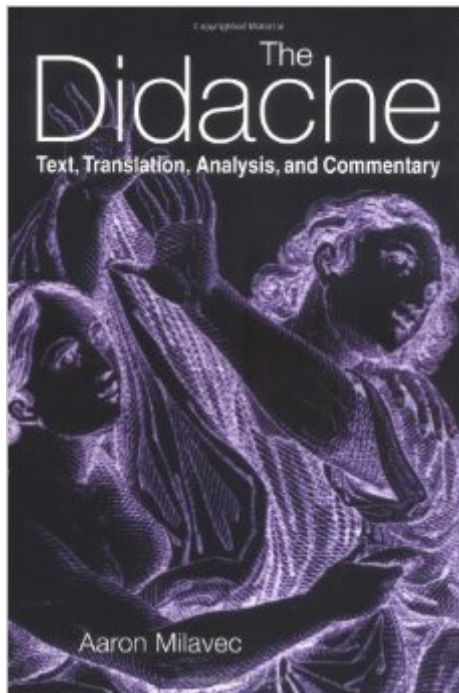


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The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, And Commentary



Synopsis

Most Christians believe that everything about Jesus and the early church can be found in their New Testament. In recent years, however, the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas and the reconstruction of the Q-Gospel have led scholars to recognize that some very early materials were left out. Now, due to the pioneering efforts of Dr. Aaron Milavec, the most decisive document of them all, namely, the Didache (Did-ah-Kay"), has come to light. Milavec has decoded the Didache and enabled it to reveal its hidden secrets regarding those years when Christianity was little more than a faction within the restless Judaisms of the mid-first-century. The Didache reveals a tantalizingly detailed description of the prophetic faith and day-to-day routines that shaped the Jesus movement some twenty years after the death of Jesus. The focus of the movement then was not upon proclaiming the exalted titles and deeds of Jesus - aspects that come to the fore in the letters of Paul and in the Gospel narratives. In contrast to these familiar forms of Christianity, the focus of the Didache was upon "the life and the knowledge" of Jesus himself. Thus, the Didache details the step-by-step process whereby non-Jews were empowered by assimilating the prophetic faith and the way of life associated with Jesus of Nazareth. Milavec's clear, concise, and inspiring commentaries are not only of essential importance to scholars, pastors, and students but also very useful for ordinary people who wish to unlock the secrets of the Didache. Milavec's analytic, Greek-English side-by-side, gender-inclusive translation is included as well as a description of how this document, after being fashioned and used 50-70 C.E., was mysteriously lost for over eighteen hundred years before being found in an obscure library in Istanbul. The study questions, bibliography, and flowcharts enable even first-time users to grasp the functional and pastoral genius that characterized the earliest Christian communities."

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Customer Reviews

In recent years there has been an enormous explosion of interest in Gnostic Christian texts such as "The Gospel of Thomas" and "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene". Almost overlooked in this fascination with early, non-canonical (i.e., omitted from the Bible) Christian texts has been The Didache ("The Teaching"), a "training manual" for Gentile converts to an early Jewish-Christian community. (Most scholars date "The Didache" to about 90-120 A.D., but Milovec opts for an earlier date between 50-80 A.D.) "The Didache" is a manual of initiation, not theology, but Milovec attempts to read between the lines to discern glimpses of the underlying theology. Although Milovec's speculations sometime stray a bit too far from the available evidence, I think he is basically correct in seeing "The Didache" as reflecting a Jewish-Christian community who viewed Jesus primarily in prophetic and messianic terms, and not as the literal God incarnate of later Christian theology. Of particular interest in this context are the eucharistic prayers found in "The Didache," prayers which do not reflect the "this is my body . . . this is my blood" phraseology of the New Testament sources. Also, "The Didache" provides perhaps the earliest specific Christian condemnation of abortion, and reiterates the Pauline critique of homosexuality (or, at least, one form of it, characterized as "the corruption of boys"). Thus "The Didache" perhaps has relevance to today's "What would Jesus say?" debates. What gives "The Didache" credibility to me is its absence of Gnostic influence and its general similarity in language to the gospels, "The Acts of the Apostles," and the "Letter of James".

"... Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles has continued to be one of the most disputed of early Christian texts. It has been depicted by scholars as anything between the original of the Apostolic Decree and a late archaising fiction of the early third century." J. Draper, Gospel Perspectives
Didache, Church Manual: The Didache (Greek; the teaching, a word related to Didactic). An ancient Church manual, that drew upon early Church traditions, repeatedly revised, it existed in varying forms at various communities. The Didache was a sort of church catechetical instruction book for novice Christians, probably in rural areas, remote from metropolis, mostly dependent on traveling preaching ministers. The subjects, style and source material of the Didache make of it one of the most disputed Early Church texts, hard to determine either a date of composition or a point of origin. The 'Teaching of the Two Ways' were included in the first six

chapters, followed by four sections of liturgical practices. Five chapters followed on disciplinary matters for the congregation, and presbyters (prophets, bishops, and deacons.) A concluding encouragement to stay faithful until the second coming, posts a warning against the antichrist. Didache's Development: Fragments of the Didache (Papyrus No. 1782) were found at Oxyrhyncus, upper Egypt from the 4th century, and in a Coptic translation from 3rd or 4th century. Quotations showing traces of this instruction text are widespread in the writings of the second and third centuries, in Syria and Egypt. This testifies to the wide use and the high regard it enjoyed.

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