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THE SO-CALLED OINTMENT PRAYER IN THE COPTIC VERSION OF THE DIDACHE: A RE-EVALUATION*

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In the extant fragment (corresponding to 10:3-11:2 of the Greek text) of the Coptic translation of the *Didache*,¹ after the prayer over the bread and the permission for “prophets” to improvise the benedictions if they so wish (10:7), there is a passage which has no parallel in the Greek.² It has much potential importance for the early history of the liturgy; however, none of the several interpretations which have been offered to date is entirely satisfactory.³ The text and a provisional translation of the

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Abbreviations: *Ap. Const.* = *Apostolic Constitutions*; Baumstark, *Geschichte* = Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1922); Brightman, *Liturgies* = Frank Edward Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, vol. 1 (London: Clarendon, 1896); Graf, *Geschichte* = Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vol. 1 (Vatican: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944).

¹*Editio princeps* of Br. Mus. Or. 9271 by George Horner, “A New Papyrus Fragment of the *Didachè* in Coptic,” *JTS* 25 (1924) 225-31; the manuscript was collated again and published in a more satisfactory manner by Carl Schmidt, “Das koptische *Didache*-Fragment des British Museum,” *ZNW* 24 (1925) 81-99, and, more recently, by Louis-Théophile Lefort, *Les Pères apostoliques en copte* (CSCO 135; Louvain: 1952) 32-34 (text; translation in CSCO 136, 25-28).

²For a thorough survey of the problems connected with the text and the interpretation of the *Didache*, see Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didachè: Instructions des apôtres* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1958); on the Coptic text, cf. pp. 28-34. The recent full-length study of the *Didache* by Stanislas Giet (*L'énigme de la Didachè* [Paris: Ophrys, 1970] 213, n. 76) dismisses the problem of the fragment in a brief note opting, following Audet, for the inauthenticity of the passage in question.

³For a recent detailed discussion of the “ointment” prayer, with critical evaluation of earlier literature, see Arthur Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1968) 41-60. See also Audet, *La Didachè*, 67-70.

passage will be first presented, followed by our own analysis and interpretation.

*Etbe pseḡi de nmpe[st]inoufi šep̄hmat n̄teihē etetnḡō mas . ḡe [te]nšep̄hmat n̄taatik piot etbe [p]ectin[ou]fi etehaktaman elaf [e]bal [hi]t̄n̄ iēs pekš[erī].pōk p[e p]aou n̄saeneh amēn.⁴ (“Concerning the matter⁵ of the *stinoufi*⁶ give thanks thus, as you (pl.) say: We give thanks to you, Father, concerning the *stinoufi* which you made known to us through Jesus, your child. Yours is the glory which is for ever. Amen.”)*

It is obvious that the exegesis of this passage depends entirely on the interpretation one gives to the word *stinoufi*. The first editor, Horner,⁷ followed by Schmidt,⁸ identified *stinoufi* with *myron*, ointment, both clearly being influenced by the wording of

⁴Schmidt, “Didache-Fragment,” 84-85, lines 15-20; ed. Lefort, *Pères apostoliques* (CSCO 135) 32, lines 16-20. I have personally collated the papyrus in the British Library on May 24, 1976, and transcribed the passage which is quoted here. Only the clearly necessary editorial emendations are indicated. There is no need to emend *mas* to *mmas* as Lefort does, since the text is in fact characterized by the omission of the particle *n* as the sign of the accusative (see Schmidt, “Didache-Fragment,” 83, for examples).

The dialect in which the text is written is similar to Fayyumic, but has some interesting features which cannot simply be dismissed as due to careless copying. According to Paul Ernst Kahle, Jr. (*Bala²izah: Coptic Texts from Deir El-Bala²izah in Upper Egypt*, 1 [London: Oxford University, 1954] 224), we have here a text in a sort of proto-Fayyumic, or more precisely “Middle Egyptian, with Fayyumic influence.” It should be noted that what Kahle isolates and describes as a new “Middle Egyptian” dialect of Coptic is the language of a relatively small number of texts (several of which have not been published yet) which were previously regarded as written in a Sahidicized Fayyumic. Kahle’s discovery of the new dialect has met with the weighty approbation of Jozef Vergote (“Les dialectes dans le domaine égyptien,” *Chronique d’Egypte* 26 [1961] 243). Kahle is of the opinion that “the manuscript of the Didache is probably the latest text in this dialect [i.e., “Middle Egyptian with Fayyumic influence”] being written about the beginning of the fifth century” (*Bala²izah*, 226). Kahle’s study of the language of the Didache fragment shows that it has in certain respects more similarities with Bohairic than with pure Fayyumic (*ibid.*). In view of this sophisticated dialectological analysis, Lefort’s earlier view (*Pères apostoliques* [CSCO 135] xiii-xiv) that the peculiarities of the text can be accounted for simply by the hypothesis that it is not directly translated from Greek but is the transposition of an older Sahidic translation into Fayyumic cannot be sustained.

⁵Or “word” (*seḡi*, which corresponds more closely to Bohairic *saḡi* than to either Fayyumic *šeḡi* or Sahidic *šaḡe*). The reference is perhaps only to “the manner in which,” but could also indicate a more precise directive for the actual wording, *peri tou logou*, of the prayer which follows.

⁶We shall presently comment at length on the meaning of this crucial term and therefore leave it for the moment untranslated.

⁷“New Papyrus Fragment,” 230: “The aroma (ointment).”

⁸“Didache-Fragment,” 85: “Salböl.”

the parallel passage in the *Ap. Const.*⁹ This interpretation was not questioned by scholars for several decades. But the latest editor, Lefort, has pointed the way to a more correct interpretation by showing that the usual equivalent of *myron* is not *stinoufi*, but rather *soĉn*;¹⁰ therefore, whatever its correct interpretation, this is *not* a prayer over ointment. Lefort himself opts for the rendering “parfum.”¹¹ But, though the translation “fragrance,” “perfume” is even etymologically quite possible,¹² it must be emphasized that we are dealing with a passage clearly cast into the form of a *precise liturgical directive*, which follows upon and patently imitates the wording of part of the blessings over the cup and the bread.¹³ What then is the meaning of the “good smell” if on lexicographical grounds alone we must reject the interpretation as the fragrant oil, the *myron*,¹⁴ and hence any putative baptismal associations?¹⁵ In the subsequent discussion we will attempt to give some cogency to an alternative solution, that—whatever

⁹Schmidt, “Didache-Fragment,” 85. On the *Ap. Const.* text see below, p. 71.

¹⁰*Pères apostoliques* (CSCO 136) 26, n. 13. In the Sahidic NT *soĉn* translates *myron* 12 times (Michel Wilmet, *Concordance du Nouveau Testament sahidique* [CSCO 183; Louvain: 1958] 898), whereas *stinoufe* renders the expression *osmē euōdias* twice (Wilmet, *Concordance*, 827) and *euōdia* by itself once (2 Cor 2:15). Once, to be sure, it renders *myron* in the Sahidic NT (Luke 23:56), and in the Bohairic version of Ezek 27:17 (Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 363a). But Lefort is clearly correct in saying that a Coptic translator normally would not have chosen *stinoufi* to render *myron*.

