

MONTANISM
AND
THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

**A STUDY IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
OF THE SECOND CENTURY**

THE HULSEAN PRIZE, 1877

BY

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“Ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia.”

IRENÆUS (adv. Haer. IV.31.3).

CAMBRIDGE
DEIGHTON, BELL, AND CO.
LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS.

1878

Cambridge:
PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A.
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DEDICATED TO
ARCHDEACON ALLEN,
WITH THE WARMEST FEELINGS OF AFFECTION
AND RESPECT

“Δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα οἱ δόκιμοὶ φανεροὶ γένωται ἐν ὑμῖν.”
1 Cor. xi, 19.

“Now, because Faith is not only a precept of doctrines, but of manners and holy life, whatsoever is either opposite to an article of creed, or teaches ill life, That Is Heresy: but all those propositions which are extrinsical to these two considerations, be they true or be they false, make not heresy, nor the man a heretic.”

TAYLOR, *Liberty of Propheying*.

“Heresy and Schism, as they are in common use, are two theological Μορμῶς, or scarecrows, which they who uphold a party in religion use to fright away such as, making enquiry into it, are ready to relinquish and oppose, if it appear either erroneous or suspicious. But howsoever in the common manage, heresy and schism are but ridiculous terms, yet the things in themselves are of very considerable moment; the one offending against truth, the other against charity; and therefore both deadly, where they are not by imputation only, hut in deed.”

THE ‘EVER-MEMORABLE’ JOHN HALES OF ETON

“Quodsi mihi fortasse contingat, ut aliter sentiam quàm pleriquesentiendum judicent, veniam mihi dan postulo, qui sine pruritu lacastendi Patres, (quos alioquin merito magnifacio,) sine insano studio pravorum hominum errores excusandi, cum tanto temporum. intervallo a Montanistis remotus aim, ut nullo commodo meo ad eorum partes tuendas adducar, sine libidine novum aliquid comminiscendi, ex eoque gloriam aucupandi, nihil aliud quæro, quam indagare verum.”

WERNSDORF, *de Montanistis*.

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INTRODUCTION.

IF it has been said with truth that a perfect historian of secular events will never be found, how much less hope can we entertain that the vast field of ecclesiastical history will ever find a really successful explorer! If historians of Greece and Rome cannot banish the political prejudices of modern times while busied with the past, is it to be wondered at that those who examine the religious questions which agitated the early Church, perceive in them the mirror of later controversies, and deal with them in a congenial spirit? It would seem that the two essentials, knowledge and impartiality, are rarely to be found together unimpaired. The mature scholar has acquired deep convictions as well as profound acquaintance with his subject, and all his conscientious striving after a perfect objectivity of treatment fails to attain success. The beginner, possessed indeed of all the impartiality which ignorance can grant, finds himself compelled to attain first, by long and painful industry, a knowledge of the instruments of research, before he can profit by them, - or is driven to the easy and worthless dependence on interested advocates and second-hand erudition¹. It is acknowledged on all hands that it needs half a lifetime to acquire a sufficient knowledge of patristic language, rhetoric, and logic, without

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which the student is at the mercy of all the arbitrary (and contradictory) catenas which can be manufactured to prove anything and everything. Accordingly the prospect that a tyro in the great science of theology could do more than gather together and coordinate the researches of previous explorers is small indeed, and the writer of the present essay aims only at amassing some "Materials for a Critical History of Montanism," and will find his hopes fully gratified should he succeed in the attempt. It might seem, at first sight, as if the subject was of a character to limit the number and character of the obstacles. The history of a heresy which only emerged into notice for less than a century, which concerned practical rather than theological or metaphysical questions, and which is treated of by but few out of the great army of ecclesiastical writers, - ought not to involve very excessive difficulty or research. But almost the next glance, and certainly the first examination, reveal the falsity of such a supposition. It is found that the chronology of the period has been, ever since history was written, the subject of the most contradictory hypotheses; that the statements of the witnesses are of the most partial and conflicting character; and that the questions as to the origin of the heresy, and its ultimate influence upon the Christian Church, involve a consideration of many important ecclesiastical controversies. And when the student has worked through his materials, and has studied not merely the text but the context of his subject, his difficulty is enhanced a hundredfold by the conviction which is forced irresistibly upon his mind. It flashes upon him, namely, that the religious upheaval known as Montanism is no isolated phenomenon, no product of one man's invention, but the first of a vast series of manifestations, which, fraught with good and with evil, have been permitted by Providence to break forth in the Christian Church. He sees the same forces at work, the same reaction, the same

¹ Baur, in his fierce onslaught upon Thiersch (*Der Kritiker u. der Fanatiker*, 1846), contemptuously notes that the latter had only bestowed eight years on the study of Irenæus!

results, in the Cathari and Waldenses of the Middle Ages; the Fraticelli and the “Homines Intelli

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gentæ;” in the Anabaptist sects of the Reformation; in the marvellous speculations of Jacob Boehme; in the wonderful spiritual revivals of the 17th century, Fox and the Quakers in England, Saint Cyran and Labadie in France and Holland, the Alombrados in Spain, Molinos in Italy, Spener and Petersen in Germany. He recognises a deep truth in Bossuet’s taunt against his great adversary, “that the new Priscilla had found a new Montanus,” for he feels that the same influences directed Madame Guyon and the Archbishop of Cambrai in their ill-fated endeavour to revive the expiring embers of spiritual religion. In the next century, he sees the same forces at work in the great Pietist movement in Germany, while its abuses are shewn in the follies of the Illuminaten-Orden. Swedenborg with his vast theosophic system simply gives form and definition to the revelations of the Phrygian prophets sixteen centuries before². Edward Irving in more recent times completes the list of parallels with his prophets, his unknown tongues, and his passionate revolt against the formalism of a callous age.

