

The Didache of the Apostles¹

The teaching² of the Lord to the Gentiles through³ the twelve apostles

The Two Ways and the First Commandment

1.1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is much difference between the two ways. 2. On the one hand,⁴ the way of life is this: first, you shall love⁵ the God who made you; second, [you shall love] your neighbor as yourself⁶; but all things, if you want them not to happen to you, then see *you* do not do to another.⁷ 3. Now the teaching of these words is this: Bless those who curse you,⁸ and pray for your enemies, but fast for those who persecute you⁹; for what credit is it if you should love those who love you?¹⁰ Don't even the Gentiles do the same?¹¹ But you must love those who hate you and you will not have an enemy.¹² 4. Abstain from fleshly and bodily cravings. If someone should give you a slap on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,¹³ and you will be mature¹⁴; If someone compels you to go with him one mile, go with him two¹⁵; if someone takes away your cloak, give him your tunic also¹⁶; if

¹ Based on the translation by J. B. Lightfoot, 1891; but a translation of the recent Greek text: *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (ed. and transl. Michael W. Holmes; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007³). Other works consulted: Rodney A. Whitacre, *A Patristic Greek Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007); Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary* (Hermeneia Series; transl. Linda M. Maloney; ed. Harold W. Attridge; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers with an English Translation* (in two volumes; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912); and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers: An American Translation* (Harper, 1950).

² The underlying Greek word διδασκαλία (didache) is the source of the title of the work, and used to be translated as 'doctrine'; but when that word took on a particular meaning, the gloss 'teaching' was adopted, and is now usually preferred.

³ The Lord is the source; the apostles are the indirect agents.

⁴ See 2.1 for the corresponding "On the other hand . . ."

⁵ The verb is future indicative, rather than imperative; this corresponds to both the Greek New Testament (GNT) and the underlying Septuagint (LXX) texts (see n. 6). In chap. 1 the rest of the commands are Greek imperatives.

⁶ Cf. Matt 22:37–39; (Mark 12:30–31); Luke 10:27; Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18. Note: while numerous NT verses and passages are cited, it is not to be assumed that the Didache is quoting the NT. The indications are that each is independent of the other, but quote common or similar oral sources.

⁷ The emphasis "you" is present both in the Greek of the Didache and of the book of Matthew. Cf. Matt 7:12; Luke 6:27–28. However, in the GNT, it is expressed as a positive. In Judaism, the equivalent is usually stated negatively, as here (cf. Tobit 4:15 "And what you hate, do to no one" [*A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford, 2007), NETS]).

⁸ Luke 6:28.

⁹ Note the progression: "Bless . . . pray for . . . but fast for . . ." In the following chapters there is a conscious effort from time to time to explain—and even to some extent, contextualize—specific sayings of Jesus. That is not the case here. As the church developed, it would have been necessary to educate on the specifics of loving one's neighbor as oneself, ensuring that the high standard be understood and so maintained. It had no natural counterpart in the society of the time.

¹⁰ That is, if you should *only* love those who love you. Cf. Matt 5:44–47; Luke 6:27–28, 32–33, 35.

¹¹ Matt 5:47.

¹² Though quoted elsewhere in apostolic writings, its original source and context are not known, although it may be the apodosis as in: if you love your enemies, "you will not have an enemy."

¹³ Matt 5:39.

¹⁴ Matt 5:48. In the NT this is counterpart to the HB "You must be holy as I am holy" (Lev 19:2; Deut 18:13).

¹⁵ Matt 5:41.

someone takes from you what is yours, do not demand it back, for you are not able.¹⁷ **5.** Give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand in return¹⁸; for the Father wants something from his own gifts to be given to all. The one who gives according to the command is blessed, for such a one will be innocent. Woe to the one who receives: for if, on the one hand, one having a need receives, such a one is innocent; but on the other hand, the one not having a need will have to explain why and to what end he received, but having been imprisoned will be examined closely about what he did, and will not leave from there until he repays the last penny.¹⁹ **6.** But also concerning this it has been said: “Let your donation sweat in your hands until you know to whom you should give.”²⁰

The Second Commandment: Grave Sin Forbidden

2.1 So then the second commandment²¹ of the teaching is: **2.** You shall not murder,²² you shall not commit adultery, you shall not corrupt boys,²³ you shall not engage in illicit sex, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not mix potions,²⁴ you shall not murder²⁵ a child by abortion, nor kill²⁶ them when born. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods, **3.** you shall not perjure yourself, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall not bear a grudge. **4.** You shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for the double tongue is a snare of death. **5.** Your word shall not be false or

¹⁶ Luke 6:29; Matt 5:40.

