

**Didache at the Crossroads:  
Reflections on Recent Directions in Research**

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During the hundred years following its discovery, Adolph Harnack and, after him, his successors succeeded in giving a determined direction to *Didache* research. In so doing, the *Didache* took on a discernible identity and was valued as contributing to the pressing academic discussions of the day. During the last forty years, Harnack and his successors have been largely marginalized. As a result, the field of *Didache* studies has been caught up in a confusing diversity of scholarly opinions. There is no single origination hypothesis, no single methodology, and no single research program to guide our way. The field of *Didache* scholarship is thus in disarray and unable to substantially contribute to the academic questions of our day.

In this essay, I want to sketch out how research programs from the past have contributed to the current crisis. I also want to sketch out how recent approaches to *Didache* studies offer some promise to resolve this crisis. My comments will be grouped under three headings: (A) **Mistaken Identity of the *Didache* as a “Church Order”**; (B) **Problematic Reliance on the Synoptics**; (C) **Failure to Recognize that “the Lord” Who Is Coming is the Father and not Jesus**.

**A. The Mistaken Identity of the *Didache* as a “Church Order”**

A unified reading of the *Didache* has been impossible until very recently because the prevailing assumption has been that the *Didache* is “the oldest church order” created in stages with the compiler splicing together pre-existing documents with only a minimum of editing.<sup>1</sup> In practice, source and redaction criticism expend so much energy in hypothesizing, on the basis of shifts in the logic and rhetoric of the text, where one source ends and another begins, that any unity gets entirely obscured in the analysis. Furthermore, since the hypothesized sources, in the form that the compiler knew them,

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Mueller, “The Ancient Church Order Literature: Genre or Tradition?” *J ECS* 15.3 (2007) 337-380.

cannot be independently known and verified (e.g., as in the case of the Synoptics), scholarly debates have been unable to arrive at any working consensus since every major author relies upon his own "reconstruction" of the original sources. Georg Schöllgen, accordingly, accurately summarized the academic disarray as follows:

It is significant that there is neither a consensus nor even only a limited number of types of solution between these extraordinarily complex theories of origin. Nearly every attempt to solve the problem stands by itself, and forms its own criteria for the supposed division of sources. So one cannot avoid the impression of arbitrariness, especially if even the smallest stylistic differences must serve as signs of a change of author.<sup>2</sup>

Against this background, it is not surprising that three recent German commentaries offer three divergent "theories of origin" for our text:

1. According to Klaus Wengst<sup>3</sup>, the author of the *Didache* set down, in the initial ten chapters, the existing traditions of his community, and then he created 11-15 by way of offering rules to protect those traditions.
2. According to Kurt Niederwimmer, the compiler of the *Didache* was, most probably, "a respected and influential bishop" who "quotes existing, sometimes archaic rules and seeks both to preserve what has been inherited and at the same time to accommodate that heritage to his own time [turn of the first century]."<sup>4</sup>
3. According to Georg Schöllgen, it is impossible to find any persuasive ordering principle in the *Didache*; rather, for him, the author "simply provides an authoritative regulation on controversial points."<sup>5</sup> which he sets out at random. Schöllgen, consequently, identifies breaks in the text as signalling the transition from one controversial point to the next and **not** as indicators of multiple authors/editors.

While the origination hypothesis of each of the three German scholars is manifestly different, they all agree on two important points:

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<sup>2</sup> Georg Schöllgen, "The *Didache* as a Church Order: An Examination of the Purpose for the Composition of the *Didache* and its Consequences for its Interpretation," in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. Jonathan A. Draper. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus, Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre), Barnabasbrief, Zweiter Klemensbrief, Schrift an Diognet* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Burchgesellschaft, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (tr. Linda M. Maloney of the 1989 German orig. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 228.

<sup>5</sup> Schöllgen, "The *Didache* as a Church Order," 63.

1. The *Didache* was produced by an author bent upon reporting or regulating the affairs of an existing community within which they functioned. Gone is the notion of a scribe or scribes sewing together blocks of preexisting materials by adding editorial stitches at the boundaries. While all three German scholars disagree as to what precisely were the traditional materials being used by the author, they all agree that the author was selecting and editing and ordering practices known to his community in such a way as to faithfully address urgent community needs.
2. The *Didache*, as a consequence, was composed by a single author producing a unified text for use within an existing community. All three German scholars have abandoned the notion of Stanaslas Giet and Willy Rordorf calling for two distinct stages of composition by different persons at different times.<sup>6</sup> With even greater force, they reject Jean-Paul Audet and Clayton Jefford who identified three temporally separated stages of composition.<sup>7</sup>

In brief, one can notice here how the traditional notion of a “church order” and its associated notion of authorship as being limited to minor editing has been abandoned when it comes to examining the *Didache*. In its place, one can detect how recent German scholarship has paved the way for a responsive and true authorship functioning within the constraints of a living community. In this way, the disarray created by a rigid emphasis on source and redaction criticism has been partially overcome and the way was open to examining the *Didache* as a unified document regulating the affairs of a functioning community.

#### A Note in Defence of Orality

While each of the three German commentators revived the notion of a single author of the *Didache*, none of them has seriously taken into account the possibility that the *Didache* was created in "a culture of high residual orality"<sup>8</sup> wherein "oral sources" (attached to respected persons) were routinely given greater weight and were immeasurably more serviceable than "written sources".<sup>9</sup> In such a society, no one practiced silent reading. Every act of reading was tantamount to winding up the gramophone so that one could “hear” again the “oral source” that initially created the grammata (the silent string of notations without spaces transcribed on the parchment). The character and meaning of a text, consequently, was only available due to the recognition that comes from “hearing” it

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<sup>6</sup> Schöllgen, "The *Didache* as a Church Order," 67-70.

<sup>7</sup> Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 42-43.

<sup>8</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, "Omne verbum sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity," *JBL* 109 /1 (1990) 3.

<sup>9</sup> Achtemeier, "Omne verbum sonat," 9-11. Also Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 52-53.

being recited. Furthermore, in societies where there is only a marginal access to and reliance upon written materials, "oral sources" offered a measure of socially maintained and person-centered stability without ever supposing that one needed or relied upon the frozen rigidity of a written text.<sup>10</sup>

Each of the German scholars considered above suffers from the bias toward textuality and the ignorance of orality when it comes to examining the *Didache*. A more fruitful point of departure, consequently, would be to begin by noting that the *Didache* has clues throughout pointing to the primacy of "oral recitation." Here are a few instances of this:

- The novice being trained in the Way of Life is told to honor "the one **speaking** to you the **word** of God" (*Did.* 4:1) thereby signalling that oral rather than written transmission of the training was presupposed. Moreover, the novice trembles "at the **words** that you have **heard**" (*Did.* 3:8).
- In every instance where the *Didache* cites specific mandates from the Hebrew Scriptures, meanwhile, the oral aspect (as opposed to the written) is highlighted: "It has been **said**" (*Did.* 1:6); "The Lord has likewise **said**" (*Did.* 9:5); "This is the thing having been **said** by the Lord" (*Did.* 14:3); "As it has been **said**" (*Did.* 16:7).
- The *Didache* gives repeated attention to speaking rightly (*Did.* 1:3b, 2:3, 2:5, 4:8b, 4:14, 15:3b) and entirely neglects to mention false or empty writing.
- At the baptism, the novice is immersed in water "having **said** all these things beforehand" (*Did.* 7:1).
- The same holds true, when later in the *Didache*, the baptized are warned only to receive teachers who "should train you in all the things **said** beforehand" (*Did.* 11:1). This indicates that both true and false teachers were being heard. No mention is made of either true or false writings.

