PLINY'S LETTER TO TRAJAN, c. 112 A. D.

The Setting: Pliny, a young Roman, who had never attended the trials of Christians in Rome, was appointed governor of Bithynia. The Christians were so numerous in Bithynia that the pagan temples were almost completely closed and the economy was upset—people did not buy idols nor sacrificial victims. Pliny's predecessor had ignored the Christian problem. Upon Pliny's arrival charges were brought to him that certain people were Christians. When word got around that he would look into the cases, many similar charges began to be made and he received an anonymous pamphlet with the names of many who were charged with being Christians. Pliny wrote the Emperor Trajan for advice.

PLINY'S QUESTIONS:
1. Should he make any distinction of ages?
2. Should those be pardoned who recanted, or was becoming a Christian an unpardonable crime?
3. Should Christians be punished for their names or for crimes attached to the name?

PLINY'S POLICY:
1. The accused were given three opportunities to deny they were Christians and if they persisted in being Christians they were put to death for pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy.
2. Roman citizens were being sent to Rome for judgment.
3. Those charged with being Christians were ordered to worship the gods of Rome and to curse Christ—a thing he had learned genuine Christians could not be induced to do.
4. He sought information about Christianity from those who said they had been Christians but had given it up earlier. Here is what he had been able to learn:
   Christians met before daybreak on an appointed day.
   They sang a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a God.
   They took an oath not to commit any crime.
   They held another meeting at which they took ordinary and harmless food.
   Some said they stopped attending when Pliny forbade meetings of secret societies.
5. Pliny arrested and tortured two maidservants, called deaconesses—he found that they held a depraved and extravagant superstition.

PLINY'S SUGGESTION:
Many people could be reclaimed for paganism if given a chance to recant.
TRAJAN'S REPLY TO PLINY

Pliny was taking the right course but no hard and fast rule of universal application could be laid down.

Christians were not to be sought out, but when someone was charged with Christianity they should be investigated and punished.

Those who recanted should be pardoned.

Anonymous charges should be given no weight—they were a bad precedent and out of keeping with the age.

THE DIDACHE, or THE TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE GENTILES c. 112 A.D.

Eusebius had listed the Didache among the disputed books that were not genuine and that should be rejected. The book was lost for years and rediscovered in 1875.

The Didache is a kind of church or catechetical manual.

CONTENTS OF THE DIDACHE:
   I. The Two Ways: I-VI
      a. The Way of Life I-IV
      b. The Way of Death V, VI
   II. Baptism: first mention of pouring. VII
   III. Fasting, VIII.1
   IV. The Lord's Prayer, VIII.2
   V. The Eucharist, IX, X
   VI. Prophets: How to tell a true prophet from a false one? XII, XIII
   VII. The Lord's Day, XIV
   IX. Bishops and Deacons, XV
   X. The Second Coming of the Lord and the Millennium, XVI