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### **The Egyptian Background of the ‘Ointment’ Prayer in the Eucharistic Rite of the Didache (10:8)**

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The textual value of the Didache recension in the Manuscript of Jerusalem (H 54), discovered by Philotheos Bryennios in 1873, has been criticized by some because the manuscript stems from the eleventh century.<sup>1</sup> It is often assumed that a series of alterations, such as interpolations and harmonizations, were made to the manuscript between the time of the text’s first emergence and its final reproduction. On the other hand, it has recently been established that the central part of the manuscript’s text (including the version of the Didache) probably reflects a valuable source which dates from a much earlier age than was previously thought. The latter document may have contained a major part of the so-called Apostolic Fathers and probably should be assigned to the patristic period.<sup>2</sup>

The reliability of H 54 remains controversial as regards the eucharistic prayers of Didache 9-10. The manuscript contains the thanksgiving prayers for the cup and bread, but omits the third thanksgiving prayer between 10:7 and 11:1 which is found in the editions of the Didache in Bihlmeyer and Wengst.<sup>3</sup> The alternative version in Bihlmeyer and Wengst is based on two sources. The first is a text in the Greek Apostolic Constitutions (= AC), a compilation which originated between 375 and 380 CE and covers the whole of the Didache in the main part of its seventh book (VII,1,2-32,4). In AC VII, 27, 1-2, the third thanksgiving prayer reads as follows:

Concerning the ointment, give thanks this way: O God, the Creator of all, we give you thanks both for the fragrance of the ointment and for the age of immortality which you have made known to us through Jesus your child, for yours is the glory and the power forever. Amen

The second source is a papyrus covering Did 10:3b-12:2a, which probably dates from the fifth century. The text, now preserved in the British Museum (PLond Or. 9271), is written in Coptic

but is a translation of a Greek text. The prayer, occurring in the Coptic fragment, closely corresponds to AC VII, 27, 1-2:

But concerning the saying for the fragrance (*stinoufi*), give thanks just as you say, ‘We give thanks to you Father concerning the fragrance which you showed us, through Jesus your servant/son. Yours is the glory forever. Amen.’

The compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions and the writer of the Coptic fragment found the third thanksgiving prayer in a copy of the Greek Didache, where it was located immediately after the injunction to the prophets. A crucial question addressed in this study concerns the authenticity of the Didache version in the Jerusalem manuscript. Was the third thanksgiving prayer found in the Coptic fragment of the Didache and in AC VII a genuine element of the Didache text that was then suppressed by the Jerusalem Manuscript (or its source), or does it represent a later addition? In the present study, attention will be given to two aspects in particular.

First, the correct Greek text of the thanksgiving prayer – apart from the possibility of its having been part of the Didache Eucharist - has to be established (section 1 below). Second, before moving on to the Didache itself, we will deal at some length with the development of the Jewish prayers underlying the Didache Eucharist. Most scholars nowadays agree that the text in Did 10 evolved from the Birkat Ha-Mazon, that is, the prayer that concludes the Jewish ritual meal. Nevertheless, Did 9-10 is not a reworking of the Hebrew but of *Greek* table prayers which have been lost to us. Evidence of a meal prayer indicating a triadic arrangement of cup, bread, and ointment is found in the first-century Hellenistic story of *Jos. Asen*. This shows that a Greek version of fixed table prayers which included the third blessing in addition to those over the cup and bread may have existed (section 2 below).

These insights have important consequences for the evaluation of the third thanksgiving prayer in the Didache Eucharist. In view of the evidence in the Jewish Hellenistic apocryphon of *Joseph and Aseneth*, which is likely to have originated in Egypt, we argue that the third thanksgiving

prayer does not belong to the oldest form of the Didache Eucharist but was interpolated in the original materials within Jewish Christian circles in Hellenistic Egypt (section 3 below).

### 1. The Text of the ‘Ointment’ Prayer in Didache 10:8

In order to establish the correct text of the third thanksgiving prayer the focus will be placed primarily on the terms ‘fragrance’ and ‘ointment’, as each of these terms may represent the authentic text. Once this problem is solved, attention will be paid to the genealogical relationship between the Greek (‘ointment’) and Coptic (‘fragrance’) versions of the third thanksgiving prayer.

For what was thanks being given in the original version of the third thanksgiving prayer? It is clear that the passage in *AC* refers to ointment (μύρον), whereas the Coptic text (*stinoufi*) is related to fragrance or incense (εὐ\*ωδία). Let us turn first to the Coptic text, which uses the term *stinoufi*. According to J. Ysebaert, the word *stinoufi* corresponds to the Greek εὐ\*ωδία, which in the context of Did 10:8 means the “good smell of Jesus that Christians are to God.”<sup>4</sup> It cannot be proven, however, that this implied thought was common belief in the Didache community considering the primitive stage of Christology in the manual. Moreover, the Coptic Didache provides a thanksgiving prayer for something which, on the face of it, is concrete and comparable to the preceding ‘cup’ and ‘fragment’ (bread), whereas in Ysebaert’s interpretation the prayer has become purely metaphorical. St. Gero (1977) also proposed εὐ\*ωδία as the most obvious Greek equivalent of *stinoufi*. In his view, however, the Coptic text refers to an archaic Christian liturgical practice of burning incense at the end of a solemn communal meal.<sup>5</sup> A prayer of blessing was spoken over incense, which was then burned. Indeed, the obligatory blessing over the incense which was burned at the meal is considered in *m. Ber* 6:6, although the form of the blessing is not given. The burning of incense during and after festive meals (*comissatio*) is also well attested in Greco-Roman antiquity.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether a prayer over incense in the Coptic Didache would reflect an actual liturgical practice. First of all, there is no literary evidence for the use of incense in Jewish

