

Message no. 32

Posted by Geoffrey Madden on Sunday, August 21, 2005 10:39pm

Subject: Tertullian

I've been reading articles by Eric Osborn who says Tertullian is subtle and a writer of wonderful latin and that his lack of charity in his attacks is a result of the persecutions of the Church at the time.

Osborn is responding to those who say Tertullian is basically a venomous, spiteful character. Reading the Apology you can see where they get that idea. He gives the impression of a smart arse lawyer more interested in landing punches than making sense.

To be totally anachronistic his association with the Phrygian prophets and his moral rigidity remind me of the worst sort of pentecostal fundamentalist. It would have been pretty pointless to argue with him on any rational grounds. It is understandable that he winds up having his own sect. I can't imagine he was fun to have around.

His appeal would be to those who desire to keep things kept simple and live in a black and white thought world and seek to reduce the mystery of religious thought to formulae. No-one would have doubted his certainty and the force of personality obvious

in his confidence would have people either hailing him as the saviour of Christianity or appalled. I think I'd be running away with the appalled.