

Admonition to Assemble Together in Didache 16.2 Reappraised

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Ever since the rediscovery of the Didache in 1873, this document has been the subject of intense scholarly research.¹ In particular, its witness to early Christian liturgical practices is well deserved.² The present paper seeks to fill a small and yet not insignificant gap in this now vast body of literature. More specifically, I would like to analyze the meaning of the admonition *puknw` deV sunacqhvsesqe* found in the final section of this text (Did 16.2).³ This expression, located in the context of the eschatological discourse, usually escaped the attention of scholars investigating Didache's witness to liturgical celebrations. This happened mainly because scholarly interest in the sources of the Didache frequently overshadowed a unified reading of this document, which prevented students of the Didache from establishing a link between the passage in question and the rest of the liturgical material. In what follows, I will first present a traditional approach to the interpretation of the passage under investigation. Next I will discuss how a recent alternative approach to the study of the Didache contributes to the understanding of this passage. My own application of this new approach to the interpretation of Did 16.2, supported by the analysis of the imagery in Did 16 and of some correspondences between the passage in question and the eucharistic passages of the Didache will conclude this paper.

¹ For a bibliography on the Didache up to 1995, see K.J. HARDER & C.N. JEFFORD, *A Bibliography of Literature on the Didache*, in C.N. JEFFORD (ed.), *The Didache in Context. Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, Leiden – New York – Köln, pp. 368-399. For the most recent bibliographies, see H. VAN DE SANDT & D. FLUSSER, *The Didache. Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Assen – Minneapolis, MN, 2002, pp. 374-404. A. MILAVEC, *The Didache. Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.*, New York – Mahwah, NJ, 2003, pp. 916-953.

² To give only a few examples: G. KLEIN, *Die Gebete in der Didache*, in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 9 (1908) 132-146. A. VÖÖBUS, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, Stockholm, 1968. J. BETZ, *Die Eucharistie in der Didache*, in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 11 (1969) 10-39. W. RORDORF, *La Didachè*, in W. RORDORF et al. (eds.), *L'eucharistie des premiers chrétiens*, Paris (1976) 7-28. J.A. DRAPER, *Ritual Process and Ritual Symbol in Didache 7-10*, in *VC* 54 (2000) 121-158. H. VAN DE SANDT, *The Gathering of the Church in the Kingdom: The Self-Understanding of the Didache Community in the Eucharistic Prayers*, in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, Atlanta, GA (2003) 69-88. A. STEWART-SYKES, *The Birkath Ha-mazon and the Body of the Lord: A Case Study of the Didache 9-10*, in *Questions liturgiques* 85 (2004) 197-205.

³ In this article the text and the English translation of the Didache are quoted according to A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, pp. 12-45, with some slight alterations.

Traditional Approach to the Didache

Traditional scholarship, predominantly engaged with source criticism of the Didache, has presented this document as a loose⁴ and “generically mixed composition,”⁵ a collage of various preexisting sources assembled together by an editor who did not have any particular interest in ensuring a progression of thought from the beginning to the end of the document.

Scholars supporting this approach have tended to isolate chapter 16, which contains an eschatological parenthesis (1-2) and a short apocalyptic section (3-8), from the rest of the Didache, which provides particular rules of community discipline.⁶ At best, such scholars have presented the eschatological section as merely a warning to the reader to obey the rules given in preceding sections, thus making chapter 16 somehow subordinate to the instructions that precede it.⁷ Fascination, moreover, with source criticism has stimulated scholars to focus on separate elements *within* this section, distinguishing the ancestral *Vorlage* and parallels with early Jewish and Christian documents,⁸ while paying less attention to the inner logic of the text itself. Supporters of this approach as a rule have not paid much attention to Did 16.2. This passage has been explained as one of the eschatological warnings, urging Christians to come to communal assemblies in view of the imminent end of the world. No particular importance has been attributed to the term *puknww* which specifies this command. It has only been mentioned that this term has two meanings: “frequently” and “in large numbers”, and that both of them fit equally well into this context.⁹

Alternative Approach to the Didache

More recently, however, Aaron Milavec has proposed a theory of intentional unity of the Didache.¹⁰ Instead of trying to find hypothetical sources, which eventually could help us to interpret this document, he tries to understand the inner logic of the Didache. The scholar convincingly argues that one can see a progression of ideas from the beginning to the end of the document. Approaching the final 16th chapter, Milavec again emphasizes its connection to what precedes it. In

⁴ G. SCHÖLLGEN, *Die Didache als Kirchenordnung. Zur Frage des Abfassungszweckes und seinen Konsequenzen für die Interpretation*, in *Jahrbuch für Antike Christentum* 29 (1986) 5-26, p. 5.