¹⁷ The parallel is Luke 6:30, although it lacks the final clause. Paul seems to reflect a similar idea in 1 Cor 6:7.

¹⁸ This is a restatement of the previous command in different words, possibly for emphasis or to draw together two different but related commands.

¹⁹ Cf. Matt 5:26. The penny here was a *quadrans*, a Roman copper coin worth 1/64 of a denarius, the latter being the standard daily wage for a laborer. The parallel passage in Luke 12:59 mentions the *lepton*, equal to one-half of a *quadrans*, the smallest coin available.

²⁰ Cf. Sir 12:1–7. The original source of the quotation is not known, but its presence here calls for thought and caution in a difficult social context where demands for benevolence were constant.

²¹ Though a string of commands follows, only some of which are from Exodus 20/Deuteronomy 5, the noun is singular, and refers to the second tablet of the Ten Commandments.

²² All of the “imperatives” in this section are future indicative actives (“you shall not . . .”) in imitation of Hebrew where negative commands are not expressed by negating the imperative, but rather by negating the imperfect (= incomplete) aspect. When translated into Greek, the future indicative is the closest correspondence. All of these commands are singular, not plural as the English might appear to suggest. Further, while Hebrew verbs are (for the most part) gender specific, Greek verbs are not. Some commentators who do not understand what is happening here erroneously claim that the apparent absence of the imperative really means that God is not commanding but affirming what the Israelites will do: “you shall not . . .”

²³ The verb is παιδοφθορέω (*paidophthoreo*) ‘to corrupt boys’, a word only found in the apostolic writings. It is a denominative from the similarly rare noun παιδοφθόρος (*paidophthoros*). The normal word for such was παιδεραστέω (*paiderasteo*), the root of the English word pederasty ‘[homosexual] lover of boys’. Given the acceptance of homosexuality at the time, the church may have felt the need for a new word that would clearly be pejorative.

The extent of the problem can be seen by the insertion of this prohibition in the midst of what is clearly a list otherwise drawn from the 10 commandments. Further, it may well be significant that it immediately precedes the more general πορνεύω (*porneuo*) “‘engage in sexual immorality’, ‘engage in illicit sex’, ‘to fornicate’, ‘to whore’, in Gk. lit. freq. in ref. to prostitution,” (F. W. Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* [University of Chicago, 2000] 854, BDAG); a more general term than that found in the LXX rendering of Exod 20:14 (μοιχεύω [*moicheuo*] ‘commit adultery’).

²⁴ The root used here underlies the modern term pharmacology.

²⁵ The same word used at the opening of the verse when quoting the sixth commandment.

²⁶ The generic word ‘kill’.

empty, but confirmed by action.²⁷ **6.** You shall not be greedy or grasping or a hypocrite or spiteful or arrogant. You shall not entertain an evil design against your neighbor. **7.** You shall not hate anyone, but some you shall reprove,²⁸ and for others you shall pray, and others you shall love more than your life.²⁹

Other Sins Forbidden

3.1 My child, flee³⁰ from every evil and everything that resembles it. **2.** Do not be quick-tempered (for anger leads to murder), or jealous or contentious or irascible³¹; for from all these things murders are engendered. **3.** My child, be not one who lusts, for lust leads to illicit sex; neither foul-speaking³² nor with uplifted eyes³³; for from all these things adulteries are engendered. **4.** My child do not be a dealer in omens,³⁴ since it leads to idolatry; or an enchanter³⁵ or an astrologer³⁶ or a magician; neither be willing to look at them; for from all these things idolatry is engendered. **5.** My child do not be a liar, since lying leads to theft; neither avaricious nor vainglorious; for from all these things thefts are engendered. **6.** My child do not be a murmurer, since it leads to blasphemy; neither self-willed nor evil-minded; for from all these things blasphemies are engendered.

7. But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth.³⁷ **8.** Be patient and compassionate and innocent and quiet and good and always revere the words that you have heard.³⁸ **9.** You shall not exalt yourself, or permit your soul to become arrogant. Your soul shall not associate with the lofty, but live with the righteous and humble. **10.** Accept as good the things that happen to you, knowing that nothing happens apart from God.

