

MONTANISM

Gender, authority and the New Prophecy

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1996

First paperback edition 2002

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Trevett, Christine

Montanism: gender, authority and the New Prophecy

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 41182 3 (hardback)

1. Montanism – History. I. Title.

BT1435.T74 1995

273'1.–dc20 95-8503

CIP

ISBN 0 521 41182 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 52870 4 paperback

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CHAPTER I

Beginnings

I. I THE STUDY OF MONTANISM

I. I. I 'One of the holiest men . . .'

Montanism and the Primitive Church (1878), Soyres' work, has been until now the only monograph in English on the history of Montanism, though recently there have been studies in English of oracles, inscriptions and testimonia. Towards the end of his work Soyres raised the question which many a student of Montanism has continued to keep in a recess of the mind:

was the 'Spirit' which Tertullian preached, and for which Perpetua died, the Father of lies, or was it the Spirit of God? ¹

In other words, was Montanism heresy or a much-maligned movement with the potential to be valuable grit for the pearl of the Church? Was Montanus, whose name was taken to designate the movement,² indeed 'one of the holiest men in the second century' (as the sermonising John Wesley maintained³) or was he that wretched little man (τὸ ἔλαεινὸν ἀνθρωπάριον; Epiphanius *Panarion* xlviii. 11,9), the deceiving, corrupt, semi-pagan opportunist 'prophet' described in a number of ancient sources?

Montanus has mostly been regarded as a villain, though a few have conceded that, like the women Priscilla and Maximilla and some of those who followed them, he may have been only in ecstatically contrived error – like Edward Gibbon's whirling dervishes, mistaking 'the giddiness of the head for the illumination of the spirit'. This study will examine both the phenomenon of Montanism and its leading protagonists.

What was Montanism? Montanism was a religious movement emerging within Christianity of the second century. It was not a simple and single phenomenon but was long-lived. Indeed it was 'an

unconscionable time a-dying', languishing long in a depleted and ailing state.⁴ As late as John of Damascus' eighth-century day (*Haer.* xlix) sectarian 'Pepuziani' (named after the Montanists' 'Mecca' at Pepuza) may possibly have existed in the region of its beginnings, though I doubt it.⁵ Its death throes began in the fourth century and it seems to have been left barely alive, so far as we can tell, after blows to it in the fifth.

'Montanism' was a name applied by others to a prophetic phenomenon. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386 CE) first used the term *Montanoi* ('Montanists') in his exceedingly polemical *Catechetical Lectures* (*Cat.* xvi.8), countering their claim to be 'Christians'. In the same source he used the term *Cataphrygian*, the name we find most frequently in our sources. The fifth-century *Codex Theodosianus* also used the term 'Montanists' along with 'Phrygians', 'Pepuzites' and 'Priscillianists': the various designations were derived either from the geographical hub of the movement (Phrygia and the town of Pepuza) or from names of Prophets associated with it (Montanus/Montanists; Priscilla/Priscillianists; Quintilla/Quintillianists).⁶ Epiphanius and others refer to some (more or less probably) related groups which stem from a later period of Montanism. These are described in terms of their allegedly aberrant eucharistic and ritual practices. They included Artotyrites ('bread and cheesers') and Tascodrougites ('nose-peggers').

The first 'Montanists' called themselves none of these things. They talked of 'The New Prophecy' or perhaps at first of 'The Prophecy'. This is suggested both by the language of the Anonymous in Eusebius *HE* v.16,4 ('this new thing. . . not prophecy', contrast the form in v.16,14) and by the words of Serapion of Antioch in *HE* v.19,2 ('so-called new prophecy').⁷ In this study I shall write of 'The (New) Prophecy' too and of the Prophets (capital P) when speaking of the first six decades or so of the phenomenon (i.e. chronologically speaking up to and including the work of Hippolytus and Apollonius). Then I shall use the familiar, if anachronistic, term 'Montanism'. I make an exception with the person of Tertullian. His views should always be suspected of being less than truly representative of the Prophecy ('Tertullianists' was another name given to such believers),⁸ but, since his writings tend to be divided as a matter of course into pre-, proto- or truly Montanist, then against my own strictures (viz. that the proper term for this early period is (New) Prophet) I shall call him Tertullian the Montanist.

