

The Apostolic Fathers

Greek Texts and English Translations

3rd edition

edited and translated by
Michael W. Holmes

after the earlier work of
J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer

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The Letters of Ignatius

Introduction

Just as we become aware of a meteor only when, after traveling silently through space for untold millions of miles, it blazes briefly through the atmosphere before dying in a shower of fire, so it is with Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria. We meet him for the first and only time for just a few weeks not long before his death as a martyr in Rome early in the second century. But during those few weeks he wrote, virtually as his “last will and testament,” seven letters of extraordinary interest because of the unparalleled light they shed on the history of the church at that time, and because of what they reveal about the remarkable personality of the author. Because of the early date of these writings and the distinctiveness of some of his ideas, particularly with regard to the nature and structure of the church, Ignatius’s letters have influenced later theological reflection and continue to be a focus in scholarly discussion of Christian origins.

Setting and Occasion

Ignatius’s letters were written under extraordinarily stressful and difficult circumstances. After his arrest (it is not known why and under what circumstances he was arrested) in Syria, which left the church in Antioch leaderless and vulnerable, Ignatius was sent to Rome in the custody of a detachment of ten soldiers (the “leopards”

of *Rom.* 5.1) to be executed. At a fork in the road somewhere in Asia Minor, probably Laodicea, the decision was made to take the northern route through Philadelphia to Smyrna, thus bypassing the churches that lay along the southern route (Tralles, Magnesia, and Ephesus). It is probable that when the northern road was chosen, messengers were sent to these churches informing them of Ignatius’s itinerary, and they evidently dispatched delegations to meet him in Smyrna. Ignatius responded to this (perhaps orchestrated) show of support by sending a letter to each of the three churches, and he also sent one ahead to the church in Rome, alerting the believers there to his impending arrival. The guards and their prisoners next stopped at Troas, where Ignatius received the news that “peace” had been restored to the church at Antioch (*Phld.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 11.2; *Pol.* 7.1), about which he apparently had been quite worried, and sent letters back to the two churches he had visited, Philadelphia and Smyrna, and to his friend Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. But before he could write any more letters the group hurried on to Neapolis and then to Philippi, where he was warmly received by the church (*Pol. Phil.* 1.1; 9.1). There he disappears from view. Presumably he was taken on to Rome and thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. While it is not certain that he died a martyr’s death (later legendary accounts of his death being historically worthless), there is no reason to think otherwise.

It appears that three concerns were uppermost in Ignatius’s mind at this time: (1) the struggle against false teachers within the church; (2) the unity and structure of the churches; and (3) his own impending death. To Ignatius, the false teachers within posed a greater threat than the pagan society without. “Heresy” (*Eph.* 6.2; *Trall.* 6.1), whether that of the “Judaizers,” whose teaching tended to diminish the importance and centrality of Christ, or that of the docetists, who under the influence of the common view that matter was evil tended to deny the reality of Jesus’ humanity, threatened to split the church and thereby destroy the God-given unity that for Ignatius was one

of the distinguishing marks of the true faith. In opposing the false teachers, Ignatius affirms both the divinity of Jesus and the reality of his incarnation, suffering, and resurrection; indeed, he grounds the meaning and reality of his own circumstances on the reality of what Jesus himself experienced (*Trall.* 10; *Smyrn.* 4.2).

He also stresses the importance of the bishop in preserving the unity of the church. He does this on two levels. First, while Ignatius's ideal church may have a threefold ministry that includes deacons and presbyters, it is the bishop who is constitutive of the church: where he is, the church is. Any activity or service that takes place without either his presence or his permission has no validity (*Smyrn.* 8.1–2; *Magn.* 7; *Trall.* 3.1). Thus schismatics, who gather separately, cut themselves off from the true church (*Eph.* 5.3; *Smyrn.* 6.2). Second, the central role of the bishop organizationally has a theological rationale: the bishop is nothing less than God's representative to the congregation. Just as Christians are united with God spiritually in heaven, so it is their duty to be in communion or harmony with their bishop on earth (*Eph.* 6.1; *Magn.* 3; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1; *Phld.* 2.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1). Conversely, one's attitude toward the bishop reflects one's attitude toward God, and thus one's behavior relative to the bishop becomes critically important. It is interesting that Ignatius provides a theological rationale for the authority and place of the bishop and does not base it, as does his near contemporary Clement of Rome, upon the concept of apostolic succession.

In addition to the theological significance and consequences of these first two concerns, the sociological implications (namely, community protection through definition of belief and legitimation of authority) should also be noted.¹

1. Harry O. Maier, *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writings of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991).

Ignatius's Attitude toward Martyrdom

Ignatius's third concern was his impending death, which he anticipates with a vivid, almost macabre eagerness (*Rom.* 4.2; 5.3; 7.2). His complex attitude toward martyrdom and the zeal with which he pursued it were shaped by at least three factors. One is his sincere desire to imitate the suffering of Jesus and thereby become a true disciple; indeed, he goes so far as to claim that only since his arrest is he "beginning" to be a disciple (*Rom.* 6.3; 5.3). However off-putting his idea may be to some, it must be given due weight as a way of understanding persecution that finds parallels in both Paul and Matthew. Some of his language, particularly in his letter to the Romans, may reflect an understandable fear of failure (*Rom.* 7.2), and hence an effort to fortify himself and hold to the course to which he has publicly committed himself. In addition, generally the only basis for releasing a Christian condemned to death was apostasy; even if the Roman church had won his release for good reasons (something he feared they might attempt to do [*Rom.* 1.1–2.1; 4.1]), rumors that he had apostatized likely would have arisen, and he no doubt wished to avoid such speculation.

Then there is the situation in Antioch, about which Ignatius is evidently quite worried. Schoedel notes Ignatius's marked tendency toward self-effacement, and that oddly enough he relates to the churches to which he writes not on the basis of his status as bishop, but as a captive about to be martyred. Schoedel then persuasively suggests that the Antiochene church was on the verge of splitting.² If such a split were to occur, it would mean that Ignatius was a failure as a bishop because he would not have maintained the godly character of the congregation that had been entrusted to him. He may, therefore, have seen in his imminent martyrdom a means by which to reclaim

2. W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 10–14.

the deteriorating situation in Antioch or to redeem his reputation as a bishop and a Christian.

Viewed in light of these factors, Ignatius's attitude toward his death is understandable and quite in line with those who died for their faith before (cf., e.g., 4 Maccabees) and after him (e.g., Polycarp).

Date

Ever since Lightfoot's magisterial discussion of the matter, there has been a near-unanimous consensus that Ignatius was martyred during the reign of Trajan (AD 98–117).³ The primary basis for this view is the tradition reported by Eusebius⁴ that Ignatius was executed sometime near the midpoint of Trajan's reign, coupled with the apparent absence in the letters themselves (assuming, for the moment, their authenticity)⁵ of any indications to the contrary. In view of this slender evidentiary basis, it is no surprise that attempts to fix the date more precisely have not been persuasive; if anything, the tendency is to enlarge the possible time frame in the direction of Hadrian's reign (117–138).⁶

3. Cf. Lightfoot, *AF* 2.2.435–72; cf. 2.1.30 (“within a few years of A.D. 110, before or after”). W. H. C. Frend (*The Rise of Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 124) has adopted the Eusebian date of approximately 107–108, while Helmut Koester (*Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. [New York: W. de Gruyter, 2000], 284) places it in the second half of Trajan's reign (ca. 110–117).

4. Somewhat vaguely in his *Church History* (3.36), more specifically in his *Chronicle* (texts in Lightfoot, *AF* 2.1.145–46, 2.2.449).

5. Those who deny their authenticity (see the discussion below) tend to date the letters toward the middle of the second half of the second century.

6. So W. R. Schoedel, “Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch,” *ANRW* 2.27.1 (1993): 347–58; Charles Munier, “Où en est la question d'Ignace d'Antioche? Bilan d'un siècle de recherches, 1870–1988,” *ANRW* 2.27.1 (1993): 380, 484. Cf. already in Lightfoot's own day Adolf von Harnack: “The Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp were probably written after the year A.D. 130; that they had been composed so early as A.D. 100 or 118, is a mere possibility, which is highly improbable, because it is not supported by any word in the Epistles, and because it rests only upon a late and very problematic witness” [i.e.,

Authenticity

Everything said about Ignatius thus far rests upon the conclusion that the seven letters of the so-called middle recension are authentic. This conclusion is widely held today, but such was not always the case.

The letters exist in three basic forms. The long recension consists of an expanded (interpolated) version of the original letters created in the fourth century accompanied by six spurious letters⁷ (some of which came to be associated with the middle recension as well). The short recension is a Syriac abridgment of the letters to the Ephesians, the Romans, and Polycarp. The middle recension, which was known to Eusebius, preserves the original form of the letters.

During the Renaissance and Reformation, both the long and middle recensions became known in both Greek and Latin, although it was not until 1646 that the Greek text of the middle recension was published. This multiplicity of forms, together with the admixture of varying numbers of later spurious letters, created a great deal of confusion and debate about the authenticity of the letters. Progress in resolving the question was not helped by the fact that the discussion came to be heavily influenced by extraneous dogmatic concerns: Catholic scholars generally defended the authenticity of the letters because of the obvious polemical value of Ignatius's early emphasis on the monepiscopal form of church structure, while Protestants generally denied their authenticity for similar reasons.

A consensus of sorts in favor of the middle recension came to prevail following the publication of Pearson's *Vindiciae Ignatianae*

Eusebius] (A. Harnack, “Lightfoot on the Ignatian Epistles: II. Genuineness and Date of the Epistles,” *The Expositor* Third Series, 3 [1886], 192).

7. One from Mary of Cassabola to Ignatius; Ignatius's reply to her; letters to the churches at Tarsus, Antioch, and Philippi, and one to Hero (Ignatius's successor as bishop of Antioch).