synagogue services in the first century CE.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there is widespread scholarly consensus that incense was not ritually burned in Christian congregations until the fourth century. This view is based on statements by second- and third-century Christian writers who reject the use of incense in the Christian rite as a sign of paganism.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the third thanksgiving prayer – whether Coptic or not – obviously concerns a saving gift made known by God to his own people “through Jesus.” It is hardly conceivable that a subject such as ‘incense’, or a ‘good smell’ for that matter, would be consistent with the general drift of the prayer.<sup>9</sup>

The evidence surveyed so far may be regarded sufficient to conclude that it is not for εὐ\*ωδία (‘fragrance’, ‘aroma’, ‘incense’) that thanks is being given in the third thanksgiving prayer in *AC* and the Coptic fragment. On the contrary, the indications support the alternative μύρον (‘ointment’) as being the direct object of the thanksgiving prayer. Relevant biblical and ancient Jewish parallel material of a ritual within the context of a single meal corroborating the μύρον reading is found in Ps 22:5 (LXX),<sup>10</sup> 2 Esdras 3:7 (LXX),<sup>11</sup> Dan 10:3 (LXX),<sup>12</sup> and *b.Ber.* 42a.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the distinction between the different unctions used for anointing such as μύρον, εὐλαϊον, etc. was blurred in the first centuries C.E. as these were often used interchangeably.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the evidence reflected in the gospels (Mark 14:3par; John 12:3; Luke 7:36-50), which presupposes the use of ‘ointment’ throughout dinner, an important parallel is found in Isa 25:6-7a: “And the Lord of hosts shall make a feast for all the nations on this mount. They shall drink gladness, they shall drink wine, they shall anoint themselves with ointment (πιφονται οἶνον, χρισσονται μύρον).” Since the Eucharist of the *Didache* anticipates eternal life in Did 10:3, it reflects a comparable eschatological orientation and might thus provide an appropriate framework for understanding Did 10:8.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the ‘ointment’ variant is supported not only by literary evidence in the Septuagint, in Jewish sources, and in the Gospels, but also by various Hellenistic materials referring to unctions which took place after the meal proper.<sup>16</sup> Consider also the instance in *Jos. Asen.* 8:5 which refers to blessed bread, cup, and ointment being consumed in the course of what was probably a ritual meal.

The authentic text, like the Greek Apostolic Constitutions, probably read τοῦ μύραρον ('ointment') in the rubric and τῆ~ῃ εὐ\*ωδία~α~ῃ του~ μύραρου ('the fragrance of the ointment') in the body of the prayer.<sup>17</sup> This solution is plausible since the Coptic word *stinoufi* in some cases also refers to μύραρον. Out of the 18 occurrences in the Septuagint and the 13 occurrences in the New Testament there are two cases (Luke 23:56 and Rev 18:13) where the Greek μύραρον is rendered in the Coptic translation of the Bible as *sti / stoi* ('smell') and one case (Ezek 27:17) where μύραρον is translated as *stinoufi* ('fragrance').<sup>18</sup>

A retranslation of the Coptic fragment into Greek compared with the passage in the Apostolic Constitutions (VII, 27, 1-2) shows the two texts of the third thanksgiving prayer to have by and large the same wording and sequence:

<i>Coptic fragment</i>	<i>AC VII, 27, 1-2</i>
περιη δεη του~ λοαγου του~ μύραρου	ου'τω~ῃ εὐ*χαριστήσατε·
ου'τω~ῃ εὐ*χαριστήσατε	--
λεαγοντε~ῃ·	Εὐ*χαριστου~μεαν σοι,
Εὐ*χαριστου~μεαν σοι,	θεεη δημιουργεη τω~ν ο'λων,
παατερ,	καιη υςπεηρ τη~ῃ εὐ*ωδία~α~ῃ του~ μύραρου
υςπεηρ τη~ῃ εὐ*ωδία~α~ῃ του~ μύραρου	καιη υςπεηρ του~ α*θανατου αι*ω~νο~ῃ
--	ουφ ε*γνωαρισα~ῃ ηςμι~ν διαη *Ιησου~
ουφ ε*γνωαρισα~ῃ ηςμι~ν διαη *Ιησο	του~ παιδοα~ῃ σου·
υ~ του~ παιδοα~ῃ σου·	ο'τι σου~ ε*στιν ης δοαξα
σοιη ης δοαξα	καιη ης δυναμι~ῃ
--	ει*ῃ τουη~ῃ αι*ω~να~ῃ· α*μηαν. <sup>19</sup>
ει*ῃ τουη~ῃ αι*ω~να~ῃ· α*μηαν.	
περιη δεη του~	
μύραρου	

If the Coptic text, despite its closeness to the *AC*, represents a separate thanksgiving prayer, one may ask which of the two versions represents the tradition's earlier form? Since the prayer

preserved in the Coptic papyrus is slightly briefer than the one in the *AC*, we are inclined to consider the latter passage to be secondary. The simple address ‘Father’ (πατερ) in the Coptic version has probably been replaced here by the address ‘O God, the Creator of all’ (θεεη δημιουργηη τω~ν ο̄λων). Moreover, the closing doxology ‘yours is the glory’ (σοιη ης δοξα) may have been amplified in the wording ‘for yours is the glory and the power’ (ο̄τι σου~ ε̄στιν ης δοξα καιη ης δυναμῑ).

