

WORKING DRAFT. PLEASE DO NOT CITE.
CRITICAL SUGGESTIONS ARE WELCOME!

Didache Amulet P.Oxy.1782: At the Crossroads of Magic/Religion and Jewish/Christian

Kimberly B. Stratton
Carleton University

In a series of articles and two books on ancient magic and miracle, Harold Remus interrogated the role of nomenclature in contests of delegitimation and in scholarly heuristics, challenging the uncritical reproduction of the distinction between “pagan” magic and Christian miracle. Through analysis of the semantic range of words in specific contexts, Harold illuminated how words function both in ancient writings and in scholarship to construct social and academic boundaries.¹ His 1994 presidential address to the Canadian Society of Biblical

1. Harold Remus, “Does Terminology Distinguish Early Christian from Pagan Miracles?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101, no. 4 (1982): 531–51; Harold Remus, “‘Magic or Miracle’? Some Second Century Instances,” *The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 127–56; Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict Over Miracle in the Second*

Studies, published in a revised version as “Magic, Method, Madness,” playfully invited scholars to reconceive their modern prejudices and try to understand ancient magic from the perspective of practitioners. After surveying the history of scholarship on magical papyri and curse tablets from their first discoveries and publications in the mid 19th century to the end of the 20th century, Remus notes the disdain with which they were first largely shunned by classical philologists, who rejected them as products of the uncultured and ignorant masses. Gradually, through the work of Preisandanz, Betz, and Gager among others, these artifacts of ancient life have gained significant attention and serious study. Remus points out, however, that even scholars such as Nock, Nilsson, and Barb, who paid attention to magic as important evidence, continued to bifurcate amulets, curses, and magical papyri from legitimate “religious” practices and Christian miracles. He argues that scholars perpetuated the dichotomy of ancient invective—my miracle is your magic—in their histories.

In “Magic, Method, and Madness” Remus embraces William Cantwell Smith’s methodological call that “adherents of a religion should be able to recognize themselves in a scholar’s description of that religion.”² He does this by engaging in a fictional dialogue with an ancient practitioner of magic, whom he calls Abrasax, the name of a deity who figures prominently in the PGM. Abrasax explains typical features of the PGM, such as secrecy, nonsense language, automatic efficacy, and irrationality, that have been deprecated as “magic” by scholars. Abrasax compares these aspects of PGM rituals with those of “legitimate” religions, undermining the distinction and elevating the PGM to the status of religion.

Century (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983); Harold Remus, “‘Magic,’ Method, Madness,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999): 258–98; Harold Remus, “The End of ‘Paganism’?” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 33, no. 2 (2004): 191–208.

2. Remus, “‘Magic,’ Method, Madness,” 272.

In this paper, I follow Harold's lead in attempting to describe a religion in terms that would be recognizable to its adherents. Instead of adopting the perspective and voice of a fictional magician, I am engaging with an artifact that, like PGM, resides at the crossroads of classifications and definitions: those between magic and religion and between Jewish and Christian. I decided to make P.Oxy.1782 the focus of this paper after reading in Bart Ehrman's introduction to his translation of the Didache for the LCL series that the earliest Didache manuscript is from a minicodex, discovered at Oxyrhynchus "which may have served as an amulet" (412). This passing reference caught my attention; I am already intrigued by questions the Didache raises for understanding the emergence of Christian identity and decided to explore the fragment as possible evidence for the Didache's apotropaic power as an amulet. So, in this paper, following Harold's methodology, I am letting this artifact speak for itself and reveal its perspective on questions regarding the definition of magic and religion, Jewish and Christian.

P. Oxy. 1782

Let us start by describing the artifact itself. It consists of two vellum leaves, which are quite small: Folio 1 measures 5.8x5 cm and Folio 2 is 5.7x4.8cm. Since the two interior edges follow the same contour, Grenfell and Hunt, who first published the Oxyrhynchus Papyri for the Egypt Exploration Society in 1922, suggest that it once formed a single sheet. Hunt³ interprets the two leaves to be part of a mini-codex that contained some or all of the *Didache*. In which case, he surmises that the quire would have included eight sheets to convey the content between Fol. 1 verso and Fol. 2 recto as well as the missing verses preceding Fol 1 recto, which begins at verse 1.3b.⁴ Because of its small size, Hunt does not suppose that this minicodex held more

3. Hunt continued the work after Grenfell passed on.

4. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds. and trans., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XV* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1922), 12–13.

than the Didache. Exhibiting a 19th century elite proclivity for sniffing out and deriding perceived evidence of low culture, Hunt describes the scribal hand as unskilled—belonging to “a person of no great culture”—indicated by spelling and the division of words, although the usual scribal abbreviation (*nomina sacra*) of *pneuma* is used.⁵ More recently, Blumell and Wayment in their publication of Christian papyri from Oxyrhynchus, postulate that these irregularities result from “the small format and need to include as much texts as possible in such a small space” and describe the handwriting as “trained” with the “letters evenly formed.”⁶ AnneMarie Luijendijk agrees with this estimation and praises the clarity of the writing; it is not beautiful book-hand, but this scribe was experienced and took care to make each letter legible.⁷ Candida Moss has explored the role that enslaved scribes played in antiquity, often working in clerical positions for business owners,⁸ and we might imagine that someone in such a position produced this tiny manuscript of the Didache for their owner, or perhaps for personal use or that of fellow members of the Jesus community. The material on which it was written—vellum—was costly, however the tiny size of P. Oxy. 1782, which is not even the size of one’s palm, could have been produced on scraps and therefore cost little to nothing. Thus, it is difficult to speculate on the social status of the person who commissioned this minicodex; he or she could have been humble or enslaved, or come from higher echelons of Egyptian society and desired a small and portable copy of the Didache.

5. Grenfell and Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XV*, 13.

6. Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment, eds., *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015), 283.

7. Personal correspondence. June 5, 2024.

8. Candida Moss, *God’s Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2024).

P. Oxy. 1782 exhibits a striking row of “wedge-shaped signs followed by horizontal dashes” in red ink following line 20 on Fol. 2 Recto (13). These lines correspond with the chapter division of the only complete Didache manuscript (H), from Codex Hierosolymitanus; dated to 1056CE, it was discovered by P. Bryennios in 1873 and published in 1883. These lines indicate that chapter divisions were already present in the Didache as early as the fourth century.⁹ The red ink also grabs the eye, perhaps suggesting a ritual purpose: it helped the person reading aloud from this text to know easily where the section ends.¹⁰

The fragment contains verses from the Two Ways section of the Didache including the so-called *sectio evangelica*. The following table gives a translation across the two folia that more or less corresponds to the original Greek lines (note the text in bold and underlined is unique to P. Oxy. 1782):

Fol. 1 Recto/Flesh	Fol. 1 Verso/Hair
Do not the gentiles do this? Love those who hate you and your will not have an	enemy. Hear <u>what is necessary for you to do in order for the Spirit to save you: first of all,</u> avoid fleshly desires . . .
Fol 2. Recto/Flesh	Fol. 2 Verso/Hair
reprove, for some of you should pray, and for some you should love them more than your life. My child, flee from	every thing evil and similar to it. Do not become angry Because anger leads

9. Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 23

10. Suggestion proposed by AnneMarie Luijendijk in personal correspondence, June 5, 2025.

	to murder
--	-----------

The lines “do not the gentiles do this?” followed by the exhortation “to love those who hate you,” on Folio 1 belong to a section of the Didache (1.3b-2.1) that is often regarded as a “Christian” interpolation into a Jewish Two Ways tractate that circulated in synagogues; it parallels passages in Matt (5:44) and Luke (6:27-33) but does not appear in contemporary sources for the Two Ways teaching found in Barnabas and the *Doctrina apostolorum*.¹¹ The presence of these lines in P. Oxy. 1782 indicates that this addition was included in some texts of the Didache by the fourth century, demonstrating the instability of the text and possibly supporting arguments that the Didache was transmitted orally and included local variations.¹²

Amulet or Minicodex?

