

‘According to the Commandment’ (*Did.* 1.5): Lexical Reflections on Almsgiving as ‘The Commandment’

ANTHONY GIAMBRONE

504 E. Pokagon St., South Bend, IN 46617, USA. email: jgiambro@nd.edu

Christian and Jewish sources of late antiquity employ ἡ ἐντολή as a term for almsgiving. The development of the locution passes through at least two stages before reaching semantic maturity around the fourth or fifth century. Tobit and Ben Sira record the early notion of charity as a paradigmatic precept, while the *Didache* attests to a more stabilised and syntactically developed, but still transitional, expression. The use of ἐντολή in 1 Tim 6.14 does not belong to the mature usage, and *Test. Ash.* 2.8 is a problematic reference point (*pace* Nathan Eubank). The *Didache* is more helpful in contextualising the NT evidence.

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The paradigmatic status of almsgiving appears in the variety of terms used to describe it.¹ If Hebrew writers often preferred צדקה, this evocative term had less traction in early Christian texts.² A more resonant expression in Christian circles was מצוה or ἐντολή. To speak of charity thus as ‘the commandment’ gave forceful expression to its archetypal status; and though the idea derives from the nomistic context of Torah observance, early Christian emphasis on ‘the law of love’ provided a framework able to assimilate the Second Temple idiom.

In this essay I will consider the development of this use of ἐντολή. My exposition will have three parts. First, I will collect the scattered observations of several

1 On the expansive sense of ἐλεημοσύνη, embracing גמילות חסדים, צדקה/מצוה, see R. Heiligenthal, ‘Werke der Barmherzigkeit oder Almosen? Zur Bedeutung von ἐλεημοσυνή’, *NovT* 25 (1983) 289–301.

2 See F. Rosenthal, ‘Šēdāqâh, Charity’, *HUCA* 23 (1950–51) 411–30; and F. Zanella, ‘Between “Righteousness” and “Alms”’: A Semantic Study of the Lexeme צדקה in the Dead Sea Scrolls’, *Hebrew in the Second Temple Period: The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of Other Contemporary Sources* (ed. S. Fassberg, M. Bar-Asher and R. Clements; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 269–88. Cf. Matt 6.1.

(at times isolated) lexicographers and suggest that the expression originates in a Second Temple Jewish context (section 1). Next, I will address and qualify Nathan Eubank's recent proposal concerning 'the commandment' (τὴν ἐντολήν) in 1 Tim 6.14 (section 2).³ Finally, I will closely examine emerging usage, treating Sir 29.9, but focusing especially on the construction κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν in the *Didache* (section 3).

1. Lexicography of the Expression

Over the last hundred years, the unfamiliar use of ἐντολή to mean 'alms/charity' has been remarked upon several times. In 1910 the great orientalist Theodor Nöldeke offhandedly documented the usage as a footnote to the related meaning in Ge'ez (*məṣwata*, cf. מצוה, מצוה).⁴ David Tabachovitz subsequently addressed the Greek data (without averting to the Semitic calque), offering several illustrations.⁵ The rabbinic scholar Saul Lieberman, in an important contribution just after the Second World War, next stressed the expression's Semitic background (Nöldeke had already noted the 'spezifisch jüdische Bedeutung').⁶ Lieberman also detected the usage in the Greek *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In the late 1960s Baruch Lifshitz added some new epigraphic evidence,⁷ and James Drescher briefly noted the same meaning of 'alms' for the Coptic ENTOΛΗ.⁸ Finally, quite recently, Nathan Eubank, leaning heavily on Lieberman, has suggested taking τὴν ἐντολήν in 1 Tim 6.14 as a reference to 'almsgiving'.

3 N. Eubank, 'Almsgiving is the "The Commandment": A Note on 1 Timothy 6.6–19', *NTS* 58 (2012) 144–50.

4 See T. Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1910) 36.

5 D. Tabachovitz, *Eranos* 25 (1927) 289. See also id., *Études sur le grec de la basse époque* (Skrifter utgivna av K. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet i Uppsala 36; Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1943) 63. Cf. Ioann. Mosch. *PG* 87.3068b and 2992a.

6 S. Lieberman, 'Two Lexigraphical Notes', *JBL* 64 (1946) 67–72. See also Jastrow, s.v. מצוה II. Lieberman seems unaware of the work of Tabachovitz.

7 B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 7; Paris: Gabalda, 1967) 74–5, 78. Lieberman had already noted a pair of relevant inscriptions. In a footnote, Lifshitz tersely cites the work of Moshe Schwabe (*Bulletin des études historiques juives* 1 (1946) 103), who evidently saw a relevant text in the New Testament. No details are given, and I have been unable to access this elusive journal.

8 See J. Drescher, 'Graeco-Coptica', *Le Muséon* 82 (1969) 85–6. Drescher ('Graeco-Coptica', *Le Muséon* 89 (1976) 311–12) subsequently registered the derivative meaning of words like φιλέντολος ('devoted to charity') which, though rare, appear in a few later sources, e.g. the Lausiac History (*PG* 34.1217b). Drescher's list of attestations makes his ignorance of Lieberman's article clear. Lieberman mentions a funerary inscription describing a (Jewish) woman as σπουδέα φιλέντολος (cf. *γ. Ter.* 8.5, 45c). See also *CIJ* 1.132, 509; and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*, vol. II: *The City of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 211–13 (§240). Cf. Tob 14.9 BA neol. (φιλελήμων). See D. Sperber, 'Rabbinic Notes to Graeco-Coptica', *AJS Review* 4 (1979) 205.

From the work of these researchers, the multilingual phenomenon is established,⁹ and the Greek idiom is well attested by the time of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.¹⁰ If such a dating explains Gottlob Schrenk's failure to discuss the meaning of ἐντολή as 'alms' in Kittel's *Wörterbuch*, the result for New Testament scholarship has been to keep the lexical datum effectively unknown.¹¹ Eubank's suggestion is still very new and has not been put to scrutiny.

The development of the expression generated only a few vague comments in the literature detailed above. While Tabachovitz remarked that the popularity of almsgiving among Christians must have promoted the usage,¹² Drescher speculated more concretely that it was ultimately traceable to the New Testament: 'It would seem that, by reason of such texts as John 15, 12 and 1 Cor 13, 13 "love, charity" (ἀγάπη) was considered the precept (ἐντολή) *par excellence*; and, as ἀγάπη and "charity" came to mean the practical expression of the virtue, so did ἐντολή itself.'¹³

The idea of charity as 'the precept' *par excellence* is indeed consonant with its high status in the early Church.¹⁴ But this is true of Second Temple and formative Judaism as well.¹⁵ It is essential, moreover, that the Hebrew substrate (unknown to Drescher) not be neglected. In this regard, it is not difficult to imagine the conditions which might have catalysed the identification of almsgiving as the תְּשׁוּבָה *par excellence* (prior to Jesus' ἐντολή καὶ ἀγάπη).

