

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

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EPISTLE OF ST. IGNATIUS

TO THE TRALLIANS.

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, having peace through the flesh, and blood, and passion of Jesus Christ our hope; in the resurrection which is by him: which also I salute in its fullness, continuing in the Apostolic character; wishing all joy and happiness unto it.

1. I HAVE heard of your blameless and constant disposition through patience, which not only appears in your outward conversation, but is naturally rooted, and grounded in you; in like manner as Polybius your Bishop has declared unto me; who came to me to Smyrna, by the will of God and Jesus Christ; and so rejoiced together with me in my bonds for Jesus Christ; that in effect I saw your whole Church in him. Having therefore received the testimony of your good will towards me for God's sake, by him; I seemed to find you, as also I knew that ye were, the followers of God.

2. For whereas ye are subject to your 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, that so believing in his death, ye might escape death. It is therefore necessary that as ye do, so without your Bishop you should do nothing; also be ye subject to your presbyters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope; in whom if we walk, we shall be found in him. The deacons also, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must by all means please all. For they are not the ministers of meat and drink, but of the Church of God. Wherefore they must avoid all offences, as they would do fire.

3. In like manner let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ; and the Bishop as the Father, and the Presbyters as the Sanhedrim of God, the college of the Apostles. WITHOUT THESE THERE IS NO CHURCH. Concerning all which I am persuaded that ye think after the very same manner: for I have received, and even now have with me the pattern of your love, in your Bishop. Whose very look is instructive; and whose mildness powerful; whom I am persuaded the very atheists themselves cannot but reverence. But because I have a love towards you, I will not write any more sharply unto you about this matter, though I very well might; but now I have done so; lest being a condemned man, I should seem to prescribe to you as an Apostle.

4. I have great knowledge in God; but refrain myself, lest I should perish in my boasting. For now I ought the more to fear and not hearken to those that would puff me up. For they that speak to me in my praise, chasten me. For I indeed desire to suffer, but I cannot tell whether I am worthy so to do. And this desire, though to others it does appear, yet to myself it is for that very reason the more violent. I have therefore need of moderation: by which the price of this world is destroyed.

5. Am I not able to write to you of heavenly things? but I fear lest I should harm you, who are yet but babes in Christ: (excuse me this care,) and lest perchance being not able to receive them, ye should be choaked with them. For even I myself, although I am in bonds, yet am not therefore able to understand heavenly things: as the places of the Angels, and the several companies of

them, under their respective princes; things visible and invisible but in these I am yet a learner: for many things are wanting to us, that we come not short of God.

6. I exhort you therefore, or rather not I, but the love of Jesus Christ; that ye use none but Christian nourishment; abstaining from pasture which is of another kind, I mean heresy. For they that are heretics, confound together the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their own poison; whilst they seem worthy of belief: as men give a deadly portion mixed with sweet wine; which he who is ignorant of does with the treacherous pleasure sweetly drink in his own death.

7. Wherefore guard yourselves against such persons. And that you will do if you are not puffed up; but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your Bishop, and from the commands of the Apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the Bishop, and Presbyters, and Deacons, is not pure in his conscience.

8. Not that I know there is any thing of this nature among you; but I fore-arm you as being greatly beloved by me, for-seeing the snares of the Devil. Wherefore putting on meekness, renew yourselves in faith, that is the flesh of the Lord; and in charity, that is the blood of Jesus Christ. Let no man have any grudge against his neighbour. Give no occasion to the Gentiles; lest by means of a few foolish men, the whole congregation of God be evil spoken of. For woe to that man through whose vanity my name is blasphemed by any.

9. Stop your ears, therefore, as often as any one shall speak contrary to Jesus Christ; who was of the race of David, of the Virgin Mary. Who was truly born, and did eat and drink; was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; was truly crucified and dead; and both those in Heaven, and on earth, and under the earth being spectators of it. Who was also truly raised from the dead by his Father, after the same manner as he will also raise up us who believe in him, by Christ Jesus; without whom we have no true life.

10. But if as some who are atheists, that is to say infidels, pretend that he only seemed to suffer: (they themselves only seeming to exist) why then am I bound? why do I desire to fight with beasts? therefore do I die in vain: therefore I will not speak falsely against the Lord.

11. Flee therefore these evil sprouts which bring forth deadly fruit; of which if any one taste, he shall presently die. For these are not the plants of the Father; seeing if they were, they would appear to be the branches of the cross, and their fruit would be incorruptible; by which he invites you through his passion, who are members of him. For the head cannot be without its members, God having promised a union, that is himself.

12. I salute you from Smyrna, together with the Churches of God that are present with me; who have refreshed me in all things both in the flesh and the spirit. My bonds which I carry about me for the sake of Christ, (beseeching him that I may attain unto God) exhort you, that you continue in concord among yourselves, and in prayer with one another. For it becomes every one of you, ESPECIALLY THE PRESBYTERS, to refresh the Bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles. I beseech you, that ye hearken to me in love, that I may not by those things which I write, rise up in witness against you. Pray also for me: who through the mercy of God stand in need of your prayers, that I may be worthy of the portion which I am about to obtain, that I be not found a reprobate.

13. The love of those who are at Smyrna and Ephesus salute