

II. THE EPISTLE TO THE MAGNESIANS.

[Magnesia by the Mæander was about fifteen Roman miles south-east of Ephesus. The foundation of the Church there probably dates from St. Paul's residence at Ephesus (Acts xix. 10—26). The Magnesian Christians, like the Ephesians, on hearing of Ignatius' visit to Smyrna, had sent delegates to that city, including representatives of all three orders of the ministry (c. 2). Ignatius writes to acknowledge their interest in him. As in other epistles, he urges the importance of unity and the duty of obedience to the ministry, especially warning them against presuming upon the youthfulness of their bishop (c. 3). In cc. 8—10 he deals with a form of Judaistic error, against which he warns them, without, however, implying its actual existence at Magnesia (cf. cc. 11, 12, 14): There are incidental allusions to Docetism (cc. 9, 11). See further Add. Note 1.]

IGNATIUS, who is also Theophorus, to her that has been blessed by the grace of God the Father in Christ Jesus our Saviour, in Whom I salute the Church which is in Magnesia by the Mæander, and wish her in God the Father and in Jesus Christ heartiest greeting.

I. When I learned that your godly love shows itself in a most orderly demeanour,¹ I rejoiced and resolved to address myself to you in the faith of Jesus Christ. For having been granted a title of the highest reverence,² in my bonds which I wear I sing the praises of the churches,³ and I pray that in them there may be union of flesh and spirit,⁴ which belong to Jesus Christ, our

¹ *i. e.* their submission to authority.

² Probably the title of 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ.' Cf. Eph. iii. 1, iv. 1, Philem. 1, 9.

³ Cf. Eph. 4, Rom. 2. Here, as there, Ignatius 'compares himself to some gay reveller; his fetters are his holiday decoration.'—LIGHTFOOT.

⁴ Cf. Rom. inscr. and below, c. 13. On Ignatius' conception of the unity of the Church, see Introd. § 4. The source of the Church's unity, as of its life, is Christ Himself. See below, 'union with Jesus and the Father.' Cf. Trall. 11.

continual Life, an union in both faith and love—for there is nothing better than that—and, more than all, union with Jesus and the Father. In Him we shall endure all the malicious attacks of the prince of this world,¹ and, escaping from them, shall attain unto God

II. Since therefore I have been permitted to see you in the person of Damas, your godly bishop, and the worthy presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius, and my fellow-servant, the deacon Zotion, of whom may I have joy, because he is subject unto the bishop as unto the grace of God, and to the presbytery as unto the law of Jesus Christ—²

III. And for yourselves, it is fitting that you too should not treat lightly the youth of your bishop, but considering the power of God the Father,³ pay him all reverence. For in like manner I have perceived that the holy presbyters have not presumed upon his seemingly youthful state,⁴ but yield place to him as to one who is prudent⁵ in God, or rather not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, even to Him Who is Bishop of all men.⁶ So then for the honour of Him,

¹ See note Eph. 17.

² 'The bishop is here regarded as the dispenser of blessings; the presbyters as the representatives and guardians of order.'—LIGHTFOOT. The sentence is unfinished.

³ *i. e.* the authority bestowed on him by God.

⁴ The words *νεωτερικῶν τῶν ἡρώων* have been variously translated. The rendering given above follows Pearson and Lightfoot. Others, seeing in the words an allusion to episcopacy as a newly-created institution, translate 'not recognizing the seemingly newly-created office.' But, apart from the fact that the language of Ignatius lends no countenance to the view that he regarded episcopacy as a new institution, the words will not admit of this rendering. Zahn renders 'the ordination of a young man,' but this puts a strain on the words. The translation above gives good sense. Damas outwardly appeared youthful, but showed a wisdom beyond his years.

⁵ The reading of the Armenian Version has been followed.

⁶ Cf. Rom. 9, Polyc. inscr. See 1 Pet. ii. 25.

Who desired you, it is fitting that you should obey without dissembling. For it is not that a man deceives this visible bishop,¹ but rather that he tries to cheat Him Who is invisible. And in such case it is not with flesh that he has to do, but with God Who knows the things that are in secret.

IV. So then it is fitting not only to be called, but also to be Christians. Even as there are some who have the name 'bishop' always on their lips, and yet in everything act apart from him. Now such seem to me to be not men of a good conscience, seeing that they gather not together in a valid way² according to command.

