

WRITINGS OF IGNATIUS

by Ignatius

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Ignatius, compiled for study and devotional reading.

8 Chapters

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00 - Ignatius

Ignatius of Antioch

Personal Martyr for the faith Disciple of John the Evangelist Condemned to die by wild beasts in Rome Brought from Antioch to Rome and wrote seven letters to churches and individuals along the way

Place and dates

Antioch; d. 110

Writings

Letter to Ephesians; Letter to Magnesians; Letter to Tralles; Letter to Philadelphians; Letter to Smyrnans; Letter to Polycarp of Smryna; Letter to Romans

These contain warnings against heretical doctrines; contain detailed summaries of doctrines; and a picture of Church organization with bishops, presbyters (elders) and deacons; First to stress Virgin Birth and to use the term "catholic church".

01 - Letter to the Ephesians

Ignatius to the Ephesians

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, sends heartiest good wishes for unalloyed joy in Jesus Christ to the Church at Ephesus in Asia; a church deserving of felicitation, blessed, as she is, with greatness through the fullness of God the Father; predestined, before time was, to be--to her abiding and unchanging glory--forever united and chosen, through real suffering, by the will of the Father and Jesus Christ our God.

1. With joy in God I welcomed your community, which possesses its dearly beloved name because of a right disposition, enhanced by faith and love through Christ Jesus our Savior. Being imitators of God, you have, once restored to new life in the Blood of God, perfectly accomplished the task so natural to you. Indeed, as soon as you heard that I was coming from Syria in chains for our common Name and hope--hoping I might, thanks to your prayer, obtain the favor of fighting wild beasts at Rome and through this favor be able to prove myself a disciple--you hastened to see me. In the name of God, then, I have received your numerous community in the person of Onesimus, a man of indescribable charity and your bishop here on earth. I pray you in the spirit of Jesus Christ to love him, and wish all of you to resemble him. Blessed, indeed, is He whose grace made you worthy to possess such a bishop.,br>

2. As to my fellow servant Burrus, your deacon by God's appointment and blessed with every gift, I wish he would stay at my side both for your honor and that of the bishop. But Crocus, too, a man of God and worthy of you, whom I received as a living example of your affection, has brought relief to me in every way; and I wish that the Father of Jesus Christ may comfort him in turn, as also Onesimus and Burrus and Euplus and Fronto, in whose persons I saw tokens of the affection of all of you. May you ever be my joy, if indeed I deserve it! It is therefore proper in every way to glorify Jesus Christ who has glorified you, so that you, fully trained in unanimous submission, may be submissive to the bishop and the presbytery, and thus be sanctified in every respect.

3. I give you no orders as though I were somebody. For, even though I am in chains for the sake of the Name, I am not yet perfected in Jesus Christ. Indeed, I am now but being initiated into discipleship, and I address you as my fellow disciples. Yes, I ought to be anointed by you with faith, encouragement, patient endurance, and steadfastness. However, ,since affection does not permit me to be silent when you are concerned, I am at once taking this opportunity to exhort you to live in harmony with the mind of God. Surely, Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, for His part is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops, though appointed throughout the vast, wide earth, represent for their part the mind of Jesus Christ.

4. Hence it is proper for you to act in agreement with the mind of the bishop; and this you do. Certain it is that your presbytery, which is a credit to its name, is a credit to God; for it harmonizes with the bishop as completely as the strings with a harp. This is why in the symphony of your concord and love the praises of Jesus Christ are sung. But you, the rank and file, should also form

a choir, so that, joining the symphony by your concord, and by your unity taking your key note from God, you may with one voice through Jesus Christ sing a song to the Father. Thus He will both listen to you and by reason of your good life recognize in you the melodies of His Son. It profits you, therefore, to continue In your flawless unity, that you may at all times have a share in God.

5. For a fact, if I in a short time became so warmly attached to your bishop--an attachment based not on human grounds but on spiritual--how much more do I count you happy who are as closely knit to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father! As a result, the symphony of unity is perfect. Let no one deceive himself: unless a man is within the sanctuary, he has to go without the Bread of God. Assuredly, if the prayer of one or two has such efficacy, how much more that of the bishop and the entire Church! It follows, then: he who absents himself from the common meeting, by that very fact shows pride and becomes a sectarian; for the Scripture says: God resists the proud. Let us take care, therefore, not to oppose the bishop, that we may be submissive to God.

6. Furthermore: the more anyone observes that a bishop is discreetly silent, the more he should stand in fear of him. Obviously, anyone whom the Master of the household puts in charge of His domestic affairs, ought to be received by us in the same spirit as He who has charged him with this duty. Plainly, then, one should look upon the bishop as upon the Lord Himself. Now, Onesimus for his part overflows with praise of the good order that, thanks to God, exists in your midst. Truth is the rule of life for all of you, and heresy has no foothold among you. The fact is, you have nothing more to learn from anyone, since you listen to Jesus Christ who speaks truthfully.

7. Some there are, you know, accustomed with vicious guile to go about with the Name on their lips, while they indulge in certain practices at variance with it and an insult to God. These you must shun as you would wild beasts: they are rabid dogs that bite in secret; you must beware of them, for they are hard to cure. a There is only one Physician, both carnal and spiritual, born and unborn, God become man, true life in death; sprung both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then incapable of it--Jesus Christ Our Lord.

8. Let no one, then, deceive you, as indeed you are not being deceived, belonging wholly to God. For as long as no dissension calculated to plague you has taken firm root among you, it follows that you are leading a life conformable to God. Your lowliest servant, I also consecrate myself to you Ephesians--that Church whose renown will go down the ages. The carnal cannot live a spiritual life, nor can the spiritual live a carnal life, any more than faith can act the part of infidelity, or infidelity the part of faith. But even the things you do in the flesh are spiritual, for you do all things in union with Jesus Christ.

9. I have heard of certain persons from elsewhere passing through, whose doctrine was bad. These you did not permit to sow their seed among you; you stopped your ears, so as not to receive the seed sown by them. You consider yourselves stones of the Father's temple, prepared for the edifice of God the Father, to be taken aloft by the hoisting engine of Jesus Christ, that is, the Cross, while the Holy Spirit serves you as a rope; your faith is your spiritual windlass and your love the road which leads up to God. And thus you all are fellow travelers, God-bearers and temple-bearers, Christ-bearers and bearers of holiness, with the commandments of Jesus Christ for festal attire. At this I am jubilant, privileged as I am to converse with you through this letter, and to congratulate you because in your otherworldliness you love nothing but God alone.

