

None of these can be regarded as friends of Christianity, however. Trajan's attitude as given to Pliny is more typical..."if you find 'em, persecute 'em but don't waste a lot of time on it." The big hang up with these men was emperor worship...they believed in it! They expected to attain divinity on death and be placed in the Pantheon. Such a glorious future called for veneration and worship during life. Christians were unwilling to do this and this, among other things, brought them into disfavor. This is discussed later in greater detail.

II.1.b
Roman
government

The Roman governmental ideal

In theory the Roman system was one of checks and balances that appeared good on paper although often negated by grabby politicians. When it was working it made an efficient government and established a state that lasted more than 1,000 years in good form and another 1,000 in partial form. The civilization would continue to dominate in the west after the government had ended. In practical form the governmental structure was something like this:

--the oligarchy: The Senate, that is, representative of the few who governed the nation by ability. An elected body of citizenry with members serving on a life-basis unless hindered by revolution, etc. The republic expression was limited to citizens and these were always a minority party albeit one that kept the power of control.

--the army: The army provided muscle to the oligarchy and kept it from going over bounds. Political conflicts between the army and the oligarchy were not uncommon and intrigue between the two was often productive of near-revolution. The army strength center was not, as a rule, Rome itself, but wherever a front was being extended or peace was being kept by massive force. It could return to Rome en masse as needed.

--the dictator or tyrant: A person who served as head of the army and chief executive officer of the Senate. He received appointment by the oligarchy although he may have been muscled to that position by the army. He had enormous potential powers and the army and oligarchy sought to control these somewhat.

--the entire nation: The Roman nation was divided into territories governed by either the Senate or the army-dictator figure. The exact government was