¹¹*Pères apostoliques* (CSCO 136) 26, line 6.

¹²*Stinoufi* can be analyzed as *sti*, “smell,” plus *noufi*, “good.” As Crum points out (*Coptic Dictionary*, 240a), this form of the adjective is usually found only in compounds.

¹³Compare the Coptic text just cited with *Did.* 9.2-3.

¹⁴It should be noted that some scholars, while accepting Schmidt’s *myron* interpretation, do not regard the text as having a *baptismal* connotation, but rather take it as a reference to the oil of healing and as providing a proof text for what was later called the sacrament of extreme unction (so Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and Anointing of the Sick* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1964] 237, following E. Riebartsh).

¹⁵Insistence on a “baptismal” interpretation fundamentally vitiates Vööbus’ lengthy analysis. Though he accepts Lefort’s comments on *stinoufi*, Vööbus concludes: “The papyrus fragment in Coptic does not go beyond the term ‘aroma.’ No explanation of its meaning is given and there is nothing to help here” (*Liturgical Traditions*, 45). Then, simply on the basis of the reference to the “immortal aeon” in the parallel text in the *Ap. Const.* (where in any case the “aroma” is unambiguously identified as “myron”: see below, p. 71), he concludes that we are dealing with “the imagery of the baptismal rite and experience” (p. 46). This of course assumes that the *Ap. Const.* provide the correct interpretation of the *Didache aucta* text; even more crucially, the argument ignores that *stinoufi* is not merely “imagery” but is as concrete, as material, as the cup and the bread!

particular Greek word underlies *stinoufi*¹⁶—the reference is specifically to *incense*,¹⁷ and the text is *a prayer over incense burned at the solemn communal meal* described in *Didache* 9 and 10.

We will be much concerned with the date and origin of the Greek text underlying the Coptic; therefore very briefly some pertinent facts about the Coptic ms and external attestation for the *Didache* should be noted for reference. The ms, on paleographical grounds, is not to be dated any later than the fifth century, according to the expert opinion of all three editors. The *Didache* was known in Egypt in the fourth century: it is mentioned in Athanasius' famous *Festal Letter* of 367,¹⁸ and the existence of the first part of the work, the so-called "Two Ways" catechism, in Sahidic, is attested in the literature of early Pachomian monasticism.¹⁹ The liturgical portion of the work, however, is not attested independently in Coptic otherwise, and, as we have seen, the argument for the existence of a Sahidic *Vorlage* for the extant Coptic fragment is precarious.²⁰ The literary and liturgical affinities of the Coptic text can be further elucidated only by reference to the parallel text from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, to which we shall turn now.

The composite nature of the *Ap. Const.* should be kept in mind when we discuss the specific passage of interest.²¹ Books I-VI of the *Ap. Const.* are a reworking of the Greek *Didascalía* (extant

¹⁶*Euōdia* is the most obvious but not the only possibility (see n. 17). The word *euōdia* of course basically just means "good scent," and can be connected with ointment as well as incense (cf. A. Stumpff, "εὐωδία," *TDNT* 2 [1964] 809).

¹⁷*Stinoufi* or its equivalents in other Coptic dialects can stand for *thymiamā* (in the Bohairic version of Ezek 16:18) and *thymiasma* (in both Bohairic and Sahidic versions of Isa 43:24), terms which can only refer to burning incense proper, as well as for the more general *arōma* and *euōdia* (Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 363a). *Stinoufi* is not the only expression for incense; *šouhēne* is another, even more common one; it renders *thymiamā* uniformly in the Sahidic NT, and is used in the Sahidic text of Ezek 16:18. In some liturgical texts *stinoufi* is used interchangeably with *šouhēne*. Our initial contention merely is that *stinoufi* = "incense" is lexically possible; but, as we will presently show, it also yields the most plausible interpretation of the text.

¹⁸Greek text cited and discussed in Audet, *La Didachè*, 83-85.

¹⁹E.g., "Instruction of Apa Pachomius," ed. Ernest Alfred Wallis Thompson Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: Longmans, 1913) 146-76.

²⁰See above, n. 4.

²¹The fundamental investigation is, despite some needed rectifications, still Franz Xaver Funk, *Die apostolischen Konstitutionen: Eine litterar-historische Untersuchung* (Rottenburg: 1891; reprint Frankfurt / Main: Minerva, 1970) 28-179.

only in Syriac and Latin).²² The first part of Book VII is textually dependent on the *Didache*.²³ The influence of Jewish synagogue prayers on the prayers of Book VII. 33ff. and of several in Book VIII has been long recognized.²⁴ Much of Book VIII has close affinities with the third-century *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus,²⁵ though the liturgy described in Book VIII is generally, and rightly, regarded as reflecting the Syrian (Antiochene?) liturgy of the fourth century.²⁶ The so-called *Apostolic Canons*, which form the concluding portion of Book VIII, depend on the disciplinary canons of fourth-century councils but as a whole are the composition of the last, Syrian, redactor of the eight books working in the latter part of the fourth century.²⁷

The Coptic *Didache* passage with which we are concerned here is closely related to a prayer in the first part of Book VII of the *Ap. Const.*, the reworking of a Greek *Didache*. *Ap. Const.* VII.27 is as follows: "Concerning the *myron*, give thanks thus: We give thanks to you, O God, creator of all (*thee, dēmiourge tōn holōn*), and for the good smell of the *myron* (*hyper tē euōdias tou myrou*), and for the immortal aeon (*hyper tou athanatou aiōnos*) which you made known to us through Jesus your child, because yours is the glory and the power forever. Amen."²⁸

A comparison of this Greek text with the Coptic makes clear the dependence of the *Ap. Const.* text on a Greek *Vorlage* which

²²See R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929) xx-xxi.

²³Cf. Adolf Harnack, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel* (TU 2; [1884]) 170-92.

²⁴Wilhelm Bousset, "Eine jüdische Gebetssammlung im siebenten Buch der apostolischen Konstitutionen," *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philologisch-historische Klasse aus dem Jahre 1915 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1916) 435-89.

²⁵Gregory Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937) lxxi-lxxvi.

²⁶Brightman, *Liturgies*, xxix-xlvi; the text of the reconstructed liturgy is printed, with conventional rubrics added, on pp. 3-27. For a study of the materials to be used for a reconstitution of the fourth-century Antiochene liturgy, with a careful estimate of the evidence of the *Ap. Const.*, see Massey H. Shepherd, "The Formation and Influence of the Antiochene Liturgy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961) 23-44.

