

Honour the Bishop

by Ignatius of Antioch

We must honour the bishop, who is a high-priest and representative of Christ, to reflect the order of God and receive a prophet's reward.

Scripture: Proverbs 20:25, Proverbs 23:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 2:17

Topics: "Church Authority", "Respect Leadership"

Description

Ignatius of Antioch emphasizes the importance of repentance towards God and the need to honor both God and earthly authorities, highlighting the significance of respecting bishops as high priests and kings as rulers who maintain peace and order. He stresses the unity and order within the Church, stating that those who dishonor the bishop disrupt this unity and face severe consequences. Ignatius urges for a hierarchy of respect within the Church, with the laity subject to deacons, deacons to presbyters, presbyters to bishops, and bishops to Christ.

Transcript

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. For "in Hades there is no one who can confess his sins." For "behold the man, and his work is before him." And [the Scripture saith], "My son, honour thou God and the king." And say I, Honour thou God indeed, as the Author and Lord of all things, but the bishop as the high-priest, who bears the image of God-of God. inasmuch as he is a ruler, and of Christ, in his capacity of a priest.

After Him, we must also honour the king. For there is no one superior to God, or even like to Him, among all the beings that exist. Nor is there any one in the Church greater than the bishop, who ministers as a priest to God for the salvation of the whole world. Nor, again, is there any one among rulers to be compared with the king, who secures peace and good order to those over whom he rules. He who honours the bishop shall be honoured by God, even as he that dishonours him shall be punished by God. For if he that rises up against kings is justly held worthy of punishment, inasmuch as he dissolves public order, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who presumes to do anything without the bishop, thus both destroying the [Church's] unity, and throwing its order into confusion? For the priesthood is the very highest point of all good things among men, against which whosoever is mad enough to strive, dishonours not man, but God, and Christ Jesus, the First-born, and the only High Priest, by nature, of the Father. Let all things therefore be done by you with good order in

Christ. Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father.

As ye, brethren, have refreshed me, so will Jesus Christ refresh you. Ye have loved me when absent, as well as when present. God will recompense you, for whose sake ye have shown such kindness towards His prisoner. For even if I am not worthy of it, yet your zeal [to help me] is an admirable thing. For "he who honours a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward." It is manifest also, that he who honours a prisoner of Jesus Christ shall receive the reward of the martyrs.

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