

1: Christians in the arena. (Book,) [www.enganchecubano.com]

Most Roman magistrates believed themselves to be enlightened and the government they represented to be merciful. and gave the Christians many opportunities to renounce their "strange unpatriotic beliefs" before condemning Christians to death in the arena or by formal execution.

Were Christians really thrown to the lions? January 30, Dear Cecil: He insists this was just made up by the church to perpetuate their religion. The story has its suspicious aspects, I guess. Fact is, while the Romans evidently fed Christians to animals, and people to lions, we have no source stating directly that they specifically fed Christians to lions. Christians were executed by the boatload during that time, often in cruel and unusual ways, with animals regularly playing a role. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was threatened with being thrown to the beasts but as it turned out was finished off by the sword. Possibly no one saw more animal action than the Christian priest Saturus – reportedly he was first tied to a boar which turned on its handler instead, then exposed to a bear it proved too cowardly to attack him, and finally killed by a leopard. Sometimes armed men fought beasts; sometimes the beasts were made to fight one another. Such games, originally held for religious purposes, became ever more lavish and were staged in amphitheaters across the empire. One well-loved event was the venatio, or hunt, often conducted amid elaborately constructed scenery, including real trees, rocky hills, artificial lakes, and the like. Roman executions typically were considered a form of public spectacle. When coinciding with a game day, they usually took place during the midday break between the morning animal hunts and the afternoon gladiator matches. A favored method was exposing an unarmed criminal to lions or bears. The entertainment value of executions was apparently low due to their sheer number – many people found them boring, either leaving for lunch or sticking around and writing letters to friends about the tedium. The ever-growing number and variety of animals required put a considerable burden on the supply chain. In his Natural History Pliny the Elder tells us lions were originally hard to catch the idea was to chase them into covered pits, but later it was discovered they could be subdued by throwing a cloak over their heads. Elephants were captured and tamed by beatings and starvation. A major source of animals was the Roman army, which had a special rank venator immunitus for those in charge of animal procurement. A sorry business for sure, but Roman animal sports did at least provide an answer to one perennial question: Which is tougher, a bull or a rhino? Never bet against a rhino, which according to the writer Martial had no problem getting its horn under a bull and flipping it like a flapjack. Cecil Adams Send questions to Cecil via cecil@straightdope.com.

2: Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire - Wikipedia

A Must Read for Students Christians gain a clearer understanding of the history of our country and how we can participate in a God-honoring way by listening to "Christians in the Arena" by Samuel J. Alibrando.

One out of four, only 25 percent of Bible-believing, active Christians voted. I refuse to be salt and light. Totally checked out of the process. With all the effort that went in , was an uptick of 2 percent Christian-voter turnout. But it is big; because, you have been losing 10 percent an election for four straight elections. So, you turned it around. Why People Voted David: You can measure that. Tell me why you voted. Abortion is what drove my vote. Pro- lifers now outnumber the pro-abortion folks. Which gave an advantage to candidates that were pro-life. It gave a 7-percentage advantage. Now, the results of that were seen, for example, at the federal level in the Congress of the United States. Of the 54, 36 of them were pro-life, which is a 67 percent pro-life class. So, that advantage in the voting numbers resulted in an advantage in the House. Eight out of the 10 were pro-life, pro-faith, pro-family. What is it now, 80 percent? The Senate is where we need the most help. Now we come to In , we actually had a percent increase in Christian voter turnout. We had been down at 15 million evangelicals, and it came up between Still less than half, but almost double. The result of that was exit polling. The result of that was the freshman class of , which in that class had 40 freshman House members. Two-thirds were pro-life, pro-faith, pro-family. In the Senate that year, you had nine U. Now, put that together. In two elections, we have elected 94 members of the House of Representatives, and two-thirds of them are pro-life, pro-faith, pro-family. The Problem But, you elect them. Y0u put them there because you want policies that look like that. Yes, you want the victories at the policy level; so, we voted. We got good people elected. What happened after that? Wade, Congress has not done a single thing to restrict the jurisdiction of abortion. Now, they have 19 measures where they restrict the funding of abortion. Well, this new class comes in and They passed the first four laws to restrict the jurisdiction of abortion. And now, we get an them. By the way, statistics show that as a result of those laws, abortion went down in America 24 percent. We showed up; we carried our values; we elected people who had our values. They get in office; they legislated with those values. It made a difference in policy. Then we go to In , there is a percent drop in Christian- voter turnout. We went from that At that point, having it drop, we elected that year. The freshman class of the House was 54 members of Congress; only 17 were pro-life. And now, we have two-thirds of the freshman class is pro-abortion, anti-marriage, anti-religion. In the Senate that year, we had 10 freshman senators. Only one of the 10 was pro-life, pro-faith, pro-family. We went from 80 percent freshman classâ€” David: To 10 percent; because, we dropped that percent drop in Christian-voter turnout. By the way, having 10 freshman senators and only one thought marriage should be between a man and a woman, the statistics nationally at that point were 72 percent of the nation believed marriage should be between a man and woman. That means seven out of ten senators should have of marriage. That is what people have to learn. Congress never reflects the values of the people; it only reflects the values of those who voted in the last election. Now, when you get to , we have an up-turn of Christian- voter turnout again: But, the problem was exit polling. That year, all of these Christians showed up, and they did not carry their values with them. Only 6 percent thought that abortion was an issue, either for or against. Only one percent thought that marriage was an issue. Where it was 41 percent in thoseâ€” David: The result was in , we elected 57 freshmen to Congress. I got to ask you. What do you mean? So, out of the 57 freshmen that we sent to Congress in , only 23 were pro-life. It had been that the more Christians show up, the more pro-life people you get. So, Christians were we were showing up; but, they were voting just like non-Christians. In the Senate that year in , we elected 14 freshman senators. Out of the 14 freshman senators, only two were pro-life; that is 14 percent. You also have a huge advantage in carrying their values with them. For example, in , only 6 percent said that abortion is an issue. In , you had 30 percent who said that it was the driving issue, not just an issue, but the driving issue. So, the freshman class of was pretty significant. Instead of having 54 or 56 or 58 freshmen as we have been having in previous years, the freshman class of is 97 freshmen, almost twice the size. Eighty-one of them are pro-life. The highest turnout of Christian voters that carried Biblical values with them. This is the most pro-lifeâ€”as a result of ,

