


This superb volume will be of interest not only to those wishing to learn how tolerance and recognition can be understood and analyzed in ancient contexts, but also to those who seek to use the evidence of the ancient world to think and speak about similar concerns in the present day.

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***The Crucified Book: Sacred Writings in the Age of Valentinus.*** By Anne Starr Kreps. *Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. viii + 186 pp. \$65 hardcover; \$65 eBook.

This is one special book. That is the claim, at least, of the *Gospel of Truth*, the centerpiece of Anne Starr Kreps's insightful volume about Valentinian scriptural practices. According to the *Gospel of Truth*, the crucified Jesus clothed himself with a book, fulfilling his identity as the embodiment of "knowledge and completion," as evidenced in his "reading out the contents of the heart." *The Crucified Book* argues that the *Gospel* here centralizes scriptural authority within the "living documents" of Jesus and his followers, thus positing a more orally-centered and fluid model of revelatory authority (2). *The Crucified Book* establishes that this Valentinian approach to scripture, though perhaps divergent from other early Christian models, was not so strange amidst the broader textual practices of the ancient Mediterranean.

Chapter 1, "The Joyful Gospel," examines the *Gospel of Truth*'s "self-presentation as a revelatory text" (12), arguing that, despite the *Gospel*'s reputation as a scriptural "outlier," it "follows the main currents of the Roman and Jewish book culture of the time" (18). This is evident, Kreps argues, in the book's alignment with Roman modes of book publication, which often featured many editions and layers of editing, as well as Jewish models of continuous revelation (e.g., in the works of Philo of Alexandria or *Genesis Rabbah*) (30, 35). Chapter 2, "The Valentinian Gospel as Scriptural Practice," explores how the conflation of books and bodies functioned as a "scriptural practice" in second-century Valentinian milieus. Building on the work of David Brakke, Kreps argues that a Valentinian model of "interior sacred textuality"—that is, that the human body itself, through Jesus and select followers, could be a vehicle for continuous divine revelation—"informed a coherent scriptural practice" (43). This practice, in turn, fits well with comparable textual practices of the ancient Mediterranean (e.g., in 4 Ezra) (50).


Chapter 3, "The *Gospel of Truth* According to the Christian Heresiographers," contrasts the relative textual fluidity of Valentinian scriptural models with those of their opponents, early Christian "proto-orthodox" heresiologists. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius figure prominently here, supporting Kreps's case that the heresiologists' criticism of Valentinian scriptural practices "was not just an effort to silence certain texts, but a sign of deep disagreement on how such texts operate" (69). Chapter 4, "Rabbis Who Published and Perished," explores how ancient Jewish notions of a "dual Torah" (i.e., written and oral) provide a close analogue to Valentinian notions

of fluid, extra-textual “canons” (93). Kreps points especially to Rabbinic tales that, similar to the *Gospel of Truth*, “blurred distinctions between teacher and text,” leading Kreps to conclude that “Valentinus’s ideas [about scripture] were not in tension with the ideas of his contemporaries” (93–94). The Conclusion, “The Iconic Book,” explores the varied modes of textuality and scriptural practice that characterized early Christian cultures, noting how the Valentinian model had surprising resonance with late antique practices (121).

The great strength of this book is its utter lack of respect for traditional disciplinary boundaries. Building on the work of Ismo Dunderberg, Kreps’s work analyzes Valentinian texts “in light of their Greco-Roman culture, without fetishizing their Gnostic features” (10). Kreps accomplishes this by juxtaposing Valentinian concepts and practices with a wide range of comparanda, including those typically classed under the labels Valentinian, Greco-Roman, Jewish, and “proto-orthodox” Christian. Kreps’s treatment effectively showcases how such labels obscure important overlaps, such as shared models of publication and scriptural practice. Some readers may object, however, to Kreps’s rather maximalist marshalling of parallels. Books and thinkers from a wide range of chronologies and cultural contexts are cited as providing comparable scriptural practices to Valentinian ideas, but relatively less attention is paid to the specifics of ancient intellectual exchange or the importance of local cultural contexts.

The book also provides an uneven treatment of the material dimensions of ancient textual practices. In Chapter 3, Kreps skillfully (if succinctly) explores how the textual ordering and content of the Jung Codex could be reflective of later iterations of the “fluid” textual revelation of Valentinian traditions (87–92). Chapter 1 also provides important contextualization of the *Gospel of Truth* amidst Roman publication and inscriptional practices. For the remainder of the book, however, textual materiality plays a relatively minor role; the book is much more focused on the metaphorical implications of books-as-people, rather than the material dimensions of people-as-books.

This should not detract from the larger accomplishment of *The Crucified Book*: it convincingly establishes that, when contextualized within parallel scriptural metaphors of the ancient Mediterranean, Valentinian concepts were neither “obscure” nor “deviant” (60). Some readers may demand more detail on the material or cultural dynamics that contributed to the wide-ranging scriptural overlaps between Valentinians and their neighbors; it is a great credit to the work of Kreps that we would think to ask the question.

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***Christian Emperors and Roman Elites in Late Antiquity.* By Rita Lizzi Testa. London: Routledge, 2022. xxxi + 279 pp. \$143.00 cloth.**

Our understanding of the role played by the Roman Senatorial aristocracy in the Late Empire has undergone a sea change in recent decades. It once seemed self-evident that the Senate lost influence when emperors no longer resided in the capital, and that its