9 The Latin *praeceptum* may also bear this sense, cf. Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.35.12-13; 4.36.4-5. See J. R. Michaels, 'Almsgiving and the Kingdom Within: Tertullian on Luke 17:21', *CBQ* 60 (1998) 479-81.

10 Like similar rabbinic logia collections, it is difficult to date the stratified *Apophthegmata Patrum*. See J.-C. Guy, *Recherches sur la tradition grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (Subsidia hagiographica 36; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1962) 23-35.

11 See ἐντολή, *TDNT* 1.545-56. The meaning 'alms' is not recorded in C. Spicq, *Lexique théologie du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 1991), BDAG, J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), or the *New Documents Illustrating Christianity* series.

12 Tabachovitz, *Études*, 64.

13 Drescher, 'Graeco-Coptica' (1969), 85. Drescher mentions that ἀγάπη also came to bear the same meaning ('alms') - a fact also unknown to many NT exegetes. Cf. Ignatius, *Rom.* Preface.

14 The high estimation of almsgiving in the early Church has been the subject of growing attention. See e.g. B. Ramsey, 'Almsgiving in the Latin Church: The Late Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries', *TS* 43 (1982) 226-59; R. Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity* (JSNTSup 77; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993); and R. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice, 313-450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

15 See e.g. M. L. Satlow, "'Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit": Charity and Piety among Jews in Late Antique Palestine', *JQR* 100 (2010) 244-77; A. Gray, 'Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity', *JSQ* 18 (2011) 144-84; and G. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale, 2013).

In particular contexts, a specific command can rise and function metonymically for the whole Law. When the seven brothers in 4 Maccabees steel themselves to stand fast from eating pork, for example, they recall the eternal torments awaiting those who transgress ‘the command of God’ (τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, 4 Macc 13.15; cf. 16.24). In their pressurised setting, ‘the command’ of Lev 11.7–8 (cf. Deut 14.8) has come to represent the entire Law, with the food taboo serving as the measure of full fidelity to the Torah.

The book of Tobit provides the best expression of the precise pressures under which almsgiving emerged as a similar demonstration of faithfully keeping the Torah. The text has a misty origin, and its fanciful setting obscures the historical circumstance. The presentation, nonetheless, is highly suggestive. Tobit suffers severe persecution – a death sentence and the confiscation of all his property (Tob 1.19) – for performing outlawed works of mercy.¹⁶ Charitable solicitude for his kinsmen, in other words, has displaced the Jewish dietary commandments as the point of confrontation with aggressive paganism. The Maccabean crisis never took such an unlikely form, and it is difficult to place such a situation historically. Tobit’s folk tale affinities may ultimately shed more light.¹⁷ Whatever reconstruction one prefers, however, the story’s diaspora setting offers the best clue both to the sense of pagan encroachment and the special status of almsgiving. In the distant reaches of the diaspora, charitable deeds became the only feasible way of making ‘sacrificial’ gifts. Charity was a kind of fulfilment made in adverse conditions which marked a (diaspora) Jew as piously observant. At the same time, in the disintegrating conditions of exile, the exercise of charity towards one’s kinsmen functioned as a form of solidarity, reinforcing the ties binding together a scattered Jewish community.¹⁸ This bonding purpose is significant and greatly illuminates Tobit’s coupling of almsgiving with endogamy (Tob 4.5–16).¹⁹ Each precept in its own way attends to much-needed boundary-maintenance.²⁰ In his wisdom instructions and in the broader

16 The loss of Tobit’s property, along with his blindness, operates as a metaphor for the exilic punishment of Israel. See R. Bauckham, ‘Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel’, *Studies in the Book of Tobit* (ed. Mark Bredin; Library of Second Temple Studies 55; New York: T&T Clark, 2006) 147–9.

17 Both the Ahikar narrative and the story of Antigone may have influenced Tobit at this point. See C. Nardi, ‘Tobia come Antigone: il pietoso ufficio della sepoltura implicita resistenza a un potere inumano’, *Vivens Homo* 17 (2006) 385–407.

18 Second Temple charitable practice was generally not extended to non-Jewish outsiders, cf. Tob 1.18, 2.2; Sir 12.4–5; cf. 12.7; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1; Julian, *Ep.* 84; 22.

19 The pairing of almsgiving and endogamy also appears in *Testament of Job*. A variation is *Jubilees*’ interest in endogamy and fraternal love. See A. Livneh, ‘“Love Your Fellow as Yourself”: The Interpretation of Lev 19:17–18 in the Book of Jubilees’, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 18 (2011) 173–99.

20 On the significance of boundary-marking in the text, see A.-J. Levine, ‘Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit’, *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (Atlanta: Scholar’s, 1992) 105–17.

narrative, these two מציח thus vie for ultimate emphasis.²¹ This situation helps to explain why the explicit language of ‘the commandment’ does not yet appear in Tobit.²²

When does this usage first appear? The attestation claimed by Eubank presents itself as the earliest record of the usage, but closer inspection reveals some difficulties.

2. ‘The Commandment’ in 1 Timothy?

Eubank’s proposal invites a pedantic observation. The verse in question reads: τηρησαί σε τὴν ἐντολὴν ἄσπιλον ἀνεπίλημpton μέχρι τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1 Tim 6.14). While a real exegetical question surrounds the precise *reference* of τὴν ἐντολήν, the *locution* with τηρέω is unexceptional. By comparison, the lexical phenomenon in the later Christian texts looks considerably different: ἐὰν θέλῃ ἐντολήν, δὸς αὐτῇ, εἰ δὲ φαγεῖν ποιήσον αὐτῇ (‘If she wants ἐντολήν, give it to her, and if she wants to eat, provide for her’).²³ The syntagm here (elliptically) parallels the normative expression, δίδωμι + ἐλεημοσύνη, and the translation ‘commandment’ simply fails. In 1 Tim 6.14 no such semantic shift is required.

If Eubank has not attended closely to the lexical construction and semantics, he relies instead upon contextual arguments. Within the letter, he points to the surrounding economic discourse (6.6–10, 17–19) and argues that the invasive personal address to Timothy (6.11–16) would be less abrupt if an instruction on the use of wealth were implicit in τὴν ἐντολήν.²⁴ This is true. Eubank, however, does not consider the structural parallel between 6.2b–21a and 1.3–20, which exposes the *wealth material* (6.6–10, 17–19) rather than the *address* as the intrusive element in the chapter.²⁵ From this perspective, Towner’s contention that the reference of τὴν ἐντολήν is ‘surely to what Paul has charged Timothy to do ... in 1:3–5’

21 See F. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (DCLS 12; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012) 45–114.

