

Ignatius of Antioch



Romans 4:1–2

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.



Who Was Ignatius of Antioch

At this time there flourished in Asia Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, who had been appointed to the bishopric of the church in Smyrna by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Lord. Distinguished men at the same time were Papias, who was himself bishop of the diocese of Hierapolis, and **Ignatius**, still a name of note to most men, the second after Peter to succeed to the bishopric of Antioch. The story goes that he was sent from Syria to Rome to be eaten by beasts in testimony to Christ. He was taken through Asia under most careful guard, and strengthened by his speech and exhortation the diocese of each city in which he stayed. He particularly warned them to be on their guard against the heresies which then for the first time were beginning to obtain, and exhorted them to hold fast to the tradition of the Apostles, to which he thought necessary, for safety's sake, to give the form of written testimony.

Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.36

1. Was the bishop of Antioch (Rom. 1:2)
2. Educated, shows knowledge of secular Greek literature
3. Seven Extant letters written sometime c. A.D. 110

Seven Letter from this figure survive:

Philadelphia
Smyrna
Tralles
Magnesia
Ephesus
Roman Church
Polycarp



Ignatius of Antioch



c. A.D. 35 or 50 – 98 or 117

Ignatius' Trip to Rome



Letters of the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, and Romans written from Smyrna

Letters of Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, Polycarp written from Troas

The Seven Churches of Asia Minor

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto **Ephesus**, and unto **Smyrna**, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto **Philadelphia**, and unto Laodicea.

Revelation 1:11



Resources for Ignatius of Antioch

J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*. Part 2, S. Ignatius; S. Polycarp. 2nd ed. 3 vols. London: Macmillan, 1889.

<http://archive.org/details/apostolicfathep2v2clemuoft>

Legal Status of Christians?

Ephesians 12:1

I know who I am and to whom I am writing. **I am a convict** (ἐγὼ κατάκριτος); you have received mercy. I am in danger; you are secure.

Trallians 3:3

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** (ὢν κατάκριτος), should give you orders as though I were an apostle.

Romans 4:3

I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul: they were apostles, **I am a convict** (ἐγὼ κατάκριτος); they were free, but I am even now still a slave.

Romans 5:1

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.

It seems reasonable to assume that local outcry had led to the arrest of Christian leaders in Antioch

Romans 10:2 (other Christians from Antioch had gone on before to Rome)

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.



Revelation 17:4–6, 9

⁴ The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication;

⁵ and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: “**Babylon the great**, mother of whores and of earth's abominations.” And I saw the woman *drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. . . .

⁹ “This calls for a mind that has wisdom: **the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated:**



Rome known as *urbs septicollis* (“city of seven hills”)

Ignatius the “God-bearer”

Ephesians, prologue

Ignatius the **Image-bearer** [Ἰγνάτιος ὁ καὶ Θεοφόρος] 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.

Ep. 1:1; Mg. 1:1; Tr. 1:1; Ro. 1:1; Ph. 1:1; Sm. 1:1; Po. 1:1

Ignatius and The Church of Rome

What do these references mean?

Romans 1:2–2:1

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. . . . 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.

Romans 4:1

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.

Ignatius and Wild Beasts

Romans 4:2

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

Romans 5:2–3

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.* 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!*



Damnatio ad bestias

Colosseum



Central Issues in the Letters of Ignatius

1. Ecclesiastical Order and the Bishopric

Issues of Emerging Orthodoxy and Heresy

2. Docetism

3. Judaism

Docetism

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.

To the Trallians, 9–11

Docetism

Magnesians 11:1

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.

Trallians 9:1–10:1

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?

Smyrnaeans 1:1–2

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,

Smyrnaeans 3:1–2

For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; 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.

Ecclesiastical Order and the Bishopric

Ephesians 5:3

"God opposes the arrogant." Let us, therefore, be careful not to oppose the bishop, in order that we may be obedient to God.

Magnesians 3:1

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.

Magnesians 4:1

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.

Trallians 2:1

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

Smyrnaeans 8:2

Wherever the bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church. 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.

Philadelphians 10:1

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.

Judaism

Magnesians 8:1

For if we continue to live in accordance with Judaism, we admit that we have not received grace

Magnesians 10:3

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.

Magnesians 9:1

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

Philadelphians 6:1

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

Philadelphians 8:2

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

“Parting of the Ways”

- Jewish Christians & Judaizers
- Jewish Christians Divided into three different groups:
 - Ebionites
 - Jacobites
 - Nazarenes
- Two types of Judaizers:
 - adopted Jewish customs and kept Christian beliefs
 - adopted Jewish customs and abandoned Christian beliefs

Jerusalem Council

Acts 15:23–29

²³ And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner;

The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment:

²⁵ It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶ Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

²⁹ *That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.*
Fare ye well.

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. 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.

To the Smyrnaeans 8

“Agape” (ἀγάπη)

“Our dinner shows its idea in its name; it is called by the Greek name for love (*agape*). Whatever the cost, it is gain to spend in piety’s name, for with that refreshment we help the needy. No, not, as among you, parasites aspire for the glory of selling their freedom, authorized by their belly to fatten themselves at the cost of any insult; no, because with God there is greater consideration for those of lower degree. If the motive of the banquet is honest, take the motive as the standard of the other proceedings required by our rule of life. Since it turns on the duty of religion, it allows nothing vile, nothing immodest. We do not take our places at table until we have first tasted prayer to God. Only so much is eaten as satisfies hunger; only so much drunk as meets the need of the modest. They satisfy themselves only so far as men will who recall that even during the night they must worship God; they talk as those would who know the Lord listens.”

Tertullian, Apology 39.16–18