²⁷Funk, *Konstitutionen*, 180-206. For an attempt at a more accurate dating (the 380's) see Eduard Schwartz, *Über die pseudapostolischen Kirchenordnungen* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1910) 12-27.

²⁸Ed. Franz Xaver Funk, *Didascalia et constitutiones apostolorum* (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1905) 414, lines 10-14.

is very close to that which underlies the Coptic.²⁹ Some of the redactional touches are quite evident: replacement of the simple address “Father” by the ceremonious *thee dēmiourge tōn holōn*, and the amplification of the closing doxology. Also, though the exact meaning of the phrase *hyper tou athanatou aiōnos* is not clear,³⁰ it has no parallel in the Coptic, and seemingly one is confronted again by a redactional interpolation.³¹ In the expression *hyper tēs euōdias tou myrou* the qualifier *tou myrou* is seemingly a redactional gloss on *euōdia*. In the introductory

²⁹Some comment is in order here on the potentially important argument which Alfred Adam adduces in favor of his hypothesis of a Syriac original for the Coptic text from the *stinoufi* passage (“Erwägungen zur Herkunft der Didache,” *ZKG* 68 [1957] 8-11). Adam reasons in the following way: The entry in Crum’s *Coptic Dictionary* on *stinoufi* shows that the word is a usual equivalent of *euōdia*, and in particular for the OT expression *ryh hnyhwh*, which in the Peshitta “in den alttestamentlichen Stellen mit *rēhā danjāhā* oder *rēh njāhā* an den neutestamentlichen Stellen mit *rēhā* ‘Duft’ wiedergegeben ist.” Thus *nyāhā* is the equivalent of *euōdia*. Therefore, Adam concludes, “Auf Grund des älteren Sprachgebrauchs, wie er in der Peschitta des Alten Testaments vorliegt, darf wohl die Schlussfolgerung gezogen werden, dass in der syrischen Vorlage des koptischen Fragments *njāhā* gestanden hat” (“Erwägungen,” 9). This, in Adam’s view, provides the clue to the *stinoufi* passage. He notes that *nyāhā* has a variety of meanings, *inter alia* that of *anapausis*, “refreshment,” and that the feminine form *nyāhtā* is used as a terminus technicus for the *agapē* feast. Therefore, the *stinoufi* prayer is simply a “Schlussgebet das den Dank für die ganze Feier in den einfachsten Worten ausspricht” (p. 10)—that is, *stinoufi* is the whole *agape* feast! Now, though the reasoning is ingenious, it cannot be sustained upon closer examination. First, Adam does not even note that *stinoufi* can stand for words other than *euōdia*. Moreover, the employment of the word *nyāhtā*, “repose,” is not common in early Syriac as an expression for the *agapē* feast—it is so used first by Rabbula (5th century) for funerary feasts, and in the 6th-century Philoxenian translation in 2 Pet 2:13, Jude 13. Even more crucially, the whole argument again ignores the liturgical specificity of the prayer: the blessing is made over some actual substance, not simply for “the good cheer,” so to speak! But Adam rightly recognizes the secondary nature of the *Ap. Const.* “myron” text, and that it represents a misunderstanding of “das Hinweisen auf den wohlgefälligen ‘Duft’ der Agapefeier” (p. 10). Adam, with commendable reserve, does not commit himself on the question of the relationship of the hypothetical Syriac text to the Greek of the Constantinople ms. A detailed analysis of his other arguments for a Syriac *Vorlage* would take us too far afield, but they have little cogency either. Cf. Vööbus’ brief critique of Adam’s hypothesis (*Liturgical Traditions*, 44-45).

³⁰Vööbus (*Liturgical Traditions*, 45-46) opts for a baptismal interpretation. But the wording is strange indeed, and has no affinity with the definitely baptismal *peri tou mystikou myrou eucharistia* in VII.44.

³¹The Greek MSS used by Funk all have the phrase in question; but the Ethiopic *Didascalia* (a reworking of Books I-VII of the *Ap. Const.*, not to be confused with the old Greek *Didascalia* which is the *Vorlage* of Books I-VI!) has the following wording: “Thou shalt give thanks thus: We give thanks to Thee,

rubric I surmise that the redactor replaced *euōdia* or some other word by *myron*; it is possible, though direct proof cannot be offered, that *myron* stands for a more unambiguous word for incense, e.g. *thymiama*, rather than *euōdia*. However, it is quite clear that—whatever the intent of the prayer in the *Vorlage*—the amplified Greek text of the *Ap. Const.* has no reference to incense, but is intended to be an ointment prayer, whereas, as we have seen, the Coptic text has a strong claim to be referred to incense but almost none to *myron*. Which text represents the wording of the Greek *Vorlage* at the crucial point of the intention of the prayer? Was the prayer, in any form, part of the primitive *Didache*, or does it represent a liturgical updating³² of the text as preserved in the Constantinople MS? Answers to these questions can be given only in the context of a close study of the place and date of the relevant portions of the *Ap. Const.*, and of the evidence for the use of incense in early Christianity, particularly in the fourth and fifth centuries.

First, though the “Clementine” liturgy of Book VIII is clearly of Syro-Palestinian provenance, much liturgical material in Book VII, as has been demonstrated, quite convincingly in my opinion, by Anton Baumstark, is rather of *Egyptian* origin.³³ In particular the *myron* prayer of VII.27 after the “eucharistic” prayers is in agreement with the arrangement of early and indisputably Egyptian material, specifically the Euchologium of Serapion.³⁴

Creator of all things, for the savour of this chrisem, and for this oil of immortality, which Thou hast revealed to us by Jesus Christ Thy Son. For Thine is the glory, and the kingdom, and the power for ever and ever. Amen.” (transl. from Br. Mus. Or. 752, by John Mason Harden, *The Ethiopic Didascalia* [London: S.P.C.K., 1920] 172). The Ethiopic is based on an Arabic version of the *Ap. Const.*, but neither the Arabic nor the Ethiopic has been investigated with any thoroughness.

³²Since we have accepted Lefort’s argument that *myron* would have been rendered by *soñ* rather than *stinoufi*, it is not necessary to review at length the various opinions concerning authenticity which have been based on the older *myron* interpretation. Incidentally, Erik Peterson’s provocative hypothesis that the *myron* prayer is authentic, and that its suppression in the Bryennios text of the *Didache* is a sign of Novatian heresy which, *inter alia*, opposed post-baptismal anointing (“Über einige Probleme der *Didache*-Überlieferung,” in his *Frühkirche, Christentum und Gnosis* [Freiburg: Herder, 1959] 166; reprinted from *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* [1951] 37ff.) has been thoroughly refuted and needs no further comment. See Audet, *La Didachè*, 68, n. 3, and Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions*, 31-33.

