

# Didache

## Introduction

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### Editions and Literature

The first edition of the Did., which includes a valuable commentary, is P. Bryennios, *Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων* (Constantinopolis, 1883). — A. von Harnack, *Lehre der zwölf Apostel: Nebst Untersuchungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der althristlichen Literatur (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1884; Anastatischer Neudruck 1893), 1f. — A. von Harnack, *Die Apostellehre und die jüdischen beiden Wege*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1895). — A. von Harnack, “Apostellehre,” in *Realenzyklopädie*, ed. A. Hauck, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1893), 1:711–30. The last two mentioned publications include a rich bibliography of ancient literature. — P. Sabatier, *La Didachè ou l'Enseignement des douze apôtres* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1885). — J. R. Harris, *The Teaching of the Apostles* (London: Clay, 1887). This work contains beautiful facsimiles of the entire manuscript. — P. Schaff, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889). — C. Taylor, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles with Illustrations from the Talmud (Lectures)* (Cambridge: Bell, 1886). — The manual volume by G. Rauschen, *Florilegium Patristicum I: Monumenta aevi apostolici* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1904). — F. X. Funk, *Patres Apostolici I*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Laupp, 1901). — An edition of the Did. that includes a critical apparatus as well as an Old Latin translation can be found in H. Lietzmann, *Die Didache, mit kritischem Apparat*, 3rd ed., *Kleine Texte 2* (Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1912). — J. Schlecht, *Doctrina XII Apostolorum: Die Apostellehre in der Liturgie der katholischen Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1901). — P. Drews, “Die Kirchenordnungen,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, ed.

E. Hennecke (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904), 182–94, as well as P. Drews, “Apostellehre (Didache),” in *Handbuch zu den neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, ed. Hennecke (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904), 256–83. — P. Drews, “Untersuchungen zur Didache,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* 5 (1904), 53–79. — T. Schermann, *Eine Elfapostelmoral oder die X-Rezension der “Beiden Wege”* (München: Lentner, 1903). — A. Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1903). — A. Seeberg, *Das Evangelium Christi* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1905). — A. Seeberg, *Die beiden Wege und das Aposteldekret* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1906). — A. Seeberg, *Die Didache des Judentums und der Urchristenheit* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1908). — G. Klein, *Der älteste christliche Katechismus und die jüdische Propaganda-Literatur* (Berlin: Reimer, 1909). — L. Wohleb, *Die lateinische Uebersetzung der Didache kritisch und sprachlich untersucht mit einer Wiederherstellung der griechischen Vorlage und einem Anhang ueber das Verbum “altare” und seine Komposita*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 7.1 (Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1913). For a larger selection from the extensive literature, see O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1913), 102f.

### Transmission

The text of the Did., which was broadly disseminated and often mentioned in ancient Christendom, was edited by Bryennios in 1883 from an eleventh-century manuscript which is now located in the Library of the Patriarch in Jerusalem (in what follows, the abbreviation for this manuscript will be H).<sup>1</sup> This manuscript is by far the most important witness to the text. The first part of the Teaching, namely the Two Ways (1:1–6:1), is also preserved within a Latin translation (L). The main witness for this translation is a manuscript in Munich. A fragment of L (1:1–2:5) is also preserved in a Melker codex. The letter of Barnabas can be considered (see below) a secondary witness for certain parts of the text. Additionally, some writings from the later ecclesiastical antiquity are of help: For example, Book VII of the Apostolic Constitutions (A) originating from the fourth century and the Apostolic Church Ordinance (K). Von Harnack prints the possible fragments of both texts in his edition of the Didache (Did. 178–92, 225–37 ab), as well as certain parts of the Life of Archimandrite Shenouda (Shenoute of Atripe), which Iselin edited in *Texte und Untersuchungen* (S). Little comes

1. TN: Knopf originally used the abbreviation M (i.e., “Manuskript”) for this manuscript. However, the abbreviation H (short for Codex Hierosolymitanus) is used throughout this translation, in conformity with the contemporary literature.

from the use of the Didache in the syntagma of Athanasius and in the pseudoathanasian *Fides Nicaena* (Batiffol, *Studia Patristica*, 2:121).

