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## Project Description

### **The Language of Peace? – Military metaphors in the writings of Tertullian**

*Non conuenit sacramento diuino et humano, signo Christi et signo diaboli, castris lucis et castris tene-brarum; non potest una anima duobus deberi, deo et Caesari.*

"There is no agreement between standing under the divine and the human sacrament, under the stand-ard of Christ and that of the devil, in the camp of light and the camp of shadows; a single soul can-not be committed to two masters, Christ and the emperor." (Tert. idol. 19)<sup>1</sup>

The question, to what extent Christian commandments such as loving one's enemies or the strict renunciation of violence can be met by individual Christians in their specific historical circumstances, is raised already in some of the earliest Christian sources like the Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles. The appearance of Christian soldiers in the Roman army, which can be determined at the end of the 2nd century AD at the latest, surely gave this question even more significance.

A clear stance in this respect is taken by the early Christian writer Tertullian, quoted at the beginning, who speaks of an incompatibility of service in the "camp of light" (castra lucis) and in the "camp of shadows" (castra tenebrarum). In contrast to his fellow-believer Augustine of Hippo, who lived about two centuries later, Tertullian can still advocate such a strict separation of Christian religious service from secular military service. While Augustine, due to the in-creasing function of Christianity as an underpinning of the Roman state in the course of the 4th century, had to find a way to reconcile the theoretical principles of the Christian faith with the real necessity of warfare, the circumstances at the time of Tertullian were completely different: When he started to transfer Christian ideas from Greek into Latin (and so probably provided the most important foundation for the development of Church Latin) he could by no means foresee that in the next centuries Christianity would come into a position in which it had to make Roman warfare and its associated acts of violence plausible.

But to what extent are these historical conditions reflected in the Christian-influenced Latin language that Tertullian was only beginning to develop? How far is the separation of divine service and military service (associated with violence), which the author demands in the opening quotation, also implemented semantically? Can we speak of a "language of peace"? Or is Tertullian taking up the disposition to violence, which can already be detected to some extent in the New Testament?<sup>2</sup>

The project aims to investigate these questions by means of a detailed examination of the semantics and metaphors. Although the focus will be on Tertullian's oeuvre, an appropriate evaluation is only

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullianus, Quintus Septimius Florens: De idololatria. Critical text and commentary by Jan H. Waszink, Supplements to Vigiliae christianae 1, Leiden (u.a.) 1987 (own translation).

<sup>2</sup> See Luz, Ulrich: Feindesliebe und Gewaltverzicht. Zur Struktur und Problematik neutestamentlicher Friedensideen, in: Holzem, Andreas et al. (eds.): Krieg und Christentum. Religiöse Gewalttheorien in der Kriegserfahrung des Westens, Krieg in der Geschichte 50, Paderborn 2009, 137-149.

possible by comparing it with earlier and contemporary authors and by also taking into account the intellectual and cultural circumstances of the author's time.

A reasonable starting point of the investigation can be the literary topos of the *miles Christi*, which uses martial language to describe Christian religious service and not only appears in Tertullian's works but also in various other early, medieval and modern Christian sources.<sup>3</sup> How is this topos established by Tertullian? To what extent is the Christian soldier depicted as an initiator or a victim of violence? Is the metaphor in its first Latin configuration integrated into an aggressive way of speaking? In short: Are there different ways how to speak about Christian and non-Christian soldiers?

Helpful insights can be found in contemporary Metaphor Analysis. Metaphors can be de-scribed as language mechanisms that construct, illuminate and obscure contexts in order to guide thinking, acting and feeling. Thus, attitudes and values expressed in metaphors can provide information about how the author perceives himself and his environment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Brennecke, Hanns C.: s.v. *Militia Christi*, in: RGG 5 (2002), 1231-1233.

<sup>4</sup> See Schmitt, Rudolf: *Metaphernanalyse*, in: Mey, Gunter/Mruck, Katja (eds.): *Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie*, Wiesbaden 2010, 5-10.