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<sup>10</sup> Achtemeier, "Omne verbum sonat," 27. Also Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, 231-234.

As soon as one explores the dominant role of orality within traditional communities, one has to abandon the notion of a single authoritative text produced by a single author. Studies in the Synoptics, for example, have moved to seeing living communities as being both the repositories and the shapers of their oral narratives.<sup>11</sup> These narratives, in the course of time, get transcribed on parchment, but the authority of that parchment depends upon the fact that what is transcribed can be read out loud by a trained reader and that listeners immediately discover an “echo” of what was currently being narrated and lived by the leading teachers and elders within that community.<sup>12</sup>

Three consequences suggest themselves:

1. Phrases such as “the author of the *Didache*” might better be replaced by phrases such as “the narrators of the *Didache*” in order to focus on the oral transmission and the aural reception surrounding the use of the *Didache*.
2. Aural reception of the *Didache* is associated with the phenomenology of “trembling” (*Did.* 3:8). Having been set upon the path of life by “the God who made you” (*Did.* 1:2), the novice trembled with excited anticipation and reverential fear. This was the phenomenology exhibited when Israel originally experienced the word of the Lord from Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16) and when the prophets encountered God's word (e.g., Ezra 9:4, Isa 66:2, Hab 3:16). Among the rabbis, it was a commonplace to remember that every master taught his disciples “with awe and fear, with trembling and trepidation” (*b. Berakhot* 22a). Reading seldom has this effect.<sup>13</sup>
3. When the Way of Life is acknowledged as an oral recitation, it follows that the ordering of the training might meticulously follow a very sophisticated schema from beginning to end. It was through my own oral recitation of the *Didache* that I myself progressively discovered this schema.<sup>14</sup> This effectively undercuts Georg

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<sup>11</sup> James Dunn, *Christianity in the Making Vol. 1: Jesus Remembered* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 2003), 191-200. Fully developed by Werner Kelber, *The Oral-Scribal-Memorial Arts of Communication in Early Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> John L. McKenzie, “The Social Character of Inspiration,” *CBQ* 24 (1962) 115-125. Already fifty years ago McKenzie argued that it was impossible to adequately describe or to verify the interior states of those writing under the influence of divine inspiration. As a social phenomena, however, one could readily understand and verify the situation that prevails when a single author, as a service to the community, transcribed the oral transmission of the authoritative and guiding narratives that animated his community.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Draper provides additional testimonies to this phenomena in his article included in this volume.

<sup>14</sup> For details, see Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: Paulist, 2003) xxxii-xxxiii.

Schöllgen's pessimistic affirmation that it is impossible to find any persuasive ordering principle in the *Didache*

Seeing the trend in the last thirty years, my expectation is that future *Didache* scholars<sup>15</sup> will increasingly use studies of orality to appreciate the nature, character, and use of the *Didache* within its community setting.

### B. Problematic Reliance on the Synoptics

The dating of the *Didache* has been heavily dominated by presuppositions<sup>16</sup> regarding the sources used in its composition. Adolph von Harnack wrote in his influential 1884 commentary: "One must say without hesitation that it is the author of the *Didache* who used the Epistle of Barnabas and not the reverse."<sup>17</sup> Harnack, accordingly, dated the *Didache* between 135 and 165 and fixed the place of origin as Egypt since Barnabas was conjectured to have been composed there. It wasn't until 1945 that E.J. Goodspeed, aided by the Latin versions of Barnabas that had no Two-Way section, finally put to rest the assumption that the *Didache* had to depend upon Barnabas.<sup>18</sup>

Once the Epistle of Barnabas was no longer considered as the source for the *Didache*, an earlier dating for the *Didache* could be entertained and a fresh impetus was given to the question as to whether the framers of the *Didache* used one or more of the canonical Gospels. It is telling that, as late as 1958, Jean-Paul Audet devoted forty-two pages to the Barnabas-dependence issue and only twenty pages to the Gospel-dependence issue.<sup>19</sup> Audet concluded that, when examined closely, even the so-called "evangelical addition" of *Did.* 1:3b-5 could not be explained as coming directly either from Matthew

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<sup>15</sup> Perttu Nikander provides an illustrative study of orality in his article included in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Presuppositions regarding the character of the early church also interfered with an early dating. See, for example, Thomas O'Loughlin, "Reactions to the *Didache* in Early Twentieth-Century Britain: a Dispute over the Relationship of History and Doctrine?" *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century. Festschrift for Prof. Keith Robbins*. (eds. Stewart J. Brown, Frances Knight & John Morgan-Guy, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Adolph von Harnack, *Die Lehre der zwölf Apostel nebst Untersuchungen zur ältesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1884), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Goodspeed, "The *Didache*, Barnabas and the Doctrina," *ATR* 27 (1945) 228-247.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didache: Instructions des apôtres* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1958), 121-163; 166-186.

or from Luke.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, in the end, Audet contributed more than any other scholar by showing, text by text, how securely the *Didache* was anchored in a Jewish horizon of understanding. Thus, Audet concluded that this pointed to a completion date prior to 70 in a milieu (Antioch) that did not yet have a written Gospel.<sup>21</sup>

Recent scholars have been willing to call into question direct dependency upon any written Gospel. Draper<sup>22</sup>, Kloppenborg<sup>23</sup>, Milavec<sup>24</sup>, Niederwimmer<sup>25</sup>, Rordorf<sup>26</sup>, and Van de Sandt<sup>27</sup> argue in favor of this position. Opposition voices, however, are still heard. C.M. Tuckett of Oxford University, for example, reexamined all the evidence and came to the conclusion that the *Didache* “presupposes the finished gospel of Matthew (and perhaps Luke)”<sup>(3)</sup><sup>28</sup>. If Tuckett is correct, then the earliest possible dating of the *Didache* would be the late 80s, the date when most scholars suppose that these gospels were finalized.

My early work with Willy Rordorf led me to realize that the nearly universal agreement that the *Didache* made use of Matthew stood on very weak grounds. In my 2003 essay,

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<sup>20</sup> Audet, *La Didache*, 186.

<sup>21</sup> Audet, *La Didache*, 192, 210.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan A. Draper, "The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*," *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. Jonathan A. Draper. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 72-91.