Various Precepts

4.1 My child, you shall remember night and day the one who speaks to you the word of God,³⁹ and honor him as [you would] the Lord; for wherever the Lord's nature is spoken about, there is the Lord. **2.** Moreover you shall seek out day by day the presence of holy men, that you may find rest in their words. **3.** You shall not cause a division, but shall make peace between those who quarrel; you shall judge

²⁷ The last clause is absent in earlier manuscripts.

²⁸ Cf. Jude 22, 23.

²⁹ Not hate . . . reprove . . . pray . . . love more than your life. This verse succinctly illustrates ἀγάπη (agape) love.

³⁰ The text returns to present imperatives.

³¹ The underlying Greek word occurs in the LXX, but not in the GNT. Used of dogs, it means 'high-spirited'.

Apparently the early Christian society necessitated the use of this word.

³² This is a literal translation of the two elements of the Greek word. The main element means 'obscene', and in the context what is forbidden is 'dirty talking'.

³³ This Greek word (ὕψηλόφθαλμος [hypsēlophthalmos]) does not occur in classical Greek, the LXX, or the GNT; so it appears to be a construct of the Christian community. It probably implies immodest curiosity.

³⁴ One who foretells from flight and cries of birds (Latin: *auger*).

³⁵ One who uses charms or incantations to get what one desires (BDAG, 359).

³⁶ Greek μαθηματικός [mathematikos] 'fond of learning', 'mathematical', 'astronomical'. "The study of mathematics was a core feature of ancient learning and was closely associated with the study of celestial phenomena. The latter emphasis [is found] in our lit. and in the sense *astrologer*" (BDAG, 609).

³⁷ Matt 5:5; Ps 37:11.

³⁸ Cf. Isa 66:2.

³⁹ Cf. Heb 13:7.

righteously, you shall not show partiality when reproving transgressions.⁴⁰ **4.** You shall not doubt whether a thing shall be or not.⁴¹

5. Do not be one who holds out the hands to receive, but when it comes to giving withdrawing them.⁴²

6. If you have something through [working with] your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins.

7. You shall not hesitate to give; neither shall you murmur when giving; for you will know who the good paymaster⁴³ of the rewards is. **8.** You shall not turn away from the one in want,⁴⁴ but share all things with your brother, and you shall not say that anything is your own⁴⁵; for if you are fellow-partakers in what is imperishable, how much more in the perishable?⁴⁶

9. You shall not withdraw your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God. **10.** You shall not give orders to your male slave or female servant (who hope in the same God [as you]) in your anger, lest they should cease to fear the God who is over both of you; for he comes, not to call men with any partiality, but those whom the Spirit has prepared. **11.** But you slaves shall be submissive to your masters in respect and fear,⁴⁷ as to a type of God.

12. You shall hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. **13.** You shall never forsake the commandments of the Lord; but shall keep those things that you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything.⁴⁸ **14.** In church you shall confess your transgressions,⁴⁹ and shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience.⁵⁰ This is the way of life.

The Way of Death

5.1 On the other hand, this is the way of death. First of all, it is evil and full of a curse; [characteristics of it are] acts of murder, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, witchcrafts, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity, deceit, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness,⁵¹ foul-speaking, jealousy, boldness, exaltation, boastfulness.⁵² **2.** People who persecute the good, hate truth, love a lie, do not perceive the reward of righteousness, not adhering to the good or to righteous judgment, vigilant not for that which is good but for that which is evil, from whom gentleness and forbearance stand

⁴⁰ Deut 1:16, 17; Prov 31:9.

⁴¹ Holmes interprets this as: “You shall not waver with regard to your decisions.” The meaning of the phrase is now opaque.

⁴² Sir 4:31.

⁴³ “[O]ne who gives in return for services rendered” (BDAG, 87). The word does not occur in classical Greek, LXX (except once in the later translation of Symmachus in Jer 28:56 [Niederwimmer, 108, n. 54]), or GNT, and so appears to be a neologism. Lampe (*A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford, 1961]) glosses as *requiter*. However, since the text adds the adjective “good,” paymaster seems to fit the context better. At the same time, μισθος (misthos) has both positive and negative senses ranging from ‘reward’ to ‘punishment’, including ‘wages’ (it occurs again in 5.2 below).