that produced the most pro-life Congress since Roe v. You look at the Senate. There were 16 freshman senators elected in ; 13 of the 16 were pro-life, pro-faith. It makes a huge difference. If you go vote and carry your values with you. Vote for peopleâ€”again, talked about life as the first issue. If you get that one right, all this other stuff is going to work. You get the life issue right, the economics is going to work. When we vote our pocketbook above righteousness, we lose every time. Is there a correlation between Christians voting and the stats? Yes, there absolutely is. As we saw in and , you started getting laws passed that look like the values of the country. We just have to work the system. Thanks for listening today folks. You can get the sequel, which is Building on the American Heritage Series. There is a lot of new material, some fantastic programs. You want to have in your library. You can get it at our website today at WallBuilders.

3: Mythbusting Ancient Rome – throwing Christians to the lions

Christians In the Civil Arena, Is It Actually Biblical? Christians In the Civil Arena, Is It Actually Biblical: Is Christian involvement in civil government appropriate? Should we as Christians be involved in and take our Christian values into government?

Christians were denounced as enemies of men and the gods and therefore subject to the severest tortures. Conviction did not lead inevitably to execution. Pardon would be granted if the Christian threw a few grains of incense on the altar of the pagan god and thereby recognize its dominance. If this offer was refused, more severe measures such as scourging or other tortures were implemented. If these failed, the victim was led to the circus or theater and subjected to a horrible death for the amusement of the crowd and the placation of the gods. She was twenty-two, a wife, a mother of a young son and a Christian. In the city of Carthage in North Africa on March 7 of the year she was put to death for her religious convictions. Her story comes to us from three eyewitness accounts written shortly after her death. Perpetua was one of five Christians condemned to death in the arena. One of her companions, Felicitas, was a slave and eight months pregnant. Two days before her execution she gave birth to a daughter. On March 7 Perpetua and her four companions were led to the arena where the crowd demanded they be scourged. Then a boar, a bear and a leopard were loosened upon the men while the women were attacked by a wild bull. Wounded, Perpetua was then put to the sword. Can we call it by any other name than what it is? Do not give me over to disgrace. Behold thy brothers, thy mother, and thy aunt: Do not destroy us all. And I wept because of my father, for he alone of all my family would not rejoice in my martyrdom. So I comforted him, saying: Perpetua, says a sympathizing recorder] seemed in a trance. How To Cite This Article:

4: Christians in the Arena | Come Reason's Apologetics Notes

Christians in the arena. Plagued people. Pythagoreans Celebrate the Sunrise. Fees for the crown. At the Chapel. Report this artwork *«Art is the lie that enables us.*

