



Ancient-Future Emerging Jesus

Unity North Atlanta Church, 4255 Sandy Plains Rd, Marietta, GA 30066
The class will be held in the Holy Grounds Café on the lower level

This four week class provides an introduction into the changing understanding of the early church and its writings about Jesus, particularly the Gospel of Thomas, but also explores some ancient spiritual practices and post-modern voices that are shaping what is being called "The Emergent or Progressive Emergent Church".

The Instructor: Rev. Gregg Carlson is a graduate of Colgate University and Northern Seminary. He has 24 years of ministry experience in a variety of settings. He has studied with one of the leading experts in the Ancient-Future movement, Dr. Robert Webber, and has been part of the Emergent Conversation for more than 4 years. He is an ordained minister who presently holds "Privilege of Call" with the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC). He currently serves as Director of Operations at Unity North Atlanta Church and is also a church planter coach with the New Church Development Team of the UCC.

Primary texts: "The Message Bible" and "Beyond Belief" by Elaine Pagels (these are both available in the Unity North Bookstore), passages from the Message Bible are also available online at www.BibleGateway.org. **There will also be some printed materials handed out by the instructor that will be an additional cost.**

Course costs: There is no fixed charge for the course, a love offering will be received each week and you are urged to participate as you are able.

Syllabus:

Class is scheduled to run from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Wednesday evenings in the Holy Grounds Café of Unity North Church, please try to be present on time. **Please read the week's reading assignment prior to attending class:**

Pre-class assignment: In one page write down any previous positive moments when you have encountered the Divine through the Way of Jesus. What are you hoping to gain in your understandings about Jesus, Christianity, the Gospel of Thomas and the early church?

Week #1 -Wednesday, July 22:

Reading Assignments to be completed before class: Chapter 1 of Beyond Belief, Chapters 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount) of the Book of Matthew in the Message Bible, the Gospel of Thomas p.227-242 in Beyond Belief

Topic: Introduction to a new understanding of the early church, Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi Library (particularly the Gospel of Thomas). Understanding modern Biblical Scholarship regarding Gospels and is Thomas the missing "Q" or source used by the authors of Matthew and Luke? How these are changing our understanding about the early followers of Jesus?

Ancient Christian practice: The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic - led by Carol Penhollow

Future-Emerging resource: "Dust" by Rob Bell

Week #2 - Wednesday, July 29:

Topic: John versus Thomas, belief versus mystic journey, Elaine Pagels theory on the early battle for the faith

Reading Assignment to be completed before class: Chapter 2 of Beyond Belief: The Gospel of Mark 3:31 - through the end of chapter 4 and John chapter 21 in the Message Bible and the hand-out on Centering Prayer from The Sacred Way, by Tony Jones.

Ancient Christian practice: Centering Prayer - led by Darrell Grizzle

Future-Emerging resource: "Breathe" by Rob Bell

Week #3 - Wednesday, August 5:

Topic: The battle for the Canon, what and who shaped the New Testament of the Bible? Do we not read the books left out? What would it look like if we were shaping a Canon or list of books for the New Testament today? **Reading Assignment to be completed before class:** Chapter 3 & 4 of Beyond Belief and, hand-out "The Eight Points of the Center for Progressive Christianity"

Ancient Christian practice: Instruction and use of the Labyrinth in Christian meditation - led by Rev. Cathy Payne Anderson

Future-Emerging Resource: The 8 points of The Center for Progressive Christianity

Week #4 - Wednesday, August 12:

Topic: The Battle for a Catholic (universal, one) Church, why so much bloodshed? Who decides who is a heretic? Is the emerging church a new vision for Christianity? What does that mean for the Unity Movement?

Reading Assignment to be completed before class: Chapter 5 of Beyond Belief, Hand-out "The Didache" (the earliest Christian document we have),

Ancient Christian practice: Celebration of the ancient Thanksgiving (Eucharist) from the Didache

Future-Emerging Resource: A panel discussion on the meaning of the Way of Jesus and the Gospel of Thomas with a panel representing views of Emergent Christians, Progressive Christians, and the Unity Movement

The Eight Points of the Center for Progressive Christianity

- 1. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus.**
- 2. Recognize the faithfulness of other people who have other names for the way to God's realm, and acknowledge that their ways are true for them, as our ways are true for us.**
- 3. Understand the sharing of bread and wine in Jesus's name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God's feast for all peoples**
- 4. Invite all people to participate in our community and worship life without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable**
- 5. Know that the way we behave toward one another and toward other people is the fullest expression of what we believe.**
- 6. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty - more value in questioning than in absolutes.**
- 7. By calling ourselves progressive, we mean we are Christians who...Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to do: striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, and bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers**
- 8. Recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege.**

The Phoenix Affirmations

The public face of Christianity in America today bears little connection to the historic faith of our ancestors. It represents even less our own faith as Christians who continue to celebrate the gifts of our Creator, revealed and embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Heartened by our experience of the transforming presence of Christ's Holy Spirit in our world, we find ourselves in a time and place where we will be no longer silent. We hereby mark an end to our silence by making the following affirmations:

As people who are joyfully and unapologetically Christian, we pledge ourselves completely to the way of Love. We work to express our love, as Jesus teaches us, in three ways: by loving God, neighbor, and self.

