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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS: THE MARTYR
AND APOLOGETIC TEXTS FROM THE 2ND CENTURY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of a research undertaken by Kwaku Boamah under the supervision of Rev. Fr. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa, Prof. Jakob Engberg and Rev. Fr. Prof. Chris Thomas towards the award of PhD Religions at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

Some Christian expression present in music, sermons and life styles of contemporary Ghanaian preachers suggest that once a person becomes a Christian they will not face predicaments such as sickness, barrenness and pains. However, in reference to Christian history, there is no Christianity without a cross; in essence, suffering is part of the Christian tradition and theology. It is important therefore to reminisce from the examples and from the history of the early Christians and the coming of Christianity to Ghana how contemporary Ghanaian Christians can deal with the question of suffering. In its early history, Christians were subjected to persecutions and martyrdoms at the hands of the Romans. The character of these persecutions and the motives of the persecutors are “classic” issues that have been debated over the centuries in ancient history, theology, religious studies, classical philology and legal history. Traditionally, most studies on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire have employed the martyr narratives and pagan texts as sources while references to apologetic literature are found only sparingly. In the martyr-texts the Christian author’s projected images of the persecutions and presented that image to their Christian readers in order to console and make sense of suffering. Similarly, contemporary apologetic texts projected images of suffering and persecution. However little is noted of scholars who have attempted to compare the contemporary images projected in these two types of texts, and no one has done so systematically. It is debated in scholarship whether the apologists were defending against ‘real’ accusations raised by the outsiders or whether they invented accusations as a pretext for promoting their own ideas. Additionally, it is claimed by many scholars that the apologies addressed to authorities were not intended for submissions to their addresses. How does the martyr and apologetic texts corroborate, supplement or contradict each other in regard to the images of the persecution and martyrdom of the early

Christians the two types of text promote? This question is best addressed when the martyr and apologetic sources are compared systematically.

This comparison is relevant because the two types of texts emerge as different Christian responses to the hostilities against the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Both kinds of texts emerged as crisis literature, born out of the persecutions and martyrdom, from the same geographical area and written during the same decades. The two types of texts were however addressed to different audiences, the martyr-texts implicitly or explicitly to Christian readers, the apologetic texts to outsiders (Roman magistrates or emperors on the one hand and the general public on the other). Based on this, my thesis is that a detailed and minute agreement in the image projected by the two types of texts will suggest that both kinds of texts do reflect the actual character of the persecutions; but at the same time suggests that the addressing of the apologetic texts to outsiders was a literary “fiction” since the authors obviously found no need to target their addresses. Conversely, if there is little agreement in the image projected, this suggests that images of persecution and martyrdom were constructed at liberty by the authors and fashioned to serve different rhetoric and ideological purposes aimed at specific inside and outside audiences. The “balance” is stuck, if the study reveals a general agreement in the image projected by the two types of texts with some detailed differences that can be argued to be based on the authors’ consideration for their respective audiences. If such a general agreement with detailed changes is found, it will arguably show, that the image projected is generally accurate, and it will show that the two types of texts were intended for different audiences. Two distinct, but each of them formative and challenging and therefore on some level comparable (in the sense that they may be fruitfully compared with a view to both differences and similarities), periods will be studied. The main effort is devoted to a study of texts written in the mid-second to early third centuries of the Roman Empire, for

comparison the missionary period of Ghanaian church history and how persecution and martyrdom in this period is presented is also studied.

The main purpose of this dissertation was to systematically compare the early Christian martyr-literature to the early Christian apologetic literature in order to investigate if these sources corroborate, supplement or even contradict their pictures of the character of the persecutions and the motives of the persecutors. Furthermore, it was the purpose to discuss the submission status of the apologetic texts, i.e. were those texts that were addressed to emperors and magistrates really intended for submission.. This project therefore surveys the picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed in the martyr and apologetic texts, and it discusses texts presenting an image of persecution and martyrdom in the missionary history of Ghana, and it discusses the relevance of these texts to Ghanaian Christianity.

The objectives of this study are attained through a systematic comparison of the texts both internally (i.e. martyr texts are compared to martyr texts and apologetic texts are compared to apologetic texts) and externally (martyr texts are compared to apologetic texts) to identify their similarities and differences in relation to the image they project of the persecutions, the persecutors and their motives. The texts are analyzed by adopting the literary critical method in studying the rhetorical features of persuasions by focusing on the speakers, audience, context and the discourse of the texts. In this way, the texts are each divided into two different sub-categories and compared internally and externally at three levels that I have termed; harmony, synthesis and a fusion. The objective was to find out if the two classes of texts when compared corroborate, supplement or even contradict themselves. These methods also help to scientifically determine the submission status of the apologetic texts to their addresses especially the authorities. In view of these methods, the internal and external comparisons showed that the apologetic texts are useful sources for the study of the

persecution and martyrdom of the early church. More importantly, the methods employed showed that even though there are some nuances (pointing to different audiences) between the texts, the two type of accounts do not contradict but rather provide evidence and support each other. Additionally, regarding the submission status of the apologies, it is argued that those apologies that were addressed to the authorities were intended for submission. This conclusion is based on the nuances in the internal comparison within the apologetic texts and in the external comparison with the martyr texts. The subject of the persecution and martyrdom is also an African story where there are examples of hostilities especially from the missionary era. Both historical contexts offer some lessons and perspectives for the contemporary African Christians who may suffer, but who recently face a prosperity gospel out of tune with the roots of Christianity (also in Ghana)..

The project contributes to academic study in many respects. The novelty in the methods, sources and contextualization of the African examples, break grounds in the studies of the persecution and martyrdom of Christians. The study offers a paradigm shift in academia where scholars are encouraged to use both genres of texts to explore the hostilities against the Christians because the texts lend credence and complement one another. The methods adopted in this study scientifically suggest that the texts were intended to receive the attention of their addresses. Moreover, it is clear from the studies that the subject of the persecution and martyrdom is very relevant to Africa. The attempt to compare the early beginnings of Christianity in the Roman and African contexts is a novelty.

Keywords: Persecution, Martyrdom, Comparison, Apologetics, Early Christians.

DEDICATION

To the many who have suffered and died for the Cross as well as those who keep on suffering today and are ready to die for the course of the Gospel.

Also to Hon. Prof. Ato Essuman and family, my Parents Mr. And Mrs. Appiah Kubi and Mr. and Mrs. Adueni-Kuffo, Siblings, Mentors and most of all my wife (Catherine Boamah) including our boys (Polycarp Appiah-Kubi Boamah and Tertullian Boahen Boamah)

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.0 Background of the Study

Contemporary Christian expression suggests that when a person becomes a Christian, all the challenges of life such as sickness, pain, barrenness, anguish and perplexities are `rolled away`. To this extent many a Christian comes to the faith with the assumption that Christianity is a bed of roses and service on a gold plate. This idea is reflected in the theme of many Christian evangelistic crusades as `Jesus is the Answer` indicative that when a person becomes a Christian all the questions of life are answered. Again, Christian music and videos address similar idea of Christianity representing the best of life. In recent times, a Ghanaian gospel singer Christiana Love sings `*enkani na misu nnuoma - in the past, I was carrying a heavy luggage*` and Ama Boahema sings this same theme, where she is molested, homeless and in pain but in her destitution she becomes a Christian and all of a sudden she owns cars, buildings and has a good job. What worsen the situation are preachers of today who dress and say that if a Christian is not living flamboyantly then they are no Christians because Christians must live without wants since their Father in heaven is the source of all wealth. This leads to a situation of breeding Christians whose attention is on experience without a history thereby becoming emotional in their expressions. To this extent, the contemporary Ghanaian Christian expression owing to its affinity to the prosperity theology has little space for suffering.

This picture of Christianity certainly raises a lot of questions such as; is this really the case, where on becoming a Christian every problem is wiped away? Can there be a Christianity without the cross? What has been the Christian experience? It is without a doubt that where ever the gospel had begun, the Christians have shed their blood. When Jesus begun the Christian movement he had to die, the early apostles died because of their faith and the

situation could not be any different, when the message of the cross was presented in Africa. It is therefore imperative for contemporary Christians to learn from the examples of the early church in dealing with predicaments of the Christians today.

The emergence of the Christian movement in the early Roman Empire included persecution and martyrdom of varying kinds. The widespread nature of the hostilities against the early Christians influenced Herbert Musurillo to argue that “No study of the church can be complete without a discussion of the Acts of the early Christian Martyrs.”¹ This statement when juxtaposed to Tertullian’s earlier assertion that “the blood of Christians is seed”² affirms the significance of the persecution and martyrdom to Christian development. The motivation for this project therefore is built on curiosity: an urge to discover what the Christians knew, thought and said about the motives of their oppressors, how they portrayed their persecutors and presented the character of the persecution.

In the event of the persecution and martyrdom, the Christians resorted to writing texts which included the martyr narratives and the apologetic texts. This implies that the martyr and apologetic texts are both crises literature influenced by the same context. However, traditional scholarship has generally favored the martyr narratives on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians against the apologetic text. The apologetic and martyr texts introduce the different reactions of Christians to the charges against them therefore; a systematic comparison is not only necessary but crucial. Already Jakob Engberg has called for a comparative study between the martyr and apologetic texts for a better appreciation of the nature of the hostilities against the Christians.³ The apologetic texts, compared to the martyr texts, are not often used for exploration on the persecution and

¹Herbert Musurillo, trans. *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), xi. All the martyr texts used in this study are from this translation, if any different source is used, it shall be indicated.

²T. R. Glover, trans. *Tertullian Apology De Spectaculis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), Apologeticum 50:13

³Jakob Engberg, “‘Truth Begg No Favours’ -Martyr-Literature and Apologetics,” in *Critique and Apologetics. Jews, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity*, eds. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jorg Ulrich and David Brakke (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 181.

martyrdom of the Christians. Although Ste. Croix and a few scholars have made scattered references to famous passages from a few apologetic texts,⁴ there have been no systematic and comparative studies of the hostilities that emerge in the martyr texts with those that emerge from a study of the apologetic texts. When such a study is commenced, it may potentially corroborate or supplement and even contradict the picture that emerges from the martyr accounts regarding the nature of the persecution.

Additionally, the apologetic texts that were addressed to Roman authorities have generated debate among scholars. Whereas some scholars argue that addressing the texts to the Roman authorities was only a literary device, intended to heighten interest in the text through the employment of such prominent addressees,⁵ others also suggest that the writing of small books on different issues to Emperors and Magistrates was one of the standard forms of communication in the governing structure of the Roman Empire.⁶ It is hence desirable to establish the submission status of such apologetic texts.

The ancient Christian ideals of suffering for the faith and responding to accusations are not peculiar to the early church. This tradition continues to inspire in the modern day African church, where Christians still face persecution and violent deaths. In Ghana, there are closely knitted examples of hostilities against missionaries especially during the missionary era which are similar to the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. There are examples like the case of a Presbyterian local agent Samuel Otu,⁷ disruption of the activities

⁴G. E. M de Ste. Croix “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?” *Past and Present* 26 (1963): 9, 23.

⁵Anders-Christian Jacobsen “Apologetics and Apologies-Some Definitions” in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics*, eds. Jorg Ulrich, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Kahlos, Maijastina (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 13-17.

⁶Jakob Engberg “Condemnation, Criticism and Consternation: Contemporary Pagan Authors` Assessment of Christians and Christianity” in *In Defence of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jorg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 201-203.

⁷Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books,1992) 115; Fred Agyemang, *Ghana` First Christian Martyr: Samuel Otu 1870-1900*. (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1989); Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brief Biography of the Late Samuel Otu (1870-1900) Ghana First Christian Martyr* (Tachimantia: Godson Printing and Multimedia Centre), 2000.

of Augustinian Catholic Fathers in 1576 at Komenda and Efutu⁸ as well as two Presbyterian maidens at Mamfe.⁹ Consequently, it is relevant to explore the subject of the persecution and martyrdom as an African story. Although the concept of Christians facing some socio-economic losses because of their faith is still prevalent today in Ghana and other parts of the world, some preachers and the expression of Christian faith today make it seem that Christianity is devoid of suffering. This is largely attributed to the propagation of the prosperity gospel mainly started by a section of the Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries.¹⁰ These preachers tell their congregations that a Christian should not fall sick, lose their job, be unemployed or live in poverty. Traditional Christian accounts of suffering of the just from the passion narratives of Christ in the gospels (Mark 13:15-47; John 19:16-42; Matthew 27:26-66; Luke 23:24-56), over the accounts of Paul and the apostles' tribulations in Acts (II Corinthians 11: 16-33; Acts 12) and to the early Christian martyr texts highlight how such a prosperity-teaching is out of touch with texts and traditions that are fundamental to Christianity in both its global and African context.¹¹ Jesus suffered at the hands of the Romans, the early Christians suffered also and almost everywhere the Christian faith has been started the first Christians have suffered to the extent of some having to shed their blood for the faith. Even today, such sufferings are still ongoing years after the establishment of the faith, what then can the Ghanaian Christian today learn from how the early Christians faced these similar hostilities in their times?

This study examines important aspects of how the early Christians reacted to persecution. Specifically, the project investigates and compares how the early Christians presented the

⁸Hans Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 27; Ralf Witgen, *Gold Coast Mission History* (Techny: Divine Word Publications, 1956), 20-25; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 26-27.

⁹Opoku Theophilus, *Mamfe Missionary Report*, 1891, 15.2.

¹⁰Andreas Heuser, "Religio-Scapes of Prosperity Gospel: an Introduction" in *Pleasure of Plenty: Tracing Religio-Scapes of Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond*, ed. Heuser, Andreas (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lange, 2010), 17-24.

¹¹Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind. Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Dowers Grove: Intervarsity Press books, 2007), 117.

character of the persecution, the identity of the persecutors and the motives of the opponents in two types of early Christian literature, the apologetic texts and the martyr texts. The study focuses from the mid-second to early third century as well as the Christian missionary era in Ghana. This focus was motivated both by the pragmatic need to limit the work to what is manageable in a PhD-dissertation and by the fact that the two types of texts investigated emerged in this period. It is hoped that such a study will pave the way for a more informed debate on the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians as such – a debate that to a higher degree and more systematically take the apologetic texts into account. This research also seeks to determine the submission status of apologetic texts to their intended addresses. Furthermore, the dissertation explores some examples of hostilities against European and African missionaries similar to the plight of the early Christian, to determine the relevance of the persecution and martyrdom to Ghanaian Christianity. Additionally, the study reflects on the strategies of the early church in dealing with the sufferings they were faced as evident from the texts to help the Ghanaian Christian deal with current predicaments of suffering. This is in order to assess if and how the responses to suffering, persecution and martyrdom in the early Christian apologetic texts and martyr texts along with the memory of suffering, persecution and martyrdom in the missionary age in Africa may have relevance for African Christianity in today's age.

The problem of this project is from an observation from scholarship that most scholars have tried to answer questions on how and why the Christians were persecuted and martyred based on the martyr texts largely. Sherwin-White for instance raises questions against Ste. Croix for using the apologetic texts to address issues related to the persecution and martyrdom of Christians,¹² thereby suggesting that the apologetic texts are no useful source for understanding the persecution and martyrdom of the early christens. The reliance on the

¹²A. N. Sherwin-White "The Early Persecutions and Roman Law Again" *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1954): 207-212; Ste. Croix "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?"²³

martyr texts alone has left a gap on the usefulness of the apologetic texts which provide responses of the Christians to the hostilities. This approach has resulted in an unsystematic discussion of the trustworthiness of the different kinds of sources, which have raised some questions such as: Were the apologies ever forwarded to the Emperors or Governors they were addressed to? Do the apologetic texts reflect `real` knowledge of the issues raised by outsiders? Were the apologetic texts intended for an outside audience? In light of these issues, this thesis seeks to investigate how these genres of texts from the same context corroborate, supplement or even contradict each other on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom? Furthermore, from a contemporary Ghanaian perspective where christian expression is quite emotional due to the prosperity theology, comparing the two beginnings of the church in the Roman and Ghanaian missionary contexts, what reflections are there for the the Ghanaian Christian today in dealing with current predicaments.

1.1 Objectives

The main objective for the project is: to examine the image of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed in the martyr and apologetic texts as well as the relevance of these texts to Ghanaian Christianity. These are segmented as:

1. To weigh against each other, the portrait of the hostilities presented in the apologetic texts as corroborative, supplementary or contradictive to the martyr narratives.
2. To establish the submission status of the apologies.
3. To explore some examples of persecution and martyrdom in Ghanaian Christian history especially during the missionary period.
4. To assess lessons from the martyr and apologetic texts as relevant for dealing with sufferings today by the Ghanaian Christians.

1.2 Research Questions

The main question that guides this research is: What image of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians is promoted in the martyr and apologetic texts including the relevance of the engagements of these texts to Ghanaian Christianity? This major question is broken into sub-questions;

1. When the two genres of texts are compared internally and externally, how do they show different foci or significant overlaps, nuances and/or contradictions?
2. What features of the texts after the comparisons may suggest the apologies were intended for submission or otherwise?
3. Compared to the Ghanaian missionary period, what examples of hostilities can be found similar to the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire?
4. How should the Ghanaian Christian respond to suffering based on reflections from the martyr and apologetic texts?

1.3 Literature Review

Why were the Romans hostile to the early Christians? Who was involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians? On what legal basis were the Christians persecuted and martyred? These and many more questions have been engaged by scholars on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire.

The review of existing literature in this section has two main parts; firstly, to review existing scholarly research on the hostilities against the early Christians and secondly due to the some Christian expression in Ghana, there are reviews of studies on the prosperity gospel especially in Africa. The review on the prosperity theology is important because many a Ghanaian Christians profess a Christianity without the cross. For the purposes of assembling what scholars have done in relation to the hostilities against the early church, scholarly

engagement on the context of the Roman Empire is evaluated to affirm some of the conditions that gave rise to the hostilities against the Christians. Furthermore, scholarly positions on persecution and martyrdom based largely on the use of the martyr texts and texts written by outsiders on the Christians are presented. Moreover, scholarly debates with regards to the addressees of the apologetic texts, as well as some of the charges against the Christians in these texts are explored. In addition, scholarly investigations into a possible relationship between the martyr and apologetic texts are also scrutinised. In general, the literature review in this part emphasises the usefulness of both types of texts in determining the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire.

From the African viewpoint, the review tries to trace the emergence of the prosperity gospel in Africa. Both parts of the literature review confirm a research gap in scholarly discoveries regarding the hostilities against the early Christians due to the unsystematic application of the apologetic texts. The review of literature on the prosperity gospel shows the gap in Ghanaian Christian expression where many Christians live experience without a history; a suffering free faith, which demonstrate the relevance of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians to African Christianity.

1.3.1 The Roman Religiosity

Scholarship on the context of the Roman Empire affirms that the Romans were very particular of their religion, though they were polytheistic.¹³ Very often, their reaction to foreign religion wavered between reception and rejection. For example, Mary Beard, Joseph North and Simon Price suggests that their polytheistic nature allowed them to import Magna Mater¹⁴ into the Roman pantheon of gods when they perceived a need for her help during war

¹³Jakob Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto: Opposition to Christianity in the Roman Empire c. 50-250 AD* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007): 70-71.

¹⁴ Mary Beard, Joseph North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80, Magna Mater was from Asia Minor and was also called Cybele.

in the 3rd century BC. However, their suspicious nature towards other religions caused them to modify some aspects of these imported gods to help them situate the gods in the Roman worldview.¹⁵ They had concepts for accepted religiosity– “*religio*” which honours the gods and “*superstitio*” which dishonoured or wronged the gods.¹⁶ A religion that is seen as a threat to the political, moral, social and economic fabric of the Roman society is suppressed because it is *superstitio*.¹⁷ Christianity was seen as a foreign religion therefore until around the 4th Century, many Christians suffered all forms of oppression and even death.¹⁸ The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians took place in both Rome and in the provinces of the Roman Empire.

Why were the Christians persecuted? What motivated the Roman authorities and the general public in the opposition? What were the Christians accused of and on what legal grounds were the Christians persecuted? These questions are to an extent answered in traditional scholarship based mainly on the martyr texts and on texts written by pagan authors about the Christians. However, when compared systematically to the apologetic texts, such a comparison might help to ascertain whether it will be productive in the future to make systematic and comprehensive use of the apologetic texts when studying the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians.¹⁹ Nonetheless, it is imperative to know what scholars have identified so far on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in their predominant use of the martyr texts and the pagan texts written about the Christians.

¹⁵ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 212 when Magna Mater was transported to Rome, there were major modifications to suite the Roman context when it was introduced such as the changing of name among others. Furthermore, Roman polytheism does not suggest an all embracing attitude to any religious practice.

¹⁶ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 215-219.

¹⁷ Ibid, 95-99, Such as the cult of Bacchus in 186 BC because of some perceived sexual and moral depravity.

¹⁸ Ibid, 365-366.

¹⁹ What is meant by external and internal comparison will be explained below.

1.3.2 Nature of the Persecution and Martyrdom - Martyr Texts

Persecution and martyrdom in this study embody the hostilities meted out to Christians from the early second century to about the mid-third century. Persecution may include mocking, torturing, whipping and other discomforting treatments against a person but may exclude death. It is important to stress that there is a thin line between persecution and martyrdom. Persecution may lead to martyrdom where death is concerned. John S. Pobee provides two definitions of the word martyr; the first relates to suffering while the second relate to the motive of the sufferer thus why the sufferer accepts to go through the suffering. He maintains that martyrdom should be in accordance with an acceptance in order to be a `witness to God`.²⁰ Therefore, influenced by these two principles he defines a martyr as "...one who comes into suffering as a result of his zealous devotion to God."²¹ The second definition which seeks to explain the `devotion to God` says, "A martyr is a zealous devotee of God, who is willing and able to undergo suffering because of his deep-rooted conviction that the Almighty God is the ultimate authority and ruler of the world who alone matters."²²

I have earlier argued that there cannot be discussions about persecution or martyrdom without an authority behind it.²³ In the Acts of the Apostles, there are instances of popular hostility without any authority involved (Acts 14:19-20; 19:21-41) as well as instances where local non-Roman authorities such as Jewish authorities, provincial governors and Roman client kings are involved. Again, in the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions, where regional Roman authorities were involved, the magistrate ruled that the condemned Christians should be executed on the birthday of the Emperor believing it would please the Emperor to have them killed.²⁴ Another instance can be extracted from the Acts of the Apostle where Paul was

²⁰John S. Pobee. *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*. (Sheffield: JSOT Press ,1985), 24.

²¹Pobee, "Persecution and Martyrdom" 24.

²²Ibid, 34.

²³Kwaku Boamah, *Magic and Obstnacy of the early Christians: Persecutions and Martyrdoms in the Roman Empire* (Saarbruken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), 17, 44-46.

²⁴Martyrdom of Perpetua 16: 3.

stoned and assumed to be dead but later got up and continued his work (Acts 14:19-28). This incident makes the distinction between persecution and martyrdom quite difficult. In the eyes of those who stoned him, Paul was dead (martyred) but to the disciples, he was just stoned and did not die (persecuted).

It is therefore not easy to give a precise definition or draw a clear cut distinction between persecution and martyrdom. However, to a large extent persecution does not necessarily lead to death – but martyrdom relates to death as a result of a person's belief. Owing to the sanctity of life, people do not find pleasure in murder hence the unending aggression of the Roman authorities towards the early Christians seems questionable. It is therefore crucial to pose a few questions in this section. How well did the non-Christians know the Christian sect? Why were the non-Christians hostile? The actions of the oppressors could be attributed to their perception of the Christian faith and practices. It is therefore right to try to assess the perceptions of the non-Christians based on some Christian and non-Christian texts in circulation around the period.

a. Allegations and Charges

Scholars have noted that the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians were based on various charges and allegations.²⁵ The Christians were not accused of any single offence but as having purported multiple crimes which included ungodliness, superstition, immorality, secret gatherings and rebellions amongst others.²⁶

²⁵ A. N. Sherwin-White "The Early Persecutions and Roman Law Again" *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1952): 207-212; Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?," 6-38; G. E. M de Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted? – A Rejoinder," *Past and Present* 27 (1964): 28-33; Joseph Walsh "On Christian Atheism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 255-277.

²⁶ Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 187-201, L. F. Janssen, "Superstitio and the Persecution of the Christians," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 131-159, Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions", 772-787; Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?" 6-38; Walsh "On Christian Atheism," 255-277.

Benko suggests that the Christians were not punished for any vice in particular but because of the name “Christian” which was associated with all these social vices.²⁷ The name Christian was associated with abominable practices such as cannibalism and incest.²⁸ This accusation was fuelled because Christians often met in secret places and under the cover of darkness.²⁹ The charge of being incestuous was influenced by Christian signs and ritual behaviours like giving each other holy kisses and yet referring to one another as ‘brothers and sisters’. This warranted the accusation of incest, because if a person engages in a romantic act (such as kisses) with a brother or sister then it is only described as incest.³⁰ The accusation of cannibalism was due to the Christian celebration of the Eucharist.³¹ The Christians said they were taking the body and blood of their crucified Saviour. Cannibals eat the flesh and drink the blood of another; therefore, the ascription of Christians as cannibals. Benko and Engberg argue that, the accusation that Christians are cannibals and incestuous contributed to the branding of Christianity as superstitious, which agrees with the conviction that the Christians were magicians.³² Benko suggests that the pagans believed that only mischievous people who had something to hide would resort to secrecy; and this was the hallmark of magicians.³³

Furthermore ‘*Superstitio*’ was one of the greatest charges against the Christians and this has been at the centre of the discussions among scholars. Beard, North and Price show the relationship between ‘*religio*’ and ‘*superstitio*’ and discuss how the Romans used these terms when drawing the distinction between correct and/or improper religious behaviour. “*Religio*” was an aspect of a Roman’s self-description while “*superstitio*” was often a spur against

²⁷Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and Early Christian* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 1-29.

²⁸Benko, *Pagan Rome* 54-74, Walsh, “On Christian Atheism,” 264-267, Engberg *Impulsore Chresto*, 187-191, Sherwin-White, “Why were the Early Christians persecuted?” 23-24.

²⁹*Ibid*, 10-11, 24.

³⁰*Ibid*, 79-98.

³¹*Ibid*, 60-61.

³²*Ibid*, 11, Engberg *Impulsore Chresto*, 306-313.

³³*Ibid*, 10-11.

others”.³⁴ However, Beard, North and Price also show that “*superstitio*”, far from being a false religion, could be seen as an extremely powerful and dangerous practice which threatens the stability of “*religio*” and the state.”³⁵ Wilken defines “*superstitio*” as “beliefs and practices that were foreign and strange to the Romans.”³⁶ Janssen contrast the ancient perception of superstition as something harmful with the modern where “in our opinion superstition is something quite silly, but harmless; we laugh at those who yield to it, but the mockery is always tinged with compassion.”³⁷ Wilken states

According to Plutarch, superstition sets people apart from the rest of society because the superstitious person does not use his intelligence in thinking about the gods...leads to bizarre and extreme behaviour...superstition leads to irrational ideas about the gods...³⁸

Janssen asserts that *superstitio* was like an infectious disease, a *tabum* that spread more and more; by its very contagiousness and became real danger to mankind.”³⁹ This shows that *superstitio* is more of an epidemic disease, which must not be ignored.

Another important charge against the Christians was their obstinacy. This charge describes the Christians as haters of order, revolutionary and apostates. Pliny found the Christians to be full of “stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy”⁴⁰ which must not go unpunished. This charge stands tall especially in the 3rd century.⁴¹ The Latin word which means obstinacy is ‘*contumacia*’ which may also mean ‘defiance, insolence, liability, or insult.’ Boamah argues that the accused Christians were obstinate due to the visions they are believed to have seen.⁴²

His argument stems from his observation that most of the martyrs, including Polycarp, Perpetua and Stephen, are said to have seen some kind of vision before or during their

³⁴ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 215.

³⁵ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 217.

³⁶ Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), 50.

³⁷ Janssen, “Superstitio and Persecution,” 134.

³⁸ Wilken, *The Christians*, 61.

³⁹ Janssen, “Superstitio and Persecution,” 138.

⁴⁰ Betty Radice, trans. *Pliny to the Emperor Trajan*. in *Pliny Letters and Panegyricus* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1969), Pliny, 10:96,3.

⁴¹ Engberg *Impulsore Chresto* 191-193.

⁴² Boamah *Magic and Obstinacy* 104-128.

martyrdoms. The visions must have communicated something to these Christians because most of these visions had a common feature of being eschatological.⁴³ This therefore made the Christians resolute in their faith and this translated into stubbornness or disrespect where the Romans were concerned.⁴⁴ In the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions when they were arrested and imprisoned, the victims requested from Perpetua to see a vision because she is gifted with the gift of seeing visions.⁴⁵ When she eventually saw the vision which communicated to them that they were going to die, it influenced their obstinacy because their fate was already revealed to them by God and even more that their death would mean their conquest of the devil.⁴⁶

Concluding the discussions on the charges against the Christians in scholarly writings thus far, the arguments can be put into two groups. Some scholars believe that the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians were based on multiple allegations while others believe that they were based on a single allegation. Those who belong to the single allegation theory include Ste. Croix, Janssen and Sherwin-White. Ste. Croix believes the charge of ungodliness finds expression throughout.⁴⁷ To him therefore, the charge of ungodliness is tied to the charge of *superstitio* because the ungodliness of the Christians gave rise to their being described as *superstitio*. To Ste. Croix, the Christians were persecuted not for what they did but what they didn't do. Janssen argues that the ultimate charge of *superstitio* encouraged the non-Christians in their actions.⁴⁸

Although Sherwin-White believes in the mono-causal theory, he asserts that it is dispensational.⁴⁹ Thus in each dispensation there is only one charge against the Christians. He provides evidence to the effect that up until the 2nd century, the reason for the persecution and

⁴³Boamah *Magic and Obstinacy* 118-128.

⁴⁴ibid

⁴⁵Martyrdom of Perpetua 4:1.

⁴⁶Boamah *Magic and Obstinacy* 123-125.

⁴⁷Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?" 6-38.

⁴⁸Janssen, "Superstitio and the Persecution" 131-159

⁴⁹Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions", 772-787

martyrdom was the perceived immoral acts of the Christians which included incest and cannibalism. Yet, further in a transitional period between the second and mid-second century, the charge changed to Christian obstinacy. During this period the Christian's hostility was fuelled by their disregard of stubbornness towards the authorities. Sherwin-White further argues that after the mid 2nd century, the reason for the hostilities shifted to the perception of the ungodliness of the Christians.

The second category of scholars who believe in multiple charges include Walsh, Benko and Engberg.⁵⁰ Walsh on his part argues strongly against the mono-causal theory but agrees with Sherwin-White's assertion that after the mid-second century, ungodliness was the main charge.⁵¹ However, he disagrees with him by suggesting that Christian immorality such as debauchery equally played an important role in persecution and martyrdom. Benko, on his part, argues that the main charges against the Christians were immorality, cannibalism and their name.⁵² There were a cluster of reasons which gave room for the hostilities against the Christians. Engberg believes that the mono-causal argument cannot stand and thereby acknowledges that there were smaller charges embedded in the major charges.⁵³ He argues that the most important charges were those of *superstitio* and ungodliness. For instance, an ungodly person who does not honour and respect the gods is also likely to be obstinate to authorities or parents, as well as show a lack respect for the laws and norms of the society. His position is based on both Christian and non-Christian texts. *Superstitio* is prominent in pagan texts while the Christian texts project the charge of ungodliness.

All these arguments make it clear that the charges of ungodliness, *superstitio*, name, obstinacy and magic can be seen as very important in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. Pobebe has, therefore, identified that persecution and martyrdom manifests

⁵⁰Walsh, "On Christian Atheism", 256-262; Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 10-11; Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 187-201

⁵¹Walsh, "On Christian Atheism", 261

⁵²Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 1-24

⁵³Engberg *Impulsore Chresto*, 173-176.

itself in eight different forms.⁵⁴ He discusses forms such as those that took place in the arena of the amphitheatre which include crucifixion, use of the sword, stoning, burning, imprisonment, expulsion or excommunication and corporal punishment. These identified forms show that the suffering of the Christians and the manner of death was not honourable especially in the sight of the persecutors because the forms of the persecutions are linked to the charges that are levelled against them.

In view of the objectives of this project, a catalogue of the charges raised in the martyr and apologetic texts are investigated. These charges are compared with each other in order to project a comprehensive picture of the charges levelled against the early Christians according to the Christian texts. This study also included an investigation and comparison of how the Christians defended themselves against the charges and misconceptions levelled against them. It is also relevant to query the legal basis for the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as presented in the two types of Christian texts.

b. Legal Basis of the Persecution and Martyrdom

The legality of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians has been discussed among scholars over the years.⁵⁵ The main questions are: was there any specific law against the Christians? What judicial procedure did the Christians face? These questions have resulted in several schools of thought. The real question is whether there was a specific law against the Christians or Christianity. This question is based on the premise that the hostility against the Christians was quite intensive, not just in Rome but even in other parts of the empire. Furthermore, apart from the authorities of the Roman Empire, other national assets

⁵⁴ Pobe, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 1-12.

⁵⁵ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 199-213; Sherwin-White "Why were the Early Christians persecuted?" 23-27; A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny. A Historical and Social Commentary*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 691-712, Ste. Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?" 28-33; Timothy D. Barnes, "Legislation Against the Christians," *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 32-50.

such as the soldiers, colosseum and amphitheatre etc. could not have been employed if there was no basis or backing for their use by some authorities of the empire or province.⁵⁶

Sherwin-White, Ste. Croix and Barnes do not agree that there was a specific law banning Christianity in the Roman Empire.⁵⁷ On the other hand, those who favour the specific law such as Keresztes puts forward a very important question based on Pliny`s decision to have the `faithful` Christian confessors put to death.⁵⁸ Keresztes argues that unlike the Christians, the Bacchanals, Druids and Isis, were referred to as `other superstition`; hence the Christians were punished differently from the others. The others were punished for particular vices unlike the Christians who were punished based on the charge of their being Christians.⁵⁹ Why then were the Christians opposed specially, if there was no specific legislation against them?

Sherwin-White discusses the positions taken by scholars with regards to the Roman attitude to the Christian communities (up until the third century and the Great Persecutions).⁶⁰ Two schools maintain that the Christians were prosecuted simply for being Christians (the *nomen*) – within these schools there are different theories regarding the underlying motives for the hostility towards Christianity. One of these schools, ascribing to the general law theory, maintains that this practise was based on a general law against Christianity.⁶¹ The other school maintain that no such law was required or existed – the practice for persecuting Christians simply developed and had its legal foundation in the power and legal rights of Roman magistrates to enforce order and set up trials.⁶² A third school holds that Christians

⁵⁶Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy* 44-45.

⁵⁷Sherwin-White “The Early Persecutions and Roman Law Again”207-212; Ste. Croix, “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?” 6-38; Barnes, “Legislation Against the Christians,” 32-50.

⁵⁸Paul Kereszets, “The Imperial Roman Government and the Christians Church: From Nero to the Severi”In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, eds. Temporini Hildegard and Haase Wolfgang (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 278.

⁵⁹Kereszets, “Imperial Rome Government,” 284.

⁶⁰Sherwin-White, “The Early Persecutions,”199.

⁶¹Sherwin-White, “The Early Persecutions,” 201-202

⁶²Sherwin-White, “The Early Persecutions,” 202

were not suppressed for being Christians, but only for specific crimes that they were believed to have committed.⁶³

The General Law School led by Callawaert and most French and Belgian scholars maintain that there was a law in the empire against Christianity. This school of thought holds that this law may have been enacted either by Nero or Domitian. However, scholars like Sherwin-White do not find enough evidence in support of the general law theory. Sherwin-White rather finds evidence of laws restraining the practice of Christianity only in Rome and not in the other provinces.⁶⁴ Ste. Croix also argues that there were no general edicts, not even “Tertullian’s notorious reference to an *‘Institutum Neronianum’* is evidence of this. Ste. Croix accepts that after 117 CE Trajan’s rescripts were published, and served as a guideline for (some) governors as a precedent, although it stresses that there were no general edicts.⁶⁵

The second school of thought supported by scholars such as Theodor Mommsen, is called the “*coercitio*” theory. Mommsen argued that the legal basis of the persecution was the Roman governor’s interest to preserve peace and order in their provinces. The “*jus coercitio*” theory implies, the legal basis for the persecution against the Christians had no reference to a specific law. Generally, most historians have supported the theory originally posted by Mommsen – that the Roman governors had the supreme power in their respective provinces to act without reference to any specific legislation but rather as they best saw fit. Sherwin-White for example agrees and substantiates this by adding that the sources do not give enough evidence for the ‘general law-theory’, and that those sources which could support this theory are only explaining persecutions restricted to Rome and do not include the situation in the provinces. Sherwin-White for example argues that enforcement of law often depended primarily on private initiative. Sherwin-White demonstrates that the evidence conclusively

⁶³Sherwin-White, “The Early Persecutions,” 199

⁶⁴Ibid, 202-203.

⁶⁵Ste. Croix “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?”14.

shows that the Christians faced not police-like action, but a formal legal process called, *cognition extra ordinem*.⁶⁶ It is a judicial process where the Governor plays the dual roles of an interrogator (examiner of the case) and a judge.

Conrat is one of the proponents of the third school of thought on the legal basis of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. This school holds that the Christians were charged based on anti-social acts that were prohibited by the Romans. The Christians were dealt with based on what the Romans called *scelera* (sin or crime), *flagitia* and *contumacia*.⁶⁷ Sherwin-White agrees with Last's solution that only part of the Christians behaviour was criminal and therefore forbidden (and suppressed). The development of this theory not only combines the two former positions, but also avoids the pitfalls in which they find themselves. On a general level, Ste. Croix agrees with Sherwin-White, but attempts to prove him wrong on one very important point, namely Pliny's shift from *flagitia*-accusations to *contumacia*-accusations.⁶⁸ Ste. Croix with reference to martyr reports - points to the *contumacia* as being the stubbornness in confessing three times that they were Christians,⁶⁹ and not as political obstinacy.

To sum up, Sherwin-White posits that there were no centrally coordinated persecutions of the Christians in the first centuries and that the policy was to deal with the cases individually, based on 'real' offences like *flagitia* and *contumacia*. Ste. Croix, like Sherwin-White and many other recent scholars (Engberg) maintain there was no law, specifically directed against the Christians.⁷⁰ However, Ste. Croix disagrees with Sherwin-White on the motive of the hostilities against the Christians. The most important reason, according to Ste. Croix, is that the authorities and the general public considered the Christians to be atheists who by their

⁶⁶Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 205-208

⁶⁷ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 210-212.

⁶⁸Ste. Croix "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?"18.

⁶⁹Ste. Croix "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?"19.

⁷⁰Ibid, 8-9.

actions would invoke the anger of the gods and destroy the good relationship that existed between the society and the gods.⁷¹ Engberg, though not too interested in the legal basis, argues that based on Pliny's (an experienced lawyer's) doubt, there may not have been a specific law against the Christians.⁷² This makes the attempt to understand the reasons why the Christians were persecuted and martyred relevant. To achieve this task, all the possible sources including the apologetic texts, must be employed. In this case therefore, the martyr and apologetic texts cannot be overlooked if this exploration will be worthwhile to all. Consequently, it is prudent to turn attention to what scholars have been discussing with regards to the apologetic texts which are useful for the advancement of this thesis.

1.3.3 Studies on the Apologetic Texts

The apologetic texts, in general, have received great attention from scholars though they are rarely systematically analysed as compared to other kinds of sources in studies that seek to understand the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. In this section, scholarly development regarding the apologetic genre and content as well as the audience or addressees and the charges and the apologists' response are discussed in view of the present project that seeks to understand the picture the Christians painted of the persecutions and of their persecutors.

a. Genre and Content of the Apologetic Texts

Many scholars have given great attention to definition of the apologetic texts. The 2nd century is described as a flourishing period of Christian apologetic writing.⁷³ It is crucial to define what makes up the genre of materials in this category of texts; however Anders Klostergaard Petersen laments the neglect of a definition of the apologetic genre by scholars

⁷¹Ibid, 24.

⁷²Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 174.

⁷³Loveday Alexander, "The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians* eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

in recent times.⁷⁴ He identifies that recent scholars have given up the attempt to find a critical definition because earlier efforts have proven futile. To this he holds that scholars need to have a clear understanding of what `genre` is when trying to understand the apologetic genre. He argues that the unsuccessful attempts at defining the apologetic genre is because of a lack of a clear universal understanding of `genre`. To be successful, genre should encompass content, form and characteristics which differentiate it from other group of texts.⁷⁵

Jacobsen agrees with this by saying genre should not only be about form but also the content and the intention of the text.⁷⁶ Petersen is quick to caution that the genre should not be seen as static but rather dynamic.⁷⁷ Influenced by Fowler, he suggests that “every literary work changes the genre it relates to ... by conformity, variation, innovation, or antagonism.”⁷⁸ He therefore holds that apologetic texts should be seen as a complex breed of text which has an aim to create identity for its in-group members.⁷⁹ Edward, Goodman, Price and Rowland borrowing from Conte maintain that a “genre should not be seen as a mechanical receipt-book for the production of text, but rather as a discursive form capable of constructing a coherent model of the world in its own image.”⁸⁰ The idea of apologetic as a mark of identity of a group of people is shared by many other scholars. Jacobsen for instance, cites Kahlos in support of Petersen`s emphasis on the role of apologetic texts as a tool of identity creation.⁸¹ The apologetic text therefore, helps to create their `otherliness` from other social and religious groups.

⁷⁴Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics: From Genre to a Mode of Thinking,” in *Critique and Apologetics. Jew, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity* eds. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jorg Ulrich and David Brakke (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 17-23.

⁷⁵Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics” 32.

⁷⁶ Jacobsen, “Apologetics and Apologies” 20.

⁷⁷Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics” 33.

⁷⁸Ibid, 33.

⁷⁹Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics” 16.

⁸⁰ Mark Edward, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland, “Introduction: Apologetics in the Roman World,” in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians* eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

⁸¹ Jacobsen, “Apologetics and Apologies,” 9.

In a similar light, Price equally posits that apologetics are about the creation and maintenance of boundaries.⁸² It is resounding to note that almost all scholars, including Petersen, Jacobsen, Young, Price, Cameron etc., maintain that it is not possible to define the apologetic genre.⁸³ Jacobsen rather supports Cameron who proposes that we define the category as an `apologetic method` where apology (defence) is used as a strategy or a method of argument.⁸⁴ For his part, in an attempt to stress the oral aspect of apology, Young says the apologetic genre takes the form of a `letter` but has a content `of defence` and assumes the model of a law court presentation.⁸⁵ Jacobsen and many others support the idea that, apologetics can be oral or can be written when a physical presence is impossible.⁸⁶

In light of these, the motivation of an apologetic text is important to scholars because the motivation is likely to influence the content, genre and strategy for the writing. Ulrich contributes to this discussion by identifying three factors for the rise of the apologetic texts.⁸⁷ The first reason for the apologetic text according to Ulrich is that the Christians believed they possessed certain absolute truths of life. The idea of an absolute truth is crucial for Christianity in order to show their uniqueness from other religions in the Greco-Roman empire. This truth fundamentally questioned the saving ability of the other religions. The second reason identified by Ulrich is that the apologists needed to clear misconceptions against Christianity by non-Christians and thirdly, martyrdom was an important factor. According to Ulrich, the authors argue against the charges levelled against the Christians and

⁸² Simon Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Cyprian," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians* eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105.

⁸³ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 18; Petersen, "The Diversity of Apologetics" 33; Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 113.

⁸⁴ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 19.

⁸⁵ Frances Young, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians* edited by Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 91.

⁸⁶ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 5.

⁸⁷ Jorg Ulrich, "Apologists and apologetics in the Second Century," in *In Defense of Christianity. Early Christian Apologists* eds. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Jorge Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 1-7.

they try to point to absurdities or anomalies in the procedures employed by the authorities in trials against Christians. This third reason for the composition of apologetic text as identified by Ulrich resonates with this project.

Jacobsen suggests that the apologetic texts cannot be defined by genre or addressee but on the basis and content of the text.⁸⁸ In agreement, Petersen, like many other scholars, proposes that the content of an apologetic text must have an element of defence. Petersen cites Anaximense who maintains that the defence must either prove their innocence or admit their guilt and prove they are backed by law, not guilty or seek forgiveness. Jacobsen argues against Petersen and remarks that his analysis of submitting defence as a definitive mark of an apologetic text is too fluid⁸⁹ since every text has an element of defence. Jacobsen adds that it is the intensity of the defence that makes it possible to classify the text as apologetic.⁹⁰ To Jacobsen, the defence is to answer some labelled attacks, which may be explicit or implicit (real or imagined).⁹¹ In agreement with other scholars such as Geffcken, Seeberg, Harnack and Adams; Jacobsen posits that apologetic texts have a double intention that is to defend and explain. The explanation is important because the Christians were a small group of people in the early Roman world who many non-Christians did not know about. This ignorance on the part of the non-Christians led to speculations, which needed to be explained to the public regarding who the Christians are and what they believe in.⁹²

Ulrich argue that this explanation is crucial because the non-Christians in some ways could not even differentiate between Christianity and Judaism.⁹³ He uses examples from Tacitus who thought of Christianity as *`chrestoi- virtuous`* from *christoi-* meaning anointed as well as Pliny who thought that the Christians were a political organisation. Apologetics, therefore,

⁸⁸ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 5.

⁹² Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 8.

⁹³ Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics," 4.

refute negative thoughts towards them by stating a defence and painting a positive picture of themselves via explanation. Petersen disagrees with Edwards, Goodman, Price and Rowland in their exclusion of polemics from the components of an apologetic text.⁹⁴ He posits that polemics may be an aggressive way to defend one's self against charges. However, Edwards, Goodman, Price and Rowland maintain that polemics may not necessarily be used to defend a previous charge by the oppressor.⁹⁵

Price also tries to distinguish between polemics and apologies by stating that polemics attack without showing any positive views while apologetics address out-group members by correcting misconceptions to present a positive view.⁹⁶ Ulrich who also believes apologetics may include polemics maintains that "All such polemics from the apologists should be understood in an eschatological context in relation to the addressees."⁹⁷ The arguments here show that polemics may be very important in an apologetic text. To this end, Jacobsen argues that the content of the apologetic style has four main argumentative strategies.⁹⁸ In the first place, the apologists adopt an ironic rhetorical approach. Secondly, they equate Christianity to best Greek traditions like philosophy. Thirdly, they cite examples from converted 'Greeks' to Christianity and finally they reject negative charges and advance positive explanation of Christianity. All these strategies are adopted to strongly foster the defensive elements in these apologetic texts.

It follows from the discussions that, there are no accepted boundaries for the texts called apologetics. Scholars have found their efforts to determine this boundary unsuccessful because the various texts that make up this category are diverse. However, almost all scholars

⁹⁴Petersen, "The Diversity of Apologetics" 30.

⁹⁵ Edward, Goodman, Price and Rowland, "Introduction: Apologetics," 1.

⁹⁶ Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 106.

⁹⁷ Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics," 21.

⁹⁸ Anders-Christian Jacobsen, "Main Topics in Early Christian Apologetics," in *Critique and Apologetics. Jew, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity*, eds. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jorge Ulrich and David Brake (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 102-106.

agree, that an apologetic text must be predominantly defensive in its approach. The obvious questions to ask at this stage are what they defend and to whom were these defences directed.

b. Addressees and Audience of the Apologetic Texts

A major feature of apologetic texts which makes it similar to letters is that they have addressees.⁹⁹ However, apologetic texts differ from letters in terms of the predominant defence content. Apologetic texts written by Christians are usually addressed to emperors, magistrates or the pagan public. The addressee of an apologetic text may in theory differ from or be identical with (to various degree overlap with) the intended audience of the text (who the author intends to read the text) and the actual audience (who in reality read the text).

The questions of the relationship between addressees and intended audiences of the apologetic texts have received much attention from scholars. It is interesting that Jacobsen argues that identification of the addressees of the apologetic text cannot help to identify the genre of the apologetic text.¹⁰⁰ His argument is grounded on the premise that, the explicit addressees of the apologetic texts should not deceive scholarship that they are the only intended audience of the text – the intended audience may be wider or even different from the addressees. Jacobsen argues that although in most cases, the explicit addressees of the texts may either be Emperors and Governors or those in authority, the intended audience are in most cases in-group members.¹⁰¹ This position is actually a departure from earlier scholars like G. Kruger and B. Altaner, who maintained that based on the apology of Justin, the explicit addressees of the apologies were the intended readers, the emperors.¹⁰² Ulrich like Jacobsen and many other recent scholars caution that scholarship does not simply presume that the addressees

⁹⁹ Young, "Greek Apologists," 91.

¹⁰⁰ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 17.

¹⁰¹ Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 16.

¹⁰² Ibid, 14-15.

were also the (only) intended readers of the texts.¹⁰³ To Ulrich, the apologies also imply a “self-justification in relation to Christianity’s identity.”¹⁰⁴ therefore, the Christians themselves were also intended readers of these texts.

