

A MESSAGE FOR THE LAST DAYS: DIDACHE 16.1-8 AND THE NEW TESTAMENT TRADITIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Didache 16. My goals are to understand the text the way the author intended for it to be understood. As any interpretation of a text will be affected by the preconceptions we take to it, I will first explain my assumptions regarding the purpose of Didache as a whole, its date of composition, and its relationship to the New Testament. These three issues are all interrelated; the date one assigns Didache will affect one's understanding of its dependence on the New Testament. I will then briefly examine the connections between Didache 16 and the preceding chapters, and finally the sixteenth chapter itself will be examined. I conclude with a second look at the relationship between the sixteenth chapter and Didache as a whole.

II. CONTENTS AND FUNCTION

Didache is an amalgam of various genres and traditions. The first five chapters of Didache (1.1-6.2) contain a Christianized version of the Two Ways tradition. This is followed by a section dealing primarily with church order (6.3-15.4), including a section on baptism, prayer, itinerant prophets, the common meal on the Lord's day, appointment of bishops, and community discipline. The final chapter (16) tells of the end times. This is a heterogeneous document, and it is often hard to see what the various parts have in common, and what the author's purpose was in writing it.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296-373) included the Didache among other books such as the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, and the

Shepherd, which, though they were not canonical, were “appointed by the fathers to be read by those who newly wish to join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness”¹. While Didache may have served as a kind of catechism, much of Didache does not seem intended for new believers; see for example the instructions relating to the appointment of bishops and deacons in chapter 15. It is more likely that only the Two Ways section was used as a catechism; this is suggested by the phrase “all these things” in 7.1: “Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”². Texts similar to the Two Ways section in Didache have been found; the Apostolic Church Order (*Doctrina Apostolorum*) includes the same material as Did 1.1-1.3a and 2.2-6.1. *Barnabas* also includes a description of the way of life and the way of death (*Barn* 18-21). The Two Ways tradition is also known in Jewish literature, and scholarly consensus today is that the three texts borrowed this Jewish text independently³. There is then reason to believe that Athanasius was recommending a Two Ways text rather than the whole of Didache for new converts.

While the Two Ways section may have had a catechetical purpose, it is unlikely that the rest of Didache was used in the same way. It is commonly assumed that Didache was a church order, containing all kinds of things that a church would need, including in addition to rules of conduct, various liturgical prayers and the Two Ways catechism. Schöllgen agrees that Didache has elements of a church order, but he argues that it should not be considered a simple church order. For example, while Didache specifies what kind of water should be used in baptism, it does not specify what the prerequisites for baptism are⁴. Schöllgen therefore concludes, “The Didache... is, as a selective church order, a polemical text on particular problems of community life”⁵.

Didache seems to be a guide for congregations who want to join the larger church community. These communities presumably had their own traditions regarding baptism, fasts and church leadership. To ensure the unity of the

¹ *Festal Letter* 39.7; see *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series (1953) vol. 4, 552.

² See SCHÖLLGEN, 46.

³ NIEDERWIMMER, (1998), 30-41.

⁴ SCHÖLLGEN, 47.

⁵ *Id.*, 63.

church, Didache set normative guidelines for these areas of potential disagreement. There is much that Didache does not discuss; presumably these issues were either properly understood by the communities, or they were dealt with adequately elsewhere.

In discussions regarding the purpose of Didache, the last chapter is most often virtually ignored, as it doesn't fit the church order hypothesis. I will examine the function of this chapter in greater detail below, but first it is necessary to say some words about the dating of Didache.

III. DATING THE DIDACHE

Although the only complete manuscript of Didache, *Codex Hierosolymitanus*, dates from 1056, it is usually assumed that Didache is an ancient text. Audet, for example, dated Didache to the first century⁶. There is some manuscript evidence for an early date: some passages of Didache have been preserved in earlier manuscript fragments. Did 1.3b-4a has been found in a Greek papyrus manuscript (*Papyrus Oxvyrhynchus* 1782) from the third century; Didache 2.7b-3.2a has been found on another piece of papyrus thought to come from the same scroll. A Coptic papyrus from ca AD 400 (Br. Mus. Or. 9271) contains 10.3b-12.2a. But the composite nature of this text raises the question whether the received text is all of the same date, or whether only some parts are truly early compositions, while others are late additions. A now lost Georgian manuscript is said to have included the whole Didache (and then some), but this claim cannot be verified⁷.

As was mentioned, Athanasius of Alexandria referred to Didache by name. Other earlier church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Origen (185-254), also refer to it. But we cannot know whether the contents of that work are the same as the Didache we have. Other ancient texts have names and contents similar to Didache such as *Doctrina Apostolorum* and *Didascalia Apostolorum* (early 200s?). It may be that Clement and Origen referred to one of these texts instead; they did not quote any passages that would show us which text they had in mind.

There are few certain quotes from Didache in other early works. The similarities between Didache and *Doctrina Apostolorum* were just mentioned; but again, it has not been possible to show dependence of the Didache on

⁶ AUDET, 199.

⁷ NIEDERWIMMER, (1998), 19, 21, 24.

Doctrina (or vice versa); the most likely explanation is that *Doctrina Apostolorum* and Didache go back to a common source⁸.

Neither manuscripts and versions nor external citations provide conclusive evidence for the claim that Didache dates from the late first or the early second century, but they do not disprove it either. The best evidence for the integrity and antiquity of Didache is internal.

IV. INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Although manuscript evidence and external evidence for an early date are inconclusive, most scholars believe that Didache is a very early text on the basis of internal evidence. Holmes lists the following factors which suggest an early date: "The relative simplicity of the prayers, the continuing concern to differentiate Christian practice from Jewish rituals (8.1), and in particular the form of church structure"⁹. Regarding church structure, Holmes finds the references to itinerant prophets and apostles (11.1-7; 13.1) especially telling. These traits "reflect a time closer to that of Paul than Ignatius"¹⁰. Finally one might adduce the artlessness and brevity of Didache to support the claim that it is an early document - over time church orders grow longer and more complex.

The internal arguments are not conclusive. The prayers (and liturgical formulas) are no doubt old, but their presence does not mean that the rest of the text is equally old, any more than does the presence of the Lord's Prayer in a modern church order. Holmes tacitly assumes that Didache is a complete church order, which as I have argued, is incorrect. We must allow for the possibility that there were other forms of church structure than are mentioned in the text. The fact that there were travelling apostles and prophets is not conclusive either. As Balabanski notes this could point to a rural setting instead of an early date; compare the American circuit preachers¹¹. As regards the felt need to differentiate Christian and Jewish practices this need not mean that Didache was written at an early date, as much as it suggests that the congregation(s) addressed included recent converts from Judaism. In

⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (1997), 479.

⁹ HOLMES, 247-8.

¹⁰ *Id.*, 248.

¹¹ BALABANSKI, 200.

short, internal evidence does not prove an early date of composition, but I still consider it likely.

