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A Giulio Caligara e Marco di Pasquale, amici e filosofi

Preface

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Cambridge 2013 Daniele Pevarello

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Introduction

The golden cup of Babylon

Illam autem temeritatem, immo insaniam eius, quis possit digno explicare sermone, quod librum Sexti Pythagorei, hominis absque Christo atque ethnici, inmutato nomine Xysti, martyris et Romanae ecclesiae episcopi, praenotavit? In quo iuxta dogma Pythagoricorum, qui hominem exaequant deo et de eius dicunt esse substantia, multa de perfectione dicuntur, ut, qui volumen philosophi nesciunt, sub martyris nomine bibant de aureo calice Babylonis. Denique in ipso volumine nulla prophetarum, nulla patriarcharum, nulla apostolorum, nulla Christi fit mentio, ut episcopum et martyrem sine Christi fide fuisse contendat (*Epist.* 133.3).

Towards the end of his life, the Illyrian theologian and ascetic Jerome of Strido embarked on a fierce controversy against Pelagius and his followers. Jerome was determined not only to confute Pelagius' views on salvation and human sinlessness, but also to attack the sources which offered Pelagius the philosophical basis of his theology. In a blazing letter to the Pelagian Ctesiphon in ca. 414 C.E. quoted above, Jerome included among the authors who inspired Pelagius also his former friend and now theological adversary Rufinus,[1] accusing him of having supplied the Pelagians with some of the most eccentric and dangerous doctrines of their teaching.[2] According to Jerome's letter, Rufinus' greatest offence had been that of translating into Latin and erroneously ascribing to Sixtus II, bishop of Rome martyred under Valerian, the Greek maxims of a pagan philosopher, whose Pythagorean persuasion that humans were made of the same substance of God and could attain perfection had allegedly fuelled Pelagius' own heretical views.[3] With his usual *vis polemica* and not without a certain affectation, Jerome showed great distress at the idea that, misled by Rufinus' false attribution to a Roman bishop, Christian readers were exposed to the risk of drinking from the golden cup of Babylon (*de aureo calice Babylonis*), that is paganism, what they believed was the sound doctrine of a Christian martyr. The maxims translated by Rufinus are still known today to the erudite public under the title of the *Sentences of Sextus*. Je-

[1] Jerome's hostility towards Rufinus was due to the Origenism of the latter, see John N. D. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings and Controversies*, London 1975, 227–228.

[2] On Jerome's idea that Pelagius was a follower of Rufinus, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 313.

[3] Kelly, *Jerome*, 315.

rome's opposition notwithstanding, the work was popular and widely read in the early church and translated into most of the major languages of Christian late antiquity. Apart from Rufinus' Latin, complete translations of these maxims were made into Coptic and Syriac alongside partial versions in Armenian, Georgian and Ethiopic. The *Sentences* survived the Pelagian controversy and were copied and distributed throughout the Middle Ages and the modern era. Following Jerome's criticism, however, commentators have doubted for centuries whether the *Sentences* could really be considered a Christian work. Accordingly they have repeatedly addressed the question of their provenance and authorship, suggesting several solutions to the problem whether the *Sentences* were a golden cup of Babylon or perhaps a Christian chalice.

Nowadays the origins of the work do not constitute a problem. Scholars agree that the *Sentences* are a second-century Christian reworking of one or more previous pagan gnomologies, which contained examples of what Teresa Morgan calls popular morality.[4] As I shall show in chapter one of this study, a crucial contribution to the attainment of this scholarly agreement came with Henry Chadwick's 1959 edition, with commentary, of the Greek text of the *Sentences*. Chadwick discovered that Jerome's translation of Origen's first homily on Ezekiel contains a quotation of *Sext.* 352, which Origen attributes to a *sapiens et fidelis vir*,[5] providing a stronger case for the Christianity of Sextus. Chadwick's book was meant to shift the interest in the *Sentences* from the problem of their origins to that of their content. Chadwick believed that because of its curious composition history, the collection could play a central role in the debate about continuity and discontinuity between the moral thought of the early church and that of paganism.[6] Regrettably, Chadwick dedicated most of his book, which bore the telling subtitle *A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, to counter-arguments against the opinion of those who believed that Sextus was a pagan philosopher rather than a Christian,[7] leaving little space to discuss analogies and differences from pagan moral philosophy.

In the concluding paragraph of his book, Chadwick leaves the problem of the moral teaching of the *Sentences* open-ended, avoiding answering the

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[4] See Teresa Morgan, *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2007, 3–5.

[5] *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11.

[6] *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, ed. by Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1959, xi.

[7] See e.g. Adolf von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, vol. 1, *Die Überlieferung und der Bestand der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius. Bearbeitet unter Mitwirkung von Lic. Erwin Preuschen*, Leipzig 1893, vol. 2, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Leipzig 1904, 2:766.

"ultimate question" that is: "Whether the ascetical and mystical ideal of the Neopythagorean sages has been an influence for good or for evil upon the spirituality of Christendom, and whether this process of incorporation did not tend to blur distinctions which might better have been kept more clearly in view".[8] As I shall show in chapter one, this hesitant last paragraph derived from a theological and moral concern for the originality of Christianity vis-à-vis pagan philosophy. Chadwick's "ultimate question", however, offers the ideal starting point for this enquiry and his treatment of this question contains preliminary remarks which have been central to the development of this study. First, Chadwick suggests here that the influence of Sextus' pagan source material on the spirituality of the *Sentences* is particularly noticeable in regard to ascetical and mystical themes.[9] Building on this insight, the present study intends to assess analogies and differences between Sextus' ideal of renunciation and that of his source material; Sextus' text offers new evidence for the study of the origins of Christian asceticism and its relationship with Greek *paideia*. Because the *Sentences* in all probability belong to the second century C.E., the evidence they provide may be of crucial importance above all to shed new light on the cloudy origins of Christian asceticism before the actual beginning of that long-lasting, and better documented, spiritual upheaval that we call monasticism. Second, Chadwick identifies the ideals of Sextus' source as Neopythagorean. Although the term Neopythagoreanism has been rightly defined as a "loose catch-all",[10] the *Sentences* contain doctrines which display close analogies with that philosophical revival of Pythagoreanism and esoteric Orphic traditions which characterised Greek philosophy between the first century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. and later merged into Neoplatonism.[11] As my study will illustrate, there is much more to Sextus than Pythagoreanism. Allusions to Plato, the Cynics and the Stoics are frequent in the *Sentences*. Although the attribution of specific ideas to a precise philosophical school in gnomologies like Sextus' is made so difficult

[8] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162.

[9] On Chadwick's view of the *Sentences* as an ascetical work, see Martin Hengel, "Sir Henry Chadwick als Patristiker und anglikanischer Theologe", in *Theologische, historische und biographische Skizzen*, WUNT 253, Tübingen 2010, pp. 409–439, 417.

[10] The definition is that of Karsten F. Johansen, *A History of Ancient Philosophy from the Beginnings to Augustine*, London 1998, 514, see also Charles H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. A Brief History*, Indianapolis (Ind.) 2001, 94–95.

[11] On the origins of Neopythagoreanism see Johan C. Thom, *The Pythagorean* Golden Verses. *With Introduction and Commentary*, Religions in the Greco-Roman World 123, Leiden 1995, 85–88.

by the composite nature of this genre that it can often seem meaningless,[12] in my study I have maintained Chadwick's designation of a number of maxims as Pythagorean. The suitability of this choice is suggested first by the fact that some of the concepts present in Sextus' source material (e.g. sexual procreationism, the practice of silence and the sharing of possessions) have indeed been variously associated with the followers of Pythagoras.[13] Second, retaining the designation of Pythagorean for Sextus' source material also offers the advantage of keeping in sight important parallels between the *Sentences* and a vast corpus of gnomic material usually considered to have originated among the Pythagoreans.[14]

The mention of a corpus of Pythagorean writings leads to a third indispensable premise of this study which originated in Chadwick's work. Alongside the Greek and the Latin text of Sextus, Chadwick published in his edition of the *Sentences* two other gnomologies: the *Clitarchus* (a collection of 144 maxims preserved in four different manuscript traditions) and the *Pythagorean Sentences* (a collection of 123 sentences in alphabetical order). Chadwick convincingly showed that a good number of sentences contained in Sextus were also preserved in *Clitarchus* or in the *Pythagorean Sentences* and often in both. A third writing showing significant similarities with the tradition of Sextus' source material is Porphyry's letter to his wife Marcella. In *Ad Marcellam*, Porphyry drew considerably from an earlier gnomic collection, which contained several parallels with Sextus and his tradition and in particular with the *Pythagorean Sentences*.[15] *Clitarchus*, the *Pythagorean Sentences* and Porphyry, unlike Sextus, do not contain any Christian element; it is highly improbable therefore that Sextus was their source. Agreements between each of the extant collections also make it very unlikely that one of them was direct source for the others. As Chadwick has convincingly shown,[16] the most plausible explanation for the exchange of material between Sextus and the three pagan texts is that they all depend on a corpus of Pythagorean sayings found in one or more previous collections.

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[12] On how philosophical schools are represented in Greek gnomic literature, see Morgan, *Morality*, 276–278.

[13] On Pythagorean silence and *koinōnia*, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8–10. On procreationism, see Kathy L. Gaca, "The Reproductive Technology of the Pythagoreans", in *Classical Philology* 95/2 (2000), pp. 113–132, 113.

[14] On the formation of a Pythagorean corpus, see James A. Philip, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism*, Toronto 1966, 16.

[15] George Rocca-Serra, "La lettre à Marcella de Porphyre et les Sentences des Pythagoriciens", in *Le néoplatonisme: Royaumont, 9–13 Juin 1969*, ed. by Pierre Maxime Schuhul and Pierre Hadot, Paris 1971, pp. 193–202, 194–196.

[16] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 148–149.

The present study is based on Chadwick's remarks on the composition history of the *Sentences* for its method of investigation. Although likely to be the result of heavy editorial reworking,[17] the pagan counterparts of the *Sentences* often preserve the non-Christianised version of several maxims used by Sextus. The significance of the existence of these non-Christianised counterparts of Sextus resides in the fact that they can offer a privileged point of view on the character of the material that Sextus used for his selection, allowing us to make some remarks on the way he related to his sources. A comparison between these sentences and Sextus' Christianised versions is potentially always meaningful. Strictly speaking, to study the contacts between these Hellenistic gnomic sources and Sextus it is relevant not only to evaluate what maxims Sextus adapted from his sources, but also what he decided to omit. Particularly significant will be those passages where Sextus combines Greek gnomic traditions with passages from the NT and the Christian tradition, but even the presence of sentences left virtually untouched in their non-Christianised form implies much for the study of the contacts between Christian and Hellenistic morality in the development of early Christian asceticism.

A last preliminary remark has to be made on my use of the terms "ascetic" and "asceticism". In this study references to asceticism and ascetic tendencies are made in a rather general sense. The main difficulty of including the concept of asceticism in one's working hypotheses lies in the enormous variety of scholarly definitions of what asceticism is and what being ascetic entails. Definitions of asceticism range from the very broad to the very narrow. Often the main strength of broad definitions lies precisely where their weakness is. Broad definitions offer endless possibilities of detecting consonances and analogies between very diverse forms of renunciation. The problem with them is that they frequently result in the feeling that any form of renunciation – especially when related to sensitive matters like sex, money, drinking and eating – could be ascetic. A typically broad definition of asceticism is found in the scholarship of Richard Valantasis who defines asceticism as a: "Performance designed to inaugurate an alternative culture, to enable different social relations, and to create a new identity".[18] This definition of asceticism has allowed Valantasis to draw attention to fascinating analogies ranging from the self-discipline practised by early Christian monks to that of present-day bodybuilders. Yet

[17] For Porphyry's editing of his Pythagorean sources, see Rocca-Serra, "Marcella", 198–199.

[18] Richard Valantasis, "A Theory of Social Function of Asceticism", in *Asceticism*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, Oxford 1998, pp. 544–552, 548.

it has also exposed his scholarship to the criticism that according to his definition: "*Anything* can be ascetical".[19]

Narrower definitions of asceticism are designed for use within the boundaries of specific religious and social contexts. They are less appropriate for studies like the present one, which intends to compare maxims dedicated to abstinence and renunciation across different sources and traditions. Only with difficulty can a narrow definition of asceticism be stretched to cover a wider array of phenomena. This disadvantage has been exposed in an illuminating discussion about method in Steven Fraade's enquiry into asceticism in ancient Judaism. Ascetic models intended for the study of specific traditions, for example the Christian Desert Fathers, cannot be applied to other contexts without the risk that practices which do not display the same austerity may be deemed as: "'Diluted' forms of asceticism, or not ascetic at all".[20] To circumvent the problem, Fraade suggested his own broad definition of asceticism as: "(1) The exercise of disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection (however understood), which requires (2) abstention (whether total or partial, permanent or temporary, individualistic or communalistic) from the satisfaction of otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires".[21] A major problem with Fraade's definition is that the concept of "otherwise permitted desires" seems to understand ascetic practices as supererogatory, almost gratuitous. This definition is useful in Jewish studies to distinguish between prohibitions coming from the Jewish law and more explicitly ascetic forms of abstention. It is less suitable, however, for the study of asceticism in early Christianity. To the Encratites, for instance, the effort towards perfection was a compelling and binding spiritual obligation. Abstention from marriage and procreation in Encratite circles therefore was not a discretionary rejection of an open option, but the sole rigorous and mandatory way of articulating one's spiritual maturity.[22]

It is probably correct to say that most definitions of asceticism, whether broad or narrow, emphasise at least some relevant aspects of an otherwise not easily defined phenomenon. Even George Bernard Shaw's sardonic characterisation of asceticism as: "Thinking you are moral when you are

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[19] Richard Valantasis, *The Making of the Self. Ancient and Modern Asceticism*, Eugene (Oreg.) 2008, x.

[20] Steven D. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism", in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. by Arthur Green, New York 1985, pp. 253–288, 254.

[21] Fraade, "Ascetical", 257.

[22] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York 1988, 95.

being uncomfortable"[23] displays an understanding of voluntary abstinence not incompatible with Sextus'. Steven Fraade's definition of asceticism was shaped by Arthur Vööbus' classic statement that asceticism is: "The practice of the denial of physical or psychological desires in order to attain a spiritual ideal or goal".[24] This descriptive definition is broad enough to allow a comparison between the self-discipline and moral austerity of Sextus' source material with that of his Christian reworking of it, and can be adopted *faute de mieux*.

In the following pages, I shall outline Sextus' encounter with pagan wisdom in reference to ascetic continence broadly defined. I shall argue that Sextus' implementation of pagan moral tenets was conducted in constant dialogue with his own biblical tradition and through a creative effort that triggered new perspectives and possibilities in early Christian reflection on ascetic discipline. The intention is to investigate what part Jerome's golden cup of Babylon had in influencing the ascetic content of the *Sentences* and thereby contributing to subsequent developments in the Christian ascetic tradition. I shall pay exclusive attention to those ascetic themes which the *Sentences* share with their sources and to the maxims which Sextus is more likely to have adapted from his source material or purposely omitted. I shall therefore include in my study considerations about celibacy and procreation, voluntary poverty as philosophical self-sufficiency, austere self-control in talking and laughing and predisposition to a contemplative and secluded life. Ascetic aspects of Sextus' thought which can be explained through Sextus' Christian legacy without recourse to his pagan source material, for example Sextus' references to fasting or his probable leaning towards spiritual marriage,[25] do not fall within the primary scope of this investigation.

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[23] As reported by Oscar Hardman, *The Ideals of Asceticism. An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion*, London 1924, 14, see also Fraade, "Ascetical", 258.

[24] Arthur Vööbus, "Asceticism", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago (Ill.) 1974[15], 2:135–137, 135, see Fraade, "Asceticism", 280 n.23.

[25] For fasting see *Sext.* 267. Spiritual marriage is probably what is meant in *Sext.* 239. On the permanence of some *virgines subintroductae* still in the fourth century, see Brown, *Body*, 267 n.37.

Chapter 1

The *Sentences of Sextus*: Reception and Interpretation

A. Introduction

In this chapter, which is both a reception history and a history of interpretation, I shall argue that scholarship has too often passively accepted Jerome's terms of the discussion. This means that the *Sentences* have been studied by scholars who focused on the problems of attribution the collection raises rather than looking more closely at its teaching. As a consequence, even scholars who do not immediately dismiss the *Sentences* as Rufinus' ingenious counterfeit have limited their observations to recording the diffusion of Sextus' collection without investigating the contextual reasons for its popularity. In the following pages, I shall follow a different path and concentrate rather on the role played by the ethical teaching of the *Sentences*, in particular their ascetic tendencies, in the diffusion they enjoyed in some early Christian circles. Accordingly, I shall deal with questions of authorship and provenance only when they shed light on the content and the circumstances in which the collection was compiled.

First, I shall examine the ancient witnesses and traditions about the *Sentences* with the intention of reassessing the testimony of Origen, Rufinus and Jerome. Instead of exploring the ancient evidence to find out about Sextus' identity, as has already been done in numerous studies on the *Sentences*, I shall try to understand what these ancient witnesses have to say about Sextus' discipline of renunciation. A close reading of the evidence will show that, beside the obvious impact of their attribution to bishop Sixtus, the *Sentences* were read and studied because of their ascetic teaching. Rather than referring to the popularity of the collection in monastic circles only in reference to the history of its transmission, I shall consider the diffusion of the *Sentences* in the early monastic tradition of the East, with Evagrius of Pontus and the Egyptian, Syrian and Armenian monks, and of the West, within the Benedictine tradition, as evidence of the relevance of Sextus in the broader ascetic tradition.

Second, I shall reconsider the history of research on the *Sentences* from its first hesitant beginnings to the new input given primarily by the discovery of the Greek original and then by the disclosure of the complex relationship between Sextus' collection and the extant witnesses of Sextus'

source material. It will be clear that by paying exclusive attention to problems of origins, authorship and, more recently, the genre of the *Sentences*, academic studies have generated a scholarly vacuum regarding the place the *Sentences* occupied in the development of a Christian ethos in the second century, an issue raised by Paul Wendland more than a century ago.[1]

B. The Testimony of Origen

I. Sextus in Contra Celsum

In the *Contra Celsum*, Origen reports that Celsus attacked the Christian habit of abstaining from sacrificial meat and blood as being inconsistent. To the Christian practice, Celsus opposed the way of life of the Pythagoreans who more consistently abstain from every kind of animal product.[2] Origen replied that Christian abstention from sacrificial victims is preferable when the consumption of sacrificial meat upsets and scandalises the brothers.[3] This argument, however, was not sufficient to counter Celsus' objections. Probably also borrowing from a Pauline saying,[4] Celsus had argued that either the idols are nothing and therefore the consumption of sacrificial meat harmless or they belong to the divine sphere and thus deserve honour. Celsus' surreptitious use of Christian arguments needed a more sophisticated counterattack and Origen turns to the *Sentences*:

> It is not irrelevant for me to mention in this connection a very graceful maxim written in the Maxims of Sextus which even the multitude of Christians read (ἣ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀναγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς Σέξτου γνώμαις). It is as follows: "It is a matter of moral indifference to eat living things, but abstinence is more rational" (ἐμψύχων χρῆσις μὲν ἀδιάφορον, ἀποχὴ δὲ λογικώτερον) (*Cels.* 8.30.9–13).[5]

Thus far Origen's loyalty had been divided between the apostolic decree of Acts 15:23–29, repeated in *Cels.* 8.29.20–27, urging Christians to abstain from εἰδωλόθυτα, blood and strangled animals, and Paul's authoritative claim that idols are nothing, cleverly repeated by Celsus.[6] Claiming that the consumption of animal products is a matter of indifference (ἀδιάφορον) and yet arguing that abstention is more rational (λογικώτερον), *Sext.* 109

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[1] Paul Wendland, review of Anton Elter, *Gnomica I*, and, *Gnomica II*, in *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 8 (1893), cols. 229–235, 232.

[2] *Cels.* 8.28.

[3] Rom 14:21 and 1 Cor 8:13.

[4] *Cels.* 8.24.4: εἰ μὲν οὐδὲν ταῦτά ἐστι τὰ εἴδωλα, cf. 1 Cor 8:4: οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ.

[5] ET Origen, *Contra Celsum*, translated by Henry Chadwick, Cambridge 1953, 473.

[6] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 109.

allows Origen to concede that idols indeed are nothing, and therefore the eating of εἰδωλόθυτα indifferent in principle, while validating at the same time Christian abstention. Through Sextus, Origen not only defends the Christian habit but also adds philosophical dignity to it, dismissing Celsus' argument that Christian abstention was inconsistent.[7] The term ἀδιάφορον in this context is probably of Stoic provenance.[8] In Stoicism, morally indifferent actions are not irrelevant or pointless. Ἀδιάφορον is an action that can only be judged in relation to the intention (προαίρεσις) of the agent.[9] Origen's quotation of Sextus, therefore, shifts the focus from the evaluation of dietary abstention in itself to a deeper understanding of its rationale and moral purpose. Despite the similarities between Christians and Pythagoreans emphasised by Celsus, it is in their moral purpose that they differ. According to Origen, Pythagoreans abstain from meat because of their belief in the transmigration (μετενσωμάτωσις) of the soul, while Christians abstain from certain food because of their moderation and distaste for gluttony (γαστριμαργία).[10] Some scholars have argued that in this passage Origen considered Sextus to be a Pythagorean philosopher and not a Christian.[11] Since Sextus defines the consumption of meat as essentially indifferent, however, his view clearly differs from that of the Pythagoreans who practised vegetarianism invariably.[12] Moreover, a reference to *Sext.* 352 in Jerome's translation of Origen's first homily on Ezekiel provides more explicit evidence that he considered Sextus to be a Christian.[13] In *Hom.*

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[7] Michel Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes. Dans le* Contre Celse *d'Origène*, Théologie Historique 81, Paris 1988, 337: "La sagesse païenne fait elle-même écho à la prescription de l'Écriture comme l'atteste la "très belle maxime" de Sextus".

[8] David Satran, "Truth and Deception in the *Contra Celsum*", in *Discorsi di verità. Paganesimo, Giudaismo e Cristianesimo a confronto nel* Contro Celso *di Origene*, ed. by Lorenzo Perrone, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 61, Roma 1998, pp. 213–222, 215–217.

[9] *Cels.* 4.45.19–22.

[10] *Cels.* 8.30.21–23. On vegetarianism and metempsychosis, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 9.

[11] *Sexti Sententiarum Recensiones. Latinam, Graecam, Syriacas*, ed. by Johann Gildemeister, Bonn 1873, xliii, also Preuschen in Harnack, *Geschichte*, 1:766. Harnack, *Geschichte*, 2:190 n.6 says that: "Zum Glück kommt nicht viel auf die Frage an" but agrees with Gildemeister. John Gwynn, "Xystus", in *Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines During the First Eight Centuries*, vol. 4, ed. by William Smith and Henry Wace, London 1887, pp. 1198–1205, 1202 notices that Origen quotes Sextus after a string of Christian authorities which makes it more plausible that Sextus was a Christian.

[12] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 148–149.

[13] περὶ θεοῦ καὶ τἀληθῆ λέγειν κίνδυνος οὐ μικρός. *Sext.* 352 must have been one of Origen's favourite quotations since he alludes to it again in *Philoc.* 5.1, see Henry Chadwick, "The Sentences of Sextus and of the Pythagoreans", in *JTS* 11/2 (1960), p. 349,

Ezech. 1.11 in fact, Origen attributes *Sext.* 352 to a wise and believing man (Lat. *sapiens et fidelis*) who remains unnamed. As Chadwick has argued, the anonymous sage is probably Sextus.[14] If Sextus had been a Pythagorean, it is dubious that Origen would have referred to such a Pythagorean source as *fidelis*.[15]

Origen's use of *Sext.* 109 has a twofold significance for this study. First, as mentioned, it adds philosophical dignity to the practice of Christian renunciation questioned by Celsus. The dual nature of the collection, at once pagan and philosophical but also Christian and devout, allows Origen to use Sextus as a sort of philosophical weapon in the service of the church. Whether as a Christianised pagan maxim or as a philosophical reformulation of a practice grounded in biblical traditions, *Sext.* 109 offers to Origen's discourse the ideal terrain of encounter between the two traditions and provides material for a deeper understanding of their similarities and differences. Therefore in his first appearance in Origen's work Sextus emerges as a champion for Christian abstention and more decisively as an author who can provide Christian abstention with a conceptual basis, grounded in the Stoic tradition, showing that Christian renunciation is a matter of λόγος rather than inconsistent superstitions.

Second, it is important to notice that Sextus' quotation is used here to promote a Christian custom that Origen perceives as a question of avoidance of pleasure for the sake of morality and as an ascetic practice. It is as a means of escaping γαστριμαργία and ἡδονή (*Cels.* 8.30.22) says Origen, that Christian abstention really reveals itself as λογικώτερον.[16] The use of the *Sentences* in this passage shows therefore that Sextus is congenial to Origen's own ascetic interpretation of Christian dietary habits. Although Origen does not explicitly state that Sextus was an ascetic, it is in the discussion of Christian abstention as an ascetic practice that Sextus' philosophical repertoire found its significance in opposing Celsus.

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and, together with *Sext.* 22, in the preface of his comment on Ps 1, in Epiphanius, *Pan.* 64.7.

[14] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 114–115.

[15] Roelof van den Broek, "The Teachings of Silvanus and the Greek Gnomic Tradition", in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Leiden 1996, pp. 259–283, 267 n.20 argues that Origen: "Knew the sentence in its pagan form", pointing out that the form known to Origen is closer to *Pyth.* 55b and *Marc.* 15.2–4 than *Sext.* 351–352. Since these passages belong to the same source material, it is possible that Origen knew more than one variant. In my opinion, however, the implications of labelling Sextus as *fidelis*, maybe translating an original πιστός, remain valid.

[16] On Origen's views on gluttony in this passage, see Veronika E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin. Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*, London 1996, 137.

II. The Sentences *among radical ascetics*

Origen's reference to the *Sentences* in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew is of crucial importance because it links Sextus with groups of radical Christian ascetics who observed extreme forms of sexual renunciation and self-mutilation. Discussing the passage of Matt 19:12 on becoming eunuchs: "For the sake of the kingdom of heaven", Origen condemns those Christians who, failing to understand the spiritual sense of the Gospel, have castrated themselves. Christians, says Origen, do not know Christ κατὰ σάρκα καὶ κατὰ τὸ γράμμα anymore; therefore the words of Jesus cannot refer to physical castration.[17] In Matt 19:12, says Origen, only those who were born eunuchs or were made eunuchs by others, are to be taken in a literal sense, while the eunuchs for the kingdom are eunuchs only in a spiritual sense. Origen aims his refutation particularly at those who have castrated themselves having found in Sextus a promoter of self-mutilation:[18]

> For instance, Sextus in the Maxims, a book accepted by many as sound (βιβλίῳ φερομένῳ παρὰ πολλοῖς ὡς δοκίμῳ), says: "Every part of the body that persuades you to be unchaste, cast away. For it is better for you to live chastely without the part than to live to destruction with it (πᾶν μέρος τοῦ σώματος τὸ ἀναπεῖθόν σε μὴ σωφρονεῖν ῥῖψον· ἄμεινον γὰρ χωρὶς τοῦ μέρους ζῆν σωφρόνως ἢ μετὰ τοῦ μέρους ὀλεθρίως)". And again further on in the same book he provides cover for the same rashness when he says: "You may see men cutting off and casting away parts of their body in order that the rest may be strong; how much better to do this for the sake of chastity (ἀνθρώπους ἴδοις ἂν ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ σώματος ἔχειν ἐρρωμένον ἀποκόπτοντας αὐτῶν καὶ ῥίπτοντας μέρη· πόσῳ βέλτιον ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωφρονεῖν)?" (*Comm. Matt.* 15.3.17–30).[19]

Here Origen quotes *Sext.* 13 and 273. Unlike *Cels.* 8.30.9–13 and *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11, in this passage Origen disagrees with Sextus. Another eminent advocate of mutilation, according to Origen's adversaries, is Philo, who in *Det.* 176 argues that castration is preferable to sexual immorality:

> Also Philo, among many of his treatises on the Law of Moses, which are in good repute even among well-educated people (εὐδοκιμῶν καὶ παρὰ συνετοῖς ἀνδράσι), says, in the book that he entitled: That the worse is wont to attack the better: "It is better to be made a eunuch than to long for unlawful unions (ἐξευνουχισθῆναι μὲν ἄμεινον ἢ πρὸς συνουσίας ἐκνόμους λυττᾶν). (*Comm. Matt.* 15.3.30–38).[20]

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[17] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.1–4, cf. 2 Cor 5:16.

[18] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.8–16.

[19] ET Chadwick, *Sextus*, 112.

[20] For a German translation, see Origen, *Der Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Mattäus. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen,* vol. 2, translated by Hermann J. Vogt, Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur 30, Stuttgart 1990, 94.

Origen explains that Sextus and Philo are to be blamed because with their interpretation they provide the enthusiasts of castration with a pretext (ἀφορμή) for sin.[21] Having missed the allegorical intention (βούλημα)[22] of Scripture, they fail to understand that Matt 19:12 refers to spiritual castration.[23] Runia observes that this is the only case in which Origen disagrees with Philo.[24] Considering Philo's influence on Origen's allegorical method,[25] the allegation of literalism against Philo is rather unusual.[26]

Although it remains doubtful whether Sextus can really be considered an advocate for mutilation,[27] self-castration seems to have been practised in the earliest days of Christian asceticism among "Gnostic Encratites"[28] but also in more ordinary circles.[29] Whether the *Sentences* actually promote self-castration is not essential to establish at this stage. What is important, and has often been neglected, is that Origen's allegation of excessive literalism against Sextus and Philo concerning self-mutilation implicitly places the *Sentences* in the midst of an on-going debate about extreme

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[21] *Comm. Matt.* 15.2.61–66. Eric Robertson Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety. Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine*, Cambridge 1965, 33 n. 3 accepts Chadwick's suggestion that *Det.* 176 refers to physical castration.

[22] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.40.

[23] On Origen's "castration spirituelle", see Henri Crouzel, *Virginité et marriage selon Origène*, Paris 1962, 87–90.

[24] David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: a Survey*, Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature 3, Minneapolis 1993, 163.

[25] Jean Daniélou, *Origène*, Paris 1948, 179–190.

[26] David T. Runia, "Filone e i primi teologi cristiani", in *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 14/2 (1997), pp. 355–380, 369: "Sorprende un po' vedere Filone, il maestro dell'interpretazione allegorica, venire criticato in quanto troppo letterale". Crouzel, *Virginité*, 88 n. 2 and Brown, *Body*, 169 who accept the testimony of Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.8 that Origen castrated himself perceive in this attack against self-mutilation the feeling of a belated regret for a juvenile error. Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition. Studies in Justin, Clement and Origen*, Oxford 1966, 67–68 doubts that Origen castrated himself.

[27] See for example *Sext.* 12 οὐκ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐδὲ χεὶρ ἁμαρτάνει οὐδέ τι τῶν ὁμοίων, ἀλλ' ὁ κακῶς χρώμενος χειρὶ καὶ ὀφθαλμῷ, which suggests a much more nuanced interpretation.

[28] Walter Stevenson, "Eunuchs and Early Christianity", in *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. by Shaun Tougher, Swansea 2002, pp. 123–142, 129 says that the followers of Basilides practised self-mutilation, cf. *Strom.* 3.1.

[29] Famously Justin, *1 Apol.* 29 tells a story of attempted self-castration in Alexandria. According to Chadwick, *Sextus*, 111 despite the opposition of ecclesiastical authorities: "Among the monks the practice was not so very rare". Aline Rousselle, *Porneia. De la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle*, Paris 1983, 164–165 says that the practice was not unfamiliar also to pagans, although it helped preserve one's "souffle vital" by refraining from procreation rather than achieving sexual morality.

sexual renunciation and in uncomfortable proximity to heretical positions.[30] Origen continues in fact by saying that physical castration is so alien to the intention of Matt 19 that the words of Jesus should not even be considered an authentic dominical saying unless taken in an allegorical sense.[31] Even inveterate heretics like the Marcionites, who reject allegory,[32] would have to acknowledge the allegorical nature of the passage if they wanted to keep these as Jesus' words.[33] Although not Marcionites *stricto sensu*, these early readers of Sextus who accepted castration are brought by Origen significantly close to the ways of a heretical group known (among other features) also for its extreme asceticism and opposition to marriage.[34]

Although nothing is said that would explicitly suggest that Sextus was a radical, Origen's allusion to the literal interpretation of castration in the *Sentences* qualifies Sextus as: "One of the teachers by whom enthusiastic spirits were in danger of being misled"[35] and projects his collection into the midst of a controversy that had in sexual morality and the ways of achieving it one of its points of contention. By failing to read Matt 19:11–12 allegorically, Sextus finds himself siding with the ascetic circles of those who possessed: "An immoderate love for moderation" (σωφροσύνης ἀμέτρῳ ἔρωτι).[36] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 shows therefore that the ascetic tendency of the *Sentences*, which Origen had found exceptionally useful in his disagreement with Celsus, possessed a more radical side. It is this radical side that compelled some Christians whose heated souls followed faith but

[30] Daniel Caner, "The Practice and Prohibition of Self-Castration in Early Christianity", in *VC* 51/4 (1997), pp. 396–415, 404 observes: "Self-castration became associated with the "dualist" doctrines espoused by Marcion, Tatian *et al.*, which tended to denigrate the body as the nagging link between the human soul and the evils they believed inherent in the material world".

[31] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.104–106: μηδὲ πιστεύειν εἶναι τοῦ σωτῆρος τοὺς λόγους, εἴ γε μὴ ἀλληγοροῦνται.

[32] Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event. A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*, Chatham 1959, 136: "The Marcionites were among the fiercest enemies of allegory".

[33] Crouzel, *Virginité*, 88 n. 7 seems to misunderstand what Origen says about Marcion.

[34] Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, Leipzig 1921, 101–102. On Origen's opposition to Marcionite asceticism, see Crouzel, *Virginité*, 132–134. Despite their asceticism, Valentinians opposed self-mutilation as one can infer from *Acts John* 53–54, see Brown, *Body*, 117.

[35] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1202.

[36] *Comm. Matt.* 15.1.34.

not reason (πιστὴν μὲν οὐ λογικὴν δέ)[37] to castrate themselves. The contrast between the lack of reason of these early readers of the *Sentences* and the λογικώτερον abstention mentioned in the *Contra Celsum* is a striking example of the ambivalence of Sextus' asceticism. While *Cels.* 8.30.9–13 shows that the *Sentences* could work as a philosophical source for Origen's ascetic thought, the use of the *Sentences* mentioned in *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 is evidence of Sextus' status among more radical circles.

A final consideration can be added about the implicit information that this passage provides for the popularity of the *Sentences*. As with Philo, Sextus' radicalism did not attenuate Origen's interest in the *Sentences*.[38] Despite Philo's statement apparently in favour of self-mutilation, Origen observes that Philo's books were: "In good repute even among well educated people" (εὐδοκιμῶν καὶ παρὰ συνετοῖς ἀνδράσι).[39] Likewise, the remark that the *Sentences* were: "A book accepted by many as sound" (βιβλίῳ φερομένῳ παρὰ πολλοῖς ὡς δοκίμῳ)[40] shows that the popularity of the *Sentences* was not restricted to self-mutilating fanatics. Origen's choice of words in describing the relative popularity of Philo and Sextus may suggest a difference in class distribution. In fact while Philo is read even among the educated, the place of Sextus, and particularly of his more extreme ascetic interpretations, is among the crowd of the many. This fact is consistent with the view that gnomologies had a prominent role in Greco-Roman primary education.[41] As I shall show in the following paragraph, Rufinus' preface to the Latin translation of Sextus also suggests that the *Sentences* and their ascetic views were more suitable for a broader and more conventional audience.

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[37] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.14–17.

[38] In *Comm. Matt.* 15.2.61, Origen calls Philo and Sextus his predecessors (ἄλλοι μὲν οὖν τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν). On Philo as predecessor of Origen, see Runia, *Literature*, 161–163.

[39] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.32–33.

[40] *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.18–19. van den Broek, "Silvanus", 260 interprets δόκιμος as "orthodox", but this is anachronistic.

[41] See Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge 1998, 120–125 and Walter T. Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness. The Literary Composition and Genre of the* Sentences *of Pseudo-Phocylides*, TSAJ 40, Tübingen 1994, 32–33.

C. Controversies over the *Sentences* in Latin Christianity

I. Rufinus' Latin Sextus: a manual of asceticism

It is no surprise that the *Sentences* were translated into Latin (ca. 400 C.E.)[42] by Rufinus, an enthusiastic Origenist. The first westerner to establish a monastery in Palestine, Rufinus was a dedicated student of the ascetics of the Egyptian desert.[43] Rufinus, however, did not imagine that his translation would have triggered a fierce controversy. The point of contention was Rufinus' indication that the Sextus of the collection: "Was the same person, who among you, that is in the city of Rome, is called Xystus, honoured with the glory of bishop and martyr" (*quem Sextum ipsum esse tradunt qui apud vos id est in urbe Roma Xystus vocatur, episcopi et martyris gloria decoratus*).[44] Jerome argued that Rufinus had deliberately fabricated the attribution to claim a nobler and more Christian origin for a book written by a pagan.[45] Rufinus' words, however, are more cautious. The form *tradunt* in the third person plural gives a hesitant and impersonal character to the attribution as if referring to a mere rumour.[46] Since the Syriac tradition of Sextus, which does not depend on Rufinus' Latin, also attributes the *Sentences* to Xustus bishop of Rome,[47] it is likely that Rufinus received the attribution to the Roman bishop from an earlier tradition. Moreover the attribution to bishop Xystus in Rufinus' preface is presented in a casual and understated way, which invalidates Jerome's allegation that Rufinus had tried to add prestige (Lat. *illustrare*)[48] to his work by abusing the name of a martyr.

Other, less studied, aspects of the Latin translation are more relevant to the purpose of this study as they suggest that Rufinus considered the *Sentences* a manual of asceticism. Rufinus' translation was meant to meet the request of the aristocratic Avita, wife of his friend Apronianus, for a book that would provide spiritual depth without being intellectually demanding

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[42] On Rufinus' translation as a translation *de verbo*, see Jean Bouffartigue, "Du grec au latin: la traduction latine des *Sentences* de Sextus", in Suzanne Saïd et al., *Études de littérature ancienne. Homère, Horace, le mythe d'Œdipe, les* Sentences de Sextus, Paris 1979, pp. 81–95, 87.

[43] David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2002, 94.

[44] *Praefatio* 6–8.

[45] *Epist.* 133.3.

[46] See Brinley Roderick Rees, *Pelagius. A Reluctant Heretic*, Woodbridge 1988, 85.

[47] ܟܣܘܣܛܘܣ ܐܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ ܕܪܗܘܡܐ, see *Analecta Syriaca*, ed. by Paul de Lagarde, Leipzig 1858, 2.

[48] *Comm. Ezech.* 6.

(*ubi neque laboraret in intelligendo et tamen proficeret in legendo*).[49] Rufinus' choice to translate Sextus corroborates the hypothesis that the *Sentences* were considered suitable predominantly for the less educated. Rufinus praises the book for its concision, fervour and clarity:

> Therefore, once she [Avita] has read this [Sextus], she will find him so brief (*tam breve*) that she will see single verses develop exceptional concepts, so fervent (*tam vehementem*) that the saying of a single line may suffice for the perfection of an entire life (*ad totius possit perfectionem vitae sufficere*), so clear (*tam manifestum*) that not even an absent-minded girl (*absens puella*) may say to the one reading it to her as an excuse that she missed the meaning (*Praefatio* 9–13).

Rufinus' comment that Sextus' collection is so straightforward that even an *absens puella* could understand it suggests that the translation was meant as a didactic tool, probably for the private edification of the couple.[50] Rufinus calls the book *enchiridion*[51] or "manual" and plays on the Greek meaning to say that the *Sentences* shall never leave Avita's hand:

> The entire work, then, is so brief (*ita breve*) that the whole book may never leave her hands, taking the place of a certain person's single old precious ring (*alicuius pretiosi anuli*) (*Praefatio* 13–15).[52]

The term *enchiridion* confirms that the *Sentences* are not a work of mere, although pious, entertainment, but are meant to initiate Avita and her spouse into the studious practice of self-discipline probably imitating the holy ascetics Rufinus himself had met in the East. Further evidence that the *Sentences* may have been intended for the moral education of the Roman middle class may derive from Rufinus' comment that his *anulus* contained a second part, an unidentified collection of instructions of a father to his son, which has not survived in any Latin MS.[53] Considering that Rufinus never says that this second work was a translation,[54] Bogaert argues

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[49] *Praefatio* 5–6, see Richard D. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire. Christian Promotion and Practice 313–450*, Oxford 2006, 1.

[50] Robert L. Wilken, "Wisdom and Philosophy in Early Christianity", in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, Notre Dame (Ind.) 1975, pp. 143–168, 162–163 mentions *Conj. Praec.* 145b, where Plutarch advices a newly married man to compile a collection of philosophical sayings for the instruction of his wife.

[51] *Praefatio* 22.

[52] Frederick C. Conybeare, *The Ring of Pope Xystus. Together With the Prologue of Rufinus Now First Rendered Into English With an Historical and Critical Commentary*, London 1910, 2 misunderstands the Latin. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 117 n.2 conjectures that the simile refers to a precious ring recently lost by Avita.

[53] *Praefatio* 20–21: "Addidi praeterea et electa quaedam religiosi parentis ad filium".

[54] Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "La préface de Rufin aux Sentences de Sextus et à une œuvre inconnue. Interprétation, tradition de texte et manuscrit remembré de Fleury", in *RBén* 82 (1972), pp. 26–46, 27.

that it may have been the *Disticha Catonis*, which were widely read among the Roman middle class to which it offered a selection of popular morality[55] and whose introduction is in the form of an instruction of a father to his son.[56]

That the *Sentences* were a manual of asceticism is suggested by Rufinus's comment that the aspiration of the work is moral perfection (*ad totius possit perfectionem vitae sufficere*).[57] During the fourth century many middle-class Christians developed a fascination with asceticism, but were too preoccupied with the world to choose monastic life. As observed by Kate Cooper, these Christians, suspended between the fascination for the desert and more mundane interests, increased the need for "devotional literature" and manuals for everyday life.[58] Latin Sextus, together with translations of other ascetic classics and Origen, can probably be seen as Rufinus' own attempt to meet the need of works which would bring into the Roman households of these ascetic amateurs the flavour of the spiritual aspirations and the striving for perfection of the Egyptian and Syrian hermits.

II. Jerome: the Sentences *and moral perfectionism*

Jerome's attack against Rufinus' translation originated mainly from personal tensions between the two ascetics. Jerome's unforgiving criticism was aimed primarily at Rufinus' attribution of the *Sentences* to Xystus. As mentioned, however, since Rufinus is likely to have received the tradition from a previous source, Jerome's claim that he intentionally misattributed the *Sentences* for calculated malice is an overstatement.[59] Some of Jerome's observations on the *Sentences*, however, provide crucial insights into the nature of Sextus' discipline of renunciation and its aspirations, and are therefore central to the purpose of this study. An important contribution to the understanding of Sextus' place in the ascetic tradition comes from Jerome's polemical suggestion that Rufinus inspired the theologies of

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[55] Paul Veyne, *L'Empire Gréco-Romain*, Paris 2005, 150: "C'est un livre que lisait, je crois, la plèbe moyenne". Morgan, *Education*, 121 sees similarities between the two gnomologies.

[56] Bogaert, "Préface", 44–45. Bogaert, "Préface", 39–42 argues that the table of matters of MSS Paris B.N. lat. 12205 and B.N. lat. 113 suggest that Sextus was originally followed by the *Disticha*.

[57] *Praefatio* 11.

[58] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge (MA) 1996, 105. Finn, *Almsgiving*, 2 stresses the: "Controversial nature" of Rufinus' attempt to meet the increasing demand for Christian moral literature with a work which originated in paganism.

[59] *Epist.* 133.3.

Pelagius and Evagrius, whose spiritual discipline Jerome regarded with suspicion.[60] Since Pelagius repeatedly quoted the *Sentences* in support of his views on human sin,[61] Jerome blamed Rufinus' translation for spreading errors. In Jerome's understanding, doctrines such as the possibility of achieving sinlessness and perfection and the negation of original sin did not originate with Pelagius, but resulted from a tradition going back to the errors of Origen and his followers:[62]

> And he [Rufinus] with his habitual recklessness and foolishness called "Ring" (*Anulum nominavit*) this book, which is read in many provinces (*qui per multas provincias legitur*), above all by those who encourage ἀπάθεια and inerrancy (*impeccantiam*) (*Comm. Jer.* 4.41).

Elter has proposed that ἀπάθεια and *impeccantia* refer to Pelagius' use of the *Sentences*.[63] This is correct for *impeccantia*, but the reference to the Stoic doctrine of ἀπάθεια, i.e. imperturbability through renunciation of passions, is problematic since the *Sentences* never explicitly allude to it.[64] Chadwick is probably right to argue that Jerome's mention of ἀπάθεια is rather a reference to Evagrius.[65] Evagrius had set imperturbability at the centre of the ascetic message of his monastic works.[66] Jerome thought therefore that by striving for emotional ἀπάθεια the Evagrian ascetics were setting their expectations too high, claiming the possibility of achieving human inerrancy, a position dangerously close to Pelagianism, and making themselves equal to God.[67] Jerome's *Comm. Jer.* 4.41 is important in two respects. First, it confirms that the *Sentences* were as popular (*per multas provincias legitur*) at the beginning of the fifth century as they were when Origen wrote *Comm. Matt.* 15.3. Second, and most importantly, by implicitly referring to the doctrines of an ascetic theorist like Evagrius, Jerome

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[60] Augustine M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus*, Oxford 2006, 16–17.

[61] On the use of Sextus in Pelagian circles, see Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius. Inquiries and Reappraisals*, London 1968, 48.

[62] Kelly, *Jerome*, 313, also Rees, *Pelagius*, 93–94 and Evans, *Pelagius*, 17. Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford 2000, 396 points out that Jerome was condemning the entire tradition in which Pelagius developed his views.

[63] *Gnomica I. Sexti Pythagorici, Clitarchi, Evagrii Pontici Sententiae*, ed. by Anton Elter, Leipzig 1892, iii.

[64] See Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*, vol. 1, Leiden 1990, 42–44.

[65] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 120.

[66] E.g. *Ad monachos* 66: ἄνευ γάλακτος οὐ τραφήσεται παιδίον, καὶ χωρὶς ἀπαθείας οὐχ ὑψωθήσεται καρδία.

[67] In Jerome's sarcastic comment the one who has achieved imperturbability: "Vel saxum, vel Deus est", *Epist.* 133.3.

suggests a continuing connection between Sextus and a number of Origenist monastic circles of the fourth and fifth century.[68]

In Jerome's terms, however, the practices of these ascetics aiming at achieving divine perfection were more suitable for pagan philosophers, Pythagoreans and Stoics, and Pelagian heretics but not for Christian monks.[69] In Jerome's view, this connection between Sextus and Hellenic philosophy was the main reason why the *Sentences* ought to be rejected:

> Who could adequately describe the rashness or rather the crack-headedness of a fellow who ascribed the book of Sextus the Pythagorean (*Xysti Pythagorei*), a man without Christ and a heathen (*hominis absque Cristo atque ethnici*), to Xystus the martyr-bishop of the Roman church? In this book much is said of perfection (*multa de perfectione dicuntur*) in accordance with the doctrine of the Pythagoreans (*iuxta dogma Pythagoricorum*) who make man equal to God (*qui hominem exaequant deo*) and maintain that he is of God's substance (*Epist.* 133.3).[70]

In his criticism, Jerome shows considerable familiarity with the content of the collection. He highlights that the *Sentences* promote moral perfectionism and regard men as equal to God (*hominem exaequant Deo*), aspects of central importance for Sextus' ideal of self-discipline. What was innovative in Jerome's denunciation of Sextus is that he maintains that Sextus' perfectionism was derived from Pythagoreanism (*iuxta dogma Pythagoricorum*) and is therefore incompatible with Christianity. For the first time after two centuries of circulation as a Christian work, the *Sentences* are attributed to a pagan: Xystus Pythagoreus. Jerome's attribution was not fraudulent, but his determination to demonstrate that Sextus was a pagan was equivocal. To date, any attempt to identify the Pythagorean Xystus with precision has been unsuccessful.[71] It is unlikely, however, that Jerome intentionally provided a false attribution. More plausible is that having correctly detected pagan elements in Sextus he ascribed the *Sentences* to a pagan philosopher in his time.[72]

In Jerome's time, however, referring to Hellenic philosophy had begun to be seen as a return to paganism to the point that reading pagan authors

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[68] On Origen's impact on Evagrian asceticism, see Richard D. Finn, *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World,* Cambridge 2009, 104.

[69] *Epist.* 133.1.

[70] ET Chadwick, *Sextus*, 120.

[71] For a complete range of possibilities, see Gwynn, "Xystus", 1203–1204 and Chadwick, *Sextus*, 126–129.

[72] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1203 thinks of the Pythagorean Sextus listed at the 195th Olympiad (1–4 C.E.), cf. Eusebius, *Chron.* 195.1.

had become a moral issue.[73] Thus Christian authors referring to pagan material would give a pretext to their detractors and raise the suspicion of heresy.[74] Jerome's accusation that Rufinus' translation was misleading for Christian readers was primarily a rhetorical device aimed at discrediting Rufinus.[75] Although Jerome was right in detecting pagan elements in Sextus, arguments like the absence of biblical characters in the *Sentences*[76] were not decisive factors in confirming that Sextus was not a Christian, as Shepherd of Hermas and Athenagoras likewise never mention Christ.[77]

Whether intentional or more fortuitous, Jerome's claim that the *Sentences* are a pagan work marks a shift in the attitude of Christian ascetics towards the collection. Jerome's attack reflects an on-going debate among Christian ascetics on the Hellenic roots of asceticism, with the Origenist Rufinus and Evagrius better disposed towards Pythagorean perfectionism than most of their contemporaries. Significantly, Jerome attributes to paganism exactly the same appetite for perfection which Rufinus in his preface saluted as one of the central aspects of Sextus' manual of asceticism (*ad totius possit perfectionem vitae sufficere*).[78] Following the rise of Pelagianism, philosophical striving for perfection had become unsuitable for Christians, at least in Jerome's understanding. Whether in Rufinus' admiring terms or in Jerome's vitriolic censure, the debate on the *Sentences* shows that moral perfectionism was the aspect of the collection that captured the attention of Christian ascetics.

Jerome himself witnesses the significance of Sextus' collection in the ascetic tradition. Before the Pelagian crisis, Jerome had been involved in 393 C.E. in another controversy, this time against the anti-ascetic theology

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[73] Cooper, *Virgin*, 88 compares this Christian rejection of, previously accepted, elements of Hellenic culture to the mounting of a "Fundamentalist language of intrinsic moral superiority".

[74] Cooper, *Virgin*, 90.

[75] Kelly, *Jerome*, 315–316 thinks that Jerome's carelessness in perceiving the Christian character of Sextus was not intentional. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 129 observes: "The suggestion is not that Jerome was in this instance a rogue and deliberate liar, only that he was probably being tendentious, casual and slapdash".

[76] *Epist.* 133.3: "Nulla prophetarum, nulla patriarcharum, nulla apostolorum, nulla Christi fit mentio".

[77] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1199 and Conybeare, *Ring*, 125–126. In *Leg.* 11.2 Athenagoras does not refer to Christ, not even when words of Jesus are quoted. Concerning Sextus, Evans, *Pelagius*, 44 observes: "It is as if the sage had been attempting to educate his readers into Christian faith without immediately giving offense over the Christian name". Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. 3.1, Leipzig 1923[5], 701 n.4 says that the reticence about Christian terminology was meant to persuade pagans of the validity of Christian morality.

[78] *Praefatio* 10–11.

of Jovinian.[79] Attacking Jovinian's disapproval of monastic celibacy, Jerome resorts to Sextus to substantiate his stricter views on marriage:

> Xystus in the *Sentences* says: "He who loves his wife too passionately is an adulterer" (*adulter est, inquit, in suam uxorem amator ardentior*). Certainly any affection towards another's wife is shameful, even more so towards one's own. A wise man loves his wife with discretion not with passion (*Jov.* 1.49).

The maxim quoted here is *Sext.* 231.[80] There is no doubt that Sextus here is invoked to convey an abstinent view of marriage. Since Jerome's two books against Jovinian predate Rufinus' translation, Jerome must have been already familiar with the Greek collection and found in it a useful tool to endorse his ascetic views, the way Origen had done in *Cels.* 8.30 a century and a half earlier.

Jerome returned to *Sext.* 231 in his commentary on Ezekiel (ca. 414 C.E.):

> It is beautifully (*pulchre*) said in the little sentences of Xystus the Pythagorean (*in Xysti Pythagorici sententiolis*): "He who loves his wife too passionately is an adulterer" (*Adulter est uxoris propriae amator ardentior*). A book that somebody (*quidam*) translated and tried to make more prestigious (*voluit illustrare*) by using the name of Xistus the martyr (*Comm. Ezech.* 6).[81]

As this passage shows, Jerome's interest in Sextus' continent views on marital love persisted even after the Illyrian's tendentious assertion that Sextus was a Pythagorean. Although in the passage quoted above the dead Rufinus (died 410 C.E.) has become a mere somebody (*quidam*) to be soon forgotten and the *Sentences* are derogatorily called *sententiolae*, Sextus' invitation to self-restraint still belongs to Jerome's ascetic repertoire, confirming that the *Sentences* remained a source of moral instruction even among their detractors.

III. The Sentences and the Pelagian understanding of sin

The assumption that Sextus played a more central role than normally assumed in the ascetic tradition is strengthened by the use made by Pelagius of the *Sentences*. According to Augustine's *Nat. grat.* 77, Pelagius used three sentences from Sextus' collection to substantiate his theological views on sin.[82] According to Jerome, as seen above, sinlessness was the

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[79] Kelly, *Jerome*, 180ff.

[80] μοιχὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος.

[81] PL 25:173c.

[82] *Sext.* 36: "Libertatem arbitrii sui permisit hominibus Deus, ut pure et sine peccato viventes similes fiant Deo"; *Sext.* 46: "Templum sanctum est Deo mens pura, et altare

main reason why Pelagians developed an interest in the *Sentences.*[83] Pelagius must have been familiar with a Latin translation of the *Sentences*. Since he quotes all the maxims where the original ἀναμάρτητος has been translated by Rufinus with *sine peccato,*[84] it is likely that despite minor variants Pelagius used Rufinus' translation. In Sextus' collection, Pelagius found evidence of the possibility of living in purity and *impeccantia* in what he believed were the authoritative words of a bishop and a martyr.[85] Robert Evans has observed that the *Sentences* were: "Something like a handbook"[86] for Pelagius, suggesting that the work translated by Rufinus to instruct the Roman West in the ways of ascetic perfectionism had accomplished its objective.[87]

Concerning ascetic discipline, Pelagius was a moderate among the ascetics of his time and was not likely to adopt some of Sextus' more radical views. Between the permissiveness of Jovinian and Jerome's extreme asceticism, he had taken a middle way.[88] In sexual matters, Evans observes that Sextus is stricter than Pelagius,[89] validating the impression that the sexual renunciation endorsed by the *Sentences* reflects a more radical form of asceticism, not dissimilar from Encratism. While Sextus allows married people to leave their spouses and choose an ascetic life even without mutual agreement,[90] Pelagius rebukes the Christian Celantia for imposing abstention on her husband without his consent, arguing that marital sex be-

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optimum est ei cor mundum et sine peccato" and *Sext.* 60: "Castus et sine peccato potestatem accepit a Deo esse filius Dei".

[83] *Epist.*133.3: "Pudeat ergo eos principium et sociorum suorum, qui aiunt, posse hominem sine peccato esse si velit, quod Greci dicunt ἀναμάρτητον".

[84] In Greek the adjective occurs also in *Sext.* 8 which Rufinus does not translate with *sine peccato*.

[85] In *Nat. grat.* 77 also Augustine accepts the tradition: "Quis item Christianus ignorat, quod beatissimum Xystum Romanae Ecclesiae episcopum et Domini martyrem dixisse". Evans, *Pelagius*, 47–48 observes: "The Greek Christian sage of the late second century contributed in remarkably full measure to the Latin Christian ascetic of the early fifth century". Georges De Plinval, *Pélage. Ses écrits, sa vie et sa réforme*, Lausanne 1943, 206 and 273 believes that Sextus was a pagan philosopher.

[86] Evans, *Pelagius*, 48.

[87] Evans, *Pelagius*, 63 argues that the influence of the *Sentences* on Pelagius' thought extended beyond the three quotations mentioned. For example the frequent use of *sapiens* in Pelagius may be due to a direct influence of Sextus' language. Bogaert, "Préface", 43 observes that later Pelagian documents kept being circulated under the name of Sextus, showing a strong connection between the two traditions.

[88] Theodore De Bruyn, *Pelagius' Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Edited and Translated with Introduction and Notes*, Oxford 1993, 13 and 52.

[89] Evans, *Pelagius*, 59.

[90] *Sext.* 230a: γάμον γὰρ δίδωσίν σοι παραιτεῖσθαι ἵνα ζήσῃς ὡς πάρεδρος θεῷ, cf. 1 Cor 7:5.

longs equally to man and wife and that God does not accept from one person a gift that actually belongs to two people.[91] Sextus and Pelagius have similar views on wealth. Like Sextus, Pelagius invites Christians to endure willingly being stripped of their belongings,[92] although Pelagius is more biblical with references to the final judgement and to eternal life.[93] Sextus, leaving out eschatological references,[94] bases his view of the renunciation of wealth on the philosophical principle of Cynic self-sufficiency, which Pelagius seemed to disregard probably because of his general aversion to classical culture.[95]

This last point on Pelagius' suspicion of philosophy is particularly important as it shows that the influence of Sextus on early Christian ascetics extended beyond the restricted circle of those who shared his philosophical views. On the whole Pelagius remained unaffected by Sextus' Pythagorising Platonism. While Sextus considers humans to be quasi divine beings,[96] in Pelagius' thought they are firmly grounded in their humanity relentlessly struggling to avoid sin.[97] Contrary to what Jerome claimed, Pelagius only partially adopted Sextus' perfectionism, particularly with regard to emotions. In Sextus, for example, the heart of the perfected believer does not have room left for passion[98] while in Pelagius passions keep troubling the mind and have to be constantly countered by not consenting to them.[99] Pelagius' attempt to introduce the *Sentences* as an authority in the debate failed when Augustine learned from Jerome that Sextus was not a Christian

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[91] *Cel.* 28, see Brinley Roderick Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers*, Woodbridge 1991, 127.

[92] *Pelag.* 1.29: "Christianum illius debere esse patientiae, ut si quis sua auferre voluerit, gratanter amittat", cf. *Sext.* 15.

[93] Evans, *Pelagius*, 60.

[94] Gerhard Delling, "Zur Hellenisierung des Christentums in den "Sprüchen des Sextus" ", in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik. Erich Klostermann zum 90. Geburtstag dargebracht*, ed. by the Kommission für spätantike Religionsgeschichte, TU 77, Berlin 1961, pp. 208–241, 220 interprets in a similar way Sextus' rendition of Matt 5:29–30 in *Sext.* 13: "Die entscheidende Hellenisierung des gesamten Herrenwortes erfolgt in der Umdeutung seiner eschatologischen Aussagen".

[95] Evans, *Pelagius*, 62. On Pelagius' opposition to classical culture, see De Plinval, *Pélage*, 73.

[96] In *Sext.* 32, they are superior to angels and in *Sext.* 34 they are "next in rank after God", ET *The Sentences of Sextus*, translated by Richard A. Edwards – Robert A. Wild, Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Traslations 22 Early Christian Literature Series 5, Chico (Calif.) 1981, 20.

[97] Evans, *Pelagius*, 63: "Man as obedient to his Lord is the dominant image for Pelagius, not man as lifted up to participate in the divine abstraction from the world".

[98] *Sext.* 204: οὐκ ἀναβήσεται πάθος ἐπὶ καρδίαν πιστοῦ.

[99] *Dem.* 27.1.

and rejected the collection in his *Retractationes*.[100] Pelagius, Rufinus and Jerome, however, demonstrate the popularity of the *Sentences* among Latin speaking ascetics in the fourth and fifth centuries. Although the philosophical character of the collection was overlooked by Pelagius or deemed unsuitable for Christians by Jerome, Sextus' discourse on self-control proved to contribute crucially to the ascetic debate in the Latin-speaking churches.

D. The Later Ascetic Tradition up to the Modern Era

I. Evagrius of Pontus and the Armenian Sextus

That Evagrius of Pontus probably read and quoted Sextus constitutes further evidence of the importance of the *Sentences* in Christian asceticism. The circulation of Sextus in monastic circles marks an important change in Christian asceticism. From being a manual of perfection for private edification to their inclusion in the monastic tradition, the *Sentences* accompanied the transition of Christian asceticism from less organised forms of renunciation to the life of the cloister. Two traditions, one in Greek and one in Armenian, link Evagrius to Sextus. The Armenian corpus of Evagrius contains three selections of Pythagorean-like aphorisms, mostly from the *Sentences*.[101] According to Conybeare, the fusion of the Armenian Sextus with the Evagrian corpus happened between the fifth and sixth century,[102] while others have opted for an earlier date.[103]

The Greek tradition consists of three short collections, different from the Armenian, which appear under Evagrius' name in a few Greek witnesses edited by Elter along with Sextus.[104] The first two collections, *Capita paraenetica* and *Spirituales sententiae*, are alphabetical collections, while the third collection does not follow any particular order. Both the Armenian and the Greek contain aphorisms from the *Sentences* but also from Sextus' source material like *Clitarchus* and the *Pythagorean Sentenc-*

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[100] *Retract.* 2.42: "Sed postea legi Sexti philosophi esse non Xysti cristiani", see Berthold Altaner, "Augustinus und die neutestamentlichen Apokryphen, Sibyllinen und Sextussprüche. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung", in AnBoll 67 (1949), pp. 236–248, 247–248.

[101] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 7.

[102] Conybeare, *Ring*, 131.

[103] Joseph Muyldermans, "Le discours de Xystus dans la version arménienne d'Évagrius le Pontique", in *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 9 (1929), pp. 183–201, 201 suggests Evagius' death in 399 C.E.

[104] Elter, *Gnomica*, xlvii–liv, see also Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus. The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, Oxford 2003, 228. Some of these sentences occur also in the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus.

es.[105] The Armenian texts and the non-alphabetical Greek have a distinct Christian flavour, but harmonisation with Christianity is noticeable elsewhere in the Greek.[106] The three Greek gnomologies handed down under Evagrius' name are probably excerpts from a larger Evagrian original.[107] Recurrent references to a life of renunciation and deliverance from passions in the three collections, suggest that asceticism was one of the criteria followed for the selection. Christian reworking of pagan sentences in the first alphabetical collection is less frequent but significant, for example in *Cap. par.* 5[108] where a pagan sentence also extant in *Clit.* 6[109] is given a distinctly Christian character by replacing the reference to pagan sacrifices (θύων) with mercy (ἐλεῶν).[110] A remarkable example of Christianisation is offered in *Cap. par.* 22:

χριστιανοῦ ἀνδρὸς μὴ τὸ σχῆμα ἀποδέχου, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς φρόνημα (*Cap. par.* 22).

Accept not the outward appearance of a Christian man, but rather the attitude of soul.[111]

The non-Christianised version of this gnome preserved in *Pyth.* 54 (= *Sext.* 462) originally referred to Cynicism:

κυνικοῦ μὴ τὸ σχῆμα ἀποδέχου ἀλλὰ τὴν μεγαλοψυχίαν ζήλου (*Pyth.* 54).

Of a Cynic do not accept the appearance, but imitate the magnanimity.

While keeping the overall structure of the sentence, the Evagrian MSS substituted χριστιανός for κυνικός. Substitutions of this kind are frequent in Sextus and were probably implemented to adapt Hellenistic aphorisms for a Christian readership.[112] The continuation of this appropriation of pagan gnomes in Evagrius' time shows that at the end of the fourth century the Christianisation of Sextus' source material was still an on-going process. The third Evagrian text contains a telling example of this process:

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[105] Rüdiger Augst, *Lebensverwirklichung und christlicher Glaube: Acedia, religiöse Gleichgültigkeit als Problem der Spiritualität bei Evagrius Ponticus*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 38 says that Evagrius drew on the *Sentences* for the *Capita paraenetica*. Antoine Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'Origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, Paris 1962, 67 n. 81 believes Sextus was a Stoic philosopher.

[106] *Al. sent.* 61 openly refers to Scripture, *Al. sent.* 65 to Jesus and *Al. sent.* 66–67 to the Eucharist.

[107] Elter, *Gnomica*, xlviii, see also Muyldermans, "Discours", 200.

[108] εὐσεβὴς οὐχ ὁ πολλοὺς ἐλεῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ μηδένα ἀδικῶν.