Matt 22:34-40 // Mk 12:28-31 // Lk 10:25-28; Cf. Deut 6:5; Lev. 19:18

Loving God Includes:

Affirmation 1: Walking fully in the path of Jesus, without denying the legitimacy of other paths God may provide humanity;

Matthew 11:28-29; John 8:12; John 10:16; Mark 9:40

As Christians, we find spiritual awakening, challenge, growth, and fulfillment in Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. While we have accepted the Path of Jesus as *our* Path, we do not deny the legitimacy of other paths God may provide humanity. Where possible, we seek lively dialog with those of other faiths for mutual benefit and fellowship.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found wherever love of God, neighbor, and self are practiced together. Whether or not the path bears the name of Jesus, such paths bear the identity of Christ.

We confess that we have stepped away from Christ's Path whenever we have failed to practice love of God, neighbor, and self, or have claimed Christianity is the *only* way, even as we claim it to be *our* way.

Affirmation 2: Listening for God's Word which comes through daily prayer and meditation, through studying the ancient testimonies which we call Scripture, and through attending to God's present activity in the world;

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 13:12

As Christians, we listen for God's Word in the living presence of the Holy Spirit, praying every day, and discerning God's present activity in our world. We also study and revere the ancient records which we call Scripture, recognizing that they have been formed within distinct historical and cultural contexts, yet have been informed by God's Spirit, which transcends all ages and

times. Most of all we seek the meaning of salvation, of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as it is presented in the Scriptures and discerned in daily life.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers engage in daily prayer and meditation, as well as personal and community study and interpretation of Scripture, as central ways God's continuing voice is discerned in everyday life.

We confess that we have moved away from Christ's Path when we have claimed that God's Word is restricted to that which may be contained in a written document, or that either the recording of God's Word in Scripture, or our interpretation of it, are infallible. Further, we have moved away from the Path when we have allowed the mere fact of Scripture's fallibility, or our own, to dissuade us from seeking God's Word in Scripture, prayer, and reflection on daily life.

Affirmation 3: Celebrating the God whose Spirit pervades and whose glory is reflected in all of God's Creation, including the earth and its ecosystems, the sacred and secular, the Christian and non-Christian, the human and non-human;

Genesis 1:31a; Psalm 96:1,11-12; Acts 17:23

As Christians, we seek to act as righteous stewards of the earth and its ecosystems. We celebrate the reflections of the Creator's glory in both the sacred and secular, human and non-human, Christian and non-Christian.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers act as caring stewards of the earth, and where the presence of the living Christ is celebrated wherever Christ's spirit manifests itself, transcending all preconceived human categories.

We confess that we have stepped away from this Path when we have ignored our role as stewards of the earth, or have interpreted Scripture in a way that fails to account for the sacredness of the earth or the integrity of its ecosystems. We have further moved away whenever we have claimed that that the glorification and praise of God is limited only to that which is consciously and overtly Christian.

Affirmation 4: Expressing our love in worship that is as sincere, vibrant, and artful as it is scriptural.

Genesis 2:7; Exodus 31:2-51; Revelation 18:22

As Christians, we strive to respond to God's artistry in Creation by integrating the arts in worship, education and proclamation. We encourage the reclaiming of artistry and artistic expression in all Christian endeavors, both personal and communal.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers make sincere and vibrant worship of God as central to the life of their community as Jesus did. We further affirm artistic expression as a way of reflecting God's creativity, joy, and prophetic voice in what may be seen, heard, felt, tasted, sung and spoken.

We confess that we have moved away from Christ's Path when we have failed to make worship the product of our best efforts to experience and express love for God, neighbor and self in community with others. We have moved further from this path when we have considered the arts as trivial or merely tangential to the life of a mature Christian community.

Loving Our Neighbor Includes:

Affirmation 5: Engaging people authentically, as Jesus did, treating all as creations made in God's very image, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, nationality, or economic class;

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:3-7

As Christians, we welcome those of every race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability, nationality, and economic class into the full life of our community.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers uplift and celebrate the worth and integrity of all people as created in God's very image and likeness. We further affirm that Christ's Path includes treating people authentically rather than as mere categories or classes, challenging and inspiring all people to live according to their high identity.

We confess that we have stepped away from this Path whenever we have failed to recognize the essential goodness of God's Creation by treating some classes of human beings as more godly than others. We have moved further from Christ's Path when we have treated people superficially, as objects to be used rather than human beings with depth and distinction.

Affirmation 6: Standing, as Jesus does, with the outcast and oppressed, the denigrated and afflicted, seeking peace and justice with or without the support of others; *Micah 6:8; Luke 12:48*

As Christians, we advocate and care for those who experience oppression and poverty, either physically or spiritually, within our faith communities, our country, and the world. We recognize the local congregation as the primary context for offering such care, even as we seek to extend it beyond our faith communities into the wider world.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers honor the essential unity of spirit and matter by connecting worship and theology with concrete acts of justice and righteousness, kindness and humility, with or without the support of others.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have suggested that Christianity is concerned with only the spiritual in contrast to the material, or vice-versa. We have moved further away when we have celebrated blessings given by God without also acknowledging responsibilities that come with blessing.