The New Prophecy believed in the outpouring of the Spirit and the appearance of a new, authoritative prophecy which brought fresh disciplinary demands to the churches. Women were prominent as leaders and the Prophets clashed with catholic representatives on matters such as the nature of prophecy, the exercise of authority, the interpretation of Christian writings and the significance of the phenomenon for salvation-history. The New Prophecy – later Montanism – spread and diversified, despite some catholic success in countering it. It was hard to kill. It represented, as Robert Eno observed in his 1971 study of ‘Authority and Conflict in the Early Church’, ‘a fundamental type of conflict’.

1.1.2 *The sources*

There is much we do not know about the New Prophecy and later Montanism. We are forced to interpret the remaining fragments of a history which was written by the winners and in this we meet serious historical limitations on patristic scholarship. Recognising the limitations, we must take account of *much* of the available material, for the writer can afford to ignore none of the evidence, excepting that late kind which merely parrots the descriptions of earlier and better-known anti-Montanists. ‘There is nothing to be gained from reading through this tittle-tattle’, Campenhausen concluded in *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (233), dismissing loftily Eusebius’ early anti-Montanist Anonymous source. But when the task is to glean what may be gleaned, then we must use what there is, recognising that primary and secondary sources have been coloured with the brush of the authors’ prejudices.

Evidence from the Montanist side includes Prophetic oracles, available now in collection and translation into modern languages through the work of Hilgenfeld, N. Bonwetsch (in Lietzmann’s *Kleine Texte*, 1914), Labriolle, R.M. Grant, Kurt Aland, David Aune, also in the *New Testament Apocrypha* edited by E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, and most recently (and usefully for the English-speaking reader) in Ronald Heine’s *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (1989; omitting ninety-six of the texts which Labriolle cited). Some of these oracles are of questionable authenticity. Some seem not to be strictly ‘oracles’ at all (see below, 3.1.2; 4.3.1–4) and they have sometimes been too readily dismissed as trivial, lacking in the *gravitas* of scriptural pronouncements or meaningless. I disagree. Such judgements are unworthy of serious scholarship, for they fail (among

other things) to take account of the fact that the material has come to us in attenuated form, subject to redaction, wrenched from the saying's original context and used in the propaganda war which was being waged. In the present study I shall use sayings as appropriate, numbering the oracles according to Aland's scheme and cross-referring to Heine's study. A tabulated list appears in 3.1 note 8.

Then there is Montanist epigraphy. This is much debated, not least about whether some of it is Montanist or not. It has been increasingly available since the publications of W.M. Ramsay and his three students W.H. Buckler, J.G.C. Anderson and (most notably) William Calder. Elsa Gibson and recently William Tabbernee have examined the most important discoveries too and as I write this, at the end of 1993, Tabbernee's study of 'Montanist Regional Bishops: New Evidence from Ancient Inscriptions' has just been published and *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* will be forthcoming in 1996. This is in part the outcome of his mammoth Ph.D. study of 'The Opposition to Montanism from Church and State'. The epigraphy is a significant addition to the available resources, for it was not available to most of the earlier commentators on Montanism. It relates to the later stages, however, and like the oracles I shall cite it as appropriate throughout.

Also from the Montanist side and from North Africa there is (i) defence of the New Prophecy by the remarkable and idiosyncratic apologist Tertullian (see 2.3.2) and (ii) the writing of the Redactor of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. Incorporated in the latter is the witness of Perpetua herself (4.5).

The bulk of the evidence is from the anti-Montanist side. At worst it is hostility of a vicious and highly imaginative kind and at best there are relatively civilised descriptions of strongly held differences of view. Considering the number of centuries and geographical areas through which the influence of Montanism percolated, the witnesses to it are few enough and, as Soyres wrote, 'some of them do not survive cross-examination'.⁹ This makes Montanism an interesting and difficult phenomenon to study.

