



First Century Practical Christianity



Hi, Friends,

Here is a document that theologians had always known about but had been lost until a copy was discovered in 1873. It's not one of those controversial writings that have been suppressed, banned and burned by the early church leaders. Although it was not included in the New Testament canon, it is now considered coterminous with the Gospel of Matthew and it is widely read by scholars because it "reveals more about how Jewish-Christians saw themselves and how they adapted their Judaism for gentiles than any other book in the Christian Scriptures". The book is called *The Didache* or *The Lord's Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*.

You can read more on Wikipedia, and, while you're there, I hope you will click on the button to the right and make a donation.

The *Didache* is important to Christians because it is practical Christianity at its earliest and it is also practical Christianity at its best. When people ask me "What is Unity?" I always reply that it is "a practical, positive, progressive form of Christianity, based on the teachings of Jesus and the practice of prayer." I then explain that we try to do what Jesus did, in a practical way. And I invite them to join with us.

The *Didache* is interesting to Metaphysical Christians because the instructions given in this compact, first-century document make no mention of the atonement of Jesus Christ. As the Wikipedia commentary says,

"'Lord' in the *Didache* is reserved usually for 'Lord God', while Jesus is called 'the servant' of the Father... In the first six chapters, known as the 'Two Ways', Jesus is never mentioned by name."

You can read it in 20 minutes. I hope it inspires you as it inspired me. The first part, chapters 1-6 concludes by saying "For if thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou wilt be perfect, but if thou canst not, do what thou canst." That's great advice for practical Christians.

Mark

Sunday, September 13, 2020

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The Didache or The Lord's Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

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Chapter 1

The two Ways. ¹There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways.

The Way of Life. ²The Way of Life is this: "First, thou shalt love the God who made thee, secondly, thy neighbour as thyself; and whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another."¹

The explanation. ³Now, the teaching of these words is this: "Bless those that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those that persecute you. For what credit is it to you if you love those that love you? Do not even the heathen do the same?" But, for your part, "love those that hate you," and you will have no enemy. ⁴"Abstain from carnal" and bodily "lusts." "If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek also," and thou wilt be perfect. "If any man impress thee

to go with him one mile, go with him two. If any man take thy coat, give him thy shirt also. If any man will take from thee what is thine, refuse it not"—not even if thou canst.²

Almsgiving. ⁵Give to everyone that asks thee, and do not refuse, for the Father's will is that we give to all from the gifts we have received. Blessed is he that gives according to the mandate; for he is innocent. Woe to him who receives; for if any man receive alms under pressure of need he is innocent; but he who receives it without need shall be tried as to why he took and for what, and being in prison he shall be examined as to his deeds, and "he shall not come out thence until he pay the last farthing." ⁶But concerning this it was also said, "Let thine alms sweat into thine hands until thou knowest to whom thou art giving."

1. This is the so-called "negative form of the Golden Rule." It is found in some manuscripts in the "Apostolic decrees" in Acts 15:28, and is, in various forms, met with in Jewish and early Christian literature. (Lake's footnote 1)
2. The Greek is literally "for thou art not even able"; but this makes no sense, and though an emendation is difficult the

sense must be something like that given by the translation — unless, indeed, the whole phrase be merely a flippant gloss, which has been erroneously taken into the texts. (Lake's footnote 2)

Chapter 2

The second part of the teaching. ¹But the second commandment of the teaching is this: ²"Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery"; thou shalt not commit sodomy; thou shalt not commit fornication; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not use magic; thou shalt not use philtres; thou shalt not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide; "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods"; ³thou shalt not commit perjury, "thou shalt not bear false witness"; thou shalt not speak evil; thou shalt not bear malice. ⁴Thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is the snare of

death. ⁵Thy speech shall not be false nor vain, but completed in action. ⁶Thou shalt not be covetous nor extortionate, nor a hypocrite, nor malignant, nor proud; thou shalt make no evil plan against thy neighbour. ⁷Thou shalt hate no man; but some thou shalt reprove,¹ and for some shalt thou pray, and some thou shalt love more than thine own life.

1. On the ground of a comparison with Jude 22 f. etc., some think that "and some thou shalt pity" ought to be added. (Lake's footnote 3)

Chapter 3

Further advice to the catechumen. ¹My child, flee from every evil man and from all like him. ²Be not proud, for pride leads to murder, nor jealous, nor contentious, nor passionate, for from all these murders are engendered. ³My child, be not lustful, for lust leads to fornication, nor a speaker of base words, nor a lifter up of the eyes, for from all these is adultery engendered. ⁴My child, regard not omens, for this leads to idolatry; neither be an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician, neither wish to see these things, for from them all is idolatry engendered. ⁵My child, be not a liar, for lying leads to theft, nor a lover of money, nor vain-glorious, for from all these things are thefts engendered.

