

c. Church and State..

(1) The illegal status

Well, Christianity was an illegal religion for some time. The reasons for that illegal status may be summer up like this:

- it was new..not demonstrably ancient to the satisfaction of Rome
- it had a "secretive" aspect with private rituals (like eucharist)
- it brought a challenging moral standard to a society that was basicall not moral.
- it denied emperor deification.

But it was not illegal due to acts of violence, criminality or defiance of soical order. There were some darker charges but these were mostly inuendo and tended to effect in time.

(2) The resultant persecution...

- the first was by the Jewish community in Palestine.
- Roman persecutions tended to be sporadic (tough if you are the one being persecut-ed but' someone on the other side of town might not be bothered at all)
- Note the persecuting emperors..like Nero they often found ulterior grouns for their efforts.
- The correspondence of Trajan and Pliny (Bettenson: Documents of the Christian Church, p. 5 ff) is revealing on the attitude and aims of Rome.
- Martyrdom was common, however, and for a fuller picture see Foxe: Book of Martyrs, Butler: Lives of the Saints, and for a good treatment of the cata-combs see Finegan: Light from the Ancient Past.