(1672), but the question was reopened in 1845 when William Cureton published the Syriac abridgment of three of the letters (the short recension). Not until the independent work of Theodor Zahn (1873), Adolf von Harnack (1878), and J. B. Lightfoot (1885) was the authenticity of the seven letters of the middle recension generally recognized.⁸ So thorough and persuasive was the work especially of Zahn and Lightfoot that the great majority of scholars since their day have considered the matter of authenticity as settled once and for all.

Three major challenges in the space of a decade in the late 1960s and 1970s—by Weijenborg and Joly, who questioned the authenticity of the entire corpus, and by Rius-Camps, who contended that three of the seven letters were forged and the rest interpolated and revised—did little to alter the consensus.⁹ The admitted difficulties that were noted and raised as a reason for reevaluating the documents were not new, and the proposed solutions seemed to raise more problems than they solved.¹⁰

In the late 90s the question of authenticity was again raised.¹¹ This time an attempt was made to place the discussion on a new footing

8. Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochen* (Gotha: Perthes, 1873); A. Harnack, *Die Zeit des Ignatius und die Chronologie der antiochenischen Bischöfe bis Tyrannus nach Julius Africanus und den späteren Historikern* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1878); J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 2, *S. Ignatius; S. Polycarp*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1885).

9. R. Weijenborg, *Les lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche* (Leiden: Brill, 1969); R. Joly, *Le dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche* (Brussels: Éditions de l'université, 1979); J. Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius, the Martyr* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1979).

10. W. R. Schoedel, "Are the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch Authentic?" *Religious Studies Review* 6 (1980): 196–201, summarized in Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 5–7; Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, "Ignatian Problems," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 62–97; cf. Charles Munier, "Où en est la question d'Ignace d'Antioche?" 359–484.

11. Reinhard M. Hübner, "Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien," *ZAC* 1.1 (1997): 44–72; Andreas Lindemann, "Antwort auf

by bringing to bear on the problem a revised understanding of gnosticism, especially as propounded by Valentinus, and by noting that foundational working assumptions on which the nineteenth-century scholars based their case are widely questioned or rejected in current scholarship. Consequently, scholars such as R. Hübner and T. Lechner claim that the letters betray a dependence upon the writings of Noetus of Smyrna and therefore must be forgeries composed no earlier than about AD 165–175, a time when the proto-orthodox church was responding to the challenges posed by the teachings of Valentinus and other gnostic teachers.

Hübner and Lechner succeed in raising fresh doubts about the traditional early date of the Ignatian letters, but their case for seeing them as later forgeries is unpersuasive: for example, they give insufficient weight to evidence in the letters that does not fit the proposed time frame, and they pay inadequate attention to probable first- or early-second-century antecedents of Ignatian ideas and concepts (such as 1 Corinthians, John, and 1 Timothy).¹² In short, the proposed solutions raise more problems and questions than they solve or answer. The traditional view, that the seven letters attributed to Ignatius are authentic, remains the most probable (and least problematic) solution to the question regarding authenticity.

die "Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien," *ZAC* 1.2 (1997): 185–94; Georg Schöllgen, "Die Ignatianen als pseudepigraphisches Briefcorpus: Anmerkung zu den Thesen von Reinhard M. Hübner," *ZAC* 2.1 (1998): 16–25; Mark J. Edwards, "Ignatius and the Second Century: An Answer to R. Hübner," *ZAC* 2.2 (1998): 214–26; Hermann Josef Vogt, "Bemerkungen zur Echtheit der Ignatiusbriefe," *ZAC* 3.1 (1999): 50–63. Also: Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius Adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologieggeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien*, VCSup 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Reinhard M. Hübner and Markus Vinzent, *Der Paradox Eine: Antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert*, VCSup 50 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

12. Mark J. Edwards, "Ignatius and the Second Century," 214–26; see also A. Lindemann's review of Lechner (see previous note) in *ZAC* 6 (2002): 157–61.

Form and Style

Ignatius utilizes both Pauline and secular communication models in distinctive ways (e.g., thanksgiving statements are notably absent), especially with respect to the greetings at the beginning and end of his letters and internal transitional devices.¹³ His dense, colorful (perhaps even florid) style reflects a popular style of rhetoric known as Asianism.

Sources and Cultural Context

Whereas Ignatius makes very little use of the Old Testament,¹⁴ he is deeply indebted to early Christian tradition, which has pervasively shaped his vocabulary and thought. His heavy use of Pauline tradition (the way Paul responded to rejection likely offered a model for Ignatius) was shaped both by a more “mystical” tradition (represented also in the Gospel of John) and by a concern for order and discipline (cf. Matthew).

Ignatius likely knew a wide range of early Christian literature, but whatever that range was, we can demonstrate with certainty his use of only a few writings.¹⁵ He probably worked with the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., *Smyrn.* 1.1); there is no evidence of Mark, and only minimal (and not conclusive) evidence of Luke (*Smyrn.* 3.2). Use of John (cf. *Rom.* 7.3; *Phld.* 7.1) is unlikely. He has read 1 Corinthians, and probably Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy. There are numerous echoes of other Pauline documents (his collection may have included

13. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 7.

14. He cites it only three times (*Eph.* 5.3; *Magn.* 12; *Trall.* 8.2); allusions are no more numerous (cf. *Eph.* 15.1; *Magn.* 10.3; 13.1).

15. See Paul Foster, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch and the Writings That Later Formed the New Testament,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159–86.

1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 1 and 2 Timothy), but it is difficult to determine whether these echoes reflect literary dependence or the use of traditional elements. The parallel between 1 John and *Ephesians* 14.2 is notable, as are parallels between Ignatius and *1 Clement*, *2 Clement*, and *The Shepherd of Hermas*, but again these are insufficient to demonstrate knowledge of documents.¹⁶

The character of Ignatius’s debt to Hellenistic culture is much debated. Gnostic affinities have been alleged on the basis of mythological elements in such passages as *Ephesians* 19 or the themes of “oneness” and “silence,” but recent investigations have indicated that these elements are also found in the wider popular culture.¹⁷ These investigations, together with observations about the form and style of his letters, suggest that Ignatius mirrors more the popular culture of his day than any specific esoteric or gnostic influences.

Text and Order of the Letters

The Greek text upon which the translation is based has been reconstructed on the basis of the following primary witnesses:

- | | |
|---|---|
| G | Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus 57,7 (11th cent.; the only surviving copy of the middle recension) |
| L | the Latin translation of the middle recension |

16. The limits of this assessment of documents whose use can be demonstrated must be respected (absence of evidence is not evidence of absence). That the use of a particular document cannot be demonstrated does not mean that Ignatius did not know it; it only means that knowledge of it cannot be demonstrated on the basis of a limited number of documents written under very stressful conditions (i.e., traveling as a prisoner).

17. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 15–17; A. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

P	Berlin papyrus codex 10581 (5th cent.; contains <i>Smyrn.</i> 3.3–12.1)
g	the Greek manuscripts of the long recension
l	the Latin manuscripts of the long recension
S	the Syriac abridgment (the short recension)
S ^f	fragments of the Syriac version of the middle recension
A	the Armenian version (middle recension)
C	the Coptic version (middle recension)
Arabic	the Arabic version (middle recension)

The Latin translation of the middle recension survived into modern times in only two manuscripts (one of which is now lost). Both the Armenian and Arabic versions appear to have been translated from Syriac; of that version only three sets of fragments are known. The Coptic version survives in two fragmentary manuscripts.¹⁸

For the letter to the Romans, which has a separate textual history, the following are the main additional witnesses:

G	Codex Parisiensis-Colbertinus (10th–11th cent.)
H	Codex Hierosolymitanus S. Sabae (10th cent.)
K	Codex Sinaiticus 519 (10th cent.)
T	Codex Taurinensis (13th cent.)
Sm, Am	the Syriac and Armenian versions of various narratives of Ignatius's martyrdom

Other abbreviations used in the apparatus (in addition to those above) include the following:

Ant Antiochus the Monk (ca. 620)

18. For bibliographic details regarding the various witnesses listed above, consult Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 3–4.

Eus	Eusebius (ca. 325)
JnD	John of Damascus (8th cent.)
Sch	W. R. Schoedel (1985)
Sev	Severus of Antioch (ca. 515)
Tht	Theodoret (ca. 446)
Zn	T. Zahn (1873)

The order in which the letters are presented is that of Eusebius (*Church History* 3.36), which reflects a geographical arrangement based upon the order of cities from which and to which they were sent (cf. above, “Setting and Occasion”). In G (Codex Mediceo-Laurentianus), however, they stand in the following order:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Smyrnaeans</i> | 4. <i>Magnesians</i> |
| 2. <i>Polycarp</i> | 5. <i>Philadelphians</i> |
| 3. <i>Ephesians</i> | 6. <i>Trallians</i> |

This sequence is consistent with Polycarp's remark to the Philipians (Pol. *Phil.* 13.2)—“We are sending you the letters of Ignatius that were sent to us by him [i.e., the letters to the Smyrnaeans and Polycarp] together with any others that we have in our possession [i.e., the letter to the Ephesians, etc.]”—and may well represent the order of the letters in the earliest collection made of them.

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THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE EPHESIANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church at Ephesus in Asia, blessed with greatness through the fullness of God the Father, predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory forever, united and elect through genuine suffering by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God, a church most worthy of blessing: heartiest greetings in Jesus Christ and in blameless joy.

