

The Apostolic Fathers in English

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after the earlier version of
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THE DIDACHE

The teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the twelve apostles.

The Two Ways

1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways.

The First Commandment of the Way of Life

²Now this is the way of life: First, you shall love God, who made you. Second, you shall love your neighbor as yourself; but whatever you do not wish to happen to you, do not do to another. ³The teaching of these words is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what credit is it if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But you must love those who hate you, and you will not have an enemy. ⁴Abstain from fleshly and bodily cravings. If someone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other as well and you will be perfect. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles; if someone takes your cloak, give him your tunic also; if someone takes from you what belongs to you, do not demand it back, for you cannot do so. ⁵Give to everyone who asks you, and do not demand it back, for the Father wants something from his

Title See the introduction. **1.2** *you shall... yourself* Cf. Matt. 22:37-39 (Mark 12:30-31); Luke 10:27; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18. • *whatever... another* Cf. Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31. **1.3** *Bless... you* Luke 6:28. • *pray for... hate you* Cf. Matt. 5:44-47; Luke 6:27-28, 32-33, 35. **1.4** *Abstain... cravings* Cf. 1 Pet. 2:11. • *If someone... as well* Cf. Matt. 5:39. • *you will be perfect* Cf. Matt. 5:48. • *If someone forces... miles* Matt. 5:41. • *if someone takes your cloak... also* Luke 6:29 (Matt. 5:40). • *if someone takes from you... back* Luke 6:30. **1.5** *Give... back* Luke 6:30.

own gifts to be given to everyone. Blessed is the one who gives according to the command, for such a person is innocent. Woe to the one who receives: if, on the one hand, someone who is in need receives, this person is innocent, but the one who does not have need will have to explain why and for what purpose he received, and upon being imprisoned will be interrogated about what he has done, and will not be released from there until he has repaid every last cent. ⁶But it has also been said concerning this: "Let your gift sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it."

The Second Commandment of the Way of Life

2 The second commandment of the teaching is: ²You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not corrupt children; you shall not be sexually immoral; you shall not steal; you shall not practice magic; you shall not engage in sorcery; you shall not abort a child or commit infanticide. You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions; ³you shall not commit perjury; you shall not give false testimony; you shall not speak evil; you shall not hold a grudge. ⁴You shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for the double tongue is a deadly snare. ⁵Your word must not be false or meaningless, but confirmed by action. ⁶You shall not be greedy or avaricious, or a hypocrite or malicious or arrogant. You shall not hatch evil plots against your neighbor. ⁷You shall not hate any one; instead you shall reprove some, and pray for some, and some you shall love more than your own life.

To Do and Not Do

3 My child, flee from evil of every kind and from everything resembling it. ²Do not become angry, for anger leads to murder. Do not be jealous or quarrelsome or hot-tempered, for all these things breed murders. ³My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to sexual immorality. Do not be foulmouthed or let your eyes roam, for all these things breed adultery. ⁴My child, do not be an augur, since it leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter or an astrologer or a magician, or even desire to see them, for all these things breed idolatry. ⁵My child, do not be a liar, since lying leads to theft. Do not be avaricious or conceited, for all these things breed thefts. ⁶My child, do not be a grumbler, since it leads to blasphemy. Do not be arrogant or evil-minded, for all these things breed blasphemies.

1.5 *will not be released . . . cent* Cf. Matt. 5:26; Luke 12:59. 1.6 *Let your gift . . . give it* Source unknown; cf. Sir. 12:1-7. 2.2-3 *You shall not murder . . . testimony* Cf. Exod. 20:13-17; Matt. 5:33; 19:18. 3.4 *augur* One who attempts to foretell the future by examining the behavior or entrails of birds or animals. • *see* Some ancient authorities read *see or hear*.

