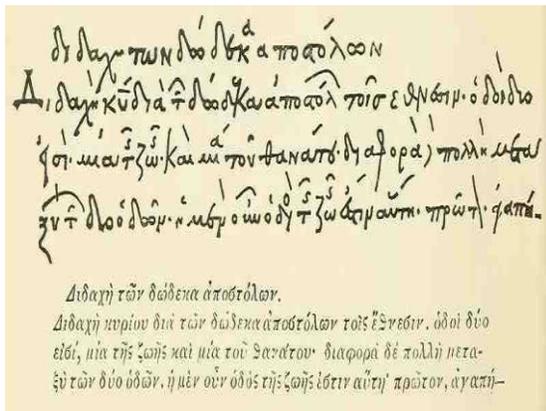


# THEOLOGY

## One Bite at a Time



## THE DIDACHE –

### “Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles”

### *A Theology for the Early Church*

Ken Emilio  
RemnantReport.com

## THE DIDACHE

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## Introduction to the Didache

The Didache <sup>1</sup> or “Teachings of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles” is a first century manual of worship and conduct. It was addressed to members of a nascent Christian/Messianic <sup>2</sup> community most likely located in the Syria-Palestine region of the Middle East.

The Didache is more than just one document, it is a compendium of writings and sayings which borrowed from and expanded upon the earliest Christian and Jewish teachings, their documents, religious practices and traditions. These include the Old and New Testaments, extra-canonical works of the early Church fathers and early Jewish writings.

The Didache is a wealth of information and instruction. It gives breathtaking insights into early Church theology and the Christian faith in general. It also fills in many of the gaps of how Christians might have conducted worship and applied their faith in living day to day.

The Didache holds sober implications for believers today. Unfortunately, access to the Didache has, for various reasons, been restricted to the Academy and seminary environments. It is virtually unknown by the Laity of the modern Church – much to its loss.

This project will study the “so-called Teachings of the Apostles” and its relevance to the first and second century Church. The project will present selected topics in the Didache which sheds much light on many of our modern day church practices and controversies. Topics include the history and culture of the Didache. It will also present some of the core teachings in the document including the “Two Ways” of conduct (i.e. “The Way” of life or death). Early Church instructions about abortion, baptism and eschatology will also be explored. Finally this project will explore how the Didache is used and cited by modern Biblical scholars today when discussing Church history and Christian doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Didache** (Koine Greek Διδαχή, *Didachē*, meaning "Teaching.")

<sup>2</sup> The term “Christian / Messianic” is used here to emphasis that members of the community were most likely comprised of both Gentile and Messianic Jews. These were in effect the first Christians who (like Paul) struggled with the transition from being Torah keeping Jews or Gentile pagans to a new faith in Jesus Christ.

## History of the Didache

Until the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., the work known as the Didache had disappeared from the Christian scene. Though proof of its existence had been established from the numerous references to it – Eusebius (c.324), Athanasius (c. 367), and Rufinus (c. 380), among others. This said, no actual copies of the Didache were known to exist until the late 1800’s.<sup>3</sup>

Then in 1873 Philotheos Bryennios, a Greek Orthodox scholar who was the Archbishop of Nicomedia,<sup>4</sup> discovered a manuscript – causing a sensation in the Christian world which has been likened to the excitement produced by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947.<sup>5</sup>

The manuscript, referred to as *The Manuscript of Jerusalem* or “H” (Hierosolymitanus), was penned in Greek and signed by one “Leon the scribe and sinner.”<sup>6</sup> Leon dated his manuscript June 11, 1054. Bryennios found the manuscript in the Jerusalem Monastery of the Most Holy Sepulcher in Constantinople. The document was later sent to the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem where it resides today.<sup>7</sup>

This precious manuscript contains much more than just the Didache. Leon had apparently discovered or made use of a set of ancient source documents from the Early church periods 300 to 400 A.D.. He also used documents from the sub-apostolic era, prior to 150 and as early as 96 A.D! Leon then set about copying what he found and produced the Jerusalem Codex (H). In addition to the Didache, Leon’s manuscript contained the following; (1) *Synopsis of the New Testament by St. Chrysostom*, (2) *First Epistle of Barnabas*, (3) *First and Second Epistle of*

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<sup>3</sup>Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-16

<sup>4</sup> Nicomedia is modern day Ismid located in Anatolia, Turkey. Bryennios published the work in 1883.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: p-24 From Audet’s (*La Didaché*), assessment of the excitement created by Bryennios’ discovery

<sup>6</sup> Ibid: p-23, FN 47. The manuscript was completed during the “Macedonian Renaissance” – a period when a great renewal of interest in art and scholarship had occurred. This would help account for Leon’s excellent work.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Cody, *The Didache: An English Translation*, Saint Meinrad Archabby, Saint Meinrad, Indiana

*Clement to the Corinthians*, (4) *Names of the books of the Hebrew Bible*, (5) *Didache*, (6) *Spurious letter of Mary Cassoboloi*, and (7) *The Twelve Pseudo-Ignatius Epistles*.<sup>8</sup>

The Jerusalem Codex discovered by Bryennios and scribed by Leon holds a distinct place in the history of the *Didache* because it is the only “complete” or near complete rendering of the *Didache* found. It offers a goldmine of information from which to study early Church teachings.

But the Bryennios’ manuscript is not the only source of information about the *Didache*. It is important to understand the *Didache* was not written by a sole author such as a book of the New Testament – it is not Holy Scripture. Rather the *Didache* is a teaching manual or catechism, that was widely distributed in the ancient world to places such as Antioch, Syria, Palestine and as far south as Alexandria, and this, over hundreds of years. As such, the content of the *Didache* has been rewritten and redacted to suit the needs and circumstances of any number of congregations in the ancient world.

Because of this, there exist many manuscripts and fragments from the Early Church era beginning with the early 1<sup>st</sup> Century up to 850 A.D. which contain various portions of the *Didache*, but not the entire text.<sup>9</sup> Many other documents and traditions have teachings and instructions that are common with or parallel to those presented in the *Didache*. These manuscripts distributed over such a wide geography and for such a long period of time, attest to the influence of the *Didache* in early Church development.

In addition to the “H” manuscript a number of other extant sources of the *Didache* are worthy of note. These include two Latin versions, one from the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century and the from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, (de *Doctrina Apostolorum*).

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid: p-17-24

<sup>9</sup> The *Didache* is listed in the *Stichometry of Nicephorus* (c. 850) as a rejected book. “It appears to have dropped out of learned discussion after that time.” P. Woolley, *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, (1975) p-124

There is also a version in Greek which is a variant of “H” called the *Apostolic Constitutions* – this in addition to two fragments from the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> But the Didache content is not limited only to these sources, as shall be demonstrated.<sup>11</sup>

While the physical history of the Didache is rich, the historic controversies surrounding this work over the centuries are richer still. There have been many areas of dispute regarding the Didache. These seem to be centered in two general areas. The first is the dating of the Didache and the second is the content, i.e., its relevance and authority with respect to the Church.<sup>12</sup>

With the discovery of the “H” manuscript, intellectual interest in the Didache was renewed in the academic world. As a result, much of the debate about dating the Didache has been reduced to a limited number of divergent opinions which center on a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century writing – this is discussed later in this paper.

Of greater importance are the numerous controversies related to the content of the Didache. From the very beginning of the Church and up to modern day, the Didache and the teachings it presents have been embroiled in the growth and government of the Christian Church, its denominations and religious practices.

Athanasius (c. 335) stated the Didache was “to be read by those who newly join us” (*Festal Letter 39*). Clement of Alexandria may have likened it to Scripture (*Miscellanes*). Yet Eusebius, according to Woolley, called the Didache “spurious” in his (*History III, 25,4*). The Didache was also listed as a rejected book in the *Stichometry of Nicephorus*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid: p-124

<sup>11</sup> The theology, and practices found in the Didache, mirror and build upon Jewish, Christian and Greek traditions such as Halakah, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament writings, and Greek philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid: Is the Didache normative to the entire Church? Sandt believes that the Didache was originally written for one Christian community and was later redacted and used by other communities until it reached its present form, (p-330, 335-336). This seems likely as the document appears to be an attempt to help clarify the teachings of the itinerate apostles found in the NT and which still seek clarification in Church denominations today.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: p-124

There is no doubt that the controversies created by the Didache in the Early Church were many. While not being directly related to the Didache as a discrete document, the subject matter contained in the Didache was widely debated. The controversies included Jewish/Christian tensions, baptism, the Eucharist, observance of the Sabbath day, eschatology etc. These issues raged well past the 8<sup>th</sup> century and into the modern era, and they are with us still.