⁵ K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache. A Commentary on the Didache* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, MN, 1998, pp. 1-3.

⁶ F.E. VOKES, *Life and Order in an Early Church: the Didache*, in *ANRW II.27.1* (1993) 209-233, p. 217. Cf. G. SCHÖLLGEN, *Die Didache als Kirchenordnung*, p. 20, n. 117. For a detailed summary of scholarly debates on this issue, see K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, pp. 207-213.

⁷ See K. WENGST, *Didache (Apostellehre), Barnabasbrief, Zweiter Klemensbrief, Schrift an Diognet*, Darmstadt, 1984, p. 60. K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, pp. 217ff.

⁸ K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, p. 229.

⁹ K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, pp. 215f.

¹⁰ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*.

the particular case of Did 16.2, the main subject of our analysis here, he has established a close correspondence between this passage and the Two Ways section from the beginning of the Didache. More specifically, Milavec has suggested that the first warning to the community “Be watchful over your life (Grhgorei`te uJpeVr th~" zwh`" uJmw~n),” employing the noun “life” in singular, may refer either to the shared life of the community or to the Way of Life defined at the beginning of the Didache (1-4). As his argument progresses, it becomes clear that the scholar has chosen the latter option. Furthermore, Milavec proposes that Did 16.2 contains several elements which echo the beginning of the Didache. He suggests that the admonition ‘puknw`" deV sunacqhvseseq`” should be translated as “frequently be gathered together” and that it reinforces the earlier admonition: “(And) you will seek every day the presence of the saint (ejkzhthvsei" deV kaq' hJmevran taV provswpa tw~n aJgivwn)” (Did 4.2a). Then he associates the perfection in the following phrase “for the whole time of your faith will not be of use for you if in the end time you should not have been perfected (ouj gaVr wjfelhvsei uJma`" oJ pa`" crowno" th`" pivstew" uJmw`n ejaVn mhV ejn tw` / escavtw/ kairw` / teleiwqh`te:)” (Did 16.2b) with a reference to perfection in Did 6.2: “For, on the one hand, if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; (eij meVn gaVr duvnasai bastavsai o{lon toVn zugoVn tou` kurivou tevlcio" e[sh/:)” (and 1.4), which, according to Milavec, denotes the Way of Life, as defined at the beginning of the Didache. Overall, Milavec attempts to draw links between the beginning of the eschatological section (Did 16.1-2) and the Two Ways section (Did 1-6). On the one hand, this interpretation of the eschatological part of the Didache seems to be consistent with the main thesis of his book about the integrity of the Didache. On the other hand, however, Milavec’s interpretation does not in fact suggest that there is a development of thought in this instance. Rather it implies that at the beginning of the eschatological discourse the framers of the Didache just reiterate some key ideas already mentioned in the Two Ways section. Milavec does not give much weight to the fact that these same ideas find their expression also in the eucharistic prayers (Did 9-10). Nor does he pay much attention to the fact that the instruction in Did 4.2a is expressed in the second person singular, while the warning in Did 16.2 employs the second person plural. This is rather surprising, since Milavec, defending the unity of the Didache, has repeatedly emphasized that the fluctuation from the singular to the plural can be explained as the natural progression of thought within the text. According to Milavec, the fact that the instructions in the Two Ways section are given in the second person singular suggests that at the initial part of the training an individual believer was addressed. From the moment of the incorporation of a new member into the Christian community through the

baptism (Did 7) onwards the instructions are given in the second person plural, save for an occasional use of the singular in Did 7 and Did 13.¹¹ The warnings in the eschatological pericope are expressed in the plural, which should mean that here the entire congregation, not an individual believer, is addressed. This should warn us against an easy association of Did 16.2 with Did 1-4.

Thus, arguing that there is a close correspondence between 16.1-2 and the Two Ways section, Milavec seems to suggest that the former passage refers to eschatologically shaped individual ethics. This proposal runs the risk of weakening one of the main theses of the book, namely the gradual progression of thought within the Didache, since it overlooks the importance of the connection between the eschatological discourse and the material following the Two Ways section, especially the most immediate context of the passage under inquiry. In what follows I will attempt to examine Did 16.2, taking up Milavec's main thesis of gradual progression of thought in the Didache, while modifying his own interpretation of this specific passage.