To these new scholars, the function of these texts is to equip Christians with arguments to be able to withstand anti-Christian arguments against them. Price agrees with this position that apologetic texts were to strengthen the Christian faith and to equip the Christians against the non-Christians.¹⁰⁵ So the Christians, who are often the intended readers, found the apologetic texts more useful than the explicit addressees. This argument supports Ulrich who states that “The aim of the apologists was to establish the Christian faith as a legitimate *religio* in the Ciceronian sense and present it as a sensible religion or philosophy.”¹⁰⁶ Thus the authors of these apologetic texts had the Christians in mind when elaborating their works. Petersen agrees with this position by suggesting that although the text is addressed to non-Christians, it ‘predominantly’ has the Christians as its target.¹⁰⁷ For him the apologies have ‘important internal function’ not only against external opponents but even more internal ramifications.¹⁰⁸

Jacobsen identifies three audiences and the aims for targeting them.¹⁰⁹ In the first place he suggests that the target of the apologist were the Roman authorities, with the aim of defending the Christian faith against the charges which were fuelling the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. The secondly the texts targets the Greco-Roman public to convert them to Christianity. Finally, Jacobsen believes the apologies were written with a strong Christian orientation to build the faith of the Christians by encouraging them to hold on to what they believed.

¹⁰³ Ulrich, “Apologists and apologetics,” 28-29.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 105-106.

¹⁰⁶ Ulrich, “Apologists and apologetics,” 17.

¹⁰⁷ Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics” 26.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Jacobsen, “Main Topics” 106-108.

Relative to the discussions on the addressees and the intended audiences of the apologetic texts, it is concluded that the explicit addressees of these texts were not the only intended readers of the texts. Recent scholarship position that Christians were equally intended to use these texts though addresses to outsiders. Notwithstanding, scholars are divided on the submission status of the apologies. Some are of the view that the explicit address is but a literary tool to gain attention and that the texts were not intended to be submitted to the explicit addressees. Others hold that it was a standard practice to write such treaties to the emperors and hence they were intended to be submitted.¹¹⁰ These arguments are made but without strong proof. It is in this regard that this study presented some evidence to give credence to either one or the other of the two theories.

c. Charges in the Apologetic Texts

If the apologetic texts can be useful to the discourse on the hostilities against the Christians and indeed if they were written to defend a case, then it is needful to know what they found worth defending. This is important because scholars such as Jacobsen and Engberg agree that the tag of an apology is to defend and therefore the perceived misconception must be evident in the apologetic text.¹¹¹ Scholarship has not been blind to this fact in the apologetic literature. Most of these charges have already been discussed by scholars who used the martyr texts to understand the persecution of the Christians, so attention was given to examine the charges presented in the apologetic texts in comparison to and possible contrast to what was found in the martyr texts.

The focus was on the possibility of using both texts to understand how the Christians in the two types of texts presented their opponents and the positions of their opponents. There are further implications beyond this study for understanding the phenomena of persecution and

¹¹⁰Jacobsen, "Main Topics" 107.

¹¹¹Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies" 5-8; Engberg, "Truth Begg no Favours" 178.

martyrdom on a broader basis of comparison between what is found in the apologetic texts, the martyr texts and in pagan literature about the Christians. It is important to note that many scholars argue that there is the possibility that the charges the apologists deal with may be fabrications and not real.¹¹² However, others such as Engberg disagree with this school of thought because the setting and time of the writing was the same as the period of the martyr text, thus the writers “dealt with real accusation, real opponents, real persecution and not just papyri or parchment-tigers”.¹¹³

Ulrich identified charges such as ritual murder, cannibalism, cultic promiscuity including incest, obstinacy, stupidity by worshipping a donkey and the most important charge at the time as the charge of atheism.¹¹⁴ Young also identifies with the charges of the name Christian and atheism based on the apology of Justin as well as the charge of idolatry in Tatian’s work.¹¹⁵ Jacobsen on his part categorizes the charges under political, religious and ethical headings.¹¹⁶ Politically, the Christians were charged for being a disorder group who met in secret places and did not partake in the emperor’s worship. Religiously, the main charge was atheism because the Christians were professing a new religious movement and refused to worship the traditional deities. The Romans liked things that were linked to antiquity (*the mos maiorum*)¹¹⁷ but the Christians dissociation from such made them to be perceived as a new movement without any affiliation with antiquity and hence, they were not considered as an organization that could be allowed to thrive. Ethically, the Christians meeting in secret places which was believed to offer them an opportunity to engage in cannibalism (the Eucharist) and to engage in incest by kissing one another with holy kiss even though they called each other ‘brother or sister’.

¹¹²Engberg, “Truth Begs no Favours” 178.

¹¹³Ibid, 208.

¹¹⁴ Ulrich, “Apologists and apologetics,” 13-16.

¹¹⁵ Young, “Greek Apologists,” 82-85.

¹¹⁶Jacobsen, “Main Topics” 85-101.

¹¹⁷Jacobsen, “Main Topics” 95.

It is important to stress at this point that there are similarities between the charges identified in the martyr and apologetic texts. Most importantly, it affirms Sherwin-White and Ste. Croix's position that in the 2nd century, the charge of atheism was often pronounced since it gave enough reasons for the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. This research does not only stress these similarities but also the nuances in the charges and their mode of presentation in the two categories of the texts used in the project.

1.3.4 Apologetic Texts and Martyr Texts

The aim of this study is to compare the martyr texts and apologetic texts in regard to how the two types of texts present the character of the persecution, present their opponents and the charges and allegations of these opponents. Earlier scholars primarily engaged in studying the persecution of the Christians have not systematically compared the two types of texts and have tended to discuss the martyr-texts more than the apologetic texts. In the exchanges between Sherwin-White and Ste. Croix, Ste. Croix uses some apologetic texts to advance his arguments but in a response, Sherwin-White questions Ste. Croix for using the apologies.¹¹⁸ It is thus obvious that Sherwin-White and other scholars view the apologetic texts as an incredible source in the debate on the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. Judith Lieu also argues against Edward, Goodman and Price with regards to their book titled *'Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians'*. She asserts that the work has no essay on the martyr accounts and only four references in the index.¹¹⁹ Lieu identifies some perceived differences between the apologetics and the martyr texts. She relates this to the phrase "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem....?"¹²⁰ where Athens is seen as a place of reasoning and a representative of the apologetic text while Jerusalem is related to faith and

¹¹⁸ Sherwin-White "Why were the Early Christians persecuted?" 23.

¹¹⁹ Judith Lieu, "The Audience of Apologetics: The Problem of the Martyrs Acts," in *Contextualizing Early Christian Martyrdom*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen and Anders Klostergaard Petersen (Frankfurt am Main; Peter Lang, 2011): 207

¹²⁰Lieu, "Audience of Apologetics", 205.

synonymous to the martyr texts. Again, others believe the apologies have explicit audience but the martyr texts do not.¹²¹

However, Lieu argues that the account of the martyrdoms of Polycarp, Perpetua and her companions as well as those in Lyon were written in the form of letters to some churches hence her assertion that they have an explicit audience. The crux of her argument seeks to show the great semblance between the two classes of texts.¹²² She argues that both texts cannot be defined in terms of genre and both are written with the Christians in mind which Engberg agrees with.¹²³ She further suggests that these texts are both written in the same crisis period hence the belief that this serves as a propelling force of the persecutions and martyrdoms. In effect, Lieu drives home the point that, both texts influence and depend on each other.¹²⁴ She mentions that the protocol martyr narrative types are like the apologies while Justin's apology uses some martyr narratives too. These similarities as projected by Lieu are important developments that draw the attention of scholars to the possibility of using these texts together in order to unveil a comprehensive picture of the plight of the Christians in the second and third centuries.

It is in this light that Engberg calls for the systematic approach in the combination of the two classes of texts to understand the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.¹²⁵ Engberg tries to show the way on a soft level by using a number of martyr and apologetic texts to evaluate these assertions. In the end, he shows that it is possible to use these two classes of text.

The thesis identifies with Engberg's call but goes even further to do not just an external but two levels of internal comparisons. The uniqueness of this project is found in sources,

¹²¹Ibid, 206.

¹²² Lieu, "Audience of Apologetics", 206-210.

¹²³Ibid, 207-209; Engberg, "Truth Begs no Favours", 184-185.

¹²⁴Ibid, 207-211.

¹²⁵Engberg "Truth Begs no Favours", 181.

methodology and research questions. In terms of sources, Engberg uses apologetic texts that are addressed only to the emperors but this project does not only use those addressed to the authorities but also those addressed to non-Christian public. The apologist Tertullian, for example, addressed one of his apologetic works to the pagan public and another to the governors. Another apologist Justin Martyr wrote two apologies to an emperor whereas his student Tatian wrote to the public. The other novelty is the methodology employed: systematic comparison. The systematic comparison compares the two types of texts `internally` within each class of texts before an `external` comparison between martyr texts and apologetic texts were carried out. Engberg compares the apologies to the martyr narratives (external comparison) but has, in contrast to this project, not conducted `internal` comparisons of the two types of texts. Finally, the research questions pursued in this project does not focus on the character of the persecution, the identity of the persecutors and their motives, but rather on how these aspects are presented in the two types of texts. This comparison will potentially be relevant for later studies of persecution and martyrdom.

1.3.5 Suffering in Christianity Today

The subject of suffering has become a composite part of the Christian faith from its inception in the Roman world to our modern period. I Peter 5:10 admonishes that “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.” This canonical text shows that suffering is part of the Christian faith. However, the role of suffering in Christianity began to change in the 1960`s with the inception of the Neo-Pentecostal theology of Kenneth Hagin.¹²⁶ Shayne Lee argues that when the Pentecostal movement began the leaders were poor and eschewed materialism.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, the situation began to change owing to economic factors and the

¹²⁶Shayne Lee, “Prosperity Theology: T. D. Jakes and the Gospel of the Almighty Dollar” *Cross Current* 57, no. 2 (2007): 227.

¹²⁷Lee, “Prosperity Theology” 227.

influx of young upward mobility.¹²⁸ Kenneth Hagin's `word-faith` ministry used the media and books to reach a wide range of audience across the continent. Some of the major contributors to what is now defined as prosperity gospel included Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes, Frederick Price, E. W. Kenyon, Benny Hinn, Joel Osteen, John Avanzini, Lester Sumrall, Benson Idahosa and Enoch Adebaye amongst others.¹²⁹

James Kwarteng provides a list of some other names used in place of the Prosperity Gospel. These include `name it and claim it; Faith formula Theology, Faith equals Fortune Message; Holistic Gospel; Health and Wealth Gospel.`¹³⁰ This theology stresses positive confession of faith for financial breakthrough and healthy living. They therefore attribute poverty as a curse and claim that Christians who are poor and sick lack faith.¹³¹ Pastors of the prosperity gospel messages use extravagant means of travel including private jets while adorning themselves with luxurious garbs. Often times their worship centres employ state of the art technology, ecstatic worship forms and the tolerance of liberal dressing.¹³² Their meetings stress giving and seed or covenant sowing¹³³ Giving may also take the form of the donation of material things.¹³⁴ It is necessary to investigate how such a gospel entered Africa given the level of poverty and economic circumstance of the people.

¹²⁸Ibid, 227.

¹²⁹Lee "Prosperity Theology" 229; James Kwarteng-Yeboah, *The Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel on Poverty Reduction in Ghana* (Saarbrücken: Scholars' Press, 2016), 57; Paul Gifford, "The Prosperity Theology of David Oyedepo, Founder of Winners' Chapel," in *Pleasures of Plenty: Tracing Religio-scapes of Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond* ed. Andreas Heuser (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), 84.

¹³⁰Kwarteng-Yeboah, *The Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel*, 56.

¹³¹Lee "Prosperity Theology" 228, J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Book International, 2013) 89.

¹³²Lee "Prosperity Theology" 231.

¹³³Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 79.

¹³⁴Ibid, 91.

a. Prosperity Gospel in Africa

Kwarteng-Yeboah suggests that the spread of the prosperity gospel message to Africa is quite difficult to trace. Paul Gifford and other scholars believe it came to Africa from North America, but Matthew Ojo and others, including Asamoah-Gyadu, hold the view that the prosperity gospel was already present in Africa since culture indicates that the African constantly prays for their well-being (prosperity).¹³⁵ The conditions that gave rise to the birth of the prosperity gospel in North America were equally prevalent in Africa so it flourished very well in small time. Kwarteng-Yeboah traces this development from Benson Idahosa who was trained by Kenneth Hagin before he came to live in Nigeria.¹³⁶ Idahosa trained people like Mensa Otabil, Nicholas Duncan Williams and many others. Idahosa set up his own Bible School to train Africans who could not go to the USA. For this reason, he established the Church of God Mission International with its Headquarters in Benin City.¹³⁷ Idahosa also visited many African nations for crusades and leadership seminars. Through such travels he was able to affect many African Pentecostals with his theology and this helped him spread the prosperity gospel.

Another Nigerian who contributed to the spread of the prosperity gospel was David Oyedepo of the Living Faith World Outreach or Winners Chapel.¹³⁸ Paul Gifford suggests that Oyedepo was influenced by the books and television programmes of Kenneth Hagin.¹³⁹ He planted churches in thirty eight African countries after sixteen years of his establishment.¹⁴⁰ Oyedepo stressed faith in the life of the Christian, giving of testimonies and throwing of

¹³⁵Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 56; Asamoah -Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 79.

¹³⁶Kwarteng-Yeboah, *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel*, 58.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Kwarteng-Yeboah, *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel*, 59.

¹³⁹Gifford, "The Prosperity theology of David Oyedepo"⁸⁴. Oyedepo mentions Gloria Copeland as his role model and adds that he slept on Kenneth Copeland's bed. Oyedepo also claims that he had a vision of God telling him that a baton has been passed on from Kenneth Hagin to him. (Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 58.)

¹⁴⁰Ibid, 59.

scriptures about intermittently.¹⁴¹ He had four private jets, houses in London and the USA, as well as a publishing company. His wealth was valued at an estimated US\$ 150 million.¹⁴²

b. Prosperity Gospel in Ghana

The Ghanaian Christian landscape has not been free from the ideals of the prosperity gospel in diverse ways. Idahosa is often credited with the influx of the prosperity gospel in Ghana because he is deemed to have trained preachers like Nicholas Duncan Williams and Mensa Otabil.¹⁴³ These other preachers also trained the likes of Dag- Heward Mills, Ampiah Kwofi, Sam Korankye- Ankrah and Eastwood Anaba who in turn trained many other neo – prophetic persons such as Elisha Salifu Amoako and Isaac Owusu Bempah. Duncan Williams in the 1980`s used the television as well as other means to trumpet the prosperity gospel while arguing that God wants his people to be rich and have the best of lives. Asamoah-Gyadu recalls that Duncan Williams preached that Jesus wore a designer cloth because his garment was seamless adding that on his crucifixion, the soldiers needed to cast lots to own the garment.¹⁴⁴ He was captured to have remarked in 2011 that:

No matter how rich you are in my church, I will not allow you to intimidate me with your wealth because you cannot even buy the perfume I use not to talk of the attire I wear.” he told the congregation at the church located at Abrepo...As a Christian, you should wear the best of clothing, drive in expensive cars, and live in comfortable houses so that the glory of God could be seen in your life because the God you worship is very expensive.¹⁴⁵

These comments are a reflection of how he lives, his theology and most of all the kind of training he is giving to his followers. In effect, he does not understand why a Christian should suffer in any way. It is however interesting that his compatriot Mensa Otabil, though trained by the same person, discounts excessive wealth although he also attracts the elites of the

¹⁴¹Gifford “The Prosperity theology of David Oyedepo” 85-99.

¹⁴²Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 59.

¹⁴³Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 59-60.

¹⁴⁴J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Pentecostalism in Ghana*. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 205; Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 59.

¹⁴⁵Ghanaweb.com, “I’m Expensive Pastor-Duncan Williams”, accessed November 18, 2016

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/I-m-expensive-pastor-Duncan-Williams-222742>

society and has some important holdings in the country.¹⁴⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu observes that these preachers interpret the cross to mean God has taken away mankind's shame and hence the Christian has to live comfortably.¹⁴⁷ These Christians have no place for suffering and persecution in their understanding of the Christian faith and hence the change the wedding vow from 'for better for worse' to 'for better for best'.¹⁴⁸ Some biblical passages they often use in prayer and preaching are 3 John 2:1-ff; Phil. 4:1-ff; 2 Cor. 9:8-ff; Luke 6:38-ff; John 10:10; Deut. 8:18-ff.¹⁴⁹ The relevance of these sufferings to the early Christians and to Christians today, especially those in Ghana will be evaluated.

The review of existing literature has shown the interests of various scholars in regard to the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as well as the question of suffering in Christianity especially the development of the prosperity gospel. The discussions by the various scholars have created schools and positions all with the aim to appreciate these phenomenon in Christian development. There is however, a gap related to the trustworthiness of the various sources used to understand the plight of the Christians in the Roman Empire from the time of Nero to about the period of Constantine. It is therefore prudent to systematically compare the various reactions which engineered the writing of the martyr and apologetic texts by the Christians. The systematic comparison will lead to a corroboration, supplementing or even contradiction of the images of the persecution and martyrdom as portrayed by these two classes of texts.

¹⁴⁶Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 59.

¹⁴⁷Gyadu *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity* 105-106.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid*, 107-110.

¹⁴⁹Kwarteng-Yeboah *Social Effect of Prosperity Gospel* 56.

1.4 Period and Selected Texts

This study consists of two main contexts: the early Roman mid- second to early third centuries (specifically between 150 – 212 AD) and the modern missionary Ghanaian period. The mid- second to early third century period was chosen because it includes the period of systematic and widespread nature of the hostilities and again it marks the development of the texts used in this study. There are more systematic persecutions in 250, 257-260 and 303-311/313. But these are “untypically” harsh and also untypical because they are initiated by the emperors. However, the period 150-212 AD was a period where the intensity and character for the persecutions is “typical” which follows quite similar patterns.

Thus apart from a need to limit this work the period is influenced by the primary texts as boundaries of the study. *Apologeticum*, Tertullian’s most famous apologetic work, is argued to have been written in Carthage around 197 AD. His other work, *Ad Nationes*, is maintained to have been written in the same year. Some scholars maintain the *Ad Nationes* formed the draft for the writing of the *Apologeticum*; which means that, they were both written in the latter part of the second century. His address to Scapula is also dated to 212 AD. On the other hand, the first and second apologetic texts of Justin Martyr are dated between 150 and 157 AD based on reference to Felix as a recent prefect of Egypt. It is generally believed that the Second Apology was originally part of the larger First Apology. Furthermore, Tatian’s work *Ad Graecos* is equally believed to have been written around the second century too. He addresses the Greeks; on the pains the Christians were suffering for being Christians in the Greco Roman world.

The apologetic texts are compared to the following martyr narratives all written in the second or third Century AD: The Martyrdom of Polycarp, a contemporary letter written in c. 155 AD by the Christians in Smyrna and addressed to other Christians in Asia Minor describing the martyrdom of the Bishop Polycarp and other martyrs. Meanwhile, the text of the martyrdom

of Justin and his companions is largely dated to 165 AD. Furthermore, Scillitan Martyrs is a martyr text written c. 180 AD in a form that resembles a Roman court protocol. Scholars have often debated whether such a protocol was used as a source by a Christian author. Finally, the Martyrdom of Perpetua, a compound text explicitly written to edify Christians and consisting of passages written by an editor and passages written by two of the martyrs in prison. These narratives are chosen because they are connected to the apologies both geographically and with regards to time. Robert Grant claims for example that Justin`s apology was written in response to the Martyrdom of Polycarp¹⁵⁰ because it makes a lot of reference to burning by fire. This suggests that they may have both been written under similar conditions in chronology and geography.

These texts were read in their original languages thus Latin and Greek, along with their modern translations in English. Below is a table of the primary texts used in this study which indicates their form or style of writing and their addressing forms as well as their dates:

TEXT	SUB-GENRE OF TEXT	DATE
Justin, 1st Apology	Apologies	150
Martyrdom of Polycarp	Narrative account ¹⁵¹	155
Justin, 2nd Apology	Apologies	157
Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions	Protocol account ¹⁵²	165
Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs`	Protocol account	180
Tertullian, Apologeticum	Apologies ¹⁵³	197
Tertullian, Ad Nationes	Apologetic	197
Tatian, Ad Graecos	Apologetic	2 nd Century
Martyrdom of Perpetua and Companions	Narrative account	208
Tertullian. Ad Scapulam	Apologies	212

Table 1.1 A table of list of Ancient sources with their date of writing.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 3, 53-54.

¹⁵¹ These are martyr narrative accounts written on the form of a story

¹⁵² This martyr narrative forms are writing in the form of a court room proceedings where there are questions and answers

¹⁵³ Engberg has suggested that the apologetic texts written to Roman authorities should be called apologies while the others addressed to the general public should be called apologetic. Engberg, "From among You". 51.

1.5 Methodology

This thesis adopts the Literary Critical approach following the rhetorical critical analysis of George Kennedy. The rhetorical analysis helps to develop elements which are compared in a Systematic Comparative method in addressing the objectives of the study. The Literary Critical approach proves helpful in the discussion of the rhetorical style of the texts.¹⁵⁴ The study is textual and, therefore, it is essential to understand the authorship, language, historical setting and content of the text.¹⁵⁵

George Kennedy suggests that the writer of a text certainly has some purpose which he/she hopes to accomplish through the text.¹⁵⁶ Hayes and Holladay show that Literary Criticism and Rhetorical Criticism are highly related since both of them are aimed at persuasion.¹⁵⁷ Tate argues that Rhetorical Criticism is concerned with communication between the author and reader looking at the strategies employed to influence the reader.¹⁵⁸ Scholars such as Kennedy, Hayes and Holladay as well as Tate maintain that ancient rhetoric was greatly influenced by Aristotle's persuasive styles.¹⁵⁹ These strategies include ethos which is the character of the speaker, pathos which refers to the feeling and reaction of the audience and finally logos which is the logic or the discourse of the text. To this extent, rhetorical studies look at the invention thus the planning of the text, arrangement and ordering of the text and style in terms of the method; these three are often present in written forms, while the oral forms are built on the memory (preparation) and delivery is concerned with the voice and gestures.

¹⁵⁴ John H. Hayes and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 2nd edition (London: John Knox Press, 1987), 73-82; Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 30-32.

¹⁵⁵ Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 73.

¹⁵⁶ George Kennedy *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3.

¹⁵⁷ Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 74.

¹⁵⁸ Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* 3rd Edition (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publications, 2008), 285.

¹⁵⁹ Kennedy *New Testament Interpretation* 15, Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 74-75; Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 285.

In view of this, Kennedy suggests that every rhetorical study must consider four items for persuasion, the speaker or writer; audience; discourse and the context or occasion.¹⁶⁰ The speaker or writer of the texts must be identified because the identity of the author influences what is written or spoken. An appreciation of the audience (both implied and implicit) helps to identify the purpose or perlocutory effect of the texts among other things. The discourse of a text is mainly the content, issues raised and how they are presented. Therefore, a discourse analysis helps to know what the author of the text seeks to say and how it is said to elicit the needed effect on the audience. An understanding of the context or the occasion of a text unravels the push factor of a text. Thus, what necessitated the writing or the speech of a text? This is very important because the choice of words, imageries used and structure of the texts are to a large extent influenced by the push factor. These four elements guided the study of the texts to present a comprehensive picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians using the martyr and apologetic texts.

The systematic comparative method focuses on the historical similarities as well as differences between the two set of texts.¹⁶¹ The method is grounded on Paden's perspective that a comparative method looks out for resemblance and contrast between various components. The comparison method therefore focuses on similarities and differences based on comparative elements that come out from the literary critical approach. This method is applied at two levels: internally and externally. Internally, the martyr texts are sub-divided into sub-genre based on the form or style of writing and evaluated within to bring out a comprehensive picture the hostilities depicted by martyr texts. The martyr sub-division is possible because some of the martyr texts are narrative in character (e.g. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*) while others follow a court protocol style (e.g.

¹⁶⁰George Kennedy *New Testament Interpretation* 15.

¹⁶¹William Paden, "Comparative Religion." In *The Rutledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R Hinnells (London: Rutledge, 2010), 225

Scillitan Martyrs as well as the *Martyrdom of Justin and his Friends*). The authors of these two sub-genres within the group of martyr texts may have a reason for adopting the style they adopted. This implies, the form of the texts may dictate the content and features of the sub-genre. The content of the two sub-genres dictated by the style of text, may lead to some possible similarities and differences between the two divisions, which are analyzed internally. The internal comparison helps to highlight similarities and differences between these sub-genres. This comparison shows a coherent picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians illustrated by the martyr texts.

In like manner, the apologetic texts base on differentiation of the addressees is divided into two: those addressed to authorities (described as Apologies)¹⁶² and those addressed to the general public.¹⁶³ Justin Martyr's *1st and 2nd Apologies* are addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius whereas, his student Tatian wrote *Ad Graecos* to the Greek public. Tertullian wrote two apologies *Apologeticum* and *Ad Scapulam* which were addressed to authorities and an apologetic text *Ad Nationes* addressed to the general public. It is interesting to study the issues raised in those addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public separately. It is also necessary to know if both Justin and Tatian present the issues in the same manner despite the difference in addressees. Furthermore, does Tertullian change his style and content when writing to authorities as compared to when he writes to the general public? Such comparisons provide insights into the intentions that prompted the writing of the texts and informs the debate on the question of whether or not the formal addressees were also (part of) the intended audiences for the texts.

It is anticipated that, a petition to the authorities should follow a particular form and content besides containing less polemics (since the apologetics are a petition or an appeal) unlike the martyr texts, which are often written to encourage surviving Christians. Although the context

¹⁶²Engberg "From among You", 51.

¹⁶³Engberg "From among You", 51.

of the texts is influenced by the hostilities against the Christians, the motivations for the two texts (martyr and apologetic) are different and hence the style, rhetoric and content are expected to be different. It is even more interesting that some scholars believe Tertullian is the editor of the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions.¹⁶⁴ The external comparison helps to answer the questions of the thesis in three broad ways. In the first place, a radical difference will mean not reflecting a common context, which is to suggest that the apologetic texts are not useful on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. In the second place, if the analyses show a close knitted similarity, it will mean the texts were not aimed at different audiences implying that the apologies were not intended for submission after all. A third position may show a coherent similarity with nuanced differences to reflect the same context but described with different aims and audiences in mind. This reveals the apologetic texts are useful on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians and even more importantly, that the apologies were at the very least intended for submission to their addressees.

The two kinds of texts, martyr and apologetic, are therefore compared systematically on three levels. Firstly, where the martyr texts and the apologetic texts are compared internally, the result is labeled “harmony” (even if potentially, the comparison reveals more differences than similarities). Secondly, the two sub-groups in the two categories of texts are compared with each other. The result of this comparison is labeled “synthesis” (again even if potentially the comparison will reveal more differences than similarities). The harmonized and synchronized versions are both designated to be comparisons at the “internal” level, since martyr texts are compared to martyr texts and apologetic texts to apologetic texts. On the third level, where martyr texts are compared to apologetic texts externally, the result is labeled “fusion” (again even if potentially the comparison will reveal more differences than similarities).None of

¹⁶⁴Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy*, 23 note 56.

these words carry any theological implication and are chosen simply to make it clear which of the three levels of comparison are discussed.

On the other hand, the thesis compares that early church period to the Ghanaian missionary era since they both mark the early beginnings of Christianity in a new context. The two contexts show the beginnings of Christianity in an already established socio-religious environment. In doing this, therefore, the thesis identifies examples of European and African missionaries facing persecution and martyrdom in Ghana during the missionary era. These examples of similar character with the plight of the early Christians in the Roman context will signify the role of suffering in Christian expression. In the light of the similar context of suffering in both the early Roman and Ghanaian missionary context, reflections from the martyr and apologetic texts will be drawn to help the contemporary Ghanaian Christian in dealing with sufferings because of her faith. The lessons drawn from these texts will help the Christian today to deal with challenges they face today because since the contexts are the same how the early church was able to endure the predicaments of their time will help the contemporary Christians today to put up with same.

The literary critical approach following the rhetorical critical model of Kennedy helps to create the comparative categories for the broad comparative elements such as the accounts, actions, accusations, argumentation strategies and themes. These elements are used to measure to what extent they corroborate, supplement or contradict each other. Furthermore, the two beginning contexts of Christianity in the Roman and Ghanaian contexts are also compared to identify examples of persecution and martyrdoms as well as lessons drawn from the martyr and apologetic texts for the contemporary Ghanaian Christians.

1.6 Significance

This study contributes to our knowledge on how the Christians in two types of contemporary texts perceive and present the persecutions they were subjected to in the Roman Empire. Little attention has been paid to the systematic comparison of sources in the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. The study has direct bearing on the discussion of the submission status of the apologetic texts to their addresses and more indirect ramifications for the study of how and why the Christians were being persecuted. The internal comparisons within the martyr texts and the apologetic texts as against the external comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts provide a new path in the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

Furthermore, this research shows the usefulness of the apologetic texts to the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. So far, in the study of this phenomenon, only relatively scattered or unsystematic references have been made to the apologetic texts. This project demonstrates that the apologetic texts are equally very relevant to understanding the phenomena of the persecution and martyrdom.

Finally, the Ghanaian perspective shows the relevance of the subject of persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians to Africa as a whole using the Ghanaian examples. Many Ghanaian Christians seem to profess a Christianity devoid of suffering; but from the example of the early Christians, it is argued that suffering forms a part of the Christian calling. The examples of hostilities in African Christian history from the missionary era affirm the fact that the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians is also an African story. The novelty here again is what the Christians today and even more especially the Ghanaian Christian can learn from the example of the early church in dealing with contemporary suffering.

1.7 Chapter Development

This project is organized into six chapters. The first chapter discusses the background, statement of problem, literature review, objectives, research questions, methodology, and the significance of the study.

The second and third chapters investigate internally the martyr and apologetic texts exclusively. These two classes of texts are therefore divided into two: based on the writing forms (martyr texts) and their addresses (apologetic texts). The aims of the comparisons are to bring out the similarities and differences to see if they internally corroborate, supplement or even contradict each other.

The fourth chapter eventually compares the two body of texts. The apologetic texts were placed side by side with the martyr texts to find similarities and differences to demonstrate if they corroborate, supplement or contradict themselves. This external comparison invariably helps address the submission status of the apologies to their addressees, especially those addressed to the authorities.

The fifth chapter discusses the Ghanaian side of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. This part though modern, seeks to show the relevance of the subject of persecution and martyrdom in Ghana. The chapter focuses on the place of suffering in Ghanaian Christianity and even more, what lessons the Ghanaian Christian can learn from these accounts in dealing with suffering.

The final chapter addresses the objectives of the research which are arrived at by a discussion of the issues based on the research objectives and questions thus raised. In the end, some recommendations, based on the findings are suggested for further studies and application.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNAL COMPARISON – MARTYR TEXTS

2.0 Introduction

The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire has occupied the attention of scholars over the past decades. A major category of texts which reflect these hostilities against the Christians are the martyr texts. These texts capture a whole range of the aspects of oppressions against the early Christians. There are many Christian martyr texts that offer descriptions of how the early Christians were persecuted. There is a general consensus among a majority of scholars that most of these texts were written in late antiquity or the early middle ages long after the end of the persecutions and that only a few of the accounts are contemporary with the persecutions.¹⁶⁵ Adolf von Harnack has contributed extensively to scholarship by classifying contemporary accounts from the later accounts which has been useful to many scholars.¹⁶⁶

It is imperative to understand why these texts were written and the motivating factors that provoked interest in such writings. More importantly, the central aspect of this chapter is to compare the two genres of texts to show the similarities and differences in how they describe the persecutions to find out if the account in one text corroborate, supplement or contradict the other. This internal systematic comparison will focus on the extent to which the two sub-categories of the martyr texts present similar or different `picture(s)` of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. Such a comparison is relevant in itself but has a further ramification for establishing the trustworthiness or the picture(s) that these texts paint of the hostilities, the opponents and their motives. If the two kinds of texts present significantly

¹⁶⁵ Musurillo *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xi-xii.

¹⁶⁶ Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* xi; T. D. Barns, "Legislation Against the Christians," *Journal of Religious Studies* (1968): 509.

overlapping picture then their accounts are corroborative and/or supplementary to each other but if they present largely different `pictures`, then they may not be very good sources for understanding the phenomena of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians.

The martyr texts can be categorized into two. The first category labeled Narrative Martyr Texts (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* and *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Companions*) are written in the form of stories which describe some of the events that went on during the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. The second category labeled Protocol Martyr Texts (*Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions* as well as the *Scillitan Martyrs*) are in the form of court protocols focusing on the dialogue between the governors and the martyrs.

In this chapter, the martyr texts are compared internally.¹⁶⁷ Firstly, one sub-group of martyr-texts, like the narrative martyr texts are compared at a harmony level. Secondly, the other sub-group of martyr-texts, the protocol texts are equally compared to reach a harmony. Thirdly, the two harmonies are compared to get a synthesis of the comparative levels adopted in this work. The synchrony as in chapter four compared to the synchrony emerging from the apologetic texts and this external comparison is labeled fusion.

2.1 The Rise and Purpose of the Martyr Texts

Early Christians took to writing in the heat of the hostilities against them. Parts of these texts were believed to have been written by the martyrs themselves while others were written by eye-witnesses or latter Christians who heard about the martyrdom. The tradition of writing martyr texts was not limited to during the period of the hostilities but even after the end of the hostilities. Scholars have been engaged in distinguishing between texts as contemporary or near-contemporary events: those that were written before the end of the persecutions, and

¹⁶⁷ For a description of the terms internal, external, harmony, synchrony and fusion see above section 1.5.

those that were written later.¹⁶⁸ Musurillo and scholars like Edward Gibbon, Thierry Ruinat, Jean Bolland, Adolf von Harnack among many others, have tried to trace the development of these texts. Building on such earlier scholarship, Timothy Barnes joins this debate and concludes that the four texts that are studied in this dissertation were all written by contemporary authors.¹⁶⁹ Parts of the account of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*, are believed to have been written by two of the martyrs themselves while in prison; the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, was written as a letter from the congregation who saw the martyrdom to other Christian congregations to inform them of what happened. The *Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions* as well as the *Scillitan Martyrs*, do not reveal anything about their authors, but they both, according to Barnes' analysis, contain a near-contemporary core.¹⁷⁰ What were the factors that gave rise to the writing of these texts and what needs did they meet in the second to early third centuries in the Roman Empire?

The Kennedy's rhetorical critical model maintains that to identify the persuasive intentions of the texts, the context or occasion as well as the discourse of the texts including the author and audience are important. Following this model, the purpose of this section is to identify the perlocutory effect of the texts therefore three issues are discussed. The first is what prompted the authors to write these texts? This question seeks to investigate some factors that made it necessary for such Christian texts to be written. To this extent, what were the prevailing socio-political as well as religious conditions that caused the authors to pen these accounts? The second issue in this question is to find out what the authors of these texts sought to achieve by their writing. The important element here is to discuss the benefits the authors sought to obtain by writing these texts. These questions are challenging since in most cases,

¹⁶⁸Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xi-xii.

¹⁶⁹Timothy Barnes. "Pre-Decian Act Martyr," *Journal of Theological Studies* xix (1968): 509-531.

¹⁷⁰Barnes, "Pre-Decian Act Martyr," 509-531.

these purposes and even factors are not explicitly expressed in these texts, and where they are expressed they may not necessarily be the only purposes.

2.1.1 Factors and Purpose

The context or occasion of a text to a large extent contributes to the perlocutory effect the author of the text seeks to achieve. The four martyr texts were written by different people at different times between the second and third centuries of the Roman Empire. Personal, local or regional dispositions or contexts are likely to have influenced the different authors in employing the form of the texts. The authors of these texts certainly had certain motives for writing: to meet certain needs. Consequently, it is crucial to identify these needs from a close reading of the texts. The factors and purposes of these texts are even more crucial to this study because an identification of these factors and purposes help to paint the rightful picture of the comparative elements.

A close reading of the martyr narratives brings to the fore three main factors and purposes that prompted the authors of these texts to write. In the first place, the authors of these texts wrote to console and encourage the Christians, especially Christians who were scattered. Secondly, there was the need to construct the Christian identity and finally, a need to record the history of Christians.

TEXTS	AUDIENCE	PURPOSE
MARTYR TEXTS	Christians	*Encouragement *Identity *History

Table 2.1 Purpose and audience of the martyr texts

In the first place, the socio-political environment of the Roman Empire was hostile so it forced Christians to move to other places for their safety. This is reflected in the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, which was occasioned at the request of the church in

Philomelium.¹⁷¹ This Church was also charged to spread the letter to other Christians¹⁷² since this was a normal practice of the early Christians at the time (Colossians 3:1-13; 2:1-4). This purpose of encouraging fellow Christians especially those in other societies to stand in times of affliction is further motivated in the account as:

Just as the Lord did, he too waited that he might be delivered up, that we might become his imitators, not thinking of ourselves alone, but of our neighbours as well. For it is a mark of true and solid love to desire not only one's own salvation but also that all the brothers.¹⁷³

The author was encouraging the martyrs and Christians to stand as imitators of Christ's death. Moreover, Engberg in agreement with Rodney Stark argues that one of the reasons for the courage of the Christians in the face of death, was to "reinforce other Christians to remain steadfast in times of hardship or persecution."¹⁷⁴ In Polycarp's account, Christians are encouraged not to be cowards by showing the example of one of the Christians who was persuaded to recant.¹⁷⁵ As a result, the martyrs were presented in heroic terms to the Christian audience in order to encourage them to persevere in their faith.¹⁷⁶

Secondly, the writing of these texts was to a great extent, a way to establish the Christian identity.¹⁷⁷ It was crucial for the Christians to show that they were very different from the Jews. Wilken remarks concerning Galen that "it is curious that Galen, writing in the middle of the second century lumps together Jews and Christians."¹⁷⁸ However, other Romans, like Celsus, were fairly aware of the Jewish Christian distinction.¹⁷⁹ Lynch asserts that "during its

¹⁷¹ Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 20

¹⁷² Martyrdom of Polycarp 20:1.

¹⁷³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 1:2.

¹⁷⁴ Jakob Engberg "Martyrdom and Persecution-Pagan Perspectives on the Prosecution and Execution of Christian c 110-210," in *Contextualizing Early Christian Martyrdom*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Uffe H. Erickson and Anders K. Petersen (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 95; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 163-189.

¹⁷⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 4.

¹⁷⁶ Martyrdom of Justine and Companions 6:1; Martyrdom of Perpetua 21:11.

¹⁷⁷ Lieu, "The Audience of Apologetics," 218-221.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Robert L. Wilken, *The Christian as the Romans Saw Them* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 113.

first three or four decades, Christianity was a sect within Judaism.”¹⁸⁰ The Christians therefore needed to clear their identity and one of the ways they did this was the writing of the martyr texts.

The importance of using the martyr texts for the creation of identity was heightened because martyrdom became the mark of the Christians as a people or group. Bowersock argues that it was “The single most visible manifestation of Christianity in the pagan Roman world. It was probably through martyrdom that many pagans became aware of Christianity in the first place during the second and third centuries.”¹⁸¹ This is seen in some non-Christian sources such as a text written by the emperor Marcus Aurelius where he ridicules the Christians for their lack of fear for death...¹⁸² Engberg cites five Roman philosophers (Galen, Lucian, Arrianus, Celsus and Marcus Aurelius) and what they commented about the Christians in relations to death.¹⁸³

In the account of the Scillitan martyrs, the proconsul Saturnius who presided over the trial told one of the victims: “Have no part in this folly of his” (where he makes reference to an earlier Christian Speratu who refused to recant).¹⁸⁴ The courage of the Christians in the face of death had become an identity of Christians where they had to explain why they are not afraid of death (see also below in the chapters on apologetic texts). Stark for instance argues that the authors of the martyr texts characterized the martyrs as courageous, a measure put in place by the author to attract the non-Christians to read the martyr texts.¹⁸⁵ These ideas, according to Stark, lend credence.

¹⁸⁰Joseph Lynch *Early Christianity: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82.

¹⁸¹G. W. Bowersock *Martyrdom and Rome*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66.

¹⁸²Wilken *The Christians as the Jews Saw Them* 83.

¹⁸³Engberg, “Martyrdom and Persecution,” 113.

¹⁸⁴Scillitan Martyrs 8.

¹⁸⁵Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 163-189; Engberg, “Martyrdom and Persecution,” 95-96.

On the other hand, the authors of these texts sought to equip the Christians with a prepared defense, which would enable them to triumph over non-Christians in an argument so they would become converts. This was important because the negative ideas of the non-Christians about the Christian identity were aimed at silencing the Christians during arguments. The accounts therefore refute allegations they find false to empower the Christians to evangelize the pagans. Habitually by addressing some of these negative thoughts against the Christian identity, the authors sought to make Christianity attractive to the non-Christians thereby converting them. The aspects of addressing the Christian identity help to answer questions on the polemics, motives, defense and demand in the comparative analysis of the texts.

The final factor for the writing of the martyr narrative texts was to document the history of the Christians. This factor was very important because the Christians were being killed day and night hence a need to document their histories. In the introduction to the martyrdom of Polycarp, the author says “We are writing to you, dear brothers, the story of the martyrs and of blessed Polycarp who put a stop to the persecution by his own martyrdom as though he were putting a seal upon it.”¹⁸⁶ This introductory remark shows that the author is trying to record the history of an important person for the knowledge of fellow Christians. The authors therefore set out to chronicle what these persons went through, their life experiences, how they stood in the face of challenges and eventually how they were killed because of their religious convictions.

The importance of documenting history is also emphasized in the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions. The introduction of this account states that

The deed recounted about the faith in ancient times were a proof of God’s favor and achieved the spiritual strengthening of men as well; and they were set forth in writing precisely that honor might be rendered to God and comfort to men by the recollection of the past through the written word.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Martyrdom of Polycarp 1.

¹⁸⁷ Martyrdom of Perpetua 1:1.

This person wants to honor God with this writing but even more to ‘recollect’ the past through a written word. This argument is strongly influenced by the concluding remarks of the account, where the martyrs are eulogized.¹⁸⁸

Parts of the account of the Martyrdom of Perpetua are written by Perpetua herself, while other aspects are maintained to have been written by one of her companions and finally an editorial introduction and conclusion are added by a third person.¹⁸⁹ Likely the portions written by the martyrs themselves were also intended to preserve the memory of their deeds and visions, at least Perpetua herself hints at this.¹⁹⁰

Further evidence for the suggestion that the authors were interested in preserving the memory of the martyrs for the future can be found in the fact that some early martyr-texts dated the deaths of the martyrs. For example in the Martyrdom of Polycarp: “The Blessed Polycarp died as a martyr on the second day of the first half of the month Xanthicus (according to the Roman calendar, on 23rdFebruary), about two o’clock in the afternoon, on a great Sabbath day.”¹⁹¹ Again, the third recession of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions reports that their martyrdom and burial was on the first of June.¹⁹² The obvious question is, are these dates provided for no reason? Frend hints that “... churches had their roll of honour of martyrs whose ‘birthdays’ (natalicia) were celebrated each year.”¹⁹³ Even today Catholic Christians especially, have specific dates of celebrating such church fathers by celebrating special masses in their memory. This shows that the early Christians considered these dates important; they became dates for some celebrations.

¹⁸⁸ Martyrdom of Perpetua 21:11.

¹⁸⁹ Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxv.

¹⁹⁰ Martyrdom of Perpetua 10:15.

¹⁹¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 21.

¹⁹² Martyrdom of Justin and Companions 6:1.

¹⁹³ Frend, *Martyrdom in the Early Church*, 257.

Although it was a date commemorating death, the Christians who saw the persecution and martyrdom in glorious and honorary terms¹⁹⁴ rather celebrated on such days. Hartog further identifies four intentions for the account, where three point to the fact that the Christians were trying to compile a history of Christianity.¹⁹⁵ He identifies ‘social or collective memory’, formation of the Christian ‘community’ and ‘mirrors the traditions, religious experiences, and the demands and challenges of the community’. Hartog thus supports the theory that the authors of the martyr-texts were engaged in identity-formation, and that the construction of Christian history and the death of Christians at the hand of persecutors were important events to be remembered as part of such identity-formation. This record of history helps to compare the peculiarities, storyline and other comparative elements as used in this study.

To this extent, the martyr texts are argued to have been written largely, to a Christian audience to encourage them in the faith, to construct their identity and to recall their history. The factors and purposes of the texts help to identify the similarities and differences between the texts to define if they corroborate, supplement or even contradict each other through the comparative elements employed.

2.2 Background of Martyr Narratives

It is in no doubt that the writing of texts is often born out of circumstances around the authors and audience. Two of the texts analyzed in the dissertation were written from an African context, thus the *Martyrdom of Perpetua* and the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* which shows that Africa has been part of the Christian history from its cradle. In using Kennedy’s model, a discussion of the background of the texts in this section brings out the general feature of the texts, authorship and the context of the texts.

¹⁹⁴Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy*, 50-53.

¹⁹⁵ Paul Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 166.

2.2.1 Martyrdom of Polycarp

The name Polycarp according to Paul Hartog was a common slave name especially in the second century, it means fruitfulness or productivity.¹⁹⁶ However, the Polycarp in this account was a Bishop of Smyrna in the second century and a companion of St. John,¹⁹⁷ one of the Apostles of Christ. According to Tertullian and Eusebius, Polycarp's appointment as Bishop was by Apostle John and analogous to the ordination of Clement in Rome by the Apostle Peter.¹⁹⁸ Polycarp's connection with the Apostle John is asserted by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Jerome among many other early church fathers.¹⁹⁹ Koester describes him as "the most significant ecclesiastical leader" and Pervo says if historians of Christian origin could be granted one interview with a personage of the period 100 – 150, Polycarp would be the choice of many.²⁰⁰ Ignatius asserts that Polycarp was of 'godly mind', 'blameless face' and a person who has great 'desire for the truth.'²⁰¹ Eusebius describes him as an apostolic man, true and a good shepherd'.²⁰² Polycarp, according to the account, was the twelfth to be martyred in Smyrna on the 23rd of February at 2pm.²⁰³

Hartog remarks that

Few early Christian works 'have exercised a greater fascination' than Mart. Pol., and few can match 'it's moving pathos and edifying effect.' Mart. Pol. builds a distinctive image of Polycarp as both 'a distinguished teacher' and 'an eminent martyr'. He was 'an apostolic and prophetic teacher ... and bishop of the catholic church.'²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁶Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians*, note 1.

¹⁹⁷Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xiii.

¹⁹⁸Hartog, *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians*, 4.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid*, 11.

²⁰⁰*Ibid*, 1.

²⁰¹*Ibid*, 2.

²⁰²*Ibid*, 4.

²⁰³Martyrdom of Polycarp 20-21.

²⁰⁴Hartog *Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians*, 165.

The account of his martyrdom is to a large extent modelled on the account of the crucifixion of Christ.²⁰⁵ Hartog even pushes the imitation of Christ in the Martyrdom of Polycarp to further look into Christological elements which are far reaching in the text as well.²⁰⁶

Although, many of the martyr narratives were written later after the incidence of the martyrdom, this account is considered by scholars as one of the few which were written soon after the martyrdom.²⁰⁷ Almost all scholars agree that Polycarp was martyred in the second half of the second century at age eighty-six.²⁰⁸ However, the precise date is an object of debate. Hartog recounts and foretells that “The date has been the subject of controversy for nearly three centuries, and it would be hazardous to say that the last word on the question has been spoken.”²⁰⁹ The dating of the martyrdom of Polycarp is influenced by two main extracts. Firstly, chapter 21 of the account of the martyrdom names L. Statius Quadratus as the Consul Ordinarius and the evidence found in which Eusebius discusses Polycarp’s martyrdom right after mentioning the successor of Marcus Aurelius.²¹⁰ H. Von Campenhausen favours 166/7 but a majority of scholars including Musurillo suggest 155/6. Meanwhile T. D Barnes supports 156/7 but has no problem with 157/8 or even 158/9.²¹¹ A minority of scholars have also suggested a dating of the martyrdom to 176/7 but this position has not been given much attention.²¹² Overall, Engberg tries to cover the arguments by giving a window of 155-9, Hartog convincingly pushes it further to 155-61.²¹³

²⁰⁵He was betrayed, arrested by a local magistrate called Herod, rode on a donkey, prayed before his arrest etc.

²⁰⁶Paul Hartog “The Christology of the Martyrdom of Polycarp: Martyrdom as Both Imitation of Christ and Election by Christ.” *Perichoresis* 12,(2014): 141-147.

²⁰⁷Engberg, “Truth Begs no Favours”, 183. However, Moss disagrees strongly with this position and argues that the account was not likely to have been recorded in the same year of the incident due to the future tense of the text (Candida Moss, “On the Dating of Polycarp: Rethinking the Place of the *Martyr of Polycarp* in the History of Christianity. *Early Christianity*” 1 (2010) 54; Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistle*, 182.)

²⁰⁸Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xiii; Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 62; Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistle*, 9.

²⁰⁹Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistle*, 200.

²¹⁰Hartog, *Polycarp Epistles*, 192-200; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xiii.

²¹¹Musurillo *Acts of the Christian Martyr* xiii, Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistles*, 195.

²¹²Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistles*, 191.

²¹³Engberg, “Truth Begs no Favours”, 184; Hartog *Polycarp’s Epistle*, 200.

