the tenant's own country. The tenant returns home, but surprisingly does not find the Lord "in great resorts"; rather, among "thieves and murderers: there [he] him espied / Who straight, *Your suit is granted*, said, and died." The tendency to juxtapose incarnation to crucifixion that all these poems display is ubiquitous in the literary tradition, and may be explained, on the one hand, with reference to the crucifixion's centrality in the prototypical poetic meditation on the incarnation, namely Phil 2 : 6–11. On the other, God's incarnation necessarily implies God's death, and the poetic no less than the theological imagination compulsively seeks to apprehend this poignant and paradoxical event.

Of course, incarnation is more than a religious doctrine for poets; it is a powerful idea capable of polymorphous development, particularly in the context of meditations on poetry itself. Dante, e.g., uses language of incarnation to represent his own tendency toward poetic rivalry. In the *Inferno*, after calling on Ovid to be silent about the metamorphoses of Cadmus, the poet reflects on the transformative interpenetrations of snake into human into snake and so on that canto 25 depicts: "two natures face to face he never so transmuted / that both kinds were ready to exchange their substance" (25.101–2, trans. Sinclair). Here, language that might be used to explain the *communicatio idiomatum* between humanity and divinity of the incarnate Christ is applied to the perpetual human-serpentine metamorphoses of which Dante is so proud. The passage thus at once asserts Dante's superiority to his poetic predecessor and denounces that assertion as dangerously hubristic. Is not Dante treading on potentially blasphemous ground in boastfully comparing his punitive, infernal transformations of snakes into men and back again to the heavenly son of God's redemptive incarnation in the man Jesus?

The English Romantics likewise employ incarnational language and ideas to reflect on their poetry. In *Milton*, William Blake's poetic predecessor descends from heaven into the writer's "foot" (21.1–11) – with a glance at the word's prosodic connotations. Dennis M. Welch carefully explains the logic of incarnation underlying the poem, which is in part an eccentric development of an analogy Blake occasionally draws between God's incarnation in Jesus and the human imagination's manifestation in art (*Milton* 3.3–4; *The Laocoön*). Somewhat less eccentric is Percy Blythe Shelley's reflection on the Arve river's reverberations in the caves of Mont Blanc, which combines echoes of the Annunciation from Luke (esp. 1 : 35) and of Plato's allegory of the cave (*Republic* 514a–20a) to gesture at divine Power's incarnation in "Poesy" ("Mont Blanc" 41–48).

Modern literature may be less interested in incarnation than earlier writings, and it frequently ignores the theme's theological and philosophical resonances. To cite just one example, *Light in August* (1932), William Faulkner's compelling version of the story of Jesus, employs the theme of incarnation as a cipher not for poetic inspiration, let alone for a transcendent God's communication with the sublunary world, but rather for the destructive social and psychological duality imposed on the mixed-race Joe Christmas in the Jim Crow south.

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Austin Busch

See also → Christology, History of

Incense

I. Biblical Texts

Incense (MT *kĕṭōret*; LXX and NT θυμίαμα) is a compound of gums and/or spices designed to produce certain scents that are used for ritual or cosmetic purposes and produced by a master crafter (Exod 37 : 29).

Incense rituals in the HB/OT associate the burning of incense with atonement as the pleasing aroma serves to placate the deity (Exod 30; Lev 2; 10; 16) This type of offering is paralleled to prayer in Ps 141 and this link is developed further in the NT (Luke 1 : 10; Rev 5 : 8; 8 : 3–4).

Incense could be burned in portable containers (Lev 10 : 1; 16 : 12; Num 16 : 17–18), but it could also be used on a stationary altar (Exod 40 : 26). There may have been restrictions regarding who could offer or use incense in the HB/OT (Exod 30 : 7–8; Lev 10 : 1–2; Num 16 : 1–35, 40; 2 Chr 26 : 16–21) and Luke seems to restrict the use of incense to priests (Luke 1 : 8–9).

Unlike other ANE cultures, the Bible does not record an origin for incense use or contain a rationale as to its requirement. It also does not include incense use in funerary procedures or magical rites.

While incense was used in Yahwistic worship, as seen from the archaeological remains found at Arad, its use relating to non-Israelite deities is condemned in the biblical text (e.g., Jer 1 : 16; 7 : 9; 44 : 17; Ezek 6 : 13).

Incense also had cosmetic uses as mentioned in Song of Songs 3 : 6; 4 : 6, 14; 5 : 5. It was used to produce love and desire (Ruth 3 : 3; Esth 2 : 12; Ps 45 : 9; Prov 7 : 17). It has been suggested that this usage connects lovers the way that the religious usage connects humanity to the divine.

