

## WHO PERSECUTE AND WHY

### 1. BECAUSE Jesus had not kept the Sabbath according to their ideas, what did the Jews do?

“Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.” **John 5:16.**

### 2. What kind Of fast is most acceptable to God?

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” **Isaiah 58:6.**

**NOTE** — This is what Jesus did. He, the Author and Lord of the Sabbath, in addition to attending and taking part in religious services (**Luke 4:16**), went about healing the sick, relieving the oppressed, and restoring the impotent, lame, and blind, on the Sabbath day. But this, while in perfect accord with the law of God, the great law of love, was contrary to the traditions and perverted ideas of the Jews respecting the Sabbath. Hence they persecuted him, and sought to slay Him.

### 3. Why did Cain kill Abel?

“For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? *Because his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous.*” **1John 3:11, 12.**

**NOTE.**— The following comment upon this passage by M. de Chesnais, a Catholic priest of New Zealand, is well put: “If you would read the Word of God, you would find that from the beginning all good people were persecuted because they were good. Abel was slain by his brother because he was good, and Cain could not endure the sight of him. *Kaikoura (New Zealand) Star, April 10, 1884.*”

### 4. Commenting upon the treatment of Isaac, the son of Sarah, by Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, what principle does the apostle Paul lay down?

“But as then, *he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit,* even so it is now.” **Galatians 4:29.**

**5. What other instances of persecution mentioned in the Bible, demonstrate the correctness of this principle?**

a. Esau, who sold his birthright, persecuted Jacob, who vowed his loyalty to God. **Genesis 25:29–34; 27:41; 32:6.**

b. The wayward and envious sons of Jacob persecuted Joseph, who feared God. **Genesis 37; Acts 7:9.**

c. The idolatrous Egyptians persecuted the Hebrews, who worshiped the true God. **Exodus 1 and 5.**

d. The Hebrew who did his neighbor wrong thrust Moses, as mediator, aside. **Exodus 2:13, 14; Acts 7:26, 27.**

e. Saul, who disobeyed God, persecuted David, who feared God. **1Samuel 15, 19, 24.**

f. Israel, in their apostasy, persecuted Elijah and Jeremiah, who were prophets of God. **1Kings 19:9, 10; Jeremiah 36:20–23; 38:1–6.**

g. Nebuchadnezzar, while an idolater, persecuted the three Hebrew captives for refusing to worship idols. **Daniel 3.**

h. The envious and idolatrous princes under Darius, persecuted Daniel for daring to pray to the God of heaven. **Daniel 6.**

i. The murderers of Christ persecuted the apostles for preaching Christ. **Acts 4 and 5.**

j. Paul, before his conversion, persecuted the church of God. **Acts 8:1; 9:1, 2; 22:4, 5, 20; 26:9–11; Galatians 1:13; 1Timothy 1:12, 13.**

**NOTE** — The history of all the religious persecutions since Bible times is but a repetition of this same story,— the wicked persecute the righteous. And thus it will continue to be until the conflict between good and evil is ended.

**6. Who does Paul say shall suffer persecution?**

*“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* **2Timothy 3:12.**

**7. What is essential to extensive religious persecution?**

Ecclesiastical control of the civil power, or a union of church and state.

**8. Since persecution is invariably wrong, and the persecutor is generally in the wrong on religious subjects, what must be true of persecuting governments?**

They likewise must be in the wrong.

**NOTES** — “There are many who do not seem to be sensible that all violence in religion is irreligious, and that, whoever is wrong, the persecutor cannot be right.” *Thomas Clarke*.

“Have not almost all the governments in the world always been in the wrong on religious subjects?” *Macaulay*.

“Do not the Scriptures clearly show that they who persecute are generally in the wrong, and they who suffer persecution in the right,— that the majority has always been on the side of falsehood, and the minority only on the side of truth?” *Luther*.

“Religion was intended to bring peace on earth and good will towards men, and whatever tends to hatred and persecution, however correct in the letter, must be utterly wrong in the spirit.” *Henry Varnum*.

God never forces the will or the conscience; but, in order to bring men under sin, Satan resorts to force. To accomplish his purpose, he works through religious and secular rulers, influencing them to enact and enforce human laws in defiance of the law of God.

**9. Under what terrible deception did Christ say men would persecute His followers?**

“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” **John 16:1, 2**.

