

The Didache Discoveries

Alan Garrow

The Apostolic Decree

"The Teaching of the Lord, by the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles"

Separate parts of Did. 1.2-5a are combined in Luke 6.27-36. Matt 5.38-48 then conflates the two. An extant instance of 'Q'?¹

Idol-food is strictly forbidden – but circumcision is *not* required (cf. Acts 15).²

Baptism 'in the name of the Lord' (cf. Did. 9.5) = incorporation into a form of Judaism?

A 'cup-bread' Eucharist that equates David τοῦ παιδός σου with Jesus τοῦ παιδός σου – suggests an early date.



A mechanism for Gentile incorporation.

The baptised (who accept the conditions of the catechism) may eat with Jewish believers (Did. 9.5).

The 'Two Way's uniquely corresponds to James' 'implanted word', 'mirror', 'law of liberty' and 'royal law'.

Rules for apostles who may also be false prophets. These appear to address a highly specific problem (cf. Acts 11.27-30).

Explains the Thessalonians' hopeless grief and the detail of Paul's response in 1 Thess 4.13-18.³

Footnotes correspond to resources noted on p. 17.

Introduction

The *Didache* is commonly recognised as having evolved over a considerable period, so what lies beneath its surface? I propose that, when later additions are lifted away, two parallel texts remain. This booklet presents these two texts side by side. On the lefthand side is the text I identify as the *Complete Apostolic Decree* – the document created by James the brother of Jesus and the Jerusalem Apostles at the Jerusalem Council in 48 CE (cf. Acts 15). On the righthand side is the text I identify as the *Missing Epistle of John* (cf. 3 John 9). The latter appears to be a revised version of the former in which the central sections on baptism, Eucharist and visitors have been updated to make them more widely applicable. I speculate that the more timeless ethical and eschatological instructions, at the beginning and end of the text, remained the same in both versions.

At some point in their development, because both versions were seen as equally valuable, I propose that they were interspliced to create a new ‘double-bellied’ and ‘double-titled’ whole. This whole was then overlaid with further additions until, ultimately, it took the form we now know as the *Didache* – the text famously rediscovered by Archbishop Philotheos Bryennios in 1873/1880.

When, in 1883, Bryennios published his critical edition of the *Didache* it was widely recognised as an exceptionally important discovery. What he discovered, however, was like a key so thickly covered in rust that it refused to fit any known lock. When, however, that rust is removed,* the pair of ‘keys’ that remain fit two highly specific ‘locks’. They match the distinctive properties of two texts long assumed to be permanently lost: *The Complete Apostolic Decree* and *The Missing Epistle of John*.

* Ellipses [...] are used to indicate where an element of Bryennios’ *Didache* has been removed as a later addition. For detailed explanations of why certain elements are seen as subsequent additions see Alan JP Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew’s Dependence on the Didache* (LNTS 254, Bloomsbury, 2004).

The Teaching of the Lord, by the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles.

1.1 There are two ways, one of life, the other of death,
and there is a great difference between the two ways.

1.2 Now the way of life is this:

first, you shall love the God who made you;
second, your neighbour as yourself,
and everything that you would not have done to you,
do not do to another.

1.3a The teaching of these words is this:

1.3b Bless [pl. throughout v. 3] those that curse you and
pray for your enemies,
fast for those that persecute you.

1.3c For what merit is there
if you love those that love you?
Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
But love those who hate you
and you will not have any enemy.

1.4a Avoid the fleshly and bodily passions.

1.4b If someone strikes you on your right cheek,
turn the other to him also, and you will be perfect.

1.4c If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

If someone takes your coat, give him your shirt also.

If someone takes away from you what is yours,
do not ask for it back, since you cannot.

1.5a To everyone asking of you give, and do not ask for it back,
for the Father wishes that gifts be given to all from his own bounty.

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The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

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2.1 The second commandment of the teaching means:

2.2 You shall not murder,

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not corrupt children. You shall not be sexually immoral.

You shall not steal. You shall not practice magic.

You shall not use sorcery.

You shall not abort child or commit infanticide.

You shall not covet what belongs to your neighbour.

2.3 You shall not swear falsely.

You shall not bear false witness.

You shall not speak evil.

You shall not harbour a grudge.

2.4 You shall not be double-minded, nor double-tongued,

for the double tongue is a deadly snare.

2.5 Your word shall not be false or empty but fulfilled by action.

2.6 You shall not be greedy, nor avaricious, nor a hypocrite, nor ill-tempered, nor proud. You shall not plot evil against your neighbour.

2.7 You shall not hate anyone. But some you shall reprove, and for some you shall pray. And some you shall love more than your own life.

