

THE EPISTLE OF IGNATIUS TO
POLYCARP

The Epistles of Ignatius are translated by Archbishop Wake from the text of Vossius. He says that there were considerable difference in the editions; the best for a long time extant containing fabrications, and the genuine being altered and corrupted. Archbishop Usher printed old Latin translations of them at Oxford, in 1644. At Amsterdam, two years afterwards, Vossius printed six of them in their ancient and pure Greek; and the seventh, greatly amended from the ancient Latin version, was Printed at Paris, by Ruinart, in 1689, in the Acts and Martyrdom of Ignatius, from a Greek uninterpolated copy. These are supposed to form the collection that Polycarp made of the Epistles of Ignatius, mentioned by Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Athanasius, Theodoret, and other ancients: but many learned men have imagined all of them to be apocryphal. This supposition, the piety of Arch-bishop Wake, and his persuasion of their utility to the faith of the church, will not permit him to entertain: hence he has taken great pains to render the present translation acceptable, by adding numerous readings and references to the Canonical Books.

CHAPTER I.

Ignatius blesses God for the firm, establishment of Polycarp in the faith, and gives him particular directions for improving it.

IGNATIUS, who is also called Theophorus, to Polycarp, bishop of the church which is at Smyrna; their overseer, but rather himself overlooked by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; all happiness.

2 Having known that thy mind towards God, is fixed as it were upon an immoveable rock; I exceedingly give thanks, that I have been thought worthy to behold thy blessed face, in which may I always rejoice in God.

3 Wherefore I beseech thee by the grace of God with which thou art clothed, to press forward in thy course, and to exhort all others that they may be saved.

4 Maintain thy place with all care both of flesh and spirit: Make it thy endeavour to preserve unity, than

which nothing is better. Bear with all men even as the Lord with thee.

5 Support all in love, as also thou dost. Pray without ceasing ask more understanding than what thou already hast. Be watchful, having thy spirit always awake.

6 Speak to every one according as God shall enable thee. Bear the infirmities of all, as a perfect combatant; where the labour is great, the gain is the more.

7 If thou shalt love the good disciples, what thank is it? But rather do thou subject to thee those that are mischievous, in meekness.

8 Every wound is not healed with the same plaister: if the accessions of the disease be vehement, modify them with soft remedies: be in all things wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove.

9 For this cause thou art composed of flesh and spirit; that thou mayest modify those things that appear be-

fore thy face.

10 And as for those that are not seen, pray to God that he would reveal them into thee, that so thou mayest be wanting in nothing, but mayest abound in every gift.

11 The times demand thee, as the pilots the winds; and be that is tossed in a tempest, the haven where he would be.

12 That thou mayest attain unto God, be sober as the combatant of God. The crown proposed to thee is immortality, and eternal life: concerning which thou art also fully persuaded. I will be thy surety in all things, by my bonds, which thou halt loved.

13 Let not those that seem worthy of credit, but teach other doctrines, disturb thee. Stand firm and immovable, as an anvil when it is beaten upon.

14 It is the part of a brave combatant to be wounded, and yet overcome. But especially we ought to endure all things for God's sake, that he may bear with us.

15 Be every day better than others; consider the times, and expect him, who is above all time, eternal; invisible, though for our sakes made visible: impalpable, and impassible, yet for us subjected to sufferings; enduring all manner of ways for our salvation.

CHAPTER II.

1 Continues his advice, 6 and teaches him how to advise others. 12 Enforces unity and subjection to the bishop.

LET not the widows be neglected: be thou after God, their Guardian.

2 Let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent; neither do thou anything but according to the will of God; as also thou dost, with all constancy.

3 Let your assemblies be more full: inquire into all by name.

4 Overlook not the men and maid servants; neither let them be puffed up: but rather let them be the more subject to the glory of God, that they may obtain from him a better liberty.

5 Let them not desire to be set free at the public cost, that they be not slaves to their own lusts.

6 Flee evil arts; or rather make not any mention of them.

7 Say to my sisters, that they love the Lord; and be satisfied with their own husbands, both in the flesh and spirit.

8 In like manner, exhort my brethren in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the church.

9 If any man can remain in a virgin state, to the honour of the flesh of Christ, let him remain without boasting; but if he boast, he is undone. And if he desire to be more taken notice of than the bishop he is corrupted.

10 But it becomes all such as are married, whether men or women, to come together with the consent of the bishop, that so their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust.

11 Let all things be done to the honour of God.

12 Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons. And may my portion be together with theirs in God.

13 Labour with one another; contend together, run together, suffer together; sleep together, and rise together; as the stewards, and assessors, and ministers of God.

14 Please him under whom ye war;

and from whom ye receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter; but let your baptism remain, as your arms; your faith, as your helmet; your charity, as your spear; your patience, as your whole armour.

15 Let your works be your charge, that so you may receive a suitable reward. Be long suffering therefore towards each other in meekness; as God is towards you.

16 Let me have joy of you in all things.

CHAPTER III.

1 Greets Polycarp on the peace of the church at Antioch: 2 and desires him to write to that and other churches.

NOW forasmuch as the church of Antioch in Lyria is, as I am told, in peace through your prayers; I also have been the more comforted, and without care in God; if so be that by suffering, I shall attain unto God; and through your prayers I may be found a disciple of Christ.

2 It will be very fit, O most worthy Polycarp, to call a select council, and choose some one whom ye particularly love, and who is patient of labour: that he may be the messenger of God; and that going unto Syria, he may glorify your incessant love, to the praise of Christ.

3 A Christian has not the power of himself; but must be always at leisure for God's service. Now this work is both God's and our's; when ye shall have perfected it.

4 For I trust through the grace of God that ye are ready to every good work that is fitting for you in the Lord.

5 Knowing therefore your earnest affection for the truth, I have exhorted you by these short letters.

6 But forasmuch as I have not been

able to write to all the churches, because I must suddenly sail from Troas to Neapolis; (for so is the command of those to whose pleasure I am subject;) do you write to the churches that are near you, as being instructed in the will of God, that they also may do in like manner.

7 Let those that are able send messengers; and let the rest send their letters by those who shall be sent by you: that you may be glorified to all eternity, of which you are worthy.

8 I salute all by name; particularly the wife of Epitropus with all her house and children. I salute Attalus my well-beloved.

9 I salute him who shall be thought worthy to be sent by you into Syria. Let grace be ever with him, and with Polycarp who sends him.

10 I wish you all happiness in our God, Jesus Christ; in whom continue, in the unity and protection of God.

11 I salute Alce my well-beloved. Farewell in the Lord.