History as a Rhetorical Instrument in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes*: A

Critical Investigation

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ABSTRACT

This study traced Tertullian's utilisation of history (or historical material) as a rhetorical instrument in one of his earliest works, the *Ad Nationes.* An in-depth analysis of the book identified this as a fundamental trajectory in the argument of Tertullian. The study casts a new perspective on the written work of this renowned Christian apologist and theologian. His use of history particularly to substantiate his arguments was compared with the contemporary primary sources, in order to assess the integrity or accuracy of his historical data. The prevailing rhetoric, as e.g. outlined by Quintilian, valued the message and intention of a text higher than the historical accuracy of the account. The same Quintilian, however, emphasized that historical accuracy would guarantee the message and intention of a text. The research concluded that Tertullian, who enjoyed a classical education and was therefore well acquainted with the rules of rhetoric, did pay sufficient attention to Quintilian's insistence on historical accuracy in his utilisation of history. Tertullian was well aware of the significance of historical accuracy. On occasion he rightly criticised Tacitus (the famous historian) for historical inaccuracies in his work. In his *Apologeticus* (in which much of the *Ad Nationes* was reworked) he corrected some historical data. In the *Ad Nationes* he wrote a brilliant paragraph on the origin of rumours (*fama*) and also expressed his appreciation for careful investigation (in court procedures) in order to ascertain the truth (*veritas*) accurately. In the rhetorical utilisation of historical material, accurate historical knowledge did not play a crucial role. Of paramount importance was the intention and purpose of the immediate argument.

KEY TERMS

Ad Nationes
Ancient History
Early Church History
Patristics
Patrology
Rhetoric
Tertullian

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie ondersoek die gebruik van geskiedenis as retoriese instrument deur Tertullianus in een van sy vroegste werke, die *Ad Nationes*. 'n In-diepte analise van die boek het Tertullianus se benutting van die geskiedenis as 'n fundamentele instrument in die argumentvoering geïdentifiseer. Daarmee is 'n nuwe perspektief op die geskrewe werk van hierdie bekende Christen apologeet en teoloog geopen. Sy benutting van geskiedenis om 'n bepaalde onderbou aan sy argument te gee, is vergelyk met die eietydse primêre bronne, om daarmee die integriteit of akkuraatheid van die *historiese* gegewens self te evalueer. Dit is waar dat die gangbare retoriek, soos byvoorbeeld uiteengesit deur Quintilianus, die boodskap en intensie van 'n teks hoër geag het as die noukeurige weergawe van historiese feite. Dieselfde Quintilianus benadruk dat historiese akkuraatheid die boodskap en intensie van 'n teks waarborg. Die studie kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat Tertullianus, wat 'n klassieke opleiding geniet het en dus goed op hoogte was met die reëls van die retoriek, in sy gebruik van die geskiedenis wel deeglik bewus is van die belang van historiese akkuraatheid. Hy wys immers vir Tacitus in hierdie verband tereg. In sy *Apologeticus* (waarin heelwat materiaal uit die *Ad Nationes* verwerk is) 'korrigeer' hy enkele historiese gegewens. Dan het hy hom ook in die *Ad Nationes* oor die ontstaan van gerugte (*fama*) en oor die waarde van ondersoek om die waarheid (*veritas*) akkuraat vas te stel (in die verhoor prosedures) uitgelaat. Tog pas hy dit nie in sy aanwending van historiese materiaal toe nie. Dit is in terme van die gangbare retoriek ook nie nodig nie. Historiese kennis en historiese akkuraatheid kom in diens van die intensie van die argument. Tertullianus *gebruik* dus geskiedkundige stof as 'n *retoriese* instrument.

SLEUTEL BEGRIPPE

Ad Nationes
Antieke geskiedenis
Patristiek
Patrologie
Retoriek
Tertullianus
Vroeë kerkgeskiedenis

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

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History as a rhetorical instrument in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes*: A critical investigation

This critical investigation deals with the *use of history* as a *rhetorical instrument* in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes*. The concepts '*use of history'* and *rhetorical instrument* as well as the preference for Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* should be clarified by way of introduction. It should also be kept in mind that the study falls in the ambit of the academic disciplines Patrology and Latin. Hence the first section on Christian apologists, in which a general orientation is presented.

CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS

It goes without saying that the *Ad Nationes* (c.196) must be read against the background of the position of the Christians in the Roman Empire toward the end of the 2nd century. During the first century CE the Roman Empire saw the rise of a new religion: Christianity. At first the Christians were regarded, particularly in the eyes of the Roman authorities, as a Jewish group (Wedderburn, 2004:186) and as such they benefitted from the Roman tolerance of Judaism (Clark, 2004:6). Moreover, the Romans made no attempt to establish a universal cult or belief-system in the Roman Empire, nor did they suppress any cult, unless Roman religious feeling was offended or public order endangered (Clark, 2004:5). After the Jewish revolt in 66 CE, the Christians began to be regarded as a separate religious sect. As a self-identified entity they came under public suspicion. The realisation that Christianity entailed the abandonment of the established cults sometimes even instigated oppression. Citing reasons for the persecution of Christians, De Ste. Croix (1963:24) for example claims that the monotheistic exclusiveness of the Christians was believed to alienate the goodwill of the gods, to endanger the *pax deorum*[1] and to be responsible for disasters.

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[1] The harmonious relationship between the gods and men.

During the 2nd century learned leaders and theologians spearheaded the defence of Christians against suspicion and persecution. In the field of historiography they are identified as the *Apologists*, 'authors who enjoyed a fuller education in the Greek manner than the majority of Christians, who could therefore envisage and present their faith in a way that might make it appear comprehensible and tolerable, if not attractive, to initially hostile readers' (Norris, 2004:36-37). Their education incorporated a thorough grounding in classical rhetoric, philosophy and Hellenistic literature. It is common knowledge that the works of the Apologists are characterised by rhetorical structures, philosophical influences and the utilisation of ancient authors. Critical scholarship has long since identified these trends and trajectories.

The Christian Apologists did not invent a unique genre. As a matter of fact Hellenised Jewish[2] and earlier Christian authors,[3] as well as writers from the Graeco-Roman world,[4] presented works which were apologetic in nature. The Apologists aligned therefore the structure of their argumentation in resonance with an established and well-known genre, which suited their purpose of defending the Christians ideally.

One aspect of classical rhetoric which often surfaced in the arguments of the Apologists is the utilisation of history. Quintilian, the great Roman rhetorician (whose prescripts they followed), instructs:

> *Est et alius ex historiis usus, et is quidem maximus sed non ad praesentem pertinens locum, ex cognitione rerum exemplorumque, quibus in primis instructus esse debet orator; nec omnia testimonia expectet a litigatore, sed pleraque ex vetustate diligenter sibi cognita sumat, hoc potentiora quod ea sola criminibus odii et gratia vacant.[5]*

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[2] Philo's *Defence on behalf of the Jews,* and Josephus's *Ad Apionem.*
[3] Richard Norris (2004:36) notes that some Biblical passages contain instances of discourse that pursue apologetic aims and methods, for example Paul's speech in Acts 17:22ff.
[4] Plato's *Apology* and Apuleius's *Apology.*
[5] Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.34

[Another important and valuable advantage to be gained from history, though irrelevant for the present discussion, is the author's own thorough knowledge of historical facts and examples. This would enable him to prove his case by utilising his accurate knowledge of history and not being totally reliant on his client for all evidence. Such arguments are all the more persuasive as they alone are exempt from the charges of prejudice and partiality.]

This also applies to the distinguished Christian theologian Tertullian (*c*. 160-220). He received a thorough classical education and undoubtedly acquired comprehensive training in the use and philosophy of rhetoric (Dunn, 2004:5). His extensive familiarity with the classical authors (Barnes, 1971:196-206) and his profound conceptualisation of their ideas and theories emphasise an intellectual ability to utilise classical rhetoric (Sider, 1971:126-132). It can therefore be assumed that the use of the past or history to substantiate and prove his arguments characterised his disputations.

TERTULLIAN'S *AD NATIONES*

Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* has not yet established a significant researched profile. As a matter of fact this early work of Tertullian has evoked a surprisingly modest investigation. In 1928/9 Borleffs published an interesting series which he called 'Observationes criticae ad Tertulliani ad Nationes libros' in *Mnemosyne*. This was followed by the publication of a text-critical edition of *Ad Nationes libri duo, Quintus Septimus Florens* (ed. Borleffs:1929). Twenty six years later Evans (1955) revisited the text and ventured to offer observations and references with regards to the *Ad Nationes*. Towards the end of the 1960's Schneider's (1968) *Le premier livre Ad Nationes de Tertullien: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire* was published. In 1942 Haidenthaller presented an 'Übertragung und Kommentar' on the Second Book of the *Ad Nationes* and the *De Testimonio Animae*, which was also helpful. In addition, the commentaries and text-critical editions of the works of Tertullian in which the *Ad Nationes* is incorporated constitute the available source platform for investigation.

As far as could be ascertained Tertullian's knowledge and use of history or historical events in the *Ad Nationes* have not been subjected to critical analysis and consideration. The recognised and standard research on the contours or structure of Tertullian's argumentation (e.g. Barnes (1971), Sider (1971), Dunn (2004) and Wilhite (2007)) equally does not take account of the role of or utilisation of history in this regard. This topic therefore presents itself as appropriate to be critically investigated.

This study thus intends to trace and critique Tertullian's utilisation of history, but it restricts itself to his *Ad Nationes.* Why? There is general consensus among scholars that Tertullian reworked much of the material of the *Ad Nationes* to establish his greatest and most influential work, the *Apologeticus*. This indicates the importance of the *Ad Nationes* and justifies academic interest and study. A further consideration that underpinned the *Ad Nationes* option relates to the fact that this book is (with good reason) regarded as one of the earliest books written by Tertullian. The *Ad Nationes* can thus be seen as the inception of his literary work. From this perspective one of the earliest written texts obviously presents itself as the most appropriate starting point for distilling a significant trajectory (the use of history) in Tertullian's thinking and writings.

The issue at stake is of course whether history and the utilisation of history indeed constitute such an important facet or aspect of the works of Tertullian. A preliminary inspection of Tertullian's early works (*Ad Martyras, Adversus Iudaeos, Ad Nationes* and *Apologeticus)* revealed that history and the use of history within a rhetorical frame of reference indeed often surfaces. The *fundamental question* therefore is: How and why did Tertullian use history (including historical events, references, images, presumptions, natural disasters, etc.) in his argumentation in the *Ad Nationes*? The study intends to answer this question. The aim is to portray Tertullian's knowledge and use of history in this specific book against the horizon of contemporary and related writings in order to assess its rhetorical quality.

Methodologically the study therefore comprises a rigorous investigation of primary sources, that is, the works of Tertullian as well as relevant contemporary Christian and classical (non-Christian) literature.[6] This implied the identification and the careful study of Tertullian's historical and theological sources. It also involved a cautious consideration and comparison of the role and use of historical data in the rest of the Tertullian corpus. This ensured a reliable result and credible depiction of a historical-critical and theological-critical perspective in arguing the utilisation of historical information in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes*.

HISTORY AS RHETORICAL INSTRUMENT

The research was not restricted to a critical review of the historical data and their reliability in the *Ad Nationes*. The meaning and function of these historical discourses in the argument that Tertullian built, were also analysed. Hence the emphasis on the use of history as *rhetorical* instrument in the *Ad Nationes*. This added an interesting dimension to the study, especially when one considers the approach of the influential Second Sophistic Movement, in which the emphasis in oratory was more on style than on substance.

A note of caution should be raised at this point. The intention was not to argue a *rhetorical theory*, based on the utilisation of history in the work of Tertullian. This falls outside the scope of the study. The abstraction and argumentation of a rhetorical theory in this regard, presupposes the inclusion of the entire Tertullian corpus. The use of history in a single book can not substantiate a theory. Reflections on the use of history in a single book in terms of a rhetorical *instrument* is however attainable. The concept of *instrument* is much more modest in its pretention than *theory*. The depiction of the use of history as a rhetorical *instrument* in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* should therefore be understood in this sense.

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[6] For example: Justin Martyr's two *Apologies*, *Oratio ad Graecos* by Tatian, Josephus's *Ad Apionem* and the *Apology* written by Apuleius in which he defends himself against a charge of witchcraft.

SECONDARY LITERATURE AND PRIMARY SOURCES

The investigation was not conducted without a critical awareness of current research, insights and widely accepted opinions expressed in scholarship pertaining to the broad field of Patristics, Patrology and Latin. As indicated, Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* and in particular his use of history as a trajectory in his argumentation, have however not yet kindled academic interest. A corpus of related and relevant (secondary) research to critically consult or engage with does not exist. Investigating Tertullian's use of history as a rhetorical instrument in his *Ad Nationes* constitutes the first (uncertain) steps into a new field of research. Primary sources thus almost exclusively made up the basis of the research. The results are therefore shaped by primary sources, demonstrating originality and a comprehensive understanding of the applicable techniques of research and fundamental enquiry.

TRANSLATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, translations from the original Latin and Greek are my own. These are put between brackets, following on the Latin or Greek citations.

EXPOSITION AND VALUE

The investigation is presented in four chapters. The *first* comprises an in-depth and critical consideration of the knowledge we have with regard to Tertullian as Christian theologian, and his works, in particular the *Ad Nationes* as published in (critical) text editions. This provided a frame of reference for the analysis of the *Ad Nationes* that followed.

The next three chapters focus on Tertullian's utilisation of history in the *Ad Nationes*. This is a text based analysis and a systematic approach was followed, i.e. from the first section of the *Ad Nationes* to the last. *Chapter two* of the study analyses Tertullian's references to Socrates, Nero and Psammatichus, a Greek philosopher, a Roman Emperor and an Egyptian king. Hence its

title: A philosopher, an emperor and a king. The *third chapter* scrutinises Tertullian's reflection on natural disasters from history. It was widely accepted that the Christians caused them. The chapter also incorporates a paragraph on decisions taken by the Senate that indicated its supremacy over religious tradition. The final paragraph deals with a historical contradiction in the work of Tacitus the famous historian. Tertullian draws attention to this undermining of the integrity or accuracy of historical knowledge. The *last chapter* (four) examines Tertullian's recalling of certain customs of two great nations, the Persians and Macedonians, as well as the heroic conduct of a general (Regulus), four women (Cleopatra, Hasdrubal's wife, Dido and Leaena) and the judge Aristides.

A comprehensive *conclusion* follows, in which the use of history as rhetorical instrument in the *Ad Nationes* is critically determined.

The argued answer to the stated central question constitutes an *original contribution* to our knowledge and understanding of Tertullian, since it focuses on an undervalued and underestimated aspect of his work. The questioning and critical appraisal of Tertullian's rhetorical use of history and historical images (both 'classical' and distinctively Christian) in the *Ad Nationes*, understood and clarified within the aim of his (Christian-theological) argumentation thus represents an feature of his legacy that still awaits in-depth and innovative research.

CHAPTER ONE

MEETING TERTULLIAN, THE FIRST LATIN CHRISTIAN AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this critical investigation of the use of history as rhetorical instrument in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* is dedicated to profiling the landscape that demarcates this research. It comprises the identification of fundamental aspects that should be considered in tracing and critiquing the use of history in the *Ad Nationes.*

Tertullian is a theologian of consequence. He is one of the best known early apologists of the Christian faith and doctrine. Over centuries his literary legacy has elicited research, interpretation and emulation. This legacy constitutes the vast back drop against which this study has to develop and take shape. However, a detailed description and analysis of the corpus of Tertullian *Wissenschaft und Forschung* fall outside the scope of this study. The *first paragraph* of the chapter therefore offers a bird's-eye view of the most influential and relevant Tertullian research, as well as the main sources (including digital platforms) of information concerning Tertullian.

Encapsulated in the current research are two issues that should not be overlooked or underestimated. Not much is known of Tertullian the person. The details of his life are for the most part shrouded in uncertainty. The *second paragraph* therefore contains only the few reliable details of Tertullian's life that has come down to us. All popular assumptions and generalisations should be omitted. The *second part* of this chapter contains an overview and appreciation of his written legacy, focusing on the *Ad Nationes* under the following headings: the oldest edition, the text-critical editions, the translations and the commentaries. The choice of the critical edition of the *Ad Nationes* text used in this investigation is also specified and motivated.

The *last section* of the chapter deals with a very interesting problem. Tertullian utilises (his) historical knowledge for explicit purposes. The question is whether he had an understanding of how to determine historical truth and how to distinguish it from fiction. In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian reflected on the establishment of *veritas* and explains how *fama* gives rise to false assumptions, undermining *veritas* and leading to its own conclusions.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TERTULLIAN RESEARCH

Tertullian research is imposingly and extensively captured on the website www.tertullian.org. In addition the *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* (Braun, 1999) provides a wide-ranging overview of all the research done on Tertullian. Both were extremely valuable in conducting the research. Dunn (2004:3-11) also provides a broad overview of Tertullian research.

The biography and study of Barnes (1971) constitute a significant contribution to the research topic. In 2004 Dunn published *Tertullian* – the first part a comprehensive and illuminating introduction to Tertullian and his surroundings, the second part a translation of various treatises. Wilhite's *Tertullian the African: an Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities* (2007) also provides valuable insights. These studies shape contemporary research and are based on thorough investigation of primary sources.

Directly relevant to the theme of our investigation is the *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian*, written by Sider in 1971. Lortz's *Tertullian als Apologet* provides a background to Tertullian and the genre of apologetics. Osborn's book *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (1997) contains a modern exposition of Tertullian's theology. His use of history as rhetorical instrument has, however, not yet evoked substantial research. As part of her doctoral studies Pètre did some work in this direction in 1939. Her work was subsequently published in 1940 under the title *l'Exemplum chez Tertullien.* Barnes wrote an important article entitled *Tertullian the Antiquarian* (1976) and the article of Burrows, *Christianity in the Roman Forum: Tertullian*

and the Apologetic Use of History (1988) also has significant bearing on the subject of this study.

The following two paragraphs contain an in-depth analysis of the biography of Tertullian as well as the editions of his works.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF TERTULLIAN

What do we in actual fact know of Tertullian? Even if his works enjoyed copious attention, Tertullian the person remains elusive. Since this lack of information has direct implications for the historical contextualisation of the central question, some perspective is imperative. The first section of this paragraph contains a general overview of biographical information as recorded in standard textbooks on the history of Christianity or the church. The intention is to demonstrate that the same details are recycled in the Tertullian research and historiography since the 19th century. A (debatable) biographical portrait became standardised. The second part of the paragraph maps out references to Tertullian in early primary sources.

What is the image of Tertullian painted in textbooks on church history? A number of representative titles have been selected for comparison. These textbooks generally depict Tertullian as a prolific and captivating writer, disputant and apologist that influenced theology by providing terminology for classical Trinitarian and Christological formulations. He advanced dogmatic development. A few examples will confirm this picture of Tertullian. In his influential 19th century *Church History,* Kurtz identified Tertullian as a church teacher of North Africa of fiery and energetic disposition. This son of a 'heathen' centurion distinguished himself as an advocate and rhetorician and converted to Christianity late in life. He joined the Montanists. His writings were apologetic and controversial, practical and ascetical. Kurtz considered the *Ad Nationes* a 'reproduction of the *Apologeticus* intended for the general public, less learned, but more vigorous, scathing and uncompromising' (Kurtz 1894: 161, 160-162).

Heussi depicts him as a person characterised by an 'ungemein temperamentvolle, widerspruchsreiche, unharmonishe Natur ….' This 'Kirchenlehrer' and 'Apologet' significantly coined 'scharfe und originelle dogmatishe Formeln.' He was the originator of Latin 'Traktatliteratur.' He had rhetorical and philosophical training and practised as a jurist in Rome, before he returned to Carthage in 190. Early in the next century he joined the Montanists. His works are divided into 'Praktisch-Asketisches, Apologetisches, Antignostisches' (Heussi 1922: 48, 56, 57).

Latourette (1937) did not devote a chapter or even a paragraph to Tertullian as an important role player in the history of the church. In dealing with the history of the church during the third century he did, however, quite often make use of Tertullian and his views, especially to profile the work and effect of the apologists. Eventually this 'stickler for morality' (1937:285), Latourette informs us, joined the Montanists (1937:347).

In Bakhuizen van den Brink's *Handboek der Kerkgeschiedenis*, *volume I*, Tertullian's works are utilized to provide information to substantiate the history of the Christian church until the end of the fifth century.[7] He does, however, include a separate paragraph on the life and conviction of Septimus Florens Tertullianus. This 'felle man' as Bakhuizen van den Brink describes him, 'hanteert het Latijn met een enorm, maar subjectief meesterschap zodat hij tot de moeilijkste schrijvers behoort ... Hij was apologeet en een onvergelijkelijk helder polemicus' (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1965: 117, 118).

