

## **Foxe's Book of Martyrs**

The First Persecution, Under Nero, A.D. 67

The Second Persecution, Under Domitian, A.D. 81

The Third Persecution, Under Trajan, A.D. 108

The Fourth Persecution, Under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, A.D. 162

The Fifth Persecution, Commencing with Severus, A.D. 192

The Sixth Persecution, Under Maximus, A.D. 235

The Seventh Persecution, Under Decius, A.D. 249

The Eighth Persecution, Under Valerian, A.D. 257

The Ninth Persecution Under Aurelian, A.D. 274

The Tenth Persecution, Under Diocletian, A.D. 303

## Trajan (53-117)



## Pliny the Younger (62-115)

Wrote letters to Trajan when he was governor of Bithynia

**Pliny wrote to Trajan concerning treatment towards Christians in Bithynia (c. 112).** Pliny asked what should be done to the Christians. Trajan's answer – if they offer sacrifice to the emperor then let them go.

## **Persecution under Trajan**

### **Ignatius of Antioch (d.117)**

Bishop of Antioch

### **Martyred at Rome under Trajan**

Attributed with writing 7 epistles on way to Rome.

### **Exalts the role of the Monarchical Bishop.**

Three tier leadership: Bishop, Elder and Deacon

The authority of Episcopalianism.

### **Are the letters of Ignatius a forgery?**

It is regarded as authentic but this is questionable.



## **Antonius Pius**

Emperor 138 – 161

Born 86 in Lanuvium, southeast of Rome.

Capable leader

Peaceful reign



## **Marcus Aurelius**

Emperor 161 – 180

Stoic philosopher

Bust Louvre

## **Polycarp (c.69 – 155/160)**

Born in Smyrna

Disciple of John; friend of Ignatius; teacher of Ireneaus.

Bishop of Smyrna

Letter of Polycarp to Philippians

Many references to NT

Visited Rome to speak with Anicletus the Bishop of Rome.

Martyred during a local persecution. Asked to recant – Polycarp replied ‘Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I speak evil of my King who saved me?’

He was burnt at the stake.

According to Eusebius martyrdom took place during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (c.166-167). According to the later source 'Martyrdom of Polycarp', it was during the reign of Antonius Pius on February 23, 155.



## Martyrs of Lyons (177)



## Amphitheatre in Lyons

Where Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus laid down their lives for the gospel.

## Bishop of Lyons

Pothinus over 90 years old

Was kept in a cell and died in prison after being beaten.

## Death of Blandina in Lyons

# Septimius Severus

## Emperor 193 – 211

He did not issue new laws against the Christians but he allowed laws already issued to be enforced.

### During his reign:

The martyrdom of the father of Origen took place in Alexandria (202).

The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity took place in Carthage (203).



**Picture:** Arch of Septimius Severus in his home town of Leptis Magna southeast of Carthage in North Africa (modern day Libya).

## Perpetua and Felicity – Martyrs in Carthage



Amphitheatre in Carthage where Perpetua and Felicity were martyred (203)



## **Martyrdom of Perpetua (d.203) in Carthage.**

New convert to Christianity

Educated woman

A wife

Gave birth in prison to a baby girl.

Knew she would be martyred (Word of Wisdom)

Possibly a Montanist.

Father pleaded with her to sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.

Killed in the arena by a gladiator.

She was 22 years old.

## **Decius (201-251)**



### **Persecution under Decian (251)**

Decius persecuted Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

The persecution caused problems for the Church after the persecution ended.

### **Novatianism**

The followers of Novatian refused to accept readmission into the Church for those who had offered sacrifice to the Emperor.

## Diocletian (243-316)



### Diocletian persecution (303)

This was the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian in Dystrus (which the Romans call March), when the feast of the Saviour's passion was near at hand, and royal edicts were published everywhere, commanding that the churches should be razed to the ground, the Scriptures destroyed by fire, those who held positions of honor degraded, and the household servants, if they persisted in the Christian profession, be deprived of their liberty. (Hist. Ecc viii 2.)

## **Persecution under Diocletian (303-306)**

### **Donatism**

The Donatist controversy. What should be done concerning those who allowed scripture to be confiscated during persecution (traditores). Was ordination by a Bishop who had been a traditor still valid?

Donatism was refuted by Augustine of Hippo.