

Bio for
Tertullian
(AD ~160 – ~225)

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- Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus was a prolific Christian author of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and the first to write works in Latin.
 - Eusebius claimed that he was born and raised in Carthage, North Africa, the son of a centurion and trained to be a lawyer and later an elder of the Church.
 - Jerome also said he was the son of a centurion and an elder.
 - Some hold him to be the same as the lawyer Tertullianus mentioned in the secular work *Pandects*.
 - However, Tertullian himself never claimed to be any of the above.
- Tertullian converted to Christianity sometime before 197 AD, when he began writing.
- He was a strong influence on the life and work of Cyprian and Augustine.
- He wrote countless books mostly in Latin (31 exist today and at least 15 are known to be lost,) which can be grouped into three genres:
 - Apologetic, e.g.
 - *Apologeticus (The Apology)* — his most famous work
 - Unlike Justin's *Apology*, Tertullian's relied on the Roman legal system as a defense.
 - He spoke on the freedom of religion.
 - *Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)* — in which he argued that there are four Gospels written by four Apostles
 - *Adversus Praxeam (Against Praxeas)* — in which he argues against patripassianism¹
 - *De Praescriptione Hereticorum (The Prescription Against Heresies)* — in which he argues that philosophy is the root of heresies and that the Church is trustworthy because of Apostolic succession
 - Ethical, e.g.
 - *De Monogamia (On Monogamy)*
 - *De Virginibus Velandis (On the Veiling of Virgins)* — in which he argued that women should remain veiled for modesty
 - *De Cultu Feminarum (On the Apparel of Women)* — in which he argued that women should not wear jewelry
 - *De Patientia (On Patience)*
 - *De Spectaculis (On the Shows)* — in which he argued that Christians should not attend the theater, arena, or the like

Sources:

<http://www.earlychurch.org.uk>

<http://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html>

http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/history/church_fathers.htm

¹ a form of modalism; a non-Trinitarian view that God the Father suffered on the cross in a different form or *mode* instead of the *person* of Jesus suffering

- Theological, e.g.
 - *De Anima (On the Soul)*
 - *De Baptismate (On Baptism)*
 - *De Penitentia (On Repentance)*
 - *De Carne Christi (On the Body of Christ)* — in which he argues that Jesus had a real human body
 - *De Resurrectione Carnis (On the Resurrection of the Body)*
- He wrote a few of his books to his Christian wife.
- He was very practical and a realist, hating Greek philosophy, thinking it to be too based on pagan world views.
- He held a traducianist² view of the creation of the soul. He believed that souls/spirits (including God) are corporeal.
- He believed in a literal Millennium.
- Tertullian was the first to develop the doctrine of the Trinity. He coined the phrase “three persons, one substance”.
- He also coined the terms “Old” and “New Testaments”, but thought that the book of Enoch should be included in the canon.
- He tended to be overly ascetic in his views and lifestyle.
- Some consider Tertullian to have been sexist, due to his strong opinions about the modesty of women and the curse of Eve.
- Famous quotes of Tertullian’s are:
 - “Christians are made, not born.” (*Apologeticus*)
 - “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.” (*Apologeticus*)
 - “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, or the Academy with the Church?” (*De Praescriptione Hereticorum*)
 - “It [that God became man] is credible, because it is ridiculous.” (*De Carni Christi*)
- In his later life, Tertullian withdrew from the Church because he held to at least some of the teachings of the Montanists.³
 - The Montanists theologically did not conflict with the teachings of Church, but they held that prophecy was as valid or more valid a form of authority than Apostolic succession.
 - It is not clear whether Tertullian joined the Montanists or started his own denomination. In any case, he continued to write against heresies — such as Gnosticism — even after leaving the Church.
 - In the time of Augustine, descendants of Tertullian’s church were readmitted into the church at Carthage.
- Jerome says that he lived till a very old age.

² Traducianism is the belief that one’s soul comes from the souls of his or her parents.

³ The Montanists were a heretical group who counted as authoritative ecstatic prophecies.