According to Tacitus, Nero used Christians as human torches. There are no references to the persecution of Christians by the Roman state prior to Nero, who according to Tacitus and later Christian tradition, blamed Christians for the Great Fire of Rome in 64, [16]: Tacitus records Annals. However, it has been argued that in context, the *institutum Neronianum* merely describes the anti-Christian activities; it does not provide a legal basis for them. Furthermore, no known writers show knowledge of a law against Christians. Eusebius wrote that Flavia Domitilla was banished because she was a Christian. In one of his letters Letter. Some who admitted that they had formerly been Christians but proved, by passing the test, that they were such no longer declared that Christians did not commit the crimes attributed to them, a declaration confirmed under torture by two slave women who were called deaconesses. Pliny therefore asked the emperor whether ceasing to be a Christian was enough to secure pardon for having been one, and whether punishment was merited just for being a Christian "the name itself" or only for the crimes associated with the name. Trajan responded that the problem could only be dealt with case by case. The authorities were not to seek Christians out, but people who were denounced and found guilty were to be punished unless, by worshipping the Roman gods, they proved they were not Christians having denied Christ and so obtained pardon. Anonymous denunciations were to be ignored. Hadrian stated that merely being a Christian was not enough for action against them to be taken, they must also have committed some illegal act. In addition, "slandorous attacks" against Christians were not to be tolerated, meaning that anyone who brought an action against Christians but failed would face punishment themselves. The pole in the arena is a memorial to the people killed during this persecution. Sporadic bouts of anti-Christian activity occurred during the period from the reign of Marcus Aurelius to that of Maximinus. Governors continued to play a more important role than emperors in persecutions during this period. It was pressure from below, rather than imperial initiative, that gave rise to troubles, breaching the generally prevailing but nevertheless fragile, limits of Roman tolerance: The extent to which Marcus Aurelius himself directed, encouraged, or was aware of these persecutions is unclear and much debated by historians. The sole account is preserved by Eusebius. The persecution in Lyons started as an unofficial movement to ostracize Christians from public spaces such as the market and the baths, but eventually resulted in official action. Christians were arrested, tried in the forum, and subsequently imprisoned. Slaves belonging to Christians testified that their masters participated in incest and cannibalism. Barnes cites this persecution as the "one example of suspected Christians being punished even after apostasy. Moreover, the church father Irenaeus, the Christian Bishop of Lyon, where this incident allegedly took place, wrote his five volume *Adversus Haereses* in, just three years after the alleged persecution but makes no mention whatsoever of any persecution which happened in his city. Martyrdom of Saint Blandina, one of the martyrs of Lyons, stained glass window by Alexandre Mauvernay. A number of persecutions of Christians occurred in the Roman empire during the reign of Septimius Severus. The traditional view has been that Severus was responsible. This is based on a reference to a decree he is said to have issued forbidding conversions to Judaism and Christianity but this decree is known only from one source, the *Augustan History*, an unreliable mix of fact and fiction. This may reflect a decrease in hostility toward Christianity or gaps in the available sources. According to Eusebius, a persecution undertaken by Maximinus against heads of the church in sent both Hippolytus and Pope Pontian into exile on Sardinia. Other evidence suggests the persecution of was local to Cappadocia and Pontus, and not set in motion by the emperor. Slaves, foreign-born residents, and lower classes were liable to be put to death by wild beasts as a public spectacle. There is no evidence for Christians being executed at the Colosseum in Rome. Decian persecution. A libellus from the Decian persecution AD. In the emperor Decius issued an edict, the text of which has been lost, requiring everyone in the Empire except Jews, who were exempted to perform a sacrifice to the gods in the presence of a Roman magistrate and obtain a signed and witnessed certificate, called a libellus, to this effect. We have always been constant in sacrificing to the gods,

and now too, in your presence, in accordance with the regulations, I have poured libations and sacrificed and tasted the offerings, and I ask you to certify this for us below. May you continue to prosper. How should those who had obtained a certificate or actually sacrificed be treated? It seems that in most churches those who had lapsed were accepted back into the fold, but some groups refused them admission to the church. This raised important issues about the nature of the church, forgiveness, and the high value of martyrdom. A century and a half later, St. Augustine would battle with an influential group called the Donatists , who broke away from the Catholic Church because the latter embraced the lapsed.

5: Could You Stomach the Horrors of 'Halftime' in Ancient Rome?

Of course the arena image immediately calls to mind those brave Christians in the first few centuries of the church who were forced to face the wild beasts or professional gladiators of ancient Rome. Although facing the most unimaginable fears, the saints did so because of their devotion to their Lord.

Various Christian quotes about gladiators and Roman festivals. If you are a Christian, you should read Decoding Nicea. Rewards and wreath crowns are set before them, while those who judge them cheer them on not to deeds of virtue, but to rivalry in violence and discord. The one who excels in giving blows is crowned. These are the lesser evils! As for the greater, who would not shrink from telling them? Some, who have given themselves over to idle and extravagant living, sell themselves to be killed. The destitute barter himself away, while the rich man buys others to kill him. And for these the witnesses take their seats! Boxers meet in single combat, for no reason whatever, nor does any one come down into the arena to offer aid. Do such exhibitions as these redound to your credit? The chief among you collect a legion of blood-stained murderers, paying to maintain them. Then these ruffians are sent forth by him, and you assemble at the spectacle to be judges partly of the wickedness of the adjudicator and partly of that of the men who engage in the combat. And he who misses the murderous exhibition is grieved, because he was not doomed to be a spectator of wicked, impious, and abominable deeds. You slaughter animals for the purpose of eating their flesh, but you purchase men to supply a cannibal banquet for the soul, nourishing it by the most ungodly bloodshedding. The robber commits murder for the sake of plunder, but the rich man purchases gladiators for the sake of their being killed. Nor may we see the other spectacles, lest our eyes and ears be defiled, participating in the utterances they sing there. For if one should speak of cannibalism, in these spectacles the children of Thyestes and Tereus are eaten. As for adultery both in the case of men and of gods But far be it from Christians to conceive any such deeds. For with them temperance dwells, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, chastity is guarded, iniquity exterminated, sin extirpated, righteousness exercised, law administered, worship performed, God acknowledged. Truth governs, grace guards, peace screens them. The holy word guides, wisdom teaches, life directs, God reigns. Who does not reckon the contests of gladiators and wild beasts among the things of greatest interest, especially those which are given by you [the ones in Rome, put on by the emperor, to whom this plea is addressed]. But we, because we believe that to watch a man be put to death is much the same as killing him, avoid such spectacles. It is always with your people that the prisons are streaming, the mines are sighing, and the wild beasts are fed. It is from you that the exhibitors of gladiator shows always get their herds of criminals to feed up for the occasion. You will find no Christian there except for simply being one. If we can maintain that it is right to indulge in the cruel, the impious, and the fierce, then let us go there. If we are what others accuse us of, then let us regale ourselves with human blood. It is good, no doubt, to have the guilty punished. Who but the criminal would deny that? Rather, he will mourn a brother who has sinned so heinously as to require a punishment so dreadful. And who is my guarantee that it is always the guilty who are sentenced to the wild beasts or some other doom and that the guiltless never suffer from the vengeance of the judge, the weakness of defense, or the pressure of the rack [i. And even in the case of those who are judicially condemned to the amphitheater, what a monstrous thing it is that in undergoing punishment they advance from some less serious delinquency to the status of manslaughter. The one who demands the lion for every manslayer of deeper dye will have the staff for the savage swordsman and rewards him with the cap of liberty. Yes, and he must have the poor victim back again, so that he may get a sight of his face-with zest inspecting near at hand the man whom he wished torn in pieces at safe distance from him.