22 While the idiom of ‘the commandment’ has not yet emerged, the narrative progressively aligns the ‘Wisdom Instructions’ ever more exclusively with the precept to give alms. Thus, while the need for Tobias to contract a proper marriage still configures the instruction in chapter 4, Raphael’s instruction in chapter 13 and Tobit’s own final testament in chapter 14 drop the topic of endogamy. I thank Gary Anderson for pointing out this feature of the text in private conversation.

23 For the citation, see Drescher, ‘Graeco-Coptica’ (1969), 85. Lieberman (‘Lexicographical Notes’, 70) gives another useful example (cf. Acts 3.3): καὶ ἐζήτηει αὐτοὺς ἐντολήν (‘He asked them for alms’).

24 Eubank, ‘Almsgiving’, 145.

25 See J. Thurén, ‘Die Struktur der Schlussparänese 1 Tim 6,3–21’, *TZ* 26 (1970) 241–53; and the diagram in P. Towner, *The Letters of Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 390–1.

deserves more consideration.²⁶ The presence here of a two-part exhortation on the proper use of wealth still requires explanation; but as Abraham Malherbe has shown in detail, the language of this exhortation is profoundly reminiscent of popular pagan morality.²⁷ To that extent, given the basic unfamiliarity of such Greco-Roman discourse with the imperative to give alms,²⁸ a thematic disjunction still appears on Eubank's reading. The presence of Greco-Roman thought forms, of course, hardly precludes Jewish sensibilities about almsgiving.²⁹ In the end, however, Eubank fails to show some wider awareness of the importance of *almsgiving* (rather than just wealth ethics) in the letter, particularly in chapter 6.

David Downs provides the exact argument Eubank requires.³⁰ The instruction on care for widows (1 Tim 5.3–16) signals the letter's robust idea of charity. Paul's desire that all be '*blameless*' (ἀνεπίλημπτοι) in regard to the instruction on providing for widows (5.7), moreover, is a direct echo of his language to Timothy in 6.14 (τηρησαί σε τὴν ἐντολὴν ἄσπιλον ἀνεπίλημπτον). But this very connection allows one to wonder whether 'the commandment' might not now refer back to the concrete directive in chapter 5. Reference to the 'treasure in heaven' metaphor in 6.19 would help secure a generic almsgiving topos,³¹ but the language here might also be read as a this-worldly investment, a material reward wealth ethic common to both Paul (2 Cor 8.14; 9.8–10; cf. Sir 29.11–13; 22.23) and pagan sources (e.g. Seneca, *Cons. Marc.* 9.1; Ovid, *Tr.* 5.8.4–18).³²

Ultimately, then, Eubank rightly argues that the locution is *culturally* presupposed. His contextual argument accordingly expands to take in the semantic context offered by Lieberman, who traced the secondary sense of ἐντολή as far

26 Towner, *Letters of Timothy and Titus*, 414.

27 A. Malherbe, 'Godliness, Self-Sufficiency, Greed, and the Enjoyment of Wealth: 1 Timothy 6:3–19: Part I', *NovT* 52 (2010) 376–405; and 'Godliness, Self-Sufficiency, Greed, and the Enjoyment of Wealth: 1 Timothy 6:3–19: Part II', *NovT* 53 (2011) 73–96.

28 See B. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 19–134. Longenecker (60–1) determines that 'there is a relatively solid basis' for the common view that 'apart from Jewish traditions and practices, care for the poor was virtually absent in the ancient world prior to the rise of Christianity'.

29 The *possible* echo of Tob 4.7–9 in 1 Tim 6.17–19, for instance, suggests an esteem for generosity inherited from Second Temple sources. The allusion is difficult to secure, however. Towner (*Letters of Timothy and Titus*, 427) cautiously remarks that 'the value of sharing, carried over from Judaism (cf. Tob 4.7–9)' was 'also apparent in Greek thought' (cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1119b–23a). It would be dubious to insist upon a 'pure' (non-Jewish) Greek background for the letter. The issue is identifying the prevailing discourse in which τὴν ἐντολήν occurs.

30 D. J. Downs, 'The God Who Gives Life That Is Truly Life: Meritorious Almsgiving and the Divine Economy in 1 Timothy 6', *The Unrelenting God: Essays on God's Action in Scripture In Honor of Beverly Roberts Gaventa* (ed. David Downs and Matthew Skinner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) 242–60. Downs builds upon Eubank's proposal, but does not question his evidence.

31 Downs, 'Meritorious Almsgiving', 251, 255–9.

32 See Malherbe, 'Part II', 78–88.

back as the *Testament of Asher*. Unfortunately, this argument is unstable. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is ‘one of the most puzzling documents of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha’.³³ Proposed dates range from the middle of the second century BCE to the late second or early third century CE.³⁴ Besides the date, however, the passage Lieberman appeals to is itself problematic. Not only is it text-critically nightmarish and otherwise difficult to interpret.³⁵ The verse at issue employs not the singular, but the plural (accusative: ἐντολάς) – a problem neither Lieberman nor Eubank mentions:

Another commits adultery and fornication and refrains from meat (ἀπέχεται ἐδεσμάτων); and fasting he does evil (κακποιεῖ); and in the power of his wealth he sweeps many away; and out of his his excessive evil he does the commandments (ἐκ τῆς ὑπερόγκου κακίας ποιεῖ τὰς ἐντολάς); and this one is two-faced (διπρόσωπον), but entirely evil. (*Test. Ash.* 2.8)

Echoing Lieberman, Eubank declares that the intolerable awkwardness of this translation is ‘obvious’.³⁶ How can one do the commandments out of excessive evil? If Charles proposed an emendation that might neatly solve the problem,³⁷ Lieberman is satisfied that ὑπέρογκος may be taken as a substantive and that ποιεῖ τὰς ἐντολάς is ‘the exact equivalent’ of מצות עשה.³⁸ The meaning of the key line would thus be: ‘From his ill-gotten goods he distributes alms.’

There are more difficulties to face here than either Eubank or Lieberman acknowledges. The Armenian evidence (dear to Lieberman) is hard to decipher and could point in opposite directions.³⁹ The immediate context is also more

33 J. Marcus, ‘The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Didaskalia Apostolorum: A Common Jewish-Christian Milieu?’, *JTS* 61 (2010) 596–626.

34 See H. C. Kee, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (ed. J. Charlesworth; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983) 777–8; and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Study of their Text, Composition, and Origin* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975) 23–34.

35 See the overloaded apparatus and proposed emendations in R. H. Charles, *The Greek Versions of The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs Edited from Nine MSS together with the Variants of the Armenian and Slavonic Versions and Some Hebrew Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908) 175–6. See also M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (PVTG 1/2; Leiden: Brill, 1978).

36 Eubank, ‘Almsgiving’, 146; Lieberman, ‘Lexicographical Notes’, 69.

37 Charles proposed that ἐκ κακίας (מרע) should read ברע (‘notwithstanding his wickedness’), and this is followed by Kee (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 817). Neither Lieberman nor Eubank addresses the emendation.

