Invocations of the Blood of Christ in Greek Magical Amulets

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Summary

The author analyses the meaning and function of the invocations of the blood of Christ in Greek magical amulets by exploring their theological and liturgical contexts and the points of contact between the discourse of the church leaders and the language of 'Christian magic'. The apotropaic power of the blood of Christ, to which the magical texts appeal, is rooted in the Christian teaching, promoted by the Fathers. It is argued that the special attitude to the blood of Christ reflected in the magical texts is to be explained by its soteriological connotations, which could be borrowed by the producers of the amulets from sermons preached in the church as well as from liturgical contexts of both baptism and eucharist.

Keywords

Christian amulets – Greek magical texts – the blood of Christ – eucharist – lived religion.

1 Introduction

The notion of Christian magic is not an easy one to define. From certain perspectives, the mixing of genuine Christian devotion with magical incantations may seem paradoxical and even inconceivable. Nevertheless, ancient magic found its way into early Christianity with relative ease.¹ While the official

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1 For an overview see D.E. Aune, "'Magic' in Early Christianity and its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship," *ASE*, 24 (2007), pp. 229-294; A. Vakaloudi,

voices of the church rigorously preached against magical practices and the ruling emperors sought to eradicate the use of amulets, curses, and other types of magic with special laws, their efforts proved only partially successful.² As many within the broader population underwent baptism, they introduced their existing magical habits into their new faith, even though those required a degree of remodelling in order for old practices to conform to Christian standards.³ In many cases, magical texts were clearly inspired by Christian teaching; the pantheon of the old religion was replaced with new sources of divine power, the Holy Trinity and the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ The most frequent building blocks of

“Δεισιδαιμονία and the Role of the Apotropaic Magic Amulets in the Early Byzantine Period,” *Byz.*, 70 (2000), pp. 182–210; and W.M. Shandruk, “Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt,” *J ECS*, 20 (2012), pp. 31–57. For the most recent list of Greek Christian amulets, with discussion and further bibliography, see J. Dijkstra and T. de Bruyn, “Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets,” *BASP*, 48 (2011), pp. 163–216.

- 2 See e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 9.16.3; *Codex Theodosianus*, vol. 1: *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondinis*, part 2: *Textus cum apparatu*, ed. by Th. Mommsen and P. Krüger, Berlin, 1990, p. 460, from 319 CE, which condemned aggressive magic; and canon 36 of the Synod of Laodicea (360–380 CE); *Ecclesiae Occidentalis Monumenta Iuris Antiquissima*, vol. 2, part 3: *Concilium Laodiceum*, ed. by C.H. Turner, Oxford, 1939, p. 373, which forbids clergymen to make amulets. Some instances of Church Fathers preaching against amulets: Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 4.37; PG, 33.501; and *Myst.* 1.8; Cyrille de Jérusalem, *Catéchèses mystagogiques*, ed. by A. Piédagnel (SC, 126bis), Paris, 2004, 2nd edn, 94–96; and ps.-Augustine, *Homilia de sacrilegiis* 5–6; Eine Augustin fälschlich beilegte, *Homilia sacrilegiis*, ed. by C.P. Caspari, Christiania, 1886, pp. 10–12. The attitude of the church fathers is summarised in H. Leclecq, “Amulettes,” in: *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 1.2 (1905), 1787–1790. See also R.Roukema, “Early Christianity and Magic,” *ASE*, 24 (2007), pp. 367–378; and K.B. Stratton, “The Rhetoric of ‘Magic’ in Early Christian Discourse: Gender, Power and the Construction of ‘Heresy,’” in: *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. by T. Penner and C.V. Stichele (BINS, 84), Leiden, Boston, 2007, pp. 89–114.
- 3 See T. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (OECs), Oxford, 2017. The process of ‘Christianisation’ resulted in a decrease in explicitly harmful and aggressive magic, and the majority of magical texts containing Christian elements fall instead under the category of protective magic, that is, amulets aiming to avert evil, demons, and diseases.
- 4 The centrality of the power of Jesus in amulets has been discussed in T. de Bruyn, “Christian Apocryphal and Canonical Narratives in Greek Amulets and Formularies in Late Antiquity,” in: *Rediscovering the Apocryphal Continent: New Perspectives on Early Christian and Late Antique Apocryphal Texts and Traditions*, ed. by P. Piovaneli and T. Burke (WUNT, 349), Tübingen, 2015, pp. 153–174, especially p.167. In the magical narratives and requests Jesus is the main figure whose presence ensures the efficacy and operation of healing and protection. See T. de Bruyn, “Ancient Applied Christology: Appeals to Christ in Greek Amulets in Late Antiquity,” in: *From Logos to Christos: Essays in Christology in Honour of Joanne McWilliam*, ed. by E. Leonard and K. Merriman (Editions SR, 34), Waterloo, 2010, pp. 3–18; and T. de Bruyn,

Christian magic included verses of Scripture, liturgical formulas, and invocations of God and Christ, which could naturally, to a greater or lesser extent, be amalgamated with pagan, Jewish, or gnostic magical symbols and themes.⁵

The study of magical texts is significant for understanding how Christianity was perceived and 'digested' by the population. In particular it helps to discern trends in Christian discourse that were influential enough to circulate beyond the theological discussions of intellectual elites and so as to reach mainstream believers within early church, forming new patterns of thought and behaviour and thus transforming the religious landscape of the late antique world. Magical texts are relevant here because their authors must have selected the words and symbols which in their view seemed most powerful – and which were at the same time the most accessible – in order to ensure the ritual efficacy and the fulfilment of their request.⁶

"Appeals to Jesus as the One Who Heals Every Illness and Every Infirmary' (Matt 4:23, 9:35) in Amulets in Late Antiquity," in: *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity. Proceedings of the Montréal Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser, 11-13 October 2006*, ed. by L. DiTommaso and L. Turcescu (The Bible in Ancient Christianity, 6) Leiden, 2008, pp. 65-81.