⁴⁴ Sir 4:5.

⁴⁵ Acts 4:32.

⁴⁶ Rom 15:27.

⁴⁷ Eph 6:5.

⁴⁸ Cf. Deut 4:2; 12:32.

⁴⁹ Sir 4:26.

⁵⁰ Cf. Sir 18:23.

⁵¹ Lit. “a desire to have more.”

⁵² In the world of late antiquity listing vices was common, and even popular. This list is comparable to those found in the GNT at Matt 15:19; Gal 5:19–21; Rom 1:29–31; Col 3:8; and elsewhere outside the GNT.

aloof, loving worthless things, pursuing a reward, not pitying the poor, not toiling for the one oppressed with toil, not recognizing the one who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of the creatures⁵³ of God, turning away from the one who is in want, oppressing him that is afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, unjust judges of the poor, utterly sinful.⁵⁴ May you be delivered, my children, from all these things.

Against False Teachers, and Food Offered to Idols

6.1. See that no one leads you astray⁵⁵ from this way of the teaching, for he teaches you apart from God.
2. For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord,⁵⁶ you shall be perfect; but if you are not able, do what you can.⁵⁷ **3.** But concerning food, bear what you are able, but keep strictly away from food offered to idols, for it is the worship of dead gods.⁵⁸

Concerning Baptism

7.1. But concerning baptism, thus you shall baptize; after you have first reviewed all these things, baptize in(to) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living water.⁵⁹ **2.** But if you do not have living water, then baptize in other water⁶⁰; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm.⁶¹
3. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in(to) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁶² **4.** But before the baptism let the one who baptizes and the one who is baptized fast, and also any others who are able. And order the one who is baptized to fast a day or two before.

⁵³ πλάσμα (plasma) “what is molded.” This harks back to the creation story in Genesis 2, LXX. While this noun is not used there, the cognate verb πλάσσω (plasso) ‘to mould, fashion’, as of a potter, is used. In the Apostolic Fathers the noun is used to refer to humans in general.

⁵⁴ As the first was a list of vices, so this list delineates types of evildoers.

⁵⁵ Matt 24:4.

⁵⁶ Matt 11:29, 30. However, in the context “the yoke” refers to the twin issues of Torah observance and sharing table fellowship, which were settled amicably in Jerusalem at the first Council (see f. n. 58).

⁵⁷ Gentile converts are not required to become “perfect” Torah-observant Jews by taking “the whole yoke of the Lord” upon them, but at the same time they are urged to take on as much as they can, and in particular the food laws, and to abstain from food offered to idols.

⁵⁸ Acts 15:29 records the similar decision by the Jerusalem Council under the leadership of James. It was addressed specifically to Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. In 1 Corinthians 8, 10 Paul’s conclusion contrary to the Council indicates that the decision was not absolute or universal.

⁵⁹ That is, “running water.” The same Greek expression is used 6 times in Leviticus 14, LXX in connection with the cleansed leper, and elsewhere in the LXX, translating Hebrew חַיִּי מַיִם “living water.”

⁶⁰ That is non-running water such as a lake or a pool.

⁶¹ Clearly the preference was for water in its natural states; other water would likely be stagnant or otherwise unsuitable.

⁶² The meaning of the Greek verb βαπτίζω (baptizo) was self evident: it involved immersion in water. To speak of baptizing by pouring was a contradiction. This indicates three things: by now baptism is an institution involving water; it is to be performed even under less than ideal conditions with however much or little water is available; and the Didachist is mindful of the practice under dry and arid conditions, possibly because that is where he is located (Egypt is suggested as a possibility). This is the earliest evidence of the practice.

Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer⁶³)

8.1 But do not let your fasts be⁶⁴ with the hypocrites,⁶⁵ for they fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday.⁶⁶

2. Nor should you pray like the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel,⁶⁷ so you should pray:

Our Father who is in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.⁶⁸
Give us today our daily⁶⁹ bread,
and forgive us our debt,⁷⁰ as we also forgive our debtors;
and do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from evil⁷¹;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.⁷²

3. Pray like this⁷³ three times a day.

⁶³ This is the earliest known witness to the Lord's Prayer outside of the GNT. It is closer to Matt 6:9–13 than to Luke 11:2–4.

⁶⁴ Or, "coincide with."