The presentation of incense in the NT is consistent with that found in the HB/OT with some ex-

pansion. That Zechariah sees the messenger of the Lord while performing the daily incense offering (Luke 1:8–13) harkens back to the incense cloud being kept between the priest and YHWH in the holy of holies (Lev 16:2, 12–13). In the Greek Bible, certain passages explicitly connect incense with burial rites (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; 16:1; Luke 7:37–38; 24:1; John 12:1–8; 19:38–42) and medical practices (Mark 6:13; Jas 5:14; Luke 10:34).

Bibliography: ▪ Feliks, Y., "The Incense in the Tabernacle," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. D.P. Wright; Winona Lake, Ind. 1995) 125–50. ▪ Nielsen, K., *Incense in Ancient Israel* (VTSup 38; Leiden 1997).

Ellen White

II. Judaism

1. Introduction. In the Pentateuch we find the bringing of incense – *qetoret* – in three main tabernacle-worship contexts: (1) as a supplement to most meal offerings (*menaḥot*, sing. *minḥah*) burnt on the outer altar (Lev 2); (2) as a daily public offering on the designated incense altar (Exod 30:1–10); and (3) as part of the service of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (cf. Milgrom 1979: 330).

2. Incense Recipe. Although the Torah lists only four ingredients in the holy incense (Exod 30:34–38), later rabbinic literature describes the temple incense as containing twelve or thirteen ingredients (*bKer* 6a). The mixture of those specific elements that are listed in the *baraita* and are mentioned by Josephus, termed *qetoret ha-sammim* (Exod 30:9, 34–38), was used exclusively for the daily offering on the inner altar, and for that of Yom Kippur (Haran: 124–28). According to rabbinic sources, the precise recipe was apparently passed down discreetly by the priestly clan, possibly on an ancient scroll (*tKip* 2:7). These sources relate that in later Second Temple days a specific family of priests – the house of Avtinas – kept the secret of the incense exclusively amongst themselves and refused to reveal it, for which they are censured in the Mishnah (*mYom* 3:11). The Tosefta (*tKip* 2:6) relates a story of an unsuccessful attempt to break their secrecy by bringing in Alexandrian experts to make the temple incense in their stead. As opposed to the unequivocally negative evaluation of these priests in the Mishnah, several traditions in the Tosefta and Talmudim explain their conduct as deriving from foresight of the temple's destruction and a concern that the secret recipes and rituals would be used for idol worship, and depict a member of the family revealing the secret to rabbis in post-temple times (*tKip* 2:6; *yYom* 3:9 (41a); *bYom* 38a), although these traditions may be retrospective apologetic attempts to cleanse the names of the dynasties involved.

3. Incense in the Temple. The daily incense ritual in the temple is described in the Mishnah (*mTam* 5–6). This offering of the incense on the inner altar was considered a desired duty that entailed blessings for the executer (*yYom* 40a) and thus only priests who had not performed it in the past participated in the daily draw (*payis*) that decided who would perform it (*mTam* 5:2). According to the mishnaic description one priest would bring three *qabbim* of incense heaped in a golden ladle (*kaf*), and after the burning ember was placed on the altar, upon receiving the order from the supervisor, would place the incense on the ember. Prior to the offering of the ember on the altar the people would exit. A source from the NT attests that when the incense was placed on the altar the people standing outside the holy chamber prayed (Luke 1:10).

4. Incense-Burning on Yom Kippur. A distinct incense-burning temple ritual took place on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), when the high priest would bring incense upon entering the holy of holies at the beginning of the process of purification of the temple (Lev 16:22–23). In the late Second Temple period a contentious debate developed between the various sects regarding the incense that was brought into the holy of holies on Yom Kippur. As recorded in rabbinic sources (*Sifra Aḥarei-mot*, parashah b, *tKip* 1:8), according to the Sadducees/Boethusians the incense was placed on the burning ember prior to the high priest's entry into the holy of holies, producing a cloud of smoke that was present during the priest's entry. The Pharisees, on the other hand, required that the priest light the incense after entering the chamber, as a simple reading of the sequence of actions in the biblical verses (Lev 16:12–13) implies. This dispute is potentially significant, since in theory it could shed light on diverse Second Temple views of the nature of the offering of incense and its purpose. However, the root of the controversy remains obscure. Rabbinic sources present the dispute as deriving from diverse readings of the verses in Lev 16 (*Sifra*, ibid.), although this appears unlikely (Tabory: 264). The Sadducean opinion appears to be simpler to explain: the cloud is produced before the entry to the holy of holies in order to shield the ark from the priest's sight (see Lev 16:23) and possibly to shield him from the divine presence that is upon it. Commentators and scholars have made several attempts to explain the Pharisaic stance (see Milgrom 1991: 1028–31; Tabory: 264–65 and footnotes).