In 1979 Praamsma characterised him as 'de punische woordensmid' (1979:59) 'die als een tweede Hannibal Rome bestreed; niet met de punt van zijn zwaard, maar met dié van zijn pen; niet door een inval in Italië, maar door een doeltreffende aanval op de romeinse cultuur' (1979: 56). In his chapter *Christelijk Afrika,* Tertullian and Origen are the main role players (1979:55-60). Pretty much within the established parameters Tertullian's position in the history of the

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[7] This also applies for Schmidt (1967:60, 64, 68, 72, 87ff, 109 ff.).

church is portrayed as being both offensive and defensive. He is a lecturer (teacher) of the church who eventually became a Montanist.

It is apparent that Tertullian is regarded as a key catalyst in the early history of the church but apart from what transpires from the survey of the church historiography above, not much is known of him. As is the case with many 'classical' authors, the story of Tertullian's life and the portrayal of his character are permeated with assumptions, rather than historical facts. In order to establish the *veritas* concerning this topic the available primary sources must be subjected to a rigorous investigation. In order to arrive at a trustworthy biographical sketch, the best primary source to investigate is the works of Tertullian himself.

Tertullian, however, divulged very few details of himself in his 31 extant works. What can be derived from these sources? To start with: Tertullian gives his name as Septimius Tertullianus,[8] but some medieval manuscripts record his name as Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (Dunn, 2004:163). He confesses his acceptance of the Christian faith: *ipsi retro fuimus, caeci sine domini lumine* [before, we ourselves were blind, without the light of the Lord].[9] We can infer from his frequent mentioning of Carthage, that he indeed lived in this city. In the *De Pallio* he addresses the *viri Carthaginenses* [men of Carthage],[10] he refers to Perpetua, who was martyred in the city in 203,[11] he wrote a treatise addressed to Scapula, who was the proconsul of the Roman province of Africa, of which Carthage was the capital and in the *Scorpiace*[12] he touches upon the Pythian Games at Carthage. With certainty we can thus state that Tertullian was an inhabitant of the African city of Carthage.

From his work *Ad Uxorem* it can be deduced that Tertullian was married to a fellow-Christian,[13] since he addresses his wife as *dilectissime mihi in Domino conserva* [my most beloved fellow-

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[8] Tert. *De Virg. Vel.* 17.9
[9] Tert. *De Paenit.* 1.1
[10] Tert. *De Pall.* 1.1
[11] Tert. *De Anim* 55.4
[12] Tert. *Scorp.* 6.2
[13] Tert. *Ad Uxor.* 1.1.1

servant in the Lord].[14] At some time he probably visited Rome,[15] though Dunn (2004:4) does not discard the possibility that he could have stated this *fact* as a rhetorical flourish. Tertullian also informs us that he wrote on several topics in Greek.[16]

The inquiry into Tertullian's works disclosed not much about the life of Tertullian. It confirmed that he was a former non-Christian from Carthage who was married to a Christian woman. He visited Rome and wrote in both Greek and Latin. Nothing more.

We should therefore turn to other available primary sources in an attempt to form a more comprehensive picture of the man. Very few early Christian writers refer to Tertullian. Eusebius[17] reports that Tertullian had an accurate knowledge of the law and was famous at Rome. Only a single ancient account of his life is extant: the 53rd chapter of Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, which is quoted in full because of its unique character. Jerome wrote:

1. *Tertullianus presbyter nunc demum primus post Victorem et Appollonium Latinorum ponitur, provinciae Africae, civitatis Carthaginiensis, patre centurione proconsulari. 2. Hic et vehementis ingenii, sub Severo principe et Antonino Caracalla maxime floruit multaque scripsit volumina quae, quia nota sunt plurimis, praetermittimus. 3. Vidi ego quendam Paulum Concordiae, quod oppidum Italiae est, senem qui se beati Cypriani iam grandis aetatis notarium, cum ipse admodum esset adulescens, Romae vidisse diceret referretque sibi solitum numquam Cyprianum absque Tertulliani lectione unam praeterisse diem ac sibi crebro dicere: - Da magistrum - ,Tertullianum videlicet significans. 4. Hic usque ad mediam aetatem presbyter ecclesiae, invidia postea et contumeliis clericorum Romanae ecclesiae ad Montani dogma delapsus in multis libris novae*

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[14] Tert. *Ad Uxor*. 1.1.1
[15] Tert. *Cult. Fem.* 1.7.2
[16] Tert. *De Bapt.* 15.2; Tert. *De Cor.* 6.3; Tert. *De Virg. Vel.* 1.1
[17] Eusebius *HE.* 2.4

prophetiae meminit. 5. Specialiter autem adversum ecclesiam texuit volumina De pudicitia, De persecutione, De ieiuniis, De monogamia, De exstasi *libros sex, et septimum quem adversum Apollonium composuit ferturque vixisse usque ad decrepitam aetatem et multa quae non extant opuscula condidisse.*[18]

[1. Tertullian, a presbyter, is now ranked first of the Latin authors after Victor and Apollonius. He was from the province of Africa, from the city of Carthage, where his father was a *centurio proconsularis*. 2. He possessed a vigorous talent, and flourished under the emperors Severus and Antonius Caracalla. He wrote many volumes, which, because they are well known, I do not mention. 3. I saw a certain Paul, an old man from Concordia, an Italian town. He told me that when he was still a young man, he had seen a man in Rome, who had been the secretary of the blessed Cyprian, already an old man and he related to him that Cyprian was accustomed to never pass a day without reading Tertullian and that he frequently said to him '*Hand me the master'* and by this he no doubt meant Tertullian. 4. He was a presbyter of the Church until middle age, thereafter, because of the envy and insults of the clergy of the Roman church, he lapsed into Montanism and he mentions the new prophecy in many books *De Pudicitia, De Persecutione, De Ieiuniis, De Monogamia, De Exstasi*, in six books and a seventh, which he wrote against Apollonius. He is said to have lived to a great age and that he wrote many works, which are not extant.]

Jerome made an important and interesting point which has relevance for this study. He notes that Tertullian wrote many volumes. That so many of his works have been preserved might be indicative of the fact that despite the crisis of Montanism and his leaning towards it, he gained recognition in the ecclesiastical tradition early on. This is also evident in the anecdote that Paul of Concordia relates concerning Cyprian who would daily ask for the *magister*, despite him

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[18] Jer. *De Vir.* 53

(Tertullian) being branded to be a Montanist and a schismatic. The numerous quotes of Tertullian in Cyprian's works confirm this conclusion.

Augustine adds another piece of information which has not been corroborated by other evidence. According to him Tertullian separated from the Montanists and founded his own sect.[19]

It is obvious that these accounts provided the biographical details that surfaced in the modern church historiography, monographs, introductions to text editions and translations of his works, encyclopaedias and church historical dictionaries.

The details concerning the life and times of Tertullian that have become common knowledge, have to be appraised critically. As recent as 1971, in what has been called 'the standard biography in English' (Dunn, 2004:3), Barnes (1971) re-evaluated some deep-seated presumptions and conjectures with regard to the standardised version of Tertullian's life and works. He argues extensively that Jerome is unreliable and that his account is indeed untrustworthy (Barnes, 1971:3 ff.). Likewise, he does not accept the assertion of both Jerome and Eusebius that Tertullian was a famous jurist (Barnes, 1971:22 ff.).

An in-depth discussion of Barnes' conclusions falls outside the ambit of this study. A condensed summary of his results would be helpful to assess the use of history in one of Tertullian's earliest writings since it offers a different perspective on our knowledge of this profound theologian. Barnes is convinced that Quintus Septimus Floris Tertullian was born *c.* 150-160 CE and lived and worked in Carthage. Basing his argument on the variation in the manuscripts of the *Apologeticus* and the fact that there was not a military rank such as *proconsularus*, Barnes concludes that Tertullian was not the son of a soldier (Barnes, 1971:21). He is also of the opinion that Tertullian was never a priest, because he (Tertullian) classifies himself among the laity. However, the translation of *presbyter* as 'priest' is questionable. If *presbyter* is understood

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[19] August. *De haeres.* 86

as 'elder', the argument of him being a 'priest' would be rendered invalid. In addition, Barnes (1971:24) suggests that Tertullian's knowledge of Roman law does not presuppose specialist training as a jurist, but that it is the product of a normal formative tertiary education. His knowledge of the non-Christian Roman and Greek authors further underpins tertiary education (Barnes, 1971:24). He belonged to the literary class of Carthage. This is evident from his writings. The present research may provide additional proof, uncovered by the literary study of Ad Nationes, that Tertullian must have had a high level of both training and talent to be able to compose such a work. His later treatises disclose sympathy towards the Montanist movement, but scholars differ on whether he broke with the Catholic Church or not. In terms of the survey with regard to the trustworthiness of historical particulars concerning the life of Tertullian, the conclusion must be that very little is indeed known of him.

In the next paragraph a historical outline of the published editions of the *Ad Nationes* is given.

THE TEXT EDITIONS OF THE *AD NATIONES*

Tertullian was the author of many treatises in both Latin and Greek. To a large extent they have been printed collectively in critical editions. Modern research has been based upon these critical editions. For the purpose of this dissertation the text traditions of the *Ad Nationes Libri I & II* are of special importance. This paragraph intends to trace the editions of the *Ad Nationes* from the earliest to the most recent text-critical editions.

Q. S. F. Tertulliani *Ad Nationes Libri I & II* are only preserved in the *Codex Agobardinus*, the oldest extant manuscript of this work. This work dates from the beginning of the ninth century and is named after its first owner, Agobardus, bishop of Lyons. This means that for a period of approximately 600 years (since its first publication at the end of the second century) we have no information concerning the history of the text. Martinus Mesnartius[20] used the *Codex Agobardinus* (Waszink & Van Winden, 1987:3) for his 1545 edition, which appeared in Paris.

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[20] Gagny-Mesnart.

The text of the *Ad Nationes*, though damaged by damp, has thus certainly been available since the second half of the sixteenth century.

In 1625 the *Editio Princeps* was published by Gothofredus[21] in Genua. The *Ad Nationes* was subsequently printed in Paris in *Q. S. Fl. Tertulliani opera* edited by Rigaltius in 1634, then again in the Rigaltius-Priorius[22] edited *Q. S. Fl. Tertulliani opera* in 1664.

In 1844 Jacques-Paul Migne published the *Patrologia Latina*, which contained the complete works of all the Church Fathers in 221 volumes. Volumes I and II comprise the works of Tertullian, which were edited by Cardinal Pitra. The first critical edition of Tertullian's works, the *Q.S.F. Tertulliani opera omnia,* was revised and prepared for publication by Oehler in 1851-54. This was the standard 19th century edition and Holmes and Thelwall used this text for the translations which was published in the popular Ante-Nicene Fathers series. In this particular series the *Ad Nationes* was translated by Peter Holmes in 1880.

The first text-critical edition of Tertullian's work was the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), edited by the Academy of Vienna from 1866-1957. It is sometimes referred to as the Vienna Corpus. The works of Tertullian is published in volumes 20, 47, 69, 70, and 76. Reifferscheid and Wissowa produced the text of the *Ad Nationes* published in 1890 as Volume 20 of the *Tertulliani opera* (CSEL).

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, Borleffs critically edited *Ad Nationes libri duo, Quintus Septimus Florens* in 1929. In 1953 the *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (*CCSL or CCL) came from the press under the editorship of Dom Eligius Dekkers. The plan was to reprint the best available editions with revision when necessary. Volumes I and II was dedicated to the works of Tertullian. Borleffs was made responsible for the critical text edition of the *Ad Nationes I & II* in this series. These texts commend themselves for use in the current research

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[21] J. Godefroy.
[22] This edition was based on the text of Rigaltius, with notes by Priorius. Borleffs lists a separate Priorius edition in 1644, but no other source validates this claim. This was also published in Paris.

project. It is the most reliable and recognised text-critical edition with an extensive apparatus which provides the user access to the history of the text.

For the sake of completeness *Sources chrétiennes* (incepted in 1949) deserves reference. This ongoing series of editions in Latin and French texts aims to publish the entire works of the Church Fathers. All the translations include a detailed introduction, notes and a philological, rather than theological, commentary. A number of Tertullian's works has been completed – the *Ad Nationes* unfortunately not yet.

The *Ad Nationes* has been translated into English, French, German, Dutch and Russian though only two commentaries have been offered: Haidenthaller (1942) in German on the second book, and Schneider (1968) in French on *Ad Nationes liber I*. A recent English translation was done by Howe (2007).

This brings our review of the history of the *Ad Nationes* text to a close. For obvious reasons the Borleffs edition in the *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* was chosen as the fundamental text to guide this investigation.

The relief of the landscape surrounding the research is now concluded. This included a synopsis of the most essential research, an overview of the sources and their accessibility, a profile of the biography of Tertullian and the text history of the *Ad Nationes.*

TRUTH AND RUMOUR

One intriguing question remains: How did Tertullian come to a decision about the veracity of an occurrence and how did he expose fiction? This question is raised in the first chapter because it helps to introduce Tertullian as a writer, who employs examples from history.

In the *Ad Nationes* he addresses the issue of truth and rumour. The current critical investigation should carefully take note of Tertullian's articulated convictions in this regard. These two concepts, truth and fiction, are fundamental to the use of history or historical data in structuring an argument. If it is about *history*, the argument should indeed either stand (*veritas*) or fall (*fama)* on this point.

In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian launches himself with avidity into the refutation of the charges against the Christians. A careful analysis of the text reveals that Tertullian, in his argument, outlines the following charges: *incestum*[23] [incest], *infanticidium*[24] [infanticide], *omnis cladis publicae vel iniuriae nos causas esse*[25] [(that) we (the Christians) are the cause of all the public calamities and injuries], *divortium ab institutis maiorum*[26] [divorcing (themselves) from the institutions of the forefathers], *superductae monstruosae superstitionis*[27] [adding a monstrous superstition], and *obstinatio et praesumptio*[28] [obstinacy and presumption]. The latter refers to the Christians' refusal to swear by the *genius* of the Caesar[29] and their contempt of death.[30] The refutation of these accusations is fundamental to the argument in the *Ad Nationes.*

It is clear that Tertullian carefully thought about the charges and that he did not deal with them on the spur of the moment. According to Tertullian it is evident that every accusation made against the Christians 'is not because of the crime, but because of the name,'[31] thus not based upon criminal and culpable acts, but merely due to identification according to a name (Christian). The reason [*causa*] for the utter hatred of the *nationes*[32] toward the Christians lies in their name.[33] He finds this to be foreign to the tradition of the *nationes*.

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[23] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.2.8; 1.16.2
[24] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.2.9; 1.15.2
[25] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.9.2
[26] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.10.3
[27] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.11.1
[28] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.17.1
[29] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.17.6
[30] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.18.1
[31] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.3.1
[32] The term '*nationes'* is difficult to translate. Whether Tertullian addresses the Roman people, all the nations of the ancient world or the heathens in the *Ad Nationes* is a question that falls outside the scope of the current work.

The *nationes*, Tertullian points out, do not generally believe things which they have not examined but in the case of the Christians, they do not *want* to make an inquiry, for fear that that information gained will not bear out their accusations against the Christians. Consequently the hostile name is punished under the assumption of crimes.[34] Tertullian thus implies that a careful investigation of the facts will settle the matter permanently. It is indeed not unusual for the *nationes* to utilise and employ a thorough judicial process, which is according to Tertullian, not an uncommon procedure for the *nationes* to follow.[35]

There are good reasons why Tertullian gives prominence to this custom in his argumentation. As a classically educated person, he was well acquainted with the contemporaneous judicial process. In his argument against the *nationes* he deliberately touches upon this and chapter two in particular contains a detailed description. This official proceeding supported by a thorough inquiry was used to determine the *veritas*. He describes this process scrupulously: Charges are brought, and the accused either confesses or is forced to confess by way of torture.[36] Confessions however do not terminate the trial. According to him an inquest into every detail of the crimes follows[37] to establish the truth beyond any doubt. Even more. He explicates this procedure by using words or phrases that designate the salient features of a trial. To avoid any rushed assumptions, he stipulates, an investigation should be conducted, in order to comprehend[38] the essence of the issue. There should be an inquiry[39] or a fair survey.[40] In any criminal case an investigation is ordered and the particulars of the crime are brought to

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Therefore, in order to avoid this problem, I have chosen to leave the term untranslated and utilise '*nationes*' throughout this dissertation.

[33] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.3.3
[34] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.3.3
[35] Cf. Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.2.1 ff.
[36] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.2.1
[37] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.2.6
[38] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.4.2
[39] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.4.2
[40] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.4.3

light.[41] The truth is thus discovered, according to Tertullian, by following the right process. It is a thorough and therefore a time-consuming undertaking.

For the purpose of this research the reference to the judicial proceedings to determine the truth is of importance. It suggests that if this process was applied to the charges against the Christians, it would have resulted in a satisfactory and fair outcome: the *truth.*

In chapter seven of the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian considers the origin of *rumour*. This is an important observation. He starts his exposition with a chosen quotation from Virgil: *Fama malum, quo[42] non aliud velocius ullum?[43]* [Is there an evil swifter than rumour?]. Focusing on the very essence of *fama,* he observes: It never ceases to lie,[44] it can only exist when it lies,[45] it falls the moment it has been proven false.[46]

Then Tertullian turns to the invention of rumours. They originate from one source, from one mouth, which disseminates mendacity. The reasons for these lies, he observes, are jealousy, suspicion or the new pleasure that exists in lying.[47] These fabrications *creep* on just like a vine, from tongues and ears and the rumour obscures the humble error of its origin.[48]

The process that generates rumour is in more than one way the opposite of the procedure that establishes the truth. The originality and validity are not established or ascertained by investigation, but rather obscured, due to lack of thorough investigation. Tertullian is aware of this fact. He compares the way in which the dubious *'rumor fabricatus'* originates and progresses to the origin of the charges that are employed (or serve) to be a stumbling block to the Christians. Rumour, he writes, is the category of witness the *nationes* suborn against the

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[41] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.6.3
[42] In the *Ad Nationes* the quotation reads: *fama malum* quo *non aliud velocius ullum.* Virgil, however, writes: *fama malum* qua *non aliud velocius ullum* (*Aen*. 1.174).
[43] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.2
[44] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.2
[45] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.3
[46] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.3
[47] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.5
[48] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.5

Christians.[49] They (the *nationes*) relate and establish the identity and origins of the name (Christian) in the same way that a *rumour* originates and spreads, rather than in the way the *truth* is established. They then prosecute the name on the basis of *fama*. Tertullian therefore writes that there is a big difference between *crimen* and *nomen* and between *opinio* and *veritas*.[50] Is he hinting that in the absence of a judicial process, with its characteristic course of action to determine the truth with regard to the Christians and their alleged crimes, the *nationes* are ensnared in the trap of the *fama*?

To conclude: This paragraph indicated that Tertullian values the *integrity* of information. It is, as was pointed out, in his mind either the result of a judicial process that has run its course in order to establish the truth, or it is the effect of a fabricated rumour. Rumour plays into the hands of fallacious fantasies and assumptions. Tertullian clearly regards the concepts of *fama* and *veritas* as opposites. Judged according to the integrity (trustworthiness) of knowledge, *fama* and *veritas* contradict one another.

The distinction between *fama* and *veritas* is of significance. This study intends to trace and analyse the use of history or historical material as a rhetorical instrument in the *Ad Nationes.* The immediate question is whether Tertullian himself applies the same process to establish *veritas* when utilising history which he demands the *nationes* to employ in order to verify the case of the Christians

Tertullian often uses events from the past in order to refute the accusations against the Christians. The issue is whether he remained true to the historical reality of these facts, events and developments, in other words, is his information supported by inquiry and investigation? Is he concerned about establishing the truth? Or, does he manipulate it? Does he reshape (or 'use') historical information to fit the purposes of rhetorical argumentation? For the sake of the investigation it is necessary to establish the following: Is Tertullian's history based upon or linked to the procedures of the established judicial *truth* or does he allow the way in which

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[49] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.7
[50] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.5.6

rumours originate to obscure historical truth to underscore an argued point? Or, does he interchange the two methods? Or did the accepted way of utilizing history fall outside the framework? What value was placed upon historical accuracy?

Keeping these questions (which will be addressed and clarified in the final conclusion of this study) in mind, the following chapters are devoted to an analysis of specific historical events, characters, etc. that Tertullian utilises in defending the Christians and their faith in the *Ad Nationes*.

CONCLUSION

This chapter should be read as an introduction to the following three. It reconnoitered the terrain of research by providing a view of the broader landscape. The synopsis of significant research was a deliberate point of departure. This was followed by an inquiry and assessment of the biography of Tertullian, which established a clear picture of what could be regarded as historically accurate, and what not. It was confirmed that we know very little of this exceptional theologian of the third century CE.

