

The Didache

A Translation

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Preface

I've worked through the text of the *Didache* before (see my *Phrasal Interlinear*) but that work was done over one year, in fits and starts, and it shows. I wanted to work through the text again, only this time in a much shorter time period and, hopefully, with a bit more consistency. Thus, in August 2009 I once again worked through the text of the *Didache*.

While this translation is indebted to my earlier work on the *Phrasal Interlinear*, the translation is new and not a simple revision. I have consulted existing translations (Lake, Lightfoot, Holmes, Ehrman and Varner) and lexica (BDAG, Louw and Nida, LSJ, Spicq) along the way and they have been most helpful. Additionally, several notes on matters of translation, textual criticism and cross references to the New Testament¹ have been added. Much like myself, this translation is a work in progress. It will be revised, particularly with an eye to matters of punctuation and paragraphing.

On translation philosophy, my hope is to be readable yet somewhat transparent to the underlying Greek text. Thus some places may be awkward to the English reader,² yet this awkwardness hopefully points to phrase, clause and discourse structures in the original. I have used [square brackets] to indicate where English words are supplied to assist in the translation. Similarly, {curly braces} indicate either an idiom or where a series of Greek words was smoothed into something not immediately transparent. In all {curly brace} instances, the underlying “literal” text is provided in a footnote.

It is my prayer that those who read this translation will find it useful, and will be able to get a glimpse into the thought and practice of those earliest days of the Christian church, and be encouraged by the steadiness and grace of our Lord.

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1 Though note that the NT cross references do need to be expanded somewhat.

2 And even more awkward to those who have acquired English in addition to their native language.

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The Didache

§ 1

1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and [there is] a great difference between the two ways. 2 Therefore the way of life is this: first, to love the God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself;³ {and whatever}⁴ you would wish to not happen to you, {you do not do to others}.⁵ 3 Now, the teaching of these words is this: bless those who curse you and pray for your enemies⁷ and fast for those who persecute you. For what [is] the benefit if we love those who love us? Do not even the Gentiles do this?⁸ 4 Refrain from fleshly and bodily desires. If someone gives you a blow on the right cheek, turn the other to him also and you will be perfect. If someone compels you to go one mile, go with him for two. If someone takes away your cloak, also give him your shirt. If someone takes away from you what [is] yours, do not demand, for you are not able.⁹ 5 To all who ask of you, give and do not demand [repayment].¹⁰ For the Father desires to give [gifts] to everyone from his own gracious gifts. Blessed [is] the one who gives according to the command, for he is without guilt. Woe to the one who receives, for if anyone having need receives, he is innocent. But the one not having need will give an account: why has he received, and for what [purpose]? Having been [put] into prison, he will be interrogated concerning what he did and he will not be set free from there until he has paid back the last cent.¹¹ 6 Surely, concerning this also it has been said “Your charitable gift must sweat in your hands until you come to know who you should give [it to].”

§ 2

1 And the second commandment of the teaching [is this]: 2 Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not sodomize, do not commit sexual immorality, do not steal, do not practice magic, do not use potions, {do not murder a child by abortion},¹² do not kill the just-born one, do not yearn after the things of your neighbor. 3 Do not commit perjury, do not bear false witness, do not speak evil, do not bear a grudge. 4 You will be neither double-minded nor double-tongued, for [being] double-tongued [is] a snare of death. 5 Your speech should not be false or empty, but filled with¹³ action. 6 Do not be greedy, or vicious, or a hypocrite, or spiteful, or proud. Do not take up an evil plan against your neighbor. 7 Do not hate any person, but some you should correct, others you should pray for, and others you should love even more than your own life.

3 Mk 12:30-31; Lev 19:18

4 Literally “and all that”

5 Literally, “also you do not do to others”

6 Mt 7:12; Lu 6:31

7 Mt 5:44

8 Mt 5:46

9 Lu 6:30

10 Mt 5:26; Lu 6:30

11 Mk 5:26; Lu 6:30

12 Literally, “do not murder a child by destroying [it]”

13 The sense is almost that of “verified” but the contrast between “empty” (κενός) and “filled with” brings out the same idea.

