

# The First Church Manuals and Liturgies

by J.B. Galloway

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*This sermon explores the significance of early Christian church manuals and liturgies, highlighting the importance of holiness, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the structure and content of these ancient texts.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:14, Acts 6:3, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 5:22, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 4:16, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 Peter 4:10

**Topics:** "Early Church", "Holy Living"

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## Description

J.B. Galloway preaches on 'The Didache,' the oldest church manual in existence, believed to be from the first century. It contains instructions on church rites, baptism, fasting, and the Lord's Prayer. The document emphasizes holiness, urging believers to flee from evil and embrace meekness, long-suffering, and goodness. The 'Didache' highlights the sanctified ones as the true Church of God, praying for deliverance from evil and perfection in love. Additionally, Apostolic Constitutions and Canons provide insights on ecclesiastical ordinances, emphasizing spiritual worthiness and the importance of the Holy Spirit in church officers.

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## Transcript

### The "Didache," Or Teaching Of The Twelve Apostles

The Oldest Church Manual in Existence. The date of its composition is uncertain, but it is probably not later than A.D. 150; some scholars are of the opinion that it is from the first century. We know absolutely nothing about the author. A few Hebrewisms occur, and this may indicate that it was written by a Jewish Christian. The genuineness of the document is universally admitted. An old manuscript of this document was found by Archbishop Bryennios in a volume containing the writings of other fathers in 1873.

### The Contents of the "Didache"

It begins with a description of the Two Ways, of Life and Death. This was used for the instruction of the converts. Then there follows a series of instructions on church rites and customs. Directions are given in chapter seven on how to baptize, in running water if possible; if not, in still water or by affusion, in either cold or warm water. More emphasis is placed upon the spiritual preparation for baptism than upon the mode. Fasting upon Wednesdays and Fridays is enjoined, and the saying of the Lord's Prayer three times a day. A form for the consecration of the cup and bread is given for the Lord's Supper. The prophets or preachers are not to be bound by formal prayers. Different orders are recognized in the ministry; a

distinction is recognized between the fixed ministry and the prophet

## The "Didache" On Holiness

### Flee Every Evil

Chapter three begins:

My child, flee every evil thing, and from everything like it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leadeth to murder; nor jealous, nor contentious, nor passionate, for of all these murders are begotten. My child, become not lustful, for lust leadeth to fornication; nor foul-mouthed, nor loftyeyed, for of all these adulteries are begotten. My child, become not an omen-watcher, since it leadeth unto idolatry; nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look on these things, for of all these things idolatry is begotten. My child, become not a liar, since lying leadeth to theft; nor avaricious, nor vainglorious, for of all these thefts are begotten. My child, become not a murmurer, since it leadeth to blasphemy; nor presumptuous, nor evil-minded, for of all these things blasphemies are begotten. But be meek, for the meek shall inherit the earth. Become long-suffering, and pitiful, and guileless, and gentle and good, and tremble continually at the words which thou hast heard.

They contended for a high spiritual life.

### Sanctified True Church

From the Didache we see that the Early Church considered the sanctified ones as composing the true Church. From chapter ten we read:

Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from every evil, and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, it, the sanctified into Thy Kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for it, for Thine is the power and glory forever. Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the Son of David! Whoever is holy, let him come; whoever is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.

The Early Church prayed to be made perfect in love and for deliverance from all evil, testified that the sanctified ones were the true Church of God, and shouted, "Glory!" "Hosanna!" "Amen." Are you living up to their standard?

### Apostolic Constitutions And Canons

The Constitutions are a collection of ecclesiastical ordinances, in eight books. The claim was made for them that they were the work of the apostles and written down by St. Clement. But this is not correct. The best scholars on church history are now about agreed that the Apostolic Constitutions are a compilation from material derived from sources differing in age. The first six of the books are the oldest part. The Didache seems to be the basis of the seventh book. And the eighth book is the latest part composed. It is generally admitted that entire work is not later than the fourth century, and the first six books can hardly be later than the second or third century. Early writers are inclined to assign parts of it to the days of the apostles if not to the apostles themselves. There is every indication that it was compiled of earlier and long-used sources. Recent research has awakened new interest in the Apostolic Constitutions by the discovery of an old manuscript of it in Constantinople.

The purpose of this work was to present a manual of instruction, worship, polity, and usage.

The Apostolic Canons, so-called, are found in the last part of the eighth book of the Constitutions. There are eighty-five of them. They were probably composed in Syria.

## The Apostolic Constitutions On Holiness

### Worldliness Condemned

From Book I, Section 2. Concerning Adornment and the Sin that arises therefrom. Worldliness is condemned. "Thou shalt not put a gold ring upon thy finger," is one sentence found. But beauty of heart is encouraged. We read, "For thou art not to please man, so as to commit sin; but God, so as to attain holiness of life, and be a partaker of eternal rest."