⁶⁵ In Matt 6:16 the reference is to the Pharisees. Whether that is the case here is not clear, although the context indicates that they are Jewish.

⁶⁶ The driving force appears to be the desire of Christians to differentiate between themselves and Jews. The choice of Monday and Thursday appears local and private, but so does the choice of Wednesday and Friday. It is assumed, probably under the influence of Judaism and Jewish Christianity, that Christians will fast. The only consideration is when. Not noted in the text is the fact that the second decision is just as arbitrary as the first.

⁶⁷ It is not possible to decide whether the Didachist is quoting a written source (the stronger affinities are with Matthew's gospel), or "the living voice of the gospel" (Niederwimmer, 135).

⁶⁸ The Didache and the GNT both read literally: "as in heaven, so on earth."

⁶⁹ The Didache is an important witness at this point, since the Greek word used here, ἐπιούσιος (epiousios), is not known prior to the GNT, and is only found there in the two accounts of the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3). Origen (c. A.D. 185–251/4) believed it to have been coined by the Gospel writers, and to be a very rare word (*De Oratione* 27.7). Etymology is not very helpful since there are several plausible possibilities. The Itala (the earliest translations from Greek to Latin in North Africa) read *panis quotidianus*, 'daily bread.' Jerome preferred *supersubstantialis*, (mis)understanding it as 'excellent, special' or 'surpassing all other substances (creations)' (Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.* [OXFORD, 1949] 405)

⁷⁰ The GNT is plural.

⁷¹ The Greek ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ (apo tou ponerou) can be understood either as "from evil" or "from the evil one." However, in Did 10.5 below, speaking of the church, the prayer is "Remember . . . to deliver it from all evil," indicating how this verse was understood.

⁷² The last line was not part of the original Lord's Prayer, but was added by the church, at least in part so that the prayer did not end on such a negative note. Later on, the line included "yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever." However, note the sequence in 10.5 below where all three are found in the same order: "your kingdom . . . power and glory forever."

⁷³ The basic command reflects Matt 6:9. What is new is the command to pray like this "three times a day," likely in imitation of Judaism with its prayers morning, afternoon, and evening. In the previous chapter regarding fasting, the practice of the Jews required the choice of different days. In this, their three-times-a-day prayers are normative; what is different is the content of the prayer.

The Eucharist

9.1 But as touching the Eucharist, give thanks⁷⁴ like this. **2.** First, concerning the cup:

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the holy vine of your servant⁷³ David,
which you made known to us
through Jesus, your servant⁷⁵;
to you be the glory forever.

3. Now concerning the broken bread:

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the life and knowledge,
which you made known to us
through Jesus, your servant⁷³;
to you be the glory forever.

4. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one,⁷⁶
so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom⁷⁷;
to you be the glory and the power⁷⁸ through Jesus Christ forever.

5. But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord, for concerning this also the Lord has also said, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴ The noun “Eucharist” (εὐχαριστία [eucharistia]) and the verb “give thanks” (εὐχαριστέω [eucharisteo]) are cognates. The noun is the general word for ‘thankfulness’, thanksgiving in the GNT; later it became the primary technical term for the church’s principal act of thanksgiving, the Lord’s Supper.

⁷⁵ Or, “your child.” παῖς (pais) denotes a child, whether male or female. However, it also connotes a servant or slave of indeterminate age. In fact, the first time it is found in the LXX (Gen 9:25) it speaks of “Chanaan . . . a slave . . . to his brothers” (NETS). At the same time, it usually stands in contrast to δοῦλος (doylos), a bond slave.

⁷⁶ Cf. Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17 that called for unity.

⁷⁷ Overall, this is possibly a reference to the act of gathering the fragments after the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6. Since in John the Passover was on the Friday of the Passion Week, there is no Thursday evening Passover as in the Synoptics. In its place John highlights that the feeding was in the Spring (there was much grass), and that the Passover was at hand, and, being in Galilee, would likely have had a mixed audience. In the Synoptics Jesus takes the bread and blesses (εὐλογέω [eulogeo, cf. eulogy/eulogize]) it; in John, he gives thanks (εὐχαριστέω [eucharisteo]), speaking the language of Communion. In this context that is steeped in eucharistic terms, John tells of the gathering of the fragments so that nothing is lost, thus fitting the language and context of this chapter.

⁷⁸ Compared to the Lord’s Prayer, and 8.2 above, the order is here reversed.

