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# TERTULLIAN ON CHRISTIAN CONVERTS AND CLASHES WITH THE PAGAN WORLD

Anni Maria Laato

## *Abstract*

Tertullian marked the boundaries between Catholic Christians and others -- pagans, heretics, and Jews -- in relation to doctrine (*lex credendi*), religious practices (*lex orandi*), and everyday life (*lex agendi*) in an unusually strict way. His eagerness to pinpoint differences could be explained as coming from his uncompromising personality, the threatened minority position of the Christians in Carthage in his time, and his responsibility to instruct newly-converted Christians. In this article, it will be argued that the main reason for his strictness was, however, his fundamental principle in the light of which he believed that all beliefs and actions must be evaluated, namely that Christians must worship the one true God wholeheartedly and avoid idolatry in everything. In this article, several examples of concrete expressions of belief, religious practices and life will be analysed, and it will be shown that this principle steered his teaching.

*Key words:* Tertullian, conversion, apologetics, freedom of religion, prayer, baptism, idolatry

## *1 Introduction*

In this article, I shall focus on Tertullian's teaching on encounters between Christian converts and the Roman pagan world, and offer only brief comment on his encounters with Jews and those whom he sees as heretics.<sup>1</sup> By studying four topics central for Tertullian, I intend to clarify the underlying pattern of thought for his position: why was it so important for him to mark - in an unusually definite and clear way- the boundaries between Christians and others? I focus on the arguments he himself used and take concrete examples from his teaching on: (1) freedom of faith, (2) how Christians should relate to Roman religious practices, (3) the essence and practices of prayer and (4) initiation and baptism. In discussing these topics, there are three aspects to relate to: doctrine, religious practices<sup>2</sup> and everyday life-styles. How these three aspects interplay with each other will also be addressed.

## *2 Preliminary Remarks*

Tertullian lived in a time when Christians were a minority in the Roman Empire and when the Christians were sporadically persecuted by the state, though their community was growing with new converts. Tertullian himself had most probably converted to Christianity as an adult.<sup>3</sup> He never directly writes about his own conversion and the reasons for it, but it can be assumed that the same things he later recommended to others were those which had drawn him to Christianity. It is clear that he had become

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<sup>1</sup> Despite its problems, I use the word 'pagans' for non-Christian and non-Jewish people.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew McGowan (*Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic 2014], 4–8) points out that the word 'worship' which could be used instead for 'religious practice', has many differing meanings, as were its counterparts in Latin (*cultus, servitus, latreia*) already in Augustine's times.

<sup>3</sup> This has been derived from passages such as *Apol.* 18.4; 50.51; *Scap.* 5.5; *Paen.* 1.1; *Res.* 59.1.

convinced of the Christian message (he later emerged as an expert on Scripture and Christian doctrine). The radical ethos of some Christians and the courage of the martyrs was equally important for him. He often emphasizes that becoming a Christian implies a real change in a person's life: life after baptism cannot be the same as it was before. For Tertullian, conversion to Christianity implied a change of community and identity. In *Apologeticum* he states that the Christians voluntarily left the Roman world they had known very well, and consequently became strangers in this world (*Apol.* 1). "We are from among you. Christians are made, not born", he famously summarizes later in the same work (*Apol.* 18.4).<sup>4</sup>

Despite his emphasis on the differences between Christians and the Pagan world, and the radical change of life for those who converted to Christianity, in many aspects Tertullian was, however, not that different from his non-Christian contemporaries. He did not withdraw himself completely from society, nor did he advise others to do so. For example, he constantly used the philosophies he criticized, and sometimes pointed out similarities between Christians and others and refers to matters that are known to his audience from the history, literature and every-day life of the Romans.

When reading Tertullian, it must also be kept in mind that he was an educated rhetorician who aimed at persuading his audience; he therefore used different kinds of language and arguments when writing to different people.<sup>5</sup> Some of his treatises were written to educated non-Christians (*Apologeticum, Ad nationes, Ad Scapulam*); in these texts, he seldom quotes Scripture but mainly argues on the basis of natural law and logic. In *Apologeticum*, for instance, he does not quote Scripture at all. Other texts were written either as an instruction for catechumens or fellow Christians (e.g. *De spectaculis, De oratione, De patientia* and *De paenitentia*) or against what he calls heresies or heretical teachers (e.g. *Adversus Marcionem, Adversus Praxean, De praescriptione haereticorum*).<sup>6</sup> In these texts Scripture was naturally a good basis for his arguments because it was both known to the addressees and authoritative to them.<sup>7</sup> Because Tertullian so clearly takes the situation and the intended audience into consideration, we cannot simply look at how he argues in one given passage without taking into consideration the context of the whole treatise, and in fact, his other texts on the subject in question too.<sup>8</sup>

Tertullian wrote in different positions in the Catholic Church. He was most probably a lay Christian with the authority to teach catechumens and fellow Christians,<sup>9</sup> but not all

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<sup>4</sup> See Andrew Louth, "Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani: Conversion, Community, and Christian Identity in Late Antiquity" in *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark* (ed. C. Harrison et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014), 109–10.

<sup>5</sup> See Tom O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible: Language – Imagery – Exegesis* (Nijmegen: Dekker and Von de Vegh, 1967), 173–4; Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 256; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Rhetorical Structure in Tertullian's ad Scapulam," *VC* 56 (2002): 47–55, 47; G.D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 12.25–29; Tobias Georges, *Tertullian 'Apologeticum'* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2011), 35–8.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian – A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 119–120.

<sup>7</sup> Dunn, "Rhetoric and Tertullian's De virginibus velandis," *VC* 59 (2005), 12.