I will turn now to the central question that initiated this study: was P. Oxy. 1782 an amulet or a mini-codex? In a 2023 publication, “Miniature Codices in Early Christianity,”

11. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 22. See also the discussion in Perttu Nikander, “The Sectio Evangelica (Didache 1.3b-2.1) and Performance,” in *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 287.

12. See Aaron Milavec, “When, Why, and for Whom Was the Didache Created? Insights Into the Social and Historical Setting of the Didache Communities,” in *Matthew and the Didache*, ed. Huub van de Sandt (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 63–65. Bentley Layton, “The Sources, Date and Transmission of Didache 1.3b-2.1,” *Harvard Theological Review* 61, no. 3 (July 1968): 372, rejects the possibility it could be oral source because of its close linguistic parallels with written sources.

Michael Kruger lays out criteria to distinguish the two types of artifact while also noting that in many cases this binary is blurred. First, the material on which they are written differs: the majority of codices are written on parchment (approximately 80%) while the majority of amulets are written on papyrus (approximately 70%).¹³ Codices were written on the recto and verso while amulets tend to be written on one side only.¹⁴ A fragment from a codex is characterized by continuous text concatenating it to the prior and following pages; amulets, in contrast, tend to contain discrete texts or portions of text that stand alone. Christian amulets often contain a pastiche of psalms, incipits of gospels, or short historiolae whose content points toward an apotropaic purpose by mentioning healing, casting out demons, protection, etcetera.¹⁵ Amulets can show evidence of having been worn such as a hole or thread and were usually rolled or folded for this purpose.¹⁶ Scribal quality also helps distinguish amulets from codices: codices tend to exhibit scribal proficiency such as even letters, straight lines, conventional spelling, punctuation, use of the coronis, ekthesis and nomina sacra. Amulets on the other hand usually

13. Michael J. Kruger, “Miniature Codices in Early Christianity,” in *Studies on the Paratextual Features of Early New Testament Manuscripts: Texts and Editions of the New Testament*, Stanley E. Porter, David I. Yoon, and Chris Stevens (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 313 n16. Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts*, 2nd (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44–45.

14. Kruger, “Miniature Codices in Early Christianity,” 313.

15. Kruger, “Miniature Codices in Early Christianity,” 316.

16. Some codices show signs of being folded in half to make them more portable. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets*, 166–67.

indicate less competency including grammatical errors, sloppy lettering, and uneven lines.¹⁷

Some amulets suggest that prayers are quoted from oral knowledge of liturgy rather than copied from a text.¹⁸

These criteria do not always hold, however, as some amulets demonstrate professional scribalism indicating that priests (or monks) may have been producing amulets along side their other pastoral duties¹⁹ or, alternatively, they may reveal the professional hand of enslaved scribes with high levels of skill. In the latter case, it is impossible to know if the enslaved scribe produced and sold amulets on the side, moonlighting if you will, or if they did so as part of their duties to their owner.²⁰ In that case, we might imagine an industrial workshop, producing amulets as part of the owner's business, which would relocate amulet production from the margins of social practice—as frequently imagined by scholars—to the economic mainstream.²¹ Some minicodices mix the categories of codex and amulet: these artifacts take the shape of a

17. Kruger, "Miniature Codices in Early Christianity," 316–17.

18. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets*, 182.

19. AnneMarie Luijendijk, "A Gosepl Amulet for Joannia (P.Oxy. VIII 1151)," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 426–29; David Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician'," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 127.

20. Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*.

21. Luijendijk, "Gospel Amulet," 425–30, contrasts this possibility with the stereotype of drunken old women producing amulets that appears in rhetorical attacks of church fathers, such as Chrysostom, and get reproduced in modern scholarship.

minicodex but are filled with content of an amulet such as the Lord's prayer, a story of healing from one of the gospels, magical symbols, or voces magicae. These codices also frequently bear the sloppier hand of an amateur.

Finally, ample evidence exists for the talismanic use of gospels and sacred writings. Chrysostom describes women wearing mini gospels for protection (see discussion below). Augustine advocates using the gospel for healing instead of an amulet: he advises someone suffering from a headache to place the gospel by her head instead of hurrying to get an amulet. Next, he praises the sick man who puts his hope in the gospel over the weak one who hurries to an amulet (*In Evang. Iohan.* 7.12.1).²² Thus, it is entirely possible that minicodices were worn or carried both for their edifying content and for their talismanic properties. Before jumping to conclude that all minicodices functioned talismanically, however, ancient authors, such as Martial and Libanius, describe taking tiny books with them on journeys for private reading.²³ Content therefore should determine a minicodex's protective function. Kruger also considers the devotional aspect of minicodices: "these books were often carried or displayed on the body as a visual expression of one's Christian identity, or as a visual reminder of Christ's presence and power." Particular Christian codices "actually invoked the spiritual presence of God."²⁴ Kruger explores the identification value of wearing a minicodex; he cites the story of a deacon who was martyred on account of wearing the gospels around his neck, identifying him as Christian. If this

22. Augustine's dichotomy between forbidden pagan amulets and legitimate Christian gospels prefigures the magic/religion dichotomy that prevailed in earlier scholarship critiqued by Remus and others. Interestingly, Augustine uses the word "hurry" to describe getting an amulet. Does that suggest even he regards their efficacy to be more expedient than use of the gospel to heal?

23. Kruger, "Miniature Codices in Early Christianity," 324.

24. Caroline Humfress in *Early Christian Book* 152

is the case, then perhaps the Didache from which P. Oxy. 1782 derives could have been worn to signal one's identification with Christianity as one was preparing to undergo baptism in fourth-century Oxyrhynchus.

Returning to our fragment, how does P. Oxy. 1782 stack up in this scholarly classification scheme? First, it displays continuous text on both sides of the folio, corresponding to a minicodex. The text is continuous, indicating that it derived from a larger work that included at least the Two Ways section of the Didache, if not more. The writing is clear and careful, suggesting training and experience, but is not elegant, so we might conjecture that the scribe developed his or her skill primarily in clerical settings. The scribe uses a striking series of lines and hash marks in red ink to indicate chapter division rather than a coronis, which was a standard scribal mark to indicate textual divisions from at least the first century BC.²⁵ Does this feature indicate a desire to draw attention to the chapter ending, perhaps for ritual purposes, or does it indicate a lack of familiarity with this scribal practice because it was not used in a clerical context? In either case, I conjecture that P. Oxy. 1782 was produced by a skilled scribe of humble means, who used scraps of vellum to create a tiny codex for personal or shared use. The small size of the codex demanded that certain orthographic conventions be displaced in order to save space. The tiny product of this labor could be worn or carried, fostering an intimate connection with the artifact that played a central role in the baptismal rite, leading to salvation.