Interpretation of Did 16.2

¹¹ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, pp. 234-236.

16.2 (And) frequently be gathered together,
 seeking the things pertaining to your souls;
 for the whole time of your faith will not be of use
 for you if in the end time you should not have been
 perfected.

16.2 puknw`" deV sunacqhvseseqe

zhtou`nte" taV ajnhvkonta tai`" yucaì"

uJmw`n:

ouj gaVr wjfelhvsei uJma`" oJ pa`" crovno"

th`" pivstew" uJmw`n ejaVn mhV ejn tw` /

escavtw/ kairw` / teleiwqh`te:

It is worth noting that this command employs the same verb *sunavgesqai* as in Did 14.1, which speaks of the eucharistic gathering on the Day of the Lord.¹² If Did 16.2 also refers to the eucharistic gathering, then the term *puknw`"* may not be interpreted as “frequently,” since in Did 14.1 the gathering is prescribed to take place on the day of the Lord. Otherwise Did 16.2 would contradict this prescription. In this case, another meaning of this term should be assumed, such as “closely,” “tightly” or “in large numbers.” Yet, the term “eucharist” is not explicitly mentioned here and it is possible that this command does not refer specifically to the eucharistic assembly. This notwithstanding, I contend that the admonition in question refers to the unity of the liturgical assembly, rather than to the frequency of celebrations. I will substantiate my position based on the analysis of Did 16.2 within its nearest and more extended context. In addition, I will try to show that this interpretation fits better the thesis of the unity of the *Didache* and the progression of thought within it.

First let us have a look at the most immediate context of the passage. Did 16.2 is situated within the eschatological section which addresses the entire congregation, using second person plural as the form of address. The two admonitions of Did 16.1 function as opening thematic statements, setting the mood for everything that follows.¹³ Both commands urge the audience to be vigilant. The warning in Did 16.2 elaborates what was said in the two previous warnings, which is indicated by the particle *dev*, whose function is to amplify what precedes it.¹⁴ Did 16.2 is connected to what follows it with the conjunction *gavr*, marking the following text as the explanation or clarification of Did 16.2. We start our analysis with Did 16.1, which marks the beginning of the eschatological section.

¹² (And) according to [the] divinely instituted [day/rule] of [the] Lord, having been gathered together, break a loaf. And eucharistize, having beforehand confessed your failings, so that your sacrifice may be pure (kataV kuriakhVn deV kurivou sunacqevnte" klavsate a]rton: kaiV eujcaristhsate, proexomologhsavmenoi taV paraptwvmata uJmw`n: o{pw" kaqaraV hJ qusiva uJmw`n h^/:)" Did 14.1.

¹³ Cf. A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, p. 632.

¹⁴ F. BLASS, A. DEBRUNNER & R.W. FUNK, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, London – Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press (1961) # 447. s.v. *dev*, in F.W. DANKER (ed), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago – London (2000) p. 213.

Concern with the Shared Life of the Community in Did 16.1

The first warning: “Be watchful over your life (grhgorei`te uJpeVr th`" zwh`" uJmw`n)” puzzled scholars as an unusual combination.¹⁵ It is formulated in plural, while the object “life” is expressed in singular here. Milavec contends that this singular “indicates either the shared “life” of the community or the Way of Life so assiduously defined at the beginning of the text (Did 1-4).”¹⁶ Further in the commentary he gives clear preference to the latter meaning, making a strong point for a connection between the beginning of the eschatological section and the Two Ways section.¹⁷ Here I would like to defend the former meaning of the “life,” based on the context in which it appears. As we have already mentioned, Milavec has convincingly argued that beginning with the chapter 7 onwards the Didache, using the second person plural, addresses the entire community. These chapters provide instructions concerning various aspects of the *community life*. On the other hand, instructions defining the individual behavior (in the Two Ways section) or referring to individual members in other matters (Did 7; 13) employ verbs in the second person singular. The fact that the commands of Did 16.1 employ the plural alone indicates that the community matter is at stake here. Furthermore, the warning in question follows immediately instructions on the organization of the community life (Did 15). Hence, I suggest that the “life” in Did 16.1 should be understood against this entire context: having given instructions concerning different aspects of the community life (Did 7-15), and more specifically, on the organization of the community (Did 15), the framers of the Didache warn the audience to be watchful about their *community life* in view of the imminent coming of the Lord (Did 16.1). This is a common message of the first two warnings (“be watchful...” and “be ready...”) of the eschatological section. They are elaborated and intensified in the third warning, in which the community life is promoted with the command to be assembled puknw`". What exactly is the meaning of this command? How shall we translate it?