10. But pray unceasingly also for the rest of men, for they offer ground for hoping that they may be converted and win their way to God. Give them an opportunity therefore, at least by your conduct, of becoming your disciples. Meet their angry outbursts with your own gentleness, their boastfulness with your humility, their revilings with your prayers, their error with your constancy in the faith, their harshness with your meekness; and beware of trying to match their example. Let us prove ourselves their brothers through courtesy. Let us strive to follow the Lord's example and see who can suffer greater wrong, who more deprivation, who more contempt. Thus no weed of the devil will be found among you; but you will persevere in perfect chastity and sobriety through Jesus Christ, in body and soul.

11. The last epoch has arrived! Therefore let us exercise restraint and fear lest God's long-suffering should turn to our condemnation. Obviously, we must either fear the gathering storm of anger or else cherish the present time of grace--one of the two; only let us be found in union with Christ Jesus so as to possess the true life. Apart from Him, let nothing fascinate you. In union with Him I carry about these chains of mine-- spiritual pearls they are! May I be privileged through your prayer--in which I wish I may ever have a share--to wear them when I rise from the dead! Thus I shall be found in the ranks of the Christians of Ephesus, who have ever been of one mind with the Apostles through the power of Jesus Christ.

12. I know who I am and to whom I am writing. I have been condemned, you have been spared; I am in danger, you are in perfect safety. YOU are the highway of God's martyrs. You are fellow initiates with Paul, a man sanctified, of character magnificently attested, and worthy of every felicitation, in whose footsteps I wish to be found when I come to meet God, and who in an entire epistle remembers you in Christ Jesus. 13. Make an effort, then, to meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer praise. For, when you meet frequently in the same place, the forces of Satan are overthrown, and his baneful influence is neutralized by the unanimity of your faith. Peace is a precious thing: it puts an end to every war waged by heavenly or earthly enemies.

14. Nothing of this escapes you; only persevere to the end in your faith in, and your love for, Jesus Christ. Here is the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, the end is love; and when the two blend perfectly with each other, they are God. Everything else that makes for right living is consequent upon these. No one who professes faith sins; no one who possesses love hates. The tree is known by its fruit. In like manner, those who profess to belong to Christ will be known as such by their conduct. Certainly, what matters now is not mere profession of faith, but whether one is found to be actuated by it to the end.

15. It is better to keep silence and be something than to talk and be nothing. Teaching is an excellent thing, provided the speaker practices what he teaches. Now, there is one Teacher who spoke and it was done. But even what He did silently is worthy of the Father. He who has made the words of Jesus really his own is able also to hear His silence. Thus he will be perfect: he will act through his speech and be understood through his silence. Nothing is hidden from the Lord; no, even our secrets reach Him. Let us, then, do all things in the conviction that He dwells in us. Thus we shall be His temples and He will be our God within us. And this is the truth, and it will be made manifest before our eyes. Let us, then, love Him as He deserves.

16. Do not be deceived, my brethren. Those who ruin homes will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now, if those who do this to gratify the flesh are liable to death, how much more a man who by evil doctrine ruins the faith in God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such a filthy creature will go into the unquenchable fire, as will anyone that listens to him.

17. The Lord permitted myrrh to be poured on His head that He might breathe incorruption upon the Church. Do not let yourselves be anointed with the malodorous doctrine of the Prince of this world, for fear he may carry you off into captivity--away from the life that is in store for you. Why do we not all become wise, having received knowledge of God, that is, Jesus Christ! Why do we perish in folly, failing to appreciate the gift which the Lord has sent us in truth!

18. I offer my life's breath for the sake of the Cross, which is a stumbling block to the unbelievers, but to us is salvation and eternal life. What has become of the philosopher? What of the controversialist? What of the vaunting of the so-called intellectuals? The fact is, our God Jesus Christ was conceived by Mary according to God's dispensation of the seed of David, it is true, but also of the Holy Spirit. He was born and was baptized, that by His Passion He might consecrate the water.

19. And the Prince of this world was in ignorance of the virginity of Mary and her childbearing and also of the death of the Lord--three mysteries loudly proclaimed to the world, though accomplished in the stillness of God! How, then, were they revealed to the ages? A star blazed forth in the sky, outshining all the other stars, and its light was indescribable, and its novelty provoked wonderment, and all the starry orbs, with the sun and the moon, formed a choir round that star; but its light exceeded that of all the rest, and there was perplexity as to the cause of the unparalleled novelty. This was the reason why every form of magic began to be destroyed, every malignant spell to be broken, ignorance to be dethroned, an ancient empire to be overthrown--God was making His appearance in human form to mold the newness of eternal life! Then at length was ushered in what God had prepared in His counsels; then all the world was in an upheaval because the destruction of death was being prosecuted.

20. If Jesus Christ, yielding to your prayer, grants me the favor and it is His will, I shall, in the subsequent letter which I intend to write to you, still further explain the dispensation which I have here only touched upon, regarding the New Man Jesus Christ--a dispensation founded on faith in Him and love for Him, on His Passion and Resurrection. I will do so especially if the Lord should reveal to me that you--the entire community of you!--are in the habit, through grace derived from the Name, of meeting in common, animated by one faith and in union with Jesus Christ--who in the flesh was of the line of David, the Son of Man and the Son of God--of meeting, I say, to show obedience with undivided mind to the bishop and the presbytery, and to break the same Bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ.

21. I offer my life as a ransom for you and for those whom for the glory of God you sent to Smyrna, where, too, I am writing to you with thanks to the Lord and with love for Polycarp and you. Remember me, as may Jesus Christ remember you! Pray for the Church in Syria, whence I am being led away in chains to Rome, though I am the least of the faithful there. But then, I was granted the favor of contributing to the honor of God. Farewell! May God the Father and Jesus Christ, our common Hope, bless you!

