**Roman Prisoner’s Dilemma/ Council of Antioch Micro Game**

**Version 2.2**

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Contents

[Pedatogical Goals/Utility 3](#_Toc124329339)

[Situation/Historical Context 4](#_Toc124329340)

[Gameplay 5](#_Toc124329341)

[Required Materials 6](#_Toc124329342)

[The Game 7](#_Toc124329343)

[Part 1 – Prisoners chose life or death. 8](#_Toc124329344)

[Part 2 – Fairness for Lapsed Christians (Apostates). 10](#_Toc124329345)

[Roles Management 11](#_Toc124329346)

[12 students – 3 Meletius, 3 Peter, 5 Indeterminate, 1 Centurion 11](#_Toc124329347)

[16 students – 4 Meletius, 4 Peter, 7 Indeterminate, 1 Centurion 12](#_Toc124329348)

[20 students – 5 Meletius, 5 Peter, 9 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion 12](#_Toc124329349)

[24 students – 6 Meletius, 6 Peter, 11 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion 12](#_Toc124329350)

[28 students – 7 Meletius, 7 Peter, 13 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion 12](#_Toc124329351)

[Supporting Materials 14](#_Toc124329352)

[Saturn God of Harvest 14](#_Toc124329353)

[Table 1 Scripture Handout 1 15](#_Toc124329354)

[Table 2 Scripture Handout 2 17](#_Toc124329355)

[Table 3 Scripture Handout 3 19](#_Toc124329356)

[Table 4 Scripture Handout 4 21](#_Toc124329357)

[Table 5 Scripture Handout 5 23](#_Toc124329358)

[Supplemental Reading for Instructors 24](#_Toc124329359)

[Acknowledgements 25](#_Toc124329360)

# Pedatogical Goals/Utility

The fundamental conflict in this game is how the Christian Church should deal with people who abandoned their faith under persecution by the Romans. During the episodes of persecution, Christians were faced with the choice of martyrdom or apostasy. Apostates either made sacrifices to Roman gods or turned over scriptures to authorities. Martyrdom was considered a sign of true faith. It was considered acceptable to avoid it by fleeing your city. Cyprian of Carthage did this and Irenaes recommended that his pupil Polycarp to this because he was young. However, those who abandoned their faith to save their lives were excluded from the church and from the clergy. When persecution ended, the apostates often tried to offer penance and return to the church. This led to conflict in the church, and both alternatives for dealing with apostates could be supported by scriptures. The student handouts include a selection of scriptures on forgiveness and those on remaining steadfast to inform the debate.

The two named roles are the leaders of two factions on opposite sides of this issue. Peter, Metropolitan of Egypt, argues for forgiveness of apostates while Bishop Meletius would permanently exclude them from the Church. Those who argued for exclusion would accept the acts of penance by apostates only on their deathbed. They were never to be accepted prior to that. This allowed them to address the scriptures on forgiveness while maintaining their rigorous opposition to their participation in the church.

These roles relate to a specific even in Egypt during the persecution of Diocletian in the early fourth century. There are several other schisms in the early centuries around this issue. The Novatianist schism occurred in the third century in Rome. The Donatist schism was centered in Carthage. The issue of martyrdom and apostacy was a major point of contention as early as the first century and instructors teaching courses in Western Civilization and religion will find many places where this game can be included to give students a more liminal understanding of the conflict.

This game was originally developed to accompany *Constantine and the Council of Nicaea* where the Meletian and Novatian heresies were key issues. The game is now expanded to use in other settings, for example following a week’s study of the Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity (203 CE) in a World History class.

The game was designed to address aspects of the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. There are deeper issues that can be explored through the discussions on forgiveness of apostates. The nature of salvation, God’s grace, and the role of the individual in their salvation are questions that arise throughout the history of Christianity. The discussions in the game raise these questions in a liminal way. The game is also an excellent way to introduce students to using texts to make arguments in contexts independent of Christianity in the same way that the Wan Li game uses texts from *The Analects* without expecting students to accept Confucianism.

The game can also be used to introduce students to public speaking for Reacting games. We understand that many users of the game have used it to introduce Reacting even when they were not dealing with relevant historical situations.

The middle phase of this game can be used in two ways. For general used, the martyrs can discuss the question of how to deal with apostates that will form the final setting of the game. This will give them time to explore the scripture handouts and prepare arguments. For courses using the Council of Nicaea game, the Council of Antioch componentintroduces the Arian heresy and provides a liminal experience for key roles in the coming Nicaea game.