- 5 The use of Scripture, especially psalms and gospels, in amulets has received much attention in scholarship recently. See J.E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (STAC, 84), Tübingen, 2014; E.A. Judge, "The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri," in: *Perspectives on Language and Text. Essays and Poems in Honour of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday July 28, 1985*, ed. by E.W. Conrad and E.G. Newing, Winona Lake, Ind., 1987, pp. 339-350; A. Biondi, "Citazioni bibliche nei papyri magici cristiani greci," *Studia Papirologica*, 20 (1981), pp. 93-127; and P. Collart, "Psaumes et amulettes," *Aegyptus*, 14 (1934), pp. 463-467. For the use of Christian ritual and liturgy see T. de Bruyn, "P. Ryl.III.471: A Baptismal Anointing Formula Used as an Amulet," *JTS*, n.s. 57 (2006), pp. 94-109; and T. de Bruyn, "The Use of the Sanctus in Christian Greek Papyrus Amulets," in: *Studia Patristica*, 40, ed. by F. Young, M. Edwards, and P. Parvis, papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 2003, Leuven, 2006, pp. 15-20. On syncretism in amulets see D. Frankfurter, "Demon Invocations in the Coptic Magic Spells," in: *Actes du huitième Congrès international d'études coptes, Paris, 28 juin-3 juillet 2004*, vol. 2, ed. by N. Bosson and A. Boud (OLA, 163), Leuven, 2007, pp. 453-466; K. Preisendanz, "Zur synkretistischen Magie im römischen Agypten," in: *Akten des VIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Papyrologie, Wien, 1955*, Vienna, 1956, pp. 111-125; M. Smith, "The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri," in: *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh, : New Testament, Early Christianity, Magica*, ed. by S.J.D. Cohen, Leiden, 1996, pp. 242-256. For Syrian and Palestinian regions see S. Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth Century Syria*, London-New York, 2007.
- 6 On the importance of magical texts as comparanda for Christian prayers including liturgical texts see A. Maravela, "Christians Praying in a Graeco-Egyptian Context: Intimations of Christian Identity in Greek Papyrus Prayers," in: *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, ed. by R. Hvalvik and K.O. Sandnes (WUNT, 336), Tübingen, 2014, pp. 291-323, at p. 294.

In this paper, I adopt an approach which revisits the opposition between the ideological and devotional purism of the church on the one hand and the so-called popular Christian religion on the other, presenting instead a more complex picture of the coexistence and mutual impact of different religious attitudes and lived practices.⁷ Popular religion did not exist separately from 'official' church discourse, and Christian magic reflected and was nourished by the theological landscape of early Christianity. Likewise, intellectual and spiritual leaders within the church took into account widespread magical practices when preaching about the 'correct' way of practising one's religion.⁸ Although magic was condemned in church rhetoric as communication with demons, in reality not all practices that modern observers would classify as magic were rejected as dangerous and destructive.⁹ Therefore, our definitions of religion and magic and our conceptions of prayer and magical incantation in early Christianity may be worth reconsidering in the light of the late antique lived devotional practices.

2 Texts with the Invocation Formula "the Blood of Christ"

From this perspective, I analyse a small corpus of ten magical texts, dating from the third to the seventh centuries CE, which refer to the blood of Christ.¹⁰

7 For this interpretative model of Christian magical texts see e.g. N.D. Lewis, "Popular Christianity and Lived Religion in Late Antique Rome: Seeing Magic in the Catacombs," in: *Popular Culture in the Ancient World*, ed. by L. Grig, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 257-276, especially pp. 259-260 and 274-275: "All religious practices that are spontaneous, of the moment, unauthorized, private and 'popular' need not be counter-performances to the sacramental system of a developed church. Rather, they likely acted as necessary 'gap-fillers', filling in where a specific need was perceived: the need for good fortune, or protection or vindication. Similarly, in Late Antiquity, those who affixed rings or bells to the mortar of tomb closures likely had little sense of their behaviour as 'un-Christian', just as they had little sense of participating in 'popular culture' by so doing."

8 E.g. John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.14; PG, 49.196: Οὐκ ὁρᾷς, πῶς αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ τὰ μικρὰ παιδιά ἀντὶ φυλακῆς μεγάλης Εὐαγγελία ἐξαρτῶσι τοῦ τραχήλου, καὶ πανταχοῦ περιφέρουσιν, ὅπου περ ἂν ἀπίωσιν; Also on amulets with Gospels compared to Jewish phylacteria see John Chrysostom, *In Matt. hom* 72.2; PG, 58.669.

9 On the distinction between condemned and acceptable magical practices see R. Martin Hernandez, "Appealing for Justice in Christian Magic," in: *Cultures in Contact Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context: Selected Papers*, ed. by S. Torallas Tovar and J.P. Monferrer-Sala, Córdoba, 2013, pp. 27-42, especially p. 28. Cf. also a poem by Gregory Nazianzus based on a magical formula: J. Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and their Tradition," *JWarb*, 56 (1993), pp. 25-62, at p.45.

10 The amulets from Egypt can be found in Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Checklist," under

To my knowledge, this is an exhaustive list and there are no other mentions of the blood of Christ in late antique magic.¹¹ All the texts were produced to serve as apotropaic objects as suggested by material clues, such as folds, possible spots of sweat, the small size of the artefacts, and the layout of the text. The scope of this article is to put them in the context of broader liturgical and theological tendencies of the early church. So far these texts have not been analysed together as a group neither the function of the invocations of the blood of Christ in them was studied in a comprehensive way, apart from a brief interpretation classifying them as deriving from liturgy, namely, the rite of eucharist.¹² In this article my contention is that the primary allusion in the reference to the blood in the amulets is not eucharistic, and the appearance of this invocation in the magical texts does not have to rely on a liturgical formula, but rather draws on a set of conceptual attitudes within Christian teaching on the role of the blood of Christ in the salvation of the humanity. Although the chronological span as well as geography of these texts is rather loose, covering about five centuries and several parts of the Byzantine *oikoumene*, including Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor, I suggest that the similarities between them are not accidental and may represent shards of one tradition of venerating and invoking the blood of Christ. I start with six texts that demonstrate affinity in structure and contain elements typical of protective magic.¹³ Two amulets incorporate the formula “the body and blood of Chris” in the incantation and four feature a shorter formula: “the blood of Christ.”

numbers 4, 17, 23, 30, 32, and 87. These are complemented in my analysis here by a recently published papyrus from Rylands collection of R. Mazza, “P.Ryl. Greek Add.1166: Christian Prayer Amulet with a Tax Receipt on the Back,” *ZPE*, 197 (2016), pp. 73–84. Three amulets outside Egypt include two lead lamellas (L. D’Amore, “Una preghiera esorcistica su piombo da Reggio Calabria [VII–VIII secolo],” *Mediterraneo Antico*, 7 [2004], pp. 751–770; and R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae*, part 1, Wiesbaden, 1994, n.35, pp. 169–180) and a metal bracelet (M. Piccirillo, “Un braccialetto cristiano della regione di Betlem,” *Liber Annuus*, 29 [1979], pp. 244–252).

