

- I. **Introduction.** To understand the conditions that existed during these times, we are going to list some of the events that are recorded in Foxe’s “Christian Martyrs of the World.” [Published 1881, view at: <http://www.wetmorebaptistchurch.com/Education/50%20Lessons/50%20Lessons.html>.] Also view all Roman Emperors at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_emperors .

II. **The Third Persecution: Under Trajan.**

A. Emperor Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, only reigned thirteen months. Trajan then became Emperor and began the third persecution against the Christians.

B. We are told that Plinius Secundus, a heathen philosopher, wrote to the Emperor in favor of the Christians, saying that he found no harm in them, and *“that the whole sum of their error consists in this: that they are wont [in the habit of doing something; accustomed], at certain times appointed, to meet before the day, and to sing certain hymns to one Christ their God; to promise to abstain from all theft, murder, and crime; to keep their faith and to defraud no man. This being done, they gather together to take bread and wine, and they quietly depart, without committing any evil act.”*



C. The Emperor Trajan replied to this letter in a way that was accepted to mean that Christians were to be persecuted until death.

III. **Examples of Terrible Persecution.**

A. “Phocas, bishop of Pontus, refusing to sacrifice to the Roman Neptune, was first cast into a burning lime kiln [lime is an inorganic material composed primarily of calcium oxides and hydroxides – it’s what they make at the Holcim plant], and being drawn from thence, was thrown into a scalding bath, where he expired.”

B. “Ignatius, a bishop at Antioch, was also put to death at the same time. After being cruelly scourged, splinter dipped in oil were put into his sides, and set alight. His flesh was then mangled with pinchers, and lastly, his body was torn to pieces by wild beasts.

C. “Symphorosa, a widow, and her seven sons, were commanded by Trajan to sacrifice to heathen Gods. Refusing to obey, the Emperor greatly enraged, ordered the woman be carried to the temple of Hercules, where she was scourged [flogged], and hung up for some time by the hair of her head. A large stone was then fastened to her neck, and she was then thrown into the river and drowned. Her seven sons were cruelly torn asunder before being slain.

D. “It is told that during the martyrdom of two brothers named Faustines and Jovita, their torments so many, and their patience so great, that Calocerius, a heathen man, was struck with

admiration, and exclaimed in a kind of ecstasy, 'Great is the God of the Christians!' after which he was promptly put to death."

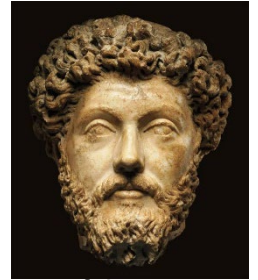
IV. Hadrian, who became Emperor at the death of Trajan, stopped the persecution of the Christians and this policy was followed Antoninus Puis who followed Hadrian.

V. The Fourth Persecution: under Marcus Aurelius, 163 A.D.

A. Antoninus Puis was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius, although historically considered a good and virtuous ruler, seems to have been ignorant of the sufferings and persecutions of the Christians during his reign.

B. "Such were the cruelties then practiced that it is said many of the spectators shuddered with horror at the sight and were astonished at the courage of the sufferers. Some of the martyrs were obligated to pass, with their already wounded feet, over thorns, nails, or other sharp shells. Others were scourged till their sinews and veins lay bare. They were finally put to death by fire."

C. Among the notable martyrs of this 4th period of persecution were Polycarpus, Justin, and Fructuosus. At Utica, Africa, 300 Christians jumped into a burning death rather than deny Christ.



VI. The Fifth Persecution under Roman Emperors, 200 A.D.

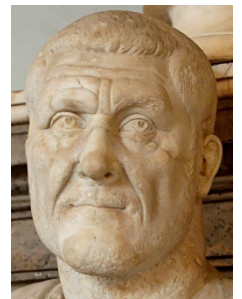
A. Due to the efforts of a Christian physician saving the life of Emperor Severus, Christians, for several years, were let alone.

B. After time, the old hates began to burn and Christian persecutions resumed.

C. "Fire, sword, wild beasts, and imprisonments were once more resorted to.; even the dead bodies of Christians were torn from their graves and subject to every insult." Christians by the thousands were met death in the arenas for the entertainment of spectators.