The Talismanic Power of P. Oxy. 1782 and the Didache

P. Oxy. 1782 confounds an *easy* answer to the question: was it a minicodex or an amulet. It invites us to reconsider the distinctions between amulet and devotional text as well as between

25. Gwendolen M. Stephen, "The Coronis," *Scriptorium* 13, no. 1 (1959): 3.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3406/scrip.1959.2996>.

Holy Writ and noncanonical scriptures. Scholars have long argued that the Didache combines different texts and genres into a unified “church order” (*Kirchenverfassung*): the first section, comprising an independent Two Ways tractate, immediately precedes instructions for baptism, of which reciting the Two Ways was part (Did 7.1b). Thus the Two Ways served not only for catechesis but functioned performatively as it was read out part and parcel of the baptismal rite.²⁶ In this scenario, the catechumen might carry the mincodex (which was small enough to fit into the palm of one’s hand) to instruct and remind her of the transformation she was preparing to undertake. Then she (or the baptizer²⁷) would recite from it as part of the rite that conveyed her from the state of sinner to saved, and incorporated her into the eschatological community of holy ones.²⁸ The codex thus played an integral role in this ritual, enabling the incorporation of a

26. Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2000), 172–73.

27. Jason N. Yuh, “Tracing One Aspect of the Process(es) of Communal Identity Construction of the Didache Through Baptism and Ritual,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2022): 495, argues that baptism in the Didache (as well as in Matthew, 1 Corinthians, Acts and elsewhere), all share the distinctive feature of being transitive—that is to say, the rite focuses on the actions of the baptizer not the person being baptized—we would imagine that our codex was carried as part of the ritual accoutrements by a teacher, prophet or apostle, who used it to baptize others.

28. Nathan Mitchell, “Baptism in the *Didache*,” in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 226, 248, correctly notes that the *Didache* does not include Pauline language about baptism joining one in the death and burial of Christ or leading to membership in “the one body.” Yet, it does tie baptism to eschatological purification, which united “the believer to the eschatological reality

proselyte into the community of holy ones, signaled by her ability to share the eucharistic meal.²⁹ Shawn Wilhite draws attention to the many salvation metaphors that pepper the Didache and contribute to its overarching soteriological message, which he ties directly to its role in baptism. Baptism, he surmises, is the “physical process” that renders a community member holy and enables them to consume the thanksgiving meal.³⁰ This ritual function of the Two Ways tractate was thus talismanic in that it effected the soteriological transformation of a catechumen from sinner to saved, much as a protective amulet functioned to preserve one from harm: they drew on similar ritual logic.³¹

which was manifested by and experienced in Jesus’ words and works (and confirmed by Jesus’ ‘resurrection’).” For the purposes of this discussion of P. Oxy. 1782, we cannot rule out the mingling of Pauline ideas about baptism with those of the Jerusalem church in the minds of believers in fourth-century Oxyrhynchus. In any case baptism was understood to purify one from (gentile) sin and therefore confer salvation; it confirmed one’s choice of the Path of Life over the Path of Death and enabled one to consume the holy food of the Thanksgiving meal.

29. “In the Didache, the remission of sins is not explicitly linked with baptism. But we have encountered the view that after baptism the believer is holy (not a ‘dog’; 9.5), and also the circumstance that the way of death, which was left behind at baptism, was lined with sins.” Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church*, 176.

30. Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 70–72.

31. Ramsay MacMullen, “Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity,” in *Conversion, Catechumenate and Baptism in the Early Church*, vol. 11, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Garland, 1993), 354, describes the resulting change of identity, signaled by wearing Christ’s name, “by baptism believers are brought under the authority or control of

Can we imagine the power latent in these pages for such a person? The minicodex would not only have guided her on this journey, instructing her in the moral requirements of it, but ensured her protection from the horrible fate of those on the path of death. In this capacity, the Two Ways teaching was apotropaic. The version of the Two Ways in Barnabas is even more stark in attributing cosmic powers of Light and Dark, God and Satan to the two paths.³² Even without this hypostasizing mythic language, the person who held, or possibly wore, this minicodex and studied these words saw in them the power to save one from cosmic powers of suffering, evil, and death.

While the Two Ways tractate does not propose the automatic efficacy of an amulet, since the catechumen needs to abide by the moral exhortations it proffers to achieve the desired result,³³ it nonetheless includes prophylactic declarations that resemble performative utterances

God. . . The formula [“in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”] expressed God’s ownership. One now wore Christ’s name.” Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978) examines the talismanic power of Jesus’s name, reconfiguring Christian “miracles” as equivalent to magic. See also de Bruyn, *Making Amulets*.

32. John S. Kloppenborg, “The Transformation of Moral Exhortation in *Didache* 1–5,” in *The Didache in Context: Essays On Its Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 93–97, argues that, in contrast to Barnabas, the *Didache* “has eliminated both angels and eschatology.” He regards the *Didache*’s moral exhortations to be grounded in Torah.

33. Fulfillment of the path of Life is necessary for entering the community. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 78. This distinction between amulets and sacred scripture was already promoted by ancient authors (see discussion below).

on amulets and might have functioned talismanically.³⁴ The first of these is attested only in our manuscript, P. Oxy. 1782 (Fol. 1r): “what is necessary for you to do *in order for the Spirit to save you*, . . .” (ακου / ε τι σε δει ποι / ουντα σωσαι / σου το πνα . . .).³⁵ This declaration affirms the soteriological power of following these exhortations and adds prophylactic emphasis to the moral teachings of the Two Ways.³⁶ Significantly, this emphasis is added to the so-called *sectio evangelica*, a set of teachings that appear in the synoptic gospels but not in other Two Ways tractates, and are ascribed to Jesus.³⁷ Our Didache fragment thus links divine protection to

34. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962) introduced the concept of a performative utterance, which effects a change in and through its declaration of that fact. A priest or judge’s statement “I pronounce you man and wife” is a prime example of a performative utterance. Note that context and authority of the speaker delimit the power of such words to be efficacious. Borrowed from philosophy, the concept was quickly embraced by anthropologists studying religion and magic. See, for example, S. J. Tambiah, “The Magical Power of Words,” *Man* 3 (1986): 171–208.

35. This statement attributes the power “to save” specifically to the Spirit, using the *nomina sacra*: πνα, in one of the few trinitarian references in the Didache. See discussion of trinitarian ideas in Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 62–66.

36. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 22, regards the reading in P. Oxy 1782 to be an older version of the Didache here. He rejects the theory that the so-called *sectio evangelica* is a “later gloss.”

