

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

(1 Peter 1:8)

Joy Unspeakable

Here is something we found interesting and thought you may find it interesting as well.

II. Early Christianity A Cheerful Religion.

Darkness at the Advent.

When our Lord announced his religion this world was in a condition of unutterable corruption, wretchedness and gloom. Slavery, poverty, vice that the pen is unwilling to name, almost universally prevailed, and even religion partook of the general degradation. Decadence, depopulation, insecurity of property, person and life, according to Taine, were everywhere. Philosophy taught that it would be better for man never to have been created. In the first century Rome held supreme sway. Nations had been destroyed by scores, and the civilized world had lost half of its population by the sword. In the first century forty out of seventy years were years of famine, accompanied by plague and pestilence. There were universal depression and deepest melancholy. When men were thus overborne with the gloom and horror of error and sin, into their night of darkness came the religion of Christ. Its announcements were all of hope and cheer. Its language was, "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." "We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Men were invited to accept the tidings of great joy. John, the herald of Jesus, was a recluse, mortifying body and spirit, but Jesus said, "John come neither eating nor drinking, but the Son of Man came eating and drinking." He forbade all anxiety and care among his followers, and exhorted all to be as trustful as are the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air. Says Matthew Arnold, "Christ professed to bring in happiness. All the words that belong to his mission, Gospel, kingdom of God, Savior, grace, peace, living water, bread of life, are brimful of promise and joy." And his cheerful, joyful religion at once won its way by its messages of peace and tranquillity, and for a while its converts were everywhere characterized by their joyfulness and cheerfulness. Haweis writes: "The three first centuries of the Christian church are almost idyllic in their simplicity, sincerity and purity. There is less admixture of evil, less intrusion of the world, the flesh, and the devil, more simple-hearted goodness, earnestness and reality to be found in the space between Nero and Constantine than in any other three centuries from A.D. 100 to A.D. 1800." De Pressense calls the early era of the church its "blessed childhood, all calmness and simplicity."

Wonderful Progress of Christianity at First.

Origen: "Against Celsus" says: "At the present day (A.D. 240) not only rich men, but persons of rank, and delicate and high-born ladies, receive the teachers of Christianity; and the religion of Christ is better known than the teachings of the best philosophers." And Arnobius testifies that Christians included orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers. And it was precisely their bright and cheerful views of life and death, of God's universal fatherhood and man's universal brotherhood--the divinity of its ethical principles and the purity of its professors, that account for the wonderful progress of Christianity during the three centuries that followed our Lord's death. The pessimism of the oriental religions; the corruption and folly of the Greek and Roman mythology; the unutterable wickedness of the mass of mankind, and the universal depression of society invited its advance, and gave way

before it. Justin Martyr wrote that in his time prayers and thanksgivings were offered in "the name of the Crucified, among every race of men, Greek or barbarian." Tertullian states that all races and tribes, even to farthest Britain, had heard the news of salvation. He declared: "We are but of yesterday, and lo we fill the whole empire--your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your municipalities, your councils, nay even the camp, the tribune, the decory, the palace, the senate, the forum." Chrysostom testifies that "the isles of Britain in the heard of the ocean had been converted."

Extracted from: Universalism

The Prevailing Doctrine Of The Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years (and showing the influence of Greek Mythology and pagan philisophy on Christian Doctrine) With Authorities and Extracts

By J.W. HANSON, D. D. --I Corinthians xv. 28 Boston and Chicago Universalist Publishing House 1899

2014.02.28