

The Montanist Milieu: History and Historiography in the study of Montanism.

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Declaration.

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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Feast of SS. Artemius the Great Martyr of Antioch & Gerasimos of Cephalonia

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Abstract.

The second century religious movement known to most historians as Montanism has attracted attention from historians of the early Church and historians of religion more generally since antiquity and since the Renaissance has been a topic of many speculations and theories. Unlike its contemporary 'Gnosticism,' with its abundance of literary sources and startling discoveries, the assessment of Montanism has been largely confined to a fixed catena of literary sources. However, since the nineteenth century epigraphic remains attesting the movement have come to light and an increasing amount of historical and archaeological data concerning the areas of rural Anatolia where Montanism thrived has come to light. Concurrently with this has been the great strides made in the research into indigenous religious movements and the interaction of religion and society across cultures. This study seeks to look anew at a series of historical theories proposed about Montanism and to assess their veracity in light of an eclectic historical and methodological approach. It is the major conjecture of this study that Montanism cannot be understood as a reified theological entity, but rather as a socio-religious phenomena inseparable from its socio-cultural surroundings.

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A Note on Referencing.

The epigraphic and literary references within this work follow a number of conventions. With regard to Greek Christian authors the abbreviations used are those found in G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford ; New York : Clarendon, 1961). With regards to secular Greek authors the abbreviations used are those in the Liddell H. & Scott, R. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996 9th Edition) and listed in the bibliography. The abbreviations for Latin authors are those in P.G.W. Glare's *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). All epigraphic abbreviations follow the conventions in Horsley & Lee, 'A Preliminary Checklist of Abbreviations of Greek Epigraphic Volumes,' *Epigraphica* 56 (1994): 129-69 and McLean, B.H. *An Introduction to Greek Epigraph of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine* (323 B.C.-A.D. 337). (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). All secondary references follow the author-date method. Translation used is indicated after text, where no translator is mentioned these translations are by the author.

Introduction.

The Montanist Milieu and the Scope of this Study.

In his famous abridgement of Johannes Mosheim's monumental *Kirchengeschichte* the founder of Methodism, and towering figure in the history of eighteenth century English Christianity, John Wesley, a man steeped in the study of the early Church fathers,¹ made the following statement:

'[Montanus was] Not only a truly good man, but indeed one of the best men upon the earth; and that his real crime was, the severely reproving those who professed themselves Christians, while they neither had the mind that was in Christ, nor walked as Christ walked; but were conformable both in their temper and practice to the present evil world.'²

Such a glowing endorsement of Montanus, a man who in the surviving literature of the early church receives an almost blanket condemnation reveals something of the enduring appeal of Montanism,³ and moreover speaks to the contemporary scholarly spirit which has sought to reassess and re-examine the pluralism which existed in early Christianity as a genuine and appreciable historical phenomena, rather than as a catena of condemnation.⁴

At the current juncture Montanism remains as intriguing a phenomenon as ever. With the monumental shift in the demographics of 'World Christianity' to what Philip Jenkins calls 'the Global South' questions of the interaction between Christianity and indigenous forms of religious expression increasingly come to the fore.⁵ As Christians did in the second century as Montanism grew in the milieu of Anatolian popular modern churches are faced with doctrinal

¹ On the life and work of John Wesley see Waller (2003).

² Wesley (1781:114). I must express my thanks here to Prof. Stuart Piggin for allowing me access to his first edition of this rare work for the purposes of this research.

³ Like "Christian," "Mormon," and "Methodist," "Montanist" was originally a pejorative name, not used until the fourth century writings of Cyril of Jerusalem (Cyr. H. *catech.* XVI.8), the movement themselves preferred the designation "New Prophecy," this work will adopt Montanism as a convenient shorthand rather than as a value judgement on their perceived heterodoxy.

⁴ For a brief overview of this tendency in recent scholarship see Ehrman (2003); McGinn (2000:893-906). For more negative appraisals see Alison (1994); Henry (1982:123-126) and McGrath (2009).

⁵ Jenkins (2007a; 2007b).

and practical questions about enculturation, assimilation, and its potential limits. Similarly, the developed world has seen the phenomenal rise of Pentecostal Christianity and what scholars of religion see as a marked shift from the modernist emphasis on reason to a post-modern emphasis on experience.⁶ Once again as the spectre of Montanus is not far from the surface as theologians debate the veracity and implications these modern day spiritual phenomena.⁷

In the contemporary scholarly situation the theological condemnations of the past are undergoing a radical inversion, and many names which are still read in the anathemas on Eastern Orthodox feast days are receiving posthumous rehabilitation. Indeed, so strong is this historiographical trend, that nowadays it is the traditional heroes of the Church, the likes of Athanasius of Alexandria, or Cyril of Alexandria, who are now viewed with suspicion.⁸ A deep suspicion harkening back to at least the late nineteenth century coupled with hermeneutical ingenuity has cast a dark cloud over the traditional meta-narrative of Christian origins bequeathed to posterity by Eusebius of Caesarea,⁹ and scholars are investigating and assessing the evidence for this period with a renewed and creative vigour.¹⁰

In doing so, traditional categories of interpretation have been frequently challenged, and interpretations which had served generations of historians and theologians, are in many instances falling apart under increased scrutiny.¹¹ Whilst it was once easy to parrot Adolf von Harnack's famous maxim that Gnosticism was '...the acute Hellenization of the gospel,'¹² now it is almost unheard of to speak of 'Gnosticism' without the obligatory parenthesis or extended prolegomena on the problematic nature of the term.¹³ That a similar situation should exist for Montanism seems clear, as William Tabbernee, a man who has dedicated almost fifty years to the study of this phenomenon, recently wrote of the various interpretations of the Montanist phenomena:

⁶ Bouma (2006).

⁷ Robeck (2010:413-429).

⁸ See, for instance, Barnes (1993) on Athanasius. Cyril of Alexandria's ambiguous contemporary reputation is well evidenced by the depiction given in the 2009 film *Agora*.

⁹ On this matter see Wilken (1971).

¹⁰ For an example of the move away from the broad tendency of 'Church History' exemplified most recently in English by Chadwick (1968) and Frend (1984) see Valleé (1999).

¹¹ This is best documented with the reconsideration of 'heresy.' See, for instance, Boulluec (1985).

¹² Harnack (1914 [1895]:297).

¹³ The bibliography on the problems of 'Gnosticism' is immense. See, for instance Brakke (2010), Filoramo (1992); King (2003); Marksches (2003); Rudolph (1987) and Williams (1993).

‘They also show that, as with ‘Gnosticism,’ the term ‘Montanism’ itself may be an inadequate one to encompass a wide variety of local expressions of the New Prophecy ranging from groups of Christians favourably disposed toward the movement remaining within mainstream Christianity to rather bizarre (or, at least, allegedly bizarre) independent sub-sects which were offshoots of the New Prophecy itself.’¹⁴

Put simply, Montanism, the New Prophecy, or the ‘Heresy of the Phrygians,’ the movement which began in the rural hinterland of Phrygia (modern day central Turkey) in the mid-second century and endured in face of ecclesiastical and legal condemnation into at least the sixth century, has remained something of a mystery to scholars of early Christianity.

Despite receiving at least passing mention in almost every synthesizing history of the early Church written since the Reformation our evidence for this movement, at least in terms of documentation, unlike its contemporary ‘Gnosticism,’ has not been substantially augmented to since this time.¹⁵ What has happened, instead, is that discussion of Montanism has undergone a series of transformations indicative of the wider discourses taking place within the practice of church histories and contemporary theologies over the past four hundred odd years. We will see how this has affected the historiographic picture of Montanism throughout this work, however, this is not its primary focus.

Within the traditional writing of *Kirchengeschichte* and *Dogmageschichte* Montanism has normally been reduced to one (sometimes two) causal factor depending largely on the whims or emphases of the scholar in question.¹⁶ These can be neatly summarised (though not exhausted) under the following list (the more important of which I will elaborate more in Chapter 1).

¹⁴ Tabbernee (2007:xxxv).

¹⁵ There are exceptions here, for instance Ficker’s 1905 publication of the Greek text of a hitherto unknown and anonymous Montanist-Orthodox dialogue likely from the fourth century. See Ficker (1905:447-463).

¹⁶ On the traditional practices of the discipline of Church History see Bradley & Muller (1995); Frend (2003); on select historiographical issues see Momigliano (1987: esp. 11-30).

(1) “Primitive Christianity,” clinging to the apostolic forms of Johannine prophetic Christianity against a tide of second century institutionalization exemplified in writers like Ignatius of Antioch.¹⁷

(2) A movement arising either directly from or heavily influenced by Phrygian pagan cults, whether these be Apollo, Cybele or Bacchus (or a syncretistic mish-mash of the three).¹⁸

(3) A movement arising from either the Diaspora Jewish population of Asia Minor or one of the sects of so-called Jewish-Christians like the Ebionites.¹⁹

(4) A political protest movement arising from the exploitative imperial policies in rural Phrygia.²⁰

(5) A highly eschatological orientated movement which exhibits various facets of modern sociological and anthropological theories relating to Nativism, apocalypticism or millenarianism.²¹

(6) An ascetic movement and forerunner to monasticism.²²

(7) As an enthusiastic proto-Pentecostal movement akin to any number of enthusiastic sects from the Quakers to the Methodists.²³

Each of these theses offers valuable insights and should not be dismissed off-hand, but in order to better understand the movement from a ‘social history’ perspective a classic *Kirchengeschichte* or *Dogmageschichte* narrative such as those which we will explore in Chapter 1 will not suffice.

Instead the aim of this thesis is to take a step away from the classical reconstructions of Montanism along more traditional lines and move it instead into the broader world of ‘social history.’ By doing so the aim of this work is to contribute to the ongoing discussion of this

¹⁷ E.g. Harnack (1914 [1895]).

¹⁸ E.g. Scheepelern (1929).

¹⁹ E.g. Massingberd-Ford (1966:145-268)

²⁰ E.g. Frend (1988:25-36).

²¹ E.g. Williams (1989:331-351).

²² E.g. Smith (1995 [1931]:34).

²³ E.g. Robeck (2010:413-429).

fascinating movement by focusing the historical lens on to the broader societal factors present during Montanism's formative period, the so-called 'age of the Antonines,' and in particular the institutional and existential situation of one group among whom Montanism remained the predominant expression of Christianity well into the sixth century: that of the rural population of what Peter Thonemann called the 'Anatolian Mid-West.'²⁴

By working through a number of factors often hinted at by previous historians and theologians, but not sufficiently elaborated, I hope to demonstrate that instead of understanding Montanism in terms of one or two causal factors or theological tendencies we must instead focus on the broad frame of reference which I call the 'Montanist Milieu.' Much as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie brought 'Catharism' to life in his studies on the social world of the Languedoc in *Montaillou* and *The Peasants of Languedoc* my contention here is that by adopting such a broader perspective and viewing Montanism predominantly as a religiously motivated 'social movement' within the context of second century Roman Asia Minor, rather than as a theological innovation or aberration, we will arrive in a better position for understand this important movement.²⁵ I hope below to illuminate important but neglected social factors which are present in both the primary evidence itself but which have influenced the subsequent discursive construction of the 'heresy of the Phrygians,' from the first second century anti-heretical polemics, through to the contemporaneous work of scholars.

This work, then, does not aim to write a chronological history of the movement from its roots in the eschatologically oriented Christianity of the Anatolian peninsula until its fiery end during the anti-heretical purges of the Emperor Justinian. Nor, indeed, do I aim to trace the movement of Montanism to North Africa, Rome and perhaps elsewhere and the subsequent theological developments which it underwent. Such a history, particularly from the literary perspective, has recently and magisterially been achieved by William Tabbernee and to emulate this work would be entirely superfluous.²⁶

²⁴ Thonemann (2009:222).

²⁵ Le Roy Ladurie (1990 [1978]; (1976 [1966])).

²⁶ Tabbernee (2007); (2009).

Similarly, this work does not aim to cover all the debated questions on such important issues as the undeniably prominent role which women played in the Montanist movement,²⁷ nor the exact nature of Montanism's undeniable eschatological orientation (e.g. was it chiliastic?),²⁸ nor finally to rehearse the often erudite but ultimately (pending new evidence) irresolvable difficulties with regard several chronological factors.²⁹ Such questions have been admirably debated by highly qualified and esteemed scholars and in such cases rather than parroting their work it seems better to instead tackle some of the open and less explored questions regarding the nature of this movement.

In order to do this, however, we must begin with a brief survey of the discursive construction of Montanism as it took place between the late seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, as it has been from this ongoing discussion and the various contemporary theological (and at times social or philosophical) trends which shaped and influenced each writers particular emphases that the modern study of Montanism has taken its cue. This will be done in Chapter 1.

Following this, it is necessary to move onto the ground and look at various aspects of the geographic and social milieu in which Montanism emerged, moving in many ways away from the chronological and narrative descriptions of previous scholars to focus instead on some of the problems relating to the early geographic spread of Montanism (and Christianity generally) in the Roman Province of Asia and some of the factors which precipitated this, in particular dealing with the local social and religious situation so-far as we can reconstruct it from the evidence of the second century. In addition it is imperative to discuss a number of technical questions which arise from the evidence, in particularly debated issues of epigraphic interpretation. This will be covered in Chapter 2 which will focus in particular on what Victor Schultze (followed by August Strobel) labelled 'the holy land of the Montanists.'³⁰

Chapter 3 will move from this broad geographical and religious milieu to focus in particular on some of the problems of writing 'rural history' and of reconstructing the lives of what I have

²⁷ On the role of women in Montanism see, for instance, Huber (1985); Jensen (1996); Kraemer (1992); Trevett (1996).

²⁸ On the issues of Montanist 'eschatology' see, for example, Hill (1993:140-146); (2001:143-159); Trevett (1997:218-224).

²⁹ On these issues see below n. 876.

³⁰ See below pp. 67-71.

called the 'average Anatolian peasant' during the Roman era. It is in this section that I will discuss a number of theoretical perspectives drawn from the social sciences which have informed the reconstruction given, moving from theoretical discussion to an in-depth discussion of the economic and political institutions which existed in Roman Asia Minor during this period and how these have arguably contributed to the growth of Montanism. Here it is important to begin any reconstruction of these early Christian communities from a bottom-up rather than top-down perspective in order to identify the important local factors which were of direct existential concern rather than in the reified world of theological polemic or empire-wide history.

In Chapter 4 I will focus on the working of such political and social institutions as these are evidenced in second century Asia Minor, as well as look at a number of historical events of the 'Age of the Antonines' which may have helped to further feed into the birth of Montanism. In this section particular attention will be paid to the reign of Marcus Aurelius' as a harbinger of what E.R. Dodds famously called 'an age of anxiety',³¹ and how this has impacted on the historiographic picture of Montanism. This chapter will focus in particular on discussing the impact on rural Asia Minor of such things as persecution, the Antonine Plague, natural disasters and in particular the potential for socio-economic fall-out and social tensions which these events may have caused.

In Chapter 5 I will focus in particular on issues of 'ethnicity' and how these have contributed to and at times hampered our understanding of the Montanist movement within the context of what Samuel Angus labelled 'Phrygianism'.³² This section will look in detail at some particular constructions of Phrygian ethnicity and group identity in modern scholarship. This discussion will focus particularly on the complex discourse on ethnicity surrounding the 'Phrygian' people in antiquity and the ways in which these often piecemeal comments of amateur ethnography, combined with the prejudices of both ancient and modern writers, have contributed to the portrait of Phrygia as what the nineteenth century church historian Henry Milman infamously called 'the land of heathen orgies'.³³

³¹ See below pp. 198-223.

³² Angus (1975 [1928]:43f.).

³³ Milman (1867:69) reads:

I will conclude this work by tying together the disparate elements covered in previous chapters by offering a theoretical reconstruction of Montanus as a religious innovator following the theoretical insights of Rodney Stark's 'theory of revelation,' hopefully demonstrating how the work and theories of earlier scholars, far from being mutually exclusive or antagonistic, can actually be seen as providing a mosaic of interrelated factors which contributed to the birth of Montanism. However, before proceeding to a scholarly review in Chapter 1 it is incumbent on me to give a brief outline of the nature of the primary sources used in this work.

The catena of sources on Montanism, thanks to the scholarly efforts of Adolf Hilgenfeld,³⁴ Nathaniel Bonwetsch,³⁵ Pierre de Labriolle,³⁶ and Ronald Heine,³⁷ have been systematically collected into a number of source collections which on the one hand makes the study of Montanism somewhat more manageable than the massive textual evidence covering other early Christian movements such as 'Gnosticism.' On the other hand, the utility of many of these sources is highly questionable, and as we will discuss throughout this thesis these sources are often historically worthless with regard to the formative years of Montanism.

Aside from a small collection of oracles preserved in Tertullian and the heresiographical sources,³⁸ we have nothing written by the Montanists themselves, with the problematic exception of Tertullian himself. Unlike the 'Gnostics,' who thanks to the amazing finds at Nag Hammadi in 1945 have left us some trace of what they actually thought on their own terms,³⁹ the beliefs and practices of Montanism are almost entirely filtered through this small collection of oracles and subsequent systematic reconstructions which owe more to the work of Tertullian than the oracles themselves. While Tertullian is an indisputably important source for understanding the situation in Roman North Africa, the applicability of his theology, representative as it is of a Latin-speaking and cultural distinct form of Christianity very far

'The land of heathen orgies was the natural birthplace of that wild Christian mysticism: it was Phrygian fanaticism speaking a new language; and as the ancient Phrygian rites of Cybele found welcome reception in heathen Rome, so also that, which was approximately called Cataphrygianism, in the Christian Church.'

³⁴ Hilgenfeld (1884).

³⁵ Bonwetsch (1914).

³⁶ De Labriolle (1913).

³⁷ Heine (1989).

³⁸ On the Montanist oracles see, in particular, Aland (1960:105-48) and McGinn (1997:28-31).

³⁹ For an introduction to the Nag Hammadi texts see Meyer (2005).

removed from the social matrix in which Montanism emerged, is problematic.⁴⁰ For the purposes of this thesis Tertullian's writing, with the exception of his recording of the oracles and allusions to the situation in Asia Minor will play a very minimal role.

The majority of our sources for Montanism in Asia Minor are those preserved in the anti-heretical polemics preserved (and elaborated) both within Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* and in Epiphanius of Salamis' notoriously problematic *Panarion*. While it cannot be doubted, particularly with Eusebius, that these are representative of the early period of Montanism they are marred with all the *topoi* which mark anti-heretical polemic as it developed from the second century and thus must be treated with extreme caution. Given the thorough treatment of these by recent authors and the ready availability of these in the collections mentioned above it would be superfluous here to treat each of them individually, suffice to say that when issues relating to this heresiological discourse arise below they will be discussed *in situ*.

The final issue of sources worth discussing here relates to the important part which epigraphic evidence plays in this thesis and before progressing to chapter one it is important to give a brief overview of early Christian epigraphy as it relates to Roman Asia Minor.

While any map of Christian expansion in the Pre-Constantinian era reveals the wide diffusion of Christianity in Roman Asia Minor,⁴¹ with the exception of some minor fragments and writers, there is an almost complete silence when it comes to written sources as to a satisfactory explanation of the extent to how and in what forms Christianity took hold across the Anatolian peninsula.⁴² For evidence, then, it is necessary to turn to the large yield of Christian funerary inscriptions which have survived, particularly in the region of ancient Phrygia.⁴³ Owing to the relative abundance of quality marble in the Anatolian Mid-West epigraphic evidence, particularly for otherwise silent rural communities, is better in this region than perhaps any other region of the Roman Empire.⁴⁴ Before, however, discussing the evidence in the chapters

⁴⁰ On this matter see, for instance, Lawlor (1908:481-499).

⁴¹ See for example the map in Martin (1970:5).

⁴² For the very meagre sources see Harnack (1908:212-222); Mullen (2004:83-114).

⁴³ On the study of early Christian epigraphy generally see Tabbernee (2008b:120-139); McHugh (1997:574-576). For a good bibliography but very problematic discussion see McLean (2002:279-288).

⁴⁴ See below. On the abundance of Phrygian marble see Drew-Bear (1999:13) and Fant (1989:1f.).

which follow it is necessary to give a broad resume and discussion of early Christian epigraphy in this region, and some of the interpretative problems which it presents.

Firstly, while some of the earliest Christian communities of the New Testament were recorded in Roman Asia Minor there is a complete silence (whether deliberate or otherwise) in the epigraphic record until the late second century. While it is almost certain that Christians of this earlier period made commemorations and even built shrines for martyrs and saints,⁴⁵ these are largely indistinguishable from those of Jews or pagans at this time.

It is not until 179/180 C.E. that we have evidence for a definitively Christian inscription.⁴⁶ The earliest example, published by William Moir Calder in 1955, is the dedication of Eutyches. While not explicitly Christian in its language, this inscription's iconography is unmistakably Christian. The limestone stele of which only the bottom half survives shows two pilasters, decorated in a criss-crossing pattern, in the *aedicula* between these two pilasters a typical Phrygian farmer is depicted, most likely a stylistic depiction of the deceased. On the left hand side is depicted the *falx vinitoria*, a classical form of knife used predominantly in viticulture and what appear to be open wax-tablets. On the right is what Calder believed was a whip, and what appears to be a small dog.

Eutyches is dressed in traditional Phrygian dress. In his left hand Eutyches is holding *uva*, that is, a bunch of grapes, behind which appears to be what Calder thought was a *tau* cross, a common feature of early Christian iconography.⁴⁷ In his right he is holding a round object impressed with a cross, a representation of the Eucharistic bread or *panis quadratus*, a distinctly Christian symbol evidenced in later inscriptions from the region.⁴⁸

While as suggested above it is highly likely that Eutyches' tombstone is not the earliest Christian epitaph it marks the earliest example of an explicitly Christian iconographic program. In terms of finds it is chronologically followed by perhaps the most famous of all early Christian epitaphs, the tombstone of Abercius Marcellus, a figure of particular interest for our purposes

⁴⁵ We know that Montanists had a shrine for their deceased leaders, see Tabbernee (1997b:206-217). See also, *Mart. Poly.* 18, which suggests that the bones of a martyr may have been used for devotion.

⁴⁶ Calder (1955:33f.).

⁴⁷ On the *tau* cross see Snyder (1985:26-29).

⁴⁸ For a brief discussion with bibliography see Snyder (1985:21f.).

here as he was the recipient of the Anonymous Anti-Montanist's early tract against the New Prophecy.⁴⁹ This inscription, which is the subject of an extensive bibliography, reads:⁵⁰

'I, the citizen of an elect city, have prepared this while still living so that I might have a notable tomb here for my body. Named Avircius, I am the disciple of a holy shepherd who feeds flocks of sheep on mountains and plains, who has powerful eyes keeping everything in view. For he it was who taught me (via) faithful writings, he who sent me to Rome to behold the capital and to see a gold-robed, gold sandaled queen. Also a people I saw there having a resplendent seal and I saw the plain of Syria and all the cities, (even) Nisibis, having crossed the

Euphrates; everywhere I had kindred spirits. Having Paul in the carriage, Faith led the way everywhere and set before me as nourishment everywhere a fish from a spring, immense, spotless, which a holy virgin caught. And this she gave into the hands of her friends to eat always, (and) having a good wine, giving mixed wine with bread. That these things should be written in this way, I Avircius, ordered, of a truth celebrating (my) seventy-second year. May the one who understands and is in harmony with all these things pray on behalf of Avircius. However, one shall not put anyone else in my tomb. Consequently, (any violator) shall pay two thousand gold pieces to the treasury of the Romans and one thousand gold pieces to my auspicious native city Hieropolis.'⁵¹

This fascinating, and at times cryptic, text was the subject of intensive debate in the late nineteenth century, particularly with regard to whether or not it was actually an example of early Christianity or whether (as argued at some length by Gerhard Ficker in what Frend called a '...pedantic and hypercritical [manner].'), it was really an example of the indigenous worship of Cybele.⁵² While few scholars would accept this pagan identification today the very fact that such a debate could take place, irrespective of the theological and confessional issues at stake between the scholars involved, shows the often problematic nature of assessing criteria for

⁴⁹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.

⁵⁰ For brief bibliography and discussion see Kearsley (1992:177-181).

⁵¹ For the Greek text see Kearsley (1992:177), the translation used here is from an unpublished discussion of Asia Minor and Cyprus graciously provided to me by William Tabbernee.

⁵² For a resume of this debate, which involved figures as esteemed as Harnack and Duchesne see Frend (1996:96-98)

whether or not an inscription is pagan, Christian or Jewish, or how far we can push inscriptions into such fixed identities.

The discussions of this are immense and for our purposes can only be touched tangentially, particularly as they relate to Asia Minor.⁵³ The chief method of assessing the Christian nature of inscriptions in Phrygia and nearby Bithynia has been the use of particular epigraphic formulae or watchwords, a number of which show a degree of both regional variation and general continuity. Often it is this, coupled with a combination of onomastic indicators (for instance the use of distinctly Christian names), iconography which is suggestive of a Christian interpretation (for instance the fish or other symbols), and even at rare times (or not so rare in the case of Asia Minor) an open confession of the Christianity of either the deceased, or sometimes, of the dedicators and the deceased, which are used as positive criteria for Christian provenance.

In addition to these positive indicators are negative indicators, for instance, the invocation of pagan gods. This said, however, Christians were not always as careful as we might expect from literary sources, as demonstrated by the common use on Roman Christian and Jewish epitaphs of the pagan abbreviation D.M. (*Dis Manibus*).⁵⁴ Having briefly outlined these criteria, none of which should be understood as fool-proof, but which in combination give an approximate as possible indication of religious affiliation, it is worthwhile looking at each in more detail.

First, are the so-called watchwords, of which the most often cited is the use of the term κοιμητήριον ('a place of sleep'), normally seen as evidence for the Christian belief that in death they were only asleep until the general resurrection on the day of judgment.⁵⁵ As McLean notes this is often '...contrasted with such a term as ἥρῳον ('tomb' or 'hero shrine') used more generally by pagans, though a number of Christian inscriptions in Asia Minor use the term ἥρῳον as well as other, more sure indicators of their religious affiliation.⁵⁶ Other important watchwords are the use of particularly

⁵³ The most useful discussions are the dated discussion of Marruchi (1974:59-68); those relating to Jewish epigraphy by Bij de Vaate & van Henten (1996:16-28); Kant (1987:671-713); Kramer (1991:141-162).

⁵⁴ Kramer (1991:156f.).

⁵⁵ McLean (2002:282f.).

⁵⁶ McLean (2002:282).

terms relating to Christian ministry such as ἐπίσκοπος ('bishop,' 'overseer'), πρεσβύτερος ('priest,' 'elder') or διάκονος ('deacon'). While these terms, often borrowed from secular Graeco-Roman usage can have different meanings, when appearing in addition to other criteria they are at the very least suggestive of Christian affiliation.

Iconography as a category, particularly in the first two centuries, can be problematic on a number of grounds. Firstly, and often neglected, was the question of early Christian attitudes to art and pictorial representation.⁵⁷ Scholars have often debated, often from modern confessional identities, whether or not Christians considered the use of art theological acceptable.

While this is an often intensive debate, it is almost certain that beginning in the second century Christians began to adapt either pagan iconographic motifs with a Christian interpretation, in addition to creating their own distinctive pictorial language. The various symbols are well attested and extensively discussed in the works of Snyder, Jensen, Marruchi and Bruun and need not overly concern us here.⁵⁸ It should be noted that prior to the third century Christian inscriptions from Asia Minor are decidedly plain, featuring merely objects of daily life rather than distinctly religious iconography, though when we come across important iconographic elements these will be discussed *in situ*.

The second problem with iconographic interpretation, tied up with the axiom that 'a picture paints a thousand words' is that an iconographic symbol, for instance the famous Christian fish, can be interpreted in a number of ways, as Kramer wrote in her amusingly titled article that it is difficult '...to distinguish, in the absence of more explicit evidence, between Jewish tuna and Christian fish.'⁵⁹ As the sheer bibliography

⁵⁷ For the most detailed discussions of this question and its historiographical background see the important studies of Finney (1994); Jensen (2000) and Murray (1977:303-345).

⁵⁸ Bruun (1963:73-166); Jensen (2000:32-63); Marruchi (1974:59-70); Snyder (1985:27-38).

⁵⁹ Kramer (1991:141f.).

of the meaning of the Fish symbol in early Christianity demonstrates (Franz Dölger in answer to Ficker's contentions about the Abercius inscription edited three volumes discussing this matter), it is often far from clear what is intended in an iconographic representation, and whether, if a symbol does have cultic significance, it is of a Christian, Jewish or even pagan milieu.⁶⁰

Onomastic indicators, that is the use of distinctly Christian names, remains a problematic question. Firstly is the question of names of debasement, that is, names that take on a particularly negative sense such as servile names or names indicating the person was a foundling. While these names might be given to a slave or a foundling (θρεπτός) it is by no means certain that they were taken on by Christians as some notion of humility and their appearance without other qualifying criteria of Christian affiliation must be rejected.⁶¹ With regard to distinctly Christian names, such as those of the disciples Peter and John, or the Apostle Paul, we are on somewhat firmer ground, but again we must be cautious in the absence of additional evidence,⁶² As Harnack noted in his *magnum opus*, before the third century:

‘Hardly any other answer can be given to the question [of adoption of distinctly Christian names] than this, that the general custom of the world in which people were living proved stronger than any reflections of their own.’⁶³

This said, with regard to Asia Minor, Ramsay observed a clear prevalence of certain names amongst Christians who had been identified as such by additional criteria.⁶⁴

That an Open-Confession is an indicator of Christian religious affiliation is a tautology, but these inscriptions are also something of a rarity in the pre-Constantinian era.⁶⁵ This said, it is particularly prevalent in Asia Minor, with numerous examples of the pre-Constantinian use of the designation Χριστιανός for the deceased. What is less

⁶⁰ On the fish symbol see Snyder (1985:24f.).

⁶¹ On this matter see the discussion of Kajanto (1962:45-53).

⁶² For discussions of early Christian onomastics and its utility see Bagnall (1982:105-124); (1987:243-250); Ferrua (1967:159-165); Harnack (1961 [1908]:422-430); Horsley (1987:1-17); Kajanto (1963).

⁶³ Harnack (1961 [1908]:423).

⁶⁴ Ramsay (1897:491f.).