[109] εὐσεβὴς οὐχ ὁ πολλὰ θύων, ἀλλ' ὁ μηδὲν ἀδικῶν.

[110] Sinkewicz, *Evagrius*, 289.

[111] ET Sinkewicz, *Evagrius*, 230.

[112] E.g. *Sext.* 49 reads πιστός against *Pyth.* 39, *Clit.* 4 and *Marc.* 11, which have σοφός. See Chadwick, *Sextus*, 157.

εἰ φιλεῖς τὸν Χριστόν, τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρεῖν οὐκ ἐπιλήσῃ· ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἀναφαίνεται εὐεργέτης μετὰ θεόν (*Al. sent.* 68).

If you love Christ you will not forget to keep his commandments, for thence is a benefactor after God revealed.

While the first part of the sentence is modelled after the NT,[113] the second part comes from *Sext.* 176 where the "benefactor after God" is the wise.[114] Unlike Sextus, the Evagrian witness shows greater freedom in letting Christian and Hellenic traditions interact. While Sextus is likely to have employed Hellenised biblical passages to demonstrate the intellectual respectability of Christianity in a world where pagan philosophy was predominant,[115] the Evagrian Greek tradition shows that for the ascetics of the East the interplay of Pythagorean gnomic sources with biblical texts continued beyond Sextus' "apologetic"[116] concern.

The Armenian ascetic tradition also demonstrates the continuous use of Sextus in monastic literature. The three fifth-century Armenian anthologies of Sextus have been reshaped into monastic instructions dedicated to a group of brethren.[117] The Armenian also offers a combination of aphorisms taken from Sextus with maxims found in Sextus' source material.[118] Since the Armenian Sextus was meant for a monastic audience, some aphorisms underwent considerable reworking. In *Sext.* 227 the Greek φιλόσοφος has been replaced by the Armenian word for "monk" and in *Sext.* 219 by "brother".[119] The Armenian "monk" appears also in *Sext.* 294 where the Vaticanus Graecus 742 with one of the Syriac witnesses reads πιστός and the Patmiensis 263 has φιλόσοφος along with Rufinus and the other Syriac epitome.[120] That Armenian Christians perceived Sextus as fully belonging to their ascetic traditions is better indicated by the fact that the most important MS of the Armenian Sextus contains also "les Vies des Saints Anachorètes" alongside the *Sentences.*[121] The same was probably true of the Georgian ascetic tradition, where the translation of the *Sentences* in

[113] Cf. John 14:15.21, John 15:10 or 1 John 5:3.

[114] σοφὸς ἀνὴρ εὐεργέτης μετὰ θεόν, see also *Sext.* 542.

[115] See Delling, "Hellenisierung", 211.

[116] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160.

[117] Conybeare, *Ring*, 137 and Theodor Hermann, "Die armenische Überlieferung der Sextussentenzen", in *ZKG* 57 (1938), pp. 217–226, 226.

[118] Hermann, "Sextussentenzen", 221–222.

[119] Hermann, "Sextussentenzen", 222 n. 40 and 42.

[120] Hermann, "Sextussentenzen", 222 n. 41.

[121] Muyldermans, "Discours", 187. It is codex 966 of the Mechitarist library of Venice.

Georgian, probably done after the Armenian,[122] is treated as an ascetic treatise and in the only surviving MS (Georg. 35 from Mount Sinai) is included with ascetical works by Antony, Evagrius, Cassian and others.[123]

If Evagrius knew the *Sentences*, he almost certainly received them from Origen, as probably did Rufinus.[124] Among ascetics Origenism remained predominant.[125] It is not unlikely that Jerome's hostility towards the *Sentences* started with his opposition to the "moines origénistes", whom he had met and regarded with suspicion during his visit to the monks of Nitria.[126] Whether the Evagrian selections of Sextus are authentic,[127] the presence of aphorisms of Sextus in the Evagrian corpus and in the ascetic corpora of Armenian and Georgian Christianity shows that the *Sentences* and their source material by the end of the fourth century had established themselves at the core of an important cultural tradition which played a crucial role in the formation of the monastic repertoire.

II. The Sentences *in Egypt and Syria*

Although fragmentary, the fourth-century Coptic translation of Sextus in codex XII of the Nag Hammadi library may date back to a third-century translation, making it the earliest translation of Sextus.[128] Accurate but not literal, the Coptic probably contained the entire 451 verses of the original.[129] The five pages of the translation still extant follow the same order supported by Rufinus and the Greek MSS, suggesting that the Coptic ver-

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[122] Gérard Garitte, "Vingt-deux 'Sentences de Sextus' en Géorgien", in *Mus* 72 (1959), pp. 355–363, 361–362.

[123] Garitte, "Sextus", 356 n.10.

[124] Muyldermans, "Discours", 199. Casiday, *Evagrius*, 173 argues that Evagrius knew the *Sentences* and: "Personally redacted a version of the collection".

[125] Kelly, *Jerome*, 126–127.

[126] Guillaumont, *Képhalaia*, 69. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 161–162 argues: "Evagrius had absorbed Sextus' morality within his Origenist spirituality, and so Sextus came to exercise an indirect influence upon the piety of Greek monasticism as well as upon that of the West through the version of Rufinus". Also the Syriac MSS of Sextus of the British library come from the monastery of the Syrians in Nitria, cf. Gwynn, "Xystus", 1200.

[127] Muyldermans, "Discours", 201 leans towards authenticity but with some caution.

[128] Paul-Hubert Poirier, "Les sentences de Sextus (NH XII,1)", in *Les sentences de Sextus (NH XII,1), Fragments (NH XII,3), Fragments de la République de Platon (NH VI,5)*, ed. by Paul-Hubert Poirier and Louis Painchaud, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi Sextion «Textes» 11, Québec 1983, pp. 1–94, 25, see also Frederik Wisse, "NHC XII,*1*: The Sentences of Sextus", in *Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII*, ed. by Charles W. Hedrick, NHS 28, Leiden 1990, pp. 295–327, 298 and Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis. Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, Leipzig 1977, 279.

[129] Wisse, "Sextus", 298.

sion was not an excerpt.[130] Agreements between the Coptic translation and the Syriac longer recension suggest a common Greek *Vorlage*, re-establishing the Syriac as a reliable witness of the Greek.[131] Among the few noteworthy variants in the Coptic, *Sext.* 338 renders δόγμα ἀκοινώνητον with ⲟⲩⲇⲟⲅⲙⲁ ⲉⲛⲉⲭϯ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲣ̄ ⲥⲣⲱϩ or: "A doctrine that does not share with those in want". Since the same happens in *Sext.* 378, it has been suggested that the Coptic shows a keener interest in helping the poor,[132] although the Coptic could just be a less elegant attempt to render the Greek. The presence of the *Sentences* in a Gnostic library is hardly surprising. Gnostics read books also used among mainstream Christians, and the *Sentences* were a popular book.[133] Probably asceticism and spiritualised anthropology were the main reasons why the collection found its way into the Nag Hammadi library.[134] Because the *Sentences* in codex XII are coupled with the *Gospel of Truth*, believed to be a Valentinian work, Wisse suggests that Sextus may have been read in Valentinian circles.[135] Sextus' view of marriage, however, seems stricter than Valentinus' teaching.[136] The presence of an early Coptic translation of the *Sentences* may suggest the existence of Platonising Christian circles in Egypt emphasising γνῶσις and ἐγκράτεια before Clement's time or concomitant with it.[137]

These abstinent ideals were probably already current in Alexandrian Judaism, where forms of Platonising asceticism influenced Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa.*[138] According to Birger Pearson, philosophical circles in Christian Alexandria remain the most plausible place of origin for the collection, making the *Sentences* a unique document for the study of cultural

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[130] The Coptic preserves a few sentences omitted by Rufinus and has only one omission (*Sext.* 162a) probably due to haplography see Poirier, "Sextus", 50 and Wisse, "Sextus", 296–297.

[131] In *Sext.* 335 the Coptic has a distinctive addition which occurs also at the end of *Sext.* 333 in the longer Syriac recension see Poirier, "Sextus", 21–22.

[132] Wisse, "Sextus", 300.

[133] See Poirier, "Sextus", 27.

[134] Poirier, "Sextus", 28. On the complex problem of asceticism among the Gnostics, see Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism". An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Princeton 1996, 160–162.

[135] Wisse, "Sextus", 301.

[136] On Valentinian asceticism, see Brown, *Body*, 110.

[137] Roelof van den Broek, "Juden und Christen in Alexandrien im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert", in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Leiden 1996, pp. 181–196, 185 and "Niet-gnostisch", 297.

[138] Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt*, London 2004, 17 suggests that the same ascetic tendencies were once present in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

life in Christian Alexandria.[139] Moreover, the use of Greek gnomic material in the *Sentences* could reflect a characteristically Egyptian cultural custom which extended beyond the boundaries of Alexandrian Christianity. Studies of demotic collections have shown that Egyptian wisdom in the Greco-Roman period drew extensively on Greek gnomologies. Miriam Lichtheim has pointed out that collections like the Insinger Papyrus (ca. second century C.E.) probably intended to emulate Hellenistic gnomic literature.[140] According to Lichtheim, thematic similarities can be established between the *Sentences* and the Insinger Papyrus, particularly in PIns. 27.9[141] and PIns. 18.8.[142] Although a direct dependence cannot be established, Lichtheim is of the opinion that Sextus' "manual of self-improvement"[143] with its "dualistic and ascetic"[144] character developed an interplay between Greek philosophy, above all Stoicism, and Egyptian wisdom. More recently, Lazaridis has shown that analogies between demotic and Greek wisdom are limited to thematic elements, while the message and the wording are often different.[145] Lazaridis however still maintains the possibility of interplay between Egyptian and Greek gnomologists.[146] Thus if Lichtheim's conclusions are right, the compiler of the *Sentences* by combining different gnomic traditions would have followed a tendency which was well established in Egypt.

Edited in 1858 by Paul de Lagarde from seven MSS dating back as far as the sixth century,[147] the Syriac Sextus consists of two independent translations. The first Syriac translation (X) consists of a short selection of 131 sentences, while the longer translation (x) is almost complete.[148] The two

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[139] Pearson, *Gnosticism*, 80, see also Poirier, "Sextus", 20.

[140] Miriam Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context. A Study of Demotic Instructions*, OBO 52, Göttingen 1983, 191: "For PInsinger works of Hellenistic gnomologia primarily in Greek should be thought of as having been sources of inspiration and models of composition".

[141] "When a wise man is stripped he gives his clothes and blesses", ET Lichtheim, *Wisdom*, 225, cf. *Sext.* 15 ὁπόσα τοῦ κόσμου ἔχεις, κἂν ἀφέληταί σού τις, μὴ ἀγανάκτει.

[142] "The chief demon is the first to punish (him) after the taking of the breath" (ET Lichtheim, *Wisdom*, 215) cf. *Sext.* 39 κακῶς ζῶντα μετὰ τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν τοῦ σώματος εὐθύνει κακὸς δαίμων μέχρις οὗ καὶ τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην ἀπολάβῃ.

[143] Lichtheim, *Wisdom*, 27.

[144] Lichtheim, *Wisdom*, 187–188.

[145] Nikolaos Lazaridis, *Wisdom in Loose Form. The Language of Egyptian and Greek Proverbs in Collections of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Leiden 2007, 210.

[146] Lazaridis, *Wisdom*, 242–243.

[147] For a description of the MSS, see de Lagarde, *Analecta*, iii.

[148] Carl Victor Ryssel, "Die syrische Übersetzung der Sextussentenzen", in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 1. Teil 38 (1895), pp. 617–630, 2. Teil 39 (1896), pp. 568–624, 3. Teil 40 (1897), pp. 131–148, 1:623 n. 18.

translators worked autonomously until a scribe mistook the two texts for two books of the same work.[149] Unlike the Coptic, the Syriac translation frequently misinterprets or rephrases the Greek.[150] For the purpose of this study, it is important to notice that most of the changes seem to have been made to adapt the content to a Christian and monastic context by adding explicit references to monastic vows, the gospels or the Pauline letters.[151] Only occasionally are departures from the original due to poor knowledge of Greek vocabulary as in *Sext.* 86 where the Greek *κρηπίς* ("foundation") has been rendered by "shoe" (Syr. ܡܣܢܐ) taking *κρηπίς* in its more obvious meaning.[152]

Several textual variants substantiate Sextus' connection with the ascetic tradition. *Sext.* 234 says that those who declare themselves believers (*πιστὸν εἰπὼν σεαυτόν*) are committed to avoiding sin at all cost.[153] The Syriac has rendered the Greek with: "Devote oneself to God" (ܐܫܠܡܬ ܢܦܫܟ ܠܐܠܗܐ), a technical expression referring to monastic vows.[154] Noteworthy is also *Sext.* 435, where the Greek warning against the threat to self-control constituted by eating too much and never sleeping alone at night (*μηδέποτε μόνος κοιμώμενος νύκτωρ*) has been transformed into:

Every man who eats and fills himself with two portions during the day. Even if he sleeps alone (ܐܦ ܒܠܚܘܕܘܗܝ ܢܕܡܟ), he cannot be without trouble and struggle.

The ascetic translator of the sentence must have found the idea of a monk not sleeping alone rather unfitting and transformed the aphorism into a warning against gluttony.[155] The existence of two unrelated Syriac translations and a relatively large number of MSS demonstrate that the *Sentences* were still read in the East between the sixth and the eighth centuries.[156]

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149 Rubens Duval, *Anciennes littératures Chrétiennes II. La littérature syriaque*, Paris 1907³, 262–263.

150 Hermann, "Sextussentenzen", 218.

151 In *Sext.* 9 the Syriac refers to 1 Cor 2:15 and in *Sext.* 13 the reading is closer to Matt 5:30, see Ryssel, "Syrische", 2:570 n.2 and 4. The latter case is fascinating because it is an attempt of re-Christianise a sentence which was Hellenised by Sextus in the Greek. On the Hellenisation of *Sext.* 13, see Delling, "Hellenisierung", 219–220

152 The shorter Syriac selection, however, translates correctly the same Greek word in *Sext.* 371, see Gwynn, "Xystus", 1201 n.e.

153 Chadwick, *Sextus*, 173 says the sentence may refer to baptism.

154 Ryssel, "Syrische", 1:628 n.4.

155 Ryssel, "Syrische", 2:622 n.4 observes that the sentence is "Mönchisch abgebogen".

156 Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur. Mit Ausschluss der christlich-palästinensischen Texte*, Bonn 1922, 170, see also Ryssel, "Syrische", 1:617–618.

From a Greek treatise of philosophical asceticism probably intended for a lay Christian public, the *Sentences* thus found their way to the monasteries, where late antique Christianity had by now restricted the ascetic tendencies of the second-century philosophical Christianity in which Sextus' collection originated.[157]

III. Sextus in the monastic tradition of the West

While in Syria Sextus was read by monks as a work of Christian devotion, the sixth-century *Decretum Gelasianum* listed the *Sentences* as a work of apocryphal origins:

> Liber proverbiorum ab haereticis conscriptus et sancti Sixti nomine praesignatus apocryphus (*Dec. Gel.* 5.291–292).[158]

Chadwick has argued that the inclusion of the *Sentences* among apocryphal writings denotes an improvement in status if compared with Jerome's assertion that they originated outside Christianity.[159] The claim that the *Sentences* originated among heretics probably refers to their use among Pelagians and Origenists. Similarly Isidore of Seville suggested that the book had been originally written by pope Xystus and later interpolated so that Christian readers should retain only *ea quae veritati contraria non sunt*. In the same passage Isidore notes that Sextus compiled his collection in imitation of Solomon (Lat. *ad instar Salomonis*) suggesting that he saw the *Sentences* as an example of Christian Wisdom literature.[160]

However, the *Sentences* continued to be copied in the West despite Jerome and the *Decretum*. It is likely that Sextus' moral perfectionism and asceticism played a major role in promoting their circulation among Christian ascetics. A telling example of this are several references to the *Sentences* in monastic rules related to the Benedictine tradition showing that the collection continued to be a source for the development of late antique monasticism, as it had been for the ascetically inclined Christian laity of

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[157] The presence of seven sentences of Sextus in the Ethiopian *Book of the Wise Philosophers* gives evidence of the vast circulation of the collection in early Christianity, see Carl Heinrich Cornill, *Das Buch der weisen Philosophen nach dem Aethiopischen untersucht*, Leipzig 1875, 21–22.

[158] Latin in Ernst von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis. In kritischem Text herausgegeben und untersucht von Ernst von Dobschütz*, TU 38/4, Leipzig 1912, 12.

[159] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 122. On the dependence of the *Decretum* on Jerome, see Gwynn, "Xystus", 1199.

[160] *Vir. ill.* 1. Chadwick, *Sextus*, ix calls the *Sentences*: "The wisdom-literature of early Gentile Christendom".

Rufinus' time. In Benedict's *Reg.* 7, the monk has to avoid loud discussions and laughter:

Undecimus humilitatis gradus est, si cum loquitur monachus, leniter et sine risu, humiliter cum gravitate, vel pauca verba et rationabilia loquatur; et non sit clamosus in voce, sicut scriptum est: Sapiens verbis innotescit paucis (PL 66:374b–c).

The concluding aphorism is *Sext.* 145 and comes from Rufinus' translation. The text in fact carries the unmistakable mark of Rufinus' addition of *verbis* to the ambiguous original: σοφὸς ὀλίγοις γινώσκεται (*Sext.* 145), a reading supported by x which translates: "But the wise is recognised as wise even in small things (ܒܡܠܝܐ ܙܥܘܪܐ)". As Sextus is not mentioned here, it remains difficult to establish whether Benedict knew the provenance of the quotation. The sentence is unexpectedly introduced with the formula *scriptum est*, which may suggest that the author mistook it for a scriptural reference.[161]

In the *Rule of the Master*, a sixth-century monastic text connected with the Benedictine tradition,[162] the Master refers twice to Sextus in *Reg. mag.* 9 where *Sext.* 145 is again introduced as Scripture (*et item dicit Scriptura*) and in *Reg. mag.* 11 where *Sext.* 152 is attributed to Origen (*Origenes sapiens dicit*).[163] Further evidence of the popularity of maxims taken from the *Sentences* among the Benedictines comes from Columbanus' *Monastic Rule* where *Sext.* 184 is mentioned:

Majus enim, ut scriptum est, periculum judicantis quam ejus qui judicatur (PL 80.215b).

Once again the wording is that of Rufinus and the aphorism is once again treated as a scriptural quotation.[164] The loose attribution of these sentences to Scripture shows at the same time that Sextus' fame as an author had begun to decline while some sentences still survived as disconnected maxims, but also that their content was still held in high esteem in monastic

[161] Paul Delatte, *The Rule of St. Benedict. A Commentary by the Right Rev. Dom Paul Delatte, Abbot of Solesmes and Superior-General of the Congregation of the Benedictines of France. Translated by Dom Justin McCann, Monk of Ampleforth*, London 1921, 126–127, see also Bogaert, "Préface", 31, which argues that the *Rule* treats Sextus: "Comme Écriture".

[162] On the relationship between Benedict's *Rule* and the *Rule of the Master*, see Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism. From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford 2000, 128–129.

[163] PL 88:965c and 973d. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 124–125 suggests that the author of the *Rule of the Master* found the quotation in a translation of a work of Origen rather than in Rufinus' translation.

[164] Adalbert de Vogüé, " 'Ne juger de rien par soi-même'. Deux emprunts de la Règle colombanienne aux Sentences de Sextus et à saint Jérôme", in *Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité* 49 (1973), pp. 129–134, 130.

literature. Even though none of these quotations openly mentions Sextus, the presence of the *Sentences* in three western rules illustrates the long-term influence that this second-century ascetic tradition had on western monasticism, an influence which stretched from Italy to Gaul and Ireland.[165]

IV. From the monastic scriptorium to the printing press

Testimonies to the use of the *Sentences* in medieval theology and ascetic literature are less frequent.[166] In a discussion on sexual morality in his *Sentences*, Peter Lombard cites *Sext.* 231 attributed to a Sextus Pythagoricus.[167] Since the Latin is closer to *Jov.* 1.49 than to Rufinus' translation, Peter probably found the sentence in Jerome and may have been unaware of the existence of the collection. Through Peter Lombard, *Sext.* 231 entered the medieval reflection on marriage in Cappellanus' *De Amore* and Deschamps' *Le miroir de mariage*, which influenced Chaucer's *Tales*.[168] Despite these occurrences, the relatively small impact of the *Sentences* on medieval literature remains "puzzling" considering their popularity in late antiquity.[169] Despite the limited impact the *Sentences* seem to have had on medieval theology, the collection continued to be copied in numerous exemplars. The high status of the *Sentences* in the Benedictine tradition contributed to their diffusion in monastic scriptoria. Not even Jerome's reservations about Sextus prevented copyists from reproducing the

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[165] Marilyn Dunn, "Mastering Benedict: Monastic Rules and Their Authors in the Early Medieval West", in *The English Historical Review* 105/416 (1990), pp. 567–594, 569.

[166] On the other hand, Arabic gnomologies adopted Pythagorean and Platonic aphorisms. The collection compiled by Mubaššir bin Fatik ca. 1148 C.E., for example, contains several maxims which are attested in Sextus' source material, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation. A Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia*, AOS 60, New Haven (Conn.) 1975, 249–251. Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, *Greek Wisdom Literature and the Middle Ages. The Lost Greek Models and Their Arabic and Castillian Translations*, Sapheneia Contributions to Classical Philology 14, Bern 2009, 174 says that through collections like Mubaššir's a certain "religious asceticism" entered Islamic wisdom.

[167] "Unde in sententiolis Sexti Pythagorici legitur: Omnis ardentior amator propriae uxoris, adulter est" (PL 192.920).

[168] Joseph J. Morgan, "Chaucer and the *Bona Matrimonii*", in *The Chaucer Review* 4/2 (1969), pp. 123–141, 132–134.

[169] Gillian R. Evans, "The Sentences of Sextus in the Middle Ages", in *JTS* 34/2 (1983), pp. 554–555, 555. Evans does not list two references to *Sext.* 231: in Jonas of Orléans (PL 106.183a), where Sextus is called *cuiusdam sapientis* and in Thomas of Perseigne's twelfth-century commentary on Song of Songs, where the sentence is attributed to a: "Psextopythagorico" (PL 206.116a).

Sentences, although sometimes they attached to Rufinus' translation the warnings of Jerome as a sort of disclaimer.[170]

The number of medieval MSS is considerable: 46 MSS dating from the ninth to the fifteenth century are still extant. To these one must add 4 MSS of selections and a considerable number of lost MSS whose existence is known through library catalogues.[171] Some medieval witnesses suggest that Sextus' moral perfectionism was still considered a relevant feature of the collection by the monks, probably as a result of Rufinus' preface which explicitly refers to it. MS Orléans B.N. 73 introduces the *Sentences* as: "*Sententiae Xysti de vita hominis perfecta*"[172] and on the MS Paris B.N. lat. 12205, which contained the *Sentences* alongside the *Regula magistri*, a different hand added: "*De vita perfecta Xisti Pont. Sententiae lat.*".[173] The fifteenth-century MS Cambridge U.L. Add. 684[174] is a copy of the *Sentences* that belonged to the house of the Brethren of the Common Life near Hildesheim, a movement known for its ascetic tendencies.[175]

With the invention of the printing press, numerous editions of the Latin text were circulated.[176] A reflexion on the other works printed alongside the *Sentences* in these early editions conveys something about the place that early editors attributed to Sextus in ancient morality. Most early modern editions seem to accept Jerome's allegations, as they include Sextus among other pagan authors. This is the case with the 1507 Champerius edition, where Sextus is published with the hermetic *Asclepius* and Pseudo-Isocrates' *Ad Demonicum*.[177] In Martini's 1518 edition, Sextus figures alongside the *Disticha Catonis*, a connection that, as seen before, may date back to Rufinus. Thomas Gale in 1671 listed Sextus *inter Ethicos* in his *Opuscula* with Demophilus, Democrates and Secundus.[178] Gale was also the first to suggest that Sextus might have been the same Quintus Sextius

[170] This is the case in MS F 31 (168) of St. John's College, Cambridge, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 124.

[171] Bogaert, "Préface", 32–35. Hubert Silvestre, "Trois nouveaux témoins latins des *Sentences de Sextus*", in *Scriptorium* 17 (1963), pp. 128–129, 129 collates three MSS of the Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles with some interesting variants of Rufinus' preface not listed by Chadwick.

[172] Bogaert, "Préface, 37".

[173] Bogaert, "Préface", 38 n.2.

[174] See Jayne S. Ringrose, *Summary Catalogue of the Additional Medieval Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library Acquired before 1940*, Woodbridge 2009, 4–5.

[175] Kenneth R. Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism. A Study in Intellectual Origins*, Scottdale (Pa.) 1975, 51.

[176] For a complete list, see Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, li–lii.

[177] Champier improved the 1502 Astemio edition.

[178] For a description, see Angelo Raffaele Sodano, *Le sentenze "pitagoriche" dello pseudo-Demofilo*, Rome 1991, 21–23.

who influenced Seneca, initiating an incorrect but long-lasting scholarly tradition.[179]

A minority of editions list the *Sentences* among patristic works.[180] Among these the most important book is certainly that of Urban Siber who wrote a commentary on Rufinus' *Enchiridion* in 1725 strenuously defending the Christian character of the collection. Siber accepted as authentic the belief that Sextus was pope Sixtus II claiming that the *Sentences* were the work of a Christian teacher. Rejecting Jerome's criticism, Siber advocated the rediscovery of the *Sentences* as a fundamental work of early Christian philosophy.[181] In Siber's view, pope Sixtus had expressed in the *Sentences* the encounter between Christian doctrine and classical philosophical morality. A picture on the frontispiece of the book portraying pope Sixtus II as a Christian pontiff and Greco-Roman sage, dressed as a philosopher of the church, sitting on the pontifical throne but wearing the *pallium philosophicum*[182] and holding a copy of his γνῶμαι, offers perhaps the best summary of Siber's view of the *Sentences* as the first treatise of Christian philosophy.[183]

E. Sextus in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

I. The first critical studies

With a few notable exceptions, nineteenth-century scholarship on the *Sentences* focused primarily on Sextus' identity and on the cultural background – Christian or Hellenic – of his moral precepts. Thus Sextus' role in the ascetic tradition was only seen in the light of his connections with Pythagoreanism, by de Lasteyrie, or Roman Stoicism, by Ott.

In 1819, Orelli followed Siber in saying that pope Xystus was the author of the *Sentences*. Orelli was the first to suggest that Xystus edited a pagan collection of Pythagorean and Stoic sentences also used by pseudo-

[179] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 126–127.

[180] Frobenius in 1516 and De la Bigne in 1575.

[181] The title page of Urban Gottfried Siber, *S. Sixti II. Philosophi pontifici R. et martyris, Enchiridion ut Christianum sec. III. monumentum juxta codicem Beati Rhenani edit, observationibus illustrat, adversus S. Hieronymi, Gelasii, J.M. Brasichellensis &c. censuras vindicat, concilioque Romano sub auspiciis Benedicti XIII*, Leipzig 1725, states that the book was published: "Adversus S. Hieronymi, Gelasii,… censuras… ad restituendam libri famam".

[182] On Christians wearing the philosophical cloak, see Tertullian *Pall.* 6.1.

[183] Siber, *Sixti*, fol. 4.

Demophilus and Porphyry.[184] He also argued that Origen did not consider the collection to be Christian, but a pagan book widely read among Christians, a position that had a strong impact on German scholarship.[185] Similar views were expressed by Ritter who argues with Gale that the *Sentences* contain the philosophy of Sextius although Christian interpolations had made them unusable as evidence for the philosophy of the Roman Stoic.[186]

A peculiar case is that of Charles de Lasteyrie who translated Sextus into French in 1843. De Lasteyrie identified the author of the *Sentences* with Sextius Niger, son of the Sextius mentioned by Gale and an advocate of the same blend of Stoicism and Pythagoreanism.[187] Influenced by French revolutionary ideals, de Lasteyrie intended to show with the *Sentences* the superiority of Greco-Roman morality over Christian religion.[188] Failing to notice the Christian interpolations in Sextus, de Lasteyrie read Sextus' collection as evidence that Christianity borrowed its dogmas and morality from Pythagoreanism[189] whose moderation de Lasteyrie opposed to the ascetic radicalism of the NT.

In 1858 de Lagarde edited the Syriac translations of Sextus. Since de Lagarde's focus was on the text rather than the content he does not consider Sextus' ascetic teaching. Listing a lacuna in MS A (ca. 876 C.E.), however, de Lagarde observes that the omission of 13 lines on marriage was probably made: "A monacho caelibe"[190] suggesting that Syriac translators and copyists had adapted the text to a monastic setting and substantiating what has been argued above regarding the ascetic tendencies of Syriac Sextus.

De Lagarde's edition revived the interest in the collection of orientalists and OT scholars. In his *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, for example, Ewald accepts the authorship of pope Xystus and sees the *Sentences* as an im-

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[184] Johann Conrad Orelli, *Opuscula Graecorum veterorum sententiosa et moralia Graece et Latine*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1819, xiv–xv.

[185] Orelli, *Opuscula*, xxx.

[186] Heinrich Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie alter Zeit*, 4. Teil, Hamburg 1839[2], 178 n.2. On Sextius, see Seneca, *Ep.* 59.7 and 108.17–21.

[187] Charles Philibert de Lasteyrie, *Sentences de Sextius, philosophe pythagoricien. Traduites en français pour la première fois, accompagnées de notes, précédées de la doctrine de Pythagore*, Paris 1843, 65.

[188] de Lasteyrie, *Sextius*, 6.

[189] de Lasteyrie, *Sextius*, 76: "Il est d'ailleurs facile de prouver que les dogmes, les maximes, contenus dans l'écrit de Sextius, ont été admis par les philosophes pythagoriciens ou stoïciens, et que les chrétiens ont emprunté eux-mêmes aux philosophes païens, et surtout aux pythagoriciens, plusieurs opinions dont se compose leur croyance".

[190] de Lagarde, *Analecta*, iii.

portant phase in Xystus' conversion from philosophy to Christianity[191] and the beginning of Christian wisdom.[192]

Meinrad Ott, in a series of pamphlets published between 1861 and 1863, argued that the *Sentences* were written by the Roman Sextius.[193] Ott focused on de Lagarde's Syriac text which he considered the result of interpolating a pagan work with NT allusions. According to Ott the interpolators were sympathisers of Pelagianism as shown by their moral perfectionism.[194] As in de Lasteyrie, the ascetical inclinations of the *Sentences* are seen as a Pythagorean element,[195] particularly abstention from prohibited food, moderation in drinking, rejection of non-procreative sex and disapproval of social ambition.[196] Passages where Sextius reflects Jewish-Christian concepts are explained by direct contacts between the Sextian school and Jewish wisdom or Philo's θεραπευταί.[197] Ott attributes considerable relevance to Alexandrian Judaism and its influence on the collection, arguing that the *Sentences* are the result of cross-fertilisation between Platonism and Alexandrian Judaism which contributed to shaping of Sextius' quasi-religious form of ascetical mysticism.[198]

The end of the nineteenth century offers two important contributions to the study of the *Sentences*: Gildemeister's 1873 edition of Rufinus' Latin text and Gwynn's 1887 entry in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Of these only the latter is relevant for the particular argument of this study

[191] Johann Rudolf Tobler, *Annulus Rufini*, Tübingen 1878, viii objects that the collection was pagan but conjectures that Rufinus' Greek MS contained some *Randglossen* by pope Xystus, which caused the wrong attribution. Evidence for this hypothesis could not been found.

[192] Heinrich Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, vol. 7, *Geschichte der Ausgänge des Volkes Israels und des nachapostolischen Zeitalters*, Göttingen 1868², 357: "Er drängt alles was er lehren will in möglichst kurze Sätze zusammen, so daß sein Werk das erste Christliche *Spruchbuch* wird".

[193] Against Ott, Martin Schanz, *Geschichte der Römischen Litteratur bis zum Gesetzgebungswerk des Kaisers Justinians*, 2. Teil, *Die Zeit vom Ende der Republik (30 v. Chr.) bis auf Hadrian (117 n. Chr.)*, München 1892, 214 points out that because there is no mention of the collection before Origen, it is unlikely that the *Sentences* had any connection with Sextius.

[194] Meinrad Ott, *Die syrischen ‚Auserlesenen Sprüche des Herrn Xistus Bischofs von Rom' – nicht eine Xistusschrift sondern eine überarbeitete Sextiusschrift*, Rottweil 1863, 8.

[195] Ott, *Sextiusschrift*, 24, see also Meinrad Ott, *Charakter und Ursprung der Sprüchen des Philosophen Sextius*, Rottweil 1861, 67–71.

[196] On criticism of "Vielgeschäftigkeit" in the *Sentences*, see Ott, *Sextiusschrift*, 31.

[197] Ott, *Sextiusschrift*, 5, 9 and 23.

[198] Ott, *Sextiusschrift*, 33: "Eine von Alexandrien ausgehende theosophisch-ascetische Befruchtung", similarly Roelof van den Broek, "Niet-gnostisch Christendom in Alexandrië voor Clemens en Origenes", in *NedTT* 33/4 (1979), pp. 287–299, 298–299.

while Gildemeister focused on the Latin text leaving out any reference to Sextus' renunciation, although he defended the ascetic character of the Syriac translation.[199] The importance of Gildemeister's edition lies in the improvement of Rufinus' Latin and in the observation that Rufinus' *Vorlage* was shorter than that used by the Syrians as the discovery of the Greek later confirmed. Since none of the Latin maxims containing Christian elements appeared in Porphyry or in the gnomic tradition, Gildemeister wrongly attributed these to the Syrian and Latin translators[200] and with Orelli suggested that the collection was known to Origen as a pagan work.[201]

Published before the discovery of the Greek original, John Gwynn's study has been influential in British scholarship, rectifying Mean's inaccurate entry in the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* where the Syriac is wrongly treated as a translation of Sextius' Latin.[202] Even without the Greek, Gwynn had already documented analogies between the *Sentences* and a version of *Clitarchus* published by Boissonade in 1829.[203] Since the Syriac Sextus displays a distinctively Christian character independently of Rufinus' translation, Gwynn argued that the compiler of the *Sentences* was: "Neither heathen nor heretical" but Christian[204] and that Origen knew Sextus as a Christian. Gwynn suggested that Christian elements and biblical allusions in the *Sentences* were not simply juxtaposed with pagan gnomes as random additions, but carefully interwoven to form a stylistically and conceptually uniform document, a rewriting rather than an interpolation. Gwynn also observed that the Christian compiler at the same time intended to Hellenise the Christian maxims he inserted and to Christianise his pagan source.[205] Like Ewald, Gwynn believes that Sextus may have been a philosopher recently converted to Christianity.[206]

Most importantly for the purpose of this study, Gwynn's work also had the merit of drawing attention to the ascetic undertones of Sextus. Com-

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[199] Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, 39.

[200] Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, xlii: "Non in Latinum solum et Syriacum sermonem, sed etiam in Christianum sibi familiarissimum transferrent". The discovery of the Greek original proved the presence of Christian elements already in the *Vorlage*.

[201] "Non dubium esse potest, quin [Origenes] eas philosophi Graeci opus esse censuerit", ibid.

[202] Joseph Carlow Means, "Sextus Pythagoraeus", in *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. 3, ed. by William Smith, London 1864, pp. 811–813, 812.

[203] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1201, see Jean François Boissonade, *Anecdota Graeca. E codicibus regiis*, vol. 1, Paris 1829, 127–134.

[204] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1199.

[205] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1203.

[206] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1202.

menting on Origen's *Comm. Matt.* 15.3, Gwynn has been the first scholar to suggest a stricter correlation between the *Sentences* and radical ascetic circles in Origen's time, suggesting that Sextus should be considered an advocate for self-mutilation.[207]

II. Sextus in nineteenth-century German scholarship

Anton Elter discovered the Greek original of the *Sentences* in codex Vaticanus gr. 742 (Y) on his first day at the Vatican library in 1880.[208] The final edition of the *Sentences*, however, was only published in 1892 with the *Clitarchus* and the Greek sentences attributed to Evagrius, with the help of Schenkl's transcription of another Greek original from codex Patmiensis 263 (Π), found by Duchesne in 1876. Elter observed that the shorter Greek text found in Patmos agreed with Rufinus, while the one from the Vatican library was closer to the *Vorlage* of the Syriac translations. The Greek original showed that Rufinus' translation was more literal than previously thought, dissipating the doubt that Rufinus had Christianised a pagan original.[209] The merit of Elter's edition consists in his demonstration of the complexity of Sextus' tradition, illustrating the intricate relationship between Sextus, his pagan relatives and the Evagrian tradition.[210] Since Elter intended to discuss the content, the origins and the date of the collection in a subsequent publication, which he never wrote, he unfortunately left the reader with an edition of the bare Greek text without trying to evaluate the *Sentences* on the basis of their message.[211]

The earliest stage of a scholarly investigation into Sextus' content and his ascetic tendencies is linked to two short reviews of Elter's edition published by Wendland in 1893. Although favourably impressed by the discovery, Wendland was dissatisfied with Elter's failure to address questions of origin, date and sources of the collection.[212] Against Gale, Ott and de Lasteyrie, Wendland ruled out the possibility that the *Sentences* originated in the Sextian school and against Siber he also rejects the attribution to pope Xystus. Contrary to Elter, who considered the *Clitarchus* to be an abridgement of Sextus, Wendland observed that *Clitarchus* does not con-

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[207] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1202.

[208] Elter, *Gnomica*, iii.

[209] Elter, *Gnomica*, iv.

[210] Elter, *Gnomica*, xxxvii–xxxviii thought that *Clitarchus* was an epitome of Sextus. Against his views, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 158–159.

[211] Elter, *Gnomica*, iv: "Tum de compositione indole aetate fonte origine Sextiani operis posthac seorsum agetur, nam prolegomena quibus de his rebus fusius exposui, ne libellus modum excederet, segreganda fuerunt".

[212] Wendland, "Gnomica", 230.

tain Christianised elements and therefore should rather be seen as a witness to Sextus' pagan source material.[213] In Wendland's view the key element for the understanding of the special place of the *Sentences* between Hellenistic and Christian morality is Sextus' "starke asketische Tendenz".[214] References to frugality and self-sufficiency reveal analogies between Sextus and philosophers like Musonius Rufus who drew equally on Stoicism and Platonic-Pythagorean notions. Ascetic elements of openly Christian provenance can be found in Sextus' derogatory view of marriage (*Sext.* 230a–b), justification of sexual abstention even within married couples (*Sext.* 239) and approval of self-mutilation (*Sext.* 273), which have parallels in other second-century Christian ascetic works and in Clement.[215] Arguing that in the second half of the second century the rise of Montanism, Marcionism and Encratism had brought discredit on ascetic practices which previously had been more widely accepted, Wendland suggests that Sextus' asceticism would date the collection to the first half of that century.[216]

Wendland has been the first scholar to emphasise the importance of the *Sentences* as a nodal point of convergence of Hellenistic and Christian morality.[217] In Wendland's view, the *Sentences* represent the coming together of the religious concerns of an increasingly mystical Hellenism with an increasingly secularised Christianity.[218] Although Wendland's views tend to oversimplify the relationship between Hellenism and Christianity, the suggestion that the *Sentences* provides evidence of direct contact between the Christian and the Hellenistic moral traditions became the starting point of Ryssel's translation of Syriac Sextus into German,[219] Chadwick's 1959 monograph on Sextus and, through Chadwick, also the present study.

Wendland's and Gwynn's effort to show that the *Sentences* were a deliberate and carefully calculated attempt by a Christian redactor to merge Christian and philosophical morality and demonstrate their profound similarities came to a halt with Harnack's *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*. In his two volumes, Harnack includes the *Sentences* among the writings of uncertain attribution. In the first volume, compiled

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[213] Paul Wendland, "Einiges aus philologischer Literatur", in *TLZ* 18 (1893), cols. 489–494, 492, cf. Elter, *Gnomica*, xxxvii–xxxviii.

[214] Wendland, "Literatur", 493, cf. "Gnomica", 230.

[215] Wendland, "Literatur", 493–494.

[216] Wendland, "Gnomica", 231.

[217] Wendland, "Gnomica", 232: "Die Theologen werden ihn jetzt als ein nicht verächtliches Denkmal der Verbindung des Hellenismus mit dem Christentum und die Ausgabe des Urtextes als wertvolle Bereicherung der älteren christlichen Litteratur zu würdigen haben".

[218] Wendland, "Literatur", 494.

[219] Ryssel, "Syrische", 1:621.

by Harnack's collaborator Preuschen, Sextus is depicted as a Pythagorean philosopher erroneously considered to have been a Christian.[220] In the second volume Harnack explains more precisely that the *Sentences* are a Christian edition of a Pythagorean "Grundschrift".[221] Harnack admits that the Pythagorean original may have possessed characteristics like an emphasis on asceticism and a solid monotheistic doctrine which were not incompatible with pagan philosophy and may have caught the attention of the Christian interpolator.[222] Since the Christian interpolator portrays Christian ethics and religious belief in philosophical terms, Harnack argues that the Christian edition reflects a cultural context like that of the first apologists and of the philosophy of Clement of Alexandria. The difference between Harnack's position and that of Wendland, Gwynn and, later, Chadwick is subtle but not without importance. Contrary to Wendland, Gwynn and Chadwick who seem to treat Sextus as an original thinker and ascribe to him a major role in the final shaping of the collection, Harnack consistently calls Sextus "der Interpolator", downplaying his actual involvement in the creation of the collection.

As far as the purpose of this study is concerned, however, Harnack offers an interesting outlook on the ascetic tendencies of the Christian interpolator, saying that he adopted positions more radical than those of Clement. Thus, similarly to Gwynn, Harnack sees in Sextus one of the ascetic radicals of Clement's and Origen's time and someone whose views were very close to those of the Encratites.[223] This view is consistent with the connection of the *Sentences* with radical circles claimed above à propos of Origen's *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.

III. The beginning of the twentieth century

With his 1910 English translation Conybeare introduced to the English public the 451 sentences known to Rufinus, the Greek appendices and the Armenian recension of Sextus. Conybeare rejects Harnack's claim that Sextus was not a Christian[224] and argues that the collection had been writ-

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[220] Harnack, *Geschichte*, 1:765.

[221] Harnack, *Geschichte*, 2:191.

[222] Ibid.: "Sprüche stark asketischer und rein monotheistischer Tendenz können sowohl von einem heidnischen als auch von einem christlichen Philosophen geprägt worden sein".

[223] Harnack, *Geschichte*, 2:192: "Der Interpolator noch asketischer zu sein scheint als Clemens, ja dass er an der Grenze der 'Enkratiten' steht, die Clemens bekämpft hat".

[224] Conybeare, *Ring*, 104. As seen above, Harnack's position was more nuanced than Conybeare believed, see Harnack, *Geschichte*, 2:190.

ten by pope Xystus I (died ca. 126 C.E.).[225] According to Conybeare, that a Christian bishop would Christianise a pagan work does not constitute a problem since second-century Christian teachers would not share the view of modern scholarship about the irreconcilable difference between Christian morality and Hellenic philosophy.[226] Conybeare argues that the gnomology is neither fully Stoic since *Sext.* 321 condemns suicide, accepted by the Stoics in particular circumstances,[227] nor fully Pythagorean because of *Sext.* 109, which says that a vegetarian diet is morally indifferent.[228]

Although some arguments, like the attribution to the pope Xystus I, were already untenable at the time of its publication,[229] Conybeare's book offers several interesting suggestions. Conybeare for example argued that NT-like allusions in Sextus could derive from the use of a non-canonical source like the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.[230] Although this hypothesis could not be verified by later scholarship, it still offers a stimulating way of looking at the presence of dominical sayings in Sextus.[231] Conybeare's portrayal of second-century Christianity as a movement open to the cross-fertilisation of a wide range of cultural elements from Cynic diatribe to hermetism and to the "ascetic treatises of the New Pythagoreans"[232] can be seen as a first step towards the kind of research on the *Sentences* Wendland had hoped for. In his work on the *Sentences*, Conybeare depicted the second century as a time where Christian teachers felt their vocation as a call to impart wisdom and promote moral progress in connection with rather than in antagonism to the moral tenets of the philosophers.[233]

Between the two World Wars, Wilhelm Kroll's 1923 entry in *Paulys Realencyclopädie* and Josef Kroll's 1924 contribution to the second edition of Hennecke's *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* also refer briefly to Sextus. Their scholarship, however, seems to have been already obsolete at the

[225] Conybeare, *Ring*, 123. Xystus II, who had been martyred under Valerian, must be ruled out for chronological reasons, see Conybeare, *Ring*, 113.

[226] Conybeare, *Ring*, 128–129.

[227] See Miriam T. Griffin, "Philosophy, Cato and Roman Suicide: I", in *GR* 33/1 (1986), pp. 64–77, 67.

[228] On Pythagorean vegetarianism, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 146–153.

[229] Gwynn, "Xystus", 1204 observes that Origen would have mentioned such connection between the *Sentences* and a Roman bishop.

[230] Conybeare, *Ring*, 121–122.

[231] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 237–238, however, has convincingly argued that Sextus seems to draw on the gospel of Matthew.

[232] Conybeare, *Ring*, 103–104.

[233] Conybeare, *Ring*, 128–129: "There was then in that age more in common between the pagan teacher and the Christian catechist than there was some generations later, when in Christian circles the prime importance came to be attached rather to correctness of dogmatic belief than of life".

time of publication. Wilhelm Kroll seems to accept the wrong assumption that both *Clitarchus* and Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* drew on the Christian *Sentences*.[234] A student of Wilhelm's, Josef Kroll sees the *Sentences* mainly as an expression of Hellenistic piety arguing against Wendland that the Christianisation of the work had been superficial and careless.[235]

An unusual view of the *Sentences* has been expressed by the Italian Ferdinando de Paola, who accompanied his Italian translation with a study arguing that Sextus represents the only surviving example of Essene literature in Greek.[236] De Paola creates a false perspective where NT allusions are taken as evidence of a pre-Christian Essenic influence on Christianity and the absence of OT quotations is explained by the idea that the text was aimed at pagan proselytes.[237]

F. The *Sentences of Sextus* in the Modern Scholarly Debate

I. Sextus between Hellenistic and Christian morality

Chadwick's 1959 book marks a turning point in the scholarship on the *Sentences*. Having improved Elter's text with a new collation of the Patmos MS,[238] Chadwick published Sextus' Greek with the *Clitarchus* and the *Pythagorean Sentences*, already published by Schenkl in 1886,[239] supplementing his edition with four studies on Sextus' provenance and moral teaching. The intention of Chadwick's book is implied in the subtitle: "A contribution to the history of early Christian ethics" which seems to be an explicit recovery of Wendland's suggestion. The book was originally con-

[234] Wilhelm Kroll, "Sextus", in PW 2/4, ed. by August Pauly and Georg Wissowa, Stuttgart 1923, cols. 2061–2064, 2063. Agreements between Sextus and Porphyry, however, are infrequent making it unlikely that Porphyry used the Christianised *Sentences*, cf. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 148.

[235] Josef Kroll, "Die Sprüche des Sextus", in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, ed. by Edgar Hennecke, Tübingen 1924², pp. 625–643, 628.

[236] Ferdinando de Paola, *Le sentenze di Sesto. Con introduzione, testo e versione*, Città di Castello 1937, xiv: "La raccolta […] contiene in forma schematica e catechetica dottrine che appartengono esclusivamente agli Esseni".

[237] Ferdinando de Paola, *Osservazioni alle Sentenze di Sesto*, Città di Castello 1938, 24–25. For a critique of de Paola's method, see Adolfo Omodeo, review of Ferdinando de Paola, *Le Sentenze di Sesto*, in *La critica* 36 (1938), pp. 59–63, 59. See also Chadwick, *Sextus*, 126 n.1.

[238] Chadwick, *Sextus*, x.

[239] On the manuscript history of this collection, see Heinrich Schenkl, "Pythagoreersprüche in einer Wiener Handschrift", in *Wiener Studien* 8 (1886), pp. 262–281, 262–263.

ceived as a study of the *Sentences* in relation to the problem of "continuity and the discontinuity" between the moral teaching of the early church and that of Hellenistic philosophy[240] following Gwynn's insistence on the Christian character of the collection and against Harnack's position. Complementing the evidence known to Gwynn and Harnack with a previously unnoticed mention of Sextus as a Christian *fidelis* in Origen's *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11, Chadwick argued that Origen knew Sextus as a Christian,[241] setting the cornerstone of many further studies on the *Sentences* including the present one. In Chadwick's understanding, Sextus was a Christian who combined Greek gnomic material with NT allusions and Christian maxims. While non-Christian sentences had been lightly Christianised, Sextus also tried to give a more Hellenistic angle to those of Christian origin[242] with the purpose of illustrating the Christian way of life in terms compatible with pagan philosophy, bringing "the moral wisdom of the Greek sages under the wing of the church".[243]

Chadwick's book contains insights for the study of the ascetic tendencies of the collection. According to Chadwick, the *Sentences* enjoyed popularity among Christians because of their ascetic character and striving for perfection,[244] later contrasted by Jerome. Confident of belonging to a higher sphere sanctioned by God's election, the readers of the collection were thus drawn to moral progress through self-knowledge and the recognition of the divine within their souls.[245] In this way NT eschatological expectations of purification and realisation of one's true nature are resolved in the present exercise of *askesis*,[246] while sexual intemperance, gluttony and greed become a serious impediment to a full expression of one's Christian identity.

Despite its fundamental contribution to the reshaping of the scholarship on the collection and the scholarly agreement about the origins of the *Sentences* and their Hellenistic sources which it originated, Chadwick's book had its limitations. The amount of space and scholarly effort required to argue against Harnack that Sextus was a Christian prevented Chadwick from exhaustively illustrating Sextus' contribution to the history of early Christian ethics. Of the four studies of Sextus in the volume only two deal

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[240] Chadwick, *Sextus*, xi.

[241] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 112–115.

[242] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 138.

[243] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160

[244] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 161.

[245] Cf. *Sext.* 394, 398, 446 and 450.

[246] Cf. *Sext.* 311, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 98. Eric F. Osborn, *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought*, Cambridge 1976, 82 says that in Sextus: "The move from a future to a present eschatology is complete".

with Sextus' place in "Early Christian ethics" as the subtitle read, while the other two engage in a lengthy refutation of Jerome's and Harnack's views. Chadwick's book is also questionable for its rather unproblematic view of the way Sextus dealt with his pagan source material. If it is true that the *Sentences* suggest continuity between Christian ethics and the moral wisdom of the philosophers, the claim that this encounter had been made possible by Sextus through only a few linguistic "adjustments" gives a rather inadequate vision of the phenomenon.[247] Moreover, Chadwick's uncomplicated view conceals a more stringent concern which shifted his focus from the history of morality to a moral evaluation of history. In his last paragraph Chadwick leaves a question open to future investigation:

> The ultimate question that is raised by the Sextine collection is a variant of the controversy between Rufinus and Jerome, namely, whether the ascetic and mystical ideal of the Neopythagorean sages has been an influence *for good or for evil* upon the spirituality of Christendom and whether this process of incorporation did not tend *to blur distinctions which might better have been kept more clearly in view*.[248]

Ultimately in Chadwick's view the effects of the interaction between Sextus' Neopythagorean sources and his Christian legacy are a blurring of boundaries creating a grey area in the development of Christian asceticism. Compared to Wendland's views about the contribution of Hellenic philosophy to Christian ethics, Chadwick's return to Jerome's claim that boundaries had been blurred is a regression of scholarship. In this approach, one could discern the all too familiar scholarly commonplace that would label as syncretistic all early Christian writings with philosophical undertones.[249]

In his 1961 article Gerhard Delling rejects reflecting on Sextus' ethics, and turns to the study of Hellenised biblical quotations in the *Sentences*. Agreeing with Chadwick that Sextus harmonised Christian and non-Christian wisdom to show their similarities,[250] Delling focuses solely on sentences displaying a direct parallel with Scripture. According to Delling, maxims ascribable to Scriptural interferences remain under ten per cent of the total,[251] with NT quotations prevailing over OT ones.[252] Some of the

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[247] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160.

[248] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162, my italics.

[249] That philosophical syncretism was a much more sophisticated concept has been argued in a different context by David Sedley, "Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World", in *Philosophia Togata. Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, ed. by Miriam T. Griffin and Jonathan Barnes, Oxford 1997, pp. 97–119, 22–24 and restated in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Setting the Scene: Stoicism and Platonism in the Transitional Period in Ancient Philosophy", in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. by Tuomas Rasimus et al., Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2010, pp. 1–14, 6–8.

[250] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 211.

[251] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 212.

parallels rest on minor affinities and can hardly be explained as allusions. In these cases, Sextus and Scripture may have been independently drawing on aphorisms from the gnomic tradition; this would be unsurprising, for example, in the Pastoral Epistles.[253] Genuine NT allusions consist in logia of Jesus reformulated in a Greek gnomic style, like *Sext.* 12–13,[254] *Sext.* 20 alluding to Caesar's denarius in Matt 22:21, *Sext*. 89 (= 210b) which contains the Golden Rule, τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην in *Sext.* 39 which recalls Matt 5:26[255] and *Sext.* 213 referring to Matt 5:44.[256] Other sentences may have been recast into less recognisable forms or refer to Christian traditions that have not been preserved.[257] Delling has also observed that sometimes Sextus tends to couple philosophical gnomes with corrective short glosses of a more explicitly Christian tone, as in *Sext.* 51–52, where the exhortation to toil to be great in God's eyes, also found in the pagan *Clit.* 5, is coupled with a reminder that true greatness consists in helping the needy.[258]

Although not specifically addressing asceticism and early Christian ethics, Delling's analysis is relevant to the purpose of this study as it reinforces the impression that the coexistence of pagan and Christian gnomes in the *Sentences* was the result of a deliberate rewriting. Delling also shows how Scriptural allusions in Sextus mostly refer to the Sermon on the Mount, which in itself is a collection of Christian moral instructions.[259] Sextus' addition of Jesus' logia to Pythagorean and Platonic gnomes marks a phase in the development of early Christian ethics where Christian teachers felt the need to commit their moral and sapiential instructions to the philosophical lingua franca of the Hellenistic gnomic tradition.[260]

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[252] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 237: "Eine enge Verbindung zum Alten Testament als ganzem ergab sich aus den bisherigen Untersuchungen für die *Sent.* nicht". William Horbury, "Old Testament Interpretation in the Writings of the Church Fathers", in *Mikra. Text, translation, reading and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in ancient Judaism and early Christianity*, ed. by Martin J. Mulder and Harry Sysling, Philadelphia (Pa.) 1988, pp. 727–787, 737 values echoes of Wisdom literature in the *Sentences* more positively.

[253] *Sext.* 7b may remind of 1 Tim 5:6 and *Sext.* 235 of 1 Tim 2:9.

[254] Cf. Matt 5:29–30 and 18:8–9, see Delling, "Hellenisierung", 220.

[255] See also *Did.* 1.5.

[256] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 229–230 and Chadwick, *Sextus*, 172. Both Chadwick and Delling, however, are wrong in saying that this is the only occurrence of ἐχθρός in Sextus, cf. *Sext.* 105. The term was probably already in Sextus' source material, cf. *Pyth.* 76 and 113.

[257] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 235.

[258] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 210.

[259] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 237–238.

[260] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 238–239.

Discussing the difference between pagan and Christian asceticism, Dodds refers to the *Sentences* in his *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*. Building on Chadwick's results, Dodds compares a few Christianised maxims in Sextus with their pagan parallels, arguing that the asceticism of Sextus' sources was mild and conventional, based on the Greco-Roman ideal of moderation. Sextus' asceticism instead offers a "much grimmer view"[261] of sexuality, advocating abstinence and self-castration and expressing an open aversion to the body. Although he is willing to admit that "hatred of the body was a disease endemic in the entire culture of the period"[262] and that Christian ascetics and Hellenic displayed the "same psychological impulses",[263] Dodds argues that Christians and Gnostics emphasised asceticism in a way previously unseen in any Hellenistic school or cult. In Dodds' understanding the asceticism of the Desert Fathers remains a question of "physical self-torture" of which "Numerous and repulsive examples"[264] exist. In the end, abandoning any historical category and resorting to the language of psychology and persuasion, Dodds shows a certain prejudice against Christian asceticism and the practicability of his own initial impulse to see pagan and Christian renunciation as two sides of the same psychological phenomenon:

> Where did all this *madness* come from? Again I do not know. Despite Reitzenstein, and more recently Leipoldt, *I cannot believe* that it had substantial roots in Hellenic tradition.[265]

Dodds' psychohistorical approach is not fully adequate to explain the interaction between Christian and pagan self-control and the complexity of Sextus' role in this encounter. In Dodds' recollection, the *Sentences* are at the roots of a development which from Sextus' "grimmer view" evolves into the "madness" of the Desert Fathers to which he opposes the reassuring *via media* of Epictetus and Clement respectively, cited as models of a pagan and a Christian – but "of Hellenic culture"[266] – resistance to ascetic extremism. The remark about Clement's "Hellenic culture" reveals how in Dodds' understanding ultimately what is Hellenic is anti-ascetic by definition to the point that even Clement's reaction against Encratism is rather seen as a consequence of his Hellenism than of his Christian conviction.

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[261] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 32.
[262] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 35.
[263] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 31.
[264] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 33.
[265] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 34, my italics.
[266] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 35.

II. Sextus between early Christian wisdom and Gnostic asceticism

Robert Wilken touches briefly on the *Sentences* in a 1975 article on the role of wisdom in early Christian thought. Wilken argues that the *Sentences* represent one of the earliest examples of Christian Wisdom literature.[267] Despite some sparse references to Jewish wisdom, the influence of Greek gnomic traditions on the *Sentences* is predominant both stylistically and conceptually.[268] The philosophical principle of the *Sentences* is the god-likeness of the wise, to be achieved through virtue and self-control. Wilken is among the first scholars to investigate the problem of the addressees of the *Sentences*. Since gnomologies were prominent in the instruction of neophytes,[269] Wilken argues that the *Sentences* were meant to introduce Christian beginners to the view that Christianity was the best way to lead a philosophical life.[270] Although there is no compelling evidence that Sextus was addressing Christian neophytes, Wilken's argument deserves attention especially considering that a similar didactic function has been suggested for works like Pseudo-Phocylides which show a similar combination of biblical and Hellenistic elements,[271] and the *Teachings of Silvanus*.[272] This didactic purpose would also explain Sextus' reticence about explicitly Christian vocabulary. Readers in fact needed first to be persuaded of the similarities between Jesus' teaching and that of sound philosophy before being introduced to Scripture.

In Wilken's view, second-century Christian teachers were contending in the philosophical market with other philosophical schools, as happens in Lucian's *Philosophies for sale*.[273] This could also be considered one of the main factors in the insistence of the *Sentences* on ascetic renunciation. Sextus in fact intended to demonstrate that Christianity was a respectable philosophical school and one way of doing this would have been to show

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[267] Wilken, "Wisdom", 158, see already Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160.

[268] Only *Sext.* 155 explicitly echoes Prov 10:19. *Sext.* 280a–b may refer to Sir 21:20, see Wilken, "Wisdom", 148.

[269] Especially women, as shown by Rufinus' dedication to Avita and Porphyry's letter to his wife Marcella, see also Thom, *Verses*, 70

[270] Cf. Justin in *Dial.* 8: ταύτην μόνην εὕρισκον φιλοσοφίαν [i.e. Christianity] ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον.

[271] Pieter W. van der Horst, "Pseudo-Phocylides (First Century B.C. – First Century A.D.). A New Translation and Introduction", in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. by James H. Charlesworth, London 1985, pp. 565–582, 565–566.

[272] Wilken, "Wisdom", 165.

[273] Wilken, "Wisdom", 159–160.

that following the Christian gospel, through ascetic renunciation, could guarantee moral perfection and freedom from passions.[274]

The discovery of part of a Coptic translation of Sextus in codex XII of the Nag Hammadi library reinforced the impression that the collection was very popular in Christian circles as early as the third or fourth century. In 1975 Frederik Wisse drew important conclusions from the presence of texts promoting asceticism and self-control in a Gnostic library.[275] According to Wisse, the presence of ascetic texts in Nag Hammadi contradicts the traditional charge of sexual libertinism that most ancient authors ascribe to Gnosticism. Wisse argues that these accusations were not based on first-hand observations but consisted in purely conjectural, although not entirely unintentional, ways of expressing in ethical terms the rejection of a creator God or the anthropological determinism associated with Gnosticism. Plotinus for example because of the Gnostic rejection of the "Lord of providence", establishes a link between the Gnostics and Epicurus, and thus attributes to the Gnostics the same appetite for bodily pleasures traditionally ascribed to Epicureanism.[276] Modern scholarship, argues Wisse, has relied excessively on ancient detractors of Gnosticism. This applies for example to Hans Jonas whose claim that Gnostic morality was based on nihilism and libertinism depends entirely on the testimony of Irenaeus and Plotinus, who described Gnostic self-discipline either as based on wrong premises or as insincere simulation.[277]

Wisse points out that, against Irenaeus and Plotinus, Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi emphasise asceticism, perfectionism and imitation of God in an almost monastic way.[278] Although the Coptic text of the *Sentences*

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[274] Wilken, "Wisdom", 164 observes: "The *Sentences of Sextus* are an attempt on the part of a Christian intellectual to provide a collection of sayings for Christians which could be used for leading men and women into the philosophical life, that is for training in moral perfection".

[275] Frederik Wisse, "Die Sextus-Sprüche und das Problem der Gnostischen Ethik", in Alexander Böhlig – Frederik Wisse, *Zum Hellenismus in den Schriften von Nag Hammadi*, Göttinger Orientforschungen VI. Reihe: Hellenistica 2, Wiesbaden 1975, pp. 55–86, 56, see also Frederik Wisse, "The Sentences of Sextus (XII, 1)", in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. by James M. Robinson, Leiden 1984[2], pp. 454–459, 454.

[276] *Enn.* 2.9.15, see Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 68–69.

[277] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion. The Message of the Alien God and the Beginning of Christianity*, Boston 1958, 270–272, see Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 66–67. Jonas, *Religion*, 274 says that both Gnostic libertinism and asceticism were based on anticosmism: "The one repudiates allegiance to nature through excess, the other, through abstention".

[278] Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 62: " Offenkundig kommen hier nicht libertinistische, sondern monastische Interessen zum Ausdruck".

does not contain Gnostic elements, its inclusion in the library suggests that Gnostic readers were satisfied with the teaching of collections like Sextus'. Wisse suggests that it is not unlikely that most of the less Gnostic treatises of Nag Hammadi found their way into the library precisely because of their ascetical content.[279] Through treatises like the *Sentences* Greco-Roman moral traditions entered the realm of Christian asceticism and thence of Gnostic renunciation, affecting the content of other texts of Nag Hammadi like the *Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII,*4*), the *Authoritative Teaching* (NHC VI,*3*) and the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,*3*), whose Encratism seems to draw on Sextus' asceticism.[280] According to Wisse therefore, Christians and Gnostics alike adopted self-control, moral elitism and other philosophical *loci* from the Greco-Roman moral tradition, although Hellenic renunciation was based on living according to nature, while Sextus' asceticism takes God as its supreme model.[281]

A critique of Wisse's arguments on Gnostic morality goes beyond the purpose of this study. Against his somewhat simplistic view, one has to take into account that the mere fact that Sextus was read in a Gnostic context does not forcefully imply that his readers were drawn to it by ascetic discipline. Moreover, when Wisse insists that the originality of Sextus' asceticism against Greco-Roman asceticism consisted in the ideal of the imitation of God he is inexact. This feature of the *Sentences* did not originate with Sextus but is due to the Pythagorean and Platonic elements of the collection, as the last chapter of this study will show. A similar shift from nature to godlikeness is noticeable in first-century Stoics open to Platonic and Pythagorean influences like Musonius and to a lesser extent Epictetus and Philo.[282] Although in Wisse's study Sextus' asceticism is used almost as a pretext to make a different point about Gnostic morality and way of life, the existence of a fourth-century Coptic translation of Sextus confirms the popularity of the collection in Christian circles in Egypt between the third and the fourth centuries, i.e. at a decisive time and in a crucial place for the development of early monasticism.

Van den Broek has expanded the study of the impact of the *Sentences* on the library of Nag Hammadi by focusing on the *Teachings of Silvanus*

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[279] Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 83: "Man kann fragen, ob diese verschiedenen Schriften nicht einfach wegen ihrer Betonung der Askese in die Codices von Nag Hammadi aufgenommen wurden".

[280] Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 82.

[281] Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 76: "Norm der Ethik ist etwas Absolutes geworden, die göttliche Natur selbst".

[282] On the Platonising phase of Stoicism, see David Sedley, "The School, from Zeno to Arius Didymus", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. by Brad Inwood, Cambridge 2003, pp. 8–32, 20–24.