3.1 My child, flee from all evil and from everything like it.

3.2 Do not be angry, for anger leads to murder;

nor jealous nor contentious nor hot-tempered,

for all these things breed murder.

3.3 My child, do not be lustful,

for lust leads to sexual immorality;

nor should you use obscene speech or lustful gazes,

for all these breed acts of adultery.

3.4 My child, do not be a soothsayer,

for this leads to idolatry;

nor an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician;

do not be willing to even look at such things,

for all these breed idolatry.

The Missing Epistle of John

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- 3.5 My child do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft; nor avaricious, nor be conceited, for all these breed theft.
- 3.6 My child, do not be a grumbler, for this leads to blasphemy; nor self-willed, nor evil-minded, for all these breed blasphemy.
- 3.7 but be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth.
- 3.8 Be patient and merciful, and guileless, and quiet and good, and always revering the words you have heard.
- 3.9 You shall not exalt yourself or admit arrogance into your soul. Your soul shall not associate with the lofty but you shall walk with those who are righteous and humble.
- 4.1 My child, be mindful night and day of the one who speaks the word of God to you. You shall honour him as the Lord, for wherever the Lord's nature is spoken of, there the Lord is.
- 4.2 You shall seek out daily the presence of the saints to find support in their words.
- 4.3 You shall not cause division; instead you shall reconcile those who quarrel. You shall judge righteously. You shall not show partiality in reproving people for their faults.
- 4.4 You shall not doubt whether a thing shall be or not.
- 4.5 Do not be someone holding out your hands to receive, but closing them when it comes to giving.
- 4.6 If you have earned something through your hands, you shall give something as a ransom for your sins.
- 4.7 You shall not hesitate to give, nor grumble when giving, for you will know the good paymaster of your reward.
- 4.8 You shall not turn the needy away; but you shall hold everything in common with your brother or sister, and not say anything is your own, for if you share in what is immortal, how much more in mortal things?
- 4.9 You shall not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God.
- 4.10 You shall not command in bitterness your male slave or your female servant who trusts in the same God, lest they stop revering the God who is over you both. For he comes not to call people according to their status but he comes to those whom the Spirit has prepared.

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- 4.11 And you slaves shall be subject to your masters, as symbols of God, with reverence and fear.
- 4.12 You shall hate all hypocrisy and all that is not pleasing to the Lord.
- 4.13 You shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord but shall keep what you have received without adding or subtracting anything.
- 4.14 In the assembly you shall confess your faults, and you shall not approach prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

5.1 And the way of death is this.

First of all, it is evil and full of accursedness; murder, adultery, lust, fornication, theft, idolatry, magic, sorcery, robbery, false witness, hypocrisy, doubleness of heart, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, obscene speech, jealousy, insolence, arrogance, boastfulness.

5.2a Those who are persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving falsehood, not knowing the reward of the righteous, not adhering to the good nor to righteous judgement, lying awake not for what is good but for what is evil, those who are far from being meek and patient, loving what is futile, seeking repayment, not showing mercy to the poor, not labouring for the oppressed, not recognizing him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God's creatures, who turn away from the needy, oppressing the afflicted, defenders of the rich, unjust judges of the poor and altogether sinful.

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6.1 See that no one leads you astray from this way of teaching, since the one who does so teaches apart from God.

6.2 If you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect, but if you cannot, do what you can.

6.3 Concerning food, bear what you can, but abstain strictly from food offered to idols, for it is worship of dead gods.

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[Baptism]

- 7.1a Concerning baptism, baptise thus: ...
- 7.1c Baptise in the name of the [Lord cf. 9.5] ...
- 7.1e in running water. ...

7.4a Before the baptism, let the one baptising and the one being baptised, and any others who are able, fast.

[Eucharist]

9.1 Concerning the eucharist, **give thanks** thus:

9.2 First, concerning the **cup**:

We give thanks to you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant.
To you be glory for ever.

9.3 And concerning the **fragment**:

We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life and knowledge, which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant.
To you be glory for ever.

9.4 As this fragment lay scattered upon the mountains and has been gathered to become one, so **gather your Church from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.**

For yours is the power and glory, through Jesus Christ, forever.

9.5a Let no one eat or drink of your eucharist but those **baptised** in the name of the Lord ...



[Baptism]

7.1a Concerning baptism, baptise thus: ...

7.1c Baptise in the name of the 7.1d Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

7.1e in running water. 7.2 If you [sing. through vv.2-4] do not have running water, baptise in other water; if you cannot in cold, then in warm. 7.3 But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

7.4b Command the one being baptised to fast for one or two days beforehand.