³³Anton Baumstark, “Aegyptischer oder antiochenischer Liturgietypus in AK I-VII?” *OrChr* 1, 7 (1907) 388-407.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 395. The prayer in question is clearly a blessing over the water and oil of exorcism and healing (ed. Georg Wobbermin, *Altchristliche liturgische*

Though some details of Baumstark's argument are precarious,³⁵ his conclusion that the first part of Book VII reflects Egyptian liturgical usages not later than ca. 400 has great cogency, and, as we shall presently see, is very significant for the purposes of our investigation.

The second point requires rather extensive analysis of the documentation. It is generally recognized that the use of incense in the eucharistic ceremony as described in the developed liturgies is a post-Constantinian phenomenon.³⁶ Second and third-century Christian writers either refer to incense (prominent, of course, in temple ritual as described in the OT) in a metaphorical fashion or reject its use outright as a sign of paganism.³⁷

Stücke aus der Kirche Ägyptens (TU 17, 36 [1898] 7-8). There is a similar prayer at a later point which, however, does not seem to be connected with the eucharistic prayers (ibid., 13-14). See also Frank Edward Brightman, "The Sacramentary of Serapion of Thmuis," *JTS* 1 (1900) 108, 267-68.

³⁵Thus the application of the expression *antitypa* (*Ap. Const.* VII.25) to the eucharistic elements is not peculiarly Egyptian (so Baumstark, "Liturgietypus," 398); cf. my article, "The Eucharistic Doctrine of the Byzantine Iconoclasts and Its Sources," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975) 13, n. 46. Baumstark notes ("Liturgietypus," 395) that the *Testamentum Domini* has a prayer over oil and water after the eucharistic prayers proper (I.24-25); (ed. Ignatius Ephraem Rahmani, *Testamentum domini nostri Jesu Christi* [Mainz: Kirchheim, 1899] 48). But that this work (written in Greek, but [apart from some Latin fragments] extant only in oriental translations [Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic]) is of Egyptian origin is by no means as certain as Baumstark assumes ("Liturgietypus," 389-90). Thus, though transmission in Arabic (via Coptic) and in Ethiopic argues for Egypt, Baumstark himself ("Überlieferung und Bezeugung der *διαθήκη τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*," *RQ* 14 [1900] 39) accepted earlier the hypothesis of Syrian origin. Franz Xaver Funk (*Das Testament unseres Herrn und die verwandten Schriften* [Mainz: Kirchheim, 1901] 87) opts for Syria; A. J. MacLean, though with many misgivings, even proposes Asia Minor (in James Cooper and Arthur John MacLean, *The Testament of Our Lord* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1902] 42-45). But Theodor Schermann's refusal (*Ägyptische Abendmahlsliturgien des ersten Jahrtausends* [Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1912] 97-98) to grant any cogency to Baumstark's arguments depends on an all too ready assumption of Syrian influence on well nigh all aspects of early Egyptian liturgical usage.

³⁶The fundamental work on the whole subject is still Edward Godfrey Cuthbert Frederic Atchley, *A History of the Use of Incense in Divine Worship* (London: Longmans, 1909). Another valuable collection of the material (even though one must dissent from some of the hypothetical constructions imposed upon it) is Carl Schneider's "Studien zum Ursprung liturgischer Einzelheiten östlicher Liturgien, 2. ΘΥΜΙΑΜΑΤΑ," *Kyrios* 3 (1938) 149-90, 293-311. See also E. Fehrenbach, "Encens," *DACL* 5. 1, cols. 2-22, esp. cols. 6-11, and Jean Michel Hanssens, *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus*, Tom. III (Rome: Gregoriana, 1932) 70-91.

³⁷See Atchley, *History*, 81-96. The material is also collected in Frederick Edward Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church* (London:

The employment of incense in Christian funerary ceremonies is attested earlier than a connection of censuring with the eucharistic liturgy.³⁸ Apart from a hardly trustworthy reference in the *Passio* of the bishop Peter of Alexandria (died A.D. 311),³⁹ the earliest pertinent material is of *Syrian* provenance. Ephrem in his *Testament* expresses his wish not to be honored with the burning of incense at his funeral.⁴⁰ John Chrysostom refers to incense used in Christian funerary processions.⁴¹ The pilgrim Etheria's⁴² mention of incense at the Sunday services of the Church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem⁴³ probably should be classified here, as a "passion play" type imitation of a (supposed) detail of the burial of Jesus,⁴⁴ rather than as a eucharistic censuring proper.

Of more direct relevance to our problem seem to be texts which connect incense with prayer and propitiation. Ephrem, in an undoubtedly genuine poem, refers to the prayer, the *censer*, and the sacrifices of Abraham, bishop of Nisibis.⁴⁵ There are other,

S.P.C.K., 1897) 129-31. See also W. H. Frere, "Notes on the Early History of the Use of Incense," in Henry Westall, ed., *The Case for Incense* (London: Longmans, 1899) 43-86.

³⁸Cf. Atchley, *History*, 97-116.

³⁹Only one 9th-century Latin version of the *Acta* of Peter, but none of the older Greek, Coptic and Arabic recensions mentions that, after the preparation for burial (*odoriferis condientes aromatibus induerunt illum sericis indumentis*), the saint was carried to his final resting place *flammantibus cereis, concrepantibus hymnis, flagrantisque thymiamatibus* (PG 18. 465C).

⁴⁰"Burn incense [*besmē*] in the sanctuary; as for me, accompany me with prayer. . . . Go and burn [the incense] in the sanctuary, so that there may be good smell for those who go there" (ed. Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones* IV [CSCO 334; Louvain: 1973] 51, lines 9-11). At an earlier point the text makes a very realistic reference to the corpse and "the stinking smell of Ephrem," *riḥeh saryā dAphrem* (ibid., 48, lines 9-10). In this work the fumigatory use of incense seems to have as its pendant the (habitual?) use of incense in churches, though no connection is made with the eucharistic liturgy.

⁴¹E.g., *Hom. xli: de S. Pelagia* (PG 50.585).

⁴²Late fourth or early fifth century; see John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (London: S.P.C.K., 1971) 27-30 for an attempt at an exact chronology.

⁴³*Dictis ergo his tribus psalmis et factis orationibus tribus ecce etiam thiamataria inferuntur intro spelunca Anastasis, ut tota basilica Anastasis repleatur odoribus* (*Itinerarium Egeriae* XXIV. 10, ed. A. Franceschini and R. Weber, in *Itinerariae et alia geographica*, CChr Series latina 175.69, lines 81-84).

⁴⁴This suggestion was first made by Juan Mateos, "La vigile cathédrale chez Egérie," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 27 (1961) 292: the resurrection theme explains, *inter alia*, "l'encensement du tombeau que rappellent les parfums portés par les femmes." The explanation is accepted by Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 65, and Rolf Zerkass, *Die Schrifilesung im Kathedraofficeium Jerusalems* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969) 27.

