

EPIC Wk 2 PERSECUTION Part 1 MAIN THEME: Persecution

Remember the words that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. Jesus Christ to His Apostles

Second Time Period 100 – 312 AD; COLOR: Dark Red – remind us of blood that was spilled by martyrs.

The seed of the Martyrs is the seed of Christians. Tertullian (Early Church father)

Persecution *active* – intermittent but consistent throughout 200 yrs.; sometimes local or regionalized or certain cities or even Empire-wide.

REVIEW: Letter of Pope St. Clement (Bishop of Rome) to Corinthians discussed important **points of structure/faith**

1. Clergy: Derive their authority from God and not from man

2. Apostolic succession and authority: Christ gave His power and authority to His apostles and the apostles handed that authority on to other men in a continuous line all the way up to our present time

3. Primacy of Pope: Pope has jurisdiction throughout the entire Church

The Church was separate from Roman Empire, very disciplined and organized, has *visible structure* and *exact doctrine* (The Church knew what it believed and taught). The Church was united during this time. Corinth was exception but was resolved. Two main doctrines

1. The Incarnation: Christ is 2nd person of Holy Trinity, true God, true Man, took on human flesh, became like us in all things

2. The Eucharist: Christ gives His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity under appearance of bread and wine in Eucharist

Beliefs of Roman Society: *Man is sufficient to himself, and that all belief was a matter of opinion.*

Christianity was *counter-cultural* (Antithetical: directly opposed or contrasted; mutually incompatible with Christianity)- one of reasons persecution erupted

Attacks on the Church: Roman writers do not want citizens to stop worshipping Roman gods and become Christian so begin attacking The Church

1. Christians are poor and ignorant: Roman society had upper class and lower class. Roman nobility would be ostracized if had any dealings with the lower class. Writers: *No respectable Roman would want to associate or join this group*

2. Christians were bad citizens: Christians refused to worship state gods or the emperor. They were against the success of the Empire.

3. Christians believed in unreasonable doctrines: Writers: *No self-respecting Roman would want anything to do with this group called Christians.*

Incarnation (Central doctrine of The Church): Porphyry (writer), Christ could not be God because he did not speak out for himself and suffered silently – not a sign of a great man and certainly not a god.

4. Christians are cannibals: Worst thing a person can do in eyes of a Roman. Pagan writers described the mystery of initiation into the Christian group was murder and dismemberment of an infant.

Despite all the above, many people were attracted to The Church because

1. Holiness attracts: Christians imitated Christ and martyrs were effective witness to their belief in Christ (See Handout: Aristides)

2. Lived and practiced virtuous lives: Christians loved each other and even those not of their faith. Many Roman citizens saw through the propaganda, and some even joined and died for their faith (*HO Apology of Aristicus*)

Romans wanted UNITY in the Empire. However, Jews were given special exceptions but Christians were different. This brought about 12 MAJOR PERSECUTIONS of The Church under Roman rule. (SG-pg. 201/HO-The Roman Persecutions).

Pliny the Younger was a magistrate of Emperor Trajan and had a question about how to deal with the Christians. Emperor replied, *Don't go after the Christian. If they're private in their faith and they're not causing any kind of disturbance, then fine, let them be. But if they publicly confess their faith, they make*

51 themselves known, If they become a nuisance then you can bring them into a court of law, try them and
52 persecute them, and execute them.

53 Emperor changed his mind after being in Antioch when an earthquake struck in 115 AD. Romans
54 thought their gods were angered because of the Christians living in the city. Emperor imposed an *Edict*
55 *of Persecution*. St Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch (trained by Apostle St. John and acquainted with other
56 Apostles) was arrested and sent to Rome.

57 St. Ignatius wrote several letters to Christians communities and especially to **St. Polycarp** (Bishop of
58 Smyrna, martyred in 165 AD at age 85, disciple of John), . Letters outlined members behavior toward
59 hierarchy of The Church in the 2nd century and clarifies other beliefs (**See Handout: Seven Letters of St**
60 **Ignatius of Antioch**)

61
62 **REMEMBER: St Ignatius was trained by Apostle St John and knew the other Apostles too.**

- 63 1. Be obedient to your priests and bishops
64 2. Church is governed by the Pope, bishops, priests, deacons, and laity
65 3. Often refers to, *Jesus Christ, our God*.
66 4. Gave us the name of The Church; first person to use the word *catholic* meaning *universal church*