2.2.2 Martyrdom of Justin and Companions

Although the exact date for their martyrdom is not certain, scholars generally agree it may have occurred around 165.²¹⁴ The account recounts the killings of seven Christians including Justin in Rome in the presence of the urban Prefect Iunius Rusticus during the time of Emperor Marcus Aurelius.²¹⁵ Rusticus was a Roman Urban Prefect from 163 to around 168, who had great influence on Marcus Aurelius' stoic thoughts.²¹⁶

Musurillo suggests that shortly before Justin's arrest, Justin had a "bitter debate with a Cynic philosopher named Crescene"²¹⁷ which may have served as the immediate reason for his arrest with his companions.²¹⁸ Justin is said to have been martyred along with his companions: Charito, Charition, Evelopistus, Hierax, Paeon and Liberian. It is not certain, if these companions were converted to Christianity by Justin since they did not answer that question directly²¹⁹ apart from Hierax who responded that he had been a Christian for a long time to suggest he was not converted by Justin and Evelopistus who admits he listened to Justin's preaching.²²⁰ However, Musurillo argues strongly that they are likely to have been associated with Justin's school at Rome where an earlier martyr, Ptolemaeus, had some connections.²²¹

The authenticity and usefulness of these accounts have captured the attention of many scholarly investigations. There are six manuscripts with three different recessions.²²² All the three recessions are in Greek²²³ and the oldest known and mostly used recession is called the

²¹⁴Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xviii; Engberg "Truth Begs no Favours" 184.

²¹⁵Ibid, xviii.

²¹⁶Ibid, 43 note 1.

²¹⁷Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xviii.

²¹⁸Discussions on the personality of Justin is deferred to the next chapter when his apology is discussed.

²¹⁹ Martyrdom of Justin and Companions (Recession A and B) 4.5

²²⁰Ibid, 4.7

²²¹Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xix.

²²² Gary A Bisbee, "The Acts of Justin Martyr: A Form-Critical Studies." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*3, (1983): 129.

²²³Musurillo *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xviii.

Valgate version from around the eighth century. The second which is the Paris manuscript is longer and is from about the ninth century and the final recession is called the Jerusalem manuscript from the twelfth century. Following Musurillo's classification, the shorter recession thus the Paris manuscript is referred to as A; the longer recession which is known as the middle recession and suggests the Vulgate version is referred to as B and the latter recession, the Jerusalem manuscript is referred to as C.²²⁴ Bisbee in discussing the relationship between the three cites Lazzita who maintains:

The First text (rec. A), the most ancient, goes back to a period of peace, as one may conclude from the beginning, but which could also be placed, and probably is placed before the conclusion of the persecutions; the second text (rec. B), a reworking of the first, is probably of the fourth century; the third text (rec. C) is later, perhaps much later even than the fourth century.²²⁵

Meanwhile Musurillo also holds that

Although the relationship between the shorter and the middle versions is still not completely clear, it would seem more likely that the middle version does indeed derive from the tradition of the shorter one, which modifies the speeches of Justin and omits the reference to the burial of the martyrs' bodies.²²⁶

Therefore, Lazzati is bold to suggest that the Paris manuscript is the original, based on the principle of the "most ancient text, and is the most brief with a minimal literary elaboration" hence even though Musurillo does not agree with this principle particularly in attribution to these texts.²²⁷ Bisbee had also tried to establish that recession B is not from A but from other sources by adopting Form-Critical studies of the texts looking at the introductory formulae, the body of the trial, the judgment announced and the conclusion of the texts.²²⁸ In light of the issues regarding the authenticity of the account of the martyrdom of Justin and his companion, this project will use the three recessions because this thesis follows after Musurillo's work and the three may have some emphasis which may be useful to the study.

²²⁴Musurillo *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xix.

²²⁵Bisbee, "The Act of Justin Martyr," 300.

²²⁶Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xviii.

²²⁷Ibid, xix.

²²⁸Bisbee, "The Act of Justin Martyr," 129-157.

2.2.3 Scillitan Martyrs

This account is described as the earliest document from the African and Latin Church.²²⁹ It recounts the martyrdom of twelve African Christians who lived in Scillinear Carthage which was near modern day Tunis.

There are twelve Christians in this martyrdom where seven are men (Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus and Laetanius) and five are women (Donata, Vestia, Secunda, Januaria and Generosa).²³⁰ Speratus seems to be the representative of the group. He speaks more than the others. Five others responded only once and they are silent through the account until where the judgment is given and their names are listed. It is argued that since they are very enthusiastic and express a lot of joy for their sentencing, they are likely to be young Christians with Speratus as their teacher. This position is strongly supported by Philip Carrington who states that “the record reminds us of the Acts of the Martyrdom of Justin and his companions in Rome, so that Speratus with his simple answers and his New Testament books may have been a teacher like Justin witnessing his faith to his pupils.”²³¹ Frend equally shows the relationship between the account of the Scillitan martyrs and the Martyrdom of Perpetua.²³²

The characters’ names suggests humble origin, but compared to this it is striking, as Musurillo observes, that the proconsul do not humiliate or torture them but kills them by beheading as though they were Roman citizens.²³³ Frend, influenced by Tertullian’s *Ad Scapulam* 3.4, suggests that the first proconsul to be hostile to the Christians in this region was Vigellus Saturnius on the fourth day of July in 180, when he executed four Christians at

²²⁹Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxii.

²³⁰Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 313.

²³¹ Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), 2: 292.

²³²Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 313.

²³³Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xxii.

Madaura.²³⁴ Philip Carrington suggests that Saturnius started being hostile to the Christians only four or five weeks after assumption to office.²³⁵ The proconsul is believed to have turned to these twelve named young Christians on the 17th of July, 180.²³⁶ This date is strongly supported by many other scholars including Musurillo,²³⁷ Andrew Rutherford²³⁸ and Engberg.²³⁹

A major debate around the text is to draw a distinction with regard to the original language. There are three versions in Latin and one in Greek.²⁴⁰ Andrew Rutherford suggests that the texts have suffered various corruptions due to translations and transcription to and from Greek and Latin. However, most scholars use the Latin version from Armitage Robinson collected from the ninth century in the British museum, which is the shortest account among the others in circulation.²⁴¹

This account is of great significance due to the context and the form it assumes. The context of this account is the Roman African province which drives home the point that Africa has been a central part of the Christian story from the earliest existence of Christianity. This area covered North African coastal regions around present day Tunisia, Algeria and Libya. More importantly in line with the objectives of this project, the form of the text is very significant. As Frend identifies, it is written in the same form and style as the protocols from contemporary Roman courtroom proceedings. This makes the account quiet dramatic, although in a subtle way avoiding all graphic descriptions of violence, which may be found more in the narrative martyr texts.

²³⁴Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 313; Carrington, *The Christian Church*, 291.

²³⁵ Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, 290.

²³⁶Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 313.

²³⁷Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxii.

²³⁸ Andrew Rutherford, "The Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs", in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*(New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896), 4: 283.

²³⁹Engberg, "Truth Begg No Favours", 184.

²⁴⁰Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xxiii.

²⁴¹Rutherford, *The Passion of the Scilitan Martyrs*, 283; Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyr*, xxiii.

2.2.4 Martyrdom of Perpetua

The Martyrdom of Perpetua recounts the martyrdom of six individuals; two women and four men.²⁴² Five of them were catechumens and the sixth was their teacher, Saturus.²⁴³ Two, Rovocatus and Felicity, were probably slaves or people of low status (*humiliores*) since they have names (*cognomina*) which indicate this.²⁴⁴ Hoffmann suggests that since they are paired, these slaves are likely to be couples. Felicity is in her final trimester of pregnancy.²⁴⁵ Two of the other catechumens, Saturinus and Secundulus, are not identified as slaves but are again only called in the narrative by their cognomina – Hoffmann suggests that they may have been freed men. Their identification in the passage as adolescents suggests that they may not have been above sixteen years. Hoffmann argues they are most likely to have lived together in the same household under one master who was likely to be Perpetua’s father.²⁴⁶

In contrast to all other characters in the narrative including the Roman governor, who are only called by one of their names, the account mentions that Perpetua was also called Vibia. This name is of a Roman North African origin of a prominent family from the middle of the first century with some military influence.²⁴⁷ Vibia Perpetua was a young lady of about twenty-two years²⁴⁸ who was from an elitist family and well catered for, described in the text as *honestenata* (good family and upbringing, born well or respectably born).²⁴⁹ The account tells the reader that Perpetua, equally a catechumen, was newly married with an infant at her breast.²⁵⁰ Hoffmann suggests that Perpetua’s father was likely to be in his early forties and a pagan but her mother was most likely a Christian.²⁵¹ The suggestion that her mother was

²⁴² Thomas Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18.

²⁴³ Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 19.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*; most slave names in Africa at the time ended in - *atus*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 21.

²⁴⁷ Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 21.

²⁴⁸ Martyrdom of Perpetua 2.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 2:1; Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 21.

²⁵⁰ Martyrdom of Perpetua 2:1-3.

²⁵¹ Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 22-23.

likely to be a Christian stems from the fact that she is not mentioned by name. Her identity may have been hidden in order to hide her identity for her to live and nurture Perpetua's baby.²⁵² This argument is supported because if her identity is known, it would be possible for some members of the public to report her to the included for martyrdom. The style of this account though predominantly narrative has some protocol contents.

2.3 Narrative and Protocol Forms Compared

The internal comparison of the narrative and protocol forms of the martyr texts, in this section sought to identify if the two classes of texts corroborate, supplement or contradict each other. If this comparison brought out a single image of the persecution based on these texts, then their accounts are corroborated but if not then, the accounts would need some other verification.

The comparative elements are developed largely from the review of existing literature and the rhetorical critical approach. Scholarship has been discussing many of the issues already so they are compared to identify their similarities and differences. The background analysis of the texts based on Kennedy's model of the speaker, audience, discourse and context²⁵³ have also influenced the creation of these comparative elements where they are compared systematically to show their convergence and divergence within and between the genre of the texts. In all, eleven elements are identified as the basis of the comparison based on the literature review and the rhetorical critical approach, which are: storyline, character of Martyrs, identity of persecutors, legal procedure, charges and allegations, motives, demands, form of suffering, polemics, defense and apology including their peculiarities.

In light of this method, the main comparative elements are grouped into three. The first three elements seek to compare how the accounts are presented and the identity of the characters in

²⁵²Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 20.

²⁵³Kennedy *New Testament Interpretation* 15.

the text. They are designated as `Account` which describe the nature of the account. This category, therefore, includes the comparison of the following; storyline, identity of the martyrs and identity of the persecutors

The second category, labeled `Accusations,' compares the legal process adopted and the accusations that were leveled against the Christians, the motivation of the persecutors` action as well as a demand from the authorities to appease the gods. The comparative elements include, legal procedure, charges and allegations, motives as well as demands

The final category of elements of comparison in this project is captured under `Action`, which focuses attention on the features of the account. It encompasses form of suffering, polemics, defense and apology including their peculiarities

2.3.1 Narrative Martyr Texts

This section presents the harmonized picture of the narrative martyr accounts. The harmony of the texts will be in the two categories, where the first part will harmonize the account of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* to the account of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* bringing out their similarities and differences. The other harmonizes the account of the martyrdom of *Justin and His Companions* as well as the *Scillitan Martyrs* by stressing their similarities and differences also based on the comparative elements. These two harmonized versions are then synchronized using the comparative elements to equally bring out their similarities and differences. This means that based on the comparative elements, the subsequent section analyzes the synchronized version of the two accounts regarding the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. The analysis is captured based on the three main classifications of the comparative elements with their attributes under them.

a. Account and Character

This comparative element seeks to identify the presentation of the accounts and the characters presented in these accounts in terms of the martyrs and the persecutors. It therefore captures three main elements; the storyline, character presentation of the martyrs and identity of the persecutors. These comparative elements seek to bring out the similarities and differences to see if the accounts supplement, corroborate or contradict themselves.

i. Storyline

The Narrative accounts in their presentations capture three main facets of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. They present elaborate events before the trial sometimes giving the family background and some biographical information on the martyrs. Secondly, these narratives present a vicious account of the trial and judgments. In both cases, this section presents horrific pictures of what the martyrs suffered and their passions. The third aspect of the procedure of the martyrs captures the post-trial events as well as a conclusion to the account. This aspect gives information about the author or editors of the texts as well as their communities.

The pre-trial events in the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp describe that Polycarp escaped from arrest in the first instance to live in the countryside.²⁵⁴ He is described in the texts as seeing a vision of his martyrdom while in exile.²⁵⁵ He was later picked up by the police under the command of Herod and presented to the Amphitheatre for trial.²⁵⁶ The *Martyrdom of Perpetua* accounts for the time of those martyrs in prison while awaiting their trial.²⁵⁷ Perpetua describes how she was visited by her father, who tried to persuade her to

²⁵⁴ Martyrdom of Polycarp 5:1.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 5:2.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 6-8.

²⁵⁷ Martyrdom of Perpetua 1-3.

recant so that she might escape martyrdom.²⁵⁸ These sections present the character of the martyrs to affect the thoughts and actions of the Christians to hold strong to the faith.

The trial and judgment sections of the narrative martyrs show the passion of the martyrs. In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the account presents the interaction with the governor as well as the general public. This section equally captures how he was judged to execution by fire²⁵⁹ and explains why he was not thrown to the beasts.²⁶⁰ It is also interesting that this account equally captures the role of the public as major actors in the execution of Polycarp by inciting the governor²⁶¹ and gathering sticks for the burning.²⁶² The account of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua* expresses the interactions between the martyrs and the governor as well as the judgment given based on the interactions. What is more interesting in this account is that the governor does not execute the martyrs immediately after the judgment but allows days to pass in order to celebrate the Emperor's birthday with their martyrdom.²⁶³ The account does not lose track of the activities of the martyrs between their judgment and execution of the judgment and the celebration of a love feast.²⁶⁴ This section on the trial and judgment help to come to terms with the pains, conditions and legal process used in the persecution and martyrdom portrayed by the narrative accounts.

The post-execution section of the texts accounts for what happened after the death of these martyrs and contain some concluding remarks by the authors or editors of these accounts. In the martyrdom of Polycarp, this section provides an apology for the Christian veneration of Polycarp's remains.²⁶⁵ The alternative section of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* captures in its conclusion, a prayer and the memory of Polycarp as attested by a later church father

²⁵⁸ Martyrdom of Perpetua 3.

²⁵⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 8: 3; 11:2; 16.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 12:2.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 3:2.

²⁶² Ibid, 13:1.

²⁶³ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6:7-8; 16:3.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 7-17.

²⁶⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 17.

Irenaeus.²⁶⁶ The Martyrdom of Perpetua concludes with a prayer for the martyrs and an encouragement for the church to look upon the examples of these Christians.²⁶⁷

To this end, the three facets of the accounts tell a story of the events of these martyrs before their trial, during the trial and after the trial. This is quite normal in literature or a narrative plot where there is a rising (just like the pre-trial events), climax (the trial) and anti-climax (post-execution) phases in the texts.

ii. Character of the Martyrs

This section tries to picture the personality and the attitude of the martyrs as portrayed by the texts. It is important that the ways in which the martyrs are described in the texts are presented as well as their dispositions and attitude to hostilities.

In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, Polycarp is described as being tried and executed on his own (although the account mentions that he is the twelfth to be martyred in Smyrna),²⁶⁸ the account of Perpetua and Felicity presents a group of catechumens and their teacher.²⁶⁹ Apart from Polycarp, Perpetua and Sataurus, the other characters in these texts are people of low social status, both slaves and freed men. We can argue that the text presented the persecution and martyrdom as affecting people who are new to the faith, since most of them are catechumens, as well as the mature members of the faith, the teacher Sataurus. The hostilities are thus presented as comprehensive; irrespective of sex and social status.

Furthermore, the Narrative Martyr Texts presents the martyrs as examples for the succeeding Christians.²⁷⁰ Polycarp is presented as the schoolmaster and father of the Christians by the

²⁶⁶ Martyrdom of Polycarp (Alternative ending).

²⁶⁷ Martyrdom of Perpetua 21:11.

²⁶⁸ Martyrdom of Polycarp 19:1.

²⁶⁹ Martyrdom of Perpetua 2:1.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 21:11; Martyrdom of Polycarp 1:2.

crowd although the public saw him as the destroyer of the Roman gods.²⁷¹ The Christians also describe him as a godlike old man, a blessed person,²⁷² a prayerful person, and as hospitable even to his enemies.²⁷³ Above all, he is presented in the text as steadfast even in the face of adversity.²⁷⁴ When the governor said:

Are you Polycarp? And when he was admitted, the governor tried to persuade him to recant, saying 'Have respect for your age' ...' swear by the Genius of the emperor. Recant. Say, "Away with the atheist" ...'swear and I will let you go. Curse Christ',²⁷⁵

Polycarp responded with the famous statement "For eighty-six years I have been his servant and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and savior?"²⁷⁶

Polycarp is thus presented as courageous and his courage is depicted as exemplary for succeeding Christians.²⁷⁷ The account depicts that Polycarp was ready to die, to the extent that he takes off his clothes by himself, something his fellow Christians felt privileged to do.²⁷⁸

The martyrdom is seen as the will of God for their lives,²⁷⁹ and an exhibition of his courage and love for God. Polycarp is seen as a 'noble ram.'²⁸⁰ he did not even feel the pain because he was like bread and precious mineral being purified.²⁸¹ Such positive remarks about the martyrs are equally present in the case of Perpetua and Felicity where the martyrdom is used to depict God's favor and spiritual strength,²⁸² His will,²⁸³ the day of victory²⁸⁴ among other remarks. The martyrs are presented as joyous and happy when they are condemned to the

²⁷¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 12:2. By describing Polycarp as the destroyer of the gods, the Christians feel very good and victorious

²⁷² Martyrdom of Polycarp 7:3; 12:2.

²⁷³ Ibid, 7.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 9:2-3.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 9:2.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 9:3.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 1:2.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 13:2.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 2:1; 5:2.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 14:1.

²⁸¹ Ibid, 2:2-3; 15:2.

²⁸² Martyrdom of Perpetua 1:1; 15:1-3.

²⁸³ Ibid, 5:6.

²⁸⁴ Martyrdom of Perpetua 18:1.

beast because it was their day of victory and baptism.²⁸⁵ The height of Perpetua's steadfastness from a Christian perspective is shown in the text when she refuses all the efforts of her father to make her recant, while he is being beaten with rods and his beard is pulled.²⁸⁶ Yet Perpetua will not recant although she was aware that her father was doing all that out of love.²⁸⁷ Due to her resolve to remain a Christian, she asks her father to "vanquish along with his diabolical arguments."²⁸⁸ These positive remarks in the texts to a large extent portrayed the Christian martyr ideology of encouraging the Christians and presenting an attraction to the non-Christians.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

The question here is to identify those who were presented in the texts and involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. Based on the narrative martyr texts, the public and the authorities play significant roles. The martyrdom of Polycarp, in terms of the public, includes the Jews and the other non-Christians. It is very significant in this account that it is actually the public who requested for Polycarp to be martyred²⁸⁹ and they further "swiftly collected logs and brushwood from workshops and baths (here the account is quick to stress that) and the Jews as is their custom zealously helped them with this."²⁹⁰ The role of the crowd in the Martyrdom of Perpetua cannot be over emphasized. Their interest is seen in their rush to the forum for the trial and to the amphitheatre where the martyrs were executed.²⁹¹

The other category of persecutors included the authorities. Their role is seen in the use of the institutions and facilities of the empire as well as in the personal involvement of the governor. In the martyrdom of Polycarp, the municipal authority and police who are likely to be armed

²⁸⁵ Martyrdom of Perpetua 18:1; 20:11; 21:2.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 6:5; 9:2-3.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 5:2.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 3:3.

²⁸⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:2.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 13:1.

²⁹¹ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6:1 and 18.

are involved in the persecution and the arena is used both for the trial and the execution which are conducted by the governor.²⁹² The argument is that these institutions and facilities of the city and the empire could not have been used without the authorization of the governor or without the governor assuming that the emperor would approve. In the Martyrdom of Perpetua, the account mentions soldiers, the forum, prisons (both city prison and military prison) and where the city's prison was under the control of the municipal authorities the military prison would have been under the control of the governor of the province.²⁹³

Furthermore, it is significant to note that these accounts identify the governor as the interrogator and judge in the trial of the Christians. In the account of the Martyrdom of Perpetua, the martyrs are described as being executed in honour of the Emperor:²⁹⁴ the governor said he was going to kill them during the celebration of the Emperor's birthday.²⁹⁵

This is interesting because though the emperor was not going to be present in this Roman African region, on that day, the governor was sure the emperor was going to be pleased with this celebration. In view of this, it is logical to say that indeed the governor and even the Emperors were presented as being involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians.

Therefore, the narrative martyr texts present a spectrum of persecution where different roles are assigned to the emperor, governors, their institutions and facilities, municipal authorities and the general public who may include the Jews.

²⁹² Martyrdom of Polycarp 4, 5:1, 6:2, 8:2, 9.

²⁹³ Martyrdom of Perpetua 2, 3:7-9, 5-6, 15-16, 18-21.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 16:3.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 16:3.

b. Accusation

The harmonization of the narrative martyr texts in this thesis include similarities and differences in terms of the accusations that were leveled against the Christians. This section, therefore, helps to understand the legal framework which the Christians faced and encompasses four elements; the legal process, the charges and allegations, motives of the persecutor and the demand of the authorities to the Christians to recant.

i. Legal Process

The legal prosecution of the early Christians has been a subject of discussion among scholars for years. Sherwin-White has been one of the leading voices in this area and he strongly argues that the Christians faced a legal process called, *cognition extra ordinem*.²⁹⁶ This is a judicial process where the governor plays the dual roles of questioner and judge.²⁹⁷ The Narrative Martyr texts underpin Sherwin-White's view. In both texts used in this study, the governor is presented as both the interrogator as well as the judge who passes the sentence,²⁹⁸ even if we see the police administration and the military tribune playing major roles in both accounts.²⁹⁹ Unlike the classic (republican) Roman judicial system there are no long and formal speeches by the accuser or the defendant (or on their behalf) where the evidence is presented.

The process adopted in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as presented in the texts suggests that the crime must be seen as crucial, since it demands the attention of the governor himself. This is also more important because, the governors in the provinces did not have much time to spare hence for them to devote so much time to the hostilities against the

²⁹⁶ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions", 203-204.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:1, 9-12; Martyrdom of Perpetua 6.

²⁹⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 5:1, 8:2; Martyrdom of Perpetua 16:2, 18-21.

Christians shows that, to them, it was important.³⁰⁰ It can also be argued that it was part of the narrative strategy to focus on process rather than the form. These indicate that the charges against the Christians must have been very grievous and were therefore handled by a higher authority in the provinces herein the governor, who enquired and passed judgement.

ii. Charges and Allegations

The main legal charge against the Christians in the Narrative Martyr Text is the charge of the name: Christian. The martyrdom of Polycarp captures the judgement of the governor which says “Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian.”³⁰¹ Again in the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions the governor asked Felicity “Are you a Christian?”³⁰² and after her answer, the judgement followed. The charge of the name in essence encompassed a whole range of negative characterisations such as atheism, incest, cannibalism among others.³⁰³

In terms of allegations based on the Narrative Martyr Texts, the public in most cases initiated the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. These allegations were often influenced by the observation of the Christians by the non-Christians which they often misunderstood.³⁰⁴ In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the public actually requested for him to be captured because he was an atheist.³⁰⁵ Again, after the judgement was announced, the mob exclaimed “Here is the schoolmaster of Asia-the father of the Christians-the destroyer of our gods-the one that teaches the multitude not to sacrifice or do reverence!”³⁰⁶ The demand on Perpetua and her companions to perform the sacrifice equally feeds into this theme of atheism, since they offended the gods by not sacrificing.³⁰⁷ Governor Hilarianus makes an attempt to persuade Perpetua to sacrifice because of her father’s “grey

³⁰⁰Erwin Urch, “Procedure in Court of the Roman Provincial Governor,” *The Classical Journal* 25 (1929):95.

³⁰¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 12:1.

³⁰² Martyrdom of Perpetua 8:4.

³⁰³ Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 1-24.

³⁰⁴ Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy* 77-102.

³⁰⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:2.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 12:2.

³⁰⁷ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6.

head.”³⁰⁸ When Perpetua refuses, he quickly asked “Are you a Christian?”³⁰⁹ This shows that Christians were accused for dishonouring the Roman gods by not offering sacrifices.

The public deemed it offensive for anybody to do things against the *Pax Romana*. What made this charge of ungodliness even more serious was the relationship between ungodliness and *superstitio*. Beard, North and Price as well as Janssen describe *superstitio* as an endemic disease which was not to be tolerated but must be quickly cut off.³¹⁰ In the account of the Martyrdom of Perpetua, the mob raised the allegations that the Christians were criminals and magicians.³¹¹ The charge of criminality could be due to the idea that Christians met at night in secret places. The non-Christians were not privy to what the Christians did at their meetings; therefore, they labelled them as criminals.³¹² They were considered magicians because they seemed to have some certain powers which only magicians seemed to possess.³¹³

iii. Motive of the Persecutors

Having identified those who were presented as involved in the persecution and martyrdom, it is significant to discuss whether their motives are presented in the texts. The question is: Did the authors of these narrative texts care to even present (or misrepresent) the motives of the persecution? These motives are possibly based on the character of the opponents or the persecutors. The role of the Jews as part of the public is most likely motivated by ideas to establish their distinction from Christianity (Acts 4:1-22) since many Roman public could not tell the difference between the Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire.³¹⁴

For the general public, it can be argued that they were moved by the desire to keep the peace of the empire known as the *pax romana*. To the Romans, the peace of the empire was

³⁰⁸ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 217; Janssen, “Superstitio and the Persecution”, 134-139.

³¹¹ Martyrdom of Perpetua 15:3; 16:2.

³¹² Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 1-24.

³¹³ Ste. Croix, “Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?” 8; Boamah, *Christian Magic*, 62-79.

³¹⁴ Boamah, *Christian Magic*, 48-49.

guaranteed by the gods, therefore if the gods are angered, this peace would be destroyed.³¹⁵ This peace with the gods, *pax deorum* is very important such that anybody who did not worship or sacrifice to the gods must be made to appease them in order to avoid calamities and plagues. Millar suggests that "...there is ever-increasing evidence that the Emperor-cult had an important place in public, religious and private life."³¹⁶ In this regard, the public's major allegation against the Christian was their unwillingness to worship any god except their own; this for the Romans equaled atheism. In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is said that in the request for Polycarp by the public, there is a direct statement from the public which contains the allegation "Away with these atheists! Go and get Polycarp!"³¹⁷ Similarly, in the martyrdom of Perpetua the father is described as encouraging Perpetua to sacrifice in order to avoid execution; he said "Perform the sacrifice ..."³¹⁸

The Narrative Martyr Texts, with regards to the motivation of the governor and Emperors apart from being religious is also politically twisted to ensure allegiance to the Emperor. The governors apart from religious motivation were interested to know and assert the Christians respect and allegiance not just to the Emperor but the entire empire. Urch argues that "The primary function of the governor was to maintain order in his province."³¹⁹ The maintenance of law and order in an early Roman society, according to the worldview of the Romans was a religious function underpinning a political agenda.³²⁰

³¹⁵ Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted", 24-25.

³¹⁶ Fergus Millar "The Imperial Cult and the Persecutions" in *Willem den Boer. Ed., Le Culte des souverains dans l'Empire Romaine* (Vandoeuvre-Geneve: Foundation Hardt, 1973), 147.

³¹⁷ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:2.

³¹⁸ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6:2.

³¹⁹ Urch, "Procedure in the Court," 95.

³²⁰ Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 313-363; Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 105-106; 134-145.

iv. Demand

During the trials, the authorities demanded the Christians to appease the Roman gods by sacrificing to restore the *pax deorum*.³²¹ This demand was based on the fact that in a court of law, the victim must be appeased. In the legal framework against the early Christians, Ste. Croix maintains that charges against the Christians bordered on what they refused to do (their failure to sacrifice) and not on what they did.³²² The account of the martyrdom of Polycarp reveals, the governor asking him to “swear by the Genius of the Emperor. Recant. Say, ‘Away with the atheist;”³²³ earlier on he had asked Polycarp to say “‘Caesar is Lord’ to perform the sacrifice and so forth, and thus save your life.”³²⁴ Further the governor, possibly (hopeful), asked Polycarp to “Curse Christ!”³²⁵ On the other hand the Martyrdom of Perpetua captures, the governor requiring them to “Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.”³²⁶

This demand to sacrifice and to curse Christ clashed with the requirements particularly in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The Christians considered a sacrifice to other gods as a sin and would, therefore, not entertain it in anyway. It is argued that the originator of this test was Pliny who required confessing Christians to perform the sacrifice and curse Christ, a demand which the Emperor Trajan also endorsed³²⁷

c. Action

After understanding the legal framework of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians from the second century Roman Empire as presented in the narrative martyr texts, it is crucial to examine the nature of the persecution as presented in these texts. What did the Christians suffer, did they attack their persecutors and did they have the opportunity to defend

³²¹ Warder Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1933), 169-174.

³²² Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians,” 24-26.

³²³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 9:2.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 8:2.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 9:3.

³²⁶ Martyrdom of Perpetua 6:2.

³²⁷ Pliny 10.96:1-4.

themselves from the accusations? The comparative elements considered here are: the form of suffering, polemics including defence and apology.

i. Form of Suffering

How did the narrative martyr texts describe the form of persecution, what the martyrs were subjected to in terms of sufferings, punishment and execution? The torments and forms of punishments described were varied. In the narratives the form of punishment interacts with the other events described such as time, place and context. In the martyrdom of Polycarp for example, the crowd requested that he be given to the beast but the one in charge of the beast, Philip the Asiarch, prompted that "... the days of the animal games were past,"³²⁸ which implies that beasts could have been used, if only the time had been right. Since the time had passed, Polycarp was instead burnt to death.³²⁹ Before this other martyrs and slaves from Polycarp's household were tortured, whipped and made to lay on broken shells.³³⁰ In case of the slaves, they were tortured in order to make them reveal the whereabouts of Polycarp; the martyrs, however, were tortured in order to force "them to deny the faith."³³¹ Polycarp was also threatened many times by the governor who tried to persuade him to recant, but in his case no torture was applied.³³²

Perpetua and her companions equally faced many forms of suffering. In their case, they faced house arrest,³³³ imprisonment both in the city and military dungeon which Perpetua described as dark and uncomfortable.³³⁴ She confesses that "A few days later we were lodged in the prison; and I was terrified, as I had never before been in such a dark hole."³³⁵ Her father was beaten in her sight with a rod just to get her to recant hence she remarks "I felt sorry for his

³²⁸ Martyrdom of Polycarp 12:2.

³²⁹ Ibid, 11.

³³⁰ Ibid, 2 and 6.

³³¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:2.

³³² Ibid, 11.

³³³ Martyrdom of Perpetua 3.

³³⁴ Ibid, 3:5-8.

³³⁵ Ibid, 3:5.

pathetic old age.”³³⁶ Just before their martyrdom, her father visited them in the dungeon in all sorrow and “... started tearing the hairs from his beard and threw them on the ground.”³³⁷ Again Felicity remarks “I felt sorry for his unhappy old age.”³³⁸ Perpetua thus also describes how family-ties between pagan and Christian members of the same family could add an extra emotional dimension to the more physical torments and to the anxiety associated more directly to the persecution. Perpetua and her companions were made to fight the beasts where a leopard, a bear, a boar and a heifer were used in the game to entertain the mob in celebration of the Emperor’s birthday.³³⁹ They also faced the gladiators³⁴⁰ and were ultimately stabbed through the throat to the chest.³⁴¹

It is suggested that there are three progressive stages of persecution and martyrdom employed in the Narrative Martyr Texts. In the first place the governor tries to persuade or threaten them to recant. Secondly, there is some form of physical torture of some of the martyrs in order to make them recant. Thirdly, they are subjected to degrading, painful and spectacular deaths by fire, animals and stabbing. These three stages of torture and forms of martyrdom are present in both Narrative Martyr Texts in which the sufferings are horrific. The martyrs are presented as heroes and victors based on their endurance in order to encourage other Christians to stand firm. This is seen in the final words of Saturus to a soldier, Pudens (who is described as having converted to Christianity under the influence of the martyrs). He says “Good-bye. Remember me, and remember the faith. These things should not disturb you but rather

³³⁶Ibid, 6: 6.

³³⁷ Martyrdom of Polycarp 9:2.

³³⁸Ibid, 9:2.

³³⁹ Martyrdom of Perpetua 19.

³⁴⁰Ibid, 19:5.

³⁴¹Ibid, 21:9-10.

strengthen you”³⁴²after which he dips a ring into his wounds and hands it to Pudens “as a record of his bloodshed.”³⁴³

ii. Polemic

It is important in an analysis of this nature to compare the level of polemic attacks on the persecutors by the authors of these texts. All the narrative accounts contain polemic elements, where the persecutors are derided. In Polycarp`s account, the authorities are branded as inhuman, tyrannical, impious, evil, vicious and even jealous.³⁴⁴ The account also describes the public as devils, pursuant, atheists and lawless.³⁴⁵ On the other hand, in the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions, the authorities are called devils³⁴⁶ while the public are described as foolish and cruel; Perpetua`s father`s arguments were described as diabolical.³⁴⁷ In terms of number and intensity therefore, the authorities lie in the first line of attack and then the public are equally attacked polemically.

iii. Defence and Apology

It is already established that the martyrs were not allowed to give long formal speeches for the defence. This section attempts to find out if the martyrs were described, as being given an opportunity to offer a brief defence of their convictions or address some of the charges against them based on the Christian doctrines and practices. Further, this section examines whether the martyrs are described as offering an apologetic defence in situations where they are not faced with the governor, but with other persecutors or other outsiders.

The two Narrative Martyr Texts describe only a few such instances of defence and all of them are described as brief. In the Martyrdom of Perpetua, neither Perpetua, nor her companions

³⁴² Martyrdom of Perpetua 21:4-6.

³⁴³ Ibid, 21:4-6.

³⁴⁴ Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:3, 3:1, 11:2, 16:1, 17:1.

³⁴⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:1; 6:1, 9:2.

³⁴⁶ Martyrdom of Perpetua 20:1.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 3:3, 20:2, 8.

are described as giving any apology or offering any defence when interrogated by the governor – they simply confess that they are Christians and Perpetua refuse to recant.³⁴⁸ In other settings, Perpetua is, however, described as offering brief apologetic defences for herself and/or her companions. When her father asked her to denounce Christianity, she pointed to a water pot and asked her father if that could be called by another name and since the answer was obviously ‘no’, Perpetua retorted that she too was a Christian and could not be referred to with any other name.³⁴⁹ Here, she defended herself against her father and not the governor. At another time when she felt they were not well treated in the military prison, she complained to the officer of the prison and claimed that they should be treated better, since they were the “most distinguished condemned prisoners.”, and condemned to die at the celebration of the emperor’s birthday.³⁵⁰ Again and even more significantly, when in these games, “men were forced to put on the robes of the priest of Saturn, the women the dress of the priestess of Ceres”³⁵¹ it is noteworthy that the account says “...Perpetua strenuously resisted this to the end.”³⁵²

In both cases, Perpetua is described as prevailing. In the account of Polycarp, it is interesting that he requested a day to teach the governor on the Christian doctrines, possibly to offer an apology, but that was turned down.³⁵³ Furthermore, the author of the text offers some strong apology directed to the Christian readers of the text with regard to who the Christians worshiped.³⁵⁴ This apology was occasioned by a petition to the governor by Nicetes (the father of the police-captain Herod and brother of Alce, who was a Christian), who, according to the author, persuaded the governor not to hand over Polycarp’s body. Nicetes, according to the author, was under the influence of the Jews, and he argued, that the Christians might

³⁴⁸Martyrdom of Perpetua 6.

³⁴⁹Ibid, 3:1-3.

³⁵⁰Martyrdom of Perpetua 16:3.

³⁵¹ Martyrdom of Perpetua 19:4.

³⁵²Ibid, 19:4.

³⁵³Martyrdom of Polycarp 10:1.

³⁵⁴Ibid, 17.

otherwise worship Polycarp instead of Christ. The author argues apologetically, that they would never worship anyone except Christ, because he died to save sinners although He was innocent.

It can, therefore, be suggested that apology and defence are not very prominent in the Narrative Martyr Texts although they are not totally absent. The little apologetic content in these texts are both formal and informal. These apologies also defend the Christian religious foundation in terms of what they worship and their unpreparedness to worship the pagan gods.

d. Other Peculiar Features

This aspect of the study identifies some other peculiar feature of the persecution and martyrdom addressed by the texts that are also very prominent in the texts. Two issues are very unique to Polycarp's martyrdom. In the first place the account deals with voluntary martyrs. These are people who desire to possibly show off and hence report themselves to be martyred because they are Christians. However, this account links these voluntary martyrs to apostates, where such persons become cowards by later renouncing their faith.³⁵⁵ The text, therefore, discourages such voluntary martyrdom. The second most unique issue in this account is the question of burial, in this account it is clear that after Polycarp was cremated, the disciples picked what they could of his remains and provided a befitting burial of his ashes.³⁵⁶ The Martyrdom of Perpetua does not tell the readers where and how they were buried.

When the two accounts are compared, the Narrative Martyr Texts, bring to the fore the role of persuasion. The texts capture frantic efforts especially by the governors to get these martyrs to recant and escape death, a procedure that may be reminiscent of the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and the governor Pliny. According to the texts, the persecutors' ultimate

³⁵⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 4.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 18:2.

desire was for the Christians to ‘repent’ in order to uphold the Roman order. Furthermore, these Narrative Martyr Texts are heavily influenced by the scriptures. A cursory reading of the scriptural references as indicated in the footnote of Musurillo’s collections shows remarkably that both accounts have thirteen scriptural references with nine New Testament and four Old Testament verses in each text. Heffernan also identifies a wide range of scriptural influence in the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions.³⁵⁷ This may already exhibit how scriptures were used at the time. Hartog affirms the heavy dependence of scriptures in the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp; which according to him resembles the Greek Bible especially the Septuagint and the New Testament.³⁵⁸

A final, major feature of these Narrative Martyr Texts is the role of visions. In the account of the Martyrdom of Perpetua, five visions were narrated, where the first one was requested by Saturus from Perpetua to know their fate. Polycarp also saw a vision before his arrest and he was shown how he was going to die by burning. It is strongly argued that since these visions were to a large extent eschatological, they seem to have encouraged the martyrs to hold on to their faith while invariably making them obstinate against the non-Christians especially the governors.³⁵⁹

These peculiar aspects of the Narrative Martyr Texts show important features of the hostilities against the Christians which may need further investigations. Although some parts of it are addressed in academia, more questions could be asked to help understand them better.

2.3.2 Protocol Martyr Texts

The Protocol Martyr Texts in this study refers to accounts of the martyrs that resemble court interactions. This class of texts is sometimes referred to as Acta Martyr Texts, but for the

³⁵⁷ Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua*, 527-529.

³⁵⁸ Hartog, *Letters of Polycarp*, 209-211.

³⁵⁹ Boamah, *Christian Magic*, 103-128.

purpose of this study it shall be designated as Protocol Martyr Texts, based on the style of the texts compared to the Narrative Martyr Texts. This study uses the account of the *Scillitan Martyrs* and the *Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions*

These texts are compared in what is labeled as harmony in order to establish similarities and differences in the image they paint of the persecution. This harmonized picture of the protocol texts is later compared to the harmonized picture from the Narrative Martyr Texts. The comparative employed in the Narrative Martyr Texts analysis are similarly used here.

a. Account

This section examines how the accounts were presented and the presentation of the characters in the texts. It encompasses the storyline of the account, identity of the martyrs and the persecutors.

i. Storyline

The Protocol Martyr Texts captures the court room interaction and their judgment. The trial activities are thus in focus. The account of the Scillitan martyrs consists mainly of the dialogue between martyrs and governor during the interrogation followed by the sentencing of the martyrs and then a passage describing how the martyrs praised God.³⁶⁰ This is similar in the case of Justin and his companions. For example in recension A, the culprits are presented before the governor, interrogated and then sentenced to death.³⁶¹ An interesting feature in all the Protocol Martyr Texts is the fact that although they were presented in a group, the governor then interrogates them individually of the charges. Finally they are judged with mention of their individual names, but with a common verdict.³⁶²

³⁶⁰Scillitan Martyrs 2-17.

³⁶¹Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2-6 (recension A) 2-5 (recension B) 2-5.

³⁶²Ibid, 5:6 (recension A) 5:8 (recension B) 5:2 (recension C); Scillitan Martyrs 14.

It is concluded that the procedure or story line of the Protocol Martyr Texts is straight forward. It basically captures the trial and only very little of the post-trial events. There is no mention of the arrest of the martyrs.

ii. Identity of the Martyrs

In this group of texts, there is not much information concerning the martyrs. Their names are provided and they are, through their confessions and words, presented as very courageous persons. In the account of Justin and his companions it is stated in recension B that one of them, Evelpidtus, was a slave of the Emperor.³⁶³ They are presented as very resolute persons who would not give up their faith.³⁶⁴ Furthermore they are presented as very happy when the sentence of their death was published after the interrogations.³⁶⁵ The recension C of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions suggest that these young Christians were from various cities in the empire.³⁶⁶ In the case of the Scillitan martyrs, their names are equally provided and they show joy when they were sentenced to death for being Christians.³⁶⁷

It is mostly accepted that apart from their leaders, the other martyrs were likely to be catechumen, students, slaves or generally people of low social status. The characterization of these martyrs as presented in the texts is rather very scanty but they are projected as exemplary members of the Christian community.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

Since the Protocol texts capture the trial session of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians, the identifiable persecutor in these texts is the governor. The governor interrogates them by himself and passes judgment.³⁶⁸ As high placed authorities of the Roman Empire they

³⁶³Ibid, 4:3 (recension B).

³⁶⁴Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 3-5 (recension A) 2-5:6 (recension B) 3-5 (recension C).

³⁶⁵Ibid, 6 (recension A) 6 (recension B).

³⁶⁶ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2-4 (recension C).

³⁶⁷ Scillitan Martyrs 1, 15.

³⁶⁸ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2-5 (recension A) 2-5 (recension B) 3-5 (recension C)

are thus presented as intimately and actively involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. The account of the Scillitan martyrs equally shows active roles of the proconsul Saturninus who interrogates and passes judgment for the execution of the early Christians.³⁶⁹ Therefore, the Protocol Martyr Texts due to the form of the protocol records focuses on the interaction between the martyrs and the governors.

b. Accusation

This section of the analysis considers the legal framework adopted in prosecuting the Christians. This category of the comparative elements harmonizes the legal processes adopted, the charges and allegations, motives and the demand of the authorities as presented in the Protocol Martyr Texts.

i. Legal Process

The Protocol Martyr Texts presents a legal process that follows the *cognitio extra ordinem* where the authority is seen as the interrogator and the judge. In the accounts, the martyrs are before the magistrate who asks questions with regards to their meeting places, activities conversion and eventually determines their fate.³⁷⁰

The authorities are described in the Protocol Martyr Texts as active in the persecution and as considering it important to persecute Christians. There is no mention of any *delator* (*denouncer*) to charge the martyrs. *Cognitio extra ordinem* according to Sherwin-White was not the most commonly used procedure in Roman imperial times.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Scillitan Martyrs 2-14.

³⁷⁰ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2-5 (recension A) 2-5 (recension B) 2-5 (recension C); Scillitan Martyrs 2-14.

³⁷¹ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 203-204.

ii. Charges and Allegations

The legal charge against the Christians is the charge of the name. In these texts the authorities are very emphatic in asking the martyrs individual questions such as "...Are you a Christian too? You are not also a Christian, are you?"³⁷² In most cases right after these questions, the judgment for their execution followed. In the account of the Scillitan martyrs, when the proconsul encouraged the martyrs to sacrifice, Vestia responded "I am a Christian;" Secunda said "I wish to be what I am" Then the proconsul Saturnius said to Speratus "Do you persist in remaining a Christian? to which Speratus responded 'I am a Christian.'³⁷³ Additionally, in the judgment that followed the sentencing began by naming the martyrs and afterwards it read "... have confessed that they have been living in accordance with the rites of the Christians, ..." ³⁷⁴ Therefore, it is without a doubt that the confession to be a Christian is presented as the foundation for the verdicts. Analyzed carefully however, it is clear that the texts present underlying allegations that explain why the confession to be a Christian was seen as a confession that entailed the death penalty. Sometimes, it is the magistrate who brings up such allegations and at other times the martyrs defend without the magistrates bringing them up. Such underlying allegations included ungodliness, cannibalism, incest, magic etc.³⁷⁵

The account of the Scillitan martyrs raises some allegations against the Christians based on the interrogations of the proconsul. Allegations such as Christianity being madness, atheism, folly and the Christians as being obstinate are identified.³⁷⁶ Further when encouraged by the proconsul to return to his "senses", one of the martyrs, Speratus, answers in a way, where he seems to anticipate allegations of wickedness ("We have never done wrong; we have never

³⁷² Martyrdom of Justin and His Companions 4:1, 8 (recession A).

³⁷³ Scillitan Martyrs 9-12.

³⁷⁴ Scillitan Martyrs 14.

³⁷⁵ Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 194; Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 1-24.

³⁷⁶ Scillitan Martyrs 2, 4, 8.

lent ourselves to wickedness...”).³⁷⁷ The interrogations in the martyrdom of Justin and his companions equally stress these allegations. The magistrate asks questions like “what sort of life do you lead?”³⁷⁸ which may be premised on the allegation of social vices such as magic, sorcery, cannibalism, incest and debauchery among others. The governor also inquired about where they met.³⁷⁹ This question resonates with the rumors that the non-Christians believed the Christians meet in secret places to do their nefarious activities.³⁸⁰

Therefore, the questions asked by the authorities and the answers provided by the martyrs present an image, according to which there were some strong prejudices against the Christians that influenced the hostilities that were leveled against the Christians in the empire.

iii. Motives of Persecutors

It is without doubt that the motives of the authorities in this category of text are presented as both political and religious. This is seen in the nature of interrogation in the text. The Scillitan martyrs presented just after the names of the martyrs that “The proconsul Saturnius said ‘If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor’.”³⁸¹ This statement points to a large extent, the proconsul’s prejudice that they may be practicing something close to *superstitio* which offends the gods. In response to this suggestion, the leader, “Speratus said ‘we have never done wrong; we have never lent ourselves to wickedness. Never, have we uttered a curse...’”³⁸² This response shows he was also addressing some of the social vices believed to be characteristic of the Christians.

Furthermore, the proconsul reacted to this statement by saying, “we too are religious people, and our religion is a simple one: we swear by the genius of our lord the emperor and we offer

³⁷⁷Ibid, 2.

³⁷⁸ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2 (recession A).

³⁷⁹Ibid, 3 (recession A), 3 (recession B), 2:4 (recession C).

³⁸⁰Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 188, Sherwin-White, “Early Christian,” 783-784; Walsh, “On Christian Atheism,” 258.

³⁸¹Scillitan Martyrs 2.

³⁸²Ibid, 3.

prayers for his health- as you also ought to do.”³⁸³ The political aspect is seen in his last words in the obligatory duty of the citizens to the emperor, the prayer. Again, this reaction points to the fact that among the Romans, the emperor was seen as both a religious and a political leader. The accounts of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions are even more interesting. The governor asked the martyrs questions about the kind of lives they lived, where they met and other enquiries that point to some of the allegations of *superstitio* to stress his religious motives. He equally demanded sacrifice from them which is more political. In the recession B, the author quotes the words of the governor as saying to Justin unequivocally “‘First of all, you must obey the gods and submit to the order of the emperors’.”³⁸⁴

The authorities in these accounts are described as presenting in their interrogation and verdicts the Christians as jeopardizing the *pax deorum* and the *pax romana*, and thus the governors are described as being motivated by their desire to restore such peace either by forcing Christians to recant and sacrifice or by punishing them. Apart from this religious motivation, the emperor needed to be assured of the allegiance of the Christians.

iv. Demand

In most cases during the trial of the early Christians, it is interesting that when the martyrs confessed to being Christians, the governor demanded from them the offering of sacrifice to the Roman gods and/or a swearing by the genius of the emperor.

All the accounts in the Protocol Martyr Texts request the martyrs to swear by the genius of the emperor and offer the sacrifice. The proconsul in the account of the Scillitan martyrs suggested to the martyrs to swear and when they refused, his judgment in part reads: “... and whereas those given the opportunity to return to the usage of the Roman they have persevered

³⁸³ Ibid, 4.

³⁸⁴ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2 (recession B).

in their obstinacy...³⁸⁵ Being Roman means praying to the genius of the emperor.³⁸⁶ The same requirement is demanded in the martyrdom of Justin and his Companions. The judgment reads: “Those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods are to be scourged and executed in accordance with the law (recension A); those who have refused to sacrifice to the gods and yield to the emperors’ edict are to be led away to be scourged and beheaded in accordance with the law (recension B).”³⁸⁷

The authorities would want the Christians to sacrifice as the general Roman populace would do. However, the Christians saw it as idolatry and hence could not bring themselves to do that, since it was against their faith.

c. Action

These comparative elements considered the nature of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The aim of this section is to understand, what the oppressors did to the Christians after the charges were proved. It therefore comprises the form of suffering, polemic attacks and possibly if they had the opportunity to defend themselves.

i. Form of Suffering

According to the texts, the Scillitan martyrs were condemned to be executed by the sword and eventually they were beheaded.³⁸⁸ In the account of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions, recension A talks about the martyrs being scourged and executed;³⁸⁹ the

³⁸⁵ Scillitan Martyrs 14.

³⁸⁶ Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome*, 134-139.

³⁸⁷ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 5:6 (recension A), 5:8 (recension B), 5:2 (recension C).

³⁸⁸ Scillitan Martyrs 14, 17.