<sup>8</sup> Dunn, *Tertullian*, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Barnes (*Tertullian*, 11) has convincingly argued that the claim of Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 53) that Tertullian was a presbyter, lacks credibility. For Tertullian's view on clergy and laity, see Anni Maria Laato, "Tertullian and the Deacons," in *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity: The First Two Centuries* (ed. Bart Koet et al.; WUNT 2. Reihe; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 245–54.

his writings reflect a particularly pastoral attitude.<sup>10</sup> His first texts can be dated between the years 196–206, when he was an active member of the local Church.<sup>11</sup> From the year 207 onwards, the charismatic and rigoristic New Prophecy movement (later called Montanism) increasingly influenced him, and his criticism towards the Catholic Church, especially its bishops, grew. According to a growing scholarly consensus, Tertullian did not, however, leave the Catholic Church when he joined the New Prophecy movement,<sup>12</sup> but rather continued to participate in its liturgical worship even during the later periods of his life.<sup>13</sup> In two of his last works, *De ieiunio* and *De pudicitia*, written around 210–212, he strongly criticized some of the practices of the *psychici*, unspiritual, as he calls (some) members of the main Church,<sup>14</sup> but nowhere does he indicate that he left the Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup>

When it comes to matters of doctrine, Tertullian remained orthodox throughout his life.<sup>16</sup> An important concept for him was *regula fidei* or *regula veritatis*, a summary of the Christian faith.<sup>17</sup> Four different versions of a *regula* can be found in his texts. He clearly did not feel himself bound to one particular formula, but rather adhered to the substance of the rule of faith, which according to him was *immobilis et irreformabilis*, i.e. it cannot be altered or transformed.<sup>18</sup> *Regula*, thus, is a broader concept for him than written formulae; and was primarily an oral summary of the Christian faith, given by God to Christ, and by Christ to his apostles.<sup>19</sup> It was a rule, a guiding principle, in the light of which everything must be evaluated: to know *regula* was to know everything one needed to; anything in conflict with *regula* was heresy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Exh. cast.* 7.3. For pastoral attitude among Church Fathers see Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology: The Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 18.

<sup>11</sup> In chronology I follow Barnes, *Tertullian*.

<sup>12</sup> See Douglas Powell, "Tertullianists and Cataphrygians", *VC* 29 (1975): 33–54; David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 3.27–29; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6–7; William Tabbernee, "Initiation/Baptism in the Montanist Movement" in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II*, (ed. D. Hellholm et al.; Berlin & Boston: DeGruyter, 2011), 924.927.

<sup>13</sup> Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West*, 176; Georges, *Tertullian 'Apologeticum'*, 19–20. It has been suggested that New Prophecy movement had its meetings after the regular services, see Powell, "Tertullianists and Cataphrygians".

<sup>14</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 48–49.

<sup>15</sup> Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 142; Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 43; Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West*, 176–177; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> In Tertullian's texts, there are four versions of a written *regula* and several allusions to such: *Praescr.* 13 and 36, *Virg.* 1 and *Prax.* 2; John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd. ed. London: Continuum, 1972), 83; Bengt Häggglund, *Sanningens regel, regula veritatis: trosregeln och den kristna traditionens struktur* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2003), 20–21.

<sup>18</sup> *Virg.* 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Apol.* 47.10; *Praescr.* 13; 14; 20; 32; 37.

<sup>20</sup> *Praescr.* 14. It has been discussed whether in the early Church it was meant that the *regula* was the rule by which everything must be measured, or if the rule in fact was the truth (*veritas*). Häggglund, *Sanningens regel*, 10.20. The relation between written *regulae*, baptismal questions, and fixed creeds is still being discussed. Written *regulae* can be seen as liturgically crystallized symbols, and on the other hand, baptismal questions are an expression of the *regula* in the wider sense. *Praescr.* 20.8; 36.3–5; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*. 87; Reinhart Staats, "Das Taufbekenntnis in der frühen Kirche" in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II*, (ed. D. Hellholm et al.; Berlin & Boston: DeGruyter, 2011), 1553–1583, esp. 1556.

Tertullian is one of the main sources when it comes to early African liturgy and religious practices.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, no detailed descriptions of services, rites or liturgical texts such as prayers in his time are preserved from North Africa; information must be collected from scattered pieces. Moreover, because he felt free to evaluate and criticize existing practices and to express his own ideas, it is not always clear whether he was describing established customs or something special that was of interest to him there and then, or indeed whether his views were common in North Africa at that time or merely his personal opinion.<sup>22</sup>

### *3 Freedom of Religion and Religious Coercion*

When seeking an underlying pattern for Tertullian's strict attitude towards the Roman religion and its practices, it is good to start with what he stated about the nature of religious devotion. Tertullian was one of the first and most outstanding advocates for religious freedom in Early Christianity.<sup>23</sup> His arguments for freedom of religion and against any religious coercion stressed the logical integrity between the contents of faith and lived religion. Freedom belonged, in his mind, to the core of religion; forced worship was not true worship at all (*Apol.* 21; 24; 28). This freedom belonged not only to a nation or a group of people, but even to individuals.

His claim for freedom of religion, however, seems to collide with his own harsh criticism of traditional Roman religion, the Jews and those he called heretics, and therefore his approach has sometimes been explained as mere rhetoric with the sole intent of gaining space for his own community.<sup>24</sup> The complex question about ambiguity in Tertullian's approach cannot be discussed fully in this article, but I highlight some aspects.

In *Apologeticum*, written for Roman rulers, Tertullian claims that coerced confession or denial of faith is worthless, because people can subsequently return to their previous views.<sup>25</sup> It was therefore unjust to compel a person to sacrifice, "for even in other acts of religious service a willing mind is required".<sup>26</sup> Belief and religious praxis were logically bound with each other.<sup>27</sup> Also in *Ad Scapulam*, a text dedicated to a Roman proconsul, he stresses the unity of religious belief and action.<sup>28</sup> Tertullian's claim in both these works can thus be summarized: true devotion cannot be forced – otherwise it is not true devotion at all. The integrity of a person was of fundamental importance to him and, therefore, belief, religious practices and life had to line up. Religion had to stem from

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<sup>21</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 275-276; Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Bradshaw, *The Search*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Guy Stroumsa, "Tertullian on idolatry and the limits of tolerance", in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton, and G.G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 173.

<sup>24</sup> See Stroumsa, "Tertullian on idolatry", 173.

<sup>25</sup> *Apol.* 2.17.