⁶⁵ On the early Christian use of the *nomen Christianum* see Hegedus (2004:173-190).

common, though again this applies less to Asia Minor, is a statement on behalf of those dedicating the monument (i.e. those still living) of their Christian allegiance. The most famous group of such inscriptions are the so-called 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions, named for their use of the epigraphic formula (with various spellings) Χριστιανοὶ Χριστιανοῖς (lit. 'Christians for Christians'). These inscriptions, largely confined to the rural Upper Tembris valley, remain a unique and fascinating phenomenon in early Christian epigraphy and will feature later in this work.⁶⁶

Epigraphic formulae, particularly in the context of Roman Asia Minor, are perhaps the most important criteria used by epigraphers and historians for identifying Christian religious affiliation. Within Asia Minor the protection of the sanctity of the grave was paramount and numerous examples survive of funerary deprecations, warning a potential desecrator of the consequences for interfering with a burial. These grave curses, invoking the gods or subterranean spirits, were adopted in modified forms by both Jews and Christians and are a key element in Anatolian epigraphy.⁶⁷

An example of such a formula, and how it might be adopted and modified by Christians, can be found in a number of inscriptions surviving from Termessos in Pisidia which reads ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς κατυχομένους ('he/she will reckon with the subterranean spirits').⁶⁸ Other inscriptions, adopting the future tense verb of the verb to-be + the dative pronoun + the preposition can be seen in another example which reads ἔστι αὐτῷ πρὸς Ἡλλίων καὶ Σελήνην ('he/she will reckon with the Sun and Moon').⁶⁹ This decidedly pagan formula, which most likely came into use in Pisidia sometime in the late first or early second century, was adopted and modified by the Christians of the city.

For instance, in Pisidian Antioch, amongst a group of recently published notes from W.M. Ramsay's 1912 field notebooks, records a dedication to a certain Quintus Appius by his wife which finishes with the followed version of this formula ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ('he/she will

⁶⁶ The standard publication of these is Gibson (1987), see also Tabbernee (1997) and Johnson (1994); (1995).

⁶⁷ On the general use of grave imprecations in Asia Minor see Lattimore (1962: 106-118); Ramsay (1884:241-262); Strubbe (1997).

⁶⁸ E.g. TAM III. 454.

⁶⁹ DAW 45,1, 8, 23.

reckon with God').⁷⁰ This formula, which is first attested here in Pisidia according to Calder '...having been earlier in pagan use...was adopted by Christians of the upper Maender and used by them (as dated tombstones show) at least from A.D. 249 to 273; that it was not used by Phrygian pagans; that in rare cases it was imitated by Jews.'⁷¹

This formula became the most important indicator of Christian religious affiliation, and was christened the 'Eumeneian Formula,' due to its particular prevalence in the country surrounding the small city of Eumeneia on the edge of the Meander valley.⁷² This formula recurs numerous times with various slight modifications regarding the epithets all of which are further suggestive of a Christian (or Jewish) milieu, for instance in an example from Pisidia which reads ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ θεοῦ. ('he/she will reckon with the greatness of God') or a number of examples containing the form ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν ζῶντα θεόν ('he/she will reckon with the living God'). In addition one example specifies in shorthand the name Jesus Christ,⁷³ another invokes 'the Great name of God,' which is seen by some as a circumlocution for the Tetragrammaton (the Hebrew name of God),⁷⁴ whilst another specifies that the reckoning will be both now and on the day of Judgment,⁷⁵ an eschatological idea shared by Christians and Jews.

This sometimes vague and certainly innocuous formula was first suspected of being Christian by Kaibel in 1878 and this identification was later solidified by Ramsay and Duschesne in 1883. The 'Eumeneian Formula' has been seen, at least as long back as the 1880s, as the example par-excellence of what has been called a 'crypto-Christian' confession, whereby a Christian has adapted the epigraphic habits of the surrounding culture, subtly transforming them in a way that on the one hand does not compromise their monotheistic beliefs, whilst on the other hand it is relatively innocuous.

⁷⁰ *IK*. LXVII.113.

⁷¹ Calder (1955:26).

⁷² On the Eumeneian formula see Calder (1939:15-26); On a recent, though unconvincing challenge to its Christian identification see Trebilco (2004:66-88).

⁷³ *CB* II.371.

⁷⁴ *CB*.II.369.

⁷⁵ *CB* II.353-354.

Other forms of 'Crypto-Christian' confessions found in Asia Minor include a variety of very similar formulae from further north in Bithynia, for instance what Johnson called the 'Nikaen Formula' which reads δώσει λόγον τῷ θεῷ ('he/she will give account to God').

Again this formula occurs with a number of variations, for instance *IK Iznik* 556 and a number of others read δώσει λόγον τῷ θεῷ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως] ('he/she will give account to God on the day of judgment'). In addition to this, is what Johnson called the 'Lycaonian Formula',⁷⁶ a modified version of the 'Eumeneian Formula' which reads ἔξει αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.⁷⁷ While scholars have often starkly contrasted these formulae with so-called Phanero-Christian inscriptions it is wise here to quote Johnson:

'The crypto-Christian imprecations of Anatolia are, in this regard, no different from pagan or Jewish imprecations. They are probably not covert declarations or "discreet advertisements" of Christian Faith, but sincere prohibitions against unauthorized use of the tomb framed in Christian terminology.'⁷⁸

As Tabbernee has written in his recent survey and study of the surviving evidence for Montanism it is likely that in most cases pagans knew who their Christian neighbours were and for the most part this would have caused little overt hostility.⁷⁹ As we will see below, the image of ongoing and fierce persecution often argued by scholars who have studied these formulae needs to be reconsidered and an in many ways more harmonious picture of the relationship between urban Christians and their neighbours begins to emerge, even if at times this harmony was unceremoniously smashed by exacerbating circumstances.

The numerous inscriptions we will cite below also open up a world of scholarly possibility with regards to the study of early Christian onomastics, social status, material culture and iconography as well as other issues which are often obscured by the idealized picture of the written sources. The wealth of data provided by such epigraphic evidence, when carefully assessed, is substantial and will help us, in addition to various other approaches, to better trace the contours of the society of the Montanist milieu.

⁷⁶ Johnson (1984:65).

⁷⁷ *TAM* III.331, 345, 350, 454, 495, 509.

⁷⁸ Johnson (1984:84).

⁷⁹ Tabbernee (2007:258).

Chapter 1.

Schwärmerei für die Montanisten: The historiography of Montanism from the Reformation until the Present.

Modern studies of early Church history in general and Montanism in particular, while perhaps falling into various trends, are not *prima facie* representative of particular philosophical schools of thought regarding history and theology.⁸⁰ To put this another way, modern historiography, whether successfully or not, aims at a certain degree of impartiality in how it approaches

⁸⁰ This statement of course could be debated. A number of studies are consciously Feminist expositions such as Huber (1985); Jensen (1996); Kraemer (1992); Trevett (1996). Others studies have adopted an explicitly 'Post-Modern' philosophical hermeneutic, for instance Nasrallah (2003).

Kirchengeschichte rather than consciously adopting the tenets of confessional identity, to use Frend's phrase it has passed '...from dogma to history.'⁸¹ This could not be as easily said for the foundational German critical scholarship of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries from which much modern scholarship, whether consciously or unconsciously draws its roots. Almost all of the historical givens concerning Montanism which have been challenged in more recent scholarship have their roots in the overarching methodological presuppositions and hermeneutical principles applied by the nineteenth century German theologian-historians.

Just as it is possible to attribute current trends within 'Gnostic' studies and related historical disciplines to earlier works from the nineteenth century,⁸² it is our conjecture here that it is equally possible to trace interpretational trajectories within the nineteenth century historiography of Montanism. By briefly surveying some of the key nineteenth century German scholars and what their works have to say on Montanism we can begin to detect something of a genealogy of the popular views of Montanism discussed above and by tracing these roots uncover trajectories for new enquiries and uncover methodological difficulties within these received traditions.

To put this another way, just as ancient writers (particularly from Irenaeus onwards) established theological criteria for defining theological orthodoxy,⁸³ presenting often insurmountable problems to the reconstruction of those movements which fell beyond the pale of the Great Church,⁸⁴ so too has nineteenth century scholarship in many ways established what might fairly be called a scholarly 'orthodoxy,' whereby an established catena of sources and interpretations were vouchsafed by early scholars and bequeathed to each successive generation of scholars. Just as our quest for the historical reality of the Montanist movement must wrestle with the issues of heresiological and theological representations and misrepresentations, so too must we identify and critique similar trends arising from the received historiographical tradition. The question has to deal not only the epistemological object of Montanism itself, but also the layers of discourse which it has been encased in, and

⁸¹ Frend (2003).

⁸² On the nineteenth century roots of 'Gnostic' studies see Jenkins (2001); King (2003); Marksches (2003:17-27).

⁸³ See below and King (2003).

⁸⁴ Here we follow Frend (1984) and McKechnie (2001) in adopting the term 'Great Church.'

these layers which begun in the second century heresiographical tradition have accumulated into the present.

Any study of nineteenth century German theology, or any theology for that matter, is mired in the truth claims and suppositions with which it begins and the social context in which it manifests itself.⁸⁵ Important for our study of Montanism is the salient fact that all the nineteenth century historians concerned were deeply entrenched in the confessional theologies of the Reformation and concerned (some more than others) with establishing the truth claims of a Reformed position vis-à-vis that of the Roman Catholic Church. Tied up with this is the perceived need to explain the transformation of the Apostolic church(es) of the New Testament into the highly structured catholic church of the third century. Often such a reconstruction engaged in the often subconscious use of what scholars have called an *Abfall* theory of history, whereby the development of the church is seen as increasingly institutionalized (and de-spiritualized) and in which these developments were seen as a sharp decline from the simplicity of apostolic milieu. Such theories normally found their nadir in a particular epoch, or movement, for instance Harnack's 'Hellenization of the Gospel,' or the so-called 'Constantinian Heresy' of the fourth century or in Byzantine 'Caesaropapism.' Such theories have also entailed within themselves problematic but still widely held ideas such as those surrounding what has been called *Frühkatholizismus*.

Along with the presence of this trajectory of confessional identity and polemic all the scholars surveyed below were in some way influenced, whether in continuity or discontinuity, by the seventeenth and eighteenth century Pietistic movements which swept the German (and English) churches. These movements, in brief, saw an increased focus on the piety and religious fervour of the individual in contrast with the more institutional and dogmatic elements of Christian religion.⁸⁶ Such an influence can be detected in the more sympathetic regard with which Montanist charisma is treated beginning with the pietist Gottfried Arnold and perhaps finding its apogee in John Wesley's famous comment cited above.

⁸⁵ For a detailed treatment of the mid-nineteenth century situation in Germany universities, including their internal politics and even the personal appearance of professors (not without its marked prejudices) see Schaff (1857).

⁸⁶ On pietism generally see 'Pietism,' *ODCC* (1997:1286) and the bibliographical survey of Ward (1993:476-505). On its influence on historiography see Bradley & Muller (1995:13).

While it would be unfair to caricature these scholars as conscious apologists it is necessary to bear in mind these extraneous factors in order to understand their positions. Intimately tied up with these two initial trajectories of confessional identity and the influence of pietism were the philosophical, historiographical and social climate of nineteenth century German which in particular saw the birth of Prussian nationalism, Hegelian philosophy, and the rise of historico-critical methodology.⁸⁷

The survey below will deal only with the work of German Protestant critical scholars of the seventeenth century through to the end of the nineteenth century. While this may seem *prima facie* to be slightly biased we need to realize at the outset that it was largely within the scholarly world of nineteenth century Prussian Protestantism that the most important advances in church historical scholarship took place and that while we cannot neglect French Roman Catholic scholars like the Abbé Louis Duchesne or later Pierre De Labriolle, or English language scholars like De Soyres the vast majority of critical work on Montanism took place within the German speaking milieu.⁸⁸ As Bradley and Muller have put it (perhaps with a pinch of superfluity):

‘...historical scholarship reached a level of maturity by the mid-nineteenth century that in many respects has not been surpassed to this day. In terms of the utilization of primary sources, energy in accumulating these sources, critical power in comparing them, and detachment in their interpretation, the accomplishment of a hundred years ago, particularly in Germany, are seldom surpassed today. Indeed, much that is written today falls far below those standards.’⁸⁹

Here It must also be recognized that within the context of Roman Catholic scholarship a great deal of institutional skepticism existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with regard to what was perceived by many as the ‘heresy of modernism’ which in many ways marginalized and impeded the adoption of historico-critical methods and theological revisionism and that the spectre of this attitude continued with varying intensity until the

⁸⁷ On the history of Germany during this period see in particular Blackbourn (1997). On the intellectual trends in particular see Friedrich (1997:88-105).

⁸⁸ Duchesne (1958 [1906]); De Soyres (1878); Labriolle (1913).

⁸⁹ Bradley & Muller (1995:20).

reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the mid-twentieth century.⁹⁰ As most Roman Catholic historiography was done by ordained clergy, it is fairly certain that few of these priest-scholars would have savoured sharing the fate of Alfred Loisy or that of earlier historian and theologian Ignatius Döllinger. To give one final indication of the scholarly climate, even Louis Duchesne found his masterpiece *Histoire ancienne de l'Église* himself on the infamous (if largely symbolic) *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* as late as 1912.⁹¹

By looking at a selection of German scholars a critical understanding and overview of the historiographical story of Montanist scholarship can be attained and we will be in a better position from which to begin our own reconstruction. This section will feature overviews and discussions of Johann Lorenz Mosheim (1694-1755), Adolf Hilgenfeld (1823-1907), Johann August Wilhelm Neander (1789-1850), Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), Albert Schweigler (1819-57), Abrecht Ritschl (1822-89) and conclude with the indomitable Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). While this is by no means an exhaustive list of German theologian-historians to have treated aspects of the subject of Montanism it represents a diverse cross-section of opinions and as will be demonstrated below allows us to trace the origins of various theoretical discussions of Montanism.⁹²

Before progressing to look at these historians, however, it is incumbent on us to give some justification for beginning with Mosheim. While early critical scholars like the Magdeburg Centuriators, Tillemont and Baronius had all written in the sixteenth and seventeenth century regarding the history of the early Church, their works were particularly marred by internal and external controversies both within their various Christian confessions and across denominational divides.⁹³ To give a brief survey, the *Magdeburg Centuries*, while utilizing primary sources was largely a violent anti-Catholic tirade, responsible for immortalizing such historical fallacies as the story of Pope Joan.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ On the topic of Modernism see 'Modernism' *ODCC* (1997:1098-1099). Consemius (1999:14-26). Jodock (2000). Vidler (1934); (1970). For a sociological look at the so-called 'modernist crisis' and its impact see Kurtz (1983:1085-1115).

⁹¹ On these three fascinating figures see 'Duchesne, Louis' *ODCC* (1997:511f.). 'Döllinger, Johann Joseph Ignaz von' *ODCC* (1997:496). 'Loisy, Alfred Firmin' *ODCC* (1997:993).

⁹² For instance, also worth mentioning are Nathaniel Bonwetsch (1848-1925), who wrote a history of Montanism (1881) and compiled a critical edition of sources (1914).

⁹³ For a discussion of this early period see Bradley & Muller (1995:11-25).

⁹⁴ On the Magdeburg Centuries see 'Centuriators of Magdeburg' *ODCC* (1997:313).

Tillemont was a Jansenist sympathizer, though his massive sixteen volume history *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premier siècles* was largely a compilation of primary sources and critical questions of chronology and authorship. It laid some of the historico-critical foundations on which subsequent scholars were able to build their reconstructions and even today remains an invaluable source for various historical questions.⁹⁵

Baronius the formidable cardinal and Vatican librarian was as much a polemicist as a scholar to the detriment both of his twelve volume *Annales Ecclesiastici* (particularly with regard to the early Church) and his ambitions to be Pope. Indeed Baronius' work can fairly be called a polemical response to the *Magdeburg Centuries*. This said, however, his history remains a valuable chapter in the history of Church history.⁹⁶ For the purposes of our task here, however, we must begin with Mosheim, the so-called 'father of Church History.'⁹⁷

It is with Mosheim's *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae* in 1726, and his subsequent works *Ketzer-Geschichte* (1746-8) and *De rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii* (1753) that we can, though somewhat arbitrarily, begin to speak of an emerging critical approach to Church history. Of more direct interest to us is Mosheim's intent to write: '...einer unparteiischen und gründlichen Ketzergeschichte.'⁹⁸ While Mosheim was not the first to do such an undertaking (he was predated by at least twenty six years by the pietist scholar, and mystic-sympathizer, Gottfried Arnold),⁹⁹ it was with him that a combination of careful source-criticism and comparative impartiality combined to breath new life into the *Kirchengeschichte* enterprise.

While it is problematic to speak of watershed periods in history it is possible to say that at least in German scholarship Mosheim marks a new *Zeitgeist* and a step toward critical church history which at least consciously attempts to bypass contemporary theological debates and to utilize the increasingly important findings of historico-critical research. For instance, his own role in the development of *Kirchengeschichte* within a university atmosphere with some nominal

⁹⁵ On Tillemont see 'Tillemont, Louis Sébastien Le Nain de' *ODCC* (1997:1622).

⁹⁶ On Baronius see 'Baronius, Cesare' *ODCC* (1997:160).

⁹⁷ For an introduction to Mosheim see 'Mosheim, Johann Lorenz von,' *ODCC* (1997:1119). Bradley & Muller (1995:14f.).

⁹⁸ Wießner, (1953-:210).

⁹⁹ On the importance of Gottfried Arnold see 'Arnold, Gottfried' *ODCC* (1997:110). Bradley & Muller (1995:12).

independence from ecclesiastical institutions (such as ecclesiastical courts) marks a key departure from an established practice which had (and continued to have within some quarters) a detrimental effect on the historico-critical task of Christian theological and historical reflection.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore with this important figure that we shall begin our survey of German Montanist historiography.

The massive scope of Mosheim's historical enterprise leaves little space for a thorough treatment of Montanism, just over two pages in the English translation of the *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae*.¹⁰¹ Despite this Mosheim shows himself (particularly in his notes) to be carefully weighing the historical evidence, for instance, he rejects the accusation that Montanus claimed to be the Holy Spirit. Moreover he is careful to note that '...he indeed attempted no change in the doctrines of religion.'¹⁰² Already here we can begin to see a rejection of the kinds of views we find earlier in which Montanism's *a priori* status as a heresy means its instant historical disapproval, while it hardly qualifies for the kind of 'in defense of heresy' literature which abounds today it is a step forward from the blanket condemnations of earlier historians.¹⁰³

If we can say then that Mosheim (and to a less influential extent his forebear Gottfried Arnold) set the scene for the historico-critical approach to church history away from undue fear of the ecclesiastical courts we must say that it was Hegel and Schleiermacher who set the philosophical program for church history, if not nineteenth century philosophy generally.¹⁰⁴

Few authors have been subject to so much critique and misunderstanding as Hegel,¹⁰⁵ and even today his legacy remains ambiguous, ranging from the unrestrained polemic (largely rejected by Hegel scholars) of Karl Popper to the almost unqualified praise of controversial thinkers like neoconservative Francis Fukuyama.¹⁰⁶ Periodically Hegel has been blamed for the excesses of both communism and fascism, and even his own career was not free from shifts in

¹⁰⁰ On a brief sketch of Mosheim's career see n. 11 above. On his role in the foundation of theology at Göttingen see Moeller (1987:9-40).

¹⁰¹ Mosheim (1850 [1726]: 207-209).

¹⁰² Mosheim (1850 [1726]: 209).

¹⁰³ For a somewhat negative discussion of the contemporary phenomenon of 'in defence of heresy' literature see Henry (1982:123-126) and more recently McGrath (2009:1-13).

¹⁰⁴ On Arnold see 'Arnold, Gottfried' *ODCC* (1997:110).

¹⁰⁵ On Hegel see 'Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich' *ODCC* (1997:744-746). On his relation to theology see Barth.(1959:268-305).

¹⁰⁶ Fukuyama (1992). Popper (1945).

position from an early radicalism to a marked conservatism in his twilight years, a factor which has largely been seen as resulting from the failure of the utopian projects of the French Revolution and the rising threat Napoleon posed to Europe in Hegel's final years. The political and social legacy of Hegel's thought, however, is not our primary concern here, but rather his reflections on the philosophy of history and theology more generally.

Hegel's system is one of the most esoteric and perplexing philosophical systems to interpret and even minds as great as Marx and Popper were wont to misinterpret some of his thinking, an understandable result for anyone who has read the famous and confusing preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is not helped by the artistic prose of Hegel which has been described as equivalent in its Romantic expression to Goethe's *Faust*, and the many translations of his work often appear wooden and ultimately fail to do justice to his thought. For our purposes here we will attempt, as briefly and as coherently as possible, to outline some of the key elements of Hegel's thought, though bearing in mind Mueller's important statement that:

‘Hegel's greatness is as indisputable as his obscurity. The matter is due to his peculiar terminology and style; they are undoubtedly involved and complicated, and seem excessively abstract.’¹⁰⁷

The process of interpretation for Hegel begins subjectively, rather than objectively.¹⁰⁸ The world of reality exists in the subjective mind of the individual who is objectively observing reality. Epistemologically it is through the dialectic between subjective thought (the ordering of reality by the mind) and the objective sense data that knowledge of reality is achieved.

For Hegel the nature of reality was fundamentally based in what he called interchangeably ‘Absolute Mind,’ ‘Spirit’ (*Geist*) or ‘Reason,’ a metaphysical idea which manifested itself in empirical history through human agents. History for Hegel, therefore, is a rational process guided (but not dictated) by ‘Absolute Spirit.’ The process whereby this takes place is through the controversial dialectic process for which Hegel is most famous for. Each historical period or movement begins with a thesis which contains contradictions built into its structure, these

¹⁰⁷ Mueller (1958:411).

¹⁰⁸ What follows draws heavily on Pals (1996:132f.). For a critique of this ‘standard’ reading of Hegel see Mueller (1958:411-414).

inbuilt contradictions arise in the antithesis which brings about a period of conflict between thesis and antithesis, this process is resolved into a synthesis which becomes, in a circular view, the new thesis and begins the process anew. This process, for Hegel, is the unfolding of Spirit (*Geist*) in time, a slow progression toward its teleological goal. For Hegel, history without this dialectical conflict was inexplicable, conflict was inherent in history.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, for Hegel history is essentially teleological and one can easily see how this view could provide a philosophical basis for a Christian eschatological view of history.

Within German historiography (and outside Germany as well) various points and counterpoints in historical and theological interpretation were systematized according to Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis dialectical process, and as a result the view it was perhaps inevitable that Montanism was perceived according to its developmental role in the unveiling of *Geist* in the early history of the Church. The results of this application of Hegelian philosophical categories are best exemplified in the work of the 'Tübingen School' though we must be cautious about over-emphasizing their adoption of this approach.¹¹⁰

The philosophy of Schleiermacher was just as influential though less acknowledged in the milieu of nineteenth century Prussian Protestant historiography.¹¹¹ Schleiermacher's thought, in a nutshell, was to focus on feeling and intuition as opposed to doctrine or historical contingency, in a sense it was highly influenced by contemporary German Romanticism and Pietism (though it was treated with some suspicion by the latter), his position can be summarized by a single sentence from *On Religion*:

'Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling. It wishes to intuit the universe.'¹¹²

In his major works on religion, *On Religion* and *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher sought to give a positive sense to religion by removing it from idle metaphysical and scientific speculation. While this might seem negative in our own time, Schleiermacher's work was aimed at what was perceived by many pious nineteenth century Christians as the encroaching

¹⁰⁹ For discussions of Hegel's impact on New Testament studies in particular see Neill & Wright (1988:29-34).

¹¹⁰ See below pp. 33-44.

¹¹¹ On Schleiermacher and his influence see Gerrish (1985:123-156).

¹¹² Schleiermacher (1988 [1799]:92).

threat posed by the natural sciences and historico-philological scholarship. His influence could still be felt, often unacknowledged, throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the works of phenomenologist scholars.¹¹³

His method of achieving this has been compared to Kant's work of critiquing knowledge in order to make space for faith. While in many aspects he was actually quite sympathetic to religious skeptics, to such a point that in his earlier work he could claim that an idea of God, in the traditional theistic sense, was immaterial to religion, he did maintain his Christian beliefs, albeit in a form which at times can be accused of bordering on pantheism or panentheism. His later work in *The Christian Faith*, however, is explicitly Christian in tone and it is from this work that he came to influence the later nineteenth century Protestant thinkers (in particular Albrecht Ritschl).¹¹⁴ While for our purposes here it is not always possible to pinpoint where Schleiermacher's thinking applies directly to the method and ideas of these historians, we must bear his influence in mind as a counterbalance to the oft cited caricature that writers like F.C. Baur were purely Hegelian in their thinking.

Now that we have briefly looked at these two important influences on general theological thinking we will move onto survey a number of authors who dealt with the specific historical phenomenon of Montanism. This survey will focus in particular on the work of Neander and Baur but attention will also be given to a number of other important writers.

From the time of Schweigler's massive 1841 study *Montanismus und die christliche Kirche des Zweiten Jahrhunderts* Montanism received a great amount of attention in German scholarship on early Christianity, however, like today being somewhat overshadowed by the perennial appeal of 'Gnosticism.' This scholarship immediately focused on the so-called 'Montanist Crisis' and what role Montanism played in epoch making early Christian developments such as the establishment of a consistent church polity, the selection of a canon of scripture, or the decline of prophecy.

¹¹³ See for instance Otto (1923); Smart (1998); Van der Leeuw (1967).

¹¹⁴ For a brief summary of Schleiermacher see Barth (1959:306-354) and 'Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst' *ODCC* (1997:1463f.)

The life of Albert Schwegger was one of talent often unrecognized and ambition cut short both by mortality and prejudice.¹¹⁵ While he lived an interesting life, there is probably some truth to Strauss' comment to Zeller that 'For neither Schwegger's personality nor his life was actually of a biographical nature.'¹¹⁶ A prodigious youth Schwegger's life was one of conflict between great ability, a desire to be pious, and eventual exacerbation at the increasingly eremitic theological debates of his time, writing to Zeller from Italy after leaving Germany following the disappointing reception of his 900 page church history he noted:

'This glimpse of Italian idol-worship has increased my anti-theological trenchancy about a lot of things. I have also resolved to hang on, come what may, and as much as I am able, to make the life of the clerics sour.'¹¹⁷

His later life was dedicated to matters of history and was carried on in an ever increasing isolation and frustration. He died suddenly at the relatively young age of thirty-seven while endeavoring to write the third volume of his *Römische Geschichte*, a work which aimed to rival that of the magisterial *Römische Geschichte* of Theodor Mommsen.

While writing almost two decades earlier than Baur (1841) Schwegger's work on Montanism has been somewhat less influential but did provide the blueprint for much of Baur's later analysis outlined below. Of Schwegger the Welsh Quaker scholar of Montanism Christine Trevett wrote:

'The work of Baur's pupil Schwegger proved to be an important if controversial contribution to the nineteenth century debate...At the hands of Schwegger 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 Schwegger looked to Ebionism for explanation, positing a stand versus gentile Christianity.'¹¹⁸

While earlier in his career Schwegger was a devotee of Hegel's philosophy, he became increasingly disillusioned concerning the utility of metaphysical speculation and at what he saw

¹¹⁵ For a biographical summary see Harris (1975:78-88).

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Harris (1975:78).

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Harris (1975:83).

¹¹⁸ Trevett (1996:6) .

as the compromising spirit of second generation Hegelian's like Henning.¹¹⁹ His historiography was one, as Trevett's comment above indicates, of great skepticism. We need to be carefully, however, to totally exclude Hegelian thinking from Schwegeler's writing on Montanism. From the beginning of the general preface Schwegeler makes clear that he is following in the footsteps of Baur's dialectical tension between Petrine and Pauline Christianity, beginning with the statement:

*'Dass von dem Beginn der apostolischen Zeit an die Richtungen des Petrinismus and Paulinismus, zu denen im Laufe des zweiten Jahrhunderts noch der Gnosticismus hinzu kommt, als parallele Linien sich neben einander hinziehen, und dass der Kampf, die gegenseitige Annäherung und endliche Versöhnung jener Entwicklungs-Reihen es ist, wodurch die Geschichte der ältesten christlichen Kirche ihre eigenthümliche Bestimmtheit erhält, diess wird, im Princip wenigstens, allgemein anerkannt. Allein die Bewährung des Principis, die Durchführung dieser Gesammtanschauung an den einzelnen concreten Thatsachen der Geschichte, ist theils gar nicht, theils nur ungenügend versucht worden.'*¹²⁰

The strong influence of Baur's earlier work on the apostolic period is immediately apparent here, as in the proceeding pages of the introduction where Schwegeler draws a similar narrative to the 'parting of ways' to that of Baur.

Despite these similarities with Baur in terms of his metanarrative of Christian origins Schwegeler's chief contribution to the study of Montanism remains his Ebionite thesis and his emphasis on the three-fold theory of revelation. Schwegeler's work introduced the standard interpretation of Montanism as providing an economic theory of revelation, whereby revelation is divided into a threefold division of Father, Son and Paraclete.¹²¹ This largely draws on the key methodological practice of systematizing Montanist thought based almost entirely on the works of Tertullian.

¹¹⁹ For this see his letter to Zeller reproduced in Harris (1975:81).

¹²⁰ Schwegeler (1841:1).

¹²¹ Schwegeler (1841:15).

While an economic theory of revelation is certainly present within Tertullian,¹²² the question of its presence within early Asian Montanism is questionable at best. This theory of Montanism has since become popular with scholars, particularly those concerned with the broader concept of 'Millenarianism,' such as Cohn and Baumgartner.¹²³ This said, however, it owes less to the primary sources (particularly the authentic oracles) than a retrospective view of Montanism which borrows significantly from the ideas expressed by medieval spiritual Franciscan Joachim of Fiore.¹²⁴

Like later scholars who were to adopt a 'Jewish-Christian' interpretation the strength of Schwegler's interpretation, which was followed in particular by American scholar Massingberd-Ford, was his demonstration that ritual practices of the Montanists could be compared to Jewish-Christian ritual practices found in literature like the Pseudo-Clementine writings.¹²⁵ Given the early date Schwegler was in many ways unable to foresee that more similarities could be drawn between certain liturgical and fasting practices of the Montanists and the Qumran sectarians, though he is in some ways representative of the broader nineteenth century trend to see heavy 'Essene' influence on early Christianity.¹²⁶

Where Schwegler's reconstruction fails, however, is in its reconstruction of Paul's opponents and inferences from this about the nature of Montanism. Here Schwegler's argument becomes circular and as Klawiter points out slightly contradictory and lacking direct evidence.¹²⁷ Essentially Schwegler reduces Montanism to a legalistic Jewish-Christianity which was opposed to the free universal gospel preached by Paul.¹²⁸ While there are certainly some interesting, and often missed, parallels between Paul's projected opponents in Galatians and nascent Montanism, Schwegler's reconstruction draws too synthetic a continuity between the apostolic churches of the New Testament and the world of second century dissent.