37. The exhortation to love not only your neighbor but your enemy as well, is regarded as a “Christianizing” insertion into a Two Ways teaching that derived originally from Jewish sapiential circles. See discussion below.

the ethical injunction to love one's enemy. In so doing, it imbues both the moral exhortation and the materiality of the text itself with divine presence, recalling invocations of Jesus's healing and protective powers on Christian amulets.

The second declarative statement, "Be delivered (or ransomed), children, from all of this (or all of these men)³⁸" (ῥυθθείητε, τέκνα, ἀπὸ τούτων ἀπάντων, 5.2c), comes at the end of the Two Ways tractate as a summation and final admonition. It functions more explicitly as a performative utterance, expressing "at the same time a warning and a wish"³⁹ whose efficacy derives from delivery of these words.⁴⁰ Significantly, this summarizing phrase (*Schlussmahnung*)⁴¹ does not appear in the Two Ways section of Barnabas, which might suggest

38. Ἀπὸ τούτων ἀπάντων can refer either to evildoers (masculine) or to vices (neuter). Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 119. See also Boudewijn Dehandschutter, "The Text of the *Didache*: Some Comments on the Edition of Klaus Wengst," in *The Didache in Context: Essays Onits Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 37–46

39. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 119.

40. Use of the aorist optative here signals the power of a wish, used often in benedictions, to effect a desired result through divine intervention; it expresses the "fixed resolve" of the speaker. Smyth Grammar 1824. Potential Optative. Cited from Perseus Project:
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0007%3Apart%3D4%3Achapter%3D44%3Asection%3D108%3Asubsection%3D118>.

41. Kurt Niederwimmer, "Der Didachist und Seine Quellen," in *The Didache in Context: Essays Onits Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 28, describes this declaration as a *Schlussmahnung* to the Two Ways tractate.

that it was added to the ritualized Two Ways tractate of the Didache where its annunciation would effectuate the protective power of baptism and adhering to the path of life. Deliverance from vices and/or from evil men were equivalent since both kinds of evil lead to suffering and/or death.⁴²

The time before baptism was a liminal and precarious period during which the catechumen was still subject to the powers and principalities, to use the language of Ephesians (6.12), and not yet protected by baptism. Baptism conferred a share in the immortality of Jesus and salvation from the way of death. While still alive, baptized believers participated in the divine presence through the mystery of the eucharist, which the Didache expressly prohibits from sharing with the unbaptized, whom it identifies as “dogs” (Did. 9.5).⁴³ I imagine the little book from which P. Oxy. 1782 derives to have held intense protective power as an artifact that would guide and shelter the user through this transition.

A number of scholars have drawn attention to the stipulation that the eucharist not be shared with the unbaptized (Did. 9.5); baptism enables one to partake of what is holy (ἅγιον). I

42. Mitchell, “Baptism in the *Didache*,” 226, 248, highlights the absence of references to Jesus’s sacrificial death and resurrection in the Didache’s baptismal and eucharistic liturgy. The verb ῥυσθεῖντε could allude to ideas that Jesus ransoms his believers through voluntary death. ῥυσθεῖντε appears four times in a TLG search: twice in Ignatius (Ep. 3.9.5.6 and Ep. 6.3.2.5), who is obsessed with the soteriological value of Jesus’s sacrificial death and physical resurrection as necessary conditions for his own martyrdom as a performance of Christian identity. It also appears in John Chrysostom, Psal. 118 (Hom. 1-3), and in the Constitutiones Apostolorum 7.18.7 where it shares the exact wording of the Didache.

43. Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church*, 176; Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 72.

want to draw attention to the talismanic quality of the eucharistic blessing, which resembles the language of magic spells in its use of a simile: “As this fragment of bread was scattered upon the mountains and was gathered to become one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom” (Did. 9.4). This “spell” invokes a state of eschatological(?) unity for the church and ensures salvation (however it is conceived) for those who are baptized and can participate in the kingdom of God through this “magic” ritual.

At the time P. Oxy. 1782 was being written (in the fourth century), the Didache was highly regarded, widely read, and bore near canonical status. Its popularity is well attested by ancient witnesses, who held it in high esteem. Clement, for example, appears to cite from the Didache (*Strom.* 1.20, 100.4) and refers to his source with the phrase, ὑπὸ τῆς γραφῆς which suggests that it functioned as sacred scripture in his estimation.⁴⁴ Eusebius, on the other hand, includes the Didache in a list of spurious writings, including Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Apocalypse of John (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25); his list demonstrates the fluid and highly contested boundaries of sacred scripture at this time.⁴⁵

In antiquity, sacred writings were regarded as imbued with divine presence and power. The “materiality of the text” itself was endowed with numinous power as Claudia Rapp and

44. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 10–11, notes that Clement includes the sin of παιδοφθορήσεις three times (*Protr.* 10.108.5; *Paid.* 2.10, 89.1; *Strom.* 3.4, 36.5), which also appears in the Didache (2.2) and in Barnabas (10.6) but not in the decalogue.

45. Notwithstanding, the Didache’s status as νόθος, Eusebius regards the books in this category to be edifying reading for the community. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 13–14.

others have shown.⁴⁶ Epiphanius of Salamis, for example, illuminates our study of the *Didache* particularly well when he states: “the mere sight of these [Christian] books renders us less inclined to sin, and incites us to believe more firmly in righteousness.”⁴⁷ Thus, physical contact with, including the mere sight of, a Christian book could inspire one to moral living. This power exuded not merely from words on the page, but from a sense that the spirit of Christ—as the incarnate Logos—dwelt in the printed words and radiated a spiritual power that touched the soul of one who had contact with it.⁴⁸ John Chrysostom affirms that the presence of a gospel in a house would keep the devil out⁴⁹ and Augustine advocates using gospels to heal (*In Evang. Iohan.* 7.12.1). The numinous power of the gospels was so potent that it could be invoked by merely a reference to them—either a title (*incipit*)⁵⁰ or an abbreviated version of a gospel story

46. Claudia Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes,” in *The Early Christian Book*, William E. Klingshirn and Safran Linda (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 196.

47. *Apophthegmata*, Epiphanius 8 (PG 65:165A). Quoted from Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes,” 197.

48. Bible codices were believed to “embody the actual presence of the incarnate Christ as Word of God. Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes,” 199.

49. *Hom.* 32 (31) in *Joh.* (PG 59: 187). Rapp, “Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes,” 199.

50. Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

(*historiola*).⁵¹ It is no surprise, therefore, to find quotations from and allusions to the gospels frequently in amulets.⁵² What is more, we have references to miniature gospels that were worn as talismans: John Chrysostom describes women who wear minigospels, like phylacteries, around their necks (*Hom. Matt. 72*). In another homily, he draws attention to “women and little children [who] suspend gospels from their necks as powerful amulets, and carry them about in all places wherever they go” (*Stat. 19.14*).⁵³

Was this power attributed to the Didache as well? Notwithstanding Eusebius’s classification of the Didache as spurious, his categorization demonstrates that many people regarded it to be legitimate; in their eyes it likely carried authority by virtue of being the ostensible words and teachings of the twelve apostles. If so, it also likely carried numinous power similar to that of the gospels and could have functioned protectively as the gospels did.