<sup>26</sup> *Apol.* 28.1; 24.5f; 27.2.

<sup>27</sup> *Apol.* 21.27– 28.

<sup>28</sup> *Scap.* 2.1-2: "It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion-to which free-will and not force should lead us-the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice. For they can have no desire of offerings from the unwilling, unless they are animated by a spirit of contention, which is a thing altogether undivine".

free choice. When writing both the above quoted texts to the Roman authorities, he backed up his claim with natural law and logic and never quoted Scripture. Tertullian lived in antiquity, and therefore we cannot expect theories of freedom of religion in a modern sense from him.<sup>29</sup> Rather, his argumentation for freedom of religion is based on his belief that in a person's and a community's life, contents of faith, devotional practices, and ways of living, must *per definitionem* be in concord with each other. Forced devotion is not devotion at all. A claim for freedom of choice was for him, therefore, not only a rhetorical device for gaining safety for Christians, but also the expression of a principle he held. This principle was not in contradiction with what he wrote about concerning other religious groups, as his writings against the Jews or against Marcion were not intended to force the Jews or the Marcionites to participate in Catholic worship against their beliefs (which would of course have been impossible), but rather, to persuade them to the Christian truth and, more importantly, to warn and instruct his own fellow Christians.<sup>30</sup>

#### *4 How Christians Should Relate to Roman Religious Practices*

The ideal of consequence when it comes to faith, religious practices and life, also guides Tertullian's thoughts when he argues against influences from the traditional Roman cult in the devotional and every-day life of a Christian. For him, the identity of a Christian permitted no grey zones; no participation in pagan cult in any form was allowed.<sup>31</sup> In baptism, a Christian denounced the devil and idolatry (*Spect. 4; Idol. 6*) and this was to be realized in every aspect of life.

How to live as a Christian in a pagan environment was a real problem in Tertullian's time since Roman religion was present in many ways in the every-day life of his audience. He therefore undertook to give instructions to Christians and formulated arguments for his views. In *De spectaculis*, written for recent converts, he meets the counter-arguments of some Christians who saw no harm in participating in public entertainment. They had confronted him by saying that the Scripture did not contain prohibitions such as "you shall not enter circus or theatre, you shall not look on combat or show". Tertullian answered them with an allusion to Ps 1:1: a Christian must not enter the assembly of the impious, and with a more general principle: "these things are not consistent with true religion and true obedience to the true God" (*Spect. 1.1*). In his argumentation as to whether certain practices are allowed or not for Christians, he is sometimes content with the silence of Scripture: one cannot say anything decisive about a certain practice if the Scripture does not (*Carn. Chr. 6.10*), but most often he tries to argue using biblical principles or from a standpoint of Christian tradition (*Herm. 20.5; 22.5; Cor. 2.4; Mon. 4.4*).

In his texts, Tertullian gives plenty of examples of practices that can threaten the integrity of a Christian, including participation in pagan festivals (*Apol. 35.4*), public

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<sup>29</sup> J.A. North, "Religious Tolerance in Republican Rome", in *Roman Religion* (ed. C. Ando, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 199–200; Georges, *Tertullian 'Apologeticum'*, 410–411.

<sup>30</sup> It can be noted that one of the reasons for the early *Adversus Iudaeos* literature – to which Tertullian's *Adversus Iudaeos* belongs – was the fact that some Christian believers participated in Jewish worship and festivals without any problem, i.e. the relation between contents of doctrine and practical forms of devotion was not completely clear for them. See Anni Maria Laato, *Jews and Christians in De duobus montibus Sina et Sion: An Approach to Early Latin Adversus Iudaeos Literature* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1998), 16; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2004).

<sup>31</sup> With some moderation, see below.

shows (*Spect.* 1.1), the theatre (*Spect.* 10 and 23), and sport events (*Spect.* 11 and 18-19). Further activities where a Christian would have to be in contact with deities or heathen cults include astrology (*Idol.* 9), the teaching of literature (*Idol.* 10) and gladiator training (*Idol.* 11). There are, however, two exceptions to Tertullian's strict view. He states that schoolchildren are to be encouraged to study despite the fact that their curriculum includes heathen mythology (*Idol.* 10),<sup>32</sup> and that Christians are also allowed to participate in family feasts provided they do not perform the offerings themselves – thus he makes a distinction between active and passive participation (*Idol.* 16). Despite his fundamental outlook on the difference between the world and the Church, Tertullian did not want Christians to completely withdraw from society,<sup>33</sup> but rather guided his listeners to participate in *spectacula Christiana*, that is, a Christian life, instead of participating in heathen shows (*Spect.* 29.3).<sup>34</sup>

*De spectaculis* and *De idololatria* belong to Tertullian's early texts, written for other Catholic Christians. Tertullian's instructions seem to be in line with the view of the Carthaginian Church and the Church in Rome.<sup>35</sup> His critical notions indicate, however, that not all Christians in his congregation followed such instructions.

Later, during his New Prophecy period, Tertullian returned to the same topic: namely, what activities a Christian could participate in. In *De corona*, he discusses, on the basis of a recent event, principles on how to deal with practices where there is no explicit Scriptural prohibition or command, but where a long ecclesial tradition exists nonetheless.<sup>36</sup> Tertullian tells that a certain soldier had refused a military crown, and consequently was condemned by the Roman authorities. This event stirred discussion among the local Christians about whether a Christian could wear a crown or not (*Cor.* 1). Tertullian starts his argumentation by presenting the soldier in question as an example for everybody: this is what a Christian does. Then he delivers several arguments for refusing a crown. The first is that Christians usually do refuse a crown. He is not happy with merely that argument, however, but finds reasons for this common practice (*Cor.* 2). His next step is to say that even if no passage in the Scripture prohibits the wearing of a military crown, the lack of a direct prohibition is not one and the same as allowing such a practice (*Cor.* 2-3). Tertullian moves on in his argumentation and asks whether a tradition has authority if it does not have any written basis in the Scripture, and shows that the life of the Church is full of such traditions. As examples, he presents practices in connection with baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>37</sup> Many of these are supported by tradition, faith, and reason, but have no Scriptural basis, and so Tertullian concludes that "you can vindicate the keeping of even unwritten tradition established by custom; the proper witness for tradition when demonstrated by long-continued observance" (*Cor.* 4). In addition to tradition, he argues on the basis of the natural law, which according to him

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<sup>32</sup> The curriculum in the education of children remained a topic for Christian parents for a long time. See Anni Maria Laato, "Adam and Eve Rewritten in Vergil's Words: Cento of Proba," in *Adam and Eve Story in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives* (ed. A. Laato and L. Valve; SRB 8; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 88–89.