If the history of the Didache teaches us anything, it is that the Early Church experienced many of the same ecclesiastical problems we face today. The very existence of the Didache and other Patristic writings gives rise to a critical question that needs to be addressed by Evangelicals and Fundamentalists alike: “Is there any value or need for modern Christians to consider the writings of the Church Fathers?”

“Protestants, and particularly evangelicals, have generally steered clear of Patristic study. This is understandable in light of their “Sola Scriptura” heritage, but it is I fear, to our detriment in the long run. Should we not be interested in how those Christians closest to the apostles understood the teaching of the apostles?”

William C. Varner, Professor of Bible and the Director of IBEX at Master’s College makes the point that being overly cautious because of doctrinal concerns raised by the Patristic writers of the nascent Church is not helpful;

“Should the excessive allegorizing of “Barnabas” or the strong emphasis on the authority of the “episkopos” by Ignatius scare us away from the deep spirituality of a Polycarp or from the simple advice on local church practice in the Didache? ... It is helpful to know that around A.D. 100, the day on which believers were to gather for the breaking of bread was Sunday, not the Sabbath as some would have us believe (14:1). It is helpful to know that around A.D. 100 Christians did not teach that Jesus came in A.D. 70 as some preterists teach... I do not need the Didache as an authority for what I believe, but I also want to know if what I believe is contrary to what the earliest Christians believed.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> W.C. Varner, Review of *The Didache* by Sandt and Flusser. Master’s Seminary Journal, V. 14 No.1, 2003. Dr Varner’s assessment of the value in studying the Didache and other Patristic writings should be heeded. The theology taught in America at the grass roots level has been reduced, in many churches, to an every Sunday, anemic repetition of the “Four Spiritual Laws.” Christians are faced with critical decisions each day such as abortion and false doctrines such as the rise of Preterists and “Sabbath only” cults. Sound Biblical teaching is indeed our foundation, but as Dr. Varner states, it is helpful to know what the early Church taught and practiced.

## Dating the Didache

Precise dating of the Didache, as Sandt and Flusser point out, is not a reasonable expectation. “No answer [as to its date], can pretend to be better than a reasonable guess. The many differing opinions show how meager and puzzling are the clues given by the Didache.”<sup>15</sup>

Van de Sandt and Flusser’s statement notwithstanding, there appears to be a consensus by most of the modern scholars researched for this paper. The date of authorship ranges between 70 and 180 A.D. with most of those being as early as 80 A.D. but no later than A.D. 120.

1. W.C.H. Frend – *The Rise of Christianity*: = Circa 70 A.D.<sup>16</sup>
2. Henry Chadwick – *The Early Church*: = 70 – 110 A.D.<sup>17</sup>
3. Ben Witherington – *The Gospel Code*: = 85 – 150 A.D.<sup>18</sup>
4. Huub van de Sandt = “Close of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century”<sup>19</sup>

There are of course scholars who date the Didache at the extreme ends of the spectrum.<sup>20</sup> But many European scholars, who have done the bulk of the work regarding the Didache hold, as does Sandt and Flusser to a “turn of the first century” date.<sup>21</sup> For purposes of this paper, the date of the Didache will be considered to be 80 – 110 A.D. which is in keeping with the majority of American and European scholarship. This being said; the above sampling raises many questions as to how these scholars came to their consensus. There are no extant manuscripts earlier than 1056 A.D., and only three fragments from the fourth century. What then, were the scholarly methods used in dating the Didache?

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<sup>15</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-48

<sup>16</sup> W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA, (1984). P-29

<sup>17</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, Penguin Books, NY, NY, (1967) p-47

<sup>18</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel Code*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill, (2004) p-180

<sup>19</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-52

<sup>20</sup> Ibid: p-48, Van de Sandt identifies some of the more extreme dates such as Audet, “*La Didache*” p-187-210 (A.D. 40 – 60) and J.A. Robinson, “*Barnabas, Hermas and the Didache*,” p-69-83 (third century).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: p-48, Sandt identifies a number of European scholars who favor a first century date.

## Methods Used in Dating the Didache <sup>22</sup>

### Direct Textual Witnesses

There are four principle documents housed in museums that give direct witness to the age of the Didache. (1) The Jerusalem Codex named “H” authored by Leon the Scribe in 1056 A.D. (2) Oxyhyachus Fragments named “P” dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. (3) A Coptic papyrus fragment dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. (4) A Version in the Ethiopic Church Order dated to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. It is from these direct witnesses that a date of no later than the 4<sup>th</sup> century is certain. <sup>23</sup>

### Indirect Textual Witnesses

By examining early church documents which are known to exist prior to a particular date and were obviously derived from or are paraphrases of the Didache, conclusions can be drawn as to the date of the Didache itself. One such document is the Apostolic Conventions known to exist prior to 385 A.D. These “conventions” or Apostolic teachings contain a paraphrase of the entire Didache. While there are revisions and accommodations for the Church community of the day, the content of these conventions are clearly from the Didache. <sup>24</sup>

The indirect witness of numerous documents from the first and second century Church Fathers show common themes and concerns developed in the Didache. <sup>25</sup> But for this writer greater insights can be drawn by looking at the New Testament itself.

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<sup>22</sup> This section is a summary of Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser’s work. The degree of difficulty in presenting the data and logic for a 1<sup>st</sup> Century dating of the Didache is daunting, yet these two men did a truly remarkable job.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: p-21-26. (1) The “H” manuscript is a complete rendering of the Didache. (2) The “P” fragments, of which there are two, preserve the text of Didache 1:3c-4a & 2:7b-3:2a. (3) The Coptic fragment corresponds to Did. 10:2b-12a. (4) The Ethiopic Version of Church Order preserves Did 11:3-13:7 and 8:1-2a.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p-27. An example of an accommodation to the Church community of the day includes a reduced emphasis upon the troublesome itinerant prophets and apostles, who by 385 A.D. had ceased to be a major concern of the Church. By this time, resident established clergy had long since replaced the traveling prophets.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p-13,49-50. Documents such as Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-339), Athanasius (c. 367) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.), make reference to “The Teachings of the Apostles” and/or use Didache-like themes.

## New Testament Insights in Dating the Didache

The New Testament witness and cultural milieu offers considerable correlation with and insights into the Didache – its date of authorship and geographic location of origin.

“In sum, it appears that the setting for the Didache is likely to be found in one of the congregations within a network of villages and small towns. The community for which the manual [the Didache] was composed, probably was a rural Christian congregation in some Greek speaking part of (Western) Syria or, possibly, in the borderland between Syria and Palestine at the close of the first century.”<sup>26</sup>

With the Advent of the Jewish Messiah, the Apostles made it clear that the Abrahamic Covenant was to be extended to the Gentiles. But the melding of the Israelite religion with Gentile Christians in a pagan society would not be easy. Apostolic instructions and clarifications regarding religious practices are given in the NT and the Didache alike – and these instructions reveal a common date of authorship. Examples include Sabbath, dietary regulations (Rom 14:1-6 vs. Did. 6:3,14:1) and concerns about Legalism (Acts 15:5 vs. Did 6:2, 8:1). As we contrast NT teachings and those found in the Didache it becomes clear that both documents were addressing the same or similar audiences in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

Sandt and Flusser spent considerable time pointing out the “Jewish – Christian” connection in the Didache. They did this, in part, to show that the Didache was composed in an atmosphere of considerable tension that existed between the Jewish and early Jewish/Christian communities located in Palestine and its neighboring provinces. This is the same tension so vividly described in the New Testament by the Apostles. The Didache and the NT books share a common concern that was unique to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Church and not to be repeated at any time before or after in history.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-52

<sup>27</sup> Similar tensions are now being played out in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Israel in the form of unrest and tension between Messianic and Orthodox Jews. This is evident in the United States as well.