⁷⁹ Cf. Matt 15:26; Mark 7:27–28 (it is not found in Luke) and Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite/Syrophoenecian woman, the source of the expression here. “[Dogs and pigs] did not refer to distinct classes of men but to men of all classes who set themselves in opposition to the gospel (cf. the term “cynical” [from the Greek adjective (κυνικός [kynikos]) ‘like a dog’]. . . . Phil 3:2 and Rev 22:15 sound like apostolic exposition of this mysterious saying (TDNT 3:1102, 1104). “If Jesus forbade giving what is holy to the dogs, he thus forbade (*also* at any rate) the giving of the sacred food to the unbaptized” (Niederwimmer, 153).

Prayer after Communion

10.1 And after you are satisfied,⁸⁰ give thanks like this:

2. We give you thanks, Holy Father,
for your holy name, which you have caused to dwell in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you have made known to us through your
servant⁷³ Jesus;
to you be the glory forever.
3. You, almighty Master, created⁸¹ all things for your name's sake,
and gave humans food and drink for enjoyment, so that they might give you thanks;
but you graciously gave us spiritual food and drink,
and eternal life through your servant.⁷³
4. Above all things we give you thanks that you are powerful;
To you be the glory forever.
5. Remember, Lord, your Church
to deliver it from all evil⁸² and to make it complete in your love;
and gather it together from the four winds—even the Church which has been sanctified—
into your kingdom
which you have prepared for it;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.
6. May grace come and may this world pass away.
Hosanna⁸³ to the God of David.
If anyone is holy, let him come;
if anyone is not, let him repent.
Maranatha!⁸⁴ Amen.⁸⁵

7. But permit the prophets to offer thanksgiving as much as they desire.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ This ultimately derives from Deut 8:10, where eating and being full and blessing the Lord your God are understood as sequential, hence the Birkat Ha-Mazon, the grace after meals in Judaism. This in turn carried over to Christianity. Originally the Eucharist bookended the fellowship meal with the thanksgiving for the bread at the beginning, and for the cup after the meal. In the now-distant past the common English prayer: “For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful” had its counterpart at the end of the meal: “For what we have received we are truly thankful.”

⁸¹ κτίζω ‘bring into existence, create’; not ποιέω ‘make’, as in 1.2.

⁸² Cf. 8.2. There is no ambiguity here, it can only reference ‘evil’, not ‘the evil one’.

⁸³ Matt. 21:9, 15. An Aramaic word (ܡܪܢܬܐ, translating the Hebrew מְשִׁיעַ הַיָּד ‘help’ or ‘save, I pray’) that carried over into the Christian church.

⁸⁴ 1 Cor 16:22. This is an Aramaic expression, capable of being understood in two ways, depending on how the word is divided: ܡܪܢܬܐ ܠܗ (μαρὰν ἁθά [maran atha]) ‘the[our] Lord has come’, or ܡܪܢܬܐ ܬܗܐ (μαράνα θά [marana tha]) ‘O Lord, come!’ BDAG prefers the latter explanation, and this is the form in the standard Greek text, UBS⁴. This and all similar Aramaic words found in the GNT are of special interest to linguists since they preserve examples of Palestinian Aramaic, a separate dialect.

⁸⁵ The third—and final—Semitic form in this short chapter. It occurs in the same form (ܠܗ) in both Hebrew and Aramaic, and carries the connotations ‘let it be so’, ‘truly’, ‘amen’ as a strong expression of affirmation.

⁸⁶ Holmes: “however they wish,” a meaning shaped more by the context than an actual translation of ὅσα θέλουσιν [hosa thelousin]. It is important for the neophytes to understand that the guidelines presented in the Didache are for

Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets

11.1 So, if anyone should come and teach you all these things that have been stated above, welcome him; **2.** but if the teacher himself should go astray and teach a different doctrine to its detriment, do not listen to him; but if to the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as [you would] the Lord.