The history of the text of the *Ad Nationes* was also traced. Dating the original text seemed to be impossible and problematic. The *Editio Princeps* had been published in 1652 and included the only known manuscript of the *Ad Nationes.* Since then four non-critical and four text-critical editions have been published. The condensed report on the Tertullian editions (since the 17th century) provided the scaffolding to select a particular text-critical edition (Borleffs) as the best and most trustworthy text.

The last section of the chapter focused on Tertullian's exposition on the establishment of truth (*veritas*) as well as his view on the character and consequences of fiction (*fama*). These concepts (and Tertullian's reflection) are of vital importance to a critical investigation that

traces and assesses the use of history as rhetorical instrument, as will become evident in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

A PHILOSOPHER, AN EMPEROR AND A KING

INTRODUCTION

According to the sequence of material of historical nature (events, characters, developments) in the *Ad Nationes*, the second chapter of the research is devoted to an analysis of Tertullian's references to Socrates, Nero and Psammetichus: a philosopher, a Roman Emperor and an Egyptian king. Tertullian's utilisation of Socrates as a renowned historical figure reflects an interest in the unquestionable quality of his person, his intellectual aptitude to question tradition and religion and the reasons for his death. The *first paragraph* deals with the way in which, and the reasons why, Tertullian brings into play the person, intellect and death of Socrates in his argumentation in the *Ad Nationes.* Nero is a Roman Emperor who receives a prominent position in the application of historical material. As will be shown in the *second paragraph* of the chapter, Tertullian skilfully captures the generally accepted and valid historical image concerning the reign of Nero to strengthen his argument for the case of the Christians against the persistent conviction that during the 200 years of its existence, the Christian faith harmfully eroded the fundamental traditions of the Empire. It emerged and gained strength under Augustus, while its teachings enlightened the world during the reign of Tiberius (at the time when Christ was crucified). Under Nero, however, condemnation prevailed.

In the contemporary Christian literature the Christians sometimes referred to themselves (in terms of a remarkable and crucial self-understanding) as the *tertium genus.* Tertullian is aware of the fact that the *nationes* also attributed this concept to the Christians. It is however not used as a rationale or justification for their existence, but functions as an intolerant prejudice to abuse the Christians. In demonstrating how unfounded the opinion of the *nationes* is, Tertullian employs the gripping story of how the Egyptian king Psammetichus tried (in vain) to determine

which nation was the first among all to establish itself. This is discussed in *paragraph three*. At the end of the chapter a synopsis is offered.

THE PERSON, INTELLECT AND DEATH OF SOCRATES

The first historical case that Tertullian draws attention to in the *Ad Nationes* concerns the life and death of Socrates, the renowned philosopher. In his argument against the conduct of the *nationes*, Tertullian claims that the Christians possess the truth, and that this truth is utterly despised by the current generation.[51] What this truth encompasses is not explicitly explained, only that *veritas semper damnabatur* [the truth was always being condemned] even *before* the Christians were in the world.[52] To carry his point he interposes certain events from Socrates' life:

> *Denique Socrates ex ea parte damnatus est, qua propius temptaverat veritatem, deos vestros destruendo: quamquam nondum tunc in terris nomen Christianum, tamen veritas semper damnabatur. Itaque et sapientem non negabitis, cui etiam Pythius vester testimonium dixerat: 'virorum,' inquit, 'omnium Socrates sapientissimus.' Vicit Apollinem veritas, ut ipse adversus se pronuntiaret; confessus est enim se deum non esse, sed eum quoque sapientissimum affirmans qui deos abnuebat. Porro apud vos eo minus sapiens, quia deos abnuens, cum ideo sapiens, quia deos abnuens.[53]*

> [Accordingly, Socrates has been condemned because, by denying your gods, he had come too near the truth. Although the Christian name was not yet in the world at that time, the truth has always being condemned. And so you will not deny that he, of whom your Pythian (god) had testified, was a wise man: 'Socrates,' he said 'is the wisest of all men.' The truth overcame Apollo so that he

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[51] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.4.5
[52] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.4.6
[53] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.4.6-7

proclaimed against himself. For he confessed that he is no god, when he affirmed that it was the wisest man who denied the gods. However, according to you he was less wise because he denied the gods, while he was in actual fact wise *because* he denied the gods.]

The main source for the life, and death, of Socrates is the writings of Plato[54] and Xenophon,[55] two of his students, and the works of Aristophanes,[56] one of his contemporaries. These works had an impact in the '*classical world*' and gave rise to an abundance of references to various anecdotes of Socrates' life and death in generations of (non-Christian) literature that followed. In this regard Socrates is a particular favourite of the rhetoricians, who often cite him as an example of a very wise person,[57] a good man who was executed,[58] an eminent personage,[59] to name only a few.

Many sources[60] corroborate that the Pythian priestess nominated Socrates as the wisest of all men. Plutarch confirms that this statement is *well-known to all*.[61] In addition '*classical*' sources inform us that Socrates was charged on two accounts, namely for rejecting the gods acknowledged by the state and instituting strange deities,[62] as well as for corrupting the youth.[63]

The Greek Christian Apologists also cited Socrates as an example, but they followed a different angle from the one adhered to by the non-Christian authors. They interpreted the reasons for Socrates' execution in a different light, with theological motivation and reference.

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[54] Writings that specifically describes Socrates' trial and death include *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito and Phaedo*.
[55] Mainly his *Memorabilia and Apology.*
[56] Socrates is an important character in Aristophanes' play, *the Clouds.*
[57] Cic. *Rep*. 1.10, *Val. Max.* 3.4. ext. 1, Sen. *Ben.* 8
[58] Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.33, Plut. *De Stoic.* 37, Sen. *Tranq.* 16
[59] Quint. *Inst.* 1.11.17
[60] Plat. *Ap.* 21A; Xen. *Ap.* 14-17; Cic. *Sen.* 78; Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.42; Val. Max. 3.4. ext. 1; Plut. *Adv. Col* 17; Plin. *HN* 7.31; Plin. *HN* 7.34
[61] Plut. *Adv. Col.* 17 ο;n i;sme,n a;pante/j
[62] Plat. *Euthphr.* 3B; Quint. *Inst.* 4.4.5; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1
[63] Xen. *Mem.* 1.2; Quint. *Inst.* 4.4.5; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1

Athenagoras[64] cites the condemnation of Socrates as an example of evil conflicting with righteousness. According to Justin Martyr,[65] the demons were the driving force behind the execution of Socrates, because he sought the truth by way of reason and inquiry.[66] In his second *Apology* Justin[67] attests that Socrates was accused of committing the same crimes as the Christians because he was more committed to employing reason in an attempt to examine and demonstrate issues. He even asserts:

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To.n   Cristo.n   prwto,tokon    tou/    Qeou/    ei=vnai
evdida,cqhmen kai. proemhnu,samen
Lo,gon o;nta ou- pa/n ge,noj avnqrw,pwn mete,sce.)
Kai. oi` meta. lo,gou biw,santej
Cristianoi, eivsi( ka;n a;qeoi evomi,sqhsan( oi-on evn
]Ellhsi me.n Swkra,thj kai.
`Hra,kleitoj kai. oi` o[moioi auvtoi/j...)))
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[We have been taught that Christ is the first born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus and men like them…- Translated by Roberts & Donaldson.][68]

The Christian Apologists, thus, employ the Socratic example, but in their emphasis on the reason for his condemnation, they followed a different direction. Their interpretation of the facts leads them to the conclusion that the cup of hemlock was offered to Socrates because he denied the existence of the gods, which is according to the Christians, true. The charge of corrupting the youth is never mentioned by these Christian authors. Tertullian is the exception.

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[64] Athenagoras, *Leg. pro Christ.* 31
[65] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 7.3; Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 5.3
[66] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 5.3
[67] Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 10.5
[68] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 46.2, 3

In his *Apologeticus*, he refers to this indictment. He there cites Socrates as a defiler of the youth, particularly young men.[69] It is noteworthy that Tertullian, unlike the other Christian Apologists, had no real love for Socrates, and he certainly did not regard him as a portrayer of Christian values.[70]

The survey of references to Socrates in '*classical*' non-Christian and Christian apologetical literature indicates the corpus of sources that constituted the knowledge of Socrates at the time of Tertullian. The citations concerning Socrates in the *Ad Nationes* (as well as the *Apologeticus*) confirm Tertullian's acquaintance with at least the contemporary and common views and perceptions regarding the life and death of Socrates. He however uses it in a particular way to serve the purposes which underlie his writing of the *Ad Nationes*.

Tertullian states that Socrates was condemned for the truth and that Apollo pronounced him the wisest of all men. He (Tertullian) depicts him as an outstanding and 'wise man' who was executed, but this does not mean that he aligns himself with the non-Christian authors and tradition in this regard. He rather follows the Christian Apologists' tradition, who interpreted Socrates' death as that of a man who died for the truth. It should be noted though that Tertullian did not simply reproduce the standardised Christian Apologist version and interpretation. He is not content with simply utilising (and manipulating) the anecdote concerning Socrates' death, in order to claim that the *nationes* executed a man who spoke the truth. He goes one step further. He deliberately adds another part of the account of Socrates' life, namely the oracular affirmation by Apollo. The pronouncement made by Apollo is attested to by numerous non-Christian '*classical*' sources.[71] Tertullian accommodates the Pythian oracle and Apollo's admittance that he himself was no god when he proclaimed Socrates to be the wisest of all men [*vivorum omnium Socrates sapientissimus*].

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[69] Tert. *Apol*. 46.10
[70] Cf. Tert. *Apol*. 46.5; Tert. *Apol*. 46.10; Tert. *De Cor*. 10.5; Tert. *De Anim*. 1.4; Tert. *De Anim*. 1.5,6
[71] Cf. footnote 58 above.

Tertullian includes this event with the sole purpose of ridiculing the god Apollo, as he explicitly warns his readers in the *Apologeticus*.[72] The Pythian god announced that Socrates was the wisest of all men. Tertullian does not comprehend this to be a mere attestation to Socrates' wisdom. He approaches this declaration from a different angle, arguing that the god Apollo acknowledged that he was no god, when he declared that it was the wisest man who denied the gods.[73] The inclination of Tertullian's argument amounts to the following: Apollo capitulated before the wisdom of Socrates (the denial of gods based upon his intellectual questioning and critique), and by doing so, had to deny his own godliness. In addressing the *nationes* in terms of common (historical) knowledge concerning the life, intellect and death of Socrates, Tertullian underlines that the truth (the denial of the gods) was comprehended long before the 'Christian name was … in the world.' His argument and use of historical information concerning Socrates provides him with a platform to also deride the *nationes*. They therefore, contrary to 'divine' acknowledgement (Apollo's self-denial), reject both Apollo ánd Socrates. 'However,' he writes, 'according to you he was less wise because he denied the gods, while he was in actual fact wise *because* he denied the gods.'[74]

In his portrayal of events from Socrates' life, namely the oracle and his execution, Tertullian however, significantly avoids mentioning important details about the last days of Socrates' life. According to Plato, with his last words Socrates uttered, he ordered a cock to be sacrificed to Aesculapius.[75] Tertullian was familiar with this request, since he draws attention to it in at least four of his works.[76] In the second book of the *Ad Nationes* he even underlines the absurdness of Socrates' request: *Socrates ips<e> deos istos quasi certus negabat; idem Aesculapio gallinacium resecari quasi certus iubebat*[77] [Socrates himself, with almost certainty, denied those gods (of yours), yet with like certainty, he ordered a cock to be sacrificed for Aesculapius].

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[72] Tert. *Apol.* 4.1
[73] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.4.6
[74] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.4.7
[75] Plato, *Phd.* 118 A
[76] Tert. *Apol.* 46.5; Tert. *De Cor.* 10.5; Tert. *De Anim.* 1.6; Tert. *Ad Nat* 2.2.12
[77] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 2.2.12

Socrates was condemned to death for denying the gods and yet his last appeal was to request Plato to offer to a god. Did Socrates believe in the gods after all? A careful consideration of this fact has led Tertullian to accept that Socrates did almost certainly [*quasi certus*] believe in the gods. In his first book of the *Ad Nationes*, he could not reconcile this information with the fundamental nature of his argument. He therefore refrains from mentioning the request for an offering, in order to make the point that Socrates - as a matter of *fact* - died for the truth. This 'fact' however, depends on the calculated omission of information elsewhere recognised and stipulated, for it would invalidate his argument in such a way that it would collapse. By doing this, Tertullian does not apply or rhetorically circumvents the principles and methods of investigation to ascertain the *veritas*, as was ruled by the judicial processes Tertullian so outspokenly commends.

In the second deliberate use of history in the *Ad Nationes,* Tertullian broaches the historical relationship between the Roman Empire (in particular the three emperors: Augustus, Tiberius and Nero) and the Christians. In general it was assumed that the greatness of the Empire correlated with the preservation and upholding of the traditional religion (Barnes: 1976:9). The *nationes* were convinced that the Christians in particular threatened this traditional correlation, because they did not share in the beliefs and rituals of the imperial religion. Tertullian regarded this assumption as a *fama*, a rumour that could not be substantiated. He illustrates his conviction by, utilising the familiar and recognised history of the Empire.

THE EMPERORS AUGUSTUS, TIBERIUS AND NERO AND THE CHRISTIANS

Tertullian accuses the *nationes* of referring to *rumour* as testimony against the Christians. He writes: *Videte, qualem prodigam adversus nos subornastis*[78] [See what sort of extravagant rumour you have instigated against us].

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[78] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.7

This *fama*, he observes, has however not been substantiated in the 200 years[79] since the Christian faith came into being. The history of its initial inception and development into a significant movement is thus linked to three most significant emperors: Augustus, Tiberius and Nero. Tertullian notes:

> *Principe Augusto nomen[80] hoc ortum est, Tiberio disciplina eius inluxit, Nerone damnatio invaluit, ut iam hinc de persona persecutoris ponderetis: si pius ille princeps, impii Christiani; si iustus, si castus, iniusti et incesti Christiani; si non hostis publicus, nos publici hostes : quales simus, damnator ipse demonstravit, utique aemula sibi puniens. Et tamen permansit erasis omnibus hoc solum institutum Neronianum, iustum denique ut dissimile sui auctoris.[81]*

> [This name rose up under Augustus Caesar, its teachings enlightened the world under Tiberius but under Nero its condemnation prevailed, so that now you may consider it in light of the person of its persecution: if that prince was pious, then the Christians were impious, if he was just, then they were unjust, if he was chaste, then they were unchaste, if he was not a public enemy, then we were public enemies. What sort of people we are, our persecutor himself demonstrated, for he certainly punishes the thing which presents hostility to himself. And although everything else has been expunged, this one practice of Nero remains, righteous even, as being dissimilar to its author.]

Tertullian was obviously familiar with the historical origins of the Christian faith and name. He confirms that during the reign of Augustus, at the time when Christ was born, *nomen hoc ortus est*. Then, he continues, under Tiberius, *disciplina eius inluxit.* Tertullian's historical understanding of the origins of the Christian name is thus constituted by an event which he identifies as the rise of the name. This became a movement which teachings were to continue

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[79] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.10
[80] i.e. *christianus*, deriving their name from Christ.
[81] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.8

to enlightening the world. He however devotes specific attention to the third Emperor he mentions. Nero was the first Roman ruler to persecute and condemn the Christians.[82] The movement that *enlightened* the world incurred suspicion and fell prey to persecution and reprobation.

The obvious question to be asked is why did Tertullian link the history of the Christian name and faith with these Emperors in the first place? According to Barnes (1976:9) the Romans held two convictions that were exceedingly threatening to Christians. These were: that Rome achieved greatness as a reward for her reverence to the traditional religion[83] and that the Christians were to blame for natural catastrophes.[84] Confronted with this situation, some Christian Apologists had therefore tried to detangle the popular (non-Christian) assumption that associated Rome's greatness with her adherence to traditional religion.[85] At the same time they had to denounce the postulation of a causative relation between the Christians and natural disasters.[86]

First to consider is the association of Rome's greatness with her devotion to traditional religion. Why was this such a dangerous belief, and why did Melito of Sardis[87] and Tertullian refute and contest the idea? The reason can be found in what Roman authors depicted the Christian faith to be. They portray it – in strong religious language - as *exitiabilis superstitio*[88] [harmful superstition], as *superstitio nova et malefica*[89] [new and wicked superstition], and as a *superstitio prava et immodica*[90] [perverse and immoderate superstition]. Undoubtedly the Christian faith was regarded as a *superstitio*[91] and it did not adhere to the *veritas* of the Roman traditional religion. If loyalty to the traditional religion was seen as causative of Rome's

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[82] Tert. *Apol.* 5.3; Melito of Sardis, the *Apology* addressed to *Marcus Aerelius, 2*.
[83] Tert. *Apol.* 25.2
[84] Tert. *Apol.* 40.1; Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.9.3
[85] Cf. Janssen (1979).
[86] Tertullian's refutation of the Christians being held responsible for natural disasters will be discussed in chapter 3.
[87] Melito of Sardis, *Apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius*, 2.
[88] Tac. *Ann*. 15.44
[89] Suet. *Ner.* 16
[90] Plin. *Ep*. 10.96
[91] L.F. Janssen extensively discusses the term *superstitio* and the reasons for Christian persecution.

greatness, then it goes without saying that adherence to the Christian faith would be synonymous with Rome's demise.

In contradiction to this belief, Melito of Sardis explicitly indicated that the relation between the Christian faith and the greatness of the Roman Empire should be regarded in a positive light. He writes: 'it (the Christian faith) proved to be a blessing of most happy omen to thy empire.'[92] Christ was born during the reign of Augustus, who (nota bene) brought the Empire into being. The *inception* of the Empire and the Christian faith coincided historically. This confirms that the Christian faith did not endanger or threaten the Empire in any possible way. On the contrary. As in the writings contemporary non-Christian '*classical authors,*' Nero and Domitian are identified by Melito as emperors under whom the Christians were persecuted. The unhappy state of affairs during the reigns of these two emperors was at the time held as common knowledge. Melito, in order to strengthen his argument, thus implies that only the treacherous Emperors, whose regimes were characterized by corruption and mismanagement, persecuted the Christians.

Comparing Melito to Tertullian, it is, broadly speaking, evident that Tertullian follows the same line of argumentation as Melito. His focal point though is on the origins of the persecution and therefore on Nero, who is accredited as the instigator of Christian persecution. Examine the character, Tertullian tells the non-Christians, of the persecutor. If Nero was pious, then granted, the Christians are impious, if he was just, then they are unjust, if he was chaste, then they are unchaste. In the *Apologeticus* he instructs them: *consulite commentarios vestros*[93] [consult your histories] for Nero was the first to persecute the Christians, and 'for anyone who knows him, can understand that nothing except if it was of remarkable virtue has been condemned by Nero (*qui enim scit illum, intellegere potest non nisi grande aliquod bonum a Nerone damnatum*).[94] The person of their persecutor (*damnator*), Tertullian writes, will show what the Christians are, for they are the opposite of their oppressor.

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[92] Melito of Sardis, *Apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius*, 2.
[93] Tert. *Apol*. 5.3
[94] Tert. *Apol*. 5.3

Tertullian continued his calculated attack on the *nationes.* They could not disassociate themselves from Nero. He was part of their history. To them it is pointed out that

> *Et tamen permansit erasis omnibus hoc solum institutum Neronianum, iustum denique ut dissimile sui auctoris.*[95]

> [And although everything else has been expunged, this one practice of Nero remains, righteous even, as being dissimilar to its author].

All the *instituta* of Nero have been wiped out, only this *institutum Neronianum* has persisted. Tertullian's allegation is clear: in their persecution of the Christians, the *nationes* are following in the footsteps of Nero, in other words, they are complying with this *institutum* of Nero.

What is meant by the *institutum Neronianum?* Does it indicate a kind of officially legalized action taken against the Christians? De St. Croix (1963:14) is of the opinion that since *institutum* is not a technical legal term, it should be translated as 'the practice adopted by Nero.' Most modern scholars[96] agree that in the first two centuries no legislation existed which outlawed the Christians. Barnes (1968:35) concludes that 'the *institutum Neronianum*, therefore, has no relevance to the legal basis of the persecutions, since it was designed to be a tendentious description of the persecution itself.'