### Anointed with Oil

In Book III, Section 2, the question of Holy Baptism is discussed, and the bishop is required to anoint with oil the one who has been baptized. The meaning of this is explained in these words, "This baptism is given, therefore, into the death of Christ; the water instead of the burial, and the oil instead of the Holy Ghost."

From Book V, Section 1, we read concerning martyrs:

"For he that is condemned for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is an holy martyr, a receptacle of the Holy Spirit."

In Book VII, Section 3, Chapter 39, the catechumens are instructed.

### His Creation

To thank God, for His creation, for sending Christ His only begotten Son, that He might save man by blotting out his transgressions, and that He might remit ungodliness, and might purify him from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and sanctify man according to the good pleasure of His kindness, that He might inspire him with a knowledge of His will, and enlighten the eyes of his heart to consider His wonderful works, and make known unto him the ways of righteousness, that he might hate every way of iniquity, and walk in the way of truth.

### Consecration of Deaconesses

From Book VIII, Section 3, chapter 20, we read from the prayer for the ordination of a deaconess:

Do Thou now also look down upon this Thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess, and grant her Thy Holy Spirit, and cleanse her from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her.

### Consecration of Readers

From the same book, and chapter 22, from the prayer for the consecration of the readers we read:

Do Thou also now look down upon Thy servant, who is to be intrusted with the reading of Thy Holy Scriptures to Thy people, and give him Thy Holy Spirit, the prophetic Spirit. Thou who didst instruct Esdras Thy servant to read the law to Thy people, do Thou also at our prayers instruct Thy servant, and grant that he may without blame perfect the work committed to him, and thereby be declared worthy of a higher

degree, through Christ, with whom glory and worship be to Thee and the Holy Ghost forever. Amen.

Great emphasis was placed upon all the officers of the church having the Holy Ghost.

It was spiritual worthiness that was considered, for even a bishop could be consecrated who was physically maimed yet spiritually qualified. From The Apostolic Canons No. 77 we read:

If any one be maimed in the eye or lame in the leg, but is worthy of episcopal dignity, let him be made a bishop; for it is not a blemish of the body that can defile him, but the pollution of the soul.

### The Early Liturgies

We who are accustomed to extemporaneous prayer and freedom of church ritual do not recognize the great influence that the liturgies have held on the Church at different periods of church history.

The liturgy was a form of public worship, especially for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. From the days of the apostles there has been a form for the observance of the Eucharist. The references to the liturgy in the first three centuries are not so numerous; but comparing them with those after the Nicaean Council, there must have been a great similarity between them. Various liturgies have come down to us from the early centuries but of their age, authorship, and genuineness we are not certain. The most interesting of these are the liturgies of St. Mark, St. James, St. Clement, St. Chrysostom, and that of St. Basil. The ancient liturgies are divided into the Liturgy of Jerusalem, used in the East; the Alexandrian, used in Egypt; the Roman; and the Persian; the Clementine also may be mentioned, but it seems that it never was used as a form for public worship. It is found in the eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions.

The liturgies were usually divided into two parts: the parts before and after the words, "Lift we up our hearts."

### Holiness In The Early Liturgies

#### Prayers for Perfection

From the Divine Liturgy of St. James, Part I, Division 3. At the beginning of the Prayer of Incense, these words occur:

Accept from us, Thy unprofitable servants, this incense as an odor of a sweet smell, and make fragrant the evil odor of our soul and body, and purify us with the sanctifying power of Thy all-holy Spirit.

From Division 4:

Fulfill to each what is profitable; lead all to perfection and make us perfectly worthy of

Thy sanctification.

From Division 13: The Prayer of the Deacon, these words occur:

Let us entreat from the Lord, that we may pass the whole day, perfect, holy, peaceful, and without sin.

God and Sovereign of all, make us, who are unworthy, worthy of this hour, lover of mankind; that being free from all deceit, and all hypocrisy, we may be united with one another by

the bond of peace and love being confirmed by the sanctification of Thy divine knowledge.

From Division 29, we read:

Holy art Thou, King of eternity, and Lord and giver of all holiness.

From The Divine Liturgy of St. Mark, Division 4, we read:

O Lord, deliver us. Purify our lives and cleanse our hearts from all pollution and from all wickedness, that with pure hearts and consciences we may offer to Thee this incense.

Cherubic Hymns

From Division 10: After the singing of the cherubic hymn, pray thus:

O holy, highest, awe-inspiring God, who dwellest among saints, sanctify us, and deem us worthy of Thy reverent priesthood. Bring us to Thy precious altar with a good conscience, and cleanse our hearts from pollution. Drive away from us all unholy thoughts and sanctify our souls and minds.

From Division 17, we read:

Send down from Thy holy heaven, from the mansion which Thou hast prepared, and from Thy faithful bosom, the Paraclete himself, holy, powerful, and life-giving, the Spirit of truth, who spoke in the law, the apostles, and prophets; who is everywhere present, filling all things, freely working sanctification in whom He will.

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