11 My analysis encompasses sources in Greek. I did not include three passages from two Coptic seventh-century books of recipes in which the blood of Christ is also mentioned: London Hay 10391 and London MS Or. 5987 in: A. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1, Brussels, 1930, pp 22–28 and 55–62, since the study of the Coptic texts would be more geographically-focused on Egypt and, therefore, is beyond my scope here.

12 See de Bruyn, “Ancient Applied Christology,” p. 9 with n. 71.

13 The other four texts will be discussed in the section 3.

2.1

A fifth- or sixth-century CE parchment amulet from Fayyum¹⁴ presents a compilation of scriptural verses in the first part: Psalm 90:1 and incipits from the four gospels are followed by more verses from Psalms (17:3; and 117:6-7) and a verse from Matthew (Matt 4:23) about Jesus healing every infirmity. Each new citation is marked with a cross. The concluding part of the amulet (lines 21-23) draws from a wider pool of liturgical language including formulas such as: “the body and blood of Christ,” “Amen,” and “Hallelujah.” The person wearing the amulet is referred to in the prayer as “the servant of God,” an expression which emphasizes the liturgical sound of the text:

+ Τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ φείσαι τοῦ δοῦ|λου σου τὸν φοροῦντα τὸ φυλακτήριον | τοῦτο ἀμήν ἀλληλοῦῖα + α + ω +¹⁵

The body and the blood of Christ spare your servant who carries this amulet. Amen. Hallelujah.

2.2

A seventh-century CE lead *lamella* from Reggio Calabria was inscribed on both sides and folded five times into the form of a cylindrical amulet.¹⁶ The text of the amulet consists of typical elements of phylacteria including liturgical quotations. The formula “the body and blood of Christ” can be read at the bottom of the recto (ll.20-23):

+ ἐν ὀνόματι τ(οῦ) | πατρὸς καὶ τ(οῦ) | (υἱ)οῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πν(εύματ)ος. | πνεῦμα ἄγ| ι[ον καὶ] | [- - -]φόρο<ν> (υἱ)ὸν | μονογενῆ πε|ριβέβλιμε καὶ π|[ἀν πο]νιρὸν π|[νεῦμα] καθαρασ[?].| Φεῦγε ἀπὸ τ[ῆς] δούλης τ[οῦ] | Θ(εο)ῦ σίττησμ[α] | πάνκακον καὶ π| ἀνβαρος καὶ π[ἀν]|κρανον καὶ πάνσ|φαλες καὶ

14 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, “Checklist,” number 4; = *Berliner Klassikertexte, herausgegeben von der Generalverwaltung der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin* [= BKT], vol. 6: *Altchristliche Texte*, ed. by C. Schmidt and W. Schubart, Berlin, 1910, pp. 129-130, number 7.1; and B.C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (LNTS, 554), London, 2016, pp. 65-71.

15 English translation in Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets*. The editors of BKT print δεμα with two first letters dotted and read αἷμα, *pace* the first editor who read δέμας: F. Krebs, “Altchristliche Texte im Berliner Museum,” *Nachrichten von der Königlischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, 4 (1892), pp. 114-120. The accusative τὸν φοροῦντα is a grammatical error and should be read τοῦ φοροῦντος instead.

16 J. Cozza Luzi, “Ein altchristliches Phylacterium aus Blei,” *RQ*, 1 (1887), pp. 197-208. Reedited in D’Amore, “Una preghiera esorcistica.”

παν[α]|κάθαρτ[ον] | πνεύμ[α διὰ τὸ] | [σδ]μα καὶ τὸ ἐμ[α] | [τοῦ] κ(υρί)ου
 ἰμδ[ν] | [Ἰυσ]οῦ | Χ(ριστο)ῦ.¹⁷

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I am clothed with the Holy Spirit and the only begotten Son, the bearer of ... and I lay curse (?) upon every evil spirit. Flee from the God's servant (female) every maleficent *sittisma* (?) and every oppressive, heavy, perilous, and impure spirit. (Through?) the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The similarities with *BKT* 6.7.1, presented under 2.1. above, include: the liturgical formula “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” which opens the text; the reference to the user of the amulet as “the servant of the God”; the general purpose of protection; and the idea of carrying an amulet with sacred symbols for one's protection (in the damaged line: -φορον). On the verso of the *lamella* the request that the servant of God is spared from evil is repeated: φῖσε ἀπὸ τῆς [δ]ούλης τοῦ Θ(εοῦ) σῖττισμα, followed by the apotropaic incipit of Psalm 68.¹⁸ It is possible that the text on the verso was a continuation of the incantation which starts on the recto with the formula “the body and blood”. Cozza Luzi restores διὰ (“through the body and blood ...”) in the missing part of the line preceding the formula and D'Amore retains his restoration. However, the preposition is not necessary here if the formula is used as an apostrophe with the imperative “spare,” as in the phylakterion in 2.1. The prayer then would read as follows: “the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, keep *sittisma* away from the servant of God.”

2.3

A seventh-century CE papyrus amulet from the British Museum also contains an invocation of the blood of Christ in the final prayer:

Δόξα | τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῷ υἱῷ [κα] | τῷ ἀ[γίῳ] πνεύματι | νῦν κα<ι> <ἀ>εὶ καὶ
 <εἰς> τοὺς αἰῶνας τ[ῶν] αἰώνων. τὸν | υἱὸν μονογενῆ περιβέβλημα | φύγε
 ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, πᾶν κακόν, πᾶν πο[νηρόν], τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, φείσαι τῷ φοροῦντι.¹⁹

17 The text is given according to D'Amore, “Una preghiera esorcistica.”

18 *Sittisma* is a hapax with an uncertain etymology. Cozza Luzi suggests the translation *Verwirrung* from σύν and σεῖω (σύσσειμα) and the verb συσσεῖω (“shake, make tremble”), based on Psalm 28(29):8, having the meaning of intoxication. According to D'Amore's interpretation it is rather a corrupted form of an euphemistic name of a demon συνάντη(σ)μα (“Incontro”), with parallels in other phylakteria.

19 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, “Checklist,” number 23. See K. Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae* (hereafter *PGM*), ed. by A. Henrichs, Stuttgart, 1973-1974, 2nd edn, P5d.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit now and ever and to the ages of ages. I am clothed with the only begotten Son. Flee from me every evil, every malice; the blood of Christ, spare the carrier of this [amulet].

The direct parallels in this amulet with the *lamella* from Reggio Calabria (2.2), including the opening trinitarian formula, a rare reference to the only begotten Son, and the wording of the apotropaic request, are striking and indicate that this type of amulets was well established not only in the Egyptian magical amulet 'market', but also in Italy.

