

MONTANISM: A MOVEMENT OF PROPHECY AND REGIONAL IDENTITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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The second half of the second century AD is the period in which many of the main features of early Christianity took shape. At the centre, claiming to represent tradition extending back to Apostolic times, was the 'Great Church', known as such even to outsiders, such as Celsus writing in c. 178.¹ The name suggests lineal descent from the Great Congregation of Israel encountered in some of the Psalms and in Nehemiah. Already by the last quarter of the century the organization of its communities was under an ordered hierarchy led by a bishop. Its eucharistic liturgy was becoming standardized, and a canon of New Testament writings was taking its place beside the Old Testament inherited from Judaism. Its bishops were maintaining contact with each other by correspondence over wide distances in order to maintain uniformity of belief. In the Greek Apologists and Irenaeus it was producing defenders against the attacks of Jews, pagans and dissident Christians alike.

Of these latter, the Gnostics, drawing heavily on the intellectual Jewish heritage of Alexandria and the ideas of esoteric sects within Judaism, promised salvation to a select few on the basis of initiation into a superior Christian Gnosis (knowledge). They rejected millenarist and apocalyptic aspirations as well as the organization and ethic of the Great Church, and they regarded its liturgy as little more helpful towards the spiritual life than that of Judaism.² On the other hand, among very many Christians there was still an underlying expectation that the end of the age was indeed approaching, that the message of the prophet must be heeded, and that the coming of the Lord to establish the kingdom of God on earth was at hand. These ideas were not necessarily impossible to contain within the Great Church. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both accepted the Millennium, and Irenaeus had included the prophetic writings of Hermas in the canon of Scripture.³

¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. and tr. H. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1953), v. 59.

² Thus, Heracleon on the limited efficacy of non-Gnostic baptism. See E.H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Nashville/New York, 1973), 57–61.

³ *Adv. Haereses*, iv. 20.2.

Hierarchical government and prophetic inspiration, however, involved different attitudes towards church order. The conflict between prophet and priest in the Old Testament, revived in an acute form with the emergence of John the Baptist, was not to be removed easily from early Christianity. What Justin and Irenaeus had been able to hold in tension could develop into schism when expressed by less able and more extreme individuals.

In the 170s, the anti-Christian writer Celsus shows that in Phoenicia and Palestine there were already wandering prophets, apparently independent of any ecclesiastical authority, proclaiming that they 'were God' or 'the Son of God', or 'a divine Spirit', and using Johannine language to the effect that they 'had come', and that the world was about to be destroyed.⁴ In these provinces, however, although prophets on the fringes of Judaism and Christianity seem to have been common enough, they were not organized and no sectarian movement resulted. Their existence, however, was a sign of the times.

In Phrygia in western Asia Minor the situation was different. There, eschatological hope and a strong tradition of prophecy had continued throughout the second century. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis c. 130 had painted the most vivid picture of the Millennium which he shared with his Jewish contemporaries.⁵ Hierapolis also was believed to be the resting-place of the four daughters of the evangelist Philip who were accepted as prophetesses.⁶ The same area was, in addition, where native Phrygian prophets, Ammia and Quadratus, had flourished in the mid-second century.⁷ If one combines this tradition of prophecy in the province with a strong Jewish presence there, and a native religion in which penitential fasting and orgiastic religious practices were held in esteem,⁸ it is not difficult to understand how a movement such as that of Montanus might break out.

The events that precipitated this are, however, unknown. If one prefers Eusebius' date of 172 against that of Epiphanius of 157 as that of the outbreak, it is still uncertain why such a violent revival of the prophetic movement should have come about.⁹ The reign of Marcus Aurelius, 161–180, was witnessing the tightening of the screw on Christians. There had been some severe local persecutions,¹⁰ but none

⁴ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, viii.9.

⁵ Papias, cited by Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (= *HE*), iii.39.11 and 12, and Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, v.33.3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷ The anti-Montanist writer Miltiades located these prophets in Philadelphia and said that the Montanist prophetesses claimed to be their successors. Cited by Eusebius, *HE*, v.17.4.

⁸ Phrygian penitential inscriptions and their possible bearing on Montanism are discussed by W. Schepelern, *Der Montanismus und die Phrygischen Kulte* (Tübingen, 1929), 92–105.