Schwegler's work, while cited by some English scholars, has had less impact than that of Baur and Neander by simple virtue of having never been translated. Indeed, most English scholars

¹²² On Tertullian's theory of revelation see Tabbernee (2007:55f.).

¹²³ Cohn (1957:25-27). Baumgartner (1999:31-45).

¹²⁴ On Joachimite theories of history and revelation see Reeves (1976). On the tendency to link Montanism with later spiritual movements see Trevett (1996:14f.).

¹²⁵ On the theory of 'Jewish-Christian' origins of Montanism see Massingberd-Ford (1966:145-158).

¹²⁶ On this trend see Jenkins (2001:45-47).

¹²⁷ Klawiter (1975:4 n. 1).

¹²⁸ Schwegler (1841:280-2).

are only familiar with it as a result of German-American historian Philip Schaff's citation of it in his immense history of Christianity.¹²⁹ Now we shall move on to Albrecht Ritschl.

Like all most Church historians of the nineteenth century Albrecht Ritschl was fundamentally concerned with the questions posed by Church history and identifying and establishing criteria for charting continuity within the Christian proclamation from generation to generation, indeed Ritschlian scholar Philip Hefner has written that this is the hermeneutic key to understanding Ritschl's complex theological thought and estimates that at least eighty percent of his published work was dedicated to this specific problem.¹³⁰

While, as we will demonstrate below, Baur concerned himself with metaphysics of Hegel and the overarching metaphysical idea of *Geist*, Ritschl was more concerned with what he called *Lebensfuehrung* (lit. lifestyle) or *Lebensideal*. These are essentially ideas which remove the processes of Church history from the metaphysical real of a vague over-arching *Geist* detectable in dialectic processes, and move them into the life of the community as it lives out what it deemed to be a theological reality, Hefner summarises this concept well:

'This *Lebensfuehrung* is a Christian existence that emerges from the situation of reconciliation between God and man, in which the action of God in reconciling man is subordinated to the human action of response to God. Both divine and human factors are held together in this category of existence, but the divine is subordinated to the human. The consequence is a life which commits itself wholly to the responsibilities of this world – chiefly love for fellowman and a vocation in society – while trusting completely in God's providence for one's ultimate justification and redemption.'¹³¹

In his important study of how this concept applies in the history of the early Church *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* Ritschl traced the historical emergence of two phenomena, what he deemed the apostolic community and the catholic church. These two

¹²⁹ Schaff (1914 [1889]: 416) writes of Schweigler (somewhat unfairly):

'A very ingenious philosophical *a-priori* construction of history in the spirit of the Tübingen School. Schweigler denies the historical existence of Montanus, wrongly derives the system from Ebionism, and puts its essence in the doctrine of the Paraclete and the new supernatural epoch of revelation introduced by him.'

¹³⁰ On Ritschl see 'Ritschl, Albrecht' *ODCC* (1997:1400f.). Barth (1959:390-397). For extensive discussions of the role of history in Ritschl's theology see the works of Hefner (1962:259-278); (1964:338-355). (1966).

¹³¹ Hefner (1964:341).

phenomena represent the eventual alienation of the early Christian community from its Hebraic roots and an increasing distortion of the apostolic message brought about by the impact of various external and internal factors (e.g. Hellenistic philosophy). Most modern historians will immediately see in this approach some of the key features of an *Abfall* theory which also found their way into the work of Harnack and other later German historians like von Campenhausen.

For Ritschl Montanism represented a level of prophetic Gentile Christianity (*Heidenchristentum*) which had its origins in the milieu of a Gentile population, possibly (though Ritschl does not commit on this point) influenced by ecstatic pagan prophecy which Ritschl saw as fundamentally different from prophetic forms found in the Hebrew scriptures (once again a point followed by later scholars).¹³²

As we might expect from Ritschl's theological emphasis on the human and communal side of the divine-human relationship (the theandric endeavour) what he saw as novel in Montanism was its developments in ecclesiology and morality. Here he sees Montanism, like a number of other later scholars, as a reaction against the institutionalization of the originally charismatic offices of the Church. Ritschl sees the original offices of presbyters, and early bishops, as filtered through the life of the individual congregation and charismata, rather than through concepts of apostolic succession (which he sees as developing in response to 'Gnosticism'). For Ritschl both Montanism and the developing early catholic church (*Altkatholische Kirche*) had abandoned the notion that the original apostolic community was the mediator of authority and had adopted bishops or prophets as moral mediators who held the power of the keys (i.e. the ability to bind and loose sins interpreted from Matt.16:19).

For Ritschl Montanism was in error because of its excessive enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) and its belief that it had received new revelations with regard to the question of the power of the keys.¹³³ He considered that both Montanism and the early catholic church had failed here because both failed to recognize and continue the religious norms of the apostolic community, instead claiming authority for bishops or prophets.¹³⁴

¹³² Ritschl (1857: 473-77).

¹³³ Ritschl (1857:523).

¹³⁴ Klawiter (1975:9).

However, before moving on, it is worth noting that Ritschl had published the first edition *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* in 1850, before abandoning the 'Tübingen School' and its Hegelian tendencies. By 1857, when he published the second edition of this monumental work, his break with the Hegelian idealism and focus on metaphysics which characterised the 'Tübingen School' was increasingly already coming to the surface.

Ritschl's overall theology has been the subject of a number of extensive treatments, both in German and English, and is far too complex to summarize here. What is important, however, is to recognise that his move away from the Hegelian thinking of the 'Tübingen School' was related to his insistence on the ethical and community elements of faith as opposed to the academic metaphysics of scholarly theology and in many ways laid the foundations for the focus in later nineteenth and early twentieth century liberal German theology on questions of ethics and morality. Here it is possible to see the influence of Schliermacher's philosophy in Ritschl's repudiation of metaphysical speculation, though tracing the explicit link here remains difficult, particularly as Ritschl also rejected any emphasis on Schliermacher's primary category of religious experience. Despite his spurning of Hegelian metaphysical speculation, Ritschl's work, still implicitly relies on the *Abfall* view of history noted above and the influence of dialectic views of history remained central to his thought.

Adolf Hilgenfeld represents the last of the 'Tübingen School' theologians to address the history of Montanism, and according to Lüdemann the last German writer to engage in a thoroughgoing *Ketzergeschichte*.¹³⁵ Despite being inclined toward the positions of Baur, Hilgenfeld never held a position or studied at Tübingen itself, and was for most of his career forced, for a number of reasons,¹³⁶ to work as librarian at Jena before being given an honorary professorship at the ripe age of sixty-seven.

While Hilgenfeld is included in Harris' survey of the 'Tübingen School' his historical methodology was significantly different to that of Baur and others. Like Schweigler he was never a convinced Hegelian and could write honestly of his methodology:

'I renounce any claim to have a self-contained total-view of the course of development in the early Christian Church, into which the individual details need merely to be fitted,

¹³⁵ Lüdemann (1995:9).

¹³⁶ Harris (1975:126f.).

and I limit myself to delivering contributions to the general conception of the development of the early Church, through special investigations, even when the trouble I have taken and the results obtained do not find acknowledgement everywhere; such a general conception still seems to me to be the only approximate solution to the problem.’¹³⁷

From the beginning of his massive *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums* published in 1884 Hilgenfeld maintains his independence from the philosophical and exegetical logic used by the ‘Tübingen School’ (by this time he had long ago fallen out with Baur on exegetical questions). His treatment of Montanism, while quite lengthy compared to the treatment of other heresies is comparatively short, only around sixty pages, much of which is taken up with printing primary sources (in particular the later Latin heresiologists).¹³⁸ Hilgenfeld’s overall contribution to the historiography of the nineteenth century was not in the field of interpretation but rather in source criticism, and his extensive and learned compilation of sources was to provide a blueprint for later collections of testimonia like those of Nathaniel Bonwetsch, Pierre de Labriolle and more recently Ronald Heine.¹³⁹

Having surveyed these (at least in terms of Montanism) minor scholars (at least in the field of Montanist studies) it is important now to move onto the two giants of nineteenth century *Kirchengeschichte*: F.C. Baur and August Neander.

Entrenched in the tradition of German pietism Neander is described by Selge as ‘...*einhelliger Meinung als frömmster und gelehrtester Lehrer der Berliner Fakultät*.’¹⁴⁰ Despite entering into polemics with Strauss over the infamous *Leben Jesu* and intervening to prevent F.C. Baur from being appointed in Halle,¹⁴¹ he was an irenic man, who according to the Selge ‘...*orthodoxe und erweckte Intoleranz lehnte ... ab*.’¹⁴² Neander believed that Church history had a hortatory as

¹³⁷ Hilgenfeld quoted in Harris (1975:116).

¹³⁸ Hilgenfeld (1884:560-600).

¹³⁹ Bonwetsch (1914); Heine (1984); Labriolle (1913).

¹⁴⁰ Selge (1953:- 10f.).

¹⁴¹ Hodgson (1966:17).

¹⁴² Selge (1953:-10).

well as scholarly function, that is '*...Kirchengeschichte galt ihm als immer neue Erhebung der Menschennatur zu höherem Leben.*'¹⁴³

August Neander became the first of the nineteenth century Germans to write on the Montanist controversy in his massive six volume general church history.¹⁴⁴ Neander believed that Montanus's heresy represented an excessive focus in the early Church on what he deemed (interchangeably) the supernatural or supra-natural and the syncretistic innate tendencies in its Phrygia milieu. Neander summarizes his method as follows:

'We must therefore, in the first place, cast a glance at the state of development in the church to which Montanism attached itself, and at the general mental tendencies which had their ground in and were represented by it; and then we may, secondly, proceed to both the personal character of the author, and also what must be ascribed to him as its author.'¹⁴⁵

For Neander, like the so-called 'Old Tübingen School' which we will see Baur reacting against, the synthesizing of the natural and supernatural was the ultimate teleological manifestation of the Christian community as an embodiment of new creation and a sign of Christ's redemption of man.¹⁴⁶ Initially, the formative New Testament period of Christianity saw a flowering of ecstatic gifts, tongues, healing and prophecy, however, Neander writes:

'But this opposition between the supernatural and the natural was not always to last; it was to be done away by the progressive development of Christianity. To bring about the harmonious union of the supernatural and the natural was its ultimate aim; just as the final removal of this discord, which had its ground in sin, was to be among the more remote consequences of redemption. The new, divine power, which in its outward manifestations had originally shown itself as an immediate agent, was to enter the sphere of human instrumentality, and gradually to appropriate those natural organs and means, which, on its first appearance, were not as yet suited to it.'¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ On Neander see 'Neander, Johann August Wilhelm' *ODCC* (1997:1135).

¹⁴⁵ Neander (1871 [1843]: 200).

¹⁴⁶ On the 'Old Tübingen School' see 'Tübingen' *ODCC* (1997:1645).

¹⁴⁷ Neander (1871 [1843]: 201).

This statement demonstrates that for Neander, the ecstasy of the Montanists was a reactionary response to the orderly development of a more institutionalized church:

‘That which opposed itself to the healthy and natural course of development must necessarily be a morbid action. The enthusiasm which surrendered itself to such a tendency must inevitably degenerate into fanaticism.’¹⁴⁸

While not going as far as Baur and Schweigel, Neander’s writing does contain the elements of *Abfall* dialectic present in other scholars, in particular between what he saw as a petrified, increasingly closed hierarchical church and the wild speculations of the ‘Gnostics,’ the opposition to the latter resulting in a stringent anti-intellectualism and ‘...a tendency hostile to all culture, to all art and science.’¹⁴⁹ Montanism’s ultimate flaw, in Neander’s eyes, was:

‘...an exclusive supranaturalism, which could not duly acknowledge the effects of redemption in converting the mind, when restored to communion with God, into an organ for divine things, was necessarily driven to deny the adequacy of the divine word which had been bestowed on the church for its guidance in knowledge and life, because it lacked the organ requisite for interpreting and applying it and for digesting the truths contained in it. A perfecting Christianity was sought for in a way which disparaged the work of Christ. In this way a one-sided supra-naturalism led to the same result as a one-sided rationalism.’¹⁵⁰

In Neander’s work we begin to see the dichotomizing of Montanism and Gnosticism as two theses in binary opposition, each of which over-played one particular element of Christian doctrine at the expense of all others. This scholarly tendency, which plays such a key role in subsequent German scholarship, overemphasizes the theological divergence of Montanism from mainstream Asian Christianity and lays the ground for the increasingly radical view which scholars began to take.

On the issue of Montanist origins, Neander is the first to place a strong emphasis on the role of its Phrygian milieu, downplaying but not dismissing potentially Judaic influences. As with Mosheim earlier, Neander is negative about the role Montanus played, and claims that:

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Neander (1871 [1843]: 203).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

‘...under the impulse of fanatical excitement, an uneducated individual , in whom we recognize at once the mental characteristics of the Phrygian, produced ultimately great effects, these without question outran the measure of his capacity.’¹⁵¹

This continues the trope that Montanism did not reach any theological maturity before the works of Tertullian, and that any reconstruction of its theology must necessarily start here.

The above quote also demonstrates another factor which entered not only German scholarship but in-particular that of Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, what we might call the theory of the ‘Phrygian disposition,’ borrowing from ancient writers and racial stereotypes Neander engages in the well-worn German practice of *Ortsnekerei*.¹⁵² Borrowing from the by no means extensive ethnography on Phrygians in antiquity Neander is happy to use designations like:

‘...the natural peculiarities of the old Phrygian race reveal themselves in this mode of conceiving Christianity, and in the shape which the zeal of the new convert assumed. The religion of nature, which prevailed among the ancient Phrygians bespeaks the character of this mountain race – inclined to fanaticism and superstition, readily believing every pretension of magic and ecstasy; and we are not surprised when we find the Phrygian temperament, which had formerly found a vent in the ecstatic frenzy of the priests of Cybele and Bacchus, exhibiting itself once more in the ecstasies and somnambulism’s of the Montanist.’¹⁵³

We should not be too harsh on Neander for this; indeed, some of his insights on the impact of persecution on exciting the Christian community we will find actually bear quite well under the scrutiny of our own theoretical insights. The pervasive influence of traditional continental ‘Orientalism,’ while manifest here, ultimately is far from the much more biting and prejudiced comments found in later English writers, as we will see below.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Neander can be somewhat excused on the grounds that he is entirely working with the ethnographical construct one finds in ancient writers, rather than contemporary racist theories, a topic to

¹⁵¹ Neander (1871 [1843]: 200).

¹⁵² For more on the ‘Phrygian Disposition’ see below pp. 243-406.

¹⁵³ Neander (1871 [1843]: 204f.) On p. 206 Neander further notes:

‘All this would naturally work on the mind of the Phrygian convert, already inclined by national temperament to fanatical enthusiasm.’

¹⁵⁴ See below p. 258.

which we will return.¹⁵⁵ For Neander the 'Phrygian disposition' is also used to explain how the ecstasies of Montanism and Phrygian religion are phenomenologically linked (as they are with other practices of 'heathen divination'), another of his conjectures which has continued to have a shelf-life perhaps well beyond its best before date.¹⁵⁶

While issues of eschatology, martyrdom, church polity and the nature of ecstasy all get a brief mention in Neander's work, though as with his compatriots the specter of Tertullian is never far away, the central concern and thesis of Neander's work maintained that Montanism was an excessively supra-naturalist movement. From this theological position all other issues related to Montanist theology subsequently flow. By drawing this picture, and contrasting it with that found in its opposite extreme of the metaphysical speculation of 'Gnosticism,' Neander in many ways inadvertently sowed the seeds for the subsequent works of the 'Tübingen School.'

Few academically based scholarly movements, bar perhaps the Oxford Movement or Neoorthodoxy, have cast such an immense shadow over their field of theological study and general perceptions of that field as the so-called 'Tübingen School,' who flourished in 1840s Germany.¹⁵⁷ The name of Ferdinand Christian Baur still raises eyebrows in biblical and theological circles and is still met with a mixture of laudatory praise or grave opprobrium. While the school's reputation was largely built on its controversial historical-critical exegesis and commentary on the New Testament, several of its members contributed valuable and influential studies of the history of the early Church, a factor largely overlooked by often blinkered New Testament scholars. Concerned as they were with issues of philosophy and historical development, the specter of Hegel loomed large, and the contempt or skepticism which many of the 'Tübingen School's' members felt toward miraculous explanations involving divine providence and traditional narratives of church history put them on a collision course both with the increasingly Pietist establishment churches and the Prussian government.

The figure of F.C. Baur hardly needs extensive introduction. His views on the authorship of various New Testament books continue to prove scandalous in some circles of New Testament

¹⁵⁵ See below pp. 258f.

¹⁵⁶ See below pp. 243-248.

¹⁵⁷ For a brief introduction to this movement and its intellectual milieu see Neill & Wright (1988: 1-34). For its antecedents in eighteenth and nineteenth theology and philosophy see Mackay (1863). For a detailed and very useful history of the movement and its key thinkers see Harris (1975).

scholarship, and among his more notable pupils are to be found a no less towering and controversial nineteenth century figure as David Friedrich Strauss.¹⁵⁸ Harris in his extensive and enlightening study of the 'Tübingen School' made the comment that, of the towering figures of nineteenth century German theology:

'Scarcely ever was a theologian attacked with such venomous invective or so spitefully maligned as Baur.'¹⁵⁹

Even his colleagues, such as Hilgenfeld, found their relations with this man '...not as friendly and free from troubles as it could well have been under different circumstances,'¹⁶⁰ This said, as important a figure in the history of New Testament scholarship as Albert Schweitzer could praise him for his contribution to the historical-critical study of the Bible.¹⁶¹ The same might also be said of what he did for early Church history, even if it is his homonymic compatriot Walter Bauer who seems to attract all the abuse there.¹⁶²

As his controversial but distinguished career was drawing to a close in 1852, he published his still highly valuable *Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtsschreibung* an extended critical study of the historiography and hermeneutical underpinnings of church historians from Hegessipus to his own time. This work was followed only a year later by the first volumen of his own attempt at a universal church history in his *Die christliche Kirche von Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des sechsten Jahrhunderts*, which was entitled *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*.

The great advantage we have with regards to Baur's work on Montanism is that prior to publishing his most important work on church history he had provided the world with a fine survey of Church historiography beginning with Hegessipus and set out his own ideas about how the discipline should be practiced. In the introduction to *Epochs of Church History* we get a very good introduction to Baur's ideas concerning history in his own words and it is worth unpacking this to understand how he treats Montanism.

¹⁵⁸ On Baur see 'Baur, Ferdinand Christian' *ODCC* (1997:171). For a full and detailed treatment of Baur's theology and historiography see Hodgson's excellent studies (1966); (1968:3-40).

¹⁵⁹ Harris (1975:43).

¹⁶⁰ Quoted by Harris (1975:53).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² On Bauer's reputation see Bauer (1971 [1936]).

After discussing the extent and the limitations of his proposed survey Baur goes on to note:

‘In any event, no one can deny it to be in the nature of the case that, whereas on the one hand historical research must immerse itself in the mass of details (not without the danger of losing itself in the particular), on the other hand it must also rise again to the universal, to those Ideas that must be the guiding points of view and the illuminating stars on the long journey through the centuries.’¹⁶³

In this simplest of statements we actually receive a glimmer, present but not explicated in Baur’s other work, of his primary hermeneutical assumptions, here guided by a career of research and reading. While the influence of Hegel (and other idealists) is immediately discernable what is also starkly apparent is that Baur’s conception of history is not a systematic application of the Idea to history, but dialectic between the universality of the Idea and the particular of contingent historical events. While it would be impossible to survey how Baur goes on to sketch his epochs of Church historiography it is important to note that in each period and with each figure, whether it be Eusebius of Caesarea or his near contemporary August Neander, Baur is intent to identify what this overarching idea is and to analyse and critique each historian’s use of the concept. For Baur each historian must walk a tightrope between what he sees as the indispensable tools of historico-critical method and the philosophical assumptions of his age. In this sense Baur’s work can properly be called ‘historical theology,’ in that it seeks, by the tools of a philosophically (and despite his critics dogmatically) sensitive analysis of documents through the rationalist historico-critical method, to identify and define the workings of Spirit. To quote Hefner’s comparison of Baur and Ritschl:

‘...with the introduction of Paulinism begins the unending dynamic development of Christianity, which Baur charts as the continual struggle of antitheses within Christianity, which are transcended by a series of Christian syntheses. In the period which holds our present attention [i.e. the early Church], Baur traces this dynamic through two stages: Pauline and Jewish Christianity transcended in an incipient form of

¹⁶³ Baur (1968 [1852]:44).

the catholic church; Gnosticism and Montanism transcended in the firmly established church.’¹⁶⁴

Having looked at his own statements, and that of careful scholars of his work like Hefner and Hogkins it is now incumbent on us to look at the Baur’s writings on Montanism in particular and to see how its reconstruction of the Montanist movement has proved enduring up until the present day.

In his discussion in *Die christliche Kirche von Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des sechsten Jahrhunderts* Baur devoted a chapter Montanism,¹⁶⁵ arguing that like its second century counterpart in ‘Gnosticism’ (which he, like most of his generation, understood as a singular phenomenon and with limited scholarly resources) it had its origin in first principles, in this case a concern with eschatology, writing:

‘...in Montanism the cardinal point around which everything revolves is the end of things, the catastrophe toward which the course of the world is moving on.’¹⁶⁶

He elaborates on this statement by stating that:

‘The belief in the second coming of Christ, and the reaction against a view of the world which had lost its hold upon this belief, are the two leading moments which serve to explain the origin and character of Montanism.’¹⁶⁷

Baur, then, in a broad way anticipated later writers (notably Massingberd-Ford, Williams and to some extent Trevett) who would see in Jewish apocalyptic expectations and a primitive Christian belief found in various New Testament passages regarding the imminent *parousia* as the key elements for unlocking the origins of Montanism.

As the early church slowly abandoned this belief in an imminent end (a process by no means complete by the third century), a tendency Baur saw in writings of the New Testament itself, some groups held strong to their belief in the imminent *parousia*, seeing a clinging to various

¹⁶⁴ Hefner (1962:260).

¹⁶⁵ Much of this chapter in *Das Christentum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* is a reworking of his earlier article published in the *Theologische Jahrbucher* (1851:538-54).

¹⁶⁶ Baur (1879 [1853]: 245).

¹⁶⁷ Baur (1879 [1853]: 246).

eschatological promises as the task of the true Christians vis-à-vis their worldly brethren. Baur is emphatic about the millenarian aspects of Montanism:

‘Such were the Montanists; and this one of their most prominent traits. Even though it be admitted that millenarianism was at the time a universal Christian belief, still the Montanists were the most pronounced of all millenarians.’¹⁶⁸

Like all other writers on Montanist eschatology, Baur’s reconstruction rests strongly on a single oracle from the Montanist prophetess Maximilla and on Tertullian’s prayer for the kingdom to come. He believed the Montanists were awaiting the heavenly Jerusalem, and that their austerity and concern with the imminent *parousia* laid the foundation for their ecstatic prophecy.

The ecstatic prophecy of the Montanists, following the image given by Tertullian in his treatise on the veiling of virgins,¹⁶⁹ was one in which the Paraclete of John 14:16 represented the full-flowering of the hitherto growing revelation of God’s ultimate purpose, a veritable overflowing of the Spirit among Christians as they prepared to undergo (or were perhaps already undergoing) coming catastrophes. This ultimate revelation of the Paraclete was inherently moral:

‘....he is the strict spirit of moral severity, the declared foe of all laxity and indifference in moral things.’¹⁷⁰

It is in this sense that Baur believed scholars needed to understand Montanism’s various moral novelties.

In this way, for Baur, Montanism was (as it would be envisioned in later writes) an essentially eschatologically orientated movement whose ‘...fundamental idea, the source of all these regulations, was that the Christian lived in the last times, and stood at the end of the whole course of the world. This thought filled the Montanist’s mind as a belief, and could not but determine his behavior.’¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Baur (1879 [1853]: 247).

¹⁶⁹ Tert. *De Vir. Vel c.* 1.

¹⁷⁰ Baur (1879 [1853]: 250).

¹⁷¹ Baur (1879 [1853]: 251) .

Such an understanding of Montanism led to Baur's belief, no doubt following his pupils Schwegler and Ritschl here, that martyrdom was of key importance to Montanism and that in this there is really nothing theologically new in Montanism *per se*. Montanism was essentially a conservative reaction against the increasing accommodation of the Great Church to the world, the Montanists must deny all things of the flesh in preparation of the imminent end. The revelations of the Paraclete understood as the final manifestation of the divine work in history overshadows the earlier revelations contained in the gospels and Paul.

'Although the Paraclete does no more than carry out the intentions of Christ and the apostles, yet, because his action comes after theirs, it is possible for him at this ,later period to effect what was impossible before.'¹⁷²

In this age of the Paraclete the dichotomy of the flesh and the spirit is pushed to its logical extreme, the flesh must now be totally denied as of this world:

'The moral doctrine of Montanus is thus summed up on one simple requirement- to break with the world, as the world itself to the eye of the Montanists is breaking to pieces and collapsing; to dissolve the bonds by which the spirit and flesh were held together, as the world is itself in process of dissolution.'¹⁷³

By drawing this conclusion Baur believes he is justified in drawing a fundamental link between Montanism and 'Gnosticism,' in that he believes both look toward a totally transformed, transcendent reality to that of the material world, 'Gnosticism' in the return to the preexistent and pure *pleroma* which existed before creation, Montanism in the consummation of the *eschaton*. This transcendent reality is drawn in the present in the binary opposites of spirit/matter in 'Gnosticism' and spirit/flesh in Montanism. For Baur both these movements were flawed in that they failed to properly take account of the institutional and historically grounded aspects of Christian life and what Baur sees as the universality of the Christian message. As Hefner succinctly notes:

¹⁷² Baur (1879 [1853]: 253).

¹⁷³ Baur (1879 [1853]: 254).

‘Gnosticism threatened to dissolve Christianity’s particularity; Montanism threatened to enslave it within its particularity.’¹⁷⁴

For Baur, Montanism, by its rigorist morality and expectation of an imminent end, failed to recognize the historical nature of Christianity and that its development was the working of the Idea in history. Baur found support for his thesis in what he perceived as the important conflict over the ‘power of the keys’ which took place between Montanists and bishops.

By drawing this conclusion, heavily laden with dialectic as it is, Baur bypassed the problem of Montanist origins. Baur claimed that any questioning into this, such as that of Neander, was utterly pointless once the theological notions of the movement had been traced and the dialectic historical process isolated, as he wrote of Neander:

‘His principal source of error is that he allows himself to be misled by the vague statements we have about the person of Montanus, and consequently explains the character of Montanism by the nature-elements of the ancient Phrygian religion, and the Phrygian temperament, as manifested in the ecstasies of the priests of Cybele and Bacchus. To follow him is only to allow ourselves to be diverted, at the outset of our inquiry, from the right point of observation.’¹⁷⁵

This lack of focus on Montanist origins, coupled with the overly dogmatic application of Hegelian logic, is seen by most as the key weakness of Baur’s work. His use almost solely of the works of Tertullian casts a disquieting shadow over the validity of his thesis and its ultimate rejection by later scholars. This said, Baur’s work captures in essence the dialectic process which some German scholars have unwittingly continued to attribute to the Montanist crisis, and if his work is perhaps little read today other than as a study in the history of ideas its enormous impact, whether on its own or filtered through the work and assumptions of other scholars is undeniable.

While we might name a number of late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars who have treated Montanism, inevitably pride of place in concluding this survey must go to Adolf von Harnack.

¹⁷⁴ Hefner (1962:261).

¹⁷⁵ Baur (1879 [1853]: 256 n. 1).

The contribution of Adolf von Harnack to the modern study of Church History is rightly considered immeasurable, if at times very controversial.¹⁷⁶ This towering figure of Prussian brilliance remains an indispensable reference point for nearly any question one can think of on the early Christian church. That a figure such as Harnack, however, remains beyond reproach in some circles goes without saying and his pervasive influence and the intransigence and almost infallibility with which his positions are often accepted has cast just as wide a shadow as the light his work has shed on many important questions concerning the early Church.

With regard to Montanism Harnack dedicates just under ten pages in his expansive and groundbreaking *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (1885) the influence of which is still felt among historians.¹⁷⁷ For Harnack, whose work was heavily influenced by Ritschl, Montanism continued to represent a stage in the increasingly secularisation and degeneration of the purity of the Apostolic Church. The detrimental outcomes of what he calls the Montanist struggle, he summarises as:

‘The Church merely regarded herself all the more strictly as a legal community basing the truth of its title on its historic and objective foundations, and gave a coreresponding new interpretation to the attribute of holiness she claimed. She expressly recognised two distinct classes in her midst, a spiritual and a secular, as well as a double standard of morality. Moreover, she renounced her character as a communion of those who were sure of salvation, and substituted the claim to be an educational institution and a necessary condition of redemption.’¹⁷⁸

Harnack’s interpretation, which continued to be important amongst German scholars like Aland and vonCampenhausen, was that Montanus ‘...felt called upon to realise the promises held forth in the Fourth Gospel. He explained these by the Apocalypse, and declared that he himself was the Paraclete whom Christ had promised – that Paraclete in whom Jesus Christ himself, nay, even God the Father Almighty, comes to his own to guide them to all truth, to gather those that are dispersed, and to bring them into one flock.’¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ For surveys of this see Frend (2001:83-102) and (2003:9-31).

¹⁷⁷ King (2003) dedicated an entire chapter of her fascinating book to Harnack’s construction of Gnosticism and how it related to his entire understanding of the nature of Christianity and history.

¹⁷⁸ Harnack (1896: 94).

¹⁷⁹ Harnack (1896:95).