<sup>23</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, "*Didache* 16:6-8 and Special Matthaean Tradition," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 70 (1979) 54-67.

<sup>24</sup> Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York: Paulist, 2003) 693-740. A summary statement was also included in the final three pages of the student edition: *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 48-51.

<sup>26</sup> Willy Rordorf, *La doctrine des douze apôtres* (tr. of Greek and critical notes by A. Tuilier Paris: Cerf, 1978) 91 and, more emphatically in the 1991 expanded edition, p. 232. See also his "Does the *Didache* Contain Jesus Tradition Independently of the Synoptic Gospels?" *Jesus and the Oral Synoptic Tradition* (ed. Henry Wansbrough. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 394-423.

<sup>27</sup> van de Sandt, Huub, and Flusser, David, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 48-52.

<sup>28</sup> For the sake of brevity, citations will be largely limited to the text of Tuckett's refutation of my position. In these instances, page numbers will follow the citation in parentheses.

“Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited,”<sup>29</sup> I made a strong case for showing that the received text of the *Didache* does not exhibit familiarity with Matthew’s Gospel, otherwise the framers of the *Didache* would have made use of the “words of Jesus” to support community practices such as the confession of failings prior to the Eucharist and not be forced to stretch the Hebrew prophets to perform that service. Moreover, I showed that the framers of the *Didache* displayed verbal usages, community discipline, and a theological orientation that set it apart from the community orientation and practices of those following the Matthean tradition.

The academic community has much to gain from a free and open exchange between two opponents. Following the publication of my essay, “Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited,” therefore, I was pleased that Tuckett took an interest in refocusing his own position while correcting various ways in which I may have “misunderstand and/or misread”<sup>30</sup> his position. In my rejoinder that was also published in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, I begin by setting forth two methodological points where Tuckett and I find substantial agreement<sup>31</sup>:

1. The framers of the *Didache* were not “citing from an open gospel set out before them” (2) nor does the fourfold use of “good news/gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον, 8:2, 11:3, 15:3, and 15:4) necessarily refer to a written source.
2. Even in instances where the *Didache* manifests an exact or nearly exact verbal agreement with Matthew, this does not, in and of itself, establish familiarity and borrowing of one from the other. This is so because both could, in these instances, be making use of oral/written traditions independently available.

Clayton Jefford<sup>32</sup>, in his book-length treatment of this issue, repeatedly comes across this impasse, namely, how to differentiate between the *Didache* making use of Matthew's Gospel and the *Didache* having access to a shared (oral) tradition from which both the author of the *Didache* and the author of Matthew are able to freely borrow. Tuckett, in response to this question, endeavors to frame a criterion that “could be applied with a degree of objectivity,”<sup>33</sup> namely:

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<sup>29</sup> Aaron Milavec, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited," *JECS* 11/4:443-480. This article is an updated and shortened version of material from my book, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*, 693-740.

<sup>30</sup> C.M. Tuckett, "Once More: The *Didache* and the Synoptics," *JECS* 13/4 (2005) 510.

<sup>31</sup> Aaron Milavec, "A Rejoinder [to Tuckett]," *JECS* 13/4 (2005) 519-521. Given my severe space limitations, I forego the temptation to explain and to nuance these statements from our respective sides.

<sup>32</sup> Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* (Volume XI. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> Tuckett, "Once More," 517.

If material which owes its origin to the redactional activity of a synoptic evangelist reappears in another work, then the latter presupposes the finished work of that evangelist.<sup>34</sup>

Tuckett uses this principle to demonstrate that *Did.* 16 shows borrowing from Matt 24. Time does not permit me to unravel the particulars of this demonstration. What I can say, however, is that I had sincerely hoped that Tuckett might have changed my mind in 1996 when I first encountered his work. He failed to do so. I appreciate his redoubled efforts to convince me yet again in 2005 after I had published my two volumes on the *Didache*. Every time I reenter into his framework of thinking, however, I confess that I found only fleeting intellectual satisfaction. Tuckett, needless to say, remains firmly convinced that *Did.* 16 made use of the redactional work found within Matt 24. He is further convinced that this borrowing took place precisely because the author of the *Didache* regarded the Matthean tradition (even if it was an oral transmission) as an “authoritative source.” But here is the stumbling stone: If the Matthean tradition was indeed the “authoritative source” that Tuckett assumes, how can he explain why the author of the *Didache* would have taken over only a mere 2% of Matt 24 while seemingly ignoring and/or rejecting the other 98%? A response to this question has not been forthcoming.

Slowly the tide is turning. At the end of the international specialist conference on “The *Didache* and Matthew”<sup>35</sup> held at Tilburg in 2003, I publicly polled the twenty-three participants at the end of the conference. Six judged that the *Didache* made use of Matthew; one person judged that Matthew made use of the *Didache*; but the overwhelming majority (sixteen) held that the *Didache* was created without any reliance upon Matthew. As more *Didache* scholars come to accept this emerging consensus, the way will open up for dating and for interpreting the *Didache* independent of the influence of Matthean studies.<sup>36</sup> I, for one, welcome this prospect and believe that the future of *Didache* studies securely lies in walking along these lines.

### **C. Failure to Recognize that “the Lord” Who Is Coming Is the Father and not Jesus**

My decision to accept an early dating for the *Didache* never was based exclusively on my conclusions regarding textual independence. Nearly eighteen years ago, for example,

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<sup>34</sup> Tuckett, “Once More,” 517.

<sup>35</sup> Papers from the conference have been subsequently edited and published: Huub van de Sandt, ed., **Matthew and the *Didache*** (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum/Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> The case of the *Didache* is thus comparable to that of the Letter to the Hebrews. As soon as it was accepted that Paul was not the author, then it was likewise required that Hebrews could be interpreted based upon its own internal logic and rhetoric quite independent of the theology of the authentic Pauline letters.

I noticed that the *Didache* focuses upon orthopraxis in much the same way as does the *Manual of Discipline* and the *Mishnah*. In this regard, reading Jacob Neusner's *Why No Gospels in Talmudic Judaism?* and Werner Kelber's *The Oral and the Written Gospel* were influential for they both, following entirely different lines of reasoning, demonstrate that the gospel genre would have been quite foreign to the Galilean disciples of Jesus. Combined with this, Jean-Paul Audet's masterful thesis showing how every part of the language and logic of the *Didache* finds its meaning within a Jewish horizon of understanding supported in my mind the possibility that the *Didache* might represent a Jewish form of Christianity that pre-dated the formation of the gospels.