V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIDACHE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

It has been suggested that Didache preserves sayings of Jesus independently of the canonical Gospels; this too could argue for the antiquity of the work, although the presence of archaic elements by itself does not prove it. But here too the evidence is ambiguous. Where Didache offers a different version of a saying of Jesus than what is preserved in the Gospels, it could be derived from an independent tradition, perhaps antedating the Gospels. But it is at least as likely that the author was simply quoting the passage from memory, and did not bother verifying it. It is difficult to prove where Didache is dependent on a New Testament text, as rarely are these texts quoted verbatim. Where Didache resembles a New Testament text but does not quote it exactly, we must allow for the possibility that the author is quoting from memory or paraphrasing the text. It should also be recalled that whatever written Gospel(s) the author of Didache had access to, he also had access to oral traditions. This could explain the presence of untraceable quotes, such as Did 1.6: "But it has also been said concerning this: 'Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it'".

Many passages in Didache remind one of the Gospel according to Matthew. Earlier most scholars assumed that the Didachist was dependent on Matthew¹². Space will not allow me to go through all the arguments for Didache's dependence on Matthew, but I will mention some of the more important ones. In four places Didache speaks of "the Gospel": "As the Lord commanded in his Gospel" (8.2); "the rule of the gospel" (11.3); "as you find in the Gospel" (15.3) "as you find in the Gospel of our Lord" (15.4). The first instance is most interesting, for what follows is the Lord's Prayer, as it is recorded in Matthew 6.9-13. There are some minor differences in wording, which are shared by some Greek manuscripts or versions of Matthew; the most important change is the addition of the phrase "For yours is the power and the glory", which is also evidenced by later manuscripts, including in particular two Coptic manuscripts. Didache includes many *logia* of Jesus in

¹² According to Niederwimmer ([1998], 209) the following scholars support dependence on Matthew: Harnack, Funk, Robinson, Vokes, Johnson, Massaux, Richardson, Stommel, Hagner. So too does Lindemann.

his version of the Two Ways teaching; many of these are also found in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Did 1.3// Mt 5.44-47; Did 1.4a // Mt 5.39; Did 1.4b// Mt 5.41; Did 1.5// Mt 5.26; Did 3.7// Mt 5.5; Did 9.5 // Mt 7.6). Some of these logia are recorded only in Matthew, others are more similar to the version recorded in Matthew than the versions recorded in the other Gospels.

It is commonly thought that Matthew was written mainly for Jewish Christians; Hagner writes for example, "the data of the Gospel are again and again explained most satisfactorily on the hypothesis that the first readers were Jewish Christians"¹³. There is reason to believe that the author of Didache likewise belonged to a largely Jewish Christian congregation. It is not unreasonable to assume that if they had access to a written gospel that it would have been that of Matthew.

Recently several scholars have argued that the similarities between Matthew and Didache are best accounted for by positing a common source for both. Kloppenborg compares Mark 13.24-27, Matt 24.29-31 and Did 16.6-8 and concludes,

The presence of a disproportionately large amount of material in Did 16.3-8 which has parallels only in special Matthean material and the corresponding lack of distinctively Markan material as reproduced by Matthew suggest that Did 16.3-8 drew not upon Matthew but upon a tradition to which Matthew also had access (KLOPPENBORG [1979], 66).

For example, although it includes passages resembling Matt 24.30, Didache does not have anything corresponding to the verse immediately preceding it, Matt 24.29, one of the key passages of the eschatological narrative. If the Didachist had had access to Matthew, "it is inexplicable that he did not adopt any of the elements of Mt 24.29"¹⁴. Matt 24.29 is virtually identical to Mark 13.24, while the parts of Matt 24.30 which the Didache uses is M material. Therefore Didache had access only to the M material, not the complete Gospel¹⁵. This argument seems persuasive at first, and Niederwimmer does not try to refute it. But I do not find it compelling. Kloppenborg is assuming that the Didachist was intending to write a complete account of the eschaton, but Balabanski rightly answers that if the Didachist saw his work as a supplement to Matthew, he would have seen no need to

¹³ D. A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13* (Word Biblical Commentary 33a; 1993) lxiv.

¹⁴ KLOPPENBORG, 63.

¹⁵ Draper writes regarding the same verses, "this makes it likely, if not impossible, that it is dependent on Matthew" ([1993], 15).

repeat everything Matthew had said about the eschaton¹⁶. Thus, I do not find that there is sufficient evidence for ruling out Didache's knowledge of (if not dependence on) Matthew.

There are cases where Didache agrees very closely with other books of the New Testament; compare for example Did 1.3a and Luke 6.28, or Did 1.5a and Luke 6.30. Some scholars have argued that the Didachist had access to Luke, or to the Pauline epistles, or to the same Q tradition from which Matthew and Luke drew. These theories enjoy considerably less support¹⁷.

Dependence of Didache on Matthew remains the most likely explanation for the similarities between the texts. The strongest argument against this theory would be based on their relative chronology. The majority opinion in New Testament scholarship assigns a late first century date to Matthew. R. Brown places it between "80-90, give or take a decade"¹⁸. If this dating is correct, and Didache was written before AD 70, it could not be dependent on Matthew. But there is good reason not to accept a late dating of Matthew. Judging by the changes Matthew makes in the apocalyptic discourse, he expected the desecration of the temple to be followed immediately by the parousia. Had he written his Gospel after the temple had been destroyed, he would not have changed the text in this way. Thus Matthew was probably written before AD 70¹⁹. We are not able to rule out dependence of Didache on Matthew or Matthew on Didache on the basis of date.

In conclusion, while Didache's dependence on Matthew cannot be proven, it does not look entirely unreasonable. The question of dependency of Didache on the canonical Gospels is one of the central questions in Didache research, and it is one that I will focus on.

VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHAPTER 16 AND THE REST OF DIDACHE, PART 1

Chapter 16 is not a homogeneous entity. The first two verses have the same ethical tone as the preceding chapters, while verses 3-8 are a

¹⁶ BALABANSKI, 197.

¹⁷ See NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 251.

¹⁸ R. E. BROWN, 1997: *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) p. 172.

¹⁹ See D. A. HAGNER, *Matthew 14-28* (Word Biblical Commentary 33b; 1995) 712.

thumbnail sketch of the end times. This eschatologue²⁰ is only loosely connected to the instructions regarding church order which preceded it. The manuscript evidence for the 16th chapter is limited to Codex Hierosolymitanus; the connection between this chapter and the rest of the Didache is otherwise supported only by the Apostolic Constitutions (and the lost Georgian version). No parallel for this section may be found in *Barnabas* or in *Doctrina Apostolorum*. The literary connection between this chapter and the preceding ones is weak, but considering the composition of the text as a whole, this is no argument against its authenticity. The best arguments for the authenticity of the sixteenth chapter are internal, as I hope will become apparent in the close reading of the sixteenth chapter that follows.

VII. EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT

“1. Watch over your life, do not let your lamps go out, and do not be unprepared, but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming. 2. Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for all the time you have believed will be of no use if you are not found perfect in the last time”²¹.

These verses continue the ethical exhortations of the fifteenth chapter. In 15.3 the author encourages members of the Christian community to correct one another, “not in anger but in peace”, to preserve the wholeness of the community. 16.2 also emphasizes the importance of community- the congregations should gather together frequently, for the benefit of their souls. In 15.4 the community is told to follow the Gospel of the Lord in its prayers, its acts of charity and everything else. The following verse (16.1) seems to be a paraphrase of a saying of Jesus. The second part of the saying, “for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming”, has parallels in Mark 13.35, Matt 24.42, 24.44, and Luke 12.40, but the first part is closest to Luke 12.35: “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning”. The similarity is more apparent in Milavec’s translation: “Do not let your lamps be extinguished and do not let your waist be ungirded”²². These verses are similar enough to suggest that the Didachist had knowledge of Luke, but they are sufficiently

²⁰ I say we let this term, which designates a description of the eschaton, enter the English language if it isn’t there already.

