ⲁⲓⲧ̅ ⲓ̅ⲓⲱⲱ ⲛ̅ⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲧ ⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲱⲃⲁⲛ ⲛ̅ⲗⲁⲓⲉ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲓ̅ⲓⲧ̅ⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲟⲧ̅ⲓ ⲉⲁⲓⲱⲉ ⲁⲓⲟⲩⲛ̅ ⲁⲛⲓⲙⲁⲉⲓⲧ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲩⲉⲓⲧ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲣ̅ⲣⲧⲉ ⲁⲓⲥⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲓ̅ⲓⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲉⲓ ⲉⲧⲃⲛⲱ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̅ⲧⲟⲟⲧ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧ̅ⲱⲃⲉ ⲉⲓⲟⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲭⲱⲕ ⲉⲓⲱⲱ ⲛ̅ⲛⲉⲧ̅ⲛ̅ⲣⲛⲧ. (Attridge and MacRae, 86-88).

313.Bently Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 251.

and then subsequently in historical time (as the teacher Jesus) circumvented Plato's original complaints about the written word—the book, a symbolic "thought and mind of the Father," did not leave its own consciousness behind when it adopted its written form.

Instead, the contents of the book were ensured through a public reading of the text. Plato's concerns about the original meaning of the text being lost did not apply here. The text itself was present to speak, "reading out the contents of its heart." There was no possibility that the text could be lost in transmission or translation; the text was also perfectly self-replicating, inscribed itself on the hearts of an elect class of humans. Finally, the text was present visually. Jesus was represented figuratively and literally as a book. Valentinus claimed Jesus "took up" or "rolled himself" in the book. The Coptic verb  $\sigma\omega\lambda$  was a technical term that described the action of rolling or unrolling of a scroll. Rolled in a book and nailed to wood, Jesus became an artistic representation of a scroll. The crucified book in the gospel represented writing that had significance beyond its written content and historical context.<sup>314</sup> As a symbol, the crucified book could assert its revelatory capacity both visually and aurally, signaling meaning to the audience irrespective of its written content.

This multiform book careened between Jewish wisdom musings about the written divine word (Torah) and another Jewish concept—the embodied logos. Valentinus utilized the

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314. The symbolic scroll here coheres to a neoplatonic orientation towards text that "temporalizes the space of consciousness and translates the simultaneously present contents of consciousness as an extension within time." Sara Rappe has argued that the idea of a non-discursive text was a central revision of *Phaedrus* by the neoplatonists. Writing was not limited to "discourse or deliberation," but as symbols indicated that "every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom..." Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), xi. See *Enneads* V.8.6. The *Gospel of Truth* is an early example of this development. As David Frankfurter has argued, the text preserved an Egyptian valuation of the written word, in which, "books with their sacred writing quite literally constituted the preservation of the cosmos: as the books set it down, so the priests performed or uttered, and so the cosmos continued according to Ma'at [cosmic order]." See David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1998), 240.

Jewish conception of Christ as the incarnation of the Torah to signify an authoritative source on knowledge of the Father. Valentinus also depicted him as "the symbolic portrayal of revelation as the book of life embodied in the person of the redeemer."<sup>315</sup> The Son, a "living book," contained all the names of the elect class of humans written on his heart. As a lawgiver, he imparted his knowledge by inscribing it on the hearts of his students. The resulting class of humans was marked acquainted with the Father by the book of law/book of life inscribed on their own hearts.

The concept of a "book of the heart" was prevalent in late antiquity, but most often described an interior, confessional text in monastic communities.<sup>316</sup> For some, the book of the heart was neither interior nor confessional: Valentinus' intellectual predecessor Paul had described a "law of the heart," that replaced the written law.<sup>317</sup> Valentinus realized Paul's figurative law of the heart as a physical scroll embodied first as the crucified Christ and subsequently as humanity's elect. A spurious letter of Paul also witnessed the idea of a crucified Torah. In the letter to the Colossians, pseudo-Paul wrote:

Having wiped out the debt record by ordinance, which was against us, he removed it from the middle, nailing it to the cross. Stripping off the rulers and powers, he exposed them with open speech, vanquishing them with it.<sup>318</sup>

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315. Wolfson, "Inscribed in the Living Book of the Living," 264.

316. Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2000), 2-15.

317.2 Cor 3:7.

318. Col 2:14-15. The Greek text used is Bruce Metzger, et al. eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998). Ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ. ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ.

Valentinus turned the image of a crucified text in Colossians, meant to be derogatory, into something positive.<sup>319</sup> For pseudo-Paul, crucifying the book of law was a way to eradicate it. The book stood for a debt record of every transgression of the law. Crucifixion expunged the debt record, made it obsolete, and made way for a new law, expressed with democratic "open speech" rather than through the written word. In contrast, Valentinus crucified the book in order to publish it. Oral law did not defeat written mandate, instead the contents of the book were read publically. The contents of the book—the identity of the elect—became unrestricted knowledge as an "edict on the cross."

Although pseudo-Paul and Valentinus shared this image of a crucified book, to what extent should we attribute a direct "influence" to Paul's writings? This passage from Colossians has been credited as the prevailing influence upon the crucifixion scene in the *Gospel of Truth*. Williams has argued that Valentinus' reversal of the Pauline imagery was direct and purposeful. Others have claimed the similarity reflects Valentinus' efforts to make his movement more attractive to the average Christian. According to David Dawson, Valentinus "absorbs his sources almost entirely into his own imaginative compositions: his allegorical reading of precursor texts becomes a process of new mythmaking."<sup>320</sup> Harold Attridge has argued that Valentinus' work was characterized by these revisionist tendencies. On the theme of the book in the *Gospel of Truth* he has written:

Familiar presentation is reinterpreted with unfamiliar metaphors. A further example of the process underway throughout the work appears in the discussion of the "living book," a particularly varied symbol whose development is Protean and complex. The theme is enunciated at 19,35-36, where

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319. Jacqueline Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth for Nag Hammadi*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 53.

320. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 128.

the "little children" are said to have revealed in their hearts the "living book of the living." Already, in the initial deployment of the image, the familiar and the unfamiliar unite. For, while the notion of the heavenly book into which the names of the righteous are inscribed is familiar from Jewish and Christian apocalyptic sources, it is striking that the "book" is within the heart of the "children" and that it is, at the same time, "the one written in the thought and mind of the Father." The intimate connection of the subject, object and agent of the revealing gnosis is thus symbolically suggested."<sup>321</sup>

This expression of what has been termed the "Attridge hypothesis"<sup>322</sup> argued that the *Gospel of Truth* was an exoteric text, which relied on themes and motifs familiar to early Christians in order to make the unique claims of Valentinianism palatable. However, considering the ancient controversy surrounding Revelations, it is not evident that its contents would be any more attractive to a potential proselyte. Moreover, we should question what sorts of themes are considered familiar and which ones unique? For Attridge, familiar meant allusions to the New Testament. For example, the idea of revelation given to "little children" should be read as an allusion to Matt 11:25 or Luke 10:21. By "developing the image of the book," Attridge argued, "the text reverts to the familiar, in what is clearly an allusion to Rev 5:9: 'the [book] which no one was able to take since it is reserved for the one who will take it to be slain.'" The exotic image of Jesus as a book on the cross then amalgamates two "familiar" themes: Colossians 2:14 and the Jewish Christian theme of the Book of Life.

However, revisionist parallels and direct influence with familiar Jewish and Christian motifs are bound to surface if we look only to these sources and assume Valentinus' are somehow derivative. This is not to deny that Valentinus was familiar with Paul or the con-

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321. Harold Attridge, "The *Gospel of Truth* as an Exoteric Text," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, eds. C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986), 245.

322. J. Woodrow McCree, *Valentinus and the Gospel of Truth in their Biblical and Cultural Matrix* (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 2003).

cept of the Book of Life, but neither was he an amalgamation of only these two traditions. Eliot Wolfson has argued the Valentinus' thought stood at the crossroads of the very process of differentiating between Judaism and Christianity, denoting a "hybridity that, at once, reinforces and destabilizes the hyphen that separates and connects the two foci of identity construction, Judaism and Christianity."<sup>323</sup> However, it is equally misleading to put the *Gospel of Truth* only in the context of Jewish-Christian identity formation. A third factor should be taken into account—Valentinus' own Roman environment.

Valentinus' approach to gospel should not be considered aberrant or even particularly unusual. Rather, the good news testifying the knowledge of the Father was consistent with other, more mainstream modes of authoritative expression, including legal documents, edicts and wills. Valentinus' Roman assumptions were nowhere clearer expressed than with his claim, "He published the edict (ΔΙΑΤΑΓΜΑ) on the cross."<sup>324</sup> This act of taking up the book and being nailed to the cross mimicked the act of nailing up an official edict in the city center. Or, as Karen King put it, "Jesus is... the divine Word of revelation, posted like a public notice on a wooden pole and read like the Book of Life."<sup>325</sup> The book as a symbol in the *Gospel of Truth* shared characteristics with Roman edicts. Edicts functioned, for lack of a better description, like living books. They were not strictly written documents nor were they composed only for reading purposes.

Romans asked the "tree falling" question of their edicts: If somebody wrote a law but nobody nailed it to a post, did it have any authority? The answer was no. Edicts were en-

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323. Wolfson, 236.

324. *Gos. Truth* 20.26. ἀφ' ὧσε ἡ διαταγμα ἀβαλ ἵτε πιωτ ρι πεστ(α)γπιος. (Attridge and MacRae, 86).

325. Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 155.

forced, even if illegible, and were considered to administer "an unseen reality... authoritatively changed by the act... not just undertaken for memory's sake."<sup>326</sup> Edicts also had potency beyond publicizing the laws written upon them. The edict as an object had power. The authority of a law was enacted by the act of nailing up the edict in public.<sup>327</sup> The edict was even protected as a living document—if someone purposefully destroyed or defaced an edict after it was published, the offender was required to pay a hefty fine. Ancient legal scholars even debated whether a law was valid if the physical edict was destroyed.<sup>328</sup> In this respect Valentinus' likening of the crucified living book to a judicial edict was appropriate.

In his gospel, Valentinus also compared the revelation through Jesus' crucifixion as a book to a "will that is unopened, that which is owed, namely the stuff of the head of the house, who is dead, is hidden."<sup>329</sup> This description should not be taken as indicative of "wide spread oriental thought," as Hans Jonas has claimed. If we consider the materiality of ancient documents, Valentinus' unopened will points to Roman thinking. Wills in the ancient world came in two forms. The "double document" type, originating most likely in Mesopotamia, and used in Egypt until the first century and then ubiquitously in Judea and Syria, was not secret. This type of will was written twice, hence the term "double document." The will was first written on the recto, complete with the signatures of witnesses, then flipped over topside down (to protect the witness signatures) and copied on the verso. The document was then folded in such a way that the contents of the will written on the verso were visible but both

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326. King, *What is Gnosticism?*, 101.

327. For example, *LevR* 1.10.

328. *D.* 2.1.7.2

329. *Gos. Truth* 20.15-16. Ἰπρητε ἴνοϋδιαθῆκη ἐμπατοϋνην ἀρας ἐςζηπ ἴβι ἴουσία ἴπνηπ ἴπνηι ἐνταξμοϋ.... (Attridge and MacRae, 86).

sets of signatures protected. However, only upon opening the will could the document's veracity be confirmed. This type of document was born from suspicion of documentation. If the likening of the crucified book to a will were indicative of wide-spread Oriental thought, we would not expect the contents of the will to be described as "secret."<sup>330</sup>

Roman attitudes towards official documents were different. Perhaps due to Roman military presence in Egypt, papyrological evidence of double document style fell out of favor in the first century BCE. In the Roman mind, documents were to be trusted by their nature of being documents. Papyrological evidence witnesses no double documents preserved in Egypt involving official business with Romans. Generally, Romans conducted official business on tabulae, which were originally squares of wood covered in wax but, by the second century, were made of any material. These tabulae, either in diptych or triptych form, were folded and sealed, the contents hidden until officially open. Unlike the double document, the contents of the Roman will were kept secret once the document was sealed. Only after the death of the testator were the contents revealed.<sup>331</sup> It was this document system that Valentinus assumed as normative in the *Gospel of Truth*.<sup>332</sup>

The Roman will carried a similar authority to an edict as a written document. Wills were thought to be infallible, a "vessel of truth, a document carefully weighed and written free of ordinary constraints... since it became public knowledge only when its author was

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330.E.A. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law*, 38-40.

331.Edward Champlin, *Final Judgments*, 64-81.

332.The *Gospel of Truth* only survives in Coptic but most scholars think the text was originally composed in Greek. A minority of scholars maintains that it may have been composed in Syriac, however most find the arguments for a Syriac original of the *Gospel of Truth* unconvincing. My observation here provides one more data point for confirming a Greek, not Syriac, original text. (against P. Nagel, "Die Herkunft des Evangelium Veritatis in sprachlicher Sicht," *OLZ* 61 (1966): 9.

past caring."<sup>333</sup> As the final instructions of a man, the will as a document was sacrosanct. Romans were particularly fussy about keeping its contents private while the testator was living. As E.A. Meyer has noted, "Except in the case of wills, there was little shyness about reading the document out loud at any time..."<sup>334</sup> In his biographies of emperors, Suetonius testified to the dramatic and often tense reading of imperial wills after the death of the emperor.<sup>335</sup>

No doubt the image of Jesus as an edict on the cross and opened will would have resonated profoundly with Valentinus' audience. Valentinus' presentation of writing in his own writing suggests a revision of the Attridge hypothesis: Valentinus used not only familiar motifs from Jewish-Christian texts, but also drew upon familiar Roman modes of writing and publishing authoritative documents. Jesus' crucifixion scenes expressed this complex textuality. On one hand, the twice-crucified book resembled a Roman will. The contents of the book were imparted once to a small, select group in the Garden of Eden, then revealed a second time, this time publically and posthumously. On the other hand, in the second crucifixion scene, Jesus on the cross visually became text, a text reading itself aloud while dying, simultaneously a Roman edict with its attendant authority.

The two crucifixion scenes are also representative of Valentinus' use of the term gospel. As a revelatory act, Jesus' crucifixion was also a publication of the knowledge of the Father, the same knowledge purported to be the "Gospel of Truth." The crucified book was gospel and Valentinus assumed its contents could be imparted orally and in writing. The gospel could be written on a scroll or on a heart. In this respect, it is not sufficient to claim

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333. Champlin, *Final Judgments*, 10.

334. Meyer, *Legitimacy and Law*, 41.

335. *Aug* 17.1.

that Valentinus was "anti-book,"<sup>336</sup> because his conception of textuality did not reside solely on the parchment. Valentinus' notion of the book included the oral and the written, the author and his text, as complementary, and even essential to one another.

The passion scenes also troubled the boundary between human and divine. In the first crucifixion scene, Valentinus had amended the traditional Jewish portrayal of the Tree of Knowledge and the cursed fruit became Jesus-as-fruit, hanging from a branch, an edible link between humankind and divinity. In the second, Jesus read out the book inscribed on his own heart, and inscribed it onto the heart of the elect as a literary link between humankind and divinity. Such back-stories allowed for the possibility of divinity in the everyman and hence for the later creation of divine texts by "ordinary" people. As one of these texts was meant to be a "Gospel of Truth," the *Gospel of Truth* declared—in a self-referential twist—its own divine origin and authority.

#### **IV. Writings of Truth**

Since the logos occupied both body and book, the sacred texts of Valentinus also manifest as body and book. The conflation of divine Son and divine book had implications for humans too. The "dialectics of mutual participation" dictated that Jesus and the elect class of humankind share an innate quality that made them recognizable to each other. Jesus, "spoken forth" into the material world, disseminated the knowledge of the father as a "living book of the living." As he "read out the contents of his heart," his interior book became inscribed on the hearts of the elect (presumably Valentinus and his congregation). By transforming a

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336. Cullen Story, *The Nature of Truth in the Gospel of Truth and in the Writings of Justin Martyr: A Study in the Pattern of Orthodoxy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 51n4.

common trope in antiquity, the figurative "book of the heart," Valentinus claimed that each member of his elect possessed a dormant text of the heart, suppressed until Jesus could make known its contents. Subsequently, just as Jesus published the book of his heart through a public reading, Valentinus instructed his audience to "speak the truth" and publish their own interior books. Valentinus' use of this book of the heart trope reflected his own position towards the written word. He transformed the symbol of the holy book into a statement about the open nature of divine revelation. Anyone who possessed a book written on the heart had the authority to disseminate this knowledge of the father—the contents of the gospel, in written or oral form.

What made one qualified to publish a book of the heart? The elect class of humanity held in common with the Son the "knowledge of the Father." Jesus, as the primordial book that pre-existed with the Father, was the ultimate authority as "teacher." He transferred his knowledge onto the hearts of the elect. Using *grammaticus* Jesus as an example, Valentinus summarized his pedagogical philosophy this way:

He was a leader, he was tranquil and made tranquil the place of taking instruction. He came to the middle; he spoke the word, while being a teacher. They came, the wise—in their own hearts alone—they tested him. But he reproached them because they were vain. They despised him because they were not truly wise. After all these people came the little children. It is they who possess the knowledge of the father. They were strengthened; they received teaching about the inanimate face of the father. They became knowledgeable, they acquainted others, and they received glory. They gave glory, he revealed himself in their heart, namely the living book of the living, that which is written down in the thought and mind of the father.<sup>337</sup>

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337. *Gos. Truth*, 19.19-20.1. εφσραζτ̄ αγω εφσραqt̄ ἴμα ἴχι σβω αqι ατμητε αqχε πιθεχε εφοει ἵουσαζ αγει φαραει ἵσι ἵσοφος ἵρρηι εἴμ πογρηт ογαεετοу εγπираze ἴμαq ἵтаq δε νεqχπιο ἴμαу χε не εἴπeтqoyeит не аyмeстωq χε неεἴрἴнэнт еп не мамне мἴнса неei тнроу аγει φараи ἵси ἵκεκοуι φнм неei ете пωоу пе псаyne ἵпiωт εаyтoк неаyхи σβω аnиmоgn̄ ἵго ἵте пiωт аyсаyne аycoγωnoу аyхи εау аyт̄ εау аqоyωnэ авал εἴμ πογρηт ἵси пiχωome етанэ ἵте нетанэ пееи етснэ зрнеи εἴμ пимееye оyаэἴμ пиноуc [ἵте п]iωт . (Attridge and MacRae, 86).

Valentinus argued that those who were going to learn had been pre-selected. Learning was not a dialectic process—these "little children" already "possess knowledge of the father." Their innate knowledge of the Father made them eligible to receive the ultimate knowledge—the book inscribed on the heart. In contrast, Valentinus claimed that the ones "not truly wise" were unqualified to receive the book because their hearts were unprepared. Adequate preparation of the heart was essential if one wanted to receive the knowledge of the Father. Those ineligible to learn the lesson possessed defective hearts. Unable to accurately assess their own knowledge, this class of humanity was wise "in their hearts alone."

A Valentinian fragment preserved in Clement's *Stromateis* argued that proper maintenance of the heart was essential to the ability to receive revelation. In what is now referred to as Valentinian fragment 2, Valentinus wrote:

One is good, whose open speech is on account of the appearance of the Son, and on account of him solely might the heart become pure, every evil being with every evil spirit driven out from the heart. For the many spirits abiding do not allow it to become pure. Each of them attends to his own affairs, in many ways mocking with desires unmentionable.... This is also the way of the heart. When it does not receive consideration, it is unclean and the dwelling place of many demons. Now, when the singly good Father looks after it, it becomes holy and brightly illuminated and thusly, the one having such a heart will be blessed, because he will see god.<sup>338</sup>

Christoph Marksches has argued that this fragment demonstrated a theory of open revelation—Valentinus insisted revelation was available to every attentive heart.<sup>339</sup> Should one

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338. Clement, *Strom.* II.114:3-6. Εἷς δὲ ἐστὶν ἀγαθός, οὗ παρρησία ἢ διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ φανέρωσις. Καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ μόνου δύναται ἂν ἡ καρδία καθαρὰ γενέσθαι, παντὸς πονηροῦ πνεύματος ἐξωθουμένου τῆς καρδίας. Πολλὰ γὰρ ἐνοικοῦντα αὐτῇ πνεύματα οὐκ ἐᾶ καθαρεύειν, ἕκαστον δὲ αὐτῶν τὰ ἴδια ἐκτελεῖ ἔργα πολλαχῶς ἐνυβριζόντων ἐπιθυμίαις οὐ προσηκούσαις.... τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον καὶ ἡ καρδία, μέχρι μὴ προνοίας τυγχάνει, ἀκάθαρτος [οὔσα], πολλῶν οὔσα δαιμόνιων οἰκητήριον ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἐπισκέψηται αὐτὴν ὁ μόνος ἀγαθὸς πατήρ, ἡγίασται καὶ φωτὶ διαλάμπει, καὶ οὕτω μακαρίζεται ὁ ἔχων τὴν τοιαύτην καρδίαν, ὅτι ὄψεται τὸν θεόν. Claude Mondésert and Marcel Caster, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Les Stromates*, SC 30, 38, 278-279 (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1951), 38:120-122.

339. Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus?: Untersuchungen zur Valentinianischen Gnosis; mit Einem Kommentar Zu Den Fragmenten Valentins* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 66. In the recurrent discussion of pre-

choose to heed the Son and his manifestation, his heart becomes pure and receives knowledge of the Father. As Valentinus noted in the *Gospel of Truth*, this was a self-selecting process: the "wise in their hearts alone" were unlikely to be receptive to the message. Those open to the revelations of the Son, on the other hand, became receptacles of knowledge of the father; pure in heart, "he will see god."

Valentinus was not just speaking figuratively when he imagined books inscribed on the pure heart. In another fragment preserved in the *Stromateis*, Valentinus associated the book of the heart with physical documents—both philosophical writings and the writings of the church:

Many of the things written in public books are found in the writings of God's church. For these common matters are the utterances from the heart, the law that is written in the heart. *This* is the people of the beloved, the one who is loved and which loves him.<sup>340</sup>

In part, this fragment reflected a popular solution for Jews and Christians looking to reconcile Greek wisdom texts with their theological systems.<sup>341</sup> Josephus, for example, had argued that Greek literature contained a deficient form of wisdom, because Plato drew his wisdom from Moses. However, unlike Josephus, who argued Plato's wisdom was inferior to Moses', Valentinus thought that some of the contents of *both* the public books *and* the church books

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determinism in Valentinian thought, this passage is quoted to explain all sides of the debate. Einar Thomassen's position was essentially a compromise; "The empirical distinction between the various groups can be made only on the basis of their reactions to the revelation, which in itself is a universal event. In frg. 2, Valentinus does not imply either that all human hearts will be cleansed from the demons cf. the optative δύναιτο ἄν." Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 453 n. 62.

340. Emphasis supplied. Valentinian Fragment 6 = Clement, *Strom.* VI 52:3-53:1. Πολλὰ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν ταῖς δημοσίαις βίβλοις εὐρίσκεται γεγραμμένα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ. τὰ γὰρ κοινὰ ταῦτα ἔστι τὰ ἀπὸ καρδίας ῥήματα, νόμος ὁ γραπτὸς ἐν καρδίᾳ. Οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ λαὸς ὁ τοῦ ἠγαπημένου, ὁ φιλούμενος καὶ φιλῶν αὐτόν. (SC 446, 166-168).

341. Clement, for his part, did not approve of this idea. Although he was obviously well versed in Greek literature, and quoted it extensively, he argued that Greek authors were nothing but plagiarists. Some other Christian attitudes towards Greek literature will be addressed in the next chapter.

reflected the contents of a third category of book, an even more authoritative interior one—the "utterances from the heart, the law written on the heart." As a variation of Justin's spermatic logos, portions of the "book of the heart" were scattered among various public and church texts.

This passage presented a difficulty with the phrase, "*This* is the people of the beloved." (οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ λαὸς ὁ τοῦ ἠγαπημένου). Here, οὗτος does not seem to have a logical referent. Scholarly solutions proposed have included amending λαὸς to λόγος, or suggesting that οὗτος referred forward to the "one who is loved and loves him."<sup>342</sup> Thomassen has suggested that the οὗτος referred to a class of people, the "Valentinian spiritual church,"<sup>343</sup> the spiritual seed embedded in the first man and dispersed throughout humanity. He credited Valentinus with a more accommodating view of salvation, in which the spiritual seed was not just disseminated among Jews but Gentiles as well.

Unfortunately, Clement provided absolutely no context in his own writing for Valentinus' quotation so any attempt to make sense of it is speculative. With this caveat in mind, I suggest that the textual problem can be resolved by assuming some consistency in Valentinus' writings, rather than through textual emendation. In light of Valentinus' flesh-book Christology, there seems to be no reason not to accept the original and natural reading of this fragment. That is to say, this sentence with οὗτος referring to "law" and the "people of the beloved" as the predicate is entirely consistent with the representation of the book in the *Gospel of Truth*. "This is the people of the beloved," referred back to the elect as "laws of the heart." This fragment preserved the same blending of book and person as authoritative

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342. A few solutions have been suggested. For a helpful summary, see Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 475.

343. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 478.

sources extant in the *Gospel of Truth*. Just as Valentinus had refused, in the *Gospel of Truth*, to choose whether the wisdom of the Father was expressed best as flesh or book and visualized the logos as both a man and a book, in fragment 6, he maintained the closeness among the book, the literary heart and the author himself.

