

THE *SENTENCES* OF SEXTUS

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*By*

Walter T. Wilson

Society of Biblical Literature  
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In keeping with the format of the Wisdom Literature from the Ancient World series, in the commentary itself references to secondary literature have been kept to a minimum. Readers interested in learning more about Sextus and his world are encouraged to consult the items listed in the bibliography.

Walter T. Wilson





## ABBREVIATIONS

Where available, abbreviations for Greek and Latin works are taken from David L. Petersen et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). Note also the following:

<i>Act. Joan.</i>	<i>Acta Joannis</i>
<i>Act. Just. Sept. Sod.</i>	<i>Acta Justinii et Septem Sodalium</i>
<i>Act. mart. Apoll.</i>	<i>Acta et martyrium Apollonii</i>
<i>Act. Phil.</i>	<i>Acta Philippi</i>
<i>Act. Thom.</i>	<i>Acta Thomae</i>
Aesop	
<i>Fab.</i>	<i>Fabulae</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>Proverbia</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententiae</i>
Alexander of Aphrodisias	
<i>Anim. mant.</i>	<i>De anima libri mantissa</i>
Ps.-Alexander of Aphrodisias	
<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Problemata</i>
Alexander Filius Numenii	
<i>Fig.</i>	<i>De figuris</i>
Ps.-Andronicus Rhodius	
<i>Pass.</i>	<i>De passionibus</i>
<i>Anec. Gr.</i>	<i>Anecdota Graeca</i>
<i>Anth. Gr.</i>	<i>Anthologia Graeca</i>
Antoninus Liberalis	
<i>Metam. syn.</i>	<i>Metamorphoseon synagoge</i>
<i>Apoc. apocr. Joan.</i>	<i>Apocalypsis apocrypha Joannis</i>
<i>Apoc. Petr. graec.</i>	<i>Apocalypsis Petri graeca</i>
<i>Apophth. patr.</i> [al.]	<i>Apophthegmata patrum</i> [collectio alphabetica]
<i>Apophth. patr.</i> [an.]	<i>Apophthegmata patrum</i> [collectio anonyma]
<i>Apophth. patr.</i> [sy.]	<i>Apophthegmata patrum</i> [collectio systematica]

Arius Didymus	
<i>Lib. phil. sect.</i>	<i>Liber de philosophorum sectis</i>
Arsenius	
<i>Apophth.</i>	<i>Apophthegmata</i>
Aspasius	
<i>Eth. nic. comm.</i>	<i>In ethica nichomachea commentaria</i>
Asterius	
<i>Comm. Ps.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Psalmos</i>
Athanasius	
<i>Exp. Ps.</i>	<i>Expositiones in Psalmos</i>
Ps.-Athanasius	
<i>Ep. Cast.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad Castorem</i>
Babrius	
<i>Fab.</i>	<i>Fabulae</i>
Basil of Caesarea	
<i>Ascet. magn.</i>	<i>Asceticon magnum sive quaestiones</i>
<i>Reg. mor.</i>	<i>Regulae morales</i>
Ps.-Basil of Caesarea	
<i>Const. ascet.</i>	<i>Constitutiones asceticae</i>
<i>Carm. aur.</i>	<i>Carmen aureum</i>
<i>Cat. ep. 2 Cor.</i>	<i>Catena in epistulam ii ad Corinthios</i>
Ps.-Cato	
<i>Dist.</i>	<i>Collectio distichorum</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Collectio monostichorum</i>
<i>Chion. ep.</i>	<i>Chionis epistulae</i>
Ps.-Clement	
<i>Ep. virg.</i>	<i>Epistulae de virginitate</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homiliae</i>
<i>Rec.</i>	<i>Recognitiones</i>
Cyprian	
<i>Quir.</i>	<i>Ad Quirinum</i>
Diogenianus	
<i>Paroem.</i>	<i>Paroemiae</i>
Dioscorides Pedanius	
<i>Mat. med.</i>	<i>De materia medica</i>
Dorotheus	
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententiae</i>
<i>Ep. Apost.</i>	<i>Epistula Apostolorum</i>
<i>Ep. Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabae epistula</i>

<i>Ep. Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Diognetum</i>
Ephraem Syrus	
<i>Apol. frat. quen.</i>	<i>Apologia ad fratrem quendam</i>
<i>Corr. vit. viv.</i>	<i>Ad correctionem eorum qui vitiose vivunt et honores appetunt</i>
<i>Hom. meretr.</i>	<i>Homilia in meretricem</i>
<i>Imit. prov.</i>	<i>Ad imitationem proverbiorum</i>
<i>Inst. mon.</i>	<i>Institutio ad monachos</i>
<i>Iud. comp.</i>	<i>De iudicio et compunctione</i>
<i>Paen.</i>	<i>De paenitentia</i>
<i>Serm. adv. haer.</i>	<i>Sermo adversus haereticos</i>
<i>Serm. al. comp.</i>	<i>Sermo alius compunctorius</i>
<i>Serm. comm. res.</i>	<i>Sermo de communi resurrectione</i>
<i>Serm. comp.</i>	<i>Sermo compunctorius</i>
<i>Serm. paraen. mon.</i>	<i>Sermones paraeneticus ad monachos Aegypti</i>
<i>Serm. virt. vit.</i>	<i>Sermo de virtutibus et vitiis</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtute</i>
Epicurus	
<i>Ep. frag.</i>	<i>Epistularum fragmenta</i>
<i>Ep. Men.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Menoeceum</i>
Evagrius Ponticus	
<i>Al. sent.</i>	<i>Aliae sententiae</i>
<i>Cap. paraen.</i>	<i>Capita paraenetica</i>
<i>Oct. spirit. malit.</i>	<i>De octo spiritibus malitiae</i>
<i>Orat.</i>	<i>De oratione</i>
<i>Pract.</i>	<i>Practicus</i>
<i>Sent. mon.</i>	<i>Sententiae ad monachos</i>
<i>Sent. virg.</i>	<i>Sententiae ad virginem</i>
<i>Serm. virt. vit.</i>	<i>Sermo de virtutibus et vitiis</i>
<i>Spirit. sent.</i>	<i>Spirituales sententiae per alphabetum dispositae</i>
<i>Evang. Bart.</i>	<i>Evangelium Bartholomaei</i>
Galen	
<i>Prop. an.</i>	<i>De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione</i>
<i>Reb. bon. mal.</i>	<i>De rebus boni mali que suci</i>
<i>Gnom. Democr.</i>	<i>Gnomologium Democrateum</i>
<i>Gnom. Vat.</i>	<i>Gnomologium Vaticanum</i>
Gregory of Nyssa	
<i>Diem lum.</i>	<i>In diem luminum</i>

<i>Eunom.</i>	<i>Contra Eunomium</i>
<i>Inst. Christ.</i>	<i>De instituto Christiano</i>
<i>Virg.</i>	<i>De virginitate</i>
Ps.-Gregogry of Nyssa	
<i>Imag. dei sim.</i>	<i>Ad imaginem dei et ad similitudinem</i>
Gregory Thaumaturgus	
<i>Met. Eccl. Sal.</i>	<i>Metaphrasis in Ecclesiasten Salamonis</i>
Hierax	
<i>Just.</i>	<i>De justitia</i>
Hierocles	
<i>In aur. carm.</i>	<i>In aureum carmen</i>
Iamblichus	
<i>Comm. math. scien.</i>	<i>De communi mathematica scientia</i>
<i>Protr.</i>	<i>Protrepticus</i>
<i>Vit. Pythag.</i>	<i>De vita Pythagorica</i>
Ps.-Ignatius	
<i>Ep. interp.</i>	<i>Epistulae interpolatae</i>
<i>Instr. Ankh.</i>	<i>Instruction of Ankhsheshonqy</i>
Isidore of Seville	
<i>Vir. illust.</i>	<i>De viris illustribus</i>
John Chrysostom	
<i>In Ps. 118</i>	<i>In Psalmum 118</i>
Ps.-John Damascene	
<i>Sacr. par.</i>	<i>Sacra parallela</i>
Ps.-Justin Martyr	
<i>Exp. rect. fid.</i>	<i>Expositio rectae fidei</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>De monarchia</i>
<i>Quaest. Christ. gent.</i>	<i>Quaestiones Christianorum ad gentiles</i>
<i>Quaest. resp. orth.</i>	<i>Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos</i>
<i>Lib. Pont.</i>	<i>Liber Pontificalis</i>
Lucian	
<i>Pod.</i>	<i>Podagra</i>
Lycurgus	
<i>Leocr.</i>	<i>Oratio in Leocratem</i>
Ps.-Lysias	
<i>Andoc.</i>	<i>In Andocidem</i>
Ps.-Macarius	
<i>Serm.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>

Macrobius	
<i>Somn. Scip.</i>	<i>Somnium Scipionis</i>
Manetho	
<i>Apotel.</i>	<i>Apotelesmatica</i>
<i>Mant. prov.</i>	<i>Mantissa proverbiorum</i>
<i>Mart. Ptol. Luc.</i>	<i>Martyrium Ptolemaei et Lucii</i>
Maximus Confessor	
<i>Loc. comm.</i>	<i>Loci communes</i>
<i>Schol. libr. myst. theol.</i>	<i>Scholia in librum De mystica theologia</i>
Maximus of Tyre	
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialexeis</i>
Methodius	
<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium sive Convivium decum virginum</i>
Nicolaus Catascepenus	
<i>Vit. Cyr. Phil.</i>	<i>Vita sancti Cyrilli Phileotae</i>
Nicomachus	
<i>Theol. arith.</i>	<i>Theologoumena arithmeticae</i>
Oribasius	
<i>Coll. medic.</i>	<i>Collectiones medicae</i>
Origen	
<i>Frag. cat. 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Fragmenta e catenis in Epistolam primam ad Corinthios</i>
<i>Hom. Jer.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Jeremiam</i>
<i>Hom. Jer. II</i>	<i>Homiliae in Jeremiam II (latine Hieronymo interprete)</i>
Palladius	
<i>Dial. vit. Joan. Chrys.</i>	<i>Dialogus de vita Joannis Chrysostomi</i>
<i>Pass. Pol.</i>	<i>Passio Polycarpi</i>
<i>Phal. ep.</i>	<i>Phalaridis epistulae</i>
Philodemus	
<i>Adul.</i>	<i>De adulatione</i>
Philostratus	
<i>Ep. et dial.</i>	<i>Epistulae et dialexeis</i>
P. Iand.	<i>Papyri Iandanae</i>
P. Ins.	<i>Papyrus Insinger</i>
<i>Pist. Soph.</i>	<i>Pistis Sophia</i>
Proclus Diadochus	
<i>Plat. rem publ. comm.</i>	<i>In Platonis rem publicam commentarii</i>
<i>Schol. Aesch. Eum.</i>	<i>Scholia in Aeschylum Eumenides</i>

Secundus	
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententiae</i>
<i>Sent. Pythag.</i>	<i>Sententiae Pythagoreorum</i>
<i>Sent. Pythag. Dem.</i>	<i>Sententiae Pythagoreorum</i> (fort. auctore vel collectore Demophilo)
Septem Sapientes	
<i>Apophth.</i>	<i>Apophthegmata</i>
<i>Praec.</i>	<i>Praecepta</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	<i>Sententiae</i>
Severian of Gabala	
<i>Incar. dom.</i>	<i>In incarnationem domini</i>
Sext.	<i>Sextus, Sentences</i>
<i>Socrat. ep.</i>	<i>Socraticorum epistulae</i>
Tatian	
<i>Orat. Graec.</i>	<i>Oratio ad Graecos</i>
Themistius	
<i>Protr. Nic.</i>	<i>Προτρεπτικός Νικομηδεῦσιν</i>
Theodora Palaeologina	
<i>Typ. mon. Lips</i>	<i>Typicon monasterii Lips</i>
Aelius Theon	
<i>Progym.</i>	<i>Progymnasmata</i>
Theon Smyrnaeus	
<i>Util. math.</i>	<i>De utilitate mathematicae</i>
<i>Vit. Aesop.</i>	<i>Vitae Aesopi</i>
<i>Vit. Pach.</i>	<i>Vita Pachomii</i>
<i>Vit. Sec.</i>	<i>Vita Secundi</i>
Zenobius	
<i>Paroem.</i>	<i>Paroemiae</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. APPROACHING THE TEXT

Described by Origen as a writing that “even the multitude of Christians read”<sup>1</sup> and by Jerome as a writing whose author was “a man without Christ,”<sup>2</sup> the *Sentences* of Sextus presents the student of antiquity not only with an intriguing interpretive history but also with distinctive insights relevant to at least three broad areas of scholarly inquiry.