2.4

The geographical range is further broadened by a bracelet found in Bethlehem and dated to the sixth century CE.²⁰ It is inscribed with apotropaic verses from Psalm 90 followed by an incantation with the formula "the blood of Christ" and a lacuna:²¹ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ παύσε ἀπὸ υ ιας ("the blood of Christ stop [evil] from ...").

The magical agency of this amulet is reinforced by the image of Solomon spearing a demon, a depiction which puts the amulet into a category known as the seals of Solomon.²² This term is usually applied to a group of objects – medallions, intaglios, and other types of inscribed amulets, – which refers in some way or other to the narrative of *Testament of Solomon*, a Greek apocryphal text written in Egypt around the first to the third centuries CE. As the story opens, Solomon was given by God through Archangel Michael a ring with a seal engraved on a precious stone in order to imprison all demons; the seal was then handed to others so that they made demons obedient with it and brought them before Solomon.²³ As a result, objects that somehow reproduce the original seal acquire the same powers protecting against the evil eye and any other demonic influence. Amulets of this kind usually include formulas such as

20 Piccirillo, "Un braccialetto cristiano," pp. 244-252.

21 On the apotropaic use of the Ps 90, see Th. Kraus, "Septuaginta-Psalm 90 in apotropäischer Verwendung: Vorüberlegungen für eine kritische Edition und (bisherige) Datenmaterial," *Biblische Notizen*, 125 (2005), pp. 39-73, especially pp. 64-65.

22 On the iconography see Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets," pp. 33-44.

23 *Testament of Solomon* 1.6; *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1: *Apocalyptic literature and Testaments*, ed. by J. Charlesworth, New York, 1983; and P. Busch, *Das Testament Salomos: Die älteste christliche Dämonologie, kommentiert und in deutscher Erstübersetzung* (TU, 153), Berlin, 2006, pp. 70 and 84-91.

σφραγίς Σολομόνος or σφραγίς Θεοῦ, and/or an image of a horse rider spearing a female demon.²⁴

2.5

A sixth-century CE papyrus amulet against some *akephaloi* extends the apotropaic formula by describing the blood as the one poured out on Golgotha and thus referring to the crucifixion and the victory of Christ:

<...> Τὸ ἐμοῦ αἷμα Χ(ριστο)ῦ τὸ ἐκχυθέν ἐ<ν> τῷ κρανίῳ τοπῶ φῖσαι καὶ ἐλέησον. Ἀμην ἀμην ἀμην.²⁵

The blood of my Christ which was shed on the Place of the Skull, spare and have mercy. Amen, amen, amen.

2.6

Another phylakterion was apparently placed on the door to protect the inhabitants of the house:

Ἡ ἰσχύς τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ ἡμῶν | ἐνίσχυσεν, καὶ ἐπέβη | κύριος ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν | καὶ οὐκ ἔασεν || τὸν ἐξολεθρεύοντα | εἰσελθεῖν. | Ἀβραάμ <ὦ>δε κατ[οικεῖ]. | Τὸ ἄιμ[α] τοῦ Χριστοῦ | παῦσον τὸ κακόν. ||²⁶

The force of our God was mighty and the Lord came to the door and did not let the destroyer to come in. Abraham lives here. The blood of Christ, stop the evil.

The blood of Christ here is associated with the blood of the lamb with which the Jews anointed their doors during the exodus to avert the killing of their first-born,²⁷ an episode that also lies behind the tradition of Jewish mezuzahs.²⁸

24 The amulets of this group appeared as early as the third century CE and became numerous in the sixth and seventh centuries CE. See an overview of this tradition in Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets."

25 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Checklist," number 32; *PGM* P15a = P.Ross.Georg. I 24.

26 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Checklist," number 17; *PGM* P2a.

27 Cf. Exod. 12, 23: καὶ ὁπαρελεύσεται κύριος πατάξει τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους καὶ ὀψεται τὸ αἷμα ἐπὶ τῆς φλῖας καὶ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων τῶν σταθμῶν καὶ παρελεύσεται κύριος τὴν θύραν καὶ οὐκ ἀφήσει τὸν ὀλεθρεύοντα εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὰς οἰκίας ὑμῶν πατάξει.

28 W. Kosior, "It Will Not Let the Destroying [One] Enter: The Mezuzah as an Apotropaic Device according to Biblical and Rabbinic Sources," *The Polish Journal of Arts and Culture*, 9 (2014), pp. 127-144. The interpretation of mezuzahs as magic amulets is debated: E.S.

3 Interpretation

3.1 *Apotropaic Function*

Despite a variety of contexts, it is possible to trace in these six texts the same sequence, which consists of the invocation of the blood (or the body and blood) of Christ followed by a short prayer to spare the owner and to avert the evil.²⁹ This sequence tends to be placed at the end of the magical text. Since the amulets date from fifth to the seventh centuries CE and come from various locations – Egypt, Palestine, and Italy –, the parallels, sometimes literal, indicate that the practice of such invocations was well-established in the magical tradition.

The function of such concluding incantation in the amulets is clear: the invocation of the divine power through the body and blood (or solely the blood) of Christ serves as a written speech act that provides the whole inscription on a piece of papyrus, parchment, or lead with its magical protective force.³⁰ In that respect, these amulets stand close to the seals of Solomon mentioned above. The main function of such seals was to protect their carriers by scaring off the demons with the image and the particular phrase “the seal of God.”³¹ The prayer with the request to spare or protect the carrier is typical for the seals of Solomon, too – the medallions often had an image of the rider on one side and the prayer to help the wearer on the other side.³² As has been noted above, the bracelet from Bethlehem has a straightforward iconographical connection with this type of objects; furthermore, the *lamella* from Reggio Calabria has two pentagrams in line 4 and one at the bottom of the verso. The pentagrams served as special *charakteres* associated with the seal of Solomon as well and it is likely that the producer of the *lamella* was familiar with the magical practice of the seals of Solomon and by adding them to the amulet s/

Alexander, “Ritual on the Threshold: Mezuzah and the Crafting of Domestic and Civic Space”, *Jewish Social Studies*, 20 (2014), pp.100-130.

29 Although, such requests to stop evil and help the owner are common in magical texts, the verb *φείδομαι* is used only in the amulets discussed here. For similar requests for protection, see Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets,” p. 30.

30 On speech act theory and its application to magical amulets see V.A. Foskolou, “The Magic of the Written Word: The Evidence of Inscriptions on Byzantine Magical Amulets,” *Delation of the Christian Archaeological Society*, 35 (2014), pp. 329-348, especially p. 340.