⁹ The problem will not be solved, of course, until an inscription dating the proconsulship of Gratus is found, but the note by T.D. Barnes, 'The Chronology of Montanism', *JTS*, NS 21 (1970), 403–8, discusses the alternatives, coming down on the side of 168/9 or 171/2 as the most likely years of Gratus' administration and hence of the emergence of Montanism.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *HE*, iv.26.3 and 5 (Melito of Sardis complaining about 'new decrees throughout Asia', making it easier for Christians to be accused before the courts of being Christians).

so severe as to provoke the immediate popular response to the claim of a converted priest of Cybele to be the Paraclete and the mouthpiece of God pronouncing a starkly eschatological message.¹¹ The end was at hand. Therefore, believers must embrace an entirely spiritual and ascetic life. Marriages were to be dissolved, continence observed, rigorous 'dry fasts' (the '*xerophagia*') were to be undertaken,¹² and the name of Christ openly confessed and proclaimed to the point of courting martyrdom. 'Do not desire', Tertullian was to quote from a Montanist source, 'to die in bed or in childbirth or in debilitating fevers, but in martyrdom so that he who suffered for you may be glorified'.¹³ Public defamation should be accepted cheerfully, for that was following the example of the Lord.

Montanus soon attracted disciples, among whom were two women, Prisca (or Priscilla) and Maximilla, who had left their husbands to become prophetesses and missionaries. Prisca found a ready hearing in communities as far afield as the Black Sea ports of the province of Thrace.¹⁴ Her message emphasized the virtues of continence and fasting as means of gaining the Spirit. 'They are flesh and they hate the flesh', she proclaimed somewhat enigmatically.¹⁵ Her colleague Maximilla seems to have been active in southern Asia Minor, in Pamphylia, where local bishops tried to exorcize her.¹⁶ But she persisted. 'The Lord sent me as a devotee, a revealer, interpreter of this labour and promise and covenant. I was compelled willing or unwilling to learn the knowledge of God'.¹⁷ As Grant points out,¹⁸ this outlook may owe something to a Montanist interpretation of Paul's Letters to the Corinthians (for example, 1 Cor. 9.7 and 2 Cor. 4.4) for she went on to assert that the ministry was not her own, but Christ's through her. 'Do not hear me, but hear Christ',¹⁹ she told her hearers.

Within a decade of Eusebius' date for the outbreak of the movement, it had spread to Rome and to Lyon in Gaul, where in 177 the confessors anxiously debated its merits in their prison.²⁰ Certainly it had struck a chord there, for the essence of the confessors' will towards martyrdom was the promptings of the Spirit, and their leaders were characterized in the contemporary account of their bearing by a survivor, as 'boiling over with the Spirit'.²¹

Little wonder, then, that the leaders of the settled Christian communities that were the feature of the Church in Asia Minor at the

¹¹ Eusebius, *HE*, v.14.1 and 16.7.

¹² *Ibid.*, v.18.2, Hippolytus, *Refutatio*, viii.19.2, and Tertullian, *De Jejunio*, 1.

¹³ Tertullian, *De Fuga*, ed. Buhllart, 9.4.

¹⁴ Eusebius, *HE*, v.19.3.

¹⁵ Tertullian, *De Res. Carnis*, 11.2.

¹⁶ Eusebius, *HE*, v.16.17.

¹⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. Holl, 48.13.1 (Grant's translation).

¹⁸ R.M. Grant, *Augustus to Constantine* (London, 1971), 160.

¹⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 48.12.4.

²⁰ Eusebius, *HE*, v.3.4.

