



The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch with brief introduction

Prepared for St. Ignatius of Antioch Church
Dayton, OH

Dear family and friends of St. Ignatius of Antioch Church,

What a special patron we have! St. Ignatius of Antioch died a mere 80 years after the Resurrection, and a mere 10 years after the death of John the Evangelist. At the time of his death, Ignatius of Antioch was perhaps the second most influential Christian alive. His writings are perhaps the most important Christian documents of the second century and testify to the importance of Christian unity, the organization of the Church with bishops, priests, and deacons, the importance of the Eucharist as truly the flesh and blood of Jesus, the role of Mary, the centrality of Rome, and the beauty of martyrdom.

St. Ignatius wrote before the books of the Bible were fully compiled and demonstrates emphatically that Christianity is neither a merely personal religion, nor a stagnant religion. St. Ignatius of Antioch attests to a lived tradition, practiced not only in our parish in 2018, but also in all of the churches in 110 AD and in most if not all of the 80 years prior. The Tradition of the Church is not 11th century innovations, nor even 3rd century innovations, but are the lived practices of the Apostles and first Christians, taught by Jesus and discerned in the Holy Spirit.

As a spiritual writer, Ignatius gives us insight not only into how to die with charity and in unity to Christ, but also how to live as a member of the people of God and as a disciple of Jesus.

I hope that the most famous writer of the Second Century, can be an inspiration to you this Christmas. Merry Christmas and God bless you.

Glory to God always,
Fr. Alex Harb

St. Ignatius of Antioch
SYRIAN BISHOP

WRITTEN BY:

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See Article History

Alternative Title: Ignatius Theophoros

St. Ignatius of Antioch, also called **Ignatius Theophoros (Greek: “God Bearer”)**, (died c. 110, Rome; Western feast day October 17; Eastern feast day December 20), bishop of Antioch, Syria (now in Turkey), known mainly from seven highly regarded letters that he wrote during a trip to Rome, as a prisoner condemned to be executed for his beliefs. He was apparently eager to counteract the teachings of two groups—the Judaizers, who did not accept the authority of the New Testament, and the docetists, who held that Christ’s sufferings and death were apparent but not real. The letters have often been cited as a source of knowledge of the Christian church at the beginning of the 2nd century.

Record Of His Life

Although St. Ignatius was an influential church leader and theologian, he is known almost entirely from his own writings. There is no record of his life prior to his arrest, but his letters reveal his personality and his impact on the Christianity of his time. Ignatius represented the Christian religion in transition from its Jewish origins to its assimilation in the Greco-Roman world. He laid the foundation for dogmas that would be formulated in succeeding generations. His advocacy of a hierarchical structure of the church with emphasis on

episcopal authority, his insistence on the real humanity of Christ, and his ardent desire for martyrdom are subjects that have generated much discussion.

Eusebius of Caesarea, whose *Ecclesiastical History* is the chief primary source for the history of the church up to 324, reported that Ignatius's arrest and his condemnation to the wild beasts in the Roman arena occurred during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (98–117). Eusebius, on unknown grounds, dates the event to 107 or 108. Ignatius's letters contain the only reliable information about him, but only one of them—that to the church in Rome—is dated (August 24), and even then no year is given.

Ignatius, surnamed Theophoros, was bishop of Antioch at the time of his arrest. Whether he was a native of the city is uncertain; his Greek prose, however, does have an Eastern flavour characteristic of that part of the Hellenistic world. His thought is strongly influenced by the letters of St. Paul and also by the tradition connected with St. John the Apostle. It is possible that he knew St. John personally.

Journey To Rome

Ignatius was taken prisoner during a persecution of the Antioch church; he was put in chains and escorted, along with others, by a unit of soldiers to Troas in northwestern Asia Minor for embarkation to Rome. By that time he must have been a well-known figure among Christians. All along his way delegations of churches, even from places off his route, accompanied him from town to town. For unknown reasons, the journey was interrupted at Smyrna (modern İzmir, Turkey), where he was warmly received by the local Christians and their bishop, St. Polycarp, who was to become his beloved friend.

There he was also met by representatives—the bishop, some elders, or presbyters, and some deacons—of the nearby churches of Ephesus, Magnesia ad Maeandrum, and Tralles, who as far as possible looked after his needs. After these delegations left Smyrna, he wrote letters to their respective communities thanking them for their attention and offering them guidelines for their lives as Christians. At his request the deacon Burrus of Ephesus was allowed to stay with him. Ignatius also wrote to Rome, urging his fellow Christians there not to prevent his martyrdom by intercession on his behalf and commending to their charity Syrian Christians who had arrived there ahead of him.

From Smyrna his journey continued to the district of Troas, where a shorter stay was made pending embarkation. This stopover was not long enough for Ignatius to write to all the churches he wished to address. He did, however, write to the congregations at Philadelphia and Smyrna (these letters were delivered by Burrus, who had accompanied him to Troas) and to Bishop Polycarp, asking him in a personal letter to write to other churches in his name. At Troas he had been joined by the deacons Philo of Cilicia and Agathopus from Syria; they gave him the consoling news that Antioch was again “at peace.” It is not certain whether this meant a lull in the persecution of Christians or perhaps—to judge from Ignatius’s use of the word *peace* elsewhere—a return of the community to concord after some religious dissension. In his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius asked to have a deacon appointed to bring the people of Antioch the congratulations of the church of Smyrna and to encourage other churches to follow Smyrna’s example. Sometime later Polycarp wrote to the church of Philippi in Macedonia for news about Ignatius and his companions, who had recently passed through their city. His death in the Roman arena is recorded by Polycarp’s disciple St. Irenaeus, who died about 200–203. Documentation ends here; the rest is inference.

The Letters: Warnings Against False Teachings

The letters of Ignatius abound in warnings against false doctrines and false teachers and in admonitions to preserve peace and concord by willing subordination in all religious matters to the clergy and, above all, to the bishop.

Nevertheless, he frequently assures his readers that their own church gives no cause for concern and that his words are prompted merely by pastoral solicitude. Only in his letter to the church of Philadelphia does he intimate that at least some of the community tended to segregate, and, in a passage in the letter to the Smyrnaeans, he seems to imply that there had been dissenters.

Smyrna is the only place along his journey where Ignatius stayed for a sufficiently long time to have firsthand knowledge of the state of the church; he knew of the others from informants, who gave him little grounds for worry. Ignatius's anxiety, perhaps, had its roots in his experiences as a bishop at Antioch. If the peace that returned to Antioch after he left is to be understood as the restoration of concord within the Christian community, then the church of Antioch might have been divided on the very same issues about which Ignatius writes to the other churches.

Ignatius apparently fought two groups of heretics: (1) Judaizers, who did not accept the authority of the New Testament and clung to such Jewish practices as observing the Sabbath, and (2) docetists (from the Greek *dokein*, "to seem"), who held that Christ had suffered and died only in appearance. Ignatius untiringly affirmed that the New Testament was the fulfillment of the Old Testament and insisted upon the reality of Christ's human nature. For him, Christ's Passion, death, and Resurrection were a vital guarantee of "life everlasting" in the risen Christ. Had Christ died only in appearance, Ignatius

believed that his own suffering and his readiness to sacrifice his life for Christ would have no meaning.

