

0030-0100 – Ignatius Antiochensis – Epistola Tertia ad Ephesios

The Third Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians

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Chapter XV.

It is better that a man should be silent while he is something, than that he should be talking when he is not; that by those things which he speaks he should act, and by those things of which he is silent he should be known.

Chapter XVIII.¹¹⁵⁷

My spirit bows in adoration to the cross, which is a stumbling-block to those who do not believe, but is to you for salvation and eternal life.

Chapter XIX.

There was concealed from the ruler of this world the virginity of Mary and the birth of our Lord, and the three renowned mysteries¹¹⁵⁸ which were done in the tranquillity of God from the star. And here, at the manifestation of the Son, magic began to be destroyed, and all bonds were loosed; and the ancient kingdom and the error of evil was destroyed. Henceforward all things were moved together, and the destruction of death was devised, and there was the commencement of that which was perfected in God.¹¹⁵⁹

**The Third Epistle of the Same St. Ignatius¹¹⁶⁰**

¹¹⁵⁷ Chaps. xvi. and xvii. of the Greek are totally wanting in the Syriac.

¹¹⁵⁸ Literally, "the mysteries of the shout." The meaning is here confused and obscure. See the Greek.

¹¹⁵⁹ Chaps. xx. and xxi. of the Greek are altogether wanting in the Syriac. [N.B.—See spurious Epistle to Philippians, cap. 4, *infra*. This concealment from Satan of the mystery of the incarnation is the explanation, according to the Fathers, of his tempting the Messiah, and prompting His crucifixion. Also, Christ the more profoundly humbled himself, "*ne subtilis ille diaboli oculus magnum hoc pietatis deprehenderet sacramentum*" (St. Bernard, opp. ii. 1944). Bernard also uses this opinion very strikingly (opp. ii. 1953) in one of his sermons, supposing that Satan discovered the secret too late for his own purpose, and then prompted the outcry, *Come down from the cross*, to defeat the triumph of the second Adam. (Comp. St. Mark i. 24 and St. Luke iv. 34, where, after the first defeat of the tempter, this demon suspects the second Adam, and tries to extort the secret).]

¹¹⁶⁰ Another inscription is, "The Third Epistle."

Ignatius, who is [also called] Theophorus, to the Church which has received grace through the greatness of the Father Most High; to her who presideth in the place of the region of the Romans, who is worthy of God, and worthy of life, and happiness, and praise, and remembrance, and is worthy of prosperity, and presideth in love, and is perfected in the law of Christ unblameable: [wishes] abundance of peace.

Chapter I.

From of old have I prayed to God, that I might be counted worthy to behold your faces which are worthy of God: now, therefore, being bound in Jesus Christ, I hope to meet you and salute you, if it be the will [of God] that I should be accounted worthy to the end. For the beginning is well arranged, if I be counted worthy to attain to the end, that I may receive my portion, without hindrance, through suffering. For I am in fear of your love, lest it should injure me. As to you, indeed, it is easy for you to do whatsoever ye wish; but as to me, it is difficult for me to be accounted worthy of God, if indeed ye spare me not.

Chapter II.

For there is no other time such as this, that I should be accounted worthy of God; neither will ye, if ye be silent, [ever] be found in a better work than this. If ye let me alone, I shall be the word of God; but if ye love my flesh, again am I [only] to myself a voice. Ye cannot give me anything more precious than this, that I should be sacrificed to God, while the altar is ready; that ye may be in one concord in love, and may praise God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, because He has deemed a bishop worthy to be God's, having called him from the east to the west. It is good that I should set from the world in God, that I may rise in Him to life.¹¹⁶¹

Chapter III.

Ye have never envied any man. Ye have taught others. Only pray ye for strength to be given to me from within and from without, that I may not only speak, but also may be willing, and that I may not merely be called a Christian, but also may be found to be [one]; for if I am found to be [so], I may then also be called [so]. Then [indeed] shall I be faithful, when I am no longer seen in the world. For there is nothing visible that is good. The work is not [a matter¹¹⁶²] of persuasion; but Christianity is great when the world hateth it.

¹¹⁶¹ Literally, "in life."

¹¹⁶² The meaning is probably similar to that expressed in chap. xiv. of the Epistle in Ephesians.

Chapter IV.

I write to all the Churches, and declare to all men, that I willingly die for the sake of God, if so be that ye hinder me not. I entreat of you not to be [affected] towards me with a love which is unseasonable. Leave me to become [the prey of] the beasts, that by their means I may be accounted worthy of God. I am the wheat of God, and by the teeth of the beasts I shall be ground,¹¹⁶³ that I may be found the pure bread of God. Provoke ye greatly¹¹⁶⁴ the wild beasts, that they may be for me a grave, and may leave nothing of my body, in order that, when I have fallen asleep, I may not be a burden upon any one. Then shall I be in truth a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world seeth not even my body. Entreat of our Lord in my behalf, that through these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God. I do not, like Peter and Paul, issue orders unto you. They are¹¹⁶⁵ apostles, but I am one condemned; they indeed are free, but I am a slave, even until now. But if I suffer, I shall be the freed-man of Jesus Christ, and I shall rise in Him from the dead, free. And now being in bonds, I learn to desire nothing.



Chapter V.

