

Attitude of Tertullian toward the Public Games
as expressed in the De Spectaculis

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
the College Department of St. Meinrad
Seminary in partial fulfilment of the re-
quirements for a Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Kenneth Graehler
May, 1959
St. Meinrad Seminary
St. Meinrad, Indiana



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction.....	1
A. Life of Tertullian.....	1
B. Background of Work.....	2
II. Tertullian's condemnation of Games.....	3
A. Close Connection with Idolatry in:.....	3
1. Origins.....	4
2. Titles.....	5
3. Equipments.....	6
4. Particular Games such as:.....	7
a. Circus.....	7
b. Theatre.....	9
c. Stadium.....	9
d. Amphitheatre.....	10
B. Source of Pleasure, Sin and Other Foolishness.....	10
1. Theatre.....	11
2. Circus.....	12
a. Race Course.....	12
b. Charioteers.....	13
3. Amphitheatre.....	13
a. Gladiators.....	13
4. Stadium.....	14
a. Wrestling.....	14
b. Boxing.....	15
III. Conclusion.....	15

I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a synthesis of the attitude of Tertullian toward the games or spectacles as expressed in his work, De Spectaculis. By "games" is understood the idea of "shows" broadly taken, which includes the spectator sports of the amphitheatre, circus and stadium and the idea of "shows" more strictly understood, which includes the performances of the theatre. First, there is a consideration of Tertullian's life and the background of De Spectaculis. Then follows the synthesis of Tertullian's two main reasons for condemning the games, viz., their connection with idolatry and the arousing of illicit passions in the spectators of such games. Finally, there are given conclusions that can be drawn from analyzing such a work. For a better analysis of the writings, a consideration of the life of the author is necessary.

A. LIFE OF TERTULLIAN

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus was born about 155 A.D. of pagan parents at Carthage. He received a thorough education in law and literature and gained a good reputation in Rome for his knowledge of law. Around 197 A.D., Tertullian was converted to the Christian faith and was baptized. Not long after, he was ordained priest and then started his literary career, which was to be advantageous to the Christians for about ten years only. Becoming overzealous, Tertullian joined the Montanists around 207 A.D. He became head of a group of Montanists, who were later called Tertullianists, and this group remained in Carthage until the time of St. Augustine, who converted the last of them. During his Montanistic period, Tertullian wrote just as strongly against the Church as he had written in defence of it during his Pre-Montanistic period. The exact date of Tertullian's death is unknown, but it must have been after 220 A.D.¹

B. BACKGROUND OF WORK

De Spectaculis was written by Tertullian probably around 197 A.D.²

There is a reference to this work in Chapter 13 of Tertullian's De Idololatria, where he says, "de spectaculis autem et voluptatibus eiusmodi suum jam volumen implevimus."³ Reference is also made to De Spectaculis in Tertullian's work, De Cultu Feminarum, which was written during a severe persecution, probably that of Severus. There is likewise an implication of this work in the writing, De Corona, where Tertullian mentions writing De Spectaculis in Greek also. "Sed et huic materiae... Graeco quoque stylo satisfacimus."⁴ The occasion for Tertullian's writing such a work was probably the celebration of games because of some great happening. The games were, long before, a part of the people of the Roman empire and it must have been spurious celebration of games for some reason or other that prompted Tertullian to write such a work. Correlating the time of writing of this work with the occasions for presentation of games, Tertullian probably wrote De Spectaculis during the games celebrating Severus' return to Rome after his victory over Albinus around 198 A.D. He could not have written De Spectaculis during the secular games in 204 A.D. because it is certain that he wrote the work before 202 A.D. Nor was it written after Severus' edict against the Christians, for Tertullian would have directed his attack of games more in reference to persecution of Christians.

