

# Tertullian

by John Gill

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*This sermon explores Tertullian's contributions to the understanding of predestination and the interplay between election and reprobation in Christian theology.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 40:5

**Topics:** "Predestination", "Election and Reprobation"

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## Description

John Gill discusses Tertullian's contributions to the understanding of predestination, emphasizing his insights into the doctrines of election and reprobation. Tertullian, an early Christian writer from Carthage, highlights the importance of the church as the body of Christ and the necessity of distinguishing between the elect and the reprobate. He suggests that God's judgment involves both salvation and punishment, and that election cannot exist without reprobation. Despite some ambiguity in Tertullian's writings regarding the role of human works in election, Gill clarifies that these should be understood within the broader context of divine providence. Ultimately, Tertullian's reflections invite deeper contemplation on the nature of faith and God's sovereignty.

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## Transcript

The

CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH.

Part 4

Chapter 1--Of Predestination

Section 7--Tertullian. A.D. 200.

Tertullian was by birth an African, of the city of Carthage, his father was a Proconsular Centurion; he flourished in the times of Severus, and Antoninus Caracalla, about the beginning of the third century. He was a presbyter of the church, and one of the first of the Latin writers among the Christians. He wrote much, and many of his works remain to this day,[1] in which we have at least some hints of his being acquainted with the doctrines of election and reprobation. In one of his books,[2] speaking of the different crowns which men of different orders were honored with, he addresses the Christian after this manner, "But thine order and thy magistracy, and the name of thy court is the church of Christ: thou art his, conscriptus in libris vitae, written in the books of life." And in another place,[3] treating of heretics, he says,

their were wits of spiritual wickedness, with whom we and the brethren wrestle; the necessary articles of faith merit our contemplation, ut electi manifestentur, ut reprobi detegantur; that the elect may be manifested, that the reprobate may be detected." And elsewhere,[4] having cited Isaiah 40:5, 6, he makes this remark, "he distinguishes the issues of things, not substances; for who does not place the judgment of God in a twofold sentence of salvation and punishment? Wherefore all flesh is grass, quae igni destinatur, which is appointed to the fire, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God; quae saluti ordinatur, which is ordained to salvation." And as he says upon another account,[5] "there can be no election without reprobation." He has indeed a passage, which seems to make election dependent upon the works of men; his words are these,[6] "What man is there without sin that God should always choose him whom he never could refuse? Or who likewise without any good work, that God should always refuse him, whom he never could choose? Show a man that is always good, and he will not be refused; show one that is always evil, and he will never be chosen." Hence the learned Scultetus[7] charges him with being erroneous in the doctrine of predestination. But this is but a single passage, and seems only to regard the different dispensations of divine providence towards good and bad men, on account of which God was censured by the Marcionites, and charged with levity and inconstancy, and not an election to grace and glory.

Dr. Whitby[8] has a single reference to this writer, which, as the rest that have been before observed, falls under the head of free will, and will be there considered with them.

#### ENDNOTES:

[1] Vide Hieron. Catalog. Ecclesiastes s. 63.

[2] De Corona, c. 13, p. 129; ed. Paris, 1634.

[3] De Praescript. Haeret. c. 38, p. 246.

[4] De Resurrect. Carnis, c. 59. p. 427.

[5] Ad Nationes, 50:1, c. 10. p. 55.

[6] Adv. Marcion. 50:2, c. 23, p. 471.

[7] Medull. Patrum, part 1, 50:7, c. 42, p. 243.

[8] Discourse, etc. p. 96; ed. 2. 95.

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