From Syria, and even unto Rome, I am cast among wild beasts, by sea and by land, by night and by day, being bound between ten leopards, which are the band of soldiers, who, even when I do good to them, all the more do evil unto me. I, however, am the rather instructed by their injurious treatment;¹¹⁶⁶ but not on this account am I justified to myself. I rejoice in the beasts which are prepared for me, and I pray that they may in haste be found for me; and I will provoke them speedily to devour me, and not be as those which are afraid of some other men,¹¹⁶⁷ and will not approach them: even should they not be willing to approach me, I will go with violence against them. Know me from myself what is expedient for me.¹¹⁶⁸ Let no one¹¹⁶⁹ envy me of those things which are seen and which are not seen, that I should be accounted worthy of Jesus Christ. Fire, and the cross, and

¹¹⁶³ Literally, "I am ground."

¹¹⁶⁴ Literally, "with provoking, provoke."

¹¹⁶⁵ Literally, "they are who are."

¹¹⁶⁶ Literally, "by their injury."

¹¹⁶⁷ Literally, "and not as that which is afraid of some other men." So Cureton translates, but remarks that the passage is evidently corrupt. The reference plainly is to the fact that the beasts sometimes refused to attack their intended victims. See the case of Blandina, as reported by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, v. 1.).

¹¹⁶⁸ Cureton renders interrogatively, "What is expedient for me?" and remarks that "the meaning of the Syriac appears to be, 'I crave your indulgence to leave the knowledge of what is expedient for me to my own conscience.'"

¹¹⁶⁹ Literally, "nothing."

the beasts that are prepared, cutting off of the limbs, and scattering of the bones, and crushing of the whole body, harsh torments of the devil—let these come upon me, but¹¹⁷⁰ only let me be accounted worthy of Jesus Christ.

Chapter VI.

The pains of the birth stand over against me.¹¹⁷¹

Chapter VII.

And my love is crucified, and there is no fire in me for another love. I do not desire the food of corruption, neither the lusts of this world. I seek the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ; and I seek His blood, a drink which is love incorruptible.

Chapter IX.¹¹⁷²

My spirit saluteth you, and the love of the Churches which received me as the name of Jesus Christ; for those also who were near to [my] way in the flesh, preceded me in every city.

¹¹⁷³ [Now therefore, being about to arrive shortly in Rome, I know many things in God; but I keep myself within measure, that I may not perish through boasting: for now it is needful for me to fear the more, and not pay regard to those who puff me up. For they who say such things to me scourge me; for I desire to suffer, but I do not know if I am worthy. For zeal is not visible to many, but with me it has war. I have need, therefore, of meekness, by which the prince of this world is destroyed. I am able to write to you of heavenly things, but I fear lest I should do you an injury. Know me from myself. For I am cautious lest ye should not be able to receive [such knowledge], and should be perplexed. For even I, not because I am in bonds, and am able to know heavenly

1170 Literally, “and.”

1171 The Latin version translates the Greek here, “He adds gain to me.”

1172 Chap. viii. of the Greek is entirely omitted in the Syriac.

1173 The following passage is not found in this Epistle in the Greek recensions, but forms, in substance, chaps. iv. and v. of the Epistle to the Trallians. Diverse views are held by critics as to its proper place, according to the degree of authority they ascribe to the Syriac version. Cureton maintains that this passage has been transferred by fabrication by introducing a part of the genuine writing of Ignatius; while Hefele asserts that it is bound by the “closest connection” to the preceding chapter in the Epistle to the Trallians.

things, and the places of angels, and the stations of the powers that are seen and that are not seen, am on this account a disciple; for I am far short of the perfection which is worthy of God.] Be ye perfectly strong¹¹⁷⁴ in the patience of Jesus Christ our God.

Here end the three Epistles of Ignatius, bishop and martyr.¹¹⁷⁵



Introductory Note to the Spurious Epistles of Ignatius

To the following introductory note of the translators nothing need be prefixed, except a grateful acknowledgment of the value of their labours and of their good judgment in giving us even these spurious writings for purposes of comparison. They have thus placed the materials for a complete understanding of the whole subject, before students who have a mind to subject it to a thorough and candid examination.

The following is the original Introductory Notice:—

We formerly stated that eight out of the fifteen Epistles bearing the name of Ignatius are now universally admitted to be spurious. None of them are quoted or referred to by any ancient writer previous to the sixth century. The style, moreover, in which they are written, so different from that of the other Ignatian letters, and allusions which they contain to heresies and ecclesiastical arrangements of a much later date than that of their professed author, render it perfectly certain that they are not the authentic production of the illustrious bishop of Antioch.

We cannot tell when or by whom these Epistles were fabricated. They have been thought to betray the same hand as the longer and interpolated form of the seven Epistles which are generally regarded as genuine. And some have conceived that the writer who gave forth to the world the Apostolic Constitutions under the name of Clement, was probably the author of these letters falsely ascribed to Ignatius, as well as of the longer recension of the seven Epistles which are mentioned by Eusebius.

It was a considerable time before editors in modern times began to discriminate between the true and the false in the writings attributed to Ignatius. The letters first published under his name were those three which exist only in Latin. These came forth in 1495 at Paris, being appended to a life of Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Some three years later, eleven Epistles, comprising those mentioned by Eusebius, and four others, were published in Latin, and passed through four or five editions. In 1536, the whole of the professedly Ignatian letters were published at Cologne in a Latin version; and this collection also passed through several editions. It was not till 1557 that

¹¹⁷⁴ Or, as in the Greek, "Fare ye well, to the end."

¹¹⁷⁵ [N.B.—The aphoristic genius of Ignatius seems to be felt by his Syrian abbreviator, who reduces whole chapters to mere maxims.]