§ 3

1 My child, flee from every evil and from everything like it. 2 Do not be inclined to anger, for anger leads to murder, neither zealous, nor quarrelsome, nor easily stoked to anger, for from all of these murder is borne. My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to sexual immorality, neither filthy-mouthed, nor eyes prone to desire, for from all of these adultery is borne. 4 My child, do not be a soothsayer, because it leads to idolatry, neither an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician, nor desire to see the same, for from all of these idolatry is borne. 5 My child, do not be a liar, because lying leads to theft, neither a lover of money, nor conceited, for from all of these theft is borne. 6 My child, do not be a grumbler because it leads to blasphemy, neither arrogant, nor evil-minded, for from all of these blasphemy is borne. 7 But be gentle, because the gentle ones will inherit the earth.¹⁴ 8 Be even-tempered and merciful and innocent and quiet and good, {always}¹⁵ ¹⁶ trembling at the words which you have heard. 9 Do not exalt yourself, neither grand arrogance to our soul. Do not let your soul be joined with the haughty, but be associated with the just and humble ones. 10 {Whatever happens to you},¹⁷ accept [it] as good, knowing that nothing takes place apart from God.

§ 4

1 My child, the one who speaks the word of God to you, remember [him] night and day, and honor him as the Lord: for where the Lord's nature¹⁸ is discussed, there the Lord is. 2 But seek out {each day}¹⁹ the presence of the saints, so that you may find comfort in their words. 3 Do not strive after division, but bring peace to the ones who fight. Judge justly, {do not show favoritism}²⁰ {when bringing sins to light}.²¹ 4 Do not be of two minds,²² whether it will occur²³ or not. 5 Do not first²⁴ reach out your hands to receive, only to pull back from giving. 6 If you have [something] because of your hands, offer it as a ransom²⁵ for your sins. 7 Do not hesitate to give nor grumble while giving, for you will come to know who the good paymaster of the reward is. 8 Do not reject the needy ones, but share everything with your brother and do not say it is your own, for if you are a sharer in the immortal, how much more in the mortal? 9 Do not withhold²⁶ your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from [their]

14 Mt 5:5

15 Literally “throughout all [things]”

16 Several editions (e.g. Ehrman, Bihlmeyer) omit δια παντος “throughout all [things]”

17 Literally “The activity that happens to you”

18 This sense of κυριότης does not occur in the NT. cf. BDAG κυριότης 1 (p. 579) which defines it as “the essential nature of the κυριος.”

19 Literally “according to the day”

20 Literally “do not receive the presence”

21 Literally, “to bring to light concerning sin”

22 This word does not occur in the New Testament. BDAG adds the qualifying statement that the word is used “f indecision about becoming a Christian or believing in specif. Christian teachings or hopes, etc.” (BDAG 253).

23 This whole verse is problematic because the referent is unclear. There are references to prayer in other parallels, though it may also refer to judging mentioned in *Did* 4.3 above. Indeed, Holmes translates it this way, “You shall not waver with regard to your decisions.” Also see Neiderwimmer 106 for more discussion on this issue.

24 Note the use of προς μεν ... προς δε to provide contrasting options. While grammars traditionally equate μεν ... δε with “on the one hand/on the other hand” to show this sort of relationship, there are generally better contextually appropriate options. Here “first/only to” is such an option.

25 Mk 10:45; 1Ti 2:6

26 On the phrase, “Do not withhold your hand from,” Holmes notes this could also be interpreted as “Do not neglect your

youth teach [them] the fear of God. 10 Do not command your male slave²⁷ or female slave who are hoping in the same God in your bitterness, lest {they cease to fear}²⁸ the God over [you] both, for he does not come to call {with partiality}^{29 30} but to whom the spirit prepares. 11 And you slaves shall be subject to your master as [to] a copy of God, in modesty³¹ and fear. 12 Hate all hypocrisy and everything that [is] not pleasing to the Lord. 13 Do not ever forsake the commandments of the Lord, but guard what you have received, neither adding to nor taking away from/ 14 In church you shall confess your sin and you shall not enter into your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

