

Chapter 1 : Tacitus the Agricola and Germania

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Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Christus, from whom the name had its origin It is impossible today to say who altered the letter e into an i. Tacitus records that Claudius was the ruler who gave procurators governing power. Yelnitsky argues that the use of "procurator" in Annals Brandon suggests that there is no real difference between the two ranks. Philo also uses this Greek term for the governors of Egypt a prefect , of Asia a proconsul and Syria a legate. Portier has stated that the consistency in the references by Tacitus, Josephus and the letters to Emperor Trajan by Pliny the Younger reaffirm the validity of all three accounts. Hochart had proposed that the passage was a pious fraud , [49] but the editor of the Oxford edition dismissed his suggestion and treated the passage as genuine. Eddy and Gregory A. Meier states that there is no historical or archaeological evidence to support the argument that a scribe may have introduced the passage into the text. Dunn considers the passage as useful in establishing facts about early Christians , e. Brown and John P. Meier state that in addition to establishing that there was a large body of Christians in Rome, the Tacitus passage provides two other important pieces of historical information, namely that by around AD 60 it was possible to distinguish between Christians and Jews in Rome and that even pagans made a connection between Christianity in Rome and its origin in Judea. Eddy has stated that given his position as a senator Tacitus was also likely to have had access to official Roman documents of the time and did not need other sources. Charles Guignebert argued that "So long as there is that possibility [that Tacitus is merely echoing what Christians themselves were saying], the passage remains quite worthless". France states that the Tacitus passage is at best just Tacitus repeating what he had heard through Christians. Suetonius on Christians and Pliny the Younger on Christians Tacitus is one of three key Roman authors who may refer to early Christians , the other two being Pliny the Younger and Suetonius.

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Christus, from whom the name had its origin, Yet again, this is far too conjectural to hang any kind of argument from, especially given the problematic nature of the Ant. But there is a certain coherence about this last conjecture. A potential counter-argument to the idea that Tacitus consulted Jews about this Jewish sect could be based on his digressions about Jews and Judaism in his History V. If he was so virulently anti-Semitic, would he be any more likely to ask Jews about this sect than he would be to accept Christian testimony? A careful reading of the passages in question, however, shows that his scorn is actually for the Jewish religion, which as a Roman aristocrat and priest of the Roman religion, he finds alien, bizarre and quite repugnant. This does not mean Tacitus would not have spoken to the most obvious source of information about a sect of this strange religion – other Jews. After all, the clear interpolations in Josephus Ant. Yet the idea of an interpolation in this Tacitus passage is a non-issue. So Carrier is going to have an uphill battle to argue all these thousands of Classicists with perhaps one exception have got it wrong. If we had anything like the manuscript evidence for any other ancient text that we have for the New Testament materials we are likely to find their level of later changes and additions is actually not so unusual. Carrier seems obsessed with trying to reduce history to statistical probabilities. As noted above, the idea that Tacitus must have got any information about Christians from Pliny is conjecture without much basis. If we turn to the letter Carrier is drawing on here, however, we find no such thing. He is saying he is not clear on exactly what it is Christians are meant to be punished for and which of them exactly should be executed, not that he does not know what they believe. He is not writing to Trajan perplexed at what they believed, but for guidance on which of the many Christians he has uncovered should be executed. So Carrier overstates the ignorance of Pliny about Christians and then makes a mighty conjectural leap to attribute a similar level of ignorance to Tacitus. So it would not be surprising that he would have kept the focus on the guilt of Nero and not mentioned any Christians at all. Here and in many other places Mythicists speak as though Christians were desperate to prove Jesus existed and were therefore motivated by this to interpolate mentions of him or destroy works that fail to note him. Josephus may have been preserved in part because of his mentions of Jesus, but the fact that all of his works, particularly Antiquities, refers to a range of people and events from both testaments of the Christian Bible means his corpus is likely to have been widely read and copied anyway. Indeed, if Carrier can read any Classical writers at all, he has a succession of Christian and Muslim scholars down many centuries to thank for that privilege. Moving on to Suetonius, Carrier writes: He notes that M. II spelling is simply a scribal error. There is certainly evidence of some confusion about the pronunciation of the name, as Tertullian noted later in the second century: What accusation can be brought against words, except that a certain pronunciation of a name sounds barbarous, or is unlucky or abusive or obscene? But Carrier continues blithely despite this, and goes on to pile supposition on supposition: If that is the case, then what would become the Testimonium Taciteum was originally about the sect of Jewish rebels first suppressed under Claudius, who were at that time led by their namesake Chrestus and were thereafter named for him whether he was still alive or not. Writing as early as c. How large this community was seven years later is unknown, but if, as Carrier himself notes, the Jewish population of the city was in the tens of thousands, a Christian population of up to or even over one thousand hardly stretches credulity. Why would he not use the present tense if he believed the group was still extant, as Christians were? Tacitus is talking about events in the past, so it makes sense he should use the past tense here. The first difficulty is that while the Fire is reasonably well-attested, we only have three detailed descriptions: As already noted, the latter two put the blame on Nero and the lost account of Pliny the Elder would have done so as well, so none of these three writers had any strong incentive to mention any scapegoating of Christians. Only the more judicious and sceptical Tacitus is interested in exploring the question of who was to blame and who was blamed. Carrier draws attention to the lack of mentions of this episode in Christian writings, saying: And unlike Tacitus, Sulpicius was writing for a mostly Christian audience and so had no need to digress to explain the origin of Christianity and its name anyway. But no such

