

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 MAGNESIANS.

Ignatius who is also called Theophorus; to the blessed [Church] by the grace of God the Father in Jesus Christ our Saviour: in whom I salute the Church which is at Magnesia near the Meander, and wish it all joy, in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ.

1. WHEN I heard of your well ordered love and charity in God, being full of joy, I desired much to speak unto you in the faith of Jesus Christ. For having been thought worthy to obtain a most excellent name, in the bonds which I carry about, I salute the Churches; wishing in them a union both of the body and spirit of Jesus Christ: our eternal life; as also of faith and charity, to which nothing is preferred: but especially of Jesus and the Father; in whom if we undergo all the injuries of the prince of this present world, and escape, we shall enjoy God.

2. Seeing then I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas your most excellent Bishop; and by your very worthy Presbyters, Bassus, and Apollonius; and by my fellow-servant Sotio the deacon; in whom I rejoice, for as much as he is subject unto his Bishop as to the grace of God, and to the Presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ: I determined to write unto you.

3. Wherefore it will become you also not to use your Bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth; but to yield all reverence to him according to the power of God the Father: as also to reverence that your holy presbyters do; not considering his age, which indeed to appearance is young; but as becomes those who are prudent in God submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Bishop of us all. It will therefore behave you, with all sincerity, to obey your Bishop; in honor of him whose pleasure it is that ye should do so, because he that does not do so, deceives not the Bishop whom he sees, but affronts him that is invisible. For whatsoever of this kind is done, it reflects not upon man but upon God, who knows the secrets of our hearts.

4. It is therefore fitting, that we should not only be called Christians, but be so. As some call indeed their governor, Bishop; but yet do all things without him. But I can never think that such as those have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God's commandment.

5. Seeing then all things have an end, there are these two indifferently set before us, death and life; and every one shall depart unto his proper place. For as there are two sorts of coins, the one of God, the other of the world; and each of these has its proper inscription engraven upon it: so also is it here. The unbelievers are of this world; but the faithful, through charity, have the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ: by whom if we are not readily disposed to die after the likeness of his passion, his life is not in us.

6. Forasmuch therefore as I have in the persons before mentioned, seen all of you in faith and charity; I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord: your Bishop presiding in the place of God, your Presbyters in the place of the council of the Apostles; and your deacons most dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ; who was with the Father before all ages, and appeared in the end to us. Wherefore taking the same holy course, see that ye all reverence one another: and let no one look upon his neighbor after the flesh, but do ye all mutually love each other in Jesus Christ. Let there be nothing that may be able to make a division among you: but be ye united to your Bishop, and those who preside over you, to be your pattern and direction in the way of immortality.

7. As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to him; neither by himself or yet by his Apostles; so neither do ye do anything without your Bishop and Presbyters: neither endeavor to let any thing appear rational to yourselves apart; but being come together into the same place, have one common prayer; one supplication: one mind; one hope; in charity and in joy undefiled. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is better. Wherefore come ye all together as unto one temple of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ: who proceeded from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned to one.

8. Be not deceived with strange doctrines; nor with old fables which are unprofitable. For if we still continue to live according to the Jewish law, we do confess ourselves not to have received grace. For even the most holy prophets lived according to Christ Jesus. And for this cause were they persecuted, being inspired by his grace to convince the unbelievers and disobedient that there is one God who has manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son; who is his eternal Word, not coming forth from silence, who in all things pleased him that sent him. [John i. 1.]

9. Wherefore if they who were brought up in these ancient laws came nevertheless to the newness of hope; no longer observing Sabbaths, but keeping the Lord's day, in which also our life is sprung up by him, and through his death, whom yet some deny; (by which mystery we have been brought to believe, and therefore wait that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only master:) how shall we be able to live different from him; whose disciples the very prophets themselves being, did by the Spirit expect him as their master. And therefore he whom they justly waited for, being come, raised them up from the dead. [Mat. xxvii. 52.]

10. Let us not then be insensible of his goodness; for should he have dealt with us according to our works, we had not now had a being. Wherefore being become his disciples, let us learn to live according to the rules of Christianity: for whosoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God. Lay aside therefore the old, and sour, and evil leaven; and be changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ. Be ye salted in him, lest any one among you should be corrupted; for by your Saviour ye shall be judged. It is absurd to name Jesus Christ, and to Judaize.—For the Christian Religion did not embrace the Jewish, but the Jewish the Christian: that so every tongue that believeth might be gathered together unto God.

11. These things, my beloved, I write unto you; not that I know of any among you that lie under this error: but as one of the least among you, I am desirous to forwarn you that ye fall not into the snares of vain doctrine; but that ye be fully instructed in the birth and suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ our hope; which was accomplished in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate, and that most truly and certainly; and from which God forbid that any among you should be turned aside.

12. May I therefore have joy of you in all things, if I shall be worthy of it. For though I am bound, yet am I not worthy to be compared to one of you that are at liberty. I know that ye are not puffed up; for ye have Jesus Christ in your hearts. And especially when I commend you, I know that ye are ashamed, as it is written, the just man condemneth himself. [Prov. xviii. 17. Sept.]

13. Study therefore to be confirmed in the doctrine of our Lord and of his Apostles; that so whatsoever ye do, ye may prosper, both in body and spirit; in faith and charity; in the Son, and in