31 For instance, one gem from Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna has an inscription: *διαφύλαξον τὸν φοροῦντά σου τὴν ἁγίαν σφραγίδα*, (“protect the carrier of your holy seal”) (E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die antiken Gemmen des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien*, vol. 3: *Die Gemmen der späteren römischen Kaiserzeit*, München, 1991, n. 2194). See also A. Mastrocinque, “Studi sulle gemme gnostiche,” *ZPE*, 122 (1998), pp. 105-118, especially p. 110.

32 Foskolou, “The Magic of the Written Word,” p. 341.

he implied that her/his amulet would be of the same type.³³ One possible explanation of this connection between the tradition of the seals of Solomon, on one hand, and the tradition of invocations of the blood of Christ, on the other, is that the seals of Solomon were often used as amulets for women for successful childbirth, and the symbolism of blood was relevant for that purpose.³⁴ Remarkably, the producers of the four out of six amulets did not include the 'body' in the formula which shows that the blood was the more important element of the two for the efficacy of the incantation. Even though this might reflect the importance of blood as a substance in ancient Egyptian magic,³⁵ the core of its apotropaic function was based on the Christian teaching, as I am going to show in the rest of the paper.

3.2 *The Eucharist*

De Bruyn has proposed the eucharist as the primary association of the magical texts discussed above. In particular, in the early liturgy the moment of distributing the eucharistic bread and wine to the faithful is marked with the announcements "the body of Christ" and "the blood of Christ," which was presumably heard by all the congregation.³⁶ This hypothesis of liturgical moments of high importance adopted by magic is corroborated by the recent publication of a sixth- or seventh-century CE phylakterion from Egypt with a quotation from anaphora.³⁷ The overall structure of this amulet is common for magical texts. The first half of the amulet, which is inscribed with verses from psalms, is separated by two crosses from the second part which contains a comparison of the eucharist with the consumption of the manna in the desert (lines 7-12):

- 33 D'Amore, "Una preghiera esorcistica," p. 757. These pentagrams are apotropaic symbols just as crosses which are present in all the amulets discussed in this article.
- 34 This is also the reason why haematite, the 'bloodstone', was systematically chosen for producing such seals-medallions: G. Vikan, "Art, medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP*, 38 (1984), pp. 65-86, especially pp.79-81.
- 35 On the tradition of the amulets featuring 'blood of Isis' in Pharaonic times and its continuation in the Christian cult of martyrs see D. Frankfurter, "Tabitha in the Apocalypse of Elijah," *JTS*, n.s. 41 (1990), pp.13-25.
- 36 *Apostolic Constitutions*, 8.13.15; *Les constitutions apostoliques*, vol. 3, ed. by B.M. Metzger (SC, 336), Paris, 1987, p. 210. de Bruyn, "Ancient Applied Christology," nn. 71-73.
- 37 Mazza, "P.Ryl. Greek Add.1166," pp. 77 and 83. Cf. The eucharistic prayer in the Barcelona papyrus, P. Mont. Roca 155a 12-14: λάβετε πίετε τὸ αἷμα τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυόμενων (ἐκχυόμενον) εἰς ἄφῃσιν (ἐλφεσιν) ἁμαρτιῶν. See M. Zheltov, "The Anaphora and the Thanksgiving Prayer from the Barcelona Papyrus: An Underestimated Testimony to the Anaphoral History in the Fourth Century," *VC*, 62 (2008), pp. 467-504; Maravela, "Christians Praying in a Graeco-Egyptian Context," pp. 308-309. Cf. the wording in the liturgy of St Mark in P. Ryl. 465 which was also used as an amulet in Mazza, "P.Ryl. Greek Add.1166," p. 78.

+Τράπεζαν ἀγία<ν> ἐτοιμάσας ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν | ἐν ἐρήμῳ τῷ λαῷ καὶ μάννα
 ἔδωκεν | φαγεῖν τῆς νέας διαθήκης Χριστοῦ | δεσποτικ(όν) ἀθάνατον σῶμα | καὶ
 τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χ(ριστο)ῦ ἐχεννόμενον ὑπὲρ | ἡμῶν εἰς ἄφυσιν ἀμαρτιῶν+.

Our God prepared a sacred table in the desert for the people and gave manna of the new covenant of Christ to eat, the Lord's immortal body and the blood of Christ poured for us in remission of sins. (Translation in Mazza)

The citation with the formula “the body and blood” most likely derives from a liturgical prayer in which the words about the body and blood were central and which recalled the power of Jesus Christ during the anaphora.³⁸

The eucharist was known as an antidote against demons and harmful magic, so the eucharistic connection works well for those amulets where “the body and blood” are invoked together.³⁹ However, how can the emphasis on blood be explained in the other four texts? Apparently, the attitude to the two substances of the sacrament was different and there existed some sort of division in their functions. When it came to the miraculous and healing qualities of the eucharist, it was the bread that was the preferred substance, not the wine. The holy bread was called φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, a medicine (with connotations of magical concoction) that brings immortality, by Ignatius and Serapion.⁴⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus' sister Gorgonia was healed through the bread of the eucharist, while Ambrose's brother kept it as an amulet wrapped

38 The striking metaphor of eucharist as manna perhaps echoes the early anaphoric texts in Serapion, *Euchologion* 1; *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis*, ed. by M.E. Johnson (OCA, 249), Rome, 1995, p. 48; *Didache* 9.4; *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1: *I Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, ed. and trans. by B. Ehrman (LCL, 24), Cambridge, Mass., 2003, p. 430; and papyrus Der Balyzeh (l. 3-11), in which the bread scattered over the hills and then gathered again symbolises the unity of the church. See C.H. Roberts and D.B. Capelle, *An Early Euchologium. The Der-Balzeh Papyrus Enlarged and Reedited* (Bibliothèque du Muséon, 23), Louvain, 1949, p. 46. Cf. also *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.25; ed. by Metzger p. 54.

39 For the eucharist as an antidote and means of protection against Egyptian magicians appears in an apophthegma about Macarius see D. Frankfurter, “The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), pp. 480-500. Bishop Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 13.3; *Césaire d'Arles. Sermons au peuple*, vol. 1: *Sermons 1-20*, ed. by M.-J. Delage (SC, 175), Paris, 1971, pp. 422-423, preached that the eucharist is a more efficient – and, naturally, blessed by the church – alternative to the magical charms.