<sup>33</sup> Georg Schöllgen, "Die Teilnahme der Christen am städtischen Leben in vorkonstantinischer Zeit: Tertullians Zeugnis für Karthago," in *Christentum und antike Gesellschaft* (ed. J. Martin, and Barbara Quint; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), esp. 332–334, 353–354.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine later used this expression for Christian liturgy, *en. Ps.* 80, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Schöllgen, "Die Teilnahme," 325, 327, 334–48.

<sup>36</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 132–133.

<sup>37</sup> One of his examples is making oblations for the dead on the anniversary day. This expression is studied by Eoin de Bhaldraithe, "Oblationes pro defunctis, pro nataliciis annua die facimus. What did Tertullian mean?" *StPatr* 20 (1987): 346–51.

confirms what he already has said (*Cor.* 5-6). Eventually, Tertullian reaches his main point on the unavoidable connection between receiving and wearing a crown, and idolatry (*Cor.* 7-15). Wearing a military crown is in fact active participation in idolatry, and therefore, a Christian cannot have any part in it.

*De corona* is regarded as more compromising in its tone than the earlier *De idololatria* because in this treatise Tertullian does not deny a Christian the possibility of remaining in the army provided situations that would compromise his faith are avoided. This apparent inconsistency has been explained by the changing realities in the army between the dates of the composition of these two texts.<sup>38</sup> In *De corona*, Tertullian does not focus on whether military service is acceptable for Christians.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the main point in this treatise is that idolatry in any form is incompatible with the Christian faith. Tertullian demonstrates that every kind of public entertainment and many other activities are connected with the worship of deities, and therefore with idolatry. For him *latreia*, worship, means not only prayer or sacrifice, but is a broader concept. Many aspects of life can indeed express affirmation or negation about the nature of a divinity.<sup>40</sup> For Tertullian idolatry is the principal crime, a root for all bad deeds, as he says in *De idololatria* 1, an idea he backs up with both Old and the New Testament passages.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, for a Christian, the boundaries between *latreia* and *idololatrea* must be clear.

When writing to other Christians about traditional Roman religion and its religious practices Tertullian argues using Scripture and with Christian doctrine based on Scripture. According to him, in cases where Scripture does not explicitly say anything, long-standing Christian tradition, preferably coming from the apostles, is to be followed. Natural law and common sense are used as additional arguments. When discussing non-Christian religions Tertullian stresses that there must be concordance between belief, worship and everyday life.

#### *4 The Essence and Practices of Prayer*

People who converted to Christianity had to learn new ways to pray, too. In *De oratione*, Tertullian discusses both the content and practices of prayer. The text is probably based on lectures held in Carthage around the years 198-200. It is directed to the catechumens, as can be seen from the form of address, *benedicti*, and from the fact that between the skilfully formulated beginning and the end, rather simple questions are dealt with. As usual in antiquity, the first lines of this work give the key to understanding the whole text. Tertullian opens his work with the following words:

*dei spiritus et dei sermo et dei ratio, sermo rationis et ratio sermonis et spiritus utriusque*<sup>42</sup> *Iesus Christus, dominus noster, novis discipulis novi testamenti novam orationis formam determinavit.*

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<sup>38</sup> Willy Rordorf, "Tertullians Beurteilung des Soldatenstandes," *VC* 23 (1969), 117; Rankin (*Tertullian and the Church*, 19) formulates: "Tertullian was passionate and generally uncompromising, but no fool. He could display, when appropriate, a certain pragmatism."

<sup>39</sup> cf. *Idol.* 19 where Tertullian categorically denies the possibility that Christians could serve in the army. Rordorf, "Tertullians Beurteilung," 117.

<sup>40</sup> See Stroumsa, "Tertullian on idolatry," 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Idol.* 4; 9; 24.

<sup>42</sup> *Patrologia Latina* has *utriusque*, but the manuscripts have *utrumque* (*Patrologia Latina*. Edited by J-P Migne vol. 1, Paris, 1844). Diercks in his edition has chosen *utrumque* and translates "in either case spirit". See G. F. Diercks, *Tertullianus De Oratione. Critische uitgave met prolegomena, vertaling en philo-logisch-exegetisch-liturgische commentaar* (Bussum: Brand, 1947).



Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the spirit of God and the word of God and the reason of God, the word of the reason and the reason of the word and the spirit of both, has prescribed a new form of prayer for the new disciples of the new covenant.

Tertullian begins his teaching on prayer by meditating on the person of Christ in the light of John 1: the Lord's Prayer comes from no less than God's *logos*, and thus reflects the essence of the logos.<sup>43</sup> The word *spiritus* here is best explained in the light of the closure of the tractate where Tertullian returns to the topic and quotes John 4:24 "God is spirit" (*Or.* 28). Tertullian explains that because Christ is God's spirit and God's speech and God's reason, the prayer he taught also contains all these elements: the spirit whereby the prayer can have such power, the speech by which it is expressed, and the reason.<sup>44</sup> Thus the contents and the expression of the Lord's Prayer are inseparable from each other and reflect the essence of Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Son of God. The last word of the sentence, *determinavit*, is characteristic for Tertullian's theology: his image of an ideal worshipper is a soldier who obeys the commands of his *imperator*, as stated at the end of the treatise (*Or.* 29). The stressing of the word 'new' in this passage is directed primarily against the Jews: according to Tertullian, what prevailed in the times of the Old Testament is either altered (*demutatum*) like circumcision, or completed (*suppletum*) like the rest of the Law, or fulfilled (*impletum*) like the prophecies, or is brought to its perfection (*perfectum*) like the faith itself (*or.* 1). The claim of newness is, however, also directed against Roman religions.