Christian tradition exists. We have Suetonius saying that Nero persecuted Christians, though not in the context of blame for the Great Fire. And we have two references to Nero persecuting Christians in Tertullian as well: That such a man was author of our chastisement fills us with pride. For anyone who knows him knows him can understand that anything not supremely good would never have been condemned by Nero. It is not hard, however, to see why Tertullian may have been reluctant to draw attention to the arson accusation, since it may have given his pagan opponents reason to suspect the persecution was actually justified. Gerhard Baudy goes so far as to argue that the arson accusations actually had at least some foundation, linking Christian apocalyptic literature with its thinly veiled threats of destruction made against Rome to speculation that if Christians did not actually start the Great Fire, some of their more radical elements may have had a strong incentive to help it along once it got going. This is highly conjectural, but there is no doubt that Christian apocalyptic contains no shortage of derogatory references to Rome and gloating predictions of its destruction. And Christian traditions also preserve other accusations of arson. The Gospel of Peter has Peter describing his situation after the crucifixion and burial of Jesus: In addition to all these things we were fasting; and we were sitting mourning and weeping night and day until the Sabbath. They do seem to have enjoyed a brief vogue during the very short reign of his namesake in the third century, with the ill-fated emperor Tacitus d. How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom, is hard to sustain given clear and direct references to it in both pagan Suetonius and Christian Tertullian sources and the strong and early Christian tradition that depicted Nero as the archetypal pagan persecutor. But as noted above, the other three accounts of the Great Fire apart from Tacitus are focused on blaming Nero and Christian writers would have had even less incentive to draw attention to the accusation of Christian arson. The other three arguments for dismissing the passage as a reference to Jesus are even weaker. The claim it only refers to Christians and does not mention Jesus is simply factually wrong. And the claim that Tacitus was merely repeating Christian hearsay goes against everything we know about him as a historian and is merely speculation presented as conclusion. What we are left with is a direct reference to Jesus as a historical person, detailing the who, what, when and where of his execution, by one of the most competent, sober, careful and sceptical historians of the ancient world. Tacitus makes literally hundreds of similar passing mentions of minor figures which are accepted without question as testament to the existence of these people, however fleeting. There is no rational reason to treat this one any differently.

