

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

son might, indeed, leave the paternal home, and so lose the privilege and position of sonship, but the filial tie is represented as unbroken throughout the story. The son is in the far country wasting his substance in riotous living, but the father is in the old home waiting to receive, to pardon, to re-instate. In that parable the heart of man is represented as unsatisfied save by the realization of the Divine Fatherhood; and this was to declare that Fatherhood universal; for the love of God must be commensurate with the need of man; if the need is universal, the love that supplies it can be nothing less. And in thus declaring the truth of God's immutable love, our Lord anticipated the experience of man. Go where you will, this is the teaching that draws forth a thankful response from man's heart. The first and last word of the spiritual life is *Abba*, Father. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight." "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

G. S. STREATFIELD.

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES OF THEMISON :
A STUDY IN 1 AND 2 PETER.

THE rise of Montanism is closely connected with the decay of Christian prophecy. The warnings uttered against false prophecy in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 140 A. D.), and the *Didache* (c. 131-160) point to the reality of the danger in the middle of the second century. The opponents of Montanism, especially the anonymous author¹ of the anti-Montanist work dedicated to Avircius Marcellus (c. 193 A. D.) were careful to distinguish between the practice of the Montanist prophets and the prerogatives of those of the New Testament.² Notwithstanding this distinction, the danger seems to have led to a shrinking of the gift of pro-

¹ *Eus. H. E.* v. 162.

² *Ibid.* v. 17, 3.

phesy within the Church, and to the gradual extinction of the order of Christian prophets.¹

Harnack² and Ramsay³ agree that the thirteen years of peace alluded to by the anonymous author⁴ as throwing discredit upon the prophecy of Maximilla coincide with the reign of Commodus (180-192). The former infers from this statement two important dates in the history of Montanism; the death of Maximilla, in 179 A.D., and the composition of the anonymous work in 193 A.D.

THE CRISIS OF 179 A.D. IN THE HISTORY OF MONTANISM.

The death of Maximilla was a great crisis in the history of the movement: "After me will be no prophetess more, but the end."⁵ The anonymous writer gives the era of the rise of Montanus as the proconsulate of Gratus. This date is however not known, but the sequence of events in the progress of the movement proves that it must have been considerably before the year 172 A.D. of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius. Maximilla herself was for a while the leader of the sect, supported by Themison, who was of sufficient importance to give his name to it. The opponents of the Catholic bishops, Zoticus of Cumana, and Julianus of Apameia, who endeavoured to win back the Montanists after the death of their founder, were called the followers of Themison.⁶ Epiphanius, who was able to consult sources of Montanist literature which have since perished, says that Montanism took its rise in the nineteenth year of Antoninus Pius (156-157),⁷ and Harnack accepts this as the era of Montanism. He concludes: "The date of Epiphanius is no longer threatened by Eusebius; Mon-

¹ McGiffert, *Eus.* p. 229.

² *Chronologie*, i. p. 365.

³ *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, p. 710.

⁴ *Eus. H.E.* v. 16, 19.

⁵ *Epiph. Haer.* xviii. 2.

⁶ *Eus. H.E.* v. 16, 17.

⁷ *Epiph. Haer.* xviii. 1.

tanus began his work in 157 (156); Gratus was proconsul of Asia the same year; Apollonius wrote his treatise in the year 197 (196),”¹ i.e., forty years after the rise of the movement.²

Montanism was not only opposed by writers in Phrygia. It is said by the author of *Praedestinatus* that Soter, bishop of Rome (166–174), wrote against the Montanists, and that, in consequence of this, Tertullian prepared his treatise *De Ecstasi* as an apology for Montanism.³ But Rome did not always look with disfavour on the prophetic movement in Phrygia. Tertullian speaks of a Bishop of Rome who had recognized the movement, and would have gone farther still in holding out the right hand of fellowship had it not been for the interference and false allegations of Praxeas. The passage is of great importance in the relation between Rome and Phrygia. “Nam iste primus ex Asia hoc genus perversitatis intulit Romam, homo et alias inquietus, insuper de jactatione martyrii inflatus ob solum et simplex et breve carceris taedium, quando, et si corpus suum tradidisset exurendum, nihil profecisset, dilectionem dei non habens, cujus charismata quoque expugnavit. Nam idem nunc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem tam prophetias Montani, Priscae, Maximillae, et ex ea agnitione pacem ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae inferentem, falsa de ipsis prophetis et ecclesiis eorum adseverando et praecessorum ejus auctoritates defendendo coegit et litteras pacis revocare jam emissas et a proposito recipiendorum charismatum concessare. Ita duo negotia diaboli Praxeas Romae procuravit, prophetiam expulit et haeresim intulit.”⁴ Who was this Bishop of Rome who recognized the prophecies of the Montanists, and by this recognition would have brought peace to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, whose letters

¹ Harn. *Chr.* i. p. 375.