This vision of Johannine influence on Montanus, by Harnack's own admission, was not the popular interpretation of this period. Harnack, like Baur, rejected any pagan influence on Montanism, instead writing this off as a case of the politically expedient reproaches of the Great Church.¹⁸⁰ Harnack's rejection of this point is most strongly asserted in his deafening silence in even mentioning the accusations and allusions to pagan practices, with the exception of one footnote to Tertullian *De Jejunio*.¹⁸¹

For Harnack Montanism was, essentially, a protest movement, a conservative reaction against the increasing secularization of the Church. One can see here the influence of Ernst Troeltsch's church/sect typology which again has continued (through attenuated form) to play a role in modern reconstructions.¹⁸²

While this is by no means a complete survey of the opinions of nineteenth century German historiography of Montanism it does help us to establish, with some precision, the origins of a number of the scholarly theories which have remained influential throughout the twentieth century. The findings of this research can be summarized in a number of statements.

Beginning with Neander a tendency in scholarship to attribute a large degree of Montanist thinking to the influence of Phrygian paganism and enthusiasm has had a strong influence. This was continued particularly through the work of the great Scottish scholar William Mitchell Ramsay, and found further expression in the twentieth century works of the American Dominican Freeman, the Danish scholar Schepelern, and the most recent German monograph of Hirschmann.¹⁸³

Ritschl's view, which while acknowledging the potentiality for a 'pagan' interpretation of these phenomenon prefers to see Montanism as a primitive Christian movement which was found suspicious as a result of its enthusiasm, the similar view is found in Stewart-Sykes. Similarly, the French scholar Pierre De Labriolle was further influenced by this view.

¹⁸⁰ Harnack (1896:104) writes:

'The lax Christians, who, on the strength of their objective possession viz., the apostolic doctrine and writings, sought to live comfortably by conforming to the ways of the world, necessarily sought to rid themselves of the inconvenient societies and inconvenient monitors; and they could only do so by reproaching the latter with heresy and unchristian assumptions.'

¹⁸¹ Harnack (1896:106 n. 4).

¹⁸² On Troeltsch and Harnack see Pauck (1964).

¹⁸³ See below pp. 243-248.

Perhaps, however, the strongest influence has remained that of Harnack and in particular his emphasis on the Johannine roots of Montanism which has often been repeated, in particular by German scholars, beginning with Lietzmann and running through the work of von Campenhausen and Kurt Aland.

The vagaries of the influence of these scholars can largely be played down to matters of translation. While Neander, Baur and Harnack were all translated in full into English, all the minor scholars have remained accessible only to those with grounding in theological German (and in Ritschl's case patience for decoding Gothic script). As much of the most fruitful work on Montanism in recent years has been undertaken in English it is not surprising that the work of these other scholars has largely remained unexplored, however, hopefully what the survey of this paper has achieved is to demonstrate that most, if not all of the theories concerning the elusive Montanist movement which have been put forward today all owe something to the theological constructions of these nineteenth century German scholars.

Having established this point the task ahead of us is to determine as far as possible the veracity and fallacies contained in these scholarly trajectories regarding Montanism and to establish a more realistic understanding of the historical phenomenon of Montanism, not over encumbered by the philosophical and theological concerns of a particular time period but rather situated contextually and theoretically in the thought-world of both second century Christianity and the socio-religious world of Roman Asia Minor.

Chapter 2 The Geographical Milieu.

In terms of the geography of religions Roman Asia Minor poses two particularly startling question with regard to the widespread diffusion of Christianity in this region at such an early date. First, what was it about the environment of Asia Minor in particular which aided such a widespread diffusion of Christianity so early. Second, what environmental and geographical elements led to this region later to become a 'hotbed of heresy.' To answer these two related questions it is necessary to realise that the physical and political geography of the Anatolia Mid-West combined here to both aid the diffusion and mitigate the detrimental factors such as persecution. It is against the backdrop of this constant interplay between people and their environment that the rise of Montanism must be traced but such a process has long been impeded by false hypotheses and *a priori* assumptions.

2. 1. The Holy Land of the Montanists.

Since at least the days of Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century travellers from Western Europe have been traversing the plains of Western Anatolia, either on errands of diplomacy or quests of plunder.¹⁸⁴ Beginning with the horseback journeys of British explorer James Hamilton and the Frenchmen Le Bas and Waddington in the 1830s a whole new dimension of the ancient world was slowly opening up to scholars, as Frend puts it succinctly in his *Archaeology of Early Christianity*:

'In the nineteenth century skeletons of temples, churches, theatres, market-places and other public buildings thrust broken columns and walls skyward, mute witnesses to past civilizations awaiting the discovery of travellers and archaeologists. Roman milestones still marked the route taken by once-great highways crossing the country from east to west. Even older Hittite and Phrygian monuments had been left standing where they had been set up 3,000 or so years before. A harvest of enormous wealth awaited those who had the wit and resources to gather it.'¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Haspels (1956:313-322).

¹⁸⁵ Frend (1996:93).

However, it was with the ongoing construction of the Ottoman railway system beginning with the opening of the Izmir-Aydin line in 1860 and the temporarily improved relationship between Britain and the Ottoman empire with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 that really opened up the area for scholars. Among the many earlier pioneers, however, it was a young William Mitchell Ramsay, a figure whose name will loom large in the pages to follow, who is due pride of place.

Beginning with his first foray into Turkey in the 1880, Ramsay became intimately familiar with the landscape over a number of expeditions, often with amusing and surprising results. On the advice of the British military consul Colonel Sir James Wilson, Ramsay set forth into the wild and potentially dangerous Anatolian Mid-West, spurning the classical sites of the Aegean coast for the potentialities which lay in wait in the valleys and highlands of ancient Phrygia and Galatia.¹⁸⁶

More on Ramsay and his explorations will appear throughout this work, as no other scholar (with the exception of perhaps Stephen Mitchell) has been blessed with so many momentous finds and such detailed exploration of this important region in the history of antiquity and the church.¹⁸⁷ For our purposes here it suffices to say that it was for the most part he who pioneered the important study of Montanism as a phenomenon against its socio-cultural and geographical milieu as it was beginning to be explored on the ground, writing as early as 1895 in the publication of his Mansfield Lectures, *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170*, Ramsay states:

‘It [Montanism] made a Phrygian mountain glen the centre of the Church; and, as a necessary consequence, the marked character of the country and the people impressed itself more and more on their religion. It is a trite subject, on which I need not dwell, how many traces of the old enthusiastic religion of Phrygian are to be found in Montanism.’¹⁸⁸

His description of these comparisons as ‘trite,’ however has created numerous misinterpretations and anachronisms in the assessment of the evidence for the relationship

¹⁸⁶ Frend (1996:94); (2003:84f.).

¹⁸⁷ For a very useful resume of Ramsay’s career and critical analysis of his theories see Frend (2003:82-107).

¹⁸⁸ Ramsay (1895b:438).

between Montanism and its environment, and while Ramsay was always to maintain the belief that '...it is impossible to write any sketch of Phrygian religion without continual reference to the history and ethnology of the Phrygian people,'¹⁸⁹ his description of the Phrygian people was often indicative more of his overall concern for Anatolia as the meeting place of east and west and the perennial conflict which this entailed.¹⁹⁰

Despite his flaws his two-volume masterpiece *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* remains to the present irreplaceable for the monuments of Western Anatolia, many of which were lost or destroyed in the years following the First World War and the subsequent conflicts between Turkey and Greece, and even today scholars continue to publish inscriptions from his surviving notebooks.¹⁹¹

In this work, following the Episcopal lists preserved in Hierocles, Ramsay was one of the first (if not the first) scholars to speculate on the location of the Montanist holy cities of Pepuza and Tymion, and that of Ardabau and thus is a fitting person to begin a brief resume of the search for the Montanist New Jerusalem.

2.2 The Problem of the Geographical Origins of Montanism.

Whether acknowledged or not simply defining Montanism as a movement of Phrygian origin significantly complicates what this in-fact means. Phrygia was not a clearly defined area in antiquity and even if we adopt (as I propose we do) a designation like the 'Phrygian Cultural Area' this still leaves us with the problem of the precise or approximate geographical origins and the subsequent diffusion of Montanism. The problematic nature of this question is immediately clear, if we cannot isolate its origin we cannot know from whither to trace its development and hypothesize what localized factors contributed to its growth and expansion. In a region where localization of distinct religious cults and regional variations are so broad precision becomes imperative.¹⁹²

Following the increasing interest in the epigraphy of Asia Minor in the train of Ramsay's work a number of theories have been proposed by various scholars to deal with this issue, particularly

¹⁸⁹ Ramsay (1917:900).

¹⁹⁰ On Ramsay's incipient 'Orientalism' see below and Frend (2003:82f.).

¹⁹¹ E.g. Byrne & Labarre (2006).

¹⁹² On the importance and diversity of local cults see below pp. 83-96.

the Scottish school of epigraphers associated with Ramsay (W.M. Calder and J.G.C. Anderson). While these theories have largely fallen out of favour today, they still find a hearing, particularly in the popular works of Frend, and are thus worth recounting and critiquing before we move on to more fertile pastures.

Beginning with the work of Ramsay in the late nineteenth century we can comfortably separate these theories into three main theses, the (1) 'Philadelphian Thesis' particularly as it relates to the potential locations for Ardabau. The (2) 'Northern Anatolian Thesis' as it relates to the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions of the Upper Tembris valley, and the (3) 'South-Western Thesis' as it relates to the 'Eumeneian Formula' and other so-called crypto-Christian formulae. Before, however, dealing with these theories, we should begin with the ancient literary evidence in the Anonymous Anti-Montanist for the origins of the movement and a discussion of the meanings of these passages.

2.3. 'Ardabau, a small town in Phrygian Mysia.'

After covering the literary situation of the Anonymous Anti-Montanist Eusebius goes on to give selections from this authors writings, it is in these fragments that we arrive at the important statement:

Ἡ τοίνυν ἔνστασις αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ πρόσφατος τοῦ ἀποσχίσματος αἵρεσις πρὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, τὴν αἰτίαν ἔσχε τοιαύτην· κώμη τις εἶναι λέγεται ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν Φρυγίαν Μυσίᾳ, καλουμένη Ἀρδαβαῦ τοῦνομα·

The location of this mysterious Ardabau has been debated amongst scholars. In his *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* Ramsay wrote:

'Further, Pepuza was probably not far from the earliest scene of the activity of Montanus. Now he was first filled with the Spirit at Ardabau in Phrygian Mysia; this peculiar term may very well indicate the Mysian country that lay S. and SE. from Philadelphia on the Phrygian frontier. If Ardabau were in that region, the situation which we have assigned to Pepuza would be intermediate between it and the cities of Eumeneia, &c., in which the opposition to Montanism in the Phrygian Church was first roused.'¹⁹³

It is in n. 5 to this statement that we see the first designation of the link between Phrygian origins and Philadelphia, where Ramsay, through an argument that a possible corruption had taken place in the city name of Kallataba in the Cogamis valley mentioned by Herodotus,¹⁹⁴ which in later Greek could have appeared as Kardaba and subsequently misconstrued as Ardabau. Kallataba was situated according to Ramsay's maps around five or ten miles south east of Philadelphia on the Cogamis river.¹⁹⁵ This region, as Ramsay describes it in his *Letters to the Seven Churches* was a natural missionary area, which had functioned, in Ramsay's opinion, as a beacon for Hellenized culture against oriental influence.¹⁹⁶ Ramsay described the road which ran from this region as one of the important routes by which trade and communication

¹⁹³ Ramsay (1895:573f. esp. 573 n.5).

¹⁹⁴ Ramsay (1895:199f.).

¹⁹⁵ See Ramsay (Map 1 Vol. 1 xiii).

¹⁹⁶ Ramsay (1994 [1904]:286-302).

was conducted between the harbor of Smyrna through Phrygia and further into the east, he further goes on to describe:

‘...the imperial post road of the first century, coming from Rome by Troas, Pergamum, and Sardis, passed through Philadelphia and went on to the East; and thus Philadelphia was a stage on the main line of imperial communication. This ceased to be the case when the later overland route by Constantinople (Byzantium, as it was then called) and Ancyra was organized in the second century.’¹⁹⁷

For Ramsay the verse relating to the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:8 indicates this ‘open-door’ for a missionary endeavour which he believed was taken up by the fledgling Philadelphian church. This region was also an area of intense seismic activity (marked in particular by the massive earthquake of 19 CE described by Strabo),¹⁹⁸ which Ramsay saw as increasing the imminent expectations of calamity of later residents of this region (here we must note here that the Montanists expected earthquakes and other natural disasters as portents for their eschatological timetabling).¹⁹⁹

This view of Philadelphia as the origin of Montanism has received a good deal of support in later scholarship, William Moir Calder accepted it with some additions, while more recently Colin Hemer in his study of the seven churches of Revelation, substantially agreed with Ramsay, though he was less emphatic about the missionary nature of Philadelphia.²⁰⁰ Most recently it has been restated by Rex Butler in the introductory remarks concerning Montanism in his study of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitis*.²⁰¹

Calder, in his important article ‘Philadelphia and Montanism,’ stated that the name Ardabau was most certainly a corruption, and that if we take the vague designation of ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν Φρυγίαν Μυσίᾳ literally then this could indicate any place situated in the massive region between Philadelphia and Dorylaion.²⁰² While Calder did not agree outright

¹⁹⁷ Ramsay (1994 [1904]:289).

¹⁹⁸ Ramsay (1994 [1904]:290ff.). Str. XII.8.17-18.

¹⁹⁹ Euseb. *h.e.* V. 16.5.

²⁰⁰ Hemer (1984:155) notes:

‘This view is overstated, but its general probability is consistent with the historical and geographical facts and with the methods of Attalid policy.’

²⁰¹ Butler (2006:11-14).

²⁰² Calder (1923:324).

with Ramsay's conjectures he did refer to it as a 'very attractive suggestion,' which he saw as further supported by the fact that the earliest Montanist centres were located along cities and villages on the road into the Meander and surrounding valleys, that is, in the regions south east of Philadelphia.²⁰³

Where Calder differed from Ramsay, however, was that he did not *a priori* accept any of Ramsay's philological and ethno-archaeological conjectures concerning place names.²⁰⁴

Instead Calder relied on the perceived similarities between the situation of the Philadelphian church described in Revelation, the epistles of Ignatius, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the earliest Montanist oracles as sufficient evidence to postulate a Philadelphian origin for the movement, writing:

'The links between the Philadelphian Letter itself and Montanist doctrine are sufficiently obvious. Without laying undue stress on the 'door set before' Philadelphia, which is clearly to be interpreted as the route of missionary enterprise leading up into Phrygia opposite the graves of the city, we may note that the commendation 'though has not denied my name' is addressed to the Church in whose orbit we find, at a later date, the birthplace of a sect which showed that they could deserve this commendation in circumstances of extreme danger.'²⁰⁵

For Calder, following in some sense Ramsay's earlier work, Montanism followed this so-called 'missionary road' which ran out of Philadelphia into the Phrygian regions of the Meander valley. Like Ramsay, as we will see below, Calder's reconstruction relied on a reconstruction of the conflicts inherent in the book of Revelation and a projection of these a number of generations forward to the time of the origins of Montanism.²⁰⁶ It also relied heavily on the theorie (now largely discredited) that the Montanists courted 'voluntary martyrdom' and their epitaphs can be solely identified by 'open-confession.'²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Calder (1923:324).

²⁰⁵ Calder (1923:327).

²⁰⁶ On this matter see Trevett (1989:313-338).

²⁰⁷ Tabbernee (1997:200-202).

Later scholars have either uncritically followed these earlier conjectures or been more circumspect in their identifications.²⁰⁸ Hemer, for instance, almost wholeheartedly supported Calder's view, concluding his chapter on Philadelphia by writing:

'Philadelphia was a notable centre of early Christian prophecy. In the controversies over authority the Revelation itself may have been under attack and its message have become a particular comfort and charter for those who applied it to themselves. It thus became a formative factor in the later history of the church and a stimulus to a vigorous and defiant temper in the face of official rejection. This accords with the circumstantial probability of Calder's case for the connection of Montanism with the district. A closer examination of the character of Montanism and its historical and geographical antecedents brings out further points of relationship with the Revelation, especially with passages related to Philadelphia. The Montanist claim to provide inspired teaching additional to the apostolic writings may have been an extreme answer to a challenge to those writings. Their expectation of the descent of the New Jerusalem near Pepuza is a concept derived from the Revelation and related to Philadelphia.'²⁰⁹

To give a few examples from other scholars, Frend simply takes Calder's thesis as a given (citing Schepelern),²¹⁰ whereas Tabbernee suggests (following Strobel)²¹¹ that Ortaköy (ancient Atyochorion),²¹² located around forty kilometres north east of Hierapolis, was the most likely site though it is now under water.²¹³ However, another intriguing interpretation relating to the religious meaning of Ardabau exists and this is worth discussing.

²⁰⁸ For instance Carroll (1983) in his thesis on the geography of Montanism rehashes Calder and Ramsay at length. J.G.C. Anderson (1906:183-227) makes a number of interesting remarks but has largely followed Ramsay.

²⁰⁹ Hemer (1986:176f.).

²¹⁰ Frend (1984:254, 266 n.135).

²¹¹ Strobel (1980:38-49). Tabbernee (1997:18).

²¹² Robert (1962:357-61).

²¹³ Tabbernee (2008:5 n. 8).

2.4. Ardabau – A Place of Revelation.

The great Romanian scholar of religion Mircea Eliade often spoke of what he called the *Axis Mundi* which in his celebrated work *The Sacred and Profane* he described as a centre of the cosmos, the place which symbolises and reiterates the cosmic processes of a community's myths and beliefs. Among the most central of the various examples found across cultures is the symbol of the mountain, as Eliade writes:

‘...the mountain occurs among the images that express the connection between heaven and earth; hence it is believed to be at the center of the world. And in a number of cultures we do in fact hear of such mountains, real or mythical, situated at the centre of the world.’²¹⁴

The mountain, then, is a place of revelation, where the prophet, in a cross-cultural sense, and during ecstatic trance or otherwise, receives divine instruction, whether this by Mohammad on Mount Hijra or Moses on Mount Sinai. While many are nowadays critical or at least wary of Eliade's approach to religious symbolism,²¹⁵ this concept of the importance of the mountain as a place of revelation, when understood against the physical geography of central Phrygia and the mythological symbolism of the book of Revelation and other apocalyptic literature, may hold an interpretive key to understanding the meaning of Ardabau.

Since 1900 a few scholars, following Preuschen, have identified the Ardabau in Eusebius' source with the Ardath in IV Ezra 9:26. Preuschen, noting the variations in the manuscript tradition for IV Ezra 9:26 in the spelling of Ardaf and acknowledging the tradition of the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem in a field, pointed out that:

‘Man könnte daher versucht sein, die Erzählung des Apolinarius für eine Verwechselung zu halten anzunehmen, dass Montanus oder die montanistischen Kreise für ihre Heimat (wohl Pepuza, wo dies Secte nach Euseb. h.e. V, 18, 13 besonders ihr Wesen triebe) einen Geheimnamen brauchten, den sie dem 4 Esrabuche

²¹⁴ Eliade (1959:38). For further details see Eliade (1958: 99f.; 122).

²¹⁵ For a concise assessment and discussion of Eliade's contribution see Rudolph (1989:101-127). For a summary and critique of his theories see Pals (1997:158-197).

entnahmen. Die Gleichheit der situation macht die Entlehnung des Namens begreiflich.²¹⁶

Given the associations made between Jewish/Jewish-Christian milieu and Montanism in a number of writers, particularly Massingberd-Ford, this interpretation needs to be looked at in more detail.²¹⁷

The text of IV Ezra, normally dated to sometime after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, probably c. 100 CE,²¹⁸ is often seen as a classic example of Jewish apocalyptic and a theological response to crisis. The particular passage in which Ardath is mentioned reads:

‘So I went my way into the field which is called Ardath, like as he commanded me; and there I sat among the flowers, and did eat of the herbs of the field, and the meat of the same satisfied me.’²¹⁹

The most complete treatment of this question (with some tacit approval) is given by Christine Trevett who notes that the use of a spiritual topography may be a deliberate attempt to suggest a fertile field area as the place of revelation (Ardath functions in this sense in IV Ezra) and of the vision of the heavenly city in IV Ezra 10:27, she also believes that the geography of the surrounding countryside in Phrygia may have conjured up images similar to those found in IV Ezra,²²⁰ for instance in 7:6 where it notes:

‘There is a city build and set on a plain, and it is full of all good things; but the entrance to it is narrow and set in a precipitous place, so that there is fire on the right hand and deep water on the left; and there is only one path lying between them, that is, between the fire and the water, so that only one man can walk upon that path. If the

²¹⁶ Preuschen (1900:266).

²¹⁷ Massingberd-Ford (1966:145-158). Also more recently the close connection between Judaism and Montanism has been restated by Mitchell (2005:207-223).

²¹⁸ On dating of 4 Ezra see Metzger (1983:520).

²¹⁹ IV Ezra 9:26 [Trans. Metzger].

²²⁰ Trevett (1993:26) writes: ‘The geography of the region of Turkey east of Alaşehir, with its basins and massifs, plains and long assents, offers plenty of scope for identification.’

city is given to a man for an inheritance, how will the heir receive inheritance unless he passes through the danger set before him?'²²¹

While certainly one could see the Montanists interpreting their own physical geography this way (and indeed in more recent work Tabbernee and Lampe have emphasized this point with relation to Revelation), this remains a problematic interpretation on a number of grounds. Figurative and symbolic language such as this is part and parcel with revelatory discourses of this kind, that is, it is far from unique to IV Ezra. Strobel is probably right in a broad sense when he writes:

'Wir möchten grundsätzlich annehmen, dass die überau massive Erwartung des Montanisten, die in spezifischer Weise ortsgebunden war, durch eine in der Tat prophetische Überzeugung und Literatur gestützt war.'²²²

But this does not necessarily preclude his acceptance of the Ardabau/Ardat as much a spiritual as a topographical clue.

While Trevett, Strobel and other scholars are certainly correct in pointing out that certain affinities exist between the apocalyptic visions and in particular the eschatological timetabling of IV Ezra and the early Montanist oracles, one is more inclined to follow Kurt Aland who put these down to the influence of Revelation and the contemporaneous chiliastic elements of theology in Asia Minor on the Montanists rather than anything else.²²³ The same goes for any speculation on spiritual topography as a means of understanding the importance of Montanist holy places, once again Revelation rather than, or in addition to, IV Ezra seems a more plausible and immediate point of reference.

Bearing in mind the idea of the mountain as a place of revelation as a perennial theme of religious symbolism, it is possible to look again at the text of Revelation and the location proposed by Tabbernee and Lampe as the location of Pepuza to give us some idea of where or what Ardabau was. Revelation 21:10 reads:

²²¹ IV Ezra 7:6-9 [Trans. Metzger].

²²² Strobel (1980: 46 n.37).

²²³ Aland (1960:105-48), Aland previously stated his thesis more succinctly in (1955:109-116).

‘And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.’²²⁴

Given the key importance of Revelation 21 in the understanding of the descent of the New Jerusalem it is probably here that we should begin to think of the location of Ardabau as the mountain from which Montanus may have seen his purported prophecy. Indeed the importance of this prophecy in is thought is brought out by Tertullian in his comment in *Adversus Marcionem*:

‘This (is the city) with which Ezekiel was acquainted, the apostle John had seen, and for which the saying of the New Prophecy, which belongs to our faith, provides evidence – having even predicted an appearance of an image of the city, as a portent, before it will actually be made manifest.’²²⁵

While the original saying of Montanus on this point has not survived though we can surmise from the comment in the Anti-Montanist Apollonius (quoted in Eusebius), which accuses Montanus of having ‘...named Pepyza and Tymion Jerusalem (now these are small towns in Phrygia), who wanted people together there from everywhere,’²²⁶ that the early Montanists localized eschatological expectation, and whether understood in a chiliastic sense or not, it was a key feature of early Montanism. As Tabbernee wrote in a popular account of his discovery of what is most likely the site of Pepuza:

‘Geographic limitations, however, raised few enduring obstacles to the construction of an apocalyptic sacred space in the speculative eschatology of Montanus’ time – or later.’²²⁷

Indeed, the localization of the New Jerusalem, while novel in Montanism, has been a continual feature of Millenarian movements throughout history, whether this be the early Mormons’ understanding of Utah or the Kimbanguist understanding of a localized New Jerusalem in Southern Africa.²²⁸

²²⁴ Revelation 21:10 [Trans. NRSV].

²²⁵ Tertullian, *Marc.* III.24.4.

²²⁶ Euseb. *h.e.* V.18.2 cited in Heine (1989:23).

²²⁷ Tabbernee (2007:77).

²²⁸ See below p. 220.

For our understanding of the location of Ardabau as the place of revelation spoken of in Revelation 21, rather than (or in addition to) the passages in 4 Ezra, it has become clear (at least if Tabbernee and Lampe's contentions are right) that the location of Pepuza and Tymion, situated as they are on either side of a mountain, likely has a spatial and spiritual understanding. As Tabbernee writes:

'In finding these sites, we also discovered the real reason for the single designation for the two settlements Pepuza and Tymion were, respectively for Montanus and his followers, the southern and northern "portals" of the Montanist "New Jerusalem" the large flat agricultural plateau between them being the ideal "landing pad" for the cube-like, bejewelled holy city described in minute detail in Rev. 21:1-22:5 (cf. Rev. 3:12).'²²⁹

To conclude, the puzzle of the location of Ardabau, or whether it is meant to represent a spiritual location or mountain of revelation rather than a genuine geographical location, has meant that scholars have sought the origins of Montanism elsewhere. While seeking the origins of Montanism in the rigor of the Philadelphian church is certainly possible, the spiritual topography explanation proposed by Tabbernee does seem the most sensible conclusion, however before moving on it is important to explore the other two-theses based on epigraphic evidence which became most prevalent in the scholarship of the Scottish epigraphers and later writers, the so-called the 'South-Central Thesis,' and the 'Northern Thesis.'

²²⁹ Tabbernee (2007:77). For a more detailed discussion of this see Tabbernee & Lampe (2008).

2.5 The Epigraphic Theses.

The traditional view, first hypothesized, by Ramsay in 1888, was that two distinct traditions can be traced in Phrygia (almost exclusively by epigraphic remains).²³⁰ The first was represented by the so-called 'Eumeneian formula,' an extremely common grave imprecation which warns a potential grave desecrator, with various variations, that 'he will reckon with God.'²³¹

While there has been some debate over this formula, the central point in Ramsay's thesis was that this was what he called a 'crypto-Christian' confession, as he later wrote in *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*:

'...it was necessary that these forms should not be too openly Christian: they must be so general in expression as not to constitute an open declaration of their religion...Various expressions were devised to suit this need, to avoid at once offence against the common public feeling and outrage to private Christian feeling...' ²³²

For Ramsay, who in his work *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170* had stressed the widespread popular hatred of Christians and their need to be circumspect,²³³ this formula was representative of a particular strand of early Christianity which sought some accommodation with the surrounding society, evidenced in the high social standing of a number of those who adopted this formula and in what he saw as their direct contrast with so-called 'Open-Confession' or 'Phanero-Christian' inscriptions evidenced elsewhere,²³⁴ as he wrote back in 1888:

'During a time when Christianity was proscribed, when its professors were subject to frequent persecution, it is of course very rare to find on a tomb any express statement as to the religion of the deceased. Such a statement might bring the whole surviving family into danger. It is highly probable that many epitaphs of Christians escape us,

²³⁰ Ramsay (1888:241-267.

²³¹ See above p. 25.

²³² Ramsay (1897:497f.).

²³³ Ramsay (1895b:446-374) contains his extended discussion on the causes and extent of anti-Christian feeling.

²³⁴ On the social status of these Christians see below pp. 119-129.

because they contain nothing to characterize them as Christian, mentioning only names and relationships.’²³⁵

The ‘Eumeneian formula,’ then, was seen by Ramsay and his followers as originating in the cities of the Aegean coast and spreading inland from the churches founded by St. Paul, particularly the church of Laodicea. This ‘South-Central Christianity,’ as Ramsay called it, eventually took root particularly in the regions of Eumeneia and the adjacent areas of the Phrygian Pentapolis and Meander valley. This said, Ramsay later argued that the Eumeneian formula was likely autochthonous to Eumeneia itself, writing:

‘[The Eumeneian formula] seems to have been originated in Eumeneia, and to have thence spread to some of the surrounding cities.’²³⁶

While certainly Ramsay’s theory is interesting it does have its problems, many of which have surfaced as the result of subsequent epigraphical finds. A more satisfactory theory for the ‘Eumeneian Formula,’ as indicated above, is that it has its roots in Pisidian-Antioch, a city which we know was early evangelised by Paul and which contains early (late second century) examples of this formula as well as its pagan antecedents.²³⁷ From here it seems more sensible that it spread north into Eumeneia via trade routes and eventually as far north as the Upper Tembris valley and Bithynia where it shows up in the third century in a modified form.²³⁸

Due to the sporadic and limited nature of persecution during this time it seems more likely that this formula represents a modification of earlier pagan epitaphs in order to give them monotheistic content, something which could hardly have been missed by their contemporaries. That they represent a totally different, somewhat cowardly and accommodating form of Christianity seems to owe more to Ramsay’s reading of the book of Revelation and its words concerning the ‘lukewarm’ Christians of Laodicea than in the reality of the situation. Indeed, if they did think this would hide their identity, it demonstrably did not

²³⁵ Ramsay (1888:243).

²³⁶ Ramsay (1897:498).

²³⁷ See above p. 15.

²³⁸ See above p. 16.

work; Christians from Eumeneia were certainly martyred in the second century and perhaps also the third century.²³⁹

The other form of Christianity proposed by Ramsay was a more extreme and confrontational form had its roots either in the apparently thriving churches of Bithynia encountered by Pliny the Younger c. 112 CE or alternatively in the rigorist Philadelphian church of Revelation (Ramsay vacillates between theories). This 'Northern Christianity' was seen to spread from Philadelphia into, in particular, the Upper Tembris valley, eventually developing into full-blown Montanism in the mid-second century. This form was characterised by its open-confession of faith, the so-called 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions, whose open and 'confrontational' character has been seen by past scholars as a hallmark (derived exclusively from Tertullian) of Montanist courting of 'voluntary martyrdom.'²⁴⁰

This 'Northern Thesis,' was first proposed by Ramsay in an 1888 article published in *The Expositor* entitled 'Early Christian Monuments of Phrygia: A Study in the Early History of the Church I.' In this article, one of Ramsay's earliest publications on the topic, he stated this thesis as:

'What then was the origin of this peculiar Christianity of north-western Phrygia? No direct evidence exists, but as it is so clearly distinct from the southern Phrygian Church movement, it must have come from the north. The great strength of Christianity in Bithynia, to the north of Phrygia, attested by Pliny as early as 102 AD, occurs to us as probably a connected phenomenon. Bithynian Christians would naturally pass down by way of Cotiaion to the Prepenisseis; this was the most natural road for their missionary enterprise to take. A slight positive presumption in favour of the connexion is furnished by a passage in the biography of a Bithynian saint, Zeno of Nicomedeia, "I have buried my wife, a Christian, but I have sons who are Christians with me," This sounds like a reminiscence of the formula "Christians for Christians."²⁴¹

For Ramsay this missionary Christianity of the Bithynian and Pontic regions would have travelled along the 'Northern Road,' which traced its way from Nicomedia, through Dorylaum

²³⁹ See below pp. 224-227.