²¹ For the running text I have used Holmes’s translation (Holmes 1992).

²² MILAVEC, 100.

different that such a connection cannot be proven. I believe that in this verse, like in the rest of chapter 16, Didache is drawing on common Christian vocabulary²³. References to girding one's waist in preparedness may also be found in Eph 6.14, 1 Pet 1.13. This metaphor is ultimately based on the language of the Old Testament; compare Ex 12.11: "This is how you are to eat [the lamb]- with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover" (NIV). In short, Didache 16.1 is not quoting any one passage, but refers to a truth expressed in much of Christian literature, namely that we must always be prepared for the hour of the Lord; we should never stop praying and doing acts of mercy, but should hold firm to the faith.

The second verse encourages the community to gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit their souls. This exhortation is similar to that in Heb 10.25: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (NIV). Similar exhortations are found in *Barn* 4.10b, 19.10. As the parousia seems to be delayed indefinitely, members of the congregations were presumably becoming lax in their Christian habits. These writers must remind them that the Day of the Lord is imminent - it could come at any moment, so they must be prepared. This same theme is picked up by *Hermas* (Vision 3.6.2 = 14.2), where it is suggested that those who cease to associate with the saints are useless²⁴.

The second half of 16.2 ["for all the time you have believed will be of no use (ouv ga.r wv felh, sei u`ma/j o` pa/j cro, noj th/j pi, stewj u`mw/n) if you are not found perfect in the last time] is very close to *Barnabas* 4.9 ["For the whole time of our faith will do us no good (ouvde.n ga.r wv felh, sei h`ma/j o` pa/j cro, nioj th/j pi, stewj h`mw/n) unless now, in the age of lawlessness, we resist as well the coming stumbling blocks..."]. It is not likely that Didache is borrowing from *Barnabas* - Didache is shorter, and therefore probably older²⁵. It is in my view more likely that *Barnabas* is dependent on Didache. Talk of perfection is not foreign to Didache; compare 1.4 ("If someone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other as well

²³ See also Niederwimmer 1989.257. Lindemann argues that the author assumes his readers are acquainted with the parable in Matt 25.1-13 (1997.159).

²⁴ See NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 258. See also *Hermas Par.* 9.26.3 (= 103.3).

²⁵ *Id.*, 259. Ladd examines the relationship between *Barn* 4.9 and Did 16.2 in some detail, but is forced to conclude that one cannot determine with any certainty whether *Barnabas* borrowed from Didache, or Didache from *Barnabas*, or whether they had a common source (1949.41).

and you will be perfect”); and 6.2 (“For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord you will be perfect”). These two verses echo Jesus’ words preserved in Matt 5.48, “Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”²⁶. In the present context the perfection that is required is not so much the doing of any particular works, but staying firm in the faith. If we stay firm in the faith until the end, God will perfect us. The notion that it is ultimately God who perfects us is also seen in the prayer recorded in 10.5: “Remember your church, Lord, to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in your love”.

16.3. For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. 4. For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another.

The reference to the final hour in the previous verse now leads to a thumbnail sketch of what the last days will be like. The language used is reminiscent of several sayings of Jesus recorded in the Synoptics. One verse which resembles 16.3 closely is Matt 7.15: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (RSV). No parallels are found in the other Gospels. Again dependence on Matthew cannot be proven; expressions like these are likely to have been part of the spoken language at the time, as indeed they are today. A stronger case can be made for dependence of Didache on Matt 24.10-13, which has several lexical similarities with our passage:

“And many will fall away (skandalisqh,sontai= Did 16.5), and betray (paradw,sousin=16.4) one another, and hate one another (mish,sousin avllh,louj=16.4). And many false prophets (yeudoprofh/tai=16.3) will arise and lead many astray. 12. And because wickedness (avnomi,a= 16.4) is multiplied (plhqunqh/nai; cf. 16.3 plhqunqh,sontai), most men’s love (avga,ph=16.3) will grow cold. But he who endures (u`pomei,naj; cf. 16.5 u`pomei,nantej) to the end will be saved (swqh,setai; cf. Did 16.5 swqh,sontai)”.

²⁶ There is no reason to find in the reference to perfection any “overtones of the mystery religions” as Balabanski ([1997] 201) suggests.

As no close parallels to Matt 24.10-12 are found in the other Gospels, it has been suggested that Didache was relying on Matthew here, or that it was relying on Matthew's source²⁷.

It is disputed whether Did 16.3-4a is speaking of the present or distant future. Balabanski asserts that the false prophets mentioned here are not to be identified with those of the preceding chapters (e.g., 11.5,6,9). The prophets mentioned in the earlier chapters are merely "abusing their privileges", while the false prophets in chapter 16 are an "End Time phenomenon"²⁸. Seeliger on the other hand believes that there is no real difference between these false prophets and the earlier ones²⁹. Balabanski is too doctrinaire in her dismissal of the identification of these prophets with those in chapter 11. It seems clear that the author of Didache wanted to convince the congregations that they were living in the last times and that the end could come at any moment.

Warnings regarding false prophets and traitors to the faith are always à propos. Compare for example Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20.29-30, RSV). A similar warning of danger coming from within is found in 1 John 2.18-19: "Children, it is now the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us..." (RSV). While literary dependence of Didache on either of these documents cannot be ruled out, it seems more likely that all three documents reflect the same schismatic tendency in the church toward the end of the first century.

Verses 3-4a speak of the general state of affairs in the end times, much like Mark 13.5-13 // Matt 24.4-12. The appearance of false prophets and traitors to the faith is a characteristic of the end times, but not a sign of the end itself. These verses are using eschatological language to portray real problems facing the community.

16.4b "And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and will perform signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands,

²⁷ See KLOPPENBORG, 66-67.

²⁸ BALABANSKI, 201.

²⁹ SEELIGER, 381-2.

and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before”.

In this sentence Didache is again using terms common in biblical eschatology, without directly quoting any passage. There are clear similarities to Matt 24, but no evidence of dependency on the Gospel text. Jesus repeatedly warns his disciples of false prophets and others claiming to be the Christ: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, ‘I am the Christ’, and will deceive many” (Matt 24.4-5, NIV); “many false prophets will appear and deceive many people” (24.11), “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect” (24.24). Similar warnings are found elsewhere in the New Testament. Various figures were expected to deceive many people in the end times; in most cases they are said do so by performing false miracles, an echo of the warning against false prophets in Deut 13.1-3. An overview of some of the more interesting parallels follows.