Affirmation 7: Preserving religious freedom and the Church's ability to speak prophetically to government by resisting the commingling of Church and State;

Luke 20:25; 1 Peter 2:17

As Christians, we strive to live as responsible citizens of our country, just as we seek to live as Christ's disciples. We celebrate the separation of Church and State as much for the protection of the Church, and other faith communities, as the State.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers honor the role of the State in maintaining justice and peace, so far as human discernment and ability make possible. We affirm the separation of Church and State, even as we endeavor to support the state in as far as Christian conscience allows.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have confused the role of the State with that of the Church. We have moved further from the Path when we have renounced the Church's calling to speak prophetically to the State by suggesting that the Church should or could take on the nature, tasks and dignity which belong to the State, thus becoming itself an organ of the State.

Affirmation 8: Walking humbly with God, acknowledging our own shortcomings while honestly seeking to understand and call forth the best in others, including those who consider us their enemies;

Luke 18:9-14; Luke 6:27-29; Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:18-19

As Christians, we recognize that we are misfits both with respect to God's Realm and the world. We are misfits with respect to God's Realm in that we rarely live up to the principles and ideals we espouse. We are misfits with respect to the world in that the ideals for which we strive frequently do not conform to the ways of the world.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers love those who consider them their enemies as much as they love themselves, striving humbly to embody the "fruits of the Spirit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have promoted a notion that people of faith are morally or ethically superior to those without faith. Further, we have moved away when we have supported any cause, no matter how just or righteous, without reflecting the "fruits of the Spirit" toward all.

Loving Ourselves Includes:

Affirmation 9: Basing our lives on the faith that, in Christ, all things are made new, and that we, and all people, are loved beyond our wildest imagination - for eternity;

Psalms 22:27-29; Psalm 23:4-6; Psalm 139:7-12; John 3:16-17; Romans 14:7-11; Philippians 1:20-26

As Christians, we bear witness to, and nurture faith in, all persons who are hungry for, or open to the revelation, love, and salvation of God in Christ. We do not seek to evangelize those who have no desire to explore the Christian Path. We trust, rather, that God's love, grace and invitation, has been, and will be, revealed in other paths, witnesses and times.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers are continually discovering, and rediscovering that they - and all people - are loved beyond their wildest imagination, and they determine to live their lives according to this discovery. We find in this discovery and surrender the very essence of salvation, which is a process, not an end-point, within an eternal journey.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path whenever we have denied God's love for all people, or have denied the effectiveness of God's eternal will that all be saved. We have moved further from Christ's path when we have not actively borne witness to God's love and grace with those who seek it.

Affirmation 10: Claiming the sacredness of both our minds and our hearts, recognizing that faith and science, doubt and belief serve the pursuit of truth;

Proverbs 1:20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:18-19; 1 Corinthians 14:15

As Christians, we seek to develop intellectually as sincerely as we seek emotional development. We further seek to clarify that the truths contained in Scripture are not conveyed primarily through scientific revelations, but through wisdom which may be gleaned frequently in story and song, symbol and parable.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers value the pursuit of wisdom, which is found at the intersection of head and heart, where God seeks relationship with the human soul.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have denied either the role of the mind, or that of the heart, in the seeking of wisdom. Further, we have moved off the Path when we have denigrated the role of doubt or pursuit of scientific knowledge as if they were enemies rather than allies of faith.

Affirmation 11: Caring for our bodies, and insisting on taking time to enjoy the benefits of prayer, reflection, worship and recreation in addition to work;

Exodus 5:4-8; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

As Christians, we strive to embrace and embody ways of living that promote the health of the body, the joy of living, and the benefits attained when work is combined with rest and recreation, reflection and prayer. We do this for our sake, for the sake of others, for the sake of the earth, and for the sake of Christ.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers care for their bodies as temples of the holy, and take time to pray and play, to worship, and to reflect, as essential parts of their vocation.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have supported the ethics of Pharaoh over the ethics of God by promoting systems of production and consumption without attending to the disciplines of rest and recreation, reflection and prayer. We have further moved from the Path when we have denigrated or abused our bodies, or those of others, or denied the rights and responsibilities of others to make decisions about how they care for the bodies God gave them.

Affirmation 12: Acting on the faith that we are born with a meaning and purpose; a vocation and ministry that serves to strengthen and extend God's realm of love.

Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 5:15-16; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31

As Christians, we practice prayer as a daily discipline, seeking in prayer both to enjoy God's presence and to discern God's will for our lives and our faith communities. We accept it as one of our highest responsibilities and privileges to help those in our communities of faith discern God's direction for their lives, and to celebrate and value their discernment in the worship and missional life of the church. In every available way, we seek to help people develop and use their diverse callings as an expression of their faith.