(NHC VII,*4*). He argues that Silvanus made use of a gnomic source close to that of the *Sentences*. *Teach. Silv.* 102.7–22, for example, depends on a tradition which combined *Sext.* 22[283] (cf. 183) and 352:[284]

For there is no small danger in speaking about these things, since you know that you will be judged on the basis of everything that you say (*Teach. Silv.* 102.19–22).[285]

The same maxims occur together in Origen's preface to the commentary on Ps 1 in Epiphanius' *Pan.* 64.7.[286] Whether Silvanus and Origen are quoting directly from Sextus or are using the same source material, they witness the enduring influence that Hellenistic gnomic traditions had on Egyptian Christianity.[287] Unlike Sextus, Silvanus makes explicit allusions to Christ and Scripture.[288] The *Teachings* are also generally less strict in their ascetic views. For example they never discourage marriage when condemning fornication.[289]

Allusions to the *Sentences* in the *Teachings* are probably too sparse to allow any conclusive comment about the impact of Sextus' moral maxims, and particularly of his ascetic tendencies, on Silvanus. Nonetheless, van den Broek's argument that Sextus and Silvanus are products of a form of "Christian Wisdom" which originated in Christian Alexandria[290] and spread "especially in ascetic circles"[291] is an important element to retain in order to illustrate the resonance that Sextus' literary initiative had with other Christian works in Egypt at a very early stage of its transmission.

III. Sextus in recent scholarship

More recently, scholars who have mentioned the *Sentences* have done so in general works on the origins of early Christian ethics. In his *Ethical Pat-*

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[283] ὅτε λέγεις περὶ θεοῦ, κρίνῃ ὑπὸ θεοῦ.

[284] περὶ θεοῦ καὶ τἀληθῆ λέγειν κίνδυνος οὐ μικρός.

[285] ET Malcolm Peel and Jan Zandee, "NHC VII,*4*: *The Teachings of Silvanus*", in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. by Birger A. Pearson, Leiden 1996, pp. 249–369, 325, cf. van den Broek, "Silvanus", 268

[286] van den Broek, "Silvanus, 270–273 claims that *Teach. Silv.* 108.16–109.8 emulates the sorites in *Sext.* 1–5. On the sorites in the opening verses of Sextus, see John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q. Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Philadelphia (Pa.) 1987, 299.

[287] van den Broek, "Silvanus", 270: "It seems that the Christian Platonists of Alexandria were under a strong Pythagorean influence, not only with respect to ethics, as is testified by the *Sentences of Sextus*, but also regarding their careful attitude to the essential mysteries of their religion".

[288] For example in *Teach. Silv.* 88.19,29, 90.33 and 96.20.

[289] Peel-Zandee, "Silvanus", 251.

[290] van den Broek, "Silvanus", 263, see also Peel-Zandee, "Silvanus", 274.

[291] van den Broek, "Silvanus", 261.

terns in Early Christian Thought, Eric Osborn briefly compares Sextus with the ethical teaching of Clement of Alexandria. Like Wendland, Osborn argues that Sextus and Clement show a similar Alexandrian inclination to assimilating Hellenistic philosophy into early Christian ethics.[292] Osborn observes that unlike Clement, who intertwined his Hellenistic and Christian sources into a homogeneous discourse, Sextus not only used the concepts of his source material, but also succeeded in preserving the gnomic style of his pagan sources.[293] Osborn suggests that the *Sentences* were instrumental in disseminating Clement's ideas in early Christianity.[294] Because a direct dependency of Sextus on Clement cannot be demonstrated, Osborn's view seems overstated. It is correct to say, however, that Sextus reflects a philosophical environment similar to that in which Clement's thought developed.

Osborn's view of Sextus' asceticism is particularly close to that followed in the present study. He claims that "Sextus has a much stronger ascetic strain than Clement"[295] and ascribes this trait to a more manifest Pythagorean dualism in the *Sentences*. Osborn's view therefore is diametrically opposed to Dodds' as it suggests that Sextus' emphasis on self-denial is rooted in his Hellenic source material. Osborn argues that it was the same ascetic inclination in the source that captured the interest of the Christian redactor of the *Sentences* who intended to emulate pagan renunciation by showing that "Anything pagans can not-do, Christians can not-do better".[296]

In his study on the origins of Christian morality, Wayne Meeks lists gnomologies among the predominant genres of ethical instruction among pagans as well as Jews and Christians as shown by Pseudo-Phocylides, Sirach and collections of Jesus' logia like Q or *Gospel of Thomas*.[297] Like Wilken, Meeks argues that "Christians used gnomes in the instruction of new believers".[298] In a paragraph dedicated to early Christian attitudes towards the human body, Meeks draws together Sextus and the Shepherd of Hermas as examples of the struggle to combine Christian radicalism with the challenges of social conventions, especially marital life:

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[292] Osborn, *Patterns*, 80. On the *Sentences* as a specimen of the: "Alexandrian tradition before Clement", see Eric F. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge 2005, 84.

[293] Osborn, *Patterns*, 81.

[294] Osborn, *Patterns*, 83.

[295] Osborn, *Patterns*, 81.

[296] Osborn, *Patterns*, 83.

[297] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality. The First Two Centuries*, New Haven (Conn.) 1993, 72.

[298] Meeks, *Origins*, 73.

Out of the wide diversity and experimentation that we find in the early Christian attitudes about the body, Hermas and Sextus represent the *uneasy compromise* that has beset the *middle way* of Christian practical ethics down to the present.[299]

Meeks' idea that Sextus and the Shepherd of Hermas represent an ethical "middle way" is built on a distinction introduced earlier on in his book:

Martyrs and ascetic heroes and heroines were a very small minority of Christians. What conceptions of the body informed the life of the ordinary believers? We may receive some hints of these by looking at two documents that are rather less intense than those we have examined so far.[300]

Because they contemplated the possibility that self-control was possible also within marriage,[301] Meeks argues that the teachings of Sextus and Hermas are seen as a more conventional response compared to the demanding self-discipline of the *Gospel of Thomas* or the degree of detachment from the body of martyrs like Polycarp and Perpetua. In Meeks' understanding therefore Sextus and Hermas are books for the masses promoting a "less intense" alternative, a sort of paperback asceticism.[302] Nonetheless, Origen's testimony to the diffusion of Sextus among Christians promoting self-mutilation shows that there were circles where the collection was interpreted in a more radical way than thought by Meeks. Therefore Meeks' suggestion that the *Sentences* express the mild and more mainstream aspect of self-control among "ordinary believers" is not fully substantiated by the evidence and should be reconsidered carefully.

An interesting reflection on the genre of the *Sentences* has been advanced by the Italian Antonio Carlini in a series of articles. Starting from the recent discovery of the oldest Greek witness of Sextus in papyrus – the fourth- or fifth-century MS Palau Ribes Inv. 225v[303] – Carlini has proposed that we see the *Sentences* in the light of the later phenomenon of Christian rewriting of pagan texts like the Christian paraphrases of Arrian's *Encheiridion* of Epictetus.[304]

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[299] Meeks, *Origins*, 149, my italics.

[300] Meeks, *Origins*, 147.

[301] Meeks, *Origins*, 149, cf. *Sext.* 239 and Herm. *Vis.* 2.2.3, where Hermas is asked to hold his wife as his sister.

[302] Remarkably Meeks builds his view of Sextus' mildness on the same *Sext*. 239 used by Dodds, *Anxiety*, 32 n.3 as an illustration of how much "grimmer" the Christian redactor was compared to his Hellenic source.

[303] Antonio Carlini, "Il più antico testimone greco di Sesto Pitagorico", in *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 113 (1985), pp. 5–26, 7.

[304] Beside Arrian's original, several Christian paraphrases of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* have survived, see Gerard Boter, *The* Encheiridion *of Epictetus and Its Three Christian Adaptations. Transmission and Critical Editions*, Leiden 1999, xiv.

Papyrus Palau Ribes Inv. 225v consists of a loose sheet carrying on the verso a few scribbled sentences taken from Sextus' collection and containing on the recto excerpts of Jewish wisdom, mainly Sirach. The scribe of Palau Ribes Inv. 225v behaves like the Syrian and Armenian translators, substituting Sextus' references to the σοφός with expressions more suitable to an ascetic discourse, like ταπείνος.[305] These substitutions echo the substitution of πιστός for σοφός operated by Sextus when rewriting his pagan source material.[306] Carlini argues that the same phenomenon can be observed in the Christian rewritings of Epictetus. When Arrian refers to a φιλόσοφος or a σοφός, for example, the Christian paraphrasts inserted ἡσυχαστής or ἀναχωρητής giving a monastic angle to the text.[307] As Carlini observes, Christians reworked pagan texts mainly when they could not entirely agree with their content. At the same time they implicitly acknowledged their authority by paraphrasing them.[308] Papyrus Palau Ribes Inv. 225v shows that the Greek text continued to be considered authoritative, and was interpolated and adapted to the requirements and spiritual needs of new generations of ascetic readers in the fourth and fifth century.[309]

In recent years scholars have referred to the *Sentences* in trying to understand how gnomologists organised the content of their collections.[310] Walter Wilson[311] has addressed compositional problems in Sextus, challenging the widespread conviction that the *Sentences* are an unsystematic collection and arguing that the content of the *Sentences* is distributed in

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[305] *Sext.* 416 is rendered with ψυχὴ ταπείνου ἁρμόζεται πρὸς θεὸν ὑπὸ θεοῦ, see Carlini, "Testimone", 20. Carlini, "Testimone", 12 says that the scribe belonged to: "Una comunità religiosa o una setta che coltivava un ideale di vita ascetico".

[306] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 157, already Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, xlii.

[307] Antonio Carlini, "Rifacimenti cristiani di opere pagane: il "Manuale" di Epitteto e le "Sentenze di Sesto" ", in *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico*, vol. 2, ed. by Maria Serena Funghi, Firenze 2004, pp. 97–110, 100–101.

[308] Carlini, "Rifacimenti", 103–104.

[309] Carlini, "Testimone", 12 calls this process: "Interpolazione progressiva". See also Antonio Carlini, "Tradizione testuale e prescrizioni canoniche: Erma, Sesto, Origene", in *Orpheus* 7 (1986), pp. 40–52, 49.

[310] Alan Kirk for example briefly studied the *Sentences* with the intention of shedding light on the compositional conventions used in gnomic literature and therefore in Q. Alan Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source. Genre, Synchrony, and Wisdom Redaction in Q*, NovTSup 91, Leiden 1998, 121 identifies in Sextus several units that display a thematic unity, like *Sext.* 67–72 and 93–98 where Kirk sees a compositional device based on *inclusio*.

[311] When this study was written Walter Wilson's commentary on the *Sentences* was not yet published.

subsections built around a catchword or rhetorical devices like anaphora.[312] While acknowledging the importance of moderation and self-control in Sextus,[313] Wilson shows that moral philosophy affects not only the content but also improves the structure of the collection[314] as in *Sext.* 167–182 which Wilson suggests is built around a canon of cardinal virtues, a frequent device in Hellenistic moral treatises.[315]

Martha Lee Turner also briefly investigates the existence of compositional themes in the *Sentences* with the intention of finding a model for the study of the *Gospel of Philip* and its structure. According to Turner, although the structure of Sextus is not immediately evident, the maxims seem to have been organised in larger thematic clusters.[316] Sharing with Chadwick the hypothesis that Sextus, Porphyry and the *Pythagorean Sentences* depend on a common source,[317] Turner observes that the inscription ἐκ τῶν Κλειτάρχου πραγματικῶν χρειῶν which precedes the *Clitarchus* in the MS Vaticanus gr. 1144[318] suggests the existence already of a larger collection of χρεῖαι of Clitarchus, which Sextus later reworked into a "Neo-Pythagorean-Christian cento".[319] Although she indicates "self-control, wisdom and purity" as the main themes in the collection,[320] Turner does not focus on the moral content of the *Sentences*. Seeing in Sextus the intention to show a continuity between Christianity and the moral zenith of Hellenistic philosophy, Turner maintains that even the less Christianised sentences

[312] For example *Sext.* 414–425, see Walter T. Wilson, *Love without Pretence. Romans 12.9–21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature*, WUNT 2.46, Tübingen 1991, 74–75.

[313] Wilson, *Love*, 97 n.88, see also Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, Berlin 2005, 120.

[314] Although a "rudimentary thematic organization" had already been suggested by Lichtheim, *Wisdom*, 27.

[315] Wilson, *Mysteries*, 51–52. As seen above, Lazaridis, *Wisdom*, 213 is less optimistic about the use of thematic units as an "organizational device" both in Greek and demotic wisdom traditions.

[316] Martha Lee Turner, *The Gospel According to Philip. The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection*, Leiden 1996, 110. *Sext*. 149–165 and *Sext*. 230a–240 contain sections respectively on excessive talking and marriage. Turner, *Philip*, 111 mentions other compositional techniques like the sorites or concatenation which helps linking each sentence to the following in a thematic unit, see also Morgan, *Morality*, 269–270.

[317] Turner, *Philip*, 108, already Chadwick, *Sextus*, 159.

[318] Turner, *Philip*, 107 n.57.

[319] Turner, *Philip*, 111. Turner, *Philip*, 105 n.52, however, notices that the appendices do not display the same traces of Christian reworking.

[320] Turner, *Philip*, 104.

of the collection "could be seen as compatible with a mildly ascetic Christianity".[321]

G. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that from the first mention of Sextus' collection in Origen to the late antique vestiges of its use in Evagrian and Benedictine monasticism and in the Syrian ascetic tradition, the ascetic tendencies of the *Sentences* have been a key aspect of their popularity. The use of Sextus in *Cels.* 8.30.9–13 has proved of crucial importance in understanding the special character of Sextus' γνῶμαι, at the same time λογικαί and πισταί, used by Origen as a philosophical trump card in defence of Christian renunciation and against the learned objections of Celsus. A closer look at Origen's testimony in *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 has also revealed a less learned and less moderate use of the collection at a popular level in Christian circles where radical views of sexual renunciation and self-mutilation seem to have been prevalent.[322] Finally, the study of the preface to Rufinus' Latin translation of Sextus has shown that Rufinus intended his translation to be a manual of ascetic perfection. The collection was read by Pelagius to this end and similarly used in pro-ascetic works even by Jerome, one of its fiercest detractors.

Conversely, a summary analysis of the history of interpretation of the *Sentences* has shown that it was precisely the prejudiced opposition of Jerome[323] that contributed to the entrenchment of the suspicion that Sextus may not have been a Christian. As a consequence scholarship, with the notable exceptions of Wendland, Chadwick and a few others, has been engaged more in settling the question about Sextus' identity than in discussing his impact on early Christian teaching about self-discipline and renunciation. The influence of the argument used by Jerome to undermine Rufinus' translation has been so crucial that even Chadwick's book, originally meant to be "A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics" as the subtitle says, dedicates much more space to the demonstration of the Christian character of the collection than to its ascetic and ethical statements. This contrast between the *Sentences* as an ascetic source in ancient

[321] Turner, *Philip*, 106. The notion that the *Sentences of Sextus* convey a "mild asceticism" has been expressed for the first time in the English translation of Sextus published by Edwards and Wild for the Society of Biblical Literature in 1981, see Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 1.

[322] Siber, *Sixti*, 18 is the only other reader of the *Sentences* to address this question.

[323] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 121 calls Jerome: "A master of the indelicate art of invective".

times and the kind of questions addressed by modern scholarship shows all too well the necessity of a scholarly investigation into the ascetic tendencies in Sextus' collection.

H. Looking Forward

As we have seen, Jerome believed that with the *Sentences* Rufinus had fraudulently introduced unsuspecting Christian readers to pagan maxims, thereby contaminating them with the dangerous perfectionism of the Pythagoreans. Chadwick's second thoughts about the appropriateness of Sextus' translation of Hellenistic tenets into Christian terms and Dodds' claim that Sextus' asceticism was stricter than that of his Hellenic sources show that scholarship has been inclined to highlight differences rather than similarities between Sextus' ascetic tendencies and those of his source material. Because of his peculiar psychohistorical approach, Dodds concentrates above all on Sextus' views of marriage and self-castration which would convey a "grimmer" view than that of his pagan sources.[324] The next chapter will examine therefore Sextus' position on castration and marriage in *Sext.* 12–13 and in *Sext.* 230a–240. In order to compare Sextus' views with that of his source material, special consideration will be given to Sextus' attitude towards the principle of procreationism which played an important role in Pythagorean sexual ethics.

[324] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 32.

Chapter 2

Sextus and Sexual Morality: Castration, Celibacy and Procreation

A. Introduction

The question of how and to what extent Hellenistic morality influenced early Christian views of sexuality could shed light on the problem of the sources of the ascetic movement.[1] In this chapter I shall examine the teaching of Sextus regarding sexuality and marriage with particular emphasis on his views of castration and procreation. Sextus' concern with sex and sexual renunciation is central to the moral teaching of the *Sentences*.[2] As mentioned in the previous chapter, that the views of the collection on marital matters were influential among early Christian ascetics can be inferred from the fact that even one of the most belligerent of its detractors, Jerome, found the *Sentences* useful and worthy of mention in his own works on self-restraint and in defence of celibacy.[3] Despite the fact that maxims openly referring to marriage and sex are not numerous, the relevance of the topic in the collection is apparent when considering that after the opening sorites about the believer's election (*Sext.* 1–7b) and a general statement on sin (*Sext.* 8–11), the first opening ethical instruction given by Sextus (*Sext.* 12–13) touches immediately on lust and sexual self-control. As I am about to show, two different moral traditions coexist in Sextus: the Pythagorean philosophical conventions about sexuality which Sextus found in his gnomic sources and Sextus' own Christian reinterpretation of them. In the following pages, I shall argue that Sextus' adoption of Hellenistic morality and in particular of teachings addressing sexual issues required more than the few linguistic "adjustments" optimistically envisaged by

[1] On the question of continuity or discontinuity between Greek and Christian understanding of sexuality and sexual renunciation, see Brown, *Body*, 34–35; Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication. Eros, Ethics and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity*, Berkeley (Calif.), Los Angeles (Calif.) and London 2003, 221–224 and Dodds, *Anxiety*, 33–36.

[2] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 99: "Prominent is the concern with sex".

[3] *Sext.* 231 in *Jov.* 1.49 and *Comm. Ezech.* 6.

Chadwick.[4] To be precise, Sextus' implementation of pagan moral principles was rather conducted in constant dialogue with his own biblical tradition and required a substantial creative effort that generated new ideas in the early Christian reflection on sexuality and sexual self-discipline.

I shall first deal with the presence in Sextus of teachings promoting the practice of castration as a way to attain chastity. Having examined Origen's testimony about it in the previous chapter, I shall now focus on Sextus' own evidence. In addition to the analysis of *Sext.* 12–13, specific emphasis will be given to *Sext.* 273 since this sentence unlike *Sext.* 12–13 originated in a pagan context. The comparison of this maxim with a non-Christianised version of it still extant in Porphyry's *Marc.* 34 will illustrate the difference between a pagan and a Christian approach to the same gnomic material. Although Sextus shows a more nuanced attitude towards self-mutilation than the circles of self-mutilating Christians mentioned in Origen's *Comm. Matt.* 15.3, I shall argue in the light of *Sext.* 273 that the possibility that Sextus may have been an advocate of castration remains open. Second, I shall examine a few examples from Sextus' section on marriage and celibacy in *Sext.* 230a–240. In this part, a reflection on Sextus' use of the expression πάρεδρος θεοῦ and a comparison between the *Sentences* and 1 Cor 7:35 – reworked by Sextus into *Sext.* 230a – will illustrate the special status attributed by the *Sentences* to the celibate believer and the ascetic radicalism of Sextus' views in his reworking of the NT tradition. Third, I shall compare Sextus' position with two philosophical traditions, generally considered to have been conventional among the Pythagoreans, for example procreationism, or the limitation of "all sexual activity to a strictly procreative function",[5] and the belief that links immoral sexual behaviour to excessive food intake. I shall argue that Sextus intentionally suppressed the leaning of his sources towards procreationism in order to emphasise his position, more inclined to sexual abstention altogether. In the conclusion, it will be shown that although Sextus' views about sexual morality were heavily influenced by Pythagorean – and Platonic – traditions, the assimilation of Hellenic elements into Sextus' ascetic tradition happened as a process of reasoned and, at times, problematic integration rather than as the result of a simple and almost accidental juxtaposition of Christian and pagan sentences discussing similar topics.

[4] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160.
[5] Gaca, *Fornication*, 57.

B. *Sext.* 12–13 and 273: the Problem of Castration

I. Self-castration in the Sentences

As discussed in the previous chapter, the most extensive reference to Sextus' collection in the work of Origen is entirely dedicated to the problem of castration in *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.17–30, which is intended as a comment on Matt 19:12. Origen's quotation is a combination of *Sext.* 13 and *Sext.* 273, the only two sentences of the collection which seem to refer explicitly to voluntary mutilation. As I have argued, Origen's testimony shows that Sextus was particularly popular in radical circles where castration may have been a practice more common than usually assumed. The two sentences quoted occur quite far apart from each other in the present order of the collection. *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 does not reveal whether the two sentences had been combined by Origen's adversaries in their defence of self-castration or by Origen himself. The first sentence mentioned by Origen is *Sext.* 13:

πᾶν μέλος τοῦ σώματος ἀναπεῖθόν σε μὴ σωφρονεῖν ῥῖψον·ἄμεινον γὰρ χωρὶς τοῦ μέλους ζῆν σωφρόνως ἢ μετὰ τοῦ μέλους ὀλεθρίως (*Sext.* 13).

Cast away any limb of the body which leads you to intemperance; for it is better to live temperately without it than to perish whole.[6]

Although scholars disagree on the actual distribution of the practice, self-castration as a literal interpretation of Matt 19:12 was a matter of debate in the early Church.[7] In the first two centuries of the Christian era the practice may have been more conventional than usually assumed. As Walter Bauer has argued, the fact that canon law had been countering the proponents of castration since its earliest days suggests that the practice was a sufficiently ordinary issue at least in certain circles.[8] In his study on eunuchism in the early Church, Walter Stevenson has shown that the evidence on the diffusion of the practice among early Christians is rather contradictory. Early Christian authors seem to fight against the idea of castration and favour a metaphorical or allegorical interpretation of Matt 19:12, as is the case with Origen's own reading. Their insistence on the topic, however, and their relentless polemic against self-castrating Christians reveal the existence of a double standard showing that common believers were thinking and some-

[6] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 17.

[7] Caner, "Self-castration", 415, see also Richard P. C. Hanson, "A Note on Origen's Self-Mutilation", in *VC* 20 (1966), pp. 81–82, 81.

[8] Canons against castration were promulgated at the council of Nicaea and at the synod of Arles, see Walter Bauer, "Matth. 19,12 und die alten Christen", in *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften*, Tübingen 1967, pp. 252–265, 257.

times acting on a different basis from the sophisticated allegorical readings of theologians.[9] The fact that Sextus had been deemed to be an advocate of castration by his less educated readers is consistent therefore with the historical evidence from the same period.

If Sextus can be linked to Egypt and to Alexandrian philosophical circles, his views may reflect positions on voluntary eunuchism that were frequently debated in his own environment. The exegetical interest in the problem of eunuchism and above all in its allegorical interpretation in fact did not start with Origen's commentary but goes back at least to Philo.[10] As Ra'anan Abusch has argued, it is with Philo that the biblical disapproval of eunuchism[11] becomes more multifaceted and that eunuchs are cited sometimes as a model of ἐγκράτεια, as in the Philonic tradition that compares the self-control of Joseph, the biblical champion of continence, with that of a eunuch.[12] As with the passage in *Det.* 176 which according to *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 was used by ascetic advocates of castration in Origen's time, it is difficult to establish whether Philo's interest in castration as a means of attaining sexual morality was a concrete suggestion or a more metaphorical one. The presence of similar passages in Philo's work, however, suggests that Sextus may not have been the only author who had a less negative view of this extreme way of practising sexual renunciation.

Through his passionate refutation of castration, Origen provides enough evidence that the issue may have been experienced as an important and urgent one. Although *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 is addressed primarily to people who read into the *Sentences* an excuse for self-mutilation and only subsequently to Sextus himself, Origen probably understood Sextus to be an adherent of this radical interpretation of Matt 19:12. Other instances in which castration is mentioned in relation to Egyptian Christianity can help to put these passages of the *Sentences* in their context. In his *First Apology* Justin Martyr tells of a young Alexandrine Christian who petitioned the Roman governor to allow a surgeon to castrate him. When permission was not granted,[13] the young man resolved to live the self-restrained life of a celibate

[9] Stevenson, "Eunuchs", 123 notes: "Alexandrian authors were subtly allegorizing the prevalent Judeo-Christian texts on eunuchs, while believers were acting on remarkably literal interpretations of these texts".

[10] Stevenson, "Eunuchs", 137.

[11] See for example Deut 23:2.

[12] Cf. *Leg.* 3.236–237, see Ra'anan Abusch, "Eunuchs and Gender Transformation: Philo's Exegesis of the Joseph Narrative", in *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. by Shaun Tougher, Swansea 2002, pp. 103–121, 111.

[13] Suetonius *Dom.* 7, for example, informs that Domitian had prohibited it, see Andrew T. Fear, "Cybele and Christ", in Eugene N. Lane, *Cybele, Attis & Related Cults. Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*, Leiden 1996, pp. 37–50, 47.

instead.[14] Since Justin is reporting the episode to demonstrate that Christians do not partake in mystery cults of a sexual nature his account may have been hyperbolic.[15] Nonetheless, the mention of castration does not seem to constitute a problem for Justin. Moreover the fact that the event is set in Alexandria may suggest that the practice was known among continent Christians in second-century Egypt, one of the more likely places of origin of the *Sentences*.[16] As Stevenson has observed, however, despite *1 Apol.* 29 Justin does not pay any special attention to the function of eunuchs and castrated people when discussing Matt 19:12 in *1 Apol.* 15.[17] There he limits his comments to mentioning the presence of numerous celibate people in the Christian communities of his time. This inconsistency shows that evidence of self-castration in the early church is often ambivalent and that authors who would otherwise admit or at least tolerate castration as an acceptable, though extreme, practice did not always interpret Matt 19:12 in a literal sense.

II. Literal and allegorical castration

Was then Sextus an advocate of self-mutilation as a way of attaining chastity? *Sext.* 13 and 273 remain a difficult piece of evidence to interpret. According to Origen's testimony, the earliest interpreters of these maxims thought so. *Sext.* 13 does not appear in any of the gnomologies related to Sextus' source material, which reinforces the impression that the sentence may belong to Sextus' Christian additions. The more likely explanation of the origins of *Sext.* 13 is to see it as a free reworking of Matt 5:29–30 or 18:8–9, as convincingly suggested by Delling.[18] The connection between *Sext.* 13 and the gospel of Matthew is also confirmed by the presence of *Sext.* 12 whose relationship with the gospel of Matthew and importance for the interpretation of this passage has been overlooked by Chadwick and other commentators:

οὐκ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐδὲ χεὶρ ἁμαρτάνει οὐδὲ τι τῶν ὁμοίων, ἀλλ' ὁ κακῶς χρώμενος χειρὶ καὶ ὀφθαλμῷ (*Sext.* 12)

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[14] *1 Apol.* 29.

[15] Caner, "Self-castration", 396. However, priests of cults related to Cybele and Attis, who practised self-mutilation, did not enjoy a high reputation in Roman society, see Fear, "Cybele", 46.

[16] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 1 n.2.

[17] Stevenson, "Eunuchs", 125.

[18] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 219–220. For a different explanation, see Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, xlii.

It is neither eye nor hand nor any such thing that sins, but he who misuses hand and eye.[19]

Unlike *Sext.* 13, this sentence would imply a less literal interpretation of self-mutilation. *Sext.* 12 does not appear in any cognate gnomology leaving the possibility open that it may have been fashioned by Sextus following a Christian source.[20] The mention of χείρ and ὀφθαλμός in *Sext.* 12 probably recalls the mention of the same anatomical parts in Mt 5:29–30 and 18:8–9,. Although textual similarities between *Sext.* 12–13 and the biblical tradition are not immediately obvious, these maxims may constitute the Hellenised and shortened version of the dominical sayings of Matt 5 and 18 or of similar traditions. Delling suggests that Sextus resolved the eschatological clauses like "entering life" (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωήν, Matt 18:8–9) or "being thrown into hell" (βληθῇ εἰς γέενναν, Matt 5:29) into the more general and philosophically appealing concepts of "living chastely" (ζῆν σωφρόνως) and "living unchastely" (ζῆν ὀλεθρίως).[21] Considering *Sext.* 12 and 13 together helps to shed light on Sextus' views on castration.

Although *Sext.*12 was derived from the gospel of Matthew exactly as *Sext.* 13, its message is radically different from the literal interpretation of castration given in *Sext.* 13. In the *Sentences*, maxims are not carelessly juxtaposed but arranged in thematic subsections.[22] Thus Sextus' choice to couple *Sext.* 12 and 13 reveals the intention of providing "ein korrigierender Satz"[23] or a key to the interpretation of *Sext.* 13 and of the dominical saying from which it was derived.[24] Consequently Sextus' views about self-castration may have been more refined than those of his early interpreters in *Comm. Matt.* 15.3. Ultimately, most of the blame for sexual sin does not rest with the limbs of the body but with the agent of the immoral act (ὁ κακῶς χρώμενος) who does not make good use, i.e. a self-controlled and ascetic use, of the body.[25] Sextus' position on self-mutilation as a way

[19] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 17.

[20] Basil of Seleucia knew this sentence, although he does not seem to know the provenance of it, cf. PG 85.437.

[21] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 219–220.

[22] However, thematically arranged gnomologies are not the norm, see Morgan, *Morality*, 258–260.

[23] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 221. Turner, *Philip*, 111 emphasises how parallelisms and antithetical pairs are frequent in the *Sentences*.

[24] Wilson, *Mysteries*, 29 sees an intentional "'antilogical' tendency" in some gnomologies observing that: "Occasionally editors would juxtapose maxims conveying opposing points of view on the same subject" because: "The contrast of differing views helps formulate a more balanced judgment, sharpens the critical faculties, and serves as a preparation for future argument and debate". See also Wilson, *Love*, 73.

[25] A similar idea is expressed also in Clement's *Paed.* 2.52.

of achieving sexual self-control therefore is deeply ambivalent. Although self-mutilation is a known and almost certainly accepted phenomenon, the *Sentences* also offer a more elaborated reflection on what is the ultimate meaning of the kind of eunuchism found in Matt 19:12 and similar traditions. From this point of view, Sextus' position on self-castration is consistent with the similarly ambivalent attitude already observed in Justin's *1 Apol.* 15 and 29.

The example of Sextus and Justin suggests that in certain circles castration may have been tolerated or even recommended in certain cases, although the emphasis of the discourse of Christian castration remained on the spiritual and ethical goal of attaining true chastity. Probably the idea that the metaphorical and the literal readings of Matt 19:12 were mutually exclusive was blatantly obvious only to Origen. According to Sextus and Justin, in matters of σωφροσύνη the end indeed justified the means. It is unlikely, therefore, that Sextus was against self-castration. Although Sextus' justification of mutilation as a way of attaining sexual self-restraint was less extreme than that of his interpreters in Origen's time, Origen is positive that the *Sentences* encourage a surgical way to continence and there are no good reasons to doubt his judgement. Sextus' cautious stance on castration may rather derive from the general tone of his collection. Since scholarship does not know anything about the intended readers of the *Sentences*, we are entering here an utterly speculative area of enquiry. If Delling is right in suggesting that Sextus tried to Hellenise, i.e. to make more philosophically acceptable, passages from the NT,[26] then *Sext.* 12–13 could be seen as an attempt to facilitate the comprehension of gospel traditions like those of Matt 5:29–30 and Matt 18:8–9 summarised in *Sext.* 13. With the addition of a more nuanced and ethically complex interpretative sentence in *Sext.* 12, Sextus could capture the attention of pagan sympathisers or more philosophically inclined Christian readers.

In this way *Sext.* 12 would also be an early witness of an exegetical tradition conveying a less literal interpretation of the dominical sayings about mutilation in the gospel tradition. Sextus' apologetic concern over a more or less literal interpretation of these passages is also consistent with the equally apologetic concern noticed by some commentators in Origen's allegorical interpretation of Matt 19:12.[27] The suggestion that Sextus and Origen may have shared a similar exegetical concern does not imply that Origen misinterpreted Sextus when counting him among the advocates of cas-

[26] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 211.

[27] Stevenson, "Eunuchs", 135 observes: "Origen is not using his allegory here to privilege a divine truth, but rather to mould a Christianity that is not repulsive to non-Christians".

tration. A closer analysis of *Sext.* 273, the second maxim attributed by Origen's *Comm. Matt.* 15.3 to the repertoire of the advocates of mutilation, will show that the *Sentences* did not intend to discourage Christians from practising self-castration.[28]

III. From suicide to castration

The study of *Sext.* 273 is important because it shows how Sextus adapted and reworked his Pythagorean sources to adapt them to his own understanding of what was morally acceptable in matters of sexuality. In *Comm. Matt.* 15.3, Origen informs us that along with *Sext.* 13 the "hot-spirited soul" (θερμότερα ψυχή, *Comm. Matt.* 15.3.14–15) of some Christians was enticed into castrating themselves by another saying of Sextus:

ἀνθρώπους ἴδοις ἂν ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ σώματος ἔχειν ἐρρωμένον ἀποκόπτοντας ἑαυτῶν καὶ ῥίπτοντας μέλη· πόσῳ βέλτιον ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωφρονεῖν; (*Sext.* 273).

You may see men who, in order to keep the rest of their bodies healthy, cut off their own limbs and throw them away. Is it not much better to do that for the sake of self-control?[29]

A similar sentence is attested in the tradition contained in Porphyry's letter to his wife Marcella which shared with the *Sentences* at least part of its source material. In Porphyry's *Marc.* 34 instead of applying the sentence to sexual self-control (ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωφρονεῖν, cf. *Sext.* 273), Porphyry suggests to his wife that she must be ready to give up the body in its entirety (τὸ ὅλον σῶμα ἀποκόπτειν):

μεγάλη οὖν παιδεία ἄρχειν τοῦ σώματος. πολλάκις κόπτουσί τινα μέρη ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ· τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἕνεκα ἕτοιμος ἔσο τὸ ὅλον σῶμα ἀποκόπτειν (*Marc.* 34).

It is therefore great education to be able to be master over the body. Often people sever some limbs for their safety; be then prepared for the sake of your soul to cut off the entire body.

Porphyry's sentence was clearly drawn from the same gnomic source used by Sextus for the compilation of the *Sentences*. Apart from several linguistic similarities,[30] Sextus and Porphyry share also the opening clause of *Marc.* 34, which is preserved as a separate sentence in *Sext.* 274 (Table 1).

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[28] Gary Taylor, *Castration. An Abbreviated History of Manhood*, London 2000, 190–191 lists Sextus among the early Christian authors who promote self-mutilation.

[29] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 47.

[30] For example, see the use of μέρη in Porphyry for μέλη found Sextus and the occurrence of the same verb ἀποκόπτειν.

Table 1: Sextus and Porphyry on mutilation

Sextus	*Porphyry*
Sext. 274 μεγάλην νόμιζε παιδείαν τὸ ἄρχειν σώματος	*Marc.* 34 μεγάλη οὖν παιδεία ἄρχειν τοῦ σώματος.
Sext. 273 ἀνθρώπους ἴδοις ἂν ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ σώματος ἔχειν ἐρρωμένον ἀποκόπτοντας ἑαυτῶν καὶ ῥίπτοντας μέλη· πόσῳ βέλτιον ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωφρονεῖν;	πολλάκις κόπτουσί τινα μέρη ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ· τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἕνεκα ἕτοιμος ἔσο τὸ ὅλον σῶμα ἀποκόπτειν

It remains arguable whether Porphyry's statement should be taken as a literal invitation to accept the eventuality of death and even contemplate suicide or as a metaphorical invitation to the ascetic rejection of the body and its passions.[31] Since the passage in the letter is preceded by Porphyry's advice to his wife to renounce her effeminate body of a woman (*Marc.* 33) but also immediately followed by the argument that one must be ready to die for the things one lives for,[32] both readings are possible.

The question whether the original gnome used by Sextus and Porphyry contained a reference to suicide depends largely on how Pythagorean in character their source material was. In *Phaed.* 61b–62c Socrates asserts that the Pythagorean Philolaus was against suicide; people willing to depart this life should wait for someone to kill them rather than upsetting the gods to whom all humans are entrusted by committing suicide. Although it is difficult to determine with any certainty to what extent the rejection of suicide attributed to Philolaus is an original Pythagorean doctrine or rather one of Plato's own principles, the general tone of the passage in *Phaedo* suggests a Pythagorean derivation.[33] A position similar to that of the *Phaedo* is contained in an explicit warning against suicide in Sextus' collection:[34]

[31] Conybeare, *Ring*, 117 and Gwynn, "Xystus", 1203 n. *h* argue that Porphyry is referring to suicide.

[32] *Marc.* 34: ὧν γὰρ ἕνεκα ζῆν ἐθέλεις, τούτων χάριν καὶ ἀποθανεῖν μὴ κατόκνει.

[33] John M. Cooper, "Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide", in *Suicide and Euthanasia. Historical and Contemporary Themes*, ed. by Baruch A. Brody, Dordrecht 1989, pp. 9–38, 15.

[34] Osborn, *Patterns*, 154 notes that Sextus was against suicide.

θανάτου μὲν σαυτῷ παραίτιος μὴ γένῃ, τῷ δὲ ἀφαιρουμένῳ σε τοῦ σώματος μὴ ἀγανάκτει (*Sext.* 321).

Do not cause your own death, but do not be angry with the person who would deprive you of your own body.[35]

Traditional Pythagorean hostility towards suicide makes it more plausible that the source material, and probably Porphyry himself, referred to a metaphorical giving up of the body or possibly to a serene and detached acceptance of the eventuality of death.[36] The archetype of *Sext.* 273 and *Marc.* 34 may have used the verb ἀποκόπτειν as a figure of speech. A figurative use of the verb ἀποκόπτειν to signify detachment from a worldly oriented life is attested in Philo.[37] A gnomic tradition using the medical necessity of amputating a limb as a metaphor for human death was known also to Epictetus. In *Diatr.* 2.5.24–26 Epictetus says that because each human being is part of a whole the individual has to accept untimely death as an inevitable necessity exactly as one has to accept that a foot could be amputated for the wellbeing of the entire body (ἀποκοπῆναι ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὅλου).[38] The similarities in language and meaning between Epictetus and Porphyry's *Marc.* 34 (ἕτοιμος ἔσο τὸ ὅλον σῶμα ἀποκόπτειν) suggest that the two may depend on the same gnome or on similar traditions. If this is the case, Epictetus and Porphyry would rather suggest that the original saying referred to the acceptance of death. Obviously the concept of a composed and impassive acceptance of death and that of a detached rejection of a world-oriented life are not mutually exclusive. In any case, neither Porphyry nor Epictetus refer to self-castration, which makes it more likely that also the tradition that Sextus found in his source material did not refer to castration.

Unlike Epictetus and Porphyry, *Sext.* 273 adds that the cutting off of a limb is performed ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωφρονεῖν, that is in order to attain self-control. The verb σωφρονεῖν does not occur in any of the gnomic sources associated with Sextus' source material[39] and occurs only one other time in Sextus precisely where readers are invited to cast away the limb that encourages them to lose their self-control (ἀναπεῖθόν σε μὴ σωφρονεῖν).[40] Since *Sext.* 13 was fashioned after a dominical tradition, and in the light of the linguistic similarities between *Sext.* 273 and 13, it is possible to argue that the refer-

[35] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 53.

[36] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 220 finds Porphyry's view: "Freilich radikaler", but he assumes that *Marc.* 34 must refer to suicide.

[37] *Somn.* 2.64, see Abusch, "Transformation", 112.

[38] *Diatr.* 2.5.24.

[39] Although σωφροσύνη occurs in *Pyth.* 88 and σώφρων in *Clit.* 123 and *Marc.* 3 and 7.

[40] *Sext.* 13.

ence to self-control in *Sext.* 273 also belongs to the Christian reworking. Sextus reshaped a maxim originally referring to the detached acceptance of death into an invitation to the ascetic control of the body. Although *Sext.* 273 does not explicitly refer to self-mutilation, Origen's testimony demonstrates that later readers of *Sext.* 273 saw in it an allusion to the ἔκκοψον αὐτὴν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ of Matt 5:30. The emphasis on σωφρονεῖν in both *Sext.* 13 and 273 suggest that these early interpreters of Sextus may have been right in identifying a reference to Matt 5:29–30 or 18:8–9.

The example of *Sext.* 273 shows how the *Sentences* tend to develop and reinterpret the ascetic character of their Pythagorean source material by turning its traditions into maxims advocating asceticism and making allusions to biblical passages. Whether *Sext.* 273 refers to actual castration or to a less literal invitation to self-control, Sextus in his reworking has drastically modified his Hellenistic source material shaping the original gnome into a completely new sentence sanctioning the ascetic self-control of the body and discarding the original invitation to a philosophical acceptance of death.[41]

C. *Sext.* 230a: Celibacy in the *Sentences of Sextus*

I. Companions of God? Variations on Paul

Sext. 230a–240 contain a list of instructions on marital matters. As mentioned above, Wayne Meeks referred to this section and in particular to *Sext.* 233[42] to argue that the *Sentences* were primarily addressed to married Christians.[43] Although sentences like *Sext.* 233 and even more so *Sext.* 230b with its cautious approval of marriage and procreation clearly include married people among the intended readers of the collection, commentators like Meeks seem to have overlooked the significance of the invitation to celibacy in *Sext.* 230a. Sextus' opening sentence does not contain an invitation to matrimony, as for example in *Clit.* 69, but describes a situation in which it is acceptable not to marry.[44] This element alone is sufficiently suggestive of Sextus' tendency to favour self-restraint:

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[41] However, also *Sext.* 273 has possibly its "Korrigierender Satz" in *Sext.* 274a: μεγάλην νόμιζε παιδείαν τὸ ἄρχειν σώματος.

[42] ἴσθι μοιχὸς εἶναι κἂν νοήσῃς μοιχεῦσαι· καὶ περὶ παντὸς ἁμαρτήματος ὁ αὐτὸς ἔστω σοι λόγος.

[43] Meeks, *Origins*, 149.

[44] Collections of saying had usually much to say about particular aspects of familiar and marital life. For a useful list of the most popular topics, among which negative remarks on women seem to have been most common, see Morgan, *Morality*, 106–109.

γάμον γὰρ δίδωσίν σοι παραιτεῖσθαι ἵνα ζήσῃς ὡς πάρεδρος θεῷ (*Sext.* 230a).

It is allowed to you to renounce marriage so that you might live as a companion of God.[45]

Sext. 230a does not appear in any of the pagan gnomologies linked to Sextus' source material, which strengthens the impression that it may have belonged to the Christian reworking of the collection. The main difficulty that this sentence offers is the translation of the expression πάρεδρος θεῷ. The longer Syriac version X translates with ܚܒܝܫܐ, which conveys the idea of an intimate relationship.[46] The adjective πάρεδρος literally indicates one who is "sitting beside". In this sense, it might refer to a legal adviser like the assistants (πάρεδροι) of the Athenian magistrates or the assessors in a court.[47] The πάρεδρος mentioned by Aristotle in *Ath. pol.* 48.4, who sat beside the statue of the eponymous hero of a tribe and listened to people bringing charges, probably constituted a minor legal office.[48] For the interpretation of *Sext.* 230a, it is noteworthy that deities had their πάρεδροι too in Hellenic myths, e.g. Themis sitting beside Zeus,[49] and in Greek-speaking Judaism both in the LXX and in Philo, where justice is called God's πάρεδρος. In Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom sits beside (πάρεδρος) God's throne:

Give me the wisdom that sits by your throne (τὴν τῶν σῶν θρόνων πάρεδρον σοφίαν), and do not reject me from among your servants (Wis 9:4).[50]

In Wis 6:14, the one who seeks wisdom early in the morning will find her conveniently sitting (πάρεδρον) at his gate. The expression is also used five times by Philo in reference to justice described as πάρεδρος of God.[51] In *Mos.* 2.53,[52] πάρεδρος is used with the dative as in *Sext.* 230a. In *Mut.* 194, Philo uses the etymology of the name Dinah (from Heb. דין, judgment) to characterise justice as the ever virgin assessor of God:

For Dinah is the incorruptible judgement, the assessor of God's justice (πάρεδρος θεοῦ δίκη), the ever virgin (ἀειπάρθενος) (*Mut.* 194).

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[45] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 43.

[46] de Lagarde, *Analecta*, 18.

[47] In Cassius Dio *Hist.* 57.7, the emperor Tiberius sits on the bench ὡς πάρεδρος in a court dispensing legal advice to the presiding magistrates.

[48] *Ath. pol.* 56.1 refers to the assessors of the archons, cf. Konstantinos A. Kapparis, "Assessors of Magistrates (Paredroi) in Classical Athens", in *Historia* 47/4 (1998), pp. 383–393, 391.

[49] Pindar *Ol.* 8.22.

[50] ET NRSV, see David Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, AB 43, Garden City (N.Y.) 1979, 202.

[51] See *Mut.* 194; *Mos.* 2.53; *Ios.* 48; *Decal.* 177 and *Spec.* 4.201.

[52] ἡ πάρεδρος τῷ θεῷ μισοπόνηρος δίκη.

Since it refers to something or someone sitting in close proximity, πάρεδρος may also be used to indicate a helper or a servant.[53] In this sense, it is often used in a special religious way and referred to the benevolent services of minor deities and deified humans, as in Euripides' *Orestes*, where a deified Helen is said to be sitting beside (πάρεδρος) Hera and Hebe and honoured as a goddess.[54] According to Diodorus Siculus and Lucian, Alexander ordered that the late Hephaestion be worshipped as θεὸς πάρεδρος.[55] A specific use of πάρεδρος is observable in the *Magical Papyri* (20 occurrences), where πάρεδροι daemons can be magically summoned to assist and serve the sorcerer.[56] In patristic authors the expression πάρεδρος θεοῦ with the genitive case occurs in Photios' *Amphilochia* 32, where justice (δίκη) is called assessor (πάρεδρος) and minister (ὑπηρέτις) of the judgments of God, although this passage probably depends on Philo. In a treatise on almsgiving Gregory of Nyssa also uses the same expression to say that, being the highest and most honourable of Christian acts, giving alms is θεοῦ πάρεδρος.[57]

The expression πάρεδρος θεῷ is unknown to the NT authors. It is probably for this reason that neither Delling nor Chadwick list *Sext.* 230a among the maxims alluding to a previous Christian tradition. Delling and Chadwick, however, are not correct in their omission. A closer analysis of *Sext.* 230a shows that the maxim displays important similarities with the NT and has probably been stylistically reworked from a Pauline passage. In his marital instruction in 1 Cor 7 after having said that the married Christian is divided between God and the world while the celibate is free from anxiety (ἀμερίμνος),[58] Paul says that his instruction is intended for the benefit of the Corinthians:

οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβάλω ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ εὔσχημον καὶ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως (1 Cor 7:35b).

Not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.[59]

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[53] In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Phaedra invokes a helper (πάρεδρος) among humans, cf. *Hipp.* 676.

[54] *Orest.* 1687.

[55] See Diodorus Siculus *Bibl.* 17.115.6 and Lucian *Cal.* 17.17.

[56] See for example *PGM* I.126–128, where a κράτιστος πάρεδρος will serve (δουλεύσει) the one who evokes it. See also *PGM* XII.14ff. where Eros can be summoned with the help of a wax figurine and will perform every kind of service.

[57] *De beneficentia* 100.

[58] 1 Cor 7:32.

[59] ET NRSV.

The adjective εὐπάρεδρος in 1 Cor 7:35 is a linguistic mystery. Unattested in any Greek writer before Paul, εὐπάρεδρος is scarcely attested afterwards, occurring less than 40 times altogether. Moreover most of these later occurrences are only quotations of Paul or comments dependent upon 1 Cor 7:35.[60] The most likely explanation of the word is that Paul himself coined the neologism by adding a prefix to πάρεδρος.[61] As a constant concern of the *Sentences* is the improvement of NT expressions in order to create a language closer to that of Hellenistic gnomic wisdom is,[62] it is not surprising that Sextus would substitute Paul's linguistically awkward εὐπάρεδρος with the more standard term πάρεδρος. Deming has suggested that either Sextus in this sentence depends on Paul or both authors depend on a common tradition.[63] Both options are possible. Apart from the correlation between the expressions εὐπάρεδρος τῷ κυρίῳ and πάρεδρος θεῷ, however, the two passages in Paul and Sextus do not share any other element. If a common tradition existed it would be difficult to reconstruct its exact content. Probably *Sext.* 230a intends to allude to 1 Cor 7:35 and to the neologism εὐπάρεδρος and the entire sentence as penned by Paul.[64] The concept of renouncing marriage as expressed in *Sext.* 230a may also be close to a philosophical tradition attributed to Democritus, which seems to have been known in Christian Alexandria and is mentioned in Clement's *Stromata.*[65] According to Clement, Democritus taught that marriage and procreation could be avoided (γάμον καὶ παιδοποιίαν παραιτεῖται) in order to focus on more essential things (Table 2). The analogy between the problem addressed by Sextus and the teaching attributed to Democritus shows that a philosophical reflexion on the rejection of marriage was not unknown to Hellenic morality.

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[60] In *Strom.* 4.149.2, Clement reformulates the passage by combining 1 Cor 7:35 and 38.

[61] On this linguistic phenomenon as a frequent feature in Paul, see F. Wilbur Gingrich, "Prolegomena to a Study of the Christian Element in the Vocabulary of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers", in *Search the Scriptures. New Testament Studies in Honour of Raymond T. Stamm*, ed. by Jacob M. Myers et al., Leiden 1969, pp. 171–178, 176.

[62] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 211.

[63] Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy. The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2004, 197 n.360.

[64] For εὐπάρεδρος as a Pauline coinage, see already Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I – II*, HNT 9, Tübingen 1949[4], 35.

[65] *Strom.* 2.138: Δημόκριτος δὲ γάμον καὶ παιδοποιίαν παραιτεῖται διὰ τὰς πολλὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀηδίας τε καὶ ἀφολκὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀναγκαιοτέρων.

Table 2: Celibacy in Sextus, Paul and Democritus

Sextus	*Paul*	*Democritus*
Sext. 230a–b	1 Cor 7:35	frg. *Strom.* 2.138
230a γάμον γὰρ δίδωσίν σοι παραιτεῖσθαι 230b ...καὶ παιδοποιοῦ		Δημόκριτος δὲ γάμον καὶ παιδοποιίαν παραιτεῖται
	τοῦτο δὲ πρὸς τὸ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν σύμφορον λέγω, οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβάλω ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ εὔσχημον	διὰ τὰς πολλὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀηδίας τε καὶ ἀφολκὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀναγκαιοτέρων
ἵνα ζήσῃς ὡς πάρεδρος θεῷ	καὶ εὐ-πάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ	
indesinenter (Rufinus' Latin Sextus)	ἀπερισπάστως	

If *Sext.* 230a is to be seen as an allusion to 1 Cor 7:35 and to the teachings concerning marriage and sexuality in that chapter, a comparison between Paul's passage and Sextus reveals a stricter leaning towards celibacy in the *Sentences*.[66] In particular it is possible to observe:

1) While Paul gives permission only for temporary (πρὸς καιρόν)[67] abstention from marital sex, Sextus does not seem to set time limitations. In *Sext.* 230a, the commitment of the celibate who has become a πάρεδρος of God is rather an enduring devotion (ἵνα ζήσῃς), so that the celibate might "live clinging incessantly to God" (*ut vivas indesinenter adhaerens deo*), as Rufinus translates it.[68]

2) As has been observed for self-castration in *Sext.* 273, it is possible that also in *Sext.* 230a Sextus has creatively reworked an allusion to the

[66] Dodds, *Anxiety*, 35 finds Paul's views in 1 Cor 7 "less extreme" than those of his earliest Christian readers.

[67] 1 Cor 7:5.

[68] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 38 n. 230a suggests that Rufinus' Greek text might have contained ἀεί (= *indesinenter*). The presence of an adverb could be motivated by the ἀπερισπάστως of 1 Cor 7:35.

NT with philosophical traditions similar to that attributed to Democritus in Clement's *Stromata*.

3) The expression γυναίκα or γάμον παραιτεόμαι in *Sext.* 230a may also refer to divorce (cf. Josephus in *Ant.* 5.294 where Samson divorces his Philistine wife) rather than to celibacy understood as a life of virginity.[69] If *Sext.* 230a refers to divorce Sextus' view would offer an even stricter ascetic element. If Sextus accepts divorce, as suggested by Chadwick,[70] his approach would be more extreme than Paul's who in 1 Cor 7:10–17 discourages the option for Christian couples. In this case, Sextus' position would be rather different from the praxis generally accepted in the early church and reflected in Clement's claim in the *Stromata* that Jesus himself taught married people not to divorce and unmarried not to seek marriage.[71]

II. The special bond between God and the ascetic continent

What does Sextus refer to when he says that it is acceptable to refuse marriage to live as a πάρεδρος to God? One of the earliest references to Christian believers as πάρεδροι of God seems to use the expression as an equivalent of servant or attendant:

> Labour together with one another, compete together, run together, suffer together, lie down together, and be raised together as the household slaves, attendants (πάρεδροι), and servants of God (Ign. *Pol.* 6.1).[72]

Commenting on 1 Cor 7, Morton Smith has argued that to a pagan audience the language of 1 Cor 7:35 would have probably evoked the same kind of magic phenomena related to the summoning of the spirits πάρεδροι.[73] As we have seen, the term could also be used for deified hu-

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[69] The Old Testament story in Judg 14:14–20 is rather complex and the nature of Samson's marriage has been object of exegetical debate, see James D. Martin, *Judges*, Cambridge 1975, 163–164. In *Ant.* 5.294 it seems that Josephus suggests that Samson divorced his wife. However, it should be noted that in *Ant.* 20.139 the same expression γάμον παραιτεόμαι clearly refers to refusing to marry someone.

[70] See Chadwick, *Sextus*, 172

[71] See Clement *Strom.* 3.97.4: πάλιν ὁ κύριός φησιν· ὁ γήμας μὴ ἐκβαλλέτω καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμήσας μὴ γαμείτω, ὁ κατὰ πρόθεσιν εὐνουχίας ὁμολογήσας μὴ γῆμαι. This dominical saying did not find its way to the NT canon. Its resonance in 1 Cor 7:27, however, gives evidence of its long-standing authority in the early church.

[72] ET *The Apostolic Fathers. Volume 1 and 2*, translated by Bart D. Ehrman, LCL 24–25, Cambridge (Mass.) 2003, 1:317.

[73] Morton Smith rightly points out the difference between the two systems. While pagans believed that certain spirits could be summoned to be πάρεδροι of the conjuror, Pauline Christians were expected to become εὐπάρεδροι of Jesus, maintaining the centrality of the deity, see Morton Smith, "Pauline Worship as Seen by Pagans", in *HTR* 73:1–2 (1980), pp. 241–249, 243–244.

mans and Smith argues that in 1 Cor 7:35 celibacy is presented as a way of attaining a closer relationship with Christ and the realm of the spirit as a sort of "shamanistic" requirement.[74]

Since this interpretation of 1 Cor 7:35 is based on the dubious attempt to read into the mind of Paul's pagan readers, it remains rather problematic to establish whether Paul intended to use εὐπάρεδρος in the sense envisaged by Morton Smith. Even though it remains difficult to attribute a precise value to the expression πάρεδρος θεῷ and occurrences of the same expression (either with genitive or with dative) are quite rare, it is not unlikely that Sextus meant to ascribe a special meaning and prestige to the relationship between God and God's celibate πάρεδρος. The continent believer is therefore special in God's eyes through renunciation of marriage. A tendency not dissimilar to that described by Morton Smith for 1 Cor 7:35 may be observed in Clement who in *Strom.* 4.151–152, referring to a Pythagorean tradition maintained that freedom from passion (ἀπάθεια) enables the true Gnostic to become a deified being.[75] Basil of Ancyra in his fourth century *De virginitate* also brings together ascetic renunciation and the idea of the πάρεδρος, arguing that true spiritual virginity is the handmaid (θεράπαινα) and the πάρεδρος of God.[76]

Since *Sext.* 230a is not attested in witnesses of Sextus' source material, the maxim may have been fashioned by Sextus. Whether Sextus fashioned the sentence himself or not, however, the concept that self-restraint enables a special relationship between the deity and the devotee plays an important role elsewhere in the collection. *Sext.* 86a–b, for example, are part of a small thematic section on piety. These sentences offer an interesting example of Sextus' argument that self-control empowers humankind to develop a closer relationship to God:

κρηπὶς εὐσεβείας ἐγκράτεια
τέλος εὐσεβείας φιλία πρὸς θεόν (Sext. 86a–b).

Self-control is the foundation of piety
The goal of piety is friendship with God.[77]

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[74] Smith, "Worship", 244: "That Paul recognized the similarity is shown by his recommendation of celibacy on the ground that it would free the Christian from distractions and make him *euparedron* for the Lord – well suited to be joined with Jesus as a *paredros*".

[75] Here Clement is reflecting on Ps 82:6 LXX: ἐγὼ εἶπα θεοί ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ὑψίστου πάντες. It is interesting to notice that here Clement recurs to the interpretation of a Pythagorean maxim in order to develop his argument further.

[76] See Basil of Ancyra PG 30.672.

[77] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 27.

Sext. 86a belonged to Sextus' source material. The same sentence is extant in the MS Θ of the epitome of *Clitarchus* (under *Clit.* 13 of Chadwick's edition).[78] *Sext.* 86b does not present any parallel in Sextus' source material which once again raises the question whether Sextus penned the sentence, perhaps under the influence of similar passages in the OT and NT. This last possibility should not be ruled out too hastily. Although the concept of φιλία πρὸς θεόν is not unknown to the Greek philosophical thought and appears for example in the *Corpus aristotelicum,*[79] the expression occurs twice in the biblical tradition. In Wis 7:14 for example those who acquire wisdom obtain also friendship with God (πρὸς θεὸν ἐστείλαντο φιλίαν). The epistle of James offers some significant hints for the interpretation of *Sext.* 86a–b:

> Adulterers (μοιχαλίδες)! Do you not know that friendship with the world (φιλία τοῦ κόσμου) is enmity with God (ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ)? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (Jas 4:4).[80]

The epistle of James is also the only text of the canon of the NT which contains the expression φίλος θεοῦ referring to Abraham in Jas 2:23. In the passage quoted above, James argues that friendship with the world, expressed here with an image taken from sexual morality and in particular adultery (μοιχαλίδες), implies enmity with God. Even though in Jas 4:4 the concept of friendship with the world is certainly to be interpreted in a broader sense than suggested by the initial reference to the adulterers,[81] the idea that friendship with God and friendship with the world are mutually exclusive seems to resonate also in *Sext.* 86a–b. According to Sextus' source material, the way to piety is ascetic self-control. By setting the goal of piety in friendship with God, *Sext.* 86b suggests that intemperance constitutes a great hindrance for the construction of the special bond linking the devotee to the deity. Although the use of ἐγκράτεια in *Sext.* 86a is not restricted to the sphere of sexuality and marriage, *Sext.* 86a–b show how Sextus understood the plea for self-control of his Pythagorean source material as a way of improving the relationship between the believer and God. This approach to self-control sheds new light on the interpretation of the expression πάρεδρος θεῷ in *Sext.* 230a, where a specific kind of ἐγκράτεια, i.e. renunciation of marriage, gives to the continent ascetic a particular sta-

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[78] Cf. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 76. For a description of the four recensions of *Clitarchus*, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 73–74.

[79] *Mag. mor.* 2.11.6.

[80] ET NRSV.

[81] On the μοιχαλίδες of Jas 4:4 as "spiritual 'adulterers'", see Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1985, 42.

tus in God's eyes, making abstention a way of expressing one's religious commitment and spiritual identity.[82]

The behaviour of the continent ascetic described in *Sext.* 230a is not dissimilar to the attitude towards marriage ascribed to the Essenes and the θεραπευταί in Philo's works. In *Hypoth.* 11.14 the same Greek expression γάμον παραιτέομαι is used to describe the rejection of marriage among the Essenes:

> Furthermore they [the Essenes] eschew marriage (γάμον παρητήσαντο) because they clearly discern it to be the sole or the principal danger to the maintenance of the communal life, as well as because they particularly practise continence (ἀσκεῖν ἐγκράτειαν). For no Essene takes a wife (*Hypoth.* 11.14).[83]

Although *Hypoth.* 11.14 continues then with a conventional attack against women and the danger of their treacheries (γοητείαι), this passage shows that the renunciation of marriage envisioned by Sextus in *Sext.* 230a was considered by Philo to be an eminent example of ascetic self-control (ἀσκεῖν ἐγκράτειαν). While Sextus, following Paul, concentrates on the implications of the ascetic renunciation of marriage for the vertical axis of the relationship between the believer and God, Philo focuses more on the horizontal axis of the social consequences of a self-controlled life as the principal way to preserve the Essenic κοινωνία. The depiction of the ascetic as a πάρεδρος θεῷ in the *Sentences* is even better explained in the light of Philo's description of the voluntary virginity of the θεραπευτρίδες in *Contempl.* 68. Here Philo develops his views on the ascetic renunciation of marriage, arguing that the sexual renunciation of these elderly female ascetics puts them in a completely new relationship with God and Wisdom:

> The feast is shared by women also, most of them aged virgins (πλεῖσται γηραιαὶ παρθένοι), who have kept their chastity not under compulsion, like some of the Greek priestesses, but of their own free will in their ardent yearning for wisdom. Eager to have her for their life mate they have spurned the pleasures of the body (διὰ ζῆλον καὶ πόθον σοφίας, ᾗ συμβιοῦν σπουδάσασαι τῶν περὶ σῶμα ἡδονῶν ἠλόγησαν) and desire no mortal offspring but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring to the birth unaided because the Father has sown in her spiritual rays enabling her to behold the verities of wisdom (*Contempl.* 68).[84]

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[82] As mentioned above, the fact that the ascetic lifestyle creates "a new identity" is characteristic of Richard Valantasis' definition of asceticism, see Valantasis, "Theory", 548. From the point of view of identity construction, the ascetic tendencies of the *Sentences* agree with Valantasis' model.

[83] ET Philo, *Volume IX*, translated by Francis H. Colson, LCL 363, Cambridge (Mass.) 1954, 443.

[84] ET Colson, *Philo IX*, 155.

As stated by Joan Taylor, in this passage Wisdom is probably an alternative way to refer to God.[85] If this is the case the image of the elderly virgins rejecting marriage to take Wisdom as their companion[86] is particularly close to Sextus' idea that to those who renounce marriage is given to live as πάρεδροι of God. Without concurring with Ferdinando de Paola's mistaken conclusion that Sextus preserves Essenic traditions,[87] there are considerable analogies between the spiritual partnership of Wisdom with the θεραπευτρίδες in Philo and Sextus' special bond between God and the ascetic in *Sext.* 230a. If Sextus' collection, as seen, may be connected with Egypt and specifically with Alexandria, it is possible that his interpretation of 1 Cor 7:35 originated in a religious and philosophical environment where the devotional value of the ascetic renunciation of marriage was already well established.

Although Sextus is not writing for a community of celibate Christians, the fact that he opens his marital instruction with a praise of celibacy hinting at the special status achieved by those who reject marriage gives good grounds to question Meeks' conclusion that the *Sentences* represent an ethical position of compromise for "ordinary believers".[88] In particular Meeks' statement based on *Sext.* 239 that "[l]ike Hermas, Sextus prizes *enkrateia*, but thinks it can be exercised by the married"[89] has to be seen in the light of Sextus' position as expressed in *Sext.* 230a, which clearly puts celibacy on a higher level of consideration. In this respect Sextus is visibly following a pattern which began already with Paul in 1 Cor 7.[90] Unlike Paul, however, Sextus does not balance his argument in favour of celibacy with any positive reformulation of the advantages of having a spouse if only for the sake of avoiding πορνεία as in 1 Cor 7:2. As mentioned above, if Chadwick is right in stating that *Sext.* 230a also embraces divorce or at

[85] Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria. Philo's Therapeutae Reconsidered*, Oxford 2003, 251: "God and Wisdom are essentially the same".

[86] The verb συμβιόω has sometimes the specific meaning of sharing one's life with a spouse. In Philo this can be seen for example in *Congr.* 41, *Abr.* 248 (with some sexual connotations), *Spec.* 2.30 and *QG* 3.29.

[87] de Paola, *Sesto*, liii. Taylor, *Women*, 71 observes that the Essenes known to Philo did not allow women into their sect.

[88] Meeks, *Origins*, 147.

[89] Meeks, *Origins*, 149.

[90] On 1 Cor 7 as intrinsically ascetic, *pace* Deming, *Celibacy*, 218–219, see Daniele Pevarello, "Ricezione e influenza di 1 Corinzi 7 sul primo ascetismo cristiano: l'esempio di Taziano, Clemente Alessandrino e Tertulliano", in *Protestantesimo* 64:2–3 (2009), pp. 265–279, 277–279.

least abandonment of one's spouse,[91] Sextus' position could also be considered as a reinforcement and radicalisation of the temporary sexual abstinence conveyed in 1 Cor 7:5. Although *Sext.* 230a–240 is peppered with references to marriage and Edwards and Wild are right in saying that "the author assumes that some of his addressees are married",[92] the mere presence of these references does not say much about the status of the married among Sextus' intended readers and even less about the space reserved to an active expression of sexual feelings among those married Christians.

