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Preface

In 2008 the Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins refocused its examination of Christian origins, moving from the region of Galilee toward the more northern environs of Syria, including the provincial capital of Antioch. This shift in emphasis achieved several goals for those who were able to contribute to the discussion from their areas of specialty.

The first of these achievements was a marked shift from concerns about sources that lie behind the gospels and the possibility of gospel origins themselves toward a consideration of the many contexts in which ancient liturgical and institutional practices developed. In certain respects this also marked a transition from the world of Palestinian Judaism to that of the diaspora synagogue, from a context in which early Christians were viewed as an emerging sect within a predominantly Jewish culture to a milieu where they were seen as one of many cultic faiths within the broader realm of the Roman empire.

Beyond this expansion, the turn toward Antioch and Syria provided opportunities to incorporate texts and traditions that circulated among early second-century authors beyond the realm of apostolic times. This is particularly germane with respect to the situation at Antioch, where several writers from the church’s second generation contributed to the development of Christianity’s heritage—at least within a specific region of the eastern Mediterranean world.

In the current issue of the Forum, five of these papers are offered as a reflection of how this discussion evolved. Included here is John Wilson’s work on Caesarea Philippi (Banias) in northern Galilee. His detailed review of the politics, culture, and peoples of the region helps provide a more detailed understanding of how local traditions influenced the synoptic gospels and Acts, marking the Seminar’s transition away from Galilee. Following is Brigitte Kahl’s introduction to the context that Syria provided for reshaping ancient Christian views. Her focus on Peter in Antioch, viewed primarily from the perspective of Paul, indicates the degree to which Jewish Christians experienced conflict in their adherence to Roman expectations. She examines questions of table ritual within the light of Jewish standards and Christian debate.

The setting of Antioch is also the topic of the next two papers, the first by me and the second by Nancy Pardee, each of whom attribute the production of the Didache to the Christian community there. In many ways these essays agree about the evolution of the text and its likely Syrian setting, though differences in
development are supposed. Attempts to locate the work of the Didachist within the changing world of the late first century acknowledge that transitional moments between early apostolic views and subsequent editors served to redefine what belief meant for the rise of late Christian antiquity.

Related to this same context is Charles Bobertz’s essay on Ignatius of Antioch and his preservation of baptismal practices. Bobertz offers a liturgical view of how ancient Christian ritual was seen from the perspective of those who managed their application—the ancient bishop. He envisages the Ignatian view of baptism as a struggle between divine power and the forces of chaos, keying on the baptismal tradition preserved by the Gospel of Mark.

Finally, the issue closes with a contribution by Helmut Koester about how story and ritual shaped the self-awareness of early Christian identity. Such elements are evident in the writings of Paul, as well as in the narratives of the gospels. Texts such as Acts and authors outside the canon also preserve the degree to which a broader understanding of ancient Christian mission dominated later Constantinian views about what it meant to be Christian.

These essays offer insight into the ancient Christian world of Galilee and Syria. Hopefully their contribution will help to reopen that world through fresh scholarly perspectives.

— Clayton N. Jefford
Paneas/Caesarea Philippi and the World of the Gospels

John Francis Wilson

Caesarea Philippi is a place name familiar to biblical scholars. This familiarity is almost exclusively due to its presence in one very familiar text: Matt 16:13–23. Recent archaeological excavations and the accompanying attention to ancient texts, geography, and contextual history that necessarily follow such excavations are transforming an obscure place-name into a significant reality. This paper will be limited to a discussion of what we are learning about Caesarea Philippi that relates more or less directly to the study of the gospels and earliest Christianity. Attempts to consolidate disparate bits of data, such as the present one, are admittedly in a very early and very fluid state of development.

Most of the topics mentioned are discussed more fully and accompanied with much fuller documentation in my book Caesarea Philippi: Banias, the Lost City of Pan (London: IB Taurus, 2004), chaps. 1–5, and in John Francis Wilson and Vassilios Tzaferis, “A Herodian Capital in the North: Caesarea Philippi (Paniaś),” in The World of the Herods (ed. Nikos Kokkinos; Oriens et Occidens 14; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007), 131–43. The first two volumes of the official excavation reports for Paneas are now also available.¹

The Names

The Paneion
The name Paneion first appears in Polybius’ second-century BCE description of a battle between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies over the control of Coele Syria and Phoenicia.² This name refers first to the large cave from which one of the major sources of the Jordan river flows and, by extension, the cult center dedicated to the god Pan that had developed around the cave and, by further extension, a geographical district named for the area’s most distinctive site. Traditionally New Testament students have called this district “the territory of Philip” or even more obscurely, “certain territories north and east of Galilee.”

² Polybius, The Histories 16.
Josephus uses the name in its original most restricted sense when he says that Herod the Great built a temple to Augustus “near the place called Paneion.”

Caesarea Philippi
Augustus appointed Herod I as ruler of the region around the Paneion, described by Josephus as “between Trachonitis and Galilee” and “containing Ulatha [the Hulah Valley] and Paneas and the surrounding country.” This appointment was part of a larger Roman strategy with regard to the Middle East. The territory would be under the control of the Herodian family for most of the next century and a quarter. Measured by length of rule, it was in fact the most “Herodian” place that ever existed. It now seems almost certain that the famous temple Herod dedicated to Augustus stood at Omrit—“near the Paneion” to be sure, but in fact about 2.5 miles southwest of the site of the city of Caesarea Philippi.

We also know that a distinction should be made between the Paneion and the city itself. This distinction is confirmed by an inscription found in the area reading: “Marker designating the boundary between the Sanctuary of Pan and the city.”

Unlike his father, Philip ruled only this territory and thus, unlike his father, it was necessary for him to establish a capital within it. Excavations have shown that he established an administrative center for himself between the Augusteum (if Omrit is indeed the site of this temple) and the Paneion—on a relatively small (160 dunam = approximately forty acres) tract lying south of the cave sanctuary. The tract was bounded on the west by the nascent river Jordan and on the south by the chasm of a tributary stream now called Wadi Sa’ar. This administrative center is the Caesarea Philippi of the gospels. Remarkably, though this center housed the seat of government and by the time of Agrippa II had a magnificent palace complex, no residential quarter dating from Herodian times has been found. This fact drives us back to the careful language of the gospels, particularly Mark, who describes Jesus’ visit as being “to the villages of Caesarea Philippi” (8:27–30). Unless one had some official business, this is literally how one would describe such a visit during the reign of Phillip. Matthew says that Jesus “came into the district of Caesarea Philippi”—wording also suggesting a knowledge of the actual historical and geo-political situation. Luke, on the other hand, omits all reference to Caesarea Philippi—a potentially significant omission.

Caesarea Panias/Paniados
With the death of Agrippa II, which may be dated at the latest to the turn of the century, the territory of the Paneion lost its relative autonomy and became a

5. See Overman et al., “Discovering Herod’s Shrine.”
mere sub-province of Syria. Philip’s name disappeared, though the occurrence of Herodian names on second-century inscriptions indicates that the aristocracy that had developed during the first century still dominated the local culture.\textsuperscript{7} Once the Herods were gone, the city returned to its pagan roots with great enthusiasm. Temples and shrines dedicated not only to Pan but also to his extended family sprang up in abundance around the cave and along the waters of the great spring. What had once been a simple Hellenistic cult site became a major religious pilgrimage center. Beautiful statues were imported and set up\textsuperscript{8} and elaborate festivals were conducted, including athletic games. The great palace was transformed into an income-producing bath house complex. The original inhabitants of the area whom Josephus called the “Syrians of Caesarea” once again dominated the culture. A distinctive and extremely interesting corpus of city coins was issued.\textsuperscript{9} These coins featured a panoply of pagan deities and activities by this time so characteristic of the place that one citizen, scratching his name on the Memnonion of Abydos in Egypt, described his home town of Paneas as \textit{Zatheos} — a title reserved for places “rich in divinities” or “inhabited by many gods.”\textsuperscript{10} The typical inscription found on the coins summarizes the city’s self-understanding by the mid-second century: “Caesarea Augustus, holy city and city of refuge, standing in front of the Paneion.”

\section*{Banias}

The history of this town during the late-Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and modern periods is an interesting one, but beyond our present purview. As the name of Philip had disappeared, so eventually did all reference to the Romans and their rulers. Only the old cult name survived, transformed from “Paneas” to “Banias” due to the Arabic pronunciation of the Greek letter “Pi.” This name has continued to the present.

\section*{The Geo-Political Situation}

\subsection*{The Boundaries}

The territories that comprised the inheritance of Philip the son of Herod were ethnically and culturally diverse and the whole has a certain look of artificiality. A careful examination of the map shows, however, that the boundaries were far from arbitrary. The geographical entity was in fact a clever creation of Roman foreign policy. The central element given to Herod was the tetrarchy of a petty Iturean dynast named Zenodorus. The Jewish client king’s explicit instructions

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} E.g. W. H. Waddington, ed., \textit{Inscriptions greques et latines de la Syrie}, no. 1894.
\item \textsuperscript{8} See Friedland, “Marbles from the Sanctuary of Pan.”
\item \textsuperscript{9} See Meshorer, “The Coins of Caesarea Paneas,” 37–58, plates 7–15.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Paul Perdrizet and Gustave Lefebvre, \textit{Les graffites grecs}, no. 528; p. 7, drawing on p. 96; text on p. 94.
\end{itemize}
were to pacify the area, keeping the important trade routes between the coastal cities of Phoenicia and Damascus open and operating, and generally to represent Roman interests in the rather wild country from the foothills of Hermon and the Golan, down the path of the nascent Jordan, and across to the mountains of southern Lebanon. This was, in the words of Millar, "an inner ‘frontier’ [between Rome and the East] possibly more real than that which lay along the fringes of the steppe."  

Herod was successful in what was expected of him, partially through the importation of large numbers of Jews from Babylonia into regions south and west of Damascus like Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Auranitis, formerly hotbeds of banditry.

The Romans retained this patchwork of territories by passing it along intact to Herod’s son Philip. Philip ruled the area in a rather rustic fashion, moving his court around in a manner similar to that used by the sheiks of the desert. His reign was long, almost forty years, and like that of his father, apparently successful from the Roman point of view.

The entire life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth falls within the years of Philip’s reign, and a far greater portion of his life and ministry than hitherto has been recognized were, in my opinion, located in the territory of Philip. It is particularly significant that the Gospel of Matthew, which I believe may have had its origins among the “villages of Caesarea Philippi,” summarizes the ministry of Jesus (Matt 4:15) by means of the language of Isa 9:1. The “Way of the Sea” is for Matthew the vital trade route from Damascus to Tyre, and the center of Jesus’ ministry is an area bordered on the south by Capernaum and her sister lakeside communities Bethsaida and Chorazim and on the north by Tyre and Sidon—in other words, within or bordering the territories of Philip the Tetrarch.  

The visit of Jesus and his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi was not, as sometimes depicted, a quiet recreational escape to the mountains. It was rather a part of Jesus’ own territory of ministry.

The City Plan

It is hard to say how much of the city plan gradually being revealed by the recent excavations can be attributed to Philip. We did find coins minted by Philip among the ruins—including one with his portrait. But Josephus tells us that the city was changed significantly by Philip’s great-nephew Agrippa II, “the natural beauties of the Panion” having been “enhanced by royal munificence” and “the place having been embellished by Agrippa at great expense.” This work may have begun as early as the 60s CE, when Agrippa renamed the city “Neronias”—an ill-timed decision quickly reversed with the rise of the Flavians. We think that the magnificent royal palace was a part of this extensive project, though
probably not constructed until after the First Revolt. It was perhaps a gift from the Flavian emperors in gratitude for the part Agrippa and his sister Berenice played in the success of the Roman campaign to crush that revolt. The same might be said of other architectural features uncovered during the excavations, such as the fine cardo maximus and the richly ornamented buildings constructed north of the palace facing the Pan sanctuary, the remains of which were later reused by the Byzantine Christians to build their cathedral.

If this assessment is correct, we should think of the “region of Caesarea Philippi” of Matthew 16 as primarily rural during Jesus’ ministry. The remains of country villas still dot the countryside, lying unfortunately among modern minefields and thus not available for excavation. It is significant to note, however, that this arrangement might not be quite so characteristic of the period during which the Gospels of Mark and Matthew were being composed. By this time Caesarea Philippi was an impressive Roman style polis dominated by a massive royal palace and an already enlarging complex of pagan sanctuaries. Furthermore, because the Romans had added much surrounding territory to the domains of Agrippa II, the “region of Caesarea” now included not only the sites of Jesus’ northern travels, but the lakeside towns of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazim as well. Just as the tetrarchy of Philip is the backdrop for at least some of the ministry of the historical Jesus, so is the kingdom of Agrippa II the backdrop for the Galilean ministry of Jesus in the gospels.

The Population

Itureans

In pre-Herodian times the dominant power in the region of Caesarea Philippi belonged to the Itureans. These Aramaic speaking people, known for their military abilities, were alternatively allies and competitors of the Jewish kings during the Hellenistic period. They shared a common border with the Jewish kingdom. The term Iturean can refer to either an ethnic entity or a political one. It can refer to the nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes that ranged over the area of our interest for many centuries or to the Iturean principality that developed during Seleucid times. The latter was ruled over by Hellenized petty dynasts who controlled only part of the territories inhabited by ethnic Itureans. The coins of these dynasts were thoroughly Hellenized—featuring portraits of Artemis, Hermes, the Dioscuri, Zeus, and Athena. The situation was remarkably parallel to the relationship of the Jews, also a wide-ranging ethnic group, to the Hellenized Hasmoneans, who took advantage of Seleucid weakness to form an independent principality whose boundaries were constantly changing. The Jewish kings and the Iturean kings both had among their titles arxiereus (high priest).

Particularly significant is the fact that according to Timagenes, the Jewish king Aristobulus I conquered “a portion of the Iturean nation, whom he joined
to them [that is, the Jews] by bond of circumcision” [104–103 BCE]. There were, then, two kinds of Itureans in the Banias area during the first centuries BCE and CE: those who were relatively recent converts to Judaism and those who remained pagans. Evidence of the latter is found four kilometers north of Banias at Senaim, where a major Iturean pagan cult center functioning during the first century has been excavated.

“Canaanites” (Syro-Phoenicians)
Ceramic finds near the cave of Pan at Banias indicate at least modest cultic activity there during the first century. We can attribute such activity not only to Greek settlers and pilgrims for whom the site was one of several in the Hellenistic world dedicated to Pan, but also to the remnants of the old Canaanite population that still inhabited the area and despite the Hellenistic influences retained ties to the ancient cults of Ba’al. Josephus calls these people the “Syrians of Caesarea.” They were a part of the people described in the gospels as “Syro-Phoenician” or even “Canaanite.” These terms would apply to the pre-Hellenistic population of the areas stretching west from “the region of Tyre and Sidon” (Matt 15:21) through Caesarea Philippi, over the mountains, and on to the desert steppe.

Greeks
Though the term “Greek” eventually had a much wider meaning, it can be used in this context of thoroughly Hellenized settlers settling in the area during the period between Alexander the Great and Roman domination. Their influence can be seen in the introduction of the Greek language, architecture, the polis, religious terminology, and the syncretism reflected in the iconography of coins.

Herodians
The long reign of the family of Herod the Great in the region of Caesarea Philippi resulted in the creation of a segment of the population sharing not so much ethnic or religious identity as simply the fact that they were “friends of the king.” Herod I had a policy of introducing numbers of his own (pagan) supporters, veterans of his armies, and clergy for his temples to Augustus at other sites such as Sebaste in Samaria and Caesarea Maritima. We may safely conclude that the situation was the same in Banias. This segment of the population would include clients, relatives, civil servants, and others who enjoyed the friendship and support of the royal family. Together these constituted a ruling class—“Hellenized” to be sure, but probably more accurately described as “Romanized.” Though the term “Herodians” appears in the gospels only in a

15. Dar, Settlements and Cult Sites, 7.
Jerusalem context, it might also be used for the group described above, whether found in Judea or in the north. It is interesting to note that the term is found in Mark and Matthew, both of which may be rooted in the region of Caesarea Philippi, but is missing in the parallel text of Luke.

**Jews**

A significant Jewish community existed in Banias from the beginning. It is perhaps more accurate to say that there were several Jewish communities there. We know that Judaism was a complex phenomenon during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. This was certainly true in first-century Caesarea Philippi.

**The Caesarean Jews**

I use this expression to describe the Jewish community living within the region surrounding the administrative center itself. This community seems to have had its own semi-autonomous government and to have followed a relatively strict form of compliance with the Law of Moses (see below). Even allowing for some exaggeration by Josephus, this was a community of considerable size—he claims it numbered in the thousands. Josephus leaves the impression that this Jewish community in Banias, though concerned to follow the laws of purity (and thus be willing, for example, to pay exorbitant amounts for olive oil that was ritually pure), nevertheless did not join in the revolt. They enjoyed the protection of Agrippa’s viceroy Modius against the local pagan population, which ironically in this case was less loyal to Rome than were the Jews of Banias. While these Jews surely must have been saddened to see the cruel destruction of thousands of their co-religionists in the games held at Banias after the war, there is no reason to believe that they themselves suffered greatly from the defeat of the Jewish rebels. Like their king, Agrippa, they had been able to walk a very narrow tightrope of “loyalty” to Rome, besieged on one side by rebellious fellow Jews and on the other by the potentially rebellious old Iturean pagan population.

**Iturean Converts**

We have already noted the presence of Aramaic-speaking tribesmen forcibly converted to Judaism during the reign of the Hasmonean Aristobulus. Having pagan roots, rather widely separated from the center of Jewish culture in Judea, and surrounded by a strongly non-Jewish cultural milieu, they might be expected either to exhibit the sort of radical commitment characteristic of some converts under such circumstances and/or to be attracted to various kinds of heterodoxies. They were no doubt a source of concern for the religious

establishment in Judea, and it would not be surprising to learn that “missionaries” from the south were present among them, intent on claiming or reclaiming them for what in the south was considered orthodoxy.

**The Babylonian Jews**
Another Jewish community had been established by Herod the Great in Batanea, not far from Banias and under its political jurisdiction. This community had originated in Babylon and had been imported for the purpose of maintaining order against the banditry of the Trachonites. A great number of immigrants came “from all those parts where the ancient Jewish laws were observed” and settled there, attracted by freedom from taxes. This community’s task was primarily military—to keep the Trachonites under control and thereby ostensibly to make the area safe for Jews traveling from Babylonia to come to Jerusalem for the feasts. Herod, of course, had an additional motive, a less religious one, since the Romans had charged him with keeping general order in the area and the “Babylonian Jews” could help him do that.

The project was successful. The country, Josephus says, “became full of people” and remained generally loyal to both Rome and the house of Herod. The leaders of this community developed very close ties with the Herodian family. Jacimus, son of the founder, trained a group of Jewish horsemen to serve as personal guards for the Herodian kings. His son Philip became a friend, confidant, and general of the armies of Agrippa II. The impression we get is that the three Jewish communities of the district of Banias (the “Caesareans,” the “Itureans,” and the “Babylonians”) were all of significant size and influence.

**Apocalyptic Judaism**
Despite the efforts of the Jerusalem religious establishment toward uniformity, the Jews who lived in the territories of Philip the Tetrarch and his successors inherited what was left of the old spirit of independence that had once expressed itself in the heterodoxy of the “northern kingdom” of Israel. We should not imagine that the traditions of the “ten lost tribes” had totally disappeared from the scene. It is true that the old altar at nearby Dan, with its golden calf, was in the hands of local pagans by Hellenistic times. And indeed the ancient cult located there, far older than the Israelite state, had essentially disappeared by Roman times. But the traditions of the sacredness of the area—the springs, the forests, and especially mighty Mount Hermon—lived on. It has been suggested that the old Israelite community of the north totally disappeared and that the Jewish population of the region was entirely the result of immigration from the south during Hellenistic times. If this suggestion were correct, the unquestioned northern associations found in Q would of necessity have their origins in “one particular Galilean community’s carefully crafted epic imagination to locate

themselves on their social map.” But note that the northern traditions were not only to be found in Q, but also in certain strands of apocalyptic Judaism not directly associated with earliest Christianity, though quite possibly a part of the matrix in which earliest Christianity appeared. In certain cases these traditions are intimately tied to specific geographical locations. It seems unlikely that such northern traditions were maintained by the pagan population exclusively, and passed along from them to later southern Jewish immigrants.

It is not possible to go into detail here, but one or two examples can be given. Almost a century ago Charles Clermont-Ganneau noticed the special place given to the region in the book of 1 Enoch, especially 1 Enoch 12–16. For the author of this document, Mount Hermon is the “Mountain of the Oath.” Here, then, is where he has the angels make their pact. The traditions underlying his treatment may have pagan origins, as Clermont-Ganneau suggests, but have been appropriated into Jewish apocalypticism and later into apocalyptic Jewish Christianity (see below). There is thus an intermingling of Old Testament traditions and pagan legends regarding the mountain and various sites around the mountain. The author of 1 Enoch not only knows the legends, but also the geography of the mountain and its environs. In fact, he knows the area better than he does Mount Sinai or Mount Zion. This suggests that his community of faith was itself located nearby.

George Nickelsburg has expanded on this theme. The author of 1 Enoch 13, he says, “pinpoints with absolute specificity and precision the geographical location where Enoch’s heavenly journey was supposed to have originated.” It is “by the waters of Dan in the land of Dan, which is southwest of Hermon” (13:7). And the seer’s proclamation to the angels takes place at the south end of the valley between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon ranges, at Abel beth Maacah (13:9). Furthermore, the climactic descent of the rebel angels occurs on Mount Hermon itself. “Thus,” says Nickelsburg,

the whole of this primordial drama unfolds in a narrowly circumscribed geographical region . . . Enoch, having been commissioned by the angels to intercede for them in God’s presence, goes to Dan for the purpose of finding the presence of God. At the sacred place, he sits down by the waters—traditionally a place of revelation—and reads himself into a trance in which he is conveyed into the presence of God. If Mount Hermon is the ladder from the heavenly sanctuary (12:4; 15:3) to earth, the waters of Dan stand in polar relationship to the gates of heaven and, through them, to the sanctuary and the throne of God.

He concludes “that these chapters constitute a tradition of northern Galilean provenance which, in turn, reflects visionary activity in the area of Dan and Hermon.”

This theme is a persistent one that also appears in Jewish-Christian circles. *The Testament of Levi* (2–7) locates an ascent to the heavenly temple in the same area and even suggests that the patriarch of the priesthood at Jerusalem received his divine call in a vision that occurred near the site of one of the shrines in the northern kingdom. Before turning to the Judaism of the rabbis, then, we note the presence of other kinds of Judaism in the area, some of which, like this one, seem to have been absorbed by heterodox communities, including the Judeo-Christian sects we will discuss below.

**The Judaism of the Rabbis**

The city of Banias and region around it are often mentioned in rabbinic literature. This was the home of some of the great rabbis who formulated the Judaism that survived the destruction of the temple and the disappearance of the Jewish state. Though the references to Banias are frequent, the nature of these documents is such that their interpretation and evaluation are difficult. Clearly some of the stories involving Banias are legendary. Some surely originated many generations after the events they claim to describe; some late documents undoubtedly retain very early traditions that have historical significance. Nevertheless, a few cautious conclusions can be drawn. We may be certain that by the early second-century Banias had become a center for rabbinic scholarship and that the Jews of Banias followed the long tradition of their fathers in cooperating with the Romans and refused to join in the second revolt, just as they had refused to participate in the first.

The Bar Kochba revolt, which destroyed so many Jewish communities further south, actually strengthened the Jewish community of Banias, as many refugees fled northward and settled in nearby Upper Galilee, the Golan, and no doubt in Banias itself. In fact, Rabbi Jose ben Kisma maintained a theological school there precisely during and immediately after the time of the revolt. If the testimony of the *Mishna* is accurate, the city could actually be described as a “place of the Torah,” that is, the home of a strong Jewish community with an active group of Torah scholars.22 This would be consistent with the picture of the Jewish community in Banias given by Josephus some fifty to seventy years earlier in the affair involving John of Gischala. Other major figures among the rabbis had connections with the city. Traditions such as these remind us once again that after the Bar Kochba revolt, the center of the Jewish population, along with its scholars and religious leaders, moved into the Golan and northern Galilee, precisely those areas that had long been administratively centered at Banias. Jews were to play a significant role in the region for the next several centuries. Dan Urman’s contention seems valid that “some of the important sages of Palestine who were involved in creating, editing, and perhaps also writing parts of the Palestinian *Halacha* were born, studied, and worked in the region.

Therefore it is possible to assume that a sizeable part of the Palestinian rabbinic sources were edited and written in the region.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{The Revolt of 66–70 CE}

If as I am suggesting people living in the region of Caesarea Philippi were significant players in the development of the Synoptic traditions, events occurring there during the period between the ministry of Jesus and the composition of the gospels should be of special interest. One event towers above all others, namely the Jewish revolt of 66–70 CE. Agrippa II stayed close to his Roman sponsors in the years before the war and consequently Caesarea Philippi was left in the hands of a viceroy, a member of the pre-Herodian Iturean royal family named Varus. In the period before the revolt, relations grew more and more hostile between the two major segments of the population of the city whom Josephus calls “the Syrians of Caesarea” and “the Jews of Caesarea.” The “Syrians of Caesarea,” like the gentile pagan inhabitants of all the Hellenistic cities of the area, hated the imposition of the Jewish Herodian dynasty upon them, despite the many compromises the dynasty made with local culture and religion. But we have noted that Banias, though predominantly pagan, also had a large and influential Jewish community numbering, if we may believe Josephus, “many thousands.” Because of Agrippa’s patronage, this community enjoyed privileges that included a kind of quasi-autonomous government. The champion of this community was Philip, son of Jacimus, the Jewish military commander of the “Babylonian Jews”—descendants of soldiers settled to the east of Banias by Herod the Great in an earlier generation. Philip had trained local troops for Agrippa and served as his chief military officer. When the revolt broke out, Varus tried to take over the region in the name of its pre-Roman, pre-Herodian rulers, the Itureans. He sealed off the town, allowing no communication between its citizens and Agrippa. He then ordered a large number of executions of Jews, charging them with rebelling against Rome. He then hatched an elaborate scheme designed to eliminate the Jewish leadership both in Banias and among the “Babylonian Jews” to the east and south. Massacres of Jews occurred throughout the area.

Varus’s scheme failed, however, and Agrippa replaced him with someone more loyal. Additionally, the Babylonian Jewish military units under Philip, son of Jacimus, now stationed at nearby Gamla, persuaded the citizens of Caesarea Philippi to remain loyal to the king. If Varus had succeeded, Banias might have become an autonomous \textit{polis} like the neighboring Decapolis cities or even a small Iturean state like the one that had disappeared into the domain of Herod the Great. As it was, the Jewish community survived, and was able to establish itself as loyal both to its own religious traditions and to Agrippa and

\textsuperscript{23} Urman, \textit{The Golan}, 22–24.
the Romans. It was so zealous in keeping the precepts of the Torah that it went
to great lengths to gain access to “pure oil,” that is, oil produced according to
Jewish law. This fastidiousness cost the community dearly, since the “pure oil”
had to be purchased from John of Gischala at outrageous prices. They were
willing to do this, Josephus tells us, “lest they should be driven to violate their
legal ordinances by resort to Grecian oil.”

Throughout the war the Jewish population of Caesarea Philippi remained
loyal to Agrippa and his Roman overlords. Of course, they had little choice, but
probably were sincerely opposed to the revolt in any case. The Roman army
and Roman soldiers were very much a part of daily life during the period. In
the summer of 67 CE the Roman general Vespasian, sent by Rome to put down
the revolt and having substantially pacified the north, accepted Agrippa’s invi‐
tation to bring his army to Banias. One of Agrippa’s motives was to intimidate
the local population and thus to “quell the disorders within his realm.” He
continued to experience serious internal opposition to his rule, both from rebel‐
lious Jews and local pagans. His palace, even though probably built after the
war, resembles a fortress in many ways, suggesting that he never felt entirely
safe, even to his dying day. The army spent twenty days in Caesarea Philippi
on this occasion. Vespasian rested his troops and spent his time “rendering
thank offerings to God for the successes which he had obtained.” Josephus’
report provides information about the nature of the city and its environs in the
60s. Situated in a place of great natural beauty, with dozens of cool mountain
springs and a great oak forest in which to camp, the Roman legions would find
delightful opportunities for rest and relaxation. But the city itself must have had
substantial facilities to host such a gathering, providing urban delights as well
as bucolic ones. Josephus neglects to tell us which god Vespasian thanked while
in Banias. There were, of course, the already impressive altars at the sanctuary
of Pan. Among Pan’s traditional powers was the ability to assist troops in battle.
But there was also the nearby Augusteum, a place to proclaim one’s allegiance
to the imperial family.