6: 10 Excruciating Martyrdoms of Early Christianity - saint hippolytus - Oddee

The Church Age will close the way it began, with the Christian in the arena, undergoing great persecution, trials and sufferings at the hands of audacious people raised against the Lord. Even within the Christian world persecutions come, for many who claim to be Christian are not lined up with God.

February 4, The enormous arena was empty, save for the seesaws and the dozens of condemned criminals who sat naked upon them, hands tied behind their backs. Unfamiliar with the recently invented contraptions known as petaurua, the men tested the seesaws uneasily. One criminal would push off the ground and suddenly find himself 15 feet in the air while his partner on the other side of the seesaw descended swiftly to the ground. In the stands, tens of thousands of Roman citizens waited with half-bored curiosity to see what would happen next and whether it would be interesting enough to keep them in their seats until the next part of the "big show" began. With a flourish, trapdoors in the floor of the arena were opened, and lions, bears, wild boars and leopards rushed into the arena. The crowd of Romans began to laugh at the dark antics before them. They gave their ever-changing sponsors and organizers known as editors an enormously powerful platform to promote their views and philosophies to the widest spectrum of Romans. All of Rome came to the Games: They were all eager to witness the unique spectacles each new game promised its audience. To the editors, the Games represented power, money and opportunity. The more extreme and fantastic the spectacles, the more popular the Games with the general public, and the more popular the Games, the more influence the editor could have. Because the Games could make or break the reputation of their organizers, editors planned every last detail meticulously. Thanks to films like "Ben-Hur" and "Gladiator," the two most popular elements of the Roman Games are well known even to this day: Other elements of the Roman Games have also translated into modern times without much change: But much less discussed, and indeed largely forgotten, is the spectacle that kept the Roman audiences in their seats through the sweltering midafternoon heat: Super Bowl B. This new variation of ancient munera a tribute to the dead struck a chord within the developing republic. Soon, other members of the wealthy classes began to incorporate this type of slave fighting into their own munera. The practice evolved over time with new formats, rules, specialized weapons, etc. Fulvius Nobilior decided to do something different. In addition to the gladiator duels that had become common, he introduced an animal act that would see humans fight both lions and panthers to the death. Big-game hunting was not a part of Roman culture; Romans only attacked large animals to protect themselves, their families or their crops. Nobilior realized that the spectacle of animals fighting humans would add a cheap and unique flourish to this fantastic new pastime. Nobilior aimed to make an impression, and he succeeded. Gladiators of the Roman Empire] With the birth of the first "animal program," an uneasy milestone was achieved in the evolution of the Roman Games: Twenty-two years later, in B. Fagan noted in his book "The Lure of the Arena," a "central facet of the experience [of the Roman Games. He understood how these events could be manipulated to inspire fear, loyalty and patriotism, and began to stage the Games in new and ingenious ways. After all, what other city was powerful enough to command foreign armies to fight each other to the death, solely for their viewing pleasure? In one of his games, "Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome" author George Jennison notes that Caesar orchestrated "a hunt of four hundred lions, fights between elephants and infantry [and] bull fighting by mounted Thessalians. To execute his very specific visions, Caesar relied heavily on the bestiarii men who were paid to house, manage, breed, train and sometimes fight the bizarre menagerie of animals collected for the Games. Managing and training this ever-changing influx of beasts was not an easy task for the bestiarii. For example, it is not a natural instinct for a lion to attack and eat a human being, let alone to do so in front of a crowd of, screaming Roman men, women and children! To avoid being executed themselves, bestiarii met the challenge. They developed detailed training regimens to ensure their animals would act as requested, feeding arena-born animals a diet compromised solely of human flesh, breeding their best animals, and allowing their weaker and smaller stock to be killed in the arena. Bestiarii even went so far as to instruct condemned men and women on how to behave in the ring to guarantee a quick death for themselves and a better show. The bestiarii could leave nothing to chance. As their reputations