V. So then the things of this life have an end, and there are set together before us the two issues of life and death, and each man shall surely go to his own place.³ For just as there are two coinages, the one of God, the other of the world, and each one of them has stamped upon it its own image, the unbelievers the stamp of this world, and they that in love believe, the image of God the Father through Jesus Christ,⁴ through Whom unless we are ready of our own accord to die unto His Passion,⁵ His life is not in us—⁶

VI. Seeing therefore that in the persons already

¹ A reference to the original meaning of the word, 'overseer.' Cf. Rom. 9.

² Cf. Smyrn. 8 note.

³ Acts i. 25. Cf. *Clement of Rome*, c. 5, and Polyc., *Phil.* 9.

⁴ Cf. Heb. i. 3, where Christ is Himself the 'impress' of the Father's 'essence.' This Divine image is stamped upon the believer by his union with Christ.

⁵ Lit. 'die into His Passion.' The Christian becomes identified with Christ in His Passion, and dies with Him. Cf. the language of St. Paul on baptism into Christ in Rom. vi. 4, Gal. iii. 27; also Rom. vi. 5, Gal. ii. 20.

⁶ The sentence is unfinished. The frequent occurrence of such broken sentences is an indication of haste in the composition of these letters,

mentioned I beheld in faith your whole number, and have welcomed them, I urge you, be diligent to do all things in godly concord, the bishop presiding after the pattern¹ of God, and the presbyters after the pattern of the council of the Apostles, with the deacons also who are most dear to me, seeing they are entrusted with a service under² Jesus Christ, Who before the ages was with the Father, and appeared at the end.³ Therefore seeking to conform yourselves to the ways of God,⁴ reverence one another, and let no man look upon his neighbour after the flesh, but in Jesus Christ love one another continually. Let there be nothing among you which shall be able to divide you, but be united with the bishop, and with them that have the rule over you for a pattern and lesson of incorruption.

VII. As therefore the Lord did nothing without the

¹ Reading *τύπον*, which has the support of the Syriac and Armenian Versions. The Greek text, Latin Version, and the Longer Greek text read *τόπον*, 'in the place of.'

There are two types of authority to which Ignatius likens the authority of the bishop, both being suggested by the memory of the Lord's earthly ministry. (1) The bishop represents the authority of the Father, to whom Christ, as Son of Man, during His earthly life yielded obedience (cf. Trall. 3, Smyrn. 8, and present passage). (2) The bishop represents the authority of Christ over His Apostles (cf. Trall. 2). In Magn. 13 we find both comparisons.

The presbyters are regularly compared to the Apostles. Cf. Trall. 2, 3; Smyrn. 8.

The deacons are also compared to Jesus Christ, but in His relation as Son of Man to the Father. See present chapter and Trall. 3 (note).

The word 'council' is suggested by primitive Church custom. The bishop sat in the centre, with the presbyters forming a 'corona' about him (cf. c. 13). Cf. Trall. 3, Philad. 8. In *App. Const.* ii. 28 the presbyters are called 'the council of the Church.'

² Or 'a service in which Jesus Christ ministered.' (Cf. Matt. xx. 28, Mark x. 45. Cf. Trall. 3.) For the rendering given, cf. 2 Cor. xi. 23, 1 Tim. iv. 6.

³ Cf. Heb. i. 2.

⁴ Cf. Polyc. 1 note.

Father¹ [being united with Him²], neither of Himself nor by the Apostles, so neither do you act in anything apart from the bishop and presbyters. Neither attempt to persuade yourselves that anything is right which you do of yourselves apart. But in common let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love, in joy that is without blame, which³ is Jesus Christ—for there is naught better than He. Gather yourselves together, all of you, as unto one shrine, even God,⁴ as unto one altar, even One Jesus Christ, Who proceeded from One Father,⁵ and is in One and returned to One.

VIII. Be not deceived by strange doctrines nor by ancient fables,⁶ seeing that they are profitless. For if, until now, we live after the rule of Judaism,⁷ we confess

¹ Cf. John viii. 28.

² Cf. Smyrn. 3. Some authorities omit the words.

³ The relative refers to the whole clause. 'This perfect unity is Jesus Christ.'—LIGHTFOOT. In place of the relative, which the Latin Version reads, the Greek text has 'there is one Jesus Christ.'