Nero died on June 9, 68 CE, and both Agrippa and his sister Berenice moved
rapidly to establish and enhance their relationship with the new rulers of Rome.
Agrippa went off to the city itself, while Berenice stayed and apparently played
a significant role in helping Vespasian become the emperor. By this time Titus,
Vespasian’s son and eventual successor, had fallen madly in love with the
much-older Berenice, whose residence of record seems to have been Caesarea
Philippi. The “Queen of Banias” would remain in the very center of Roman poli‐
tics, perhaps the most powerful woman in the world for the next several years.
When his father became emperor, Titus took command of the army in Judea.
Thus it was he who presided over the fall and destruction of Jerusalem and
the disintegration of the Jewish rebel state (August 70 CE). Leaving Jerusalem

in ruins, Titus first moved his victorious troops and thousands of Jewish captives to Caesarea Maritima. Then, following the lead of his father, he brought them to Caesarea Philippi. The place had many attractions, among them the loyalty to Rome of both the Jewish and pagan population, and the presence of his beautiful lover Berenice. She and her half-brother Agrippa had to watch the slaughter of thousands of their fellow Jews, taken prisoner in the south, during a birthday celebration for Titus’s brother Domitian held in Banias. Thousands of spectators came from the Hellenized cities of the area, such as Damascus, the cities of the Decapolis, and the coastal cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Berytus and so on, to watch the spectacle.26

Caesarea Philippi and the Formative Years of the Synoptic Tradition

Caesarea Philippi has found a place in Synoptic studies primarily because it is cited by the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Matthew as the backdrop for a conversation between Jesus and an undifferentiated group of “disciples” (only Peter is named). For the modern reader the place seems obscure and rather surprising. The best many traditional commentaries can make of the situation is that Jesus must have been on a sort of nature outing, a bit of welcome relief in the cool mountain air, a temporary reprieve from the hot and dusty towns of Galilee. I am suggesting that what we have learned from archaeology and from a new look at the literary sources suggests something quite different. I will even be so bold as to suggest a working hypothesis along these lines:

The pericope usually entitled “The Confession at Caesarea Philippi and the First Prediction of the Passion” introduces a collection of Jesus-traditions belonging to the apocalyptic Jewish-Christian community centered in the region of Caesarea Philippi. This collection is pre-Synoptic and has been at least partially preserved within the canonical gospels in Mark 7:20–9:29 and Matt 16:1–17:20.27 During and following the revolt, other communities of Jesus people, displaced by the war, fled from southern Galilee and later from Judea, into the region of Caesarea Philippi, bringing their own contributions to the growing Synoptic tradition. The Gospel of Matthew represents the literary fruit of the resulting amalgamation.

The Banias Tradition

Now we will briefly review what I am suggesting is a “Banias tradition”—preserved in Matthew and Mark, but pre-Markan in origin. This block of material has the “region of Caesarea Philippi” as its backdrop. Matthew has his own version, at least partially from an independent source. None of the material is

27. Mark 6:17–29 (Matt 14:3–12) may also belong to this block. Theissen, The Gospels in Context, 81–89, has suggested that the story of the death of John the Baptist, featuring Philip, Herodias, and Salome, all of whom had strong ties to Caesarea Philippi, originated in northern Palestine/southern Syria.
found in Q and while Luke draws from it, he does not mention the geographical backdrop. Only some general comments can be made here about this material.

Confession of Messiahship
Mark 8:27–30; Matt 16:13–20
This passage has been long identified with some sort of Ur-Markus. Marxen notes:

> It is the same here as elsewhere in Mark. The locales which he occasionally furnishes his pericopes derive entirely from his sources. We must note the fact that at a very early stage local traditions were formed which may be associated with Christian communities in these places. We must also reckon with the probability that the geographical data may be historically reliable.28

As for the Matthean version, there are elements that, to use Nickelsburg’s phrase, are “widely recognized to have stemmed from an earlier tradition or traditions.”29 Mark locates the incident “on the road” to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Matthew says it happened “when Jesus came into the District of Caesarea Philippi”—tightening the relationship between the incident and the geographical location. If Matthew’s gospel was produced in this district, such a subtlety might be understandable.

Some have suggested that the red rock cliff at Caesarea Philippi is the source of Jesus’ reference to a “rock” and that the cave of Pan within it is the source of his phrase “the gates of hell.” This theory is attractive, if not absolutely convincing. It does seem plausible, however, to connect this incident and the one that follows it with the traditions of 1 Enoch and Testament of Levi 2–7 discussed elsewhere. Both of these depict Mount Hermon as a point of access to heaven; both suggest that commissioning comes only after a communication between heaven and earth. Mount Hermon, towering above and dominating the scenery in the district of Caesarea Philippi, is in those traditions an ancient place of revelation where a ladder stretches from earth into heaven itself. This polarity of heaven and earth may be seen in Matt 16:19.

Transfiguration on Hermon
Mark 9:2–10; Matt 17:1–9; Luke 9:28–36
It seems plausible to suggest that Matthew and Mark are both drawing on earlier material for this incident, and there are signs that point toward Caesarea Philippi as the source of that material. As for the transfiguration story, we have already seen how this event occurs precisely where both Jewish and Christian apocalypticists say such events should occur—high atop Mount Hermon (Mark 9:2). There is a traditional rival site, Mount Tabor. But the context in

28. Marxen, Mark the Evangelist, 72–73.
the gospels strongly favors Hermon. Certainly the theme originating in Jesus’ question (Mark 8:26; Matt 16:13) is carried into the transfiguration story, that is, Jesus is superior to “Moses and the Prophets.” This suggests that Mark and Matthew understand the two pericopae to be intricately connected, and that Caesarea Philippi forms the geographical backdrop. Nickelsburg’s conclusion seems reasonable, namely, that the similarities between Matt 16:13–19 and the transfiguration story, on the one hand, and the Enoch-Levi tradition, on the other, “suggest a historical connection between some members of the primitive Christian community and those apocalyptic Jewish circles in which the Enoch-Levi tradition circulated.”

Such a connection is entirely plausible “in the district of Caesarea Philippi.”

The Coming of Elijah
Mark 9:9–13; Matt 17:1–13
The discussion between Jesus and the disciples following the transfiguration centers on Elijah. This prophet of the north had, like Jesus, paid particular attention to a woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Zarapheth; 1 Kings 17). This is not the first or last time when events during the ministry of Jesus reflect a special identification with the northener Elijah.

The Healing of the Epileptic Boy
Mark 9:14–29; Matt 17:14–21
The next pericope may also be placed in Caesarea Philippi. Mark suggests that the healing occurred in “that place”—that is, near where the transfiguration had occurred. Luke understands Mark in this way, saying that the healing happened “the next day, when they came down from the mountain” (9:37–45). The god Pan was believed to be capable of possessing humans, and the symptoms resulting strongly resemble those of the boy in the Synoptic story. The “divine frenzy” that accompanied such possessions even had a name, “panolepsy.” Jesus is able to free the boy from the possession. The theme of “Christ versus Pan” becomes a common one in the following generations in the north.

The association with Caesarea Philippi ends with the next pericope. Jesus and the disciples are now “gathered in Galilee” (Matt 17:22; cf. Mark 9:30).

Jesus-People in the North

Synoptics and Acts
Caesarea Philippi represented the mid-point on the main road between Tyre and Damascus, and is a part of a larger group of political entities that might in this context be called “the north.” Both major lines of Synoptic tradition

preserve hints of the very early presence of Jewish Christians in the north, as does Acts. The pericope designated Woes on the Cities of Galilee (Matt 11:21–2; Luke 10:13–14) implies that Tyre and Sidon have been more open to the gospel than the lakeside cities where most of the “mighty works” were done. Mark prominently mentions Tyrian disciples in the crowds attending to Jesus’ teaching (3:8; cf. Luke 6:17). Mark 7:24–31 retains the memory of a healing trip by Jesus through the north. He has an encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman in “the vicinity of Tyre,” after which he travels on to Sidon, his furthest destination northward. He then crosses what we now call the Bekaa Valley to Caesarea Philippi along a major road. Next he proceeds south along the course of the Jordan directly through Phillip’s territory to the town of Bethsaida and then into the Decapolis, all the while traveling on major roads. This trip is characterized by healings and exorcisms that are depicted as happening along the way—that is, mostly within the territory of Caesarea Philippi. This text is sometimes taken as an example of Mark’s lack of geographical knowledge of the area. It seems to me it is an example quite to the contrary.

The geographical progression in Mark 8 moves in the opposite direction. Jesus proceeds from the mysterious “district of Dalmanutha” (8:10) to Bethsaida (which lay in Philip’s tetrarchy), where a healing occurs (8:22–26), and then on to Caesarea Philippi (8:27ff.). It is difficult to attribute any reason for these geographical references other than specific traditions of a significant ministry of Jesus in and around Philip’s tetrarchy.

While the author of Luke-Acts is generally less interested in the geography of Jesus’ northern ministry, he does provide evidence of very early Jewish-Christian presence in the area. Acts 11:19 claims that Jesus people who were scattered from Jerusalem after the death of Stephen “traveled as far as Phoenicia . . . telling the message only to Jews.” Acts 15:3 strongly implies the existence of Jewish-Christian communities in “Phoenicia and Samaria.” Acts 21:36 has Paul’s party landing at Tyre. “Finding the disciples there,” the narrator says, “we stayed with them seven days.” Then “all the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city.” There is a pre-Pauline Jewish-Christian church on the eastern side of the north as well. Saul goes to Damascus to find “any there who belong to the Way” (Acts 9:1–3). After his conversion he “spent several days with the disciples in Damascus” (Acts 9:19–20). Later, he is said to have preached “to those in Damascus” (Acts 20:26), something he recalls in his own words in Gal 1:17.

If, as these texts suggest, followers of Jesus already organized into communities were to be found from Tyre to Damascus before the conversion of Paul, it follows that Jesus traditions were present as well. There had been very little time for these traditions to evolve or to be significantly altered through theological reflection. The calendar suggests that these communities had numerous members who had already reached adulthood in the 40s and 50s CE and certainly some who were contemporaries of Jesus himself.
Jewish-Christian Sects

Unfortunately, most of our information about Jewish followers of Jesus, particularly those communities that survived beyond the first century, comes to us through the exceedingly tendentious auspices of “Orthodox” historians, writing after the triumph of Byzantine Christianity. Thus very early communities, some perhaps with ties reaching back to Jesus and his apostles, persisting in Palestine and Syria for centuries, are remembered and described only in terms of their “heresies” (that is, diversions from the form of gentile Christianity adopted by the court of Byzantium). Nevertheless, despite the difficulties in reconstructing the historical record, we can be sure that the district of Paneas was one of the centers of such movements, apparently from a very early period.

The famous and controversial account of Eusebius claims that southern Jesus people fled from Jerusalem prior to its destruction and settled in Pella of the Decapolis. Epiphanius (c. 315–403 CE) adds some relevant and often overlooked details. He traces the Jewish Christian sect of the Ebionites back to the primitive followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and reports that they actually scattered in several directions, laying the foundation for several types of Jewish Christianity, elements of which could be found in a region stretching east of the Jordan from Damascus to the southern reaches of the Dead Sea. Ebion, he says, “preached in Asia and Rome, but the roots of those thorny weeds come mostly from Nabatea and Banias, Moabitis, and Cocabe in Batanitis beyond Adrai—in Cyprus as well.”

If, as seems to be the case, Epiphanius’ use of the term “Iturea” refers to the district of Banias, he also locates additional Jewish Christian sects in the Banias area, including the Sampsaeans (or Elkesaites) and the Ossaeans. Further, he locates the Nazoraeans in Coele Syria and the Decapolis, another way of describing essentially the same geographical regions.

These very early Jewish-Christian groups possessed their own traditions about the ministry of Jesus that in turn became the basis for both their own literature and quite possibly for significant portions of the canonical gospels. Such works as the Gospel of the Nazoraeans and the so-called Gospel of the Ebionites show great similarities to the Gospel of Matthew, but do not seem to be directly dependent on the canonical form of the gospel. This may indicate that these documents “originated in an environment in which traditions used by the Gospel of Matthew were known, but that such traditions had a different development.”

Matthew and the Gospel of the Nazoraeans may then represent two lines of development in an environment shared by Aramaic and Greek-speaking Christians. Such an environment existed in the district of Caesarea Philippi. It seems possible to hypothesize a Jewish form of Christianity persisting in the area, developing its own particular synthesis of the ancient Jewish

32. Panarion 30.18.1.
traditions that included Jewish apocalypticism and a belief in the messianic identity of Jesus of Nazareth. This synthesis in turn left its imprint on the formative documents of the Orthodox Church. And, as suggested above, this community shared its space with another form of Judaism, namely that of certain of the rabbis of the Mishna who were engaged in the same task, a redefinition of Judaism, but in a very different way.

The presence of these groups in and around Banias may thus throw some light on the origins of the Gospel of Matthew, or at least of that dimension of the Gospel of Matthew that is not dependent on either Markan traditions or Q—the so-called “M” source. Jerome knew about a version of the Gospel of Matthew “in Hebrew letters” and “for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed.” This version, he says, could be found in the library at Caesarea [Maritima]. “From the Nazoraeans who use this book in Beroia, a city of Syria, I also received the opportunity to copy it.” Some New Testament scholars have noticed that the canonical Gospel of Matthew has a “northern Galilean/southern Syrian” point of view and have concluded that the community from which the gospel arose should be located “somewhere along the border region between lower Galilee and Syria.” Banias seems to be a likely candidate, both in terms of location, and theological milieu.

A Closing Note

Though coming to these conclusions by a different route, I was interested to discover resonant ideas in Anthony Saldarini’s Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community. He describes Matthew’s community as being “labeled deviant by the authorities and by many members of the Jewish community in its city or area;” he describes its goal as “to ensure the survival of the Jewish community without the Temple and its related political institutions.” He suggests that Matthew should be read alongside various contemporary apocalyptic works and the early strata of the Mishna. He locates the Matthean community “somewhere in Syria or Coele Syria in the later first century.” This community was “rejected by the larger Jewish community,” but “had enormous influence on the growing number of gentile believers-in-Jesus and the emerging Christian church.” Saldarini’s comments provide a remarkably consistent summary of my own suggestions as I have sketched them in this presentation.

34. Jerome, Liber de Viris Illustribus 3.
36. Saldarini, Matthew’s Jewish Christian Community, 1, 4, 26, 123.
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What something *seems* to be is not necessarily what it *is*. What something *is*, is a profoundly theological question, because it questions the authority of those who claim the power to define reality. Does this power rest with God—or with the idol(s)? This, I believe, is at the heart of Paul’s battle at Syrian Antioch as reflected in Gal 2:11–14. A radical strand of apocalyptic-messianic criticism confronts, from a minority position within Judaism but in the name of Jewish Torah, an established notion of Jewishness as idolatrous. The question raised is whether the public face of this “established Jewishness” has become a mask that hides something profoundly un-Jewish underneath, namely a play-acting of Jewish lawfulness that conceals its true conformity with the Roman imperial order and its God(s): an act of dissimulation—*hypokrinesthai* (Gal 2:13).

This is the option I want to explore in this paper: No matter what the “official version” of the break-up at Antioch was, as communicated by Paul’s antagonists, the *primary* reason for the revocation of the mixed table community of Jews and Gentiles in the capital of Roman Syria was not its heterodoxy with regard to Jewish purity law, at least in Paul’s opinion. The primary reason was that it had become or could have become a public offense—as much public as meals could be offensive within the civic setting of the Antiochene metropolis, according to Josephus (*B.J.* 1.425) the third biggest and wealthiest city of the world, and the headquarters of Roman power for the province of Syria.

We know from the work of Dennis Smith (2003) and Hal Taussig (2009) among others how much the meal setting was a space that reflected and reproduced, or challenged and transformed, social order. Yet the meal that brought Jews and “nations” (*ethnē*) together at the same table and made them “eat together” (*synēsthien*) in the name of Jesus the Messiah according to Gal 2:12 was lacking even the minimal requirements that signaled compliance with law and order: for example, those ritualized gestures of reverence towards god Caesar and any other of the established civic deities, like a libation for example. For this meal, according to Paul, was supposed to follow strictly monotheistic “table manners.”
Admittedly, this is not explicitly what he says in Gal 2:11–14. But if our presupposition is right, Paul is talking about politically highly sensitive matters that he could hardly discuss in a straightforward manner without encoding them to some extent—the presence of “spies” and “false brothers” mentioned in Gal 2:4 strongly supports this assumption of a “hidden transcript.” So we might have to read a bit “in between the lines.” If we thus piece the inter-texts, subtext, and text of Galatians together, what appears in large letters written over all of the letter is: NO OTHER GOD(S). Paul, for example, vehemently insists that the Galatian “tribes” (ethnē) are the real children of Abraham the anti-idolater, that they are derived from the One sperm of Abraham, which is able to beget Oneness of Jews and Greeks in Christ, against the law mediated by somebody who is not of the One, whereas God is One (3:16, 20, 28): Galatians 3–4 as the theological core of the letter is messianic monotheism all throughout.

Within a civic setting in the Roman East, this observance of an “irregular” and “unregulated” monotheism by non-Jews constitutes a complicated case, as already Bruce Winter in his groundbreaking reflections on Gal 6:11–18 before the background of “civic obligations” (1994) has shown, more recently followed by Thomas Witulski (2000 and 2007), Mark Nanos (2004), and Justin Hardin (2008). Jews, because of their (grudgingly) acknowledged monotheistic bias and obstinacy, are exempt, or partly exempt, from public and imperial religion. Non-Jews are not. If Jews and non-Jews are gathering for a meal in collective irreverence towards the established religious patterns, this is blasphemy, disrespect of the common good and the common gods, most notably the One singular God that every nation under Roman rule has in common, namely Caesar.2 It shows lack of civic patriotism, hatred of humanity, and most of all non-compliance with the basic rules of Roman peace, Roman order, and Roman law that were all encoded in “Roman religion.”3 These hybrid Jewish meals of uncircumcised non-Jews

1. Phenomena like informants and (internal) censorship that are linked to a variety of mechanisms of social control are a much underestimated aspect of Pauline hermeneutics so far. It may possibly account for some of the puzzlement surrounding Paul’s use of terms like “law” or “works.” Before this background, Paul’s use of biblical intertextuality, as explored in this paper, might be seen as a way of both revealing and concealing meaning. On “hidden transcripts,” see Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance, and Kahl, “Acts of the Apostles.”

2. On the “universal” nature of Roman state religion, see Ando, Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty, 390–92. As Ando states, Caesar was acknowledged as the “god of all mankind” because of his superhuman acts as a savior and benefactor of the whole human race (p. 390). Although Augustus co-existed with a broad polytheistic range of other gods and goddesses, he held the exclusive power to reveal “his divine nature to the whole world at once, and thus endowed the Roman empire with its only universally shared deity” (p. 392). On the de-facto role of imperial religion as a “world religion” and (though operating within an entirely polytheistic framework) a “functional imperial monotheism” that clashed with Paul’s Jewish-messianic monotheism, see Kahl, Galatians Re-Imagined, 139–44, 164–67.

3. I prefer the term “Roman religion” to the much narrower “imperial cult.” Based on the groundbreaking work of Price, Rituals and Power, and Mitchell, Anatolia, the debate on the role of imperial religion within the framework of Asia Minor, including the Roman province of Galatia at Paul’s time, has been recently re-opened (e.g., Friesen, Imperial Cults and the
might have easily appeared as a frivolous mockery of the “august” taxonomy and ordering principles that were applicable to the nations under Roman rule. They simply rendered to Jesus what belonged to Caesar: for example, the glory, worship, and power as the sole Lord of the cosmos and the ruler of the nations. The Jews might to some extent belong to their own God. The nations/Gentiles belonged to god Caesar alone.4

That Jews and nations/Gentiles eat together at Jewish terms might therefore have been seen as utterly intolerable and dangerous. The additional fact that they ate together in order to commemorate a lawfully executed Jewish insurgent as resurrected messiah probably aggrivated the situation, especially as Caesar claimed the same titles of worldwide Lord, savior, and (son of) God that were now used in this dubious new Christ-cult. It is possible that Christ-following Jews themselves like James, who were observing the developments at Antioch from the outside, were the first who saw that “performing” the collective non-allegiance of both Jews and other nations to god Caesar in a (semi-)public meal setting was inevitably going to draw more attention than one would wish within a civic provincial setting under Rome’s watchful gaze. It might, for example, endanger the always precarious outsider/insider status of the broader Jewish community within the polis, as Mark Nanos has very convincingly shown.5

From a pragmatic standpoint, a less conspicuous public existence for Jews and non-Jews than “eating together “in Christ (synæsthien; Gal 2:12) was thus highly advisable. So why then, for example, should not both groups go back into their own traditional meal settings to stay out of trouble, and still continue being together as followers of Jesus the Messiah? The non-Jews would just need to make a few relatively insignificant accommodations and good-will gestures towards civic and imperial religion: for example, observing the imperial calendar with some of its basic holidays, public celebrations, and built-in acts of worship to Caesar (Gal 4:8–10).6 The Jews had never minded such petty idolatry among their sympathizers who were not fully proselyte. The only alternative

Apocalypse of John; Harland, Associations, Synagogues and Congregations; Witulski, Kaiserkult in Kleinasien; Hardin, Galatians and the Imperial Cult). It has been stated that “emperor worship” was not an isolated cultic act but pervaded the entire social fabric and played a much more significant and all-comprising role in civic life than is traditionally assumed. This enables us to fundamentally re-think the role and identity of Paul’s “opponents” in Roman Galatia or Syrian Antioch, shifting from an exclusively Jewish frame of reference to a much more complex triangular interaction between Rome, Jews, and Galatians (or Syrians).

4. For an innovative and in-depth exploration of the complex relationship between Jews and Gentiles/nations within the framework of Roman imperial order and of Paul’s transformative intervention, see Lopez, Apostle to the Conquered.


6. For a “Roman” interpretation of this much debated passage (Gal 4:8–10) that only in a somewhat forced manner could be read as targeting a “Jewish calendar,” see Mitchell, Anatolia, 2.10; Witherington, Grace in Galatia, 298; Witulski, Kaiserkult in Kleinasien, 151–52; Hardin, Galatians and the Imperial Cult, 16.
would be that these non-Jews indeed became full Jews, that is, circumcised, in order to be covered by the (relative) exemption status of the Jews, and then legally eat together with Jews on fully Jewish terms. Both options would “normalize” the civic standing and appearance of Paul’s messianic Galatians within the existing social taxonomy. 7 Paul, however, rejected the first one as vehemently as he rejected the second one of these two different strategies to “accommodate” to outside pressure.

Within the limited space of this presentation, I am not going to further pursue the historical plausibility of this reading model for the Antiochene conflict that I have explored in much more detail elsewhere. 8 Rather, I want to deal with its textual and inter-textual evidence. I believe that we can exegete the notoriously difficult passage of Gal 2:11–14 much more convincingly and consistently if we contend that Paul is blaming Peter, Barnabas, and the Antiochene Jews not of a Jewish apostasy opposed to a Christian way of life, but of an idolatrous, profoundly un-Jewish apostasy towards an imperial way of life.

The exegetical trouble-spot of the whole passage is the first sentence of Paul’s rebuke of Peter in 2:14: “If you as a Jew live in a Gentile-like [ethnikōs] manner, and not like a Jew, why do you force the Gentiles to Judaize?” What does ethnikōs mean in this context? If we turn to Hans Dieter Betz’s commentary, for example, ethnikōs is not an accusation, but an affirmation of what Peter has done when he gave up his Jewishness in order to eat with the Gentiles. Paul reminds Peter and the other Jewish Christians that they (I quote and summarize Betz) had achieved “total emancipation from Judaism” and that one can “as a Christian be saved without the Torah.” 9 Peter’s ethnikōs zēs thus would mean to live like a Christian as opposed to a Jewish way of life (= not like a Jew). And because Peter himself no longer lives like a Jew but as a Christian, he should not force Gentiles to “Judaize,” no matter what exactly this is supposed to mean.

This reading paradigm is highly problematic, not only because it turns Antioch into the birthplace of a Christianity that from the outset is defined in antithesis to Judaism. It also is rhetorically (and grammatically) inconsistent and fits the flow of the text like a strait-jacket. Within the overall rhetorical construct of 2:11–14, when Paul arrives at verse 14 he has built up a highly charged atmosphere. Step by step Peter’s wrongdoing has been exposed: I opposed him to his face; he stood self-condemned; he drew back—for fear of the circumcised ones; he led others astray in a collective hypocrisy, all the other Jews, and even Barnabas! He was

7. On “normalization” as the core of the Galatian crisis, see Winter, Seek the Welfare of the City, in which he perceives the circumcision of the Galatians as an “evasive action” (p. 140) and a matter of “self-preservation” (p. 141) caused by external pressure with regard to the imperial cult. For a discussion of this thesis, see Hardin, Galatians and the Imperial Cult, 111–14. Already Barclay, Obeying the Truth, 58–59, had assumed that the main problem was “social dislocation” and a precarious social identity on the part of the Galatians who had turned away from their previous religious observances and social affiliations.
not walking in accordance with the truth of the gospel. Therefore I told him . . . : at this point, where Paul enters into his direct speech, one is poised for a sharp rhetorical climax that discloses what this is all about and why it is so intolerable what Peter does. Yet if we follow Betz and the mainstream of commentaries, Paul all of a sudden becomes exceedingly polite, diplomatic, and pussy-footed. Out of the blue he seems to have decided to drop the issue altogether. Instead, he gives Peter a limp and very strangely worded applause for being a good Christian, at least in general, who lives ἔθνη καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαίος, namely, in community with the Gentiles, unlike the Jews.

This is not very plausible. If we take the coherence of the text in any way seriously, Paul has to talk about the concrete failure of Peter, not his overall achievement as a Christian. ἔθνη should thus have a negative connotation.

ἔθνη, in fact, does have a negative connotation in every single one of its four other New Testament occurrences. The term—three times in Matthew (5:4; 6:7; 18:17) and once in 3 John 1:7—clearly signifies the out-group, the non-brothers of the ἐκκλησία. In Matt 5:47 it refers to “ordinary” decent behavior practiced even by tax collectors and ἔθνοι: loving those who love you, and greet only your brothers—whereas Jesus requires extraordinary gestures of inclusion towards the “others,” even enemies. ἔθνη as in-group versus out-group discrimination that does not comply with the radical messianic inclusion of Jew and Gentile, self and other: this indeed would fit into Paul’s diatribe against Peter at Antioch quite well.

So what might ἔθνη καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαίος ᾧς in Gal 2:14 then mean? Exactly what it says: Peter right now lives like a Gentile, not like a Jew. And this is not a compliment in this case, but a severe criticism, especially if we look at the next verse: We are by nature Jews and not sinners from the Gentiles (Gal 2:15). So the most natural interpretation of 2:14 would be, with great inbuilt rhetorical momentum: You, Peter, have made a big public show of being a Jew, but in fact I, Paul, tell you, you live like a Gentile sinner, a goy: ἔθνης. And as a Jew, as you and I know, you should not. You should live Ιουδαιός, not ἔθνης.

This is a small thing to say. The interpretational implications are huge, however, and challenge the whole occidental reading paradigm of Galatians and of Pauline “Christianity” (which, as we know, is never called Christianity by Paul himself, rather seen as the mystical, apocalyptic community and diversity of Jews and Gentiles/nations “in Christ”). Paul in our reading does not criticize Peter from a Christian perspective because of a Judaizing apostasy. Rather, he criticizes him from a Jewish viewpoint of a Gentilizing apostasy. Can this assumption be substantiated?