For Tertullian, the Lord's Prayer fulfils the two tasks of prayer, worship and supplication, and more than this, it sums up the whole content of Christ's teaching, and thus it is an abridgement, *breviarium*, of the entire Gospel (*Or.* 1). In his explanations to the individual petitions, he seeks to demonstrate this: every petition is connected to commands of the Lord in Scripture and reveals something about the Christian faith (*Or.* 2-10).

His fundamental idea – that both the contents and the form of prayer reflects the person of Jesus Christ and his teaching – is also the guiding principle when Tertullian subsequently turns to investigate many of the prayer practices adhered to by Carthaginian Christians and evaluates them accordingly (*Or.* 13-27). Some of these practices were followed by individuals, others by the assembled community. It was apparently customary in Carthage to wash one's hands before prayer (*Or.* 13). Tertullian reports that some Christians followed this rule with "superstitious carefulness", so that they washed their hands even when coming from a bath. Having researched this custom, Tertullian found that it was done to commemorate the surrender of the Lord by Pilate and concluded that this custom should be avoided for two reasons: Christians should not identify themselves with Pilate, and the spiritual cleanliness was what was necessary, rather than the outward cleanliness – Christians have already been washed in Christ. Contrary to this, he presents the Jews who wash themselves daily but "are never clean because they inherit the sins of their fathers" (*Or.* 14). Another "empty observance" belonging to superstition was the custom of removing

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<sup>43</sup> Tertullian regularly uses *sermo* as a translation for the Greek *logos*. In a later work he explains that *logos* can be translated into Latin both as *sermo* and as *ratio*, and *logos* is the one who is with God before the creation, and through whom all is created (*Prax.* 5). In *Prax.* 2 he translates *logos* as *sermo* in a *regula*: God's pre-existent *sermo* was born as a human being through Mary. Both words, *sermo* and *ratio*, for their part, have multiple meanings: *sermo* can be translated as 'word' or 'speech', *ratio* as 'reason', 'meaning' or 'ruling principle'. These different meanings are for Tertullian not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

<sup>44</sup> The text is uncertain: Patrologia Latina has *qua docetur* ("whereby it is taught") and Diercks edition (*Tertullianus De Oratione*), has *quo reconciliat* ("why it produces reconciliation").

coats when praying (*Or.* 15). This custom, according to him, was not based on a command of the Lord, but rather came from the pagans. Tertullian offers a nice biblical example to counter this practice: “God had no trouble hearing the three saints in the Babylonian king’s furnace praying in their trousers and turbans” (*Or.* 15). Some Carthaginian Christians had used Hermas as a model – he sat down on his bed after prayer (*Or.* 16) – to support the custom of sitting down after prayer.<sup>45</sup> Tertullian rejects this argument by saying that Hermas had merely been stating what he did, rather than giving a model of discipline. Otherwise, a Christian could not have prayed anywhere where there was no bed available – a chair or a bench would not have sufficed! Furthermore, he states it was a custom of pagans. Christians were to stand under the eye of the living God in order to show their reverence, just as angels do.<sup>46</sup> Some had also developed a habit of praying loudly with their hands elevated loftily; Tertullian rejects these on the grounds of the biblical ideal of humility: God sees and hears the heart (*Or.* 17). Prayer with the lifting up of the hands in the *orans* position was the normal custom in the early Church, inherited from the Jews, but came to be interpreted as a remembrance of the crucifixion of the Lord (*Or.* 14).<sup>47</sup> Tertullian also discusses some recent customs in Carthage. Some Christians who were fasting did not offer each other a kiss of peace after prayer (*Or.* 18). Criticizing this custom, Tertullian says that fasting should be secret (the new custom revealed who was fasting), and further, that no other occasion was more appropriate for a kiss of peace. Women’s dress and the veiling of the virgins in a liturgical assembly are also discussed extensively (*Or.* 20-22) as there had been confusion around this practice.<sup>48</sup> Here Tertullian writes against an old custom in his Church.<sup>49</sup> The custom of kneeling was also discussed: some abstained from kneeling on the Sabbath (*Or.* 23).<sup>50</sup> Tertullian thinks that in matters such as this, one practice should not be taken as an offence to others. Thus, he does not hesitate to criticize local customs but rather evaluates them in the light of the doctrine and common sense.

When instructing Christians, Tertullian gives detailed instruction for the prayer-times. He explains that in the New Testament Christians are prescribed “to pray at every time and every place” (Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Tim 2:8), but what does this advice mean? “Every place”, according to Tertullian, simply means every place where it is possible (*Or.* 24). The expression “every time” is discussed more thoroughly (*Or.* 24-26). Tertullian

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<sup>45</sup> Herm. *Vis.* 5.1.

<sup>46</sup> According to Bradshaw, both customs – standing and kneeling – were used on ordinary days in the early Church. Tertullian gives important information about kneeling becoming connected with penitence, and that during his time morning prayer already had a penitential character. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church: A Study of the Origin and Early Development of the Divine Office* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1981), 64–65.

<sup>47</sup> Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 65. This position is often seen in the catacomb art. See Robin Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 35–37.

<sup>48</sup> I follow here Dunn, “Rhetoric and Tertullian’s *De virginibus velandis*,” *VC* 59 (2005): 1–30.

<sup>49</sup> *De virginibus velandis* is written against individuals who defended the non-usage of the veil with custom. Therefore, Tertullian contrasts custom with truth: *Sed Dominus noster Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem, cognovinit* (*Virg.* 1.1). He says that even custom is on his side, namely the biblical custom, and custom in other North-African Churches. Tertullian’s opponents had also used Scripture, so he too begins his argumentation with Scriptural arguments. He then argues with the natural law, and thirdly, with arguments from Church discipline. *In his consistit defensio nostrae opinionis secundum scripturam, secundum naturam, secundum disciplinam. Scriptura legem condit, natura contestatur, disciplina exigit.* *Virg.* 16.1.

