

The Didache

Faith, Hope, and Life of Christians 50-70 C.E.

What is the Didache?

The Didache reveals more about how Christians saw themselves and how they operated on a day-to-day level than any book in the Christian Scriptures. It is not a gospel and, accordingly, it does not attempt to offer guidance by narrating a life of Jesus. In fact, the internal logic, theological orientation, and pastoral practice of the Didache runs decisively counter to what one finds within the received gospels. Thus the way is open for an early dating of the Didache.

A unified reading of the Didache has been impossible up to this point because the prevailing assumption among scholars biased in favor of textuality has been that the Didache was created in stages with the compiler splicing together pre-existing documents with only a minimum of editing. The end result, therefore, was a complex (or even a haphazard) collage that joined together bits and pieces of traditional material coming from unidentified communities/authors. In contrast, this volume explores the internal oral logic of the Didache that enables the hearer to reconstruct the functional unity binding the text together and accounting for the flow of topics from beginning to end.

The Didache represents the first concerted attempt by householders (Crossan 1998) to live the way of Jesus adapted to the exigencies of family, of occupation, of home--the very things which Jesus and his wandering apostles had left behind (Theissen). The senior mentors of this community had formulated the Didache over a period of years based upon their own successful practice in initiating gentiles to become full participants in their shared life. One overhears a candidate being trained from scratch by a mentor who becomes his or her beloved "father" or "mother" Finally, one discovers how a community poised on the threshold of the end times fashioned its daily life sharing the passionate expectation of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus.

Professor Aaron Milavec was inspired to undertake this study following a NEH summer grant with Jacob Neusner some fourteen years ago. His articles on the Didache have appeared in *BTB*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, *Proceedings of the EGLBS*. His forthcoming book will be divided as follows:

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Milavec's book includes three unique features:

An analytical Greek-English side-by-side gender-inclusive translation which allows the reader to glimpse the flow of topics and the oral structure upon first reading;

An origination hypothesis developed and tested so as to account for the particular oral logic and progression of topics (illustrated by flow charts) found in the received text;

A probing the clues of the text in order to reconstruct the standards and anxieties of the framers of the Didache against their social, religious, and historical background