

## DIDACHE

### A QUOTE

It is appropriate here to say a word about the writing called the Didache. Although this document was not considered for inclusion in the canon during the early history of the church, many scholars have thought it to be a very early document and some today quote it as if it were an authority on the teaching of the early church on the same level as the New Testament writings.

It was first discovered in 1875 at a library in Constantinople but probably dates from the first or second century A.D. Yet it contradicts or adds to the commands of the New Testament at many points. For example, Christians are told to let alms sweat in their hands until they know to whom they are giving (1.6); food offered to idols is forbidden (6.3); people are required to fast before baptism, and baptism must be done in running water (7.1–4); fasting is required on Wednesdays and Fridays but prohibited on Mondays and Thursdays (8.1); Christians are required to pray the Lord’s Prayer three times a day (8.3); unbaptized persons are excluded from the Lord’s Supper, and prayers unknown in the New Testament are given as a pattern for celebrating the Lord’s Supper (9.1–5); apostles are prohibited from staying in a city more than two days (11.5; but note that Paul stayed a year and a half in Corinth and three years in Ephesus!); prophets who speak in the Spirit cannot be tested or examined (11.7, in contradiction to 1 Cor. 14:29 and 1 Thess. 5:20–21); salvation requires perfection at the last time (16.2).

Such a document, of unknown authorship, is hardly a reliable guide for the teachings and practices of the early church.

### MY ANALYSIS

The Didache, otherwise known as the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is older than the Gospels. Scholars agree that the work is probably the product of the oral tradition that finally resulted in the formation of the gospels for it is so simple. It is probably Syrian in origin and from the late first century (page 14, the Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought).

The Didache gives the words of Jesus similar to the Gospels but different enough to indicate that its author knew nothing about these works. Anyway, it is significant that it does not attribute these words to Jesus.

The Didache claims to be the teaching of the apostles which implies that it is giving the teaching of these men about Jesus. Since Jesus was regarded as infallible it is unthinkable that the author would not have stated what sayings came from Jesus.

Section Two of the Didache is a Church manual. It gives the words for baptism as, “In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”, but does not agree with Matthew’s text which adds, “I baptise you”. The words have to be said right to administer a valid baptism and the Didache leaves out an important part if it really belonged in them in the first place. The Gospels were not available to the author of the Didache. This formula is simpler and therefore probably earlier than Matthew.

The Didache commands baptism in cold running water if it is available. This command is not in the New Testament. It suggests that the author did not hear of the Gospels which describe the mode of water baptism.

The Eucharist it prescribes says nothing about the, “This is my body,” stuff that the New Testament has. It is simply a thanksgiving coupled with prayers for unity. The manual prescribes, “Begin with the chalice” (9). The gospel Jesus started with the bread. Then the manual gives the ritual refuting those who say that the Eucharist words of Jesus were said before this ritual, which it calls the “eucharistic prayer,” was given. Eucharist means thanksgiving. Now the Eucharist words of Jesus are about giving thanks, “This is my body being sacrificed for you. Do this in memory of me,” and since this writer tells us to begin using the thanksgiving prayer as he says it is clear that the simple ceremony he gives is all there is to the Eucharist in his opinion. The Didache insists that people must be free from sin when they eat the Eucharist for it is a sacrifice. This may mean that it is the offering to God of the Church which suffers for him. Whoever wrote the Didache did not know of the gospels which recommend a different Eucharist ceremony. Whoever heard of an elementary Church manual that would omit the Eucharistic words having known of them?

The Didache speaks of broken bread being used at the Eucharist. That it is never called the body of Christ disproves the Catholic claim that the early Church always believed that it was the body of Christ. The Didache calls it bread which it would not do unless that is all it is for if the bread is Jesus then that is too important a doctrine to be left out of a elementary lesson on the faith. The bread might have been broken before the ceremony so the Christian view that it was broken during an unmentioned part of the ceremony is just fantasy. At the last supper Jesus gave thanks first before he used the bread and

wine. In the Didache Eucharist, God is thanked first for the wine and then the broken bread which would have been done before the this is my body or blood bit had this bit been used for that is logical. You don't thank God for the bread after you say the this is my body over it. So clearly the Didache is giving the whole Eucharist rite as it knows it.

The way the book is written and never mentions the apostles being alive and that readers can go to them for further information suggests that they were either dead or had vanished. You might feel that it could mean that the apostles wrote it but there is no reason to think that. Its author would have told the readers to be sure that the apostles approved of his book if they had still been going around preaching. The gospel of Mark (the earliest gospel), at least, could have been out by the time the Didache appeared so the silence of the Didache concerning gospels proves that Mark was hidden.

