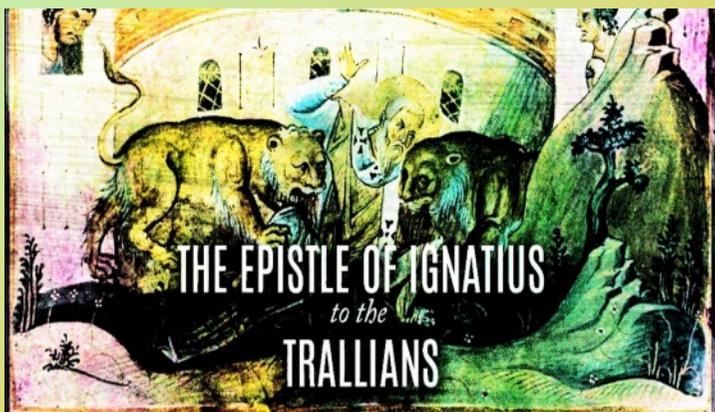


Ignatius To The Trallians



**Archives of
Willie Martin**

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From the Achieves

Of

Willie Martin

IGNATIUS, ALSO CALLED THEOPHORUS, TO THE HOLY CHURCH AT TRALLES IN ASIA, loved by God the Father of Jesus Christ; elect and an honour to God; enjoying inward and outward peace through the Passion of Jesus Christ, who is our hope when we rise to be with Him. I salute her in Apostolic fashion with the fullness of grace and offer her heartiest good wishes.

1. Beyond reproach, I hear, and unshaken in patient endurance is your disposition--not an acquired habit, but a natural endowment. I was informed of it by Polybius, your bishop, who by the will of God and Jesus Christ came to Smyrna and so heartily shared my joy at the chains which I bear in Christ Jesus, that in his person I beheld your whole community. Welcoming, then, your God-inspired goodwill, I burst into thanks and praise, finding that you, as I learned, were patterning yourselves after God.

2. Surely, when you submit to the bishop as representing Jesus Christ, it is clear to me that you are not living the life of men, but that of Jesus Christ, who died for us, that through faith in His death you might escape dying. It is needful, then--and such is your practice--that you do nothing without your bishop; but be subject also to the presbytery as representing the Apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope, in whom we are expected to live forever. It is further necessary that the deacons, the dispensers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should win the approval of all in every way; for they are not dispensers of food and drink, but ministers of a church of God. Hence they must be on their guard against criticism, as against fire.

3. Likewise, let all respect the deacons as representing Jesus Christ, the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as God's high council and as the Apostolic College. Apart from these, no church deserves the

name. In these matters I am convinced that such is your attitude; for I have received, and have with me, the embodiment of your affection in the person of your bishop. His very demeanour is a powerful sermon, his gentleness a mighty influence--a man whom even the unbelievers, I am sure, respect. From love for you I spare your feelings--though I might write more sternly in this regard. But I do not think that I, a man condemned, should give you orders like an Apostle.

4. Many thoughts are mine when I take God's view of things; yet I keep within due bounds, that I may not perish through boastfulness. Right now I must fear the more, and pay no heed to those who flatter my vanity. Really, those who speak to me in this strain torture me. True, I am in love with suffering, but I do not know if I deserve the honour. My passionate longing is not manifest to many, but it grips me all the more. What I need is equanimity, by which the Prince of this world is undone.

5. Am I not able to write to you about heavenly things? I am; but I fear to inflict harm on you who are mere babes. Pardon me, then you must not be choked by what you cannot assimilate. It is the same with me: just because I am in chains and able to grasp heavenly things--the ranks of the angels, the hierarchy of principalities, things visible and invisible it does not immediately follow that I am a disciple. Plainly, we are yet short of much if we are not to be short of God.

6. I exhort you therefore--no, not I, but the love of Jesus Christ: partake of Christian food exclusively; abstain from plants of alien growth, that is, heresy. Heretics weave Jesus Christ into their web--to win our confidence, just like persons who administer a deadly drug mixed with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting gladly take—and with baneful relish they swallow death!

7. So, then, beware of such! And you will do so if you are not puffed up and cling inseparably to God Jesus Christ, to the bishop, and to the precepts of the Apostles. He that is inside the sanctuary is pure; he that is outside the sanctuary is not pure. In other words: he that does anything apart from bishop, presbytery, or deacon has no pure conscience.

8. Not that I have discovered any such thing in your midst; no, I merely warn you betimes since you are dear to me and I foresee the devil's snares.

Take up the practice, then, of kind forbearance and renew yourselves in faith, which is the Flesh Of the Lord, and in love, which is the Blood of Jesus Christ. Let none of you bear a grudge against his neighbour. Give no pretext to the pagans, so that, because of a few foolish persons, God's own people may not be reviled. For woe unto him through whom my name is reviled among some out of folly."

9. Stop your ears therefore when anyone speaks to you that stands apart from Jesus Christ, from David's scion and Mary's Son, who was really born and ate and drank, really persecuted by Pontius Pilate, really crucified and died while heaven and earth and the underworld looked on; who also really rose from the dead, since His Father raised Him up, His Father, who will likewise raise us also who believe in Him through Jesus Christ, apart from whom we have no real life.

10. But if, as some atheists, that is, unbelievers, say, His suffering was but a make-believe--when, in reality, they themselves are make-believes--then why am I in chains? Why do I even pray that I may fight wild beasts? In vain, then, do I die! My testimony is, after all, but a lie about the Lord!

11. Shun these wildlings, then, which bear but deadly fruit, and when one tastes it, he is outright doomed to die! Surely, such persons are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the Cross, and their fruit would be imperishable--the Cross through which by His Passion He calls you to Him, being members of His body. Evidently, no head can be born separately, without members, since God means complete oneness, which is Himself.

12. I greet you from Smyrna together with the Churches of God present here with me. They comfort me in every way, both in body and in soul. My chains, which I carry about on me for Jesus Christ, begging that I may happily make my way to God, exhort you: persevere in your concord and in your community prayers. It is certainly fitting for you individually, but especially for the presbyters, to give comfort to the bishop in honour of the Father and Jesus Christ and the Apostles. I beg you to listen to me in love, so that I may not, by writing to you, prove witness against you. But also pray for me, who stand in need of your charity before the mercy seat

of God. Thus I shall be granted that portion on the obtaining of which my heart is set, and shall not be found a reprobate.

13. The love of the Smyrnaeans and the Ephesians sends you greetings. Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria, to which I do not deserve to belong, being the least of her members. Farewell in the name of Jesus Christ. Be obedient to the bishop as to the commandment, and so, too, to the presbytery. And love one another, man for man, with undivided heart. My spirit is consecrated to you, not only now, but also when I have happily made my way to God. For I am still in danger. But then, the Father is faithful and will, in Jesus Christ, answer both my and your prayer. May you in union with Him be found above reproach.



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