² Eus. *H.E.* v. 18, 12.

³ Oehler, *Tertullian*, vol. ii. p. 744.

⁴ *Tert. adv. Prax.* i.

were only revoked by the misrepresentations of Praxeas, and the appeal to his predecessors in the See of Rome? On the authority of Pseudo-Tertullian he has been identified with Victor (A.D. 189-199): "Sed post hos omnes etiam Praxeas quidam haeresim introduxit, quam Victorinus ? Victor) corroborare curavit."¹ It is, however, not certain that the reference in this passage is to any joint action of Victor and Praxeas against the Montanists, and, as Harnack says,² it is difficult to think that Rome would have sent "letters of peace" so late in the century when Avircius Marcellus, Apollonius, and the anonymous writer had taken on behalf of the Church so definite a line against the movement. Harnack thinks that Tertullian is referring to the action of Eleutherus³ (174-189), and that his predecessors, whose policy Praxeas appealed to as a precedent, were Anicetus (155-166), and Soter (166-174). There is no record of any interference by the former in the affairs of Montanus, but as the movement took its rise at the very beginning of the rule of Anicetus, it is quite possible that he may have pronounced against it. The attitude of Soter is known from the *De Ecclasi* of Tertullian.

There is also independent evidence that Eleutherus was called upon to give his judgment on the movement. The churches of Gaul, on the occasion of their great persecution (177-178), "set forth their own prudent and most orthodox judgment" on the Montanist prophets, and "sent it to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, and also to Eleutherus, who was then bishop of Rome, negotiating for the peace of the churches."⁴ This last phrase links the passage in with that of Tertullian's "letters of peace," and almost implies that the churches of Vienne and Lyons were pleading on behalf of their brethren among the Montanist churches of Phrygia. Eusebius's estimate of the letter of the Gallic

¹ *Ps.-Tert. adv. omn. haer.* viii.

³ *Chron.* i. p. 376.

² *Chron.* i. p. 375.

⁴ *Eus. H.E.* v. 3, 4.

martyrs as "prudent and most orthodox" has led Salmon and McGiffert¹ to hold that their object was the condemnation of the Montanists, but the internal evidence of the great "Letter of the Churches of Vienna and Lyons" seems almost to prove their sympathies were the other way, that indeed there were so many elements of Montanism among the martyrs of Gaul that it is difficult to believe that they would have counselled extreme measures against the movement in Phrygia.

The austerities of Alcibiades,² only recorded by Eusebius to show his readiness to submit to more orthodox practice, point him out as a sympathizer with, if not as a follower of the Montanists. Biblias, when accused of sharing in Thyestian banquets, replied: "How could those eat children who do not think it lawful to taste the blood of even irrational animals?"³ It is also recorded of Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, a man filled with love for God and his neighbour, that when asked if he also were a Christian, "confessed with a loud voice, and was himself taken into the order of martyrs, being called the 'Paracletus' of the Christians, having the Paraclete in himself, the Spirit more abundantly than Zacharias."⁴ It is a question whether the claims of Montanus were originally greater than this; in any case, the language shows very close affinity with Montanist thought. There is also a touch of prophetic enthusiasm in the attitude and action of Alexander, "a Phrygian by birth, a physician by profession." The name is common on the inscriptions of the Phrygian Pentapolis and the district of Akmonia.⁵ "He was well known to all on account of his love to God, and boldness of speech (for he was not without a share of the apostolic charisma)."⁶

¹ McGiffert, *Eus.* p. 219.

² *Eus. H.E.* v. 3, 2.

³ *Ibid.* v. 1, 26.

⁴ *Ibid.* v. 1, 10.

⁵ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, pp. 645, 652, 653, 699, 703.

⁶ *Eus. H.E.* v. 1, 49.

This letter of the churches of Vienna and Lyons to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia was written c. 179 A.D., and would reach Phrygia about the time of the death of Maximilla. It was a most fitting occasion for bringing about peace between the Catholic and Montanist churches, and it is to this date therefore that the "letters of peace" which were sent by Eleutherus may be assigned.¹ He had been much impressed by the sufferings of the Christians in Gaul; Irenaeus had been commissioned by his brethren in Lyons to bring the sorrows of the Church before the Roman Bishop.² Eleutherus may have heard of the sufferings of the Montanist martyrs.³ He would think it a fit opportunity to do his part to promote the peace of the churches.

THE EIRENICON OF ELEUTHERUS.

