Chapter Nine

The Didache Community and its Jewish Roots (Did 11-15)

The ritual observances prescribed in Did 7-10 are interrupted by a new introduction in 11:1-2. These verses form a transition to a kind of church order which ends in 15:4, just before the eschatological chapter 16. Chapters 11-15 give a glimpse of the local church or churches\(^1\) for which the Didache was written. A variety of disciplinary measures is presented, designed particularly to correct abuses in the life of the Didache community. In Did 11:1-12:2, the emphasis is on testing Christians who would stop over at the Didache community. The passage provides guidelines by which to ascertain the legitimacy of these Christians, whether they claim to be apostles, prophets or just laymen. The next subject dealt with is the treatment of Christians who want to settle in the community. Here, too, the Didache carefully distinguishes between laymen and the different ministering roles with regard to the matter of provisions to be made (12:2-13:7). In chapter 14, the concern is no longer with the attitude of the local community towards outsiders, towards those who visit the community, but rather with circumstances within the settled community itself. The successive topics are loosely connected. The directives in chapter 14 concern the confession of sins and the reconciliation of comrades who are engaged in a dispute. Both rules are laid down as a requirement for the admission to the celebration of the Eucharist.\(^2\) In 15:1-2, another theme is introduced. The community members are advised to select for themselves bishops and deacons who are qualified for their offices. They are explicitly warned not to despise them. The next statement in 15:3 reminds of the admonition in 14:3. Someone who, in spite of the congregation’s correction, continues to wrong his brother has to be excluded from the community until he repents. At the end of the text, the community is called upon to conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements of the gospel.

In the following pages, attention will be drawn to three interrelated subjects. The literary composition of Did 11-15, still a hotly debated issue, will come up for discussion first (pp. 331-40). We will examine the various results of previous

\(^1\) We believe that the Didache was originally written for a single community. Some elements (its title and Did 13:4) in the present form of the document seem to indicate that it was redacted in a later stage for use in other communities as well (see below, pp. 345-46 and 364).

\(^2\) The primary theme is not the celebration itself, as in Chaps. 9-10; cf. Vööbus, Liturgical Traditions in the Didache, 75-78 and Niederwimmer, Die Didache, 234.
investigations in redaction criticism attempting to explain its *aporia* in terms of traditions and historical developments. It will become clear that chapters 11-13 essentially form a literary unit which was incorporated by the final composer of the Didache (the Didachist) into an extant Christian scheme of traditional materials underlying Did 8-10 and 14-15. A next section will focus on Did 11-13 where the apostles, prophets and teachers are dealt with (pp. 340-50). The directives in these chapters, which reflect the circumstances in the time and region of the Didachist, will help us to further present the milieu in which this unity (and probably the Didache in its entirety as well) was composed and transmitted. Finally, the focus will be directed toward the Jewish roots of the materials under discussion and, also in this respect, the chapters 11-13 will play an outstanding role (pp. 350-64). This examination will show that early Judaism has left a great impact on the present text of the Didache.

*The Literary Composition of Didache 11-15*

Modern scholarship has not yet reached a general consensus regarding the vexing problem of the disposition of the materials in Did 11-15. It has considerable consequences for the interpretation of Did 11-15 and the study of the community’s history whether we consider this section as a collection of dissimilar traditional materials re-worked by an editor, or whether we look upon it as a literary unity composed by one author. The above survey may suggest that Did 11-15 in its present form does not represent a literary unit. The apparently incoherent character of the text and some discrepancies, which will be detailed below, make it difficult to accept that a single author is responsible for the arrangement of these chapters. The following discussion will show how scholars have tried to find a solution for the seemingly uncoordinated nature of this section. We will first examine the theories with regard to Did 11-13. Several researchers have taken this passage to be an expansion and elaboration of an originally separate tradition. They associate this tradition and the later additions in Did 11-13 with various stages in the historical development of the Didache community. A second line of research involves the entirety of Did 11-15 as it focusses upon the purported clash between Did 11-13 and 15. In this approach, problems are solved by compositional theories which assume a first edition of the Didache to which later materials were added in one or more redactional stages.

**DIDACHE 11-13**

Kurt Niederwimmer\(^3\) has summarized some problems which render the section in Did 11-13 most confusing. He finds that Did 11:4-12 offers a set of rules about