Such sentiments are a strong argument against the proposition that Ignatius had come under the influence of some early form of gnosticism—a dualistic religion that stressed salvation by esotericknowledge, or *gnōsis*, rather than by faith. Some of Ignatius’s formulations possibly echo gnostic language, and he seems to have made an impression on certain gnostic sects. Nevertheless, there is no trace in his letters of the basic gnostic equation of good and evil with spirit and matter. He does not even take up St. Paul’s antinomy of flesh and spirit. For him, the spirit is above the flesh rather than against it; even what the “spiritual man” does “according to the flesh” is spiritual.

Martyrdom As Union With Christ

Concern for the doctrine that Christ is man as well as God is the main reason that Ignatius insisted so emphatically on “siding with the bishop.” On this earth the bishop represents to his church the true bishop, Christ. Union with the bishop in belief and worship means union with Christ. Those who in a spirit of pride break away from the bishop destroy that union. The unity of the church with its monarchical structure is for Ignatius a concrete realization already on earth of the future life in Christ; authority within the church has not yet become for him a principle of institutional discipline. Ignatius used, for the first time in Christian literature, the expression “catholic church,” meaning the whole church that is one and the same wherever there is a Christian congregation.

Ignatius’s letter to the church of Rome is by far the longest and the richest in laudatory epithets. Throughout his letter he speaks of the Roman Christians in terms of special distinction. But even when he states that their church holds the first place

in the whole Christian “community of love [*agapē*],” he acknowledges a position of preeminence rather than of jurisdiction.

Ignatius’s desire to become a martyr is also linked with his understanding of union with Christ. To be a perfect disciple of Christ means to imitate Christ in his Passion, to share in it, to be united with Christ in suffering. Many times in his letters Ignatius accuses himself of being imperfect because he has not yet been put to this test. Now, on his journey to Rome, he at last “begins to be a disciple,” and his great fear is that his friends in Rome might obtain for him a pardon and so deprive him of his way to perfection. This longing for martyrdom has sometimes been interpreted as a neurotic obsession. Although the language used by Ignatius in voicing this desire does often sound exaggerated, his attitude was shared by many Christians of his time. For Ignatius, love of martyrdom ultimately springs from a deep conviction that only by union with Christ’s Passion will he participate in Christ’s glory. Even this belief does not free him from the fear that he might recoil in the face of death, and he asks the churches to pray for his strength and constancy.

Ignatius’s Personal Relationships

Only rare glimpses of Ignatius’s personal relations are possible from the letters. His greetings, in the manner of St. Paul, to individuals at the end of his letters seldom have a personal ring. In his letter to the church of Smyrna he singles out Tavia for special mention, but his reason seems to be pastoral. Another woman of that town, Alke, is remembered twice as “a name dear to me,” and a certain Attalus as “my beloved.” Among the clergy Ignatius finds words of special warmth for the deacons. They are “most dear” to him, and he likes to speak of them as his “fellow-slaves.” By his time deacons apparently were no longer mere dispensers of the church’s charities, as

they are depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. If the bishop represents Christ as shepherd, the deacons are images of Christ as “the servant of all.” In emphasizing his fellowship with them, Ignatius insists on the common bond among all Christians in the service of God.

Among all the persons known from Ignatius’s correspondence, St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, stands out as his personal friend. Ignatius made the acquaintance of his younger colleague during his stay at Smyrna. He addresses him and generally speaks of him with an affection that is absent in his praise of other bishops. Polycarp received the only personal letter from Ignatius; it is a letter of advice from an experienced older man to a younger one who, for all the promise he shows for the future, still has to find his way. Polycarp, in turn, when writing to the Philippians, praises Ignatius as an example of patience and of willingness to suffer for Christ. Some 40 years later (perhaps in 155) Polycarp himself was to follow in his friend’s footsteps to a martyr’s death.

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which is at Ephesus, in Asia, deservedly most happy, being blessed in the greatness and fullness of God the Father, and predestinated before the beginning[1] of time, that it should be always for an enduring and unchangeable glory, being united[2] and elected through the true passion by the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God: Abundant happiness through Jesus Christ, and His undefiled grace.

CHAP. I.--PRAISE OF THE EPHESIANS.

I have become acquainted with your name, much-beloved in God, which ye have acquired by the habit of righteousness, according to the faith and love in Jesus Christ our Saviour. Being the followers[4] of God, and stirring up[5] yourselves by the blood of God, ye have perfectly accomplished the work which was befitting to you. For, on hearing that I came bound from Syria for the common name and hope, trusting through your prayers to be permitted to fight with beasts at Rome, that so by martyrdom I may indeed become the disciple of Him "who gave Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God,"[6][ye hastened to see me[7]]. I received, therefore,[8] your whole multitude in the name of God, through Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love,[9] and your bishop in the flesh, whom I pray you by Jesus Christ to love, and that you would all seek to be like him. And blessed be He who has granted unto you, being worthy, to obtain such an excellent bishop.

CHAP. II.--CONGRATULATIONS AND ENTREATIES.

As to my fellow-servant Burrhus, your deacon in regard to God and blessed in all things,[1] I beg that he may continue longer, both for your honour and that of your bishop. And Crocus also, worthy both of God and you, whom I have received as the manifestation[2] of your love, hath in all things refreshed[3] me, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shall also refresh[3] him; together with Onesimus, and Burrhus, and Euplus, and Fronto, by means of whom, I have, as to love, beheld all of you. May I always have joy of you, if indeed I be worthy of it. It is therefore

befitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ, who hath glorified you, that by a unanimous obedience "ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing,"[5] and that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, ye may in all respects be sanctified.

CHAP. III.--EXHORTATIONS TO UNITY.

I do not issue orders to you, as if I were some great person. For though I am bound for the name [of Christ], I am not yet perfect in Jesus Christ. For now I begin to be a disciple, and I speak to you as fellow-disciples with me. For it was needful for me to have been stirred up by you in faith, exhortation, patience, and long-suffering. But inasmuch as love suffers me not to be silent in regard to you, I have therefore taken[6] upon me first to exhort you that ye would all run together in accordance with the will of God. For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the [manifested] will of the Father; as also bishops, settled everywhere to the utmost bounds [of the earth], are so by the will of Jesus Christ.

CHAP. IV.--THE SAME CONTINUED.

Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, man by man, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you, and perceive by your works that ye are indeed the members of His son. It is profitable, therefore, that you should live in an unblameable unity, that thus ye may always enjoy communion with God.

CHAP. V.--THE PRAISE OF UNITY.

For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop--I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual

nature--how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity! Let no man deceive himself: if any one be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two possesses[4] such power, how much more that of the bishop and the whole Church !He, therefore, that does not assemble with the Church, has even[5] by this manifested his pride, and condemned himself. For it is written, "God resisteth the proud." [9] Let us be careful, then, not to set ourselves in opposition to the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God.

CHAP. VI.--HAVE RESPECT TO THE BISHOP AS TO CHRIST HIMSELF.

Now the more any one sees the bishop keeping silence,[10] the more ought he to revere him. For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household,[11] as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself. And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that ye all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do ye hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.

CHAP. VII.--BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS.

For some are in the habit of carrying about the name [of Jesus Christ] in wicked guile, while yet they practise things unworthy of God, whom ye must flee as ye would wild beasts. For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, against whom ye must be on your guard, inasmuch as they are men who can scarcely be cured. There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first possible and then impossible,[7] even Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAP. VIII.--RENEWED PRAISE OF THE EPHESIANS.