Is there in early Christian literature any trace of his action, any trace of the "letters of peace" which he sent to the churches of Asia and Phrygia? There is one document which has received the "imprimatur" of St. Peter, whose history is intimately associated with the Churches of Asia, the First Epistle of St. Peter. The Epistle was already known in Asia. It is referred to in the Epistle of Polycarp to the Smyrnæans, written as a covering letter for the Epistles of Ignatius about 117 A.D. It is stated by Eusebius that Papias made use of it in his writings;⁴ and these belong to the years 145-160. Polycarp did not recognize its Petrine authorship, neither did he quote from the latter portion of the Epistle. It was known also in Rome. There are faint traces of it in the First Epistle of Clement (93-95 A.D.);⁵ and a verbal quotation in the Second Epistle of Clement (c. 166). These are the only witnesses before the time of Eleutherus.⁶

¹ Harnack, *Chron.* i. p. 316.

² Eus. *H.E.* v. 4, 1.

³ Harn. *Chr.* i. p. 381.

⁴ Eus. *H.E.* iii. 39, 17.

⁵ Harn. *Chr.* i. p. 461; v. Soden, *Handcommentar*, p. 115.

⁶ Harn. *Chr.* i. p. 461.

The First Epistle of St. Peter, apart from its opening and closing verses (i. 1-2, v. 12-14) has the character of a homily rather than a letter, and is on the whole Pauline in its character.¹ Ramsay dates it 80 A.D.² Harnack prefers the later date 83-93.³ Its Petrine authorship is first recognized in the Second Epistle of St. Peter (iii. 1). It was afterwards recognized by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.⁴ The character of the last verses has convinced Harnack that they belong to the period of the Second Epistle.⁵

There is evidence that the Church of Rome was in the habit, in the second century, of sending forth homilies and letters under its authority to other churches. Hermas is bidden to give one copy of his "Little Book" of visions to Clement, that he might send it "to the foreign cities, for this is his duty."⁶ The so-called Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians is probably a homily of Soter, bishop of Rome,⁷ and to be identified with the Epistle which, on the testimony of Dionysius of Corinth, was sent by him from Rome, and read in the public services of the Church of Corinth.⁸ Dionysius also bears witness to the practice of making alterations and additions to his own letters. "As the brethren desired me to write Epistles, I wrote. And these Epistles the apostles of the devil have filled with tares, cutting out some things and adding others."⁹ There is thus ample evidence of the free use made of letters and homilies at this period, in some cases legitimately, in others illegitimately.

If the Homily of Soter became known at Corinth under the name of St. Clement, there is nothing inconsistent in supposing that the Pauline Homily sent as an Eirenicon by

¹ Harn. *Chr.* i. pp. 451, 453.

² Ramsay, *Church in Rom. Emp.* p. 232.

³ Harn. *Chr.* i. p. 455.

⁵ *Ibid.* i. p. 470.

⁷ Harn. *Chr.* i. 461.

⁸ Eus., *H.E.* iv. 23, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. p. 459-60.

⁶ Hermas, *Vis.* ii. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.* iv. 23, 12.

Eleutherus may have become known in after years in Phrygia under the name of St. Peter. Is there any internal evidence in the First Epistle of St. Peter, that it was, as is here suggested, the Eirenicon of Eleutherus to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia in 179 A.D.?

It is not probable that the opening and closing verses, i. 1, 2, v. 12-14, are from the hand of Eleutherus. Soter did not assume the name of Clement when he sent his homily to Corinth. The Clementine authorship was ascribed late in the Church of Corinth. Again, if these verses had been written by Eleutherus, he would scarcely have omitted Phrygia from the list of provinces to which the letter was addressed. It is probable also that i. 10-12 belong to the author of the opening verses, who has been identified with the author of the Second Epistle. It has been said of these verses, and of the parallel thought in 2 Peter i. 19-21, that "in both there occurs a view of the Spirit which is unique in the New Testament."¹ This can scarcely be said of the greater portion of the First Epistle, which is rather Pauline than unique.

The original homily begins with 1 Peter i. 3. The doxology of iv. 11 forms its conclusion. There seems to be a slight difference in the style of iv. 12—v. 11. The language does not flow quite so smoothly as in the earlier portion of the Epistle. It is also noticeable that after dealing with the subject of persecution in iii. 13—iv. 6, it is taken up again in iv. 12-19. But there is a difference in the nature of the charge. In iii. 14 the suffering is endured for righteousness, sake, in iv. 14 it is for the name of Christ. The quotations in the Epistle of Polycarp to the Smyrnaeans are numerous and distributed over the greater part of the Epistle, but none are drawn from iv. 12—v. 11.

