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How the Didache Attracted, Cooled Down, and Quenched Prophetic Fire

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One gains the first impression that the community had more to be feared from abusive and wayward prophets than to receive from true ones. Upon closer examination, however, one discovers that the prophets were the true visionaries who already lived in the age to come and who incessantly called to their comrades to follow them. Here was their glory, and here was their failure--like two sides of the same coin.

Building upon earlier and projected studies (Milavec 1994, 1995, 1996, 2003), the task of this essay is to push the evidence of the **Didache** against its sociological background in order to probe how prophets originated, how they functioned, and how they disappeared.

Prophets Functioning at the Eucharist

Did. 10:7 introduces "the prophets" for the first time. Just prior to this, the eucharistic prayers of the community have been outlined in detail (Did. 9:1-10:6), and now the community is instructed in the imperative voice: "Turn towards (**epi+ trepete**) the prophets" (Did. 10:7). This literal rendering of **epitrepete** works well here. It suggests that the framers of the **Didache** are again relying upon the order of events to guide the order of their telling. Thus, the text would literally suggest that the community literally moved its focal attention from the action and words of the celebrant (Did. 9:1-10:6) to the action and words of the prophets (Did. 10:7). Most probably, however, the figurative sense of **epitrepete** is also intended: "Entrust [yourselves] to the prophets" or "Permit the prophets." Both the literal and figurative senses can be captured by saying: "Turn towards the prophets [entrusting them] to eucharistize as much as they wish" (Did. 10:7).

The community is told to rely upon the prophets "to eucharistize" or "to give thanks" (**eucharistein**)--using exactly the same word to specify what the prayer leader and the community do before and after the meal (Did. 9:1). Where is the difference? Three points:

1. **Prophetic Freedom** -- To begin with, one notes that the community has received a

specific prayer summary (**Did.** 9-10) for its thanksgiving while no such format was given to the prophet(s). This points in the direction of indicating what must have been unique about prophetic prayer, namely, that their prayer spontaneously flowed from the Spirit which inspired them on the occasion and not from a pre-arranged pattern which was set in advance (Halleux:9).

2. **Prophetic Content** -- While the **Didache** gives no themes and progressions which guided prophetic eucharistizing, it should not be imagined that the prophets gave thanks for anything and everything under the sun. Assuming this to be the case, then special attention must be given to the four disjointed eucharistic acclamations in **Did.** 10:6:

Come, grace [of the Kingdom]!
and pass_away, [Oh] this world!
Hosanna to the God of David.
If anyone is holy, be admitted!
if anyone is not, be converted!
Come Lord [**maran atha**]! Amen!

This acclamations might represent the spontaneous shouts or chants of various members of the congregation who were caught up by the future expectation with which the prayer leader closed the official prayer (**Did.** 10:5). In the light of **Did.** 10:7 which immediately follows, however, it can now be suggested that these jubilant anticipations of the future Kingdom might have been used in various ways: (a) by way of priming the prophets for their charismatic and "no holds barred" prayers of thanksgiving; (b) by way of summarizing typical prophetic themes which punctuated the closing prayers of the free-wheeling prophets; and/or (c) by way of indicating the spontaneous shouts/chants whereby the congregation affirmed the prayers of the prophets.

3. **Prophetic Style** -- The prophets were relied upon "to eucharistize as much as they wish" (**Did.** 10:7). The Greek phrase **hosa thelousin** ("as much as they wish") could also be construed to mean "as often as they wish." Thus, given the nature of prophetic inspiration, this leaves open the possibility that this or that prophet would remain silent precisely because he or she was, at that moment, uninspired. A prayer leader was expected to function and, unless caught by a fever or struck by laryngitis, he/she would function according to his/her skills which were at his/her command. The prophet, however, was understood to rely upon an inspiration from the Spirit which blows when and where she wills. The prayers and the gestures of the eucharistic celebrant might have been engaging, true, profound--provoking deep longings and offering fervent hope. The prophets, on the other hand, began with the closing eucharistic petitions of saving, perfecting, and gathering of the church (**Did.** 10:5) and transformed these into living and breathing expectations which those present were able "to taste and see"--provoking tears and trembling and jubilation. The prophetic eucharistizing, therefore, was the sweet desert which culminated every eucharistic meal.