This is confirmed by contemporary primary sources. According to Tacitus,[97] after the great fire in Rome in 64 CE, Nero needed a scapegoat to dispel the rumor that *he* was responsible for the conflagration. He consequently blamed the Christians and had them persecuted. Tacitus is convinced that Nero persecuted the Christians because of the *scelus*. Suetonius[98] also mentions

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[95] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.7.9
[96] Cf. De St. Croix (1963), Barnes (1968), Sherwin-White (1964).
[97] Tac. *Ann.* 15.44
[98] Suet. *Ner.* 16

Nero's persecution of the Christians, but does not convey a reason. Tertullian's historical facts are in accordance with their versions.

It should be clear by now why Tertullian singles out these three emperors to employ a historical argument against the *rumor* that the Christians would be a threat to the Empire. This time he strictly adheres to known historical facts. It could not be refuted. The rumor is adjudicated from a historical perspective. He accuses the *nationes* of acting just like Nero, one of the most notorious rulers of the Empire. Tertullian thus uses history to equate the conduct of the *nationes* with that of Nero, without considering that Nero persecuted them because they allegedly burned Rome and that the *nationes* are frustrating them merely on account of the *name*.

In the last paragraph of this chapter, the use of a third historical event in the *Ad Nationes* is investigated. It coincides with an interesting depiction of the Christians as the *tertium genus*.[99] Christians understood themselves to be the *tertium genus.* The *nationes* also entitled them as the *tertium genus* ['kind of people'] - an intolerant expression to indicate the undesirability of their existence. Tertullian confronts the *nationes* in this regard, recalling Psammeticus' endeavor to determine the *primum genus*.

TERTIUM GENUS? PSAMMETICUS' ENDEAVOUR TO DETERMINE THE PRIMUM GENUS

In chapter VIII of the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian refutes a rather perplexing accusation. He starts the chapter with the statement: *plane, tertium genus dicimur*[100] [We are indeed called the third *genus*, 'kind of people'] and he devotes the entire section to invalidate this epithet ascribed to the Christians.

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[99] *Genus* should not be translated as *race*. *Generation* also does not capture the meaning or sense of this expression. I take it as a technical term, with an underlying theological inclination to indicate a community that is present among all the *genera*, all the generations and nations.
[100] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.1.8

What is the origin of this appellation? The non-Christian writers hardly mention this new religion or cult (as the Christians are called) and there are only a few scattered references to the Christians in their works.[101] None of them epitomizes the Christians as the *tertium genus.* The Christians, though, sometimes identified themselves in a positive sense as the *tertium genus.*[102] An investigation of the Christian idea of being the *tertium genus* disclosed that the identification with this concept provided them with a rational to justify their existence alongside the other (two) *genera*: Jews and Romans.

In his *Ad Nationes* Tertullian however refutes this label *tertium genus* employed by the *nationes* regarding it as an insult to the Christians. Tertullian's refutation thus constitutes a dissimilar use of the concept *tertium genus* in correlation with the rest of the Christian authors. It is therefore important to trace the concept *tertium genus* in the rest of Tertullian's works for it is of importance to establish how he used this notion.

Tertium genus surfaces in three of the writings of Tertullian.[103] His comment in the *Scorpiace* is of particular interest:

> *Illic constitues et synagogas Iudaeorum, fontes persecutionum, apud quas apostoli flagella perpessi sunt, et populos nationum cum suo quidem circo, ubi facile conclamant: usque quo genus tertium?*[104]

> [Will you build synagogues of the Jews - fountains of persecution - here, where the apostles had endured the whips to the full, and the people of the nations, with their own circus, where they readily cry together: to what end is the third *genus*?]

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[101] Tac. *Ann.* 15.44; Sue. *Ner.* 16; Plin. *Ep.* 10.96; Joseph. *AJ.* 18.63
[102] Arist. *Apol.* 2 ff.; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.5
[103] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.20.4;Tert. *Virg. Vel.* 7.2; Tert. *Scorp.* 10.10
[104] Tert. *Scorp.* 10.10

We can thus infer that the *nationes*, at least in Carthage, did regard the Christians in a particular way as the *tertium genus.* The context in which Tertullian uses it is that of the *circus,* which reminds of the spectacular public persecution of Christians. It is here, Tertullian writes, 'where they readily cry together: to what end is the third *genus*?' It is obvious: the Christians as the *tertium genus* are not tolerated. His statement in the *Ad Nationes*: *plane, tertium genus dicimur* must be seen against this background. This explains why he goes to much trouble to disprove the validity of the conception of the Christians as *tertium genus* amongst the *nationes.* Schneider (1968:190) suggests that Tertullian is perhaps trying to prevent this expression from turning into an insult. Tertullian's own references do not shed any light on his conception of the *tertium genus* nor do they make it clear why he goes to such lengths to refute this unwelcome branding.

Before we analyse Tertullian's argument, we need to understand *why* the Christians referred to themselves as the *tertium genus.* Early Christian writers present us with sufficient informative material to conceptualise their understanding and use of the concept. According to Aristides[105] there are four classes of men: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians. Clemens of Alexandria, quoting from the *Preaching of Peter*, identifies three classes: the Greeks, Jews and Christians.[106] Among the Christian writers there was thus a motivated tendency to classify humanity in clusters of groups, identified by what they regarded themselves essentially to be, thus designating their co-existence. A study of the relevant material indicated that the Christian authors thus divided humanity into three differentiated groups or classes: the non-Christians (those who did not believe in God or his Son), the Jews (those who only believed in God) and the Christians (those who believed in God and his Son, Jesus Christ). In this sequence and connotation they would identify themselves as the *tertium genus,* a particular *genus* that is present among all nations.[107]

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[105] Arist. *Apol.* 2
[106] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.5
[107] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.8.9

In defending the Christians against the abusive name *tertium genus* used by the *nationes*, Tertullian does not elucidate the concept itself. Why? He is more interested in illustrating that the *nationes* err when they refer to the Christians as the *tertium genus.* Contrary to the Christians, the *nationes* perceived the term *genus* to denote a nation or national identity. It is this perception that Tertullian scrutinises. In pursuing this goal, Tertullian evokes Egyptian history. He recollects how Psammeticus, king of Egypt, set out to establish the first nation.

> *Psammetic<h>us quidem putavit i<n>v<en>i<s>se ingenio exploratus fide<m> prima<m> generis. Dicitur enim infantes recenti e partu seorsum a commercio hominum alendos tradidisse nutrici, quam et ipsam propterea elinguaverat, ut in totum exules vocis humanae non auditu formarent loquellam, sed <de> suo promentes eam primam nationem designarent, cuius sonum natura dictasset. Prima vox 'beccos' renuntiata est; interpretatio eius panis apud Phrygas nomen est: Phryges primi genus exinde habentur.*[108]

[Psammetichus, through his own genius, thought that he had found the first proof of the (origin of) the nations. For it is said that he took new-born infants and entrusted them to a nurse, to be cared for separate from all human interaction. He had the nurse's tongue cut off for that reason, so that, in overall absence of the human voice, they (the infants) do not form a language by hearing, but so that they, who bring it forth for themselves, might denote the first nation, whose speech nature dictates. Their first word was reportedly '*beccos*,' which means bread among the Phrygians. Therefore the Phrygians were regarded as the first nation.]

The only extant source which refers to this anecdote is Herodotus.[109] According to him, prior to the reign of Psammetichus, the Egyptians thought of themselves as the oldest (or first) human nation (*genus*). When Psammetichus came to the throne he undertook an exhaustive study to

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[108] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.8.2
[109] Hdt. 2.2

establish the truth concerning this matter. He took two infants and entrusted them to a shepherd, who was under strict orders never to speak to them. He had to keep them secluded in a hut and bring them goats on whom they might suckle. Psammetichus' intention with this project was to determine which word they would first utter.

The shepherd complied with all his orders and when two years had gone by he opened the door. The two children extended their arms towards him and uttered the word *beccos*. At first this was of no significance to him, but when the children repeated it every time he appeared, he told Psammetichus what had happened. The children were brought before the king and after he heard them utter the word, he took pains to discover which nation used the word *beccos*. He determined that the Phrygian word for bread was *beccos* and came to the conclusion that the Phrygians were of greater antiquity than the Egyptians. Herodotus relates this episode in paragraph two of his second book and he cites the priests of Vulcan in Memphis as his sources.[110]

Herodotus presents a second version of this story. In the following paragraph he informs the reader that according to the *Greeks* Psammetichus entrusted the children to nurses who had their tongues cut out. Tertullian decides on the latter version as chronicled by the Greeks. The reasons for this choice will become evident. After representing this tale of two infants who were assigned to the care of *one* woman, he observes:

> *Sed unum hoc erit de vanitatibus vestrarum fabularum, non otiose nobis retractandum, quo fidem vestram vanitatibus quam veritatibus deditam demonstrare gestimus.[111]*

> [It will not be futile for us to make one (observation) about the vanity of your tales by which we desire to demonstrate that your faith is rather dedicated to vanity than to verity.]

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[110] Hdt. 2.2
[111] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.8.4

Tertullian accuses the *nationes* of believing an 'empty tale,' (*de vanitatibus fabularum*) rather than the truth. He then launches into an explanation as to why this story is so ridiculous. He commences by asking: how could the nurse possibly have survived after such an important part was removed from her body? As a matter of fact, he even adds detailed information not mentioned in the Greek version of Herodotus. Her tongue was cut out from the very root, mutilating her throat, which cannot even be injured on the outside without constituting a danger. And, if she did survive that procedure, Tertullian further observes, how is it possible that she did not perish later, when, after her tongue was cut out in this manner, the pus was flowing back into her chest and she was deprived from food for so long? Even if she did survive by the same remedies as Philomela,[112] Tertullian maintains, illustrating his knowledge of non-Christian 'classical' literature, that the wise explain her (Philomela's) dumbness with the blush of shame, rather than the removal of her tongue. Furthermore: if she survived on this assumption, then she would still have been able to produce some sounds, which the infants could have imitated, but since they had tongues, they could have done it more easily and attach a definite meaning to it.

Tertullian illustrates that the Psammetichus experiment to establish the Phrygians as the first nation is not credible, mainly because the woman who was entrusted with the children could not possibly survive the surgical intervention. The Memphis version (shepherds) would obviously not serve his purpose to the same extent. It is therefore an 'empty tale,' rather than the truth. Even if the Phrygians were the first *genus*, Tertullian concedes, it does not follow that the Christians were the third.[113] Even if the *nationes* meant the Christians are the third in terms of religion, the argument is still not valid.[114] Tertullian concludes that it is an ill-judged blunder to call the Christians the third nation.

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[112] Philomela was an Athenian princess who was raped by her brother-in-law and when she threatened to tell the world, he cut out her tongue, but she survived. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 6. 424-674, Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.14.8, Sophocles also wrote a tragedy concerning this tale, called *Tereus*, which is no longer extant.
[113] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.8.9
[114] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.8.11

CONCLUSION

This chapter critically examined the first applications of historical material in the argument of Terullian's *Ad Nationes*. In this process the historical references were considered in the light of and in comparison with contemporary primary sources to ensure a reliable understanding and comprehension of the way in which Tertullian utilised historical data. The analysis of historical material confirmed that consultation and consideration of primary sources specific to Tertullian's time (historical) and knowledge referential horizon is of paramount importance. Methodologically it constitutes the point of departure to provide the central question of the study with a well-argued and grounded answer. This approach has been applied in considering historical details with regard to Socrates, the philosopher, Nero the emperor and Psammetichus the king.

The analysis consequently indicated that Tertullian in his deliberate reflections on the person, intellect and death of Socrates, engaged in a very deep-seated (religious) issue for both Christians and non-Christians living in the Roman Empire, i.e. the denial of the gods. A very strong and popular conviction in the Roman Empire deemed that Rome achieved greatness as a reward for her reverence to the traditional religion. The denial of the gods fundamentally challenged this core belief of the Empire. It was no secret that the Christians indeed contradicted this belief system and they were therefore intensely distrusted and their beliefs openly refuted. The Christian faith was viewed as *superstitio.* Adherence to the Christian faith was irreconcilable and in conflict with the *veritas* of the Roman traditional religion. It is this very issue that Tertullian employed by making Socrates a powerful spokesperson on behalf of the Christians. Long before the inception of the Christian faith this great philosopher's intellect led him to deny the gods. He (Socrates) was paying them (the *nationes*) in kind. As was pointed out, Tertullian however deliberately overlooked essential knowledge (which he knew very well, as I indicated) concerning Socrates' last request for a cock to be offered to Aesculapius. Inclusion of this information would invalidate his argument in such a way that it would indeed have

collapsed. This rhetorical omission in actual fact undermines the integrity and validity of his argument.

The *second issue* discussed above is equally fundamental in nature. Tertullian builds his argument around the history of the Christian faith in the first 200 years since its inception. What was the *effect* of this particular history? Did its rise and teachings in any way threaten the Empire? Could this be established historically? Tertullian's intention is to address these questions. He employs commonly known facts concerning three eminent Emperors to show that the Christians, contrary to the claims and accusations of the *nationes,* were a blessing to the Empire. His argument is that the Christian faith emerged and enlightened the world under two outstanding and capable emperors: Augustus and Tiberius. The fact that the rise of the Christian faith coincided with the reign of these two emperors in particular is of historical significance. The history of Nero however constitutes the core of his argument. Nero (in contrast to Augustus and Tiberius) persecuted the Christians. Tertullian reminds the *nationes* that Nero's bad reputation and incompetence was generally known. It is this dreadful emperor who persecuted the Christians. The contrast (excellent-Augustus-Tiberius-blessing and dreadful-Nero-persecution) that Tertullian implies is thus intended to be a historical argument for the sake of a free and unfettered existence for the Christians in the Empire. The integrity of the historical knowledge he utilises is beyond reproach. How convincing his argument is to effect a historical rectification, remains an open question.

Incorporating a story about the Egyptian king Psammetichus, Tertullian touches on another very fundamental issue: the right of the Christians to live in the Roman Empire. The Christians identified themselves as the *tertium genus*. As was pointed out in paragraph four they understood themselves to be a *genus* amidst all the *genera* of the Roman Empire. Their *genus* was thus present in all the other differentiated *nationes* (*genera*). *Tertium genus* was characterized by a specific theological inclination: the belief in God and Jesus Christ, and not by ethnic, cultural or social stratification. Tertullian was aware that the *nationes* took *tertium genus* to indicate a separate nation or cultural entity, in which the Christians would try to

entrench themselves. The unsuccessful endeavor of Psammetichus to establish the original first nation provides proof that the *tertium genus* could not be understood as a cultural entity. Conceptualizing the Christians as the *third nation* is to carry water in a sieve. As indicated, Tertullian selects that version of the story that suits his purposes best.

The analysis of the three examples of history used by Tertullian suggests a trajectory in Tertullian's method of employing historical material. The next chapter will further expound the utilisation of historical material in the *Ad Nationes*.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURAL DISASTERS, THE SENATE AND THE GODS AND TACITUS THE HISTORIAN

INTRODUCTION

Mapping out the utilisation of historical material in the *Ad Nationes* in this chapter comprises a reflection on decisions taken by the Senate when this esteemed institution apparently disregarded the authority of the gods and traditional religion. Tertullian knew that this would have a significant and eroding effect on accusations that the Christians did not respect the authority of the ancestors and tradition. This chapter also focuses on a noteworthy reference to Tacitus the historian concerning historical truth and the integrity of historical data. Close reading of the text also led to another interesting point, which warrants closer examination. There was a widely held opinion that Christians played a clandestine role in causing natural disasters.[115] Tertullian rejected this claim using an intriguing argument. Chapter 3 therefore commences with the natural disasters which were remembered at the time of Tertullian and how they were linked with history.

NATURAL DISASTERS

There was a deep-rooted belief amongst the *nationes* that the Christians were to blame for public calamities. Tertullian must have been well aware of this conviction, and the negative implications it had for the Christians. He therefore had to deal with these superstitions. He writes:

> … *enumerem necesse est, ut v<os> recognoscendo miremini, in quantam stultitiam incidatis, qui om<nis> cladis publicae vel iniuriae nos causas esse vultis.*[116]

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[115] Tert. *Apol.* 40.1; Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.9.3
[116] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.9.2

[… it is necessary that I enumerate (this), so that you are astonished when you recognize in how much folly you fall in, you who want us to be responsible for every public calamity and injury.]

Tertullian reminds the *nationes* that when the Tiber overflows its banks, or when the Nile does not, when there is an earthquake or a famine, everybody immediately shouts *Christianorum meritum!* [It is the fault of the Christians!][117]

In challenging these accusations, Tertullian again relies on common historical knowledge and memory to refute this *fama*. He lists major historical events from ancient times (i.e. prior to the manifestation of the Christian faith) that were still popularly remembered in his day as extensive large-scale catastrophes and then poses the question: Where were the Christians when these (and other) disasters occurred? He asks in direct words:

Ubi tunc Christiani, cum res Romana tot historias laborum suorum subministrauit? Ubi tunc Christiani, cum Hiera, Anap<h>e et Delos et Rhodos et Cea insula multis cum milibus hominum pessum ierunt, uel quam Plato memorat maiorem Asia aut Africa in Atlantico mari mersam? Cum Vulsinios de caelo, Tarpeios de suo monte perfudit ignis? Cum terrae motu mare Corinthium ereptum est? Cum totum orbem cataclysmus aboleuit?[118]

[Where then were the Christians when the Roman state furnished so many accounts of their hardships? Where then were the Christians when Hiera, Anaphe, Delos, Rhodos and Cea were immersed with thousands of men? Or as Plato reports, when a *landmass* bigger than Asia or Africa was submerged in the Atlantic Sea? When flames from heaven engulfed the Volsinii or when fire from their own mountain filled Pompeii. When Corinth was inundated by the sea after an earthquake? Or when the deluge destroyed the whole world?]

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[117] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.9.3
[118] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.9.6-7

At first glance it seems as if Tertullian's argument is waterproof. It is straight forward: all the natural disasters that were cited in fact took place before the Christian faith was established. History proves to be on his (and the Christians') side. But is it really that simple? Closer investigation of the text revealed some significant results.

Tertullian describes five calamities that befell the world. These were: (1) The immersion of the islands Hiera, Anaphe, Delos, Rhodos, Cea and the submerging of the landmass which Plato reported. (2) The second disaster was the flames from heaven that destroyed the Volsinii. (3) Thirdly he mentions the volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. (4) Fourth on his list is an earthquake and the subsequent tsunami which engulfed Corinth. (5) Lastly he touches on the great flood that destroyed the world. These five are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Tertullian's example of the islands which disappeared under the sea can be divided into three differentiated sections: Hiera, Anaphe, Delos and Rhodos as the first section, Cea as the second awhile the (submerged) landmass Plato spoke of constitutes the third. This division is basically determined by the sources of information with regard to each calamity.

The first focal point is the islands Hiera, Anaphe, Delos and Rhodos. What are known of them? According to Schneider (1968:201) Tertullian used Pliny the Elder as his source. The only problem is that Pliny cites these islands as landmasses that have *appeared*,[119] while, according to Tertullian, they have *disappeared*. Schneider explains this inconsistency by pointing out that the lists of exempla of islands that emerged and islands that disappeared are in close proximity in the work of Pliny. Pétré (1940:36) further suggests that the reason for Tertullian's mistake is that he is perhaps citing from memory. Friedrich (2000:165) mentions the disappearance of Hiera, but he does not date this occurrence.

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[119] Plin. *HN*. 2.89

Pliny describes the formation of Hiera in 197 BCE at a location between Thera and Therasia.[120] The emergence of this island is also described by Strabo,[121] Seneca[122] and Justinus.[123] Strabo adds that the Rhodians were the first to venture upon the island and that they erected a temple for Poseidon Asphalios.[124] No ancient source mentions the disappearance or submergence of the island.

Anaphe forms part of the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea, but no source mentions it as having risen up from the sea. According to Apollonius Rhodius[125] Jason[126] begged Phoebus for help when he and his companions were lost at sea. Apollo came down and his golden bow flashed a brilliant beam and an island appeared, where they cast anchor and built an abode for Apollo. Apollodorus[127] relates that Jason and his companions were sailing during a storm when Apollo shot a shaft of lightening into the sea which revealed an island close by. These accounts do not explicitly tell us that Anaphe rose up from the sea. A careful perusal seems to indicate that Apollo rather illuminated the island with his bow or lightning so that it would be visible to the sailors. The *appearance* of Anaphe, whether magical or not, is documented, but its *disappearance* not.