51. David Frankfurter, “Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Meyer Marvin and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 457–76.

52. Luijendijk, “Gospel Amulet,” 423–25.

53. Luijendijk, “Gospel Amulet,” 418–19. Luijendijk hypothesizes that these mini gospels only included short *historiola* or incipits in a *pars pro toto* manner since she finds it hard to imagine “women and children walking around with miniature codices of entire gospels tied around their necks” (424). Alluding to the healing episodes of gospel stories in amulets, she argues, would have produced “a small but very powerful text” (425). My attempt to reconstruct the minicodex of P.Oxy. 1782 (following Luijendijk’s directions) reveals a rather small packet that could very easily have been worn or, at the very least, carried in a pouch for protective as well as instructional and devotional purposes. Of course, if the codex included other texts in addition to the Didache it might have become more unwieldy.

Additionally, the Didache includes the Lord's Prayer: this prayer alone conveyed powerful apotropaic power.

Theodore de Bruyn describes the talismanic power of the Lord's prayer in amulets where the prayer seems to be quoted from memory.⁵⁴ He states that the Lord's prayer "had an inherent authority as the prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples."⁵⁵ Furthermore, the line, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, Matt. 6.13) functions as a performative utterance, which achieves its effect in and through declaring its intentions. The phrasing of this protective utterance closely resembles that of the Didache 5.2, which I discussed above: "be delivered, children, from all of this (evil men and vices)." In both cases, the declaration of deliverance/being ransomed (ῥυθθεῖτε, ῥῦσαι) achieves its power through annunciation. Furthermore the division between temptation and deliverance expressed in the Lord's Prayer resembles the ontological division of the entire Two Ways tractate, supporting my hypothesis that the Two Ways section in and of itself could have served a talismanic function in preparation for baptism. The complete Didache was doubly talismanic since it included the Lord's Prayer as well.

To answer our initial question, was P. Oxy. 1782 an amulet or a minicodex, I propose that our little fragment belonged to a tiny codex—smaller than your hand—that was charged with the sacred power of scripture and contained a statement of the Lord's ability to deliver one from evil, which functioned apotropiacally as a performative utterance. In this capacity, it may have been worn, or carried by someone who cherished it as a sacred and protective object. As part of a catechismal instruction manual, P. Oxy. 1782 provided guidance that prepared the reader to join the community in Christ through baptism—ensuring deliverance from evil and death through the

54. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets*, 182.

55. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets*, 155.

eschatological gathering of the church into the kingdom of god. P. Oxy. 1782 thus confounds the boundaries between talisman, devotional object, instructive guidelines, and canonical scripture, highlighting the contingency of these categories.

In the next section, I will explore questions the Didache raises about Christian origins and identity in the late first and early second centuries, situating our minicodex in the crosshairs of debates over dating the origins of “Christian” as a term of self-identification.

Didache and the Origins of Christian Identity

When Bryennios first published the Didache in 1883 “astonished” scholars quickly identified it as the early church order known from ancient sources.⁵⁶ The Didache offered a unique glimpse into the formative period of Christianity by providing early, and previously unknown, evidence for rites of baptism and the Eucharist that showed no knowledge of Pauline tradition, as well as guidance about peripatetic prophets and apostles before the hierarchical structure of church offices was established.⁵⁷ Harnack published his influential study of the

56. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), xii, describes the astonishment of scholars that this long lost book was discovered; some, however, initially doubted its authenticity.

57. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 3–5; J. Armitage Robinson, “The Problem of the Didache,” *Journal of Theological Studies* os-XIII, no. 51 (1912): 343–44. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XIII.51.339>, argues for the Didachists’ knowledge and imitation of 1 Corinthians.

earliest church order only one year later in 1884.⁵⁸ Although there were some early detractors, including accusations that it was a forgery, the Didache attracted significant attention for its contribution to our understanding of Christian origins.⁵⁹ Over the 150 years since its discovery, different dates for the Didache have been proposed and different degrees of Jewish identity have been explored. In each case, dating of the Didache and its relationship to Judaism are inextricably intertwined. Aaron Milavec characterizes the field as “caught up in a confusing diversity of scholarly opinions. There is no single origination hypothesis, no single methodology, and no single research program to guide our way.” He opines that the field of Didache scholarship is in “disarray.”⁶⁰

While Milavec’s diagnosis may be overly bleak, a student of the Didache quickly encounters a cornucopia of opinions and approaches that must be sifted and evaluated. While there have been some historical trends in scholarship, shifting the date from early to late and back again, there has always been disagreement. Thus, I will propose a rudimentary system of organization into two main categories: 1) the first group dates Didache to the first century and argues that it reflects a primitive form of the Jesus movement, one that predates the gospels (or is

58. Adolf von Harnack, *Lehre der Zwölf Apostel Nebst Untersuchungen Zur Alttesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und Des Kirchenrechts*, Texte und Untersuchungen 2.1, 2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1884).

59. Milavec, *The Didache*, xii.

60. Aaron Milavec, “The Distress Signals of Didache Research: Quest for a Viable Future,” in *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford (Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 59.

contemporary with them) and is ignorant of Pauline theology and praxis.⁶¹ This theory was superseded by others that posit a pre-Didache phase of tradition, originating in a Jewish milieu, which was adopted and redacted by the author of our document, the so-called “Didachist.”⁶² According to this group, the Two Ways teaching derives from a common Jewish wisdom tradition, evident in the Manual of Discipline (1QS 3.18-4.26) discovered at Qumran, and in the

61. Accepting the attribution of the Didache to the twelve apostles, Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didachè: Instructions des apôtres*, Études bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1958), 104–20, argued for three layers of composition, stemming from one author in apostolic times, to which was interpolated certain passages, including the *sectio evangelica*, Did. 1.3b-2.1. He was not the first to do so. Some redactional theories predate the discovery of the Qumran scrolls See Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 42 n5. Following Audet, Mitchell, “Baptism in the *Didache*,” 228, argues for 3 redactional stages or layers: the first one uses a Jewish TwoWays catechesis that combines the decalogue with wisdom traditions without any distinctive Christian elements. This material overlaps with Matthew’s gospel but does not show knowledge of the written version. The second layer, which included the *sectio evangelica* (1.3b-2.1) and the addition of liturgical (ch. 7-10) and regulatory material (ch. 11-15), reflects an author who was familiar with a written version of the gospel of Matt and sought to “Christianize” the Jewish collection of sayings.

62. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 139--140, for example exclaims that the Didache presents “an archaic liturgical formulary without peer in the early period of Christian literature.” It records the “oldest formula for the Christian eucharistic liturgy.” He goes on to discuss the Jewish prayers that provide a model for the meal prayer in the Didache.

epistle of Barnabas.⁶³ To that has been added the liturgy for an early version of the eucharistic meal that does not evidence any of the expected emphasis on Jesus's soteriological death. Rather blessing over the wine of David has messianic associations and gathering the scattered bread of the church omits any reference to Christ's sacrificial flesh. This group perceives proximity to Judaism in the language and theological orientation of the *Didache* vis-à-vis the gospels, Pauline corpus, the epistle of Barnabas, and writings of early church fathers such as Ignatius and Justin.⁶⁴

63. Discovery of IQS 3.18-4.26 demonstrated that the *Didache* no longer needed to postdate Barnabas. Kloppenborg, "Transformation of Moral Exhortation" examines similarities between the *Didache*, Barnabas, *Doctrina Apostolorum*, the Apostolic Constitutions, Manual of Discipline and the Canons of the Holy Apostles to map their relationships and dependencies. Compared to Barnabas, Kloppenborg identifies a demythologizing of the moral exhortation in the *Didache* that is grounded in the Decalogue and Holiness code. He dismisses the Christianization of the *Didache* as "slight" in light of its "Torahizing" of the Two Ways.