grew, bestiarii were given the power to independently devise new and even more audacious spectacles for the ludi meridiani midday executions. And by the time the Roman Games had grown popular enough to fill ,seat arenas , the work of the bestiarii had become a twisted art form. As the Roman Empire grew, so did the ambition and arrogance of its leaders. And the more arrogant, egotistic and unhinged the leader in power, the more spectacular the Games would become. Who better than the bestiarii to aid these despots in taking their version of the Roman Games to new, ever-more grotesque heights? Caligula Amplified the Cruelty Animal spectacles became bigger, more elaborate, and more flamboyantly cruel. Damnatio ad bestias became the preferred method of executing criminals and enemies alike. To meet this ever-growing pressure to keep the Roman crowds happy and engaged by bloodshed, bestiarii were forced to consistently invent new ways to kill. They devised elaborate contraptions and platforms to give prisoners the illusion they could save themselves – only to have the structures collapse at the worst possible moments, dropping the condemned into a waiting pack of starved animals. Perhaps most popular – as well as the most difficult to pull off – were the re-creations of death scenes from famous myths and legends. The halftime show of damnatio ad bestias became so notorious that it was common for prisoners to attempt suicide to avoid facing the horrors they knew awaited them. One prisoner who refused to walk into the arena was placed on a cart and wheeled in; the prisoner thrust his own head between the spokes of its wheels, preferring to break his own neck than to face whatever horrors the bestiarius had planned for him. It is in this era that Rome saw the rise of its most famous bestiarius, Carpophorus, "The King of the Beasts. He triumphed in one match that pitted him against a bear, a lion and a leopard, all of which were released to attack him at once. Another time, he killed 20 separate animals in one battle, using only his bare hands as weapons. When he armed his hands, the Hydra would have met a single death; one stroke of his would have sufficed for the entire Chimaera. He could yoke the fire-bearing bulls without the Colchian; he could conquer both the beasts of Pasiphae. If the ancient tale of the sea monster were recalled, he would release Hesione and Andromeda single-handed. Perhaps most shockingly, it was said that he was among the few bestiarii who could command animals to rape human beings, including bulls, zebras, stallions, wild boars and giraffes, among others. This crowd-pleasing trick allowed his editors to create ludi meridiani that could not only combine sex and death but also claim to be honoring the god Jupiter. After all, in Roman mythology, Jupiter took many animal forms to have his way with human women. Historians still debate how common of an occurrence public bestiality was at the Roman Games – and especially whether forced bestiality was used as a form of execution – but poets and artists of the time wrote and painted about the spectacle with a shocked awe. The Ancient Myth has been confirmed! Hoary antiquity, Caesar, should not marvel at itself: By that time, the relationship between the emperors and the Senate had disintegrated to a point of near-complete dysfunction. The wealthy, powerful and spoiled emperors began acting out in such debauched and deluded ways that even the working class "plebs" of Rome were unnerved. But even in this heightened environment, Commodus served as an extreme. Having little interest in running the empire, he left most of the day-to-day decisions to a prefect, while Commodus himself indulged in living a very public life of debauchery. His harem contained girls and boys some of whom it was said had so bewitched the emperor as he passed them on the street that he felt compelled to order their kidnapping. Commodus began to fight as a gladiator. Sometimes, he arrived dressed in lion pelts, to evoke Roman hero Hercules; other times, he entered the ring absolutely naked to fight his opponents. To ensure a victory, Commodus only fought amputees and wounded soldiers all of whom were given only flimsy wooden weapons to defend themselves. In one dramatic case recorded in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Commodus ordered that all people missing their feet be gathered from the Roman streets and be brought to the arena, where he commanded that they be tethered together in the rough shape of a human body. Commodus wanted to rule the halftime show as well, so he set about creating a spectacle that would feature him as a great bestiarius. Commodus once made all of Rome sit and watch in the blazing midday sun as he killed bears in a row – and then made the city pay him 1 millions esterces ancient Roman coins for the unsolicited favor. By then, Rome was broken – bloody, chaotic and unable to stop its death spiral. Early Christians were among the most popular victims in ludi meridiani. The emperors who condemned these men, women and children to public death by beasts did so with the obvious hope that the spectacle would be so horrifying and humiliating that it

would discourage any other Romans from converting to Christianity. Little did they realize that the tales of brave Christians facing certain death with grace, power and humility made them some of the earliest martyr stories. Nor could they have imagined that these oft-repeated narratives would then serve as invaluable tools to drive more people toward the Christian faith for centuries to come. In the end, who could have ever imagined that these near-forgotten "halftime shows" might prove to have a more lasting impact on the world than the gladiators and chariot races that had overshadowed the bestiarii for their entire existence? The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. This version of the article was originally published on Live Science.

7: Christians In The Arena - Invocation Rituals

Given the consistent movement away from God's values in America today, this audiobook provides biblical directives on how believers are to act in a morally corrupt society.

