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FOR THE CHRISTIAN EXAMINER.

ON THE GENUINENESS OF THE WRITINGS OF IGNATIUS
AND THE SCHEME OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT DE-
SCRIBED IN THEM.

MR. EDITOR:—

A friend in Scotland who had seen some of the numbers of your Journal, has sent me a paper on "THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF IGNATIUS," with permission to offer it, as I now do, to your pages. He had intended it in a somewhat different form for another work, which, however, circumstances have prevented him from carrying through. It may be interesting to some of your readers, and if it be also useful, this will be, as I well know, in accordance with the prayers of the writer.

I shall presume on his indulgence and that of your readers, in prefixing to it, as it passes through my hands, one or two remarks.

And first, I think my friend has too unhesitatingly assumed the genuineness—at least the integrity of the text of the Ignatian Epistles. Two versions of these Epistles have come down to us, and these so different from each other, that they cannot both be genuine; and the one of these which has the fairer claims to be regarded as a genuine document, has some internal marks of interpolation.

That great scholar, and not less distinguished Minister of the gospel, Archbishop Usher, who first edited these Epistles, and in a sense, recovered them from the wreck of ancient learning, had his doubts of the genuineness of the Epistle to Polycarp. Mosheim thus closes his remarks on the question concerning their genuineness.

"But to whichever of these editions (the two versions above referred to,) we give the preference, we shall never, do what we may, entirely deliver these Epistles from all suspicion of corruption and interpolation. In my judgment, therefore, the great controversy concerning the Ignatian Epistles, in which so many eminent men have taken a side, is still undecided, and must remain so, unless more versions, and these of a higher antiquity than the existing ones be discovered, or other ancient literary remains which shall throw a clearer light upon it. That these Epistles are very ancient is most certain, that they are entire forgeries is utterly incredible; but how far they can be accounted free from corruptions cannot at present be determined."*

I am not aware that any additional light has been thrown on the question since the days of Mosheim.

* Moshemii De Rebus Christianorum ante Constant. Commentarii, p. 161.