A description of an oath that, according to the Mishnah, the high priest had to take prior to the Yom Kippur service preserves a memory of the emotional charge this dispute engendered (*mYom* 1:5). A climactic point, at least in the literary history of this debate if not the actual history, is found in a short story that appears in several rabbinic sources and tells of a Sadducee high priest who ostenta-

tiously disobeys the Pharisaic ruling by producing the "cloud of smoke" before entering the holy of holies, and dies a terrible death shortly after (*tKip* 1:8; *yYom* 1:5, 39a; *bYom* 19b; Feintuch: 79–94).

5. Incense Outside the Temple. The burning of incense for ritual purposes in Judaism was not confined to the temple. Already in the Pentateuch we find, in specific cases, an instruction to bring incense as an independent offering on a censer, outside of the tabernacle (e.g., Num 17:11; Haran: 121–24). Regarding the First Temple period there is much evidence in the Bible of incense offering to various deities (Milgrom 1979: 331). However, biblical evidence and archaeological findings led scholars to conclude that incense was also burnt as an offering to the Israelite God outside the temple, even after Josiah's centralization-of-sacrifice reform (7th cent. BCE), although this conclusion, the extent of the phenomenon, and its religious legitimacy have been much debated (Haran: 113–129; Milgrom 1979: 331–33; Szanton: 61; Elgvin/Pfann: 28–30). Indeed, the exclusion of Judea and Samaria from the dispersion of incense altars in the land of Israel during the Persian period may indicate that in these areas, in early Second Temple times incense-burning was perceived as an exclusively temple-based rite (Szanton: 73).

Evidence of incense-burning outside the temple, which was approved by religious authorities during the Second Temple period, is found in papyri from Elephantine (5th cent. BCE, Porten: 30:25–26; 31:21, 25, 27). An incense altar and other utensils have also been found in Qumran, and had possibly served the Qumran community, which may have accompanied its prayer service with incense burning (Elgvin/Pfann: 20). Indeed, this could explain references to *reaḥ niḥoaḥ* in Qumran sources (ibid. 28, and n. 34). Scholars have also deduced from several rabbinic sources that incense was burned outside of the temple, and that this phenomenon was accepted, at least *de facto*, by the rabbis (*mZev* 13:5–6; *bZev* 59a; *yMeg* 1:11; *yAZ* 4:4; *bBer* 53a; Finkelstein: 654–60; Milgrom 1979: 333–34).

6. Uses of Incense after the Destruction of the Temple. In the Roman and Byzantine periods, Jews regularly encountered and used incense. The Mishnah and Talmudim refer to Jews lighting incense before the bier in a funeral procession; after meals, women freshening their garments by lighting incense and waving or placing the container beneath the garment; and the blessings surrounding the smelling of pleasant aromas (e.g., fragrant trees, spices in a spice shop, and musk). To this end, the rabbis must consider what to do when one smells a pleasant incense aroma but does not know its source. They are particularly concerned with the incense of gentiles and their temples (*mBer* 8:6; *yBer* 8:6 (12b); *bBer* 53a). Many of the discussions focus on the lighting of incense with respect to other Sabbath laws. It is in this context that the rabbis address in which order the blessings after the Sabbath and the blessings after the last Sabbath meal occur. It is likely that the Jewish use of spices in the Havdalah (end of Sabbath) rituals came about as the result of separating the spices lit after the meal from the close of the Sabbath itself. While the rabbinic legal corpora do not describe possible synagogue uses, it is possible that those who attended lit incense in order to freshen the space.

Some evidence exists for ritual incense burning in post-Second-Temple times. Some scholars maintain that incense shovels found in synagogue iconography from the first five centuries CE are not merely historic renderings of past temple worship, but rather reflect contemporary customs of accompanying prayer with incense (Elgvin/Pfann: 30; Freund: 660). Daniel al-Qumisi, the Karaite, testifies about this phenomenon as late as 9th century CE in Palestine (Milgrom 1979: 334). Indeed, the association between incense and prayer goes back to earlier times. Revelation 5:8 mentions incense brought in golden bowls in heaven, which is the prayers of the saints. Rabbinic sources as well connect the two (*TanBAḥarei-mot* 14), based on the verse "Take my prayer as an offering of incense" (Ps 141:2). It is possible that this association is influenced by the inclusion of the *baraita* that lists the ingredients of the incense (*bKer* 6a) in the daily prayerbook, already in geonic times (as in *Seder Rav ʿAmram Gaʾon*; see below).