Pliny groups the last two islands, Delos and Rhodos, together. History has handed down that these two islands rose up from the sea.[128] According to Philo[129] these celebrated islands were invisible in ancient times and as the waters receded, they rose up. Pindar[130] refers to Delos as 'god-built.' With regards to Rhodos he relates that according to the ancient tales, when the gods divided the earth among themselves, Rhodos was still hidden under the sea. Helios was not present and as a result he was not allotted any land. Zeus was about to order a new casting

[120] Plin. *HN*. 2.89
[121] Strab. 1.3.16
[122] Sen. *QNat*. 2.26.4-6
[123] Just. *Epit.* 30.5
[124] Strab. 1.3.16
[125] Apol. Rh. *Argon.* 4.1711
[126] Jason and the Argonauts.
[127] Apoll. *Bibl.* 1.9.26
[128] Plin. *HN.* 2.89
[129] Philo, *Aet.* 23
[130] Pind. *Ol.* 6

of the lots, but Helios said that he had seen a fertile land growing in the sea and Lachesis and Zeus agreed that he could take that land.[131] This is how Rhodos came into being.

Tertullian cites four islands as having *disappeared*.[132] The sources however indicate rather that they have appeared. Tertullian's version in this regard is contradictory to the data registered in the sources which were also available to him. He is therefore incorrect and what he depicts as natural calamities, were in fact seen as natural wonders. Probably his memory, on which he relied, failed him on this point. But, it indeed undermined his argument. The only truth was that at the time of these events, the Christians were not yet in existence.

The next island we turn our attention to is Cea. Information from the sources profiles an image in which details are confusing or contradicting, but it is clear that the disaster which led to an island's disappearance into the sea was common knowledge amongst the authors. In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian calls this immersed island Cea. In the *Apologeticus* however, he refers to it as Cos. Whether he is referring to the same island is not clear. In his list of islands that have appeared, Pliny does not mention the island Cea or Cos. He does, however refer to Cea in his discussion of cities that have been immersed under water. According to him on the island of Cea an area of 30 000 paces was covered by the sea, causing a sudden and untimely death to thousands of inhabitants.[133] A disastrous event – submersion into the sea - is thus linked to Cea.

Strabo[134] relates that a piece of land broke off from Cos and it formed the island Nisyrus. Later in his work Pliny[135] also informs us that the island Nisyros was supposedly severed from the island Cos. The fact that Pliny refers both to Cea and Cos would seem to indicate that he distinguished between the two islands, but whether Tertullian did the same, we do not know for certain.

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[131] Pind. *Ol.* 7
[132] In the *De Pallio* Tertullian again refers to Delos which is no more. Tert. *De Pall.* 2.3
[133] Plin. *HN.* 2.94
[134] Strab. 10.5.15
[135] Plin. *HN.* 5.36

When Tertullian raises the catastrophe that hit the island Cea, he is citing from history in accordance with general knowledge. A natural disaster did occur. A part of the island, according to Pliny, did indeed disappear. In this instance Tertullian cites an example of a natural disaster - an island with thousands of people was suddenly submerged by the sea – that had happened before the inception of the Christian church.

The next case in point that Tertullian raises in support of his argument that the Christians are not responsible for natural disasters that (presumably) struck the non-Christians, is the tale of a landmass that has sunken into the Atlantic Sea. In both the *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticus* Tertullian cites his source as Plato. Plutarch[136] reports that Solon first heard this story from learned priests and he tried to disclose it to the Greeks in poetical form. Solon, however, abandoned the project due to old age[137] and Plato completed what Solon had started.[138] It would thus seem possible that Solon was Plato's source.

Plato informs us that an island larger than Libya and Asia[139] vanished into the sea.[140] Pliny[141] also briefly refers to this event. With regard to lands which have been changed into seas, Pliny alludes to an immense space which is covered by the Atlantic Ocean. He cites Plato as his source. Though Pliny's account of this event is in the same book as his references to the island which Tertullian refers to, it would seem that Tertullian cites Plato, rather than Pliny. Schneider (1968:201) and Pétré (1940:37-38) also suggest that Plato, and not Pliny, is Tertullian's source. Tertullian does not change Plato's story. This is a convincing example of a natural calamity that has occurred before the Christian faith introduced itself to the Mediterranean world.

The focus has thus far been on disasters. Tertullian related the disappearance of islands and landmasses beneath the sea. Tertullian's second example of a disaster, that is, Volsinii being

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[136] Plut. *Sol*. 24
[137] Plut. *Sol*. 31
[138] Plut. *Sol.* 32
[139] Pl. *Ti*. 24e
[140] Pl. *Ti*. 25d
[141] Plin. *HN.* 2.94

engulfed by flames from heaven, must now be examined. Volsinii was one of the ancient Etruscan cities. Pliny ascribes the destruction of the city to lightning. He writes that the city was entirely destroyed by lightning.[142] According to him a monster named Volta invoked thunder to annihilate the city.[143] Tertullian is probably referring to this report, when he claims that the city was destroyed by flames. As far as could be determined no other author refers to the city being demolished by lightning or flames from heaven.

Zonaras on the other hand tells that the Romans razed the city to the ground in 265 BCE.[144] We are thus confronted with two different versions of the destruction of Volsinii. Whether Tertullian was familiar with Zonaras' version of events we cannot tell, since he lived in the 12th century, and as far as could be ascertained, no other author refers to the destruction of Volsinii. Whether Tertullian made a conscious choice to follow Pliny's version, is impossible to establish. In Tertullian's examples of natural disasters in the *Apologeticus*, this example is not mentioned. This might be an indication that the military destruction of the city was well known, and Tertullian realised that citing such an example, might make him (and his argument) vulnerable to ridicule. Nevertheless, the destruction of Volsinii also took place before the rise of the Christian church.

Of all the examples Tertullian lists, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE, which buried the city of Pompeii in ashes, is the most fascinating. This was a well-known incident and we have a detailed description of the events as they unfolded in a letter by Pliny[145] the Younger. He responds to the enquiry by Tacitus concerning the eruption. In his letter he also discloses that his uncle, Pliny the Elder, had died during the eruption. Numerous well-known authors such as Josephus,[146] Suetonius[147] and Tacitus[148] all refer to this eruption.

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[142] Plin. *HN.* 2.52
[143] Plin. *HN.* 2.53
[144] Zonar. 8.7
[145] Plin. *Ep.* 65
[146] Joseph. *AJ.* 20.141
[147] Suet. *Tit.* 8
[148] Tac. *Ann*. 4.67

The upsurge of the volcano and the subsequent destruction of the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum are no doubt suitable examples to cite as illustrations of natural disasters. If it is, however, considered that this event took place in 79 CE, and kept in mind that Tertullian is arguing that Christians are not responsible for natural disasters, the utilisation of this example is baffling. In 79 CE the Christians were already a self-identified entity. The eruption took place after the persecution of Christians in Rome in 64 CE. Filson (1939:16) argues that in all probability there were Christians in Pompeii in 79 CE. This example presents itself rather as an opportunity for Tertullian's opponents to use against the Christians, than a historical event to prove their non-involvement in natural disasters because of their non-existence. Indeed, in his re-worked argument in the *Apologeticus*, there is no mention of Pompeii and the disaster that unexpectedly ended its life as a city.[149] This correction is also a convincing indication that Tertullian did not have another eruption of the mountain in mind.

The fourth disaster that Tertullian lists comprises an earthquake and the subsequent tsunami that engulfed Corinth. The ancient city was situated in an area where earthquakes were frequent. Since Tertullian does not divulge additional information, we cannot know which specific event he has in mind. From numerous sources we know with certainty that earthquakes struck Corinth and the whole of Asia Minor[150] from time to time. The legitimate point that Tertullian is making is that these natural disasters were part of the ancient world long before Christians became component of that world. The implication is that they cannot be blamed for their incidence; neither can they be accused of causing them.

The final (fifth) example that surfaces in Tertullian's list of rhetorical questions is similarly vague. He refers to the great deluge which devastated the world. Though the Bible describes a great deluge in the book of Genesis,[151] it is highly unlikely that Tertullian is referring to this event. He is exclusively using non-Christian examples to carry his points. In non-Christian

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[149] Tert. *Apol.* 40.3-4
[150] E.g. Plin. *HN*. 2. 86
[151] Gen. 6.

literature[152] there are also stories of a deluge and it is almost certainly these legends that Tertullian has in mind. Again: these events refer to times that knew no Christians, underpinning the validity of his argument.

It is evident that Tertullian, by presenting a list of questions referring to five immense catastrophes, intended to uphold the integrity of the Christians and the Christian faith against accusations of the *nationes* that implied their involvement in these calamities. The point of his argument is that these disasters took place *before* the inception of the Christian faith and could therefore not have had anything to do with the Christians. In this way he challenged the assumptions of the *nationes* by means of a logical argument and historical dating. It has however transpired that Tertullian is not accurate in his treatment of historical knowledge and information. As a matter of fact, his utilisation of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius could not support his argument, since the event took place at a time when the Christian faith was well established in the Roman Empire. Although he builds up a strong argument, this and other historical inaccuracies hamper his point. The use of the natural disasters of history as a rhetorical instrument to defend Christians against the accusations of the *nationes*, is a matter that we will return to in the final conclusion.

THE SENATE AND THE GODS

In chapter X (*Ad Nationes*) Tertullian explains, by way of a very applicable and significant metaphor, the method he employs to refute the charges against the Christians. He commands the *nationes* to pour out all their venom and to hurl all their shafts of false accusations against the Christian name. But, warns Tertullian, he will not cease to refute them and their shafts will be blunted by an exposition of the whole Christian discipline. He will continue to pluck these shafts from the Christians' bodies and return them to the archers (i.e. the *nationes*).[153] In utilising historical references or history in the following examples, Tertullian's announced

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[152] Paus. 1.18; Pl. *Leg*. 2.359d; Plin. *HN*. 5.14
[153] *Admentationibus* is based on the verb *ammentare.* See Schneider (1968:214).

modus operandi will become apparent. Whatever the *nationes* accuse the Christians of, he will return that shaft with a little tag that says: '*Ditto'*.

The first shaft the *nationes* hurl at the Christians is the general charge of *divortium ab institutis maiorum*[154] [separation from the practices of their forefathers]. Tertullian wrenches this shaft from where it stuck and in returning it to his accusers he observes that they are guilty of exactly the same thing. At first, his argument is broadly set up. He highlights the actions[155] of the *nationes* that imply their own disassociation from the customs of their ancestors. He summarises this observation by accusing them as follows: '*totam auctoritatem maiorum vestra auctoritas deiecit*[156] [your authority overthrew all the authority of your ancestors]. The *nationes* are forever praising antiquity, Tertullian claims, but it is only to their disgrace, since they are also rejecting it at the same time.

After these general observations, he focuses on the tip of the arrow - that part which penetrates the deepest, namely the worship of the gods. He will clearly demonstrate that the gods are torn down and despised by the *nationes* and consequently he will expose the absurdity of the multi-god religions. Tertullian slowly starts to build his argument. He firstly points out that, since the heathen cannot worship all the gods, they have to make a choice. Their inevitable selection offends the god not chosen, for it is impossible to choose one god without slighting the other. He concludes that the forefathers must have realised this and have therefore ordered things in such a way that not all the gods could become objects of worship for all people. Tertullian concludes that the ancestors were therefore impious, especially with respect to the gods. In order to prove this statement, he traces the conduct of the Senate regarding the authority of the gods.

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[154] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.10.3
[155] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.10.4-5: They corrupt and destroy old things, they suppress the laws with new decrees and statutes, they change their style, dress, equipage, food and even their speech.
[156] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.10.6

<M>entior, si numquam censuerant, ne qui imperator fanum, quod inⁱ<bell>o vovisset, prius dedicasset quam senatus probasset, ut contigit <M. Aem>ilio, qui voverat Alburno deo. Utique enim impiissimum, immo con<tumelio>sissimum admissum est, in arbitrio et libidine sententiae humanae < . . . . . . >re honorem divinitatis, ut deus non sit, nisi cui esse permiserit senatus. Saepe censores inconsulto populo <aedes> adsolaverunt; certe Liberum <Patre>m cum sacro suo consules senatus auctoritate non urbe sol<u>mmodo, verum tota Italia eliminaverunt. Ceterum Serapem et Isidem et Arpocraten et Anubem prohibitos Capitolio Varro commemora<t> eorumque <aras> a senatu deiectas nonnisi per vim popularium restructas. Sed tamen et Gabinius consul Kalendis Ianuariis, cum uix hostias probaret prae popularium coetu, quia nihil de Serape et Iside constituisset, potiorem habuit senatus censuram quam impetum vulgi et aras institui prohibuit.[157]*

[I am lying, if they had never decreed that a general may not dedicate a temple, which he had vowed during a battle, before the Senate had given its approval, as is the case with M. Aemilius, who vowed (a temple) to the god Alburnus. Now, is the greatest impiety, or rather the greatest affront, not revealed when the will and desire of human judgment (dictates) the honour of the gods, so that a god is not a god, unless he is permitted to be one by the Senate? The senators have often, without consulting the people, destroyed temples. The consuls have, with the Senate's authority, banished Father Bacchus with all his rituals, not only from the city, but also from the whole of Italy. Moreover, Varro relates that Serapis, Isis, Arpocrates, and Anubis were removed from the Capitol, and their altars, which have been thrown down by the Senate, have alone been restored by the violence of the people. On the first of January, because he had not yet decided about Serapis and Isis, the consul Gabinius with difficulty gave approval for sacrifices to be made, on account of the assembled crowd. He however, held the

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[157] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.10.14-18

judgment of the Senate to be more important than popular demand and he forbade the altars to be built.]

Tertullian shows that those *sapientissimi ac prudentissimi maiores* [those very wise and prudent forefathers] devised a decree, that no general should dedicate a temple, which he had vowed in battle, before the Senate had given its approval.[158] To prove his point Tertullian refers to Marcus Aemilius. He further states that the Senate often destroyed the temple without consulting the populace, citing the case of Father Bacchus, and four Egyptian deities: Serapis, Isis, Arpocrates and Anubis.

The example of Marcus Aemilius is discussed first. The text of the *Ad Nationes* is corrupted here and all that is readable is *ut contigit … ilio.* It is an accepted fact among researchers that the *Apologeticus* is a refinement of the *Ad Nationes.* Borleffs therefore turned to the *Apologeticus* to see whether it could illuminate the problem. The text of the *Apologeticus* is also corrupted, but it reads: *M.Aem….Alburno.*[159] This passage is also extant in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius and he writes `Markoj Aivmilioj.`[160] Consequently, it is clear that Tertullian does refer to one Marcus Aemilius.

Tertullian does not tell us much about Marcus Aemilius, only that he made a vow to the god Alburnus. As a result, the first difficulty that confronts us, is determining who Marcus Aemilius was, for Tertullian nowhere gives his cognomen.

The Aemilii was a patrician family (Hornblower & Spawforth, 1956:22) who distinguished themselves politically as well as on the battlefield. Tertullian writes that an *imperator* was not allowed to dedicate a temple, which he had vowed in battle, before the Senate gave its sanction. The obvious conclusion therefore is that the Marcus Aemilius referred to in this example was an *imperator,* and this title provides a clue as to the identity of the man Tertullian

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[158] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.10.13. Cf. Cic. *Leg.* 2.19
[159] Tert. *Apol.* 5.1
[160] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2.2.5

has in mind. Though non-Christian literature mentions many military leaders with this name, two seem more likely than the others to fit the reference: Marcus Aemilius Lepidus I and Marcus Aemilius Scaurus.

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus I was consul in 187 BCE with Gaius Flaminus. His name does not appear on the Fasti Triumphales,[161] but there are nineteen lines missing, covering the years between 187/6 and 178/7, during the consulship of Lepidus. It follows that there is a strong likelihood that he was granted a triumph. Livy informs us that while he was engaged in a war against the Ligurians, Lepidus vowed temples to the deities Diana and Juno Regina.[162] It is also significant that Livy imparts this information in the same book (39) in which he tells of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, which is Tertullian's next example. Livy, however, like every other source, Christian and non-Christian, does not mention the god Alburnus.

The other prospect is Marcus Aemilius Scaurus. Schneider (1968:217) suggests that this is the man Tertullian refers to. His reasoning is as follows: He was consul in 115 BCE and his colleague was M. Caecilius Metellus. In *Adversus Marcionem* Tertullian writes:

> *Alioquin, si sic homo deum commentabitur, quomodo Romulus Consum et Tatius Cloacinam et Hostilius Pavorem et Metellus Alburnum et quidam ante hoc tempus Antinoum, hoc aliis licebit? nos Marcionem nauclerum novimus, non regem nec imperatorem.*[163]

> [What is more, if a man will devise a god, as Romulus did Consus, and Tatius Cloacina, and Hostilius Pavor and Metullus Alburnus and, before our time, a certain authority Antinous, is this practice then lawful for others as well? We acknowledge Marcio as our skipper, although he is neither king nor emperor.]

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[161] A list of all the triumphs granted from the foundation of Rome down to the reign of Augustus.
[162] Liv. 39.2.8,10
[163] Tert. *Marc.* 1.18.4

It is thus Metellus and not Aemilius, who vowed an altar to Alburnus in *Adversus Marcionem*. It is therefore possible that when he mentioned the god Alburnus, Tertullian confused the two consuls or that both were involved in the consecration of an altar to Alburnus. M. Aemilius Scaurus' name appears on the Fasti Triumphales and he received a triumph, according to the list, for conquering the Carnian Gauls.

Aurelius Victor[164] writes that Scaurus first campaigned in Spain and after that he served under L. Aurelius Oresetes in Sardinia. He also triumphed, according to Victor, over the Ligurae and the Taurici, though the Fasti Triumphales credit him with conquering the Carnian Gauls. It would seem that Aerelius Victor confused Marcus Aemilius Lepidus I (who conquered over the Ligurae) and Marcus Aemilius Scaurus. He was also selected to go with L. Calpurnius Bestia when the Romans declared war against Jugurtha.[165] M. Aemilius Scaurus was thus involved in many wars. Cicero[166] tells us that Aemilius Scaurus wrote an autobiography consisting of three books, which was (according to Cicero) very useful, but not much read anymore. It is possible that Aemilius Scaurus relates this anecdote of consecrating an altar for Alburnus in his autobiography, but this work is unfortunately not extant anymore.

Though there are many other Aemilii who were involved in wars, these are the only two who seem to have any possible connection to Tertullian's example: Lepidus who vowed temples to deities and Scaurus who had a colleague with the name Metullus. It is of course impossible to come to any conclusion as to which one he is referring to.

Not a single source, Christian or non-Christian, mentions these divine pledges of Aemilius to the god Alburnus. He is never even mentioned by any other author, and the standard classical dictionaries[167] do not list him either. This example of Tertullian is thus very obscure since the identity of M. Aemilius or that of the god Alburnus, cannot be established with any certainty.

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[164] Aur. Vict. *De Vir. Ill*. 72
[165] Sall. *Jug.* 28
[166] Cic. *Brut*. 112
[167] See e.g. *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (1989); *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2003).

Tertullian's next accusation is that the Senate has often destroyed a god *inconsulto populo* [without consulting the people]. He selects *Liberum Patrem*, who is identifiable with the god Bacchus, as his example. According to him the consuls, on the authority of the Senate, banned Bacchus not only from the city, but from the whole of Italy.

In 187 BCE Bacchus was cast out of Rome and out of Italy. Livy attests to the fact. The *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* is extant. Livy is therefore the principal authority in providing the background to the expulsion of the Bacchantes. He narrates that a nameless Greek, a priest of secret nightly rituals, came to Erutria. At first only a few were privy to these rites, but then it began to be generally known among men and women. The delights of wine and banquets were added to the religious foundation, in order to attract many people. The wine inflamed their minds, all ages and genders mixed and a variety of corrupt practices emerged, since everyone did as he/she pleased. A diverse number of vices were practiced: *stupra promiscua ingenuorum feminarumque* [promiscuous fornication between free-born men and women], *falsi testes* [false witnesses], *falsa signa testamentaque et indicia* [forged seals and wills and evidence] as well as *venena … intestinaeque caedes* [poisonings ... and secret murders]. Livy aptly summarises the activities of the Bacchantes in Erutria when he writes: *multa dolo, pleraque per vim audebantur* [much was ventured by treachery but even more by violence.][168]

This cult with all its debauchery spread to Rome, where it finally came to the attention of the two consuls, Spurius Postumius Albinus and Quintus Marcius Philippus, who were instructed to investigate secret conspiracies.[169] In Rome there was a youth, Publius Aebutius, whose stepfather wanted to get rid of him. One way of corrupting him was through the *Bacchanalia*. However, when he told his lover, a freedwoman and well-known courtesan, that he was to be initiated into the Bacchic rites, she was distressed. She told him what she had seen there, when she was still a slave and attended her mistress there. After hearing these atrocities, he went home and informed his mother and stepfather that he did not intend to be initiated, upon

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[168] *Liv.* 39.8.5-8
[169] *Liv.* 39.8.2

which he was driven from the house. He went to his aunt's house and told her what had happened. She then advised him to inform the consul.

