

Moral Rigour in the Thought of Tertullian and its Manifestations in Montanism

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Abstract---This paper examines a central aspect of the life and thought of the African theologian Tertullian, namely his adherence to the movement of Montanism, often labelled a heresy. This episode has generated considerable debate among scholars of early Christianity. On the one hand, some interpret it as a **serious deviation** from Catholic orthodoxy, a blemish on the career of a writer otherwise known for his vigorous defence of Christian doctrine. On the other hand, others argue that Tertullian's attachment to Montanism should not be regarded merely as a rupture with the Catholic Church, but rather as the logical extension of his intellectual and spiritual convictions, deeply rooted in moral rigour and his unwavering concern for ethical discipline, which he considered the very essence of Christian faith. Exploring this issue sheds light on the broader tension within early Christianity between the institutional Church, which sought to regulate doctrine and discipline, and charismatic movements, which emphasised strict morality and personal piety. Viewed within its historical and intellectual context, Tertullian's choice appears less as an emotional adhesion to a new religious current and more as a deliberate theological and ethical stance, reflecting his belief in moral discipline as the cornerstone of authentic Christian life and as a safeguard against laxity and deviation within the community. Thus, studying Tertullian's engagement with Montanism not only illuminates his personal trajectory, but also highlights the wider debates that shaped African Christianity in the second century CE, where the strict traditions of Roman-African culture intersected with the dynamics of religious and intellectual renewal.

Keywords---Tertullian, Christianity, Montanism, heresy, moral rigour, discipline.

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Introduction

Tertullian is considered one of the pillars of the Catholic Church, the first Latin Christian writer, and a representative of African Christianity through which he summarized for us the general history of the Church and the doctrinal history of North Africa. His works preserved for us the writings of later Christian authors, bearing witness to the solidity and nobility of the theology that he established, as well as to the first principles which laid the foundation for the beginnings of Latin Christian literature, independent of Greek influence.

Despite the relative novelty of his Christianity (around 197 CE), he quickly became one of its main theoreticians in Carthage and one of its greatest defenders. He devoted his efforts to refuting the accusations directed against Christians and turned his polemical activity toward attacking the enemies of the Church, beginning with pagans and Jews, and responding to the different heretical movements that appeared during his time. He dedicated a significant portion of his writings to these controversies (Marcionism, Valentinianism, Hermogenes, Apelles, Praxeas). Most of his works, foremost among them the *Apologeticum* and his famous letter to the martyrs (*Ad Martyras*), demonstrate his religious discipline and his strict and uncompromising positions towards the Church and its leaders.

Indeed, the severity that characterized his personality, together with his deep concern for moral discipline and the strict application of Christian teachings, was one of the main reasons that led him to embrace Montanism, which had appeared in Phrygia in the mid-second century CE (around 156–157). Its doctrines quickly reached Carthage, one of the most important Roman provinces, where Tertullian found ideas compatible with his thought and moral outlook, especially the belief in the imminent return of Christ and the necessity of withdrawing from the world in expectation of his coming.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to shed light on this significant point in Tertullian's life, which some consider a blemish, since through Montanism he separated himself from the Catholic Church. Others, however, particularly specialists in philosophical and theological studies, see his shift to Montanism as a response consistent with his moral discipline and lifelong pursuit of a life of asceticism and chastity. We will therefore seek to explore the reasons for his break with the Church, the principles and ideas on which he insisted during this period, and the impact of Montanism on his life and his writings.

1. Biography of Tertullian

Our knowledge of **Tertullian** remains fragmentary due to the scarcity of direct testimonies and historical sources. His biography is far from complete, and much of what we know comes indirectly from later authors such as **Eusebius of Caesare**¹, **Jerome**², and **Augustine**³. Understanding the historical background and the cultural environment in which he was formed is therefore essential for reconstructing his life and intellectual trajectory⁴.