⁶My child, be not a grumbler, for this leads to blasphemy, nor stubborn, nor a thinker of evil, for from all these are blasphemies engendered, ⁷but be thou "meek, for the meek shall inherit the earth;" ⁸be thou long-suffering, and merciful and guileless, and quiet, and good, and ever fearing the words which thou hast heard. ⁹Thou shalt not exalt thyself, nor let thy soul be presumptuous. Thy soul shall not consort with the lofty, but thou shalt walk with righteous and humble men. ¹⁰Receive the accidents that befall to thee as good, knowing that nothing happens without God.

Chapter 4

The duty of the catechumen to the Church. ¹My child, thou shalt remember, day and night, him who speaks the word of God to thee, and thou shalt honour him as the Lord, for where the Lord's nature is spoken of, there is he present. ²And the thou shalt seek daily the presence of the saints, that thou mayest find rest in their words. ³Thou shalt not desire a schism, but shalt reconcile those that strive. Thou shalt give righteous judgment; to the thou shalt favour no man's person in reproving transgression. ⁴ Thou shalt not be of two minds whether it shall be or not.

Household duties. ⁹Thou shalt not withhold thine hand from thy son or from thy daughter, but thou shalt teach them the fear of God from their youth up. ¹⁰Thou shalt not command in thy bitterness thy slave or thine handmaid, who hope in the same God, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both; for he comes not to call men with respect of persons, but those whom the Spirit has prepared. ¹¹But do you who are slaves be subject to your master, as to God's representative, in reverence and fear.

Against meanness. ⁵Be not one who stretches out his hands to receive, but shuts them when it comes to giving. ⁶Of whatsoever thou hast gained by thy hands thou shalt give a ransom for thy sins. ⁷Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor shalt thou grumble when thou givest, for thou shalt know who is the good Paymaster of the reward. ⁸ Thou shalt not turn away the needy, but shalt share everything with thy brother, and shalt not say that it is thine own, for if you are sharers in the imperishable, how much more in the things which perish?

Against hypocrisy. ¹²Thou shalt hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. ¹³Thou shalt not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but thou shalt keep what thou didst receive, "adding nothing to it and taking nothing away." ¹⁴In the congregation thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and thou shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the Way of Life.

Chapter 5

The way of Death. ¹But the Way of Death is this: First of all, it is wicked and full of cursing, murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, witchcrafts, charms, robberies, false witness, hypocrisies, a double heart, fraud, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul speech, jealousy, impudence, haughtiness, boastfulness. ²Persecutors of the good, haters of truth, lovers of lies, knowing not the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to the good nor to righteous judgment, spending

wakeful nights not for good but for wickedness, from whom meekness and patience is far, lovers of vanity, following after reward, unmerciful to the poor, not working for him who is oppressed with toil, without knowledge of him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God's creatures, turning away the needy, oppressing the distressed, advocates of the rich, unjust judges of the poor, altogether sinful; may ye be delivered, my children, from all these.

Chapter 6

Final exhortation. ¹See "that no one make thee to err" from this Way of the teaching, for he teaches thee without God. ²For if

thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou wilt be perfect, but if thou canst not, do what thou canst.

Food, and 'things offered to idols.' ³And concerning food, bear what thou canst, but keep strictly from that which is offered

Chapter 7

Baptism. ¹Concerning baptism, baptise thus: Having first rehearsed all these things, "baptise, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," in running water; ²but if thou hast no running water, baptise in other water, and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. ³But if thou hast neither, pour

Chapter 8

Fasting. ¹Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Prayers. ²And do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel, pray thus: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, as in Heaven so also upon earth; give us to-day our daily bread, and forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors, and

Chapter 9

The Eucharist. ¹And concerning the Eucharist, hold1 Eucharist thus:

The Cup. ²First concerning the Cup, "We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David thy child, which, thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy child; to thee be glory for ever."

The Bread. ³And concerning the broken Bread: "We give thee thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever. ⁴As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains,

Chapter 10

The final prayer in the Eucharist. ¹But after you are satisfied with food, thus give thanks: ²"We give thanks to thee, O Holy Father, for thy Holy Name which thou didst make to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and prayer in faith and immortality which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy Child. To thee be glory for ever. ³Thou, Lord Almighty, didst create all things for thy Name's sake, and didst give food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might give thanks to thee, but us hast thou blessed with spiritual food and drink and eternal light through thy Child. ⁴Above all we give thanks to thee for that thou art mighty. To thee be glory for ever. ⁵Remember, Lord, thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect

Chapter 11

Travelling teachers. ¹Whosoever then comes and teaches you all these things aforesaid, receive him. ²But if the teacher himself be perverted and teach another doctrine to destroy these things, do not listen to him, but if his teaching be for the increase of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.

Apostles. ³And concerning the Apostles and Prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel. ¹ ⁴Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, ⁵but let him not stay more than one day, or if need be a second as well; but if he stay three days, he is a false prophet. ⁶And when an Apostle goes forth let him accept nothing but bread till he reach his night's lodging; but if he ask for money, he is a false prophet.