40 Ignatius, *Eph.* 20.2; ed. by Ehrman, pp. 240-241; Serapion, *Euchologion* 1; ed. by Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis*, p. 48. Serapion includes this term, strongly associated

in a napkin; other miracles involving the holy bread are reported in John Moschus' *Pratum spirituale*.⁴¹ On the other hand, the apotropaic and exorcistic qualities were reserved in the thought of the Fathers to the blood of Christ. So, for instance, Cyril of Jerusalem:

[T]here, the blood of a lamb was the spell against the destroyer; here, the blood of the Lamb without blemish Jesus Christ is made the charm to scare evil spirits.⁴²

In a commentary on the Gospel of John, John Chrysostom also referred to the wondrous faculty of the blood of Christ to drive out demons, bringing together the blood of the eucharist and the blood of salvation discussed in Hebrews:

This blood makes the seal of our King bright in us; it produces an inconceivable beauty; it does not permit the nobility of the soul to become corrupt, since it refreshes and nourishes it without ceasing. The blood which we receive by way of food is not immediately a source of nourishment, but goes through some other stage first; this is not so with this Blood, for it at once refreshes the soul and instils a certain great power in it. This Blood, when worthily received, drives away demons and puts them at a distance from us, and even summons to us angels and the Lord of angels. Where they see the Blood of the Lord, demons flee, while angels gather. This Blood, poured out in abundance, has washed the whole

with magical practices, into his anaphora. See also Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis*, p.233; and Roukema, "Early Christianity and Magic," pp. 370-371.

41 Cited in Mazza, "P.Ryl. Greek Add.1166," p. 78. See Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 8.18; PG, 35, 809-812; Ambrose, *De excessu fratris* 1.46; Ambrosius. *Explanatio symboli, De sacramentis, De mysteriis, De paenitentia, De excess fratris Satyri, De obitu Valentiniani, De obitu Theodosii*, ed. by O. Faller (CSEL, 73), Vienna, 1955, p. 234; and John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*; PG, 87c, 2875-2880 and 2935-2938. From the practical point of view, it is the holy bread that was more convenient to preserve as presanctified gifts for the use outside liturgy.

42 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst.* 1.3; SC, 126bis.86: ἐκεῖ αἷμα ἄμνοῦ ὁλοθρευτοῦ ἦν ἀποτρόπαιον, ἐνταῦθα τοῦ Ἀμνοῦ τοῦ ἁμώμου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τὸ αἷμα δαιμόνων καθέστηκε φυγαδευτήριον. English translation by E.H. Gifford in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second series*, 7, ed. by P. Schaff and H. Wace, Buffalo, N.Y., 1894. The vocabulary of this passage is very close to the language of magic: the imperative φύγε, φυγαδεύθητι appear also in magical exorcisms and narratives: S. Giannobile and D.R. Jordan, "A Lead Phylactery from Colle san Basilio (Sicily)," *GRBS*, 46 (2006), pp. 73-86, at p. 80; and A. Avdokhin, "A Dipinto from the So-called 'Chapel of St Paul' (Caesarea Maritima): A Reading and Interpretation," *ZPE*, 196 (2015), pp. 155-158. The allusion to magic is corroborated by the variant reading φυλακτήριον in some manuscripts: see Piédagnel, p.86.

world clean. The blessed Paul has uttered many truths about this Blood in the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁴³

It can be seen from these contexts that the power of the blood, though present in the eucharist, is rooted not in the rite itself, but rather in the conceptual framework of the Christian teaching, and, in particular, the core of the Christ's work of salvation, namely, his crucifixion, death, and subsequent liberation of the humanity from devil. The apotropaic invocations of the blood of Christ go beyond their eucharistic associations.

3.3 *Soteriological Meaning*

The centrality of the blood of Christ for salvation goes back to the New Testament texts: its theological importance is elaborated in particular in Hebrews.⁴⁴ Remarkably, the blood in Hebrews is not used in the sacramental context of the eucharist and evokes the cultic language of sprinkling, that is, sanctification and purification through external use rather than consumption. As the commentator notes, "it rather designates the equivalent in the new order of the blood with which the new covenant was inaugurated, namely, the blood shed on the cross, which provides access to God and to God's forgiveness".⁴⁵ In the passage from Chrysostom's homily above, the theological significance of the blood of Christ is linked to the spiritual life of the Christians. Likewise, the connection between general soteriological notion of the blood of Christ and its implications for every member of the church can be discerned in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. He recalled the blood of Christ in the openings of his letters in order to define the status of his correspondents and to ground the communication between them and him as their spiritual leader in the unity of the church.⁴⁶

43 John Chrysostom, *In Ioh. hom.* 46.3; PG, 59.261: Τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα ἀξίως λαμβανόμενον ἐλαύνει μὲν δαίμονας καὶ πόρρωθεν ἡμῶν ποιεῖ, καλεῖ δὲ ἀγγέλους πρὸς ἡμᾶς, καὶ τὸν Δεσπότην τῶν ἀγγέλων. Ὅπου γὰρ ἂν ἴδωσι τὸ αἷμα τὸ Δεσποτικόν, φεύγουσι μὲν δαίμονες, συντρέχουσι δὲ ἄγγελοι. Τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα ἐκχυθὲν πάσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐξέπλυνε. Πολλὰ περὶ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου καὶ ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐφιλοσόφησε. English translation in *Saint John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist, Homilies 1-47*, translated by T.A. Goggin (FC, 33), Washington, D.C., 1957.

44 Heb 10:19-28; 9:11-14; and 12:24. Cf. Acts 20:28.

45 H.W. Attridge, *The Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, 1989, p.294. On the purification through sprinkling blood goes back to the rituals of Yom Kippur see B. Lourié, "Calendrical Implications in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Révue biblique*, 115 (2008), pp. 245-265.

46 Ignatius, *Eph.* 1.1; ed. by Ehrman, pp. 218; *Smy.* 1.1; ed. by Ehrman, p. 296; and *Phil.* Inscr.; ed. by Ehrman, p. 282.

This focus on the blood as the link between universal salvation and personal devotion could be a suitable basis for the magical invocations. In fact, the blood of Christ is encountered in two amulets in the soteriological context. One is a fourth- or fifth-century CE text with a narrative of Christ's birth, life, passion, and resurrection, including a detailed account of the descent to hell.⁴⁷ The blood which Christ brought with him there is a means by which to liberate the imprisoned souls (lines 8-12):

ἐλεεθ ἐλεᾷ ἑθ, ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος, ὁ ἀνελθὼν εἰς τὸν | ἑβδομον οὐρανόν, ὁ ἐλθὼν
ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ πατρός, τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ εὐλογημένον, διὸ αἱ ψυχαὶ ἐλευθε|ρώθησαν
δι[ἀ] τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ οἱ ἀνύγησαντες δι' ἑαυτῶν αἱ πύλαι χαλκαῖ δι' αὐτόν, ὁ
κατακλάσας | τοὺς μοχλοῦ[ς] σιδηροῦς, ὁ λύσας τοὺς δεδημένους ἐν τῷ σκότι,
ὁ ποιήσας τὸν Χάροντα ἄσπορον, | ὁ καταδήσα[ς τ]ὸν ἐχθρόν ἀ[πο]στάτην, ὁ
βληθεὶς εἰς τοὺς ἰδίους τόπους.

