

TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

An Instruction of the Lord Given to the Heathen by the Twelve Apostles

1. Two Ways there are, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the Two Ways.

2 Now, the Way of Life is this: *first, love the God who made you; secondly, your neighbor as yourself*: do not do to another what you do not wish to be done to yourself.

3 The lesson of these words is as follows: *bless those that curse you, and pray for your enemies*; besides, *fast for those that persecute you*. For *what thanks do you deserve when you love those that love you? Do not the heathen do as much?* For your part, *love those that hate you*; in fact, have no enemy.⁶ 4 *Abstain from gratifying the carnal [and bodily] impulses*. When anyone gives you a blow on the right cheek, *turn to him the other as well, and be perfect*; when anyone forces you to go one mile with him, *go two with him*; when anyone takes your cloak away, *give him your coat also*; when anyone robs you of your property, *demand no return*. You really cannot do it.¹² 5 *Give to anyone that asks you, and demand no return*; the Father wants His own bounties to be shared with all. Happy the giver who complies with the commandment, for he goes unpunished. Trouble is in store for the receiver: if someone who is in need receives, he will go unpunished; but he who is not in need will have to stand trial as to why and for what purpose he received; and, if he is thrown into prison, he will be questioned about his conduct, and *will not be released from that place until he has paid the last penny*. 6 However, in this regard, there is also a word of Scripture: *Let your alms sweat in your hands until you find out to whom to give*.

2. A further commandment of the Teaching: 2 *Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not practice pederasty; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not deal in magic; do not practice sorcery; do not kill a fetus by abortion, or commit infanticide. Do not covet your neighbor's goods*. 3 *Do not perjure yourself; do not bear false witness; do not calumniate; do not bear malice*. 4 *Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare*. 5 *Your speech must not be false or meaningless, but made good by action*. 6 *Do not be covetous, or rapacious, or hypocritical, or malicious, or arrogant. Do not have designs upon your neighbor*. 7 *Hate no man; but correct some, pray for others, for still others sacrifice your life as a proof of your love*.

3. My child, shun evil of any kind and everything resembling it. 2 *Do not be prone to anger, for anger leads to murder. Do not be fanatical, not quarrelsome, not hottempered; for all these things beget murder*. 3 *My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication. Do not be foul-mouthed or give*

free rein to your eyes; for all these things beget adultery. 4 My child, do not be an augur, because it leads to idolatry. Do not be an enchanter, not an astrologer, not an expiator, and do not wish to see <and hear> these things; for they all beget idolatry. 5 My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft. Do not be a lover of money, or a vain pretender. All these things beget thievery. 6 My child, do not be a grumbler, because it leads to blasphemy; or self-willed, or evil-minded. All these things beget blasphemy.

7 On the contrary, be gentle, for *the gentle will inherit the land*. 8 Be long-suffering, and merciful, and guileless, and quiet, and good, and *with trembling treasure forever the instructions* you have received. 9 Do not carry your head high, or open your heart to presumption. Do not be on intimate terms with the mighty, but associate with holy and lowly folk. 10 Accept as blessings the casualties that befall you, assured that nothing happens without God.

4. My child, day and night *remember him who preaches God's word to you*, and honor him as the Lord, for where His lordship is spoken of, there is the Lord. 2 Seek daily contact with the saints to be refreshed by their discourses. 3 Do not start a schism, but pacify contending parties. *Be just in your judgment*: make no distinction between man and man when correcting transgressions. 4 Do not waver in your decision.

5 Do not be one that opens his hands to receive, but shuts them when it comes to giving. 6 If you have means at your disposal, pay a ransom for your sins. 7 Do not hesitate to give, and do not give in a grumbling mood. You will find out who is the good Rewarder. 8 Do not turn away from the needy; rather, share everything with your brother, and do not say: "It is private property." If you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in the things that perish!

9 Do not withdraw your hand from your son or your daughter, but from their youth teach them the fear of God. 10 Do not, when embittered, give orders to your slave, male or female, for they hope in the same God; otherwise, they might lose the fear of God, who is the Master of both of you. He surely is not coming to call with an eye to rank and station in life; no, He comes to those whom the Spirit has prepared. 11 But you, slaves, be submissive to your masters as to God's image in reverence and fear.

12 Abhor all sham and whatever is not pleasing to the Lord. 13 Do not by any means neglect the *commandments of the Lord*, but *hold fast* to the traditions, *neither adding nor subtracting anything* 14 In church confess your sins, and do not come to your prayer with a guilty conscience.