Such a historical vista is indeed calculated to appal the writer, and to cause him to shrink from the task before him. It would need the imagination and the receptive faculty of a Coleridge, added to the acumen of a Thirlwall, to do the barest justice to this enormous and as yet uncultivated field. But the purposes of the following essay do not require the prosecution of so hopeless a quest. It is enough to have recognised the true horizon, and to take one’s observations by the real luminaries: as for the rest, an analysis of one link in a great chain will be the best help for a later comprehension of its extent and its agency.

Before proceeding to enumerate and classify the historical materials at our disposal, it is necessary to state the reasons which have induced me to depart from

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the ordinary methods of arrangement. Ever since history has been regarded and dealt with as a science, the chaotic plan which once obtained of mingling together, in one perplexing heap, external and internal narrative, the statements of fact and the analysis of opinion, has been completely abandoned. But it is at least an open question whether the methods which the new historical schools have adopted, have not almost equally serious defects. Instead of working steadily *from* the solid facts of history, there is a marked tendency to reverse the process, and to employ these facts merely as the buttresses for a previously constructed theory. Now it maybe very allowable for the astronomer or the physiologist to elaborate a theory from an ingenious conjecture, and then to submit it to repeated tests of the telescope or microscope; but the system when applied to historical research is by no means so advantageous. There is an elasticity in historical facts, especially (of course) when one is dealing with ancient history, which enables even the most conscientious writer to shape them to his purpose. Möhler finds the Papacy in the records of the Primitive Church; Bishop Browne the Anglican system; somebody else, with equal candour and learning, Presbyterianism. I do not

² As to the points of contact between Montanism and Swedenborgianism, see Appendix D.

say that differences. would cease if a more strictly inductive method were adopted, but I feel convinced that some theories would never have been committed to print. The two most recent writers on Montanism, Schwegler and Ritschl, not only practise this dangerous method, but take credit for so doing³. In the first case, we may venture without presumption to conjecture that, had Dr Schwegler reversed

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his plan, he might neither have abolished the personality of Montanus, nor have concocted the extraordinary theory of the Ebionitic origin of Montanism, which provoked a criticism from the patriarch of the Tübingen school himself⁴.

The present writer wishes to observe a more humble and prudent method. It will be his aim, in the following essay, to begin by collecting and analysing all the records that have come down to us in relation to the external history of Montanism. Next in order comes an examination into the Tenets of Montanism, and lastly the attempt to distinguish its true historical position, and its ultimate influence upon the Church.

The materials for the work are, in their extent and character, precisely what we find in the case of nearly all obscure departments of history. They are obscure, not less on account of the paucity of original evidence, than from the plethora of subsequent conjecture. The witnesses before the court are few enough, and some of them do not survive cross-examination; but the number of counsel and “ amici curæ ” is so vast, that the jurymen, wearied by the alternate eloquence of bigotry and paradox, frankly declares himself more puzzled after the learned explanations than before them⁵.

First of all, if not in chronology, yet in all other respects, stands Tertullian. Until the seventeenth century he was the only writer in whose pages the prophets of Phrygia appeared in any light but that of fanatics, heretics, and criminals. He is a favourable witness, but the testimonies as well as the controversies of ancient and

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modern times, prove his value to be supreme. It is well known that the question as to the period of his lapse to Montanism is still disputed, although (as will be shewn subsequently) the controversy has now reached very narrow limits. It will be necessary, in the course of the preliminary historical examination, to arrive at distinct

³ Schwegler puts the history into the last (third) book of his essay, “weil awar die beiden ersten Haupttheile ohne den dritten verständlich und zusammenhängend sind, der dritte aber nicht ohne die Voraussetzung der zwei andern” (p. 13). Ritschl prefaces his account, also placed last, with the words - “Es ist nur der Zweck, die zerstreuten und spärlichen Notizen über die Geschichte des Montanismus in der Kirche zu sammeln, um die vorausgehende Darstellung zu bestätigen” (p. 525).

⁴ See Baur’s articles in the *Theol. Jahrbücher* of 1851, the substance of which was subsequently incorporated (1853) in his *Christenthum der 3 ersten Jahrhunderte*.

⁵ “Hoc commentario lecto, multo incertior sum quam dudum,” observes Wernsdorf after reading the notes of the scholiast Balsamon. This, by the way, was only an unconscious paraphrase of Locke’s rather irreverent remark upon Biblical commentators in general, itself deriving its origin from Terence (*Phorm.* 459).

conclusions upon the dates and character of his works, before quoting them in a later chapter as documents in the case^{6,7}.

Next only in importance, and possibly earlier in date, come the writers quoted so largely by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*. They are at once the chief witnesses and counsel for the prosecution, and they evince one and all the thorough detestation of a supposed heretic, and the readiness to believe anything evil of him, so characteristic of this and many later ages. Neither the anonymous author of the first book cited⁸, nor Apollonius, nor Serapion, quoted in later chapters⁹, attempts to furnish any complete account of the rise and progress of the sect; the facts mentioned are vague in the extreme, and nothing is unquestionable except the animus. Irenæus, although he lived through the period of the spread and influence of

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Montanism, makes only some doubtful references to it in his work against heresies. It has indeed been contested whether the passages in question (*Adv. Hær.* III. 11. 9, IV. 33. 1, II. 32. 4) have in reality a polemical application to the Montanist prophecies, and the ingenious Dr Schwegeler is half inclined to claim Irenæus as a Montanist altogether¹⁰! But one of the passages in question, to which we shall recur later, can have but one natural and reasonable interpretation, viz, as referring to the Montanists.

Hippolytus, thanks to the discovery of the *Philosophumena* in 1842, is a more important witness. Although his career is even now very obscure, we may infer with some confidence that he was born in the second half of the second century, studied under Irenæus, strongly approved of Bishop Victor's severe measures with regard to the Easter-question, but came into antagonism with Zephyrinus and Kallistus on certain points of doctrine and discipline. He wrote his work *Against all Heresies* early in the third century, - say from A.D. 210-220., or even a little later¹¹.