Thanks for Visit and Assistance

1 I welcomed in God your well-beloved name, which you possess by reason of your righteous nature, characterized by faith in and love of Christ Jesus our Savior. Being imitators of God, once you took on new life through the blood of God you completed perfectly the task so natural to you. **2** For when you heard that I was on my way from Syria in chains for the sake of our shared name and hope, and was hoping through your prayers to succeed in fighting with wild beasts in Rome—in order that by so succeeding I might be able to be a disciple—you hurried to visit me. **3** Since, therefore, I have received

Salutation *the Image-bearer* Gk *Theophoros*. In Greek inscriptions the term is commonly used as a title, describing those who carry divine images or shrines in religious processions (imagery and terminology that Ignatius applies to the Christian community in 9.2). It is possible that here the term is used as a name (“Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus”); if so, it would be the first instance of such a usage. **1.1 name** I.e., that of “Christian.” • *by reason . . . nature* Other ancient authorities read *possess by natural right in an upright and righteous mind*

in God’s name your whole congregation in the person of Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love who is also your earthly bishop, I pray that you will love him in accordance with the standard set by Jesus Christ and that all of you will be like him. For blessed is the one who has graciously allowed you, worthy as you are, to have such a bishop.

2 Now concerning my fellow servant Burrhus, who is by God’s will your deacon, blessed in every respect, I pray that he may remain with me both for your honor and the bishop’s. And Crocus also, who is worthy of God and of you, whom I received as a living example of your love, has refreshed me in every way; may the Father of Jesus Christ likewise refresh him, together with Onesimus, Burrhus, Euplus, and Fronto, in whom I saw all of you with respect to love. **2** May I always have joy in you—if, that is, I am worthy. It is proper, therefore, in every way to glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you, so that you, joined together in a united obedience and subject to the bishop and the council of presbyters, may be sanctified in every respect.

Obedience to the Bishop

3 I am not commanding you, as though I were someone important. For even though I am in chains for the sake of the Name, I have not yet been perfected in Jesus Christ. For now I am only beginning to be a disciple, and I speak to you as my fellow students. For I need to be trained by you in faith, instruction, endurance, and patience. **2** But since love does not allow me to be silent concerning you, I have therefore taken the initiative to encourage you, so that you may run together in harmony with the mind of God. For Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops appointed throughout the world are in the mind of Christ.

1.3 earthly Some ancient authorities omit this word. If original, the contrast is likely with Christ, their heavenly bishop. **2.1 pray** Or *wish*.

4 Thus it is proper for you to run together in harmony with the mind of the bishop, as you are in fact doing. For your council of presbyters, which is worthy of its name and worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as strings to a lyre. Therefore in your unanimity and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. **2** You must join this chorus, every one of you, so that by being harmonious in unanimity and taking your pitch from God you may sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, in order that he may both hear you and, on the basis of what you do well, acknowledge that you are members of his Son. It is, therefore, advantageous for you to be in perfect unity, in order that you may always have a share in God.

5 For if I in a short time experienced such fellowship with your bishop, which was not merely human but spiritual, how much more do I congratulate you who are united with him, as the church is with Jesus Christ and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, so that all things may be harmonious in unity. **2** Let no one be misled: if anyone is not within the sanctuary, he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop together with the whole church! **3** Therefore whoever does not meet with the congregation thereby demonstrates his arrogance and has separated himself, for it is written: “God opposes the arrogant.” Let us, therefore, be careful not to oppose the bishop, in order that we may be obedient to God.

6 Furthermore, the more anyone observes that the bishop is silent, the more one should fear him. For everyone whom the Master of the house sends to manage his own house we must welcome as we would the one who sent him. It is obvious, therefore, that we must regard the bishop as the Lord himself. **2** Now Onesimus himself

5.2 *bread of God* Cf. John 6:33. **5.3** *separated* Or *judged*. • *God...arrogant* Prov. 3:34; cf. James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5. • *be obedient to God* One ancient authority reads *belong to God by our subjugation*.

highly praises your orderly conduct in God, reporting that you all live in accordance with the truth and that no heresy has found a home among you. Indeed, you do not so much as listen to anyone unless he speaks truthfully about Jesus Christ.

Warnings about Teachers of Error

7 For there are some who are accustomed to carrying about the Name maliciously and deceitfully while doing other things unworthy of God. You must avoid them as wild beasts. For they are mad dogs that bite by stealth; you must be on your guard against them, for their bite is hard to heal. **2** There is only one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord.

8 Therefore let no one deceive you, just as you are not now deceived, seeing that you belong entirely to God. For when no dissension capable of tormenting you is established among you, then you indeed live God’s way. I am a humble sacrifice for you and I dedicate myself to you Ephesians, a church that is famous forever. **2** Those who belong to the flesh cannot do spiritual things, nor can those who are spiritual do fleshly things, just as faith cannot do the things of unfaithfulness, nor unfaithfulness the things of faith. Moreover, even those things that you do according to the flesh are in fact spiritual, for you do everything in Jesus Christ.

6.2 *heresy* Or *faction*. • *unless...Christ* An editor’s emendation. One ancient authority reads *except Jesus Christ speaking in truth*; another has a grammatically impossible reading. **7.2** *God in man* Other ancient authorities read *God come in flesh* (cf. John 1:14). **8.1** *dissension* Other ancient authorities read *lust*. **8.2** *Those who belong... the things of faith* Cf. Rom. 8:5, 8.

9 But I have learned that certain people from elsewhere have passed your way with evil doctrine, but you did not allow them to sow it among you. You covered up your ears in order to avoid receiving the things being sown by them, because you are stones of a temple, prepared beforehand for the building of God the Father, hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a rope the Holy Spirit; your faith is what lifts you up, and love is the way that leads up to God. **2** So you are all participants together in a shared worship, God-bearers and temple-bearers, Christ-bearers, bearers of holy things, adorned in every respect with the commandments of Jesus Christ. I too celebrate with you, since I have been judged worthy to speak with you through this letter, and to rejoice with you because you love nothing in human life, only God.

Response to Maltreatment

10 Pray continually for the rest of humankind as well, that they may find God, for there is in them hope for repentance. Therefore allow them to be instructed by you, at least by your deeds. **2** In response to their anger, be gentle; in response to their boasts, be humble; in response to their slander, offer prayers; in response to their errors, be steadfast in the faith; in response to their cruelty, be civilized; do not be eager to imitate them. **3** Let us show by our forbearance that we are their brothers and sisters, and let us be eager to be imitators of the Lord,

9.1 *from elsewhere have passed your way* Or *from there have passed by*. • *temple, prepared beforehand* An editor's emendation. Some ancient authorities read *temple of the Father, prepared*. **9.2** *carrying . . . things* Here Ignatius applies to the Ephesians the image of a pagan religious procession, in which the participants carry with them their gods, idols, shrines, etc. • *in human life, only God* An editor's emendation. The ancient authorities may be translated *in your new way of life except God*. **10.2** *steadfast in the faith* Cf. Col. 1:23. **10.3** *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*.

to see who can be the more wronged, who the more cheated, who the more rejected, in order that no weed of the devil may be found among you, but that with complete purity and self-control you may abide in Christ Jesus physically and spiritually.

The Last Times: Both Cosmic and Personal

11 These are the last times. Therefore let us be reverent; let us fear the patience of God, lest it become a judgment against us. For let us either fear the wrath to come or love the grace that is present, one of the two; only let us be found in Christ Jesus, which leads to true life. **2** Let nothing appeal to you apart from him, in whom I carry around these chains (my spiritual pearls!), by which I hope, through your prayers, to rise again. May I always share in them, in order that I may be found in the company of the Christians of Ephesus, who have always been in agreement with the apostles by the power of Jesus Christ.

12 I know who I am and to whom I am writing. I am a convict; you have received mercy. I am in danger; you are secure. **2** You are the highway of those who are being killed for God's sake; you are fellow initiates of Paul, who was sanctified, who was approved, who is deservedly blessed—may I be found in his footsteps when I reach God!—who in every letter remembers you in Christ Jesus.

Frequent and Harmonious Meetings

13 Therefore make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently,

10.3 *cheated* Cf. 1 Cor. 6:7. **12.2** *highway* Ephesus was on the route by which prisoners from the East would be taken to Rome; Ignatius seems to suggest that their spiritual position corresponds to their geographical location. **13.1** *to give thanks and glory to God* Or possibly *for the Eucharist and glory of God*.

the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith. **2** There is nothing better than peace, by which all warfare among those in heaven and those on earth is abolished.

Words versus Actions

14 None of these things escapes your notice, if you have perfect faith and love toward Jesus Christ. For these are the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning and love is the end, and the two, when they exist in unity, are God. Everything else that contributes to excellence follows from them. **2** No one professing faith sins, nor does anyone possessing love hate. The tree is known by its fruit; thus those who profess to be Christ's will be recognized by their actions. For the work is a matter not of what one promises now, but of persevering to the end in the power of faith.

15 It is better to be silent and be real than to talk and not be real. It is good to teach, if one does what one says. Now there is one teacher, who spoke and it happened; indeed, even the things that he has done in silence are worthy of the Father. **2** The one who truly possesses the word of Jesus is also able to hear his silence, so that he may be perfect, so that he may act through what he says and be known through his silence. **3** Nothing is hidden from the Lord; even our secrets are close to him. Therefore let us do everything with the knowledge that he dwells in us, in order that we may be his temples, and he may be in us as our God—as, in fact, he really is, as will be made clear in our sight by the love that we justly have for him.

14.2 *The tree . . . fruit* Cf. Matt. 12:33. • *the work* I.e., Christianity; cf. *Rom.* 3.3. **15.1** *spoke and it happened* Ps. 33(LXX 32):9. • *as our God* Some ancient authorities omit *our*.

The Stench of Evil Teaching

16 Do not be misled, my brothers and sisters: those who adulterously corrupt households will not inherit the kingdom of God. **2** Now if those who do such things physically are put to death, how much more if by evil teaching someone corrupts faith in God, for which Jesus Christ was crucified! Such a person, having polluted himself, will go to the unquenchable fire, as will also the one who listens to him.