First, originating in the late second or early third century C.E. and consisting of nearly five hundred Greek aphorisms,<sup>3</sup> the *Sentences* represents one of our earliest and longest examples of Christian Wisdom literature. In keeping with the conventions of such literature, the text addresses a range of stock moral topics (speech, moderation, education, marriage, wealth, death, etc.), utilizes a time-honored literary format (gnomic precepts and observations arranged anthologically), and draws on sapiential traditions familiar from a wide variety of sources, including Jewish (e.g., Ben Sira), Christian (e.g., the letter of James), Egyptian (e.g., the *Instruction* of Papyrus Insinger), Greek (e.g., the *Carmen aureum*, or “Golden Verses”), and Latin (e.g., the *Sentences* of Publilius Syrus) sources, not to mention more “popular” sources of wisdom such as the so-called schoolbook papyri.<sup>4</sup> Situated within such a comparative ambit, the study of Sextus’s sayings can help us better understand how and why the ancient church developed its

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1. *Cels.* 8.30.

2. *Ep.* 133.3.

3. Of the text’s 451 numbered verses, 31 have been subdivided into a, b, c, etc., bringing the total to 490 sayings. The appendices (see below) add an additional 159 sayings.

4. Among such papyri, gnomic texts (sometimes referred to as gnomic “primers” or “copybooks”) survive in greater quantities than any other kind of literature, apparently figuring in every stage of the curriculum, from elementary lessons in orthography to more advanced rhetorical exercises. See Criboire 1996 and Morgan 1998.

own wisdom traditions, appropriating and adopting existing traditions to suit the distinctive needs of early Christian communities.<sup>5</sup> An appreciation for the dynamics informing such developments is of particular relevance for those interested in explicating the actual “life” of the ancient church insofar as the rhetorical posture of a gnomic text such as the *Sentences* is as fully practical as it is expressly instructional, the author’s aim being to foster among his readers both habits of moral reasoning and capacities for moral action.

Second, even as the *Sentences* exemplifies a “traditional” mode of communication, there is something decidedly nontraditional about its basic social outlook and moral orientation, both of which are often described as ascetical.<sup>6</sup> As James Francis has observed, the starting point for most surveys of asceticism is the fourth century C.E., the time of the flowering of monasticism among Christians and of Neoplatonism among non-Christians. Consideration for the work of an author like Sextus provides an opportunity to study the character of this phenomenon at a more formative stage, at a time when the nature, rationale, and limits of ascetical practice were still under negotiation. Generally speaking, the activity of early ascetics, many of whom were non-Christian, was viewed with skepticism, the mistrust aimed at them being fueled in part by the perception that they were “advocating norms and values antithetical to the accepted social and political order, and claiming a personal authority independent of the traditional controls of their society.”<sup>7</sup> In the case of the *Sentences*, the focal point for the establishment of such alternative authority—the “imaged final product of ascetical performance”<sup>8</sup>—is the sage, who in the author’s imagining does not so much reject such roles as priest (e.g., vv. 46a–b), prophet (e.g., v. 441), patron (e.g., v. 176), and parent (e.g., v. 244) as usurp and combine the social functions with which such roles would have been associated, including their function as traditional (i.e., socially mandated) bearers of wisdom. In so doing, our author projects a social world wherein the readers’ configuration of meaningful relationships and commitments has been not only significantly restructured, but also significantly restricted. Considered from this vantage point, the study of the

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5. Cf. Küchler 1979, 553–92; Meeks 1993, 71–73.

6. E.g., Chadwick 1959, 161; Dodds 1965, 32; Edwards and Wild 1981, 1–2; Wisse 1988, 503; Meeks 1993, 147–49; Valantasis 2001, 187–88.

7. Francis 1995, xiii–xiv.

8. Valantasis 1995, 810.



*Sentences* can help to illumine both an underappreciated chapter in the history of asceticism as well as some of the factors associated with the emergence of ascetical sensibilities and identities in the early church.

Third, while it is apparent that the *Sentences* projects an eclectic intellectual profile,<sup>9</sup> what makes this writing most distinctive from an ideational standpoint is its author's reliance on two generically similar collections of Pythagorean sayings, documents that in turn are representative of a revival of Pythagoreanism that began in the first century B.C.E. Accordingly, the readers of the *Sentences* encounter a significant number of concepts and motifs consistent with the teaching of that movement. They are, for example, instructed:

- to practice silence (v. 427), brevity of speech (v. 156), and wariness in the dissemination of divine truths (vv. 350–352);
- to shun public discussions (v. 112) and the love of reputation (v. 188);
- to adopt a serious demeanor and avoid laughter (vv. 280a–282);
- to learn before acting (v. 290);
- to believe that insolence begets ruin (v. 203);
- to deem no material possessions their “own” (v. 227), but to have them in common with others (v. 228);
- to exercise discipline in sleep, so as to be “thrifty” with time (vv. 252 + 253b);
- in matters of diet, to prefer vegetarianism (v. 109) and avoid intoxication (v. 269);
- to keep “pure” not only the body (v. 346) but also the soul (v. 24) and the intellect (v. 57b);
- to understand that souls failing to observe this standard will be “claimed” by demons (v. 348);
- to cultivate friendships with others (v. 226), especially with the divine (v. 86b);
- to “follow” God (v. 421);

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9. For examples of Platonic influence, see the commentary on vv. 44–45, 48, 103, 148, 165d–e, 168–170, 199, 391, 435. For examples of Stoic influence, see the commentary on vv. 31, 257, 272, 297, 323, 363a–364, 387–388. For examples of scriptural influence, see part 4 below.

- to consider that the best way to honor God is by making one's intellect like God (v. 44);
- to honor and emulate the sage as well (v. 376a), since he actually "images" God to humanity (v. 190).

Although Sextus would not have been the first or only Christian to demonstrate an acquaintance with Pythagoreanism,<sup>10</sup> the nature and extent of his interaction with this philosophical tradition make the *Sentences* a particularly fascinating test case for understanding how such appropriations would have been negotiated, especially at the practical level. While it would not be incorrect to see the *Sentences* as a conduit through which Pythagoreanism influenced the development of moral thought and practice in the early church, it is also the case, as we shall see, that Sextus does not simply replicate his source material but creatively adapts it to a new setting. Not coincidentally, the evaluation of such adaptations can contribute also to our knowledge of an underappreciated chapter in the history of philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. VERSIONS

The Greek text of the *Sentences* is preserved in two manuscripts, Patmien-sis 263 (MS Π), from the tenth century C.E., and Vaticanus Graecus 742 (MS Υ) from the fourteenth century C.E.<sup>12</sup> Together they witness to over 600 Sextine sayings, though neither document comes close to preserving them all. Besides the title, MS Υ lacks vv. 59–60, 104, 157, 164b, 183, 208a, 211, 228, 310–311, 313, 341–342, 388, 410, 412, 414–415a, 416, 427–428, 434, 437, 440, 446, 448, 451–453, 455–456, 463–466, 470–471, 474–475, 478, 480–485, 491, 509–511, 516, 518, 530, 532, 535, 538–539, 552, and 555, while absent from MS Π are vv. 7a, 98, 107, 125, 127, 163b, 164b, 165b–g, 247, 279, 297b, 370, 398, 431–443, 458, 496, 556–568, 570–577, 580–582, 584, 587–590, 592, and 595–609.<sup>13</sup> A comparison of the two lists indicates

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10. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 2.4–5; Theophilus, *Autol.* 3.7; Clement, *Strom.* 5.5.27.1–5.5.31.5; Origen, *Cels.* 1.3; 5.49.

11. The evidence for Neopythagoreanism in the Hellenistic and early imperial periods has been little studied, though see Dörrie 1963 and van der Waerden 1979, 269–93.

12. For additional information, see Elter 1892, 3–4 and Chadwick 1959, 3–4.

13. In some cases, omissions in the Greek manuscripts (as well as in the transla-

that several sayings are missing from both manuscripts, their information being obtained either from the Latin translation of the *Sentences* (vv. 434, 437, and 444) or from a comparative source (v. 164b). Besides differences in length and content, the two manuscripts also differ as to the arrangement of material. The order of sayings in ms  $\Upsilon$  is usually supported by that of the Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian translations, and so can safely be judged to better represent the order of the original text. Manuscript  $\Pi$ , on the other hand, organizes its sentences as follows: vv. 1–235, the first half of v. 262, the end of v. 379, vv. 380–405, 236–261, 428–430, 444–450, 569, 579, 578, 583, 585–586, 591, 593–594, 610, 452–454, 406–427, 455–488, the second half of v. 262, vv. 263–379, 489–555. In cases of textual variants within individual sayings, there is a tendency for the reading in ms  $\Pi$  to be supported by the Latin translation (e.g., vv. 13, 42, 154, 156, 166, 188, 191, 320, 326, 344) and for the reading preserved in ms  $\Upsilon$  to be supported by the Syriac translation (e.g., vv. 10, 109, 155, 169, 173, 180, 207, 210a, 211, 228, 230b, 253a, 286, 342, 355, 414), though inversed configurations are also evident (e.g., vv. 32, 99, 130, 146, 169, 185, 271, 285, 344, 451).

The Latin version of the *Sentences*, prepared by Rufinus of Aquileia in the late fourth century C.E. (see part 3 below), is preserved in at least fifteen manuscripts, the earliest and most important of which is Salmasianus (Parisinus gr. 10318) from the seventh or eighth century C.E.<sup>14</sup> This version runs to 451 sayings and supports the arrangement of material in ms  $\Upsilon$  over that of ms  $\Pi$ , supplying crucial evidence for both the extent and the ordering of the original text. Besides missing vv. 452–610, the Latin lacks vv. 7a, 82d–e, 91b, 163b, 164b, 165b–g, 171b, 210b, and 376b, while the text of vv. 265–266 and 389b–390 is deficient. Rufinus's translation overall is fairly literal, though there are places where it alters (e.g., v. 32), expands (e.g., v. 117), combines (e.g., vv. 82b–c), or misconstrues (e.g., v. 439) sayings in the Greek.

Approximately one quarter of Sextus's maxims, specifically vv. 157–180 (minus v. 162a) and vv. 307–397, is preserved in a fourth-century C.E. Coptic manuscript found at Nag Hammadi (NHC XII,1).<sup>15</sup> This transla-

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tions) have the effect of eliminating duplications or near duplications of material; see part 5 below. Cf. Chadwick 1959, 153–54.

14. Gildemeister 1873; Chadwick 1959, 4–6; Silvestre 1963; Bogaert 1972; Bouffartigue 1979.

15. Wisse 1975; Poirier 1983; Wisse 1988.

tion is also fairly literal, departing significantly from the Greek on only a handful of occasions (e.g., vv. 325, 380, 392). In cases of textual variants within individual sayings, the Coptic version tends to agree slightly more often with ms Υ and the Syriac version than with ms Π and the Latin version, and almost never agrees with ms Π against the other witnesses (cf. v. 354). As with the other translations, it generally supports the order of sayings as presented in ms Υ.

Two different Syriac translations of the *Sentences* are preserved together in some eighteen manuscripts, the oldest of which dates from the sixth century c.e.<sup>16</sup> The shorter of these (sy<sup>1</sup>) is an epitome containing only 131 sayings, arranged in generally the same order as ms Υ, and ranging as far as v. 555. The longer translation (sy<sup>2</sup>), by contrast, includes all of the sayings in vv. 1–587 except vv. 22, 36–77, 133, 170, 179, 202, 207, 211, 228, 235–239, 253b, 257, 288, 299, 324–325, 342, 350–354, 357–358, 360–363b, 367–369, 380–381, 405, 407, 414, 415b, 422–424, 447, 451, 456–460, 462, 466, 486–532, 535, and 544. Again, these sentences usually occur in the same order as in ms Υ, though the sayings in two sections (vv. 231–258 and vv. 350–412) evidence significant differences in content and arrangement, the latter even incorporating material of a non-Sextine origin. By and large, the Syriac translation retains the core of the Greek sayings upon which it is based, thus making it useful for text-critical purposes, though it also demonstrates a tendency to expand individual sayings with explanatory material of a Christian character.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, included among a collection of sayings attributed to Evagrius Ponticus are about 130 Sextine sayings translated into Armenian, arranged in basically the same order as in ms Υ.<sup>18</sup> Although this translation appears to have been based not on the Syriac but directly on the Greek, it has been but little studied and its evidence does not figure in critical editions of the text.<sup>19</sup>

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16. Lagarde 1858; Ryssel 1895–1897; Baumstark 1922, 170.