From a Jewish point of view, the core of Gentile sin and Jewish apostasy is idolatry, the violation of the first and second commandments (Exod 20:1–5). Peter’s withdrawal from the common table thus would not be what it seems to be, namely, a somewhat justifiable re-alignment with a Jewish identity construct in accordance with Torah. In a situation where everything is over-determined
and colonized by civic religion and most of all imperial religion, nothing, not even Jewish law, Jewish identity, and the Jewish God can escape the omnipresent grip of the Roman empire and its idols: Sin, in Paul’s terminology.\textsuperscript{10} Suppose Peter’s separation from the nations, blamelessly Jewish as it appears, is truly driven by fear of reprisals and an urge to demonstrate at least minimal conformity within the framework of Roman order and Roman religion. He urges the non-Jews to “normalize” their religious affiliation by either becoming fully Jewish (i.e., circumcised = “Judaized,” see 2:14; 5:2–3; 6:11–12) or performing some of the rituals showing allegiance to god Caesar that are required from non-Jews (4:8–10).\textsuperscript{11} According to Paul, both are a betrayal of the One Jewish God who now has called both Jews and non-Jews away from worship and servitude to idols, and in particular away from the supreme idol, god Caesar, who falsely claims to be the ruler and god of the nations of the world (cf. 4:9).\textsuperscript{12} What Peter does is “bowing down and service” to this other god by admitting him as ruler of the nations/Gentiles. He misuses God’s name and law to justify what in fact is idolatry. All of these would be clear transgressions of the first, second, and third commandments (Exod 20:1–7). I believe this is exactly what Paul wants to say.

From an intertextual point of view, the whole passage of Gal 2:11–14—and in fact Galatians as a whole—is steeped in the big Deuteronomic and Maccabean antithesis of God versus idol(s). In the framework of traditional readings of Galatians and of Paul, this profoundly Jewish prophetic zeal seems so counter-intuitive that it has been rarely noticed, exceptions like the important study by Roy Ciampa (2001) notwithstanding. I just want to briefly list the most obvious of these intertextual echoes:\textsuperscript{13}

10. This is a dilemma that might be hinted at in the highly cryptic statement in 3:20 about the “mediator” who does not represent the One (henos ouk estin) and who is put in stark contrast to the true God as One (heis estin). Does this enigmatic “mediator” point to the way Torah has been “hijacked” by Caesar and the imperial order? For an insightful historical exploration of “imperial patronage of the Torah” and the de facto symbiosis, as well as tension between Jewish Torah and the power interests of Israel’s colonial overlords from the Persian to the Roman empire, see Schwartz, \textit{Imperialism and Jewish Society}, 20–21.

11. The “exemption status” of the Jews and the boundaries between imperial religion and Jewish observance, however, were probably less rigid and clear-cut than we might assume both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, see Bernett, “Der Kaiserkult in Judäa,” and Hardin, \textit{Galatians and the Imperial Cult}, 102–10.

12. Fredriksen, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth}, 132–33, has shown that Paul’s inclusion of the Gentiles into the community of Abraham’s children, without however allowing them to be circumcised, was informed by Paul’s apocalyptic Jewish framework that anticipated an end-time pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem, where they would abandon their idolatry (Isa 2:2–3; Zeph 3:9). Yet only if they stay “nations” (i.e., uncircumcised) could they testify that these events have indeed started. Fredriksen also points to the highly anomalous social status that is created for the non-Jewish Christ-followers through this “inclusion without conversion,” see Fredriksen, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth}, 135.

13. All of the following intertextual connections have been thoroughly researched by Ciampa, \textit{Presence and Function of Scripture}, 157–78. For the Maccabean background in particular, see also Cummins, \textit{Paul and the Crucified Christ}.
1. *Anthistanai kata prosōpon*: When Cephas came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face (2:11). This is the beginning of the Antiochene section. *Anthistanai kata prosōpon* has no other New Testament occurrences, but is found eight times in the Septuagint, mostly in Deuteronomy. Every one of these occurrences deals with a conflict within the framework of the first commandment where allegiance to God or allegiance to the idols is at stake (Deut 7:24; 9:2; 9:12; 11:25; Judg 2:14; 2 Chr 13:7–8). Most explicit with regard to the imperial connotation is Jdt 6:4, where a power struggle between Israel’s God, acting through Judith, and the “godlike” king and emperor is staged who pretends that no other god is like him—but Judith successfully, as it turns out, “opposes him to his face.”

2. Fear (*phoboumenos*) versus faith: One of the most persistent problems in all these instances is “fear” of the Gentile “superpower” that makes it hard to trust/have faith in God. The other nations are much bigger than Israel, huge in fact, and their kings/emperors have all the power in the world. Participation in their religion and way of life seems much more realistic than *anthistanai kata prosōpon/stand up against*. This perfectly matches Gal 2:12, where Paul accuses Peter that he withdraws and separates himself out of fear (*phoboumenos*). Fear in general seems a powerful force driving the efforts of the circumcision proponents in Galatia who, according to Paul, are not really motivated by their Torah-obedience, but rather want to avoid “persecution” and thus try to make a “good showing in the flesh” (6:12–13, referring to the circumcised and “normalized” appearance of the Galatians).14

3. *Hypostellō/withdraw* exactly fits into this pattern. The verb is rare in the Septuagint and New Testament and we may focus on its most prominent citation in Hab 2:4, which is of key importance for Paul’s justification theology. Both in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11 the first half of the Habakkuk verse is explicitly quoted: “the righteous one will live out of faith.” Only in Heb 10:38–39 is a full quotation of the statement in Hab 2:3–4 given: The righteous and faithful one is opposed to the one who withdraws (*hypostellō/hypostolē*). The context of Hebrews makes it more than clear that this “withdrawal” means an effort to escape public disapproval, conflict, persecution, and abuse (Heb 10:32–36). This is a strong clue that in the background of Peter’s and Paul’s Antiochene controversy issues of public (non-)conformity and accommodation are playing out.

4. *Hypocrisis*: *Hypokrinesthai* means play-acting, role playing, deceptive identity games, pretending to be something while truly being something different. Two times Paul uses this term in 2:13 for what Peter has done at Antioch:

14. For this crucial passage that in a way “decodes” the whole circumcision debate and what is at stake in it, see Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult*, 85–115, and Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, 137–40, in which he in particular points to the legal connotations of *euprosōpēsai* in Gal 6:12. It should be noted that *euprosōpēsai* as showing a “good face” (or one that is publicly acceptable) is closely linked to another term Paul uses in 2:11–14, namely *hypokrinesthai*, “to play a role, feign” (see below). Both times these acts of public self-presentation are driven by “fear.”
collective hypocrisy (*synhypekrithēsan*) that even led Barnabas astray and made him a co-hypocrite (*synapēchthē autōn tē hypokrisei*). This term speaks in quite plain language about Peter’s table separation being something else than what it pretends to be. In the gospels it is especially Matthew who talks about hypocrisy. In the Sermon on the Mount, like in Galatians 2, the practice of the hypocrites and the *ethnikoi* are somewhat linked (cf. Matt 6:2, 5, 7, 16). Furthermore, hypocrites are those who are primarily concerned about the public appearance of what they do. They most of all want to be “seen” and “honored” (Matt 6:2, 5, 16), which by implication means that it is their own social status and standing rather than the fulfillment of the law and their relationship to the “Father” that truly matters to them (cf. Matt 6:3–4, 6, 17–18). In the story about tax-paying in Matt 22:15–22, the hypocrites quote the law of God in the affirmative by faking respect for Jesus’ teaching of the “way of God” (Matt 22:16). But what they really are concerned about is to trick Jesus into revealing himself as a rebel against Caesar’s law (Matt 22:15).

This use of “hypocrisy” that consistently points to the hybridity of Torah under Roman colonial rule fits exactly with what we have found so far as Paul’s accusation against Peter: not that he keeps Jewish Law, but that he makes it a public show in order to demonstrate his conformity with the norms and codes of the Gentiles, which are the norms and codes ultimately controlled by the emperor. As in Matthew, the real alternative is not Torah or Torah-free, but proper or improper Torah observance before the backdrop of an all-pervasive and multi-layered context of foreign domination that is both attractive as its lures subjects into conformity and threatening for those who are non-compliant.

This use of hypocrisy is finally confirmed by another famous text in 2 Maccabees 6. During the persecution under Antiochus IV, an old and dignified Jew called Eleazar is being forced to eat pork in order to publicly demonstrate his submission to the king’s orders and his god(s). Eleazar refuses this apostasy from Judaism and subsequently has to face torture and execution. Interestingly, a trick that is called *hypocrisy* could have saved his life. Well-meaning prosecutors offer him secretly a chance to survive by allowing him to eat his own kosher meat, if he pretends that it is pork. Both the requirements of Jewish purity/food laws and the public obedience to the king’s law could thus be nicely reconciled. But Eleazar strictly rejects this *hypocrisy*—the noun and verb occur three times in the narrative (2 Macc 6:21, 24, 25) He does not want to mislead the young

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15. In light of Matthew’s potential origin in Syrian Antioch, it is interesting to note that these two terms (*ethnikos* and *hypokrisis*), which are somewhat focal for Paul’s Antiochene report, play such a prominent role in the gospel as well—of the eighteen New Testament occurrences of the term *hypokritos*, no less than fourteen belong to Matthew; of the five occurrences of *ethnikos* (adjective and adverb), as already stated, three are in Matthew.

16. For *ethnikos* as a term pointing to a Roman imperial framework, see Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles.”
people into apostasy from the Law through his hypocrisy (2 Macc 6:24–25), in other words, he does not want to propagate an *ethnikos* way of life.17

It is striking how many lexical and structural features the conflict around Peter at Antioch and Eleazar in Maccabees have in common: the polarity of Jews versus Gentiles, the problem of eating and food laws, of proper Jewish living versus false and fearful accommodation to outside pressure, the issue of misleading others, and of hypocrisy understood in terms of dissimulation and apostasy towards the Gentiles and their idols. All the examples of hypocrisy we have quoted so far confirm that the “real” issue at Antioch indeed might have been idolatry as submitting oneself to the claims of a foreign power and the god(s) it imposes. One could, as in the case of the escape route proposed to Eleazar, well stick to the letter and the smaller things of Jewish law (like table separation and food/purity laws), while neglecting the larger problem: giving in to conformity with imperial law and imperial religion—the other gods.18

5. Judaize/judaizein: “If you as a Jew live in a Gentilish manner (*ethnik*ōs) and not like a Jew (*Ioudaikōs*), why do you force the Gentiles to Judaize (*ioudaizein*)?” (Gal 2:14). This last term of the Antiochene passage strongly supports what we have found so far. It is a *hapax legomenon* within the body of New Testament literature, and it occurs only one time in the Septuagint, namely in Esth 8:17, where it translates the *hitpael* of the Hebrew *jhd*. Interestingly, the Septuagint interpreter rendered this Hebrew term by two Greek verbs: “. . . and many of the Gentiles got circumcised and Judaized (*perietemonto kai ioudaizon*) because of fear of the Jews” (Esth 8:17 LXX). This appears as the perfect intertextual decoding of the Antiochene situation, where Peter’s enforced “Judaizing” of the Gentiles has “fear of the circumcised” as its motive (Gal 2:12). In Esth 8:17 LXX, the narrative of the Jewish heroine has arrived at a stage where for a brief moment the Persian empire aligns itself with the Jews. For the Gentiles under Persian rule, in this very specific situation a “conversion” to Judaism in terms of circumcision becomes a matter of opportunism and civic prudence. It might be that Paul uses this episode as an intertextual mirror to illuminate the situation in Antioch, where he sees that Judaism and “Judaizing” are driven by god Caesar and his law, not by fear of the God of Israel and Torah.

The textual and inter-textual evidence that something else is going on at Antioch other than what *seems* to be going on (and what we have read all the time) is extraordinarily thick and consistent. Paul then would not be urging Peter and other Jews to walk *out of* Judaism but to walk properly *within* Judaism, offering a kind of “messianic halakha:” *orthopodein=walk properly or righteously*

17. The term substituting for *ethnikos* in 2 Macc 6:24 is *allophylismos*, i.e., “foreignism.”

18. Interestingly, a re-negotiation of “core” and “periphery” with regard to Torah-observance is at the center of Matthew’s criticism against the Pharisees as “hypocrites” in Matthew 23 (e.g., 23:23–28). A severe imbalance not only between essence and appearance, but also between the “small things” and the “weightier matters of the law,” is stated.
(Gal 2:14) is another New Testament *hapax legomenon*, with no other occurrence either in the Septuagint or other early Jewish literature, that strongly defines the text of 2:11–14. Paul thus would be engaged in a *halakhic* dispute with Peter. The framework of this dispute is not simply Jewish “work righteousness” versus “Christian faith righteousness” (as in the traditional Protestant paradigm), nor an all-too-narrow Jewish “ethnocentrism” *per se* that is opposed by Pauline inclusiveness (as in the “New Perspective”). Rather, the question is how in the age of a universal and unifying imperial world religion that claims allegiance by both Jews and non-Jews/nations alike, the *Oneness* and singularity of the One God of Israel can be adequately represented. How might God as the creator of the world and ruler of the nations be properly reflected in theological statements and social practices that embody this other faith and non-compliant allegiance: the “law of Christ” rather than the “law of Caesar” (cf. 6:2).

It might be that the table community of Jews and Gentiles at Antioch for Paul embodied precisely this new messianic order of all the nations together pledging their allegiance to the One God of Israel in the way envisioned by prophets like Isaiah (e.g., 2:2–3): symbolizing the new messianic creation (cf. 6:15) as the collective exodus of circumcised and uncircumcised nations out of Caesar’s world order and away from its false god(s). This act of *inter-national* “civil disobedience” and non-conformity with the universal imperial idol of god Caesar for Paul was as truly enabled by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah as it was truly based on Torah. His opponents, however, saw it as a violation of Torah that had set Israel apart from the nations/Gentiles. They probably claimed holiness codes, purity laws, and food regulations (e.g., Lev 20:22–26) to make their case and return to a more “orderly” (i.e., separate) and “lawful” mode of existence. These, however, were “lawful works” in the eyes of Caesar, not of God, as Paul would have countered.

To conclude: If this was true—if Paul criticizes Peter and Barnabas not because of their Torah-observance but their Torah-disobedience—then we would have to re-think who Paul was and what was going on in his communities. The apostle’s signature theology of justification by faith and apart from “works of the law,” outlined as the climax and conclusion of the Antiochene section in the immediately following verses 2:15–21, appears in a new light. The “Antiochene incident” has been rightly seen as a formative event in the

19. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function*, 169. I disagree with Ciampa, however, when he asserts that Paul simply replaces “Jewish law” by “Christian gospel” as the supreme criterion of this *halakha* (pp. 170–71). The dispute in my opinion is rather about how Jewish Torah can be properly followed in a situation where Jewish Law is over-determined by Roman law and religion. On this, see also Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 56.


21. For a comprehensive re-evaluation of Paul’s justification by faith within a context of Roman “work-righteousness” and “boasting,” i.e., with regard to euergetism and patronage, as well as the codes of honor and shame, see Robert Jewett, *Romans*. With regard to Galatians, see Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*. 
earliest history of emerging Christianity, yet the way it has been perceived has entangled the Christian “self” in highly problematic constructs of Otherness—faith versus works, law rightousness versus grace, gospel versus Torah, particularism versus universalism—that all lead back to the root binary of Judaism versus Christianity. To understand that the conflict between Peter and Paul was as much about Jewish Torah as it was about Roman nomos, or maybe even more about Roman nomos than Jewish Torah, opens up a new dimension of seeing the Jesus-movement of the first century and its real-life challenges in a much more complex and nuanced way.

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Locating the *Didache*

Clayton N. Jefford

**Introduction**

The process of recreating the origin of any ancient document, even when it contains information that immediately identifies its author, date, and location, is tenuous at best. When data is present, we can only assume that it is accurate. When external sources offer additional comment, we suppose that they tender details without bias. Otherwise, scholars may freely construct their best and most informed academic arguments in support of one position or another, but the resulting conjecture is simply a best guess conviction. At worst, and it seems that this is exactly the situation in which historians of early Christian literature often work, there is limited vision. We are like the blind who stumble in the dark, believing that we must certainly be on the right path, even more reinforced in our confidence by our companions who link hands with us and agree. We trust that our friends glimpse a little more of the truth that do we ourselves, but other groups of the stumbling blind cry out for us to proceed in different directions, which disturbs us. Ultimately, the validity of our case confirms itself by the fact that we have a majority of votes and the loudest voices and the most to lose if we change our opinion.

This is our situation with respect to the *Didache*. Furthermore, here we have a text with no valid claim for authorship, date, or location and little other useful data from external sources. After almost a hundred and fifty years of study, most scholars retain only a hazy conviction as to the circumstances of the composition of the writing, being primarily dependent on the views of other researchers.

In the paper that follows I offer a brief survey of the typical information that scholarly claims employ as a foundation for the provenance and date of the *Didache*, the current condition of where scholarship stands on the issue, and my own position on its origins. I acknowledge that I am largely convinced of my views, yet am aware that they could easily collapse like a house of cards when confronted with sufficient breeze.

**Typical Data**

**Internal claims**

The *Didache* offers no specific claim to authorship, date, or provenance apart from its titles, whose association with the original document are highly
suspect. Neither the shorter title ("A Teaching of the Twelve Apostles") nor the longer title ("A Teaching of the Lord to the Nations by the Twelve Apostles") is likely provided as a marker of identification for the text itself but, instead, for the validity of the teaching that stands behind it.

Scholars sometimes assert that the reference to "as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains . . ." in 9.4a indicates a provenance filled with either hills or mountains, while the prayers of 10.4 likely derive from Syria-Palestine. Other scholars argue that the use of the unique liturgical term "broken bread" (klasma) in this same passage or the instruction to use warm, standing water in baptism when cold, running water is absent (7.2) support yet another setting for the final draft of the text. Nothing else in the text specifically supports either conclusion.

In the final analysis there is little contained within the writing itself that offers help in locating the text. We are thus largely dependent on external witnesses and secondary sources for our reconstructions of provenance and authorship.

External Evidence
There is somewhat more within the historical tradition to indicate the degree to which early Christians employed the Didache. With respect to manuscripts, a Greek fragment containing 1.3b–4a and 2.7b–3.2a from Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. 1782) and a Coptic rendering of 10.3b–12.1a (Br.Mus.Or. 9271) survive from the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries respectively. A Latin translation of the two ways materials that now form chapters 1–5, known as the Doctrina apostolorum, may derive from the third century. Unfortunately, we currently have only a single manuscript for the whole of the text, written in Greek and covering the materials of 1.1–16.8 (Codex Hierosolymitanus 54), which comes from the eleventh century. Even this text may be missing its conclusion.

Several other textual witnesses refer to the Didache or employ its teachings. Clement of Alexandria, for example, may have incorporated either the text or its sources into his various writings during the third century. Some short time

1. See Jefford, Didache, 19. In fact, the longer title appears as part of the first line of text in our only "complete" version of the Didache known to date.
5. Niederwimmer, The Didache, 9 n. 49 considers use of this Latin text by Ps.-Cyprian, De aleat. 4 (ca. ce 300), mixing materials from Did. 14.2 and 15.3, to be proof of the existence of the entire Didache in the Latin Doctrinae apostolorum.
6. See the reconstruction of Garrow, Matthew's Dependence, xxxiii.
7. Niederwimmer, The Didache, 4–29 gives an extensive survey from which I draw the present material.
8. See, e.g., Strom. 1.20.100.4; 3.4.36.5; 5.5.31.1; Protr. 10.108.5; Paed. 2.10.89.1; Quis dives salv. 29.4.
later in the fourth century, Eusebius records the Didache among the “spurious” (notha) literature of Christian antiquity, and Athanasius of Alexandria does not list it as canonical, “but recommended reading.”9 Around this same period, however, Pseudo-Cyprian actually identifies a passage from Did. 6.2 as scripture (et alio in loco scriptura) when he discusses the commandments of the Lord.10 So too, another fourth-century text, the Syrian Liber graduum, appears to play on Did. 8.1 and/or 8.3 in its comments on fasting and prayer, again citing this material as “scripture for the just” (sicut iustis scriptum est).11

Numerous other authors have incorporated larger portions of the Didache into their works. Most significant among these are the third-century Didascalia apostolorum from Syria and the early fourth-century Apostolic Church Order 4–13 from Egypt, the latter of which incorporates the two ways material of Did. 1.1–4.8 (minus 1.3b–2.1). In addition, the fourth-century text of Apostolic Constitutions 7, which may derive from either Syria or Asia Minor, and the Ethiopic Church Order, which incorporates Did. 11.3–13.7 and 8.1–2, show broad awareness and employment of the Didache within early Christian liturgical and ecclesiastical settings.

What we may conclude from this broad spectrum of usages is debatable. On the one hand, we see that developing Christian traditions in Syria and Egypt were incorporating either the text of the Didache or its traditions throughout the third and fourth centuries. The text appears in a variety of languages, including Latin, Greek, Coptic, Syriac, and Ethiopic, suggesting that it held broad appeal within a variety of Christian cultures. It was valued both for liturgical and instructional purposes.

Unfortunately, this tells us almost nothing about the original provenance of the Didache, except that its likely source was probably somewhere in the eastern end of the Mediterranean basin, from Egypt to Asia Minor. This conclusion ignores, of course, that many of our preserved manuscripts naturally come from the efforts of the ancient Egyptian Christian community, a hospitable environment for the preservation of documents and traditions in general, regardless of their origin. Outside of Egypt in more inhospitable environments, it is undoubtedly true that many original documents disappeared through either neglect or the elements. In addition, our conclusion ignores the reality that, simply because people in a particular location used a text, this does not necessarily mean that it originated there. Nonetheless, scholars have not typically sought to place the Didache elsewhere within the Mediterranean world.

9. H.E. 3.25.4 and Festal Letter 39 (dated CE 367) respectively. It is possible that each writer refers only to the two ways portion of the tradition here, but this is under debate.  
10. De centesima sexagesima, tricesima.  
11. Liber graduum 7.20.
Elements and Traditions within
Any attempt to discern the elements and traditions that lie within the Didache as a means by which to locate the text is an especially tricky business. I offer this comment with the recognition that the Didache, while brief, includes a variety of relatively distinctive features couched among an assortment of possible, familiar sources. The nature of these features is much too complex a topic to present in its entirety here. Hence, I will offer only a quick survey of considerations for the moment, addressing some of them in more detail later.

1. Structure: Most scholars agree that the sixteen chapters of the Didache may be divided by structure into several different primary units: an opening two ways segment (1–5); a transitional ending to the two ways (6); a broad assortment of liturgical and ecclesiastical instructions (7–15); and a concluding apocalypse (16). Researchers generally admit that the two ways segment contains a secondary insertion at 1.3b–2.1 that reveals knowledge of gospel texts not otherwise reflected within the Didache. Chapter 6 is comparable to the essential ruling of the so-called apostolic decree of Acts 15 and, while it stands as a transitional ending to the two ways segment in its current setting, no corresponding text appears at the end of the Latin Doctrina apostolorum or the roughly equivalent materials of Barnabas 18–20, perhaps contrary to expectation.

This division of the Didache into structural segments demands a consideration of how the editor (or Didachist) incorporated various sources into the composition framework of the text, as well as the tradition history of those sources. Further, it remains unclear whether a single person redacted those sources or, instead, a series of editors worked, perhaps in successive stages, to compile the text as we now have it. Finally, there is some question concerning the purpose for which the Didache was originally fashioned in whatever form and whether that purpose as envisioned by the first compiler, the Didachist, is essentially the same as the final function of the text as envisioned by subsequent editors.12

Distinctive elements: The following fundamentals represent numerous key items within the Didache that have typically given historians pause about the nature of the text. This list is merely representative, not exhaustive.

(a) Second person language: The Didache directs its instructions to the reader by use of both second- and third-person pronouns and verbal forms. With respect to second-person usages, however, the text alternates between singular and plural constructions, with the plural appearing at 1.3, 4.11, 8.1–13.1, 13.4, and 14.1–16.2.13 To the best of my knowledge, J.-P. Audet was the first scholar to

12. The concept of an “evolved” text has become a common assumption among contemporary scholars, though it meets with stiff resistance in the commentary of Milavec, The Didache, who argues that the Didachist envisioned the work as a unified production.

recognize any significance to this variation and proposed a hypothesis of redactional layers behind the text that reflected this usage.\textsuperscript{14} His opinion greatly influenced subsequent views about the formation of the \textit{Didache}, though researchers have not uniformly accepted his conclusions.\textsuperscript{15} Regardless, there is some reason to believe that the Didachist has incorporated sources into the construction of the writing as suggested, at least in part, by this inconsistent use of second-person pronouns and verbal forms.

(b) Exceptions: Scholars generally recognize that there is a strong proclivity toward Judaic views behind the instructions of the \textit{Didache}. This appears in the nature of the two ways instruction, which focuses on the Decalogue and use of wisdom rhetoric such as the phrase “my child . . .” (six times in chapters 3–4), in the insistence that food sacrificed to idols be avoided (chapter 6), in the use of typical Jewish baptismal directions and prayer formulations (chapters 7, 9–10), and in the broad omission of high Christological formulae. At the same time, however, the Didachist has made allowances for those who are unable to keep specific teachings. Thus, in 6.2 we read, “For if you can bear the Lord’s whole yoke, you shall be complete. But if you are unable, do what you can.” In addition, having been told that baptism must be performed with cold running water, in 7.2 we read, “But if you have no running water, baptize in other water; and if unable in cold, then in warm.” To many scholars these exceptions suggest either that the Didachist has relaxed the strictures of ancient Jewish-Christian faith on behalf of non-Jewish believers or that a secondary editor has loosened the text’s original constraints.

(c) The Apostolic Decree: \textit{Didache} 6 marks a transition from the two ways segment of chapters 1–5 to the more liturgical and ecclesiastical directions of chapters 6–15. The final verse here (6.3) offers a prohibition about food that parallels the so-called apostolic decree of Acts 15: “and concerning food, endure what you can, but certainly beware of meat sacrificed to idols, for it signifies worship of dead gods.” If we can accept the general context for the construction of this decree as known from Acts, then it seems likely that the declaration held primary importance both for the churches in Jerusalem and in Antioch, the document’s origin and destination. Although certainly known elsewhere among early churches, the Didachist’s inclusion of this prohibition may suggest some additional connection to either (or both) of these communities.

(d) Confessional language: While the general nature of the \textit{Didache} is somewhat formulaic in a liturgical sense, this is not true with respect to confessional formulae. Thus as indicated above, the text contains almost no specific Christological phrasing such as one finds in the New Testament, with the singular use of the phrase “Jesus Christ” (9.4) that appears within the context

\textsuperscript{14} Audet, \textit{La Didachè}, 187–210.
\textsuperscript{15} Niederwimmer likewise envisions the use of sources, but sees them as primarily incorporated at a set moment of history. See Niederwimmer, “Der Didachist,” 15–36.
of a prayer. Instead, the Didachist prefers to use terms such as “God” (eleven times), “Lord” (twenty-one times—with an additional plural reference to “masters” and the possessive “belonging to the Lord” [kuriakos]), “Father” (five times—four of which appear in the prayers of chapters 9–10), and “spirit” (five times—four of which appear in the discussion of prophets who are “in the spirit” in chapter 11). Otherwise, the name of Jesus appears three more times within the prayers of chapters 9–10 as part of the phrase “Jesus your servant” (9.2, 3; 10.2), thus indicating that the entreaties themselves are directed toward God as Father. There is no specific indication from the use of these particular terms or phrases that the Didachist is necessarily confessing any particular theology that exceeds the lowest expectations of a messianic Jew. Subsequently, many scholars (though not all) have argued that the Christology of the text is extremely low.

The intriguing exception to this general lack of confessional formulae is the specific instruction to baptize “in the name of (the) Father and (the) Son and (the) Holy Spirit” (7.1, 3). This usage is liturgically specific, since it applies to the act of baptism alone and may thus have entered the text through a particular source tradition. The explicit citation of the Trinitarian formula is itself rare within the New Testament, appearing only at Matt 28:19 (again within the context of baptism).16

The existence of the Trinitarian formula in the Didache begs the question of the relationship of the text, or at least this particular baptismal tradition, to the Gospel of Matthew. Further, the data presses us to explain why a text that is otherwise deficient in terms of confessional language should here employ such an advanced theological formula.

(e) The “hypocrites”: In 8.1–2 the Didache warns its readers not to fast alongside the “hypocrites.” This term is occasionally used by Jesus in the New Testament gospels, primarily for those who endorse a specific religious tradition (typically the Pharisees), yet who do not scrupulously adhere to it themselves. The Didache applies the term in a similar manner to those who fast and pray inappropriately, offering some parallel to hypocrites in the synagogue as specified in the triptych on alms—fasting—prayer that appears in Matt 6:1–18. Unlike the context of Jesus and the Pharisees in the gospels, however, the Didachist, writing for a time after the ministry of Jesus, does not identify or describe these hypocrites specifically. This leaves some question concerning the referent to which the term applies, that is, either to the Pharisees still or, instead, to some other Jewish or Jewish-Christian group. The matter, though widely investigated, remains unresolved.