17 The Lord accepted the ointment upon his head for this reason: that he might breathe incorruptibility upon the church. Do not be anointed with the stench of the teaching of the ruler of this age, lest he take you captive and rob you of the life set before you. **2** Why do we not all become wise by receiving God's knowledge, which is Jesus Christ? Why do we foolishly perish, ignoring the gracious gift that the Lord has truly sent?

The Mystery of Jesus' Death

18 My spirit is a humble sacrifice for the cross, which is a stumbling block to unbelievers but salvation and eternal life to us. Where is the wise? Where is the debater? Where is the boasting of those who are thought to be intelligent? **2** For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God's plan, both from the seed of David and of the Holy Spirit. He was born and was baptized in order that by his suffering he might cleanse the water.

19 Now the virginity of Mary and her giving birth were hidden from the ruler of this age, as was also the death of the Lord—three mysteries to be loudly proclaimed, yet which were accomplished

16.1 *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*. • *will not inherit . . . God* Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9–10. **17.1** *The Lord . . . head* Cf. Matt. 26:6–13. **18.1** *a stumbling block to unbelievers* Cf. 1 Cor. 1:23. • *Where is the wise . . . debater* Cf. 1 Cor. 1:20. **18.2** *God's* One ancient authority omits this word. • *water* I.e., the water of baptism.

in the silence of God. **2** How, then, were they revealed to the ages? A star shone forth in heaven brighter than all the stars; its light was indescribable and its strangeness caused amazement. All the rest of the constellations, together with the sun and moon, formed a chorus around the star, yet the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity about the origin of this strange phenomenon, which was so unlike the others. **3** Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life; and what had been prepared by God began to take effect. As a result, all things were thrown into ferment, because the abolition of death was being carried out.

Promise of a Second Letter

20 If Jesus Christ, in response to your prayer, should reckon me worthy, and if it is his will, in a second letter that I intend to write to you I will further explain to you the subject about which I have begun to speak, namely, the divine plan with respect to the new man Jesus Christ, involving faith in him and love for him, his suffering and resurrection, **2** especially if the Lord reveals anything to me. All of you, individually and collectively, gather together in grace, by name, in one faith and one Jesus Christ, who physically was a descendant of David, who is Son of Man and Son of God, in order that you may obey the bishop and the council of presbyters with an undisturbed mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.

19.3 *magic . . . abolished* Other ancient authorities read *magic was dissolved and every wicked spell vanished; ignorance was abolished and the ancient kingdom was destroyed.* **20.1** *faith . . . for him* Or *his faith and his love.* **20.2** *reveals . . . gather* An editor's emendation; the ancient authorities read *reveals to me that all of you, individually and collectively, continue to gather.* • *one* Other ancient authorities read *in.*

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

21 I am devoted to you and to those whom for the honor of God you sent to Smyrna, from where I am writing to you, with thanksgiving to the Lord and love for Polycarp as well as for you. Remember me, as Jesus Christ remembers you. **2** Pray for the church in Syria, from where I am being led to Rome in chains, as I—the very least of the faithful there—have been judged worthy of serving the glory of God. Farewell in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, our shared hope.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE MAGNESIANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church at Magnesia on the Maeander, which has been blessed through the grace of God the Father in Christ Jesus our Savior, in whom I greet her and wish her heartiest greetings in God the Father and in Jesus Christ.

Chains and Worthiness

1 When I learned how well ordered your love toward God is, I rejoiced and resolved to address you in the faith of Jesus Christ. **2** For inasmuch as I have been judged worthy to bear a most godly name, in these chains that I bear I sing the praises of the churches, and I pray that in them there may be a union of flesh and spirit that comes from Jesus Christ, our never-failing life, and of faith and love, to which nothing is preferable, and—what is more important—of Jesus and the Father. In him we will reach God, if we patiently endure all the abuse of the ruler of this age and escape.

Obedience to the Bishop

2 Inasmuch as I was found worthy to see you in the persons of Damas, your godly bishop, and your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and my fellow servant, the deacon Zotion—may I enjoy

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. Eph. Salutation. **1.2** *never-failing* Or *everlasting* or *constant*.

his company, because he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the council of presbyters as to the law of Jesus Christ.

3 Indeed, it is right for you also not to take advantage of the youthfulness of your bishop but to give him all the respect due him in accordance with the power of God the Father, just as I know that the holy presbyters likewise have not taken advantage of his youthful appearance but defer to him as one who is wise in God; yet not really to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all. **2** For the honor, therefore, of the one who loved you it is right to be obedient without any hypocrisy, for it is not so much a matter of deceiving this bishop who is seen but of cheating the one who is unseen. In such a case he must reckon not with the flesh but with God, who knows our secrets.

4 It is right, therefore, that we not just be called Christians, but that we actually be Christians, unlike some who call a man bishop but do everything without regard for him. Such people do not appear to me to act in good conscience, inasmuch as they do not validly meet together in accordance with the commandment.

Two Ways

5 Seeing then that all things have an end, two things together lie before us, death and life, and everyone will go to his own place. **2** For just as there are two coinages, the one of God and the other of the world, and each of them has its own stamp impressed upon it, so the unbelievers bear the stamp of this world, but the faithful in love bear the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ, whose life is not in us unless we voluntarily choose to die into his suffering.

3.1 *one who is wise* Other ancient authorities read *ones who are wise*. **3.2** *you* Some ancient authorities read *us*.

Further Comments about Obedience to the Bishop

6 Since, therefore, in the persons mentioned above I have by faith seen and loved the whole congregation, I have this advice: Be eager to do everything in godly harmony, the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons, who are especially dear to me, since they have been entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who before the ages was with the Father and appeared at the end of time. **2** Let all, therefore, accept the same attitude as God and respect one another, and let no one regard his neighbor in merely human terms, but in Jesus Christ love one another always. Let there be nothing among you that is capable of dividing you, but be united with the bishop and with those who lead, as an example and lesson of incorruptibility.

7 Therefore as the Lord did nothing without the Father, either by himself or through the apostles (for he was united with him), so you must not do anything without the bishop and the presbyters. Do not attempt to convince yourselves that anything done apart from the others is right, but, gathering together, let there be one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope, with love and blameless joy, which is Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is better. **2** Let all of you run together as to one temple of God, as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One.

Judaism and Christianity

8 Do not be deceived by strange doctrines or antiquated myths, since they are worthless. For if we continue to live in accordance

6.1 *the bishop . . . council* Other ancient authorities read *the bishop presiding after the model of God and the presbyters after the model of the council*. **7.2** *who came forth . . . to the One* Cf. John 16:28.

with Judaism, we admit that we have not received grace. **2** For the most godly prophets lived in accordance with Christ Jesus. This is why they were persecuted, being inspired as they were by his grace in order that those who are disobedient might be fully convinced that there is one God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word that came forth from silence, who in every respect pleased the one who sent him.

9 If, then, those who had lived according to ancient practices came to the newness of hope, no longer keeping the sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through him and his death (which some deny), the mystery through which we came to believe, and because of which we patiently endure, in order that we may be found to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher, **2** how can we possibly live without him, whom even the prophets, who were his disciples in the Spirit, were expecting as their teacher? This is why the one for whom they rightly waited raised them from the dead when he came.

10 Therefore let us not be unaware of his goodness. For if he were to imitate the way we act, we are lost. Therefore, having become his disciples, let us learn to live in accordance with Christianity. For whoever is called by any other name than this one does not belong to God. **2** Throw out, therefore, the bad yeast, which has become stale and sour, and reach for the new yeast, which is Jesus Christ. Be salted with him, so that none of you become rotten, for by your odor you will be convicted. **3** It is utterly absurd to profess Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, in which every tongue believed and was brought together to God.

8.2 *from* Other ancient authorities read *not from*. **10.3** *every tongue . . . together* Cf. Isa. 66:18.

The Reality of Jesus' Human Experiences

11 Now I write these things, my dear friends, not because I have learned that any of you are actually like that, but, as one who is less than you, I want to forewarn you not to get snagged on the hooks of worthless opinions but instead to be fully convinced about the birth and the suffering and the resurrection that took place during the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. These things were truly and most assuredly done by Jesus Christ, our hope, from which may none of you ever be turned aside.

Obedience to the Bishop

12 May I have joy in you in every respect—if, that is, I am worthy. For even though I am in chains, I cannot be compared to one of you who are at liberty. I know that you are not conceited, for you have Jesus Christ within you. Moreover, I know that when I praise you, you feel ashamed, as it is written: “The righteous one is his own accuser.”

13 Be eager, therefore, to be firmly grounded in the precepts of the Lord and the apostles, in order that in whatever you do, you may prosper, physically and spiritually, in faith and love, in the Son and the Father and in the Spirit, in the beginning and at the end, together with your most distinguished bishop and that beautifully woven spiritual crown which is your council of presbyters and the godly deacons.
2 Be subject to the bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ in the flesh was to the Father, and as the apostles were to Christ and to the Father, that there may be unity, both physical and spiritual.

12 Prov. 18:17 LXX. **13.1** *in whatever . . . prosper* Ps. 1:3. **13.2** *in the flesh* Some ancient authorities omit this phrase. • *and to the Father* Some ancient authorities add *and to the Spirit*.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

14 Knowing as I do that you are full of God, I have only briefly exhorted you. Remember me in your prayers, in order that I may reach God; remember also the church in Syria, of which I am not worthy to be called a member. For I need your united prayer and love in God, that the church in Syria may be judged worthy of being refreshed by the dew of your fervent prayers.

