

## BOOK I.

### THE HISTORY OF MONTANISM.

#### § 1. Chronology.

MORE than a century ago, Mosheim declared that the chronology of Montanism was a matter of such extreme obscurity that he could only claim a fair measure of probability for the view he adopted<sup>1</sup>. The reason lies in the wide diversity, one might fairly say the absolutely contradictory character, of the evidence furnished by the earliest ecclesiastical historians. The chief of these, Eusebius and Epiphanius, furnish statements which hardly any ingenuity can reconcile; and the conclusions of modern writers have been consequently derived from the preference they have given to one or other of the two historians. Eusebius (in his annals) gives us the year A.D. 172, with the mention (cap. 16) that the first manifestations in Asia Minor took place in the pro-consulate of Gratus, and (in another place) that thirteen years of peace followed the death of Maximilla<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, as will be seen, these two last

26

data afford little help. Epiphanius presents no less than three statements. In the first place, he gives the "93rd year after the Ascension of our Lord," having previously fixed this as the 18th year of Tiberius<sup>3</sup>. This gives us AD. 135; but in another place<sup>4</sup> he mentions the 19th year of Antoninus Pius, thus postponing the beginning of the heresy until A.D. 157. His third statement<sup>5</sup> is that, from the date of Maximilla's death to the date of his writing, a period of 290 years had elapsed. Now the given year (sc. the 12th of *Valentinian, Valens, & Gratian*) must be not later than A.D. 390, which would carry the beginnings of Montanism into the first century. The *Chronicon Paschale* gives the year 182<sup>6</sup>. In Tertullian's writings we have no help towards the discovery of the date of commencement, but two remarkable statements with regard to the subsequent history of Montanism are found, to which we shall refer later on. It is not necessary to enumerate all the various conjectures which modern writers have made or followed; the first one which attempted a reconciliation of the statements of Epiphanius, due to Petavius, may be briefly stated<sup>7</sup>. He assumed that

<sup>1</sup> "Disputant viri docti et sine fine disputabunt de tempore, quo primum factio haec in Phrygia exorta est. Ego quam plerique probant, nec sine rationibus probant sententiam sequutus sum ..... (regnante M. Aurelio, medio fere saeculo, &c.)" *De rebus Christianorum ante Const. Magn.* p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Hefele suggested (*Conciliengeschichte*, I. 71, and see the Prolegomena to the 3rd edition of his *Patres Apostolici*), that the earliest date was preferable, according to his view, that Hermas, whom he believes to have written certainly before A.D. 151, under Bishop Pius, "bereits den Montanismus zu bekämpfen scheine." Cf. the exhaustive article in the Freiburg *Kirchen-Lexikon*, VII. 255 ff., and for older authorities, Baronius, II. 266, Tillemont, II. 441, and Bouth, II. 97 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Epiph. *Hæres.* LI. § 33. And see Schwegler (*Montanismus*, p. 249 ff.) and Ritschl (*Entstehung*, p. 525).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. XLVIII. § 1. "Οὗτοι γὰρ γεγόνασι περὶ τὸ ἑννεακαίδεκάτον ἔτος Ἀντωνίνου τοῦ Εὐσεβοῦς μετὰ Ἀδριανόν.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. XLVIII. § 2.

<sup>6</sup> I. 490. (ed. Dindorf.) "Μαμερτίνου καὶ Ῥούφου τὸ γ' ἢ κατὰ Φρύγας ἄθεος προφητεία Μοντανοῦ συνέστη, ἔτι δ' καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδου καὶ Θεοδότου."

<sup>7</sup> It is sufficient to mention that Pearson, Dodwell, and Neander supported the arguments in favour of the years 156 or 157; Blondel and Longuerue, followed in our days by Schwegler and Hefele, declared for A.D. 140 or 141;

the historian “meant Antoninus the Philosopher,” thus arriving at the year 179. But Pearson, in his *Minor Works*, has exposed the weakness of the assumption.

Looking upon the general character of the evidence, as furnished by Eusebius and Epiphanius, there can hardly be a doubt that the former has far higher claims to credence. But the absolute impossibility of supposing that a sect which only (according to his view) began to exist in Phrygia in 172, should in five years time have reached the situation which elicited the letter of the Gallic Confessors (universally fixed at A.D. 177), makes it necessary to see whether his witnesses really support his conclusion. Let us look at the statements of the Anonymous writer, and the quotations from Apollonius and Serapion, all of whom were most probably contemporaries, or at any rate of the next generation. The Anonymous wrote “more than thirteen years after the death of Maximilla.” But this prophetess appears to have survived her companions, from several passages in Epiphanius, (cf. *Euseb.* v. 17,) therefore the beginning of the prophesyings is thrown back to an earlier date, to which we are helped by the additional statement, that “it was forty years” (sc. at the time that Apollonius wrote) “from the first public appearance of Montanus.” And we know, moreover, that this writer was a contemporary of Commodus (cap. 18). Put these facts together. It may be fairly concluded:-

- (1) That the Anonymous wrote at least 54 years, and perhaps more, after the origin of Montanism.
- (2) That he wrote at the beginning of the reign of Commodus, if not under Marcus Aurelius.

Now Miltiades is quoted by Eusebius as mentioning that (contrary to a prediction of Maximilla) “thirteen years have elapsed, and perfect peace prevails.” Can this give us a clue? Baratier declares that it does. “Constat ergo

ad Commodi tempus pacem hanc referendam esse. Cœpit nempe Ann. CLXXIX. labente, cum Marcus Imperator Marcomannis victis quiesceret, et duravit usque ad Ann. CXCIII., quo ipsis Cal. Jan. Commodus interficiebatur, vel usque ad Martium ejusdem anni, et Pertinacis mortem, Ann. XIII. et aliquot mensibus.” Taking this for granted, the solution is not far off. Miltiades wrote in the year 193, and the death of Maximilla is thus placed in 179, subsequent to the decease of Montanus and Priscilla. Apollonius had written during their lifetime, in other words, not later than A. D. 178. Now we know that 40 years had elapsed from the beginning of the manifestations, which brings us to the year 138 as the date of origin. But it is probable that Maximilla survived Montanus some years, and at least possible that Apollonius did not write immediately after his death. Therefore we are justified in taking 175 as a likely date for Priscilla’s decease, and 165 or 166 as that of Apollonius’ writing. This brings the origin of all back to the year 126, which may agree with Epiphanius’s account of the 93 years after the

---

Tillemont and Walsh follow Eusebius in fixing the date at AD. 172. Baratier, the wonderful child-prodigy, (b. 1721, † 1740) who wrote a Hebrew lexicon at nine years of age, had planned an exhaustive work on the history of the early Church. He only lived to publish a preliminary dissertation on the succession of the Bishops of Rome in the first centuries. He treats at some length in this essay the origin of the Montanistic movement, and concludes that it was far earlier than most writers have supposed. Many of his results I have adopted in this chapter.

Ascension, although some calculate this differently. I confess that I cannot follow Baratier in his rather arbitrary emendations of the other statements in Epiphanius<sup>8</sup>, nor do I think them necessary for the adoption of his conclusions. All that remains is to fix the interval between the first origin and the establishment of a distinct party, the natural confusion between which is probably the chief cause of obscurity. Baratier gives 10 years for this purpose, and concludes:- “So we may delay the establishment of the Heresy until the year 136, or the

29

19th of Hadrian’s reign. And thus we can reconcile Epiphanius’s accounts among themselves, and to our own.” Without adopting every step of this ingenious reasoning, there can be no doubt that it obviates some (if not all) of the great difficulties which attend the usual Eusebian calculation. It also harmonizes with the statement of “Prædestinatus” that Soter, bishop of Rome, wrote against the Montanists<sup>9</sup>. Now the period of Soter’s episcopate is usually reckoned at 167-175, or (as by Vater in his *Tabellen*,) at 161-171. In either case it is quite impossible to suppose that a sect which only had its first beginnings in an obscure Phrygian village in the year 172, could in the following year (the latest possible for Soter), have been deemed formidable enough at Rome to elicit an episcopal manifesto. But by the adoption of a much earlier date, this difficulty vanishes. And, as we shall see later, a very important statement of Tertullian’s on the attitude of the Roman See towards Montanism, is also satisfactorily explained<sup>10</sup>.

## § 2. Names and Nicknames.

Leaving to a later section our attempt to solve the remaining problems connected with the chronology of the Montanist party, we turn to the second difficulty which meets us at the threshold. This is the extreme diversity of names by which the Montanists are described, and the obvious risk of confounding together descriptions of what might be essentially different objects. The most common designation of the sect applied by ancient writers is that of Phrygians or Cataphrygians, derived from the province

30

where Montanus began his teachings<sup>11</sup>, while all modern writers have preferred to connect the sect with the name of its founder. But the same writers speak of other parties, (whom they

---

<sup>8</sup> “Item idem Epiphanius se anno CXII. post id tempus scribere dicit, *quod mendosum est. (!)* Sed alibi nempe Hæres. XLVIII. § 2. non CXII. annos sed CCXC. habet, quod iterum absurdum. *Sed legendum CCL.* Scribebat enim Ann. CCCLXXVI. Et facilis lapsus a πεντήκοντα in ἑννεήκοντα. (Dindorf, following Petavius, supposed the original numeral to have been εἴκοσι.) At in Pearsonii Hypothesi forent Ann. CCXX. quod absurdum quoque, quia ex εἴκοσι nemo ἑννεήκοντα exsculpet.” (*Disquis. chronol.* p. 140 ff.)