Such is the Way of Life.

5. The Way of Death is this. First of all, it is wicked and altogether accursed: *murders, adulteries, lustful desires, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisy, duplicity, fraud, pride, malice, surliness, covetousness, foul talk, jealousy, rashness, haughtiness, false*

pretensions, <the lack of the fear of God>. 2 It is the way of persecutors of the good, haters of the truth, lovers of falsehood; of men ignorant of the reward for right living, not *devoted to what is good* or to just judgment, intent upon not what is good but what is evil; of strangers to gentleness and patient endurance; of *men who love vanities*, and *fee hunters*, of men that have no heart for the poor, are not concerned about the oppressed, do not know their Maker; of *murderers of children*, destroyers of God's image; of men that turn away from the needy, oppress the afflicted, act as counsels for the rich, are unjust judges of the poor—in a word, of men steeped in sin. Children, may you be preserved from all this!

6. See that no man leads you astray from this Way of the Teaching, since any other teaching takes you away from God. 2 Surely, if you are able to bear the Lord's yoke in its entirety, you will be perfect; if you are not able, then do what you can. 3 And in the matter of food, do what you can stand; but be scrupulously on your guard against meat offered to idols; for that is a worship of dead gods.

7. Regarding baptism. Baptize as follows: after first explaining all these points, *baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, in running water. 2 But if you have no running water, baptize in other water; and if you cannot in cold, then in warm. 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*. 4 Before the baptism, let the baptizer and the candidate for baptism fast, as well as any others that are able. Require the candidate to fast one or two days previously.

8. Your *fasts* should not coincide with those of *the hypocrites*. They fast on Mondays and Tuesdays; you should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. 2 And do not *pray as the hypocrites do*. but pray as the Lord has commanded in the Gospel:

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the power and the glory for evermore.

3 Say this prayer three times a day.

9. Regarding the Eucharist. Give thanks as follows: 2 First, concerning the cup:

“We give Thee thanks, Our Father,
for the Holy Vine of David Thy servant,
which Thou hast made known to us

through Jesus, Thy Servant.”

“To Thee be the glory for evermore.”

3 Next, concerning the broken bread:

“We give Thee thanks, Our Father,
for the life and knowledge
which Thou hast made known to us
through Jesus, Thy Servant.”

“To Thee be the glory for evermore.”

4 “As this broken bread was scattered over the hills
and then, when gathered, became one mass,
so may Thy Church be gathered
from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom.”

“For Thine is the glory and the power
through Jesus Christ for evermore.”

5. Let no one eat and drink of your Eucharist but those baptized in the name of the Lord; to this, too, the saying of the Lord is applicable: *Do not give to dogs what is sacred.*

10. After you have taken your fill of food, give thanks as follows:

2 “We give Thee thanks, O Holy Father,
for Thy holy name
which Thou hast enshrined in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality
which Thou hast made known to us
through Jesus, Thy Servant.”

“To Thee be the glory for evermore.”

3 “Thou, Lord Almighty,
hast created all things for the sake of Thy name
and hast given food and drink for men to enjoy,
that they may give thanks to Thee;
but to us Thou hast vouchsafed spiritual food and
drink and eternal life
through <Jesus>, Thy Servant.”

4 “Above all, we give Thee thanks
because Thou art mighty.”

“To Thee be the glory for evermore.”

5 “Remember, O Lord, Thy Church:

deliver her from all evil,
perfect her in Thy love,
and *from the four winds assemble* her, the sanctified,
in Thy kingdom
which Thou hast prepared for her.”

“For Thine is the power and the glory for evermore.”

6 “May Grace come, and this world pass away!”

“*Hosanna to the God of David!*”

“If anyone is holy, let him advance; if anyone is
not, let him be converted. *Marana tha!*”

“Amen.”

7 But permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they desire.

11. Accordingly, when an itinerant teaches you all that has just been said, welcome him. 2 But should the teacher himself be a turncoat and teach a different doctrine so as to undermine (this teaching), do not listen to him. But if he promotes holiness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as the Lord.