Somewhat later, I was able to notice that the *Didache* focuses on God the Father as the expected savior coming to gather his elect into the kingdom. In Paul's letters and in the sermons of Acts, this focus gets decidedly altered. The one who heralded the kingdom is now being celebrated as the savior who has been raised from the dead, taken up into heaven, and is sitting at the right hand of God awaiting the time for his triumphant return when he will raise the dead to life, judge the nations, and establish God's kingdom. The *Didache*, interestingly enough, focuses exclusively on what God the Father will do--much in the same way that it would appear that Jesus did when he proclaimed the Kingdom of God in his tours of the villages of Galilee. Thus, quite clearly, the *Didache* must have originated within a community wherein the faith of Jesus (rather than faith in Jesus) was still running strong.<sup>37</sup>

In his book, *The Birth of Christianity*, John Dominic Crossan (following Koester and Kloppenborg) identifies two primary, but markedly different, Jesus traditions propagated in earliest Christianity: namely,

1. The tradition which placed central emphasis upon Jesus' sayings and life as a divinely approved guide for living, a tradition Crossan labels as "the Life Tradition," and
2. The tradition which placed central emphasis on Jesus' death and resurrection, a tradition found in the letters of Paul and the sermons of Acts which Crossan labels as "the Death Tradition."<sup>38</sup> (see 407, 415, 420, 501-504, 521, 550, 572f).

The *Didache*, along with the Gospel of Thomas and the Q Gospel, in contrast to this, follow the Life Tradition and retain a form of Eucharist wherein the Father is the honored guest and thanks are given for what he has already done and what he will bring to pass in the future. In this Eucharist, however, there is no memorial of the saving Death of Jesus and no expectation of the return of Jesus as Lord in the End Times.

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<sup>37</sup> This comes forward in my writings beginning with "The *Didache*--A Window on Gentile Christianity before the Written Gospels," *The Fourth R* 18/3 (May/June, 2005) 7-11, 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998) 407, 415, 420, 501-504, 521, 550, 572-573.

What is striking in Crossan's exposition is that he puts forward a hermeneutical principal advising scholars investigating these two early and very distinct forms within earliest Christianity to "not privilege one over the other":

We should not privilege . . . the death and resurrection over the sayings, as in past theology, nor the sayings over the death and resurrection, as in present reaction. . . . Furthermore, whatever descriptive term is used for one, be it proclamation or kerygma, tradition, or gospel, the same term should be used for the other. Finally my own preferred terminology is the Life Tradition and the Death Tradition.<sup>39</sup>

Crossan's insights offer a very fruitful point of departure for exploring the unique character of the *Didache* in the context of alternative forms of early Christianity. His hermeneutical principle serves to safeguard a climate that is both impartial and ecumenical.

#### An Examination of the Use of κύριος in the *Didache*

The *Didache* makes use of κύριος ("lord") twenty-four times. In each instance, the context can be explored in order to discern whether the "Lord-God" or the "Lord-Jesus" is meant. The purpose of this exercise is open up the hidden spirituality of the *Didache* and to provide a sure starting point for exploring its inner workings.

Within the eucharistic prayers, Jesus is portrayed four times as παῖς ("the servant") who reveals the life and understanding of the Father (*Did.* 9:3). This accords well with the understanding of the Christian Scriptures that Jesus proclaimed "the good news of God" (Mark 1:4; Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 2:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 9; 1 Pet 4:17)--never the "good news of Jesus." Thus, in the four places within the *Didache* wherein "good news" (εὐαγγέλιον) is found (*Did.* 8:2, 11:3, 15:3, and 15:4), it must be supposed that this refers to an oral source<sup>40</sup> and that it comprises the "good news of our Lord-God" (*Did.* 15:4) transmitted by his servant, Jesus.

For the reasons just mentioned, it must also be supposed that when it comes to baptizing and receiving visitors "in the name of the Lord" (*Did.* 9:5, 12:1), this means, first and foremost, doing these things "in the name of the Father" (*Did.* 7:1). The members of the *Didache* were singularly preoccupied with his "name" (*Did.* 8:2, 10:2) and mute when it came to the "name of Jesus." More especially, the daily prayers petition that "your [the Father's] name be made holy" (*Did.* 8:2) and the weekly Eucharist

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<sup>39</sup> Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 415.

<sup>40</sup> Historically speaking, the term εὐαγγέλιον referred to an oral production and, only in the latter third of the second century, were books recording the "good news" first designated by this name. Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 1-54.

speaks of "your [the Father's] holy name, which you tabernacle in our hearts" (*Did.* 10:2). Within the prayer life of this community, consequently, the presence of the Father is singularly and consistently evoked. The presence of Jesus is not dwelt upon.<sup>41</sup>

On four occasions, the *Didache* makes reference to persons being honored or received "as the Lord" (*Did.* 4:1, 11:2, 4, 12:1). The most elaborate of these is the following:

[A] My child, the one speaking to you the word of God,  
 [1] you will remember night and day,  
 [2] and you will honor him/her as the Lord,  
 for where the dominion of the Lord is spoken of,  
 there the Lord is (*Did.* 4:1).

Here the novice was being shown the appropriate posture to take toward his/her personal trainer from whom s/he receives the Way of Life: (a) Remembering and reflecting at night and during the day on his/her life and words; and (b) Honoring him/her "as the Lord." In this instance, the novice honors his/her mentor "as the Lord-God" for it is "the

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<sup>41</sup> This does not mean that David and Jesus are not specifically honored as the Lord's "servants" within the eucharistic prayers. Rather, my purpose here is to highlight that prayers are addressed directly to the Father and that there is no need to add at any point "from him, with him, and through him [Jesus]." Thus, the Lord-God is boldly and familiarly addressed as "our Father," and the eucharistic meal honors him as the unseen host who is praised throughout the meal for his work in guiding, liberating, and sanctifying his children.

In contrast, the Pauline memorial of the Last Supper shifts this focus toward Jesus. Now the guiding, liberating, and sanctifying functions are either shared or entirely taken over by Christ Jesus. The development of eucharistic theology, meanwhile, has been singularly preoccupied with explaining the manifold ways that Christ is present. Christian denominations vie with one another in inventing new ways to evoke the presence of Christ. Hence, even though most or all of the traditional canonical prayers are still addressed to the Father, the minds and the hearts of today's worshippers are predisposed toward encountering Jesus. This is the direct result of the Death Tradition.