### Points of Contact and Witnesses

The first part of the Did., the Two Ways, shows close points of contact with Barn. 18–20 (see comments), and also there are points of contact between Barn. 4:9f and Did. 16:2. Unfortunately, however, it cannot be said that the two texts are directly dependent upon one another. The similarities between the texts go back instead to a common source, the Two Ways. Overall, Barnabas seems to have retained its more original form. Even contact between Hermas, *Mand.* II.4–6 and Did. 1:5 (cf. comments on this verse) does not give way to a sure conclusion. The other witnesses to the text are mostly late, and there are not many of them. The most important are Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.20.100.4, Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 3.25.4, the 39th Festal Letter of Athanasius, the stichometry of Nicephorus, and the list of 60 canonical books (the last three texts printed by Preuschen, *Analecta*, 2:42–52, 62–64, 68–70).

### Sources

It can be considered a certainty that Did. 1–6 was originally a Jewish text which dealt with the “Two Ways.” It is also likely that the form of this proselyte catechism, which was available to the author of the Did., contained the largest part of ch. 16, the concluding apocalyptic portrait (Did. 16:3–7). Perhaps Did. 16:2 was also a part of the Jewish text, since a clear parallel to this passage can again be found in Barnabas (4:9f). The Jewish text has been taken over by the Did. without significant alterations. Only what is written in Did. 1:3–6 is a Christian revision of the Jewish *Vorlage*: The words of the Lord are brought in only here, in connection with the Two Ways. Yet these words of the Lord are missing in the form of the Two Ways presented in Barnabas.

### Date and Provenance

At first glance, it is clear that the work is very old. It still bears witness to the old Pneumatics, beside whom the official ministerial office plays only a minor role. The authorities of the past, besides the OT, are the Lord in the Gospel and the Twelve Apostles. Non-gospel portions of the NT are not taken into consideration. The cult is still very free, and the prayers of

the Lord's Supper have a completely non-Pauline form. The longing for the end is tense and is substantial. The Did. could not have been composed later than 150 CE. But other observations show that the date should not be placed too early either: the idea of giving the Lord's teaching to the gentiles through the Twelve Apostles (cf. Acts and Matt 28:19f), the decline of the old Pneumatics (11:3–12), the church scattered throughout the world (9:4; 10:5), and the number of congregations (11:6) all point clearly and with certainty beyond the apostolic age. Unfortunately, it is difficult to date the text more precisely, leaving a broad range of dates between 90–150 CE. If the author knows Matthew and possibly even Luke, as he presumably does, then it is not necessary to depart far from a post 100 CE date as the earliest possible option. Not much can be deduced from the obvious relationship between the Did. and Barnabas, since this relationship is judged to be indirect. This is similarly true of the Did.'s relationship with Hermas. The earliest author who explicitly refers to the Did. is Clement of Alexandria (see above). Therefore, unfortunately, the date of the origin of this extremely significant work must be left rather indefinite.

The question of the provenance of the Did. is not as problematic. It could not have originated in the West; only the East is possible, though certainly not Asia Minor. Either Egypt or Syria or Palestine are options. Contact with Barnabas, which probably originated in Egypt, the most ancient reception of the Did. in Clement of Alexandria, and the strange form of the doxology in the Lord's Prayer in 8:2 (see the discussion there) causes one to think of Egypt as the provenance for the Did. Contrary to this assumption, however, is the reference to "bread on the hills" in Did. 9:4 (see discussion there), which would have been an impossible concept for the inhabitants of the Nile valley as well as those of the Delta. Standing behind the two-part doxology (of course βασιλεία and δόξα; omit καὶ ἡ δύναμις) is Matt 6:13 as well as Tatian and cur. (vac. syr. sin.).<sup>2</sup> The scarcity of water mentioned in Did. 7:2f, fits poorly in the context of the rich supply in Egypt. The Did. does not evidence any knowledge of presbyters and therefore hardly could have been written in Egypt (see Hauschildt, "πρεσβύτεροι"). The strange close connection the Christian congregations share with Judaism (see Did. 8–10), whose customs and traditions still influence the Christian congregations, suggests that Syria and Palestine are much more likely to have been the provenance of the work than Egypt. Admittedly, the adoption of the Two Ways could take place anywhere within the diaspora. — Because of the circumstances presupposed in Did. 13, one