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A solution can be found to both of these problems by adducing from fragment 2 new evidence indicating that this fragment indeed represents a primary historical source. This new evidence takes the form of the discovery of a significant statistical relationship among the following three words: The connecting link among, as well as the common source for, the three words listed above appears to be the Hebrew netser branch, descendants--apparently influenced by Isa It is mathematically extremely unlikely that this link with netser represents a random coincidence. Also, it appears that a later Christian redactor of fragment 2 or his target audience would not have known of this connection. Because of this and other contextual explanations, the possibility is largely eliminated that fragment 2 could have been significantly redacted by a later Christian. We are thus left with the substantial probability that this fragment constitutes a primary historical source, most likely via Tacitus. In the well-known section of Annales As will be seen, when it comes to these "Christiani," things are not at all as they have seemed. Fragment 2 was preserved by the Christian historian Sulpicius Severus in his Chronica 2. This fragment will enable us to demonstrate who the Christiani really were, and, as we shall see, they were not Christians. Here as elsewhere in this paper I am using "Christians" as opposed to "Christiani" , "Christianity," and "the Church"to refer to the Pauline version only. The present study demonstrates that frag. In addition, we shall see that the Hebrew name for at least a portion, if not all, of this group was probably "Netsarim" Nazoreans. Let us now turn to frag. This fragment gives the details of the debate within a high-level military council of war called by the Roman army commander Titus just prior to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in Jerusalem in 70, near the end of the first Jewish revolt against Rome. The debate was over whether or not the Roman army should destroy the Temple. For our purposes here, the last half of frag. For it seemed proper to some that a consecrated Temple, distinguished above all that is human, should not be destroyed, as it would serve as a witness to Roman moderation; whereas its destruction would represent a perpetual brand of cruelty. They argued that the destruction of the Temple was a number one priority in order to destroy completely the religion [per Severus. Tacitus or another classical author would have used the word superstitio alien religious belief. For although these religions [i. The Christiani arose from the Jews: With the root removed, the branch [stirps] is easily killed. It is therefore reasonable to conclude with Bernays that Sulpicius Severus depended on Tacitus. His conjecture has indeed been generally accepted. In that case though, as Momigliano observes in "Jacob Bernays" , the net effect would be simply to replace "the name of Tacitus as the source of Sulpicius by the name of the man who was probably the source of Tacitus, Antonius Iulianus: These Christiani are also distinguished in frag. This point of view in frag. The first of these points was made by Bernays and others; the rest are new to this study. This paper will focus on the more relevant portion of the fragment, the second half. The second half of frag. This is particularly true with respect to A quippe used instead of nam before the expression of explanatory and contrasting opinions in a subordinate sentence,[9] B the use of the typically Tacitean at contra,[10] and C the fact that everything else in the last half of this fragment other than the Severean word religio appears either Tacitean or in any event not non-Tacitean. The clear impression given in frag. There can be little doubt the Roman general staff under Titus is portrayed in the final part of frag. With the root removed, the branch [stirps] is easily killed"; see note 1 above as quoting from Isa As will be shown more clearly, frag. I am including only substantives here since the metaphor actually used in frag. B Mohr Paul Siebeck ,]: I have eliminated Semitic meanings that are duplicative. For the statistical reasons, see below. All we have to do at this point then is divide by the total number of nouns in the Latin language to obtain the probability of the Romans or anyone else having randomly arrived at a metaphor which happened to correctly transliterate ultimately into the two Greek names for the sect the New Testament also associates with the "Christiani" of Acts. To simplify this calculation and at the same time ensure reasonable accuracy, we shall eliminate from consideration all Latin proper nouns, since these refer mainly to people and places outside of Israel and it is