I mention these things here, because the very fabric of our current eucharistic spirituality blocks us from rightly appreciating and rightly entering into the spirituality of the *Didache*. Even dedicated scholars and pastors are prone to read into the *Didache* what they want to find there and to discover therein what they imagine ought to be there if it is to be credited and harmonized with what we now know about early Christianity. The clues of the *Didache* are thus bent into all sorts of fantastical directions that have few checks and balances and, as a result, the authentic voice of the *Didache* is muffled.

word of God" and the Way of Life revealed by the Father that was being transmitted.<sup>42</sup> This parallels what R. Eleazar ben Shammua said, "The reverence owing to your master [mentor] should be like the awe owing to Heaven [=God]" (*m. Avot* 4:12; *Kallah Rabbathi* 52b).<sup>43</sup>

### The Lord's Prayer

The *Didache* declares that members should pray three times a day "as the Lord ordered in his good news" (8:2). The "Lord," in this case, could possibly refer to Jesus, but this would yield to a Matthean bias that might be misplaced in the context of the *Didache*. The focus in the *Didache* is quite clearly centered upon "how does the Lord-God want us to pray?" at the three ordinary times each day.<sup>44</sup> Given the fact that "the Lord's Prayer" in

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<sup>42</sup> Kurt Niederwimmer judges that "the Lord-God" would have been intended in its original Jewish context but that here, it refers to the "Lord-Jesus" (1998:105). This demonstrates that even seasoned scholars can unknowingly transport into the *Didache* their bias in favor of identifying Jesus as Lord. They acquire this bias in studying Paul and in participating in Christian piety. It is difficult for them, accordingly, to imagine how the *Didache* can be true to Jesus while absolutely being centered upon the presence, the purposes, and the saving grace of the Father. Niederwimmer refers to the "original Jewish context" without, even for a moment, reflecting that Jesus himself and the movement he left behind were solidly rooted within a Jewish context. Thus, even in the Synoptics we find Jesus saying to his disciples: "Whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (Matt 10:40/Luke 9:48). And, even for Paul, who was consumed with promoting the messianic identity of Jesus, finds no difficulty in referencing the final consummation of history as taking place when "the LORD will become king over all the earth; the LORD will be one and his name one" (Zech 14:9) as requiring that "when all things are subjected to him [Christ-Jesus], then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Draper, in this volume, adds more references supporting this when he notes that "speaking the Name or Word or Torah mediates the presence of God is widespread in Jewish thinking."

<sup>44</sup> The framers of the *Didache* specify: "Three times within the day pray thus" (*Did.* 8:3). At the same time, the framers found no necessity to define those times during the day when these prayers take place, nor do they specify the posture of prayer. The silence of the *Didache* on these points suggests that everyone was familiar with those times due to the practice of the community which, in its turn, was shaped by the practice of the synagogue. Following Paul F. Bradshaw, "the times were traditional and unchanged, and so need no explicit mention" (*The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 26).

Gospel of Matthew (6:9-13) differs markedly from what one finds in Gospel of Luke (11:2-4), and given the distinct possibility that Jesus (like most of his contemporaries) prayed extemporaneously, and, finally, given the absence of any tradition that Jesus routinely acted as prayer leader for his disciples, one has to be cautious in assuming that the *Didache* knows anything of Matthew's account of the origin of this prayer.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, the *Didache* doesn't stop with saying, "as the Lord ordered," but continues with "in his good news." The good news, of course, is God's good news of his plans to establish his kingdom on earth as it is already established in heaven. The framers of the *Didache*, consequently, presuppose that the oral tradition for the "Our Father" was already established and in use within their community life. The *Didache* sanctions this usage as what "the Lord ordered in his good news" and insures that this prayer template had the authority (a) to override the use of the Eighteen Benedictions (m. Berakhot 4:3, m. Taanit 2:2) which guided synagogue Jews in their prayers three times a day and (b) to reign in the enthusiasm of Christians who might be expected to promote the second coming of Jesus in their daily prayers.<sup>46</sup>

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Taras Khomych follows this line of thinking in his own article in this volume when he contrasts εὐαγγέλιον as found in Paul and in the *Didache*: "As opposed to Paul, the *Didache* is notably not centered on Christology. Focusing instead on the expectation of the ultimate arrival of the Lord God, this document presents Jesus as God's παῖς, who revealed the will of the Lord."

<sup>45</sup> The scholars of the Jesus Seminar, meeting in Atlanta in 1988, said that certain lines of the prayer appeared to be most authentic, namely, "hallowed be thy name," "thy kingdom come," "give us this day our daily bread" and "forgive us our debts." But they said that these were likely to have been paraphrases of earlier statements and that it was unlikely Jesus ever strung these lines together in a single prayer. For a detailed analysis, see Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope and Life*, 300-350.

<sup>46</sup> Suffice it to say here that the phrase "do not pray as the hypocrites" (*Did.* 8:2) signals that there was some contention within the *Didache* communities regarding what prayer template was to be used for the three-fold daily prayers. Keep in mind that such prayers were regularly prayed in small groups (in households and in workshops); and, in this case, a gifted prayer leader would improvise and expand within the progression given by the prayer template and "because yours is the power and the glory forever" would be used as the expected refrain (as also in the weekly Eucharist).

Given the restricted eschatological horizon of the *Didache*, one can imagine that someone who misused the daily prayers to promote Jesus as the Messiah coming upon the clouds of heaven would be as objectionable as someone who promoted defense of the Jerusalem temple as part of God's final showdown with the gentiles. The framers of the *Didache* had the pastoral genius of knowing where to be lenient and to honor diversity and where to draw the line and enforce a necessary unity. The community that prays together stays together.

## The Eucharistic Meal

In connection with the Eucharist, we find the following instruction:

(And) lēt<sup>47</sup> no one eat or drink from your eucharist  
except those baptized in the name of [the] Lord,  
for the Lord has likewise said concerning this:  
"Do not give what is holy to the dogs" (*Did.* 9:5).

Within the context of the *Didache*'s Eucharist, "Lord" is reserved for "Lord-God" and prayers are addressed entirely to the Father. Given the identification of Jesus as παῖς ("the servant") of the Father (*Did.* 9:2f; 10:2f), one would not be astonished that *Did.* 9:5 retains the notion that baptism was practiced "in the name of the Lord-God."<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, within the Death Tradition, baptism was performed "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38, Acts 8:16, Acts 10:48, Acts 19:5; 1 Cor 1:13; Gal 3:27), but we would not expect that to be the case here.

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<sup>47</sup> In my two *Didache* volumes, I adapted the practice of using an umlaut by way of signaling that the verb is plural. I retain this practice in this essay.

<sup>48</sup> Scholars generally agree that *Did.* 9:5 represents an earlier tradition that was gradually replaced by the trinity of names. See James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 155-156.

The tradition of acting "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (*Did.* 7:1, 3) should not be thought of as reflecting early evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Christianity took over from Judaism an instinct for monotheism that made it impossible for Jews to imagine any physical person being confounded with the invisible and all-powerful Lord of the Universe. For an in-depth story, I would recommend the historical grounding and the exegetical lucidity of James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press & Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 163-229. A key passage in his work is as follows:

Paul in fact calls Jesus "Lord" as much as a means of distinguishing Jesus from God as of identifying him with God. We have already cited 1 Cor 8:6 more than once: "For us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ." Evidently Paul could confess Jesus as Lord, while *at the same time* confessing that God is one; the two claims were not seen to be in any kind of competition. Paul could acknowledge the lordship of Christ, without apparently diminishing his commitment to Jewish monotheism. . . . We should also note a phrase which recurs quite often in the Pauline corpus, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" [Rom 15:6, 2 Cor 1:3, 11:31; Eph 1:3, 17; Col 1:3; also 1 Pt 1:3]. Even Jesus as Lord has God as his God (p. 190).