Eleeth Eleeth,⁴⁸ the God of aion, who ascended to the seventh heaven and came from the right of the Father, the blessed lamb, wherefore the souls were set free through His blood and to Whom the gates of brass opened by themselves, who broke in pieces the bars of iron, who released those who were bound in darkness, who made Charon without offspring and bound the apostate enemy, who was thrown into his own places.⁴⁹

The pattern of short narratives, or *historiolae*, was common in magical texts and formed the basis for request for protection in Christian magic.⁵⁰ Such creed-like concatenations could often take a hymnic or acclamatory form.⁵¹ A similar structure of invocations based on the key events of Christ's life can be found in a fifth-century CE papyrus amulet from the National Library in Vienna:

47 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Checklist," number 30; *PGM* P13. Most recent discussion in A. Mihálykó, "Christ and Charon: *PGM* P13 reconsidered," *SO*, 89 (2015), pp. 183-209; Cf. Maravela, "Christians Praying in a Graeco-Egyptian Context," pp. 310-312 and 315-316.

48 The name Eleeth is the reading proposed by Mihálykó and attested in a variant text of the *Testament of Solomon* (6.7) as the powerful divine name for exorcising demons. See Mihálykó, "Christ and Charon," pp. 195-196; and Busch, p. 131 n.12.

49 English translation in Mihálykó, "Christ and Charon."

50 Mihálykó, "Christ and Charon," p. 201; and Maravela, "Christians Praying in a Graeco-Egyptian Context," p.310.

51 De Bruyn, "Ancient Applied Christology," pp. 5-8, esp. 6-7, and T. De Bruyn, "What did Ancient Christians say when they cast out demons? Inferences from spells and amulets," in: *Christian Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium*, ed. by G.D. Dunn and W. Mayer, Leiden-Boston, 2015, pp. 64-83, at pp. 68-69.

δι' ἡμᾶς | + αἷμα τοῦ σαρκοθέντος ἐκ τῆς ἀγίας | παρθένου Ἰη(σο)ῦ Χρ(ιστο)ῦ
 + αἷμα [το]ῦ γεννη[θέν]τος ἐκ [τῆς ἀ]γίας θεοτόκου Ἰη(σο)ῦ Χρ(ιστο)ῦ + |
 αἵματο[υ ...] φανέντος [... ...] δαι[....] | Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χρ(ιστο)ῦ + [αἱ]μα τοῦ
 βαπτ[ισθέν]τος ἐν τῷ | Ἰορδάνῃ ὑπὸ τοῦ προδρόμου Ἰωάννου | Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χρ(ιστο)
 ῦ ἀμην + αἷμα τοῦ προσενέγκατος | ἑαυτὸν θυσίαν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν |
 Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χρ(ιστο)ῦ ἀμή[ν]⁵²

The blood of Jesus Christ who was incarnated for us from the saint Virgin;
 the blood of Jesus Christ who was born from the saint Theotokos; the
 blood of Jesus Christ who appeared ...; the blood of Jesus Christ who was
 baptised in Jordan by John Prodromos. Amen. The blood of Jesus Christ
 who brought himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Amen.

In this text the blood is placed at the beginning of each verse, thereby stressing
 its centrality and linking the protection of the carrier with the story of Christ's
 sacrifice. A similar link can be found in a sixth-century CE papyrus amulet
 against the *akephaloi*.⁵³ For the efficacy of the amulet, it was important to spec-
 ify that it was that very blood which was involved in the salvation of the hu-
 manity.⁵⁴

3.4 *Baptismal Connotations*

The soteriological character of the teaching about the blood of Christ was ap-
 plied not only to the eucharist but also to the baptism, even more so that the
 two rites were united in the early church in baptismal liturgy. The associations
 between the blood of salvation and baptism were developed, for example, by
 Basil in his treatise *De baptismo* where he alludes to the baptismal formula in-
 corporated in Galatians,⁵⁵ stating that the process of taking off the ancient

52 Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Checklist," number 87; described in C. Wessely, *Les plus anciens monuments du Christianisme écrits sur papyrus*, vol. 2, Paris, 1924, p. 435. A full edition is in preparation. See Dijkstra and de Bruyn, "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt," p.196, n. 155.

53 See 2.5 above.

54 The magical efficacy relying on Christ and his victory over death and demons noted in De Bruyn, "Ancient Applied Christology," p. 9.

55 Gal 3:27: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε ("For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"). See H.-D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, 1979, pp. 181-201. The formula suggests the divine transformation which the new member of the church undergoes during baptism. On the symbolism of the baptismal garment, see pp. 413-451. Cf. Col 3:10; and Eph 4:24. Putting on new clothes also implies official declaration of adoption as

man which leads to putting on the new one during baptism is achieved through the blood of Christ:

... so is with one who is baptised, whether he be Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, Scythian or barbarian, or anyone else bearing the name of any other race. As soon as he has put off the old man with his deeds in the blood of Christ and, by Christ's teaching in the Holy Spirit, has put on the new, created according to God in justice and holiness of truth.⁵⁶

Remarkably, two amulets discussed above in 2.2 and 2.3 allude to the same concept with the phrase (ὁ)ὸν | μονογενὶ περιβέβλιμε, ("I am clothed in the only begotten Son"), which introduces the idea of encircling or clothing oneself with the protective power of God. It is possible that the producers and users of these two magical amulets associated the power of the blood of Christ primarily with the baptismal context, and not with the eucharist.

In fact, the magical potential of the baptism was no less significant than that of the eucharist, and the language of that rite was also adapted to the magical uses.⁵⁷ Baptismal rites included preliminary exorcisms which might be reflected in a lead tablet from Antiochia Caesarea.⁵⁸ It is our most ancient text with

a legal act which took place at baptism. See Betz, *Galatians*, p. 187; and N. Taylor, "Liturgy and Identity: Conversion-Initiation in Galatians 3:26-29," *Anaphora*, 6 (2012), pp. 1-18, at p.10. Cf. S.J. Harrill, "Coming of Age and Putting on Christ: The *toga virilis* Ceremony, its Paraenesis, and Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Galatians," *NovT*, 44 (2002), pp. 252-277. The language of putting on salvation or the redeemer himself often appears in connection with baptism, especially in gnostic texts: see Betz, *Galatians*, p. 188, n.61.