It is therefore suggested that the original Homily is represented by 1 Peter i. 3-9. 13—iv. 11, and that iv. 12—v. 11

¹ Falconer, *EXPOS.* July 1902, p. 54.

form the covering letter of Eleutherus. How far do these verses fit in with the circumstances and needs of the year 179? There was nothing to suggest to the writer that the reign of Commodus would be a period of peace to the churches. The prophecy of Maximilla was probably based upon a firm conviction, drawn from the signs of the times. She had prophesied wars and anarchy.¹ The confidence which her followers had in her foresight and judgment would therefore cast a shadow over their life. This shadow would be deepened by the letter of the churches of Gaul on the persecutions at Vienne and Lyons. The counsels of Eleutherus would be a message of peace and a word of consolation and encouragement in the deepening gloom.

Written almost on the morrow of these persecutions, and with the details of the martyrdoms before him, the words of 1 Peter iv. 12, 13, express the urgency as well as the sympathy with which he addresses the churches in Asia: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you, but as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice, that at the revelation of his glory ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." The nature of the charge brought against the Christians is identical in the First Epistle of St. Peter and the Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons. There is no question of any crime; they stand or fall in the name of Christ. This is the glory of their martyrdom, and they are to take care that no real crime shall mar the value of their witness. They may suffer and die for the name of Christian, and look for a blessing in their death. They will lose this blessing if they are guilty of crime; "If ye are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are ye, because the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or as a

¹ Eus. *H.E.* v. 16, 18.

busybody ; but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this name”(1 Pet. iv. 14-16).

It is recorded of Vettius Epagathus, in the letter on the Gallic Martyrdoms, that he asked to be permitted to testify on behalf of his brethren. “ ‘There is among us nothing ungodly or impious.’ But those about the judgment seat cried out against him, for he was a man of distinction ; and the governor refused to grant his just request, and merely asked if he also were a Christian.”¹ Blandina found her comfort and relief from pain in exclaiming : “ I am a Christian, and there is nothing vile done by us.”² Sanctus “ would not even tell his name, but answered in the Roman tongue to all their questions, ‘ I am a Christian.’ Christ suffering in him, manifested his glory, delivering him from his adversary, and making him an example for the others, showing that nothing is fearful where the love of the Father is, and nothing painful where there is the glory of Christ.”³ The testimony of Sanctus is an important parallel to the revelation of Christ’s glory in suffering, which is a characteristic feature in 1 Peter iv. 13-16. The glory of Christ is not associated with suffering in 1 Peter iii. 13-iv. 6.

“ Biblias confessed herself a Christian, and was given a place in the order of martyrs.”⁴ “ Those who confessed what they were, were imprisoned as Christians, no other accusation being brought against them. But the first were treated afterwards as murderers and defiled, and were punished twice as severely as others.”⁵ There is again a very close parallelism with 1 Peter iv. 15 : “ Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer.”

Attalus was led round the amphitheatre, a tablet being carried before him, on which was written in the Roman language, “ This is Attalus the Christian.” When he was placed in the iron seat, and the fumes rose from his burning

¹ Eus. *H. E.* v. 1, 10.

² *Ibid.* v. 1, 19.

³ *Ibid.* v. 1, 20-23.

⁴ *Ibid.* v. 1, 26.

⁵ *Ibid.* v. 1, 33.

body, he said to the people, in the Roman language: "Lo! this which ye do is devouring men, but we do not do any wicked thing."¹ The same charge—the name of a Christian—is the ground of the martyrdom of Lucius, *c.* 150;² it is met with also in the *Passio SS. Epipodii et Alexandri*, *c.* 178,³ in the *Passio S. Symphoriani*,⁴ and in the *Acta Martyrum Scillitanorum*.⁵ The close parallelism throughout these second-century Acts and the definite expressions of 1 Peter is at least noteworthy.

A new thought opens out in the following verses: "The time is come for judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what will be the end [of them that obey not the Gospel of God?]" (1 Pet. iv. 17). Persecution was serious enough when directed against the Church of God; what if the Churches themselves were to begin to persecute? "Let none of you suffer as ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος" (1 Pet. iv. 15). Zeller explains it as meaning that Christians are not to expose themselves to inconvenience by mixing in matters which have nothing to do with the confession of their faith. He bases his interpretation on a passage in Epictetus. Epictetus (iii. 22, 97) is defending the Cynics in their claim to ἐπισκοπεῖν men, to overlook them as ἄγγελοι καὶ κατάσκοποι—messengers from Zeus to men. They were accused of mixing themselves thereby in affairs which do not concern them. The defence of Epictetus is expressed in these words: οὐ τὰ ἀλλότρια πολυπραγμονεῖ ὅτου τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἐπισκοπή, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἴδια.⁶ This association of the Christians with Cynics by way of explanation gathers increased support from their association in the writings of the period. Aelius Aristides classes the Christians with the Cynics as belonging on the whole to the same type. They cut them-

¹ *Ibid.* v. 1, 44, 52.