Let not then any one deceive you, as indeed ye are not deceived, inasmuch as ye are wholly devoted to God. For since there is no strife raging among you which might distress you, ye are certainly living in accordance with God's will. I am far inferior to you, and require to be sanctified by your Church of Ephesus, so renowned throughout the world. They that are carnal cannot do those things which are spiritual, nor they that are spiritual the things which are carnal; even as faith cannot do the works of unbelief, nor the unbelief the works of faith. But even those things which ye do according to the flesh are spiritual; for ye do all things in Jesus Christ.

CHAP. IX.--YE HAVE GIVEN NO HEED TO FALSE TEACHERS.

Nevertheless, I have heard of some who have passed on from this to you, having false doctrine, whom ye did not suffer to sow among you, but stopped your ears, that ye might not receive those things which were sown by them, as being stones[1] of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross,[2] making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope, while your faith was the means by which you ascended, and your love the way which led up to God. Ye, therefore, as well as all your fellow-travellers, are God-bearers, temple-bearers, Christ-bearers, bearers of holiness, adorned in all respects with the commandments of Jesus Christ, in whom also I exult that I have been thought worthy, by means of this Epistle, to converse and rejoice with you, because with respect to your Christian life[7] ye love nothing but God only.

CHAP. X.--EXHORTATIONS TO PRAYER, HUMILITY, ETC.

And pray ye without ceasing in behalf of other men. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See,[2] then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be ye meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting: to their blasphemies return[4] your prayers; in contrast to their error, be ye steadfast[5] in the faith; and for their

cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord (who ever more unjustly treated, more destitute, more condemned?), that so no plant of the devil may be found in you, but ye may remain in all holiness and sobriety in Jesus Christ, both with respect to the flesh and spirit.

CHAP. XI.--AN EXHORTATION TO FEAR GOD, ETC.

The last times are come upon us. Let us therefore be of a reverent spirit, and fear the long-suffering of God, that it tend not to our condemnation. For let us either stand in awe of the wrath to come, or show regard for the grace which is at present displayed--one of two things. Only [in one way or another] let us be found in Christ Jesus unto the true life. Apart from Him, let nothing attract[16] you, for whom I bear about these bonds, these spiritual jewels, by which may I arise through your prayers, of which I entreat I may always be a partaker, that I may be found in the lot of the Christians of Ephesus, who have always been of the same mind with the apostles through the power of Jesus Christ.

CHAP. XII.--PRAISE OF THE EPHESIANS.

I know both who I am, and to whom I write. I am a condemned man, ye have been the objects of mercy; I am subject to danger, ye are established in safety. Ye are the persons through(1) whom those pass that are cut off for the sake of God. Ye are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet(4) may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus.

CHAP. XIII.--EXHORTATION TO MEET TOGETHER FREQUENTLY FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For when ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims(7) is prevented by the unity of your

faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth,(8) is brought to an end.

CHAP. XIV.--EXHORTATIONS TO FAITH AND LOVE.

None of these things is hid from you, if ye perfectly possess that faith and love towards Christ Jesus(10) which are the beginning and the end of life. For the beginning is faith, and the end is love.(11) Now these two, being inseparably connected together,(12) are of God, while all other things which are requisite for a holy life follow after them. No man [truly] making a profession of faith sinneth;(13) nor does he that possesses love hate any one. The tree is made manifest by its fruit;(15) so those that profess themselves to be Christians shall be recognised by their conduct. For there is not now a demand for mere profession,(16) but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end.

CHAP. XV.--EXHORTATION TO CONFESS CHRIST BY SILENCE AS WELL AS SPEECH.

It is better for a man to be silent and be [a Christian], than to talk and not to be one. It is good to teach, if he who speaks also acts. There is then one Teacher, who spake and it was done; while even those things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father. He who possesses the word of Jesus, is truly able to hear even His very silence, that he may be perfect, and may both act as he speaks, and be recognised by his silence. There is nothing which is hid from God, but our very secrets are near to Him. Let us therefore do all things as those who have Him dwelling in us, that we may be His temples,(20) and He may be in us as our God, which indeed He is, and will manifest Himself before our faces. Wherefore we justly love Him.

CHAP. XVI.--THE FATE OF FALSE TEACHERS.

Do not err, my brethren.(3) Those that corrupt families shall not inherit the kingdom of God.(4) If, then, those who do this as respects the flesh have suffered death, how much more shall this be the case with any one who corrupts by wicked doctrine the faith of God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such an

one becoming defiled [in this way], shall go away into everlasting fire, and so shall every one that hearkens unto him.
CHAP. XVII.--BEWARE OF FALSE DOCTRINES.

For this end did the Lord suffer the ointment to be poured upon His head,(7) that He might breathe immortality into His Church. Be not ye anointed with the bad odour of the doctrine of the prince of this world; let him not lead you away captive from the life which is set before you. And why are we not all prudent, since we have received the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ? Why do we foolishly perish, not recognising the gift which the Lord has of a truth sent to us?

CHAP. XVIII.--THE GLORY OF THE CROSS.

Let my spirit be counted as nothing(10) for the sake of the cross, which is a stumbling-block" to those that do not believe, but to us salvation and life eternal. "Where is the wise man? where the disputer?"(1) Where is the boasting of those who are styled prudent? For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment(3) of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost. He was born and baptized, that by His passion He might purify the water.

CHAP. XIX.--THREE CELEBRATED MYSTERIES.

Now the virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world, as was also her offspring, and the death of the Lord; three mysteries of renown,(5) which were wrought in silence by(6) God. How, then, was He manifested to the world?(7) A star shone forth in heaven above all the other stars, the light of Which was inexpressible, while its novelty struck men with astonishment. And all the rest of the stars, with the sun and moon, formed a chorus to this star, and its light was exceedingly great above them all. And there was agitation felt as to whence this new spectacle came, so unlike to everything else [in the heavens]. Hence every kind of magic was destroyed, and every bond of wickedness disappeared; ignorance was removed, and the old kingdom abolished, God Himself being manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life. And now that took a

beginning which had been prepared by God. Henceforth all things were in a state of tumult, because He meditated the abolition of death.

CHAP. XX.--PROMISE OF ANOTHER LETTER.

If Jesus Christ shall graciously permit me through your prayers, and if it be His will, I shall, in a second little work which I will write to you, make further manifest to you [the nature of] the dispensation of which I have begun [to treat], with respect to the new man, Jesus Christ, in His faith and in His love, in His suffering and in His resurrection. Especially [will I do this 14] if the Lord make known to me that ye come together man by man in common through grace, individually,(1) in one faith, and in Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh, being both the Son of man and the Son of God, so that ye obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind, breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, but [which causes] that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ.

CHAP. XXI.--CONCLUSION.

My soul be for yours and theirs(2) whom, for the honour of God, ye have sent to Smyrna; whence also I write to you, giving thanks unto the Lord, and loving Polycarp even as I do you. Remember me, as Jesus Christ also remembered you. Pray ye for the Church which is in Syria, whence I am led bound to Rome, being the last of the faithful who are there, even as I have been thought worthy to be chosen(4) to show forth the honour of God. Farewell in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, our common hope.

EPISTLE TO THE MAGNESIANS

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the [Church] blessed in the grace of God the Father, in Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whom I salute the Church which is at Magnesia, near the Moeander, and wish it abundance of happiness in God the father, and in Jesus Christ.

CHAP. I.— REASON OF WRITING THE EPISTLE.

HAVING been informed of your godly(1) love, so well-ordered, I rejoiced greatly, and determined to commune with you in the faith of Jesus Christ. For as one who has been thought worthy of the most honourable of all names,(2) in those bonds which I bear about, I commend the Churches, in which I pray for a union both of the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ, the constant source of our life, and of faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred, but especially of Jesus and the Father, in whom, if we endure all the assaults of the prince of this world, and escape them, we shall enjoy God.