This passage in Didache bears many similarities to another notoriously difficult passage, 2 Thes 2.1-12. Here Paul speaks of ‘the lawless one’ or ‘the man of lawlessness’ (οὐ νόμος, οὐ ἀνθρώπος θεῶν ἀνομία) who will come “by the activity of Satan” and will be accompanied by “all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception” (2.9-10, NRSV). There are many theories regarding the identity of the lawless one; the one that I find most persuasive was advanced already by Irenaeus (*Adv Haer* 5.25.1) - the man of lawlessness is the same as the antichrist alluded to in 1 John 2.18³⁰. The antichrist is an evil counterpart to Christ, an incarnation of evil or of the Devil. This character was ultimately inspired in part by prophecies regarding a blasphemous invading king described in Daniel 11.31-36. Balabanski notes the similarities between Didache 16.4b and 2 Thes 2.1-12, and concludes that the character in Didache, like the man of lawlessness, is “distinct from Satan”. She also notes the connections between these characters and the Book of Daniel. She adds that they are also dependent on “the lawless watchers of the Enoch tradition and...the Nero redivivus myth”³¹. The Watchers tradition is an intertestamental development of Gen 6.1-4. As Forsyth has shown, it was influential in developing the myth of a heavenly opponent to God. To the extent that the Watchers myth forms part of the literary history of the Jewish and Christian combat myth, it can be said to form the background for 2 Thes 2 and Didache 16. But the connections are quite

³⁰ N. FORSYTH, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the combat myth* (Princeton 1987) 313.

³¹ BALABANSKI, 195.

distant. As regards the dependence of these two narratives on the Nero redivivus myth, Balabanski's case is weaker still. The Nero redivivus myth is the widely spread tradition that the emperor Nero who died AD 68 would return to power. In some versions of the legend he died but would return from the dead, in others he never died, but went into hiding. Christian and Jewish apocalypses from the first or second century adopted these traditions. They speak of an evil man with near-divine powers appearing at the end time, and some of them clearly refer to Nero. The third Sibylline Oracle 63-69 speaks of 'one of the *Sebastenoi*', while *Ascension of Isaiah* 4.2-3 speaks of a matricide; both descriptions fit Nero, who was of the line of Augustus and who arranged the murder of his mother Agrippina in AD 59³². In contrast, there is nothing specific to Nero in 2 Thes or Didache 16; there are in fact no traces of the Nero redivivus myth in either 2 Thes or Didache. Indeed, if we assume that Paul wrote 2 Thes, which I do, we could not expect any such traces, as Paul died before Nero³³. The primary background for both 2 Thes and Didache 16.4b are the early Christian traditions about the antichrist, which in turn probably go back to Jesus' teaching.

The first and second Johannine epistles allude to the same tradition as 2 Thes. They redefine the unique Antichrist as anyone who betrays the Christian community: "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come...Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2.18, 22 NIV); "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 7, NIV). These passages could be considered attempts to 'demythologize' the traditions about the antichrist; since no single person who could be identified as the antichrist appeared after the fall of the temple, the tradition had to be reinterpreted. In contrast there is no evidence that the authors of Didache and 2 Thes expected

³² See J. J. COLLINS, "The Sibylline Oracles", in: CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (1983) 360; M. A. KNIBB, "The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah", in: CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol 2 (1985) 161. The beast with the fatal wound in Rev 13.12 is commonly identified as Nero; cf A. YARBRO COLLINS, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula MT 1976) 174-184.

³³ For arguments in favor of Pauline authorship see CH. WANAMAKER, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; 1990) 17ff and L. MORRIS, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; 1991) 17-23.

anything but a single antichrist figure³⁴. This would suggest that both texts are of an early date.

Another interesting parallel to Didache 16.4b is found in Rev 12.9, a passage which speaks of Satan being the one who deceives the whole world: "The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world (o` planw/n th.n oivkoume,nhn o[lhn)..." (RSV). The latter phrase is reminiscent of Didache's term kosmoplanh,j, a *hapax legomenon* meaning "deceiver of the world"³⁵. It is possible that the Didachist also has Satan in mind when he used this phrase. But other interpretations are equally plausible. In Rev 13.13-14 it is the second beast, the one which rose out of the earth that "works great signs, ever making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the [first] beast, it deceives (plana/|) those who dwell on earth" (RSV). In Rev. 19.20 this second beast is implicitly identified with the false prophet, as he is also said to have performed signs in the presence of the beast³⁶. The false prophet in turn is presumably a human figure³⁷. The Didachist may have had a similar human figure in mind³⁸.

Didache warns that this deceiver will commit "abominations the likes of which have never happened before"; this too is an apocalyptic commonplace; the end times are usually portrayed as worse than anything that has come before; compare Mark 13.19// Matt 24.21; Dan 12.1. According to BDAG the word translated 'abomination' (avqe,mita) "refers primarily ... to violation of tradition" but may also mean 'something forbidden'³⁹. It is roughly synonymous with avnomi,a, the term translated 'lawlessness' in 2 Thes 2.3. The worst abomination or breach of the Law is to demand the worship that

³⁴ WANAMAKER, 248 and MORRIS, 221 reject a collective interpretation of the man of lawlessness.

³⁵ *The Apostolic Constitutions* VII.32.2 reads kosmopla,noj, which is a morphologically more correct form of the word. Niederwimmer 1998.219. The verb plana,w is also used in Matthew in the verses quoted above and in 2 John 7.

³⁶ Cf. R. H. MOUNCE, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT 1977) 260; A. YARBRO COLLINS, in: J. J. COLLINS, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; 1993) 107.

³⁷ The identity of the second beast has long been the subject of debate; Beale writes that it has been identified as "Satan, Antichrist, the Roman imperial priesthood, the Catholic church, and false teachers" (707).

³⁸ So LINDEMANN, 163. Again, I do not imply that Didache is dependent on Revelation. Rather, both Revelation and Didache refer to a common antichrist tradition.

³⁹ BDAG, 24.

belongs to God; cf. Isa 14.4-20, Ezek 28.1-10, Dan 11.36-37. In the Didache, the world deceiver tries to persuade people that he is the Son of God. Holmes translated $\Upsilon\iota\omicron\jmath\ \text{Qeou}$ as 'a son of God'; the translation 'the Son of God' is also possible, and in my view, more likely (cf Mark 15.39 where the same words are usually translated "The Son of God"). It is not clear whether the Didachist implies that the deceiver will claim to be the promised Davidic king, the Messiah, or whether his claims are grander than that. It is clear that the deceiver is claiming the role that belongs to Jesus alone. Christ had warned that in the end time false prophets and false Messiahs would appear (Mark 13.21-22 // Matt 24.23-24). Similarly, Paul warns that the lawless one will claim to be God (2 Thes 2.4), and according to the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Beliar "will act and speak like the Beloved, and will say 'I am the Lord, and before me there was no one'" (4.6)⁴⁰.

Didache warns that "the earth will be delivered into his hands". This too is an apocalyptic commonplace - the powers of evil have dominion only because God allows it. Compare Dan 7.6: "After this I looked... and the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it" (RSV), and Dan 7.25, regarding the eleventh king: "they [the saints] *shall be given* into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time" (RSV). Similarly, in Revelation it is said that "authority *was given* [to the beast] over every tribe and people and tongue and nation..." (Rev 13.7, RSV), and *Ascension of Isaiah* 4.3 reads, "some of the twelve *will be given* into his hand"⁴¹. I take all these to be 'divine passives', circumlocutions used to avoid using the name of God unnecessarily. The message is the same in each case - although circumstances may suggest otherwise, rest assured that God remains in control.

Didache 16.4b brings together many eschatological traditions, and has attracted considerable scholarly attention. But what was the Didachist's purpose in writing this verse? Is this verse intended to summarize what the Christian community already believed, or is it a new synthesis, creating clarity out of chaos? Balabanski argues that Didache 16.4b seeks to explain the meaning of the enigmatic reference to the desolating sacrilege ($\beta\delta\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\gamma\mu\alpha\ \text{th/j}\ \text{evrhmw,sewj}$) of Matt 24.15. The world deceiver is "an individual personification of evil who masquerades as God's representative"⁴². It could

⁴⁰ CHARLESWORTH, 161.