⁷Instead, be humble, merciful and innocent as you have heard. ⁸Your soul shall not be humble. ¹⁰Accept what transpires apart from

4 My child, remember you, and honor your nature is preached in the presence of the saints. Do not cause division. Do not judge righteously. ⁴You shall not wa-

⁵Do not be one who grumbles when it comes to your own. You shall give a reward when you grumble when you receive the reward. ⁸You shall do everything with your own. For if you do not do the perishable things

⁹You shall not wear your youth you shall not wear your male slave or your anger, lest they call you to call not with you. ¹¹And you slaves shall be a symbol of God.

¹²You shall hate a slave. ¹³You must not do what you have received, neither confess your transgressions to your conscience. This

3.7 *the humble . . . decisions* Lit. *be* *adelpho*. 4.8 *not do your responsibility* (13:1).

⁷Instead, be humble, for the humble shall inherit the earth. ⁸Be patient and merciful and innocent and quiet and good, and revere always the words that you have heard. ⁹Do not exalt yourself or permit your soul to become arrogant. Your soul shall not associate with the lofty, but live with the righteous and the humble. ¹⁰Accept as good the things that happen to you, knowing that nothing transpires apart from God.

4 My child, remember night and day the one who preaches God's word to you, and honor him as though he were the Lord. For wherever the Lord's nature is preached, there the Lord is. ²Moreover, you shall seek out daily the presence of the saints, so that you may find support in their words. ³You shall not cause division, but shall make peace between those who quarrel. You shall judge righteously; you shall not show partiality when reproofing transgressions. ⁴You shall not waver with regard to your decisions.

⁵Do not be one who stretches out the hands to receive but withdraws them when it comes to giving. ⁶If you earn something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins. ⁷You shall not hesitate to give, nor shall you grumble when giving, for you will know who is the good paymaster of the reward. ⁸You shall not turn away from someone in need, but shall share everything with your brother or sister, and do not claim that anything is your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things!

⁹You shall not withhold your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth you shall teach them the fear of God. ¹⁰You shall not give orders to your male slave or female servant (who hope in the same God as you) when you are angry, lest they cease to fear the God who is over you both. For he comes to call not with regard to reputation but those whom the Spirit has prepared. ¹¹And you slaves shall be submissive to your masters in respect and fear, as to a symbol of God.

¹²You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. ¹³You must not forsake the Lord's commandments but must guard what you have received, neither adding nor subtracting anything. ¹⁴In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

3.7 *the humble...earth* Matt. 5:5; Ps. 37:11. 4.1 *remember...to you* Cf. Heb. 13:7. 4.4 *waver...decisions* Lit. *be of two minds whether it shall be or not*. Cf. Barn. 19.5. • *brother or sister* Gk *adelpho*. 4.8 *not claim...your own* Cf. Acts 4:32. 4.9 *withhold your hand from* I.e., *neglect your responsibility to*. Cf. Barn. 19.5. 4.13 *must guard...anything* Cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32 (LXX 13:1).

The Way of Death

5 But the way of death is this: first of all, it is evil and completely cursed; murders, adulteries, lusts, sexual immoralities, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisies, duplicity, deceit, pride, malice, stubbornness, greed, abusive language, jealousy, audacity, arrogance, boastfulness. ²It is the way of persecutors of good people, of those who hate truth, love a lie, do not know the reward of righteousness, do not adhere to what is good or to righteous judgment, who are vigilant not for what is good but for what is evil, from whom gentleness and patience are far removed, who love worthless things, pursue a reward, have no mercy for the poor, do not work on behalf of the oppressed, do not know the one who made them, are murderers of children, corrupters of God's creation, who turn away from someone in need, who oppress the afflicted, are advocates of the wealthy, lawless judges of the poor, utterly sinful. May you be delivered, children, from all these things!

The Right Choice

6 See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, for such a person teaches you without regard for God. ²For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you are not able, then do what you can.

Concerning Food

³Now concerning food, bear what you are able, but in any case keep strictly away from meat sacrificed to idols, for it involves the worship of dead gods.