CHAP. II.— I REJOICE IN YOUR MESSENGERS.

Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ, [I now write(8) to you].

CHAP. III.— HONOUR YOUR YOUTHFUL BISHOP.

Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth,(1) but to yield him all reverence, having respect to(2) the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest youthful appearance(3) [of their bishop], but as being themselves prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of us all. It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion, obey [your bishop], in honour of Him who has willed us [so to do], since he that does not so deceives not [by such conduct]

the bishop that is visible, but seeks to mock Him that is invisible. And all such conduct has reference not to man,(10) but to God, who knows all secrets.

CHAP. IV.— SOME WICKEDLY ACT INDEPENDENTLY OF THE BISHOP.

It is fitting, then, not only to be called Christians, but to be so in reality: as some indeed give one the title of bishop, but do all things without him. Now such persons seem to me to be not possessed of a good conscience, seeing they are not stedfastly gathered together according to the commandment.

CHAP. V.— DEATH IS THE FATE OF ALL SUCH.

Seeing, then, all things have an end, these two things are simultaneously set before us— death and life; and every one shall go unto his own place. For as there are two kinds of coins, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it, [so is it also here.][2] The unbelieving are of this world; but the believing have, in love, the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ, by whom, if we are not in readiness to die into His passion,[3] His life is not in us.

CHAP. VI.— PRESERVE HARMONY.

Since therefore I have, in the persons before mentioned, beheld the whole multitude of you in faith and love, I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony,[4] while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the beginning of time,[5] and in the end was revealed. Do ye all then, imitating the same divine conduct,[7] pay respect to one another, and let no one look upon his neighbour after the flesh, but do ye continually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let nothing exist among you that may divide you; but be ye united with your bishop, and those that preside over you, as a type and evidence of your immortality.[8]

CHAP. VII.— DO NOTHING WITHOUT THE BISHOP AND

PRESBYTERS.

As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to Him, neither by Himself nor by the apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavour that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and in joy undefiled. There is one Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is more excellent. Do ye therefore all run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and has gone to one.

CHAP. VIII.— CAUTION AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINES.

Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace. For the divinest prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. On this account also they were persecuted, being inspired by His grace to fully convince the unbelieving that there is one God, who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, who is His eternal Word, not proceeding forth from silence,[5] and who in all things pleased Him that sent Him.

CHAP. IX.— LET US LIVE WITH CHRIST.

If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things[7] have come to the possession of a new[8] hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance[10] of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death— whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith,[12] and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master— how shall we be able to live apart from Him, whose disciples the prophets themselves in the Spirit did wait for Him as their Teacher? And therefore He whom they rightly waited for, being come, raised them from the dead.[16]

CHAP. X.— BEWARE OF JUDAIZING.

Let us not, therefore, be insensible to His kindness. For were He to reward us according to our works, we should cease to be. Therefore, having become His disciples, let us learn to live according to the principles of Christianity.[7] For whosoever is called by any other name besides this, is not of God. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the sour leaven, and be ye changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Be ye salted in Him, lest any one among you should be corrupted, since by your savour ye shall be convicted. It is absurd to profess[12] Christ Jesus, and to Judaize. For Christianity did not embrace[13] Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, that so every tongue which believeth might be gathered together to God.

CHAP. XI.— I WRITE THESE THINGS TO WARN YOU.

These things [I address to you], my beloved, not that I know any of you to be in such a state;[17] but, as less than any of you, I desire to guard you beforehand, that ye fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that ye attain to full assurance in regard to the birth, and passion, and resurrection which took place in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, being truly and certainly accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our hope,[1] from which may no one of you ever be turned aside.

CHAP. XII.— YE ARE SUPERIOR TO ME.

May I enjoy you in all respects, if indeed I be worthy! For though I am bound, I am not worthy to be compared to any of you that are at liberty. I know that ye are not puffed up, for ye have Jesus Christ in yourselves. And all the more when I commend you, I know that ye cherish modesty[4] of spirit; as it is written, "The righteous man is his own accuser."[5]

CHAP. XIII.— BE ESTABLISHED IN FAITH AND UNITY.

Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that so all things, whatsoever ye do, may prosper both in the flesh and spirit; in faith and love; in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit; in the beginning and in the end; with your most admirable bishop, and the well-compacted spiritual crown of your presbytery, and the deacons who are

according to God. Be ye subject to the bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union both fleshly and spiritual.

CHAP. XIV.— YOUR PRAYERS REQUESTED.

Knowing as I do that ye are full of God, I have but briefly exhorted you. Be mindful of me in your prayers, that I may attain to God; and of the Church which is in Syria, whence I am not worthy to derive my name: for I stand in need of your united prayer in God, and your love, that the Church which is in Syria may be "deemed worthy of being refreshed[2] by your Church.

CHAP. XV.— SALUTATIONS.

The Ephesians from Smyrna (whence I also write to you), who are here for the glory of God, as ye also are, who have in all things refreshed me, salute you, along with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans. The rest of the Churches, in honour of Jesus Christ, also salute you. Fare ye well in the harmony of God, ye who have obtained the inseparable Spirit, who is Jesus Christ.

EPISTLE TO THE TRALLIANS

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the holy Church which is at Tralles, in Asia, beloved of God, the Father of Jesus Christ, elect, and worthy of God, possessing peace through the flesh, and blood, and passion of Jesus Christ, who is our hope, through our rising again to Him,[1] which also I salute in its fulness,[2] and in the apostolical character,[3] and wish abundance of happiness.

CHAP. I.--ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR EXCELLENCE.

I know that ye possess an unblameable and sincere mind in patience, and that not only in present practice,[5] but according to inherent nature, as Polybius your bishop has shown me, who has come to Smyrna by the will of God and Jesus Christ, and so sympathized in the joy which I, who am bound in Christ Jesus, possess, that I beheld your whole multitude in him. Having therefore received through him the testimony of your good-will, according to God, I gloried to find you, as I knew you were, the followers of God.

CHAP. II.--BE SUBJECT TO THE BISHOP, ETC.

For, since ye are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, in order, by believing in His death, ye may escape from death. It is therefore necessary that, as ye indeed do, so without the bishop ye should do nothing, but should also our hope, in whom, if we live, we shall be found in Him. It behoves you also, in every way, to please the deacons, who are [ministers] of the mysteries of Christ Jesus; for they are not ministers of meat and drink, but servants of the Church of God. They are bound, therefore, to avoid all grounds of accusation [against them], as they would a burning fire. Let them, then, prove themselves to be such.

CHAP. III.--HONOUR THE DEACONS, etc.

In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment(2) of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the

sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church.(4) Concerning all this, I am persuaded that ye are of the same opinion. For I have received the manifestations of your love, and still have it with me, in your bishop, whose very appearance is highly instructive,(6) and his meekness of itself a power; whom I imagine even the ungodly must reverence, seeing they are (7) also pleased that I do not spare myself. But shall I, when permitted to write on this point, reach such a height of self-esteem, that though being a condemned(8) man, I should issue commands to you as if I were an apostle?

CHAP. IV.--I HAVE NEED OF HUMILITY.

I have great knowledge in God,(9) but I restrain myself, lest, I should perish through boasting. For now it is needful for me to be the more fearful; and not give heed to those that puff me up. For they that speak to me [in the way of commendation] scourge me. For I do indeed desire to suffer, but I know not if I be worthy to do so. For this longing, though it is not manifest to many, all the more vehemently assails me.(13) I therefore have need of meekness, by which the prince of this world is brought to nought.