64. Mitchell, "Baptism in the *Didache*", for example, argues that the *Didache* promotes a "conservative" Pharisaic style of Christian Judaism that emphasizes purity, separation from gentiles, and observance of Torah according to what he labels "Christian *halachot*." He identifies a desire to proscribe gentiles unless they adopt complete observance of the Torah, as advocated in the Two Ways tractate. In other words, the *Didache* suggests that one can attain salvation only by becoming a fully observant Jew. He also dates the earliest layer of the *Didache* (1-5) to the period prior to 80 CE, possibly even as early as 50-70CE. The second layer, which includes the liturgical and organizational rules (7-15) probably date to the same time period in which the gospel of Matthew was written down. The present form dates from the mid-second century (following Robert Kraft's argument).

The second group perceives reliance on the synoptic gospels and Barnabas, thus requiring a later date—somewhere between 120-175, depending on the argument.⁶⁵ This group also perceives more distance from Judaism and more differentiation as a distinct community with a separate identity expressed through moral exhortations, leniency with regard to ritual law, and lack of nationalistic eschatology.⁶⁶ A segment of this group hypothesizes that the Didache

65. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 18–22; Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 30–41, examines the literary relationship between Didache and Barnabas, and then discusses the hypothesis of an independent Two Ways tractate.

66. Jonathan Reed, “The Hebrew Epic and the Didache,” in *The Didache in Context: Essays Onits Text, History and Transmission*, ed. Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 214–25, for example situates the Didache in continuity with Mosaic law, however, he sees a shift toward re-identifying Israel with the church: references to Hebrew scriptures that focus upon the land, or Jerusalem as the holy city, or the temple as a place of worship are absent in the Didache, also absent are predictions of the temple’s destruction. Prophets replace the priesthood, the *ekklesia* replaces the temple, the thanksgiving meal replaces the temple sacrifice. Significantly, this is done without anti-Jewish supersessionism: Malachi is cited to “urge a clean sacrifice: rather than to denounce Judaism. In contrast to Kloppenborg, this leads Reed to date the Didache to well after first Judeo-Roman war and likely the middle of the second century. He sees the Didache’s “calm rhetoric,” compared to other early Christian texts, as evidence that it represents a community as “stable and strong, confident in its abilities to discern and remove those who, though they seem to be a minority, should come along with a different teaching.” Stephen Finlan, “Identity in the Didache Community,” in *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 21–22 argues that is is “incomplete, if not actually misleading, to say that gentiles are encouraged to take on ‘the full culture and identity of Israel.’ The Jewish

deliberately presents itself as apostolic, but is in fact deliberately archaizing, and dates to the second half of the second century.⁶⁷ I will return to their arguments in more detail later in the paper.

Much of the debate about “Christian” identity and dating of the Didache revolves around the so-called *sectio evangelica*, a section of text, interpolated into the Two Ways teaching that appears in the Didache, but not in versions of the Two Ways teaching that occur in Barnabas and the *Doctrina Apostolorum*. Since the wording of the *sectio evangelica* is close to that of the synoptics, scholars have argued that it was added to the Didache at some point to bring the Didache’s moral exhortations into alignment with the canonical gospels. When this happened and by whom is another area of disagreement. It could have been added when the Didache was first compiled by the so-called Didachist,⁶⁸ or may have already been part of the Two Ways

elements are transformed and universalized; therefore they are not ‘fully’ (nationally) within the Israel orbit. Only in a symbolic sense can believers be said to be taking on an ‘Israel’ identity.”

67. Robinson, “The Problem of the Didache”, for example, argues that the Didachist knew and imitated 1 Corinthians. He makes some good points but assumes an early date for church offices and sacraments as well as a universal *kerygma* that seems anachronistic now. Sherman E. Johnson, “A Subsidiary Motive for the Writing of the Didache,” in *Munera Studiosa: Studies Presented to W.H.P. Hatch on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Massey H. Shepherd and Sherman E. Johnson (Cambridge, Mass: Episcopal Theological School, 1946), 107–22, dates the Didache to 150-175 and argues that it deliberately gives illusion of antiquity because the author wanted to extend and clarify material the gospels but needed apostolic authority to do so.

68. This is the position of Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, 22, 52–53.

teaching that was used for catechesis in that community. Alternatively, it may have been added later to a published text sometime before the fourth century, when our fragment witnesses it.⁶⁹

Against the trend to regard the Didache as a compilation of separate sources, Aaron Milavec argues for the Didache's unity and for an early dating in the mid-first century. He argues that the Didache was transmitted orally, which may explain the "textual instability" noted by other scholars. According to Milavec, it was a living text, whose content varied slightly according to the performative context and local traditions but whose origins derive in the primitive church and preserve its ethics and ethos.⁷⁰ Previous studies, he opines, have overlooked "the possibility that the Didache was created in a 'culture of high residual orality' wherein 'oral sources' (attached to respected persons) were routinely given greater weight and were immeasurably more serviceable than "written sources."⁷¹

My interest in the Didache arises from its use of the term "Christian" as a self-identifier in 12.4, where it states that a visiting believer should work to eat (if staying more than two or three days), because "surely no idle/lazy *Christian* should live among you" (πῶς μὴ ἀργὸς μεθ' ὑμῶν ζήσεται Χριστιανός). The use of the word "Christian" here is striking for either a first or mid-second century date. As many scholars have recently noted, the term Christian does not appear before the second century, and when it does, its first appearances occur in situations of

69. Layton, "Sources," 380, presents these possibilities, although he rejects the second one because of the "primitive character" of chapter 6-15. He would date early parts of the Didache (chps 6-15) to 50-100CE with the *sectio evangelica* added sometime after 150CE to "Christianize" it.

70. Milavec, "When, Why, and for Whom," 63; Milavec, *The Didache*, xii; and Milavec, "Distress Signals," 61–64.

71. Milavec, "Distress Signals," 61–62.

persecution or prosecution.⁷² David Horrell traces the origin of the word “Christian” to a Roman judicial setting, similar to proceedings the younger Pliny describes in his correspondence with Trajan wherein he requests guidance on dealing with accusations against “Christians,” whom he identifies as harmless (but stubborn) adherents to a new superstition. Horrell concentrates on the connection between suffering “as Christian” in 1 Peter 4: 16 and the origin of Christian as a self-identifying label; the author of 1 Peter advises recipients of his letter to act nobly so that they die “as Christians” (ὡς Χριστιανός) not as ordinary criminals.⁷³ His admonition seeks to revalorize the word Christian much as wiccans do with the word “witch.” Ignatius also reinterprets the meaning of the word Christian when he boldly exclaims that he will only attain the state of being Christian in and through a violent death in the arena (Rom. 3.2).⁷⁴

Both of these attestations date to the second century. Scholars have interrogated the appearance of the term in Acts where the word “Christian” appears twice (11.26; 26:28); both instances point toward an outsider designation that was derogatory.⁷⁵ Justin’s *Dialogue with*

72. Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 251–53;

73. David G. Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity,” *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 362–3.