This does not mean that the Coptic version provides a more reliable preservation of the prayer in every respect. If the criterion of brevity is applied to the introductory rubric of this thanksgiving prayer, the additional phraseology of the Coptic fragment (‘But concerning *the saying for the fragrance*, give thanks *just as you say*’) seems to be secondary to the terminology in *AC* which simply reads ‘Concerning the ointment, give thanks this way.’ The wordings λογγου του~ and λεαγοντε̄ do not correspond to the linguistic usage of other *Didache* rubrics (8:2; 9:1.3; 10:1). One clause not touched upon so far is the phrase ‘and for the age of immortality’ (καιη ῡσπερη του~ ᾱθανατου αῑω~νο̄) in the *AC*. It has no parallel in the Coptic version but cannot be explained as a straightforward development of the text form from the shorter recension reflected in the Coptic. It is dangerous to assume that this phrase is simply an elaboration or expansion of a later editor.<sup>20</sup> A literary dependence of the prayer in the *Apostolic Constitutions* on the predecessor of the Coptic fragment cannot be taken for granted; it is more likely that both the Greek source underlying the Coptic version and the passage in *AC* are connected in their dependence on a common ancestor.

## **2. Did the ‘Ointment’ Prayer belong to a Hellenistic Version of Jewish Table Prayers?**

In the last decades it came to be generally accepted that the ultimate roots of the Christian Eucharist in *Did* 9-10 lay in Jewish liturgical practice. The benedictions before the meal in *Didache* 9 evolved out of the synagogue service and the prayers after the meal in *Didache* 10 are probably a reworking of the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, the Hebrew Grace that concludes the Jewish ritual meal.<sup>21</sup> Admittedly, there may have been a degree of variation and fluidity in the phraseology of the Hebrew prayers in the first century C.E. On the other hand, the extant materials from Qumran

of non-Qumranic origin confirm that the initial step in the formation of fixed prayers was taken already in the Second Temple period.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.1. The Hellenistic Version of the Jewish Table Prayers**

A proper appraisal of the eucharistic prayer in the Didache can best be achieved by postulating various layers of composition. If Did 10 evolved from the Birkat Ha-Mazon, it is clear that the initial form of the Hebrew Grace after meals underwent a significant development as the tripartite structure of the Jewish Grace changed into a bipartite pattern. While the Birkat Ha-Mazon is divided into three strophes,<sup>23</sup> its structure has been adapted to a bipartite use in Did 10.<sup>24</sup> The blessing-thanksgiving-supplication pattern of the Birkat Ha-Mazon becomes a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication. The reorganization of the Grace after meals reflected in the Didache took place in a second stage when the Birkat Ha-Mazon was translated from Hebrew into Greek within Jewish Hellenistic circles.

At the same time the benedictions before the meal are likely to have been rearranged in line with the liturgical composition of the Greek version of the Birkat Ha-Mazon. The blessing over the cup and the bread before the meal reproduces to a certain extent the wording of the lengthy prayer of thanksgiving after the meal. The resemblance of phraseology and content between the prayers of Did 9 and 10 is clear. Later, in a third stage of the prayer's history, these benedictions were appropriated by one or more Jewish Christian Didache communities, which seem to have Christianized them superficially using specific phrases like διαη !ησου~ του~ παιδοαδ σου (Athrough Jesus your servant@ in 9:2.3; 10:2.3) or διαη !ησου~ Χριστου~ (Athrough Jesus Christ@ in 9:4). All this leads to the conclusion – as also will become clear below – that Did 9-10 is a reworking not of the Hebrew but of the Greek version of the Jewish table prayers.<sup>25</sup>

Since the ritual expresses the religious experience of Israel in its own particular Palestinian setting, it did not survive transplantation into the Hellenistic world without enduring profound transformations. When the prayers were transferred from their Hebrew background to the

Hellenistic setting and translated into Greek, they received a new dimension. Admittedly, we don't know to what extent the Hellenistic Jewish model behind the Didache prayers had already expanded beyond the original Hebrew form as the Greek version of the Jewish table prayers has been lost to us. Nevertheless, a translator would have had little occasion to use a word like 'immortality' or the juxtaposition "knowledge and belief" in a triad such as "knowledge and belief and immortality" (γνωσσεωδ καιη πιστεωδ καιη α\*θανασιααδ) in Did 10:2.<sup>26</sup> The word 'immortality' returns in such Septuagintic writings as Wisd 3:4; 4:1; 8:13.17;15:3 and 4 Macc 14:5; 16:13, books that were unknown in ancient Hebrew or Aramaic literature. The term seems to express a general aspiration of Hellenistic Judaism (cf. 2 Macc 7:9.14.36).<sup>27</sup> Similarly, relying on Philo, we ascertain that the word γνωσσιδ appears to have been a term which was also central to Hellenistic Jewish thought.<sup>28</sup>