In the entire New Testament, Matthew alone has the trinity of names associated with baptism, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19). Vööbus points out, however, that Eusebius cites the great commission of Matthew more than two dozen times as "teach all nations in my name."<sup>49</sup> It is quite probably, consequently, that Eusebius' text of Matthew's Gospel did not have a trinitarian formula and that this was later edited into copies of Matthew's Gospel. Accordingly, the retention of the simple formula, "baptized in the name of the Lord," (*Did.* 9:5) may also be a remnant of how 7:1b and 7:3 were expressed in earlier recitations of the *Didache*. Hence, some weight must be given to the possibility that the trinitarian formula was introduced into the *Didache* in much the same way that an early copyist emended Matt 28:19 to conform to the liturgical practice of his day.<sup>50</sup>

Many scholars immediately jump to the conclusion that the second use of "the Lord" clearly refers to Jesus since a word for word repetition of "Do not give what is holy to dogs" is found on the lips of Jesus in Matt 7:6.<sup>51</sup> This conclusion is doubtful for three reasons:

(1) To begin with, the *Didache* up to this point has not used "Lord" by way of referring to Jesus. (2) When a similar formula is used in *Did.* 14:3, the citation in this case is from Mal 11:1 and, consequently, the appeal to what was "said by [the] Lord" clearly and unambiguously refers to the Lord-God.<sup>52</sup> (3) Finally, the context of the saying about "holy things" in Matthew clearly pertains to Jesus' teaching and has no oblique reference to the Eucharist.

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1968), 37-39.

<sup>50</sup> Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions*, 37-39 & Jonathan Draper, *A Commentary on the Didache in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and related Documents* (Cambridge: doctoral dissertation, St. John's College, 1983), 146-147.

<sup>51</sup> Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 153.

<sup>52</sup> Kurt Niederwimmer, at this point, allows that "κύριος here probably does not refer to Jesus" (*The Didache*, 198). This is an understatement. Niederwimmer is deliberately tentative here because he was hoping to show that all of the references to "the Lord" in the *Didache* might have referred to the Lord-Jesus. For the moment, however, one can judge from the implied Christology of the *Didache* that it would have been blatantly blasphemous for members of the *Didache* communities to even imagine that Jesus might somehow adopt Mal 11:1 as referring to himself and, accordingly, direct that the gentiles should offer pure sacrifices to him. Even as late as the early third century, Christian communities were still struggling with whether it was fitting to offer prayers to Jesus (e.g., Origen, *On Prayer*); thus, it would be ludicrous to imagine that the *Didache*, given its Jewish horizon of understanding, would have entertained anything but a strict monotheism. The words of Mal 11:1 thus could *only* be understood as "having been said by the Lord-God" (*Did.* 14:3).

The saying itself, when read within the context of the *Didache*, clearly associates the eucharistic bread and wine as "holy"<sup>53</sup> (see also *Did.* 10:3) and as a "sacrifice" (*Did.* 14:2-3) and, therefore, not to be given to "the dogs." The reference to "dogs" was pejorative since, in the experience of the first-century hearer, the dog here was not a beloved household pet but "the annoying and despised eastern dog of the streets"<sup>54</sup> who is essentially a wormy, uncared-for, scavenger "commonly consuming flesh not acceptable for humans, such as animal carcasses and even human bodies."<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in the Christian Scriptures, the term "dogs" is used on multiple occasions as a metaphor to designate the gap between "the children of God" and the gentiles (Matt 15:26f, Mark 7:26f, Phil 3:2, 2 Pet 2:22).

Within the rabbinic literature, however, "it is the flesh of [temple] sacrifice that the much quoted saying refers: 'what is holy is not to be released to be eaten by dogs' (*b. Bekhorot* 15a interpreting Deut 12:15; *m. Temurah* 6:5; *b. Temurah* 117a & 130b [actually 17a & 30b]; *b. Shebiit* 11b and *b. Pesahim* 29a)."<sup>56</sup> In pagan temples, given the absence of refrigeration, those periods when there were an excessive number of flesh sacrifices resulted in transporting some of the meat offered to a god to be sold in the local meat market. Among the rabbis, therefore, the saying of *Did.* 9:5 seemed to say that meats offered to the Lord were "holy" and therefore ought not to be fed to dogs (literally) or sold off to "dogs" (metaphorically, the gentiles). The framers of the *Didache*, consequently, had only to redraw the lines between insiders and outsiders, between the children and the dogs, in order to discover that such a saying of the Lord-God applied to their Eucharist. In order to do so, however, the Eucharist had to be seen as the equivalent to a temple sacrifice. And this is exactly what happens in *Did* 14:1-3 wherein the framers of the *Didache* used Mal 1:11 to affirm that the Lord-God regarded the eucharistic meal

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<sup>53</sup> The wine and bread were "consecrated" (Latin: *con* [intensive] + *sacrare* [to make sacred]). They were entirely set aside from ordinary wine and bread by the prayer of thanksgiving that consecrated them. This point has been hotly contested because the Eucharist of the *Didache* is not a memorial of the Last Supper nor do the words, "This is my body . . . ; this is my blood" appear. Edward J. Kilmartin makes the observation that prayers of thankful praise must be considered the apostolic forms of "consecration" as framed within the Life Tradition ("Sacrificium Laudis: Content and Function of Early Eucharistic Prayers," *TS* 35 [1974] 273). Enrico Mazza also makes the point that "the problem of the validity of the consecration is a problem which does not exist in the Jewish concept of the ritual meal" ("Elements of a Eucharistic Interpretation," *The Didache in Modern Research* [ed. Jonathan A. Draper. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997] 287). For further details, see Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*, 357-421.

<sup>54</sup> *TDNT* 3.1101

<sup>55</sup> Frederick J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances from Prehistory to the Present* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 247.

<sup>56</sup> *TDNT* 3.1102

as a sacrifice. This, in turn, invited the use of another saying of the Lord-God ("Do not give what is holy to dogs.") as an ironclad directive against inviting the non-baptized to partake of this Eucharist.

### Living on the Threshold of the Lord's Coming

Just as the message of the *Didache* continued the message of Jesus of Nazareth, so too, the Eucharist of the *Didache* perpetuated the proleptic anticipation of the kingdom that marked the table fellowship of Jesus. Fed on the Eucharist, therefore, those who shared the Way of Life of the Father were nourished in their altered social reality. The consecrated cup evoked the holy vine of David, the consecrated broken loaf evoked the life and knowledge of the Father. The former indicated that the Father had elected Israel and established a kingdom of promise through David, his servant. Drinking the cup of the holy vine, therefore, allowed newly baptized gentiles to join in fellowship with Israel and to share her eschatological expectations.

Above all, the Eucharist of the *Didache* was profoundly forward looking: Those whose lives were nourished on the broken loaf were set aside for the final ingathering--for just as the fragments that form the loaf were once "scattered over the hills" (*Did.* 9:4) and, only later, kneaded and baked in one loaf, so too, those who ate of fragments of this consecrated loaf knew that the Father would one day harvest them "from the ends of the earth" so as to gather them into his kingdom on earth. Those who ate, therefore, tasted the future and collective promise that the "one loaf" signified.