15 The Ephesians greet you from Smyrna, from where I am writing you. They, like you, are here for the glory of God, and have refreshed me in every respect, together with Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans. All the other churches also greet you in honor of Jesus Christ. Farewell in godly harmony to you who possess an undivided spirit, which is Jesus Christ.

14 *the dew . . . prayers* An editor's emendation. Some ancient authorities read *with dew by means of your church*.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE TRALLIANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the holy church at Tralles in Asia, dearly loved by God the Father of Jesus Christ, elect and worthy of God, at peace in flesh and spirit through the suffering of Jesus Christ, who is our hope when we rise to be with him, which I greet in the fullness of God in the apostolic manner and offer heartiest greetings.

Praise for the Trallians

1 I know that you have a disposition that is blameless and unwavering in patient endurance, not from habit but by nature, inasmuch as Polybius your bishop informed me when, by the will of God and Jesus Christ, he visited me in Smyrna; so heartily did he rejoice with me, a prisoner in Christ Jesus, that in him I saw your entire congregation. **2** Having received, therefore, your godly good will through him, I praised God when I found out that you were, as I had learned, imitators of God.

Obedience to the Bishop

2 For when you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are living not in accordance with human standards but in accordance with Jesus Christ, who died for us in order that by believing in his death you might escape death. **2** It is essential, therefore, that you continue your current practice and do nothing without the bishop, but be subject also to the council of presbyters

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. *Eph.* Salutation. • *spirit* Some ancient authorities read *blood*.

as to the apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope, in whom we shall be found, if we so live. **3** Furthermore, it is necessary that those who are deacons of the mysteries of Jesus Christ please everyone in every respect. For they are not merely deacons of food and drink but ministers of God's church. Therefore they must avoid criticism as though it were fire.

3 Similarly, let everyone respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, just as they should respect the bishop, who is a model of the Father, and the presbyters as God's council and as the band of the apostles. Without these no group can be called a church. **2** I am sure that you agree with me regarding these matters, for I received a living example of your love and still have it with me in the person of your bishop, whose very demeanor is a great lesson and whose gentleness is his power; I think that even the godless respect him. **3** Because I love you I am sparing you, though I could write more sharply on his behalf. But I did not think myself qualified for this, that I, a convict, should give you orders as though I were an apostle.

Suffering and True Discipleship

4 I have many deep thoughts in union with God, but I take my own measure, lest I perish by boasting. For now I must be more careful and pay no attention to those who flatter me, for those who speak to me in this manner torture me. **2** For while I strongly desire to suffer, I do not know whether I am worthy, for the envy, though not apparent to many, wages war against me all the more. Therefore I need gentleness, by which the ruler of this age is destroyed.

2.2 *live* Some ancient authorities add *in him*. **2.3** *mysteries* Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1. • *merely deacons* Or *merely servers*. **3.3** *But . . . qualified* Gk is corrupt; another possible reading is *But I was not empowered*. **4.2** *envy* I.e., of Satan.

5 Am I not able to write to you about heavenly things? But I am afraid to, lest I should cause harm to you, who are mere babes. So bear with me, lest you be choked by what you are unable to swallow. **2** For I myself, though I am in chains and can comprehend heavenly things, the ranks of the angels and the hierarchy of principalities, things visible and invisible—despite all this I am not yet a disciple. For we still lack many things, so that we may not lack God.

The Danger of False Teaching

6 I urge you, therefore—yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ—partake only of Christian food, and keep away from every strange plant, which is heresy. **2** These people, while pretending to be trustworthy, mix Jesus Christ with themselves—like those who administer a deadly drug with honeyed wine, which the unsuspecting victim accepts without fear, and so with fatal pleasure drinks down death.

Safety under the Bishop

7 Therefore be on your guard against such people. And you will be, provided that you are not puffed up with pride and that you cling inseparably to Jesus Christ and to the bishop and to the commandments of the apostles. **2** The one who is within the sanctuary is clean, but the one who is outside the sanctuary is not clean. That is, whoever does anything without the bishop and council of presbyters and deacons does not have a clean conscience.

5.1 Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1–2. 5.2 *heavenly things . . . invisible* Cf. Col. 1:16. 6.2 *themselves* Gk is corrupt; some ancient versions read *themselves*; Lightfoot emends to *poison*. • *without fear* An editor's emendation. Some ancient authorities read *gladly*. 7.1 *Jesus Christ and* Some ancient authorities read *God, Jesus Christ, and*.

Advance Warning against Error

8 Not that I know of any such thing among you; rather, I am guarding you in advance because you are very dear to me and I foresee the snares of the devil. You, therefore, must arm yourselves with gentleness and regain your strength in faith (which is the flesh of the Lord) and in love (which is the blood of Jesus Christ). **2** Let none of you hold a grudge against his neighbor. Do not give any opportunity to the pagans, lest the godly majority be blasphemed on account of a few foolish people. For “woe to the one through whose folly my name is blasphemed among any.”

The Reality of Jesus' Human Experiences

9 Be deaf, therefore, whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the family of David, who was the son of Mary; who really was born, who both ate and drank; who really was persecuted under Pontius Pilate, who really was crucified and died while those in heaven and on earth and under the earth looked on; **2** who, moreover, really was raised from the dead when his Father raised him up. In the same way his Father will likewise also raise up in Christ Jesus us who believe in him. Apart from him we have no true life.

10 But if, as some atheists (that is, unbelievers) say, he suffered in appearance only (while they exist in appearance only!), why am I in chains? And why do I want to fight with wild beasts? If that is the case, I die for no reason; what is more, I am telling lies about the Lord.

11 Flee, therefore, from these wicked offshoots that bear deadly fruit; if anyone even tastes it, he dies on the spot. These people are not the Father's planting. **2** For if they were, they would appear as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be imperishable—the

8.1 *and regain your strength* An emendation. Some ancient authorities read *and renew yourselves*. 8.2 *woe . . . among any* Cf. Isa. 52:5. 11.1 Cf. Matt. 15:13.

same cross by which he, through his suffering, calls you who are his members. The head, therefore, cannot be born without members, since God promises unity, which he himself is.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

12 I greet you from Smyrna together with the churches of God that are present with me, people who have refreshed me in every respect, physically as well as spiritually. **2** My chains, which I carry around for the sake of Jesus Christ while praying that I may reach God, exhort you: persevere in your unanimity and in prayer with one another. For it is right for each one of you, and especially the presbyters, to encourage the bishop, to the honor of the Father and to the honor of Jesus Christ and of the apostles. **3** I pray that you will listen to me in love, so that I may not by virtue of having written to you become a witness against you. But also pray for me, for I need your love in the mercy of God so that I may be reckoned worthy of the fate that I am eager to obtain, lest I be found disqualified.

13 The love of the Smyrnaeans and of the Ephesians greets you. Remember in your prayers the church in Syria, of which I am not worthy to be considered a member, being as I am the very least of them. **2** Farewell in Jesus Christ. Be subject to the bishop as to the commandment, and likewise to the council of presbyters. And love one another, each one of you, with an undivided heart. **3** My spirit is dedicated to you, not only now but also when I reach God. For I am still in danger, but the Father is faithful: in Jesus Christ he will fulfill my prayer and yours. May we be found blameless in him.

12.2 *and to the honor of Jesus Christ* Some ancient authorities read *and of Jesus Christ*; others read *of Jesus Christ*. **12.3** *that I am eager* An emendation; both text and meaning are uncertain. • *lest . . . disqualified* Cf. 1 Cor. 9:27. **13.3** *we* Some ancient authorities read *you*.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE ROMANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church that has found mercy in the majesty of the Father Most High and Jesus Christ his only son, the church beloved and enlightened through the will of the one who willed all things that exist, in accordance with faith in and love for Jesus Christ our God, which also presides in the place of the district of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and presiding over love, observing the law of Christ, bearing the name of the Father, which I also greet in the name of Jesus Christ, son of the Father; to those who are united in flesh and spirit to every commandment of his, who have been filled with the grace of God without wavering and filtered clear of every alien color: heartiest greetings blamelessly in Jesus Christ our God.

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. *Eph.* Salutation. • *faith in and love for Jesus* Or *faith and love of Jesus*; other ancient authorities omit *faith [in] and*. • *presides . . . Romans* This phrase, as wordy in Greek as in English, has been the subject of considerable discussion, primarily because of its obvious bearing on the question of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. A number of alternative ways of understanding the phrase have been proposed, most of which either strain the meaning of the words or require the emendation of a well-established text, and thus have little to commend them. Here the church (not the bishop) is said to *preside* or *rule* (cf. *Magn.* 6), presumably over the district in which it is located. • *presiding over* Or *preeminent in*. • *observing . . . Christ* Other ancient authorities read *bearing the name of Christ*, likely because of the influence of the following *bearing the name of the Father*.

A Request Not to Hinder His Martyrdom

1 Since by praying to God I have succeeded in seeing your godly faces, so that I have received more than I asked—for I hope to greet you in chains for Christ Jesus, if it is his will for me to be reckoned worthy to reach the goal. **2** For the beginning is auspicious, provided that I attain the grace to receive my fate without interference. For I am afraid of your love, in that it may do me wrong; for it is easy for you to do what you want, but it is difficult for me to reach God, unless you spare me.

2 For I do not want you to please people, but to please God, as you in fact are doing. For I will never again have an opportunity such as this to reach God, nor can you, if you remain silent, be credited with a greater accomplishment. For if you remain silent and leave me alone, I will be a word of God, but if you love my flesh, then I will again be a mere voice. **2** Grant me nothing more than to be poured out as an offering to God while there is still an altar ready, so that in love you may form a chorus and sing to the Father in Jesus Christ, because God has judged the bishop from Syria worthy to be found in the west, having summoned him from the east. It is good to be setting from the world to God in order that I may rise to him.