His full name was **Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus**, a fact to which he himself alluded in his final work *De Baptismo*. This rare self-reference provides one of the few personal details preserved in his writings. His name does not appear in the lists of *cognomina* preserved in medieval manuscripts, which suggests that his family, though socially modest, gradually rose within the Roman social hierarchy. The tribal name *Septimii* indicates an origin in **Leptis Magna**, one of the great Punic cities of Tripolitania, and the same gens to which the emperor **Septimius Severus** belonged⁵.

¹ Eusèbe de Césarée, *histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 4, 5, trad., émile Grapin, Alphonse picard et Fils, éditeurs, Paris, 1905.

² Jérôme, *des Hommes illustre*, LIII, trad., M.L.Aimé-Martin, Auguste Desrez Imprimeur- Éditeur, Paris, 1838.

³ Kris de Brabander, *le retour de Paradis (la relation entre la sanctification de l'homme et l'Ascèse Sexuelle chez Tertullien)*, Berpols publishers, Turnhout, Belgium, 2007, p.28.

⁴ Barnes T, *Tertullian a historical and Literary study*, Oxford clarendou Press, 1971, p.2.

⁵ David E. Wilhite, *Tertullien the African*, walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 2007, p.19.

Tertullian was born to pagan parents in **Carthage**, probably between 150 and 160 CE, during the reign of **Antoninus Pius** (86–161 CE). Most scholars, however, converge on the year **155 CE**⁶. Jerome informs us that his father was a centurion, a commander of a unit attached to the **Legio III Augusta**⁷, stationed in Numidia and placed at the disposal of the proconsul of Africa⁸. This background indicates that Tertullian grew up in a **military milieu**, within a family that enjoyed considerable standing in Carthaginian society. From the second century onwards, the military elite increasingly attained elevated social status, a factor that likely contributed to his privileged upbringing⁹.

The social position of his family afforded him access to a **high-level education** across several disciplines, the fruits of which are visible throughout his works. He received his early training in Carthage, where he studied rhetoric and honed his skills through the standard exercises based on Greek and Latin classics as well as on the works of major philosophers¹⁰. In *Adversus Valentinianos*, he recalls his student days in Carthage, describing the eloquent Latin orator **Phosphorius** returning from battle to deliver a speech, only to be met with ironic laughter by African students¹¹. His literary style, admired for its precision and philosophical depth, prompted scholars such as **Stephanie Binder** to compare him with **Seneca**, particularly in works such as *De Idololatria*. His writings demonstrate not only a mastery of rhetorical technique but also a critical engagement with sources ranging from Republican-era authors to the Alexandrian school¹².

In addition to classical literature and philosophy, Tertullian mastered **Greek**, composing several works in the language, though none survive. His competence is evident in his frequent etymological discussions and recourse to Greek lexicons. Alongside Greek, Latin was his native cultural and educational medium¹³, and, like many of his contemporaries, he was perfectly bilingual. However, after his conversion to Christianity, he progressively abandoned Greek in favor of Latin, which became the vehicle for his apologetic and theological concerns¹⁴.

His formation was not limited to rhetoric and philosophy: Tertullian also undertook the study of **Roman law**¹⁵, likely at the urging of his father, who envisioned for him a career in public administration. This required legal training and a solid grounding in jurisprudence. Tertullian therefore moved to **Rome**¹⁶, where he is reported to have witnessed the triumphal procession of the Parthians. His passion for law, combined with his rhetorical gifts, enabled him to excel in legal analysis¹⁷. Traces of his legal expertise are found in fragments of the *Digest*, notably in *De Castrensi Peculio*, which deals with the property of soldiers and issues related to *patria potestas*¹⁸. These fragments are consistent with Jerome's testimony that Tertullian achieved renown under the emperors **Septimius Severus** and **Caracalla** as a *jurisconsultus*¹⁹, a legal advisor frequently consulted by members of the Roman elite. This

⁶ **Kris de Brabander** proposes the year **155 CE** as the date of Tertullian's birth, whereas **Barnes (T.)** and **Monceaux (P.)** suggest **160 CE**. **Fabien Davier**, however, in his dissertation, after discussing all the proposed dates, concludes that **155 CE** is the most probable year of his birth and **255 CE** the year of his death.