Emphasis on Unity in Did 16.2

For a moment we will leave the beginning of this passage, namely the phrase puknw`" deV sunacqhvseseqe, for its apparent ambiguity. It suffices to note that this expression deals with community assemblies. The participative clause, immediately following the phrase in question, shows the benefits of such gatherings: it is for the good of souls, indicating that the individual well-being of

¹⁵ K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, p. 214.

¹⁶ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, p. 634.

¹⁷ Cf. K. NIEDERWIMMER, *The Didache*, pp. 214f.

the faithful should be looked for “within the interpersonal dynamics of the community.”¹⁸ Referring to the benefits of such gathering, this participial clause does not in fact help us to specify the meaning of the preceding phrase, since it may support a prescription to meet frequently as well as an admonition to form a unified assembly.¹⁹ Further motivation, provided by the following *gavr*-clause, brings more light to the interpretation of the passage. The emphasis here falls on perfection, which will be demanded in the end time (ejn tw` / escavtw/ kairw` /). As noted above, Milavec has pointed out that references to perfection are found also in Did 1.4 and 6.2 and, based on this, he has suggested that there is a close connection between the Two Ways section and the eschatological section of the Didache. But do these passages speak of the same thing when they employ this notion? It does not seem so for several reasons. First of all, Did 1.4 and 6.2 address individual Christians, while Did 16.2 is directed towards the community. Secondly, if we accept the thesis of progression of thought from the beginning of the document to its end, we should not neglect the fact that the theme of perfection is mentioned at still another place in the Didache, namely in one of the eucharistic prayers (Did 10.5). This prayer formulates a petition to God to perfect God’s Church: “Remember, Lord, your church, to save [her] from every evil and to perfect [her] in your love and to gather [her] together from the four winds [as] the sanctified into your kingdom which you have prepared for her... (mnhvsqhti kuvrie th`" ejkklhsiva" sou tou` rJusasqai aujthVn ajpoV pantoV" ponhrou` : kaiV teleiw`sai aujthVn ejn th` / ajgavph/ sou` : kaiv sunacon aujthVn ajpoV tw`n tessavrwn ajnevmwn: thVn aJgiasqei` san eij" thVn shVn basileivan, h}n hJtoivmasa" aujth` /:...)” The perfection asked for in the prayer is not an individual characteristic (as is the case with Did 1.4 and 6.2) but an attribute of the Church. It is worth noting that the eucharistic prayer and Did 16.2 employ the *verb* *teleioww* which might be an indication of a process which community undergoes. On the other hand, Did 1.4 and 6.2 employ the *adjective* *tevleio*", suggesting that an individual characteristic is at stake here. More importantly, the eucharistic prayer combines perfection with the themes of gathering and eschatology. The same motives are present also in Did 16.2, while not in Did 1.4 and 6.2. The above arguments allow surmising that the reference to perfection in Did 16.2 is closely related to the theme of perfection in Did 10.5. Both passages speak of perfection of the community of believers, which should be distinguished from personal perfection, referred to in Did 1.4 and 6.2.

¹⁸ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, pp. 640f.

¹⁹ Cf. however, K. Niederwimmer (*The Didache*, pp. 215f) who quotes parallel places in other early Christian writings, which tend to emphasize the idea of unity of congregation.

Because of this correspondence between Did 10.5 and the passage under inquiry, the former may help us understand the meaning of the latter. A. Vööbus has pointed out that the meaning of Did 10.5

...concentrates upon the undivided dedication, the wholeness of consecration to the divine will and of complete obedience to it... In view of the highest standards of dedication and of the sense for a deeper grasp of the intensity of obedience, it is hardly surprising that we find it at the very heart of the liturgical rite... What this eucharistic imagery [of perfection] means actually involves a deeper self-realization of the community as the *ejkkIhsiva*.²⁰

Thus in Did 10.5 perfection is connected closely to the theme of the final gathering of the Church, so that the gathering into the Kingdom constitutes the fulfillment of the request to make the Church perfect.²¹ Did 16.2 takes up the same topic. It becomes even more clear when we investigate closer the text following this passage.