³⁸⁹ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 5:6 (recension A).

recension B equally talks about scourging and beheading of the Christians,³⁹⁰ while recension C points to cruel torrent, death by the sword and chastisement by whips.³⁹¹

These forms of persecution and martyrdom can be classified into two; physical torture and the ultimate punishment: death. The physical torture including scourging, whipping and various chastisements is only found in Justin's Martyrdom. The ultimate form used to claim the lives of these Christians was the cutting off of their heads.

ii. Polemic

The Protocol Martyr Texts also lay some counter attacks on the persecutors of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Although the account of the Scillitan martyrs does not lay any direct attacks on the persecutors, the account of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions has a strong polemic content. All three recensions of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions begin with charges by the authorities as being "wicked", "idolaters" and "impious".³⁹² The recension C includes other direct charges of the authorities as being a "plague" and "terrible" all directed against the authorities in these hostilities. All the direct attacks are directed against the authorities without consideration of the public.

iii. Defense and Apology

It must be stressed that the account of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians as portrayed by the Protocol Martyr Texts emphasize how the martyrs defend the Christian faith. The account of the martyrdom of the Scillitans tries to cleanse Christianity of the social vices they are alleged to have been engaged in by suggesting that they had done nothing wrong; they did not support wickedness or curse people.³⁹³ The martyrs in this account further argued that they were responsible members of the society since they paid their taxes, do not

³⁹⁰Ibid, 5:8 (recension B).

³⁹¹Ibid, 4:1; 5:1; 6:1 (recension C).

³⁹²Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 1 (recension A), 1 (recension B), 1 (recension C).

³⁹³Scillitan Martyrs 3.

steal and they explain that the God they serve is invisible.³⁹⁴ The martyrdom of Justin and his companions also explained that the Christians were blameless and their doctrines of the Omni-presence of God, Jesus as the creator, Christian apocalypse and many other Christian beliefs and practices were relevant to their worship.³⁹⁵ These defenses offered by the Christians during the interrogations in this class of martyr texts tries to explain the Christian beliefs and practices as well as make the Christian faith appealing to the non-Christians. Therefore, to a large extent it has a strong evangelistic appeal.

d. Other Peculiar Features

It is important to stress that these accounts of the martyrdom bring to the fore some other peculiarities that are very interesting. In the first place there is little presence of scriptural influences in the texts. However, some imageries and ideas used in the texts have some scriptural backings. Justin for instance cites from Jeremiah 23:24 that “God is not circumscribed by place; invincible, he fills the heavens and the earth,...”³⁹⁶

The accounts touched on burial as a practice of the early church. In the recession B of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions the Christians had to even ‘secretly’ steal the bodies of the martyrs for burial.³⁹⁷

A major peculiarity of this text is the element of conversion. The accounts show that some of the martyrs, especially in the martyrdom of Justin and his companions, are second generation Christians.

³⁹⁴Ibid, 5-6.

³⁹⁵ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 2:5; 5:1-6 (recession A), 2:3-7; 3:1-3; 4:7-8; 5:1-8’ (recession B), 2:1-3; 4:1-6; (recession C).

³⁹⁶ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 3:1 (recession B).

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 6 (recession B).

2.3.3 Similarities and Differences

This section of the project brings together the two classes of the martyr texts to identify possible similarity and differences in the way they portray the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians in the Roman Empire during the second to early third centuries. This comparison helps to see if the texts corroborate, supplement or even contradict each other. The Narrative Martyr Texts have one way of describing these hostilities while the Protocol Martyr Texts also seem to strengthen other aspects. The activity therefore is to synchronize the issues these texts raise in the persecution and martyrdom. The synchronization here is presented using the categorization of the comparative elements used in discussing the Narrative and Protocol Martyr texts.

a. Account

This category compares the storyline or the flow of events in the texts, the identity of both the oppressors and the oppressed. This comparison helps to understand the two categories of the martyr texts, the presentation of the accounts and who was involved in these hostilities. This comparative section looks into the nature of the accounts of the persecution and martyrdom as captured by the martyr texts while stressing their convergent and divergent viewpoints.

i. Storyline

The two kinds of martyr texts differ in their focus whereas the Narrative accounts are detailed, the protocols are short and straight forward. The Narrative accounts take into consideration three main parts, pre-trial, trial and post-trial issues. Meanwhile, the protocol accounts focus on the trial alone without attempts to reveal the background of the hostility which are captured in the narrative as pre-trial events.

Again, the protocols do not concern themselves with the post-trial events while the narratives find those sections equally important since it enables them to address and offer some closing

remarks as well as exhort the later Christians to look on the examples of these ‘faithful’ ones.³⁹⁸ However, since the Protocols often present in-depth accounts of the trial session, they are focused on the dialogue between magistrate and martyrs, where the narratives by comparison seem to rush through. The pictures presented by the two kinds of texts, therefore, complement each other.

ii. Identity of Martyrs

The Narrative and Protocol Martyr Texts agree in their presentation of the characters of the martyrs. The martyrs are presented in the texts in heroic terms. They are described with positive remarks especially as highly courageous and worthy of emulation by the later Christians. This glorifying image of the martyrs in the texts makes it clear that to a large extent these texts are written by Christians with a large Christian congregation in mind.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

Again, the two classes of texts agree with regards to whom was involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians in the second century Roman Empire. The texts suggest that the persecutors included both the non-Christian public and those in authority. Whereas the narrative texts emphasize the role of the public, the subjects and citizens of the empire and in the Martyrdom of Polycarp with special mention of the Jews, the public is absent from the protocol texts that focus solely on the role of the high Roman magistrate. The authorities are also active in the narrative texts, but here we see a spectrum of authorities from municipal authorities and local police to Roman soldiers and governors and we see the use of public facilities and spaces like prisons, forums and amphitheaters

The narratives describe a host of events regarding the persecution, that is, before the martyrs’ arrest and until their execution. However, the Protocol accounts capture the court

³⁹⁸ Martyrdom of Polycarp 19-22; Martyrdom of Perpetua 21:11.

interrogation and judgment hence their inability to bring into the picture persecutors involved in arrest, confinement etc. Therefore, the narrative accounts capture the authorities and the public; while the Protocol accounts exclude the public.

b. Accusation

This category compares the Narrative and Protocol Martyr Texts with regard to the legal procedure adopted, charges and allegations, motive and the demand of the authorities. This section therefore gets into the legal framework of the hostilities.

i. Legal Procedure

All the processes presented in the texts followed the *cognitio extra ordinem* procedure. The narrative and protocol martyr texts agree that the legal method adopted is what Sherwin-White suggests in his writings.³⁹⁹ In this method, the high Roman magistrate, governor or urban prefect, is presented as the one who personally interrogates and eventually passes judgment on the Christians. The involvement of magistrates and of Rome's urban Prefect in the prosecution of Christians show how seriously the authorities took the threat of the Christians and that they used their power in an attempt to stop Christianity's spread.

ii. Charges and Allegations

As stated earlier, the primary charge with which the Christians were saddled was the charge associated with the name Christian. In all the accounts, the governor questioned the defendants on their affiliation with the name Christian. This central charge often found expression in the judgment after the trial which spelt doom to the Christians. The charge of the name entailed, however, that there were negative traits or crimes associated with the name: these included the allegations of *superstitio*, magic, social vices and many others.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 203-204.

⁴⁰⁰ Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 187-191.

This means that the charge of name was an umbrella charge that subsumed other punishable allegations against the Roman religious, social, and political order.

In both the Narrative and Protocol texts there are spaces for some allegations against the Christians by the non-Christians. These allegations are generally social in nature but may have some religious and political implications. These allegations are based on prejudices that the populace had against the Christian movement at the time. The Christians were seen as magicians, criminals, cannibals, incestuous besides other negative connotations associated with the name Christian.⁴⁰¹ It is worth noting that these prejudices contributed largely to the plight of the Christians at the time.

iii. Motives

The texts overlap in their description of the motives of the persecutors. The motivation was predominantly religious and political. The persecutors sought to establish Roman religious unity by ensuring that those who deviated from the worship of the gods were not tolerated. This was key because a toleration of such characters would anger the gods and this would often result in calamity for the society. Therefore, there was a need to maintain the peaceful relationship between the gods and the people – *Pax Deorum*. Again, the political life of the Romans was very important to them, therefore it was significant to register the allegiance of the Christian. The Christians unpreparedness to offer prayer and sacrifices to the genius of the emperor created doubt in the minds of the people especially those in authority and the Christians unpreparedness to offer the sacrifice meant they could join other political powers to cause chaos in the Roman administration. The narrative and protocol martyr texts affirm these two as major factors that fueled the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

⁴⁰¹Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 1-24.

iv. Demand

After the supposed culprits admitted that they were Christians, the authorities demanded that they appease the gods by offering sacrifice or they demanded an oath by the genius of the emperor. This demand was an attempt to restore the broken relationship that existed between the gods and the Romans. The Christians could not do this since it was against the first two requirements of the Decalogue.

c. Action

This section of the comparative analysis seeks to reveal how the judgments were implemented in both the narrative and protocol accounts. The form of suffering, polemics and their defense and apology were analyzed from the texts.

i. Form of Suffering

The narrative accounts point to a number of abuses which are grouped as psychological, physical or ultimate punishment. It must be stressed that the first two strategies were technically applied to get the Christians to recant but since they were obstinate, the ultimate punishment, death, was applied. Although these channels of persuasions were applied in the protocol accounts, the psychological parts are not quite evident when compared to the narrative texts. In the protocol accounts, emphasis is placed on physical abuse which included whipping and scourging and execution as an ultimate punishment.

To this end, the narratives expose the reader to the pain the Christians suffered psychologically and physically while the protocol texts focus on their decapitation and physical torture.

ii. Polemic

The two classes of texts attack the authorities and the general public in some counter charges. The Protocol texts directly attack authorities alone while the Narrative texts, besides the authorities also attack the public directly. This difference between the texts could be attributed to the nature of the texts. Since the Narrative texts focus on a large number of activities, the role of the public is also captured. However, the Protocol texts did not bring the public into the picture of the hostilities so they are excused from these direct attacks.

It is also worthy to note that most of the attacks were directed to the authorities in both texts considering the intended audience of the texts. Since the authors intended the texts to be read by Christians, they deemed it necessary to expose the class of tyrants who were most interested in the acts of persecution and martyrdom.

iii. Defense and Apology

The protocol accounts as compared to the narrative accounts present a more detailed perspective on the defense and apologies presented by the Christians with regards to the charges leveled against them. It was only in the martyrdom of Polycarp that there is some formal apology of who the Christians worship.⁴⁰² It was not even offered by the martyr (Polycarp) but by the narrator, when it is suggested that the Christians may steal the body of the martyr to worship it. Also, Polycarp himself requested for such a debate but he was refused.⁴⁰³ The account of Perpetua and her companions also has some defense but these cannot be described as formal.⁴⁰⁴ The protocol accounts have a lot of apologetic and defense content as seen in the way the martyrs try to address some of the prejudices against the Christians. In effect, the protocols offer some defense and apology while the narratives are almost quite on defense and apology.

⁴⁰² Martyrdom of Polycarp 17.

⁴⁰³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 10.

⁴⁰⁴ Martyrdom of Perpetua 3:1-3, 16:3, 18:4.

The nature of the hostilities based on the synthesis of the two classes of texts shows some agreements and disagreements. The differences do not reveal a contradiction but complementary elaboration; what is not covered in the protocol texts (pre- and post-trial events) are covered in the narrative texts; what is in absolute focus in the protocol texts (dialogue between judge and martyr) is also not an in-depth part the narrative accounts.

d. Other Peculiar Features

Apart from the comparison of these two sources, there are some peculiarities which can equally be compared. In the first place, they both make use of scriptural texts and references. They cite from the Old and New Testaments to support and progress their arguments. Secondly, they both agree that, although some martyrs were in group, they faced the charges individually. This suggests that each individual was given a chance to take responsibility for their actions hence blanket judgments were not allowed. Furthermore, the accounts present from a non-Christian perspective the obstinacy of the martyrs. This is heightened to reveal the efforts made by the governors and other persons in persuading the Christians to recant which they blatantly refused. Their refusal often revealed that the Christians were resolute in their faith and would not offer sacrifices or pray to the genius as this was against their beliefs.

However, they differ in terms of the fact that the narratives touch on the role of visions in these hostilities while the protocols do not record anything about visions. Also, the protocols touch on an important subject which is absent in the narratives. They delve further into the issue of conversion which shows that many of the Christians were converted by their parents. This aspect is equally significant for future studies

In general, it can be seen that the narrative and protocol accounts have some important convergences with very few differences but no contradictions. The few nuances in the texts

complement each other strongly with regard to the general picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire from the second century.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the three main factors which influenced the writing of such martyr text. Firstly, there was the need to relate with other Christians abroad. Secondly, it was necessary to record the history of Christian developments and thirdly, to build the Christian identity. These factors and purposes largely connect to bring to the fore, the corroborative and supplementary roles of the two classes of texts.

It is clear from the analysis that there are great resemblances in the narrative and protocol texts. It is argued that the level of overlap and similarity in the image painted by all four texts, demonstrate there was a historical reality behind the images provided by the texts. Notwithstanding there are a few nuances but not contradictions between these forms of texts. These nuances do not contradict but rather supplement each other. The various nuances identified go to stress the influence of the form of the text on the content since an author who intends to write in a protocol form does not have the time to include what happened before the arrest of the martyrs or the events after the martyrs are killed. Conversely, such authors have an increased focus on the dialogue between martyr and governor, thereby focusing more on apologetic and defense when compared to the narrative style of writing.

Based on this result it is suggested that scholars should make use of both the protocol and martyr texts to clearly understand the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. Using one form without the other may cause one to lose sight of some crucial aspects of the entire phenomena where the hostilities are concerned but a corroborated and supplementary use of the two will contribute to a better understanding of the situation at the time.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERNAL COMPARISON: APOLOGIES AND APOLOGETIC TEXTS

3.0 Introduction

The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire was prevalent both in Rome and in the other parts of the empire. John Granger Cook suggests that the Romans perceived the Christians as ‘others’ because they did not seem to fit into the Roman identity construction.⁴⁰⁵ The non-Christians felt that the doctrine and practices of the Christians to a large extent were against the Roman social order. To correct such notions, Christian authors wrote this genre of texts called the apologetics to equip Christians with a prepared defense as well as provide them with the ability to convert some high profile personalities of the empire. The apologetic texts further include Christian descriptions of the persecutions, the persecutors and presentation of their allegations, which the apologists in turn offer a defense. This chapter, therefore, explores the image of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians projected by the apologetic texts to identify if their picture of the hostilities against the Christians supplement, corroborate or contradict each other.

Most scholars, including Ulrich⁴⁰⁶ and Engberg,⁴⁰⁷ agree that the division of the apologetic texts is based on their explicit addressees. This is important because although most of the apologies are addressed to outsiders, some of them are addressed to the authorities such as the emperors or magistrates, while the others are addressed to the general public. Engberg, among other scholars, designates the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities as apologies and those addressed to the general public as part of the bigger corpus of apologetic texts.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ John Granger Cook, *Roman Attitude Towards the Christians: From Claudia to Haridian* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck), 2010: 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Ulrich, “Apologetics and Apologies,” 11-12.

⁴⁰⁷ Engberg, “Truth Begs No Favours,” 182-183.

⁴⁰⁸ Engberg, “Truth Begs no Favours,” 183; Engberg, “From among You,” 51.

The main objectives of this chapter are twofold; firstly, to develop a comprehensive picture of the persecution and martyrdom as portrayed by the apologetic texts. The comparison is to find out to what extent the two categories of texts supplement, corroborate or contradict each other with regards to the hostilities against the Christians, as was done in chapter two. The essence of the similarity (which may imply a corroborative or supplementary) or a possible difference (which may imply contradictory accounts) helps to address the second objective, which is a discussion of the submission status of the apologies. This second objective is crucial because some scholars maintain that the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities were not intended for submission. It therefore, contributes to the age long debate on the premise that a close knit similarity between the two classes of apologetic texts based on the comparative elements would suggest that the apologies were not intended for submission while a level of difference would suggest an intention for submission. Therefore, if the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities are the same as those addressed to the public, then the apologies were not intended for submission and the reverse may, therefore, be true. In view of the Kennedy rhetorical critical model which focuses on the speaker or author, audience, discourse and context or occasion of a text, adopted in this study, some preliminary discussion on the nature, factors and purposes of the apologetic text are analyzed.

3.1 The Rise and Purpose of the Apologetic Texts

The religious landscape of the first three centuries of the Roman Empire was diverse and multifaceted, religious traditions and expressions were many and spanned from private to official.⁴⁰⁹ The presence of these varying traditions in the Roman Empire brought about some form of religious rivalry among the traditions. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland argue that some of the religious traditions were hostile to each

⁴⁰⁹ Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: Apologetics in the Roman World," in *Apologetics In the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians*, eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

other at the time. They describe the situation as attacks of “great ferocity at times.”⁴¹⁰ It is, therefore, in view of such attacks that the writing of apologies arose in the empire.

Whenever there were disasters of any kind, the Christians were blamed. Tertullian’s famous statement that “If the Tiber rises to the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky is rainless, if there is an earthquake, a famine, a plague, immediately the cry arises, ‘The Christians to the lions!’”⁴¹¹ affirms this plight. Simon Price therefore indicates that “apologies are necessarily a response of some sort to criticism.”⁴¹²

The writing of the apologetic texts were, therefore, to a large extent, influenced by the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. It is interesting that these texts were not written by the martyrs themselves but by other members of the Christian faith. These writers felt the need to write because according to Tertullian, the martyrs were not given the opportunity to defend themselves.⁴¹³ The martyrs in the *cognitio* process were not allowed to give long defenses but responded directly to the questions that were put to them. The martyrs needed to answer straight to the point and were not allowed to advance comprehensive defenses to the misconceptions of the Romans against the Christians. Ulrich suggests that

Accused Christians were not permitted to provide a thorough defense, but simply required to answer yes or no to the charge of being Christian. The “*sitz im Leben*” for Christian apologies was therefore different from that of the classic defense speech

⁴¹⁰Edwards, Goodman, Price and Rowland, “Introduction,” 1.

⁴¹¹Tertulliani, Quinti Septimi Florentis. *Ad Nationes Libri Duo*, ed. Janus Guilielmus Philippus Borleffs (Leiden: Brill, 1929); Peter Homes, trans. “Ad Nationes” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition (1997; repr. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866-72), Ad Nationes 1:14.1; T.R. Glover, trans. *Tertullian Apology De Spectaculis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), Apologeticum 40:2.

⁴¹² Simon Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Cyprian,” in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagan, Jews and Christians*, eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105.

⁴¹³Tertullian, Apologeticum 1:1; 4; 2:2-3; Rudolph Arbesmann. “Tertullian to Scapula,” in *Tertullian Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily J. Daly and Edwin A. Quain (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), Franciscus Oehler, ed. *Tertulliani Quae Supersunt Omnia* (Lipsiae: Lipsiae T. O. Weigel, 1857), Ad Scapulam 1; Ad Nationes I.1:13.

This idea is bordered on fair trial, which Justin advances. The rise in the number of apologetic texts written against the persecution and martyrdom of Christians could be said to have been motivated by the principle of natural law.⁴¹⁴

The idea of fair legal process, which is normally referred to as Natural Law or Justice in legal studies,⁴¹⁵ was an important feature of the Roman legal system. Lloyd⁴¹⁶ and Smith show that the idea of Natural Law was a Greco-Roman idea where Smith says it was displayed in the Roman court room “no man is to be judged unheard.”⁴¹⁷ Smith shows that it is also very scriptural as spelt out in John 7:51 “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” Vittorio Frosini cites Aristotle who suggests that man is different from an animal as a result of man’s sixth sense of justice from injustice.⁴¹⁸

Natural justice is built on two main principles, *nemo iudex in causa sua* thus a judge should not be biased in their adjudication of justice. The second, which is very important for the purpose of this study is *audial teram partem* which implies that parties to a case must be given adequate opportunity to be heard or state a basis for their defense.⁴¹⁹

The theory of Natural Justice focuses more on the process for delivering a good judgment and considers it important just as the content of justice is delivered. This means if the process is wrong, the judgment will be questioned. It is in this light that the process which gave the Greco-Romans rights to persecute and martyr the Christians is important, especially in respect of giving the Christians an opportunity to be heard, which the martyr narratives are not interested in but which the apologetic texts also find very important. The apologists were greatly influenced by the principle of natural justice to write in their defense by explaining

⁴¹⁴ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* I.2.

⁴¹⁵ Vittorio Frosini, “A Theory on Natural Justice,” *Archives for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy* 82, (1996): 102; A. C. Lloyd, “Natural Justice” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1962): 218; S. A de Smith, *Judicial Review of Administrative Action*, 2nd Edition (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1968), 136.

⁴¹⁶ Lloyd, “Natural Justice,” 218.

⁴¹⁷ Smith, “Judicial Review of Administrative Action,” 136.

⁴¹⁸ Frosini, “A Theory on Natural Justice,” 102.

⁴¹⁹ Smith “Judicial Review of Administrative Action,” 135, Lloyd “Natural Justice,” 219.

the Christian beliefs and practices while defending Christianity of the charges leveled against the Christians.⁴²⁰ The authors of the apologetic texts therefore had certain reasons (purposes) for writing these texts. These purposes are discussed below for better appreciation of the hostilities against the early Christians in the Roman Empire.

3.1.1 Purpose of the Apologetic Text

The writing of these texts reveal that the authors had some aims and objectives which they sought to make known to their readers. Young suggests that "... their objective was not simply defending themselves against charges. Their common intent is justification of an anomalous social position in the eyes of others or themselves..."⁴²¹ This is important because an acknowledgement of the purposes of a text helps to understand it holistically and to identify the interest of the author in writing such texts. To identify the purposes of texts, the surest way is to focus on the intended audience(s) of the text. It is crucial to appreciate that the intended audiences of a text may be different from its addressees. Whereas the audience of a text may not be explicit, the addressee(s) are often explicit for example in the introductory or the concluding sections of the text. An addressee of a text is the one to whom a text is addressed on the level of rhetoric.

The intended audience may not necessarily be explicit and the intended audience may not be addressed. It is in fact possible that addressees may not even be the intended or actual audience of the text. It is mostly argued among scholars that the apologies often failed to reach their addressees especially those directed to authorities.⁴²²

This is actually the case of some Christian apologetic because some scholars believe that these apologetic texts had different audiences (intended and actual) besides their

⁴²⁰ Tertullian *Ad Nationes I.1, 2; Ad Scapulam I; Apologeticum I*; Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos and Fragments*. Ed. and trans. Molly Whittaker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), *Ad Graecos*1.

⁴²¹ Young, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," 104.

⁴²² Edward, Goodman and Price, "Introduction," 44

addressees.⁴²³ This is one of the main objectives of this study; to ascertain if the Christian apologists especially those addressed to the emperors or governors were intended for submission. What will be discussed here is whether the intended audiences of the apologies included the addressees, or whether the addressing of the texts to emperors and magistrates simply served a rhetoric or literary purpose. It is not discussed whether the apologists intended others besides the authorities to read the apologies, since this is universally acknowledged in scholarship to be the case.

Apologetic texts ideally address out-group members because they seek to complain about something by defending their cause. However, many scholars agree that Christian apologetic texts were not only for out-group members only but in-group members as well.⁴²⁴ In this regard, the apologists sought to address issues that were of great benefit to both outsiders and insiders. It can, therefore, be argued that the authors of these texts sought to put an end to the persecution and martyrdom by appealing to the authorities, evangelizing to the general public as well as creating a Christian identity by addressing the non-Christians and the Christians (this is important because identity construction is also an insider affair).

The first potential audience of the apologetic texts are the Roman authorities particularly the emperors or the provincial authorities. In the texts addressed to this category of persons the authorities are the explicit addressees; the question is whether the authors anticipated or hoped that these authorities would read these texts and would bring about a change in the plight of the Christians.⁴²⁵

The second potential category of audience who the apologists may have had in mind while writing their texts can best be described as the general public. It is interesting to discuss, to

⁴²³Loveday Alexander, "The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text" in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagan, Jews and Christians*, eds. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 106.

⁴²⁴Jacobsen, "Main Topics," 106; Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics," 2-6.

⁴²⁵Justin, First Apology 68.

what degree and in what way the authors of the apologetic texts had the public in mind. This is interesting because the public do not have the capacity to stop the hostilities and in most cases they are a heterogeneous group of people who mostly act as accusers. It is therefore without doubt that Tatian's address of his apology to the Greek public and Tertullian's address of his apology to the Nations, must mean a lot more than preventing the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. This is indeed a clear case of "if you cannot stop them, just join them" and here, it is rather the principle of "if you cannot stop them, get them to join you". It is argued that the apologists sought to win the general public into Christianity by targeting them in their apologies.⁴²⁶ The apologetic texts could, therefore, be described as tools to convert the public to become Christians, to a large extent.

Molly Whittaker comments on Tatian's works as "...essentially hortatory rather than didactic. His main concern is to urge pagan readers to leave the error of their ways in order that they may turn to the truth."⁴²⁷ Already, Christianity has a strong evangelistic appeal, whereby in some cases, they are seen to derogatorily describe other religions to make Christianity attractive by sometimes creating some form of religious intolerance by calling the gods of the other religions 'demons'.⁴²⁸ To this extent, Jacobsen with reference to Engberg identifies that one of the most important apologetic strategies employed by the apologists was to use their conversion story as a precursor for the public to also join Christianity.⁴²⁹

Often, Tertullian sarcastically ridicules the Roman religio-cultural ways of doing things and tells his audience that before becoming a Christian he was in the same predicament as the

⁴²⁶ Justin, First Apology 68.

⁴²⁷ Molly Whittaker, ed. and trans. *Tatian Oratio Ad Graecos and Fragments*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), vx.

⁴²⁸ Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century," 4.

⁴²⁹ Jacobsen, "Main Topics," 103; Engberg, "From among You," 50.

public.⁴³⁰ Engberg argues that the apologists used their conversion experiences in their accounts as a “deliberate attempt to make new Christians.”⁴³¹ Dunn, argues strongly that the purpose of Tertullian’s *Apologeticum*, was not basically to acquit the Christians but to convert the pagans.⁴³² Justin affirms this evangelistic purpose of the apologies when in his *Second Apology*, he requests that the apology is published with the objective; “And if you publish this, we will make it manifest to all, that, if possible, they may be converted; for we composed this treatise for this end alone.”⁴³³ This implies that the main objective of the apology is to win others to Christianity. The apologists also give a lot of space to explain the Christian ideology of the apocalypse and the eschatological themes.⁴³⁴ These eschatological and apocalyptic accounts in the apologies are meant to get the public to rethink their end by embracing Christianity to secure their future. To the Christians, therefore, salvation is only found in Christ.⁴³⁵ Justin even suggests that this evangelistic purpose of the apologies is not directed only towards the public but even more specifically to those in authority.⁴³⁶

The third very important factor for the writing of apologies was to establish the identity of the Christians.⁴³⁷ Ulrich suggests that before the Christians gained popularity; they were a small and insignificant group of people who did not attract the interest of anybody.⁴³⁸ Acts 18:2 for instance exhibits the confusion between the Christians and the Jews at the time of Emperor Claudius, because before AD 50, Christianity was seen as a sect in Judaism.⁴³⁹ The Roman Empire was full of various religious traditions and owing to the relationship between Christianity and Judaism there was the need to establish the identity of the Christians

⁴³⁰ Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 18:4; Simon Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 107.

⁴³¹ Engberg, “From among You,” 77.

⁴³² Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Rhetorical Structure in Tertullian’s ‘Ad Scapulam,’” *Vigilliae Christianae* 56 (2002): 49-51

⁴³³ Justin, *Second Apology* 15.

⁴³⁴ Justin *First Apology* 11, 18, 21, 50-53; *Second Apology* 8, 14; Titan, *Ad Graecos* 6; 12:4-5; 17:1; 32:2; Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* I. 1; *Apologeticum* 49; *Ad Scapulam* 1, 3.

⁴³⁵ Ulrich, “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” 3.

⁴³⁶ Justin *Second Apology* 15.

⁴³⁷ Young, “Greek Apologists of the Second Century,” 102.

⁴³⁸ Ulrich “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” 4.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, 4-5. (until around 80 AD even Christians considered themselves as Jewish)

especially to describe their relationship with Judaism.⁴⁴⁰ Tacitus, a famous historian, senator and governor of the early second century, called the Christians, Chrestians (virtuous) which was as a result of the similarity between the word Χριστοί (anointed) and Χρηστοί (virtuous).⁴⁴¹ The apologists therefore needed to show that Christians were different from the Jews. To this end, the apologists try to show the weaknesses in the Jewish interpretation of scripture and their ways of life as different from the Christian applications.⁴⁴²

Jacobsen argues that the apologists tried to create ‘otherness’ in the Roman community in order to construct the Christian community with distinction.⁴⁴³ Kahlos affirms that apologetics and polemics are often used to reinforce a group’s identity.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, Tertullian uses the first person plural pronoun ‘We’ a lot, especially in his apology to Scapula such that out of the five chapters, three begin with this pronoun and one begins with the second person (plural) pronoun ‘You’.⁴⁴⁵ Tatian also employs several personal pronouns throughout his work.⁴⁴⁶ These pronoun markers set boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in a community.

The final audience of the apologetic texts which is not explicitly stated but very obvious is the Christians themselves. Engberg clearly suggests that apart from the explicit addresses of the apologists, they definitely had other contemporaries (which were most likely Christians)⁴⁴⁷ in mind. The apologists wrote to encourage the Christians to stand firm in arguments against the non-Christians.⁴⁴⁸ Jacobsen suggests that this was important because the apologists needed to strengthen the faith of weak Christians.⁴⁴⁹ The intention to encourage

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, 2; Young, “Greek Apologists of the Second Century,” 101.

⁴⁴¹ Ulrich “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” 4.

⁴⁴² Justin, First Apology 30-45; Second Apology 4; Tertullian Apologeticum 18:6-8; 20:2-5; Ulrich, “Apologists and Apologetics in the Second Century,” 16-17.

⁴⁴³ Jacobsen, “Apologetic and Apologies,” 9.

⁴⁴⁴ Maijastina Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue c. 360 – 430* (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2007), 56-57.

⁴⁴⁵ Tertullian, Ad Scapulam 1,2, 4 and 5.

⁴⁴⁶ Tatian, Ad Graecos 1:3; 3:1; 4:2; 12:5.

⁴⁴⁷ Engberg, “Truth Begg No Favours,” 178.

⁴⁴⁸ Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 105-106.

⁴⁴⁹ Jacobsen, “Main Topics,” 109-110.

and strengthen the Christians gave rise to the systematic discussions of the doctrines of the Christians. This was very important because already, non-Christians such as Celsus accused the Christians of shunning debate and that Christians were the down trodden members of the society whose intellectual capacity was low. Hence, the apologies served as an avenue to help Christians find happiness with their faith and also provide strong argument against their debaters in places where the apologists could not be present to expose their view point.

These are the four main factors or purposes that greatly motivated the apologists to write these texts. The purposes of the texts are clearly spelt out if the audience or addressees are examined based on the text. The objectives were to appeal to the authorities to stop the hostilities, evangelize to the general public as well as show a distinction between Christianity and other religions especially Judaism by admonishing non-Christians to accept the faith. Hence, it is evident that the above mentioned points influenced the writing of the apologetic texts. Niels Willert, based on Tertullian's works summarizes the purpose of the apologies as follows:

The purpose of the work is therefore both defensive and offensive. It is formally addressed to the governors, but the imperial power and pagans in general are presumably also among the intended audience. One of the aims of the work has been to not only give the state insight into the unjust treatment of Christians, but also to broadly promote a transition from paganism to Christianity among the people.⁴⁵⁰

It can, therefore, be concluded that the perlocutory aim or purposes of the apologies are for defense, explanation,⁴⁵¹ identity formation and conversion.

3.2 Submissions Status of Apologies

A major feature of the apologetic texts is the explicit nature of its addresses, although this is not a peculiar feature because letters equally have explicit addressee(s).⁴⁵² However, there is a strong debate among scholars on whether these apologies were intended to be submitted to

⁴⁵⁰Niel Willert, "Tertullian," in *In Defence of Christianity. Early Christian Apologists*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Jorg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 15: 163.

⁴⁵¹Jacobsen, "Apologetics and Apologies," 5-7.

⁴⁵²Ibid,20-21.

those they were addressed to. Despite the fact that almost all scholars agree that the addressees were not the only people intended to read the text, they disagree on the intent of the authors regarding the reading of the texts by their addressees. The texts certainly had internal audiences⁴⁵³ in mind apart from the external group they possibly address. However, the debate borders on the intent of the authors with regards to ensuring that the addressees (the public and the authorities) received and read the texts.

Alexander suggests that “apologetics, as we have seen, often fail to reach the dramatic audience to whom it is ostensibly addressed.”⁴⁵⁴ Some scholars argue that the address to the authorities was only a literary device, intended to heighten interest in the text through the application of such prominent addressees.⁴⁵⁵ Lesley Bernard seems to be in this category when he remarks on Justin’s Apologies by stating that “Humanistic Jewish writers before Justin had used similar modes of addressing to ensure that their works were well received by the public for whom they were designed.”⁴⁵⁶ To this class of scholars, the apologists only applied the names of the authorities to attract readers for these texts.

On the other hand, some also maintain that it was standard practice in the Roman Empire where small books on different issues were sometimes written in communicating with emperors and magistrates.⁴⁵⁷ Such a small book *libellus* in Latin and *biblidion* in Greek which can be translated as “small scroll” were submitted to a magistrate or an emperor with a petition.⁴⁵⁸ This group of scholars, therefore, suggests that it is likely that these texts could have been intended for submission to the authorities. Jacobsen is one of those who strongly maintain that the apologies were at least intended for submission.⁴⁵⁹ The basis of his strong

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁵⁴ Alexander, “The Acts of the Apostles,” 44.

⁴⁵⁵ Jacobsen “Apologetics and Apologies” 13-17.

⁴⁵⁶ Bernard, *St. Justin Martyr*, 6.

⁴⁵⁷ Engberg “Condemnation, Criticism and Consternation,” 201-203.

⁴⁵⁸ Oskar Skarsune, “Justin and The Apologists,” in *The Rutledge Companion to Early Christian Thought*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 123.

⁴⁵⁹ Jacobsen, “Main Topics” 107.

suggestion is that the apologetic texts touch strongly on political issues especially with regards to the legal status of the Christians in the empire.

In the light of this seeming confusion, this project provides some scholarly solution by adopting a systematic comparison between the sub-categories of the apologetic texts in this chapter and with the martyr texts in chapter four to address the issues. This comparison is based on the argumentative strategy of the texts. In the first place, among the Apologetic texts, it is assumed that those written to the general public may have a strong polemic approach as compared to those addressed to the authorities and less inclined towards discussing detailed legal procedure. Geoffrey Dunn agrees with the premise that the polemic content of a text that is intended to be read by a particular group is less polemic towards that audience.⁴⁶⁰ Kahlos defines polemic as a strong verbal or written attack on a people, beliefs and practices with the purpose of destabilizing an opponent's position in order to highlight that of the polemist.⁴⁶¹ Again, in this light, the sources of the argument as presented to the general public may use both Christian and non-Christian sources while those addressed to the authorities may depend on philosophy, logic and legal arguments besides the Christian and non-Christian sources.

On the other hand, where the apologetic texts are compared to the martyr texts, it is anticipated that if the apologies were intended for submission, the martyr texts will focus on religious charges while the apologetics will deal with political issues. Furthermore, the apologies will present a more aggressive defense as compared to the martyr texts (if there are any apologetic aspects of the texts). Additionally, the martyr texts are most likely to use Christian sources in their works as compared to the apologetic texts which may employ both Christian and non-Christian sources as well as philosophical, logical and legal arguments. The reverse of these issues would therefore mean that the apologies were never meant to be

⁴⁶⁰ Dunn, "Rhetorical Structure in Tertullian's 'Ad Scapulam'," 50.

⁴⁶¹ Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 62-63.

submitted, when compared to the martyr texts. In essence, if the results of the external comparisons are different, then it is logical to argue that the apologies were meant to be submitted but if the comparisons show that the martyr texts and the apologetic texts were similar in these same respects, then the conclusion suggests that the apologies were not at the very least intended for submission.

3.3 Background of the Apologetic Texts

It is very important at this point to explore the texts to be used for the internal comparison of the apologetic texts. This is very important because this chapter seeks to compare the texts written to the authorities to those written to the general public. It is important to understand the features of the individual texts and their authors. In all, six different texts and three authors are discussed in this chapter. Four of the texts are addressed to the authorities with two addressed to the general public. It is interesting that in terms of authorship, one person (Justin Martyr) wrote two apologies to the authorities (*First and Second Apologies*) but his student (Tatian) wrote to the public (*Oratio Ad Graecos*). Another author (Tertullian) wrote two apologies (*Apologeticum and Ad Scapulam*) to the authorities and also wrote (*Ad Nationes*) to the public. The texts are compared to identify if the authors changed their styles based on the implicit addresses.

3.3.1 Justin Martyr

Ulrich from a modern perspective describes Justin as the “most important second century apologist.”⁴⁶² Justin gives a lot of information about his background and conversion in one of his texts *Dialogue with Trypho*.

Justin’s date of birth is not certain but most scholars agree that it must have been in the early second century and that he was to pagan parents in Flavia Neapolis in Syria Palestine modern

⁴⁶²Jorg Ulrich, “Justin Martyr” in *In Defence of Christianity. Early Christian Apologists*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Jorg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 15: 51

day Nablus.⁴⁶³ Lesley Bernard suggests that Justin`s ancestors must have settled in Flavia Neapolis as colonists after its establishment.⁴⁶⁴ He refers to himself as a Samaritan⁴⁶⁵ but Ulrich and Bernard suggest that his labelling refers to his hometown rather than to his religion because his life does not suggest he was ever a religious Samaritan.⁴⁶⁶ His grandfather`s name, Bacchius, is Greek while his father`s name, Priscus, is Latin.⁴⁶⁷

He had a gentile upbringing while his education was Greek at various philosophical schools.⁴⁶⁸ He started out as a Stoic however, he said, he was not learning anything new about God so he left for the Peripatetic school; but when he was asked to pay tuition he felt good philosophers should not take money before teaching, so he then approached a famous Pythagorean and asked to be trained at the Pythagoras school. However, to be trained in the school of Pythagoras the student needed to know music, astronomy and geometry. Unfortunately, Justin did not have these qualifications so he was dismissed. In his troubled moments, the thought of the Platonists came to mind, and he approached someone who admitted him for training, where he confesses, he improved day by day. Justin can, therefore, be said to have trained in four philosophical schools, from Stoic, to Peripatetic through Pythagorean to Platonism. It was while he was training as a Platonist that he met an old man who spoke to him about Christianity.⁴⁶⁹

He had some Christian education and saw himself as a Christian philosopher. He, therefore, established his school to train Christians. Bernard suggests that his school may not have been a permanent or stationary one but possibly a mobile school where he taught various people at

⁴⁶³ Justin`s First Apology 1:1

⁴⁶⁴ Leslie W. Bernard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 5.

⁴⁶⁵ Philippe Bobichon, *Justin Martyr: Dialogue avec Trypho* (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003); Thomas B. Falls, *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation of the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, the Monarchy or The Rule of God* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press 1948) *Dialogue with Trypho* 29:1; 120:6.

⁴⁶⁶ Ulrich, "Justin Martyr," 51; Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 5.

⁴⁶⁷ Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 5.

⁴⁶⁸ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 2; Ulrich, "Justin Martyr," 51, Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 6

⁴⁶⁹ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 3; Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 6-7.

various places. It is believed that some of his students came to him in Rome.⁴⁷⁰ Some of his students were Evelpistus (one of his companions who died with him), Tatian (the Assyrian), Irenaeus (from Smyrna) and many others.⁴⁷¹ He also gave himself up for the writing of texts especially apologies. Three of his texts have survived *First* and *Second Apologies* as well as the *Dialogue with Trypho*.⁴⁷² Young summarises the central theme of Justin`s apologetic thoughts as “Justin tries to challenge the justices of condemning Christians just for being Christians by confronting misconceptions and rumours on one hand while setting out their doctrines and ethics as philosophical and true on the other.”⁴⁷³ He was vehement in defending the Christian faith from the Romans, Jews and dissents. Justin died as a martyr at the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Bernard suggests that he may have been young when he died.⁴⁷⁴ His martyr account has been analysed in the previous chapter. Justin himself together with Tatian, his student have suggested that he may have been reported as a Christian by his stoic competitor Crescens.⁴⁷⁵

For the purposes of this work, his two main apologies are discussed and compared with Tertullian`s *Apologeticum* and *Ad Scapulam*. These four texts are all addressed to authorities. Subsequently the four texts were compared to selected apologetic texts addressed to the general public. The features and characteristics of the two apologies are therefore discussed below.

i. First and Second Apologies

Most scholars seem to agree that Justin`s two apologies are related and that they are supposed to be one text. The First Apology is addressed to the Emperor Antoininus Pius and his son

⁴⁷⁰ Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 12.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*,13.

⁴⁷² Ulrich, “Justin Martyr,” 53; Bernard, *Justin Martyr*, 5.

⁴⁷³ Young, “Greek Apologists of the Second Century,” 83.

⁴⁷⁴ Ulrich, “Justin Martyr,” 52.

⁴⁷⁵ Justin Second Apology 3:1; Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*19:1.

Marcus Aurelius and his later co-emperor Lucius Verus.⁴⁷⁶ However, Oskar Skarsaune suggests that it had the emperor, senate and the Roman people in mind to appeal to them to stop the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire.⁴⁷⁷ Ulrich divides the *First Apology* which has sixty-eight chapters and a rescript from the Emperor Hadrian to Manucius Fundanus into five main parts.⁴⁷⁸

1. Chapters 1- 12 Defense against the charge of Atheism
2. Chapters 13 – 29 The teachings of Jesus
3. Chapters 30 – 60 Jesus as the son of God
4. Chapters 61- 67 Christian sacraments (Eucharist, baptism) and Sunday meetings
5. Chapter 68– end Legal and political basis of his apology.

Again, he divides the *Second Apology* which has fifteen chapters into four main sub-sections.⁴⁷⁹ He suggests that:

1. Chapters 1- 4 Hostilities of demons to God
2. Chapters 5 – 7:8 Apocalyptic themes with emphasis on the eternal fire
3. Chapter 7:9 – end Justin`s logos doctrine;
4. Chapter 8 Failure of philosophy

On the other hand, Bernard offers another in-depth categorization of the texts.⁴⁸⁰

1. Chapters 1 – 2 Appeal for justice
2. Chapters 3 – 5 Defend Christianity against some scandals
3. Chapters 6 – 12 The charge of atheism
4. Chapter 13 Christianity as monotheism

⁴⁷⁶ Bernard, *St. Justin Martyr*, 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Skarsaune, "Justin and The Apologists" 123.

⁴⁷⁸ Ulrich, "Justin Martyr," 53-54.

⁴⁷⁹ Ulrich, "Justin Martyr," 54.

⁴⁸⁰ Bernard *St. Justin Martyr*, 6- 8; 15-17.

5. Chapters 14 – 20 Christianity as a moral religion
6. Chapters 21-22 Pagan stories which model and corrupt Christian stories
7. Chapter 23 Christ as the messiah
8. Chapters 24 – 29 Against magicians
9. Chapters 30 - 53 Christianity is the fulfillment of prophecy
10. Chapters 54- 58 Roman myths are imitations of Christ
11. Chapters 59 – 60 Plato depended on Moses
12. Chapters 61 - 67 Christian baptism and Eucharist.

His thoughts on the Second Apology only provide topics for the chapters without categorizations.

In all, Young suggests that Justin sees his works in three ways.⁴⁸¹ In the first place as *aprosphonesis* (philosopher-king) which he addresses emperors who are philosophically inclined. In the second place it is *enteuxis* (a plea or petition), the Second Apology in particular was inspired by the recent killings of Christians. Thirdly as *exegesis* (explanatory) which projects Christianity as the true religion.

3.3.2 Tatian the Assyrian

Falkenberg presents the confusion surrounding a man described as a heretic by the Western Church but as a theologian by the Eastern Church.⁴⁸² Tatian may have been born around 120 AD in Assyria⁴⁸³ east of the Euphrates to wealthy pagan parents⁴⁸⁴ and possibly died between 180 and 190 AD.⁴⁸⁵ He travelled extensively and his parents gave him the best of conventional, Hellenistic education, particularly in rhetoric and, at a point, he was initiated

⁴⁸¹ Young, "Greek Apologetics of the Second Century," 83-84.

⁴⁸² Rene Falkenberg, "Tatian," in *In Defence of Christianity. Early Christian Apologists*, eds. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen and Jorg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 15: 67.

⁴⁸³ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos* 42:1; Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 11:1; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, ix.

⁴⁸⁵ Falkenberg, "Tatian," 67.

into a mystery cult.⁴⁸⁶ He visited Rome and became a student of Justin who he respected very much.⁴⁸⁷ He may have been converted based on his desire for intellectual activities such as the reading of scriptures but it is also possible that Justin played a role in his conversion. Tatian referred to himself as the `herald of the truth`.⁴⁸⁸ Justin`s influence on Tatian was great and there are some similarities in their life history since they were both converted by scriptural reading, belonged to pagan families and attacked the Roman culture.⁴⁸⁹ Tatian also became a teacher after Justin, and Clement of Alexandria and Rhodo who opposed Marcion, were his students.⁴⁹⁰ To him Christianity is an educational discipline (παίδεια- paideia), superior philosophy and an all-embracing religion irrespective of age or sex.⁴⁹¹

Later in his life, he broke away from the Church because of his teachings and moved to the east of Mesopotamia to form his school and sect, although Eusebius suggests that he was actually excommunicated in 172.⁴⁹² Irenaeus suggests that his break away was as a result of pride and the sect he formed denied Adam salvation, banned marriage and promoted vegetarianism.⁴⁹³ Tertullian equally affirms the ascetic practices and their celebration of the Eucharist with water instead of wine.⁴⁹⁴ However, Whittaker suggests that by the fourth century, Tatian`s influence on the sect had diminished.⁴⁹⁵ Jerome and Irenaeus suggest that his sect was called Encratites.⁴⁹⁶ He is therefore sometimes described as a heretic and/or Gnostic by many scholars although Falkenberg suggests that he may not have been a major heretic

⁴⁸⁶Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*; 35:1-2; Falkenberg, "Tatian," 67.

⁴⁸⁷Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 18:2, 29:1; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, ix.

⁴⁸⁸Falkenberg, "Tatian," 68; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, ix, xv; Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 18, 20.

⁴⁸⁹Gerald F. Hawthornes, "Tatian and His Discourse to the Greeks", *The Harvard Theological Review* 57 (1964): 187; Paul Foster, "Tatian", *The Expository Times* 120 (2008):106.

⁴⁹⁰ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, ix; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 2.

⁴⁹¹ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xv.

⁴⁹²Falkenberg, "Tatian," 67.

⁴⁹³Falkenberg, "Tatian," 76; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, x.

⁴⁹⁴ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, x.

⁴⁹⁵Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶Ibid.

after all.⁴⁹⁷ Emily Hunt, Hawthorne, Foster and others strongly argue against Irenaeus and Grant on their assertion that Tatian became a heretic.⁴⁹⁸

i. Tatian`s ad Graecos

Tatian wrote quite extensively because apart from his *Oratio Ad Graecos*, he matches the gospels in his *Diatessaron*, and his *On Animals* is lost.⁴⁹⁹ He even had it in mind to write a text entitled *Those who have Propounded ideas about God* Falkenberg suggests that he wrote it but that it is lost.⁵⁰⁰ There may be other extracts by him such as *On Problems*, *On Perfection According to the Savior*, *On Six Days of Creation*.⁵⁰¹ Hawthorne argues that Tatian`s writings are influenced by philosophies especially Stoicism and Platonism.⁵⁰²

Foster suggests that Tatian`s text represents an important Christian apologetic trend in the second century in defense of faith.⁵⁰³ It is generally agreed that he wrote his *Oratio Ad Graecos* in Greek probably between the 150`s to 170.⁵⁰⁴ Whittaker describes his apology as hortatory rather than didactic to stress on the strong evangelistic appeals although it is also full of polemics.⁵⁰⁵ Some of the major themes this apology touches on are monotheism, logos theology, some Roman ideologies such as mythologies, astrology, magic, sorcery etc. Many of the issues he raises show his close connections with Justin especially in the way he uses Jewish ideas to argue that Christianity is older than Homer, besides his argument from prophecy and chronological argument.⁵⁰⁶ The text has extensive biblical references. A cursory count from the list provided by Whittaker shows that Tatian uses about seven Old

⁴⁹⁷Falkenberg, "Tatian," 79; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xvi.

⁴⁹⁸ Hawthorne, "Tatian and His Discourse," 165-167; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century* 1-2; Foster, "Tatian," 116-117.

⁴⁹⁹Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 2; Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, x; Falkenberg, "Tatian," 68.

⁵⁰⁰ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, x; Falkenberg, "Tatian," 68.

⁵⁰¹Falkenberg, "Tatian," 68.

⁵⁰²Hawthorne, "Tatian and His Discourse," 178-180.

⁵⁰³Foster, "Tatian," 117.

⁵⁰⁴Falkenberg, "Tatian," 67; Foster, "Tatian," 108; Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xv.

⁵⁰⁶Falkenberg, "Tatian," 69.

