

**TERTULLIAN
CONCERNING THE
RESURRECTION
OF THE FLESH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649087570

Tertullian concerning the resurrection of the flesh by D. Litt & A. Souter

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D. LITT & A. SOUTER

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TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN
LITERATURE. SERIES II
LATIN TEXTS

TERTULLIAN
CONCERNING THE
RESURRECTION
OF THE FLESH

By A. SOUTER, D.LITT.

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. London
The Macmillan Company: New York

1922

TO
MY DEAR FRIEND
THE REVEREND PROFESSOR
HERBERT ADAMS GIBBONS,
M.A., B.D., PH.D., LITT.D.,
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY,
CHEVALIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR,
HISTORIAN
AND
CHAMPION OF OPPRESSED NATIONS,
IN GRATITUDE
FOR
A TWELVE-YEARS' FRIENDSHIP

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PREFACE

THE choice of further works of Tertullian as subjects for translation in this series was determined by the list of the more important works of Tertullian given by Dr. Swete in his *Patristic Study* (London, 1902), p. 145. Among these appears the *De Carnis Resurrectione*; and certainly, whether it be considered from the point of view of subject-matter or of style, it is one of the most significant and valuable of its author's writings. At the present time its reading may be especially commended to the bereaved, at least to such of them as value Scripture teaching, as being likely to afford them much more solid comfort than they will get from spiritualistic séances.

In this work, composed with great care, Tertullian shows more traces of rhetorical training than usual (cf. c. 5). In the wonderful c. 12 he even blossoms into poetry. I cannot name a more suitable introduction to the study of his works than this *De Carnis Resurrectione*.

The general features of the present volume do not differ greatly from those of previous volumes, to which the reader is referred for information as

to my plan and purpose, but I am glad to be able to publish in the Appendix a collation of a very important manuscript, hitherto unknown, which makes the present volume indispensable to all serious students of Tertullian in the original Latin.

The Rev. J. H. Baxter's kind reading of the proofs has been very helpful to me.

A. SOUTER.

Aberdeen,
January 19, 1921.

INTRODUCTION

§ I.—ON TERTULLIAN'S LIFE AND WORKS

OF Tertullian, as of many another who has rendered pre-eminent service to humanity, almost nothing is known. His full name was Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, and he was a native of the Roman province of Africa, which corresponded roughly in area to the modern Tunis. He was of pagan parentage, and underwent a complete training as a lawyer. He appears to have visited Italy, but he spent the greatest part of his life in the city of Carthage, which had been refounded by Julius Caesar about a hundred years after the younger Scipio had laid it waste. The city had become once again a great centre, and Christianity must have reached it at an early period, probably direct from Italy. In Africa the new religion found a favourable soil, a fact not altogether undue to the Semitic origin of the old Punic stock, which found something akin to itself in the daughter of Judaism. The number of churches in Africa in Tertullian's time probably greatly exceeded the total of Italy itself. And this Christianity seems to have been more Latin than Greek. The most highly educated of the

provincials in Africa were acquainted with Greek, but the proportion of such persons was far less than would have been found in Italy.

We have no evidence as to the date of Tertullian's birth, but if we place it about A.D. 160, we shall probably not be far wrong. The date of his conversion is equally unknown, but it may be assigned to the period of mature manhood. He was a man of ardent temperament, unbounded energy and great creative faculty. In such a man conversion was sure to be followed at the earliest possible interval by active work on behalf of the Faith, and for him the pen was the obvious instrument. All his knowledge of law, literature and philosophy was at once enlisted on the side of the persecuted religion. Like a later convert from paganism, St. Ambrose, he must have taken up the study of the Scriptures as eagerly as he had followed his earlier pursuits. We have no satisfactory evidence that he held any office in the Church. It is safest to regard him as an early forerunner of a succession of Christian laymen, men like Pelagius, Marius Mercator, Junilius and Cassiodorus, who have had their share in building up the body of Christian doctrine.

The strongly ascetic vein in Tertullian led him later to adopt the doctrines of the Montanists. This sect took its name from Montanus of Pepuza in Phrygia, and among its tenets was the assertion of prophetic gifts in opposition to the regularly constituted ministry; millenarism, and abstinence

from every sort of union between the sexes. The influence of Montanism spread gradually in the West, and reached Africa almost certainly from Italy, but it is improbable that it had become associated with a declared sect in Africa in Tertullian's time. It represented rather a tendency within the bosom of the Church. But that tendency gained more and more power with Tertullian himself, and in his later works he accepts the doctrine of the new prophecy, and inaugurates the arbitrary rule of individual spiritual gifts, thus undermining the authority of the Old and New Testaments as well as that of the Church. He contradicts Scripture in urging the Christian to face persecution, in depreciating marriage, in making regulations for fasting, and other minor matters.

But these and other exaggerations, though they have deprived Tertullian of canonisation, in no way affect his importance as the earliest of the Latin Fathers. His great learning, his obvious sincerity and his burning eloquence are to be set over against such excesses, as well as against the occasional coarseness which will break out in the writings of a Tertullian, a Jerome and an Augustine, who have in their unregenerate days become too familiar with uncleanness. In originality he is inferior to none of these. In doctrine and in language alike he is a pioneer of Western Christianity. To him we owe the first formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity; to him we owe a great part of the Christian Latin vocabulary. He