The Origin of the Wandering Apostle-Prophets

The Didache, needless to say, gives a lot of attention to apostle-prophets. Some scholars suggest that, at the time that the **Didache** was written, itinerant apostles (Aune:208; Draper 1983:232; Niederwimmer 1998:169) no longer visited the Didache communities and that even prophets had taken to settling down (**Did.** 13:1). To this, Audet rightly responds: Why waste so many words on something which no longer existed? (Audet 1958:443) The oral tradition of the **Didache** devoted so much attention to the apostle-prophets because it needed to. Thus, they were dealing not with just a rare visit but regular visits.

Where did all these apostle-prophets come from? Where were they going? And why were some of them making the decision to settle in a Didache community? Three theories will be considered by way of explaining the evidence of the **Didache** on these issues.

Theory One: The Apostle-Prophets As Designated Missionaries

Acts 13:1-3 provides an illustrative case of how an originating community (in this case Antioch) might have acted under the impulse of the Spirit in designating two of its "prophets and teachers" (Paul and Barnabas) to begin functioning as "apostles":

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas . . . and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia . . . (Acts 13:1-4).

Acts initially notes that five named persons functioned as "prophets and teachers" within the Antioch community. While praying together, the Holy Spirit calls them to undertake an apostolic mission to proclaim the Word to outsiders. Acts does not make it clear whether Barnabas and Saul were seized by the Spirit to earnestly desire such a mission or whether the five named prophets together felt the need to send someone among them on mission and that, after prayer and fasting, Barnabas and Saul were selected. In any case, after the second period of fasting and praying, "the three prophets who will remain in Antioch lay their hands on the two departing and send them forth" (Haenchen:396).

If the above theory were correct, then it might be supposed that apostles such as Barnabas and Saul would "be received as the Lord" (**Did.** 11:4) and given hospitality. So far so good. But then three trouble spots appear:

1. The one or two day limitation on hospitality is puzzling (**Did.** 11:5). Would not the community naturally urge someone with the stature of a Barnabas or a Paul to stay on at least until the next eucharistic gathering? Would there not be the expectation that such apostle-prophets might energize the community with their charismatic prayer and their reporting of the

marvels that God has worked in their missionary adventures? If the apostle-prophets were anxious to get on with finding places where the word of God had not yet been heard, this could be allowed. The **Didache**, however, remains blind to all this and sets down a seemingly ironclad and "impolite" rule: "If ever he/she should remain three days, he/she is a false prophet" (**Did.** 11:5).

2. The rule welcoming a prophet "to settle down among you" (**Did.** 13:1) is not only puzzling, it runs directly contrary to what Acts 13 would lead us to expect. Anyone sent out on an apostolic mission was naturally expected to return to their place or origin and report their successes and failures. This is what Barnabas and Saul do (Acts 14:15-27). In Luke's Gospel, this is what the Twelve (9:10) and the seventy sent out by Jesus do (10:17-24). When the **Didache** invites wandering prophets to settle down permanently, consequently, this runs directly contrary to Luke's expectation that prophets were to return to their community of origin.

3. Paul, at one point, settled down in a community he founded for over a year (Acts 18:11). This clearly exceeds the one or two day limitation on hospitality operative in the **Didache**. Moreover, the **Didache** makes no mention of having been founded by prophets or of having sent out prophets. If the Didache communities had send out prophets (as Luke describes it), then it would be impossible to understand why, upon their return, the hospitality extended to them would be so severely limited. Furthermore, if the Didache communities had been founded by prophets, then the **Didache** would have mentioned them as exempt from the testing and from the limitations of hospitality governing prophets.

In conclusion, while Acts 13 provides an interesting instance of how apostle-prophets originated and operated, clearly the rules of the Didache were not designed with the likes of Barnabas and Paul in mind.

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Theory Two: Peasants Crushed by their Loss Herald the Kingdom

Crossan (1998) takes seriously Theissen's thesis that wandering charismatics moved about without money, without knapsack, without a change of clothes (Mark 6:8-11 and par.). What Crossan adds to this, however, is that these persons did not embrace this harsh life style willingly as a form of "voluntary renunciation of possessions" (Theissen cited in Crossan 1998:281) or as a "temporary" abandonment "necessitated by their mission" (Horsley cited in Crossan 1998:280), but that this condition came crashing down upon them because of the ruthless pressures of the Roman economic order wherein huge agricultural estates worked by slaves flooded the markets with inexpensive grains which squeezed the already marginal profits available from small family farms:

What that process [rural commercialization] meant was a complete dislocation of peasant life, family support, and village security. Some peasants, of course, did quite well at the expense of others. But, for those others, it meant certain indebtedness, possible enslavement, and probable dispossession. It meant a move from subsistence on a small family farm to the status of tenant farmer, landless laborer, beggar, or bandit. . . . It is these **destitute landless one** and **poor landed ones** that the Kingdom-of-God movement brings together as **itinerants** and **householders** (Crossan 1998:330).