17. Verse 36 (“To one who is faithful God gives authority befitting God; the authority he gives is therefore pure and sinless”), for instance, is rendered: “Now indeed power is given to him, the faithful person, as the power of God; to the person who has a clear conscience, being sinless, all power is given to him from God” (cf. 1 Tim 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3).

18. Conybeare 1910; Muyltermans 1929; Hermann 1938.

19. A number of Sextine sayings are also preserved in Georgian and Ethiopic translations; for the former, see Garitte 1959; Outtier 1978; for the latter, Poirier 1983, 17.

To conclude, the cumulative evidence furnished by the versions indicates that the *Sentences* consisted originally of 451 sayings, a finding that, as we will see, is corroborated by internal considerations (see especially n. 85 below). It is this collection, then, that constitutes the main focus of the commentary that follows. Sometime after the late fourth century C.E. (that is, sometime after Rufinus made his translation) but before the sixth century C.E. (that is, sometime before the Syriac translations were made) additional material (the so-called appendices) was added, eventually bringing the total to 610 sayings. This appended material can be further subdivided into appendix 1 (vv. 452–555), which is preserved by both Greek manuscripts and both Syriac translations, appendix 2 (vv. 556–587), which is preserved by MS Υ and sy<sup>2</sup>, but only sporadically by MS Π and not at all by sy<sup>1</sup>, and appendix 3 (vv. 588–610), which is preserved by MS Υ, but only sporadically by MS Π and not at all by the Syriac.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. SITUATING THE TEXT

The earliest surviving references to our text are from the writings of Origen (c. 185–254 C.E.), references that furnish evidence regarding not only the identity of its author but also its date, provenance, and reputation, as well as some of the different uses to which its contents could be put.

The Alexandrian twice refers to the author and his work by name. In *Comm. Matt.* 15.3, he draws on vv. 13 and 273—material he says derives from “a book accepted by many as sound”—for evidence that certain Christians, inspired by a literal interpretation of Matt 19:12, endorse the practice of self-castration, a practice to which Origen explains he himself objects. In *Cels.* 8.30, meanwhile, he cites “a very graceful maxim” (i.e., v. 109)—one obtained from a writing that “even the multitude of Christians read”—in defense of the dietary mandates stipulated in Acts 15:29. On both occasions, Origen refers to the author of the book in question simply as Sextus (Σέξτος) and to the book itself as his maxims (γνώμαι), designations that correspond with the title of the document preserved in MS Π (Σέξτου γνώμαι).<sup>21</sup>

The *Sentences* is also cited three times in Origen’s extant corpus without attribution.<sup>22</sup> In *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11, he cites the saying (i.e., v. 352) of

20. Chadwick 1959, 8. He prints the text of the appendices on pp. 64–72.

21. MS Υ lacks a title. MS Π repeats its title after v. 190 and again after v. 276.

22. See also the commentary on v. 152.

“a wise and believing man” (*sapiens et fidelis vir*), indeed, the saying of “a man I often quote,” in support of his practice of deliberately withholding certain theological truths from those unworthy to hear them. The same verse is cited in support of the same practice in *Comm. Joan.* 20.6 and, together with v. 22, in the preface to Origen’s commentary on the first psalm (*Sel. Ps.* 12.1080a [= Epiphanius, *Pan.* 2.416]).

We hear little of the *Sentences* until the end of the fourth century C.E.,<sup>23</sup> when, in response to a request from “the gracious and aristocratic Roman lady Avita,” Rufinus of Aquileia (345–410 C.E.) translated the work into Latin.<sup>24</sup> In a preface to the text addressed to Avita’s husband Apronianus, Rufinus expresses the hope that it will address her need for a theological treatise whose understanding “should not require any great effort.” Indeed, the “very open and plain style” of the work that he has selected is, Rufinus believes, ideally suited to meet her needs, especially insofar as its entire contents are “expressed with such brevity that a vast meaning is unfolded in each verse, with such power that a sentence only a line long would suffice for a whole life’s training.” The collection, then, can be likened not only to “a necklace of the word and of wisdom” but also to a ring, one whose “seeds of instruction” can be kept “constantly at hand,” the little book being aptly called in Greek the *Enchiridion* or in Latin the *Ring* (*anulus*).<sup>25</sup> As for the book’s author, Rufinus refers to “Xystus, who is said to be the same man who at Rome is called Sixtus, and who gained the glory of being both bishop and martyr,”<sup>26</sup> a reference either to Pope Xystus I

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23. Although he does not refer to it by name, the influence of the Greek version of our text was felt perhaps most profoundly by Evagrius Ponticus (345–399 C.E.), for whom the *Sentences* apparently served as both a source and a model. See the commentary on vv. 71a, 75a, 81, 88, 123, 125–26, 138, 141, 152, 189, 194, 204, 277, 305, 377, 393, 394, 413. Cf. Sinkewicz 2003, 228–32.

24. Chadwick 1959, 117. Murphy (1945, 119–23) dates the translation to 398–400 C.E. Even though certain sayings in the text (e.g., v. 238) assume a male readership, Rufinus provides evidence that its contents could be deemed appropriate for a female audience as well. Note that Porphyry’s *Ad Marcellam*, a gnomic letter exhibiting numerous parallels with our *Sentences* (see part 4 below), is also addressed to a woman.

25. On Rufinus’s prologue, see Bogaert 1972.

26. Rufinus’s manner of reporting the ascription suggests that he is transmitting a tradition of some kind, though it is one that must have developed sometime after the first half of the third century C.E., since Origen betrays no knowledge of it.

(r. 117/119–126/128 C.E.)<sup>27</sup> or—more likely—to Pope Xystus II (r. 257–58 C.E.), who was martyred during the Valerian persecution.<sup>28</sup> Rufinus concludes the preface by explaining that he has appended to the received text some additional sayings, a reference not to the so-called appendices (see part 2 above), but to material from an unknown source that has not survived in the manuscript tradition.

It is worth noting that Rufinus was not the first or only person to render Sextine sayings into Latin. In 393 C.E., for example, Jerome had cited a certain saying of “Xystus” (i.e., v. 231) with approval.<sup>29</sup> Some twenty years later, he cited the same gnome (again, with approval), though now with the additional remark that its author’s book had been “translated into Latin by a certain person who has tried to father it on the martyr Xystus, not observing that in the entire volume, which he purposelessly divided into two parts, the name of Christ and of the apostles is not mentioned.”<sup>30</sup> Jerome’s denigration of Rufinus becomes even more expansive in *Ep.* 133.3:<sup>31</sup>

Who could adequately describe the rashness or rather the crack-head-ness of a fellow who ascribed the book of Sextus the Pythagorean (a man without Christ and a heathen!) to Xystus the martyr-bishop of the Roman church? In this book much is said of perfection in accordance with the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, who make man equal to God and maintain that he is of God’s substance. The result is that those who are ignorant that the volume is by a philosopher, supposing themselves to be reading the work of a martyr, drink from the golden cup of Babylon (cf. Jer 51:7). Furthermore, in that volume there is no mention of the prophets, of the patriarchs, of the apostles, or of Christ, so that he tries to make out that there was a bishop and a martyr who did not believe in Christ.

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27. The fact that practically nothing is known about this figure (see *Lib. Pont.* 8; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.3) does not prevent Conybeare (1910, 123–24) from postulating him as the author of our *Sentences*.

28. For information on Xystus II, see *Lib. Pont.* 25; Cyprian, *Ep.* 80; Damasus, *Epigr.* 13.

29. *Jov.* 1.49.

30. *Comm. Ezech.* 6 (translation from Chadwick 1959, 119). Jerome’s translations of v. 231 differ from one another as well as from the version offered by Rufinus. The “two parts” to which he alludes are presumably the original set of Sextine sayings and the now-lost material added by Rufinus.

31. Translation from Chadwick 1959, 120.

The man behind the *Sentences*, then, is not Xystus the Christian pope but Sextus the pagan philosopher, a reference perhaps to Quintus Sextius (fl. ca. 50 B.C.E.), a Stoic philosopher with Pythagorean leanings whose teaching greatly impressed Seneca.<sup>32</sup> Such ignorance regarding the work's authorship is particularly deplorable since, as Jerome complains elsewhere, this "ring" is being "widely read in many provinces, and especially by those who preach freedom from passion and sinless perfection."<sup>33</sup> For all its vitriol, Jerome's critique of the text's perfectionist associations was not entirely gratuitous, since, if the testimony of Augustine is to be trusted, Pelagius cited three of Xystus's precepts (vv. 36, 46a–b, and 60) in support of his doctrines.<sup>34</sup> Any heretical taint the collection may have thereby acquired<sup>35</sup> did not prevent Latin scribes responsible for copying the *Sentences* from attributing the text to Pope Xystus.<sup>36</sup> Nor did it prevent the work from becoming popular in monastic circles, where it is quoted, for example, in the *Rule* of the Master, the *Rule* of Saint Columban, and the *Rule* of Saint Benedict.<sup>37</sup>

While the debate between Rufinus and Jerome attests to the expanding popularity (or notoriety) of our text, their testimony (which is of a late and not altogether disinterested nature) is of little value in the task of identifying its author and his circumstances.<sup>38</sup> The evidence of Origen renders the former's (apparent) ascription to Pope Xystus II highly improbable,<sup>39</sup>

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32. Seneca, *Ep.* 59.7–8; 64.2–5; 73.12–15; 98.13; 108.17–18. See also the commentary on Sext. 109.

33. *Comm. Jer.* 4.41 (translation from Chadwick 1959, 121).

34. *Nat. grat.* 64.77. Augustine here acknowledges the work as an authentic composition of the martyred bishop, though later (after exposure to Jerome's views) he will reverse himself (*Retract.* 2.68).

35. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Vir. illust.* 1; Chadwick 1959, 120–21.

36. Most of the extant Latin manuscripts attribute the work to Pope Xystus (Gildemeister 1873, xiv–xxiii; Chadwick 1959, 5, 123–24), while the material in the Syriac version is organized under the title "Select Sayings of Saint Xystus bishop of Rome" (Lagarde 1858, iv; Gildemeister 1873, xxxi; Chadwick 1959, 6, 130).

37. See Vogüé 1973 and the commentary on vv. 145, 152, and 184. For citations of the *Sentences* in medieval literature, see Bogaert 1982; Evans 1983; Vogüé 1986.

38. As Chadwick (1959, 112–14, 135) discusses, indecision regarding Sextus's status as a Christian author has continued into modern times. Internal evidence led Chadwick himself to conclude that the compiler was Christian (1959, 137–40), though it is interesting that even among his own students the text is sometimes simply referred to as "a collection of Neopythagorean maxims" (Russell 2004, 118, cf. p. vii).

39. Chadwick (1959, 133–34) speculates that Xystus died an old man and there-



while internal evidence (see part IV below) renders an ascription to a non-Christian figure (or to any figure living before the second century C.E.) virtually impossible. It is best to conclude, then, that our author was simply, as Origen put it, “a wise and believing man,”<sup>40</sup> otherwise unknown, by the name of Sextus, writing sometime in the late second or early third century C.E.<sup>41</sup> The fact that Origen is the first author to demonstrate an acquaintance with the text raises the possibility that its originating provenance was Egyptian, a possibility that perhaps becomes a probability when we take into account the very large number of parallels between the *Sentences* and the writings of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215 C.E.).<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. SOURCES

The *Sentences* is familiar to modern readers especially from the work of Henry Chadwick, who, drawing on the contributions of Johann Gildemeister, Anton Elter, and others, published a critical edition of the Greek and Latin versions of the text in 1959, accompanied by a series of interpretive essays and explanatory notes. One of Chadwick’s major contributions was to explicate Sextus’s dependence on two generically similar collections of Pythagorean sayings, the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* and the *Clitarchi sententiae*.<sup>43</sup> The former survives principally in three witnesses, the most important of which is a manuscript from the fifteenth century C.E., Vienna

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fore could have published the *Sentences* early enough in the third century for the work to become popular by Origen’s time.

40. *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11. Maximus Confessor (*Schol. libr. myst. theol.* 4.429) similarly refers to him as “Sextus the ecclesiastical philosopher” (see the commentary on vv. 27–29).

41. Among possible unattested ascriptions, mention may be made of the Sextus named by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.27) as a Christian author active during the reign of Septimius Severus. While a date of 193–211 C.E. would tally with the evidence proffered by Origen, none of this figure’s compositions (including a treatise on the resurrection—a topic, as we shall see, of no interest to our author) has survived, leaving us with no basis of comparison with the *Sentences* and therefore no basis for identifying him as its author.

42. Remember, too, that a copy was found at Nag Hammadi (see part 2 above), a document which Rubenson identifies as one of “the few texts that can be used as a bridge between late Egyptian wisdom literature and the early Egyptian monastic exhortations” (2004, 529).