38 Lieberman, ‘Lexicographical Notes’, 71 fn 41a, 42. On the Semitic character of the Greek of the *Testaments*, see Charles, *Greek Versions*, xl–xlii.

39 Lieberman supports his translation with the Armenian version, which reads the equivalent of ἔλεος (‘charity’) instead of ἐντολάς. The unmentioned difficulty is that in 2.6 the Armenian undermines this very sense of ἐντολή. Specifically, in 2.5–7 the case of ‘another’ (ἄλλος) duplicitous man is described. Three times this character is said to exercise charity towards the poor (ἐλεεῖ πτωχούς; τὸν πτωχὸν ἐλεεῖ; τὸν πένητα ἀναπαύει) – yet he is called

complex than either scholar concedes.⁴⁰ The use of the plural, moreover, is not the normal or expected idiom.⁴¹ Lieberman, in fact, produces no examples and seems simply to have retroverted ‘the exact equivalent’ of *ποιεῖ τὰς ἐντολάς*. Finally, the word *ἐντολαί* must shift meanings twice in the passage (2.5–10) if taken in the proposed idiomatic sense of ‘alms’ in 2.8. Even if the intuition is right, then, more clearly needs to be done to establish the hypothesis.⁴² Even then we would still lack a solidly *datable* instance of *ἐντολή* as ‘alms’.

Lieberman’s other purported Greek examples are late. The Hebrew evidence, moreover, is confined to the fifth-century *Midrash Rabbah* and a synagogue inscription from the same time.⁴³ It is unclear, then, exactly how far back one can push the secondary meaning of *ἐντολή* and its Semitic antetype (מצוה).⁴⁴ One must presume that the calque belongs to a moment of close interaction between the two linguistic cultures. If Eubank’s argument is plausible, then, it remains desirable to anchor the usage more firmly to the NT period – however one settles the authorship and dating of 1 Timothy. Two texts help clarify the usage during this earlier period: Sir 29.9 and *Didache* 1.5 (cf. 13.5, 7).

two-faced, for he ‘rejects (?) the commandment (τὴν ἐντολήν)’. It may be possible to save the idiom, but the textual problems are imposing and require attention. See M. de Jonge, ‘The Greek Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Armenian Version’, *Studies on the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Text and Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1975) 120–39.

40 A formal framing device separates the parallel cases of 2.5–7 from 2.8. Each unit begins with ἄλλος and ends ‘this one is two-faced, but wholly evil’.

41 The passage Lieberman cites in *Lev. Rab.* 34.14 uses the singular מצוה in all the MSS. Lieberman does suggest that *Ap. Const.* 8.43 uses the plural ἐντολαί in the sense of alms, but (embarrassingly) he is citing the paragraph heading which appears in Migne (*PG* 1.1148a). This title is late and appears neither in the text of F. X. Funk (*Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum: Volumen 1* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoenigh, 1905) 554) nor M. Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques* (SC 336; Paris: Cerf, 1987). The plural expression is occasionally attested (היה עבדי מצויון סגין) in isolated MSS (e.g. *Lev. Rab.* 37.2), but the singular was still preferred.

42 Part of Lieberman’s argument is that vainly giving alms from ill-gotten goods appears in both *Test. Ash.* 2.8 and *Midrash Rabbah*. This suggestion is worth pursuing – in spite of the textual problems. Cf. CD 16.13–20; Matt 27.4–6.

43 On the dating, see H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996²) 290–1. For the synagogue inscription, see E. L. Sukenik, *Journal of the Palestinian Oriental Society* 15 (1935) 101.

44 Satlow (“Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit”, 256–8) determines that the use of מצוה as ‘alms’ became common only around the fourth century CE; but he does not reckon with the Greek evidence. Though the DSS and Tannaitic literature do not seem familiar with the usage, Gary Anderson (*Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 174) helpfully points in the direction of Tob 4.5–11, 12.8–10 and 14.8–11.

3. The Emerging Usage

3.1 *Sir* 29.9

The *Wisdom of Ben Sira* (29.9) provides evidence of the emerging expression, though Eubank ominously admits that ‘it is not as clear here as in the *Testament of Asher*’.⁴⁵ The text reads: ‘On account of *the commandment* receive a poor person, and according to his need, do not turn him away empty-handed’ (χάριν ἐντολῆς ἀντιλαβοῦ πένητος, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἔνδειαν αὐτοῦ μὴ ὀποστρέψης αὐτὸν κενόν, 29.9). The reference to almsgiving is plain from the mention of πένης and ἔνδεια; and this reference agrees with the chapter’s wider concern for charity.⁴⁶ Ben Sira’s appeal to the ἐντολή, with no need for explanation, anticipates the meaning found in the later sources. The distance from the more developed idiom, nevertheless, remains clear.

(1) The parallel expressions in the immediate context employ the plural (ἐντολάς, 29.1, 11) rather than the (anarthrous) singular.⁴⁷ Thus: ‘The one who gives alms/shows mercy (ὁ ποιῶν ἔλεος) lends to his neighbour; and the one who gives a helping hand (ὁ ἐπισχύων τῇ χειρὶ) keeps the *commandments* (τηρεῖ ἐντολάς)’ (29.1). Such shifting in number indicates that the expression (and idea) has not stabilised; and in the wider context of the book, almsgiving remains but one of the Lord’s commandments.⁴⁸ Indeed, in Sira’s moral vision, even more than Tobit’s, despite charity’s important place, other commandments can hold the same high rank as almsgiving.⁴⁹

(2) It is perfectly natural to use the singular ἐντολή in a defined context to refer to some understood precept (e.g. Exod 12.17; 1 Sam 13.13; 1 Kings 2.43), without implying any exemplary status. Members of the *Yahad* were admonished ‘to reprove each man his brother according to the commandment (הַצִּוְיָה)’ referring explicitly to Lev 19.17 (CD 7.2); while, after Jesus’ crucifixion, the women rest on the Sabbath κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν (Luke 23.56). Accordingly, many agree that Ben Sira is thinking here of Deut 15.7–11 – without yet imagining any paradigmatic sense.⁵⁰

45 Eubank, ‘Almsgiving’, 147.

46 On this passage, see B. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring: Generosity in the Book of Sirach* (Deuterocanonical and Cognate literature Studies 2; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010) 181–203.

47 The absence of the article cannot be insisted upon in the prepositional phrases (BDF §255; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) §183). Among other things, the use of the plural also troubles Downs’ suggestion (‘Meritorious Almsgiving’, 246 n. 16) that 2 *Clem.* 17.1 (cf. 16.4) knows the usage.

48 See P. Skehan and A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987) 75–92.

49 E.g. the fourth commandment ranks first in particular rhetorical contexts, where it is lauded in terms similar to almsgiving (3.3–4, 14, 31; cf. ἐντολήν μεγίστην, *Letter of Aristeas* 228; Eph 6.2).