### The Jerusalem Manuscript - *Hierosolymitanus 54 (H)*

The manuscript found by Bryennios in 1873 and which he published in 1883 is not the only source of “Didache-like” content.<sup>28</sup> It is important to understand that the Didache is not like the NT Canon, in that the use of Textual Criticism for studying variants and establishing the authenticity of copies does not apply to the Didache – this is because there are so few copies for comparison. Also later versions of the Didache have been redacted and updated over centuries of Church growth. This was done by different Christian communities to reflect the real-life situations of those communities using and applying the teachings.<sup>29</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, the Jerusalem codex (H) will be our primary document for examining the content, theology and ecclesiology of the Didache – the reasons are as follows:

(1) Codex (H) is the only “complete” manuscript of the Didache known to exist.<sup>30</sup> Other copies of the early Didache are only fragments with too little content to be useful. This makes working with (H) more consistent when comparing it to other early writings such as the NT.

(2) “Complete” versions such as the *Apostolic Constitutions* are in fact expanded paraphrases and thus less helpful in determining beliefs and practices of the nascent Church.

(3) The text of the Didache found in (H) is bracketed by other writings such as Barnabas and Clement which have been shown to be accurate transmissions of those documents. This testifies to the probable accuracy of the Didache text in (H) as well. For example, the text of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of Clement found in (H) is even more complete than found in Codex Alexandrinus .

Sandt makes the following statement; “Despite the late date of its origin, The Jerusalem codex (H), in some respects measures up to the Alexandrinus and the Siniaticus”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-17-18

<sup>29</sup> Ibid: p-28

<sup>30</sup> Ibid: p-18. Some experts believe that a few final lines of text may have been lost in (H).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: p-18

(4) The final reason for choosing the Jerusalem codex is the acceptance of this document by such a large body of experts on multiple continents and from various schools of theology who specialize in the Didache and use the Jerusalem codex (H) so extensively.<sup>32</sup>

### The Didache portion of the Jerusalem Codex (H)

The entire manuscript scribed by Leon, is approximately 120 folio pages of minuscule Greek script, of which less than five (5) folio pages make up the Didache portion. There are sixteen “chapters” in the Didache with approximately 100 “verses.” The English translation was originally completed by A. Cody called “*The Didache: An English Translation.*”<sup>33</sup> Scholars have also performed critical comparisons with direct and indirect witnesses (e.g. The Oxyrhynchus fragments etc.) which resulted in several restorations and refinements.<sup>34</sup>

The Didache is a compilation of several earlier sources and traditions. The composition of the text, according to Sandt and Flusser; “is structured into four clearly separated thematic sections: (1) The Two Ways document (i.e.Chaps. 1-6) with later additions in 1:3b-2:1 and 6:2-3, (2) a liturgical treatise (Chaps. 7-10) – (3) a treatise on church organization (Chaps 11-15 with a later expansion in 11-13) and (4) an eschatological section (Chap 16).”<sup>35</sup>

In addition to Sandt’s thematic divisions, the document can also be divided into distinct categories of teachings and insights that resemble a kind of systematic theology. These divisions include doctrines of the Church, (e.g. baptism, church government, unity of the Church,) doctrine of the Trinity, Worship, Eschatology, Doctrine of sin, The Law, and the person of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>32</sup> e.g. Sandt / Flusser / Jeffords / Cody / Rorodorf / Tuilier / Neiderwimmer.

<sup>33</sup> Cody’s translation can be found in Clayton Jefford’s *The Didache in Context*, Brill, Netherlands (1995).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid: p-6. Sandt credits the restorations of Willy Rorodorf and André Tuilier, for their work in the Greek. Sandt and Flusser also did extensive restoration work resulting in a more understandable and modern translation.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p-28

## Theology Found in the Didache

This section will present a brief survey of selected teachings found in the Didache. It will then compare these teachings to several first century sources and traditions, which may have influenced or been influenced by the Didache. The sources for comparison will include for example: (1) The Early Patristic writings – (2) The Hebrew Bible and other Jewish writings and traditions of the period – (3) The New Testament Scriptures.

The specific teachings, below were chosen because of their relevance to modern Christian denominations. Three of these topics were chosen because there remains a good deal of discussion and debate about them among Christians – i.e. asking what should and should not be normative practices for the Church today. The “Two Ways” topic was chosen because it presented an excellent opportunity to explore the Jewish and Christian traditions while comparing these to the “Two Ways” of the Greek & pagan philosophies.

An interesting discovery was made by this author when conducting an informal poll of Laymen and Bible students. It revealed a surprising lack of Biblical awareness concerning the topics chosen and what the Bible teaches concerning them. Most of those polled had many opinions concerning the topics, yet with little or no Biblical foundation being evident.<sup>36</sup>

The following are the topics to be covered in this section;

- Abortion
- Baptism
- Eschatology
- The Two Ways

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<sup>36</sup> I include myself in this category of those who have been taught only superficially so as to be able to conduct worship and learn the established norms in the Christian community.

## ABORTION

*“You shall not murder a child, whether by [procuring its] abortion or killing it once it is born.” Didache (2:2)*

A frequent question asked by modern Christians is “What does the Bible say about abortion?” We live in a time when one million babies are aborted in the United States each year. Yet all too often the pulpits are silent about this scourge. Pastors and teachers seldom develop a strong Biblical case against abortion, or worse use the Bible as a justification for permitting limited abortions.<sup>37</sup> What is needed is a clear authoritative voice about what the Early Christians thought concerning this topic - the Didache is helpful in providing one such voice.

The Didache is very clear in its denunciation of abortion and infanticide. In Chapter 2:2 the Didachist instructs the faithful – those who have chosen “The Way of Life” not to abort their children or kill them after they are born. By contrast, the people who have chosen the “Way of Death,” are described as “...child murderers, who abort what God has formed” (*Did* – 5:2).

In the first century, there was a number of methods used to end an inconvenient pregnancy or get rid of an unwanted infant; including induced, chemical and surgical abortion for the unborn, and “exposure” of newborn infants.<sup>38</sup> It is astounding that the practice of surgical and chemical abortion, (a kind of “morning after” drug), was so common that the Early Church Fathers had to address the issue in their writings, (see Patristic writings below).

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<sup>37</sup> Liberal Pastors and Theologians often cite Exodus 21:22-25 implying abortion to be a lesser offense than murdering a newly born infant. However this improper interpretation of the text has been soundly refuted by scholars like Gleason Archer; “There is no ambiguity here...there is no second-class status applied to the fetus under this rule.” In other words, if man injures a woman so as to cause the death of the fetus, his life should be forfeit. Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, (1982) p-246-249.

<sup>38</sup> The fact that surgical and chemical abortion was common in the first century came as a shock until I read the Patristic writings on the subject, (see below). “Exposure” is the practice of leaving an unwanted infant on the side of the road or in a field, to be eaten by dogs and wild animals or rescued by “good Samaritans,” or those with less than noble intent. Exposure was a common practice among pagans and unfortunately some Christians. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and others spoke strongly against this.

In my polling of Christians, most, if not all I interviewed were unaware that the nascent Church held such strong views on this subject – or even that abortion was widely practiced. I believe that this ignorance is a serious lack of stewardship on the part of the clergy and laity in the education of the modern Church.