After his meeting with Postumius, he (Postumius) wanted an audience with the courtesan who finally revealed the exact nature of the Bacchantes to him (Postumius). She told him that at first only women performed the rites, but Paculla Minia, when she was priestess, effected some changes. She increased the three days every year appointed for initiating new members, to five days every month. She introduced men and changed the time of celebration from day to night.[170] The most horrible deeds were practiced, Livy writes: *nihil ibi facinoris, nihil flagitii praetermissum* [no crime, no shameful deed has not been practiced by them].[171] If someone was unwilling to participate, they were sacrificed as victims.[172]

It is obvious that the *Bacchanalia* was a gathering of people who practiced the vilest of deeds. Besides the villainy and corruption that formed part of this cult, Livy mentions another concern. The courtesan told Postumius that *multitudinem ingentem, alterum iam prope populum esse, in his nobiles quosdam viros feminasque*[173] [they were already a great multitude, almost another nation (state) and among these were men and women of certain noble families]. Thus, this cult not only threatened Roman morals, it also endangered the state. Drastic action was needed to stem the tide of baseness, which impended to engulf the *populus Romanus.*

Thus, the Senate proclaimed a decree, stating that there will be no location devoted to the worship of Bacchus. If a Roman citizen or man of Latin rights feels they require such a place, they have to plead their case in front of the Senate, with no less that 100 senators present. There were to be no priest or master of such an organization, nor a common fund. No one was to take a common oath or vows with the Bacchantes, or make stipulations with them, or give or take surety from them. Their rites were not to be performed in private or public or outside the

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[170] Liv. 39.13.8-9
[171] Liv. 39.13.10
[172] Liv. 39.13.12
[173] Liv. 39.13.14

city, unless permission had been given by the urban praetor, in accordance with the opinion of the Senate, delivered with no less than 100 Senators present. Such rites were to be performed in the company of no more than five persons, and there was to be no more than two men and no more than three women present. These were the stipulations of the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*, decreed in 187 BCE.

Livy is not the only source that alludes to these events. Cicero[174] also refers to the severity of Senate, supported by the consular armies, in the public indictment and persecution of the Bacchantes. Valerius Maximus[175] describes the terrible fate that the women, who were involved in the Bacchic rites, suffered. He also cites the reasons why the rites of the *Bacchanalia* were abolished. According to him the cult was done away with when its adherents passed into *perniciosam vaesaniam* [pernicious madness] He continues:

> *Bachanalia mysteria fuere Romae. sed cum temporibus nocturnis viri ac feminae pariter essent furerentque, multo colentium sanguine (se et) peregrina sacra abolita sunt.*[176]

> [There were Bacchic mysteries at Rome. But when men and women were together at night time and became wild, these foreign rites were abolished with much carnage among the participants.]

The abolishment of the cult of Bacchus is documented by a number of non-Christian writers. Though the early Christian writers[177] refer to Bacchus and to his rites, there is no mention of Bacchus being banned from Rome or Italy. Tertullian is the first Christian writer to refer to this occurrence.

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[174] Cic. *Leg.* 2.37
[175] Val. Max. 6.3.7-9
[176] Val. Max. 1.3.1
[177] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 21.2; 25.1; 54.6; Theoph. *ad Autol.* 1.9; 2.7; 3.3; Athenagoras, *Leg. Pro. Christ.* 28

When accusing the Senate of getting rid of a god, Tertullian (correctly) cites the example of Bacchus, who was banned from Rome and Italy. He does not elaborate on this charge and he does not provide the reasons why the Bacchic rites were banned. If Tertullian did proffer the motivation behind the eviction, the intelligent reader would not fail to notice similarities between some elements of the Bacchanalia and the Christians. Both allegedly came together at night to practice promiscuous deeds,[178] human sacrifice,[179] both were foreign religions, their numbers grew and there were members of noble families.[180] Tertullian thus cannot cite the reasons. He only uses the part of history which suits his argument.

Another example of the Senate disposing of deities according to Tertullian is the case of the four Egyptian gods. Serapis, Isis, Arpocrates and Anubis were excluded from the Capitol and their altars, which were thrown down by the Senate, were only restored by popular demand and violence. Tertullian cites his source as Varro, which presents a problem. There are only two extant works of Varro, *De Rerum Rusticum* and *De Lingua Latina (V-X)* and some fragments. In his extant works there is not a single reference to these Egyptian gods. We must therefore assume that Tertullian is referring to one of Varro's lost works.

According to Egyptian mythology, Isis was the wife of Osiris, the king of the Afterlife. He was assassinated by his brother Seth, who then seized the throne. Isis reassembled the dismembered body of her husband. Anubis helped her by embalming the body of Osiris. She then gave birth to Horus, or Harpocrates, as the Greeks called him, who was the posthumously conceived son of Osiris (Grimal, 1992:42). Serapis was so closely aligned with Osiris that he had no separate cult (Hornblower & Spawforth, 1956:44) and he later came to be identified as the husband of Isis. These four deities were thus closely connected in Egyptian and Greek mythology and their cults were usually practiced at the same time.

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[178] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.16.1
[179] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.15.2
[180] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.1.2

Numerous sources attest to the fact that the temples of Serapis and Isis were destroyed. The Roman History of Cassius Dio covers the period from the foundation of the city to 229 CE. According to Dio, the Senate decided in 52 BCE to tear down the temples of Isis and Serapis,[181] and in 48 BCE the temples were razed to the ground *again.*[182] Valerius Maximus writes that in 50 CE, when the Senate decreed that the temples of Isis and Serapis were to be demolished and no one of the workmen dared to touch the temples, the consul L. Aemilius Paullus took off his official gown, seized an axe and dashed it against the door of that temple.[183] Soothsayers proposed this action after observing some omens. Suetonius[184] and Tacitus[185] refer to the Senate's expulsion of the Egyptian and Jewish religions, but since they do not name the deities involved, we do not know whether the expulsion also included Isis, Serapis, Anubis and Harpocrates. Josephus[186] writes that Tiberius ordered the temple of Isis to be demolished after shameful practises were reported to have taken place there.

The literature which alludes to Tertullian's example, only mentions Isis and Serapis. Anubis and Harpocrates are not mentioned at all. Tertullian also only mentions all four deities once at the beginning of this example. Then he follows the precedent and writes that on the first day of January the consul Gabinius gave consent for some sacrifices, on account of the crowd which had gathered, since he could not decide regarding *Serapis and Isis.* He still refused their altars to be built.

Since the cults of these four deities usually went together, it is possible that when the authors refer to the temples of Serapis and Isis, they also include Anubis and Harpocrates. It could also be that only the temples of Isis and Serapis were destroyed and Tertullian used the names of the other two deities, who were usually associated with Isis and Serapis, to strengthen his

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[181] Cass. Dio, 40.47
[182] Cass. Dio 42.26
[183] Val. Max. 1 3.3
[184] Suet. *Tib.* 36
[185] Tac. *Ann.* 2.85
[186] Joseph. *AJ* 18.3.4

argument, i.e. that the Senate not only did away with *two* deities, but with *four.* They indeed displayed an authority that was seemed to disregard both tradition and the gods.

The last paragraph looks at an encounter with Tacitus the historian – on the integrity of historical knowledge, which he as a historian jeopardised.

TACITUS THE HISTORIAN

In chapter XI (*Ad Nationes*) Tertullian refutes a charge against the Christians with a retort. The Christians are not only implicated and suspected *rei desertae communis religionis, sed superductae monstruosae superstitionis*[187] [of having forsaken the common religion, but also of introducing an abhorrent superstition]. This accusation caused an outrage. Tertullian relates the origin of this charge to *somniastis*[188] [you dreamt]. It is thus evident that in Tertullian's mind this charge is based on *fama*, and not on facts.

According to Tertullian, Tacitus, the famous Roman historian made up this suspicion (*hanc … suspicionem fecit*).[189] Tertullian gives a short summary of what Tacitus wrote in the *fourth Book* of his *Histories*, concerning this alleged atrocity (or monstrosity):

> *Is enim in quarta Historiarum suarum, ubi de bello Iudaico digerit, ab origine gentis exorsus, et tam de ipsa origine quam de nomine religionis, ut uoluit, argumentatus, Iudaeos refert in expeditione vastis in locis <a>quae inopia laborantes onagris, qui de pastu aquam petituri aestimabantur, indicibus fontis usos evasisse : ita ob eam gratiam consimilis bestiae superficiem a Iudaeis coli. Inde, opinor, praesumptum, nos quoque, ut Iudaicae religionis propinquos, eidem simulacro initiari.*[190]

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[187] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.11.1
[188] *Ibid.*
[189] *Ibid.*
[190] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.11.2-3

[For in the fourth book of his Histories, where he treats the Jewish war, he begins at the origin of the nation and he explains his understanding of not only the origins but also the name of the religion. He relates that the Jews, in their expedition in desolate areas, suffering for want of water, escaped by using wild asses, whom they thought would seek water after pasture, as guides to water. And that on account of their gratitude the Jews honoured an image similar to one of these animals. From this, I think, it was presumed that we were also, due to our closeness with the Jewish religion, initiated in the same image (worship).]

According to Tacitus, Tertullian writes, a horrible disease, which mutilated the body, broke out in Egypt. The oracle of Hammon advised the king, Bocchoris, to cleanse the kingdom and to convey this race (the Jews), despised by all the gods, to foreign lands. They (the Jews) were left in a desert, where Moyses advised them not to anticipate the power of man or god, but to trust in themselves and a heaven-sent leader, the first one who would deliver them from their present misery. They agreed and started on an arbitrary course. Their big concern was a shortage of water, and when they had lain down on the plain, ready to die of thirst, they saw a herd of wild asses go from their pasture to a crag overshadowed by a forest. Moyses followed them and discovered a spring of water. After they had taken a city and temple into use, Moyses, in order to secure his authority for the future, introduced a new form of worship, and they placed an effigy of the animal which had saved them in the desert in their temple.[191]

Tertullian declares that this information is to be found in the *fourth* book of Tacitus' histories. It is actually chronicled in his *fifth* book, a mistake which he corrects in the *Apologeticus*.[192] He adheres to the essential details of the story, even though he gives a very condensed version. His objective is simply to highlight the main points of Tacitus' narrative. He also explains how it came about that the Christians are accused of worshipping an ass's head, since Tacitus is referring to the Jews. Tertullian indicates that it happened because of the close connection the Christians have with the Jews.

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[191] Tac. *Hist.* 5.3,4
[192] Tert. *Apol*. 16.2

Tacitus was not the only non-Christian author who was familiar with this story. Josephus[193] twice refers to this anecdote. Plutarch[194] was also aware of this peculiar practice of the Jews. Even though Tacitus was not the only source of this story, Tertullian still chose his version, and he had a valid reason for doing so. Earlier in chapter X, he announced that he would meet the charges against the Christians with a retort. In the following extract he does precisely that when he responds to the charge as follows:

> *At enim idem Cornelius Tacitus, sane ille mendaciorum loquacissimus, oblitus affirmationis suae, in posterioribus refert Pompeium Magnum de Iudaeis debellatis captisque Hierosolymis templum adisse et perscrutatum nihil simulacri reperisse.*[195]

> [However, the same Cornelius Tacitus - truly he is most garrulous with his lies - forgetting his assertion, in his later statement relates that Pompeius Magnus, after vanquishing the Jews and capturing Jerusalem, entered the temple and found nothing (in the likeness of an) image, though he searched thoroughly.]

Tertullian shares the known story about the Jewish worship of an ass's head as Tacitus related it, but then he proceeds to attack. Tertullian shows that the famous historian contradicts himself. Later *in the same book*, he tells of Pompeius, the first Roman to subdue the Jews. He entered the temple and *inde vulgatum nulla intus deum effigie vacuam sedem et inania arcana*[196] [thus it was made public that there was no image of a god inside, that the temple was empty and that the mysteries were void]. The logical conclusion is that this fact concerning the Jews' worship cannot be true, since Pompeius found no ass's head: it is a *fama.* Furthermore it was a recognised and trusted historian who created this figment. This is the point Tertullian is

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[193] Joseph. *Ap.* 2.79; Joseph. *Ap.* 2.112
[194] Plut. *Quaes. Conv.* 4.5
[195] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.11.3
[196] Tac. *Hist.* 5.9

making. What is presented as *veritas* or the truth by a renowned historian, is nothing more than fiction. The *nationes* should know that.

CONCLUSION

This chapter continued the exploration of the use of history as rhetorical instrument in the *Ad Nationes.* It commenced with a critical consideration of Tertullian's reflections on natural disasters for which the Christians were held accountable. He argued that these calamities occurred before the inception of the Christian faith. The investigation further included Tertullian's reference to the meetings of the honourable and highly esteemed Senate and their dealings with the gods. It became clear that Tertullian selected decisions and actions of the Senate that implied their negation of the gods. He thus underpinned his argument that the *nationes* also did not adhere to the (religious) customs of their ancestors, and thereby implied that their own authority enjoyed precedence over that of the traditional gods. The archer's arrows were thus returned with precision. Christians had other reasons to disregard the authority of the tradition. The second part of the chapter concerned Tertullian's encounter with Tacitus the historian. Tertullian deliberately discloses how the historian contradicts himself and thus invalidates his contention that the Christians, having forsaken the common religion, were also capable of introducing an abhorrent superstition. The argument revolves around Quintilian's premise: The important and valuable advantage to be gained from history is the author's own thorough knowledge of historical facts and examples. Accurate knowledge of history would enable him to prove his case.[197] Tertullian clinched the round, but by now it has become evident that he himself did not always stay true to the historical facts.

Chapter four completes the critical analysis of the use of history as rhetorical instrument in the *Ad Nationes*. It is entitled two nations, one general four women and a judge.

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[197] See Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.34

CHAPTER FOUR

TWO NATIONS, ONE GENERAL, FOUR WOMEN AND A JUDGE

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapters (XV-XIX) of the *Ad Nationes* there are four instances where Tertullian enforces his argument by referring his audience to history. Historical example was to reinforce his refutation of further charges that circulated against the Christians. These were infanticide, (which he treats in chapter XV but does not link to any historical material), incest (chapter XVI), persistence (chapter XVII and XVIII) and the (questioned) belief of Christians in the resurrection and last judgement (XVIV, which is also the penultimate chapter of the *Ad Nationes*). The assumption that Christians practised and approved of incestuous relations is linked to two great nations (*paragraph two*), the Persians and the Macedonians, whose reception in the 'classical' non-Christian and Christian literature portrays a fascinating picture. Tertullian, in dealing with the perseverance of Christians, utilises the narrative of the death of Regulus, the celebrated Roman general, and also the following four women: Cleopatra, Hasdrubal's wife, Dido and Leaena, to serve his purposes. The *third paragraph* deals with these amazing stories. The *last paragraph* of the chapter focuses on Aristides, the judge. The findings of the analysis is summarised in the conclusion.

TWO GREAT NATIONS

THE PERSIANS

No non-Christian writer mentions the charge of incest against the Christians. The Greek Christian Apologists, however, often refer to this charge, as if it was widely raised against

Christians.[198] As indicated, Tertullian also devotes his efforts to the rebutting of this assumption. He launches his refutation of this accusation with a sarcastic question: *Quo in loco metuo ne cedam :quid enim tale in vobis detinebo?*[199] [In this instance I fear that I have to yield to you: for what like charge shall I maintain against you?]

He proceeds to accuse the *nationes* of practising incest amongst themselves: they are guilty of the very same practises. He is returning shafts thrown at the Christians. The only difference between the conduct of the Christians and that of the *nationes* in this regard, Tertullian writes, is that the *nationes* take pleasure in or enjoy incest openly, without any restriction day and night.[200] To underscore this accusation, Tertullian appeals to history. Both the Persians and the Macedonians were accustomed to incest and did not regard it as forbidden or repulsive. He observes:

> *Plane Persae, <C>tesias edit, tam scientes quam non horrentes cum <ma>tribus libere f<ac>iunt.*[201]

> [To be sure, the Persians, Ctesias relates, practice (incest) freely with their mothers, not only with full knowledge, but also without horror.]

We first turn our attention to the Persians, who unreservedly practised incest 'with their mothers.' Tertullian cites Ctesias as his source. He undoubtedly refers to Ctesias of Cnidus, who was a Greek physician at the court of the Persian king Ataxerxes. Ctesias compiled two books of history, the *Persica* and the *Indica*, of which only fragments are still extant.[202] Photius wrote a succinct epitome[203] of the *Persica* in the ninth century, which suggests that the *Persica* at least

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[198] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 27.5; Theoph. *ad Autol.* 3.4; 3.15; Athenagoras, *Leg. Pro. Christ.* 3; Arist. *Apol.* 17.2
[199] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.16.1
[200] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.16.3
[201] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.16.4-5
[202] These fragments have been collected by Felix Jacoby in his monumental work *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker.* The fragments relevant to our inquiry: FGrH, F44.
[203] Phot. *Bibl.* 1.72

was still extant during Tertullian's time of writing. The possibility thus exists that Tertullian could have had direct access to Ctesias' works.

According to Ctesias the practise of incest was rife among both the Persians and the Macedonians. Tertullian is aware of this and utilises this information for the benefit of his arguments in the *Ad Nationes*. In the Christian apologetical literature of the second century only Tatian refers to this custom.[204] The Tertullian citation therefore is noteworthy and deserves further investigation.

It is commonly agreed that incest was detested amongst the Indians, Chinese, Greeks and Romans (Baber, 1935:409). Cicero mentions laws against incest,[205] Tatian informs us that the Greeks had illegalised incestuous practises between mother and son[206] and Theophilus records that Solon promulgated legislation against sexual intercourse of this kind.[207] According to Theophilus, Epicurus and the Stoics also taught this practice.[208] References to this kind of sexual conduct is, however, more frequent in the Cynic and early Stoic writings. Diogenes, Zeno and Chrysippus allude to incest as a moral example of what is permissible for wise men (Hook, 2005:17). This quick survey of primary sources thus indicates that the sexual activity between close relatives was frowned upon in both Greek and Roman societies.

In the (primary) literature incestuous behaviour between brother and sister[209] is more commonly referred to than that between father and daughter[210] or mother and son. Intimate sexual relationships involving mothers and sons were (within this context) apparently exceptional in the ancient world. As a rule such affairs were referred to when implicated

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[204] Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 28
[205] Cic. *Leg.* 2.41
[206] Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 28
[207] Theoph. *ad Autol.* 3.6
[208] *Ibid.*
[209] Suet. *Calig.*24; Suet. *Ner.* 5; Ov.*Ep. Sapph*. 11. Tac. *Ann*. 12.4. Also see Baber (1935), Middleton (1962) and Shaw (1992).
[210] Tac. *Ann*. 6.19; Hyg. *F*. 206

persons or individuals, e.g. Periander,[211] Oedipus[212] or Phraataces[213] became the object of interest.

With regard to the Persians, some authors restrict the occurrence of incest between mother and son to the Persian Magi. Strabo[214] notes that the Magi, according to the custom of the country, even wed their mothers. Catullus observes *nam magus ex matre et gnato gignatur oportet*[215] [it is proper that a magus is born from a mother and her son].[216] Tatian, the Christian (and Greek) Apologist inform us that the Greeks regarded intercourse with a mother as illegal, but that it was customary among the Persian Magi.[217] The Magi were a distinguished group and at the time of Tertullian still widely referred to as such. Tertullian though, does not restrict mother-son incest to the Persian Magi, but asserts that it was common to the Persians as a nation.

Tertullian acknowledges that he is informed by Ctesias. Others agree. Plutarch in his *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute*, tells us that Alexander taught the Persians to respect their mothers and not to marry them, implying the Persians as a *nation* by not specifying any group among them.[218] Dio Chrysostom relates that Diogenes the Stoic held the opinion that the Persians did not object to incestuous relationships with their mothers.[219] And, as Tertullian informs us, Ctesias also attributed this kind of incestuous conduct to the whole of the Persian nation.

Information and literature available to Tertullian thus confirm incestuous behaviour between mother and son both amongst the Persians in general and the Magi in particular. The Magi do appear in his works. He refers to them as the kings of the East who brought gifts to Christ in

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[211] D.L. 1.7
[212] Isoc. 12. 122
[213] Joseph. *AJ*. 18.2.4
[214] Strab. 15.3.20
[215] Catull. *Carm.* 90
[216] Literally: from a mother and what has been born (from her).
[217] Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 28
[218] Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 1
[219] Dio Chrys. *Or.* 10

Bethlehem.[220] They were the astrologers, operating within a very specific sphere which means that they were not, at least in Tertullian's mind, representatives of the whole Persian nation. Thus, when Tertullian indicates to the *nationes* that the Persians practise incest, he is not specifically referring to the Magi. He has the Persians as a nation in mind. This great nation serves as a persuasive example to illustrate that the practise of incest exists among *nations* and to confirm that it is therefore not a distinctive trait attributed (right- or wrongfully) to Christians alone.