67 Statement: **Early Christians did not believe that Jesus was God. Emperor Constantine in 4th century**
68 **was first to say Jesus is divine. FALSE** Was in writings of St Ignatius in 2nd Century.
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- 70
71 5. Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus Christ: *Take care of them who partake of one Eucharist, for one*
72 *is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and in one the cup to unite us with His blood.*

73 Statement: **Early Christians did not believe in the true presence of the Eucharist.** (ref: John 6)
74 **FALSE** Was in writings of St Ignatius in 2nd Century. Not something made up later.
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77 **FOUR MARKS of the CHURCH**

78 **ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC**
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80 **St. Polycarp**: man of **bold faith**, very direct person, did not mince words, not concerned about his image,
81 or how the media might portray him. He is known for two things:

- 82 1. Preached against heresies of that time: Rebuked early heretic Marcion, calling him *the firstborn of*
83 *Satan*.

- 84 2. Established the *day* Easter would be celebrated: Roman church celebrated on 1st Sunday of full
85 moon; In Syria, celebrate on 14th day of Jewish month of Nissan, whatever day that fell on. St Polycarp
86 and the Council of Nicaea in 4th century, decided the Roman celebration would be worldwide
87 St Polycarp leaves Rome, goes to Smyrna (155 AD). 10 Christians are martyred by beasts in an arena;
88 then arrested Polycarp and tried to burn him. When he was untouched by the fire, they stabbed him.

89 **Church persecuted externally by Roman authorities and internally through heresies.** (HO-Heresies, SG
90 pgs. 202-204)

91 **HERESY**: *denying a Doctrine of the Faith*. **SCHISM**: one does not recognize the authority of the pope –
92 reject teaching of The Church, then reject Christ
93

94 **APOLOGIST**: St Hippolytus wrote book *Apostolic Tradition* (Rome 220 AD); described liturgical customs
95 of the Roman Church; later became first *anti-pope*; arrested as a Christian, sent to Roman mines,
96 returned to The Church (only anti-pope to be canonized) (See HO – St Hippolytus)

97 **APOLOGIST** definition: *Any of the Christian writers, primarily in the 2nd century, who attempted to*
98 *provide a defense of Christianity and criticisms of paganism and other aspects of Greco-Roman culture.*
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101
102 **INTERNAL PERSECUTION**

103 **HERESY: Gnosticism** (Ancient world to present day: “*GNOSIS*” (Greek: Knowing)- Believed in two god
104 always at war with each other:

- 105 1. God of light (good god)- spiritual; of goodness and life
106 2. God of dark (bad god) -body, material things

107 **Beliefs:** a. *Secret knowledge* needed to ascent to god; would incorporate into their *beliefs*, the faith of
108 the day. b. Incarnation was false c. no way a god would become human nor allow people to eat its flesh
109 d. sexual relations only allowed to propagate new followers, otherwise practiced celibacy e. highest
110 form of worship was suicide – frees the soul of the *bad body* (Ex: Cult from CA. *Heavens Gate* committed
111 suicide in belief souls would board a ship behind a meteorite)

112 St. Irenaeus (130 -202 AD, Feast day June 28), Bishop of Leone, Gaul (modern France), disciple of St.
113 Polycarp. Wrote 2 major works refuting Gnosticism and also provides list of Pope’s from St. Peter to
114 Pope Francis (current)

115 *How do you know it is the true church? 1. Listen to the teachings; if same as Rome, then it is right 2. Can*
116 *the community and church trace its leader as bishop to the apostolic succession? **If a Christian***
117 **community is in union with Rome, then it is the true Church.**

118
119 **HERESY: MARCONISM (144 AD)** Founder: Marcion. His father was a bishop, wealthy, gave Church much
120 money to The Church, went to Rome and wanted The Church to agree with his thinking: 1. Denied Jesus’
121 human nature, two different gods in Bible – God of OT, God of NT. Followers sought out martyrdom
122 Practiced **RIGORISM**: Belief: If sin committed after Baptism, it cannot be forgiven.

123
124 **HERESY: MONTANUSISM/MODALISM (2nd and 3rd centuries):** Montanus alleged direct revelations from
125 Holy Spirit; personal revelation equal to sacred scriptures and sacred traditions of The Church (does not
126 believe *personal revelation is for the sake of salvation*. Beliefs: authority of prophet higher than a
127 bishop, focused on end times, practiced severe penitential discipline, had emphasis on *fasting*, called on
128 followers to renounce sex and marriage, followers were to give up materials possessions and give to his
129 appointed spiritual leaders, followers sought martyrdom
130