Persons accustomed to grinding poverty for many generations may continually object to their plight but they rarely become revolutionaries. On the other hand, those who have lived by the work of their hands in comparative security for many generations become openly rebellious when economic conditions beyond their control reduce them to a landless situation where they are no longer able to protect either themselves or their children from a precarious hand-to-mouth existence menacing them with exposure to the elements and with slow starvation (Crossan 1998:166-170; Theissen 1977:39-40). Such persons, Crossan notes, could have easily embraced "a God who stood on the side of the oppressed against the oppressor, a God who opposed systematic evil not because it was systematic but because it was evil" (1998:282). Driven by a divinely inspired hope which healed their desperation, their humiliation, their homelessness, such landless peasants created a class of itinerant charismatics who visited the householders and delivered a powerful message of healing:

The itinerants look at the householders, which is what they were yesterday or the day before, with envy and even hatred. The householders look at the itinerants, which is what they may be tomorrow or the day after, with fear and contempt. The Kingdom program [of Jesus] forces those two groups into conjunction with one another and starts to rebuild peasant community ripped apart by commercialization and organization (1998:331).

If the above theory were correct, then it would be supposed that apostle-prophets would "be received as the Lord" (**Did.** 11:4) and given hospitality. Unlike Barnabas and Paul, however, these vagabond prophets were often smelly with unkept hair and ragged clothes--the condition which the homeless in our modern cities take on. Their life was their message, and their message was their life. They gave no thought to what they should put on or what they were to eat, and yet God took care of them. Once they delivered their message, however, they quietly left so that the householders would not feel that their hospitality had been overtaxed and so that, in a few weeks, they could be received again without any resentment. If they stayed "three days" or asked "for silver," they would have crossed over this delicate line.

The arrival of the Kingdom absorbed the entire lives of the apostle-prophets. They were the ones who hungered and thirsted for justice. When it came time to pray, therefore, their entire souls let loose! Their entire life of being ground down by the Roman economic order and being made to suffer what no one ought to suffer came to fruition in the prayer of yearning and hope that God would come soon. As they prayed, these apostle-prophets remembered the years of distress wherein, crop after crop, they slipped deeper and deeper into debt despite the back-breaking work of their entirely family.

The rabbinic tradition provides a parallel case of how deep suffering nurtures urgent prayer. According to the **Mishnah**, when the seasonal rains fail to arrive at the expected time, the people gather around the ark which has been brought forward "in the street of the town" and "they bring down before the ark an experienced elder who has children and whose cupboard is empty" (**m. Taanit** 2:2). Note that the prayer leader must be someone **respected**, someone **skilled** in improvising the daily prayers, and someone **suffering** at the cries of his own children for bread. This last qualification is very significant. The text explains why: "So that his heart should be wholly in the prayer" (2:2).

Crossan's theory does well in explaining why an apostle-prophet would be "received as the Lord" (**Did.** 11:4)--a high honor--but then strictly limited to "two days" (**Did.** 11:5) hospitality. Yet, the moment that a visiting prophet signals that he/she wished "to settle down among you" (**Did.** 13:1), he/she immediately had access to free room and board. How does one explain this sudden switch from restricted to unrestricted hospitality? Seven considerations follow:

1. As explained above, Crossan theorizes that the prophets emerged from the ranks of those peasants who had recently fallen from poverty into indigence. Within the Didache communities, however, the economic safety net (Milavec 1996) insured that its own members would not fall into indigence due to the shared work and shared resources among them. Thus, none of its own members was ever forced or tempted to take up a vagabond existence as a beggar, bandit, or prophet. Hence, Crossan inadvertently accounts for why the Didache community neither created nor sent out its own prophets.
2. Many or most prophets would not have been inclined to return home, not only because there was no home to return to since it had been repossessed due to defaulted loans, but because they themselves risked being apprehended by their money lenders to be sold into debt-slavery or to be publicly tortured. Thus, Crossan accounts for why prophets did not return to their home communities (as in Acts 13).
3. If they were unable or unwilling to return home, why then would they abandon their vagabond existence in order to settle down? Crossan notes that the charismatic vagabonds received the honor and respect due to prophets, but he did not note that some of them evidently discovered that the economic safety net--the mark of pastoral genius in the Didache community--was a redeeming feature of the **Didache** evidently absent in their base communities. Had it been present, they would have been saved from the suffering and the shame which accompanies the fall into indigence. It is understandable, therefore, that some prophets received a kind of existential shock when they realized that their loss of home, family, and occupation could have been avoided had they initially been part of a Didache community. Hence, with good reason, some prophets asked "to settle down among you" (**Did.** 4:8).
4. For those prophets in this condition, one can surmise that a long period of grief work would