50 See Gregory, *Everlasting Signet Ring*, 186–7; and e.g. B. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51* (EB 39; Würzburg: Echter, 2010) 180.

(3) The prepositional syntax (χάριν ἐντολῆς) prevents a full semantic convergence with ἐλεημοσύνη. One does not yet find here the critical syntagm δίδωμι/ποιέω/ζητέω + ἐντολή, as it appears in the later sources.⁵¹ It is thus inaccurate to blur this usage with the later Greek idiom, though the clear genetic relation should not be missed.

3.2 The Didache

The *Didache* represents a critical witness to the developing trajectory of ἐντολή as charity discourse.⁵² The opening line of the work famously announces the existence of Two Ways (1.1). An instruction follows, identifying the ‘way of life’ as the love of God and neighbour (1.2). In this context, an exhortation to almsgiving appears (1.5–6):

5a παντί τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δίδου, καὶ μὴ ἀπαίτει.
 5bα πᾶσι γὰρ θέλει δίδοσθαι ὁ πατήρ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων χαρισμάτων
 5bβ μακάριος ὁ δίδους κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν, ἀθῶος γὰρ ἐστίν.

Give to all who ask of you, and do not ask for repayment.

For the Father wishes something from his own benefactions to be given to all. Blessed is the one who gives according to the commandment, for he is innocent.

Line 5a is a Janus linking the teaching on alms with the previous section (1.4).⁵³ The macarism in 5bβ, of course, is the point of interest. Steven Bridge remarks that ‘scholars have long since recognized “the mandate” [i.e. τὴν ἐντολήν] as a reference to the Second Mandate in the Shepherd of Hermas’.⁵⁴ The close connection of these texts is unmistakable:

4 πασίν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς δίδοσθαι θέλει ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων δωρημάτων ...
 6 ὁ οὖν δίδους ἀθῶός ἐστιν ...
 7 φύλασσε οὖν τὴν ἐντολήν ταύτην, ὡς σοι λελάληκα.

⁵¹ Note also the use with τηρέω in Ecclus 29.1.

⁵² Eubank (‘Almsgiving’, 147 n. 15) notes the ‘possible use’ at *Did.* 1.5 (not 13.5 or 13.7), but offers no discussion.

⁵³ Kurt Niederwimmer (*The Didache: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 78) assigns 1.5a to the previous section, noting that 1.5a is ‘obviously a doublet’ of the final line of 1.4 – ‘If someone takes away from you what is yours, do not demand it back (μὴ ἀπαίτει) – since you cannot do so anyway.’ The repeated phrase is clear, but Niederwimmer misses the signs introducing a new theme. (1) All four lines in 1.4 are formally parallel, beginning with ἐάν. This does not appear in 1.5a. (2) The subject of the protasis throughout 1.4 is an oppressive τις, whereas in 1.5 there is no such figure or any violence to renounce. (3) The παντί of 1.5a and πασί of 1.5b stand in direct parallel. (4) The connective γὰρ binds 1.5a logically to 1.5b.

⁵⁴ S. Bridge, ‘To Give or Not to Give: Deciphering the Saying of Didache 1.6’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5 (1997) 555–68, at 565.

For God wishes something from his own gifts to be given to all ...
 Therefore the one who gives is innocent ...
 Therefore observe this commandment I have spoken to you. (*Herm.* 27.4, 6, 7)⁵⁵

The literary relationship at this point unfortunately remains unsolved.⁵⁶ Carolyn Osiek considers that ‘the best solution to draw is that there is a common written, or perhaps even oral, source behind the appearance of this one cluster of ideas’.⁵⁷ This is safe.⁵⁸ One might merely add that, despite uncertainty in the dating of both documents (and the wider difficulties surrounding the history of transmission for *Did.* 1.3b–2.1),⁵⁹ *Hermas* is widely considered the later text.⁶⁰ The notion that ‘the mandate’ appealed to in the *Didache* would be a reference to *Hermas*’ Ἐντολή β’ is thus hard to sustain on simple chronological grounds.⁶¹

Osiek’s suggestion of a shared source is helpful, then, but it solves the wrong problem. It addresses the tradition history of the parallel sayings, but leaves the (unparalleled) phrase κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν unexplained. After all, the injunction (τὴν ἐντολήν ταύτην) which is given to *Hermas* by ‘the shepherd’ (*Herm.* 27.7; cf. 25.5–7) is an unmistakable part of the redactional framework of that text.⁶² More important, κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν in the *Didache* is likewise redactional.⁶³ It

55 Niederwimmer (*Didache*, 82) observes that *Hermas* has no macarism, nor a parallel to the phrase κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν. The formula φύλασσε τὴν ἐντολήν ταύτην (27.7) is not tightly connected to the present context, appearing (with variations) regularly in *Hermas*, cf. M.1 26.2; M.3 28.2; M.5 34.8; M.8 38.12; S.5 55.2, 7, 56.3, etc.

56 C. Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 26.

57 Osiek, *Hermas*, 27. Although they share a Two Ways framework, no other suggestion of literary dependence connects *Hermas* and the *Didache*.

58 See Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 68–72, 82; also R. Glover, ‘The *Didache*’s Quotations and the Synoptic Gospels’, *NTS* 5 (1958–9) 15; H. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* (TU 65; Berlin: Akademie, 1957) 230–1; J.-P. Audet, *La Didachè: Instructions des Apôtres* (Paris: Gabalda, 1958) 163–6.

59 See B. Layton, ‘The Source, Date, and Transmission of *Didache* 13b–2:1’, *HTR* 61 (1968) 343–83.

60 On the question of dating, see Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 52–4; H. van de Sandt and D. Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum/Fortress, 2002) 48–52; and Osiek, *Hermas*, 18–20. Layton considers 1.3b–2:1 to be a later, archaising interpolation. Most commentators, however, accept this *sectio evangelica* as original to the *Didachist*’s composition, if derived from a special source. See Niederwimmer’s excursus (*Didache*, 68–72).

61 The structure of *Hermas* is problematic (see Osiek, *Hermas*, 12–16), and the antiquity of the internal divisions (Ἐντολή, etc.) is uncertain. The heading παρὰβολή does appear in the Michigan Codex 129 (M), dated around 250 CE. See C. Bonner, ed., *A Papyrus Codex of the Shepherd of Hermas Similitudes 2–9) with a Fragment of the Mandates* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1934).

62 See n. 55 above. Neither of the parallels (*Herm.* 27.4 // *Did.* 1.5bα; *Herm.* 27.6 // *Did.* 1.5bβ) is a commandment which might be the direct reference of ἐντολή.