⁴⁵"May your fasting be armor for our land, your prayer a shield for our city, may your censer [*piromāk*] purchase reconciliation [*tar'utā*]. Blessed be he

somewhat later texts which indicate that supplication of one form or another was often accompanied by the burning of incense.⁴⁶ In fact, in some texts censuring is used as a synonym for supplication, in contexts where literal burning of incense was quite unlikely.⁴⁷

This brings us to the evidence for the use of incense during the eucharistic liturgy proper. Censing at various stages of the service characterizes all the "classical" eastern liturgies,⁴⁸ but the evidence of these, based on MSS which do not antedate the ninth century, cannot be retrojected into the fourth century.⁴⁹ The datable early extant evidence is again of Syrian provenance. We have just referred to a passage from Ephrem's *Carmina Nisibena* which has been taken by some scholars to allude to censing in the liturgy. A passage from John Chrysostom *can* also be interpreted, despite the lack of precision, as referring to the use of incense prior to and/or during the eucharistic liturgy.⁵⁰ But the earliest unambiguous fourth-century evidence comes from the *Apostolic Canons* (if, as it seems most likely, their author is to be identified with the final redactor of the *Ap. Const.*⁵¹). The third Canon prescribes that "At the fitting time, it is not lawful to bring forth to the altar anything but fresh ears of corn or grapes, and oil for the lamp and incense (*thymiama*) at the time of the holy offering."⁵² The incense, which is to be used "at the time of the holy offering,"

who sanctified your sacrifices" (ed. Edmund Beck, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena* 1 [CSCO 218; Louvain: 1961] 46, lines 18-19). Hans Lietzmann (following the suggestion of the earlier editor, Bickell) sees in the passage a reference to the sequence of liturgical activities: fasting, prayer, censing of the eucharistic elements and the eucharistic sacrifice (*Messe und Herrenmahl* [Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1926] 86-87). However, other evidence which merely associates the offering of incense with supplication (see note 46) makes this reasoning somewhat doubtful.

⁴⁶Cf. Atchley, *History*, 118-19.

⁴⁷Thus, in one recension of a Syriac collection of the miracles of the Virgin, some of her devotees, threatened by imminent shipwreck in a storm "remembered her, and placed incense on the fire [*sāmu besmē*]" *al nurā* and immediately the sea became calm . . ." (ed. Ernest Alfred Wallis Thompson Budge, *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary* . . . [London: Luzac, 1899] 138, n. 1).

⁴⁸The evidence is collected and subjected to an incisive, but not entirely convincing, analysis by Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl*, 86-93.

⁴⁹Cf. R. Taft, "Evolution historique de la liturgie de saint Jean Chrysostome . . . L'encensement et le lavabo," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 25 (1975) 275-86.

⁵⁰*PG* 58.781, cited by Atchley, *History*, 200. Chrysostom contrasts the censing of the church to produce a pleasant odor with the reluctance to banish the evil smell of spiritual uncleanness.

⁵¹See Funk, *Konstitutionen*, 180-206, for detailed proof.

⁵²Funk, *Didascalia et constitutiones apostolorum*, 564, lines 8-10.

is to be blessed at the altar, as are the oil for the lamp, fresh corn, and grapes. The textual evidence is quite secure: the phrase concerning incense is found in all the Greek mss and in both recensions of the Latin translation of the Canons by Dionysius Exiguus (early sixth century).⁵³ The oriental evidence is quite concordant; the Coptic (Sahidic and Bohairic⁵⁴), both Syriac versions,⁵⁵ the Arabic⁵⁶ and Ethiopic⁵⁷ renderings all support the Greek. It should be noted, again, however, that, despite the literary unity of the work, the "Clementine" liturgy of Book VIII does not explicitly mention censuring. A sacrificial interpretation of incense in close connection with the eucharist is found in an exegetical work of Theodoret of Cyrillus (middle of the 5th cent.): "We offer to God incense (*thymiama*) and the light of the lamp, and the sacred rite of the holy table."⁵⁸ In one of the homilies (No. 17) ascribed to the great Nestorian theologian Narsai of Nisibis (latter half of the fifth century) the sumptuous

⁵³Dionysius' *Interpretatio prima* has *timiamia* (*id est incensum*) *tempore quo sancta celebratur oblatio* (ed. Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, *Ecclesiae occidentalis monumenta iuris antiquissima* 1.1 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1909] 10, col. 1, lines 3-5). The *Interpretatio altera* differs only in giving the more correct transliteration "*thymiama*" (col. 2, line 2).

⁵⁴The Sahidic version has *oušouhēne mpnau nte prosphora etouaab* ("incense at the time of the holy sacrifice"), ed. Paul Anton de Lagarde, *Aegyptiaca* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1883) 210. The Bohairic text (*ibid.*) uses *ousthoi-noufi* for "incense"; this text, according to the colophon translated from Sahidic (de Lagarde, *Aegyptiaca* 238; see also Henry Tattam, *The Apostolic Constitutions or Canons of the Apostles in Coptic* [London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1848] 213) may reflect a Sahidic *stinoufe* as the word for incense. Rather interestingly, the marginal gloss in the Bohairic ms, *nem ousougen*, "with myron," shows an evidence of wanting to bring the work liturgically up to date.

⁵⁵The version in the Epitome of Ebedjesus (cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 324) has *besmē b^cedānā dqurbānā ʿalahāyā*, "incense at the time of the divine offering" (ed. Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio . . . tomus X* [Rome: Apud Burliaeuum, 1837] 175). The version incorporated in an older Syriac pseudo-Clementine canonical collection has only *besmē b^cedānā dqurbānā* (ed. P. de Lagarde, *Reliquiae iuris ecclesiastici antiquissimae* [Leipzig: 1856; reprint Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967], p. *mh*, lines 5-6). Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 82, and Ignazio Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia syriaca* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1958) 224-25.

⁵⁶*bahūr fī waqt al-quddās al-ṭāhir*, "incense at the time of the pure consecration," from the version of the *Apostolic Canons* proper incorporated in the "127 Canons of the Apostles" (ed. Jean Périet and Augustin Périet, PO 8 [1912] 655). On this compilation, which with most likelihood is translated from Coptic, see Graf, *Geschichte*, 572-77.

⁵⁷*eṭān bagizē q'erban neṣuḥ* "incense at the time of the pure offering" (ed. Winand Fell, *Canones apostolorum aethiopice* [Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1871] 13).