I shall not refer to all the material in Labriolle's *Sources* though I will use a great deal (a) from the second and third centuries, viz. Eusebius' early anti-Montanist sources, the early source of Epiphanius, the writing of Hippolytus, Tertullian, Origen and others; (b) some important fourth- and fifth-century witnesses which include Epiphanius (again), Didymus of Alexandria and the *Dialexis* (this last a

dialogue between an orthodox and a Montanist believer), Pseudo-Tertullian, Filastrius of Brescia, Augustine and others, plus (c) some later testimonia relating to the final throes of Montanism.

1.1.3 *What writers have said*

Patristic studies are 'often like a walk through excavated ruins', offering 'the mutilated remains of past glory'.¹⁰ For Montanism only partial edifices can be recognised and this is also true about the communities of its catholic opponents. Yet metaphorically speaking, at least, the ruins of Montanism have been excavated regularly and variously interpreted.¹¹ Yet there have been fewer studies of the New Prophecy and later Montanism than of (say) Ignatius of Antioch or of Gnosticism, of emerging catholicism or 'Jewish-Christianity'. That is odd, given that studies of the second century Church or of the sweep of church history to Nicaea or Chalcedon make reference to Montanism as a potent force in shaping catholic developments.

Karlfried Froehlich wrote of this lack of interest in Montanism in 'Montanism and Gnosis' in 1973. Kurt Aland had explained it, he said, in his useful essay 'Bemerkungen', and it was due to belief that *there was no more to say*. The evidence had been picked over and something approaching a scholarly consensus had been reached about Montanism's distinctive features. Nevertheless, Montanism has not been neglected in the last few decades. Short studies have appeared with great regularity up to the present and I shall be citing a large number of items. Interest in Montanism is no less lively than in the nineteenth century, though it is not at the forefront of church historians' thinking.

Turning to the research of the nineteenth century, Bonwetsch provides a good beginning. In *Die Geschichte des Montanismus* (1881) Bonwetsch discussed findings on Montanism to his day, moving from the catholic Baronius and Tillemont in the seventeenth century,¹² through eighteenth-century critics including Arnold and Wernsdorf, Walch (*Entwurf einer vollständigen Historie der Ketzerereien*, Leipzig 1762) and Mosheim, who was chancellor of Göttingen University, friend of the Hanoverian court and pioneer in the 1760s of a new kind of objective Church history writing. Important nineteenth-century studies which had preceded Bonwetsch's own included those of Neander and Ritschl, F.C. Baur, Réville, Renan, Schwegler, Georgi and Soyres.¹³ Bonwetsch's own examination of Montanism proved stimulating and comprehensive. Klawiter has reviewed the nineteenth-

century discussions in his Ph.D. study,¹⁴ and included the two important articles in English (i) by Harnack ('Montanism', which appeared first in the ninth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* vol. xvi, 774ff.) and (ii) by G. Salmon ('Montanus' in *DCB* iii). Zahn, Voigt and Hilgenfeld had written in the closing decades of that century too, addressing the causes, sources for and development of Montanism. Our debt to German-speaking scholars is obvious. But what were they saying about Montanism?

The New Prophecy was often portrayed as a form of primitive, 'original' Christianity revived (or perhaps surviving with minority status) and involved in a desperate struggle to preserve legitimate but decaying elements of the tradition in the face of developing catholicism and ecclesiastical organisation. Here was 'the lost Pentecostal springtime of the Church' as Whale put it, or 'le plus remarquable de ces retours fort naturels vers l'esprit apostolique'.¹⁵ This has been a view particularly associated with Protestant scholarship but certainly not exclusive to it.