Tertullian wrote this treatise to catechumens, as is evident in the first line of the work, "dei servi, qui cum maxime ad deum acceditis."⁵ The treatise is a complete condemnation of all games from the historical aspect, because they are rooted in idolatry,⁶ and from an ethical aspect, because they arouse illicit passions in the man who attends them.⁷ Tertullian condemned four general classes of shows, viz., the spectator sports in the

circus, stadium and amphitheatre, and the plays in the theatre. For source material in regard to the first part of the treatise, which deals with the origin and history of shows, Tertullian used the works of Suetonius and perhaps also Varro's Libri rerum divinarum from which Suetonius got much of the material for his own work. That Tertullian had the necessary knowledge and was qualified to write about the games is evident from the fact that he was known for his "far from exemplary conduct" before his conversion, i.e., he was accustomed to frequent such spectacles and thus he knew what he was writing about from experience. In fact, he belonged to a group of gladiators before becoming a Christian.

II. CONDEMNATION OF GAMES

A. BECAUSE OF IDOLATRY

Tertullian begins his treatise by pointing out the goodness of all things. He says that the horse which was used in the Circus, the stone of the amphitheatre, the voice of the singer in the theatre, and the powers of the body are all good.⁸ Tertullian is following a basic Christian principle of ethics that all things are good, but it is the misuse or abuse of a thing that makes it an evil thing. For example, liquor is not evil in itself. It is the abuse of the amount imbibed that makes the evil. So Tertullian grants that the horse, voice, and buildings are indeed good because they were created by God, just as the proper use of liquor is good, for God would not have otherwise created the means whereby we are able to have it, viz., the process of fermentation. But Tertullian says, "haec sit tota ratio damnationis, perversa administratio conditionis a conditis."⁹ The whole consideration of the problem with regard to shows is summed up by Tertullian in the same chapter when he says that the eyes are not given for lustful looking, nor the mouth for evil-speaking, nor the ears for hearing evil, nor any other

organ for performing evil.

"Neque enim oculos ad concupiscentiam sumpsimus et linguam ad maliloquium et aures ad excetaculum maliloquii et gulam ad gulae crimen et ventrem ad gulae societatem et genitalia ad excessus impudicitiae et manus ad vim et gressus ad vagam vitam." ¹⁰

After a somewhat lengthy introduction, Tertullian goes more to the point at issue, i.e., the condemnation of the shows because of their close connection with idolatry. In his arguments for considering the games outlawed for Christians, he says that every Christian at Baptism renounced the attendance at shows or games, for the games are works and pomps of the devil. This he goes on to prove in succeeding chapters. ¹¹ This argument is the key argument in this first part of Tertullian's work. He himself says in Chapter III of his treatise that one can not find anywhere in Scripture the command specifically given, not to go to the theatre, the circus, amphitheatre or stadium. But insofar as these places are places dedicated to the devil, it is by all means necessary for the Christians to avoid them.

1. ORIGINS

The first object of Tertullian's attack in regard to the connection of the games with idolatry is their origin in idolatry. On the origin of the word "ludi" itself, there is a consideration of two possible sources. On the one hand, the Romans in borrowing games from the Lydians who, under Tyrrhenus, established the celebration of games in connection with religion, might have given the name "ludi" to such celebrations. On the other hand Varro wanted to derive the name "ludi" from "ludus", i.e., the "sport" of the young men during holy days and in temples and solemnities. ¹²

At any rate, Tertullian says that the games originated from false religion. ¹³ At first the games were called, "Liberalia", in honor of the god Liber or Bacchus who, the Romans thought, gave them the gift of the vine.

The games were then called, "Consualia", in honor of the god, Neptune, who was also called Consus. Neptune was known to the Romans as god of counsel because he advised the rape of the Sabine virgins, as wives for his soldiers. To this same Consus there is a dedicated altar at the head of many race courses in the circus with the inscription, "Consus consilio Mars duello Lares coillo potentes."¹⁴ At such altars sacrifices were offered on certain days. Later on the games were dedicated to the god Jupiter Teretrius and called the "Tarpeian" games because they were celebrated on the Tarpeian hill in Rome. Still later the games were also celebrated in honor of the god, Mars, and also of the goddess, Rubigo, among others.