<sup>50</sup> The Sabbath was not regarded as equal to Sunday, but the Jewish custom of not fasting on the Sabbath had continued in North Africa. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 68.

states that there is no biblical precept of praying at certain times, but there are examples of apostles observing prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours (Acts 2:15; 10:9; 3:1-7), and it is good to establish certain times for prayer “as it were by law” (*quasi lege*).<sup>51</sup> He points out that Daniel observed this in accordance with Israel’s duty (Dan 6:10), and Christians should also do so. Thrice daily regular prayers remind one of the Holy Trinity. Additionally, he instructs that one should pray in the morning and in the evening, before one eats and before one bathes, since spiritual refreshment takes priority over the flesh. Before meals, the sign of the cross should also be made. He also mentions the custom, observed by “more diligent prayers”, of including “Alleluia and this type of psalm, with the endings to which those who are present may respond” (*Or.* 27) in their prayers. He also witnesses the widening custom of reading psalms at regular times of prayer.<sup>52</sup> As Osborn has stated, Tertullian’s treatise on prayer reflects the central themes of his theology, and summarized his attitude as follows: “his Christian soldier finds thought-provoking paradox and perfection everywhere”<sup>53</sup> The examples above show that Tertullian’s doctrinal views are decisive in how he evaluates customs observed in the Carthaginian Church. Distance is taken from customs which, according to him, originate from the pagan world.

### *5 Initiation and Baptism*

The fourth topic, initiation and baptism, opens yet another view to this study.<sup>54</sup> As noted in the introduction, baptism meant, for Tertullian, a radical change in a person’s life. Baptism was, for him, the beginning of a new life in a new community. Its contents can be summarized in one person, Christ as *ikhthys*, fish, with whom the little fishes, *pisciculi*, must stay in the salvific baptismal water (*Bapt.* 1.3). It is “the sacrament of our Christian water, which washes away the sins of our old blindness and frees us for eternal life” (*Bapt.* 1.1).

The period before baptism, the catechumenate, was a time for deep learning of the contents of Christian faith, but also of learning how a Christian should live in a non-Christian environment (*Bapt.* 1). It was a time for repeated prayers, fasts, bending of the knee, night vigils and confessing of sins (*Bapt.* 20).

Tertullian describes and explains many liturgical customs in connection to baptism, many of which express the change from old to new. The baptismal rite expresses what Christians believed that God accomplishes in it.<sup>55</sup> In the following I shall give some examples of this.

The main source for Tertullian’s view on baptism is *De baptismo*, in which he presents his theology on baptism as well as many North African liturgical practices.<sup>56</sup> He wrote

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<sup>51</sup> Tertullian witnesses that in Africa at least five times of prayer – morning, the third, sixth, ninth hour, and evening (a prayer at night is mentioned in *Or.* 29 and *Ux.* 2) were already being observed by the end of the second century, that is, earlier than in the East. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> Osborn, Tertullian: First Theologian of the West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 150.

<sup>54</sup> In this article, I am not going to discuss Tertullian’s criticism of infant baptism, because this much debated topic is not central for understanding his views on encountering the pagan world.

<sup>55</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, “Uncovering the Dynamic *lex orandi* – *lex credendi* in the Baptismal Theology of Irenaeus,” *Pro Ecclesia* 12, no. 2 (2003): 213–214 stresses the close connection between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* in early Christianity: those who formulated the doctrines were the same people who administered the sacraments.

<sup>56</sup> The baptismal rites in Tertullian’s times varied in different parts of the Christian world. Fundamental elements were common, but the forms differed. K. W. Noakes, “Initiation from New Testament Times until

this treatise to catechumens in Carthage to defend baptism against those who intended to reject it, as well as to explain its meaning, and to give his audience a deeper understanding of the baptismal liturgy.<sup>57</sup> He refers to rules to be observed in giving and receiving baptism, (*Bapt.* 17.1), but does not give a complete description of the baptismal rite itself, nor does he explain all the customs.<sup>58</sup>

Tertullian was the first theologian to witness the (later very common) custom of seeing Easter as the preferred time for baptism, even if Pentecost was for him fine, too (*Bapt.* 19).<sup>59</sup> He upheld the appropriateness of these days because of their significance in the Lord's life and because they were the great Christian festivals.<sup>60</sup>

The procedure of initiation and baptism in Tertullian's North Africa can be reconstructed as follows:<sup>61</sup> Catechumenate (*Bapt.* 20), the blessing of water,<sup>62</sup> invoking the Holy Spirit to sanctify it (*Bapt.* 3-5), the threefold renunciation of the devil (*Cor.* 3.2; *Spect.* 4), the threefold interrogation and baptism by means of the threefold immersion or submersion (*Prax.* 26, *Cor.* 3.2), the anointing with oil (*Bapt.* 7.1; *Res.* 8.3), the imposition of the bishop's hands and prayer for the Holy Spirit (*Bapt.* 8.3), signing with the cross (*Res.* 8), prayer (*Bapt.* 20.5) and finally, the drinking of milk and honey followed by the Eucharist (*Cor.* 3). Each stage expresses change in the life of the person who is being baptized.

Some of the rites are mentioned already in the New Testament, while others are later developments. In *De corona*, Tertullian takes some baptismal practices as examples of practices that are not written in Scripture, but which are, nonetheless, maintained on the grounds of tradition alone (*Cor.* 3). Such are the denunciation of the devil, his pomp and angels, uttered just before entering the water;<sup>63</sup> the threefold immersion; making "a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed"; the tasting of milk and honey after the Baptism; and refraining from the daily bath for a week after baptism (*Cor.* 3).<sup>64</sup> The expression "somewhat ampler pledge" refers to the baptismal questions. There is no declarative symbol in the liturgy of *De baptismo*; instead, a threefold interrogation was

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St Cyprian", in *The Study of Liturgy* (ed. C. Jones et al.; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), 90-94; Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 169.

<sup>57</sup> Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55.118-119.