most unlikely the Christiani would have chosen their Semitic name, if any, from such a list for the effect of this on our calculation, see below. Therefore, we shall consider only Latin common nouns. An estimate based on a representative sampling of common nouns from the Oxford Latin Dictionary indicates there were approximately 18, common nouns in Latin. This gives us, therefore, an estimated probability of randomness in this case of divided by 18., or 1. It is quite possible, of course, that some first-century Semitic words and meanings that are unknown to us today have been inadvertently omitted from this analysis. In addition, the failure to consider the use of metaphors or similes involving Latin proper nouns see above may also understate the probability of non-randomness--by drastically limiting the total number of Latin words under consideration to just 18, In any event, the overall results indicate a probability of non-randomness well within the range of statistical significance i. There is a statistical relationship here that is almost certainly not random. This virtually eliminates Severus or another later Christian as the source for this material since a later Christian redactor almost certainly could not have arrived at the choice of stirps simply by accident, as we have seen. Nor probably would Severus or another later Christian even have known anything of this verbal relationship. Furthermore, had he known, writing about it in such an utterly oblique way would have been pointless; his readers would not for the most part have understood the connection. This can be inferred by the absence of references to it in Christian and other literature. In addition, since frag. Moreover, in Rom All three of these passages from the Hodayot employ netser and thus all were apparently influenced in turn by the parallel Isa For the mathematical reasons mentioned above, the odds are overwhelmingly against any random selection by anyone of a branch metaphor for the Nazoreans and, to a somewhat lesser extent, for any other group such as the early Christians who were reportedly linked to them. We can thus infer that in Rom 1. Compare also the numerous other examples of "son of David" applied to Jesus in the New Testament in one form or another: We may note also in Justin Apol. These parallel phenomena indicate the existence of an important tradition involving a convergence of opinions including frag. To the extent that Severus or any other later Christian may have redacted the second half of frag. This would have had to be done with sufficient expertise to deceive both people in his own time who were fluent in Latin and future generations of scholars see note 4 above. But in so doing, the redactor would have risked exposure by his contemporaries because the complete Historiae were still extant during the early fifth century. Furthermore, any such hypothetical interpolations of "Christiani" into frag. Having largely ruled out Severus or another Christian as the source for the last half of frag. We have a number of sources who appear to have had the same very particular idea about the Christiani as a "branch. This source must have been a very reliable one, or the Roman general staff would not have used it in any form at their high-level meeting. Surely the Romans would have known the proper names of their enemies. The alternative would be too fantastic. This name in Hebrew would have been, presumably, "Netsarim" i. Thus, the name "Netsarim" would most likely have carried the additional meaning in Hebrew a meaning presumably grasped and perhaps even implied in frag. However, to the best knowledge of this author, the explicit use of a root-and-branch metaphor in its entirety is to be found nowhere else in classical literature other than in frag. As we have seen, a straightforward reading of the last half of frag. The destruction of the Temple can also be seen in this light as an extension of the tortures inflicted on the Christiani six years earlier by Nero in Rome, as described by Tacitus in Ann. This construction of frag. The name "Christus" refers presumably to "the anointed one [of God]," i. Compare the three other uses of netser in the Hebrew Bible: Tacitus reports in Ann. The Romans felt that as long as the Temple stood those who stood against Rome were assured of a rallying point Josephus Bell. In conclusion, out of all the myriads of different metaphors utilizing substantives which anyone, whether Roman general or later Christian redactor, could have employed to describe the Christiani in frag. This entire correlation is further confirmed by a consistent tradition in other sources Rom 1. Since under the given circumstances the odds that all these phenomena are a coincidence are extraordinarily low, it is clear that frag. It thus represents almost certainly a primary historical source, probably via Tacitus, portraying the Christiani as a major Jewish group acting in opposition to Rome and in defense of Israel. Notes [1] fertur Titus adhibito consilio prius deliberasse, an templum tanti operis everteret. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der classischen und biblischen Studien Berlin, ; repr. Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, n. All references to page numbers

in Bernays are from the original Breslau edition. For more recent commentary on frag. Bialik Institute, [Hebrew]; T. Most recent historians have largely agreed with Bernays on this point, at least with respect to those portions of frag. Teubner, ; H. Cornelii Taciti libri qui supersunt Stuttgart: Teubner, ; E. Cornelii Taciti libri qui supersunt Leipzig: Teubner, ; Rudolf Till, ed. Kerle, ; Caesar Giarratano, ed.