Testament verses and thirty-four New Testament verses.⁵⁰⁷ It is argued that Tatian greatly considers his audience when writing so he does not use the Christological titles such as Christ, Son of Man, Saviour and the logos theology,⁵⁰⁸ This text, though an apology, is criticized for omitting words and concepts like Christ, Christianity, Jesus, Lord, church, savior and its lack of an appeal to the readers.⁵⁰⁹

Whittaker classifies his forty-two chaptered apology into sixteen sections.⁵¹⁰

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Chapter 1 | Introduction and attacks the Greek culture |
| 2. Chapter 2 – 3 | Attack Roman philosophy |
| 3. Chapters 4 – 7 | Discuss the Christian doctrine of creation |
| 4. Chapters 8 – 11 | Attack astrology and mythology. |
| 5. Chapters 12 – 15 | The two kinds of spirits |
| 6. Chapters 16 – 18 | Against sorcery and medicine |
| 7. Chapter 19 | Addresses philosophers especially Crescens |
| 8. Chapter 20 | Apocalypse |
| 9. Chapter 21 | Mythologies |
| 10. Chapters 21 – 28 | Attack pagan practices |
| 11. Chapters 29 – 30 | Tatian's conversion |
| 12. Chapter 31 | Chronological arguments |
| 13. Chapters 32 – 34 | Christian attitudes towards sex and age. |
| 14. Chapter 35 | Tatian's education and travels |
| 15. Chapter 36 – 41 | The chronological argument again |
| 16. Chapter 42 | Conclusion. |

⁵⁰⁷ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xvii.

⁵⁰⁸ Falkenberg, "Tatian," 71-73 although Whittaker does not link the absence of these elements to Tatian's audience (Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xvi.)

⁵⁰⁹ Hawthorne, "Tatian and His Discourse to the Greeks", 161.

⁵¹⁰ Whittaker, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, xviii-xx.

Hunt describes this text as “...an apologetic work, written to justify the position of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world, and belong to the stream of Hellenized Christianity that emerged after Christianity’s divergence from Judaism.”⁵¹¹

3.3.3 Tertullian

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus⁵¹² often called Tertullian from Carthage, North Africa can be described as the most significant Christian scholar in North Africa from about the first to the third century. He was noted for his thoughts and strong opinions. It is argued that the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians was visited on the African province of the Roman Empire as far back as the reign of Commodus around 180 AD during the time of Vigellius Saturnius as proconsul who killed the first Christians when he was a governor.⁵¹³ Soon after that incident, he again eliminated some other Christians known as the Scillitan Martyrs who are said to have been murdered on the 17th July 180.

Cleveland Cox is not sure how Christianity entered the African province,⁵¹⁴ Barnes suggests that Christianity came to this region during the apostolic age.⁵¹⁵ He defines two major scriptural instances from the Acts of the Apostles to back his arguments. In the first example, he depends on Acts 2:10, the Pentecost experience where those in Jerusalem at the time included Libyans who were Africans. His second example is from Acts 8:26-40 where the Apostle Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who he baptized.

Lamin Sanneh and other scholars such as Bediako, agree to these two instances but go even further to touch on other inferences from scriptures, historical sources and other sources of oral tradition to show that Christianity had been in Africa probably soon after the crucifixion

⁵¹¹Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 19.

⁵¹²Robert and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*3; Willert, “Tertullian,” 164.

⁵¹³Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971), 60.

⁵¹⁴Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3.

⁵¹⁵Barnes, *Tertullian: A historical and Literal Studies*, 63-64.

of Christ.⁵¹⁶ Sanneh for instance argues that during the birth of Christ he was taken to Egypt (an African land), in Mark 15:21 Simon of Cyrene was the one who helped Jesus to carry his cross, and he was from Africa (Cyrene was a Roman province of Libya); this same Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexander who were major Christian contributors of Christianity in Africa. Furthermore, Sanneh refers to Eusebius who suggests that Mark (the writer of the first gospel account) and the Apostle Thomas, both visited African lands. Therefore, Sanneh and other scholars attribute Christianity in Africa to the time of the ministry of Jesus.

Although some scholars suggest that Christianity in Carthage was predominantly Jewish, Barnes strongly disagrees with this position because Carthage was a cosmopolitan and busy town where Christianity spread very fast and was spearheaded by the rich and educated. He referred to the example of the martyr Perpetua who was of the senatorial rank and concluded that by 212 AD Christians were in the majority.⁵¹⁷ Ste. Croxe suggests that by the beginning of the third century, there was a council of about seventy Bishops which was presided over by the Bishop of Carthage, Bishop Agripupinus.⁵¹⁸ If this is true, then it is without a doubt that Christianity had visibility in the African Province by the third century which invariably attracted them to the hostilities as a province of the Roman Empire, which Ste. Croxe describes as ‘baptism of blood’.⁵¹⁹

Wilbert believes Tertullian was born in 160 AD.⁵²⁰ Barnes however, believes he was born between 155 and 170 AD.⁵²¹ Ste. Croxe pushes for a much earlier date of 145 AD.⁵²² Tertullian was a Stoic philosopher and this made him susceptible to Christianity. He probably became a Christian around 193 AD as a result of observing the courage of the martyrs and

⁵¹⁶Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 1-13; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa 2013), 20-45;

⁵¹⁷Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literal Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 63-69.

⁵¹⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁵²⁰Willert, “Tertullian,” 164.

⁵²¹ Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literal Studies*, 1; 59.

⁵²² Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5.

because of his understanding of Christianity as a moral religion.⁵²³ As a Christian, he is believed to have been a catechumen teacher who prepared baptismal candidates.⁵²⁴ Ste. Croxe suggests that he was a presbyter.⁵²⁵ Glover suggests that he was not liked by the church because they saw him more as a Puritan.⁵²⁶ However, he may have studied literature, language, rhetoric and Law.⁵²⁷ Many scholars including Willert and Croxe suggest that he lived in Rome and practiced as a lawyer⁵²⁸ although Barnes disagrees strongly with both positions based on his assertion that he may never have lived in Rome.⁵²⁹ Tertullian was married but subsequently bereaved and hence he lived with his son Caracalla and died a martyr at an old age around 230 or 240 AD.⁵³⁰

Most of the information about Tertullian is retrieved not only from his own writings, but the writings of Jerome, Eusebius and Augustine.⁵³¹ Jerome holds that Tertullian was a son of a centurion, and that Tertullian was ordained. Augustine tells his readers that although he became a montanist probably in the third century,⁵³² he later left montanism to form his own sect which was called Tertullianistae. Eusebius suggests he was a famous lawyer.

However, Barnes disagrees with the descriptions by the three church fathers.⁵³³ He disagrees with the claim that Tertullian was a priest since Tertullian never suggests this in his arguments but describes himself twice as belonging to the laity. He believes that he was often referred to as a priest because some of his writings were sermonic. However, he suggests that Jerome may have referred to Tertullian as a priest because he admired Tertullian and like

⁵²³Willert, "Tertullian," 163; Barnes, *Tertullian: A historical and Literal Studies*, 2. However, Ste. Croxe suggests that he became a Christian in 185 AD but does not explain what attracted him to this faith (Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3-4.)

⁵²⁴Willert, "Tertullian," 164.

⁵²⁵Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5.

⁵²⁶Glover, *Tertullian: Apology*, ix.

⁵²⁷*Ibid*, xvi; Willert, "Tertullian," 164.

⁵²⁸Willert, "Tertullian," 164, Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3-5.

⁵²⁹Barnes, *Tertullian: A historical and Literal Studies*, 58.

⁵³⁰*Ibid*, 2, 59-60.

⁵³¹*Ibid*, 57-58.

⁵³²Roberts and Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5; Willert, "Tertullian," 159.

⁵³³Barnes, *Tertullian: A historical and Literal Studies*, 3-29.

himself (Jerome), Tertullian was not well treated by the Roman clergy. Croxe agrees with the idea that Tertullian agreed with Montanus opinions because “by the envy and contumelious treatment of the Roman clergy”.⁵³⁴ Barnes is even not sure that Tertullian’s father was a soldier in the first place since his father’s title as ‘centurion proconsularis’ may not have been in existence because no centurion had the title of a ‘proconsularis’. Again, Tertullian is often associated with a Tertullian who wrote some important legal text books but Barnes disagrees because the Christian Tertullian seemed much younger than this lawyer and again there are some occasions where the Christian Tertullian displays legal accuracies and some unpardonable inaccuracies and thus he could not have been a lawyer.

Tertullian is believed to have written extensively where Willert suggests that he has about thirty-one manuscripts to his credit although Barnes has a record of thirty-two.⁵³⁵ Glover describes him as sometimes even too clever to a fault.⁵³⁶ Barnes again suggests that it took him about sixteen years to write all his texts, thus the period spanning 196 to 212 AD.⁵³⁷ Many of his works are polemic against heresies, Gnosticism and Marcion. Yet many of his writings are influenced by Montanist ideas.

Barnes further believes that the dating of Tertullian’s works may have been influenced by his attacks on Bishop Callistus⁵³⁸ since he is a lawyer and priest. Therefore he suggests methodology as a means of dating these texts based on allusion to historical events, reference to other texts, doctrines, style and conclusions.⁵³⁹ He suggests a strong relationship between the texts that are useful for this project. He suggests that the *Apologeticum* was a remolding of the *Ad Nationes* since both were written around the same period: The *Ad Nationes* was written in the Summer 197 AD, while *The Apologeticum* was written in the Autumn of the

⁵³⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5.

⁵³⁵ Willert, “Tertullian,” 159, Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 55.

⁵³⁶ Glover *Tertullian: Apology*, xvi.

⁵³⁷ Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 58.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*, 30-56.

same year. The *Ad Scapulam* was written some fifteen years after the *Apologeticum* in 212 AD.⁵⁴⁰

i. Tertullian`s Apologeticum

Tertullian addresses the Roman Governor but had other readers, especially the emperor,⁵⁴¹ in mind. This text is seen as a phenomenon rare in Latin paleography` with two distinct manuscript traditions.⁵⁴² Barnes picks up the traditions that Tertullian`s *Apologeticum* has two recessions, where the first version labeled the *Fuldensis* was the draft of rewriting the *Ad Nationes* with which Willert agrees,⁵⁴³ while the second the *Vulaget* version is the final and polished text.⁵⁴⁴ Barnes and Willert agree on 197 as the date of its authorship.⁵⁴⁵ In this text, Tertullian deals with some political themes at the time because of political instabilities at the time of writing.⁵⁴⁶ Tertullian argues strongly and extensively against the worship of the emperor and the idea of child infanticide among Christians in this text.⁵⁴⁷ Willert suggests that the structure of the text consists of *exordium* (introduction), *narration* (description of case), *propositio* (topic list), *argumentatio* (argumentation), *confirmatio* (evidence), *confutatio* (counter-evidence) and a *peroratio* (close).⁵⁴⁸ The text is structured into three main sections, where the body of the text mainly addresses three main charges;

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|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Chapters 1 – 3 | Introduction |
| 2. Chapters 4 – 45 | Main issues |
| a. Chapters 7 – 9 | Ethical charges |
| b. Chapters 10 – 16 | Religious charge |

⁵⁴⁰ Glover *Tertullian: Apology*, xxii; Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 48.

⁵⁴¹ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 1:1, 9:6, 30:7, 44:2, 45:7, 50:12; Willert, "Tertullian," 162.

⁵⁴² Glover *Tertullian: Apology*, xxi.

⁵⁴³ Willert "Tertullian," 160.

⁵⁴⁴ Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 14.

⁵⁴⁵ Willert, "Tertullian," 159; Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 55.

⁵⁴⁶ Willert, "Tertullian," 161-163.

⁵⁴⁷ Tertullian *Apologeticum* 28-35; Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*, 13; Willert, "Tertullian," 163.

⁵⁴⁸ Willert, "Tertullian," 168-170.

- c. Chapters 28 – 35 Political Charges
- 3. Chapter 46 – 50 Conclusion.

ii. Tertullian's ad Scapulam

Barnes and Arbesmann suggests that it may have been written soon after the 14th of August in 212 due to the reference made to the eclipse of the sun.⁵⁴⁹ Although he earlier on suggested that the reason or basis for the writing of this text was motivated by an activity of a Roman jurist Domitus Ulpianus who collected rescripts of the emperors against the Christians; this activity took place in 215 AD, three clear after the writing of the text.⁵⁵⁰ It is without doubt that this apology is addressed to the proconsul of the African province Scapula. Tertullian in this apology builds on the Christian liberty to worship who or what they want because it is a natural right of a person to choose their religion. Furthermore, to him, the charge of Christian disloyalty cannot be accurate because the Christians were very supportive of the social, economic and political wellbeing of the Roman Empire.

A major aspect of this apology is the identity marker used; out of the five chapter apology, three chapters begin with “We”⁵⁵¹ while one chapter begins with “Your”⁵⁵² to show that this text tries to draw lines between what the Christians believe as against the beliefs of the Roman society. Furthermore, another very unique argument in this apology is built on the logic that anything that is not profitable is eschewed. This suggests that since the authorities are not benefiting or attaining the desired aim of the hostilities they should stop it. To this end, Tertullian lists authorities who have suffered some consequences for the hostilities

⁵⁴⁹ Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical Survey*, 38; Arbesmann, “Tertullian to Scapulam,” 148.

⁵⁵⁰ Arbesmann, *Tertullian to Scapulam*, 147.

⁵⁵¹ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 1, 2, 4.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, 5.

against the Christians. These included Vigellius Saturninus (who became blind), Claudius Lucius Herminianus (who became sick), and Caecilius Capella (who faced doom).⁵⁵³

On the other hand Tertullian describes good authorities such as Cincius Serverus, Vespronius Candidus, Julius Asper and Hadrian⁵⁵⁴ who did not engage in the hostilities against the Christians. He refers to the current hemorrhage suffered by Scapula so as to admonish him to be wise and stop the persecution of the Christians (lest the divine retribution be fulfilled on him).⁵⁵⁵ Tertullian by this appeal to the conscience of Scapula suggests that it is not beneficial to persecute the Christians.

The chapters can be categorized into;

1. Chapter 1 Introduction and Christian obstinacy
2. Chapter 2 The doctrine of God, and the politico-religious charges
3. Chapter 3 Signs of the apocalypse and some governors predicaments
4. Chapter 4 Roman political system and good Emperors
5. Chapter 5 Growth of Christianity in the empire.

iii. Tertullian`s Ad Nationes

It has already been suggested that there is a strong relationship between *Apologeticum* and *Ad Nationes*.⁵⁵⁶ Barnes suggests that owing to the reference made to the battle of Laudanum, this text must have been written soon after the afore-mentioned battle hence the position that it was written in 197.⁵⁵⁷ Tertullian in this apology argues that the Christians are facing many injustices. He employs sarcasm, rhetoric, polemics and other strategies to argue against political, social, ethical and religious charges against the Christians. He argues that the main

⁵⁵³ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid*,4.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*,3.

⁵⁵⁶ Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical Survey*, 49.

⁵⁵⁷ Barnes *Tertullian: A Historical Survey*, 55.

charge is in relation to the Christian name. Tertullian therefore uses Tacitus' confusion in calling the Christians, *christens* which means virtue (in Greek) to say the Christians are virtuous in their dealings.

This apology is also divided into two books where book two mainly addresses a non-Christian theory about the Roman gods. Varro had theorized that the gods are made of three elements. The first part is the *physical* which appeals to philosophers, the second part *mythic* which appeals to poets and the final part *gentile* which is concerned with the nations. The apology is divided into sections as follows:

1. Chapter 1 Introduction (Varro's theory of the gods)
2. Chapters 2 – 5 The physical composition of the gods and philosophy
3. Chapters 6 – 7 The mystic and the poets.
4. Chapter 8 The Gentiles and the nations
5. Chapter 9 Criticism against Varro's theory
6. Chapter 10 – 16 Criticism against Roman religious practices and the gods
7. Chapter 17 Christian God as superior to the gods of the Romans.

The book one deals with various issues in relation to the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. It is divided as follows:

1. Chapters 1 – 3 Introduction (Injustices against the Christians)
2. Chapter 4 The virtue of Christianity and the goal of philosophy (Socrates)
3. Chapter 5 Some questionable Christian behaviors
4. Chapter 6 Injustice against the Christians
5. Chapters 7 – 9 Some negative thoughts against the Christians.
6. Chapter 10 Roman gods as contemptible

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 7. Chapters 11 – 13 | Roman perception of the Christian Worship |
| 8. Chapter 14 | Christians accept all persons but Romans discriminate |
| 9. Chapters 15 – 16 | Ethical accusations against the Christians |
| 10. Chapters 17 – 19 | Christian obstinacy |
| 11. Chapter 20 | Conclusion(only the Christian God is true) |

3. 4 Internal Comparison of the Apologetic Texts

The writing of the apologetic texts is influenced by the hostilities against the Christians in the Roman Empire. However, they are not to the same degree as the martyr texts used when scholars discuss the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. This chapter seeks to bring out the picture of the hostilities against the Christians as portrayed by the apologetic texts by dividing the texts according to their explicit recipient and comparing them to each other. This internal comparison of the apologetic texts is crucial to addressing the objectives of the study.

The comparison is structured into fourteen comparative elements in this internal comparison. These comparative elements are largely similar to those used in comparing the martyr texts in chapter two. The elements are almost in the same in order, which will be an advantage for the external comparison of the two kind of texts in chapter four. These elements are sub categorized into three main comparative forms. The first category looks at the ‘Account’ in the texts. This category tries to find out if the texts have some narrative elements as well as analyze the players in the texts by looking at the characters as persecutors and martyrs including the form of suffering of the Christians. The second category of the comparative elements looks at the ‘Accusations’ that give room for the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. This category looks at the legal procedure of the hostility according to the texts,

the charges and allegations against the Christians, the motives of the persecutors as well as the demand from the authorities to the Christians. The final comparison dives into the argumentative form of the apologetic text to advance the position of the texts. In the light of these elements, the polemic aspects of the texts and the argumentative strategies are analyzed.

3.4.1 Apologetic Texts to Authorities (Apologies)

The apologetic texts come in two forms depending on the addresses. Some are addressed to the authorities of the Roman Empire with the aim of trying to influence the authorities to stop the hostilities against the Christians and possibly to even win them into Christianity.

a. Account

This sub-heading here discusses the possible narrative aspect of the Apologetic texts, the players in the account and who plays what roles in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. These characters include potentially both martyrs and persecutors. Again, the forms of the sufferings are equally discussed.

i. Narrative

This comparative element tries to find out if the apologies tell the story of the martyrs with their text. It can however, be strongly argued that although there are some elements of storytelling, the apologetic texts do not really function as a narrative. The presence of a narrative in these texts is quite minimal and not enough to be classified as containing such narratives. Justin's *Second Apology* begins with a story of a Christian woman who according to Justin is treated unfairly because she is a Christian.⁵⁵⁸ The other apologetic texts do tell little or no stories about the persecution and martyrdom. The apologists are more focused on defending the Christians of the charges leveled against them and explaining the Christian doctrines and beliefs with the motive of converting them to Christianity.

⁵⁵⁸Justin, *Second Apology*, 2.

ii. Identity of the Martyrs

It is important to know how the apologies characterize the Christians who face the persecution and martyrdom. It is crucial to know this because an identification of the character of the martyrs will help define the motives of the apologist. This implies that if the martyrs are guilty as charged, they will not solicit the pity of the audience because they would deserve the punishment due to them. However, the apologists present the martyrs in a positive light to affect the psychology of the audience to empathize with the martyrs while revealing their innocence and projecting the maltreatment of the persecutors. The apologies to this extent show that the martyrs are virtuous, chaste, courageous and innocent⁵⁵⁹ they even thank God when they are sentenced. Both Justin and Tertullian explain that they were well aware that being a Christian may warrant death since Christ also suffered death.⁵⁶⁰

Additionally, the apologies show that these martyrs included both men and women and that the Christians included people of all ages. It implies that Christianity was without any barrier of age or sex. Again, the characterization of the Christians as giving thanks even when condemned makes the martyrs worthy of emulation to the audience of these texts. Many readers would expect that people sentenced unjustly to death would castigate, insult or attack the judge, or alternatively plead for mercy, especially because they believe they were not allowed a fair trial. Nonetheless the apologists present the martyrs as calm and thankful when sentenced and executed and this marks therefore a stark contrast to expected behavior. In essence, the positive character of the martyr's appeals to the audience of these texts, thus portraying the Christians and martyrs as superior to condemned criminals.

⁵⁵⁹ Justin First Apology, 12, 15; Tertullian, Apologeticum, 46; Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, 5.1.

⁵⁶⁰ Justin Second Apology, 11, 12; Tertullian, Apologeticum, 1.13, 27.3, 50.1; Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, 1.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

In terms of who was involved in the perpetuation against the early Christians, Justin's *First Apology* apart from the authorities identifies rumor mongers and accusers,⁵⁶¹ while his *Second Apology* mentions a husband who accuses his wife of being Christian.⁵⁶² Furthermore, Tertullian's *Apologeticum* mentions the populace and his *Ad Scapulam* talks about the citizens and populace.⁵⁶³ In the light of these identifications, it is evident that the persecutors in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians can be categorized into two, the public and authorities. While the public acted as accusers in reporting and laying allegations against the Christians, the authorities turned the allegations into charges against the Christians so as to convict them legally.

The character of these persecutors makes it clear that the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians was widespread and included the entire machinery of the Roman Empire. Since the persecution is cast in some legal system, the category of the authorities can be suggested to include some institutions of the empire in the care of the Roman authorities. Given the characters involved the persecutions are thus presented as widespread and comprehensive.

iv. Form of Suffering

Justin does not provide a list of the forms of the persecutions against the Christians. However, Tertullian provides a list in his *Apologeticum* where he points to hanging on the cross, stakes, hooks, torture, crushed, rack, lions, pander, sword, axed and burnt alive as some of the forms applied against the Christians.⁵⁶⁴ He again in the *Ad Scapulam* lists, torture, beasts, burning and decapitation as punishments meted out to the Christians.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ Justin First Apology, 3, 4.

⁵⁶² Justin Second Apology, 2.

⁵⁶³ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 50.12; Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3.

⁵⁶⁴ Tertullian *Apologeticum*, 4.3-4, 12, 30.7, 40.2, 50.12.

⁵⁶⁵ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3, 5.

All the comparative elements of the Account of the persecution show that the narrative content of the apologetic texts is almost absent. The Christians are projected in positive light and the persecutors included both the authorities and the general public. Furthermore, the Christians suffered a great number of humiliating and inhumane treatments ranging from physical torture to execution.

b. Accusation

This comparative element discusses the apologists' picture of the legal procedure in the hostilities against the Christians. What were the accusations according to the apologists and what demands from the authorities did the martyrs face? The political administration of the Roman Empire and the legal regime applied against the Christians according to the apologetic texts will be analysed in this section.

i. Legal Procedure

It is not very clear to decipher the type of legal process the martyrs faced based on the selected texts. However, based on the little account given by Justin in his *Second Apology*, it is logical to conclude that the format was, as suggested by Sherwin-White, *Cognitio extra ordinem*.⁵⁶⁶ In this account Justin suggests that in the first place a charge is brought against a woman by her husband but since he could not sustain it, the husband directed the accusation against his wife's Christian teacher, Ptolemaeus. The account therefore suggests that he was questioned by the governor Urbicus; who executed him. On the other hand, Tertullian's *Ad Scapulam* talks about 'advocates and assessors'.⁵⁶⁷ Furthermore, since the other texts equally build on the problem of injustice, it can be suggested that the procedure was purely in agreement with Sherwin-White's suggestion of *Cognitio extra ordinem*. In this procedure, the authority, thus the emperor, governor or prefect, acts as the interrogator and judge. This

⁵⁶⁶ Sherwin-White, "The Early Persecutions," 203-204; Justin, *Second Apology*, 2

⁵⁶⁷ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 4.

discloses that the authorities played a significant role in the legal process used against the Christians in these hostilities.

ii. Charges and Allegations

The public, especially those who accused the Christians before the authorities, held some negative prejudices against the Christians. These prejudices gave them the energy to act as accusers against Christians. Justin's *First Apology*, identifies allegations such as wickedness, covetousness, conspiracy, infanticide and incest at their meetings, as some of the allegations against them.⁵⁶⁸ Along with ethical charges they face the charge of atheism and formally the charge of the name Christian, that is they are simply denounced to the authorities as Christians.⁵⁶⁹ In his *Second Apology* Justin argues that the Christians are seen by outsiders as godless and impious,⁵⁷⁰ therefore the charges of the name Christian and atheism are very prominent against the Christians.⁵⁷¹ Furthermore in his *Apologeticum*,⁵⁷² Tertullian identifies allegations such as Christians being worshipers of the cross and an ass, that they are mad, criminals, infanticides, incestuous, murderers, adulterous, dishonest and treacherous people. Tertullian on his part talks about charges such as the name, atheism, treason, failures in businesses, obstinacy and many others.⁵⁷³ Additionally, in his *Ad Scapulam*, the Christians are portrayed by the non-Christians as sacrilegious, thieves and magical by the public.⁵⁷⁴ He, therefore, touches on charges of political disloyalty, atheism, the name Christian and other ethical issues.⁵⁷⁵

These allegations when classified can be seen as religious, political, social and ethical crimes against the Roman consciousness. The most important charges against the Christians as

⁵⁶⁸ Justin First Apology, 12.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 6, 7, 20.

⁵⁷⁰ Justin Second Apology, 3.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁷² Tertullian Apologeticum, 1.13, 2:1-6, 16.

⁵⁷³ Ibid, 9, 10, 28.2, 42, 50.2.

⁵⁷⁴ Tertullian Ad Scapulam 2, 4.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid, 1, 2.3, 4.

identified by these apologies are charges of the name Christian and atheism. Additionally, political charges and ethical charges are leveled against the Christians. These religious, political and ethical charges against the Christians to a large extent were derived from the allegations by the public. It is also significant to stress that these charges are not mutually exclusive but significantly and jointly interdependent. Tertullian shows a relationship between the various charges when he says “But the Christians, a man guilty of every crime, the enemy of gods, emperors, laws, morals of all Nature together.”⁵⁷⁶

iii. Motives

The apologetic texts, do not state categorically what motivated the Romans against the Christians. However, based on the charges and the involvement of the authorities, it can be suggested that, they were motivated by the need to keep the peace of the Roman society and the *pax deorum*. The charges and allegations were often religious and in order not to offend the gods of the Romans but to preserve the society, the Christians had to be persecuted. The persecutors were, therefore, seeking to maintain the peace with the gods known to the Romans as *pax deorum*. This idea of working to bring peace between the gods and the people was every Roman's responsibility. It implied that the Christians by not offering sacrifices and refusing to worship the Roman gods had gone against the norms of the society; the relationship between the gods and the people could be destroyed. This could bring natural disasters and many other troubles to the society. Therefore, such persons needed to be dealt with in order to restore the *pax deorum* between the gods and the people. The idea of maintaining the peace between the gods and the people to a large extent influenced the persecutors to act against the Christians. This is important because it was believed that when there is peace between the gods and the people; there will be economic, social and political

⁵⁷⁶ Tertullian, Apologeticum, 2.16.

peace and progress. Peace between the gods and the people guaranteed the safety of the Roman social set up.

iv. Demand

According to the apologist the accused Christians are required by the authorities to sacrifice to the gods of the Roman Empire and to swear by `the genius` of the emperor. All the apologetic texts recount the demand by the authorities for the Christians to sacrifice to the genius of the emperor.⁵⁷⁷ As mentioned earlier, the martyrs refused to perform the sacrifice because it was against their faith— Justin uses this in his arguments against the ethical accusations.⁵⁷⁸ The refusal of the Christians to perform the sacrifice proved that the Christians were a disloyal group who were against the Roman religious, political and social order. This is why they were blamed for all the natural disasters in the Roman Empire.⁵⁷⁹

In the light of this analysis, it is realized that the legal procedure employed against the Christians according to the apologists were, as Sherwin-White suggested, *cognitio extra ordinem*. The allegations and charges against them covered religious, political and ethical accusations. The persecutors were motivated by the need to keep the peace between the gods and the people. The martyrs' refusal to sacrifice proved their obstinacy and readiness to die for their faith.

c. Argumentation

This section compares four main issues with regards to how the apologists defended the Christians against the accusations. These comparative elements analyze how the Christian apologies adopted various methods to defend and explain the Christian ways of doing things.

⁵⁷⁷Justin First Apology, 55; Tertullian, Apologeticum, 28; Tertullian, Ad Scapulam, 2.

⁵⁷⁸Justin First Apology 5, 11.

⁵⁷⁹Croix, "Why were the Early Christians Persecuted," 24-25; Fergus Millar, "The Imperial Cult and the Persecution." In *Le Culte des souverains dans l'Empire Romaine*, ed. Willem den Boer (Vandoeuvre-Geneva: Foundation Hardt, 1973), 147.

The comparative elements consider the presence of polemics, argumentative strategies, sources of the arguments and the themes that are addressed by the apologies.

i. Polemics

The main issue is to identify if the apologists launched some form of attacks against their opponents in these texts. It is often very normal that in defenses like these, the authors will try to attack their opponents in the course of the defense. It is often assumed that apologetics may incorporate polemics. Justin in his *First Apology* describes the hostilities against the Christians as ‘stupid’, ‘irrational’, and the accusers as ‘dissolute’. He also attacks Jewish methods of scriptural interpretation.⁵⁸⁰ Sometimes, Justin even sounds insulting, for example where he says “...you do not investigate the charges made against us, but, give in to unreasonable passion, and the instigation of evil demons...”⁵⁸¹

In his *Second Apology* he states that since what is being done to the Christians is ‘unreasonable’ he is “compelled” to write this apology⁵⁸² and then attacks his so called accuser, Crescens.⁵⁸³ Tertullian is even comprehensive when it comes to the application of polemics in his apologies. In *Apologeticum* he charges the Roman gods and the Jews while describing his prosecutor as unjust, impious, cruel, as dogs and as foul.⁵⁸⁴ He wages strong attacks on the addressee of the text when he says “it is you then, who are the danger to mankind, it is you who bring upon the public misfortune-you, by your contempt for God and your worship of statues....”⁵⁸⁵ He describes the authorities as cunning, ruse, cruel, raged and as haters of the truth.⁵⁸⁶ The situation is the same in his address to Scapula, where he

⁵⁸⁰Justin, *First Apology*, 9, 11, 49.

⁵⁸¹*Ibid*,5.

⁵⁸²Justin *Second Apology* 1.

⁵⁸³*Ibid*,3.

⁵⁸⁴Tertullian *Apologeticum*, 7, 11.15, 27, 5.4, 50.12

⁵⁸⁵*Ibid*, 41.1

⁵⁸⁶*Ibid*,1.1, 27.3, 41.1

describes the persecutors as evil, enemies of God, fighters against God, ‘ignorant men’ and describes their gods as ‘demons’.⁵⁸⁷

Such attacks on the Jews, gods, authorities and the public by the apologists show how the Christians retaliated to the charges by hitting back. They therefore attacked their religious thoughts, social and political ideas. It can further be argued that these attacks are more against the Roman gods and social order and equally strong against the public. The attacks on the authorities by the apologies are by comparison more restrained. Justin’s major attack on the authorities are found in his First Apology where he described them as irrational, specifically in their dealings with Christians – but this was a specific irrationality that contrasted with a general rationality.⁵⁸⁸

Tertullian on his part launches various attacks in his *Apologeticum* and *Ad Scapula* by suggesting that the authorities are haters of the truth, that they are ‘cruel’ and ‘ignorant’, that they are marked by ‘cunning ruse’ and ‘cruel and that they are fighting against God.’⁵⁸⁹ On the other hand, the heaviest of the attacks in the apologies to the authorities are directed at the public, possibly because they initiate the entire process of the hostilities by acting as the accusers.

ii. Strategy

It is important to bring to light how the apologists try to defend the Christian cause. It is very interesting that they did not adopt a particular method except to say they adopted a mixed method in defending the Christian faith. Justin used the Christian idea of the apocalypse to convince the audience of the text as well as rhetoric by employing sarcasm and questions.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 2, 3,4, 5

⁵⁸⁸ Justin, *First Apology*, 9

⁵⁸⁹ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 1.1, 27.3, 41.1, *Ad Scapulam*, 1

⁵⁹⁰ Justin *First Apology*, 2, 6, 11, 53, *Second Apology*, 2, 9

Skarsaune affirms Justin's use of philosophy, rationalization and ridicule in his apology.⁵⁹¹ In general, Justin uses two major argumentative strategies. In the first place he uses what is termed 'argument from prophecy' to show that Christianity is not a new religion but a religion that has existed since time immemorial to suggest that Christianity is even greater than the Roman culture.⁵⁹² He does this by showing that Moses is older than Homer and that some great philosophers like Socrates and Plato were a kind of proto-Christians even before the advent of Christ.

In the second place Justin tries to show that Christianity is a philosophy of truth which appeals more to reasoning. Therefore, at the end of his First Apology he argues that "And if our account seems to you reasonable and true, respect it; but if it seems foolish to you, despise it as nonsense. And do not decree death against those who have done no wrong as against enemies."⁵⁹³ He shows in his *Second Apology* that what is being perpetuated against the Christians is 'unreasonable' so he is writing to appeal to the authorities.⁵⁹⁴

Tertullian on his part equally uses irony, appeals to conscience, logic, rhetoric and argument from prophecy including the Christian doctrine of the apocalypse to defend the Christian course. In the *Apologeticum*, he categorically states his argumentative strategy which can be clipped as polemic-apology when he says "I will not only refute the charges brought against us but will turn them against those who bring them..."⁵⁹⁵ Therefore he uses this strategy a lot in this text. Again, in his *Ad Scapula*, he uses a unique strategy that can be described as a rebuttal of the hostilities on the authorities.⁵⁹⁶ He recounts the evils and pains that have come to some of the authorities who were hostile to the martyrs and the blessings that came upon

⁵⁹¹ Skarsune, "Justin and The Apologists," 125

⁵⁹² Justin, First Apology, 15, 20, 22, 23, 30-53, 59-60, Second Apology, 4, 13

⁵⁹³ Justin, First Apology, 68

⁵⁹⁴ Justin, Second Apology, 1

⁵⁹⁵ Tertullian Apologeticum, 4:1

⁵⁹⁶ Tertullian Ad Scapulam, 3

some of the authorities for being friendly to the Christians. This strategy was to appeal to the governor Scapula to think through these issues and stop his hostilities against the Christians.

It can therefore be argued that the apologists adopted various strategies in dealing with the charges that were leveled against the Christians. Predominantly they used rhetorical, philosophical and religious methods in advancing the case of the Christians.

iii. Sources

It is certainly important to look into the basis of the argument used by the apologists. This is important because the basis or the sources used will help the apology to achieve its aim of stopping the hostilities and converting the audience to Christianity. Therefore, it would be very useful for the apologists to use sources that are familiar and appeal to the audience in order to attain the purpose of the text.

Justin in his *First Apology* among other sources uses some pagan, Jewish and scriptural sources.⁵⁹⁷ What is even more interesting is that, Justin cites the Emperor Hadrian's rescript to Minucius Fundanus to back his argument as a conclusion.⁵⁹⁸ In his *Second Apology*, he still depends on pagan and scriptural sources as the basis of his defense to address the emperor.⁵⁹⁹

Tertullian interestingly does not use as many different sources as Justin does though he also uses pagan, Jewish texts (especially those from Josephus), Roman history and the scriptural sources in his *Apologeticum*.⁶⁰⁰ In his address to Scapula he makes references to recent historical events of the Roman Empire and uses scriptural sources to present his defense of Christianity in North Africa.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ Justin First Apology, 8, 20-21, 26, 30-64

⁵⁹⁸ Justin, First Apology, 68

⁵⁹⁹ Justin Second Apology, 4-13

⁶⁰⁰ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 4.3, 14.2, 14.6, 31.1-3.

⁶⁰¹ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Basically, the apologists use both Christian and non-Christian sources to support the arguments addressed to the authorities of the Roman Empire. The use of pagan sources is very important because it builds on the idea of arguing from the ‘known to the unknown’. In this way the author begins with or spices up what they intend to tell their readers with what the audience already know before teaching them what they may not know. The apologists therefore adopt either a new interpretation of the non-Christian source or use the pagans understanding but twist it a little in order to get their readers to appreciate the texts. The apologists carefully considered their sources especially the texts from the pagan sources as well as scripture to enable them drive home their points.

iv. Themes

A few themes can be gathered from these apologies, and it is important to understand the purpose of the texts. Justin touches a lot on Christology, Christian practices as well as philosophers – especially Socrates and Plato. He also mentions more briefly Christian heresies especially those of Marcion in his *First Apology*.⁶⁰² In his *Second Apology*, he speaks about the theology of God, Christian obstinacy, Christian virtues, Christian superiority over Plato and Socrates – again there is a brief mention of Simon as the instigator of heresy.⁶⁰³ Tertullian also builds on themes such as injustice against the Christians, Christian practices, truth and in his discussions of the Christian apocalypse in his *Apologeticum*.⁶⁰⁴ In his *Ad Scapula* some of the major themes are on the doctrine of God, the transformation that Christianity brings to its converts and the blessings and bane of the persecutors or emperors.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² Justin, *First Apology*, 8, 21, 50, 54, 58-60.

⁶⁰³ Justin, *Second Apology*, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15.

⁶⁰⁴ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 1-2, 34, 47, 49.

⁶⁰⁵ Tertullian *Ad Scapulam*, 2, 3, 4, 5.

To this extent, it can be said that the prominent themes or topics that the apologies discuss in their apology are issues on injustice, Christian doctrine, Christology, truth and Christian identity (against heresies) as well as themes of apocalypse. These topics show that the apologists are interested in defending the Christian course by explaining what Christianity is all about by using the major themes that are used against Christianity.

In arguing the case of the Christians, the apologists attack the Jews, the Roman gods, authorities and the general public polemically. They use multi-faceted arguments while using both Christian and non-Christian sources in their argument. They also discuss major Christian themes in their defense against the accusations of the Christians.

d. Other Peculiar Features

It is interesting that in each apology, this group of apologists have some peculiarities which other apologists do not necessarily touch on possibly due to the audience of the texts. Justin in the *First Apology* is seemingly sermonic and educative, which is often termed kerygmatic and didactic. He touches on Christian practices such as baptism, the Eucharist and Sunday meetings.⁶⁰⁶ His *Second Apology* builds extensively on the logos theology by Roman philosophers.⁶⁰⁷ In his *Apologeticum*, Tertullian is briefer in his treatment of logos theology, but has a passage, where he explains Christian prayer practices and themes in particular that they pray for the emperors for a long life, secure rule, safe home, brave armies, faithful senate, honest people and a quiet world. Tertullian also describes the spread of Christianity and the Eucharist.⁶⁰⁸ His *Ad Scapula* is peculiar in the way he recounts especially recent issues and the blessings or bane of emperors or magistrates who have either supported or resisted the hostility against the Christians.

⁶⁰⁶ Justin, *First Apology*, 61-67.

⁶⁰⁷ Justin, *Second Apology*, 6-10.

⁶⁰⁸ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 30.4, 37.4, 39.5-6.

These peculiar aspects of the texts show the purpose and intended audiences. The apologies addressed to the authorities raise issues on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the first to about the third centuries of the Roman Empire.

3.4.2 Apologies to the Public

The second category of apologetic texts, those addressed to the public, will be analyzed using the comparative elements in this chapter. The text addressed to the public was largely to explain the Christian faith to the public. It was therefore anticipated that when the public appreciate what Christianity is about, they may stop hunting the Christians and ultimately become Christians themselves.

a. Account

This major comparative category has three main issues to harmonize with respect to the apologies addressed to the public. In the first place, their narrative content will be discussed; secondly the character of the martyrs as portrayed by the apologists and finally the character of the persecutors will also be evaluated. The aim is to understand how the apologists present the characters involved in or subjected to the persecution. Additionally, the forms of sufferings of the Christians are equally compared here.

i. Narrative

This class of texts does not focus on storytelling as a feature of what they seek to tell their audience. Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* has a little sketch of the story of the martyrs⁶⁰⁹ while Tatian's does not look into the accounts of the martyrs at all. They are very much concerned with defending the charges against the Christians rather than narrating the passion of individual Christians.

⁶⁰⁹Tertullian *Ad Nationes*, 1.1.

ii. Character of the Martyrs

Tertullian projects the Christians and indeed the martyrs as courageous, innocent, loving, just and upright,⁶¹⁰ while Tatian projects them as courageous and chaste.⁶¹¹ These positive characters as created by these apologists feed the minds of the audience such that they are prompted to see that the martyrs did not deserve persecution or death. Even more, this positive picture tries to show that Christians are the most just and useful members of society but, that they suffer the wrath of the wicked. According to the apologists, the martyrs and the Christians in general are hunted heroes rather than offenders against Roman culture.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

On the other hand, Tatian does not present much about the identity of the persecutors, he identifies Crescens, a fellow philosopher who is likely to have reported Justin.⁶¹² Tertullian suggests instances of father and slave masters being the accusers of the Christians.⁶¹³ These identities are interesting because the accusers are people from the same household where it is a father against his Christian son and a slave master against his slave(s). This ‘strife’ in the household setup is interesting because by these identifications, it seems that there are struggles or disbandment in the household.⁶¹⁴ On the average, it is assumed that a father should have some authority in the religious convictions of a ward especially a son and a slave master should control the religious expression of his/her slave; yet these authority figures have lost this authority to the extent that they may have to publicly ‘give-up’ on their ‘subordinates’ by personally reporting them for persecution and martyrdom.

⁶¹⁰Ibid, I.18.

⁶¹¹ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 4.1.

⁶¹² Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 19.1.

⁶¹³ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, I.4.

⁶¹⁴“This seem to affirm Jesus` words in Matthew 10:34-35 “Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35For I have come to turn ‘A man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

The identities of those involved in the persecution and martyrdom indicate that the public were the accusers. This shows that the public were not passive in this process since they played significant roles in initiating the entire process, hence the need to address them in an apology to defend against the allegations and convictions that may have pushed them to accuse the Christians. It is significant to note that the emphasis placed on the public did not imply the absence of the authorities in these hostilities since the proceedings are cast in some legal framework and presided over by the authorities of the provinces and the empire.

iv. Form of Suffering

This aspect of the comparative element considers what was done to the Christians by the persecutors according to the image projected by the apologists. Tertullian talks about torture, beasts, swords, fire and the martyrdom of Christians by execution or crucifixion.⁶¹⁵ Tatian does not provide an in-depth list of the pains the Christians suffered.

These forms show that several activities were used, according to Tertullian, to intensify the pains of the Christians. They were tortured with various instruments and animals as well as bruised by fire and eventually crucified like Jesus, their leader.

In essence, the Account and Narrative aspects of the apologies point to the fact that, they are not very interested narrating a story out of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. The character of the Christians and the martyrs are painted in some heroic terms. The persecutors include family members and slave-masters of Christian slaves. Therefore, the nature of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians included various means of torture and eventually death by crucifixion.

⁶¹⁵Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1.3, 6.

b. Accusation

The comparative elements in this category seek to investigate the legal framework of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. It embraces four main issues, thus legal procedure, charges and allegations as well as motives including the demands to sacrifice.

i. Legal Procedure

The central issue of these apologists is the question of injustice and the apologists argue that the Christians were not given the opportunity to defend themselves in the trials.⁶¹⁶ The entire proceedings are described in a way that still points to *cognition extra ordinem*— where the authority is both the interrogator and arbitrator in the process of prosecution against the Christians. The public acted as the accusers, and the authorities acted as arbiters of the legal process.

ii. Charges and Allegations

Various allegations are leveled against the Christians by the public in this legal system. The *Ad Nationes* identifies infanticide, incest, shameful acts and presents that the Christians according to their accusers are responsible for the natural disasters.⁶¹⁷ The Christians therefore, faced charges which projected them as destroyers of the state, atheists and as obstinate.⁶¹⁸ They were also saddled with the charge of the name Christian. Tatian also relates that outsiders alleged that Christians were foreign and cannibalistic.⁶¹⁹ Predominantly, charges of atheism and obstinacy are in focus for Tatian in his refutation.⁶²⁰

These accusations are clearly a mixture of ethical, political, social and religious allegations. This indicates that the charges against the Christians according to the apologists were

⁶¹⁶Ibid, I.2.

⁶¹⁷ Tertullian *Ad Nationes*, I.2,5, 9.

⁶¹⁸Ibid, I.1, 3, 10, 11, 17.

⁶¹⁹ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 1.1; 25.3.

⁶²⁰Ibid,4.1-2, 5.1-3, 32.1.

multiple. Tertullian suggests that to the public these crimes are “more atrocious and numerous.”⁶²¹

iii. Motive

In view of the charges, persecutors and the form of hostility, it can be strongly suggested that in this sub-genre too, the persecutors sought to preserve the Roman peace, thus *pax deorum*. Tertullian captures this idea very well with his famous statement that “if the Tiber has overflowed its bank, if the Nile has remained in its bed, if the sky has been still or the earth been in commotion, if death has made its devastations or famine its afflictions, your cry immediately is ‘This is the fault of the Christians!’”⁶²² Therefore, since the Christians had offended the gods of the non-Christians by not worshipping the gods, it led to such disasters breaking out on the society. There is therefore no doubt that the perceived Christian atheism and the resultant perceived threat to the *pax deorum* was presented as the first motivating factor which provoked the persecution of the Christians.

iv. Demand

The martyrs, according to the apologists, were given the opportunity to sacrifice to the gods of the empire, using the image of the emperor to clear themselves of the accusations. In both apologetic texts the authorities demanded the Christians to make the sacrifice, but the Christians refused.⁶²³ The Christians, to a large extent, felt that the gods of the Romans were man-made who were contemptible⁶²⁴ so they cannot worship such gods.

In the light of this legal framework as portrayed by the apologies addressed to the Roman public, the legal procedure was likely to be *cognitio extra ordinem*, while the accusations against the Christians ranged from social, religious, political to ethical, and these accusations

⁶²¹Tertullian Ad Nationes, I.2.

⁶²² Tertullian, Ad Nationes, I.9.

⁶²³Tertullian, Ad Nationes, I.12 Tatian, Oratio Ad Graecos, 13.3, 14.1, 27.2.

⁶²⁴Ibid, I.10; Ibid,18.2.

were affirmed in the unpreparedness of the Christians to sacrifice using the *genius* of the emperor. The motivation of the persecutors, as presented by the apologists, can be attributed to their desire to see the preservation or restoration of the peace with the gods.

c. Argumentation

The comparative elements under this heading seek to look into the means by which the apologists defended the Christians from the charges and allegations. The possible presence of polemics is discussed and the argumentative strategy adopted by the apologies is also evaluated. Furthermore, the sources used in these defenses as well as the central themes that are discussed by the apologists are also explored. These elements will help understand the defense approach adopted by the apologists who wrote to the public to protect Christianity.

i. Polemic

It is normal for apologists to adopt some polemic approach in defending their course. Tertullian charges the persecutors as ‘unjust’, ‘ignorant’, ‘absurd’, blind and haters.⁶²⁵ He says to the people “You are ashamed, I suppose to worship unadorned and simple crosses...”⁶²⁶ Tatian describes the gods as ‘demons’ and the persecutors as mad, and fools.⁶²⁷ He describes the public’s action on a number of instances as non-sense⁶²⁸ and the hostilities in strong words by admonishing them to “drop all their non-sense and be done with this criminal hatred of us”.⁶²⁹

These polemic attacks were against the Roman gods, and even more the general public. It is most important to stress that there are no direct attacks on the authorities in this category of apologies to the public. The attacks are mostly against the public and the Roman system or practices especially by Tatian. This is a strong mark of Tatian’s apology where he often

⁶²⁵ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, I. 1, 6, 7, II.2, 7.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid*, I.12.

⁶²⁷ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 14, 21.1, 22.1, 33.1.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid*, 26.2, 33.1.

⁶²⁹ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 9.4.

shows dislike for the Greek culture and its practices⁶³⁰ hence⁶³¹ the apologists direct the attacks at these persons to solicit a change in their attitudes against the Christian faith and to win them to Christianity.

ii. Strategy

The authors of these apologetic texts adopted various methods in defending the Christian faith from the charges and allegations against them. Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* uses rhetoric which includes logic, questions, sarcasm and history of the Romans as well as the Christian idea of the apocalypse to defend and explain the Christian practices to the public.⁶³² He says, “It is quite uncertain whether I shall laugh at your absurdity or unbraid you for your blindness.”⁶³³ Tatian does not use a different strategy compared to Tertullian; he uses rhetoric, recent events, history, the apocalypse and argument from prophecy.⁶³⁴ He ridicules the Roman gods when he says “Your official festivals are ridiculous, celebrated in honor of evil demons who bring shame upon human beings”⁶³⁵ and the double standards in the Roman system by suggesting “You sacrifice animals in order to eat meat and you buy men to provide human slaughter for the soul, feeding it with bloodshed of the most impious kind.”⁶³⁶

The authors employed various strategies in defending and explaining the Christian practices to the general public who were involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. The authors of these apologies therefore adopt rhetorical, philosophical and religious approaches in defending the Christian faith from their adversaries. The various approaches have different aims to be achieved by the text. Whereas the rhetorical, logical and argument from prophecy appeal more to philosophers and educated members of the society, the

⁶³⁰Foster, Tatian, 107; Hawthorne, “Tatian and His Discourse,” 180-181.

⁶³¹Hawthorne, “Tatian and His Discourse,” 187.

⁶³² Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1, 1-4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.1-2, 10, 14.

⁶³³*Ibid*, 11.12.

⁶³⁴ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 1.1, 3.1-4, 4.1-2, 6, 8, 11.2, 13.1, 17.1, 22, 31, 32.2.

⁶³⁵*Ibid*, 22.1.