² *Ibid.* iv. 17, 12. "Who is not an adulterer, nor a murderer, nor a thief."

³ Rainart, *Acta Sincera*, p. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 75.

⁶ *Handcommentar*, von Soden, p. 163.

selves off from all Greek culture, from everything that was good and noble. They broke up family ties, and set brother against brother.¹ Ramsay proves from the inscriptions that this picture was much exaggerated. "He spoke only from superficial acquaintance with the extreme partisans and the prominent martyrs; but he had no knowledge of the mass of undistinguished and obscure Christians, whose very existence was probably unknown to him except by rumour. It is this unknown multitude of common persons that are revealed to us in the sepulchral inscriptions." "We cannot doubt that the shopkeeper or trader who was converted did not as a rule alter the outward appearance of his life. People might converse with him in the street or the forum and observed no reason to suspect him of Christianity. He lived in externals much as before; he observed the same laws of politeness in society; his house, his surroundings, continued much the same; he kept up the same family names, and when he died his grave, his tombstone, and his epitaph, were in the ordinary style."²

"The inscriptions of Eumeneia bring before us a picture of rich and generous development, of concession, of liberality, in which people of diverse thoughts were practically reconciled in a simple society. But they also show us Eumeneia as mainly a city of Christians. Nothing similar to this is known throughout the ancient world. Eumeneia stands before us as the earliest Christian city of which record remains, exemplifying the practical conciliation of two hostile religions in a peaceful and orderly city."³ In such a society a busybody would rank as an evildoer. The warning of Eleutherus tended to check the very crime of which Aelius Aristides accused the Christians when he associated them with the Cynics.

The writer, addressing the presbyters, calls himself their

¹ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 486. ² *Ibid.* p. 487.

³ *Ibid.* p. 503.

fellow-presbyter (1 Pet. v. 1), a word only found here in the New Testament. It is used also by the anonymous anti-Montanist writer¹ of Zoticus of Otrous, who from his prominence may have been bishop.² The expression "witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1 Pet. v. 1), taken with "fellowship with the sufferings of Christ" (iv. 12), may refer to the witness of Eleutherus to the persecutions in Gaul. The words "τῶν κλήρων" are illustrated by the letters of the Gallic Churches. Vettius Epagathus is taken εἰς τὸν κλήρον τῶν μαρτύρων, and the same phrase is used of Biblias.³

The letter of Eleutherus, written as is here suggested in 179, was not only coloured by the martyrdoms of Vienne and Lyons, but by the martyrdoms which about this time are stated to have taken place at Apameia.⁴ The anonymous writer records the names of Gaius and Alexander of Eumeneia—the names occur in the inscriptions of Eumeneia Nos. 353, 354, 355, 370.⁵ It was sent therefore both as a letter of peace to the Churches and an encouragement in the midst of persecution.

How far the action of Eleutherus may be the cause of the councils held at this period to consider the Montanist question it is impossible to say. Zoticus of Otrous was present at a synod of Ancyra, at which there were prolonged discussions.⁶ In addition to the synod of Ancyra "the faithful of Asia met often in many places throughout Asia to consider this matter."⁷ The Libellus Synodicus states that one was held at Hierapolis, under Apollinarius, at which twenty-six bishops were present, and another at Anchialus, under Sotas, with twelve present. The authority of the Libellus is not high, though accepted by Hefele.⁸

¹ Eus. *H.E.* v. 16, 5.² Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 706.³ Eus. *H.E.* v. 1, 10, 26.⁴ *Ibid.* v. 16, 22.⁵ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, pp. 514, 518, 526.⁶ Eus. *H.E.* v. 16, 4-5.⁷ *Ibid.* v. 16, 10.⁸ McGiffert, *Eus.* p. 232.

THE FOLLOWERS OF THEMISON.