CHAP. V.--I WILL NOT TEACH YOU PROFOUND DOCTRINES.

Am I not able to write to you of heavenly things? But I fear to do so, lest I should inflict injury on you who are but babes [in Christ]. Pardon me in this respect, lest, as not being able to receive [such doctrines], ye should be strangled by them. For even I, though I am bound [for Christ], yet am not on that account able to understand heavenly things, and the places(4) of the angels, and their gatherings under their respective princes, things visible and invisible. Without reference to such abstruse subjects, I am still but a learner [in other respects(5)]; for many things are wanting to us, that we come not short of God.

CHAP. VI.--ABSTAIN FROM THE POISON OF HERETICS.

I therefore, yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, entreat you that ye use Christian nourishment only, and abstain from herbage of a different kind; I mean heresy. For those(7) [that are given to this] mix(11) up Jesus Christ with their own poison, speaking things which are unworthy of credit, like those who administer a deadly drug in sweet wine, which he who is ignorant of does greedily(13) take, with a fatal pleasure(14) leading to his own death.

CHAP. VII.--THE SAME CONTINUED.

Be on your guard, therefore, against such persons. And this will be the case with you if you are not puffed up, and continue in intimate union with(17) Jesus Christ our God, and the bishop, and the enactments of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure, but(2) he that is without is not pure; that is, he who does anything apart from the bishop, and presbytery, and deacons,(4) such a man is not pure in his conscience.

CHAP. VIII.--BE ON YOUR GUARD AGAINST THE SNARES OF THE DEVIL.

Not that I know there is anything of this kind among you; but I put you on your guard, inasmuch as I love you greatly, and foresee the snares of the devil. Wherefore, clothing(11) yourselves with meekness, be ye renewed(12) in faith, that is the flesh of the Lord, and in love, that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Let no one of you cherish any grudge against his neighbour. Give no occasion to the Gentiles, lest by means of a few foolish men the whole multitude [of those that believe] in God be evil spoken of. For, "Woe to him by whose vanity my name is blasphemed among any."(17)

CHAP. IX.--REFERENCE TO THE HISTORY OF CHRIST.

Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with(18) Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and [truly] died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the

dead, His Father quickening Him, even as after the same manner His Father will so raise up us who believe in Him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life.

CHAP. X.--THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S PASSION.

But if, as some that are without God, that is, the unbelieving, say, that He only seemed to suffer (they themselves only seeming to exist), then why am I in bonds? Why do I long to be exposed to s the wild beasts? Do I therefore die in vain?(9) Am I not then guilty of falsehood(10) against [the cross of] the Lord?

CHAP. XI.--AVOID THE DEADLY ERRORS OF THE DOCETAE.

Flee, therefore, those evil offshoots [of Satan], which produce death-bearing fruit, whereof if any one tastes, he instantly dies. For these men are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be incorruptible. By it(9) He calls you through His passion, as being His members. The head, therefore, cannot be born by itself, without its members; God, who is [the Saviour] Himself, having promised their union.(10)

CHAP. XII.--CONTINUE IN UNITY AND LOVE.

I salute you from Smyrna, together with the Churches of God which are with me, who have refreshed me in all things, both in the flesh and in the spirit. My bonds, which I carry about with me for the sake of Jesus Christ (praying that I may attain to God), exhort you. Continue in harmony among yourselves, and in prayer with one another; for it becomes every one of you, and especially the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the hon-our of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the apostles. I entreat you in love to hear me, that I may not, by having written, be a testimony against you. And do ye also pray for me, who have need of your love, along with the mercy of God, that I may be worthy of the lot for which I am destined, and that I may not be found reprobate.

CHAP. XIII.--CONCLUSION.

The love of the Smyrnaeans and Ephesians salutes you. Remember in your prayers the Church which is in Syria, from

which also I am not worthy to receive my appellation, being the last(1) of them. Fare ye well in Jesus Christ, while ye continue subject to the bishop, as to the command [of God], and in like manner to the presbytery. And do ye, every man, love one another with an undivided heart. Let my spirit be sanctified(2) by yours, not only now, but also when I shall attain to God. For I am as yet exposed to danger. But the Father is faithful in Jesus Christ to fulfil both mine and your petitions: in whom may ye be found unblameable.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which has obtained mercy, through the majesty of the Most High Father, and Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son; the Church which is beloved and enlightened by the will of Him that willeth all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the report of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honour, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of obtaining her every desire, worthy of being deemed holy,(2) and which presides over love, is named from Christ, and from the Father, which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God.

CHAP. I.--AS A PRISONER, I HOPE TO SEE YOU.

THROUGH prayer(3) to God I have obtained the privilege of seeing your most worthy faces,(4) and have even(5) been granted more than I requested; for I hope as a prisoner in Christ Jesus to salute you, if indeed it be the will of God that I be thought worthy of attaining unto the end. For the beginning has been well ordered, if I may obtain grace to cling to(1) my lot without hindrance unto the end. For I am afraid of your love,(3) lest it should do me an injury. For it is easy for you to accomplish what you please; but it is difficult for me to attain to God, if ye spare me.

CHAP. II.--DO NOT SAVE ME FROM MARTYRDOM.

For it is not my desire to act towards you as a man-pleaser,(4) but as pleasing God, even as also ye please Him. For neither shall I ever have such [another] opportunity of attaining to God; nor will ye, if ye shall now be silent, ever be entitled to(5) the honour of a better work. For if ye are silent concerning me, I shall become God's; but if you show your love to my flesh, I shall again have to run my race. Pray, then, do not seek to

confer any greater favour upon me than that I be sacrificed to God while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in love, ye may sing praise to the Father, through Christ Jesus, that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for(6) from the east unto the west. It is good to set from the world unto God, that I may rise again to Him.

CHAP. III.--PRAY RATHER THAT I MAY ATTAIN' TO MARTYRDOM.

Ye have never envied any one; ye have taught others. Now I desire that those things may be confirmed [by your conduct], which in your instructions ye enjoin [on others]. Only request in my behalf both inward and outward strength, that I may not only speak, but [truly] will; and that I may not merely be called a Christian, but really be found to be one. For if I be truly found [a Christian], I may also be called one, and be then deemed faithful, when I shall no longer appear to the world. Nothing visible is eternal.(9) "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."(10) For our God, Jesus Christ, Bow that He is with(11) the Father, is all the more revealed [in His glory]. Christianity is not a thing(1) of silence only, but also of [manifest] greatness.

CHAP. IV.--ALLOW ME TO FALL A PREY TO THE WILD BEASTS.

I write to the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may be no trouble to any one. Then shall I truly be a disciple of Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body. Entreat Christ for me, that by these instruments(2) I may be found a

sacrifice [to God]. I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles; I am but a condemned man: they were free,(3) while I am, even until now, a servant. But when I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus, and shall rise again emancipated in Him. And now, being a prisoner, I learn not to desire anything worldly or vain.

CHAP. V.--I DESIRE TO DIE.

From Syria even unto Rome I fight with beasts,(4) both by land and sea, both by night and day, being bound to ten leopards, I mean a band of soldiers, who, even when they receive benefits,(5) show themselves all the worse. But I am the more instructed by their injuries [to act as a disciple of Christ]; "yet am I not thereby justified."(6) May I enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me; and I pray they may be found eager to rush upon me, which also I will entice to devour me speedily, and not deal with me as with some, whom, out of fear, they have not touched. But if they be unwilling to assail me, I will compel them to do so. Pardon me [in this]: I know what is for my benefit. Now I begin to be a disciple. And let no one, of things visible or invisible, envy(2) me that I should attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings,(2) breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful(3) torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ.