Inner Corruption of the Community in Did 16.3-4a

Analyzing the rest of the eschatological section, Milavec has rightly observed that Did 16.3-8 unveils the last days scenario in five different stages. These are marked with an asyndeton, which is formed alternately of the adverb *toVte* and a combination of a conjunction with the adverb *kaiV toVte*, indicating the progression of events. All the verbs beginning with Did 16.3 onwards, are in the future tense. Thus this section forms a sub-unit within the eschatological passage. At the same time, it should be mentioned, that this section is closely connected to 16.2 as it takes up the expression ‘*ejn tw` ejscavtw/ kairw`/*’ (Did 16.2) by ‘*ejn gaVr tai" ejscavtai" hJmevrai"/,*’ and, even more importantly, by means of the conjunction *gavr*, marking the following text as an explanation of this sentence.²² This is especially clear with respect to Did 16.3 which is directly combined to Did 16.2. Did 16.4.a in turn forms an explanation to Did 16.3 marked by yet another conjunction *gavr*. Hence, for a correct interpretation of Did 16.2 it is important to understand the meaning of these following clauses which provide an explanation to it. The text of these passages runs as following:

²⁰ A. VÖÖBUS, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, Stockholm, 1968, p. 127. Cf. L. CLERICI, *Die Einsammlung der Zerstreuten. Liturgiegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Vor- und Nachgeschichte der Fürbitte für die Kirche in Didache 9,4 und 10,5*, Münster, 1966, pp. 94-102.

²¹ E. MAZZA, *The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer*, Collegeville, MN, 1995, p. 29.

²² E. BAMMEL, *Schema und Vorlage von Didache 16*, in *Studia Patristica* 4,2 (1961) 253-262.

16.3 **For**, in the last days, the false prophets and corrupters will be multiplied, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and the love will be turned into hate.

16.4a **For**, with the lawlessness increasing, they will hate each other and they will persecute and they will betray.

16.3 ejn **gaVr** tai`" ejscavtai"
hJmevrai" plhqunqhvson tai oiJ
yeudoprofh`tai kaiV oiJ fqorei`":
kaiV straqhvson tai taV provbata

ejj" luvkou": kaiV hJ ajgavph
strahvsetai ejj" mi`so":

16.4a aujxanouvsh" **gaVr** th`"
ajnomiva", mishvsousin
ajllhvlou" kaiV diwvxousin
kaiV paradwvsousi:

Did 16.3 describes the initial wave of the eschatological scenario in terms of the multiplication of the false prophets, the transformation of the sheep into wolves, and of the love into hatred. The following explanatory **gavr**-clause names this process “lawlessness,” which progressing brings further hatred, persecutions and betrayals. The main message of these two **gavr**-clauses is, then, that in the end time there will be problems with the integrity of the community. Furthermore, as Milavec has convincingly argued, these problems should not be understood as malefactions coming from outside of the community but those originating from within the community itself.²³ Hence, if this passage deals with the corruption *within* the compounds of the Christian community, we should expect that Did 16.2, which is commented on these two clauses, and especially the notion of perfection, which immediately precedes Did 16.3, present the same concern with the unity or integrity of the community. This supports our argument that there is a close correspondence between the notion of perfection in Did 10.5 and in Did 16.2. Both passages denote the concept of the unity of the Church and of the local assembly respectively.

To recapitulate, Did 16.2 consists of the admonition dealing with communal assemblies, explained by the need to be found perfected. On the basis of examination of the context of Did 16.2, we were able to establish that this passage, developing warnings of Did 16.1, addresses the whole

²³ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, pp. 642-645.

community and deals with the issue of the shared community life. At the same time, as explained by the two *gavr*-clauses following it, Did 16.2 addresses the problem of the integrity of the community. This integrity denotes the meaning of the perfection demanded in the final times, constituting the purpose of the command “*puknw`*” be gathered together,” which in this context should refer to the unified liturgical assembly. Consequently, the term *puknw`*” should be translated with “closely,” “tightly” or “jointly” in this place. Besides the context, this interpretation of Did 16.2 may also be supported by the implied imagery of this passage.