(f) The “gospel”: A perennial focus of scholarly discussion is the Didachist’s incorporation of the term “gospel” four times within the text. These usages are

16. The phrase “the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit” that appears in some manuscripts of 1 John 5:7–8 is generally considered to be a spurious addition to the text.
Locating the Didache

quite specific in their reference: once with allusion to prayer (“but as the Lord commanded in his gospel, pray thus,” 8.2); once with respect to visitors (“and concerning apostles and prophets, according to the regulation of the gospel act thus,” 11.3); and twice with reference to ethical relationships (“and do not correct one another in anger, but in peace, as you have in the gospel,” 15.3; “but your prayers, alms, and other works, thus act as you have in the gospel of the Lord,” 15.4).

There is some reason to think that these references are to the “good news message” that early Christians attributed to the teachings of Jesus, as is suggested by the scattered allusion to the “gospel of the Lord” in 8.2 and 15.4. If this is the intention, then such would suggest that these usages might be quite early within the tradition of Christian rhetoric. Then again, allusions to specific rituals, such as prayers, alms, and other works (8.2; 15.4) as directed by “the gospel” appear to reflect specific New Testament passages (i.e., Matt 16:1–18). This may suggest that the Didachist here refers to a preset written text that circulated under the designation “gospel.” If this is the case, then we must offer a date for the Didache with consideration to the earliest use of this term for a specific document within Christian literature.

This leaves researchers with the question of whether the term “gospel” refers to a tradition of teaching or, instead, to a specific literary text. Furthermore, does this require us to date the entire Didache by a uniform decision that applies to all four instances, or could we make individual decisions based either on the sources that the Didachist has employed or on later editorial activity that recognizes a different understanding for the term? This issue is not easily resolved.

(g) Eucharist?: Chapters 9–10 are introduced with the phrase “and concerning the giving of thanks” (9.1), followed by a series of liturgical instructions that primarily include specific prayers to be said over the cup and bread, as well as at the conclusion of the ritual in question. Because there are no words of institution associated with these instructions, scholars have debated whether the Didachist intends these materials to reflect a so-called “agape-feast,” a unique form of the early Christian Eucharist, or a supplementary component to the Eucharist as already attested by Paul in 1 Corinthians and the passion narratives of the synoptic gospels.

The final instruction in 10.7 provides an even further cloud to the issue at hand: “but permit the prophets to give thanks as they will.” We may perhaps include this comment under the subheading of “Exception” as listed above. In either case, we find that the Didachist here offers appreciation for the authority that prophets continue to hold within the community, as well as some recognition that liturgical rituals remain in a state of flux.

We must distinguish some context for the use of these materials, on the one hand, and raise the issue of whether the prayers in chapter 9 were originally associated with that of chapter 10, on the other. So too, there is some question as to whether these prayers are typical of Jewish liturgical settings or, instead,
reflect some specific advancement of Christian theology beyond that which is generally expressed elsewhere in the *Didache*.

(h) The term "Christian": In 12.4 the Didachist employs the term "Christian," which is used only three times in the New Testament. The author of Acts observes that it is first applied to the followers of Christ in Antioch (Acts 11:26). While it is difficult to know what the use of this word may mean for determining the provenance of the *Didache*, its appearance here is undoubtedly of some importance.

(i) The "Lord's own day": Another singular phrase within the *Didache* is the intriguing reference “on the Lord’s own day” (*kyriakēn kyriou*) that appears in 14.1. The only similar New Testament use of the wording “Lord’s day” occurs at Rev 1:10, at which time the author indicates that he was in the spirit on the “Lord’s day” when he heard a loud voice instruct him to write to the seven churches of Asia Minor. In non-canonical literature, the term appears in Ignatius’ *Epistle to the Magnesians* (9.1), twice in the *Gospel of Peter* (9.35; 12.50), and later in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea.17

The significance of the term for considerations of provenance relates to the primary question of when early Christians shifted their weekly liturgical focus from the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday. Debate concerning Jewish-Christian religious practices is already evident in *Did*. 8.1, where the reader is warned not to fast with the hypocrites on Monday and Thursday but, instead, on Wednesday and Friday. Of further interest in this regard are questions related to the type of calendar that the Didachist employs, either lunar or solar.18

Ultimately, the issue of Christian orientation with respect to worship and regulation of lifestyle comes into play as we seek to locate the provenance and date of the *Didache*. The evolution of Christian liturgical sensitivities at the end of the first century was clearly not uniform, which makes any consideration of the *Didache* in this regard all the more delicate.

(j) Bishops and deacons: Finally, the *Didache* has long been distinctive for its instruction to appoint “bishops and deacons” (15.1) without mention of the office of presbyter. The suggestion of a dual office of leadership is somewhat problematic in terms of the development of Christian hierarchy, at least with respect to our literary witnesses and limited understanding of tradition.

Scholars have proposed several possible solutions to the problem. The first prospect is that we should accept the most obvious, literal reading of the instruction and admit that two offices governed the community of the Didachist—bishop and deacon. If this is true, then the *Didache* suggests a faith community without parallel in the tradition, representing a strand of gover-

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nance that eventually failed, possibly by a community that stood outside the mainstream of the ecclesiastical tradition. A second and more widely accepted solution is that the term “bishop” in fact represents the dual function of presbyter-bishop prior to the eventual and ultimate division of those two offices. In this scenario one might argue that the bishop stood as a leader of the college of presbyters. A third possibility may be that the *Didache* does not direct itself toward the community in general but, instead, to those who already hold the authority for electing bishops and deacons—the presbyters. The term “presbyter” or “elder” (*presbyteros*) does not appear elsewhere in the text, but there is no particular reason why it should have.

Thus, it is necessary to envision the form of community governance that the Didachist endorses and to consider whether that vision is unique within the tradition by either its early construction or geographical isolation. We must likewise factor in the mention of other offices and functions within the text, such as apostles and prophets and teachers (11.1–13.7), with the recognition that the writing represents a community either whose locus of authority was in flux or that held a variety of governing offices to be both valid and honorable.

2. Familiar sources: It is difficult to know the extent to which the *Didache* has incorporated materials from the New Testament versus sources that either were parallel to scripture and/or that the biblical authors used themselves. Attempts to make this determination have led to a number of competing hypotheses about the relationship of the *Didache* to its sources with the result that a variety of possibilities currently are in consideration among scholars. For the moment, one may break the source materials into several categories: Hebrew scripture and New Testament parallels.

(a) Hebrew scripture: On the one hand, the *Didache* cites from scripture explicitly on only a few occasions. At the same time, the Didachist clearly employs scripture throughout the structure of the text, indicating a familiarity with biblical motifs.

With respect to scriptural citations, there are four clear instances. All of these come from Jewish texts that were popular among Christians. In 1.6 the commandment to let one’s gift sweat in the hands before giving it appears to be drawn from Sir 12:1 (“if you do good, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds” [NRSV]). This injunction is introduced with the phrase “but it has also been said about this,” suggesting a source of authority within the tradition, though no definite attribution is offered. Later in the two ways materials at 3.7, the Didachist enjoins “but be meek, for the meek shall inherit the earth.” The source of this aphorism is LXX Ps 36:11, a text that Matt 5:5 reflects as well. Unlike the citation of Sir 12:1, however, there is no specific appeal to any literary authority. In 14.3 there is a blended extract of Mal 1:11 and 14: “in each place and time, offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wondrous among the nations.” This citation is introduced as “for this is what the Lord said” without further clarification regarding
the nature of who “the Lord” may be in this context, that is, Jesus Christ or God the Father. The final quotation appears in 16.7 with the words “the Lord will come and all the holy ones with him.” This comment is drawn from Zech 14:5 and introduced with “but as it has been said,” indicating the scriptural authority to which the Didachist here appeals.

In the final analysis the Didache expressly employs three citations of scripture with specific references to authority (Sir 12:1; Mal 1.11, 14; Zech 14:5) and one without (Ps 37:11 [= Ps 36:11 LXX]). These selections indicate a proclivity by the Didachist (or the sources used) toward prophetic and wisdom texts, typical of early Christian inclinations.

With respect to use of scripture within the structure of the Didache, little beyond the two ways segment needs examination here. The idea of “two ways” itself that opens the Didache is a prevalent theme in ancient literature, tracing its origins within Jewish thought to Deut 30:15, restated in Jer 21:8. The long tentacles of this motif wind themselves in various forms through the Testament of Asher, Galatians, Matthew, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, etc. What makes the theme unique in the Didache is its combination with additional scriptural allusions. Thus, after the essential two ways statement in Did 1.1, we find the commands to love God and neighbor (drawn from Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 respectively) and the so-called golden rule (roughly paralleled in Tob 4:15). In the chapters that follow, the two ways presents itself after the fashion of the Decalogue (Exod 20:13–16/Deut 5:17–20), expanding the opening elements of these commandments into a system of lesser prohibitions designed to protect the more authoritative scriptural tradition (Did. 2.2–3.6). No other versions of the two ways in literature offer such an intensive exploration of scriptural motifs.

Elsewhere in the Didache, apart from the citations in 14.3 and 16.7 as noted above, there is little concern for the exploration of scriptural ideas. This raises the question of whether we should associate any basic concern for scripture with the Didachist specifically or, perhaps instead, with the two ways source tradition alone. So too, it is possible that the materials and traditions behind Didache 6–16, unlike the two ways itself, simply did not lend themselves to scriptural elucidation in the mind of the Didachist.

(b) New Testament parallels: A key consideration in locating the Didache revolves around the issue of the extent to which the Didachist has employed other New Testament writings, borrowed from parallel sources, or even influenced the production of scriptural texts. There is only limited debate about the extent to which the Didachist reflects materials from the Gospels of Mark and Luke/Acts, slightly more with respect to the Johannine literature, and virtually noth-

19. It is true that numerous biblical motifs and phrases permeate the apocalyptic materials of chapter 16. This has led some scholars to suggest that this material originally served as the conclusion of the two ways materials prior to its incorporation by the Didachist.
Locating the Didache

20. Other New Testament parallels are possible as well, though they are scattered. See, e.g., Did. 1.4 (1 Pet 2:11). The connection that the Didache may have with respect to the book of James was the subject of a conference held in Tilburg, The Netherlands, whose essays appear in a volume edited by van der Sandt and Zangenberg, eds., Matthew, James, and Didache. In light of the following discussion about the connection between Matthew and the Didache, it seems only natural to include the text of James, given its close connection with Matthew in terms of sayings parallels.

21. In his recent paper at the 2008 Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Boston entitled “From the Sermon on the Mount to the Post-Temple Didache,” John W. Welch listed some 73 possible parallels or “transmutations” of Temple themes from the Sermon that now appear in the Didache.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Didache</th>
<th>Sermon</th>
<th>[Other]</th>
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reflected otherwise lost Christian literature. In the following extremely succinct survey, I will follow the approach of “schools of thought” as identified by research language. This was the method that I took in my dissertation that, while not exhaustive in perspective or strictly exact in localizing traditions, helps to organize the diversity of materials at hand.

**German-Language Research**

Among the earliest responses to the publication of the *Didache* by Philotheos Bryennios in 1883 were numerous German studies of the text and its ancient Christian context. Adolf Harnack led the charge (1884), espousing positions that came to dominate German thought ever after. He envisioned that the *Didache* had made use of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Barnabas* (following Bryennios), and *Hermas*, thus necessitating a date sometime during the years 120–165. By 1893 he came to argue that the text also knew the Gospel of Matthew, some gospel harmony, or the *Gospel of Peter*. Harnack assigned the *Didache* to Egypt, a likely location for many of the sources that he envisioned the author to have employed.

Following Harnack’s lead in 1884, several German scholars came to support his views, at least in part. For example, Adam Krawutzcky agreed that the *Didache* belonged in the middle of the second century, indicating the formative role of *Barnabas* and *Hermas*, but also the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. F. X. Funk and Theodor Zahn liked Harnack’s Egyptian provenance, though Funk pushed the date forward to the first century, while Zahn argued for the years 80–130. Adolf Hilgenfeld granted Harnack and Krawutzcky’s second-century setting, arguing that the text came after *Barnabas* and *Hermas* and in conflict with the Gnostics and Montanists, but pointed toward Asia Minor as the preferred provenance. Shortly after the publication of these views, G. Wohlenberg (1886) offered an Egyptian provenance sometime during the years 100–110, noting the influence of the Pauline epistles. Paul Drews (1904) observed the influence of Matthew 10 and 24 behind *Didache* 16, thus suggesting a post-synoptic milieu for the writing. And finally, Rudolf Knopf (1920), also preferring Egypt, argued for a more specific span from the years 100–150 and the influence both of Matthew and Luke.

For the most part, early German scholars were largely influenced by their understanding of Clement of Alexandria’s use of the *Didache* and the incorporation of its text into the *Apostolic Church Order*. The suggestion of an Egyptian provenance and a second- or late first-century date took special note of this perspective.

**French-Language Research**

The primary spokesperson for French thought in 1885 was Paul Sabatier, who argued for an unknown location in Syria around the middle of first century, prior to the missionary journeys of Paul. In this respect his provenance
agreed with that of Hilgenfeld, though his dates preceded the entire range of German speculation. In his opinion such an early moment in the formation of Christianity reflects the text’s unique catechetical tradition, its simplistic baptismal and Eucharistic formulas, its eschatological and Jewish character, and the author’s dependence on a spiritual ecclesiology. Most importantly, Sabatier was convinced that the Didachist had employed traditions that were older than the Synoptic gospels themselves, an argument that Harnack specifically came to reject in 1896.

Perhaps the most important contribution that Sabatier offered to the discussion was the insistence that the traditions behind the Didache were primitive and, being ancient, suggested that the text itself was quite early. This understanding of an archaic nature for the Didache eventually ushered in a consideration of oral traditions and greater respect for the role that non-canonical sources could play in the composition of canonical sources. While Sabatier reflected on the possibilities that the text provided for reconstructing the earliest forms of the Christian faith, his arguments also pointed toward the need to link the Didache with what scholars knew of the church from the New Testament.

**English-Language Research**

Early studies of the Didache among English-speaking scholars revealed the diversity of perspective that researchers could muster. F. W. Farrar (1884) showed agreement with Harnack in choosing Egypt as the location for the text, but preferring the end of the first century for its date. He argued that the materials of the Didache drew largely from memory, though there was otherwise a heavy dependence on Matthew and Luke, with some knowledge of the Pauline epistles. R. D. Hitchcock and Francis Brown (1885) agreed with Farrar about an Egyptian provenance and a date around 100. They argued further that the text had served as a source for Barnabas and Hermas, envisioning Egypt as a place where traveling teachers and prophets were common. The omission of the phrase “yours is the kingdom” in the Lord’s prayer struck them as typical of Egyptian liturgical tradition. So too, they envisioned that the “undeveloped character of the ministry” in the Didache argued distinctly against either Syria or Asia Minor.

Otherwise, most British scholars and their American counterparts came to reject the location of Egypt as a serious choice. For example, Philip Schaff (1885) looked toward either Syria or Palestine as the text’s location, with a preference for Jerusalem, dating the work around 90–100. Schaff found no knowledge of the New Testament by the Didachist but believed that both Barnabas and Hermas had made use of the text. Canon Spence (1885), similar to Schaff, preferred Pella in Palestine as the likely location, pointing toward the dates of 80–90.23

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23. Adam, “Erwägungen,”1–47 later accepted much of Spence’s position, attributing the composition of the text to Pella sometime during 90–100 for the purpose of serving eastern Syrian churches as guidelines.
B. B. Warfield (1886) saw the influence of Matthew throughout the text, with 1.3–6 drawn from Tatian’s Diatessaron. He dated the Didache to around the year 100. J. B. Lightfoot (1912) also preferred Syria or Palestine, but leaned toward the beginning of the second century. Lightfoot noted that there is no “permanent localized ministry” or concern for episcopacy within the text, that the agape meal was still part of the Eucharist, and that the overall work contains a certain “archaic simplicity.” Jan Greyvenstein (1919) also pointed toward the end of the first century, but attributed the work to the school of James, specifically in Antioch. B. H. Streeter (1924) insisted that the Didache arose within the Matthean community, reflecting the development of Q. It survived among the memories of the community elders via oral tradition and took its final literary form in Syria or Palestine prior to 100.

In 1898 Charles Bigg began a movement that argued for a much more recent setting for the Didache. He called the text “a romance of the fourth century” that had made use of Hermas, the Didascalia, and various writings of Clement of Alexandria. Similarly, J. Armitage Robinson (1920), arguing that the Didachist had employed both Hermas and Barnabas, in due course suggested that the text could not be placed before the year 140, possibly not appearing until the third century. Robinson greatly influenced James Muilenburg (1929), who preferred Syria to Egypt as the provenance for the text. As he noted in his argument, his guidance for this choice came from the views of Henry Gwatkin, who envisaged a location in “some simple countryside, most likely in a mountainous district.” There was no room for Egypt in this vision. For Muilenburg, the Didache employed Matthew and Luke, as well as Barnabas from the early second century. Also preferring a later date, William Telfer (1939) believed that the Didachist was “a leader in the church at Antioch, and an elder contemporary of Theophilus.” Thus, he dated the text no earlier than around 180. Finally, F. E. Vokes (1938) argued that the Didachist was a Montanist who wrote in Antioch toward the end of the second or beginning of the third century, using Matthew, Acts, Barnabas, Hermas, and Justin’s Apology as the basis of the text. This last insight represents a complete reversal of the previous work of Hilgenfeld, who had argued expressly that the Didache wrote in specific opposition to Montanism!

What early English research reveals is a decided preference for an earlier date than what was typical of German scholars, though not so early as that proposed by Sabatier. At the other extreme, several scholars chose to move the text beyond the realm of the early patristic period, arguing for as late a time as the third or fourth centuries. There is some vacillation among Egypt, Palestine, and Syria as the provenance of choice among these various hypotheses. Specific locations arose in each case, but ultimately Syria and specifically Antioch came

to serve as the broadest option of choice. Largely, this selection reflected the role that Matthew served with respect to the composition of the Didache and the influence that Streeter played among researchers in early twentieth-century biblical scholarship.

**Later Pivotal Contributions**

By way of transition we should note several key studies that arose between the time of early Didache research and more recent investigations. These are reviewed only briefly for their foundational role in shaping current views of the problem of provenance and date behind the text, though their importance is without question.

One of the pivotal contributions to a fresh approach to the Didache was the 1957 Marburg Habilitationsschrift of Helmut Koester, who focused on the oral traditions behind the apostolic fathers in general.25 Koester’s determination of a date sometime between the years 90–130 was in keeping with general German assumptions. More importantly, however, was the focus that he gave to independent oral sources, which circumvented any need for a consideration of New Testament gospels behind the Didache. Of primary significance was his focus on the two ways convention and collections of logia of Jesus, in addition to issues related to the elasticity of early Christian traditions and their use in the first and second centuries. Koester’s spotlight on oral traditions and sayings collections would revive and solidify a topic of concern for numerous later approaches to the text, especially as seen in the work of Jonathan Draper, Ian Henderson, and Aaron Milavec.

Perhaps the most widely recognized study of the Didache in the mid-twentieth century was the 1958 commentary of J.-P. Audet, who took advantage of the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls in his exploration of the text. Following the speculation of Sabatier, Audet attributed the earliest materials of the Didache to the mid-first century and, in consideration of diverse parallels with Matthew, set the work in the general region of Antioch. Most importantly, however, he saw three redactional layers behind the work, signifying that the final text represented a composite of editorial stages that covered several decades.

This identification of such stages of development later became the focal consideration of Robert Kraft’s commentary in 1965, which referred to the final form of the Didache as “evolved literature.” Kraft, like Audet before him, believed that the earliest materials behind the text came from the middle of the first century. Yet he did not consider the text in its present form to be earlier than the mid-second century. In addition, he returned to the traditional German argument that the text came from Egypt, primarily based on the textual traditions that survived there.

The contributions of Audet and Kraft have been primarily to recognize that the *Didache* may have derived from the process of several editorial stages and, in turn, may represent a discussion with contemporary forms of Jewish thought that were not automatically preserved by the rise of rabbinic Judaism. The impact of such speculation about evolving stages of composition has been widely reflected within later scholarship, as was soon evidenced in the commentaries of Stanislas Giet (1970) and of Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier (1978). The work of the latter authors likewise pointed to a first-century origin for the text, though with a more general understanding of western Syria as the provenance. At the same time, however, the immediate concern of Audet for the influence of Qumran seems mostly to have run its course.

Finally, it is vital to note the early work of Édouard Massaux (1950) and the later research of Wolf-Dietrich Köhler (1987), each of whom has endeavored to trace the influence of Matthew in early Christian literature. The studies by Massaux left him with little question that the Didachist both knew and employed the Matthean gospel throughout the composition of the text. This holds true both in the two ways segment and throughout the liturgical and ecclesiastical materials that follow. Though he offered no setting for the *Didache*, Massaux believed that the consistent usage of Matthew in the *Didache* justifies an assumption that the text does not date prior to the time of Justin Martyr in the mid- to late-second century. Köhler came to a similar conclusion about the Didachist’s use of Matthew, noting that there was firm evidence that this was the gospel of choice for the *Didache*. Believing Matthew itself to stem from a Syrian provenance during the years 80–100, however, he envisaged that the *Didache* could have arisen at any point thereafter. The conclusions of Massaux and Köhler have greatly affected those scholars who hold to the temporal primacy of the New Testament gospels as sources for the *Didache*. For many researchers such investigations have largely offset the arguments of Koester for the Didachist’s dependence on a more fluid oral tradition, subsequently creating a divide among contemporary researchers that hinges on the role of Matthew in understanding the composition of the *Didache*.

**Some Contemporary Views**

Because of the popularity that the *Didache* has gained within biblical and patristic scholarship during recent decades, it is possible here only to survey a

26. The recent research of del Verme, *Didache and Judaism*, represents one remaining development of *Didache* study in light of Qumran. In his 1983 Cambridge dissertation, Draper himself drew numerous insights from a comparison of the *Didache* to the Dead Sea Scrolls, though he subsequently rejected this line of approach as ultimately insignificant for understanding the text.
29. Indeed, Massaux’s section on the *Didache* begins with a view previously argued by Sherman Johnson, “Subsidiary Motive,” that the very title of the text purposefully directs the reader to the closing mission charge of Matt 28:18–20.
range of views about the text as they relate to the questions of provenance and date. The following perspectives represent divergent approaches that have been largely influential for other scholars. The order of their listing is almost entirely arbitrary.

In his 1984 volume on four texts from the apostolic fathers, Klaus Wengst identifies the Didache as having originated in the region of Syria. He offers this vision with full recognition that it is in Egypt that scholars have often placed the text. Yet, he finds that the Didachist’s concern about having only warm, standing water for baptism (Did. 7.2) and the reference to “bread scattered on the mountains” (Did. 9.4) serve as adequate arguments against an Egyptian setting. With respect to date, he believes that the references to “the gospel” in the Didache indicate a full recognition of Matthew, which he likewise attributes to Syria during the years 80–100. Clement of Alexandria’s knowledge of the Didache provides a terminus post quem for the text. Furthermore, parallel celebrations of the Eucharistic formula that the Didachist preserves also appear during the time of Justin, suggesting a date sometime in the second century.

Kurt Niederwimmer, who published his commentary on the Didache in 1989, takes a slightly different approach to the subject. He rejects the view of Audet that the Didache developed through a series of stages. Instead, he sees it as a unified compilation of divergent traditions, which include the two ways tractate, the liturgical formulae, possibly the sayings on itinerant charismatics, and perhaps the apocalyptic materials. These traditions most likely date to the late first century, but the sources that they preserve are quite old and provide a certain archaic nature to the finished work. As Niederwimmer observes, the efforts of the Didachist in compiling these resources suggest “a tendency to reconcile traditions with the changed circumstances of a church undergoing a process of stabilization.” As such, the situation of the writing reflects the early struggles of institutional growth. The redactional activity of the Didachist does not reveal any exacting ecclesiastical development, thus suggesting that the final text arose somewhere around 110–120, though Niederwimmer admits that such a date remains hypothetical. With respect to provenance, like Wengst, he recognizes the differing endorsements for either Egypt or Syria-Palestine. In the final analysis, however, the presence of “the offshoots of the Jesus-discipleship movement” argues in favor of the latter location, with an urban setting preferred, but not that of Antioch.

Though he began with no assumption about date and provenance in his dissertation on the Didache, Jonathan Draper ultimately concedes that he sees the

30. See particularly Wengst, Schriften, 61–63.
32. See especially Niederwimmer, The Didache, 52–54.
34. Niederwimmer, The Didache, 52.
text to be a late first or, at the latest, early second-century construction. At least he acknowledges this as an “emerging scholarly consensus,” recognizing that this period was particularly suitable for Jewish-Christian efforts “concerned with the preparation and socialization of Gentile converts.” He admits that the place of origin is highly debated, but again acknowledges that “the general region of Syria, or more narrowly Antioch” has become widely accepted. At the same time, Draper is sensitive to the traditions of Jesus sayings that now reside within the Didache, recognizing the possible history of their oral transmission and development in Palestine and especially the region of Galilee.

We here turn to two other scholars who have made significant contributions to Didache research, yet who remain somewhat indistinct about the placement of the Didache itself. The first is Christopher Tuckett, who, like Wengst, is largely convinced that the composition of the Didache most likely falls after that of Matthew and Luke. In his estimation the presence of Matthean editorial style within the Didache makes for a suitable argument that the gospel text arose prior to the text. At the same time he finds the most “economic solution” to the relationship between the two writings to be that the Didachist has made use of this particular gospel. He does not call this a “direct dependence” necessarily, but an indirect usage “perhaps mediated through a process of oral tradition and/or memory.” Though he hesitates to offer a specific date for the text, he observes that few scholars would place it much past the middle of the second century and thus, presumably, he agrees with this assessment. Tuckett seems little disposed to situate the work within a specific provenance, leaving its parameters open for both interpretation and flexibility.

The second author is Aaron Milavec, whose massive commentary on the Didache appeared in 2003. Unlike Tuckett, Milavec argues that the Didache arose independently from Matthew and, as such, there is no justification for reading the text in light of that gospel. He offers a variety of explorations into the early nature of the text’s traditions, explaining their usage within the broad setting of early Jewish-Christian debate, noting broadly that “[t]he Didache community took its stand within the Pharisaic revolution.” In this respect he envisions the text to derive from the earliest strata of Christian teaching from the years 50–70. With respect to origin though, he too remains somewhat vague, preferring to

42. This now is also the view of Crossan, Birth of Christianity, 383–406, who acknowledges his dependence on the arguments of Milavec and Ian Henderson (387).
43. Milavec, The Didache, 802.
discuss those who participated in the communities of the *Didache* without limiting the text to a specific setting.\(^{44}\)

As with Tuckett, the parameters for Milavec’s discussion remain open; unlike Tuckett, however, his starting assumptions are quite different. The blurring of vision for the date and/or location of the *Didache* in each case, while perhaps necessary, is both the strength and weakness behind such discussions of the text, thereby leading to some conflict in how we might best understand its formulation and meaning.

More recently, the position of several scholars of a new generation are certainly worth mention. Alan Garrow, for example, takes the view that the *Didache* is actually a primary source for the author of Matthew. As Garrow observes, he remains unsure of a *terminus a quo* for the text due to the references to “gospel” throughout and in light of *Did.* 16.7, though he believes that all these allusions were included prior to the second century. As for provenance, he employs a general perception of layers behind the development of the text under the hypothesis that a “first layer was written in Jerusalem and delivered to Antioch,” a second layer perhaps reflecting a “Johannine provenance” followed, culminating in a third layer whose setting has been lost to reconstruction. This final layer, while not easily traced, most likely arose “at some distance from the geographical origin of the text,” since the editor felt confident to correct “so many teachings of the existing text.” Ultimately, Garrow sees no reason to assign the *Didache* to a single location beyond an assumption that the earliest materials derive from Jerusalem, with the common meal saying of *Didache* 6 serving as a direct reflection of the apostolic council from ca. 49 CE.\(^{45}\)

Nancy Pardee returns to the association of Matthew and the *Didache* as a key for understanding the issues of date and provenance. She does not suppose that the Didachist necessarily draws on Matthew directly, but notes that the high correlation of parallels between the two works suggests that the *Didache* has used either “a Matthean source or a proto-Gospel that hales from the same community.” Her *terminus ad quem* would perhaps be the year 90, though a vision of Jews as “hypocrites,” the acceptance of non-Jews in the community, the establishment of resident leadership, and several stages of expansion for the text make setting a *terminus a quo* difficult. She accepts the connection of the *Didache* with the production of Matthew in Antioch or Syria, noting this particular location as a place where Jewish and non-Jewish Christians coexisted in

\(^{44}\) E.g., see Milavec, “The Pastoral Genius,” 89 n. 2, and Milavec, *The Didache*, 176–83, 438–64, 583–808. Perhaps his most specific argument in the latter work is offered against those who turn to the rules for giving first fruits (see *Did.* 13.3–7) as helpful evidence, noting that “nothing conclusive can be decided regarding the geographical or chronological location of the framers of the *Didache* based on the rules for first fruits” (522). Other evidence that may in fact specify the text’s origins is not readily apparent.