02 - Letter to the Magnesians

Ignatius to the Magnesians

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church at Magnesia by the Maeander, a church blessed with the grace of God the Father through Jesus Christ our Savior, in whom I salute her. Heartiest greetings and good wishes to her in God the Father and in Jesus Christ.

1. When I learned of your well-ordered God-inspired love, I was jubilant and decided to have a chat with you in the spirit of the faith in Jesus Christ. I am privileged to bear a name radiant with divine splendor, and so in the chains which I carry about on me, I sing the praises of the Churches and pray for union in their midst, a union based on the flesh and spirit of Jesus Christ, our enduring life; a union based on faith and love--the greatest blessing; and, most especially, a union with Jesus and the Father. If in this union we patiently endure all the abuse of the Prince of this world and escape unscathed, we shall happily make our way to God.

2. Now, then, it has been my privilege to have a glimpse of you all in the person of Damas, your bishop and a man of, and in the persons of your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and of my fellow servant, the deacon Zotion. Would that I might enjoy the latter's company! He is obedient to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbyters as to the law of Jesus Christ.

3. But for you, too, it is fitting not to take advantage of the bishop's youth, but rather, because he embodies the authority of God the Father, to show him every mark of respect--and your presbyters, so I learn, are doing just that: they do not seek to profit by his youthfulness, which strikes the bodily eye; no, they are wise in God and therefore defer to him--or, rather, not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all men. SO, then, for the honor of Him who has deigned to choose us, it is proper to obey without any hypocrisy. It is not really that a man deceives this particular bishop who is visible, but tries to overreach Him who is invisible. When this happens, his reckoning is not with man, but with God who knows what is secret.

4. The proper thing, then, is not merely to be styled Christians, but also to be such--just as there are those who style a man bishop, but completely disregard him in their conduct. Such persons do not seem to me to have a good conscience, inasmuch as they do not assemble in the fixed order prescribed by him.

5. Now, as all things have an end, and those two issues, death and life, are set before us at one and the same time, so each man is bound to go to his own place. It is the same as with two coinages, the one of God, the other of the world; and each of them has its own stamp impressed upon it: the unbelievers bear the stamp of this world, while the believers, animated by love, bear the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ, whose life is not in us unless we are ready of our own accord to die in order to share in His Passion.

6. Since, then, in the persons mentioned before I have with the eyes of the faith looked upon your whole community and have come to love it, I exhort you to strive to do all things in harmony with

God: the bishop is to preside in the place of God, while the presbyters are to function as the council of the Apostles, and the deacons, who are most dear to me, are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who before time began was with the Father and has at last appeared. Conform yourselves, then--all of you-- to God's ways, and respect one another, and let no one regard his neighbor with the eyes of the flesh, but love one another at all times in Jesus Christ. Let there be nothing among you tending to divide you, but be united with the bishop and those who preside--serving at once as a pattern and as a lesson of incorruptibility.

7. Just as the Lord, therefore, being one with the Father, did nothing without Him, either by Himself, or through the Apostles, so neither must you undertake anything without the bishop and the presbyters; nor must you attempt to convince yourselves that anything you do on your own account is acceptable. No; at your meetings there must be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope in love, in joy that is flawless, that is Jesus Christ, who stands supreme. Come together, all of you, as to one temple and one altar, to one Jesus Christ--to Him who came forth from one Father and yet remained with, and returned to, one.

8. Do not be led astray by those erroneous teachings and ancient fables which are utterly worthless. Indeed, if at this date we still conform to Judaism, then we own that we have not received grace. Why, the Prophets, those men so very near to God, lived in conformity with Christ Jesus. This, too, was the reason why they were persecuted, inspired as they were by His grace to bring full conviction to an unbelieving world that there is one God, who manifested Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son--who, being His Word, came forth out of the silence into the world and won the full approval of Him whose Ambassador He was.

9. Consequently, if the people who were given to obsolete practices faced the hope of a new life, and if these no longer observe the Sabbath, but regulate their calendar by the Lord's Day, the day, too, on which our Life rose by His power and through the medium of His death--though some deny this; and if to this mystery we owe our faith and because of it submit to sufferings to prove ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Teacher: how, then, can we possibly live apart from Him of whom, by the working of the Spirit, even the Prophets were disciples and to whom they looked forward as their Teacher? And so He, for whom they rightly waited, came and raised them from the dead.

10. Let us not, then, be insensible to His loving kindness. Certainly, if He were to imitate our way of acting, we should be done for instantly. We must, therefore, prove ourselves His disciples and learn to live like Christians. Assuredly whoever is called by a name other than this, is not of God. Hence, put away the deteriorated leaven, a leaven stale and sour, and turn to the new leaven, that is, Jesus Christ. Be salted in Him to keep any among you from being spoiled, for by your odor you will be tested. It is absurd to have Jesus Christ on the lips, and at the same time live like a Jew. No; Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism believed in Christianity, and in its bosom was assembled everyone professing faith in God.

11. Now this, dearly beloved, I do not write as though I had learned that any of you were men of that description, but because, as one who is not your superior, I merely wish to warn you betimes not to yield to the bait of false doctrine, but to believe most steadfastly in the birth, the Passion, and the Resurrection, which took place during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Facts these are, real and established by Jesus Christ, our hope. May God grant that none of you may

relinquish it!

12. May you be my joy in all respects, if indeed I deserve it! For, though I am in chains, compared with one of you who are free, I am nothing. I know that you are not conceited, for you have Jesus Christ in you. What is more, I know that when I praise you, you blush, just as the Scripture says: The just man is his own accuser.

13. Be zealous, therefore, to stand squarely on the decrees of the Lord and the Apostles, that in all things whatsoever you may prosper, in body and in soul, in faith and in love, in the Son and the Father and the Spirit, in the beginning and the end, together with your most reverend bishop and with your presbytery--that fittingly woven spiritual crown! --and with your deacons, men of God. Submit to the bishop and to each other's rights, just as did Jesus Christ in the flesh to the Father, and as the Apostles did to Christ and the Father and the Spirit, so that there may be oneness both of flesh and of spirit.

14. Knowing that you are steeped in God, I am exhorting you but briefly. Remember me in your prayers that I may happily make my way to God. Remember, too, the Church in Syria, of which I am an unworthy member. Yes, I do stand in need of your God-inspired prayer and your love. Thus the Church in Syria will be privileged through your Church to be quickened with refreshing dew.