CHAP. VI.--BY DEATH I SHALL ATTAIN TRUE LIFE.

All the pleasures of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth, (4) shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die in behalf of(5) Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth. "For what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?"(6) Him I seek, who died for us: Him I desire, who rose again for our sake. This is the gain which is laid up for me. Pardon me, brethren: do not hinder me from living, do not wish to keep me in a state of death; (7) and while I desire to belong to God, do not ye give me over to the world. Suffer me to obtain

pure light: when I have gone thither, I shall indeed be a man of God. Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. If any one has Him within himself, let him consider what I desire, and let him have sympathy with me, as knowing how I am straitened.

CHAP. VII.--REASON OF DESIRING TO DIE.

The prince of this world would fain carry me away, and corrupt my disposition towards God. Let none of you, therefore, who are [in Rome] help him; rather be ye on my side, that is, on the side of God. Do not speak of Jesus Christ, and yet set your desires on the world. Let not envy find a dwelling-place among you; nor even should I, when present with you, exhort you to it, be ye persuaded to listen to me, but rather give credit to those things which I now write to you. For though I am alive while I write to you, yet I am eager to die. My love⁽⁸⁾ has been crucified, and there is no fire in me desiring to be fed;⁽¹⁾ but there is within me a water that liveth and speaketh,⁽²⁾ saying to me inwardly, Come to the Father. I have no delight in corruptible food, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham; and I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life.

CHAP. VIII.--BE YE FAVOURABLE TO ME.

I no longer wish to live after the manner of men, and my desire shall be fulfilled if ye consent. Be ye willing, then, that ye also may have your desires fulfilled. I entreat you in this brief letter; do ye give credit to me. Jesus Christ will reveal these things to you, [so that ye shall know] that I speak truly. He⁽⁵⁾ is the mouth altogether free from falsehood, by which the Father has truly spoken. Pray ye for me, that I may attain [the object of my desire]. I have not written to you according to the flesh, but according to the will of God. If I shall suffer, ye have wished [well] to me; but if I am rejected, ye have hated me.

CHAP. IX.--PRAY FOR THE CHURCH IN SYRIA.

Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, which now has God for its shepherd, instead of me. Jesus Christ alone will oversee it, and your love [will also regard it]. But as for me, I am ashamed to be counted one of them; for indeed I am not worthy, as being the very last of them, and one born out of due time.(6) But I have obtained mercy to be somebody, if I shall attain to God. My spirit salutes you, and the love of the Churches that have received me in the name of Jesus Christ, and not as a mere passer-by. For even those Churches which were not(7) near to me in the way, I mean according to the flesh,(8) have gone before me,(9) city by city, [to meet me.]

CHAP. X.--CONCLUSION.

Now I write these things to you from Smyrna by the Ephesians, who are deservedly most happy. There is also with me, along with many others, Crocus, one dearly beloved by me.(1) As to those who have gone before me from Syria to Rome for the glory of God, I believe that you are acquainted with them; to whom, [then,] do ye make known that I am at hand. For they are all worthy, both of God and of you; and it is becoming that you should refresh them in all things. I have written these things unto you, on the day before the ninth of the Kalends of September (that(2) is, on the twenty-third day of August). Fare ye well to the end, in the patience of Jesus Christ. Amen.

EPISTLE TO THE PHILADELPHIANS

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, which is at Philadelphia, in Asia, which has obtained mercy, and is established in the harmony of God, and rejoiceth unceasingly(1) in the passion of our Lord, and is filled with all mercy through his resurrection; which I salute in the blood of Jesus Christ, who is our eternal and enduring joy, especially if [men] are in unity with the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons, who have been appointed according to the mind of Jesus Christ, whom He has established in security, after His own will, and by His Holy Spirit.

CHAP. I.--PRAISE OF THE BISHOP.

WHICH bishop,(3) I know, obtained the ministry which pertains to the common [weal], not of himself, neither by men,(4) nor through vainglory, but by the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; at whose meekness I am struck with admiration, and who by his silence is able to accomplish more than those who vainly talk. For he is in harmony with the commandments [of God], even as the harp is with its strings. Wherefore my soul declares his mind towards God a happy one, knowing it to be virtuous and perfect, and that his stability as well as freedom from all anger is after the example of the infinite(6) meekness of the living God.

CHAP. II.--MAINTAIN UNION WITH THE BISHOP.

Wherefore, as children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines; but where the shepherd is, there do ye as sheep follow. For there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit, who, by means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captives those that are running towards God; but in your unity they shall have no place.

CHAP. III.--AVOID SCHISMATICS.

Keep yourselves from those evil plants which Jesus Christ does not tend, because they are not the planting of the Father. Not that I have found any division among you, but exceeding purity. For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of repentance,

return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ. Do not err, my brethren. If any man follows him that makes a schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks according to a strange(5) opinion, he agrees not with the passion [of Christ.].

CHAP. IV.--HAVE BUT ONE EUCHARIST, ETC.

Take ye heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth(1)] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to [the will of] God.

CHAP. V.--PRAY FOR ME.

My brethren, I am greatly enlarged in loving you; and rejoicing exceedingly [over you], I seek to secure your safety. Yet it is not I, but Jesus Christ, for whose sake being bound I fear the more, inasmuch as I am not yet perfect. But your prayer to God shall make me perfect, that I may attain to that portion which through mercy has been allotted me, while I flee to the Gospel as to the flesh of Jesus, and to the apostles as to the presbytery of the Church. And let us also love the prophets, because they too have proclaimed the Gospel,(4) and placed their hope in Him,(5) and waited for Him; in whom also believing, they were saved, through union to Jesus Christ, being holy men, worthy of love and admiration, having had witness borne to them by Jesus Christ, and being reckoned along with in the Gospel of the common hope.

CHAP. VI.--DO NOT ACCEPT JUDAISM.

But if any one preach the Jewish law(9) unto you, listen not to him. For it is better to hearken to Christian doctrine from a man who has been circumcised, than to Judaism from one uncircumcised. But if either of such persons do not speak concerning Jesus Christ, they are in my judgment but as monuments and sepulchers of the dead, upon which are written only the names of men. Flee therefore the wicked devices and

snares of the prince of this world, lest at any time being conquered(1) by his artifices,(2) ye grow weak in your love. But be ye all joined together(3) with an undivided heart. And I thank my God that I have a good conscience in respect to you, and that no one has it in his power to boast, either privately or publicly, that I have burdened(6) any one either in much or in little. And I wish for all among whom I have spoken, that they may not possess that for a testimony against them.

CHAP. VII.--I HAVE EXHORTED YOU TO UNITY.

For though some would have deceived me according to the flesh, yet the Spirit, as being from God, is not deceived. For it knows both whence it comes and whither it goes,(10) and detects the secrets [of the heart]. For, when I was among you, I cried, I spoke with a loud voice: Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons. Now, some suspected me of having spoken thus, as knowing beforehand the division caused by some among you.(11) But He is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I got no intelligence from any man.(13) But the Spirit proclaimed these words: Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies(1) as the temples of God;(2) love unity; avoid divisions; be the followers of Jesus Christ, even as He is of His Father.

CHAP. VIII.--THE SAME CONTINUED.