Patristic Writings – Concerning Abortion:

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century writings of the Early Church Fathers regarding abortion is staggering! Early Church documents as early as 70 A.D., are extensive on the subject – this does not include the writings of the Bible or the Didache. Below is a brief sampling;

“You shall not kill a child by obtaining an abortion, nor, again, shall you destroy him after he is born.” – Barnabas (*c.70-130*).<sup>39</sup>

“We say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder... We also teach that it is wrong to expose an infant. For those who expose them are guilty of murder.” – Athenagoras (*c. 175*).<sup>40</sup>

“Among surgeons’ tools there is a certain instrument that is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for first of all, opening the uterus and then keeping it open. It also has a circular blade, by means of which the limbs within the womb are dissected with careful, but unflinching care... (the next comments are omitted due to graphic nature)... ...they give it, (the surgical tool), the name, “killer of the infant” – which infant, of course had once been alive.” – Tertullian (*c. 210*).<sup>41</sup>

“Indeed the Law of Moses punishes with appropriate penalties the person who causes abortion. For there already exists the beginning stages of a human being. And even at this stage, [the fetus] is already acknowledged with having the condition of life and death, since he is already susceptible to both.” *Tertullian (c. 210)*<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, (1998), p-2

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: p-2

<sup>41</sup> Ibid: p-2

<sup>42</sup> Ibid: p-3

By citing the Law of Moses, Tertullian presents the Biblical concept of life beginning at conception and stressing the value of the unborn child. Tertullian was in fact, using Scripture to make his case Thus showing the early church fathers must have acknowledged that the Bible condemns abortion. There are several OT texts to which Tertullian may have been referring. There exists, in the writings of the early church, an unbroken chain of condemnation for the practice of abortion and condemnation was for both women and the fathers.<sup>43</sup>

When combined with the Biblical texts and writings such as the Didache, which are in agreement with the Patristic writings, there exists unbroken chain of teaching which extends from the early 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church and on into our modern era – challenging our Churches today to pay heed. Some of the Biblical texts regarding abortion are cited;

Exodus 21:22-25. Here the Law of Moses is clear; Whether intentional or not the premature birth of an infant which results in its death will be punishable by death; *“and if men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage [resulting in its death] ...then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life.”* (NASB)<sup>44</sup>

Psalms 139:13-16 shows God intimately involved in the conception and development of the individual in the mother’s womb. *“For thou has possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb.... My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret...Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”* (KJV)

So too Jeremiah 1:5 indicates that God is aware of the potential of His people from conception. *“Before I knew formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you...”* (NASB). There can be little doubt the OT served as a foundation for the Patristic writings of Tertullian and the Didache with regard to abortion.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid: p-2,3. Clement - men must not kill their children, because of “licentious indulgences.”

<sup>44</sup> The Ryrie Study Bible – “If the baby died, then the law of retaliation applied.”

## BAPTISM

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*“As for Baptism, baptize this way. Having said all this beforehand, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water.” Didache (7.1)*

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only two ceremonies commanded by Jesus (Matt 28:19, Lk 22:19-20, *c.p.* I Cor 11:23-24). It is interesting that both of these ceremonies are given a good deal of treatment in the Didache (Chap 7 and 8). With respect to baptism, the Didache gives specific instructions. These instructions can be classified as (1) pre-baptism instructions (2) baptism instructions (3) instructions with respect to those not baptized.

Baptism, as presented in the Didache, was apparently accepted and understood as a regular and ongoing practice in the early Christian community. Missing from the Didache is any discussion regarding the theology and history behind the ceremony.

What is present in the Didache is the “mode(s)” of baptism viz. the spiritual state of the believer, the Trinitarian formula and the kinds of waters which were to be used. Much of the Didache baptism resembles the Jewish traditions of the *Mikveh* of purification for Passover and other observances.<sup>45</sup> Those hoping to find dogmatic support for their own denominational practices of baptismal ordinances may be disappointed as the major modes baptism practiced in Christian churches today are listed as acceptable in the Didache (i.e. immersion, sprinkling).<sup>46</sup>

It is helpful at this point to present a brief review of the classifications of the instructions found in the Didache, these will include: (1) pre-baptism instructions (2) baptism instructions (3) instructions with respect to those not baptized.

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<sup>45</sup> The Jewish baptismal practices of purification will be briefly discussed below.

<sup>46</sup> At the age of six, I was baptized in a Dutch Reformed church via sprinkling. However at the age of 28, my wife and I decided to join a Baptist church in which we were subsequently immersed as a condition of membership. It is striking that all modes of baptism in the Didache appear acceptable with preference being given to immersion in cold “running” or “living” water. There does not appear to be any kind of competitive inference made – just the practical instruction based upon availability. Given the instructions in the Didache, neither the Reform “sprinkling” nor Baptist “immersion” (in a heated and stagnant baptismal), are the most preferred. Our current church, located in a small rural community, baptizes in the Applegate River. The snow-fed, “living” water of this river, at temperatures just above freezing, certainly make one’s baptism service a memorable one!

(1) Pre-baptism Instructions;

Pre-baptismal instructions must be understood in light of the context and location of the baptismal text in the Didache. The instructions can be inferred in 7:1 – “*As for baptism, baptize in this way. Having said all this beforehand, [i.e. all that is written above in the previous chapters, concerning the ‘way that leads to life’]...*” Thus baptism was to be practiced with the understanding that the one seeking baptism was already living in accordance with the “Way of Life” as presented in Chapters 1 thru 4 – and this was to be acknowledged by the community.

Such instructions can hold implications regarding our understanding of the salvific process of the believer. Specifically the process where one makes a verbal profession of faith and is immediately baptized verses “repentance” i.e. changing direction first, and then undergoing baptism as a confirmation of that repentance. It is interesting that there is no provision for infant baptism nor a statement about baptism in and of itself imparting grace to the individual, as claimed by the Roman Church – this because the individual to be baptized is comprehending, professing and living the Christian life already – “*Having said all this beforehand.*”

The order of the text seen in this light would suggest that the first six chapters, which present the “Two Ways,” would constitute a “catechumen” or a liturgy which was memorized and then recited as an oath or vow during the baptism ceremony. The pre-baptism instructions of living the Two Ways and confession of sins, served to spiritually prepare the one to be baptized. The ceremony itself would then be performed in accordance with chapter 7:1-4. This ceremony of oath taking followed by immersion was for the new believer and for the “sinning” Christian alike as a renewal of faith, and was practiced on a regular basis.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-87-88. Sandt cites early historians such as Pliny who observed Christians meeting regularly at dawn to confess sin, chant verses, honor Christ and take vows to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, commit no breach of trust etc. Sandt believes it is reasonable to suggest that baptism was a part of this ritual. Sandt also cites Hippolytus who quotes a similar formula of confession, oath taking and water baptism. Sandt states: “The oath, being sworn in water, was part of the purification ceremony preceding the rebaptism for the remission of sins.”

## (2) Baptism Instructions:

The baptism instructions prescribed by the Didache are to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in running (i.e. “living”) water (7.1). The text then follows in a descending order of preference as to the quality of the water, in the event no running water is available: “...baptize in another kind of water; if you cannot in cold, then in warm – but if you have neither, pour water on the head thrice in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (7.2-3).

Prior to the baptism, the one to be baptized and the one performing the ceremonies and “others who are able” are to fast for one or two days (7.4). The admonition to fast prior to baptism is followed in the text by chapter eight which then gives instructions on how to fast.

## 3) Those not Baptized

The last reference to baptism is found in chapter 9.5, and relates to who may not partake of the Eucharist meal. “Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist save those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord, since the Lord has said, ‘Do not give to dogs what is holy.’ ” <sup>48</sup>

The instruction here is very clear. Those who have not confessed sin and are not living the “Two Ways” doctrine, are those who would not be eligible for baptism and subsequently the Eucharist meal. This may not be simply a matter of disqualification for those who are not members of the community but could be seen as protection for their own sake. This in light of I Cor. 11:28-30 where the participant is required to examine himself and not eat the meal in an unworthy manner i.e., not discerning the Lord’s body. “*For this reason many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.*” (NKJV) Seen in this light, the admonition to be baptized prior to taking the meal was certainly taken seriously and would be required of all believers.

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<sup>48</sup> This quotation of Matthew 7:6 raises the question - is the term “dogs” a reference to Gentiles or is it a term used to describe unbelievers in general? Sandt suggests the Didache is a blending of Jewish and Hellenistic practices and traditions. Baptism, the Eucharistic meals etc. can best be understood by assuming they represent an historical transformation from Jewish to Gentile traditions, p-297. As such terms like “dogs” may represent all unbelievers.

### Trinitarian Formula in Baptism.

The use of the Trinitarian formula in the baptism ceremony is of particular interest and importance. This is because the Didache and the text of Matthew 28:19 are the earliest instance of a Trinitarian formula being used in the rite of baptism (circa 70-90 AD).<sup>49</sup> The Didache along with the support of Matthew's Gospel gives solid evidence that the Trinity was recognized as such as early as the middle of the first Century and was not a later fabrication.<sup>50</sup>

### Jewish Parallels to the Didache Baptism

The Didache suggests that much of its content is directly related to Jewish influence. This influence was manifested as a fundamental tension between Jews and Gentile Christians. This unique period in history, was in effect the realization of the Abrahamic covenant whereby the blessings of God to Israel would now be shared with the nations (Rom Chaps 9,10,11,14,15).

