THE CHURCH AND THE STATE: PAGAN ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANITY

Hymn. 575 "When Storms Around Are Sweeping"
Scripture: Psalm 124
Prayer: Eusebius: H.E. V.5.1-6

THE EVER PRESENT THREAT OF PERSECUTION IN THE SECOND CENTURY:
By the middle of the second century the church had so grown and
spread that the pagans could no longer ignore it.
Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, was martyred c. 137 A.D.
Fronto of Cirta, famous rhetorician and teacher of Marcus
Aurelius, delivered a public oration against the Christians
which may have been the occasion of Justin's First Apology.
The popular slanders against the Christians: Thyestean
banquets, Oedipodean incest, onolatry, and atheism. Any
kind of public calamity such as too little rain or too
much rain brought popular outcries, "The Christians to
the lions!" or "Burn the Christians!"
The Epistle of Hadrian in behalf of the Christians appended
to Justin's First Apology.
Justin's Second Apology recorded the martyrdom of the teacher,
Ptolemaeus, and a woman he had converted, when her husband
objected. Also he recorded the death of Lucius who
protested the injustice.
The martyrdom of Justin and several of his disciples probably
followed his debate with the Cynic philosopher, Crescens.
Crescens, embarrassed by the debate denounced Justin to
the government.
The judgment passed on the Christians by Galen, philosopher
and physician in Rome between A.D. 162-168.
The mention of the Christians by the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius
(Meditations II.3.2)
The satirical attack upon the Christians made by Lucian of
Samosata (c. 170 A.D.) in his The Passing of Peregrinus.
The attack upon Christianity made by the philosopher, Celsus,
in his The True Word (c. 178 A.D.)

THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS UNDER THE EMPEROR MARCUS AURELIUS
(161-180 A.D.):
The emperor's program of reviving the failing empire by a
restoration of the worship of the gods that had made
Rome great and the failure of the Christians to cooperate.
Persecutions tended to come at the time of great festivals
when Christians were conspicuous by their absence.
The persecution in Gaul: Bishop Pothinus, Alexander the
physician, Attalus the Roman citizen, Sanctus the deacon,
and Blandina (Eusebius: H.E. V.1.3)

THE CHRISTIANS UNDER THE EMPEROR COMMODUS (180-192 A.D.)
The martyrdom of the Roman senator, Apollonius (Eusebius: H.E.
V.21)
The Emperor Commodus freed the Christians in the salt mines
of Sardinia upon the pleading of his favorite mistress,
Marcia, a Christian. The Bishop of Rome, Victor,
prepared for Marcia the list of those imprisoned for
their faith. The story of Callixtus (Kallistos)
whose name was not on the list.