[Eucharist]

10.1 After you have had your fill, give thanks thus:

10.2 We give thanks to you holy Father for your holy Name which you have made to dwell in our hearts and for the knowledge, faith and immortality which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant.
To you be glory for ever.

10.3 You Lord almighty have created everything for the sake of your Name; you have given human beings food and drink to partake with enjoyment so that they might give thanks; but to us you have given the grace of spiritual food and drink and of eternal life through Jesus your servant. 10.4 Above all we give you thanks because you are mighty.
To you be glory for ever.

10.5 Remember Lord your Church, to preserve it from all evil and to make it perfect in your love. And, sanctified, gather it from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for it.

For yours is the power and the glory for ever.

10.6 Let grace come and let this world pass away.

Hosanna to the son of David.

If anyone is holy let him come, if anyone is not let him repent.

Maranatha. Amen.



[Visitors]

11.3a Concerning apostles and prophets ...

11.4 let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord.

11.5 He shall stay only one day, or, if need be, another day too.

If he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

11.6a When the apostle leaves, let him receive nothing but enough bread to see him through until he finds lodging.

11.6b If he asks for money he is a false prophet. ...

10.7 Allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they wish ...

[Visitors]

11.7 ... and every prophet speaking in the Spirit neither test nor judge; every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven.

11.8 But not every one speaking in the Spirit is a prophet, but only those whose behaviour is as the Lord's, by their actions you can discern the false prophet from the prophet.

11.9 Every prophet calling for a table of food in the Spirit will not eat of it. If he does he is a false prophet. ...

11.12 If any prophet, speaking in the Spirit says, 'Give me money', or anything else, do not listen to him. On the other hand, if he calls you to give it to someone who is in need, do not judge him.

12.1 Let everyone who comes in the name of the Lord be received, after that, when you have tested him, you will know what he is like - for you will have right and left perception.

12.2a If the one who comes is a traveller, help him as much as you can,

12.2b but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days if this is necessary.

12.3 But if he wants to settle with you, and he is a craftsman, let him work and so eat. 12.4 If he has no craft, see to it in your own understanding that no one lives among you in idleness because he is a Christian. 12.5 If he is unwilling to do this, he is trading on Christ. Be on your guard against such people.

[Last Things]

16.1 Watch over your life. Let your lamps not go out and let your loins not be ungirded but be ready, for you do not know the hour at which our Lord is coming.

16.2 You shall assemble frequently, seeking what your souls need, for the whole time of your faith will be of no profit to you unless you are perfected at the final hour.

16.3 In the last days shall be multiplied false prophets and corruption and shall turn the sheep into wolves and love shall turn into hate

16.4a For with the increase of lawlessness they shall hate one another and shall persecute and betray.

16.4b And then shall appear the world-deceiver as a son of God and he shall do signs and wonders and the earth shall be betrayed into his hands and he shall do godless things that have not been done since the beginning of the age.

16.5 Then human creation shall pass into the fire of testing and many shall be caused to stumble and be lost but those who persevere in their faith shall be saved by the curse itself.

16.6 And then shall appear the signs of truth

first the sign of extension in heaven

next the sign of the trumpet call

and third the resurrection of the dead ...

16.8 Then the world shall see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven, ... [*H54 breaks off here*] and all his holy ones with him, on his royal throne, to judge the world-deceiver and to reward each according to his deeds.

16.9 Then the evil shall go away into eternal punishment

but the righteous shall enter into life eternal

inheriting those things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which has not arisen in the heart of man.

Those things which God has prepared for those who love him.

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Further Reading/Resources

Alan JP Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew's Dependence on the Didache* (LNTS 254, Bloomsbury, 2004)

Includes the full text of the Didache in Greek and English and a detailed analysis of the Didache's compositional history. A video introduction to this process is available at: alangarrow.com/original

¹Alan Garrow, 'An Extant Instance of 'Q'', *NTS* 62 (2016) 398-417

Argues that Luke knew and used the Original Didache, and that Matthew then conflated Luke's reworking of those sayings with the original. This suggests that the Original Didache was both early and widely regarded as authoritative. Text available at: alangarrow.com/extantq.

²Alan Garrow, 'Salvation by one step or two? The Didache, Acts and the background to Galatians' – essay in multi-author Brill volume (forthcoming, November 2024)

Argues that Acts 15 serves as a 'software patch' designed to disambiguate the Original Didache/Apostolic Decree in favour of a pro-Pauline interpretation.

²Alan Garrow, 'The Didache: Key to the Acts-Galatians Conundrum' – Paul and Acts Seminars BNTS, Maynooth, 2017.