# Situation/Historical Context

The game is set in a Roman prison in Egypt where a group of prominent Christian leaders are in prison awaiting execution. Peter of Alexandria is Metropolitan of Egypt, the highest-ranking bishop in Africa. Meletius is another prominent Bishop. Prisoners are regularly selected for execution, but the prominent bishops are being held to be martyred during an important Roman festival. During this imprisonment there as a conflict between Peter and Meletius over whether Christians who had avoided execution by making offering to the Roman gods, surrendering scriptures, etc., (apostates) could make penance and return to the church. This would be a life and death issue in the prison. Any prisoner who made sacrifices to the Roman gods could save their life and leave prison. Peter favored forgiveness while Meletius opposed it. Clearly, if the Church accepted penance for apostates, the prisoners would be encouraged to save their lives. The conflict reached the point that a curtain was placed across the prison to separate the two groups. They refused to worship and take communion together.

After Peter was executed, Meletius was sent to the salt mines for hard labor and eventually released. Because there was not Metropolitan for Egypt, Meletius ordained bishops and established churches as he traveled. His churches followed his views on apostates. Meletius was unsuccessful in his effort to become Metropolitan. Soon after this, Alexander was selected as Metropolitan. He refused to accept the churches and clergy that Meletius established and ordained. The conflict between Meletius and Alexander eventually became violent. Gangs loyal to Alexander attacked the churches of Meletius’ followers. The issue was high on the agenda for the Council of Nicaea.

The same issue arose in Rome in the third century. The Bishop of Rome (Pope) Fabian was martyred in 250 c.e. After a delay of a year, Cornelius was elected pope. Cornelius was part of a faction that favored penance and forgiveness for apostates. The clergy who opposed this then elected Novatian was a Bishop in Rome. This led to two competing Popes in Rome in 251 c.e. Novatian took a rigid view against admission of apostates back into the church. The Novatianists churches took the view that any serious sin including adultery and idolatry that was committed after baptism excluded the sinner from the Church and that pardon was possible only at death. Cornelius won this battle and Novatian was forced to flee to Carthage. However, his churches continued to practice his ideas.

In the early fourth century, the issue arose again in Carthage when Caecillian was consecrated Metropolitan by three bishops, one of whom was accused of being an apostate. The churches that believed that apostates could not be part of the church selected Donatus as Bishop. This led to a split with two competing leaders, each with a large number of churches. They petitioned Constantine repeatedly to settle the issue and it was one reason for that Constantine called the Council at Nicaea.

The issue raised by the Novatians and Donatus contains a deeper theological question on the nature of the sacraments. Are sacraments like baptism only valid if the person who administers them is free from sinful actions and apostacy? The idea that this is true leaves all Christians unsure of their salvation. How can they know the purity of the person who preforms the sacrament for them? This makes sacraments magical moments depending on the quality of the priest. The opposition to this position, which became the standard for the Church, was that the sacrament is an act of God and that the mediator who carries out the sacrament is not an essential part of it.

There are other examples in the early Christian literature of the debate over whether to accept martyrdom or commit apostacy. The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity is an example of an early Christian woman who accepts martyrdom while her family tries to convince her to abandon her faith to save her life.

Modern students may not fully understand the level of commitment to faith that leads to martyrdom. The example of Islamic martyrs is the modern example that one can point to. It is important for students in the game to accept the idea that if they are killed for their faith, they will receive a reward in heaven. It is not necessary for students to understand or accept Christianity. You, as the Gamemaster, are promising them something special if they are martyrs. It is enough that they believe you. There are several scriptures included for the students to support the idea of heavenly rewards and the importance of holding strong in one’s faith. The promise or a reward should not be too specific. Heaven is an abstract concept and instructors should not state explicitly what food will be in the heavenly rewards, though giving examples of possible rewards would be good. That will help students envision the fact that choosing martyrdom will lead to something good. The Centurion role is to cast doubt on the reward being special and arguing that a reward they can see is better than a potential reward in the future.