⁴¹ Compare also Luke 4.6, where the Devil claims that all the authority and splendor of the kingdoms of the world have been given to him. See also Matt 26.53.

⁴² BALABANSKI, 195.

be argued that if it had been the Didachist's intent to explain the meaning of Matt 24.15, he could have done better than simply substitute the term *kosmoplanh,j* for *bde,lugma th/j evrhmw,sewj*. It is not much of a clarification. The fact that the description of this character and the events preceding his coming are so sparse suggests that the author is reminding his readers of a tradition with which they were already familiar, instead of providing them with new information. Didache does not provide us with sufficient information to identify this personification of evil with any certainty. This passage offers the same difficulties as 2 Thes 2.1-12, and what Morris wrote regarding 2 Thes 1.12 applies *mutatis mutandis* to Did 16.4b: "The plain fact is that Paul and his readers knew what he was talking about, and we do not"⁴³. This passage serves two purposes. Didache is providing a schematic review of the various traditions regarding the eschaton to remind the readers of what they have already learned. But the primary purpose of this verse is to put perspective on the treacherous acts of former Christians. Their actions must be taken seriously, for through them they are inaugurating the reign of the world deceiver.

16.5 "Then all humankind⁴⁴ will come to the fiery test, and many will fall away and perish; but those who endure in their faith will be saved by the accursed one himself".

While parallels for many parts of Didache's sixteenth chapter may be found in Matthew, that is not the case for the first part of this verse. This verse has been the subject of much discussion, the key questions being the nature of the fiery test and the interpretation of the phrase *u`p auvtou/ tou/ kataqe,matoj*. What is the nature of the fiery test? The Bible often associates the fire with the Day of the Lord. In some passages, such as 2 Pet 3.10, the fire has a purely destructive function ("the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and all the works that are upon it will be burned up" [RSV])⁴⁵. In Didache the fire destroys some, while others are saved. Both Didache and Paul use the Old Testament motif of the refiner's fire, a

⁴³ MORRIS, 228.

⁴⁴ Holmes' translation of *h`kti,sij tw/n avnqrw,pwn* (Literally: the creation of humans) as "all humankind" is justified. *Κττις* refers to mankind rather than to creation as a whole in Mark 16.15 as well.

⁴⁵ This text is problematic, the original reading uncertain. Some mss read *katakah,setai* 'will be burned up' others read *eu`reqh,setai* 'will be found', others have other verbs. Hence the differences in translation between RSV and NRSV.

metaphor for God's testing and purifying his people (see for example Zech 13.9, Mal 3.2, Ezek 22.20-22)⁴⁶. Building on these Old Testament passages, Milavec takes Did 16.5 to refer to 'purgatorial fire', and takes *kata,qema* to refer to the fire itself- the same fire that destroys the ungodly, purifies and saves the believers. He supports this theory by comparing it to *Hermas Vis* 4.3.2-5, and the Christian Sibylline Oracle 2.252-4, both of which probably date from the second century and are in his view roughly contemporaneous with Didache⁴⁷. In *Hermas* the same fire which destroys the wicked purifies the chosen, while in the Sibylline Oracle, the fire destroys the impious, but the righteous are saved. While Milavec makes some valid connections, the term 'purgatorial fire' can be misleading; Didache is of course not picturing some intermediate stage between heaven and hell, but suffering on earth.

Didache 16.5 should best be understood in light of passages such as the following from 1 Peter:

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1.6-7, RSV).

In this passage earthly suffering caused by the opponents of Christ is compared to a refining fire. In the same way the fiery test of Did 16.5 refers to the suffering brought on the Christians by the world deceiver. These trials serve to test the depth of the Christians' faith. In Didache, as in 1 Peter, fire is being used metaphorically, not literally⁴⁸.

The phrase translated "they will be saved by the accursed one himself" is obscure. It evidently perplexed the editor of the *Apostolic Constitutions* who dropped it, and revised the verse to read instead, "and many will fall away because of him, but those who endure unto the end will be saved"⁴⁹. There is no agreement on how 'the accursed one' is to be interpreted. Milavec's interpretation of the curse as the purifying fire was already mentioned. Although I can't disprove it, it seems farfetched. Audet offers another interpretation that is equally imaginative. He suggests that the word

⁴⁶ See also 1 Cor 3.10-15 where Paul writes that every man's work will be tested by fire.

⁴⁷ MILAVEC, 148-9.

⁴⁸ Milavec (1995.148) rejects this interpretation on the grounds that "the burning process of testing in the Didache... has as its first function, to halt the reign of evil under the direction of the 'world deceiver'." This is to read too much into the text.

⁴⁹ My translation. See also PARDEE, 156.

kata,qema should not be understood as ‘curse’, but as ‘grave’. kata,qema does not have this meaning anywhere else, but he suggests it could be derived from katati,qhmi ‘to entomb’ and the related noun kata,qesij ‘burial’. He writes,

Le résultat de la kataqesij (*depositio*) est le kataqema, normalement le cadavre déposé dans son tombeau, l'état de mort. Que le mot ait ensuite évoqué, plus vaguement, avec le tombeau, la mort elle-meme, ce ne serait que naturel (1958.473).

Audet also relies on the reconstructed Georgian text, reading avpV instead of u`pV, and understands the text as a whole “those who endure in their faith will be saved from the grave itself”. Balabanski accepts this translation, as did Milavec earlier⁵⁰.

Although it is interesting, Audet’s interpretation fails to convince. Pardee subjects the word kata,qema to a very thorough study, comparing it also with the word avna,qema. As the word is found almost exclusively in Jewish and Christian texts, she concludes that it is “a creation of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period”⁵¹. She notes that it is used synonymously with avna,qema, which in Jewish and Christian texts most often means ‘something accursed’ or ‘curse.’ Further, “these significations seem to be Jewish creations, since they are attested only in two places outside of Jewish and Christian literature”⁵². While avna,qema occasionally has a positive meaning in the Jewish texts,

kata,qema and its corresponding verb καταθεματιζω are found only with a negative meaning. This must mean that they came into being after the noun avna,qema had assumed its negative significance. In addition, it is likely that the forms with kata came into being as a way to make explicit the negative meanings of avna,qema (PARDEE, 169).

The meaning ‘curse’ or ‘accursed one’ is then well established.

It remains to be found to whom or what the word kata,qema refers. Most interpreters of Didache understand the accursed one to refer to Christ. It is possible the author made the same connection with Deut 21.23 as Paul did in Gal 3.13, concluding that by being hanged on a tree Jesus became a curse/accursed for us. Or the Didachist may have been aware that unbelievers

⁵⁰ BALABANSKI, 181; MILAVEC, 101.

⁵¹ PARDEE, 158.

⁵² *Ibid.*

would say, "Jesus be cursed" (Avna,qema vIhsou/j) as 1 Cor 12.3 suggests. The author of Didache need not have depended on Paul's letters for the identification of Jesus as the accursed one. The identification was common in the early church; *Barnabas* for example associates Jesus with the cursed scapegoat (Barn 7.6-12)⁵³. By whom was Jesus cursed? Pardee offers several possible answers:

It may be that the statement refers to the condemnation of Jesus by the Jews, either in the sense of the synagogue ban or perhaps in reference to the death sentence which was passed against him. Or it may refer to the judgment of God upon Christ in a sense that is parallel to that in Rom 9.3. It may even be that the reference here is to lapsing Christians who curse Christ (PARDEE, 175-6).