Valentinus also collapsed the identity of the elect into the character of Jesus in the *Gospel of Truth*. Valentinus had described Jesus as a "living book of the living," containing all the names of humankind's elect. As such, they were contents of the book published on the cross, "the living written in the book of the living."<sup>344</sup> Likewise, as Jesus was first crucified as the "fruit of knowledge" in the garden of Eden, Valentinus described the elect as "wisdom that is plucked"—alluding to the elect in their primordial state.<sup>345</sup> While Harold Attridge and George MacRae have rendered the Coptic ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲛ ⲛⲉⲁⲣ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲣⲓⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲕⲙ "you are the understanding that is drawn forth,"<sup>346</sup> and Bentley Layton translated, "for it is you who are unsheathed intelligence,"<sup>347</sup> it is possible that the harvest language here was deliberate, and the description of the elect as harvest likened the elect to Jesus the fruit. Crum has provided a range of meanings for the verb ⲧⲱⲕⲙ—pluck, draw, and drag.<sup>348</sup> The original Greek was likely ἀνασπάω<sup>349</sup> and in biblical texts, the verb was used in three contexts; one might ⲧⲱⲕⲙ (draw) his sword,<sup>350</sup> or ⲧⲱⲕⲙ (harvest/pluck) produce,<sup>351</sup> or be ⲧⲱⲕⲙ-ed out of fires of damna-

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344. *Gos. Truth* 21:5.

345. *Gos. Truth* 33:8-9.

346. Attridge and MacRae, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 104-105.

347. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 260.

348. W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939), 406.

349. Robert McLean Wilson, "A Note on the Gospel of Truth," *NTS* 9.3 (1963): 295-298.

350. Mt 26:51; Ps 36:14; Ps 151:7; Jud 8:20; Ez 28:7; Nah 3:2.

351. Mt 12:1; Mt 13:29; Ps 128:6; Jer 12:14; Mat 14:47 (as in fish).

tion.<sup>352</sup> It should also be noted that the third semantic meaning was closely tied to this second one—the image of being plucked from eternal punishment as elect was often connected to images of the harvest. The idea of the elect being harvested from the general crop as a select group was a popular image in late antique literature. John 4:31-38, for example, had described a harvest of believers waiting to be gathered.

In the context of the *Gospel of Truth*, the idea of "plucked wisdom" provides one more example of Valentinus' continuous blending of the identity of the elect with the Son. He placed the elect in the same category as the Son crucified in the Garden of Eden, a piece of fruit who disseminated knowledge. While other texts only claimed that eating the fruit in Eden was not the catastrophe the Genesis account claimed, the *Gospel of Truth* specifically identified the fruit of knowledge as Jesus, designated to make known knowledge of the Father. Like the Son, who subsequently "went into the midst and spoke the word as teacher," Valentinus exhorted his followers, "Speak the truth, for you are wisdom that is plucked. Strengthen the love of the fallen.... Occupy yourselves with your very self...."<sup>353</sup>

Philip Tite has argued that this section of the text, 32:31-33:30, functioned as a type of paraenetic discourse, which urged the audience to maintain certain social praxes derived from the theological message of the text.<sup>354</sup> Pace Tite, this section need not be read specifically as a call to the itinerant preaching circuit.<sup>355</sup> Valentinus' urging to "speak the truth," in the context of the *Gospel of Truth's* arguments about language as revelation, pointed to an

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352. Acts 27:40; Jn 18:10; Jud 22 (pulled out of fire); Exod 21:3; Amos 9:2 (of Hell).

353. *Gos. Truth*, 32.31-35.

354. Philip L. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse* (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2009), 217-285.

355. *Ibid.* 276-283.

agenda that allowed and encouraged the generation and publication of divine revelation by the elect congregation. Mimicking the actions of the Son, who "spoke" the first edition of the living book of the living, the elect were also urged to "speak" as living books, and, by extension, as walking texts.

Valentinus even referred to his elect as "writings of truth." He described a congregation of living books, "each alone a fulfilled<sup>356</sup> truth, writing like a book that is perfect." These perfect books extended Platonic speculation about the ideal book—the one "written in the soul of the learner."<sup>357</sup> However, unlike Plato's idealized book, which had subordinated written knowledge as inferior to oral communication, Valentinus' books were found embodied in the entire person: as textual bodies, these living documents were "not places of voice, nor writing cut off from sound so that one reads and thinks of emptiness."<sup>358</sup> His books "texts of truth" superseded any particular format, they were neither oral nor written. Instead, Valentinus hypothesized that his elect were heavenly documents, "writings written by the one whom the father wrote for the aeons in order that through his writings the father is known."<sup>359</sup> These "texts" were composed before creation and divinely authored.

Valentinus gave us reason to think that his composition was to be understood as one of these documents. After opening his work with a brief description of humanity's descent

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356. ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲛⲁ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ "perfect" or "finished."

357. *Phaedrus* 275e.

358. *Gos. Truth*, 23:5-6. ⲉⲛⲉⲙⲉⲗ... ⲉⲅⲱⲁⲁⲧ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲭⲡⲁⲅ. (Attridge and MacRae, 90). There are two possible meanings for my wooden rendering of the Coptic. Bentley Layton translates these two terms as "with voice.... or mute," referring to reading aloud or silently. Kendrick Grobel's critical edition interprets the phrases to mean "vowels and consonants." See Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 256; and Kendrick Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth*, 82.

359. *Gos. Truth* 20:21.

into error and ignorance of the Father, Valentinus referred back to his own composition in the text, writing:

This<sup>360</sup> is the gospel of him who is sought after, which has revealed itself to the ones who are perfect through the mercy of the father. The secret mystery, Jesus the messiah, by him, he gave light to the ones in darkness, by her, forgetfulness. He gave light for them, he gave a path, the path is truth, which he told them.<sup>361</sup>

When Valentinus claimed "this is the gospel," he left ambiguous what "this" is. One solution, on grammatical grounds, proposes that "this" refers either to joy, searching, or knowledge. Alternatively, "this" could refer to Jesus, because in the following gospel context, Jesus is called a way (31:28-29) and a guide (19:17).<sup>362</sup> A third claim suggests that "this" refers generally to the "just announced promise of the abolition of not knowing the Father—is the content of the good news, which can also be summarily denominated 'Jesus the Christ.'"<sup>363</sup> In context of Valentinus' theory of sacred book, the logical antecedent to "this is the gospel," does appear to be Valentinus' composition itself. Since he argued that revelation was open and available to anyone with a pure heart, Valentinus himself, and congregations comprising texts of truth, had the potential to publicize themselves as a holy book, provided each "speaks from the heart." Moreover, the document meets all his sacred book criteria: his writing described knowledge of the Father, he called the elect "texts of truth" and his composition also attached itself to the tradition of textual truth with its self-designation "Gospel of Truth." The

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360. Attridge and MacRae have translated this as "through this," which is not warranted.

361. *Gos. Truth* 18.12-21. πει πεγαγγελιον ιπετογκωτε ιςωφ ιταφογανζι ινετχηκ αβαλ ζιτνι νιμιντωδανζητην ιτε πωτ πιμυστηπιον εθηπ ιη(σω)ς πεχ(ριστο)ς πει αβαλ ζιττοτϛι αφιρ ογαειν ανετρημ πεκει αβαλ ζιττοτϛι ιφβωε αφρ ογαειν αραγ αφι νογμαειτ πιμαειτ ιδε πε ιμιντηνε ενταφταμαγ αρασ. (Attridge and MacRae, 84).

362. Attridge and MacRae, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 50.

363. Grobel, *A Valentinian Meditation*, 49.

text also was not confined to an oral or written format; although it is a written document, rhetorical deictic markers (such as "This is the gospel" quoted above) indicate that it was read aloud. While not a narrative of Jesus' life, to the ancient Valentinian reader or listener, the *Gospel of Truth* was no less revelatory. This point was not lost on the ancient scribes who preserved the text in Coptic.

## **V. The Buried Book**

The *Gospel of Truth* as an artifact illustrates how a fourth-century audience might have read Valentinus' text. The only extant copies of the *Gospel of Truth* are from a pair of fourth century Egyptian codices from the Nag Hammadi library. One copy is badly damaged. The more complete manuscript is the third text of codex one (now the famed Jung Codex named after the institute that eventually purchased it). The Jung Codex preserved the *Gospel of Truth* as it was read before 350 C.E. The *Gospel of Truth* was the third of five texts in the Jung Codex, which included the *Prayer of Paul*, *Apocryphon of James*, *Gospel of Truth*, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, and the *Tripartite Tractate*. The order of the texts comprising the Jung Codex and the *Gospel of Truth*'s placement within it suggested that its fourth-century audience read this second-century text as a book about books, endorsing a theory of open revelation.

Recent efforts in codex criticism have tried to explain why the texts in the Nag Hammadi library were grouped the way they were. Analyses of the codex has demonstrated that looking for intention behind the organization of the Jung Codex is not simply idle speculation. The collection of texts and the sequence in which they were ordered was purposeful. Studies of the facsimiles of the manuscripts indicate that two scribal hands copied the texts

comprising the Jung Codex. Scribe A initially copied the *Apocryphon of James*, *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate*, leaving seven pages for scribe B to copy the *Treatise on the Resurrection* between the *Gospel of Truth* and *Tripartite Tractate*.<sup>364</sup> Scribe A subsequently copied the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul* into the introduction.<sup>365</sup>

It has been suggested that the order of the texts promoted a chronological history of revelation. Michael Williams has argued that some of the Sethian-oriented texts were organized (into codices III, IV/VIII, VII) as histories of revelation from a rewritten Genesis to witnesses of a risen Christ.<sup>366</sup> Another hypothesis, which he applied to the Jung Codex, suggested that specific combination and order of these texts might be explained by the compiler's efforts to mimic the layout of the New Testament, placing the *Gospel of Truth* in the category of epistle, or explanatory essay.<sup>367</sup> More convincingly, Michael Kaler argued that the evidence that the *Prayer of Paul* and the *Apocryphon of James* were included as an afterthought<sup>368</sup> indicated that the compilers were trying to invite as many holy figures into the collection as possible.<sup>369</sup> The *Apocalypse of James* began with the twelve apostles sitting around

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364. As Michael Kaler notes, scribe A left too much room, evidenced by scribe B's writing becoming larger towards the end of the work, as he noticed he had more than enough room to fit the entire text. Michael Kaler, "The Prayer of the Apostle Paul in the Context of Nag Hammadi Codex I," *J ECS* 16:3 (2008): 319-339.

365. On the *Prayer* added secondarily, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 253: "Though the short, two-page Prayer of the Apostle Paul is presently the opening writing in Codex I, it was evidently copied onto what was originally a blank flyleaf of the book . . . its purpose was surely not merely to fill up blank pages with any esoterica that happened to be at hand. Rather, this little prayer was likely deemed appropriate as a brief invocation to open the volume."

366. Michael Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 250.

367. *Ibid.*, 251.

368. Codex analysis indicates that these two texts were later copied on the first pages of the codex, perhaps left blank for this purpose.

369. As suggested by Michael Kaler, "The Prayer of the Apostle Paul in the Context of Nag Hammadi Codex I," 319-339.

a table, and the later addition of the *Prayer of Paul* completed the cast of characters. The *Apocalypse of James* opened with each of the apostles writing their individual books.

The placement of the *Gospel of Truth* within this context may have been considered an invitation for others to join the apostles' literary activities. The opening text of the Jung Codex invoked the reader's capacity to function as a text. Michael Kaler has argued that the *Prayer of the Apostle* "implicitly argues in favor of prioritizing revelatory, esoteric knowledge over exoteric knowledge conveyed through physical means, thus again validating the reader of codex I and her reading experience."<sup>370</sup> However, the reception of revelatory, esoteric knowledge was not necessarily limited strictly to "validating the reader.... And her reading experience." The text reads:

Give me your power, when I make a request of you. Give healing for my body, as I request of you through the evangelist.... Bestow that which no angelic eye has seen, nor archonic ear hears, and that which has not gone into the heart of men who have become angels.<sup>371</sup>

If we are to imagine that, as a prayer, this text was spoken aloud by the reader, these requests were removed from the mouth of Paul, and given new meaning in the mouth of the suppliant. These words uttered by the suppliant requested completely new revelation, a revelation not just new to humanity, but to the entire primordial cast—archons *and* angels. Paul, who like the second-century supplicant never met the savior but experienced a supernatural vision of his own, was an ideal candidate for pseudepigraphy. The compilers of the Jung Codex

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370. Ibid. 332.

371. *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, 20-30. For the critical edition of the Coptic, see Dieter Mueller, "Prayer of the Apostle Paul," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)*, ed. Harold Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies XXII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 5-11. [ⲙ]ⲁ[ ]ⲧⲏⲛⲉⲓ ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲕⲗⲟϥⲓⲁ [ⲉⲓ]ⲣ ⲁⲓⲧⲓ ⲛ̅ⲙⲁⲕ ⲙⲁⲧ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟϥ[ⲧⲁⲕ]ⲟ ⲛ̅ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲙⲁ ⲉⲓⲧⲏ ⲡⲉϥⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲓⲧⲏⲥ.... ⲉⲣⲓ ⲕⲁⲣⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲕ] ⲛ̅ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲓⲛⲡⲉⲛⲉⲗ ⲛ̅ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ [ⲙⲉ]ϥ ⲁⲣⲁϥ ⲁϥⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙ<ⲡⲉ>ⲙⲉⲟϥⲁⲉ [ⲙⲁ]ⲣϫⲟⲛ ⲃⲁⲧⲙⲉϥ ⲁϥⲱ ⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙ[ⲡ]ⲓⲥⲓ ⲁⲑⲣⲏⲓ ⲉⲓⲛ̅ ⲫⲏⲧ ⲛ̅ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲑⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̅ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲗⲟⲥ. (Mueller, 8).

opened with Paul, a historical voice, but a historical voice historically separated from the historical Jesus.

The second text in the codex, the *Apocryphon of James*, gave voice to the disciples who knew the historical Jesus. The author of the *Apocryphon of James* seemed to think that disciples who knew the historical Jesus were overrated as spiritual authorities. The portrayal of the disciples and the placement of this text within the Jung Codex anticipated further the call for continued generation of new revelatory texts. In the *Apocryphon of James*, the disciples were engaged in the business of textual production. The text is a response to a letter from an unnamed student requesting "an apocryphon, which was revealed to me and Peter through the Lord." James obliged and sent the text, "in Hebrew writing... sent to you, and only you." He advised his correspondent, whose name was obscured from damage to the manuscript, to "be careful about reciting this book to many, this is that which the savior did not want to say to all of us, his twelve disciples."<sup>372</sup> The *Apocryphon* also revealed that this was not the first secret book James had sent this "servant of salvation" (οὐξῦπηρετης μιοϋχθει) nor the only apostle to compose one. This particular text was revealed to James when the twelve disciples were sitting around and "bringing to mind the things the Savior had said to each one of them, whether secretly or publically, and arranging them in books."<sup>373</sup> According to this letter, all the disciples were actively writing books. The text acknowledged that the revelations in the books were unique to each of them. Just as James had explained to

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372. *Ap. Jas.* 1.5-10. Critical edition: Francis E. Williams, "The Apocryphon of James," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)*, ed. Harold Attridge, Nag Hammadi Studies XXII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 13-54. ατρατῆναϋ νεκ ἰοῦαποκρυφο(ν) εαῦβαλιπ(ϥ) αβαλ ἰνῆει μη πετρος ριτῆ πχαϊς.... εἴν ρενσρεει μῆιτρεβραιοις αριτῆναοϥ νεκ νεκ μεν οὔαεετῆ.... ἰγαρηε ατῆχοϥ ἰπχωμε αραε πεε ετε μπεσω(τη)ρ οῦωω [α]χοοϥ αραη τηρῆ πριῆιτснаϥ ἰμαθητης. (Williams, 28).

373. *Ap. Jas.* 2.10-15. πῆιτснаοϥ ἰμαθητης αῦω εῦειρε ἰπμεεϥε ἰνενταραπσωτηρ χοοϥ αποϥεει ποϥεει ἰμαϥ ετε ἰπετῶηπ ετε ἰπετογανεῖ αβαλ αῦω εῦρ ταссе ἰμαϥ αεῖν χωωμε. (Williams, 30).

his correspondent that the contents of his particular revelation was not for everyone, the other disciples were also recording the things the Savior told them, "secretly or openly."

The text also anticipated new revelatory information. By the end of the *Apocryphon*, James, Peter, and the other disciples had fallen out of favor, and the Savior informed them they were only saved for the sake of the "children coming after us." (ϞΗΗΡΕ ΕΥΝΗΗΥ ΜΗΝΣΩΝ). As James explained to the others, "He has... given us an assurance and promised life to us all and revealed to us children coming after us, having commanded us to love them as we will be saved because of them."<sup>374</sup> The text explained that those who wrote during the incarnation of the Son had the least clout among three groups of people—the ones who predicted his incarnation were once blessed; however, "blessed three times were they who have already been ordained by the Son when they had not yet existed."<sup>375</sup> The apostles were not happy that these future sons usurped their authority as the elect. James mollified them all by sending each to a different section of the world and turned his attention back to his correspondent. James abdicated his authority by "offering a prayer that the beginning come into existence for you," and concluded with "now we proclaim a part with these ones, the proclamation being made for them, these whom the Lord has made his sons."<sup>376</sup> Francis Williams has explained this obscure ending indicated that James made a partial revelation in collaboration with "those for whose benefit the proclamation was made (i.e., the Gnostics)."<sup>377</sup> In oth-

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374. *Ap. Jas.* 15.35-16.3. ρϞ† ΝΕΝ Ν̄ΝΟΥΔΕΖΙΑ ΔΥΩ ΔϞϞΠΩΠ ΝΕΝ ΤΗΡ̄Ν Μ̄ΠΩΝ̄Ξ ΔΥΩ ΔϞΒΩΛΠ ΝΕΝ ΔΒΑΛ Ν̄ΞΝ̄ϞΗΗΡΕ ΕῩΝΗΗΥ Μ̄ΗΝΣΩΜ ΕΔϞΡ̄ ΚΕΛΕΥΕ [ΝΕΝ] Δ[ΤΡ]ΕΝΜΕΡΙΤΟΥ ΞΩΣ ΕΝΔ[ΟΥ][Χ]Ε[ΕΙ] ΕΤΒΕ ΝΕΤ̄ΜΕΥ. (Williams, 52).

375. *Ap. Jas.* 14.40-15.2. Ξ̄ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ Ν̄ϞΑΜ̄Ν̄Τ Ν̄ΣΑΠ ΝΕΕΙ ΝΕ[ΕΙ] ΝΤ[ΔΞΟΥ]ΤΑϞΕ ΔΕΙΩ Μ̄ΜΑΥ ΞΙΤ̄Ν ΠΩΗ[ΡΕ] ΕΜΠΑΤΟΥϞΩΠΕ ΔΕΚΑΣΕ ΕΡ[Ε]ΟΥΜΕΡΟΣ ϞΩΠΕ ΝΗΤ̄Ν Ν̄Μ̄ΝΕΥ. (Williams, 50).

376. *Ap. Jas.* 16.13-14, 26-30. †̄Ρ̄ ΠΡΟΣ ΕΥΧΕΣΘΑΙ ΔΕ ΑΤΡΕΤΕΞΟΥΕΙΤΕ ϞΩΠΕ ΔΒΑΛ Μ̄ΜΑΚ.... Ν̄ΤΑΞΟΥΤΑϞΕ ΔΕΙΩ ΝΕΥ ΝΕΕΙ Ν̄ΤΑΞΑΠΧΔΕΙΣ ΕΕΙΤΟΥ ΝΕϞ Ν̄ϞΗΡΕ. (Williams, 52).

377. Francis Williams, "The Apocryphon of James," 37.

er words, James' proclamation was not complete, and awaited completion by "those about to be born."

The ending of *Apocryphon of James* left the "proclamation" unfinished and in the charge of "those to be born." The three texts placed after the *Prayer to Paul* and the *Apocryphon of James* conspicuously lacked pseudepigraphic authorship. The *Gospel of Truth*, the third text in the codex, separated the "historical" voices of Paul and the twelve apostles from the anonymous author instructing Rheginus in the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and the author of the *Tripartite Tractate*, the texts comprising the rest of the codex. The purposeful arrangement of the texts in this order is suggestive. An introduction in the voice of Paul, who never met Jesus the man, and argued that "knowledge of Christ and of the mysteries of the cosmos that Christ reveals comes from revelation," coupled with a second text that censured Jesus' apostles, invited the next three texts, presumably written by authoritative authors who never met Jesus during his lifetime.<sup>378</sup> The compilers indicated that the traditional authors of the authoritative texts, the apostles, were no longer the only keepers of knowledge about Jesus. The three texts that follow aligned themselves with the voice of Paul, who opened the codex. Paul never met Jesus; neither did the authors of the last three texts of the codex. The order of these texts in the Jung Codex, and the exhortation that opened the collection, may have suggested to the fourth-century reader that he or she was also part of a revelation tradition, and a living text herself.

My reading is supported by a new fragment of Athanasius' thirty-ninth *Festal Letter* found in the archives of Moscow's state museum.<sup>379</sup> This letter records the first list canoniz-

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378. As suggested by Michael Kaler, "The Prayer of the Apostle Paul in the Context of Nag Hammadi Codex I," 319-339.

379. This fragment is published in Alla I. Elanskaya, "The Literary Coptic Manuscripts in the A.S. Pushkin State



even as he railed at it. He complained that some misused Paul's legacy to promote their own words. Consequently, it is possible that other Christians did hold such ideas about the production and purpose of scripture, views that informed the compiling of NHC I.

## **VI. The Living Book**

Plato had declared the written word dead discourse, unable to answer for itself and at best, useful as a good mnemonic device. Unlike Plato, Justin and Valentinus had no problem with the written word—the person and book were so intimately connected it was impossible for a text to lose itself. They recognized the living in literary works. For Valentinus, truth resided in the identity of the Father, but knowledge of the Father was obtained through the name of the Son. The elect shared distinctiveness with the Son through their own "true" names. The Son-as-book was a living record of these names, recorded orally and in writing, and also identified as the name himself. The elect, as possessors of divine names, were eligible to read this book and have it inscribed upon their own hearts.

Valentinus used a common trope in antiquity—the book of the heart—literally. The spiritual seed did not contain glimmers of the logos, as Justin had argued. Rather, Valentinus imagined the elect as living, walking books of the heart. Because each member of the spiritual class possessed a book written upon his heart, he was eligible to publish his book of the heart, just like Jesus did. The fragments of Valentinus confirmed this reading of the *Gospel of Truth*. Fragments 2 and 6 linked the physical, published books of Greco-Roman authors to a class of people and the concept of the book of the heart.

Valentinus' book of the heart suggested that his version of textuality was one of "living scripture." He embraced the idea of authoritative holy text, but did not confine the

text to the page or to one author. Like his version of the logos, which was manifest both orally and in writing, Valentinus' idea of the Holy Book comprised a text with multiple authors and formats. His bookishness embraced other Jewish ideas of holy text and was also shaped by his Roman environment. Consequently, it is accurate to conclude that Valentinus was not an outlier in his religious landscape. Perhaps his combination of the centrist Jewish and Roman views he embraced was unique, but his view of the "living book" was not in radical opposition or tension with normative society.

Valentinus had shaped his gospel concept by subsuming all media and texts under a super-rubric, the "Gospel of Truth." His contemporary, Marcion, went to the other polar extreme, accepting only a gospel text he had written himself and the Gospel of Luke, which he adjusted to exclude citations of the Septuagint. Valentinus' self-declared intellectual opponent, Irenaeus, was adamant that there were only four authoritative written gospels. The next chapter will discuss how Irenaeus put forward this position as a normative, sensible option between the unrestricted attitude of Valentinus and the overly restricted bookshelf of the Marcionites.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CANON FORMATION AND THE HERESIOLOGISTS

Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἅτινα ἐὰν γράφηται καθ' ἕν, οὐδ' αὐτὸν οἶμαι τὸν κόσμον χωρῆσαι τὰ γραφόμενα βιβλία.

Now there are so many other things Jesus did that if ever it was written completely, not the world itself, I suppose, could hold all the books that would be written.

—John 21:25<sup>384</sup>

### I. Towards a Written Gospel

The *Gospel of Truth* described Valentinus' concept of gospel. His good news was potentially infinite—bits of the divine Logos were scattered among humanity, leaving open the possibility of new revelation. Valentinus did not place restrictions on its media; the gospel existed in both oral and written form. Nor did he place limits on its authorship. The *Gospel of Truth* had presented the reception of the holy book as an exchange of knowledge between divine and human. The elect, present in the Garden of Eden to receive instruction from Jesus, became part of the apostolic succession and gained authority as living books. The final verse of the Gospel of John, cited above, suggests that this Valentinian endorsement of plurality was not particularly innovative. John had harbored no expectations that his account was the only or even the best gospel. He recognized the existence and validity of other books, noting that his own book was geared specifically to proselytizing—"Now Jesus performed many other signs before his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these things have been written so that you believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and believing, possess

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384. Barbara Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graecae*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 406.

life in his name."<sup>385</sup> John did not just tolerate the existence of other books about Jesus; he presumed the possibility of limitless composition.

This is not to say that all books about Jesus were considered equal. In its opening lines, the Gospel of Luke suggested that some of the existing compositions were substandard, disorganized, or incorrect. So many books were being composed about Jesus and his followers, what was an ancient reader to do? Luke justified his own book project: "To investigate everything carefully from the very beginning, to write an orderly account so you may know the truth..."<sup>386</sup> Luke's suspicions gave voice to early anxieties about wrong information spreading about Jesus. His concerns about method and authenticity lend credence to recent assertions that the creation and rise of orthodoxy required the creation and rise of heresy.<sup>387</sup> Books provided one arena for this struggle—Luke insisted that readers could learn "the truth" from his Jesus story, simultaneously insinuating that other narratives were false.