D. Sextus, Procreation and the Pythagorean Tradition

I. Marriage in Sextus and Clitarchus

Sextus' pessimistic view of marriage is further expounded in *Sext.* 230b. The explicit reference to childbearing in particular has been considered an important proof that the *Sentences* do not disparage sexuality:

γάμει καὶ παιδοποιοῦ χαλεπὸν εἰδὼς ἑκάτερον· εἰ δὲ καθάπερ εἰδὼς πόλεμον ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἀνδρίζοιο, καὶ γάμει καὶ παιδοποιοῦ (*Sext.* 230b).

Marry and beget children knowing that both are difficult; if you know this, as you know that a battle could be hard and that you would be brave, then marry and have children.[93]

This sentence has often been too hastily interpreted as a concession to the enjoyment of sexuality and family life. Henry Chadwick for example interprets *Sext.* 230b as a positive endorsement of marriage where the status of the "married man is superior to the selfish bachelor".[94] It is true that Sextus states here the admissibility of marriage. Marriage and procreation, however, are said to be χαλεπός, a difficult enterprise even brutal and ruthless, as suggested by the military simile (πόλεμος χαλεπός) in *Sext.* 230b. Accordingly marriage becomes a matter of bravery (ἀνδρίζοιο) and a dangerous business. Despite the mention of childbearing, marriage is not de-

[91] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 172: "The wording (δίδωσιν) suggests that the application intended is not addressed to a man or woman still unmarried, but rather to married couples to whom it is 'granted' to abandon the conjugal life if they so wish and to follow the ascetic way". Chadwick probably reads too much into the use of δίδωσιν. Since παραιτεόμαι may indicate apply to both divorce and more generic rejection of getting married, there is in principle no decisive reason to exclude unmarried Christians from the freedom granted in *Sext.* 230a.

[92] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 1.

[93] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 43.

[94] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 173.

scribed as a natural constituent of a full social and biological life,[95] but as a daring act. Sextus stresses the element of danger contained in marital life by repeating the adjective χαλεπός twice. This repetition probably constituted a stylistic problem and appeared redundant to the copyists of MS Y and of the Greek *Vorlage* of X, the Syriac longer selection. Both texts omit the first part of the sentence, which appears in Rufinus' Latin translation and in the MS Π. Sextus is evidently not the first Christian writer to warn against the dangers of marital life. In 1 Cor 7:28, while allowing marriage, Paul does not miss the opportunity to stress the tribulation (θλῖψις) associated with marriage. Democritus' fragment, as we have seen, shows that probably the theme was also commonplace in the pagan moral tradition.

The mention of childbearing, however, is not a frequent feature in the NT apart from 1 Tim 2:15 where the term τεκνογονία is used rather than the verb παιδοποιέω. The fact that marriage and reproduction are mentioned together in *Sext.* 230b is more significant than usually assumed as it reveals the underlying pagan, and probably Pythagorean, roots of the concepts employed by Sextus in this passage. Looking more closely at Sextus' instruction on family life it is possible to observe a series of analogies between the *Sentences* and the pagan *Clitarchus* which have been neglected by most of the commentators who defend the idea that Sextus' asceticism is mild and conventional.[96] In particular *Sext.* 230a–240 show a considerable number of parallels with the smaller section of the χρεῖαι of Clitarchus in *Clit.* 69–73:[97]

γάμει δυνατὸς ὢν ἄρχειν.
ὅρος ἀφροδισίων παιδοποιΐα.
μοιχός ἐστι τῆς αὑτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος.
αἰδούμενος τὴν γυναῖκα αἰδουμένην ἕξεις.
ἐφ' ὅσον ἂν γαστρὸς ἄρξῃς, καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἄρξεις (*Clit.* 69–73).

Marry, when you are able to rule.
The begetting of children is the limit of sexual desires.
Every unrestrained lover is an adulterer towards his own wife.
Being respectful towards your wife, you will keep her respect.
Inasmuch as you rule over your stomach, you will rule over your sexual desires.

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[95] On marriage and procreation as a natural act, and therefore not contrary to a philosophical life, even among more ascetically inclined Hellenistic moralists like Musonius, see James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue. Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*, University Park (Pa.) 1995, 14.

[96] Neither Meeks nor Edwards and Wild refer to the way Sextus reformulates the maxims of his pagan source material in their assumption that the asceticism of the *Sentences* does not contain more radical teachings.

[97] *Clit.* 69–72 has been preserved in MS Λ or Vaticanus gr. 1144 fol. 232^{v} and *Clit.* 73 in MS Φ or Parisinus gr. 1630, fol. 186.

Clit. 69–73 belongs to the larger section *Clit.* 68–76 similarly concerned with sexual and family matters (Table 3).

Table No. 3: Sextus and Clitarchus on marriage

Sextus	*Clitarchus*
Sext. 230a–240	*Clit.* 69–73 (MS Λ)
230a γάμον γὰρ δίδωσίν σοι παραιτεῖσθαι ἵνα ζήσῃς ὡς πάρεδρος θεῷ	(= 1 Cor 7:35?)
230b **γάμει** καὶ παιδοποιοῦ χαλεπὸν εἰδὼς ἑκάτερον· εἰ δὲ καθάπερ εἰδὼς πόλεμον ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἀνδρίζοιο, καὶ γάμει καὶ **παιδοποιοῦ**	69 **γάμει** δυνατὸς ὢν ἄρχειν 70 ὅρος ἀφροδισίων **παιδοποιΐα**
231 **μοιχὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος**	71 **μοιχός ἐστι τῆς αὑτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος**
232 μηδὲν ἕνεκα ψιλῆς ἡδονῆς ποίει	
233 ἴσθι μοιχὸς εἶναι κἂν νοήσῃς μοιχεῦσαι· καὶ περὶ παντὸς ἁμαρτήματος ὁ αὐτὸς ἔστω σοι λόγος	(= Matt 5:28?)
234 πιστὸν εἰπὼν σεαυτὸν ὡμολόγησας μηδὲ ἁμαρτεῖν θεῷ	(= Christian addition?)
235 πιστῇ γυναικὶ κόσμος σωφροσύνη νομιζέσθω	
236 ἀνὴρ γυναῖκα ἀποπέμπων ὁμολογεῖ μηδὲ γυναικὸς ἄρχειν δύνασθαι	
237 γυνὴ σώφρων ἀνδρὸς εὔκλεια	
238 **αἰδούμενος** γαμετὴν **αἰδουμένην ἕξεις**	72 **αἰδούμενος** τὴν γυναῖκα **αἰδουμένην ἕξεις**
239 ὁ τῶν πιστῶν γάμος ἀγὼν ἔστω περὶ ἐγκρατείας	(= Christian addition?)
240 ὡς **ἂν γαστρὸς ἄρξῃς, καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἄρξεις**	73 ἐφ' ὅσον **ἂν γαστρὸς ἄρξῃς, καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἄρξεις** (only in Parisinus gr. 1630)

A closer comparison between *Sext.* 230a–240 and *Clit.* 69–73 shows that *Sext.* 230a–240 has probably been built on the same sequence of maxims which originated *Clit.* 69–72. Both Sextus and the *Clitarchus* probably drew their material from a larger section on sex and family in the una-

bridged χρεῖαι. Almost certainly the non-Christianised *Clitarchus* preserves a tradition closer to the teachings of the pagan source material. In particular:[98]

1) The two sections have three sentences in common (*Clit.* 71, 72 and 73 = *Sext.* 231, 238 and 240).

2) *Sext.* 230b though heavily reworked preserves the same imperative γάμει, which appropriately opened the first maxim on marriage in the Pythagorean source (*Clit.* 69).

3) The remaining sentences that Sextus does not share with *Clitarchus* are either allusions to Scripture, like *Sext.* 233 which probably points at Matt 5:28,[99] or manifestly Christian in their terminology like *Sext.* 234 and 239.[100] If one removes what probably was added by Sextus, the verses that the *Sentences* and *Clitarchus* have in common reflect the same order. If considered against other witnesses of Sextus' source material, the supposedly positive view of marriage of *Sext.* 230b appears less obvious. What is remarkable in the *Sentences* is the way the author expands the sober and pragmatic opening of *Clit.* 69 "marry, when you are able to rule" into the description of a grim and desolate battlefield. What marriage is really about for Sextus is expressed in *Sext.* 239, a maxim which displays distinctively Christian terminology (πιστός); the believers' marriage should be ἀγὼν περὶ ἐγκρατείας, a struggle or a competition for self-control.

II. The ἀκόλαστος husband in Sext. *231*

An even stricter position concerning sexuality within marriage is suggested in the maxim which immediately follows *Sext.* 230b:

μοιχὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος (Sext. 231)

Every unrestrained husband commits adultery with his wife.[101]

The word ἀκόλαστος is not very frequent in LXX Greek and occurs only three times in Prov 19:29, 20:1 and 21:11 where it translates the Heb. לֵץ ("babbler" or "scoffer"). The term means "unbridled" or "undisciplined" and in moral language is often used in opposition to σώφρων "moderate", the virtuous person who practises self-control as for example in Plato.[102] Strictly speaking, the word μοιχός can refer to an adulterer, meaning liter-

[98] Although not explicitly referring to this passage Chadwick, *Sextus*, 157 notes: "There are not a few instances where the text of Clitarchus bears every mark of being the original form which Sextus revised in a Christian direction".

[99] See Delling, "Hellenisierung", 230

[100] On πιστός as a Christian term, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 154.

[101] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 43.

[102] *Gorg.* 507c.

ally someone who engages in extramarital affairs, or in a more general sense to debauchery. In the LXX μοιχός and μοιχάομαι have mostly been used to translate the Hebrew root נאף (for example in Prov 6:32, Job 24:15, Ezek 16:32, Jer 7:9) with reference to infidelity as opposed to marital faithfulness. Occurrences of μοιχός and μοιχάομαι in the NT are not numerous. Every time the two terms are used, however, the reference is to adultery (cf. 1 Cor 6:9, Mark 10:11f., Matt 5:32 and 19:9). In Heb 13:4 the μοιχός falls in a category clearly distinct from that of the πόρνος which refers to those engaging more generally in illicit relationships.[103]

The use of μοιχάομαι in the Gospel of Matthew is particularly relevant here. Both Matt 5:32 and Matt 19:9 say with only slightly different wording that whoever divorces his wife causes her to be an adulteress and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery, save for cases of πορνεία (Matt 5:32 παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας and Matt 19:9 μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ). Although the word πορνεία can be understood as a more general reference to any kind of illicit or invalid union, Matthew here is probably referring to the eventuality of the infidelity of the wife.[104] In any case, μοιχάομαι in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 shall be better translated with "committing adultery". It is clear in fact that the strength of the argument against divorce resides in the surprising turn which causes the lawful custom of divorce to be overturned and reveal itself in a new light as a form of sexual transgression perfectly comparable to marital infidelity.[105] Similarly if μοιχός in *Sext.* 231 were to be translated by "debaucher" the point of the maxim would be lost. Moreover a translation that does not refer to adultery would fail to explain the genitive τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικός. What the maxim is saying therefore is that those who practise unrestrained and uninhibited sex, even and especially within marriage, are to be counted as adulterers.[106] In comparison with Paul's teachings in 1 Cor 7, which as suggested above were probably known to Sextus,[107] marriage in the *Sentences* is no longer a safer space where those who were denied the spiritual gift of celibacy could express their sexuality in an acceptable even though not ideal way (cf. 1 Cor 7:2).

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[103] Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1977, 566.

[104] Richard T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: an Introduction and Commentary*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1985, 123.

[105] See France, *Matthew*, 281 and Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1999, 190.

[106] Similarly already Philo in *Spec.* 3.9, see Taylor, *Women*, 234.

[107] Also the longer Syriac selection X saw an allusion to 1 Cor 7 in the Greek original and made it even more explicit by adding a reference to 1 Cor 7:9, see Ryssel, "Syrische", 2:597 n.4.

It is precisely in this sense that Clement interprets the same tradition in one of the rare passages where Clement shows knowledge of either Sextus' collection or its source material:[108]

Καὶ τὸ σκότος αὐτοῖς ἐστι προκάλυμμα τῶν παθῶν· μοιχεύει γὰρ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ γάμον ὁ ἑταιριζόμενος αὐτόν (*Paed.* 2.99.3).

And darkness serves to them as a screen for [their] passions: for you commit adultery with your own spouse if you treat her like a prostitute.

Since the genitive ἑαυτοῦ seems to be Sextus' emendation,[109] the possibility of direct contact between Clement and the *Sentences* cannot be ignored. In Clement the maxim is followed by an extensive quotation of Sir 23:18–19 which exhorts readers not to rely on darkness to cover their extramarital affairs. *Paed.* 2.99.3 however has changed the original reference to adultery (ἄνθρωπος παραβαίνων ἀπὸ τῆς κλίνης αὐτοῦ, Sir 23:18a) into a reference to marital sex (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀναβαίνων ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης αὐτοῦ). What darkness cannot conceal from God's eyes therefore is no more extramarital sex, but the husband's lustful appetites which he pathetically tries to hide behind the privacy of wedlock. In this case, Clement is probably a good interpreter of Sextus' teaching. Unlike the more nuanced Paul, Sextus responds here to a moral framework in which the spectre of sexual immorality is implanted right into marriage. It is no more a question of visiting prostitutes (like in 1 Cor 6:15–16), because adultery belongs now to the very nature of sexual desire, carved in the passion of human bodies lying in wait behind the masquerade of marital love.

III. Aborting procreationism

In her book *The Making of Fornication*, Kathy Gaca says that the view sanctioned by *Sext.* 231 is intrinsically Christian and states that the sentiment of this maxim cannot be found in "any other Greek or Roman source".[110] Unlike Gaca, Henry Chadwick has argued that the idea of moderation within matrimony was widespread in Sextus' world and can be found for example in Plutarch's *Conjugalia Praecepta*:[111]

[108] Clement, *Le Pédagogue. Livre II. Texte Grec*, translated by Claude Mondésert and Henri-Irénée Marrou, SC 108, Paris 1965, 188 n. 4.

[109] *Clit.* 71 reads τῆς αὐτοῦ γυναικός.

[110] Gaca, *Fornication*, 260 n.38.

[111] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 173.

οὐ δύναμαι τῇ αὐτῇ καὶ ὡς γαμετῇ καὶ ὡς ἑταίρᾳ συνεῖναι (*Conj. praec.* 142c).

I cannot have the society of the same woman both as wife and as paramour.[112]

Even though the tradition witnessed by Plutarch is similar to that of *Sext.* 231, *Conj. praec.* 142c does not convey the same notion as Sextus'. If anything the context described by Plutarch shows the distinctiveness of Sextus' view. In *Conjugalia Praecepta* Plutarch advocates that a husband cannot have intercourse with his wife as if she were a prostitute. Nonetheless, Plutarch says that this principle applies only to the husbands of those women who are not cooperative and are by their own nature (φύσει) austere (αὐστηρά), ill-tempered (ἄκρατος) and unpleasant (ἀνήδυντος). According to Plutarch, a truly modest woman in fact does not exceed in moderation and is willing to accustom her husband to what is morally respectable through pleasure (μεθ' ἡδονῆς). Because Sextus is extending the idea to all unbridled husbands (πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος) irrespective of the character of their wives, the circumstances described by Sextus exceed by far Plutarch's teachings on how to deal with a tepid wife. Gaca is certainly right therefore to single out the originality of Sextus' position. In her analysis of the passage, however, she does not pay the necessary attention to the fact that the same sentence appears also in *Clit.* 71 and belonged in all probability to Sextus' source material rather than to his Christian reworking.

From the comparison of *Sext.* 230a–240 with *Clit.* 69–73 it appears clear that *Sext.* 231 (= *Clit.* 71) is one of the pagan maxims which Sextus left untouched. If it is correct that *Sext.* 230a–240 has been built on *Clit.* 69–73, the fact that the Christian reworking of the *Sentences* leaves out *Clit.* 70 offers a crucial insight into Sextus' editorial process and consequently in his view of the ethical instructions of his pagan source. Although *Clit.* 70 is only contained in MS Λ, it is likely that Sextus read it in the unabridged version of Clitarchus' χρεῖαι he used for his collection. This argument is supported by the fact that:

1) The two references to procreation (γάμει καὶ παιδοποιοῦ) with which Sextus expands the imperative (γάμει) found in *Clit.* 69 probably were made under the influence of the mention of παιδοποιΐα in *Clit.* 70.

2) *Clit.* 70 belongs inherently to *Clit.* 71 of which it constitutes an indispensable prerequisite. As a matter of fact *Clit.* 71 without *Clit.* 70 would not have made any sense to a Greco-Roman readership, as implied by Gaca's comment. This last crucial point requires some clarifications.

[112] ET Plutarch, *Moralia II*, translated by Frank C. Babbitt, LCL 222, Cambridge (Mass.) 1962, 321.

As we have seen, when Kathy Gaca says that *Sext.* 231 offers a view unheard of in Greco-Roman moral treatises she is right although she is starting from a wrong postulate. A sentence stating that every ἀκόλαστος husband is an adulterer identical to *Sext.* 231 is also present in a pagan collection under *Clit.* 71. Gaca is right however in arguing that Sextus' position is different. The decisive difference does not lie in the plain statement of *Sext.* 231, but in Sextus' suppression of *Clit.* 70 which gave to *Clit.* 71 (= *Sext.* 231) its original meaning:

ὅρος ἀφροδισίων παιδοποιΐα
μοιχός ἐστι τῆς αὑτοῦ γυναικὸς πᾶς ὁ ἀκόλαστος (*Clit.* 70–71).

The limit of sexual desire is the procreation of children.
Every unrestrained husband is an adulterer with his [own] wife.

To anyone familiar with the Pythagorean tradition, this sentence sounds quintessentially Pythagorean. As Gaca has argued, procreationism, i.e. the idea that also within matrimony sex is acceptable only when aimed at reproduction, is a traditional feature of Pythagoreanism later to be found also in Plato's *Republic* and in Roman Stoicism particularly in Musonius and Seneca.[113] Moreover because of their dualistic view of soul and body and their concept of the development of the soul as a harmonic structure, the Pythagoreans expected from their followers not only that marital sex would be aimed exclusively at reproduction but also that the act in itself would be deliberately moderate, self-controlled and almost physically detached. Any unrestrained act during conception would have perturbed the harmony of the soul of the newly conceived and passed on violent and brutal appetites to the soul of the offspring.[114]

Whether ὅρος in *Clit.* 70 is to be taken as a time indication meaning perhaps that the appropriate time for expressing one's sexuality is only as long as one is fertile[115] or it refers to procreation as the limit and rule (ὅρος) of marriage, its presence in the *Clitarchus* means that *Clit.* 71 must be read in a procreationist way. The ἀκόλαστος husband therefore acts like an adulterer when he does not limit his sexual activity to the begetting of children but engages in unrestrained sex, hijacking the natural goal of human sexuality and endangering the offspring with his excessive physical involve-

[113] Gaca, *Fornication*, 99–107. Concerning procreationism, Gaca, "Reproductive", 132 observes: "This sexual regulation is Pythagorean and develops from uniquely Pythagorean concerns". Procreationist guidelines appear also in treatises of Jewish moralists keen on Greek philosophy, see for example Ps.-Phoc. 186: μηδ' ἐπὶ σῇι ἀλόχωι ἐγκύμονι χεῖρα βάλῃαι.

[114] Gaca, "Reproductive", 118. On this traditional view of "eugenetic sex", see Brown, *Body*, 20.

[115] Cf. γάμου δὲ ὅρον, in Plato, *Leg.* 785b.

ment. For similar reasons Pythagoreans strongly disapproved of adultery as well as homoerotic sex and all kinds of human sexuality meant for recreation rather than reproduction.[116]

Sextus' omission of the procreationist framework of his source material has been entirely neglected by scholars, also by those who did not fail to notice that Sextus' ascetic tendencies are stronger than Clement's.[117] As a matter of fact, a certain procreationist model was adopted by Christian writers in the second and third century. Clement of Alexandria was aware of the procreationism of the Pythagoreans.[118] In particular, he explicitly adopted their views in the third book of his *Stromata* as a counter-argument against the Encratism of the Marcionites and other groups.[119] In *Strom.* 3.58, Clement exposes the guidelines of his procreationist response to Encratism:

καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ παιδοποιίᾳ γήμαντα ἐγκράτειαν ἀσκεῖν χρή, ὡς μηδ' ἐπιθυμεῖν τῆς γυναικὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, ἣν ἀγαπᾶν ὀφείλει, σεμνῷ καὶ σώφρονι παιδοποιούμενος θελήματι (*Strom.* 3.58.2).

A man who marries for the sake of begetting children must practise continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife, whom he ought to love, and that he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will.[120]

Although Gaca has convincingly argued that the differences between Clement and the Encratites have often been exaggerated,[121] the turning point of Clement's anti-Encratite view of marriage consists in having positively presented παιδοποιΐα and therefore marriage as a way of exercising continence (ἐγκράτειαν ἀσκεῖν). Clement's insistence that Christians do not do anything for lust but have sex only for the sake of begetting children is meant to counter the arguments of the detractors of marriage, in particular of the Marcionites whom Clement has introduced in *Strom.* 3.12 as follow-

[116] Robert H. Allen, *The Classical Origins of Modern Homophobia*, Jefferson (N.C.) 2005, 108.

[117] Osborn, *Patterns*, 81

[118] In *Strom.* 3.24, Clement openly says of the Pythagoreans: ἐμοὶ δὲ ἔμπαλιν δοκοῦσι γαμεῖν μὲν παιδοποιίας ἕνεκα, τῆς δὲ ἐξ ἀφροδισίων ἡδονῆς ἐθέλειν κρατεῖν μετὰ τὴν παιδοποιίαν.

[119] Gaca, *Fornication*, 15, see also John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford 2000, 178.

[120] ET *Alexandrian Christianity. Selected Translations of Clement and Origen with Introductions and Notes*, ed. by John E. L. Oulton and Henry Chadwick, LCC 2, London 1954, 67.

[121] Gaca, *Fornication*, 248. Unlike Gaca, Rainero Cantalamessa, "Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel Cristianesimo delle origini. Bilancio di una ricerca", in *Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel Cristianesimo delle origini*, Milano 1976, pp. 423–460, 447 values more positively Clement's reassessment of Christian marriage.

ing Plato and the Pythagoreans in their dualistic rejection of birth.[122] This attempt to save marriage from the attacks of its ascetic detractors culminates in *Strom.* 3.66 where the Christian couple is seen in its reproductive capacity as cooperating in creation (ὁ γάμος συνεργάζεταί τι τῇ κτίσει) with unmistakably anti-Marcionite undertones.[123] Even though *Sext.* 230b contains an invitation to marry and beget children (γάμει καὶ παιδοποιοῦ), Sextus never provides his readers with a positive understanding of marriage – not even when allowing it. If, as it seems, Sextus' source material contained a maxim about procreation as the only acceptable boundary of marital sex (cf. *Clit.* 70), Sextus' omission of it strengthens the impression that his positions were more strictly ascetic than those of Clement.

That Sextus' source material was infused with Pythagorean procreationist principles can be further proved by looking at the Greek appendices of the *Sentences*. As Chadwick has observed, these were probably added to the collection sometime between the fourth and the sixth century, i.e. between the Latin translation of Rufinus, who did not know them, and the two Syriac witnesses which translated some of their maxims into Syriac. The presence in the appendices of several duplicates of sentences attested also in the original 451 sentences translated by Rufinus and of maxims conveying similar concepts but with a slightly different wording suggests that the material used in the appendices may have belonged to the same source material used by Sextus.[124] It is a fact that the maxims of the appendices are far less Christianised and mostly retain the form of their pagan originals.[125] The Greek appendices of the *Sentences* contain an ample array of maxims whose procreationist tenor is very close to *Clit.* 70:

οἱ δι' ἡδονὴν παιδοποιούμενοι ὑβρίζουσι τὰς παιδοποιΐας (*Sext.* 509).

Those who beget children for the sake of pleasure insult the procreation of children.

ὅταν ἀρκῇ τέκνοις, ἀρκοῦ καὶ ἀφροδισίοις (*Sext.* 517).

When you are done with children, be done also with sex.

Sext. 509 in particular refers to the Pythagorean and Platonic view that not only sex is meant exclusively for reproduction, but also that reproductive

[122] *Strom.* 3.12.1–2 observes that οἱ ἀπὸ Μαρκίωνος κακὴν τὴν γένεσιν ὑπειλήφεσαν and concludes μὴ βουλόμενοι τὸν κόσμον τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ γενόμενον συμπληροῦν, ἀπέχεσθαι γάμου βούλονται.

[123] In *Strom.* 3.87 the human parent is called συναίτιος γενέσεως or διάκονος γενέσεως in comparison to God, the real Father in heaven.

[124] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 158: "Byzantine readers, probably in the monasteries, found the work so congenial that they added to it many more maxims found in the pagan sources upon which Sextus himself had drawn but which he had preferred to pass by".

[125] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 138, see also Turner, *Philip*, 105 n.52.

sex is only tolerable when kept on a proper level of apathetic detachment.[126] Generally the appendices are also more interested in family life, containing 12 out of 16 occurrences of γυνή and 7 out of 11 occurrences of τέκνον in the *Sentences*. The relative paucity of references to wife and children in the original 451 sentences needs to be considered carefully since it may hint at Sextus' general disinterest in family related topics. If the theory is right that the compilers of the Greek appendices continued to draw on the same source used by Sextus, Sextus seems to have omitted more references to procreation than the one in *Clit.* 70. Although the explicit permission to procreate children granted in *Sext.* 230b marks an important difference between Sextus and the Encratites, Sextus, unlike Clement, is reluctant to attach to procreation any particular meaning which might enhance the reputation of marriage among his readers.

A similar phenomenon has been observed by Deming apropos 1 Cor 7. According to Deming, if Paul had mentioned childbearing and other advantages of marital life, he would have discouraged celibacy compromising the delicate balance of his instruction on marriage and celibacy.[127] In the *Sentences*, the suppression of the procreationist criterion expounded in *Clit.* 70 alters the meaning of the passage and its view of what may constitute sexual ἀκολασία. Thus *Sext.* 231 is extrapolated from its original context providing the readers only with the restrictive statement of *Clit.* 71 (= *Sext.* 231) without any indication of when marital sex would be acceptable. It is likely that Sextus intentionally minimised the procreationism found in his source material, not because it was a Pythagorean doctrine,[128] but because accepting a strong case in favour of procreation would have resulted in promoting marriage, as happens in the third book of Clement's *Stromata*, instead of encouraging celibacy. Sextus' ascetic tendencies therefore seem here to be more radical than Clement's, the adversary of Encratism.

IV. The diet of love

That the omission of procreationist maxims in the *Sentences* is not due to their Pythagoreanism is demonstrated by the readiness with which Sextus

[126] See Gaca, "Reproductive", 120–121.

[127] Deming, *Celibacy*, 211: "[Paul] does not want to set the value of marriage too high and thereby discourage all forms of celibacy, nor does he wish to praise celibacy in a way that undermines the institution of marriage. Hence Paul offers no laudation of the ends of marriage, nor does he enumerate the advantages of having a wife to watch over one's affairs. This twofold appeal also accounts for the absence of any direct mention of childbearing".

[128] As seen for example in *Strom.* 3.24 this Pythagorean habit found appreciation also among Christian moralists.

adopts Pythagorean leitmotifs of his source when they meet his ascetic criteria. This is the case for example with maxims associating food and sexuality. As shown above, Sextus ends his extensive instruction on sexuality and marriage with a sentence on food consumption:

ὡς ἄν γαστρὸς ἄρξῃς, καὶ ἀφροδίσιων ἄρξεις (*Sext.* 240).

As you control your stomach, so you will control your sexuality.[129]

Although not preserved by the epitomator of the MS Λ, this sentence is extant in the MS Φ of the *Clitarchus* and in all probability belonged to Sextus' source material:

ἐφ' ὅσον ἄν γαστρὸς ἄρξῃς, καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἄρξεις (*Clit.* 73).

In as much as you govern your stomach, you will govern your sexual desires

Forms of alimentary renunciation, in particular fasting and dietary prohibitions, are not unusual in the Christian tradition (cf. for example Matt 6:16–18 or Acts 13:2–3) probably under Jewish influence.[130] Encouragements to avoid gluttony are also common in the Greek gnomic tradition and the *Sentences* contain numerous warnings against unrestrained eating.[131] Nonetheless, the correlation between gluttony and sexual immorality conveyed in *Clit.* 73 (= *Sext.* 240) goes beyond a general concern over moderation as it points once again at moral conventions popular among the Pythagoreans. As Gaca has argued, Pythagorean procreationism is often complemented in the sources by dietary prescriptions. Pythagoreans believed that excessive eating was responsible for disproportionate sexual appetite.[132] This belief was shared by Galen and Greek traditional medicine where sexual drive and the production of semen were explained as a surplus of bodily fluids caused by food consumption.[133]

In the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* the virtue of self-control (σωφροσύνη) is presented as the ability to master the self in four different realms of human life: diet (γαστήρ), sleep, lust and anger.[134] In a comment on this pas-

[129] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 43.

[130] See for example *Did.* 8.1, cf. Marcello Del Verme, *Didache and Judaism. Jewish Roots of an Ancient Christian-Jewish Work*, London 2004, 170–176.

[131] On alimentary self-restraint in Sextus and other gnomic authors, see Wilson, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, 124 n.49.

[132] Gaca, "Reproductive", 132: "The procreationist dictate is reinforced by several persuasive strategies. First, persons must diet and exercise to prevent the sexual appetite from being overfed".

[133] Teresa M. Shaw, "Creation, Virginity and Diet in Fourth-Century Christianity: Basil of Ancyra's *On the True Purity of Virginity*", in *Gender and History* 9:3 (1997), pp. 579–596, 585, see also Brown, *Body*, 17–18.

[134] *Carmen aureum* 9–11, see Thom, *Verses*, 127.

sage, Hierocles argues that these four aspects are to be seen as a progression. Thus, excessive eating causes overindulgence in sleeping and both these factors contribute to an over-production of semen releasing sexual lust, which leads the subject to irascibility.[135] A tradition close to that of the *Golden Verses* and Hierocles lies also behind *Sext.* 435. Here lack of self-restraint in food consumption is seen as a contributory cause of sexual immorality:

ἄνθρωπος δὶς ἐμπιπλώμενος τροφῇ καὶ μηδέποτε μόνος κοιμώμενος νύκτωρ συνουσίας οὐ φεύγει (*Sext.* 435).

A person stuffed after eating twice as much and who never sleeps alone at night does not avoid sexual intercourse.

As mentioned above, the Syriac longer version X changed the reference to not sleeping alone (μηδέποτε μόνος κοιμώμενος) with "even if he sleeps alone" (ܐܦ ܒܠܚܘܕܘܗܝ ܕܡܟ) to make the text more suitable to a monastic audience. The English rendition of Edwards and Wild: "A person who eats a double portion and never sleeps alone at night does not avoid becoming like his passion"[136] is incorrect and needlessly complicated. The word συνουσία here clearly means "sexual intercourse". This has also been the interpretation of Rufinus, who renders the Greek with *concubitum non effugit.*[137] This sentence suggests that Sextus borrowed from his Pythagorean source material the idea of a close link between food and sexual misconduct. This is further verifiable in another passage where gluttony is presented as a surrendering to a sensual life:

ἄνθρωπος γαστρὸς ἡττώμενος ὅμοιος θηρίῳ.
οὐδὲν φύεται ἐκ σαρκὸς ἀγαθόν.
αἰσχρᾶς ἡδονῆς τὸ μὲν ἡδὺ ταχέως ἄπεισιν,
τὸ δὲ ὄνειδος παραμένει (*Sext.* 270–272).

A man ruled by his stomach is like an animal.
Nothing good derives from the flesh.
The sweetness of disgraceful pleasure swiftly departs,
but the reproach remains.[138]

Sext. 270 comes after a warning against drunkenness (*Sext.* 268–269)[139] and derives from Sextus' source material since it occurs also in *Clit.* 95.[140]

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[135] *In aureum carmen* 8.1, see Thom, *Verses*, 129. Iamblichus *Vit. Pyth.* 13 says that Pythagoras had given up wine, meat and large meals and therefore also needed little sleep.

[136] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 71.

[137] de Paola, *Sesto*, 83 interprets the Greek correctly.

[138] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 47.

The observation that the incontinent is like a beast (ὅμοιος θηρίῳ) in the source material is reminiscent of a similar view in the Pythagorean tradition where one of the reasons for self-control was to elevate humanity above the irrational beasts.[141] Chadwick has seen in *Sext.* 271 an allusion to Rom 7:18a.[142] Although nothing final can be said about the provenance of *Sext.* 271, the fact that the sentence does not occur in any of the witnesses of Sextus' source material may imply that this maxim belonged to the Christian reworking of the collection.[143] If Chadwick is right, then Sextus reads Paul's passage in a strictly ascetic way. In fact, as Delling has observed, Sextus here interprets the Pauline σάρξ as referring to the desires of the flesh and all the excesses they cause.[144]

That Sextus saw dietary self-control as closely related to sexual continence can also be seen in *Sext.* 428 where the control of stomach and genitals is essential for Christian identity.[145] The case of *Sext.* 345 (= *Clit.* 114) in particular establishes a connection between the stomach and incontinence which Sextus found in his source material:

κρεῖττον ἀποθανεῖν λιμῷ ἢ διὰ γαστρὸς ἀκρασίαν
ψυχὴν ἀμαυρῶσαι (*Sext.* 345).

It is better to die of hunger than to impair the soul through gluttony.[146]

This sentence must have been very popular among Pythagoreans since it occurs also in *Pyth.* 103, Porphyry's *Marc.* 35 and Stobaeus' *Flor.* 3.17.26, where the maxim is attributed to Pythagoras himself. In all these traditions the maxim is presented as a generic invitation to moderation and does not mention the stomach.[147] *Clit.* 114 contains the reference to the stomach but

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[139] On drunkenness as the cause of sexual immorality, see *T. Jud.* 14.2: τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα τῆς πορνείας τὸν οἶνον ὡς διάκονον πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς ἔχει τοῦ νοός.

[140] ἄνθρωπος γαστρὸς ἥσσων ὅμοιος θηρίῳ.

[141] Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 212–213, see Gaca, "Reproductive", 121.

[142] οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 175.

[143] However σάρξ occurs in *Pyth.* 98 and 108.

[144] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 218: "Der Sammler der *Sent.* hat freilich σάρξ offenbar nicht in der Weite von Rom 7,18 verstanden, sondern nach dem Zusammenhang [...] speziell auf alles körperliche Begehren bezogen: aus ihm entsteht nichts Gutes". On ascetic readings of Rom 7:18, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation. Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, Princeton (N.J.) 1999, 345.

[145] γαστρὸς καὶ ὑπὸ γαστέρα μὴ κρατῶν οὐδεὶς πιστός. The word πιστός here may suggest a Christian reworking. The fact that in MS Y the sentence only figures in the Greek appendices (*Sext.* 588) may be due to misplacement. On the link between genitals and stomach, see also *Strom.* 3.41, where they are the most dishonourable parts of the body.

[146] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 57.

[147] *Pyth.* 103: τεθνάναι πολλῷ κρεῖττον ἢ δι' ἀκρασίας τὴν ψυχὴν ἀμαυρῶσαι.

not to dying of hunger (λιμῷ), which appears only in Sextus. The MS tradition is further complicated by the fact that while MSS Φ and Λ agree in mentioning the stomach, MS Θ offers a version similar to those of the *Pythagorean Sentences*, Porphyry and Stobaeus. The variations within the pagan witnesses of *Sext.* 345 shows that the Pythagorean tradition represented in the source material of the *Sentences* was in itself rather fluid and unstable when Sextus issued his own reworking.

Contrary to what we have observed regarding the omission of Pythagorean procreationism in *Sext.* 230a–240, these last examples show that Sextus readily incorporated Pythagorean traditions, like the one stating that excessive eating causes sexual immorality, whenever those traditions would give him occasion to strengthen his ascetic angle. Sextus' integration into a Christian work of traditions linking together excessive eating, sleep and sexual misbehaviour must be seen in relation to a wider phenomenon later in the monastic tradition and as an indirect contribution to the shaping of the ascetic attitude towards food in early Christian ἐγκράτεια.[148] As we have seen, Evagrius of Pontus probably had access to the *Sentences* or to a tradition close to Sextus' Pythagorean source material. In the instructions to his fellow monks, Evagrius introduces a similar connection between overindulgence, sleep and sexuality:[149]

> Do not feed your body with too much food, so that you do not see bad dreams (φαντασίας κακάς) in your sleep. For just as the flame consumes the forest, so hunger quenches shameful dreams (φαντασίας αἰσχράς) (*Ad monachos* 11).

Because they are shameful, the bad dreams of the monk prone to dietary excesses are most likely of a sexual nature. Similarly Basil of Ancyra, who is believed to have been a doctor, seems to insinuate that sexual continence is ultimately a matter of proper dieting and prescribes a light diet to virgins in order to avoid sexual dreams and a general excitement of the body.[150] Although both Evagrius and Basil were mostly influenced by Galen and Greek medicine,[151] the positions of Sextus and Evagrius on overindulgence reveal remarkable points of contact with the Pythagorean concern over ap-

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[148] Concerning self-control and sleep, see *Sext.* 253b: ἔστιν σοφοῦ καὶ ὕπνος ἐγκράτεια. This attitude towards the dangers of sleeping belonged already to Sextus' source material. *Pyth.* 5 for example says that sleep is like death for the mind and *Clit.* 87 encourages to observe moderation in sleeping.

[149] Concerning sleep, Evagrius shares the same concern of Sextus' source material, see for example *Ad monachos* 48: ὕπνος πολὺς παχύνει διάνοιαν, ἀγρυπνία δὲ ἀγαθὴ λεπτύνει αὐτήν, cf. *Pyth.* 5. In *Ad monachos* 50, wakefulness is a remedy against λογισμοὺς πονηρούς.

[150] PG 30.685, see Shaw, "Virginity", 586–587.

[151] Shaw, "Virginity", 585.

propriate diet as an ascetic way to sexual morality.[152] This shows once again how Sextus and his pagan source material played an important role in the transition from Hellenistic morality to the development of the Christian ascetic tradition.

E. Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed some of the teaching of the *Sentences* concerning sexual asceticism, with particular reference to self-castration, the status of the celibate believer and the attitude of the Christian compiler towards Pythagorean procreationism. In Sextus two traditions merge: the mainly Pythagorean moral maxims of his source material and the Christian maxims taken from NT traditions. In particular I have shown that the relationship with NT traditions is manifest in the treatment of self-mutilation in *Sext.* 12–13 and 273, where Sextus alludes to Matt 5:29–30 and 18:8–9, and in *Sext.* 230a where I have argued that Sextus expands on a Pauline theme.

Concerning self-mutilation I have argued for Sextus' ambivalence about castration as a means to achieve self-control, a position that brings Sextus closer to his contemporary Justin. While *Sext.* 12 invites the readers to focus on the right use of the limbs before resorting to castration, I have demonstrated that in *Sext.* 273 Sextus purposely altered a pagan gnomic tradition on death or suicide similar to that extant in *Marc.* 34 reshaping it into a statement in favour of self-castration. In the analysis of *Sext.* 230a I have shown that the expression πάρεδρος θεῷ in the *Sentences* depends on the description of the celibate as εὐπάρεδρος τῷ κυρίῳ 1 Cor 7:35, a parallel overlooked by most commentators.[153] By comparing the *Sentences* with the Pauline teaching on marriage in 1 Cor 7, I have argued that Sextus reinforces and enhances the status of the celibate. Moving away from the interpretation of marriage as a "guard against *porneia*"[154] within which the

[152] Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1972, 178 observes that in ancient Pythagoreanism: "Fasting, abstention from particular foods, and rules of sexual behaviour play an important role" although some of these taboos were widespread in the conventional "folk tradition" of ancient Greece. According to Philostratus' *Vit. Apoll.* 8.5.17, a light diet (λεπτοτέρᾳ […] διαίτῃ χρώμενος) is what allows the Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana to see into the future, see Francis, *Subversive*, 127.

[153] Neither Chadwick nor Delling, who investigates NT parallels in the *Sentences*, seem to refer to it.

[154] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, New Haven (Conn.) 1999, 216.

partners are advised to separate from one another only for a set time,[155] Sextus envisages a state of permanent celibacy. I have suggested that to that end Sextus probably contemplated even divorce as acceptable.

Concerning *Sext.* 230a–240, I have demonstrated through a comparison with *Clit.* 69–73 that Sextus silenced the affirmative view about reproduction as the only positive reason for marriage found in his source material. Correspondingly his references to married life are deliberately grim, as in *Sext.* 230b, or describe it as an occasion for renunciation, as in *Sext.* 239 where Sextus says that the marriage of believers should be a struggle for self-control (ἀγὼν περὶ ἐγκρατείας).[156] Although *Sext.* 230b demonstrates that Sextus was not a follower of Encratism *stricto sensu,*[157] since procreationism was the main argument on which Clement built his defence of marriage against the Encratites[158] its absence from Sextus' collection marks an important difference between the two Christian masters. Sextus' omission of procreation as the purpose of wedlock, previously unnoticed in scholarship,[159] reveals his stricter ascetic tendencies and suggests a more open reserve as to the Christian approval of marriage.

F. Looking Forward

The analysis of a number of passages where the *Sentences* combines Pythagorean and Christian maxims on sexual morality has shown that Sextus does not limit his editing to a mere juxtaposition of similar themes. The Christian editor engages instead in an original and creative reinterpretation of pagan and Christian traditions reshaping his source material into a whole more consistent with his own ascetic views on sexuality. The next chapter will show that this cross-fertilisation of traditions is not restricted to sexual morality, but includes also Sextus' views on wealth and poverty, where alongside Pythagorean elements the *Sentences* have combined NT

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[155] 1 Cor 7:5.

[156] In Herm. *Vis.* 2.2.3 Hermas' wife is going to be his ἀδελφή. On continent marriages in early Christianity see Brown, *Body*, 96 and Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage. Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*, Princeton (N.J.) 1993, 40.

[157] Irenaeus says that obstinate Encratites like Tatian, Marcion and Saturninus considered marriage to be simply φθορὰν καὶ πορνείαν, *Haer.* 1.28.

[158] In *Strom.* 3.96, Clement explains that the sexual ἀκρασία of 1 Cor 7:5 applies only: "To those who were desiring to go beyond procreation", ET Oulton-Chadwick, *Alexandrian*, 85.

[159] Gaca, *Fornication*, 259–260 does not see any difference between Sextus' and Clement's position.

traditions on the danger of attachment to possessions with the philosophical ideal of the αὐτάρκεια or self-sufficiency of the sage.

Chapter 3

Sages without Property: the Example of *Sext.* 15–21

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall discuss a particular aspect of the teachings on poverty and wealth contained in the *Sentences of Sextus*, namely Sextus' statement that the wise needs to be ἀκτήμων, without property.[1] Scholarship has already observed that Sextus' attitude towards wealth and poverty is "more strongly negative"[2] than that of Clement and of other Christian teachers. This aspect of Sextus' teaching, however, deserves more attention than it has received so far. Since voluntary poverty and dispossession later became fundamental aspects of the Christian ascetic tradition,[3] what Sextus has to say about rejection of wealth may contribute significantly to the assessment of the *Sentences* as an ascetic text. In the following pages, I shall argue that Sextus' more radical opposition to wealth is the result of a fertile encounter, namely between that of the philosophical praise of autarky, or self-sufficiency, and gospel traditions about renunciation and poverty. I shall therefore investigate Sextus' teaching about poverty and wealth highlighting the cultural background of his instructions and their implications for the understanding of how Hellenistic morality and Christian teaching inform his collection. For the most part, this chapter focuses on *Sext.* 15–21 since in this section the Christian editor has been particularly active in reworking a number of maxims on dispossession in his source material and combining them with NT sayings.

First, I shall investigate Sextus' views about voluntary poverty and rejection of wealth. I shall compare Sextus' arguments with Hellenistic traditions about the right attitude of the philosopher towards possessions, arguing that Sextus' ascetic views on poverty as a source of freedom for the

[1] *Sext.* 18.

[2] Osborn, *Patterns*, 81.

[3] See Gillian Clark, "Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender", in *Asceticism*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, Oxford 1998, pp. 33–48, 35 and Gregory Collins, "Simeon the New Theologian: An Ascetical Theology for Middle-Byzantine Monks", in *Asceticism*, ed. by Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, Oxford 1998, pp. 343–356, 350.

believer are built on philosophical traditions on the frugality of the sage as a replication of the deity's self-sufficiency. I shall also exemplify how the philosophical traditions adopted by Sextus influenced the Christian construction of ascetic poverty in later times. Second, I shall compare the teachings of the *Sentences* about wealth with Epictetus' Stoic interpretation of Cynic poverty in his *Discourses*. This comparison will show how Sextus' views on wealth can be seen as a Christianised way of expressing the requirements of an ethos and a disapproval of relying on wealth, already observable in the Roman imperial period in the Stoic reinterpretation of the extreme way of life of the Cynics of ancient Greece. Third, I shall investigate Sextus' rendition of the gospel saying of Caesar's denarius as an example of the effective Hellenisation of Christian traditions. I shall show that Sextus' own version of the saying of Jesus was both strongly influenced by his philosophical source material and deeply rooted in exegetical traditions current in the cultural milieu of Christian Alexandria. Finally I shall move away from section *Sext.* 15–21 and turn briefly to Sextus' treatment of the theme of the sharing of wealth and that of almsgiving. I shall argue that Sextus' unceasing interweaving of his source material, particularly its Pythagorean substratum, and Christian traditions affected his view of what might constitute an ethical use of wealth.

B. The Σοφὸς Ἀκτήμων in Sextus

I. Dispossession and freedom

Sext. 15–20 contain several references to the relationship between the wise and the loss of worldly possessions. The introduction of this theme early in the collection, and in a section heavily reworked by the Christian editor,[4] suggests that Sextus attributed considerable importance to the moral problem constituted by attachment to wealth. With the exception of *Sext.* 20, the section is largely built around pagan material. Another probable Christian allusion is contained in the reference to eternal punishment and reward at the judgement (παρὰ τῇ κρίσει) in *Sext.* 14, despite the fact that in MS Π the sentence appears in *Pyth.* 6a.[5] The section opens with an invitation to surrender one's possessions:

[4] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 139 suggests that the first pages had been more heavily Christianised to make a good first impression on a Christian readership.

[5] Since Patmiensis 263 (Π) contains also the *Sentences*, it is likely that *Pyth.* 6a may be a duplication of the same sentence in Sextus. The other Greek witness and the Syriac translation of the *Pythagorean Sentences* omit the maxim.

ὁπόσα τοῦ κόσμου ἔχεις, κἂν ἀφέληταί σού τις, μη ἀγανάκτει (*Sext.* 15).

Even if someone takes away your worldly possessions, do not be vexed.[6]

Chadwick sees here a resemblance to Luke 12:33, where Jesus invites his disciples to seek "an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys".[7] Luke's passage, however, emphasises the contrast between material possessions and the "unfailing treasure" in heaven awaiting those who sell their possessions and give alms.

Unlike Luke, Sextus focuses on loss and on the necessity to overcome the distress it causes, without mentioning almsgiving and heavenly treasures. Nevertheless ideas similar to *Sext.* 15 are expressed in other passages of the NT, for example in Luke 6:30 (= Matt 5:42).[8] Moreover Chadwick has observed that the use of the word κόσμος in this sentence is "characteristically Christian",[9] which suggests that the maxim was either fashioned after a Christian tradition or later Christianised. The more likely explanation of the origins of *Sext.* 15 is that Sextus reworked a pagan maxim into a Christian one. A pagan maxim similar to *Sext.* 91b in fact may have offered the inspiration for *Sext.* 15:[10]

ἃ δέδοταί σοι, κἂν ἀφέληταί σού τις, μὴ ἀγανάκτει
ἃ δίδωσιν ὁ θεός, οὐδεὶς ἀφαιρεῖται (*Sext.* 91b–92).

Even if someone takes away what has been given to you, do not be vexed.
No one takes away what God gives.[11]

The presence in the *Sentences* of two or more duplicates, one of which represents the original pagan gnome which Sextus reworked into a Christian maxim, is a phenomenon fairly common in the collection. *Sext.* 16[12] for example displays the same Christian use of the word κόσμος as *Sext.* 15 and is probably a Christianised version of *Sext.* 38.[13] *Sext.* 91b in all probability is a pagan maxim. Although not appearing in the other witnesses of Sextus' source material, the verb ἀγανακτέω is frequent in Greek works of

[6] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 17.

[7] ET NRSV, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 163.

[8] παντὶ αἰτοῦντί σε δίδου, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἴροντος τὰ σὰ μὴ ἀπαίτει, cf. *Did.* 1.4.

[9] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 154, see e.g. 1 Cor 2:12, Jas 4:4, or 1 John 5:19.

[10] See Chadwick, *Sextus*, 155. The reference to *Sext.* 91a is a misprint. Rufinus must have considered *Sext.* 15 and 91b mere repetitions because he omits the latter.

[11] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 27. *Sext.* 92 is duplicated in *Sext.* 404 with ὅσα instead of ἅ.

[12] σεαυτὸν ἐπιλήψιμον μὴ πάρεχε τῷ κόσμῳ. Delling, "Hellenisierung", 216 sees here allusions to 1 Tim 3:2 and 5:7, cf. also 1 Thess 4:12 and Col 4:5.

[13] μηδενὶ σεαυτὸν ἐπιλήψιμον δίδου, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 155.

Stoic writers of imperial Rome.[14] In Epictetus, in particular, the rhetorical question τί οὖν ἀγανακτεῖς ("Why then are you vexed?") marks the climax of numerous debates, modelled after the Cynic diatribe, over the acceptance of death (*Diatr.* 2.1.17), adverse fate (*Diatr.* 2.5.26), avoiding the contest of life (*Diatr.* 4.4.31) or envying others for their intellectual skills (*Diatr.* 4.7.39) or their wealth (*Diatr.* 3.17.5–6).

Sext. 91b–92 presents also a distant resemblance to a passage in Epictetus similarly built around the rhetorical tension between ἀφαιρέω and ἀγανακτέω:

εἶτα σύμπαντα εἰληφὼς παρ' ἄλλου καὶ αὐτὸν σεαυτόν, ἀγανακτεῖς καὶ μέμφῃ τὸν δόντα, ἄν σού τι ἀφέληται; (*Diatr.* 4.1.103).

And so, when you have received everything, and your very self, from Another, do you yet complain and blame the Giver, if He takes something away from you?[15]

Although the content of *Diatr.* 4.1.103 is not the same as *Sext.* 91b–92, they may represent two parallel traditions. Both sentences deal with the idea of facing the vexation that loss entails. Moreover Epictetus' mention of the things that Zeus gives is close to *Sext.* 92, which similarly refers to the things given by the deity. Sextus' source material probably contained several sentences like these. *Pyth.* 3 for example expounds a similar concept in a longer maxim extant also in *Marc.* 12:

ἃ κτησάμενος οὐ καθέξεις, μὴ αἰτοῦ παρὰ θεοῦ· δῶρον γὰρ θεοῦ πᾶν ἀναφαίρετον· ὥστε οὐ δώσει ὃ μὴ καθέξεις (*Pyth.* 3).

Do not ask from god things that, having obtained them, you will not retain: for every gift of god cannot be taken away, therefore he will not give you what you will not retain.

Pyth. 3b was probably reshaped into *Sext.* 92, while *Pyth.* 3a survives as a separate maxim in *Sext.* 128. This leaves open the question whether Sextus broke down a sequence of maxims which originally belonged together, unless the *Pythagorean Sentences* and Porphyry represent a later stage of the tradition where originally separated maxims had been merged into larger units.[16] *Clitarchus* offers a noteworthy variant of *Sext.* 92 (= *Pyth.* 3b):

ἃ δίδωσι παιδεία, ταῦτα οὐδείς σε ἀφαιρήσεται (*Clit.* 15)

What education gives you nobody will take away.

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[14] See Musonius, *Diss.* 10.24 and 28.31 and Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.12.25; 1.26.5; 1.29.37; 2.4.6; 2.6.3–4,14; 2.16.36; 2.21.17; 3.17.4; 3.22.57; 4.4.5,17; 4.6.37 and 4.8.23. The verb occurs also three times in the OT and seven in the NT.

[15] ET Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual and Fragments*, voll. 1–2, translated by William A. Oldfather, LCL 131 and 218, Cambridge (Mass.) 1925 and 1928, 2:279.

[16] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 152.

The interest of this sentence lies in the fact that instead of θεός *Clitarchus* reads παιδεία. By signifying that the things one cannot lose are the gifts of culture, *Clitarchus* offers an interpretative tradition of *Pyth.* 3b (= *Sext.* 92) suggesting that what is really ἀναφαίρετον in life pertains to the sphere of the intellect and of the immaterial. Similarly Epictetus in *Diatr.* 4.1.103 says that people owe to Zeus their very self (αὐτὸν σεαυτόν), signifying with it probably life or the soul.[17]

In *Sext.* 17, Sextus returns to the theme of dispossession using once again the verb ἀφαιρέω as in *Sext.*15:

χωρὶς τῆς ἐλευθερίας πάντα ἀφαιρουμένῳ σε τῷ πέλας ὕπεικε (*Sext.* 17).

Let your neighbour take away everything except your freedom.[18]

Chadwick has suggested that *Sext.* 17 must have been fashioned after a pagan gnome like *Pyth.* 97:[19]

συγγενεῖ καὶ ἄρχοντι καὶ φίλῳ πάντα εἶκε πλὴν ἐλευθερίας (*Pyth.* 97).

To a kinsman, a governor or a friend, surrender everything except freedom.

The same sentence, without reference to a φίλος, appears also in Stobaeus where it is attributed to Pythagoras himself.[20] The idea that freedom constitutes the most precious of one's possessions is commonplace in Hellenistic authors. Philo, for example, argues that those who deprive (ἀφαιρούμενοι) others of freedom commit an especially hideous act because freedom is the most excellent of all possessions (τὸ πάντων ἄριστον κτῆμα) and one people would be ready to die for.[21] That freedom is the only remaining good to those who are dispossessed of anything else is shown by a comment of Cassius Dio in *Hist. Rom.* 41.25, where Caesar deprives the defeated Massaliotes of weapons, ships, money and everything else except their title of free people (πλὴν τοῦ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ὀνόματος). Nevertheless sentences like *Pyth.* 97 do not deal explicitly with wealth and its rejection, but simply state the relative inalienability of freedom.

The *Sentences*, however, contain at least one example where the non-negotiable importance of freedom seems to be implicitly connected with a sober attitude towards possessions. In referring to *Pyth.* 97 as the most likely parallel of *Sext.* 17 in Sextus' source material, Chadwick omits to

[17] On Zeus as the internal as well as external divine principle, see Anthony A. Long, *Epictetus. A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life*, Oxford 2002, 249.

[18] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.

[19] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 163.

[20] *Flor.* 3.13.66.

[21] *Spec.* 4.15.

mention that a similar reference to the deprivation of freedom appears also in *Sext.* 275:

οὐ γὰρ παύσει ἐπιθυμίαν κτημάτων ἡ χρημάτων κτῆσις.
φιλόσοφον οὐδέν ἐστιν ὃ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀφαιρεῖται (*Sext.* 274a–275).

For the possession of goods will not stop a longing for possessions.
Nothing exists which deprives a philosopher of his freedom.[22]

Contrary to *Sext.* 17, here freedom is depicted as something that cannot be lost. The choice of the Christian editor to list *Sext.* 275 immediately after *Sext.* 274b may suggest that Sextus interpreted *Sext.* 275 as especially concerning one's relationship with wealth. As we are about to see in the next paragraph, *Sext.* 274b certainly belonged to Sextus' source material as it is also extant in *Pyth.* 30c in a longer section on the self-sufficiency of the sage. Once more it is difficult to say whether Sextus extrapolated *Pyth.* 30c from its original context or the compiler of the *Pyth.* 30a–d joined together maxims dealing with similar topics. The twofold occurrence of *Pyth.* 30c (= *Sext.* 274b) in a section on self-sufficiency in the *Pythagorean Sentences* and in connection with the loss of freedom in *Sext.* 274b–275 may suggest that Sextus' source material conveyed the idea that love of wealth endangers the autonomy of the Pythagorean sage. The mention of ἄρχων in *Pyth.* 97 may imply that at least in the *Pythagorean Sentences* the maxim was also meant to have certain political undertones. In any case, the grouping of *Sext.* 274b with 275 suggests that in Sextus' understanding amassing wealth was meaningless since the only genuine good for the philosopher is freedom. The invitation not to be vexed (μὴ ἀγανάκτει) by loss of worldly possessions in *Sext.* 15 should therefore be read in the light of *Sext.* 17 also as an affirmative statement about the importance of freedom. Although not unheard of in the NT,[23] Sextus borrowed the idea that the wise believer should face dispossession without being upset and not oppose any resistance as long as this does not affect freedom from his source material. As we are about to see, this fact contributed to the adoption in the *Sentences* of an ascetic view according to which voluntary poverty is the only way to freedom.

II. Poverty as godlike self-sufficiency

Sextus' opening section on the relationship between the wise and worldly possessions reaches a crucial point in *Sext.* 18–19:

[22] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 47.
[23] See Matt 5:39–42.

σοφὸς ἀκτήμων ὅμοιος θεῷ.
τοῖς κοσμικοῖς πράγμασιν εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα χρῶ (*Sext.* 18–19).

A sage without property is like God.
Use worldly things only when necessary.[24]

In this passage Sextus expounds an important aspect of his ethical instruction, namely the idea that the sage, since he enjoys a special relationship with God,[25] is required to act in accordance with this special bond with God.[26] Here Sextus suggests that poverty is what enables the sage to lead a life like God's heavenly existence. The use of the adjective ἀκτήμων is important to establish the provenance of this maxim. The word and its cognates do not occur in the LXX or in NT, while the *Sentences* use ἀκτήμων twice: here and where Sextus says that poverty is preferable to being wealthy and not sharing one's possessions.[27]

Sextus' claim that a life without property renders the sage similar to God might suggest that God is ἀκτήμων. While the New Testament can talk about Christ's poverty (πτωχεία) in 2 Cor 8:9, the ἀκτημοσύνη of the biblical God is not a common concept.[28] The only occurrence of the adjective ἀκτήμων referring to God is to be found in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Here, the author speculates whether there has been a time in which God possessed nothing:

οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν· ἦν <ποτε> ὅτε ἀκτήμων ἦν ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ ἦν μόνος ἄρχων αὐτῆς (*Hom.* 19.17.3).

For it is not possible to say: there was a time when God was without property, but he was always the only ruler of it.

Even though the exact meaning of this passage is made more difficult by a lacuna,[29] the author of the *Pseudo-Clementines* seems to rule out the idea that being without property (ἀκτήμων) adequately describes God. The source of *Sext.* 18, in fact, is not Christian.

Attested twice in Homer,[30] the adjective ἀκτήμων is not common in Greek prose. A comparison with the *Pythagorean Sentences* shows that the origin of *Sext.* 18 is pagan. A pagan gnome almost identical with *Sext.* 18

[24] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.
[25] Cf. *Sext.* 49.
[26] *Sext.* 59: θεὸν πατέρα καλῶν ἐν οἷς πράττεις τούτου μέμνησο.
[27] *Sext.* 377: ἀκτήμονα κρεῖττον ἢ ἀκοινώνητον εἶναι πολυκτήμονα.
[28] In *Mos.* 1.157, Philo stresses that God possesses everything.
[29] *Die Pseudoklementinen I. Homilien*, ed. by Bernhard Rehm, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Jahrhunderte 42, Berlin 1953, 261. For a slightly different interpretation of this text, see *Les homélies clémentines. Traduit du grec, introduit et annoté*, translated by André Siouville, Lagrasse 1991, 356–357.
[30] Cf. *Il.* 9.126 and 268.

is still extant in the same passage on the self-sufficiency where we have detected a duplicate of *Sext.* 274b (= *Pyth.* 30c):

ζῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς θεῷ ὁμοίως ὁ αὐτάρκης καὶ ἀκτήμων καὶ φιλόσοφος καὶ πλοῦτον ἡγεῖται μέγιστον τὸ μὴ δεῖσθαι τῶν ἁπάντων καὶ ἀναγκαίων· οὐ γὰρ παύσει ποτὲ ἐπιθυμίαν ἡ τῶν κτημάτων ἐπίκτησις· αὔταρκες δὲ πρὸς εὐζωΐαν τὸ μηδὲν ἀδικεῖν (*Pyth.* 30a–d).

The philosopher who is self-sufficient and without property lives truly like a god and holds it to be the greatest wealth not to be in need of all the things that are strictly necessary. For further acquisition of goods will never put a stop to desire, but for well-living it is sufficient not to do anything wrong.

Apart from the mention of the ἀκτήμων φιλόσοφος, which recalls the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων of *Sext.* 18, also the reference to "The things that are strictly necessary" (ἀναγκαῖα) both in *Sext.* 19 and in *Pyth.* 30 gives further evidence that the two authors were following a similar tradition. On the basis of *Pyth.* 30, it can be inferred that Sextus' source material probably connected the ἀκτημοσύνη of the sage with his autarky (αὐτάρκεια) or self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency is taken by the anonymous Pythagorean compiler of *Pyth.* 30 as a sign of true wealth, a moral wealth, mirroring the state of autarky in which God lives.

The concept of divine autarky to which *Pyth.* 30 refers is a well-known notion in the Greek understanding of deities.[31] A passage from Aristotle's *Ethica Eudemia* offers an example of how the theme could be developed in a way similar to *Pyth.* 30. Here Aristotle contrasts the human need for friendship with God's αὐτάρκεια. Being in need of nothing, God is certainly not in need of friends. This is the reason why, says Aristotle, if one wants to be authentically moral one has to be exceedingly self-sufficient (αὐταρκέστατος) and keep friends not out of need or for personal gain but only because of sheer altruistic love.[32] *Pyth.* 30 shows that the source from which Sextus adapted his idea of the ἀκτημοσύνη of the wise already considered the autarky of the sage to be an image of God's own autarky and a sign of moral perfection.

Some of the vocabulary used in *Pyth.* 30 is found in other Hellenistic writers who seem to reflect a similar tradition. Philo, for example, shows an interesting parallel to Sextus and *Pyth.* 30 in *Prob.* 1.75–77.[33] Here Philo describes the attitude of the Essenes towards possession and wealth using the same terminology of philosophical sobriety found in Sextus' source material. The Essenes, says Philo, are ἀχρήματοι καὶ ἀκτήμονες, i.e.

[31] Jewish and Christian sources also say that God is not in need of anything, see Josephus, *Ant.* 8.111 and Acts 17:25.

[32] *Eth. eud.* 1244b–1245b.

[33] On the "literary existence" of the Pythagoreans, see Justin Taylor, *Pythagoreans and Essenes: Structural Parallels*, Leuven 2004, 12.

poor and without possessions not because of bad fate, but by their own inclination and choice.[34] Also the description of their sobriety echoes *Pyth.* 30 and *Sext.* 19 in emphasising that only what is strictly necessary is desirable. They do not amass vast properties but study to procure for themselves only ὅσα πρὸς τὰς ἀναγκαίας τοῦ βίου χρείας, those things strictly necessary for life.[35] In fact, they consider themselves very wealthy (πλουσιώτατοι) since they believe that abundance consists in frugality and contentedness. The similarities between Philo and *Pyth.* 30 go perhaps beyond the common use of the word ἀκτήμων. They point to a moral world where voluntary frugality and renunciation of possessions was considered a sign of philosophical commitment.[36] It is from this tradition that Sextus was drawing material for his construct of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων.

III. Self-sufficiency as an ascetic practice in the Sentences

Undoubtedly, Sextus is not the first Christian to be influenced by the ideal of autarky.[37] Christians could find an interest in the topic already in the LXX. Prov 30:8 does not expect from God wealth or poverty but only τὰ αὐτάρκη.[38] An invitation to moderate self-sufficiency (συμμέτρια αὐτάρκεια) is also contained in *Pss. Sol.* 5.16 whereas abundance often produces sin.[39] The importance of αὐτάρκεια is also attested in the NT. In Phil 4:11, though pleased for the generosity of the Philippians, Paul declares that he has learned to be self-sufficient.[40] In 1 Tim 6:5–6 godliness μετὰ αὐταρκείας is great personal gain (πορισμός). In Sextus, however, self-sufficiency has become a virtue in its own right. This is evident in the laconic imperative of *Sext.* 98 to practise self-sufficiency, repeated also in *Sext.* 334:

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[34] *Prob.* 1.77.

[35] *Prob.* 1.76.