A different idea about how eternal life may be acquired is found in the succeeding strophe of the prayer in Did 10:3. The 'life' that God had made known in 9:3 is probably understood here as immortality too. When this strophe speaks of the gift of 'spiritual food and drink and eternal life' (πνευματικηην τροφηην καιη ποτοην καιη ζωηην αι\*ωφνιον), the language used unquestionably reveals that special significance was seen in the elements themselves.<sup>29</sup> But what was meant by spiritual food and drink? From the perspective of the Hellenistic Wisdom literature, the spiritual nourishment is the teaching that God gives through Wisdom (cf. Prov 9:5-6 LXX).<sup>30</sup> The prayer in Did 9:3-4 seems to rest upon a Jewish prayer tradition in which everyday food was regarded to be a heavenly endowment bestowing life and wisdom. The consuming of spiritual food in 10:3 is seen as causing the effect of eternal life. We ascertain a shift from a ritualized meal in which the divine presence is felt through the sharing of the communal table to a cultic event with divine food connotations assigned to eucharistic elements.

## **2.2. *Joseph and Aseneth* and a Hellenistic Version of the Jewish Table Prayers**

A striking parallel with the ritual of the Eucharist in the Coptic fragment and AC VII, 27, 1-2 is found in the story of *Joseph and Aseneth*, as it contains blessings to be said over the bread, cup, and ointment. Participation in these blessings is the key to salvation, which is eternal life,

immortality, and incorruption. Here, the idea of divine food has become so prominent that the meal has assumed sacred qualities. Since it is almost generally accepted that the story of *Jos. Asen.* - which was probably composed in Greek - is of Jewish provenance, our interest will centre on whether these bread-cup-ointment passages could be related to a Greek version of a more or less standardized Jewish table prayer.

Attention will be given first, however, to the legend of *Jos. Asen.* Virtually all specialists have taken Egypt as its place of origin<sup>31</sup> and the period between 100 B.C.E. and 115 C.E. as its date of composition.<sup>32</sup> The milieu from which *Jos. Asen.* emerged was one in which Jews lived in dynamic tension with gentiles, and the socio-historical context was the problem of mixed marriages.<sup>33</sup> Any sort of contact between Jews and gentiles, whether intermarriage or table fellowship, appears to have been forbidden on the grounds that it pollutes. In order to explain this, however, there is no need to presume a distinct sectarian milieu since a relatively ‘mainstream’ (if the term is appropriate) Hellenistic Jewish community may also be an appropriate setting for understanding and appreciating the peculiarities of the work.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.1. The Ritual Passages in *Joseph and Aseneth*

The narrative about *Joseph and Aseneth* consists of two different though interconnected stories: the conversion of Aseneth (Chaps. 1-21) and the envy of the Pharaoh’s son (Chaps. 22-29). Only the first tale is relevant to our subject. According to Gen 41:45, Joseph married a foreign woman, the daughter of an Egyptian priest. The problem of the wedding of the chaste and pious Joseph to the pagan Aseneth<sup>35</sup> is couched in terms of the fundamental antithesis between Jews and Egyptians. The contrast is clearly marked by Joseph’s refusal to eat with the Egyptians and to kiss Aseneth. When she has fallen in love with him and is about to kiss him, Joseph says

“It is not fitting that a pious man<sup>36</sup>  
 who worships (εὐ\*λογεῖ~) with his mouth the living God  
 and eats (ε\*σθιᾶει) blessed bread of life (ἀζρτον εὐ\*λογημενον ζωη~ῳ)  
 and drinks (πιᾶνει) a blessed cup of immortality (ποτηριον εὐ\*λογημενον  
 ἀ\*θανασιααῳ)  
 and anoints himself (χρῖαεται) with blessed ointment of incorruption (χρῖασματι  
 εὐ\*λογημενω᾽ ἀ\*φθαρσιααῳ),

should kiss an alien woman,  
 who blesses with her mouth dead and dumb idols  
 and eats from their table bread of strangling,  
 drinks from their libations a cup of treachery  
 and anoints herself with the ointment of perdition” (8:5).<sup>37</sup>

Joseph prays for her instead. Utterly shaken, Aseneth exchanges her royal robes for sackcloth, destroys her idols, and casts them and her rich foods out the window. She mourns, fasts, and repents for seven days. Aseneth definitively breaks with her ancestral religion and becomes a proselyte. On the morning of the eighth day, an unnamed chief messenger of God, a celestial visitor, appears, declares her reborn, and feeds her a piece of honeycomb. He interprets the honeycomb as the spirit of life, made by the bees of paradise from the roses of life:

And the man stretched out his right hand and broke a small portion off the comb,  
 and he himself ate and what was left he put with his hand into Aseneth’s mouth,  
 and he said to her, “Eat.” And she ate.  
 And the man said to Aseneth, “Behold,  
 you have eaten bread of life (αζρτον ζωη~η),  
 and drunk a cup of immortality (ποτηριον α\*θανασιααη),  
 and been anointed with ointment of incorruption (χριασματι α\*φθαρσιααη)  
 (16:15-16a).<sup>38</sup>

He promises her that Joseph will come to marry her. And so he does; the wedding ceremony takes place, performed and presided over by the Pharaoh himself.