John and Luke's self-referential descriptions are fragments of a larger epic about the emerging primacy of the sacred book within early Christianity. We know the end of the story. At some point, the written gospel was restricted to four texts, whose sanctity matched the divine Torah. Written gospels became an authority separate from the oral teaching (parado-

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385. Jn 20:30-31. Πολλά μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ (Aland, 403).

386. Lk 1:3. ἔδοξε κάμοι παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι κράτιστε θεόφιλε ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν (Aland, 193). N.B. For context and because of Greek grammatical structure, I often provide more Greek in the footnotes than corresponds to my in-text English translations.

387. See Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque, IIe-IIIe siècles* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1985). Also Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Surrey, Ashgate Publishers: 2009), 11-35. Edwards argues that ancient claims of orthodoxy were always coupled with complaints of corruption and false belief. These dual voices indicate that what was termed heresy created orthodoxy. This is evident from the reactionary rhetorical maneuvers of the heresiologists.

sis) passed down by the apostles.<sup>388</sup> However, the *Gospel of Truth* indicates that this outcome was not forgone. As Adolf von Harnack noted, "Primitive Christianity is not the equivalent to the gospels, rather that the gospels lived at the expense of primitive Christianity."<sup>389</sup> Early Christians were preoccupied with questions on locating divine authority. Valentinus had argued the authority lay in every pure-hearted person. He posited an open record, and a direct revelatory experience, which was potentially universally accessible. An alternative answer, which became normative, was separate oral and written records dependent on apostolic succession.

This chapter examines the voices of those who advocated for this latter "orthodox" position. It compares the way the heresiologists discussed the nature of the Valentinian heretical holy book to the way they present their own definitions of proper gospel. First I consider how the heresiographical writings, despite their overt polemical aims, might be useful for understanding the *Gospel of Truth* in its intellectual environment. Then I examine the way they described the heretical sacred book over and against the notion of orthodox scriptures. In the rhetoric of orthodoxy, the many books of the Valentinians deviated from the singular message of the church and its four-gospel canon. Yet the complaints of Irenaeus and his successors indicate that they had some knowledge of Valentinus' spermatic book, which they claimed led to intellectual chaos.

Ancient heresiographers also sought to define the scope of the sacred book regardless of number. One prominent marker of orthodoxy became the acceptance of a four-gospel

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388. It is interesting to note that Le Boulluec argues that this apostolic succession was Justin's response to rabbinic oral law. See Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie*, 90.

389. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. N. Buchanan. (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 75.

canon. However, the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy did not end at the acceptance of four gospels or many gospels. There were other issues about the sacred book including medium and authorship that Christian intellectuals necessarily confronted. Christians debated and sometimes blurred boundaries of the book and body. We find that, while Valentinus presumed no distinction between oral and written texts, Irenaeus sharply separated the written tradition from other traditions of the church.

Epiphanius' *Panarion* looked back on these second century developments. The fourth section of this chapter demonstrates that Epiphanius relied on the distinction Irenaeus had made between orthodox and heretical holy books in order to construct his genealogy of heresy. For Epiphanius, the history of heresy narrated the struggle over the nature of sacred book. Epiphanius also took the orthodox disembodiment of scripture to new heights. While Irenaeus sought to extract the holy human from the holy text, Epiphanius removed a text that had lost its sacred status from its written format. The book of *Jubilees* carried authority for Epiphanius, but because it was excluded from the canon, he cited *Jubilees* as tradition and not scripture.

Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and later, Epiphanius extracted the person from the revelatory written word. Confronted with new compositions and the necessities of unification, the heresiologists drew their own boundaries around the holy book. Irenaeus sought to limit the scope of the written word, constricting the written gospel to four texts. Tertullian banned heretics from accessing these books, claiming that they did not belong to them. In contrast, Valentinus had urged each person to speak the truth, finding truth in multiple books and persons. Comparing these competing theories of the holy book indicates that opposition to Valentinus' living, human books contributed to the gradual forming of the canon. Instead

of living sacred books, these heresiologists advanced a four-fold written Gospel and text-based interpretations.

## II. The Limits of Heresiography

Accounts of deviant Christian beliefs and behavior became popular in the second century. However, the antagonistic writing style and arguments leave doubts about their historical validity. These same authors who were defending Christianity against Roman charges of cannibalism and incest accused other Christians of similar activities. The overlap among the sources, signaling prolific borrowing from source to source, has also diminished the historical integrity of the heresiologists. Heresiology quickly developed a coherent intellectual tradition, largely because later authors recycled large amounts of material from their predecessors. Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (c. 180) likely followed Justin Martyr's earlier lost heresiological treatise and Tertullian (160-220) and Hippolytus (170-235) were heavily influenced by Irenaeus' widely circulating work. Tertullian's *Against the Valentinians* and large sections of Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* summarize many of his points. Almost two centuries after Irenaeus penned his polemic against Valentinus and his followers, Epiphanius directly lifted from his work rather than write his own account of Valentinians.

Irenaeus' heresiological monograph circulated widely and was quickly translated into Latin.<sup>390</sup> His work is better known through its Latin title *Adversus Haeresis*, or *Against Heresies*, because the original Greek is lost, only reconstructed through fragments quoted in later authors, such as Irenaeus' self-proclaimed intellectual heir, Hippolytus of Rome (170-235).<sup>391</sup>

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390. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht: Spectrum Press, 1950), 1:291.

391. Photius' *Bibl. Cod.* 121 mentions that Hippolytus claimed discipleship to Irenaeus.

Hippolytus composed two heresiological works; an earlier *Syntagma* against the Heresies noted by Eusebius is now lost. His second work, the *Refutation Against all Heresies*, began with polemics against Greek philosophy, worked its way through the mystery cults, then focused on detailed descriptions of thirty-three Gnostic heresies, including Valentinus. This work is dated after 222 C.E., as Hippolytus indicated that his enemy Pope Callistus had finally died.

His Latin-writing counterpart, Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (155-220) of Carthage, wrote prolifically after his conversion to Christianity in 193. He was a Roman citizen, the son of a high-ranking aide to the proconsul of Carthage, and educated as a lawyer and ordained as a priest. He composed his *De praescriptione haereticorum*, a legal treatise against all Christian heretics, applying the legal maneuver of *praescriptio* to extinguish any claims of ownership heretics made for scripture.<sup>392</sup> He aimed to cut short any debate between catholic and heretic before it even started by claiming heretics could not read or argue from scripture. However, the unique feature of this heresiological treatise remained its methodological argument—the content was freely borrowed from Hippolytus and Zephyrinus' earlier treatises and his *Against the Valentinians*, composed after his conversion to Montanism, depended entirely on Irenaeus.

How can these accounts possibly be useful for understanding the thought and writings of Valentinus? The most recent efforts in scholarship have argued that they are not. These efforts to discuss the heresiologists and Valentinian thought focus on doctrinal questions in order to discern whether the texts found at Nag Hammadi were the same texts Irenaeus might

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392. *Praescriptio* was a method of argument to lay claim to possession based on length of time elapsed. It came to signal a pre-trial hearing of a preliminary allegation, which could potentially cut short a full trial. See Charles Phineas Sherman, *Roman Law In the Modern World* (Boston: The Boston Book Company, 1917), 2:215-225.

have read as a source on Valentinian thought. Contradictions are supposed to indicate that the heresiologists were not being truthful, the Valentinians writings are inauthentic, or, as in the case with the *Gospel of Truth*, both.

For example, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian all provided detailed cosmologies they attribute to Valentinus that do not appear in his writings. These cosmologies resembled the *Apocryphon of John* and other "Sethian" texts far more than any Valentinian speculation. The *Gospel of Truth* 16:35 introduced the Son "who is in the thought and mind of the Father." In *Adversus Haeresis*, Irenaeus had presented the Valentinian concept of "thought" (Ennoia) and "mind" (Nous) of the Father as distinct cosmological hypostases.<sup>393</sup> However, in the *Gospel of Truth*, these terms were used as abstractions, describing attributes of the Father. This kind of theological "contradiction" between the Nag Hammadi and catholic writings has been the basis for arguing that the heresiologists are of limited value for understanding the *Gospel of Truth*.

The *Gospel of Truth's* claim, "The thing that is hidden is the Son,"<sup>394</sup> also raised suspicions about Irenaeus' accuracy. Irenaeus said that Valentinus claimed that the Father was only comprehensible *through* the Son.<sup>395</sup> Although it does seem that the *Gospel of Truth* later goes on to stress the revelatory abilities of the Son, this line has presented some problems. How can the Son be the vehicle of revelation when he is hidden? One solution has been to use the "contradiction" of the comprehensible yet hidden Son to demonstrate that the Nag

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393. See *Adv. haer.* 1.1.1. Also Attridge and MacRae, "The Gospel of Truth," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)* Nag Hammadi Studies Series XXII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 40.

394. *Gospel of Truth*, 24:14.

395. Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Heresies*, SC 100-101, 210-211, 263-264, 293-294, 406 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965-1995). *Adv. haer.* 1.8.5.

Hammadi text was not the same text Irenaeus referred to when he mentioned the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*.<sup>396</sup> Another has been to call for textual corruption; Grobel has argued that this phrase was a later addition, a parenthetical statement and not attributed to Valentinus.<sup>397</sup>

In light of these discrepancies, and mindful of the authors' own agendas, modern scholars have found works of the heresiologists of little value for the study of Valentinus. As one scholar has observed about Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, a scholar will find whatever she is looking for in his text.<sup>398</sup> However, the opposite has also been the case and inconvenient details are disregarded. The most recent monograph on Valentinus ignored their writings completely. For example, against the claim that Valentinus wrote the *Gospel of Truth*, Philip Tite has written:

The reference to a "gospel of truth" in Irenaeus is unconvincing for two reasons: (1) the reference is very vague, placed within a broader rant over various "heretics" not following the writings of the apostles (the Valentinians are claimed to be excessively reckless in this regard by actually fabricating "new" gospels—the polemical rhetoric here should be kept clearly in mind); (2) even if the Valentinians did have a "gospel of truth," Irenaeus is very clear that it is both recent and the product of followers of Valentinus (qui sunt a Valentino; there is, therefore, no reason to suppose, based on this reference alone, that the text in question was Valentinus' workmanship).<sup>399</sup>

Irrespective of his position on the authorship of the *Gospel of Truth*, the expectations about the writings of the early Christian heresiologists here are unrealistic. Tite was unsatisfied with Irenaeus' vagueness, but then put forward an interpretation of his work that runs counter to a natural reading and corroboration with other Valentinian writings. Tite has also raised

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396. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics and Paraenetic Discourse*, 218.

397. Grobel, *The Gospel of Truth*, 62.

398. Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading?: A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 2-4.

399. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 219.

the problem of "polemical rhetoric." However, it is not evident that polemics should be a synonym for false. Furthermore, in a period of experimental canon formation, it should not be taken for granted that "fabricating 'new' gospels," was a widely understood polemical slander at all. However, Tite has sought to understand Valentinianism only from "inside sources" disregarding the heresiologists completely, suggesting that a serious reading of the Gnostic material must come at the expense of the heresiologists.<sup>400</sup> For example, explaining why he did not utilize any of the heresiological sources, Tite explained his focus on Valentinus' own writings by claiming "these texts (NHL) were written by real people to real people within historical contexts and evidently with specific rhetorical goals in mind."<sup>401</sup>

However, the heresiologists were no less real and their historical contexts no less relevant. Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Tertullian shared a common vision of the past and future of early Christianity. They all described a unified catholic church, which presented a consistent and singular teaching from its inception. They certainly would have disagreed amongst themselves about the content of the singular teaching, but they all agreed that the church only taught one doctrine. They further agreed that the unified catholic church was under attack. The constant threat of corruption by heresy required vigilance and preparation. In part, their writings aimed to describe the kinds of things to guard against. However, because the historical record indicates that unified primitive Christianity is a fiction, their call to guard against heresy points to efforts to delineate, rather than protect, the catholic church. Their literary projects aimed to manage the diversity within early Christianity and, by ruling out variations

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400. It is also unclear why Irenaeus' claims that the *Gospel of Truth* was a new composition would exclude Valentinus as author. Their lives did overlap, and, at the time Irenaeus wrote *Against the Heresies* in 180, the *Gospel of Truth* would have only been 20-40 years old, indeed "recent" in the scope of Irenaeus' holy literature.

401. Tite, *Valentinian Ethics*, 19.

of doctrine, reveal the content of orthodoxy. Their complaints about Valentinian instruction were part of these efforts. The heresiological objection to Valentinian plurality of opinion was a negative evaluation of Valentinian theological mandates that appeared in the *Gospel of Truth*, urging all pure-hearted persons, as living books, to speak the truth.

These rhetorical goals were not separate from their historical realities. In their lifetimes, Christianity *was* under attack of sorts, and each heresiologist confronted persecution and opposition. While these persecutions were not widespread, each author was personally involved. Irenaeus' own teacher Polycarp had been martyred and Irenaeus was arrested and knew other Christians who suffered martyrdom in his outpost Gaul as well as Rome during the Aurelian Persecutions. He owed his own position as bishop of Gaul to the martyrdom of his predecessor. Both Tertullian and Hippolytus would have been targets during Emperor Maximinus' hunting of the clergy (c. 235-238) and their anxieties are evident through their writings. Tertullian addressed his own congregation in Carthage about the virtues of martyrdom and issued an *Apologeticus* to the Roman Senate and an instruction manual on martyrdom *De Corona* in the face of persecutions. Maximinus exiled Hippolytus to Sardinia, where he died in the mines. The point is that, for these authors, the stakes of their arguments were high and not just debates on "mere theology"<sup>402</sup> or freewheeling polemics. Their agenda to delineate a singular belief from a pluralistic Christianity did not simply spring from an urge to standardize and regulate, but reflected the level of commitment they were forced to make to be Christians in an era of persecution. Their ambitions to delineate the boundaries of

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402. This is the major distinction Adiel Schremer makes between "Rabbinical" efforts of standardization and unification of Judaism and the goals of the "Church Fathers," whose interests in unification he attributes to academic theological speculation. Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

orthodox Christianity hinged upon amplifying small differences they perceived among the many varieties of Christianity. So rather than asking what the heresiologists might have understood about Valentinus and the Valentinians, we should question what they perceived as the difference, or, as put by Michael Bérubé, "What, in other words, actively makes sense to people whose beliefs you do not share?"<sup>403</sup>

Moreover, as Alain Le Boulluec has persuasively demonstrated, the heresiographers' orthodoxy was a discourse, not a doctrine. This point is underscored by the observation that Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian all would be considered heretics by the standards of Constantine's Christian Empire and Hippolytus and Tertullian were considered heretics in their own time. By the end of Hippolytus' life, he was one of the leading voices against the centralizing church leadership in Rome, headed by Callistus. Although there are legendary accounts of his martyrdom, during his life and for two centuries after his death, Hippolytus remained apart from the central church in Rome. In part, this was a result of Hippolytus' own convictions. He was a heresy hunter and vigorously opposed to a popular view of the trinity as three aspects of a single God, rather than three distinct beings within the godhead. This modalist view of the trinity was so widespread that it was not immediately clear to Pope Zephyrinus that modalism *was* heresy and so he "allowed it to prevail."<sup>404</sup> Hippolytus charged Callistus, a deacon at the time, with bribing and manipulating Pope Zephyrinus into protecting and furthering the modalist cause. When Callistus took over for the martyred

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403. Michael Bérubé. "What's the Matter with Cultural Studies?" *The Chronicle Review*, September 14, 2009. "In an especially rich essay, 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists'—in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988), edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg—Hall wrote: 'The first thing to ask about an 'organic' ideology that, however unexpectedly, succeeds in organizing substantial sections of the masses and mobilizing them for political action, is not what is *false* about it but what is *true*.'"

404. *Ref.* IX, ii.

Zephyrinus, Hippolytus accused him of usurping the office and declared himself the first antipope. Ironically, it was Hippolytus' trinitarianism that later became orthodox doctrine.

Hippolytus' vociferous dissent aside, it is not clear whether he was in a position of much influence at all. He had his own group of followers but noted bitterly that Callistus' school was "crowded." Eusebius was not quite sure where he was from, noting he was a "bishop from somewhere."<sup>405</sup> Although praising his zealous writing style and factual reporting, Jerome did not know much about him either.<sup>406</sup> Hippolytus upheld stringent expectations for Christian behavior that included permanent excommunication for Christians who avoided martyrdom. Prudentius reported that Hippolytus had advocated this kind of puritanical Novatianism, but recanted before he died.<sup>407</sup> Pope Damasus' fourth-century inscription on the grave of Hippolytus indicated that he had been a Novatian until he died, but should still be regarded as a holy martyr.

Tertullian belonged to a group of Christians who were targets of Irenaeus and, later, Epiphanius' heresiography. A decade after Tertullian's conversion to Christianity, he became a follower of the Phrygian prophet Montanus. He was vocal about his own acceptance of Montanist teachings, which accepted new prophecy from individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit. In Carthage, he sat on a council that debated and authorized the authenticity of these new prophecies.<sup>408</sup> Even though excommunicated, he continued to write against Christian heretics, particularly Gnostics. The biographies of these writers indicate that heresy lay in

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405. *HE* VI.20.22.

406. See Jerome, *Illustrious Men*, 61.

407. Prudentius, "Peristephanon", hymn XI.

408. William Tabernee, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians* (Peabody: Hendricksons, 2009), 128.

the eye of the beholder—even Irenaeus would have had to recant his claims that Jesus lived until the age of fifty!<sup>409</sup>

### III. Creating Unity and Managing Diversity

Within the diverse Christian landscape, the complaint consistently leveled against Valentini-ans was their own diversity of doctrine. The heresiologists accused Valentinians of deviating not only from the original, orthodox teachings of the primitive church, they also argued that they differed amongst themselves. The impetus for these allegations has been attributed to polemics, their ignorance of Valentinianism, or an indication that the Valentinian church real-ly was a diverse collection of sects.<sup>410</sup> However, a sympathetic look at their allegations indi-cates that their polemics were a negative evaluation of a feature of Christianity that the *Gospel of Truth* had promoted. The *Gospel of Truth* had argued for the existence of a divine spark within each member of humankind, endowing each with capacity to speak forth our own version of the gospel. The many books, including those of both Christians and others, testify to the gospel's diversity of expression. The multivocality that the *Gospel of Truth* ac-cepted was the same plurality the heresiologists condemned. The heresiologists' antagonism was not aimless and their polemics were not misdirected stupidity. Rather, they struggled against a viable form of authoritative authenticity, which Irenaeus described derisively as a concept of "truth properly residing at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at anoth-

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409. On this point, see Paul Parvis, "Who Was Irenaeus? An Introduction to the Man and His Work," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 19.

410. For the first position, see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979). For the third, Simone Petrement, *A Separate God*, trans. Carol Harrison (Harper Row: San Francisco, 1990), 353-354.

er in Cerinthus, then afterward in Basilides...."<sup>411</sup> Valentinus saw the spermatic logos active in the hearts of many people; the heresiologists saw chaos.

In the heresiological writings, diversity of doctrine and practice was a characteristic of heresy in general but diversity of opinion was more specifically applied to Valentinians. Tertullian had remarked that the very fact that Valentinus' followers departed from their original teacher's opinions pointed to the allegiance to their teacher.<sup>412</sup> This was a consistent criticism running throughout the writings of the three heresiologists. Valentinus and his followers each had their own opinion. Evidence from both sides has suggested that Valentinus and his school encouraged multivocality. In the *Gospel of Truth*, the good news was disseminated orally to the elect, who were then urged to "speak the truth," thereby revealing their knowledge. Irenaeus complained that Valentinus taught that the good news did not originate as a written document, but was delivered *viva voce*. He also objected to the Valentinian claim that not everything was revealed to apostles; some were reserved for later students.<sup>413</sup>

This is not to say that multivocality was only a feature of Valentinians. The heresiologists' frustrations with open gospel and accusations of diversity were not reserved solely for them. From the positive perspective, Valentinians were not the only Christians who claimed access to current, living knowledge. Montanus and his prophetesses Maximillia and Priscilla went further than Valentinus' claims about revelatory books of the heart. According to Mon-

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411.*Adv. haer.* 3.2.1. Καὶ ταύτην τὴν σοφίαν εἷς ἕκαστος αὐτῶν εἶναι λέγει ἢν ἀφ'ἑαυτοῦ ἐξεύρηκεν πλάσμα δηλονότι, ὥστε ἀξίως κατ'αὐτοὺς εἶναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ποτὲ μὲν ἐν Οὐαλεντίνῳ ποτὲ δὲ ἐν Μαρκίῳ ποτὲ δὲ ἐν Κηρίνθῳ μετέπειτα ἐν Βασιλείδῃ.... (SC 211: 27).

412.*Adv. Val.* IV.

413.*Adv. haer.* 3.2.1-2.

tanus, revelation was open, new prophets were to be found among the congregation, and it was possible to generate new authoritative material.

Consequently, as a catholic turned Montanist, Tertullian offers a unique perspective on the problem of diversity within early Christianity. His priorities shifted from his pre-Montanist heresiological treatise *Praescrption* to his *Against the Valentinians* composed as a Montanist. His change in focus indicates that after he embraced Montanism, Tertullian had to create difference between the kind of diversity he had condemned in the Valentinians and the diversity he embraced as a Montanist, especially since he headed their council in Carthage devoted to determining the veracity of new prophecies.<sup>414</sup>

In his pre-Montanist heresiological work—the *Praescrption Against Heretics*—Tertullian was primarily concerned about cataloguing heresies. He and Hippolytus shared the notion that heretics defeated themselves—it was only necessary to shine light upon them. All heretics were the same to Tertullian; he often used the phrase "Marcion and Valentinus" or "Marcionites and Valentinians" as a catchall phrase to refer to heretics.<sup>415</sup> Echoing the seek/find schematic in the *Gospel of Truth*, Tertullian complained about their infinite process of seeking—"Where indeed will be the end of seeking? Where the stand still of believing? But even Valentinus puts forth 'Seek and you shall find.'"<sup>416</sup> Tertullian argued that instead, there should be a limit to seeking, since the object to be found is belief, and "you would not seek

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414. On Tertullian's shift in rhetorical priorities, see L. WM. Countryman, "Tertullian and the Regula Fidei," *SecCen* 2.4 (1982): 212-213.

415. All heresies are the same to Tertullian in *Prescriptions*; he often refers to the Marcionites and Valentinians, or "Marcion and Valentinian" (10.30) as a general subject.

416. *Praescr. Haer.* 10.7. *Ubi enim erit finis quaerendi? ubi station credendi? ubi expunctio inueniendi? Apud Marcionem? Sed et Valentinus proponit: quaerite et inuenietis.* (CSEL 1:196).

except with an expectation to find."<sup>417</sup> Since the Valentinians were still claiming to seek, by their own admission, Tertullian argued, they cannot be Christians.<sup>418</sup>

A second difference Tertullian identified was the heretical disregard of apostolic authority. Instead, Tertullian observed, they claimed either that the apostles were not told everything or that they were told everything but did not get the message out to all persons.<sup>419</sup> Instead, "truth awaited some Marcionites and Valentinians to liberate it."<sup>420</sup> Consequently, each heretical school possessed its own idea of the truth. Difference was a moral marker for Tertullian; it earned heretics the epithet "aliens and haters of the apostles:" (*extranei ut inimici*). Tertullian tethered the heretical dismissal of apostolic authority to their approach to sacred books. Differences in their teaching indicated that heretics possessed corrupt scriptures—a sure indication of their moral defectiveness as "haters of the apostles." He noted that Valentinus, like Marcion, emended scripture with "other expositions and obvious changes."<sup>421</sup>

From Tertullian's perspective, one was what one read. He suggested that perfect scripture was a reflection of the perfect self: "The fact that what we ourselves are also the scriptures are and have been from the beginning. From them, we are, before there was any other way than we are, before they were interpolated by you."<sup>422</sup> Tertullian asked rhetorical-

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417.*Praescr. Haer.* 10.3. *Nam non credidisses si non inuenisses, sicut nec quaesisses nisi ut inuenires.* (CSEL 1:195).

418.*Ibid.* 14.

419.*Ibid.* 22. For a positive evaluation of plurality, see the *Prayer to the Apostle Paul* and *Ap. Jas.*

420.*Ibid.* 29.2. *Aliquos Marcionitas et Valentinianos liberanda veritas expectabat.* (CSEL 1:209).

421.*Ibid.* 30.11. *Item Valentinus aliter exponens et sine dubio emendans, hoc nomine quicquid emendat, ut mendosum retro, alterius fuisse demonstrat.* (CSEL 1:211).

422.*Ibid.* 38.5. *Quod sumus, hoc sunt scripturae ab initio suo. Ex illis sumus, antequam nihil aliter fuit quam sumus; quid denique fuit, antequam a vobis interpolarentur?* (CSEL 1:218).

ly, "For indeed what is contrary to us in our [scriptures]?"<sup>423</sup> He argued that the teachings of the church perfectly aligned with scripture: "What particular to us have we brought in so that, detecting something contrary and in scripture, we must fix it by detraction, addition or alteration?"<sup>424</sup> An internally consistent collection of scripture was a sign of its correctness, but also a sign of an individual and a church's orthodoxy. Holy writing in its primordial state (since the beginning) embodied the primordial church and perfect Christian. For Tertullian, scripture was singular, like the unified catholic church.