be in order. Like those who have lost imitate members of their own family or those who are the victims of torture, they needed a time to heal. The **Didache**, in its pastoral genius, therefore allotted to them free room and board. This is in sharp contrast to the case of other visitors wishing to settle who fall immediately under the rule: "Let him/her work and let him/her eat" (**Did.** 12:3). Moreover, no time limit is given to this period of grief work. With time, however, such prophets found healing of hearts and of spirits and felt ashamed that others had to work harder to maintain their well-being.

5. With real pastoral wisdom, the **Didache** assigned the prophets the role of giving thanks to God for the first-fruits of members of the community (**Did.** 13:3). The one offering the first-fruits gained an eloquent prayer from the prophet; yet, the prophet gained a sense that God could be thanked for the little daily successes in the fields and in the shops and that not everything had to stop until the Kingdom arrived. Hence, by degrees, the prophets who settled in the Didache community began to laugh again and to work again. Bye and bye, their love of life returned. At the same time, one can surmise that the edge gradually disappeared from their anticipation of the Kingdom. Accordingly, they were inspired to pray less at the community Eucharist. Finally, the prophetic fire left them entirely.

6. Relative to first-fruits, the **Didache** has the curious rule of directing that they be given "to the prophets . . . but if you should not have a prophet, give to the beggars" (**Did.** 13:4). This provision for the absence of a prophet finds no explanation in the text; yet, here again, Crossan's theory supplies an unexpected solution. Given the allure of the Didache community, it would hardly be likely that any community would not have a single prophet. And, with even a single prophet, the community would have a resident prophet for life. Why then make provisions for the case when a community had no prophet? In view of the above, however, this exception clause would appear to confirm the supposition above that as the brokenness of settled prophets was healed, the prophetic fire left them.

7. If first-fruits were not given to an available prophet, then they were to be given to "the beggars" (**Did.** 13:4). This rule strongly suggests that the near equivalent of "a prophet" is "the beggars"--thereby unexpectedly confirming Crossan's theory that visiting prophets were in many ways indistinguishable from beggars and vagabonds.

All in all, Crossan's theory provides a very well-rounded explanatory matrix for the rules governing apostle-prophets in the **Didache**. While the text itself cannot absolute preclude any apostle-prophet of the type seen in Acts 13, one can see how poorly such rules would apply if it were supposed that prophets of the stature of Barnabas and Saul were intended. Until a more satisfactory explanatory theory is put forward, therefore, Crossan's ideas as expanded above will be used as the most probably ground for understanding the clues of the **Didache**. A third theory will be considered; yet, as will become evident, it will be shown to be very unsatisfactory.

Theory Three: From Troublesome Radicals to Resettling Refugees

Stephen J. Patterson (1995) has devised an alternate interpretation of prophetic origins based upon an extension of Theissen's theory of wandering charismatics as applied to the **Didache**. Patterson distinguishes two distinct phases in the response of the **Didache** to incoming prophets: in phase one, wandering radicals have become troublesome and the community takes measures to stop their abuses; in phase two, these same wandering radicals have lost their base of support (probably due to the Jewish wars) and are being admitted for permanent residence along with other refugees.

Patterson grounds his study on the conviction that **Did.** 12:2b-13:7 represents a later addition to the **Didache**. This conviction is based in part on the redactional studies of Niederwimmer (1998) and in part on the fact that the Coptic fragment ends at **Did.** 12:2a (Patterson 1995:319-324). If two phases are evident within the text itself, then it follows that these suggest two phases in the community's dealing with wandering prophets: "Thus 11:1-12:2a and 12:2b-13:7 represent two distinct moments within the history of the Didachist's confrontation with itinerants" (1995:324, error in citation corrected).