²⁴⁰ See below pp. 228-242.

²⁴¹ Ramsay (1888:264).

to Cotiaenum and through the Tembris valley to Acmonia and the Meander valley.²⁴² It was this 'Northern Christianity' responding to early persecutions alluded to in I Peter and the epistles of Pliny, who (for the most part) maintained an open-confession of the faith in the face of persecution which was eventually to manifest itself in Montanism and the so-called defiance of the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions.²⁴³ It was these churches who were addressed in the greetings in I Peter 1:1f. which reads:

'To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.'²⁴⁴

While this is again a possibility, the evidence for early Christianity in this region, as the statement of Ramsay above indicates (and as the sadly unpublished research of Johnson supports) is far from expansive, and any argument concerning a more rigorous form of Christianity deriving from this region is largely circular. Some elements of 1 Peter allude to a situation of persecution (e.g. I Pet. 4:12f.) and to resisting the temptations this might bring about (5:6-11) and certainly the celebrated Pliny and Trajan correspondence shows that a refusal to sacrifice, an action often associated with Montanism, had been practiced by some Christians in this region at the beginning of the second century. Moreover, Pliny's comments indicate (perhaps exaggeratingly) that Christianity had spread widely in the surrounding districts.²⁴⁵ However, to assess the veracity of this thesis we need to look at some of the epigraphical evidence for this region in order to postulate whether open-confession inscriptions were the rule or the exception.

As aforementioned, little work has been done on the epigraphy of early Christianity in Bithynia, however, Johnson's unpublished doctoral dissertation allows us to make a few generalizations. Firstly, open-confession, like elsewhere in West Central and Southern Phrygia, was not a common occurrence. Of the inscriptions collected by Johnson the formulae used (which he

²⁴² For this route see the map in Mitchell (1993:120).

²⁴³ See above p. 14.

²⁴⁴ I Peter 1: 1f.

²⁴⁵ See below p. 65.

dubs the 'Nikaen formula') is, like its Eumeneian counterpart, vague and innocuous reading δώσει λόγον τῷ θεῷ ('he/she will give account to God'). As Johnson perceptively notes:

'Those scholars who have concerned themselves with the early Christian inscriptions of Anatolia have accepted this traditional scenario [i.e. Ramsay's Northern Thesis], and have attempted to reconcile the inscriptions with a preconceived literary image of the Early Church.'²⁴⁶

The literary image to which Johnson refers is that of a church under siege, in which open-profession would elicit the violent response of persecution. For this theory, which is explicitly held in the work of the Scottish epigraphers, only a rigorist and confrontational sect like the Montanists would dare to openly proclaim their faith, as Johnson continues:

'A more or less standing theory has emerged. The crypto-Christian imprecatory inscriptions (including both the Eumeneian and Nikaeian formula epitaphs) are characterized as furtive proclamations of Christianity, consciously framed in ambiguous language so to avoid conspicuity. In granting the Christians the will and ability to manipulate the form of funerary inscriptions to serve their own covert purposes, the theory credits the Christians with a remarkable detachment from their own cultural milieu – precisely that sort of detachment suggested by the literary sources. The studied reticence of the Christians is ascribed to caution, and necessitated by the continual threat of persecution. The implication is that the Christians, if allowed, would have expressed themselves in a manner altogether different from non-Christians.'²⁴⁷

This is the line of reasoning which was stressed by Calder in his defence against the criticisms of Henri Gregoire as far back as 1955; it is, however, in need of some revision.²⁴⁸ Firstly, as we will see below, the extent of early Christian persecution in Phrygia and Bithynia, while certainly not absent, was geographically limited largely to the urban centres, notably not the rural countryside in which the so-called defiant 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions were found.²⁴⁹ Secondly, and more importantly, this particular formula is an entirely third century

²⁴⁶ Johnson (1984:80).

²⁴⁷ Johnson (1984:81).

²⁴⁸ Calder (1955:29).

²⁴⁹ On persecution see below pp. 222-242.

phenomenon, by which time Christians had become significantly more visible anyway. Thirdly, though not too much weight ought to be pressed on this due to the ongoing discussion, not a single verifiably Montanist inscription uses the so-called 'Christians for Christians' formula, and if anything the diffusion of Montanism was strongest in regions which adopted so-called 'Crypto-Christian practices.' Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, is the fact, unknown to Ramsay, that a variation of the so-called crypto-Christian Eumeneian formula, strongly associated with the more lax, urbane Christians of the cities of the Menander valley, and as far south as Pisidian Antioch, can be found with an 'Open-Confession' use of a very conspicuous Latin Cross in an inscription published by Gibson in 1975.²⁵⁰

What the evidence, much of which was unavailable to Ramsay, indicates is that far from being an import from Bithynia to the North, the roots of the Montanist variety of early Christianity, when divorced from the false dichotomy drawn between the crypto-Christian and the phanero-Christian forms of early Christianity in Phrygia, remains something of a mystery, though from purely geographical factors, it seems more acceptable to accept, in a cautious and modified form that the form of Christianity which developed into Montanism likely had its roots in Philadelphia, though that Montanism's interpretive understanding of Revelation was likely the result of an autochthonous exegesis which spiritualised the geographical peculiarities of what Schultze called '...das heilige Land der Montanisten.'²⁵¹

In concluding then it is important that we abandon this false-dichotomy between 'South-Central' and 'Northern' forms of Anatolian Christianity as a hypothesis which no longer stands up to evidence and search elsewhere for the contingent factors which led to the birth of Montanism. While it can be agreed, for different reasons outlined elsewhere, that the Eumeneian inscriptions do demonstrate a significant amount of shared characteristics with geographically and chronologically contemporary pagan inscriptions, the use of this argument to argue for a lukewarm Christianity in direct contrast to a defiant Montanist church of the martyrs is most assuredly an oversimplification no longer tenable in light of research carried out since Ramsay's original proposal.

²⁵⁰ Gibson (1975:151-157).

²⁵¹ Schültze (1922:474).

2.6. Schultze's 'Holy Land of the Montanists.'

In 1922 the German archaeologist and scholar of early Christianity, Victor Schultze, published a series of volumes entitled *Altchristliche Städte und Landschaften* of which the two volumes making up part II were dedicated exclusively to *Kleinasien*. That a German scholar should dedicate such space to the cities of Asia Minor belies the incredible importance which this region had in the geographic spread of the early Church, as the great Prussian historian Adolf von Harnack had written around ten years before in his groundbreaking *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* :

‘Asia Minor, and indeed the majority of the above named provinces, constituted the Christian country *kat’ exochen* during the pre-Constantine era. This is a fact which is to be asserted with all confidence, nor are the grounds of it inaccessible, although different considerations obtain with regard to the various sections of Asia Minor as a whole.’²⁵²

Similarly, the Yale historian of Christian missions and expansion Latourette was just as emphatic, noting:

‘It was in Asia Minor that, by the beginning of the fourth century, Christianity had been adopted more widely than in any other large section of the Empire. The strength of Christianity in this region, one of the richest in the Empire, could not but be significant. Here, in Ephesus, was one of the most influential strongholds of the faith. Here, too, were the Churches mentioned in the Apocalypse.’²⁵³

It was in part two of this work, in the final pages, that Schultze, after an exhaustive treatment of Phrygia almost city by city, arrives at what he dubbed ‘das heilige Land der Montanisten.’²⁵⁴ Having already treated in detail the urbane cities of the Meander and surrounding valleys Schultze described the region which, at this time, he saw as the most likely location of Pepuza, a conjecture in which he (and Ramsay before him) turned out to be broadly right. Schultze writes:

²⁵² Harnack (1972 [1908]:326).

²⁵³ Latourette (1937: 87f.).

²⁵⁴ Schultze (1922:474-477).

‘Am Nordufer des Maiandros an seinem Laufe von Eumeneia bis Lunda lagert ein wildes, unregelmässiges Hochland von einer durchschnittlichen Breite von 15km und rund 25km Länge. Im Süden begrenzt es der nach Norden umbiegende Fluss, im Westen eine breit gespannte, vom Senaros durchströmte Ebene. Das Zentrum dieses von Schluchten und Rinnsalen durchschnittenen, vom Verkehr ringsum durch hohe Bergwände getrennten Gebietes war Jahrhunderte hindurch der Ausgang und der Sammelpunkt einer der bedeutungsvollsten Erscheinungen in der alten Kirche, des Montanismus, einer stürmischen, in die Formen ekstatischer Prophetie gekleideten Rückwirkung gegen die den Weltverhältnissen in steigendem Masse sich anbequemende, ihre Disziplin lockernde Kirche.’²⁵⁵

In 1897 Ramsay had described the same area, the so-called Banaz Ova, writing:

‘Communication is easy across the northern part of the Banaz-Ova; but in the centre and south the great canyons of the rivers and of all their tributaries, with perpendicular walls, 500 to 900ft high, impede anything like heavy traffic.’²⁵⁶

The association of this area as the heartland of Montanism owed much to a number of important epigraphic finds, in particular a number of very early Montanist inscriptions at Temenothyrai (modern Uşak), some dating as early as the period between 180-224 C.E.,²⁵⁷ though also in Ramsay’s case to the ‘inhospitable’ nature of the canyon region and its population of ‘strict’ and therefore ‘fanatical’ Muslims in the late nineteenth century.²⁵⁸ For Ramsay (and many scholars) since the region of Phrygia was to be geographically determinate for ‘rigorist’ and ‘enthusiastic’ currents of religion, whether these be the Montanists, the Novatians from the third century onwards, or Rumi’s ‘Whirling Dervishes’ centuries later.²⁵⁹

Taking the title of his work from Schultze’s chapter title German historian August Strobel went on, following an extensive field survey of the Anatolian Mid-West, to write his small but

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ramsay (1897:569).

²⁵⁷ On these inscriptions see below pp. 113f.

²⁵⁸ Ramsay (1897:574).

²⁵⁹ On the Novatians see Calder (1923b:59-91); Gregory (1975:1-18). On Rumi and ‘Whirling Dervishes’ see Friedlander (2003) on this link in modern scholarship Benko (1993:165) notes: ‘Thus the fertile soil of Asia Minor gave us not only the cults of Cybele and Dionysus, but also Christian Montanism, and this highly refined, spiritualized orgia, the mystic dance of the Muslim dervishes.’

important book *Das heilige Land der Montanisten: Eine religionsgeographische Untersuchung*. While Strobel provided some fascinating inscriptions, extensive topographical information (despite being written in difficult German prose), as well as a number of *Thematische Untersuchungen* he was ultimately little closer to the site of Pepuza than his forebears, as the American Byzantinist Timothy Gregory wrote:

‘Unfortunately, Strobel was, like all of his predecessors, unable to fix the location of Pepuza with any precision. He is convinced that the centre of the Montanist movement lay in the upland valley of Kirbasan, but he cannot say more than that.’²⁶⁰

While not discovering the site of Pepuza, however, Strobel’s conclusions and precision work remain vital, and his conclusions are particularly important for our understanding of the relationship between geography and religion, and between the Montanist movement and its socio-cultural matrix, as he writes (followed by a tribute to W.M. Ramsay):

‘Das Ursprungsland des Montanismus kann, wie heute die Dinge liegen, nicht mehr aus der Analyse der Zusammenhänge ausgeblendet bleiben. Man kann es besuchen und man muss seine Relikte, die in reicher Zahl erhalten geblieben sind, studieren. Die Mitte der Bewegung, ihr, “heiliges Land”, kann mit jener Exaktheit lokalisiert werden, wie jedes andere Ursprungsgebiet einer Sekte von kirchengeschichtlicher Bedeutung. Die Eigenart des Gebietes hat sich bis heute unverfälscht erhalten. Wer es durchforscht, steht unter dem Eindruck, dass sich noch stets einander geformt haben. Nicht nur die Besonderheiten phrygischer Religionstät, auch viele Inhalte montanistischen Glaubens gewinnen von daher ihre Erhellung.’²⁶¹

Numerous scholars then,²⁶² have argued, that it was in this broad geographic region of the Banaz-Ova, particularly its geographically difficult central region that Pepuza was to be located, but despite their immense efforts and often ingenious hypotheses it was not until over a century after Ramsay that a group of archaeologists, led by Australian William Tabbernee, and working with the systematization of the clues provided by Marksches and decades of

²⁶⁰ Gregory (1982:757f.).

²⁶¹ Strobel (1980:297).

²⁶² It should be noted here that Calder also weighed into the argument (1931:421-425).

Tabbernee's own research,²⁶³ stumbled across what is the strongest candidate yet for the location of Pepuza and Tymion, the twin cities which Montanus renamed Jerusalem.²⁶⁴ Tucked away then, in this difficult region close to the Turkish town of Karayakuplu, were remains of what appeared to be a small city, situated, according to Tabbernee on

'...a large rectangular terrace of land, overlooking the river, which contains numerous ancient architectural pieces, including marble blocks, undoubtedly quarried from the ancient quarry on the south side of the Banaz Çayı at the eastern end of the site and from a second quarry in the Ulubey Canyon between Pepuza and Cılandıras. These blocks indicate the presence of a significant building, and the shape of the field, which has an east-west orientation, tentively suggests that this may be the site of a church.'²⁶⁵

While tantalizing suggestions and evidence have been slowly emerging from the archaeological surface surveys between 2001-2004 excavation has come to a grinding halt, and for now we must be grateful to Tabbernee and his team for their discovery and wait patiently for the cutting of the ever-present red-tape involved in archaeological excavation.²⁶⁶

In the meantime, we know that Montanism spread rapidly from its centre in Pepuza into the cities of the Meander valley and further abroad. Thus it is now necessary to turn in more detail to the epigraphic and historical evidence for Christianity in the area of West-Central Phrygia, or as Thonemann puts it the 'Anatolian Mid-West.' This area can be geographically designated as the region covering around 150km from Philadelphia in Lydia in the West across a fertile, but not contiguous area running to just east of Hieropolis (Koçhisar).²⁶⁷

The region is marked by the trajectories of the Mainandros, Hermos, Tembris, Hyllos and Klydros rivers. To its north east were the trajectories of the Upper Tembris valley on which sat the Aragua estate. Numerous cities, attested in Hierocles' list, scattered this fertile but often

²⁶³ Marksches (1994:7-28).

²⁶⁴ For the story of this discovery see Tabbernee (2003:87-93) and Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:15-29).

²⁶⁵ Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:103).

²⁶⁶ Here I must thank Prof. Tabbernee for sharing his work and the current status of the excavations. I must also thank him for warning me about the current situation before I sought funding to visit the site (which is currently closed to the public). I must also here thank my supervisor Prof. Paul McKechnie for sharing his photos and knowledge of the Phrygian countryside, without which my own untravelled ways would have proved insurmountable.

²⁶⁷²⁶⁷ For a detailed map of this area see Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:2f.).

rough region and in what follows we will survey some of these cities briefly to give some idea of the diffusion of both normative and Montanist Christianity and the kind of environment (both physically and architecturally) which became the Montanist milieu.

Chapter 2b. A Geographical Tour of the Anatolian Mid-West

2b. 1. Prolegomena.

The areas of Western Phrygian plateau, particularly the cities and plains of the Phrygian Pentapolis and Maeander valley districts were a slightly more elevated region compared to the cities of the Aegean coast and were relatively fertile and productive areas throughout antiquity, though notably broken up by scattered mountain ranges, often formidable canyons and limited road access.²⁶⁸ Today, these areas receive between 400 to 500 mm of rain annually and remain productive agricultural regions, particularly for staple grains much as they were in antiquity.²⁶⁹

The major traffic routes to this region ran on the old Persian 'Royal Highway,' which ran from Ephesus in the west through a number of Phrygian cities such as Laodicea-ad-Lycos and Apamea Celaenae.²⁷⁰ While French has assembled a vast amount of evidence for these routes (particularly surviving milestones) many of the routes (particularly those which are not marked by paved roads) remain conjectural, indicated by French's decision not to publish an ancient road map in his two-volume study.²⁷¹ This said it can be confidently said that it was largely in this area, accessible through a variety of routes which were geographically dictated by the physical landscape that Montanism originally spread and thrived.²⁷² Mitchell's maps show that the cities explored below were connected by a number of major routes suitable for wheeled traffic, though the further east one travels the more difficult the terrain and the more imposing the dictates of physical geography.²⁷³

Around this area we know of Montanist communities in cities such as, among others, Hierapolis in the Phrygian Pentapolis.²⁷⁴ Communities also existed in Eumeneia north of Hierapolis connected by a major road leading from Apamea to Sebaste.²⁷⁵ The second trajectory of this road, which splits at Apamea, leads north-east through Synnada to

²⁶⁸ For the physical geography of Anatolia see Mitchell (1993:Map 1).

²⁶⁹ On this see Erinc & Tunçdilic (1952:179:203).

²⁷⁰ On the Royal Road see French (1998:15-43).

²⁷¹ French (1988:i). French, however, does produce a number of modern road maps and indicates find places on them which give us some idea.

²⁷² On the important roads of Asia Minor see the map in Mitchell (1993:130).

²⁷³ Mitchell (1993:Map 7).

²⁷⁴ See below pp. 100-107.

²⁷⁵ Euseb. *h.e.* V. 16.22.

Docimieum and Amorium, from which it runs east due south to Pessinous in Galatia, the important centre of the indigenous priesthood of Cybele often linked to Montanism.²⁷⁶

From the north-westerly route from Apamea which runs to Sebaste the major roads take another fork, with the western trajectory leading north-west to Temenothyrai (the modern city of Uşak), where a number of important Montanist epitaphs have been discovered;²⁷⁷ from Temenothyrai the road moves further west to the cities of Lydia such as Sardis, by-passing the important cities of Philadelphia and Thyateira; the latter being accused by Epiphanius of being overrun by Montanists in the fourth century.²⁷⁸

The north-eastern trajectory from Sebaste runs firstly to the important city of Acmonia, through the Upper Tembris valley city of Appia to Cotiaenum; around which extensive imperial estates (such as that at Aragua) have furnished us extensive evidence for pre-Constantinian rural Christian communities (possibly Montanist).²⁷⁹ From here the roads lead north to Dorylaeum, where again the road forks, with the north-western route leading into Bithynia and the important cities of Nicaea and Nicomedia, and the eastern route, which slopes due south, running through Iuliopolis to Ancyra in Galatia, a location where early on opponents of Montanism found numerous adherents of the sect.²⁸⁰

In the valley areas east of Philadelphia and situated in between the two major routes into Phrygia from the Aegean coast, situated around sixty five kilometres north of the culturally important city of Hierapolis (Pamukkale) where Montanism was first 'officially' condemned that one can find the Montanist holy city of Pepuza, nestled away in valleys geographically isolated from the nearby cities and only accessible through a single (and precarious) route.²⁸¹

In terms of the political geography of Roman Asia, the realities of which we will examine in Chapter 3,²⁸² all the region covered in this work fell under the assize (or *conventus*) jurisdictions of either Laodicea-ad-Lycos around twenty kilometers south east of Hierapolis, Apamea around thirty kilometers south east of Eumeneia, or under the administration of the

²⁷⁶ See below pp. 243-325.

²⁷⁷ *IMont* 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

²⁷⁸ Epiphanius, *haer.* LI.33.

²⁷⁹ For these monuments see Gibson (1978).

²⁸⁰ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.4.

²⁸¹ Tabbernee & Lampe (2008).

²⁸² See below pp. 117f.

important quarrying centre of Synnada around fifty-kilometers to the north-west of Apamea. In each case the distance between these centers and their assize districts is quite small but we also need to bear in mind that the inhabitants of these regions were much more restricted with regard to travel than we are today. We must also bear in mind that even the best of Roman roads could prove hazardous, and many of the areas where it seems Montanism most thrived were villages off the proverbial beaten track.²⁸³ In order to trace the extent of Christianity in this area and by implication provide a geographical picture of the Montanist milieu it is important here to undertake a brief survey of the evidence, discussing these important locations in the early period of Montanism, and examining as we go important factors in their local history, the evidence for early Christianity and the role they played in the early Montanist crisis.

Due to the massive number of unidentified villages we will include inscriptions found in the *chōra* of a city under that city head, only noting when the diffusion of inscriptions is more concentrated outside of the city centre.²⁸⁴ The ordering of this survey will follow, as best as possible, the listing of bishoprics provided by Hierocles' *Syndekeмос* (dating to c. 580 CE), a key text for understanding the provincial organization of the early Byzantine era and also of paramount importance to archaeologists and historians attempting to pinpoint the topography of the region since the nineteenth century.²⁸⁵ Similarly, we will largely limit ourselves to epigraphic evidence. Identifiable architectural remains of Christianity during the pre-Constantinian era (at least in Asia Minor) are virtually non-existent, and while we will mention some elements of monumental architecture and public building, due to the relative lack of systematic excavation it is best to stick to the inscribed stones which we do have, in order to tentatively answer questions of diffusion and community composition.

Before, however, surveying the evidence city by city it is important that we give a brief overview of the religious diversity which marked this region, in particular introducing some of the key features of the Jewish and pagan communities with whom the early Christians and Montanists shared the civic and rural space.

²⁸³ On some of the many dangers of Roman travel see MacMullen (1966:255-268).

²⁸⁴ Where we do not know the name of the ancient location the modern Turkish names will be included in brackets after inscriptions.

²⁸⁵ The list of Hierocles' *Syndekeмос* is printed, with other important sources, in Ramsay (1883:372-373).

2b.2. Jews and Pagans in Roman Asia Minor.

Like Christianity and Montanism the indigenous cults of Roman Asia Minor and the Jewish communities of the Anatolian Mid-West varied from location to location, both in number and practices. Too often scholars have reduced the diversity and plurality of local religious life in the Anatolian Mid-West, on the one hand caricaturing pagan religion into a synthetic mish-mash of Dionysian and Cybelic enthusiastic religion,²⁸⁶ and on the other hand making Judaism into a syncretistic 'Hellenized' Judaism obsessed with magic, angels and engaged in accommodation with local pagan deities and religious practices.²⁸⁷

The vast epigraphic evidence, however, for both pagan and Jewish communities, tells a much more interesting story and it is important to look in more detail at this, particularly as it relates to the cities and countryside of the Anatolian Mid-West in which Montanism found its apogee. Civic and local cults were alive and well in Antonine Asia Minor, and it is against the backdrop of this active piety that we must seek possible antecedents of Montanist practices, rather than in vague and anachronistic portraits reconstructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'. These indigenous religious currents formed an integral part of the lives of the Phrygians and other peoples of the Anatolian Mid-West, as Mitchell has noted:

'Men served the gods, took their names from them, looked to them for prosperity and security both individually and collectively, and through the gods could rise to power and influence among their fellows.'²⁸⁸

However, alongside the ubiquitous cults of the Graeco-Roman pantheon, the urban smatterings of Roman imperial religion, and the indigenous cults of the countryside, stood not only the Christians, but a thriving and ancient Jewish community and before moving on to the diversity of pagan religion in this region it is best to briefly treat these.

²⁸⁶ See below pp. 243-325.

²⁸⁷ For this tendency see below pp. 78-82.

²⁸⁸ Mitchell (1993b:12).

2b.3.The Jews in Asia Minor.

While the evidence is not without debate, it seems almost certain that Diaspora Jewish communities had existed in some areas of the Anatolian peninsula prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great.²⁸⁹ However, it is not until the reign of Antiochus the Great that irrefutable evidence emerges for the explicit foundation of such communities.²⁹⁰ According to the report in Josephus, which seems to be backed by later archaeological evidence, Antiochus III made the following request of his satrap Zeuxis:

‘If you are in health, it is well. I also am in health. Having been informed that a sedition is arisen in Lydia and Phrygia, I thought that matter required great care; and upon advising with my friends what was fit to be done, it hath been thought proper to remove two thousand families of Jews, with their effects, out of Mesopotamia and Babylon, unto the castles and places that lie most convenient.’²⁹¹

These settlers, while no doubt forced to migrate, were given fairly prosperous terms, as the letter continues ‘...they shall be permitted to use their own laws; and when thou shalt give every one of their families a place for building their houses, and a portion of land for their husbandry, and for the plantation of their vines; and thou shalt discharge them from paying taxes of the fruits of the earth for ten years; and let them have a proper quantity of wheat for the maintenance of their servants, until they receive bread-corn out of the earth.’²⁹²

While much of the Seleucid territories in Anatolia passed into Pergamene hands with the treaty of Apamea in 188 BCE it seems that little changed in the conditions of the Jews under Attalid rule.²⁹³ The same seems to apply also under Rome, when we are furnished with much better evidence. For instance, Philo of Alexandria in his *De Legatione ad Gaium* refers vaguely to the numerous Jews of Asia,²⁹⁴ whilst around a century previously we have the evidence of Cicero’s

²⁸⁹ Schalit (2006: 586); Blanchetière (1974:367-382). For a dated but still fairly substantial resume of the literary evidence see Juster (1914:188-194). The most important studies of these communities are Ameling (1996: 29-55); Kittel (1944:10-20); Kraabel (1968); Mitchell (1993b:31-37); Trebilco (1991).

²⁹⁰ For a full discussion of this important reference see Schalit (1960:289-318).

²⁹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* XII.148f. [Trans. Whiston].

²⁹² Josephus, *Antiquities* XII.150-152. [Trans. Whiston].

²⁹³ On Attalid treatment of former Seleucid foundations see Hansen (1971:173-175).

²⁹⁴ Philo, *De Legatione ad Gaium* XXXIII.245; XXXVI.281.

spirited defense of the Roman proconsul Lucius Valerius Flaccus, famed for his confiscation of the Jews annual temple tax.²⁹⁵

While it is problematic to follow the estimates of Ramsay and others as to the overall numbers of the Jewish population at this time,²⁹⁶ the sheer amount of money confiscated under Flaccus does suggest a sizable Jewish presence.²⁹⁷ Indeed, Ameling has suggested that of the estimated population of Roman Asia Minor (which he puts at around one million) an educated guess of a Jewish population of 5-10% of the total was likely.²⁹⁸ That a sizable proportion of this population could be found in Phrygia is clear from the sheer number of inscriptions found in this region.²⁹⁹ As we will see below, the level of integration which the Jews achieved in these cities was impressive, as van der Horst has concluded in his recent article:

‘What we can say, however, is that the material from the Roman imperial period gives the impression of a high degree of integration of the Jewish communities into society as a whole, exactly as we can also observe that phenomenon elsewhere in Asia Minor. Much of the epigraphic evidence points to good relationships with the non-Jews of Phrygia...’³⁰⁰

Van der Horst goes on to list a number of these aspects and we will further explore the degrees of this integration below,³⁰¹ however, the wide extent of this integration also raises the question of how far such accommodation went, and whether the Jews of this region had compromised, and this is worth briefly looking at.

²⁹⁵ Cicero, *Pro Flacco* XXVIII.69. On Cicero’s references see Marshall (1975:139-154).

²⁹⁶ Ramsay (1902:19-33 & 92-109).

²⁹⁷ Blanchetière (1974:372f.)

²⁹⁸ Ameling (1996:30)

²⁹⁹ For Phrygian inscriptions see *CIO* II.

³⁰⁰ Van der Horst (2008:292).

³⁰¹ Van der Horst (2008:292) continues:

‘...the building of a synagogue by a Roman priestess of the emperor cult, Jewish participation in important cultural events (sport or music), the adoption by Jews of such (pagan) funerary customs as the *rosalia*, Jewish involvement in the Phrygian purple industry, probable knowledge of certain biblical texts among non-Jews, local acquaintance (in Apameia) with the story of Noah and the ark, and, last but not least, the strong presence of the mixed Jewish-pagan cult of Theos Hypsistos.’

2b.4. Anatolian Indigenous Religion.

We have seen in Chapter 1 (and will see in more detail below in Chapter 5) that scholars have gone to great lengths to justify a synthetic and synchronistic picture of indigenous religion of Asia Minor, often with little or no recourse to more up-to-date scholarship, preferring to parrot the opinions of W.M. Ramsay and others rather than to look more closely at the evidence.

That the reality of indigenous Phrygian religion on the ground was much more complex and subject to extreme regional variation is clear, but in order to better understand the Montanist Milieu it is imperative that we look at some of this regional variation.

In his important survey of pagan cults in Anatolia, Stephen Mitchell states that:

‘Four groups give the best impression of the religious atmosphere of ancient Anatolia, namely those for Zeus, for the various Mother Goddesses, for Mēn, and for the several champions of divine justice and vengeance.’³⁰²

This is certainly a good broad statement, and with the additions of votive and oracular religion will provide a good starting point for assessing and discussing some of the currents of indigenous Anatolian religion which will be treated in the pages that follow.

a. Cybele and the Anatolian Mother Goddesses.

The most important cult of Roman Asia Minor, at least in the estimation of those who wish to find indigenous parallels to Montanism,³⁰³ was that of the Great Mother, Cybele, who like the Mother of the Gods in the Emperor Julian’s *Fifth Oration* or Isis in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, was known by a litany of epithets across the Anatolian Peninsula.³⁰⁴ The worship of this *Magna Matar*, as she was known among the Romans, was a ubiquitous element of Anatolian religion probably at least as far back as Hittite times and endured through all the power-shifts which this important peninsula underwent through the centuries leading up to Roman rule,³⁰⁵ as Vermaseren has written in his important study:

³⁰² Mitchell (1993b:19).

³⁰³ See, for example, Benko (1993:137-169).

³⁰⁴ Julian, *Or. V.* On the cult of Cybele see the important studies of Borgeaud (2004); Roller (1999); Turcan (1996); Vermaseren (1977). Much older but still extremely important is Graillot (1912).

³⁰⁵ Bogh (2007:304-339). Graf (2007:7-9).