⁷ Jérôme, des Hommes illustre, LIII.

⁸ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion Arabe, (Tertullien et les origines) T.I. Ernest Leroux, éditeur, Paris, 1901, p.179.

⁹ Kris de Brabander, op-cit, p.28 ; Braun René, Aux origines de la chrétienté de l'Afrique, un homme de combat, « Bulletin de l'association Guiloume Baudé », N.,2, Juin 1965, p.194

¹⁰ Kris de Brabande, op-cit, p.28

¹¹ Tertullien, contre les Valentinieniens, VIII, Trad. Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire-éditeur, Paris,1852.

¹² Stéphane é.Binder, Tertullien et moi, édition du cerf, Paris, 2022, Pp.45.46.

¹³ **Saint Augustine** notes in his *Confessions* (I, 13) that during his studies he was required to learn Greek, a language he disliked, alongside classical Latin, which he distinguishes from the Latin commonly spoken by the people.

¹⁴ Braun René, op-cit, p.193.

¹⁵ Albert Réville, Tertullien et la Montanisme, « revue des Mondes (1829-1971) », Novembre, 1864, Seconde période, Vol., 54, N., 1, p.168.

¹⁶ Tertullien, De l'ornement des femmes, VII, Trad. Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire-éditeur, Paris,1852

¹⁷ Albert Réville, op-cit, p.168.

¹⁸ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p.181.

¹⁹ Jérôme, des Hommes Illustre, LIII.

legal status may also explain why, after his conversion, he was not subject to persecution or harassment by the Roman authorities in Carthage²⁰.

Scholars such as **R. Baraun** have suggested that Tertullian's earliest literary efforts in Rome focused on social issues, particularly marriage, citing Jerome's reference to a lost treatise *De matrimonio* « On the Disadvantages of Marriage ». Even if his beginnings were modest, he achieved a measure of fame in Rome, which foreshadowed his later literary prominence²¹.

Tertullian's **legal training** provided him with a powerful arsenal in his later Christian apologetics. The Roman legal tradition significantly influenced the Church, which incorporated juridical concepts into ecclesiastical and theological discourse - such as hierarchical ranks and disciplinary measures²². Tertullian drew upon this tradition in his works, raising Christian apologetic debate to the level of formal legal argumentation. In his *Apologeticum*, he acted as the advocate of the Christian community, appealing to imperial magistrates to respect the spirit of Roman law and to clarify the juridical foundations of their judgments. His repeated use of terms such as *civitas* illustrates his reworking of the Roman concept of citizenship into a new framework of **Christian citizenship**, a central theme in his writings²³.

The combination of rhetorical brilliance, legal expertise, and theological conviction made Tertullian a formidable polemicist and a pioneer of **Latin Christian apologetics**, a field previously dominated by Greek authors. His fame endured long after his death; he is cited by **Eusebius of Caesarea** in the *Ecclesiastical History*, where Eusebius acknowledges his legal erudition and notes that his *Apologeticum* had even been translated into Greek²⁴.

Tertullian's residence in Rome was brief, for he soon returned to his native **Carthage**, a city experiencing vibrant intellectual activity in the second century, enriched by Alexandrian thought, Greek philosophical traditions, and proximity to Rome²⁵. Carthage held a special place in his heart and in his works²⁶, particularly in *De Pallio*, where he proudly praised its citizens as "the masters of Africa" and lauded not only its men but also its women - figures such as **Dido**, the city's legendary founder, and the wives of Carthaginian generals - whom he held up as exemplars of chastity and models for Christian women²⁷.

