

# **Non-Canonical Writings of Ante-Nicene Fathers Regarding Sexual Conduct of Candidates for Bishop**

## **Extracts from**

From: “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325”, The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors).

- “The Teaching Of The Twelve Apostles” (*Didache*, 120 A.D.)
- “Of The False Worship Of The Gods”, *The Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330).
- “Of the Wicked Life and Death of Hercules”, in Chapter 7 of *The Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330).
- “Of Jupiter, And His Licentious Life”, in Chapter 10 of *The Eiptome of the Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330).
- “What Ought to be the Characters of a Bishop and of the Rest? Of the Clergy”, Section 1, Book 2 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*.
- “Matrimonial Precepts Concerning Clergymen”, Article XVII, Section 3, Book 6, of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*
- “Of the Love of Boys, Adultery, and Fornication”, Article XXVIII, Section 5, Book 6, of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*
- “Moral Exhortations Of The Lord’s Constitutions Agreeing With The Ancient Prohibitions Of The Divine Laws. The Prohibition Of Anger, Spite, Corruption, Adultery, And Every Forbidden Action”, Article II, Section 1, Book 7 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*
- “Concerning Ordinations”, Article IV, Section 2, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*
- “Various Canons Of Paul The Apostle Concerning Those That Offer Themselves To Be Baptized — Whom We Are To Receive, And Whom To Reject”, Article XXXII, Section 4, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*
- “The Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles”, Article XLVII, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*

## **Non-Canonical Writings of Ante-Nicene Fathers Regarding Sexual Conduct of Candidates for Bishop**

Early writings of the church clearly condemn homosexual sex. Even pagan mythical gods are criticized for this. Candidates for bishop are permitted to be married only once. If married, this must also be the only marriage for the spouse. A person to be ordained bishop must be unblameable in all things.

### ***Didache*<sup>1</sup>**

The Didache is an important source of information concerning early church faith and practice. Written circa 120 A.D., it is one source of our own faith and practice regarding infant baptism, conduct of the Eucharist, worship on the Lord's Day

#### **Chapter 2. The Second Commandment: Gross Sin Forbidden**

And the second commandment of the Teaching; Thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, **thou shalt not commit paederasty<sup>2</sup>**, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not practice magic, thou shalt not practice witchcraft, **thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten**. Thou shalt not covet the things of thy neighbor, thou shalt not forswear thyself, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not speak evil, thou shalt bear no grudge. Thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Thy speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. Thou shalt not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. Thou shalt not take evil counsel against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not hate any man; but some thou shalt reprove, and concerning some thou shalt pray, and some thou shalt love more than thy own life.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Teaching Of The Twelve Apostles" (*Didache*, 120 A.D.), in *The Sunday School Times*, Philadelphia (April 12, 1884), Professor Isaac H. Hall and Mr. John T. Napier (translators), collected in Fathers Of The Third And Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching And Constitutions, Homily, And Liturgies American Edition A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D. (Editor) (June 1886), in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325" The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D., (Editors), (April 1975) ;in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Page 758). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

<sup>2</sup> paederasty: Sexual relations of a male with a male, especially a boy. Chambers English Dictionary, W & R Chambers Ltd and Cambridge University Press (1988).

### ***Of The False Worship of the Gods, LACTANTIUS<sup>3</sup>***

Of [Jupiter](#), I cannot pass by the cases of Amphitryon and Tyndarus, whose houses he filled to overflowing with disgrace and infamy. But he [reached the height of impiety and guilt in carrying off the royal boy. For it did not appear enough to cover himself with infamy in offering violence to women, unless he also outraged his own sex. This is true adultery, which is done against nature.](#)

### ***Of the Wicked Life and Death of Hercules<sup>4</sup>***

He [[Hercules](#)] [never abstained from women, or males](#), and traversed the whole world.

### ***Of Jupiter, and his Licentious Life<sup>5</sup>***

For he [[Jupiter](#)] made Alemena and Leda, the wives of great men, infamous through his adultery: he also, [captivated with the beauty of a boy, carried him off with violence](#) as he was hunting and meditating manly things, [that he might treat him as a woman.](#)

### ***What Ought To Be The Characters Of A Bishop And Of The Rest? Of The Clergy<sup>6</sup>***

**II.** Let him therefore be sober, prudent, decent, firm, stable, not given to wine; no striker, but gentle; not a brawler, not covetous; “not a novice, test, being puffed up with pride, be fall into condemnation, and the snare of the devil: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abused.” [Such a one a bishop ought to be, who has been the “husband of one wife,” who also has herself had no other husband,](#)

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<sup>3</sup> “Of The False Worship Of The Gods”, *The Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330), Rev. William Fletcher, D.D. (translator), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D., (Editors), (April 1975) ;in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, (Page 38). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).*

<sup>4</sup> “Of the Wicked Life and Death of Hercules”, in Chapter 7 of *The Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330), Rev. William Fletcher, D.D. (translator), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D., (Editors), (April 1975) ;in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, (Page 465). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).*