Argues that the Original Didache is the Apostolic Decree and thus lies behind the crisis Paul faced when writing to the Galatians. Video available via: alangarrow.com/conference-papers

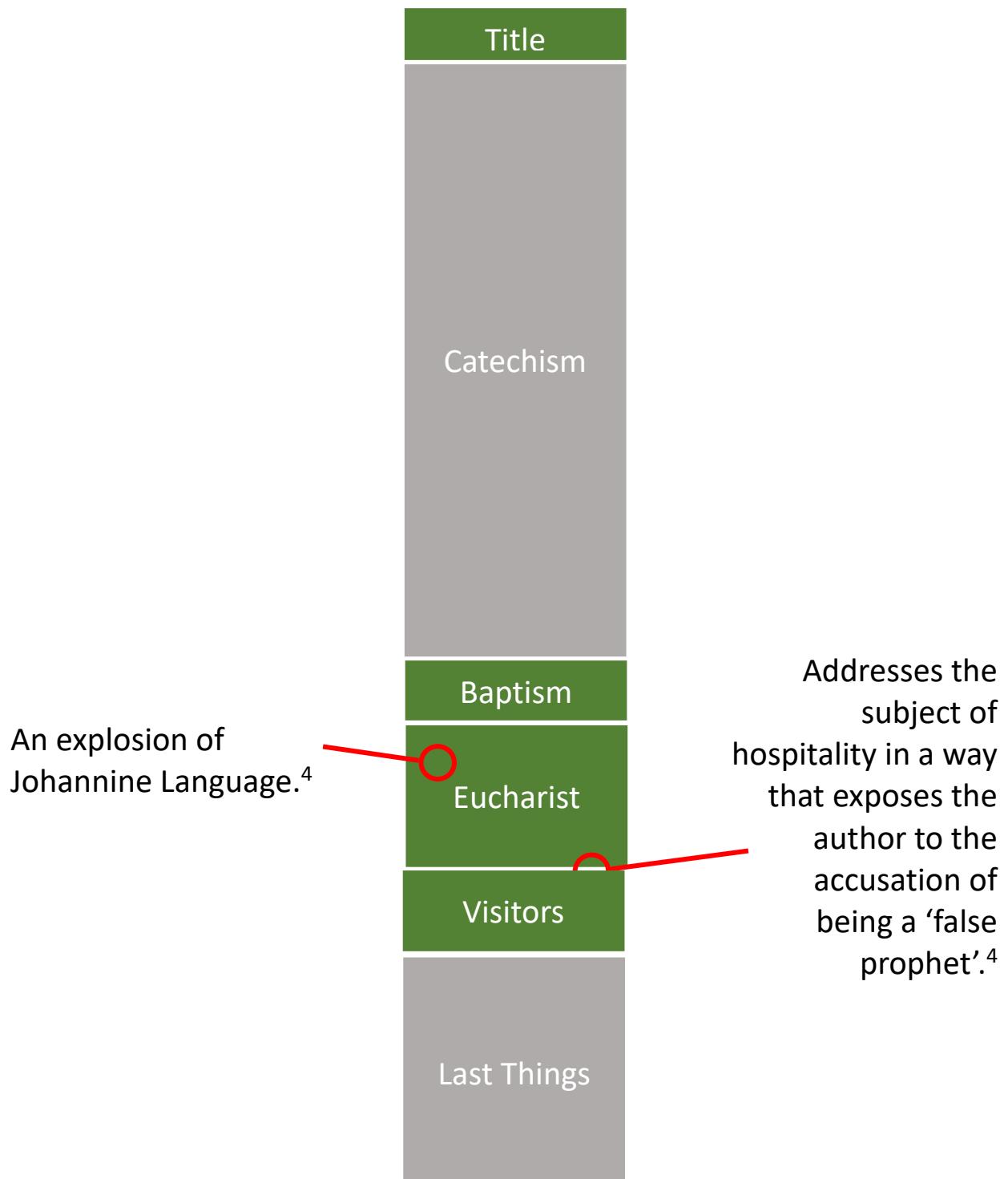
³Alan Garrow, 'The eschatological tradition behind 1 Thessalonians: Didache 16', *JSNT* 32 (2009) 191-215.

Argues that the Thessalonians' hopeless grief was generated by their knowledge of Didache 16 – and that this same text is the embedded tradition reworked by Paul in 1 Thess. 4.15-17. Supports a pre-50CE date for the Original Didache. Text available at: alangarrow.com/didache-and-paul

⁴Alan Garrow, 'The Missing Epistle of John' – Johannine Literature Seminar BNTS, Liverpool Hope, 2019.

Argues that the Revised Didache is the lost document referred to in 3 John 9. Video available via: alangarrow.com/conference-papers

The Missing Epistle of John



Footnotes correspond to resources noted on p. 17

www.alangarrow.com