2. The Conversion of Tertullian to Christianity

After returning from **Rome** to **Carthage**, **Tertullian** underwent a profound transformation in his religious life. This turning point invites us to consider the factors that led this eloquent orator to move from a world dominated by paganism and polytheism to becoming one of the foremost Christian thinkers. For nearly thirty years he lived as a pagan, and - by his own admission - mocked Christians as his peers did. Unlike **Cyprian** and **Augustine**, however, he left us no explicit key to understanding the reasons behind his conversion. Yet, several passages scattered throughout his works allow scholars to construct various hypotheses²⁸.

Tertullian never stated precisely what drew him to Christianity. However, like many noble spirits, he was deeply impressed by the patience and steadfastness of poor Christians who endured persecution.

²⁰ Braun René, op-cit, p.194

²¹ Braun René, op-cit, p.194

²² Tertullien, Apologétique, I.II.III, Trad. Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire-éditeur, Paris,1852

²³ Fabien Davier, op-cit, p.56

²⁴ Eusèbe de Césarée, histoire ecclésiastique, II, 4, 5, trad., émile Grapin, Alphonse picard et Fils, éditeurs, Paris, 1905

²⁵ Peter W Janes, the concept community in Tertullian's writing, Submitted as Doctoral thesis, McGill University, faculty of religions studies, Montréal, Canada, March, 1973, p.03

²⁶ Tertullien, Du Manteau, I, Trad., Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire- éditeur, Paris,1852.

²⁷ Tertullien, Aux Martyres, IV, Trad., Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire- éditeur, Paris,1852.

²⁸ Braun René, op-cit, p.194

He continually questioned the source of their endurance, which became one of the decisive factors leading him to inquire about the new faith. This is evident in the *Apologeticum*, which reflects a lived experience, as well as in his treatise²⁹ *De Scapulam*, where he ponders the perseverance of the martyrs. Once he grasped the secret of their constancy, he immediately embraced the Christian faith³⁰.

His innate curiosity, passionate temperament, and impulsive character also made him admire the ethics of Christ and the new vision of life grounded in love and self-sacrifice. In Christianity he discovered an environment that provided both spiritual peace and intellectual solace, especially after the emptiness and disorientation left by paganism³¹. The violent persecutions that struck **Carthage** in the second century likewise played a decisive role in convincing many Carthaginians, including Tertullian, to adopt the new faith³².

The French scholar **Aziza Claude** has advanced an intriguing theory after analyzing Tertullian's works and his positions on Judaism. He posits two possibilities: first, that Tertullian converted to Judaism before embracing Christianity, since Jewish thought was in constant conflict with Roman authority due to its rejection of Roman law, while Christianity, by contrast, succeeded in attracting individuals who were able to preserve their original culture within its framework. The second possibility is that Tertullian received his early religious formation in a Jewish environment before turning to Christianity. This would explain his later engagement in dialogue with the Jews as a means of proclaiming his Christian identity. According to Aziza, such interaction could be seen as a legal maneuver aimed at securing recognition for Christianity comparable to that which Judaism already enjoyed in the empire. In this light, Tertullian's conversion represented less the adoption of a wholly new religion than the **natural evolution of his faith and convictions**³³.

Scholarly opinions differ regarding the exact date of Tertullian's conversion, ranging between **190 and 195 CE**. The most probable date is **195 CE**, with **Agrippinus**, bishop of Carthage, playing a decisive role in completing his path to the faith. After his baptism, Tertullian married a Christian woman - about whom nothing is known - though he dedicated to her a treatise entitled *Ad uxorem* "To My Wife". Whether or not he had children remains unknown³⁴.

Thanks to his powerful eloquence and fervent zeal, Tertullian quickly became an influential figure in Carthaginian society, and was eventually ordained a **priest** around **200 CE**, according to the testimony of **Jerome**³⁵. Nevertheless, Tertullian often emphasized his humility, referring to himself as an ordinary man, as in his apology to the martyrs : « *I have no authority to address you myself* ». Once ordained, he devoted himself to teaching the faithful through sermons, treatises, and discourses, in which he addressed theological and disciplinary issues with great severity, focusing particularly on **morality and stricte discipline**³⁶.

