

*The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*  
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[pp. 497-514]

## **The Didache and Revelation**

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Is the Didache a matriarch, a great-niece or a forgotten half-sister in relation to the New Testament? Elements of family resemblance suggest some form of relationship but greater precision remains elusive. Most previous attempts to address this type of question have focussed, understandably, on the Didache's numerous and well known points in common with Matthew's Gospel. However, despite the discussion of every possible interpretation of the evidence, opinion remains divided as to whether the Didache is a source for Matthew, dependent upon Matthew, or dependent on sources independently shared with Matthew.<sup>1</sup> One way to refresh the discussion is to approach it from an entirely different angle. This essay, accordingly, seeks to locate the Didache in terms of its relationship to the Book of Revelation; a text with affinities to the Didache in its ethics, Eucharistic references, and eschatology.<sup>2</sup> [498]

### **Ethics**

That the Didache and Revelation share similar ethics is not especially surprising given that broadly speaking a common ethical base underlies most early Christian literature. They are distinctly similar, however, in their attitudes to eating food sacrificed to idols and the practice of sorcery.

In both the Didache and Revelation, eating food sacrificed to idols receives specific and pointed attention as an activity to be avoided at all costs. In Did. 6:2-3 this is articulated as the only requirement of the law where no compromise is permitted. In the messages to Pergamum and in particular Thyatira, eating food sacrificed to idols is held up as an ultimate betrayal (2:14, 20). All the churches are uniquely warned

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition in the Didache," in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996) is among those who see the *Didache* as dependent on Matthew. Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (VCSup 11; Leiden: Brill, 1989), esp. 91, 160-61, and Jonathan A. Draper, "The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*," in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), esp. 83, represent the majority view that both texts depend on a common source or sources. Alan J. P. Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew's Dependence on the Didache* (JSNTSup 254; London: T&T Clark International, 2004) explores the possibility of Matthew's direct dependence on more ancient sections of the *Didache* (see also Jonathan A. Draper "The *Didache*" in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* (ed. Paul Foster; London: SPCK, 2007), 13-20.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the composite nature of the *Didache*, the current study is, strictly speaking, concerned only with Revelation's relationship with specific ethical, eucharistic and eschatological material in the *Didache*. Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 13-156, offers detailed consideration of compositional issues.

against this activity (2:23), while those who have resisted this temptation have no other burden laid on them (2:24).

The Didache and Revelation are also unusual in early Christian literature in their strong and explicit condemnation of sorcery and magic (Did. 2:2; 3:4 and Rev 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15).<sup>3</sup> In Revelation 9:21, sorcery is condemned alongside murder, fornication and theft, a combination similar to that of murder, adultery, child abuse, fornication, theft, magic and sorcery in Did. 2:2. This is not to suggest that the lists of proscribed actions in Revelation and the Didache are necessarily directly related. It is to note, however, that their ethical attitudes are more closely related to one another than to any other early Christian text. In terms of illuminating the relationship between the Didache and Revelation this observation serves to indicate the likely presence of a relationship of some kind.

### Eucharist

A striking set of parallels is noted by David Barr:

Nearly every aspect of [Did. 9 & 10] is paralleled in the Apocalypse, but the concentration of elements in the closing scene is remarkable. There are no less than seven specific points of correlation with the final scene in the Apocalypse: (a) both mention David; (b) both say only some are worthy to participate; (c) both compare outsiders to “dogs”; (d) both [499] promise a drink of life; (e) both invite some to come; (f) both invite the Lord to come; (g) both close with Amen.<sup>4</sup>

Barr also identifies other connections between Revelation and the Didache’s Eucharists:

Numerous other correlations can be made with other parts of the Apocalypse as well: “We give you thanks” (Did. 9:1; Rev 11:17); “to you be glory unto the ages” (Did. 9:2; Rev 7:12, etc.); Jesus as the agent of revelation (Did. 9:3; Rev 1:1); plea for gathering of the church (Did. 9:4; Rev 7:1-10; 21:9-10); God said to “tabernacle” with humanity (Did. 10:3; Rev 21:3; 13:6); God addressed as “Almighty” (*pantocrator*: Did. 10:3; Rev 1:8; [4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:6,15] 21:22; etc.); God said to “create all things” (Did. 10:3; Rev 4:11); the call to repentance (Did. 10:6; Rev 2-3). The Eucharistic service in the *Didache* also includes two themes that pervade the Apocalypse: the plea to deliver the church from all evil and perfect it in love (Did. 10:5), and the prayer “May grace come and may this world pass away” (Did. 10:6). This association of the Eucharist with the passing away of this world and the gathering of the church into the Kingdom is to be stressed.<sup>5</sup>

By highlighting these correlations while also drawing attention to the curious instruction at Did. 10:7 “But permit the prophets to give thanks (*eucharistein*)

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<sup>3</sup> The only other mention of sorcery in the New Testament is in the vice list of Galatians 5.20.

