The Didascalia apostolorum
An English version with introduction and annotation
by A. Stewart-Sykes

DESCRIPTION:
The Didascalia apostolorum is one of the ancient church orders, setting out the duties and responsibilities of laypeople, bishops and widows, regulating the keeping of Pascha and engaging in polemic with Judaism. It is a work of extraordinary interest for the history of the church in Syria, as a document of social and liturgical history and as a document bearing witness to relations between Christians and Jews. Alistair Stewart-Sykes presents the text in a readable English version which takes full account of the various textual witnesses. Of particular importance is the introduction. The Didascalia is conventionally ascribed to a single hand in third-century Syria, but here an entirely new compositional hypothesis is proposed in which the work is shown to be composite and to include sources of much greater antiquity than the period of final redaction. In the light of the compositional hypothesis there are radically new discussions of ministry (including the ministry of widows), relationships with Judaism, and liturgy (including the penitential process). Beyond this the introduction engages with the social context in which these developments emerged. The work is suitable for a wide audience. The translation will be useful to undergraduate and graduate students whereas the introduction and commentary will be of interest to scholars in ecclesiastical history, historical liturgy, forming Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations as well as Syriac studies. The author, Alistair Stewart-Sykes, is well-known in the field having produced the first critical text for over a century of the Apostolic church order and the first full-length commentary on the Apostolic tradition.