

Letter to Diognetus

For Christians are not differentiated from other people by country, language or customs; you see, they do not live in cities of their own, or speak some strange dialect, or have some peculiar lifestyle...They live in both Greek and foreign cities, wherever chance has put them. They follow local customs in clothing, food, and the other aspects of life. But at the same time, they demonstrate to us the wonderful and certainly unusual form of their own citizenship. They live in their own native lands, but as aliens; as citizens they share all things with others; but like aliens, suffer all things. Every foreign country is to them as their native country, and every native land as a foreign country. They marry and have children just like everyone else; but they do not kill unwanted babies. They offer a shared table, but not a shared bed. They are at present 'in the flesh' but they do not live 'according to the flesh'. They are passing their days on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and go beyond the laws in their own lives. They love everyone, but are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and gain life. They are poor and yet make many rich. They are short of everything and yet have plenty of all things. They are dishonored and yet gain glory through dishonor. Their names are blackened and yet they are cleared. They are mocked and bless in return. They are treated outrageously and behave respectfully to others. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; when punished, they rejoice as if being given a new life. They are attacked by Jews as aliens, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them cannot give any reason for their hostility. To put it simply – the soul is to the body as Christians are to the world. The soul is spread through all parts of the body and Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul is in the body but is not of the body; Christians are in the world but not of the world.¹

¹ Tim Dowley, ed. *Introduction to The History of Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 67.