

## **second century athenagoras plea christians CLEANED**

St. Athenagoras: Second Century Plea Christians To the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarm

### Chapter 1. Injustice Toward Christians In your empire, different nations follow various customs and laws, a is forbidden by law or threatened punishment for following their ancestral practices, however strange. Some wo Hector or Helen, others Aga Tennes, still others grant divine honors to Erechtheus. Egyptians even deify cats, crocodiles, serpents, asps, a You and the laws grant all these freedoms, considering it impious to have no god also holding that every should worship the gods he prefers to keep men from wrongdoing. Why, then, is the me "Christian" seen as criminal? Names do not deserve hatred; only unjust acts shou punished. Under your reign, citizens enjoy equal rightsexcept Christians, who, though innocent and law-abi harassed and persecuted for th alone. We respectfully present our case, asserting that we suffer unjust persecutors' fines and insults concern little, for we do not repay violence nor sue those who rob us, but inste turn the other cheek and give more than taken. When our property is seized, they pursue even our lives, acc of crimes for which we are guiltless. --- ### Chapter 2. Demand for Equal Treatment When Accused If anyone can prove us guilty of actual crime, we do n escape punishment. But if only our name is ac no crime is substantiated, the law should protect us as it does o one else is convicted based on identi rather than evidence. Let the life of the accused be investigated; let the n "Christian" not bear liability in itself. This is how philosophers are judged: not for their title, but their actions. --- ### Chapter 3. Refuting the Main Charges Three charges are made against us: atheism, cannibalism, and i these are true, punish us; if not, inves our lives, beliefs, and loyalty to state and emperor. Grant us only the sam rights as others. --- ### Chapter 4. Christians Are Not Atheists Our doctrine recognizes one uncreated, eternal distinct from matter, who made all things by his Logos. C atheists while we proclaim such piety is unreasonable denied all gods, as Diagoras did, the accusation m but we do not. --- ### Chapter 5-7. Philosophers and Poets One God Philosophers and poets, from Euripides and Sophocles to Plato and the Stoics, acknowledge one su they use various terms and approaches. Why are Christians alone persecuted for this belief? --- ### Chapter 8 Argument Against Polytheism If there were multiple uncreated gods, they would either occupy the same space impossible, as uncre are unique) or be separate, which implies they are limited or powerless. Reason and the t of prophets that God is one. Prophets

such as Moses and Isaiah proclaim: "I am God, and there is none beside

###Chapter 11. Christians Moral Life Our teachings are not human invention but come from God. We are tax enemies, bless those who curse and not return violence for violence. Even our uneducated members exemplify virtues in daily life. --- ### Chapter 12. Christians Motivation We behave virtuously not to please men but because we believe we must answer to God for our lives. Our hope is for a better life to come, rather than present pleasures. --- ### 13. Why Christians Reject Pagan Sacrifices God, the maker of all, has no need of blood or burnt offerings. The sacrifice is in understanding his works and living reasonably. Animal sacrifices are for those who err, but we offer a bloodless, rational worship. --- ### Chapter 14-16. Christians and Pagan Gods The charge that we are impious for worshiping city gods is misplaced; nations differ greatly in their deities and rites. Christians distinguish between the uncreated God and created matter; we do not worship images of wood but the Creator who shaped all. --- ### 17-18. On Idolatry The names and images of pagan gods are of recent origin, invented by poets and artisans. Fashion hands, and are often younger than their makers. Even the gods, according to their own mythologies, have a subject to change, making them perishable and unlike the eternal God. --- ### Chapter 19-22. Critique of Pagan Allegories Pagans themselves admit their gods had beginnings, sprang from elements or from men, committed depicted with monstrous forms. Some claim meanings behind the myths (such as gods representing elements these are not gods in truth, being corruptible and not eternal. --- ### Chapter 23-24. On Demons and Spirits So effects attributed to idols result not from their divinity, but from lower spiritual beings demons which the philosophers also distinguish from God. Demons deceive and mislead people, craving sacrifices and false worship. --- Chapter 25-28. The Heathen Gods Were Men Historical testimony, including from Egyptian priests and Greek affirms that so-called gods like Osiris, Apollo, Heracles, and Asclepius were mere men, later deified by popular affection for their deeds and rulership. --- ### Chapter 29-31. False Accusations Against Christians The slanderers that Christians practice impious feasts and sexual immorality echo the vilifications faced by philosophers like Pythagoras and Socrates. Christians, whose doctrine requires purity even of thought, cannot be guilty of such deeds. The one who looks within commits adultery in his heart; how much more are overt acts forbidden. --- ### Chapter 32-34. Christian Moral Christians abstain even from lustful looks and consider even a second, pleasure-seeking kiss as a potential sin if for procreation; many choose celibacy out of devotion to God. Divorce and remarriage are considered adultery. Among Christians is far stricter than among their accusers. --- ### Chapter 35-36. Christians Reject Cruelty and Christians avoid not only homicide, but even witnessing bloodshed at public games. Abortion and child exposure are murder. Belief in the resurrection of the body further deters them from such acts. --- ### Chapter 37. Plea for Judgment Having cleared ourselves from each accusation, we ask for just judgment: that we might be seen as pious, peaceful,

subjects whoupholdvirtue and pray for the well-being of the rulers and the empire.