It is evident from the writings of the anonymous writer and of Apollonius that there was considerable opposition shown to the Montanists between 179 and 196. They would appear to have been known at this period, after the death of Maximilla, as the followers of Themison.¹

The name was well known in Phrygian history. Themison, the first of the name, was a powerful favourite of Antiochus II., 261-248 B.C. He gave his name to Themisonion, a city on the south-western frontier of Phrygia, where he was deified as Heracles.² The name occurs on one of the inscriptions from Laodicea, No. 7.³

Themison seems to have taken an active part in defeating the counsels of Zoticus of Cumana and Julianus of Apameia, perhaps during the period of uncertainty and strife which followed on the death of Maximilla. His followers are said to have muzzled the Catholic bishops.⁴ This is on the authority of the anonymous writer. Apollonius speaks of him as one of their confessors: "So also Themison, who was clothed with plausible covetousness, could not endure the life of confession, but threw aside bonds for the sake of possessions. Yet, though he should have been humble on this account, he desired to boast as a martyr, and, in imitation of the Apostle, he wrote a certain Catholic epistle to instruct those whose faith was better than his own, contending for words of empty sound, and blaspheming against the Lord and the apostles and the holy Church."⁵

It is evident from these references that Themison was a man of considerable influence and authority among the Montanists. He would not have written a Catholic epistle, investing it with apostolic authority, had he not held such a position. He was therefore, in all probability, the Mon-

¹ Eus. *H. E.* v. 16, 17. ² Ramsay, *Phrygia*, pp. 252-3.

³ *Ibid.* p. 74.

⁴ Eus. *H. E.* v. 16, 17. ⁵ *Ibid.* 18, 5.

tanist bishop of Pepouza, a small Phrygian city which became the metropolis of the Montanists.

The character which is given by Apollonius is on a level with most of the statements of the anti-Montanist writers as recorded by Eusebius. It is difficult to think that the Montanists were as bad as they appear in these writings. There may have been excesses due to the fanaticism of some of their leaders and prophets, but asceticism rather than licence was the rule of their community. McGiffert comments on one passage of Apollonius in very severe language : "Knowing what we do of the asceticism and the severe morality of the Montanists, we can look upon the implications of this passage as nothing better than baseless slanders. That there might have been an individual here and there whose conduct justified this attack cannot be denied ; but to bring such accusations against the Montanists in general was both unwarranted and absurd, and Apollonius cannot but have been aware of the fact. His language is rather that of a bully or braggadocio who knows the untruthfulness of his statements than of a man conscious of his own honesty and the reliability of his account."¹ If all the charges brought against the Montanists were true, it is as difficult to think that Tertullian could have joined them as it is to think that St. Martin would have pleaded for Priscillian if the charges brought against him had been substantiated. It is not unlikely that the polity and reforms of Montanus and Themison, like those of Priscillian, were against a growing worldliness in the Christian Church. It had been part of the office of the Christian prophet to protest against the sins of the world, such as those typified by the woman in the black garment in the Shepherd of Hermas.² The description of Christianity in Eumeneia implies this spirit of worldliness in like manner as the canons of Elvira reveal a similar spirit in Spain. It would almost appear to have

¹ McGiffert, *Eus.* p. 236 n., 27. ² Herm. Sim. ix. 15.

been a consequence of the rapid growth of Christianity, and the holding of civil affairs by members of the Christian community. "The Christians of Eumèneia continued to live in many respects as before; they were characterized by most of the habits and some or many even of the faults of their old life and of the society in which they lived."¹

It was to be expected under such conditions that some would take a new departure, and lay down a stricter code of morality, supporting their reforming ideas by a claim to special inspiration. The Phrygian character suited such a protest. "The character of the Phrygians shows a singular mixture of wild enthusiasm and earnestness."² Their enthusiasm made them prone to every form of religious emotion and quickly responsive to new impressions: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" (Gal. iii. 1).

The enthusiasm of the Phrygians was probably due to the influence of the worship of the goddess-mother Leto. She had her chosen shrine at Hierapolis, north of Laodicea. This cult gave expression to the character of the Anatolian religion. "Its essence lies in the adoration of the life of Nature, that life subject apparently to death, yet never dying, but reproducing itself in new forms, different and yet the same. This perpetual self-identity under varying forms, this annihilation of death through the power of self-reproduction, was the object of an enthusiastic worship, characterized by remarkable self-abandonment and immersion in the divine, by a mixture of obscene symbolism and sublime truths."³ This characteristic enthusiasm explains in part the rise of Montanism, and may account for some features in its movements which occasionally reverted to the primitive licentiousness. The sanctuary of Mother Leto was a cave in a deep gorge about six miles north-west of Hierapolis. Her son, Lairbenos,

¹ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 485.

² Harnack, *Mission*, p. 479.

³ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 87.

was also worshipped at Hierapolis, under the title of Apollo Archegetes. There was in connexion with his worship a brotherhood, known as the Semeiaphoroi of Apollo, whom Hogarth regards as a class of professional wonder-workers, like the dervishes of modern times, who cut themselves with knives and do other wonders under the influence of religious excitement. Ramsay however considers them merely as "bearers of the Sign."¹ The excesses of Montanist prophecy, the frenzy which the anti-Montanist writers charge against the prophets, may have had some affinity with these heathen rites. Montanus himself is said to have been a heathen priest before his conversion.