We affirm that the Path of Jesus is found where all of Christ's followers are understood to be called into a ministry. God's intention for us can be found and followed, however haltingly and imperfectly, in obedience to the guidance and insights, which come in prayer. We hold this conviction to be true of the Church as well as of each of its members.

We confess that we have moved away from this Path when we have claimed that one form of ministry is any higher or more sacred than any other, in or outside a church. Further, we have moved from the Path when we have failed to concretely value meaningful input and participation by both laypeople and clergy in the worship and mission of our communities.

THE DIDACHE

(The Teaching)

with comments by Ben H. Swett
30 January 1998

The Greek word *didache* means "teaching." The *Didache* is the short title of an ancient document that contains some very early Christian doctrines. Although a document of that name is referred to by several ancient writers, it apparently was lost. It was re-discovered in Constantinople in 1875, in a manuscript dated 1056 that also included several other documents either known or referred to as having been written before AD 150.

The *Didache* seems to consist of five parts, here shown as chapters although these divisions are not in the document. The first part shows what a genuine teacher of Christian righteousness will say and how he or she will go about teaching. The second part deals with the question of clean and unclean foods, and outlines procedures for baptism, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist and the love-feast. The third sets policies on the treatment of apostles and prophets by members of the congregation. The fourth organizes the church, and the fifth briefly summarizes teachings concerning the second coming of Christ at end of the age.

This translation of the *Didache* is not copyrighted.

On Righteousness

1:1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and the difference between the two ways is great.

1:2 The way of life is this: first, you shall love the God who made you; second, your neighbor as yourself, and whatever you would not have done to you, do not do to another.

These are the two great commandments (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18) according to Jesus (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 10:25-28), plus the negative form of the Golden Rule, "Do not do to another what you would not want done to you."

The negative form of the Golden Rule is not in the New Testament, although the thought is in Romans 13:10. It is found in the literature of many religions and philosophies: Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Islamic. It provides a basis for self-restraint; and in practice, it can change a person from harmful to harmless (from negative to neutral in terms of effect on others).

Jesus taught the positive form of the Golden Rule: "Do for another what you would want done for you" (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31). It provides a basis for personal initiative; and in practice, it can change a person from harmless to helpful (from neutral to positive in terms of effect on others). Thus, by the result it produces, the positive form of the Golden Rule is a higher ethic, properly seen as building upon and going beyond the negative form of the Golden Rule.

1:3 And the teaching of these maxims is this: bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast on behalf of those who persecute you; for what thanks is there, if you love them that love you? Do not even Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you will not have an enemy.

Matthew 5:43-47, Luke 6:27-35, Romans 12:14

1:4 Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts. If anyone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you will be perfect [full-grown, fully-mature]. If anyone compels you to go a mile, go with him two; if anyone takes your cloak, give him your coat also; if anyone takes from you what is yours, do not ask for it back nor try to use force.

"Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts" is a very terse summary of numerous teachings throughout the New Testament. (e.g., Matthew 5:27-30, Ephesians 4:22, I Thessalonians 4:3-5, I John 2:16-17). "Turn the other cheek, go the second mile, and give your coat also" are in Matthew 5:39-41 and Luke 6:29.

1:5 Give to everyone who asks of you, and do not demand it back; for the Father wants something from his own free gifts to be given to all. Blessed is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless; but woe to him who receives; for if one who receives is actually in need, he is guiltless; but whoever receives when not in need will have to explain why he received and for what purpose; in prison he will be interrogated concerning the things he has done, and he will not depart from there until he has paid the last penny.

1:6 Yes, truly it has been said about this: "Let your alms sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give."

As far as I can tell, this saying is not anywhere in the Bible.

2:1 And the teaching of the second commandment is this:

2:2 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery; you shall not seduce boys; you shall not fornicate. You shall not steal. You shall not be a fortune-teller; you shall not practice sorcery. You shall not kill a child by abortion nor slay it when born. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

2:3 You shall not commit perjury; you shall not give false testimony; you shall not speak evil; you shall not bear malice;

2:4 you shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double-tongue is a snare of death.

2:5 Your word shall not be false or empty, but confirmed by deeds.

2:6 You shall not be greedy or rapacious or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. You shall not take up an evil plot against your neighbor.

2:7 You shall not hate anyone, but some you shall rebuke, and some you shall pray for, and some you shall love more than your own soul.

3:1 My child, flee from everything that is evil and everything that is like it.

3:2 Do not be wrathful, for wrath leads to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor quarrelsome, for from all these murder ensues.

3:3 My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication, nor a filthy-talker nor a lewd-looker, for from all these adulteries ensue.

3:4 My child, do not be an interpreter of omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magical purifier, nor wish to see them, for from all these idolatry arises.

3:5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft, nor avaricious nor conceited, for from all these thefts are produced.

3:6 My child, do not be a complainer, since it leads to blasphemy, nor self-willed nor evil-minded, for from all these blasphemies are produced.

3:7 Be meek, for the meek will inherit the earth.

3:8 Be long-suffering and merciful and guileless and peaceable and good, and revere always the words you have heard.

3: 9 You shall not exalt yourself, nor let your soul be presumptuous. Your soul shall not be joined with the lofty, but with the righteous and humble you shall walk.