### **2.2.2. Do the Ritual Passages in *Jos. Asen.* refer to a Greek Version of the Jewish Table Prayers?**

As shown above, the question of ritual arises in two types of passages of the apocryphon. The first is the much-debated so-called ‘meal formula’ (8:5), the formulaic reference to eating the blessed bread of life, drinking the blessed cup of immortality, and anointing with the blessed oil of incorruption. Such phrases return in 8:9; 15:5; 16:16; 19:5; and 21:21. The second passage concerns the mysterious honeycomb in Chaps. 14-17.

The crucial question in the research of *Jos. Asen.* is whether the somewhat stereotypical meal language refers to a ritual or cultic meal in the author's community, or whether it is to be explained in another way. A number of scholars have objected to the assumption that the clauses mentioning bread, cup, and ointment refer to liturgical usage, since the variations do not allow us to speak of a liturgically fixed formula. The repeated expression is triadic in three occurrences mentioning bread, cup, and ointment (8:5; 15:5, and 16:6) and dyadic in another three occurrences referring to just bread and cup (8:9; 19:5, and 21:21).<sup>39</sup> The distinct references are considered too divergent to allow us to draw any conclusions in this respect, and it is assumed that these passages relate to the entire Jewish way of life.<sup>40</sup>

The language employed may have functioned, indeed, to describe the special prototypical nature of Aseneth's conversion from idolatry. In 8:5, the positive clauses are set within a prohibitive framework ("it is not fitting that a pious man [woman] ...") which serves to highlight the fundamental difference between Jew and non-Jew. The contrast is such that there can be no intimacy, and certainly no intermarriage, between the worshiper of God and the idol worshiper. Aseneth must renounce the idols. The fourfold series of antitheses in relative clauses spells out the difference between the two classes of people, enforced by the antithetical use of meal terminology to characterize a lifestyle diametrically opposed to an existence marked by idolatry. Jews remain apart from non-Jews, with whom they may coexist but must not mingle: no table-fellowship with pagans and no physical intimacy with a pagan woman is permitted.

The rejection of the idea that the meal language refers to an ordinary Jewish meal ritual may also be explained by the unsuccessful attempts in the past to elucidate these clauses about the bread, cup, and ointment by analogies with a Jewish mystery cult, an archetypal Jewish meal, a Qumran meal, or the meal of the Therapeutae.<sup>41</sup> Especially the inclusion of the anointing was problematic as it was commonly felt that it had no exact parallel in ancient Judaism. Researchers were forced to posit a ritual where the benediction of the unction comes after the blessing of the bread and the wine.<sup>42</sup> The methodological problem involved is, of necessity, circular in that some hypothetical pre-existing ritual is required to interpret the text whereas it is impossible to demonstrate the

correctness and reality of the ritual behind the text. The extant parallel in the alternative Didache version was unnoticed or not considered at all to check the reference in *Jos. Asen.*<sup>43</sup>

Another objection to a ritual interpretation of the bread, wine, and ointment passages is found in Chaps. 14-17. The privileges enjoyed by Jews over non-Jews are brought out clearly here in the report about the heavenly visitor. In *Jos. Asen.* 16:14-16, the angel gives Aseneth a piece of honeycomb. She is told that in eating it she has eaten bread of life, drunk a cup of immortality, and been anointed with ointment of incorruption (16:16; 19:5). The eating of honey is equated with the triadic meal formula, and it seems that eating, drinking, and being anointed mean the same thing as eating the honeycomb. If the blessed bread, cup, and ointment were consumed in the course of a special religious rite, one would expect to find such a rite or rites mentioned in the narrative of *Jos. Asen.* It is remarkable that Aseneth does not eat the bread and drink the cup and be anointed. There is little in the document itself, then, to suggest a Jewish ritual meal. On the contrary, the fact that she receives a heavenly honeycomb implies that the bread, cup, and ointment were not so consumed. "It is an extremely important but often overlooked fact," Randall D. Chesnutt states, "that Aseneth never actually receives any bread, cup or ointment anywhere in the narrative. Instead she eats a piece of honeycomb ... This explicit equation of eating the honey with eating the bread, drinking the cup, and being anointed with the ointment makes it highly unlikely that allusion to a fixed ritual form is intended in either half of the equation."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the idea of a ritual meal is abandoned by many, suggesting that the formula refers to the entire Jewish way of life over against pagan standards of behaviour.

There are, however, good reasons to assume that the formulaic references under discussion in *Jos. Asen.* may be taken as allusions to some sort of ritual meal. Firstly, it cannot be said with certainty whether the honey and the honeycomb have replaced the bread, wine, and ointment. It is more likely that the honeycomb is merely used at the initiation of Aseneth since eating the honeycomb is linked to repentance and conversion<sup>45</sup> whereas the clause in 8:5 (and elsewhere) referring to the eating and drinking (and anointing) indicates everyday Jewish custom. The present tense of the verbs reflects the recurring ritual practice of those who worship God.