3 Now, as regards the apostles and prophets, act strictly according to the precept of the Gospel.⁷¹ 4 Upon his arrival every apostle must be welcomed as the Lord; 5 but he must not stay except one day. In case of necessity, however, he may stay the next day also; but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. 6 At his departure the apostle must receive nothing except food to last till the next night’s lodging; but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

7 Moreover, if any prophet speaks in ecstasy, do not test him or entertain any doubts; for *any sin may be forgiven*, but this sin *cannot be forgiven*. 8 However, not everyone speaking in ecstasy is a prophet, except he has the ways of the Lord about him. So by their ways must the true and the false prophet be distinguished. 9 No prophet who in an ecstasy orders the table spread, must partake of it; otherwise, he is a false prophet. 10 Any prophet that teaches the truth, yet does not live up to his teaching, is a false prophet. 11 When a prophet, once approved as genuine, does something by way of symbolizing the Church in an earthly manner, yet does not instruct others to do all that he himself is doing, he is not liable to your judgment, for his judgment rests with God. After all, the Prophets of old acted in the same manner. 12 But if anyone says in ecstasy, “Give me money,” or something else, you must not listen to him. However, should he tell you to give something for others who are in need, let no one condemn him.

12. Anyone *coming in the name of the Lord* must be welcomed; but, after that, test him and find out—you will of course use your discretion either for or against him.⁸¹ 2 If the arrival is a transient visitor, assist him as much as you can, but he may not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three. 3

But if he intends to settle among you, then, in case he is a craftsman, let him work for his living; 4 if he has no trade or craft, use your judgment in providing for him, so that a follower of Christ will not live idle in your midst. 5 But if he is not satisfied with this arrangement, he is a Christmonger. Be on your guard against such people.

13. Every genuine prophet who is willing to settle among you *is entitled to his support*. 2 Likewise, every genuine teacher is, like *a laborer, entitled to his support*. 3 Therefore, take all first fruits of vintage and harvest, of cattle and sheep, and give these first fruits to the prophets; for they are your high priests. 4 But if you have no prophet, give them to the poor. 5 When you bake bread, take the first loaf and give it according to the commandment. 6 Likewise, when you open a fresh jar of wine or oil, take the first draught and give it to the prophets. 7 Of money and cloth and any other possession, first set aside a portion according to your discretion and give it according to the commandment.

14. On the Lord's own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks;⁸⁷ but first confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure. 2 However, no one quarreling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled; your sacrifice must not be defiled. 3 For here we have the saying of the Lord: *In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a mighty King, says the Lord; and my name spreads terror among the nations*.

15. Accordingly, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons,⁹¹ men who are an honor to the Lord, of gentle disposition, not attached to money, honest and well-trying; for they, too, render you the sacred service of the prophets and teachers.⁹³ 2 Do not, then, despise them; after all, they are your dignitaries together with the prophets and teachers.

3 Furthermore, correct one another, not in anger, but in composure, as you have it in the Gospel; and when anyone offends his neighbor, let no one speak with him—in fact, he should not even be talked about by you⁹⁶—until he has made amends. 4 As regards your prayers and alms and your whole conduct, do exactly as you have it in the Gospel of Our Lord.

16. Watch over your life; *your lamps* must not go out, nor *your loins* be ungirded; on the contrary, *be ready. You do not know the hour in which Our Lord is coming*. 2 Assemble in great numbers, intent upon what concerns your souls. Surely, of no use will your lifelong faith be to you if you are not perfected at the end of time.¹⁰⁰ 3 For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will come in swarms; the sheep will turn into wolves, and love will turn into hate. 4 When lawlessness is on the increase, men will hate and persecute and betray one another; and then the Deceiver of this world will appear, claiming to be the Son of God, and give *striking exhibitions of power*; the earth will be given over into

his hands, and he will perpetrate outrages such as have never taken place since the world began. 5 Then humankind will undergo the fiery test, and *many will lose their faith* and perish; but *those who stand firm* in their faith will be saved by none other than the Accursed. 6 *And then the proofs of the truth will appear*; the first proof, an opening in the heavens;¹⁰⁶ the next proof, *the sounding of the trumpet*; and the third, the resurrection of the dead—7 not of all indeed, but in accordance with the saying: *The Lord will come and all the saints with Him*. 8 *Finally, the world will behold the Lord riding the clouds in the sky.*

Quasten, J., & Plumpe, J. C. (Eds.). (1948). *The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Epistles and the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, The Fragments of Papias and The Epistle to Diognetus*. (J. A. Kleist, Trans.) (6th ed., pp. 15–25). New York; Mahwah, NJ: The Newman Press.