\(^{45}\) Garrow’s view remains fluid to some extent. The insights included here come from private correspondence in January 2009.
Locating the Didache

a middle ground between Paul’s insistence on “freedom” and the conservatism of the faction of James.46

In addition to these views, we might include several more recent perspectives. William Varner gives a nod toward J. B. Lightfoot (1912) in his preference for Syria as a likely provenance and toward Milavec with a date sometime after the year 70, and possibly before. He finds the elements of simplicity, silence about doctrinal issues and persecution, and an emergent institutional structure that acknowledges itinerant apostles and prophets to be “uncharacteristic of the church in the first decades of the second century.”47 Jonathan Schwiebert likewise prefers the general region of Syria without the specification of a particular city site. At the same time, however, his notation that the Didache was “probably transcribed in Syria up to a full century prior to Justin’s writing” remains a somewhat blurry attribution with respect to date.48

In conclusion, not so many contemporary scholars have put in writing a firm conjecture on the date and location of the Didache. This is fair enough. Such conjectures receive easy rebuttal and mostly serve to limit a researcher’s explorations into the text, investigations that hold together more easily when the writing and its traditions remain murky. It is with some pause, therefore, that I offer the following general reconstruction as a model for my own understanding of the text. Yet, it is worth stating my view on the parameters of the work in public forum for the purpose of debate.

The Jefford Proposal49

A key element in coming to any particular understanding of the date and provenance of the Didache appears to be in how one chooses to characterize the relationship of the text to the Gospel of Matthew. Consecutive authors address this concern in diverse ways, yet the matter typically recurs as a central issue. Of course, this begs the question of how we both date and place Matthew, which is not the focus of the present study. For the moment I am sympathetic to a large school of thought that places the gospel text in or around the region of Antioch in Syria, and it is from here that the remainder of my hypothesis derives. I admit that my own views, fashioned by my decision about Matthew itself, may be remolded to the extent that we can demonstrate that the text has arisen elsewhere.

46. Pardee’s insights also derive from private correspondence in January 2009, though the provenance of Syria arises in her dissertation, “The Genre,” 295, which has been published in 2012 by Mohr-Siebeck. Draper, Garrow, and Pardee (as well as Huub van de Sandt and I) previously served as members of the Steering Committee of the SBL “Didache in Context Consultation” seminar.
48. Schwiebert, Knowledge, 15.
49. The essential elements of my position have already been briefly explicated in Jefford, The Apostolic Fathers, 19–22.
Yet there is much flexibility for me in how any such change in understanding may affect my views about the Didache.

Also important for me is some recognition of the reality that the Didache is not uniform in its construction. This is not to say that I do not appreciate the efforts of those who approach the text's final form as a unified whole, as Milavec seeks to demonstrate. Yet I find the variety of sources and layers that lie beneath the surface to be a complex puzzle that suggests too much about the evolution of the work to ignore. It seems that it is indeed this—the enigmatic nature or “riddle” of the text—that has constantly attracted the attention of scholars since the end of the nineteenth century. I am likewise enticed by this element of the work.

In returning to Matthew, there is a sense in which the editors of the Didache are both dependent on the Matthean perspective and yet not reliant on it, which makes the problem all the more complex. With respect to dependence, we find numerous parallels to teachings and themes in Matthew that permeate the Didache. I have listed many of these above, and elsewhere scholars have made much more extensive exploration into the matter. What is perhaps most troubling in this possible “dependence,” however, is a point previously addressed by Tuckett, that is, the matter of whether the Didache preserves evidence of the editorial activity of Matthew. Two widely examined sections of the Didache may suggest such evidence—the so-called ecclesiastical section of 1.3b–2.1 and the concluding apocalyptic materials of 16.1–8. Scholarly debate rages with respect to both passages. I can happily agree that the former is a later addition to the Didache and with more suspicion that specific Matthean editorial concerns may have come into play in shaping the latter. For my own perspective, the presence of Matthean cues in 1.3b–2.1 serves as a definite argument that the section is not original to the text. As for Didache 16, I have long agreed with Paul Drews that this material is quite old in the shaping of the Didache, yet may have received considerable adaptation during its tenure with the text in light of the both powerful and slippery nature of apocalyptic literature in general. It seems only natural that the vision of Matthew has come into play in this chapter. Otherwise, I do not find evidence of Matthean editorial activity within the Didache.

At the same time, much in the text either indicates parallels with Matthew (minus editorial indicators) or is separate from it. By way of illustration, the bulk of such parallels reflect the so-called M materials of the gospel, with the majority drawn from Matthew’s Sermon. Yet little that is specifically typical

50. To recall the wording of Vokes, The Riddle.
of Matthew’s Sermon appears within the Didache, suggesting instead that the Didachist is not necessarily familiar with that scene itself but simply draws from its core M traditions. For example, we find here that the Didache contains only a single beatitude (Did. 3.7) versus Matthew’s nine (Matt 5:3–12). Its instructions on fasting and prayer (Did. 8.1–3) do not reflect structured directives on alms—prayer—fasting as in Matthew (Matt 6:1–18). Its opening comment on the two ways (Did. 1.1) says nothing about “gates” (pulē; Matt 7:13–14) and its golden rule saying is expressed in the negative (Did. 1.2c), versus both Matthew and Luke’s positive renderings (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31). In conclusion, the Didachist seems quite familiar with material that is otherwise unique to Matthew and yet at the same time does not recognize Matthean settings or nuances.

By way of materials that seem in conflict with Matthean foci, the Didache offers several oft-noted examples. The Didachist gives prayers of thanksgiving (Did. 9.1–10.6) that are missing from the Eucharistic scenes of the gospels; in contrast, the gospels offer Jesus’ words of institution and a Passover setting (Matt 26:17–29 pars.) that are absent in the Didache. The Didachist offers specific instructions on how to distinguish between true and false prophets (Did. 11.3–13.6), while Matthew observes only that they can be recognized by their fruits (Matt 7:15–20). The Didachist uses the prohibition “do not give what is holy to dogs” within the context of the thanksgiving meal (Did. 9.5), while Matthew offers no similar context (Matt 7:6). Such observations have often led scholars to observe that the Didache must represent some early Christian population whose ideas and practices reflect a backwater setting that has subsequently been lost and forgotten. Nevertheless, ecclesiastical history is replete with similar elements that the larger tradition rejected in time. What now appears in the Didache may reflect something of the same situation.

We may include several other curious elements to the observations above. I note first that the Didachist holds the golden rule and double love commandments together (Did. 1.2), while Matthew offers them in separate contexts with the tags “for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt 7:12) and “on these two commands depend all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:40). Such markers are absent in other Synoptic parallels. In addition, Matthew records the recitation of the Decalogue’s prohibitions by Jesus (Matt 19:18 pars.) without elaboration, while the Didachist uses the same as a framework behind a significant and unique expansion of the two ways (Did. 2.2–5.2) based on the teachings of “the Lord.” Further, scholars typically regard Matthew’s Christology to be relatively high, but that of the Didache to be low. At the same time, of course, both texts are singular in their insistence that the ritual of baptism include some use of the Trinitarian formula (Matt 28:19; Did. 7.1, 3), a decidedly advanced instruction. Finally, both documents indicate some familiarity with the wisdom instruction of ben Sirach and, in the case of Matthew, chiefly within the teachings of the M material. Otherwise, their usages of scriptural sources are not necessarily the same.
The amalgam of what appears at first sight to be somewhat similar influences suggests to me that both Matthew and the Didache have arisen within a larger community that shares common sources—both oral and written. For the present, the roots of these sources remain unidentified. They certainly include something of the Jesus tradition of Palestine and Syria (?), perhaps reflective of an emerging Q tradition and independent collected teachings. In any case, the authority of their teachings lies at the foundation of both Matthew and the Didache as a uniquely recognized basis of faith instruction.

What remains then is to explain why these two texts hold such diversity of perspective in other ways, particularly with respect to those liturgical traditions and ecclesiastical instructions in the Didache that we now view as idiosyncratic. The secret to this situation may come in the recognition that Matthew itself reflects an evolutionary process that, following Markan priority theories, has already built on a gospel narrative drawn from Mark that subsequently became canonical for later tradition. It was natural that all other views necessarily became both secondary and irrelevant to the tradition as a result of the Matthean preference for the Markan strategy.

Thus, I suspect the following situation to be true. While scholars often envision that Matthew evolved along a series of developing layers, it seems likely that the Didache progressed along a similar process. In this respect, then, I endorse some form of “evolving literature” hypothesis of stage development that finds parallel in the views of Audet, Kraft, and Garrow. The core of teachings behind both Matthew and the Didache represents foundational materials that various house churches in the region of Antioch knew and cherished. This essential core was the same in each case, including respected scriptures, sayings of Jesus, traditional Jewish interpretations within the evolving Christian faith, liturgical practices that reflected Jewish foundations, etc. We may debate the sources of such teachings, but their eventual migration to the important city of Antioch seems evident to me.

By way of excursus, we may ask why Antioch would seem to be a likely setting for such a process. The evidence is circumstantial and not conclusive. Nevertheless, there is some cumulative strength of rationale for the argument. Firstly, there was a strong Jewish community in the city and surrounding environs that held close links to Palestine and the Temple in Jerusalem. The perspective of the Didache is decidedly Jewish in tone, as is that of Matthew. Secondly, both Acts 15 and Didache 6 reflect the so-called apostolic decree as an important point of instruction, an item that undoubtedly would have held great influence among the churches of Antioch, as the author of Acts suggests. Further, Paul

54. Curiously, certain versions of Acts 15:20 (D, It, sa) further include the negative form of the golden rule that is similarly preserved in Did. 1.2c.
himself makes use of the two ways tradition only one time in his surviving letters, that is, at Gal 5:17–24. We recall that it is within this same letter that Paul provides an account of his recent “rebuke” of Cephas in Antioch (Gal 2:11–14), suggesting that there may be some link between that historical event and his recollection of specific two ways teachings that he has recently recalled from his time among the churches of the city. In addition, we recollect from Acts 11:26 that it was in Antioch that believers were first called “Christians,” while it is in Did. 12.4 that the Didachist insists that whoever should come in the name of the Lord shall live within the community as a “Christian.” If we wish to argue that the Didache is indeed an early piece of Christian literature, this is a most intriguing use of the term for consideration. Finally, Antioch was without question a focal point of early Christian missions as recognized both in the Pauline letters and by the author of Acts. At the same time, however, its house churches lacked clear unity of perspective, developing an understanding of Christianity sometimes from strong, traditional Jewish roots and at other times from parallel visions that did not have Jewish foundations. In essence then, the city and its environs reflected a religious tension that made the evolving church there something of a “work in progress” and thus a crucible of conflict among competing parties.\footnote{The situation of Christian Antioch has been admirably discussed in recent days by Michelle Slee, The Church, Magnus Zetterholm, The Formation, and Isabella Sandwell, Religious Identity. Zetterholm, “The Didache, Matthew, James,” 89 n. 63, has recently acknowledged the possibility of my views about placement of the Didache within this setting, though his own reconstruction takes a slightly different course.}

I return here to my reconstruction of Christianity in Antioch and the role of the Didachist within that evolution. In essence I believe that the Didache reflects a fundamental perspective of faith that existed among Christian Jews in the city whose views endorsed specific scriptures, teachings of Jesus, and messianic faith and liturgical practices that sprang from the foundations of the synagogue. Cephas and the “party of James” would have been attracted to these same Christians in their visits to the city. There is some justification in finding a similar perspective at least tentatively reflected in Matthew, though this gospel clearly strives to incorporate non-Jewish concerns as well, as is indicated by the “mission to the nations” presented in Matthew’s great commission at 28:19–20. Thus, it is here that the gospel becomes a key in understanding the ultimate rationale for the composition of the Didache. In my opinion Matthew appears to represent a stepping-stone between Jewish forms of Christianity and more universal expectations among non-Jewish Christians within the city.

Here the construction of the Gospel of Matthew becomes most important. If we can accept at least some version of Markan priority as the framework for the construction of Matthew, then in the process of compiling sources for the gospel, the author and editors undoubtedly had choices to make between
competing traditions. On the one hand, there were sayings and narratives already preserved by the Markan tradition; on the other, there were often slightly divergent, parallel versions that were dear to the heart of the local, Jewish-Christian, Matthean community. Since Mark is weak in its preservation of teachings of Jesus, the compilers of Matthew could easily insert instructions from various known sources, including the M materials and traditions of the local community. At those places where local sayings differed in form from the Markan version, however, our editors typically opted for the Markan rendering, thus rejecting the local formulation. In essence then, the text of Matthew does not represent simply a clear understanding of local, Christian tradition but, instead, a blending of traditions that holds at the core of its structure a gospel that has come from outside the community, the text of Mark.

What then was the function of the Didache? I am persuaded that, at least at the outset, its purpose was to preserve in part those sayings and teachings of the original Christian Jewish community in Antioch that were not included in the text of Matthew. On the one hand, this explains why the Matthean parallels in the Didache tend to be Jewish in perspective, often are divergent from the Matthean form and context, and make no concerted attempt to match any known gospel structure or agenda in either theology or liturgical practice. In other words, the text preserves an ancient Christian Jewish tendenz within Antioch that was unaffected by the evolving mainline Markan tradition by choice. This also explains why the Didachist refers to “the gospel” four times in the text. The Didachist is aware of the construction of Matthew as a standard for the larger Antiochean church and likewise endorses its authority as a basis for community living and faith. Thus, the references to “the gospel” are purposeful attempts to employ the authority of the newly written text as a basis for community life within the local setting. The Didache then did not ascend as a competitor with Matthew, but as a supplementary text that preserved a core of basic community traditions that stood at the ready to address the traditional ethical, liturgical, and ecclesiastical concerns of the community. In addition, as the text of Matthew was adapted and expanded in its development, so too was the text of the Didache. I am convinced that each evolved to meet the situation of its times, though we are not presently in a position to offer specific comments on what those changed situations may have been. Whatever the nature of the situation, the Didache has preserved local traditions and teachings from the beginning, gradually supplementing them with additional instructions as the needs and concerns of the community grew.

Two issues arise in this particular reconstruction that I must address. The first is the question of whether the purpose of the Didache changed during the process of its evolution and adaptation. I believe that it did to some extent. The earliest specific use of the Didache of which we have knowledge derives from the Apostolic Constitutions, whose author has incorporated much of the Didache.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{56} Not including the two ways materials of the Didache.
into a section on the training of ecclesiastical functionaries. While we may argue that this was an original and insightful use of the *Didache*, I prefer to think that this approach occurred to the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions* by virtue of how the community of the *Didache* already employed its own text, that is, as some form of manual of instruction. The divergent use of “you” singular and “you” plural throughout suggests to me that the work was not intended to train new Christians on the whole but, instead, to train ecclesiastical functionaries in their role as teachers of new converts and leaders of the faith community generally.\(^\text{57}\) Indeed, a large part of their role was to induct and instruct new Christians, but the final concern of the *Didache* was to provide adequate teaching for their own work. This begs the question of who such leaders were that needed training. In my opinion they were those members of the larger Antiochean church community who, previously having served as “elders” within the synagogue, now needed to know their new function and duties as “presbyters” within the evolving three-tiered structure of the local church community. Thus, the reason that the text of the *Didache* mentions bishops and deacons without presbyters is because ultimately the final form of the text addressed itself specifically to the formation of presbyters. Similarly, this may have led to the demise of the *Didache* in the tradition. Once the Gospel of Matthew had supplanted the authority of the teachings of the *Didache* and the community’s elders grasped their role within the new structural hierarchy, the text no longer served any meaningful role for the tradition.

The second issue is the question of how the bishop Ignatius factored into this equation. Ignatius, a devoted follower of Paul, found no reason to cater to Jewish Christianity. He was clearly attracted to the authority of Matthew and he revealed no dependence on the *Didache*. Nevertheless, this is as we might expect, since he evidently represented the rise of Christianity in Antioch that sought no underpinning from Jewish principles and institutions. Moreover, while many of his ideas about theology and ecclesiastical structure have come to dominate later Christian tradition, his constant plea for such ideas may suggest that not all bishops and faith communities readily accepted them late in the first century. Indeed, the peace that his home church in Antioch finally achieved as he himself journeyed to his presumed martyrdom in Rome may conceivably have arisen because of his own departure, since his fiery personality and boisterous positions surely led to many conflicts among the house churches there.\(^\text{58}\) In either case, Ignatius was at least cognizant of various teachings in the *Didache*, since he employed various phrases and ideas that the Didachist likewise preserved.\(^\text{59}\) It is not surprising that he did not quote from the *Didache*, however, since neither did he quote from Matthew, the gospel of choice for him and most likely for the Antiochean community.

\(^{57}\) See already Jefford, “Presbyters.”  
\(^{58}\) Ignatius, *Phil.* 10.1.  
\(^{59}\) See Jefford, “Ignatius of Antioch.”
In conclusion, I am convinced that the Didache derives from the ancient, original Christian-Jewish community of Antioch. It preserves some of our oldest teachings and liturgical practices, primarily untouched by the development of the Markan canonical tradition that came to serve as the structural and theological backbone of Matthew, which itself managed to blend the Jewish and non-Jewish house churches of the city into a singular faith tradition. I believe that in the early second century a new generation of believers largely discarded the traditions of the Didache as they abandoned its role as caretaker of the tradition and found unnecessary its function as instructor of ecclesiastical functionaries in transition due to the solidification of the Ignatian three-tiered hierarchy of leadership. Subsequently, within a generation of its origin, the text became a vestige for the larger tradition and, apart from some specific usages of its aphorisms and directives, found itself shelved under the category of “what they used to believe.”

Works Cited


Locating the Didache


Visualizing the Christian Community at Antioch

The Window of the Didache

Nancy Pardee

Locating the Didache in Antioch

At the March 2009 session of the Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins, Clayton Jefford situated the Didache in the area of Antioch based primarily on the commonality found between the Didache and the Gospel of Matthew, a text thought by many scholars to have originated in that city. To be sure, other data were brought in to support the argument: 1) the intriguing similarity between Did. 6.3, prohibiting the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols, and the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:20, 29 (21:25), a statement explicitly directed toward Antioch and environs; and 2) the occurrence of the term Χριστιανός (“Christian”) in Did. 12.4, a word found only in Acts 11:26, 26:28, and 1 Pet 4:16 in the New Testament and said, in the first reference cited, to have originated in Antioch. (One might add that this assertion is strengthened by the fact that Χριστιανός occurs five times in the letters of Ignatius [ca. 107 ce] but nowhere else that early.) But Jefford believed, and I agree, that the most important connection between the Didache and Antioch comes from the fact that it shares many traditions explicitly with the Gospel of Matthew. In Jefford’s view these shared traditions include: 1) the prominence given to the double commandment to love God and neighbor and to the Golden Rule, statements that are juxtaposed at the very beginning of the Didache (1.2) and are uniquely characterized in the Gospel of Matthew, albeit separately, as encapsulating “the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12; 22:36–40); 2) the attestation of the Trinitarian formula for baptism in Matt 28:19 and Did. 7.1, 3; 3) the shared wording of the Lord’s Prayer as found in Matt

1. The following paper was first delivered at The Jesus Seminar on Christian Origins, Westar Institute, Santa Rosa CA, in October 2009, and was designed to continue the discussion initiated by Clayton N. Jefford in his paper, “Locating the Didache,” presented at the March 2009 meeting of the Seminar. The paper has remained largely unchanged, albeit with some clarifications and minor revisions.

2. See, e.g., the summary provided in Meier, “Matthew, Gospel of,” 624.

6:9–13 and Did. 8.2; 4) the attestation of the “M” saying Μὴ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσί(ν) (“Do not give what is holy to the dogs”) in both Matt 7:6 and Did. 9.5b; 5) the tradition in Did. 16.6–8 regarding the signs of the end, the resurrection of the dead, and the second coming of the Lord, which we both agree has been successfully shown by John Kloppenborg to come from Matthean special tradition; 6) the occurrence of the term ὑποκριταί (“hypocrites”) in the context of fasting and prayer in Matt 6:2, 5, 16 and Did. 8.1–2; 7) the instruction concerning reproof of community members seen in Matt 18:16–17 and Did. 15.3; and 8) the possible connection between the instruction on prayers and alms in Did. 15.4, the instruction on fasting, prayer, and hypocrites in 8.1–2, and similar material in Matt 6:1–18. To these I propose further references to Matthean material in Didache 11–15, namely, the commands to receive an apostle as the Lord (Did. 11.2–3; Matt 10:40) and for reconciliation prior to participating in an offering/eucharist (Did. 14.2; Matt 5:23–24). To all of this Jefford added the overwhelming use of Jewish tradition in both texts, pointing in the Didache to the imagery of the Two Ways, the exposition of the Decalogue within the Two Ways text, the Jewish character of its rites of baptism and eucharist, and the concern with fasting and prayer, among other commonalities. I think the evidence, while cumulative, is nonetheless persuasive, and I agree wholeheartedly with Jefford’s statement that

Despite the differences between Matthew and the Didache, the similarities that have traditionally been recognized between the two works indicate a core perspective that bound the writings together within a single metropolitan situation.

Even given these many points of contact between the Didache and Matthew, however, scholars have yet to resolve whether this evidence favors dependence of one text on the other or the use by both of common tradition(s) or both, the last case being possible if the Didache could be shown to have developed in stages. This leads us to the next section.

The Compositional History of the Didache

Status Quaestionones
The question of whether the text of the extant Didache (essentially represented by the Jerusalem manuscript H54) is the result of various stages of composition

5. A version of this saying is also found in John 13:20.
or was crafted entirely (or nearly so) at one point of time is one of the most contentious areas of discussion in *Didache* studies. Although others had raised the question earlier, I think Jefford helpfully pointed to the study of Audet as the one that precipitated the modern discussion of possible redactional layers to the text. Audet had proposed three stages of composition: an initial work extending essentially from 1.1–11.2; a later addition (by the same author) of most of 11.3–16.8; and lastly an interpolation (from a different editor) consisting of 1.3b–2.1, 6.2–3, 7.2–4, and 13.3, 5–7.Originally in 1978 (second edition, 1998), Rordorf and Tuilier suggested two stages of composition, an earlier composition comprised of *Didache* 1–13, followed by the addition of chapters 14–15 (and possibly 16). Jefford himself reconstructed the development as having started as a text consisting of chapters 1–5 (except 1.3b–6) and 16; followed by an expansion adding 6.1, 3, 7.1, and 7.4–10.6; next by a later addition of 11.3–12 and chapter 13 and 15; and finally ending with the interpolation of 1.3b–2.1, 6.2, 7.2–3, 10.7–11.2, 12.1–5, and 14.1–3. More recently Alan Garrow also suggested a number of redactional stages: a so-called Peri Layer (1.1–5a; 2.1–5.2a; 6.1–7.1a, c, e, 4a; 9.1–5a; 11.3a, 4–6; and possibly 16.1–6, 8–9 [reconstructed]); a Prophet Document (10.1–7; 11.7–9, 12; 12.1–5); a Modifying Teacher Layer (1.5a–6; 7.1b, d, 2–3, 4b; 8.1–2a, 2c–3; 9.5b; 11.1–2; 11.10–11; 13.1–15.2); a Gospel Layer, that is, an addition that presumes the finished Gospel of Matthew (8.2b; 11.3b; 15.3–4); and a Jerusalem addition (16.7). In (sometimes stark) contrast to these proposals remains the view of other scholars that the text was written at one point of time, for example Kurt Niederwimmer, Georg Schöllgen, Ian Henderson, Huub van de Sandt, Aaron Milavec, Michelle Slee, and William Varner. Some of these scholars allow for the use of pre-existing sources and/or oral tradition, factors that they believe satisfactorily explain the phenomena cited by others as indicating a more complex development. In this debate too I side with Jefford in seeing the presence of redactional stages within the text, though, as I will discuss below, I have a different view on the delimitation of these stages and thus with the history of the community/-ies that they represent.

The idea that the composition of the *Didache* has a history to it is suggested by a number of phenomena. The most important piece of evidence comes from

a comparison of the Two Ways text of Didache 1–6 with clearly related versions of that text found in the Latin Doctrina apostolorum, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apostolic Church Order, and the Life of Schnudi. While there are certainly differences of various degrees among these versions of the Two Ways, the similarities between them point clearly to a literary relationship, and today most scholars envision this as owing to the existence of an ancestral Two Ways source text. When one compares the Two Ways in the Didache with these other witnesses, however, the fact that Did. 1.3b–2.1 is an interpolation into the Two Ways source is obvious; with the exception perhaps of 1.5b πᾶσι γὰρ θέλει δίδοσθαι ὁ πατὴρ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων χαρισμάτων (“for the Father wants to give of his own gifts to all”) that occurs at a later point in the Doctrina, none of the other Two Ways witnesses shows any trace of this passage. The other extant witnesses to the Didache, namely the Óxyrhynchus fragment and the Apostolic Constitutions (and perhaps the Georgian version) do attest at least a portion of this addition, thus showing that its occurrence in H54 is not unique to that manuscript. That 1.3b–2.1 is an interpolation into a pre-existing Two Ways is also seen in the rather clumsy join between this section and what follows. While the original Two Ways simply attests the clause τούτων δὲ τῶν λόγων ἡ διδαχὴ ἐστὶν αὕτη (“the teaching of these words is this” [Did. 1.3a]) followed immediately by the instruction against murder, adultery, etc., (2.2), the author of the Didache considered it preferable to distinguish the new material from the original and thus designated the latter as δευτέρα δὲ ἐντολὴ τῆς διδαχῆς (“second command of the teaching”).

While the presence of this interpolation in 1.3b–2.1 in and of itself does not favor the model of redactional stages over a single point of composition for the Didache (since it only reveals the use of a source at one editorial stage), other instances of incongruity, repetition, and contradiction in the Didache are seen by many as throwing the weight of the evidence in that direction. In his paper Jefford mentioned the change between singular and plural forms and the instances of “exceptions” in the text as two indicators of redaction. Other points that raise suspicion include: the contradiction between the instruction to give to all people versus the “scripture” quotation counseling a more cautious stance in Did 1.5–6; the fact that instruction on eucharists is given in chapters 9–10 and then also addressed later on in chapter 14; and the sudden appearance of previ-
ously unmentioned bishops and deacons late in the text (15.3). This brings me to my 2002 dissertation.21

The Text-Linguistic Method
In my dissertation, I applied to the Didache a text-linguistic method developed by David Hellholm for his study of the Visions section of the Shepherd of Hermas.22 Hellholm analyzed Hermas using this method in order to determine the generic characteristics of an apocalypse. Whereas previous research had been able to ascertain a number of elements shared among apocalyptic texts, Hellholm maintained that an understanding of genre also required a more thorough evaluation of the importance of each of these elements relative to one another (hierarchization) as well as an understanding of the function of such texts. Moreover, he maintained that the structure of a text is a key component of the communication of its genre to an audience and that this could best be described through a text-linguistic analysis. Such an analysis not only provides a very detailed description but in doing so also affords a model to which other similar texts can be compared in order to arrive at a definition of a particular genre.

Though by training I am certainly not a text-linguist, I was nonetheless impressed by Hellholm’s method and results on Hermas and intrigued as to what the use of such a method of analysis on the Didache might glean in terms of our understanding of its genre and composition history. Fortunately Professor Hellholm himself was kind enough to mentor me in the early stages of applying this method to the Didache, and over the years has generously afforded me his comments and criticisms as well as additional sources of information.