<sup>5</sup> “Of Jupiter, And His Licentious Life”, in Chapter 10 of *The Eiptome of the Divine Institutes*, Book 1, in “Lactantius” (A.D. 260 - 330), Rev. William Fletcher, D.D. (translator), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D., (Editors), (April 1975) ;in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, (Page 467). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).*

<sup>6</sup> “What Ought to be the Characters of a Bishop and of the Rest? Of the Clergy”, Section 1, Book 2 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, (Page 785). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).*

“ruling well his own house.” In this manner let examination be made when he is to receive ordination, and to be placed in his bishopric, whether he be grave, faithful, decent; whether he hath a grave and faithful-wife, or has formerly had such a one; whether he hath educated his children piously, and has “brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” whether his domestics do fear and reverence him, and are all obedient to him: for if those who are immediately about him for worldly concerns are seditious and disobedient, how will others not of his family, when they are under his management, become obedient to him?

### ***Matrimonial Precepts Concerning Clergymen***<sup>7</sup>

**XVII.** We have already said, that a bishop, a presbyter, and a deacon, when they are constituted, **must be but once married, whether their wives be alive or whether they be dead;** and that it is not lawful for them, if they are unmarried when they are ordained, to be married afterwards; or if they be then married, to marry a second time, but to **be content with that wife which they had when they came to ordination.** We also appoint that the ministers, and singers, and readers, and porters, shall be only once married. But if they entered into the clergy before they were married, we permit them to marry, if they have an inclination thereto, lest they sin and incur punishment. But we do not permit any one of the clergy to take to wife either a courtesan, or a servant, or a widow, or one that is divorced, as also the law says. Let the deaconess be a pure virgin; or, at the least, a widow who has been but once married, faithful, and well esteemed.

### ***Of The Love Of Boys, Adultery, And Fornication***<sup>8</sup>

**XXVIII.** But we do not say so **of that mixture that is contrary to nature,** or of any unlawful practice; for **such are enmity to God.** For **the sin of Sodom is contrary to nature,** as is also that with brute beasts. But adultery and fornication are against the law; the one whereof is impiety, the other injustice, and, in a word, no other than a great sin. But neither sort of them is without its punishment in its own proper nature. For the practicers of one sort attempt the dissolution of the world, and endeavor to make the natural course of things to change for one that is unnatural; but those of the second sort — the adulterers —

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<sup>7</sup> “Matrimonial Precepts Concerning Clergymen”, Article XVII, Section 3, Book 6, of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Pages 908-909). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

<sup>8</sup> “Of the Love of Boys, Adultery, and Fornication”, Article XXVIII, Section 5, Book 6, of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325” The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Pages 920-921). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

are unjust by corrupting others' marriages, and dividing into two what God hath made one, rendering the children suspected, and exposing the true husband to the snares of others. And fornication is the destruction of one's own flesh, not being made use of for the procreation of children, but entirely for the sake of pleasure, which is a mark of incontinency, and not a sign of virtue. All these things are forbidden by the laws; **for thus say the oracles: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind."** "For such a one is accursed, and ye shall stone them with stones: they have wrought abomination." "Every one that lieth with a beast, slay ye him: he has wrought wickedness in his people." "And if any one defile a married woman, slay ye them both: they have wrought wickedness; they are guilty; let them die." And afterwards: "There shall not be a fornicator among the children of Israel, and there shall not be an whore among the daughters of Israel. Thou shalt not offer the hire of an harlot to the Lord thy God upon the altar, nor the price of a dog." "For the vows arising from the hire of an harlot are not clean." These things the laws have forbidden, but they have honored marriage, and have called it blessed, since God has blessed it who joined male and female together. And wise Solomon somewhere says: "A wife is suited to her husband by the Lord." And David says: "Thy wife is like a flourishing vine in the sides of thine house; thy children like olive-branches round about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord." Wherefore "marriage is honorable" and comely, and the begetting of children pure, for there is no evil in that which is good. Therefore neither is the natural purgation abominable before God, who has ordered it to happen to women within the space of thirty days for their advantage and healthful state, who do less move about, and keep usually at home in the house. Nay, moreover, even in the Gospel, when the woman with the perpetual purgation of blood touched the saving border of the Lord's garment in hope of being healed, He was not angry at her, nor did complain of her at all; but, on the contrary, He healed her, saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee." When the natural purgations do appear in the wives, let not their husbands approach them, out of regard to the children to be begotten; for the law has forbidden it, for it says: "Thou shalt not come near thy wife when she is in her separation." Nor, indeed, let them frequent their wives' company when they are with child. For they do this not for the begetting of children, but for the sake of pleasure. Now a lover of God ought not to be a lover of pleasure.