# Gameplay

**Classroom Layout**

The setting for Part 1 is a prison, so there is no specific requirement for layout. Students can stand, sit, or walk around to talk together. The setting is quite informal. A second venue is required. This can be a simple as the hallway outside the classroom. If the Council of Antioch portion is being used, a second setting with chairs and possibly a table is good but not necessary. The final part can again be informal. The apostates should sit together in one part of the room. The martyrs and those not selected for martyrdom will sit together.

# Required Materials

**Printed role sheets.**

* There are 3 named roles (Meletius, Peter, and Centurion). You will need 2-3 of each Priest role depending on class size and enough Indeterminate role sheets for the rest of the students.
* Council of Antioch roles for martyrs. There are 4 individual roles for martyrs Arius, Alexander, Ossius Eusebius of Caesarea, Narcissus and Theognus. The remaining martyrs, possibly up to 8 depending on class size, will need the Alexandrian roles.
* Martyrs without Council of Antioch receive Role addendums for Part 2 when they exit the classroom.
* Roles for apostates. You will need up to 12.
* Roles addendums for Part 2 one per student.
* Copies of selected scriptures. There are several versions. This means offers wider range of scriptures and prevents all students from making the same argument.

**Heavenly and earthly rewards.**

The liminality of the game requires that two types of snacks be provided, one much better than the other. Due to modern dietary issues, you may wish to interrogate the class the day before the game about what they would consider a wonderful in class treat and what would be a nice minor snack.

Small snacks for apostates could be a bowl of popcorn, donut holes (1 per student), mini-candy bars, cookies etc.

The heavenly reward could be donuts, pizza, ice cream, cupcakes, etc. It should be noticeably more appealing.

When playing the game, the minor snacks will be present in the classroom from the start and the heavenly reward will not be revealed. It is important it be kept secret.

**Martyr drawing bowl**.

Some sort of bowl or urn with marbles or tokens of two types or colors. You don’t need a lot of tokens since they can be returned to the bowl after each drawing. Students line up and draw until the desired number of martyrs are selected. Students should not be able to see which color they are drawing so they can’t choose.

**Image of the god Saturn –** Print this and have available for apostates to bow to.

**Scripture Handouts** – There are five handouts. Handouts 1 and 2 are scriptures from the New Testament only. Handouts 3-5 include both Old and New Testament scriptures. Instructors can use all five or may choose to use only the New Testament readings depending on the course in which it is used.

# The Game

**Overall arc of the game**

Students are divided into three groups, Meletius & followers, Peter & followers, and Indeterminates. A Roman Centurion runs the game in the prison. This can be a student or the Gamemaster. Also, it is helpful to have a second person, to monitor the second venue. In most cases, the TA can manage the death lottery and the gamemaster can organize the Council of Antioch portion. It is possible for one person to move back and forth, as we have done when using this.

During the first part of the game, students will draw lots to see who will become martyrs. Students may also volunteer to become martyrs before the drawing. They can choose to accept their fate with the promise of heavenly rewards, or they can make sacrifices to the Roman gods and receive a reward from the Centurion.

Note- If the Council of Antioch is being used, the students who will play roles of Eusebius, Ossius, Arius, and Alexander can be instructed to volunteer so that they move directly to this part of the game.

There are two options for the martyrs. If the game is to be played with the Council of Nicaea game, the martyrs go to a simulation of the Council of Antioch. This council was convened to address the position of Arius that there was a time before Jesus the Christ existed in God. This is considered heresy by Alexander and others. The council leads to the excommunication of the Arians. The situation in the game is set so that this will always be the outcome. The excommunicated Bishops appealed their excommunication, and the Council of Nicaea was convened in part to settle the issue.

When the game is not associated with Nicaea, the martyrs go to heaven where they enjoy their heavenly rewards and discuss what to do with the apostates when the persecution ends.

The final phase involves giving the prisoners not selected for martyrdom their heavenly rewards, the same as that given to the martyrs. The apostates request to do penance and receive the heavenly reward. Meletius wants them excluded from the church and not to be rewarded. Peter believes penance is necessary after which they would return to the church.The class debates whether to allow this using the scriptures in the handouts to support their arguments.

After sufficient debate, the class votes on whether the apostates also receive the heavenly rewards or not. The apostates have already received an earthly reward, but their rewards are clearly inferior to the martyrs. The apostates have no vote but argue they should be forgiven and share in the rewards.

## Part 1 – Prisoners chose life or death.

This part of the game should take approximately half of the class period, regardless of the length of the class period. For 90-minute classes, the game can conclude after 75 minutes to allow time for other activities. The time required also depends on the class size. Smaller classes will go faster.