15. The Ephesians at Smyrna--the place from which I am writing to you--send their greetings. Like yourselves, they have come here for the glory of God. They have revived my spirits in every way, as does Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. The rest of the Churches, too, beg to be remembered in honor of Jesus Christ. Farewell--you who, being of one mind with God, possess an unflinching spirit--which is to be like Jesus Christ.

03 - Letter to the Philadelphians

Ignatius to the Philadelphians

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is at Philadelphia in Asia; a church which has found mercy and is irrevocably of one mind with God; which unwaveringly exults in the Passion of Our Lord, and firmly believes in His Resurrection through sheer mercy. This Church I salute in the Blood of Jesus Christ. She is a source of everlasting joy, especially when the members are at one with the bishop and his assistants, the presbyters and deacons, that have been appointed in accordance with the wish of Jesus Christ, and whom He has, by His own will, through the operation of His Holy Spirit, confirmed in loyalty.

1. Regarding this bishop I am informed that he holds the supreme office in the community not by his own efforts, or by men's doing, or for personal glory. No, he holds it by the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am charmed with his sweetness of manner. He accomplishes more by his silence than others that talk to no purpose. No wonder; he is as perfectly in accord with the commandments as strings are with a harp. With all my heart, therefore, I laud his disposition to please God, a disposition virtuous and perfect, as I am very well aware; his unshaken constancy, too, and his passionless temper, modeled on the transcendent gentleness of the living God.

2. Being born, then, of the light of truth, shun division and bad doctrines. Where the shepherd is, there you, being sheep, must follow. For, many wolves there are, apparently worthy of confidence, who with the bait of baneful pleasure seek to capture the runners in God's race; but if you stand united, they will have no success.

3. Avoid the noxious weeds. Their gardener is not Jesus Christ, because they are not the planting of the Father. Not that I found any division in your midst; but I did find that there had been a purge. Surely, all those that belong to God and Jesus Christ are the very ones that side with the bishop; and all those that may yet change their mind and return to the unity of the Church, will likewise belong to God, and thus lead a life acceptable to Jesus Christ. Do not be deceived, my brethren: if a man runs after a schismatic, he will not inherit the kingdom of God; if a man chooses to be a dissenter, he severs all connection with the Passion.

4. Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for, one is the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus you will conform in all your actions to the will of God.

5. My brethren, my love for you overflows all bounds, and it is my supreme delight to provide you with safeguards, though it is really not I that do it, but Jesus Christ. Being in chains for His sake, I am all the more apprehensive, since I am not yet perfected. But then, your prayer will make me perfect in the sight of God, so that I may win the lot which, through mercy, has fallen to me. I take

refuge in the Gospel, which to me is Jesus in the flesh, and in the Apostles, as represented by the presbytery of the Church. But let us also cherish the Prophets, because they, for their part, foreshadowed the Gospel; and they hoped in Him and waited for Him and were saved by their belief in Him; for thus they were one with Jesus Christ. O those lovable and wonderful saints! Their merits are attested by Jesus Christ, and their message is part and parcel of the Gospel of our common hope.

6. But should anyone expound Judaism, do not listen to him. It is preferable, surely, to listen to a circumcised man preaching Christianity than to an uncircumcised man preaching Judaism. But if neither of them preaches Jesus Christ, they are to me tombstones and graves of the dead, on which only the names of the dead are inscribed. Shun, then, the base artifices and snares of the Prince of this world, for fear you may be harassed by his scheming and grow weak in your love. Rather, come together, all of you, with undivided heart. I thank my God that I have a good conscience as concerning you, and that no one has occasion to boast that I was a burden to anyone either secretly or openly, in great matters or in small. But I also pray for all those in whose midst I spoke, that they may not find in my words any testimony against them.

7. For, even though some were willing enough to lead my human spirit into error, yet the Spirit is not led into error, since He proceeds from God. Indeed, He knows where He comes from and whither He goes, and lays bare what is secret. I cried out, while in your midst, and said in a ringing voice--God's voice: "Give heed to the bishop and to the presbytery and to the deacons." Some, however, suspected I was saying this because I had previous knowledge of the division caused by some; but He for whose sake I am in chains is my witness, that I had not learned it from any human source. No, it was the Spirit who kept preaching in these words: "Apart from the bishop do nothing; preserve your persons as shrines of God; cherish unity, shun divisions; do as Jesus Christ did, for He, too, did as the Father did."

8. I was doing my part, therefore, acting as a man trained to cherish unity. Where there is division and passion, there is no place for God. Now, the Lord forgives all if they change their mind and by this change of mind return to union with God and the council of the bishop. I trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, who will free you from all enslavement. I exhort you never to act in a spirit of factiousness, but according to what you learnt in the school of Christ. When I heard some say, "Unless I find it in the official records--in the Gospel I do not believe"; and when I answered them, "It is in the Scriptures," they retorted: "That is just the point at issue." But to me the official record is Jesus Christ; the inviolable record is His Cross and His death and His Resurrection and the faith of which He is the Author. These are the things which, thanks to your prayer, I want to be my justification.

9. Good, too, are priests; but better is the High Priest who was entrusted with the Holy of Holies, who alone was entrusted with the hidden designs of God. He is the door of the Father, through which enter Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the Prophets and the Apostles and the Church. All these are means of being united with God. But the Gospel contains something special-- the Advent of the Savior Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Passion and His Resurrection. The beloved Prophets announced His coming, whereas the Gospel is the imperishable fulfillment. All things alike are good, provided your faith is rooted in love.

10. Since it was reported to me that--thanks to your prayer and kindly interest, inspired by Jesus Christ--the Church at Antioch in Syria is at peace, it is proper that you, as a church of God, should appoint a deacon to go there as God's ambassador, and congratulate the people in a public meeting, and give glory to the Name. Blessed in Jesus Christ is he who is to discharge this office; and you, too, will reap glory. If only you are determined, it is not impossible to do this for God's name, just as the neighboring Churches have, some of them, delegated bishops--others, presbyters and deacons.