D. Despite all the persecution, Christianity grew tremendously during this time.

VII. The Sixth General Persecution: 235 A.D. The Emperor Maximinus raised a persecution against Christians and ordered them to be hunted down and slain.



Partial list of Roman Emperors (27 B.C. – 423 A.D.)

1st century AD

[Augustus](#) (27 BC–14 AD)
[Tiberius](#) (14–37 AD)
[Caligula](#) (37–41 AD)
[Claudius](#) (41–54 AD)
[Nero](#) (54–68 AD)
[Galba](#) (68–69 AD)
[Otho](#) (January–April 69 AD)
[Aulus Vitellius](#) (July–December 69 AD)
[Vespasian](#) (69–79 AD)
[Titus](#) (79–81 AD)
[Domitian](#) (81–96 AD)
[Nerva](#) (96–98 AD)

2nd century AD

[Trajan](#) (98–117 AD)
[Hadrian](#) (117–138 AD)
[Antoninus Pius](#) (138–161 AD)
[Marcus Aurelius](#) (161–180 AD)
[Lucius Verus](#) (161–169 AD)
[Commodus](#) (177–192 AD)
[Publius Helvius Pertinax](#) (Jan–Mar 193 AD)
[Marcus Didius Severus Julianus](#) (Mar–June 193 AD)
[Septimius Severus](#) (193–211 AD)

3rd century AD

[Caracalla](#) (198–217 AD)
[Publius Septimius Geta](#) (209–211 AD)
[Macrinus](#) (217–218 AD)
[Elagabalus](#) (218–222 AD)
[Severus Alexander](#) (222–235 AD)
[Maximinus](#) (235–238 AD)
[Gordian I](#) (March–April 238 AD)
[Gordian II](#) (March–April 238 AD)
[Pupienus Maximus](#) (April 22–July 29, 238 AD)
[Balbinus](#) (April 22–July 29, 238 AD)
[Gordian III](#) (238–244 AD)
[Philip](#) (244–249 AD)
[Decius](#) (249–251 AD)
[Hostilian](#) (251 AD)
[Gallus](#) (251–253 AD)
[Aemilian](#) (253 AD)

[Valerian](#) (253–260 AD)
[Gallienus](#) (253–268 AD)
[Claudius II Gothicus](#) (268–270 AD)
[Quintillus](#) (270 AD)
[Aurelian](#) (270–275 AD)
[Tacitus](#) (275–276 AD)
[Florian](#) (June–September 276 AD)
[Probus](#) (276–282 AD)
[Carus](#) (282–283 AD)
[Numerian](#) (283–284 AD)
[Carinus](#) (283–285 AD)
[Diocletian](#) (east, 284–305 AD; divided the empire into east and west)
[Maximian](#) (west, 286–305 AD)

4th century AD

[Constantius I](#) (west, 305–306 AD)
[Galerius](#) (east, 305–311 AD)
[Severus](#) (west, 306–307 AD)
 Maxentius (west, 306–312 AD)
[Constantine I](#) (306–337 AD; reunified the empire)
[Galerius Valerius Maximinus](#) (310–313 AD)
[Licinius](#) (308–324 AD)
[Constantine II](#) (337–340 AD)
[Constantius II](#) (337–361 AD)
[Constans I](#) (337–350 AD)
[Gallus Caesar](#) (351–354 AD)
[Julian](#) (361–363 AD)
[Jovian](#) (363–364 AD)
[Valentinian I](#) (west, 364–375 AD)
[Valens](#) (east, 364–378 AD)
[Gratian](#) (west, 367–383 AD; co-emperor with Valentinian I)
[Valentinian II](#) (375–392 AD; crowned as child)
[Theodosius I](#) (east, 379–392 AD; east and west, 392–395 AD)
[Arcadius](#) (east, 383–395 AD, co-emperor; 395–402 AD, sole emperor)
[Magnus Maximus](#) (west, 383–388 AD)
[Honorius](#) (west, 393–395 AD, co-emperor; 395–423 AD, sole emperor)