According to Hellholm, a text is structured by means of a variety of markers that can be divided into three different categories. The most important category consists of markers that indicate that a new act of communication is taking place. One way of doing this is through a “meta-communicative sentence,” a sentence that often appears, for example, as an introduction to a quotation or a dialogue using verbs of communication (speaking, writing, hearing, etc.). An example in the Didache would be the instruction ὡς ἐκέλευσεν ὁ κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ αὐτοῦ οὕτω προσεύχεσθε (“as the Lord commanded in his gospel, thus pray”), followed then by the Lord’s Prayer (8.2). On the one hand the instruction to pray is a communication taking place between the author of the Didache and the audience; in the prayer, on the other hand, the communication is between the person praying and God. The meta-communicative sentence signals this clearly to the audience, however, and avoids any confusion. The other means of indicating a new act of communication is through a “substitution on the meta-level,” that is, a word or phrase that represents a text, such as a title

21. Published in a revised and expanded form in Pardee, Genre and Development.
22. Hellholm, Das Visionenbuch, esp. 77–95. Hellholm’s system is an adaptation of one developed for narrative texts in general by Elisabeth Gülich and Wolfgang Raible.
or chapter heading. An example of this in the Didache is the heading περὶ δὲ τοῦ βαπτίσματος (“concerning baptism”; 7.1), which uses, as per convention, the phrase περὶ δὲ (“[and] concerning”) to signal the beginning of instruction on a new subject. Because the heading itself is not a part of the material that it introduces but is a designation for the text that follows, the heading is said to be on the “meta-level” with respect to the text. Both of these markers, meta-communicative sentences and substitutions on the meta-level, are “pragmatic” in nature, signaling a change in the communication situation. Another type of substitution that helps to delimit text-parts but does not do so from a position on the “meta-level” is illustrated in the Didache by the phrase in 7.1 ταῦτα πάντα προειπόντες (“having said beforehand all these things”), a clause that clearly refers back to the previous chapters but falls short of being a title. It is only in context that the audience knows that “these things” signifies the preceding instruction; without the context the reference would be unclear. This is called a substitution on the abstraction level and is a bridge between the two levels of communication present.

Two other types of markers also help to indicate a text’s structure. “Semantic” markers such as changes in place, time, dramatis personae, etc. also signal that a new part of the text is beginning, yet they remain on the same communication level as the text that follows—there is no change in speaker/audience. An instance of this phenomenon in the Didache would be the phrase in 10.1 μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐμπλησθῆναι (“after being filled [with food]”), which signals the beginning of a new part of the instruction on the eucharist. Finally there are “syntactic” markers, words such as conjunctions and particles that simply function gram-matically to connect or disconnect text parts.

After analyzing the structure of the Didache with the help of such markers, I came to the conclusion that the evidence supports the model of a progressive composition of the text rather than production at a single point of time. Although I cannot provide all of the details here, I wish to state briefly the evidence I gleaned.

Results of a Text-Linguistic Analysis of the Didache
As one begins to read the Didache, one can immediately see examples of how the markers described above structure the text. Within the Two Ways section, the phrases ὁδὸς τῆς ζωῆς (“way of life”), ὁδὸς τοῦ θανάτου (“way of death”), and the term διδαχή (“teaching”) itself are all used to organize the material into discrete sections. For example, the clauses in 1.2 ἡ μὲν οὖν ὁδὸς τῆς ζωῆς ἐστὶν αὕτη (“on the one hand the way of life is this”) and 4.14 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς ζωῆς (“this is the way of life”) are both substitutions for the section 1.2b–4.14b and form an inclusio around it, setting it off as a separate sub-text. Similarly 5.1 begins ἡ δὲ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδὸς ἐστὶν αὕτη (“[on the other hand]
the way of death is this”), introducing a passage that concludes in 5.2 with the wish ὄψεσθε, τέκνα, ἀπὸ τούτων ἁπάντων (“may you be delivered, children, from all these”). Both contain substitutions for the passage in 5.1b–2. Immediately following in 6.1 is the warning ὅρα, μή τίς σε πλανήσῃ ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς διδαχῆς (“see to it that no one cause you to stray from this way of teaching”). Here ταύτης τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς διδαχῆς (“this way of teaching”) clearly refers to the entirety of the material from 1.1–5.2 (it is a substitution for it) and signals the closure of the Two Ways. This conclusion is reinforced by the next sentence in 6.2 εἰ μὲν γὰρ δύνασαι βάτασον ὅλον τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου, τέλειος ἔσῃ (“for [γὰρ] if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect”), where, in my opinion, the phrase ὅλον τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου (“the whole yoke of the Lord”), given the meaning of γὰρ, must refer also to the preceding teaching of the Two Ways.24 Finally in 6.3, the phrase περὶ δὲ τῆς βρώσεως (“concerning the food”) introduces a new passage regarding Jewish dietary regulations that states ὃ δύνασαι βάτασον· ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ εἰδωλοθύτου λιῶν πρόσεχε (“bear what you can; but certainly keep away from meat offered to idols”). In this instance περὶ δὲ is not on the meta-level since the relative ὃ depends on it for its meaning.

Moving beyond the Two Ways, the phrase in 7.1 περὶ δὲ τοῦ βαπτίσματος (“concerning baptism”), as previously mentioned, signals another new topic. In this case, however, the entire clause serves as a type of chapter heading, signaling that a new sub-section of material is about to begin and functioning as a substitution on the meta-level for it. Immediately following this command, however, comes the sentence ταῦτα πάντα προειπόντες, βαπτίσατε . . . . (“having said beforehand all these things, baptize . . .”). Here the phrase ταῦτα πάντα προειπόντες clearly refers to all of the preceding material from 1.1–6.3, that is, the teaching of 1.1–5.2, the conclusion in 6.1–2, as well as the instruction on food in 6.3. Moreover the participle προειπόντες, a verb of communication, signals to the reader that the preceding material was, as it were, a “quotation.”

The text has thus undergone an abrupt change in communication levels moving from the level of the author and audience of the Two Ways to the level of an author and audience for whom the Two Ways is now a ritual text to be recited at baptism and that has been embedded in a larger document. In the Didache as it stands this is completely unexpected, and it is especially here that I find one of the strongest arguments against seeing the work as the result of a single compositional event. It seems clear from this awkward transition that the Two Ways text was not merely one source among many for the author, but a text already understood as authoritative by this author and perhaps by the receivers as well. The Two Ways apparently could not simply be taken over into a new, authoritative text; on the contrary, it itself provided the authority for the new work.

24. For the view that the “yoke of the Lord” represents the Mosaic Law, see Draper, “Torah and Troublesome Apostles,” 352–57.
If the opposite had been true, if the Two Ways could have been incorporated into a larger work that would be seen as authoritative in its own right, an effective communication would have indicated the function of the Two Ways from the beginning. Since this is not the case and since the transition is so abrupt, I conclude that the text beginning at 7.1 represents a new redaction of a Didache that had concluded originally at 6.1–2. Here 6.3 is a passage that is outside of the Two Ways yet within the text envisioned in 7.1. Consequently this compositional stage is the earliest (though not the only) possible date for this addition.

In terms of the macro-structure of the text, the section on baptism seemingly continues until the beginning of a new section is signaled by the introductory phrase περὶ δὲ in 9.1 (περὶ δὲ τῆς εὐχαριστίας [“concerning the eucharist”]). Yet two topics only loosely connected with baptism, namely fasting and prayer, have also been included under that rubric via catchwords. Thus, as one reads along in the text, baptismal fasting brings up the topic of fasting in general; then the fasting of hypocrites brings up the praying of hypocrites that leads to the Lord’s Prayer. These are markers on the semantic level, but these markers are not as strong as, for example, a change in time or place, and thus the structure of the text at this point is not strongly demarcated.

After the instruction on the eucharist/agape meal in Didache 9–10 comes the command in 11.1–2:

ὁς ἂν οὖν ἐλθὼν διδάξῃ υμᾶς τὰ προειρημένα, δέξασθε αὐτόν· ἐὰν δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ διδάσκων στραφεὶς διδάσκῃ ἄλλην διδαχήν εἰς τὸ καταλῦσαι, μὴ αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε·

Therefore, whoever comes and teaches you all these aforesaid things, receive him; but if the one teaching himself turns and teaches another teaching in order to annul (these), do not listen to him.

Here the phrase ταῦτα πάντα τὰ προειρημένα most naturally refers to the entirety of the text from 1.1–10.7, demonstrates that it is considered to be a single entity by the author, and further, shows that this entity has ended. The indirect reference to the text here as a διδαχή (via the verb διδάσκω and the reference to ἄλλην διδαχὴν) recalls the occurrence of the term in 6.1. Moreover both recall, in my opinion, the title[s] of the text—note that aside from these the only other occurrence of the term διδαχή is found in 1.3 embedded within the Way of Life. Indeed, here in 11.2 we meet the noun διδαχή for the last time.

But yet the text continues. Once again περὶ δὲ signals the beginning of a new subject in 11.3, this time on the topic of apostles and prophets. Interestingly, the author makes reference here to an outside text, known also to the audience, the εὐαγγέλιον (the “gospel”). A reference to the “gospel” has occurred only one time prior to this—in 8.2 it was used to identify/authorize the Lord’s Prayer. Moreover it is in this new section, as mentioned above, that one also find allusions to verses known only from the Gospel of Matthew accompanied by the application of these verses for the life of the community. A sub-section is seman-
tically signaled in 12.1 with the move from apostles and prophets to itinerants in general, but the text turns back to prophets (and teachers) in chapter 13 with instruction regarding the material support of itinerant-turned-resident prophets. In chapter 14 the phrase κατὰ κυριακὴν ("on the Lord’s day") signals a change in topic where instruction is presented on when to hold the eucharist as well as the importance of confession and reconciliation beforehand. Completely unexpectedly a new section begins in 15.1 with the command to the community to choose bishops and deacons—this instruction is connected only syntactically to what precedes by a simple οὖν ("therefore"). Following this the theme of the reproof of community members is raised. One can see throughout this section that the instructions are only loosely joined syntactically, if not semantically, and that the markers are very weak, with the result that a deliberate structure is difficult to discern. As it stands, all the material in chapters 11–15 should come under the topic of apostles and prophets, but semantically this is not the case. This section of the text is only clearly delimited via the substitutions at the beginning in 11.3 and then again at the end in 15.4 by the command:

τὰς δὲ εὐχὰς υἱῶν καὶ τὰς ἐλεημοσύνας καὶ πᾶσας τὰς πράξεις οὕτω ποιήσατε, ὡς ἔχετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν

But your prayers and alms and all your acts do thusly as you have it in the gospel of our Lord.

Not only does the reference to the “gospel” in this statement form an inclusio with 11.3,25 but the general phrase πᾶσας τὰς πράξεις ("all your acts"), I would argue, is a substitution for the entirety of the text from 1.1–15.3. That 15.4 in fact concludes the main part of the text is supported by the rhetorically powerful, asyndetic γρηγορεῖτε ("Watch!") in 16.1, which introduces an eschatological warning to the community to guard their actions, followed by a description of the end-times.26 Such an eschatologically oriented conclusion is common in paraenetic texts in Judaism and early Christianity.27

In summary, I believe that the evidence from the text-linguistic analysis shows that the Didache, in essence, has three different conclusions, each one of which refers back to the entirety of the preceding text and without indicating in any way that further material is to come. The fact that the title of the text as a whole (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) communicates to the audience that the material following is a διδαχή seems to me more than coincidental, given the conclusions of 6.1–2 and 11.1–2, as well as the outside witnesses to the title in the Doctrina and especially in Barn. 18.1, where the Two Ways is introduced as another γνώσιν καὶ διδαχὴν ("[text of] knowledge and teaching").

25. Hellholm, personal communication.
26. An eschatological context for γρηγορεῖτε is also found in Matt 24:42 (par. Mark 13:35) and Matt 25:13.
27. See, e.g., the discussions in Bammel, “Pattern and Prototype” = “Schema und Vorlage”; Baltzer, Covenant Formulary; and Berger, Auferstehung des Propheten, 486 n. 194.
Based on the text-linguistic analysis combined with other evidence, I propose the following three-stage model of the development of the text:

1. *Did.* 1–6.2a; 16
2. *Did.* 1–7; 9–11.2; 16.
3. *Did.* 1–16

Granted, this is only a working model. Still, if it were correct, what might such stages of redaction tell us regarding the development of the community/-ies behind them?

**Christian Antioch via the Didache**

**The Two Ways Source**

When one begins with the Two Ways text alone (and here I am basing my conclusions on what is common between the *Didache* and the *Doctrina*, since neither appears to have been directly dependent on the other), we clearly have a text originating within Judaism, as was reviewed above and as is widely acknowledged. Although the choice between two paths in life was a widespread motif in the ancient world, it was nonetheless a well-known image in Judaism, ultimately stemming from the tradition of the ways of life and death presented by Moses in Deut 30:15ff. and still found in Jewish texts roughly contemporary with those of the New Testament, for example, *The Community Rule of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1QS), the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and others. The focus of the text moreover is a recommendation to its audience of Jewish monotheism and ethics, including some of the commands, or instruction based on commands, of the Decalogue. At times the teaching is given in the second person future singular style of the Decalogue; in *Did.* 3.1–6 and parallels it is presented within the Jewish tradition of “building a fence around the Torah.” At the same time, however, the specific content of the teaching given shows that, while the author and the community of origin appear to be Jewish, the audience is Gentile. Indeed much of the material would be unnecessary for Jewish readers, who would already know the Decalogue as well as the prohibition of homosexuality, abortion, and magic. Moreover, the opening of the Way of Life in *Did.* 1.2 not only commands the love of God and neighbor, it explicitly identifies the deity as τὸν θεὸν τὸν ποιήσαντά σε (“the God who made you”), perhaps another clue that it is Gentiles who are being addressed. In addition, as Milavec points out, the Two Ways is missing exactly those commands of the Decalogue that would be impossible for Gentiles to keep, namely, the “honoring” of (pagan) parents and the keeping of the Sabbath.

And yet the Two Ways source here is perhaps not only Jewish but is thought by some scholars to be already Christian in its presentation of the “Double Love Command.” While acknowledging that such a juxtaposition of love of God and neighbor occurs within contemporary Jewish literature, they nonetheless see the particular form found in the Two Ways as reflecting specifically Christian tradition. Support for this idea is also seen in the instruction in Did. 4.1:

τοῦ λαλοῦντός σοι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ μνησθήσῃ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας· τιμήσεις δὲ αὐτὸν ὡς κύριον. ὅθεν γὰρ ἡ κυριότης λαλεῖται, ἐκεί κύριος ἐστίν.

Remember night and day the one who speaks the word of God (Doctrina: the Lord God) to you and honor him as the Lord. For whence the nature of the Lord is proclaimed (Doctrina: procedunt [goes forth]) there the Lord is.

Here in the juxtaposition of θέος and κύριος, as well as in the command to honor such a person ὡς κύριον (“as the Lord”), κύριος seems best understood as a reference to Christ. The idea of a Christianized Two Ways source also coincides well with Jefford’s proposal that the juxtaposition of the Double Love Commandment and the Golden Rule stems from the same community as the Gospel of Matthew, which knows both commands as summaries of “the Law and the Prophets.”

The function of this source text seems to go beyond simply presenting (Christian) Judaism to outsiders and bears a strong catechetical nature as well, as seen, for example, in the address of the audience as children (recurring in Didache 3–4 τέκνον; 5.2 τέκνα); in the reference to honoring one’s teacher (4.1); and in the command to seek out daily the faithful (4.2 τὰ πρόσωπα τῶν ἁγίων [“the faces of the saints”]). Such a text indeed corresponds to the characterization of διδαχή within Judaism as summarized by Karl Rengstorf, namely as the exposition of Torah for one’s relationship to God and neighbor. That the Two Ways provides both the Law and an exposition of the Law for Gentiles seems clear. But whether this Two Ways source represents specifically the community of the Didache at this point is uncertain because of its broader circulation as an independent text. Nor is there any indication that such a text is both catechetical and initiatory in the sense in which we find it connected with baptism in the Didache. What appears to be the case, however, is that whichever community/ies first used this Two Ways, it was one in which Gentiles were accepted into membership based on a restatement of the Jewish Law that focused on a monotheistic religious system and morality, and seemingly did not require circumcision or adherence to food laws. Although Slee cites several examples that suggest that certain Hellenistic Jews accepted male Gentile converts without their undergoing circumcision, she herself admits that this is not the norm. Indeed,
it seems better to understand this Two Ways text in the context of a Jewish Christian community who preached a gospel akin to that of the apostle Paul. At this point nothing in the text precludes a connection with Antioch, where a Gentile mission of this character was carried on early, and many factors speak for such an association.

The First Stage of the Didache
At some point in time, however, this Two Ways text underwent the addition of 1.3b–2.1 and, I maintain, of 16.1–8. Although there are no overt structural markers tying chapter 16 to the Two Ways section of the Didache, I believe it to be part of this stage of redaction for a number of reasons. First of all, as was stated above, it was a common generic trait to end paraenesis with an eschatological conclusion. Indeed the conclusion of the Two Ways of the Didache reads:

Beware lest anyone cause you to wander from this teaching, otherwise you will be taught apart from the (true) instruction. If you do these things daily with deliberation, you will be near to the living God. But if you fail to do them, you will be far from the truth. Store up all these things in your soul, and you will not be beguiled from your hope, but through these holy contests you will persevere to gain a crown. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns and rules with God the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Alone Did. 6.1–2a does not provide such a conclusion for the Two Ways of the Didache, but the addition of chapter 16 certainly does. In support of this reconstruction is also the semantic connections between the references to ζωή (“life”) in 16.1 and τελειώω (“complete, make perfect”) in 16.2, terms that, outside of the Two Ways, are seen only in the eucharistic prayers of the Didache. It is perhaps important also to note that of the two references to perfection in the Two Ways, one occurs in the “interpolated section” in 1.4 and the other is found in 6.2 that, as one can see from a comparison with the conclusion of the Doctrina above, also appears to have been a redactional change. Such semantic connections are reinforced by the occurrence of plural forms in 16.1 (γρηγορεῖτε, ὑμῶν, γίνεσθε, οἴδατε) that may coincide with the sudden change to plural from singular in Did. 5.2 in contrast with the version found in the Doctrina. Very important in my view, however, is also the fact that it is in both 1.3b–2.1 and chapter 16 that one finds an abundant, though rather loose, use of early Christian tradition without citation. Briefly speaking, in 1.3b–2.1 there is Q material paralleling passages from Matt 5:39–48//Luke 6:27–35 as well as parallels to traditions found also in 1 Peter, Justin, and Hermas. In chapter 16 material

33. See, e.g., the summary by Meier, “Matthew,” 624.
35. Did. 9.3 and 10.3 both refer to the ζωή given by God, in the latter case specifically eternal life; 10.5 uses the verb τελειώσω in the context of eschatological salvation.
Visualizing the Christian Community at Antioch

parallel to the Synoptic Gospels as well as Barnabas is also found. In none of
these cases, however, is the material presented as a quotation from an authorita-
tive text. Elsewhere in the Didache, of course, such sayings are attributed to the
“gospel” and/or to the Lord (8.2; 11.3; 15.3, 4). Such a clear stylistic difference
seems to me a strong indicator that 1.3b–2.1 and chapter 16 belong to the same
redactional stage.36

This is, of course, where Jefford and I part ways, and indeed Jefford’s view
that the presence of Matthean and Lukan redactional elements in 1.3b–2.1
shows it to be a later addition to the Didache is held by many scholars. As Jefford
mentioned, one of the most important, recent analysts of specifically redactional
elements within the Didache is Christopher Tuckett, who in 1989 provided a very
detailed and methodologically sound analysis of the text as a whole.37 Yet when
one looks at Tuckett’s analysis of the passage 1.3b–2.1, one finds that there are
only three cases where he believes the evidence strong enough to indicate that
the interpolator knew the gospels of Matthew and Luke. The first, and the only
certain case of Matthean redaction in his opinion, is the occurrence of διώκω
(“persecute”) in Did. 1.3 paralleling Matt 5:44 and contrasting with ἐπηρεάζω
(“mistreat”) in Luke 6:28. While one word alone is not very weighty, as Tuckett
admits, his view that no other section of the Didache seems concerned with
persecution signals to him that the word comes from the Gospel of Matthew
rather than the Didachist. Yet he also states that διώκω may be a “Matthean
favourite”38 and, given the current hypothesis regarding a connection between
the communities of Matthew and the Didache, not to mention the fact that
persecution is indeed mentioned in Did. 16.4, one questions whether this is a
very strong argument at all. A second indication of redaction, this time Lukan,
is seen, according to Tuckett, in Did. 1.3b ποία γὰρ χάρις, which agrees with
Luke 6:32–33 ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστίν (“what sort of credit is it to you?”) and con-
trasts with Matt 5:46 τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε (“what reward do you have?”). Tuckett
argues that the gospel writer revised the original question, giving it an ironic
sense in order to contrast the ancient idea of reward via reciprocity (doing good
in order to receive good in return) with that of divine reward. The Didachist
picked up the Lukan redaction of the phrase but not its context with the result
that the meaning in the Didache becomes “confused” and ends up promoting

36. I first presented this idea in my paper “The Function of Apocalyptic Eschatology in
the Genre ‘Church Order’ Didache 16,” delivered to the Society of Biblical Literature Early
Christian Apocalypticism Seminar, Atlanta, November 25, 1986. To my knowledge, the only
other scholar to notice this phenomenon was Cyril Richardson, who attributed it to the au-
thor of the Didache and viewed the cited material as originating in the author’s sources, in
other words, precisely opposite from my reconstruction (Richardson, Early Christian Fathers,
165). Garrow also sees large portions of the “interpolated section” and chapter 16 as part of
the earliest layer of the Didache, but does not address the similarity in the appropriation of
the Synoptic-related material in these two places.
the theory of reciprocity Luke was trying to criticize: ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς μισοῦντας ὑμᾶς, καὶ ὑψεῖτε ἐχθρὸν (“but love those who hate you and you will not have an enemy,” Did. 1.3).39 Contrary to Tuckett’s theory, however, the occurrence of a similar vocabulary and context both in 1 Pet 2:20 and Ignatius (Pol. 2.1) shows that the Didache need not depend for this passage on a knowledge of Luke and also that ποία χάρις should not be taken in the literal sense of “what kind of credit,” but ironically, “is it any credit at all?” Such an interpretation fits Did. 1.3, which, though perhaps shamelessly practical in its conclusion, is nonetheless completely comprehensible.40 The third passage that Tuckett cites in support of his argument is the semantic parallel between Did. 1.4 λάβῃ and Luke 6:30 αἴροντος, both verbs of “taking” as compared with Matt 5:42, which attests instead δανίσασθαι (“borrowing”). Tuckett maintains that this is Lukan redaction, since the gospel writer is not hesitant to use δανίζω a few verses later in 6:34. Still, however, Tuckett is forced to admit that Luke’s version is “uneven” in that it “exhorts someone who has just been robbed not to demand his property back.” He goes on to speculate, in fact, that this is the origin of the comment at the end of Did. 1.4 οὐδὲ γὰρ δύνασαι (“for you are unable”).41 But is not the “unevenness” of Luke’s version exactly what one looks for when one applies the rule lectio difficilior probabilior? Is it not more likely that it is the author of Matthew who has adjusted the term to “borrow” in order to make sense out of this passage? Moreover, if the Didachist “presupposes the gospels of Matthew and Luke in their finished forms,” as Tuckett maintains, why would the more difficult version of the two be chosen for inclusion here? Finally, beyond these specific criticisms on the arguments of Tuckett, one must also raise the more general issue as to why an editor who knows the gospels of Matthew and Luke nonetheless limit the interpolation here to material from the narrow passage found in Matt 5:39–48/Luke 6:27–35 and Matt 5:26/Luke 12:59. The problem of 1.3b–2.1, in my opinion, remains open.

Going with the proposed model, if I am correct in connecting Did. 1.1–6.2 with chapter 16, what might this suggest about the circumstances of the author(s)/receivers involved? First of all, whoever the intended recipients of the original Two Ways were, I would suggest that, at this point, they now form a separate community from that of the author. This seems to be the implication of 16.2, where the community is directed to gather together frequently and may also be supported by the change from the singular to the plural address in 5.2. Secondly, it would appear that the community of origin is now in possession of more of the Jesus tradition or at least now deems a part of that tradition an important component in its instruction for Gentiles. The fact that the interpolation

40. For a more detailed investigation, see now Pardee, Genre and Development, 178–83.
of 1.3b–2.1 has been set within the Way of Life but before the original instruction of the Two Ways (instruction now relegated to “second” position) suggests that the Jesus tradition is considered by the author as the more important of the two. This in and of itself shows a development in the Christian self-identity of the author/community of origin over against traditional Judaism and the Two Ways source. I think it also noteworthy that a significant portion of the interpolation deals with radical love, especially in the face of abuse and persecution, and that hate, persecution, and betrayal are also the subject of 16.3–4. Is the choice of this material mere happenstance, or might it be a reflection of the situation of the community/ies creating/receiving this text? Although some would deny both that Didache 16 reflects an imminent eschatology and simultaneously that there is a reflection of current circumstances therein, when one imagines chapter 16 in closer proximity to chapters 1–6, might not the possibility exist for seeing this text as early enough to accommodate such an eschatological view? Certainly it is true that there is a difference between the conflicts presupposed in each section. On the one hand, the interpolation seems to deal more broadly with conflict both from within one’s own social group (the use of present participles indicating ongoing cursing and persecution) as well as from those who are more powerful, perhaps even social superiors (physical abuse, forced labor, and confiscation of goods). Did. 16.3–4, on the other hand, with its emphasis on betrayal (στραφήσοντα τὰ πρόβατα εἰς λύκους, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη στραφήσεται εἰς μίσος [“the sheep will be turned into wolves and love will be turned into hate”]), certainly sees conflict as internal to the community and a result of the coming of ψευδοπροφῆται καὶ οἱ φθορεῖς (“false prophets and corrupters”). Still this may not be irreconcilable if one takes into account that the interpolation is included within the section designated διδαχή per se, where it would more directly apply to the experience of Gentile converts. The eschatological conclusion, however, could reflect the experience of the community at large, that is, both Hellenistic Jewish Christian and Gentile, and thus may reflect the sending community’s own experience of conflict from non-Christian Jews and/or conservative Jewish Christians. If I am correct in my interpretation of κατάθεμα (“curse; accursed one”) in 16.5 as referring to the pronouncement of Christ as “accursed” by Jews, this may lend support to the idea that conflict with other Jews is one of the battlefronts. Further, the situation may reflect the problem with the delay in the parousia—the inclusion of an eschatological timetable of sorts was perhaps a way to console Gentile believers in the face of conflict and persecution.

42. See also Hellholm, “Kristen dopkatekes,” 123, who believes that this interpolation changes the text into a Christian baptismal catechism.
43. Balabanski, Eschatology in the Making, 199.
44. Pardee, “The Curse That Saves.”
The Second Stage of the Didache

In the second stage of the text, however, the addition of instruction on conducting the rites of baptism and eucharist shows that the communication situation has definitely moved outside of the boundaries of the original community. The Didache has been expanded from the basic teaching to Gentile converts to the prescription to a Gentile community for the correct performance of the essential Christian rites. Despite some scholars to the contrary, it would serve no function in my mind to write down these rituals for one’s own community. Rather a distance is now implied and the function of the text is to keep the recipient community/ies (the number is unclear) in line with the traditions of the authoritative community. The Two Ways of chapters 1–6, that is, again the “teaching” per se, has now been designated for use in baptism. Likewise an instruction for the eucharist is also provided. Note that contrary to what some scholars suggest, there is no reason to see the eucharist in chapters 9–10 as specifically a baptismal eucharist, especially given the fact that it makes clear in 9.5 that only baptized members are allowed, a specification that would be unnecessary if baptism had just taken place. The change in communication levels in 7.1 shows that the communication situation is no longer that of instruction to catechumens but is now one of instruction to those who baptize catechumens and hold community eucharists. A new warning against other, contrary teachings, similar to the one at the end of the previous edition (6.1–2), unites this new ritual section with the previous Two Ways. But the retention of chapter 16 signals that either an eschatological conclusion is still felt to be generically necessary, or reinforces the unity of the new edition, or both. It may be here that also the instruction prohibiting the consumption of meat sacrificed to idols enters the text. As Jefford has pointed out, the introduction of this instruction with περὶ δέ aligns itself (though in my opinion only to some extent) with the use of that phrase elsewhere in the Didache. Moreover he suggests that the instruction here may be an earlier form of the Apostolic Decree than that preserved in Acts. Slee even makes the interesting proposal that the Decree originated in Antioch as a way of healing the rift over Jewish/Gentile commensality portrayed in Gal 2:11–14 and assigns it a date soon thereafter.