3:10 You shall accept what befalls you as good, knowing that without God nothing happens.

4:1 My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to you; honor him as the Lord, for where his lordship is proclaimed, there is the Lord.

4:2 Seek out daily the faces of the saints, that you may rest in their words.

4:3 You shall not desire schism, but shall set at peace those who contend. You shall judge righteously; you shall not show partiality when rebuking for transgressions.

4:4 You shall not vacillate about whether a thing will be or will not be.

4:5 You shall not be one who stretches out his hands to receive but one who draws them back when someone is giving.

4:6 If you have anything in your hands, give a ransom for your sins.

4:7 You shall not hesitate to give; neither shall you grumble when giving, for you know who is the fair paymaster of your reward.

4:8 You shall not turn away from him who is actually in need, but share with your brother in all things and not say things are your own, for if you are partners in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things?

4:9 You shall not remove your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God.

4:10 You shall not command in your bitterness your slave or your maid who hope in the same God as yourself, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both; for he comes not with regard for reputation, but to those whom the Spirit has prepared.

4:11 And you slaves, subordinate yourselves to your masters in shame and fear, as to an image of God.

4:12 You shall hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord.

4:13 You shall not abandon the commandments of the Lord, but guard what you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything.

4:14 You shall confess your transgressions in the congregation; and you shall not come to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

5:1 But this is the way of death: first of all, it is evil and full of curses, murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, fortune-tellings, sorceries, robberies; false testimony, hypocrisy, duplicity, deception, arrogance, malice, stubbornness, greed, filthy-talking, jealousy, audacity, pride, boastfulness;

5:2 persecuting good men, hating truth, loving falsehood, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not adhering to what is good nor to righteous judgment; watching not for that which is good but for that which is evil; far from gentleness and patience, loving worthless things, pursuing recompense, having no mercy for the needy, not working for him that is distressed, not recognizing him who made them; murderers of children, corrupters of the image of God, turning away from him that is in need, oppressing him that is distressed, advocates of the rich, unjust judges of the poor, utterly sinful. May you be delivered, my children, from all these!

6:1 Take heed lest anyone lead you astray from this way of teaching, for he who does so teaches you away from God.

6:2 If you can carry the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect [full-grown, fully-mature]; but if you cannot, then do what you can.

"Be ye therefore perfect" is in Leviticus 19:2 and Matthew 5:48.

6:3 Concerning food, bear what you can, but carefully keep away from food sacrificed to idols, for it is a worship-service to gods from the realm of the dead.

The prohibition against eating food sacrificed to idols was one part of the decision of the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49. The entire decision was sent as a letter to all the churches (Acts 15:20-29, 21:25), so why doesn't the Didache include all of it?

On Piety

7:1 Concerning baptism, baptize thus: having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water.

7:2 But if you have no running water, baptize in other water, and if you cannot baptize in cold water, then warm water;

7:3 but if you have neither, pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

7:4 Before a baptism, let him who baptizes and him who is baptized fast, and any others who may be able to do so. And command him who is baptized to fast one or two days beforehand.

The Trinity formula "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" appears only once in the New Testament (Matthew 28:19). It is probably a later insert (redaction) in both the Didache and Matthew's Gospel, because the Trinity was not defined until AD 362. The original reading was probably "In the name of the Lord" (see the Didache 9:5). Fasting before baptism dropped out of our tradition somewhere along the line.

8:1 Do not let your fasting be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second day and the fifth day of the week [Monday and Thursday], but you shall fast on the fourth day and the day of preparation [Wednesday and Friday].

The word "hypocrite" occurs 21 times in the New Testament. Mark uses it once. Luke uses it four times. In addition to parallels, Matthew uses it eleven times in passages that are found only in his gospel. All these are sayings of Jesus in which "hypocrite" refers to the most religious Jews of his day. Interestingly enough, this word is not found in Acts or any of the epistles.

8:2 Neither pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the power and the glory, forever."

8:3 Pray this way three times a day.

Which Gospel is referred to here? The Lord's Prayer is not in Mark or John. It is worded this way in Matthew (6:9-13) but not in Luke (11:2-4).

9:1 And concerning the thanks-giving [Eucharist], give thanks thus:

9:2 first, concerning the cup: "We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of your son David, which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever."

Direct comparison of "your son David" and "your son Jesus" must be a very early doctrine, predating the doctrine that Jesus is the only son of God and the doctrine set forth by Athanasius in AD 318 that Jesus was God Incarnate. This is probably one reason why Athanasius excluded the Didache when he finalized the list of New Testament books in AD 367. Paul compared David and Jesus (Acts 13:16-41, Romans 5:15-17, I Timothy 2:5).

9:3 And concerning the broken bread: "We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever.

4 As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains, and gathered together became one, so may your congregation be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ, forever."

5 But let no one eat or drink of your thanks-giving except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord, for the Lord has said, "Do not give that which is holy to the dogs."

There is nothing like this in the New Testament. Paul's instructions concerning the Lord's Supper do not include a model prayer (I Corinthians 11:20-34). "Give not that which is holy to the dogs" is in Matthew (7:6), but not in this context.