²¹ E.g. Vettius Epagathus, so described, *HE*, v.1.9.

end of the second century were caught off balance. They feared 'the strange sounds' emitted by Montanus, and were shocked at his repeated claim to be the voice of God himself. Two oracles remembered by friend and foe alike in the mid-fourth century and quoted by Epiphanius stated, 'Behold a man is like a lyre, and I hover over him like a plectrum. Man sleeps while I awake. Behold it is the Lord, who makes men's hearts ecstatic and gives new hearts to men.' Again, 'It is I, the Lord Almighty who am present in a man. I am neither an angel nor an emissary: I the Lord God, the Father have come'.²²

The message was the same as that of Montanus' Palestinian contemporaries, but the effect was far greater. The clergy were thrown into confusion. At the end of the second century no one wished to be accused of being a gainsayer of the Spirit and slayer of the prophets. Had not the prophets of the Old Testament foretold every detail in the life of Christ? Did not the Church's credibility against its Jewish opponents rest on pressing home the argument from prophecy? Moreover, Paul had not forbidden speaking in tongues, and there had been prophets in the first Christian communities. The dangers implicit in the new movement were, however, apparent. The claims of the new prophecy challenged the hierarchical order of the Church and the authority of its clergy. Ecstatic utterance seemed out of place in established communities.²³ Voluntary martyrdom was not only contrary to ecclesiastical discipline²⁴ but was calculated to frustrate the efforts of apologists, such as Melito of Sardis and Athenagoras, who were seeking to prove the divinely ordained character of the Empire and, hence, the possibility of harmony between it and the Church.²⁵

Failing to suppress the new prophecy at once, opponents urged the falsity of its message. The genuine prophets of Scripture did not utter in a state of ecstasy.²⁶ For the first time since the Apostolic Council of 48 AD the leaders of the Great Church assembled councils of bishops and condemned the prophets.²⁷ Exorcisms,²⁸ such as those attempted by Sotas, Bishop of Anchialus on the Black Sea coast, or Zoticus of Cumana, of the prophetesses were accompanied by more strong-arm methods. Maximilla has left traces of this in her plaint, 'I am driven away from the sheep like a wolf, though I am no wolf, but Word, Spirit and Power'.²⁹

²² Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 48.4.1, 11.1 and 11.9 (Grant's reconstruction, 160.)

²³ Eusebius, citing the Anonymous anti-Montanist writer, *HE*, v.16.9.

²⁴ Thus, the criticism of Quintus in the accounts of Polycarp's martyrdom, for 'rushing to the tribunal with others in a headstrong and irreligious spirit', Eusebius, *HE*, iv.15.8. The fact that Quintus was a Phrygian does not make him a 'proto-Montanist'. Also, *Mart. Polyc.*, 4 (voluntary martyrdom 'against the Gospel').

²⁵ Thus, Melito, cited in Eusebius, *HE*, iv.26.7, and implied by Athenagoras, *Plea* 1 and 37.

²⁶ Miltiades, quoted by Eusebius, *HE*, v.17.1-2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, v.16.10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, v.19.3 and compare x.16.8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.7.

Montanus' immediate followers seem to have expected the almost immediate descent of New Jerusalem in the wilderness tradition, near the Phrygian villages of Pepuza and Tymion, probably near Philadelphia. Pepuza, indeed, they named 'Jerusalem' in anticipation.³⁰ Montanus and Prisca disappear from the scene relatively soon. Maximilla declared c. 179 that 'after me there shall be no further prophethess, but the end.'³¹ This did not happen, and not even the relative peace of the Church during the reign of Commodus, 180–192, discredited the movement. By 190 this had become a well-organized church, with a notably efficient financial system,³² involving paid preachers, and a hierarchy whose titles reached back to the Apostolic period with the grade of *koinōnos* (companion) of the Lord in addition to bishop, presbyter and deacon.³³ Later, a higher rank of Patriarch was added.³⁴ At first at least, the hierarchy seems to have been open to men and women, and the latter played an important part in the liturgy. Epiphanius' informants described services enlivened by processions of torch-bearing maidens and scope for prophetic utterances.³⁵ A new generation of leaders had replaced the founders of the sect, of whom Miltiades, Themiso 'the confessor' and the prophethess Quintilla seem to have been the most prominent.³⁶

For forty years the Great Church in Asia Minor battled with the Montanists. Eusebius weaves his account of the movement from four separate sources, the earliest, Claudius Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, Papias' see, where Montanism was strong, writing 'while Montanus with his false prophethesses were beginning their error', i.e. in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.³⁷ Two other bishops, Miltiades and Melito of Sardis, were also contemporary with the early days of the movement. The most complete accounts were written by an anonymous writer addressing his work to Avircius Marcellus, Bishop of Hieropolis c. 200, and to Apollonius whose see is not mentioned. All these writers, while criticizing the fraudulent character of the movement – prophethesses joining in revels and prophets 'dyeing their hair' and 'loving ornaments'³⁸ – were in particular opposed to Montanism as a local schism and unnecessarily provocative to the authorities.