So writes Henryk Sienkiewicz in his novel *Quo Vadis*. By the end of the 19th century, the image of cowering Christians huddled in the arena awaiting their deaths as lions prowled towards them was the defining symbol of Roman religious persecution and the subject of many famous paintings. Today, the prevailing modern conception of the relationship between the Roman state and the Christians is that a number of emperors, including Nero and Marcus Aurelius, were responsible for introducing policies of persecution. We would like to tackle two important questions about the treatment of Christians in the Roman Empire. Was persecution a consistent imperial policy, and what types of punishments were inflicted on Christians? Blaming the Emperors

The myth of constant persecution largely stems from two works written in the early fourth century A. These authors were living in the reign of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and tasked themselves with charting the history of Christian suffering up to this glorious moment. In both their works, the torture and execution of Christians in preceding centuries is associated with the emperors under whom they occurred. But the reality is that the punishment of Christians in the first three centuries A. The emperor Nero is referred to as the first persecutor of the Christians by Lactantius. After the Great Fire of Rome in A. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Nero had the Christians covered in wild beast skins and torn to death by dogs. However, no ancient writer suggests that these Christians were persecuted for their faith alone. They were charged with committing the crime of arson. The unpopularity of the Christians with other Romans is made clear by letters exchanged between Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia modern-day north Turkey and the emperor Trajan in the early second century A. Pliny reported that the provincials had been denouncing others to him and even anonymously posting the names of suspected Christians. Trajan replied as follows: They must not be searched for, but if they are denounced and found guilty they must be punished. Polycarp was persecuted before an enthusiastic crowd in Smyrna. However, this did not put an end to denunciations by provincials who felt uneasy or threatened by Christians in their communities. We can see this in the case of Polycarp of Smyrna and the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, who were harassed by members of the local population and subsequently brought to trial. This is how emperors such as Marcus Aurelius earned the label of persecutors. However, the initiative to punish Christians did not come from the emperors at all, but from below. In the case of Polycarp, who was burned alive, the people of Smyrna are even said to have joined in enthusiastically to find wood for the fire. This was mob violence at its finest. Not Just Lions. The punishments meted out to Christians who admitted their religion and refused to sacrifice varied enormously. In the first and early second centuries A. Later in the second century, beheading was a privilege to which only the highest-ranking citizens were automatically entitled. These included being crucified, burned to death, and attacked by beasts. Being condemned to the beasts was a particularly grisly end. It meant that you and your companions would be exposed in the arena to a variety of wild and ferocious animals, such as leopards, boars, and yes, lions, and required to fight for your lives. Condemnation to the beasts was a popular punishment for criminals, and not just unique to Christians. It is important to emphasise that such cruel deaths were not unique to Christians. Condemnation to the beasts was a popular punishment for criminals of any type, because it maximized their suffering and allowed good and proper Roman citizens to gain pleasure from the deaths of wrong-doers. For the Good of the Empire

The pattern of localised persecution changed in A. In that year, the emperor Decius issued an edict that ordered all Romans to sacrifice to the gods and present a certificate to prove that they had done so. This edict was prompted by serious barbarian invasions. Decius believed that Romans needed to unite to show support for the gods in order to protect the empire. His sacrifice edict was not specifically directed at Christians, though it did pose a particular problem for the followers of this monotheistic religion. A certificate of sacrifice. Christians could then breathe a sigh of relief until A. The legislation described those who did not sacrifice as un-Roman. Death was not initially the automatic punishment for Christians who refused to sacrifice. Some clergy, such as Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in North

Africa, were simply sent into exile. His less fortunate colleagues in Numidia were condemned to hard labour in the mines, a punishment usually reserved for slaves. It was only in the second stage of persecution that death was prescribed for Christians such as Cyprian. This was a major disaster which later Christian authors recounted with glee as some kind of divine retribution. The Great Persecution After Valerian, the Roman state took no official action against the Christians for more than forty years. In a series of edicts, the emperors ordered the destruction of churches, the seizure of ecclesiastical property, and the burning of Christian texts. Every opportunity was given to Christians to acknowledge the gods, and the emperors even introduced an amnesty for imprisoned clergy if they performed a sacrifice. The types of penalties inflicted on Christians depended on provincial governors who were charged with enforcing imperial will. Some were tortured and then burned to death. Others were mutilated and then sentenced to the copper mines in Egypt. However, Lactantius tells us that some governors did not spill Christian blood, indicating that persecution was not uniformly enforced. Nor did all the emperors agree with the policy. The eastern provincials had to endure a series of waves of persecution until A. This was neither an edict, nor from Milan, but a letter from Constantine and his co-emperor Licinius to eastern governors. The Romans were horrible, bloodthirsty people in many ways. But the treatment of Christians by the Roman imperial state was more complex than we might at first think. Persecution of Christians was carried out on the local level, and usually initiated by provincial mobs. Death – particularly by lions – was not an inevitable punishment, and not restricted to Christians. Universal edicts of persecution were only issued on specific occasions in the third and early fourth centuries A. They were a result of the emperors trying to reinforce traditional Roman religion in increasingly unsettled times.