11. Now, as to Philo, the deacon from Cilicia, a man of attested merit, who even now assists me in the ministry of the word of God together with Rheus Agathopus, an exquisite character, who has been accompanying me from Syria after turning his back upon this life--well, both these men testify (and I, too, thank God on your behalf) that you received them kindly. May the Lord do so to you! As for those who treated them with disrespect, may they be redeemed by the grace of Jesus Christ! In their love the brethren of Troas wish to be remembered. It is from here that I send this letter through the kindness of Burrus, who, as a testimonial of honor, was sent by the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans to accompany me. These men will be honored by the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they hope with body and soul and spirit and faith and love and concord. Farewell in Jesus Christ, our common Hope.

04 - Letter to Polycarp

Ignatius to Polycarp

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, sends heartiest greetings to Polycarp, who is bishop of the Church of Smyrna, or rather has for his bishop God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. I am so well pleased with your God-mindedness, firmly built, as it were, upon an immovable rock, that I am exceedingly grateful for the privilege I had of seeing your saintly face. May it, please God, be a constant joy to me! I exhort you, clothed as you are with the garment of grace, to speed on your course and exhort all others to attend to their salvation. Do justice to your once with the utmost solicitude, both physical and spiritual. Be concerned about unity, the greatest blessing. Bear with all, just as the Lord does with you. Have patience with all in charity, as indeed you do. To prayer give yourself unceasingly; beg for an increase in understanding; watch without letting your spirit flag. Speak to each one singly in imitation of God's way. Bear the infirmities of all, like a master athlete. The greater the toil, the greater the reward.

2. If you love good disciples, you can expect no thanks. Rather, reduce to subjection, by gentleness, the more pestiferous. Not every hurt is healed by the same plaster. Allay fits of fever by means of poultices. Be wary like a serpent, yet always guileless like a dove. You consist of body and soul for the reason that you may deal graciously with whatever meets your eye; but pray that what is kept secret may be revealed to you. In this way you will be lacking in nothing and abound in every gift. As a pilot calls on winds and a storm-tossed mariner looks heavenward, so the times call on you to win your way to God. As God's athlete, be sober; the stake is immortality and eternal life. Of this you are firmly convinced. For your sake I sacrifice myself--chains and all, which are your delight.

3. Men that seem worthy of confidence, yet teach strange doctrines, must not upset you. Stand firm, like an anvil under the hammer. It is like a great athlete to take blows and yet win the fight. For God's sake above all we must endure everything, so that God, in turn, may endure us. Increase your zeal. Read the signs of the times. Look for Him who is above all time--the Timeless, the Invisible, who for our sake became visible, the Impassible, who became subject to suffering on our account and for our sake endured everything.

4. Widows must not be neglected. After the Lord, you must be their guardian. Nothing must be done without your approval; nor must you do anything without God's approval, as indeed you do not. Be calm. Let meetings be held as frequently as possible. Seek out all by name. Do not treat slaves, male or female, with a haughty air, but neither must they give themselves airs; on the contrary, for the glory of God they should render all the better service so as to obtain a better freedom from God. They should not pine for release at the expense of the community; otherwise, they turn out to be slaves of unruly appetites.

5. Pay no attention to their wily stratagems; and do more preaching on this subject. Tell my sisters to love the Lord and to be content with their husbands in body and soul. In like manner, exhort my

brethren in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church. If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the Flesh of the Lord, let him persistently avoid boasting. The moment he boasts, he is lost; and if he is more highly esteemed than the bishop, he is undone. For those of both sexes who contemplate marriage it is proper to enter the union with the sanction of the bishop; thus their marriage will be acceptable to the Lord and not just gratify lust. Let all things be done to the honor of God.

6. Heed the bishop, that God may heed you, too. My life is a ransom for those who are obedient to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons; and in their company may I obtain my portion! Toil together, wrestle together, run together, suffer together, rest together, rise together, since you are stewards in God's house, members of His household, and His servants. Win the approval of Him whose soldiers you are, from whom you also draw your pay. Let none of you turn deserter. Let your baptism be your armor; your faith, your helmet; your love, your spear; your patient endurance, your panoply. Your deposits should be your works, that you may receive your savings to the exact amount. To sum up: be long-suffering toward one another and gentle, as God is with you. May you be my joy always!

7. Since, as I was informed, the Church at Antioch in Syria enjoys peace through your prayer, I, too, gather fresh courage, carefree and confident in God. If only I win my way to God, for at the resurrection I want to be found your disciple! It is fitting, my dear God-blessed Polycarp, to convene a council invested with all the splendor of God and to appoint someone who is dear to you and untiring in his zeal, one qualified for the part of God's courier; then confer on him the distinction of going to Syria and extolling, for the glory of God, the untiring charity of your community. A Christian is not his own master; his time belongs to God. This is God's work; and it will be yours, too, once you have accomplished it. Yes, I trust in the grace of God that you are ready for a noble work which concerns God. Knowing your intense zeal for the truth, I confine my exhortation to these few words.

8. To conclude. Because of my sudden embarkation from Troas for Neapolis-- for such is the order of the day. I cannot personally write to all the Churches. Therefore, God-minded as you are, you will please write to the principal Churches and tell them to do the same thing: those that can afford it should send messengers; the rest should send letters through the kindness of your personal delegates. You are qualified for this task. In this way you all will reap honor from a work destined to live forever. Remember me to all by name, especially to the widow of Epitropus, with her whole family and those of her children. Remember me to my dear Attalus. Remember me to the man who will have the honor of going to Syria. God's grace will forever be with him, as also with Polycarp who sends him. I say good-bye to you all forever in Jesus Christ our God, through whom I wish you to be united with God and under His watchful eye. Farewell in the Lord!

05 - Letter to the Romans

Ignatius to the Romans

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the transcendent Majesty of the Most High Father and of Jesus Christ, His only Son; the church by the will of Him who willed all things that exist, beloved and illuminated through the faith and love of Jesus Christ our God; which also presides in the chief place of the Roman territory; a church worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of felicitation, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and presiding in love, maintaining the law of Christ, and bearer of the Father's name: her do I therefore salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. Heartiest good wishes for unimpaired joy in Jesus Christ our God, to those who are united in flesh and spirit by every commandment of His; who imperturbably enjoy the full measure of God's grace and have every foreign stain filtered out of them.