Prophets. ⁷Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in a spirit, "for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven." ⁸But not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a

to idols, for it is the worship of dead gods.

water three times on the head "in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." ⁴And before the baptism let the baptiser and him who is to be baptised fast, and any others who are able. And thou shalt bid him who is to be baptised to fast one or two days before.

lead us not into trial, but deliver us from the Evil One, for thine is the power and the glory for ever." ³Pray thus three times a day.

1. This is the traditional translation of ἐπιούσιον, but it is by no means certain that it is correct. The word has from the beginning been a puzzle, and its meaning is not clearly known. See further any good commentary on the gospels. (Lake's footnote 4)

but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever." ⁵But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

1. The translation fails to preserve the play on the words, which might be rendered "concerning the giving of thanks, give thanks thus, etc." But this would obscure the fact that eucharistia is here quite clearly "Eucharist" (cf. verse 5). (Lake's footnote 5)

in thy love, and gather it together in its holiness from the four winds to thy kingdom which thou hast prepared for it. For thine is the power and the glory for ever. ⁶Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosannah to the God of David. If any man be holy, let him come! if any man be not, let him repent: Maranatha, ¹ Amen."

⁷But suffer the prophets to hold Eucharist as they will.

1. A transliteration of Aramaic words meaning "Our Lord! Come!" (Lake's footnote 6)

prophet, except he have the behaviour of the Lord. From his behaviour, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known. ⁹And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet. ¹⁰And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he do not what he teaches, is a false prophet. ¹¹But no prophet who has been tried and is genuine, though he enact a worldly mystery² of the Church, if he teach not others to do what he does himself, shall be judged by you: for he has his judgment with God, for so also did the prophets of old. ¹²But whosoever shall say in a spirit 'Give me money, or something else,' you shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him.

1. It is unknown to what ordinance the writer refers. (Lake's footnote 7)
2. This passage has never been satisfactorily explained: it probably refers to a tendency among some prophets to introduce forms of worship, or of illustration of their teaching, of doubtful propriety, if so the reference below to

the prophets of old is perhaps an allusion to Hosea (Hos. 1, 2 ff.). (Lake's footnote 8)

Chapter 12

Travelling Christians. ¹Let everyone who "comes in the Name of the Lord" be received; but when you have tested him you shall know him, for you shall have understanding of true and false. ²If he who comes is a traveller, help him as much as you can, but he shall not remain with you more than two days, or, if need be, three. ³And if he wishes to settle among you and has a

Chapter 13

Prophets who desire to remain. ¹But every true prophet who wishes to settle among you is "worthy of his food." ²Likewise a true teacher is himself worthy, like the workman, of his food.

Their payment by firstfruits. ³Therefore thou shalt take the firstfruit of the produce of the winepress and of the threshing-floor and of oxen and sheep, and shalt give them as the firstfruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. ⁴But if

Chapter 14

The Sunday worship. ¹On the Lord's Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure; ²but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be

Chapter 15

Bishops and Deacons. ¹Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. ²Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honourable men together with the prophets and teachers.

Chapter 16

Warning that the end is at hand. ¹"Watch" over your life: "let your lamps" be not quenched "and your loins" be not ungirded, but be "ready," for ye know not "the hour in which our Lord cometh." ²But be frequently gathered together seeking the things which are profitable for your souls, for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you except ye be found perfect at the last time; ³for in the last days the false prophets and the corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall change to hate; ⁴for as lawlessness increaseth they shall hate one another and persecute and betray, and then shall appear the deceiver of the world as a Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders and the earth shall be given over into his hands and he shall commit iniquities which have never been since the world began. ⁵Then shall the creation of mankind come to the fiery trial and "many shall be offended"

craft, let him work for his bread. ⁴But if he has no craft provide for him according to your understanding, so that no man shall live among you in idleness because he is a Christian. ⁵But if he will not do so, he is making traffic of Christ; beware of such.

1. Literally, "right and left understanding." (Lake's footnote 9)

you have not a prophet, give to the poor. ⁵If thou makest bread, take the firstfruits, and give it according to the commandment. ⁶Likewise when thou openest a jar of wine or oil, give the firstfruits to the prophets. ⁷Of money also and clothes, and of all your possessions, take the firstfruits, as it seem best to you, and give according to the commandment.

reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled. ³For this is that which was spoken by the Lord, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king," saith the Lord, "and my name is wonderful among the heathen."

Mutual reproofs. ³And reprove one another not in wrath but in peace as you find in the Gospel, and let none speak with any who has done a wrong to his neighbour, nor let him hear a word from you until he repents. ⁴But your prayers and alms and all your acts perform as ye find in the Gospel of our Lord.

and be lost, but "they who endure" in their faith "shall be saved" by the curse itself. ¹ ⁶And "then shall appear the signs" of the truth. First the sign spread out in Heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead: ⁷but not of all the dead, but as it was said, "The Lord shall come and all his saints with him." ⁸Then shall the world "see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven."

1. The meaning is obscure; but there seem to be other traces in early literature of a doctrine that each curse also contained the elements of a counterbalancing power to salvation. There is a valuable and long note on the subject in Rendel Harris's edition of the Didache. (Lake's footnote 10)

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