I therefore did what belonged to me, as a man devoted to(3) unity. For where there is division and wrath, God doth not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop.(4) I trust [as to you] in the grace of Jesus Christ, who shall free you from every bond. And I exhort you to do nothing out of strife, but according to the doctrine of Christ. When I heard some saying, If I do not find it in the ancient(7) Scriptures, I will not believe the Gospel; on my saying to them, It is written, they answered me, That remains to be proved. But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient: His cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith(8) which is by Him, are undefiled

monuments of antiquity; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified.

CHAP. IX.--THE OLD COVENANT IS GOOD: THE GOSPEL IS BETTER.

The priests(11) indeed are good, but the High Priest is better; to whom the holy of holies has been committed, and who alone has been trusted with the secrets of God. He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God. But the Gospel possesses something transcendent [above the former dispensation], viz., the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion and resurrection. For the beloved prophets announced Him,(17) but the Gospel is the perfection of immortality.(18) All these things are good together, if ye believe in love.

CHAP. X.--CONGRATULATE THE INHABITANTS OF ANTIOCH ON THE CLOSE OF THE PERSECUTION.

Since, according to your prayers, and the compassion which ye feel in Christ Jesus, it is reported to me that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria possesses peace, it will become you, as a Church of God, to elect a deacon to act as the ambassador of God[for you] to[the brethren there], that he may rejoice along with them when they are met together, and glorify the name[of God], Blessed is he in Jesus Christ, who shall be deemed worthy of such a ministry; and ye too shall be glorified. And if ye are willing, it is not beyond your power to do this, for the sake(3) of God; as also the nearest Churches have sent, in some cases bishops, and in others presbyters and deacons.

CHAP. XI.--THANKS AND SALUTATION.

Now, as to Philo the deacon, of Cilicia, a man of reputation, who still ministers to me in the word of God, along with Rheus Agathopus, an elect man, who has followed me from Syria, not regarding(4) his life,--these bear witness in your behalf; and I myself give thanks to God for you, that ye have received them, even as the Lord you. But may those that dishonoured them be

forgiven through the grace of Jesus Christ! The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to you by Burrhus, who was sent along with me by the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans, to show their respect.(7) May the Lord Jesus Christ honour them, in whom they hope, in flesh, and soul, and faith, and love, and concord! Fare ye well in Christ Jesus, our common hope.

EPISTLE TO THE SMYRNAEANS

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which has through mercy obtained every kind of gift, which is filled with faith and love, and is deficient in no gift, most worthy of God, and adorned with holiness: the Church which is at Smyrna, in Asia, wishes abundance of happiness, through the immaculate Spirit and word of God.

CHAPTER I.--THANKS TO GOD FOR YOUR FAITH.

I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom. For I have observed that ye are perfected in an immoveable faith, as if ye were nailed to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit, and are established in love through the blood of Christ, being fully persuaded with respect to our Lord, that He was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God; that He was truly born of a virgin, was baptized by John, in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by Him; and was truly, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, nailed [to the cross] for us in His flesh. Of this fruit we are by His divinely-blessed passion, that He might set up a standard for all ages, through His resurrection, to all His holy and faithful [followers], whether among Jews or Gentiles, in the one body of His Church.

CHAPTER II.--CHRIST'S TRUE PASSION.

Now, He suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved. And He suffered truly, even as also He truly raised up Himself, not, as certain unbelievers maintain, that He only seemed to suffer, as they themselves only seem to be [Christians]. And as they believe, so shall it happen unto them, when they shall be divested of their bodies, and be mere evil spirits.

CHAPTER III.--CHRIST WAS POSSESSED OF A BODY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit." And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors. And after his resurrection He did eat and drink with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father.

CHAPTER IV.--BEWARE OF THESE HERETICS.

I give you these instructions, beloved, assured that ye also hold the same opinions [as I do]. But I guard you beforehand from those beasts in the shape of men, whom you must not only not receive, but, if it be possible, not even meet with; only you must pray to God for them, if by any means they may be brought to repentance, which, however, will be very difficult. Yet Jesus Christ, who is our true life, has the power of [effecting] this. But if these things were done by our Lord only in appearance, then am I also only in appearance bound. And why have I also surrendered myself to death, to fire, to the sword, to the wild beasts? But, [in fact,] he who is near to the sword is near to God; he that is among the wild beasts is in company with God; provided only he be so in the name of Jesus Christ. I undergo all these things that I may suffer together with Him, He who became a perfect man inwardly strengthening me.

CHAPTER V.--THEIR DANGEROUS ERRORS,

Some ignorantly deny Him, or rather have been denied by Him, being the advocates of death rather than of the truth. These persons neither have the prophets persuaded, nor the law of Moses, nor the Gospel even to this day, nor the sufferings we have individually endured. For they think also the same thing regarding us. For what does any one profit me, if he commends me, but blasphemes my Lord, not confessing that He was [truly] possessed of a body? But he who does not acknowledge this, has in fact altogether denied Him, being enveloped in death. I have not, however, thought good to write the names of such persons, inasmuch as they are unbelievers. Yea, far be it from me to make any mention of them, until they repent and return to [a true belief in] Christ's passion, which is our resurrection.

CHAPTER VI--UNBELIEVERS IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST SHALL BE CONDEMNED.

Let no man deceive himself. Both the things which are in heaven, and the glorious angels, and rulers, both visible and invisible, if they believe not in the blood of Christ, shall, in consequence, incur condemnation. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Let not[high] place puff any one up: for that which is worth all is a faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred. But consider those who are of a different opinion with respect to the grace of Christ which has come unto us, how opposed they are to the will of God. They have no regard for love; no care for the widow, or the orphan, or the oppressed; of the bond, or of the free; of the hungry, or of the thirsty.

CHAPTER VII.--LET US STAND ALOOF FROM SUCH HERETICS.

They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His

goodness, raised up again. Those, therefore, who speak against this gift of God, incur death in the midst of their disputes. But it were better for them to treat it with respect, that they also might rise again. It is fitting, therefore, that ye should keep aloof from such persons, and not to speak of them either in private or in public, but to give heed to the prophets, and above all, to the Gospel, in which the passion [of Christ] has been revealed to us, and the resurrection has been fully proved. But avoid all divisions, as the beginning of evils.

CHAPTER VIII.--LET NOTHING BE DONE WITHOUT THE BISHOP.

See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.

CHAPTER IX.--HONOUR THE BISHOP.

Moreover, it is in accordance with reason that we should return to soberness [of conduct], and, while yet we have opportunity, exercise repentance towards God. It is well to reverence both God and the bishop. He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil. Let all things, then, abound to you through grace, for ye are worthy. Ye have

refreshed me in all things, and Jesus Christ [shall refresh] you. Ye have loved me when absent as well as when present. May God recompense you, for whose sake, while ye endure all things, ye shall attain unto Him.

CHAPTER X.--ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR KINDNESS.

Ye have done well in receiving Philo and Rheus Agathopus as servants of Christ our God, who have followed me for the sake of God, and who give thanks to the Lord in your behalf, because ye have in every way refreshed them. None of these things shall be lost to you. May my spirit be for you, and my bonds, which ye have not despised or been ashamed of; nor shall Jesus Christ, our perfect hope, be ashamed of you.

CHAPTER XI.--REQUEST TO THEM TO SEND A MESSENGER TO ANTIOCH.