56 Basil, *De bap.* 1.24; *Basilio di Cesarea. Il battesimo*, ed. by U. Neri (Testi e ricerche di scienze religiose, 12), Brescia, 1976, 266: οὕτω καὶ ὁ βαπτιζόμενος, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖος, εἴτε Ἕλλην, εἴτε ἄρσεν, εἴτε θῆλυ, εἴτε δοῦλος, εἴτε ἐλεύθερος, εἴτε Σκύθης, εἴτε βάρβαρος, εἴτε ἄλλος ἐν οἰαδήποτε διαφορᾷ γένους ὀνομαζόμενος, ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, διὰ δὲ τῆς διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι ἐνδυσάμενος τὸν νέον τὸν κατὰ Θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας. English translation in *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works*, vol. 1, transl. by M. Wagner (FC, 9), New York, 1962. In this treatise the blood of Christ is recalled *passim*, in order to associate the baptism with the death of Christ and the purification which the baptised receive.

57 See de Bruyn, "P. Ryl. III.471", pp. 101-107; Roukema, "Early Christianity and Magic," pp. 370-371.

58 Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*, n. 35. The verb ἀναχωρεῖν is attested both in the liturgical exorcisms and in *Testament of Solomon*. This prompts Kotansky to put into the category of Christian-Solomonic exorcistic amulets. Cf. PGM P10, Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*, p. 172.

the reference to the blood of Christ dating from the third or fourth centuries CE:

Πρὸς πν|εύμαθα | Φωαφθρο, | ἀναχώρη|σον ἀπὸ Βα|σελείου, τῇ | δεξιᾷ χειρ[ι] |
τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ καὶ | τὸ ἔμα το[ῦ] | Χ(ριστο)ῦ καὶ τοῖ[ς] | ἀγγέλοις α(ὑ)τῆς καὶ |
ἐκκλησίᾳ

For (evil) spirits: Phoathphro, depart from Basilius, by the right hand of God, and the blood of Christ and by her (sic) angels and (the) Church.⁵⁹

Here the blood of Christ is not part of an apotropaic formula placed at the end of the text and introducing a prayer. Nevertheless, the blood is invoked as a tool of exorcism together with the hand of God, angels, and the church.

The suggested baptismal connotations of the blood would correspond well with the parallels between the amulets and the tradition of the seals of Solomon, as discussed above. In the early church writings, starting with *Shepherd* of Hermas, and continuing into later patristic works, an important metaphor for baptism, and especially for the associated rite of anointment, is the placing of a seal on newly-converted Christians and thereby adding them to Christ's flock.⁶⁰ Apparently, in a baptismal context, the blood of Christ could be seen as a power of God which purified new members of the church community and which continued to protect them against evil spirits after the baptism together with the seal of the Spirit.⁶¹

59 English translation in Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*.

60 See de Bruyn, "P. Ryl. III.471", p. 99; *Hermas* 93.4; *Die apostolischen Väter*, vol. 1: *Der Hirt des Hermas*, ed. by M. Whittaker (GCS, 48), Berlin, 1967, 2nd edn, p.90; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.3.11; *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 2: *Stromata, Buch I–VI*, ed. by L. Früchtel, O. Stählin, and U. Treu (GCS, 52), Berlin, 1985, 4th edn, pp. 118–119; Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto Christiano* 8.1.58.13; *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 1, ed. by W. Jaeger, Leiden, 1963, p. 58; and Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 40; PG, 36.361. Cf. the metaphor of sealing in Paul: 2 *Cor* 1:22; and Eph 1:13; and 4:30. The symbolism of sealing was also typical for gnostic texts see A. Mastrocinque, "Studi sulle gemme gnostiche," *ZPE*, 122 (1998), pp. 115–116.

61 Athanasius, *Fragmenta de amuletis*; PG, 26.1320, called the cross "the seal of salvation", using the terminology overlapping with magic when he preached against using the amulets. Cf. also Serapion, *Euchologion*, 16, ed. by Johnson pp. 64–65: "with the impression of the sign of the saving cross of the only-begotten, the cross through which Satan and all opposing powers were overthrown and triumphed over, as those having been reborn and renewed through the washing of regeneration, they may also become sharers of the gift of the Holy Spirit and, having been sealed in this seal, may remain firm and immovable, without harm and safe from violence"; and Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 1.3; PG, 33.373: ἅλλ' ὅπου βλέπει τὴν ἀγαθὴν συντὴν θαυμασίαν, ἣ τρέμουςι δαίμονες καὶ γινώσκουσιν ἄγγελοι· ἵνα οἱ μὲν

4 Conclusions

The blood of Christ appears as a multi-faceted symbol which provides a connection between the death and victory of Christ, the salvation of the universe, the Christian ritual of initiation, and eucharist as crucial for the normative church life of Christians. The image of blood in this sense can be compared with that of the cross which became a universal symbol of Christianity, a summary of its teaching and belief, being evoked in the communal life of the church in multiple ways, including prayerful invocations to its divine and apotropaic powers, promoted also by church leaders. A similar attitude to the blood of Christ can be discerned in the early Christianity, an attitude which is also reflected in the amulets.

The language of liturgy and magical practices overlapped: amulets used the scriptural verses and liturgical expressions while the Fathers employed magically loaded terms, such as 'seal', 'medicine', and 'apotropaion', to designate and explain the transforming, protective, purifying, and healing powers of the sacraments. The producers and users of the amulets did nothing illicit, at least, from their point of view, when they appealed to the blood of Christ – they used the language of the church as they understood it and adjusted it to their situational needs, referring to certain theological concepts and liturgical expressions which were accessible for them through saying prayers, participating in the sacraments, listening to the preachers, and through other ways of oral and written communication within the church. The amulets with the invocations to the blood of Christ reveal the significance of this concept for the religious mindset of Christian believers in the early Byzantium.

φύγωσιν ἐλασθέντες, οἱ δὲ περιέπωσιν ὡς οἰκεῖον. Τοῖς οὖν λαμβάνουσι τὴν πνευματικὴν ταύτην σφραγίδα καὶ σωτήριον, χρεῖα καὶ τῆς οἰκεῖας προαιρέσεως· ("... but where He discerns the good conscience, there He gives the Seal of salvation, that wondrous Seal, which devils tremble at, and Angels recognise; that the one may be driven to flight, and the others may watch around it as kindred to themselves. Those therefore who receive this spiritual and saving Seal, have need also of the disposition akin to it.")