**10. Who is the original murderer?**

“Ye are of your father *the devil*, and the lusts of your father ye will do. *He was a murderer from the beginning*, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” **John 8:44**.

**11. When James and John wished to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans who did not receive Christ, what did Christ say to them?**

“He turned, and rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*” **Luke 9:55, 56.**

**NOTES** —Some of the reasons given in justification of persecution may be noted in the following quotations:—

“The state cannot afford to permit religious liberty. We hear a great deal about religious tolerance, but we are only tolerant in so far as we are not interested, A person may be tolerant toward a religion if he is not religious. . . . Intolerance means fervor and zeal. The best the state can do is to establish a limited religious liberty; but beyond a certain degree of tolerance the state cannot afford to admit the doctrine.” *Monsignor Russell (Catholic), quoted in Washington Post, May 5, 1910.*

“The church has persecuted. Only a tyro in church history will deny that. . . . We have always defended the persecution of the Huguenots, and the Spanish Inquisition. When she thinks it good to use physical force, she will use it. . . . But will the Catholic Church give bond that she will not persecute at all? Will she guarantee absolute freedom and equality of all churches and all faiths? The Catholic Church gives “no bonds for her good behavior.” *Editorial in Western Watchman (Catholic), of St. Louis, Mo., Dec. 24, 1908.*

“The Inquisition was a very merciful tribunal; I repeat it, almost a compassionate tribunal. . . . A man was only allowed to be racked once, which no one can deny was a most wonderful leniency in those times.” *Catholic Mirror, official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, Aug. 2, 9, 1896.*

“We confess that the Roman Catholic Church is intolerant; that is to say, that it uses all the means in its power for the extirpation of error and sin; but this intolerance is the logical and necessary consequence of her infallibility, She alone has the right to be intolerant, because she alone has the truth. The church tolerates heretics where she is obliged to do so, but she hates them mortally, and employs all her force to secure their annihilation.” *Shepherd of the Valley (St. Louis, Mo.), 1876.*

This erroneous position has been well refuted by Lord Macaulay in the following words: “The doctrine which, from the very first origin of religious dissensions, has been held by all bigots of all sects, when condensed into few words and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is simply this: I am in the right, and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me; for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger I shall persecute you; for it is my duty to persecute error.” *Essay on “Sir James Mackintosh.”*

Benjamin Franklin well said: “When religion is good it will take care of itself; when it is not able to take care of itself, and God does not see fit to take care of it, so that it has to appeal to the civil power for support, it is evidence to my mind that its cause is a bad one.” *Letter to Dr. Price.*

John Wesley gave the following Christian advice: “Condemn no man for not thinking as you think. Let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself. Let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God. Abhor every approach, in any kind or degree, to the spirit of persecution. If you cannot reason nor persuade a man into the truth, never attempt to force a man into it. If love will not compel him to come, leave him to God, the Judge of all.”

## **12. What does Christ say of those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake?**

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” **Matthew 5:10–12.** See **Revelation 2:10; 6:9–11.**

“In the furnace God may prove thee,  
Thence to bring thee forth more bright;  
But He can never cease to love thee;  
Thou art precious in His sight:  
God is with thee,—  
God, thine everlasting light.”

**13. What divine precepts received and obeyed would do way with all oppression and persecution?**

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Matt. 22:39. “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” **Matthew 7:12.**

**14. What does love not do?**

“*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor*: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” **Romans 13:10.**

**THE BIGOT'S CREED**

BELIEVE, as I believe—no more, no less;  
That I am right, and no one else, confess;  
    Feel as I feel, think only as I think;  
Eat what I eat, and drink but what I drink;  
    Look as I look, do always as I do;  
And, only then, I'll fellowship with you.  
That I am right, and always right, I know,  
Because my own convictions tell me so;  
    And to be right is simply this: to be  
    Entirely and in all respects like me.  
    To deviate a jot, or to begin  
    To question, doubt, or hesitate, is sin.  
Let sink the drowning man, if he'll not swim  
Upon the plank that I throw out to him;  
Let starve the famishing, if he'll not eat  
My kind and quantity of bread and meat;  
Let freeze the naked, too, if he'll not be  
Supplied with garments such as made for me.  
'Twere better that the sick should die than live,  
    Unless they take the medicine I give;  
'Twere better sinners perish than refuse  
    To be conformed to my peculiar views;  
'Twere better that the world stood still than move  
    In any way that I do not approve.