74. Kimberly B. Stratton, “Turning to Heed the Call: Althusser, Interpellation and ‘Christian’ Origins” (In progress).

75. See John S. Kloppenborg, “Second Century Constructions of Christianity,” in *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, ed. William E. Arnal and Erin Vearncombe (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming) for an erudite argument for the origins of “Christian” identity in the second century.

Trypho also indicates that “Christian” was only just becoming a self-identifying label around the time he exclaims his supersessionist theology.⁷⁶ William Arnal describes the construction of Christian identity in the second century through a process of selectively curating “Christian” history.⁷⁷ More recently, Markus Vinzent has argued that writings once dated to the first century and regarded as evidence of Christian history, are actually products of the second century in response to Marcion’s creation of the first “new testament.”⁷⁸ Rejecting the theory that Marcion redacted Luke’s gospel to suit his demiurgical agenda, Vinzent proposes that Marcion wrote the first gospel and was the first to claim the identity “Christian.”⁷⁹ Prior to the second century,

76. Justin reinforces the ambiguous status of Jesus people by using the labels *we* and *you* throughout the first half of the dialogue. Until chapter 63, Justin only uses the term Christian four times and in contexts suggesting conflict and persecution. Kimberly B. Stratton, “Trauma, Meaning-Making, and Christian Identity-Formation in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*,” in *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, ed. William E. Arnal and Erin Vearncombe (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming).

77. William Arnal, “The Collection and Synthesis of ‘Tradition’ and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 193–215.

78. Markus Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 212.

79. Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity*, 332: “Marcion seems to be the first author in history to give the name ‘Christianity’ to the “new” religion that stands in contrast to ‘Judaism.’”

there is no evidence that “Christianity” existed as “an abstract notion” nor that any believers in Jesus ascribed to the name Christian.⁸⁰

What do we do then with the Didache’s casual use of the term Christian, which reveals no context of persecution, does not advance it as a defiant claim to a new identity (new nation, race, or people), or suggest it as fraught or contested in any way. I propose three possibilities: 1. the Didache is from the first century and the term Christian was already in use (Josephus also refers to the tribe (φῶλον) of Christians (*AJ* 18.64); 2. the Didache is from the second century when the term Christian came into use and reflects this time period; 3. the term Christian is added to the document even later when Christian identity is well established.

Starting with the first proposition, I would reject this possibility out of hand. The use of the term Christian, especially, in such a casual way is too anachronistic for the first century. Josephus’s use of the term is equally suspicious. Vinzent persuasively makes the case that Eusebius interpolated the Testamentum Flavianum, at the very least the affirmation that Jesus was the Christ.⁸¹ If so, then he likely added the reference to the tribe of Christians, whom, Josephus states, still exist in his time (εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὠνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φῶλον, 18.64). The second possibility holds more promise since it already aligns with second-century dates for the Didache. I want to return to some of the early claims that the Didache was deliberately archaicizing since they align with Vinzent’s arguments for the second-century dating of the New Testament. In Chapter 5, Vinzent explores the emphasis on the authority of the twelve apostles in Acts, the catholic letters, and *Epistula Apostolorum* as an antidote to the authority ascribed to Paul by Marcion. If his theory is correct, could it help date the Didache to the same time period? Some scholars raised questions about the Didache’s

80. Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity*, 214.

81. Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity*, 82–85.

authenticity early on. Robinson, for example, pinpoints the document's anachronisms when he states that "it does not seem to fit in anywhere in either time or place. The community which it presupposes is out of relation to all our knowledge of Church history."⁸² While Robinson builds some of his argument on his own anachronistic assumptions about church offices, sacraments and a single, universally accepted kerygma, he makes a number of points that warrant reconsideration. Johnson also argues for a mid to late second century date for the Didache, arguing that it deliberately used the authority of the apostles to clarify points of Christian teaching, which remained obscure in the gospels. Like Vinzent, he proposes that this occurred in response to Marcion: "as the Church went through a time of testing—particularly from Marcion's day on—the Twelve were increasingly appealed to by the orthodox."⁸³

The final possibility I raise is that the word Christian crept into the document at a later stage. This theory would accord well with Milavec's hypothesis that the Didache circulated orally since a reciter could have inadvertently added the word Christian as a gloss to the idle visitor, reflecting his own self-conception and common use of the term Christian in his day. It also could have been inserted as a scribal gloss at some point in the second century when certain Jesus followers embraced this derogatory term and revalorized it. With specific reference to the *sectio evangelica*, Layton makes a similar proposal: the Christianizing passage was added to the original Didache (dated to 50-100CE) sometime after 150CE. Prior to that, "no sharp difference was yet felt between a special Christian exegesis (that of the Sermon on the Mount) of the command to love God and one's neighbor (*Did.* 1.2) and that of the Hellenistic synagogue."⁸⁴ The *sectio evangelica* was only added at a point in time that "Christianity felt itself to be clearly

82. Robinson, "The Problem of the Didache," 340.

83. Johnson, "Subsidiary Motive," 113.

84. Layton, "Sources," 382.

differentiated from the matrix of Jewish teaching within which it arose,” which Layton dates to 150CE or later.⁸⁵

In support of the second proposition, which dates the bulk of the Didache (minus the Two Ways teaching that arose from Jewish sapiential circles) to the mid-second century is the emphasis on church hierarchy. Concern for authorizing officers of the church to regulate teachings and practices appears as a strong concern in the pastoral epistles and writings of Ignatius. This feature would also point toward a second-century date when church order was more of a concern and the communities were large enough to warrant hierarchical organization and routinization of leadership. A final point in favor of a later date is the “calm rhetoric” that Reed identifies in the Didache. He perceives in the text a community that is well established and confident in its identity. It does not need to use violent rhetoric for divisive purposes, and presents ethics, rituals, and church order in a self-evident manner. It does not refer to the destruction of the Temple, which is in the distant past, but unpolemically presents the church as the temple, the eucharist as the sacrifice, and prophets as the priests who receive first-fruits from the community.⁸⁶ If Reed’s argument is correct, then I would shift the date of the Didache even later than he does; he puts it after the Bar Kokhba revolt. That time period, however, is marked by extreme vitriol and supersessionist rhetoric, which points to fraught processes of social differentiation. The heightened rhetoric of us versus them, that characterizes many writings from this period, combined with the initial claims to a new identity—Christian—which is presented in ethnographic language as a new people, nation, and race (in opposition to both Greeks and Jews), suggests to me that this is not the period of calm rhetoric and a community confident in its identity as Reed argues, but rather points to a community struggling to define itself and find an

85. Layton, “Sources,” 382.

86. Reed, “The Hebrew Epic and the Didache,” 225.

identity. Thus, the Didache could come from an even later period, when the term Christian was accepted and didn't warrant any special comment.