<sup>9</sup> Scripsit contra eos librum S. Soter papa urbis, et Apollonius Ephesiorum antistes.” (*Liber Prædestinati*, Hæres. XXVI p. Galland. *Bibl. Patr.* X. 366.) The same writer adds, it is true, that Tertullian replied to these attacks, “agens contra Soterem supradictum urbis Papam, asserens falsa esse de sanguine infantis, Trinitatem in unitate deitatis .... &c.” Now it is clear that Tertullian wrote no book before the last decade of the 2nd century, and did not become a Montanist until the beginning of the 3rd.

<sup>10</sup> *Adv. Praxean*, cap. I. On this vide infra, in the chapter on the Opponents of Montanism.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, Augustin, *De Hæres.* § 26, “Cataphryges sunt, quorum authores fuerunt Montanus tanquam Paracletus, et duae prophetissae ipsius .... His nomen provincia Phrygia dedit, quia ibi extiterunt.” [Basel ed. of 1542, VI. 17.] The name in question is employed by Eusebius, Epiphanius, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen (ap. Pamphil.), Athanasius, (οἱ κατὰ Φρύγας,) Cyril, Gregory Nazianzen, Didymus Alexandrinus,

variously describe as Quintillianists, Priscillianists, Pepuziani, Tascodrugitæ, Artotyritæ,) in terms which strengthen a suspicion that these were either names of sub-sections of the same sect, if not arbitrary nicknames for the party itself<sup>12</sup>. The subdivision into two parties, the Proculists and the Æschinists, as asserted by the author of the Appendix to Tertullian's *Præscr. adv. Hæreticos*, will be best treated of in our later investi-

31

gations<sup>13</sup>, and the catalogue of titles may be concluded by the mention of the noble designation which, according to Tertullian, was sometimes applied as a reproach, but always received as an honour, - that of "Spirituales." ['Nos, quos merito spirituales dici facit agnitio spiritualium charismatum ..... sed psychicis, non recipientibus spiritum.' *De Monogam.*, cap. I.]

### § 3. Montanus.

All that can be declared with certainty about Montanus is *that he existed*, that he was originally an inhabitant of Ardaban in Mysia (near the Phrygian frontier), and that about the year A.D. 130 he began to teach a new revelation, and to lay claim to prophetic powers, if not (as his opponents declared) asserting himself to be the Paraclete himself. That he was born of heathen parents, and that he received the office of a presbyter, or even of a bishop, are rumours upon which it is now impossible to decide<sup>14</sup>. He attached to himself a large number of disciples, including several women of high social position, and the opinions he promulgated spread not only through Asia Minor, but obtained acceptance at Rome and at Carthage. He is asserted by some to have left writings, but the sentences quoted have far more the appearance of oral tradition<sup>15</sup>. He has been even claimed as a joint-author

---

Firmilian, Philaster, Theodoret, and one or two others. Isidor, Hilary, and Ambrose only speak of Montanus. John of Damascus has οἱ Καταφρυγαστῶν. [See his *De Hæres.* § 48. Migne, XCIV.707.]

<sup>12</sup> That the Fathers often exercised their orthodox wit in this way is well known (e.g. the "Alogi," of whom we shall speak later). The Tascodrugitæ were supposed to apply the hand to the nose when praying; the Artotyritæ are said to have offered bread and cheese: (cf. Prædestinatus "panem et caseum offerunt, dicentes a primis bominiibus oblationes Deo de fructibus terrae fuisse celebratas,") and this is said by Epiphanius (*Hæres.* XLIX. 2. 1) to have been a rite practised by a very similar sect." The "Pepuziani" were obviously Montanists from the name of the village (Pepuza) in which Montanus first taught, and where some believed he held episcopal authority later. (See Wernsdorf, di *Montanistis*, p. 57.) As Pepuza was a very obscure place, the nickname would carry a certain contempt. The titles "Priscillianists" and "Quintillianists" are not so easy to explain with certainty. It is quite probable that both refer to prophetesses, and that each of these had her special circle of hearers. Of course the "Priscillianists" will not be confounded with the totally distinct Spanish party in the 4th century. And that the title was applied to the Montanists is proved by two penal statutes, in which the same language is employed with regard to both. (Cod. Theod, Tit. *de Hæreticis*, legg. 34, 40, 57, 65, and Cod. Just. lib. I. tit. V. §§ 18-21.) Whether, however, Quintilla was also a Montanistic prophetess, is more open to doubt. Tertullian wrote against her his treatise *de Baptismo*, describing her as one of the Cainite sect, and Epiphanius gives her the honours of a separate heresy. (Cf. *Hær.* XLVIII. 14, XLIX. 1. 2, LI. 33.)

<sup>13</sup> Pseud.-Tertull cap. 52: "Sunt enim qui κατὰ Proclum dicuntur, sunt enim qui secundum Aesehinem pronunciantur." The name of this writer, and his period, appear to have never been ascertained. Some suppose it was Hippolytus.

<sup>14</sup> All our details about the person of Montanus are derived either from Eusebius, *H. E.* v. 16-18, or from the 48th Heresy of Epiphanius. Later writers simply copy or write from memory.

<sup>15</sup> Bishop Kaye thinks that Tertullian's works furnish presumptive proof that the effusions of Montanus... were committed to writing," (*History of second and third centuries*, p. 28,) but the passages he quotes, viz. from cap. 9 and 11 of the *De Fug. in Persec.*, and from the list of the *De Pudicitia*, hardly seem to confirm the statement sufficiently to counterbalance the fact that Tertullian does not anywhere mention such writings as proceeding from the pen or dictation of Montanus himself. The first passage: "Spiritum vero si consulas, quid magis sermone illo

of the Sibylline Oracles<sup>16</sup>. His opponents declared that he was mad, that he led a disgraceful life<sup>17</sup>, and that he finally

committed suicide “after the manner of Judas<sup>18</sup>.” Long after his death, when the ecclesiastical opposition had finally developed into active persecution, an Asiatic bishop is said to have exhumed the remains of Montanus, and to have burnt them<sup>19</sup>. All that can be deemed historically certain, I repeat, is that this personage began a religious movement, the full bearing of which he may not have conceived himself, but in which his share is undeniable<sup>20</sup>.

---

Spiritus probat? namque omnes pene ad Martyrium exhortatur non ad fugam, ut et illius commemoremur, ‘Publicaris, inquit: bonum tibi est. Qui enim non publicatur in hominibus, publicatur in Domino.’” Surely this might as easily refer to a traditional as to a written utterance; and it might as probably have been revealed through Maximilla as through Montanus. The quotations made by Epiphanius are also just of that oracular and fragmentary nature to be expected in tradition: and, as Bp Kaye admits, had Tertullian been aware of the existence of such declarations, “he would scarcely have failed in his Treatise against Praxeas to give some explanation of passages, which appear at first sight to identify Montanus with God the Father” (p. 29). The statement of Hippolytus, “τὰ πολλὰ φλύαρα αὐτῶν βιβλία,” may well be applied to the apologetic writings of Themiso and Proculus. Tillemont (*Mémoires*, II. 47), and Welch (*Ketzerhistorien*, I. 890), believed in the existence of such writings as Kaye supposes, and thought that Epiphanius must have had access to them. So also Wernsdorf, (*De Montanistis*, p. 133,) who adduces a passage from Theodoret:— Μοντανός τὰ τούτων (sc. προφητιδῶν ?) συγγράμματα προφητικὰς προσηγόρευσε βιβλους. He adds, “Atque hoc ipsum diserte confirmat ipse praesul Cyprius, qui verba Montani ex ejus prophetia adducit, λέγει γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ λεγομένη προφητείᾳ, idemque non uno loco ipsa Maximillae verba transcribit, ut necesse sit, aut hanc Prophetiam continuisse Montani et mulierum oracula conjuncta, aut Maximillam etiam librum reliquisse.” - I should certainly not balance my own inferences against so great a weight of authority. But it is difficult to imagine that detached utterances like the famous “Μετ’ ἐμὶ” προφήτης οὐκέτι ἔσται, ἀλλὰ συντέλεια,” attributed to Maximilla, (Eriph. *Hær.* XLVIII. § 2,) and “Ἀκούσατε ὦ παῖδες Χριστοῦ τί λέγει, ἐμοῦ μὴ ἀκούσατε ἀλλὰ Χριστοῦ,” (ibid. § 12,) must necessarily have formed part of a book, and could not have been handed down by word of mouth.

<sup>16</sup> This curious notion was supported by Jean le Sueur, (Sudorius,) in his *Histoire de l’Eglise* (p. 466), and also by Blondel. Longuerue seems to have thought it not unlikely.