<sup>4</sup> David L. Barr, “The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment,” *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 254.

<sup>5</sup> Barr, *Oral Enactment*, 254-5.

however they wish,”<sup>6</sup> Barr hints at the possibility that Revelation is an example of a prophet exercising such freedom to create an extended Eucharistic prayer.

Barr’s intimation is suggestive. Some form of link between Revelation and the Didache Eucharists<sup>7</sup> does seem likely. However, meaningful precision about the nature of that relationship requires believable [500] answers to two practical questions. First, how much of Revelation was performed on any given liturgical occasion? As Barr himself notes, ‘the length of the Apocalypse makes it unlikely that it was actually and repeatedly read aloud as part of a service. It would seem to take up the whole service’.<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that it is impossible that the whole text was performed on each occasion, but it is to say that such an arrangement seems ungainly and, to that extent, implausible. Second, what was the relationship between hearing Revelation and physically receiving bread and wine? This question is generated by the observation that Revelation does not include any acts of thanksgiving over food or drink and so to this extent is unlikely to represent an equivalent act to that described in the Didache’s Eucharistic chapters.

The problem of the length of reading at each service may be solved by observing that Revelation’s narrative regularly sets up conditions suitable for the creation of cliff-hanging installment breaks. For example, in Rev 5-7, the scroll of “what must soon take place,” which only the Lamb may open, is sealed shut with seven seals. As each seal is broken the hearers (see 1:3) are brought closer and closer to directly accessing the scroll’s contents.<sup>9</sup> A high point of suspense is generated, therefore, just before the final seal is broken: as the hearers stand on the brink of being able to “see” the contents of the scroll. These conditions are ideal for a cliff-hanging installment break, whereupon the audience must return to a future gathering to find out what happens next.

A similar pattern occurs as the narrative continues. Now that the seven seals are broken, the audience might reasonably expect, at their next meeting, to learn the contents of the Lamb’s Scroll. Instead, however, they are treated to a further series of announcements, this time in the form of trumpet blasts and woes (Rev 8 & 9). Eventually an angel declares (10:6,7): “There will be no more delay, but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets.” Up until now there has been a delay, when the seventh trumpet blows, however, the delay will be over. The seventh trumpet is blown at Rev 11:15. Surely now the contents of the scroll will be [501]

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<sup>6</sup> Barr, *Oral Enactment*, 254.

<sup>7</sup> My own view, expressed in Garrow, *Matthew’s Dependence*, 13-28, is that Did. 9 and Did. 10 are two parallel, and originally separate, Eucharistic prayers. See also Paul F. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2009), 41-2. An important feature of this view, relevant to the current discussion, is that the reception of bread and wine is perceived as taking place after Did. 10:6. For a contrary view see Dietrich-Alex Koch, “Die Eucharistischen Gebete von Didache 9 und 10 und das Rätsel von Didache 10:6,” in *Jesus, Paul, and Early Christianity: Studies in Honour of Henk Jan de Jonge* (eds. R. Buitenwerf, H.W. Hollander and J. Tromp; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008): 195-210.

<sup>8</sup> Barr, *Oral Enactment*, 253.

<sup>9</sup> Translations of the Didache are my own. Translations of Revelation are from the NRSV.

revealed to the expectant congregation? This point of heightened suspense is once again ideally suited for the insertion of a cliff-hanging installment break. The audience must return on a further occasion to hear how the story unfolds.

A further installment break between Rev 15:1-4 and Rev 15:5-7 would explain a well-known curiosity in the flow of Revelation's narrative. Rev 15:1 describes angels carrying the seven last plagues with which the wrath of God is ended. Just four verses *later*, these same angels emerge from the temple as if being introduced for the first time. They also receive the bowls that only moments previously they had already been described as holding. An installment break between these two appearances after 15:4 would explain this surprising arrangement. In this case, the installment would also end on a high point of suspense just as the final bowls of judgement are about to be poured out. The next installment would then open where the previous one had left off, with a description of the angels emerging from the temple and receiving the bowls of ultimate wrath.

