

of Jewish law and the authority and message of Jesus.

The conflict produced some revealing documents. One major Jewish Christian text from the first century, the *Didache* (also known as the Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles), treats Jesus as little more than a “charismatic prophet,” Vermes writes. In contrast, an important Gentile Christian work, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, written in the 120s AD, portrays Jesus as “a quasi-divine character” who has “existed since all eternity and was active before the creation of the world.”

In the first century, a council of apostles convened in Jerusalem to attempt to resolve the tensions between the branches. The council ruled that Gentiles would only have to obey select Jewish laws, such as those that prohibited offerings to idols, and could disregard others, such as the circumcision requirement. But Gentile Christians weren’t cowed. Buoyed by their growing numbers, they began to remake some aspects of the Jewish Christian experience to suit their preferences. The breaking of the bread became “a sacramental reiteration of the Last Supper,” now known to many Christians as Communion.

During the second century, the unique early brand of Jewish Christianity began to wane. Vermes writes that as Christianity spread across the Gentile Roman Empire and Jews were taxed in the Jewish-Roman wars, Jewish Christians “vanished, either rejoining the Jewish fold or being absorbed in the Gentile church.”

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## Disaggregating the Bible

**THE SOURCE:** “Christianity and the Future of the Book” by Alan Jacobs, in *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2011.

THE KORAN CALLS CHRISTIANS “People of the Book.” It’s an apt description. “There is an intimate connection between the Christian message, the Christian scriptures, and the codex,” argues Alan Jacobs, an English professor at Wheaton College. The codex—a bound, portable successor to the unwieldy scrolls on which Scripture was preserved for earlier Christians—spread a unified and organized version of the Word across the world. But what happens to Christianity if the book goes the way of the scroll?

It depends, says Jacobs. As a technology, the bound book has served Christians well. Early adherents were eager to convey that



Behold, the iBible.

“the Church does not possess a series of little books,” but, rather, one big book that encompasses both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. From the Christian perspective, Jesus’s life is foretold in the former and chronicled in the latter. “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God of Jesus Christ,” Jacobs writes of the Bible’s message. Whether one is browsing Scripture on an iPad or thumbing through it the

## EXCERPT

## Philosophy With Floorboards

*In her Sovereignty of Good, [novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch] wrote that any moral philosophy must be inhabited. What counts is not so much whether it passes an exam, as what kinds of occupancy it can support. Is anyone at home in this philosophy? Does it have flesh and bones, or rather joints and floorboards? If you knock, does anyone come to the door?*

—SARAH BAKEWELL, author of *How to Live: A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer* (2011), in *The Philosophers’ Magazine* (First Quarter 2012)

old-fashioned way, that message of unity endures. “Electronic reading devices like the Kindle, and even tablets like the iPad, preserve many of the essential features of the codex,” Jacobs says.

Not so projector screens and PowerPoints, which are rapidly becoming the preferred means of presenting Scripture in church services around the world. Screen projection, prevalent in developing-world congregations too strapped to purchase Bibles, “severs its chosen verse or two from its textual surroundings” and “occludes any sense of sequence within the whole of the Bible.” (Jacobs isn’t the first to fret about

fragmentation. Biblical scholars have claimed for years that verse and chapter divisions—not finalized until the 1500s—are artificial distractions.)

Popular Web sites also encourage selective reading. Search boxes in online Bibles feature more prominently than “browse” buttons, Jacobs reports.

Will these technologies lead Christians to miss the forest for the trees? It’s possible. “If Christians forget, or forget more completely than they already have,” Jacobs writes, “the integrity and necessary sequentiality of their holy Book, and of the story it tells, that would be a catastrophe for Christianity.”

Arts in Beijing. What one critic has called the “frenzy” for music training in China, writes Hao Huang, a professor of music at Scripps College, has an unexpected history.

Western classical music wasn’t introduced to the Chinese public until Christian missionaries came in the 19th century, but it quickly gained popularity and prestige as a symbol of the Western “culture of scientific progress and modernization.” The rigors of classical training fit the Confucian value of self-cultivation through self-discipline. Confucius believed that the study of music was “an indispensable way to train the mind,” Huang notes, and considered it more important than mathematics and writing. The great sage said that “one is roused by Songs [poetry], established by ritual, and perfected by Music.”

Confucianism and classical music both came under severe attack during Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution (1966–76). The communist government portrayed European music as a bourgeois invention used for counterrevolutionary ends. By the 1980s, however, the Chinese Communist Party was beginning to re-embrace Confucius, and classical music came back into favor as well.

Li Delun, one of the Chinese musicians trained in the West whose career survived the Cultural Revolution, helped lead the revival with a new ideological line, declaring, “People need this product of the West to liberate their cultural thinking from 2,000 years of feudalism.” By the early 1990s,

## ARTS & LETTERS

# From Confucius to Chopin

**THE SOURCE:** “Why Chinese People Play Western Classical Music: Transcultural Roots of Music Philosophy” by Hao Huang, in *International Journal of Music Education*, Oct. 11, 2011 (online).

THERE MAY BE NO PLACE IN THE world where the great works of the Western classical music tradition are so widely admired as in China. Some 36 million Chinese children are studying the piano, six times the number of American children. Government has poured money into majestic new music halls such as the Shanghai Opera House and the National Center for the Performing



In Beijing, renowned Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim instructs young musicians.