2. TITLES

Tertullian's next line of attack in regard to the connection of the games with idolatry is their titles. The dedication of the games during this time was of two types. First, there were games plainly dedicated to various gods and goddesses such as Apollo, Ceres, Neptune, Cybele and Flora, of which Tertullian gives a list when he says, "Megalenses enim et Apollinares, item Cereales et Neptunales et Latiare et Florales in commune celebrantur."¹⁵ These were annual affairs celebrated at certain fixed times in honor of gods for favors received.

The second type of games mentioned by Tertullian with regard to the connection by titles with idolatry is the games celebrated in honor of kings' birthdays, public successes, municipal festivals and deaths of important men. It is difficult, however, to see why Tertullian includes this group of games as connected with idolatry. Concerning the idea of games in honor of public successes, it was mentioned above that Tertullian might have written De Spectaculis during the celebrations for Severus' victory over Albinus, much as is done nowadays when victory is gained in war or contests

or in any other way. Likewise when a great man dies, although games are not celebrated, nevertheless, a speech may be given or a statue put up in the same spirit as this second group of games were celebrated. With regard to municipal festivals also, there are similar instances of these nowadays such as centenary celebrations. Why then did Tertullian include this second group of games as connected with idolatry? Perhaps his zeal for perfection, which forbade any semblance of pleasure, prompted him to include them as idolatrous. This is only slightly feasible, however, since a man of Tertullian's standing should have realized the importance of some licit pleasure. There is a possible hint as to why Tertullian considered this second group of games just as idolatrous as the first where he says, "licebat deis suis faciant, perinde mortuis suis ut diis faciunt."¹⁶ From this then a conclusion might be drawn that idolatry was so widespread at this time that there was a connection with it in whatever a person did. And Tertullian wanting to protect the neophytes, for whom De Spectaculis was written, included this second group of celebrations as idolatrous, insofar as wherever they took place, they were bound to be connected with idolatry in some way or another. At any rate the number of these two types of games was considerable, and, although not all of the celebration days of the second group of games were holidays where business had to be closed down, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180) there were at least one hundred and thirty-five such holidays where business was closed down.¹⁷

3.EQUIPMENTS

Tertullian next speaks out against the "equipments" of the games or, more specifically, against the pomp that goes before the games. There must have been a long, drawn-out procession or parade before the games started, and it is the pomp of these parades that Tertullian attacks when he says,

"de simulacrorum, de imaginum agmine...de sedibus...de exuviis."¹⁸ All these things have a connection with the pagan gods, and added to the fact that rites and sacrifices preceded, occurred simultaneous with, and followed these pompous parades, as it is said in the same chapter, "quanta praeterea sacra, quanta sacrificia praecedant, intercedant, succedant,"¹⁹ the outcome would be one big idolatrous celebration. This would be certainly an offence against God. Thus Tertullian says at the end of the same chapter, "quaevis idololatria sordide instructa vel modice locuples et splendida est censu criminis sui."²⁰

4. PARTICULAR GAMES

a. CIRCUS

Tertullian in subsequent paragraphs continues to attack particular aspects of the four general classes of games he has condemned. He devotes a large section to the particular aspects of idolatry in the circus, as, for instance, he says that the circus is dedicated to the Sun, to whom an altar in the middle of the circus is dedicated; and that the origin of the name "circus" is held by some, viz., the Greeks, to have come from the daughter of the Sun, Circe. He also talks of the structures of the circus as idolatrous, such as "ova"²¹ dedicated to Castor and Pollux; "delphines",²² with ornaments dedicated to Neptune and others; "obelisci enormitas",²³ dedicated to the Sun; and "euripo",²⁴ which was an artificial lake in the middle of the circus. Johnston says²⁵ that one type of game in the circus was the hunts (venationes) where wild beast would be turned loose to be slaughtered by men trained for the purpose. One type of such beast was the crocodile which was kept in an artificial lake in the middle of the arena. This is what Tertullian is talking about when he says "euripus", which was dedicated to the mother of the council of gods. The use of the crocodile in such

"venationes" was probably more predominant in Carthage, where Tertullian lived and wrote this treatise under consideration, than in the rest of the Roman empire, since the crocodiles were more available in Africa than in Italy.