In all, it is possible to identify a pattern of features that signal installment breaks after 3:22; 7:1; 11:18; 15:4; and 19:10. Thus creating a text designed to be read in six separate installments.<sup>10</sup> If Revelation was designed to be read in installments, then this removes the need to make the implausible suggestion that the whole the text was read prior to a single Eucharist.

The second puzzle generated by Barr's proposal is not, however, immediately resolved by the installment theory. The question here is the functional relationship between the reading of Revelation and the receiving of bread and wine. Barr notes that "Nearly every aspect of [Did. 9 & 10] is paralleled in the Apocalypse."<sup>11</sup> Crucially, however, the one aspect that is notable by its absence is any kind of thanksgiving over food or drink. This means that it is not possible simply to characterise the installments of Revelation as complete Eucharistic prayers. At the same time, however, the parallels between the two texts do suggest that Revelation's installments relate, in some way, to Didache-style Eucharists. So far as the particular nature of that relationship is concerned, the following paragraphs seek to illustrate how each installment could serve as a "prophetic preface" to a conventional prayer of thanksgiving, such as those described in Did. [502] 9-10. In each case, the preface has the effect of charging the subsequent eating and drinking with a particular set of significances. Each preface also links into a following thanksgiving over bread and wine by picking up the language of the conventional prayer and/or by issuing an explicit invitation to the eschatological meal that follows.

#### *Installment One: Rev 1:1-3:22*

Links to the Didache Eucharists include the following: the description of God as Father (2:27; Did. 9:2 and 10:2); God described as παντοκράτωρ (1:8; Did. 10:3); reference to the power and glory of God (Rev 1:6; Did. 9:2,3,4; 10:2,4,5); references to the kingdom and authority over the nations (Rev 1:6; 2:26,27; 3:21; Did. 9:4;

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<sup>10</sup> A. J. P. Garrow, *Revelation* (New Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 1997), 14-53, offers a detailed presentation of this hypothesis.

<sup>11</sup> Barr, "Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," 254.

10:5); the Lord's coming (Rev 1:4,7,8; Did. 10:6); reference to David (Rev 3:7; Did. 9:2; 10:6); calls to holiness (Rev 3:4,7,18; Did. 10:6); and repeated calls to repentance (Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19; Did. 10:6). Most significantly, the installment concludes with an invitation to eat with Christ: "Listen, I am standing at the door, knocking. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you and you with me" (Rev 3:20). This statement marks a moment of decision, an opportunity to choose between two groups identified in the preceding seven messages. On the one hand there are those who follow Jezebel and Balaam whose infidelity, likened to fornication, is demonstrated by the eating of food sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:14,20). On the other, there are those who endure faithfully and who will be rewarded, for example, with food from the tree of life (Rev 2:7) and the hidden manna (Rev 2:17).

#### *Installment Two: Rev 4:1-8:1*

This installment has a particularly large number of parallels to the Didache's Eucharistic prayers. These include the following: numerous references to God's holiness (Rev 4:8; Did. 10:2); God described as ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ (Rev 4:8; Did. 10:3) and creator of everything (4:7-8,11; Did. 10:3); repeated liturgical refrains giving power and glory to God (4:11; 5:12,13; 7:12; *Did.* 9:2,3,4; 10:2.4,5); ingathering from every tribe, people and nation to reign on earth (5:9; 7:9; 5:10; Did. 9:4; 10:5); and the requirement of holiness/the wearing of white robes for those who enter God's presence (7:9,13,14; Did. 10:6). Heard in a liturgical setting, the conclusion of this installment offers two opportunities to cement identification between the earthly hearers and their faithful heavenly counterparts. First, a closing hymn with which a congregation might also participate begins to break down the boundary between the world of the hearer and the world of the text. Second, the forthcoming reception of bread and wine will enable hearers to begin to participate in the feast enjoyed by those who, having been through the great tribulation, have access to the water of life and neither hunger nor thirst (Rev 7:16,17).

#### *Installment Three: Rev 8:1-11:18*

Unlike the preceding installment, which focuses on the fate of those who make the right choices in terms of exclusive allegiance to Christ, this installment majors on the fate of those who make the opposite decision. As the installment comes to a close, the message is reinforced once again: God will ultimately be victorious and will reward those allied to him and punish those allied to other gods (Rev 11:15-18). The concluding hymn includes the promise of a coming kingdom (Rev 11:15; Did. 9:4; 10:5) and links to the following Eucharist with the phrase 'Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, κύριε ὁ παντοκράτωρ' (Rev 11:17; Did. 9:2,3; 10:2,3).

