

The Epistle of Ignatius to Mary at Neapolis, Near Zarbus.

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to her who has obtained mercy through the grace of the most high God the Father, and Jesus Christ the Lord, who died for us, to Mary, my daughter, most faithful, worthy of God, and bearing Christ [in her heart], wishes abundance of happiness in God.



Chapter I.—Acknowledgment of her excellence and wisdom.

Sight indeed is better than writing, inasmuch as, being one⁸⁹⁴ of the company of the senses, it not only, by communicating proofs of friendship, honours him who receives them, but also, by those which it in turn receives, enriches the desire for better things. But the second harbour of refuge, as the phrase runs, is the practice of writing, which we have received, as a convenient haven, by thy faith, from so great a distance, seeing that by means of a letter we have learned the excellence that is in thee. For the souls of the good, O thou wisest⁸⁹⁵ of women! resemble fountains of the purest water; for they allure by their beauty passers-by to drink of them, even though these should not be thirsty. And thy intelligence invites us, as by a word of command, to participate in those divine draughts which gush forth so abundantly in thy soul.

894 Literally, “a part.”

895 Literally, “all-wise.”

Chapter II.—His own condition.

But I, O thou blessed woman, not being now so much my own master as in the power of others, am driven along by the varying wills of many adversaries,⁸⁹⁶ being in one sense in exile, in another in prison, and in a third in bonds. But I pay no regard to these things. Yea, by the injuries inflicted on me through them, I acquire all the more the character of a disciple, that I may attain to Jesus Christ. May I enjoy the torments which are prepared for me, seeing that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”⁸⁹⁷

896 Literally, “by the many wills of the adversaries.”

897 [Rom. viii. 18.](#)

Chapter III.—He had complied with her request.

I have gladly acted as requested in thy letter,⁸⁹⁸ having no doubt respecting those persons whom thou didst prove to be men of worth. For I am sure that thou barest testimony to them in the exercise of a godly judgment,⁸⁹⁹ and not through the influence of carnal favour. And thy numerous quotations of Scripture passages exceedingly delighted me, which, when I had read, I had no longer a single doubtful thought respecting the matter. For I did not hold that those things were simply to be glanced over by my eyes, of which I had received from thee such an incontrovertible demonstration. May I be in place of thy soul, because thou lovest Jesus, the Son of the living God. Wherefore also He Himself says to thee, “I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me shall find peace.”⁹⁰⁰

898 Literally, “I have gladly fulfilled the things commanded by thee in the letter.”

899 Literally, “by a judgment of God.”

900 [Prov. viii. 17](#) (loosely quoted from LXX.).

Chapter IV.—Commendation and exhortation.

Now it occurs to me to mention, that the report is true which I heard of thee whilst thou wast at Rome with the blessed father⁹⁰¹ Linus, whom the deservedly-blessed Clement, a hearer of Peter and Paul, has now succeeded. And by this time thou hast added a hundred-fold to thy reputation; and may thou, O woman! still further increase it. I greatly desired to come unto you, that I might have rest with you; but “the way of man is not in himself.”⁹⁰² For the military guard [under which I am kept] hinders my purpose, and does not permit me to go further. Nor indeed, in the state I am now in, can I either do or suffer anything. Wherefore deeming the practice of writing the second resource of friends for their mutual encouragement, I salute thy sacred soul, beseeching of thee to add still further to thy vigour. For our present labour is but little, while the reward which is expected is great.



901 The original is *πάππ*, [common to primitive bishops.]

902 [Jer. x. 23.](#)

Chapter V.—Salutations and good wishes.

Avoid those that deny the passion of Christ, and His birth according to the flesh: and there are many at present who suffer under this disease. But it would be absurd to admonish thee on other points, seeing that thou art perfect in every good work and word, and able also to exhort others in Christ. Salute all that are like-minded with thyself, and who hold fast to their salvation in Christ. The presbyters and deacons, and above all the holy Hero, salute thee. Cassian my host salutes thee, as well as my sister, his wife, and their very dear children. May the Lord sanctify thee for evermore in the enjoyment both of bodily and spiritual health, and may I see thee in Christ obtaining the crown!