

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO THE ANTIOCHIANS

by Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius's epistle warning against heretical errors and false teachings while emphasizing proper doctrine concerning God and Christ and exhorting consistency in Christian conduct.

16 Chapters

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The Epistle Of Ignatius To The Antiochians

Introduction

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church sojourning in Syria, which has obtained mercy from God, and been elected by Christ, and which first [1215] received the name Christ, [wishes] happiness in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter I.--Cautions against error.

The Lord has rendered my bonds light and easy since I learnt that you are in peace, that you live in all harmony both of the flesh and spirit. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, [1216] beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called," [1217] guarding against those heresies of the wicked one which have broken in upon us, to the deceiving and destruction of those that accept of them; but that ye give heed to the doctrine of the apostles, and believe both the law and the prophets: that ye reject every Jewish and Gentile error, and neither introduce a multiplicity of gods, nor yet deny Christ under the pretence of [maintaining] the unity of God.

Chapter II.--The true doctrine respecting God and Christ.

For Moses, the faithful servant of God, when he said, "The Lord thy God is one Lord," [1218] and thus proclaimed that there was only one God, did yet forthwith confess also our Lord when he said, "The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord." [1219] And again, "And God [1220] said, Let Us make man after our image: and so God made man, after the image of God made He him." [1221] And further "In the image of God made He man." [1222] And that [the Son of God] was to be made man [Moses shows when] he says, "A prophet shall the Lord raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." [1223]

Chapter III.--The same continued.

The prophets also, when they speak as in the person of God, [saying,] "I am God, the first [of beings], and I am also the last, [1224] and besides Me there is no God," [1225] concerning the Father of the universe, do also speak of our Lord Jesus Christ. "A Son," they say, has been given to us, on whose shoulder the government is from above; and His name is called the Angel of great counsel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the strong and mighty God." [1226] And concerning His incarnation, "Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son; and they shall call his name Immanuel." [1227] And concerning the passion, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, I also was an innocent lamb led to be sacrificed." [1228]

Chapter IV.--Continuation.

The Evangelists, too, when they declared that the one Father was "the only true God," [1229] did not omit what concerned our Lord, but wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." [1230] And concerning the incarnation: "The Word," says [the Scripture], "became flesh, and dwelt among us." [1231] And again: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." [1232] And those very apostles, who said "that there is one God," [1233] said also that "there is one Mediator between God and men." [1234] Nor were they ashamed of the incarnation and the passion. For what says [one]? "The man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself" [1235] for the life and salvation of the world.

Chapter V.--Denunciation of false teachers.

Whosoever, therefore, declares that there is but one God, only so as to take away the divinity of Christ, is a devil, [1236] and an enemy of all righteousness. He also that confesseth Christ, yet not as the Son of the Maker of the world, but of some other unknown [1237] being, different from Him whom the law and the prophets have proclaimed, this man is an instrument of the devil. And he that rejects the incarnation, and is ashamed of the cross for which I am in bonds, this man is antichrist. [1238] Moreover, he who affirms Christ to be a mere man is accursed, according to the [declaration of the] prophet, [1239] since he puts not his trust in God, but in man. Wherefore also he is unfruitful, like the wild myrtle-tree.

Chapter VI.--Renewed cautions.

These things I write to you, thou new olive-tree of Christ, not that I am aware you hold any such opinions, but that I may put you on your guard, as a father does his children. Beware, therefore, of those that hasten to work mischief, those "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame." [1240] Beware of those "dumb dogs," those trailing serpents, those scaly [1241] dragons, those asps, and basilisks, and scorpions. For these are subtle wolves, [1242] and apes that mimic the appearance of men.

Chapter VII.--Exhortation to consistency of conduct.