However, the Montanist Tertullian held different concerns. Unlike his comprehensive work against *all* heresies, his heresiological work focusing only on Valentinus was likely written after his adoption of Montanist concepts of continued revelation. As a Montanist, Tertullian was challenged with the problems of newness the New Prophecy posed while embracing a fixed set of scriptures. He even possessed a book of the recent prophecies of Priscilla and Maximilla, which were not included in the scriptures. In *Against Valentinians*, Tertullian's primary concern about the Valentinians was not their composition of new teachings and texts, but the fact that all their new teachings contradicted one another. In fact, he considered this diversity a key feature of Valentinianism—"We know, I say, knowing best their own origin, why we call them Valentinians, although they seem not to be. Indeed, they have separated from the founder, but the origin is by no means effaced; if ever it differs, the very

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423.Ibid. 38.4. *Etenim quid contrarium nobis in nostris?* (CSEL 1:218).

424.Ibid. 38.4 *Quid de proprio intulimus ut aliquid contrarium ei et in scripturis deprehensum detractione vel adiectione vel transmutatione remediaremus?* (CSEL 1:218).

difference is the testimony."<sup>425</sup> Tertullian attributed their diversity to the concept of the sper-  
matic logos:

This heresy is permitted to present itself pleasingly many ways, as prosti-  
tute who customarily changes her dress daily. Why not? With that spiritu-  
al seed of theirs passes through each man in such a way. Whenever they  
have add anything new, immediately they call the presumption a revelation,  
and ingenuity a grace, and never unity, only diversity."<sup>426</sup>

Tertullian claimed that the individual and discordant teachings of Valentinians were by-prod-  
ucts of their teachings about the spermatic logos residing in individuals, likening these reve-  
lations to the spiritual "seed" encountering a prostitute. In contrast, the revelatory spiritual  
gifts received by New Prophets were in full accord with the doctrine of the catholic church.  
Tertullian was adamant that Montanists "only disagree here, that is, we do not acknowledge  
second marriages and we do not ignore Montanus' prophecy about future judgment."<sup>427</sup> The  
novelty of the New Prophecy and new prophecies was not the introduction of new doctrine,  
but spiritual guidance on how to make old doctrine relevant for the modern age.<sup>428</sup>

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425.*Adv. Val.* 4.1. *Nouimus, inquam, optime originem quoque ipsorum et scimus, cur Valentinianos appellemus, licet non esse videantur. Abscesserunt enim a conditore, sed minime origo deletur, et si forte mutatur; testatio est ipsa mutatio.* (CSEL 2:755).

426.*Adv. Val.* 4.3. *Alioquin tantum se huic haeresi suadere permissum est, quantum lupae feminae formam cotidie supparare sollemne est. Quidni, cum spiritale illud semen suum sic in unoquoque recenseant? Si aliquid noui adstruxerint, revelationem statim appellant praesumptionem et charisma ingenium, nec unitatem sed diversitatem.* (CSEL 2:756).

427.*Praedestinatus*, xxvi. *Hoc solum discrepamus, inquit, quod secundas nuptias non recipimus, et prophetiam Montani de futuro iudicio non recusamus.* "Irenaeus' 'New Testament' is basically a collection of works conceived to be written by, or to report the teaching of, *apostles*; and while he differs radically from Valentinus about how such books should be read, he does not, save in the case of Acts, seem to differ with them about the books that constitute the core list. It is Marcion, not the Gnostics, whom he openly accuses of truncating the list of essential Christian Scriptures." Richard A. Norris, Jr. "Irenaeus of Lyon," in the *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, 50.

428.Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones*, 129. Also see *On Flight in Persecution* viii-ix: Tertullian argues that although apostles were nomadic to avoid martyrdom, his congregation's historical times were different and the spirit was telling him they should embrace it. On the authority of the New Testament for Tertullian, see H. Karpp, *Schrift und Geist bei Tertullian* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1955). Also John Jansen, "Tertullian and the New Testament," *SecCen* 2.4 (1982): 191-207.

Irenaeus had been faced with a similar problem in the face of one of his opponents claiming absolute unity with a single written gospel.<sup>429</sup> Marcion had claimed there was only one written gospel; Irenaeus was arguing for the primacy of four written gospels. On the other hand, Irenaeus accused the Valentinians of possessing "more gospels than there really are,"<sup>430</sup> a similar charge Marcion might aim at Irenaeus. Compared to Marcion, Irenaeus' multifaceted gospel might seem almost Valentinian! Irenaeus solved his problem by turning his idea of a four-fold gospel into the moderate position—not too few, not too many books:

For Marcion throws out the whole Gospel. Moreover, cutting himself off from the Gospel, he boasts that he possesses a part in the Gospel.... But those who are from Valentinus, being completely without fear, bring out their own compositions, boasting that they possess more gospels than there really are.<sup>431</sup>

By placing himself in the middle, Irenaeus transformed Marcion into the extreme nay-saying conservative—as Tertullian later described, Marcion had insisted on a single gospel "using the knife" to limit his scripture to a single text. Valentinus, on the other hand, became the undisciplined liberal, "using the pen" to write his own compositions. Irenaeus presented the four-fold gospel as a reflection of natural order—neither too limiting or libertine. These four gospels were also presented as the alternative to a text called the *Gospel of Truth* circulating among Valentinians. Irenaeus viewed the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* as a direct challenge to his "canon of truth" and "gospel of truth" comprising the four gospels.<sup>432</sup> Irenaeus referred to

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429. William Tabbernee, "Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry in Carthage c. 203 C.E.," *PRS* 32 (2005): 435-38.

430. *Adv. haer.* 3.2.2.

431. *Adv. haer.* 3.11.9. Καὶ γὰρ Μαρκίων ὅλον ἀποβάλλων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἑαυτὸν ἀποκόπτων μόνιον καυχᾶται ἔχειν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.... Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου πάλιν ἔξω παντὸς ὑπάρχοντες φόβου ἴδια συγγράμματα ἐκφέροντες πλείονα ἔχειν καυχῶνται αὐτῶν τῶν εὐαγγελίων.... (SC 211:171-175).

432. See Thomas C.K. Ferguson, "The Rule of Truth and Irenaeus' Rhetoric in Book 1 of 'Against Heresies,'" *VC*

these four gospels as the "true" *Gospel of Truth*, over and against the "comparatively recent writing, the *Gospel of Truth*, though it in no way agreed with the gospels of the apostles." The problem with the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth*, Irenaeus argued, was "the gospel handed down by the apostles can no longer be 'of truth'."<sup>433</sup>

Irenaeus provided further indication that he was challenged by the problems Valentinian diversity presented. He could not ignore the fact that a four-fold gospel resembled the Valentinian concept of many gospels far more than Marcion's single gospel. Equally problematic for Irenaeus was a moment recorded within his four gospels that seemed to indicate that the Valentinian mandate to "speak" had apostolic precedent. Having chastised the Valentinians for each speaking their own mind, Irenaeus was left with the problem of explaining the Pentecost. All the apostles speaking different things in different languages challenged the notion of a unified "canon of truth" consisting of a single apostolic message and a four-fold gospel. Irenaeus circumvented what he perceived as a point of contact with Valentinus' school by explaining that the Pentecost could not have taken place had Valentinus or Marcion been around to corrupt the gospel message. Irenaeus solved the problem of the Pentecost by using it as an opportunity to create a distinction between his singular message and what he perceived as Valentinus' promotion of plural preaching—Irenaeus argued that the disciples all spoke the same message in different languages in contrast to the Valentinians who all preached different things in familiar language.

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55.4 (2001): 356-375. *Adv. haer.* 1.20.1; 2.25.3.

433. *Adv. haer.* 3.11.9. μηκέτι εἶναι τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδεδομένον ἀληθείας εὐαγγέλιον. (SC 211:175).

#### IV. Gospels of the Heart

Clear similarities among Christian groups incited the heresiologists' efforts to manage the diversity of early Christianity. Not only did Valentinus and Irenaeus both adopt multiple gospels, they also shared a theological vocabulary. Consequently, when Irenaeus endeavored to distinguish between his orthodoxy and the wide range of heresies, he struggled to make sense of the naturally shared language.<sup>434</sup> For instance, although Irenaeus mentioned that Valentinus claimed there "were more gospels than there really are," these two intellectuals did share a core body of texts in common, including the Hebrew Bible and most of the texts that now comprise the New Testament.<sup>435</sup> However, Irenaeus argued for a difference in their method of reading, noting an unattested Valentinian tendency to apply cosmological significance to any number appearing in a holy writing. For example, Irenaeus accused Valentinus of using the number of days in a month as proof that there were thirty original aeons comprising the Pleroma. Irenaeus also noted, "If there are any such things laying in the scriptures to be thrust into the number four, [the heretics] say it is from their tetrad."<sup>436</sup>

Although faulting the heretics for applying numerological exegesis to sacred writings, he reverted to the same hermeneutical techniques to explain why the number of written gospels "could be neither more nor less than four in number."<sup>437</sup> Based on the "four regions of the earth," the "four universal spirits," the "four-faced Cherubim," all "four-footed living

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434.Pace Mark Edwards, I think these similarities suggest genuine intellectual kinship rather than intentional effort's on Irenaeus' part to "shadow" the rhetoric of Valentinus. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church*, 11-35.

435.Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 32. Also see *Adv. haer.* 1.3.6.

436.*Adv. haer.* 1.18.2. Καὶ εἴ τινα ἀπλῶς τοιαῦτα κεῖται ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς εἰς τὸν τῶν τεσσάρων δυνάμενα ἄγεσθαι ἀριθμὸν διὰ τὴν Τετρακτὸν αὐτῶν φασὶ γεγενῆσθαι. (SC 264: 279).

437.See Annette Reed, "Εὐαγγέλιον: Orality, Textuality and the Christian Truth in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*," 22; Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, 30, 38, 85-86.

creatures," and the "four covenants of the human race,"<sup>438</sup> Irenaeus deemed it "fair that the church have four pillars" of the four-fold gospel.<sup>439</sup> Irenaeus had identified this type of scriptural exegesis as Valentinian, yet fell back on the same methods, ironically to assert the orthodoxy of a four-fold gospel.<sup>440</sup> Irenaeus attempted to differentiate between Valentinus and himself, arguing, "A principle does not come from numbers, but numbers from a principle"<sup>441</sup> (*Non enim regula ex numeris, sed numeri ex regula*). Irenaeus argued that his own approach to numerical exegesis was fundamentally different: "[The Gospel's] words served both ancient things and by all means our times and they should, by that way, not connect [its words] to the number thirty, but connect them with argument or more accurately, with correct reason."<sup>442</sup> After all, Irenaeus explained, when listening to music, each note does not necessarily have meaning in itself, but has to be understood in the context of the entire composition. Instead, Irenaeus claimed that Valentinus and his followers "adapt the numbers themselves... to the true underlying argument."<sup>443</sup>

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438. Irenaeus identified four covenants (καθολικαὶ διαθήκαι) revealed to humanity—the single command to Adam, the Noahide covenant, the Mosaic covenant and the Gospel. *Adv. haer.* 3.9.8.

439. *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8. Ἐπεὶ γὰρ τέσσαρα κλίματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ᾧ ἔσμεν καὶ τέσσαρα καθολικὰ πνεύματα, κατέσπαρται δὲ ἡ ἐκκλησία ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γῆς, στῦλος δὲ καὶ στήριγμα ἐκκλησίας τὸ εὐαγγέλιον καὶ Πνεῦμα ζωῆς, εἰκότως τέσσαρας ἔχειν αὐτὴν στῦλους πανταχόθεν πνέοντας τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ ἀναζωπυροῦντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. (SC 211: 160-162).

440. For example, *Adv. haer.* 2.24.3. Mark Edwards might mark this passage as an example of Irenaeus' "shadowing" the heretical writings and appropriating their rhetoric for orthodoxy. However, early authors, like Philo, establish that this kind of numerical patterning of the divine was part of Irenaeus and Valentinus' shared heritage. See Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy*, 35-57.

441. *Adv. haer.*, 2.25.1. (SC 294:252).

442. *Adv. haer.*, 2.25.1. *Non quidem, sed cum magna sapientia et diligentia ad liquidum apta et ornata omnia a Deo facta sunt, et antiqua et quaecumque in nouissimis temporibus Verbum eius operatum est. Et debent ea, non numero xxx, sed subiacenti copulare argumento siue rationi, neque de Deo inquisitionem ex numeris et syllabis et litteris accipere.* (SC 294:250).

443. *Adv. haer.* 2.25.1. *sed ipsos numeros et ea quae facta sunt aptare debent subiacenti veritatis arugmento* (SC 294:250).

Irenaeus and Valentinus shared a lingua franca that went beyond numerology. Their shared language extended to a metaphorical garden of sacred writing. Irenaeus, like Valentinus, also placed the scripture in the Garden of Eden. We recall from Chapter Three that Valentinus had described a dual gospel, at once both oral and written, represented in the *Gospel of Truth* as the fruit from the tree of knowledge.<sup>444</sup> Irenaeus shared Valentinus' idea of sacred books as fruit from Eden. He warned his readers to avoid heretical doctrines, and find "nourishment" with the fruit of true scripture. Irenaeus envisioned the church as a garden with the writings of the church as its vegetation. The same commandment given to Adam and Eve applied to holy writings— "For the Church has been planted as a paradise in this world; therefore says the Spirit of God, 'From every tree of the garden you may freely eat,' that is, eat you may from every scripture of the Lord; but you shall not eat with an hyper-inquisitive mind, not touch any heretical sedition."<sup>445</sup>

Irenaeus' arguments converged with the *Gospel of Truth*. Valentinian wisdom also originated with a bite of fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Valentinus and Irenaeus agreed upon that. However, unlike Valentinus, Irenaeus was not promoting this scriptural fruit, but emphasized its ruinous capabilities. He compared all heretical writings to the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, suggesting their singular destructive character. As seen in the previous section, his complaint about the plurality of heretical doctrine was picked up by his successors and considered one of the major defining features of wrong

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444. *Gos. Truth* 18:25-31.

445. *Adv. haer.* 5.20.2. φεύγειν μὲν οὖν δεῖ τὰς γνώμας αὐτῶν καὶ ἀκριβῶς φυλάσσεσθαι μήποτε βλαπτόμεθα ὑπ' αὐτῶν καταφεύγειν δὲ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ αὐτῆς τιθηνεῖσθαι τῷ κόλπῳ καὶ ταῖς κυριακαῖς ἐκτρέφεσθαι γραφαῖς. Πεφύτευται γὰρ ἡ ἐκκλησία παράδεισος ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ. Ἀπο παντὸς οὖν ξύλου τοῦ παραδείσου βρώσει φαγη φησὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ τουτέστιν ἀπὸ πάσης κυριακῆς γραφῆς φάγε ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς ὑπερφρονήσεως μὴ φάγῃς μηδὲ ἄσῃ πάσης τῆς αἰρετικῆς διχοστασίας. Ὁμολογοῦσιν γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἑαυτοὺς γνῶσιν ἔχειν καλοῦ τε καὶ πονηροῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ τὸν πεποιηκότα αὐτοὺς θεὸν τείνονται τὰς διανοίας αὐτῶν. (SC 153: 257-259).

belief. However, in the Eden comparison, it was Irenaeus' orthodox scripture that was plural (all the trees in paradise) but heretical scripture was restricted to a single fruit. In fact, Irenaeus found support for his "rule of truth" by noting that the same singular truth was expressed in the many writings of Holy Scripture.

Irenaeus exhibited further knowledge of Valentinian scripture, observing that Valentinus' doctrine had been "scattered" (διέσπαρται) among many sources: "The heretics... blind to the truth... walk in various roads; and therefore the footsteps of their doctrine are scattered here and there without agreement or connection."<sup>446</sup> Irenaeus perhaps alluded to Valentinus' interpretation of the spermatic logos inscribed on the hearts of many.<sup>447</sup> For Valentinus, the spermatic logos explained how a variety of human writings could all express divine truths. The fragment of his work *On Friends* (known as Valentinian Fragment 6), preserved in the *Stromateis*, argued that overlap between books both "public" and "writings of the church" contained fragments of the book of the heart. This fragment indicates that Valentinus would have been a prolific reader of all types of books. Irenaeus spun this concept differently; for him Valentinian theology was scattered so fragmentally among his followers that it made no sense at all. Irenaeus viewed variety as weakness and evidence that these books "without connection or agreement" were heretical. In the debate on the spermatic logos, Irenaeus and Valentinus would have agreed on the underlying facts that the doctrine had been widely scattered.

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446. *Adv. haer.* 5.20.1. Ἀνάγκην μὲν οὖν ἔχουσι πάντες οἱ προειρημένοι αἰρετικοὶ διὰ τὸ τυφλώττειν περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἄλλην καὶ ἄλλην πορεύεσθαι ἀνοδίαν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀσυμφώνως καὶ ἀνακολούθως διέσπαρται τὰ ἕχνη τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτῶν. (SC 153: 253-255).

447. We recall that Tertullian also knew of the Valentinian concept of the spiritual seed. He derisively had located this seed inside "every man." This seed manifested as heretical writings personified as a well-dressed prostitute. In this way, Tertullian insinuates that the Valentinians, the receivers of the 'spiritual seed' were prostitutes.

The book of the heart was also a shared trope between Irenaeus and Valentinus. While the heart as text forms a metaphorical system, appearing already in the writings of Plato, both Irenaeus and Valentinus used the phrase to denote divine, revelatory messages. The different ways they employed the phrase point to their fundamental disagreement about the ontology of the sacred book. Valentinus presumed that any member of the elect possessed the capacity to publish his own interior text and thereby he embraced all books public and ecclesiastical. The "shared matter between them" comprised the book of the heart, which could also be found within the bodies of spiritual Christians. Irenaeus' book of the heart, on the other hand, was not written. Like Valentinus' understanding of the phrase, Irenaeus' book of the heart marked a righteous individual. However, in Irenaeus' use, the book of the heart confirmed the singularity of the apostolic teaching and authority of the four written gospels.<sup>448</sup> A heart recorded the "ancient tradition," (τὴν ἀρχαίαν παράδοσιν) the preaching of the apostles without the need for the written documents.<sup>449</sup>

Irenaeus described the book of the heart's relationship to the written text by posing the question, what if the gospels had never been written down? How would one know what Jesus said and did, and, more importantly, how would one know how a good Christian should believe and behave? As a case study, Irenaeus pointed to illiterate barbarian Christians, who

having come to believe in Christ without papyrus and pigment, they have

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448. Eric Jager described the invention of the book of the heart within early Christianity as a development from Paul to Augustine. Paul's "book of the heart" was a universal Gospel that aimed to replace the particular "letter of the law." Augustine's book of the heart was interior—an individual confessional record. Jager's work focuses primarily on the book of the heart's medieval developments, so in between Paul and Augustine, he claims, "Origen, a prolific Christian allegorist may have invented the book of the heart." The evidence the *Gospel of Truth* and Irenaeus offer indicates that this is incorrect. See Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, 17-18.

449. On the concept of *Paradosis*, see Albert Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic *Paradosis*," *HTR* 80.1 (1987): 63-77; Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, 27-45.

salvation written on their hearts through the spirit, and, carefully guarding the ancient tradition, believe in one god.... If ever someone should preach to them the inventions of the heretics, associating with them in their own dialect, they would instantly plug their ears, and run far away, not enduring even to listen to the blasphemous homily. In this way, through the ancient tradition of the apostles, they do not accept in their mind any of their marvelous tales. For neither community nor instruction has been established among them.<sup>450</sup>

Valentinus had claimed each Christian was a living book; Irenaeus agreed. The book etched on the heart of each Valentinian refuted the concept of a fixed set of revelatory texts, and explained conflicting matter between sources. For Irenaeus, the books etched on the hearts of illiterate barbarians contained the gist of the four gospels and confirmed the inerrancy of these written sources.

This is not to say that, for Irenaeus, the heart only had the capacity to store the gospels. In general, the contents of the book of the heart provided authoritative information in the absence of written sources. In a letter to an old friend Florinus, Irenaeus scolded his correspondent for his interest in the "error of Valentinus." Florinus and Irenaeus had met in Smyrna when Irenaeus was a child and Florinus resided in the royal court trying to impress Polycarp. Using his closeness with Polycarp to his advantage, Irenaeus explained to Florinus that his old teacher would be horrified to hear the doctrine Florinus was espousing. Irenaeus declared himself an apostolic-like authority on the teachings of Polycarp, adding that he had recorded Polycarp's lessons "not on paper, but in my heart, and always through the grace of

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450. *Adv. haer.* 3.4.2. Ἡ τάξει πείθονται πολλὰ ἔθνη βαρβάρων τῶν εἰς Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότων ἄνευ χάρτου, καὶ μέλανος ἐγγεγραμμένην ἔχόντων διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχαίαν παράδοσιν ἐπιμελῶς φυλασσόντων, εἰς ἓνα θεὸν πιστευόντων... Οἷς ἐάν τις ἀπαγγεῖλη τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν αἰρετικῶν παρεπινηνομήνα τῇ ἰδίᾳ αὐτῶν διαλέκτῳ προσομιλήσας παραυτίκα ἀποκλείοντες τὰ ὧτα πόρρω που καὶ μακρὰν φεύξονται, μηδὲ ἀκοῦσαι ὑπομένοντες τὴν βλάσφημον ὁμιλίαν. Οὕτως δι' ἐκείνης τῆς ἀρχαίας τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδόσεως οὐδὲ εἰς ἔννοιαν ἀποδέχονται ὅτι τούτων τερατολογία ἐστίν. (SC 211: 47-49).

God genuinely I reflect on them."<sup>451</sup> Like his barbarian friends who possessed an innate sense of the gospels as books of their heart, Irenaeus became a written repository of Polycarp's teaching—not just the things Polycarp said, but "the way he carried himself, and his character." Carrying the teaching of Polycarp in his heart gave Irenaeus interpretive authority to speak for Polycarp in the absence of Polycarp himself.

Irenaeus and Valentinus shared a common vocabulary of the book of the heart as a revelatory source. However, Irenaeus set the book of the heart *against* a formal written text. His book of the heart represented conceptual knowledge. In the absence of the written gospels, illiterate barbarians were still able to discern correct doctrine from heresy, thereby ratifying the four gospels. In the absence of Polycarp, Irenaeus knew what behaviors his teacher would and would not approve. The book of the heart amounted to "tradition" or *paradosis*, the things passed down from the apostles. Valentinus, on the other hand, had made no such distinction. He collapsed both written and oral book into his gospel. His book of the heart subsumed public books and books of the church, and also designated the amorphous teaching delivered to the elect, first in the Garden of Eden and then from the cross. In the *Stromateis* fragment, Valentinus had made clear that the contents of the "book of the heart" were to be found in physical, published books of all philosophical orientations.

From Irenaeus' perspective, the validity of the Valentinian book of the heart came at the expense of apostolic authority. However, from other Christian perspectives (including Irenaeus') the book of the heart was a sign of apostolic-like authority. An apostolic book of

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451. Eusebius, *HE* 5.20.5-7. Ταῦτα καὶ τότε διὰ τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ ἐπι ἔμοι γεγονὸς σπουδαίως ἤκουον ὑπομνηματιζόμενος αὐτὰ οὐκ ἐν χάρτῃ ἀλλὰ ἐν τῇ ἐμῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ ἀεὶ διὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ γνησίως αὐτὰ ἀναμαρτυκῶμαι... For Greek text, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, LCL 153 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926).

the heart appeared in the *Apocryphon of James*, which depicted each of the apostles writing down revelation told uniquely to him. Consistent with Irenaeus' observations that Valentini-ans justified preaching "their own opinions" by claiming the apostles had not received the complete revelation, in the *Apocryphon of James*, not all the apostles were told everything. James received a special revelation, which he recorded in two books because he had "opened his heart."<sup>452</sup> In this respect, the *Apocryphon of James* stands more closely to the *Gospel of Truth* than to Irenaeus' position. The *Apocryphon of James* indicated that a book of the heart could be manifest in physical books as visible, written, new revelation.

Irenaeus' book of the heart was to remain oral and conceptual. He equated the book of the heart with the concept of *paradosis*—traditions passed down from apostolic times. The concept of *paradosis* allowed Irenaeus to restrict the source of "good news" to text, while giving authority to rituals and Christian behavior that were not specifically outlined in the written text. *Paradosis* allowed Irenaeus to go beyond the text and doctrine of Polycarp; the "tradition" of Polycarp was more than the sum of his teaching—it included the way he spoke, carried himself, and behaved in public. *Paradosis* allotted early Christian leaders flexibility to go beyond the increasingly restricted collection of authoritative texts without compromising their efforts at unity. However, as Eusebius would later note, restricting early Christian reading material had not, by his time, been particularly effective.<sup>453</sup> Even a post-Nicene heresiologists such as Epiphanius consulted books outside the canon. The concept of *paradosis* allowed him to do just that.

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452. *Ap. Jas.* 14.27. ἐξατετνοῦσιν ἀπετῶσεντ. (Williams, 50).