§ 5

1 But the way of death is this. First of all, it is filled with evil and cursing, murders adulteries, expressions of lust, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, idolatries, acts of magic, robberies, false witnessing, acts of hypocrisy, acts of duplicity, deceit, pride, malice, stubbornness, greediness, abusive language, jealousy, arrogance, haughtiness, boastfulness. 2 Persecutors of the good, hating the truth, loving the lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not joining the good or [the] righteous judgment, not caring for the good but for the evil, from whom gentleness and patience [are] far removed, loving what is worthless, pursuing reward, not having mercy on the poor, not toiling for the downtrodden, not understanding the one who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of the creatures of God, rejectors of the needy ones, oppressors of the afflicted, defenders of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, [people] steeped in sin. Be delivered, children, from all such as these.

§ 6

1 See to it [that] no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, since he teaches³² you apart from God. 2 For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you are not able, whatever you are able, this you must do. 3 And concerning food, you bear what you are able, but regarding food sacrificed to idols, {be scrupulously on your guard},³³ for it is worship of dead gods.

§ 7

1 And concerning baptism, baptize in this way: having reviewed all of these things, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,³⁴ in running water. 2 But if you do not have access to running water, baptize in other water. And if you are not able [to baptize] with cold [water], {[then baptize] with warm [water]}. 3 But if you possess {neither},³⁵ pour water on the head three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

responsibility to” (Holmes p. 257).

27 Normally δουλός would not merit the translation “male slave”, but as the context includes a comparison to female slave/servant (παιδική), “male” is included in the translation of δουλός.

28 Literally, “the will not fear”

29 Literally “according to person”

30 On the idiom κατά προσωπον, see BDAG προσωπον 1bβ 7.

31 On the translation of αισχυνη as “modesty”, see BDAG sense 1.

32 The pronoun implicit in διδασκει refers to the one doing the erroneous teaching. This could also be translated more interpretatively as “such a one teaches.”

33 Literally “you be very much concerned”

34 Mt 28:19

35 Literally “not either”

of the Holy Spirit. 4 And before the baptism the baptizer should fast beforehand, and the one being baptized, and any others who are able. Call upon the one being baptized to fast beforehand for one or two [days].

§ 8

1 Do not have your fasts with the hypocrites. For they fast {on Mondays and Thursdays};³⁶ but you should fast {on Wednesdays and Fridays}.³⁷ 2 Neither are you to pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel. Pray in this way: Our Father who [is] in heaven, may your name be holy, may your kingdom come, may your will be done, as in heaven, so also upon earth; our daily bread give to us today, and forgive us our debt as also we forgive our debtors, and do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one, because yours is the power and the glory {forever}.^{38 39} 3 Pray in this way three times each day.

§ 9

1 Now, concerning the Eucharist, Eucharistize⁴⁰ as follows: 2 First, concerning the cup: We give thanks to you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your son, which you made known to us through Jesus your son, glory to you {forever}.⁴¹ 3 Next, concerning the broken bread: We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your son, glory to you {forever}.⁴² 4 Just as this broken bread was being scattered over the mountains and being brought together it became one, likewise bring together your church from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, so that yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ {forever}.⁴³ 5 But none shall eat or shall drink from your Eucharist but those baptized in the name of the Lord; for also concerning this the Lord has said, “Do not give what [is] holy to the dogs.”⁴⁴

§ 10

1 And after you have been satisfied with food, give thanks as follows: 2 We give thanks to you, O Holy Father, for your holy name which you caused to dwell⁴⁵ in our hearts and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you made known to us through Jesus your child; to you [be] the glory {forever}!⁴⁶ 3 You, All-Powerful Master,⁴⁷ you have created all things for the sake of your name. Both food and drink you have given to the people for enjoyment, so that they might give thanks to you. But to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink and life eternal through your son. 4 Above all, we give thanks to you because you are powerful. To you [be] the

36 Literally “on the second [day] of the week and on the fifth [day]”

37 Literally “on the fourth [day] and on the day of preparation”

38 Literally “into the ages”

39 Mt 6:9-13

40 “Eucharistize” verbs the noun to keep the Greek wordplay in the English. It could also be translated “partake in the Eucharist” or “give thanksgiving” or even more generically “give thanks.”

