



Defense of the Didache

The claim that the *Didache* was altered by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) is largely unsubstantiated. To counter this claim, we need to examine the manuscript evidence, early church references, and historical consistency of the text. Here's a detailed breakdown of why the *Didache* is reliable and why the claim of RCC alteration is weak:

1. Manuscript Evidence

The primary surviving manuscript of the *Didache* is Codex Hierosolymitanus (1056 AD), discovered in 1873 by Philotheos Bryennios in the Jerusalem Monastery of the Holy Sepulcher in Constantinople. While this is a relatively late copy, the text itself is widely recognized by scholars as being much older, dating to the first century.

Key points regarding manuscript integrity:

- No evidence suggests tampering by the RCC. If the RCC had modified the text to fit their doctrines, we would expect clear interpolations or inconsistencies with early church citations.
- The *Didache* contains teachings that align with early Jewish-Christian communities rather than distinctively Roman Catholic doctrine.
- Other early Christian writings reference it, confirming its stability before the dominance of the RCC.

2. Patristic References and Early Citations

The *Didache* was known to early Church Fathers long before the rise of the centralized Roman papacy. If the RCC had altered it significantly, these references would differ from the existing text.

Examples:

- **Eusebius (c. 324 AD)** refers to the *Didache* as one of the “disputed” books that were read by some in the church (Ecclesiastical History 3.25.4), meaning it was already widely circulated before the RCC could have edited it.
- **Athanasius (367 AD)** mentions the *Didache* in his 39th Festal Letter, distinguishing it from canonical scripture but still regarding it as a valuable early Christian text.
- **The Epistle of Barnabas (c. 80–120 AD)** shows thematic and textual similarities to the *Didache*, indicating its early use.

- **The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 100–150 AD)** echoes teachings found in the *Didache*, supporting its authenticity from an early period.

If the RCC had changed the *Didache*, we would expect these early references to differ from the version we have today, yet they do not.

3. Theological Content: No Signs of Later Catholic Doctrinal Insertions

One of the strongest counters to the claim of RCC modification is that the *Didache* lacks key Roman Catholic doctrines that would have been included had it been altered:

- **No mention of papal authority** – If the RCC had changed the *Didache*, it would likely include references to the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. Instead, church leadership is described more in line with early Christian practices of appointing bishops and deacons locally (*Didache* 15:1).
- **No Marian doctrines** – There is no mention of Mary’s perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, or assumption, which were later developed as RCC doctrines.
- **Simple Eucharistic theology** – The *Didache* describes a thanksgiving prayer over the cup and bread (*Didache* 9-10) that lacks transubstantiation or sacramental language.
- **Baptismal flexibility** – The *Didache* allows for baptism in different forms (immersion preferred, pouring allowed when necessary), which does not align with later strict sacramental theology.

If the RCC had altered the *Didache*, these doctrines would likely have been inserted, yet they are absent.

4. Linguistic and Stylistic Consistency

The language of the *Didache* aligns with first-century Jewish-Christian Greek rather than later Latinized church writings. The text:

- Uses Koine Greek with a structure resembling Jewish instructional texts.
- Shows parallels to the Gospel of Matthew, reinforcing its Jewish-Christian origins.
- Reflects early catechetical (teaching) practices rather than developed dogma.

A late modification by the RCC would likely introduce linguistic and doctrinal anachronisms, which are not present.

5. Theological Alignment with Early Christianity

The *Didache* aligns with first-century Christian ethics, the Two Ways tradition (good vs. evil), and early Christian community structure. It does not reflect the hierarchical and doctrinal developments seen in the medieval RCC.

- **Moral Teachings** – Align closely with Jewish ethical instructions and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.
- **Eschatology (End Times beliefs)** – The *Didache* mentions the "deceiver of the world" but lacks later RCC eschatological frameworks.

Had the RCC altered it, we would expect post-Nicene theological developments, which are absent.

6. Absence of Evidence for Modification

- There is no known variant of the *Didache* that contradicts the Codex Hierosolymitanus version.
- If the RCC had edited it, we would expect alternative manuscript traditions showing differences, but none exist.
- The textual history is stable, without evidence of major alterations in transmission.

Conclusion: The *Didache* Is Reliable

The claim that the RCC altered the *Didache* lacks historical and textual evidence. The *Didache* remains an early Christian document that:

1. Is supported by early patristic references.
2. Lacks later RCC-specific doctrines.
3. Maintains linguistic and theological consistency with the first-century Christian community.
4. Has stable manuscript transmission with no competing versions.



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