It is then safe to assume that the accursed one is Christ. Thus this verse reinforces the call to faithfulness made in 16.2 by affirming that Christ will save those who are firm in their faith through times of trial. He will not let them be annihilated.

The final part of the verse is less problematic. Didache's wording is close to that of Matt 24.13 = Matt 10.22 and to Mark 13.13, which read, "he who stands firm to the end will be saved". The similarity does not prove dependence of Didache on the Gospel texts; this saying of Jesus is easily memorized and spread orally.

16.6 "And then will appear the signs of the truth: first the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third the resurrection of the dead".

No exact parallel for this verse is found in the Bible, though Matt 24.30-31 provides some rough parallels. Like Didache (but unlike Mark) Matthew refers to a sign - the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Again, unlike Mark, Matthew adds that the ingathering of the saints will be preceded by a loud trumpet call. The fact that these similarities are found only in Matthew and not in Mark leads Draper to conclude with Kloppenborg, "the Didache represents an independent tradition under whose influence Matthew altered his Markan source"⁵⁴.

How similar are Matt 24.30-31 and Did 16.6 really? The trumpet call on the last day is an apocalyptic commonplace; it is found also in 1 Cor 15.52, 1 Thes 4.6, Rev 4.1; 8.2-9-14; see also Isa 18.3; 27.13; Jer 4.5; 51.27; Joel 2.1;

⁵³ SEELIGER, 379; PARDEE, 175.

⁵⁴ DRAPER, (1996), 40.

Zech 9.14; 4 Ezra 6.23. Further, as Lindemann notes, in Matt 24.30-31 the trumpet call follows Christ's return, while in Didache it precedes it⁵⁵. Since it was such a common motif, I do not believe it is necessary to suppose that Didache borrowed the image either from Matthew or from Matthew's special source.

The phrase *shmei/on evkpetasewj evn ouvranw/|* shares some words with Matthew 24.30-31 (*shmei/on* and *evn ouvranw/|*), but it is unclear whether the two phrases refer to the same thing. The meaning of *evkpetasij* has been the subject of some discussion. The editor of the *Apostolic Constitutions* evidently found it puzzling, as the Constitutions speak here of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, borrowing the phrase from Matthew. *VEkpetasij* is a deverbal noun from *evkpetanumi* 'to spread, stretch out'. BDAG translates it as a 'spreading out', or 'opening'⁵⁶. The simplest interpretation of this passage would be "the sign of the opening in the heavens", as Milavec translates it⁵⁷. This is also how Audet understands the phrase; he translates it "ouverture dans le ciel"⁵⁸. If this translation is correct, the phrase would refer to an event like that described in Rev 6.14: "The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up" (RSV), or 2 Pet 3.10: "the heavens will pass away with a loud noise".

Butler rejects this translation, however: "If *evkpetasij* in the Didache passage meant 'opening,' we should have expected not *evn ouvranw/|* but *tou/ ouvranou/*. *VEkpetasij* is an active verbal noun, and should take the objective genitive"⁵⁹. Butler notes that *evkpetanumi* may also refer to the stretching out of hands in prayer. The verb is used this way in the LXX; compare Isa 65.2 as quoted by *Barnabas*: "All day long I have stretched out (*evxepe, tasa*) my hands to a disobedient people who oppose my righteous way". Significantly, *Barnabas* 12.4 interprets this passage as a foreshadowing of Jesus' crucifixion⁶⁰. Butler suggests that Didache's sign of the spreading in heaven is also referring to the apparition of a cross. He notes that the *Odes of Solomon*, which are preserved only in Syriac, include the intriguing line, "for the stretching out of my hands is his sign" (42.1-2). Butler suggests that the original Greek may have read *evkpetasij ga.r tw/n ceirw/n mou*

⁵⁵ LINDEMANN, 167.

⁵⁶ BDAG, 307.

⁵⁷ MILAVEC, 101; BALABANSKI, 181 accepts this translation.

⁵⁸ AUDET, 473.

⁵⁹ BUTLER, 276.

⁶⁰ This parallel was noted already by BUTLER, 280.

shmei/on auvtou/⁶¹. He finds another piece of supporting evidence in Origen's commentary on Matt 24.29-30; Origen interprets Matthew's sign of the Son of Man as the cross⁶². Butler finds that there is good reason to believe that the shmei/on evkpetasewj evn ouvranw/| refers to a "cruciform apparition in the sky"; this would accord with the words accompanying the Roman Catholic feast of the Invention of the Cross: *hoc signum crucis erit in caelo cum Dominus ad iudicandum venerit*⁶³. Butler's argument is good, but I wonder whether it is really any stronger than the interpretation of the phrase as an opening in the sky. Is it grammatical to speak of a spreading in the sky without specifying what it is that is spreading out? Lindemann resolves the issue by saying that evn ouranw/| should be taken with shmei/on rather than with evkpetasewj. The Didachist does not have in mind an opening in the sky, but a sign that is seen in the sky, and that sign is an opening⁶⁴.

Draper assumes that shmei/on evkpetasewj evn ouvranw/| is the Didachist's elaboration of the sign of the Son of Man found in Matthew's source text. He suggests that shmei/on in these two phrases corresponds to the Hebrew *nes*, which he translates as 'totem', or a fixed signal for battle⁶⁵. Draper specifies further that the totem envisaged by Didache is "a pole with a cross-piece and a symbolic figure mounted on it"⁶⁶. Draper is reading more than a little into the text. His whole thesis hinges on the doubtful suggestion that shmei/on occurs with two different meanings reflecting two different Hebrew words in 16.6; I think the thesis can be safely rejected. Milavec accepts Draper's thesis, but instead of seeing the totem as a pole with a cross-piece, he takes it to be an unfurling banner⁶⁷. Again, the weakness of Milavec's theory is there is no reason to identify shmei/on with a totem. Milavec is not the first to associate the sign with a military banner. Stuiber made the same association, identifying the sign with a military

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 278.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 278, 279.

⁶⁴ LINDEMANN, 166-7.

⁶⁵ DRAPER, (1993), 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷ DRAPER, (1995), 152.

banner⁶⁸. Niederwimmer writes that Stuibler's interpretation is "eine mögliche Deutung, die aber keineswegs voll überzeugt"⁶⁹.

All the interpretations given are somehow inadequate, and we must allow for the possibility that the text is corrupt or that the Didachist was not very good at Greek. I doubt that Didache 16.6 was intended to clarify Matthew or Matthew's source - if that was the Didachist's aim, he failed miserably. Rather the three signs serve as a mnemonic device summarizing the congregation's eschatological teaching, like three key words are intended to bring to mind the three main points of a sermon. If this theory is correct, then the sign of the spreading of the heaven could refer not only to an opening in the sky as in Rev 6.14, but also to the various events which precede it, such as the sun becoming black as sackcloth, the moon becoming like blood and the stars of the sky falling to earth (Rev 6.12-13).

16.6 "...the resurrection of the dead- 7. but not of all; rather, as it has been said, "The Lord will come, and all his saints with him".