Implied Imagery in Did 16

The eschatological section of the Didache, compared to other apocalyptic texts, has often been characterized as “studied, dull... uninteresting” and devoid of imagery.²⁴ The reason is given that in the Didache “one finds neither mobilization of armies fighting world wars nor any cosmic upheaval in the seasons or the falling of the stars. Nor does one find demonic forces overwhelming and persecuting the children of God.”²⁵

Indeed, the Didache does not provide extensive descriptions of various disturbances expected in the final days. Nevertheless, its eschatological section should not be chastened as absolutely unimaginative either. Recently Jonathan Draper has offered an attractive interpretation of the “signs of truth” mentioned in Did 16.6.²⁶ He has observed that in the Ancient Israel the blowing of the ramshorn, accompanied by the raising of a totem, functioned as a sign for gathering of tribes to prepare for war. Further he has taken note that the Israelite prophetic literature repeatedly used these motives to announce the beginning of holy war, waged by God or on God’s behalf. As regards the three “signs of truth” in Did 16.6, Draper has suggested that this passage, similarly to the Jewish prophetic texts, uses the imagery of the warfare to present the concept of the eschatological ingathering of the elect.²⁷ While accepting this thesis, I would like to take it one step further.

As we have seen above, in the eschatological section the concept of the gathering is introduced by Did 16.2 which urges the local community to form a unified assembly in order to be found perfected in the end time. In what follows I will argue that Did 16.2 expresses the idea of the

²⁴ C. BIGG, *Notes on the Didache*, in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 6 (1905) 411-415, p. 412.

²⁵ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, p. 642.

²⁶ And then will appear the signs of the truth: [the] first sign [will be] unfurling [banner] in heaven, next [the] sign of [the] sound of [the] trumpet, and the third [sign will be the] resurrection of [the] dead (16.6).

²⁷ J.A. DRAPER, *The Development of “the Sign of the Son of Man” in the Jesus Tradition*, in *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993) 1-21.

unified gathering using military imagery too. I will base my argument on the use of the words of pukn- cluster by Hellenistic writers of the first and the second centuries C.E.

The words of pukn- cluster occur in works of ancient authors with various meanings, underlining such notions as frequency, continuity, or density.²⁸ Among the authors of the first two centuries C.E. we find only little evidence for the use of such terms in the sense of a unified gathering of people. It is worth noting, however, that this meaning of pukn- words is attested almost exclusively in the works of Greek tactical writers. More specifically, these authors used the term puvknwsi" as a technical term for the maneuver of "compacting" a military unit, for example, of a phalanx.²⁹ Thus the Greek tactical writer Arrianus says that "puvknwsi" is the contraction from a more open to a closer (puknovteron) [formation] regarding both rank and file."³⁰

Greek tacticians also emphasized that the puvknwsi" of phalanges was one of the most important requirements for military success. Hence, in stories about famous battles, it is often reported that experienced commanders do all they can to guarantee the puvknwsi" of their formations, especially before making important strategic moves.³¹

It is worth noting that some early Christian authors used similar expressions employing words of the puvkn- cluster to urge Christians to unity. Interestingly enough, these admonitions may usually be found in a context of eschatological discourse.³² One example will suffice here. In his Letter to the Ephesians Ignatius of Antioch urges his readers:

Be eager therefore, to come together puknovteron to give thanks and glory to God. For when you gather as a congregation puknw", the powers of Satan are destroyed, and his destructive force is vanquished by the harmony of your faith (13.1).³³

As I have argued elsewhere,³⁴ Ignatius using military terminology and drawing on the imagery of war, employed the notion of puknwv" to exhort his readers to form a *unified assembly* in order to be more effective in their fight against evil forces. This reminds us of Did 16, where the admonition to

²⁸ H.G. LIDDEL & R. SCOTT, s.v. puknov", in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford (¹⁰1994) 1552-1553.

²⁹ Asklepiodotus, *Tactica* 4.1 and 3. Cf. Aelianus, *Tactica* 11.3-5, etc.

³⁰ Arrianus, *Tactica* 11.3.

³¹ Polyaeus, *Strategem* 2.29.2; 3.10.7; 5.18.6. Plutarchus, *Aemilius Paulus* 20.3.

³² II Clem 17.3; IgnEph 13.1; IgnPol 4.2; cf. Hebr 10.25; I Clem 46.2; Barn 4.10; 10,11, etc.