453. Eusebius, *HE* 3.25.

## V. Written Paradosis

Epiphanius (ca. 310-404) provides a retrospective discussion on the role of sacred text for early Christian heresiology. His historical situation was unique among the heresiologists. Perhaps of Jewish heritage, he grew up in a wealthy Christian home in Palestine, which he left for the austere life of an Egyptian monk. Learned and multi-lingual, he rose in the monastic ranks, later becoming bishop of Salamis.<sup>454</sup> Epiphanius also lived in a Christian era. From the twenty canonical rules issued at the Council of Nicaea to the fourth century lists of approved sacred texts circulating in Athanasius' 39th festal letter and the mysterious Muratorian Canon,<sup>455</sup> Epiphanius thrived in an age of standardization. Christianity was no longer illegal. He did not adopt a defensive strategy, or defend his religion to the senate like Tertullian. He was not at risk of exile like Hippolytus, or risk execution as all three earlier heresiologists did.

Consequently, his heresiography was less apologetic than the earlier authors' works. Epiphanius traveled extensively in the eastern Mediterranean, encountering a variety of Christianities. These peregrinations inspired the composition of the *Panarion*, a catalogue of eighty heresies. His *Panarion* has never been taken particularly seriously as a reliable source for the ancient heresies Epiphanius claims to know first-hand. An early twentieth century article reflects some attitudes about his writing that still persist:

His early asceticism seems to have imbued him with a love of the marvelous; and his religious zeal served only to increase his credulity. His eru-

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454. See Socrates, *HE* 2.46; Sozomen, *HE* 25.

455. Harry Gamble, "Marcion and the 'Canon,'" in *Cambridge Dictionary of Early Christianity: Origins through Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 213. "While this letter presupposes persistent variations in what was read as scripture, it signals the beginning of a widespread effort to define the limits of Christian scripture and thus to fix a canon."

dition is outweighed by his prejudice, and his inability to recognize the responsibilities of authorship makes it necessary to assign most value to those portions of his works, which he simply cites from earlier writers.<sup>456</sup>

Epiphanius' sweeping arguments, sensational eyewitness claims, and inaccessibility to the modern reader<sup>457</sup> have not championed his historical usefulness.

However, his inability to "recognize the responsibilities of authorship" suggests that Epiphanius had other priorities as a writer, ones that do not measure up to our own expectations of historiography. Like his forerunners, he "borrowed" liberally from Irenaeus and he was not compelled to cite his sources. Yet his work can be useful as a witness to a developing orthodox theory of sacred book. Epiphanius presented a concept of text that has the capacity to heal and harm. He offered his writing as a cure for lethal heretical books and teachings. Even the title, *Panarion*, reflected this notion. *Panarion*, literally "breadbasket," is typically translated "medicine chest." Epiphanius' *Panarion* was designed as preventative and curative medicine. Epiphanius compared the eighty heresies he catalogued to various poisonous snakes and offered curative theology as the anti-venom.

Epiphanius' approach to heresy was anthropological. His fascination for the variety of practices he heard about or encountered is evident. Although he did have didactic aims, Epiphanius wrote a history book, sometimes credited as the first chronography.<sup>458</sup> His *Panarion* moved diachronically through the five "mother" heresies originating in anti-deluvian times, which fractured through the generations of humankind into seventy-five other heresies reaching into Epiphanius' own time. Epiphanius' ideas about the origins of heresy

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456. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Epiphanius."

457. A full English translation of the *Panarion* only became available in the mid 90s.

458. See J. M. Scott, *Geography in early Judaism and Christianity: The Book of Jubilees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73.

resemble the recent theses of modern scholars more than the origins posited by the earlier heresiographers. His predecessors had viewed heresy as an external and later corruption of pure Christianity, beginning with Simon the Magician.<sup>459</sup> Epiphanius argued that heresy existed since the beginning of humanity and a variety of early Christianities developed contemporary to the unified catholic church.

His history of heresy told a history of sacred text and its uses and abuses.<sup>460</sup> The creation and dissemination of books was an important part of this history for Epiphanius. His exposition of each sect was systematic; Epiphanius would explain a sect's geographical and intellectual origins, outline their key beliefs, make note of deviant ritual traditions, and subsequently offer his refutation. He would consistently mark any abnormal textual behavior—if a heretical group disregarded a sacred book, excised a sacred book, or composed a sacred book. These illicit composition practices originated among the five earliest heresies—Barbarism, Scythianism, Hellenism, Judaism, and Samaritanism. Barbarism, the primeval heresy existing from the time of Adam to the flood was marked by an absence of sacred text. Instead, "there was no heterodoxy, no different ethic groups, no name for a heresy, nor idolatry.... Each person followed his own ideas."<sup>461</sup> The age of Scythianism, the heresy of the post-deluge perestroika, was an era of bipartite belief—one was either "godly" (the precursor to

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459.It was only in the early 20th century that this view was seriously challenged with the publication of Walter Bauer's seminal work *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei in ältesten Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934).

460.In a recent dissertation, Young Kim argued that the *Panarion* constructed a geography, biography and chronography of heresy. See Young Richard Kim, "The Imagined World of Epiphanius of Cyprus," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2006). Here it is argued that Epiphanius' "Imagined World" also included a literary landscape, in which heresies were not just identified geographically and chronologically, but also through text.

461.*Pan.* I 1.9. Οὐπω δὲ ἑτεροδοξία, οὐκ ἔθνος τι διαφερόμενον, οὐκ ὄνομα αἰρέσεως, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ εἰδωλολατρεία. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἕκαστος ἀνθρώπων ἰδίᾳ γνώμη ἐστοίχει... Βαρβαρισμὸς τότε ἐκαλεῖτο ἐν ταῖς δέκα γενεαῖς τοῦ χρόνου τὸ ἐπώνυμον. (PG 41:180).

Christianity) or "ungodly." There was no "learning from teaching or books."<sup>462</sup> Hellenism, on the other hand, *was* disseminated through "teaching and books." After the tower of Babel fiasco, when humanity was scattered across the world, the Hellenism "error" was propagated by Egyptian, Babylonians, and Phrygian authors—historians and chronographers, who spread "the error of mythology... from which wonderworking and magic arose."<sup>463</sup>

Epiphanius held books and bad writing responsible for the spread of heresy. By the age of Epicurus (c. 340-270 BCE),<sup>464</sup> the whole world was divided into two religious inclinations—Hellenism and Judaism. Hellenism spread through the "poets, prose authors, historians, astronomers," or any intellectual producing text (oral or written), in contrast to the *nomos* of Judaism.<sup>465</sup> Judaism was the heresy of books. Epiphanius named the twenty-seven books of the Jews, in addition to the two in dispute (wisdom of Sirach and Solomon), along with "certain other apocrypha."<sup>466</sup> Epiphanius observed that in the hands of the wrong individuals, the texts were abused, misinterpreted, and rewritten by "the stupid ideas of individuals."<sup>467</sup> For example, the Samaritans combined Jewish and Greek scripture. Scribes, the second of fifteen Jewish sects, possessed four versions of the law (Torah).<sup>468</sup> Another sect of the

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462. See *Pan.* I 2.3. Ἦν δὲ μόνον ἀσέβεια καὶ εὐσέβεια ὁ κατὰ φύσιν νόμος, καὶ ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνὸς ἐκάστου προαίρεσις τοῦ θελήματος, καὶ οὐκ ἀπὸ διδασκαλίας, οὔτε ἀπὸ συγγραμμάτων συγγραφέων πλάνη, οὐκ Ἰουδαϊσμός, οὐχ Ἑλληνισμός οὐχ αἵρεσις ἕτέρα τις. (PG 41:181).

463. *Ibid.* I 3.11. Συγγραφεῖς τε ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ιστοριογράφοι, ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἐρανισάμενοι ἔθνομύθου πλάνης, ὅθεν δὴ τὰ τῆς φαρμακείας καὶ μαγείας ἠρέθη. (PG 41:191).

464. It is doubtful that Epiphanius held to this timeline. He speaks about the epoch pre-historically.

465. *Ibid.* I 8.2.1. ποιηταί, ιστοριογράφοι, λογογράφοι, ἀστρονόμοι... (PG 41:207).

466. *Ibid.* I 8.6.1-4.

467. *Ibid.* I 9.1.1.

468. *Ibid.* I 15.2.1.

Jews, the Nasaraeans,<sup>469</sup> "claimed [the Torah] books are fictitious."<sup>470</sup> The Osseans also "forbid the books of Moses," and one of their teachers composed his own book of proper praxis.<sup>471</sup>

From Epiphanius' perspective, heresy was hereditary. The misuse of text originally a Jewish error, became absorbed into pluralistic Gnostic heresies as the primal heresy of Judaism fractured into many sects. Epiphanius situated Valentinus and his school within this family tree of heresy. In his genealogical schema, Epiphanius defined Valentinus as one of ten varieties of Gnostic. The ten types of Gnosticism were siblings "shooting forth from the earth like mushrooms."<sup>472</sup> These "stunted, smelly" sibling sects all derived from first century perversions of Samaritanism, which, according to Epiphanius' family tree, itself broke off from the Jewish heresy.

Because Epiphanius emphasized the connection between the Gnostic heresy (a term he assigned to a specific sect and also a term he would use interchangeably with ten other sects) and the Valentinians, his report on the book culture of the Gnostics is relevant for his portrayal of the Valentinians. Epiphanius continued the heresiological complaints of earlier heresiologists that the Gnostics and Valentinians possessed too many books. He noted that some Gnostics fabricated a work called the "Gospel of Perfection," (which Epiphanius re-named the "dirge of perfection"), and others read a "Gospel of Eve." These compositions reflected their concept of gospel, which Epiphanius described as "moronic visions and testi-

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469. Frank Williams posits that Epiphanius was referring to the Mandaeans. For the purposes of this chapter, the historical Nasaraeans are not the issue here. Epiphanius' representation of them is.

470. Ibid. I 18.1.3. Ἐφασκον γὰρ πεπλάσθαι ταῦτα τὰ βιβλία, καὶ μηδὲν τούτων ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων γεγεννησθαι. (PG 41:258).

471. Ibid. I 19.3-4.

472. Ibid. II 31.1.3. ὡς μύκητες ἐκ γῆς ἀνεβλάστησαν. (PG 41:273).

monies, which they claim is gospel."<sup>473</sup> To describe the content of "visions" and "testimonies," Epiphanius quoted one of their ritual chants, in which they conversed with spirits. The divine spirits imparted divine revelation, and the ritual saying observed that the visionary and the spirit became one:

I stood upon a high mountain, and saw a large man who was tall and another short one. And I heard something that sounded like thunder and approached to hear, and he spoke to me and said, 'I am you and you are me, and wherever you are, there I am. And I am disseminated in all things.'<sup>474</sup>

Epiphanius indicated that their gospel was a product of individual revelatory experience inspiring a Pentecostal glossolalia/glossographia. The visionary figure was "sown" (ἐσπαρμένος) everywhere, residing in the recipients of the vision they called gospel. Epiphanius did not say either way whether this revelatory gospel took the form of a book or was kept within the visionary's person.

Although the heresiologists freely borrowed from one another, they condemned any evidence of textual or ideological influence on religious doctrine. Epiphanius blamed Hesiod's *Theogony* and "the thirty or so gods in Hesiod's own work" for inspiring Valentinus' own cosmogony. Epiphanius deemphasized Valentinus' originality by claiming everything he taught could be found in the works of the Greek poets. Ironically, the majority of Epiphanius' report on Valentinus was lifted directly from Irenaeus. Epiphanius was not interested in elaborating further, noting that Irenaeus "seemed to want to drag his opponent after he had already been thrown and beaten, to make a public spectacle of him... even when he was

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473.Ibid. II 26.2.2-3.1.; Ὁρμῶνται δὲ ἀπὸ μωρῶν μαρτυριῶν καὶ ὄπτασιῶν ἐν ᾧ Εὐαγγελίῳ ἐπαγγέλλονται. (PG 41:336).

474.Ibid. II 26.3.1. Ἔστην ἐπὶ ὄρους ὑψηλοῦ καὶ εἶδον ἄνθρωπον μακρὸν, καὶ ἄλλον κολοβόν, καὶ ἤκουσα ὡσεὶ φωνὴν βροντῆς, καὶ ἤγγισα τοῦ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἐλάλησε πρὸς με καὶ εἶπεν· Ἐγὼ σὺ καὶ σὺ ἐγώ, καὶ ὅπου ἐὰν ᾦς, ἐγὼ ἐκεῖ εἰμι, καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν εἰμι ἐσπαρμένος. (PG 41:336).

down." Epiphanius claimed to be less ambitious, noting that the Valentinians refuted themselves. Refutation of the Valentinian heresy should be obvious, Epiphanius argued. "First of all, their ideas differ from one another, and one claims to destroy the other." Their teachings lay outside scripture, and Epiphanius expected any true teachings to be narrated by the prophets and apostles "in plain language."<sup>475</sup>

Epiphanius joined his predecessors in condemning the proliferation of new compositions and the tolerance of plural authoritative voices. He also lived in a Christian empire in an era when several official attempts were made to standardize Christian reading lists. That is why it is so odd to encounter citations of *Jubilees* in his writings. Direct and indirect citations of *Jubilees* and other pseudepigrapha appear in the writings of early Christian intellectuals, who also used the text freely. The canon lists proliferating in the fourth and fifth centuries did not reflect the reading habits of the faithful. The leaders composing the lists were legislating to correct, not making rules that reflected general practice. While the large corpus of Jewish pseudepigraphic and apocryphal literature was part of Christianity's intellectual heritage and early Christian writers did not spontaneously abandon them because they were not included in the canon, the presence of *Jubilees* in Epiphanius' writing is striking because the *Panarion* is a text specifically targeting those who read the wrong books. Epiphanius, who endorsed an Old and New Testament similar to the collections used today, condemned those who disregarded certain writings and those who added to the corpus. However, three non-canonical texts informed his arguments for orthodoxy—the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the

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475. Ibid. II 31.34.1. Πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι διάφορα παρ' αὐτοῖς τὰ φρονήματα καὶ ἕτερος τὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταλύειν ἐπαγγέλλεται... δεῦτερον δὲ ὅτι ἀσύστατα τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς μυθοποιήματα, οὔτε που γραφῆς εἰπούσης οὔτε τοῦ Μωυσέως νόμου οὔτε τινὸς προφήτου τῶν μετὰ Μωυσέα, ἀλλ' οὔτε τοῦ σωτῆρος οὔτε τῶν αὐτοῦ εὐαγγελιστῶν, ἀλλ' οὔτε μὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων. (PG 41:510).

*Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, and *Jubilees*, or the "little Genesis." The *Wisdom of Solomon* was, according to Epiphanius, of disputed canonicity among the Jews so the two (dubious) citations of the text in the *Panarion* are not so strange.<sup>476</sup> However, the seven explicit references to *Jubilees* are surprising to encounter in the writings of a champion of orthodoxy. Other than the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*,<sup>477</sup> it was the only non-canonical text he cited to support his orthodox position.

Epiphanius cited *Jubilees* directly and indirectly to add onomastic and geographic detail to his chronography of heresy.<sup>478</sup> He relied on *Jubilees* to provide the correct name of Noah's wife, for example, and to give a precise location for the final resting place of the Ark.<sup>479</sup> In his obscure treatise *On Weights and Measures*, Epiphanius cited *Jubilees* to provide a taxonomy of angels.<sup>480</sup> These were corrective details that challenged "heretical" accounts of the feminine and divine filling the "silent spots"<sup>481</sup> of scripture. The particular details Epiphanius gleaned from *Jubilees* by themselves are not terribly interesting.<sup>482</sup> However, his as-

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476.Ibid. I 8.3.2.

477.For *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* in the *Panarion*, see Benjamin Wright, "The Apocryphal Ezekiel Fragments" in *The Apocryphal Ezekiel*, eds. Michael Stone, Benjamin Wright and David Satran, *Early Judaism and its Literature 18* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 8-9.

478.The role of *Jubilees* and other apocrypha for fourth century Church Fathers has been described in this way: "these books can and should be read for the 'edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical doctrine. William Adler, "The Pseudepigrapha in the Early Church" in *The Canon Debate*, eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 226.

479.For a complete catalogue of all citations in *Jubilees*, see Hermann Röscher and August Dillman, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1874; repr. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1970), 252-382; For the examples above, see *Pan.* I 2.1, and *Jub.* 5:28, *Pan.* 1,2,8 and *Jub* 10:19, *Pan.* 1.3.1; *Jub* 11:16, 12:2.

480.See Epiphanius, *On Weights and Measures*, 22.

481.I'm indebted for this phrase to Ralph G. Williams.

482.Modern scholars have argued that Epiphanius used *Jubilees* as a commentary to Genesis and found it useful for constructing a primeval geography. See Scott, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity*. It should not be surprising that Christians used *Jubilees*, as David Frankfurter has noted, Jewish apocrypha "provided a model of revelatory authority that implied validity to 'new' revelations such as prophecy, and that drew upon a broader Mediterranean conception of a secret yet available gnosis." David Frankfurter, "The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories, in the *Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early*

assumptions about what the text of *Jubilees* was and its role for good Christians reveal something about Epiphanius' beliefs about sacred text in general.

For Epiphanius, the contents of *Jubilees* were a vital component of a proper Christian education. He chastised those who appeared ignorant of the contents of the text. For example, he challenged the Manicheans for claiming that "the moon waxes and wanes because it becomes filled with souls which have died in the knowledge of his unbelief." Epiphanius pointed out that much time passed before the moon might be able to take any dead souls at all by noticing:

But at the beginning of the making of the world, around Adam's year, Abel was killed around at the age of thirty... But the sun and the moon and the stars on the fourth day of creation had been set as the centerpiece. Now what, you? May we agree that your idiocy is refuted?<sup>483</sup>

Epiphanius extracted from *Jubilees* that "in the fourth week (of the second Jubilee) she bore Abel... At the beginning of the third Jubilee, Cain killed Abel," to conclude Abel was killed "roughly at the age of thirty." The calculations in *Jubilees* allowed Epiphanius to preserve a natural interpretation over the Manichean allegorical explanation of time and call Mani and his followers ignorant for not knowing this basic material.

For Epiphanius, *Jubilees* had an unusual status as text—Epiphanius did refer to *Jubilees* as a book and not just an oral tradition; however, he never referred to *Jubilees* as scripture. Instead, Epiphanius called the text "paradosis"—the same term Irenaeus used to de-

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*Christianity*, eds. James VanderKam and William Adler (Van Gorcum: Fortress Press, 1996), 129.

483. *Pan.* V 66.23.1-5. ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ δὲ τῆς κοσμοποιίας, περὶ τὸ ἕκαστὸν ἔτος τοῦ Ἀδάμ, πλείω ἐλάσσω, ἀποκτείνεται Ἄβελ, ὡς ἐτῶν ὑπάρξας λ πλείω ἐλάσσω. Μετὰ τοῦτον τὸν πρῶτον ἀποκτανθέντα τελευτᾷ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὁ Ἀδάμ ὁ πρωτόπλαστος δι' ἐτῶν ἄλ, τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ τῆς σελήνης καὶ τῶν ἄστρον ἀπὸ τετάρτης ἡμέρας ἐν οὐρανῷ πηχθέντων καὶ κτισθέντων. Τί οὖν εἴπωμεν, ὦ οὗτος; Ὁμολογήσωμεν τὸν τῆς ἀνοίας σου ἔλεγχον; Πῶς γὰρ ἠδύνατο ἐννακόσια τριάκοντα ἔτη γενέσθαι ἄνευ τοῦ φθίνειν σελήνην καὶ πλήθειν; Ποίων τοίνυν ψυχῶν τελευτησασῶν ἐνεπίπλατο ἡ σελήνη καὶ ἐπληροῦτο; λέγε. Ἄλλ' ἠγνόει Μανιχαῖος ὅτι εἰσὶ συνετοί, οὐ λόγοις ψευδέσι πειθόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ἀληθεστάταις ἀποδείξεσιν. (PG 42:68).

scribe the barbarians' "gospel of the heart" and oral traditions of the apostles. In a discussion on the beginnings of Barbarism, Epiphanius found the roots of this first heresy explained in a tradition preserved only in *Jubilees*, which reported that this is when the mischievous Watchers appeared on earth.

Seth was the child of [Adam], and the son of Seth Enosh, and succeeding him were Cainan, Mahalaleel and Jared. And the tradition which comes down to us maintains that evil arts first began in the world.<sup>484</sup>

The semantic range of the term παράδοσις included the "content of instruction that has been handed down, a tradition of teachings, commandments, narratives."<sup>485</sup> Early Christian writers used the term to describe orthopraxis. The nuances of meaning designated an acceptable tradition of the Church, often credited to the apostles. παράδοσις was handed down through normative practice, a doctrinal teaching, an acceptable tradition (often oral), and often an interpretation of scripture was provided for support. Often it related to prescribed rituals, such as baptism, for which no set of instructions is provided in the canonical texts. Rarely is it employed pejoratively. In Epiphanius' time, if *Jubilees* was regarded as παράδοσις, its status was equivalent to other emerging orthodox practices in the fourth century not prescribed in detail through canonical text such as baptism or a ritualized Eucharist.

While *Jubilees* was part of Epiphanius' intellectual heritage—many early Christians used it citing it by name or just alluding to onomastic and geographical details of its contents—it is not entirely clear why Epiphanius would hang on to this text and exclude others. Perhaps Epiphanius found *Jubilees* in particular valuable as a non-Gnostic supplement to

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484. *Pan.* I 3.3.4; see *Jubilees* 4:15. Τούτου παῖς Σήθ. Υἱὸς δὲ τούτου Ἐνώς, καὶ κατὰ διαδοχὴν Καινάν, Μαλελεήλ, Ἰάρεδ. Ὡς δὲ ἡ παράδοσις ἢ εἰς ἡμᾶς ἔλθοῦσα, ἐντεῦθεν ἤρξατο ἢ κακομηχανία ἐν κόσμῳ γίνεσθαι. (PG 41:180).

485. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. παράδοσις.

Genesis. That he relegated the text to the category of *paradosis* indicates that Epiphanius was balancing the inherited intellectual tradition of the book of *Jubilees* with his idea of an orthodox Christianity delineated by a circumscribed collection of sacred texts. Although a text, *Jubilees* as *paradosis* allowed Epiphanius to preserve its importance without compromising on his own notions of canonicity.

Moreover, Epiphanius may have also had a personal attachment to *Jubilees*. His own *Panarion* project bore similarities to *Jubilees'* description of the Book of Noah. *Jubilees* 10 recounted the publication of this lost book. Seeing his children being led astray by unclean demons, Noah received oral instruction from the angels on how to keep his children pure. Subsequently, as the text says, Noah "wrote down all things in a book as [the angels] instructed him concerning every kind of medicine. Thus the evil spirits were precluded from hurting the sons of Noah."<sup>486</sup> Like Noah, who could ward off malevolent powers with a medicinal book, Epiphanius offered his own literary cure for the evils of heresy, and perhaps saw support for his own writing efforts in the text of *Jubilees*.

The way in which Epiphanius characterized heretical textuality and how he used it to define orthodox sacred text reflects a later stage of canon formation. "Having one's own books" became a marker of heresy in itself; Epiphanius did not need to qualify what was in the books, merely that they had them. Epiphanius' use of *Jubilees* supports these claims. Although he did not abandon *Jubilees*, he completely removed it from its textual format. Epiphanius took Irenaeus' separation of the book of the heart from the written gospels one step further. *Jubilees* was marked as a tradition, "*paradosis*" that was passed down through

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486. *Jub* 10:13-14. (OTP 2:36).

generations of instruction. By de-emphasizing the textual nature of a book like *Jubilees*, Epiphanius authorized Irenaeus' arguments and contributed to the development of the forming canon. True gospel could only be found in writing, and, conversely, supplementary traditions were *not* to be found in writing.

## **VI. Holy Books and Holy People**

Irenaeus and Valentinus shared a common vocabulary. They both imagined the written word originating in the Garden of Eden. They both described a book of the heart capable of retaining and recording sacred instructions that went beyond the capacities of ordinary writing. They even shared non-biblical exegetical symbols, such as the significance of the number four. Multivocality was also a shared concept. Despite the fact that the heresiologists tried to make plurality the defining feature of heresy, they upheld a principle of multiple written sources themselves in the face of Marcion's singularity. Irenaeus often noted how his rule of truth was supported from a multitude of sources, thereby underscoring its veracity.<sup>487</sup> Irenaeus placed limits on his sources by imposing a four-fold Gospel, which gave scripture a hierarchy. Unlike Valentinus, who conflated the written manuscript and the book of the heart, Irenaeus held them as separate concepts. His *Against Heresies* began the process of sorting written authority from oral tradition on Jesus. Irenaeus limited the number of Gospels to four, and adhered to a collection of books that seemed to comprise a core reading list of scripture. But how does one promote a Christian ethos that does not have explicit support in

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487. Reed, "Εὐαγγέλιον: Orality, Textuality and the Christian Truth in Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*," 44. "However, he simultaneously appeals to the authority of multiple sources for this Truth, variously citing the law and the prophets, written epistles and gospels, the words of Jesus, the preaching of his apostles and the tradition of the Church. For him, the very plurality of these witnesses testifies to the singularity of the Truth they contain, by virtue of the one Logos, who is the ultimate cause of all of its manifestations."

the literature? Irenaeus did not disregard the oral teachings of the apostles and the example of Polycarp as a model of Christian *paidea*. Irenaeus relegated these to the "book of the heart," a category equivalent to *paradosis*, or the oral handing down of tradition.