**Round 1**

The Centurion announces the requirement for martyrs. He asks for volunteers and if not enough come forward, he conducts a drawing to complete the required number. Before the drawing, the prisoners debate the value of martyrdom and the possibility of forgiveness of apostates.

Meletius and his followers try to convince the indeterminates they should not give up and sacrifice to the Roman gods to save their lives. They promise them bliss in Heaven (they will get an excellent snack) if they die. Peter and his followers suggest that those who avoid martyrdom can rejoin the church later if they do penance.

The Centurion promises those who surrender their faith and give up can immediately get a small snack. Death awaits those who do not. He argues that no one knows what happens after death. You can’t count in that reward, but he offers life and food now.

Students selected for martyrdom decide whether to give up their faith and accept the snack offered by the Centurion or die as martyrs. Those who give up get to leave prison and resume their lives outside (they get a small snack which they eat in front of the people in prison).

Meletius and Peter are not in the lottery, but their followers are. Meletius and Peter are not in the lottery because they are being reserved for a special martyrdom later. Meletius’ followers roles instruct them to choose martyrdom and Peter’s followers are instructed to zgive up their faith. Indeterminates are free to decide based on the arguments presented.

**Round 2**

The Centurion again announces the need for more martyrs. The debate proceeds as in round 1 ending with a drawing to select the prisoners for martyrdom.

**Round 3**

The Centurion again announces the need for more martyrs. The debate proceeds as in round 1 ending with a drawing to select the prisoners for martyrdom.

This game was originally written to accompany the game *Constantine and the Council of Nicaea*. The Debate of the Martyrs in Antioch sets the stage for this game by introducing students to the Arian controversy.

**Note for Gamemasters – If you are using the Council of Antioch game, the GM should probably manage that part of the game and leave the Centurion and possibly a TA or Mentor to manage the death lottery part. If not using the Council of Antioch game, there is little to do for the martyrs, so the TA or Mentor should manage that leaving the GM in the classroom. We have used the game without a TA with the Centurion running the lottery.**

**Debate of the Martyrs in Antioch – this phase begins as soon as the first group of martyrs are selected and continues until the end of Round 3. Martyrs at Antioch do not receive their heavenly rewards until Part 2.**

Those who choose death are reincarnated at the Council of Antioch with new roles.

* The first group of martyrs are given roles for Arius, Ossius who chairs the Council and Alexander. Depending on class size there may be additional roles. They begin the debate as soon as they finish reading their role sheets on whether Arius’ ideas on Jesus are correct or heresy. Alexander and Ossius will challenge Arius and the others in his faction as heretics. The scriptures in the roles will be used to make arguments for the various understandings of Jesus.
* The second round of martyrs receive roles designated for the class size. This will complete the Arians at the Antioch session. The students continue the debate on the nature of Jesus.
* The final round of martyrs receives roles for more Alexandrians as specified

As soon as the third-round students arrive and read their role sheets, a vote is held on whether to excommunicate those who adopt Arian theology. This vote will always go against Arius as did the actual Council of Antioch, which was stacked with Alexandrians. The purpose of this is to establish the position of the Arians at Nicaea in a liminal way. Ideally, the students playing Arius, Narcissus, Theognus, and Eusebius of Caesarea will keep these roles for the full game, so they understand the impact of the ruling by the Council and feel personally besieged by the opposition. If you have students who you want to take the roles of Eusebius of C. and Ossius in the Nicaea game, you can instruct them to volunteer for martyrdom in the first round. It is not necessary to assign the final roles for Nicaea in this preliminary game, but it adds to the liminality for these students. If classes are too small to include Narcissus and Theognus, these students will also receive new roles for the Nicaea game.

As soon as the Council of Antioch votes, all students return to the classroom for part 2.

**Martyrs in Heaven**

If the Council of Antioch is not being used, martyrs just receive their rewards and are given the handout for Part 2. They are encouraged to review the scriptures and prepare for the next debate. If the Council of Antioch is not being used, you may wish to shorten Part 1 to allow more time for Part 2.

## Part 2 – Fairness for Lapsed Christians (Apostates).

After the third round of martyrs is selected, everyone is freed from prison and the martyrs return from the Antioch debate or from Heaven.

Hand out the role addendum for Part 2 to all students.