⁶³⁶*Ibid*, 23.2.

sarcastic and reasoning aspects appeal more to the non-educated members of the society. The apocalyptic strategy without a doubt, seeks to attract the audience for conversion to Christianity. The strategy is therefore a mixture which has various motives to defend against the charges, explain the Christian practices and to convert the audience of the text.

iii. Sources

In order to make the texts attractive to the audience, the authors depend on various sources in advancing their arguments. Tertullian depends on history, non-Christian sources and scriptural materials to make his thoughts attractive to the audience.⁶³⁷ Tatian equally uses non-Christian, recent events and scriptural sources.⁶³⁸

It is certainly interesting and important that the apologist uses both Christian and non-Christian sources. This is crucial because it helps the apologist, to bring the arguments to the door step of their audience. Tertullian categorically shows the usefulness of the non-Christian sources that

Wishing, then, to follow step by step your own commentaries which you have drawn out of your theology of every sort (because the authority of learned men goes further with you in matters of this kind than the testimony of facts)⁶³⁹

The apologist uses sources that the audiences are very familiar with but uses them differently to meet the needs of the apologies. The non-Christians may be quite aware of the Christian scriptures, so the apologist uses it to explain the Christian understandings and practices.

The use of both Christian and non-Christian sources by the apologists who wrote to the public in defense of the Christians is very important.

⁶³⁷ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1.2-4, 5-7, 10, 11.1-2, 7, 9-14.

⁶³⁸ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 1, 2, 13, 21-26, 31, 37-41.

⁶³⁹ Tertullian *Ad Nationes*, 11.1.

iv. Themes

Identification of the main themes discussed in these apologies also help to understand the texts of the apologies addressed to the public better. The main theme of Tertullian's *Ad Nationes* is to build on the idea of injustice against the Christians, the status of the Roman gods and the usefulness of Christian converts.⁶⁴⁰ In Tatian's *Oratio Ad Graecos* he builds more on non-Christian practices, argument from prophecy, Christian identity and his personal conversion.⁶⁴¹

These themes as identified in these texts are mostly about Christian ideas aimed at attracting the audience to Christianity. They are aimed at projecting a good image of Christianity while making the Roman culture black and unattractive. The authors suggest that the audience look at the brighter side of Christianity by focusing on the positive impacts of Christianity on life and the society in general.

The defense of Christianity from the charges as addressed in the apologies to the public was quite holistic. Various argumentative methods are used especially by way of laying some polemical charges against the Roman system and exhorting Christianity above the Roman ways of doing things. The apologist used sources that are predominantly known to the public to make their argument not new but give them breath of freshness to convince the pagans. The argumentations in these apologies are therefore comprehensive and thoughtful.

d. Other Peculiar Features

The apologetic texts addressed to the public have their peculiar features. The second book of Tertullian *Ad Nationes* is devoted to Varro's theory of the classification of the gods.⁶⁴² Tertullian devotes his seventeen-chapter book to explore and argue against this theory.

⁶⁴⁰ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1.1, 2, 4, 6, 10, 14.

⁶⁴¹ Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 22-26, 29-30, 36-41.

⁶⁴² Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, ll.1-17.

Another peculiar issue Tertullian brings to the table concerning why they pray facing the east.⁶⁴³ Tatian on his part does not have other major issues in his texts part from his defense of the Christian positions; it is worth noting that other apologists do not inform their readers apart from laying stress on philosophy while attacking the Roman gods and social order.

In conclusion, it is argued that these classes of text, while neglecting narrative elements, still paint comprehensive pictures of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. They are useful for the understanding of the statutes and actions against the Christians and how the Christians defended themselves to the public, the initiators of the persecution and martyrdom. The fundamental aim of addressing this category of recipients, can be classified as evangelistic rather than provoking an end to the hostilities.

The picture of the persecution and martyrdom against the Christian in the Roman Empire as portrayed by the apologist is to be compared with the apologies to the authorities to bring out the similarities and difference. This internal comparison of apologetic texts is necessary for two reasons. In the first place it affords the opportunity to have a synchronized picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians as projected by the apologist. This single picture can then be compared to the picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed in the martyr texts, to bring out the similarities and differences in the texts.

The second reason for this internal comparison is to address the question of the submission status of the apologies to the authorities. The similarities and differences that may come out from the synthesis of the two sub-genres may be an opener in addressing this issue. This internal comparison is therefore crucial in the realization of the aims and significance of this study in all respects.

⁶⁴³Ibid,13.

3.4.4 Similarities and Differences

This section seeks to synchronize the harmonized versions of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as projected by the two different kinds of apologetic texts. The synchronized version of the similarities and differences between these two categories of the apologies is further in chapter four be compared to the synchronized version of the persecution and martyrdom in the martyr texts from chapter two. The comparison is outlined based on the thirteen main comparative elements categorized into the four groups and their peculiarities.

a. Account

The three comparative elements under this sub-heading bring out the similarities and differences between the apologies addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public in terms of the nature of the accounts of the hostilities against the Christians. The possible narrative content of the account is compared as well as the characterization of the accounts into persecutors and martyrs. Again, the forms of sufferings of the Christians as portrayed by the two classes of the apologetic texts are also compared.

i. Narrative

This comparative aspect looks into a possible presence of a narrative in the apologetic texts. This comparison is key because Judith Lieu argues strongly that there are great lines of similitude between the apologies and the martyr texts.⁶⁴⁴ It will be interesting to test this presupposition although she argues this position is based on the audience of the text, but this study seeks to push this point further by testing the presence of narrative in the apologetic text.

⁶⁴⁴ Lieu, "The Audience of Apologetics," 218.

It is evident from the texts addressed to the authorities that the narrative presence in this class of text is very small. Apologies addressed to the public also, do not have narrative contents. To a large extent therefore, it can be argued that the apologetic texts in general have very little presence of narratives. The authors of these texts are more interested in defending and explaining the Christian course of action rather than telling stories about the plights of the Christians in the Roman Empire.

ii. Character of the Martyrs

It is equally significant to look at how the martyrs and the Christians in general are presented in these texts. The martyrs and Christians are portrayed as innocent, and it is presented as a source of amazement for outsiders that Christians are displaying courage, composure and even thankfulness when they are tortured and sentenced to death. This is in contrast, to a normal human inclination to be afraid of death and to do everything to avoid it.

It is evident the different classes of the apologetic materials sought to portray the martyrs as courageous, innocent and thankful even when they were sentenced to death. The apologists therefore present the martyrs in glorious and heroic terms to make them attractive to the audience. These martyrs followed the ways of their founder (Jesus) and were actually aware that they would have to die when they accepted to be Christians.⁶⁴⁵ Justin says, “But neither would we be out to death, nor would wicked people and demons be more powerful than us, were not death a debt due from every person who has been born. Wherefore we give thanks when we pay this death.”⁶⁴⁶ They were ready to die also because they would be going to a Prefect place of justice.

⁶⁴⁵Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 1, 3, Justin, *Second Apology*, 12, Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 1.12, 21.3, 46.1, 49.14-15, 50.1, Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 4.1.

⁶⁴⁶ Justin, *Second Apology*, 11.

It can be suggested based on the similarities between the two classes of the apologies and the addresses, that the martyrs are heroes of the Christian faith. This is important because the texts are intended to be read by insiders (Christians) so the authors sought to portray these characters as people who stood unwaveringly in the face of all odds. This courage of the martyrs as projected by the apologists was to encourage the Christians and suggest that when they are charged they should stand as the others had done.

On the other hand, it appeals to the outsiders (non-Christians) to see in these characters glorious victims of injustice even to the point of death. This picture is used by the apologists as an evangelistic tool to attract others to the Christian faith. Indeed, Barnes for instance suggests that Tertullian's conversion to Christianity was as a result of the impression made on him by the character of the martyrs because the martyrs showed no fear of death.⁶⁴⁷ This means, there may have indeed been other persons in the empire, who found such characterization of the heroic martyrs attractive thereby prompting them to convert to Christianity. Both classes of apologetic texts projected the Christians in a positive light and utilized it as a tool to encourage other Christians and to impress non-Christians.

iii. Identity of the Persecutors

This comparative element seeks to identify who was involved in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians in the Roman Empire. Both classes of texts again agree that the hostilities perpetrated against the Christians were carried out by both the authorities and the public. The public included family members, professional groups and individuals who found the Christians detestable and hence reported the Christians to the authorities and followed it up until the Christians were killed. Apart from the public who reported the Christians, the authorities of the empire sometimes including the Emperor himself and the resources of the

⁶⁴⁷ Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Studies*, 2.

empire were committed to the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians. The resources are seen as being used since the charges are laid against the Christians in the courts.

The involvement of the resources of the empire, the authorities and the general public show that the Christians were presented as confronted by a comprehensive persecution and martyrdom. The agreement between these two classes of texts gives a coherent picture of the roles of the public and the authorities in the persecution and martyrdom against the early Christians in the Roman Empire.

iv. Form of Suffering

The two classes of texts agree that the early Christians suffered physical torture of various forms before their execution. The agreement between these texts is very strong and affirmative (conclusive).

Both texts agree in the area of the scanty use of narratives and they also project the martyrs as heroes in order to encourage the Christians and evangelize to the non-Christians. Furthermore, they agree that the public and the authorities participated in these hostilities thereby making the persecution and martyrdom comprehensive. There is a great deal of similarity between the apologies addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public in these respects.

b. Accusation

These four categories of comparative elements, basically seeks to bring out the similarities and differences between the apologies addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public in terms of the legal framework. The analysis will look at the harmony of the classes of texts concerning the legal procedure, charges and allegations as well as the motive of the persecutors and notwithstanding, the demand for the Christians to sacrifice.

i. Legal Procedure

This comparative element seeks to compare the legal procedure employed against the Christians according to the apologies. It is suggested that the apologies addressed to the authorities point to the *cognitio exta ordinem* as being the process/form used in cases against Christians. In this form of process private persons acted as accusers, but neither they nor the defendants were given the opportunity to present their cases in long formal speeches. Instead the prosecution was presided over by the governor, prefect or emperor, who acted as the interrogator and gave the judgments.

Sherwin-White was the modern scholar who first and most strongly argued that this was the procedure used against the Christians. According to the apologists the Christians were not allowed to defend themselves in long formal speeches. Further however, the charge of the name and the condemnation on the basis of confessing to be a Christian, meant that the authorities, according to the apologists, were unwilling even to allow the Christians proper time to answer when cross-questioned by the governor.⁶⁴⁸ Tertullian says

Whatever you charge against us, when you so charge others, they use their own eloquence, they hire the advocacy of others, to prove their innocence. There is freedom to answer to cross-question, since in fact it is against the law for men to be condemned, undefended and unheard. But to Christians alone it is forbidden to say anything to clear their case, to defend the Truth, to save the judge from being unjust. No! One thing is looked for, one alone, the one thing needful for popular hatred-the confession of the name. Not investigation of the charge! Yet if you are trying any other criminal, it does not follow at once from his confession to the name of murderer, or temple-robber, or adulterer, or enemy of the state.⁶⁴⁹

Tertullian points to three major deviations from normal or more classical (republican) judicial process, firstly personal defense without the support of advocate (lawyers), secondly no investigation after confession of being Christians and thirdly no chance for the accused Christian to defend properly against the foundation of the hatred of this name. To this extent

⁶⁴⁸Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 1.1; Tatian, *Oratio Ad Graecos*, 27.1.

⁶⁴⁹ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 2.2-4.

therefore, the addresses of these apologetic texts agree that the Christians were subjected to the *cognitio exta ordinem*.

ii. Charges and Allegations

The Roman public is deemed to have laid various allegations against the early Christians in the period of the persecution and martyrdom. The Apologies identify political, social, religious and ethical allegations. This class of the apologetic texts stress the political (conspirators, treason, obstinacy), ethical (infanticide, incest, adultery) and religious charges (godless, impious, worshipers of ass and cross, sacrilegious, magic). On the other hand, the apologetic texts also identify some ethical, social, religious and political charges. However, they stress on the ethical (incest, infanticides, shameful sect, and cannibalism), religious (atheist) and social issues (natural disaster). It is argued that the relationships between the charges are inter-related.

When the Christians were arraigned before the courts, the allegations changed officially to charges. The apologies addressed to the authorities present that the charges against the Christian were political, ethical and religious in character. Tertullian's *Apologeticum* add that the Christians allegedly were not good at business.⁶⁵⁰ Meanwhile the apologies addressed to the public focus on religious, social and political charges.

The apologies addressed to the authorities do not discuss the social impact of the Christians on the Roman society. However, Tertullian in his *Ad Nationes* and *Apologeticum*, natural disasters were blamed on the Christians.⁶⁵¹ Tatian also alludes to a lot of recent happenings in the empire to prove the innocence of the Christians.⁶⁵² Meanwhile, the apologies addressed to the public also tones down on the political charges while the apologies to the authorities stress

⁶⁵⁰Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 42.

⁶⁵¹ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 4.

⁶⁵² Tatian, *Ad Graecos*, 3.2.

and try to prove that the Christians are neither conspirators (Justin),⁶⁵³ nor traitors (Tertullian).⁶⁵⁴ These little twists in the allegations that are refuted in the texts addressed to the general public compared to the allegations that are refuted in the texts addressed to the authorities, show that the content of the texts are influenced by the addressee and not only by the common context of the two types of texts.

The twist in the charges here is the silence on the ethical issues regarding the charges against the Christians as addressed to the public. This does not imply that they were absent rather that relatively little mention of them is made. Most of the defenses in this class of the apologetic texts is concerned with the religious charges such as atheism and the name. This is important although the charge of the name may suggest some ethical behaviors which are not in consonance with the Roman worldview.

iii. Motive

In view of the charges and allegations as well as the form of hostilities against the Christians as described in the apologies to the authorities and those to the public, it is logical to argue that the persecutors were motivated by the need to reinstate or maintain the peace between the Romans and the gods. The two classes of texts agree on this point, that the *pax deorum* was seen by outsiders as important, that the Christians were perceived to be a threat to this peace with the gods and that this prompted the persecutions.

iv. Demand

All the texts in the apologetic category agree that the accused Christians were asked to offer sacrifice. This demand may have been influenced by the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan, which Tertullian refers to.⁶⁵⁵ The authorities were very much aware that the

⁶⁵³ Justin, First Apology, 12.

⁶⁵⁴ Tertullian, Apologeticum, 2.6.

⁶⁵⁵ Tertullian Apologeticum, 2.6-9.

Christians would not accept to sacrifice due to their belief in one God, monotheism, hence the Christians unwillingness to sacrifice and to swear by the genius of the emperor – since to the Christians, this would entail a worship of the Roman gods and the emperor.

Whereas both classes of texts, those addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public, agree that the procedure used was *cognitio exta ordinem* and that the authorities demanded sacrifice of the Christians; there are some slight differences in the accusations. The apologies to the authorities do not stress social allegations against the Christians but this is a prominent allegation in the apologies to the public. On the other hand, allegations in the apologies addressed to the public are comparably silent on political issues. Yet when we turn to the texts addressed to the authorities, the ethical charges figure comparatively less, while the political charges are prominent and related to the alleged charge of Christian obstinacy.

In conclusion there is a significant overlap in how the two kinds of apologetic texts present the legal framework, but with small twists in the emphasis given to different allegations and charges – twist that corresponds to the agenda in the two different kinds of apologetic texts in relation to their addresses.

c. Argumentation

The comparative elements seek to look into the methods and forms of defense of the Christians as adopted by the apologists who wrote to the authorities and those addressed to the public. Four main issues are compared in this group; polemic content, argumentative strategy, sources of the arguments and the major themes of the various classes of the apologetic texts.

i. Polemic

It is true that an apology may contain both offensive and defensive elements,⁶⁵⁶ where the offensive elements may be described as polemics since they turn the charges against the accusers. The apologies to the authorities attack the Jews, the Roman gods, the authorities and the public. Most of the direct attacks can hierarchically be arraigned against the public and then the gods and only then against the authorities.

On the other hand, the apologies to the public also attack the gods as well as the Roman system and practices and the general public. The only distinction between the two classes is that the Jews are attacked due to their interpretation and use of Scriptures.⁶⁵⁷ Both kinds of apologetic texts all attack the Roman religious system, especially the gods, in very strong terms. Hawthorne suggests that Justin's and Tatian's texts are no apologies because of their depth of attacks on the Greeks, so they are described as harangues.⁶⁵⁸ Tatian launches a strong attack against the Roman religious system and Tertullian in his *Apologeticum* attacks the system even more. What is true and most significant in synthesizing the two classes of apologies is the attacks on the public and the authorities.

Most of the direct attacks in the apologies addressed to the authorities are against the public. There are about twenty such direct attacks while there are only about seven direct attacks against the authorities. The apologies to the public do not really lay direct attacks on the authorities. This is a major difference between these two classes of texts, which must be further investigated.

⁶⁵⁶ Edward, Goodman and Price, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, xi, 106.

⁶⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 21.15.

⁶⁵⁸ Hawthorne, "Tatian and His Discourse," 188.

ii. Strategy

It is crucial to explore the ways the apologists in the various classes of texts defend the Christian cause. The apologies to the authorities predominantly use arguments from prophecy and rhetoric which encompassed philosophy, logic, reasoning, sarcasm and irony. Predominantly, the apologies to the authorities depended on rhetorical, philosophical and religious methods in dealing with the charges against the Christians. The apologies to the public equally use these same methods as those to the authorities.

Although these texts agree in terms of the strategies there are slight differences with regards to the predominant strategy used. Whereas the apologies to the authorities depend more on rhetorical and philosophical methods, the apologies to the public depend more on philosophical and religious strategies. This means that philosophical strategy is key to both classes and apologies to the authorities also depended more on rhetorical tools while texts addressed to the public depended on religious strategies.

The two classes of texts use philosophical strategies because the Roman society was philosophically inclined. However, owing to the aims of the text especially in relation to the addressees, those to the authorities used rhetorical forms which are not much different from the philosophical strategy but texts addressed to the authorities' preferred religious strategy to aid conversion and speak against the Roman religious and social order. Therefore, in terms of the strategy, there are great similarities but nuanced differences in terms of what they emphasize.

iii. Sources

The authors of the various texts have depended on two main sources. They used both Christian and non-Christian sources. Apologies to the authorities and those to the public together used pagan, Jewish, scriptures, history and events in the empire as basis of their

argument. These sources as used by the authors are applied forcefully. However, the major issue here is on emphasis. Whereas the apologies to the authorities depends a lot on the non-Christian sources especially the pagan sources, notwithstanding the apologies to the public depend on Christian sources especially the Christian scriptures. A cursory count of scriptural usage from Tatian's apology has about thirty-five quotations; thirty-one from the Old Testament and four from the New Testament. The stress on the sources used, equally shows that the authors have various aims and select their sources according to the addresses of the texts.

iv. Themes

It is without doubt that the major themes developed by the various apologies are concerned with Christian themes. Here, the apologists try to explain issues about the Christian faith in terms of Christology, apocalypse, Christian ethics, conversion and the transformation that Christianity brings to the entire society. Another major theme of the two types of apologies relate to Christian practices which mark the Christian identity such as the Eucharist, Sunday services, prayer topics, forms of prayer and membership of Christians irrespective of age, sex and social status.

Generally speaking, when comparing the two types of apologetic texts the argumentative forms overlap largely, but with a few nuanced differences. This indicates that the texts responded to the same context (persecution), had overlapping aims (bringing hostility to an end, impressing outside readers positively and building identity of Christian readers), but were intended for partly different audiences reflecting the addressing of the texts to authorities and general public respectively.

3.5 Submission Status

In attending to scholarly debate related to the possibility of the Roman authorities reading the content of the apologetic texts, particularly those addressed to them, the internal comparison of the two sub-genres help to address some aspects of the quest. The argumentative forms or the comparative elements of these two classes based on the addresses, relate to the means by which the defenses are presented. This can point to either an intended submission or otherwise of the apologetic texts, especially those addressed to the authorities.

The following is a list of polemic attacks found in the various texts and who they directed them to.

	FIRST APOLOGY	SECOND APOLOGY	APOLOGETICUM	AD SCAPULA	ORATIO AD SCAPULA	AD NATIONES
GODS/ ROMAN SYSTEM	*Evil *Demons		*Are not gods *Profane idols and deification of human names *Perjury *Catastrophe *Contempt *Misfortune	*Demons	*Demon *System Madmen *Ridicule *Non-sense	*Dead *Absurd
AUTHO- RITIES	*Irrational		*Haters of truth *Cunning ruse and cruel rage	*Cruel *Ignorant *Fighting the god		
PUBLIC	*Unreasonable *Stupidity *Dissolute	*Wicked *Against Crescene	*Unjust, *Dogs *impious, *foul *Foul charges *Danger *Cruel		*Non-sense *Criminal hatred	*Ashamed *Incest *Absurdity *Blindness

Table 3.1 Polemic attacks in the apologetic texts

The assumption is that the apologies addressed to the general public may have a strong polemic approach compared to those addressed to the authorities. Furthermore, the sources of the argument in the apologies presented to the general public may use both Christian and non-Christian sources while those addressed to the authorities may depend more on non-Christian and, apart from the Christian and non-Christian sources, philosophy, logic and legal arguments.

In view of the synthesis analyzed above it is clear that both classes of the apologetic texts raise serious polemics against the public, while the gods and the Roman social-religiosity are next in line of the fire of these Christian apologists before the authorities are attacked. In terms of polemics, the authorities are in the third place in direct attack by these apologies. Most of the attacks among the apologies addressed to the public are against the pagans and do not directly attack the authorities. Direct attacks against the Roman gods are more frequent than attacks against the authorities in the apologies to the authorities. It can therefore sufficiently be argued that owing to the fewer number of direct polemics against those in authority, it is logical to conclude, that the apologies were at the very least intended to receive the attention of those in authority of the Roman Empire. In terms of the intensity of the polemics too, the authorities are charged as being ‘ignorant’, ‘haters of truth’, ‘cunning’ and ‘cruel’.⁶⁵⁹ Meanwhile, some of the charges against the public are ‘unreasonable’, ‘stupid’, ‘dissolute’, ‘wicked’, ‘cruel’, ‘unjust’, ‘impious’, ‘foul’, ‘criminal’, ‘non-sense’, ‘ashamed’, ‘absurd’, blind etc.⁶⁶⁰ Those against the gods and the Roman system are harsh. The gods are described as dead, ‘absurd’, ‘demons’, contemptuous, no god, ‘profane’ etc.⁶⁶¹ These examples show that the intensity or the heat was less on the authorities compared to the public and the gods. Therefore, it can equally be suggested that the authors indeed wanted the authorities to read their petitions in order to possibly stop the hostilities and to convert them to Christianity.

In terms of the sources used in the arguments and the argumentative strategies, though similar, they show a little difference. Although both the apologies to the authorities and those to the public use Christian and non-Christian sources, those addressed to the authorities use more of the non-Christian sources, particularly pagan sources. This strategy is important for

⁶⁵⁹ Justin First Apology, 9, Tertullian, Apologeticum, 1.1, 27.3; Ad Scapulam, 1.

⁶⁶⁰ Justin, First Apology, 5, 11; Second Apology, 3, Tertullian, Apologeticum, 5.4, 7.1, 21.27, 41.1, 50.12; Ad Nationes, I.12, II.7; Tatian, Oratio Ad Graecos, 26.2.

⁶⁶¹ Tertullian, Apologeticum, 9.2, 11.15-16, 28.3, 40.6, 41.1; Ad Scapulam, 2; Ad Nationes, I.14, II.2; Tatian, Oratio Ad Graecos, 8.1.

conviction because it uses the ‘known to the unknown’ approach to lure the reader. It is not very likely that the authorities knew so much of the Christian sources, but it is highly possible that they were hands-on with the pagan sources. To make them understand the arguments therefore, the apologists in both classes of apologies, use texts that were familiar to outsiders and thus brought the arguments to their door step. Justin copies a whole rescript of the emperor as a conclusion of his *First Apology*.⁶⁶² It can therefore be supported, that by doing this he did not want the emperor or the authorities to read his texts.

Again, in terms of argumentative strategy both classes of apologies use a lot of philosophical argumentative strategies to defend the Christians and to explain the Christian practices. This strategy is very important to the apologists when writing to the authorities and even to the public, owing to the fact that the Roman society valued philosophy. Justin in his *First Apology* shows the inclination of the Emperor to philosophy was when he says “To the Emperor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar and to his philosopher son Verissimus, and Lucius the philosopher,...”⁶⁶³ the principal characteristic of the members of the imperial family listed here, is their affinity to philosophy. The apologist was aware that these authorities were interested in philosophy so he needed to dance to the tune of his audience. Kahlos suggests that the best form of argumentation is to build on the premise of common mutual grounds, which Christian apologists do very well with in many cases.⁶⁶⁴ It will therefore be out of place to assume that the apologies did not really want such persons to read them, after going through such efforts to present arguments in ways and derived from sources, which the authorities were known to respect and be able to relate to.

Consequently, based on the internal comparison in this chapter, it is logical and suggestive, that the apologists who addressed apologies to the authorities also wanted these authorities to

⁶⁶²Justin First Apology 68.

⁶⁶³Ibid, 1.

⁶⁶⁴ Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 67.

read their apologies. The polemic attacks are less directed to the authorities and the few which were targeted at them were not couched in very strong language compared to those targeted at the gods and the public. Furthermore, the argumentative strategy and sources of arguments too are suggestive that the apologies did their works in the manner designed so as to be attractive to the authorities by depending more on pagan sources and adopting a heavy philosophical approach. At the very least therefore, the apologist certainly wanted the authorities to read their apologies.

3.6 Conclusion

The analysis of the apologetic texts in this chapter has demonstrated that these sub-genre of texts are useful in the exploration of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. Many of the comparative elements in this internal comparison affirm and corroborate what they suggest in most of the cases. They talk about the same things although they are not perfectly knitted because there are a few nuances based on where the stress is placed and in relation to the addresses. The most important aspect of the nuances is that they do not contradict each other but supplement what the other sources are quite lax about probably due to the addresses of the text. This, therefore, suggests that in using the apologetic texts to understand the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians, the two categories of the texts must be used side by side for a comprehensive picture of the hostilities. On the other hand, these little divergences help in relation to the discussion of the submission status of those apologetic texts addressed to the authorities. This chapter argues that, based on the nuances particularly relative to the accusations and argumentative forms, the authors of the texts certainly wanted the authorities to read them.

It is, therefore, important to compare the synchronized picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire as suggested by the apologists to the

synchronized version of the martyr texts from the previous chapter. The next chapter therefore brings the two pictures together to identify their similarities (supplement or corroborate) and differences (contradict) concerning the hostilities against the Christians in the Roman Empire from the second to around the third century.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXTERNAL COMPARISON: APOLOGETIC AND MARTYR TEXTS

4.0 Introduction

The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire made its mark on emerging Christianity; Christians reacted to them and felt the need to remember them in writing. Two prominent types of written responses composed from a Christian perspective were the martyr accounts and the apologetic texts. However, these two broad genres of texts are rarely used by scholars in the pursuit to understand the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. It is therefore important to compare them to identify their corroborative, supplementary or possibly contradictory aspects on the subject of the persecution and martyrdoms. For the understanding of the character of the persecution and the motives of the persecutors, the martyr-texts are for example (along with texts written by non-Christian authors about the Christians) the texts that are used the most is the martyr texts, while the apologies are not exploited. The apologetic texts seek to complain about unjust treatment, to defend Christianity and to target, at least on the level of rhetoric, out-group recipients. The apologetic and the martyr texts were however written around the same time. They are, therefore, different reactions to the persecution and martyrdom.⁶⁶⁵

To this end, this project argues that it is needful as a preliminary step towards exploiting the texts as sources to other questions – a prominent example being the questions concerning the character of these hostilities and the motives of the persecutors – to systematically and comprehensively compare the two types of texts. Further, such a comparison should have both an internal dimension (where the different kinds of apologetic texts are compared with each other and the different kinds of martyr texts with each other) and an external dimension

⁶⁶⁵Lieu, “The Audience of Apologeticum,” 210.

(where the different kinds of apologetic texts are compared to the different kinds of martyr-texts).

In this chapter, the two separate pictures of the persecution and martyrdom as projected by the martyr text (synthesis) and that which is painted by the apologetic texts (synthesis) are compared externally to develop a comprehensive picture of the image projected by the early Christians of the persecution and martyrdom they were suffering. The comparisons stresses the similarities and differences between the two types of texts and to ascertain whether the image of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as presented in the two genre of texts corroborate, supplement or contradict one each other.

This comparison will pave the way for a discussion of the submission status of the apologies addressed to the authorities, that is whether they were submitted, intended for submission or not. This project assumes that if the external comparison brings out some slight differences in content, then it will be agreed that they were meant to be read by the different addressees. If for example the apologetic texts (addressed to outsiders) need to argue or explain Christian habits or rituals, such as calling each other brother or sister, the Eucharist and baptism, a Christian need not be convinced that they are not fornicating with their mothers, when they say take eat and drink my body and blood they do not eat human flesh and blood in the Eucharist, then it will be agreed that they were meant to be read by outsiders, that is the addressees. On the other hand, if there are similar levels of explanation in martyr texts that are clearly aimed at insiders and apologetic texts that are rhetorically aimed at outsiders, then the apologies may not have been intended for submission to the addresses by the apologists, especially those addressed to the authorities.

On another line, if the differences are significant in relation to descriptions of the character of the persecution, the identity of the persecutors, the motives of the persecutors etc., then it

would be just to suggest that such differences would pose a problem for how we may use the texts as sources for such questions. Such major differences will show that either one or the other of the two types of texts, or indeed both of them, are projecting distorted images of the persecution. If so, the entire phenomena of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians could be argued to be largely imaginary as was the practice in antiquity.⁶⁶⁶It would also question whether the apologies were ever intended for submission since it may be a fiction.

Before the comparison in this chapter, the audience and purpose of the two categories of the texts are discussed to determine the motivation for writing the texts. After this, a fusion of the image of the persecution and martyrdom as portrayed by the two classes of texts are analyzed. These emerging similarities and differences are then highlighted to determine the contours of their corroborating, supplementing or contradicting each other. Eventually, the submission status of the apologies is discussed.

4.1 Audience and Purpose of Texts

The audience and purposes of the texts are likely to be linked. As analysed in chapters two and three, it is clear that an identification of the audiences of the texts help to appreciate the purpose of Christians in writing these texts. It must also be stressed that the addressees of the texts are not likely to be their only targets. Potentially the two types of text could have been intended for the following audiences with the following purposes. Below is a merged table which explains the audience and purpose of the two classes of texts.

⁶⁶⁶Engberg, "Truth Begs no Favours," 178.

TEXTS	AUDIENCE	PURPOSE
MARTYR TEXTS	Christians	Encouragement Identity Formation History
APOLOGETIC TEXTS	Authorities	Stop the hostilities Conversion
	Public	Stop the hostilities Conversion
	Christians	Encourage Defend

Table 4.1 Purpose and audience of the martyr and apologetic texts

The discussion, so far, has pointed in the direction that these potential intended audiences and purposes were as a matter of fact, in the minds of the authors. The close reading of the martyr texts reveals that their audience are the Christians. The explicit addressees of the texts are in-group members (Christians), the texts are used to encourage them to stand firm in the faith following the example of the martyrs. The texts are also aiming to build the Christian identity with regard to their beliefs and practices while establishing the Christian history. Furthermore, the texts try to establish the Christian history by identifying forerunners of Christianity who had given up their lives because they are found to be Christians. The martyr texts can consequently be described as directed towards the Christians.

On the other hand, some of the apologies are explicitly addressed to the authorities with the expressed aim of putting an end to the persecution and ultimately to convert the readers to Christianity.⁶⁶⁷ The authorities play significant roles in questioning and in passing judgement on the martyrs in the trial against the Christians. The other explicit addressees of the apologetic texts are the public. The public in the apologies often act as opponents of Christianity, accusing Christians before the authorities and engaging in other acts of hostility. The purpose of writing to the public by the apologists was for them to make non-Christian readers less hostile and more favourably inclined towards Christianity – ultimately a hope is expressed that non-Christian readers might convert. The authors hope that if the public would

⁶⁶⁷Petersen, “The Diversity of Apologetics,” 19.

stop accusing the Christians and become Christians themselves, persecution and martyrdom would be a thing of the past. In the trial of the Christians, as reflected in exchange of letters between Pliny and the Emperor Trajan,⁶⁶⁸ the public is described as taking the initiative and instigating the persecutions by charging the Christians before Pliny. Therefore, winning the public over into Christianity would stall the persecution and martyrdom. Additionally, although not explicitly addressed, it is agreed among many scholars that the apologists equally had their in-group members (Christians) in mind. The apologists wanted to encourage the Christians and also to equip them with arguments that would enable them to stand up in debates with outsiders. The apologists sought to equip the Christians to be able to defend themselves especially when the pagans challenged their faith. As a result, the apologist had the authorities, public and the Christians in mind when writing their texts.

It is argued that the martyr texts were mainly directed towards the Christians while the apologists target non-Christians. Therefore, it may be right to suggest that the texts were written to different category of audiences Christians and non-Christians. The purposes of the texts are, therefore, different since the audience differ. These differences suggest that they should be used together because their differences in audience corroborate and supplement rather than contradict each other.

4.2 Fusion of the Martyr and Apologetic Texts

This section of the discussion tries to bring the synthesized pictures of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians in the martyr and apologetic texts together. The fusion of the two accounts based on the three main categories used in the internal comparisons the same elements are used in this section. The first category is labeled ‘Account’ which, considers the comparative elements of a narrative, apology, character of the martyrs, identity of the

⁶⁶⁸ Pliny 10.96:1-4, 97.

persecutors and form of suffering. The second category named 'Accusation' compares the legal framework projected by the two classes of texts examining the legal procedure, charges and allegations, motive of the actions and the demands of the authorities as reflected in the martyr and apologetic texts. Finally, the means of defense in the texts are described as 'Argumentation' and include a comparison of the polemic attacks, strategy, sources and themes developed in the martyr and apologetic texts.

4.2.1 Account

This comparative element compares the nature of the persecution and martyrdom as reflected in the martyr and apologetic texts. The comparisons include a possible presence of narrative in both martyr and apologetic texts. Again, there is a possible presence of apology in both kinds of texts, and the presentation of the character of the martyrs and the persecutors in the two kinds of texts are compared. Additionally, the form by which the Christians are projected to have suffered by the two classes of texts are compared too, to find out if they corroborate, supplement or contradict.

i. Narrative

The narrative martyr-texts are of course narrative. The authors of these texts tell the story of the martyrs in three phases; pre-trial, trial, and post-trial. By comparison there is little narrative in the martyr-texts of the protocol form, they are written as dialogue and focus almost exclusively on the trial. Equally, there is very little narrative presence in the apologetic texts, the exception being one small martyr-story in Justin's Second Apology.

The narrative martyr-texts served a purpose in relation to Christian audiences. It was very important for the Christians to be told about the events, since many of the Christians were not at the venue of the hostilities and Christians in one city communicated in writing with

Christians in other cities. Thus the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp is addressed by the Christians in Smyrna to Christians abroad.

ii. Apology

The internal comparison has shown some level of apologetic content even in the martyr texts even though it abounds in the apologetic texts. The apologetic texts contain a more systematic and comprehensive apologetic contents. They defend the Christian faith from certain accusations which the apologists believe is a result of misconceptions against the Christians.⁶⁶⁹ These apologists therefore, wrote to non-Christians and sought to correct these ‘misconceptions’ with the hope of bringing the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians to an end. On the other-hand, the martyr texts are written to Christians who are not the perpetrators of the hostilities, hence there is no need to be apologetic.

iii. Character of Martyrs

Both the apologetic and martyr texts project the Christian martyrs in positive terms. They portray them as thankful and joyous even when they are sentenced to death.⁶⁷⁰ The martyrs are seen and presented as innocent and courageous when they are tortured and manhandled in order to force them to denounce their faith. These positive pictures of the martyrs make them look heroic to the readers.⁶⁷¹ This positive character of the martyrs was a strategy that presents them as examples of true Christian living to the Christian readers and sympathetic to the non-Christian readers for suffering such injustice.⁶⁷² In such cases the readers will be sympathetic towards the victim’s plight. To this end, the apologies argue that if the Christians should be killed, it should be based on specific proven crimes such as infanticide and other

⁶⁶⁹Justin’s First Apology 7; 6; 12, 20, 29; 49; 63; 68 Second Apology, 2; 3; Tertullian Apologeticum, 2:1-6, 10; 16; 28; 50 Tertullian Ad Scapulam 2, 3, 4; Tertullian Ad Nationes 1; Tatian Ad Graecos 1; 25:1-3

⁶⁷⁰Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity 18.1, Scillitan Martyrs 15, Justin’s Second Apology, 12; Tertullian Apologeticum, 1:13; 27:3; Tertullian Ad Scapulam 4.

⁶⁷¹Lynch, *Early Christianity*, 84.

⁶⁷²If the martyrs were pictured in negative terms it will imply that they were deserving of the sentence because of their own faults.

breaches of the law but not based on their being Christian because the name does not imply those accusations.⁶⁷³ Meanwhile, the apologies maintain that by turning to Christianity, the Christians have rather become more responsible members of the society. Thus Christianity has rather thought them to stop engaging in crimes which they were engaged in before they became Christians.⁶⁷⁴ Justin for instance argues that “Those who formerly delighted in fornication now embrace chastity alone; those who formerly made use of magical art have dedicated themselves to the good and unbegotten God.”⁶⁷⁵

The two genres of texts agree that even when sentenced, the martyrs thank God showing their humility and strong characters. The martyrs’ reactions in both kinds of texts are presented as exceptional, when people are sentenced to death they are likely to show remorse, anger, to cast insults or to appeal their cases. However, the Christians who the authors present as victims of injustice give thanks and are happy with the unjust sentence. Their joy was not as a result of the unjust sentence but rather because they are following the footsteps of Christ. This positive character as portrayed in the two classes of texts is conscious and aims at affecting the psychology of the readers.

The authors of the martyr texts are not particularly interested in presenting their readers with a particular image of the social status of the martyrs; the same apply to the apologists. Apparently, judging by the names, most of the martyrs described (especially those used in this study) belongs to the lower segments of society with some slaves and freed slaves, the exceptions are Polycarp (who may have had a villa in the country and a slave) and Perpetua (whose father was a man of authority). In the Passion of Perpetua most of the martyrs are new Christians attending catechisms. Tertullian specifically remarks how the Christian faith has

⁶⁷³ Tertullian Apologeticum 2:5-6, 20; Justin, First Apology 7.

⁶⁷⁴ Tertullian Apologeticum 3:1-4; Ad Scapulam 4; Justin, First Apology 14-15; Second Apology 2, Tatian Ad Gracoes 33:1-3.

⁶⁷⁵ Justin First Apology, 14.

penetrated all the segments of the society.⁶⁷⁶ But this is not specifically about martyrs, so we may conclude that neither the authors of the martyr-texts, nor the apologists were interested in presenting the victims of the persecutions as belonging to a special segment of the population or on the other hand to present Christianity as inclusive.

iv. Character of the Persecutors

On the other hand, both classes of texts agree that the perpetrators of the hostilities against the early Christians included both the authorities and the public. Both types of texts show that the public acted as the accusers and brought the Christians to the attention of the authorities. An accuser was termed a *delator* in the Roman judicial system. The public may include Roman citizens and the Jews in the Roman Empire, who brought the allegations against the Christians. These categories of persons have different motivations; whereas the Romans wanted to avert the anger of the gods, the Jews wanted to show the distinction between themselves and the Christians, since the Romans seemed confused without these distinctions.⁶⁷⁷ In some cases, the public included family members and this causes some nuances between the texts. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity*, her father wanted to save the daughter⁶⁷⁸ but the situation is different in Tertullian's *Ad Nationes*, the father rather brings the accusation.⁶⁷⁹ Although this cannot be generalized in all the texts, it is needful to show the roles of family members and parents played in the hostilities.

The roles of the authorities in these hostilities can be identified in two major ways in terms of humans and institutions.⁶⁸⁰ The authorities in the provinces and the Emperors themselves are presented as participating in these aggressions. Furthermore, the resources of the empire and the provincial and municipal authorities are equally committed to these hostilities. The police,

⁶⁷⁶Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50:13; *Ad Scapulam* 3, *Ad Nationes* I.1:1-5.

⁶⁷⁷Hartog *Polycarp's Epistles*, 226-231.

⁶⁷⁸*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* 3:1-3, 9.

⁶⁷⁹Tertullian *Ad Nationes*, 4.

⁶⁸⁰Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy*, 44-46.

tribunals, amphitheater and other resources of the empire and the cities which could not have been used without the permission of the authorities are equally used against the early Christians.

This means, that both the martyr texts and the apologetic texts present the persecution as comprehensive and involving a spectrum of persecutors. The hostilities took place in almost the whole of the Roman Empire, from Rome through African regions including Asia and Gallic Provinces, with the involvement of the emperors, provincial authorities, institutions of the empire, municipal authorities as well as the general public. The involvement of all these agents as portrayed in the martyr and apologetic texts show the hostilities were `typical` and permeating the Roman Empire.

v. Form of Suffering

The martyr texts since they are narrative in form identify various aspects of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. The texts identify psychological and physical torture before the eventual execution of the Christians in these hostilities. On the other hand, the apologies also touch on the physical torture and the execution of the Christians. Generally, there is no doubt that the two texts agree in the forms that were applied in the hostilities against the Christians in the Roman Empire. The Christians faced the beast, whips, stones, lions, sword, stakes, fire and in most cases, they were beheaded.⁶⁸¹

Despite these similarities, the martyr texts, as suggested already, include the psychological aspect of the pains of the Christians in the hostilities which are nearly absent in the apologetic texts. The martyrdom of Perpetua and Polycarp shows the emotional struggles of martyrs.⁶⁸²

This is interesting because in the narrative martyr texts, the mental pressure on the coming

⁶⁸¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:2-4, 6:1,11; Martyrdom of Justin and Companions 6 (recension A) 6 (recension B) 5 (recension C); Scillitan Martyrs 14, Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity 6:5-7, 8:1, 21:7-10; Tertullian Apologeticum 4:3-4, 12, 30:7, 40:2, 50; Tertullian, Ad Scapulam 3; Tertullian Ad Nationes I:3, 6.

⁶⁸² Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity 6:3-6, 9:2.

martyrs feature prominently, whereas there is no such focus in the protocol martyr texts, nor in the apologetic texts. Although Tertullian affirms this psychological torture as part of the persecution, he does not give any example to that effect, nor does he linger on the issue.⁶⁸³ Therefore, though the texts agree in the forms applied in the hostilities against the Christians, the nature of the text influences the aspects to be included.

Therefore, the comparative elements under Account of the martyr and apologetic texts bring to light the nature of the hostilities against the Christians as presented in the two kinds of texts. The addressees or the predominant people who are expected to read the texts influence the writing. Firstly, the martyr-texts offer little apology and nothing in terms of explaining features of Christianity well-known by insiders, but potentially un-known by outsider – both these aspects feature in the apologetic texts. Secondly, the narrative martyr texts are narrative and the protocols focus on dialogue while the apologetic texts have very little narrative content. The two classes of text portray the martyrs in positive light by making them heroic and worthy of emulation. The persecutors are also identified to include the public and the authorities, making the hostilities comprehensive. In all, most of the comparative elements agree in most cases but with very little nuances in few places. This supports the conclusion that the apologetic texts and the martyr texts were indeed responses which often reflected the same context of persecution although written with different audiences in mind and thus reflecting and projecting an image of persecution from two different angles.

4.2.2 Accusation

The persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire were not arbitrary or mob action but according to the two classes of texts, they are situated in a legal framework. The comparative elements under this category seek to understand the picture of the legal aspects of the hostilities as projected or reflected by and in the two kinds of texts.

⁶⁸³ Tertullian Apologeticum, 1:11.

The elements here therefore compare the legal procedure adopted in the process, the allegations and charges, motives as well as the demand of the authorities to the Christians. These issues gave reasons for the Christians to be treated the way they were by the public and by the authorities.

i. Legal Procedure

This comparative element compares the process adopted by the perpetrators of the actions against the Christians in the Roman Empire as projected and reflected in both the martyr and apologetic texts. It is without a doubt that both texts agree that the process is best described as *cognitio extra ordinem* where the judge has enormous powers.⁶⁸⁴ Urch has argued that based on Cicero's *Orations*, the Romans had two main legal procedures: the accusatorial and the inquisitorial systems.⁶⁸⁵ The accusatorial procedure was done in public, where enough time for defense is allowed and the judgment is based on testimony. Meanwhile, the inquisitorial procedure is where the prosecutor is the judge sitting on the bench, the testimony is in secret, with little time for a defense and the whole procedure is based on questions. This shows that the *cognitio extra ordinem* was a blend of these two processes. Most scholars attribute the *cognitio extra ordinem* to Augustus,⁶⁸⁶ which combines the normal preliminary and trial sessions of the Roman judicial system into one usually under the magistrate.⁶⁸⁷ This early Roman judicial system is where a charge is brought against a person and the magistrate interrogates the defendant.⁶⁸⁸ The plaintiff who brings the charge could be described as the *delator*, where in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed by the

⁶⁸⁴Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 175.

⁶⁸⁵Erwin Urch, "Procedure in the Courts of the Roman Provincial Governors" *The Classical Journal* 25 (1929): 93-94.

⁶⁸⁶William Turpin, Formula, Cognition, and Proceedings extra Ordinem, *Revue Internationale des droits de l'Antiquite* (1990) 501; David Johnston, *Roman Law in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 121; Andrew Borkowski, Paul du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 80.

⁶⁸⁷Borkowski, *Textbook on Roman Law*, 81; Johnston, *Roman Law in Context*, 121-122.

⁶⁸⁸Turpin, "Formula, Cognition and Proceedings," 544-554; Boamah, *Christian Magic*, 55.

texts, the *delator* is most often a private person from the public.⁶⁸⁹ The public as seen already includes even family members of the victims.

In one text, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, Jews are also described as calling for the persecution of Polycarp. Again, in both classes of the martyr and Apologetic texts, it is very clear that the Governors or Prefects play the important roles of questioner and judge in the processes.⁶⁹⁰ The authorities interrogate the Christians on various issues regarding how they became Christians, where they held their meetings, their family backgrounds and sometimes even tries to persuade them to recant in order to escape death. The judges eventually pass judgment when they do not succeed in getting the Christians to recant.

To this extent, the two kinds of texts agree that the Roman authorities tried the Christians in *cognitio extra ordinem* processes. Both kinds of texts thus present the authorities treating being a Christian as a capital offence.

ii. Charge and Allegations

The public who accused the Christians before the magistrates leveled certain allegations against them for onward prosecution by the authorities. According to the two classes of texts, these charges are ethical, social, political and religious as evidenced in chapters three and four of this thesis. The martyr texts emphasize religious and political charges such as atheism, criminality, magic, sorcery and obstinacy. The apologetic texts emphasize the same allegations but stress the social aspects of the allegations too. These allegations were turned into charges when the Christians faced the legal system at their trials. The martyr texts show that the Christians were charged based on the name Christian. The charge of the name Christian, incorporated the religious, ethical, social and political implications. That is to say,

⁶⁸⁹ Urch, "Procedure in the Courts," 96.

⁶⁹⁰ Martyrdom of Polycarp 3:1; 4:1; Martyrdom of Justin and Companions 1-2 (recension A) 1-2 (recension B) 1-2 (recension C); Scillitan Martyrs 1-2, 15, Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity 6:3; Justin First Apology, 55; Tertullian Apologeticum 28, Tertullian, Ad Scapulam 2:2; Tertullian Ad Nationes I:11; Tatian, Ad Graecos 13:3

being Christian meant that the accused person is an atheist, cannibal, magician, obstinate and many other abominations against the Roman system.⁶⁹¹ Tertullian therefore says “No name of a crime stands against us, but only the crime of a name.”⁶⁹² The Apologists equally identify the charge of the name, treason, incest, cannibals, evil and others as identified in the martyr texts. These charges are therefore equally social, political, religious and ethical.

It is interesting that besides everything, both classes of texts stress the religious and political aspects of the allegations. This agreement is imperative to show that the two texts are influenced by the social system and they give credence to each other. What is also worthy of note is the mutual dependence of these allegations, which is to say, the religious charges have political, religious and social consequences.⁶⁹³ The Christians are accused of being atheists. Viewed from a modern perspective the persecutors are religiously motivated and fear that the Christian refusal to worship the deities will anger the gods and bring disasters. However, the wellbeing of the family, society, the city and the empire also depends on the good-will of the gods, and the Christians are also called upon to sacrifice for the well-being of the *genius* of the emperor, so the issue is also deeply political and social, the question of the Christians’ allegiance to the empire and their place in the structure of ancient families and society is brought into question. Not just that but it also implies they do not worship the gods of the Romans, which can anger the gods and may end the empire in some natural disaster against the society, therefore there are social implications in these issues. To this end, the agreement between the martyr and apologetic texts on the allegations against the Christians are comprehensive and widespread, which gives reasons for their persecution and martyrdom.

The charges just as the allegations were also connected with the charge of the name which carries many connotations against the Roman sensibilities. Despite the agreements, there is a

⁶⁹¹ Walsh, “On Atheism,” 257.

⁶⁹² Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, I. 3.