[36] See *Sext.* 467: πλούσιον μόνον νόμιζε τὸν σοφόν.

[37] On αὐτάρκεια in Sextus, Pseudo-Phocylides and other Hellenistic moralists, see Wilson, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, 81 n.36.

[38] Sir 5:1 and 11:24 are more sceptical about being αὐτάρκης.

[39] μακάριος οὗ μνημονεύει ὁ θεὸς ἐν συμμετρίᾳ αὐταρκείας ἐὰν ὑπερπλεονάσῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐξαμαρτάνει.

[40] ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι. On autarky in Paul, see Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, Edinburgh 1998, 155–156 and Abraham J. Malherbe, "Paul's Self-Sufficiency (Philippians 4:11)", in John T. Fitzgerald, *Friendship, Flattery, & Frankness of Speech. Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, Leiden 1996, pp. 125–139, 137–139.

αὐτάρκειαν ἄσκει (*Sext.* 98 = 334)

Practise self-sufficiency.[41]

Sext. 98 shows that in the *Sentences* self-sufficiency has become a sought-after state and the purpose of ascetic practice (ἄσκει). That Sextus intended the ἀκτημοσύνη of the sage to mirror God's own autarky through a negative attitude towards wealth is shown in passages like *Sext.* 49–50:

ὁ μὲν θεὸς οὐδενὸς δεῖται, ὁ δὲ πιστὸς μόνου θεοῦ.
ζηλοῖ τὸν οὐδενὸς δεόμενον ὁ τῶν ὀλίγων ἀναγκαίως δεόμενος (*Sext.* 49–50).

God needs no one; the faithful needs only God.
The person who requires little for his needs emulates Him who needs nothing.[42]

Sext. 49 derives from Sextus' source material occurring also in *Clit.* 4, *Pyth.* 39 and *Marc.* 11. *Clitarchus*, the *Pythagorean Sentences* and Porphyry state that it is the σοφός who needs only God.[43] Sextus substitutes the sage with the faithful (πιστός). As elsewhere in the collection, these changes are often signs of Christian revision.[44] Therefore Sextus intentionally adopted and Christianised this tradition. *Sext.* 49 and 50 were probably not sequential in Sextus' source material, although for *Sext.* 50, Sextus also adopted a pagan gnomic tradition. A similar exhortation to "Emulate the one who needs nothing" has been preserved in *Clitarchus.*[45] To the original sentence, Sextus added the explanation that one has to reduce the necessities of life to the minimum in order to imitate God. Sextus is probably responsible for the coupling of *Sext.* 49 and 50 in the Christian collection, which suggests that Sextus understood the imitation of God as a drastic reduction of one's ἀναγκαῖα. This is consistent with the idea of self-sufficiency as a form of personal discipline expounded in *Sext.* 98 (= 334).

It is reasonable to argue that Sextus' stricter attitude towards wealth observed by Osborn[46] derives from a creative cross-fertilisation between traditional gospel themes, like the concern for the πτωχοί[47] or the call to sell one's property and follow Jesus[48] (Luke 18:22), with the philosophical tra-

[41] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 29.
[42] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 23.
[43] θεὸς μὲν γὰρ δεῖται οὐδενός, σοφὸς δὲ μόνου θεοῦ, *Marc.* 11.
[44] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 157 suggests that the substitution of "sage" with "believer" implies a Christian revision. The adjective πιστός, by no means restricted only to Christian texts, in Sextus' source material lacks the same religious slant, cf. *Clit.* 75 where πιστή refers to a faithful wife.
[45] *Clit.* 11.
[46] See the introduction to this chapter.
[47] Matt 5:3.
[48] Luke 18:22.

ditions of the source material. These traditions, as we have seen, promoted autarkic sobriety and rejection of wealth as a way of elevating oneself to godlike freedom above the constraining bonds of materiality. A significant example of Sextus' *modus operandi* is contained for example in *Sext.* 263–264b:

ὃ μὴ κατέθου, μηδ' ἀνέλῃς, οὐ γὰρ κατὰ τὸν αὐτάρκη πολιτεύῃ.
ἀφεὶς ἃ κέκτησαι ἀκολούθει τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ.
ἐλεύθερος ἔσῃ ἀπὸ πάντων δουλεύων θεῷ (*Sext.* 263–264b).

Do not collect more than you have deposited, for in so doing you do not live in accord with self-sufficiency.
Let go of your possessions and follow the right teaching.
You will be free from all things if you serve God.[49]

Sext. 263 contains a Greek gnomic tradition known to Plato[50] and traditionally attributed to Solon: ἃ μὴ ἔθου, μὴ ἀνέλῃ.[51] Although nothing final can be said about a direct dependence of *Sext.* 264a on the NT, this sentence offers crucial linguistic parallels with the rich young man in Matt 19:16–22 (par. Mark 10:17–22 and Luke 18:18–25). In particular:

1) Matt 19:22 says that the rich man had κτήματα πολλά, i.e. many possessions. Sextus could have echoed this detail with the reference to the possessions (ἃ κέκτησαι) one should shed.

2) Sextus asks his readers to leave behind (ἀφίημι) their possessions with the same expression used in Matt 19:27.29 and par. in the discussion about leaving everything (ἀφήκαμεν πάντα)[52] to follow Jesus which arises from the story of the rich young man.

3) Matt 19:21 invites the rich man to sell his possessions and follow (ἀκολουθεῖν) Jesus with the same verb used in *Sext.* 264a to invite the readers of the *Sentences* to leave their possessions and "follow the right teaching".

Since *Sext.* 264a does not figure in any other witness of Sextus' source material, it is possible that the sentence was penned by the Christian editor after Matt 19:21–22 or a parallel tradition.[53] If this is true, this passage would show how Sextus could combine a pagan gnomic tradition and a quotation from Jesus' *ipsissima verba* and merge the two in *Sext.* 264b, conducing to the conclusion that serving God makes the believer free from

[49] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 47.
[50] *Leg.* 913c: ἃ μὴ κατέθου, μὴ ἀνέλῃ, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 175.
[51] Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 1.57.
[52] Matt 19:27.
[53] This is the opinion of Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 46 n.264. If *Sext.* 264a develops Matt 19:16–22, then the ὀρθὸς λόγος which the reader of the *Sentences* is supposed to follow could be a reference to Christ, as suggested in Delling, "Hellenisierung", 233.

everything and therefore truly autarkic. Sextus' point of view tends to be more strictly ascetic than the gospel saying, reaching a greater hostility towards possessions. In the *Sentences*, for example, it is no longer a question of selling one's property and giving the money to the poor as in the synoptic gospels. In Sextus, it becomes essential to get rid of one's best possessions purposely and completely:

ὅταν τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν κτημάτων εὐλόγως εἰς βόρβορον ῥίψῃς, τότε καθαρὸς ὢν αἰτοῦ τι παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ (*Sext.* 81).

When you purposely throw your best possessions in the mud, then, being pure, ask for something from God.[54]

Here wealth is synonymous with impurity and a major obstacle to prayer and to the relationship with God. Voluntary poverty has become a form of self-mortification. There is almost a perverse tone of self-satisfaction in the idea of the self-inflicted pain of throwing one's possessions in the mud. Therefore the believer is not just asked to renounce his possessions, but τὰ κάλλιστα, the very best of them, an expression that points at a sort of reverse aesthetics: the explicit renunciation of one's dearest things.

C. From the Σοφὸς Ἀκτήμων to the Ἀκτήμων Μοναχός

I. Ascetic Christians in a Cynic's Rags?

An interesting parallel to Sextus' concept of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων is found in Epictetus' description of the Cynic life in Arrian's *Diatr.* 3.22. In *Diatr.* 3.22.2–8, Epictetus explains that becoming a Cynic is a demanding task and that nobody should do it without divine assistance and against divine providence, lest he become hateful to God. Other people may enjoy their possessions, hide behind their walls and benefit from the assistance of their slaves. Epictetus' Cynic, however, rejects every appetite (ὄρεξις, *Diatr.* 3.22.13), has only his dignity (αἰδώς) as protection and is naked (γυμνός) without it.[55] According to Epictetus, Cynic poverty does not only consist in the external renunciation of one's possessions, but contributes to generate an internal force which nurtures the Cynic's moral life. Poverty compels the Cynic to reach a higher and nobler life, without which he sinks into utter ridicule.[56] The life of a Cynic allows the sage to live free (ἐλεύθερος)

[54] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 25.

[55] *Diatr.* 3.22.15.

[56] On Epictetus' "positive reinterpretation" of Cynicism and its rejection of any social convention see Margarethe Billerbeck, "The Ideal Cynic from Epictetus to Julian", in *The*

without fearing anything external (τι τῶν ἐκτὸς φοβεῖσθαι).[57] A genuine Cynic therefore is a messenger sent from Zeus to humankind (ἄγγελος ἀπὸ τοῦ Διὸς ἀπέσταλται) and a scout, whose duty is to point the blind multitudes to the place where true happiness lies, which is not in the body (ἐν σώματι), possessions (ἐν κτήσει), power (ἐν ἀρχῇ), or government (ἐν βασιλείᾳ).[58] Here Epictetus inserts a paradigmatic discourse on authentic Cynicism to rectify the base view of Cynic life held by many:

ἴδετέ με, ἄοικός εἰμι, ἄπολις, ἀκτήμων, ἄδουλος· χαμαὶ κοιμῶμαι· οὐ γυνή, οὐ παιδία, οὐ πραιτωρίδιον, ἀλλὰ γῆ μόνον καὶ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἓν τριβωνάριον. καὶ τί μοι λείπει; οὔκ εἰμι ἄλυπος, οὔκ εἰμι ἄφοβος, οὔκ εἰμι ἐλεύθερος;
(*Diatr.* 3.22.47–48).

Look at me (…) I am without a home, without a city, without property, without a slave; I sleep on the ground; I have neither wife nor children, no miserable governor's mansion, but only earth, and sky, and one rough cloak. Yet what do I lack? Am I not free from pain and fear, am I not free?[59]

It remains an unsolved problem how reliable Epictetus' account of Cynicism is for the reconstruction of the lifestyle of Cynics in the early Roman Empire. From the general tenor of *Diatr.* 3.22, it appears that Epictetus intentionally depicts an idealised and hyperbolic description. Epictetus' purpose was probably that of showing that the high moral requirements of Cynicism were not within reach of the young would-be Cynic addressed in *Diatr.* 3.22.[60] The Cynics in *Diatr.* 3.22 are not only romanticised representations; they are also profoundly influenced by Epictetus' own Stoic beliefs, as Abraham Malherbe has convincingly shown.[61] The statements that the Cynic philosopher is a messenger sent by Zeus or a servant of Zeus (ὑπηρέτης τοῦ Διός, *Diatr.* 3.22.82) are certainly Stoic and clash with traditional Cynic atheism.[62]

It is difficult to establish whether Epictetus knew the same tradition of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων contained in *Pyth.* 30. Epictetus may have followed his old master Musonius Rufus, who, in Lucius' *Diss.* 14.6 describes the Cynic

Cynics. The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy, ed. by Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, London 1996, pp. 205–221, 207–208.

[57] *Diatr.* 3.22.16.

[58] *Diatr.* 3.22.27–30.

[59] ET Oldfather, *Discourses*, 2:147.

[60] "Wherefore, in the name of God, I adjure you, put off your decision, and look first at your endowment" *Diatr.* 3.22.107, ET Oldfather, *Discourses*, 2:169.

[61] Abraham J. Malherbe, "Self-definition among Epicureans and Cynics", in *Jewish and Christian Self-definition*, vol. 3, ed. by Ben F. Meyer and Ed P. Sanders, London 1982, pp. 46–59, 50.

[62] *Diatr.* 3.22.81, see also Billerbeck, "Ideal", 208.

philosopher Crates as ἄοικος and ἀκτήμων.[63] Since Musonius shares in some Pythagorean traditions,[64] a connection is not implausible. Regardless of the precise origin of the description, the model of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων that Sextus offers to his Christian readers shows a continuity with a philosophical tradition, found both in Hellenistic (Epictetus, Musonius) and Hellenistic-Jewish (Philo) authors. This tradition attributed great importance to voluntary renunciation of property, praised self-sufficiency as true wealth and probably issued from a mythicised interpretation of what ancient Cynicism was.

The later ascetic tradition proves that the Hellenistic σοφὸς ἀκτήμων adopted by Sextus was also appealing to other Christian authors. In particular, Epictetus' description of the ideal Cynic life in *Diatr.* 3.22.47–48 shows striking similarities with the address to the true soldier of Christ of the pseudo-Basilian *Praevia institutio ascetica*:

ἄοικός σοι καὶ ἄπολις καὶ ἀκτήμων προκείσθω βίος. ἄνετος ἔσο, λελυμένος ἀπὸ πασῶν κοσμικῶν φροντίδων· μή σε δεσμεύσῃ γυναικὸς ἐπιθυμία, μή σε φροντὶς παιδός (PG 31.621.16).

Set before thyself a life without house, city, or possessions. Be free, released from all worldly cares. Let not love of woman enchain thee, nor solicitude for child.[65]

Both Epictetus and Pseudo-Basil define their ascetic hero as ἄοικος, ἄπολις and ἀκτήμων. Whether this treatise is a genuine work of Basil is not crucial for this enquiry, although the same adjectives also occur in other ascetic texts of Basil considered to be genuine.[66] What is relevant is that after two centuries the author still finds Epictetus' description of the Cynic life the most suitable model to illustrate the life of a Christian ascetic, as Sextus found the Hellenic tradition of *Pyth.* 30 a fitting maxim for his Christian readers. Pseudo-Basil also exhorts the Christian ascetic to dismiss the world and live the life of a free man, which may derive from Epictetus' treatment of freedom from the slavery of the body in *Diatr.* 3.22.40–41. The observation that the three adjectives rarely appear together apart from the two passages considered confirms that Pseudo-Basil depends upon Ep-

[63] See also Stobaeus *Flor.* 4.22a.20 and Plutarch *Vit. aere al.* 831c. On Musonius' influence on the philosophy of Epictetus, see Oldfather, *Discourses*, 1:viii.

[64] For Pythagorean procreationism in Musonius, see Gaca, *Fornication*, 114. He also agreed with Neopythagorean "feminism" according to Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians. Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life*, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 2009, 246. Less optimistic on contacts between Musonius and Apollonius is Musonius Rufus, *Entretiens et fragments*, translated by Amand Jagu, New York (N.Y.) 1979, 9.

[65] ET Clarke, *Basil*, 56.

[66] *Ep.* 2.2.

ictetus.[67] The couple ἄοικος καὶ ἄπολις is more frequent but often has a negative meaning, as in Philo's *Leg.* 3.2–3 which describes the wicked man (φαῦλος) by the same adjectives.[68] Again Philo's *Sacr.* 32 refers to ἄοικος and ἄπολις as the morally reprehensible consequences of the love of pleasure. Pseudo-Basil seems to have found particularly appealing those aspects of Epictetus' description of the Cynic life where the Stoic influence seems to have been more evident,[69] like the divine calling of the Cynic philosopher[70] and the Cynic's rejection of procreation and the adoption of all humankind as moral sons and daughters.[71] Similarly the ideal soldier of Christ in Pseudo-Basil does not procreate but begets spiritual children through a spiritual marriage.[72]

Sextus' description of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων in *Sext.* 18, developed from *Pyth.* 30, shows similarities with Cynic and Stoic themes in Epictetus, and it was later received in the wider tradition of Christian asceticism. Because of the uncertain provenance of *Pyth.* 30 and the Stoicising character of Epictetus' passage, it is difficult to tell whether the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων originally belonged to Cynicism. Gerald Downing has argued for a direct link between Cynicism and the *Sentences*. According to Downing, the *Sentences* are the result of the influence of Cynicism on Christianity "At a popular level",[73] although Sextus' collection should better be seen as "eclectic".[74] Since the term Cynic (κυνικός) occurs in *Pyth.* 54 (= *Sext.* 462) and four times in *Sext.* 461–464, it seems that Sextus' source material contained a number of references to Cynicism. Because of the difficulty of attributing isolated sentences to specific philosophical schools, however, Downing's suggestion that Cynicism influenced up to one eighth of the entire collection can only be partially accepted.[75]

Whatever Cynic ideals Sextus embraced, he did not adopt them slavishly, but in a critical way. A brilliant example of his method is *Sext.* 253a:

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[67] The same three adjective in Nicholas Kataskepenos' *Vita s. Cyrilli Phileotae* 4.2 probably depend on Basil.

[68] See also *Gig.* 1.67, *Virt.* 190 and *Congr.* 58.

[69] Billerbeck, "Ideal", 208.

[70] *Diatr.* 3.22.23.

[71] *Diatr.* 3.22.81.

[72] PG 31.621.25–27.

[73] F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, Edinburgh 1992, 75.

[74] Downing, *Origins*, 192. However, F. Gerald Downing, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century*, Sheffield 2004^2, 99 n.18 acknowledges the Pythagorean substratum of the *Sentences*.

[75] Downing, *Origins*, 194.

παρρησίαν ἄγε μετὰ αἰδοῦς (*Sext.* 253a).

Use freedom of speech with reserve.[76]

Downing correctly stresses the Cynic slant of this reference to παρρησία.[77] At the same time this sentence shows Sextus' concern about maintaining a distance from Cynicism. As Margarethe Billerbeck has observed, the reception of Cynicism in the early Empire, and particularly the Stoic reception of Diogenes, carefully selected the elements which were more compatible with traditional Roman culture. Self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια) and freedom of speech (παρρησία) were generally accepted, while Cynic traditions less suitable to Roman society like the concept of shamelessness (ἀναίδεια) were rejected.[78] Sextus' concern that παρρησία should happen within the limits of decency or shame (μετὰ αἰδοῦς) is consistent with Billerbeck's observation. The critique of Cynicism of the *Sentences* is not exclusively Christian, but follows the same programme of sanitisation of Cynicism from "impudence and immodesty" practiced in Roman Stoicism.[79] The presence in the Greek appendices and in *Pyth.* 54 of sentences disapproving of the Cynics[80] confirms that Sextus probably found this criticism already in his source material. Sextus therefore treats Cynicism with the same prudence shown by the philosophers of his time. Through their sources, the *Sentences* not only introduced Christian readers to philosophy, but helped Christianity to familiarise itself with the lively philosophical debate of their age.

Since the maxim on the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων in *Sext.* 18 refers to God, the possibility that this sentence reflects a tradition developed directly from classic Cynicism seems unlikely.[81] Although not Cynic *stricto sensu*, however, *Sext.* 18 may contain Cynic elements. Despite the aversion of early Cynicism to traditional religion, later authors like Epictetus and Julian introduced to their interpretation of Cynicism a strong element of religious piety, which did not originally belong to it.[82] As William Desmond has

[76] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 45.

[77] Downing, *Origins*, 193. But the expression is rather frequent also in the NT, particularly in John and Acts.

[78] Billerbeck, "Ideal", 220.

[79] Miriam T. Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion", in *The Cynics. The Cynic movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, ed. by Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, London 1996, pp. 190–204, 204.

[80] *Sext.* 461 (= *Pyth.* 54) reads: "The training (ἄσκησις) of a Cynic is a good thing, but his way of life is not to be followed".

[81] For a Cynic origin of *Sext.*18, see Downing, *Origins*, 193 n.101.

[82] Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Religion and the Early Cynics", in *The Cynics. The Cynic movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, ed. by Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, London 1996, pp. 47–80, 80.

pointed out, Cynicism was not simply a way of life, but belonged to a philosophical *continuum*, which developed from the Eleatics. Cynic renunciation derives from Eleatic ontology. What Cynics did was to apply the impassivity and self-sufficiency of the Eleatic Being to the self-sufficiency and impassivity of the Cynic-beggar.[83] Sextus' maxims on the poverty of the sage as a reflection of God's ἀκτημοσύνη follow a similar path. As Downing has suggested, later sources inspired by Cynic ideals, like Pseudo-Lucian's *Cynicus* 12,[84] offer a similar view of the gods. The celebration of voluntary poverty as a way of emulating the being of God preserves Cynic ideas which Sextus, through his sources, considered worthy of Christian theological instruction. The Hellenistic tradition provided the Christian ascetics with the appropriate philosophical tool to develop their morality of poverty. In *Sext.* 18, the Stoic and Cynic philosophical tradition of God's self-sufficiency influenced Sextus' development of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων as reflecting the poverty of the Christian God. As we are about to see, the passage from Hellenistic moral philosophy to Christian asceticism, or from the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων to the ἀκτήμων μοναχός, was opened irreversibly.

II. Poor sages and poor monks

The praise of ἀκτημοσύνη, not very frequent in Christian authors before Sextus' time, became a common idiom in the ethical reflection on wealth in later Christian literature, particularly in ascetic circles. By the fourth century the ἀκτήμων βίος or the ἀκτήμων φιλοσοφία had become nearly a *terminus technicus* for those who had opted for combining Christian asceticism with the strictest philosophical commitment. In *Hist. eccl.* 7.32.27, Eusebius praises the Alexandrian Pierius for his highest achievements in poverty (ἄκρως ἀκτήμονι βίῳ). According to Eusebius, the choice of a life of poverty signifies one's commitment to asceticism and philosophy in a way not dissimilar from Sextus' σοφὸς ἀκτήμων. A good example of this is the description of Pamphilus in *Mart. Pal.* 11.2. While helping the poor, Pamphilus himself lives in poverty (ἐν ἀκτήμονι διῆγε βίῳ) and through self-restraint (δι'ἀσκήσεως) practises divine philosophy (ἔνθεον φιλοσοφίαν).

The same triplet of poverty, asceticism and philosophy applies also to Alexander bishop of Antioch in Theodoret's *Hist. eccl.* 5.32. In line with Eusebius, Theodoret describes Alexander as versed in self-restraint

[83] William D. Desmond, *The Greek Praise of Poverty. Origins of Ancient Cynicism*, Notre Dame (Ind.) 2006, 166.

[84] Pseudo-Lucian claims that the Gods οὐδενὸς γὰρ δέονται, see Downing, *Origins*, 194 n.102. In *Ep.* 18.13, Seneca says that the despiser of wealth is *deo dignus*.

(ἀσκήσει), philosophy (φιλοσοφίᾳ) and poverty (ἀκτήμονι βίῳ) in addition to eloquence. In *Contra fatum*, Gregory of Nyssa reports the opinion that a life inspired by the highest ideals (ὑψηλοτέρᾳ ζωῇ) is also a life without possessions (ἀκτήμονι) and a life worthy of a free man (ἐλευθεριάζοντι).[85] Asterius of Amasia is remarkably close to Sextus' source material in seeing a connection between poverty and philosophy. Commenting on Matt 19:16–22, Asterius notes that Jesus offered the rich young man to follow the ἀκτήμονα φιλοσοφίαν, the "poor philosophy", which is the mother of virtue.[86] Although a direct dependence on the *Sentences* is not demonstrable, Asterius' passage seems to echo *Sext.* 264a where Sextus invites the reader to leave behind all possessions and follow τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ, probably equally recalling Matt 19.

The ideal of the ἀκτήμων βίος flourished above all in the monastic movement. In the *De ascetica disciplina*, another pseudo-Basilian text akin to that *Praevia institutio ascetica* which drew on Epictetus, poverty is the first item in the list of what constitute the essentials of the monastic life:

> First of all a monk shall acquire a life without possessions (ἀκτήμονα βίον κεκτῆσθαι), solitude of the body, and propriety in his dress, a moderate voice and a well-disciplined discourse (PG 31.648.42–45).

Rejection of wealth precedes any other form of renunciation and austerity. The ascetic ideal of ἀκτημοσύνη was so important in early Christianity that it started also to be applied to major biblical figures. In *Philoc.* 26.4.12, Origen calls the prophet Elijah ὁ ἀκτημονέστατος while Chrysippus of Jerusalem describes John the Baptist as having acquired a property-less life (ἀκτήμονα γὰρ βίον ἐκέκτητο, cf. Pseudo-Basil above), having followed a spiritual philosophy in the desert.[87] An excellent example of the development of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων of Sextus' source material in the Christian ascetic tradition is contained in the seventh-century *Scala paradisi* of John Climacus. Climacus dedicates a whole step of his ladder to the theme of ἀκτημοσύνη. Having said that poverty enables a life free from any concern, he adds a saying which seems to echo Sextus:

> ἀκτήμων μοναχὸς δεσπότης κόσμου (*Scala paradisi* 17.5–6).
>
> A monk without property is a lord over the world.

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[85] *Contra fatum* 34.3, I follow here the numbering of *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 3.2, ed. Jacobus A. McDonough, Leiden 1986, see also *Vita s. Macrinae* 8.9.

[86] *Hom.* 3.13.5.

[87] *Encomium in Joannem Baptistam* 10. Later Gregorius Palamas in *Hom.* 11.20, says that Christ himself conducted an ἀκτήμονα βίον, extending to Jesus the monastic ideal.

It is difficult to prove any direct influence of Sextus on this passage of John Climacus.[88] Nevertheless, the connection established by Climacus between voluntary poverty[89] and the attainment of a higher spiritual status resembles the teaching of the *Sentences*. If Sextus' σοφὸς ἀκτήμων reflects God's self-sufficiency and freedom, Climacus' ἀκτήμων μοναχός through asceticism realises a quasi-divine control over everything worldly, which seems to follow a pattern similar to that of the *Sentences*.[90] Furthermore, the medieval text of the canon 28 of the *Canones Novembris* in the *Analecta Hymnica Graeca* offers a late example of how far traditions parallel to the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων of Sextus' source material influenced Christian asceticism. The anonymous hymnographer celebrates the life of the ascetic saint Paul of Corinth. Having mentioned his asceticism, the author commemorates the support Paul gave to the poor by distributing even the alms he had received from other Christians:

Having given away, oh Paul, your wealth
which you had received
from pious men
and loving Christ, oh wise (σοφέ);
the life without property (τὸν ἀκτήμονα βίον)
you have warmly loved (*Canononες Novembris* 28.54–59).

The text probably dates back to the time of Paul, i.e. to the eighth or ninth century.[91] The saint is hailed as a σοφός, a sage, following the ἀκτήμων βίος, which here assumes strong ascetical nuances. Although probably independent of the *Sentences*, this text once again demonstrates how traditions about wisdom (cf. σοφέ) and ἀκτημοσύνη analogous to Sextus' view were still used in ascetic traditions some six centuries after the *Sentences*. Sextus illustrates a stage in the development of Christian voluntary poverty, where philosophical thought on the self-sufficiency of the sage as imitation of God's freedom, once adopted by Christian moralists, was evolving into the pre-monastic and monastic theme of renunciation of worldly possessions as an expression of the ascetic's freedom from the world.

[88] It is not impossible to think here of an indirect influence of NT passages like 2 Cor 6:10: ὡς μηδὲν ἔχοντες καὶ πάντα κατέχοντες.

[89] Poverty without the intention of it (ἄλογος) is instead doubly wrong, cf. *Scala paradisi* 17.23.

[90] On God as κόσμου δεσπότης, see Philo, *Sobr.* 55.

[91] *Analecta Hymnica Graeca. E codicibus eruta Italiae inferioris*, vol. 1, *Canones Novembris*, ed. by Giuseppe Schirò, Roma 1972, 607.

D. Sextus and Caesar's Denarius

*I. "To the world the things of the world" (*Sext. *20)*

Sext. 19–21 provide a significant example of the interaction between Hellenistic morality and Christian traditions in the collection. Here Sextus combines the ideal of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων adopted in *Sext.* 18 with the NT tradition about Caesar's denarius. This textual encounter generates a radical transformation in the interpretation of both the pagan substratum of the passage and the NT tradition alluded to. As I am about to show Sextus discloses, through a constructive dialogue with the philosophical principles of his source material, the full potential of Jesus' logion as an invitation to a rigid ascetic discipline and to a more strictly dualistic view of reality. Having introduced the concept of the sage without possessions, Sextus lays out the rule of conduct that his ascetic sage has to follow when dealing with worldly affairs:

τοῖς κοσμικοῖς πράγμασιν εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα χρῶ.
τὰ μὲν τοῦ κόσμου τῷ κόσμῳ, τὰ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ ἀκριβῶς ἀποδίδου.
τὴν ψυχήν σου νόμιζε παραθήκην ἔχειν παρὰ θεοῦ (*Sext.* 19–21).

Use worldly things only when necessary.
Take care to render to the world the things of the world and to God the things of God.
Consider that your soul is a trust from God.[92]

Several commentators have acknowledged the relationship between *Sext.* 20 and Jesus' answer to the Pharisees on the payment of the tax to the emperor in Matt 22:21 (= Mark 12:17 and Luke 20:25):[93]

ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεω (Matt 22:21)

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.[94]

Delling suggested that the coupling of *Sext.* 19 with 20 represents Sextus' effort to Hellenise Christianity by pairing a NT maxim with a Pythagorean gnome.[95] Delling's definition of *Sext.* 19 as unequivocally Pythagorean is not supported by evidence because the sentence is not attested in any other Pythagorean source. As we shall see in the next paragraph, however, *Sext.* 19 probably alludes to the commonplace moral debate about necessary and unnecessary pleasures which confirms that the sentence contains a Christianisation of philosophical traditions.

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[92] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.

[93] See Gwynn, "Xystus", 1200, Chadwick, *Sextus*, 139 and Delling, "Hellenisierung", 221–223. Sextus' word order is closer to Matt 22:21 than to Mark and Luke.

[94] ET KJV.

[95] See Delling, "Hellenisierung", 221.

The claim that Sextus is quoting directly from the gospel of Matthew is also debatable. Delling had reservations about it[96] and more recently Köhler has openly questioned it.[97] Sextus' direct knowledge of the gospel of Matthew can neither be demonstrated, nor convincingly ruled out. The presence of a similar logion in *Gos. Thom.* 100.1–4 and the possibility that echoes of these words of Jesus may have already shaped Rom 13:7[98] show that the logion was widespread among the earliest Christian writers. Whether dependent on Matthew or on another source, it is likely that *Sext.* 20 points to Jesus' logion lying behind Matt 22:21b and parallels. The presence of the same verb ἀποδίδωμι both in Sextus and in the NT is an important clue to establish dependence.[99] Since ἀποδίδωμι is a *hapax legomenon* in the *Sentences* and never occurs in the other witnesses of Sextus' source material, Sextus probably did not borrow this maxim from his pagan tradition. The change in number of the imperative ἀποδίδου from plural to singular is consistent with the gnomic style of the collection, which generally addresses readers with a second person singular. The choice of the more apophthegmatic μέν and δέ instead of the paratactic καί attested in the synoptic tradition probably denotes a stylistic improvement; but the overall grammatical structure of the sentence seems to reflect Jesus' logion.[100]

The most striking difference between the two versions is that in the *Sentences* what was biblically due to Caesar (τὰ Καίσαρος) is now due to the world (τὰ τοῦ κόσμου). The reference to τὰ κοσμικά in *Sext.* 19 and the mention of κόσμος in *Sext.* 15 and 16 have already prepared the reader for this change. Moreover the movement from a specific situation to a broader horizon is consistent with Sextus' overall tendency to generalise NT passages observable elsewhere in the collection.[101] The shift from Caesar to the world, however, not only reflects a stylistic issue, but also marks an important shift in the interpretation of the gospel tradition. Sextus expresses in *Sext.* 20 the result of the encounter of Jesus' logion with two themes of his pagan sources: the theme of the godlike poverty of the sage already seen in *Sext.* 18 and *Pyth.* 30 and that of the moral use of the world according to necessity alluded to in *Sext.* 19. In this way, the *Sentences* expand

[96] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 238.

[97] Wolf-Dietrich Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus*, WUNT 2. 24, Tübingen 1987, 508.

[98] ἀπόδοτε πᾶσιν τὰς ὀφειλάς, τῷ τὸν φόρον τὸν φόρον, τῷ τὸ τέλος τὸ τέλος, τῷ τὸν φόβον τὸν φόβον, τῷ τὴν τιμὴν τὴν τιμήν, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Dallas (Tex.) 1988, 768.

[99] In 1 Cor 7:3, the verb refers to conjugal duties between husband and wife.

[100] See Delling, "Hellenisierung", 221.

[101] See, for example how *Sext.* 13 handles Matt 5:29f.

Jesus' logion, reinterpreting the gospel tradition in a new light that is both more strictly ascetic and more rigidly dualistic. Later, in the fourth century, Ambrose interpreted Jesus' logion in a similar way. In *Exp. Luc.* 9.35–36, Ambrose seems to bring together Caesar's denarius in Luke 20:20–26 with Jesus' miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth in Matt 17:24–27. Having explained that Christ and Peter did not need to pay the temple tax because they did not bear the image of Caesar but that of God, Ambrose uses the NT story of Caesar's denarius as an exhortation to embrace poverty:

> If he did not have the image of Caesar, why did he pay the tax? He did not give of his own, but rendered to the world what was of the world (*reddidit mundo quod erat mundi*). And if you do not want to be subjected to Caesar, do not acquire the things that are of the world (*noli habere quae mundi sunt*): in fact if you are wealthy, you are subjected to Caesar. If you do not want to be indebted to the earthly king, leave behind all you possessions and follow Christ. Rightfully he resolved first to render to Caesar what is Caesar's: indeed nobody can belong to the Lord unless first they have rejected the world (*nisi prius renuntiaverit mundo*). (*Exp. Luc.* 9.35–36).

Like Sextus, Ambrose interprets the things that are Caesar's as worldly possessions. Although this passage does not offer enough evidence for arguing Ambrose's dependence on Sextus, it is remarkable that both *Exp. Luc.* 9.35–36 and *Sext.* 18–21 see in Jesus' logion an encouragement to adopt poverty as deliverance from[102] and ascetic antagonism towards the world (*renuntiaverit mundo*). Rufinus perceived the same uncompromising austerity in the *Sentences* as he translated σοφὸς ἀκτήμων in *Sext.* 18 with: "A wise man who detests money" (*sapiens vir et contemptor pecuniae*).[103] The tradition confirms Sextus' interpretation. In the *Sentences*, the exhortation to give to Caesar what is Caesar's does not point to the problem of taxation any more, but rather at a more rigorous and compelling ascetic discourse upon the believer's relationship with the world as a whole. If the believer wants to grasp the real implication of Jesus' words, suggests Sextus, he is invited carefully (ἀκριβῶς) to distinguish between the two realms, the worldly and the divine, in a way that is dismissive of the worldly and promotes a more detached and austere attitude in order to focus on the divine.

The NT tradition of Jesus' saying and the *Sentences* also differ in the supplementation of the adverb ἀκριβῶς. Expressions like ἀκριβῶς and ἀκριβεία are not frequent in the LXX[104] or in the NT.[105] In the *Sentences*,

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[102] Cf. *Sext.* 17.

[103] In *Commentarius in evangelium Matthaei* 22.1–2, Hilary of Poitiers explains Matt 22:21 as *contemptus saeculi.*

[104] Cf. Deut 19:18; Wis 12:21, 19:18; Sir 16:25, 42:4 and Dan 7:16.

[105] Cf. Matt 2:8; Luke 1:3; Acts 18:25, 22:3; Eph 5:15 and 1 Thess 5:2.

ἀκριβῶς occurs twice: in *Sext.* 20 and in *Sext.* 9, where Sextus introduces one of the most explicit statements of his rigorous asceticism:

πιστὸς ἀληθείᾳ ὁ ἀναμάρτητος.
μέχρι καὶ τῶν ἐλαχίστων ἀκριβῶς βίου (*Sext.* 8–9).

A sinless person is truly faithful.
Even in regard to the smallest matters, live scrupulously.[106]

Chadwick suggested that *Sext.* 9 may allude to Luke 16:10 on being faithful also in very small things (ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ).[107] Matt 5:19 exhorts not to break even the least (μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων) of the commandments of the Law and it could also be seen as a possible archetype of this sentence. Eph 5:15 conveys a concept similar to *Sext.* 9 asking the readers to examine carefully (ἀκριβῶς) their conduct.[108] Since ἀκριβῶς and ἀκριβεία do not occur in the other witnesses of Sextus' source material, it is possible that Sextus did not draw on his source for *Sext.* 9 as he did not for *Sext*. 20. However, the presence of the adverb ἀκριβῶς in Sextus probably suggests ascetic rigour. In *Praep. ev.* 1.4.9, Eusebius says that a strict way of life (βιοῦν τε ἀκριβῶς) removes every shameful passion and is a sign of conversion to Christianity for both Greeks and barbarians.[109] Ἀκρίβεια was also an important principle in the pagan moral tradition. In *Diatr.* 3.22.25, Epictetus uses the adverb ἀκριβῶς to describe the way the ideal Cynic carefully scouts out what is friendly and what is hostile to humankind in life. Irrespective of the exact provenance of ἀκριβῶς in *Sext.* 9 and 20, the double presence of the adverb in the first pages of the *Sentences* lays out the ethical programme of the entire collection. The ascetic reader of the *Sentences* needs scrupulously to distinguish the worldly from the divine and be irreproachable in every aspect of life in order to be the πιστὸς ἀναμάρτητος, the highest ethical ideal of the *Sentences*.

II. The rule of necessity

Sextus' interpretation of the logion of Caesar's denarius as an invitation to voluntary poverty draws on the pagan ideal of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων in *Sext.* 18 and on a philosophical definition of what ἀκτημοσύνη entails:

τοῖς κοσμικοῖς πράγμασιν εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα χρῶ (*Sext.* 19).

Use worldly things only when necessary.[110]

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[106] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 17.
[107] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 163.
[108] βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε.
[109] See also *Commentarius in Psalmos*, PG 23.77.52.
[110] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.

As we have seen, Sextus adopted the philosophical doctrine that the sage without property imitates God from *Pyth.* 30 or a tradition close to it. In Sextus' understanding, the believer is not only required to renounce his wealth, as in many NT exhortations to poverty,[111] but must also engage in a constant struggle to make the least possible use of the world. *Sext.* 19 says that the believer must use worldly things according to a strict rule of necessity. This rule has also been borrowed from the Hellenistic moral tradition. The reflection on the use of the ἀναγκαῖα is a topos in pagan moral philosophy particularly concerning pleasure. In *Resp.* 558e–559b, Plato distinguishes between pleasures which are necessary (ἀναγκαῖαι) and beneficial to life, and pleasures which are avoidable and unsafe for body and soul. Eating simple foods, like bread and meat, and all that contributes to the wellbeing of the body are necessary pleasures. Everything that goes beyond this canon of simplicity is instead to be rejected as dangerous and unnecessary.[112] Isocrates' *Paneg.* 40 distinguishes between arts useful for the necessities of life (τἀναγκαῖα τοῦ βίου) and arts conceived for sheer pleasure (ἡδονή). Arrian mentions that Epictetus used to advise the true philosopher to practise every morning, as in a gymnasium, to cut down one's ἀναγκαῖα, starting with giving up something easy like a cup, or a tunic, and then moving to leaving behind one's dog or horse and finally one's children and spouse.[113] This technical use of τὰ ἀναγκαῖα does not seem to be attested in the LXX and the NT, with the possible exception of Titus 3:14 (τὰς ἀναγκαίας χρείας).[114] In the *Sentences*, Sextus consistently employs necessity as a rule. The adjective ἀναγκαῖος occurs 7 times and twice the adverb ἀναγκαίως.[115] In all probability, Sextus' source, like Epictetus, already used necessity as a rule for everyday life, for example to establish the right amount of sleep needed. *Clit.* 85–87 in MS Φ reads:[116]

ὅσα πάθη ψυχῆς, τοσοῦτοι δεσπόται.
οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλεύθερον εἶναι κρατούμενον ὑπὸ παθῶν.
ὕπνον προσίεσο διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον (*Clit.* 85–87).

As many passions the soul has so many masters.
It is not possible for a free man to be ruled by passions.
Admit sleep according to necessity.

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[111] See Mark 10:17–22 and parallels.

[112] *Resp.* 559a–b.

[113] *Diatr.* 4.1.107–113.

[114] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Nashville (Tenn.) 2000, 459 says that the expression: "Could refer to the daily practical needs".

[115] In *Sext.* 19, 50, 119 (twice) , 165e, 251, 276 (twice) and 496.

[116] These verses appear in this order only in the MS Φ. The sequence *Clit.* 85–86 is supported also by Σ, codex Bodleianus Auct. F.6.26 fol. 183–187, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 73.

Also in a witness of Sextus' source like *Clitarchus* the criterion to distinguish between use and abuse is to use things διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, following necessity. *Clit.* 85 also appears in *Sext.* 75b which confirms that this passage belonged to Sextus' source material. Since in MS Φ *Clit.* 85–86 are coupled with *Clit.* 87, the excerptor of MS Φ seems to convey the idea that whatever goes beyond necessity has to be considered a form of enslavement to the passions.[117]

In Sextus, the rule of necessity does not only define what is to be ascetically rejected, but also what can be freely practised. Plato says that young people who seek unnecessary (τῶν μὴ ἀναγκαίων) pleasures become vagrants, while those who seek only necessary pleasures are frugal and responsible.[118] Similarly, there are in Sextus pleasures which are unavoidable and to which ascetic self-control does not apply. In practising these necessary pleasures, the believer is free from anxiety, as repeatedly stated in the *Sentences*:

φέρε τὰ ἀναγκαῖα ὡς ἀναγκαῖα (*Sext.* 119).

ἡδονὰς ἡγοῦ τὰς ἀναγκαίας ὡς ἀναγκαίας (*Sext.* 276).

Bear with what must be as something that must be.

Consider unavoidable pleasures to be necessary.[119]

Christian sources of the same period show how Sextus was not the only Christian thinker to integrate a rule of necessity into Christian moral teaching. Clement follows a similar principle in his *Stromata*:

For true wealth is abundance in those actions that are according to virtue, but poverty is shortage of it according to worldly desires (κατὰ τὰς κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας).[120] For regarding possessions (κτήσεις) and the use of the things that are necessary (τῶν ἀναγκαίων) it is not quality that is harmful (βλαβεράν), but quantity, when it exceeds the right measure (*Strom.* 6.99.5–6).

Like Sextus, Clement defines which desires and possessions are appropriate for Christian believers according to necessity. Thus Clement and Sex-

[117] *Sext.* 253b is close to *Clit.* 87 in meaning although not in wording: ἔστιν σοφοῦ καὶ ὕπνος ἐγκράτεια.

[118] *Resp.* 559d.

[119] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 31 and 49.

[120] In Clement, *Stromata Buch I–VI*, translated by Otto Stählin and Ludwig Früchtel, vol. 2, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Jahrhunderte 52, Berlin 1960[3], the text of Stählin and Früchtel follows the reading of the 1592 Sylburg edition. The only MS witness of the *Stromata*, codex Laurentianus V 3, reads κοσμίας, see Clement, *Les Stromates. Stromate VI. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, ed. by Patrick Descourtieux, Sources Chrétiennes 446, Paris 1999, 261. Here Clement seems to depend on Plato, cf. the presence of βλαβερός in *Resp.* 559b.

tus illustrate how the moral debate in pagan philosophy shaped the teaching of second- and third-century Christians about renunciation and self-control.

Sextus combines the principle of necessity with divine self-sufficiency to establish an important guideline for his Christian ascetic sage as the already mentioned *Sext.* 50:

ζηλοῖ τὸν οὐδενὸς δεόμενον ὁ τῶν ὀλίγων ἀναγκαίως δεόμενος (*Sext.* 50).

Since *Sext.* 18 had stated that the sage without property is ὅμοιος θεῷ, it is clear that the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων is the one who "Requires little for his needs".[121] Here the true Christian sage of the *Sentences* learns to imitate God's autarky by using only what is strictly necessary, precisely as Epictetus' true philosopher in *Diatr.* 4.1 trains himself to increasingly severe forms of renunciation. The Christian ascetic needs to need little to find freedom and godlike self-sufficiency. Possibly, Sextus adapted his principle from a similar sentence preserved in *Clitarchus*:

ζήλου τὸν μηδενὸς δεόμενον (*Clit.* 11).

Emulate the one who needs nothing.

In MSS Φ and Σ this sentence follows a maxim on the righteous as image of God,[122] which recalls the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων of *Sext.* 18. Sextus found the principle of necessity coupled with that of divine autarky to be perfectly fitting for his own construction of a Christian way of dealing morally with the world. When the Christian sage uses things of the world, he does so because of necessity. This principle does not imply an exclusively negative evaluation of the world, but suggests that anything that goes beyond necessity should be avoided. Whether *Sext.* 19 belonged to Sextus' source material or, more likely considering its characteristic use of the word κόσμος, to its Christian expansion, Sextus provides here an example of how pagan philosophical traditions found their way into Christian morality. The more strictly ascetic interpretation of Christian poverty observed by commentators in the *Sentences*[123] was not built on a radicalisation of the NT teachings on poverty. Rather, Sextus combined his Christian tradition with Hellenistic ideals of divine self-sufficiency and rejection of unnecessary passions, as is palpable in Sextus' rewriting of Jesus' logion about Caesar's denarius in *Sext.* 20.

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[121] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 23.
[122] *Clit.* 9: δίκαιος ἀνὴρ εἰκὼν θεοῦ.
[123] Osborn, *Patterns*, 81.

III. Sextus' interpretation and Alexandrian Christianity

Sextus' interpretation of Jesus' logion also attests to an old interpretive motif, which seems to have been widespread above all in Alexandrian Christianity.[124] *Sext.* 21 suggests that Sextus read the NT τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ in *Sext.* 20 as a reference to the human soul:

τὴν ψυχήν σου νόμιζε παραθήκην ἔχειν παρὰ θεοῦ (*Sext.* 21)

Consider that your soul is a trust of God.[125]

The word παραθήκη here has the technical economic meaning of trust, deposit. The term preserves something of the original "financial" setting of Jesus' logion.[126] Seen in the light of the statement of *Sext.* 20 that believers need to settle their separate accounts with the world and with God, this reference to the soul as a deposit adds new insight to Sextus' interpretation of Jesus' logion. The divine sphere to which the things of God belong is ultimately the life of the soul. In the dualistic economy of the *Sentences*, the debt to the world can be paid off with ascetic ἀκρίβεια, while God's business concerns the inner life of the Christian ascetic.

This interpretation of Matt 22:21 and parallels as a reference to the soul is attested in other authors predominantly connected with Alexandria.[127] Clement's *Ecl.* 24 reads:

When we belonged to dust (ὅτε χοϊκοὶ ἦμεν), we belonged to Caesar. Caesar, in fact, is the transient ruler, whose earthly image is the old man (εἰκὼν ἡ χοϊκὴ ὁ παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος), to whom he went back. To him the earthly things, which we have "borne in the image of the earthly one" (ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ χοϊκοῦ), are to be given back and "to God the things that are God's" (τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ). For each passion is to us as a letter (γράμμα) and a mark (χάραγμα) and a sign (σημεῖον). Now the Lord has impressed on us another mark and other names and letters, faith instead of unbelief and all the rest. So we are transferred from the material things to the spiritual (ἀπὸ τῶν ὑλικῶν ἐπὶ τὰ πνευματικά) (*Ecl.* 24).

Clement combines the man of dust (χοϊκός) of 1 Cor 15:47–49 with Jesus' logion to illustrate the regeneration of the believer in baptism.[128] The pas-

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[124] As argued in chapter one, the Coptic translation of the Nag Hammadi library suggests the popularity of the collection in Egyptian ascetic circles.

[125] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19. Rufinus, who translates with "from God" (Lat. *a deo*) is more effective here.

[126] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 222–223, a similar idea is later to be found in Asterius the Sophist, *Commentarii in Psalmos* 12.12–14, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 164. Wilson, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, 147 n.44 sees *Sext.* 21 in the light of Gen 2:7 and 6:3. On παραθήκη in NT, cf. 1 Tim 6:20 and 2 Tim 1:12.14.

[127] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 223: "Die weitgehende Gemeinsamkeit in der Interpretation von Mt 22,21 zwischen den Alexandrinern und den *Sent.* ist schon recht beachtenswert", see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 163.

sage, however, follows the same train of thought as *Sext.* 20. The distinction between what is Caesar's and what is God's entails in Clement's reading the same polarised scenario observable in *Sext.* 20. In both authors, to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to give God what is God's requires a movement from a material (ὑλικός) to a spiritual dimension. In Clement, as in Sextus, this movement requires an ascetic austerity, since it is the passions (ἕκαστον γὰρ τῶν παθῶν) in humans which bear Caesar's inscription. That in Clement the things of God belong to the sphere of the soul, as in Sextus, is shown in *Exc.* 4.86:

> Upon the coin presented [to him] the Lord did not say: "Whose possession is this?", but: "Whose image and inscription (ἡ εἰκὼν καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή) is this? Caesar's", so that it would be given to the one it belonged. Similarly the believer (πιστός): through Christ he has God's name as inscription and the Spirit as image. Also the irrational animals show to whom they belong through their seal and they are claimed from their seal. Similarly the believing soul (ἡ ψυχὴ ἡ πιστή): having received the seal (σφράγισμα) of truth, carries around the "marks of Christ" (*Exc.* 4.86.1–2).

This passage is remarkably close to Sextus' reading. Both Clement and Sextus pair Jesus' logion with a discourse on the soul. As with the soul as παραθήκη in *Sext.* 21, Clement says that the believing soul is the carrier of God's σφράγισμα and therefore the decisive sign of one's relationship with God.

These readings probably attest to an ancient exegetical tradition which contrasts Caesar's inscription with the soul as the image of God. A similar tradition is also attested outside Greek speaking Christianity. In *Marc.* 4.38 and *Idol.* 15,[129] for example, Tertullian interprets *quae sunt Dei* similarly as what in humans bears the image of God, though he never mentions the soul as explicitly as Sextus and Clement. In *Fug.* 12, he interprets the encouragement to render to God what is God's as a request to be ready for martyrdom, rendering to God one's own blood as Jesus' blood was shed for humanity. The presence of a similar interpretation also in Origen's commentary on Matthew shows how the tradition witnessed by Sextus and Clement was particularly popular in Alexandrian circles:

> And we owe some things as a tribute to the ruler of the bodies called Caesar (σωμάτων ἄρχοντι λεγομένῳ Καίσαρι), the necessities of life (τὰ ἀναγκαῖα) for the body, which have the bodily image (εἰκόνα) of the ruler of the bodies; these are nourishment, lodging, the necessary rest and sleep (ἀναγκαία διανάπαυσις καὶ ὕπνοι). And other things, since the

[128] See Carlo Nardi, *Il battesimo in Clemente Alessandrino. Interpretazione di* Eclogae Propheticae *1–26*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 19, Rome 1984, 203. On the relevance of this passage for the interpretation of Sextus, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 163.

[129] "Imaginem Caesaris Caesari, quae in nummo est, et imaginem Dei Deo, quae in homine est"

soul by nature is according to the image of God (ἡ ψυχὴ φύσει κατ' εἰκόνα ἐστὶ θεοῦ), we owe to God, the king of it, which are useful and appropriate to the nature and essence of the soul; these things are the paths that lead to virtue and the actions according to virtue (*Comm. Matt.* 17.27.12–18).

Although a dependence of Origen on Clement is possible, Origen is here even closer to Sextus' reading. Giving to Caesar what is Caesar's means to be subjected to the one who dominates the body and therefore to provide the body with its necessities or τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τῷ σώματι.[130] These ἀναγκαῖα consist in food, shelter and sleep[131] and are the same necessities of life which in *Sext.* 19 are said to belong to the worldly sphere. Linguistic similarities between Sextus, Clement and Origen are insufficient to ascertain with any consistency their respective dependence. The presence in Sextus, however, of a traditional interpretation of Jesus' logion on Caesar's denarius attested also in Clement and Origen reinforces the impression of a strong connection between Sextus' collection and Egypt, and in particular Alexandria.[132]

IV. Sextus and wealth: further pagan and Christian interactions

Sextus' reformulation of Jesus' logion about Caesar's denarius is only one example, although probably the most meaningful one, of how the *Sentences* redesign their Christian traditions through the use of philosophical themes from their source material. The principle of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων adopted in *Sext.* 18 shapes other statements about wealth throughout the collection. Following Sextus' discourse on voluntary poverty and ascetic self-restraint, the *Sentences* argue that love of wealth is not only an economic issue, but an indication of a sensual disposition. If the sage's poverty and self-sufficiency equals freedom, wealth means that one is still subjected to the κόσμος and its seductions:

φιλοχρηματία φιλοσωματίας ἔλεγχος
κτῶ τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς βέβαια (*Sext.* 76–77).

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[130] According to Nardi, *Battesimo*, 206, the association of Caesar with the ruler of this world, i.e. with the Devil, expresses a rejection of imperial idolatry and stresses the freedom of the baptised believer from the dominion of a world inhabited by "potenze negative".

[131] On sleep, cf. *Sext.* 235b and *Clit.* 87.

[132] Against Algis Uždavinys, *The Golden Chain. An Anthology of the Pythagorean and Platonic Philosophy*, Bloomington (Ind.) 2004, 38, who too hastily concludes that the idea that the *Sentences* originated in second-century Alexandria is: "merely speculation".

Love of money demonstrates love of body.
Acquire the things of the soul because they are secure.[133]

The tension between wealth and τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς is a resumption of Sextus' specific interpretation of Caesar's denarius in *Sext.* 18–21 and most likely depends on it.[134] Here, however, once again Sextus drew on his source material, combining the Christian echoes of *Sext.* 77 with the pagan teaching on φιλοχρηματία of the preceding sentence, *Sext.* 76, which derives from *Pyth.* 110 (= *Marc.* 14):

φιλήδονον καὶ φιλοσώματον καὶ φιλόθεον τὸν αὐτὸν ἀδύνατον εἶναι· ὁ γὰρ φιλήδονος καὶ φιλοσώματος· ὁ δὲ φιλοσώματος καὶ φιλοχρήματος· ὁ δὲ φιλοχρήματος ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἄδικος (*Pyth.* 110a–d).

It is impossible for the same person to be a lover of pleasure and of the body and also to be loving God; for the one who loves pleasure loves also the body; but the one who loves the body loves also money; and the one who loves money by necessity is also unrighteous.

The connection between love of wealth and sensuality may have belonged to the Pythagorean tradition. In Hierocles' commentary on the Pythagorean *Golden Verses* love of the body (φιλοσωματία) and love of money (φιλοχρηματία) are mentioned together.[135] In *Phaed.* 68b–c, Socrates argues that the one who is troubled[136] at the idea of dying is not a philosopher, but a lover of the body (φιλοσώματος) and lover of money (φιλοχρήματος). The pagan tradition of *Pyth.* 110 continued to be used also by Christian writers in later times. Asterius of Amasia, for example, cited *Pyth,* 110c–d in *Hom.* 14.12.3. Since *Hom.* 14.12.2 discusses the βίος ἐγκρατής as an image of the life to come,[137] Asterius confirms that the same philosophical traditions which influenced Sextus' self-discipline continued to play a substantial role in the development of Christian asceticism even in the fourth and fifth century. The last Christian witness of the use of *Pyth.* 110 is the Greek monk Nicholas Kataskepenos who in his *Vita s. Cyrilli Phileotae* cites a portion of text larger than that known to Asterius.[138] Kataskepenos is therefore an independent witness of the *Pythagorean Sentences* and shows that the collection was still used in Greek monastic circles in the twelfth century CE.

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[133] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 25.

[134] But see also NT traditions like Matt 6:20 and Luke 12:33. On κτάομαι, see Matt 10:9.

[135] *In aureum carmen* 13.7.

[136] ἀγανακτέω.

[137] βίος ἐγκρατὴς μελλούσης καὶ ἀφθάρτου ζωῆς ἐστιν εἰκών.

[138] 35.1, which contains *Pyth.* 110a–e.

Sextus' ascetic discipline concerning wealth was shaped by the Greek philosophical reflection on love of wealth as anti-philosophical. The relatively high frequency in Sextus of sentences combining the practice of philosophy with renunciation of possessions can illustrate the point:

μηθὲν ἴδιον κτῆμα νομιζέσθω φιλοσόφῳ (*Sext.* 227).

θησαυρὸν κατατίθεσθαι μὲν οὐ φιλάνθρωπον,
ἀναιρεῖσθαι δὲ οὐ κατὰ φιλόσοφον (*Sext.* 300).

Let the philosopher not think of anything as his own property.

To hoard riches is inhumane, but even to accept riches is contrary to philosophy.[139]

These sentences are to be read along the same line of thought as Plato's *Phaed.* 68b–c. As in Plato love of wealth exposes the inauthentic philosophers, so in the ascetic discipline of the *Sentences* the believer has self-control as his only possession:

πιστοῦ πλοῦτος ἐγκράτεια.
ὅπερ μεταδιδοὺς ἄλλοις αὐτὸς οὐχ ἕξεις, μὴ κρίνῃς ἀγαθὸν εἶναι.
οὐδὲν ἀκοινώνητον ἀγαθόν (*Sext.* 294–296).

Self-restraint is the wealth of a believer.
Do not consider anything good which you cannot share with others and still have yourself.
Nothing is good which is not shared.[140]

Sextus probably found the idea that ἐγκράτεια is great strength and wealth in traditions similar to *Pyth.* 89.[141] Elter's Greek text has σοφοῦ instead of πιστοῦ in *Sext.* 294, which is the reading supported by MS Π, Rufinus' *Vorlage* (Lat. *sapientium divitiae*) and x (Syr. ܚܟܡܬܐ), the shorter Syriac version. If the alternative reading with σοφός is correct, this may imply that *Sext.* 294 already belonged to Sextus' source material. At any rate, it is clear that Sextus' intention here is that of showing that the ascetic austerity endorsed by the *Sentences* was indeed a reasonable option, also from a philosophical point of view. Although *Sext.* 294–296 probably do not apply only to wealth, the theme of sharing one's possessions constitutes a central aspect of Sextus' teaching about wealth and poverty. The *Sentences* contain more occurrences of κοινωνέω, κοινός and ἀκοινώνητος (8 times altogether) than *Clitarchus* (one occurrence), the *Pythagorean Sentences* (one occurrence) and Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* (4 times, including κοινωνία). The use of κοινωνία and cognate terms in the *Sentences* may retain a Neopythagorean slant and refer to some form of Pythagorean "so-

[139] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 43 and 51.
[140] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 49 and 51.
[141] ῥώμην μεγίστην καὶ πλοῦτον τὴν ἐγκράτειαν κτῆσαι.

cialism" as argued by Christopher Hays.[142] Little is known, however, of how historically accurate Pythagorean communalism is.[143] The occurrences of κοινωνία and cognates in Sextus' source material do not seem to refer to sharing of possessions, suggesting that the Pythagorean communalism may have been a marginal topic in that tradition.

Richard Finn has observed in the *Sentences* an interest in almsgiving and helping the poor, which was absent in Sextus' source material.[144] If Sextus indeed received the references to κοινωνία from his sources, he seems to have used the Pythagorean language to express a Christian concern over the fate of the poor, as in the following sentence:

τροφῆς παντὶ κοινώνει.
ὑπὲρ τοῦ πτωχὸν τροφῆναι καὶ νηστεῦσαι καλόν (*Sext.* 266–267).

Share your food with everyone.
In order to provide food for the poor it is good even to fast.[145]

In *Sext.* 267 *hapax legomena* abound (both νηστεύω and πτωχός never occur in Sextus' tradition). Sextus' source material never refers to fasting, which suggests that *Sext.* 267 must belong to the Christian addition to the collection. The practice of using the money saved by fasting to feed the poor is attested also in Herm. *Sim*. 5.3.7. Here, as in *Sext.* 340, which expresses concern for the orphans, Sextus turns to the roots of his Christian and biblical tradition. This reappearance of Christian topics shows how Sextus' interweaving of the philosophical themes of his source, though crucial in the development of his ascetic understanding of voluntary poverty as self-sufficiency, does not blur the Christian focus of his collection.

[142] Christopher M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics*, WUNT 2.275, Tübingen 2010, 208.

[143] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8 accepts the view that early Pythagorean ἑταιρείαι practised commonality of property. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life. Translated with Notes and Introduction*, translated by Gillian Clark, Liverpool 1989, xvi suggests that later Pythagorean circles, like the ones depicted by Iamblichus, may have considered the early practice merely "inspirational".

[144] Finn, *Almsgiving*, 3. However, Anneliese Parkin, "'You do him no service': An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving", in *Poverty in the Roman World*, ed. by Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne, Cambridge 2006, pp. 60–82, 63 reminds that reaction to begging in the Greco-Roman world, for example among the Stoics, was not of mere hostility as later contended by Christian moralists.

[145] ET Edwards-Wild, Sentences, 47.

E. Conclusion

The example of *Sext.* 18–21 considered in this chapter has shown how Sextus' ascetic teaching about the rejection of wealth arose from an interaction between Hellenistic morality and early Christian teaching. I have argued that the *Sentences* modelled their understanding of voluntary poverty on pagan philosophical traditions found in Sextus' source material. These traditions maintained that the philosopher's practice of self-sufficiency, or αὐτάρκεια, made him similar to God, the αὐταρκής *par excellence*. Sextus' source material celebrated the philosopher's poverty as evidence of his commitment to virtue and to the imitation of God. A similar vocabulary praising poverty as an intrinsic path to virtue is also to be found in Epictetus and in Philo's description of the Essenes. I have demonstrated that Sextus based his views predominantly on the ideal of this σοφὸς ἀκτήμων[146] rather than from a direct enforcement of the numerous NT texts on poverty.

This chapter has shown that Sextus' view of poverty as a spiritual virtue is consistent with the reinterpretation of traditional Cynic motifs which had developed in first-century Roman Stoicism and particularly in the works of Epictetus and Musonius. Through a comparison with later Christian authors of monastic treatises like Pseudo-Basil and John Climacus, I have also shown how the ideal of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων adopted by Sextus continued to play a central role in Christian monasticism particularly in the East. Although I have argued that Pseudo-Basil developed the principle from Epictetus rather than Sextus or his source material and that Climacus' dependence on Sextus cannot be verified, Sextus constitutes one of the earliest examples of Christian adoption of this motif. Thus the *Sentences*, as a Christian document, through the adoption of the ideals of their source material, were at the same time incorporated in the lively philosophical debate of the first two centuries C.E. and set at the very beginning of a thriving ascetic tradition.

The analysis of *Sext.* 20 has provided an illustration of how the interplay between Greek gnomic wisdom and NT traditions in the collection worked. I have shown that Sextus fashioned an original reformulation of Jesus' logion about Caesar's denarius[147] under the influence of the principles adopted from his source material. In his reading, Sextus interprets the opposition between Caesar and God in the original logion in the light of a more rigidly antagonistic perception of the relationship between God and the world, signified by love of wealth. This antagonism results in the no-

[146] *Sext.* 18, cf. *Pyth.* 30.
[147] Matt 22:21 and par. and *Gos. Thom.* 100.1–4.

tion that together with the rejection of wealth, the wise believer shall ascetically minimise any dealings with the world.

I have argued that Sextus' interpretation of Jesus' logion has to be read alongside the philosophical norm of necessity contained in Sextus' sources and alluded to in *Sext.* 19. According to Sextus' source material, necessity is the criterion by which the wise assesses what constitutes good or bad use of the necessities of life, or ἀναγκαῖα. Through this norm, Sextus provided his Christian readers with a model of austerity, which would, at the same time, endorse refraining from excesses and free the ascetic from anxiety by asserting that unavoidable, basic pleasures are acceptable.[148] A comparison with later developments of the same reading of τὰ Καίσαρος as τὰ τοῦ κόσμου in Ambrose has shown that Ambrose read Jesus' logion as an invitation to a rejection of the world in the name of an austere *contemptus mundi*. Although a direct dependence of Ambrose on Sextus could not be demonstrated, this development might suggest the presence of a dualistic rejection of the world in Sextus' own interpretation. The substantial analogies between the *Sentences* and readings of Caesar's denarius in Clement and Origen has made more likely, though by no means definitive, the hypothesis that the *Sentences* may have originated in Christian Alexandria. By inserting the logion on Caesar's denarius into a cluster of maxims on the meticulous (ἀκριβῶς)[149] self-control of the believers over their use of the world and the necessities of life, Sextus includes Jesus' saying in his ascetic programme anticipating the interpretation of the gospel traditions in the light of ἀκρίβεια which would later become an important motif in monastic literature.[150]

Nevertheless, the adoption of philosophical autarky and other motifs from his source material did not cause Sextus to forget or minimise the main foci of his Christian tradition. As I have shown, although heavily influenced by his pagan source, Sextus supplemented his collection with traditional Jewish-Christian themes related to poverty like almsgiving, the sharing of food, the assistance to the orphans and fasting. Special attention to the poor seems to have characterised Christian devotion from the beginning. 2 Cor 6:10 characterises Christian missionaries as destitute, reflecting Christ's own poverty.[151] In the *Sentences*, however, early Christian

[148] Cf. *Sext.* 276.

[149] *Sext.* 18.

[150] On the importance of strictness (ἀκρίβεια) in the life of Antony and the Desert Fathers, see Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks. Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 33, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 2002, 5–7.