⁵⁸PG 80, 284C.

ritual is described just before the consecration: “the mysteries are set in order, the *censers are smoking*, the lamps are shining . . .”⁵⁹ It is significant that a preliminary censuring of the church is not noted. But the earliest detailed description of censuring, at the beginning of the liturgy, is found in the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, which reflects the Syrian liturgy of the late fifth or early sixth century.⁶⁰ According to pseudo-Dionysius, “The hierarch . . . having accomplished the holy prayer at the sacred altar, begins to cense, having started from there, and comes around the whole circuit of the holy choir.”⁶¹

All of the foregoing evidence for censuring used in the eucharistic liturgy is significantly of *Syrian* provenance. Apart from one very doubtful text, the *Canons of Athanasius*,⁶² there is no evidence for eucharistic censuring in Egyptian liturgical practice in the extant

⁵⁹Trans. R. Hugh Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai* (TextsS 8.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1909) 12 (= ed. Alphonse Mingana, *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina primo edita*, vol. I [Mosul: Typis Fratrum praedicatorum, 1905] 281). There has been much doubt expressed about the authenticity of the homily, on stylistic and liturgical grounds, and because of the attribution in some MSS to the thirteenth-century writer Ebedjesus of Elam (Connolly, *Liturgical Homilies*, p. xii). Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 112 and 348 (opting for inauthenticity!). See also Willem Cornelis van Unnik (*Nestorian Questions on the Administration of the Eucharist* . . . [Amsterdam: 1937; reprint Amsterdam: Grüner, 1970] 422ff.) who concludes that the question is still *sub iudice* (p. 57).

⁶⁰For a tentative reconstruction of the pseudo-Dionysian liturgy see Brightman, *Liturgies*, 487-88.

⁶¹*De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 3, PG 3, 425B.

⁶²Ed. Wilhelm Riedel and Walter E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904). Though originally composed in Greek, the work is extant only in Sahidic and Arabic. The Sahidic version, though relatively old (one MS has been dated by Crum to ca. A.D. 600), is, however, fragmentary, and in particular these sections where the Arabic version mentions incense are missing. The Arabic text is not translated from the Sahidic, but rather, as Crum suggests, from a lost Bohairic version made independently from the Greek (*ibid.*, 81). Though Riedel, with some hesitation, accepts the Athanasian authorship of the lost *Grundchrift* (*ibid.*, pp. xiv-xxvi), it is quite clear that the translation into Arabic and the division into paragraphs is the work of Michael of Tinnis (according to Graf [*Geschichte*, 605] perhaps to be identified with the 11th-century redactor of the *History of the Patriarchs* of Severus ibn al-Muqaffa⁹). At any rate, the final portion of the Arabic (which includes [par. 106] a detailed description of the censuring of the gospel book) has, as Riedel himself notes “almost the appearance of a subsequent edition” (Riedel and Crum, *Canons of Athanasius*, p. xxvi). In view of the silence of Athanasius and other early Egyptian fathers concerning liturgical censuring (cf. note 63) I hesitate to ascribe the two passages concerned with incense (par. 7 *fin.*, par. 106) to Athanasius, whatever else in the work may be of early provenance.

fourth- and fifth-century material.⁶³ One finds, of course, use of the well-known metaphorical language of the odor of sanctity,⁶⁴ even symbolizing divine presence⁶⁵ or gnosis in Christian Egyptian texts.⁶⁶ But, as we have emphasized from the outset, the

⁶³For a convenient collection of liturgical allusions in this patristic literature, see Brightman, *Liturgies*, 504-09. The earliest explicit mention of liturgical censuring, to my knowledge, in a datable narrative Egyptian text is from the 11th-century recension of the Arabic biography of the patriarch Shenouti I (A.D. 849-80), according to which in a nocturnal liturgy "while he went around the sanctuary (*haikal*) with incense, his eyes shed bitter tears" (trans. Yassā 'Abd-al-Masīh and Oswald Hugh Ewald Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, 2.1 [Cairo: L'institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1943] 55; Arabic text not published). To be sure, a number of censers from Egypt have been dated, in particular by Josef Strzygowsky (*Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire . . . Koptische Kunst* [Vienna: Holzhausen, 1904] 280ff.) as coming from the pre-Islamic period; he even dates two standing censers to the 2d to the 4th century (Nos. 9122-23). Though it is not within my competence to control the datings, they seem to be on the whole rather arbitrary, especially where one is dealing with objects acquired by purchase from private individuals or from antiquities dealers. In any case, there is no indication of the *function* these censers had, and for several there even seems to be no clear indication that they are of Christian origin. The archeological evidence is therefore of little moment, it seems to me, compared to the silence of the literary sources on censuring in the eucharistic liturgy. Cf. Henri Leclercq, "Encensoir," *DACL* 5 (1922) cols. 21-33, and Schneider, "Studien," *Kyrios* 3 (1938) 171-74.

⁶⁴For an example from "orthodox" Coptic literature, cf. the encomiastic *Vita* of bishop Pisentius (7th century), in which the saint is described as "one who was full of light and who spread forth *stinoufe* all the time" (ed. Ernest Alfred Wallis Thompson Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* [London: Longmans, 1913] 74).

⁶⁵See Ernst Lohmeyer's classic monograph, *Vom göttlichen Wohlgeruch* (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaft, Phil.-hist. Klasse 9; 1919), particularly pp. 15-22 on ancient Egyptian material; the latter is also discussed by the Egyptologist Hans Bonnet, "Die Bedeutung der Räucherungen im ägyptischen Kult," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 67 (1931) 20-28. See also Waldemar Deonna's more comprehensive study, "ΕΥΩΔΙΑ, Croyances antiques et modernes: l'odeur suave des dieux et des élus," *Genava* 17 (1939) 167-263.

⁶⁶In the Coptic Gnostic *Gospel of Truth* "the smell" (*pstaei*) is identified with the Spirit and is described as an attribute of the Father (ed. Michel Malinine et al., *Evangelium Veritatis* [*Supplementum*; Zürich and Stuttgart: Rascher, 1961] 34). Much of the Gnostic material, and the classical background, is discussed à propos this passage in Jacques-É. Ménard, *L'Évangile de Vérité* (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 158-63. In the *Gospel of Philip*, the "odor" (*stoei*) occurs, but only in connection with "ointment" (*sočn*) (ed. Walter C. Till, *Das Evangelium nach Philippos* [Patristische Texte und Studien 2; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963] 55, lines

Coptic *Didache* provides a concrete liturgical directive for the prayer over incense; not only is a liturgical parallel lacking in fourth- and fifth-century literature from Egypt,⁶⁷ but also the very practice of censuring at the liturgy, which was introduced at an undetermined time (seventh or eighth century?),⁶⁸ and came to be prominent in the Coptic liturgy and penitential practice in the Middle Ages,⁶⁹ cannot be documented in the pre-Islamic period.

On the basis of the foregoing evidence one can now answer with some assurance the question whether the Coptic text represents a liturgical updating of the *Didache* or whether indeed it reflects a

36ff.). Incense specifically does not seem to have played a demonstrable role in the sacramental system of the Gnostics, judging by both the patristic accounts and the Coptic texts.