Tertullian knows that the *nationes* would counter his argument by pointing out the insignificance of the transgressions of one or two nations, compared to the Christians who have poisoned the land and the entire ocean as well - *Nos enim omne infecimus solum, omnem poluimus oceanum.*[221] It becomes evident why Tertullian opted for the Persians as a collective nation, and not a particular less significant group such as the Magi if one considers his line of thinking: The Christians are suspected and accused in a superlative degree. They threaten the land, as well as the entire ocean, in short, they threaten the entire world - and he intends to expose other eminent nations to similar violations. The Persians used to be a great nation that conquered the world and made an impact on history that is still evident. In other words: the Persian nation is his trump card to outmatch the superlative degree of the accusation lodged against the Christians.

THE MACEDONIANS

To strengthen his argument, Tertullian also reminds the *nationes* that 'it is publicly (known)' that the same practises are to be found among the Macedonians, another great and powerful nation. He writes:

> *... Sed et Macedones id, quo<d> probaverunt, <palam>est factitare, siquidem,*
>
> *cum primum scaenam eorum Oedip<us>intravit trucidatus oculos, risu ac derisu*

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[220] Tert. *Marc.* 3.13.6, 8; Tert. *Idol.* 9.3; Tert. *Iud.* 9.10
[221] Tert. *Ad. Nat.* 1.16.6

exceperunt. Tra<goedus>consternatus retracta persona, 'numquid,' ait, 'domini, disp<licui> vobis?' Responderunt Macedones: 'Immo, tu quidem pulchre, at scriptor vanissimus si finxit, aut Oedipus dementissimus si ita fecit:' atque exinde alter ad alterum: 'ἤλαυνε', dicebat, 'εἰς τὴν ματέρα.'[222]

[… The Macedonians, it is publicly (known), frequently do the same thing, which they approved of, for, when Oedipus first entered upon their stage after he ruined his eyes, they received him with laughter and derision. The confused actor pulled off his mask and said: 'Gentlemen, surely I have not displeased you?' The Macedonians answered: 'You were admirable indeed, but either the author was most ridiculous if he invented this,[223] or Oedipus was most foolish if he did this.' Then one said to the other: 'He lay with this mother.']

Referring to incest, Tertullian asserts that the *Macedonians* 'frequently do the same thing' as the Persians. As proof of this statement he describes an incident during the performance of the play Oedipus. The Macedonians thought it ridiculous to mutilate one's eyes as punishment for having committed incest with one's mother. They thought it normal for a son to be involved in an incestuous relationship with his mother. Tertullian is the only source for this incident (Barnes, 1976:9). This assumption warrants closer scrutiny.

Unlike sources signifying the practise of incest among the Persians, very few of them refer to alleged incestuous behaviour among the Macedonians. None of the Greek Apologists cite the Macedonians in their refutation of the charge of incest. As a matter of fact, they do not even mention the Macedonians at all. This is rather surprising. Philip and Alexander the Great were after all Macedonians and this nation was an important force in the ancient world during the third and second centuries BCE. The reception of the Macedonian world and heritage is highly profiled in the non-Christian '*classical'* literature (Herodotus, Thucydides, Plutarch, Strabo, Curtius Rufus, Pausanius, Junianus Justinus, etc.). The profusion of references to the

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[222] Tert. *Ad Nat.*1.16.4,5
[223] The mutilation of his eyes as punishment for committing incest with his mother.

Macedonians in these works implies a popular, valued and deeply etched historical image. The absence of a Macedonian reception in the Christian apologists raises an interesting question that is not relevant for this study. What is relevant is a critical evaluation of Tertullian's reference to the Macedonians since it touches on the core question of the research: How trustworthy is Tertullian's claim?

In the most important works[224] consulted on the Macedonians, no mention is made of sanctioned incestuous relations amongst them: not between brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son or even an uncle and his niece. Only two sources link incest to the Macedonians, but the context is very different. Seneca, in *the Apocolocyntosis* writes: *Athenis dimidium licet, Alexandriae totum*[225] [It is permissible to go half way in Athens, the whole way in Alexandria]. He alludes to the fact that among the Greeks marriage between a brother and sister with the same father was considered incest, but not between a brother and sister with the same mother. In Alexandria though, there were no restrictions in this regard.

Pausanius provides us with the second reference. In a passage relating to Ptolemy, the Macedonian general of Alexander and inceptor of the Ptolemaic dynasty, he observes:

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ou-toj   o`   Ptolemai/oj      vArsino,hj   avdelfh/j
avmfote,rwqen evrasqei.j auvth,n(
Makedo,sin ouvdamw/j poiw/n vnomizo,mena( Aivgupti,oij
me,ntoi w-n h-rxe)
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[This Ptolemy fell in love with Arsinoë, his full sister, and married her, violating herein Macedonian custom, but following that of his Egyptian subjects …. Translated by W. H. S. Jones.][226]

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[224] Pausanius, *Description of Greece*, Strabo, *Geography*, Polybius, *Histories,* Plutarch, *Alexander,* Herodotus, *The Histories.*
[225] Sen. *Apocol.* 8
[226] Paus. 7.1.1

This observation is rather significant. All the sources consulted, indicate that Ptolemy is the only Macedonian who committed incest, and Pausanius informs us that it was not a Macedonian custom.

Tertullian is of the opinion that incestuous practises, in particular those between mother and son, was generally accepted among the Macedonians. He bases this conviction on an incident which took place in the theatre between the Macedonians and the actor who played Oedipus, as cited above. What are his sources? A thorough investigation proved that the Tertullian citation is quite unique. This event is not reported (as far as could be established) in any other contemporary source, nor is there any evidence to support Tertullian's claim that incestuous marriages were customary among the Macedonians. It should be clear by now that what he carved from history amounts to a rather farfetched conjecture, thus damaging its historical credibility.

In conclusion. Tertullian frames the charge of incest within the ambit of similar practises among two great nations, the Persians and the Macedonians. His assertions and the anecdotes on which he bases them, and the reasons for these fabrications, cast serious doubt on his credibility. Although he presents it as truth, as *veritas* that the Macedonian men allegedly also lived incestuously with their mothers, thorough research proved it to be nothing more than an assumption, used by Tertullian for the purposes of his argument. No other source mentions this incident. On the contrary, Pausanius writes that the conduct of Ptolemy I was against the Macedonian customs.

THE GENERAL AND FOUR WOMEN

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, one of the charges against the Christians was their *obstinatio* and *praesumptio.*[227] In chapter XVII of his *Ad Nationes,* Tertullian discusses their persistence in refusing to appease the images of the Caesars and to swear by their *genii.* The

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[227] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.17.1

next chapter (XVIII) commences with a list of examples to illustrate their *obstinatio.* These entail, Tertullian remarks*,* that the Christians 'do not resist your swords nor your crosses, beasts, neither fire nor tortures' (… *neque gladios neque cruces neque bestias vestras, non ignem, non tormenta … recusemus*).[228] Since an eagerness for martyrdom was characteristic of the North African Christians (Dunn, 2004:15), Tertullian does not deny this charge of *obstinatio*. Instead of contradicting this accusation, he selects four examples of martyrdom from history, to show his readers (the *nationes*) that the most famous among their own ancestors did not shrink from martyrdom and that their suffering was praised in literature:

> *Crucis vero novitatem numerosae, abstrusae, Regulus vester libenter dedicavit; regina Aegypti bestiis suis usa est; ignes post Carthaginensem feminam Asdrubale marito in extremis patriae constantiorem docuerat invadere ipsa Dido. Sed et tormenta mulier Attica fatigavit tyranno negans, postremo, ne cederet corpus et sexus, linguam suam pastam expuit, totum eradicatae confessionis ministerium.*[229]

> [Your Regulus prepared (the way) of the cross as a new method for numerous and unknown (deaths). The queen of Egypt used her own beasts (to kill herself); Dido herself set an example for another Carthaginian woman, more steadfast than her husband Asdrubal in the extremities of her fatherland, to rush into the fire. And the Athenian woman who, denying the tyrant, overcame his tortures and at last, lest her body and gender give in, she bit off her tongue and spat it out, destroying the only instrument of a confession.]

Tertullian's first example is Regulus, the celebrated Roman general. The narrative of Regulus was well known and accounts of his endeavours are described in historical, literary and rhetorical works. It became a popular children's story and an anecdote for the narrators of patriotic tales. Often cited from memory, it consequently accumulated many romantic, but

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[228] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.18.1
[229] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.18.3-4

legendary elements (Frank, 1926:311). As a result there were different versions in circulation in Tertullian's days.

The *historians*[230] usually included an account of Regulus' sufferings in their writings. Though there are many different variations, a short overview which comprises the main trajectory and incorporates the most common and important elements, will suffice here. The narrative indicated that Regulus was captured by the Carthaginians and sent to Rome to negotiate prisoner-exchange. Before he left Carthage he swore an oath to return to the city. When he arrived in Rome he advised the Senate not to exchange prisoners, even though he knew the Carthaginians would get wind of his advice to the Senate. Instead of remaining in Rome, where he would be safe, he returned to Carthage to certain torture and execution by way of crucifixion.

This enthralling story was also utilised by the *rhetoricians*[231] They often cite Regulus as an example of fortitude, loyalty, honour, justice, temperance, frugality, contempt of pain and death, and fidelity. It thus becomes clear that Tertullian, by citing Regulus as an example to carry his point, was following in the footsteps of the non-Christian authors, and referring to a figure who was very well-known at the time.

Though there are many examples of fortitude and contempt of death in non-Christian literature, Tertullian chose Regulus for a very specific reason. In the *Ad Nationes* he only states that with regards to the cross, Regulus established a novelty which was unprecedented.[232] Later in the same chapter he elaborated and referred to the manner of Regulus's death. He writes:

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[230] App. *Pun.* 1; Livy 18
[231] Sen. *Tranq.* 16; Quint. *Inst.* 12.2.29-30; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.32; Cic. *Off.* 1.13, 3.26, 27, 29
[232] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.18.3

Si crucem confingendi corporis machinam, nullus adhuc ex vobis Regulus pepigit.

[Although among you no Regulus has raised a cross, fashioning his own body as an instrument (for torture).]²³³

This citation refers to the crucifixion of Regulus. However, in the *Apologeticus* when dealing with Regulus he states: *Regulus, ne unus pro multis hostibus viveret, toto corpore cruces patitur*²³⁴ [Regulus, lest one life was spared for the lives of many of the enemy, suffered crosses over his whole body]. Problematic is the plural usage of crosses. In the *Ad Nationes* he implies that Regulus was crucified, but in the *Apologeticus* he mentions 'suffered crosses' and not just one cross. How should this inconsistency be explained?

His reference to Regulus in the *Ad Martyras* provides the answer. Addressing his work to Christian martyrs who might not be intimately familiar with Roman history and literature, he presents a more detailed version of the Regulus narrative. He writes: *et in arcae genus stipatus undique extrinsecus clavis transfixus, tot cruces sensit*²³⁵ [and crammed into a sort of chest, pierced with nails from the outside *and* on every side, he endured so many crosses]. This report of Regulus' death, where he was put in a chest with nails driven in from the outside is common in the literature. Those authors however, who adhere to this version of events, usually attribute his death not to crucifixion, but to sleep deprivation, since he could not lie down.

Tertullian is very selective in what he reveals to his addressees with regard to the way in which Regulus died. He conceals or obscures some of the 'facts' so that he could infer that, in a manner of speaking, Regulus was crucified.

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[233] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.18.10 . Concerning this translation, cf. Holmes: *Although no longer any Regulus among you has raised a cross as the instrument of his own crucifixion.* (Tr. Holmes, 1869.) Cf. also Howe: *Even if no next new Regulus has offered himself to a cross as the instrument of affixing his body.* (Tr. Howe, 2007.)
[234] Tert. *Apol.* 50.6
[235] Tert. *Ad Mart*. 4.6

It is, in conclusion, impossible to determine Tertullian's source accurately, since Regulus was a popular personality in the writings of historians, rhetoricians and poets. However, what can be resolved is that Tertullian shrouded some features of the tale in order to use Regulus as an example of somebody who went willingly to be crucified.

In his discussions concerning the use of examples, Quintilian wrote that courage is more deserving of admiration in a woman than in a man.[236] Tertullian adhered to this prescript. In his treatment of examples of fortitude, Regulus is the only male he opted to use. The rest of his examples are (four) women: Cleopatra, the wife of Asdrubal (Hasdrubal), Dido and the unknown 'woman of Athens.' In the next section, Tertullian's rhetorical utilisation of these females, which played an important part in history as he knew it, is examined.

Cleopatra's death has been treated by numerous ancient authors, resulting in various different versions. Even the earliest reports differ in the account given of the exact manner of her death. According to Plutarch, rumour had it that she was either bitten by an asp or that she poisoned herself. He mentions that Augustus seemed to have believed that she was killed by a snake, since the statue of her in his triumphal procession featured a snake.[237] Strabo, who was a contemporary of Cleopatra, writes that she was taken alive, but killed herself either by an asp bite or with poisonous ointment.[238] It is evident that from the earliest times multiple accounts were given of the manner in which she died.

In the *Ad Nationes* there are two aspects that demand attention. Tertullian does not explicitly refer to an asp or a snake, but he uses the word *bestias*-in the plural instead of the singular. Using the plural instead of a singular may be an indication that he was influenced by the accounts of Virgil, Florus, Propertius and Horace, who seem to support a 'two-snake theory.' The death of Cleopatra also surfaces in Tertullian's *Ad Martyras*. He writes:

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[236] Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.10
[237] Plut. *Ant.* 86
[238] Strab. 17.1.10

Bestias femina libens appetiit, et utique aspides, serpentes tauro vel urso horridiores.[239]

[The woman readily sought beasts, especially asps, those serpents more terrible than a bull or a boar.]

However in all the accounts that describe her death, not a single source uses the word *bestias.* *Serpens,*[240] *aspis,*[241] *viper*[242] and even *anguis*[243]are used, but never *bestias.* The fact that Tertullian chose *bestias* seems remarkable*.* What does this indicate?

Tertullian is deliberately working from a list. He showed that Regulus voluntarily went back to Carthage to be 'crucified.' Following this account of his crucifixion, he needs non-Christian literature to provide an example of somebody who was willingly killed by *bestias.* Cleopatra presented herself as the perfect example in this regard. She was well-known,[244] she was a woman and she was killed by a snake(s).

Serpens or *aspis* is not synonymous with *bestiae*, but in both *Ad Nationes* and *Ad Martyras* Tertullian regards snakes as *bestiae.* In order to use Cleopatra as an example of someone in the non-Christian literature that has been killed by *bestiae,* he has to equate snakes with wild animals. In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian does not even mention a snake, asp or viper, he simply writes that Cleopatra was killed by *bestiae.* Unlike the Regulus example, where he chooses the version of the story that best suited him, he, in his Cleopatra example, substitutes one word for another, for the sake of his argument.

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[239] Tert. *Ad Mart.* 4.6
[240] Florus 2.11; Hor. *Carm.* 1.37; Vel. Pat. 2.87
[241] Plut. *Ant.* 86, Strab.17.1.10
[242] Mart. *Ep.* 4.59
[243] Verg. *Aen.* 8.671-728
[244] She had a statue in Rome and died not so long ago. She was mentioned in contemporary literature.

The *wife of Asdrubal*, better known as Hasdrubal, presents Tertullian's next example of fortitude. Though many authors describe the demise of Carthage (146 BCE), only a few mention the story of Hasdrubal's wife. Unlike the other examples, there are no real deviations in the story. After a fierce battle, Hasdrubal surrendered to Scipio, and seeing this, his wife threw herself and her two children into the fire. This event is utilised by Tertullian, comparing it with the circumstances surrounding the death of Dido (willingly by fire), the founder queen of Carthage. Tertullian was not the first to associate Hasdrubal's wife and Dido in this way. Anneaus Florus[245] also compared the way she died with that of Dido. First, however, attention is given to the way in which Hasdrubal's wife met her death.

Tertullian was aware of this fact that the non-Christian histories consequently noted that Hasdrubal's wife tossed her two boys into the fire, since he mentions it in the *Ad Martyras.*

> *Item Asdrubalis uxor, quae iam ardente Carthagine, ne maritum suum supplicem*
> *Scipionis videret, cum filiis suis in incendium patriae devolavit.[246]*

> [Likewise, the wife of Asdrubal, who, while Carthage was already burning, hastened with her children into the conflagration of her fatherland, so as to not see her husband make a humble entreaty to Scipio.]

Hasdrubal's wife is, along with her children, also mentioned in book II of the *Ad Nationes*. Here Tertullian employs her fortitude as example of a person who did not leave children behind to fall in the hands of the enemy, in sharp contrast to that of Aeneas (Dido's lover), who only saved his son and father, and left the rest of the Trojans behind.[247] In the first book of *Ad Nationes* Tertullian does not mention the children. This is done for a reason. One of the charges against the Christians, which he adamantly refutes, is the fact that the Christians would kill

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[245] Florus 1.31
[246] Tert. *Ad Mart*. 4.5
[247] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 2.9.12-14

infants.[248] In using Hasdrubal's wife as an example of fortitude in the *Ad Nationes I*, he did not want to augment or enhance the idea that he as a Christian would seemingly be commending the killing of children. In the *Ad Martyras* it does not matter, since he is writing exclusively for Christian martyrs. In the second book the emphasis is on not leaving one's own people behind to fall in the hands of an enemy.

In the *Ad Nationes I* he would not take the risk of being interpreted to seem to commend infanticide, and therefore he omits the fate of the children. Hasdrubal's wife willingly throws herself into the fire, burning to death. She serves as the perfect example of a non Christian who died by fire, like the Christians who was burned at the stake. Once again Tertullian does not relate the full story: he carefully leaves out the fact that she also killed her children.

Tertullian refers to *Dido* as the historical example who had died in the same manner as Hasdrubal's wife, i.e. a death by fire. Both were the embodiment of fortitude. The story of Dido is probably one of the best known in Roman history. In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian mentions Dido in passing, simply as an example that Hasdrubal's wife followed.

The well-known Virgilian account however depicts Dido as anything but fortitudinous. In despair and turmoil, she kills herself because her lover has left her. Augustine,[249] the only other Christian writer to mention Dido, stuck to the Virgilian account, that Dido killed herself after being forsaken by Aeneas. Tertullian gives a different meaning and connotation to her death. The question therefore is: did he follow the Virgilian account?

In the *Apologeticus* Tertullian also recalls Dido's death. He writes:

> *Alique Carthaginis conditrix rogo secundum matrimonium evadit: o praeconium castitatis et pudicitiae.*[250]

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[248] Tert. *Apol*. 7.1; Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.15.1
[249] August. *Confess*. 1.13.20
[250] Tert. *Apol*. 50.5

[A certain foundress of Carthage escaped a second marriage by way of a funeral-pyre: o what commendation of chastity and modesty!]

In the *Ad Martyras* the Dido-example is further illuminated:

…cum feminae quoque contempserint ignes: Dido, ne post virum dilectissimum nubere cogeretur[251]

[while women were even contemptuous of fire: Dido, lest she was forced to marry after a most dear husband (died).]

And in the *De Monogamia*:

… regina Carthaginis … ne tamen secundas eas experiretur, maluit e contrario uri quam nubere.[252]

[… a queen of Carthage … who, lest she experience a second marriage, on the contrary, preferred to burn rather than to marry.]

These extracts make it clear that Tertullian had another (different) version of the Dido saga in mind. Justin, the author of the epitome of Trogus, narrated that Larbias, king of the Libyans forced Dido to marry him, but that she sacrificed herself on a ceremonial funeral pyre as a final deed of honouring of and remaining faithful to her deceased husband.[253] This unwillingness to be married again corresponded with Tertullian's convictions with regard to remarriage. In his interpretation and association the history of Dido's death is utilised in such a way that it perfectly suits his (Christian) notion of chastity and modesty. In the *Ad Nationes I* this story is

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[251] Tert. *Ad Mart*. 4.5
[252] Tert. *De Mon*. 17.2
[253] Just. *Epit.* 18.3-5

used to serve a different purpose. Exemplifying fortitude, she (as Hasdrubal's wife) willingly burned to death. Tertullian omits all the available detail in this regard.

The next item on Tertullian's list for which he seeks an example is *torture*. Though there are many examples of non-Christians among the *nationes* that were tortured he once again chooses a woman, still adhering to Quintilian's advice. He identifies her as the *woman of Athens* or *Athenian courtesan.*

Tertullian refers to this 'Athenian woman' in his *Ad Nationes*, and calls her an 'Athenian courtesan' in the *Apologeticus* and *Ad Martyras*, but he never mentions her by name. From other non-Christian sources[254] we know that her name was Leaena. Unlike his previous examples, Tertullian describes her story in full detail. In fact, he is the only one to say directly that she bit off her tongue, though other sources imply it.[255] He does not change, add or leave out certain 'facts.' Leaena was the perfect example of someone tortured to death.