[151] Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

readers were exposed to a different idea of poverty. Sextus depicts voluntary poverty as a distinctive feature of moral excellence. This step marks an important stage in the development of the Christian understanding of voluntary poverty, anticipating and enabling the ascetic severity of monastic poverty as a sign of true wisdom and affirmation of one's freedom from the world and dominion over it.

F. Looking Forward

The study of the ideal of the sage without property in the *Sentences* has shown how in Sextus pagan gnomic material and NT traditions cooperate in creating new meaning. Through the philosophical motifs of his source material, Sextus produced an interpretation of Jesus' logion on Caesar's denarius which emphasises the need for voluntary poverty and a more radically ascetic and austere way of dealing with the world. The next chapter will show that the austere self-control urged by the *Sentences* did not apply only to sexuality or poverty, but influenced the collection to the point of encompassing even less obvious aspects of the life of the Christian ascetic sage such as the practice of moderation in talking and laughing. As with property, so also the stern and severe countenance and the brief and straightforward discourse of the sage of the *Sentences* were perceived as distinctive signs of moral perfection.

Chapter 4

Wordiness, Brevity and Silence in Sextus

A. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the influence that philosophical brevity and the Neopythagorean endorsement of silence in Sextus' source material had on the portrayal of the Christian sage in the *Sentences*. In his outline of the moral teaching of the *Sentences of Sextus*, Henry Chadwick described the collection as the attempt to delineate a "way to achieve moral and spiritual perfection".[1] Accordingly, most sentences deal with relevant moral topics such as sexuality, family life, wealth, and all those aspects of everyday life where the believers expressed their Christian faith. Since the ultimate goal of Sextus' believer is perfection in every aspect of life, however, the *Sentences* contain sections dedicated to more specific aspects of self-discipline, whose ascetic relevance could appear less obvious. Among these sentences, there are some devoted to the dangers of excessive talking and the practice of silence. Chadwick has already highlighted the importance of silence in Christian circles, mostly as a sign of humility, and in classical culture, particularly for the Pythagoreans.[2]

The teachings of the *Sentences* on brevity and silence, however, disclose more than the simple adoption of philosophical motifs. The purpose of this chapter is to show that through the motifs adopted from his sources Sextus offered to Christian believers a whole repertoire of conventional views on self-discipline and philosophical commitment. In this way, Sextus' Christian sage is modelled on analogous views of the philosophical life and romanticised descriptions of the philosophers of old in the pagan tradition. The 'Christian philosopher' emerging from the *Sentences* is then a stern and austere sage, a person of few words and extreme self-control, whose almost motionless lips are only occasionally allowed a dignified smile, and never burst into laughter.[3] In the pagan world, between the second and the third century, silence as self-discipline is frequently mentioned

[1] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 97.
[2] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 180.
[3] *Sext.* 280b.

in gnomic literature and popular philosophy. The Greek *Life of Secundus*, for example, makes a vow of silence the main topic of its narrative, referring to the rigid discipline of Pythagoras and his school.[4] Sirach, Philo and Josephus show that the same elements also influenced Jewish wisdom and Hellenistic Judaism. In these texts, silence and self-restraint in talking, as well as laughing, are signs of education and intelligence.[5] Remarkably, the only explicit quotation from the OT in Sextus (*Sext.* 155) is Prov 10:19, which disapproves of excessive loquacity. The study of Sextus' adoption of conventions on the philosopher's brevity and endorsement of silence illustrates Sextus' peculiar position at the confluence of Jewish, Christian and Greek wisdom. The Christian Sextus, like the pagan *Life of Secundus* and the Jewish sages, reflects a cultural tendency to accentuate the role of silence in the life of the wise, demonstrating the convergence of elements originally belonging to different religious and philosophical traditions.

In this chapter, I shall first address Sextus' teaching about the dangers of wordiness. This section will illustrate Sextus' treatment of the different traditions of his cultural heritage and his creative effort to harmonise them. Through a study of *Sext.* 155 in its immediate context in the collection, it will be argued that Sextus saw the biblical tradition of wordiness as a cause of sin in Prov 10:19 in the light of the exhortations to brevity contained in his pagan source material. Second, I shall delve into the motif of brevity in Sextus' sources. It will be argued that in the pagan source material brevity refers to Greek traditions which considered laconism to be the actual essence and origin of the philosophical reflection. I shall also show how Sextus intended not only to adopt the ideal of Greek brevity, but also to imitate its literary means of expression, unlike authors like Origen who had a different view of wordiness. Third, I shall compare the use of the motif of brevity in Greek philosophy and Jewish and Christian writers. It will be argued that pagan, Jewish and Christian portrayals of sages emphasise brevity, silence and austere restraint of laugher as indications of an ascetic commitment to wisdom. In this section, I shall show how Sextus' silent Christian sage may have played a role in the development of the imagery of the Christian ascetic in later developments of Christian traditions of self-denial.

[4] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8.

[5] Regarding Jewish wisdom, see Prov 10:19 and Sir 20:1.5.7; 21:20 and 32:8.

B. The Dangers of Wordiness

I. Idle, thoughtless talking

Sext. 151–173 contain a cluster of more than twenty maxims on the dangers of wordiness.[6] After *Sext.* 173, the collection continues with more general instructions on the right conduct of the faithful, but without special emphasis on speech. Sextus' teaching on speaking is divided into two subsections. *Sext.* 151–164b present brevity as a sign of wisdom and, conversely, superfluous words as an indication of an ignorant and evil mind. After this, Sextus focuses on the issue of telling lies in *Sext.* 165a–173. Nonetheless, a few sentences regarding lies and truth appear in the section on silence and brevity,[7] while maxims on reticence, for example about God, occur in the section about lying.[8] The main concern of *Sext.* 151–164b is to provide the reader with instructions on the appropriate use of speech. The exact context of Sextus' discourse remains difficult to ascertain. The mention of an assembly (σύλλογος) in *Sext.* 164a (= *Clit.* 39) may suggest that at least some of the guidelines of this section were meant for more public occasions. Since σύλλογος in *Sext.* 164a comes from *Clit.* 39, references to more public occasions may have already belonged to Sextus' source material. This section focuses on the avoidance of idle conversations, the use of brevity and the situations in which silence is preferable to speech.[9] The section opens with a commonplace statement on the importance of thinking before speaking:

ἡ γλῶσσά σου τῷ νοΐ σου ἐπέσθω (*Sext.* 151)

Let your tongue follow your mind.[10]

This sentence is not attested in any other witness of Sextus' source material. It is possible, however, that Sextus found it in his gnomic source, because its content does not contain anything specifically Christian. Diogenes Laertius attributes to one of the Seven Sages, Chilon of Sparta, a maxim which resembles *Sext.* 151:[11]

τὴν γλῶτταν μὴ προτρέχειν τοῦ νοῦ (*Vit. phil.* 1.70)

That the tongue shall not outrun the mind.

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[6] Wilson, *Mysteries*, 118 sees moderation in talking as a gnomic commonplace.

[7] Cf. *Sext.* 158–159.

[8] Cf. *Sext.* 173 and at a lesser extent *Sext.* 171a–b.

[9] Cf. *Sext.* 162a–b and 164b.

[10] Adapted from Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 33 which translate: "Let your tongue obey your mind".

[11] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 159.

The similarities between *Sext.* 151 and Chilon's saying are not overwhelming but nonetheless significant. Edwards and Wild's English translation of ἕπομαι in *Sext.* 151 with "to obey" conceals the resemblance of the two maxims. Rufinus translates with "to follow" (*sequatur*) which preserves the spatial metaphor better than the English; to say that the tongue needs to follow (ἕπομαι) the mind or that it should not outrun (προτρέχω) it conveys essentially the same idea. This sentence of undisclosed origin was well-known in Greek popular culture. Later authors maintain the connection with the Seven Sages, though occasionally they attribute it to Pittacus of Mytilene rather than Chilon.[12] The same proverb, with διάνοια in place of νοῦς, is also mentioned by Isocrates in *Demon.* 41 and by the scholiast to Pindar's *Isthm.* 6.[13] Among Christian writers, John Chrysostom seems to refer to Chilon's maxim, probably in the same form known to Isocrates, when he recommends that the tongue must have a wall, or a fence (τειχίον), so that it will not outrun understanding (διάνοια).[14]

In *Sext.* 152, which refers to the danger of irresponsible talking, Sextus also uses pagan material for his discourse:

αἱρετώτερον λίθον εἰκῇ βάλλειν ἢ λόγον (*Sext.* 152)

It is preferable to toss a stone without purpose than a word.[15]

Unlike *Sext.* 151, *Sext.* 152 is rare in gnomic collections outside the traditions of Sextus' source material. The maxim has been preserved in an almost identical form in *Clit.* 28, *Marc.* 14 and *Pyth.* 7. In *Pyth.* 7, the purposeless word is an "idle word" (λόγος ἀργός). This is also the form known to Stobaeus who cites it in *Flor.* 3.34.11, attributing the saying directly to Pythagoras (πυθαγόρου). The Syriac version of the *Pythagorean Sentences* confirms the variant having rendered λόγος ἀργός with ܡܠܬܐ ܒܛܠܬܐ ("idle word").[16] Sextus' reading is amply supported by *Clit.* 28 and *Marc.* 14 and may reflect more closely Sextus' source material. The presence of the maxim in Porphyry confirms the pagan origins of it. In *Marc.* 14, Porphyry presents sentences which appear separately in *Sext.* 152, 165a.c and *Sext.*

[12] The same sentence goes under the heading *Pittaci* in *Fragmenta philosophorum Graecorum*, vol. 3, ed. by Friedrich W. A. Mullach, Paris 1875, 216. Stobaeus retains the attribution to Chilon, cf. *Flor.* 3.1.172.

[13] *Scholion* 105a. The same maxim occurs in Choricius of Gaza, *Logos* 2.2.23.

[14] PG 52.772: καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα τειχίον ἐχέτω, ὥστε μὴ προτρέχειν τῆς διανοίας.

[15] Adapted from Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 35 which translate: "It is better to toss a stone without purpose than a word". However, αἱρετώτερον is better translated with "preferable".

[16] Johann Gildemeister, "Pythagorassprüche in Syrischer Überlieferung", in *Hermes* 4 (1870), pp. 81–98, 87.

76a, but in a different order.[17] In the same paragraph, Porphyry reports also an almost unaltered version of *Pyth.* 110 (cf. *Sext.* 76) showing his dependence on a common Pythagorean source, similar to that used by the *Pythagorean Sentences*, *Clitarchus* and Sextus.

If the maxim can be ascribed to Sextus' Pythagorean source material, its occurrence in monastic works of later Christian authors shows how that material continued to be used in the ascetic tradition. In particular, a variant of *Sext.* 152 appears in the already mentioned *Capita paraenetica*, a collection of gnomes attributed to Evagrius:[18]

βέλτιον λίθον εἰκῆ βαλεῖν ἢ λόγον (*Cap. par.* 2)

It is better to throw a stone without purpose than a word.

Chadwick defines Sextus as a "precursor" of Evagrius.[19] Jerome implicitly lists Sextus together with Evagrius among the authors who inspired the Pelagian heresy.[20] *Cap. par.* 2 appears also in John of Damascus' spurious *Sacra parallela,*[21] together with Evagrius' *Sp. sent.* 35, which Elter considers a variation of *Sext.* 153 (= *Clit.* 29),[22] and *Al. sent.* 71. Evagrius and John of Damascus read βέλτιον ("better") instead of αἱρετώτερον ("preferable"). Also Rufinus' Latin reads *melius*, which favours the reading of Evagrius and suggests that they knew a similar version of the sentence. Since the alphabetical sentences of Evagrius edited by Elter quote maxims that are not attested in Sextus' *Sentences*, but are extant in the *Clitarchus* or the *Pythagorean Sentences,*[23] it is likely that Evagrius had access to the Pythagorean gnomic tradition used by Sextus. The testimony of Evagrius shows that Sextus' example of incorporating Hellenistic moral principles into Christian teaching was still shaping and inspiring the works of Christian ascetics two hundred years after Sextus' time. As already mentioned, the same phenomenon is also observable in the West, where a Latin version of *Sext.* 152 occurs in the sixth-century *Regula magistri*:

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[17] I tend to disagree here with Chadwick, *Sextus*, 151 who argues that *Sext.* 138 (ἐκ φιλαυτίας ἀδικία φύεται) is a modified version of the maxim ὁ δὲ φιλοχρήματος ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ ἄδικος (*Pyth.* 110d), which appears in *Pyth.* 110 and in *Marc.* 14. It is unclear, in fact, why φιλαυτία and φιλοχρηματία should be considered interchangeable. The presence of φύεται in Sextus suggests that the *Sentences* are simply quoting a different tradition.

[18] See Elter, *Gnomica*, lii.

[19] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162.

[20] Jerome's *Epist.* 133.3, cf. Elter, *Gnomica* I, ilvii.

[21] PG 95.1205.30–32.

[22] See Elter, *Gnomica*, liii.

[23] For example, Evagrius' *Cap. par.* 5 is probably a Christianised version of *Clit.* 6, see Elter, *Gnomica*, l.

Nam et Origenes sapiens dicit: Melius est lapidem in vanum iactare quam verbum (*Reg. mag.* 11)

In fact also the wise Origen says: It is better to throw a stone pointlessly than a word.

The anonymous author attributes the sentence to Origen rather than Sextus. Chadwick argues that the *Regula* drew the quotation from a text familiar with Origen's Greek, maybe transmitted by Evagrius, but not with Rufinus' version.[24] It is not unlikely that Origen quoted Sextus without mentioning his source, as he does on other occasions.[25] In this way, the same pagan proverbs about the dangers of idle discourses found in Sextus' Pythagorean source material, through Origen and Origenists like Evagrius, entered Western monasticism.

The analysis of *Sext.* 151–154 has demonstrated that Sextus developed the material for his discourse on idle talking from pagan traditions and that the same pagan traditions also played a role in later development in the Christian ascetic tradition. The study of *Sext.* 155, however, will show that Sextus saw a close relationship between the pagan motifs of his source and the Jewish-Christian wisdom literature of his own tradition.

II. Prov 10:19 LXX in Sext. *155*

In the subsection *Sext.* 151–164b, *Sext.* 155 marks a shift from the motif of idle talking to that of excessive talking:

πολυλογία οὐκ ἐκφεύγει ἁμαρτίαν (*Sext.* 155)

Excessive talking cannot avoid sin.[26]

The term πολυλογία is used here for the first and only time in Sextus' collection. The word does not occur in *Clitarchus*, the *Pythagorean Sentences* or Porphyry either, which suggests that *Sext.* 155 did not belong to Sextus' pagan gnomic source. Apart from *Sext.* 155, the section *Sext.* 151–173 shows numerous points of contact with the pagan source material and in particular with *Clit.* 28–44. *Sext.* 152–157 reproduces in an almost unaltered form *Clit.* 28–32 (Table 4).

[24] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 125 n.1. Rufinus has *frustra* for εἰκῇ rather than *in vanum*.

[25] In at least three instances: in Jerome's Latin translation of *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11, in the preface to Origen's commentary on the first Psalm preserved in Epiphanius' *Panarion* 64.7.3, and in the preface to the fifth volume of the commentary on John in *Philoc.* 5.1.

[26] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 35. Edwards and Wild translate οὐκ ἐκφευγει with "cannot avoid" rather than "does not avoid" changing slightly the tone of the sentence.

Table 4: Sextus and Clitarchus on silence

Sextus	*Clitarchus*
Sext. 152–157	*Clit.*28–32
152 αἱρετώτερον λίθον εἰκῇ βάλλειν ἢ λόγον	28 αἱρετώτερον εἰκῇ λίθον βάλλειν ἢ λόγον
153 σκέπτου πρὸ τοῦ λέγειν ἵνα μὴ λέγῃς ἃ μὴ δεῖ	29 σκέπτου πρὸ τοῦ λέγειν ἵνα μὴ λέγῃς εἰκῇ
154 ῥήματα ἄνευ νοῦ ψόφος [or ψόγος?]	30 ῥήματα ἄνευ νοῦ ψόφοι
155 πολυλογία οὐκ ἐκφεύγει ἁμαρτίαν	(= Prov 10:19 LXX, Christian addition?)
156 βραχυλογίᾳ σοφία παρακολουθεῖ	31 βραχυλογίᾳ σοφία παρακολουθεῖ
157 μακρολογία σημεῖον ἀμαθίας	32 μακρολογία σημεῖον ἀμαθίας

The order of *Clit.* 28–32 in the synoptic table above is that of the MSS Φ, Σ and partly Λ, which probably are closer to their source than the MS Θ.[27] The similarities between Sextus' text and *Clitarchus* denote a close interdependency between the two texts. It is likely that Sextus and the epitomators of *Clitarchus* reproduced sentences about idle talking and brevity from a cluster on the same theme in their common source. *Sext.* 152–157 differ from *Clit.* 28–32 only with the insertion of *Sext.* 155. All other differences between Sextus and *Clitarchus* are minor variants. *Clit.* 28 and *Sext.* 152 are almost identical, apart from a slightly different word order. The difference between *Clit.* 29 and *Sext.* 153 deserves more attention. Sextus exhorts the believer not to say: "things that you should not [say]" (ἃ μὴ δεῖ), while *Clit.* 29 urges the readers not to speak "without purpose" (εἰκῇ). Since the word εἰκῇ occurs also in the preceding maxim (*Clit.* 28 = *Sext.* 152), the repetition of the same expression in *Clit.* 29 may represent a compositional device meant to create a logical succession.[28] The expression ἃ μὴ δεῖ in *Sext.* 153 is used also in *Clit.* 25 (= *Sext.* 141) and 143, and in *Pyth*. 6. Like *Sext.* 153, also *Clit.* 16 begins with the imperative σκέπτου:

σκέπτου πρὸ τοῦ πράττειν καὶ ἃ πράττεις ἐξέταζε, ἵνα μηδὲν ποιῇς ὃ μὴ δεῖ (*Clit.* 16).

Consider carefully before doing [anything] and examine closely what you do, so that you do not do anything that you should not do.

[27] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 74.

[28] van den Broek, "Silvanus", 272 and 277 observe that Sextus and the author of the *Teachings of Silvanus* often employ similar compositional expedients.

The presence of ἃ μὴ δεῖ in *Sext.* 153 may be due to the interference of ὃ μὴ δεῖ from *Clit.* 16. Although in a heavily reworked form, *Clit.* 16 is similar to *Sext.* 93, which also ends with the plural ἃ μὴ δεῖ like *Sext.* 153, and confirms that Sextus knew a sentence similar to *Clit.* 16.[29] Although evidence is too scant to conclude anything final, *Sext.* 153 could also be alluding to the idle younger widows of 1 Tim 5:13, who are rebuked for indulging in gossiping:

ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἀργαὶ μανθάνουσιν περιερχόμεναι τὰς οἰκίας, οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀργαὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ φλύαροι καὶ περίεργοι, λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα (1Tim 5:13)

Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say.[30]

Like *Sext.* 153, the author of First Timothy also describes idle discourses involving the risk of τὰ μὴ δέοντα. If Sextus intended *Sext.* 153 as an allusion to First Timothy, he did not make it clear. Gerhard Delling, who is usually very broad-minded in identifying biblical allusions in the *Sentences*, does not list this maxim among the sentences alluding to NT epistles.[31] Concerning *Sext.* 154 (= *Clit.* 30), Chadwick emended the Greek text on the basis of *Clitarchus*.[32] The MS tradition, however, reads ψόγος (Eng. "blameable") instead of ψόφος ("mere sound") in MS Π and the unlikely φόβος in MS Y. Rufinus translates with *obprobria*, which suggests that his *Vorlage* was closer to Π. Probably, the common source of Sextus and *Clitarchus* had ψόφος, or the plural ψόφοι,[33] which later became ψόγος by a scribal error. The reading ψόφοι is also supported by X, which reads: ܩ̈ܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܣܪ̈ܝܩܐ ܘܣܦ̈ܝܩܐ (Eng. "They are void and empty voices").[34]

[29] The transmission of *Sext.* 93 is a complicated problem. Elter, *Gnomica*, x corrects the text of the *Sentences* with *Clit.* 16 and is followed also by Chadwick, *Sextus*, 22. Both in MSS Π and Y, however, the Greek is different: σκέπτου πρὸ τοῦ πράττειν ἃ πράττεις, ἵνα μὴ δὶς ποιῇς ἃ μὴ δεῖ, which is the text accepted by Edwards and Wild (cf. Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 26). Rufinus' Latin is of little help to establish the original reading, but seems to corroborate the idea that the text has been corrupted. While unaware of the variant found in Π and Y, Rufinus is also different from *Clit.* 16: *antequam agas pervide quale sit quod facturus es* (cf. Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, 15). The Syriac longer translation X probably already had the μὴ δὶς ποιῇς variant: ܕܠܐ ܬܬܥܒܕܘܢ ܕܬܪ̈ܬܝܢ ܙ̈ܒܢܝܢ (cf. de Lagarde, *Analecta*, 13). A sentence from the Pythagorean tradition conveys the same meaning, see *Carmen aureum* 27: βουλεύου δὲ πρὸ ἔργου, ὅπως μὴ μωρὰ πέλεται.

[30] ET NRSV.

[31] Cf. Delling, "Hellenisierung", 214–219.

[32] Elter, *Gnomica*, xiii adopts a similar solution and reads ψόφοι with *Clit.* 30.

[33] It is not unlikely that the epitomator changed the singular with the plural under the influence of the plural ῥήματα.

[34] Cf. de Lagarde, *Analecta*, 16.

While *Sext.* 152–157 and *Clit.* 28–32 closely followed the same source, the addition of *Sext.* 155 is probably due to Sextus' Christian reworking. *Sext.* 155 is remarkably similar to Prov 10:19 LXX and constitutes the only explicit quotation of the OT in Sextus:[35]

ἐκ πολυλογίας οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ ἁμαρτίαν (Prov 10:19 LXX)

By too many words you will not escape sin.

As observed by Delling, *Sext.* 155 is probably a quotation of Prov 10:19 LXX and may constitute an attempt to improve stylistically the biblical passage as in *Sext.* 230a and *Sext.* 13.[36] The chances that this sentence may have belonged to Sextus' source material are not high. The Greek appendices of the *Sentences*, which usually show less or no evidence of Christianisation, contain a maxim with a similar linguistic structure:

οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ ἁμαρτίαν ἀναλώμασι.
πολύθεος ἄνθρωπος ἄθεος (*Sext.* 598–599).

With [great] spending you will not escape sin.
A person with many gods is a godless person.

Also *Sext.* 71b (= *Clit.* 10) seems to repeat the same construction:

ἐκ φιληδονίας ἀκολασίαν οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ (*Sext.* 71b).

If you love pleasure, you will not escape licentiousness.[37]

It cannot be proved, however, that this was the original form of the maxim in Sextus' source material. *Clit.* 10, for example, maintains the initial ἐκ, but has the verb φύω instead of ἐκφεύγω.[38] Apart from these three instances in the *Sentences*, the verb ἐκφεύγω does not occur in any other witness of Sextus' source material. It seems likely that the current form of *Sext.* 71b originated from Sextus' Christian rewriting, maybe under the influence of Prov 10:19 LXX. Concerning *Sext.* 598, it is correct that the Greek appendices do not show obvious signs of Christianisation.[39] *Sext.* 598, however, appears in the same context as *Sext.* 599 whose provenance is uncertain. Both Philo[40] and Origen[41] seem to know a similar tradition. The

[35] See Gildemeister, *Sententiarum*, 155; Elter, *Gnomica*, 13, Chadwick, *Sextus*, 139; Horbury, "Interpretation", 237 and Wilken, "Wisdom", 148.

[36] "Er ist, unter Beibehaltung des Vokabelbestandes, lediglich besser stilisiert" Delling, "Hellenisierung", 212.

[37] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 81.

[38] ἐκ φιληδονίας ἀκολασία φύεται.

[39] Whereas they do contain more obviously pagan elements, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 138.

[40] Cf. *Migr.* 69 and *Fug.* 114.

[41] Cf. *Fr. Ps.* 65.12 and *Mart.* 5.

nexus between πολύθεος and ἄθεος of *Sext.* 599 thus occurs in Jewish or Christian authors but not in pagan gnomic wisdom, suggesting that the origins of the sentence are probably not pagan.

The insertion of Prov 10:19 LXX in a cluster of pagan gnomes about idle discourses and brevity clarifies Sextus' understanding of the interaction between his pagan sources and his biblical tradition. In the *Sentences*, the biblical πολυλογία is then seen through the pagan concern for brevity, or βραχυλογία (*Sext.* 156 = *Clit.* 80), so that sinful talkativeness in the biblical sense can be avoided by being βραχύλογος in a philosophical sense.

C. Sextus and Brevity

I. The words and the Word: brevity as a theological and moral problem

Sextus' pagan source material facilitates his interpretation of Prov 10:19 as an invitation to brevity. Prov 10:19 has been frequently quoted in early Christian writers, also by Alexandrian authors like Clement and Origen.[42] Ambrose refers frequently to Prov 10:19 in his works.[43] Whilst Sextus is also interested in the stylistic aspect of brevity, most Christian authors treat brevity only as a theological and moral problem. In *Paed.* 2.49–52, for example, Clement writes a long admonition against obscene language (αἰσχρολογία). At the end of his discourse, Clement quotes Sirach[44] and also Prov 10:19 LXX.[45] In Clement's view, πολυλογία is to be understood as φλύαρος ἀδολεσχία, i.e. gossipy and idle discourses, which deserve punishment and must be silenced.[46] Clement's primary focus, however, is not on the mere fact of πολυλογία but on its content. In *Paedagogus*, idle discourses are dangerous especially when they indulge in obscene details like adultery (μοιχεία) and pederasty (παιδεραστία).[47]

This tendency to consider πολυλογία a problem of content rather than length is more pronounced in Origen. In *Comm. Jo.* 5.4, Origen reflects on

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[42] For example Clement *Paed* 2.6; Origen *Cels.* 5.1, *Or.* 21 and *Comm. Jo.* 5.4; Didymus *Comm. Job* 3.294; John Chrysostom *Exp. Ps.* 139 and *Catech. illum.* 4; Basil of Caesarea *Ep.* 263.4 and 265.2; Cyprian *Test.* 3.103; Jerome *Pelag.* 3.1.

[43] *Cain* 1.9; *Instit.* 1.5; *Noe* 10 and 26; *Virg.* 3.3; *Off.* 1.3; *Exp. Ps. 118* 2,3,4 (= *In Canticum Canticorum* 1.3), 5 and 8; *Enarrat. Ps.* 1.26, 36.28 and 66, 37.42, and 40.41; *Job* 1.6; *Exp. Luc.* 9.9; *Exh. Virginit.* 12 and *Ep.* 7 and 66.

[44] Sir 20:5 and 8.

[45] He adds a γὰρ τοι between ἐκ and πολυλογίας.

[46] *Paed.* 2.52.4: Ναὶ μὴν καὶ τὴν φλύαρον ἀδολεσχίαν κατασιγαστέον. «Ἐκ γάρ τοι πολυλογίας οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ», φησίν, «ἁμαρτίαν·» δίκην ἄρα ὑφέξει ἡ γλωσσαργία, cf. Delling, "Hellenisierung", 212 n.1.

[47] *Paed.* 2.52.3.

talkativeness and its threats. Starting from a warning against writing too many books in Eccl 12:12 LXX,[48] Origen moves to Prov 10:19 speculating whether using too many words is always sinful πολυλογεῖν even when speaking about holy things and salvation.[49] If this were the case, says Origen, Solomon himself would not have escaped sin, since he wrote three thousand proverbs and five thousand songs.[50] The sin of πολυλογία then must refer to something else. Like Clement, Origen seems to suggest that πολυλογία applies to content rather than quantity. Because the only Word of God, Christ (John 1:1–4), is one, all Christian teachings refer to that only Word. According to Origen, any word pronounced outside the one Word is already one too many, while all words about the one Word of truth are all but one and only word:

ἡ πολυλογία ἐκ τῶν δογμάτων κρίνεται καὶ οὐκ ἐκ τῆς τῶν πολλῶν λέξεων ἀπαγγελίας (*Comm. Jo.* 5.5).

Wordiness is judged by the notions and not by the utterance of the many things said.

The caveat against πολυλογία in Prov 10:19 shall not be interpreted as an invitation to restrain one's speech, but as an encouragement to speak always in accordance with the one Word of God in Christ.

Early Christian theologians, however, were interested in πολυλογία mostly because the term is used in Matt 6:7 in Jesus' introduction to the Our Father:

When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases (μὴ βατταλογήσητε) as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words (ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν) (Matt 6:7).[51]

In *Or.* 21.2, Origen reads the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in Matthew according to the principle exposed in *Comm. Jo.* 5.5. Origen contrasts the babbling (βαττολογεῖν, cf. Matt 6:7) of the Gentiles with the prayers of the Christians which are godly speech (θεολογεῖν).[52] The Matthean βαττολογεῖν of the Gentiles, therefore, is again a problem of content. Those who bab-

[48] υἱέ μου φύλαξαι ποιῆσαι βιβλία πολλά. Origen opens with these words the fifth book of his commentary, cf. *Comm. Jo.* 5.1.

[49] *Comm. Jo.* 5.2: «Ἐκ πολυλογίας οὐκ ἐκφεύξῃ ἁμαρτίαν, φειδόμενος δὲ χειλέων νοήμων ἔσῃ». Καὶ ζητῶ, εἰ τὸ ὁποῖά ποτ' οὖν λέγειν πολλὰ «πολυλογεῖν» ἐστιν, κἂν ἅγιά τις καὶ σωτήρια λέγῃ πολλά.

[50] This at least is the tradition according to 1 Kgs 4:32 LXX, which probably misinterpreted the Hebrew. In the MT (1 Kgs 5:12), the songs written by Solomon amount to a mere thousand and five.

[51] ET NRSV. *Did.* 8.2 introduces the Our Father with the exhortation not to pray: "Like the hypocrites".

[52] *Or.* 21.1.1–2.

ble, says Origen, are those who in their prayers have set their minds on base and censurable things, unworthy of God's perfection, and, like pagans, send up their prayers only for corporeal and external things.[53] The βατταλογεῖν and the πολυλογεῖν of Matt 6:7 are consequences of the same inability to divert one's attention from the plurality of the worldly powers (οἱ ἄρχοντες οἱ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) to God's unity.[54] Like Clement, Origen sees πολυλογία as a moral problem. What is censurable of wordiness is not the number of words used, but its propensity to licentious content (Clement) or its potential rejection of God's one Word (Origen); this is the wordiness which cannot escape sin.

II. "Wisdom accompanies brevity of speech" (Sext. 156*)*

The same moral undertones are present also in Sextus' instruction on lengthy and idle discourses. Content is not indifferent to Sextus. When *Sext.* 153 warns the believer not to say ἃ μὴ δεῖ, he implies that there are things one should not talk about. As mentioned above, *Clit.* 16 (= *Sext.* 93) exhorts the readers to consider carefully (σκέπτου, cf. *Sext.* 153) lest they do what they should not do (ἵνα μηδὲν ποιῇς ὃ μὴ δεῖ). In *Clit.* 16 (= *Sext.* 93) the moral intention is clear. In the uncertain, but not impossible, case that ἃ μὴ δεῖ in *Sext.* 153 refers to λαλοῦσαι τὰ μὴ δέοντα in 1 Tim 5:13 a moral concern for the content of the discourses should not be ruled out. On the other hand, ἃ μὴ δεῖ in *Sext.* 153 may refer to things which it is better not to say not because objectionable, but because better kept secret, according to another frequent motif of the collection.[55]

Sextus, however, does not limit his argument to a moral understanding of the content of wordy discourses, but follows a train of thought which is slightly different from Clement's and Origen's. As we have seen, his discourse on wordiness derived most of its material from its pagan source. After the OT quotation, Sextus adds two sentences also extant in *Clit.* 31–32:

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[53] *Or.* 21.1.10–11: πᾶσαν εὐχὴν <περὶ> τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς ἀναπέμποντες.

[54] *Or.* 21.2.4–9. On the importance of prayer as taking one's mind off the fragmented plurality of the many and finding perfect agreement with God's one mind in *De Oratione*, see Lorenzo Perrone, "Il discorso protrettico di Origene sulla preghiera. Introduzione al *περὶ εὐχῆς*", in *Il dono e la sua ombra. Ricerche sul* περὶ εὐχῆς *di Origene*, ed. by Francesca Cocchini, SEAug 57, Rome 1997, pp. 7–32, 9 n.6. As in *Comm. Jo.* 5.4–5, it is the unity of God's one Word that is at stake when one indulges in the empty pleasures of πολυλογία: εἷς μὲν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος, πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ ἀλλότριοι τοῦ θεοῦ, *Or.* 21.2.8–9.

[55] See *Sext.* 366: λόγον περὶ θεοῦ σιγᾶν ἄμεινον ἢ προπετῶς διαλέγεσθαι.

βραχυλογίᾳ σοφία παρακολουθεῖ.
μακρολογία σημεῖον ἀμαθίας (*Sext.* 156–157).

Wisdom accompanies brevity of speech.
Speaking at length is a sign of ignorance.[56]

The emphasis on brevity in the pagan source material inspired Sextus to expand his understanding of the biblical warning against πολυλογία. In its new context, Prov 10:19 LXX becomes an invitation to conciseness as true wisdom versus lengthy discourses which reveal ignorance. As seen above, the mention of Prov 10:19 LXX at the beginning of Origen's fifth book of his comment on the gospel of John served the specific purpose of demonstrating that πολυλογία does not consist in the use of many words or the writing of many books,[57] but in choosing the wrong topic. Sacred books are not wordy by definition. According to Origen, all sacred books of the OT and the NT, insofar as they all speak of Christ the one Word, are but one book.[58] For the same reason, the works of the heretics (ἑτερόδοξοι) are inherently too many (πολυβίβλος), because they are written to contradict the truth.[59] Origen's purpose is that of explaining why, despite his many books, he does not incur the accusation of being wordy. In other contexts, both Clement and Origen have shown their approval for stylistic brevity.[60] In the reading of Prov 10:19, however, style is not their primary concern. Origen, in particular, through a sophisticated theological argument finds himself at the other end of the spectrum, using Prov 10:19 to justify his own propensity to μακρολογία.

Sextus interprets Prov 10:19 in the light of the invitation to brevity in his source. In the *Sentences*, the biblical πολυλογία of the book of Proverbs meets gnomic μακρολογία. Following his source material, Sextus transmits to his Christian readers the view that knowledge of God is not only a matter of saying the right things, as in Origen, but also of how those things are said. True knowledge of God is inseparable from brevity:

ἄνθρωπον θεοῦ γνῶσις βραχύλογον ποιεῖ.
πολλοὺς λόγους περὶ θεοῦ ἀπειρία ποιεῖ (*Sext.* 430–431).

[56] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 35.
[57] Cf. Eccl 12:12 LXX.
[58] *Comm. Jo.* 5.6.20–31.
[59] *Comm. Jo.* 5.8.8.
[60] In *Strom.* 5.8.46, Clement praises ἄσκησις βραχυλογίας together with ἔνδειξις σοφίας and ἐπίδειξις συνέσεως as benchmarks of good style. On βραχυλογία in Origen, see *Cels.* 3.45; *Philoc.* 18.16 and *Comm. Matt.* 17.36.

Knowledge of God produces a man of few words.
A lack of experience leads to excessive talk about God.[61]

The view of brachylogy as a trait of those who know God is repeated twice in the *Pythagorean Sentences* in *Pyth.* 10 and 16 and is also extant in *Marc.* 20 in a slightly modified form.[62] *Pyth.* 10 offers an alternative version of the pagan gnomes included by Sextus in his collection:

βραχύλογον μάλιστα ἡ θεοῦ γνῶσις ποιεῖ· πολλῶν δὲ λόγων περὶ θεοῦ ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἀμαθία αἰτία (*Pyth*. 10).

Knowledge of god makes concise in the highest degree; the reason for many words about god is ignorance of god.

In *Sext.* 431, Rufinus translates ἀπειρία with *ignorantia dei*, which suggests that his *Vorlage* may have contained an expression similar to ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἀμαθία of *Pyth.* 10. That the true wise are people of few words is one of the foundations of the piety of the pagan source material. The Pythagorean source contains an advice on prayer similar to Matt 6:7:

γλώτταλγος ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἀμαθὴς εὐχόμενος καὶ θύων τὸν θεὸν μιαίνει· μόνος οὖν ἱερεὺς ὁ σοφός, μόνος θεοφιλής, μόνος εἰδὼς εὔξασθαι (*Pyth.* 15).

A garrulous and ignorant person when praying and making offerings defiles God; the sage is the only priest, the only one dear to God, the only one who knows how to pray.

This 'religious' meaning that the source material attached to βραχυλογία influenced not only Sextus' understanding of wordiness in Prov 10:19, but also the choice of his means of communication. Martha Lee Turner has argued that Sextus split sentences which appear as self-contained gnomic units in the *Pythagorean Sentences* and in Porphyry into shorter gnomes. Chadwick has been more cautious in accepting this as the only explanation of the relationship between Sextus and his source material as preserved by the *Pythagorean Sentences* and Porphyry.[63] Since the alphabetical order of the *Pythagorean Sentences* is probably not original, they represent a secondary level in the transmission of the pagan corpus used by Sextus. In some instances, however, Sextus seems to have shortened or split longer sentences.[64] According to Turner, Sextus split up his source because he was "prompted by an attachment to brevity and mystery"[65] and "favoured

[61] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 69.

[62] *Marc.* 20: θεοῦ γὰρ γνῶσις ποιεῖ βραχὺν λόγον. Porphyry's text as it stands could be the result of a scribal error.

[63] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 152.

[64] E.g. *Pyth.* 121b (= *Sext.* 127).

[65] Martha Lee Turner, "On the Coherence of the Gospel *according to Philip*", in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Lit-*

the gnomic over the discursive".[66] By combining Prov 10:19 with *Sext.* 156–157 (= *Clit.* 31–32), Sextus not only established a connection between two traditions, but also turned the preference for brevity in his pagan source into a devotional as well as stylistic statement. If the πολυλογία denounced in the Bible causes people to sin, gnomic βραχυλογία is the only means of communication suitable to the Christian believer. Sextus' interpretation of Prov 10:19 LXX never results in an astute justification of verbosity as in Origen's *Comm. Jo.* 5.5. As if in agreement with Buffon's adage: "Le style est l'homme même",[67] the wise believers envisaged in the *Sentences* are compelled by their very own spiritual nature to use gnomic brevity as the only appropriate style for discussing Christian faith. The preference for the short discourse in Sextus is not a mere matter of style, but becomes a moral choice insofar as the believers' brevity prevents them from sinning.

D. Sextus' Laconic Sage

I. Concise Socrates, concise Moses, concise Jesus

The adoption of the ideal of brevity constitutes a central philosophical influence from the source material on Sextus. Many Greek philosophers considered brachylogy the primary form of transmission of wisdom. The distinction between the brief and the long discourse referred to in *Sext.* 156–157 is often mentioned in Plato's works. In *Gorg.* 449c, for example, Socrates invites Gorgias, who claims to be skilled in the art of brevity (cf. *Gorg.* 449b), to use βραχυλογία rather than μακρολογία. The motif of the long and brief discourse is central above all in the *Protagoras*. In *Prot.* 335c, Socrates praises Protagoras for his skills at fashioning brief (ἐν βραχυλογίᾳ) as well as long (ἐν μακρολογίᾳ) discourses, saluting his wisdom (σοφὸς γὰρ εἶ). Socrates, however, claims not to be versed in the art of lengthy speeches, asserting that he prefers brevity.[68] As in the *Sentences*,

erature Commemoration, ed. by John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, Leiden 1997, pp. 223–250, 239.

[66] Turner, "Coherence", 240, see also Turner, *Philip*, 251.

[67] Buffon, "Discours", 9.

[68] Cf. *Prot.* 335b. Socrates' distaste for rhetoricians and ironic admission of rhetorical inadequacy are a frequent feature in Socratic dialectic. In *Alc. maj.* 106b, Socrates declares that he is not gifted enough to εἰπεῖν λόγον μακρόν. That brevity constituted Socrates' favourite stylistic choice has been argued by Antonio Capizzi, *Socrate e i personaggi filosofi di Platone. Uno studio sulle strutture della testimonianza platonica e un'edizione delle testimonianze contenute nei dialoghi*, Roma 1969, 157 and Mario Montuori,

Socrates' predilection for brachylogy over macrology is not a mere matter of style. Brachylogy is part of Socrates' dialectical strategy and functions as an argumentative trump card that enables the philosopher to disclose the limits of rhetoric as a form of investigation of the truth. In *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy*, Seth Benardete has illustrated how Socrates' preference for brachylogy over macrology is a ploy to demonstrate the inefficacy of all rhetorical effort. Socrates uses brachylogy to undermine every discourse, long or short, rather than to express truths for which macrology would be less suitable.[69]

However, the claim that the brief discourse is preferable to the long represents popular views whose echo probably still resonates also in *Sext.* 155–156.[70] In *Leg.* 641e, Plato says that Athenians are more inclined to be πολύλογοι, while Spartans are concise (βραχύλογοι) and Cretans favour πολύνοια, or thoughtfulness. The Athenian character of the dialogue mentions Attic wordiness to convince his interlocutors that sometimes a lengthy discourse, like the one which follows in *Leg.* 642a, is necessary. The mention of Spartan brevity introduces a well-known motif. In *Protagoras*, Socrates argues that Spartan brevity had been the cornerstone of the wisdom of the Seven Sages, the earliest form of philosophical education in ancient Greece. *Prot.* 342b–343c explains that the Spartans owe their success more to their education and wisdom than to physical training.[71] The Seven Sages, says Socrates, were: "Followers, admirers and disciples of the Spartan education".[72] According to Socrates, well-known short sayings (ῥήματα βραχέα) like: "Know yourself" (γνῶθι σαυτόν) and: "Nothing in excess" (μηδὲν ἄγαν) belonged to this Lacedaemonian tradition:

ὅτι οὗτος ὁ τρόπος ἦν τῶν παλαιῶν τῆς φιλοσοφίας, βραχυλογία τις Λακωνική (*Prot.* 343b)

Because this was the manner of the philosophy of the ancients, a certain Laconic brevity.

It is difficult to establish with any certainty how far Sextus' Neopythagorean source material depended directly on Plato's discourse about brachylogy and macrology. Later attempts to harmonise Platonism and Pythagoreanism attribute the same love of brevity directly to Pythagoras, who was

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Socrates: Physiology of a Myth, translated by J. M. P. Langdale and M. Langdale, Amsterdam 1981, 185 particularly n.55.

[69] Seth Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's* Gorgias *and* Phaedrus, Chicago (Ill.) 1991, 13: "It is not obvious that short speeches are rhetorically neutral and bring about instruction".

[70] Morgan, *Morality*, 49 highlights the wide circulation of sayings against talkativeness.

[71] For a different opinion about the Spartans, see Morgan, *Morality*, 48.

[72] οὗτοι πάντες ζηλωταὶ καὶ ἐρασταὶ καὶ μαθηταὶ ἦσαν τῆς Λακεδαιμονίων παιδείας, *Prot.* 343a.

seen as a mythologised portrayal of the ideal Platonic savant.[73] In his treatise *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Iamblichus explains that Pythagoras handed down to his followers short and often obscure *akousmata* precisely because of his commitment to brachylogy. Commenting on the Pythagorean adage: "Beginning is half of the all",[74] Iamblichus observes:

οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἡμιστιχίῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἑτέροις παραπλησίοις ὁ θειότατος Πυθαγόρας τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐνέκρυπτε ζώπυρα τοῖς δυναμένοις ἐναύσασθαι, βραχυλογίᾳ τινὶ ἐναποθησαυρίζων ἀπερίβλεπτον καὶ παμπληθῆ θεωρίας ἔκτασιν (*Vit. Pyth.* 162.3–7).

But not only in that half-line, but in others like it, the most divine Pythagoras hid the sparks of truth for those able to kindle them; his brevity of speech conceals a boundless treasury of knowledge.[75]

While brevity is typical of sound philosophy, idle talking traditionally characterises charlatanry and poor reasoning as in Eupolis' description of Socrates as a πτωχὸς ἀδολεσχής.[76] Porphyry also believed that brachylogy was a sign of philosophical excellence. In the *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry describes Plotinus' style as a perfect mixture of imagination and brevity:

Ἐν δὲ τῷ γράφειν σύντομος γέγονε καὶ πολύνους βραχύς τε καὶ νοήμασι πλεονάζων ἢ λέξεσι, τὰ πολλὰ ἐνθουσιῶν καὶ ἐκπαθῶς φράζων † καὶ τὸ συμπαθείας ἢ παραδόσεως. (*Vit. Plot.* 14).

In writing he is concise and full of thought. He puts things shortly and abounds more in ideas than in words; he generally expresses himself in a tone of rapt inspiration, and states what he himself really feels about the matter and not what has been handed down by tradition.[77]

In Roman times, the philosophical debate about concision had left the realm of rhetoric and entered the dominion of the moral debate on virtue. Middle Platonism and Stoicism had developed the traditional distrust of loquacity into a stricter view of brevity as a matter of self-restraint and discipline. Plutarch argued that the five-year silence forced on Pythagorean new adepts was meant to limit the πολυλογία caused by their πολυμάθεια.[78] In the spurious *De liberis educandis*, the passage from rhetoric to ethics pertains to traditional Greek education. The author says that children should not be taught to deliver wordy discourses to please the crowds, as

[73] On the lives of Pythagoras as a Platonic manifesto in Porphyry and Iamblichus, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 134.

[74] ἀρχὴ δέ τοι ἥμισυ παντός, *Vit. Pyth.* 162.2.

[75] ET Clark, *Life*, 72–73.

[76] *Fragmenta* 352.

[77] ET Plotinus, *Porphyry on Plotinus. Enneads I*, translated by Arthur H. Armstrong, LCL 440, Cambridge (Mass.) 1966, 39 and 41.

[78] *Curios.* 519c.

wise spirits are not concerned with such things. The wordy excess of school rhetoric makes the young self-indulgent, exposing them to the risk of πολυλογία.[79] According to Pseudo-Plutarch, young people who try to please the crowds with their rhetoric grow up to be unrestrained (ἄσωτοι) and fond of pleasure (φιλήδονοι).[80] Here πολυλογία is connected to morality; it encourages bad habits and does not achieve what education should provide. Stoic writers of the first and second century also developed a concept of style based on concision as a form of self-discipline. In *Ep.* 59.4, Seneca praises Lucilius for his brevity and stylistic control.[81] Marcus Aurelius states in *Meditations* 1.7 that among the things that his teacher Rusticus taught him was the advice to achieve discipline by avoiding sophisms, idle speculations and even poetry and rhetorical exercises as activities not suitable for the true sage but only for a sophist.[82]

Sextus' interpretation of Prov 10:19 LXX in the light of the philosophical concern about brevity probably shows how Sextus thought that Scripture required the same austerity and self-control as traditional Greek culture. Philo also bridged his biblical legacy with the philosophical culture of his time, as Sextus did. Like Sextus, Philo is responsive to βραχυλογία as the appropriate style of wisdom. In *Opif.* 130, Philo explains why the account of creation contained in Jewish scripture seems philosophically sketchy:

καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὴ κατὰ μέρος <ἀλλ'> ἀθρόα πάντα διεξελήλυθε φροντίζων εἰ καί τις ἄλλος βραχυλογίας, οὐδὲν ἧττον τὰ ῥηθέντα ὀλίγα δείγματα τῆς τῶν συμπάντων ἐστὶ φύσεως (*Opif.* 130.3–5)

For although he [Moses] went through everything as a whole and not in detail, being concerned like no one else about brevity, even so the few things he says are examples of the nature of the whole.

Philo puts great emphasis on Moses' βραχυλογία, applying aspects of the Greek reflection on the appropriate form of wisdom to biblical characters.[83] In the same context, Philo had said that Moses had introduced the Sabbath to allow his followers to dedicate themselves to moral philosophy

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[79] *Lib. ed.* 6c.

[80] *Lib. ed.* 6b.

[81] *Habes verba in potestate, non effert te oratio nec longius quam destinasti trahit*. Frank I. Merchant, "Seneca the Philosopher and His Theory of Style", in *AJP* 26/1 (1905), pp. 44–59, 53 highlights, however, how Seneca equally opposed "The obscure brevity that was the fashion in the time of Sallust".

[82] See Francis, *Subversive*, 2.

[83] What Philo says about Moses recalls what Gorgias says of his rhetorical abilities in Plato's *Gorg.* 449c: καὶ γὰρ αὖ καὶ τοῦτο ἔν ἐστιν ὧν φημι, μηδένα ἂν ἐν βραχυτέροις ἐμοῦ τὰ αὐτὰ εἰπεῖν.

(τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν εἰς βελτίωσιν ἠθῶν καὶ τὸν τοῦ συνειδότος ἔλεγχον).[84] Having then to explain why Scripture does not contain more explicit and learned accounts of Moses' philosophy, Philo uses the argument of brachylogy in *Opif.* 130 as a way of justifying Moses' philosophical reticence through an equally philosophical motif. Although Sextus remains unsurpassed in his determination to adhere to the gnomic style of his source material, Philo's mention of Moses' brevity reveals the same intention to demonstrate a profound agreement between biblical wisdom and Greek philosophy. In another example, Philo refers to silence as a remedy against talkativeness as in Plutarch's explanation of Pythagorean silence in *Curios.* 519c mentioned above. Here Philo shows knowledge of traditions similar to those used by Sextus:

θρασύτατον γὰρ καὶ λαλίστατον ἀμαθία, ἧς πρῶτον μέν ἐστιν ἄκος ἡσυχία, δεύτερον δὲ προσοχὴ τῶν ἄξιόν τι προφερομένων ἀκοῆς (*Her.* 10.3–5).

For ignorance is an insolent and loquacious thing, whose first remedy is silence, and the second attention to those who utter something worth listening.

The reference to ignorance (ἀμαθία) as loquacious (λαλίστατος) recalls the gnome μακρολογία σημεῖον ἀμαθίας, which *Sext.* 157 (= *Clit.* 32, cf. *Pyth.* 10) derived from the Pythagorean source material. Although Philo and Sextus do not seem to share common sources, the similarities between the two texts may imply knowledge of a common Pythagorean tradition.[85]

The Christian tradition also seems to have known the pagan perception of the philosophical excellence of brevity. Apart from the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:7 (cf. *Did.*8.2), the Shepherd of Hermas also deals with talkativeness:

"Listen, now", he said, "concerning the earthly spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἐπιγείου) that is empty and powerless, and also foolish. First, the person who appears to have this spirit exalts himself and wishes to be given pride of place (θέλει πρωτοκαθεδρίαν ἔχειν); and he is immediately impetuous, shameless (ἀναιδής), and garrulous (πολύλαλος), and he indulges himself with many luxuries and with many other deceptions. Moreover, he receives wages for his prophecy – without them, he does not prophesy (Herm. *Mand.* 11.11–12).[86]

In this passage, the Shepherd of Hermas offers some criteria to expose prophets with an earthly spirit, as *Did.* 11 teaches to tell true prophets from

[84] *Opif.* 128.

[85] In favour of a Neopythagorean influence on Philo's treatment of silence is Odo Casel, *De philosophorum Graecorum silentio mystico*, Giessen 1919, 85: "Silentium Philonis Neopythagoreorum silentii simillimum est, id quod non solum eo explicatur, quod utraque schola sensu mystico imbuta erat, sed etiam quod ipse Philo philosophiae Neopythagoricae non ignarus erat".

[86] ET Ehrman, *Fathers*, 2:289.

false prophets. Alongside the traditional giveaways of Christian false prophets such as love of money, misbehaviour and inconsistency with the truth taught, as in *Did*. 11.4–12, the Shepherd provides a new infallible criterion; those who falsely claim to be prophets are recognized because they are too πολύλαλοι, too loquacious. As with the exposure of the idle discourses of sophists and unrestrained young rhetoricians in Plato, Pseudo-Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, the Shepherd sees πολυλαλία as suspicious and a potential sign of depravity. A second example of the Christian use of the concept of brevity as a criterion of philosophical and moral excellence is offered by Justin Martyr. Introducing his cento of teachings of Jesus in *1 Apol.* 15–17, Justin observes:

> We thought it worthwhile, before the demonstration, to make mention of some few of the teachings of Christ himself, and let it be for you, as powerful kings, to examine whether we have been taught and do ourselves teach these things truthfully. And his words are brief (βραχεῖς) and concise (σύντομοι), for he was not a sophist (οὐ γὰρ σοφιστὴς ὑπῆρχεν), but his speech was the power of God (δύναμις θεοῦ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ) (*1 Apol.* 14.4–5).[87]

The fact that the words of Jesus in Justin are βραχεῖς and σύντομοι, exactly like Plotinus' writing style in *Vit. Plot.* 14, does not imply a direct dependence of the two texts. The passage above, however, shows how central the traditional bias against talkativeness and in favour of brevity was in the description of the ideal sage. The emphasis on brevity as a sign of wisdom and sound philosophy was so crucial that even Jesus has to be characterised as concise in Christian authors with philosophical aspirations like Justin. As with Pseudo-Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, Justin's concern is to show that Jesus was not a σοφιστής. As with Moses in Philo's *Opif.* 130, however, the observation about Jesus' brevity probably has the twofold function of demonstrating the soundness of his doctrine and at the same time of neutralising any accusation of lack of rhetorical skills.

The example of the *Sentences* is central for the understanding of this Christian interest in brevity. The *Sentences* constitute the only text for which a direct use of a Greek source on βραχυλογία has been demonstrated. Sextus illustrates, therefore, the encounter between Greek emphasis on brevity as a necessary element of the philosophical demeanour of the pagan sage and the biblical tradition. It is through works like the *Sentences* that Christianity consolidated its taste for brevity. Certainly, the philosophical meaning that Greco-Roman thought attached to brachylogy was not unknown to other Christian authors. As mentioned above, in *Strom.* 5.46 Clement lists brevity among the stylistic requirements of the right interpre-

[87] ET *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr. Apologies*, translated by Dennis Minns and Paul Parvis, Oxford 2009, 113. See also Meeks, *Origins*, 72.

tation of Scripture. However, the difference between the *Sentences* and other early Christian writings consists in the fact that Sextus' pagan source material imposes on the Christian author not only the ideal of brevity, but also the choice of a literary genre, namely that of the gnomology. Sextus' commitment to maintain the stylistic dictates of gnomic brevity shows his intention to set his Christian collection in the wider landscape of the aphoristic wisdom of his time. The genre of the *Sentences* suggests that Sextus intended to convey the idea of continuity between Jewish-Christian and pagan wisdom. Through the use of aphoristic brachylogy, Christians were able to express their faith using the same means of communication that Plato saw as the origin of any philosophy.

The effects of the adoption of brevity were not limited to Greek speaking second-century Christianity. Ambrose, for example, interpreted Prov 10:19 like Sextus as an exhortation to brevity:

> *By a multitude of words thou shalt not escape sin.* Disputes overflow with richness of words, while devotion preserves the fear of God. For this reason the one who is sparing with words is rich in Spirit (*parcus in verbis, dives in spiritu*); he prefers to fear [God] than to throw idle words about what is true (*quam vana veri verba jactare*): fear is the discipline of wisdom (*disciplina sapientiae*), while talkativeness is the destruction of innocence and virtue (*loquacitas innocentiae virtutisque naufragium*), and an invitation to error and mischief (*Enarrat. Ps.* 36.28).

Ambrose, like Pseudo-Plutarch, saw talkativeness as morally dangerous, as indicated by the observation: *loquacitas innocentiae virtutisque naufragium*.[88] Although a direct dependence between the two authors cannot be established, Ambrose's line of thought is close to Sextus'. As in Sextus' exhortations to brevity, Ambrose's ideal believers are brief (*parcus in verbis*) as their brevity is a sign of their fear of God and wisdom. The reticence that Ambrose's concise Christian should observe even about truth (*vana veri verba jactare*) evokes the restraint that Sextus requires from the believer even when speaking the truth about God: περὶ θεοῦ καὶ τἀληθῆ λέγειν κίνδυνος οὐ μικρός (*Sext.* 352). As mentioned above, the same sentence is cited by Origen in *Hom. Ezech.* 1.11 and *Philoc.* 5.1. Sextus, however, found the maxim in his source material, as it appears with minor variants also in *Pyth.* 55 and *Marc.* 15 showing that the reticence endorsed by Sextus and Origen originated in pagan circles.[89] Also the remark that the rich in spirit should be *parcus in verbis* is close to the *Sentences* and particularly to Rufinus' rendition of *Sext.* 145 (*sapiens paucis*

[88] Similarly in the *Pseudo-Clementines* πολυλογία is not suitable for those who have chosen virginity, cf. *Ep. virg.* 1.8.

[89] *Marc.* 15: καὶ γὰρ καὶ τἀληθῆ λέγειν ἐπὶ τούτων περὶ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ ψευδῆ κίνδυνον ἴσον φέρει.

verbis innotescit), which appears also in Benedict's *Reg.* 7.[90] Rufinus' Latin translation is the most telling example of how Sextus' stylistic choice influenced also Christians in the west. Although the need for a brief and easy book had been expressed by Avita, who commissioned the work, Rufinus in the *Praefatio* to the translation approvingly mentions the *brevitas* of Sextus twice. Brevity seems to have also been Rufinus' criterion for the choice of the lost work which accompanied the Latin translation.[91] As has been demonstrated by Bouffartigue, the Latin translation shows that Rufinus tried to conform to the *brevitas* of the Greek original.[92] In this way, the preference for brevity which Sextus found in his source material continued to have a profound impact on Christian ascetic literature even outside the boundaries of the Greek language.

II. From brevity to silence

The counterpart of the Greco-Roman inclination towards the use of philosophical brevity was an intensified interest in the silence of the sage. Identified sometimes with the Pythagorean silence, the silence of the Greco-Roman sage became a mark of wisdom and a cultivated way of practising self-discipline. In *Ench.* 33, Epictetus shows how the connection between silence and brevity works, discussing the distinctive marks (χαρακτῆρα) of the true philosopher. When not uttering few brief and strictly necessary words, the sage should predominantly remain silent:

καὶ σιωπὴ τὸ πολὺ ἔστω ἢ λαλείσθω τὰ ἀναγκαῖα καὶ δι' ὀλίγων (*Ench.* 33.2)

And be silent for the most part, or else make only the most necessary remarks, and express these in few words.[93]

Epictetus continues by laying out a set of rules for the sage's austerity. He lists conversation topics which should be avoided, for example gladiators and horse-races, and advises the philosopher to avoid laughter.[94] Brevity and silence become here a form of active renunciation. The same development from brevity to silence as ascetic self-control is observable in later Platonic accounts of Pythagorean silence.[95] Iamblichus offers a remarkable example for the reception history of Pythagorean silence:

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[90] In *Reg.* 6, Benedict quotes Prov 10:19, like Sextus and Ambrose.

[91] *Praefatio* 9,13 and 21.

[92] Bouffartigue, "Traduction", 92.

[93] ET Oldfather, *Discourses*, 2:517.

[94] *Ench.* 33.2–4.

[95] Epictetus himself shows familiarity with the Pythagorean tradition, see his references to the *Golden Verses* in *Diatr.* 3.7.26 (citing *Carmen aureum* 3–4); *Diatr.* 3.10.2–3 (citing *Carmen aureum* 40–44) and *Diatr.* 4.6.32 (citing *Carmen aureum* 40).

After this, he [Pythagoras] imposed a five-year silence (σιωπὴν πενταετῆ) on his adherents, to test their self-control (ἀποπειρώμενος πῶς ἐγκρατείας ἔχουσιν): control (κρατεῖν) of the tongue, he thought, is the most difficult type of self-control (χαλεπώτερον τῶν ἄλλων ἐγκρατευμάτων), a truth made apparent to us by those who established the mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια) (*Vit. Pyth.* 72).[96]

In this passage, Iamblichus reinterprets the Pythagorean discipline of silence as a test of the adepts' predisposition to ἐγκράτεια.[97] Although Iamblichus still sees Pythagorean silence in the light of the secrecy expected from the initiates of mystery cults (τὰ μυστήρια), the practice seems now to be seen as a form, and indeed a difficult form, of ascetic discipline. As Odo Casel has shown, the importance of silence in Greek philosophy cannot be separated from its origins in the devout and sacred, awe-inspiring, silence of the Greek mystical tradition.[98] Horace had written of the *fidele silentium* that binds the participants to the Eleusinian mysteries.[99] Diogenes Laertius reports a note from Alexander Polyhistor's *Successions of Philosophers* that Pythagoreans worshipped the gods in religious silence (εὐφημία).[100]

The motif of silence as an ascetic practice is contained in the fictional *Life of Secundus*, a second-century philosophical novel extant in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian and Arabic. Having caused his mother's death, Secundus takes a vow of silence (σιωπὴν ἀσκήσας), which he does not break even when interrogated by the emperor Hadrian, eager to consult the philosopher's wisdom. Determined to keep silent even under threat of death, Secundus in the end is rewarded by the emperor for his philosophical commitment. Because Secundus in the Greek *Life* is called both a Pythagorean (Πυθαγορικὸν ἐξειληφὼς βίον) and a follower of Cynic self-discipline (τὴν τοῦ κυνὸς προφέρων ἄσκησιν), it is difficult to attribute the work to a specific philosophical school.[101] Although Secundus' vow of silence is presented as Pythagorean, its origins are probably to be seen in the traditions of the popular morality of the time.[102] Secundus' heroic silence,

[96] ET Clark, *Life*, 31.

[97] On silence among the Pythagoreans, see Burkert, *Lore*, 179 and Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8.

[98] For the religious aspects of the Greek teaching about silence, see in particular Casel, *Silentio*, 3–27.

[99] *Carm.* 3.2.25, see Casel, *Silentio*, 11.

[100] *Vit. Phil.* 8.33. On Alexander Polyhistor as depositary of an authentic Pythagorean tradition, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 79–80.

[101] *Secundus the Silent Philosopher. The Greek Life of Secundus*, ed. by Ben Edwin Perry, APA Philological Monographs 22, Ithaca (N.Y.) 1964, 68. On the similarities between Cynic and Pythagorean lifestyle, see Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 49 and 72.

[102] On speech and silence in popular morality, cf. Menander, *Sententiae* 292 and 306, see Lazaridis, *Wisdom*, 30 n.71 and also 140 and 209 and Morgan, *Morality*, 106.

however, possesses the same characteristics of restraint and ascetic performance observable in the passage from brevity to silence in Epictetus' *Enchiridion* mentioned above. This suggests that between the first and the second century concision and silence had become a key feature in the description of the ideal sage in pagan culture. Another example of this comes from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, the first century miracle worker. Philostratus' work was probably intended to be a philosophical rehabilitation of a controversial figure originally considered to be no more than a γόης, a sorcerer and a charlatan.[103] In order to strengthen Apollonius' philosophical claims and fend off the accusation of γοητεία, Philostratus models Apollonius' life on Pythagoras, highlighting the similarities between the asceticism of the two and stressing Apollonius' observance of Pythagorean silence.[104] Philostratus also depicts Pythagorean silence as a religious practice:

> And the followers of Pythagoras accepted as law any decisions laid down by him, and honoured him as an emissary from Zeus, but imposed, out of respect for their divine character, a ritual silence (ἡ σιωπὴ δὲ ὑπὲρ τοῦ θείου) on themselves. For many were the divine and ineffable secrets which they had heard (πολλὰ γὰρ θεῖά τε καὶ ἀπόρρητα ἤκουον), but which it was difficult for any to keep (κρατεῖν) who had not previously learnt that silence also is a mode of speech (ὅτι καὶ τὸ σιωπᾶν λόγος) (*Vit. Apoll.* 1.1.19–25).[105]

Philostratus' observation that "also silence is a form of discourse" (ὅτι καὶ τὸ σιωπᾶν λόγος, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.1.25) recalls a maxim extant in *Clit.* 38, one of the pagan witnesses of Sextus' source material. Although all Greek MSS and Rufinus omit it, Chadwick and Elter emended the Greek text of the *Sentences* by inserting *Clit.* 38 as *Sext.* 164b following the reading of the Syriac, which lists *Clit.* 38 among the other sentences of Sextus.[106] The discovery of a Coptic version of *Sext.* 164b in NHC XII,*1*.15 has shown that their conjecture was correct:

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[103] Francis, *Subversive*, 97.

[104] Francis, *Subversive*, 105. Apollonius was said to have placated a mob without breaking his vow of silence, see Francis, *Subversive*, 113. The Pythagorean element of silence is present also in the letters attributed to Apollonius, see *The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana. A Critical Text with Prolegomena, Translation and Commentary*, ed. by Robert J. Penella, Leiden 1979, 135 and also Stobaeus *Flor.* 3.36.1.

[105] ET Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, the Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius*, voll. 1–2, translated by Frederick C. Conybeare, LCL 16–17, Cambridge (Mass.) 1912 and 1921, 1:5.

[106] de Lagarde, *Analecta*, 16.

ἡ αὐτὴ ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶ τοῦ λέγειν καὶ τοῦ σιωπᾶν (*Clit.* 38 = *Sext.* 164b).