Moreover, these formulas can hardly echo an initiation ritual, because it is Joseph, and not Aseneth, who is characterized in 8:5 as a pious man worshiping God.

Secondly, the negative clauses about the bread, cup, and ointment in 8:5 indicate sacrificial meals normally held in a temple at a god's table. They display an inescapable analogy with 1 Cor 10:18.21: "Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ... You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of the demons." For Paul, the table of the Lord represents a cultic meal such as the Eucharist. No Jew could be a co-religionist, worshiping his God while also upholding the gods associated with Roman society. Indeed, *Jos. Asen.* does not mention the table of the Lord in 8:5, but, since the negative clauses about the bread, cup, and ointment indicate sacrificial meals usually taking place in pagan temples destined for the cult of idols, this contrast clearly suggests that a ritual meal is involved.

Thirdly, the similarity between the passages shows that the expression 'to eat the blessed bread of life and to drink the blessed cup of immortality' is a technical formula, especially since the narrative itself does not require such an expression. The wording of the bread-cup-ointment passages seems to confirm an understanding that did not necessitate any further elaboration. The formula is not a natural product of the events described in the story, but is best explained as referring to an independent and established ritual meal where bread, cup, and ointment are consumed together.

In sum, the similarity of the six ritual references in shape and language allow us to speak of a somewhat fixed form. The bread, cup, and ointment are evidently linked, and often, in the frequent mention of them in parallel constructions, they stand together. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that these passages in *Jos. Asen.* attest to a meal of some sort, and it is possible that they refer to a Greek version of the Jewish table prayers used in Hellenistic Egypt. This suggestion may be supported by the evidence that the alternative Didache version gives a place to the blessing over ointment as well. Moreover, the repeated use of the Greek benediction

formula in the passive participle in *Jos. Asen.* (εὐ\*λογημενον) reflects the benediction found in the Hebrew meal blessings (iwr**b**) as rendered, for example, in *m.Ber.* 6:1 and in Finkelstein's reconstruction of the Birkat Ha-Mazon.<sup>46</sup> If the reading of the 'ointment' prayer is included, and if our understanding of it is correct, then the alternative Didache form supports the contention that the bread, cup, and ointment are consumed in the course of a religious meal framed within a Greek version of the Jewish table prayers.

### **3. Conclusion: The 'Ointment' Prayer as an Egyptian interpolation in the Didache**

Did the alternative Eucharist develop from an Egyptian version of the Jewish table prayers? A positive answer to this question would imply that the 'ointment' prayer is not a product of editorial expansion to the Didache but was part of the Didache from the very beginning. The suggestion is attractive but unlikely. The 'ointment' prayer appears to represent a later interpolation for two reasons. Firstly, the prayer gives thanks for the aroma of the 'ointment'. While the first two thanksgiving prayers merely show appreciation of the spiritual gifts of salvation ('the holy vine of David' and 'the life and knowledge') which are represented by the material cup and bread, the 'fragrance of the ointment' does not appear to imply a sacred endowment of deliverance only.<sup>47</sup> Instead, the 'ointment' prayer also thanks for the material gift, for 'the fragrance of the ointment' itself. There is a shift in diction and connotation here because the thought of this verse is loosely connected to the first two thanksgiving prayers, and, thus, intrudes into the context.

Secondly, the position of the 'ointment' prayer at this specific location raises special difficulty. The Coptic papyrus and the Greek Apostolic Constitutions append the prayer to the very end of the eucharistic prayers in Chaps. 9-10, where it follows the ruling in 10:7 allowing the prophets freedom to give thanks to the extent they wish. The latter instruction was apparently a transitional verse leading the reader to the materials on church discipline which are disclosed in Chaps. 11-15. The present position of 10:8, therefore, leaves the clear impression that the liturgical passage was awkwardly inserted between the non-liturgical injunction concluding the eucharistic prayers and the instructions on the reception of prophets and apostles in Chap. 11.

Since there is clearly imitation of the table prayers in Did 9:1-2 and 9:3<sup>48</sup> – cf. the emphasis on the thanksgiving in the rubric (περιη ... ου̅τωδ̅ ευ\*χαριστησασατε) and in the prayer proper (Ευ\*χαριστου~μεαν̅ σοι, παατερ ηςμω~ν, υςπεηρ), and a continuing Christianization (. . . διαη̅ ζ̅Ιησου~ του~ παιδοαδ̅ σου̅ σοιη̅ ης̅ δοαξα̅ ει\*δ̅ τουηδ̅ αι\*ω~ναδ̅) – there can be little doubt that the ‘ointment’ prayer is a Christian addition to the basic eucharistic prayers of the Didache. In the formative stage of Christianity in first-century Egypt, Jewish ‘converts’ to Christian faith brought with them their rituals, worldview, and lifestyle, and, obviously, these Judeo-Christians continued to faithfully observe their religious customs. The original Didache text was modified, amended, and updated to fit the version of the table prayers with which the Jewish Christian community in Egypt was familiar. In this way, local diversity, for example in the form of an ‘ointment’ prayer, could easily have crept into the ritual.<sup>49</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Peterson 1959, p. 181; Audet 1958, pp. 52-78; Wengst 1984, p. 6; for a summary and support of Wengst’s alterations, see Dehandschutter 1995, pp. 37-46.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion, see Rordorf-Tuilier <sup>2</sup>1998, pp. 102-110, and especially Van de Sandt-Flusser 2002, pp. 16-24.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bihlmeyer <sup>2</sup>1956, p. XX; Wengst 1984, pp. 57-59.82; see also Peterson 1959, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> See Ysebaert 2002, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The so-called Ointment Prayer’, 70.83-84.