In chapter XVIII of the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian vindicates the Christians' preparedness for martyrdom. He does this by employing the rhetorical construct of citing examples to support his argument. Quintilian makes it clear that the advocate is allowed to only use that part of the example which is advantageous to his line of reasoning.[256] Tertullian is no stranger to the containment of facts in rhetoric. He is very selective in his examples. He selected the version where Regulus was 'crucified', where Cleopatra was killed by a snake(s) and he even changed the snake(s) into *bestiae.* He describes the death of Hasdrubal's wife, but did not mention her children. The ancient Carthagian queen Dido is mentioned as the applicable historical example, but purposefully not mentioning any detail. The only example he does not tamper with is that of Leaena.

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[254] Plut. *Mor. De garr.* 505 D-F; Paus. 1.23.2, Ath. 13.596 e-f
[255] Plut. *Mor. De garr.* 505 D-F
[256] Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.6. Quintilian stipulates: *Potentissimum autem est inter ea quae sunt huius generis, quod proprie vocamus exemplum, id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commemoratio. intuendum igitur est, totum simile sit an ex parte, ut aut omnia ex eo sumamus aut quae utilia sunt.* [We must consider, therefore, whether such fact is completely similar to what we wish to illustrate, or only partly so, that we may either adopt the whole of it or only such portion as may serve our purpose.]

THE JUDGE ARISTIDES

In the previous two chapters (XVII & XVIII) Tertullian refuted the charges of obstinacy and presumption that the *nationes* lodged against the Christians. He came to the conclusion that the gentiles conducted themselves in the same manner as the Christians. In chapter XVIV he states that he has completed his refutation against these charges and will turn to a new subject, namely the Christians' belief in the resurrection and last judgement.

He claims that the Christians are ridiculed for believing in the resurrection. But, he writes, in order to laugh more merrily and to deride more unrestrainedly, 'take a sponge or perhaps your tongue and destroy those records of yours' (*arrepta spongia vel inter <sa l>ingua delete litteras interim vestras*),[257] because some of them, he continues, also assert that souls will return to bodies. Tertullian's conclusion is thus that the *nationes* deride what they in fact also deem to be true. He states that not only do they believe that souls return to bodies, but, even in something much more ridiculous, that souls reappear in a dog or a mule or a peacock.[258] He then maintains:

> *Item iudicium annuntiamus a Deo pro cuiusque meritis post inter<i>tum destinatum; id vos Minoi et Radamantho adscribitis, iustiore om<nin>o Aristide recusato.*[259]

> [Likewise we expound that God determined a judgement according to the merits of every man after death; this you ascribe to Minos and Rhadamanthus, while you reject Aristides, who altogether is more just.]

For the purposes of the study this remark is of importance and has to be investigated. The *nationes* credit the judgment or verdict of Minos and Rhadamanthus, while they reject that of

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[257] *You must take your sponge or perhaps your tongue and wipe away those records of yours*- Tert. *Ad Nat.*1.19.3
[258] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.19.4
[259] Tert. *Ad Nat.* 1.19.5

Aristides. In Greek mythology three judges, Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus, are usually acknowledged. They were the sons of Zeus. He appointed them as judges.[260] Rhadamanthus was to be the judge of the nations of Asia, Aeacus adjudicated the nations of Europe and Minos was to have the privilege of the final decision.[261] In non-Christian literature this judiciary is sometimes grouped together[262] and sometimes treated separately.[263] Minos and Rhadamanthus are occasionally the only two judges mentioned,[264] just as we find the duo in Tertullian's reference. In their works the Christian Apologists[265] also refer only to Minos and Rhadamanthus. Aeacus is however not mentioned by any of them. In one of his other works Tertullian refers to a certain Aeacus, a righteous hero (and not a judge),[266] which indicates that he had someone else in mind.

By referring to Minos and Rhadamanthus, Tertullian is therefore touching on a common theme in non-Christian and Christian literature. He writes that the *nationes* ascribe to the judgement of Minos and Rhadamanthus, but that they reject Aristides, who was altogether more just in his rulings than both Minos and Rhadamanthus. In the non-Christian literature Aristides is often referred to as 'Aristides the Just.'[267] Plutarch devoted one of his 'lives' to Aristides, and this work is still extant. According to him (Plutarch), Aristides was at first loved because of his surname[268] but later he was jealously hated.[269] He was consequently ostracized by the citizens of the city, who defended their dislike of his reputation claiming that they feared tyranny.[270] Aristides was thus first loved and then hated, and consequently 'the Just' was ostracised.

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[260] Pl. *Grg*. 523-524; Plut.*Cons. ad Apoll. 36*

[261] *Ibid*.; Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 36

[262] Dem. *De Cor*. 18.127; Pl. *Ap*. 41a; Sen. *Herc. Fur.* 731ff; Pl. *Grg.* 523-524; Ov. *Met*.9.434

[263] Minos: Stat.*Theb.* 4.520 ff, 4.570; Philostr. *VA* 3.25; 8.7; Hor. *Carm.* 4.7.20; Prop. 2.20. Rhadamanthus: Verg. *Aen.* 6.541ff; Pind. O 2. 75. Aeacus: Ov. *Met*. 13.25ff; Prop. 2.20, Stat. *Silv.* 3.3.15

[264] Stat. *Theb*. 8.21ff, Plut. *Thes*. 16.1, Diod. Sic. 5.78.2

[265] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.*8.4; Athenagoras, *Leg. Pro. Christ.* 12; Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 6, 25

[266] Tert. *De Anim.* 33.9

[267] Plut. *Vit. Arist.*7.6; Cic. *Tusc.* 5.36; Val. Max. 5.ext. 3d; Hdt. 8.79, D.L. 2.5

[268] Aristides was surnamed 'the Just'-Plut. *Vit. Arist*. 6.1 -*Of all his virtues, it was his justice that most impressed the multitude, because of its most continual and most general exercise. Wherefore, though poor and a man of the people, he acquired that most kingly and godlike surname of 'The Just.'*

[269] Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 7.1

[270] Plut. Vit. *Arist.* 7.2

The *nationes'* decisions in this regard lack credibility. That is the point Tertullian is making. They favour Minos and Rhadamanthus, while they reject Aristides. But Aristides is the one who legitimised his reputation of unprejudiced fairness through unmerited suffering. Even more. The preference for Minos and Rhadamanthus has certain implicated applicability to the judicial system.

The conclusion summarises the findings of this last chapter, while the concluding section will contain the ultimate outcome of this study.

CONCLUSION

This last chapter analysed the way in which Tertullian utilised history in refuting the suspicion that Christians practised and approved of incestuous relations. As was indicated, Tertullian shows with reference to history that similar practises occurred among two great nations, the Persians and the Macedonians. He is not arguing that this matter would therefore not be unique to the Christians. He is rather denying the nations any high moral ground in this regard. They have not the right to make such accusations and are not in a position accuse. The *credibility* of the historical information (especially with regards to the Macedonians) is though questionable.

Tertullian also vindicated the Christians' preparedness for martyrdom. Christians are willing to die for what they believe. Should it be demanded of them, they would willingly bring a martyr's death upon themselves, rather than to abstain from their convictions. He utilises the narrative of the death of Regulus, the celebrated Roman general, and then the four women: the death of Cleopatra, Hasdrubal's wife, Dido and Leaena, to serve an intention to profile the Christians against heroic traditions well known by the *nationes*. He actually selected versions of the narratives, or change them, in order to suit his intentions best. Regulus was 'crucified,' Cleopatra was killed by *bestiae* and not a snake(s) as the story has it. Tertullian describes the death of Hasdrubal's wife, without mentioning the fate of her children. The last paragraph of

the chapter indicated how Tertullian defended the Christian belief in the resurrection and last judgement with reference to Aristides, the just judge, whom the *nationes* rejected. All three examples have complied with the requirements of the prevailing rhetoric.

This completes the survey, identification and study of historical material used by Tertullian. The analysis carefully traced and scrutinised the utilisation of historical information, references, events, characters, etc. utilised by Tertullian in his arguments *ad Nationes* on behalf of the Christians. The final concluding paragraph elucidates the use of history as rhetorical instrument in the *Ad Nationes*.

CONCLUSION: HISTORY AS RHETORICAL INSTRUMENT IN THE AD NATIONES

In the *Ad Nationes* Tertullian intended to refute the charges against the Christians. These charges, he indicated, were: incest (*incestum*), infanticide (*infanticidium*), '(that) we (the Christians) are the cause of all the public calamities and injuries' (*omnis cladis publicae vel iniuriae nos causas esse*), divorcing (themselves) from the institutions of the forefathers, (*divortium ab institutis maiorum*), adding a monstrous superstition (*superductae monstruosae superstitionis*) and obstinacy and presumption (*obstinatio et praesumptio*).[271]

An examination of Tertullian's works in general revealed that history and the use of history often surfaces in his arguments in defence of the Christian faith. This strongly suggested that his use of historical events, information, characters, narratives, references, natural disasters, etc. should be understood within a rhetorical frame of reference. Hence this study's concern with his use of history as *rhetorical instrument* in defending the Christians and their faith in one of his earliest books, the *Ad Nationes*. The aim of this study was to uncover the characteristics, significance and meaning of the use of history as rhetorical instrument in this book. The final paragraph offers a concluding perspective on the eventual findings of the research. The careful study of Tertullian's use of history in the *Ad Nationes*, based on and related to the applicable historical and theological sources, indeed disclosed a fundamental literary strategy. Tertullian utilised history in his disputation with the *nationes* at the end of the second century CE. It plays a key role in his argumentation and is fundamental to the structure of the book. This rhetorical device was subsequently scrutinised.

Tertullian utilises historical data nine times in the *Ad Nationes*. It demonstrates his knowledge of history and historical sources and incorporates the history of the Roman Empire, ancient Egypt, Macedonia, Persia, the Christian church, mythology and natural history. The following examples from history find practical application in the *Ad Nationes*:

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[271] Cf. p. 19 ff.

1. The person, intellect and death of Socrates.

2. Three emperors: Augustus, Tiberius and Nero and the Christians.

3. The *tertium genus* and Psammeticus, king of Egypt.

4. Natural disasters.

5. The senate and the gods.

6. Tacitus the historian.

7. Two great and powerful nations – the Persians and the Macedonians.

8. Regulus and the death of four women.

9. The Judge Aristides.

Each of these is utilised in conjunction with a particular issue that was publicly raised to incriminate the Christians or to place them under suspicion. Each is employed to substantiate the refutation of the non Christian indictments against the Christians. The analysis disclosed the following:

1. *Socrates*: The Christians were blamed for the denial of the gods. In the knowledge and worship of (their) God, they reject the existence of all the other gods and are therefore condemned for possessing, in Tertullian's view, the truth. Long before the inception of the Christian faith, Tertullian argues, Socrates, because of intellectual questioning and critique, discovered the same truth: the gods in reality did not exist. His consequential denial of the gods resulted in his execution. Tertullian's historical information concerning Socrates also provides him with a platform to deride the *nationes*. They therefore, contrary to 'divine' acknowledgement (Apollo's self denial), rejected both Apollo and Socrates. He significantly avoids mentioning Socrates' last request, namely to sacrifice a cock to the god Aesculapius. The reason for the omission is obvious: he would have jeopardised his own argument.[272]

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[272] Cf. p. 26 ff.

2. *The emperors*: The *nationes* were convinced that the Christians in particular threatened the greatness of the Roman Empire because they rejected the correlation between the prosperity of the Empire and the preservation and upholding of traditional religion. Tertullian regards this assumption as invalid and history itself provides the proof. The Christian name and teachings that are to continue enlightening the world, he contends, were incepted and allowed to prosper under the greatest of emperors, Augustus and Tiberius. On the other hand, the Christians were persecuted by Nero, who was identified by the *nationes* beyond any doubt as one of the worst. Only one logical conclusion can be drawn: following the example of the most outstanding emperors, Christians should be tolerated and treated with respect as the outstanding Emperors did.[273]

3. *The third generation*: In defending the Christians against the abusive name *tertium genus,* perceived to denote a separate nation or national identity, and therefore an unwelcome threat, Tertullian turns to Egyptian history. He illustrates that the Psammetichus experiment to establish the Phrygians as the first nation was not credible. It is therefore a highly questionable practice to pursue this line of thinking as the *nationes* did when they identified the Christians as the third *nation*. Tertullian selected a version of this ancient narrative that best suited the point he wanted to make.[274]

4. *Natural disasters*: Christians were held responsible for, or accused of being instrumental in natural disasters and calamities. This popular belief heightened suspicion against them. In order to counter this accusation, Tertullian turns to natural history and common memory. He lists four catastrophes from ancient times, and one (the eruption of Mt Vesuvius) from the first century CE, and then poses the question: How could Christians have been implicated if these disasters occurred at a time when the Christian faith had not yet established itself? These disasters indeed took place *before* the inception of the Christian faith. Christians *could* not be held accountable for them.

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[273] Cf. p. 32 ff.
[274] Cf. p. 38 ff.

Except of course for the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius – an event that occurred in 78 CE, most probably while Christians lived in the nearby cities. This inaccuracy invalidates the point he was trying to make.[275]

5. *The Senate and the gods*: A further charge against the Christians was that they disassociated themselves from the practices and religious traditions of their forefathers. Tertullian is of the opinion that the *nationes* are guilty of exactly the same charge. He recalled a number of decisions and actions of the Senate that did not take the gods into consideration, to substantiate his claim. The senators clearly regarded their authority as superior even to that of the traditional gods. 'Your authority overthrew all the authority of your ancestors,' Tertullian concluded.[276] The *nationes* are forever praising antiquity, Tertullian observes, but their behaviour is inconsistent, since they are rejecting it at the same time.[277]

6. *Tacitus the historian*: Tertullian discloses how the famous historian contradicts himself in the presentation of historical facts concerning the alleged worshipping of an ass's head by the Jews. In highlighting the contradicting points of Tacitus' narrative, Tertullian intended to expose that it was a recognised and trusted historian who created this figment. What was presented as *veritas* or the truth by a renowned historian, is nothing more than fiction. The *nationes* should know that. The only conclusion could be that Tacitus ruined his argument against the Christians namely that they have not only forsaken the common religion, but have also introduced an abhorrent superstition.[278]

7. *The two ancient nations*: Tertullian profiles the proclaimed suspicion that Christians practised and approved of incestuous relations against the perspective of similar practises among two great nations, the Persians and the Macedonians. However the

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[275] Cf. p. 47 ff.
[276] Tert. *Ad Nat*. 1.10.6
[277] Cf. p. 56 ff.
[278] Cf. p. 67 ff.

credibility of the historical information (especially with regards to the Macedonians) is questionable, as was pointed out in the exposition. Tertullian was not interested in historical accuracy. He was rather denying the nations any high moral ground in this regard. They have not the right to make such accusations and are not in a position accuse. History is merely used as a rhetorical instrument to prove a point.[279]

8. *Regulus and the women*: As indicated in chapter four, one of the charges lodged against the Christians was their *obstinatio* and *praesumptio.* They persisted in their refusal to appease the images of the Caesars and to swear by their *genii*. They were prepared for martyrdom. Tertullian did not contradict this charge. Instead he selected four examples of martyrdom from history, showed his readers that the most famous among their ancestors did not shun from martyrdom and that they were lauded for that in literature. He actually selects versions of the narratives, or manipulates them in order to suit his purpose. Regulus was 'crucified,' Cleopatra was killed by *bestiae* and not a snake(s) as the story has it. Tertullian describes the death of Hasdrubal's wife, without mentioning the fate of her children. In his description of Dido he prefers the version where she would rather die than be married a second time. Tertullian again sacrificed historical accuracy for the sake of rhetorical effect.[280]

9. *Aristides the judge*: Tertullian reiterates that the Christians are ridiculed for believing in the resurrection. He is quick to point out that the *nationes* disparage in fact what they also hold to be true. They believe that souls not only return to bodies, but that they reappear in a dog or a mule or a peacock. He then turns to mythology. Against the background of their acceptance of these ridiculous beliefs, he accuses them that they favoured Minos and Rhadamanthus, while rejecting the fair judge Aristides. Aristides even lived up to his reputation of unprejudiced fairness by undergoing unmerited suffering. Their professed beliefs and decisions lack credibility.[281]

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[279] Cf. p. 73 ff.
[280] Cf. p. 81 ff.
[281] Cf. p. 90 ff.

Tertullian utilises history as a valued ally or collaborator in rejecting the accusations against the Christians, or (in one case) to substantiate a(n) (appreciated) indictment. In his arguments history is awarded authority and elevated to act as adjudicator. History has the final say. History, because it *occurred*, cannot be challenged or changed, and is therefore particularly valuable to the author.

A close reading of the text on the other hand shows that Tertullian is guilty of inaccuracies in his utilisation of history. He manipulates history to fit his purpose. History as such, as recorded in the sources, is not free to speak for itself. The analysis reveals that Tertullian selects, omits, changes, and even bends history to substantiate his argument. Another master, the author, thus dictates. Tertullian does not allow history to come to prove its own point. His use of history entails nothing more than to *utilise* it as an *instrument* to prove his point.

In the final analysis Tertullian rhetorically utilised history within the parameters of the contemporary and prevailing school of thought. It often transpired in the analysis that he adhered to the instructions of Quintilian in his use of history. His application of these rules did not however carry more weight than his adherence to current rhetorical thinking. His manipulation or adaptation of historical facts or data was permissible within a rhetorical framework. Quintilian taught:

> *Potentissimum autem est inter ea quae sunt huius generis, quod proprie vocamus exemplum, id est rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commemoratio. intuendum igitur est, totum simile sit an ex parte, ut automnia ex eo sumamus aut quae utilia sunt.*[282]

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[282] Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.6

[We must consider, therefore, whether such fact is completely similar to what we wish to illustrate, or only partly so, that we may either adopt the whole of it or only such portion as may serve our purpose.]

Tertullian's historical inaccuracy and generalisation should be understood in view of Quintilian's teaching. Tertullian utilised historical material to serve a specific purpose. He did not hesitate to adapt or change historical information as it was recorded in the sources available to him. He selected versions that would suit his argument best, without considering their historical veracity. One could argue that rhetorical rules allowed for inaccurate use of history, as long as the intention of the argument was upheld.

The historical *inaccuracies* in Tertullian's arguments in the *Ad Nationes* demonstrated his *rhetorical* use of history. It has been also been shown that the prevailing rhetorical thinking as articulated by Quintilian actually allowed for these inaccuracies. Accuracy in the rhetorical utilising history was not an issue. Accurate *knowledge* of history though, indeed was held in high regard. Quintilian also wrote:

> *Est et alius ex historiis usus, et is quidem maximus sed non ad praesentem pertinens locum, ex cognitione rerum exemplorumque, quibus in primis instructus esse debet orator; nec omnia testimonia expectet a litigatore, sed pleraque ex uetustate diligenter sibi cognita sumat, hoc potentiora quod ea sola criminibus odii et gratia vacant.*[283]

> [Another important and valuable advantage to be gained from history, though irrelevant for the present discussion, is the author's own thorough knowledge of historical facts and examples. This would enable him to prove his case by utilizing his accurate knowledge of history and not being totally reliant on his client for all

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[283] Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.34

evidence. Such arguments are all the more persuasive as they alone are exempt

from the charges of prejudice and partiality.]

Quintilian advocates thorough knowledge of historical facts and examples. Accurate knowledge of history is fundamental in proving a case. Historical knowledge inhibits prejudice and partiality. This also should be taken into account in the design of a convincing argument, he tutored.

Tertullian was conscious of the significance of Quintilian's emphasis on historical accuracy. He indeed also applied it. He reprimanded no one less than Tacitus on his (Tacitus') inaccurate treatment of historical facts.[284] The historical data in the *Ad Nationes* concerning the three Emperors was accurate and aligned with the available sources. In the *Apologeticus*, in which much material from the *Ad Nationes* was reviewed, he corrected historical assumptions and mistakes made in the *Ad Nationes*. The two paragraphs on the origins of rumour (*fama*) and the rigorous investigation to establish the truth (*veritas*), also demonstrated his awareness of the value of historical accuracy. The research however, indicated that in his rhetorical utilisation of historical data to substantiate his argumentation in the *Ad Nationes*, Tertullian did not adhere to historical accuracy. He *utilised* (accurate) *knowledge* of history in service of the intention and purposes of the immediate argument.

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[284] Cf. p. 70.

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