In phase one (**Did.** 11:1-12:2a), three classes of itinerants (apostles, prophets, teachers) visit the community but none wish to settle. In phase two (**Did.** 12b-13:7), apostles disappear, and wandering prophets and teachers wish to settle within the community along with other travellers whom Patterson surmises are refugees from the Jewish wars with the Romans:

One perhaps envisions the stream of refugees from Palestine which would have been produced by the Jewish Wars [66-70 CE], or later by the revolt of Simon bar Kochba [135 CE]. Both the settled communities [of Palestine] and the itinerants who depended upon them would have been displaced by such events. It perhaps is not surprising, therefore, that one finds among the refugees who are addressed here both normal refugees who have no claim to any special status (12:3-5) and prophets and teachers who have lost their base of support (13:1-7) (1995:326).

The advantage of Patterson's theory is that it imaginatively turns the clues of a textual history into a reconstruction of actual history. Leaving aside the question as to whether **Did.** 11:1-12:2a envisions three classes of charismatic itinerants or only one (namely, apostle-prophets who occasionally teach), Patterson's theory does provide a seductive explanation as to why phase one has no settling of wandering prophets and teachers while phase two is preoccupied with the settling (of refugees) and the support of prophets and teachers as well.

Allowing for the moment that **Did.** 12b-13:7 does represent a later addition, the following problems emerge within the imaginative thesis itself:

1. The limited assistance to travelers (**Did.** 12:2) and the conditions for possible settlement (**Did.** 12:3f) do not adequately reflect war-time refugees. As the Roman armies moved through Galilee, whole populations would have taken flight in advance of the armies; hence, in

a few days, dozens, maybe even hundreds of persons, would have arrived all at once. The first to arrive would have been offered food and lodging; those coming later would have to be given a loaf and sent onward to other towns.

2. Among war refugees, there would have been no "Christ-peddlers" (**Did.** 12:5). Every able refugee would have immediately pitched in to deal with the crisis situation. The **Didache**, on the other hand, speaks of "plan[ing] beforehand how a Christian will live among you not being idle" (**Did.** 12:4), a situation far removed from the mass of refugees which would descend upon a Didache community in time of war.

3. With community resources being spread thin, it would be preposterous to imagine that a rule would be established offering "true prophets" and "true teachers" free room and board without the expectation of doing any work. Rather, one would have expected some sort of triage system whereby the ill and the starving would have been taken care of first before the able-bodied were given the lion's share of the resources of the community.

Stepping back from the three theories put forward, one can now appreciate to what degree each theory harmonizes or clashes with the internal logic of the text itself. All in all, the theory of Crossan displays the greatest congruence since it answers not only some of the evident problems in interpreting the **Didache** but it brings light upon unsuspected areas as well. For the time being, therefore, the theory of Crossan needs to be used and extended until such time that its limitations accumulate and open the way to an even more intellectually satisfying solution for accounting for the visiting prophets which stand behind the **Didache**.

The Didache Community As Absorbing But Not Creating Prophets

From what has been discussed, the Didache community can now be seen as honoring the prophets yet taking care that they do not wear out or abuse their welcome. With great delicacy, the **Didache** set limits. The divinely given passion of the prophets was never to be challenged; yet, not everything a prophet said or did was to be taken at face value either. This guarded accreditation of the prophetic spirit becomes most evident when it is noticed that the Didache community makes ample provisions for welcoming prophets but gives no attention whatsoever to creating them and sending them out. Furthermore, wandering prophets are welcome to settle down--an indication that some prophets like what they see and know of the Didache community. But even with prophets settling in the community with semi-regularity, the distribution of first-fruits has to anticipate the case when a prophet may not be present and the first-fruits would have to be given to their nearest equivalent, beggars. This is an unsettling clue. On the face of it, the Didache community would appear to attract, absorb, and, in the end, destroy the prophetic spirit itself.

Why is this? What is going on?

To being with, the prophetic character blossomed in adversity. Crossan can find no

special reason why, in and of itself, there is anything glorious about abandoning house, occupation, family. Among the ranks of those recently broken on the wheel of harder and harder labor and deeper and deeper debt, the prophets emerged. Not everyone eaten up by the system, needless to say, automatically turned to God when at the end of their ropes. For some men and women recently driven into desperation, however, the prospect of the Kingdom of God seemed as the last hope in this world. No one expected governments to do anything for the poor. Friends and family helped to the degree that they were able; yet, in hard times, no more giving was possible lest all be exposed to the same fate. The prophets felt that God and God alone was their sure advocate and expected liberator (Pss 10:1-18; 34:16-22; 37:7-13; 70:5; Isa 41:17-20; Job 5:8-16, 29:11-17). And because they relied upon God so completely, they prayed for the coming of the Kingdom with a fierceness and with a persistence that defied human understanding. Broken in spirit, their confidence in the Lord enabled them to hold on and wait for the end times with the innocence of children waiting for their papa to come home.