8: Damnatio ad bestias - Wikipedia

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History[edit] The exact purpose of the early damnatio ad bestias is not known and might have been a religious sacrifice rather than a legal punishment, [1] especially in the regions where lions existed naturally and were revered by the population, such as Africa and parts of Asia. For example, Egyptian mythology had a chimeric Underworld demon, Ammit , who devoured the souls of exceptionally sinful humans, as well as other lion-like deities, such as Sekhmet , who, according to legend, almost devoured all of humanity soon after her birth. There are also accounts of feeding lions and crocodiles with humans, both dead and alive, in Ancient Egypt and Libya. Damnatio ad bestias appeared there not as a spiritual practice but rather a spectacle. In addition to lions, other animals were used for this purpose, including bears, leopards , Caspian tigers , and black panthers. It was combined with gladiatorial combat and was first featured at the Roman Forum and then transferred to the amphitheaters. Terminology[edit] Whereas the term damnatio ad bestias is usually used in a broad sense, historians distinguish two subtypes: They were sometimes assisted by venators hunters , [8] who used bows, spears and whips. Such group fights were not human executions but rather staged animal fighting and hunting. Various animals were used, such as hyenas , elephants , wild boars , buffaloes , bears , lions , tigers , bulls , wolves , and leopards. The first such staged hunting Latin: The custom of submitting criminals to lions was brought to ancient Rome by two commanders, Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus , who defeated the Macedonians in BC, and his son Scipio Aemilianus , who conquered the African city of Carthage in BC. Rome reserved its earliest use for non-Roman military allies found guilty of defection or desertion. Some documented examples of damnatio ad bestias in Ancient Rome include the following: Cicero was indignant that a man was thrown to the beasts to amuse the crowd just because he was considered ugly. Tacitus states that during the first persecution of Christians under the reign of Nero after the Fire of Rome in 64 , people were wrapped in animal skins called tunica molesta and thrown to dogs. Application of damnatio ad bestias to Christians was intended to equate them with the worst criminals, who were usually punished this way. There is no evidence for Christians being executed at the Colosseum in Rome. The spread of the practice of throwing Christians to beasts was reflected by the Christian writer Tertullian 2nd century. He states that the general public blamed Christians for any general misfortune and after natural disasters would cry "Away with them to the lions! Tertullian also wrote that Christians started avoiding theaters and circuses, which were associated with the place of their torture. Felicitas, and their Companions ", a text which purports to be an eyewitness account of a group of Christians condemned to damnatio ad bestias at Carthage in , states that the men were required to dress in the robes of a priest of the Roman god Saturn , the women as priestesses of Ceres and were shown to the crowd as such. The men and women were brought back out in separate groups and first the men, then the women, exposed to a variety of wild beasts. The victims were chained to poles or elevated platforms. Those who survived the first animal attacks were either brought back out for further exposure to the beasts or executed in public by a gladiator. The Edict of Milan gave them freedom of religion. Penalty for other crimes[edit] Roman laws, which are known to us through the Byzantine collections, such as the Code of Theodosius and Code of Justinian , defined which criminals could be thrown to beasts or condemned by other means. Deserters from the army [32] Those who employed sorcerers to harm others, during the reign of Caracalla. For example, after the overthrow and assassination of Commodus , the new emperor threw to lions both the servants of Commodus and Narcissus who strangled him. Even though Narcissus brought the new emperor to power, he committed a crime of murdering the previous one. Beast fighters and criminals being executed, the Zliten leopard, mosaic from c. Local governors were required to consult a Roman deputy before staging a fight of skilled gladiators against animals. Blandina , Lyon Perpetua and Felicity , Saturus and others , presumably Carthage Germanicus, second half of the 2nd century, Smyrna , mentioned in the Martyrdom of Polycarp of Smyrna.

9: The Early Christians - Throwing Christians to the Lions: Fact and Legend

As Christians, we ought to be the man in the arena. In this life, we face insurmountable difficulties. In this life, we face insurmountable difficulties. We face hardships, adversities, and destitution.

Strange People , views As a consequence of professing their faith, early Christians were persecuted mostly during the Roman Empire and were often tortured to death for maintaining his or her religious belief. Many deaths were inspirational for other people and increased the fame of the Catholic religion, although several of these stories are unhistorical and are purely legendary. Meet ten of the most excruciating martyrdoms of early Christianity. He is treated in the Golden Legend, which says he was a soldier who participated in the torture execution of St. He was then sentenced to be torn apart by horses. Ignatius succeeded Evodius as bishop of Antioch; he retained the office for forty years, proving himself in every way an exemplary pastor. The Emperor was a humane man, yet the gratitude which he felt he owed to his own pagan gods for his victories over the Dacians and the Scythians later led him to authorize the death penalty for those Christians who refused to acknowledge these divinities publicly. According to the legend, Trajan ruled that Ignatius should die. He was bound and conveyed to Rome, to be devoured by wild beasts in the Colosseum. His feast day is February 1. Source Photo 3Saint Lawrence: Lawrence was one of seven famous deacons of the early Church. The other six deacons were captured by the Emperor Valerian on August 6, , and martyred. The oppression of the Christian Church was very severe, and many Christians fled Rome or died. As librarian and archivist, Lawrence was thought to have a list of all the members of the early Church, and the locations of all the mythical hidden hoards of gold belonging to the Vatican. Captured by the soldiers of the Emperor Valerian, he was told to produce all the wealth of the Church. He was given only two days to bring all the treasures to the imperial palace. Lawrence gathered up all the diseased, orphaned or crippled Christians on the appointed day, brought them to the palace, and told the startled emperor that "These are the treasures of the Church! He is often represented holding a gridiron to memorialize this grisly manner of martyrdom. Lawrence was most certainly beheaded and not roasted, the traditions of his being cooked are somewhat stronger than actual fact. As a result, St. Lawrence is also considered a patron saint for cooks. There is also the popular story that he was so willing to embrace Christ in heaven, that he did not mind the pain from the fire of his martyrdom, and indeed, he found the strength to tell his executioners "Turn me over. I am done on this side. Lawrence and many of these other early Christians in facing their death did much to gain respect for their religion in Rome, and after the death of St. Lawrence, there was widespread conversion to Christianity. His feast day is August 10th. Source Photo 4Saint Agatha of Sicily: Agueda is particularly worshiped by married women and those women who are breast feeding their babies. Agatha, daughter of a distinguished family and a girl of great beauty, was pursued by a Senator Quintianus who had fallen in love with her. Quintianus then had her subjected to various cruel tortures. Of these, the most barbaric was an order to have her breasts cut off. This became the peculiar characteristic in medieval images of the saint. However, it was said that Agatha was consoled by a vision of St. Peter, who healed her miraculously. Her scorned admirer eventually sentenced her to death by being burnt at the stake. However, she was saved from this fate by a mysterious earthquake. She later died in prison as a result of the repeated cruelties inflicted on her. Her feast is kept on 5 February and she has been venerated as patron saint of breast cancer patients. Source Photo 5Saint Bartholomew: After the Resurrection, he is traditionally believed to have preached in India and Armenia. Tradition holds that in Armenia he was flayed alive and then crucified upside down for refusing to worship pagan gods. This fate led to him being adopted as the patron saint of tanners. Source 1 , Source 2 Photo 6Pope St. According to the oldest list of Roman bishops, he was the third successor to St. He is the author of an Epistle to the Corinthians which was written c. The letter is one of the earliest witnesses to the authority of the Church of Rome and was so highly regarded that it was read publicly at Corinth with the Scriptures in the second century. Clement converted many high-ranking citizens of the region before being exiled to Crimea by emperor Trajan. There, with the charisma of miracles, he converts several thousand to Christianity. Learning of this, Trajan condemns Clement to death by drowning him into the sea with an iron anchor. About the year A. Cyril recovered some