<sup>17</sup> The “evidence to character” in the case of an alleged heretic is always very positive if not always very consistent. For instance, Jerome accuses Montanus of corrupting his bearers by bribery: “M. immundi spiritus praedicator, multas ecclesias per Priscam et Maximillam primum auro corruptit, deinde haeresi polluit,” (*Epist.* CXXXIII. *Ad Ctesiph.*). By way of contrast, Apollonius (ap. Euseb. *H. E.* V. 18) charges him with πλεονεξία! Another writer accuses him of adultery and infanticide: ἡ Μοντανοῦ βλασφημία παιδικτονίαις, μοιχείαις τε καὶ εἰδωλολατρείαις συντίθεται, (Isid. *Pelus.* I. 242). And Cyril of Jerusalem declares: ὁ Μοντανός ὁ ἀθλιώτατος καὶ πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας καὶ ἀσελγείας πεπληρωμένος, (*Catech.* XVI. 8). It must be admitted that the charge of adultery is hardly compatible with the reproach of being “abscissus et semi-vir,” according to Jerome (*Ep. ad Marcell.* XLI.).

<sup>18</sup> The anonymous author quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.* V. 16) observes: “καὶ οὕτω δ’ τελευτῆσαι καὶ τὸν βίον καταστρέψαι Ἰούδα προδότου δίκην.”

<sup>19</sup> This is stated by the younger Welch (*Ketzerhistorien*, I. 617), on the authority of “des Bischofs Johannis Kirchenhistorie in Asseman’s *Biblioth. Orient.* tom. II. cap. 11.”

<sup>20</sup> Schwegler’s hypothesis that Montanus is a merely mythical personage, is supported by him on the following grounds: (a) the complete obscurity as to the character of the man, apart from the “obligés” attacks of the ecclesiastical writers; (b) the universal designation of “Phrygian” instead of “Montanist;” (c) the author of the appendix to the *Præscriptio* does not mention him, (nor, he might add, does Hippolytus); (d) the vagueness of the statements in Eusebius, stuffed with such words as φουσί, λέγεται, λόγος ἔστιν, φήμη ἔστιν, and the like; (e) a passage in a spurious homily once attributed to Chrysostom, and included in some editions, in which Montanus is clearly described “als völlig mythische Person;” (f) the analogy with the generally admitted non-existence of Ebion. After mentioning these points, Schwegler admits the difficulty that remains: “Dieser Secten-

#### § 4. Prophetesses and Disciples.

Of the immediate followers of Montanus in Asia Minor, by far the most notable are the two women, Maximilla and Priscilla, or as she is sometimes called, Prisca. There is hardly a single mention of the leader in which they do not appear, not only as his companions, but as sharers in his alleged spiritual gifts<sup>21</sup>. They are described as having forsaken their husbands and families, and the usual charges of immorality and of final suicide are brought against them<sup>22</sup>. Maximilla seems to have occupied a prominent place of authority among the Montanists, and her prophetic utterances are quoted as well by Tertullian as by the hostile historians in a way which proves that she was one of the recognised organs of spiritual instruction<sup>23</sup>. If we are to accept the statements of Epiphanius, the Quintilla to whom we have already referred<sup>24</sup> was originally a Montanist prophetess, but finally formed a separate sect of Quintillianists, which has been more than once confounded with the main body itself. But a reference to the first chapter of Tertullian's treatise on Baptism, directed against this very Quintilla, will shew that this cannot

35

have been the case<sup>25</sup>. Of the other women whose visions were received as a Divine revelation, the only names that have come down to us are those of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, whose adherence to Montanism, (notwithstanding the well-meant efforts of Orsi and other

---

name, weil unabhängig von einem Eigennamen entstanden, müsste irgend welche sachliche Erklärung zulassen. Allein es findet sich bei keinem der Alten eine Andeutung, durch welche man über den Bereich von Möglichkeiten hinauskäme. Dass die Donatisten und Novatianer von späteren Geschichtschreibern mit den Montanisten verwechselt, oder als Montenses bezeichnet werden (as in Optat. Milev. *de schism. Donatist.* II. 4; but see Hieron. in Chron. s. a. 356), gibt nichts Sicheres an die Hand" (p. 244). Although this admission goes a good way towards disposing of the theory, it may be remarked that the evidence for the existence of Maximilla and Priscilla, (whom Schwegler suffers to exist,) is precisely of the same character as that affecting Montanus all three have sayings ascribed to them, and that of Montanus, too characteristic and remarkable to be pure invention. Ritschl thus gums up his argument for the personal existence:- "Wenn der Parteiname 'Montanisten' nicht bei den ältesten Schriftstellern üblich ist, sondern der Name 'Kataphryger,' so geht daraus nur hervor, dass Montanus nicht etwa eine schöpferische Person war, sondern nur die Kombination vollzog, welche durch die allgemeinen Verhältnisse nothwendig sich aufdrängte." (*Entstehung der Altkath. Kirche* p. 526.)

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Euseb. *H. E.* IV. 27, and v. 16-18. Also Epiphanius, *Hæres.* XLVIII. passim. Also Theodoret, *Hæret. Fabul.* III. 2. Jerome speaks of the wealth they brought with them. All passages from older writers dealing with the Montanistic prophetesses are collected in Wolf's *Fragmenta mulierum Græcarum*, p. 120 ff.

<sup>22</sup> "Von den Personen der Maximilla und Priscilla hat die Geschichte nichts überliefert als das Prädikat meretrices" (p. 247). Schwegler is here a little unfair, but there is no lack of loose declamation and improbable charges. The account of the suicide in Eusebius, it must be recollected, is considerably qualified by the candid admission, "ἴσως μὲν οὕτως, ἴσως δ' οὐχ οὕτως," which would be no very inappropriate motto for much of the "history" to be derived from these quarters, (V.16, § 6).

<sup>23</sup> Augustin is the only writer who seems to place Maximilla in a secondary rank, giving the first place to Priscilla and (?) Quintilla, on account of their vision. Hippolytus makes out Maximilla and Priscilla the real leaders, and suppresses Montanus altogether, VIII. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Vide supra, p. 30, note 2.

<sup>25</sup> He alludes to her as "a viper of the Cainite heresy, making it her first aim to destroy baptism." That this is a pre-Montanistic treatise appears sufficiently clear from the words, "that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine." (See Kaye, p. 43, and *Anti-Gnostikus*, p. 169 ff.)

Roman Catholic writers,) is now generally acknowledged<sup>26</sup>. Among the men prominent in the party, Themiso, Theodotus, Alexander, Alcibiades, Æschines, Proclus (or Proculus,) Lucius, and (according to some modern writers,) Athenagoras. The first-named wrote a “general epistle” to advocate the principles of the New Prophecy<sup>27</sup>. Theodotus, who is not to be confounded with any one of the three other heretics of the same name, is briefly mentioned by Eusebius<sup>28</sup>. Of Alexander and Alcibiades we have no information other than a record of their names in the same work<sup>29</sup>. Æschines and Proclus are noted by the Pseudo-Tertullian as the respective leaders of the two branches into which Montanism broke up in the Third Century, and the latter is also said to have engaged in

36

a controversy with the presbyter Caius at Rome<sup>30</sup>, Bishop Pacian mentions Blastus as one of the sect, as well as Lucius Carinus<sup>31</sup>. Athenagoras has been included by some on account of his peculiar views on Inspiration; but this and similar questions of internal evidence must be reserved for treatment in the following book.

## § 5. Progress in Asia Minor.

The plan of this essay does not admit of an examination into the causes for the rapid spread of Montanism in Asia Minor. These will be investigated when we deal with the general historical “position” of the party, after having analysed its distinctive tenets. No satisfactory evidence is to be found either in Eusebius or Epiphanius, as to the incidents of this progress. The latter in one place, it is true, asserts that the city of Thyatira was infected with the heresy as early as A.D. 126, a statement which (as we have shewn) it is impossible to reconcile with any consistent theory<sup>32</sup>. A more probable account is found in the anonymous writer so largely quoted by Eusebius. He relates that, owing to the alarming spread of the new opinions, many assemblies of the faithful were convened in order to decide on measures of repression, and that these synods invariably condemned the Montanists<sup>33</sup>. The *Libellus Synodicus* alludes to one council held at Hierapolis by Apollinaris, (the bishop of the town,) and twenty-six other prelates, which fulminated anathemas against Montanus and Maximilla. Also that a “holy and special synod” was held by the Bishop Sotas and twelve

---

<sup>26</sup> Vide infra, II. § 8, and Appendix B. The Cardinal’s treatise is based upon the following impregnable syllogism: (1) P. and F. are recognised as martyrs by the Church; (2) all such martyrs must be orthodox; (3) Ergo.