³³ Translation is that of B.D. EHRMAN, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. I, Cambridge, MA – London, 2003. Here Ehrman translates the notions "puknovteron" and "puknw"" with "more frequently" and "frequently" respectively.

³⁴ See T. KHOMYCH, *The Notion of puknōs as a Distinctive Characteristic of Liturgical Celebrations in the Letters of St Ignatius of Antioch*, in *Studia Patristica* (2005) 62-67: forthcoming.

assemble closely (Did 16.2) is followed later on by a description of the eschatological gathering of the elect, which employs the imagery of warfare (Did 16.6). In this context the expression *puknw`* "dev sunacqhvsese" in Did 16.2 may also draw on war imagery, more specifically on imagery of compacting of a military unit. The framers of the Didache thus, could use the military language and imagery in order to make the admonition for vigilance more vivid and understandable for their fellow Christians. Taking into account its connection with the eschatological vision presented in Did 16.6 as well as with the eucharistic petition in Did 10.5, the unified assembly in Did 16.2 appears as an image and, at the same time, an anticipation of the final gathering expected in the eschaton. Thus, the eschatological section of the Didache, interpreted in this way, does not appear so absolutely dull and unimaginative after all.

Does Did 16.2 Contain Reference to the Eucharist?

As mentioned earlier, scholars investigating Didache's testimony to liturgical celebrations usually leave Did 16 unattended. It is rather exceptional, when a scholar makes connection as following:

...the gathering together of "your church" at the end of time was the overriding concern [of the Eucharistic prayer in Did 9].... Far from being an individual appeal for deliverance and holiness, the presumption [of the eucharistic prayers in Did 9-10] is that all stand together. This is consistent with Did 14.1-3 where the eucharist is regarded as "your sacrifice" and not as "your sacrifices." So, too, the apocalyptic ending warns: "Be watchful over your [singular] life" (Did 16.1).³⁵

Later on, however, Milavec has focused more on the connection of Did 16.1-2 with the Two Ways section, failing to develop further correspondence of the beginning of the eschatological section with other eucharistic passages. Milavec's translation of the notion *puknw`* " in Did 16.2 with "frequently," was probably one of the reasons for this failure, as it obscured the emphasis on unity of the assembly in this passage. The interpretation of the term *puknw`* " as "closely," suggested here, shows Did 16.2 as a warning for unity in an eschatological context. This emphasis on the unity of the liturgical assembly should be added to the correspondences (in terminology, grammar and themes developed) between the eucharistic passages of the Didache (9-10, 14) and Did

³⁵ A. MILAVEC, *The Didache*, pp. 395f. Cf. J.A. DRAPER, *Resurrection and Zechariah 14.5 in the Didache Apocalypse*, in *JECS* 5,2 (1997) 155-179, p. 176.

16.2 mentioned earlier. All this taken into account, it seems very likely that the phrase *puknw`" dev sunacqhvsese* in Did 16.2 refers to the Eucharistic gathering as well. It shows particularly close correspondence to Did 10.5, a petition that God assemble the Church at the end of time and perfect Her. However, there are differences between these passages too. Did 10.5 is a petition to God, while Did 16.2 contains an admonition to the local community to take their responsibility for its perfection, unanimously coming together for worship. At the same time, this admonition functions as an image, pointing out to the final gathering described in Did 16.8 as an assembly of "the purified elect and the resurrected saints who, together, form an entourage to welcome the Lord when he comes atop the clouds"³⁶ to bring the promised Kingdom to them.

Conclusion

This contribution has focused on the interpretation of a largely neglected passage Did 16.2. After a short overview of some approaches to its interpretation, we attempted to shed some more light on the understanding of this section, adapting Milavec's recent theory about the unity of the Didache and progression of thought within it, while modifying his particular interpretation of this specific passage. Based on the analysis of the passage and its context, we established that Did 16.2 gives an admonition to the local community to assemble together in unity. This interpretation was further supported by the analysis of the implied military imagery of Did 16 and correspondences between the passage in question and references to the Eucharist in Did 9-10 and 14, whose common concern is the integrity of the community. We pointed out that Did 16.2 is distinct from the other eucharistic passages as it contains a reminder of community's responsibility in view of the coming end and as such it presents the local liturgical congregation as an image of the final gathering of the Church or the elected saints in the eschaton.

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³⁶ A. MILAVEC, *Synoptic Tradition in the Didache Revisited*, in *JECS* 11,4 (2003) 443-448, p. 474.