

The Didache

Unknown (Early Church)

Early Church (pre-Nicene) · Rule

STROMATA 32

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INTRODUCTION

This is an anonymous work that also goes by the much longer title ‘The Lord’s Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations’. We don’t know who originally wrote it but it is generally expected to date from the 1st century and contrary to the title’s suggestion isn’t generally thought to be written by one of the apostles but by individuals in the generation succeeding them. Based on similar discoveries amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls it’s also likely to have started life as a Jewish catechism which was then adapted for use in the Early Church given its similarities to some documents used by the Jewish community during this period. For such an early text we didn’t actually discover any copies of this document until 1873 when it was uncovered by a Greek Monk in modern-day Turkey. Based on historical accounts by those like the Church Historian Eusebius it was known to have existed, only it was believed to have been lost before it’s eventual rediscovery.

The text itself was likely used as a way to introduce new believers, or whole communities of believers, to more practical aspects of the Christian faith. We can break down its contents into four broad areas: Ethics, Rites, Church organisation, and a brief section towards the end on the return of Christ. It is worth noting that the rites it commends to the reader are principally: Baptism, Fasting, Daily Prayer, and Communion. In regard to the organisation of the Church it places a great emphasis on itinerant preachers, with guidelines to discern the good from bad, and encourages the appointment of Bishops and Deacons from amongst a congregation.

Whilst no name is explicitly associated with the Didache academics believe that it seems to emerge out of a Jewish-Christian context looking to engage with a Gentile population-based on the terminology it uses and how it is constructed.

The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations.

Chapter 1\ The Two Ways; The First Commandment

There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, your neighbour as yourself;

and all things whatsoever you would should not occur to you, do not also do to another. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there, if you love those who love you? Do not also the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone gives you a blow upon your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes away your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to every one that asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). Happy is he that gives according to the commandment; for he is guiltless. Woe to him that receives; for if one having need receives, he is guiltless; but he that receives not having need, shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what, and, coming into straits (confinement), he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape thence until he pay back the last farthing. Matthew 5:26 But also now concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

Chapter 2\ The Second Commandment: Gross Sin Forbidden

And the second commandment of the Teaching; You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, Exodus 20:13-14 you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, Exodus 20:15 you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten. You shall not covet the things of your neighbour, Exodus 20:17 you shall not forswear yourself, Matthew 5:34 you shall not bear false witness, Exodus 20:16 you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbour. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.

Chapter 3\ Other Sins Forbidden

My child, flee from every evil thing, and from every likeness of it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leads the way to murder; neither jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper; for out of all these murders are engendered. My child, be not a lustful one; for lust leads the way to fornication; neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye; for out of all these adulteries are engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens, since it leads the way to idolatry; neither an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look at these things; for out of all these idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since a lie leads the way to theft; neither money-loving, nor vainglorious, for out of all these thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads the way to blasphemy; neither self-willed nor evil-minded, for out of all these blasphemies are engendered. But be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5 Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, Luke 18:14 nor give over-confidence to

your soul. Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with just and lowly ones shall it have its intercourse. The workings that befall you receive as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

Chapter 4\ Various Precepts

My child, him that speaks to you the word of God remember night and day; and you shall honour him as the Lord; for in the place whence lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord. And you shall seek out day by day the faces of the saints, in order that you may rest upon their words. You shall not long for division, but shall bring those who contend to peace. You shall judge righteously, you shall not respect persons in reproving for transgressions. You shall not be undecided whether it shall be or no. Be not a stretcher forth of the hands to receive and a drawer of them back to give. If you have anything, through your hands you shall give ransom for your sins. You shall not hesitate to give, nor murmur when you give; for you shall know who is the good repayer of the hire. You shall not turn away from him that is in want, but you shall share all things with your brother, and shall not say that they are your own; for if you are partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal? You shall not remove your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from their youth shall teach them the fear of God. Ephesians 6:4 You shall not enjoin anything in your bitterness upon your bondman or maidservant, who hope in the same God, lest ever they shall fear not God who is over both; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1 for he comes not to call according to the outward appearance, but unto them whom the Spirit has prepared. And you bondmen shall be subject to your masters as to a type of God, in modesty and fear. Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22 You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord. Forsake in no way the commandments of the Lord; but you shall keep what you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking away therefrom . Deuteronomy 12:32 In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

Chapter 5\ The Way of Death

And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and full of curse: murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rapines, false witnessings, hypocrisies, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing a reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for that which is good, but for that which is evil; from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing requital, not pitying a poor man, not labouring for the afflicted, not knowing Him that made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from him that is in want, afflicting him that is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, utter sinners. Be delivered, children, from all these.

Chapter 6\ Against False Teachers, and Food Offered to Idols

See that no one cause you to err from this way of the Teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear all the yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able, what you are able that do. And concerning food, bear what you are able; but against that which is sacrificed to idols be exceedingly on your guard; for it is the service of dead gods.

Chapter 7\ Concerning Baptism

And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19 in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you can not in cold, in warm. But if you have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Chapter 8\ Concerning Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer)

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; Matthew 6:16 for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Yours is the power and the glory forever. Thrice in the day thus pray.

Chapter 9\ The Thanksgiving (Eucharist)

Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David Your servant, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let 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 forever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs. Matthew 7:6

Chapter 10\ Prayer After Communion

But after you are filled, thus give thanks: We thank You, holy Father, for Your holy name which You caused to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You made known to us through Jesus Your Servant; to You be the glory forever. You, Master almighty, created all things for Your name's sake; You gave food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to You; but to us You freely gave spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Your Servant. Before all things we thank You that You are mighty; to You be the glory forever. Remember, Lord, Your Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Your love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Your kingdom which You have prepared for it; for Yours is the power and the glory forever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not so, let him repent. Maran atha. Amen. But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.

Chapter 11\ Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets

Whosoever, therefore, comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not; but if he teach so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, thus do. Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet that speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he hold the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit eats not from it, except indeed he be a false prophet; and every prophet who teaches the truth, if he do not what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself does, shall not be judged among you, for with God he has his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever says in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, you shall not listen to him; but if he says to you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.

Chapter 12\ Reception of Christians

But let every one that comes in the name of the Lord be received, and afterward you shall prove and know him; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you, except for two or three days, if need be. But if he wills to abide with you, being an artisan, let him work and eat; 2 Thessalonians 3:10 but if he has no trade, according to your understanding see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep aloof from such.

Chapter 13\ Support of Prophets

But every true prophet that wills to abide among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Matthew 10:10; cf. Luke 10:7 Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter 14\ Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day

But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.

Chapter 15\ Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof

Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, 1 Timothy 3:4 and truthful and proven; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Despise them not therefore, for they are your honoured ones, together with the prophets and teachers. And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel; Matthew 18:15-17 but to every one that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds so do, as you have it in the Gospel of our Lord.

Chapter 16\ Watchfulness; The Coming of the Lord

Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord comes. Matthew 24:42 But often shall you come together, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you be not made perfect in the last time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; Matthew 24:11-12 for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, Matthew 24:10 and then shall appear the world-deceiver as the Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is

said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

Source: Translated by M.B. Riddle. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886. Revised for New Advent by Kevin Knight.

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