The Third Stage of the Didache

In this third edition of the Didache it seems clear that there is a plurality of communities being addressed since, as Steimer has pointed out, it is possible for a community not to have a resident prophet (Did. 13.4). With the establishment

45. See, e.g., Steimer, Vertex Traditionis, 321, 339.
48. Slee, Church in Antioch, 87–89.
49. Steimer, Vertex, 261–62. Steimer cites also the predominance of the plural form of address beginning in Didache 7 and the command to select bishops and deacons (plural) as
of various communities and the ongoing duration of community life has come the need to provide guidelines for what, up to that point, had apparently been a rather ad hoc organizational system. First is raised the question of the “offices” that already exist: apostles, prophets, and teachers. The itinerant ministry, especially in the form of itinerant prophets but also, to a lesser extent, itinerant teachers, appears to be still very much alive. The possibility for a prophet (or teacher) to become a resident leader in a community is confirmed, but in chapter 14 it is still the community as a whole that is instructed to hold eucharist on Sunday and apprised of the necessity of confession and reconciliation before that rite. Unexpectedly a command to choose bishops and deacons to perform the tasks previously handled by the prophets and teachers is given in chapter 15, followed by another instruction regarding community relationships. Although he rejects this now, Milavec once thought 15.1–2 best considered an interpolation, and he may have been right. As we have seen earlier, from a structural perspective chapters 14 and 15 are only minimally connected with each other and with the rest of the text through weak syntactic markers, and it would be impossible to tell on that basis alone whether any portion of this material was from a different redactional stage. Still, in a manner similar to the instruction on fasting and prayer in chapter 8, this section appears to be somewhat disruptive to the text here, though not to such an extent as to render it uninformative.

All of the new material, however, is now envisioned as being under the authority of an outside text. While the prior redactional layer (Did. 1–7; 9–11.2; 16) attested the existence and use of Jesus tradition but with no indication of it being contained in a single textual entity, there is now an authoritative text referred to as “the gospel.” This text is seemingly known to the addressees, since the author refers to it with the definite article, and thus it appears to be a written text that can be consulted. It is interesting that, at this stage, the text of the Didache itself is made subject to the gospel, yet the author apparently still has the authority to interpret the gospel for the community. It seems likely that we are dealing here with a strong “mother” church and a number of satellite communities of lesser status. Thus, in a way reminiscent of the Mishnah, texts similar to Matt 10:40 (also John 13:20) and 12:31 (but also in Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10), for example, are referred to in a shorthand way by the Didachist and then interpreted for specific situations. This cannot have taken place without the awareness of both parties of the text of the gospel. I suggest that it is also at this point that the author takes the opportunity to comment on/align the practices of the recipient communities on fasting and prayer, again in accordance with this

also supporting this conclusion. These, however, could be addressed to multiple persons in one community and thus do not carry the same weight as the support from 13.4.


51. For a description of various components that create effective communication within a text, see Beaugrande and Dressler, Introduction to Text Linguistics, 3–11.
“gospel.” Thus in Didache 8 we get the familiar term ὑποκριταί associated with these practices as is also the case in Matthew. The tone of the rhetoric here in the adjustment of these practices, as also in the stipulation that the eucharist take place on the “Lord’s day,” shows that the authoritative community has moved even further away from traditional Judaism at this point and has a much more “Christian” self-understanding. This in turn implies a much deeper and more permanent rift between Judaism and Christianity in Antioch.

Within this redactional model I have left for further reflection passages that Jefford categorized as “exceptions.” The first is Did. 6.2b, where the emphasis on keeping the τὸν ᾿υνόν τοῦ κυρίου (“the yoke of the Lord”) in order to be τέλειος (“perfect”) is now downgraded to ὃ δύνῃ, τοῦτο ποιεῖ (“do what you can”). The second is the provision for situational modifications to the baptismal rite (7.2–3), instructions that are rendered in the singular in contrast to the plural form of address just before and after it. To this I would also add the instruction of 1.6, which contradicts the command in 1.5 to give to everyone who asks. Each of these is in some way disruptive to the text and presumes an earlier version.

And yet if the redactional history that I have proposed is correct, it provides an alternative model for reconstructing the situation of the early Church in Antioch. For example, at the end of his paper, Jefford envisioned the Didache as a text whose first purpose “was to preserve in part those sayings and teachings of the original Christian Jewish community in Antioch that were not included in the text of Matthew” and whose final function was for the training of “presbyters,” former synagogue elders who were now assuming new roles within the Christian community. In his view, however, the usefulness of the text was short lived and virtually abandoned by the early second century, that is, “within a generation of its origin.” Though he accepts the existence of redactional stages within the text, it appears, if I am understanding him correctly, that he sees these stages as occurring in rather rapid succession. In contrast, the compositional history I have proposed results in a much more extended life for the text and thus a much larger window from which to view the history of the community/ies by whom and for whom it was created.

In an alternative view, Slee sees the Didache as a product of a single compositional stage and this affects greatly her reconstruction of the community. She suggests that the Didache was created in mid-first century Antioch for the purpose of resolving the conflict over table fellowship reported in Galatians and providing a way for the various factions in the church to coexist. In my view, however, Slee misses the marker indicating that the “yoke of the Lord” is a substitution for the Two Ways and instead, agreeing with Draper, understands the “yoke” as a reference to the Law of Moses. Thus in order to be “perfect,”

52. Jefford, “Locating the Didache,” 64 (see in this issue of the Forum).
something required in 16.2 for salvation, Gentiles are informed by the text that they will ultimately have to fulfill the entirety of the Law, though for the present they need only keep away from meat sacrificed to idols (6.2–3). Slee’s view that this latter instruction resolved the commensality issue may be correct, but her compositional view of the Didache forces her to view the community as one in which two “classes” of Christians co‐existed depending on the extent to which they kept the Mosaic Law and to view anything but full Torah observance as being ultimately inadequate for salvation.\footnote{Slee, Church in Antioch, 85–86. Here Slee also cites Draper’s articles, “Torah and Troublesome Apostles” and “Christian Self-Definition.”} If the instruction on the dietary law is from a later stage in the development of the text, however, it perhaps shows that the originally liberal stance taken toward Gentile converts has been softened a bit in an attempt to make it more acceptable to Torah‐observant Jewish Christians. Slee also does not recognize the change in communication levels in 7.1, which leads her to see the text that follows as continuing to address Gentile catechumens. Based on this, she views the “hypocrites” mentioned in the instruction on fasting and prayer not as Jewish opponents, but as a Christian Pharisaic group that is trying to interfere with the training of the new converts.\footnote{Slee, Church in Antioch, 92.} In my view such a reconstruction of the community of the Didache is not supported by the text itself.

The compositional history of the Didache, the relationship it bears to the Gospel of Matthew, and the insight it provides into early Christianity in Antioch is still very much a work in progress. I hope in this paper, however, to have made a small contribution towards achieving a clearer picture of the development of the Church in this ancient locale.

\footnote{55. Slee, Church in Antioch, 85–86. Here Slee also cites Draper’s articles, “Torah and Troublesome Apostles” and “Christian Self-Definition.”} 
\footnote{56. Slee, Church in Antioch, 92.}

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“That by His Passion He May Purify the Water”

Ignatius of Antioch and the Beginning of Mark’s Gospel

Charles A. Bobertz

Ignatius Ephesians 18.2:

ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκυρφορήθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας κατ’ οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ, ἐκ σπέρματος μὲν Δαυίδ πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου· ὃς ἐγεννήθη καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη ἵνα τῷ πάθει τὸ ὕδωρ καθαρίσῃ.

For our God, Jesus the Christ, was carried in the womb by Mary according to God’s plan, the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit, born and baptized so that by his passion he might purify the water.1

A basic question emerges in any consideration of the opening scene of Mark’s gospel (Mark 1:1–13), the appearance of John the Baptist in the Jordan wilderness and the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan river: why does Jesus, manifestly messiah the Son of God (Mark 1:1), have to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (1:5)? From almost any traditional theological perspective, Jesus is without sin.2 And from a narrative perspective—considering Mark not merely as a collector of traditions but as a truly creative author—why would Mark choose to begin his gospel with such a potentially embarrassing scene? He might just as easily, for example, have begun his story with a poetic prologue as we have in John or a version of the birth narrative as we have in the other two synoptic gospels (Matthew 1–2; Luke 1–2). Mark could also have begun his gospel with verse 14: “Now after John was arrested . . .” Even from a historical perspective it is hard to determine why the early Christian community would have chosen to include a story, despite John the Baptist’s protests within the story (1:7–8), that places Jesus in a position of being baptized by John and therefore portrayed as a disciple of John. So on a theological, narrative, or even historical understanding, the opening baptismal scene of Mark’s gospel does not make much sense.

2. See, e.g., Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Orations 3.11.

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Modern commentaries on Mark provide a range of suggestions to explain this apparent dilemma. Augustine Stock\(^3\) quotes Morna Hooker\(^4\) to the effect that the acceptance by Jesus of the baptism by John is a necessary link between John and Jesus and an acknowledgement of John’s preparatory role. Apparently combining theological, narrative and historical considerations, Stock argues that it is essential to have Jesus join John’s eschatological movement because it represents a break with Israel’s past disobedience and prepares for the advent of God’s kingdom. Offering a historical explanation, Ben Witherington follows many commentators by declaring that John figured prominently in Jesus’ life prior to his independent public ministry and that Jesus’ historical public ministry grew out of the public ministry of John.\(^5\) A comprehensive commentary by Joel Marcus discusses the early Christian embarrassment over the implication of Jesus’ sinfulness in this scene coupled with his subordination to John the Baptist. Making no attempt at explanation, Marcus quickly switches to a detailed discussion of Jesus’ baptismal vision.\(^6\) Mark Edwards, on the other hand, moves to explain the inconsistency by suggesting an original Hebrew or Aramaic narrative at 1:9. Edwards then appears to read the account of Jesus’ baptism by John as a straightforward literal and factual description of what actually happened.\(^7\) Finally, an expanded theological explanation of the scene is offered by C. E. B. Cranfield in his Cambridge Greek Testament commentary:

Jesus’ submission to John’s baptism of repentance was his mature self-dedication to his mission of self-identification with sinners which in due course would involve the Cross. In his baptism he became for men’s sake and in their place ‘the one great Sinner who repents’ — to use Barth’s daring phrase . . . it is by no means unlikely that already at the Jordan he was aware that his baptism by John foreshadowed another baptism, more bitter, without which his mission could not be accomplished.\(^8\)

All of the commentaries above, and others that could be cited, view Mark’s account of the baptism of Jesus by John as a potentially troublesome feature of the gospel. Yet it may well be that Ignatius of Antioch’s citation of an early Christian creed in Eph. 18.2 provides us with an ancient liturgical tradition of

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3. Stock, *The Method and Message of Mark*, 52. Yet essential questions, narrative or historical, such as why Christ himself would have to be baptized into John’s movement or why Christ would need forgiveness of sins remain unaddressed in what otherwise is a valuable discussion of this part of the gospel.
baptism that helps us to explain why Mark begins his gospel with the awkward inconsistency of Jesus being baptized by John.

We should begin with an analysis of the creedal and liturgical quality of Ignatius’ reference at Eph. 18.2:

For our God, Jesus the Christ, was carried in the womb by Mary according to God’s plan, the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit, born and baptized so that by his passion he might purify the water.

As William Schoedel indicates, the passage here reflects the conception, birth, and passion of Jesus as the special mark of Ignatius’ incarnational theology. What one notices, however, is that the reference here is not just to the conception, birth, and passion (πάθος), but also to baptism as an integral part of the quoted formula. And in his citations of other creedal material (e.g., Smyrn. 1.1), Ignatius includes the emphatic “truly” (ἀληθῶς) when he refers to Jesus’ baptism, an emphasis not included here. So also in Ephesians 19 when Ignatius alludes to certain mysteries, baptism is not singled out. Baptism then is not one of the primary topics found in Ignatius’ authentic letters. So its abrupt appearance in Eph. 18.2 might well signal that it is part of an earlier creedal or liturgical tradition being quoted by the bishop of Antioch. So how might the content of such an early creedal tradition help us to understand the opening of Mark’s gospel?

No modern commentaries that I am aware of suggest this early tradition of “so that he might purify the water” as a reason, if not the reason, for the baptism of Jesus in Mark’s gospel. Scholars have long noted that the undeniable narrative focus of Mark is the passion. And of course the connection of baptism with the passion of Jesus and early Christian martyrs is made within the narrative of Mark itself at 10:38–39. So it makes sense that the opening scene of Mark reflects a liturgical understanding of baptism connected to the passion of Jesus. It is moreover highly likely that the story presented here at the outset of the gospel, Jesus coming up out of the water (1:10), directly reflects the liturgical practice of the Markan house churches.

10. See, e.g., Ign. Smyrn. 1.1.
11. Schoedel, Ignatius, 84, refers to 18.2 as “quasi-creedal material.” He suggests that Ignatius’ unique opening reference at 18.2 (“Jesus the Christ”) may well signal that such an ancient creedal tradition reflected a sensitivity to “Christ” as a title rather than a second name. And there are other qualities in this text that help us to confirm this hypothesis. The final clause of this verse, a ἵνα (“so that”) purpose clause (“so that he might purify the water”) appears nowhere else in Ignatius’ writing. It is plausible to assume, therefore, that Ignatius is quoting an earlier tradition.
12. As early as Kähler, The So-Called Historical Jesus, 80.
13. As numerous scholars have pointed out, there are many direct references to the passion narrative in the opening baptismal scene. Examples would include the depiction of John as Elijah (1:6) and the call to Elijah at the cross (15:35–36), as well as the “tearing” of the heavens at the baptism of Jesus (1:10) and the “tearing” of the Temple curtain (15:38).
From the standpoint of a liturgical practice that must have emerged prior to the writing of Mark and even Paul’s earliest letters, it may well be that Christians connected the ritual power of baptism to the apocalyptic defeat of demonic forces, the immersion ritual itself being the place of battle between the powers of Chaos (water) and the divine. In Mark, Jesus rises from the waters of baptism (1:10) in order to immediately engage the forces of Satan (Chaos) in the wilderness (1:13). It is only after this confrontation that Jesus begins his ministry in the gospel, often confronting demons, watery Chaos, and death and defeating them all (1:23; 4:35–41; 5:41; 7:5; 9:17). So from the beginning of the gospel to its end, the cosmic struggle between divine power and Chaos, inaugurated in the baptism, has been joined. And surely this is also the essential idea being expressed in the liturgical tradition cited by Ignatius: “that by his passion he might purify the water.” The liturgical tradition cited by Ignatius signals an apocalyptic victory by the death of Christ over the forces of Chaos.

The idea that the liturgical ritual of baptism was part of a greater apocalyptic drama that involved the battle between the forces of Chaos—water, demons, and death—and the powerful Spirit of God is prevalent across the early Christian spectrum of literature, both heterodox and orthodox. A few examples must suffice here. At the end of the second century CE, Tertullian read both the Old Testament and New Testament typologically. Christ was now part of the story of the Exodus and wilderness wandering while also being the “rock” of Horeb (Exod 17:6) from which the water, now Christian baptismal water, flows. Having himself been baptized, Christ was now the baptismal water used in the church, filled with power for the apocalyptic battle that lies ahead both in the gospel narrative and in the church of Tertullian’s day. Tertullian goes on to assert that the power of the baptismal font in the church is established through the passion and resurrection of Christ, no doubt in Tertullian’s mind the powerful means with which to engage in the cosmological struggle against demonic forces. Elsewhere, Tertullian even hints at what I think is a sound

14. Paul of course makes numerous references to both baptism (e.g., Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27–28) and the Lord’s supper (e.g., 1 Cor 11:17–34), and expects his audience to be familiar with the rites.

15. Tertullian writes: “This is the water which flowed continuously down for the people from the nearby rock; for if Christ is the rock without doubt we see baptism blest by the water in Christ. How powerful is the gift of the water, in the sight of God and his Christ for the confirmation of baptism. Christ is never without water if He is Himself baptized in water. He inaugurates in water the first rudimentary displays of His power” (De Baptismo 9). Translations from the Latin and emphases are my own.

16. “And thus it was with this baptism of John that his disciples used to baptize as ministers, the baptism with which John before had baptized as forerunner. Let none think it was with some other baptism because no other exists, except that [baptism] of Christ subsequently; which at that time, of course, could not be given by His disciples, inasmuch as the glory of the Lord had not yet been fully attained, nor the efficacy of the font established through the passion and the resurrection; because neither can our death be defeated except by the Lord’s passion, nor our life be restored without his resurrection” (De Baptismo 11).
reading of Mark’s opening scene as Jesus’ baptism into his own death, the entire subsequent Markan narrative being the inevitable dramatic denouement of that beginning apocalyptic struggle.17

Ironically perhaps, this interpretation of Jesus’ baptism in the Markan narrative as the ritual enactment of his own death might well be supported by what the second century Gnostics, quoted here in the Gospel of Philip, were arguing against: namely, the incarnational implications of the orthodox insistence on the reality of the passion and death of Christ enacted in baptism. For the orthodox apparently, the water of baptism really is Chaos and death and, one might surmise, the victory over death, rising from the water, was a victory for creation itself. This understanding of the water is precisely what the Gospel of Philip appears to fear:

By perfecting the water of baptism, Jesus emptied it of death. Thus we do go down into the water, but we do not go down into death, in order that we may not be poured out into the spirit of the world. When that spirit blows, it brings the winter. When the Holy Spirit breathes, the summer comes. (77)18

Another gnostic text, the Paraphrase of Shem, uses graphic terms to depict the cosmological struggle behind the scenes of the baptism of the redeemer (Jesus). Whirlpools and flames rise up against the redeemer as he descends into the water, but he emerges victorious, and thus frees the spirit imprisoned in creation by the winds and the demons and the stars:

Then I shall come from the demon down to the water. And whirlpools of water and flames of fire will rise up against me. Then I shall come up from the water having put on the light of faith and the unquenchable fire in order that through my help the power of the Spirit may cross she who has been cast into the world by the winds and the demons and the stars. (32)19

As Schoedel intimates in his commentary on Ignatius, the idea that the water was purified by Christ’s baptism—itself an enactment of the passion—is surely linked to the more ancient Near Eastern mythology of the defeat of the dragon of the deep.20

It is the important work of Jon Levenson in interpreting the Genesis creation narrative utilizing comparative material from ancient Jewish and Near Eastern mythology that places the mythology of the struggle of God against watery

17. “For, on Christ’s being baptized, that is, upon his sanctification of the waters by His own baptism . . .” (Adversus Judaeos 14).
18. Translations of Coptic Gnostic texts are slightly altered from James M. Robinson, The Nag Hammadi Library in English.
19. See also Testimony of Truth 30: “And John bore witness to the descent of Jesus. For it is he who saw the power which came down upon the Jordan River; for he knew that the dominion of carnal procreation had come to an end.”
20. Schoedel, Ignatius, 84; see also Odes of Solomon 22.5.
Chaos into its proper liturgical and ritual context. Ultimately, Levenson argues, it is the defining of ritual order within the Temple cult in ancient Judaism that marks out the order of creation amidst the constant assault of Chaos. Ritual action literally sustains the order of the cosmos. Such a role for ritual action in ancient cultic practice increases the likelihood the creedal summaries like those found at Ignatius Eph. 18.2 and depictions of ritual action like the opening baptismal scene in Mark share the cultic context of the early Christian communities, a context within which the crucified and risen Christ becomes the center of ritual order and perforce the antagonist to the forces of Chaos.

Further, Levenson argues that what is depicted in descriptions of the ancient Temple cult is the constant possibility, a cosmic threat, of a return to Chaos from the creation established by ritual action. Most important for my purpose here, however, is to note Levenson’s convincing argument that God’s sovereignty over Chaos in ancient Judaism was a liturgical reality, realized and enacted in the cultic system of the Jerusalem Temple on Mount Zion. With the performance of the cult, Zion becomes the phenomenological cosmic mountain. Creation proceeds from Zion, and Zion becomes the junction and conduit between heaven, earth, and hell. In the cult, moreover, primordial mythical time is present as opposed to what we might describe as time or temporality. The cosmic mountain is Eden, the order of creation itself, untarnished by time, surrounded yet unaffected by threats of Chaos.

The two major seven day liturgical festivals, Tabernacles in the fall and Passover in the spring, also fit within this description of the cosmic mountain. Both celebrated the new year and the enthronement of God in battle tested victory over Chaos. In particular, the spring celebration of Passover celebrated the cosmogonic victory over watery Chaos (the Red Sea is pushed back just as in Genesis the chaotic waters at creation are pushed back) followed by the salvific appearance of dry land upon which the carefully ordered sanctuary was built. This sanctuary, with its intended cultic practice, seals and continues in that practice the victory of God in establishing the ordered creation (dry land) over Chaos (waters).

Early Christian texts depicting the baptism of Jesus and alluding to Christian baptism in general continued to depict this myth of the struggle of God against Chaos. The myth was enacted in the baptismal ritual wherein Christ literally (the body of Christ) became the embodiment of the struggle of divine order against the cosmic forces of Chaos. The water of baptism was death and Chaos—the passion of Christ—and the resurrection from the water was the establishment of divine order manifest in the sanctuary ritually enacted in the Lord’s supper (the body of Christ). This meal was the ritual space that manifested the proper order.

of creation itself. This ancient Christian understanding finds its most classic expression four centuries later in the description of bishop Cyril of Jerusalem:

According to Job, there was in the waters the dragon that drew up the Jordan into his mouth. Since, therefore, it was necessary to break the head of the dragon into pieces, he [Christ] went down and bound the strong one in the waters, that we might receive power to tread upon serpents and scorpions. The beast was great and terrible. No fishing-vessel was able to carry one scale of his tail: destruction ran before him, ravaging all that met him.

In the commentary on Ignatius’ letter to the Ephesians, Schoedel points out that the crushing of the head of the dragon of the deep still figured in the cultic rites of the ancient Syrian church for the blessing of the water or the benediction of the baptismal font. Moreover in the ancient Byzantine rite of water blessing, there is mention of “the opposing powers.” The exorcistic function of the water blessing rite is clear and the link with Christ’s baptism in the Jordan is explicit. Thus the tradition found in Ignatius (“so that he might purify the water”) most likely does reflect cultic practice and understanding of the place wherein divine power defeats Chaos. It is therefore almost certain that this understanding of ancient Christian baptismal practice undergirds the depiction of Jesus’ baptism at the opening of Mark. Jesus takes on the forces of Chaos and death in ritual action and so sets the stage for the dramatic confrontation with, and victory over, the forces of Chaos and death in the narrative that follows.

There was therefore a continuing tradition informed through ancient Jewish cultic practice and early Christian cultic practice that depicted a cosmological battle for the order of creation between the forces of God and Chaos. And so it stands to reason that both Mark and Ignatius would be influenced by such traditions. Jesus purifies the water; Jesus rises from the water; ritual practice enacts the story.

This consideration of the ritual power of baptism in the context of early Christian apocalyptic thought and practice points to a much more satisfying answer to our original question concerning the opening of Mark’s gospel: why does Jesus have to undergo baptism by John? Early Christians enacted their baptismal liturgy as an enactment of divine power over Chaos. They apocalyptically understood Christ’s passion as the final struggle with Chaos before the victory of Christ in resurrection. Coming forth from the midst of the water

22. The correlation between this Christian self-definition and the creation of the gospel narrative is clear. Paul declares that an ethical violation of the sacred space of the meal is the reason that some in Corinth have become sick and died (1 Cor 11:30). In Mark, Jesus, having risen from baptism, attends to the order of nature (Mark 4:35–41; 6:48) as well as sickness and disease throughout the gospel.
and death was life and creation, cosmic struggle and triumph enacted in cultic practice. The water was made pure. Chaos was defeated. In the Gospel of Mark the ritual baptism of Jesus, the defeat of Chaos and the triumph of order, encapsulates and gives meaning to the narrative that follows. Jesus in the narrative of Mark is the resurrected Christ who conquers, because he has already conquered in the opening baptismal scene, the forces of death and Chaos.

Works Cited


Story and Ritual as the Foundation of Nations

Helmut Koester

Greece

In his book *Pindar’s Homer*, Gregory Nagy has demonstrated that the story of Homer’s *Iliad* was the foundation story of the Hellenes. At the same time, and together with the story of the conquest of Troy, the rituals of the regular festivals for all Hellenes in Olympia, Nemea, Delphi, and Isthmia became the cornerstone of a new nation, the Greeks.

The Hellenes originally were a conglomeration of various tribes and cities that were often at war with each other and only sometimes formed temporary alliances. There was a unifying language, although it was divided into many dialects: Aeolian, Doric, Ionic, and Attic, which also accompanied the Greek migrations into western Asia Minor—not to speak of Macedonian, only remotely related to Greek dialects. But there was nothing like a national unity until the eighth or seventh century BCE. The legend of all Greeks before Troy is, of course, a fiction. Moreover, every tribe and every city had its own foundation story or legend and its own deities. Many of these foundation myths and legends survive in the works of the Greek tragedians and in later mythologies. But they told only the story of particular cities, and they were related to specific deities and their rituals.

The story that finally became the common bond for all people inhabiting Greece and the western shores of Asia Minor was the story of the conquest of Troy. It was an inclusive story; all Greek cities and tribes were enumerated at this great adventure of the nation. As the singers repeated the story, new cities were added in order to make the list of participants in the war against Troy complete and all-inclusive. Various versions of the story were still performed in many places and repeated orally for a long time. The codification of the story in written form in Homer’s classic epic was only the conclusion of this development, while it did not bring to an end the oral performances of the story, as can be seen in the *Odes of Pindar*.

The story of unifying rituals for the nation was complex. Though Zeus became increasingly recognized as the chief deity, there was no attempt to eliminate polytheism. The unifying rituals were celebrated in different sanctuaries, two of which belonged to Zeus (Olympia and Nemea), one to Apollo (Delphi),
and one to Poseidon (Isthmia). But the story of the nation before Troy belonged to all of them. These performances were now bound to particular rituals and celebrations at the four national sanctuaries: Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea. In ritual and story the unity of all Hellenes was thus demonstrated and made visible. An external documentation of this unity was the termination of all warfare during a certain period before and after the festivals, which were celebrated at specified intervals. In fact, the four-year intervals of the Olympic games became the standard for calculating times and years. The various treasuries dedicated by Greek cities and tribes in these sanctuaries also document their presence as part of the nation of all Hellenes. The admittance of the Macedonians to the Olympic festival in the fourth century BCE under Philip II also documents the inclusion of Macedonia into the nation of the Hellenes.

A final stage in the development of the story of Troy after its written codification is the writing of allegorical commentaries on Homer’s *Iliad*. This marks the time of the termination of development of new versions of the story.

**Israel**

A similar pattern can be observed in the history of Israel. Also here is story and ritual fundamental to the creation of the nation. It is often questioned whether indeed all the tribes of Israel had been in slavery in Egypt and participated in the Exodus. Perhaps only one or two tribes came from Egypt. But they brought the memory and story of the Exodus from Egypt to the promised land. As these people lived side by side with other tribes, their story at first competed with tribes already settled with their own stories and their own sanctuaries. There were two other foundation stories that competed with the Exodus story: the story of the “Ancestors,” which derived the origin of the people from a place beyond the Euphrates, from where Abraham migrated to the land of Canaan; and the royal story laying down the justification for the establishment of the kings of Israel.

The first step towards becoming a nation was the formation of an amphictyony of tribes that spoke the same language, even if different dialects existed. Different from the development of the nation of the Hellenes, the amphictyones attempted to establish a central sanctuary and a religious system of monolatry. Joshua 22 relates that the secession of the Rubenites, Gadites, and a part of the tribe Manasse also included the establishment of a separate sanctuary beyond the Jordan, probably dedicated to a different deity, which resulted in the threat of war. As the amphictyony becomes a nation, all tribes are bound to one story and one deity. Joshua 24 describes the establishment of the covenant: Joshua

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1. Martin Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels*.
2. See the famous *shibboleth* of Judg 12:5–6.
recites the story, which has already combined the story of the Patriarchs with the story of the Exodus. The covenant includes the taking of an oath that includes the obligation to worship only Yahweh. Twelve stones were erected after the crossing of the Jordan for the twelve tribes (Joshua 4). It is interesting to note that the numbers do not quite fit: there must have been originally thirteen tribes, and therefore one of the sons of Jacob, namely Joseph (there was never a tribe named after him!), became the father of two tribes, to wit, Ephraim and Manasse.