'The frontiers of various states of Asia Minor show many changes in the course of its turbulent and tempestuous history, and they had a great variety of government. But even in the Roman epoch there was no citadel, village or hamlet in Phrygia that did not remain true to the worship of Cybele even during the most difficult times. Hence her votive reliefs, statues, terracottas and coins are amply represented in the many museums of Turkey.'³⁰⁶

The forms and names, however, of this ubiquitous mother goddess, differed from region to region, often featuring toponymic epithets similar to those later applied to the Virgin Mary amongst European and Latin American Roman Catholics.³⁰⁷ We have Mother Zizimene, Mother Kanereime, and Mother Sipylene just to name a few.³⁰⁸ Despite this, the amount of epigraphic evidence specifically relating to the practices of her cult (in all its forms) pales in comparison to the inundation of votive inscriptions which are so typical of imperial Asia Minor, and this proves extremely problematic for reconstructing the aspects of her cult which were, and perhaps more importantly for our study were not, practiced in Anatolia during this period.³⁰⁹ Despite Ramsay MacMullen's contention that '...there are the holy days of Cybele, observed in an unchanging calendar wherever she was recognized,'³¹⁰ our evidence for the cultic activities of Cybele are almost all Latin sources referring to the practices adopted and developed within Rome itself (a question we will return to in Chapter 5).³¹¹

With regards to the geographically relevant epigraphic evidence in his multi-volume collection the *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* Vermaseren dedicates the first volume to Asia Minor, the native province of the goddess. Despite an abundance of evidence, however, the region of the Anatolian Mid-West in which Montanist thrived is markedly lacking in the most important evidence, that is, epigraphy or textual sources relating to the cultic activities of her adherents. What survives, however, is worth briefly noting.

³⁰⁶ Vermaseren (1977:27).

³⁰⁷ On the prevalence of polyonymy amongst pagan deities see MacMullen (1981:90). Ferguson (1970:13-31) with specific reference to 'Mother Goddesses.'

³⁰⁸ For a further examples see Mitchell (1993b:20).

³⁰⁹ For a thorough, if disappointingly small, survey of inscriptions see *CCCA* I.

³¹⁰ MacMullen (1981:100).

³¹¹ See below pp. 262-302.

From Pliny's *Natural History* we know that Cybele was worshipped in the *Plutonium* of Hierapolis, situated around sixty-five miles south due east from Pepuza.³¹² Some scattered documentary evidence survives from Hierapolis and surrounding cities such as Apamea and Otrous featuring the goddess, particular in her traditional iconography on coins and on some monuments.³¹³ However, the extent and nature of cultic activity associated with this widespread devotion remains unclear. One inscription, dedicated by the council and the people of Hierapolis, however, does record a late second or early third century epitaph of a certain Marcus Aurelius Eutybianos described as *archigallos*.³¹⁴ Whether this indicates a functioning or honorary priesthood is difficult to surmise, though it could possibly be an example of a geographically and chronologically close example of ritual castration, of the kind Jerome seems to allude to in his comments about Montanus,³¹⁵ certainly Pliny's statement refers to the priests of the Great Mother in this city. Most scholars, however, believe that by this period castration had ceased to be practiced by the *archigallos*, basing themselves on the evidence for an *archigallos* with a family.

This epigraphic evidence for a *galli* in the heartland of Montanism is of particular importance. As is well known the priests of Cybele, the *galli*, were notorious in antiquity for their ecstatic reveries which ended in ritual castration.³¹⁶ Moreover, they were known for their ostentatious dress and appearance, an accusation leveled at Montanus by an early opponent. A number of sources related to this survive though problematically most refer to the Phrygian spring festival as it was practiced in Rome, and which we will discuss in some detail in Chapter 5.³¹⁷

In nearby Eumeneia, where Montanism was evidenced quite early,³¹⁸ survives what must have been a rather large dedicatory inscription probably dated in the third century. In part it notes 'Aurelius Monimos, son of Aristonos Zenodotos the torch-bearer (λαμπαδάροχην) of the sanctuary of Zeus Soter and Apollo and Mēn Askaenos and Mother of the Gods Agdistis.'³¹⁹ This is a positively intriguing inscription for a number of reasons, though perhaps most

³¹² Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, II.95.

³¹³ CCCA I.

³¹⁴ CCCA I.76.

³¹⁵ Jerome *Ep.* XLI.4.

³¹⁶ On this aspect of the Cybele cult, and its assumed 'cross-dressing' See below pp. 269-302.

³¹⁷ See below pp. 269-302.

³¹⁸ See below 100-107.

³¹⁹ CCCA. I.84.

importantly as evidence for Vera Hirschmann's important contention that one could be a functionary of both Apollo and one of the Anatolian Mother deities, something which she has argued puts to rest the seeming contradiction between the evidence cited in Jerome and in Didymus the Blind regard Montanus' earlier involvement in pagan cults.³²⁰

Secondly, and perhaps also striking with regard to Montanism is the explicit reference to a *lampadarchen*. While torch-bearing as an element in women's religion was ubiquitous in the ancient world,³²¹ Montanism in particular spoke of the seven torch-bearing virgins who Epiphanius describes as:

'And frequently in their assembly seven virgins dressed in white and carrying torches enter, coming, of course, to prophesy to the people. And these, by manifesting a certain kind of frenzy, produce deception in the people present, and make them weep; they pour forth tears as if they were sustaining the sorrow of repentance, and with a certain bearing they lament the life of men.'³²²

That this has some potentially important parallels with Cybelic worship has been suggested but ultimately rests on problematic phenomenological parallels.³²³

Despite then these scattered references within her homeland itself and the Montanist milieu it is probably safe to conclude with Mitchell that, '...despite the antiquity and international reputation of the cult of Cybele, its best days were over even by the time of Augustus.'³²⁴

What we know of how Cybele was worshipped for the most part relies on the literary and epigraphic evidence for the Romanized form of her cult which developed from her *evocatio* in 204 BCE.³²⁵ In order to understand something of her rites, then, we must look at these rituals and attempt to reconstruct as much as possible their Phrygian roots, a matter to which we will return in Chapter 5.³²⁶

³²⁰ See below pp. 303-306. Hirschmann (2005:70-74).

³²¹ Parisinou (2000:19-43).

³²² Epiphanius, *haer.* LI.32.2 [Trans. Heine].

³²³ Freeman (1950:308f.).

³²⁴ Mitchell (1993b:20).

³²⁵ See below pp. 269-302.

³²⁶ Ibid.

b. Zeus.

Zeus, like the Mother of the Gods was known under various autochthonous epithets and was by far the most worshipped of gods in Anatolia.³²⁷ Rather than being the land of *Mutterrecht* depicted by earlier scholars, the religious devotion of Asia Minor was uninterested in modern debates on gender.³²⁸ Indeed, so far as scholars of Montanism are concerned this fact seems to have eluded them, concerned as they have often been with establishing Montanism within a Phrygian milieu, and at times as a proto-feminist religious revival.³²⁹ However, in the eyes of the Phrygian people, just as the wild mother roamed the mountains with her lions, so Zeus towered above the people from his highland vantage point, receiving epithets like 'sender of thunder and lightning.'

Within the regions of the Phrygian cities where Montanism thrived Zeus was worshiped as Zeus Alsenos, Zeus Orochoreites, Zeus Orkamaneites, Zeus Karpodotes, Zeus Bennios, Zeus Bronton, Zeus Soter, Zeus Abozenos, and Zeus Pandemos.³³⁰

In the Upper-Tembris valley, where Christianity (and perhaps Montanism) held such a visible presence, we might forget that the vast majority of votive offerings from this area are dedicated to Zeus. Similarly, Zeus Andreia was worshipped at the nearby city of Appia, as was Zeus Soter.³³¹

Most of the evidence which survives for Zeus, in his many localized incarnations, is votive. For instance, of the number of votive Inscriptions collected by Thomas Drew-Bear in the regions of the Anatolian Mid-West almost 90% are dedications to Zeus on behalf of rural farmers, often seeking healing or prosperity for their cattle or flocks.³³²

³²⁷ For a survey of epigraphic evidence see Mitchell (1993b.22-4).

³²⁸ See below pp. 269f.

³²⁹ For the interest which Montanism has had among feminist scholars see Huber (1985); Jensen (1996); Kraemer (1992); Trevett (1996).

³³⁰ Drew-Bear (1990: 1907-2044); (1976:247-278).

³³¹ Drew-Bear (1999).

³³² Drew-Bear (1999).

c. Mēn.

The indigenous god Mēn, with his important and well-studied sanctuary in Pisidian-Antioch,³³³ was another god whose cult was widespread and who received various localized epithets.³³⁴ Like Cybele his presence on coins and on iconographic monuments was widespread throughout central Anatolia,³³⁵ his iconography described by Mitchell as ‘...wearing a Phrygian cap and cloak, with a crescent moon behind his shoulders, carrying a pine cone and often a cock.’³³⁶

Like Zeus his epithets were many, however, the most important in the Anatolian Mid-West was Mēn Askaēnos who was worshipped in Sebaste, Eumeneia and other important centers of the Montanist Milieu. As evidence for numerous votives at Pisidian-Antioch demonstrate Mēn,³³⁷ like Zeus and Cybele, was a god beseeched for divine aid, he was also a god who could be vengeful and be involved in some of the more rigid moral tendencies of Phrygian and Lydian religion. For instance, a number of the surviving *Beichtinschriften* collected by Petzl (and supplemented by others) explicitly evoke Mēn in one of his many incarnations. One such inscription, dated to year 249 of the Sullan era (164/165 C.E.) from Saittai in neighbouring Lydia reads:

‘Great is Mēn Axiottenos, king in Tarsi! When the scepter had been set up in case anyone stole anything from the bath-house, since a cloak was stolen, the god took vengeance on the thief and made him bring the cloak to the god after a time, and he made confession. So the god gave orders through an angel that the cloak should be sold and his powers written up on a stele. In the year 249.’³³⁸

This inscription is interesting on a number of fronts. Firstly, it demonstrates the practice of ‘placing a scepter,’ whereby Phrygian and Lydian priests would place a raise a scepter in the ground indicating that the gods held sovereignty over a matter, and thus invoking the god to punish a malefactor.³³⁹ Secondly, it contains another element which was common in many

³³³ See Mitchell & Waelkens (1998).

³³⁴ For a detailed study of Mēn see Lane (1990:2161-2174).

³³⁵ For an incomplete resume of this evidences see *CMRDM* I.

³³⁶ Mitchell (1993b:24).

³³⁷ For the large number of votives see *CMRDM* I.160-294.

³³⁸ *BIWK* 3.

³³⁹ On this practice see Lane-Fox (1986:379); Gordon (2004:177-196).

central Anatolian cults, the angelophany,³⁴⁰ whereby these divine messengers would act as intermediaries between the all-powerful God invoked and humans, often through a dream or vision. As we will see Montanist prophets also engaged in the ubiquitous practice of revelation dreams,³⁴¹ and one of the more interesting Montanist oracles explicitly states (probably with reference to Isaiah):

‘Neither angel nor envoy, but I the Lord God the Father have come.’³⁴²

It is possible to speculate, though little more, that this oracle was aimed at the kind of visions received from Mēn by the intermediary of an angel. Moving on, then, it is important to look at some of the more ‘enthusiastic’ deities whose rites are often deduced as evidence for Montanist syncretism.

d. Dionysus.

Dionysiac religion, despite its strong historical and traditional associations with Asia Minor,³⁴³ had a relatively small distribution in Phrygia during the Roman era, and like the cult of Sabazios (see below) Dionysus often appeared as the combination Zeus Dionysus.³⁴⁴ Dionysiac religion’s reputation for unbridled enthusiasm and the participation of women in its cultic activities has ensured a frequent association with Montanism.³⁴⁵

How widespread such Dionysian practices were during the Roman period in this geographical locale, however, is subject to debate and the evidence for Asia Minor, while suggestive is far from conclusive. The standard picture cited by scholars (who have not looked at the epigraphic evidence) is best summarized by the late nineteenth century classical scholar Lewis Farnell who wrote:

‘In Asia Minor, the Greek Dionysos, though he retained a distinct recognition and remained a distinct personality in many of the state-cults, was greatly overshadowed by the figure of the great mother-goddess of Anatolia, and tended to merge himself in

³⁴⁰ Kearsley (1992:206-209); Sheppard (1980:77-101).

³⁴¹ Oracle No. 11.

³⁴² Oracle No. 3 [Trans. Heine].

³⁴³ On Dionysiac religion see Ferguson (1970:101-104); Kraemer (1979:55-80); Nilsson (1975).

³⁴⁴ For dedications to Zeus Dionysus see Drew-Bear (1990:1904f.).

³⁴⁵ Benko (1993:140).

his Phrygian counterparts, Attis and Sabazios, whose names were probably of more avail throughout this region than his. The ruling character of the Phrygian religion was its spirit of violent enthusiasm, and on such a soil the Hellenized god was likely to revert to his aboriginal instinct.³⁴⁶

Despite this enthusiastic summary, most of the evidence for Dionysian piety outside of the Aegean cities of Asia Minor, comprises of *ex voto* offerings ὑπὲρ καρπῶν and containing distinctly Dionysiac symbolism such as a wine krater, largely to be found in the regions of the Upper Tembris valley and the Anatolian Mid-West, which literary sources tell us were famed for their wine in antiquity.³⁴⁷ Likewise, in terms of numismatics, where the prevalence and the popularity of gods is often to be found, Dionysiac motifs feature on forty-five different cities in Phrygia alone, which contrary to the near epigraphic silence, like the evidence for Cybele, suggests the gods widespread popularity.³⁴⁸ However, in terms of the important Dionysian cultic practices, particularly those relating to ‘mysteries’, as with Cybele, the evidence is markedly more limited.

Most interesting in this regard are a number of inscriptions published by both C.H. Haspels (from the Phrygian highlands) and Susan Cole (from the Meander valley). In terms of explicit terms used in the inscriptions published by Haspels both record initiates (μύσται) of the Dionysian mysteries. Both are typical Phrygian altars (βωμῶι) but contain interesting iconography on both the front and behind. Haspels describes them thus:

‘On the front, two figures (defaced), the one to the right with goat’s horns and bunches of grapes as a head-gear; in his right hand, what looks like a small tree-trunk. On the left-hand side, a scene in which a male figure, a tree and a serpent climbing up the tree play a part. On the right-hand side, two male figures, the snake and the tree again, but in a different grouping. Above, in front, between the acroteria, a goat’s head; on the sides, a bunch of grapes; on the back, a vine in a krater, a small goat nibbling a plant. Above, in front, between the acroteria, a goat’s head; on the sides, a bunch of grapes;

³⁴⁶ Farnell (1896:158).

³⁴⁷ For a survey of the literary evidence for viticulture in Asia Minor from antiquity see Broughton (1959:609-611); Mitchell (1993:146f.). On Dionysian inscriptions of this type see Waelkens (1977:281f.).

³⁴⁸ Cole (1991:47).

on the back a bust. The top of the bomos is shaped like a low mound, around which two serpents coil, one from either side; they meet in front, where they bite into a bunch of grapes.³⁴⁹

What is clear from these iconographic elements, as Haspels observed, is that the imagery involves some form of Dionysian mystic initiation, though the frequent overlap of iconographic elements amongst various 'mystery deities' means any speculation as to their nature is largely subjective.³⁵⁰ While it would be superfluous here to delve too deeply into what exactly the Dionysian mysteries entailed,³⁵¹ the inscriptions do show that religious devotion to Dionysus was not confined to mere votives seeking a bumper crop of grapes, such as those found in the Upper Tembris valley, but rather the practice of group cultic activities.³⁵²

More recently, Susan Cole has published a relief from Acmonia in the Meander valley which iconographically seems to depict a Dionysian hierophant. Cole makes this deduction by comparing it to a very similar altar from Dorylaion to the north of Phrygia which is an explicit *ex voto* offering to Bacchus and Dionysus.³⁵³ Similarly, we know of a Dionysiac *θίασος* near Acmonia dating from the later period of the Severan emperors.³⁵⁴

Like Cybele then, we have ample evidence for cult functionaries and the widespread popularity of Dionysus in Phrygia, and can certainly state that Dionysiac cults existed during our period.³⁵⁵ However, to go any further in speculating about the rituals and practices of these cults would take us into the hazy area of reconstructing ancient rituals from meager sources and its inherent dangers, and thus it is best to move on to a deity often (probably incorrectly) associated with Dionysus: Sabazios.

³⁴⁹ Haspels (1962:286).

³⁵⁰ This is made apparent by Nilsson (1962:180f.), who believed these inscriptions were more likely dedications to Sabazios.

³⁵¹ For a selection of texts and introduction to Dionysiac initiations see Meyer (1987:61-109). For a complete overview of the evidence for the Hellenistic and Roman periods see Nilsson (1975).

³⁵² For Dionysiac votive inscriptions from the Upper Tembris valley see Drew-Bear (1999:) and Waelkens (1977:281f.).

³⁵³ Cole (1992:41-48).

³⁵⁴ *MAMA* VI.240.

³⁵⁵ We do have more certain information on the practices of such *thiasoi* in neighbouring Lydia for an earlier period as described by Horsley & Barton (1981:7-41), though we must be cautious about projecting this into our period.

e. Sabazios.

Despite a great amount of erudite etymological speculation and over a century of discussion debate still rages as to whether Sabazios was originally native Phrygian or Thraco-Phrygian deity.³⁵⁶ Various speculations about his cultic activities and literary sources for constructing these (particularly those drawn from Demosthenes' famous attack on Aeschines in *De Corona*) have been made.³⁵⁷ Though like Dionysus, and indeed almost any of the 'oriental' deities worshipped in the Roman world, any reconstruction becomes a composite portrait of geographically and chronologically distinct evidence. The general gist of the evidence can only really suggest that Sabazios, like Dionysius, was an ecstatic deity worshipped by frenzied musical processions very similar to those surrounding Attis and the cult of Cybele.³⁵⁸

Despite this, and perhaps more important than those of Dionysus, the dedications to Sabazios as an example of syncretism are paramount and as we have observed above he has frequently been seen as the example par excellence of an enthusiastic and violent Anatolian deity.³⁵⁹ As the statement from Farnell above indicates Sabazius has often been seen as a Thracian-Phrygian equivalent of Dionysus, largely from the *theocrasis* which took place in many of the ancient writers and for the purported similarity of their enthusiastic cult activities and the iconographic similarities which were shared by many of the deities popular in Anatolia.³⁶⁰ Despite the associations often made, the evidence for the worship of Sabazios, as alluded to above, is remarkably sparse. In his collection, for instance, Lane records only twenty-four inscriptions from all of Asia Minor, the most interested of which are from Lydia.³⁶¹

More recently, Tassignon in arguing (somewhat unconvincingly) for Sabazios as functioning in continuity with early Hittite deities, has given an updated catalogue of surviving evidence, though it still remains sparse and totally lacking in cultic features.³⁶² The collective evidence demonstrates that in Phrygia Sabazios is exclusively identified with Zeus, for instance in a

³⁵⁶ On these debates see Johnson (1984b:1585-1587); Lane (1985:1-10).

³⁵⁷ Demosthenes, *De Corona* 259-260.

³⁵⁸ For a collection of literary testimonies see *CCIS* II T. no. 1-40.

³⁵⁹ On Sabazius the bibliography is extensive see Johnson (1984:1583-1613); Fellmann (1981:316-333); Lane (1989); Turcan (1996:315-327).

³⁶⁰ Lane (1980:9-33).

³⁶¹ *CCIS* II.21-45.

³⁶² Tassignon (1998:203 n. 81).

number of inscriptions published by Petzl in which Zeus Sabazius is invoked in *Beichtinschriften*,³⁶³ one of which reads:

‘In the year 320 [of the Sullan era 235/6 C.E.], on the 12th of the month Peritios. After ignorantly cut down a tree in the grove of the gods Zeus Sabazius and Artemis Anaetis, [I have] erected [this stele] giving thanks after having escaped punishment.’³⁶⁴

This inscription, among others, demonstrates that much like with other Anatolian deities that Zeus Sabazios was intimately tied up with the leveling of divine punishments on those who committed ritual transgressions, in this case unwittingly stealing from properties dedicated to the god.

f. Apollo.

Apollo, particularly as a god of revelation and prophecy, loomed large in Asia Minor and oracles sought from the important sanctuaries of Didyma and Claros can be found throughout Anatolian Mid-West.³⁶⁵ Like Zeus and other gods Apollo took on various localized epithets, for instance, Apollo Lairbenos in Hierapolis. As with the other cults his worship was not exclusive and as the inscription cited above with regard to Cybele indicates he was often worshiped in combination with other local gods and the broader gods of the Graeco-Roman and local pantheons. Of particular importance, as we will see below, was his role within Hierapolis, which was famous in antiquity for its *Plutonium*.³⁶⁶ Here, as we will see, a number of oracles survive attesting to Apollo’s revelations during the period of the Antonine plague, and given the anonymous accusation that Montanus was a priest of Apollo we will look at these in some more detail below in Chapter 4.³⁶⁷

g. The gods of Divine Justice.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of religion in the Anatolian Mid-West, as already alluded to, was the interest which the various localized deities took with regard to moral transgressions as some of the evidence surveyed above clearly indicates. Indeed, the phenomenon of

³⁶³ *BIWK* 76, 77, 49, 50.

³⁶⁴ *BIWK* 76.

³⁶⁵ On these oracles see Parke’s excellent study (1985).

³⁶⁶ See below pp. 185.

³⁶⁷ See below p. 212.

Beichtinschriften ('confessional inscriptions') or *Sühneinschriften* ('atonement inscriptions') is one of the most commented on aspects of Phrygian religious life.³⁶⁸ Far from being deities who were sought out or appeased merely for the material and spiritual benefits which they could provide, the deities of the Anatolian Mid-West were notoriously stringent in their punishment of various moral crimes. Theft, adultery and sacrilege were often met with horrid illnesses and the subsequent 'confessions' and sacrifices of individuals seeking to appease this divine wrath.³⁶⁹

This perceived presence of an omniscient divine panopticon was a common idea in Greco-Asiatic religion. In an area where secular authority was often powerless to prevent crime it became increasingly common for the meting out of chastisements for sins to fall exclusively into the hands of the gods or lesser deities. The inscriptions which reveal this interesting example of popular piety, which continue to be discovered in some numbers by epigraphers, narrate something of expiatory rite undertaken under the guidance of a local priest in which the person responsible for the inscription confesses on stone a hidden sin which the priests have revealed is responsible for their current state of misfortune.³⁷⁰

Perhaps one of the more amusing examples of these inscriptions (at least for historians, probably not for the subject) is one dated to 235/6 CE from Silandos in neighboring Lydia, which records the fate of the slave Theodoros in the form of a dialogue between him and Zeus, it reads:

THEODOROS: Because I have been brought by the gods to my senses, by Zeus and the Great Mēn Artemidorou. (I have atoned and set up this inscription).

ZEUS: I have punished Theodoros on his eyes for his offenses.

THEODOROS: I had sexual intercourse with Trophime, the slave of Haplokomas, the wife of Eutyichis, in the 'praetorium'.

ZEUS: He takes the first sin away with a sheep, a partridge and a mole.

³⁶⁸ MacMullen (1981: 58). On the *Beichtinschriften* see the important unpublished thesis of Rostad (2006); Arnold (2005:429-449); Chaniotis (2004:1-43); (2009:115-153); Moga (2005:123-131); Petzl (1991); Schnabel (2003:160-188);

³⁶⁹ On 'confession' in ancient religion see Pettazzoni (1937:1-14).

³⁷⁰ For a useful collection see Petzl (1993).

THEODOROS: While I was a slave of the gods of Nonnos, I had sexual intercourse with the flutist Ariagne.

ZEUS: He takes away with a 'piglet', a tuna, (another) fish.

THEODOROS: For my third sin I had sexual intercourse with the flutist Aretousa.

ZEUS: He takes away with a chicken, a sparrow, a pigeon. A kypros of barley and wheat, a prochus of wine, a kypros of clean wheat for the priests, one prochus.

THEODOROS: I asked Zeus' help.

ZEUS: Look I have blinded him for his sins. But, since he had appeased the gods and has erected the stele, he has taken his sins away. Asked by the council, (I responded that) I am kindly disposed, if he sets up my stele, on the day I have ordered. You may open the prison. I set the convict free after one year and ten months.³⁷¹

The relevance of these inscriptions for outlining the purported moral rigorism of the Phrygian people is clear and its relation to Montanism has thus far been insufficiently explored (with the exception of Schepelern's negative appraisal).³⁷² They are also important for understanding how Christians from a Phrygian cultural background might persevere in their pre-conversion ideas regarding theodicy and the power of divine chastisement, as for instance is evidenced in the threats found in Christian grave imprecations across the Anatolian Mid-West.

Elsewhere the moral concerns of the Phrygian gods are revealed even in their nomenclature, for instance in the numerous dedications to Hosios and Dikaioi ('The Holy and the Just')³⁷³ which can be found throughout the Phrygian countryside and on whom Mitchell wrote:

'The cult was particularly widespread in the villages and the countryside, the authentic Phrygian environment, where divine justice was closer to hand than any that might be sought from officials or from the courts, and where gods ruled villages in a real sense.'³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ *BIWK* 5,11.2-26 [Trans. Chaniotis]

³⁷² Schepelern (1929:129f.).

³⁷³ On this group of inscriptions see Kearsley (1992:206-209); Sheppard (1980:77-101).

³⁷⁴ Mitchell (1993b:25).

Other evidence, such as an inscription published by Kearsley, indicate that these villages even set up fraternities for the purpose of worshipping these two deities, it reads: 'Aurelius...The association of the Friends of the Angels (made) to Holiness and Justice a vow.'³⁷⁵

Similarly the intervention of these two personified attributes can be seen in an inscription published by Drew-Bear which in translation reads 'Telesphoros and Hermogenes [of the village of] Stallanos, set up [this stele] having committed perjury,' the implication being that Hermogenes and Telesphoros had been somehow punished for committing this act and were required to make restitution by confession.'³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Sheppard (1980:87f. no. 8) [Trans. Kearsley].

³⁷⁶ Drew-Bear (1976:262f. no. 27).

Chapter 2b.5. A Geographic Survey of Phrygia.

Laodicea-ad-Lycum.

Our journey begins at Laodicea-ad- Lycos, which was ‘officially’ founded by Antiochus II between 261 and 253 BCE, probably on an earlier settlement.³⁷⁷ From the time of Roman occupation in Asia Minor the town was the assize centre of a district known as Cibyra (not to be confused with the town of the same name on the Phrygian-Lycian border). Laodicea drew its wealth according to Strabo from its famed black wool sheep,³⁷⁸ though it also contained extensive farmlands, as Ramsay notes:

‘The territory is fertile: but under the Turkish occupation it has been allowed to pass to a large extent out of cultivation. The great marshes in the lower parts of the valley were doubtless drained and cultivated under the Empire. Still it is pretty certain that the Lycos valley could not grow enough grain to support the population of so many great cities, and that a *seitones*, to superintend and be responsible for the corn supply, must have been a much needed official of the state. Of the territory of Laodicea, a considerable portion is not fine arable land, viz. that hilly ground which lies between the Kadmos and the Kapros.’³⁷⁹

The extent of its territory is problematic, but Ramsay believed that:

‘The natural boundaries of Laodicean territory on the south and south-east are fixed by the lofty M. Salbakos and M. Kadmos. The small valley drained by the river Kadmos probably also belonged to it. The eastern boundary was probably the step that divides the lower from the upper Lycos valley.’³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ For the most extensive (though extremely dated) survey of Laodicea see Ramsay (1895:32-83). Also important, though dated, is Schultze (1922:435-445). More up-to-date but with a marked tendency toward New Testament background see Yamauchi (1980:135-146).

³⁷⁸ Strabo XII.16.

³⁷⁹ Ramsay (1895: 40).

³⁸⁰ Ramsay (1895: 36).

This territory, in Ramsay's opinion, was divided into a number of separate *χώραι* each with a separate name, he identifies two of these as: Eleinokapria and Kilarazos, which he believes were part of a pre-Seleucid Anatolian village system marked by 'oriental despotism.'³⁸¹

Despite their origins under Ramsay's haunting specter of oriental tyranny these *χώραι* seem to have exhibited some autonomy, including the leveling of fines for grave desecration.³⁸² Though it seems clear that the *πόλις* was predominantly the focal point of the more spread out farmers of these two *χώραι*. Within the *polis* itself a number of archaeological remains attest at least two theatres, a stadium, a gymnasium, as well as aqueducts and other signs of *πόλις* infrastructure.³⁸³

From the figures recorded in Cicero's *Pro Flacco* it seems likely that in the first century BCE (c. 62 BCE) Laodicea had a sizable Jewish community, enough to provide twenty pounds of gold when Lucius Valerius Flaccus illegally impounded the temple tax levied on Jews of the diaspora.³⁸⁴ Similarly, a problematic notice in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* records that:

'The magistrates of Laodicea to the proconsul Gaius Rabirius, son of Gaius, greeting. Sopatrus the envoy of the high priest Hyrcanus, has delivered to us a letter from you, in which you have informed us that certain persons have come from Hyrcanus, the high priest of the Jews, bringing documents concerning their nation, to the effect that it shall be lawful for them to observe their Sabbaths and perform their other rites in accordance with their native laws, and that no one shall give orders to them, because they are our friends and allies, and that no one shall do them an injury in our province; and as the people of Tralles objected in your presence that they were dissatisfied with the decrees concerning them, you gave orders that they should be carried out, adding that you have been requested to write also to us, about the matters concerning them. We, therefore, in obedience to your instructions, have accepted the letter delivered to us and have deposited it among our public archives; and to other matters on which you

³⁸¹ Ramsay (1896:40f.).

³⁸² *CB* I. 14.

³⁸³ Bean (1971:247-57). For a list of inscriptions see Broughton (1959:769).