1.1 *so that . . . asked* An editor's emendation; most ancient authorities read *faces*, even as I have been asking to receive yet more; the difference in Greek is a single letter. **1.2** *grace* Other ancient authorities read *goal*. **2.1** *For I do not . . . please God* Cf. 1 Thess. 2:4. • *a word of God . . . a mere voice* The contrast is between *word* as an intelligible or meaningful utterance and *voice* as an irrational cry or inarticulate sound. • *love my flesh* I.e., *wish to keep me alive*. Ignatius's fear was that the Roman Christians, desiring to preserve his (physical) life, would plead his case before the magistrates and obtain his release, thereby frustrating his desire for martyrdom, through which he hoped to preserve his (spiritual) life. **2.2** *west . . . east* Lit. *in the setting* [of the sun] . . . *from the rising* [of the sun]; notice the play on these words in the next sentence.

Martyrdom: The True Test of a Christian

3 You have never envied anyone; you taught others. And my wish is that those instructions that you issue when teaching disciples will remain in force. **2** Just pray that I will have strength both outwardly and inwardly so that I may not just talk about it but want to do it, so that I may not merely be called a Christian but actually prove to be one. For if I prove to be one, I can also be called one, and then I will be faithful when I am no longer visible to the world. **3** Nothing that is visible is good. For our God Jesus Christ is more visible now that he is in the Father. The work is not a matter of persuasive rhetoric; rather, Christianity is greatest when it is hated by the world.

Sacrifice as True Discipleship

4 I am writing to all the churches and am insisting to everyone that I die for God of my own free will—unless you hinder me. I implore you: do not be unseasonably kind to me. Let me be food for the wild beasts, through whom I can reach God. I am God's wheat, and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, so that I may prove to be pure bread. **2** Better yet, coax the wild beasts, so that they may become my tomb and leave nothing of my body behind, lest I become a burden to anyone once I have fallen asleep. Then I will truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world will no longer see my body. Pray to the Lord on my behalf, so that through these instruments I may prove to be a sacrifice to God. **3** I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul: they were apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am even now still a slave. But if I suffer, I will be

3.3 *work* I.e., Christianity; cf. *Eph.* 14.2. **4.1** *unseasonably kind* Apparently an allusion to an ancient proverb: "An unseasonable kindness is no different than hostility." • *food* Some ancient authorities omit this word. • *bread* Some ancient authorities read *bread of God*; others read *bread of Christ*. **4.2** *the Lord* Some ancient authorities read *Christ*.

a freedman of Jesus Christ and will rise up free in him. In the meantime, as a prisoner I am learning to desire nothing.

Desire to Face, Not Flee, Martyrdom

5 From Syria all the way to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, on land and sea, by night and day, chained amidst ten leopards (that is, a company of soldiers) who only get worse when they are well treated. Yet because of their mistreatment I am becoming more of a disciple; nevertheless I am not thereby justified. **2** May I have the pleasure of the wild beasts that have been prepared for me; and I pray that they prove to be prompt with me. I will even coax them to devour me quickly, not as they have done with some, whom they were too timid to touch. And if when I am willing and ready they are not, I will force them. **3** Bear with me—I know what is best for me. Now at last I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing visible or invisible envy me, so that I may reach Jesus Christ. Fire and cross and battles with wild beasts, mutilation, mangling, wrenching of bones, the hacking of limbs, the crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil—let these come upon me, only let me reach Jesus Christ!

6 Neither the ends of the earth nor the kingdoms of this age are of any use to me. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ than to rule over the ends of the earth. Him I seek, who died on our behalf; him I long for, who rose again for our sake. The pains of birth are upon me.

5.1 *I am not thereby justified* 1 Cor. 4:4. **5.3** *mutilation, mangling* Some ancient authorities read *mutilation and*; others omit.

Longing for Life through Death

2 Bear with me, brothers and sisters: do not keep me from living; do not desire my death. Do not give to the world one who wants to belong to God or tempt him with material things. Let me receive the pure light, for when I arrive there I will be a human being. **3** Allow me to be an imitator of the suffering of my God. If anyone has him within, let that person understand what I long for and sympathize with me, knowing what constrains me.

7 The ruler of this age wants to take me captive and corrupt my godly intentions. Therefore none of you who are present must help him. Instead take my side, that is, God's. Do not talk about Jesus Christ while you desire the world. **2** Do not let envy dwell among you. And if upon my arrival I myself should appeal to you, do not be persuaded by me; believe instead these things that I am writing to you. For though I am still alive, I am passionately in love with death as I write to you. My passionate love has been crucified and there is no fire of material longing within me, but only water living and speaking in me, saying within me, "Come to the Father." **3** I take no pleasure in corruptible food or the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who is of the seed of David; and for drink I want his blood, which is incorruptible love.

8 I no longer want to live according to human standards. And such will be the case, if you so desire. Do so desire, so that you also may be desired! **2** With these brief lines I am making my request of you.

6.2 *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*. • *tempt* An editor's emendation; one ancient authority reads *deceive*; the Gk manuscripts are defective. **7.2** *believe instead* Some ancient authorities read *be persuaded instead by*. • *passionate love* I.e., for the "world"; cf. Gal. 6:14. • *water living and speaking* So the Gk manuscripts; another ancient authority reads *living water welling up*; other ancient authorities vary widely.

Do believe me! And Jesus Christ, the unerring mouth by whom the Father has spoken truly, will make it clear to you that I am speaking truly. **3** Pray for me, that I may reach the goal. I write to you not according to human perspective but in accordance with the mind of God. If I suffer, you will have wanted it; if I am rejected, you will have hated me.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

9 Remember in your prayers the church in Syria, which has God for its shepherd in my place. Jesus Christ alone will be its bishop—as will your love. **2** But I myself am ashamed to be counted among them, for I am not worthy, since I am the very last of them and an untimely birth. But I have been granted the mercy to be someone, if I reach God. **3** My spirit greets you, as does the love of the churches that welcomed me in the name of Jesus Christ rather than as a mere transient. For even churches that did not lie on my way (that is, my physical route) went before me from city to city.

10 I write these things to you from Smyrna through the Ephesians, who are most worthy of blessing. With me, along with many others, is Crocus, a name very dear to me. **2** Regarding those who preceded me from Syria to Rome to the glory of God, I believe you have information. Let them know that I am near, for they are all worthy of God and of you, and it is quite proper for you to refresh them in every respect. **3** I am writing these things to you on the ninth day before the calends of September. Farewell until the end, in the patient endurance of Jesus Christ.

8.3 goal Some ancient authorities add *through the Holy Spirit*. **9.2 an untimely birth** Cf. 1 Cor. 15:8–9. **10.3 ninth . . . September** I.e., August 24.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE PHILADELPHIANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ at Philadelphia in Asia, one that has found mercy and is firmly established in godly harmony and unwaveringly rejoices in the suffering of our Lord, fully convinced of his resurrection in all mercy, which I greet in the blood of Jesus Christ, which is eternal and lasting joy, especially if they are at one with the bishop and the presbyters and deacons who are with him, who have been appointed by the mind of Jesus Christ, whom he, in accordance with his own will, securely established by his Holy Spirit.

Praise for the Bishop

1 I know that the bishop obtained a ministry (which is for the whole community) not by his own efforts or through people or out of vanity but in the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am impressed by his forbearance; he accomplishes more through silence than others do by talking. **2** For he is attuned to the commandments as a harp to its strings. Therefore my soul blesses his godly mind (well aware that it is virtuous and perfect), his steadfast character, and his lack of anger, as one living with all godly gentleness.

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. *Eph.* Salutation. • *Jesus* Other ancient authorities read *Lord Jesus*. **1.1 talking** Some ancient authorities add *purposelessly*. **1.2 as one living . . . gentleness** Or *in all gentleness of the living God*.

Warnings about Divisions

2 Therefore, as children of the light of truth, flee from division and false teaching. Where the shepherd is, there follow like sheep. **2** For many seemingly trustworthy wolves attempt, by means of wicked pleasure, to take captive the runners in God's race; but in your unity they will find no opportunity.

3 Stay away from the evil plants, which are not cultivated by Jesus Christ, because they are not the Father's planting. Not that I found any division among you: instead, I found that there had been a purification. **2** For all those who belong to God and Jesus Christ are with the bishop, and all those who repent and enter into the unity of the church will belong to God, so that they may be living in accordance with Jesus Christ. **3** Do not be misled, my brothers and sisters: if any follow a schismatic, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. If any hold to alien views, they disassociate themselves from the passion.

4 Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup that leads to unity through his blood; there is one altar, just as there is one bishop, together with the council of presbyters and the deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.

Safety in the Gospel and in the Church

5 My brothers and sisters, I am overflowing with love for you, and greatly rejoice as I watch out for your safety—yet not I, but Jesus Christ. Though I am in chains for his sake, I am all the more afraid, because I am still imperfect. But your prayer to God will make me perfect, so that I may attain the fate by which I have received mercy,

3.1 Cf. Matt. 15:13. **3.3** *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*. • *will not inherit . . . God* Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9–10. **5.1** *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*. • *to God* Some ancient authorities omit.

since I have taken refuge in the gospel as the flesh of Jesus and in the apostles as the council of presbyters of the church. **2** And we also love the prophets, because they anticipated the gospel in their preaching and set their hope on him and waited for him; because they also believed in him, they were saved, since they belong to the unity centered in Jesus Christ, saints worthy of love and admiration, approved by Jesus Christ and included in the gospel of our shared hope.

Warnings about Judaism

6 But if anyone expounds Judaism to you, do not listen to him. For it is better to hear about Christianity from a man who is circumcised than about Judaism from one who is not. But if either of them fails to speak about Jesus Christ, I look on them as tombstones and graves of the dead, upon which only the names of people are inscribed. **2** Flee, therefore, the evil tricks and traps of the ruler of this age, lest you be worn out by his schemes and grow weak in love. Instead gather together, all of you, with an undivided heart.