<sup>27</sup> “Ἐτόλμησε μιμούμενος τὸν ἀπόστολον (?) καθολικὴν τινα συνταξάμενος ἐπιστολὴν κατηχεῖν μὲν τοὺς ἄμεινον αὐτοῦ πεπιστευκότας, συναγωνίζεσθαι δὲ τοῖς τῆς κενοφωνίας λόγοις, βλασφημῆσαι δὲ εἰς τὸν κύριον καὶ τοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ τὴν ἅγιαν ἐκκλησίαν.” (Apollonius ap. Euseb. *H. E.* V. 18. 3.)

<sup>28</sup> The younger Walch carefully enumerates (1) “Theodotus der Gärber, aus Byzanz;” (2) “Th. Stifter der Melchisedekiten;” (3) “Th. der Valentinianer;” and finally, (4) “Th. der Montanist.” (*Hist. der Ketzereien*, I. 547.) Eusebius mentions him with Alcibiades as being ἀμφὶ Μοντανὸν (V. 3).

<sup>29</sup> The same authority in one place, (v. 16,) actually describes Montanism as “ἡ τῶν κατὰ Ἀλκιβιάδην λεγομένων αἵρεσις.” But Schwegler remarks (*Montanismus*, p. 243) that the text is doubtful, and that Heinichen’s edition reads “Miltiades” in this place.

<sup>30</sup> Vide infra, Book III. § 1. And see Tertullian’s eulogy on “Proculus noster” (*Adv. Val.* 5).

<sup>31</sup> “Nam puto at Graecus Blastus ipsorum est” (sc. Phrygum). And elsewhere: “ipsi illi Phryges nobiliores, qui se animatos mentiuntur a Leucio, se institutos a Proculo gloriantur” (*Paciani Epist. I. ad Symp.* VII. 257 in *Gall.*).

<sup>32</sup> Eriphan. *Hæres.* XLVIII. § 33.

<sup>33</sup> “Τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν πιστῶν πολλάκις καὶ πολλαχῆ τῆς Ἀσίας εἰς τοῦτο συνελθόντων καὶ τοὺς προσφάτους λόγους (sc. of the Montanists) ἐξετασάντων καὶ βεβήλους ἀποφηνάντων καὶ ἀποδοκιμασάντων τὴν αἵρεσιν, οὕτω δὲ τῆς τε ἐκκλησίας ἐξέωθησαν καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας εἴρχθησαν.” (*H. E. lib.* V. cap. 16.)

others at Anchialus, on the Black Sea, which council also condemned the Montanists<sup>34</sup>. But these statements have to contend with the difficulty of being reconciled with others supported by far higher authority. If Montanism had been thus summarily condemned, how can we account for the fact that Rome was willing to recognise its orthodoxy not many years later? Or how can we suppose that the confessors of Gaul would have pleaded so earnestly in the face of a solemn decision of the Asiatic Church? These synods are supposed to have been held before A.D. 150, that is, not long after Montanism began to attract the attention of the Church, although twenty years after the first formation at Pepuza. But this seems to be contradicted by a statement in the *Libellus*, to the effect that the Synod of Hierapolis condemned "Theodotus the tanner" at the same time. Now it is certain that this Theodotus was excommunicated by Victor, Bishop of Rome, near the end of the Second Century, and the only way out of the difficulty is in the supposition, (offered by Hefele,) that the compiler of the *Libellus* confounded one Theodotus with another<sup>35</sup>. The further events connected with Asia Minor, such as the decision of the Laodicean Council, will be treated of under the head of the decline of Montanism.

#### § 6. Montanism at Rome.

In the middle of the Second Century, Rome had already become the intellectual centre of Christendom. Perhaps no historical event had so much importance in shaping the earlier stages of Catholicism as the removal of the head-quarters from Jerusalem to the capital of the Empire. All who wished to influence the Church, or

to contribute towards the solution of the pending controversies, hastened thither: Valentinus the Gnostic, Justin the Apologist, Hegesippus the Historian, Polycarp the representative of Asiatic orthodoxy, Praxeas the Monarchian, Proclus the Montanist<sup>36</sup>. If the last-named is to be considered the first who proclaimed the New Prophecy at Rome, there can be little doubt that he found the ground prepared for him indirectly by the writings of a remarkable predecessor. The Visions of the "Shepherd" must have been the popular book, for more than a generation, among the secondary Hagiographa<sup>37</sup>. As Ritschl observes: "The real object of these writings is the elevation of the moral code (Sittenstrenge)," and it is difficult to understand the 'reason why Tertullian (*De Pudic.* 20) speaks of "that apocryphal shepherd of adulterers." Now, we are enabled to infer that it was during the episcopacy of Anicetus that Montanism first appeared at Rome. The evidence is not strong, but it is just sufficient to lend consistency to the view, and very little more can be ever hoped for when one is dealing with the period in question. Our historical points of contact are:-

---

<sup>34</sup> This *Libellus Synodicus* contains analyses of the Councils of the first nine centuries. It was brought from Greece at the time of the Renaissance by Andreas Darmarius, and was edited by Pappus, (? Pfaff,) a theologian of Strasburg. Harduin reprinted it in his collection, while Mansi separated each portion, placing each under the respective date. Although of no very early date, this *Libellus* is considered to have been based on good information. (See Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, I. 70.)

<sup>35</sup> Vide supra, p.35, and note 4.

<sup>36</sup> See this worked out in Gfrörer's *Kirchen.Geschichte*, I. 263 ff., and Schwegler's *Nachapost. Zeitalter*, II. 201.

<sup>37</sup> Westcott on *Canon of N. T.* (4th ed.), p. 190 ff. Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 529, 530.

- (a) The statement of Prædestinatus that Soter wrote against Montanism<sup>38</sup>.
- (b) The knowledge (derived from Eusebius) that Eleutherus was so unfavourable to the same party as to call forth the letter of the Gallic martyrs; confirmed by –
- (c) Tertullian's account of the coming of Praxeas to Rome, and his breaking off the amnesty by (doubtless among other objections) reminding "the Bishop" (? Victor) that his predecessors had censured the Montanists.

Let us consider (b) and (c) more closely. Eusebius relates that the Confessors of Lyons and Vienne (churches which it appears had been founded by Phrygian evangeli-

39

zation) "sent letters both to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia, and also to Eleutherus, bishop of Rome, advocating peace among the churches<sup>39</sup>." This missive, styled by Eusebius "εὐλαβῆς καὶ ὀρθοδοξοτάτη," was carried by Irenæus, then a presbyter; and knowing the high respect entertained for the authority of confessors, we have no difficulty in believing, especially with the following confirmation, that this embassy was successful in its endeavour. One or two writers, however, have pointed out, and with reason, that this statement is by no means so clear as Schwegler and Ritschl believe, and some have even declined to regard the Gallic epistle as in any way favourable to Montanism<sup>40</sup>. But, apart from the fact that Eusebius's suppression of the letter itself speaks plainly as to the character of its contents - for he would surely have quoted any rebuke to the Montanists "in extenso" - the word ἀδελφοῖς when applied to the same in the other letter (describing the torments of the martyrs), added to "τὴν αὐτὴν πίστιν... ἔχουσιν," and above all, the description of one of their number as "ἔχων τὸν παράκλητον ἐν ἑαυτῷ, τὸ

40

πνεῦμα πλεῖον τοῦ Ζαχαρίου<sup>41</sup>; all these details fairly support the theory in question. That Irenæus should have regarded Montanism at first with far more favourable eyes than later, will not surprise those who study the very slight allusions to the New Prophets in his book

<sup>38</sup> "Scripsit contra Montanistas Soter papa urbis." (*Hæres.* XXVI.)

<sup>39</sup> "Τῶν δ' ἀμφὶ τὸν Μοντανὸν ... περὶ Φρυγίαν ἄρτι τότε πρῶτον τὴν περὶ τοῦ προφητεύειν ὑπόληψιν παρὰ πολλοῖς ἐκφερομένων, (πλείσται γὰρ οὖν καὶ ἄλλαι παραδοξοποιῶσαι τοῦ θείου χαρίσματος εἰσέτι τότε κατὰ δαιμόριον ἐκκλησίας ἐκτελούμεναι πίστιν παρὰ πολλοῖς τοῦ κἀκεῖνους προφητεύειν παρεῖχον) καὶ δὴ διαφωνίας ὑπαρχούσης περὶ τῶν δεδηλωμένων, αὐθις οἱ κατὰ τὴν Γαλλίαν ἀδελφοὶ τὴν ἰδίαν κρίσιν καὶ περὶ τούτων εὐλαβῆ καὶ ὀρθοδοξοτάτην ὑποτάττουσιν ἐκθέμενοι καὶ τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς τελιωθέντων μαρτύρων διαφοροῦς ἐπιστολάς, ἃς ἐν δεσμοῖς ἔτι ὑπάρχοντες τοῖς ἐπ' Ἀσίας καὶ Φρυγίας ἀδελφοῖς διεχάραξαν, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἐλευθέρῳ τῷ τότε Ῥωμαίων ἐπισκόπῳ, τῆς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν εἰρήνης ἕνεκα πρεσβεύοντες." *H. E.* lib. V. cap. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Of course Baronius and later R. C. writers indignantly spurn the notion that the martyrs could have sympathised with "heretics." Even the younger Walch is inclined to hold that the epistle may have recommended the Montanists to "restore peace" by ceasing to prophesy. (*Hist. der Ketzereien*, I. 643.) He adds: "Da es ihm (sc. Eusebius) nicht gefallen, zugleich den Inhalt des Urtheils bekannt zu machen; so hat es an mancherlei Muthmassungen neuerer Gelehrten nicht fehlen lassen, da denn jeder die guten Alten so denken lässt, wie er nach seinen eigenen Religionsgesinnungen denken würde." (I. 643.) Schwegler seems, in this instance, to have drawn only a fair conclusion from the evidence. (*Montanismus*, p. 253.)