Speaking and being silent require the same level of understanding.[107]

In the light of *Vit. Apoll.* 1.1.19–25 and *Clit.* 38, it is possible that the sentence belonged to the Pythagorean tradition.[108] The presence of this maxim in the Christian reworking confirms the cultural debt of Sextus' Christian circles to Pythagoreanism. Philostratus' observation that Pythagorean silence was perceived as a ritual silence about the divine mysteries (ἡ σιωπὴ δὲ ὑπὲρ τοῦ θείου) recalls another Pythagorean element which may have influenced Sextus' collection. As seen in Alexander Polyhistor in Diogenes Laertius' *Vit. Phil.* 8.33, ritual silence constituted the Pythagorean way of honouring the gods with εὐφημία. Charles Kahn has argued that Alexander's remark may refer to "a living cult that maintains a number of ritual observances characteristic of the Pythagorean tradition from the earliest times".[109] If Kahn is right, reticence about God and the preference for silence in the *Sentences* may be the result of the influence of the Pythagoreanism of Sextus' source material:[110]

λόγον περὶ θεοῦ σιγᾶν ἄμεινον ἢ προπετῶς διαλέγεσθαι (*Sext.* 366).

In talk about God, silence is better than reckless words.[111]

Porphyry knows a similar maxim νόμιζε αἱρετώτερον εἶναι σιγᾶν ἢ λόγον εἰκῇ προέσθαι περὶ θεοῦ (*Marc.* 15),[112] which suggests that the sentence belonged to the Pythagorean source material. The reticence about God in *Sext.* 366 is an example of Pythagorean forms of devotion and discipline which, through Sextus, entered the repertoire of the Christian sage.

σοφὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ σιγῶν τὸν θεὸν τιμᾷ· [εἰδὼς διὰ τίνα σιγᾷ] (*Sext.* 427).

Even while silent the wise man honours God [since he knows on Whose behalf he is silent].[113]

As Chadwick has suggested, the explicative gloss εἰδὼς διὰ τίνα σιγᾷ in MS Π may show some Christian cautiousness in accepting silence in itself as a

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[107] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 35. NHC XII,*1*.15 reads: ⲉⲣⲉⲩⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧⲏⲙⲏ ⲧⲉ ⲉⲱⲗⲭⲉ ⲟⲩⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧⲏⲙⲏ ⲟⲛ ⲧⲉ ⲉⲕⲁⲣⲱϥ.

[108] Alvyn Pettersen, "Sending Heretics to Coventry? Ignatius of Antioch on Reverencing Silent Bishops", in *VC* 44/4 (1990), pp. 335–350, 336 n.15 ascribes the sentence καὶ τὸ σιωπᾶν λόγος to the Pythagoreans.

[109] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 83.

[110] Ott, *Sextiusschrift*, 31 considers the theme of self-control in talking as evidence of asceticism, which he attributes to the Pythagorean character of the *Sentences*.

[111] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 61.

[112] Cf. also *Sext.* 152.

[113] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 69.

way of honouring God.[114] The sentence originated in the pagan tradition of Sextus' source material. It appears also in *Pyth.* 14 and *Marc.* 16, whilst MS Y has it in the appendix under *Sext.* 589. The pagan source probably contained numerous sentences conveying similar views, as witnessed by other instances in the Greek appendices.[115] Through Pythagorean silence, the *Sentences* offer to Christian believers the opportunity of making of Christianity a cult closer to the philosophical cult of Platonic Neopythagoreans, transmitting also to Christianity the concept of silence as an intrinsically religious practice.[116]

III. The austerity of the Christian sage

The *Sentences* are not the only case in which Pythagorean imagery is used in a different religious context. In his description of the Essenes in *J.W.* 2.119–161, Josephus uses the motif of silence to highlight the self-discipline of the sect. Josephus' account is rather idealised and was probably modelled after Pythagoreanism.[117] Having said that the Essenes lunch in common sitting in silence (μεθ'ἡσυχίας, *J.W.* 2.130) except for grace,[118] Josephus describes the adepts dining at home either in silence or restraining themselves from speaking as far as possible:[119]

> No clamour or disturbance ever pollutes their dwelling; they speak in turn (ἐν τάξει), each making way for his neighbour. To persons outside the silence of those within appears like some awful mystery (ὡς μυστήριόν τι φρικτόν); it is in fact due to their invariable sobriety and to the limitation of their allotted portions of meat and drink to the demands of nature (ἡ διηνεκὴς νῆψις καὶ τὸ μετρεῖσθαι παρ' αὐτοῖς τροφὴν καὶ ποτὸν μέχρι κόρου) (*J.W.* 2.132–133).[120]

Josephus' description of the silent meals of the Essenes suggests ascetic self-control. In the passage above, silence is a sign of the Essenes' unceas-

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[114] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 180. But the gloss is not attested in Latin and Syriac.

[115] *Sext.* 578: τιμὴ μεγίστη θεῷ θεοῦ γνῶσις ἐν σιγῇ.

[116] Ibid.: "It was characteristic of Pythagoreanism to ascribe value to silence for its own sake". Isocrates, *Bus.* 29 observes that Pythagoreans acquired more fame with their silence than others with their words.

[117] On the parallels and analogies between the Essenes and the Pythagoreans with some remarks on Josephus' description of the Essenes, see Taylor, *Pythagoreans*, 15–36.

[118] On the meals of the Essenes, see Brown, *Body*, 39.

[119] Self-control in speaking at a banquet is mentioned elsewhere in Jewish literature; for example in Sir 32:7–8, where young guests speak only if necessary and no more than twice (μόλις δίς) whilst older diners should be brief ὡς γινώσκων καὶ ἅμα σιωπῶν. On silence among the Essenes, see also *J.W.* 2.146.

[120] ET Josephus, *Volume IX*, translated by Henry S. J. Thackeray, LCL 433, Cambridge (Mass.) 1965, 375. A similar disciplined behaviour characterised the meetings of Philo's Therapeutae, cf. *Contempl.* 80.

ing sobriety (διηνεκὴς νῆψις) and moderation (τὸ μετρεῖσθαι). A similar disciplined behaviour (κατὰ τάξεις) and modest silence (ἡσυχία) characterised the worship meetings of Philo's Therapeutae (*Contempl.* 80).[121] The Essenes' self-control and silence discloses Josephus' intention to depict the Essenes as a utopic society of ascetic sages.[122] As in later Neopythagorean authors, silence and brevity belongs here to the ideal demeanour of the true sage. As with the μυστήρια of Iamblichus' account of Pythagorean silence (*Vit. Pyth.* 72), Josephus' remark that the silence of the Essenes gave an awe of mystery to their meetings adds a tone of mysticism to the description. Despite the Hellenic elements in Josephus' portrayal of the Essenes, reticence and silence probably reflected an actual disposition among Jewish sages. As seen in Prov 10:19 LXX, Jewish wisdom contained references to the danger of wordiness and the virtues of silence. Prov 17:28 says that even a dim-witted man (אויל) is considered a sage when silent. In Sirach, the talkative is hateful,[123] while the wise remains silent until the right moment: ἄνθρωπος σοφὸς σιγήσει ἕως καιροῦ (Sir 20:7a). Many of these maxims have parallels in the pagan gnomic tradition.[124] Although the exact relationship between the *Damascus Document* and Josephus' Essenes is unclear,[125] its laws seem to echo the importance of reticence mentioned by Josephus:

וביום השבת אל ידבר איש דבר נבל ורק
(CD 10.17–18)

And on the day of Sabbath, nobody should say a foolish or idle word.

As with the injunction not to socialise (ערב) voluntarily on a Sabbath and the ban on having sex in the Holy City,[126] the prohibition of idle conversation represents a stricter interpretation of Jewish law.[127]

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[121] Robert M. Grant, "Early Alexandrian Christianity", in *CH* 40/2 (1971), pp. 133–144, 138 sees Philo as an exponent of a "Pythagoreanising Judaism". Philo, however, never explicitly mentions Pythagoreanism in his *De vita contemplativa*, see David T. Runia, "Why does Clement of Alexandria Call Philo 'The Pythagorean'?", in *VC* 49/1 (1995), pp. 1–22, 11 n.56.

[122] See Brown, *Body*, 38–40.

[123] Sir 20:5: ἔστιν σιωπῶν εὑρισκόμενος σοφός, καὶ ἔστιν μισητὸς ἀπὸ πολλῆς λαλιᾶς.

[124] Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes*, AB 39, New York 1987, 300.

[125] See Charlotte Hempel, *The Laws of the Damascus Document. Sources, Traditions and Redaction*, Leiden 1998, 5–7.

[126] CD 11.4–5 and 12.1–2.

[127] But see Isa 58:13. On the strict views of the *Damascus Document*, see Cecilia Wassen, *Women in the Damascus Document*, Leiden 2005, 102. On CD 10.17–18 and the Sabbath, see Steven D. Fraade, "Looking for Legal Midrash at Qumran", in *Biblical Per-*

The prohibition of idle conversations, together with a preference for silence, continued in the rabbinic era. The rabbis interpreted Prov 10:19 as an exhortation to brevity and austere silence, just as Sextus in *Sext.* 155–157:

> Simeon his son said: All my days I have grown up among the Wise, and I have not found anything better for one than silence (ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב משתיקה); and not study is the chief thing but action; and whoso multiplies words occasions sin (וכל־המרב דברים מביא חטא) (*m. 'Abot* 1:17).[128]

The multiplying words (רבה דברים) recalls the "many words" (ברב דברים) of Prov 10:19 MT, which the LXX translated with πολυλογία. The Mishnah shows that the rabbis attributed great significance to austerity and silence. In *m. 'Abot* 3:13, rabbi Akiba says that "laughter and levity accustom a man to immorality" and that silence is "a fence (סיג) for wisdom".[129] In *m. 'Aboth* 6:6, a later addition, "little conversation" (במעות שיחה), "little sex" (במעות תענוג), "little sleep" (במעות שנה) and "little laughter" (במעות שחוק) are listed among the 48 requirements for the study of Torah.[130] In later Judaism the silent disciple of the wise, who spares words whenever possible, had become a model of wisdom. Josephus and Philo suggest that this model was close to, and probably reliant on, similar traditions on the description of the true wise in the pagan world.[131]

As seen above, Sextus reflects a similar development in Christianity. With the adoption of brevity and silence from his source material, Sextus was offering to his readers a depiction of Christian sages informed by pagan, probably Pythagorean, elements as Philo and Josephus had done with their Jewish 'philosophers'. Early Christian history offers at least one other relevant example of 'Pythagoreanising Christians'. In *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.7 Eusebius says that in Alexandria the Christian Gnostic Basilides imposed on his followers a five-year period of silence like the Pythagoreans.[132] If true, this piece of information would prove the popularity of Pythagoreanism in Alexandrian Christian circles, in one of the cities where the *Sentences* are

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spectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. by Michael E. Stone and Esther G. Chazon, Leiden 1998, pp. 59–79, 72–74.

[128] ET *Pirkē Aboth: The Tractate 'Fathers' from the Mishnah, Commonly Called 'Sayings of the Fathers'*, ed. by R. Travers Herford, New York 1925, 35.

[129] ET Herford, *Aboth*, 85.

[130] See Herford, *Aboth*, 157. Further down in *m. 'Abot* 6:6 the student of Torah is told to make "a fence for his words" (והעושה סיג לדבריו).

[131] See William Horbury, "*Cena pura* and Lord's Supper", in *Herodian Judaism and New Testament Study*, Tübingen 2006, pp. 104–141, 132 and Todd S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Cambridge 1988, 61–62 and 132.

[132] See Grant, "Alexandrian", 136.

believed to have originated.[133] Although nothing final can be said, the suggestion that Christians like the followers of Basilides may have had access to writings very similar to the *Sentences* or to their pagan source material is not unlikely. Sextus would offer a plausible explanation of one possible way in which Christians like Basilides may have had access to Pythagorean material. In spite of his polemical treatise against Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, even Eusebius wrote of Pythagorean silence with approval (*Hier*. 12).[134]

The account that some early Christians saw in silence and brevity a sign of wisdom and philosophical commitment could shed some light on other instances of Christian silence. In Ign. *Eph.* 1.15 and in Ign. *Phld.* 1.1, Ignatius praises the silence of the Christian bishop. This silence has been convincingly explained by Chadwick as imitation of God's silence.[135] Alvyn Pettersen has further explained that the silence praised by Ignatius refers to the "persuasiveness of silence in the face of falsehood", i.e. to the bishop's refusal to be drawn into polemical arguments with the heretics.[136] Ignatius does not explicitly refer to pagan philosophical traditions. However, the observations made à propos Sextus and the silence of the wise in early Christian circles suggest that Ignatius may also have seen the silent bishop as behaving like a true sage. Ignatius' silent bishop probably conveyed also an idea of moderation and humility. Ignatius himself sees it as a sign of modesty (ἐπιείκεια, Ign. *Phld*. 1.1). As seen in Epictetus and Iamblichus, philosophical approval of silence possessed ascetic undertones, presenting silence as training in self-control. Regarding silence, Sextus anticipates later Christian practice. The systematic collection of the *Apophthegmata patrum* included sayings of the Desert Fathers about silence in the fourth chapter which is dedicated to ἐγκράτεια.[137] Father Agatho is said to have observed silence by keeping a stone in his mouth for three years and Abba Poemen did not talk to other monks to signify his status of ascetic death

[133] van den Broek, "Silvanus", 269–270. On the predominance of Neopythagorean influences on Alexandrian philosophical circles, see Henny F. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism*, Oxford 2006, 74.

[134] See Dodds, *Anxiety*, 34 n.2.

[135] Henry Chadwick, "The Silence of Bishops in Ignatius", in *HTR* 43/2 (1950), pp. 169–172, 171–172: "God is silence; therefore when men see their bishop silent, the more reverence should they feel towards him, for it is then that he is most like God".

[136] Pettersen, "Silent", 346.

[137] *Apophthegmata patrum collectio sistematica* 4.18: ἀγάπα τὸ σιγᾶν ὑπὲρ τὸ λαλεῖν· ἡ σιωπὴ γὰρ θησαυρίζει, τὸ δὲ λαλῆσαι διασκορπίζει.

(ἀπέθανον γάρ, ὁ δὲ νεκρὸς οὐ λαλεῖ).[138] Gregory of Nazianzus would add the observance of silence to his practice of fasting (PG 37.1307).[139]

Similar observations may be made about Sextus' disapproval of laughter:

ἄμετρος γέλως σημεῖον ἀπροσεξίας.
σεαυτῷ διαχεῖσθαι πέρα τοῦ μειδιᾶν μὴ ἐπιτρέψῃς (*Sext.* 280a–b)

Immoderate laughter is a sign of inattentiveness.
Do not allow yourself more levity than a smile.[140]

Restraint from inopportune laughing – and crying – is also a characteristic of the followers of wisdom in Plato's *Laws*.[141] In *Resp.* 388e young men should not be inclined to laughter (ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ φιλογέλωτάς γε δεῖ εἶναι). Diogenes Laertius depicts both Pythagoras (*Vit. Phil.* 8.20) and Plato (*Vit. Phil.* 3.26) as never laughing. The same attitude is said of Pythagoras also in Porphyry's *Vit. Pyth.* 35, a passage which was later used by Athanasius in *Vit. Ant.* 14.[142] In *m. 'Abot* 3:13, laughter and levity lead a person to obscenity or immorality. A similar encouragement to a self-restrained smiling instead of immoderate laughing is found also in Sir 21:20.[143] Here Sirach and Sextus are very close. The connection between the two texts has already be noted by Chadwick in his comment to *Sext.* 280b.[144] Gerhard Delling has argued that *Sext.* 280a–b might be dependent on Sir 21:20, suggesting that *Sext.* 280a could be seen as a reshaping of the first member of Sirach's *parallelismus* (cf. Sir 21:20a), while *Sext.* 280b should be seen as a development of Sir 21:20b.[145] The linguistic similarities between Sextus and Sirach are too weak, however, to allow us to conclude *Sext.* 280a–b is an actual attempt to reshape Sir 21:20.

In any case once again Sextus seems to adopt for his Christian sage elements which were considered fitting characteristics of the philosopher *par*

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[138] *Apophthegmata patrum collectio sistematica* 4.7 and 10.38.

[139] Frances Young, "Christian Teaching", in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. by Frances Young et al., Cambridge 2004, pp. 464–484, 476.

[140] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 49.

[141] *Leg.* 732c. Gerrit J. de Vries, "Laughter in Plato's Writings", in *Mnemosyne* 38/3–4 (1985), pp. 378–381, 380–381 reminds that laughing remains an important element in *Phaedo*.

[142] Jan N. Bremmer, "Symbols of Marginality from Early Pythagoreans to Late Antique Monks", in *GR* 39/2 (1992), pp. 205–214, 208.

[143] Sir 21:20: μωρὸς ἐν γέλωτι ἀνυψοῖ φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀνὴρ δὲ πανοῦργος μόλις ἡσυχῇ μειδιάσει.

[144] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 175.

[145] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 212 and Wilken, "Wisdom", 148.

excellence.[146] Restraint of laughter was also important in the later ascetic tradition of Christianity. In the alphabetical collection of the *Apophthegmata patrum*, father Pambo, the disciple of Antony, is commended because he never smiled (μειδιάω) in his life, which probably should be taken as a reference to his sanctity.[147] For this reason, the daemons are said to have tried to make him laugh (γελάω) by parading in front of him holding a piece of wood with feathers and trying to make it fly. When the monk started laughing (γελάω) and the daemons rejoiced for their success, the narrator says that father Pambo immediately explained that he was not laughing (γελάω), but deriding (καταγελάω) them because of their powerlessness, since so many daemons were necessary to carry a single wooden wing. Apart from the naivety of the story, it is interesting to notice here that the fact that the Christian ascetics never laughed, and even more so never smiled (μειδιάω) surpassing in virtue Sirach's and Sextus' sages, is interpreted to be a sign of sanctity. Among the Christian authors who were more affected by philosophical aversion to laughing, the most relevant cases are that of Clement who dedicates an entire section of the *Paedagogus* to restraint of laughter (*Paed.* 2.45–48) and that of John Chrysostom, who in *Hom. Heb.* 15.4 argues that Jesus himself never laughed and therefore the true Christian should avoid levity and maintain a grave and solemn attitude in life.[148]

E. Conclusion

In the previous pages I have emphasised the role played by brevity and silence in the construction of the ideal Christian sage envisaged by Sextus in his collection. Sextus borrowed these motifs from his pagan sources. It has been argued that the interest of the source material in brevity and silence stemmed from traditions which considered these elements to be crucial to the moral demeanour of those who dedicated themselves to philosophy. I have also shown how the *Sentences* integrated the views of the pagan source material with similar themes from Scripture. In particular, Sextus included Prov 10:19 LXX, a saying on wordiness (πολυλογία) as cause of sin, in a cluster of maxims advocating brevity (βραχυλογία) against lengthy

[146] Bremmer, "Symbols", 212 sees resisting laughter in Christian asceticism as the result of Pythagorean influence.

[147] οὐδέποτε ἐμειδία τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, PG 65.372.17–18. It is not unlikely that Paul's smiling at Onesiphorus in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 4 conveys the same placid and benevolent sanctity.

[148] PG 63:122.7–8.

discourses (μακρολογία). This inclusion shows that Sextus intended to present both the philosophical and the biblical tradition as complementary and converging. Plato, and probably already Socrates, attributed great importance to brevity. Brachylogy was considered the earliest form of philosophical discourse in the Greek wisdom tradition. Later, together with silence, brevity became a display of self-control, as in Epictetus and in Iamblichus' recollection of early Pythagoreanism. It has been shown that the same concepts influenced Jewish authors like Philo and Josephus, who depicted pious Jews (Essenes or Therapeutae) and even Moses as versed in brevity and practising silence. I have also argued that in Sextus the concern for brevity affects the literary form and becomes a means of expression instead of mere conceptual preference. Through the compilation of a Christian gnomology, Sextus favoured the use of brevity in some Christian circles. A comparison with Origen and Clement, who were well aware of the stylistic and theological problems of wordiness but did not use brachylogy, has shown Sextus' unique approach.

Finally, I have argued that on the ideal of a self-restrained sage who talks little and never laughs, Christian authors who lived after Sextus' time built their understanding of the right behaviour of the Christian ascetic, in particular among the fathers of the Egyptian desert. Concerning Egypt, I have also shown that Alexandria had been one of the most important centres for the encounter between Jewish-Christian and Greco-Roman culture. Philo and, above all, Basilides, the heretical Christian from Alexandria who practised Pythagorean silence, are probably the closest historical examples of cultural circles similar to that in which the *Sentences* originated. Building on the influence that Sextus and his pagan sources had on Evagrius and on the anonymous author of the *Regula Magistri*, it is possible to conclude that Sextus' collection contributed to the adoption of philosophical brevity and contemplative silence in Christian monastic practice.[149]

F. Looking Forward

Brevity, silence and restraint of laughter represent the personal discipline of austerity that the Christian sage envisaged in the *Sentences* had to observe in his everyday life. As seen in this chapter, these elements are later to be found in the Christian ascetic tradition and particularly in the stories

[149] On the importance of silence in early Christian asceticism, see Caner, *Wandering*, 36–37 and David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2006, 15.

of the Desert Fathers. The next chapter will move from the personal austerity of the ascetic sage to their attitude towards their fellow humans. It will be shown how through their strict personal discipline the believers of the *Sentences* develop a social attitude of voluntary estrangement and contemplation which anticipates monastic solitude.

Chapter 5

The Social Life of the Ascetic Sage

A. Introduction

In *The Body and Society*, Peter Brown has highlighted the importance of seclusion and desert life for the spiritual geography of early Christian ascetics.[1] Continence for early Christian ascetics not only entailed a strict personal discipline and a constant struggle for self-control, but often required a movement, a dislocation. In the fourth century, this movement assumed the traits of a displacement, both physically and socially, from a world of relationships and interaction to a more or less symbolic deserted space. Secluded life in the wilderness often became the external reflection of the inner struggle of the ascetic to achieve self-control and be a stranger to the world and its temptations.[2] As Brown puts it "only a body rendered as dry as the desert sands could hope to keep its purity".[3] The desert of early Christian ascetics, however, was not always a real wasteland and sometimes not even a real place. It was rather a spiritual and relational condition in which ascetic discipline could be exercised in all its demanding aspects. As Susanna Elm has argued, continent Christians in fourth-century Egypt and Asia Minor knew multiple models of ascetic life, each of which involved various degrees of estrangement from human company. Alongside those who would choose the harshness of the real desert were those who would exercise their discipline in cities and towns and those who, as Elm says, lived "in between",[4] on the outskirts of villages, where social interaction was reduced, but isolation was not absolute.[5]

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[1] Brown, *Body*, 214.

[2] For Christian ascetics of the fourth and fifth century the desert was the place where it was possible to achieve *xeniteia* or alienation from the world. On *xeniteia* among early Christian monks see Caner, *Wandering*, 24–30. Desert, as opposed to the city life, is also the ideal arena for the endless battle of the monk against demonic powers, as shown by Brakke, *Demons*, 15.

[3] Brown, *Body*, 241.

[4] Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1994, 331.

[5] Anchorites in the Egyptian desert and coenobitic ascetics living in urban centres or at the margins of villages did not constitute two completely different options, but are to

The time in which the *Sentences of Sextus* were compiled was probably not characterised by a similar flourishing of ascetic options. Despite John Cassian's well-known claim that monasticism started in the apostolic age with the first Christian community in Jerusalem,[6] Christian texts contemporary with the *Sentences* do not contain explicit references to a secluded life or a call to the desert. Evidence of Christian asceticism in the second century is far less compelling than it is for the following centuries. This lack of explicit information on Christian ascetics in the earliest days of Christianity, together with a widespread scholarly prejudice that before Antony's time Christian devotion was not ascetic, has induced many students of Christian asceticism to overlook the importance of the second century in the making of monasticism.[7] As an artefact of second-century Christianity which had profound resonance among Christian ascetics of the fourth and fifth century (Jerome, Rufinus, Pelagius, Evagrius), the *Sentences* constitute an ideal test-case for the study of those ascetic habits of second-century Christians, which constituted the conceptual basis of later monastic discipline. Even though Sextus does not supply any argument for the predating of fully established monasticism before Antony's time, the *Sentences* refer to a number of ascetic practices which would later be associated with monastic life. These features do not suggest that monasticism was already a reality in second-century Christianity. The attitudes to God and fellow humans addressed by Sextus are rather to be considered for their seminal role in shaping devotional habits, which later merged into the historical phenomenon of monastic asceticism in the strict sense of the

be seen as aspects of the same phenomenon, though complex and nuanced, cf. James E. Goehring, "The Encroaching Desert: Literary and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt", in *Ascetics, Society and the Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, Harrisburg (Pa.) 1999, pp. 73–88, 81.

[6] See Acts 4:32–33 and Cassian, *Collationes patrum* 18.5. In Cassian's understanding coenobitic monasticism precedes the secluded life of the anchorites. On this claim and on the problems of the origins of monasticism, see William Harmless, *Desert Christians. An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism*, Oxford 2004, 417–418 and also John C. O'Neill, "The Origins of Monasticism", in *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. by Rowan Williams, Cambridge 1989, pp. 270–287, 274.

[7] See Finn, *Asceticism*, 2–3. Caner refers briefly to the model of the late antique holy man and to ascetic practices in the centuries preceding Constantine, but then rapidly moves to the increased interest in asceticism typical of the time following Constantine and the establishment of Christianity at the centre of Roman society, cf. Caner, *Wandering*, 5. The presence of "earliest ascetic movements", which existed "as early as the second century" is acknowledged by Dunn, *Monasticism*, 59 (also 6–7), but without further development. An outdated but evocative attempt to detect earlier, mostly Jewish, antecedents of the model of the monastic life can be found in O'Neill, "Origins", 283–286. See also Finn's "final thoughts" on the matter in Finn, *Asceticism*, 156–157.

word. Moreover, because of the peculiar nature of the *Sentences* as a Christian reworking of popular pagan wisdom, the study of the idea of a secluded life in Sextus is of crucial importance for the possible role played by pagan popular philosophy in the development of the attitude of early Christian ascetics towards their social context, a theme that has often been neglected by those studying the origins of monasticism.[8]

In the following pages I shall first enquire into Sextus' interpretation of the sage's interaction with the world. It will be shown that Sextus understands the world as a realm in dualistic opposition to the circle of the believers. It will be argued that this more profound opposition belongs to Sextus' Christian rewriting, whilst the Pythagorean source material emphasised the sage's vocation in the world as an act of purification, worship and philanthropic care towards humankind. Second, I shall argue that Sextus endorses a tendency to withdraw from public life into the intimacy of one's private circle. The same tendency can be observed among pagan philosophers of the second and third century. In this section, I shall also investigate whether views similar to those contained in the *Sentences* might have influenced the later monastic tradition. Third, I shall address the possibility that the *Sentences of Sextus* contributed to promote a tendency towards the contemplative life. I shall pay attention in particular to those sentences which convey the idea of a unity between the wise man, or more precisely his soul or mind, and the deity. These mystical elements in Sextus' collection derive from the pronounced Platonic-Pythagorean character of the source material. Due to this Platonic element, Sextus sees asceticism and contemplative life as two aspects of the same mystical effort to bring humanity closer to the divine. I shall argue, therefore, that the intellectual background of Sextus is ultimately similar to that which later influenced the philosophical mysticism of Neo-Platonic masters like Plotinus and Iamblichus.

B. A Sage in the World: Philanthropy, Purity and Separation

I. The sage as a philanthropist

References to human relationships in the *Sentences* mostly concern family life, the right conduct of the wise believer towards other wise and believing people, and the correct attitude of the wise to the κόσμος and its seductions. Sextus' selection is filled with commonplace moral guidelines, as in

[8] With the recent exception of Richard Finn, who addressed the problem in a short chapter of his book on Greco-Roman asceticism, cf. Finn, *Asceticism*, 9–33.

Sext. 89 and in *Sext.* 210b where Sextus twice provides the reader with his own rendition of the so-called golden rule.[9] In particular, sentences pointing at virtuous behaviour, e.g. *Sext.* 293 which invites the wise to be patient with the closest members of his household, are fairly frequent. As in *Sext.* 293, the moral requirements set by Sextus for the Christian sage often involve the choice of a nonviolent attitude. If *Sext.* 293 concerns one's household, the presence of nonviolence in other sentences raises the question of Sextus' view on the sage's civic and political behaviour in society at large, as in *Sext.* 324:

σίδηρον ἀνδροφόνον ἄριστον μὲν ἦν μὴ γενέσθαι, γενόμενον δὲ σοὶ μὴ νόμιζε εἶναι (*Sext.* 324).

It would be best if murderous weapons did not exist, but since they do, do not think they are for you.[10]

The interpretation of *Sext.* 324 in Sextus is not straightforward and raises some problems. *Sext.* 324 comes immediately after a short section on the death of the sage, where death is presented as a relief and a liberation from the body (*Sext.* 322) and therefore as an event that shall not be feared by the experienced souls (*Sext.* 323). In the same passage, Sextus urges the wise not to commit suicide, even though the eventuality of death shall be tolerated.[11] Chadwick gives two possible explanations of *Sext.* 324: either "Do not think you are fated to die in battle or that there is any enemy sword with your name written on it" or as a refusal of military service.[12] Chadwick favours the latter explanation and quotes Ps.-Phoc. 32–34 as supporting his interpretation:

If you gird on a sword, let it be not to murder but to protect.
But may you not need it at all, neither without the law nor justly.
For if you kill an enemy, you stain your hand (Ps.-Phoc. 32–34).[13]

In his commentary, van der Horst interprets this passage of Pseudo-Phocylides as opposing military service.[14] Chadwick's suggestion that

[9] ὡς θέλεις χρήσασθαί σοι τοὺς πέλας, καὶ σὺ χρῶ αὐτοῖς (*Sext.* 89 = *Sext.* 210b), cf. Matt 7:12. For different versions from a diverse range of cultures, cf. Edward-Wild, *Sentences*, 26 n. 89.

[10] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 55.

[11] *Sext.* 321: θανάτου μὲν σαυτῷ παραίτιος μὴ γένῃ, τῷ δὲ ἀφαιρουμένῳ σε τοῦ σώματος μὴ ἀγανάκτει.

[12] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 177. Wendland, "Gnomica", 231 had already argued that Sextus was against military service.

[13] ET Pieter W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides. With Introduction and Commentary*, SVTP 4, Leiden 1978, 91.

[14] van der Horst, *Sentences*, 136: "There is undeniably a pacifistic ring about these verses".

Sext. 324 similarly envisages a rejection of military service cannot be confirmed with any certainty because Sextus does not refer to specific events. It is of the very nature of sapiential style to favour the general and the ahistorical over the particular and the historical, which suggests that if interdiction of killing is intended, the political and social implications of the interdiction are not expounded. In a 1913 study on the Essenic elements in Pseudo-Phocylides, Arnaldo Beltrami attributes the views of both Sextus and Pseudo-Phocylides to a Cynic or Neo-Stoic tradition.[15] Later Stoic teachers favoured the quest for inner peace rather than discourses about war and politics.[16] A certain degree of pacifism, however, had already been a characteristic mark of Cynic and early Stoic cosmopolitism. Being exposed to the crisis of the traditional institutions of the Greek polis, the Stoic philosopher discovers a sort of collective fellowship of all humans and a sense of universal brotherhood, which accordingly results in a more or less open rejection of war, seen as a threat both to the individual and to the common good.[17] With regard to the presence of a pacifistic and nonviolent attitude in the *Sentences*, Sextus tends to maintain the general conceptual layout of his sources. As with the Pseudo-Phocylides passage on carrying a sword, so the injunction not to harm anyone (*Sext.* 23) and the rejection of military service (*Sext.* 324) are introduced without explicit reference to Scripture, but as a direct consequence of the sage's commitment to wisdom and philosophical thinking.

The mention of Sextus' pacifism is but one aspect of a broader constitutive view of the life of a sage in the *Sentences*, that of a sense of deep solidarity and harmony with all humankind. It is on this sense of responsibility that the sages feel towards their fellow humans that Sextus and his sources build their comprehension of the ultimate meaning of a sage's existence, the higher call of the σοφός in the *Sentences*. As mentioned, solidarity and patience with fellow humans is a recurrent theme in the *Sentences*. Whilst in *Sext.* 293 the sage's tolerance is exercised in favour of closest relations (οἰκείων), *Sext.* 370–372 convey the feeling of a universal concern for humanity:

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[15] Arnaldo Beltrami, "Spirito giudaico e specialmente essenico della silloge pseudofocilidea", in *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*, 41 (1913), pp. 513–548, 527.

[16] See for example Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.13.9–13, where the inner peace and freedom from passions offered by philosophical training are opposed to the political peace granted by the emperor, cf. Gerardo Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity*, Notre Dame (Ind.) 1973, 161–162. Musonius Rufus, however, continued to speak publicly in favour of peace and against war, at least in Tacitus' recollection, cf. *Hist.* 4.81.

[17] On the relationship between cosmopolitism and the rejection of war in early Stoicism, and particularly in Zeno, see Zampaglione, *Peace*, 112–113.

οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἀδικῶν τις ἄνθρωπον σέβοι τὸν θεόν.
κρηπὶς θεοσεβείας φιλανθρωπία.
ὁ προνοῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐχόμενός τε ὑπὲρ πάντων οὗτος ἀληθείᾳ θεοῦ νομιζέσθω (*Sext.* 370–372).

It is not possible for anyone who wrongs a human being to worship God.
Love of humanity is the foundation stone of divine worship.
Whoever is considerate of all human beings and prays for them should be considered as truly of God.[18]

The connection between divine worship (θεοσέβεια) and love of human kind (φιλανθρωπία) introduced in this passage is an example of a pagan notion that Sextus derived from his source:

κρηπὶς εὐσεβείας ἡ φιλανθρωπία σοι νομιζέσθω (*Pyth.* 51).

That love of humanity be considered by you to be the foundation of piety.

Pyth. 51 probably preserves the pagan model of *Sext.* 371.[19] The concepts of φιλανθρωπία and εὐσέβεια go hand-in-hand in Greek culture as the expression of the quintessence of any good quality in a human being.[20] The two notions play a central role in Philo's Hellenised description of the religious principles of Judaism. In *Spec.* 2.62–63, for example, εὐσέβεια and φιλανθρωπία, together with justice, are the two highest principles (δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω κεφάλαια) learned by Jews in synagogues on a Sabbath day.[21]

The concept of φιλανθρωπία in the *Sentences* is developed in two closely related ways. First, and most importantly, the sage's obligation to lead a philanthropic existence results in a further invitation to self-control and asceticism. Amassing treasures and excessive interest in material possessions, for example, are condemned as non-philanthropic and unworthy of philosophy:

[18] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 61.

[19] See also *Marc.* 35.13. Philo *Virt.* 51.1–2 draws on the same tradition and says that φιλανθρωπία is the twin sister of εὐσέβεια.

[20] See Demosthenes, *Mid.* 12, where the custom of the Athenians to suspend executions and penalties during religious festivals is proof of both their φιλανθρωπία and their εὐσέβεια, as opposed to Meidias' ὕβρις (*Mid.* 17). In Polybius *Hist.* 4.20.1, the high reputation of the Arcadians is due to their φιλοξενία, their φιλανθρωπία, but above all to their εὐσέβεια towards the gods. According to Diodorus Siculus, the Atlanteans excelled in εὐσέβεια and φιλανθρωπία, cf. *Bibl.* 3.56.

[21] Similarly, Josephus stresses that Judaism teaches, among other virtues, εὐσέβεια and φιλανθρωπία, cf. *C. Ap.* 2.146.

θησαυρὸν κατατίθεσθαι μὲν οὐ φιλάνθρωπον, ἀναιρεῖσθαι δὲ οὐ κατὰ φιλόσοφον (*Sext.* 300).

To hoard riches is inhumane, but even to accept riches is contrary to philosophy.[22]

Once again the strict connection between love of humankind, piety and self-control shows Sextus' agreement with philosophical motifs well established in the cultural environment of his time.[23] In *Spec.* 4.97, Philo says that Moses in the Jewish law did not grant the Israelites free consumption of any food and drink aiming to self-control (ἐγκράτεια), humanity (φιλανθρωπία) and piety (εὐσέβεια). The same connection between philanthropy and ascetic self-control can be found in later Christian texts like the *Pseudo-Clementine*s. In *Hom.* 9.23 and in *Epistula Clementis ad Jacobum* 8.3–5, it is said that only by exercising chastity (σωφροσύνη) one can effectively be φιλάνθρωπος.[24] In *Hom.* 12.33, philanthropy is a "cause of immortality" (αἰτία ἀθανασίας) and constitutes the epitome of any Christian teaching and true expression of fear of God. The agreement of the *Sentences* with their pagan source shows continuity between Sextus' moral ideals and Greek philosophy. The tradition of *Pyth.* 51 continued to be popular among pagan authors. Writing to his wife Marcella on dealing justly and magnanimously with her slaves, even Porphyry the philosopher did not find anything better than to refer to the same gnome used by Sextus in *Sext.* 370–372.[25]

The other interesting aspect of Sextus' use of the concept of φιλανθρωπία is illustrated by *Sext.* 372 mentioned above. In this sentence Sextus expands on the motif of philanthropy as a foundation of piety, adding that only those who are considerate and careful of their fellow humans can claim to belong to God.[26] As will be shown below, the description of the sages as belonging to God or coming from God and ultimately their assimilation to the deity is of crucial importance in the *Sentences*. Sextus' view that φιλανθρωπία allows the Christian to claim provenance from God also recurs in other early Christian writings. Some texts consider philan-

[22] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 51. The Greek here is rather concise, Rufinus had to supply *inventum autem* (*thesaurum*) in order to explain the ἀναιρεῖσθαι of the second hemistich.

[23] On φιλανθρωπία in Hellenistic morality and above all among Stoics cf. Musonius, see *Diss.* 14.35 and *Gnom.* 45, even though authenticity of most fragments attributed to Epictetus is still a debated question, cf. Oldfather, *Discourses*, 2:439.

[24] *Epistula Clemetis ad Jacobum* 8.3: ἐὰν σώφρων ᾖ τις, καὶ φιλάνθρωπος γενέσθαι δύναται. See also *Hom.* 15.5, where the concept of philanthropy has become a wholly Christian theme, which appears ἀδικώτατος to a pagan mind.

[25] *Marc.* 35: οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως γὰρ οὖν ἄνθρωπον ἀδικοῦντα σέβειν θεόν ἀλλὰ κρηπὶς εὐσεβείας σοι νομιζέσθω ἡ φιλανθρωπία, see *Porphyry the Philosopher. To Marcella*. Translated by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Atlanta (Ga.) 1987, 77.

[26] On being worthy of God, cf. *Sext.* 1–3.

thropy to be what enables Christians to see themselves as truly made in God's image. This is what is meant in the *Pseudo-Clementines* (*Hom.* 12.33.5), when Peter tells Clement that the exercise of philanthropy turns the Christian into an image of God: immortal and free from corruption. The conceptual shift from the practice of philanthropy and piety as a human action to the understanding of the same virtues as the carrying out of a divine or quasi-divine activity is related to God's being said to act according to philanthropy in Jewish-Hellenistic and in Christian texts.[27] In *Mos.* 1.198, Philo says that God rescued the Israelites and set them free in accordance to his congenital (σύμφυτος) kindness (ἐπιείκεια), humanity (φιλανθρωπία) and piety (εὐσέβεια). Among Christian writers, *Diognetus* celebrates God's "exceeding philanthropy" and love.[28] If philanthropy is a divine attribute, those who act in a philanthropic and pious (θεοσέβεια) way, lead a divine life, are from God, and progress towards God. This point is illustrated in the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria, where φιλανθρωπία and θεοσέβεια, alongside ἡμερότης, are mentioned together as in *Sext.* 371 as the foundation of the assimilation of the true Gnostic to God:

ἡμερότης δ', οἶμαι, καὶ φιλανθρωπία καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὴς θεοσέβεια γνωστικῆς ἐξομοιώσεως κανόνες. ταύτας φημὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς «θυσίαν δεκτὴν» εἶναι παρὰ θεῷ (*Strom.* 7.13.4–14.1).

Gentleness, I believe, and philanthropy and sublime piety are the rules of Gnostic assimilation. These virtues, I say, are an "acceptable sacrifice" in God's sight.

In this passage, Clement refers to the "acceptable sacrifice" (θυσία δεκτή) of Phil 4:18. Although a direct relationship between Clement and the *Sentences* cannot be demonstrated,[29] the principles of philanthropy and piety, which Clement calls virtues (ἀρεταί) in the light of the Classical tradition, influenced both Clement's and Sextus' definition of true devotion. That Clement and Sextus share the same view is further proved by the only reference to sacrifice (θυσία) in the *Sentences*, which is to be found in a passage referring to caring for one's fellow humans:

[27] Conversely, the Greek archaic age sees divine law as completely deprived of any philanthropic element reflecting the coercive character of archaic human law, see Eric Robertson Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley and Los Angeles (Calif.) 1951, 37.

[28] *Diogn.* 9.2: ὢ τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης φιλανθρωπίας <καὶ ἀγάπης> τοῦ Θεοῦ.

[29] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 161 sees Sextus' asceticism as profoundly akin to that of Clement and Origen, without suggesting, however, that Clement knew the *Sentences.*

θυσία θεῷ μόνη καὶ προσηνὴς ἡ ἀνθρώποις εὐεργεσία διὰ θεόν (*Sext.* 47).

The only suitable offering to God is to do good deeds for men because of God.[30]

It is difficult to establish with any certainty whether *Sext.* 47 depends on Heb 13:16 or Phil 4:18 or Jas 1:27, as suggested by Delling.[31] Against Delling, *Clit.* 6: εὐσεβὴς οὐχ ὁ πολλὰ θύων, ἀλλ' ὁ μηδὲν ἀδικῶν proves that a Christian background is not indispensable to the explanation of the passage. *Sext.* 370–372a, however, shows a marked resemblance to Clement, indicating how Clement may have developed his idea from a pagan tradition similar to that used in *Pyth.* 51 and *Sext.* 371.

II. Wisdom as an act of purification

In the sentences dedicated to the relationship of the wise with the κόσμος, Sextus and his sources express the concern that the sage must be pure and irreprehensible in all dealing with the world:

σεαυτὸν ἐπιλήψιμον μὴ πάρεχε τῷ κόσμῳ (*Sext.* 16)

Do not offer the world a chance to criticise you.[32]

This sentence follows *Sext.* 15 where believers are told not to be vexed if deprived of their worldly possessions. *Sext.* 16 shows Sextus' concern over the effect that the lifestyle of the sage has on his social environment. In Sextus' understanding, the sage fulfils the moral duty of being blameless in the face of the world by achieving the respectability which comes only from spotless conduct:

ἐξουσίαν πιστῷ ὁ θεὸς δίδωσι τὴν κατὰ θεόν· καθαρὰν
οὖν δίδωσι καὶ ἀναμάρτητον.
αἰδείσθω σου τὸν βίον ὁ κόσμος.
μηδενὶ σεαυτὸν ἐπιλήψιμον δίδου (*Sext.* 36–38).

God gives divine power to a faithful person; that is, He gives pure and sinless power.
Let the world respect your way of life.
Do not give anyone a reason to criticise you.[33]

This passage combines the sage's obligation to avert the criticism of the world in *Sext.* 16 with the theme of purity and sinlessness of *Sext.* 36. The theme of purity occurs frequently in the *Sentences*, particularly with reference to the requirement that the believers keep their mind (διάνοια or νοῦς)

[30] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 21.
[31] Delling, "Hellenisierung", 216.
[32] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.
[33] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 21.

pure, as in *Sext.* 57b and 181,[34] or their heart, as in *Sext.* 46b.[35] *Sext.* 102[36] reminds the reader that what makes someone impure is the perpetration of a shameful act (πρᾶξις αἰσχρά). This sentence shows that purity in Sextus' terms does not belong primarily to the realm of cultic practices, but pertains to the whole human person and particularly to the ethical sphere. Sextus derived the motif of purity and purification and their ethical implications from his pagan source material. In *Pyth.* 119, for example, the reader is reminded that there is no place on earth more suitable for the deity than a pure soul.[37] The κόσμος in *Sext.* 37 signifies the entire complex of relationships and social entities around the sage. In Sextus' view, therefore, the main task in a sage's attitude towards the world consists in maintaining a state of purity in every kind of human interaction. In order to attain purity, the sage must keep a high ethical profile. In *Sext.* 23, the best way to purity is not to harm anyone:

ἄριστον ἡγοῦ καθαρμὸν τὸ μηδένα ἀδικεῖν (*Sext.* 23).

Recognise that the best purification is to harm no one.[38]

The view that connects purification (καθαρμός) to the exercise of virtue is a philosophical topos.[39] This is particularly true of Plato's concept of καθαρμός as a necessary act of distinction between the good and the evil in the soul, as in *Soph.* 226d. Plato defines this form of purification as a removal of any evil from the soul, that is of all vices and forms of ignorance.[40] As Benardete has observed, this purification ultimately coincides with the cathartic properties of philosophy itself and does not consist in a cultic or ritual act.[41] In Plato's *Sophist*, this cathartic aspect of philosophy entails also a form of ascetic self-control and consists in pursuing a moral and virtuous life according to the principle of moderation.[42] In Plotinus, who is heavily influenced by Plato in this respect, the cathartic exercise of

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[34] *Sext.* 57b: ἔστω σου ἡ διάνοια καθαρὰ κακοῦ παντός, see also *Sext.* 181: μέχρι καὶ τοῦ νοῦ καθάρευε τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων.

[35] *Sext.* 46b: ἄριστον θυσιαστήριον θεῷ καρδία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀναμάρτητος.

[36] *Sext.* 102: ἀκάθαρτον ἄνθρωπον ποιεῖ πρᾶξις αἰσχρά.

[37] *Pyth.* 119: ψυχῆς καθαρᾶς τόπον οἰκειότερον θεὸς ἐπὶ γῆς οὐκ ἔχει. The motif, however, seems to have been commonplace in the Greco-Roman world, cf. Chadwick, *Sextus*, 165.

[38] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.

[39] Wilson, *Mysteries*, 174 n.90.

[40] *Soph.* 227d. For a closer analysis of this Platonic concept see Noburu Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's* Sophist*. Between the Sophist and the Philosopher*, Cambridge 1999, 64f.

[41] Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful. Plato's* Theaetetus, Sophist *and* Statesman *Translated and with Commentary by Seth Benardete*, Chicago (Ill.) 1984, II.94.

[42] Benardete, *Being*, II.152.

virtue is what ultimately leads the soul to immunity from the influence of passions and to true wisdom.[43] Here Sextus does not seem to differ at all from the view expressed in the philosophical tradition of his source material. For the Christian πιστός of the *Sentences*, as for the pagan σοφός of the source material, the exercise of virtue and the leading of a moral life in the world are an act of moderation and self-control, which can be seen as a form of ascetic purification.

It is questionable whether for Sextus the καθαρμός of *Sext.* 23 also implied a more cultic aspect than for Plato and the other pagan philosophers. Since the word καθαρμός is a hapax legomenon in the *Sentences* and in the pagan witnesses of Sextus' source material, it is difficult to ascertain whether *Sext.* 23 originated from Sextus' Christian reworking or belonged to the Pythagorean source. The context provides the modern reader with little evidence in this respect. The maxim immediately following *Sext.* 23 could be of Christian origin since it mentions the λόγος θεοῦ in connection with the moral act of purification:

ψυχὴ καθαίρεται λόγῳ θεοῦ ὑπὸ σοφοῦ (*Sext.* 24).

A soul is purified by a word of God from a sage.[44]

Porphyry's *Ad Marcellam* and the *Pythagorean Sentences*, and also Sextus in most of the other occurrences of a similar clause, speak of λόγος περὶ θεοῦ rather than of λόγος θεοῦ.[45] The latter expression is frequent in the LXX and in the NT but is hardly attested in pagan authors. These elements support the hypothesis that *Sext.* 24 represents a Christian or a Christianised maxim. The similarities, already noted by Chadwick,[46] between *Sext.* 24 and *Sext.* 97[47] are noteworthy. Both maxims follow a similar compositional structure, where the effect on the soul in the nominative case (ψυχή) of a word of God, or the thought (ἔννοια) of God, is described with a passive verb in the present tense. *Sext.* 97 belonged to Sextus' pagan source, since it appears in the same form in the non-Christianised *Clit.* 17. This

[43] Cf. *Enn.* 1.2.3, which is using *Theaet.* 176b. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, Oxford 2007², 43 highlights how the final stage of this process of purification is the achievement of a likeness between the soul and the divine. On the connection between likeness to the divine and the development of a contemplative element in pagan and Christian late antiquity.

[44] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 19.

[45] Cf. *Pyth.* 10, 55–56, 112 (λόγος περὶ θεῶν) and *Marc.* 15. The expression λόγος περὶ θεοῦ is also frequent in Sextus, for example in *Sext.* 173, 195, 350, 356, 359, 361–362, 366. Sextus uses λόγος θεοῦ in *Sext.* 401 and 585 in the Greek appendices.

[46] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 164.

[47] *Sext.* 97: ψυχὴ φωτίζεται ἐννοίᾳ θεοῦ.

fact increases the possibility that *Sext.* 24 might be seen as the Christianised version of a lost pagan maxim similar to *Clit.* 17 (= *Sext.* 97).

If *Sext.* 23–24 intended to Christianise the philosophical ideal of moral catharsis through the idea of the revelation of the λόγος θεοῦ, Sextus' position would be similar to that of authors who like Philo attempted the same philosophical exercise.[48] However, the possibility that the expression λόγος θεοῦ ὑπὸ σοφοῦ in *Sext.* 24 might point to Jewish-Christian revelation is ultimately rather remote. In addition, Sextus himself complicates the task of assessing the exact provenance of the expression λόγος θεοῦ by stating elsewhere in the collection:

λόγος ἀληθὴς περὶ θεοῦ λόγος ἐστὶν θεοῦ (*Sext.* 357).

The true word about God is God's word.[49]

Sext. 357 states that a true word about God is as authoritative as a word of God, exactly as *Sext.* 355 argues that a true word about God must be honoured as God himself.[50] In Sextus' views about the right way of life of his readers, therefore, the Platonic understanding of the philosophical life as an act of purification through knowledge and moderation plays a major role. In the *Sentences*, the Christian reader is requested to show the same degree of committed activity to cleansing the soul through rigorous reasoning as that expected of a Platonic philosopher. In this regard, *Sext.* 103 is particularly interesting:

καθαίρει ψυχὴν ἀνοήτου δόξης ἔλεγχος (*Sext.* 103).

The refutation of foolish opinion cleanses the soul.[51]

In this sentence, the proximity between Sextus' idea of cleansing of the soul and the principles of Platonic purification is remarkable. Examining Plato's claim for ἔλεγχος as the greatest form of purification confirms how deeply Platonic Sextus' teaching is in this regard:

διὰ ταῦτα δὴ πάντα ἡμῖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον λεκτέον ὡς ἄρα μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεών ἐστι (*Soph.* 230d).

It's precisely because of all of this, Theaetetus, that we have to say that refutation is after all the greatest and most authoritative of purifications.[52]

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[48] On revelation in Philo's system of thought see Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, WUNT 2.36, Tübingen 1990, 71–73. Louth, *Origins*, 29 stresses how revelation becomes central in Philo's mystical thought.

[49] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 59.

[50] *Sext.* 355: περὶ θεοῦ λόγον ἀληθῆ ὡς θεὸν τίμα.

[51] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 29. See also *Sext.* 181: μέχρι καὶ τοῦ νοῦ καθάρευε τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, where purification entails intellectual activity.

The analogies between the philosophical purification of the soul in Plato and the requirements for purity which Sextus drew from his source, show how Sextus expected his Christian readers to behave like philosophers. Through the teaching of Christian intellectuals like Sextus, believers of the earliest days of Christian asceticism have been exposed to the ideals of a philosophical life.[53] As far as purification is concerned, the way of life that the Christian Sextus proposes to his readers is directly derived from that of Hellenistic philosophy.

III. The world as a separate entity in Sextus

Even though the readers of the *Sentences* are invited to participate in what the world offers, this participation is always regulated by moderation. Dealings with the world are allowed only when they are strictly necessary, common to all mortals, i.e. when they are ἀναγκαῖα, essential and inevitable.[54] Apart from these cases, however, Sextus' references to the world seem to convey a separation of the wise from the κόσμος. The word κόσμος and the adjective κοσμικός occur eleven times in the *Sentences*, including the Greek appendices. With the exception of *Sext.* 235, where κόσμος means "ornament" or "decorum", and *Sext.* 464, all other occurrences indicate an unmistakable divide between the worldly sphere and the moral habitat of the wise.

In the *Sentences*, human reality with its pleasures and worries is designated by the expression: "The things of the world" (τὰ τοῦ κόσμου).[55] This expression occurs in Sextus' section on the poverty of the sage in *Sext.* 15–20. As I have already mentioned, the use of the expression τὰ τοῦ κόσμου to indicate the worldly sphere does not occur in the *Clitarchus*, the *Pythagorean Sentences* or any other text associated with Sextus' tradition. It is notable that the Christian use of the expression concerns passages regarding renunciation or having ascetic overtones. In 1 Cor 7:33–34, for example, Paul argues that married people are concerned with τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, while the celibate only cares for τὰ τοῦ κυρίου.[56] In the *Acts of*

[52] ET Benardete, *Being*, II.21

[53] According to Gillian Clark, "Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life: Porphyry and Iamblichus", in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, Berkeley and Los Angeles (Calif.) 2000, pp. 29–51, 41 for philosophers like Porphyry and Iamblichus: "The aim of the philosophic life was always to purify the soul and help it to rise by study and contemplation toward the divine".

[54] See the reiterated invitation to treat necessary worldly things as necessary (ἀναγκαῖα) in *Sext.* 19 and 119.

[55] Cf. *Sext.* 15: ὁπόσα τοῦ κόσμου and also 20 and 82b.

[56] Cf. 1 Cor 7:32.

Paul and Thecla 23.6, the anonymous author, believed by some to have been an Encratite from Syria,[57] reports that Onesiphorus left behind τὰ τοῦ κόσμου to follow (Gr. ἠκολούθει) Paul using the Greek verb of Christian discipleship.[58] In the non-Christianised *Pythagorean Sentences* and *Clitarchus*, the word κόσμος does not convey any particular view on renunciation.[59] Chadwick's claim that the use of κόσμος in the *Sentences* should be seen as a characteristic feature of Sextus' Christian reworking rather than his source material seems highly plausible.[60]

It is not immediately clear what aspects of worldly existence are encompassed in Sextus' use of the word κόσμος. As seen, the expression ὁπόσα τοῦ κόσμου in *Sext.* 15 seems to refer to material possessions. An important characteristic of worldly things as opposed to things belonging to the divine sphere is that worldly things are always represented as transient, unstable and unable to give real meaning to human life. A good example of this view is contained in *Sext.* 404–405, where what the world has to offer is compared with what God offers:

ὅσα δίδωσιν ὁ θεὸς οὐδεὶς ἀφαιρεῖται.
ὃ παρέχει κόσμος βεβαίως οὐ τηρεῖ (*Sext.* 404–405).

Whatever God gives, no one takes away.
What the world offers, it does not keep secure.[61]

It is probably correct to suggest here that what the world offers in *Sext.* 405 refers to material possessions, as can be inferred from a similar use of the verb ἀφαιρέω in connection with human possessions in *Sext.* 15. Other occurrences of ἀφαιρέω in the *Sentences*, however, show that what the world offers, and cannot be kept secure, involves a wider range of possibilities. Maxims of similar content in the *Sentences*, like *Sext.* 91b–92,[62] are not restricted to material possessions, but probably refer to everything mundane and transient. The result is a disparaging attitude to all mundane reality:

μηθὲν ὧν ἀφαιρήσεταί σε κακὸς ἀνὴρ τίμα (*Sext.* 130).

Value nothing that an evil man can take from you.[63]

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[57] Jeremy W. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla. A Critical Introduction and Commentary*, WUNT 2.270, Tübingen 2009, 43 and 84 n.14.

[58] *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 23.6.

[59] Cf. *Pyth.* 106 and *Clit.* 3.

[60] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 154.

[61] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 67.

[62] *Sext.* 91b–92: ἃ δέδοταί σοι, κἂν ἀφέληταί σού τις, μὴ ἀγανάκτει. ἃ δίδωσιν ὁ θεός, οὐδεὶς ἀφαιρεῖται.

[63] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 31.

A similar view is conveyed by *Sext.* 101: τὰ τοῦ σώματος μὴ ἀγάπα. Here, the expression: "The things of the body" (τὰ τοῦ σώματος) probably refers more specifically to the realm of sex, food and pleasure, but it is again a good example of an entire category of things which is intended and the sentence probably indicates a more general rejection of all that is mundane. A similar use can be seen in Paul's use of the expression τὰ τοῦ κόσμου in the already mentioned 1 Cor 7:33–34. In this passage, the task of determining what exactly the "things of the world" are is left to the reader to solve. In Paul's case as in the *Sentences*, it is clear that the things of the world are perceived as conflicting with τὰ τοῦ κυρίου. Since the discussion in 1 Cor 7 concerns marriage and sexual morality, the expression τὰ τοῦ κόσμου in Paul cannot be completely separated from sexuality. As in Sextus, however, it probably points beyond the mere sexual.[64]

A similar attitude to the mundane was shared in other second-century Christian circles. In some Christian texts almost contemporary with Sextus, the world assumes a more negative connotation. In *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5, after Paul's arrival in Iconium, the Christian domestic worship that takes place in Onesiphorus' house encompasses acts of adoration and prayer (κλίσις γονάτων), a Eucharistic meal (κλάσις ἄρτου) and preaching the word of God on self-control (περὶ ἐγκρατείας) and resurrection. This summary is a telling definition of what was considered essential in the Christian circle which produced the apocryphal acts of Paul. In the same passage, Paul breaks out in a passionate exhortation to withdraw from the world, freely modelled on the canonical beatitudes:[65]

> Blessed are those who keep chaste their flesh, because they will be the temple of God, blessed are those who master themselves (ἐγκρατεῖς), because God will speak to them, blessed are those who give up this world (οἱ ἀποταξάμενοι τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ), because they will be pleasing God. Blessed are those who have wives as though they had none, because they will inherit God. Blessed are those who fear God, because they will be angels of God (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5).

Finn is correct in seeing here the word κόσμος as referring to sexuality.[66] For the author of the apocryphal acts of Paul, the sexually continent seem to be the ultimate recipients of God's revelation (αὐτοῖς λαλήσει ὁ θεός). In this passage, restraining from sexual intercourse and marriage corresponds to the withdrawal from the κόσμος, so that withdrawal from the κόσμος and sexual renunciation are simply two ways of referring to the same ascetic attitude.

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[64] Deming, *Celibacy*, 193–194.
[65] Matt 5:1–12.
[66] Finn, *Asceticism*, 89.

Gos. Thom. 27 also seems to connect the withdrawal from the κόσμος with an ascetic interpretation of Christian life:

> If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the Father's domain. If you do not observe the Sabbath day as a Sabbath day, you will not see the Father (*Gos. Thom.* 27).[67]

Finn suggests that this logion, together with *Gos. Thom.* 75, is to be seen as an invitation to withdrawal from the world.[68] Valantasis agrees that the reference to the fasting "from the world" is a call to "ascetical discipline" and an invitation to "a disengagement from the world".[69] As with Paul in 1 Cor 7:33–34 and differently from the passage of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* mentioned above, the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* does not explicitly say what aspects of worldly life are under consideration in the use of the word κόσμος. Nothing more precise can be said on the nature of the fasting from the world in *Gos. Thom.* 27. Valantasis, however, suggests that the metaphorical use of "fasting" involves both a quantitative disengagement from the world, as one reduces the intake of food, and a qualitative disengagement, as ritual fasting may involve the suspension of specific activities.[70]

The examples of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and of the *Gospel of Thomas* suggest that Sextus' dualistic opposition to τὰ τοῦ κόσμου contemplates not only possessions as in *Sext.* 15, but also sexuality and a multifaceted array of mundane activities. In Sextus' conceptual world as in the other two examples, the κόσμος is a negative reality to which Christian believers oppose their ascetic resistance. Since readers are not told what precise attitudes their aversion to the world entails, dealing with the world always remains potentially inadvisable and to be avoided as much as possible.

C. The Sage's Solitude

I. From cosmopolitism to political disengagement

The mention of the sage's beneficial action to humanity (εὐεργεσία) in *Sext.* 47 opens an important moment in Sextus' understanding of the role of the ascetic sage in his social environment. Because of their philanthropic concern for humanity, the sages in the *Sentences* are often described as benefactors (εὐεργέται). Far from being uninterested in humankind, the as-

[67] ET Richard Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, New York (N.Y.) 1997, 100.
[68] Finn, *Asceticism*, 70–71.
[69] Valantasis, *Thomas*, 100.
[70] Valantasis, *Thomas*, 100–101.

cetic sage perceives the goal of wisdom and education as a contribution to the public well-being. The actions of the sage are κοινός, public or communal, envisaging society at large. *Sext.* 209–213 intend to show how the Christian concern for mutual love, and in particular for love of one's enemies, is the accomplishment of the philosophical attempt to elude the entangled bonds of human passion:

τότε δόκει πιστὸς εἶναι, ὅταν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν ἀπαλλαγῇς.
ἀνθρώποις χρῶ τοῖς ἅπασιν ὡς κοινὸς ἀνθρώπων εὐεργέτης.
ὡς θέλεις χρήσασθαί σοι τοὺς πέλας, καὶ σὺ χρῶ αὐτοῖς.
ἀνθρώποις κακῶς χρώμενος σεαυτῷ κακῶς χρήσῃ.
οὐδένα κακῶς ποιήσει ὁ πιστός.
εὔχου τοὺς ἐχθροὺς δύνασθαι εὐεργετεῖν (*Sext.* 209–213).

Consider yourself to be faithful only when you put aside the passions of the soul.
Treat all human beings as though you were a public benefactor of humanity.
As you want your neighbours to treat you, so treat them.
In mistreating human beings, you mistreat yourself.
The faithful person will not act badly towards anyone.
Pray that you may be able to do good to your enemies.[71]

Liberated from the illness of passion,[72] Sextus' sage becomes a source of healing and moral wellbeing to humanity in general as κοινὸς εὐεργέτης. The idea that the sage should be a public benefactor is recurrent in Sextus.[73] The passage above contains obvious NT references.[74] The word εὐεργέτης, however, is rare in the LXX and the NT.[75] Sextus probably found gnomes on the philosopher or the teacher as a benefactor in his pagan source material:

γονέων διδάσκαλοι μείζους εὐεργέται (*Clit.* 78 = *Sext.* 536).

Teachers are greater benefactors than parents.

Clit. 78 also appears in *Sext.* 536 in the Greek appendices, which except for a few sentences do not display signs of Christianisation.[76] The initial

[71] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 39–41. Although Christian elements in this passage are apparent, love for one's enemies is not exclusively Christian, see for example Epictetus *Diatr.* 3.22.54.

[72] On passions as illnesses, see *Sext.* 207: πάθη νοσημάτων ἀρχαί.

[73] See *Sext.* 260: ἐπιτήδευε κοινὸς ἀνθρώποις εὐεργέτης εἶναι. The expression κοινὸς εὐεργέτης has kingly undertones in Josephus, *Ant.* 16.98 and Philo, *Legat.* 149, where it refers to the Roman emperor.

[74] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162 connects *Sext.* 210b with Matt 7:12 and *Sext.* 213 with Matt 5:44.

[75] Cf. 2 Macc 4:2; 3 Macc 3:19 and 6:24; Wis 19:14; Luke 22:25.

[76] With the exception of *Sext.* 599 and perhaps *Sext*. 587. On the pagan character of the appendices, see Turner, *Philip*, 105 n.52.

view expressed in the source material must have referred to the beneficial effects of wisdom. It is the educated man who is a benefactor second only to God, as in another maxim of the Greek appendices, which probably comes from the same bulk of gnomic material used by the author of the *Clitarchus*:

παιδευτικὸς ἀνὴρ οὗτος εὐεργέτης μετὰ θεόν (*Sext.* 542).

A man skilled in teaching is a benefactor second only to God.

A version of this sentence is already present in Sextus' own selection under *Sext.* 176, where the benefactor second only to God is the sage: σοφὸς ἀνὴρ εὐεργέτης μετὰ θεόν. Philo has a view of the judge versed in the study of virtue, which is remarkably similar to the concepts expressed in *Sext.* 210a:

Because the man who cultivates these virtues [wisdom, justice and courage] may be reasonably considered to be a public benefactor (κοινὸς εὐεργέτης), like a good pilot, calming the storms of affairs for the sake of the salvation and safety of those who have entrusted their personal interests to him (*Spec.* 4.58).