63 So Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 82.

is not restricted to *Did.* 1.5, but appears twice more in a passage having no connection to *Hermas* (*Did.* 13.5, 7). It is thus problematic to forge too close a link here with the Shepherd.

If *κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν* in *Did.* 1.5 is not the instruction given to *Hermas*, but a redactional theme of the *Didachist*, to what does it refer? The most popular possibility is Luke 6.30 – or its precursor in Q. The logion clearly has some close relation with *Did.* 1.5a: *παντί αἰτοῦντί σε δίδου, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἴροντος τὰ σὰ μὴ ἀπαίτει*.⁶⁴ The connection is not in dispute – nor is the ample presence of synoptic material in *Did.* 1.3–5. Again, however, the question of tradition history is not the immediate issue. There are, in any event, several difficulties with embracing Luke/Q 6.30 as a solution to the reference of the *Didache's* ἐντολή. First, as Niederwimmer rightly senses (yet overstates), a shift in theme separates *Did.* 1.5a from 1.5b–6.⁶⁵ The original logion, in particular, is an instruction on non-retaliation, not charity per se – even if the decoupling of these ideas cannot be pressed. Second, if the allusion in 1.5b were to the immediately preceding injunction in 1.5a, one might expect more deictic force: e.g. τὴν ἐντολήν ταύτην (as in *Herm.* 27.7). Third, the *Didachist* is perfectly able to specify the gospel tradition by name – even when this means mere oral traditions (cf. *Did.* 15.3).⁶⁶ Thus the Our Father is prefaced: ‘Do not pray like the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel (ὡς ἐκέλευσεν ὁ κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ αὐτοῦ)’ (8.2).⁶⁷ Exhortations, too, can be enjoined *κατὰ τὸ δόγμα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* (11.3).⁶⁸ Finally, again, as a basic point of method, the *Didache's* wider usage of the phrase *κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν* must be considered before a judgement can be made on the case of 1.5.

We may turn, then, to this wider usage. The two additional occurrences appear towards the end of the document, in a section (13.1–7) which transitions from a discussion of teachers (11.1–2) and itinerant apostles and prophets (11.3–12) to instructions on the ‘sacrifice’ (ἡ θυσία) of the breaking of bread (14.1–3). The text in question thus blends matters of cult and personnel:

- 4 ἐάν δὲ μὴ ἔχετε προφήτην, δότε τοῖς πτωχοῖς.
5 ἐάν σιτίαν ποιῆς, τὴν ἀπορχὴν λαβὼν δὲς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν.

64 See Glover, ‘The *Didache's* Quotations’, 15. Glover’s summary of the relevant material determines that ‘no sound case for the *Didachist's* knowing Luke, as distinct from Q, can ... be made’.

65 See n. 53 above.

66 See Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 230–7.

67 For a discussion, see H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1990) 16–17.

68 Almsgiving is explicitly grounded in the Gospel: ‘As for your prayers and acts of charity (τὰς ἐλεημοσύνας) and all your actions, do them *as you have it in the Gospel of our Lord*’ (15.4; cf. 15.3). Perhaps here ‘the commandment’ is not mentioned, since almsgiving is lumped together with other things.

- 6 ὡσαύτως κεράμιον οἴνου ἢ ἐλαίου ἀνοιξάς,
τὴν ἀπαρχὴν λαβὼν δὸς τοῖς προφήταις.
7 ἀργυρίου δὲ καὶ ἱματισμοῦ καὶ παντὸς κτήματος λαβὼν τὴν ἀπαρχὴν
ὡς ἂν σοι δόξη, δὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν.

But if you do not have a prophet, give to the poor.
If you make bread, take the first fruits and give according to the commandment.
Likewise when you open a jar of wine or oil,
take the first fruits and give them to the prophets.
As for money and clothing and every possession, take the first fruits,
as it seems to you, and give according to the commandment. (13.4-7)

In consideration of these lines and the unknown reference(s) of ἡ ἐντολή, Paul Drews made the interesting and unlikely suggestion that ‘eine vermutliche, bisher unbeachtete Quelle der *Didache*’ containing dominical sayings and bearing the name ‘Ἐντολή is being invoked.⁶⁹ The force of Drews’ idea lies in the suggestion that the *Didachist* has a single point of reference in all three ἐντολή passages.⁷⁰ If there is reason to suspect this, one need not therefore imagine a(nother) lost Q. Indeed, what Drews fails to recognise is that binding together 1.5 and 13.4-7 is precisely the ‘Gebot’ to give alms.⁷¹

This commandment is clear in 13.4b. If this theme has not been highlighted, part of the distraction has been the offering of ‘first fruits’ to the ‘prophets’. No other primitive Christian text speaks in just this way, and the scenario dangles a tantalising hint about the life of the *Didache* community.⁷² Much might be said here, but it will suffice to make two points.

(1) The sacral language of 13.3-7 advances the *Didache*’s larger operation of replacing the Temple cult (cf. 8.1-2; 14.1-3; 16.3-8).⁷³ In this connection, the giving of ‘first fruits’ in the *Didache* is no longer restricted to the produce of those in the Land (cf. Lev 23.10; *m. Bik.* 3.2; *m. Hal.* 4.7, 10), nor brought to the priests of the central sanctuary (cf. Deut 26.1-4).⁷⁴ It is impossible to say whether or not the cultic ‘substitution’ envisioned in the *Didache* implies that the Temple was still standing (cf. *m. Bik.* 2.3). What can be said is that, both

69 P. Drews, ‘Untersuchungen zur *Didache*’, *ZNW* 5 (1904) 63-7.

70 Drews, ‘Untersuchungen’, 63.

71 ‘Es läßt sich nämlich an keiner der drei Stellen ein uns bekanntes Gebot aufzeigen, das der Verfasser im Auge haben und worauf er seine Leser verweisen könnte’ (Drews, ‘Untersuchungen’, 63).

72 See A. Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 CE* (New York: Newman, 2003); and G. Schöllgen, ‘Die *Didache* – ein frühes Zeugnis für Landgemeinden?’, *ZNW* 76 (1985) 141-2.

73 See Milavec, *Didache*, 505-6, 783-808. But see Audet, *La Didachè*, 62-7 on *Did.* 10.6.

74 See E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1990) 298-300.

during the Second Temple period and after, charity held status as a kind of surrogate cult.⁷⁵ Thus Ben Sira declares, while the Temple still stood:

The one who returns a kindness offers choice flour,
and one who gives alms sacrifices a thank offering. (Sir 35.2)

Later R. Johanan ben Zakkai openly expresses the principle to R. Yehoshua, mourning the loss of the Temple:

Be not grieved my son. There is another equally meritorious way of gaining ritual atonement, even though the Temple is destroyed. We can still gain ritual atonement through deeds of loving kindness. For it is written, 'deeds of charity I desire not sacrifice'. (*'Abot R. Nat.* 4.5; cf. *b. Ber.* 55a)

The doctrine of redemptive almsgiving which informs this rabbinic saying also informs *Did.* 4.6–7 (cf. *Barn.* 19.8–11):

6 If you earn something by working with your hands,
you shall give a ransom for your sins (λύτρωσιν ἁμαρτιῶν σου).
7 You shall not hesitate to give, nor shall you grumble when giving,
for you shall yet come to know who is the good paymaster of the reward.

