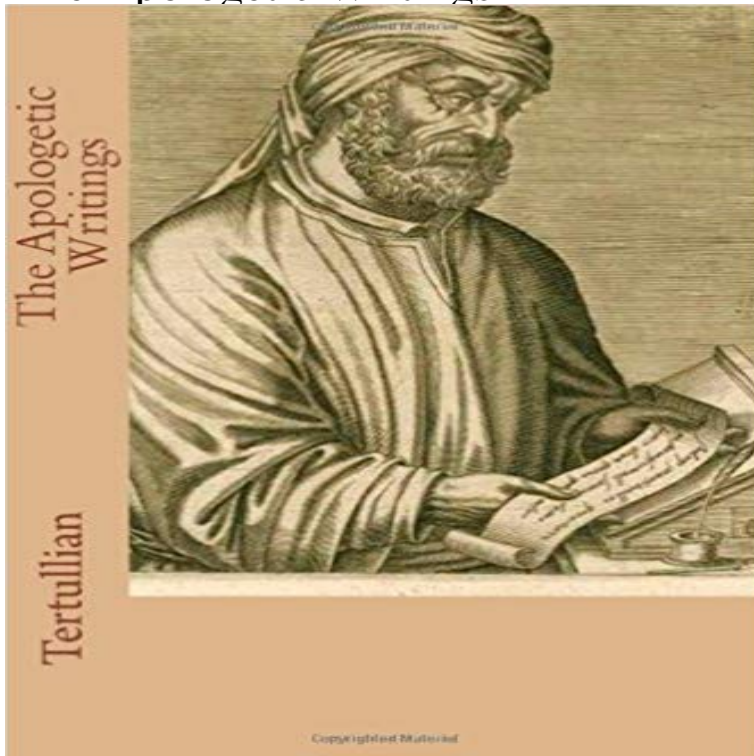


The Apologetic Writings



Ecclesiastical writer in the second and third centuries, b. probably about 160 at Carthage, being the son of a centurion in the proconsular service. He was evidently by profession an advocate in the law-courts, and he shows a close acquaintance with the procedure and terms of Roman law, though it is doubtful whether he is to be identified with a jurist Tertullian who is cited in the Pandects. He knew Greek as well as Latin, and wrote works in Greek which have not come down to us. A pagan until middle life, he had shared the pagan prejudices against Christianity, and had indulged like others in shameful pleasures. His conversion was not later than the year 197, and may have been earlier. He embraced the Faith with all the ardour of his impetuous nature. He became a priest, no doubt of the Church of Carthage. Monceaux, followed by dAles, considers that his earlier writings were composed while he was yet a layman, and if this be so, then his ordination was about 200. His extant writings range in date from the apologetics of 197 to the attack on a bishop who is probably Pope Callistus (after 218). It was after the year 206 that he joined the Montanist sect, and he seems to have definitively separated from the Church about 211 (Harnack) or 213 (Monceaux). After writing more virulently against the Church than even against heathen and persecutors, he separated from the Montanists and founded a sect of his own. The remnant of the Tertullianists was reconciled to the Church by St. Augustine. A number of the works of Tertullian are on special points of belief or discipline. According to St. Jerome he lived to extreme old age.

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The Apologetic Writings

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