#### *Installment Four: Rev 11:19-15:4*

In this installment the hearers are offered a clear choice between fidelity and infidelity to God. The consequences of infidelity are played out in the description of the blasphemous beast and those induced to worship him (Rev 13:3-8, 11-16; 14:7,8,10,11). In counterpoint there are two calls to fidelity (Rev 13:7; 14:12) matched with the benefits of such a decision (Rev 14:1-5,13,16). This contrast is also expressed in the harvest of grapes for the wine press of God's wrath (Rev 14:17-20) and the ingathering of his good grain (Rev 14:14-16; cf. Did. 9:4; 10:5). These two

harvests provide the raw materials for the forthcoming of eucharistic eating at which point the hearers have a further opportunity to confirm their allegiance to Christ. The concluding hymn leads into this participation by inviting the hearers to identify, in song and in eating, with those who have conquered the beast and his image (Rev 15:2). This song links to the Didache Eucharists by praising God as holy (Rev 15:4; Did. 10:2) and as *pantocrator* (Rev 15:3; Did. 10:3). At the close of the installment, as the hearers stand on the brink of the impending final judgements (Rev 15:1), they are reminded that the time to confirm their allegiance to Christ is now. [504]

#### *Installment Five: Rev 15:5-19:10*

This installment is dominated by the perils of false allegiance. Those who fornicate with Babylon the Whore will find themselves caught up in her destruction. A vehicle of such allegiance, also characterised as fornication, is the sharing of a common cup (Rev 17:2,4; 18:3; see also 18:9). There is, however, an alternative to such fornication. The installment links to the following Eucharist by praising God as ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ (19:6; Did. 10:3) and with the invitation: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9, see also 19:7). As in Did. 10:6, those who wish to participate in this imminent marriage supper must be ‘holy’, or, in the language of Revelation, ‘clothed with fine linen, bright and pure’ (19:8).

#### *Installment Six: Rev 19:11-22:21*

As noted at the start of this section, Barr recognizes a large number of parallels between the *Didache* Eucharists and the concluding chapters of Revelation. Reception of the bread and wine provides a final opportunity to receive the gift of the water of life and to demonstrate a readiness to receive the Lord at his imminent coming.

As noted above, there are two obvious objections to the idea that Revelation is, in some sense, an example of a prophet exercising the freedom offered by Did. 10:7: it is too long for practical use in a worship setting and does not contain thanksgivings over food and drink. These objections do not apply, however, if Revelation was read in installments that linked into thanksgivings over food and drink. It remains feasible, therefore, that the numerous connections between Did. 9-10 and Revelation are due after all to John’s exercising of the privilege afforded to prophets by Did. 10:7.

### **Eschatology**

A third set of connections between the *Didache* and Revelation occur in their narration of the events of the End. Before attempting to consider these similarities, however, it is necessary to deal with an important preliminary issue: the lost ending of the *Didache*.

There is good reason to suppose that the Bryennios (= the Jerusalem MS), which contains the only surviving direct record of the [505] *Didache*, is incomplete. This raises the question of the likely original form of the *Didache*’s concluding

apocalypse.<sup>12</sup> Clues as to the content of the missing lines may be found in *Apostolic Constitutions* Book VII and in the *Renunciation* of Boniface, which independently support a continuation of the narrative into a scene of final judgment and reward. This continuation, in turn, highlights the secondary nature of Did. 16:7.<sup>13</sup> After removing Did. 16:7, an analysis of the witness of *Apostolic Constitutions* Book VII and the *Renunciation* of Boniface establishes an initial case for the reconstruction of Did. 16:8b-9.<sup>14</sup>

16:3 For in the last days false prophets and corruption will be multiplied  
and sheep will turn into wolves and love will turn into hate.

16:4a For with the increase of lawlessness they will  
hate, persecute and betray one another.

16:4b And then will appear the world-deceiver as a son of God  
and he will do signs and wonders and the earth will be betrayed into his hands [506]  
and he will do godless things that have not been done since the beginning of the age.

16:5 Then human creation will pass into the fire of testing  
and many will fall away and perish  
but those who persevere in their faith will be saved by the curse itself.