Participants at the eucharistic meal would have had little inclination to speculate regarding some form of bodily or sacramental presence of Jesus. Their focus was elsewhere. For them, *the Father was the unseen but very much present host at every eucharistic meal*. The drink and food served were provided by him (*Did.* 10:3, 1:5). His "holy name" was dwelling within their "hearts" (*Did.* 10:2). The prayers addressed to this "holy Father" (*Did.* 10:2) were directly and immediately received by him. But, above all, he was the "almighty Master" (*Did.* 10:3) who was poised "to save . . . to protect . . . and to gather" his entire church into "the kingdom . . . prepared for her" (*Did.* 10:5). In their way of experiencing things, consequently, members of the *Didache* communities looked to the Father for their redemption--just as his "servant Jesus" (*Did.* 9:3, 10:3) had done before them.

After the dishes were taken away, the prayers after the meal began. Now the newly baptized encounters the "holy name" of the "holy Father" that "you tabernacle in our hearts" (*Did.* 10:2). Then, themes of creation and redemption were recounted (*Did.* 10:3). Then, "Remember, Lord, your church [assembly], to save her from every evil, to perfect her in your love, to gather her together from the four winds, sanctified, into your kingdom. . . ." (*Did.* 10:5). Here again, for a second time, one encounters assurances that those who share the Way of Life revealed by the Father through Jesus stand under his protection, and, as the Lord of History, they will assuredly be gathered during the end times into his kingdom. The following refrains bring the official Eucharist to its close:

Come, grace [of the kingdom]!  
 And pass away, [Oh] this world!  
 Hosanna to the God of David!  
 If anyone is holy, come! If anyone is not, convert!  
 Come Lord [marana tha]! Amen! (*Did.* 10:6)

The *Didache* is not intent upon the coming of the Son of Man (Matt 10:23, 16:27-28; 25:31-46, 26:64) or the return of Jesus (1 Thess 4:16-17, I Cor 1:7-8, Acts 1:11, Rev 1:7) but awaits the coming of "the God of David" (*Did.* 10:6) who, after all the failures of fleshly kings, will finally come to rule the world himself. This is the eschatology of the prophet Zechariah. The Lord-God is finished using intermediaries. For his final coming, the Lord-God will come himself personally.<sup>57</sup> The closing lines of the *Didache*

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<sup>57</sup> Most Christians and many scholars among them will have great difficulty with suggesting that God himself is expected to usher in the final kingdom. To begin with, Christian sources and homilies seldom, if ever, probe this line of thinking. When one reads the prophetic books of the bible, this is the reoccurring theme; yet Christians are in the habit of reading the prophets by way of confirming the mission of Christ (e.g., see <http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/walk-in-the-word/listen/i-am-your-savior-part-2-198732.html>).

Yet, in Genesis, one finds God rolling up his sleeves and planting a garden in Eden (Gen 2:8). This would be a good place to begin to show how anthropomorphic images of God fit easily into the Jewish tradition. Jacob Neusner, in his excellent volume, *The Incarnation of God: The Character of Divinity in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), provides a wide assortment of such illustrations.

So, we can now turn our attention from the first pages to the last pages of the Christian bible. The Book of Revelation has a wide assortment of end-times scenarios. The favorite by far of most Christians is the scene wherein the Lord-God is seated on his throne in the new Jerusalem that has come down from heaven and a voice says:

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes [See Isa 25:8]. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new" (21:3-5).

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus has the form of a lamb "that was slaughtered" (Rev 5:9, 12). In the final apocalyptic vision in this book, however, it is the Lord-God who is at the center of the healing action. But God and the lamb together provide light for the city and a beacon for the nations: God's glory replaces the sunlight/moonlight and the Lamb provides an oil lamp. The contrast is evident:

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its [i.e., by the city's]

returns to this expectation when it cites Zechariah in support of the selective resurrection of the just saying:

"The Lord will come and all the holy ones with him."

Then the world will see the Lord coming atop the clouds of heaven (*Did.* 16:7-8).

Within the Life Tradition, it has become quite clear that the one who was to come to establish his kingdom was "the God of David" (*Did.* 10:6) and not "the Son of David" as found in Matt 21:15. Under the influence of Matthew, it is not surprising that the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions* altered the closing words of *Did.* 10:6 to read, "Come Lord! Hosanna to the Son of David" (7.26.5)<sup>58</sup>. Thus, as the Death Tradition took hold, the prayers of the *Didache* were revised to make room for the "second coming" of the Lord-Jesus.<sup>59</sup> "Come Lord [*Marana tha*]" remains but, in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the Son of David is expected and not the God of David. The *Didache*, on the other hand, forces us to go back to an older belief where the focus was set upon the "God of David" (*Did.* 10:6) who is both "the Father" and "the Lord" who will gather the elect into *his* kingdom (*Did.* 9:4, 10:5).<sup>60</sup>

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light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it [the city] (21:23-25).

Thus, right within the NT canon, one has a vision of an apocalyptic future very much centered upon the arrival of the Lord-God.

<sup>58</sup> Knowing this, it becomes clear how impossible it would be to rely upon the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* to reconstruct the so-called "lost ending" of the first-century *Didache*. Unfortunately even scholars such as Niederwimmer come to the conclusion that a "lost ending" is "obvious from the structure of the *Didache* apocalypse (16:3-8), as well as from the paraphrasing conclusions of this section in the *Apostolic Constitutions* . . ." (Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 20). For a detailed examination, see Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life*, 828-836.

<sup>59</sup> John A.T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) observes with T.S. Glasson that the *parousia* does not derive from messianic passages within the Hebrew Scriptures but from end-time visions of the Lord-God coming to his people, with the "single adjustment that the Lord was the Lord Jesus" (p. 140).

<sup>60</sup> Some scholars have asked me why the *Didache* makes no room for the Messianic claims on behalf of Jesus that are promoted by the Death Tradition. I respond to this very excellent question as follows:

## *Conclusion*

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If Acts gives us anything near an accurate picture of Paul's impact upon the synagogues in Asia Minor that he visited, then one can gain a certain sympathy for those who wanted Paul silenced and were willing to take action against him as "a disturber of the peace" (Acts 24:5). From the point of view of Paul's opponents, Paul appeared as an irresponsible and irrepressible fanatic who dominated the open forums in the synagogue every Sabbath and used the Hebrew Scriptures by way of demonstrating that everyone had to champion Jesus of Nazareth because God had raised him from the dead and thereby singled him out as the one who would return in the Final Days to usher in the Messianic Age. When Paul did get silenced, he then withdrew from that synagogue those Jews and "God-fearers" who accepted the renewal of faith and hope that came with his apocalyptic visions. In so doing, however, it can also be imagined that such actions often broke up families and introduced factionalism into the very heart of the local synagogue.