⁶⁷It should be noted here that ch. 38 of the "vulgate" recension of the Arabic *Didascalia* (cf. note 31) has a detailed description of the liturgy, with a pre-anaphoral triple circumambulatory censuring of the altar "in honor of the Holy Trinity" by the bishop, with a subsequent censuring of the congregation by a presbyter (translated, with conventional rubrics added, in Brightman, *Liturgies*, 510-11; for another translation, see Funk, *Konstitutionen*, 233-34). The "Abū Ishāq" recension, represented by *Borg. ar.* 22 and the Ethiopic translation, though lacking this particular chapter along with others (cf. Graf, *Geschichte*, 565), does assume a liturgical use of incense. The Ethiopic text (tr. John Mason Harden, *The Ethiopic Didascalia* [London: S.P.C.K., 1920] 92) says, "We command you, then, that no layman execute the office of the priesthood, neither offer incense, nor baptize, nor lay on hands, nor give the bread of blessing"—a reworking of *Ap. Const.* III.10, which does not mention the offering of incense as part of the sacerdotal duties. This Egyptian *Didascalia* tradition does attest the use of incense, but still there is no cogent reason to assume that it preserves fourth- or fifth-century usage. MacLean's statement that the censuring in the Arabic *Didascalia* text is consistent with a fourth-century date for the work, simply because "incense is mentioned in the Pilgrimage of Silvia, about 385 A.D." (James Cooper and Arthur John MacLean, *The Testament of Our Lord* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1902] 34) is a misleading simplification, in view of the material we have presented earlier.

⁶⁸One can only speculate about the time of and motives for the introduction of liturgical censuring in Egypt; however, in view of the relatively early Syrian evidence and the strong influence of Syrian liturgical usages, especially after the monophysite schism (cf. Schermann, *Ägyptische Abendmahlsliturgien*, 97ff.), it seems that liturgical censuring was such a Syrian import.

⁶⁹By the twelfth century liturgical censuring came to be extremely widespread in Egypt. The peculiar custom arose even of individuals confessing their sins before the censor carried around by the priest, at the time of the preliminary censuring of the altar and nave (cf. n. 66), as a substitute for auricular confession. See Georg Graf, "Über den Gebrauch des Weihrauchs bei den Kopten," *Dem Prinzen Johann Georg Herzog zu Sachsen zum 50. Geburtstag gewidmet: Ehrengabe deutscher Wissenschaft dargeboten von katholischen Gelehrten* (hrsg. von Franz Fessler; Freiburg: Herder, 1920) 223-32, and idem, *Ein Reformversuch innerhalb der koptischen Kirche im zwölften Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1923) esp. 55-59, 150-52.

primitive “long” recension. Following Baumstark, I argue for an Egyptian origin for much of the liturgical material in *Ap. Const.* VII. I surmise that the Egyptian redactor of Book VII already had a reference to incense in his Greek *Didache* text. But, in line with his very free and creative handling of his sources and his familiarity with *myron* prayers after the eucharist, and his “Egyptian” ignorance of, or penchant against, liturgical censuring, he merely reinterpreted the *euōdia*—or *arōma* or *thymiama*—of his Greek *Didache*, as referring to the fragrant *myron* of the baptismal rite. The *final* redactor of the *Ap. Const.*—perhaps to be identified with the composer / interpolator of Book VIII and of the *Apostolic Canons*—no longer had access to the original text of the *Didache*, but knew it only in the form incorporated in Book VII. Though the final redactor of the *Ap. Const.*, judging by *Apostolic Canon* 3, was familiar with liturgical censuring, he did not mention, perhaps by inadvertence, censuring in the liturgy of Book VIII.⁷⁰ By contrast, the Coptic translator, working without the conscious purpose of the “Constitutor” of Book VII, rendered the Greek text quite literally,⁷¹ not feeling it incumbent upon him, it seems, to harmonize the translation with the prevalent liturgical norms of Egypt.

Some comment is next in order on the possibility that the Coptic *Didache* text renders an interpolated Greek *Didache* text, revised in order to justify, by means of the fiction of apostolic institution, the introduction of incense in the eucharistic service of the Syrian rite. Though the probable Syro-Palestinian origin of the material in the *Didache* would argue in favor of the Syrian origin of the Greek *Vorlage* of the Coptic text,⁷² the further conclusion that the Greek text reflects a fourth- or fifth-century

⁷⁰Baumstark reduces the contribution of the final redactor to little more than that of arranger and compiler (“Die Urgestalt der ‘arabischen Didaskalia der Apostel’ . . .” *OrChr* 1, 3 [1903] 208).

⁷¹This can be easily seen by simultaneously comparing the Coptic translation and the relevant portion of the *Ap. Const.* with the Greek *Didache* text of chaps. 10-11.

⁷²It should be pointed out, however, that a recognition of the Syrian element in the liturgical portion of the *Didache* is not incompatible with the view that the extant Greek recension (represented by the Bryennios ms and the Georgian version) is of Egyptian provenance. This is the opinion, for instance, of Cyril C. Richardson (*Early Christian Fathers* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953] 163) echoing in part Harnack’s detailed arguments for an Egyptian *Heimat* for the *Didache* as a whole (*Lehre der zwölf Apostel* [TU 2; 1884] 15-18). If the final redactor of the Greek *Didache* was indeed Egyptian, then *a fortiori* the Greek *Vorlage* of the Coptic text would be an Egyptian ms, and the need to account for the influence of possible Syrian liturgical censuring would disappear.

Syrian liturgy does not follow. The form of the incense prayer clearly imitates the archaic language of the prayers over the bread and the wine. There is no similarity with incense or *myron* prayers used in Egypt and elsewhere. Rather, in our view, the prayer over the incense is part of that liturgical archaism of the *Didache* which the interpolator of Book VII of the *Ap. Const.* strove to remedy.

This brings us finally to a discussion of the original character of the prayers in *Didache* 9 and 10. This is not the place to delve into details of the long controversy; I would merely register my agreement with those scholars who see in *Didache* 9 and 10 a reflection of a Christian "agape," without a "eucharistic" commemoration of the passion, an "agape" the structure of which was influenced by the ceremonial that surrounded solemn Jewish communal meals.⁷³ Literary evidence for the use of incense in Jewish *synagogue* services in early Christian times does not exist:⁷⁴ this would have provided, of course, the most natural stage of transition to account for incense in the *Didache* liturgy as a Jewish-Christian ceremonial peculiarity. The explanation is rather to be sought in the fact that *Didache* 9-10 in fact describe a communal meal.

The burning of incense during and after meals is well attested in Greco-Roman antiquity,⁷⁵ without any obvious religious overtones. The burning of incense is also attested for Jewish meals as these are described in the Talmud. Here we seemingly find the source for, or at least a striking analogue to, the apparently sacred aspect of the act of burning incense—but, to be sure, as just part of giving to minutiae of everyday conduct a religious dimension, which of course characterizes this entire literature. In the Mishnah (*m. Ber.* 6.6)⁷⁶ the requisite blessing

⁷³See Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 111, n. 6. Cf. Luigi Clerici, *Einsammlung der Zerstreuten: Liturgiegeschichtliche Untersuchung . . . der Fürbitte für die Kirche in Didache 9,4 und 10,5* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1965) 1-2, and the most recent discussion by Willy Rordorf, "Les prières eucharistiques de la Didachè," *Eucharisties d'Orient et d'Occident* (ed. Bernard Botte, et al.; Paris: Cerf, 1970) 1. 65-82.