Next in order of chronology is Firmilian, whose epistle to Cyprian has been long an effective weapon in the anti-Papal armoury. He was Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, and was a great friend of Origen. He unites with some rather vague

⁶ There is another controversy connected with Tertullian's relation to Montanism which is discussed in the second book (cf. § 1). This is the question as to how far his writings present to us Montanistic tenets pure and simple, and without any colouring from Tertullian's individual opinions.

⁷ This resolution the writer was compelled to abandon, adopting the results of Uhlhorn, [*Fund: Chron. Tertull.*]

⁸ Supposed by many (Valois, Tillemont, Longuerue, Dodwell, Baumgarten-Crusius and Rothe) to have been Asterius Urbanus. Jerome varies between Rhodon and Apollonius [cf. *de Vir. Illustr.* 37 and 40]. All turns upon the interpretation of the words used by Eusebius - ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τῷ κατὰ Ἀστέριον Οὐρβανὸν - *H. E.* lib. V. cap. 16). Rufinus and Nicephorus declared for Apollinaris, but this seems inadmissible. Probably, as Schwegeler thinks, Eusebius himself was ignorant (*Montanismus*, p. 286).

⁹ For what is known of these writers, see *infra*, Book I. § 6. The quotations from the Anonymous take up the 16th and 17th chapters. The 18th contains the account of Apollonius, and the following a brief mention of Serapion's writings.

¹⁰ Seine Ansichten vom Prophetengeiste, sein Chiliasmus, seine Verwerfung der zweiten Ehe, seine praktisch-ascetischen Grundsätze überhaupt, nur diese Alles mit mehr Besonnenheit vorgetragen, lassen seine Verwandtschaft mit dem montanistischen Systeme nicht Verkennen." (*Der Montanismus u. die chr. Kirche* p. 223, note). See *infra*, Book III. § 1, and notes.

¹¹ Baur believed that the *Philosophumena* were written by the Presbyter Caius.

charges against the teachings of Montanism an important statement as to the position assumed towards the party by the Eastern Churches¹².

In Cyprian's epistles we find more than one reference

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to Montanism as an existent sect, but the pupil of Tertullian who for ever exclaimed "Da magistrum!" would not express openly his objections to a party many of whose opinions he had adopted. [E.g. strong belief in visions, severity on penance, &c.]

Pacian, bishop of Barcelona, whose history is very uncertain; inaugurates the list of "hear-say" witnesses¹³.

Eusebius probably wrote in the years 338-9, and apart from his quotations from early anti-Montanistic writers (already mentioned) gives us but scanty information. On the point whether the party was still in existence in his own time, he is silent. Far more considerable in volume is the contribution of Epiphanius, written about the year 374. The 48th Heresy in his capacious catalogue is that of Montanus, and in the course of his lengthy dissertation he communicates much valuable information as to the utterances of the prophetesses, interspersed however with an inordinate proportion of homiletical comment. If Eusebius is wanting in the historical sense and method, what shall we say of his successor? Carelessness and inaccuracy in his dates and statements of fact, which frequently contradict one another¹⁴; ignorance even of his own subject so complete that he includes heathen philosophy among Christian heresies; yet this is the founda-

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tion upon which the accounts in the majority of popular histories are based.

It will not be necessary to enumerate the Fathers in whose writings are found chance allusions to Montanism¹⁵. Athanasius was too much occupied with another heresy to

¹² See Cyprian's Epistles, No. 75.

¹³ Pacian is an important witness as proving the opposition of the Western Church to the Montanistic doctrine of penance, which no other writer mentions. [E. g. "So manifold and so diverse are the errors of these men, that in them we have not only to overthrow their peculiar fancies against penance, but to cut off the heads as it were of some Lernæan monster How manifold controversies have they raised concerning as this also concerning the pardon of penance." *Ep. ad Symphr.* transl. in "Libr. of Fathers."] But the good bishop makes one very comic blunder in including Praxeas among the Montanists.

¹⁴ We shall find, when dealing with the chronology of Montanism, that Epiphanius gives two dates for its commencement, and fixes the death of Maximilla in the year 86, when she was not yet born. Hefele conjectures (*Conciliengeschichte*, I. 71) that this is a clerical error for 186, which is possible. See Lipsius, *Quellenkritik des Epiphanius*: "seine sprüchwörtlich gewordene Leichtgläubigkeit, seine unkritische Willkür in der Benutzung and Verwendung der Stoffe u. s. w." (Einleitung).

¹⁵ For instance, in Clemens Alexandrinus (*Strom.* IV. 13, ap. Migne, *Patrol. Græca*, tom. VIII.), who records the nickname ψυχικοί bestowed by the Montanists on their opponents. But the passage – "ταῦτα (sc. idolatrous rites) οἱ Φρύγες τελίσκουσιν Ἀττιδι καὶ Κυβέλη καὶ Κορύβασιν (*Coh. ad Gentes*, cap. II.) - even if written by Clement, can only refer to the Phrygian race. Origen has a solitary reference, to be found in the Apology of Pamphilus:- "Requisierunt sane quidam utrum hæresin an schisma oporteat vocari eos qui Cataphrygæ vocantur, observantes falsos prophetas, et dicentes: Ne

be able to spare time for condemning the Montanists, and it is characteristic that the only mention in his genuine works is by way of parallel to the Arians, who are accused of substituting the Emperor's authority (i.e. Constantius) for that of Christ "ὑπερ ἐκεῖνοι Μαξίμιλλαν καὶ Μοντανόν"¹⁶."