16:6 And then shall appear the signs of truth  
first the sign of stretching out in heaven  
next the sign of the trumpet call  
and third the resurrection of the dead.

*16:7 not of all the dead, but, as it says,  
'the Lord shall come, and all the holy ones with him'*

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<sup>12</sup> Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 38-43, observes that the case for seeing the *Didache* as originally extending beyond 16:8a is supported by: the need for a resolution of the conflict between the Lord and the world-deceiver; comparison with New Testament eschatological storylines; evidence from the punctuation and layout of the Jerusalem manuscript; and by comparison of the Jerusalem manuscript with the versions of *Did. 16* preserved in *Apostolic Constitutions*, the reported (and now lost) Georgian version of the *Didache* and the 8<sup>th</sup> Century *Renunciation* of Boniface.

<sup>13</sup> Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 46, 225 n. 27 and Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 38-44. If, as Robert E. Aldridge, "The Lost Ending of the *Didache*" *VigChr* 53 (1999): 5-13, and Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 38-43, propose, the original text of *Did. 16* continued into a description of a general judgment, then the secondary nature of *Did. 16:7* becomes particularly apparent. In the face of a general judgment, the selective resurrection of the dead portrayed in *Did. 16:7* generates a narrative anomaly. This aberration from the narrative flow of *Did. 16*, in combination with *Did. 16:7*'s deviation from the style and structure of the surrounding text, all point towards its status as a later insertion. Possible motivations for this insertion are offered in Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 44 and Alan J. P. Garrow, "The Eschatological Tradition behind 1 Thessalonians: *Didache 16*," *JSNT* 32 (2009): 202.

<sup>14</sup> This reconstruction is taken from Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 44-64. It shares numerous features with that of Aldridge, "Lost Ending," 1-15. Taking into account the necessarily speculative character of any reconstruction, one point may be affirmed with some confidence; the original form of the narrative is highly likely to have continued into a scene of judgment and reward.

16:8 Then the world will see the Lord  
coming upon the clouds of heaven ...  
[and all the holy ones with him,  
on his royal throne,  
to judge the world-deceiver and to reward each according to his deeds.

16:9 Then the evil will go away to eternal punishment  
but the righteous will enter into life eternal  
inheriting those things  
which eye has not seen  
and ear has not heard  
and which has not arisen in the heart of man.  
Those things which God has prepared for those who love him.]

Having addressed the preliminary issue of the lost ending, it is possible to consider the correlations between this narrative and the story of “what must soon take place” as told by Revelation.<sup>15</sup>

*Signs preceding the arrival of the world-deceiver (Did. 16:3,4a)*

For in the last days false prophets and corruption will be multiplied  
and sheep will turn into wolves and love will turn into hate.

For with the increase of lawlessness they will hate, persecute and betray one another.

The Didache expresses the conviction that one of the signs of the End will be an increase in false prophecy. The context indicates that these are people who arise from inside, rather than outside, the fold of Jesus’ followers; they are sheep who turn into wolves.

This kind of character is also described in Revelation. In the messages to Pergamum and Thyatira two church insiders acquire names designed to reveal their identity as false prophets; Balaam, ‘who put a stumbling block before the people of Israel’ (Rev 2:14) and Jezebel, “who calls herself [507] a prophetess” (2:20). “The false prophet” is a name also attributed to the second beast (13:11-17) when it reappears in Rev 19:20. This beast is described as having two horns “like a lamb”, even while it speaks like a dragon (13:11), a description that might also be taken as suggesting that, while the beast has the appearance of innocently belonging to the Lamb, it is in reality a traitor to that cause.<sup>16</sup>

*The appearance of the world-deceiver (Did. 16:4b)*

And then shall appear the world-deceiver as a son of God  
and he will do signs and wonders and the earth will be betrayed into his hands  
and he will do godless things that have not been done since the beginning of the age.

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<sup>15</sup> Garrow, *Revelation*, offers a detailed analysis of the story told by Revelation. According to John Sweet’s review, *JTS* 49 (1998): 940-1, reading Revelation in instalments solves the disputed question of where the contents of the Lamb’s scroll, the story of ‘what must soon take place’, are located within the overall narrative.

<sup>16</sup> Garrow, *Revelation*, 88-91, presents a case for seeing the second beast/false prophet as a pseudo-Christian, rather than pagan, figure.

