

(4) Antoninus Pius initiated no concerted effort against the Christians. His attitude was much like that of Trajan although there were loud tumults among the people here and there blaming famine, pestilence, and military defeat on the Christian's denial of the traditional gods.

During his reign Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna was martyred at the age 86+. When ask to worship the R. gods Polycarp affirmed that in ail his years he had "experienced nothing but love and mercy" from God and he would not deny Him now. He was burned praising God at the stake.

5. Changed Attitude under Marcus Aurelius. (taken up later)

- a. After 170 A.D. for the next 140 years the Roman Empire aims at rooting out Christians<sup>ty</sup>
- b. Marcus Aurelius "the best of the pagans" succeeded Ant. Pius (170) Just what part this self-reliant Stoic had in determining the persecution of Christians is open to discussion.

F. The Apostolic Fathers and the First Apologists. (100-165)

1. Apostolic Fathers (General) First generation after the Apostolic Age.

- a. These men are not of the same calibre as the apostles.
- b. What little writing there is from this period falls far short of the canonical books.

2. Specific Writings of this period.

- a. Epistle of Clement of R. to the Corinthian Church. In this letter Clement writes authoritatively but never mentions himself, instead he presents the exhortation of the Roman church to the Corinthians to avoid internal strife. (Important in connection with pope theory) vs. authority of pope.
- b. Epistles of Ignatius -- (ob. cit. Trajan) These letters written about 109 have been bitterly assailed since they lend support to the importance of the bishop.