human bones and an anchor which he believed to be the relics of St. He took these relics to Rome where they were joined with relics of St. Ignatius of Antioch at the basilica of St. His feast day is November Source Photo 7

Saint Agnes of Rome: She suffered martyrdom at the age of 12 during the reign of the Eastern Roman Emperor Diocletian, on January 21, Phocus, the son of the prefect Roman governor Sempronius, was one of several rich young men who fell in love with Agnes. Sempronius questioned her officially, and she freely admitted her faith in Jesus. He ordered her to go to the temple of Vesta, to offer her a sacrifice but Agnes steadfastly refused any compromise with pagan practice. Threats of death also did not sway her some sources indicate that Roman law did not permit the execution of virgins, so the judge threatened her chastity instead. Agnes was stripped naked and dragged through the streets to a brothel. On the way, as the saint prayed, her hair miraculously grew and covered her body to protect her modesty. According to the legend, at the brothel, she managed to remain a virgin. She was then condemned as a witch and led out tied to a stake to be burned. However, the bundle of wood would not burn, whereupon the officer in charge drew his sword and struck off her head or stabbed her in the throat. The execution reportedly shocked even the bloodthirsty pagan crowd, since Agnes was so young and pure. Thus, her death created a new wave of sympathy for the Christians and brought many to the faith. Her feast day is celebrated on January Source Photo 8

Saint Sebastian: He was an officer of the Imperial Roman army, and captain of the guard under the emperor Diocletian in 3rd century AD. Discovering his betrayal, Diocletian ordered Sebastian to be shot by archers. He survived, recovered, and returned to preach to Diocletian, who had him beaten to death. He died a martyr in Rome, c AD. Because Sebastian was thought to have been killed by the arrows, and yet was not, and then later was killed by the same emperor who ordered him shot, he is sometimes known as the saint who was "martyred twice. Having received a vision that urged her to baptism, Catherine became a Christian. It is said that she visited her contemporary the Roman Emperor Maxentius and attempted to convince him of the error of his ways in persecuting Christians. She succeeded in converting his wife, the Empress, and many pagan wise men whom the Emperor sent to dispute with her, all of whom were subsequently martyred. Upon the failure of the Emperor to win Catherine over, he ordered her to be put in prison; and when the people who visited her converted, she was condemned to death on the breaking wheel. The wheel was typically a large wooden wagon wheel with many radial spokes, but a wheel was not always used. In some cases, the condemned was lashed to the wheel and beaten with a club or iron cudgel, with the gaps in the wheel allowing the cudgel to break through. According to legend, the wheel itself broke when she touched it, so she was beheaded. Given the paucity of historical information, however, there is very little evidence to confirm any of these legends. Her feast day is celebrated on 25 November by most Christian churches. Source 1, Source 2 Photo 10

Saint Symphorosa: When Emperor Hadrian had completed his costly palace at Tibur and began its dedication by offering sacrifices, he received the following response from the gods: If she and her sons offer sacrifice, we promise to give you all that you ask for. The next day the emperor summoned her seven sons, and ordered them to be tied to seven stakes, which had been erected for the purpose round the Temple of Hercules. Each of them suffered a different kind of martyrdom. Crescens was pierced through the throat, Julian through the breast, Nemesius through the heart, Primitivus was wounded at the navel, Justinus was pierced through the back, Stracteus Stacteus, Estacteus was wounded at the side, and Eugenius was cleft in two parts from top to bottom. Their bodies were thrown into a deep ditch at a place which the pagan priests afterwards called "Ad septem Biothanatos. The Church celebrates their feast 18 July.

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