<sup>6</sup> Klinghardt 1996, p. 472 and n. 25

<sup>7</sup> See Gero 1977, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> See E. Fehrenbach 1922, cols. 6-8; Lietzmann 1926, pp. 86-87 (= Richardson 1979, pp. 71-72); Dix <sup>2</sup>1945, pp. 425-27; Gero 1977, pp. 74-78.

<sup>9</sup> Niederwimmer <sup>2</sup>1993, 209.

<sup>10</sup> “You have prepared a table (τρααπεζαν) before me in presence of them that afflict me: you have thoroughly anointed my head with oil (ε\*λιπαναν ε\*ν ε\*λαιω); and your cup cheers me like the best wine.”

<sup>11</sup> “And they gave ... meats and drinks, and oil, (καιη βρωματα καιη ποταη, καιη ε/λαιον) to the Sidonians and Tyrians, ...”

<sup>12</sup> “I ate no pleasant bread, and no flesh or wine entered into my mouth, neither did I anoint myself with oil (ε/λαιον ου\*κ η\*λειψαμην), until three whole weeks were accomplished.”

<sup>13</sup> “If one is accustomed to [rub his hands with] oil (/μν) [after a meal], he can wait for the oil.”

<sup>14</sup> “Allerdings bleibt eine Verdichtung auf einen einzigen Begriff aus. Wir stoßen in unserem Bereich sehr wohl auf immer wiederkehrende Wortfelder - χριαιειν κτλ., α\*λειαιφειν κτλ., ε/λαιον, μυαρρον, νααρδον καταχει~ν (oder andere Derivate von χει~ν), lat. ung(u)ere etc. -, aber nicht auf eine herausragende Bevorzugung des uns besonders interessierenden χριαιειν ...(cf. Karrer 1991, pp. 191-92); “In der Grunddimension dienten sie (i.e., die Salbungen) – ausgedrückt mit den Verben χριαιειν, (α\*π- )α\*λειαιφειν, καταχει~ν κτλ. (neben Öl auch mit anderer Salbe: “Myron”), ung(u)ere etc. – einer Reinigung, die als Befreiung von den bösen, ...eine volle oder erneute Kultteilnahme erst ermöglichte” (id., 196). See also Groen 1991, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Kollmann 1990, 91.

<sup>16</sup> Klinghardt 1996, 471.475. One anointed oneself not only during the *comissatio* after the meal but also at an earlier stage, during the first part of the meal or in between the first part and the second part (Mayer 1917, 32-35; Karrer 1991, 205).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. e.g. Schmidt 1925, p. 95; Wengst 1984, p. 82; Niederwimmer <sup>2</sup>1993, p. 209, n. 134.

<sup>18</sup> See Ysebaert 2002, pp. 4-5 and n. 12. Interestingly, F. Stanley Jones and P.A. Mirecki in their English translation of the text translate the Coptic *stinoufi* twice as ‘ointment’ (see Jones-Mirecki 1995, p. 53). Were they influenced by the wording of the parallel passage in AC VII, 27, 1-2?

<sup>19</sup> For the Greek text, see Metzger 1987, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> St. Gero 1977 considers the phrase to be a redactional explanation (p. 72). Further, see below, n. 48.

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<sup>21</sup> For references to further literature, see Van de Sandt-Flusser 2002, p. 312, n. 122.

<sup>22</sup> More details and references can be found in Van de Sandt-Flusser, 271-272.

<sup>23</sup> *Text Birkat Ha-Mazon:*

- “Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who feedest the whole world with goodness, with grace and with mercy
- We thank Thee, O Lord, our God, that Thou hast caused us to inherit a goodly and pleasant land, the covenant, the Torah, life and food. For all these things we thank Thee and praise Thy name forever and ever
- Have mercy, O Lord, our God, on Thy people Israel, and on Thy city Jerusalem, and on Thy Temple and Thy dwelling-place and on Zion Thy resting-place, and on the great and holy sanctuary over which Thy name was called, and the kingdom of the dynasty of David mayest Thou restore to its place in our days, and build Jerusalem soon.” (see Finkelstein 1928-29, pp. 215-17. For the possibly earlier version of the third benediction, see id., p. 233)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Middleton 1935, p. 263; Talley 1976, pp. 125-29; and see, also for the following, Van de Sandt-Flusser 2002, pp. 313-25.