Martyrs from Antioch report on the outcome of the Council of Antioch and are immediately given their heavenly reward.

Martyrs returning from Heaven have already received their rewards.

The heavenly rewards are also be given to the prisoners who were not selected as martyrs.

As the martyrs enjoy their heavenly rewards, the class now debates whether the apostates should be allowed to apologize and receive the heavenly rewards. There are two choices. The apostates can also receive the heavenly rewards. Alternatively, the rewards should be divided equally to the martyrs and the remaining prisoners who were not selected for martyrdom.

There may not be enough heavenly rewards to give everyone as much as the martyrs received but there should be enough remaining rewards to give equally to the remaining prisoners and to those who received the earthly rewards when released from prison.

 Peter and those who surrendered argue that everyone should share the heavenly reward. The scripture handout should be used to argue for forgiveness.

Meletius and his followers will argue that only the remaining prisoners are worthy of the reward. The scripture handout should be used to support their position.

Is it fair that some people have already had an earthly snack and now will get more while others have not? Should the heavenly reward be distributed evenly to the entire class or only to the faithful?

The class then votes on who gets the remaining heavenly rewards.

The actions required by the characters are specified in their roles.

The Centurion runs the death lottery and gives apostates their snacks.

Ossius chairs the Council of Antioch if this is used. He and Alexander argue that Arius’ ideas are heresy and they should be excommunicated.

Arius and Eusebius lead the arguments for the validity of their ideas about Jesus.

Peter and Meletius lead the argument of their respective factions on whether to grant penance to the apostates.

The game ends when the final vote is taken on giving the apostates the Heavenly rewards.

The only potential problem would be if no students refuse martyrdom. Since the followers of Peter are instructed to do this, it is not expected to happen. The actions of the indeterminates are unpredictable but having Peter’s followers choose the earthly reward should ensure that some choose this as well. In any case, there will be a small group of apostates for Part 2.

# Roles Management

The role assignments by class size are specified below. For classes of intermediate size between the one listed, add additional indeterminate roles. For larger classes, you can combine two of the lists that closest approximates your class size. This will duplicate some roles in the Antioch phase and increase the number of martyrs selected in each round.

The roles of Peter, Meletius, and the Centurion are key leaders, but assigning them to specific students is not critical to the success of the game.

When used, the Roles for the Antioch phase are designed to keep an even balance between Arian and Alexandrian until the arrival of the final group of martyrs. This gives the Arians a strong faction to argue their position and possibly a false hope of success. The final martyrs to arrive are Alexandrian since they don’t really have time to debate but need to ensure the vote goes in their favor. In the end, the Arian’s cause is lost due to the stacking of both the game and the actual event against them. If you are assigning roles for the Council of Nicaea to people in the Antioch phase, you may distribute the Antioch roles at the beginning of Part 1 with instructions that the students volunteer for martyrdom in the specific round where their character appears in Antioch.

## 12 students – 3 Meletius, 3 Peter, 5 Indeterminate, 1 Centurion

**Round 1 – 3 martyrs Arius, Ossius, and Alexander**

**Round 2- 2 martyrs Eusebius of C. and 1 Alexandrian**

**Round 3 – 2 martyrs 2 Alexandrian**

## 16 students – 4 Meletius, 4 Peter, 7 Indeterminate, 1 Centurion

**Round 1 – 3 martyrs Arius, Ossius and Alexander**

**Round 2- 3 martyrs Eusebius of C., Theognus and 1 Alexandrian**

**Round 3 – 3 martyrs 3 Alexandrian**

## 20 students – 5 Meletius, 5 Peter, 9 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion

**Round 1 – 4 martyrs Arius, Eusebius of C., Ossius and Alexander**

**Round 2- 4 martyrs Narcissus, Theognus and 2 Alexandrian**

**Round 3 – 3 martyrs 3 Alexandrian**

## 24 students – 6 Meletius, 6 Peter, 11 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion

**Round 1 – 4 martyrs Arius, Eusebius of C., Ossius and Alexander**

**Round 2- 4 martyrs Narcissus, Theognus and 2 Alexandrian**

**Round 3 – 4 martyrs 4 Alexandrian**

## 28 students – 7 Meletius, 7 Peter, 13 Indeterminates, 1 Centurion

**Round 1 – 4 martyrs Arius, Eusebius of C., Ossius and Alexander**

**Round 2- 4 martyrs Narcissus, Theognus. and 2 Alexandrian**

**Round 3 – 4 martyrs 4 Alexandrian**

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# Supporting Materials

## Saturn God of Harvest



## Table Scripture Handout 1

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forgiveness** | **Stand Firm in the Faith** |
| If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (First John 1:9)If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (First Letter of John 1:8-9)Jesus said, “Every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32. Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Colossians 3:13)Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:3-7) | Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (First Peter 5:7-9)Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:3)Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (First Corinthians 15:1-2)Jesus said, “They will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.” (Luke 21:12-19)Jesus said, “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:21-22) |