³⁸⁴ Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 68. For a discussion of this passage see Marshall (1975:139-154).

have given us instructions we shall give such attention that no one shall incur blame.³⁸⁵

While, like any of the legal evidence preserved in Josephus this document must be treated with caution, at the very least, coupled with the evidence from Cicero, it is evidence for a relatively numerous Jewish community in Laodicea.³⁸⁶ The epigraphic evidence, however, for this community is sparse. In Ameling's recent collection the *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* only two inscriptions recording Jews survive from Laodicea. The first, actually from Rome and dated by Ameling to the third or fourth century C.E., reads 'Here lies Ammias, a Jew, from Laodikea, who lived eighty-five years. In Peace,' the final sentence being in Hebrew characters (בשלום).³⁸⁷ The second inscription, found in Laodicea and probably to be dated to the second or third century C.E., is the sarcophagus of Lucius Nonius Glykon, which contains the final phrase (partially damaged) '...to him the curses written in Deuteronomy,' a Jewish adaption of popular curse motifs found across Phrygia, the formula of which is also found nearby in Hierapolis.³⁸⁸

From as early as the writing of Epistle to the Colossians a Christian community is attested here (2:1, 4:15f.) in addition to literary evidence from Revelation 3:14-22 which records a Christian community, known to posterity for their 'lukewarm' embrace of Christianity and suggestions of economic prosperity.³⁸⁹ Epigraphically the evidence for the second and third centuries is next to non-existent, however, we do have evidence of at least one pre-Constantinian presbyter.³⁹⁰ With regards to literary evidence we have mention of Sagaris of Laodicea in Eusebius who seems to have been martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, though our information about this figure is vague in the very least.³⁹¹

As an assize centre the relative reticence of any Christian activity after the first century is probably to be expected, indeed the presence of the Imperial Cult in this city made Christianity a considerable burden and it is probably not unlikely that the 'lukewarm' Christians of

³⁸⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* XIV.241-3

³⁸⁶ On this document see Blanchetière (1974:375f.).

³⁸⁷ *IJO* II.212.

³⁸⁸ *IJO* II. 213.

³⁸⁹ For a survey of literary evidence see Mullen (2004:98f.).

³⁹⁰ *SEG* 34 (1984), 1353. *SEG* 37 (1987), 1240.

³⁹¹ See below pp. 224-227.

Revelation were not to survive even the most banal of persecutions. Still its importance in the history of Montanism, at least from a later date, is made clear in surviving conciliar documents which condemn the heresy which still flourished in this region during the late fourth century.³⁹²

Hierapolis.

Moving north east from Laodicea up the Lycos valley but remaining in the same *conventus* district (Cibyra) one arrives at Hierapolis.³⁹³ Known in antiquity for its oracular temple of Apollo Kareiros,³⁹⁴ it received a Christian community early, attested along with Laodicea-ad-Lycum and Colossae in the Epistle to the Colossians.³⁹⁵ As D'Andria's reconstructed city plan shows,³⁹⁶ Hierapolis was a bustling metropolis in antiquity, complete with baths, theater, two nymphaeums, gymnasium and other infrastructure of urban life common in Asia Minor. Hierapolis was also the home of an extensive and prosperous Jewish community.

For Ramsay Hierapolis provided a stark contrast to its neighboring, and largely Greek styled polis Laodicea, instead Hierapolis was '...the centre of native feeling and Phrygian nationality in the valley.'³⁹⁷ As we will see below any such talk by Ramsay is at best an example of Ramsay's somewhat whimsical and romantic flights of fancy rather than an accurate designation, but it does pay to see how Ramsay qualifies this, particularly as Hierapolis was an early centre of the Montanist crisis.³⁹⁸

For Ramsay, Hierapolis' history was, following the language of classic nineteenth century geographical determinism, '...determined by the nature features of its situation.'³⁹⁹ As Ramsay saw it, '...no place known to the ancients was the power of Nature more strikingly revealed.'⁴⁰⁰ As we will see in our discussion below Ramsay carries on in this hyperbole throughout his discussion where he speaks of the limestone formations of Pammukkale, and the famous

³⁹² For these canons from the Council of Laodicea (363/364 C.E.) see *NPF* XIV, pp.

³⁹³ For a survey of the evidence for Hierapolis (again dated) see Ramsay (1895: 84-121). Also Schultze (1922:411-435). Bean (1971:232-246). Yamauchi (1980:147-154).

³⁹⁴ Strab. XIII.4.14.

³⁹⁵ Col. 4:13.

³⁹⁶ D'Andria (2001:98).

³⁹⁷ Ramsay (1895:84)

³⁹⁸ On Ramsay's relationship with Asia Minor and his fertile imagination see below pp. 262-265.

³⁹⁹ Ramsay (1895: 85)

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

vapors of Apollo Lairbenos, complete with an amusing (if credible) explanation for the disappearance of this geological feature.⁴⁰¹

Despite Ramsay's overenthusiastic comments, the prevalence of an indigenous strain in the religious life of Hierapolis is an important factor to consider, though as Bean wrote in 1971:

'How many temples the city really possessed we cannot tell; certainly a great variety of deities were worshipped there, but these had not all temples. Actually, the only priests mentioned in the inscriptions are those of Cybele and the Emperors; and on the site one temple only has been identified, named the temple of Apollo recently excavated.'⁴⁰²

While Italian archaeologists have continued excavating since Bean wrote in the early 1970s, as D'Andria's map makes clear, the Sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos', the celebrated *Plutonium* mentioned by Strabo, remains the only excavated temple, and provides us with an important oracular background and evidence for the Montanist Milieu.

The worship and beliefs concerning of Apollo Lairbenos in Hierapolis have often been seen as a key local background for understanding Montanism, with Schepelern observing that Montanism was in some senses a direct reaction against the penitential discipline proscribed in this cult, in which the priest played a key role. As he wrote:

'In allen den Inschriften, die aus dem Lairbenoskulte stammen, sind derartige Sünden sogar die einzigen, die wir konstatieren können. Damit steht die strafe Priesterschaft in Verbindung, die offenbar hinter den religiösen Zuständen liegt, in die uns die Inschriften einführen, und die eben im entschiedensten Gegensatz zu allen ursprünglichen Instinkten des Montanismus stehen.'⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Ramsay (1895:86) writes: 'I think we must attribute it [i.e. the disappearance of the vapor] to the actions of the Christians, who had deliberately filled up and covered over the place, the very dwelling-place of Satan.'

⁴⁰² Bean (1971:234).

⁴⁰³ Schepelern (1929:129f.).

This ties up with the particularly important element of Anatolian religion mentioned above, that of what Mitchell and others have called the ‘gods of divine justice,’⁴⁰⁴ as Miller’s describes beliefs concerning Apollo Lairbenos:

‘Thus Apollo Lairbenos was especially concerned with obedience to his injunctions, with the breaking of oaths, with stealing, and, in some respect, with the status of children. In addition to punishing shortcomings in these matters, he was capable of afflicting his followers when they tried to shirk a responsibility or simply wished to do something that was forbidden. A god with these concerns and with the power to punish people and to extract money from their purses, is, as the *stelai* advise, not to be taken lightly.’⁴⁰⁵

An example of the kind of injunctions made by Apollo Lairbenos on his followers can be seen in an inscription published by Ramsay in 1889, which records the punishment of Apellas, son of Apollonios, for being unfaithful to his wife.⁴⁰⁶ This vengeful aspect of Apollo Lairbenos and beliefs concerning him (which as we have observed were shared by many of the indigenous deities of the Anatolian Mid-West), is brought out sharply by a number of inscriptions which survive from the important epoch of the Antonine Plague, when Hierapolis’ citizens beseeched the god to turn away the sickness which afflicted them.⁴⁰⁷ As we will see below this is an important aspect to understanding the historical milieu of the rise of Montanism, for it was against the back-drop of the Antonine plague (among other things) that Montanist beliefs first came to the fore.⁴⁰⁸

Despite having a fairly important amount of evidence for this cult, Ramsay’s discussion of Hierapolis descends into one of his infamous descriptions of Phrygian religion before going on to argue (on very spurious evidence) for the essentially Phrygian nature of the city, often counter intuitively to what the evidence demonstrates.⁴⁰⁹ What emerges from Ramsay’s work must ultimately be chalked up as much to his fertile imagination as to the evidence from which

⁴⁰⁴ Mitchell (1993:187-195).

⁴⁰⁵ Miller (1985:67).

⁴⁰⁶ Ramsay (1889:220 no. 5).

⁴⁰⁷ Miller (1985:48). Parke (1985:145f.).

⁴⁰⁸ See below p. 212.

⁴⁰⁹ For Ramsay’s views on Phrygian religion and their impact see below p. 262-265.

he deduces it and this has direct bearings on his reconstruction of the Montanists as we will see in some detail below.

Jews and Christians in Hierapolis.

More important for the history of Christianity in this region was that Hierapolis was the home of an extensive Jewish community, who have bequeathed to posterity a substantial number of inscriptions.⁴¹⁰ As aforementioned Jewish communities had existed in Asia Minor since at least the time of Antiochus III, when, according to Josephus, the Seleucid monarch had settled a number of Jewish communities in the regions of the Anatolian Mid-West as colonists.⁴¹¹

In Hierapolis, by the second century CE, one of these Jewish communities seems to have thrived. By this time the community included a number of citizens wealthy enough to make donations to local guilds, and well integrated enough into the polis to specify that fines for grave desecration be paid into the local treasury.

One of the many interesting inscriptions is that of Publius Aelius Glykon, originally published by Judeich, which records how he commissioned the guild of purple-dyers to annually lay wreaths on his tomb around the period of Passover (ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῶν ἀζύμων).⁴¹² Similarly it contains a notice that another guild, this time of carpet-weavers, would leave wreaths on his tomb around the period of Pentecost (ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ πεντηκοστῆς). While it is clear that Aelius Glykon was a Jew himself, it is less certain whether the guilds in question were Jewish and presents interesting issues with regard to pagan and Jewish relations in the city.⁴¹³

Of the body of Jewish inscriptions originally published by Judeich there are a number of other notable features.⁴¹⁴ The Jews of the city preserved their own archive for the storing of stipulations relating to burial regulations and probably other important community matters, for instance, the epitaph of Aurelia Augusta, which in translation reads:

410 On this community see Kraabel (1968), Trebilco (1991), and most recently Miranda (1999:109-155) with an up-to-date survey of all epigraphic evidence.

411 On the Jews in Phrygia see Ramsay (1915:168-174); Van der Horst (2008:283-

412 *Alt.v.Hierapolis* 342.

413 On this inscription see Trebilco (1991:178f.); Kraabel (1968:120f.).

414 Kraabel (1968:125f.).

‘This *soros* and the area surrounding it belong to Aurelia Augusta, daughter of Zotikos, in which she is to be buried, and her husband Glukianos, also called Apros, and their children. Anyone else who buries [someone] in it shall give _____denaria to the community of the Jews resident in Hierapolis as reparation, and 2000 denaria to the plaintiff. A copy [of this inscription] has been deposited in the archive of the Jews.’⁴¹⁵

This strong integration and presence within the broader Hierapolitan community has often been deduced by scholars as evidence for the syncretistic nature of Phrygian Jews, with question of the levels of participation which Jews could go to in civic life being perennial point of discussion.⁴¹⁶ While, as noted above, the precedent for the laxness of Phrygian Jews is often inferred from problematic Talmudic passages, it suffices to say here that such interpretations are problematic and work off an anachronistic conception of the normative nature of Talmudic Judaism, as Kraabel writes:

‘[Such conclusions are problematic]...since most were descended from generations of Phrygian Jews who had developed their own “Anatolian Jewish” way of life (and death) far from the concern and control of Rabbinic circles.’⁴¹⁷

In addition to this Jewish presence, of which much more could be said, was a strong Christian presence, as alluded to above, and most notably one with what seems to have been distinctly chiliastic and prophetic bent. Eusebius describes, for instance, the work of Papias of Hierapolis, a disciple of the apostle John and contemporary of Polycarp according to Irenaeus,⁴¹⁸ and of whom Eusebius wrote:

‘Among them, he says that after the resurrection of the dead there will be a thousand-year period when the kingdom of Christ will be established on this earth in material form. I suppose that he got these notions by misunderstanding the apostolic accounts, not realizing that they had used mystic and symbolic language.’⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ *IJO* II. 205 [Trans. Kraemer (1988:110 no. 56)].

⁴¹⁶ Blanchetière (1974:367-382).

⁴¹⁷ Kraabel (1968:129).

⁴¹⁸ *Iren. haer.* V.333.

⁴¹⁹ Euseb. *h.e.* III.39. [Trans. Williamson].

It was also at Hierapolis, according to popular tradition, that the Evangelist Philip settled with his prophetic daughters, something recorded in Papias' lost works:

'...Papias also reports certain miraculous incidents and other matters that apparently reached him by tradition. That Philip the apostle lived at Hierapolis with his daughters has already been mentioned, but it must now be told how Papias, who knew them...' ⁴²⁰

This tradition, which was very widespread and enduring, is also mentioned in an important letter of the Quartodeciman bishop Polycrates of Ephesus preserved in Book III of Eusebius:

'Great luminaries sleep in Asia who shall rise again on the last day at the Lord's advent, when he shall come with glory from heaven and call back all his saints – such as Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps at Hierapolis, with two of his aged, virgin daughters.' ⁴²¹

That this later became an issue of some prevalence in debates between the proto-orthodox and the Montanists is made even clearer, when the Anonymous Anti-Montanist writes:

'But they will not be able to prove that any prophet either of those in the Old Testament or the New was inspired in this way; they shall boast neither Agabas, nor Judas, nor Silas, nor the daughters of Philip, nor of Ammia in Philadelphia, nor Quadratus, nor if indeed there are any others who have no relation to them at all.' ⁴²²

Indeed, aside from the Anonymous, who may have written in Hierapolis, was Apolinarius the bishop of Hierapolis. Apolinarius was possibly writing at the time of a synod against Montanism which seems (though the evidence is very problematic) to have resulted in the breaking off of communion between the proto-orthodox and the Montanists. ⁴²³ According to the ninth century *Libellus Synodicus* which in translation reads:

'An august and holy local synod was assembled in Hierapolis of Asia by Apollinarius, the most holy bishop of the city, and twenty-six other bishops, to renounce publicly and

⁴²⁰ Loc. Cit.

⁴²¹ Euseb. *h.e* III.31. [Trans. Williamson].

⁴²² Euseb. *h.e* V.17.3 [Trans. Heine].

⁴²³ On this Synod, which may in fact be the earliest such council on record, see Hefele (2007 [1894]:77-80).

excommunicate the false prophets Montanus and Maximilla, who in a blasphemous manner, or demon possessed as the same Father says, ended their life. With them they also condemned Theodotus the leather-worker.

An august and holy special synod was assembled by the most holy bishop of Achilles, Sota, and twelve other bishops. It reproved and publicly renounced the leather-worker Theodotus, along with Montanus and Maximilla, who taught that there are eight hundred and seventy-eight ages [that is aeons], and claimed that he himself was the Holy Spirit.

An august and holy local synod was assembled in Gaul by the confessors to publicly renounce Montanus and Maximilla. Its ruling passed over to the faithful in Asia.⁴²⁴

How much accuracy is in this very late source is a matter of debate, however, the Anonymous anti-Montanist does make the comment that around the 180s ‘...the faithful of Asia, at many times and in many places, came together to consult on the subject of Montanus and his followers; and these new doctrines were examined, and declared strange and impious.’⁴²⁵

While it has often been maintained that Apolinarius was responsible for an anti-Montanist tract, it seems plausible here to follow Tabbernee in asserting that it was rather an Episcopal letter concerning the findings of a local gathering (the term synod being anachronistic), of the kind referred to by Serapion of Antioch.⁴²⁶ Whatever the case may be Hierapolis, then, remained a key centre of Montanism and it is probable that Montanists used the fourth century *martyrium* of Philip there well into late antiquity.⁴²⁷

Epigraphic evidence for Christianity in this city, despite a number of literary references (particularly with regard to the anti-Montanist struggle), is relatively sparse. The earliest dated inscription, which is prior to 212 C.E., is a sarcophagus lid which is sadly no longer extant. The epigraph reads in translation: ‘For Ammia and Askelios, The (coffin is that) of Christians.’⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ *Libellus Synodicus* cited in Heine (1989:179).

⁴²⁵ Euseb. *h.e* V.4.27.10

⁴²⁶ Tabbernee (2007:20).

⁴²⁷ Tabbernee (2009:281-286).

⁴²⁸ *IMont* 10 [Trans. Tabbernee].

The second early inscription (*IMont* 11) is more problematic, but it has been argued that it was Montanist due to the name 'Prophetilla'.⁴²⁹

An inscription dated from 242/243 C.E. records Aurelius Satorneinos, who is described as ΧΡΕΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ ('a Christian'). Like we will see below with Apameia and Eumeneia, however, this so-called 'open-profession' did not stop Satorneinos from warning potential grave desecrators that such actions would result in a fine to the civic chest.⁴³⁰ Like the Jews then, by the third century, Christians in the city demonstrate at least nominal integration into important civic institutions.

Apamea.

Following the route from Laodicea east one eventually arrives at Apamea (*Apamea Kelaenos*). This city stood as an important trading city along a trajectory of the Maeander river. Founded by Antiochus I, the city was considered, after Ephesus, as the trading capital of Asia of which Dio Chrysostom wrote a glowing account (not lacking in his nauseating panegyric) and which Strabo could call the '...a great emporium of Asia, I mean Asia in the special sense of that term, and ranks second only to Ephesus; for it is a common entrepôt for the merchandise from both Italy and Greece.'⁴³¹

In it he describes agricultural activities such as the growing of wheat, spelt and barley, as well as animal husbandry. Apamea was first and foremost a market town, as Dio Chrysostom writes:

'You sit at the head of Phrygia, of Lydia, of Caria too, and other tribes most populous dwell about you, Cappadocians, Pamphylians, and Pisidians, to all of whom you offer your city as a market and assembly place.'⁴³²

Chrysostom also praises the city for its part in the '...sacred festivals of Asia, and as great a share in the expenditures as those cities in which the sacred festivals are held.'⁴³³ A passage no doubt referring to Ephesus and other important metropolises, though that the citizens and

⁴²⁹ Hogarth (1891:97).

⁴³⁰ *IMont* 11.

⁴³¹ Str. XII.8.15. See also D.Chr. XXXV. Broughton (1959:768f.)

⁴³² D. Chr. XXXV.

⁴³³ Loc. Cit.

taxpayers of Apamea contributed such an amount (discounting the panegyric exaggeration) is a sign of their piety to traditional religion and civic cult.

Apamea was the assize capital of this West-Central Phrygian region, and thus an important central city in matters of law-and-order, as well as an economic centre. It was also a centre of the imperial cult and a number of Asiarchs are recorded there.⁴³⁴ Like the cities of Eumeneia and Acmonia to its north it was early a centre of Christianity and Montanism. The anonymous anti-Montanist records that:

‘For this reason also, whenever those from the Church who have been called to martyrdom for the true faith happen to be with any of the so-called martyrs from the heresy of the Phrygians, they separate themselves and die not in fellowship with them because they are not willing to agree with the spirit which speaks through Montanus and the women. And that this is true is obvious in what happened even in our times in Apamea on the Menander in those who were martyred with Gaius and Alexander from Eumeneia.’⁴³⁵

That these martyrdoms took place in Apamea of a number of Christians from Eumeneia may be seen as indicative of the role which the *conventus* played in the trial of Christians, a matter to which we will return below.

Much more than its neighboring city of Eumeneia to the north Apamea showed a strong culture of public life and benefaction, numerous dedications survive on behalf of citizens for the liturgies and other public benefices. Similarly, epigraphically its religious life was of further interest, inscriptions from the early second century record relatives of a high-priest of Asia,⁴³⁶ an honour often fought over by cities. In terms of religious concerns, like in Eumeneia and other cities of the Anatolian Mid-West fines were regularly imposed on grave desecrators, and many of the gods discussed above were venerated here, though again we have little evidence for explicit civic cults.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ For a list see Broughton (1959:769).

⁴³⁵ Euseb. *h.e* V.16.22 [Trans. Heine].

⁴³⁶ *MAMA* VI.182.

⁴³⁷ E.g. *MAMA* VI.187, 188, 189, 191, 193, 198, 199, 200, 203.

Institutionally its documentary evidence is of first importance as it contains many of the important functionaries of Roman rule such as archons,⁴³⁸ bailiffs,⁴³⁹ ἀγορανόμοι,⁴⁴⁰ as well as councillors,⁴⁴¹ and δεκάπρωτοι,⁴⁴² whose important roles we will discuss further in Chapter 3. Interestingly, by the third century, Christians were to be found amongst these officials, for instance a Christian bailiff, is recorded in *MAMA* VI.222 which also includes an Asiarch. That a Christian could function in such a civic role, and a law-and-order related one at that is strong testimony as to the strength of Christianity in this region, though we should also note the strong Jewish presence.⁴⁴³

According to Cicero's list in *Pro Flacco* it was Apamea which furnished the largest contribution for the Jewish tax which Flaccus confiscated, with Cicero giving the sum as a hundred weight of gold, almost five times that of nearby Laodicea.⁴⁴⁴ While as aforementioned it would be foolhardy to reckon the exact numbers of Jews here it does point to a sizable Jewish population, either in Apameia alone or in the surrounding cities of its *conventus* district (e.g. Eumeneia and Ackmoneia), it does suggest a sizable enough population and raises the question of their involvement in the city.⁴⁴⁵

By the second century the city of Apamea was issuing a famous series of coins depicting Noah's ark, showing the familiarity with which even pagan citizens had with this famous Jewish narrative.⁴⁴⁶ Indeed the apocryphal Sibylline Oracles proclaimed that Ararat was to be found in Phrygia. That relations between the Jews of this city and the broader population entailed a fair degree of mutual understanding is clear. One Jewish epitaph which survives which includes the stipulation 'he knows the Law of the Jews' (τὸν νόμον οἶδεν [τ]ῶν Εἰουδέων), which seems to suggest an general understanding and appreciation of at least some basic Jewish traditions amongst the predominantly gentile population.⁴⁴⁷ The inscription in full reads:

⁴³⁸ *MAMA* VI.183.

⁴³⁹ *MAMA* VI.204.

⁴⁴⁰ *MAMA* VI.215.

⁴⁴¹ *MAMA* V.216.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ On the Jewish community at Apamea see Trebilco (1991:85-103).

⁴⁴⁴ *Cic. Flac.* XXVIII.68.

⁴⁴⁵ On this see Marshall (1975:146f.).

⁴⁴⁶ On these coins see Trebilco (1991:95-101).

⁴⁴⁷ For a discussion of this particular inscription see Strubbe (1994:108f.).

‘Aurelios Roufos, son and grandson of Iulianos, I have made this grave for myself and for my wife Aurelia Tatiana. Let no one else be buried here. If, however, someone buries (another person) here, he knows the Law of the Jews.’⁴⁴⁸

Just as Jews seem to have achieved an important place in the civic life of this city, Christians were also to be counted among its citizens by the third century, for instance, Aurelius Artemos who was a citizen of Apamea,⁴⁴⁹ or Aurelius Trophimos a citizen of Asian Antioch buried near Apamea,⁴⁵⁰ and like their pagan counterparts Christians were capable of requesting fines to go to the city treasury.⁴⁵¹ From this evidence we can see that Christians were not, however, only to be found in the upper-strata (though their presence there should not be understated), another inscription, for instance, records a Christian in the much less esteemed (though perhaps more important) profession of a shoemaker.⁴⁵²

The image that emerges from the epigraphic evidence, then, and which seems to starkly contradict much of the expectation one might have from preconceived notions about persecution derived from the statement of the Anonymous Anti-Montanist cited above, is that by the third century an affluent and influential Christian community existed in Apamea, right under the nose of some of the most potentially threatening vestiges of Roman rule. Indeed by the third century there was already evidence of so-called ‘Open-confession’ inscriptions within Apamea, for instance the epitaph of Aurelius Proklos who erected an tomb for himself and his wife Meletine ending the epitaph with the word Χρειστιανῶν (‘Christians’).⁴⁵³ In addition to this, we also have a so-called ‘open-confession’ inscription which also includes the ‘Eumeneian Formula,’ recording a certain Kapiton commemorating his wife and sister.⁴⁵⁴ While, then, it would be imprudent to retroject this evidence back onto the second century it is important to see that irregardless of persecutions Christianity in this region thrived.

⁴⁴⁸ *CIO* II.179. [Trans. Trebilco (1991:100 n. 5.1).]

⁴⁴⁹ *MAMA* VI.223.

⁴⁵⁰ *MAMA* VI.224.

⁴⁵¹ *MAMA* VI.226, 228.

⁴⁵² *MAMA* VI.234.

⁴⁵³ *IMont* 19.

⁴⁵⁴ *IMont* 20.

Acmonia.

Further north, at modern Ahat, was the small city of Acmonia, whose territory stretched from its mountainous location down into the Banaz Ova and beyond.⁴⁵⁵ Little of the city survives; Ramsay noted evidence for a theatre, an *odeon* and some other buildings, enough for him to say:

‘The remains of Akmonia mark it as a city of great wealth and importance; and this is confirmed by its dignity as enjoying the Neokorate, and as a seat of a high-priesthood of the Imperial cultus. Yet, in spite of its importance, it is rarely mentioned in literature, and its history is blank.’⁴⁵⁶

Despite its strategic position in the foothills overlooking the Banaz-Ova, Acmonia was not isolated, and evidence suggests close contact between it and the more southern cities of Apamea and Eumeneia. As Ramsay noted little is known of its foundation, despite the survival of a curious foundation mythology.

What is interesting for our purposes here is that the presence of the Imperial Cult in the city is briefly attested, for instance, an inscription from around 200 CE published in Ramsay records a high-priest of the emperors,⁴⁵⁷ though perhaps the most notable evidence here is the important inscription of Julia Severa, a priestess of the imperial cult, who is elsewhere titled a ‘head of the synagogue.’⁴⁵⁸ While it would be superfluous here to enter into the debates of Julia Severa’s religious affiliation or affiliations, it is clear from her presence that the Jewish community of Acmonia enjoyed at the very least important patronal relationships, if not particularly wealthy members, and had its own by all descriptions ornate synagogue.⁴⁵⁹

By the number of surviving inscription Acmonia seems to have been the second most sizable Jewish community in Phrygia, with at least ten surviving Jewish epitaphs in Ameling’s collection.⁴⁶⁰ From these inscriptions we know that the Jews had their own synagogue, which had undergone renovations of painted mosaics during the first century. The Jews of Acmonia,

⁴⁵⁵ On the geographical location of Acmonia see Tabbernee (1993:169f.); Ramsay (1897b:621-636).

⁴⁵⁶ Ramsay (1897b:625).

⁴⁵⁷ *CB* II.532.

⁴⁵⁸ See below n. 480.

⁴⁵⁹ On the debate of Julia Severa see Trebilco (1991:58-60).

⁴⁶⁰ *CIO* II.168-178. For the inscriptions see Ramsay (1915:168-174); Strubbe (1994:70-127).

moreover, had developed their own unique take on the traditional grave-imprecations. For instance, the epitaph of Makaria and her granddaughter Alexandria, ends with the foreboding threat that whoever should vandalize or disturb the tomb will 'reckon with the curses written in Deuteronomy,' in this case probably a reference to Deuteronomy 27-29, though Strubbe and others have made a number of qualifications here.⁴⁶¹

If these references were not enough to frighten away would-be grave-robbers, those contained on another Jewish epitaph were even more fearful, reading:

'[If somebody] buries somebody else may he receive the treacherous blow of the unexpected sort which their brother Amrimnos (received). And if one of them is not afraid of the curses, may the sickle of the curse come into their houses and leave no-one behind.'⁴⁶²

Similarly others threatened a malefactor with other stipulations such as that 'the wrath of God will destroy his whole family,'⁴⁶³ or 'he will reckon with the sickle of the curse,'⁴⁶⁴ the latter a likely reference to the LXX text of Zechariah 5.1-5.⁴⁶⁵

Christian evidence in Acmonia is more sparse. Of the pre-Constantinian evidence only two third century inscriptions survive, the first of which is dated to 253/254 C.E. and reads:

'In the year 381, I, Aurelia Ioulia, (commissioned this tomb) for my father...and for my mother, Beroneikiane, and for my sweetest child Severos and for my daughter-in-law Moundane, in memory. Christians.'⁴⁶⁶

This inscription has sometimes been claimed as Montanist due to the odd name Moundane, which certainly sounds akin to Montanus, though the evidence is far from certain. The second inscription, which is undated but obviously of the upper moulding of a *βομός* similar to that of *IMont* 21, reads quite simple 'Hedia, a Christian.'⁴⁶⁷ It is probably given the palaeography and

⁴⁶¹ Strubbes (1994:89f.). Trebilco (1991:60-69).

⁴⁶² *MAMA* VI.316 [Trans. Trebilco (1991:74 n. 5.1)].

⁴⁶³ *MAMA* VI.325.

⁴⁶⁴ *CIJ* 769.

⁴⁶⁵ On these inscriptions see Strubbe (1994:87f.) and Trebilco (1991:75f.).

⁴⁶⁶ *IMont* 21 [Trans. Tabbernee].

⁴⁶⁷ *IMont* 22 [Trans. Tabbernee].

other similarities that this inscription was from the same workshop as that of *IMont* 21 but that it is Montanist again remains inconclusive.

The strong Jewish presence, imperial cult and 'open-confession' formulae, similarities shared with a number of the cities we have looked at do suggest that the Christians of Akmoneia maintained positive relationships with their neighbours. No evidence for persecution in this city survives, though as Apamea was the assize capital it is possible that Christians from Akmonia may have been tried here. Its closer proximity to the Montanist city of Pepuza and to the Montanist community at Temenothyrae may suggest the presence of Montanists here, though as indicated the evidence is far from conclusive.

Temenothyrai.

Following the Roman road in a north-west direction one eventually arrives at Temenothyrai, an important centre of early Montanism.⁴⁶⁸ Temeonothyrai (sometimes referred to additionally as Flaviopolis) was located on the borderlands between Lydia and Phrygia, on the trading route leading east from Sardis, in whose *conventus* district it was situated.⁴⁶⁹ The modern region of Uşak was visited by both Arundell and Hamilton, the former noting that still during that time (the mid 1800s) it was famed for its carpets and weaving (as well as its liquid opium).⁴⁷⁰ More recently Drew-Bear described its location as:

'The city of Uşak, built on the lower slopes of two adjoining hills and extending over the level plain immediately to the south, stands at an altitude of ca. 850 m near the western rim of the Phrygian high plateau, to the south of a mountain chain beyond which lies the territory of Kadoi in the upper Hermos valley, and to the south-west of Mt. Dindymos beyond which were the cities of Appia and Kotiaieion.'⁴⁷¹

Temenothyrai is only mentioned twice in surviving ancient literature, both times in Pausanias, a Bithynian native. Inscriptional evidence notes that it was originally part of the tribal territory of the Mekkadenoi, a group who Drew-Bear believed were probably of mixed Lydian and

⁴⁶⁸ For a succinct geographical survey see Tabbernee (1997:61). For an important discussion on the city and its identification see Drew-Bear (1979:275-302).

⁴⁶⁹ Jones (1971a:80-81).