43. Chadwick 1959 provides a critical edition of these texts on pp. 73–94.

cod. 225 (MS D), which contains 119 sayings organized alphabetically under the title αἱ γνώμαι τῶν Πυθαγορείων.<sup>44</sup> Ninety-four of these sayings, plus another four sayings, are included also in Patmos cod. 263 (MS Π), a manuscript of the tenth century C.E. In addition, a Syriac version of the sixth or seventh century C.E. preserves ninety-eight aphorisms attributed to Pythagoras, ninety-four of which are also found (in the same order) in MS D.<sup>45</sup> The *Sentences* of Clitarchus, meanwhile, is present in four witnesses, the most substantial of which is Parisinus gr. 1630 (MS Φ),<sup>46</sup> a manuscript of the fourteenth century C.E., which has a collection of ninety-three unattributed aphorisms, twenty-two of which are also found in Vaticanus gr. 1144 (MS Λ), a manuscript from the fifteenth century C.E., which contains fifty-nine maxims under the title ἐκ τῶν Κλειτάρχου πραγματικῶν χρειῶν συναγωγή. In addition, there is Bodleianus Auct. F. 6.26 (MS Σ), also from the fifteenth century C.E., which has thirty-eight sayings under the heading παραινετικά, all of which are also found in MS Φ, and Parisinus gr. 1168 (MS Θ) from the thirteenth century C.E., which has twenty-three sayings under the title Κλειτάρχου, seven of which are also found in MS Φ and/or MS Λ. While MSS Φ, Λ, and Σ generally agree as to the order of the sayings that they have in common, MS Θ presents a different, and presumably secondary, arrangement.<sup>47</sup> As Chadwick also observed, there is one final writing whose study is relevant to explicating the source-critical history of Sextus's *Sentences*, namely, Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam*, a gnomic letter written around 300 C.E. in part to provide the Neoplatonic philosopher's wife spiritual guidance in his absence. This text is preserved in a single manuscript, Ambrosianus Q. 13, from the late fifteenth century C.E.<sup>48</sup>

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44. See Schenkl 1886.

45. Printed by Lagarde 1858, 195–201. Cf. Gildemeister 1870. Many of the Greek gnomes are preserved also by Stobaeus, including especially a collection of fifteen alphabetically organized sayings in *Anth.* 3.1.30–44 introduced with the heading Πυθαγόρου γνώμαι. Forty-five sayings (again, alphabetically organized) from the Vienna collection are also found in a manuscript from the sixteenth century C.E. (Vaticanus gr. 743), though these are ascribed by editors to Demophilus (Mullach 1860–1881, 1.497–99).

46. Printed in Boissonade 1833, 1.127–34.

47. Elter 1892, 37–43; Chadwick 1959, 73–74. In analyzing this text, then, it is important to bear in mind that many of its sayings are preserved by only one witness. It appears that each copyist created an epitome of sayings from a now-lost source.

48. Rocca-Serra 1971; Wicker 1987.

Viewed synoptically, the literary parallels that the *Sentences* manifests with these three comparative texts are seen to be not only numerous but also pervasive:<sup>49</sup>

<b>Sextus</b>	<b>Clitarchus</b>	<b><i>Sent. Pythag.</i></b>	<b><i>Marc.</i></b>
4		40	(15)
10	66		
14		6a	
17		97	
18–19		(30 <sup>a-b</sup> )	
22		(112)	(15)
23	(6)		
24	17		(11)
35			(11)
36			11
41		(79)	
44			(11)
46a		(66 <sup>a</sup> )	(11, 19)
49	4	39 <sup>a</sup>	11
50	11		
51	5		
53	137		
55	7		
57a	8		
61–62			(21)
71b	10		
74			34
75a	(86)	21	34
75b	85	71	34
76		110 <sup>c</sup>	(14)
86a	13		

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49. What follows is a corrected and expanded version of the catalogue provided by Chadwick 1959, 144–46.

88	14		
92	15	(3 <sup>b</sup> )	(12)
93	16		
97	17		11
102			(9)
113	18		(12)
114	19		(12)
120	20		
122			12
124			12
125	21		12
126			12
127		121 <sup>a</sup>	12
128	22	3 <sup>a</sup>	12
134			13
136			13
137	23		
138	24	(110 <sup>d</sup> )	
140	143 <sup>a</sup>		
141	25, 143 <sup>b</sup>		
142	143 <sup>c</sup>		
145		(92)	13
146	26		
149	27		
152	28	(7)	(14)
153	29		
154	30		
156	31		
157	32		
159	34		
162a–b	36		
163a	37		
163b	35		
164a	39 <sup>a</sup>		

164b	38		
165a–c			14
165d	40		
165f	41		
165g	39 <sup>b</sup>		
168	42		
169	43		
171a	44		
174	45		
176	(63, 134)		
177	48		(8)
178		6	
181			9
182		13 <sup>c</sup>	
186	53		
190	9		
191		(17)	
198		86	
202			(9)
204			(9)
205		2 <sup>b</sup> , (116)	(9)
207–208a			9
209		(2 <sup>c</sup> )	(9)
214	64		
227		(62, 80)	
231	71		
232			(35)
236	69		
238	72		
240	73		
245		(113 <sup>a</sup> )	
253b	(87)		
255	76		
265	(94, 97)		

270	95		
273			34
274a			34
274b		30 <sup>c</sup>	
283		84	
285		64	
290	(50)		
294		(89)	
295	105	(32)	
299	(106)	111 <sup>b</sup>	
301		95	(32)
303			(12)
304			16
305	(126b)	49	16
312			16
313			16
314			(16)
316		(107)	
319	134	105	
325	132	(47)	
326a		11 <sup>c</sup>	
327		11 <sup>a</sup>	
328		104	
333	109		
334–335			(35)
343	110		
345	114	(103)	(35)
350			15
351		55 <sup>a</sup>	15
352	(144)	55 <sup>b</sup>	15
356			15
359		56	15
360			15
362		(7), 115	15

366			(15)
371		51	35
376a		4	15
378		70 <sup>b</sup>	
381		102 <sup>a</sup>	16
382		70 <sup>c-d</sup>	
385	120		
387	121		
399	123		
400		35	
402		(102 <sup>c</sup> )	(16)
404	15, (122)		
406		(94)	(17)
408		83 <sup>a</sup>	
409	126a		
416			16
417			16
418			16
421	(1)		
422			16
423			16
424	(135)		16
426		14 <sup>a</sup>	16
427		14 <sup>b</sup>	16
429		15 <sup>a</sup>	16
430		10 <sup>a</sup> , (16)	20
431		10 <sup>b</sup>	
443		(20 <sup>c</sup> )	

While the overall situation is obviously complex, comparative analysis yields the following general observations:

- Sextus has sixty-six sayings with parallels in the *Sentences* of Clitarchus. This represents 13 percent of all the sayings in

Sextus and 46 percent of all the sayings in Clitarchus. Of these sixty-six sayings, four also have parallels in the *Ad Marcellam*.

- Sextus has thirty-nine sayings with parallels in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*.<sup>50</sup> This represents 8 percent of all the sayings in Sextus and 31 percent of all the sayings in the Pythagorean collection. Of these thirty-nine sayings, eighteen also have parallels in the *Ad Marcellam*.
- Apart from the parallels that they have in common with Clitarchus and/or the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, Sextus and the *Ad Marcellam* have twenty-five parallel sayings. This represents 5 percent of all the sayings in Sextus and less than 1 percent of all the sayings in the *Ad Marcellam*.<sup>51</sup> The *Ad Marcellam* also exhibits a number of parallels with Clitarchus and (especially) the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* that are not found in Sextus.
- There are nine occasions when the parallels between Sextus and Clitarchus exhibit exact verbal agreement.<sup>52</sup> More often, the parallels exhibit minor differences in wording, word order, or both.
- There are two occasions when the parallels between Sextus and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* exhibit exact verbal agreement.<sup>53</sup> Everywhere else, the parallels exhibit minor differences in wording, word order, or both.
- The twenty-five parallels that Sextus and Porphyry have apart from the parallels that they also share with Clitarchus and/or the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* never exhibit exact verbal

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50. Counted twice in this reckoning are four sayings that the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* has in common with both Sextus and Clitarchus. See the commentary on Sext. 49, 75b, 128, and 319.

51. Thus of all the sayings in Sextus, 26 percent (13 + 8 + 5 percent) have parallels in one or more of the comparative sources, meaning that nearly three-quarters of the Sextine sayings lack such parallels, a fact that renders Chadwick's favorite designation for our author (i.e., "the compiler," e.g., pp. 138–39, 152, 154, 157) somewhat misleading.

52. Sext. 10 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 66; Sext. 114 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 19; Sext. 128 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 22; Sext. 137 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 23; Sext. 140 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 143<sup>a</sup>; Sext. 156 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 31; Sext. 157 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 32; Sext. 164a = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 39<sup>a</sup>; Sext. 385 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 120.

53. Sext. 128 = *Sent. Pythag.* 3<sup>a</sup>; Sext. 305 = *Sent. Pythag.* 49 (ms II).



agreement. Overall, differences between Sextus and Porphyry in wording and word order tend to be more substantial than those between Sextus and Clitarchus or those between Sextus and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*.

- On those occasions when both Sextus and Porphyry have a parallel with the same saying in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, it is more common for Porphyry and the Pythagorean collection to agree against Sextus in the saying's wording or word order than for Porphyry and Sextus to agree against the version of the saying in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, on those (far fewer) occasions when both Sextus and Porphyry have a parallel with the same saying in Clitarchus, it is more common for Porphyry and Clitarchus to agree against Sextus in the saying's wording or word order than for Porphyry and Sextus to agree against the version of the saying in Clitarchus.<sup>55</sup>
- The correspondence in the arrangement of sayings is higher between Sextus and Clitarchus than it is between Sextus and the *Ad Marcellam*, and much higher between Sextus and Clitarchus than it is between Sextus and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*. In addition, while the parallels that Sextus exhibits with Clitarchus are strewn throughout the text, they tend to be concentrated in the first half of the *Sentences*, with forty-four of the sixty-six sayings that Sextus has in common with Clitarchus occurring between Sext. 49 and Sext. 177. On the other hand, nineteen of the thirty-nine sayings that Sextus has in common with the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* occur between Sext. 274b and Sext. 382. Most of the sayings that Sextus has in common with Porphyry, finally, are concentrated in clus-

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54. See especially Sext. 127 = *Sent. Pythag.* 121<sup>a</sup> = *Marc.* 12; Sext. 205 = *Sent. Pythag.* 2<sup>b</sup> = *Marc.* 9; Sext. 371 = *Sent. Pythag.* 51 = *Marc.* 35; Sext. 381 = *Sent. Pythag.* 102<sup>a</sup> = *Marc.* 16; Sext. 429 = *Sent. Pythag.* 15<sup>a</sup> = *Marc.* 16. More complicated scenarios are presented by Sext. 4 = *Sent. Pythag.* 40 = *Marc.* 15 and Sext. 352 = *Sent. Pythag.* 55<sup>b</sup> = *Marc.* 15. Cf. also Sext. 22 = *Sent. Pythag.* 112 = *Marc.* 15; Sext. 402 = *Sent. Pythag.* 102<sup>c</sup> = *Marc.* 16; Sext. 406 = *Sent. Pythag.* 94 = *Marc.* 17.

55. See Sext. 49 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 4 = *Marc.* 11; Sext. 97 = Clitarchus, *Sent.* 17 = *Marc.* 11.

ters (e.g., Sext. 122–136, 350–362, 416–429), wherein we sometimes find agreements in relative order.

- Even as Sextus often agrees with Clitarchus in the general order of shared material, there are occasions where Porphyry agrees with Clitarchus against Sextus in the arrangement of sayings.<sup>56</sup> There are also occasions where Porphyry agrees with the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* against Sextus in the arrangement of sayings.<sup>57</sup>
- Besides the parallels discussed so far, Sextus also exhibits a fair number of partial parallels with the comparative texts (indicated in the chart above by the numbers in parentheses), places where verbatim agreement is limited to one or two words and/or short phrases. Sextus exhibits more partial parallels with the *Ad Marcellam* than with the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, and more partial parallels with the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* than with Clitarchus. Obviously, a certain amount of subjectivity on the interpreter's part figures into the identification of such partial parallels. Nevertheless, their presence in any quantity, especially beside so many "full" parallels, raises the possibility of indirect as well as direct literary influence among the four texts.
- As we shall see, Sextus contains some twenty sayings of biblical origin or character. None of these sayings have parallels in Clitarchus, Porphyry, or the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*.