This is exactly the sort of apocalyptic factionalism that the framers of the *Didache* were trying to prevent. How so? Firstly, by codifying the Way of Life, the liturgical templates, the treatment of visiting prophets, and the end-times scenario. Secondly, by insisting that these are boiler-plate protections for all concerned: "You will not at all leave behind the rules of the Lord, but you will guard the things that you have received, neither adding nor taking [anything] away" (*Did.* 4:13, 6:1, 11:1-2, 15:4). Thirdly, visiting apostles and prophets are honored "as the Lord" but then their stay is deliberately limited and their conduct carefully supervised (*Did.* 11:1-13:4). After the official Eucharist is finished, the prophets are allowed to give thanks "as much as they wish" (*Did.* 10:7) and as they wish. Thus, a Christian prophet could paraphrase 1 Thess 4 in its entirety. Another prophet could recite a "secret of the Most High" as found in 2 Esdr 12:31-36. And still another could glorify King Hezekiah or even name his own "master" as the future Messiah (*b. Sanhedrin* 98a). From the vantage point of the *Didache*, all such apocalyptic visions regarding the identity and the role of the Messiah were left "open and unresolved"; what remained certain, however, is that "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" ("the rule of praying is the rule of believing"). Fourthly, the terms "Christian" (*Did.* 12:4) and "Christ-merchant" (*Did.* 12:5) appear in the *Didache* not as unqualified endorsements but by way of giving cautions regarding unfortunate tendencies found among these outsiders (*Did.* 12:3). Fifthly, it must be observed that the *Didache* also leaves "open and unresolved" another troublesome source of factionalism, namely, whether Jerusalem or the temple will have any role to play in God's future kingdom.

In sum, the rule: "You will not cause dissention, and you will reconcile those fighting" (*Did.* 4:3) applies to all of this as well. And no amount of apocalyptic certainty can override the final call for "watchfulness . . . for the whole time of your faith will not be of use to you if in the end time you should not have been perfected" (*Did.* 16:1-2). Finally, the fact that the end times opens with havoc in the heart of the Jesus movement (*Did.* 16:3-4) is most probably a sign that such bitter havoc has already been tasted by the framers of the *Didache* relative to the endless varieties of apocalyptic variations that visitors bring with them into the heart of the *Didache* communities.

In the end, I return to the crisis facing *Didache* scholarship. We have been at a standstill for a long time. During a thirty-year period when the number of participants and the number of papers increased three-fold during the annual meetings of the SBL, the number of persons addressing the *Didache* has still remained at a comparatively low level. This is because the legacy of source and redaction criticism and the influence of Harnack has hopelessly fragmented the text and reduced it to a second-century church order. The thrust of my essay has been to show that this orientation is being progressively abandoned. "The decision to reject one paradigm," Thomas Kuhn rightly notes, "is always simultaneously the decision to undertake another."<sup>61</sup>

First, the voice of the *Didache* was muted by the supposition that it was spliced together like a church order. In truth, however, it exhibits a finely tuned oral integrity from beginning to end. Next, the voice of the *Didache* was distorted because it was interpreted in the shadow cast by the Gospel of Matthew. Freed of the Christology and ecclesiology of Matthew, the *Didache* demonstrates a highly sophisticated community of householders bound to the Way of Life in anticipation of the final ingathering into the kingdom of God. Finally, in the third section, the voice of the *Didache* was freed from the high Christology that even scholars with the stature of Kurt Niederwimmer have mistakenly tried to overlay the document. Thus, the hermeneutical caution of John Dominic Crossan helps us to safeguard the Life Tradition within the *Didache* and to enable it to stand up for itself without being overwhelmed by the Death Tradition.

Not all examinations of the *Didache* are created equal. Some force us to notice more about the text. Some examinations break through the surface of text and weave together the clues offered by the text into tantalizing visions of the communitarian way of life that stood behind the text. Superior theories have a greater fruitfulness--they are "fraught with further intimations of an indeterminate range"<sup>62</sup> that reveal themselves, from time to time, in "as yet undisclosed, perhaps as yet unthinkable, consequences"<sup>63</sup> (Polanyi 1966:23). Such theories also provide a greater intellectual satisfaction--they say more about what is the hidden depths of meaning within the text. As part of their greater fruitfulness and greater intellectual satisfaction, however, they also often carry with them a concomitant vulnerability to being falsified.

As someone who spent many sleepless nights puzzling over the *Didache*, I still believe that I have much to learn from those who are coming after me and will inevitably dismantle and reconstruct much of what I have done. Among all my reviewers, however, I am especially indebted to Dr. Robert J. Daly, professor emeritus of patristic studies at Boston College. In his review of my thousand-page volume, he makes some very

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University Press, 1962) 77.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Tacit Dimension* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 23.

<sup>63</sup> Polanyi, *Tacit Dimension*, 23.

perceptive and timely observations that serve to define how, in the present moment, a new direction in *Didache* studies is emerging not only within my own scholarship but also among the small group of pioneering scholars who have embraced proposals that find common ground with the position that I have set out above. I find it fitting, therefore, to give Professor Daly the last word when it come to defining a "viable future" for *Didache* studies:

Building on, but also fundamentally correcting more than a hundred years of research and interpretation, Milavec's basic thesis, convincingly demonstrated in magnificent detail, is that the *Didache* is neither a church order in the ordinary sense of the word, nor a text sometimes awkwardly patched together by several hands from several sources, nor a document that is dependent on any of the gospels (it's actually prior to them) or on other Christian texts, but an orally transmitted guide for mentors given the responsibility of progressively introducing adult pagans into this new Christian way of life.

It is also a book that could not have been written even as recently as one or two decades ago. To list some of the reasons for this: (a) the relative maturation of nonpolemical approaches to matters of Christian origins—no longer is interpretation driven by a specifically Catholic or Protestant confessional need to prove this or that; (b) the maturation and broad acceptance of sociological analyses of the New Testament and Early Christianity; (c) the general availability of an explosion of knowledge about postbiblical Judaism and about late antiquity in general; (d) a methodological shift away from the relative dominance of textuality over orality--i.e., one no longer assumes that the first question is how this document developed as a written text, but is ready to ask first about the life situation that can explain the text as received. In other words, the fundamental principle of interpretation that Milavec consistently follows to good effect is not to look for exogenous reasons for interpreting the text, but to go the extra mile in allowing the text, as received, and from its own context, to explain itself.

Following this method of interpretation, Milavec shows that the *Didache* is not only not dependent on any of the gospels, but is most likely prior to them and, in any case, theologically very different. What it reveals is a, so-to-speak, pre-Christological stage of Christianity. There is no mention of Christic sacrificial atonement; no mention even of the passion and death of Christ. Instead Jesus is spoken of as the "Servant"; nor is it Jesus, but the Father, who is spoken of as the Lord, the one who will come in the Last Days.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> <http://catholicbooksreview.org/2004/milavec.htm>

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