This concentrated opposition by the educated leadership of the Church in Asia Minor halted the Montanist advance and identified it

³⁰ Ibid., 18.2. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 48.14.1.

³¹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 48.2.

³² Eusebius, *HE*, v.18.2, Apollonius writing about Montanism c. 215.

³³ See W.M. Calder, 'Early Christian Epitaphs from Phrygia', *Anatolian Studies*, v (1955), 37.

For terms used concerning Polycarp, see *Mart. Polycarpi*, 6.2 and 17.3.

³⁴ Mentioned by Jerome, *Letter* 41.3, c. 384.

³⁵ *Panarion*, 49.2. This could well be an adaptation from the worship of Cybele.

³⁶ Eusebius, *HE*, v.18.5 (Themiso) and v.16.3 (Miltiades). Miltiades' works are rejected in the Muratorian Fragment. See J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius* (2nd.edn, 1987), 125. For Quintilla, *Panarion*, 49.2.

³⁷ Eusebius, *HE*, iv.27.

³⁸ Ibid., v.18.11 (Apollonius).

more precisely as a Phrygian movement.³⁹ Before this happened, however, Montanism was to take root in an area where the prophetic and eschatological message was to flourish in the Church from that time onwards, namely in North Africa. Though there were obviously Christians in North Africa before 180,⁴⁰ the Church there enters history as a Church of the Martyrs. Seventeen years after the martyrdom of the Scillitans, 17 July 180, Christians in Carthage had achieved the reputation of a sect whose members courted martyrdom at the hands of the authorities.⁴¹ The Church there had every reason to welcome Montanus' message, and scholars who have believed that both the editor of the *Passio Perpetuae* and the confessors themselves, martyred on 7 March 203, were strongly influenced by the new prophecy are, surely, correct.⁴² It took Tertullian another four years, when he was writing his largest work as a controversialist, *Adversus Marcionem*, first to try to integrate pronouncements of the new prophecy into orthodoxy, and then, evolving from that, to move into the Montanist camp. While Tertullian was prepared in his *De Ecstasi* to defend the ecstatic nature of the prophetic message,⁴³ for him, Montanism implied a gradual hardening of attitudes on moral questions and on the nature of confessorship that he had held previously. Thus, in the *De Monogamia* and *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, he asserted the Montanist view that second marriages were completely inadmissible.⁴⁴ In the *De Corona Militis* he claimed that there was no way in which a Christian soldier could serve in the army of the Emperor. Christ's service was for Christ alone,⁴⁵ and in the *De Fuga in Persecutione*, he stated that, far from persecution being something to be avoided, it was to be welcomed as a judgement of God to improve his servants. The martyr's death was the only one to which a Christian should aspire.⁴⁶ The New Prophecy was the continuation of the work of the Spirit manifested in the Gospel. The more stringent moral rules it asserted befitted the 'maturity' of the Church, contrasted with its 'youth' in the Gospel era.⁴⁷ It suited a chosen people waiting

³⁹ The first clear association between Phrygia and the heresy with the naming of the Montanists, 'Cataphrygians' is from the Muratorian Canon c. 200 (Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 125), but Hippolytus c. 220 also associates Phrygia with the movement, *Refutatio*, viii.19.1. Thenceforward the association becomes commonplace.

⁴⁰ Apuleius indicates a possible Christian in his description of an unpleasant and godless tradesman's wife, *Metamorphoses*, 9.14, 'sacrilegious worship of a god which she called "unique"'. See M. Simon, 'Apulée et le christianisme', *Mélanges de l'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris, 1974), 299–305.

⁴¹ Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, i and *Apol.*, 50.3.

⁴² See B. J. Kidd's cautiously argued and expressed view in *History of the Church to 461*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1922), 283–6 and Frend, *The Donatist Church* (3rd edn., Oxford, 1985), 118.