Consideration of these factors led Chadwick to a conclusion regarding the literary relationship of these four texts—indeed, a conclusion he found "impossible to resist"—namely, that Sextus and Porphyry independently utilized the *Clitarchi sententiae* and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*

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56. For example, the sayings in Clitarchus, *Sent.* 48 and 49 occur together and in the same order in *Marc.* 8, while Clitarchus, *Sent.* 48 has a parallel in Sext. 177, and Clitarchus, *Sent.* 49 has a parallel in Sext. 547.

57. For example, the three members of *Sent. Pythag.* 102 occur in the same order and (essentially) the same wording in *Marc.* 16, while *Sent. Pythag.* 102<sup>a</sup> has a parallel in Sext. 381 and *Sent. Pythag.* 102<sup>c</sup> has a partial parallel in Sext. 402. Similarly, the six members of *Sent. Pythag.* 110 occur in the same order and (essentially) the same wording in *Marc.* 14, while *Sent. Pythag.* 110<sup>c</sup> has a parallel in Sext. 76 and *Sent. Pythag.* 110<sup>d</sup> has a partial parallel in Sext. 138.

as sources for their compositions.<sup>58</sup> This would best account both for Porphyry's tendency to agree with the two Pythagorean collections against Sextus and for the absence in the *Ad Marcellam* of Sextus's distinctively Christian material. For his part, Sextus favored the *Clitarchi sententiae* over the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, drawing on the former more frequently, citing it without alteration more frequently, following its arrangement of sayings more closely, and using up a greater portion of its material (almost one-half, compared to less than one-third of the material in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*).<sup>59</sup>

As compelling as this explanation is, it leaves unaccounted the parallels (and partial parallels) that Sextus has with the *Ad Marcellam* apart from what the two have in common with Clitarchus and the Pythagorean collection. One possibility would be to posit a now-lost text, one that (like the *Clitarchi sententiae* and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*) Sextus and Porphyry accessed independently of one another. The number and nature of the parallels, however, make the reconstruction of such a source problematic, to say the least. An alternative explanation suggests itself when passages such as the following are considered:

*Sent. Pythag.* 49: κακῶν πράξεων κακὸς δαίμων ἡγεμῶν ἐστίν.

*Sext.* 304: ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπων βεβαιοῖ καλὰς πράξεις.

*Sext.* 305: κακῶν πράξεων κακὸς δαίμων ἡγεμῶν ἐστίν.

*Marc.* 16a: θεὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπον βεβαιοῖ πράσσοντα καλά.

*Marc.* 16b: κακῶν δὲ πράξεων κακὸς δαίμων ἡγεμῶν.

While the wording varies slightly, Sextus and Porphyry agree in presenting together and consecutively two gnomes, only one of which has an analogue in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*.

*Sent. Pythag.* 55<sup>a</sup>: λόγον περὶ θεοῦ τοῖς ὑπὸ δόξης διεφθαρμένοις λέγειν οὐκ ἀσφαλές.

*Sent. Pythag.* 55<sup>b</sup>: καὶ γὰρ τὰ ἀληθῆ λέγειν ἐπὶ τούτων καὶ τὰ ψευδῆ κίνδυνον φέρει.

*Sext.* 350: λόγου περὶ θεοῦ μὴ παντὶ κοινώνει.

*Sext.* 351: οὐκ ἀσφαλὲς ἀκούειν περὶ θεοῦ τοῖς ὑπὸ δόξης διεφθαρμένοις.

58. Chadwick 1959, 148, cf. 158.

59. Chadwick's (1959, 144–59) presentation of the evidence obscures this fact.

Sext. 352: περι θεοῦ καὶ τάληθῆ λέγειν κίνδυνος οὐ μικρός.

Marc. 15a: μήτε βίου μήτε λόγου τοῦ περι θεοῦ κοινώνει.

Marc. 15b: λόγον γὰρ περι θεοῦ τοῖς ὑπὸ δόξης διεφθαρμένοις λέγειν οὐκ ἀσφαλές.

Marc. 15c: καὶ γὰρ καὶ τάληθῆ λέγειν ἐπὶ τούτων περι θεοῦ καὶ τὰ ψευδῆ κίνδυνον ἴσον φέρει.

Again, while the wording varies (sometimes significantly), Sextus and Porphyry agree in presenting together and consecutively three gnomes, only two of which (the second and the third) have analogues in their source material. In addition, Sextus and Porphyry agree against the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* in adding περι θεοῦ to the third saying (though they do so in different places).

*Sent. Pythag.* 56: λόγου τοῦ περι θεοῦ προηγείσθω τὰ θεοφιλῆ ἔργα.

Sext. 359: τὰ ἔργα σου θεοφιλῆ προηγείσθω παντὸς λόγου περι θεοῦ.

Sext. 360: ἐπὶ πλήθους λέγειν περι θεοῦ μὴ ἐπιτήδευε.

Marc. 15d: προηγείσθω οὖν τοῦ περι θεοῦ λόγου τὰ θεοφιλῆ ἔργα.

Marc. 15e: σιγάσθω ὁ περι αὐτοῦ λόγος ἐπὶ πλήθους.

Again, while the wording varies, Sextus and Porphyry agree in presenting together and consecutively two gnomes, only one of which has an analogue in their source material. Note further that Sext. 362 = Marc. 15 = *Sent. Pythag.* 115, so that Sextus and Porphyry further agree in bringing *Sent. Pythag.* 56 and *Sent. Pythag.* 115 into close proximity with one another.

Analysis of such examples,<sup>60</sup> then, raises the prospect that what we are dealing with is not a now-lost source, but a now-lost edition of the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, one that contained not only different versions of the sayings preserved in the extant manuscripts but also more sayings and that organized its contents differently.<sup>61</sup> Here it is important to bear in mind that aphoristic anthologies generally lend themselves to complex editorial

60. Sext. 127–128 and Marc. 12 agree in conjoining *Sent. Pythag.* 3<sup>a</sup> and *Sent. Pythag.* 121<sup>a</sup>. A more complicated scenario is presented by Sext. 75a–b = Marc. 34, where Sextus and Porphyry agree in conjoining *Sent. Pythag.* 21 and *Sent. Pythag.* 71, though they may be doing so under the influence of Clitarchus, *Sent.* 85–86. See the commentary on vv. 75a–b.

61. Cf. Chadwick 1959, 149–53.

trajectories, as an inspection of the ancient witnesses to Clitarchus, the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum*, and, of course, Sextus himself attests.

While the sample size is smaller, similar phenomena can be observed when attention is turned to parallels involving Clitarchus; for example:

Clitarchus, *Sent.* 21: ὧν ἡγεμόνες οἱ πόνοι, ταῦτα εὐχου σοι γενέσθαι μετὰ τοὺς πόνους.

Sext. 125: ὧν ἡγεμόνες οἱ πόνοι, ταῦτά σοι εὐχου γενέσθαι μετὰ τοὺς πόνους.

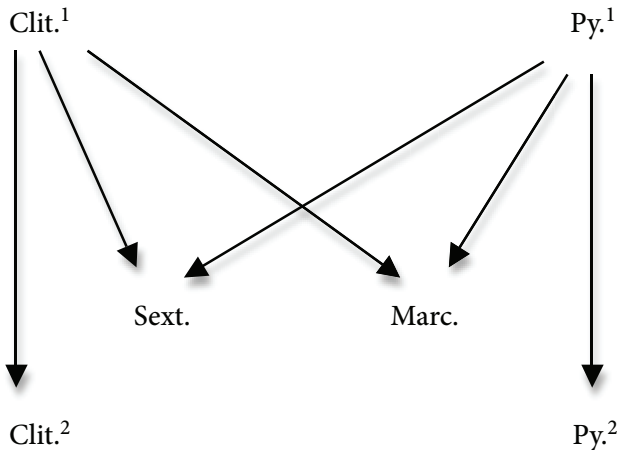
Sext. 126: εὐχὴ ῥαθύμου μάταιος λόγος.

*Marc.* 12a: ὧν ἡγεμόνες οἱ μετ' ἀρετῆς πόνοι, ταῦτα εὐχώμεθα γενέσθαι μετὰ τοὺς πόνους.

*Marc.* 12b: εὐχὴ γὰρ ῥαθύμου μάταιος λόγος.

Even as the wording varies, Sextus and Porphyry agree in presenting together and consecutively two gnomes, only one of which has an analogue in their source material, the same sort of pattern detected above.<sup>62</sup>

Consideration for such editorial patterns yields the following stemma diagram:



Here Clit.<sup>1</sup> and Py.<sup>1</sup> refer respectively to the now-lost editions of the *Clitarchi sententiae* and the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* utilized independently

62. For another example, see the commentary on v. 177.

by Sextus (Sext.) and by Porphyry in the *Ad Marcellam* (Marc.), while Clit.<sup>2</sup> and Py.<sup>2</sup> refer respectively to the versions of these texts as they can be reconstructed from the extant manuscripts. See further the commentary on vv. 36, 170, 177, 204, 273, 350, 356, and 360.

As for the nature of his interactions with the source material, our author's approach can be fairly described as both active and variable. For example, Sextine redactional activity often results in the expansion of a saying,<sup>63</sup> though it is almost as likely to result in a saying's contraction.<sup>64</sup> Changes in wording,<sup>65</sup> word order,<sup>66</sup> or a combination of the two<sup>67</sup> are quite common, sometimes resulting in the reformulation of a saying.<sup>68</sup> On other occasions it appears that our author is not so much rewriting a received saying as he is composing one of his own, drawing on the source material for inspiration.<sup>69</sup> On still other occasions, he seems to combine elements from different sayings.<sup>70</sup> There are also more than a few instances where it appears that Sextus has redacted certain gnomes in order to make them align better with the surrounding text.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the most distinctive edi-

63. E.g., κρείττον ἀποθανεῖν ἢ διὰ γαστρὸς ἀκρασίαν ψυχὴν ἀμαυρῶσαι (Clitarchus, *Sent.* 114) becomes κρείττον ἀποθανεῖν λιμῶ ἢ διὰ γαστρὸς ἀκρασίαν ψυχὴν ἀμαυρῶσαι (Sext. 345). Cf. the commentary on vv. 36, 50, 146, 165d, 171a, 177, 236, 325, 422–423.

64. E.g., ἄξιος ἀνθρώπος θεοῦ θεὸς ἂν εἶη ἐν ἀνθρώποις (*Sent. Pythag.* 4) becomes ἄξιος ἀνθρώπος θεοῦ θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις (Sext. 376a). Cf. the commentary on vv. 127, 168, 181, 350, 352, 371. A more extreme case is represented by Sext. 429 = *Sent. Pythag.* 15<sup>a</sup>.

65. E.g., ἐκ φιληδονίας ἀκολασία φύεται (Clitarchus, *Sent.* 10) becomes ἐκ φιληδονίας ἀκολασίαν οὐκ ἐκφεύζει (Sext. 71b). Cf. the commentary on vv. 49, 138, 153, 163a, 174, 178, 182, 205, 231, 240, 270, 274b, 283, 399.

66. E.g., ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἀπατῆσαι δυνατόν λόγῳ, θεὸν δὲ ἀδύνατον (Clitarchus, *Sent.* 53) becomes δυνατόν ἀπατῆσαι λόγῳ ἀνθρώπων, θεὸν μὲντοι ἀδύνατον (Sext. 186). Cf. the commentary on vv. 125, 152, 159, 198, 328, 359.

67. E.g., πρᾶττε μεγάλα, μὴ ὑπισχνούμενος μεγάλα (*Sent. Pythag.* 86) becomes ποίει μεγάλα μὴ μεγάλα ὑπισχνούμενος (Sext. 198). Cf. the commentary on vv. 182, 214, 351.

68. E.g., ὁ γὰρ μὴ μεταδιδούς ἀγαθοῖς δεομένοις οὐ λήψεται δεόμενος παρὰ θεῶν (*Sent. Pythag.* 70<sup>b</sup>) becomes μὴ διδοῦς δεομένοις δυνατός ὢν οὐ λήψη δεόμενος παρὰ θεοῦ (Sext. 378). Cf. the commentary on vv. 17, 202, 333, 360, 381, 382.

69. E.g., Sext. 253b (ἔστιν σοφοῦ καὶ ὕπνος ἐγκράτεια) appears to have been prompted by Clitarchus, *Sent.* 87 (ὕπνον προσίεσο διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον), even though the two sayings have only one word in common. Cf. the commentary on vv. 176, 191, 227, 245, 273, 294, 408.