10:1 And after you are filled, give thanks thus:

10:2 "We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name, which you have caused to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which you have made known to us through your son Jesus; to you be the glory forever.

10:3 You, Almighty Master, created all things for the sake of your name, and give men food and drink to enjoy, that they might give thanks to you, but to us you give spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your son.

10:4 Above all, we give thanks that you are powerful; to you be the glory forever.

10:5 Remember your congregation, Lord, to redeem it from all evil and perfect it in your love; and gather it together, the one that has been sanctified, from the four winds into your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours is the kingdom and the glory forever.

10:6 May grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy let him come; if anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."

10:7 But let the prophets give thanks however they wish.

The phrase "the one (church) that has been sanctified" is probably a very clumsy redaction inserted some time after the Roman Emperor Theodosius declared the Nicene sect of Christianity the only sanctified Church in AD 380.

Paul prayed, "Yours be the glory forever." (Romans 11:36, 16:27, Galatians 1:5, Ephesians 3:20-21).

Paul used the Syrian expression maran-atha which means "Our Lord continues to come." It appears only once in the Bible (I Corinthians 16:22). Paul's home (Tarsus) was in the Syrian-speaking part of Cilicia. Thus, maran-atha may very well have been Paul's signature -- his personal testimony that Jesus continued to come to him after his conversion on the road to Damascus.

On Apostles and Prophets

11:1 Therefore, whoever comes and teaches you all these things aforesaid, receive him.

11:2 If the teacher himself is perverted and teaches a different doctrine to the subversion thereof, do not listen to him; but if he increases your righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as you would the Lord.

11:3 And concerning the apostles and prophets, do according to the command of the Gospel.

11:4 Let every apostle who comes to you be received as you would the Lord.

11:5 He will stay one day, and if necessary, a second day, but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet.

11:6 Let the apostle when departing take nothing except bread until he arrives at his next lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

This clearly indicates that at least some of the apostles were still living when the Didache was written. It reflects what Jesus said when he told his apostles not to provide for themselves on their journeys (Matthew 10:10-11), and it suggests that supporting apostles could be a burden on the people with whom they stayed.

Matthew uses the word "apostle" once (10:2), Mark uses it once (6:30), and Luke uses it six times in his gospel, but none of these passages contain any command. Paul used the phrase "apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:4-6).

"Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord" is akin to something Jesus said: "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." (Matthew 10:40-41)

11:7 Do not tempt or dispute with any prophet who speaks in spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven.

11:8 However, not every one who speaks in spirit is a prophet, but only he who has the disposition of the Lord; therefore, by their dispositions the false prophet and the prophet shall be known.

The unforgivable sin is to see the work of God and say, "That is the work of the Devil" (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:29, Luke 12:10). "By their fruits you shall know them" refers to discernment of true and false prophets in Matthew (7:15-20), but the parallel in Luke (6:43-45) refers to a good man rather than a prophet.

11:9 Any prophet who orders a meal in spirit shall not eat of it; if he does, he is a false prophet.

11:10 If any prophet who teaches the truth does not do what he teaches, he is a false prophet.

11:11 And any prophet, true and approved, who performs rites to a secret cosmic assembly, but does not teach others to perform what he performs, shall not be judged by you, for his judgment is with God; for likewise also did the prophets of old.

11:12 If anyone says in spirit, "Give me silver," or whatever else, do not listen to him; but if he tells you about others in need, that you should give to them, let no one condemn him.

There must have been a problem with false prophets who tried to get things for themselves. Several commentaries note that Didache 11:11 is difficult to interpret. The phrase "performs rites to a secret cosmic assembly" is my literal translation. It probably meant that the congregation should not be alarmed if they saw and heard a prophet conversing with invisible members of the Kingdom of God. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "Let two or three prophets speak and the others weigh what is said" (I Corinthians 14:29-32).

12:1 Let every one who comes in the name of the Lord be received, and then examine him judiciously -- right and left -- for the opinions he holds.

2 If the one who comes is a traveler, assist him as much as you can, but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, unless there is a necessity.

3 If he wishes to settle with you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living.

4 If he is not a craftsman, decide according to your own judgment how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness.

5 If he will not do this, he is one who makes gain from Christ. From such keep aloof.

Paul taught against living in idleness, in AD 50 or 51 (II Thessalonians 3:6-12).

The word "Christian" appears only three times in the Bible. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch of Syria about AD 43 (Acts 11:26); King Herod Agrippa II said to Paul, "In a short time you think to make me a

Christian!" about AD 59 (Acts 26:28); and Simon Peter wrote, "If one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed..." no later than AD 64 or 65 (I Peter 4:16).

On Organization

13:1 Every true prophet who desires to settle among you is worthy of his food.

13:2 Likewise, a true teacher also is worthy, but like the craftsman, he works for his living.

13:3 Therefore, take the first-fruits of every product of the wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and sheep, and give it to the prophets, for they are your chief priests.

13:4 And if you have no prophet, give it to the poor.

13:5 If you make bread, take the first-fruits and give according to the commandment.