<sup>41</sup> *H. E.* lib. v. cap. 1. Ritschl does not go quite so far as Schwegler in his estimate of the pro-Montanistic character of the epistle. He may be right in thinking that the passage here quoted does not necessarily imply what is here inferred, but it is remarkable, to say the least, that an instance of ascetic practice, quite Montanistic in its character, is quoted with regard to Alcibiades, (not to be confounded with the Phrygian of that name). See V. 3.

against Gnosticism, and we can only suppose that he supported the petition with his already not inconsiderable influence. The date of this mission is now universally fixed at A.D. 177<sup>42</sup>.

Our next piece of evidence is derived from Tertullian, and is of such vast importance in the history of Montanism that it needs to be transcribed: "For after the Bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, and in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia, he" (sc. Praxeas, already mentioned as having brought his heresy from Asia to Rome), "by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as to desist from his purpose of acknowledging the [said] gifts. By this, Praxeas did a twofold service for the devil at Rome; he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and he crucified the Father. Praxeas' tares had been moreover sown, and had produced their fruit here also, while many were asleep in their simplicity of doctrine... We indeed, on our part, subsequently withdrew from the carnally-minded on our acknow-

41

ledgment and maintenance of the Paraclete<sup>43</sup>." Who was this Bishop of Rome? Although many singular guesses may be found in the different histories and monographs, the later and more critical writers<sup>44</sup> are divided between two names only, Eleutherus and Victor. It must be premised that the imperfect chronology of the Roman bishops in the 2nd century defies any pretence at complete accuracy, and in the following statement of the argument on both sides, I adopt the dates commonly accepted in general works of reference<sup>45</sup>. It is clear that, in order to explain Tertullian's "præcessores," Anicetus and Soter are inadmissible. For Eleutherus the chief ground is the probability that the intercession of the Gallic confessors and of Irenæus had the effect of making peace, and obtaining recognition for the Montanistic *χαρίσματα*. Only as there is not a scrap of confirmatory evidence, the supporters are bound to urge other reasons drawn from what is known of Victor's

42

---

<sup>42</sup> 17th year of Marcus Aurelius. Cf. Sulpicius Sev. *H. Sacr.* II. 46. "Tum primum inter Gallas martyria visa, serius trans Alpes Dei religione suscepta."

<sup>43</sup> "Idem tunc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem jam prophetias Montani, Priscæ, Maximillæ, et ex ea agnitione pacem ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae inferentem, falsa de ipsis prophetis et ecclesiis eorum adseverando et præcessorum ejus auctoritates defendendo coëgit, et literas pacis revocare jam emissas, et a proposito recipiendorum charismatum concessare. Ita duo negotia diaboli Praxeas Romae procuravit, prophetiam expulit, et haerese intulit; Paracletum fugavit et Patrem crucifixit. Fruticaverunt avenae Praxeanae, hic quoque superseminatae, dormientibus multis in simplicitate doctrinae; ..... Et nos quidem postea agnitio Paracleti atque defensio disjuncta a Psychicis."

<sup>44</sup> Baronius, Rigaltius (see Prolegg. to his ed. of Tertullian), declare for Anicetus, of course with the purpose of minimizing the papal mistake; Schweigler and Ritschl are in favour of Eleutherus; Neander is doubtful; Pagi (*Annot. ad Baron.*), Tillemont (*Mém.* II. 869), and Routh (*Rel. Sacr.* I. 261), prefer Victor. Dodwell (ap. Pearson, *Opp. posth.* App. 168,) suggested Zephyrinus.

<sup>45</sup> That is to say:- Pius, (142-157); Anicetus, (157-168); Soter, (168-173); Eleutherus, (173-189); Victor, (189-201); Zephyrinus, (201- 218). Vater in his *Tabellen*, still a standard authority in Germany, differs considerably from the above: e. g. he places Soter's accession in 161, that of Eleutherus in 171, and Victor's in 182. Certainly this latter calculation is more convenient for those who suppose that Tertullian's bishop was Eleutherus, as it bestows five more years on him. The latest investigator, Lipsius, differs slightly in his results from the first enumeration. (See Appendix E.)

character. “His hostile attitude towards Jewish Christianity,” says Schwegler, “and his overbearing conduct to the Asiatic Church, are well known. This might agree well with the final condemnation of Montanism, but not with a previous desire for reconciliation<sup>46</sup>.” But this would depend, as the same writer admits, on the question whether the Montanists of Rome had retained the Asiatic rule for keeping Easter, or had adopted that of the Western Church. Prædestinatus says distinctly “unum Pascha nobiscum<sup>47</sup>,” and Schwegler has no resource but to reject his evidence as untrustworthy. It is true that the evidence on this point is very conflicting, and that Socrates<sup>48</sup>, Sozomen<sup>49</sup>, and the Pseudo-Chrysostom<sup>50</sup> assert that the Montanists held to the Asiatic rule. But there is another aspect of the question, to which very little attention seems to have been paid. By examining the records of the Monarchian heresy, always identified with Praxeas, we find no small grounds for supposing that Victor must have been this bishop. For instance, the author of the Appendix to Tertullian’s *Præscriptio* says: “But after all

43

these things, one Praxeas introduced a heresy, which Victorinus was careful to corroborate<sup>51</sup>.” Who was Victorinus? Many high authorities, such as Fabricius in his comments on Philaster<sup>52</sup>, and, in our own times, Oehler, believe that this name is simply a mistake for that of Victor. But in neither case can we suppose that the intervention of Praxeas caused a complete breach and excommunication. We know, for instance, that the Montanist Proclus conducted a controversy with the presbyter Caius, the latter being placed by Eusebius in the period of Zephyrinus<sup>53</sup>. And this bishop was probably the “pontifex maximus” and “episcopus episcoporum,” whose claims to absolve all crimes incurred the severity of Tertullian’s satire<sup>54</sup>. In fact, the Montanists during the remainder of Victor’s reign may be reasonably supposed to have remained in an ambiguous position, disowned and yet not formally and officially condemned: as with the Jansenists in France between the “Paix de l’Eglise” in 1668, and the renewal of persecution in 1702. The time was not yet ripe for declaring those men heretics who opposed the growing encroachments of ecclesiastical machinery, and the

<sup>46</sup> *Montanismus*, p. 250. Neander seems to have wavered between the two:—“Wir wissen nicht, weiche Umstände den starren, von einem hierarchischen Geist beseelten Victor für den Montanismus gütig stimmen könnten. Es passt wohl zur Charakteristik desselben, dass er seinen beiden Vorgängern nicht widersprechen wollte, und dass daher Praxeas ihn dadurch gegen die montanistischen Gemeinden sich zu erklären bewog, dass er ihm des Ansehen seiner Vorgänger entgegenhielt.” (*Anti-Gnostikus*, 2nd ed. p. 441, note; and see also *AU. K. G. I. 3. 896.*)

<sup>47</sup> *Hæres. XXVI.*, Schwegler finds it convenient to discredit this witness here, after using him elsewhere. (Cf. p. 254.) “Indem uns nämlich der Prædestinatus mit der Nachricht zu Hülfe kommt.”

<sup>48</sup> *Hist. Eccl. IV. 28.* [He is dealing with a later period, when the Montanists had fused with the Novatianists.]

<sup>49</sup> Sozom. *Hist. Ecol. VII. 18.* Sabbatius introduced the Jewish custom to the Novatianists: “καὶ πολλοὺς τοὺς ζηλοῦντας ἔσχε, καὶ μάλιστα Φρύγας καὶ Γαλάτας,” &c.

<sup>50</sup> In the spurious 7th Oration, “In Pascha,” (Chrysost. *Opp. Tom. VIII. App. 276*, ed. Montfauc.) we find that, among those who belonged to the heresy of σὺν Ἰουδαίων ποιοῦντες τὸ πάσχα is included the party of τῶν Μοντανιστῶν. [But cf. the 7th and 8th Canons of the Council of Laodicea.]

<sup>51</sup> “Post hos omnes etiam Praxeas quidam hæresin intulit, quam Victorinus corroborare curavit.” (Cap. 53.)

<sup>52</sup> Oehler supposed (*Annot. in Tertull.*) that the name of Victor’s successor, Zephyrinus, had been also written, either originally, or by way of correction; and that a subsequent transcriber, as so often was the case, added the termination of the latter name to the former.