The shared discourse between Irenaeus and Valentinus suggests that Irenaeus' concept of the four-fold gospel was radical for early Christianity's literary landscape. This fact is underscored by Eusebius' observation 150 years later, that although many books had been banned, "are known by most churchmen."<sup>488</sup> Many were unwilling to surrender books that had been read widely in their own communities. Epiphanius' *Panarion* presented a post-Nicene solution to this problem. He defined heresy both by what a group chose to read and how it read. However, although Epiphanius went to great lengths to stick to the crystallizing reading list, a few allusions and quotations of non-canonical texts appeared in his works. These references were summoned as support of Epiphanius' orthodoxy and not as examples of heretical deviancy. Epiphanius circumvented any objections by naming these texts—*Jubilees* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, as *paradosis*. He expanded upon Irenaeus' use of the category to include both texts and traditions that did not fit the new, stricter reading guidelines. These examples of how "the gospels lived at the expense of primitive Christianity," suggest that Valentinus' all encompassing book of the heart was a more common version of textuality in the second century.

Delineating the boundaries of the holy book was not an activity limited to early Christians. The very ways in which a group separated text from interpretation contributed to a group's own identity and cohesion. Valentinus made no distinction between holy book and

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488. *HE* 3.25.6.

person and left interpretation tied up in the text. Irenaeus drew a sharp line between the revelatory text and the holy person's authority to interpret. "Tradition" etched in the book of the heart endowed certain individuals with the interpretative authority to speak about revelatory text. However, these were not the only two solutions to the problem of the revelatory holy text. The rabbinic concept of a dual Torah, both oral and written, presented another solution to the problem of the boundary between holy book and holy person, which will be explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RABBIS WHO PUBLISHED AND PERISHED

כי נח נפשיה דרבי זירא פתח עליה ההוא ספדנא ארץ שנער הרה וילדה ארץ צבי גידלה שעשויעה אוי נא לה אמרה רקת כי אבדה כלי  
המדתה

When the soul of Rabbi Zeira was laid to rest, the mourner opened his eulogy: "the Land of Shinar conceived and gave birth, the lovely land raised her beloved child. Woe, said Rakath, for she has lost her precious vessel."

—BT Moed Qatan 25b<sup>489</sup>

### I. Books of the Heart and Books of the Mouth

The funeral oration for Rabbi Zeira described the late teacher as a "precious gem," which the city of Tiberias (Rakath) lost with his passing. The eulogizer's words suggested more than esteem. The Mishnah had identified this "vessel" with the Torah: "Beloved is Israel, for they were given the vessel with which the world was created; even greater is the love that made known to them that they were given the vessel with which the world was created. As it is said: 'I have given you a good lesson—do not forsake my law.'"<sup>490</sup> The eulogizer implied that with the loss of Rabbi Zeira came the loss of the precious vessel, the Torah. This is not the only instance in which Jewish teachers were likened to Torah; comparisons between Torah scrolls and Torah scholars are found in rabbinic texts from all periods, reflecting the rabbinic notion of a dual Torah. This principle dictated that Moses received not one but two Torot on

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489. In this chapter, I consult the Schottenstein edition of the Talmud for the Hebrew text and my translations, the Albeck edition of the Mishnah, and the Zuckerman edition of the Tosefta. Hersch Goldwurm, et al., eds., *Talmud Bavli: The Schottenstein Edition* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1990-2007); Hanoah Albeck, ed., *Shisha Sidrei Mishnah*, (Jerusalem: 1952-58); M.S. Zuckerman, ed., *Tosefta Based on the Erfurt and Vienna Codices with Parallels and Variants*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrman, 1937).

490. Avot 3.15. חביבין ישראל שנתן להם כלי חמדה חבה יתרה נודעת להם שנתן להם כלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם שנאמר כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורת אל-תעזבו (Albeck, 4:376). For the full phrase "כלי חמדה" describing Torah, see p. Taan. II 65a. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literatures*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), s.v. חמדה.

Mount Sinai—the written Pentateuch and a second oral version, passed down through the mouths of Jewish leaders.<sup>491</sup> The Oral Torah was eventually preserved in the texts now called rabbinic literature.<sup>492</sup>

As the rabbinic answer to the question, what is a sacred book, the dual Torah provides a useful comparison to understanding the *Gospel of Truth* as a sacred text because in the context of ancient debates about the selection of revelatory, sacred, or authoritative books, Valentinus' "book of the heart" most closely resembled the Oral Torah.<sup>493</sup> As the category "books of the heart" permitted Valentinus to embrace many forms of revelation, the concept of "Torah of the Mouth" permitted rabbinic circles to generate new material that they could include in the category Torah.<sup>494</sup> Yet both Valentinus and the Rabbis go far beyond the mere

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491. Avot 1.1 describes the transmission of the law from Moses on Sinai to Joshua, the elders, the prophets, the men of the synagogue, and finally into the custody of certain Jewish teachers. The phrase Oral Torah (תורה שבעל פה) first appeared as a technical term in the Babylonian Talmud (see Git 60b), but the concept of two Torahs is present in the *tannaitic* midrashim. See *Sifre Deut* 306 and 351; *Sifra Behuqotai* 8.12. On these passages see Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 91-95. Also Steven Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," *Oral Tradition* 4:1 (1999): 33-51.

492. As Martin Jaffee has argued, "Rabbinic distinctions between the written and spoken media of Torah are intimately connected to the social dominance of the Rabbinic Sage as a symbolic representation of Torah." Martin Jaffee, "A Rabbinic Ontology of the Written and Spoken Word: On Discipleship, Transformative Knowledge and the Living Texts of Torah," *JAAR* 65.3 (1997): 528.

493. Rabbinic references to Torah of the mouth in the second century are nearly as sparse as Valentinian mentions of books of the heart. As Martin Jaffee has observed: "If the rabbinic movement had not survived the third century, had it reached the end of its literary life by in the *tannaitic* compilations, historians would have no reason to think that the notion of an Oral and Written Torah enjoyed particular prominence among Sages..." Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 97-98.

494. According to talmudic tradition, the Rabbis were the repository of oral law and the authorities on the written law (Shab 31a). Despite the prohibition against writing down the Oral Torah (Tem 14b), it comprises the rabbinic writings from the Mishnah through the Talmud. The question of when the concept of Oral Torah emerged is a matter of debate. At the pessimistic end of the spectrum, the Oral Torah was not a fully developed concept until the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud. On this, see also Jacob Neusner, ed., "The Oral Torah and the Oral Tradition: Defining the Problematic," in *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 59-78. Saul Lieberman has argued that the features of an oral text were present at the beginning of the rabbinic movement and that there is evidence it was written down by the third century. Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd edition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 97. Martin Jaffee's position falls in the middle: the Palestinian Talmud developed the Oral Torah and the Babylonian Talmud footnoted it. Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 162n6.

construction of new texts. With traditions of living canons, books of the mouth and heart respectively, the Rabbis and Valentinus blurred distinctions between teacher and text. In the *Gospel of Truth*, the sage Jesus and text were juxtaposed on the cross, in a remarkable syzygy of readers, dying and publishing. In the rabbinic material, the sage and text were at times legally interchangeable, accorded equal respect in burial or carried side-by-side, and sometimes so close that one could not *be* without the other. If Valentinus presumed no boundary between holy books and holy people, rabbinic efforts showcased a way books could become people and people could become books.

This chapter explores rabbinic legal comparisons between human bodies and Torah scrolls to understand how, theoretically, a scroll and person could function together as a sacred book. Legal discussions among rabbis about Torah scrolls among belonged to the same disagreements witnessed between Valentinus and Irenaeus about Gospel: What is gospel? Is it the oral proclamations of a living body? Is it a written text? If so, how should the written text be valued? Rabbinic circles answered the question, "what is a sacred book?" by treating Torah scrolls and Torah scholars with surprising parity.<sup>495</sup> Just as Valentinus had promoted a living document perspective on the written word, Jewish sages argued that Torah could reside not just in a scroll but in the mouths of certain teachers. After looking at these legal discussions that defined the rabbinic sacred book, I examine their solution to a significant complaint about a canon of living documents. Irenaeus had objected to the pandemonium resulting from each "preaching his own opinion." Despite his overt bias, Irenaeus raised a valid point; what happens when living sacred texts disagree? Extant Valentinian sources did not address

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495. Examples discussed in this chapter include Yad 4.6, Ber 18a, MQ 25a-b, BQ 17a, *LamR Petihta* 25.

this problem, but talmudic tales presented a solution that relied on the same scholar-as-scroll motif appearing in the *Gospel of Truth*, to "canonize" deviant expressions of Oral Torah, namely, certain sages who refused to cooperate with the majority.<sup>496</sup> Just as Valentinus' Jesus published the text of his heart as a crucified scroll, in talmudic narratives, Torah scholars were described as scrolls to ratify their own oral teachings at the very moment they were suspect, symbolically conveying the inadequacy of human language to convey divine concepts.<sup>497</sup> These stories, to borrow Rodney Stark's language, indicate that Valentinus' ideas were not in tension with the ideas of contemporary intellectuals.<sup>498</sup> Although ejected from a coalescing Christian center, Valentinus' views about the relationship between the oral and the written dovetailed with contemporary mishnaic views that gradually became the trademark of Rabbinic Judaism as codified by the Babylonian Talmud. Valentinus has been relegated to the intellectual margins of Christianity, but if the Rabbis considered his views, they might have considered him mainstream.

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496.AZ 18a; Sanh 68a.

497.Many authors in Late Antiquity, irrespective of religious and philosophical orientation, considered what the apophatic nature of divine discourse meant for their own works. For shift from Pagan to Christian modes of persuasion, see Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). For the function of debate in philosophical circles, see Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For the circumscription of debate in rabbinic circles, see Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 171-201. For the circumscription of debate in Christian circles, David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*," 395-419. On the ineffable neoplatonic and Gnostic language, see Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A.H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 481-505; also *The Poetry of Thought in Late Antiquity: Essays in Imagination and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2001), 247-272.

498.Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 1-24.

## II. Torah Scrolls Defile the Hands

Jewish legal scholars puzzled over a similar question occupying Roman jurists: What counts as a book? As explored in chapter one, Roman jurists detailed physical characteristics that made a document a book in the context of inheritance law;<sup>499</sup> Jewish jurists outlined the features that distinguished a Torah scroll from other scrolls. They were asking questions such as: What kind of ink should one use to copy out a scroll? What other materials can be used? what language should it be written in?<sup>500</sup> How should it be rolled? How big should it be?<sup>501</sup> How many books can be included in the scroll?<sup>502</sup> Jurists from both traditions explored the physical boundaries of the book. As Ulpian asked whether book covers, scroll cases, book boxes, and book cases were included in an inheritance of a personal library, rabbinic scholars asked whether scroll straps, boxes and sleeves possessed the same characteristics as the scroll itself.<sup>503</sup> They even evaluated whether the blank spaces of a scroll carried the same sanctity of the letters themselves. These discussions aimed to make precise the characteristics that made a Torah scroll a Torah scroll.

However, rabbinic legal scholars were faced with an additional matter that did not concern their Roman counterparts. Roman jurists had demarcated the boundaries of "book" for the purpose of inheritance. Rabbis demarcated the boundaries of "scroll" to locate sanctity and purity. As the document God consulted to create the world, the Torah was considered

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499. See *D.* 32.50.

500. In *Shab* 115a-b, the sages debated whether it is permitted to save a Torah scroll from fire on the Sabbath. The answer depended upon what language the scroll was written.

501. *BB* 13b ff.

502. *Git* 60a and *Yoma* 37b discuss rabbinic debates about copying part of a scroll.

503. *t. Yad* 2.12.

a sacred book *par excellence*. But if so, how should the sacredness be quantified? For instance, the Mishnah passage below asked, is a Torah scroll holier than the Sabbath?

A. If a man was reading in a scroll upon the threshold and the scroll rolled from his hand, he may roll it back to himself.

B. If he was reading on top of the roof and the scroll rolled from his hand, if it does not reach ten handbreadths from the ground he may roll it back to himself. But after it has reached ten hand breadths, he turns it upon the written side.

C. Rabbi Judah says, "Even it is not suspended from the ground except for the width of a needle, he may roll it back to himself."

D. Rabbi Shimon says, "Even if it is upon the ground itself, he may roll it back to himself, because no prohibition overrides the holy writings for you."<sup>504</sup>

This passage explored how a potential problem associated with scrolls should be addressed by the Sabbatical law. Since rabbinic regulations prohibit the transport of an object between private and public domains on the Sabbath, what should be done when a Torah scroll rolls from one domain to another? The first pericope explored the horizontal limits: If a reader is positioned on the border of the public and private domain, the threshold, and a scroll rolls into the public domain, may one roll the scroll back? The second pericope explored the vertical limits of the Sabbath boundary. If the scroll rolls down from the roof, at what point has it crossed the Sabbath limit? The general rule was ten handbreadths, after which, the scroll rolls into public domain. In the third pericope, Rabbi Judah argued that as long as the scroll does not touch the ground, it remains in the private domain and may be rolled up. Yet, a modern reader, familiar with the veneration of the Torah scroll, might be surprised that a Torah scroll could be left hanging from a rooftop at all! Rabbi Shimon agreed. He placed

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504. Eruv 10.3. קורא בספר על האסקפה נתגלגל הספר מידו-גוללו אצלו היה קורא בראש הגג ונתגלגל הספר מידו-עד שלא הגיע לעשרה טפחים גוללו אצלו: משהגיע לעשרה טפחים הופכו על הכתב. רבי יהודה אומר: אפלו אין מסלק מן הארץ אלא כמלא מחט-גוללו אצלו רבי שמעון אומר: אפילו בארץ עצמו-גוללו אצלו שאין לך דבר משום שבות עומד בפני כתבי הקדש (Albeck, 2:122-123).

the Torah scroll above the Sabbath in his hierarchy of holiness, arguing that its protection trumped the preservation of Sabbath boundaries.

The classification of a text as sacred or not was further argued by a counterintuitive proxy: sacred texts would defile the hands and everyday texts would not. This classification by proxy is worthy of some exploration for its own sake but also points to a conceptual world view in which special books possessed the qualities of people, not other books. Rabbinic discussions measured the sanctity of a book by its capacity to impart uncleanness. A Mishnah passage classified Torah scrolls as objects that defile the hands: "The harps for singing are unclean; but the harps of the sons of Levi are clean. All liquids are unclean but the liquid in the slaughtering house [of the temple]<sup>505</sup> is clean. All the scrolls defile the hands except the scroll used in the Temple Court."<sup>506</sup> An object that defiles the hands makes one ritually impure and therefore ineligible to participate in ritual life. Torah scrolls as unclean vessels required explanation; how could an object of ritual power be a vessel of ritual impurity, "the antithesis to holiness"?!<sup>507</sup> While M Kelim 15.6 might have initially designated books unclean for practical purposes of avoiding pollution from an unclean object,<sup>508</sup> ancient and modern scholars alike have been troubled by the idea that Torah could defile the hands.<sup>509</sup> The

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505. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literatures*, s.v. מטבחים.

506. Kel 15.6. נבלי השרה-טמאין ונבלי בני לוי-טהורין כל המשקין-טמאין ומשקה בית מטבחיא טהורין כל הספרים מטאין את הידים. חוץ מספר העזרה (Albeck, 6:70).

507. Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud: A Reference Guide* (New York: Random House, 1989), 195.

508. As suggests James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority and Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 50-51.

509. Solomon Zeitlin, "A Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures," *PAAJR* 3 (1931-32): 121-158. S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976), 102-120. James Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy After the Exile* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 55-74. Martin Goodman, "Sacred Scripture and 'Defiling the Hands,'" *JTS* 41 (1990): 99-107. Shamma Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands—The Transformation of a Biblical Concept in Rabbinic Theology," in *Minhah le-Nahum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M Sarna in Honour of his 70th Birthday*, ed. Mark Brettler and

phrase "defile the hands" predates the earliest rabbinic decrees that applied it to Torah scrolls.<sup>510</sup> The earlier meaning may have been lost and the rabbinic laws tried to make sense of the arcane phrase.<sup>511</sup>

Efforts to explain why Torah scrolls defile the hands generally fall into one of two categories. One line of inquiry has proposed that a Torah scroll is classified as unclean for its own protection. Martin Goodman, noting that "it might seem to outsiders that in practice the difference between Jews' reverence for the Torah scroll and that of pagans was negligible," posited that the description may have been a way to explain why Jews treated Torah scrolls the way they did, venerating them the way a pagan might venerate an idol.<sup>512</sup> The claim that they defiled the hands, Goodman suggested, guarded against accusations that Jews practiced idolatry. The rationalization of the Talmud explained that people would store their holy items together, including Torah scrolls and *terumah*— the harvest offerings allocated to the Temple.<sup>513</sup> The realities of daily life put the Torah scrolls at risk by being close to the food offering and the rodents attracted to them. Because contact with an unclean object would render *terumah* unfit for priestly consumption, unclean was a useful classification for Torah

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Michael Fishbane (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 117-132. Menahem Haran, *The Biblical Collection* (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1996), 201-276 [Hebrew]. Chaim Milikowsky, "Reflections on Hand-Washing, Hand Purity and Holy Scripture in Rabbinic Literature," in *Purity and Holiness*, ed. M.J.H.M Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 149-162. Yehuda Cohen, *Tangled Up in Text: Tefillin in the Ancient World* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 139-141. Timothy H. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," *JTS* 61, no. 2 (2010): 501-515.

510. See Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands," 118.

511. Martin Goodman detected a "rabbinic embarrassment about a system which they endorse but do not understand." Goodman, "Sacred Scripture," 102. Others have pointed out that rabbinic discussions of Torah scrolls that defile the hands try to make sense of something obscure to them. For this observation, see Barton, *Oracles of God*, 61; also Leiman, *Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 161.

512. So argued Goodman, "Sacred Scripture," 99-107. There is no textual evidence to support this thesis.

513. Shab 14b.

scrolls to keep them away from edibles.<sup>514</sup> But if this is the case, why would the *tannaim* seriously entertain the idea that a Torah scroll could be left hanging from a roof top to risk similar damage?

A second, more convincing line of inquiry has demonstrated that "defiling the hands" touched on notions of authority and canonicity.<sup>515</sup> The Tosefta ruled "the Gospels and heretical books do not defile the hands,"<sup>516</sup> indicating that they were to be avoided. Mishnaic sources debated whether Song of Songs, Esther and Qoheleth defiled the hands. These discussions indicated that scriptures that defiled the hands because they were inspired by God and not humans. BT Megillah 7a similarly proposed that Esther defiled the hands because it was composed under divine inspiration.<sup>517</sup> It also added the qualification "composed to be read, not composed to be recited,"<sup>518</sup> meaning unlike certain texts repeated but not written down, one should be looking at the parchment when reading from Esther. This has suggested to some that a book that defiles the hands was a book read for liturgical purposes. In contrast, books that were supposed to be recited would be regarded as memory aides and not texts used in a ritual setting.

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514. See Shab 14b. This is the explanation accepted by Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 116. Milikowski explored the possibility that Scripture defiling the hands came from two separate precepts—Terumah defiles the hands and Scripture renders Terumah impure. Chaim Milikowski, "Reflections on Hand-Washing, Hand Purity and Holy Scripture in Rabbinic Literature," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 154-159.

515. Shamma Friedman and Timothy Lim have argued that books that defiled the hands derived from the concept of sacred contagion, as seen in the killing powers of the ark of the covenant. See Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands," 130-131. Also Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," 501-515. Haran has claimed that Scripture defiles the hands because it has inevitably been touched by unclean hands. Cf. Milikowski, 158.

516. t.Yad 2.13. הגליונים וספרי המינין אינן מטמאות את הידים (Zuckerman, 683).

517. This is also the suggestion of James Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darnton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 68-72.

518. Meg 7a. נאמרה לקרות ולא נאמרה ליכתוב

But why should texts inspired by the holy spirit or read in a ritual setting defile the hands? Why should uncleanness in particular be a marker of that authority? After all, many ordinary objects carry the same degree of uncleanness as Torah scrolls and other books of scripture do, yet, as M Yadaim 4.6 below indicates, the ability to defile the hands described the extraordinary when applied to books:

The Sadducees say, "We accuse you, Pharisees, on the charge that you say, 'the holy writings defile the hands, the books of Homer do not defile the hands.'" Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai said, "Do we not have anything against the Pharisees but this alone? Look, they say the bones of a donkey are clean, but the bones of Johanan the high priest are unclean." They said to him, "corresponding to their love is their uncleanness, for no one makes utensils of the bones of his father and mother." He said to them, "So it is with the holy writings, their love is their uncleanness. Now the books of Homer, which are not beloved, they do not defile the hands."<sup>519</sup>

Here, the Mishnah constructed a debate between Sadducees and Pharisees about the precise definition of a sacred book. The rabbis of the Mishnah distinguished heretics on the basis of what they perceived the book to be: the "heretical" Sadducean position compared books of scripture to other books. Their view might be summarized: if the books of scripture, which are precious to us defile the hands, how much more so should the books of Homer, which are not precious. For the Sadducees, the capacity to "defile the hands" described ordinary objects, like books. In contrast, the "orthodox" rabbinic position, argued through the mouths of the Pharisees, claimed that a book that defiles the hands was extraordinary.<sup>520</sup> The Pharisaic outlook, using the Sadducee's ruling about the relative value of bones to their own advantage,

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519. Yad 4.6. אומרין צדוקיין: קובלין אנו עליכם פרושים! שאתם אומרים: כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידיים ספרי המרם אינם מטמאים את הידיים. אמר רבן יוחנן בן זכאי, וכי אין לנו על הפרושים אלא זו בלבד: הרי הם אומרים, עצמות חמור טהורים, ועצמות יוחנן כהן גדול טמאים. אמרו לו: לפי חיבתן, היא טומאתן, שלא יעשה אדם עצמות אביו ואמו, תרובדות. אמר להן: אף כתבי הקודש לפי חיבתן (Albeck, 6: 485). וספרי המרם שאינן חביבין-אינן מטמאין את הידיים

520. Zeitlin has argued that the Pharisees used this decree to keep the people from reading the Scriptures without the proper rabbinic interpretive authority. Zeitlin, "Canonization," 139.

compared books of scripture to bones, not to other books. By placing scripture into a category apart from books, they argued it deserved not the casual treatment reserved for Homer, but the reverence one should show towards human bones.

The rabbinic material placed Torah scrolls and bones in the same category in other legal discussions. For instance, a *baraita* ruled: "Someone who is carrying bones from place to place may not put them in a saddlebag, set them on a beast of burden and ride upon them because one would be treating them with contempt.... And as they said about bones, so they said about Torah scrolls."<sup>521</sup> The comparison with human bones, which can be both unclean and objects of reverence supports a third explanation for a Torah scroll's capacity to defile the hands—a Torah scroll's ability to impart uncleanness, rather than holiness, as a ritual object points to a characteristic that has been described as "sacred contagion."<sup>522</sup> Sacred contagion describes the transfer of holiness from one object to another—the sanctification of priestly garments when sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice in the temple, for example.<sup>523</sup> However, in addition to imparting holiness, a sacred object could kill those ineligible to handle it. The ark of the covenant possessed such lethal capabilities, striking dead two Israelite brothers who accidentally touched the ark after retrieving it from the Philistines.<sup>524</sup> Various Jewish traditions also connected the ark of the covenant with sacred writing: the ark was said to con-

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521. Ber 18a. ת"ר המוליך עצמות ממקום למקום הרי זה לא יתנם בדסקיא ויתנם על גבי חמור וירכב עליהם מפני שנוהג בהם מנהג. See p. Ber 3.5 and Semahot 49b for parallels.

522. Jacob Milgrom, "The Priestly Laws of Santa Contamination," in *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 137-146. Cf. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands," 511.

523. Exod 29:21; Cf. Lim 511.

524. See 2 Sam 6:7; Chron 13:10.

tain the tablets of the ten commandments,<sup>525</sup> the book of Deuteronomy,<sup>526</sup> and the Damascus Document mentioned a "book of the law" residing in the ark.<sup>527</sup> Mishnah Yadayim 3.5 also made an explicit comparison between Torah scrolls and the ark of the covenant, insinuating that Torah scrolls possessed similar attributes that imparted uncleanness rather than holiness to all who touched it:

A book that was erased but eighty-five letters were left—as many as in the paragraph, "It came to pass when the ark set out,"—defiles the hands. A scroll on which eighty-five letters are written—as many as in the paragraph, "And it came to pass when the ark set out—defiles the hands."<sup>528</sup>

The underlying question posed here asks, when is a Torah scroll still a sacred book? Just as Ulpian tried to clarify how much writing must be on a document before it counts as a book, here, the Mishnah quantified how much writing must remain on a Torah scroll for it to defile the hands. The ruling was derived from counting the number of Hebrew letters in a passage of Torah describing the ark as it traveled through the wilderness with the Israelites. This passage hinted at an association between the ark and Torah, suggesting that the same abilities of the ark to impart sacred contagion applied to Torah scrolls too.

In the context of an empire-wide discussion about sacred books, rabbinic circles measured sacrality by a book's ability to defile the hands. Yet, this presents a difficulty for the authenticity of the Oral Torah: although "it was axiomatic for the rabbis that their own teachings bore the authority of divine inspiration since they had been passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next... no compilation of rabbinic dicta was ever said to

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525. See Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands," 509.

526. Deut 10:1-5; Exod 25:10-22.

527. CD 5:2-3.

528. Yad 3.5. ספר שנמחק ונשתיר בו שמונים וחמש אותיות כפרשת "ויהי בנסע הארון" - מטמא את הידיים מגילה שכתוב בה שמונים וחמש אותיות כפרשת "ויהי בנסע הארון" מטמא את הידיים (Albeck, 6:481).