3. Now concerning the apostles and prophets,⁸⁷ deal with them according to the rule of the gospel. **4.** Let every apostle⁸⁸ who comes to you be received as [you would] the Lord. **5.** But he shall not stay more than a single day, except if there be need, then [he may stay] another; but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. **6.** And when he departs let the apostle not receive anything except bread, until he finds shelter; but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.⁸⁹

7. And you shall not test or evaluate any prophet who speaks in the spirit; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.⁹⁰ **8.** However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he has the ways of the Lord. From their ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized.⁹¹ **9.** And no prophet ordering a meal⁹² in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet. **10.** If any prophet teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, he is a false prophet. **11.** But any prophet proven to be genuine who does something in a worldly manner portraying a symbolic meaning of the church (so long as he does not teach you to do all that he himself does) shall not be judged by you, for his judgment is with God. Besides, the prophets of old acted in like manner.⁹³ **12.** But if anyone should say in the Spirit, “Give me money” or anything else, you shall not listen to him⁹⁴; but if he tells you to give on behalf of others that are in need, let no one judge him.

them, not for the church in general, including—and especially—the prophets. The latter are free to pray differently, and at greater length.

⁸⁷ While the Greek construction could be understood to state that ‘apostle’ and ‘prophet’ are alternative titles for the same individual, it is clear that this is not the case. They are two separate offices.

⁸⁸ An ‘apostle’ here is not one of the twelve, but rather an itinerant missionary.

⁸⁹ Two aspects need to be noted here. First, he is a false prophet (one word in Greek, and used 3 more times here), not a false apostle. Though the latter term developed, apparently it is not yet in vogue, and there may have been some reluctance to speak of a false apostle. At the same time, it may serve to demote the apostle. Second, the text is very explicit in placing limitations. Two days pass quickly, and then the apostle must be on the road again, with nothing except rudimentary provisions. Apostles are welcomed, but not welcome to stay.

⁹⁰ Matt 12:31, though it is not clear that the warning is being correctly interpreted. Nor does the Didachist abide by his own strictures, as seen by the assessment criteria that follow.

⁹¹ The problem is not new, the GNT had already spoken of false prophets and false teachers, 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1.

⁹² Lit., “a table.” This may be to provide for the poor. To do so would be a conflict of interest.

⁹³ While this would have made sense at the time, its meaning is now obscure. Some have wondered whether the focus may have been on spiritual marriages, that is, unconsummated. Likewise, the reference to the OT prophets is not clear beyond that fact that by the then-contemporary standards such things as Hosea’s marriage, and Ezekiel’s actions would have seemed unusual, and even strange. Given the statement, some Christian prophets were also raising some eyebrows.

⁹⁴ This stern warning seems not to be tempered by Paul’s advice and defense: “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:14). However, see also Did 13.1, 2. The extent of the problem can be seen by the attention given to it both here and in following chapters as a guide for the new converts.

Reception of Christians

12.1 But let everyone who comes in the name of the Lord⁹⁵ be received. But then when you have tested him you shall know—for you shall have insight—what is right and what is wrong.⁹⁶ **2.** If the one who comes is traveling through, assist him, so far as you are able; but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, if it be necessary. **3.** But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for and eat his bread. **4.** But if he has no craft, according to your insight provide how he shall live as a Christian⁹⁷ among you, but not in idleness.⁹⁸ **5.** If he will not do this, he is trading on Christ. Beware of such people.⁹⁹

Support of Prophets

13.1 But every genuine prophet desiring to settle among you is worthy of his food. **2.** Similarly, a genuine teacher, like the workman, is also worthy of his food. **3.** Every first fruit then of the produce of the wine-press and of the threshing-floor, of your cows and of your sheep, you [sg.] shall take and give as the first fruit to the prophets; for they are your [pl.] high priests.¹⁰⁰ **4.** But if you [pl. in all v. 4] do not have a prophet, give them to the poor. **5.** If you [sg. in 5–7] make bread, take the first fruit and give according to the commandment. **6.** Likewise, when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first fruit, and give to the prophets. **7.** As for money and raiment and any other possession, take the first fruit as shall seem right to you, and give according to the commandment.¹⁰¹

Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day

14.1 And on the Lord's day¹⁰² gather together and break bread and give thanks, having confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure. **2.** And let no one having a dispute with a companion, join you until they have been reconciled, lest your sacrifice be defiled.¹⁰³ **3.** For it is concerning this sacrifice that the Lord said, “‘In every place and at every time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king,’ says the Lord ‘and my name is wonderful among the nations.’”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ Ps 118:26; Matt 21:9.

⁹⁶ Lit., “on the right hand and on the left.”