⁷⁴All the possibly pertinent material, literary, ethnographical, and archeological, on the Jewish use of incense is marshalled by Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough (*Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* [New York: Pantheon, 1954] 4. 195-208).

⁷⁵See Friedrich Pfister, "Rauchopfer," *PW* 2.1, col. 278; Atchley, *History*, 64-66.

⁷⁶"If they were sitting down to eat, each individually, he says a blessing for himself; if they have a banquet, one says the blessing for all. If wine is brought to them in the middle of the meal, each one says the blessing for himself; if after the

over the incense (*mûgmār*)⁷⁷ which was burned at the meal is discussed,⁷⁸ but the *form* of the blessing is not yet given. Though the pertinent sections in both the Babylonian and the Palestinian Gemara begin with the blessing over burning incense proper,⁷⁹ for the most part the rabbinical opinions recorded are concerned with blessings over other fragrant oils and perfumes. The Babylonian Gemara does provide a form of the prayer over incense,⁸⁰ but this has nothing in common with the *Didache* formula. However, as we have noted, the *Didache* incense prayer imitates formulas of blessing over the cup and the bread, which are not of direct concern here.

The foregoing evidence makes it plausible that the *Didache* incense prayer is a reflection of a Jewish-Christian (*ḥaburah?*) meal practice.⁸¹ The reference to the burning of, and blessing

meal, one says the blessing for all, and he says [the blessing] over the incense, also if they bring in the incense only after the meal” (ed. Chanoch Albeck, ששה מינה מדררי משה [Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Mosad Bialik, 1958] 1. 25).

⁷⁷The Mishnaic Hebrew word *mûgmār* is cognate to Jewish Aramaic *gûmrā*, “burning coal,” and it refers to burning incense, unlike the word *bōsem* (pl. *bēsāmim*), which has the broader connotation of aromatic materials, spices, perfumes, etc. On the subject, cf. Samuel Krauss, *Talmudische Archaeologie* (Leipzig: Fock, 1910) 1. 237-38. It is not at all certain that the *mûgmār* of *m. Ber.* 6.6 is to be identified with the aromas, *bēsāmim*, in the disputed sequence in *m. Ber.* 8.5 (“light, food, *bēsāmim*, *habdālāh*” [School of Shammai]; “light, *bēsāmim*, food, *habdālāh*” [School of Hillel]). For a commentary on this passage, see Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to the Talmud* (New York: Harper, 1973) 49-50. That the burning of *mûgmār* was a routine part of the meal is made clear also by *m. Ed.* 3.11, where R. Gamaliel [I?] allows that on a festival day the floor between the couches may be swept, and that “they may place the *mûgmār* [on the fire]” (ed. Albeck, *Mishna*, 4.297). The same ruling is found in *m. Beṣa* 2.7 (ed. Albeck, *Mishna*, 2.293).

⁷⁸*Tosepta Ber.* 6.6 does not mention *mûgmār*, but does note a difference of the schools of Shammai and Hillel concerning the order of the benedictions of the light and the *bēsāmim* (a dispute similar to *m. Ber.* 8.5 but different in detail). Is this a sign that at the time of the compilation of *Tosepta Ber.* the custom of burning incense has already fallen into desuetude?

⁷⁹“Rabbi Zērā said [that] Rabba bar Jeremiah said, ‘When do they say the blessing over the fragrance? When its column [of smoke] rises’” (*b. Ber.* 43a [bottom]). Since an objection from Zērā follows, and then a final solution from the master based on the *distinguo* of “intention,” it seems that the text is in slight disarray; the initial question (When do they say the blessing?) must be in fact Zērā’s. The parallel text in the Palestinian Gemara is briefer but more coherent: “Rabbi Ze’irā [said] in the name of Rab Jeremiah, [Over] the *mûgmār*, as soon as the smoke rises, it is necessary to say the blessing” (*y. Ber.* 6.6, p. 10b).

⁸⁰Over all *mûgmārôt* the correct form of the benediction is “[Blessed be You], who do create fragrant woods” (*b. Ber.* 43a).

⁸¹This connection was surmised by Robert A. Kraft in his commentary *Barnabas and the Didache* (The Apostolic Fathers 3, ed. Robert M. Grant; New

over, incense was then simply not understood by the (fourth-century?) Egyptian redactor of *Ap. Const.* VII, who, to make some "liturgical" sense of it, turned it into a *myron* prayer. One can at least speculate that a similar lack of comprehension of an antiquated custom may have been the reason for the *excision* of the incense prayer from the common archetype of the eleventh-century Bryennios MS and the Georgian translation. Though admittedly the foregoing argumentation does not amount to actual proof that the incense prayer indeed formed part of the original *Didache*, one can assert with some probability that the Coptic fragment reflects the archaic Christian liturgical practice of burning incense at the end of the communal meal.

In closing, it should be noted that the acceptance of the foregoing interpretation of the Coptic *Didache* text does not imply that all the negative references with respect to incense in ante-Nicene Christian literature should be regarded as, so to speak, merely a literary smokescreen, and that the metaphorical *osmē euōdias*⁸² from Paul onward *must* refer to the actual burning of incense at Christian cultic gatherings. Rather, as in other cases of liturgical and doctrinal development, one is simply led to recognize the diversity of early Christian usage and belief. After all, to paraphrase Paul, one man's *euōdia* may well be another's *dysōdia*!

York: Nelson, 1965), but not explored in detail. I will quote his comment in full: "An important clue . . . might be discovered if the significance of the 'ointment' or 'perfume' (fragrant oil) of 10:8 were known. It is not impossible that this too is a vestige from Christian Love Feasts, since the Jewish fellowship meal ritual included a blessing on the aromatic spices ('ointment?') which usually were burned" (p. 167). As his source for Jewish usage Kraft refers only to Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre, 1945) 425-6. Dix alludes to the burning of spices at *haburah* meals, and notes the section from *m. Ber.* which we have analyzed previously. However, then Kraft seems to retract his suggestion: "But ointment/oil was used in many connections in early Christianity" and lists various uses such as the oil of baptism, episcopal ordination, etc. In commenting on the text, Kraft does not seem to know Lefort's edition of the Coptic fragment and the important rectification of the translation of *stinoufi*; otherwise he would not be faced by the dilemma of "ointment" being burned, which forces him back to the *myron* interpretation.

⁸²Cf. Gerhard Dellling, "ὄσμη," *TDNT* 5 (1967) 493-96.