⁴ The rendering given follows the text of Lightfoot, and adopts his reading *Θεόν*, for *Θεοῦ* of the Greek text and Latin Version; 'one shrine, even God,' instead of 'one shrine of God.' With this reading God is compared to the shrine, and Jesus Christ to the altar-court, through which in the Jewish Temple access was gained to the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. The idea is that Christ is the means of access to the Father. The whole passage is an appeal for unity, which can only come through being in Jesus Christ, Who is Himself in the Father. For the word altar, cf. Eph. 5, Trall. 7, Philad. 4. See also Heb. xiii. 10. For the whole idea of the passage cf. Heb. ix. 6 sq.

⁵ The reference is to His earthly mission. The language of this passage recalls John i. 18, xiii. 3, xvi. 28.

⁶ Cf. 1 Tim. i. 4, iv. 7, Tit. i. 14, iii. 9. In those passages, as also in the present passage, the reference is probably to Rabbinic fables and the allegorical interpretations of Jewish history. See Hort (*Judaistic Christianity*, p. 135 sq.). In the expressions of this epistle and of that to the Philadelphians there is nothing which necessarily points to a mixture of Gnosticism and Judaism as Lightfoot supposes. See further Add. Note 1.

⁷ Cf. Gal. i. 13, ii. 14. By 'the rule of Judaism,' Ignatius means the observance of Jewish rites.

to the new leaven,¹ which is Jesus Christ. Be salted in Him,² that no one among you wax corrupt, for by your savour you shall be proved. It is outrageous to utter the name of Jesus Christ and live in Judaism. For Christianity believed not in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, in which people of every tongue believed and were gathered unto God.

XI. I write not this, my beloved, because I have learned that some of you are in such evil case, but as one who is less than you, I desire to put you on your guard that you fall not into the snares of vain teaching, but be fully convinced of³ the birth and passion and resurrection, which came to pass in the time of the government of Pontius Pilate⁴—events which truly and certainly were brought to pass by Jesus Christ, our Hope, from which Hope may none of you ever go astray.

XII. May I have joy of you in all things, if I be worthy. For even though I am a prisoner, I am nothing in comparison with one of you who are free. I know that you are not puffed up, for you have Jesus Christ within yourselves.⁵ And I know that when I praise you, you feel the greater shame, for it is written, '*The righteous man is his own accuser.*'⁶

XIII. Be diligent therefore to be confirmed in the

¹ Matt. xiii. 33, Luke xiii. 21.

² Matt. v. 13, Mark ix. 50, Luke xiv. 34. Cf. Lev. ii. 13.

³ This confession, couched in an anti-Docetic form, may indicate that Ignatius feared the danger of Docetism at Magnesia. Or possibly he is thinking of the dangers threatening other churches, and so gives an anticipatory warning to the Magnesians.

⁴ The date of the Crucifixion is inserted here, as in the Creed, in order to emphasize the historical truth of the fact, and connect it with the general history of the period. Tacitus, in his account of the Christians, mentions Pilate (*Ann.* xv. 44).

⁵ Cf. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁶ Prov. xviii. 17. LXX. The Hebrew gives quite a different sense.

decrees¹ of the Lord and the Apostles, that in everything which you do, you may be prospered² in flesh and spirit, by faith and love, in the Son and Father and in the Spirit,³ in the beginning and in the end, along with your bishop who is worthy of all honour, and the fitly-woven spiritual coronal⁴ of your presbytery, and the deacons who are according to the mind of God. Submit yourselves to the bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ [was subject] to the Father [after the flesh], and the Apostles to Christ and the Father, that there may be union both of flesh and spirit.⁵

XIV. Knowing that you are full of God, I have exhorted you briefly. Remember me in your prayers, that I may attain unto God. Remember too the Church which is in Syria, whereof I am not worthy to be called a member. For I have need of your united prayer in God, and your love, that the Church in Syria may be granted the refreshing dew of your fervent supplication.

XV. The Ephesians from Smyrna salute you, whence also I am writing to you, for they have come hither for God's glory, even as yourselves. In every way they have refreshed me, with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. The rest of the churches, too, salute you in the honour which is of Jesus Christ. Farewell in godly peace, keeping a steadfast spirit, which⁶ is Jesus Christ.

¹ The word for 'decrees' occurs in Acts xvi. 4.

² An allusion to Ps. i. 3. LXX.

³ For the order, cf. 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

⁴ See note on c. 6.

⁵ Cf. c. 1 (note), and see Introd. § 4.

⁶ The relative probably refers to the whole clause and the idea of concord prominent in it.