<sup>58</sup> Tertullian's baptismal liturgy is often compared with *Trad. Ap.* 15-21. In recent scholarship, both the authorship and the unity of this text have been put in question; however, it can be said to reflect for the most part early third century practices in the West. Despite many similarities, there are some differences between the baptismal rites described by Tertullian and *Trad. Ap.* Øyvind Norderval, "Simplicity and Power – Tertullian's *De Baptismo*," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II* (ed. D. Hellholm et al.; Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter, 2011), 960; Anders Ekenberg, "Initiation in the Apostolic Tradition," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II* (ed. D. Hellholm et al. Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter, 2011), esp. 1011, 1019, 1025.

<sup>59</sup> There is no possibility to say whether this was already an established custom in his church. Other early witnesses are Hippolytus, *Comm. in Dan.* 13.15; Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 4.76; possibly also *Trad. ap.* 20.5-21.1; for the last one, see Ekenberg "Initiation in the Apostolic Tradition," 1028.

<sup>60</sup> Bradshaw suggests that this choice of time in fact has other theological reasons: the biblical model for baptism was at this time primarily no longer the baptism of Christ but rather his passage from death to resurrection. Easter symbolises thus the beginning of a new life in baptism. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 159; Noakes "Initiation," 91; Edward Yarnold, "Initiation – The Fourth and Fifth Centuries," in *The Study of Liturgy* (ed. C. Jones et al., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1980), 95–110, esp. 95.

<sup>61</sup> Noakes "Initiation", 91-92.

<sup>62</sup> Tertullian is the first witness of this. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 152.

<sup>63</sup> The Renunciation formula 'the devil and his following and his angels' is also witnessed in *Spect.* 4.

<sup>64</sup> All these excluding the last one are also attested in *Trad. ap.* 21.9; 21.12–18; 23.2.

used.<sup>65</sup> These baptismal questions have a Trinitarian structure, and are, with regard to both form and content, closely related to *regula fidei*; it seems probable that Trinitarian *regulae* were developed in connection with baptismal questions and the pre-baptismal catechesis.<sup>66</sup> Baptismal questions, because they became a part of liturgy, subsequently became more or less fixed in wording and outline, and thus became well-known and influential.<sup>67</sup> Tertullian's Trinitarian doctrine was formed in the living tradition of Christian baptismal liturgy. The threefold questions and threefold immersion expressed belief in the Triune God, and directed the understanding of what was happening in its celebration.<sup>68</sup>

Tertullian explains that the laying on of hands invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit came from the Old Testament times, where Jacob blessed his grandsons. During this rite, the Holy Spirit descends upon the baptized – this is drawn from Gen 1 and the baptism of the Lord (*Bapt.* 8).<sup>69</sup> Signing the body with the cross was done to fortify the spirit, Tertullian explains in *Res.* 8.<sup>70</sup> According to both Tertullian (*Bapt.* 7-8; *Res.* 8) and Cyprian (*Ep.* 70.2; 73.9; 74.5), anointing was performed after baptism, and together with the imposition of hands, was connected to receiving the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup> This was a practice derived from the Old Testament where priests were anointed, Aaron being the first (*Bapt.* 7). Tertullian explains that anointing is something carnal, but its result is, nonetheless, spiritual (*Res.* 8).

Tertullian comments on the fact that several symbolic acts were practised both in the Catholic Church as well as in other communities. Anointing and the tasting of milk and honey are examples of this. From Tertullian's time, there is actually more evidence of anointing in connection with baptism in the heterodox communities than in the orthodox ones, e.g. Marcionite (*Marc.* 1.14; 1.28; 3.22).<sup>72</sup> Tertullian notes that signing the forehead with the cross was also a custom performed by Catholics as well as Marcionites.<sup>73</sup> The tasting of milk and honey after baptism or in the context of the post-baptismal Eucharist are also witnessed by *Traditio Apostolica* (23.2), possibly by Tertullian's contemporary and co-Carthaginian text *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (4) as

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<sup>65</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 44–49.83; *Spect.* 4; *Cor.* 3; *Prax.* 26. A similar practice is also attested by *Trad. ap.* and was prevalent in the beginning of the third century.

<sup>66</sup> Staats, "Das Taufbekenntnis," 1558.

<sup>67</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 83, 96; Staats, "Das Taufbekenntnis," 1157–1558.

<sup>68</sup> Driscoll, *Uncovering the Dynamic*, 216. See *Prax.* 26: 'After his resurrection he promises in a pledge to his disciples that he will send them the promise of his Father; and lastly, he commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed, it is not once only but three times that we are immersed into the Three Persons, at each several mention of their names'.

<sup>69</sup> Kelly (*Early Christian Doctrines* [rev. ed.; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978], 209) states that throughout his life Tertullian was unclear about the exact time of descending of the Spirit onto the baptized, but one can say that the Holy Spirit gives cleansing and remission of sins throughout this rite; laying on hands is especially said to give the gift of the Spirit (*Bapt.* 3–4, 6 and 8, *Res.* 8).

<sup>70</sup> Bradshaw (*Daily Prayer*, 158) is critical on the interpretation according to which this means a distinct ritual act.

<sup>71</sup> For the discussion of baptismal anointing, see Ekenberg, "Initiation in the Apostolic Tradition," 1021–1022. Bradshaw (*Daily Prayer*, 227) suggests that post-baptismal anointing spread to the East from the West with the pilgrims under the time of doctrinal debates about the Holy Spirit.

<sup>72</sup> Lampe suggested influence from Gnostics to Catholics, but Noakes argues against him that anointing is a custom derived from both the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Sam 16:13) and Roman bath praxis. Noakes "Initiation," 90; G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1969), 120–128.