⁴³ One of the few works of Tertullian that have not survived, but written against the anti-Montanist writer in Asia Minor, Apollonius. For the Montanist reply that 'God put Adam into ecstasy, that is deep slumber,' see *Panarion*, 48.4 and 5.

⁴⁴ *De Monog.*, 1 and *De Exhortatione*, 9.

⁴⁵ Compare also *De Exhortatione*, 12.

⁴⁶ *De Fuga*, 1 and 9.

⁴⁷ *De Monog.* 14.5.

the last Trump marking the end of the existing Satanic age.⁴⁸

The New Prophecy as interpreted by Tertullian was to bequeath a legacy to the North African Church that found its fullest expression in the Donatist movement in the next century. Foreshadowing one of the main issues that were to divide Catholic and Donatist is Tertullian's quotation of a prophecy attributed to Prisca, that only a 'minister administering [a sacrament] in sanctity' could dispense a valid sacrament.⁴⁹ This was the tradition accepted by Cyprian and by the Donatist majority of North African Christians in the fourth century.⁵⁰

In Rome, the rigorist party was always to be in the minority. Pope Eleutherus, 171–189, had decided guardedly against the Montanists when consulted by Irenaeus on behalf of the Lyon martyrs. The latter's decision Eusebius describes as 'pious and orthodox', and apparently agreeable to Eleutherus.⁵¹ Montanism, however, built up a following. A quarter of a century later, Eusebius also provides information about a controversy involving the Montanist, Proclus and the Roman presbyter, Gaius.⁵² Against Proclus' claim to the validity of the New Prophecy through proven succession of prophets in Phrygia, Gaius replied by referring to the 'trophies' of the Apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, the first time any visible association of the Apostles and Rome is mentioned. Gaius also claimed that the canon of the New Testament was closed. There was no place for New Prophecy in it, nor even for the Fourth Gospel!⁵³

The Montanist tradition was to survive in the mainstream of Christianity in North Africa. With this exception it was to become, despite itself, sectarian, labelled as the 'sect of the Phrygians'. In the west during the fourth century Montanist groups maintained themselves in the background of orthodox Christianity. In the 380s, Bishop Pacianus of Barcelona remarked that whenever he went into a populous city he would find a Montanist church.⁵⁴ He also indicates that the issues were no longer confined to the validity of the new prophecy, but extended to that of the date of Easter. The anti-Montanist authorities quoted by Eusebius make no reference to the Montanist celebration of Easter, nor does Hippolytus. Indeed, ortho-

⁴⁸ *De Oratione*, 29.

⁴⁹ *De Exhortatione*, 10, a development of Tertullian's already strongly-held view that only those in communion with the Church, i.e. in possession of the Spirit, could baptize validly. *De Baptismo*, 15.

⁵⁰ The continuity between Tertullian, Cyprian and the Donatists is briefly and clearly summarized by G.G. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London, 1950), 145–52.

⁵¹ *HE*, v.3.4. The text of Eleutherus' reply has not survived, but Eusebius implies that the 'peace of the Churches' which was at issue involved distancing himself from the Montanists who were disturbers of that peace.

⁵² *Ibid.*, ii.25.7, (citing Gaius).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vi.20.3, (citing Gaius), and for Gaius' rejection of the Fourth Gospel, see Hippolytus cited in Dionysius Barsalibi in Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, 2nd. edn., 153.

⁵⁴ Pacian, *Ep. 1 ad Symphronianum*, *PL* xiii. col. 1054.

dox writers in the first fifty years of the Montanist movement concede its doctrinal and liturgical orthodoxy.