"Places" of celebration of games as connected with idolatry is next considered by Tertullian, and in that regard he says, "loca nos non contaminant per se, sed quae in locis fiunt, a quibus et ipsa loca contaminari altercati sumus."²⁶ Hence Tertullian says that it is not the place than contaminates, but rather what is done there, and the circus is one such contaminating place, as he says in the same chapter, "Si Capitolium intravero, a Deo excidam."²⁷ The idea is that there is enough sin in the world without a person making himself more liable to it by putting himself into an occasion of sin. Thus because of the connection of a place with idolatry, which makes it an occasion of sin for anyone and, more especially, for the neophytes, the place where the games are celebrated are condemned. Tertullian does make the distinction that if the cause is an honest one and pertains to a necessary business or duty, it cannot be condemned for its idolatry. For, as he says, "plateae et forum et balneae et stabula et ipse domus nostrae sine idolis omnino non sunt."²⁸ This also points out the idea expressed above, viz., the widespread idolatry, for there were idols for the streets, forum and baths. Even the stables were dedicated to the goddess, Epona, as Tertullian says in his Apologeticum,²⁹ and, likewise, the houses themselves were dedicated to idolatry, as he says in De Idololatria, "ostiarum deos apud Romanos, Cardeam a cardinibus appellatam et Forculum a foribus et Limentinum a limine et ipsum Janum a janua."³⁰

Tertullian continues with a more specific attack on the circus as idolatrous in regard to performances insofar as he says that in former times

horsemanship was guiltless, but now, being connected with idols, it is "daemoniorum officia."³¹ The horses are dedicated to Mercury, four-horsed chariots are dedicated to the Sun, while those with two horses are dedicated to the Moon. Tertullian even goes so far as to condemn the colors designating the different charioteers and the corresponding colors of the trappings of the horses, of which there were four. He calls them the "aurigas coloribus idololatriae."³² The four colors were: red, at first dedicated to the summer but later to Mars; white, dedicated at first to winter but later to the Zephyrs; green, dedicated to spring and blue to autumn. Johnston says³³ that the last two colors were probably put into use during the reign of Augustus and that during Domitian's reign, purple and gold colors were also used.

b. THEATRE

Of the four general types of games condemned, the stage in its connection with idolatry incensed Tertullian most. He considered the stage as completely given over to idolatry in its dedications, in particular to such patrons as Apollo, the Muses, Minerva, and Mercury. The attack against the goddess of love and god of wine, or drunkenness, viz., Venus and Bacchus, is especially strong. He says that Venus and Bacchus conspire, thereby making a combination, i.e., of theatre dedicated to Venus and of wine dedicated to Bacchus, prompting men to such free actions, that such performances are called "Liberalia".

"Sed Veneri et Libero convenit. Duo ista daemona conspirata et conjurata inter se sunt ebrietatis et libidinis. Itaque theatrum Veneris Liberi quoque domus est. Nam et alios ludos scaenicos Liberalia proprie vocabant, praeterquam Libero devotos, etiam a Libero institutos."³⁴

c. STADIUM

Completing the condemnation of the four types of games because of their

connection with idolatry, Tertullian condemns the stadium by mentioning the gods and goddesses to whom various aspects of the stadium are dedicated. Such gods and goddesses are Jupiter, Hercules, Neptune, Minerva, the Muses, Apollo, and Mars.³⁵ These were the major idols, but there were more besides these. The point of attack against the amphitheatre is similar to what has been considered above, i.e., in as much as it was used for idolatry.

d.AMPHITHEATRE

The condemnation of the amphitheatre can be summed up by Tertullian's own words where he says, "Pluribus enim et asperioribus nominibus amphitheatrum consecratur quam capitolium."³⁶