'defile the hands.'"<sup>529</sup> This concern might be allayed if one considers the "compilation of rabbinic dicta" to reside within the rabbis' bodies rather than through their written records. For a human corpse, even that of a rabbi, conveys the "father of the fathers of uncleanness," the highest degree of ritual impurity. Moreover, as demonstrated below, rabbis identified their own bodies as scrolls.

### **III. This One Observed What is Written in That One**

If the ability for a Torah scroll to impart uncleanness appears odd, the custom of burying a Torah scroll with a Torah scholar seems stranger still. Rabbinic texts described the peculiar practice of placing a Torah scroll on the bier of a deceased sage and reciting the phrase "this one observed what is written in that one."<sup>530</sup> Material evidence also testifies to the practice of burying a Torah scroll with an important intellectual even though it "seems to run counter to the tendency to distance the corpse from the realm of the sacred."<sup>531</sup> Several motivations for instigating this burial tradition have been suggested:<sup>532</sup> perhaps it was done to ensure the a scroll accompanied the sage to the afterlife so he could continue his studies. Or it may have simply been a mark of honor. It may have had a didactic purpose, pointing to the connection between Torah study and eternal life. It also may have emphasized that the sages were the authority on Torah and without the sage to interpret, the book should be taken out of circula-

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529. Goodman, "Sacred Scripture and 'Defiling of the Hands'," 107.

530. MQ 25a-25b. This practice has been analyzed in detail in Adiel Kadari, "'This One Fulfilled What is Written in that One': On an Early Burial Practice in Its Literary and Artistic Contexts," *JSJ* 41 (2010): 191-213. While his article focused on historical burial customs, here I explore the hermeneutical significance of the practice.

531. For the material evidence, see Kadari, "This One Fulfilled What is Written in that One," 207-213.

532. As Kadari has observed, none of the following reasons excludes the others. Kadari, "This One Fulfilled What is Written in that One," 191.

tion.<sup>533</sup> Whatever the initial basis, the rhetoric of the literary evidence presented below reflects rabbinic efforts to canonize certain people as law by placing them in physical proximity to the written version.

A passage from the *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, a *tannaitic* midrash on the book of Exodus, described a version of this practice:

Moreover, the coffin of Joseph would travel alongside the ark of everlasting life. And the nations of the world would say to the Israelites: 'what is the significance these two chests?' And the Israelites would say to them: This one is the ark of everlasting life and the other is a coffin of a dead man. Then the nations of the world would say: What is the significance of this coffin that it should go alongside of the ark of everlasting life? And the Israelites would say to them: The one resting in this coffin has observed that which is written on the item resting in this ark.<sup>534</sup>

In part, this passage aimed to reconcile the end of the book of Genesis with the events of the Exodus. On his deathbed, Joseph asked that his body be buried in the land of Abraham, yet the last line of Genesis recorded: "he was embalmed and placed in a coffin (ארון) in Egypt."<sup>535</sup> Exodus 13:19 reported that Moses "took with him the bones of Joseph" when the Israelites left Egypt so rabbinic hermeneutical methods connected the coffin of Joseph with the ark (ארון) that Moses built, concluding that Israelites sojourned through the desert with two *aronot*.

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533. This suggestion is supported by non-rabbinic evidence. As seen in Chapter One, Romans shared a cultural memory of King Numa buried with sacred books to keep them from falling into the wrong hands.

534. ולא עוד אלא שהיה ארונו של יוסף מהלך עם ארון חי העולמים והיו אומות העולם אומרים להן לישראל מה טיבן של שני ארונות. הללו והם אומרים להם זה ארונו של חי העולמים וזה ארונו של מת והיו אומרים להם אומות העולם מה טיבו של ארונו של מת שמהלך עם ארון חי העולמים אמרו להן המונח בארון זה קיים מה שכתוב במונח בארון זה Edition: Lauterbach, Jacob Z. ed., *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition on the Basis of the Manuscripts and Early Editions with an English Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933/1961; repr.1976), 1:178-179.

535. NRSV Gen 50:26.

Yet this passage also worked to present oral and written law side by side and posited a relationship between them. Defying chronology—Joseph kept the commandments in Egypt before they were given to Moses on Sinai—the rabbis continued the idea documented in other Jewish texts such as *Jubilees* and the works of Philo; righteous individuals observed the law even before it was given to Moses. By placing Joseph's coffin in parallel to the ark, the rabbis supported Philo's perspective, explored in chapter two, which presented the Patriarchs as living laws. However, differences in their priorities are evident. Philo, intent on demonstrating that the written Torah perfectly compounded a universal natural law, pointed to the patriarchs as living laws to demonstrate the veracity of the textual version. The rabbinic outlook did not harbor the same embarrassment about a written Torah; their agenda lay in authorizing an oral version. Here, Joseph as embodied law was ratified by the written contents of the ark and by the explicit statement, "This one observed what is written in that one." The passage perhaps also hinted—through the nations and their puzzled questions—that only outsiders did not know this.

This reading is supported by variations of this passage found in two other rabbinic texts repeating the ritualized phrase, "This one observed what is written in that one." In these instances "that one" no longer designated the ark of the covenant but a Torah scroll. *Lamentations Rabbah*, another early midrash, documented this phrase in describing the respects paid to Hezekiah, a rare king of Judah who did "what was pleasing in the eyes of God," through his religious reforms. The midrash honored these efforts by turning Hezekiah into a rabbi. The text reads: "R. Judah bar Simon said: 'they built a college over Hezekiah's tomb and when they went there they would say to him, 'teach us.'" R. Hanin said: 'they placed a Torah scroll over Hezekiah's tomb and said, 'the one who lies in this coffin observed what is

written in this."<sup>536</sup> Hezekiah had restored the Temple as the central place of worship and destroyed the altars of other gods. In the logic of this passage, these reforms merited his esteem as a teacher. The rabbis turned his tomb into a place of study, featuring Hezekiah as the expert scholar. Moreover, they uttered the same aphorism over Hezekiah used to honor the patriarch Joseph as pre-Sinai law. By turning Hezekiah into a scholar, the passage implied that those who restored obedience to the Torah became honorary rabbis, perhaps embodying the law to the extent of Joseph. While the rabbis may have been concerned with honoring Hezekiah, this discussion also was a bit self-serving. The passage recognized ones who restore proper religious observance as rabbinic teachers.

A second description connected the honor accorded to Hezekiah to rituals of rabbinic burial practice:

Our rabbis taught: They honored him when he died—this is Hezekiah King of Judah—by bringing out thirty-six thousand pallbearers before him, so said Rabbi Judah; Rabbi Nehemiah said to him: did they not do so before Ahab? Rather, they placed a Torah scroll on his bier and they said to him, 'this one observed what is written in that one.' Do we not do likewise?<sup>537</sup>

The response "do we not do likewise" indicates that placing a Torah scroll on the coffin of an esteemed individual was part of ancient Jewish burial customs. The Talmud also mentioned two Babylonian sages, Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Chisda, who objected to this practice.<sup>538</sup> Their objections, however, indicate that sages were, on occasion, buried with Torah scrolls.

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536. *LamR Petihta* 25: רבי יהודה בר סימון אמר בית וועד בנו למעלה מקברו של חזקיהו בשעה שהיו הולכים לשם היו אומרים לו למדנו רבי חנין אמר ספר תורה נתנו למעלה מקברו של חזקיהו ואמרו זה שהוא מוטל בארון זה קים מה שכתוב בזה

537. BQ 17a. ת"ר וכבוד עשו לו במותו זה חזקיה מלך יהודה שיצאו לפניו שלשים וששה אלף חלוצי כתף דברי ר' יהודה א"ל ר' נחמיה והלא לפני אחאב עשו כן אלא שהניחו ס"ת על מטתו ואמרו קיים זה מה שכתוב בזה והאידנא נמי (עבדינן הכי אפוקי מפקינן אנוחי לא מנחינן ואיבעית אימא אנוחי נמי מנחינן קיים לא אמרינן)

538. MQ 25a-25b.

Other funerary customs drew explicit comparisons between sages as law and Torah scrolls. For instance, the stipulations for mourning a Torah scholar were informed by the customs for mourning a damaged Torah scroll. How does one properly mourn a sage? The Talmud stipulated that one must tear his garments, then cited an earlier ruling of Rabbi Simon ben Eleazar, who claimed, "One who stands near the dying, at the time when he breathes his last, he is duty bound to rend his clothes." This situation was declared analogous to the destruction of a Torah scroll: "To what is this like? To a scroll of law that is burnt, when one is duty bound to rend his clothes."<sup>539</sup> In addition to reflecting an outlook in which Torah scrolls and scholars were interchangeable, the idea that a damaged Torah scroll could "die" suggested that the scroll itself was thought of in similar terms to a living body.<sup>540</sup>

The Talmud also developed a legal equivalence of the Torah scroll and Torah scholar by demanding equal obeisance; one should behave the same way towards a Torah scholar as a Torah scroll. Torah scrolls were to be treated like sages (and vice versa) both when living and deceased. For example, the question was posed: "Must one stand up before a Torah scroll?" The legal ruling was derived from a comparison between scroll and scholar: "*A minore ad maius*, since we rise before those who study Torah, how much more so should we

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539.MQ 25a. This is oddly phrased because the conventional mourning practice (rending clothes for the deceased) is based on the strange practice (rending clothes for a Torah scroll.) C. Friedman, "Laws of Mourning: The Tractate of Moed Katan and its Parallels," (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2008), 236 [Hebrew]. Cf. Kadari, "This One Fulfilled What is Written in that One," 199.

540. See Marianne Schleicher, "The Many Faces of the Torah: Reception and Transformation of the Torah in Jewish communities" in *Receptions and Transformations of the Bible*, ed. Kirsten Nielsen (Aarhus: University Press, 2009), 145. In a second article, she argues that this practice demonstrated the Torah scroll's holiness as an artifact, constructed from the ruins of the temple. See Marianne Schleicher, "Accounts of a Dying Scroll," in *The Death of Sacred Texts*, ed. Kristina Myrvold (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishers, 2010), 11-30. These articles provide a fascinating look at how the Torah scroll developed efficacy as a holy object from the Middle Ages through modern times, there is no evidence for accompanying practices, such as genizot or funerals for scrolls, before the Arab conquest.

rise before the Torah itself!"<sup>541</sup> If a scroll should be honored like a body, conversely, the desecration of one deserved the desecration of the other: "Rabbi Parnach said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan, whoever holds a Torah scroll naked will be buried naked."<sup>542</sup> In a more overt transposition between scroll and scholar, Yerushalmi Berakhot permitted a Torah scroll to complete the number necessary for a quorum of ten if only nine adults were present.<sup>543</sup> These stipulations cohered into a tradition in which the sacred book comprised both the body and scroll.

#### **IV. The Parchment Burns but Writing Flies in the Air**

A dual Torah had certain advantages. Oral books could circumvent the problems with the written word that Plato had pointed out: written documents lacked the ability to explain themselves and therefore left themselves open to misinterpretation. On the other hand, Oral Torah came from the mouth of a living teacher, and books of the heart came from Valentinus' followers, at hand to clarify and explain. However, oral and living books presented their own difficulties. Both Valentinus and Jewish sages, locating sparks of the logos in living teachers as well as texts, confronted similar challenges to this dual format. Written texts could be copied; oral texts were at the mercy of a good memory. Disagreement between written texts could be mediated by the reader. But living sparks could clash. What happens when the authorities offer diverging opinions? What happens when one leading rabbi forbids teaching Torah in public and another claims it is a divine imperative? Or a group of rabbis declare an

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541. Qid 33b. איבעיא להו מהו לעמוד מפני ספר תורה ר' חלקיה ור' סימון ור' אלעזר אמרי קל וחומר מפני לומדיה עומדים מפניה לא כל שכן

542. Shab 14a א"ר פרנך א"ר יוחנן האוחז ס"ת ערום נקבר ערום

543. p.Ber 7:2 53b.

oven unclean but one rabbi declares it clean? In short, what happens when living books disagree?

Irenaeus had argued that disagreement implied inauthenticity. Although Valentinian sources did not defend themselves against such a charge, BT Avodah Zara 17b-18a and BT Sanhedrin 65a presented an insider perspective on the problem of disagreeing living books. Of course, the dispute is a distinctive feature of rabbinic discussion, but the idea that certain teachers were living repositories of Torah altered the stakes of these disagreements—can sacred books contradict one another? These two rabbinic narratives confronted this difficulty and share some distinctive traits. Both stories featured a halachic dispute between leading *tannaim* and in both cases, the disagreement arose from differing opinions about the latitude and liberty of Oral Torah. In both narratives, the authority of the sage was challenged, the sage died to prove his point, and posthumously was deemed halachically correct. In both cases, a voice from heaven interceded on behalf of the sage. Both narratives also include the striking detail of rabbis mutating into Torah scrolls at the moment of death. These bibliomorphoses indirectly addressed the problem of disagreeing books. Just as the *Gospel of Truth's* depiction of Jesus crucified as a scroll described the nature the Valentinian sacred book, the dying-scholar-as-scroll motif in the rabbinic narrative context illustrated a dual Torah, canonizing the oral version at the very moment its authoritative status was compromised.

A compelling illustration of this principle is found in BT Avodah Zara 17b-18a.<sup>544</sup> This narrative shares a distinctive feature with the *Gospel of Truth*: both texts described teachers executed in own their books— Jesus was rolled up in a book and nailed to the cross and Rabbi Hanina was wrapped in his Torah scroll and burned. Although these killings reflected contemporary Roman practice,<sup>545</sup> both texts relied on this detail to turn a story of a criminal execution into a narrative about the nature of the sacred book. The death of the living book in the *Gospel of Truth* showcased Valentinus' idea of an oral and written sacred text; the dying book in BT Avodah Zara 17b-18a visually represented the rabbinic idea of a dual Torah.

In the rabbinic narrative, Rabbi Jose ben Kisma and Rabbi Hanina disagreed about teaching Torah in public, an act of civil disobedience under Roman law. Rabbi Jose ben Kisma argued that because Roman rule was ordained by God, the Roman legislation prohibiting teaching Torah in public should be obeyed. Rabbi Hanina disagreed; surely God would

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544. Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion's martyrdom is recounted in several rabbinic sources. While the circumstances leading to his death vary, a consistent feature of each story was the method of execution. See *Sifre Deut* 32.4 307, *Semaḥot* 8 and *Kallah* 23, and *AZ* 17b-18a. Richard Kalmin has studied the strata to this narrative, arguing that the Babylonian layers demonstrate that Babylonian sages placed a higher premium on Torah study than their Palestinian counterparts. See Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21-26.

545. While Arthur Marmorstein argued that the story was too dramatic to reflect reality, Saul Lieberman put forth the position that the level of detail and accuracy indicates that eye-witnesses produced the narrative. Arthur Marmorstein, *Studies in Jewish Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 1950), pp. 142, 167, 174. Also Saul Lieberman, ed., "On Persecution of the Jewish Religion," in *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Salo Baron on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 213-254 [Hebrew]. Cf. Herbert W. Basser, "Hanina's Torah: A Case of Verse Production or of Historical Fact?" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, New Series, ed. Jacob Neusner (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 1:68. Other works of scholarship to address this story include: Saul Lieberman, "The Martyrs of Caesarea," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 1 (1939-44): 395-446. G. Blidstein, "Rabbis, Romans and Martyrdom—Three Views," *Tradition* 21 (1984): 54-62. Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 56-58. Daniel Boyarin and Virginia Burrus, "Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity," *Social Compass* 52.4 (2005): 431-441. Jan Willem van Henten, "Jewish and Christian Martyrs," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2004), 163-182. Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonian between Persia and Roman Palestine*, 23-26.

absolve him for disobeying this Roman law. He answered Rabbi Jose's accusations simply: "Heaven will have mercy on us," and continued to teach Torah in public. Jose ben Kisma predicted, "I would be astonished if they do not burn you and the Torah scroll in the fire." It turns out, Rabbi Jose ben Kisma was correct—on the day of Jose ben Kisma's funeral, Rabbi Hanina was discovered:

sitting, engaged in Torah and preaching to the masses with a Torah scroll resting on his chest. They seized him, wrapped in the Torah scroll and heaped green vines upon him and set them on fire. They brought tufts of wool, soaked them in water and laid them on his heart so his soul would not depart quickly. His daughter said to him, "Father, must I see you in such a state?" He said to her, "If I were being burned alone, this situation would be difficult for me. Now that I am burned with a Torah scroll, the ones who resent the insult to the Torah scroll will resent the insult to me?" His students said to him, "Rabbi, what do you see?" He said to them, "the scroll burns but the letters are flying away." You two open your mouth and let the fire enter you." He said to them, "It is better that the one who gives takes than for one to do violence against himself." The executioner said to him, "Rabbi, if I make the flame bigger and remove the tufts of wool from your heart will you bring me to life in the world to come?" He said to him, "Yes." "Promise me?" He promised him. So the executioner made the flame bigger and removed the tufts of wool from his heart and his soul departed quickly. Then the executioner leapt and fell into the middle of the fire. And a *bat kol* came forth and said: "Rabbi ben Teradion and the executioner have been invited to life in the world to come. When Rebbi heard it he wept and said: "One may acquire eternal life in a single moment, another in so many years."<sup>546</sup>

Rabbi Hanina's execution under Roman authority brought into focus the issue of his own authority as teacher and embodiment of Torah. Despite the disagreement between the two

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546.AZ 18a. לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון שהיה יושב ועוסק בתורה ומקהיל קהלות ברבים וס"ת מונח לו בחיקו הביאוהו וכרכוהו בס"ת והקיפוהו בחבילי זמורות והציתו בהן את האור והביאו ספוגין של צמר ושראום במים והניחום על לבו כדי שלא תצא נשמתו מהרה אמרה לו בתו אבא אראך בכך אמר לה אילמלי אני נשרפתי לבדי היה הדבר קשה לי עכשיו שאני נשרף וס"ת עמי מי שמבקש עלבונה של ס"ת הוא יבקש עלבוני אמרו לו תלמידיו רבי מה אתה רואה אמר להן גליון נשרפין ואותיות פורחות אף אתה פתח פיך ותכנס [בך] האש אמר להן מוטב שיטלנה מי שנתנה ואל יחבל הוא בעצמו אמר לו קלצטונירי רבי אם אני מרבה בשלהבת ונטל ספוגין של צמר מעל לבך אתה מביאני לחיי העולם הבא אמר לו הן השבע לי נשבע לו מיד הרבה בשלהבת ונטל ספוגין של צמר מעל לבו יצאה נשמתו במהרה אף הוא קפץ ונפל לתוך האור יצאה בת קול ואמרה רבי חנינא בן תרדיון וקלצטונירי מזומנין הן לחיי העולם הבא בכה רבי ואמר יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת ויש קונה עולמו בכמה שנים

sages, the narrative pointed out that both were correct. Although Rabbi Hanina was admonished for teaching publicly and perished just as Rabbi Jose ben Kisma predicted, heaven did have mercy on him—the executioner spontaneously offered to make the fire hotter and remove the wet bandages to limit his suffering. In case there was any doubt on heaven's verdict, the *Bat Kol* concluded, "Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion and the executioner are summoned for life in the world to come."

Yet the story insinuated that there *was* doubt about Rabbi Hanina's provoking of Romans. Both the *Gospel of Truth's* Jesus and Hanina had attracted large audiences with their public lessons. Yet when Jesus the book "came into the midst" the majority of of his audience mocked him; only the little children paid attention. Rabbi Hanina's public Torah teaching similarly attracted "the masses," and although the text did not specify whether his audience was hostile, friendly or simply curious, Rabbi Hanina acknowledged his own marginal clout; only the presence of a burning Torah scroll could incite outrage over his death. Had Hanina been executed without the text, his demise might have gone unnoticed. Consistent with other rabbinic discourse about honoring sages, here the written Torah lent symbolic validity to the dubious authority of the Oral Torah embodied in Rabbi Hanina.

As the *Gospel of Truth* did with Jesus' execution, the rabbinic authors capitalized on the opportunity to turn Hanina's grim historical end into a didactic moment. Valentinus eulogized Jesus' crucifixion as a "great teaching," representing "knowledge and completion" as he "read out the contents of his heart" on the cross. Rabbi Hanina similarly used his death pedagogically, imparting new lessons even as he died. As students congregated at the base of the cross to receive the book to be inscribed on their own hearts, so were Hanina's own students present to receive revelation from the martyr, perhaps hoping to learn what happens at

death.<sup>547</sup> Although they attempted to comfort their their teacher, advising him on a method to make his own death easier, Rabbi Hanina remained the authority. He left them with a final Torah lesson: "It is better that he who give take than for one to do violence against himself," indicating he could not take any part in bringing about his own death, even to the extent of removing the wet rags causing his body to burn slowly, or opening his mouth to burn quickly. Rabbi Hanina's lesson even convinced the executioner, who comprehended his own role in reconciling Hanina's prediction of heaven's mercy with the reality of his slow, torturous death.

Hanina's death, also like Jesus' in the *Gospel of Truth*, associated the physical Torah scroll with the body of the teacher. His deathbed vision of "scroll burning but letters flying away" described a destructible scroll with indestructible contents, comparable his own body, smoldering under slow-burning green vines, while his soul awaited transport to the afterlife. His students further drew comparison between the written and oral versions of Torah as they encouraged their teacher to do as the scroll did: "You too open your mouth and the fire will enter you." The comparison to the written Torah pointed to his credibility as a vessel of Oral Torah. While other versions of the narrative claimed Rabbi Hanina's death was punishment for mixing charity funds with the general collection,<sup>548</sup> here, his death simply fulfilled the predictions of another living book—Rabbi Jose ben Kisma, who also dies, but without fanfare.

The Bavli narrative expressed little unease about the disagreement between Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Jose ben Kisma. Instead it seems to neutralize the conflict as a characteris-

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547.As Jonathan Schofer has observed, the deathbed scene was the "ultimate moment for instruction." See Jonathan Schofer, *The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 52.

548.*SifreDeut* 307; *Semaḥot* 8.

tic of living books. (In the end, both living books had valid points: as Rabbi Jose ben Kisma predicted, Rabbi Hanina and his scroll were burned; as Rabbi Hanina hoped, at the moment of death, heaven was merciful.) Valentinus' writings conveyed a similar unconcern with disagreement. He ignored conflicting passages, as he located books of the heart in the "shared matter" between books of various orientations. Consequently, contra Irenaeus, the right question to be asking about living books was not whether they disagree, but *how* they should disagree. The circumstances surrounding the demise of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus addressed this question. Like Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Eliezer died while engaged in a legal dispute with leading sages of his generation and the dispute itself contributed to his demise. Yet unlike the circumstances of Rabbi Hanina's death, where the original disagreement was smoothed over by the fact that both sages were correct, in the case of Rabbi Eliezer, the issue of disagreement itself was at stake.

Rabbi Eliezer's death was redacted in BT Sanhedrin 65a-b, but the story presumed the circumstances of his excommunication, narrated in BT Baba Metzia 59a-b—popularly dubbed the "Oven of Akhnai." This narrative is multi-layered, and as it explored issues of divine and human authority, it also considered what it meant for conflicting versions of Oral Torah to engage in legal debate. The two main characters, second century *tannaim* R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, displayed competing views about what constitutes a convincing argument. Rabbi Eliezer built his defense on sensational, supernatural means of argumentation (like flying trees), while Rabbi Joshua countered the supernatural with scholarly rebuke and citations of authoritative texts. The narrative critiqued both methods—in disagreements, the majority is not always right; on the other hand, showy miracles required the cooperation of heaven,

undermining the theology that the Torah was "no longer in heaven"—aiming to set the etiquette for dispute between sages.

The positioning of the Oven of Akhnai narrative as an interpretation of verbal wrongdoing indicates that the Babylonian editors interpreted the story as an opinion piece on the right protocol for debate. The law reads:

Just as there is wrongdoing in buying and selling, also there is wrongdoing with words. One may not say to another, "How much is that item?" if he does not want to buy it. If someone has repented, one may not say to him, "Remember your former deeds." If someone is a foreigner, one may not say to him, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors." As it is said, "Now a stranger you shall neither taunt nor oppress."<sup>549</sup>

The ensuing talmudic narrative began in typical rabbinic fashion with a legal question: was a segmented oven (an Akhnai oven) clean or unclean? The disagreement, preserved in M Kelim 5:10, centered on the mundane matter of whether an oven composed of many tiles separated with sand was to be considered clean. Yet the narrative quickly moved away from this halachic issue, focusing instead on the right and wrong words of argument. A brief appearance of *amora* Rav Judah brought this issue to the forefront, as he explained why the oven was called "Akhnai." He pointed out the phonological similarities between Akhnai and Akhnah, or "snake," explaining, "they encompassed it with arguments like a snake."

Both sides were guilty of verbal wrongdoing—the Sages in their eventual excommunication of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Eliezer in that he abandoned the use of words completely. In his strangely zealous defense of the cleanliness of an oven, he brought forth "every imaginable argument," and, when these failed, pulled out some supernatural tricks. In old-

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549. BM 4.10. כשם שאונאה במקח וממכר כך אונאה בדברים. לא יאמר לו: בכמה חפץ זה? והוא אינו רוצה לקח אם היה בעל תשובה לא אמר לו: זכר מעשיך הראשונים! אם הוא בן גרים לא יאמר לו: זכר מעשה אבותיך! שנאמר: 'וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו' (Albeck, 4:821).

fashioned Mosaic style, Rabbi Eliezer drew carob trees out of the earth, made water flow uphill, and tilted walls of stone to testify in his defense. His argument might be summarized as "I am right because Heaven says so." His arguments were not verbal but physical—a carob tree uprooted, rolling across the ground and a stream of water reversing its direction testified to the fact that legally speaking, R. Eliezer was correct: the oven should be considered clean. However, the other *tannaim* remained unconvinced by these arguments and each time they responded "no proof is brought from..." the operative word being proof. The *tannaitic* rejection of R. Eliezer's arguments was a rejection of his methodology.