41 Literally “into the ages”

42 Literally “into the ages”

43 Literally “into the ages”

44 Mt 7:6

45 This same word is translated “make a nest” in Mt 13:32, of birds making nests (or perhaps finding shelter) in the branches of the bush grown from a mustard seed.

46 Literally “into the ages”

47 The vocative is used here as it is used in verse 2 above. The reference is obviously to God, which is why the words are capitalized.

glory {forever}.⁴⁸ 5 Remember, Lord, your church, to deliver her from all evil and to perfect her in your love and gather her from the four winds⁴⁹ (she that has been sanctified)⁵⁰ into your kingdom, which you prepared for her, for yours is the power and the glory {forever}.⁵¹ 6 Come, grace, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come. If anyone is not, he must repent. {O Lord, come}!⁵² ⁵³ 7 But allow the prophets to give thanks as much as⁵⁴ they desire.

§ 11

1 Therefore {whomever} comes [and] teaches you all these things which were mentioned before, welcome him. 2 But if the one teaching himself turns away [that] he may teach a different doctrine leading to destruction, do not listen to him; but [if his teaching is] for the increase of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as the Lord. 3 Now, concerning the apostles and prophets, act in this way, according to the ordinance of the gospel. 4 Every apostle coming to you, let [him] be welcomed as the Lord. 5 He will not stay {more than}⁵⁵ one day, and if it is necessary, another. But if he stays three [days], he is a false prophet. 6 When going out, the apostle is to receive nothing {except}⁵⁶ bread until his lodging is located. And if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. 7 And any prophet speaking in the Spirit, do not test or judge, for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. 8 But not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet, only if he has the manner of the Lord. Therefore, from his manner you shall distinguish [between] the false prophet and the prophet. 9 And any prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit will not eat from it, and if [he does] otherwise, he is a false prophet. 10 But any prophet teaching the truth, if what he teaches he does not do, he is a false prophet. 11 But any prophet having been proven genuine who is making the church into a worldly mystery, but not teaching [them] to do whatever he himself does, he shall not be judged by you. For with God he has his judgment, for even the ancient prophets acted in the same way. 12 But whomever should say in a spirit, “Give me money” or something else, do not listen to him. But if concerning others being in need, he should say to give, no one should judge him.

§ 12

1 But everyone who comes in the name of the Lord⁵⁷ let [him] be welcomed. And then, having tested [him], you will know him. {Then you will be able to distinguish [whether he is] true or false}.⁵⁸ 2 If the one coming is a traveler, help him as much as you are able. But he shall not remain among you {more than}⁵⁹ two or three days, if he has need. 3 And if he desires to stay with you, being an artisan, let him work and let him earn his keep.⁶⁰ 4 And

48 Literally “into the ages”

49 Mt 24:31

50 Some sources omit τὴν ἁγιασθεῖσαν

51 Literally “into the ages”

52 Literally “maran atha”, a transliteration of Aramaic.

53 1Co 16:22

54 This could also be translated “however” (Holmes) or “as often as” (Ehrman).

55 Literally “if not”

56 Literally “if not”

57 Ps 118:26; Mt 21:9

58 Literally “Then you will be able to have understanding of right and left”

59 Literally “if not”

60 The sense is less like the literal “to eat” and more along the lines of “to earn a living” or “to earn his keep.” Louw and Nida class a similar idiom in 57.190, but the vocabulary is not the same here.

if he has no craft, take [this] into consideration according to your understanding, how he shall live among you [as] a Christian without being idle.⁶¹ 5 And if he does not want to act in this way, he is a Christmonger.⁶² Beware of such as these.