Returning to P. Oxy. 1782, which I have used to illuminate an aspect of early Christian identity formation. It was carried or worn by someone preparing to undergo baptism, or possibly baptize others. The clear lettering suggests that it was produced by an experienced scribe but maybe one that did clerical work instead of copy manuscripts in elegant book hand. The small size points to portability or a limited budget. Perhaps it was handed down or passed along between catechumens, maybe written up for one of them as a mnemonic aid to help learn the words for their rite of transformation. Or it was carried by a teacher or prophet, who used it to initiate others into the community of holy ones, saved from the path of death and certainty of perdition. Did they consider it to hold talismanic power? Yes, I presume they did to some extent. It contains the Lord's prayer and a declarative wish for preservation. At the time P. Oxy. 1782 was written it included the "Christianizing" passages that brought the Two Ways teaching into alignment with the gospels. Certainly by that time the person using it would have considered herself to be "Christian" or on the path to becoming Christian although we know from Pseudo-Clementines and Chrysostom, that in the fourth century, many Christians continued to blur boundaries with Judaism in ways that irked certain authorities. They also persisted in "pagan" practices, like wearing amulets, that challenged boundaries between magic and religion, Christianity and polytheism. Thus we return to the concerns and questions that motivated the work of Harold Remus and his call to describe a religion in terms that are identifiable to believers.

Bibliography

- Arnal, William. "The Collection and Synthesis of 'Tradition' and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011): 193–215.
- Audet, Jean-Paul. *La Didachè: Instructions des apôtres*. Études bibliques. Paris: Gabalda, 1958.
- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Edited by J. O. Urmson. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Blumell, Lincoln H., and Thomas A. Wayment, eds. *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- de Bruyn, Theodore. *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts*. 2nd. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Dehandschutter, Boudewijn. "The Text of the *Didache*: Some Comments on the Edition of Klaus Wengst." In *The Didache in Context: Essays On its Text, History and Transmission*, edited by Clayton N. Jefford, 37–46. Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Finlan, Stephen. "Identity in the Didache Community." In *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, edited by Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015.
- Frankfurter, David. "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells." In *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, edited by Meyer Marvin and Paul Mirecki, 457–76. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.
- . "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician'." In *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, 115–35. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Grenfell, Bernard P., and Arthur S. Hunt, eds. and trans. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XV*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1922.

- Harnack, Adolf von. *Lehre der Zwölf Apostel Nebst Untersuchungen Zur Altesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und Des Kirchenrechts*. Texte und Untersuchungen 2.1, 2. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1884.
- Hartman, Lars. *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2000.
- Horrell, David G. “The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity.” *JBL* 126, no. 2 (2007): 361–81.
- Johnson, Sherman E. “A Subsidiary Motive for the Writing of the Didache.” In *Munera Studiosa: Studies Presented to W.H.P. Hatch on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Massey H. Shepherd and Sherman E. Johnson, 107–22. Cambridge, Mass: Episcopal Theological School, 1946.
- Kloppenborg, John S. “Second Century Constructions of Christianity.” In *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, edited by William E. Arnal and Erin Vearncombe. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming.
- , “The Transformation of Moral Exhortation in *Didache* 1–5.” In *The Didache in Context: Essays On Its Text, History and Transmission*, edited by Clayton N. Jefford, 88–109. Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Kruger, Michael J. “Miniature Codices in Early Christianity.” In *Studies on the Paratextual Features of Early New Testament Manuscripts: Texts and Editions of the New Testament*, Stanley E. Porter, David I. Yoon, and Chris Stevens, 310–29. Leiden: Brill, 2023.
- Layton, Bentley. “The Sources, Date and Transmission of *Didache* 1.3b-2.1.” *Harvard Theological Review* 61, no. 3 (July 1968): 343–83.
- Lieu, Judith M. *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Luijendijk, AnneMarie. “A Gosepl Amulet for Joannia (P.Oxy. VIII 1151).” In *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, edited by Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres, 418–43. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

- MacMullen, Ramsay. "Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity." In *Conversion, Catechumenate and Baptism in the Early Church*, vol. 11, edited by Everett Ferguson. Studies in Early Christianity. New York: Garland, 1993.
- Milavec, Aaron. *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003.
- . "The Distress Signals of Didache Research: Quest for a Viable Future." In *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford, 59–84. Society of Biblical Literature, 2015.
- . "When, Why, and for Whom Was the Didache Created? Insights Into the Social and Historical Setting of the Didache Communities." In *Matthew and the Didache*, edited by Huub van de Sandt, 63–84. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Mitchell, Nathan. "Baptism in the *Didache*." In *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, edited by Clayton N. Jefford, 226–55. Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Moss, Candida. *God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2024.
- Niederwimmer, Kurt. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- . "Der Didachist und Seine Quellen." In *The Didache in Context: Essays Onits Text, History and Transmission*, edited by Clayton N. Jefford, 15–36. Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Nikander, Perttu. "The Sectio Evangelica (Didache 1.3b-2.1) and Performance." In *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, edited by Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford, 287–310. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015.
- Rapp, Claudia. "Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes." In *The Early Christian Book*, William E. Klingshirn and Safran Linda, 194-. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007.

- Reed, Jonathan. "The Hebrew Epic and the Didache." In *The Didache in Context: Essays Onits Text, History and Transmission*, edited by Clayton N. Jefford, 214–25. Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Remus, Harold. "Does Terminology Distinguish Early Christian from Pagan Miracles?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101, no. 4 (1982): 531–51.
- . "The End of 'Paganism'?" *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 33, no. 2 (2004): 191–208.
- . "'Magic,' Method, Madness." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999): 258–98.
- . "'Magic or Miracle'?: Some Second Century Instances." *The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 127–56.
- . *Pagan-Christian Conflict Over Miracle in the Second Century*. Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983.
- Robinson, J. Armitage. "The Problem of the Didache." *Journal of Theological Studies* os-XIII, no. 51 (1912): 339–56. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XIII.51.339>.
- Sanzo, Joseph E. *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Smith, Morton. *Jesus the Magician*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978.
- Stephen, Gwendolen M. "The Coronis." *Scriptorium* 13, no. 1 (1959): 3–14.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3406/scrip.1959.2996>.
- Stratton, Kimberly B. "Trauma, Meaning-Making, and Christian Identity-Formation in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*." In *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, edited by William E. Arnal and Erin Vearncombe. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming.
- . "Turning to Heed the Call: Althusser, Interpellation and 'Christian' Origins," in progress.
- Tambiah, S. J. "The Magical Power of Words." *Man* 3 (1986): 171–208.

Vinzent, Markus. *Resetting the Origns of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Wilhite, Shawn J. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Apostolic Fathers Commentary Series. Eugene,

OR: Cascade Books, 2019.

Yuh, Jason N. "Tracing One Aspect of the Process(es) of Communal Identity Construction of the

Didache Through Baptism and Ritual." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Winter

2022): 475–503.