70. See the commentary on vv. 92, 178, 295, 299, 304, 319.

71. E.g., in v. 301 Sextus replaces συνετός in his source (*Sent. Pythag.* 95) with σοφός, creating a catchword with σοφόν in v. 302. Cf. the commentary on vv. 53, 57a,

torial feature of our *Sentences* is its author's proclivity for inserting πιστός and related terms into received sayings,<sup>72</sup> especially since πιστός represents what Chadwick deemed to be the best example of Sextus's "characteristically Christian" vocabulary. As he notes, this is one of the more important ways in which our author adapts his "pagan" sources to an ideational environment more amenable to his intended audience.<sup>73</sup>

Also characteristically Christian is Sextus's reliance on biblical sources, which can be catalogued as follows:<sup>74</sup>

v. 6	(cf. Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8)
v. 9	Luke 16:10 (cf. Matt 5:19)
vv. 12–13	Matt 5:29–30; 18:8–9 (cf. Mark 9:43–48)
v. 15	Luke 6:30
v. 20	Matt 22:21
v. 30	(cf. 1 John 1:5)
v. 32	(cf. Heb 1:14)
v. 39	Matt 5:26 (cf. Matt 18:34; Luke 12:59)
v. 41	(cf. Luke 12:34)
v. 77	Matt 6:20; Luke 12:33
v. 87	Lev 19:18
v. 89	Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31
vv. 106a–b	Matt 22:37, 39; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27
v. 110	Matt 15:11; Mark 7:15
v. 130	(cf. Matt 6:19–20)
v. 141	(cf. Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13)
v. 155	Prov 10:19a

86a, 97, 149, 162a–b, 163b, 190, 304–305, 430. It is interesting that even as he contextualizes sayings in this manner, Sextus also demonstrates a propensity to drop connecting particles like δέ and οὖν, e.g., ἀπλήρωτον γὰρ ἐπιθυμία, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἄπορος (Clitarchus, *Sent.* 26) becomes ἀπλήρωτος ἐπιθυμία, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἄπορος (Sext. 146). Cf. the commentary on vv. 165f, 165g, 207, 208a, 230a, 274a, 344, 422, 427, 431. For exceptions, see on vv. 51, 55, 255, 274b, 283.

72. E.g., οὐδεμία προσποίησις ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον λανθάνει (Clitarchus, *Sent.* 132) becomes οὐδεμία προσποίησις ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον λανθάνει, μάλιστα δὲ ἐν πίστει (Sext. 325). Cf. the commentary on vv. 36, 49, 169, 171a, 209, 400, 409. Note that πιστός occurs 32 times in Sextus but never in the *Sententiae Pythagoreorum* and only once in Clitarchus.

73. Chadwick 1959, 138, 154.

74. Cf. Chadwick 1959, 139–40; Delling 1961.

v. 175	(cf. Rom 2:24)
v. 190	(cf. Gen 1:26–27)
v. 192	(cf. Mark 10:23; Luke 18:24)
v. 193	Matt 19:23
v. 201	(cf. 1 Pet 4:6)
v. 210b	Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31
v. 213	Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27–28
v. 226	(cf. Lev 19:18)
vv. 227–228	(cf. Acts 2:44–47)
v. 233	Matt 5:28
v. 242	(cf. Matt 10:8)
v. 264a	Matt 19:21 (cf. Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22)
v. 271	Rom 7:18
v. 303	(cf. 2 Cor 1:23)
v. 316	(cf. Matt 6:21; Luke 12:34)
v. 320	2 Cor 5:4
v. 329	(cf. Luke 6:30)
v. 336	(cf. Matt 20:26–27; Mark 10:43–44)
v. 340	Sir 4:10
vv. 341–342	Matt 6:1–2
v. 347	(cf. Jas 5:3)
v. 372	(cf. 1 Tim 2:1)
v. 386	(cf. Isa 54:14)

Altogether there are twenty sayings in the *Sentences* that incorporate allusions to scripture, the most popular text being the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>75</sup> Verse 39 (“After his release from the body, one who lives an evil life is called to account by an evil demon until the last penny is paid up”), for example, draws on Matt 5:26 (“Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny”). Here, as elsewhere, biblical material is not cited verbatim (in this case only τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην is retained) but is accommodated to the aphoristic form and philosophical argot of the author’s nonbiblical sources. Likewise typical is vv. 12–14:

Sext. 12: It is neither eye nor hand that sins, nor anything of that sort, but one who uses hand and eye wrongly.

75. Cf. Köhler 1987, 508.



Sext. 13: Every part of the body that persuades you not to observe moderation, throw away; for it is better to live moderately without the part than to live ruinously with it.

Sext. 14: Consider that both the rewards and the punishments given to you at the judgment will be unending.

This cluster is clearly based on Matt 5:29–30; 18:8–9 (cf. Mark 9:43–48). Observe, however, that the final line (Sext. 14), even as it projects a scenario consistent with that of the biblical source (note especially τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον in Matt 18:8), is derived not from any gospel text but from *Sent. Pythag.* 6a, which Sextus cites with virtually no change. Similar again is vv. 155–156:

Prov 10:19a: ἐκ πολυλογίας οὐκ ἐκφεύξει ἁμαρτίαν.

Prov 10:19b: φειδόμενος δὲ χειλέων νοήμων ἔσση.

Sext. 155: πολυλογία οὐκ ἐκφεύγει ἁμαρτίαν.

Sext. 156: βραχυλογία σοφία παρακολουθεῖ.

Upon recognizing the allusion to the first clause of Prov 10:19 in Sext. 155, the reader might be excused for assuming that Sext. 156 is based on its second clause. The line's actual source, however, is not a biblical proverb but Clitarchus, *Sent.* 31, which Sextus reproduces exactly. Such integration is typical of the sort of hermeneutic Sextus models for his readers.<sup>76</sup> In still other cases, what the Sextine evidence reflects is not so much a particular biblical text as the particular appropriation of that text in early Christian circles. For example, the saying in v. 316 (“Where your ability to reason is, there is your good”) appears to be based not on the dominical logion in Matt 6:21 but on a noetic version of the logion circulating in the ancient church. Compare, for example, Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 15.16: “For where the treasure is, there also is the mind of a human being.”<sup>77</sup>

In addition to these twenty sayings, there are twenty more sayings that entail possible or indirect allusions to scripture (indicated in the chart above by the references in parentheses). For instance, v. 30 (“God is

76. Cf. Clement, *Strom.* 1.1.18.1: “My miscellanies will embrace the truth which is mixed in with the dogmas of philosophy—or rather which is covered and hidden with them, as the edible part of the nut is covered by the shell. In my view, only the farmers of faith are fit to protect the seeds of truth.” Cf. also below, nn. 89–90.

77. Delling 1961, 231.

a wise light not admitting of its opposite”) can be compared with 1 John 1:5 (“God is light and in him there is no darkness at all”), v. 130 (“Honor none of the things that an evil man might take from you”) with Matt 6:19 (“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where . . . thieves break in and steal”), v. 201 (τέλος ἡγοῦ βίου τὸ ζῆν κατὰ θεόν) with 1 Pet 4:6 (ζῶσι δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι), v. 226 (“The one who does not love a sage does not love himself”) with Lev 19:18 (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”), v. 242 (“What you freely receive from God, freely give as well”) with Matt 10:8 (“You received without payment; give without payment”), and v. 336 (“It is better to serve others than to be served by others”) with Matt 20:26 (“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant”). Of course, care must be observed when drawing conclusions from such parallels. For instance, even if Chadwick includes v. 190 (σέβου σοφὸν ἄνδρα ὡς εἰκόνα θεοῦ ζῶσαν) in his list of Sextus’s “characteristically Christian” features,<sup>78</sup> it should be noted that its content derives not from any biblical source (cf. Gen 1:26–27) but from Clitarchus, *Sent.* 9: δίκαιος ἀνὴρ εἰκῶν θεοῦ. Similar issues arise when considering a case such as the following:

Matt 5:29: “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and cast it from you; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”

Sext. 13: “Every member of the body that persuades you not to observe moderation, throw away; for it is better to live moderately without the part than to live ruinously with it.”

Porphry, *Marc.* 34: “Often people cut some limb to save their lives; you should be prepared to cut off the whole body to save your soul.”

Sext. 273: “You may see people cutting off and throwing away their own limbs in order to keep the rest of the body strong. Is it not much better to do this in order to observe moderation?”

At different points in the collection we find a pair of similar sayings, one whose formulation is more familiar from a biblical or Christian context, and another whose formulation is more familiar from one of the author’s non-Christian sources. This phenomenon—one that requires of the knowing reader a certain mediating reflection—is something that occurs else-

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78. Chadwick 1959, 154.

where in the *Sentences*. Verse 15, for example, has a counterpart in v. 91b, v. 16 in v. 38, vv. 33–34 in v. 176, v. 65 in v. 189, v. 166 in v. 305, v. 175 in v. 396, and v. 389b in v. 433.

Finally, there are another dozen or so additional places where Sextus is seen to be utilizing specific biblical images or concepts, including, most notably, the image of God as father (vv. 58–60, 135, 221–222, 225, 228, 376b). See further the commentary on vv. 158, 166, 184, 210a, 292, 311, and 425. Chadwick also identified a small number of specific terms, including *ἐκλεκτός* (vv. 1–2, 35, 433), *κόσμος* (vv. 15, 16, 20, 37, 82b, 235, 405), and, of course, *πιστός* (see above), that are employed in a manner consistent with Christian usage.<sup>79</sup>

## 5. MORPHOLOGY

The *Sentences* of Sextus is a typical example of a gnomic anthology, or gnomologium, and as such can be compared not only with the two Pythagorean anthologies upon which it relies but also with a variety of other ancient texts, including the *Instruction* of Papyrus Insinger,<sup>80</sup> the *Sentences* of Menander, the *Sentences* of Syriac Menander, and the *Sentences* of Publilius Syrus.<sup>81</sup> The monostichic form predominates, some sayings being as short as two or three words (e.g., vv. 68–70), though multisegmented sayings can also be found (e.g., vv. 28, 230b). Admonitions (e.g., vv. 82b, 338), jussives (e.g., vv. 91a, 177), conditionals (e.g., vv. 247, 262), and wisdom sentences (e.g., vv. 176, 337) are all well represented, sometimes in isolation (as in the examples just given), sometimes bundled in various combinations so as to create rhetorically coherent exhortatory clusters, for example, vv. 141–142 (matching conditionals), vv. 190–191 (admonition + jussive), vv. 268–270 (jussive + admonition + wisdom sentence), vv. 295–296 (admonition + wisdom sentence), vv. 310–311 (complementary wisdom sentences), vv. 341–342 (wisdom sentence + conditional), etc. In some cases, groupings are based on structural as well as thematic affinities, as with this pair of matching admonitions:

Sext. 178: ὁ μὴ δεῖ ποιεῖν, μηδ' ὑπονοῦ ποιεῖν.

Sext. 179: ἂ μὴ θέλεις παθεῖν, μηδὲ ποίει.

79. Chadwick 1959, 154.

80. For a comparison of this text with Sextus, see Lichtheim 1983, 187–91.

81. Cf. Küchler 1979, 256–58.

While the *Sentences* as a whole exhibits an assortment of text-structuring techniques, by far the most common is catchword composition, the types of which include simple (e.g., vv. 167–168, 186–187), compound (e.g., vv. 417–418, 422–423), anaphoric (e.g., vv. 143–144, 415b–417), epistrophic (e.g., vv. 7a–b, 430–431), and extended (e.g., vv. 350–362, 411–418) catchword. Another common structuring device is antithetical juxtaposition (e.g., vv. 61–62, 113–114). We also find examples of interlocking structures (e.g., vv. 6–8, 94–97). Connectors like *δέ* and *γάρ* are used to link sayings as well (e.g., vv. 29, 255), though rather sparingly. Like other gnostic anthologists, Sextus is unafraid of repetition, sometimes reusing the same saying in different contexts and combinations. Note in particular the following: v. 59 = v. 222 (MS *Υ* omits the former), v. 89 = v. 210b (Rufinus omits the latter), v. 92 = v. 404 (with a slight difference), v. 98 = v. 334 (MS *Π* omits the former).<sup>82</sup> As to their length and complexity, the exhortatory units vary, most containing two or three verses, though some can extend to several lines, as we see, for example, with vv. 204–209:

Sext. 204: οὐκ ἀναβήσεται πάθος ἐπὶ καρδίαν πιστοῦ.

Sext. 205: πᾶν πάθος ψυχῆς λόγῳ πολέμιον.

Sext. 206: ὁ ἂν πράξει ἐν πάθει ὦν, μετανοήσεις.

Sext. 207: πάθη νοσημάτων ἀρχαί.

Sext. 208a: κακία νόσος ψυχῆς.

Sext. 208b: ἀδικία ψυχῆς θάνατος.

