

1 **The Church and Roman Society**

"Far from us, say the Christians, be any man possessed of any culture or wisdom or judgment; their aim is to convince only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women, and children...These are the only ones whom they manage to turn into believers."

– Celsus, pagan opponent of Christianity

Most Christians came from the lower classes.

2 **Christian standards of holiness stood out in Roman society.**

- Christians separated themselves from the pervasive polytheism of Greek and Roman life.
 - Greeks and Romans had a god for every occasion; many social events involved acknowledgement of the appropriate god, something a Christian should not do.
 - Christians had to be careful not to contribute to idol worship through their work.

3

- Christians shunned Roman entertainment, which was often extremely immoral.
 - Gladiatorial combats
 - Theater
- Christians who owned slaves treated them humanely and considered them their equals in the church.
- Christians upheld the sanctity of human life, in contrast with pagans, who often committed infanticide.
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- Christians maintained the holiness of the body.
 - Chastity
 - Moderation in all things
- Christians were much admired for their acts of charity.

5 **Tension often existed between Christians and pagan society.**

- Because they believed in only one invisible God, Christians were considered dangerous atheists who would bring trouble to their communities by offending the gods.
- As they separated themselves from the sinfulness of pagan society, Christians often appeared rude and aloof.

6

- Wild rumors spread about terrible happenings in Christian meetings.
 - Poor information about the holy kiss led to charges of sexual immorality.
 - Poor information about the Lord's Supper led to charges of cannibalism.