In Cyril of Jerusalem we find a series of denunciations, so serious as to the nature of the charges, and so passionately unreasonable in their manner, that it is necessary to remind ourselves that the "Catechetical Lectures" were delivered when Cyril was but a young man¹⁷. Gregory of Nazianzus, theologian, orator, and poet, is the first to state rhetorically the ground upon which the Church, in later times, grounded its final anathema on Montanism. opposed to the Holy Ghost, the true Paraclete, was "τὸ Μοντονοῦ πονηρὸν Πνεῦμα" and hence it easily followed that a baptism, in which the Holy Spirit took no part, could

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not be regarded as valid. The same idea appears in Gregory's poems¹⁸.

Rather earlier in date, perhaps, than the before mentioned, comes Didymus Alexandrinus, a staunch champion of orthodoxy against Arianism, which did not prevent him from being finally condemned by the second Nicæan Synod on a charge of Origenistic heresy. In his writings we find a charge of formal error, on the part of 'the Montanists, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity¹⁹. Ambrose²⁰, Hilary²¹, Philaster²² contribute small shreds of evidence, of course mere tradition, but still, in default of better materials, deserving of careful examination. The last named repeats the atrocious accusations of Cyril, and affords a convenient opportunity for a few words on the character of his historical method, and his credibility as a witness. Notwithstanding the high praise which Augustine (*De Hæres.* cap. 58) has lavished upon him, Philaster cannot be ranked highly. His critical powers may be not unjustly estimated by the fact that he places the Cainites and Ophites before the Christian era, because he finds traces of Old Testament history in their schemes! He considers it mortal heresy to doubt the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now I wish to disclaim most strongly any desire to speak disrespectfully

accedas ad me, quoniam mundus sum: non enim accepi uxorem, nec est sepulcrum patens guttur meum, sed sum Nazaræus Dei, non bibens vinum sicut illi." What Origen's real opinion of Montanism may have been, can hardly be inferred from this passage.

¹⁶ *Epistola de Synodia* (Migne, *Patr. Græca*, XXVI. 688). In the spurious *Synopsis S. Script.* lib. XI. (Migne, XXVIII. 352), we have "οἱ κατὰ Φρύγας παρεισάγοντες προφήτας μετὰ τὸν Κύριον σφάλλονται, καὶ ὡς αἰρετικοὶ κατεκρίθησαν" The equally spurious "Sermo contra omnes Hæreses" describes the opinions as "γρεῶν πτύσματα ἴσως ὡς κεκερωμένων" (Migne, XXVIII. 520).

¹⁷ Migne, *Patr. Græca*, XXXIII. 928, and transl. in "Library of the Fathers."

¹⁸ *Orat.* iv. *Contra Julianum*, and XXII. *De Pace* (Migne, *Series Græca*, XXXV.). See also *Poëmata*, lib. II., "Οἱ Μοντανοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τιμῶντες κακῶς."

¹⁹ Migne, S. G. XXXIX. 720.

²⁰ *Comment. in Ep. ad Thess.* I. 22 (Migne, XVII. 453). And there is a reference of a somewhat rhetorical order in the 46th sermon, *De Salamone* (ibid. p. 697).

²¹ "Hinc et Montanus per insanas feminas suas Paracletum alium defendit."

²² What Epiphanius had done for the Greek Church, Philaster attempted for the Latin. He wrote about 10 years after his model, whom he certainly used. Montanism is the 49th of the list of heresies (Migne, XII. 1165, 1166), of which there are, thanks to his search, no less than 156, viz. 28 before Christ, and 128 subsequently. The whole subject has been exhaustively treated by Lipsius, in his *Quellenkritik des Epiphanius*, and his *Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte neu untersucht*.

of writers with whose works I have naturally but a small acquaintance. The horde of scribblers in the last century who were enabled to derive from Daillé and Barbeyrac the materials for cheap criticism, discovered in themselves a lower literary depth than that of any Byzantine annalist. And when we find (as I shall have occasion later to point out) a professed contemner of the Fathers guilty of an "economy" in his quotations from Tertullian which cannot be excused by ignorance, we must admit that the blame due to bigotry and deceit must not be bestowed solely upon the early ecclesiastical writers. Still, it is true that a very stringent caution is needed before we accept the statements even of so celebrated a writer as Jerome. The confessed, even boasted, theory of Economies, remains for ever a source of exultation to the enemies of Christianity, and of bitter shame and grief to her friends²³. And the critical student will not fail to see, as he wades through the pages of Epiphanius or Philaster, how true in substance was the remark of Daillé: "When the Fathers contend with the Valentinians or the Manichæans, they seem to hold the doctrines of Pelagius; but if with the Pelagians, their language is Manichæan: are they striving against the Arians, their arguments are Sabellian, but if against Sabellius, they are at least Semi-Arian²⁴." Perhaps a

fairer verdict is that delivered by a modern critic, who lays down that their historical standpoint was "to accept every statement that tended to edification²⁵." Resuming our

²³ Ribovius (Ribow), a professor of Göttingen at the beginning of the last century, left a treatise on this subject (*De Oeconomia Patrum*), which appears to have been originally delivered as a show-discourse, upon the occasion of a visit from George II. In this "Black Book," - or it is far more damaging than the *l'Employ des Pères*, we find the following summing up:- "Integrum omnino Doctoribus at cœtus Christiani antistitibus, esse, ut dolos versent, falsa vana intermiscant, et imprimis religionis hostes fallant, dummodo veritatis commodis et utilitati inserviant." Of his quotations, the most startling is one from Jerome, which is also quoted by Lessing in one of the Anti-Goeze pamphlets:- "Paulus in testimoniis quæ sumit de veteri testamento, quam artifex, quam prudens, quam dissimulator (!) est ejus quod agit."

²⁴ This was quoted from memory, but with the Latin text before me (Geneva, 1656, p. 147) the expressions are milder. It is "a Sabellio minus esse alieni videntur," and "ad Arium accedera videntur." And the whole accusation is ascribed, - "ut animadvertit Episcopus Bitontinus, de Augustino in primis."