<sup>53</sup> Eusebius, *H. E. lib. II. 25; III. 31; VI. 20.* (Vide infra, II. § 7.) Although the writings in this controversy are lost, we can gather from the subject as described by Eusebius, that the last extremities of power had not yet been employed by the majority.

<sup>54</sup> “Audio etiam edictum esse propositum, et quidem peremptorium. Pontifex scilicet maximus edicit: ‘Ego et mœchiæ et fornicationis delicta penitentia functis dimitto.’ O edictum, cui adscribi non poterit: bosium factum!” (*De Pudic. cap. 1.*)

consequent “quenching of the Spirit.” But this result, ‘which will be further discussed in another chapter, was inevitable. At the beginning of the third century, the Montanists at Rome were completely isolated from the

44

rest of the Church. A few generations later they became the mark for unanimous hatred and contempt.

### § 7. Montanism in Africa.

After Montanism had been rejected at Rome, it took fresh root in Africa. This is not the place to speak of the many causes which combined to fit the nature and proclivities of the national temperament for the new opinions; we can judge the effects upon the surest and completest evidence. To the great champion of the New Prophecy at Carthage the next section is devoted. His contemporaries, the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas, the account of whose sufferings constitutes one of the most interesting portions of Christian history, are now generally considered to have been undoubtedly attached to the same party; and I confess that I cannot understand the possibility of any other conclusion<sup>55</sup>. They have visions, and they expect them; they convey a mild but unmistakable reproof to their bishop; they even seem to recognise that peculiarity of ritual which several witnesses ascribed to Montanism, viz. the offering of cheese<sup>56</sup>. The date of their martyrdom has now, thanks to the labours of Uhlhorn, been fixed with tolerable certainty in the year AD. 203, though he himself, with commendable caution, prefers to allow a possibility of a rather later date<sup>57</sup>. On the episodes of the martyrdom itself, deeply pathetic as they are, the limits and object of this essay forbid me to enter; but there are several incidents in the preliminary narrative which cast light on the situation of the Carthaginian Church, and on the extent of the Montanistic progress. In the 11th chapter, the martyr Saturus relates a vision, in which he was carried, together with Perpetua, into heaven. There

45

they found their bishop, Optatus, and the presbyter Aspasius, apparently in sadness. These at once fell at the feet of Perpetua and her companion, and besought them to restore peace. The future martyrs, though disclaiming this authority, yet began to console them; and angels, coming in, exhorted Optatus to “correct his flock<sup>58</sup>.” Now it is known that Optatus was Bishop of Carthage. Aspasius is called “doctor” as well as “presbyter,” from being probably the teacher of catechumens. That, the dissension was upon the subject of Montanism appears

---

<sup>55</sup> See the controversy in Orsi, Basnage (*Hist. Eccl.* XVIII. 9), Wernsdorf, *de Montanistis*, p. 52 ff., and 126, Ritschl, *Entstehung*, p. 545 ff.; Schwegler, *Montanismus*, p. 65, Uhlhorn’s *Fundamenta*.

<sup>56</sup> On this point I certainly should lay no stress. See Appendix B.

<sup>57</sup> “Persecutio Severiana ..... jam ann. 205 vel 206 defervisse. Martyrium autem SS. Perpetuae at Felicitatis primum jam impetum persecutionis prodere videtur.” (Uhlhorn, *Fundamenta Chron. Tertull.* p. 13.) See the whole chapter.

<sup>58</sup> [See the whole passage in Appendix B.] Ritschl paraphrases the “quia sic ad te conveniunt quasi de circo redeuntes, &c” thus: “(denn die Glieder derselben kämen zu ihm,) als wenn sie von der Rennbahn zurückkehrten, und an den auf die Spiele bezüglichen Parteien theilnahmen.” Uhlhorn also takes this meaning for “factions,” against Holstenius and Münter, who thought that ecclesiastical factions were meant. (*Fundamenta*, p. 18.)

the only reasonable conclusion<sup>59</sup>. The “*corrigere plebem tuam*” must certainly have referred to the question of discipline, always foremost in the relations of the Montanists to the church-rulers. And finally the simile employed by the angels, “*quasi de circo redeuntes et de factionibus certantes,*” can only be explained as an oblique condemnation of the amusements which laxer Christians enjoyed or excused, but which the Montanists invariably denounced as mortally sinful.

## § 8. Tertullian.

Our knowledge of this great man's life is almost solely derived from a meagre sketch left by Jerome, and from allusions in his own works. We infer with certainty that his literary activity took place in the reigns of Severus and Caracalla, (A.D. 193-216,) but we can only conjecture that he was born about the middle of the Second Century<sup>60</sup>, and survived until 220 or 230<sup>61</sup>. Jerome tells us that he

46

was a native of Carthage, and the son of a proconsular centurion<sup>62</sup>, and it is impossible not to recognise in the writings which have come down to us the evident traces of legal as well as rhetorical education. Eusebius informs us that Tertullian was thoroughly acquainted with the Roman Law<sup>63</sup>, and we may suppose that he practised as an advocate on reaching manhood. But the bent of his mind towards religious speculation seems to have found an early vent in a treatise on the state of marriage<sup>64</sup>, and such a nature was not likely to watch without deep interest, nor without ultimate choice of side, the then widening gulf between the Montanists and the hierarchy at Rome. It seems probable that he was born a heathen, and in his early life may not have been free from the moral corruption of the time and place<sup>65</sup>. But when the time of conversion came, it was deep and decisive. The fierce, stern African character made valiant soldiers, if not always discreet teachers, in the service of God. Its intellectual bent was far removed indeed from the dreamy, Oriental musings upon the origin of the world: but it welcomed the ardent hopes of Christ's speedy coming; it revelled in the austerities which at once diminished the terrors of persecution and opened visions of the future reward; it was prepared to acknowledge the religion of the New Prophets as the pure, unadulterated Gospel, and their utterances as the voice, of the Spirit. Tertullian was always combating; first with the heathen, next against

47

---

<sup>59</sup> Uhlhorn quotes Münter, (*Primord. eccl. Afr.* p. 25.) and Morcelli, (*Africa Christiana*, II. 53.) The latter even fixed the duration of Optatus's episcopate at from AD. 200 to 204.

<sup>60</sup> Allix placed his birth about the year 145 or 150.

<sup>61</sup> Jerome reports that “he is said to have lived to a very advanced age” (*Catal. Scr. Eccl.*)

<sup>62</sup> Kaye explains this office as equivalent to our modern “aide-de-camp.” He refers to a note of Valesius in Euseb. *H. E.* II. 2.

<sup>63</sup> “Τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους ἠκριβωκῶς ἀνὴρ” (II. 2), which, as Neander suggests, should be taken together with the following: “τάτε ἄλλα ἐνδοξος, καὶ τῶν μάλιστα ἐπι Ῥώμης λαμπρῶν.” (See *Anti-Gnostikus*, p. 7 ff.)

<sup>64</sup> “Als Jüngling richtete er an einen heidnischen Philosophen (cf. Hieron. ep. 22 *ad Eustoch.*) eine nach Art der rhetorischen Deklamation verfasste Schrift über die Schwierigkeit des Ehestandes.” (See also *Adv. Jovinian.* I. 13.)

<sup>65</sup> So Neander infers from a passage in the *De resurr. Carn.* cap. 59; as well as from the allusions to former visits to the gladiatorial combats. (*Antign.* p. 9, and note.)

the “carnal-christians,” lastly against heretics. The scanty fragments of report as to his life may be briefly reviewed here: that he became, after his conversion, a presbyter in the Christian Church, is asserted by Jerome expressly, and is contradicted nowhere<sup>66</sup>. His decided acceptance of Montanism, and consequent separation from the Church about the year 203<sup>67</sup>, decided the remaining course of his life. A visit to Rome (perhaps more than one), as to the period or duration of which even conjecture is wasted, alone marks what may have been externally a very uneventful life. His writings, however, with but a few exceptions, are ours<sup>68</sup>; and from them it now remains to extract such preliminary knowledge as may enable us to quote them rightly<sup>69</sup>. [See Book II. § 1.]

## § 9. Assailants of Montanism.

Most of the names of the adversaries of the Montanists have been already mentioned in the course of the preceding narrative. In fact, concerning the “Anonymous” writer, Apollonius, Serapion, Apollinaris, Zoticus, and Sotas, nothing is known ‘in addition to the brief facts stated. Praxeas also is only known by an outline of his heresy, and by the incidents recorded by Tertullian. Two remain, however, concerning whom something is to be said. Miltiades, who is called scornfully “the sophist

48

of the Churches” by Tertullian<sup>70</sup>, is known to have written a book against the Montanistic Prophecies<sup>71</sup>. The presbyter Caius is known to us, through Eusebius, as (a) writing against the Montanist Proculus; (b) denying (probably in the same work,) the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews; (c) describing the works of Cerinthus in a manner which led some to suppose that he included the Apocalypse among them<sup>72</sup>. This last feature induced Storr and Eichhorn to class Caius with the strange and little-understood party, - the Alogi, which we

---

<sup>66</sup> Naturally, the undoubted fact of Tertullian’s marriage has caused all B. C. writers to contest the statement of Jerome. It has been the custom of these critics to put forth such passages as, “Nonne at Laici Sacerdotes sumus ?” (*De Exhort. Cast.* c. 7). And one in the *De Monogamia* c. 12: “...tunc unum omnes sumus, tunc omnes Sacerdotes, quia Sacerdotes nos Deo et Patri fecit.” I cannot see that such an employment of the term carries any more weight on one side, than the narrative in the *De Anima* (where T. mentions his stopping to hear a revelation in the Church “dimissa plebe”), on the other side.