2. TN: cur. = Curetonian Syriac; vac. = is missing; syr. sin. = Sinaitic Syriac. Thank you to both Stephen Carlson and James Dowden for their clarification on the meaning of these abbreviations.

must assume that the Did. did not originate in a clearly urban community, but in more remote, rural or small-town circles. From Did. 11:6 (see the discussion of this passage), it can be concluded that the Christians and Christian congregations are not spread out too thinly.

### The Superscription

Of the two superscriptions that H offers, the second, fuller one is likely the original one, whereas the first, abbreviated form comes from the scribe of the manuscript. A teaching based on the words of the Lord (1:3–5; 4:13; 8:2; 11:3; 15:3f) will be presented. διδασχή is conceived here very anciently as practical instruction about moral commandments and congregational ordinances; see Barn. 16:9; 18:1 and the διδάγματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Justin, 1 *Apol.* 14.4. The apostles are the mediators of the moral teaching and the church order, not in the sense that the author wanted his booklet to be thought of as written by them, but in such a way that the apostles, and specifically the Twelve, as is often the case, appear in the post-apostolic age as mediators and guarantors of all teaching, tradition, and institutions; see the general view of the Acts of the Apostles; see further Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 1 Clem. 44:1–3; Rev 21:14; etc. “The teaching” comes from the Lord and is vouched for and passed on by the Twelve apostles. The addition of τοῖς ἔθνεσιν recalls Matt 28:19, but does not need to have originated from there; on the matter, see still Justin, 1 *Apol.* 39.3: ἀπὸ γὰρ Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἄνδρες δεκαδύο τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον . . . διὰ δὲ θεοῦ δυνάμεως ἐμήνυσαν παντὶ γένει ἀνθρώπων ὡς ἀπεστάλησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διδάξαι πάντας τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγον. The abbreviated title διδ. τ. δωδ. ἀποστ. is offered in all places of the early church literature where the Did. is mentioned, except in H; see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* III 25.4: τῶν ἀποστόλων αἱ λεγόμεναι διδασχαί, Athanasius in his 39th Festal Letter: διδασχὴ καλουμένη τῶν ἀποστόλων, stichometry of Nicephorus: διδασχὴ ἀποστόλων, list of the 60 canonical books: διδασχαὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων (see the Preuschen, *Analecta II*, 49f, 64, 69); also the Latin church called the writing: *doctrina apostolorum*, see the superscription: *De doctrina apostolorum* in the Munich manuscript and Ps. Cyprian, *Adv. aleat.* 4. The reason the original, fuller title was abbreviated to διδασχὴ τῶν [δώδεκα] ἀποστόλων and not to διδασχὴ κυρίου is because the second abbreviation was too broad and indefinite and did not distinguish the text sufficiently from the Gospel literature.

## I. The Two Ways: The Baptismal Catechism (1:1—6:2)

The majority of the exhortations preserved here comes from a Jewish proselyte catechism, which was simply adopted and prepared for congregational use (cf. the introduction). The very general content of this Jewish work, which stayed away from everything that had to do with Jewish ceremonial and cultic laws, made it easy to adopt the writing. We view the revised and Christian transmitted text as a Christian phenomenon, but take into account the Jewish parallels. As can also be observed elsewhere, the Jewish diaspora prepared the Christian proclamation. On the surface at least, it was a great advantage in this case, since one did not need a new version of a moral teaching but could follow older, proven wisdom. The proverbial literature of the LXX was gladly and often used by Christians.

### A. There Are Two Ways (1:1)

#### *Translation*

<sup>1:1</sup> There are two ways, one which leads to life and one to death;  
but there is a great difference between the two ways.