Ye have been the disciples of Paul and Peter; do not lose what was committed to your trust. Keep in remembrance Euodias, [1243] your deservedly-blessed pastor, into whose hands the government over you was first entrusted by the apostles. Let us not bring disgrace upon our Father. Let us prove ourselves His true-born children, and not bastards. Ye know after what manner I have acted among you. The things which, when present, I spoke to you, these same, when absent, I now write to you. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." [1244] Be ye followers of me. [1245] My soul be for yours, when I attain to Jesus. Remember my bonds. [1246]

Chapter VIII.--Exhortations to the presbyters and others.

Ye presbyters, "feed the flock which is among you," [1247] till God shall show who is to hold the rule over you. For "I am now ready to be offered," [1248] that I "may win Christ." [1249] Let the deacons know of what dignity they are, and let them study to be blameless, that they may be the followers of Christ. Let the people be subject to the presbyters and the deacons. Let the virgins know to whom they have consecrated themselves.

Chapter IX.--Duties of husbands, wives, parents, and children.

Let the husbands love their wives, remembering that, at the creation, one woman, and not many, was given to one man. Let the wives honour their husbands, as their own flesh; and let them not presume to address them by their names. [1250] Let them also be chaste, reckoning their husbands as their only partners, to whom indeed they have been united according to the will of God. Ye parents, impart a holy training to your children. Ye children, "honour your parents, that it may be well with you." [1251]

Chapter X.--Duties of masters and servants.

Ye masters, do not treat your servants with haughtiness, but imitate patient Job, who declares, "I did not despise [1252] the cause [1253] of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me. For what in that case shall I do when the Lord makes an inquisition regarding me?" [1254] And you know what follows. Ye servants, do not provoke your masters to anger in anything, lest ye become the authors of incurable mischiefs to yourselves.

Chapter XI.--Inculcation of various moral duties.

Let no one addicted to idleness eat, [1255] lest he become a wanderer about, and a whoremonger. Let drunkenness, anger, envy, reviling, clamour, and blasphemy "be not so much as named among you." [1256] Let not the widows live a life of pleasure, lest they wax wanton against the word. [1257] Be subject to Cæsar in everything in which subjection implies no [spiritual] danger. Provoke not those that rule over you to wrath, that you may give no occasion against yourselves to those that seek for it. But as to the practice of magic, or the impure love of boys, or murder, it is superfluous to write to you, since such vices are forbidden to be committed even by the Gentiles. I do not issue commands on these points as if I were an apostle; but, as your fellow-servant, I put you in mind of them.

Chapter XII.--Salutations.

I salute the holy presbytery. I salute the sacred deacons, and that person most dear to me, [1258] whom may I behold, through the Holy Spirit, occupying my place when I shall attain to Christ. My soul be in place of his. I salute the sub-deacons, the readers, the singers, the doorkeepers, the labourers, [1259] the exorcists, the confessors. [1260] I salute the keepers of the holy gates, the deaconesses in Christ. I salute the virgins betrothed to Christ, of whom may I have joy in the Lord Jesus. [1261] I salute the people of the Lord, from the smallest to the greatest, and all my sisters in the Lord.

Chapter XIII.--Salutations continued.

I salute Cassian and his partner in life, and their very dear children. Polycarp, that most worthy bishop, who is also deeply interested in you, salutes you; and to him I have commended you in the Lord. The whole Church of the Smyrnæans, indeed, is mindful of you in their prayers in the Lord. Onesimus, the pastor of the Ephesians, salutes you. Damas, [1262] the bishop of Magnesia, salutes you. Polybius, bishop of the Trallians, salutes you. Philo and Agathopus, the deacons, my companions, salute you, "Salute one another with a holy kiss." [1263]

Chapter XIV.--Conclusion.

I write this letter to you from Philippi. May He who is alone unbegotten, keep you stedfast both in the spirit and in the flesh, through Him who was begotten before time [1264] began! And may I behold you in the kingdom of Christ! I salute him who is to bear rule over you in my stead: may I have joy of him in the Lord! Fare ye well in God, and in Christ, being enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

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