This is the only place in Didache 16 where Scripture is explicitly quoted. This suggests that this is the central message of Did 16.3-8. Didache is quoting the end-time prophecy of Zech 14.5, which reads in the LXX: *kai. h[xei ku,roij o` qeo,j mou kai. pa,ntej oi` a[giou metV auvtou/*. Didache has dropped the phrase *o` qeo,j mou*, perhaps to make this verse apply more clearly to Jesus⁷⁰. The holy ones mentioned in Zech 14.5 probably referred to angels originally; compare Job 5.1, Ps 89.5, Dan 8.13. It may seem strange that this text would be used to prove the resurrection of only the faithful. Draper has examined some rabbinic interpretations of Zech 14.5 and concludes that these passages evidence "a traditional complex of ideas concerning martyrdom and resurrection, for which Zechariah 14.5 became a proof text"⁷¹. There are several echoes of Zech 14.5 in the New Testament, including one in 1 Thes 3.13: "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (RSV)⁷². While the proper translation of the term *a`giou* has been debated- some see in it a reference to angels, others to departed saints, others both, its meaning in Did 16.7 is

⁶⁸ STUIBER, 43.

⁶⁹ NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 267.

⁷⁰ DRAPER, (1997), 160.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷² See also 2 Thes 1.10, Matt 25.31

clear⁷³. It is not necessary to interpret these as people who actually died for their faith, but it is likely that they are people who were faithful to Christ until the day they died.

The New Testament gives conflicting information on the resurrection; some passages suggest that both the righteous and the wicked will be raised; thus John 5. 28-29 reads, "For the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (RSV)⁷⁴. Other passages are ambiguous; Balabanski numbers among these Matt 7.21-23; 11.20-24; 12.41-42; 22.23-33⁷⁵. One passage which could be taken to imply that both the living and the dead are raised is Matt 25.31-46. Now Matt 25.31 also echoes Zech 14.5, but interprets the holy ones as angels: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him..." Balabanski seems to suggest that by quoting Zech 14.5, Didache is clarifying the meaning of Matt 25.31-46. There will not be a resurrection of judgment⁷⁶; only the wicked that are alive at the time of the parousia will be judged.

It seems Balabanski has missed the point of this verse. The Didachist is not interested in denying the judgment of the wicked of years past. He is rather countering those who proclaim universal salvation. This view could be supported by passages such as John 12.31; Rom 11.32; Col 1.20; Eph 1.10; 1 Tim 2.4; 4.10; Titus 2.11; 2 Pet 3.9. For the Didache, resurrection is not a prelude to judgment. It is a purely positive event - but only those who are faithful to the end will enjoy it. Those who turn against their brothers in times of trial cannot count on universal salvation to allow them to meet the Lord when he comes in glory.

16.8 "Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven".

This final verse does not present any problems in itself. In language it is closest to Matt 24.30: "Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great

⁷³ According to MORRIS, 112 the holy ones in 1 Thes may refer both to angels and departed saints, while Wanamaker writes, "It seems likely that the ἀγγελοὶ of 3:13 are the angels, though this cannot be maintained dogmatically" (145). See also DRAPER, 164-5.

⁷⁴ See also Rev 20.11- 21.8

⁷⁵ BALABANSKI, 203.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 202ff.

glory". Didache differs from Matthew in that it replaces the Son of man with the Lord, and instead of *evpi*, it has the preposition *evpa,nw*, which does not differ significantly in meaning. While Mark 13.26 does not specify who is there to see the Lord come, Matthew specifies it is all the tribes of the earth. It is likely that *ko,smoj* in Did 16.8 similarly refers to people in general, not just the Christians. This is the hour when the persecuted Christians are vindicated.

Kloppenborg writes that "Did 16.8 agrees with Matt 24.30 at those points where Matthew disagrees with Mark", that is, he uses a form of *evpi* instead of *evn*, and adds *tou/ ouvranou/*. He concludes, "Did 16.8 represents an independent tradition under whose influence Matthew altered his Markan source"⁷⁷. This seems too great a conclusion to draw from these changes. The change from *evn* to *evpi*, or *evpa,nw* is trivial, while the addition *tou/ ouvranou/* is supported by the LXX. Thus neither dependence on Matthew or Matthew's special source can be proven.

Most commentators agree that originally Didache included a few more words after this. The *Apostolic Constitutions* ends thus:

"And then the Lord will come with all his saints with him upon the clouds with the angels of his strength (i.e., with his army of angels) on his throne of kingship, in order to judge the deceiver of the world, the Devil, and to reward each person according to his deeds. Then the evil ones will depart into eternal punishment, but the just will enter into eternal life, inheriting that which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and what has not entered the heart of man, that which God has prepared for those who love him, and they will rejoice in the kingdom of God and in Christ Jesus" (My translation).

The *Apostolic Constitutions* expands the text of Didache elsewhere, so we cannot assume that everything in this extended ending should be traced back to Didache. The reconstructed Georgian version of Didache supposedly ends with the words, "For the Son of man is going to come in his Father's glory with the angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done (*kai tote avpodw,sei e`ka,stw| kata. th.n pra/xin auvtou/*)"⁷⁸. On the basis of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the Georgian version of Didache, Wengst confidently adds the following words to the ending: *avpodou/nai evka,stw| kata. th.n pra/xin auvtou/*⁷⁹. Draper cautions

⁷⁷ KLOPPENBORG, 63.

⁷⁸ DRAPER, (1997), 171. Compare Matt 16.27.

⁷⁹ WENGST, 90.

against reliance on the Georgian version however, “the existence/genuineness of this version must be queried since no copies are known to be extant”⁸⁰. Niederwimmer does not dare reconstruct the ending, noting only: “doch dürfte die Apokalypse der Did. ursprünglich mit einem kurzen Hinweis auf das Weltgericht geschlossen haben”⁸¹. Lindemann disagrees. There is no reason for the author to bring up judgment again, as it is already implied in 16.5. Furthermore, other eschatological narratives also leave the final judgment without mention; compare 1 Thes 4.13-18, 1 Cor 15⁸². I conclude that if Didache originally ended with a verse speaking about judgment, it is best to assume that it implied the Lord would judge only the wicked who are alive at the time of the coming, not that he would raise them from death only to judge them⁸³. But as we cannot know anything definite about the lost ending, I won’t comment on it further.

VIII. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ESCHATOLOGUE AND THE REST OF THE DIDACHE, PART 2

As was mentioned, there has been much debate regarding the background of the Didache. But scholars do agree that there are similarities between Didache and Jewish catechetical documents of the same time. Bammel has looked at these documents more closely and concludes that in the Jewish catechisms the rule of conduct is usually followed by an eschatological conclusion⁸⁴. Bammel compares various Christian and Jewish redactions of the Two Ways tradition, and concludes confidently, “One can state almost definitely: the Two Ways catechism had an eschatological ending right from the beginning”⁸⁵. He then suggests that Didache 16 is a displaced and expanded form of the original eschatological conclusion to the Two Ways material. The ethical exhortation of 16.2b reflects the original conclusion, verses 3-8 are a digression. The threat of final judgment and

⁸⁰ DRAPER, (1997), 171.

⁸¹ NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 247.

⁸² LINDEMANN, 171.

⁸³ So also DRAPER, (1997), 178.

⁸⁴ BAMMEL, 366-7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 368.

promise of a reward for the righteous would have served to enforce the Two Ways teaching⁸⁶.