7. Purpose of Incense. Rabbinic sources do not explicitly outline the precise nature and goal of the incense. A few ideas are found in Second Temple sources. Philo sees incense as a sacrificial offering of thanksgiving, similar to other sacrifices, but, as a more spiritual form of offering, it is more specifically about one's spiritual gifts than one's worldly matters (see Leonhardt: 186). The four ingredients listed in Exod 30:34 symbolize, in Philo's eyes, the four elements, whereas Josephus speaks of thirteen ingredients (apparently those that are listed in the rabbinic *baraita* [*bKer* 6a]), that come from fertile land, the desert, and the sea, as symbolizing that all things were given by God and are intended for Him (*J.W.* 5.218).

8. In the Liturgy. The compilers of the siddur in the Geonic period saw fit to include the passage containing the recipe for the incense from *bKer* 6a in the morning and evening liturgy (see *Seder Rav ʿAmram Gaʾon*, "Seder Maʿamadot"), to coincide with the times of the morning and afternoon sacrifices in the temple. The rabbis based this practice on the verse in Hosea (14:3), "Instead of bulls we will pay [the offering of] our lips," which they understood as sanctioning prayer as a substitute for the sacrificial cult. It is still recited, either daily, or on the Sabbath and holidays depending on the rite.

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Yonatan Feintuch

III. Christianity

In ancient Christianity incense was used for reasons of odor and hygiene (e.g., regarding burials), but, in order to distinguish Christianity from the Roman emperor cult, its use during church services was refused (Tertullian, *Apol.* 30.6; Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 49:21). It was only when the Christian Church was officially recognized in the 4th century CE and elements from the Byzantine court ceremonial were adopted that Christian liturgy (the Eastern liturgies to this day in a more comprehensive manner than the Roman liturgy) opened up to the use of incense (cf. Egeria, *Itinerarium* 24.10; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.26.8; 7.30.2; apsis mosaic in S. Vitale, Ravenna). The many incense rituals and their allegorical interpretations attested in the liturgical commentaries of the Middle Ages (symbol of God's nearness [Exod 13:21]; savor of his knowledge [2 Cor 2:14–16]) represent the result of a synergy between general religious ideas (fragrant scent accompanying the divine epiphany; clouds of smoke shrouding the holy of holies) and the biblical-symbolic sign of veneration (Matt 2:11; Rev 5:8), cleansing (Lev 16), and the ascension of prayers and offerings (Rev 8:3–5).

Hence, the celebrant acting in *persona Christi* is preceded by a thurifer (incense bearer). The primary signs of Christianity, i.e., altar, cross, and gospels, are also incensed; later even the Paschal candle. The thurification before and during the reading of the gospel indicates that the message of the gospel fills and transforms the entire room, i.e., the entire world with a fragrant scent. As described in Rev 8:3 wax and incense are burned on the altar during the dedication ritual of the altar stemming from the Gallic liturgy. They constitute a sign of the ascending prayer issued by the saints, who are present in the relics underneath the altar. The incensation during the preparation of the gifts is derived therefrom (first attested in Amalar, *Liber officialis* 3.19.26). However, the practice to incense the consecrated elements during their elevation in the Eucharistic Prayer and the habit to thurify the Blessed Sacrament, which is exposed and adored, was not established until the early modern age.

In the Liturgy of the Hours in East and West, the incense ritual is connected to the lucernal Ps 141 (140): 2 during the vespers: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." While in the Byzantine vespers the incensation still commences with this verse, in Roman liturgy the thurification was devolved upon the Canticle of Mary, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55; cf. the recitation of the Benedictus [Canticle of Zecheriah; Luke 1:68–79] at Lauds). The incense rituals, which are nowadays customary in the Latin rite, are described in the Caeremoniale Episcoporum (Ceremonial of Bishops, 1984, n. 84–98).

Furthermore, the use of incense (parallel to holy water) in the sense of a lustrative-sanctifying dimension has asserted itself with regard to ceremonial benedictions (Rituale Romanum: De Benedictionibus [1984] Praenotanda n. 26e).

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Jürgen Bärsch

Incense Altar

I. Archaeology

Incense altars are well-known from many contexts in the ANE from the Iron Age until the classical periods. Numerous examples are found in the Iron Age Levant, particularly in the Northern Kingdom and Philistia. While most agree that these small stone altars served for incense, Haran has claimed that they were for inexpensive offerings such as grain. However, the find of what appears to be incense shovels next to an altar at Tel Dan, as well as recent evidence of organic residue from burned incense in Iron Age ceramic chalices strengthens the claim that incense was in fact burned on these altars, probably within a chalice or other vessel. Most