With respect to baptism, there are a number of parallels between the Didache and Jewish practices of the *Mikveh*. The baptism of the Didache has clear connections to the Jewish proselyte baptism.<sup>51</sup> Other parallels include the atoning qualities of the bath, i.e., the necessity for repentance; confession and purification of sin.<sup>52</sup> Purification of the heart and body by immersion must be done before one could participate in the Passover Meal.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid: p-287

<sup>50</sup> Ibid: p-291. In comparing Matt 28:9 and the Didache, Sandt goes so far as to state that there is "likely evidence" that supports the theory that Matthew was directly influenced by the Didache.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid: 279. Sandt goes to great length to make this point in numerous chapters of his book.

<sup>52</sup> E Kitov, *Our Heritage*, Feldheim, Jerusalem, Israel, (1968) Vol 1, p-70.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid: Vol 2, p-571

## Eschatology

*“Keep vigil over your life. Let your lamps not go out and let your waists not be ungirded but be ready, for you do not know the hour at which our Lord is coming.” Didache (16:1)*

The eschatological emphasis of the Didache is found in chapter sixteen and is appropriately the conclusion of the Didache text. The chapter has eight verses with a distinct separation of topics and admonitions. Verses 1 and 2 are the familiar admonitions to be vigilant and to assemble frequently. The final verses, 3-8, are apocalyptic in that they reveal what will take place during the days just prior the Lord’s coming. These include; the increase of false prophets, lawlessness, persecution of the saints, the apostasy of believers, the testing of human creation, signs and wonders, the resurrection of the dead and the Lord’s return in the clouds.

Of particular interest is the “Futurist” tone of the entire chapter. This shows that the nascent church held to a belief that Jesus had not returned at that time. It is probable that the Didache was written and most certainly circulated after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D. This would argue against those who today hold to a “Preterist” eschatological model. The Didache is in concert with many other extra Biblical writers who share this perspective of the Lord’s return as a future event.<sup>54</sup>

Another area of interest is the tone of imminence, whereby the community was instructed to be vigilant and hold fast to their faith, i.e. *“Let your lamps not go out... (16:1).”* This was because Christ may return at any time. This emphasized the need to follow the “Way of Life” unless one might fall at the end of his race.

The Didache, from an eschatological perspective is in parallel with the NT witness of a future tribulation. This tribulation would precede the expected return of Jesus Christ in the clouds to claim his own.

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<sup>54</sup> David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, (1998), p-237-239. Tertullian (c 210), Hippolytus (c 205), Origen (228), this of course does not include NT authors such as John and Paul who were also looking forward to Christ’s return. (Rev 22:20-21) (I Thes. 4:13-18)

## “The Two Ways”

*“There are two ways, one of life, the other of death,  
and between the two ways there is a great difference.” Didache (1:1)*

The “Two Ways” philosophy of human behavior is one of the few concepts which were common among the dominant religions and philosophies of the first and second century era. These included the Jewish, Greek and Christian “Two Way” traditions. The Didache shares this tradition and indeed, the “Two Ways” teaching is a hallmark of the Didache content.

The words of admonition to love God and then love neighbor is followed in the Didache with the *“teaching [that flows] from these words”* (1:1-2). Here the Didachist begins by presenting the fact that Christians have a choice – to conduct their lives according to the way that leads to life or they can choose to live a way that leads to death.

The “way of life” teaching in the Didache includes a listing of instructions and admonitions against specific behaviors.<sup>55</sup> This listing makes up chapters one through four. The “way of death” is a list of the behaviors which characterize those who follow this path. The listing of the way of death makes up chapter five.<sup>56</sup>

The “Two Ways” described in the Didache is directly connected to and in agreement with the OT and Qumran writings, (i.e. Jewish), Greek mythology and the NT, (i.e. Christian) traditions. The following page will briefly develop some examples of this and show that the “Two Ways” tradition is a blend of the dominant faiths in the Mediterranean culture of the day.

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<sup>55</sup> The “Way of life” includes admonitions to bless and pray for one’s enemies (1:3), avoid fleshly and bodily passions (1:4a), turn the other cheek (1.4b), give to those who ask (1.5a), not to accept what you do not need (1.5b), do not murder, commit adultery, corrupt children, fornicate, steal, abort a child, harbor resentment, hate, and love others more than self (2.1-7). Chapters three and four include similar admonitions including the admonition to keep the commandments without “adding or subtracting anything.” (4.13)

<sup>56</sup> The “Way of Death” describes the characteristics of those who commit murder, adultery as listed above, but also include those who practice obscene speech, jealousy, arrogance, boastfulness, pride, malice, willful stubbornness, false witness, *“who are out of money”* – do not earn money in a just way, reject the poor and defend the unjust rich who oppress the poor etc., (5.1-2). These “lesser sins” are interesting because they are directly cited as those which are characteristic of the one whose path leads to death. They are in fact a sobering reflection to every individual Christian who may be tempted to rely on “cheap grace.”

There are numerous examples of the Two Ways teachings in the OT texts. “*See, I have set before you life and good, death and evil...therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live*” (Deut 30:15-19). Other texts include Deut 11:26-28, Jer 21:8, Ps 1:1-6, Ps 118, 139:24, Prov 2:13, 4:18, 11:20, 12:28 etc. While these texts are similar to the Didache Two Ways, they do not contain the same structure nor do they fully develop the Two Ways tradition as seen in the Didache and later Christian writings.

It was not until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran that a sharply Jewish dualistic tone and formula like that of the Didache was found. The Qumran document is called “The Manual of Discipline” (1QS 3:13-4:26). According to Sandt this document teaches that “God has predetermined the moral history of man... the world is divided into two opposing forces of good and evil.”<sup>57</sup> Sandt posits that the Qumran scrolls are connected to several early Christian documents including the Didache and Letter of Barnabas; and that this combination became the source of the fully developed “Two Ways” tradition.

It is also necessary to mention the “Greek Two Ways” tradition found in early Greek mythology and philosophy. “Two Ways” formula was not limited to Jewish and Christian traditions. It was also found in Greek literature such as the “Choice of Hercules” where Hercules is given a choice between two women, characterized as good and evil.<sup>58</sup>

In conclusion the “Two Ways” teaching is a combined and developed formula with its origin in the Jewish Scriptures and other Jewish writings. These were then combined with early Christian and Greek writings such as the Didache to form the developed “Two Ways” structure which has been handed down through the centuries.

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<sup>57</sup> Huub van de Sandt, David Flusser, *The Didache*, Fortress Press, MN, (2002), p-59

<sup>58</sup> Ibid: p-58

## Treatment of the Didache by Modern Scholars

The following is a review of some of the ways modern scholars use the Didache in their work. It is an interesting review as it reveals the varied attitudes towards the Didache, both positive and negative in making their points.

**Donald Guthrie Th.M. Ph.D.** – makes regular citation of the Didache and other non-canonical writings of the early church in his book *New Testament Introduction*.<sup>59</sup> His approach is to use the Didache as a support document in dating various books of the NT. He also uses the Didache for exploring similarities of language and the attestation of Early Church practices when doing surveys of the individual books of the NT. Guthrie also refers to other scholar's use of the Didache both pro and con in making assertions about various books of the NT.

Guthrie, at times, uses the Didache as a tool for authenticating the validity of a number of NT documents – their dates of authorship and showing common ground for writing styles of the day. He is in fact using a non-canonical document as a support for the NT. He does not overstate the authority of the Didache in his use of the document; rather he presents the Didache and other non-canonical books in a responsible and scholarly way that is most helpful – for example:

Guthrie presents the argument that Matthew was written somewhere between 80-100 A.D. One reason, he posits, is the Didache appears to cite Matthew and hence, he logically reasons, Matthew would be an earlier document.<sup>60, 61</sup> Guthrie also looks for linguistic and theological parallels in a similar manner when dating Luke.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> D Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill (1990)

<sup>60</sup> Guthrie did not specify what portion of Matthew was cited by the Didache, but this would most likely be Matt 5:3-48, 7:13-17 i.e. "The Sermon on the Mount."

<sup>61</sup> Ibid: p-54

<sup>62</sup> Ibid: p-125 Guthrie cites J.M. Creed's, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 1930. Here it would have been helpful if Guthrie had gone into greater detail and given examples in his use of the Didache.