3. Tertullian between Montanism and His Break with the Catholic Church

After directing his intellectual energy to defending Christianity against secular authority and the principal heretical movements of his time, **Tertullian** underwent a decisive shift by embracing **Montanism**, a religious movement that originated in **Phrygia** (Asia Minor) in the mid-second century

²⁹ Braun René, op-cit, p.194

³⁰ Tertullien, A Scapula, IV, V

³¹ L'Abbé Antoine de Genoud, les ouvres complètes de Tertullien, Les belles lettre, Paris, 2017, p.11 ; Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p182.

³² Kris de Brabander, op-cit, p.29.

³³ Claude A., Tertullien et le Judaïsme, les belles Lettres, Paris, 197, pp.48.50.

³⁴ L'Abbé Antoine de Genoud, op-cit, p.11.

³⁵ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op- cit, p.183.

Jérôme, des Hommes Illustre, LIII

³⁶ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op- cit, p.183.

CE (155–160), under the leadership of **Montanus**. Convinced that divine revelation had not ceased with the apostles but continued in his own person, Montanus proclaimed himself the direct voice of God. He presented himself as the *Paraclete*, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit within the Church, announcing that Christ's return was imminent and that the Church must detach itself from the world in preparation for this event. This required long and repeated fasts, ascetic practices, and abstention from certain foods, such as meat and wine. The movement found particular resonance among women, with **Maximilla** and **Priscilla** playing prominent roles in its dissemination³⁷.

Church leaders, however, regarded Montanism as a direct challenge to their authority, particularly since it claimed that only the Holy Spirit, and not the clergy, had the power to forgive sins. This conviction triggered the break between Montanism and ecclesiastical authority, leading to its condemnation in Asia. Nevertheless, the movement spread throughout the Roman Empire³⁸, gaining adherents such as **Proculus** toward the end of the papacy of **Victor I** (c. 199 CE), though he later renounced it. From Rome, Montanism eventually reached **Carthage**, where Tertullian was gradually drawn to its ideas and ultimately became one of its chief exponents in North Africa³⁹.

Tertullian himself never revealed the precise reasons for his adherence, but his stern temperament, ascetic inclinations, and moral rigor made Montanism naturally appealing to him⁴⁰. According to **Jerome**, his conversion to Montanism occurred in the middle of his career⁴¹, around 206–207 CE. Another likely factor was his disillusionment with what he perceived as the laxity of the Catholic Church, particularly on the issue of penance after persecution. The decree of Pope **Callistus** (217–222 CE), which allowed for the reconciliation of Christians who had lapsed under persecution, was especially offensive to Tertullian, who argued that grave sins could not be forgiven and that such leniency encouraged future moral compromise⁴².

Nevertheless, Tertullian did not adopt Asian Montanism wholesale. He moderated some of its positions and appropriated only those elements that reinforced his own theology, especially its moral rigor and eschatological expectations. He considered Montanists to be the true heirs of primitive Christianity and integrated their terminology into his own thought, particularly in articulating a clear Trinitarian theology of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the early stages of his adherence⁴³, he remained in contact with the Catholic Church, but his increasingly rigid positions - on fasting, persecution, chastity, and monogamy - brought him into conflict with clerics in both Rome and Carthage. His condemnation of second marriage, which he denounced as a form of adultery on Pauline grounds, provoked further opposition⁴⁴.