²⁵ Schwegler, *Nachapost. Zeitalter*, I. 47: "alles glaublich zu finden, sobald es erbaulicher Natur ist." As to accuracy in detail, there is hardly any reliance to be placed on the writers of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. [See, for Justin Martyr, the list in Semisch's monograph, I. 224 ff.] Even of Tertullian we find the temperate Neander forced to remark: "Der unkritische, und wo er kein besonderes Interesse zu zweifeln hat, leichtgläubige T. ist freilich kein Zeuge von grosser Bedeutung." There is a remark of Schwegler's on the manner of quoting the Fathers which, much as I differ from his conclusions in general, seems to me to hit an unquestionable blot in popular apologetic literature. "Ein unparteiischer Geschichtschreiber wird also, wenn en die ganze Wahrheit sagen will, nicht blos sagen dürfen, Irenäus bezeugt unsere 4 kanonischen Evangelien, sondern en wird beifügen müssen, sein historischer Beweis für ihre Vierheit ist die Vierheit der Weltgegenden und der Hauptwinda. Er wird nicht blos sagen dürfen: Tertullian bezeugt die Echtheit des Johanneischen Evangeliums, sondern er wird hinzufügen müssen, - derselbe Kirohenvater erzählt auch mit demselben Ernste und gleich festem Glauben die offenbarsten Fabeln über denselben Apostel, z. B. sein Römisches Oelmärtyrthum." (*Nachap. Zeitalter*, I. 50.) Of course it is obvious what all this means and intends, but still truth is truth, and the evidence of a witness who is not cross-examined does not carry overwhelming weight. One flaw in the reasoning of Dr Schwegler is that it proves too much: e.g. it would induce us to reject Bacon on every point, because he believed the earth was stationary. As to the matter of candour, Dr S. might have profited by his

survey of the evidence, we find some mention of the latter stages of Montanism in the writings of Optatus Milevensis²⁶, and a repetition of Cyril's accusations in the epistles of Isidor of Pelusium²⁷. The two next writers

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carry far more weight from their personal reputation, than from the substance of the information they give us. Jerome, in his commentary on St Matthew's Gospel, furnishes some details as to the extent of the fasts enjoined by the Montanists, and in one of the letters to Marcella we find a rather declamatory account of the party. In his brief memoirs of illustrious men are included the lives of certain writers against Montanism as well as that of Tertullian; but these, and the last in particular, are extremely superficial²⁸. Even the great Bishop of Hippo seems to lose some of his matchless power when he assumes, in his single *Book of Heresies*, the painful office of ecclesiastical scavenger. But it is needless to say that the wild loose declamation, and the rambling hearsay, are conspicuous by their absence. He mentions, it is true, the most horrible of the charges, but without expressing any opinion of his own as to the value of the evidence upon which it was based²⁹.

The sparse allusions in Ambrosiaster³⁰, and Marius

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Mercator³¹, may be briefly dismissed with a bare mention. Theodoret, however, gives us some valuable evidence, and the honesty with which he confesses some favourable points, gives additional weight to his condemnatory statements on the important

precepts when, in the same volume (I. 491) he included Calvin among those who reject utterly the 2nd Epistle of Peter, while in fact the great Reformer only admits doubts as to style, and places it in his Appendix. (See Calvin Soc. Edition, *Comm. on Cath. Epp.* p. 363.)

²⁶ *De schismate Donatistarum libri VII adversus Parmenianum*. Date doubtful.

²⁷ Born at Alexandria about middle of fourth century: took part in Cyril's controversies. Left about 2000 epistles on all subjects, of which Nos. 242-245 deal with Montanism, being addressed to Herminus. (See the Paris edition of 1638, x. p. 68.) Isidor talks confidently about "adulteries, and the slaughter of children, and the worship of idols, and the possession by fierce demons," as prevailing notes of Montanism. His originality consists in discovering a bond of connection between this party and the Manichæans.

²⁸ Hieron. *Comment, in Matth.* ap. Migne, XXVI. 57. See also Ep. LXXV. Ad Marcellam, and the *De Viris Illustribus*, XXIV, XXXVII, XLIII, L, &c. The meagreness of the notice of Tertullian's life, considering Jerome's opportunities for collecting the available materials (cf. the *Catalogus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*), induced, among other reasons, the amazing hypothesis of Semler, that Tertullian never existed, and that the writings attributed to him, together with those of Irenæus and Justin, were produced at a manufactory of apologetic literature, which he supposed to have flourished at a later time!

²⁹ *De Hæresibus ad Quodvultdeum liber unus*, in 6th vol. of Froben's ed. of 1542, p. 17. The comparison, in parallel columns, of the accounts of Philaster, Augustine, John of Damascus, and the writer of the "Prædestinatus," convincingly shews that each later writer used his predecessor, and considerably diminishes the cumulative force of the evidence when the accounts agree.

³⁰ Or the "Pseudo-Ambrosius," the author of a commentary on St Paul's epistles in the second volume of the works of Ambrose of Milan. (Ed. Benedict.) Written about 366-384. He occasionally alludes to the Montanists.

³¹ An inhabitant of southern Italy, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century, as we gather from an epistle addressed to Augustine, and a mention in another place of the Eutychian heresy. (*Opera omnia*, ad. Baluze, Par. 1684.)

question whether or not a branch of later Montanists adopted Sabellian tenets³². Last of all the ancient writers, comes Joannes Damascenus, a writer of the eighth century, who naturally can do no more than collate the evidence of his predecessors, although he introduces one or two assertions not met with elsewhere³³. The genuineness of the book on heresies, called the *Prædestinatus*, has been a subject of too much controversy to enable me to place writer (as I should be otherwise inclined) among the witnesses of the fifth century. It is clear that there was never an actual sect of Prædestinarians at that time, and equally clear that the book itself is the work of a Semi-Pelagian, who seeks with some ingenuity to damage his opponents by exaggerating their opinions. The book in question furnishes a catalogue of heresies in the style of Epiphanius, the imaginary “Prædestinati” being the last named, and the last but one the Nestorians. Under the 26th head, we have an account of the Montanists, remarkable not only for lucidity but for a studied impartiality of tone^{34 35}.