B.SOURCES OF PLEASURE, SIN, AND OTHER FOOLISHNESS

Then Tertullian goes on to condemn the games because they are sources of pleasure, disquiet and other passions contrary to the goodness of the Nature of the Holy Spirit. His argument therefore amounts to this that since these shows instill passions and pleasures contrary to the goodness of the Holy Spirit, Christians cannot attend them lest they be led to sin. In other words, because the games are an occasion of sin, the Christians cannot attend them. Tertullian was certainly convinced of the fact that they were an occasion of sin, for he would not otherwise have said, "Nam et si qui modeste et probe spectaculis fruitur pro dignitatis vel aetatis vel etiam naturae suae condicione, non tamen immobilis animi est et sine tacita spiritus passione. Nemo ad voluptatem sine affectu."³⁷ The presentation of the shows must have been at a pretty low state for this to have been true. At any rate Tertullian, in succeeding chapters, attacks particular aspects of each of the four general classes of shows and an enumeration of these various aspects will now be considered.

1. THEATRE

Tertullian's general condemnation of the theatre is for the immodesty to be found there. His general attitude is expressed in Chapter 25 when he speaks ironically about how a person is going to fare when he goes to such shows in the theatre. Surely, he says, a man will not learn modesty from the players. Why, the very adorning of men and women and this party-spirit are the things that inflame carnal lusts. Besides that, no one cares whether he is seen or not at such places. But does he care about the Prophet's words while the tragedian is acting and the player is making music? This is what Tertullian says:

"Pudicitiam, (opinor), ediscet attonitus in mimos. Immo in omni spectaculo nullum magis scandalum occurret quam ille ipse mulierem et virorum accuratio cultura. Ipsa consensio ipsa in favoribus aut conspiratio aut dissensio inter se de commercia scintillas libidinum conflabellat. Nemo denique in spectaculo ineundo prius cogitat nisi videri et videre. Sed Tragoedo vociferante exclamationes ille alicuius prophetae retractabit et inter effeminati tibicinis modos psalmum secum comminiscetur."³⁸

He also by way of condemnation chides the father who guards his virgin daughter from lewd language but who has the audacity to take her to the theatre and thus undermine his whole effort to protect his daughter.³⁹ He speaks more particularly in regard to this matter of the immodesty of the theatre when he alludes to the practice of bringing prostitutes themselves on stage, where they are made fun of, and where the men argue about their price, their rank, their age, their dwelling, and other things which, Tertullian says, are not even fit to consider.

"Ipsa etiam prostibula, publicae libidinis hostiae, in scaena proferuntur, plus miserae in praesentia feminarum, quibus solis latebant, perque omnis aetatis, omnis dignitatis ora transducuntur; locus stipes, elogium, etiam quibus opus non est, praedicatur."⁴⁰

In the same chapter, Tertullian calls the theatre the, "privatam consistorium impudicitiae." He even goes so far as to say that the theatre is so much

a place of the devil that if a person goes to the theatre he may become possessed by the devil as he says one woman did.⁴¹

Finally, in one argument, which is a bit far-fetched, Tertullian condemns the theatre because the players shave and wear shoes thus making them taller and therefore making Christ a liar, who said, "Nemo potest adicere cubitum unum ad staturam suam."⁴² Tertullian is probably adding mere number to his arguments here. Perhaps the rigidity of his spirit led him to believe that shaving one's beard and wearing high shoes were positively evil. As has been said, his character was of such type, and it was because of his rigidity that he later joined the Montanists and formed a most strict sect, called the Tertullianists. At any rate, he does include these arguments in condemning the theatre, though they are of dubious value.