The *Didache* thus recognises the atoning power of generous giving.⁷⁶ It is no strain, then, to suggest that the alternative cult implied in 13.3–7 understands charity as the essential source of its sacral character. This leads to the second point.

(2) In the *Didache's* pattern of substitution, the poor enjoy some extended or metaphoric status as priestly figures. The 'prophets' are identified as such explicitly: αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ ὀρχιερεῖς ὑμῶν (13.3).⁷⁷ Yet, these 'high priests' are functionally interchangeable with the poor (πτωχοί). The needy might stand in 'if you do not have a prophet' (13.4).

The boldness of directing dedicated offerings to the hands of beggars must not be missed. When Judith (deceitfully) explains to Holofernes why the Lord has abandoned his people, the monstrous sin she concocts is the sacrilege (ἀτοπία) of mishandling first fruits. Being starved by the siege, 'they have decided to use the first fruits (ἀπαρχάς) of grain and the tithes (δεκάτας) of wine and oil, which they consecrated and reserved for the priests who minister in the presence

75 See Anderson, *Charity*, 15–34; and Gregory, *Everlasting Signet Ring*, 222–53.

76 See Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving*, 141–52.

77 Niederwimmer (*Didache*, 192 n. 9) speculates that the term ὀρχιερεῖς is an error on the part of the *Didache*, since 'no specific regulations exist for the income of the high priest'. Milavec (*Didache*, 513) helpfully points to Philo, who uses the language of 'first fruits' (ἀπαρχομαί) in connection with 'priests of the superior rank', in distinction from 'the second rank' of levites (*De spec. leg.* 1.156–7).

of our God in Jerusalem – ‘things which the people should not so much as touch with their hands!’ (Jdt 11.13). Against this background, one must recognise in the *Didache*’s consignment of first fruits to the hands of the poor a link connecting offerings for the priests with gifts to the needy. The two social groups are functionally aligned.

The base for this linkage is well established. Ben Sira attests to the parallelism repeatedly and at one point even connects it to first fruits.⁷⁸

Fear God and honour the priest;
Give him his portion as he commanded you:
The first fruits (ἀπαρχήν) and sin offering,
The gift of the arms and sacrifice of holiness,
and first fruits of holy things (ἀπαρχήν ἁγίων).
To the poor also extend your hand,
so that your blessing might be perfected. (Sir 7.31–2)

Ben Sira’s vision here has deep biblical roots. Ultimately, it stems from the Pentateuch’s complicated tithing legislation, where a ‘third tithe’ was set apart for the poor every third and sixth year. This offering for ‘the Levites, aliens, orphans and widows’, which was never brought to the priests in Jerusalem, was nevertheless described and treated in the Torah as a ‘sacred portion’, subject to precise purity laws (שְׁקֵטָה, τὰ ἅγια, Deut 26.12–15). As Gary Anderson explains, ‘Already in Deuteronomy we see the beginnings of the sacralization of gifts to the poor.’⁷⁹

In principle, ‘firstfruits were not to be confused with tithes’.⁸⁰ The *Didache*’s language thus seems to conflate a ritual concerned with the produce (and ownership) of the Land with the deuteronomic ethic of social concern. This is no great difficulty, however. First of all, the first fruits ritual with its creedal declaration (‘My father was a wandering Aramean ...’, Deut 26.1–11) is immediately followed in Deuteronomy by the instruction on the third year tithe for the poor, with its declaration (‘I have brought the sacred portion out of my house, and given it to the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow ...’, 26.12–15). The close association of the two offerings is therefore native to the deuteronomic law. Beyond this, the *Didache*’s use of ἀπαρχή is also ‘artfully adopted for gentiles’, lacking the neat distinctions preserved in the LXX and meant to echo familiar pagan practice.⁸¹ Excessive precision, then, should not be expected. A similar conflation of

78 Gregory, *Everlasting Signet Ring*, 222–53.

79 Anderson, *Charity*, 28. See also Gregory, *Everlasting Signet Ring*, 245. Cf. Deut 14.22–7 and 15.1–8; Sir 7.29–36; 35.6–26.

80 Milavec, *Didache*, 498.

81 Milavec, *Didache*, 518. The practice of offering ‘first fruits’ (*primitiae*) was not uniquely Jewish. Cf. Homer, *Il.* 9.529; Ovid, *Met.* 8.273; 10.431; Pliny, *Natural History* 4.26.

‘tithes’ and ‘first fruits’ appears in Philo, for instance.⁸² It is interesting, nonetheless, that the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a fourth-century expansion of the *Didache*, explicitly speaks at this point of a ‘tithe’ directed to the poor (annually?):⁸³

(1) All the first fruits (ἀπαρχήν) of the winepress, the threshing-floor, the oxen, and the sheep, you shall give to the priests, that the storehouses of your treasuries and the products of your land may be blessed, and you may be strengthened with grain and wine and oil, and the herds of your cattle and flocks and sheep may be increased. (2) You shall give the whole tithe (δεκάτην) of your increase to the orphan, and to the widow, and to the poor, and to the stranger. (3) All the first fruits of your warm bread, of your vessels of wine, or oil, or honey, or nuts, or grapes, or the first fruits of other things shall be given to the priests; but those of silver, and of garments, and of all sorts of possessions, to the orphan and to the widow (*Ap. Const.* 7.29).⁸⁴

Even here, though, despite the more refined legal precision, non-agricultural ‘first fruits’ are still directed to the needy.

The circumstance reflected in the *Apostolic Constitutions* is far removed from the background to the *Didache*. The well-established clerical caste and protocol of priestly emoluments belong to another world.⁸⁵ All the same, we should avoid exaggeration. Milavec is surely too imaginative in his reconstruction of the extreme need of the *Didache*’s ‘prophets,’ whom he sees as ‘broken men and women who, owing to economic pressures, had suffered the loss of their families, their homes, and their shops’.⁸⁶ One way or another, whatever their private economic means (cf. *Did.* 12.4), it appears that the *Didache* sees the offerings to the ‘prophets’ (cf. 15.1) to be on the order of regular, ministerial entitlements – distinct, that is, from charity to the poor. The *Didache*, in other words – despite its loose language of ‘first fruits’ – maintains a distinction between hieratic ‘taxes’ and charitable gifts. It does not collapse the categories, despite their close relation.