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Passing to modern times, we find no particular improvement with respect to historic method in the treatment by Baronius and the Magdeburg Centuriators. The former³⁶ is naturally desirous to explain away the awkward statements of Tertullian about the recognition of Montanism promulgated and then retracted by a Bishop of Rome. Tillemont is laborious and avails himself of all materials, but whether he exercises sufficient judgment in rejecting unsound statements, will be a matter for later consideration. At the end of the 17th century two learned Germans made valuable contributions to ecclesiastical history, and especially to the department of heresiology. Thomas Ittig (1643-1710) recounted the history of Montanism with much learning and impartiality, without the slightest tinge of that mania for “rehabilitations” which has made some more recent monographs little more trustworthy than the pious conjectures and traditions of a Cyril or a Pacian³⁷. In his immediate contemporary,

³² *Hæret. Fabular.* III. 2, ap. Migne, *Patrol. Græca*, LXXXIII. 401-404. Theodoret was chiefly engaged in the Nestorian controversy. († 457.)

³³ The last of the Greek Fathers, and the gallant defender of images against the iconoclasm of the Emperor Leo. (See his book on heresies, in Migne, XC. 705-708. The 48th Heresy is that of Montanism.) He asserts that the Montanists entrusted the priesthood to women; and as to the sacrifice, he thus improves on the former accounts: “Μυοῦνται δέ τινα κατακεντοῦντες νέον παῖδα ἀφίσι χαλκαῖς, ὡσπερ οἱ Καταφυγαστῶν, καὶ τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ ἄλευρον φυράσαντες καὶ ἄρτοποιήσαντες, προσφορὰν μεταλαμβάνουσι.”

³⁴ The book is to be found in the tenth volume of Gallandi’s *Bibliotheca Patrum*, pp. 366 ff. It was first edited by the learned Jesuit, Jac. Sirmond, in the year 1643, a circumstance which caused a suspicion that it had been manufactured to suit the then raging controversy between the Jesuits, the Jansenists, and the Dominicans. [Cf. Routh: “Prædestinatus, quem librum *ambiguæ fidei* primus edidit Jac. Sirmondus.” *Ref. Sacr.* II. 378.] Neander believed that it was really written by an eccentric Augustinian, but the internal evidence seems to point in the direction suggested above. See some valuable remarks by W. Möller in Herzog’s *Real-Encyclopædie* (sub voce “Semi-Pelagianismus”).

³⁵ I am now fully satisfied that Pr. can be accepted as a witness of the fifth century.

³⁶ See especially Tom. II. p. 261 (ad. Lucæ, 1738). Ritschl points out (p. 4) that the historians of Magdeburg were the first to recognise the character of the new ecclesiastical constitution in the 2nd century.

³⁷ *De Hæresiarchis ævi Apostolici et Apost. proximi dissertatio* (Lips. 1690), Cap. XIII. pp. 219-254, and an Appendix.

Gottfried Arnold, we find the first writer since Tertullian who places the history and doctrines of the Montanists in a comparatively favourable light³⁸. It is

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however obvious that Arnold's bias towards mysticism makes him partial in his judgments, and open to the same criticism as his predecessors, though from a different side. It is well, nevertheless, seeing the immense preponderance of voices on the unfavourable side, not to disregard the few which have, from time to time, been raised in defence of the purity and orthodoxy of the Montanists. First of the scientific historians comes Mosheim (1694-1755), who relates the history of the party not only in his narrative of the Events before Constantine, but also in his larger work³⁹. It is unnecessary to say that this great writer deals with each portion of his subject with learning and every desire of impartiality, besides the advantage (then first introduced) of a scientific arrangement of his subject. But I am bound to state my honest conviction that Mosheim and his school were, by temperament and training, incapable of doing full justice to a manifestation like Montanism. Their minds were not able to give a "sympathetic" examination, (by which I am far from meaning a favourably partial one). All claims of spiritual insight and revelation become in their eyes mere fanaticism and lunacy. It is curious to compare their impressions of Montanism with those of some bigoted Ultramontane writer, and to mark how very similar are the results. Let us take, for the sake of brevity, the notice in Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, and also that in Gervaise's book, *L'histoire et la vie de S. Epiphane* (Paris, 1738):-

MIDDLETON (I. 224)

"Montanus, the heretic, and his female associates, seem to have

GERVAISE. (p. 235 ff.)

"S. Epiphane étudie à faire voir que c'étoient des imposteurs, et il

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MIDDLETON (I. 224)

been the authors of these prophetic trances, towards the end of the 2nd century, and acquired great credit by their visions and ecstasies, in which they acted their part so well, by feigned distortions and convulsive agitations of the body, as to appear to be out of their senses; and in these fits uttered many wild prophecies and predictions, which they imposed upon the people for divine

GERVAISE. (p. 235 ff.)

la preuve par deux raisons. La première, c'est qu'il y a déjà, dit-il, plus de deux cent ans que cet hérésiarque at ses Prophétesses sont décédées, cependant le monde subsiste encore, et nous ne voyons aucune marque de sa prochaine destruction. La seconde est que si on compare leurs prétendues Prophéties avec celles de tous les grands saints on y trouvera des distances infinies."

³⁸ *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historien*, (Schaffhausen, 1740). The mystical leanings of this writer led him to regard the Montanists with, especial favour, and he hints in more than one place at the final verdict on them which has been only recently delivered by Ritschl and Hilgenfeld. Arnold is in many ways a very interesting personage in ecclesiastical history, his career having a considerable influence in the great Pietistic movement in Germany. At last he gave himself entirely to the study of Mystical Theology, and furnished a valuable history of this special subject in his *Historie und Beschreibung der mystischen Theologie* (Frankf. 1703), which, together with Poiret's book, is indispensable to the student of theosophy. His own views were developed in his *Geheimniss der göttlichen Sophia* (Leipz. 1700.)