<sup>73</sup> *Marc.* 3.22; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 154. *Signaculum* was not only used in baptism, but was an act of prayer, used by Christians in all circumstances, *Cor.* 3.

well as the Odes of Solomon (4.10),<sup>74</sup> but the same praxis was also followed among the Marcionites – Tertullian says that this demonstrated that the Marcionites needed the Creator God no matter what they said (*Marc.* 1.14).<sup>75</sup>

Because baptism was administered in the Marcionite church much in the same way as in the Catholic Church, Tertullian felt the need to comment on this. He does not criticize their liturgical praxis, but rather their theological consistency: without belief in the resurrection of the body and the continuity between the Creator God and the God of the New Testament, the Marcionite baptism is meaningless.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, for Tertullian becoming baptized meant giving up the old life and beginning a new life. Baptism in Tertullian's time was administered with plenty of symbolic actions, many of which conveyed the change in the life of the one being baptized. Tertullian does not criticize any of these rites, but tries to explain their origins and meaning. He declares that many of them have come down through tradition, even though there was no command for them in Scripture. These rites illustrate different aspects of the theology of baptism. As they were repeated in a Church's life and witnessed again and again by the faithful, they highlighted what was important in the Christian theology of baptism. Most notably, the three baptismal questions and the threefold immersion in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit expressed the Trinitarian character of the Christian faith. The liturgical actions Tertullian describes express the washing away of sins, receiving the Holy Spirit and beginning a new life – all of which are emphases which concur in Tertullian's theology on the whole. Stressing the differences to pagan water rituals and heretic baptism was also important for Tertullian.

## 6 Conclusions

This article has discussed some examples of real clashes between the Christian faith and pagan Roman world in Tertullian's texts. For him, becoming a Christian meant leaving one's former community behind. At the same time, Tertullian preserved much of the culture he had grown up with and did not withdraw himself from society. In encounters both with pagans and with newly converted Christians, Tertullian made use of his knowledge of Roman mythology, literature and religious practices as well as his skills in philosophy and rhetoric. The clash with pagan culture and religions primarily grew from his conviction that everything in a Christian's life -- both religious practices and everyday life -- must reflect the contents of the faith. He had no wish to make it easier for someone to convert to Christianity by accepting or using pagan rituals, as has been

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<sup>74</sup> *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 4 mentions liquid cheese and its sweet taste. Tabbernee "Initiation/Baptism in the Montanist Movement," 933; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 160-162. Bradshaw (*Daily Prayer*, 157) mentions that this custom was also known in Egypt and Ethiopia.

<sup>75</sup> Milk and honey are polyvalent symbols: they can refer to the coming to the Promised Land (Ex 33:3) food for new-born Christians (Isa 7:14-15, 1 Pet 2:2) as well as the Body of Christ in the Eucharist (Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, "Taufe und Taufeucharistie. Die postbaptismale Mahlgemeinschaft in Quellen des 2. und 3. Jahrhunderts," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II* (ed. D. Hellholm et al., Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter), 1518-1520; "...honey and milk where withal he gives them the nourishment of children," *Marc.* 1.14.

<sup>76</sup> *Marc.* 1.28.2; Eve-Marie Becker, "Taufe bei Marcion – eine Spurensuche," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity II* (ed. D. Hellholm et al. Berlin and Boston: DeGruyter), esp. 882-883.

claimed the Church did to some degree after Constantine;<sup>77</sup> instead, he wanted to make the differences clear.<sup>78</sup>

The historical situation and Tertullian's temperament partly explain why his advice to new Christians was so clear-cut. However, the fundamental idea behind Tertullian's numerous detailed rules on how to live as a Christian in a non-Christian environment was theological. It was the question of whom one worships. For him, idolatry was the main problem of humankind (*Idol.* 1). It was the root for all crimes and sins. This conviction was, therefore, formative for his theology.

Tertullian offered detailed instruction on doctrine, religious practices and everyday life-style to newly converted Christians. The doctrinal content of belief, summarized in the *regula fidei*, was - for him - the basis in light of which everything in the life of a Christian or a church should be evaluated. *Regula* - which he states has come from God and Christ to the apostles - is transmitted to following generations through the apostolic succession in the living liturgical and catechetical tradition of the Church.

The same emphasis on the divine origin of Christian instruction is also visible in Tertullian's teaching on the Lord's Prayer.<sup>79</sup> In *De oratione*, he makes it clear that the authority and the origin for both the content and the form of the Lord's Prayer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Son of God. Being God's spirit, reason and speech, Christ has determined a new form of prayer that reflects his own essence: both the power and the words and the meaning of the Lord's Prayer are dependent on him. Concerning other liturgical and devotional practices, Tertullian regards it as important to investigate the reasons and origins for them. He is well-aware that in many cases there were similar kinds of rituals in the traditional Roman religions and what he calls heretic communities (e.g. water rituals, prayer customs). If he could justify practices on the basis of Scripture, he usually did so. In other cases, he evaluated the practices from the point of view of the doctrine and tradition: he kept and encouraged those which were in accordance with the Scriptural faith and Christian tradition, while rejecting those which originated from pagan religions or reflected superstition. As a skilled rhetorician, he used different kinds of reasons to support his view. Scriptural arguments were, therefore, often reinforced with philosophical arguments, *natura, disciplina, traditio*.

How Christians ought to live and behave was always important for Tertullian, and it became a more central theme in his later writings. When he grew closer to the New Prophecy movement, his attitude towards certain liturgical practices, e.g. rules for fasting, possibility for a second repentance, and the Christian life-style became stricter,<sup>80</sup> but on matters of doctrine he did not essentially change his views. It was typical for Tertullian throughout his career to see Christian life as striving for victory, where one must always give one's best (*Cor.* 11, *Ux.* 1.3). He did not hesitate to exhort Christians to change their ways in accordance with the Christian faith. Characteristic too for Tertullian was to notice possible contradictions and to try to address the situation.

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<sup>77</sup> See Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 229; Louth, "Fiunt, non nascuntur," 110.

<sup>78</sup> Bradshaw (*Daily Prayer*, 213) has pointed out that in earlier scholarship it was usual to play down pagan influences on Christian practices.

<sup>79</sup> cf. *Praescr.* 21; 37.1; 13.6; *Apol.* 47.10. See Hägglund, *Sanningens regel*, 22.

<sup>80</sup> Influenced by New Prophecy movement, Tertullian thinks that the Paraclete teaches new things which have to do with the way of life (*Mon.* 2). Barnes, *Tertullian*, 135; Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church*, 42.

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