For F.C. Baur the catholic Church had emerged as synthesis out of tensions between Pauline and Petrine (Hellenistic and Judaic) kinds of Christianity. The work of Baur's pupil Schwegler (*Der Montanismus und die christliche Kirche des 2. Jahrhunderts*, 1841) proved an important if controversial contribution to the nineteenth-century debate. Indeed Bonwetsch saw in Schwegler's work the opposite extreme to Neander (*Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* and *Antignostikus*), who had overvalued the significance of Montanus himself and understood Montanism as a reaction against Gnosticism's perversion of Christianity. At the hands of Schwegler Montanism was a name *invented* to cover certain second century and later modes of thought, and the question of Montanus' very existence might be raised. Montanism was legalistic *Judenchristentum* and Schwegler looked to Ebionism for explanation, positing a stand versus gentile Christianity.

Ritschl took issue with this view in an 'epoch-making' (Bonwetsch) work (*Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, second edn, 1857). The root of Montanism was not Ebionism, he maintained, but catholic *Heidenchristentum* should be examined. Montanism's enthusiasm betrayed the influence of gentile Christian, even pagan, practice, which for Ritschl certainly did not derive from the legitimate prophecy of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Church. As for its opposition to a developing (and non-apostolic) catholic form of

church order, the fact was that it was not itself apostolic. Still neither its chiliasm nor its legalism divided it from the beliefs of the Church catholic, he thought.

Some felt that the Jewishness of Montanism had been overstressed but Baur had wondered where the many 'Jewish' elements in Montanism would have derived from, if not from Judaism. Like Harnack he took note of the parallel rise of monarchical episcopacy and he saw in Montanism a more ancient and Jewish form of Christianity which was now in opposition to a hierarchical, Hellenised form. It is clear, then, that J.M. Ford's attempt (in 1966) to explain Montanism as a 'Jewish-Christian' phenomenon was far from new. Long ago Gregoire for one had looked at the possibility of elements having been borrowed from a Palestinian kind of Judaism, a generation after the disastrous Bar-Cochba revolt. Intransigence against Rome was still in the air, he suggested.¹⁶

Nineteenth-century scholars had also examined Montanist eschatology, looking for the roots of its rigorism;¹⁷ had questioned whether Tertullian was a good source for the Prophecy, and had acknowledged the possibility that it had been a bastion against Gnosticism. Réville, Soyres and Renan should be mentioned in these respects, as also Augustus Neander's work *Antignostikus* (ET by J.E. Ryland, London 1887). In the writings of Renan and Harnack we see interest in conflicts of culture and in the political dimension of apocalyptic thought. This last aspect of the study of the Prophecy's beginnings has been developed in the twentieth century in the work of Scheepelern and Kurt Aland, and most recently in studies by W.H.C. Frend. Hilgenfeld (*Die Glossolie in der alten Kirche*, Leipzig 1850, and *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*, Leipzig 1884), on the other hand, had studied the Prophecy in terms of an attempt to reinstate a more original, charismatic form of ministry.

The same questions are still in the air. Klawiter's thesis has asked whether Montanism was a prophetic reform movement of protest against secularisation and spiritual decline in catholic circles (so Baur and Campenhausen), or whether it was perhaps the revolution of martyrs in political revolt against Rome. This latter view, more clearly expressed in the twentieth century, was presupposed in some nineteenth-century comments on the Prophecy's apocalyptic eschatology (e.g. Renan). Writers are still asking whether the Prophecy was revival or unacceptable innovation; whether Tertullian's North African Montanism was at all like 'real' (Asia Minor) Montanism

and so on.¹⁸ There are no definitive answers, though in some respects we are now better served with evidence.

Pierre de Labriolle has been an unsurpassed chronicler of Montanism. No student of it dares to ignore the work of this Roman Catholic who saw in the Prophecy something bigger than a purely local Phrygian reaction against the catholic Church. In *La Crise Montaniste* (1913) and *Les Sources de l'Histoire du Montanisme* of the same year Labriolle gave a comprehensive overview of what was known of Montanism in Rome, North Africa and the East, and the sources and analysis took the reader from its beginnings to the destruction of its sites. Labriolle ventured as far as John of Ephesus, who launched a major attack on the Montanists, but he did not include the evidence of Michael the Syrian (see 5.2–5.3) or of those epigraphic sources which were available (thanks to Ramsay) even in 1913. There is still excellent meat in his Introduction to the sources, which considered their possible dependence one upon another. As for what Labriolle thought, he believed that the apparent revivalism of the Prophecy was misleading. What it offered was not truly primitive Christianity at all. Despite its return to prophecy, its apocalyptic turn of mind and its rigorous refusal to betray the faith, it could not be. For Montanus (Labriolle believed) taught that the Paraclete was incarnate in the prophetesses Priscilla and Maximilla and in himself.¹⁹