⁶⁹³ Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, 1-24.

little twist between the martyr and the apologetic texts in relation to the charges. The martyrs do not seem very much interested with the social aspect of the charges. This does not seem to suggest this aspect of the charges is absent but rather the stress which the apologist gives to them does not get the same prominence in the martyr texts. The apologetic texts give attention to these social reasons why the people and authorities wanted the Christians to be martyred, but the martyr texts do not necessarily say much to that effect. This can be explained with reference to the intended audiences of the texts. To this end, the martyr texts put the highlight on religious charges while the apologies also draw more attention to the religious, political and social charges. Therefore, despite the fact that the texts agree on the charges against the Christians in their persecution and martyrdom in the Roman Empire, the stress is influenced by the intended recipients of the texts.

iii. Motives

It is expedient to compare the motivation of the persecutors as described by the authors of the martyr and apologetic texts. In both classes of texts, there is a clear agreement that the persecutors were influenced by the need to keep the peace of the society and maintain a cordial relationship with the gods. Christopher Haas argues strongly that the motivation of the persecutors in the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians was largely religious.⁶⁹⁴ The Romans have the responsibility to keep and protect the peace of the empire. The Romans, did not distinguish the social, political, economic and religious consciousness of the Empire.⁶⁹⁵ To a large extent therefore, the Roman worldview is controlled by their religion. They therefore try to establish peace with the gods which they describe as *pax deorum*.⁶⁹⁶ The peace between the people and the gods was crucial for the success and the progress of the

⁶⁹⁴ Christopher J. Haas, "Imperial religious policy and Valerian's persecution of the Church, AD 257–260," *Church History* 52 (1983): 133-144; Walsh, "On Christian Atheism," 256.

⁶⁹⁵ Beard, North and Price *Religions of Rome*, 43-54.

⁶⁹⁶ Haas. "Imperial Religious Policy," 139-140.

society. This peace when in place is referred to as *pax romana* since it is believed to keep the society free from natural disasters and plagues which disturb the empire.⁶⁹⁷

Therefore, the persecutors saw the Christians as destroying the *pax deorum* by not offering the sacrifice to the gods. This motive is very clear in the strong charge of atheism which is ubiquitous in all the texts.⁶⁹⁸ In the martyrdom of Polycarp, the public accused him as being the destroyer of the gods⁶⁹⁹ and Tertullian's famous statement in the *Ad Nationes* which suggests that the Christians are blamed for any social disorder gives credence to the fact that the perceived Christian threat to the *pax deorum* was the main motivation⁷⁰⁰ for these persecutions. The persecutors sought to make sure that the gods were not angry, and believed that if they could compel the Christians to sacrifice then the anger of the gods would be amended and an impending calamity averted.

iv. Demand

The Roman system was largely based on the accuser because he/she is the victim;⁷⁰¹ therefore, judgments are given in a way to appease the victim. In the trial of the Christians, although the public are often the accusers or plaintiffs, they represent the gods who are the victims. Therefore, in these trials the authorities try to appease the gods by asking or demanding from the Christians to sacrifice before they are sentenced. The Christians according to both the martyr and apologetic texts were given the opportunity to sacrifice to the Roman gods and/or the *genius* of the emperor.⁷⁰² This demand to a large extent is attributed to Pliny, who first applied this method in Bithynia and his procedure was endorsed

⁶⁹⁷ Lynch, *Early Christianity*, 81.

⁶⁹⁸ Tertullian *Ad Scapulam*, 3; Tatian *Ad Graecos* 3:2.

⁶⁹⁹ *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12:2.

⁷⁰⁰ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* I.4.

⁷⁰¹ Urch, "Proceedings in the courts," 96.

⁷⁰² *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 4:1, 8:2, 9:2-3; *Martyrdom of Justin and Companions* 5:6 (recension A) 5:8 (recension B) 5:2 (recension C); *Scillitan Martyrs* 5, *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* 6:2-3; *Justin First Apology*, 55; *Tertullian Apologeticum* 28, Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 2:2; Tertullian *Ad Nationes* I:11; Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 13:3.

by the Emperor Trajan. This is an important demand because the Christians are monotheist and will therefore see this action of sacrifice as worship of other gods, which is against the first two commandments (Exodus 20).

In both types of texts, the Christians are offered the opportunity to recant their faith and prove themselves innocent of the charges by offering this sacrifice. In most cases, the martyr and apologetic texts show that the Christians are unwilling to be doing this. They are described as standing by their faith without wavering, they are in turn perceived as obstinate by the non-Christians.⁷⁰³ Therefore, the texts, without any differences, corroborate each other's account in that the authorities employed a test to confirm that the accused Christian would recant and that this test included a demanded of sacrifice, which would also appease the gods. In both kinds of texts, the Christian martyrs (ideally) refused.

To this end therefore, the legal framework, adopted against the Christians was very engaging. The process was largely *cognitio extra ordinem* where the authorities played significant roles of the enquirer and the judge. The allegations and charges were comprehensive and can be classified as social, ethical, political and religious in nature but the stress on a particular category of addressees by the authors of the various texts are as a result of the intended addressees, whom the authors desired should read the text more. In the attempt to make amends with the gods, both texts agree conclusively that the Christians were offered the opportunity to sacrifice to the Roman gods and/or the *genius* of the emperor but they declined. Generally, in this category of comparative elements the texts agree very strongly.

⁷⁰³Boamah, *Christian Magic*, 16, 107-114.

4.2.3 Argumentation

The authors of the martyr-texts and the apologetic texts had different aims and different audiences in mind when writing their texts and presenting their images of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the second and third centuries of the Roman Empire. An analysis of the arguments they used, what they based their arguments on, the level and direction of polemic employed will likely help us appreciate the aims of the authors and who they intended to influence with their texts. This section of the comparative elements looks into the means by which the authors sent their views across to their audiences. Therefore, the possible presence of polemic attacks is compared in the martyr and apologetic texts. Again, the argumentative strategy, sources and themes in the texts are compared to each other to bring out their similarities and differences.

i. Polemic

Polemics may be an argumentative attack on an opponent's beliefs and practices with the aim of weakening the opponent's standing and credibility.⁷⁰⁴ The authors of the apologetic texts and of the martyr texts to various degrees launched counter-polemics against their opponents. The authors of these texts presented Christians as victims of injustice. The martyr texts are full of polemics against the authorities and the people. The authors of the martyr texts describe the authorities as tyrants, impious, vicious, jealous, as devils, wicked, idolatrous, and they describe the public as crude, inhumane torturers and lawless among other attacks.⁷⁰⁵ The apologists equally attack the Roman gods, system, authorities and the people.⁷⁰⁶ These attacks make it clear that the Christians did not take the hostilities for granted but they tried to register their displeasure in what was happening to them.

⁷⁰⁴Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 62-63.

⁷⁰⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 2:3, 3:1, 6:1, 9:2, 11:2, 17:1; Martyrdom of Justin and Companions 1 (recension A) 1 (recension B) 1 (recension C); Martyrdom of Perpetua and Companions 3:3, 20:1-2, 8.

⁷⁰⁶ Justin First Apology, 49, 63, 68; Second Apology 5, 21:15, 27; Tertullian Apologeticum 5:4, 27, 41, 50.12; Tertullian, Ad Scapulam 2-4; Tertullian Ad Nationes I:1, 14, Tatian, Ad Graecos 9:4.

It is noteworthy of emphasis, that although there are polemics in both classes of texts, the stress in each case is different as analyzed in chapters three and four. The martyr texts focus their polemics against the authorities but do not directly attack the Roman gods or system. As an important nuanced difference, the attacks in the apologies can be arranged hierarchically as first against the Roman gods, secondly against the public and only thirdly against the authorities. This difference is interesting and can best be explained as directly related to the aim or the purpose of the texts in close relation to the differences in intended audiences. It is logical to understand that since the martyr texts are addressed to fellow Christians, the authors attack the authorities more because they ordered the execution of the martyrs, and the public because they brought the allegations.

However, they did not have to attack polemically the punitive system or the gods. They are not aiming at convincing the authorities or the non-Christian public that the Christians are being unjustly sentenced (Christian readers will agree on this). Nor is there a need to attack the gods, since there is no need to convince Christian readers that the Christians are not being atheists when they refuse to worship the idols that are not real gods. Although the apologists believe they are writing a systematic defense of the charges against the Christians, to a non-Christian⁷⁰⁷ community or to the authorities with the aim of stopping the hostilities.

Through these polemic, the apologists try to convince the authorities and the public that the cases against them are illogical, unjust and counter-productive (there would be little reason to convince Christian readers of this), and that the gods are not real gods, and hence the Christians are not atheist nor causing divine wrath and retribution when they refuse to worship such pitiful, deceiving and powerless idols. Although the apologetic texts do polemically attack the authorities, they do so in a restrained manner. The apologies direct the attacks predominantly against the Roman system and the gods. The restraint may serve the

⁷⁰⁷Jacobsen, "Main Topics," 106-108; Lieu, "The Audience of Apologetics," 205.

purpose of not unnecessarily alienating the addressees. Therefore, although both texts have polemic contents, they attack differently.

ii. Strategy

The comparative element in this section of the comparison between the martyr and apologetic texts looks into the strategy adopted by the authors to convey their thoughts to the audience. Kahlos argues that “the Christian apologetic and polemic was a daughter of ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric in its adaptation of argument device and rhetoric figures.”⁷⁰⁸ This implies that the argumentative strategies in these Christian texts are influenced by the Greco-Roman setting. This aspect of the comparative element presents a major difference between the martyr and apologetic texts and internally in the corpus of martyr texts and between the two kinds of martyr texts. Since the narrative martyr texts are predominantly narrative in nature, they use story telling as the main strategy to convey their thoughts of the plight of the Christians in their persecution and martyrdom. The protocol martyr texts analyzed are totally dominated by dialogue with remarkably short statements, questions and answers exchanged between magistrate and martyrs. In contrast, the apologies make use of several approaches,⁷⁰⁹ predominantly philosophical, rhetorical and religious strategies in their attempt to defend the Christians of the charges that were leveled against them. The authors of these texts, therefore try to argue from what is typically called the ‘known to the unknown’, where they try to show where the authors and audience share a mutual agreement.⁷¹⁰

iii. Sources

It can be argued that the basis of an argument determines the direction of the argument. Therefore, it is crucial to compare the sources used by the authors in these texts. It is evident from reading of the martyr texts that they use Christian materials. The authors of the martyr

⁷⁰⁸Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 66.

⁷⁰⁹Jacobsen, “Main Topics,” 102-106.

⁷¹⁰Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 67.

texts predominantly appeal to scriptural sources and imageries. Since the martyr texts are written mostly to a Christian audience, sources that are familiar to Christians are used.⁷¹¹ Yet the apologies are comparatively less dependent on Christian sources. The apologetic texts blend both Christian and non-Christian sources. The use of non-Christian sources is more intensive than the use of Christian sources.⁷¹² Indeed, the apologies to the authorities mostly employ non-Christian sources with Justin in his *First Apology*, for example, reproducing Hadrian's receipt as basis of his apology.⁷¹³ It shows that owing to the audience of the texts, the authors of the martyr and apologetic texts chose and employed sources, which their readers will be familiar with, sources that are able to appeal to these readers, thus advancing their arguments and influencing the readers.

Therefore, the authors of the martyr and apologetic texts differ here in terms of the sources they use for their texts. While the martyr texts depend on Christian sources, especially scriptures, the apologies depend on both Christian and non-Christian sources but in most cases cite non-Christian sources. This difference between the texts is without doubt a case of influence by the audience.

iv. Themes

The two classes of texts to a large extent try to develop Christian ideologies and identities. They differ on the themes that they build through the texts from one text to the other. These themes are largely influenced by the authors of the individual texts and the subjects that they are addressing to the audience. The apologetic texts especially explain some of the Christian beliefs and practices in their writings targeted at non-Christians. They touch on issues like the Christian baptism,⁷¹⁴ services on Sunday,⁷¹⁵ why they worship on Sunday,⁷¹⁶ Christian

⁷¹¹Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, notes on the accounts.

⁷¹²Jacobsen, "Main Topics" 102-106.

⁷¹³Justin First Apology, conclusion.

⁷¹⁴Justin First Apology, 61.

spread,⁷¹⁷ conversion,⁷¹⁸ ethics,⁷¹⁹ prayer topics,⁷²⁰ Eucharist⁷²¹ among many other Christian ideologies, rituals and habits explained in these texts. A unique theme that is distinctively found in the narrative martyr texts alone relate to visions⁷²² by the martyrs.

Conclusively, comparison between the martyr and apologetic texts in relation to their argumentative forms, it is clear that they both contain polemic materials although the martyr texts attack only the authorities and the public, the apologists attack the gods and the Roman system more apart from the public and the authorities. Furthermore, they do not agree on the argumentative strategy, where the narrative martyr texts use storytelling, the apologists adopt philosophical, rhetorical and religious strategies. Moreover, the different texts use different sources while the apologists use both Christian and non-Christian sources, the martyr texts depend only on the Christian sources. However, they agree in terms of the central theme of building the Christian ideology and identity in the martyr and apologetic texts. In all major questions relating to the character of the persecutions, the identity of persecutors and victims, the motives of the persecutors, the charges and allegations, the different kinds of texts corroborate and affirm each other.

In cases of difference, these are of a kind that add nuance rather than contradict and the nuances reflect the literary character of the different texts and their different audiences. Therefore, the texts can be used as complementary of each other in future studies of the hostilities against the Christians.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid,67.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid, 67.

⁷¹⁷ Tertullian Apologeticum 37:4; Ad Nationes I.1; Tatian Ad Graecos 29.

⁷¹⁸ Tertullian Ad Scapulam 3-4.

⁷¹⁹ Tertullian, Apologeticum, 39, Ad Scapulam 2-4, Ad Nationes I1.

⁷²⁰ Tertullian Apologeticum, 30.4.

⁷²¹ Justin First Apology 65.

⁷²² Martyrdom of Polycarp 5:2; Martyrdom of Perpetua 4:3-10, 7:3-9, 8, 10, 11-13.

4.3 Similarities between Apologetic and Martyr Texts

The comparison between the martyr and apologetic texts in relation to the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire from the second century reveal many similarities. The analysis here is in reference to the fusion of the harmony of the texts done in chapters two and three.

4.3.1 Similarities

In the first place, the two classes of the texts agree that the martyrs are courageous, heroic and worthy as examples not just for the Christians but also for the Roman public and the authorities. The authors of the apologetic texts present the martyrs in glorious terms even in the apologies to the authorities. These positive depictions of the martyrs are intended to solicit the sympathy of the audience because even when they are unjustly sentenced, the martyrs give thanks. The glorious characterization of the martyrs by the Christian authors in the martyr and apologetic texts emphasize the texts as evangelistic tools.

The two classes of texts again agree on the identity of the persecutors as being the public and the authorities. Both the martyr texts and the apologetic texts identify on the narrative level the significant roles of the public as those who bring the allegations. The category of the public may include the pagans, Jews and even family members of the Christian martyrs. The texts further point out that there were different authorities involved. It is clear from the two classes of texts (martyr-texts and apologetic texts) that the leaders of the empire and the provinces played significant roles in perpetuating these hostilities against the Christians. Some of these authorities included the Emperors, Governors and Prefects. The second category of the authorities which include some institutions and infrastructure of the empire and the local authorities were equally committed to the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. This category may include the local police-like forces, soldiers, amphitheaters, tribunals, arenas, forums, dungeons among many other facilities of the empire.

The argument here is that these facilities could not have been committed to the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians without the permission of the authorities. The martyr texts and the apologetic texts equally paint the picture of a spectrum of authorities involved in the persecutions, which can therefore be labeled permeating and comprehensive.

Additionally, with regard to the legal procedure used against the Christians, the two classes of the martyr and apologetic texts agree strongly. The Christians were processed in trials where the *cognitio extra ordinem* procedure is employed. In this system, some private person brings the accusation acting as *delator* while the magistrate or the governor acts as the interrogator and judge at the same time.

Furthermore, the two classes of texts agree to the degree that the martyrs were given an opportunity to save their lives by sacrificing to the Roman gods. The opportunity to sacrifice to the Roman gods or to the *genius* of the emperor was offered to the martyrs but they refused. The Christians refused to recant because it would be tantamount to idolatry from a Christian perspective since it is against the first two commands of the Decalogue. The agreement of the texts in relation to this proof is significant because this formula is largely traced to Pliny, since he applied this from Bithynia. The fact that the authors of the martyr and apologetic texts agree on this formula show the relationship between them.

In the same light, the texts agree mostly on the terms of the form of the persecution and martyrdom. Both the martyr and apologetic texts identify physical torture of various kinds and add that the martyrs are eventually executed, although the narrative martyr texts being mostly narrative in nature included some psychological pressure in what they describe. There is no shred of doubt with regard to the form of the persecution of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The agreement in the martyr and apologetic texts here show the level of suffering of the Christians in these hostilities. They suffered at the hands of metallic

instrument such as sword and racks, by animals such as lions, beasts, a heifer and a bear; they faced fire and beheading, all because they were Christians. Both types of texts agree that the Christian martyrs faced physical torture and executions.

What is more, the martyr texts and the apologetic texts agree with regard to what motivated the persecutors in the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. The texts are in harmony that the persecutors were largely influenced by the need to maintain the peace of the empire, thus the *pax romana*. This peace is to the Romans guaranteed when the relationship with the gods are intact, thus the *pax deorum*. The non-Christians were pushed by the responsibility towards a fervent relationship between the people and the gods. The Romans, to a large extent hold a worldview of religious influence in almost every occurrence in society. It was a highly religious society, which believed that religion controlled the political, economic and social life, therefore a destabilization of the religious sphere would mean a destabilization of the society. To this end, since the Christians refrained from offering sacrifice to the gods, they were believed to anger the gods and it was further believed that such anger would bring about natural disasters, famine, pestilence, invasions or civil war. The perpetrators therefore sought to appease the gods by persecuting the Christians. The perceived need to preserve or restore the *pax deorum* in the face of a perceived Christian threat to this relationship with the gods was thus motivating the persecutions as evident in the martyr texts and the apologetic texts.

Finally, the two texts predominantly try to develop Christian ideologies. The central themes of the martyr texts and the apologetic texts are issues connected to the Christian identity. The texts deal with some misconceptions the persecutors had against the Christians, misconceptions that motivated hostilities. The authors of the apologetic texts deal with Christian beliefs and practices such as the Eucharist, baptism, Sunday services, conversion

and ethics. They describe these beliefs and practices in ways that downplay the allegations of outsiders and in ways that present Christianity as attractive.

4.3.2 Nuances

Despite these close knit similarities between the martyr texts and the apologetic texts, in some few instances there are nuances. These cannot be described as differences but similarities with different emphasis. Although they agree with regard to these issues, the different texts put some form of emphasis on one part which the others touch on sparingly.

In the first place, in terms of the allegations leveled against the Christians by the public, the two texts agree but with little divergence. Although the allegations in both texts can be categorized into religious, political, social and ethical categories, the martyr texts do not emphasize the social allegations, while the apologists do.

Secondly, the charges in both texts are classified into religious, social, ethical and political. Among the categories of charges identified in the martyr and apologetic texts; the martyr texts especially stress the religious and ethical charges but are relatively silent when it comes to the social and even political charges. Meanwhile the apologists confront all the charges with a little more stress on the political instead. This seeming twist can be described as a result of the addressees of the texts. Since the martyr texts are predominantly written with a Christian audience in mind, the religious factor must be stressed. On the other hand, since the apologies have non-Christians audience in mind, the other holistic aspects are stressed in order to convert and stop the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

Thirdly, with respect to the presence of polemics in the texts, both of them attack the public and the authorities. However, the strength and number of attacks in the martyr texts are highly stressed. Thus, many of the counter attacks in the texts are directly aimed at the authorities. On the other hand, the apologists attack the Roman gods and the customs or

worldview of the Romans. After the Roman gods, most of the attacks are directed towards the public and then the authorities. This slight shift between the texts can best be explained as a result of the intended recipient. This is because it is logical to be less aggressive to a reader of a text especially when the text is in anticipation of something. What it implies is that since the authors of the martyr texts had their fellow Christians in mind, it was right to attack the authorities. Yet the apologists are less blunt in their attacks on the authorities because the aim was for the authorities to be converted and to stop the hostilities – this restraint is most pronounced in the apologies addressed to the authorities. Here the authors prefer to attack the gods or the customs and the public. The little shift in the direction of the strength of polemics in the martyr and apologetic texts is thus influenced by the intended audiences of the texts.

The martyr texts and the apologetic texts paint a coherent and consistent picture of the plight of the Christians in the Roman Empire in the early years. The comparative elements used in this study have shown that the similarities, apart from corroborating the stories, also have little twists that supplement the accounts in one way or another. The comparative elements shown in these similarities make it clear that to have a comprehensive understanding of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians, the martyr and apologetic texts should be used in comparison. When these sources are combined, a comprehensive and conclusive picture of the persecution and martyrdom can be drawn in future studies.

4.3.3 Differences

The account of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed in the martyr and apologetic texts, when compared bring to light a few differences which however cannot be described as contradictory but supplementary.

Firstly, while the narrative the martyr texts are exactly narrative, those written in the protocol form focus on dialogue between magistrate and martyrs. The narrative martyr texts present

the story of the martyrs following a structure of pre-trial, trial and post-trial, while the texts of the protocol form focus almost exclusively on the trial. The apologies to the authorities are written in the form of petitions following a well-known pattern and tradition in the Roman Empire for writing such petitions on all kinds of subjects and directing them to the authorities. This slight difference between the texts shows that the intended recipients of the texts influenced the form of the texts and that both the intended recipients and the form influenced the content. While the authors of the martyr texts record stories of the martyrs with Christians in mind, the apologists write a plea to the non-Christians as their primary audience.

Secondly, the strategies in these texts are different. In view of the fact that the narrative martyr texts are mostly narrative in form, the strategy is storytelling. The authors of these texts inform their reader by telling the story of the Christians to the Christian community. However, this is not the case in the apologies. They rather adopt multi-faceted approaches in arguing the Christian case. They used philosophical, rhetorical and religious strategies to convince the authorities and public about Christianity. The methods used by the apologies were well-known and recognized in the Roman Empire and therefore potentially able to convince outside readers. Therefore, there is divergence between these two classes of texts, while the narrative martyr texts largely use storytelling and the protocol texts dialogue as strategies, the apologists use philosophical and rhetorical strategies to convince their readers.

Finally, there is some little divergence although with a little intersection between the martyr texts and the apologetic texts in terms of the sources used by these authors. The authors of the martyr texts basically use Christian sources especially scriptures. They depend a lot on scriptures and Christian authored materials in conveying the Christian stories to the Christians. However, the apologists use both Christian and non-Christian sources. The Christian apologists use Christian sources such as scriptures and a few other Christian

materials but they depend more on non-Christian sources. It was very useful for the apologists to use sources that appeal to the non-Christian Roman public with imperial documents such as the Emperor Hadrian's rescript and Trajan's rescript to Pliny. It was also useful for them to appeal to the history of the Romans and to philosophy. Their rhetoric finally included references to some recent social occurrences such as eclipses and floods. The approaches used by the apologists are not visibly used by the authors of the martyr texts, showing some divergence of the two classes of texts.

To this end, the form of the texts in terms of the narrative and defense forms as well as the argumentations of the texts based on their strategy and sources bring some divergence between the two classes of texts. This implies that although the texts have some similarities, yet there are a few unique aspects which show their originality and boundaries. Irrespective of the fact that these two classes of texts are influenced by the same social circumstance, yet they are influenced by the purpose and addresses of the texts. The various texts talk about the circumstance in different ways. Whereas the writers of the narrative martyr texts use narration and depend on Christian sources to write the story of the martyrs, the apologists write a plea using both Christian and non-Christian sources with multi-faceted approaches. These differences, instead of contradicting each other, they rather supplement one another.

4.4 Submission Status of the Apologetic Texts

The question of the submission status of the apologetic texts to the authorities has engaged the minds of many scholars in the study of the Christian apologetic texts. While some scholars believe the authors intended their texts to be read by their addressees, others maintain that the apologies were not intended for submission. These polarized arguments have been going back and forth, while other scholars do not intend to take sides.

Using the systematic comparative method, this project attempts to bring to rest these arguments. The major objective of this section is to find out if the authors of the text intended their texts to be read by their addressees especially those addressed to the authorities. The premise of this project to address this question is extensively based on the external comparisons of the martyr and apologetic texts. The premise is based on the explicit addresses of the texts, since the martyr texts are addressed to Christian audience while the apologies are addressed to non-Christian audience. Therefore, if both texts are talking about the same phenomena of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians, there may be some similarities and differences in the texts. Hence, if the accounts are nearly very similar, then the apologists likely did not intend their non-Christian addressees to read their texts, but applied such addresses to heighten interest in the texts as the scholars who believe they were not meant to be submitted maintain. On the other hand, if there are substantial agreement on the main picture of how, why and by whom the Christians were persecuted, but with some important differences in how and why this is described and in how the authors argue and present their case; then it would be logical to argue that the authors really had different aims and audiences in mind, that the apologies addressed to outsiders really wanted to reach this outside audience (hence the nuanced differences). It will be equally logical to argue that the two kinds of texts reflect the same context of persecution (hence the major overlap and agreement in the picture the two kinds of texts paint of these persecutions). This premise as adopted in this study is already answered in the external comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts in relation to the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the mid second to the early third centuries of the Roman Empire.

The premise that near total similarity in these texts would suggest a non-submission while overlap with a few nuanced but telling differences would suggest a possible submission, is applied in this section of the study. It is clear from the discussions above that the apologies

were intended to be submitted to the non-Christian audience especially those to the authorities. The apologies were intended to be read by the addressees, particularly those addressed to the authorities, and they are analyzed in four elements: form of the texts, accusations, sources of the texts and the polemic contents of the texts. The comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts in view of these elements clearly suggests that the apologetic texts were meant to receive the attention of their addressees particularly the authorities in order to stop the hostilities against the Christians and to convert the addressees.

First and foremost, based on the form and explicit addressees of the texts being different yet influenced by the same time and context, it suggests that the apologists wanted outsiders to read their texts. Comparing the apologetic texts with the martyr texts it is clear that the authors were members of the same communities and witnessed the same kinds of persecutions, but they chose different forms and addressees of their texts. The narrative forms appealed to the Christians and their needs because the authors wanted to encourage and have a record of the Christian history. These purposes are very much attained by using stories to show the agonies of the martyrs to encourage the other Christians and to know why there is need to celebrate such heroic character of the faith.

However, to convert and stop the persecutions, the non-Christians are not likely to be influenced much by stories but rather a method appealing to their sensibilities in their own ways. The apologies are aimed at influencing outsiders. The authors know Roman society and culture and argue philosophically, rhetorically and legally especially to those in authority. These forms, are typical examples of the saying ‘when you go to Rome, do as the Romans do.’ Therefore, the apologists who wanted their texts to be read by their addressees adopted means that are familiar and highly appealing to the non-Christians different from the forms used by the authors of the martyr texts. The apologists that addressed their texts to emperors or magistrates therefore did submit these apologies and intended them to be read.

Secondly, based on the twists in the accusations, thus the allegations and charges, there is every reason to suggest that the apologists hoped that their texts were going to be read by their addressees. The martyr texts stress the religious accusations while the apologies are rather systematic in stressing both religious and political accusation which have ethical as well as sociological consequences. The stress shows the interest of the authors and their intention regarding readership. Since the martyr texts are targeted towards Christian readers, the religious aspects of the charges are of utmost importance and indeed, the Christians are primarily killed for being Christians. Therefore, the aim is to encourage them to religiously keep the Christian faith. However, the apologists wrote to the authorities and public who are more interested apart from the religious situation, also in the political, social and ethical fabric of the society. The apologists therefore meet the demand of the addressees by clearing the Christians of the political, social and ethical accusations apart from the religious accusations which the narratives also deal with. This differentiation between the martyr texts and the apologetic texts in terms of the accusations show that the apologists were influenced by the thoughts of the non-Christians. The comprehensive nature of the accusations on the apologetic materials could not have only been to generate interest in the texts but that their addressees will read them and be influenced.

Thirdly, the apologies can be argued to be intended for submission based on the sources used in the two classes of texts. Owing to the variety of purposes and factors which pushed for the writing of these texts, multiple and various sources are employed by the authors of these texts. The martyr texts rely deeply on Christian sources especially scripture, which are well known to the Christians as sources of their ideology. It would certainly be interesting if the apologies also used more scriptural materials in their texts. In this case, it would be outright evident that the apologists did not intend their texts to be read by the addressees because those scriptures are not as relevant to the non-Christians as to the Christians. However,

although being Christians, the Christian apologists certainly made some scriptural references but these were not dominant compared to their usage in the martyr texts. The apologetic texts rather depended more on texts that appealed to the non-Christians such as Imperial documents such as Emperor Hadrian's rescript, Tertullian's reference to Pliny and Trajan, and they made use of philosophical and Roman historical materials. All this was intended to make an impact on the addressees. This difference between the martyr texts and the apologetic texts can best be explained, if we take seriously that the authors of the martyr texts had Christian readers in mind, whereas the apologists aimed at non-Christian readers.

Last but not least, of the elements in the external comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts which show that the apologies were hopeful to be read by the addressees is based on the polemic content of the texts. Although Evans suggests strongly that the texts intended to be read by non-Christians employ more polemics compared to those to be read by Christians,⁷²³ it is rather more logical in this class of texts to argue that if the authors intend the readers to appreciate the text, the authors will less attack the reader. This is influenced by the aim of the text. Since the apologists wish that the hostilities are halted, when they write to those who can stop it (the authorities), the text must appeal to their conscience rather than being aggressive towards them. In comparing the level of apologies in the martyr and apologetic texts, it is clear that the martyr texts heavily attack the authorities of the empire. Meanwhile the apologies attack the gods and the Roman system, especially their customs and worldview before attacking the public after which they attack the authorities who have the capacity to stop the persecutions. It is the intention of the apologies to have their audience read them and that is why the apologists do not attack the authorities more in their texts but since the authorities may not read the martyr texts, the polemic attacks against the authorities abound.

⁷²³ R. F. Evans "On the Problem of Church and Empire in Tertullian's Apologeticum" in Elizabeth A. Livingstone ed., *Studia Patristica* Papers Presented to the 6th International Conference on Patristic Studies at Oxford 1971, Part 3 (Berlin, 1976), 14: 21-36.

In view of the form of the texts, accusations, source and the polemic aspects of the martyr and apologetic texts, it is evident that the addressees were expected to read these texts. The authors of the apologetic texts consciously employ elements that are appealing and attractive to the non-Christians. It suggests strongly that the apologists really looked forward to reaching the non-Christians, principally the authorities, with these texts. They made use of the standard practice of the time by writing such texts not just addressed to the non-Christians. In view of the foregoing analysis, this thesis finds that the authors did not apply the addresses to these texts to create significance for the texts but consciously adopted elements that are more Roman than Christian in the content to meet the standard of the audience they addressed.

4.5 Conclusion

The martyr and apologetic texts certainly represent different reactions and reflections to the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Although they have strong appeal to different audiences, the martyr-texts mostly aimed at Christians and the apologies most clearly aimed at non-Christians, there is overlap, and likely also from the authors' perspective and intended overlap. This implies that the authors of the martyr texts appeal more to the Christian community though the non-Christians are not excluded from the readership of the texts. Though the apologies appeal most directly to the non-Christians, they still have the Christian readers in mind. Many Christians were recent converts who needed to be affirmed in their commitment to Christianity. Further some (intended) readers might have been converts at various stages in their conversion processes.

Finally, the authors may have intended Christian readers to use the arguments provided in the apologetic texts in debates with outsiders. Thus there are also overlapping purposes between martyr texts and apologetic texts: to encourage the Christians, establish their identity and

history while equipping them to debate with outsiders using the texts, their arguments or their stories as evangelistic tools to convert the non-Christians and stop the hostilities against the Christians. Many scholars over the years have mostly depended on the martyr texts to explore the persecution of the Christians. However, this project has shown the usefulness of the apologetic texts in understanding the plight of the early Christians in the second and third centuries of the Roman Empire. The two classes of texts corroborate and supplement each other on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

This conclusion affirms Judith Lieu's thesis that since the martyr and apologetic texts are influenced by the same social setting, they are very similar in many respects and seldom contradict each other.⁷²⁴ The external comparisons of the texts which are derived from the internal comparison show that the texts are very similar in most ways but with little differentiations when compared to each other. The twists and differences in the texts do not contradict each other but rather emphasize the blinded or blurred sides of each other thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the hostilities when used together.

This systematic comparison has also helped to address the submission status of the apologetic texts particularly those addressed to the authorities. The submission status of the texts is tackled using the few twists and differences between the texts, as clear evidence of the intention of the authors intended to have their texts read by their addressees in order to stop the hostilities and, even more importantly, convert them to Christianity. In all, the martyr and apologetic texts are both useful for a comprehensive picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire during the late-second to the mid-third centuries.

⁷²⁴ Lieu, "Audience of Apologetics," 208-223.

CHAPTER FIVE

LESSONS FROM MARTYR AND APOLOGETIC TEXTS FOR CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAI CHRISTIANITY

5.0 Introduction

The phenomena of persecution and martyrdom of the Christians is not only an event of history but also a contemporary reality. Many Christians over the world, including Africans, still face persecution and martyrdom in various forms. Langdon Gilkey asserts that “suffering represents a universally shared experience, but still one always received, experienced and understood it in a particular way.”⁷²⁵ Thomas Oden argues that the persecution and martyrdom of African Christians point to a continuity of `the communion of saints` where in the third century these hostilities were perpetuated by the Romans, in the seventh century by the Arabs, in the nineteenth century by colonial powers and today by Jihadist groups.⁷²⁶

Although the modern trends of persecution and martyrdom are quite different from what happened to the early Christians from the second and third centuries in Rome, the underlining motivation and sufferings of the Christians remain the same, irrespective of the time and place. The motivation of the Romans against the Christians was predominantly to protect the social, political and religious world-view of the time and place. Today, many Christians face forms of hostilities aimed at checking them to uphold the general socio-cultural dynamics of the setting within which they find themselves.

This chapter focuses on some Ghanaian examples, to show the relevance of the subject of the persecution and martyrdom among Christians today. Africa due to the global shift in Christian movement to the global south, has become one of the major homes of

⁷²⁵ Langdon Gilkey “The Christian Understanding of Suffering” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*5, (1985): 50.

⁷²⁶Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*. 117.

Christianity.⁷²⁷ Since the subjects of the persecution and martyrdom are an all engaging phenomena in Christian history, it is overly significant to trace its elements to a place where Christianity in the world today gains its strength. In doing this, this paper seeks to demonstrate the level of continuity of the Christian history spanning the second century to the modern era (Rome to Africa-Ghana). This chapter, therefore, discusses examples of persecution and martyrdom in Ghana from the missionary era, which included both the European and African missionaries. Furthermore, the chapter builds bridges from the Roman second-third centuries to the modern Ghanaian context by drawing lessons from the martyr and apologetic texts. The lessons are intended to help the Ghanaian Christian in dealing with hostiles of the contemporary times.

5.1 Persecution and Martyrdoms during the Missionary Era

The history of the church in Africa is traced from biblical times especially the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.⁷²⁸ In the first instance, when Jesus was born and needed somewhere to escape to for safety from the cruelty of Herod the Great, the spirit of God directed his earthly parents to an African country, Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15). Additionally, on the day of Pentecost which marked the birth of the church, among the people gathered included Egyptians and Libyans who were Africans there but could hear the disciples speak in their native languages (Acts 2:10). What is more, the Apostle Philip was led by the Spirit to leave the large congregation he was ministering to in order to minister to a lonely African from Ethiopia, an eunuch on the desert (Acts 8:26-40). This eunuch is identified as Judich,⁷²⁹ and

⁷²⁷ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History, Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 79-110; Andrew Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 117-119; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*(Akropong-Akuapem: Regnum Africa 2013), 3-7.

⁷²⁸ Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 1-4.

⁷²⁹ Sanneh *West African Christianity* 3.

was believed to have come from Meroe serving Queen Candace.⁷³⁰ By Judich's efforts, there grew a flourishing Christian kingdom in the upper Nile valley for centuries. Historically, it is suggested that John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark visited Egypt while Apostle Thomas transited through Egypt to India where he was martyred.⁷³¹ These and many other examples from the Bible and other Christian sources show that the gospel of Christ is not alien to Africans.

Christianity in the Western part of Africa was largely introduced by Catholic Portuguese Christians on their economic exploration under the leadership of Don Diego D'Azambuja who landed at Elmina, a place in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana) on 19th January 1482.⁷³² These first Portuguese explorers on landing ashore got a piece of land from the king of Elmina, Nana Kwamena Ansah whose name they recorded as Caramansa. They celebrated the first mass and later erected the image of St. Anthony, which was later corrupted by the indigenes as a god by name Nana Antona. This first missionary effort did not yield many converts and is sometimes described as a flop especially because the Portuguese were more interested in economic activities than missionary efforts. Sanneh describes this period as the incubation period.⁷³³ The second wave of the missionary effort can be described as the period of the chaplaincy. This was the period of colonization when European explorers who came to Africa had chaplains on board to take care of the spiritual needs of the Europeans. These chaplains sometimes extended their duties to the local people especially 'mulato' children. This period was also bedevilled by some setbacks such as finance, behaviours of the merchants, health, conflicts and language challenges. The third stage of the European missionary enterprise which was rather systematic and comprehensive can be described as the

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Sanneh *West African Christianity* 4.

⁷³² Debrunner, *A History of Christianity*, 16-19; Witgen, *Gold Coast Mission History*, 1-8; Sanneh *West African Christianity* 22; Caseley B. Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian. A History of the Methodist Church Ghana, 1961-2000* (Trenton: African World Press, Inc. 2010), 2.

⁷³³ Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 20.

period of the missionary groups. During this period, many of the religious organisations in Europe and America began to send to Africa, missionary teams to evangelize the people and to plant their denominational congregations in Africa. There were groups like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), Augustinian Priest, Caucasian Priest, Dominicans, Wesleyan Missionary Society, Basel Mission Society, Breman Mission and many other missionary groups.⁷³⁴

This phase of the missionary enterprise used education, translation, health, economic empowerment and other strategies to plant churches in Africa. One of the most important strategies of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was advocated by CMS secretary Henry Venn known as the three 'self's'.⁷³⁵ He advocated that Africans themselves should lead the African churches (self-governing), again, the African should lead the evangelisation process (self-propagation) and the African must be made to generate funds to run the African church (self-financing). This and many other strategies adopted by these missionary groups engaged the African in the missionary efforts as interpreters, translators, preachers and sometimes even missionaries. The collaboration between the European and African agents was necessary because the Europeans were frequently affected by malaria. Many of the European missionaries died barely six months after arriving, therefore the African agents did most of the evangelical works, while some were sent to Europe to be trained and brought back, and others were trained here in Africa for the local people.

5.1.1 Traditional African response to Christianity

It is very crucial to examine the response of the indigenous African people especially the authorities towards the emergence of Christianity on the African soil. The importance of this investigation is born out of the fact that generally the presence of a new religion in the face of

⁷³⁴ Kofi J. Agbeti, *West African Church History. Christian Mission and Church Foundations: 1482-1919*. (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1986), 11-102; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 26-34.

⁷³⁵ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 28-29.

an established religion is likely to be met with some resistance. The analysis of the martyr and apologetic texts corroborate that the main objective of the hostilities against the Christians was to maintain the peaceful relationship between the people and the gods (*pax deorum*). Although it is said that African Traditional Religion is elastic and accommodative, it resisted the presence and growth of Christianity in Africa as the Romans.

African Traditional worshippers, like the Romans, resisted Christianity during the missionary days because they wanted to preserve the relationship with the gods for the safety of the society. In most cases, the Traditional Priests fuelled such feelings against the missionaries because the presence of the Christians could anger the gods thereby bringing some calamities on the people. For instance, Freeman is deemed to have recorded in his diary that “Since my arrival in Ashanti, the fetish men seem to have taken the alarm a day or two back. The Twissah fetish men said that the town was in danger of being destroyed by fire, and that they must make fetish to ward off the danger.”⁷³⁶ The idea of securing the safety of the society by pleasing the traditional gods, therefore affected reception of the Christian faith by the populace. In Fomena, the people were not ready to accept the Christian faith because it would mean abandoning the traditional religion. Birtwhistle therefore remarks “they said they were afraid that trouble would come to their nation if they neglected their fetish days and observed the Christian Sunday.”⁷³⁷ The idea of the safety of the society guaranteed a cordial relationship between the people and the gods and was very important to the Africans.

It is even more interesting that in most cases, the chiefs were rather more receptive to the missionaries than the priests therefore the people agitated. This was a prominent trait during Freeman’s mission where chiefs were often receptive but they did not easily accept the faith

⁷³⁶John Ekem D. K., *Priesthood in Context. A Study of Priesthood in Some Christian and Primal Communities of Ghana and Its Relevance for Mother –Tongue Biblical Interpretation*. (Accra: Sonlife, 2009), 93.

⁷³⁷Allan Birthwhistle, *Tomas Birth Freeman. West African Pioneer*. (London: The Cargate, 1950), 35.

because they believed “this might have a disruptive effect on the State.”⁷³⁸ Sanneh for instance explains one of the important reasons why Nana Kwamena Ansah could not accept Christianity was that as a chief, he needed to preside over the religious ceremonies of his people so he could not become a Christian.⁷³⁹

In Mamfe – Akuapim the Christians could not visit a Christian woman who was unconscious due to child labour because her condition was blamed on her husband since they had become Christians.⁷⁴⁰ As a purification rite, twelve sheep were slaughtered and her husband was asked to carry the thirteenth sheep to the shrine while confessing that he had brought this calamity from the gods on his wife because they were Christians. The man refused to do this because it was against his new found faith.

Again, the Northern German Missionary Society (Bremen) was prevented from entering the hinterland of Anlo because it was the preserve of the gods therefore the people were prevented from hearing the gospel.⁷⁴¹ Dorvlo remarks, “there was the feeling that Christianity was a strange and rival religion that would take the people away from the indigenous religion and destroy the customs that bound them together as one.”⁷⁴² This implies that that people saw Christianity as disruptive of their social network, customs and traditions. At one instance the people are even said to have blamed the king for some mishap as a result of the presence of the Christians in Anlo land. These accusations resonate with the situation of the early church.⁷⁴³ The Christians were often blamed for any misfortune in a foreign land and this is evident in the comparison with the Roman Empire situation. The Hundred and Fifty year’s anniversary brochure on the history of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Anyako

⁷³⁸Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birth Freeman*, 62.

⁷³⁹Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 24

⁷⁴⁰Ekem, *Priesthood in Context*, 81-82

⁷⁴¹Kofi Dorvlo “The contributions of German Missionary Evangelism and Education in German Togoland” in *Germany and its West African Colonies. “Excavations” of German Colonialism in Post-Colonial Times* eds. Wazi Apoh and Bea Lundt. (Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopt, 2013), 125.

⁷⁴²Dorvlo, “The Contributions of Germany Missionary Evangelism,” 126.

⁷⁴³Tertullian *Ad Nationes* 8

equally recounts a situation in 1857, where the lack of rains was blamed on the presence of the Christians.⁷⁴⁴ The Christians were fortunately saved from being beaten and evicted when the rains came.

Theophilous Opoku, an early African pastor in Mamfe reports of some incidence of conflicts between the Christians and the traditional authority.⁷⁴⁵ He recounts that around 1868, the significant growth of Christianity in the Mamfe community led to conflicts between Christians and the traditional people. Theophilous writes that in 1869, the conflicts, owing to the increasing numbers of Christians in Mamfe, led to an announcement by the local authority that nobody should become Christian. Anybody, who disobeyed would be made to pay one hundred `heads` of cowries (which was predominantly used as means of exchange at the time) which Sill values as \$ 34 today.⁷⁴⁶ If a child became a Christian, his/her parents would be responsible. This situation in Mamfe was quite similar to the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire, although in the Roman Empire scholarship cannot affirm that there was any specific law against the Christian. Notwithstanding, owing to the rise of Christianity in Mamfe and the Roman Empire, attempts were made to stop the growth of the faith in foreign lands.

It was during this period that two young maidens faced the anger of the people of Mamfe. Yaa Kade believed to be fourteen or fifteen years of age and was later christened Wilhelmina. Gyamea was about eighteen years old and was also christened Maria. These two maidens decided to become Christians at a time when all the people of Mamfe had been banned by the

⁷⁴⁴Evangelical Presbyterian Church Anyako (Bremen Mission), *150th Anniversary Celebration Brochure*, (Anyako: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2007), 15-16

⁷⁴⁵Opoku, *Mamfe Missionary Report*, 1891; Ulrike Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood. The Basel Mission in Pre- and Early Colonial Ghana* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), 236-241; Serena O. Dankwa, “`Shameless Maiden`: Women`s Agency and the Mission Project in Akuapim,” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 63 (2005): 104-116

⁷⁴⁶Sill *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood*, 237.

Mamfe traditional authority from becoming Christians and refused to bow to pressure to recant. Opoku recounts that

the parents and relatives of our dear heroines with hard entreaties and in tears constantly begged these their daughters to yield and deny the faith they have professed, but were always met with the same answer from the girls: "If they choose to kill us, we are not afraid to die in this plight."⁷⁴⁷

The Christians in Mamfe saw the actions of these maidens as heroic just as the early Christians saw the martyrs as heroic (as identified in Chapter two under the sub-topic, Identity of the martyrs). The role of their relatives draws great similarities especially like the plight of Perpetua and her companions. Additionally, the resilience of these ladies resemble the steadfastness of the early Christians described as obstinacy. They showed no fear of death should they be killed because they defied orders not to become Christians just as the early martyrs according to the texts were fearless of death.

In view of their obstinacy and unpreparedness to recant, they were threatened that they would be sold into slavery among other threats to get them to denounce their faith. Additionally, woods, clubs, cutlasses, swords as well as spears and war songs were sung to push them to renounce the Christian faith. Kade is recorded to have remarked "it will give me no shame for having become a slave for Christ`s sake, but I will rather glory and rejoice in it."⁷⁴⁸ Gyamea also pointed out that "For timid and simple girls as we are, it is disagreeable for us to be put in logs, though, but however still this will never deter us and induce us to deny our Lord, whom we love and for the sake of that love, we have given ourselves to."⁷⁴⁹ This statement resembles the words of Polycarp.⁷⁵⁰ To this end, when the people saw that the maidens would not recant, they were held in stocks (made from heavy blocks of wood) and starved for some days. They were shaved by the local priestess and their bald heads washed with water from

⁷⁴⁷Opoku, *Mamfe Missioary Report*, 1891.

⁷⁴⁸Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood*, 238.

⁷⁴⁹Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood*, 238.

⁷⁵⁰Martyrdom of Polycarp 9:3.

the shrine of Topere in order to nullify their baptism into Christianity. They were fortunately saved by the governor who heard about the plight of these young ladies.⁷⁵¹

Their stubborn witness paid off and soon after, many others responded to the call of the gospel and the town of Mamfe was won for the Lord. This story is similar to the stories of the early Christians like Perpetua, Felicity, Justin Martyr, Polycarp and the many other Christians who died because of their faith, making the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians an African story.

In general, it is concluded that the response of Traditional Religion to Christianity was quite hostile. Many of the missionaries just like the Early Christians suffered a great deal at the hands of the local people especially the Traditional Priests. The main motivation for such actions was largely to preserve the peace between the people and the gods as well as to ensure the safety of the society.

In all of these efforts of evangelising the African continent, the missionaries, both Europeans and Africans faced occasions of hostilities. They faced a number of persecutions and many others were martyred by natural and human efforts. The purpose of this section is to identify some of the hostilities against both European and African missionaries in their quest to plant the church in Africa especially their first entry into the Western part of Africa in 1471 to the third period of the missionary groups around 1760.

5.1.2 European Missionaries

It is rather interesting that the European and American missionaries who came to Africa and Ghana knew very well that they might die and yet, they still accepted the challenge of leaving their comfort zones. To many of the missionaries, Africa was the “white man’s grave,”⁷⁵² yet they accepted to come. Dunwell for instance registered his fears when Captain Potter

⁷⁵¹Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood*, 239.

⁷⁵²Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, 11.

informed him and other crew members on the ship that brought him that among other things the Fantes themselves could even poison his food.⁷⁵³ Many of them did not survive for long and they died owing to some natural tendencies such as the weather and malaria as well as human hostilities.⁷⁵⁴ It is accentuated that the Methodist mission sent thirty-two European missionaries within ten years but fifteen of them died before spending even eight months, while apart from Freeman, Brooking and the Allens, the others could not survive two years.⁷⁵⁵ This section therefore highlights a few examples from the records of some of the missionary groups who worked in Ghana and Africa.

Owing to the fact that the Portuguese explorers could not make enough evangelical gains, the king of Portugal called on the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, who sent five Fathers in 1572 and made some important gains even among chiefs and their households.⁷⁵⁶ However, the work of the Fathers in sharing the faith among the people increased the number of Christians especially among royal households. This angered the youth of Efutu and Komenda leading to some vandalism. The youth destroyed the church with some of the sacramental objects and killed (martyred) four of the Augustinian Priests out of the five: the only survivor escaped martyrdom because he was not at the station at the time of the attack.

Again, the activities of the Basel Mission also faced some natural martyrdom where three missionaries were sent on March 13th, 1832 but by July, two of them had already died leaving Andrew Riis only.⁷⁵⁷ They died as a result of malaria and the temperate weather, however Riis was saved because he moved to Akropong, where the weather was rather conducive and he was ably assisted by a traditional herbalist who gave him some ritual baths and herbs to drink. Riis did not abandon the mission but carried the ministry to other places like Aburi,

⁷⁵³Francis Bartels, *Roots of Ghana Methodism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 12-13.