Sext. 209: τότε δόκει πιστὸς εἶναι, ὅταν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν ἀπαλλαγῆς.

The term *πάθος* functions as a keyword for the unit, forms of the word occurring in five of its seven lines, while the catchword *ψυχῆς* binds the structurally similar pair of wisdom sentences in vv. 208a–b with v. 209, and, to a lesser extent, with v. 205. The saying in v. 207, meanwhile, is joined to the couplet that follows by the use of the similar terms *νοσημάτων* (v. 207) and *νόσος* (v. 208a). Note finally the *inclusio* created by the repeti-

82. Note also that a fairly large number of sayings in the original collection have repetitions or near repetitions in the appendices: v. 115 = v. 602, v. 117 = v. 603, v. 227 = v. 594, v. 241 = v. 570, v. 282 = v. 573, v. 386 = v. 608, v. 427 = v. 589, v. 428 = v. 588, v. 443 = v. 592. Cf. Chadwick 1959, 153–54.

tion of πιστός (as well as πάθος) in v. 204 and v. 209: what begins as an assertion concludes as an appeal.<sup>83</sup>

Like the other examples of its genre, the *Sentences* evidences no overall literary structure, though a significant number of sayings in the collection have been similarly grouped by subject matter. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the text opens with a series of coordinated units, as if the author were alerting his readers to key themes in the instruction that follows. Thus, after an impressive introductory sorites (vv. 1–5), we have units on sin (vv. 6–14), on “the world” (vv. 15–21), on the nature of God (vv. 25–30), on God’s relationship with humanity (vv. 31–36), and on honoring God (vv. 41–50). Evidence of topical organization is less consistent after this point, though the reader still encounters a significant number of coherent compositions, many of them unified by the use of keyword,<sup>84</sup> including units on the sage’s thoughts (vv. 54–62), on justice (vv. 63–66), on moderation (vv. 67–75b), on piety and impiety (vv. 82e–88), on moral action (vv. 93–97), on self-sufficiency (vv. 98–103), on food (vv. 108a–111), on acquisitiveness (vv. 115–121b), on prayer (vv. 122–128), on speech-ethics (vv. 149–165g), on passion (vv. 204–209), on benefaction (vv. 210a–214), on marriage (vv. 230a–240), on learning (vv. 248–251), on children (vv. 254–257), on diet (vv. 265–270), on seriousness (vv. 278–282), on the sage (vv. 306–311), on death (vv. 320–324), on the soul (vv. 345–349), and on caution in making theological statements (vv. 350–368).<sup>85</sup> Sextus not only repeats individual sayings, then, he also repeats topical units (e.g., compare vv. 108a–111 with vv. 265–270). Perhaps most interesting in this regard are the two major instructions on speech, vv. 149–165g and vv. 350–368. The former (based substantially on Clitarchus) offers a “secular”

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83. Kirk (1998, 121–25) helpfully analyzes the morphology of several instructional units in the *Sentences*, including vv. 67–72, 93–98, and 307–311. See also Lazaridis 2007, 230–236.

84. See especially the commentary on vv. 54–62, 63–66, 67–75b, 93–97, 108a–111, 122–128, 204–209, 248–251, 254–257, 265–270, 306–311.

85. Many sayings in the appendices are also organized by subject matter, e.g., there are sections on ruling well (vv. 452–460), on Cynic self-sufficiency (vv. 461–464), on citizenship (vv. 481–485), on parents (vv. 486–495), on siblings (vv. 496–498), on marriage (vv. 499–517), on children (vv. 518–523), on human nature (vv. 524–529), on education (vv. 540–547), on ruling well (vv. 548–555), and on the nature of God (vv. 556–569). Both the consistency with which their sayings have been arranged as well as some of the specific topics represented (citizenship, parents, etc.) distinguish the appendices from the original collection.

view on the subject, its twenty-six sayings including not a single reference to God, while the latter (virtually free of Clitarchan influence) offers a more “theological” perspective, the phrase *περι θεοῦ* occurring no less than seventeen times. Taken as a whole, the priorities indicated by these various topical units in the *Sentences* are of obvious import for constructing the text’s ideational profile, a task to which we now turn.

## 6. ORIENTATION AND OUTLOOK

Although the *Sentences* is properly characterized as a wisdom writing, its focus is not on wisdom as such (*σοφία*), but on the person who embodies wisdom most fully, the sage (*σοφός*). Nevertheless, in assessing the content of the *Sentences*,<sup>86</sup> it is appropriate to begin with ontology, this being determinative for both the text’s epistemology and its soteriology. Consideration of these topics, in turn, sets the stage for a discussion of the text’s anthropology, which can be seen to exhibit social, theological, and moral dimensions. In evaluating these dimensions, it is important to bear in mind the text’s rhetorical posture: Sextus’s objective is not simply to show what the sage is “like” (vv. 44–45, 381, etc.) but also to show how it is possible to become a sage oneself.

The divine exists as mind (v. 26), ineffable (vv. 27–28), incoercible (v. 306), omniscient (v. 57a, 66), and self-sufficient (vv. 49–50, 382), the creator of all things (v. 31). It is particularly in the being of the divine as wisdom (v. 30) that the various roles adopted by God in relation to creation are best appreciated, just as the execution of such roles most fully manifests the nature of wisdom itself. This is because the exercise of such wisdom is understood above all to be “illuminating” (vv. 30, 95a–b), that is, it is understood as the means by which God becomes not only knowable (v. 406) but also approachable (v. 167) and imitable (vv. 147–148). The God thus apprehended is perceived to be the source, guide, and validator of everything that is truly and abidingly good (vv. 131, 404) or—to use a favorite Sextine term—“noble” (*καλός*) in existence (vv. 104, 113, 215, 304, 390), including salvation (v. 373), God functioning as the originating and preeminent agent in a vast regime of benefaction and generosity (vv. 33, 47, 176, 242). Because the wisdom that characterizes God is “pure” (vv. 30, 36), the divine is both inimical to evil (v. 314) and utterly disassoci-

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86. Cf. Chadwick 1959, 97–106.

ated from evil (v. 440), the source of evil being something that is itself evil, namely, the demonic (v. 305). God, then, does not cause evil (v. 114); God judges evil (v. 347), thereby instantiating yet another aspect of divine providence (vv. 312, 380).

God is also defined over against “the world” (vv. 19–20, cf. v. 55), the latter signifying the realm of existence associated with the human body. Participation in corporeity is not itself evil, however, but becomes the occasion for evil when things of the body become the object of desire, rendering one vulnerable to the corrupting infiltration and influence of demonic entities (vv. 62, 305, 348). Any “goods” that the world has to offer, then, are as deceptive as they are transitory (vv. 271, 274b, 317, 405).

While the divine self exists in a perfect unity, the human self exists as a composite of disparate and potentially contentious elements. For its part, the body “belongs” to the world, while the soul belongs to God (v. 55), the soul being the element of the human personality that not only originates with God but can return to God upon its separation from the body at death (vv. 21, 39–40, 127, 347–349), this being possible because it possesses the capacity to “join” with God (vv. 416–419). Despite their different natures, the body and the soul are interconnected (vv. 320, 346, 449), however, especially insofar as it is through the former that the latter is tested (vv. 347, 425). Even though the body was created to cause little disturbance for the soul (v. 139a, cf. v. 276), its legitimate needs being finite (vv. 19, 115, 412–413), the pleasures of the body can insult (v. 448), burden (v. 335), torture (v. 411), enslave (vv. 75a–b, 322), defile (vv. 108a–b, 111), debilitate (vv. 207–209, 345), dehumanize (v. 270), and even destroy (v. 397) the soul if not vigilantly checked—bodily longings making it impossible for the soul to realize its purpose of knowing God (v. 136, cf. v. 72). Mere physical existence, then, regardless of its quality, is insufficient for human thriving. Like the body, the soul requires certain “nourishment.” Unlike the body, however, what the soul requires is not something material but something divine (v. 413). Only those who relinquish the things of the body become free to acquire the things of the soul (vv. 77–78), things that make it possible not only to know God but to become like God. Indeed, the individual who excels in the testing that accompanies somatic existence acquires attributes associated with the divine so completely that he can be described as “a god in a living human body” (v. 7a, cf. v. 82d). Insofar as the divine is manifested through wisdom (*σοφία*), it stands to reason that such an individual is ordinarily referred to as a sage (*σοφός*) or a philosopher (*φιλόσοφος*). Similarly, insofar as the divine exists as mind

(νοῦς), the element of the human personality with which the philosopher-sage occupies himself, and which he cultivates more fully than anyone else, is the power of the mind (τὸ νοοῦν) that has been established within him (vv. 26, 394), the “something godlike” within the human constitution (v. 35) that has the greatest affinity for the divine, variously identified as the mind (e.g., v. 181), the intellect (e.g., v. 381), reason (e.g., v. 363a), and the ability to reason (e.g., vv. 315–316). It is the exercise of this faculty that enables the soul to control the passions of the body and achieve a “greatness” commensurate with its divine nature (v. 403).

Knowledge of the divine, then, is presented as a matter of self-knowledge, while assimilation to the divine is conceived as a matter of self-actualization, the domain of the noetic serving both as the medium mediating between the realm of the transcendent and the realm of the soul and as the modality by which the soul recognizes its essential kinship with the divine and realizes its potential for deification. This is more than a matter of acquiring learning (vv. 251, 290, 353, 384) or knowledge (vv. 148, 250, 406, 439) about the divine, however, but also of establishing habits of thought that free the mind of sin and cultivate its capacities for moral reasoning. This helps to account for the importance attached to prayer in our text, this representing one of the sage’s most fundamental practices (e.g., vv. 122, 124–125, 128). This also helps to account for the rather large number of appeals in the text to “think” only divine things (e.g., vv. 54, 56, 82e, 95a, 233, 289) or to imagine the divine as actually present in the mind, scrutinizing its deliberations (e.g., vv. 66, 57a, 143–144). The complementarity of form, function, and content evidenced by the *Sentences* in this regard is noteworthy. Insofar as its short, striking sayings lend themselves to easy recitation and memorization, engagement with the text itself fosters such noetic habits both by reshaping one’s patterns of thought and by facilitating the translation of thought into action.<sup>87</sup> In addition, as with most gnomic compositions, the logic of the *Sentences* presents something of a rhetorical paradox, for while its ostensible purpose is to advance a particular moral perspective, the aphoristic progression of thought is actually fractured and unsystematic, jolting the reader from one judgment or topic to the next. The seemingly random character of the text’s organization underscores the underdetermined nature of the

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87. Cf. Galen, *Prop. an.* 6: “You may be sure that I have grown accustomed to ponder twice a day the exhortations attributed to Pythagoras. First I read them over, then I recite them aloud.”



sayings themselves, compelling the reader to make connections, ponder relevant applications, and discern unifying patterns. In this manner, the text not only shapes moral comportment; it also develops capacities of moral reasoning and imagination.

In support of his agenda, the author has amassed an impressive array of metaphorical fields, which together serve both to clarify the nature of his anthropological ideal and to motivate his readers to embrace this ideal as their own. Wisdom, for example, is spoken of as “leading” the soul (v. 167, cf. v. 402), which, “guided” by reason (v. 74, cf. vv. 95b, 104), “follows” God (v. 421, cf. v. 264a) in its “journey” to the divine (vv. 40, 420). Images of movement are supplemented by images of proximity and perception. The soul of the sage is always “with” God (vv. 55, 82a, 143, 444), inseparably “joined” to God (vv. 418, 423), “hearing” (v. 415b) and “seeing” (vv. 417, 446–447) God, who “dwells” within his intellect (v. 144, cf. vv. 46a, 61). A variety of relational images is employed as well. The sage can be described as God’s “servant” (v. 319), for instance, indeed, as the ideal servant, his will being so closely aligned with divine reason that he is instinctively “ruled” (v. 41) and “governed” (v. 422) by God in everything that he does, thereby achieving the ultimate form of freedom, that is, freedom from worldly constraints, desires, and deceptions (v. 264b, cf. vv. 43, 275, 309, 392). The sage, then, not only “works” for God (vv. 359, 383–384); he himself becomes the “work” of which God is most proud (vv. 308, 395). Because he shares all things with God (vv. 310–311), the sage can also be understood as God’s friend, *φιλία* with God representing the goal of his spiritual life (v. 86b), a life based on the principle that what is like God is “dear” (*φίλος*) to God (v. 443, cf. vv. 45, 147) and that in order to become like God it is necessary for him to love (*φιλεῖν, ἀγαπᾶν*) the aspect of himself that is most like God (vv. 106a–b, 141, 442, 444). A fair number of the priorities already mentioned (likeness, obedience, affection, etc.) are implied by yet another image, that of God as father. Whatever authority the sage wields he possesses by virtue of his status as God’s son (v. 60, cf. vv. 36, 375), who, as such, not only honors God (cf. vv. 355, 427, 439) but honors only what God also honors (v. 135), in the knowledge that the best way to honor God is to conform oneself to God as much as possible (vv. 44, 381). Thus he not only confesses God as father (v. 225); he remembers this confession in all of his actions (vv. 59, 221–222), thereby making himself worthy (v. 58) of one who, as God’s son, is “nearest to the best” (v. 376b). Recognizing that he is *μετὰ θεόν* (vv. 34, 82c, 129, 292), then, he organizes his entire existence so as to live

κατὰ θεόν (vv. 48, 201, 216, 399, 433).<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the sage assimilates himself to God so completely that he not only “sees” God himself, he actually “presents” (v. 307), “images” (v. 190), and “mirrors” (v. 450) God to others (cf. vv. 7a, 82d, 376a). For his part, God, much like a father, provides and cares for the sage (vv. 419, 423–424), taking pleasure in the sage’s accomplishments (vv. 48, 340, 382, 422).