The antichrist, as witnessed for example, in 2 Thess 2:3-12 and 1 John 2:18, is a central figure in the mainstream Christian apocalyptic tradition from the earliest period. In their descriptions of this character, the Didache and Revelation share a number of distinctive features: his influence is global (Rev 13:3,7,8 see also 13:12,14); he has divine pretensions (Rev 13.1,5,6,8); and performs deceptive miracles (Rev 13:3; see also 13:13,14). Further, as the narrative progresses, he engenders persecution (see below).

*The test engendered by the world-deceiver (Did. 16:5)*

Then human creation will pass into the fire of testing  
and many will be caused to stumble and lost  
but those who persevere in their faith will be saved by the curse itself (σωθήσονται ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ καταθέματος.)

At this point it is necessary to consider the meaning of the obscure phrase σωθήσονται ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τοῦ καταθέματος. The great majority of scholars favour “saved by the accursed one himself,” as in “saved by Christ himself.”<sup>17</sup> If correct, this interpretation represents a significant disjunction between the Didache and Revelation. In Revelation the highly unusual word κατάθεμα is used to assure hearers that, in the New Jerusalem, there will no longer be any curse (22:3). On this occasion, therefore, it is impossible that κατάθεμα could be a reference to “Christ”.

While the traditional interpretation of the *Didache's* καταθέματος counts against a link with Revelation, the association between ‘curse’ and Christ has an extremely fragile basis. First, there is no evidence to suggest that ‘the curse’ was ever, or could ever have been, a reverent title for Christ. More particularly, even if in some very remarkable circumstance Jesus was known by this name, it is unclear why “Lord” would not have been preferable in Did. 16:5. “Those who persevere in their faith shall be saved by the Lord himself,” more than adequately expresses the meaning favoured by those who see ‘the curse’ as a reference to Jesus.

The popularity of the view that καταθέματος refers to Christ, despite the awkwardness of this interpretation, may be attributed to the lack of credible alternative. Aaron Milavec,<sup>18</sup> however, observes that the burning process (Did. 16:5a) has the power both to save and to destroy, much as a furnace reveals the

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<sup>17</sup> For discussions of the mainstream position see, for example, Kurt Neiderwimmer, *The Didache* (Trans. L. M. Maloney; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 221-2; Aaron Milavec, “The Saving Efficacy of the Burning Process in *Didache* 16.5” in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission* (ed. C. N. Jefford; NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995): 139-142; Nancy Pardee, “The Curse that Saves (*Didache* 16.5)” in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission* (ed. C. N. Jefford; NovTSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 1995): 157; and Hans Rienhard Seeliger, “Considerations on the Background and Purpose of the Apocalyptic Conclusion of the *Didache*,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996): 379.

<sup>18</sup> Aaron Milavec, “Saving Efficacy of the Burning Process,” 131-54.

pure metal from amidst the dross.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the burning process immediately follows the arrival of the world-deceiver suggests the possibility that τό κατάθραμα refers not to Christ, but to the persecution engendered by the world-deceiver. During this persecution some fall away and are lost, but others by their perseverance prove their faith true and thereby are saved.<sup>20</sup>

This reading, rather than creating a disjunction with Revelation, creates three points of connection between the two texts. First, the association between faithful endurance and consequent salvation coheres with Revelation's repeated affirmation of the same correlation (Rev 2:10; 3:9-10; 6:9-10; 7:14-17; 12:11; 20:4; 21:7).<sup>21</sup> Second, Revelation and the Didache both closely associate the coming persecution with the advent of the beast/[509] world-deceiver (Rev 13:7 cf. 13:10). Third, as already noted, they both share the very rare term κατάθραμα. Revelation 22:3 otherwise appears to allude to Zech 14:11 (LXX), where the more common term ἀνάθραμα is used. This raises the question of Revelation's motive for replacing ἀνάθραμα with κατάθραμα. Given that Did. 16:5 is the only other recorded use of the term in the relevant literature,<sup>22</sup> it is credible that Did. 16:5 provided the motivation for this change. If the Didache's καταθράματος was understood as referring to the ultimate persecution, then there is every reason for Revelation to assure its readers that, in the New Jerusalem, there will no longer be any κατάθραμα.

#### *Signs announcing the coming of the Lord (Did. 16:6)*

And then shall appear the signs of truth  
first the sign of spreading out in heaven  
next the sign of the trumpet call  
and third the resurrection of the dead.

