

c. (Cont.)

"were evil men who deserved to be punished" they gained public sympathy as a result of Nero's persecution.

d. First clear reference from Pagan sources

(1) After Domitian there were a series of good Emperors.

(2) ⁹⁸⁻¹¹⁷ Trajan (100-125) appointed Pliny the Younger governor of Bethania. Pliny wrote long letters to Trajan seeking advice.

Letter 96 - Pliny wants to know how to deal with Christians. He understands that they are alien to R. policy. When they are called before him he has asked them persistently to worship the R. gods until their "obstinacy and unbending attitude" are deserving of punishment even if their Christianity is not. Nevertheless he says many are affected by the cult, and as it spreads the worship of the gods has fallen off. By applying pressure he has managed to stimulate worship of gods.

Trajan: You have done well. These Christians are not to be sought out nor tried unless accused by signed petitions. If they recant release them. - Trajan was extremely jealous of his power and would not allow even a voluntary fire fighting group to be organized. In 107 when he, or one of his governors, visited Antioch he threatened to persecute all who refused to worship the gods. The Bishop of the local church, Ignatius, was brought before him and condemned, as an example, to be thrown to the lions. On his way to Rome, Ignatius wrote seven epistles. He writes he would "rather die for Christ than rule the world", and stresses the importance of loyalty to the bishop as Christ's representative on earth. Ignatius thrown to lions and a few bones returned as treasured relics to Antioch.

(3) Hadrian - (¹¹⁷128-138) was an administrator similar to Trajan but one more devoted to the Roman gods. During his reign the false messiah Bar Kopa revolted and confirmed in Hadrian a firm hatred of Judaism. When the Jews were reconquered he set up a temple to Jupiter in the J. temple and a temple to Venus at the site of the Crucifixion. No J. was allowed within 10 mi. of Jerusalem.