13:6 In like manner, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the first-fruits and give it to the prophets.

13:7 Yes, and of money and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruits, as seems good to you, and give according to the commandment.

There were "prophets and teachers" in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). Paul wrote, "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues." (I Corinthians 12:28-31)

Paul and Barnabas earned their own living, but Peter did not -- and Paul did not preach what he practiced in that regard. On the contrary, he strongly maintained that the workman is worthy of his wage (I Corinthians 9:1-27). However, I find nothing in the New Testament about giving the first-fruits to the local prophets.

14:1 Gather together on the Lord's day, break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.

14:2 But do not let anyone who has a quarrel with a companion join with you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be polluted;

14:3 for this was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles."

The Lord's Day was established as the first day of the week (Sunday) very early in the history of the church. "Reconcile before coming to the altar" is in Matthew 5:23-24. The quote on pure sacrifice is slightly paraphrased from Malachi 1:11.

15:1 Therefore, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, true and approved, for they also perform for you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

15:2 Therefore, do not despise them, for they are your honorable men, along with the prophets and teachers.

Paul used "bishop" as equivalent to "elder" (Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:1-18, Titus 1:5-14). In Greek, the word translated "bishop" literally means "overseer" or "supervisor" and the word translated "deacon" means "servant".

"Elect for yourselves" is in stark contrast to the doctrine that bishops must only be consecrated by bishops, and the doctrine of "apostolic succession". The fact that it includes this democratic doctrine, later replaced by the hierarchy, was probably another reason why Athanasius excluded the Didache when he finalized the list of 27 New Testament books in AD 367.

15:3 And reprove one another, not in anger but peaceably, as you have it in the Gospel, and let no one speak to any one who wrongs his brother, neither listen to him, until he repents.

4 And your prayers and almsgiving and all your deeds, do as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

This is Jesus's procedure for reproving a brother (Matthew 18:15-17). When you give alms and when you pray: (Matthew 6:2-8). When you fast: (Matthew 6:16-17).

On the Future

16:1 Be watchful for your life; do not let your lamps be quenched or your loins be ungirded, but be ready, for you do not know the hour in which our Lord comes.

16:2 Be often gathered together, seeking what is fit for your souls, for the whole time of your faith will not profit you if you are not perfect [full-grown, fully-mature] at the end of the season.

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

16:4 For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God, and he will do signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will do unlawful things such as never happened since the world began.

16:5 Then the creation of man will come to the fiery trial of testing, and many will stumble and perish, but those who endure in the faith will be saved alive from under the curse.

16:6 And then will appear the signs of the truth: first the sign of an opening in the heavens, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly a resurrection of the dead:

16:7 not of all, but as it is said: "The Lord will come and all his saints with him."

16:8 Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.