1. By prayer to God I have obtained the favor of seeing your venerable faces; in fact, I have been pleading for an even greater favor: as a prisoner in Christ Jesus I hope to embrace you, provided it is His will that I should be privileged to reach the goal. An auspicious beginning has certainly been made--if only I obtain the grace of taking due possession of my inheritance without hindrance. The truth is, I am afraid it is your love that will do me wrong. For you, of course, it is easy to achieve your object; but for me it is difficult to win my way to God, should you be wanting in consideration for me.

2. Surely, I do not want you to court the good pleasure of men, but to please God, as indeed you do please Him. Yes, I shall never again have such an opportunity of winning my way to God, nor can you, if you remain quiet, ever have your name inscribed on a more glorious achievement. For, if you quietly ignore me, I am the word of God; but if you fall in love with my human nature, I shall, on the contrary, be a mere sound. Grant me no more than that you let my blood be spilled in sacrifice to God, while yet there is an altar ready. You should form a choir of love and sing a song to the Father through Jesus Christ, because God has graciously summoned the bishop of Syria to come from the rising of the sun to the setting. How glorious to be a setting sun--away from the world, on to God! May I rise in His presence!

3. You have never grudged any man. You have taught others. All I want is that the lessons you inculcate in initiating disciples remain in force. Only beg for me strength within and without, that I may be a man not merely of words, but also of resolution. In this way I shall not only be called a Christian, but also prove to be one. For if I prove to be one, I can also be called a true believer even then when I am no longer seen by the world. Nothing that is seen is good. Our God Jesus Christ certainly is the more clearly seen now that He is in the Father. Whenever Christianity is hated by the world, what counts is not power of persuasion, but greatness.

4. I am writing to all the Churches and state emphatically to all that I die willingly for God, provided you do not interfere. I beg you, do not show me unseasonable kindness. Suffer me to be the food

of wild beasts, which are the means of my making my way to God. God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may prove Christ's pure bread. Better still, coax the wild beasts to become my tomb and to leave no part of my person behind: once I have fallen asleep, I do not wish to be a burden to anyone. Then only shall I be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ when the world will not see even my body. Petition Christ in my behalf that through these instruments I may prove God's sacrifice. Not like Peter and Paul do I issue any orders to you. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am until this moment a slave. But once I have suffered, I shall become a freedman of Jesus Christ, and, united with Him, I shall rise a free man. Just now I learn, being in chains, to desire nothing.

5. All the way from Syria to Rome I am fighting wild beasts, on land and sea, by day and night, chained as I am to ten leopards, that is, a detachment of soldiers, who prove themselves the more malevolent for kindnesses shown them. Yet in the school of this abuse I am more and more trained in discipleship, although I am not therefore justified. Oh, may the beasts prepared for me be my joy! And I pray that they may be found to be ready for me. I will even coax them to make short work of me, not as has happened to some whom they were too timid to touch. And should they be unwilling to attack me who am willing, I will myself compel them. Pardon me--I know very well where my advantage lies. At last I am well on the way to being a disciple. May nothing seen or unseen, fascinate me, so that I may happily make my way to Jesus Christ! Fire, cross, struggles with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crunching of the whole body, cruel tortures inflicted by the devil--let them come upon me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ.

6. Of no use to me will be the farthest reaches of the universe or the kingdoms of this world. I would rather die and come to Jesus Christ than be king over the entire earth. Him I seek who died for us; Him I love who rose again because of us. The birth pangs are upon me. Forgive me, brethren; do not obstruct my coming to life--do not wish me to die; do not make a gift to the world of one who wants to be God's. Beware of seducing me with matter; suffer me to receive pure light. Once arrived there, I shall be a man. Permit me to be an imitator of my suffering God. If anyone holds Him in his heart, let him understand what I am aspiring to; and then let him sympathize with me, knowing in what distress I Amos 7:1-17. The Prince of this world is resolved to abduct me, and to corrupt my Godward aspirations. Let none of you, therefore, who will then be present, assist him. Rather, side with me, that is, with God. Do not have Jesus Christ on your lips, and the world in your hearts. Give envy no place among you. And should I upon my arrival plead for your intervention, do not listen to me. Rather, give heed to what I write to you. I am writing while still alive, but my yearning is for death. My Love has been crucified, and I am not on fire with the love of earthly things. But there is in me a Living Water, which is eloquent and within me says: "Come to the Father." I have no taste for corruptible food or for the delights of this life. Bread of God is what I desire; that is, the Flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for my drink I desire His Blood, that is, incorruptible love.

8. No longer do I wish to live after the manner of men; and this is what will happen if you wish it so. Wish it, that your own wishes, too, may be fulfilled. By this short letter I beseech you: do believe me! Jesus Christ will make it clear to you that I speak the truth--He on whose lips there are no lies, through whom the Father has spoken truthfully. Pray for me that I may succeed. What I write to you does not please the appetites of the flesh, but it pleases the mind of God. If I suffer, you have

loved me; if I am rejected, you have hated me!

9. Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria which now has God for her Shepherd in my stead. Jesus Christ alone will be her Bishop, together with your love. For myself, I am ashamed to be counted as one of her members. I certainly do not deserve to be one, being the least of them and one that came to birth unexpectedly. However, if I but make my way to God, then by His mercy I shall be someone. My spirit salutes you, and so does the affection of the Churches that offered their hospitality to me, not as to a chance visitor, but in deference to Jesus Christ. Why, even those not adjoining my route--the route by which my body traveled hastened in advance from town after town to meet me.

10. I am sending you this letter from Smyrna through the kindness of the Ephesians, who deserve so much praise. Among many others Crocus is here with me--a dearly beloved name to me! As to the men from Syria who for the glory of God have gone to Rome to meet you there, you have, I trust, made their acquaintance. Please, inform them also that I am near. One and all they are men of God and will be an honor to you. You will do well to give them every comfort. I am writing this to you on the 24th of August. Farewell to the end in the patient endurance of Jesus Christ.

06 - Letter to the Smyrnaeans

Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church of God the Father and the beloved Jesus Christ; a church mercifully endowed with every gift; overflowing with faith and love; lacking in no gift; radiant with God's splendor, and fruitful mother of saints. To the Church at Smyrna in Asia I send best wishes for irreproachableness of sentiment and loyalty to the word of God.