³⁹ *De Rebus Christianorum ante C. M.* (Helmst. 1784). The *Church History* has been often edited.

revelations; and by affecting at the same time a peculiar sanctity and severity of discipline, they first raised and propagated in the Church that spirit of enthusiasm, which subsisted in it for near a century, and then gradually sank into utter contempt.” [The author is quite sure that “Montan at Maximille, poussés par l’esprit de ténèbres qui lea agitoit, se fussent pendus.”]

The poor Abbé, with his implicit faith in the inspired accuracy of Epiphanius, is by no means so contemptible as the blatant rationalist, who does not even affect an argument, and condemns as heretics and impostors men whose opinions were far beyond entering into his philosophy. There is certainly something not a little comic in Dr Conyers Middleton, to whose profound orthodoxy such unanimous testimony was given by the Church of England, standing up as Inquisitor-General; and the coolness with which he talks of the “feigned distortions” and “affected sanctity” would alone stamp the performance as proceeding from the author of the *Letters from Rome* and the *Free Enquiry*⁴⁰. It is only just to the founder of this school to admit that his own writings were as free from the flippancy and cynicism which marked those of many of his followers, as from their general superficiality in the matter of learning. It is well known that at this period everything that savoured of so-called “Enthusiasm” was under

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the united ban of science, theology and society. Half the sermons of the 18th century, to judge by what have come down to us, must have been written against this detestable error; and no doubt much of the contempt lavished upon Montanism and kindred manifestations was intended obliquely for the misguided men who were at this time preaching to the poor a very different Gospel from that of Middleton and Warburton⁴¹.

In this same period, however, we have a series of monographs upon the special subject of Montanism, treated naturally from different standpoints, but in almost each instance by men of reputation⁴². Some of these I have not been able to meet with, but the essay of Theophilus Wernsdorf not only contains a mention of all possible materials, but also an investigation into the opinions (not the external history) conducted with much ingenuity and learning. But this writer is undoubtedly a “counsel for the defence,” and in the course of his pleadings he is more than once guilty of a want of candour in his quotations, which is as reprehensible, and indeed more so, than the similar tactics employed occasionally on the other side⁴³. The younger

⁴⁰ And of the cowardly attacks on a far greater man. See Monk’s *Life of Bentley*.

⁴¹ There are some good remarks in Mr Leslie Stephen’s *History of Thought in the 18th century*.

⁴² Strauch’s *De Montana discursus theologico-historicus*, (1680,) is mentioned by Schwegler, also three dissertations by Ruel, “De Montano et Montanistis,” in Hartmann’s *Concilia Illustrata* (I. 283 ff.), and one by Longerue, - none of which I have been able to consult. They are all doubtless in the University Library at Göttingen.

⁴³ Theoph. Wernsdorf, *De Montanistis commentatio historica-critica*. (Ged. 1751.) Notwithstanding the fine profession of historical candour, (which I have ventured to copy on my title-page,) Wernsdorf, while attempting to prove the complete agreement of Montanistic tenets with the doctrines of the Primitive Church, more than once quotes as evidence writings of Tertullian, such as the *Ad Martyres*,

Walch published his *History of Heresies* in 1762, and his sober impartiality seems to me very far from deserving Schwegler's sneer⁴⁴. Schroeckh's vast storehouse of facts - more it cannot claim to be - presents once more all that industry can furnish⁴⁵.

It is needless to enumerate the vast catalogue of modern ecclesiastical histories, very few of which present even a new idea upon the side-paths of their subject. But Neander⁴⁶ has the merit, among many others of having first discussed the influence of the Phrygian nationality, early religions and customs, upon the party which originated there. At the same time, two useful monographs appeared; that of Fr. Adolph Heinichen (*De Alogis, Theodotianis, atque Artemonitis*, Lipsiæ, 1829), in which, following up the previous researches of Merkel. (*Ueber die Aloger &c.*, Frankf., 1782), he explores a most important appendix to the history of the Montanists; and that of Conrad Kirchner (*De Montanistis. ...commentatio de eorum origine &c. &c.*, Jenæ, 1832), which, without any claim to originality, furnishes a good synoptical view of the evidence. The controversies which followed the publication in 1832 of Möhler's *Symbolik*, caused much attention to be paid to the movement, which, in the Catholic theologian's opinion represented the completest and most logical development of the Protestant "ground-idea." His mention of Swedenborg brought into the lists Dr Tafel of Tübingen, who defended the principles of Neo-Montanism against its adversaries⁴⁷. The school of Tübingen

began now its investigations into the period succeeding the Apostolic age. In order to avoid the outcry which had followed the publication of the *Leben Jesu*, the trenches were dug in a district where the danger was less to be apprehended: the facts were left alone for a time, while the early witnesses were being discredited. Schwegler's successful essay, in the year 1841, once more brought the importance of Montanism before the bar of criticism. As his work is referred to repeatedly in the following pages, no further mention is here necessary⁴⁸. In 1847, Ritschl published the first edition of his great work on the Primitive Church, in which he developed for the first time the true view that Montanism was a reaction in a conservative sense, rather than a "New Prophecy." He was rather sharply criticised by Baur in the *Theologische Jahrbücher*, who also dissected Neander's views on the same subject, the articles being finally incorporated in his *Kirchengeschichte der 3 ersten Jahrhunderte*

(p. 128,) which all authorities, - and all internal evidence, proclaim to have been written before the "lapse." Now as I firmly believe that his conclusion is sound, and follows from the honest reasonings which I shall attempt imperfectly to set forth in this essay, I feel the more shame that a good cause should have been so disgraced. Dr Réville, surely through an oversight, quotes the *Præscriptio* as embodying Tertullian's Montanistic opinions. (Cf. *Etudes sur T.*, *Nouv. Rev. de Théol.* 1858, p. 53.)