In his book, Guthrie writes that the Didache may be a “possible” external attestation for dating the Book of Ephesians – this because of what Guthrie calls “reminiscent language.”

Guthrie holds that the language of the Didache, (and other writings i.e. Clement of Rome) is reminiscent of Ephesians yet not entirely similar. The Didache reflects a more developed state of church life and thought; as such the book of Ephesians would have predated sub-apostolic writings such as the Didache. <sup>63</sup>

Guthrie gives examples of how other scholars have used documents like the Didache when attempting to authenticate NT writings such as the Book of James. Guthrie cites J.B. Mayor, who claims several allusions and parallels of style found in the Didache, written prior to the second century, support the authorship and circulation to be that of a first century writer. <sup>64</sup>

Guthrie makes a very interesting and insightful observation about the practice of hospitality in the NT era. In his survey of the Johannine Epistles regarding false teachers, Guthrie points out that the revered practice of “hospitality” was to be denied to false teachers. (c.f. II Jn 1:10) He shows that the use of hospitality was a critical tool for spreading “propaganda” whether true or untrue. As such the harsh measure of denying hospitality would be an effective deterrent to the spread of false doctrine. Guthrie points to the Didache which also employed this tactic in the giving and /or limiting hospitality to certain prophets and teachers (Did 10: 1-11). <sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid: p-497

<sup>64</sup> Ibid: p-724. While Guthrie gives Mayor’s argument a hearing, he does not fully embrace it. The use of the Didache as a support document in this manner does have its detractors, and rightfully so. The Christian community must have been very diverse in the first century as stated by Flusser and other scholars. As such, finding allusions to generally held concepts of Christian theology and religious practices does not make for concrete statements regarding dates of authorship or authentication of a particular writer or even a specific teaching.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 889-890

**Wayne Grudem M.Div., Ph.D.** – In his book *Systematic Theology*, Grudem uses the Didache as a kind of contrarian view to Pauline and other NT writings. He gives various examples of how the Didache conflicts theologically with Paul and NT ecclesiology. Where other theologians use the Didache as a support or reference, Grudem appears to be responding to those who would lend too much credence to the Didache and the application of its teachings the modern church. <sup>66</sup>

Should the Didache be used as a reliable guide for understanding the teaching and practices of worship by the early church? Grudem says no: “Because there are so many differences with NT teaching, the Didache seems to have been written by someone who was out of touch with mainstream apostolic activity and teaching. It is not a reliable guide to the teachings or practices of the Apostles in the Early Church.” <sup>67</sup>

Grudem offers examples of how he feels the Didache differs with NT teachings. Grudem rejects the use of Didache as an authoritative document by those who claim the NT prophets should be esteemed as having the same authority as the OT prophets – their reasoning being the Didache says prophets who speak in “the Spirit” should not be tested (Did 11:7). Grudem points out that this is contrary to the NT apostles who were constantly encouraging the saints to test the prophets (c.f. Acts 17:11, 1 Thess 5:20-21, 1 Cor. 14:29). <sup>68</sup>

While Grudem is correct to point out apparent contradictions and additions in the Didache with respect to the NT witness, it is regrettable that Grudem rejects the document to the degree that he does. The evolution of the church, post NT Canon era, has seen the introduction and adoption of many practices and doctrinal statements which appear, on the surface to conflict with or add to the NT corpus.

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<sup>66</sup> W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, Eng, (1994)

<sup>67</sup> W. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament*, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill, (1988) p-88.

<sup>68</sup> W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p-1054

The following are major points of contradiction or additions that Grudem asserts are not found in the NT writings but written in the Didache:

- 1:6 Sweating of alms in the hands.
- 6:3 Food offered to idols are forbidden.
- 7:1-4 Fasting is required before Baptism.
- 7:1-4 Baptism is to be done in running water.
- 8:1 Fasting required on Wednesday and Friday – Not Monday or Thursday.
- 8:3 The Lord’s prayer is to be offered three times per day.
- 9:1-5 Congregants not baptized are forbidden from taking the Lord’s Supper.
- 11:5 Prophets were forbidden to stay in the city for more than two days.
- 11:7 Prophets who speak in the “Spirit” were not to be tested.
- 16:2 Salvation requires perfection at the last time.

Do such statements regarding Baptism, Lord’s Supper, fasting, hospitality etc. written in the Didache necessarily conflict with NT teaching? Or might they be clarifications offered by the writers as a response to questions specific to a particular life situation (*sitz im leban*)? Might the Didache in reality be like the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Apostles’ Creed which clarified specific doctrines or solved disputes?

The conflicts experienced by the church today, with its many denominations, is evident of the fact that the “Church” is not unified in how it addresses or practices the above issues. The theology in the Lord’s Supper is a good example; Is the “Presence of the Lord” during the Eucharist meal one of transubstantiation (Roman Catholic), consubstantiation (Lutheran), “real presence” (Calvin-Reformed), or the “memorial / symbolic only” teaching of Fundamentalists? <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the Didache should not be regarded as a dogmatic or normative guide for the practices of the Church as a whole. But rather a document that is closer to a denominational statement of doctrine and observances which holds great value in that it reveals what the early church deemed important and helped it make the transition from Judaism to Christianity.

**Ben Witherington III Ph.D.** – Witherington makes good use of the Didache in his commentaries on 1-2 Peter.<sup>70</sup> His focus is one of grammatical, historical and theological concern. Unlike Grudem, Witherington uses the Didache as a support document in his working with Biblical texts to make his points about 1<sup>st</sup> Century belief systems, historical context and the precise meaning of words and phrases. Some examples of his work with the Didache follows:

1.) Citing the Didache, Witherington shows there was an early Christian ethical tradition which was shared widely and was similar to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3-48) and the ethics of Rom 12:10. He then applies this ethical tradition as a link to 1 Pet 3:8-12.<sup>71</sup>

2.) He uses the Didache (4.10) to historically, and doctrinally reinforce the admonition in 1 Pet 2:20 for the proper treatment of slaves by Christian masters.<sup>72</sup>

3.) He uses the Didache to better explain the meaning of a word or sense of a Greek word, “*gongysmos*” as “grumbling” (c.f. Did. 4.7 compared to 1 Pet 4:9).<sup>73</sup>

4.) He identifies the early use of the word “Christian” in 1 Pet 4:16 (Did 12.4).<sup>74</sup>

5.) Witherington also uses the Didache to compare Greek phrases with those used in the NT – “Fiery trials” 1 Pet 4:12 compared to Did.. 16.5. The word *Pyrōsis* in both cases alludes to a future trial, testing and or proving by fire (c.f. purifying precious metals) and thus confirming the faith of the one who suffers the trial.<sup>75</sup>

Witherington’s use of the Didache is very helpful and a good example of how an expert can use non-canonical documents to study the Bible. Witherington does not enter into the pros and cons of the doctrines of the Didache; rather he uses it as a tool and reference.

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<sup>70</sup> B. Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, V-II, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill, 2007

<sup>71</sup> Ibid: p-168

<sup>72</sup> Ibid: p-153

<sup>73</sup> Ibid: p-204 – 205

<sup>74</sup> Ibid: p-215

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: p-211

**W.H.C. Frend** – *The Rise of Christianity*,<sup>76</sup> Frend uses the Didache to show a common understanding of Dualism in the 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. The “Believers” were those who had chosen the “way” of light or truth in contrast to those who had chosen the way of darkness. This was a limited Dualism “because supreme power remained in the hand of God.” Frend states that this “limited Dualism” was assumed and that it fit in the Christian tradition of enmity between Good and Evil (i.e. Did. 1:1-2).<sup>77</sup>

Frend cites the Didache to support the historical assertion that proselytizing and a sense of mission was active in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Church. This evangelistic mission was intended to “increase righteousness and knowledge of the Lord.”<sup>78</sup>

The Didache was also cited by Frend to explain that the social structure and conduct of the slave / master relationship was a reality in the early Church, and that this was in agreement with the NT witness. Frend states “that before God there was neither slave nor free, male nor female (Gal 3:28) but on earth, until the coming of the Lord, social distinctions remained.”<sup>79</sup>

Frend holds up the Didache as evidence to argue that “normative Christianity” in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was less a product of the Gospels and Pauline writings than it was the OT books such as Isaiah. The portrayal of Jesus as “servant” (Did 9.2-3, 10.2) and the Holy vine of David (9.2), speaks to a greater influence of the Hebrew Bible and Israelite religion on the early Christian Church than it does to the Apostolic writings and the Hellenizing influences of the gentile culture and philosophies.<sup>80</sup>

In summary Frend sees the Didache as a reliable source to explore the historical framework of the nascent Church and the religious culture surrounding it.