2.CIRCUS

a.RACE COURSE

Tertullian's condemnation of the circus because it instilled evil passions is directed against the race course and the charioteers. In general, he considered the circus a place where madness consistently presided, "... ubi proprie furor praesidet."⁴³ Concerning the race course, Tertullian did consider more particular aspects, such as blows, kicks, runnings, and jumpings, when he said, "Indigna conspectu tuo non negabis, pugnos et calces et colaphes et omnem petulantiam manus et quamcumque humani oris, id est divinae imaginis, depugnationem. Non probabis usquam vanos cursus et jaculatus et saltus vaniores."⁴⁴ He mentions these points with regard to the race course, but they seem to be describing the wrestling which occurred in the amphitheatre which will be mentioned later. Maybe Tertullian is describing the reactions and excitements of the audience present for the field events, for he mentions in another place that the man who in the streets restrains

quarrels, in the circus grows wild with excitement. "Qui in Plateis litem manu agentem aut compescit aut detestatur, idem in stadio gravioribus pugnis suffragium ferat." ⁴⁵

b.CHARIOTEERS

The second consideration of the circus, viz., the charioteers, was by far the predominant drawing card for the circus. Tertullian condemns them because they disquiet the soul and have so much pomp. He considers the charioteer to be, "animarum inquietator, furiarum minister, statuum minister," ⁴⁶ and he is no doubt here considering the spirit of excitement transmitted to the audience from such a competitive sport. These chariot races were by far the most exciting and most frequently celebrated games of the circus as Johnston says. ⁴⁷ The danger of the chariot race was the element for which the Romans clamored, and not necessarily the speed. What they appreciated most, in their bloodthirstiness, was a good wreck where someone was stepped on by the horses or driven over by another driver.

3.AMPHITHEATRE*GLADIATORS

The amphitheatre is condemned in general by Tertullian for the cruelty, impiety, and brutality found there. He rebukes the man who is shaken at the sight of the corpse of a man who had died a natural death, but who in the amphitheatre looks with steady gaze on bodies mangled and torn to pieces in the gladiatorial combats. ⁴⁸ There is mention in three specific places of the reasons why the predominant sport of the amphitheatre, viz., the gladiatorial combat, was to be condemned. Tertullian says in one place, "Certe quidem gladiatores innocentes in ludum veneunt, ut publicae voluptatis hostiae fiant. Etiam qui damnantur in ludum, quale est ut de leviori debito in homicidas emendatione proficiant?" ⁴⁹ In other words Tertullian is against the idea that the innocent men should have to go into the amphi-

theatre and kill or be killed. He admits the justice of the guilty being punished, for he says, "Bonum est cum puniuntur nocentes."⁵⁰ It had been the case in the early days of such contests that men who were guilty of some crime served as gladiators. But after a while there was not enough convicted men to serve the purposes of the amphitheatre, so innocent men were pressed into service. This is what Tertullian is condemning. In the second part of the above quoted passage, Tertullian says that, although it is good to punish the guilty, it is not right to force men to engage in this sport, who are guilty only of petty crimes, thereby making them guilty of an even greater crime, i.e., murder.

Tertullian also condemns gladiatorial combats because of the passions aroused in the audience. The people, he says, are moved to urge the gladiator to murder, (this was the case where the people gave the "thumbs down" treatment as a sign for murdering the gladiator who was at the disadvantage) and they are moved to demand for the victorious gladiator the staff, which freed a free man from further necessity of fighting, and cap, which freed the slave entirely and therefore by such actions they allowed places in society for murderers, i.e., the freed gladiators.⁵¹

The ascetic rigorism of Tertullian prompted him also to include another argument against the gladiatorial combats which applied more to those who were of the faith. He says that by all means the faithful should not go to such games because they thereby give testimony to the gladiators with the same mouth that has given homage to the Holy Eucharist and applaud the gladiators with the same hands that previously had been folded in prayer.⁵²

4. STADIUM

a. WRESTLING

The last consideration to be made of games condemned, because they

instilled evil passions in the hearts of men, is that of the games in the stadium. Of this type of game Tertullian makes mention in two specific places only. He condemns wrestling because of the misuse of strength, i.e., to cause hurt to another, and because of the vanity of the wrestlers in their training to acquire powerful-looking bodies. Thus he says,