It might seem that, if one accepts that Montanism stood in the eschatological tradition of early Christianity, drawing heavily for its beliefs on the Johannine writings, the Fourth Gospel, Epistles and Revelation, a time would come when beliefs arising out of these would be represented in the Montanist *credo* and liturgy. An important paper, by the Revd H. Taylor, read at the tenth International Patristic Conference at Oxford, August 1987, points to close affinity between the Quartodeciman and Montanist calculations of Easter.⁵⁵ The Montanist belief could be derived from Revelation, ch. 12 that the birth of the Messiah was attended by astronomical events, namely the harmony of sun, moon and zodiacal cycle, and the tradition that it took place on 25 March.⁵⁶ Correspondingly, he would return at the beginning of the (Jewish) year, at the time of the spring equinox, whose date determined the Pascha.⁵⁷ In the fifth century Montanist churches throughout the Empire would receive a share in the communion from the Paschal celebration at Pepuza.⁵⁸ The Johannine epistles strengthened the Montanists in their belief that they were living in the last hour before the Millennium. Whether the detail of this reasoning is correct or not, it seems evident that the Montanists continued to follow what had been the Christian tradition in second-century Asia Minor of using the solar calendar to coincide the Pascha with the Jewish Passover on 14 Nisan, and relied on the Johannine writings for their liturgy and Scriptures.⁵⁹ Their's was a prolonged wake in the expectation of the Bridegroom and the descent of New Jerusalem at Pepuza.⁶⁰

A second characteristic mentioned by Sozomen in the fifth century concerning the Montanists was that they maintained bishoprics in villages as well as towns.⁶¹ He mentions this fact as an example of the different ecclesiastical customs among churches and sects he had himself encountered. Apart from Pepuza itself, where were these bishoprics? What evidence has survived of the rural character of Montanism? This certainly had not been the intention of Montanus or his followers. The early conflicts with the orthodox had

⁵⁵ H. Taylor, 'What was Montanism?', publication forthcoming in the conference Proceedings.

⁵⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromaton*, i.145.6.

⁵⁷ Taylor, 'What was Montanism?'. See Sozomen, *HE*, vii.18.12. The Montanist Pasch was dated 'on their own devising'. Sozomen, *HE*, vi.24 draws attention to most of the equally rigorist Novatianists in Phrygia being Quartodecimans.

⁵⁸ Philastrius, *De Haeresibus*, 49. For assemblies at Pepuza, see *HE*, v.18.2 (citing Apollonius).

⁵⁹ See J. Massingberd Ford, 'Was Montanism a Jewish Sect?', *Journ. Eccl. Hist.*, xvii (1966), 145-58.

⁶⁰ For the Bridegroom symbolism, see Rev. 21 in connection with the vision of New Jerusalem descending from heaven, and its application by the Montanists to themselves, see *Panarion*, 49.1.

⁶¹ *HE*, vii.19.2.

raged over the control of urban communities, such as Ankara,⁶² or outside Asia Minor, at Antioch.⁶³ Thyateira, one of the Seven Churches, had for a long time during the third century⁶⁴ been Montanist. Gradually, it seems that in the towns of Asia Minor the orthodox regained the upper hand. Yet the Cataphrygians, as the Montanists came to be called, were to survive at least until the end of the sixth century.⁶⁵ How and where? Part of the answer to the latter question must come from the group of more than twenty inscriptions from the Upper Tembris valley in Northern Phrygia. These all contain the formula 'Christians for Christians' (*Christianoi Christianois*) and were set up for all to see. W.M. Calder published fifteen of these in a notable article in this journal.⁶⁶ He concluded that they were Montanist and dated predominantly to the period before the Great Persecution. He pointed to the outspokenly Christian beliefs demonstrated by the dedicators, in line with Montanist preaching wholly different from more orthodox epitaphs, and the proclamation on one of these inscriptions that the deceased was a 'soldier', i.e. in the *militia Christi*.⁶⁷ The Tembris valley formed part of an imperial estate, and the dedicators proclaimed their occupation as farmers by the ploughs and woolcarding combs represented on the stones. They were articulate and wrote in tolerable Greek. Their living standard may well be reflected by the inscription in which Aurelius Papylos bequeaths to his sons Papylos and Amianus his tool chest, the land he had inherited, while his wife was to receive thirty measures of barley and a sheep.⁶⁸ An inscription probably of the early fourth century from Kurd Koi in the same area indicates also a tradition of religious rigorism, the deceased in this case choosing virginity, dedication to Christ and baptism by the presbyter of 'the Novatianist saints'. Such presbyters were also marked out as 'leaders of the people'.⁶⁹

Doubts, however, have recently been raised, first by the American researcher Dr Elsa Gibson,⁷⁰ and by W. Taberneer of Macquarie University in New South Wales.⁷¹ In both instances it is a matter of

⁶² *Ibid.*, v.16.3 (c. 200, the Anonymous' pretext for writing).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19.1 (Serapion's opposition to Montanism c. 200).