<sup>67</sup> The date is fixed by Uhlhorn in A. D. 202 (or 203), by Noesselt in 199, by Hesselberg in the following year. 199 seems the year most commonly followed, and it is probably as nearly right as we can hope for.

<sup>68</sup> See list in Kaye, p. 59 ff. Also in Oehler’s *Prolegomena*. The seven books *On Ecstasy* are indeed a terrible loss to the historian of Montanism!

<sup>69</sup> I reserve the question of doctrine to the following Book.

<sup>70</sup> According to Eusebius, (*H. E.* lib. V. C. 17,) the title or subject was: “περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν προφήτην ἐν ἐκστάσει λαλεῖν” Tertullian includes him, in the 5th chapter of his book against the Valentinians, among the writers who had already written against these heretics; but his expression “ecclesiarum sophista,” does not evince any admiration in other respects.

<sup>71</sup> It would be possible to construct some ingenious theories in connection with the passage in the Muratorian Fragment:- “Arsinoi autem sen Valentini, vel Mitiadis (sic), nihil in totum recipimus, qui etiam novum Psalmonum librum Marcioni conscripserunt una cum Basilide Assianum Catafrygum constitutorem.” But all critics that I have been able to consult dismiss it as hopelessly obscure. (See Schwegler, p. 219, note.)

<sup>72</sup> Euseb. *H. E.* lib. VI. C. 20; and lib. VI. C. 28. Prof. Westcott (*Canon of N. T.* 275, note), expresses his “decided belief that Caius is not speaking of the Apocalypse of St John, but of books written by Cerinthus in imitation of it.” Volkmar (*Hippolytus u. die röm. Zeitgenossen*, p. 60, ff.) is inclined to place the very existence of the in doubt. A writer in the *Lit. Centralblatt* (1854, p. 35) attempted to prove that Caius “als der Gegenbischof gemeint sein könne, wogegen denn auch Hippolytus gestritten habe.” The whole matter seems to be hopelessly obscure.

shall describe later. Photius relates of him “χειροτονηθῆναι αὐτὸν καὶ ἔθνῶν ἐπίσκοπον<sup>73</sup>,” which Schwegler would explain as denoting an intimate connection between Caius and the anti-Jewish party. In what way the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews became a subject of controversy between Catholic and Montanist, I confess, I am utterly unable to conjecture.

49

## EXCURSUS UPON THE ALOGIAN HERESY.

Mindful of Hug’s caustic, and perhaps not ill-deserved comment<sup>74</sup>, I shall compress these remarks into the briefest compass. The sources for our knowledge of this heresy are as follows:-

(a) Original writers:

- I. Dionysius Alexandrinus (ap. Euseb. *H. E.*, V. 25), also III. 28.
- II. Epiphanius (*Hæres.* LI.).  
[Mentions also in Josephus, Augustin, John of Damascus, &c.]

(b) Modern compilers:-

- I. Petrus Wesselingius *Probabilium liber singularis, in quo insunt vindicæ... verborum. Johannis, &c.* Ultraject. 1731.
- II. Koerner *De Auctoritate Apocalypseos Johannis ab Alogis impugnata, &c.* Lips. 1751.
- III. Schroeckh. *Christliche Kirchengeschichte* (tom. III. p. 176 seq.).
- IV. Walch. *Hist. der Ketzereien* (I. 569 seq.).
- V. Merkel. *Historisch-kritische Aufklärung der Streitigkeit des Aloger und anderer alten Lehrer über die Apokalypsis im zweiten Jahrhunderte.* Frankfurt, 1782.
- VI. Heinichen. *De Alogis, Theodotianis, atque Arternonitis.* Lipsiæ, 1829.

[See also Schwegler, p. 267 if., Harnack, (*Zeitschr. für hist. Theol.* 1874,) and Lipsius, *Quellen der aeltesten Ketzergeschichte*, p. 93 ff.]

THE NAME. We have already seen how easily names of heresies were invented or varied. The Tascodrugitæ for instance, (v. supra, I. § 2,) are also called Ascodrogitæ, Ascodrutæ, Ascodrupidæ, Ascitæ. And Theodoret (*Hær. fab.* II. 4) says of Artemon, “Ἀρτέμων... ὃν τινες Ἀρτέμων ὀνομάζουσιν.” Kœrner considered the term “Alogi” a pure nickname, an opinion concurred in by Walch, who says:- “Der Witz der Kirchenlehrer, Ketzern Spottnahmen beyzulegen, ist hier offenbar.” (I. 569.) Even in modern times this inclination has been

50

manifested, and Heinichen (p. 6) mentions a pamphlet entitled *Die Akephaler unserer Zeit.* (Lips. 1825.)

LOCALITY AND DURATION. According to Epiphanius, Asia Minor, especially Lydia. He mentions the city of Thyatira. (Heinichen, p. 8.) This heresy cannot be dated before the end of the Second Century, nor is there any trace after the middle of the Third. Epiphanius declares that 112 years had

<sup>73</sup> Phot. Cod. 48. Pag. 12. (Bekker.) Quoted by Schwegler, *Montanismus*, p. 287, note.

<sup>74</sup> “Die Secte der Aloger, über welche man desto mehr geschrieben hat, je weniger man von ihnen weiss.” (Hug, *Einleitung in das N. T.* II. 588.)

elapsed since the sect had disappeared. Now it is known that he wrote his history of heresies in the twelfth year of Valentinian's reign, *i.e.* about A.D. 375 or 376. This places the end of the Alogi about A.D. 263. But we cannot be certain<sup>75</sup>.

OPINIONS. According to Epiphanius, the rejection of the Logos doctrine, and in general of St John's writings, particularly the *Apocalypse*. No doubt Epiphanius's Alogi, Irenæus's rejectors of prophecy, and the sect described by Dionysius of Alexandria (ap. Euseb. *H. E.* VII. 25) are identical. The last-named, as we have seen before, ascribes the origin of the error to Cerinthus; although, strangely enough, the later heretics chose to accuse him of having forged writings which he certainly did not accept. The *Apocalypse* was rejected as possessing no internal claims to reception: (τί με ὠφελεῖ ἡ ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου, λέγουσά μοι περὶ ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἑπτὰ σαλπύγγων; Ep. *Hær.* LI. 32). Irenæus (*adv. Hær.* III. 9, 11) evidently condemns the same party on two grounds: (1) "qui vol plures, quam dictæ sunt, vel rursus pauciores inferunt personas (πρόσωπα) Evangelii;" and (2) "qui donum Spiritus frustrentur, quod in novissimis diebus secundum placitum patris effusum est in humanum genus." This shews us another part of the Alogistic grounds for rejecting St John's writings: they found in them so strong a bulwark for the Montanistic claims that they had no alternative. There seems every probability that Praxeas was a member of this party. As Schwegler has pointed out, "he came from Asia Minor, opposed the Logos doctrine, does not allude to the Holy Spirit, and opposes the Montanists bitterly." Of Epiphanius' statement that Theodotus the tanner was ἀπόσπασμα ἐκ τῆς Ἀλόγου αἰρέσεως, we can only say that it labours under much antecedent improbability, as we know that the so-called Theodotians appealed to the

51

Gospel of John (ch. VIII. 40) in their attempt to prove the sole humanity of Christ's nature<sup>76</sup>.

## § 10. Decisions of Councils.

In a former section (§ 5) we saw that certain synods were held in Asia Minor, about the years 150-160, which resulted in the local condemnation of the Montanists; such anathemas, however, not preventing the saintly Confessors of Lyons from openly advocating the aspersed cause. The next trace of a synod dealing with the question is found in the famous Epistle of Firmilian to Cyprian. In it he says: "Since some doubted as to the efficacy of the baptism of those who receive the new prophets, but nevertheless acknowledge the equality of Father and Son with us... we have diligently examined the question, and have determined that no baptism beyond the limits of the Church is to be received<sup>77</sup>. In ascertaining the exact period to which this Synod belongs, we are aided by two points in his narrative. Firstly the phrases, "we assembled at Iconium," "we examined the question," etc. etc., shew us that Firmilian himself took part as a bishop in the conferences. And, as Hefele has pointed out, the use of "jam pridem" supports the inference that the Synod took place in the first years of Firmilian's prelacy, and consequently in the years A.D. 230-235<sup>78</sup>. We find that, during

---

<sup>75</sup> "As we have no evidence of the tenets attributed to the Alogi being entertained in the time of Eleutherius," says Storr, "we should place the sect later, in the times of Victor or Zephyrinus." I think that the passages of Irenæus quoted above (and written, as he admits, under Eleutherius) do distinctly refer to the Alogi, whether they had the name then or not. It was this rationalizing party which, working into the hands of the ambitious hierarchy, finally drove out the Montanists.