A direct dependence of Sextus on Philo cannot be demonstrated. Sextus and Philo, however, seem to follow a tradition similar to that of Sextus' pagan source material, which presents the virtuous sage as a general benefactor of society. Because Philo refers to a judge, the social implications of the virtuous exercise of a public office are straightforward. Sextus' pagan material was probably based on the advantages that the σοφός εὐεργέτης secures for the homeland (πατρίς). Numerous sentences dealing with politics and civic life did not make it into Sextus' selection. They are still extant, however, in the Greek appendices as well as in the *Clitarchus* and the *Pythagorean Sentences*:

μεγάλως εὐεργετεῖ τὴν πατρίδα ὁ σπουδάσας ἀγαθὸς εἶναι πολίτης (*Pyth.* 61).

Greatly benefits the homeland the one who is eager to be a good citizen.

In *Pyth.* 61, the theme of εὐεργεσία is seen in all its political significance, as it probably was in Sextus' sources. *Clitarchus* also contains sentences with a marked, although commonplace, civic character like *Clit.* 65, which celebrates the fate of those who die for the homeland: ὑπὲρ πατρίδος ἀποθανεῖν εὐτυχές. *Pyth.* 61 survives in an unaltered form in the Greek appendices under *Sext.* 482. All maxims referring to a citizen (πολίτης) as in *Sext.* 478, 482 and 483 and most of those containing the word homeland (πατρίς) as in *Sext.* 481, 482 (= *Pyth.* 61) and 484 belong to the same section of the Greek appendices.[77] Because *Sext.* 482 is also attested in the

[77] At least in MS Π.

Pythagorean Sentences, it probably came from a source very close to Sextus' source material. There is a strong case that Sextus' source material had an extensive section on civic life, which an anonymous compiler later used for the appendices on the assumption that they belonged to the same work. If this is the case, Sextus intentionally left out of his selection those sentences which dealt more specifically with political life and the benefit of the homeland. In Sextus' philosophical sources, the goal of wisdom was the training of good and loyal citizens. Sextus ignores the sentences restricted to the local reality of the homeland, preferring a more universalistic concern for humanity as such.

This universalistic view is not unique to the *Sentences*. Among Christian authors, it is found in a well-known passage of *Diognetus*:

> They [the Christians] live in their respective countries, but only as resident aliens; they participate in all things as citizens (πολῖται), and they endure all things as foreigners (ξένοι). Every foreign territory (ξένη) is a homeland (πατρίς) for them, every homeland a foreign territory (*Diogn*. 5.5).[78]

In the *Sentences*, as we have seen, the sage is a self-controlled benefactor of humanity, second only to God, who rejects all passions (*Sext.* 209) to achieve a serene state of philanthropic care for all people (*Sext.* 210a), including his own enemies (*Sext.* 213). *Diognetus* expresses the beneficial presence of the Christians in the world in the famous passage which equates Christians to the soul of the world:

> To put matter simply, what the soul is in the body, this is what Christians are in the world (*Diogn.* 6.1).[79]

In *Diognetus* as in Sextus, the beneficial effect of the presence of the virtuous Christians in the world is strictly connected to the renunciation of passions and self-control. This is hinted at by passages like *Diogn.* 6.5, where as the body hates the soul so the world hates Christians: because of their strict opposition to pleasure.[80] In *Diognetus* as in the *Sentences*, the universalistic concern for humanity is achieved by raising one's interest above the limited reality of the homeland and local politics. It is probably for this reason that Sextus omitted most of the sentences of his source dealing with a more concrete interpretation of citizenship, and favoured sentences concerned with a more universal perspective. In the *Sentences* this movement from the particular to the universal role of the sage seems to be rooted in Hellenistic philosophical traditions and particularly in Cynicism. Marrou has argued that the detachment from a particularist interpretation

[78] ET Ehrman, *Fathers*, 2:141.
[79] ET Ehrman, *Fathers*, 2:141.
[80] Although *Diogn.* 5.6 shows that Sextus' asceticism was much stricter.

of the homeland in *Diognetus* is not due to Cynic influence, because Cynicism would entail indifference towards political life, while Christians in *Diognetus* are described as actively engaged in all aspects of society (cf. *Diogn.* 5.5).[81] The *Sentences*, however, offer a better perspective on the question, suggesting that philosophy can indeed be credited with some influence on Christian universalism. In spite of the references to homeland and citizenship mentioned above, Sextus' source material probably also contained allusions to Cynic cosmopolitism. The presence of four maxims dedicated to the Cynic life in the Greek appendices of the *Sentences* and one in the *Pythagorean Sentences* shows that Cynic cosmopolitism played a role in Sextus' philosophical tradition:[82]

κυνικὸς ἀληθὴς τὸν κόσμον οἶκον ἡγεῖται (*Sext.* 464).

A true Cynic regards the whole world as home.

A slightly different version of this maxim also appears in *Clit.* 3: πατρίδα τὸν κόσμον ἡγοῦ. Both sentences are best seen in connection with the claim of Diogenes the Cynic of being a κοσμοπολίτης.[83] Whether these sentences were not included in Sextus' selection because of the explicit mention of Cynicism is difficult to tell. Downing, who otherwise regards the *Sentences* as an eclectic document rather than ascribing them to a philosophical school, identifies in the collection a "great deal of Cynic material".[84] Numerous analogies hold between Cynic wandering philosophers and Pythagorean mendicant *akousmatikoi*. Charles Kahn argues that in literary descriptions these "counterculture Pythagoreans" are very similar to Cynic philosophers.[85] The universalistic aspect of the *Sentences* has probably been influenced by the Cynic reaction against the particularism of the Greek *polis*.

Marrou's negative views on Cynic attitudes towards political life do not cover the complexity of the entire phenomenon. Cynic cosmopolitanism entails not only disengagement and indifference, but also expresses a "larger loyalty", which goes beyond any localism and embraces the entire cosmos in a perfect mix of φιλανθρωπία and ἄσκησις, as convincingly

[81] Cf. *A Diognète. Introduction, édition critique, traduction et commentaire*, ed. by Henri I. Marrou, SC 33, Paris 1951, 143.

[82] *Sext.* 461–464, *Sext.* 462, which appears also in *Pyth*. 54.

[83] Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 6.63.

[84] Downing, *Origins*, 193, see also F. Gerald Downing, *Making Sense in (and of) the First Christian Century*, Sheffield 2000, 146.

[85] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 49 and 72.

demonstrated by John Moles.[86] In his Stoic interpretation of Cynicism, Epictetus says that the true Cynic does not find fulfilment of his higher vocation in the political life because he already occupies the noblest office of all, i.e. of philosophically debating with all humankind about happiness, fate and freedom.[87] As seen, Sextus omitted gnomes of his source which contained political particularism and favoured those conveying a universalistic perspective. Sextus' choice not only expresses an inclination common to other philosophically engaged Christian writers like the author of *Diognetus*, but also reflects a trend in the larger philosophical debate, as seen in Epictetus' interpretation of Cynic cosmopolitism. Later accounts of Pythagoreanism show the same tendency. Although early Pythagoreans were known for their political engagement,[88] the asceticism of Pythagoras himself, or rather of his late antique biographers, made Pythagoreanism less committed to civic life and more interested in developing moral debate beyond the restrictions of political loyalty, as shown by Garth Fowden.[89] This "disengagement from civic life", as Finn puts it,[90] was also a distinctive feature of the attitude of Porphyry towards political involvement, whose *Life of Pythagoras* describes Pythagoras' aversion to ambition (φιλοτιμία) and love of fame (φιλοδοξία).[91] The same φιλοδοξία in the *Sentences* is also said to have disastrous consequences in matters of faith:

κακοδοξίας αἰτιώτατον ἡ ἐν πίστει φιλοδοξία (*Sext.* 188).

In matters of faith, the love of renown usually causes the loss of renown.[92]

Like Porphyry's portrayal of the ascetic Pythagoras, Sextus' Christian sage disapproves of love of fame. As Teresa Morgan has shown, invitations to

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[86] John L. Moles, "Cynic Cosmopolitanism", in *The Cynics. The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, ed. by Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, London 1996, pp. 105–120, 111 and 115.

[87] *Diatr.* 3.22.27 and 30 and 3.22.83–85. On the divine calling of the sage in Epictetus' Stoic interpretation of Cynicism, see *Diatr.* 3.22.23.

[88] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 7.

[89] Garth Fowden, "Sages, Cities and Temples: Aspects of Late Antique Pythagorism", in *The Philosopher and Society. Essays in Honour of Peter Brown*, ed. by Andrew Smith, Swansea 2005, pp. 145–170, 150 observes: "Pythagoras, an ascetic philosopher, was simply not very committed to the institutions of urban life, and chose to give greater weight to strictly moral considerations". In late antiquity, the departure of Hellenic philosophers from public life is also a consequence of the gradual Christianisation of the Empire, see Robert M. van den Berg, "Live Unnoticed! The Invisible Neoplatonic Politician", in *The Philosopher and Society. Essays in Honour of Peter Brown*, ed. by Andrew Smith, Swansea 2005, pp. 101–115, 101.

[90] Finn, *Asceticism*, 10.

[91] Cf. *Vit. Pyth.* 32.

[92] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 39.

reject rhetoric found in other gnomologies could equally be read "as encouragement to quietism – staying out of the public arena altogether".[93] In her writings on the contrast between Christian and pagan asceticism in relation to society, Gillian Clark has argued that Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and the like, in spite of their frequent exhortations to withdrawal from social interaction, nonetheless fulfilled most of the duties expected from members of their society.[94] The Christian ascetic response, on the other hand, was to abandon the mild and elitist political disengagement of Greek philosophy and promote a life of humility, self-abasement and voluntary isolation.[95] Clark is right to highlight the radical interpretation Christian ascetics have given to the philosophical ideal of withdrawal from political concerns. The *Sentences*, however, show that, despite their radicalism, some Christian ascetic teachers, like Sextus, saw their interpretation as a continuation of the requirements of political disengagement of a philosophical life. In their philanthropic disengagement from the particularism of political life, Sextus' ascetic sages were developing the philosophical ideals of their pagan sources.

II. Seclusion and the quest for wisdom

Despite their insistence on a philanthropic concern for humanity, the *Sentences* require the ascetic sage to separate from the world. The way Sextus depicts the place occupied by the wise in the world is marked by a pronounced imbalance between the wise's philanthropic offer and the reaction of the κόσμος to that offer. On the one hand, the Christian σοφός is a benefactor of humanity, driven by unselfish philanthropy. On the other hand, the world is a recalcitrant interlocutor, which repays the wise with hostility rather than gratitude. In *Sext.* 214, having introduced the wise as a benefactor and having expounded the principle of loving one's enemies, Sextus' tone darkens as he refers to the people's indifference to the sage:

φαύλοις φαίνεται ἄχρηστος σοφὸς ἀνήρ (*Sext.* 214).

A wise man appears useless to the masses.[96]

The problem of the exact meaning of φαύλος in *Sext.* 214 is not easily solved. Edwards and Wild opt for a less negative solution, whilst Rufinus translates *malis*, stressing the moral ineptitude of the adversaries of the

[93] Morgan, *Morality*, 106.
[94] Gillian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, Cambridge 2010[5], 74–75.
[95] Clark, "Lives", 46–47, but also Clark, *Society*, 76.
[96] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 41.

wise.[97] The term could indicate the layman, the person not familiar with wisdom, as Epictetus' ἰδιώτης indicates the philosophically uneducated in contrast to the φιλόσοφος (*Diatr.* 3.19). In any case, the sentence suggests a distance between the philosopher and the world. The same can also be said of *Sext.* 145, where only a select few do not fail to recognise the sage: σοφὸς ὀλίγοις γινώσκεται.[98] Rufinus' unusual reading of this sentence (*sapiens paucis verbis innotescit*) is probably not original. *Sext.* 145 derives from the same tradition of *Pyth.* 92 (= *Marc.* 13.9–11), which asserts that the sage is ignored by the majority of people, but known to God.[99] The idea of the sage as isolated and ignored already belonged to Sextus' source material, contributing to the impression that the believer of the *Sentences* is detached and distant not only from political life, as seen, but also more generally from the world of human relationships. Despite being seen as a benefactor of humanity, the ascetic sage of the *Sentences* does not benefit from much popularity:

μή σε παύσῃ τοῦ εὐεργετεῖν ἀχάριστος ἄνθρωπος (*Sext.* 328).

Do not let an ungrateful person keep you from doing good.[100]

Here, the actions of the benefactor (εὐεργετεῖν) are met by the ingratitude of the beneficiary. The contrast between this sentence and the frequent references to the necessity of sharing among the believers is particularly striking.[101] The isolation of Sextus' ascetic sage is also conveyed by those sentences which contrast the seeker of wisdom with the anonymous multitude (πλήθος).[102] Most of these sentences seem to refer to more or less official displays of rhetoric. Because of the commonplace character of these sentences, it is difficult to argue that any of these maxims reflect an actual real-life experience in Sextus' circle. In *Sext.* 360, the sage is invited to avoid speaking about God to the multitude, which is in line with Sextus' reticence about God observable elsewhere in the collection.[103] *Sext.* 112[104] and 343[105] are invitations not to please the multitude or to stir up its anger.

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[97] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 37.

[98] σοφὸς ὀλίγοις γινώσκεται.

[99] *Pyth.* 92: σοφὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ὀλίγοις γινωσκόμενος, εἰ δὲ βούλει, καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων ἀγνοούμενος, γινώσκεται ὑπὸ θεοῦ.

[100] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 55.

[101] See *Sext.* 228: ὧν κοινὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ ταῦτα ὡς πατήρ, τούτων μὴ κοινὰ εἶναι τὰ κτήματα οὐκ εὐσεβές.

[102] Cf. *Sext.* 112, 343, 360 and indirectly 243 and 535.

[103] Cf. *Sext.* 350–354.

[104] πλήθει ἀρέσκειν μὴ ἐπιτήδευε.

[105] ὀργὴν πλήθους μὴ παρόξυνε.

With its invitation not to please (ἀρέσκειν) the multitude, *Sext.* 112 is better seen in connection with *Sext.* 534 in the Greek appendices:[106]

ὁ τοῖς πολλοῖς πειρώμενος ἀρέσκειν πολλοῖς ὅμοιος (*Sext.* 534).

The one who tries to please many is similar to many.

Sentences like this convey a sense of distance between the author's circle and an indistinct multitude not sharing the same commitment to wisdom. This division between a circle of insiders and the uninitiated outsiders reveals a marked esoteric elitism. In *Sext.* 241 (= *Sext.* 570)[107] and 400,[108] the multitude of the uninitiated is indicated by the term ἄπιστοι, the unbelievers, in contrast to the πιστὸς ἄνθρωπος, the addressee of the collection.[109] Although most sentences addressing the πιστός are likely to have been Christianised,[110] the contrast between a philosophical inner circle, where sharing of possessions was practised, and the uneducated masses probably belonged to the Pythagorean stratum of Sextus' sources.[111] Frederik Wisse is probably right to argue that Sextus' esotericism has been one of the reasons why the *Sentences* found their way into the Nag Hammadi library.[112] Sextus and his Christian audience probably modelled their inner circle on the Pythagorean 'esoterics'.[113] As observed by Brown, early Christian ascetic literature was mostly written for the elite.[114] A similar Pythagorean idealisation of the first Christian community in Jerusalem may already have played a role in the description of the apostolic church in Acts 4, as it did with Josephus' Essenes,[115] later presented by Cassian as a monastic community (*Collationes Patrum* 18.5).[116]

If compared with the later monastic tradition, the evidence for solitude in the *Sentences* remains altogether modest. The *Sentences* do not contain

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[106] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 168.

[107] φυλάττου τὸν παρὰ τῶν ἀπίστων ἔπαινον.

[108] ἀνθρώπων ἀπίστων βίος ὄνειδος.

[109] *Sext.* 1–8.

[110] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 154 and Johan C. Thom, "The Passions in Neopythagorean Writings", in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. by John T. Fitzgerald, Abingdon 2008, pp. 67–78, 72.

[111] On Pythagorean esotericism, see Burkert, *Lore*, 179, 192 and 205 and Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8 and 90–91.

[112] Wisse, "Sextus-Sprüche", 56.

[113] Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 8.

[114] Brown, *Body*, 24.

[115] Steve Mason, "Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin in Acts", in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting. Volume 4: Palestinian Setting*, ed. by Richard Bauckham, Grand Rapids (Mich.) 1995, pp. 115–178, 133.

[116] See Richard J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian. Aristocrats, Asceticism, and Reformation in Fifth-century Gaule*, Oxford 2007, 130.

any overt invitation to seek solitude and isolation, nor any explicit reference to the necessity of becoming a "solitary one" (μοναχος) as in the approximately coeval *Gos. Thom.* 16, 49 and 75.[117] Nevertheless, with their call to autarky and their depiction of a misunderstood and estranged sage disengaged from public life, they convey the image of the sage as one who voluntarily chooses to abandon his social and relational environment and dedicate himself entirely to the quest for wisdom. This model of σοφός is reminiscent of the contemplative Therapeutae of Philo's *Contempl.* 18–20, who leave behind any family relation and political concern without turning back (ἀμεταστρεπτί, *Contempl.* 18). Philo's ascetic sages do not migrate to another city like fugitive slaves who, instead of obtaining freedom, only change masters (δεσποτῶν ὑπαλλαγήν, οὐκ ἐλευθερίαν, *Contempl.* 19). They leave civic life altogether, not because of their aversion to humanity (οὐ διά τινα ὠμὴν ἐπιτετηδευμένην μισανθρωπίαν, *Contempl.* 20), but because there is no place for wisdom in the city:

> For every city, even the best governed, is full of turmoils and disturbances innumerable which no one could endure who has ever been even once under the guidance of wisdom (*Contempl.* 19.5–7).[118]

The discreet feeling of relational estrangement and solitude conveyed by the ascetic model of the *Sentences* is evocative of a much later phenomenon observable in anchoritic monasticism of the fourth and fifth century: that of *xeniteia*, exile or voluntary alienation.[119] It is probably too reductive, however, to limit the concept of *xeniteia* to desert-dwelling monks. As has been demonstrated above in relation to the author of the *Diognetus,* the self-definition of Christians as foreigners in their own cities is older than the anchoritic movement. The same cosmopolitan dimension of the seeking of wisdom is mentioned in the concluding paragraph of Philo's account on the Therapeutae, where the contemplative ascetics are called "citizens of heaven and of the cosmos" (οὐρανοῦ μὲν καὶ κόσμου πολιτῶν, *Contempl.* 90), to signify that their secluded life is but a spiritual displacement to a higher and vaster reality. NT passages like Heb 11:13–14

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[117] An ascetic interpretation of these passages is given by Finn, *Asceticism*, 84, see also Richard Valantasis, "Is the Gospel of Thomas Ascetical? Revisiting an Old Problem with a New Theory", in *JECS* 7/1 (1999), pp. 55–81, 72–73.

[118] ET Colson, *Philo IX*, 125.

[119] I prefer to render *xeniteia* as "alienation", or "estrangement", rather than the more traditional "exile", although John McGuckin, "Aliens and Citizens of Elsewhere. *Xeniteia* in East Christian Monastic Literature", in *Strangers to Themselves. The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. by Dion C. Smythe, Burlington (Vt.) 2000, pp. 23–38, 24–27 also rejects "alienation" as post-modern.

and 1 Pet 2:11 already exhort Christians to consider themselves strangers (ξένοι) and alien dwellers (παροίκοι).

As argued by Daniel Caner, Christian ascetics before Antony's withdrawal into the desert expressed their *xeniteia* in a more domestic way.[120] Like Philo, Evagrius expressed reservations about civic life as a place for spiritual progress exhorting the monk to love *xeniteia* and flee from the idle discourses of the city.[121] Even in the tradition of the Desert Fathers, the call to voluntary alienation entails much more than a physical flight into the desert and consists also in a spiritual exile based on detachment from worldly passions and commitment to silence.[122] John McGuckin has convincingly argued that the concept of *xeniteia* predates its Christian use.[123] According to McGuckin, Christians adopted the term and the imagery related to *xeniteia* from Greek gnomic sources, in particular from "Stoicizing, aphoristic wisdom".[124] McGuckin refers to a gnome attributed to Democritus:

ξενιτείη βίου αὐτάρκειαν διδάσκει· μᾶζα γὰρ καὶ στιβὰς λιμοῦ καὶ κόπου γλυκύτατα ἰάματα (*Frag.* 246).

The life of a foreigner teaches self-sufficiency: for barley bread and a bed of hunger and labour are the sweetest of remedies.

The fragment conveys a marked sense of ascetic renunciation. It is notable that in the gnome attributed to Democritus *xeniteia* is presented as a way to learn autarky through the difficulty suffered by living like a ξένος. Although the *Sentences* do not refer to *xeniteia*, they contain, as seen in chapter three, explicit invitation to practice autarky as a form of ascetic self-discipline (*Sext.* 98 = *Sext.* 344). Moreover in his selection of Neopythagorean gnomes, Sextus intentionally downplayed references to the civic duties of the sage favouring universalism and political disengagement. When McGuckin indicates in the detachment and "political de-racination"[125] of the Greek gnomic tradition the possible source for monastic *xeniteia*, he makes an important point. The example of the *Sentences of Sextus* illustrates first how this attitude, which McGuckin attributes to a Neo-Stoic cultural environment, had by the time of Sextus already been integrated into Gnomic works ascribable to philosophical schools other than Stoic, in particular Platonic and Neopythagorean. Second the *Sentences of Sextus*,

[120] Caner, *Wandering*, 24.
[121] PG 40.1257.
[122] Graham Gould, *The Desert Fathers on Monastic Community*, Oxford 1993, 162–164.
[123] McGuckin, "Aliens", 30.
[124] McGuckin, "Aliens", 31.
[125] McGuckin, "Aliens", 31.

beside the sentences of Democritus mentioned by McGuckin, offer a good example of the kind of gnomic literature which favoured the adoption of autarky and philosophical detachment in the monastic imagery of early Christian asceticism.

D. Contemplation and Imitation

I. The soul's journey towards God

The section *Sext.* 415b–425 is almost entirely dedicated to the relationship between the the soul of the sage and the deity:

σοφοῦ ψυχὴ ἁρμόζεται πρὸς θεὸν ὑπὸ θεοῦ.
σοφοῦ ψυχὴ ἀεὶ θεὸν ὁρᾷ.
ψυχὴ σοφοῦ σύνεστιν ἀεὶ θεῷ.
καρδία θεοφιλοῦς ἐν χειρὶ θεοῦ ἵδρυται.
ψυχῆς ἄνοδος πρὸς θεὸν διὰ λόγου θεοῦ.
σοφὸς ἕπεται θεῷ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ψυχῇ σοφοῦ.
χαίρει τῷ ἀρχομένῳ τὸ ἄρχον, καὶ ὁ θεὸς οὖν σοφῷ χαίρει.
ἀχώριστόν ἐστιν τοῦ ἀρχομένου τὸ ἄρχον, καὶ θεὸς οὖν τοῦ σοφοῦ προνοεῖ καὶ κήδεται.
ἐπιτροπεύεται σοφὸς ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ μακάριος.
ψυχὴ σοφοῦ δοκιμάζεται διὰ σώματος ὑπὸ θεοῦ (*Sext.* 416–425).

Through God, the soul of the sage is attuned to God.
The soul of the sage always perceives God.
The soul of the sage is always in union with God.
The heart of one who loves God is secure in the hand of God.
Through God's word the soul ascends to God.
The sage accompanies God and God accompanies the soul of the sage.
Anything that rules takes pleasure in what it rules, and so God takes pleasure in the sage.
Anything that rules is inseparable from what it rules, and so God watches over and cares for the sage.
The wise man is governed by God and so is blessed.
Through the body the sage's soul is tested by God.[126]

The close connection between God and the sage's soul was a significant motif of Sextus' sources, which found its way into the Christian selection. *Sext.* 416–418 originally belonged to Sextus' pagan source, since they appear in the same order and in an almost identical form in *Marc.* 16. In the *Sentences*, the soul of the sage is always in the presence of the deity and any action shall be performed with a constant reference to God.[127] This close relationship of the sage's soul with the deity is also attested in *Clit.* 7 (ἡ ψυχή σου ἀεὶ ἔστω παρὰ θεῷ, cf. *Sext.* 55), which equally affirms that the

[126] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 69.
[127] *Sext.* 224 : ἐν οἷς πράττεις πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχε τὸν θεόν.

sage's soul is always with God. The already mentioned *Pyth.* 119 also says that a pure soul is home (τόπον οἰκειότερον) to the deity. In Sextus' own rendering of the tradition contained in *Clit.* 7, the Christian collection adds the observation that whilst the soul is always with God, the body is at home only on the earth.[128] This addition conveys a stronger dualistic view of opposition between body and soul. The remark that the body is a trial for the sage's soul in *Sext.* 425 at the end of the section above shows that the symbiosis between God and the sage (*Sext.* 421) is possible only in a strictly ascetic environment. In being governed by the deity the sage has the guarantee of pleasing God (*Sext.* 422) and of developing an indissoluble bond with the deity, which makes the two of them inseparable (ἀχώριστον, *Sext.* 423). By exercising self-control the wise reaches a state of unity with the deity. This intimacy or friendship between the sage and the deity is built on the ascetic ideal of ἐγκράτεια, which is the only authentic form of devotion, as in the already mentioned passage on the "foundation of piety".[129]

As the primary form of piety, self-control enables a circular movement where the more virtuous the life of the sage is, the closer the sage's soul gets to God; and the closer the sage's soul is to God, the more ascetically perfect the sage's life is. This movement is seen in the *Sentences* as an ascent (ἄνοδος) towards God, as in *Sext.* 420 mentioned above. Even though no explicit pagan counterpart can be found for this sentence in Sextus' shared tradition, the philosophical and Hellenic slant of it is undeniable. A similar connection between strict ascetic discipline and the possibility of escaping the alienated life on earth and ascending to the gods is contained in Porphyry:

> In the first place, indeed, as I have said, know that it would not be at all possible for those still intending to remember the "return journey" from their sojourn abroad (ξένης καταγωγῆς) to make the ascent (ἐπάνοδον) pleasurably, as though it were some smooth surface, and in leisurely fashion. For no state is more diametrically opposed to another than pleasure and indolence are to the ascent to the gods (τῇ πρὸς θεοὺς ἀνόδῳ) (*Marc.*6).[130]

The necessity of the ascent of the soul from its worldly exile to a superior level of awareness and perfection reveals the conceptual debt that Sextus, Porphyry and all the ascetic tradition both pagan and Christian, owe to Pla-

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[128] *Sext.* 55: τὸ μὲν σῶμά σου μόνον ἐπιδημείτω τῇ γῇ, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἀεὶ ἔστω παρὰ θεῷ.

[129] *Sext.* 86a–b: κρηπὶς εὐσεβείας ἐγκράτεια. τέλος εὐσεβείας φιλία πρὸς θεόν. The first part of the sentence is also attested in *Clit.* 13. In *Contempl.* 34, Philo says something similar by indicating that the Therapeutae take ἐγκράτεια as a foundation (θεμέλιον) for the soul on which they build their virtuous life.

[130] ET O'Brien Wicker, *Marcella*, 51.

to. It is in the famous metaphor of the man in the subterranean cave[131] that Plato describes the flight of mankind from the prison (δεσμωτήριον) of its worldly delusion as an "ascent of the soul to the intelligible place" (τὴν εἰς τὸν νοητὸν τόπον τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνοδον)[132] of the reality above. As argued by Andrew Louth, detachment from the bodily sphere and purification of the soul are essential to the Platonic understanding of this spiritual ascension.[133] Through their source material, Sextus and Porphyry interpret the connection between the ascent of the soul to God and ascetic renunciation in essentially Platonic terms. In Sextus, the travel of the soul towards the deity is made possible by wisdom:

σοφία ψυχὴν ὁδηγεῖ πρὸς θεόν (*Sext.* 167).

Wisdom leads a soul to God.[134]

Even though there is no explicit equivalent of *Sext.* 167 in the traditions connected with Sextus, the presence of the term σοφία does not necessarily imply that the maxim is Christian. References to wisdom are frequent in the non-Christian texts of Sextus' pagan source material.[135] Very different is the case of *Sext.* 402, which probably expresses in Christian terms a similar view to that of *Sext.* 167:

ψυχὴν ἀπὸ γῆς πίστις ἀνάγει παρὰ θεόν (*Sext.* 402).

Faith guides the soul from earth to God.[136]

The term πίστις is totally absent from *Clitarchus* and the *Pythagorean Sentences*, whilst occurring ten times in Sextus.[137] Faith is mentioned twice in Porphyry's letter *Ad Marcellam*. *Marc.* 23, however, refers negatively to irrational faith (ἄλογος πίστις) as the wrong attitude towards God. *Marc.* 24 lists faith, together with truth, love and hope in a conventional Neoplatonic inventory of contemplative principles.[138] Because of its use of πίστις, *Sext.* 402 is likely to belong to Sextus' Christian reworking, although Chadwick did not list it among the gnomes he considered of Christian origin.[139] If this

[131] *Resp.* 514a.

[132] *Resp.* 517b.

[133] Louth, *Origins*, 7 with reference to *Phaed.* 66e–67a, also Clark, *Society*, 62.

[134] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 37.

[135] *Clit.* 31 (= *Sext.* 156) and 42 (= *Sext.* 168), *Pyth.* 33 and 94 (= *Marc.* 17.1–2), cf. *Marc.* 1, 11, 17, 23, 30.

[136] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 402.

[137] πιστός occurs 36 times in the *Sentences* against one occurrence in *Clit.* 75 (= *Sext.* 513) with no religious connotation and one occurrence in *Marc.* 9, where it clearly means "trustworthy".

[138] Cf. *Orac. Chald.* 45–47, see also Proclus *Theol. Plat.* 1.25 and 4.9.

[139] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 139–140. *Sext.* 402 is also linguistically close of Ps 29:4 LXX.

is the case, the rewriting of a sentence on the Platonic journey of the soul towards the deity influenced Sextus' understanding of the purpose of Christian faith. Under the influence of the Pythagorean and Platonic elements of his source, Sextus depicts the Christian ascetic believer on the model of the Platonic philosophers. The task of wisdom, and indeed of Christian faith, is that of leaving behind earth and its base instincts to raise oneself above the sphere of perception and rest in the presence of God (παρὰ θεόν). As in the Neoplatonic Porphyry, ascetic life in the *Sentences* is not an end in itself, but a spiritual and intellectual exercise, which enables the philosopher to drop the burden that weighs down one's perception of reality. Leaving behind the sensible world, Sextus' ascetic sage is now ready to fulfil the ultimate task of a true philosophical life: that is the contemplation of God in a Platonic, and most of all Philonic, way.[140]

II. Contemplation and imitation of God

At the furthermost bounds of his ascetic discourse, Sextus explicitly mentions the necessity for the sage to imitate the deity and to lead a godlike life. *Sext.* 41–50, a further example of the use of concatenation or sorites in Sextus,[141] introduces the central motif of imitation (ὁμοίωμα) of God:

τιμὴ μεγίστη θεῷ θεοῦ γνῶσις καὶ ὁμοίωμα.
ὅμοιον μὲν οὐδὲν θεῷ, προσφιλέστατον δὲ τὸ εἰς δύναμιν ἐξομοιούμενον (*Sext.* 44–45).

The knowledge and imitation of God is the best way to honour him.
Nothing is like God, but whatever imitates Him as far as possible is most pleasing to Him.[142]

Chadwick is probably right to observe that these sentences express a tension between the Platonic view of the possibility of imitating God and the biblical perspective according to which nobody can be like God (Ps 71:19 LXX and 89:8 LXX).[143] As has been shown of *Strom.* 7.13.4–14.1, Clement shows strong affinities with these sentences of Sextus when indicating philosophical philanthropy and piety as effective ways to obtain Gnostic assimilation (γνωστικὴ ἐξομοίωσις) to God. Sextus found the Platonic concept of ὁμοίωσις θεοῦ,[144] or assimilation to God, in his source material. The

[140] *Her.* 69–70, cf. Louth, *Origins*, 33–34.

[141] On concatenation, that is the device according to which each sentence starts with the conclusive clause of the previous sentence, in Sextus, see van den Broek, "Silvanus", 272, Kloppenborg, *Formation*, 299 and Turner, *Philip*, 111.

[142] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences* 21.

[143] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 166.

[144] *Theaet.* 176b.

expression occurs in *Marc.* 13 and 16, which is Porphyry's rendition of a passage also found in the *Pythagorean Sentences*:

τιμήσεις τὸν θεὸν ἄριστα, ὅταν τῷ θεῷ τὴν διάνοιαν ὁμοιώσῃς· ἡ δὲ ὁμοίωσίς ἐστι διὰ μόνης ἀρετῆς· μόνη γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὴν ψυχὴν ἄνω ἕλκει πρὸς τὸ συγγενές (*Pyth.* 102).

You will honour God best, if you make [your] mind similar to God; but this assimilation is [possible] only through virtue. Virtue alone draws the soul upwards to what is akin to her.

Here, the theme of the soul's journey towards a divine sphere is mentioned again. In the *Pythagorean Sentences*, however, it is the exercise of virtue rather than wisdom or faith that enables the soul's ascent. *Pyth.* 102 and *Marc.* 16 show that Sextus' pagan sources probably contained references to the view that the sage's mind has to conform to God's mind. The invitation to imitate the deity is a very common feature in Sextus' collection and in its tradition. In *Sext.* 18 (σοφὸς ἀκτήμων ὅμοιος θεῷ) and in *Pyth.* 30a (ζῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς θεῷ ὁμοίως ὁ αὐτάρκης καὶ ἀκτήμων καὶ φιλόσοφος) the urging to imitate the deity always requires ascetic renunciation. As shown in chapter three, the ascetic necessity of renouncing one's possessions is introduced with the invitation to live as one similar to God (ὡς ἀληθῶς θεῷ ὁμοίως), that is to imitate God's autarky, an element which later exerted a strong influence on the Christian ascetic tradition.[145]

Imitating God in the *Sentences* is seen as an intellectual and spiritual effort. Alongside renunciation in the lower aspects of life, which enables the sage to imitate God's self-sufficiency, the wise are required to change their mindset so that their entire view of reality is transformed:

τιμᾷ θεὸν ἄριστα ὁ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ διάνοιαν ἐξομοιώσας θεῷ εἰς δύναμιν (*Sext.* 381).

He honours God best who conforms his mind to God as far as possible.[146]

This sentence is Sextus' own rendition of the tradition preserved in *Pyth.* 102 and *Marc.* 16. In *Marc.* 19, Porphyry explains that the mind (φρόνημα) is united (συνάπτω) with the mind of the deity following the principle that like attracts like (τὸ ὅμοιον πρὸς τὸ ὅμοιον). In the *Sentences*, the outcome of the gradual assimilation of the sage's mind with the deity is a state of perpetual and mutual presence, which results in a sort of inhabitation of God in the sage's mind:

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[145] George H. van Kooten, *Paul's anthropology in context. The image of God, assimilation to God, and tripartite man in ancient Judaism, ancient philosophy and early Christianity*, WUNT 232, Tübingen 2008, 175. For the significance of autarky among Egyptian ascetics see Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1978, 83.

[146] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 65.

σοφοῦ διάνοια ἀεὶ παρὰ θεῷ.
σοφοῦ διανοίᾳ θεὸς ἐνοικεῖ (*Sext.* 143–144).

The sage's mind is always with God.
God dwells in the mind of a sage.[147]

As van Kooten has shown, in the first two centuries C.E. Middle Platonism interpreted the philosophical debate about assimilation to the deity as an invitation to a contemplative life.[148] In the *Sentences*, references to the intimate relationship between the sage and God convey a similar view. If the διάνοια of the sage is always in God's presence, thinking of God eventually becomes the only worthy human activity and all human activity is summarised in an act of contemplation:

τὸν χρόνον ὃν ἂν μὴ νοήσῃς τὸν θεόν, τοῦτον νόμιζέ σοι ἀπολωλέναι (*Sext.* 54).

Consider as lost the time you do not spend thinking of God.[149]

A similar sentence invites the sage to think of God more often than one breathes (συνεχέστερον νόει τὸν θεὸν ἢ ἀνάπνει, *Sext.* 289). This sentence, in a slightly modified form, occurs also in Gregory Nazianzen *Adversus Eunomianos* 27.4 (μνημονευτέον γὰρ θεοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀναπνευστέον).[150] Even though a direct connection between the two authors cannot be established with any certainty, the two sentences are linguistically (ἀναπνέω/ἀναπνέυω) and structurally close enough to support the view that Gregory's sentence is a variant of *Sext.* 289 or of its tradition. Since Rufinus and Evagrius probably received the *Sentences* from the Origenist ascetic tradition, it is not unlikely that the Origenist Gregory Nazianzen had access to the same sources. As Chadwick has observed, the ascetic and contemplative implications of the advice to think of God more often than one breathes resonated greatly through Gregory's sentence in the monastic tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy.[151]

Thinking of God or contemplating God in the *Sentences* is a constant exercise in which the mind of the wise, fixed on God's qualities, becomes

[147] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 33.

[148] Above all in Alcinous, see van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 154–160. For Philo, *Decal.* 97–101 assimilation concerns both contemplative and active life, cf. van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 190–191.

[149] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 23.

[150] See Bernard Coulie and Marc Dubuisson, *Thesaurus Sententiarum Sexti: textus auctus una cum Sententiis Clitarchi, sententiis Pythagoricorum et translatione latina Rufini Aquileiensis*, Turnhout 2003, vii.

[151] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 176. Gregory's sentence is quoted in John Chrysostom *In Psalmum 118*, PG 55.703; in John of Damascus *Sacra Parallela* (PG 95.1357 and 96.228); in George Pachymeres *Hist.* 6.23; in the *Typicon* of the Lips monastery (13.74) and many other monastic works.

a reflection of the deity. Sextus expresses this, observing that the διάνοια of the sage is like the mirror (ἔνοπτρον) of God (*Sext.* 450).[152] Also in Sextus as in *Marc.* 19, this reflection is possible because like attracts like, as stated in *Sext.* 443 (φίλον ἡγοῦ τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ). Because of the affinity between God and the soul of the wise, the sage's act of contemplation is also an act of self-knowledge:

ἔθιζε σεαυτὸν ἀεὶ ἀφορᾶν πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
ὁρῶν τὸν θεὸν ὄψῃ σεαυτόν.
ὁρῶν τὸν θεὸν ποιήσεις τὸ ἐν σοὶ φρονοῦν ὁποῖον ὁ θεός.
σέβου τὸ ἐν σοὶ καὶ ταῖς τοῦ σώματος ἐπιθυμίαις μὴ καθυβρίσῃς.
ἀσπίλωτόν σου τὸ σῶμα τήρει ὡς ἔνδυμα τῆς ψυχῆς παρὰ θεοῦ, ὡς καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου τηρεῖς ἀσπίλωτον ἔνδυμα ὄντα τῆς σαρκός (*Sext.* 445–449).

Accustom yourself to look only toward God.
If you perceive God you will perceive yourself.
If you perceive God you will conform your mind to God.
Reverence what is within you and do not insult it with bodily lust.
Keep spotless your body, the garment of the soul given by God, just as you keep spotless your coat, the garment of the flesh.[153]

Sextus connects contemplation of God (*Sext.* 445) with the purity of one's body (*Sext.* 449), which suggests a strict nexus between ascetic renunciation and the contemplative life. A similar connection between ascetic practices and contemplation of God can be observed in the already mentioned *Gos. Thom.* 27, where disengagement from mundane activities (or "fasting from the world") is the only way of getting a glimpse of God's kingdom.[154] The *Sentences*, however, differ from *Thomas* for taking the deification of the ascetic sage to the extreme. Sextus develops the view that the ascetic sage indeed leads the life of a god and must be honoured accordingly:

ἄξιος ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις.
θεὸς καὶ υἱὸς θεοῦ τὸ μὲν ἄριστον, τὸ δὲ ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ ἀρίστου (*Sext.* 376a–b).

A human being worthy of God is a god among human beings.
If God is best, then a son of God is next best.[155]

Sext. 376a originates in Pythagorean circles as it appears also in *Pyth.* 4. The choice of the American translators of the *Sentences* to capitalise the first θεός but not the second betrays a certain theological cautiousness. The prudence of the translators probably reflects the uneasiness of the Christian Sextus with the view conveyed by *Pyth.* 4 (= *Marc.* 5). In *Sext.* 376b, not

[152] Cf. 2 Cor 3:18.
[153] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 71.
[154] Valantasis, *Thomas*, 100–101.
[155] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 63.

attested in any witness of the source material, Sextus inserted the clarifying gloss that a son of God is second best to God himself.[156] The expression "son of God" occurs only in the *Sentences* referred to the believers (cf. *Sext.* 58, 60, 135 and implicitly 221 and 228), but not in *Clitarchus*, Porphyry or the *Pythagorean Sentences.* Sextus, therefore, probably added *Sext.* 376b in the attempt to soften the misinterpretations that could arise from *Pyth.* 4.[157]

Another daring statement was probably that of *Sext.* 446: ὁρῶν τὸν θεὸν ὄψῃ σεαυτόν which was preserved only in MS Π. Rufinus tried to mitigate the daring statement with a less controversial rendition of the Greek: *intuendo deum videbis eum*. As it stands now, Rufinus' translation is rather tautological. The Syriac translation also seems to have misinterpreted the σεαυτόν of the Greek offering a hazy translation that misses the point of the Greek.[158] *Sext.* 446, however, is analogous to *Sext.* 577 (γνῶθι θεόν, ἵνα γνῷς καὶ σαυτόν) which belongs to the appendices of the Greek MS Y and the Syriac X. Modelled upon the Delphic aphorism γνῶθι σαυτόν, *Sext.* 446 implies that by knowing God the sage will gain knowledge of himself. The same view is conveyed by *Sext.* 394:

τίς θεὸς γνῶθι· μάθε τὸ νοοῦν ἐν σοί (*Sext.* 394).

Know who God is: know the understanding that is within you.[159]

Again the Latin and the longer Syriac recension offer a different version of the Greek interpreting τὸ νοοῦν as "what within you knows God" (Lat. *et quid in te quod agnoscit Deum*, Syr. ܘܡܢܘ ܗܘ ܕܡܣܬܟܠ ܒܟ ܠܟ ܐܠܗܐ). Unless the Latin and the Syriac preserve a different Greek text, they seem to offer a certain resistance to Sextus' extreme view that the sage's soul ought to imitate God.

Unlike these Christian interpolators, the Hellenic philosophical tradition was not unfamiliar with the idea that the purified soul could be moulded into an image of the deity.[160] In the Pythagorean tradition, the ideal ruler was seen as an image of the deity.[161] Plotinus later, describing his quest for

[156] θεὸς καὶ υἱὸς θεοῦ τὸ μὲν ἄριστον, τὸ δὲ ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ ἀρίστου.

[157] Although the absence of *Sext.* 376b in Rufinus and the presence of a different, but undoubtedly Christian, sentence in the longer Syriac recension may indicate a much later Christian interpolation.

[158] Syr. ܐܢ ܠܟܢ ܬܡܬܘܚ ܡܕܪܟܢܘܬܟ ܠܘܬ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܗ ܒܡܕܪܟܢܘܬܟ ܚܙܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܗ, or "If you stretch your understanding towards God, you [will] see God in (or through) it", cf. Ryssel, "Syrische", 2:624.

[159] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 65.

[160] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.49, cf. Fowden, "Sages", 154.

[161] van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 95–99. That Sextus' tradition contained references to the Pythagorean βασιλεύς can be inferred from *Clit.* 56–58.

a virtuous life, adopts the simile of the sculptor. As the sculptor cuts away and polishes what is still uneven and rough, so the philosopher has to chisel himself until the godlike beauty of virtue (τῆς ἀρετῆς ἡ θεοειδὴς ἀγλαία) surfaces (*Enn.* 1.6.9). In Plotinus, this working of one's rough material into a divine masterpiece of virtue is obtained through purification and contemplation.[162] Purification and ascetic practices in Sextus have a similar aspiration. Sextus found the view that the wise is an image of the deity in his sources:[163]

σέβου σοφὸν ἄνδρα ὡς εἰκόνα θεοῦ ζῶσαν (*Sext.* 190).

Respect the wise man as a living image of God.[164]

Although the notion of God's image (εἰκὼν θεοῦ) is mentioned in biblical literature,[165] there is little doubt that *Sext.* 190 either belonged to Sextus' pagan tradition or was influenced by it, as a similar maxim can be found in *Clit.* 9:

δίκαιος ἀνὴρ εἰκὼν θεοῦ (*Clit.* 9).

A righteous man is an image of God.

As van Kooten has observed, *Clit.* 9 demonstrates that the notion of the righteous as image of God, originally developed within the Cynics,[166] was used in Neopythagorean circles.[167] When Sextus recommends that the best way to honour God is to imitate God (*Sext.* 44–45), he draws from a philosophical tradition which urged that renunciation and asceticism enabled humankind to live a godlike life and eventually to deify oneself through ἄσκησις.[168] The aim of becoming like God, as seen above with Clement's "Gnostic assimilation", becomes then central both in the ethical and ascetical reflection of the Greek-speaking early Christian theologians as well as in the Latin-speaking.[169] Even though the theme is clearly Platonic, philosophical traditions like the one preserved in the *Sentences* contributed to the Christian reflection on the imitation of God a point of contact between the self-discipline required to live an ideal philosophical life and the rising Christian interest in asceticism.

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[162] Louth, *Origins*, 41.
[163] van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 99–100.
[164] ET Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 39.
[165] Gen 1:26–27, 5:1 and 9:6, Wis 2:23.
[166] Diogenes Laërtius, *Vit. Phil.* 6.51.
[167] van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 100.
[168] Finn, *Asceticism*, 30.
[169] See van Kooten, *Anthropology*, 174 and Clark, *Society*, 72.

E. Conclusion

As mentioned above, in their introduction to the American translation of the *Sentences*, Richard Edwards and Robert Wild argue for Sextus' "mild asceticism". Edwards and Wild observed that Sextus never advises "the wise person [to] retreat into the desert as a hermit".[170] This is certainly true. I have argued in this chapter, however, that the *Sentences* constitute an important point of contact between the philosophical traditions they reproduce and the later development of Christian asceticism. In the first part of the chapter, I have shown how Sextus conveys the idea of an antagonism between the ascetic believers and the world in which they live. In the *Sentences* this antagonism is fully embodied in the sage's concern with purity, which marks a strong Pythagorean influence.[171] Far from advocating a mere opposition to the world, the *Sentences* solve the tensions between the wise and their social world by stressing their unselfish philanthropy and their pacifism. As I have argued, it is through teachers like Sextus and Clement of Alexandria that the concept of φιλανθρωπία was adopted by Christians and became an integral part of the early Christian quest for perfection.

In the second part, I have shown how the *Sentences* depict the philanthropic Christian sage as a universal benefactor and how the universalistic character of some of Sextus' maxims is rooted in a Cynic cosmopolitism.[172] I have suggested that the *Sentences* envisage a disengaged life on the political front. In particular, I have argued that Sextus may have intentionally omitted from his sources pagan gnomes addressing active involvement in politics and public affairs. These omissions are particularly noteworthy if one considers that gnomes addressing themes like honour, power, ambition and the quest for glory are frequently featured in pagan gnomologies.[173] According to Teresa Morgan's findings, sentences about social relations and power make up 21% of the total distribution of main topics in Greek and Latin gnomologies, representing the most frequent theme addressed in Hellenistic collections of sayings.[174] The almost complete absence of such themes in the *Sentences*, therefore, marks an interest-

[170] Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 1.

[171] Taylor, *Pythagoreans*, 100.

[172] On εὐεργεσία as a common denominator between Sextus and the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, see Luigi Alfonsi, "Dio in Marco Aurelio e nelle 'Sentenze' di Sesto", in *Dio nella Bibbia e nelle culture ad essa contemporanee e connesse*, Torino 1980, pp. 339–366, 366.

[173] Morgan, *Morality*, 95–98.

[174] Morgan, *Morality*, 121.

ing shift. I have argued that this preference for a disengagement from social duties is similar to the voluntary isolation of the contemplative philosophers in Philo's *De vita contemplativa*. I have also proposed that it is in authors like Sextus that one of the most interesting features of early Christian monasticism, the phenomenon of *xeniteia* or voluntary social estrangement, is rooted.

In the third part of my chapter, I have shown that the ultimate outcome of Sextus' asceticism is a contemplative life and imitation of God. I have shown how Sextus is mostly influenced by Platonic and Neopythagorean views. If compared with Clement, Origen and even Valentinus, Sextus' interest in contemplation perfectly matches what is known of the Alexandrian spirituality of his time.[175] On the other hand, the presence of significant philosophical elements in a collection, which was later read among the Egyptian ascetics of Nag Hammadi, can contribute to rectifying the evaluations of those scholars who claimed that early Christian asceticism had an anti-philosophical purpose. Brakke's observation, for example, that by the time of Athanasius: "The model Christian was no longer the insightful intellectual, but the self-controlled ascetic" is probably an overstatement.[176] Sextus demonstrates the existence of a continuity between the self-discipline of the Christian ascetic and the Christian intellectual, whose spiritual advancement was based on the same principles of the "aesthetics of the self"[177] characteristic of pagan temperance.

[175] Louth, *Origins*, 72.

[176] David Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, Baltimore (Md.) 1995, 144.

[177] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality: 2*, London 1992, 12. Elizabeth A. Clark, "Foucault, the Fathers, and Sex", in *JAAR* 56/4 (1988), pp. 619–641, 635 notes: "That we tend not to associate asceticism with an "aesthetics of existence" reveals our overemphasis on the material conditions of asceticism – the dirt, the vermin – and our relative neglect of the ascetics' fastidious grooming of their psyches".

Conclusion

As I have mentioned in the introduction, this study has to a certain extent been stimulated by the final paragraph of Henry Chadwick's book on the *Sentences of Sextus*. Chadwick ends his work by asking whether the *Sentences* with their curious composition history imply that "the ascetic ideal of the Neopythagorean sages has been an influence" on the Christian ascetic tradition. In the same paragraph, he wonders whether Sextus' use of pagan sources has blurred "distinctions which might better have been kept more clearly in view".[1] Considering Chadwick's main thesis that the *Sentences* were not a spurious document lightly interpolated by Christians but the deliberate endeavour of a highly original Christian thinker,[2] Chadwick's last paragraph conveys a sense of hesitation as the author does not answer his final questions. This study has answered affirmatively the question whether the ascetic tendencies of Sextus' source material influenced his ideal of self-discipline. It has also shown, however, that the reference to a blurring of distinctions is not an accurate way of describing Sextus' adoption of Hellenistic principles of self-restraint. Having reconsidered the external and internal evidence, I have illustrated how this deep impact of philosophical asceticism on the collection was possible only because it found a crucial responsiveness to the ideals of a life of renunciation already in Sextus' interpretation of Christian devotion.

In chapter one of this study I have surveyed the history of interpretation of the *Sentences* in modern scholarship within the broader context of their reception history. The first main contribution of this research to the scholarly debate around the *Sentences* consists in re-examining the evidence of their reception in the early Christian tradition, and demonstrating that their views are more extremely ascetic than scholars have assumed so far. Through a close reading of Origen's testimony in *Comm. Matt.* 15.3, I have argued that alongside moderate and educated readers like Origen, the *Sentences* were read within radical Christian circles, whose positions Origen does not hesitate to equate with those of the Marcionites and other

[1] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162.

[2] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 159: "There is a single mind behind the compilation and the work of revision".

Christian groups equally oriented towards strict *enkrateia*. Mentioned by Origen in defence of Christian dietary abstention, used by Rufinus and Pelagius as a manual of perfection, interpolated by Evagrius and recalled in Benedict's rule, the *Sentences* are inextricably linked to the development of eastern as well as western monasticism in the early church. Through a reassessment of their reception and diffusion, this study has shown how the *Sentences* have uninterruptedly belonged to the ascetic repertoire of Christianity from second-century Egypt to sixth-century Syria.

In contrast to these results, the survey of views expressed by modern scholarship about the *Sentences* has uncovered an almost absolute neglect of those ascetic features which had determined their initial popularity. I have argued that this indifference towards a central theme of the collection is due to the long-lasting effect of Jerome's criticism. Jerome claimed that the *Sentences* had been written by a Pythagorean philosopher and were therefore not fit for a Christian readership. Accordingly, scholars, both pre-modern and modern, have focused on their pagan provenance rather than on their content. Resuming Jerome's simile of the golden cup of Babylon mentioned in the introduction of this study,[3] one could say that modern scholarship has put greater effort in deciding whether the *Sentences* were a Babylonian cup or a Christian chalice than in sampling their contents.

Even Chadwick's suggestion that Sextus may have blurred the boundaries between Christianity and Neopythagoreanism constitutes a deliberate return to Jerome's terms of discussion.[4] As this study has emphasised, Chadwick's final speculation that the influence of Neopythagorean asceticism may have been a blurring of boundaries discloses a concealed tendency to attach a negative significance to the complex composition history of the collection. This approach still echoes Jerome's invective, revitalised by a scholarly bias against anything that could even remotely be deemed as syncretistic. Chadwick's final observations ultimately reveal a difficulty in reading the *Sentences* for what they are: a Christian edition of pagan, mostly Platonic and Neopythagorean, material.

In chapters two, three and four I have examined the influence of Sextus' source material on the asceticism of the *Sentences* with reference to maxims on sexual morality, wealth and abstention from wordiness and laughter. These texts have been chosen because they include several passages in which Sextus is more univocally dependent on pagan parallels conveniently preserved in other witnesses of his source material. Sextus selected care-

[3] See *Epist.* 133.3.

[4] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162: "The ultimate question that is raised by the Sextine collection is a variant of the controversy between Rufinus and Jerome".

fully the material to be included in the collection. A further contribution of this research to the study of the *Sentences* consists in having expanded Chadwick's remarks on Sextus' authorial mind. On the basis of my examination of Sextus' treatment of these parallel traditions, I have shown how the *Sentences* tend not to blur distinctions and cannot hastily be deemed to be simply syncretistic. Sextus repeatedly reshapes pagan sentences giving them a different meaning and context and when necessary omits key aspects of the moral principles of his source to foster the radical asceticism of his own positions.

Chapter two has been dedicated to an evaluation of Sextus' views on self-mutilation, the spiritual meaning of celibacy and procreation. Through a comparison with the extant pagan witnesses of Sextus' gnomic tradition, I have reconstructed with reasonable approximation the views about marriage and procreation conveyed by the source material of the *Sentences*. The results of this comparison have offered a more detailed picture of the guidelines followed by Sextus in his rewriting. In this way, it has been possible to shed new light on his editorial choices, showing that they have been often determined by his own Christian vision of morality.

This study differs from earlier accounts on the *Sentences* in arguing that Sextus' views on abstinence are more extreme than thought by most commentators. Most importantly, I have questioned the opinion of those who, like Meeks or Edwards and Wild,[5] have depicted the *Sentences* as a display of a mild form of asceticism more open to a compromise with everyday life. In particular, I have argued that Sextus deliberately silenced the strict procreationist principles of his Pythagorean source in an attempt to discourage his readers from a positive interpretation of marriage. This characteristic of Sextus' Christian reworking, which has never been treated in previous scholarship, contrasts with Chadwick's one-dimensional persuasion that "with adjustments here and there the language of Stoic or Pythagorean wisdom could pass in Christian circles".[6] I have demonstrated instead that the adoption of Pythagorean features in Sextus' collection has not been a mere linguistic fact or a matter of simple adjustments, but the result of intense and careful negotiation with the philosophical principles of the source material. Comments like Joseph Kroll's observation that in the pagan teaching of Sextus' source material "Die Christen fanden nichts, was sie aus der Sammlung hätten entfernen müssen"[7] are therefore misleading. Sextus is rather to be seen here in the light of Clement and Justin

[5] Interestingly Edwards was introduced to the *Sentences* by Meeks, see Edwards-Wild, *Sentences*, 6.

[6] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 160.

[7] Kroll, "Sprüche", 628.

as the witness of an encounter between Hellenistic morality and Christian traditions which produced the necessary cultural background for the development of new forms of devotion and piety within the variegated landscape of early Christianity.

Phenomena like the omission of procreationism in *Sext.* 230a–240 or the reshaping of *Sext.* 273 into a maxim advocating self-mutilation show how Sextus meticulously selected and reworked several maxims on sexual morality which could serve his ascetic tendencies. From this point of view, Chadwick's comment on the influence of the Neopythagorean source on the spirituality of the Christian Sextus seems to perceive only one aspect of the problem. It is equally true that Sextus determined what maxims of his source material were suitable for a Christian readership on the basis of his Christian inclination towards Encratism. If the purpose of the *Sentences* was "to bring the moral wisdom of the Greek sages under the wing of the church" as stated by Chadwick,[8] this study has shown that in Sextus' understanding not all Greek wisdom could be easily accommodated under that wing. While adopting pagan wisdom, Sextus also persevered in a constant conversation with his Christian legacy. Concerning celibacy and marriage, for example, I have argued that in *Sext.* 230a–231 Sextus combines the Neopythagorean procreationist temperance within marriage of *Clit.* 71 with Paul's considerations on celibacy in 1 Cor 7:35. Within three verses, Sextus typically strengthens the Pauline case for celibacy forcing at the same time on *Clit.* 71 (= *Sext.* 231) an alternative understanding which supersedes the procreationist principle of his source.

Since Sextus allows marriage and procreation in *Sext.* 230b he cannot be fully considered an Encratite. His resistance to procreationism, however, sets him apart from other early Christian writers. Procreationism in fact played a crucial role in Clement's argument against Encratism in the third book of the *Stromata*. Sextus' attitude towards the procreationism of his source suggests that the position of those who saw in Sextus the ideal complement of Clement needs to be modified.[9] This study has shown that Sextus belongs to a different category of Christian teachers, one that on central issues conveys more radical positions than those expressed by Clement.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] "His [Sextus'] kindred spirit is Clement of Alexandria", ibid. See also Gaca, *Fornication*, 259–260. Later Chadwick saw in Sextus an example of orthodox Encratism, see Henry Chadwick, "Enkrateia", *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. by Theodor Klauser, vol. 2, Stuttgart 1962, coll. 343–365, 356: "Einer der Hauptdokumente des orthodoxen Enkratitentums im späten 2. Jh.".

In chapter three I have focused on *Sext.* 15–21 where Sextus deals with the relationship of the Christian wise with worldly possessions. I have argued that Sextus' views in this regard are informed by the philosophical ideal of autarky or self-sufficiency which appeared in his source. Developing the Hellenistic principle that the autarky of the philosopher reflects God's self-sufficiency, the *Sentences* expound an abstinent view on personal possessions, stating that the Christian sage should reject all worldly things in order to be a real imitator of God. Through a close reading of *Sext.* 18 and 20, I have shown how Sextus interlaces the tradition of the sage without property or σοφὸς ἀκτήμων in *Pyth.* 30, with the saying of Jesus about Caesar's denarius (Matt 22:21 and par.). As it had been for *Sext.* 230a–231, the example of *Sext.* 18 and 20 also illustrates the continuous cross-fertilisation of NT and Greek gnomic traditions. As this study has uncovered, in this case allusions to the NT and pagan maxims are not simply juxtaposed but reworked into a homogeneous whole where the philosophical material is used as an interpretative key which opens the NT tradition to an array of possible readings where the dualistic and ascetic understanding of Jesus' words is significantly accentuated.

This chapter has also shown how Sextus is not the only Christian writer, although probably the first documented one, to adopt the ideal of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων. Independently from the *Sentences*, later Christian authors in their works on abstinence and renunciation adopted pagan traditions similar to those used by Sextus. This is further evidence of the relevance that some Hellenistic philosophical traditions had in the development of the imagery of Christian asceticism. It is the case of the ideal of the σοφὸς ἀκτήμων which the author of the pseudo-Basilian *Praevia Institutio Ascetica* found not in *Pyth.* 30, as Sextus did, but in Epictetus,[10] propelling the description of the Greek sage without property into the centre of the monastic tradition.

Chapter four constitutes an innovation in the study of the *Sentences*. In this chapter I have investigated the often neglected theme of austerity in Sextus as a form of self-discipline. In particular, I have focused on Sextus' negative attitude towards excessive talking and laughing and his endorsement of silence and brevity. The study of silence and brevity in Sextus has provided fresh insight at the *Sentences* stressing the analogies between what Sextus says about silence and later developments of the theme in the monastic tradition. Concerning Sextus' negative attitude towards wordiness, I have argued that the *Sentences* are at the centre of a development that ran parallel through Jewish and Greek gnomic wisdom. Gnomic brevity was traditionally perceived as the primary and most ancient means of

[10] *Diatr.* 3.22.

expression of Greek philosophy. The ideal of brevity together with the promotion of silence as a sign of wisdom were important factors in the characterisation of the wise in Sextus' time. In this chapter, I have shown that when Sextus champions brevity and silence as the right attire of the Christian believer, he claims for the Christian sage the same philosophical dignity of the Greek sages. It is in this sense that the frequent substitution of σοφός and φιλόσοφος with πιστός[11] in the *Sentences* should be interpreted. This phenomenon is not only a device used to Christianise maxims of the pagan source, but also an implicit suggestion that the Christian believer displays the same sober austerity and is entitled to the same respect as the philosophers of old.

Chapter five constitutes a preliminary attempt to address the ascetic value of the aspect of the source material that Chadwick in his final paragraph called: "Mystical".[12] This chapter has offered an opportunity to look beyond the immediate historical context of the *Sentences* at the further developments that some of the themes treated by Sextus later found in the monastic tradition. In particular, the chapter has explored the presence in Sextus of sentences promoting a secluded life and an antagonism between worldly concerns and the life of the sage believer. I have argued that the *Sentences* convey, in an implied but nonetheless substantial way, the message of a separation between the believers and their social context in favour of a more contemplative life. This study has shown that this feature of the *Sentences* originates in Sextus' adoption of two themes found in his source material. Sextus draws equally on the Cynic ideal of cosmopolitism and on the Pythagorean, and Platonic, emphasis on the imitation of God. As a result, the *Sentences* promote a gradual detachment from the worries of ordinary life in order to achieve a deeper intimacy between the ascetic sage and God. I have argued that these philosophical elements already adopted in the second-century *Sentences* are to be seen as the foundation of later developments in the ascetic tradition of Christianity, for example in the monastic idea of *xeniteia* or voluntary alienation, a concept dear to the monastic tradition of the east.

A final word should be spent on the implications that the study of the ascetic tendencies of the *Sentences of Sextus* has for the study of asceticism in early Christianity. These implications extend in two opposite directions for the Christian works and events which preceded and for those which followed Sextus' time. Concerning the time before Sextus, the *Sentences* may have an impact on the way modern scholarship reads the NT. The analysis

[11] For example *Sext.* 49, see Chadwick, *Sextus*, 157.
[12] Chadwick, *Sextus*, 162.

of Sextus' rewriting of several scriptural passages has shown how the *Sentences* can preserve early interpretative traditions of the NT. Sextus for instance reads Paul's teaching on marriage in 1 Cor 7 as reinforcing the value of abstinence and celibacy and interprets Jesus' saying about Caesar's denarius from the synoptic tradition in a more radically dualistic way, witnessed also by Clement and Origen. Sextus' emphasis on celibacy in interpreting Paul situates the *Sentences* between Tatian's ascetic reading of First Corinthians[13] and Clement's defence of marriage against Encratism equally based on Paul.[14] In this way, Sextus like Tatian and the *Gospel of Thomas* adds weight to the evidence for an early date of ascetic readings of the NT. As witnesses of some of the earliest interpretative traditions of the NT, authors like Sextus therefore constitute a constant reminder to NT scholarship of the possibility that the intrinsic ascetic value of some NT passages has yet to be fully understood.

Concerning Sextus' time and later developments of the ascetic tradition in Christianity, it is important to place the *Sentences* in the wider context of second-century Christianity. Texts like the *Sentences* together with the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* point to the existence of a substantial ascetic strain in second-century Christianity. The *Sentences* confirm that asceticism was already a driving force in the interpretation of Scripture and Christian devotion in the time preceding Antony. From the point of view of the development of Christian asceticism, Sextus contributes to fill a void often underlined in the history of early monasticism. The *Sentences* show the strength and the vitality of the tradition which led to monasticism, offering a crucial insight into the ascetic tradition of Christianity in pre-monastic time.

Athanasius' *Vit. Ant.* 2 stresses that before going into the desert Antony left his sister with some Christian ascetics in his village. As James Goehring has observed, this detail shows that Athanasius did not consider Antony to be the originator of monasticism.[15] Antony's innovation consisted rather in his move to the desert, which broke with the tradition of more urban forms of monasticism which in Antony's time had already been in existence.[16] As the product of an encounter between early Christian ascetic readings of the NT, philosophical teachings about self-sufficiency and contemplation and more popular traditions on the austerity of the ideal sage,

[13] Extant in *Strom.* 3.81.1–2.

[14] See *Strom.* 3.88.3, where Clement illustrates the spiritual advantages of both conditions: celibacy and marriage.

[15] James E. Goehring, "The Origins of Monasticism", in *Ascetics, Society and the Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, Harrisburg (Pa.) 1999, pp. 13–35, 20.

[16] Goehring, "Monasticism", 24.

the *Sentences of Sextus* represents an important piece of evidence for the reconstruction of the cultural context of some of these early ascetics.

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