⁴⁴ Entwurf einer vollständigen Historie der Ketzereien. Leipz. 1762. [Cf. Schwegler, p. 11.]

⁴⁵ *Christliche Kirchengeschichte*. Leipz. 1768-1804. (Continued by Tzschirner.)

⁴⁶ *Allgemeine Geschichte der christl. Religion u. Kirche*. (Hamburg, 1827.)

⁴⁷ J. F. Tafel: *Vergleichende Darstellung und Beurtheilung der Lehrgegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten*. (Tübingen, 1835.) Möhler was then a professor at the University of Tübingen, but he afterwards accepted a call to München.

⁴⁸ *Der Montanismus und die christliche Kirche*. (Tüb. 1841.) There had been a competition for a prize offered by the Theological Faculty: Dr Schwegler was successful.

(1853). Before this, in 1847, Schwegler had shaped his essay into a larger work, in which his paradoxes were but slightly modified⁴⁹. In 1850, the learned Hilgenfeld published his *Glossolalie in der alten Kirche*, declaring his complete agreement with Ritschl's conclusions, the latter's book appearing in an enlarged form in 1857⁵⁰. In the following year, an interesting essay by Dr Albert Réville appeared. in the *Nouvelle Revue de Théologie*, in which the theories of Schwegler and Ritschl were discussed, and a very lucid and impartial sketch of the Montanistic movement furnished⁵¹. In 1865 Lipsius published the first of his investigations into the nature of the materials used by Epiphanius; a labour (it need scarcely be said) of infinite

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importance in connection with Montanism⁵²; supplemented quite recently by further researches as to the evidence given by Philaster and other early hereseologers⁵³. In addition to these labours, the same writer's monograph upon the chronology of the early bishops of Rome has already been recognised as a standard authority⁵⁴. The last work to be mentioned comes from that well-known magazine of Protestantism, the Theological Faculty of the University of Strasburg. Just before the war of 1870, M. Emile Ströhlin, (a pupil of Colani's,) published an *Essai sur le Montanisme* as his thesis for a degree. Without any pretensions to originality or to exhaustive handling of the topic, M. Ströhlin must be admitted to have furnished a clear and useful résumé of Montanistic history and teaching, his various debts to Schwegler and Ritschl being freely acknowledged⁵⁵. To this list may be added the two articles, each from its own stand-point admirable, by Möller in Herzog's *Real-Encyclopädie*, and by Hefele in the *Freiburger Kirchen-Lexikon*; while the name of the latter theologian cannot be mentioned without a tribute to the assistance furnished to such enquiries by his *Conciliengeschichte*

From this vast heap of materials it still remains to construct a truly Critical History of Montanism. The first grand step, viz, the application of the keenest analysis to the evidence of Eusebius and Epiphanius, notwithstanding the labours of Lipsius, Volkmar, and Harnack, cannot yet be regarded as complete⁵⁶. If only the tenth part of the labour given to the elucidation of the text of a dramatist, and the chronological order of his works,

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could be devoted to such writers as Hippolytus and Tertullian, and with the same impartiality, - what results might we not expect? As for the other requirement, the scientific comparison of Montanism with later spiritual reactions, all that has been done as yet is of the most fragmentary nature.

⁴⁹ *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter*. (Tüb. 1846.)

⁵⁰ *Entstehung der Alt-Katholischen Kirche*, (2^{te} Auflage,) Bonn, 1857.

⁵¹ *Etudes sur Tertullien*. (2.) Le Montanisme, 1858, pp. 49 ff.

⁵² *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanius*. Wien, 1865.

⁵³ *Die Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte*. Leipzig, 1875.

⁵⁴ *Chronologie der römischen Bischöfe*. Kiel, 1869.

⁵⁵ *Essai sur le Montanisme*, Strasbourg, 1870.

⁵⁶ See Harnack's *Quellenkritik der Geschichte des Gnosticismus*, Leipzig, 1873, and his criticisms on Lipsius in the *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie*, (1874,) II. 143-226.

The writer of this essay, it need not be said, makes no claim to have even attempted these great tasks. Standing on the shoulders of his predecessors, he has tried to form an impartial estimate of their labours, as well as of what remains to be done in the future. But acknowledging that he has worked upon old materials, he claims to have honestly analysed and judged them, and (as Chillingworth puts it) “to have defended truth only, and only by truth.”

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*** Since writing this notice of the materials, I discovered in the library of the British Museum a curious pamphlet on Montanism, (in fact, the only existing monograph in English,) written by "a Lay Gentleman," no other clue to the author's name being given⁵⁷. It is bound up with a sermon of Dean Kicke's on Enthusiasm, and an account of the Camisard Prophets, some of whom had visited England. The "lay gentleman's" partiality (or ignorance) is exemplified by his quoting no single work of Tertullian's except the spurious appendix to the *Praescriptio*. He remarks naïvely: "Had there been any writings of the Montanists remaining at this day, out of which I could have taken my accounts, I should not have concealed anything that they could have said for themselves." One would have thought that Dean Hicke could have informed him as

⁵⁷ Hartley, in his quaint *Paradise Regained*, (London, 1764, p. 176,) speaks of a *History of Montanism*, by Dr Francis Lee, the friend of Pordage, and the leading spirit of the Philadelphian Society. Can this be it? I should hesitate to think that so enlightened a man could have perpetrated so one-sided an account of a religious phenomenon in many respects similar to the movement in which he himself took part.

to the existence of such treatises as the *De Monogamia*, *De Virg. velandis*, and so forth. The book is dated, London, 1709. Its historical value may be estimated from the fact that the writer gravely asserts his belief that the Montanists did not invent the doctrine of Transubstantiation!

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