It is unthinkable that in a Church that tended to apostasy after the departure of the apostles for the next world, like the New Testament records, that teachings like the inspiration of the New Testament and the rite of the Eucharist would have been left out. The Didache contains very basic teaching and its author would not leave out other basic teachings unless they were unknown or rejected.

The Didache warns that it is an awesome crime to subject a prophet to verifications and it shall not be pardoned. This contradicts the gospel Jesus' willingness to give evidence for his claims and the apostolic approval for trying prophets out. It could be a hint that the resurrection of Jesus might be believed in by faith and not by evidence at all. The Didache, however, states that any prophet who leads an unholy life is to be condemned as a fraud. This naïve work should be acknowledging that there can be wolves dressed as sheep. Jesus did that in Matthew (7:15) but then the author never read this book for he never heard of it. You cannot say it might mean he did know it and despised it for this command he rejected was just commonsense and he would have agreed with it if he had known of it.

The Didache promises that if you love your enemy then you will have nobody to be an enemy to you. This contradicts the Beatitudes which say that the loving are those who are hated the most. And the life of Christ proves that if he was perfect then love was the torture and death of him. The Didache seems to be saying either that Jesus was not sinless or not crucified. This would explain why it was not centred on the person of Jesus but on his doctrine.

The Didache appropriates to itself the title, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", and claims to be divinely inspired. This is saying that Judas Iscariot, who the four gospels see as a traitor and a fake, was a true prophet betraying the fact that the early Church did not know what the Gospels said about him for the Didache says that real prophets are invariably good men.

Though I reject the notion that the New Testament says that Jesus did away with the Old Testament food laws, the Didache says that the laws are still in force and this proves that it did not know of Jesus' teaching or the gospels. Jesus said that he made all foods clean in the context of condemning the Jewish habit of condemning too many foods. It was only the man-made food laws he was opposed to and not to the biblical ones. Most in the early Church made the mistake of thinking he made all food on earth clean over reading the gospels and it is telling that the Didache did not make the same error. The Didache was early and the Gospels were non-existent or secret. Their traditions did not exist.

The book says we must reprove one another without anger. Nobody had heard then that Jesus was very sarcastic and insulting to the Jewish leaders. There were no public gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Didache is good evidence that the Jesus of the gospels never existed. It shows that the apostles were not as centred on Jesus as the New Testament says but on his teaching. If he did not exist or if he was obscure they could not afford to be. The only thing the book is interested in about Jesus is his visible return on the clouds of Heaven after the world is led astray by a false son of God who does seemingly holy miracles. There is no evidence that the book makes mistakes so it is denying that Jesus did miracles because why do them when they are not evidence of holiness? The Didache says that the truth is its own verification which is why it condemns trying out prophets which by implication condemns looking for miracles from them. If the return of Jesus is all that matters as this book infers by saying nothing else about Jesus apart from his being a good teacher and servant of God then the Jesus of the past does not matter and the Jesus of the past could only matter if he was known. The Didache believes that Jesus existed but hints that there is no reason to believe that for he was an enigma.

The Didache tells Christians to do whatever they are told and read in the Gospel of our Lord. The Didache has two sections, the first section is the Two Ways which explains how we are to be saved and be good Christians and the second is A Church Manual. The Church Manual is the section that tells us to read the Gospel of our Lord. The first section of the book or the first book if you prefer is about the way of life so this may be the Gospel of our Lord. Internal evidence shows that the book cannot mean anything like a New Testament gospel. It means the first part of the Didache for at the end of that part it says that it is the teaching of God and nobody is allowed to change it so it claims to be inspired by God. The whole Didache is like it is written for morons so it could not mean another book.

By the way, the Didache is better and wiser and saner than the New Testament. Christians should burn the New Testament and make it the new New Testament. There were books which some included in the Bible, like the Book of Tobit which Catholics added to the Bible. These are writings next in importance to the Bible. The Didache was one such book, according to Athanasius. Clement of Alexandria and Origen subscribed to the sentiment of the Church at Alexandria that this book was as much inspired scripture as the New Testament (page 194, The Canon of Scripture). The book purports to be the teaching of the apostles so it claims to be inspired for the apostles were regarded as inspired and even the gospels never claim to embody apostolic doctrine so this book is superior to them. Yes they say they are about the apostles but that is not the same thing for only the apostles can speak for the apostles while the gospels are at best interpretations. And it says that the false Son of God will mislead the world and names no source. This is telling us that it foretells the future by God's power. It understands itself to be scripture.

The early writings all show that the generation that studied them did not have our gospels because it was that generation that revered them and kept them and did not edit them to make them fit any gospels. Thus, nobody can argue that the books just reflect the deviations of the authors and that we can infer nothing about the Church's doctrine at that time.