By **213 CE**, Tertullian formally broke with the Catholic Church. From then on, he devoted his writings to attacking it, frequently targeting the bishop of Rome and his decrees. In his *De fuga in persequutione* "On Flight in Persecution"⁴⁵, for instance, he argued that persecution originates from God and must never be avoided⁴⁶, condemning those who fled and later sought reconciliation with the Church, often through financial payments. He recounts the case of the Christian **Retilius**, who repeatedly evaded

³⁷ Stéphane é. Binder, op-cit, p.168

³⁸ L'Abbé Antoine de Genoud, op - cit, P.

³⁹ Baraun R., op – cit, P.201.

⁴⁰ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p.186.

⁴¹ St Jérôme, des hommes illustres, LIII.

⁴² Peter W. Janes, op - cit, p.10; Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p.186

⁴³ Kris de Brabandes, op – cit, p .31. ; Peter W.Janes, op - cit, P.10.

⁴⁴ St Augustin, Des Hérésier, LXXXVI, trad., M. L 'Abbé Aubert, sous la direction de ; M.Raulx,Bar-le-Duc,L.Guérin et Cie, éditeurs,1869.France.

⁴⁵ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p.186.

⁴⁶ Terullien, De la fuite pendant la persécution. A Fabius, IV, Trad., Trad., Antoine –Eugène Genoud, Louis Vivés, libraire-éditeur, Paris, 1852.

persecution by paying bribes but was eventually captured, condemned, and executed - thus attaining the martyrdom he had long evaded⁴⁷.

Through Tertullian's influence, Montanism became firmly established in North Africa, attracting many followers. Yet, according to **Augustine**, he eventually grew dissatisfied with its excesses and broke away, founding a sect of his own known as the **Tertullianists** (*Tertullianisme*)⁴⁸. Although their writings, composed in Tertullian's style, have been lost, the sect remained active in Carthage until the fourth century, when most of its members rejoined the Catholic Church, even handing over their basilica⁴⁹.

4. The Literary Activity of Tertullian during His Montanist Phase

After Tertullian's initial adherence to the Montanist movement, he did not immediately sever ties with the Catholic Church. Consequently, his works produced between **207 and 212 CE** are generally classified as belonging to the *semi-Montanist phase*. During this period, he focused on refuting heretical doctrines and Gnostic sects, which posed a serious threat to Christianity, while simultaneously producing apologetic writings in defense of the faith. He also composed instructional treatises aimed at guiding the faithful in Christian principles and stressing the importance of moral discipline. His major writings from this period may be summarized as follows:

Work	Content
Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)	A monumental five-book refutation of Marcion's theology, which denied the Creator God and posited an unknown deity, rejected continuity between the Old and New Testaments, and promoted a Marcionite gospel. Tertullian defended the incarnation of Christ and the unity of Scripture.
De Anima (On the Soul)	A continuation of his earlier Testimony on the Soul, written during his Catholic phase. It defends the divine origin of the soul, addresses heretical views, and explores the nature of the soul in relation to sleep and death.
Against Valentinus	In 39 chapters, he rejects the Valentinian system, opposing its teachings as incompatible with the New Testament.
De Carne Christi (On the Flesh of Christ)	A response to heretics who denied the real incarnation of Christ, affirming that he was born, lived, and died in a true human body. This treatise serves as a prelude to <i>On the Resurrection of the Flesh</i> .
De Resurrectione Carnis (On the Resurrection of the Flesh)	A detailed defense of the resurrection of the flesh, countering heretical objections, and upholding scriptural testimony from both Testaments.
De Virginibus Velandis (On the Veiling of Virgins)	Advocates the necessity of virgins wearing the veil both within and outside the church.
Ad Scapulam (To Scapula)	A letter to the Roman proconsul Scapula (211–212 CE), denouncing persecutions and affirming that Christians harbor no fear but respond with love, and that their refusal to sacrifice to the emperor does not indicate disloyalty.
De Exhortatione Castitatis (On the Exhortation to Chastity)	Addressed to a widowed friend, urging him not to remarry, as second marriage was considered contrary to God's will.

⁴⁷ Terullien, De la fuite pendant la persécution. A Fabius, V.