There were doubtlessly several sanctuaries, and the sanctuary of the Exodus people—for a long time a movable sacred shrine that could be transported from one place to another—had to compete with other shrines existing in the country. This shrine was finally brought to Jerusalem and later enshrined in the Temple. There were other significant sanctuaries: Dan, Shechem, Carmel, Garizim, Bethel, Beersheba, and later in Elephantine. Israel attempted to legitimize only one sanctuary, though without lasting success. Because of the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, the temple at Bethel became important as the central shrine of the northern kingdom of Israel. Even in the post-Exilic times, several shrines existed, one in Jerusalem, another on Mount Garizim—destroyed by Hircanus in 128 BCE—another apparently across the Jordan, and for some time there was a temple in Leontopolis in Egypt.

Just as in the case of the formation of the nation of the Hellenes, the story of the Exodus and the competing foundation stories were told orally. The Exodus story circulated in more than one version, which is evident in the parallels of the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy and in the pieces of the story preserved in written form in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. Moreover, the story continued to be sung apart from its written fixation; these songs are preserved in a number of Psalms. It was a long development that leads from the beginnings to the codification of the holy scripture of the Pentateuch. The oral tradition may already have combined several foundation stories. But definitely in the written versions the three major competing stories (Exodus, patriarchal, and later the royal story) were combined not only in the sequence in which they were recorded, but also internally. Gen 22:14 and 14:18–20, for example, connects Abraham as the representative of the people of the country with Jerusalem. The establishment of major festivals is told as part of the foundation story (Passover in Exodus 12; Mazzot festival in Exodus 13).

In the history of Israel further adjustments to the foundation story were needed. At the time of the Exile both royalty and the possession of the land became problematic. In deuterо-Isaiah 40–55 the possession of the land is replaced by the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Even the institution of the Temple as the dwelling place of God is questioned: God is dwelling among the people. The foundation story ends with the death of Moses, who is neither king nor priest but the prophet interpreting the law, in the codification of the five books of the Pentateuch as binding holy scripture. Nehemiah 8–10 tells how this written
document and its interpretation became the ultimate form of the foundational story for Israel.³

After the final codification and the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, there was no more opportunity to tell the story anew and independently. This translation (not the original Hebrew!) was later held as inspired Word of God and, parallel to the later interpretation of Homer’s *Iliad*, allegorical interpretation assured that the foundation story retained its relevance.

Henceforth, the primary festival in which the story of the Exodus is remembered had been democratized, namely in the celebration of Passover. This democratization of the story of the Exodus and its separation from a particular sanctuary was reinforced by Deutero-Isaiah: God no longer lives in the Temple but among the people of Zion. Thus the celebration was not bound to public sanctuaries but was celebrated in the house and family. Until this day, Passover is the feast in which the story of the Exodus is repeated and documented in the performances: the unleavened bread as the food of those who are on the way, the lamb, the bitter herbs, and the cups. Even today Passover is the feast in which all Jews—however secularized—remember that they belong to one nation.

Rome

For many centuries Rome had its foundation legend that told that the twin brothers Romulus and Remus founded the city in the year 753 BCE. From this date were all the years counted (*ab urbe condita*). This legend was also used as the foundation for various political, social, and religious institutions. But as a parochial legend it was primarily concerned with the city of Rome itself. It had no major significance for Rome as the capital of worldwide empire.

The creation of the story and the ritual for the Roman empire and its many nations took place at the end of the Roman Republic at the time of Julius Caesar and especially of Octavian/Augustus. It did not set aside the old story of the founding of the city by Romulus and Remus and the rituals associated with it, but it overshadowed the old story because of its more international significance. The older story was overshadowed by the story of the Trojan hero Aeneas, which finally became enshrined as the new epic for the empire in Vergil’s *Aeneid*. It was not an entirely new story. Some legends tell that Romulus and Remus, the founders of the city, were descendants of this Trojan hero (unless this is a later attempt to connect the two stories). In any case, Julius Caesar had already depicted on his coins the Trojan hero Aeneas, the son of Aphrodite, as he was fleeing from the ruins of Troy carrying on his shoulders his aged father

³. I am indebted to Klaus Baltzer for much of what I have learned about story and ritual in Israel.
Anchises holding the Penates and his young son Ascanius at his side. The Julian family derived its origin from Aeneas and thus from his mother, the goddess Aphrodite, who was later worshiped by Augustus as Venus Genetrix.

The story of Aeneas was fundamentally different from the older foundation myth of Rome as the city of Romulus and Remus because it belonged to a fresh eschatological worldview. This worldview had found its expression in the Roman poets of the time, primarily with Horace and Vergil. Augustus had often participated in the readings of these poets in the circle sponsored by Maecenas, and had adopted the vision that he was standing at the beginning of a new age. It was no longer the age of the primary state god Jupiter but the age of Apollo and the age of the sun, which was being prepared for all nations under Rome.

The most universal expression of the consciousness of a new departure was the institution of the Julian solar calendar. Cities were encouraged to issue decrees certifying the introduction of the solar calendar. Such decrees were then published in inscriptions, a number of which are preserved, known as “gospel” inscriptions. The gospels (euangelia) issuing from Rome announced the celebration of the emperor’s birthday as the coming (epiphanēia) of the savior (soter) Augustus and his unsurpassed benefactions. The new age of the sun was made visible in the erection of the temple of Apollo by Augustus in Rome. Years were now counted from Augustus’ victory over Marc Antony at Actium. The Altar of Peace (Ara Pacis), consecrated in the year 12 BCE, depicts Aeneas supervising the traditional three-animal sacrifice and the fruitful Mother Earth, thus symbolizing the time of the origin (Urzeit) and the coming of future blessings (Endzeit).

In the Fourth Eclοge, Vergil’s eschatological prophecy had employed the venerable ancient Egyptian prophecy of the birth of the child, a prophecy that had already been used in Israel in the composition of Isaiah 9 and would reoccur in the beginning chapters of Luke’s work. Also in the Aeneid, Vergil reaches back to the past in which the future is preordained. Old myths and legends, sung for centuries by the bards, are refashioned into a new epic story. The people of old and their deeds, conflicts, and battles prefigure things to come. Even explicit prophecies of the coming of Augustus Caesar, the son of the divinized Caesar (divi filius), can be found (6.1045–50). On the shield of Aeneas, wrought by Vulcan in gold and electrum and presented to Aeneas by his mother Venus, are depicted in all the coming glorious events of Roman history and in great detail the Battle of Actium and the triumphal procession of Augustus as he returns to Rome as victor over Marc Antony and the Egyptian queen (8.874–950). Moreover, both the story and the language recall Homer’s epic. As in the Iliad, the gods are divided supporting the hero (Jupiter and, of course, Venus) or

4. Dieter Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?”
opposing him (Juno). The story is also forced into the Homeric hexameters, a Greek poetic mode that is ill-fitted for the Latin language. We shall find the same reaching back into past history and language also in the formation of the new Christian story.

When Horace was commissioned to compose the hymn for the centennial celebrations of Rome in the year 17 BCE, he heightened in his Carmen Seculare the sense of eschatology beginning to be realized. What has been promised for the coming of the new age is beginning to be realized in the present time. Old virtues are restored; new legislation assures that a society with the values of the past is being built; signs of the new fruitfulness of the earth can already be seen; the blessings of the gods extend to all people. Also here, by the guidance of divine blessings, the pattern of reaching back into the past to form the story of what is to come and in part already has come can be observed.

What had been accomplished in the building of the new story of Rome that would extend to all nations of the Roman realm did not stand alone. Roman, as well as local, cults and rituals continued to exist and were encouraged to reform and to function according to established traditions, including also the Temple cult of Jerusalem. But a new ritual was added for the political benefit and unity of all people under Roman rule, to wit, the cult of the divinized Caesar. Octavian, after the assassination of Caesar, when nobody dared to support the funeral games for the dead Caesar, the young Octavian, adopted by the testament of his great-uncle, financed such games out of his own resources. A comet appeared in the sky during the celebrations, which was interpreted as the ascension of Caesar to be seated in the assembly of the gods. This was the beginning of the imperial cult. It was destined to become the religious symbol and political bond holding together all nations under Rome rule.

In the time of Octavian/Augustus, Rome tried to leave behind the civil wars and the terrible legacy of the past when it was a dominant city that mercilessly had exploited its conquered nations. A new story (the epic of Vergil) and a unifying ritual (the imperial cult) were designed to create a new reality in which all nations and cities were united into a new commonwealth of all people, in which the city of Rome was to become the symbol and the guarantor of this unity as princeps inter pares. Imperial temples began to honor the deified Caesar and the goddess Roma, then the deified emperors and, as time went on, also the ruling emperor as a deified god. Imperial temples were erected within a few years or at least within a few decades. Even the Jerusalem Temple demonstrated its loyalty by a daily ritual for the emperor. During the following centuries, cities in the provinces competed with each other for the honor of becoming a temple warden (neokoros) for imperial temples. Some major cities and provincial capitals eventually achieved that honor twice or even three times and proudly called themselves in the official documents and inscriptions “Twice Neokoros” or “Three Times Neokoros.” An imperial high priest was appointed by the ruling emperor for each of the Roman provinces, even as late as the time of
Constantine. Also, aristocratic women can be found among these provincial officials. And there were of course also Caesarean games instituted to be celebrated at regular intervals.

These religious institutions and their rituals were to become the major instrument to hold together the many nations of the vast realm under Rome rule. It was what the Romans called *religio*, the instituted rituals, sacrifices, and games, together with the story telling the origin and significance of the performance that had a highly political significance. The favor of the gods was needed and dependent upon their rightful performance.

In the Greco-Roman tradition, such understanding of the imperial cult did not deny the designation of a legitimate *religio* to other religious institution and celebrations of the various nations and cities under its rule. On the contrary, the imperial cult was often closely connected to existing older local cults. In Athens, for example, the temple of Augustus and Roma, the primary gods of Rome, imitated in its architectural decorations the patterns of the venerable Erechtheion that housed the sanctuaries of Erechtheus, the founding hero of Athens, and of the city goddess Athena. In Pergamum, the temple of Dionysus was rebuilt and dedicated to Caracalla, the “New Dionysus.” In this respect the new Roman story and ritual for the entire empire differed fundamentally from Israel and its insistence that the god of Israel was the only real god, creator of heaven and earth, and eventually tried to make sure that there was only one legitimate temple, where this god was worshiped. All other gods were idols and all worship and ritual dedicated to them was idol worship. Christianity inherited this monotheistic commitment from Israel that had already begun to dominate the Greco-Roman world at large in various forms.

Rome’s respect for other religious movements and local cults and their traditions was an unusually successful move. On the one hand, the primary ritual (the imperial cult) and its story became the only *religio* that had a political function as the bond for all nations under Rome. On the other hand, rituals and stories of other nations were deprived of their general political significance. They became just “religions,” respected and practiced, but without wider relevance. They could continue their life on the whole undisturbed as long as they also paid homage to Rome and provided at least some token of recognition to the politically functioning imperial cult.

Christianity

**John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth**

It is not the intention of this paper to get involved in the complex and bewildering discussion of the “historical Jesus.” I am convinced, however, that all attempts to find the “historical Jesus” by recourse to rabbinic Judaism, to messianic movements of the time, to apocalyptic mythology of early Judaism, or even to social or philosophical Greco-Roman models of the time are misguided.
They fail to consider the indebtedness of Jesus and of John the Baptist to the prophetic tradition of Israel.

John the Baptist was a prophet in the tradition of the prophecy of Israel of old. True prophets are politicians, so was John. Instead of tuning in with the messianic false prophets of his time who saw the evil in Rome and agitated for an uprising of Israel against their Roman oppressors, John saw the evil in Israel and called Israel to repentance in the face of the coming judgment of God.

Jesus’ prophetic proclamation, which probably began after his teacher’s arrest by Herod Antipas, should not be interpreted as an invitation to a new personal piety. Rather it must be understood as a proclamation in the tradition of Israel’s prophets. Israel’s prophecy was a third institution in the nation, independent of the other two (royal court and Temple) and more often than not opposed to them. Their prophetic message was a call for political and social justice, for the feeding of the poor and their rights in the court, and directed against the luxurious living of the upper class. They announced the coming of God’s judgment if Israel would not repent and return to justice for all. The prophets wanted to establish justice so that God’s rule (the “kingdom of God”) could become a reality in Israel.

Jesus fully belonged to this prophetic tradition of Israel as he called for repentance in the face of the coming judgment of God. In this same tradition, Jesus announced that God’s rule would bring bread to the poor, who were the rightful owners of the land. These beatitudes, as well as his command to love one’s enemies, are utterances of eminent social and political relevance. But Jesus added a new element to this proclamation: those who would hear his call could already now participate in the justice of the rule of God that would eventually bring care and equity for all the oppressed and neglected and despised people—the poor, the weeping, and the persecuted—and restore them to their rightful place under the rule of the God of all Israel. The degree to which this was also a call for the establishment of God’s rule for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, is difficult to ascertain. But the call for loving one’s enemies certainly goes beyond the nationalistic parochialism of the messianic propaganda of Jesus’ time. Also, that would be quite in agreement with the later prophets of Israel, especially deuter-Isaiah, where the prophet is also designated as a prophet to all nations (Isa 49:6).

There is no new story and no new ritual here. Everything remains within the tradition of Israel, only the eschatological expectation is heightened. Also the baptism in the Jordan by John belongs here. The origin of this ritual is debated. It certainly cannot be explained as a borrowing from the repeated washing rites of the Essenes. In my opinion the most plausible explanation is that it was recourse to the Exodus tradition. As Israel entered the promised land, the crossing of the Jordan was already interpreted in terms of the crossing of the sea. If that is the case also in John’s baptism in the Jordan, it would attest that John’s and Jesus’ messages did not go beyond the prophetic proclamation of Israel in story
and ritual. This would be confirmed if the institution of the Twelve as representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel goes back to Jesus himself.

**Jesus’ Suffering, Death, and Resurrection**

What happened after the crucifixion and death of Jesus? A naïve answer to this question would suggest that the disciples eagerly collected the memory of whatever Jesus had said and done. But that is extremely unlikely for people who were pious and traditional people of Israel. It is much more plausible that they would have prayed, sung psalms, and read and interpreted the scriptures and also celebrated a meal in the tradition of the meals they had experienced in Jesus’ company.

The passion narrative that is preserved in the gospels of the New Testament and also in the *Gospel of Peter* clearly indicates how a memory of Jesus’ suffering and death was formed. It is without any doubt that this reading reflects the stories of the suffering of the prophet, especially of the servant of God in Isaiah 53, and of the stories of the suffering righteous as they are present in the Psalms, foremost Psalm 21 (22). Here lies the origin of the passion narrative. Much later Luke told this in his masterful and moving legend of the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13–32). The stories of the suffering and vindication of the prophet and of the righteous who had been martyred gave Jesus’ disciples the language by which they could tell the story of Jesus. Luke’s story also contains another important element: at the breaking of the bread they realized that Jesus had been mysteriously present with them—and he disappeared from their eyes, but they knew that he was alive.

Luke’s story is not the only attestation confirming that the developing narrative of Jesus’ suffering and death was closely connected to a meal celebrated in Jesus’ company. The apostle Paul is the earliest witness, and he confirms the close connection of the Eucharist with the narrative of Jesus’ suffering and death. In the introduction to the words of the institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23) he shows clearly that he knew a narrative context for the statement “in the night he was handed over” (*en tē nukti hē paredideto*). Moreover, he designates that what he is going to cite as a tradition that he had received (*egō paretlabon apo tou kuriou ho kai paredōka*). Two observations are crucial: (1) the tradition must have existed before his call; (2) it was already associated with a story that was based on the memory of the scripture of Isaiah 53 from which the phrase “in which he was handed over” (*hē paredideto*—certainly not “in which he was betrayed”!) has been derived. This is confirmed by the evident allusions to Isaiah 53 in the quotation of the “gospel” in 1 Cor 15:3–4, where Paul also refers to the fact that he had received this gospel as a tradition. Of course, what is quoted here as “the gospel” is a short formula referring to a whole narrative context, to wit, the passion narrative.

It can be concluded that an oral passion narrative already existed in the very early days of the formation of the church, certainly before Paul’s call. It also
demonstrates that this narrative was based on scriptural prophecy, especially on Deutero-Isaiah. But it did not recall the Exodus story and passover. 6 This is a new story, and it is closely connected to a new ritual. Passion narrative and Eucharist belong together, as the institution of the Eucharist is also both embedded in the passion narratives of the Synoptic Gospels. The close connection of story and ritual indicates that the missionary efforts of the founding period are not designed to spread a new religion; rather, they seek to found a new eschatological nation that opposes the equally eschatological propaganda of Rome. This is a political, not a “religious,” enterprise. It is confirmed by the use of political terminology. The message is called “gospel,” borrowing a key term of Augustus’ propaganda. The representatives of this new nation are designated as the local “assembly” (ekklēsia) in parallel to the political local assemblies of the various cities of the empire.

The message for the new nation, however, is diametrically opposed to Rome’s story. The story of Christ’s suffering and death was for Paul the core of the message that wants to establish a new nation under the rule of God and Christ. The new nation under Christ was to be built right now among all those who were willing to join, be baptized into the one body, and become part of a new society in which all functions deserved equal respect and dignity. It was an eschatological vision of a community that would soon be confirmed by the return of Christ in glory to commence his rule and issue in a new world of justice and equality for all. 7

Piety and morality, the social pillars of the Roman empire, would not be the standards for the building of this new nation. Indeed, the terms piety and morality never appear in Paul’s genuine letters. This does not imply that immoral behavior is now acceptable. On the contrary, immorality is simply off limits. 8 Moral and pious conduct, however, establish individuals as good Roman citizens and not yet citizens of the new realm of Christ. To become a citizen of that realm requires a different standard of conduct, namely, the commandment of

6. There is no indication that the last meal of Jesus was a Passover meal. The dating of the Gospel of John (18:28) is certainly the oldest tradition, if not even historical (pace the dating of the Synoptic Gospels). Paul’s reference in 1 Cor 5:7 to Jesus as the Passover sacrifice (to pascha hēmōn etythē Christos) may also reflect knowledge that Jesus died at the time of slaughtering of the Passover lambs. The same tradition is also reflected in the Easter date of the Quartodecimans, who mourned Jesus’ death and fasted while the Jews celebrated their Passover meals.

7. I reject the interpretation of 1 Thess 4:17 that believers would be taken up in the clouds into heaven at the return of Christ. The use of the terminology of apantēsis suggests that those going out of the city to meet Christ, those still living and the resurrected dead alike, would have to use the vehicle of the cloud to meet Christ in the air in order to bring him back to earth triumphantly because Christ is coming, after all, from heaven.

8. See especially 1 Corinthians 5–6.
Once one becomes incorporated into the body of Christ, neither the moral standards of the Greco-Roman world nor the law of Israel are able to tell the new member what they should do. Only spelling out the commandment of love (1 Corinthians 13) and following the guidance of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–25) can be the guide to conduct. The “law of Christ” is to carry one another’s burden (Gal 6:2). The law of Moses is thus rejected as a guide, but otherwise the churches reached back into the language of the Bible of Israel, although not to the Exodus story but to the stories of the suffering righteous.

Does this new conduct exclude an exercise of “religious” behavior? The discussion of this question dominates especially the Corinthian correspondence. Two elements are significant: (1) religious demonstrations are all right but they are useless if they do not build up community (1 Corinthians); (2) demonstrations of the superiority of (apostolic!) religious accomplishments violate the revelation of God’s presence in weakness (2 Corinthians). In either case the new community is not built up. New hierarchies are established. The apostle is forced to demonstrate that he can also show that he is powerful in terms of religious accomplishments. But he cannot do that, because God in Christ had revealed his presence in weakness, suffering, and dying. If divine power is no longer available in the establishment of greatness, might, and glory, there is no way in which God’s presence can be found in greatness, power, and glory. Therefore Paul does not want to have proclaimed Christ any other way than Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2). Only love can respond to that revelation of God in this world.

The Early Church After Paul
Paul himself already had to confront in his own communities those who valued personal religious experience or individual moral achievement in the present life higher than the building of a new nation representing the world to come. In 1 Corinthians he confronted spiritualists. They claimed that they had already found for themselves the fulfillment of the promises of the future in their individual religious experience. First Corinthians 1–2 suggests that they based their claims on a spiritual interpretation of the sayings of Jesus. It is evident in the controversy that Paul saw such behavior as destructive for the building of the community. He argues that the Eucharist is not sacred food for the individual’s religious benefit; rather, it is the ritual that builds up the community, which is the body of Christ formed by the individual’s exercise of spiritual gifts for the benefit of the entire body (1 Corinthians 11–12). A discussion

9. Note that in Romans 13 the warning that secular authorities have the power to punish immoral behavior is followed by a discussion of the commandment of love as the fulfillment of the law.

of the commandment of love, contrasted with the achievements of religious experience, follows in 1 Corinthians 13. In the letter to the Galatians (also in Philippians 3), Paul confronts Judaizing propaganda that values foremost individual moral fulfillment through obedience to the law. Diaspora Judaism had already advocated fulfillment of the law as the way to achieve morality and piety that would be in conformity with both the moral standards of Rome and the harmony of the universe (“law of nature”). Paul emphasizes the alternative of the “fruit of the spirit” as the spelling out of the commandment of love (Gal 5:23–25; cf. 6:2). Only the latter can build community and exclude the competitions that result from the individual’s effort to reach moral perfection.

The understanding of Christian existence as a path to individual religious experience and perfection is thus as old as the very beginnings of Christianity. The interpretation of the sayings of Jesus that is preserved in the Synoptic Sayings Gospel already leads in a direction in which the new faith guides the individual into religious experience and perfection. The Gnostic movement was leading the way into an understanding of Christianity as a “religion” that had no stake in the affairs of this world. This would be the leading question: are the Christians a new nation with their founding story and their ritual through which all believers would be united as a new people under an eschatological hope, or was this a new religion enjoying the benefits of religious experience and the assurance of life after death, but otherwise able to live in harmony with the piety and morality of the Roman world?

The answers to this question are many and diverse and more often than not try to achieve a compromise. Only a few examples can be given here at the conclusion of my paper. The eschatological perspective of the coming of Christ for the establishment of his rule of justice and equality was soon revised after the death of Paul. The letter to the Colossians spiritualizes the eschatology (Col 3:1–4), and through the introduction of the table of household duties, it adjusts the social order of the church so that it is in agreement with Greco-Roman standards. Ephesians follows Colossians on this path. The Pastoral Epistles further radicalize this adjustment with the introduction of the ideal of good citizenship. A future eschatological expectation is absent in all deutero-Pauline epistles. Christianity should become a religion tolerated by Rome in the same way in which any other religion of the Roman world is respected.

In contrast, the Revelation of John renews the eschatology in direct opposition to Rome. The new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven onto the earth is depicted as the ideal society in which even the rule of God and the Lamb is democratized. In spite of the efforts of Christian communities to appear as a politically harmless religion, the test arises in the face of Rome’s suspicion that

11. One might consider 2 Thessalonians as the exception. But even here the eschatology is neutralized as it loses its function of informing the understanding of Christian existence in the present time.
Christianity is, after all, a subversive movement, not a true religio but a superstition.12 In this confrontation with Rome, Christians remembered that their Lord Jesus was their true king and true ruler. Many refused to sacrifice to the emperor. In martyrdom, eschatology is renewed, although it is individualized. But the martyrdom reports become political symbols indicating that there is hope for all of a better order of justice and equality that is stored up in heaven—note the status of women and slaves in martyrdom, especially in the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.

At the same time, except for the Gnostic movement, the ideal of a new community of justice and care for all perseveres and is strongly emphasized in the social institutions of Christian communities. Care for the poor and the widows and orphans, visiting the sick, hospitality, in some instances the efforts of freeing slaves, and adjudication of conflicts by the bishop's courts become instituted (pace the development of necessary hierarchical structures). The Eucharist remains as the institutional ritual that makes all the members parts of one body.13 The second Christian ritual, baptism, was continued as a simple and inexpensive entrance rite. Contrary to mystery initiations of the Greco-Roman world, which were designed to provide individuals with special religious experiences and privileges and required complex and costly preparations, baptism remained essentially an act of entrance into community.

At the same time, the story of Jesus' suffering and death, the "gospel," is elevated as the founding story of a new nation. The passion narrative is the core of the development of those gospels that later become part of the canon of sacred scripture. It is no accident that gospels without passion narratives are not admitted. The Gospel of Thomas—no matter how valuable its preservation of Jesus' sayings may be—is left outside. A grand attempt to make the Christian story a prose epic that would rival Vergil's Aeneid may have survived in Luke's work if both the gospel and the book of Acts are viewed as one work.14 Like Vergil's work, the story begins in a city of the east that is now lying in ashes. The story, under divine guidance, seems to end in failure in Jesus' death, but is revived by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and ends in the successful preaching of the gospel in Rome, the capitol of the empire. Unfortunately, the division of Luke's work into two parts obscured the original impact of Luke's epic.

Many of the community structures based on ritual and story maintained the Christian churches as community throughout the increasingly disastrous persecutions of the second and early third centuries, regardless of the desire of individual members to find individual moral perfection, religious experience, and assurance of an afterlife. In any case, the social services of the Christian

12. See the Letter of Pliny to Trajan.
13. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch represent many passages that emphasize the necessity to maintain the Eucharist as ritual through which all members are united.
14. For the following, see Marianne Palmer Bonz, The Past as Legacy.
churches may have attracted as many new members as the promise of an afterlife. Christianity continued as a nation rivaling Rome and threatening the religio-political structures of the empire—and the Romans knew it, no matter how often the Christians claimed that they were just another law-abiding “religion.”

The edict of toleration issued by Galerius and his co-emperors in 311 made Christianity a legitimate “religion,” one among many others. Constantine, as the Pontifex Maximus, insisted that this edict was binding, although for many years after 311 he presented himself as a monotheistic adherent of Sol Invictus. When he gave privileges to Christian churches, his motivations were not necessarily “Christian.” Freedom from “liturgies” for clerics simply gave Christians the same rights that other religions enjoyed. Declaring the manumission of slaves by Christian courts parallels similar rights that pagan temples possessed, and the right of Christian bishops’ courts to adjudicate cases of civil law was a convenient move to lessen the load of cases that had accumulated in secular courts. The social services that Christian churches had provided and were now enabled to continue were of general benefit to the empire as a whole. More examples for such legislations could be quoted. Christianity did not become a state religion here—not yet.

More and more, however, Christian churches had learned early to provide space for religious experience and often emphasized this service of the churches as central and most important. Gnostic piety provided much of the language. The Odes of Solomon demonstrate the profound influence of Gnosticism upon early Christian piety, and Gnosticizing elements are evident in the hymnological tradition of the churches and can still be found in many hymnbooks until today. The development of the monastic movement is deeply indebted not only to Gnostic piety, but also to Gnostic speculation, especially in monastic mysticism.

The fundamental question remains: what happened to the ritual and story of the prophetic eschatological message of justice and equality and a new righteousness of God that should be established for all? I am afraid that the answer

15. Tertullian, in his Apologeticum, does not only argue that the Christians are innocent law-abiding and moral citizens, he also ridicules the religious foundations of Roman rule and demands that only a secular government could be accepted as legitimate.
16. Constantine issued coins until 318 that showed him as the twin brother of Sol Invictus. That the sign of the cross (or the chi-rho) on the shields of his soldiers assured him of the victory against Maxentius in the battle at the Milvian Bridge in 312 is a Christian legend that Constantine accepted as “true” only more than a decade later. All actions during his reign concerning Christianity were not based upon his Christian leanings, but on his imperial authority as Pontifex Maximus.
17. It is no accident that the Nag Hammadi writings most likely belonged to a Christian monastery library. I have not yet had the opportunity to study the newly published letters of St. Antony. But Elaine Pagels’ paper presented at the November 2009 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature suggests that in these letters the famous saint appears to be indebted to Gnosticism much more than the Life of Saint Antony by Athanasius reveals.
is complex and difficult and cannot be discussed in the context of this paper. All I would argue is that this question should be considered in the writing of Christian history before and after Constantine. Throughout this history the foundation of Christianity was not and should not be an a-political matter of the history of a religion. The ritual of a new community and the story of God’s act to declare the crucified Jesus as the revelation of God’s righteousness, justice, and equality for all remains a political challenge until today, more often than not forgotten by “religious” advocates of the relevance of Christianity in our own times.

Works Cited