Though Schöllgen tentatively supports this conclusion⁸⁷, Bammel's argument is not persuasive. In his view the original conclusion was 16.2b, which happens to be identical to *Barnabas* 4.9. But while *Barnabas* includes a Two Ways section, verse 4.9 is not part of it⁸⁸. Further there are close parallels between Did 1-6.1 (the Two Ways section) and the *Apostolic Church Order*, but not between any part of Did 16 and that church order⁸⁹. Further, according to Seeliger, there is no reason to assume that the ethical section is enforced by threat of final judgment; "Nowhere in the New Testament or early Jewish apocalyptic is there a law based on judgment or expectation of the end"⁹⁰. Still, Bammel has a point. It may well have been traditional to end manuals of discipline with an eschatological section, if not as a threat to those who break the law, then as an encouragement to those who uphold it. If this is the case, the Didachist would have dropped the original ending to the Two Ways section, as he was not ready to conclude his document. He then provided his own eschatological ending which is in no way dependent in form or content on the ending to the Two Ways document⁹¹.

What was the function of Didache 16.3-8? As was mentioned, Bammel considers it a digression; when the author mentioned 'the final hour' in 16.2, he was led to add more information on the last days. The Didachist organizes his material on the basis of word associations elsewhere as well - compare the transition from baptismal water to baptismal fasts to other fasts (7-8.1)⁹².

Seeliger suggests that in Did 16 "the most important content of prophetic teaching is repeated for the communities that have no prophet", so that they might be better able to identify false prophets when they appear⁹³. Didache does not intend to give a complete eschatology, but to be "an *aide-mémoire*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 369. See also BALABANSKI, 202: "Eschatological material came to be used in the interests of ethical and paranetical concerns as a motivating force".

⁸⁷ SCHÖLLGEN, 53.

⁸⁸ There is a reference to the evil way in *Barn* 4.10, but the Two Ways section itself is found in *Barn* 18.1-20.2.

⁸⁹ NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 248.

⁹⁰ SEELIGER, 377.

⁹¹ So also NIEDERWIMMER, (1989), 248.

⁹² SCHÖLLGEN, 64.

⁹³ SEELIGER, 381-2.

of apocalyptic eschatology”⁹⁴. While Seeliger has a point - Didache is not aiming for completeness - his suggestion that it is specifically directed against the teachings of false prophets sounds rather far-fetched; as Balabanski writes, “there is little evidence in this chapter of a direct polemic against the teachings of false prophets”⁹⁵.

Just as chapters 5-15 are probably not intended to be a complete church order, so too chapter 16 is not intended to be a complete account of the eschaton (It is therefore misleading to call chapter 16 the “Didache Apocalypse”). Clearly, Didache is not attempting to give a complete account of the life, teaching, and significance of Jesus; the author is assuming that the congregation has access to this in other sources. It is safe to assume that these sources also tell of the eschaton.

It has been suggested that rather than give a full account of the eschaton, Didache 16 is only answering some questions that were troubling the congregation(s). This parallels the church order correctives in the previous chapters; Schöllgen writes,

“The Didache is structured into a large number of clearly separated thematic sections, which as a rule put forward one essential argumentation... Since the text often rejects deviant practices, it must be asked whether its regulation is directed against a recognizable abuse or dissent, which may be attested elsewhere as well (SCHÖLLGEN, 45)”.

Schöllgen does not apply these questions to chapter 16 himself, because it “falls out of the framework of the rest of the sections of the writing”, but Balabanski suggests that Didache 16 served to explain some potentially confusing passages in Matthew, such as the meaning of the desolating sacrilege, the sign of the Son of Man, and the resurrection of the dead⁹⁶. Although this is an intriguing suggestion, I do not think it works. As I have shown, in the first two instances, Didache can hardly be said to clarify Matthew’s account, and in the third the connection between Didache and Matthew is quite tenuous.

Still, we do know that eschatology was a burning topic in the early church; it is mentioned in all four Gospels, in 1&2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 1&2 John, 2 Peter, Revelation, etc. These works also show that there was not complete agreement on the eschaton in the early church. Further, church

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁹⁵ BALABANSKI, 200.

⁹⁶ BALABANSKI, 202.

history has shown that differing eschatological expectations have served to split the church; consider the debates regarding the millenium in Augustine's time and our own. If Didache served as a church order/ catechism for small independent congregations who wished to join the larger church, it is possible that this chapter was included to rule out any future disagreements regarding eschatology.

But it is more likely that Didache 16 was primarily intended to be paraenetic⁹⁷. The main purpose of Did 16.3-8 is to encourage the believers to follow the teaching given in the earlier chapters, especially the call to hold true to the faith in times of trial. It acknowledges that they are going through hard times, and prophesies that things will only get worse until the time of the parousia. It promises that Jesus will save his chosen in the midst of their suffering if they persevere in the faith (16.5) and it reminds the readers that only those who are faithful to the end will be raised to life on the last day, only they will be able to come with the Lord in glory.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars have tried to determine which sources Didache used, but the results have thus far been meager. Because Didache rarely if ever quotes New Testament passages directly, it is very hard to prove which books the author did or did not have access to. Further, it should be kept in mind that chapter 16 is preserved in a single manuscript, and it is very late. It is therefore quite possible that it has been made to approximate the language of the New Testament more closely at a late date.

Past attempts at finding the source for Didache have become so caught up in the details of their proofs, that they seem to have missed the point the passage was trying to make. Suffice it to say, whether the author of Didache knew Matthew (or other parts of our New Testament) there is little evidence that the goal of Didache 16 was to explain ambiguities in either Matthew or Matthew's source document.

Didache 16.1-8 may have served to guard against misunderstandings regarding the eschaton which could have caused division once the new congregations to which this work were addressed joined the larger church represented by the author. But this was hardly the primary purpose of this chapter. It was written primarily to encourage Christians to stay firm in their

⁹⁷ So also LINDEMANN, 155.

faith. The author knew that his readers were facing great adversity, and warned them it would get even worse. The author also wanted to encourage his readers by saying that if they held to their faith even to the point of death, they would be raised to join the Lord when he comes with his saints in the clouds of heaven. If on the other hand they were to fall away, they would not be raised to life.

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Resumen.- Esta es una lectura cuidadosa de la Didaché 16, examinando su función, su datación, su relación con el resto de la Didaché y con las tradiciones del Nuevo Testamento. La Didaché usa un lenguaje y unos símbolos muy comunes en la Iglesia primitiva. Como se ha notado con frecuencia, los paralelos con Mateo son especialmente sorprendentes, pero no son tan cercanos como para poder considerar la Didaché 16 como una clarificación de las ambigüedades en Mateo. La razón principal del último capítulo del Didaché es animar a los creyentes a seguir la enseñanza dada en los primeros capítulos, especialmente la llamada a mantener la fe en tiempos de prueba.

Summary.- This is a close reading of Didache 16, examining its function and dating, and its relationship to the whole of Didache and to New Testament traditions. Didache uses language and symbols that were common currency in the early church. As has often been noted, parallels to Matthew are especially striking, but not close enough to warrant describing Didache 16 as a clarification of ambiguities in Matthew. The main purpose of the final chapter of Didache is rather to encourage believers to follow the teaching given in the early chapters, especially the call to hold on to the faith in times of trial.