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<sup>76</sup> W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA, (1984).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid: p-29

<sup>78</sup> Ibid: p-127

<sup>79</sup> Ibid: p-133

<sup>80</sup> Ibid: p-136-137

## Conclusion

The Didache is a document that should be read and studied by every Christian. All too often believers spend a tremendous amount of time and money reading “Christian books” that promise a deeper understanding of their faith or will improve their lives. However, when it comes to understanding their heritage, most Christians ignore the early Church documents and the Patristic writings altogether. Instead they turn to “Biblical or Historical Novels.” They are given scholarly commentaries or a Bible encyclopedia and left to fend for themselves.

The Didache should be encouraged because it was specifically designed and written to help answer some of the key questions believers ask concerning the religious observances they practice every Sunday. The Didache is a concise, easy to read and simplified manual of how to live the Christian life. Is it “normative” for every church and denomination? *No!*

The Didache is not a theological treatise and should not be considered a normative “Statement of Faith.” Indeed portions of the Didache will chafe some. But the NT gives Christians options as to how we practice our faith; this in light of Romans 14 and 15 which tells us to accept each other and not get into debates about which day we meet, or the food we eat.

The Didache offers believers a tangible link to the Church of the Apostles. It shows them that the people of the early church faced many of the same issues that confront them and their families; issues like abortion, Church observances, and living the Christian life.

The Bible is indeed our only source of God’s inspired Word, but in true pastoral fashion, the Didache can help explain and clarify God’s Word – this with clear and direct instructions on how the Believer should conduct his or her daily life.

The Didache encourages the twenty first century Christian because it lets us know that the faith we practice is not done in a vacuum. How we baptize, take the Lord’s Supper and seek to live a righteous life, (the Way of Life), is not a futile endeavor. The Didache teaches that our faith must be in harmony with Scripture, the people who wrote it and lived it from the beginning.

## Appendix I

### The Didache – A Contemporary Paraphrase

- Paraphrase by K Emilio – See End Notes

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#### CHAPTER 1 – The Path of Life

1:1 There are two paths, one path leads to life and one leads to death, and there is a great difference between the two paths.

1:2 Now the path leading to life is this -- first, you shall love the God who made you and your neighbor as yourself. What you do not want someone do to you, do not do it to another.

1:3 And the teachings of these truths are as follows. Bless them that curse you and pray for your enemies. Fast on behalf of those that persecute you; for what reward will you have if you love only those who love you? Do not unbelievers do the same thing? But if you love those who hate you, you will not have enemies.

1:4 Abstain from sensuous and worldly passions. *For example*, if any one hits you on your right cheek, *do not hit him back, instead* turn your left cheek to him *as well*, and you will be perfect; if any one forces you to walk a mile *with them*, *do not fight him*, but go with him an extra mile; if a man steals your shirt, give him your coat also; if a man takes from you what is *rightfully* yours, do not demand it back because you do not have *the power* to do so.

1:5 Give to every one when he tells you he is needy, and do not ask for it back; for the Father wishes we share with the needy from His *many* gifts to us. Blessed is he who gives according to this commandment, for he is free from the guilt *of greed*; but to him who receives the charity *there is a burden upon him as well*. For if a man is *truly* in need, there is no guilt *or shame*; but if he *asks for and* receives charity when he is not in need, then he shall have to defend his motives for taking the gift, and how he plans on using the gift. If he is put in jail he shall be questioned concerning the things that he has done, and shall he will not be released until he has paid back every cent.

1:6 Regarding matters *concerning giving*, there is an old saying which is true; "let your charity stay in your hands until you know to whom you are giving."

#### CHAPTER 2

2:1 The next group of teachings are as follows

2:2 You shalt not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not corrupt the young; you shall not have sexual relations outside of marriage; you shall not steal; you shall not practice magic; you shalt not practice sorcery; you shalt not kill a child by abortion, nor slay it when it is born; you shalt not covet the property of your neighbor;

2:3 you shall not commit perjury; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not speak evil; you shall not desire *in your heart* to harm another or have evil intentions towards others.

2:4 you shall not be *intentionally* ambiguous or speak with double meanings *in order to deceive*, for to be double tongued is the snare of death.

2:5 your speech shall not be false or empty, but concerned with truth and real action.

2:6 you shall not be greedy, or predatory, or hypocritical, or malicious, or proud; you shall not conspire or plot an evil plan against your neighbor;

2:7 you not hate any man, but some you shall call to account for their actions and for some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own soul.

### **CHAPTER 3**

3:1 My child, fly from everything that is evil, and from everything that is like it.

3:2 Do not be an angry or hot-tempered person, for anger leads to murder; do not be overly zealous or aggressive or quarrelsome, for from all these things murder is derived.

3:3 My child, do not be a person who is owned by his passions, for passions leads to sexual immorality; do not use obscene language; nor flirtatious, for from these things come adulteries.

3:4 My child, do not play with occult or witchcraft, since it leads to idolatry, nor a user of spells, nor an astrologer, nor practice token rituals *or games*, nor even wish to be entertained by these, because from these things involve the worship of false gods.

3:5 My child, be not a liar, for lying leads to theft; be not envious or self-absorbed, for from these traits, taking from others what does not belong to you will be the result.

3:6 My child, do not be a grumbler or complainer, since it leads to slander and do not insist on having things your own way or be evil-minded, for from all these things insults and character assassination is produced;

3:7 but rather be reasonable and mild-tempered, for the meek shall inherit the earth;

3:8 be long in your mercy, and compassionate, and harmless, and peaceable, and good, and fearing always in great respect and wonder the words that you have heard.

3:9 You shall not praise or applaud yourself, neither shall you be arrogant. Do not become bound to or walk only with the elite, but walk and stand with people who are just and humble.

3:10 accept the things that happen to you as good, knowing that nothing happens without God.

## CHAPTER 4

4:1 My child, you shall be mindful every night and day of him the one who teaches you about the Word of God; you shall honor him as you do the Lord, for where the teaching of the Lord is given, the Lord is there also;

4:2 everyday you shall be among and listen to God's holy children that you may rest and gain support in their company and words;

4:3 you shall not incite disputes among one another, but instead you shall help make peace among those who quarrel; you are to judge righteously; you shall not show favoritism to anyone when you hold them accountable for their bad behavior;

4:4 you shall not be indecisive after deciding whether a thing will be or not.

4:5 do not be the kind of person who stretches out of his hand to receive help, but then draws his hand back when it is his time to help others.

4:6 If you have things because you worked for them, you shall give back something as a obligation that you have because you too are a sinner;

4:7 you shall not hesitate to give, neither shall you grumble when giving; for you should remember who is the one who will repay with [His] rewards.

4:8 you shall not turn away from him that is in need, but shall share with thy brother in all things, and shall not say that things are your own; for if you as brothers are partners in what is immortal, how much more are you partners in what is mortal?

4:9 you shall not withhold teaching your son or from you daughter, but from their youth you shall continuously instruct them to be mindful and in awe of God.

4:10 you shall not be harsh when you give instructions to your male and female employees, who also trust in the same God as you do. Otherwise they may lose their respect [because of your witness] in the God who is over both employer and employee; for God does not call someone because of their status here on earth, but [He calls] those whom the Spirit has prepared.

4:11 And to you employees, submit yourselves to your employers with respect, because you are witnesses of God.

4:12 you shall hate and reject all hypocrisy and everything that is not pleasing to God;

4:13 you shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord, but you shall guard what you have received [God's commandments], neither adding to them nor subtracting from them;

4:14 you shall confess your misbehavior in the Church, and do not come to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the path of life.