Your prayer has reached to the Church which is at Antioch in Syria. Coming from that place bound with chains, most acceptable to God, I salute all; I who am not worthy to be styled from thence, inasmuch as I am the least of them. Nevertheless, according to the will of God, I have been thought worthy [of this honour], not that I have any sense [of having deserved it], but by the grace of God, which I wish may be perfectly given to me, that through your prayers I may attain to God. In order, therefore, that your work may be complete both on earth and in heaven, it is fitting that, for the honour of God, your Church should elect some worthy delegate; so that he, journeying into Syria, may congratulate them that they are [now] at peace, and are restored to their proper greatness, and that their proper constitution has been re-established among them. It seems then to me a becoming thing, that you should send some one of your number with an epistle, so that, in company with them, he may rejoice over the tranquility which, according to the will of God,

they have obtained, and because that, through your prayers, they have now reached the harbour. As persons who are perfect, ye should also aim at those things which are perfect. For when ye are desirous to do well, God is also ready to assist you.

CHAPTER XII.--SALUTATIONS.

The love of the brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to The love of your brethren at Troas salutes you; whence also I write to you by Burrhus, whom ye sent with me, together with the Ephesians, your brethren, and who has in all things refreshed me. And I would that all may imitate him, as being a pattern of a minister of God. Grace will reward him in all things. I salute your most worthy bishop, and your very venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in His flesh and blood, in His passion and resurrection, both corporeal and spiritual, in union with God and you. Grace, mercy, peace, and patience, be with you for evermore!

CONCLUSION.

I salute the families of my brethren, with their wives and children, and and the virgins who are called widows. Be ye strong, I pray, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Philo, who is with me, greets you. I salute the house of Tavius, and pray that it may be confirmed in faith and love, both corporeal and spiritual. I salute Alce; my well-beloved, and the incomparable Daphnus, and Eutecnus, and all by name. Fare ye well in the grace of God.

EPISTLE TO POLYCARP

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to Polycarp, Bishop of the Church of the Smyrnæans, or rather, who has, as his own bishop, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: [wishes] abundance of happiness.

CHAP. I.-- COMMENDATION AND EXHORTATION.

HAVING obtained good proof that thy mind is fixed in God as upon an immoveable rock, I loudly glorify [His name] that I have been thought worthy [to behold] thy blameless face,(1) which may I ever enjoy in God! I entreat thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to press forward in thy course, and to exhort all that they may be saved. Maintain thy position with all care, both in the flesh and spirit. Have a regard to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Bear with all, even as the Lord does with thee. Support(2) all in love, as also thou doest. Give thyself to prayer without ceasing.(3) Implore additional understanding to what thou already hast. Be watchful, possessing a sleepless spirit. Speak to every man separately, as God enables thee.(4) Bear the infirmities of all, as being a perfect athlete[in the Christian life]: where the labour is great, the gain is all the more.

CHAP.II.--EXHORTATIONS.

If thou lovest the good disciples, no thanks are due to thee on that account; but rather seek by meekness to subdue the more troublesome. Every kind of wound is not healed with the same plaster. Mitigate violent attacks[of disease] by gentle applications.(1) Be in all things "wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove."(2) For this purpose thou art composed of both flesh and spirit, that thou mayest deal tenderly(3) with those [evils] that present themselves visibly before thee. And as respects those that are not seen,(4) pray that [God] would reveal them unto thee, in order that thou mayest be wanting in nothing, but mayest abound in every gift. The times call for thee, as pilots do for the winds, and as on tossed with tempest seeks for the haven, so that both thou [and those under thy care] may attain to God. Be sober as an athlete of God: the prize set before thee is immortality and eternal life, of which thou art also

persuaded. In all things may my soul be for thing,(5) and my bonds also, which thou hast loved.

CHAP. III.--EXHORTATIONS.

Let not those who seem worthy of credit, but teach strange doctrines,(6) fill thee with apprehension. Stand firm, as does an anvil which is beaten. It is the part of a noble(7) athlete to be wounded, and yet to conquer. And especially, we ought to bear all things for the sake of God, that He also may bear with us. Be ever becoming more zealous than what thou art. Weigh carefully the times. Look for Him who is above all time, eternal and invisible, yet who became visible for our sakes; impalpable and impassible, yet who became passable on our account; and who in every kind of way suffered for our sakes.

CHAP. IV.--EXHORTATIONS.

Let not widows be neglected. Be thou, after the Lord, their protector s and friend. Let nothing be done without thy consent; neither do thou anything without the approval of God, which indeed thou dost not, inasmuch as thou art stedfast. Let your assembling together be of of frequent(9) occurrence: seek after all by name.(10) Do not despise either male or female slaves, yet neither let them be puffed up with conceit, but rather let them submit themselves(11) the more, for the glory of God, that they may obtain from God a better liberty. Let them not long to be set free [from slavery] at the public expense, that they be not found slaves to their own desires.

CHAP. V.--THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Flee evil arts; but all the more discourse in public regarding them.(2) Speak to my sisters, that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands both in the flesh and spirit. In like manner also, exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the Church.(3) If any one can continue in a state of purity,(4) to the honour of Him who is Lord of the flesh,(5) let him so remain without boasting. If he begins to boast, he is undone; and if he reckon himself greater than the bishop, he is ruined. But it becomes both men

and women who marry, to form their union with the approval of the bishop, that their marriage may be according to God, and not after their own lust. Let all things be done to the honour of God.(7)

CHAP. VI.--THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FLOCK.

Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. My soul be for theirs(9) that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbyters, and to the deacons, and may my portion be along with them in God! Labour together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates,(10) and servants of God. Please ye Him under whom ye fight, and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply. Let your works be the charge(12) assigned to you, that ye may receive a worthy recompense. Be long-suffering, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you for ever!(13)

CHAP. VII.--REQUEST THAT POLYCARP WOULD SEND A MESSENGER TO ANTIOCH.

Seeing that the Church which is at Antioch in Syria is, as report has informed me, at peace, through your prayers, I also am the more encouraged, resting without anxiety in God,(1) if indeed by means of suffering I may attain to God, so that, through your prayers, I may be found a disciple [of Christ].(2) It is fitting, O Polycarp, most blessed in God, to assemble a very solemn(3) council, and to elect one whom you greatly love, and know to be a man of activity, who may be designated the messenger of God;(4) and to bestow on him this honour that he may go into Syria, and glorify your ever active love to the praise of Christ. A Christian has not power over himself, but must always be ready for s the service of God. Now, this work is both God's and yours, when ye shall have completed it to His glory.(6) For I trust that, through grace, ye are prepared for every good work pertaining

to God. Knowing, therefore, your energetic love of the truth, I have exhorted you by this brief Epistle.

CHAP. VIII.--LET OTHER CHURCHES ALSO SEND TO ANTIOCH.

Inasmuch as I have not been able to write to all the Churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis, as the will(7)[of the emperor] enjoins,[I beg that] thou, as being acquainted with the purpose(8) of God, wilt write to the adjacent Churches, that they also may act in like manner, such as are able to do so sending messengers,(9) and the others transmitting letters through those persons who are sent by thee, that thou(10) mayest be glorified by a work(11) which shall be remembered for ever, as indeed thou art worthy to be. I salute all by name, and in particular the wife of Epitropus, with all her house and children. I salute Attalus, my beloved. I salute him who shall be deemed worthy to go [from you] into Syria. Grace shall be with him for ever, and with Polycarp that sends him. I pray for your happiness for ever in our God, Jesus Christ, by whom continue ye in the unity and under the protection of God,(12) I salute Alce, my dearly beloved.(13) Fare ye well in the Lord.

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