Preserving this distinction between ministrants and the poor leaves one final option open for understanding ‘the commandment’. Perhaps it is about providing for the prophets. Genuine (ἀληθινός) teachers and prophets are said to be ‘worthy of their food’ (ἄξιός τῆς τροφῆς, *Did.* 13.1–2). With some reason,

82 ‘The laws order that tithes (δεκάταξ) from flour, and wine, and oil, and from their domestic flocks and wools, be offered as first fruits (ἀπάρχεσθαι) to the priests’ (*De virt.* 95). See J. Baumgarten, ‘On the Non-Literal Use of MA’ASER/DEKATE’, *JBL* 103 (1984) 245–61.

83 See Metzger, *Constitutions Apostoliques*, 13–62.

84 It is interesting that mention of ‘the commandment’ has fallen out here – as in *Ap. Const.* 7.5 (parallel to *Did.* 1.5). Without speculating on the explanation, this fact makes it virtually certain that Lieberman is wrong to appeal to the title in 8.43 as evidence that the *Constitutions* employs this idiom.

85 The uncertain availability of the ‘priests’ – no longer equated with ‘prophets’ – is not a concern for the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

86 Milavec, *Didache*, 507; cf. 498, 500, 507.

Harnack thus imagined Matt 10.10 ('the labourer is worthy of his food') to be the *Didache's* 'commandment'.⁸⁷ The proposal, unfortunately, faces the same range of objections that the logion in Luke 6.30 faced above – including, in this case, the inability to account for ἐντολή in *Did.* 1.5. We may add that the voluntary (ὡς ἄν σοι δόξῃ) offerings of money, clothes and other material possessions given 'according to the commandment' in *Did.* 13.7 stand in direct tension with Matt 10.8–12, which expressly prohibits the ἐργάτης from holding money or extra tunics. For Matthew 'repayment' is all in food and shelter.

The behaviour of the early church regarding the support of ministers was complex.⁸⁸ It is evident from 2 Corinthians alone that the praxis and philosophy was far from uniform. Fortunately, it is not necessary to sort out all the problems. The major preoccupation for the Didachist's community is clear enough: discerning 'worthy' ministers deserving of support (*Did.* 11.6, 12; 12.1–5; 13.1–2). This discernment parallels a similar question posed about giving to the poor.⁸⁹ The instruction in 1.5–6 addresses this, declaring that pretenders who take without being in real need will be held accountable 'until [they] repay the last penny' (1.6; cf. Matt 5.26). The difference in each case is that, while the Didachist counsels not to give to swindling prophets, indiscriminate charity to the poor seems to be commended.⁹⁰ Indeed, in the case of misdirected alms, it is only the receiver who comes in for rebuke – not the benefactor, who is reckoned to be 'innocent' (*Did.* 1.5).

The distinction is telling. On the one hand, both gifts to the 'prophets/priests' and gifts to the poor were in some way understood as gifts offered to God. It is exactly this that the description of ἀποδοχή suggests. The hands of prophets and the hands of the poor are in a real sense like a kind of altar.⁹¹ On the other hand, gifts to the poor are somehow more secure as acceptable offerings. Almsgiving is so trustworthy, in fact, that its promotion aids the discernment of spirits: a prophet is trustworthy who enjoins giving gifts to the needy – not one who says ('in the Spirit') δός μοι ἄοργύρια (11.12). It is suggestive, then, in interpreting the repeated injunction to 'give' (δός κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν) in 13.5–7, that this imperative is not elsewhere ever used with the *prophets* as indirect object. By contrast, the command to 'give' does resonate with the instruction on the free distribution of alms (1.5; cf. 13.4).

The best solution to the unspecified phrase κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν in the *Didache* is accordingly to take it as a reference to the command to give to the poor. The

87 Schöllgen ('Didache', 141), in the same line, sees in the first fruits 'der Pflicht zum Unterhalt der Propheten'.

88 See A. E. Harvey, 'The Workman is Worthy of his Hire', *NovT* 24 (1982) 207–21.

89 Note the link to 1 Timothy 5 in the shared concern about needy persons swindling the system, and the interest to be 'blameless' (ἀνεπίληπτον, 1 Tim 5.7) or 'innocent' (ἄθωπος, *Did.* 1.5).

90 See the argument mounted by Bridge, 'To Give or Not to Give', 555–68.

91 See Anderson, *Charity*, 15–34.

third-year tithes of Deuteronomy 26 may even be in view (cf. Deut 15.7–11; Sir 29.9). All contextual considerations in the document converge towards a high estimation of charitable giving, and no other solution answers the all data. As a gloss, of course, ‘alms’ is still grammatically unworkable. As in Ben Sira, the word here clearly means ‘commandment’ (although the gerund ‘almsgiving’ is within sight). Nonetheless, two developments distinguish the *Didache’s* more advanced usage. First, the singular has stabilised as the preferred and exclusive expression. Second, a regular syntagmatic relation with δίδωμι has appeared.⁹²

ὁ δίδους κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν (1.5)
 δὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν (13.5)
 δὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν (13.7)

While the prepositional phrase still precludes any exact equation with the later employment, the *Didache’s* idiom has paved the way for making τὴν ἐντολήν the direct object. The language is thus one syntactic step away from the full semantic shift.

4. Conclusion

The adoption of the language of ‘the commandment’ in connection with almsgiving arises within a distinctly Jewish, Second Temple setting, in which a kind of ‘parallel cult’ grew up around the practice of charitable offerings. It appears to be no accident that the semantic trajectory of ἐντολή passes through the cultic practices of the Jewish-Christian *Didache*; and it is perhaps significant that later Christian sources attesting the usage are largely of Syrian provenance. One might imagine the expression as belonging to a specific religio-cultural idiolect. If the *Didache*, as the most impressive witness to the developing usage, reveals a brand of Christian praxis still operating within a modified framework of Torah observance (cf. Deut 26.1–15), this fits well with the nomistic ethos of acting on behalf of יהמצי. At the same time, it is significant that the *Didache* positions the teaching on almsgiving in an instruction fundamentally shaped by Jesus’ double commandment of love of God and neighbour. The appeal to ἡ ἐντολή thus functions within a newly formulated Law (cf. 1 Tim 1.5–8). Syntactically 1 Tim 6.14 more closely resembles Sir 29.1 than the *Didache*. As a pastoral rule concerned with church officers and charity, however, the *Didache’s* framework of thought may best illuminate the evidence found in 1 Timothy.

⁹² This locution must be distinguished from the formally identical and perfectly common expression ‘to give a command’. The people, dispatching Demades to Alexander, for instance, gave him instructions (δοὺς ἐντολήν) about what he should ask (Diodorus Siculus 17.15.4). Cf. *JG* ix.1.2 583.23; *Fouilles de Delphes* iii.3 239.10, etc. See G. P. Burton, ‘The Issuing of Mandata to Proconsuls and a New Inscription from Cos’, *ZPE* 21 (1976) 63–8.