The twentieth century has brought more systematic study of the Prophecy's possibly pagan roots, though the attempt to parallel the Prophecy and later Montanism with elements in pagan Phrygian practice is not new. It can be traced back at least to the work of Neander in 1827. Bonwetsch, Schwegler, Hilgenfeld and Harnack, among others, drew attention to parallels with Phrygian paganism, especially with the cult of Attis-Cybele, and towards the end of the century the British scholar W.M. Ramsay took up the theme in his study of *The Church in the Roman Empire*. There he had contrasted the Prophecy's insistence on a local, Phrygian church polity (not uninfluenced by the society and native cults of Phrygia) with the unifying ideal of the Roman church.²⁰ Nevertheless, the work of Harnack, Schwegler and Labriolle had already served to dampen enthusiasm for Phrygian pagan parallels when in 1929 Wilhelm Schepelern undertook a comprehensive study of the topic. This was under the title *Der Montanismus und die phrygischen Kulte*.

That title has misled some writers (who seem not to have read the book) into thinking that Schepelern found the roots of the Prophecy

in Phrygian paganism. This was not so. He recognised that *ecstatic* prophecy had been a key factor for the catholics' condemnation and certainly there were parallels to be examined with the cult of Attis-Cybele. Similarly the honouring of pagan priestesses was examined as a possible clue to the position of women in Montanism, and the most striking parallels with Montanist practice were found to be the lamenting virgins in congregational worship (as described by Epiphanius) and rites which involved the pricking of infants with needles. Yet the sources concerned were late. They could not tell us about the roots of the Prophecy. Its immediate dependence, he concluded, was not on Phrygian paganism. Its roots lay in the kind of Christianity which looked to Johannine sources and especially to the Revelation.²¹ Kurt Aland was even more uncompromising about its Christian origins. In 'Der Montanismus und die kleinasiatische Theologie' (a resumé of his 'Bemerkungen') he declared that Montanism was 'eine Bewegung rein christlichen Charakters'. Scholars since have endorsed this view. Aland stressed the importance of the *Asian* theological setting for the Prophecy.

Interest in pagan parallels with the Prophecy seems to have diminished in recent decades, though the study by Greville Freeman is less critical of the sources than was Schepelern and there is an unpublished 1980 dissertation by B.W. Goree on 'The Cultural Bases of Montanism', more sympathetic than most writers to dependence on Phrygian paganism.²² W.H.C. Frend's valuable study, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, has combined the Jewish, Christian apocalyptic and native rural Phrygian strands in examining the Prophecy's beginnings, and in 'Montanism: A Movement of Prophecy and Regional Identity' he expressed the view that Prophetic rigour and ecstatic utterances probably had owed more to Phrygian paganism than Schepelern allowed. A. Daunton-Fear's article on 'The Ecstasies of Montanus' linked Montanus' form of prophesying with the cult of Apollo, but such views are now rare. Goree's dissertation began by expressing regret that for the preceding half century scholars of Montanism had lost interest in examining a possible pagan background for it. Avid readers, I suggest, *could* find references to Phrygian pagan influence in writings since the 1930s (E. Evans in *Tertullian's Treatise Against Praxeas*, Knox in *Enthusiasm* and Greenslade in *Schism in the Early Church*, to cite but a few) but such claims in my view have tended to be inadequately defended assertions.