⁹⁷ The name only occurs here in the Didache. It is of Latin origin (*christianus*), formed from the name *Christus*, and the common suffix *-ianus* to indicate ‘adherent, belonging to’. It only occurs 3 times in the GNT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16), and in the uncorrected text of Codex Sinaiticus, a fourth century manuscript, it reads the variant *χρηστιανοι* (*chrēstianoī*) based on *Chrēstus* ‘useful, kind’, indicating that Gentiles often confused the two homophones, since the latter was a common proper noun, especially for slaves. Thus they would assume that the disciples were followers of one called *Chrēstus*.

⁹⁸ Compare Paul’s three-fold counsel in 1 Thes 4:10–12 from arguably the first book of the NT to be written: “But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.”

⁹⁹ It is clear that the church was vulnerable; the Didachist is anxious that it not be gullible. While hospitality was a duty, the resources were limited. Idleness was not to be tolerated; and craftsmen were preferred.

¹⁰⁰ No justification is offered for the equation GNT prophet = HB high priest.

¹⁰¹ The lack of explanation indicates that the hearers/readers were well informed of Jewish practices relative to firstfruits. Note in the same context that there is no mention of tithe (= 1/10th), or of tithing.

¹⁰² Literally it reads: “the Lord’s day of the Lord.” The Lord’s day is found only in Rev 1:10 in the GNT, and this is the earliest non-biblical reference. In both places the day is undefined, and in the GNT the day is the Sabbath.

¹⁰³ Matt 5:23–24.

¹⁰⁴ Mal 1:11, 14.

Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof

15.1 Elect for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are humble and not lovers of money, and true and tested, for they also perform for you the service of the prophets and teachers.¹⁰⁵ **2.** Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honored ones along with the prophets and teachers.

3. Furthermore, correct one another, not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel; and let no one speak to anyone that has gone wrong towards his or her neighbor, neither let that one hear a word from you, until he or she repents.¹⁰⁶ **4.** But your prayers and your acts of charity and all your actions, so do as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

Watchfulness; the Coming of the Lord

16.1 Be watchful for your life; do not let your lamps go out, and do not be unprepared,¹⁰⁷ but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord comes.¹⁰⁸ **2.** You shall gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for the whole time of your belief will not benefit you unless you are found complete at the last time.¹⁰⁹

3. For in the last days the false prophets and the corrupters will be multiplied,¹¹⁰ and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. **4.** For as lawlessness increases,¹¹¹ they shall hate one another and shall persecute and betray. And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and shall work signs and wonders,¹¹² and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall commit abominations, which have never happened before.¹¹³ **5.** Then all humankind¹¹⁴ will come to the fiery testing, and many fall away and perish; but those who endure in their faith will be saved by the accursed one himself. **6.** And then the signs of the truth¹¹⁵ will appear; first a sign of an opening in heaven,¹¹⁶ then a sign of the sound of a trumpet¹¹⁷; and third, the resurrection of the dead—**7.** yet not of

¹⁰⁵ This chapter introduces a whole new agenda: appointing local leaders, rather than depending on the itinerants. The limiting to bishops and deacons parallels the early days of the church (cf. Phil 1:1 for a similar grouping). *Inter alia*, it is made clear to the neophytes that they are not eligible for such a position, since these are the honored, venerable ones. At the same time, these local leaders are at least of equal standing with the prophets and teachers.

¹⁰⁶ 2 Tim 3:5; cf. Matt 5:22–26; 18:15–35.

¹⁰⁷ Lit., “your loins be ungirded.”

¹⁰⁸ Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13; Luke 12:35.

¹⁰⁹ Matt 24:10.

¹¹⁰ 2 Pet 3:3; Matt 24:10–12; 7:15.

¹¹¹ Matt 24:12.

¹¹² Cf. Mark 13:22.

¹¹³ Lit., “been since the world began.” Mark 13:19.

¹¹⁴ Lit., “creation of humankind.”

¹¹⁵ Matt 24:30.

¹¹⁶ Rev 19:11. Heaven is pictured as a dome, and thus able to be opened.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16.

all;¹¹⁸ rather, as it has been said, “The Lord will come, and all His saints with Him.”¹¹⁹ **8.** Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ The indications are that the Didachist believed that only the righteous would rise in the resurrection.

¹¹⁹ Zech 14:5; cf. 1 Thes 4:14.

¹²⁰ Matt 24:30; 26:64. This last chapter shows the interest of the early church in understanding the signs that foretell the end of the world.