§ 13

1 But every true prophet wishing to reside among you is worthy of his food.⁶³ 2 Similarly, a true teacher is also himself worthy, just as the worker, of his food. 3 Therefore, collecting all the first fruits of the produce of the winepress and threshing floor, both of cattle and of sheep, you shall give the first fruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. 4 And if you do not have a prophet, give [your first fruits] to the poor. 5 If you make bread,⁶⁴ collecting up your first fruits give [them] according to the commandment. 6 Likewise, upon opening a jar of wine or olive oil, collecting up your first fruits give [them] to the prophets. 7 And of money and of clothing and of every possession, collecting up your first fruits {as seems proper to you},⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ give [them] according to the commandment.

§ 14

1 And coming together on the Lord's day of the Lord, break bread and give thanks,⁶⁷ confessing beforehand your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. 2 And everyone having a quarrel with his fellow member, do not let [them] gather with you until they have reconciled so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. 3 For this is what was said by the Lord: "In every place and time, offer me a pure sacrifice because I am a great king," says the Lord, "and my name [is] great among the nations."⁶⁸

§ 15

1 Therefore, appoint for yourselves overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord, men [who are] gentle and not lovers of money and truthful and well-proven, for to you {they themselves also minister}⁶⁹ the ministry of the prophets and teachers. 2 Therefore you must not disregard them, for they are your honorable ones, along with the prophets and teachers. 3 And correct one another not in anger but in peace, as you find in the gospel. And anyone committing a wrong against another, {let no one speak [to him]},⁷⁰ neither let [him] hear from you until he repents. 4 But your prayers and your charitable giving and all of your actions, do as follows: as you find in the gospel of our Lord.

61 An alternate and less likely rendering of this last portion of the verse could be "how no idle Christian shall live among you" (cf. also Ehrman, vol 1 p. 437).

62 That is, one who trades on Christ. He uses the name of Christ primarily for his own personal temporal benefit.

63 Mt 10:10

64 This infrequent word is apparently only found in Christian writings (cf. BDAG). While the word is literally "dough" when it is the object of a verb like "make," it is better to translate as "bread".

65 Literally "what ever your opinion"

66 The word that is translated "opinion" and in the idiom rendered as "seems proper" is not attested in the NT and not cited in Louw-Nida; cf. LSJ sense II.

67 It is also possible to translate this as "hold the Eucharist," though with the specific mention of "break bread" associated, such a translation is less likely.

68 Mal 1:11, 14

69 Literally "they minister also themselves"

70 Literally "no one let speak"

§ 16

1 Be on the alert, for your life. {Do not let your lamps be extinguished}⁷¹ and {do not be unprepared},⁷² but be ready, for you do not know the hour in which our Lord comes.⁷³ 2 And be assembled together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls. For the full time of your faith will be of no benefit to you {unless}⁷⁴ you are found perfect at the final moment. 3 For in the final days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. 4 For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and they will persecute and they will betray one another.⁷⁵ And then the deceiver of the world shall appear as a son of God, and he will perform signs and wonders, and the earth will be handed over into his hands. And he will do incessantly vile things which never before have happened {since time began}.⁷⁶ 5 Then the creation of mankind shall come to the burning ordeal of testing. And many will be led astray and will be destroyed, but the ones enduring in their faith will be saved⁷⁷ by the accursed one himself.⁷⁸ 6 And then the signs of the truth shall appear: First, a sign of an opening in heaven; then a sign of the sound of a trumpet; and the third [sign], the resurrection of the dead. 7 Now, not all [of the dead], but as was said, “the Lord shall come and all the holy ones with him.”⁷⁹ 8 Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.^{80 81}

71 Literally “the lamps of you not let be extinguished”

72 Literally “the loins of you not let be ungirded”

73 Lu 12:35

74 Literally “if not”

75 Mt 24:10-12

76 Literally “from eternity”

77 Mt 24:10, 13

78 Here “the accursed one” is actually Christ, the one cursed by those led astray.

79 Zech 14:5

80 Mt 24:30

81 Some (e.g. Neiderwimmer 226) hold the original ending of the *Didache* is lost, positing reconstruction of the ending from related sources (the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the Georgian version)