The Prophecy, in the opinion of most scholars of the present day,

was *Christian*. I would not struggle to deny that elements of local Phrygian religious practice may have fed into the Prophecy during its long life and been Christianised, but we should distinguish between its *Phrygian* Christian character and a real connection with paganism.²³

For many, of course, the Prophecy/later Montanism was synonymous with revolt – against emerging catholic authority and catholic pragmatism (‘worldliness’ to some); the Spirit against the letter; the prophet against the bishop or the fanatic against the sober teacher. As early as 1729, in Arnold’s *Unparteyische Kirchen und Ketzerhistorie*, it was being portrayed as the genuine world-denying piety of godly Christians, rudely attacked by the opposition. Many catholic writers over the centuries have also seen it as a form of opposition but have not graced it with the mantle of *legitimate* protest. Rather it was a heinous threat to the truth of the Church catholic or to Christian orthodoxy. Of whatever century, and whether catholic or protestant, writers have tended to treat Montanism with a sideways glance at the Reformation.

Montanism’s rise as critic, irritant, or even heresy is sometimes regarded as a watershed for the young Church.²⁴ It rose alongside the growth of episcopal authority and certain forms of Gnosticism. Hence the history of ecclesiology and of doctrine has tended to be understood with reference to these two (Montanist and Gnostic) aberrant and abhorrent forces. Adolf von Harnack represented one angle on this view though he gave Ritschl the credit for ‘first discerning the true significance of the Montanistic movement’.²⁵ The Church, he said, ‘marched through the open door into the Roman state’ and Montanism was among the forces (the ‘warning voices’) raised against secularising tendencies. In turn it fell prey to arrogance and legalism.²⁶ Gnosticism and Montanism (so Harnack and Ritschl too)²⁷ were the two movements whose defeat made the catholic Church. Given such ‘twinning’ in terms of influence, it is interesting that we rarely encounter attempts to twin Montanism and Gnosticism genetically. Instead Montanism is usually assumed to have been at odds with, rather than influenced by, Gnosticism. There has been one dissenting voice, however.

Froehlich made a spirited attempt to link the two. The consensus view, he said, still owed much to a ‘triangular theory’ of church history and the Hegelian view which went back to F.C. Baur and was popularised by Harnack. This, which had marked a lot of Roman Catholic historiography, maintained that the second-century Church

faced danger on three fronts: from Gnosticism, paganism and Montanism. Protestant scholarship, Froehlich went on, offered only variation on the theme, with Montanism, the catholic tradition, Marcionism, paganism/Hellenisation, Gnosticism and so on, appearing in various combinations and systematisations in different works by Protestants. There was some support for the assumption about the antignostic character of Montanism but he attempted to undermine 'the speculative constructions of Christian history', to show Montanism's close affinities with Gnostic thought. He made an impression upon Françoise Blanchetière, at least, who concluded ('Le Montanisme originel', 1979, 19) that

Fondementalement, la 'nouvelle Prophétie' est d'abord un renouveau spirituel à coloration apocalyptique et même encratiste, non sans quelque parente avec certaines idées gnostiques.

Tabbernee ('Opposition', 558) disagreed, however, and I too shall argue that the Prophecy was hostile to Gnostic thinking.

1.1.4 Is Montanism worth the effort?

The study of Montanism, says Klawiter, has been dominated by desire to know how the ancient catholic Church evolved. So the presentation of Montanism has depended on whether the writer considered that evolution valid.²⁸ But we should also note that some of the partisans have wondered whether Montanism is worth the study at all. English speaking scholarship of the outspoken kind has accused students of gullibility, of taking too seriously a movement of 'coarse revivalism': Christianity

perverted by fear of learning and speculation . . . opposed to . . . the dignified traditionalism of the sub-Apostolic church.

Church historians had exaggerated its importance, for Montanism, 'if the wayward genius of Tertullian had not lent energy to its propaganda', would have made no more than 'a small ripple' on Christendom's surface.²⁹ In France even Labriolle thought that Montanism (never as great a threat as Gnosticism to the Church) had suffered from over-dramatisation.