⁶⁴ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 51.33 (Holl), 307.

⁶⁵ They survived condemnation by Justinian in 530 (*Cod. Just.*, 1.5.20) and further persecutions during his reign. They were active as late as 580 (John of Ephesus, *HE*, iii. 20 and 32). Last mention in history is in Theophanes, *Chron.* sub ann. mundi 6120 = AD 722. In Sozomen's day they were still very numerous in Phrygia, *HE*, ii.32.6.

⁶⁶ W.M. Calder, 'Philadelphia and Montanism', *BjRL*, vii (1923), 309-55. I agree with Calder's assessment of the inscriptions which he saw (some of these I saw myself in the Museum at Istanbul) as 'belonging to the third century (or at latest the early years of the fourth)', 319.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 344, Fig. 4, Domnus described twice as 'megan istratiôtên'.

⁶⁸ E. Gibson, *The Christians for Christians Inscriptions of Phrygia*: no. 15, 33-4. *Greek Texts Translation and Commentary* (Missoula, 1978).

⁶⁹ W.M. Calder, 'Leaves from an Anatolian Notebook', *BjRL*, xiii (1929), 254-7 and esp. 260-3.

⁷⁰ Gibson, *The Christians for Christians Inscriptions*, especially 139-44.

⁷¹ G.H.R. Horsley, ed., 'New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity' (Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University), Section 98, 'Christian Inscriptions from Phrygia' (written by W. Taberneer).

lack of positive evidence for a Montanist connection, supported in Tabernee's case by arguments that most of the inscriptions date to the post-Constantinian period and, by implication, are orthodox.⁷² The difficulty with this sort of argument is that matters of opinion can be pressed as far as the critic needs to establish his case. It would, however, be an exceptional individual who would proclaim himself a 'Kataphrygian' on his tombstone or even a follower of 'Montanus'. One has to deal with probabilities, and the lack of any recognizably Catholic inscription among the group, coupled with the fact that proclamation of the faith was an acknowledged Montanist tenet (though not always maintained in practice), would incline one to accept the view of the discoverers, particularly of Calder. One would agree that the group of inscriptions is a valuable testimony to the indigenous rural Christianity of Phrygia in the years before Constantine's conquest of the east in 324, and that, as in similar circumstances in Donatist Numidia, this took a strongly biblical and eschatological form characteristic of Montanism.

The study of Montanism badly needs a fresh injection of material. It is doubtful whether the fundamental studies of the literary sources by P. de Labriolle will be superseded.⁷³ The supplementary work by Wilhelm Schepelern, Kurt Aland and J. Massingberd Ford has established the pedigree of the Montanist within the early Christian prophetic and pseudepigraphic movement against the background of a strong Jewish Dispersion influence.⁷⁴ The influence of the cult of Cybele on the actual form of ecstatic utterance of Montanus and his immediate following and the rigour of self-inflicted penances characteristic of the sect may have been stronger than Schepelern eventually concluded.⁷⁵ Much, however, depends on future study in the field. The discoveries of Ramsay, Calder and their successors need to be supplemented by surveys and excavations of the actual sites whence the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions came. The sort of work which French archaeologists carried out between the wars in central Algeria to establish beyond doubt the existence of Donatist Numidia, confirming the textual evidence provided by Optatus of Milevis and Augustine, needs to be undertaken in the Tembris valley. Only when finds associated with inscriptions on sites are dated accurately can the doubts raised by recent scholars either be sustained or removed. Meantime, Montanism is a field wide open to interdisciplinary research more than sixty years after this *Bulletin* published Calder's seminal article on 'Philadelphia and Montanism'.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷³ P. de Labriolle, *La Crise Montaniste* (Paris, 1913), and the same author's accompanying volume, *Sources d'histoire du Montanisme*.

⁷⁴ For an assessment of these works, see my 'Montanism, Research and Problems', *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 30 (1984), 521-37. (Bibliography to 1982).

⁷⁵ W. Schepelern, *Der Montanismus*, 122ff.