⁷⁵⁴ Bartels, *Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 5.

⁷⁵⁵ Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, 55.

⁷⁵⁶ Witgen, *Gold Coast Mission History*, 23-24; Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 33-34; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 26-28.

⁷⁵⁷ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 62-64; Bartels, *Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 5.

Kwahu.⁷⁵⁸ Although he did not win many converts, he was not discouraged by the delayed response to his message. Sanneh records that he won his first convert in Akropong after twenty years of ministry and in Aburi, his first convert was after eight years of work.⁷⁵⁹ It is resounding that he won Mohenu, a traditional priest who later adopted the name Paul and became a missionary.⁷⁶⁰ Their resilience, vision and fortitude in the face of persecution as missionaries to a foreign land and culture serve as lessons for the Ghanaian Christian.

Another Basel missionary who in the face of great challenges stood firm for the propagation of the gospel was Frederick Augustus Ramseyer who entered the endangered environment of the Ashantis in 1896 and three years later, in 1899 established a mission.⁷⁶¹ However, there were some riots which destroyed the mission built by Ramseyer and he narrowly escaped death but three people died as a result of the riots including Samuel Otu who is described as the first Ghanaian martyr by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.⁷⁶² Despite these developments, Ramseyer is believed to have returned to rebuild the mission in December 1901 and by 1914, he had founded twenty congregations with eight hundred converts and seventeen schools in the Ashanti land.⁷⁶³

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society also faced some examples of hostilities similar to the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The first Methodist missionary was Joseph Rhodes Dunwell, a twenty-seven year old lay preacher who arrived on 1st January, 1835.⁷⁶⁴ Bartels recounts from Dunwell's diary how afraid he was but still accepted to come

⁷⁵⁸ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 99-100.

⁷⁵⁹ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 27; Witgen, *Gold Coast Mission History*, 20-25; Sanneh, *West African Christianity* 115.

⁷⁶⁰ Sanneh, *West African Christianity* 113.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid*, 114-115.

⁷⁶² *Ibid*, 115; Agyemang, *Ghana's First Christian Martyr*, 7-22; Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brief Biography of the Late Samuel Otu*, 2

⁷⁶³ Sanneh, *West African Christianity* 115.

⁷⁶⁴ Bartels *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* 12-14; Sanneh, *West African Christianity* 119; Agbeti *West African Church History* 55; Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, 10.

to a foreign country to spread the gospel.⁷⁶⁵ Dunwell laid some strong foundations of the already existing group of Christians who requested for Bibles but got a missionary in addition.⁷⁶⁶ However, his life span on the continent was short; he lived for only six months, thus on the 24th of June, 1835 he died. This did not deter the missionaries. After fifteen months, Rev. George Wrigley and his wife Harriet Wrigley were sent. Due to the good work done by the African agents who handled the church on the demise of Dunwell, there was the need to send more missionaries to help the Wrigleys. Therefore Rev. and Mrs. Peter Harrop arrived on the 15th January, 1837 to help with the missionary work. Unfortunately, Mrs. Harrop died three weeks after her arrival. Rev. Harrop and Mrs Harriet Wrigley also died three days after Mrs. Harrop`s death on 8th February, 1837 leaving only Rev. George Wrigley who also died within nine months.⁷⁶⁷ The Wrigleys expanded the missionary activities to Anomabu, Dixcove, Abura, Dunkwa and Dominasi.⁷⁶⁸ It was after them that Thomas Birch Freeman, whose mother was English and father African, was sent to work from 1838 to 1890. The belief was that he could resist the weather and malaria because he had African blood⁷⁶⁹

Like the Basel and Catholic history, the works of these missionaries were sometimes met with resistance and riots from the community. There were disturbances and persecution of the Christians in Obidan and Anomabo.⁷⁷⁰ The greatest opposition against the Wesleyan Methodist Society was encountered in their attempt to propagate the gospel to the people of Kumasi and its environs who are often described as `warlike`.⁷⁷¹ This was fiercely resisted but the missionaries did not give up and Freeman was eventually very successful not just in the Fante lands but Kumasi, Accra, Nigeria and other parts of the Western African

⁷⁶⁵ Bartles, *The Roots of Methodism*, 13.

⁷⁶⁶ Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 55-56; Bartles, *The Roots of Methodism*, 11.

⁷⁶⁷ Debrunner, *History of Christianity in Ghana*, 96-99; Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, 11; Bartles, *The Roots of Methodism*, 12-75.

⁷⁶⁸ Bartles *The Roots of Methodism in Ghana*, 20-28; Sunneh, *West African Christianity*, 118; Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 55.

⁷⁶⁹ Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 120-123; Bartles, *The Roots of Methodism in Ghana*, 28-131.

⁷⁷⁰ Bartles, *The Roots of Methodism in Ghana*, 56-59.

⁷⁷¹ Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, 20-26.

territories.⁷⁷² Birthwhistle cites from Freeman`s journal how nervous he was but found solace in the hymn `My life, my blood, I here present, If for Thy truth they may be spent`.⁷⁷³ Freeman suffered a lot of things such as walking long distances through the rains and sleeping in structures that would not be given to pigs⁷⁷⁴ and described his life as being in “one incessant whirls”.⁷⁷⁵ When his wife died, he wrote in his journal that “... but now she is removed into the eternal world, and is now I trust in the enjoyment of a martyr`s crown.”⁷⁷⁶ These missionaries left their countries not knowing what was awaiting them in these foreign lands but gave up everything to come, even when others had died painfully, they accepted to come, for the sake of the gospel.

In general, the faith, obstinacy, resilience and fortitude of these European missionaries in the spread of the gospel in Ghana and Africa as a whole, deserve commendation. They stood firm in the face of great opposition, leaving the comfort of their countries for the sake of the gospel and some of them died in defence of their faith. They complement the Christians` history of persecution and martyrdom in the African Church history by their pains and glories. However, they were not the only ones who suffered. Many of their African counterparts who complemented their efforts, as interpreters, hosts and companions, equally suffered a great deal, thereby being examples of the persecution and martyrdom of the African Church history.

5.1.3 African Agents

The history of the church in Africa will not be complete without the sufferings of the many African agents who through toil, sweat, tears, blood and life established the church. These

⁷⁷² Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 122-123; Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 56-57.

⁷⁷³ Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, 5.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 44-54.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 55.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

Africans fit into Tertullian's truism that "the blood of Christians is seed."⁷⁷⁷ There were many Africans who complemented the efforts of the Europeans and in some cases initiated the establishment of the church amidst loss of property, dignity, family and even life. Birthwhistle for instance recounts Freeman's interpreter at Dominasi whose foot was cut while bathing by an oyster shell which made him lame.⁷⁷⁸ Although this was an accident, he suffered this fate for the purpose of the gospel. Many more Africans have equally suffered in the missionary enterprise on the African soil. This section exemplifies some of the cases of African agents who suffered different types of persecution and martyrdom for the sake of the gospel and Christianity in Africa.

In Ghana, a Presbyterian catechist, Samuel Otu, was martyred in 1900 because he was seen as a spy for the Europeans given that he was a Christian.⁷⁷⁹ Samuel Otu was originally from Larteh in the Eastern region but as a missionary, Ramseyer posted him to Techimantia.⁷⁸⁰ However, owing to mistrust between the Asantes and the British colonial authorities, all missionaries were expelled from the Ashanti towns.

Otu's martyrdom fits very well into the account of the early Christian martyrs in many ways. In the first place like the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, he was betrayed by gossip. When the announcement was made to halt activities of allies of the Europeans, Samuel Otu and his family refused to leave the Asante land because they were consumed by the missionary work. Someone therefore is said to have given a report that Nana Kofi Kuma was hiding "a clerk who was also a spy for the British at Techimantia."⁷⁸¹ This is similar to the plight of Polycarp who was in hiding but someone betrayed him to the authorities of his location and even though he got to know and was encouraged to escape, he resisted and was

⁷⁷⁷Tertullian *Apologeticum*50:13.

⁷⁷⁸ Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, 30.

⁷⁷⁹ Agyemang, *Ghana's First Christian Martyr*. 9-17; Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brief Biography of the Late Samuel Otu*, 2-4.

⁷⁸⁰ Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 119; Agbeti, *West African Church History*, 54-55.

⁷⁸¹ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brief Biography of the Late Samuel Otu*, 2.

arrested.⁷⁸² Additionally, Samuel Otu, just like Polycarp, prayed and his prayer shows his willingness to die for the course of the gospel. This prayer resembles what Jesus prayed before his crucifixion, “Lord thy will be done, not ours.”⁷⁸³ His use of `ours` shows he was not alone and indeed he was with his wife who had prayed ahead of him for salvation based on the biblical examples of Daniel and the Israelites in Egypt. In the end, his wife actually encouraged him in these words:

As I have been warning you, they will arrest us. You know we came here to preach the Word of God, not to do our private business. We came here to preach the Word of God unto men`s salvation. But if you are arrested and killed you will be counted worthy of your Lord`s commendation as a martyr of Jesus and His Cross. Fear not; harm to the flesh is painful to any person but the spirit prevails over the pains of the human body.⁷⁸⁴

These words show the sufferings they were facing was nothing new to them, but that they actually anticipated that such a plight would come their way. Just like the early Christian martyrs show their resolve and positive perspectives for death because of the cross of God.

Furthermore, the charge for his martyrdom rambles what the early Christians faced. Although Samuel Otu`s case was more political than religious it was a pure situation of allegiance. He was killed because he was seen as a spy of the British colonial authority owing to his dressing which gave him an identity that made his allegiance as an African questionable.⁷⁸⁵ He was seen as a spy because the Asantes and the British were at war therefore their allies including missionaries were expected to vacate the Ashanti land. This was because the Asantes believed that allies such as missionaries irrespective of race, may leak some information from the Asantes to the British. The question of allegiance made the Roman authorities demand for the martyrs to pray using the genius of the emperor. Therefore, since Samuel Otu`s allegiance was questionable to the Asantes, like the early Christians, he was killed because of his faith.

⁷⁸²Martyrdom of Polycarp 6

⁷⁸³Agyemang, *Ghana`s First Christian Martyr*, 17.

⁷⁸⁴Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brief History of Samuel Otu*, 2-3.

Even more importantly, some of the things he suffered together with his wife were exact replica of the situation of the early Christians. His wife recounts that:

Here my husband was ordered to put his hands on the sticks after being asked to take off his coat, he was bound tightly to the sticks with rope. I was also put in fetters on my ankles... My husband was placed trussed in the stock or sticks, unable to move his hands or legs on Thursday and Friday but he was removed from the stock on Saturday.⁷⁸⁶

After his execution too, his wife was also stripped naked to find out if she was hiding valuable things in her cloths and later her hair was shaved.⁷⁸⁷ These hard treatments given to Samuel Otu and his wife by the traditional authority in Techimantia for the sake of the gospel represent the pains, sweat and blood of African for the purpose of the gospel in Ghana reminiscent of the plight of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana has honored him today with a church named after him and a statue erected on the church compound at Techimantia for the courage shown in the defense of his faith. He is described as the first Ghanaian martyr.

Additional examples of Africans who lost privileges, suffered and gave up their lives for the sake of the gospel in Africa includes William De-Graft. In the history of the Methodist Church Ghana, the pains of William De-Graft cannot be over emphasized with regards the persecutions he suffered. De-Graft owing to his convictions of biblical interpretations formed a Bible Band, sometimes called the "Meeting" to study the word of God together.⁷⁸⁸ In view of his insistence of bible interpretation in school, he was dismissed together with some of his friends from the castle school. He insisted that the reading of the bible as part of the education must be interpreted. Due to this disagreement with Joseph Smith (the head teacher of the school) regarding interpretation of the bible, the governor of the Gold Coast at the time ordered him to be whipped and dismissed from the school. In view of his dismissal, he could not be employed and his dream of working with the government as a Clerk on completion of

⁷⁸⁶ Agyemang, *Ghana's First Christian Martyr*, 16-17.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 19.

⁷⁸⁸ Bartles, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 8.

his education was destroyed.⁷⁸⁹ It was due to the loss of job opportunities as a result of his faith which motivated him to seek greener pastures at Dixcove where he met Captain Potter a Christian ship owner. Dunwell then requested for Bibles for the Bible Band which ended up in sending a missionary, Joseph Rhodes Dunwell to the Gold Coast. Essamuah remarks that

the differences in biblical hermeneutics between the two factions within the Fante Bible band mirrored in the large society between the chiefly class and the new educated elite, were to lead to the persecution of de-Graft who fell into disfavor with the current governor who was friendlier with Smith, probably because the latter was more compliant. De-Graft was briefly imprisoned and deported from Cape Coast, then resettled at Dixcove.⁷⁹⁰

According to Essamuah, De-Graft faced imprisonment and deportation. However, other sources affirm that de-Graft was beaten and imprisoned along with some other followers but his deportation may not be substantiated as suggested by Essamuah. Birthwhistle and Bartels agree that de-Graft left for Dixcove because of economic reasons since he could never secure a job in any government set up.⁷⁹¹ Again, if he was deported or excommunicated from Cape Coast, he could not attend the meetings of the `Meeting or Bible Club`. Instead, it can be argued that he had to forsake his dreams of working with the government service for the sake of the gospel, he sacrificed his future for the gospel. Some of the early Christians suffered hostilities of imprisonment, beating, loss of privileges and many others for the sake of the gospel of Christ as demonstrated in the case of William de-Graft.

In general, it can strongly be argued that Africans have had their fair share of the persecution and martyrdom, which characterized the development of the Christian faith from the early first century. During the missionary periods some Africans suffered torture and death due to their Christian faith. The persecution and martyrdom are equally an African story. It is also worthy to stress that the account of Christian persecution and martyrdom is not only a historical occurrence but a continuous one even in a contemporary society. Even today, many

⁷⁸⁹ Agbeti, *West African Church History* 55; Bartles, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* 8-10.

⁷⁹⁰ Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, 10.

⁷⁹¹ Birthwhistle, *Thomas Birch Freeman*, 2; Bartles, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 8-10

Christians suffer various forms of hostilities and death as a result of their faith. Looking forward, it is imperative to deal with how the African and Ghanaian Christian should conceptualize the hostilities they face today. This conceptualization can best be concluded on, if Christians today can draw lessons from the early church examples. It is always true that it is wise to learn from people who have come from a place a person is about to travel to. Therefore, the way the early church contained the hostilities against them can help the church today in dealing with its current predicaments of hostilities.

5.4 Lessons for Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity

The incidences of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as presented in the martyr and the apologetic texts have some important lessons for Christians today with regards to dealing with suffering. Christians today are faced with some form of persecution or discomfort as a result of their faith; these texts are useful in dealing with such issues. Although international organisations will not give any country or group the pleasure to allow carnivorous animals to chew other human beings as a form of punishment even if those victims are notorious criminals the subject of the persecution and martyrdom is ongoing. Many Christians today suffer discomfort, discrimination and abuses as a result of their faith. In the words of Jesus recorded in John 15:18-25, it is written that the world will persecute Christians because the world does not know them for Christians are not of this world, but aliens. Therefore, he encourages them to take heart and stand firm. It is therefore prudent to learn from those who have suffered and overcame. It implies adopting the strategies used by the forerunners in dealing with current and similar predicaments. Romans 15:4 says “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.” Paul’s words here make analysis of the relevance of the texts to Christian situations imperative. Although he made

this statement in reference to scripture, it is not limited to scripture because of the beginning statement ‘For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction.’ Boamah has argued that scriptures in most cases are generated from a group of texts and possibly from scripture which may find its place in a canon.⁷⁹² It can also be argued that to some extent, particularly based on the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, these martyr texts were used as scriptures to encourage other Christians.⁷⁹³

Christians today the world over, including Ghanaians, can learn a great deal from the accounts of these martyrs which are recorded by the apologists and the martyrologists. Christians today must learn to record their histories, stand in solidarity with fellow Christians in their sufferings, recount the histories to generations from time to time and also to show courage in the face of adversities. These and many other lessons come out clearly from the martyr and apologetic texts which Christians today can learn from, in their bid to deal with situations of suffering.

5.4.1 Recording History

It is certainly prudent for the Christian today to learn to document their history for the benefit of succeeding generations. It has already been argued in chapters two and three that the writing of the martyr and apologetic texts are a record of history. The apologetic texts are described as historical since they describe things that happened at a particular time during the reign of a particular emperor. This is very wide spread in Tertullian’s apology to Scapula where in chapters three and four, the history of how some emperors treated the Christians and the consequences on their lives.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹²Kwaku Boamah, “The Making of a Canon: Impact of the Old Testament Scriptures in the Christian Canon Development” in *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Science*80 (2018): 8-11.

⁷⁹³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 1; Martyrdom of Perpetua 1:2.

⁷⁹⁴ Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam*, 3, 4.

These accounts record the happenings and plights of Christians who lived in the Roman Empire from the first to about the third centuries. Furthermore, the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp opens with the statement “We are writing to you, dear brothers, the story of the martyrs ...”⁷⁹⁵ Eventually the authors of the account state that the writing of this history was prompted by a request for the account of what happened by the recipients.⁷⁹⁶ This suggests that the account was a pure recounting of history of the Christians to fellow Christians. The accounts of the martyrdom of Justin and his Companions as well as the Scillitan martyrs can equally be described as historical documents because they both situate the accounts in a particular date by identifying the authority at the time of their writing.⁷⁹⁷ The account of Perpetua and Felicity cannot be described any less as a historical account. This is influenced by chapters three to thirteen of the account since they are personal memoirs of martyrs while the others were added by an editor.⁷⁹⁸ What would have encouraged martyrs to personally record their plights, if not to record their histories? What would encourage an editor to pick someone’s memoir and provide a framework of introduction and conclusion, if not to compose it as a historical work for fellow Christians? The Martyr and Apologetic texts are, to a large extent, historical accounts of the pains of the Christians in the early empire.

Christians today must learn to record their history for future generations to benefit from what happened to their predecessors. This is very important particularly to the African Christian because very little records are kept by Ghanaian Christians about their past.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁵ Martyrdom of Polycarp 1:1.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid,20.

⁷⁹⁷ Martyrdom of Justin and Companions 1 (all recensions); Scillitan Martyrs 1.

⁷⁹⁸ Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxv.

⁷⁹⁹ As part of my studies, we were to write a term paper of the history of churches in Ghana which are about a hundred years old using sources such as old preaching journals and announcement books. This research gave students a lot of problems because the few churches which are in this range do not either have the documents to write their history or what they have is shallow and inadequate. There was a church where a minister had committed to flames old preachers’ diary kept by the church, cradle roll, announcement books and other past documents because they were past records which are of no use today. In another church, the archival room was in shambles because the documents were not arranged but heaped on the floor in a room under lock and key. Interestingly, no one knew who had the keys.

The church today must learn from the recording of the plight of the Christians in the Roman Empire. It is not to say that these two texts are sacrosanct historical records, because the texts have some challenges. They are a step ahead of nothing. The church today and Ghanaian Christians must learn to record their own history for generations yet unborn to know what happened. This will provide encouragement and a blue print for actions tomorrow.

5.4.2 Communalism / Solidarity

There is an Akan adage that `se wokoto se abowa bi te wo nuaso a, nka se sore ne so,na mmom soreyen so` which can be translated as, ‘if you see a beast on your brother, don’t say get off him, but rather get off us.’ This idea is built on the principle of communalism or solidarity. There is need to see the threat of suffering against other Christians as a threat against the entire Christian fraternity and therefore the need to stand in solidarity against a common enemy. It can be inferred from the martyr and apologetic texts that the early Christians stood in solidarity with the martyrs in their most difficult moments. The apologists wrote to their addressees to defend the case of the Christians. At the time of writing, the apologists did not suffer the pains themselves but they took the pain in all solidarity to stand with their fellow Christians who were suffering. The apologists used pronouns such as ‘we, me, I’ showing their identification with the martyrs.⁸⁰⁰ By the apologists identifying themselves with the martyrs without fear of being arrested and martyred too, they showed their solidarity. Tertullian is so fascinated with identifying himself with the smeared Christians. Tertullian prefers to be associated with the martyrs to the extent that he encourages what is termed voluntary martyrs.⁸⁰¹ He even threatened the Emperor that if the

⁸⁰⁰ Tatian Ad Graecos 10:1; 11:1.

⁸⁰¹ Tertullian, Ad Scapulam 5:2.

oppressors are not careful, the surviving Christians will give themselves up for martyrdom in solidarity because there are many more Christians than the Emperor may think.⁸⁰²

In the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the church did not desert him. When he fled into exile, there were still some Christians with him over there⁸⁰³ and when he died from the fire, the Christians wanted his body to bury.⁸⁰⁴ The church was so eager to bury him that even when he was cremated, the church in solidarity still went for his ashes to bury him remarking that “collecting the remains that were dearer to us than precious stones and finer than gold, we buried them in a fitting spot.”⁸⁰⁵ It can be argued that based on the style of writing especially by quoting the direct words of Polycarp and the governor, the authors and possibly many other Christians walked with him to witness the entire trial from his arrest to cremation, they did not betray him. The church showed solidarity, reverence and support for Polycarp in his difficult moments. In the case of the Scillitan martyrs, the way the account is written shows that the other Christians did not desert the martyrs when they were arrested. In the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions, the Christians visited them in prison⁸⁰⁶ and celebrated a Christian ceremony called love feast with them.⁸⁰⁷ The church was in solidarity with these martyrs every step of the way. In the account of the martyrdom of Justin and his companions, the Christians even had to secretly steal the corpse for burial.⁸⁰⁸

Christians today in their work places, homes and other places need to stand in solidarity with fellow Christians who go through difficulties as a result of their faith. Sometimes owing to denominationalism, when Christians are struggling because of their faith, the others would rather disassociate themselves because their faith traditions are different. Christians should

⁸⁰² Ibid,5:3-4.

⁸⁰³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 7:2-3.

⁸⁰⁴ Martyrdom of Polycarp 17: 1-2.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid,18.

⁸⁰⁶ Martyrdom of Perpetua 9:1.

⁸⁰⁷ Martyrdom of Perpetua 17:1.

⁸⁰⁸ Martyrdom of Justin and his Companions 6 (recension B and C).

see persecution of other Christians an enemy which desires concerted and communal efforts from all in-group members. It is quite possible to find Christians putting up solidarity messages on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and on other platforms such as these, but they will not show this solidarity in person. Many Christians today are likely to be quiet when other Christians are maltreated in the workplace for fear of being victimized but that was not the way the early church faced the persecution and martyrdom. If such solidarity could come in the way of the hostilities, it could encourage the victims to face their difficulties while getting some motivation to endure. The early church stood by the martyrs in solidarity affirming that the attack on their personhood was an attack on the whole Christian faith, hence like the Akan adage, the other Christians must show solidarity in fighting the common enemy.

5.4.3 Recount history to the Generations

Just like the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp which was requested for by the church,⁸⁰⁹ the Christian today must know about what others have suffered to establish the church today. The Philomilium Church certainly wanted to know in order to remember such characters and to celebrate them; this is why the recorders of the account will include the exact date of the martyrdom as 23rd February and the specific time as `two o`clock in the afternoon`on a Sabbath day.⁸¹⁰ These details are there to help the churches to set aside such days for the celebration of these heroes of the church. This is very crucial for the growth of the church because future generations must be told of what earlier heroes have done for the growth of the faith.

It is a great lesson for the church today to reminisce the past so that the flames of yester years will continue to glow knowing where the church has come from. Among the various church

⁸⁰⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp 20.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid,21.

traditions, the Catholic and Anglican churches are quite focused on celebrating such heroes. There are celebration days for some of these martyrs and even more, 1st of November is celebrated as “All saints Day” to reminisce the canonical saints while 2nd November, is “All Souls’ Day” is for other recent family members who may be dead. However, among the Methodist and Presbyterians, only the “All Saints Day” is celebrated. Meanwhile, among the Methodists, the early church fathers are not even mentioned but rather members of the church bring names of their family members who are dead and their names are mentioned as a way to remember them.⁸¹¹ This is why only the ministers know the names of such heroes because they study about them at the Seminary but they do not educate the congregation about them. The leadership of the churches must celebrate heroes of the church, if especially the Catholic Church can do it, the other churches can equally teach their congregations about the contributions of these early Christians who have given their lives and blood for the sake of the church. The church can do well to honour such great persons who planted the church with their blood. They deserve to be remembered.

5.4.4 Courage of Martyrs

If there was any character trait of the martyrs which is easily identifiable without struggling it is their courage. The martyrs showed a lot of courage even in the face of death without fear. The martyrs were not afraid to die and even in the presence of the authorities of the Roman Emperor, they did not hesitate to speak in the face of death. The courage of the martyrs in many respects is described as obstinacy which was one of the major reasons for their persecution and martyrdom.⁸¹² When they were threatened with death, the martyrs stood resolute. For instance, when Polycarp was asked to swear by the emperor’s genius, he

⁸¹¹I named my son Polycarp owing to the inspiration from the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp. Many friends and family members kept asking what the name means and where I got that name from. It is rather interesting that apart from my Catholic friends and Methodist reverend ministers, all other persons had never heard the name Polycarp. This case in point shows how little the African Christian today knows about the early Christians.

⁸¹² Boamah, *Magic and Obstinacy* 16; Engberg, *Impulsore Chresto*, 191-193.

responded “if you delude yourself into thinking that I will swear by the emperor’s genius as you say, and if you pretend not to know who I am, listen and I will tell you plainly: I am a Christian...”⁸¹³ Tertullian threatened the governor that the emperor could not stand it if all the other Christians came forward that they were Christians because they were not afraid of death.⁸¹⁴ Evidently, the early Christians would not recant their faith just to escape death but stood prepared, ready to die.

The Christian must stand resolute in the face of temptation or during suffering. Many a Christian may give up avoiding some uncomfortable situation by denying their faith so that they may escape suffering. In many cases, there are Christians in work places, families etc. where anything that contended with their faith had been chosen at the expense of their faith. Instead of the early Christians recanting to save themselves, they stood strong in the faith for what they believed without giving up.

5.4.5 Restrain over Reaction

This lesson is very crucial because it shows how Christians should respond in the face of suffering. This is a question of restrain or reaction. It is about whether in the face of suffering Christians should hold their fire or release it. This is a critical decision to make because naturally when a person is hit, it is logical for the person to retaliate especially when he or she feels they are not treated justly. The fact that many African countries including Ghana have become multi-religious societies, inter-religious dialogue is desirable.

The accounts of the martyr narratives and the apologetic texts show that the early Christians did not respond to the violence against them with equal measure of violence. They rather resorted to writing to restrain other believers from taking to the streets to equally deal treacherously with the non-Christians. They also wrote to the authorities and the general

⁸¹³ Martyrdom of Polycarp 10:1.

⁸¹⁴ Tertullian Ad Scapulam 5:2-5.

public to plead the case of the Christians. The early Christians restrained themselves when they were persecuted and martyred by the non-Christians. The African Christian today needs to learn from this example by restraining and not reacting in like manner in response to their persecutors.

5.5 Conclusion

The story of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians is certainly an African story. Many Christians suffer various levels of discomfort as a result of their faith. In all of these, the resilience and capacity of the early church which are similar to the examples of the early African missionaries are relevant today. The hymnist lauds this point in the lines

*Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word
Faith of our fathers! Holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.*

The Christian today can learn from these examples and strategies adopted by the early Christians in dealing with the hostilities against them and this can be a study ground for the Christians all over the world. Therefore, their histories serve as learning opportunities for suffering Christians today. Since the Christians see martyrdom as a baptismal faith which involves participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.⁸¹⁵ Hence if this is the way their master Jesus went, the subjects need to follow the same path.

⁸¹⁵ Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, 119.

CHAPTER SIX

IMAGE OF THE HOSTILITIES AND GHANAIAN CHRISTIANITY

6.0 Introduction

The early Christians suffered a great deal in the Roman Empire. Though a religious group, they were perceived to be a threat to the political sect. These hostilities influenced the writing of two sets of texts by the Christians: Martyr and Apologetic texts. These texts have their targeted audiences and specific aims. That notwithstanding, a greater majority of scholars studying the persecutions have largely depended on the martyr texts and the texts written by pagans about the Christians. However, to a limited degree the apologetic texts have also been used in this context, but Sherwin-White has criticized it as distorting.⁸¹⁶ The apologetic texts have mainly been analyzed with other questions in mind, for example the development of Christian theology, canon-formation, relationship between Christianity and philosophy, argumentative strategies etc.⁸¹⁷ Yet, since these two types of texts are influenced by the context of the hostilities, it is prudent to compare the picture the two types of texts project. A comparison of the picture emerging from a class of texts with the other will also help appreciate the usefulness of the two classes of texts as sources for the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

The martyr texts give either narrative depictions or they focus on the dialogue between martyr and magistrate in court, no martyr texts leave room for elaborate apologetic discussions, where the charges are refuted or where Christian habits, rituals or doctrines are explained. In contrast the last two aspects are the focus of the apologetic texts. The martyr texts focus mostly on the procedure and charges against the victim but do not contain

⁸¹⁶Sherwin-White, "Why were the Christians Persecuted?" 23.

⁸¹⁷Ulrich, "Apologists and Apologetics," 1-34.

reflective and comprehensive responses of the victim, which the apologies largely provide. Generally, most scholars have analyzed the plight of Christians in the Roman Empire, especially in terms of the persecution and martyrdom, by depending on the martyr and pagan texts as well as some use of the New Testament sources with a tightfisted use of the apologetic texts. This has left gaps in the picture of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians since this approach focuses little attention on the apologetic texts. The gap is created because the martyr texts do not reflect on the reaction of the Christians to the charges though natural law makes provision to listen to the reaction of the accused, which the apologetic texts do. Again, scholars have not attempted to systematically compare the hostilities against the Christians as portrayed in the martyr texts to that which the apologists present to evaluate the usefulness of the apologetic texts to the phenomena of the hostilities. Such a comparison could reveal whether the picture emerging from the study of the martyr texts is corroborated, supplement or even contradicted.

With regards to the recipient and readership of the apologetic texts, some scholars argue that some apologists addressed their texts to the authorities for literary purposes such as making the texts seem more interesting. Other scholars do not agree to this but maintain that writing such notes to the authorities at the time was a standard way to communicate with them.

The objective of the study was to examine the image of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians as portrayed in the martyr and apologetic texts as well as the relevance of these texts to Ghanaian Christianity. This was segmented as:

1. To weigh against each other, the portrait of the hostilities presented in the apologetic texts as corroborative, supplementary or contradictive to the martyr narratives.
2. To establish the submission status of the apologies.

3. To explore some examples of persecution and martyrdom in Ghanaian Christian history especially during the missionary period.
4. To assess lessons from the martyr and apologetic texts as relevant for dealing with sufferings today by the Ghanaian Christians.

This concluding chapter of the project summarizes the issues raised in this study guided by the objectives and research questions. In the first place the discussion of the purpose and audiences of the texts are summarized, and then the similarities and differences between the two classes of texts are highlighted. The attention of this chapter further tie the various arguments on the submission status of the apologies and eventually lessons from the various texts to help African Christians to deal with current predicaments of sufferings are reflected. Finally, this chapter draws the curtain by putting forward a few recommendations and future studies for scholarship.

6.1 Purpose and Audience of the Martyr and Apologetic Texts

The purpose and audience of the texts certainly helped to appreciate the motivation of the authors of the texts. In this light, it is concluded that, the martyr texts were directed towards the Christians. The martyr texts are predominantly directed towards the Christian audience to encourage them in the faith, construct their communal identity and to recollect their history. The apologetic texts apart from inherently being useful to the Christian community are directly addressed to the non-Christian community. The intentions were to dispel allegations, correct misunderstandings and false rumors, explain Christian rituals, practices and beliefs, and most ambitiously, to make outside readers favorably disposed towards the Christians even perhaps converting them. Therefore, both texts were written to a predominantly different category of readers; the martyr texts generally to Christians while the apologetic texts appeal more to non-Christians (implying those in authority and the broad-spectrum of

the public) but with a strong Christian community readership in mind. This in essence imply that the two classes of texts, despite their appeals, meet at a cross intersection of Christian readers.

There were differences and similarities in their purposes and intended audiences. The two kinds of texts sought to encourage the Christian community (apologetic texts and martyr texts), to make converts of the non-Christians (apologetic texts), construct the Christian identity (apologetic texts and martyr texts) and ultimately halt the hostilities against the Christians in the Roman Empire (apologetic texts). These similarities in the motivations and purposes of the texts suggest their contents may be corroborative and supplementary, while the differences in motivations, intended audiences and purposes suggest supplementary depictions of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

The comparisons of the depictions in the two kinds of texts are mostly similar, which is ascribed to the similar context out of which the texts grew and their overlapping purposes – lend credence to the general trustworthiness of their depictions. On the other hand, the differences in the pictures are found based on the different audiences (the martyr texts almost exclusively at a Christian audience, the apologetic texts at both a Christian and an outside audience). In essence, the general permeating similarities seasoned by nuanced differences between the depictions in martyr texts compared to the apologetic texts, point to trustworthiness of the pictures. This suggestion is built on the logical inquisitiveness that there are some similarities and possible differences between the two classes of texts.

6.2 Findings- Martyr and Apologetic Texts Compared

The findings of this thesis are generated based on the objectives and research questions of the study, influenced by the methodological approach in attaining the goals of the study.

6.2.1 Usefulness of Apologetic Texts

In addressing the first objective and research question regarding the usefulness of the apologetic text as corroborative, supplementary or even contradictory to the martyr texts, the systematic comparison helps to arrive at an answer. It is clear from the analysis that the apologetic text is corroborative and supplementary to the martyr texts rather than contradictory on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman mid-second to early third Roman centuries.

Internally, a comparison of the narrative martyr texts to the protocol accounts clearly shows that the two styles of martyr texts are greatly corroborative with permeating similarities seasoned by nuanced differences related to the styles in which the two types of martyr texts are written. The similarities are evident in terms of the identity and motives of the persecutors, the legal process used, the allegations, charges and the demands of the authorities and the forms of the persecution the two kinds of martyr texts agree in the image they project. This general agreement lends credence to their depictions as reflecting a historical reality.

Notwithstanding these similarities, there are few nuances. Some of the few peculiarities are in view of the order of events, character of the persecutors and apologetic contents of the texts. It is argued that these nuances do not contradict but rather supplement each other. The peculiarities show the influence of the style of the text on what should go into the content of the text. Thus, a protocol form does not have the time to include what happened before the arrest of the martyrs or the events after the martyrs are killed but rather focus more on the interaction between the authorities and the martyrs.

An internal comparison of the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public equally show some major similarities. These similarities include the narrative content, character of the martyrs, identity of the persecutor, motives, procedure,

demand, form of the persecution among others. These major unities in relation to the depiction of the persecution and martyrdom again lend credence to the idea that the texts have grown out of and do reflect real persecutions. However, there are a few important nuanced differences between the two categories of apologetic texts are influenced by the intended readers of the texts. The peculiarities are in the areas of accusations, defense strategies, sources and polemics among others. The interesting issue is that the nuances or peculiarities do not contradict each other but rather supplement one another.

It has been argued that the peculiarities are as a result of the addressees of the texts, thus those addressed to the public builds more on social accusations while those aimed at the authorities deal with political accusations. That is not to suggest the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities do not deal with social charges but that the emphasis or most of the accusations are captured in political terms and vice versa. This is why they are called nuances or peculiarities in this study. These nuances are seen to be of supplementary value because if scholars depend on a text that is addressed towards the authorities, the conclusions are likely to be skewed; therefore, a collaborative use of the two types of the apologetic texts will offer a holistic picture as projected by the apologetic texts. Additionally, the few peculiarities also help to address the submission status of the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities which will be discussed after this sub-topic. Notwithstanding, the apologetic texts equally present a corroborative and supplementary picture to each other regarding the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians.

Externally, the martyr and apologetic texts develop a coherent and consistent picture of predicaments of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. The comparative elements have shown that while the similarities between the texts corroborate their accounts, the nuances are of supplementary value. The corroborative similarities point to the usefulness of the apologetic texts as sources to the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early

Christians. This implies that to a large extent Sherwin-White is wrong to suggest that the apologetic texts are not useful in a discussion on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians. On the other hand, the supplementary nuances between the martyr and apologetic texts point to the fact that not only are the apologetic texts useful, but imply that the two texts need to be synchronized for a comprehensive picture of the hostilities against the Christians to emerge.

Further studies of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians should of course still pay diligent attention to the texts written by non-Christians about the Christians. There is a gap in scholarship because of the failure to adequately appreciate the importance of also studying the elaborate and reflected defense offered for Christianity in these texts, thereby making the picture of the hostilities incomplete. However, when the apologetic sources are included in these traditional sources, a comprehensive picture of the persecution and martyrdom may emerge.

6.2.2 Submission Status of the Apologetic Texts

The second objective and research question seeks to ascertain the possibility or otherwise of the submission status of the apologies. As suggested in the introductory chapter, the similarities and differences or nuances in the texts are likely to help address the submission status of the apologies to the authorities. The comparative elements used in this systematic comparison of the texts internally and externally help to define that at the very least; the texts were intended for the authorities' consumption.

The internal comparison of the apologetic texts addressed to the authorities and those addressed to the public suggests that the apologists certainly wanted the authorities to read their works. The texts addressed to the authorities deal with more legal matters as compared to the texts addressed to the public. The authorities are likely to be more interested in legal

issues rather than the public. Further, there is a strong polemic content in both categories of apologetic texts. There are however nuanced differences in the priority or focus of the polemic. Those addressed to the authorities do not attack the authorities much, instead they attack the Roman gods and system as well as the public more. This is crucial because the apologists wanted to be more favorable to the authorities who have the capacity to stop the hostilities when they read their texts, therefore the need to attack them less.

The external comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts equally concludes that the apologists intended their texts to be read by the authorities. The principle is that if the martyr and apologetic texts are similar in every way, then the texts addressed to the authorities were not intended for submission but if there are differences in certain specified nuances, then the texts were intended to receive the attention of the authorities. The basis of this principle suggests that since the readers of the martyr texts are expected to be different from the apologetic texts, the content and style of the texts when compared must exhibit some differences even if they are both talking about the same thing. The comparative elements in the first place show that apart from the form and addresses of the texts being different, the accusations are also different. Thus whereas the martyr texts deal more with religious accusations the apologetic texts focus more on political and ethical accusations.

Secondly, the sources cited by the various authors in the different texts also show some differences. The martyr texts largely depend on Christian sources especially scriptures while the apologetic texts use both Christian (although not much scriptural texts) and even more importantly non-Christian Roman sources.

A third important difference between the martyr and apologetic texts is the argumentative strategy employed in the text. This is interesting because while the apologetic texts use philosophical, rhetorical and religious strategies, the martyr texts basically use story telling or dialogue form as its strategy to portray the story of the hostilities against the early Christians.

Finally, the level and direction of polemics in the martyr and apologetic texts are different. While the apologetic texts abound in polemic and largely direct these attacks to the Roman gods and system as well as the public, the few attacks in the martyr texts are largely directed towards the authorities. This is fascinating because the explicit addressees of the martyr texts are the Christians so the authors are free to attack the authorities.

Therefore, the form of the texts, accusations, source and the polemic aspects of the martyr and apologetic texts suggest that the apologies were intended to be read by their outside addresses. The authors of the apologetic texts intentionally adopted elements that were appealing to the non-Christians because of their explicit readers. To a large extent therefore, unlike what some scholars maintain, the apologists did not apply the addresses to these texts in order to heighten the significance of the texts. They rather consciously chose elements that were more Roman than Christian in content to meet the standard of their audience, particularly the authorities. It is therefore strongly argued that the texts were highly intended to receive the attention of the authorities especially by addressing the texts to them.

In view of the conclusion on the usefulness of the apologetic texts to the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire, it is evident that they are of corroborative and supplementary value. This usefulness has also helped to define the submission status of the apologies. It is, therefore, imperative to review the significance of the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians to how the modern African Christian can deal with suffering based on how the early Christians sustained the situation. The link between the two contexts is necessary because they both exhibit the beginning of Christianity in a new environment where there is an already established religious worldview of the people. The historic reality of the contexts provides a basis for contemporary Christians because there cannot be experience without history, so that the history will serve as a guide for contemporary players of the faith. On the subject of the

persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians, it is without a doubt that suffering is indeed a universal element and a composite part of the Christian calling. Therefore, since the founder of the faith suffered and the early apostles including the church fathers suffered, the contemporary Christians are also likely to suffer. Yet, the most important part of the issue of suffering is how a person will be able to endure it. In most cases, examples of how others have overcome similar predicaments will serve as precedence for contemporary Christians, thus to look out for how others have faced the same thing. Therefore, how the early Christians endured those predicaments will help the Christians today who face similar challenges day in day out to adopt those same strategies to overcome current challenges.

6.2.3 The Texts and the Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity

The third and fourth objectives and research questions which seek to show the relevance of the subject of the persecution and martyrdom as well as the relevance of these texts to African Christianity today is explored in chapter five.

The subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians is not only a Roman or European ideology, but African too. In the first instance, the Roman Empire encompassed some African territories where some of the accounts used in this study are recorded on Roman, African soils. The account of the persecution and martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity as well as the accounts of the Scillitan martyrs are both recorded in African societies. Additionally, Tertullian was an African from Carthage who wrote extensively about some of the predicaments against the early Christians.

Furthermore, the modern African environment is not insulated from various sufferings and discomforts suffered by Christians as a result of their faith. Examples of the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians can be found in the modern African era most especially during the missionary times. Many of the European missionaries accepted to

come to the African region knowing very well that they may not survive. They suffered from the environment including the weather therefore only a few survived more than two years. On the other hand, not only the European missionaries suffered but, the African missionaries and agents equally suffered a great deal for the sake of the gospel. The examples from Mamfe and Samuel Otu as well as his wife of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana are widely known. There are other examples such as William de-Graft who suffered imprisonment and loss of privileges for the sake of their Christian convictions. The Christian even today including Ghanaians suffers various degrees of excruciating pain because of their Christian beliefs. It is therefore prudent to learn from the examples of the early church in dealing with similar challenges today. The Ghanaian today can learn a great deal, from how the early church was able to contain those challenging periods of their development to deal with contemporary hostilities against their faith.

The church today and the Ghanaian Christian, for that matter, must accept the inevitability of suffering as part of the Christian calling. The martyr and apologetic texts teach the Christian today to learn to record their history to help succeeding generations remember their heroes. Furthermore, the early Christians did not see the hostilities as an individual predicament but a collective challenge and therefore stood in solidarity with those suffering, knowing it was an attack of the entire Christian community. Notwithstanding, the courage of the early Christians in the face of death is worthy of emulation by the African Christian. They did not run away in the face of death but rather stood their grounds in defense of their faith. These Christians enviably did not cling to `action begets reaction` but restrained themselves. They could have said, they will also kill other persons in compensation of those who are killed. These are commendable steps the African Christians can learn from these texts in relation to dealing with suffering today.

The texts are therefore very significant to help Ghanaians deal with current predicaments of suffering as the Christians faced in the Roman Empire. The Ghanaian Christian today can learn a great deal from these texts to deal with current challenges such as social justice. Since the questions of this project are answered by the systematic comparative approach, it is crucial to make a few recommendations for scholarly considerations. These recommendations are made based on the texts and are aimed towards the future of scholarship on the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this project, some few recommendations are suggested for the consideration of scholarship. The recommendations are organized under academic and pastoral levels in addressing the issues.

Academically, scholarship on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians must employ both martyr and apologetic texts sources – along, of course with the texts written by non-Christian authors about the Christians. As evidence from the systematic comparison of the martyr and apologetic texts, the two classes of texts do not only corroborate but more significantly supplement each other on the hostilities against the early Christians. This conclusion suggests that if the martyr texts are used alone, the defense of the martyrs would be lost, whereas where the apologetics are used alone, the development of the accusations and their maltreatments would be lost. However, when the two are used together, a fuller story of Christian perspective on the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians will be captured, thus making the approach more satisfactory from a scholarly perspective. To this end, it is prudent to use both classes of texts for a comprehensive picture of the plight of the Christians in the Roman early second to mid third centuries as presented by the Christians.

Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that African scholars must, among other areas of specialty, champion the study of the history of the early church. Although many African scholars are found in various aspects of religious studies and theology such as biblical studies, history and Pentecostal studies amongst others, scholars in the area of early church history are lacking. It is interesting that the few African scholars who specialize in the history of religions only focus on the epochs from the medieval period to the present, and not the early periods from about the first to around the sixth centuries. The lack of scholarly work in this period leaves a great gap in the study of religions in capturing the early developments of the faith. To this end, religious and theological institutions must have a patristic section of their faculty where issues on church history are taught and not just a passing issue of the courses that are taught. This will generate interest for students and hence introduce scholars to the area.

On the pastoral front, this thesis recommends that preachers educate the congregation on the subject of the development of the Christian faith. When preachers do this, members of the church will become familiar with their roots and have a comprehensive understanding of the faith they profess. An appreciation of where the faith has come from and the circumstances around it will deepen the faith and expressions of the practitioners.

Notwithstanding, when preachers teach on the subject of the early beginnings of the faith, members will appreciate well the relationship between the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians and contemporary sufferings of Christians. This will help members to pick up lessons on how the early Christians stood firm during this period and it will serve as fertile ground to accommodate better current predicaments. This will imply the prosperity gospel ideologies will be minimized if not eliminated from the worldview of the contemporary Christian expression. Members will appreciate that the Christian calling include sufferings since Christians are aliens on this earth.

This project therefore heavily recommends that a study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians must encompass the martyr and apologetic texts together. Furthermore, African scholars must show an interest in the study of the early church, by including patrology in the academic field of religion and theology institutions. At the pastoral level, the teaching on the early developments of the faith will deepen the faith of the members while it will help members manage better conditions of sufferings.

6.4 Future Studies

An important development which the martyr and apologetic texts point to, which is suggested for further studies in the study of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians is a study of the relationship between the early Christian hostilities and conversion. The analysis of the martyr and apologetic texts, bring to the fore the theme of conversion or evangelism which must be investigated by scholars. Tertullian for instance threaten that “We multiply when we are mown down by you.”⁸¹⁸ Many scholars including Frend support the position that the persecution and martyrdom rather increased the membership of the Christians.⁸¹⁹ Dunn also suggests that the purpose of Tertullian Apologeticum was not intended to acquit the Christians from the charges but rather to convert the non-Christians.⁸²⁰ This theme is strategically placed in these texts to show either how other non-Christians have come to accept the Christian faith based on the martyrdom of one Christian or the other. This subject deserves attention since an analysis of the texts show they are written in a context where the persecuted Church also grew and eventually became the most important institution in society. It would be interesting to discuss the relationship between persecution and growth, since the

⁸¹⁸Tertullian Apologeticum 50:3.

⁸¹⁹Engberg, Martyrdom and Persecution,”95; W.H.C. Frend *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church. A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 257-258.

⁸²⁰Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Rhetorical Structure in Tertullian’s `Ad Scapulam`,” *Vigilliae Christianae* 56 (2002): 49-51

rise and persecution of Christians in the global south has also been linked to examples from patristic period.

6.4 Conclusion

The major contributions of this project to knowledge are realized largely through the methodological approach of the study. The martyr and apologetic texts grew out of the same predicament of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. This project has shown the usefulness of combining both texts for a comprehensive image of the persecution and martyrdom. While the martyr texts describe the events for a Christian audience with the perlocutory effect of stimulating admiration and determination to follow the martyr's example; the apologetic texts are addressed mainly to a non-Christian audience to explain the Christian faith, answer questions about the rites and traditions of the Christians by demonstrating the fallacy and prejudicial nature of the accusations against the Christians. The perlocutory effect of the apologies is to contribute to eliminate the hostilities and to integrate Christianity into the socio-religious landscape of the Roman Empire and to win them into Christianity. Therefore, the main finding of the research is the proposal to integrate the apologetic texts to corroborate and supplement the martyr texts on the subject of the persecution and martyrdom of the early Christians in the Roman Empire.

The external comparisons of the texts which are derived from the internal comparison show that the texts are very similar in most ways but with little differentiations when compared to each other. The twists and differences in the texts do not contradict each other but rather emphasize the blinded or blurred sides of each other thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the Christian image of the hostilities when used together. This systematic comparison has also helped to address the submission status of the apologetic texts particularly those addressed to the authorities.

The submission status of the texts is tackled using the few twists and differences between the texts. Scholars are divided on the submission status of the apologies, while a good majority considers the apologies to be a pure literary fiction; others maintain they were factual incidents that happened in the Roman Empire. The literary critical approach based on Kennedy's rhetorical critical model and systematic comparison method, it is evident that the authors of the apologies were intended to submit their texts to their addressees in order to stop the hostilities and even more importantly, convert them to Christianity. This conclusion affirms Judith Lieu's thesis which suggests that the martyr and apologetic texts being influenced by the same social setting, are very similar in many respects.⁸²¹

Finally, the study rediscovers the history of Ghanaian martyrs (both European and African missionaries), a history that is still not largely written but deserves to be known. A comparative study between the inceptions of Christianity in the early Roman and Ghanaian contexts offers a new perspective to Ghanaian Christianity. The blood of the Ghanaian martyrs can therefore be the 'seed' of a true Ghanaian and biblically founded Christianity. The examples of these martyrs can help curb the effect of the prosperity preaching and mould Christians who are able to stand for their values against rampant corruption and money-centered attitude that is affecting Ghana's developmental agenda.

⁸²¹Lieu, "Audience of Apologetics," 208-223.

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