Edward Gibbon, of course, had offered a different perspective. Convinced of the rightness of his picture of 'gloomy and austere' second-century Christians who 'with caution and reserve' offered 'frequent predictions of impending calamities', Gibbon wrote of that

same Church censuring the Prophets 'for discharging too freely the dangerous secret'. Here then was a domestic struggle, in which the catholics turned on the New Prophecy with a venom and level of accusation which matched what the Church itself had suffered.³⁰

Nevertheless, there are many in Christian churches today – charismatics and those who fear their influence, feminist commentators and others – who look on the New Prophecy/Montanism as more than a matter of antiquarian interest. Montanism was once a reality in Cappadocia. In May 1993 I was in Cappadocia and found myself in conversation with a British member of the charismatic House Church movement while we both waited in the heat to be let into a church dedicated to Basil the Great. The man was familiar with Montanism and for him the issues he thought it represented (as well as the dangers he had read of) deserved to be expressed, for they were alive and kicking. Similarly feminist reclaimers of the history of Christian women have seized on the Prophecy, sometimes with scant knowledge of its history and implications but conscious that here was a phenomenon in which (unusually in Christian history) women were prominent. The study of Montanism has always been moulded by the concerns and the confessional stance of writers.

So here is a confession: I stand in the Protestant camp, heir to a seventeenth-century radical Puritanism to which Montanism has sometimes been compared. I'm sure some readers will think that it shows. But Montanism merits study not because it can continue to provide ammunition in centuries-long wars of words about authority, charisma, women's ministry and more. It deserves study not least because in the present century new fields of scholarship (decipherment and interpretation of new-found epigraphy, study of the phenomenon of ancient prophecy both Christian and otherwise, the sociology of religion and psycho-history) are bringing fresh insights to bear on what we think we know of it. Frend does regret in several of his writings that there are not systematic surveys and excavations of sites where epigraphy was discovered, as happened with Donatism. And this is a gap to be filled. Nevertheless, a lot of new work has been done on Montanism and it is right that for the first time in English since 1878 Montanism should have an airing.

1.1.5 More on methodology

The subject index at the end will allow the reader to trace oracular and epigraphic items. The index of scholars' names will give access to

bibliographical details which do not appear in the final bibliography (for no nineteenth-century or earlier works will be included, for example). What is to be done about Tertullian? Tertullian's evidence poses particular problems (2.3). One could treat Tertullian's Montanist writings as being maverick about Montanism or more generously see them as evidence only for the (second-phase) phenomenon in North Africa. One might disregard all he has to say. Yet on certain matters his is the only available evidence and since my purpose in chapter three, in particular, is to examine what may be known of the New Prophecy's teachings, such gaps are to be avoided. Consequently the evidence of Tertullian will be discussed, but always with acknowledgement of its possible shortcomings.

The distribution of the Prophecy creates difficulties too. Even in its first few decades it was not confined to a single area but we know something of it in Rome and in Africa as well as in Asia Minor and beyond. It was not the same in all of these places, though writers of the past have sometimes collated information and then assumed unjustifiably a uniformity of belief and practice. Klawiter was rigorous in his separation of these different settings for the Prophecy and this was a proper reminder to students about assumptions we should not make. It is right, then, that in chapter two these settings are considered separately. Nevertheless, when in chapter three the Prophecy's *content* is described, evidence from all three settings will be brought together, albeit giving due recognition to possible variations in practice. Chapters four and five take us beyond the early third century and into the realm of sources which are more scattered and at times more suspect.

The death of the prophetess Maximilla (c. 179–80 CE) is usually taken to mark the end of the first phase of the Prophecy, since she is assumed to have been the last of the Prophetic Trio (Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla) to die. Hence some would differentiate rigidly between first and second 'phases'. I have not found it possible to do so. There are far too many unknowns to be able to state with certainty that what we hear must have been characteristic of *either* the pre-179 CE Prophecy *or* that which was true of (say) Asia Minor only after that date. Moreover I am not wholly convinced that Maximilla was the last of the Three to die (see 1.3,3–4; 4.1–4.2), a doubt which must alter any understanding of the Prophecy's 'phases'. While it is clear from early and later sources on the subject that the activity of the Three marked a time of special dispensation of the Spirit, and