"Nusquam tibi vires aut injuriosae aut vanae placebunt, sed nec cura facticii corporis, ut plasticam dei supergressa, et propter Graeciae otium atiles homines oderis. Et palaestrica diaboli negotium est: primos homines diabolus elisit."⁵³

b. BOXING

Tertullian likewise condemns the boxer for a reason similar to that of the condemnation of the wrestler, viz., the misuse of the body. He could not approve of the blows and wounds inflicted in such matches and so he says, "Sane et ille artifex pugnorum impunitus ibit. Tales enim cicatrices caestuum et callos pugnorum et aurium fungos a deo cum plasmaretur accepit; ideo illi oculos deus commodavit, ut vapulando deficient." ⁵⁴ Thus we conclude the synthesis of Tertullian's attitude toward the games as he wrote it in his De Spectaculis. The two general reasons, then, for which Tertullian condemned the four types of games (theatre, circus, amphitheatre and stadium) were because they were connected with idolatry and because they aroused people, both spectators and participators, to passions which were contrary to the spirit of the Holy Spirit.

III. CONCLUSION

What effect did Tertullian's treatise have on the attendance at the games? How was it accepted by the Christians?, and by the Church? It is hard to say whether Tertullian's treatise had any effect on the attendance at the games or not. There is no evidence, either through documents or actions taken by officials, so it can only be speculated as to whether the

attendance dropped. But considering the asceticism and austerity of the times to which the Church was training her members "by subjecting Christians to an energetic prophylactic discipline," ⁵⁵ as Giordani says, to prepare them for martyrdom, it must be said that there were certainly some who took Tertullian's rigoristic view to heart and ceased attendance at such spectacles.

In regard the Christians' viewpoint, Giordani adds that "asking Christians not to attend the public games was like forbidding our little boys to take part in any sports at all. It meant the same sacrifice, it meant depriving them of the surest, noisiest, and most popular collective entertainment that life in those days afforded." ⁵⁶ Apparently then, there must have been a number who strained at the impact of Tertullian's words, possibly an even greater number than those who took the words to heart. Tertullian, no doubt, expected the conflict in the hearts of less rigorous Christians, and knowing the objections of such a group which tried to justify its going to the games, he answered two objections in the treatise itself. He answers those who contend that there is no commandment in Scriptures forbidding shows by recalling to mind that illicit pleasures are forbidden therein. And he answers the objection of those who say that God sees these spectacles from Heaven and is not defiled by saying that the sun shines in sewers and it is not contaminated by them. He then mentions that God looks on the spectacles as a judge not as a spectator. ⁵⁷

Concerning the Church's action in reference to Tertullian's treatise, Giordani says, "because the condemnation was too general the Church did not accept it as a rule." ⁵⁸ Perhaps he is saying that the Church considered the treatise as too much external evaluation, but the fact is, the ethical principles of Tertullian still are valid and of value. Why then did not the

Church do something more positive? There are no documents or evidence that the Church took positive action, but just because the evidence is lacking, it does not follow from that that the Church did not act. The question must stand answered by saying that the Church probably did do something, but due to the fact that the Church follows the policy of working through its individual magistrates rather than through a bold, forthright condemnation that such and such cannot be done, no evidence is left. The Church sets forth such statements only when there is a definite universal need for it. Even though we have no indications of the Church's stand with regard to the work, it must be taken for what it is worth, and certainly Tertullian's principles are of value.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cassidy, Molders of the Medieval Mind, p.103, places Tertullian's death at c.240 A.D. Quasten, The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus, p. 247, estimates Tertullian's death at 220 A.D. Cassidy further refers to the Early History of the Church, (Vol. III) by Duchesne.
2. Quasten, p.293, suggests the more probable date as 197 A.D. Dodgson, Vol.1 Apologetic and Practical Treatises, suggests the date 198 A.D. according to a reference in De Idololatria, and sometime before 201 A.D. according to an implication in De Corona.
3. De Idololatria, 13 (CSEL 20, 44, 8)
4. De Corona, 6 (PL2, 2103 B)
5. De Spectaculis, 1. (CSEL 20, 1, 5)
6. Spect. 3-14 (CSEL 20, 4, 18-16, 5)
7. Spect. 14-30 (CSEL 20, 16, 5-29, 25)
8. Spect. 2 (CSEL 20, 2, 8-10)
9. Spect. 2 (CSEL 20, 4, 7)
10. Spect. 2 (CSEL 20, 3, 21)
11. Spect. 4 (CSEL 20, 6, 2-4)
12. Spect. 5 (CSEL 20, 6, 27-7, 3)
13. Spect. 5 (CSEL 20, 7, 26-8, 2)
14. Spect. 5 (CSEL 20, 7, 19)
15. Spect. 6 (CSEL 20, 8, 6)
16. Spect. 6 (CSEL 20, 8, 16)
17. Johnston, Private Life of the Romans, p. 220
18. Spect. 7 (CSEL 20, 8, 24)
19. Spect. 7 (CSEL 20, 8, 26)
20. Spect. 7 (CSEL 20, 9, 9)
21. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 9, 20)

22. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 9, 21)
23. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 9, 25)
24. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 10, 2)
25. Johnston, p. 242
26. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 10, 20)
27. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 10, 18-19)
28. Spect. 8 (CSEL 20, 10, 14-15)
29. Apol. 16 (PL 1, 421 A)
30. Idol. 15 (CSEL 20, 48, 7)
31. Spect. 9 (CSEL 20, 10, 29)
32. Spect. 9 (CSEL 20, 11, 13)
33. Johnston, p. 237
34. Spect. 10 (CSEL 20, 12, 19-24)
35. Spect. 11 (CSEL 20, 13, 20-14, 8)
36. Spect. 12 (CSEL 20, 15, 9)
37. Spect. 15 (CSEL 20, 17, 6-9)
38. Spect. 25 (CSEL 20, 25, 3-11)
39. Spect. 21 (CSEL 20, 22, 6-7)
40. Spect. 17 (CSEL 20, 19, 2-6)
41. Spect. 26 (CSEL 20, 25, 22)
42. Matt. 6; 27
43. Spect. 16 (CSEL 20, 17, 22)
44. Spect. 18 (CSEL 20, 20, 1-4)
45. Spect. 21 (CSEL 20, 22, 8-9)
46. Spect. 23 (CSEL 20, 23, 14)
47. Johnston, p. 227-239
48. Spect. 21 (CSEL 20, 22, 9-11)

49.Spect. 19 (CSEL 20, 20, 24-27)

50.Spect. 19 (CSEL 20, 19, 15)

51.Spect. 21 (CSEL 20, 22, 16)

52.Spect. 18 (CSEL 20, 25, 16-19)

53.Spect. 18 (CSEL 20, 20, 6-8)

54.Spect. 23 (CSEL 20, 24, 3-6)

55.Giordani, The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers, p. 65

56.Giordani, p. 56

57.Spect. 20 (CSEL 20, 21, 5-11)

58.Giordani, p. 60

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cassidy, F. P., Molders of the Medieval Mind, Herder, St. Louis, 1944
2. Dodgson, C., English Translation of Apologetic and Practical Treatises, Vol. I in Library of the Fathers, edited by J. H. Parker, J.G.F., J. Rivington, Baxter, London, 1842
3. Ellspermann, G. L., The Attitude of the Early Christian Latin Writers toward Pagan Literature and Learning, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1949
4. Giordani, I., The Social Message of the Early Church Fathers (translated from the Italian by A.I. Zizzamia), St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson, New Jersey, 1944
5. Johnston, H.W., The Private Life of the Romans, The Lake Classical Series, Scott, Foresman and Co., Chicago, 1903
6. Quasten, J., The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus, Vol. II of Patrology Series, Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1950
7. Tertullian, Apologeticum (PL 1, cols, 257-536), Paris, 1844
8. Tertullian, De Corona (PL 2, cols, 76-102), Paris, 1844
9. Tertullian, De Idololatria (CSEL 20, A. Reiffersheid and G. Wissowa, Vienna, 1890
10. Tertullian, De Spectaculis (CSEL 20, A. Reiffersheid and G. Wissowa), Vienna, 1890

ARCHABBEY LIBRARY



3 0764 1002 9642 0