<sup>76</sup> See Eichhorn's *Einleitung*, II. 385, Heinichen, pp. 31-35, Schwegler, 270. On the other hand, Lipsius holds that "die Aloger des Epiphanius, wenn auch nicht gerade die Theodotianer, so doch eine mit diesen aufs Engste verwandte Partei waren." (*Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte*, p. 105.)

<sup>77</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* LXXV.

<sup>78</sup> "Einen weitem Anhaltspunct für die Zeitbestimmung der Synode von Iconium in den zwei Stellen.....Zugleich berechtigt uns des *jam pridem* zu der Annahme, dass unsere Synode wohl in die ersten Jahre der bischöflichen Amtsführung Firmilians zu versetzen sei. Aus Eusebius aber (VI. 26) wissen wir dass

the controversies on the same question which were raging in the years 255, 256, between Stephen of Rome and Cyprian, two or three Synods were held, and the Roman Bishop declared the Montanistic baptism to be valid. It is well known that the Council of Nicæa passed over the Montanists in silence, thus confirming, tacitly at least, this decision of Stephen; while the Paulianists (i. e. followers of Paul of Samosata) were ordered to be re-baptized upon admission. But the last link was broken in the Synod which met at Laodicea in the latter part of the Fourth Century<sup>79</sup>, held at the time of a truce in the Arian campaign, which accounts for the predominant reference to questions of discipline. The 8th Canon enacts:- "That those who return from the heresy of the so-called Phrygians, even if they belonged to its clergy, and were the most distinguished, yet must be carefully catechised, and baptized by the bishops and presbyters of the Church." Now in the former Canon (§ 7), it was expressly stated that the Novatianists and Quartodecimans needed no re-baptism. This final condemnation was once more endorsed by the Œcumenical Synod of Constantinople (A.D. 381), the 7th Canon of which includes this provision:- "The Montanists or Phrygians, and the Sabellians, we receive as we do Pagans, namely, the first day we make them Christians, the second catechumens, the third day we exorcise them by breathing thrice into their face and ears, and make them continue a good while in the Church and hear the Scriptures, and afterwards we baptize them<sup>80</sup>." Such was the epitaph on the tomb of the New Prophets!

### § 11. Last Traces.

Augustin is the only writer who furnishes us with any tidings concerning the later fortunes of the African Montanists. It is true that elements of Montanistic ethical severity transfused themselves into other sects, and that the blunders of ecclesiastical annalists confuse together frequently manifestations of a very dissimilar character, such as Donatism. Augustin's account<sup>81</sup> conveys to us the impression that a separate sect of Tertullianists had been formed; but this notion is so utterly contrary to what we know of the Catholic spirit pervading that teacher's writings, that we must conclude that a later generation adopted the title. Still there is one witness, Prædestinatus, who would place this schism in Tertullian's own life-time<sup>82</sup>, and

---

Firmilian schon minter Kaiser Alexander Severus (222-235) als Bischof von Cäsarea blühte, weshalb wir keinen Anstand nehmen, mit Valesius und Pagi die Abhaltung der Synode in die Jahre 230-235 zu verlegen." (Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, I. 82.) - That this implied sentence on Montanism was not recognised by the Church, appears from the action taken at Nicæa.

<sup>79</sup> Hefele declares himself unable to fix this Synod with any chronological precision. It must have been 'after A.D. 343, and before 381. (*Conciliengeschichte*, I. 724 ff.)

<sup>80</sup> "...Μοντανιστὰς τοὺς ἐνταῦθα λεγομένους Φρύγας, καὶ Σαβελλιανοὺς τοὺς υἰοπατορίαν διδάσκοντας, καὶ ἕτερα ἅπαντα χαλεπὰ ποιοῦντας· καὶ τὰς ἄλλας πᾶσας αἰρέσεις· πάντας τοὺς ἀπ' αὐτῶν θέλοντας προστίθεσθαι τῇ ὀρθοδοξίᾳ ὡς Ἑλληνας δεχόμεθα, καὶ τὴν πρώτην ἡμέραν ποιοῦμεν αὐτοὺς Χριστιανούς, τὴν δ' δευτέραν κατηχομένους, εἶτα τὴν τρίτην ἐξορκίζομεν αὐτοὺς μετὰ τοῦ ἐμφυσᾶν τρίτον εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ εἰς τὰ ὠτα αὐτῶν. καὶ οὕτως κατηχοῦμεν αὐτοὺς, καὶ ποιοῦμεν αὐτοὺς χρονίζειν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ ἀκροᾶσθαι τῶν γραφῶν. καὶ τότε αὐτοὺς βαπτίζομεν." [As to the value of this evidence of the fusion of Montanism and Sabellianism, vide infra, Book III.]

<sup>81</sup> "Tertullianistæ a Tertulliano, usque ad nostrum tempus paulatim deficientes, in extremis reliquiis durare potuerunt in urbe Carthaginiensi. Me autem ibi posito ante aliquot annos omni ex parte consumti sunt. Paucissimi enim, qui remanserunt, in catholicam transierunt, suamque basicam, quæ nuno etiam notissima est, catholicæ tradiderunt." August. *Hæres.* 86.

<sup>82</sup> "Tertullianus a Cataphrygis postea divisus fudit a se omnem Phrygiæ vanitatem, et Tertullianistarum conventicula propagavit, nihil tamen in fide mutavit." *Præd. Hæres.* 86.

the same writer in another place mentions that Tertullian, in later life, attempted a reconciliation between his own opinions and those of the Church<sup>83</sup>. The natural process of decomposition would take its course as soon as the last links of Catholicity were broken. It is possible that, in the middle, of the Third Century, two main divisions already existed:- viz. (a) the orthodox Montanists, otherwise Proculists, or (in Africa) Tertullianists, who added nothing to the received faith but a belief in the prophetic gifts, and in the

54

value of ascetic observances; (b) the Æschinists, who had gradually adopted Sabellian views, just as, in our own times, many Presbyterian congregations in England gradually lapsed into Unitarianism. Montanism was practically dead when its prophets ceased to find successors<sup>84</sup>, though relics of the party are found alluded to in ecclesiastical history as far as the Sixth Century<sup>85</sup>, and in the edicts of Honorius, Theodosius, and Justinian. Having now reviewed the historical facts of Montanism, we turn to an examination of its doctrines.

[Text scanned July 2003 by Robert I Bradshaw. It is not copyright and may be freely copied and distributed. Any typos should be reported to rob@earlychurch.org.uk]

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 26. But this might perhaps refer to the line which Tertullian adopts throughout, viz, maintaining that the Pneumatici had prescription on their side, and were the true Catholics.

<sup>84</sup> Epiphanius points to the fact that, in his time, the Montanists could point to no prophet (*Hær.* XLVIII. § 2). In fact, the last appearance that I can trace in history, is that of the prophetess mentioned by Firmilian, who does not indeed apply the name Montanist to her, but whose account admits of no other conclusion. He writes to Cyprian:- "In Cappadocia subito emereit atque in ecstasi constitute so prætulit et quasi S. Spiritu plana sic agebat, mirabilia quædam et portentosa perficiens; dicebat enim in Judæam festinare, fingens tanquam inde venisset. Huic exorcieta quidam inspiratus Del gratia fortiter restitit, at esse ilium nequissimum spiritum, qui prius sanctus putabatur, ostendit. Illa mulier etiam hoc frequenter ausa est, ut invocatione non contemptibili sanctificare se panem et eucharistiam facere simularet, et sacrificium Domino non sine sacramento solltæ prædicationis offerret, baptizaret quoque multos usitata et legitima verba Interrogationis usurpans." The period of this woman's appearance may be thus fixed. Firmilian tells us that it was "viginti at duos fere annos" before he wrote (which was during the Baptism Controversy, 253-257), so that we may conclude that it was about A.D. 12, 235. [See Ritschl, *Entstehung*, p. 551 ff.] Wernsdorf contends that this woman was no Montanist, (p. 54 ff.), but a mere enthusiast. Apart from their belief in continued revelations, the later Montanists would easily have coalesced with the Novatianist and kindred sects.

<sup>85</sup> Gregory of Nazianzum declares (*Orat.* 14): "ἡ Φρυγῶν εἰσέται καὶ νῦν μανία." (Cf. Schwegler, p. 306, note.) But on the other hand, we find Optatus declaring that Montanism was a dead heresy:- "Marcion, Praxeas, Sabellius, et ceteri usque ad Cataphrygas temporibus suis ..... ab assertoribus ecclesiæ catholicæ superati sunt. Ut quid bellum cum mortuis geram, quod ad negotium temporis nostri non pertinot?" (*Opt. Mil. de Schism. Donat.* I. 9.) For the edicts referred to, see list of references in Gieseler's *Church History*.