<sup>25</sup> For Did 10, see Dibelius 1938, passim; Sandelin 1986, pp. 212-18. Compare also Lietzmann 1926, pp. 233-34 (= Richardson 1979, 190); Koester 1957, p. 193; Wengst 1984, pp. 48-49. 53, n. 177; Ledogar 1968, pp. 127-28; Kollmann 1990, pp. 80-89; Wehr 1987, pp. 346-47.

<sup>26</sup> The terminology is reminiscent of John 6:69-70 and 17:8 (cf. also 3:36; 17:3) where *γινώσκειν*, *πιστεύειν*, and *ζωὴν αἰ\*ωνίου* are interconnected. As there are insufficient indications proving a relation of dependence between Did 9-10 and the Gospel of John, they may draw on common Jewish-Hellenistic tradition (cf. Kollmann 1990, pp. 84-85).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. also Schnackenburg 1971, pp. 228-342

<sup>28</sup> For instances, see Bultmann 1933, p. 702.

<sup>29</sup> An early parallel is found in the statement of Paul in 1Cor 10:3-4 which mentions that the generation of the desert ate “the same spiritual food” (*πνευματικὴν βρωμᾶ*) and drank “the same spiritual drink” (*πνευματικὴν ποσμᾶ*).

<sup>30</sup> See Dibelius 1938, 34.37-38. The thanksgiving for the ‘life and knowledge’ in Did 9:3 is a traditional concept not only in Hellenistic Judaism, where the predicate ‘life’ as representing God’s gift is identified with the Torah (Sir 17:11; 45:4; Prov 8:35; cf. Acts 7:38), but also in rabbinic Judaism, where it is recognized as Wisdom (cf. Borgen 1965, p. 148; see also Klinghardt 1996, pp. 440-41 and n. 33).

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- <sup>31</sup> Similarities between Aseneth and the goddesses Isis and Neith have been established; cf. Philonenko 1968, pp. 61-79; see also Schürer 1986, p. 548; Chesnutt 1995, pp. 76-81. M. de Goeij develops the idea suggested originally by Philonenko (1968, pp. 83-89) that this is a gnostic drama. In a second-century Valentinian Gnostic setting, the pagan Aseneth is summoned to come from her digression to the true gnosis (1981, pp. 15-22). However, the disdain for matter, commonly shown by gnostic thinkers, is lacking in the narrative.
- <sup>32</sup> See Philonenko 1968, pp. 108-09; Burchard 1985, pp. 187-88; Burchard 1987, p. 104; Chesnutt 1995, pp. 80-85; Docherty 2004, p. 31.
- <sup>33</sup> Tromp 1999, p. 33.
- <sup>34</sup> We follow the reconstructed Greek eclectic text, largely founded on *b* manuscripts, which has recently been edited in a critical edition by Burchard 2003.
- <sup>35</sup> This is the spelling of the LXX and the Greek text of *Jos. Asen.* In the MT of Gen 41:45, Joseph's wife's name is Asenath.
- <sup>36</sup> The wording ἀ\*νδριη θεοσεβει~ in this context means 'observant Jew', and as such he will not eat with the Egyptians (7:1). In the same way, the prohibition of marriage to Gentiles is implied in Joseph's initial rejection of Aseneth (7:6).
- <sup>37</sup> For the Greek text, see Burchard 2003, p. 116.
- <sup>38</sup> For the Greek text, see Burchard 2003, p. 212.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Sängler 1980, pp. 169-170; Chesnutt 1995, pp. 128-29.
- <sup>40</sup> See especially Jeremias <sup>3</sup>1960, p. 27; Burchard 1965, pp. 121-33; Idem 1987, pp. 113-117; Schnackenburg 1971, pp. 335-340; Chesnutt 1995, pp. 128-35.
- <sup>41</sup> See e.g. Philonenko 1968, pp. 89-98; Kilpatrick 1952, pp. 6-8; Nauck 1957, pp. 169-171; and Kuhn 1957, pp. 76-77, respectively.
- <sup>42</sup> At first sight, it might refer to a description of Levi's vision of his 'ordination' to the priesthood in *T. Levi* 8:4-17. In vv. 4-5, bread, wine, and anointing are mentioned, among other elements, in this second investiture of Levi, but this place is problematic as unction is mentioned before the consumption of the bread and the wine.
- <sup>43</sup> The first, to my knowledge, to suggest the 'ointment' prayer in Did 10:8 as a parallel was B. Kollmann (1990, 90). He did not develop this idea, however.
- <sup>44</sup> Chesnutt 1995, p. 131.

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<sup>45</sup> Kollmann 1990, p. 88.

<sup>46</sup> Finkelstein 1928-29, 215-17.225-233.

<sup>47</sup> Vööbus 1968, pp. 56-57; Niederwimmer <sup>2</sup>1993, pp. 207-08.

<sup>48</sup> See Audet 1958, p. 69; Vööbus 1968, p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> A characteristic feature – though in a mitigated form - of the Hellenistic milieu from which the ointment prayer came is still perceptible in *AC VII*, 27, 1-2. The emphasis on the divine nature of blessed food suggested in *Jos. Asen.* is echoed here in the phrase “for the immortal eon” (ὕπερ τοῦ ἀθανάτου αἰῶνος).

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