When Rabbi Eliezer's paranormal arguments met Rabbi Joshua's reason, the walls of the schoolhouse, a synecdoche for the student body, defied gravity to obey both *tannaim*. They began to fall in acknowledgement that Rabbi Eliezer's interpretation of the law was correct, but remained standing as a salute to Rabbi Joshua's observation that the debate was really none of their business. Subsequently, the schoolhouse walls froze in a tent-like formation. As Rabbi Eliezer brought his final proof, R. Joshua found the right words to defend his position, despite the fact that his legal ruling was technically wrong. In a final bid to win the legal debate, Rabbi Eliezer turned to heaven itself for backup. Despite a rare appearance of the *Bat Kol*, who explicitly stated, "The law agrees with him in every way," Rabbi Joshua won the argument by turning to the written Torah, using the deity's own words against him: he constructed his argument, "it is not in heaven," from Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

For this commandment I give to you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant. It is not in heaven so one may say, "who will go up for us to the heavens and take it for us so we may hear it and do it. Nor is it beyond the sea so one may say who will venture beyond the sea and take it for us so we may hear it and do it. *For the word is very near to you, in your mouths and in your hearts*, so you may do it.

Appealing to the written law by claiming, "it is not in heaven," Rabbi Joshua located the law in the collective mouth (and heart) of the rabbis.<sup>550</sup> As with the *Gospel of Truth*, which encouraged individuals to "publish" their interior books of the heart, Rabbi Joshua spoke forth the text residing in his own mouth, despite the fact that it conflicted with the claims of another living book and even with the judgment of the deity itself, who confirmed that the Akhnai oven was clean. Irenaeus would have found such an exchange hugely problematic—books of the heart were supposed to corroborate written Gospels, not challenge them! Irenaeus expected perfect consistency among texts of the heart and the four Gospels. No such expectations were present here. Instead, Rabbi Joshua's assumptions about the nature of sacred book resembled Valentinus' outlook. Just as the *Gospel of Truth* urged individuals to "speak the truth because you are a form of it," Rabbi Joshua spoke forth the text that he insisted existed in his own mouth. He did dwell on the inconsistency between his internal text and the legal ruling of the deity. Valentinus also ignored conflicting matter and more concerned with the "shared material" among books of the heart. As fragment six asserted, he accepted wisdom from many sources, oral or written, ignoring their contradictions. This rabbinic narrative suggested a similar uninterest in perfect consistency, evident by the deity's own response to his living books' conflict over an oven—rather than articulated the kind of doctrinal outrage Irenaeus expressed over diverging texts and teachers, he laughed.<sup>551</sup>

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550. Despite this verse from Deuteronomy functioning as a proof text for the concept of Oral Torah, the rabbis focus on the mouth and ignore the heart. *Leviticus Rabbah*, another *tannaitic* midrash, suggests that heresy was located in the heart, especially one's "own heart." See *LevR XVIII* and Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 25-27.

551. In this respect, the narrative functions as "canonization of dissent." See Schofer, *The Making of a Sage*, 55.

The narrative appeared to be more concerned with establishing the right versus wrong ways for books of the mouth to disagree. The use of "wrongdoing with words" continued in the story as the sages excommunicated Rabbi Eliezer. Eschewing words completely, they departed from proper legal procedure with an *ad hominem* attack, burning the items Rabbi Eliezer deemed pure and cutting him off from the community.<sup>552</sup> However, just as Rabbi Eliezer's excommunication was disproportionate to the minor disagreement, equally was the proof Rabbi Eliezer brought to make his point. When it came to sources authority on sacred matters, the Oven of Akhnai narrative indicated that the rabbis expected their sources to clash. By focusing on developing proper protocol, they avoided criticisms similar to the charge Irenaeus had directed at Valentinus—utter chaos results from each preaching his own opinion.

The sages' excommunication of Rabbi Eliezer provoked more questions about the nature of Oral Torah. If Oral Torah was to be esteemed equally to written Torah, his excommunication implied that he was ejected from an oral canon of living books. What happens to Oral Torah when it is excommunicated? Does it become profane, incapable of making judgments or unqualified as a source of authority or wisdom? BT Sanhedrin 68a took up these questions, exploring decanonized Oral Torah through the death of Rabbi Eliezer. As the value of Rabbi Eliezer's legal opinions was questioned, the story reinstated Rabbi Eliezer's authority as Torah without resolving his disagreement with other sages, by relying on the scholar-as-scroll motif that had canonized the *Gospel of Truth's* Jesus and Rabbi Hanina as living books.

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552. Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 47.

BT Sanhedrin 68a observed that excommunicated Oral Torah was still capable of sound legal judgment, despite expectations to the contrary. Rabbi Eliezer lay dying wearing his phylacteries, objecting to his wife and daughter's attempts to remove them. His friends and family assumed he had simply gone mad. Yet Rabbi Eliezer showed off the depths of his legal knowledge, reminded them it was the Sabbath, and prevented them from committing a major infraction (removing phylacteries on the Sabbath) to fix his minor one (wearing phylacteries on the Sabbath).<sup>553</sup> His ex-colleagues learned that Rabbi Eliezer had not in fact gone insane, visited him, but kept the requisite distance from him as one who had been excommunicated. The text did not portray the students positively; the ensuing interaction between Rabbi Eliezer and his students reads like an interaction between teacher and weak students scrambling before an exam:

He said to them, "why did you come."  
They said to him, "to study Torah."  
He said, "why did you not come until now."  
They said to him, "we did not have time."

The Soncino translation editor's subsequent explanation, that these rabbis did not want to offend Rabbi Eliezer by bringing up his excommunication, is insufficient. During their visit, these rabbis still kept the physical distance required from one who has been excommunicated, indicating that they had not been completely prohibited from visiting Rabbi Eliezer earlier. Their excuse must have sounded feeble and Rabbi Eliezer, asserting his position as Torah expert, cursed, "I would be astonished if they died a natural death!"

When Rabbi Eliezer partially transformed, in his final hour, into a wrapped Torah scroll, he reclaimed his position as Torah. The Talmud reported:

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553. For explanation of this halachic detail, see Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 36. The full Hebrew text of this narrative is provided below.



mind. They returned to a disagreement catalogued by the Mishnah: is a shoe still on its last considered susceptible to uncleanness?<sup>555</sup> In the Mishnah, Rabbi Eliezer disagreed with the sages and his answer was no. Revisiting the question here, his answer was still no. Pronouncing, "הוא טהור," he died with the word pure on his lips, a legal ruling about a shoe on a last to be sure, but also a general pronouncement—Rabbi Eliezer maintained his disagreement, yet his soul departed in purity. Moreover, his excommunication was annulled upon his death, the disagreement never satisfactorily resolved. Rabbi Eliezer literally had the last word on the matter.

The Mishnah had described Rabbi Eliezer as a "vast cistern"<sup>556</sup> of knowledge and his final hour metamorphosis reinforced this expertise. Just as the burning Torah scroll gathered recognition for the burning Torah scholar, here the dying Torah scroll represented Rabbi Eliezer's undiminished capacity as Oral Torah; his body described as two Torah scrolls took him from a position of pedagogical notoriety to piety.<sup>557</sup> This bibliomorphosis reinforced his elite status at the very moment it was in dispute. Despite being excommunicated and ending his life exiled from his intellectual circle, Rabbi Eliezer was not ejected from Oral Torah. The rabbi-as-book motif confirmed his canonization. Such a symbol included him and Rabbi Hanina in the select class of teachers whose words counted as Torah even as their ideas radically conflicted with the opinions of other living books.

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555. See Kel 26.4.

556. Avot 2.8.

557. Rabbi Eliezer's bibliomorphosis is absent in the Yersushalmi version of this story (p. Shab 2:7, 20d), suggesting that this Bavli detail developed a firmer connection between Rabbi Eliezer's oral proclamations and a physical Torah scroll.

The book as a symbol marked a benediction of the dispute when no words were satisfactory. Origen had reflected on these limits of human language to comprehend the divine:

For if methods of demonstration among men, contained in books, influenced men then it would be correct to say our faith was taken up through human knowledge and not through the power of God; But now it is clear to those with raised eyes that the Word and Preaching have become available to the multitudes not through persuasive, wise words, but through displays of spirit and power.<sup>558</sup>

The image of the book, as it appears in the *Gospel of Truth* and these rabbinic narratives, presents a "manifestation of Spirit and Power" exactly when the consistency of the text (whether oral or written) was called into question. In the face of apparent contradictions in the Gospels, Origen urged Christians to "leave behind the words of the beginning of Christ, for such things are rudimentary, to carry on to total perfection, in order that that wisdom which is told to the perfect ones may be told to us also."<sup>559</sup> This outlook drove Origen's own allegorical hermeneutic. Likewise, the *Gospel of Truth* referred to the spiritual elect as "texts of neither consonants nor vowels that one reads and thinks empty thoughts." Rather, "they are texts of truth."<sup>560</sup> A rabbinic narrative likewise noted that Moses' own Torah was incomprehensible to him.<sup>561</sup> More incomprehensible was the fate of Rabbi Akiva, the "Torah" whose flesh was sold like horse meat in the market. God told Moses, "Be silent, for this is

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558.Origen, *Princ.*, 4.1.7. εἰ γὰρ αἱ κατημαξευμένα τῶν ἀποδείξεων ὁδοὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐναποκείμεναι τοῖς βιβλίοις κατίσχυσαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, «ἢ πίστις» ἡμῶν ἀν εὐλόγως ὑπελαμβάνετο «ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων» καὶ οὐκ «ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ»· νῦν δὲ τῷ ἐπάραντι τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σαφὲς ὅτι «ὁ λόγος καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα» παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς δεδύνηται «οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμει». H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, *Traité des principes*, 5 vols.; SC 252, 253, 268, 269, 312 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978-1984), 286:288.

559.*Princ.*, 4.1.7. πειραθῶμεν «ἀφέντες τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον», τουτέστι τῆς «στοιχειώσεως», «ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φέρεσθαι», ἵνα ἡ τοῖς τελείοις λαλουμένη σοφία καὶ ἡμῖν λαληθῆ. (SC 286: 288).

560.See *Gos. Truth* 23:1-17. On the ineffable nature of divine communication in neoplatonic thought see Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 481-505.

561.Men 29b.

my decree," suggesting that the apparent injustice "this is Torah and this is its reward?" could not be answered in a way Moses could understand it. Disagreement among Rabbis similarly recognized the ineffable nature of divine will.

The death scenes of both rabbis addressed the question, what did it mean for versions of Oral Torah to disagree? The answers provided in both narratives indicate that disagreement was expected and variation normal.<sup>562</sup> In the context of rabbinic thought, this seems obvious, but when compared to the expectations of Christian theologians like Irenaeus, the contrast is striking. Irenaeus' Gospel concept demanded perfect consistency; the rabbinic Torah concept expected conflict. Yet the evidence of the *Gospel of Truth* indicates that this difference is not one between Judaism and Christianity—Valentinus too expected diversity, not rejecting books for variation. Instead he drew from the "shared material" between books from all philosophical orientations to define the parameters of his "book of the heart."<sup>563</sup>

## V. Gospel of the Heart and Torah of the Mouth

As concepts and not simply descriptive terms for a genre, both Torah and Gospel encompass a wide semantic range.<sup>564</sup> As one could hear the gospel (good news) or read a Gospel, one

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562.I am grateful to Anna Bonafazi for articulating this point during our discussions of her paper "Composing Lines, Performing Acts: Relationships between Melodic Units, Clauses and Discourse Acts in a South Slavic Epic Song (Milman Parry collection, PN 662)", paper coauthored with D. F. Elmer (paper presented at the IX Orality and Literacy in the Ancient Graeco-Roman World Conference, Canberra, Australia, July 2010).

563.Also like Valentinus, rabbinic toleration of diversity does not imply universal polysemy, complete legal multivocality or limitless pluralism. Fragment six noted that Valentinus was more concerned with "shared matter" among conflicting sources. He did not accept all material from all sources, but rather some material from many sources. On rabbinic polysemy in the Babylonian Talmud: Boyarin, *Borderlines*, 151-201. Also Richard Hidary, *Dispute for the Sake of Heaven: Legal Pluralism in the Talmud* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2010), 17-31 and 43-80.

564.The relationship between Gospel and Torah is a matter of much discussion. In the traditional historical model, the Christian Gospels were the answer to the Jewish Torah. This position is reflected in the terminology "Old Testament" and "New Testament." In another model, the rabbinic Oral Torah was the answer to the Christian Gospels. This position is the implication of the arguments of Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001). The existence of

could obey the Torah (law), read Torah, or embody Torah. With the Gospel of the heart and Torah of the mouth, Valentinus and Rabbis proposed similar definitions of the sacred book in an age when the definition was not so obvious. Consequently, to understand Valentinian books of the heart it is useful to consider rabbinic parallels. Like other religious circles, they had to draw lines between the texts that are sacred and those that are not. And, as traditions that accept living canons, they also had to explore where the sage ends and the texts begins. Both traditions put forward a sacred book that existed in written and corporeal form. In the *Gospel of Truth*, the book could reside in the heart of the elect; in the rabbinic tradition, it was found in the mouth of an elite class of teachers. Living books possessed revelatory authority, adding the advantage that the book was always present to explain and expound. To be sure, other groups (like Montanists) maintained traditions about living authorities on divine matters, but these leaders were regarded as prophets, not books.

Both Valentinus and Rabbis also shared a significant degree of tolerance for disagreement among their sacred books. Valentinus expressed no interest in resolving inconsistencies between books of the church and books of Greek wisdom; disagreement was a cornerstone of rabbinic discourse. From the perspective of other intellectuals, such as Irenaeus and Epiphanius, who criticized groups lacking coherent and consistent collections of texts, this was troubling. They were particularly suspicious of groups who displayed variety in their teaching. How does one persuade people to accept the authority of teachers as living books? Valentinus and the Rabbis both resorted to the scroll, calling upon the written document to ratify the

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Gospel and Oral Torah may also be mutually dependent—the shift in emphasis in Judaism towards oral tradition has been explained by the increased emphasis Christians began to place on written revelation. For this argument, see Guy Stroumsa, "The Scriptural Movement of Late Antiquity and Christian Monasticism," in *J ECS* 16.1 (2008): 61-77.

oral text. They depicted their esteemed teachers dying, wrapped in their own books—a gruesome lesson about the nature of sacred text.

If literary descriptions of the form and function of books reveal anything about the way authors regarded their literary endeavors, the shared scholar-as-scroll motif indicates that the concept of Oral Torah enhances our own understanding of Valentinus' book of the heart. Both groups proposed that the sacred book included written and oral permutations: just as the Rabbis had the idea of an Oral Torah, transmitted orally from Moses through certain teachers, Valentinus similarly posited a bodily gospel, transmitted both in writing and orally, originating with Jesus on the cross. The concept of the book of the heart was represented in the *Gospel of Truth* by the way the author chose to describe the physical book—Jesus, a crucified book, replicated the contents of his heart onto the hearts of his followers. The teacher-as-text motif in the *Gospel of Truth* reflected Valentinus' idea of what a sacred book was and the bibliomorphisms in the Talmud functioned in a similar way. Rabbis as books, a visual demonstration of a Torah comprising both written and oral formats, pointed to their concept of sacred book. However, the Valentinian record is not nearly as complete as the rabbinic record. The *Gospel of Truth* revealed limited information about the book of the heart: it was pre-existent, resided in the body of Jesus, and could copy itself onto pure human hearts. Fragment six demonstrated that Valentinus was not simply being poetic when he described a book of the heart, because he found evidence for it in written texts published for a variety of audiences. But evidence ends there.

What does it mean to endorse books in oral form? To the modern reader, a text like the *Gospel of Truth*, which resembles oral discourse more than a formal literary composition, is homily. To the ancient critic, a text like the *Gospel of Truth*, which did not resemble other

Jesus-centric compositions, was nonsense. Yet the more detailed rabbinic record pointed to one way a tradition of living, conflicting books could function as a meaningful category. The Talmud treated the oral and written versions of their sacred books identically in many activities—studying, mourning rituals, and burial practices. These practices indicate that the idea of a living book could be taken as seriously as its written counterpart, even as the sacred text developed beyond the bounds of contents.

A shared tradition of human, sacred books does not indicate dependence, influence, or awareness of one group by the other. There are significant differences that make this clear. The book of the heart was self-replicating; the book of the mouth took years to acquire. The book of the heart subsumed both written and oral formats; the book of the mouth did not describe the written Torah. Rabbinic sages from all generations placed restrictions on the number written authoritative texts; fragment six indicates Valentinus did not. Furthermore, Valentinus' writings suggest that his idea about what a sacred text was supposed to be was organic. The term gospel originally connoted oral discourse; its application to written texts was secondary. There is no indication that Valentinus struggled with the term gospel (even Irenaeus relied on both meanings). Because gospel could designate written or oral information, the writings of the church, writings of Greek philosophers, and the verbal proclamations of leaders all fell naturally under the rubric of sacred book. In contrast, the rabbis fought hard for the dual Torah. Put another way, as the terms Gospel and Torah developed in opposite directions, so did the two idea of living books. The idea of oral texts faded quietly from the Gospel tradition as the authority of Oral Torah gained momentum under an increasingly organized rabbinic community.<sup>565</sup>

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565. See Guy Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformation in Late Antiquity*, trans. Susan Emanuel

These differences do not make comparison a futile exercise in "parallelomania."<sup>566</sup> Instead, the similarities between the corpora of living books demonstrate how two groups confronted challenges stemming from the empire-wide "struggle over the relative value of the sacred book in antiquity."<sup>567</sup> As various groups debated the significance and function of the book in a religious context, oral books allowed both Valentinus and rabbis to continue composing even as this activity was being reigned in. Since Christians insisted the logos resided only in the body of Jesus and Jews claimed the logos belonged only to the Torah, both Valentinus and the rabbis redefined these terms. Through the shared image of the teacher as book, the *Gospel of Truth* was able to claim that Jesus was both body and book and the rabbis could insist that Torah designated both a scroll and a scholar.

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(Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 28-55; *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Studies in the History of Religions 70 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996; repr. 2005), 109-131.

566. This term was introduced to biblical studies in Samuel Sandmel's 1961 SBL presidential address. For a transcription of the speech, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania" in *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13.

567. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 7.

## CONCLUSION

In the last decade, religious studies scholars have become increasingly interested in the materiality of text and the symbolic capital of the sacred book. Several recent studies have examined the sacred book as an icon and discussed its power as a signifying, material object.<sup>568</sup> The practices of holding funerals for books and burying them, attested across traditions both east and west, provide stunning examples of the symbolic bodily significance of books. As books have become cheaper, the proliferation of holy books forced traditions to reflect on the significance of their written documents, particularly as they deteriorate. While the Jewish practice of depositing decaying texts into a *genizah* is very ancient, elaborate funerary rites have developed to honor a deceased Torah scroll.<sup>569</sup> In Bengal, one might find a body or a book floating down the Ganges, a Hindu burial for pure individuals.<sup>570</sup> An old Qur'an might

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568. For example: K. van der Toorn ed., *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (Louven: Peeters, 1997); Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Herbert L. Kessler, "The Book as Icon," in *In the Beginning: Bibles Before the Year 1000*, ed. Michelle P. Brown (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 2006), 77-103, 222-244; William Klingshirn and Linda Safra, eds., *The Early Christian Book*, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007); Vincent L. Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008); James Bielo, ed., *The Social Life of Scriptures: Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Biblicism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Dorina Miller Parmenter, Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, eds., *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (London: T.&T. Clark, 2009); Max D. Moerman, "The Materiality of the Lotus Sutra: Scripture, Relic, and Buried Treasure," in *Dharma World* 37 (July-September 2010), 15-22.

569. See Marianne Schleicher, "Accounts of a Dying Scroll: On Jewish Handling of Sacred Texts in Need of Restoration or Disposal," in Kristina Myrvold, ed., *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in World Religions* (London: Ashgate Publishers, 2010), 11-30.

570. Måns Broo, "Rites of Burial and Immersion: Hindu Ritual Practices on the Disposing of Sacred Texts in Vrindavan," in *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in World Religions*, 91-106.

be buried in a Muslim cemetery or soaked in water until the ink drifts off the pages.<sup>571</sup> Ritual burials of sacred texts are also found across Sikh, Christian, Jain, and Buddhist traditions, incited by a seemingly universal human discomfort about throwing away holy books, especially as they represent the body of a holy person or contain a divine presence.<sup>572</sup>

A simple "disposal of a book" as a burial ritual testifies not only to the sanctity of the book but also its ritual resemblance to the human body. Oral traditions are ratified through their representation as physical texts and written documents are through their comparison to bodies. The Lotus Sutra, self-identifying as dying words of Buddha, for example, is said to contain the whole body of the Buddha.<sup>573</sup> Rabbinic literature, too, leveraged the symbolic capital of the scroll to ratify the oral lessons of dying rabbis. In the writings of Valentinus, we have find similar efforts to join holy person and holy book. Routinely, ancient practitioners ritually and legally blurred categories between oral and written. As Roman legal scholars codified the features of a book, and authors considered the significance of their own writing, they spoke of the written word in terms of the human body. Valentinus utilized the metaphorical language of his time as he joined holy book and holy person as sources of revelatory authority. When book and body are tied together, in metaphor and in law, oral texts and their speakers achieve parallel authority to the contents and symbolic power of written texts. Despite the convenient category "people of the book," a phrase that implies people and

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571. Jonas Svensson, "Relating, Revering, and Removing: Muslim Views on the Use, Power, and Disposal of Divine Words, in *The Death of Sacred Texts*, 31-54.

572. See the other fascinating articles in Kristina Myrvold, ed., *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in World Religions* (London: Ashgate Publishers, 2010).

573. See "Beholding the Precious Stupa," in *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, trans. Bunno Kato, Yoshiro Tmaura and Kojiro Miyasaka (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1975; repr. 1992), 195-207. Also Reginald A. Ray, "Buddhism: Sacred Text Written and Realized," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Fredrick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 148-180.

books exist in separate ontological categories, the boundaries between speaking bodies and written texts are never clear.

Studying the symbolic representations of the book can also distinguish the Jewish and Christian book traditions, and insert the Valentinian tradition into the "parting of the ways" discussion. Focusing on "the book" puts aside the identities of religious groups that scholars have located in antiquity, and instead asks the question: For these readers, what makes a text sacred and from where does it get its authority? Some of those we call "Christian" created their identity around the person of Jesus as some of those we call "Jewish" did with Torah. Valentinus presented a third option in which divine authority was tied up both in the book and body, moreover, many books and many bodies. Valentinus sanctioned all formats of sacred "book," written on papyrus or written in the heart of the speaker. This theory of sacred book places him not at the periphery of a crystallizing Christianity but in the center of discursive debates that shaped Judaism and Christianity as separate traditions.

Yet Valentinus' proposal provided only one solution to the questions about the role of the sacred book and location of divine authority. We find numerous "canonical experiments" in this environment and combinations of books and people as sources of revelatory authority.<sup>574</sup> While Marcion confined the source of divine knowledge to one text, Montanus and his New Prophets channeled the divine spirit to speak through them. Justin's spermatic word permitted divine truths in works of multiple authors, even Greek philosophers, while his student Tatian streamlined several gospel accounts into one text. Irenaeus defended a four-fold written Gospel amid these other ideas of embodied and spoken texts.

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574. Marksches, "The Canon of the New Testament in Antiquity," 175-194.

Why was there so much debate, especially beginning in the second century, about whether certain sources were authoritative? It is not just that Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, two new religious movements, were coming into their own. The questions did not just ask which books were in or out, but sought a fundamental re-examination of textual authority. Second-century scholars found their ecosystem of texts complicated by the convenience of the codex and the ensuing proliferation of new texts and wider circulation, prompting an exploration of what constitutes a sacred book. While they were not discussing the shift from scroll to codex, just as my research subject is not the Kindle, I am aware that current technological advances rouse my own interest in the representation of books in second century texts. I imagine that the rapidly changing format and wider availability of texts prompted ancient scholars to scrutinize the workings of the divine book, as empire-wide discussions addressed the role of books as sources of information, avatars for people, or both.

Moreover, just as new technology incited funerary practices for books, the very recent scholarly interest in these topics might be explained by our own technological advances. Rapidly changing formats complicate our definitions of books and their attendant textual authority, but also inspire scholars across disciplines to scrutinize their research subjects' representations of the written word. Currently, categories that seem clear—book, article, lecture—have been upended by the changing, multiple formats of the written word and force us to consider the significance of our own writings, especially as these writings confer authority. Which new forms are "publications" for tenure or valid for scholarly conferences?<sup>575</sup> Might a digital humanities project replace a traditional dissertation? How long before a priest reads

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575. Jennifer Howard, "New Forms of Scholarship in a Digital World Challenge the Humanities" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Apr 4, 2010): n/a.

scripture from a Kindle? How much longer before the physical presence of this Kindle inspires reverence from the congregation? To answer these questions, we are forced to consider the same questions about older texts: What gave the printed "hard copy" book authority in the first place that the electronic "soft copy" is doubted? Whenever new formats of text arise, close examinations of the written word and its authority follow.

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