

In this section there is no attempt to list all of the Roman emperors...we are concerned only with those who had an immediate impact on the church.

Antoninus Pius 138-161: The church grew during his rule as he seems to have had some underlying sympathy with Christianity..there were a few small persecutions during this time, however.

Marcus Aurelius 161-180: As a philosopher, Aurelius was a stoic and maintained a vigorous antipathy towards the church on both political and philosophical grounds. As a moralist in the stoic tradition, he was bothered by Christianity's stress on the "other world". As a politician he resented any force in the empire that vied with him for popularity or power. The church in France (around Lyons) suffered dramatically during his time. But in much of the empire his anti-christian sentiment, while known, was not activated.

Commodus 180-193: A double minded and shaky leader, sporadic perscecution was part of the norm of his rule.

Septimius Severus 193-211: With a strong feeling for emperor worship, he pushed persecutions in Northern Africa and Egypt. Some of these were extensive and it was in one of them that Origen's father was martyred. He is not to be confused with Alexander Severus as below.

Caracalla 211-217: Policies of persecution in north Africa were continued but his rule was too short with a political interregnum following. The confused periods in such times proved a help to the church in that the battered areas had a time to regather energy and form.

Alexander Severus 223-235: There was a relaxation of persecutions in his time although the church is still illegal. It did receive the right to inherit fortunes, property and the like at this period and our older church buildings (ruins) come from this age (an excellent discussion of one such in Finegan LIGHT FROM THE ANCIENT PAST) and the "official" meeting halls were gradually replaced by owned buildings. Origen was respected by Alexander and had some influence in court. Some traditions report the emperor's wife was a secret Christian and pressured him for better treatment of the church.