Chapter 4 : Tacitus on Christ - Wikipedia

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Though most has been lost, what remains is an invaluable record of the era. The first half of the *Annals* survived in a single copy of a manuscript from Corvey Abbey, and the second half from a single copy of a manuscript from Monte Cassino, and so it is remarkable that they survived at all. In an early chapter of the *Agricola*, Tacitus asserts that he wishes to speak about the years of Domitian, Nerva and Trajan. In the *Histories* the scope has changed; Tacitus says that he will deal with the age of Nerva and Trajan at a later time. Instead, he will cover the period from the civil wars of the Year of Four Emperors and end with the despotism of the Flavians. Only the first four books and twenty-six chapters of the fifth book survive, covering the year 69 and the first part of the work. The work is believed to have continued up to the death of Domitian on September 18. He wrote at least sixteen books, but books 7–10 and parts of books 5, 6, 11 and 16 are missing. Book 6 ends with the death of Tiberius and books 7 to 12 presumably covered the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. The remaining books cover the reign of Nero, perhaps until his death in June 68 or until the end of that year to connect with the *Histories*. The second half of book 16 is missing, ending with the events of We do not know whether Tacitus completed the work; he died before he could complete his planned histories of Nerva and Trajan and no record survives of the work on Augustus Caesar and the beginnings of the Roman Empire, with which he had planned to finish his work. *Agricola*, a biography of his father-in-law Gnaeus Julius Agricola; the *Germania*, a monograph on the lands and tribes of barbarian Germania; and the *Dialogus*, a dialogue on the art of rhetoric. *Germania* book The *Germania* Latin title: *De Origine et situ Germanorum* is an ethnographic work on the Germanic tribes outside the Roman Empire. The *Germania* fits within a classical ethnographic tradition which includes authors such as Herodotus and Julius Caesar. The book begins chapters 1–27 with a description of the lands, laws, and customs of the various tribes. Later chapters focus on descriptions of particular tribes, beginning with those who lived closest to the Roman empire, and ending with a description of those who lived on the shores of the Baltic Sea, such as the Fenni. Tacitus had written a similar, albeit shorter, piece in his *Agricola* chapters 10–11. *Agricola De vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae* [edit] Main article: *Agricola* book The *Agricola* written c. As in the *Germania*, Tacitus favorably contrasts the liberty of the native Britons with the tyranny and corruption of the Empire; the book also contains eloquent polemics against the greed of Rome, one of which, that Tacitus claims is from a speech by Calgacus, ends by asserting that *Auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace. There is uncertainty about when Tacitus wrote *Dialogus de oratoribus*. Many characteristics set it apart from the other works of Tacitus, so that its authenticity has at various times been questioned. It lacks for example the incongruities that are typical of his mature historical works. Sources [edit] Tacitus makes use of the official sources of the Roman state: He is generally seen [by whom? The minor inaccuracies in the *Annals* may be due to Tacitus dying before he had finished and therefore before he had proof-read his work. Tacitus cites some of his sources directly, among them Cluvius Rufus, Fabius Rusticus and Pliny the Elder, who had written *Bella Germaniae* and a historical work which was the continuation of that of Aufidius Bassus. Tacitus also uses collections of letters *epistolarium*. He also took information from *exitus illustrium virorum*. These were a collection of books by those who were antithetical to the emperors. They tell of sacrifices by martyrs to freedom, especially the men who committed suicide. When he writes about a near-defeat of the Roman army in *Ann. I, 63* he does so with brevity of description rather than embellishment. In most of his writings he keeps to a chronological narrative order, only seldom outlining the bigger picture, leaving the readers to construct that picture for themselves. Nonetheless, where he does use broad strokes, for example, in the opening paragraphs of the *Annals*, he uses a few condensed phrases which take the reader to the heart of the story. His historiography offers penetrating—often pessimistic—insights into the psychology of power politics, blending straightforward descriptions of events, moral lessons, and tightly focused dramatic

accounts. Throughout his writing, he is preoccupied with the balance of power between the Senate and the Emperors, and the increasing corruption of the governing classes of Rome as they adjusted to the ever-growing wealth and power of the empire. Tacitus noted the increasing dependence of the emperor on the goodwill of his armies. The Julio-Claudians eventually gave way to generals, who followed Julius Caesar and Sulla and Pompey in recognizing that military might could secure them the political power in Rome. His experience of the tyranny, corruption, and decadence of that era 81â€”96 may explain the bitterness and irony of his political analysis. He draws our attention to the dangers of power without accountability, love of power untempered by principle, and the apathy and corruption engendered by the concentration of wealth generated through trade and conquest by the empire. Nonetheless, the image he builds of Tiberius throughout the first six books of the Annals is neither exclusively bleak nor approving: The entrance of Tiberius in the first chapters of the first book is dominated by the hypocrisy of the new emperor and his courtiers. In the later books, some respect is evident for the cleverness of the old emperor in securing his position. In general, Tacitus does not fear to praise and to criticize the same person, often noting what he takes to be their more-admirable and less-admirable properties. Prose[edit] His Latin style is highly praised. The style has been both derided as "harsh, unpleasant, and thorny" and praised as "grave, concise, and pithily eloquent". A passage of Annals 1. Tiberii Gaique et Claudii ac Neronis res florentibus ipsisâ€”ob metumâ€”falsae,.

Chapter 5 : SENTENCE CONNECTION IN TACITUS : :

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Chapter 8 : Tacitus' Fragment 2: The Anti-Roman Movement of the Christiani and the Nazoreans

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Chapter 9 : Sentence Connection in Tacitus

Tacitus' dedication to Fabius Iustus in the Dialogus may indicate a connection with Spain, and his friendship with Pliny suggests origins in northern Italy. The Annals is one of the earliest secular historical records to mention Christ, which Tacitus does in connection with Nero's persecution of the Christians.