## Table Scripture Handout 2

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| **Forgiveness** | **Stand Firm in the Faith** |
| Jesus said, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:13-15)Jesus said, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:37)Jesus said, “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.” (Luke 17:3-4)Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Jesus to be executed. When they came to the place called Golgotha, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”(Luke 23:32-34)For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. (Hebrews 8:12) He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ( ! Peter 4:8)And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (James 5:15) | Then Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:34-38. “Son of Man” is a messianic title for Jesus.)So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (First Corinthians 10:12-13)But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (First Corinthians 15:57-58)For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6:4-6) |

## Table Scripture Handout 3

|  |  |
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| **Grace and Forgiveness** | **Rigor- Stand Firm** |
| 1 Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.2 Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;12 as far as the east is from the west,so far has he removed our transgressions from us.13 As a father has compassion on his hildren, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. (Psalm 103, selections)Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Jesus to be executed. When they came to the place called Golgotha, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”(Luke 23:32-34) | But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you professed your faith in the presence of many witnesses. (First Timothy 6:11-12)Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of other nations... When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way,” they will bring disaster. The Lord will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the Lord will blot out their names from under heaven. (Deuteronomy 29:18-20)Joshua said to the people of Israel, “The Lord is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.” (Joshua 24:19-20)But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his commandments. (Psalm 103:17-18) |

## Table Scripture Handout 4

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| **Grace, forgiveness** | **Rigor, stand firm** |
| If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.…put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. (Psalm 130:3-4, 7)Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his mercies never fail.They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness, O Lord. (Lamentations 3:22-23)God said, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.” (Second Chronicles 7:14-15)Jesus said, “Every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32. “Son of Man” is a title for Jesus. “Blasphemy against the Spirit” is vague.)Jesus said, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:37) | I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.4 Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. (Psalm 40:1-4)Jesus said, “They will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.” (Luke 21:12-19)Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (First Corinthians 15:1-2) |

## Table Scripture Handout 5

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| **Grace, forgiveness** | **Rigor, stand firm** |
| If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (First John 1:9)King Solomon prayed, “When your people sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near; and if they have a change of heart, and repent and plead with you and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.” (Second Chronicles 6:36-39)Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of your people?You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. (Micah 7:18)Jesus said, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:13-15) | Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wickedor stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in seasonand whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.4 Not so the wicked! They are like dust that the wind blows away.5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction. (Psalm 1)If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. (Isaiah 7:9b)Jesus said, “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.” (Matthew 10:21-23) |

# Supplemental Reading for Instructors

The best way to get a better understanding of the situation in the game is to read the gamebook for *Constantine and the Council of Nicaea*. This includes an expanded discussion of the Meletian controversy and the Arian issue. It also has extensive information on the Novatianists and Donatist movements. It reviews the Roman persecution of Christians in the first four centuries. This should be sufficient background for instructors to understand the historical situation.

Original documents related to the Meletian schism can be found at <https://www.fourthcentury.com/documents-concerning-the-meletian-schism/>

Original documents related to Novatian, and his schism can be found at

<https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/novatian.html>

Resources on the Donatian schism can be found at

<https://earlychurch.org.uk/donatism.php>

Original documents on the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity can be found at https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian24.html

# Acknowledgements

This game was designed for use with the RTTP game *Constantine and the Council of Nicaea* but has found other uses as a stand-alone introduction to Reacting to the Past.

I must acknowledge that the idea for this game arose when I played *Athens Besieged* by Mark Carnes at the New York Reacting meeting. I basically borrowed the entire structure of the game from Mark and adapted it for the situations in the Nicaea Game.

William H. Campbell at University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg conceived the idea to expand the game to more general cases of imprisonment by Romans and martyrdom. He also contributed the idea for lists of scriptures on forgiveness and steadfastness.