

“Early Church Confronts Culture”

Randy Broberg, 2010



Incredible Cultural Challenges for Early Christians

- Christian masons hired to build pagan temples
- Christian school teachers hired to teach pagan myths (as though true)
- Christian doctor asked by patient to chant to god of medicine, Aescalapius
- Christian wife, married to pagan, required to expose new born child.
- Christian soldier, ordered to massacre defeated enemy's women and children.

Description of Early Christians

- "For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. . . . following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. . . ."

– The Letter to Diognetus Chap 5:

Roman View of Early Christians

- It was then that he [Perigrinus] learned the wondrous lore of the Christians by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. [Christ] whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world. ... The poor wretches have convinced themselves first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody, most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another, after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods, and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they ... [are] receiving such doctrines traditionally *without any definite evidence*. So if any charlatan or trickster able to profit from them comes along and gets among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.
 - Lucian, *Perigrinus*, 11ff.