It is important to note that participation in the life of the mind determines not only the nature of the sage’s relationship with God but also his place in an anthropological hierarchy. While God may have created everything—even the angels—for the sake of humankind (vv. 31–32), this does not mean that God relates to all people equally. The divine “abides” not in the human intellect as such but only in an intellect that is “pious” (v. 46a), “pure” (v. 57b), and “good” (v. 61), that is, in the intellect of the sage (vv. 143–144, 450), while an intellect deficient in these qualities becomes the abode of evil things (v. 62). Goodness, in fact, is rare (v. 243), the majority of people failing not only to meet the sage’s standards (vv. 7b, 400) but even to recognize the sage for who he is (vv. 53, 145) and what he can do (v. 214). And even among the faithful, that is, among those pledged to remain sinless (vv. 8, 247), there will be those who sometimes fail to act in accord with reason (v. 331, cf. v. 285). Within this context, the relationship of the sage to those around him is analogous to that of the mind to the body, which in turn is analogous to that of God to the world. On one hand, the sage self-consciously differentiates himself from the faithless “masses” (v. 214), making little effort to ingratiate himself with them (vv. 112, 360), even to the point of scorning their approval (vv. 241, 299, cf. v. 188), cognizant of the fact that it is not only worldly things but also worldly people that can deceive (vv. 186, 338, 367–368, 409–410). By the same token, he avoids anything that might bring public disrepute upon himself or his message (vv. 16, 51, 343, 396), implicitly acknowledging the judgment of nonbelievers as a measure of how his godlike life comes to expression. Moreover, insofar as it takes the activity of God as its model, the vocation of the sage requires that he interact with a broad range of people in a variety of ways. At the risk of oversimplification, the priorities attendant upon this vocation can be evaluated under three broad and overlapping categories, each of which can be understood as both an articulation of practical

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88. For these distinctively Sextine phrases, see the commentary on vv. 82c and 201.

self-formation and a configuration through which the sage is manifested to the world as a vessel of divinity.

1. To begin with, the sage commits himself to a life of *personal holiness*, one defined especially by disciplined deportment in matters of diet (vv. 108a–111, 265–270), sexual activity (vv. 231, 239–240), social intercourse (v. 112), sleep (v. 253b), and the accumulation of material possessions (vv. 137, 264a, 274b). A regimen organized around such somatic austerities represents an essential means of training the soul, whose pleasures (vv. 70–72, 111, 139b, 172, 232, 272, 411), desires (vv. 146, 274b, 437, 448), passions (vv. 75a–b, 204–209), and longings (v. 136) for the things of the world must be restrained, such discipline extending to the control of one's thoughts and intentions (vv. 12, 178, 181, 233). By divesting himself of material possessions (vv. 78, 81, 82b, 121a, 264a); by observing the standards of moderation (vv. 13, 67, 273, 399, 412), self-sufficiency (vv. 98, 263, 334), and self-control (vv. 86a, 239, 253b, 294, 438); and by remaining unperturbed at the loss of physical things (vv. 15, 91b, 130), even his own body (v. 321), the sage both practices and demonstrates his freedom from worldly concerns. Indeed, even though he accepts the experience of certain physical pleasures as necessary for survival (v. 276), the sage endeavors to “conquer the body in everything” (v. 71a, cf. v. 274a), refusing to consider anything in the physical world as his “own” (v. 227), that is, as something whose acquisition contributes to his identity as a person worthy of the divine. By maintaining this regimen and reducing his needs as much as possible (cf. vv. 19, 115, 140), the sage emulates God (vv. 18, 49–50), who needs nothing, encratism constituting the very foundation of one's relationship with God (v. 86a, cf. vv. 428, 438) since it represents the means by which one avoids sins like greed (v. 137), intemperance (vv. 68, 71b, 231, 451), and the love of money (v. 76), which, like any sins, must be meticulously checked (vv. 8–13, 181, 233–234, 247, 283, 297–298). Insofar as it represents a path to godliness, then, this encratism is appropriately conceptualized not only in terms of piety (vv. 49, 204, 209, 428, 437–438) but also in terms of purity (vv. 81, 102, 108b, 111, 429). Both body (v. 346) and mind (vv. 57b, 181) must be purged of carnal contaminants so that the latter can serve as God's “temple” (vv. 35, 46a), that is, as a venue of divine revelation. From this perspective, the entire existence of the sage can be understood as a modulation of sacred power, one that provides the world not only with a model of the godly life but also with a living norm and effusion of the holy.

2. Like anyone else, the sage is expected to observe the golden rule (vv. 89–90, 179, 210b–212, 327) and refrain from wronging others (vv. 23, 64–66, 138, 208b, 370, 386), the mistreatment of a fellow human being constituting the greatest act of impiety that one can commit against God (v. 96). Beyond this, the sage has a particular role to play as steward and imitator of divine benefaction (vv. 33–34). In fact, as a *common benefactor* of all humanity (vv. 210a, 260) the sage ranks second only to God (v. 176), surpassing all humankind in his goodwill toward humankind (v. 332), the love of humanity serving as an expression of his reverence for God (v. 371). Convinced that “nothing is good that is unshared” (v. 296, cf. v. 377), the sage not only prays for everyone (v. 372), he freely shares what he has freely received (v. 242, cf. v. 82b) with everyone (v. 266, cf. v. 228), even with enemies (v. 213) and the ungrateful (v. 328). Insofar as they represent a special object of divine concern, the principal beneficiaries of the sage’s largesse are the poor (v. 267), the needy (vv. 52, 330, 378–379, 382), and other socially vulnerable groups (v. 340). Although he understands that God ignores those who ignore the poor (vv. 217, 378), the sage gives not for his own sake (v. 342) but for the sake of God and for the sake of being like God, convinced that such beneficence is the only offering acceptable to God (v. 47, cf. vv. 52, 340, 379, 382). He therefore gives willingly (vv. 300, 379) and promptly (v. 329), whenever he can (v. 378), without discrimination (v. 266) or reproach (v. 339) or in order to attract attention (v. 342), deeming it more important, as befits God’s servant (v. 319), to serve others than to be served by them (v. 336). The sage’s beneficence to humanity is evidenced further in his teaching, especially in his teaching about God (vv. 357–358, 410), which takes the form of leading (v. 182), guiding (v. 166), praising (v. 298), persuading (v. 331), correcting (vv. 24, 103), reproving (v. 245), censuring (vv. 90, 298), and judging (vv. 63, 183, 258, 261) those under his protection (v. 331), even the ignorant (v. 285), the sage’s authority over other people being an extension of God’s authority over the sage (vv. 182, 288, 422–424).

3. This leads to the third category, one which, if for no other reason, demands consideration by virtue of the sheer volume of material that Sextus devotes to it. As a rule, the sage is more concerned with acts of faith than with words of faith (v. 383), and prefers hearing such words to speaking them (vv. 171a–b). This is due in part to the fact that a great deal of power—and therefore a great deal of risk—is implicated in any speech act, which therefore requires of the sage particular attention to the problem of *speech ethics*, which represents yet another area in which he com-

municates God to the world. Words can “purify” the soul (vv. 24, 103), to be sure, but words can also be used to harm (vv. 152, 185) and deceive (vv. 165a–b, f, 186, 393). The sage is leery, then, of anything that unbelievers have to say (vv. 241, 299, cf. vv. 408–410), even (or perhaps especially) when this consists of praise for the sage’s speech (v. 286). For his part, the sage refrains from saying anything that is false (vv. 158–159, 165c–d, 168, 393, cf. v. 165e), deceptive (vv. 165a–b, f, 186), hurtful (v. 185), slanderous (v. 259), blasphemous (vv. 83–85, 223), obsequious (vv. 149–150), ill-timed (vv. 160–163a), or excessive in length (vv. 155–157, 431). He refrains also from overpromising (v. 198), self-assertion (vv. 389b, 433), and boastfulness (vv. 284, 432), convinced that no imposture can remain hidden for long (v. 325) since faith is a matter not of speech but of speech informed by thought (vv. 93, 153–154) and confirmed by action (vv. 177, 356, 359), that is, of actually “being” faithful (vv. 188–189, cf. v. 220). Particular power—and therefore particular risk—is attached to speech about God, even when such speech is truthful (v. 352). This is because a word about God must be accorded the same reverence as God himself (v. 355, cf. v. 439), that is, it must be approached in a state of purity, a state that applies to the speaker, who as he talks about God is being judged by God (v. 22), as well as his listeners, whose souls have been commended to the speaker as a trust (v. 195, cf. v. 361). Accordingly, declarations about God uttered by those who have not been “cleansed” of sin must be ignored (v. 356, cf. v. 173), since even listening to a questionable opinion is dangerous (v. 338), and those who speak falsely about God are forsaken by God (vv. 367–368), the ability to speak truthfully about God having been granted exclusively to the righteous (v. 410), that is, to those who not only say but also do what is pleasing to God (vv. 358–359). Likewise, it is never acceptable for the sage to speak a word about God to those who are “unclean” (v. 407), that is, to the multitudes (vv. 350, 360), to the ungodly (v. 354), or to those corrupted by fame (v. 351), sordidness (v. 401), or overindulgence (v. 451), such speech acts, even when committed unintentionally (v. 401), constituting a betrayal of God himself (v. 365).

In evaluating the significance of such statements, it is helpful to make comparison with the *Stromata*, wherein the practice of esotericism (for which see the commentary on vv. 350–368) represents an expressed strategy. As Clement explains in passages like *Strom.* 1.1.14.2–1.1.15.1, 1.12.55.1–3, and 7.18.110.1–4, in an effort to protect his message from those morally and intellectually unworthy of it, in writing he has not only refrained from openly expressing certain biblical truths; he has deliber-

ately presented his material in an enigmatic and unsystematic fashion.<sup>89</sup> Turning back to the *Sentences*, if we bear in mind the random character of its organization, the veiled manner in which it alludes to biblical texts, and the underdetermined nature of its gnomic contents generally, then it is possible to recognize esotericism not only as a major theme (again, see the commentary on vv. 350–368) but also as a priority that informs its form and mode of communication as well.<sup>90</sup>

Consideration for this priority pertains to one final observation regarding the rhetorical posture of our text, which has to do with the indeterminacy surrounding the relationship between the text's projected reader and the text's anthropological ideal. Certain sayings in the collection address the reader as though he were already a sage, leading and teaching others (e.g., vv. 182, 285, 331), while other sayings present the sage as someone to whom the reader relates as a student in need of correction (e.g., vv. 244–246, 298), while still other sayings address the reader as though he may not yet be “pure” enough to speak or even hear a word about God (e.g., vv. 211, 356). Such discrepancies have the effect of leaving the reader's actual status vis-à-vis the sage uncertain and unresolved, the implication being that becoming a sage is more a process than a goal, one attended not only by constant effort but also by constant self-scrutiny. It is from this perspective that it is possible to see how within every description that the text provides of the sage there is an implied imperative, just as within every imperative to think or act like a sage there is an element that contributes to the sage's overall description, the author simultaneously commending a moral and anthropological ideal for his readers while challenging them to realize that ideal for themselves.

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89. *Strom.* 1.12.56.3: “My present outline of memoranda contains the truth in a kind of sporadic and dispersed fashion, so as to avoid the attention of those who pick up ideas like jackdaws. When it lights on good farmers, each of the germs of truth will grow and show the full-grown grain.”

90. In *Strom.* 5.4.22.1–5.4.23.1, Clement refers to the gnomes of the Greek sages as representative of the esoteric style; cf. Origen, *Cels.* 3.45.