The meaning of ἐκπετάσεως ἐν οὐρανῶ is very obscure. Read literally the sign is of a 'spreading out' in heaven, but scholars are divided as to how this might be rendered as a visible sign. Neiderwimmer discusses three alternatives.<sup>23</sup> 1) An opening in the heavens as a precondition for the following descent of the Lord and his holy ones. A difficulty with this proposal is that, if this were the intention, it is not clear why ἐκπετάσεως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ was not preferred. 2) A cross in the heavens, as witnessed, for example, in *Apoc. Pet.* 1 (Ethiopic): 'so shall I come on the clouds of heaven with a great host in my glory; with my cross going before my face will I come in my glory.' This option has the advantage of examples in the later tradition. However, if this were the intention, it is unclear why such an obscure description of

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<sup>19</sup> This interpretation was first proposed in the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Jonathan Draper and is discussed further by him in "Resurrection and Zechariah 14.5 in the Didache Apocalypse," *J ECS* 5 (1997): 155-6.

<sup>20</sup> Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 29-38, provides a fuller account of this exegetical debate.

<sup>21</sup> This logic is also expressed by: Mk 13:9-13; Lk 21:19; Mt 10:22; 24:13; 2 Thess 1:4-6; 1 Pet 4:12-13

<sup>22</sup> 'κατάθραμα' occurs only in Revelation and Didache in first century Christian literature. Neiderwimmer, *The Didache*, 221-2 lists seven later occurrences. See also Pardee, "The Curse that Saves," 158.

<sup>23</sup> *The Didache*, 223-4.

the cross was used. 3) The standard of the Son of Man in the form of banners spread out in the heavens. This suggestion more readily reflects the sense of 'spreading out' than the preceding options, but is more difficult to detect in the tradition.<sup>24</sup> [510]

When it comes to considering how this sign might have been represented by Revelation there are two possibilities. First, the concept of an enlarging opening in heaven may be reflected in John's reference to an 'open door in heaven' in Rev 4.1, which develops through the sequence of installment 'openings', until John sees 'οὐρανὸν ἠμεωγμένον' in Rev 19.11. The second possibility is that the action of 'stretching out' refers, not to banners, but to a scroll being opened and stretched out in the heavens. The 'spreading out' of the Lamb's scroll is, of course, an important element in Revelation's narrative. Further, it is immediately followed by an equivalent to the *Didache's* second sign, the trumpet call, in Revelation's sequence of seven trumpets (Rev 8:6,8,10,12; 9:1,13; 11:15). The *Didache's* third sign, the resurrection of the dead, has a more complex relationship with Revelation's narrative. Revelation does include a description of the resurrection of the dead (21:13-14), but this description is placed alongside the account of the general judgement (20:12; cf. Did. 16:8b).<sup>25</sup>

#### *The arrival of the Lord (Did. 16:8a)*

Then the world shall see the Lord  
coming upon the clouds of heaven and all his holy ones with him,  
on his royal throne ...

Revelation 1:7 demonstrates an awareness of the expectation that the Lord will come 'on the clouds'. In Rev 19:11 he is described as riding on a white horse. Both texts agree, if the independently reconstructed ending of the *Didache* is correct, that the Lord is accompanied by faithful followers. Revelation's equivalent to the *Didache's* 'holy ones' is the accompanying army of riders who wear fine linen white and clean (Rev 19:14). A parallel to the *Didache's* 'royal throne' may be present in Revelation's thrones of reign and judgement (Rev 20:4,11). [511]

#### *The consequences of the Lord's arrival (Did. 16:8b-9)*

... to judge the world-deceiver and to reward each according to his deeds.  
Then the evil will go to eternal punishment  
but the righteous will enter into life eternal  
inheriting those things  
which eye has not seen  
and ear has not heard

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<sup>24</sup> A reference to the Lord stretching out his hand, as in Isaiah 11:1, is a further possibility, cf. Garrow, "Eschatological Tradition", 208.

<sup>25</sup> Revelation refers to more than one resurrection, and then not altogether straightforwardly. On the one hand, the martyrs are apparently caught up, at a relatively early stage, to join the heavenly army on Mount Zion (14:1-5; cf. 11:12). At the same time, however, this group appears to enjoy a form of resurrection after the Messiah's return (20:4-5). So far as the general resurrection is concerned the sequence is also curiously presented. When the throne is set up in Rev 20:11 the dead might be taken as already resurrected (20:12). However, the description of general resurrection is delayed until the two verses that follow (20:13-14).

and which has not arisen in the heart of man.  
Those things which God has prepared for those who love him.