⁴⁷ Terullien, De la fuite pendant la persécution. A Fabius, V.

⁴⁸ Augustin, Des Hérésies, LXXXVI

⁴⁹ Monceaux P., Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne, op-cit, p.186.

De Pallio (On the Cloak)	A defense of his choice to wear the philosopher's cloak instead of traditional Roman dress, portraying it as a symbol of cultural renewal in Carthage.
De Corona (On the Crown)	Discusses the case of a Christian soldier who refused the donativum and the laurel crown, defending his stance as consistent with Christian faith and criticizing Catholic rejection of the Montanist prophecy.
Scorpiace (Antidote to the Scorpion's Sting)	In 15 chapters, rebuts Gnostic claims that martyrdom was unnecessary, affirming it as a spiritual rebirth essential to Christian witness.

The works from the fully Montanist phase (213–216 CE), which mark Tertullian's definitive break with the Catholic Church, include five principal treatises:

Work	Content
De Fuga in Persecutione (On Flight in Persecution)	Addressed to his friend Fabius, arguing that fleeing persecution is contrary to God's will, since persecution is a divine test of faith.
Adversus Praxean (Against Praxeas)	His final anti-heretical work, directed against Praxeas, who denied the Trinity and opposed the new prophecy. It is the earliest source to use the term <i>Trinitas</i> as a theological concept.
De Monogamia (On Monogamy)	Argues that second marriage is unlawful and tantamount to adultery, promoting chastity as God's will.
De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos (On Fasting against the Psychics)	Directed against Catholics (whom he labels <i>Psychici</i>), defending Montanist practices of fasting, their times, and their spiritual significance.

Conclusion

From this study, it becomes clear that **Tertullian**, despite his eventual separation from the Catholic Church, remains a pivotal figure in the history of early Christianity and one of its most prominent representatives in North Africa. He was the first to articulate the theology of the African Church in refined Latin, laying the foundations of Latin Christian literature, which later became a major reference for successive generations of Western theologians. This role makes him, despite the controversies surrounding his life and allegiances, a living witness to the birth and development of Christianity in the Latin West.

Tertullian's adoption of Montanism cannot be understood simply as a rupture with the Catholic Church, but rather as the natural outcome of his **rigorous personality**, his deep commitment to **moral discipline**, and his inclination toward **asceticism and austerity**. For him, morality was the very essence of Christian faith. He regarded the Catholic Church's leniency and pastoral concessions as dangerous compromises that undermined the spiritual integrity of believers. His embrace of Montanism, therefore, was less a betrayal of Christianity than an attempt to preserve its purity and its ethical rigor.

Equally significant is Tertullian's role as a brilliant **apologist and polemicist**, who drew upon his mastery of Roman law and classical rhetoric to defend Christianity against pagans, Jews, and Gnostic heresies. His writings—both from his Catholic and Montanist phases—demonstrate a carefully structured theological mind, committed to presenting arguments that were legal, scriptural, and rational. This combination endowed his works with enduring authority, ensuring their preservation as fundamental sources in the Christian tradition.

Although ecclesiastical history has often judged his separation from the Catholic Church as a “fall” or a “stain” upon his legacy, a more balanced reading reveals that his break was the inevitable consequence of his moral severity and his unwavering insistence on the absolute demands of Christian discipline. His

life thus illustrates a historical tension that has marked Christianity from its earliest days: the balance between doctrinal rigor and pastoral accommodation.

In the end, Tertullian stands as a **paradoxical figure**: on the one hand, the **father of Latin Christian literature**, who provided the Church with a new language to express its faith; on the other, a **rigid thinker** whose inflexible standards led him to separate from the institution he had once so ardently defended. Yet his intellectual and theological influence endured well beyond his own time, shaping Christian discourse and even inspiring later giants such as **Augustine**, who, while diverging from him in substance, acknowledged the brilliance of his style and the force of his arguments.

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