Concerning Baptism

7 Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. ²But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. ³But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. ⁴And before the baptism let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others

5.1 *abusive language* Or *obscenity*. 7.1 *reviewed* I.e., with those who are about to be baptized • *in the name . . . Spirit* Matt. 28:19. • *running* Lit. *living* (also in following sentence). 7.2 Cf. Tertullian, *On Baptism* 4: "It makes no difference whether a man be washed in a sea or a pool, a stream or a fountain, a lake or a trough." 7.3 This appears to be the earliest reference to the Christian use of a mode of baptism other than immersion.

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who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.

Concerning Fasts

8 But do not let your fasts coincide with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday.

Concerning Prayer

²Nor should you pray like the hypocrites. Instead, pray like this, just as the Lord commanded in his Gospel:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors;
and do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.”

³Pray like this three times a day.

Concerning the Eucharist

9 Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows. ²First, concerning the cup:

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the holy vine of David your servant,
which you have made known to us
through Jesus, your servant;
to you be the glory forever.

³And concerning the broken bread:

8.1 *But do not let . . . hypocrites* Cf. Matt. 6:16. 8.2 *Nor should you . . . hypocrites* Cf. Matt. 6:5. • *Our Father . . . forever* Cf. Matt. 6:9–13. • *the evil one* Or *evil*. 9.1 *the Eucharist* Or *the thanksgiving*. The Gk word *eucharistia*, which in the NT is used in the general sense of “thankfulness” or “thanksgiving” (e.g., Acts 24:3; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 3:9), soon became a technical term for the primary act of “giving thanks,” namely the Lord’s Supper (cf. Ign. *Smyrn.* 6.2; Justin

We give you thanks, our Father,
for the life and knowledge
that you have made known to us
through Jesus, your servant;
to you be the glory forever.

⁴Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and then
was gathered together and became one,
so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth
into your kingdom;
for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

⁵But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been
baptized into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning
this: "Do not give what is holy to dogs."

10 And after you have had enough, give thanks as follows:

²We give you thanks, Holy Father,
for your holy name, which you have caused to dwell in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you have made
known to us through Jesus your servant;
to you be the glory forever.

³You, almighty Master, created all things for your name's sake,
and gave food and drink to humans to enjoy, so that they might give
you thanks;

but to us you have graciously given spiritual food and drink,
and eternal life through your servant.

⁴Above all we give thanks to you because you are mighty;
to you be the glory forever.

⁵Remember your church, Lord,
to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in your love;
and from the four winds gather the church that has been sanctified
into your kingdom,

which you have prepared for it;
for yours is the power and the glory forever.

⁶May grace come, and may this world pass away.
Hosanna to the God of David.

Martyr, *1 Apology* 65). **9.5** *Do not . . . dogs* Matt. 7:6. **10.3** *servant* Some ancient authorities read *servant Jesus*.

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 Maranatha! Amen.

⁷But permit the prophets to give thanks however they wish.

Concerning Teachers

11 So, if anyone should come and teach you all these things that have just been mentioned above, welcome him. ²But if the teacher himself goes astray and teaches a different teaching that undermines all this, do not listen to him. However, if his teaching contributes to righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as you would the Lord.

Concerning Itinerant Apostles and Prophets

³Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. ⁴Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. ⁵But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. ⁶And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. ⁷Also, do not test or evaluate any prophet who speaks in the spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. ⁸However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false prophet and the prophet be recognized. ⁹Furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false prophet. ¹⁰If any prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false prophet. ¹¹But any prophet proven to be genuine who does something with a view to portraying in a worldly manner the symbolic meaning of the church (provided that he does not teach you to do all that he himself does) is not to be judged by you, for his judgment is with God. Besides, the ancient prophets also acted in a similar manner. ¹²But if anyone should say in the spirit, "Give me money" or anything