Dealings with the Church at Philadelphia

3 Now I give thanks to my God that I have a clear conscience in my dealings with you, and that no one can boast, either privately or publicly, that I was a burden to anyone in any respect, small or great. Moreover, I pray that all those to whom I spoke will not cause what I said to become a witness against them.

7 For even though certain people wanted to deceive me, humanly speaking, nevertheless the Spirit is not deceived, because it is from God; for it knows from where it comes and where it is going, and exposes the hidden things. I called out when I was with you; I

5.2 *our shared hope* Cf. 1 Tim. 1:1. **7.1** *the Spirit . . . going* Cf. John 3:8. • *exposes the hidden things* Cf. 1 Cor. 2:10.

was speaking with a loud voice, God’s voice: “Pay attention to the bishop, the council of presbyters, and the deacons.” **2** To be sure, there were those who suspected that I said these things because I knew in advance about the division caused by certain people. But the one for whose sake I am in chains is my witness that I did not learn this from any human being. No, the Spirit itself was preaching, saying these words: “Do nothing without the bishop. Guard your bodies as the temple of God. Love unity. Flee from divisions. Become imitators of Jesus Christ, just as he is of his Father.”

8 I was doing my part, therefore, as a man set on unity. But God does not dwell where there is division and anger. The Lord, however, forgives all who repent, if in repenting they return to the unity of God and the council of the bishop. I believe in the grace of Jesus Christ, who will free you from every restraint.

The Gospel versus Judaism

2 Moreover, I urge you to do nothing in a spirit of contentiousness, but in accordance with the teaching of Christ. For I heard some people say, “If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe it in the gospel.” And when I said to them, “It is written,” they answered me, “That is precisely the question.” But for me, the “archives” are Jesus Christ, the unalterable archives are his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith that comes through him; by these things I want, through your prayers, to be justified.

9 The priests, too, were good, but the high priest, entrusted with the Holy of Holies, is better; he alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God, for he himself is the door of the Father,

8.2 *archives* I.e., the (now called Old Testament) scriptures. **9.1** *high priest* Cf. Heb. 4:14–5:10. • *door* Cf. John 10:7, 9.

through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the apostles and the church enter in. All these come together in the unity of God. **2** But the gospel possesses something distinctive, namely, the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering, and the resurrection. For the beloved prophets preached in anticipation of him, but the gospel is the imperishable finished work. All these things together are good, if you believe with love.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

10 Since it has been reported to me that in answer to your prayer and the compassion that you have in Christ Jesus the church at Antioch in Syria is at peace, it is appropriate for you, as a church of God, to appoint a deacon to go there on a mission as God’s ambassador, to congratulate them when they have assembled together and to glorify the Name. **2** Blessed in Christ Jesus is the one who will be judged worthy of such ministry, and you yourselves will be glorified. It is certainly not impossible for you to do this for the name of God, if you are willing; indeed, the neighboring churches have sent bishops, and others presbyters and deacons.

11 Now concerning Philo, the deacon from Cilicia, a man with a good reputation, who even now assists me in the word of God, along with Rhaius Agathopus, a chosen man who followed me from Syria, having renounced this life: they speak well of you, and I give thanks to God on your behalf, because you received them as the Lord received you. But may those who dishonored them be redeemed by the grace of Jesus Christ.

9.2 *prophets . . . of him* Cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–12. **10.2** *Christ Jesus* Other ancient authorities read *Jesus Christ*. **11.1** *Rhaius* An editor’s emendation; some ancient authorities read *Rbeus*, others *Gaius*. Cf. *Smyrn.* 10.1.

2 The love of the brothers and sisters in Troas greets you. I am writing you from there through Burrhus, who was sent with me by the Ephesians and Smyrnaeans as a mark of honor. The Lord Jesus Christ will honor them; on him they set their hope in body, soul, and spirit with faith, love, and harmony. Farewell in Christ Jesus, our shared hope.

11.2 *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi*.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO THE SMYRNAEANS

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to the church of God the Father and of the beloved Jesus Christ at Smyrna in Asia, mercifully endowed with every spiritual gift, filled with faith and love, not lacking in any spiritual gift, most worthy of God, bearing holy things: heartiest greetings in a blameless spirit and the word of God.

The Reality of Jesus' Human Experiences

1 I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise, for I observed that you are established in an unshakable faith, having been nailed, as it were, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ in both body and spirit, and firmly established in love by the blood of Christ, totally convinced with regard to our Lord that he is truly of the family of David with respect to human descent, Son of God with respect to the divine will and power, truly born of a virgin, baptized by John in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him, **2** truly nailed in the flesh for us under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch (from its fruit we derive our existence, that is, from his divinely blessed suffering), in order that he might raise a banner for the ages through his resurrection for his saints and faithful people, whether among Jews or among Gentiles, in the one body of his church.

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. *Eph.* Salutation. **1.1** *the divine will and power* Lit. *the will and power*; some ancient authorities read *God's will and power*. • *baptized . . . by him* Cf. Matt. 3:15. **1.2** *its* I.e., the cross's.

2 For he suffered all these things for our sakes, in order that we might be saved; and he truly suffered just as he truly raised himself—not, as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in appearance only (it is they who exist in appearance only!). Indeed, their fate will be determined by what they think: they will become disembodied and demonic.

3 For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; **2** and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: “Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon.” And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood. For this reason they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. **3** And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father.

Warnings about Teachers of Error

4 Now I am advising you of these things, dear friends, knowing that you are of the same mind. But I am guarding you in advance against wild beasts in human form—people whom you must not only not welcome but, if possible, not even meet. Nevertheless, do pray for them, that somehow they might repent, difficult though it may be. But Jesus Christ, our true life, has power over this.

Martyrdom Motivated by Jesus’ Real Passion

2 For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only. Why, moreover, have I surrendered

2.1 *in order . . . saved* Some ancient authorities omit. **3.2** *Take hold . . . demon* Cf. Luke 24:39; the (now lost) *Gospel according to the Hebrews* and the *Teaching* [or possibly *Preaching*] of Peter are reported to have contained the same (or a very similar) saying. • *blood* Some ancient authorities read *spirit*.

myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts? But in any case, “near the sword” means “near to God”; “with the beasts” means “with God.” Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that I may suffer together with him! I endure everything because he himself, who is the perfect human being, empowers me.

5 Certain people ignorantly deny him, or rather have been denied by him, for they are advocates of death rather than of the truth. Neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses have persuaded them, nor, thus far, the gospel nor our own individual suffering; **2** for they think the same thing about us. For what good does it do me if someone praises me but blasphemes my Lord by not confessing that he was clothed in flesh? Anyone who does not acknowledge this thereby denies him completely and is clothed in a corpse. **3** Given that they are unbelievers, it did not seem worthwhile to me to record their names. Indeed, far be it from me even to remember them, until such time as they change their mind regarding the passion, which is our resurrection.

Bad Teachers and Bad Beliefs

6 Let no one be misled. Even the heavenly beings and the glory of angels and the rulers, both visible and invisible, are subject to judgment if they do not believe in the blood of Christ. Let the one who can accept this accept it. Do not let a high position make anyone proud, for faith and love are everything; nothing is preferable to them.

2 Now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ that came to us; note how contrary they are to the

4.2 *is* Some ancient authorities read *became*. **5.2** *they think . . . us* I.e., they have the same opinion of Ignatius’s suffering that they do of Christ’s: it is all “in appearance only.” • *it . . . someone* Some ancient authorities read *someone do me if he*. **6.1** *Christ* One ancient authority adds *who is God*. • *Let . . . it* Cf. Matt. 19:12.

mind of God. They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty. They abstain from Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by his goodness raised up.

7 Therefore those who deny the good gift of God perish in their contentiousness. It would be more to their advantage to love, in order that they might also rise up. **2** It is proper, therefore, to avoid such people and not speak about them either privately or publicly. Do pay attention, however, to the prophets and especially to the gospel, in which the passion has been made clear to us and the resurrection has been accomplished.

Obedience to the Bishop

8 Flee from divisions as the beginning of evils. You must all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and follow the council of presbyters as you would the apostles; respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop. Only that Eucharist which is under the authority of the bishop (or whomever he himself designates) is to be considered valid. **2** Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.

6.2 *or the one released* Some ancient authorities omit. • *They abstain . . .* Some editions begin chapter 7 here. **8.1** *beginning of evils* Some editions end chapter 7 here. **8.2** *catholic* This term here occurs in Christian literature for the first time. In later use (by ca. AD 200) the word “catholic” became a technical term designating “the Catholic Church” as opposed to the heretical sects, but here the expression is used in the sense of “universal” or “general” (thus the adjective could be attached to words like “resurrection” or “salvation” as well as to “church”), or possibly “whole” (conveying the idea of organic unity or completeness).

It is not permissible either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop. But whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid.

9 Finally, it is reasonable for us to come to our senses while we still have time to repent and turn to God. It is good to acknowledge God and the bishop. The one who honors the bishop has been honored by God; the one who does anything without the bishop’s knowledge serves the devil.

Thanks for Services Rendered

2 May all things, therefore, be yours in abundance in grace, for you are worthy. You refreshed me in every respect, and Jesus Christ will refresh you. In my absence and in my presence you loved me. God is your reward; if you endure everything for his sake, you will reach him.

10 You did well to welcome Philo and Rhaius Agathopus, who followed me for God’s sake, as deacons of God. They too give thanks to the Lord on your behalf because you refreshed them in every way. You will certainly not lose any of this! **2** May my spirit be a ransom on your behalf, and my chains as well, which you did not despise, nor were you ashamed of them. Nor will the perfect hope, Jesus Christ, be ashamed of you.