1. I extol Jesus Christ, the God who has granted you such wisdom. For I have observed that you are thoroughly trained in unshaken faith, being nailed, as it were, to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ both in body and in soul, and that you are well established in love through the Blood of Christ and firmly believe in Our Lord: He is really of the line of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God by the will and power of God; was really born of a virgin, and baptized by John in order to comply with every ordinance. Under Pontius Pilate and the tetrarch Herod He was really nailed to the cross in the flesh for our sake--of whose fruit we are, in virtue of His most blessed Passion. And thus, through the Resurrection, He raised a banner for all times for His saints and faithful followers, whether among the Jews or the Gentiles, that they might be united in a single body, that is, His Church.

2. All these sufferings, assuredly, He underwent for our sake, that we might be saved. And He suffered really, as He also really raised Himself from the dead. It is not as some unbelievers say, who maintain that His suffering was a make-believe. In reality, it is they that are make-believes: and, as their notion, so their end: they will be bodiless and ghostlike shapes!

3. For myself, I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the Resurrection. And when He came to Peter and Peter's companions, He said to them: "Here; feel me and see that I am not a bodiless ghost." Immediately they touched Him and, through this contact with His Flesh and Spirit, believed. For the same reason they despised death and, in fact, proved stronger than death. Again, after the Resurrection, He ate and drank with them like a being of flesh and blood, though spiritually one with the Father.

4. I am urging these things on you, beloved, although I know that you are of the same mind. I am cautioning you betimes, however, against wild beasts in human form, whom you ought not only not to receive, but, if possible, even avoid meeting. Only pray for them, if somehow they may change their mind--a difficult thing! But that is in the power of Jesus Christ, our true Life. Surely, if those things were done by Our Lord as a mere make-believe, then I in my chains, too, am a make-believe! Why, moreover, did I surrender myself to death, to fire, to the sword, to wild beasts? Well, to be near the sword is to be near God; to be in the claws of wild beasts is to be in the hands of God. Only let it be done in the name of Jesus Christ! To suffer with Him I endure all things, if He, who became perfect man, gives me the strength.

5. Some disown Him through ignorance, or, rather, were disowned by Him, being advocates of death rather than the truth. They were not convinced by the prophecies or by the Law of Moses;

no, not even to this day by the Gospel or the sufferings of our own people; for they entertain the same view of us. Really, what good does anyone do me if he praises me, but blasphemes my Lord by not admitting that He carried living flesh about Him? He who does not admit this, has absolutely disowned Him, and what he carries about him is a corpse. Their names--names of unbelievers they are! -I do not think advisable to write down. In fact, I even wish I did not remember them, until they change their mind concerning the Passion, which is our resurrection.

6. Let no one be deceived! Even the heavenly powers and the angels in their splendor and the principalities, both visible and invisible, must either believe in the Blood of Christ, or else face damnation. Let him grasp it who can. Let no rank puff up anyone; for faith and love are paramount--the greatest blessings in the world. Observe those who hold erroneous opinions concerning the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how they run counter to the mind of God! They concern themselves with neither works of charity, nor widows, nor orphans, nor the distressed, nor those in prison or out of it, nor the hungry or thirsty.

7. From Eucharist and prayer they hold aloof, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His loving-kindness raised from the dead. And so, those who question the gift of God perish in their contentiousness. It would be better for them to have love, so as to share in the resurrection. It is proper, therefore, to avoid associating with such people and not to speak about them either in private or in public, but to study the Prophets attentively and, especially, the Gospel, in which the Passion is revealed to us and the Resurrection shown in its fulfillment. Shun division as the beginning of evil.

8. You must all follow the lead of the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed that of the Father; follow the presbytery as you would the Apostles; reverence the deacons as you would God's commandment. Let no one do anything touching the Church, apart from the bishop. Let that celebration of the Eucharist be considered valid which is held under the bishop or anyone to whom he has committed it. Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not permitted without authorization from the bishop either to baptize or to hold an agape; but whatever he approves is also pleasing to God. Thus everything you do will be proof against danger and valid.

9. It is consonant with reason, therefore, that we should come to our senses, while we still have time to change our ways and turn to God. It is well to revere God and bishop. He who honors a bishop is honored by God. He who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop worships the devil. May all things, then, be yours in abundance through grace, for you deserve it. You have brought relief to me in every respect, and may Jesus Christ do so to you! Whether I was absent or present, you have shown me love. Your reward is God, to whom you will come if you endure all things for His sake.

10. As to Philo and Rheus Agathopus, who accompanied me in the name of God, it was good of you to give them a warm reception as to servants of Christ God. For their part, they thank the Lord on your behalf, because you offered them losers. A ransom for you are my life and my chains, which you did not despise and of which you were not ashamed. Neither will Jesus Christ, our consummate hope, be ashamed of you.

11. Your prayer made its way to the Church at Antioch in Syria. Coming from there in chains radiant with divine splendor, I send greetings to all. Not that I deserve to belong to that community, being the least of its members; but by the will (of God) I was granted this favor--no, not because of any conscious deed, but because of the grace of God. Would that this grace were given me in perfection, that through your prayer I may make my way to God! Now, that your own work may be made perfect both on earth and in heaven, it is proper, for the honor of God, that your Church should send a God-empowered delegate to go to Syria and congratulate the people on enjoying peace, having recovered their normal greatness, and having their full status restored to them. It therefore appears to me to be a God-inspired undertaking to send one of your number with a letter for the purpose of joining in the celebration of their God-given tranquillity, and because they have, thanks to your prayer, at last made port. Be perfect, therefore, and devise a perfect method. You need only be willing to do well, and God is ready to assist you.

12. In their affection the brethren at Troas wish to be remembered to you. It is from here that I send this letter through the kindness of Burrus, whom you conjointly with your brethren, the Ephesians, commissioned to accompany me. He has given me every possible comfort. And would that all might imitate him, for he is a pattern of what a minister of God should be. God's grace will reward him in every way. Greetings to the bishop, that man of God, to the God-minded presbytery, to the deacons my fellow servants, to the whole community, individually and collectively, in the name of Jesus Christ, in His Flesh and Blood, in His Passion and Resurrection, both corporal and spiritual, in unity with God and with you. Grace be to you and mercy and peace and patient endurance forever.