It seems probable, therefore, that this religious enthusiasm of the pagan cult of Phrygia had its influence upon the Montanist movement, and to some extent discredited it in the eyes of the Catholic bishops. Prophets and physicians were everywhere associated with the worship of Leto and Apollo. Although Montanus claimed descent for his prophetic gifts through the line of Christian Prophets,² the names of Quadratus and Ammia of Philadelphia being specially mentioned,³ yet there were traces of ancient Anatolian practice in the ritual at Pepouza. Pepouza was the head-quarters of the Montanist movement. It was little more than twenty miles north-east from Hierapolis. There was a custom in the churches of Pepouza which illustrates the old tradition of enthusiasm which the movement inherited from the ancient worship. Frequently in their church there enter seven virgins bearing torches, robed in white, who come to prophesy to the people. These show forth some form of enthusiasm, and practise deceit on the laity who are present, weeping as if moved by repentance, shedding tears over the life of men.⁴

¹ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 57.

² *Ibid.* p. 105.

³ *Eus. H.E.* v. 17, 4.

⁴ *Epiph. Haer.* xlix. 2.

There was also in the Akmonian district a Brotherhood of Hymnodoi connected with the cult of the local deities. This was another form of religious enthusiasm which found a response in the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the Christian Church (Eph. v. 18, 19). The oracle from the odes of Montanus may not be genuine, but the psalms of Montanus may have been known to the writer of the Muratorian Canon.¹

The earnestness and moral severity of the movement is traceable to foreign influence. Ramsay distinguishes two types in the district immediately around the cradle of Montanism. The Phrygians and Carians tended more to the patriarchal type of social institutions, while the Lydians retained more of the matriarchal type, which seems to have been native to Asia Minor.² The religious and moral character of the people would be influenced in the same way. The enthusiasm was due to the traditions of the native matriarchal type, the earnestness to the patriarchal. "The Phrygians, as is now coming to be generally acknowledged, were a warrior tribe of conquerors who crossed the Hellespont from Europe and penetrated gradually into Asia Minor. Lydia was so strong under the sway of the Heracleid kings, closely allied with the Anatolian Empire, that had its centre at Pteria, as to resist and drive farther eastward the stream of conquest." "The conquering and ruling caste formed an aristocracy among the primitive population of Phrygia, but, as is always done in similar cases, it took wives from the subject caste and the older inhabitants."³

It is to this European strain that the earnest side of the Phrygian character may be traced. Socrates, writing of the Phrygians (c. 489 A.D.) says: "The race of the Phrygians appear to be more temperate than other races ;

¹ Harn. *Alt. Chr. Litt.* p. 238.

² Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

for they seldom swear. The Scythians and the Thracians are naturally of a very irritable disposition, while the inhabitants of the East are addicted to sensual pleasures. But the Paphlagonians and Phrygians are prone to neither of these vices; nor are the sports of the circus and the theatrical exhibitions desired now among them. And for this reason, it seems to me, these people so readily assented to the letters written by Novatus (Novatian). Fornication is regarded amongst them as the grossest crime."¹ Socrates is a high authority on the inner life of Novatianism, which in its sterner aspect had much that was common with Montanism, if indeed in Phrygia the Novatian and Montanist communities were not almost identical in his day. His testimony is therefore an indirect apology for the earnestness and moral tone of the Montanist movement.

But there may have been also another moulding influence in the Phrygian character in this district. There was a very large Jewish population. "They were far more numerous in Apameia and the cities connected with it than they were in the Laodicean group; and the evidence of the inscriptions fully confirm this. Akmonia, Sebaste, Eumeneia, Apameia, Dokimion, Iconium are the cities where we can identify Jewish inscriptions, legends, and names. We cannot doubt that this large Jewish population exercised a great influence in the development of the district and of the cities."² It is in the neighbourhood of these cities that the centres of the Montanist movement are found. Pepouza lies to the west of Eumeneia;³ Hierapolis and Otrous lie to the north-east of Eumeneia, higher up the Glaucus river; Ardaban, the birthplace of Montanus, was in Phrygian Myria, and is identified by Ramsay with Kallataba, west of Pepouza.⁴

Socrates, *H.E.* iv. 28.

³ *Ibid.* p. 573.

² Ramsay, *Phrygia*, pp. 667-8.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 199.

There were some interesting points of contact with Judaism in the Montanist movement. Pepouza was the earthly centre of the true Church, the new Jerusalem.¹ A neighbouring village, Tymion, was united with it in this honour.² It was in Phrygia that St. Paul criticized the proneness of the Galatians to Judaizing influences. It is there that he speaks of St. Peter as entrusted with the Apostleship of the Circumcision (Gal. ii. 8). The Christian Jews of Phrygia would therefore be quick to recognize the apostolic authority of St. Peter, and the more, if, on other grounds, they were being treated as separatist churches.