10.6 *repent* Or *be converted*. • *Maranatha* Or *Our Lord, come!* Cf. 1 Cor. 16:22. **10.7** *wish* Other ancient authorities read *wish*. And concerning the ointment, give thanks as follows: *We give you thanks, Father, for the fragrant ointment that you have made known to us through Jesus your servant; to you be the glory forever. Amen.* **11.7** Cf. Matt. 12:31. **11.11** *who does something . . . church* Or *who acts out in an earthly fashion the allegorical significance of the church*; Lit. *who acts with a view to the earthly mystery of the church*. The phrase has never been explained satisfactorily. It may refer to some symbolic action intended to convey spiritual truth, analogous to those performed by some of the OT prophets (e.g., Hosea's marriage to Gomer), which may have seemed to some members of the community to be of doubtful propriety.

else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in need, let no one judge him.

12 Everyone who comes in the name of the Lord is to be welcomed. But then examine him, and you will find out—for you will have insight—what is true and what is false. ²If the one who comes is merely passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you for more than two or, if necessary, three days. ³However, if he wishes to settle among you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living. ⁴But if he is not a craftsman, decide according to your own judgment how he shall live among you as a Christian, yet without being idle. ⁵But if he does not wish to cooperate in this way, then he is trading on Christ. Beware of such people.

13 But every genuine prophet who wishes to settle among you is worthy of his food. ²Likewise, every genuine teacher is, like the worker, worthy of his food. ³Take, therefore, all the first fruits of the produce of the wine press and threshing floor, and of the cattle and sheep, and give these first fruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. ⁴But if you have no prophet, give them to the poor. ⁵If you make bread, take the first fruit and give in accordance with the commandment. ⁶Similarly, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the first fruit and give it to the prophets. ⁷As for money and clothes and any other possessions, take the first fruit that seems right to you and give in accordance with the commandment.

Concerning the Lord's Day

14 On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. ²But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have been reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. ³For this is the sacrifice concerning which the Lord said, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations."

Bishops and Deacons

15 Therefore appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are humble and not avaricious and true and approved,

12.1 *find out . . . false* Or (lit.) *know, for you will have right and left understanding.* 13.1 *worthy . . . food* Matt.10:10. 13.2 *the worker . . . food* Matt.10:10. 14.3 *In every place . . . nations* Mal. 1:11, 14.

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for they too carry out for you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. ²You must not, therefore, despise them, for they are your honored men, along with the prophets and teachers.

Call to Follow the Gospel

³Furthermore, correct one another not in anger but in peace, as you find in the Gospel; and if anyone wrongs his or her neighbor, let no one speak to that person, nor let that one hear a word from you, until he or she repents. ⁴As for your prayers and acts of charity and all your actions, do them all just as you find it in the Gospel of our Lord.

16 Watch over your life: do not let your lamps go out, and do not be unprepared, but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming. ²Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for all the time you have believed will be of no use to you if you are not found perfect in the last time.

Mini-Apocalypse

³For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. ⁴For 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 will perform signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before. ⁵Then all humankind will come to the fiery test, and many will fall away and perish; but those who endure in their faith will be saved by the accursed one himself. ⁶And then there will appear the signs of the truth: first the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third, the resurrection of the dead—⁷but not of all; rather, as it has been said, "The Lord will come, and all his saints with him." ⁸Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

16.1 Cf. Mark 13:35, 37; Matt. 24:42, 44; Luke 12:35, 40. 16.2 *for all the time ... to you* Cf. Barn. 4.9. 16.4 *For as lawlessness ... another* Cf. Matt. 24:10–12. • *will perform ... wonders* Cf. Mark 13:22. 16.5 *will be saved* Matt. 24:10, 13. • *by ... himself* Or *by him who was cursed* (cf. Gal. 3:13; in either case the reference is to Christ), or *by the curse itself*; or (emending the text) *from the curse itself*; i.e., the grave. 16.6 *then ... signs* Cf. Matt. 24:30. • *trumpet* Cf. Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16. 16.7 *The Lord ... him* Zech. 14:5; cf. 1 Thess. 3:13. 16.8 *will see ... heaven* Cf. Matt. 24:30.