13. Greetings to the families of my brethren, including their wives and children, and to the virgins who are enrolled among the widows. Farewell in the power of the Father! Philo, who is with me, wishes to be remembered to you. Offer my respects to the household of Tavia, and I pray that she may be firmly rooted in faith and love, both carnal and spiritual. Give my regards to Alce, that most dear friend of mine, and to the incomparable Daphnus, and to Eutecnus, and to all the rest by name. Farewell in the grace of God!

07 - Letter to the Trallians

Ignatius to the Trallians

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the holy Church at Tralles in Asia, loved by God the Father of Jesus Christ; elect and an honor to God; enjoying inward and outward peace through the Passion of Jesus Christ, who is our hope when we rise to be with Him. I salute her in Apostolic fashion with the fullness of grace and offer her heartiest good wishes.

1. Beyond reproach, I hear, and unshaken in patient endurance is your disposition--not an acquired habit, but a natural endowment. I was informed of it by Polybius, your bishop, who by the will of God and Jesus Christ came to Smyrna and so heartily shared my joy at the chains which I bear in Christ Jesus, that in his person I beheld your whole community. Welcoming, then, your God-inspired goodwill, I burst into thanks and praise, finding that you, as I learned, were patterning yourselves after God.

2. Surely, when you submit to the bishop as representing Jesus Christ, it is clear to me that you are not living the life of men, but that of Jesus Christ, who died for us, that through faith in His death you might escape dying. It is needful, then--and such is your practice--that you do nothing without your bishop; but be subject also to the presbytery as representing the Apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope, in whom we are expected to live forever. It is further necessary that the deacons, the dispensers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should win the approval of all in every way; for they are not dispensers of food and drink, but ministers of a church of God. Hence they must be on their guard against criticism, as against fire.

3. Likewise, let all respect the deacons as representing Jesus Christ, the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as God's high council and as the Apostolic college. Apart from these, no church deserves the name. In these matters I am convinced that such is your attitude; for I have received, and have with me, the embodiment of your affection in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a powerful sermon, his gentleness a mighty influence--a man whom even the unbelievers, I am sure, respect. From love for you I spare your feelings--though I might write more sternly in this regard. But I do not think that I, a man condemned, should give you orders like an Apostle.

4. Many thoughts are mine when I take God's view of things; yet I keep within due bounds, that I may not perish through boastfulness. Right now I must fear the more, and pay no heed to those who flatter my vanity. Really, those who speak to me in this strain torture me. True, I am in love with suffering, but I do not know if I deserve the honor. My passionate longing is not manifest to many, but it grips me all the more. What I need is equanimity, by which the Prince of this world is undone.

5. Am I not able to write to you about heavenly things? I am; but I fear to inflict harm on you who are mere babes. Pardon me, then you must not be choked by what you cannot assimilate. It is the same with me: just because I am in chains and able to grasp heavenly things--the ranks of the

angels, the hierarchy of principalities, things visible and invisible it does not immediately follow that I am a disciple. Plainly, we are yet short of much if we are not to be short of God.

6. I exhort you therefore--no, not I, but the love of Jesus Christ: partake of Christian food exclusively; abstain from plants of alien growth, that is, heresy. Heretics weave Jesus Christ into their web--to win our confidence, just like persons who administer a deadly drug mixed with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting gladly take--and with baneful relish they swallow death!

7. So, then, beware of such! And you will do so if you are not puffed up and cling inseparably to God Jesus Christ, to the bishop, and to the precepts of the Apostles. He that is inside the sanctuary is pure; he that is outside the sanctuary is not pure. In other words: he that does anything apart from bishop, presbytery, or deacon has no pure conscience.

8. Not that I have discovered any such thing in your midst; no, I merely warn you betimes since you are dear to me and I foresee the devil's snares. Take up the practice, then, of kind forbearance and renew yourselves in faith, which is the Flesh Of the Lord, and in love, which is the Blood of Jesus Christ. Let none of you bear a grudge against his neighbor. Give no pretext to the pagans, so that, because of a few foolish persons, God's own people may not be reviled. For woe unto him through whom my name is reviled among some out of folly."

9. Stop your ears therefore when anyone speaks to you that stands apart from Jesus Christ, from David's scion and Mary's Son, who was really born and ate and drank, really persecuted by Pontius Pilate, really crucified and died while heaven and earth and the underworld looked on; who also really rose from the dead, since His Father raised Him up, His Father, who will likewise raise us also who believe in Him through Jesus Christ, apart from whom we have no real life.

10. But if, as some atheists, that is, unbelievers, say, His suffering was but a make-believe--when, in reality, they themselves are make-believes-- then why am I in chains? Why do I even pray that I may fight wild beasts? In vain, then, do I die! My testimony is, after all, but a lie about the Lord!

11. Shun these wildlings, then, which bear but deadly fruit, and when one tastes it, he is outright doomed to die! Surely, such persons are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the Cross, and their fruit would be imperishable--the Cross through which by His Passion He calls you to Him, being members of His body. Evidently, no head can be born separately, without members, since God means complete oneness, which is Himself.

12. I greet you from Smyrna together with the Churches of God present here with me. They comfort me in every way, both in body and in soul. My chains, which I carry about on me for Jesus Christ, begging that I may happily make my way to God, exhort you: persevere in your concord and in your community prayers. It is certainly fitting for you individually, but especially for the presbyters, to give comfort to the bishop in honor of the Father and Jesus Christ and the Apostles. I beg you to listen to me in love, so that I may not, by writing to you, prove witness against you. But also pray for me, who stand in need of your charity before the mercy seat of God. Thus I shall be granted that portion on the obtaining of which my heart is set, and shall not be found a reprobate.

13. The love of the Smyrnaeans and the Ephesians sends you greetings. Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, to which I do not deserve to belong, being the least of her members. Farewell in the name of Jesus Christ. Be obedient to the bishop as to the commandment, and so,

too, to the presbytery. And love one another, man for man, with undivided heart. My spirit is consecrated to you, not only now, but also when I have happily made my way to God. For I am still in danger. But then, the Father is faithful and will, in Jesus Christ, answer both my and your prayer. May you in union with Him be found above reproach.

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