8.2 *love feast* Or *fellowship meal*. This congregational meal almost certainly included a celebration of the Eucharist. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:17–34; Jude 12. **9.2** *God . . . reward* Other ancient authorities read *God will reward you*; some editors (following an ancient Latin version) emend to *may God reward you*. **10.1** *Rhaius* An editor’s emendation; some ancient authorities read *Rheus*, others *Gaius*. Cf. *Phld.* 11.1. • *deacons* Or *ministers* or *servants*. • *of God* Some ancient authorities read *of Christ God*. **10.2** *hope* Some ancient authorities read *faith*.

Details about Antioch

11 Your prayer reached the church at Antioch in Syria; having come from there bound in the most God-pleasing chains I greet everyone, even though I am not worthy to be from there, for I am the very least of them. Nevertheless in accordance with the divine will I was judged worthy, not because of the witness of my own conscience, but by the grace of God, which I pray may be given to me in perfection, so that by your prayer I may reach God. **2** Therefore, in order that your work may become perfect both on earth and in heaven, it is appropriate that your church appoint, for the honor of God, a godly ambassador to go to Syria to congratulate them, because they are at peace and have regained their proper stature and their corporate life has been restored to its proper state. **3** It seemed to me, therefore, to be a deed worthy of God for you to send one of your own people with a letter, so that he might join in glorifying the tranquility that by God's will has come to them, and because they have now reached, thanks to your prayers, a safe harbor. Inasmuch as you are perfect, let your intentions also be perfect, for if you want to do well, God is ready to help you.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

12 The love of the brothers and sisters in Troas greets you. I am writing you from there through Burrhus, whom you, together with your Ephesian brothers and sisters, sent with me. He has refreshed me in every respect. Would that all were imitators of him, for he is a model of service to God. Grace will reward him in every respect. **2** I greet the bishop, so worthy of God, and the godly council of presbyters, and my fellow servants, the deacons, and all of you, indi-

11.3 *deed* . . . *God* Some ancient authorities read *worthy deed*. • *let* . . . *be* Or *aim at what is*. • *perfect* Cf. Phil. 3:15. **12.1** *brothers and sisters* Gk *adelphoi* (twice).

vidually and collectively, in the name of Jesus Christ and in his flesh and blood, his suffering and resurrection (which was both physical and spiritual), in unity with God and with you. Grace, mercy, peace, patience to you always.

13 I greet the households of my brothers with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows. I bid you farewell in the power of the Father. Philo, who is with me, greets you. **2** I greet the household of Gavia, and pray that she may be firmly grounded in faith and love both physically and spiritually. I greet Alce, a name very dear to me, and the incomparable Daphnus, and Eutecnus and everyone else individually. Farewell in the grace of God.

13.1 *Father* Some ancient authorities read *Spirit*. **13.2** *Gavia* Some ancient authorities read *Tavia*.

THE LETTER OF IGNATIUS TO POLYCARP

Salutation

Ignatius the Image-bearer to Polycarp, bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans, or rather who has God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as his bishop: heartiest greetings.

1 So approving am I of your godly mind, which is grounded, as it were, upon an unmovable rock, that my praise exceeds all bounds, inasmuch as I was judged worthy of seeing your blameless face. May it bring me joy in God.

General Instructions for a Bishop

2 I urge you, by the grace with which you are clothed, to press on in your race and to exhort all people, so that they may be saved. Do justice to your office with constant care for both physical and spiritual concerns. Focus on unity, for there is nothing better. Bear with all people, even as the Lord bears with you; endure all in love, just as you now do. **3** Devote yourself to unceasing prayers; ask for greater understanding than you have. Keep alert with an unresting spirit. Speak to the people individually, in accordance with God's example. Bear the diseases of all, as a perfect athlete. Where there is more work, there is much gain.

Salutation *the Image-bearer* See note at Ign. Eph. Salutation. • *the Lord* One ancient authority omits. **1.2** *Bear with all... all in love* Cf. Eph. 4:2. **1.3** *in... example* Or *in a godly agreement of convictions*.

2 If you love good disciples, it is no credit to you; rather with gentleness bring the more troublesome ones into submission. Not every wound is healed by the same treatment; relieve inflammations with cold compresses. **2** Be as shrewd as a snake in all circumstances, yet always innocent as a dove. You are both physical and spiritual in nature for this reason, so that you may treat gently whatever appears before you; but ask, in order that the unseen things may be revealed to you, so that you may be lacking in nothing and abound in every spiritual gift. **3** The time needs you (as pilots need winds and as a storm-tossed sailor needs a harbor) in order to reach God. Be sober, as God's athlete; the prize is incorruptibility and eternal life, about which you are already convinced. May I be a ransom on your behalf in every respect, and my chains as well, which you loved.

Dealing with Teachers of Error

3 Do not let those who appear to be trustworthy yet who teach strange doctrines baffle you. Stand firm, like an anvil being struck with a hammer. It is the mark of a great athlete to be bruised, yet still conquer. But especially we must, for God's sake, patiently bear all things, so that he may also bear with us. **2** Be more diligent than you are. Understand the times. Wait expectantly for the one who is above time: the Eternal, the Invisible, who for our sake became visible; the Intangible, the Unsuffering, who for our sake suffered, who for our sake endured in every way.

Protecting the Weak

4 Do not let the widows be neglected. After the Lord, you be their guardian. Let nothing be done without your consent, nor do anything yourself without God's consent, as indeed you do not.

2.2 *Be... dove* Matt. 10:16. **4.1** *God's consent* Some ancient authorities read *God*.

Stand firm. **2** Let meetings be held more frequently; seek out everyone by name. **3** Do not treat slaves, whether male or female, contemptuously, but neither let them become conceited; instead, let them serve all the more faithfully to the glory of God, so that they may obtain from God a better freedom. They should not have a strong desire to be set free at the church's expense, lest they be found to be slaves of lust.

Duties of the Married

5 Flee from wicked practices; better yet, preach a sermon about them. Tell my sisters to love the Lord and to be content with their husbands physically and spiritually. In the same way command my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the church. **2** If anyone is able to remain chaste to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting. If he boasts, he is lost; and if it becomes known to anyone other than the bishop, he is ruined. And it is proper for men and women who marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, so that the marriage may be in accordance with the Lord and not due to lustful passions. Let all things be done for the honor of God.

Obedience to the Bishop; Harmonious Work

6 Pay attention to the bishop, in order that God may pay attention to you. I am a ransom on behalf of those who are obedient to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons; may it be granted to me to have a place among them in the presence of God! Train together with one another: compete together, run together, suffer together, rest together, get up together, as God's managers, assistants, and servants. **2** Please the one whom you serve as soldiers, from whom you receive your

5.1 *love . . . church* Cf. Eph. 5:25, 29. **6.1** *in the presence of* Some ancient authorities read *in*. **6.2** *Please the one . . . as soldiers* Cf. 2 Tim. 2:4. • *receive your*

wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism serve as a shield, faith as a helmet, love as a spear, endurance as armor. Let your deeds be your deposits, in order that you may eventually receive the savings that are due you. Be patient, therefore, and gentle with one another, as God is with you. May I always have joy in you.

Request for a Delegate to Antioch

7 Since (as I have been informed) the church at Antioch in Syria is at peace through your prayer, I too have become more encouraged in a God-given freedom from anxiety—provided, of course, that through suffering I reach God, so that I may prove to be a disciple by means of your prayer. **2** It is certainly appropriate, Polycarp (how blessed by God you are!), to convene a council that will be most pleasing to God and to appoint someone whom you consider to be especially dear and resolute, who is qualified to be called God's courier; commission him to go to Syria, so that he may glorify your resolute love, to the glory of God. **3** As a Christian one has no authority over oneself but instead is devoted to God. This is God's work, and will be yours, when you complete it. For by grace I trust that you are ready for a good work in the service of God. Knowing your intense desire for the truth, I have exhorted you only briefly.

wages One ancient authority reads *will receive your wages*. • *Let your baptism . . . as armor* Cf. Eph. 6:11–17. • *deposits . . . savings* The military metaphors of the preceding three sentences are continued. When soldiers were granted gifts of money, only half the sum due was paid out to them, the balance being credited to their account. These *deposits* became the *savings* due if and when an honorable discharge was received. **7.1** *a disciple . . . prayer* Some ancient authorities read *your disciple in the resurrection*. **7.2** *you* *You* and *your* are plural throughout chapter 7.

Personal Greetings and Parting Requests

8 Since I have not been able to write to all the churches because I am sailing at once from Troas to Neapolis, as the divine will commands, you must write, as one possessing the mind of God, to the churches on this side, so that they too may do likewise. Those who can should send messengers, the rest letters through the people you are sending, so that you may be glorified by an eternal deed—for you are worthy of such a thing.

2 I greet everyone by name, including the widow of Epitropus together with the whole household belonging to her and the children. I greet Attalus, my dear friend. I greet the one who is about to be commissioned to go to Syria. Grace will be with him always, and with Polycarp, who sends him. **3** I bid you farewell always in our God Jesus Christ; may you remain in him, in the unity and care of God. I greet Alce, a name very dear to me. Farewell in the Lord.

8.1 *Since* Some ancient authorities read *Therefore since*. • *you must write* *You* is singular. • *on this side* I.e., of Antioch in Syria. Ignatius has in mind the churches between Smyrna and Antioch: Ephesus, Magnesia, and Tralles. He himself had been able to communicate with Philadelphia about sending a delegation to Antioch. • *sent by you* *You* is singular. • *that you may be* *You* is plural. • *you are worthy* *You* is singular. **8.3** *I bid you* *You* is plural. • *may you* *You* is plural.