In both the Didache and Revelation the Lord returns for judgement. Both texts specifically mention the judgement of the world-deceiver/beast (Rev 19:20-21) and both texts also specify that each will be rewarded according to their actions/deeds (Rev 20:12,13). The Didache is succinct in its description of the rewards and punishments in prospect. It describes them as 'eternal' in both cases, and elaborates with regard to the inheritance prepared for the righteous to the extent that they are beyond anything previously experienced or imagined. Revelation also uses the image of God preparing an inheritance for the righteous in its more extensive description of their eternal destiny (21:1-22:5, esp. 21:2,7).

What is striking about this set of comparisons is that Revelation echoes every major element of the Didache's presentation, and does so in a greatly elaborated form. This suggests, not only that Didache 16:3-6,8-9 and Revelation belong to a common stream of eschatological tradition, but also that Revelation falls later in that stream than does the Didache.

### **The Didache's relationship to Revelation**

The preceding observations about the similarities between the Didache and Revelation indicate the likelihood of some form of relationship between the two texts. Further, Revelation's very much more elaborate forms suggest that it falls later in the stream of developing tradition than does the Didache. However, a credible assessment of the more precise relationship between the two texts must explain, not only their similarities, but also for their marked differences. Critical to such an explanation is Did. 10:7: "allow the prophets to give thanks as much as they wish". It is this advice that explains how it is possible that the Didache's simple instructions regarding the Eucharist could be combined with its very brief eschatological narrative to create the extraordinary Book of Revelation.<sup>26</sup> On this basis I conclude, not merely that the Didache predates Revelation, but that the Didache's eucharistic and eschatological patterns provided the creative fountainhead out of which Revelation was born.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Didache's relationship to the New Testament**

As well as having implications for the study of Revelation, the above conclusion has implications for the Didache's placement in relation to the wider New Testament. The Didache shares points of connection with almost every strand of New Testament

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<sup>26</sup> Barr, "Oral Enactment," 253-4, notes the close relationship between apocalypse and Eucharist. '[T]he Eucharist – like the Apocalypse itself – looks back to the death of Jesus and forward to the messianic banquet in the Kingdom of God. An apocalypse is a dramatic portrayal of the coming of the Kingdom of God; Eucharist is an active celebration of the coming of that Kingdom. What the Apocalypse does in word, the Eucharist does in deed; it is the myth that corresponds to the ritual.'

<sup>27</sup> Revelation is commonly dated to either c. CE 95 or CE 68-69. Garrow, *Revelation*, 66-79, discusses the weaknesses of both options, while also making a positive case for CE 80-81.

tradition. In addition to the well-known connections with Matthew's Gospel and those with Revelation outlined above, such links include Mark 13:26-27 and Did. 16:8;<sup>28</sup> Luke 6:27-36 and Did. 1:2-5;<sup>29</sup> John's Gospel and Did. 9 & 10;<sup>30</sup> Acts 15:23-29 and Did. 6:1-3;<sup>31</sup> Romans 12:14,16,20; 13:9,10 and Did. 1:2-4; 1 Cor 2:9 and Did. 16:9;<sup>32</sup> 1 Thess 4:15-17 and Did. 16:3-6,8-9;<sup>33</sup> James and the Didache;<sup>34</sup> 1 Pet 2:11; 3:9; 4:12 and Did. 1:4; 1:3; 16:5. This very broad pattern of association suggests either that the Didache was written at a relatively late date in the light of several other texts or that it was written so early as to belong to the shared heritage of several divergent traditions. [513]

If, as this paper concludes, the Didache's eucharistic and eschatological traditions were the fountainhead from which Revelation was born, then this has the corollary effect of increasing the likelihood that Didache deserves to be regarded, not as a granddaughter or half-sister in relation to the New Testament, but as its matriarch.

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<sup>28</sup> Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 191-6.

<sup>29</sup> Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 224-7.

<sup>30</sup> Johannes Betz, "The Eucharist in the *Didache*," in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. J. A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 249, 255-6.

<sup>31</sup> Clayton N. Jefford, "Tradition and Witness in Antioch: Acts 15 and Didache 6," in *Perspectives on Contemporary New Testament Questions: Essays in Honor of T.C. Smith* (ed. Edgar V. McKnight; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 86-88.

<sup>32</sup> Garrow, *Matthew's Dependence*, 196.

<sup>33</sup> Garrow, "Eschatological Tradition".

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Huub van de Sandt, *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings*, (eds. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangenberg; Symposium, 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).