## **CHAPTER 5 - The Path of Death**

5:1 But the path of death is this. First of all, [the path of death] is evil, and full of cursing. On this path are found murders, adulteries, lusts, fornication, thefts, idolatries, soothsaying, sorceries, robberies, false witnessing, hypocrisies, double-mindedness, magic, pride, malice, hatefulnes, self-will, greed, self centered, filthy talking, jealousy, disrespect, audacity, pride, arrogance;

5:2 there are those who persecute the good -- lovers of a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not holding on to the good nor to righteous judgment, not focusing on the good but the bad, from whom meekness and patience are afar off, loving things that are trivial, chasing after their own advancement and caring about the needy, nor considering that they could work in order to help someone who is in trouble, thus not appreciating the God who made them. [they are] child murderers who abort what God has formed, they turn away from those who are in need, who oppress people who in trouble, they are unjust judges of the poor, sinners in everything they do. From these, may you be preserved.

## **CHAPTER 6**

6:1 See to it that no one turns you away from this doctrine concerning the two paths, the one who causes you to stray from this teaching does so without God.

6:2 If you are able to keep the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able to do so, then do all that you can;

6:3 concerning food, keep that which you are able to do. But regarding things sacrificed to idols, beware, because they involve the worship of the gods of hell.

## **CHAPTER 7**

7:1 But concerning baptism; immerse yourselves in running water; having first recited all these precepts; baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;

7:2 if you do not have running water, immerse in some other water, and if you cannot not immerse in cold water then baptize in warm water;

7:3 but if you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

7:4 Before the baptism, let the person who will perform the baptism and the one who will be baptized fast, and also any others who may be able. And you shall instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast at least one or two days before.

## **CHAPTER 8**

8:1 Do not let your fasting, take place at the same time as the hypocrites, for they fast on Monday and Thursday, but as for you, fast on Wednesday and Friday.

8:2 Do not pray as the hypocrites do: instead pray as the Lord hath commanded you in his gospel. Pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, so as in heaven and on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And

forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil: for yours is the power, and the glory, forever.”

8:3 pray like this three times per day.

## **CHAPTER 9**

9:1 Now concerning the Eucharist [thanksgiving or communion supper], here is the way you should give thanks.

9:2 First, concerning the cup. [Say this] “We thank you our Father, for the holy vine, of David your servant, who you have made known us being Jesus Christ your Son; to you be the glory forever.”

9:3 And concerning the broken bread. [Say this] “We thank you our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son; to you be the glory forever.”

9:4 “As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and afterward it was brought together to become one again, likewise may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory, and the power, through Jesus Christ, for ever.”

9:5 Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist [communion supper] unless they have first been baptized in the name of the Lord, since the Lord said concerning this, “Do not give what is holy to dogs [unbelievers].”

## **CHAPTER 10**

10:1 When you have completed your meal and are full, again give thanks in this way;

10:2 “We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name, which you made to live in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son; to you be the glory forever.”

10:3 “You Almighty Master, created all things for the sake of your name, and give both meat and drink, for all men to enjoy, that we might give thanks to you. But to us you have also given spiritual meat and drink, and everlasting life, through your Son.”

10:4 “Above all we thank you because you are powerful and able to save; to you be the glory forever.”

10:5 “Remember your Church oh Lord, preserve it from every evil, and make it perfect with your love. After your Church has been perfected and sanctified, gather it together from the four winds [of the earth], to your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours are the kingdom and the glory forever.”

10:6 “Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the Son of David. If any one is holy let him come; if any one is not, let him repent. Oh Lord Come [Maranatha], Amen.”

10:7 regarding the prophets among you, allow them to give thanks as much as they want.

## **CHAPTER 11**

11:1 In keeping with this [regarding prophets among you], whoever comes and teaches you all the things said above, receive him;

11:2 but if a teacher turns aside and instructs you in another doctrine that subverts and destroys what you have learned, do not listen to him; however if his teaching adds to your righteousness, and your knowledge of the Lord, receive him as you would the Lord.

11:3 concerning the apostles and prophets, act in this way which is according to the decree of the gospel.

11:4 Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord.

11:5 He can stay [with you] one day, and if necessary, a second; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet.

11:6 and when the apostle departs let him take nothing but enough bread to get him to his next resting-place; but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

11:7 you shall not test or dispute with any prophet who speaks in the spirit; [do not judge him] for every other sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.

11:8 not every one who speaks in the spirit is a prophet – only the one whose behavior is of the Lord; by their actions they shall be known, both the false and the true prophet.

11:9 Any prophet who gives orders to lay out a meal in the spirit, shall not eat of it himself, but if he does eat of it, he is a false prophet;

11:10 and every prophet who teaches the truth, yet does not practice the truth, he is a false prophet;

11:11 every prophet who is accepted and true, and is caring for the earthly needs of the Church, yet does not teach others to follow his example shall not be judged by you, for this prophet will be judged by God; for this is the way that the ancient prophets were judged.

11:12 Do not listen to any prophet claiming to be in the spirit if he says, "Give me money," or things of that kind; but if he asks you for something to help others who are in need, let no one judge him.

## **CHAPTER 12**

12:1 Let everyone who comes in the name of the Lord be received by you. Later you should examine him and get to know his character, for you have knowledge both of good and evil.

12:2 If the person who come is just passing through, help him so far as you are able; but he will not remain with you more than two or three days, unless it is a necessity.

12:3 if he wishes to settle down with you, and he is a craftsman, let him work, and so eat;

12:4 but if he does not have a trade, you should use your creativity to prevent an idle Christian from living among you. Give him some productive work to contribute.

12:5 but if he be not willing to contribute, he is using Christ to make a living. Avoid such a person and be on guard against him.

### **CHAPTER 13**

13:1 every true prophet who is willing to live among you is worthy of his food,

13:2 In the same way a true teacher is just as worthy of his food as a laborer.

13:3 You shall take the firstfruits of what is produced by the wine-press and the threshing-floor, of the oxen and sheep, and you shall give it to the prophets, for they are your chief priests;

13:4 but if you have no prophet among you, give your firstfruits to the poor.

13:5 If you prepare a feast, give the firstfruits according to the commandment;

13:6 in like manner when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the firstfruits and give them to the prophets;

13:7 take also the firstfruits of money, of clothes, and of every possession, as seems appropriate to you, and give them according to the commandment.

### **CHAPTER 14**

14:1 Assemble on the Lord's day [Sunday], and after you have met together, break bread and give thanks, confessing your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

14:2 But do not let anyone who has a quarrel with his friend assemble with you until after they have be reconciled, this, so that your sacrifice may not be profane and impure;

14:3 for the Lord said; "In every place and time offer unto me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles."

### **CHAPTER 15**

15:1 Select for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are mild-tempered and not greedy, and who are true and approved, for they perform for you the service of prophets and teachers.

15:2 do not despise or disregard them, for they hold honored positions among you, together with the prophets and teachers.

15:3 Correct one another, not in anger but peaceably, as you are commanded in the written Gospel; and let no one speak to the one who does wrong to his neighbor, neither let him be heard by you until he repents.

15:4 practice your prayers, tithes and offerings and all your other works, as you are commanded in the written Gospel of our Lord.

## CHAPTER 16

16:1 Watch and be vigilant concerning your life; do not your lamps go out or your waist belts be loose, but be ready, for you do know not the hour when our Lord will come.

16:2 Gather together frequently, seeking what is profitable for your souls; for the whole period of your faith will not be profitable unless you are found to be perfect in the last days.

16:3 For in the last days false prophets and seducers will be multiplied, and the sheep will turn into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate;

16:4 and because lawlessness will abound they will hate each other, and persecute each other, and deliver each other up; and then shall the Deceiver of the world appear as the Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands; and he will do unlawful things, such as have never happened since the beginning of the world.

16:5 Then shall the creation of man come to the fiery trial of proof, and many shall be offended and shall perish; but they who remain in their faith shall be saved by the rock of offence itself [the one cursed – i.e. Jesus].

16:6 And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first the sign of an appearance in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead

16:7 however not all of the dead, but as it has been written, The Lord shall come and all his saints with him;

16:8 then shall the world behold the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.

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End Note;

1. The principle resource for this paraphrase was an original translation by Charles H. Hoole. The Didache is in the public domain. Source of this translation: Used with permission: <http://www.carm.org/misc/didache.htm>
2. Some themes and specific word usage were taken from Van de Sandt & Flusser's translation of the Didache – *The Didache* (Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2002) pages 10-16.
3. As the above paraphrase is not a translation, it is the opinion of this writer that Van de Sandt and Flusser's translation is preferred - see Bibliography.



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