## ***Moral Exhortations Of The Lord's Constitutions Agreeing With The Ancient Prohibitions Of The Divine Laws. The Prohibition Of Anger, Spite, Corruption, Adultery, And Every Forbidden Action***<sup>9</sup>

**II.** The first way, therefore, is that of life; and is this, which the law also does appoint: "To love the Lord God with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, who is the one and only God, besides whom there is no other;" "and thy neighbor as thyself." And whatsoever thou wouldest not should be done to thee, that do not thou to another." "Bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you." "Love your enemies; for what thanks is it if ye love those that love you? for even the Gentiles do the same." "But do ye love those that hate you, and ye shall have no enemy." For says He, "Thou shalt not hate any man; no, not an Egyptian, nor an Edomite;" for they are all the workmanship of God. Avoid not the persons, but the sentiments, of the wicked. "Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts." "If any one gives thee a stroke on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Not that revenge is evil, but that patience is more honorable. For David says, "If I have made returns to them that repaid me evil." "If any one compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." And, "He that will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." "And from him that taketh thy goods, require them not again." "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee do not shut thy hand." For "the righteous man is pitiful, and lendeth." For your Father would have you give to all, who Himself "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust." It is therefore reasonable to give to all out of thine own labors; for says He, "Honor the Lord out of thy righteous labors," but so that the saints be preferred. "Thou shalt not kill;" that is, thou shalt not destroy a man like thyself: for thou dissolvest what was well made. Not as if all killing were wicked, but only that of the innocent: but the killing which is just is reserved to the magistrates alone. "Thou shalt not commit adultery:" for thou dividest one flesh into two. "They two shall be one flesh:" for the husband and wife are one in nature, in consent, in union, in disposition, and the conduct of life; but they are separated in sex and number. **"Thou shall not corrupt boys:" for this wickedness is contrary to nature, and arose from Sodom, which was therefore entirely consumed with fire sent from God. "Let such a one be accursed: and all the people shall say, So be it."** "Thou shalt not commit fornication:" for says He, "There shall not be a fornicator among the children of Israel." "Thou shalt not steal:" for Achan, whet he had stolen in Israel at Jericho,

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<sup>9</sup> "Moral Exhortations Of The Lord's Constitutions Agreeing With The Ancient Prohibitions Of The Divine Laws. The Prohibition Of Anger, Spite, Corruption, Adultery, And Every Forbidden Action", Article II, Section 1, Book 7 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325" The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Pages 925-927). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

was stoned to death; and Gehazi, who stole, and told a lie, inherited the leprosy of Naaman; and Judas, who stole the poor's money, betrayed the Lord of glory to the Jews, and repented, and hanged himself, and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out; and Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, who stole their own goods, and "tempted the Spirit of the Lord," were immediately, at the sentence of Peter our fellow-apostle, struck dead.

### **Concerning Ordinations<sup>10</sup>**

**IV.** I Peter say, that a bishop ordained is to be, as we have already, all of us, appointed, unblameable in all things, a select person, chosen by the whole people, who, when he is named and approved, let the people assemble, with the presbytery and bishops that are present, on the Lord's day, and let them give their consent. And let the principal of the bishops ask the presbytery and people whether this be the person whom they desire for their ruler. And if they give their consent, let him ask further whether he has a good testimony from all men as to his worthiness for so great and glorious an authority; whether all things relating to his piety towards God be right; whether justice towards men has been observed by him; whether the affairs of his family have been well ordered by him; whether he has been unblameable in the course of his life.

### **Various Canons Of Paul The Apostle Concerning Those That Offer Themselves To Be Baptized — Whom We Are To Receive, And Whom To Reject<sup>11</sup>**

**XXXII.** He that is guilty of sins not to be named, a sodomite, an effeminate person, a magician, an enchanter, an astrologer, a diviner, an user of magic verses, a juggler, a mountebank, one that makes amulets, a charmer, a soothsayer, a fortune-teller, an observer of palmistry; he that, when he meets you, observes defects in the eyes or feet of the birds or cats, or noises, or symbolical sounds: let these be proved for some time, for this sort of wickedness is hard to be washed away; and if they leave off those practices, let them be received; but if they will not agree to that, let them be rejected.

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<sup>10</sup> "Concerning Ordinations", Article IV, Section 2, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325" The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Pages 959-960). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

<sup>11</sup> "Various Canons Of Paul The Apostle Concerning Those That Offer Themselves To Be Baptized — Whom We Are To Receive, And Whom To Reject", Article XXXII, Section 4, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325" The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Page 986). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

## **THE ECCLESIASTICAL CANONS OF THE SAME HOLY APOSTLES.<sup>12</sup>**

XLVII.

**17.** He who has been twice married after his baptism, or has had a concubine, cannot be made a bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or indeed any one of the sacerdotal catalogue.

**18.** He who has taken a widow, or a divorced woman, or an harlot, or a servant, or one belonging to the theater, cannot be either a bishop, priest, or deacon, or indeed any one of the sacerdotal catalogue.

**19.** He who has married two sisters, or his brother's or sister's daughter, cannot be a clergyman.

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<sup>12</sup> "The Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles", Article XLVII, Book 8 of *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, James Donaldson (Editor), in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325" The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., And James Donaldson, LL.D. (Editors), (April 1975); in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, (Pages 999-1000). A. Roberts and J Donaldson (Editors) The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).