This abbreviated version of the apocalypse is the simplest and clearest I have ever seen, but it does not copy any other version of the apocalypse I can find. Also worth noting: nothing in the Didache indicates any awareness of the Jewish rebellion in AD 66 or the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

~~~~~

#### **Content Analysis**

The Didache contains some material that is also in Matthew and Luke, rather a lot that is only in Matthew, and much that is not in any of the canonized gospels, but -- and this is remarkable -- *it contains virtually nothing that is found in Mark.*

How could that have happened? If the Didache was based on Matthew, as most New Testament scholars assume, how did the writer manage to exclude virtually everything that Matthew copied from Mark? And even if he had both of those gospels open in front of him, why would he want to do that?

A more likely hypothesis is:

Sayings of Jesus were probably in wide circulation in both oral and written form. The Didache refers to a collection of the sayings of Jesus known as "The Gospel of the Lord" but none of the four canonized gospels. Mark wrote his Gospel based on the preaching of Peter, as most New Testament scholars maintain. Matthew had the Didache and copied from it as he did from Mark:

that would explain the origin of the passages that are only in the Didache and Matthew. Luke compiled his Gospel from several sources, including Mark, but he did not have the Didache.

Much of the material in the Didache is also in Acts and/or the Epistles of Paul. The style of these parts is typical of Paul.

The common source for parts of the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas is not very difficult to ascertain. If we were to compare two sermons by Billy Graham, one given in the 1950s and the other in the 1990s, many phrases and even whole sentences would be virtually identical, but not in the same sequence -- which is precisely what we find in the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas. Therefore, the most probable source is Barnabas himself, early and late in his career.

The Didache shows several abrupt changes in vocabulary, phrasing, and ways of addressing an audience that capture the "voices" of three different speakers. In sum, it reads like a set of lecture notes taken by someone listening to three people.

## **Historical Context**

Many strong parallels point to Paul and Barnabas as the apostles involved in this teaching. If so, what we know about them from other sources brackets the time and place in which the Didache was written.

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul wrote:

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. (Galatians 2:1-2)

Fourteen years after Paul's first visit to Jerusalem probably equates to AD 47. The Didache may be what Paul laid before the leaders in Jerusalem -- a summary document prepared in advance for just that purpose -- or more likely from the way it sounds, a set of lecture notes taken while Barnabas and Paul and Titus were speaking. In either case it is worth noting that in the Didache and in Acts 15:12 Barnabas speaks first. He was the leader at Antioch. Paul was his assistant. when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Peter and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (Galatians 2:9)

This was when Barnabas and Paul received their charter as "The Apostles to the Gentiles." They returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing Mark with them. (Acts 12:25) Shortly thereafter, all three of them set out on Paul's first missionary journey, which scholars date in AD 47. (Acts 13:1-4)

They went from Antioch to and through the island of Cyprus, and then north to what is now the southern coast of Turkey. There Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas went on establishing new churches in the Roman province of Galatia. They returned to the coast by the way they came, sailed back to Antioch of Syria, and "remained no little time with the disciples." (Acts 13 - 14)

But some men came down from Jerusalem [to Antioch] and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1) Paul's letter to the Galatians was probably written at this time. No doubt, men from Jerusalem also told his converts in Galatia that they had to be circumcised. Paul was angry because the leaders in Jerusalem had broken their agreement by sending men to the Gentiles. Thus, his letter to the Galatians was written in late AD 48 or early AD 49.

Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go [from Antioch] up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. (Acts 15:2b)

Scholars date the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem in AD 49. The controversy was not between Paul and Peter. After all, Peter was the one who first preached the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 11:1-3). It was between Paul and "the circumcision party" led by James of Jerusalem, the brother of Jesus (Galatians 2:12).

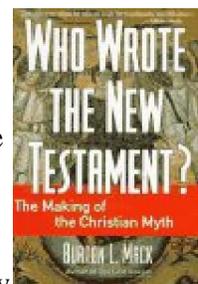
The long title of the Didache in the manuscript dated 1056 reads: "The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles" but I believe the original title was "The Teaching of the Apostles to the Gentiles" and the rest was inserted later.

Certainly Barnabas and Paul were "The Apostles to the Gentiles." If the Didache is a sample of their teaching, as it certainly seems to be, then it must be dated no later than AD 49 because that was when they went their separate ways. The most probable date is either AD 44 or AD 47. In either case, those dates are earlier than anything in the New Testament. Therefore, I believe the Didache is the earliest Christian document we have. Although rightly regarded as a church handbook and not a Gospel or absolutely based on the teachings of Jesus, it provides valuable insights concerning the moral doctrines, theology, rituals, esoteric operations and congregational testing of apostles and prophets, and the basic organization of First Century Christianity.

\*\*\*\*\*

Burton Mack notes two interesting features of the text of the Didache. One concerns alms, and the other concerns the Eucharist. Of the first, Mack writes (*Who Wrote the New Testament?*, p. 240):

There are several interesting features of this manual of instruction. One is an overriding concern with the practice of alms, gift giving, and the support of dependents, itinerant teachers, and others who may ask for a handout. Generosity was obviously thought to be a prime Christian virtue, but in practice one had to be careful, for others could easily take advantage of the Christian. This was especially the case with "false" prophets who showed up and wanted the congregation to feed them. The instruction was not to "receive" any prophet who asked for food or money while speaking "in a spirit" (Did. 11:12), and not to allow any "true" prophet (who did not do that) to stay longer than two or three days unless he was willing to settle down, learn a craft, and "work for his bread" (Did. 12:2-5). It is obvious that the Didache was written with resident congregations in mind and that their overseers and deacons had grown weary of the hype and hoopla characteristic of an earlier period of itinerant teachers and preachers. The pattern of congregational life over which they presided was sufficient. They



had gotten together and agreed upon the practices, prayers, and rituals that defined the Christian way.

On the second, Mack continues (op. cit., pp. 240-241):

The prayer of thanksgiving (eucharist) for the community meal in chapters 9 and 10 are also significant. That is because they do not contain any reference to the death of Jesus. Accustomed as we are to the memorial supper of the Christ cult and the stories of the last supper in the synoptic gospels, it has been very difficult to imagine early Christians taking meals together for any reason other than to celebrate the death of Jesus according to the Christ myth. But here in the Didache a very formalistic set of prayers is assigned to the cup and the breaking of bread without the slightest association with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The prayers of thanksgiving are for the food and drink God created for all people and the special, "spiritual" food and drink that Christians have because of Jesus. Drinking the cup symbolizes the knowledge these people have that they and Jesus are the "Holy Vine of David," which means that they "belong to Israel." Eating the bread symbolizes the knowledge these people have of the life and immortality they enjoy by belonging to the kingdom of God made known to them by Jesus, God's child. And it is serious business. No one is allowed to "eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's name" (Did. 9:5). We thus have to imagine a highly self-conscious network of congregations that thought of themselves as Christians, had developed a full complement of rituals, had much in common with other Christian groups of centrist persuasions, but continued to cultivate their roots in a Jesus movement where enlightenment ethics made much more sense than the worship of Jesus as the crucified Christ and risen son of God.

Mack states on the provenance of the Didache (op. cit., pp. 241-242): "It is not unthinkable that both the Didache and the Gospel of Matthew stem from the same or closely related communities, though at slightly different times in their histories. . . it would be easy to imagine a social location in some district of southern Syria or northern Palestine where a small group of congregations had formed."