The Jews in Apameia so far lost their nationality that they seem to have abandoned entirely the use of the Hebrew language and names. It is impossible to identify them from their names alone. The language and tone of certain inscriptions suggest that they are Jewish or Jewish-Christian.³ The Talmud witnesses to the separation of the Phrygian Jews from their brethren. They lost connexion with their own land; they forgot their language; they did not adopt the philosophy and education of the Alexandrian Jews; they were readily converted to Christianity; and Ramsay considers it was this religious separation to which the Talmud refers. "The Phrygian Jews melted into the general population."⁴

But though lost to their brethren in Palestine and Egypt, does not the founding of the New Jerusalem at Pepouza point to a new religious movement among them? Does it not give grounds for thinking that Montanism was in part a Jewish-Christian reaction against the Gentile Christianity of the Church? Is not the earnestness and severity of the movement derived as much from the Jewish strain in their character as from their European affinities?

¹ Epiph. *Haer.* xlix. 1.

³ Ramsay, *Phrygia*, p. 669.

² Eus. *H.E.* v. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 674-5.

Such were some of the influences at work in Phrygia at the time of the birth of Montanism. The inscriptions in the Pentapolis, the district especially affected by the movement, prove that Christianity was introduced very early, much earlier indeed than in the regions across the mountains to the east and north of the Pentapolis.¹ "The origin of Christianity in this district goes back to the Pauline circle. Avircius Marcellus bears witness to the Pauline authority in the Church when he speaks of Paul, and Paul alone, as his companion on his journeys. No. 657."²

1. 12: Παῦλον ἔχων ἐπόμην πίστις πάντη δὲ προῆγε.³

This inscription on the tomb of Avircius Marcellus, now in the Lateran Museum at Rome, was written by Avircius himself about the year 192.⁴ "It was composed in the heat of the controversy against the Montanists by one of the anti-Montanist champions. He took the marked and bold course of inscribing on his tomb outside the south gate of the city (of Hierapolis) a declaration of his unalterable sentiments, and of the experience which showed him that alike in Rome and the extreme east his sentiments were those of the universal Church. The key to his intention is given by the word *φανερώς* in l. 2. He intended this declaration, inscribed in a conspicuous position before the public eye, to be an imperishable record of his testimony and of the message which he had to deliver to mankind in favour of the one and indivisible Church catholic and against Montanism. He took care before his death that his testament, inscribed on his grave, should continue for ever to protest against the Montanists."⁵

Is there not in this important epitaph, taken in connexion with the Jewish-Christian character of the

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 571-16. ² *Ibid.* p. 715. ³ *Ibid.* p. 723. ⁴ *Ibid.* p. 713.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 710.

district, a clue to the history of the two Epistles associated with the provinces of Asia in the second half of the second century? Avircius Marcellus was the champion of the Church Catholic, and he led his followers under the banner of St. Paul. "‘Avircius with Paul followed, while Faith everywhere led the way.’ After careful study of what Zahn, Harnack, Lightfoot, and others say on this point my impression is deepened that these words prove Paul to have been the Apostle whom Avircius and *oi voouvres* revered above all others, whom he had with him as an ideal before his mind, and as a teacher (by his writings) before his eyes and in his hands.”¹

Avircius rallied the forces of the Church under the banner of St. Paul. Themison was the champion of the Montanists, bishop—it may be—of the New Jerusalem at Pepouza. Is it not reasonable to think that, amidst a strong Jewish element in the population, he rallied his forces under the banner of St. Peter, the Apostle of the Circumcision, even to the extent of sending forth a Catholic Epistle in his name? It cannot be more than a suggestion, but it is one which fits in with the attitude of Avircius and with the Jewish ideas of the Montanist Church.

The good offices of Eleutherus had failed; the ten years between 180 and 190 were years of increasing antagonism between the rival churches. What was the attitude of Themison during this period? What action did he take? The letter of Eleutherus had made for peace; and though peace had given place to war, the letter still remained, and would be held in high esteem by those whom the writer had intended to encourage and to befriend. Rome held St. Peter in equal honour with St. Paul. Was it not fitting to send forth the letter of Eleutherus to the neighbouring churches of Asia Minor

¹ *Ibid.* p. 728.

under the imprimatur of St. Peter? If the Church of Corinth honoured the Epistle of Soter with the title of St. Clement, why should not the Church of Pepouza honour that of Eleutherus with the title of St. Peter?

T. BARNES.

(To be continued.)