Prophets offered their urgent prayers to God and received, in exchange, a small measure of food and lodging from the Christians who received them. When the prophets arrived at the doors of a Didache community, these folks had something to offer to prophets which went beyond a short period of room and board. Other Christian communities could not protect their own members against the ravages of the debt cycle; the Didache community, in contrast had worked out an elaborate way of life that made such a fate well-nigh impossible. One for all and all for one. Here was a business partnership (**koinonia**) which pressed to change the way economics was done. Needless to say, the Didache community did what it did out of its own conviction that everything belonged to the Father and that each person was a stewards using the good things of this world in such a way as to insure that "his good things are given to everyone" (**Did.** 1:5). Thus, far from forming an emergency chest to handle emergency situations (as appears to be the case in Acts and in Justin Martyr), the people of the Didache pioneered a way of being in the world that obviated starvation and debt-servitude.

No wonder, then, that some prophets came "wishing to settle down among you" (**Did.** 13:1). The community, in response, extended to them unlimited and free room and board, knowing full well that they had already abandoned this world and cared only for the world to come. With time, however, such prophets found that their broken hearts began to mend and their depression began to lift. With real pastoral wisdom, the **Didache** assigned the prophets the role of giving thanks to God for the first-fruits of members of the community (**Did.** 13:3). The one bringing the first-fruits gained an eloquent prayer; yet, the prophet gained a renewed faith that God could be thanked for the little daily successes in the fields and in the shops and that life did not have to stop and remain breathless until the Kingdom arrived. Hence, by degrees, the prophets who settled in the Didache community began to laugh again and began to work again. They returned to work because they felt ashamed (having worked all their lives) that others had to work harder to maintain their well-being. But, more than this, they returned to work because their love of life was returning. And as they worked and gained a degree of self-reliance again, their zeal for the coming of God burned less brightly. As such, they were inspired to pray less and less at the community Eucharist. Finally, the prophetic urge left them

entirely.

Conclusion

Within the first-century world of conflicting spiritualities, the **Didache** affirmed the everyday holiness practiced by house-holders while resisting the eschatological extremes practiced by those charismatic wanderers who had lost jobs, homes, and families in order to promote the Gospel. The pastoral genius of the **Didache** is that it knew how to honor the heroic virtue and charismatic gifts of its prophets without imagining that perfection necessarily consisted in doing these things. The **Didache** celebrated the love of God and neighbor (Did. 1:2) in the daily little things: in short prayers (Did. 8:2), in sharing resources (Did. 4:8), in reconciling those fighting (Did. 4:3). Prolonged prayers, selling all one has in order to give it to the poor, and reconciling the whole world to Christ were left to others--the few and not the many. Here then, in the moderate and delicate wisdom of the **Didache**, the unadorned attraction of ordinary holiness supplanted and tamed the unmoderated excesses of the wandering apostle-prophets.

All in all, it was not so much prophetic visions but prophetic living that was prized by the community. Thus, the wandering prophets discovered something about prophecy which they had never quite understood--that prophecy is not the end but the beginning and that a spoonful of prophetic living is more valuable than a whole barrel of prophetic dreaming. The prophets had hoped to make way for the Kingdom by the ardor of their words which burned red-hot due to the tormented despair of their lives. The members of the Didache community, in contrast, endeavored to find the joy of everyday holiness (the Way of Life) as they lived and worked and laughed among the saints. No wonder, then, the Didache community honored the prophets but not to give them even a small edge whereby to pry up and destroy the least of what had "been said beforehand" (Did. 11:1). No wonder, then, the Didache community ended up attracting, cooling down, and healing those charismatic wanderers whose minds and bellies had formerly burned with prophetic fire.

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How the Didache Attracted, Cooled Down, and Quenched Prophetic Fire

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Abstract: This essay examines the evidence of the **Didache** against its sociological background in order to probe how wandering prophets originated, how they functioned, and how they disappeared. Three theories are considered. The first theory (from Acts 13) suggests that the apostle-prophets were missionaries sent out from Antioch. The second and far-superior theory (from John Dominic Crossan) suggests that the apostle-prophets were homeless and landless peasants fired up with the hoped-for Kingdom which would restore their dignity. The third theory (from Stephen Patterson) reconstructs a redactional analysis which identifies the settling prophets as refugees of the Jewish wars.