#### *Textual Notes*

1:1 The image of the two ways or of pairs (God and mankind; the righteous and the unrighteous; of justice and injustice) occurs extraordinarily often within the LXX. The number exceeds the hundreds; see the concordance under the term *ὁδός*. Furthermore, the construction “the way of life and death” is found in Jer 21:8; see then Prov 12:28 and Ps 1:1f (the entire psalm is a variation on the theme of the two ways); T. Ash. 1; as well as Matt 7:13f and 2 Pet 2:15. It is also often used in the rabbinic literature; see, for example, Pirke ’Abot 2:1 (Fiebig, *Mischnatraktate*, 2:5f): “Rabbi (here meaning R. Judah HaQadosh) said, ‘what is the right way which a person should choose’” (see additional examples in Klein, *Katechismus*, 159ff and 185f). Furthermore, the comprehensive designation “halakah” for the parts of the Jewish tradition regulating the way of life belongs here; see also ἡ *ὁδός* in 1 Cor 4:17; Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22 = Christianity. The image of the two ways also appears throughout the literature of the world in both religious and ethical instruction. For Greece, see primarily the fable of Prodicus about Heracles at the crossroads in Xenophon, *Memorab.* II 1.21–33 or Hesiod, *Works and Days* 287–92: τὴν μὲν τοι κακότητα

καὶ ἰλαδὸν ἔστιν ἐλέσθαι. Πηιδίως· λείη μὲν ὁδός, μάλα δ' ἐγγύθι ναίει· Τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἰδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάροιθεν ἔθηκαν Ἀθάνατοι· μακρὸς δὲ καὶ ὄρθιος οἶμος ἐς αὐτήν. Καὶ τρηχὺς τὸ πρῶτον· ἐπὴν δ' εἰς ἄκρον ἵκηται, Πηιδίη δὴ ἔπειτα πέλει, χαλεπή περ ἐοῦσα. Theognis 911f: Ἐν τριόδῳ δ' ἔστηκα. δὴ εἰσὶν πρόσθεν ὁδοὶ μοι· Φροντίζω τούτων ἥντιν' ἴω προτέρην. See further Vergil, *Aen.* VI 540–43; Plutarch, *Dem.* 26 and especially *St.* (Lactanz, *Instit.* VI 3 said of the two ways: *quas et poetae in carminibus et philosophi in disputationibus suis induxerunt*). The Fatiha, the first Quranic Surah, reads: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the world, the merciful beneficent one, the king of day and night. We serve you and we implore you to lead us on the straight way, the way of those upon whom you are gracious and not the path of those with whom you are angry and who go astray.” In the religious literature of India, the image recurs frequently; see the title of the famous Buddhist collection of proverbs *Dhammapada*, which means something like “The Way of Truth,” or the foundational sermon of the Buddha in Benares on “the middle way, the four noble truths, and the noble eight-part path” (*Mahāvagga* I 6.17ff, text in, for example, Bertholet and Grube, *Lesebuch*, 219f or Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 147ff). Buddha thought of himself as a teacher of a “path,” that is, practical behavior which leads to knowledge and salvation. The “path” is for him the quintessence of the “norm” (Beckh, *Buddhismus*, has worked this out everywhere rather beautifully). And so much more could be quoted from all times and from many peoples. — In any case, the text of the beginning of the Did. offered in L is: *viae duae sunt in saeculo, vitae et mortis, lucis et tenebrarum. in his constituti sunt angeli duo, unus aequitatis, alter iniquitatis*. How old this form must be, which belongs to a parallel recension, is seen in Barn. 18:1; see also Herm. *Mand.* VI 2.1 and immediately before the two ways.

## B. Description of the Way of Life (1:2—4:14)

### 1. Basic and General Description (1:2)

#### TRANSLATION

<sup>1:2</sup> Now the way to life is this: “First, love God, who created you; second, love your neighbor as yourself.” And whatever you do not want done to you, do not do to another.