⁴⁷⁰ Arundell (1834:104-118).

⁴⁷¹ Drew-Bear (1979:279).

Phrygian descent.⁴⁷² Despite this mixed descent, numismatic evidence suggests that most commercial transactions were done with Phrygian, rather than Lydian cities.⁴⁷³ Inscriptions record a βουλή, archons and councilors who undertook works of euergetism;⁴⁷⁴ including one chief archon who was also a citizen and benefactor at the Phrygian city of Amorion,⁴⁷⁵ and another benefactor who was also a citizen of Smyrna.⁴⁷⁶

The city also records a ‘high priest of Asia for life’ who funded gladiatorial combats in the city probably during the short reign of Philip II.⁴⁷⁷ Of the inscriptions surviving from the city the most interesting are a set of “Montanist” inscriptions, however, in addition to these are other ‘open-confession’ inscriptions, one, recording a burial of Eutyches son of Eutyches for his wife Tatia, datable to the late third century (278/9 CE).⁴⁷⁸

In terms of our survey Temenothyrai is the most interesting location in terms of Montanism as it is where our earliest epigraphic evidence survives from between the late second and early third century.⁴⁷⁹ Five inscriptions survive recording, among other things, a Montanist *presbytera* Ammion and a Montanist *episcopus* Diogas.⁴⁸⁰ Unlike many of the inscriptions which survive from this region, the Montanist inscriptions from Temenothyrai give us some iconographic elements of note. Perhaps the most striking is that of what appears to be the *panis quadratus* on a small Eucharistic table found on *IMont* 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8, however, for understanding the social composition of this community it is important to note that a number of iconographic elements (such as carding combs, distaff and spindle, pruning hooks and hatchets) seem to suggest rural occupations. This would be expected given that Temenothyrai was originally on the tribal territory of Mocadene and was probably still undergoing a process of hellenisation in the late second and early third century.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷² Drew-Bear (1979: 277 n. 14).

⁴⁷³ Ibid. 291.

⁴⁷⁴ *CB* II. 519; 517; 518;

⁴⁷⁵ *CB* II.518

⁴⁷⁶ Drew-Bear (1979) no. 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Drew-Bear (1979) no. 8

⁴⁷⁸ *CB* II.444

⁴⁷⁹ *IMont* 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

⁴⁸⁰ *IMont* 4.

⁴⁸¹ Drew-Bear (1979:288-302).

Thyatira.

Thyatira was one of the important cities of Lydia. Along with Laodicea, Thyatira was important for the production of textiles and showed a number of the signs of an important commercial city. From New Testament times the city had a Christian community and was one of the seven churches addressed by the Seer John in the Apocalypse (Rev. 2:18-23), where he writes:

‘And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze: ‘I know your works—your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practise fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.’⁴⁸²

That it was a female prophet who seems to have caused some of the controversies at Thyatira had in the past caused Ramsay,⁴⁸³ and others to note its later connection with Montanism, but as we will see this may have more to do with many of the problematic assumptions regarding Phrygian religion than any possible continuity.

This said, Montanism seems to have taken off in this district and Epiphanius writes that by the fourth century ‘...since these Phrygians settled there, snatched the simple believers’ minds like wolves, and converted the whole town to their sect.’⁴⁸⁴ Here Epiphanius is explicitly referring to the opposition to the use of Revelation by the so-called ‘Alogoi,’ on account of its popularity amongst the Montanists, however he makes it clear that he believed that Thyatira (mentioned in the preceding paragraph) had been wholly won over to the Montanism.

⁴⁸² Rev. 2:18-23 [Trans. NRSV].

⁴⁸³ Trevett (1989:313-348); Ramsay (1994 [1904]:248); Hemer (1986:117-123)

⁴⁸⁴ Epiphanius, *haer.* LI.34.1.

This might seem like a minor point, however, this passage, if accurate, presents the possibility, long ago noted by Calder, that if the church at Thyateira was wholly Montanist, then the use of 'open-confession' formulae there could be argued as indicative of explicitly Montanist Christianity when used elsewhere (and in opposition to the theory for the non-Montanist nature of the important 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions).⁴⁸⁵

The most important inscription in this regard is *TAM* V.2.1299 which is seen by Mitchell as a '...powerful supporting argument' for the Montanist nature of the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions and deserves some discussion.⁴⁸⁶ The inscription, in its *IMont* 13 translation, reads:

'In the year..., on the tenth (day) of the month Loös, Aurelius Gaios son of Apphianos, a Christian, prepared (this sarcophagus) for himself and for Aurelia Stratoneikiane his wife, being herself a Christian. No-one else has authority to place (the body) of another (here); but if anyone were to put in another corpse, that one shall pay 1,000 *denarii* to the *katoikia* of the Chorianonians.'

Tabbernee has argued that this inscription cannot easily be classified as one of the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions, due to the separation of at least ten words between the first use of Christian and the second, the latter of which is incidentally a provisional reading.⁴⁸⁷ The second caveat posed by Tabbernee, though perhaps less problematic than he assumes, is that the find location was not in Thyateira itself (thus disposing of the evidence from Epiphanius) but eighteen kilometers south. This argument poses the issue of whether Montanism would have spread south outside the city and whether it was the only form of Christianity in the region at this time, though given the presence of Montanists in the nearby rural regions of Temenothyrai this does seem plausible at the very least.⁴⁸⁸

As with the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions which we will discuss below, Tabbernee's argument rests on his interpretation of 'open-confession' formulae, though his cautious stance with regard to its definitive Montanist status is probably quite correct. What is perhaps more

⁴⁸⁵ Calder (1923:309-53).

⁴⁸⁶ Mitchell (1993b:104f.).

⁴⁸⁷ Tabbernee (1997:104).

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

interesting is that it occurs in a rural area, not a city itself. However, we should not push this geographical situation too far, as the dedicators felt confident enough to profess their Christianity while at the same time taking advantage of their membership in the community of the Chrorianonians.

Pepuza/Tymion.

Leading Lydia back for Phrygia brings us to Pepuza/Tymion, two cities whose location was debated for over a century before their rediscovery by Tabbernee and Lampe in 2000.⁴⁸⁹ While no Christian inscriptions specifically found at these locations have yet to be published (one Montanist inscription referring to Pepuza has),⁴⁹⁰ the Tymion inscription has been published twice.⁴⁹¹ This inscription was brought to the attention of Tabbernee by Rosalind Kearsley who saw the inscription while preparing for the publication of her volume of bilingual inscriptions, and is the first epigraphic attestation of Tymion.⁴⁹² It is also fascinating and reopens the question of social tensions as a strong contributing factor in the rise of Montanism.⁴⁹³ The inscription reads (in part), in Tabbernee and Lampe's improved translation:

‘...to the tenant farmers (*colonis*) among the Tymians and the Simoens:

Our procurator will set himself against unlawful exactions and against those who continue to ask in a very demanding way for dues. If, however, the matter requires a higher authority, he (i.e. the procurator), in the manner of his office, will not hesitate to defend these persons (i.e. the tenant farmers) before the governor of the province of Asia against those who in an unlawful way ask for dues.’

⁴⁸⁹ For a narrative of this discovery see Tabbernee (2003:87-93).

⁴⁹⁰ Mitchell (2005:207-23).

⁴⁹¹ Hauken et al. (2003:33-44) and Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:49-74).

⁴⁹² Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:51).

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 144 reads:

‘Among other factors, socio-economic reasons can be identified that allow us to establish correlations between socio-economic conditions and religious phenomena. The Tymion inscription of the year 205 C.E. published in this volume, could suggest that the ecstatic Montanism, calling Tymion “Jerusalem” and spreading rapidly in Phrygia, probably also was attractive to some of the economically stressed tenant farmers who are mentioned on the epigraph and lived in Tymion on an imperial estate. The ecstatic religious praxis offered a vent to those who were burdened economically. In addition, the Montanist ecstasies prophesied that in the near future a heavenly city would descend from the sky onto the imperial estate and level this location of present distress on the ground. Such a prophecy tended to relieve some of the socio-economic stress caused by illegal taxes and harsh methods of collecting dues.’

While we only have literary evidence referring to this so far, the initial excavation report published by Tabbernee and Lampe, while perhaps premature as Mitchell notes,⁴⁹⁴ gives a glimpse into ongoing work which will no doubt shed important light on all aspects of Montanism in its Phrygian milieu.

Eumeneia.

From this most likely candidate for Pepuza and Tymion we travel south to Eumeneia, a city which is perhaps the best known early Christian district in Asia Minor, not least for having bequeathed us the aforementioned 'Eumeneian formula.' Due to its importance, Eumeneia requires a more thorough treatment than many of the cities already surveyed. Founded by Attalus II in honor of his brother Eumenes II, the city thrived in the second and third centuries of the Common Era. Situated on the upper Maeander plains at an altitude of around 850 meters, at the foot of what Drew-Bear describes as 'des contreforts rocheux qui forment la jonction entre l'imposant massif de l'Ak Dağ (culminant à plus de 2400m.) au sud-est de la ville, et celui du Burgaz Dağ (haut de 1990m.) au nord-ouest.'⁴⁹⁵

Ak Dağ marked the northernmost extremity of the mountain range stretching forty kilometers between Eumeneia and its important neighbour Apamea in the south.⁴⁹⁶ This chain of mountains formed what Drew-Bear called '...une barrière nette entre la plaine du Méandre, à l'ouest, et la haute plaine des villes de la Pentapole, au nord-est.'⁴⁹⁷ Situated in such a geographical setting Eumeneia no doubt derived its prosperity from the surrounding fertile plains of the Meander valley (particularly of the Banaz Ova), which were still abundantly watered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁹⁸ Epigraphic evidence from this region is largely of the *bomos* variety and thus tells us little about the type of farming (compared with the rich iconography of the door-stone type found elsewhere in Phrygia)⁴⁹⁹, though during 1921 the region was recorded as 'produc[ing] grains, hemp, cotton, and tobacco.'⁵⁰⁰ Similarly, when Hamilton and Arundell staged their separated expeditions in the

⁴⁹⁴ Mitchell (2009:492).

⁴⁹⁵ Drew-Bear (1978:112).

⁴⁹⁶ Magie (1950:126).

⁴⁹⁷ Drew-Bear (1978:112).

⁴⁹⁸ See above n. 438.

⁴⁹⁹ Waelkens (1979:277-315).

⁵⁰⁰ Semple (1921:341).

1830s Eumeneia was famed for its viticulture.⁵⁰¹ Two roads ran out of Eumeneia, one leading south to Apamea, the other north to Sebaste.⁵⁰²

The history of Eumeneia as a city was uneventful at best, it was the scene of no great battle, no famous treaty, no great or particularly memorable monuments and certainly no literary figures of any note. In fact, to many scholars of the ancient world Eumeneia may even be so close to anonymity to be confused with either the Delian city or the festival which bore the same name. However, in histories of early Christianity and its geographic spread Eumeneia always warrants at least a footnote, sometimes even a whole sentence, for one claim to fame.⁵⁰³ That is, by the mid-third century Eumeneia provides comparatively extensive epigraphic evidence for a thriving early Christian community who seem to be achieving increasing predominance. However, in terms of literary evidence this only shows Christians at Eumeneia at an early date including Montanists and at least three martyrs who will be discussed below.

Scholars are always happy to grant Eumeneia this passing distinction, and normally to footnote some standard discussion of this by W.M. Ramsay or Louis Robert,⁵⁰⁴ without much elaboration. However, when we stop to consider the matter further, in corollary with other factors that can be assembled about third century Eumeneia, we should stop to pause and give some thought to what the implications of these inscriptions are. Of particular interest are the implications of seven inscriptions referring to the elites of Eumeneia.

These inscriptions show that a number of Christians were members of the civic council (βουλή) and that two thirds of the surviving inscriptions for βουλευταὶ in Eumeneia are identifiably Christian, some dating perhaps as early as the second century, though more likely the third (most of the onomastic evidence is post *Constitutio Antoniniana*). For instance, one reads:⁵⁰⁵

‘In the year 249 C.E., in the month, on the day, Aurelius Moschas, son of Alexandros, erected the *hierōn* for Alexandros son of Menekrates...’

⁵⁰¹ Arundell (1834:150) writes:

‘Here were vineyards bearing grapes of such magnificent size, and exquisite flavor, that Eucarpia would be a more fitting name than Eumenia.’

⁵⁰² See map in Mitchell (1993a:120).

⁵⁰³ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.22. For additional literary references see Mullen (2004:94f.).

⁵⁰⁴ Ramsay (1896:584-568); Robert (1960: 414-439).

⁵⁰⁵ *CB* II. 372.

We can date this inscription then to the mid-third century, right before the reign of Decius. Another of the inscriptions,⁵⁰⁶ this time using a monogram to represent the name Jesus Christ, can in Ramsay's reckoning be dated to around 270 C.E. What is most interesting about this second inscription, however, is that it refers to a Christian member of the city council, a role which potentially involved considerable economic outlay but also the issues of compromise with the pagan cults of the civic space.⁵⁰⁷

The repercussions for active participation in civic life amongst early Christians had long dictated a cautious attitude to such office, with some writers like Origen and Tertullian condemning Christians who hold civic office on the grounds that it would amount to idolatry.⁵⁰⁸ This said, a substantial amount of evidence exists for Christians holding such offices, perhaps even as early as the first century.⁵⁰⁹ When we consider some the nature of civic office a number of matters have to be born in mind. Firstly, are the contrasts between the seven Christian councillors and their three surviving pagan colleagues.

Under the empire of the first and second centuries civic office, which entailed membership in the decurial order, required a minimum wealth requirement,⁵¹⁰ and usually involved the processes of civic benefaction and euergetism.⁵¹¹ Councilors would be expected to finance lavish public liturgies and building works as part of their office.⁵¹² With the importance which civic cults held within the life of the πόλις such participation would present immediate problems for pious Christians wishing to undertake such duties. That such demands (whether enforced or voluntary) were in place in Eumeneia is evidenced by two of the three pagan epitaphs recording βουλευταί, the first of which notes in traditionally laudatory language of such public inscriptions that Julianus, son of Artemidoros and chief among the members of the council '... blamelessly fulfilled the liturgies for the city.' (λειτουργίας ἀμέμπτως ἐκτελέσαντα τῇ πατρίδι).⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁶ *CB* II.371.

⁵⁰⁷ On the legal obligations of the civic councilors see Berger (1953:426f.).

⁵⁰⁸ Origenes *Cels.* VIII.75. Tert. *Apol.* XXXVIII; *De Idol.* XVII.

⁵⁰⁹ For a good general survey of this see McKechnie (2009:1-20).

⁵¹⁰ 25,000 denarii in second century Attica. MacMullen (1974:5).

⁵¹¹ For a fascinating and detailed discussion of euergetism and civic benefaction see Veyne (1990 [1976]).

⁵¹² Jones (1971 [1940]:176).

⁵¹³ *CIG* 3885.

While it is difficult to date this inscription, given the nomenclature a date in second, or perhaps even first century, is likely (by the absence of the pseudo-praenomen). What is interesting is that of the seven epitaphs of Christian councillors none record any benefaction and all are most likely third century.

An explanation for this is difficult due to the dramatic shifts which took place in Roman provincial society during the tumultuous (though perhaps no less tumultuous than usual) third century.⁵¹⁴ By this time civic office had become burdensome and increasingly those who met the wealth qualifications sort to avoid office. A number of factors contributed to this situation not least the increasingly centralized nature of Roman government and concentration of landholdings into the hands of large (often imperial) estates, a process which gradually took place in Asia Minor from the first century of the Common Era,⁵¹⁵ which caused problems for private estate owners (whose land was increasingly hedged in). While it is not necessary to go into too much detail here, what can be said is that as the third century progressed, legislative measures indicate that provincial governors were increasingly required to enforce *munera* on an increasingly unwilling decurial class. A result of this was the debasing of the decurial order, which became increasingly hereditary and ceremonial. It also so, interestingly, from the period of at least Marcus Aurelius' and Commodus' joint reign legislation dealing with the conditions under which Jews could hold civic office, without compromising their *superstitio*.⁵¹⁶

With this new burden the lavishness, and pride in the performance of euergetism which marks the second century decurial inscriptions disappears, but the chief question must be whether this is a result of the social conditions outlined in the previous paragraph, or is it a direct result of 'Christianization,' whereby concerns of conscience amongst a Christian elite meant the foregoing of public duties which were intimately intertwined with pagan religious piety? The current state of the evidence does not offer a clear answer to these questions, but it does at least suggest that Christians, whatever their attitude toward their civic duties, were an

⁵¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of this shift see Alföldy (1985:159-85). The following paragraph draws extensively on this work and that of MacMullen (1974).

⁵¹⁵ Broughton (1934:207-239).

⁵¹⁶ *Dig.* XXVII.1.15.6; *Dig.* L.2.2.3. On this and other legislation regarding the civic position of the Jews see Grayzel (1968:93-117); Rabello (1980: 662-762).

increasingly visible force within Eumeneia.⁵¹⁷ The question must be asked, of whether or not they had grown to a majority status within the city, as many authors are quick to state.⁵¹⁸

Whether or not Eumeneia had a Christian majority by the third century is a question which is impossible to answer, and best left open.⁵¹⁹ However, a number of factors should be taken into account. Firstly is the epigraphic evidence from elsewhere, most importantly the important Orcistus inscription of the fourth century.⁵²⁰ While this inscription is Constantinian in date, it states that ‘...all are said to live as followers of the most holy religion.’ This inscription, dating sometime between 323 and 331 CE indicates that by this time a small city in Phrygia could lay claim to having an entirely Christian population.

More interesting, however, and worthy of some discussion is the passage in Eusebius’ *Church History* which raises some very interesting questions about the fate of Eumeneia. This passage reads:

‘For example a little Christian town in Phrygia was encircled by legionaries, who set it on fire and completely destroyed it, along with the entire population – men, women, and children – as they called on Almighty God. And why? Because all the inhabitants of the town without exception – the mayor himself and the magistrates, with all the officials and the entire populace – declared themselves Christians and absolutely refused to obey the command to commit idolatry.’⁵²¹

A similar passage is found in Eusebius’ near-contemporary Lactantius, who writes:

‘For, having gained power, every one raged according to his own disposition. Some, through excessive timidity, proceeded to greater lengths than they were commanded; others thus acted through their own particular hatred against the righteous; some by a natural ferocity of mind; some through a desire to please, and that by this service they might prepare the way to higher offices: some were swift to slaughter, as an individual

⁵¹⁷ Mitchell (1993b:58) raises some of the difficulties which our sparse evidence poses.

⁵¹⁸ E.g. Frend (1984: 445); Lane-Fox (1987:295).

⁵¹⁹ On this see Mitchell (1993b:40f.; 58).

⁵²⁰ *MAMA* VII.305 [Trans. Coleman-Norton (1966: no. 43)].

⁵²¹ Euseb. *h.e.* VIII.11.1 [Trans. Williamson].

in Phrygia, who burnt a whole assembly of people, together with their place of meeting.’⁵²²

The Greek of Eusebius’ passage is difficult to verbally match with the language on the inscriptions of Eumeneia, but the general gist of the passage gives some support to a claim that Eumeneia could have been strongly Christianized by the mid-third century. Ramsay took this passage to probably refer to a massacre at Eumeneia itself, writing:

‘The contrast between the rich intellectual and political life of the Christians in the third century and the inarticulate monotony of the many centuries that succeeded is painful: one recognizes in the numbers of our catalogue the signs of a great misfortune to the human race, the destruction of a vigorous and varied life.’⁵²³

Setting aside Ramsay’s hyperbole, there is some likelihood in his argument concerning the absolute dearth of Christian inscriptions in Eumeneia after Constantine. In Ramsay’s opinion the last securely datable Christian inscription from Eumeneia (CB II.373) dates to around 290-300 CE on account of the use of the Eumeneian formula.⁵²⁴ This is probably correct, as McKechnie has recently stated in an unpublished paper ‘one is on firm ground in inferring that most Eumeneian formula gravestones were put up between the 240s and 270s.’⁵²⁵

The dating of this inscription must be decided, however, on the basis of the identity and dating of the career of the official Castrius Constans mentioned. Two inscriptions survive mentioning this official, the one cited above and another from Herakeleia in Caria which mentions L. Castrius Constans (ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνος Λουκίου Καστρίου Κώνσταντος ὑπατικοῦ).⁵²⁶ Ramsay, followed by Anderson, had suggested that L. Castrius Constans may have been a governor, though both date this to a later period.⁵²⁷ In her most recent discussion of the matter Roueché has demonstrated that this need not necessarily be so, and that a date as early

⁵²² Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* V.11 [Trans. Fletcher].

⁵²³ Ramsay (1896b: 505).

⁵²⁴ Ramsay (1896b:529).

⁵²⁵ McKechnie forthcoming. I thank Prof. McKechnie here for allowing me to read and comment on this paper before its publication.

⁵²⁶ MAMA VI.94.2.

⁵²⁷ Ramsay (1896b: 529); Anderson (1932:32).

as the joint rule of Valerian and Gallienus is possible.⁵²⁸ Either way this is indeed the latest monument at Eumeneia which we can confirm as Christian.

Why Eusebius, who was often so careful to note the details of persecution (even in his morbid narrative in books eight and nine) could not name this city poses problems and while it is indeed a rather deafening silence it remains just that, an argument from silence. Whatever the case may be, Eumeneia retains its status as the most comprehensive body of epigraphic data for Christians in the small cities of Asia Minor during the pre-Constantinian era. However, we must be cautious in how we interpret this evidence, less we draw too strong an inference from Eumeneia's civic status. What is important to note, as Mitchell and Drew-Bear have (contra Ramsay), is that far from being concentrated within the πόλις of Eumeneia these inscriptions are to be found in the surrounding territory,⁵²⁹ as Mitchell writes:

‘Given that most of the inhabitants of Eumeneia presumably lived off the land as peasant farmers, it is worth emphasizing that the stereotype of early Christians as an urban sect has little validity here.’⁵³⁰

Of the thirty-six Christian inscriptions thus far published, twenty-four are found in towns surrounding modern Ishikli (the site of ancient Eumeneia),⁵³¹ thus aside from the strong probability that many of these have been moved since antiquity we still have an overwhelming majority of inscriptions which are not found in the *polis* of Eumeneia itself, which either way was hardly a large metropolis anyway. Before progressing on it is worth quickly surveying the content of these inscriptions and briefly discussing one key point of dispute.

Most of the inscriptions from Eumeneia use the distinct epigraphic formula known as the ‘Eumeneian formula,’ which as we have noted above roughly translates as ‘he will reckon with God.’⁵³² This vaguely monotheistic confession was first suggested as Christian by Kaibel in 1878 and has largely been accepted by scholars as a sign of Christianity from Ramsay's work in

⁵²⁸ See Roueché's updated version of *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* at <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/ala2004/>.

⁵²⁹ Drew-Bear (1978:53-5 esp 54f.) Mitchell (1993b:58).

⁵³⁰ Mitchell (1993b:58).

⁵³¹ *CB* II. 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 361, 362, 365-6, 367, 372, 373, 375, 376, 379, 380. *MAMA* IV. 353, 354, 355. *IPhygDB* 46, 47, 48. Calder *JRS* 16 (1926) 179, 212, 208.

⁵³² See Calder (1939:15-26); (1923:309-354); Sheppard (1979:169-180); Trebilco (2004:66-88).

the nineteenth century onwards. Despite this a recent argument has been proposed by Trebilco arguing against the designation.

Trebilco argues not against a Christian provenance, but rather a more cautious approach to the automatic assumption that all such inscriptions are Christian, noting:

‘...the conclusion from this that we wish to draw here- that the Christians, who were (we have argued) in contact with the local Jewish community, may have shared the Eumeneian formula itself with Jews and so we cannot determine the religious provenance of the majority of the inscriptions.’

Here Trebilco certainly has a point, one which is in agreement with the earlier work of Bij de Varte and van Henten.⁵³³ However, his argumentation on certain points requires more careful discussion.

Firstly, on the matter of Christian councilors, Trebilco believes that it is more likely that ‘Eumeneian formulae’ inscriptions recording civic councilors refer to Jews, as Jews are more often attested elsewhere of holding office.⁵³⁴ This is certainly a plausible argument, particularly (and not mentioned by Trebilco in this context) given their exemption from questionable *munera*. However, as the evidence from Eusebius above asserts this is not necessarily the case, and the very fact that Christian writers like Origen and Tertullian felt it necessary to discuss this in detail suggests that at least some members of their community had faced this moral dilemma.⁵³⁵

Trebilco’s argument here, whilst suggestive, ultimately rests on the somewhat naive assumption common in earlier historical works that all,⁵³⁶ or more generously most,⁵³⁷ early Christians took their faith extremely seriously and would have echoed Tertullian’s famous (and ironic) words:

‘He neither sacrifices nor lends his authority to sacrifices. He does not farm out sacrificial victims. He does not assign to others the care of the temples. He does not

⁵³³ Bij de Varte & Van Hente (1996:16-28).

⁵³⁴ Trebilco (2004:79f.)

⁵³⁵ Origen, *Cels.* VIII.75. Tert. *de. Idol.* XVII.

⁵³⁶ E.g. Harnack (1961 [1908]: 307f.)

⁵³⁷ Marksches (1999:122f.) gives a more cautious appraisal of Tertullian’s passage.

look after their tributes. He does not give spectacles at his own or the public expense, nor preside over them. He makes no proclamation or edict for any festivals. He does not even take oaths. Furthermore, he does not sit in judgement of anyone's life or character (for you might allow his judging about money). He neither condemns nor indicts. He chains no one. He neither imprisons nor tortures anyone. Now, is it believable that all this is possible?'⁵³⁸

Without being overly cynical, Marksches raises an important, and often downplayed, point in the concluding paragraph of his discussion on the phenomenon he calls 'semi-Christianity':⁵³⁹

'So – contrary to all the assurances in Christian literature – conversion to Christianity does not always represent a radical break with all forms of pagan life and thought.'⁵⁴⁰

Unfortunately Trebilco seems to confuse the ideal of early Christianity, as expressed in writers like Tertullian and Origen, with the existential reality which was often far less flattering.

The second point of Trebilco's argument relates to the two inscriptions which he believes are 'positively' Jewish. These are both from Acmonia, which (as we have already seen) had a sizable Jewish population. The first of these records a certain Mathios but otherwise gives no other ideas of religious affiliation which could be argued as positively Jewish.⁵⁴¹

Despite being claimed long ago as Ramsay as more likely to be Christian,⁵⁴² this interpretation was challenged by Louis Robert on the grounds that the name *Mathios* was obviously a Semitic name.⁵⁴³ A number of other scholars have followed this conclusion;⁵⁴⁴ though aside from this there is no positive evidence for Judaism we are left in a bind (could not a Christian have a Jewish name?). Indeed even Trebilco concludes that '...the Jewish provenance of the inscription, although most probable, is not absolutely beyond doubt.'⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁸ Tert. *de. Idol.* XVII [Trans. ANF].

⁵³⁹ Marksches (1999:52-54).

⁵⁴⁰ Marksches (1999: 54).

⁵⁴¹ *CB* II.455-7.

⁵⁴² Ramsay (1897:563).

⁵⁴³ Robert (1960:411 nn. 1-3).

⁵⁴⁴ Trebilco (2004:71 n. 32).

⁵⁴⁵ Trebilco (2004:71).

The second of these inscriptions,⁵⁴⁶ which has been subject of a great deal of discussion amongst scholars, is *CIJ* 769 from Acmonia, which concludes ‘he will reckon with the Most-High God, and the may the sickle of the curse come into his house.’ (ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὕψιστον, καὶ τὸ ἄρ᾽ δρέπανον εἰς τὸν ὕκον αὐτοῦ). For Trebilco this inscription is more likely Jewish on similarly shakey grounds. As a number of scholars have noted,⁵⁴⁷ the LXX was not the sole property of the Jews in antiquity and was certainly used by Christians as well (see Rev. 14:16), the same goes for the epithet ‘The Most-High God’ which is certainly used frequently in Jewish and Christian texts (though many of those texts Trebilco categorises as ‘Jewish’ were equally familiar to Christians). While then a number of scholars have argued for the positive Jewish provenance of this inscription,⁵⁴⁸ Trebilco again notes that ‘...We need to leave open the possibility that it could be Christian.’

While Trebilco’s arguments are quite plausible, and a necessary corrective to over-simplifying the evidence, none of them provides irrefutable positive evidence for Jewish provenance and it is at least possible to read the evidence in a different manner, as McKechnie notes:

‘The broader weakness in Trebilco’s case is that none of the texts that he discusses must be Jewish and cannot be Christian. His claim that the Eumeneian formula might have been used by Jews can in theory be accepted (and the inscriptions that Trebilco instances have made their way into the Jewish corpus), but due weight should be given to the fact that some Eumeneian formula texts must be Christian and cannot be Jewish, while there is no conclusively Jewish case. There is sufficient reason, then, to think that all or most of the individuals named in the catalogue here were Christians.’⁵⁴⁹

I believe McKechnie to be closer to the mark here, but with the two caveats. Firstly that such a conclusion can only ever be provisional and is subject to falsification by new evidence.⁵⁵⁰ Secondly, with regard to Jewish and Christian identity one needs to acknowledge that far from being clear cut at this time that the separate entities of Judaism and Christianity were only

⁵⁴⁶ *CIJ* 729.

⁵⁴⁷ Bij de Vaate & van Henten (1996:19). Strubbe (1994:87f.).

⁵⁴⁸ Trebilco (2004:72 n. 39).

⁵⁴⁹ McKechnie (2009:6).

⁵⁵⁰ I note that McKechnie acknowledges this in his forthcoming paper publishing new examples of the Eumeneian formula.

beginning to emerge in this period, and to paraphrase Daniel Boyarin, the boundaries were far from solidified.⁵⁵¹ Having discussed this it is worth moving on to the evidence itself.

Of the thirty six Christian inscriptions from Eumeneia, thirty two contain the 'Eumeneian formula,' nineteen in the standardized form, nine using the epithet 'the Living God' including one of only two recorded bishops,⁵⁵² one specifying in shorthand the name 'Jesus Christ,'⁵⁵³ one invoking "the Great name of God," which is seen by some as a circumlocution for the Tetragrammaton (the Hebrew name of God)⁵⁵⁴, and one which specifies that this "reckoning" will be both now and on the day of Judgement, an eschatological idea shared by Christians and Jews.⁵⁵⁵

Traditionally this formula has been seen as the example par excellence of a 'Crypto-Christian' confessional formula, that is, inscriptions which do not bear any specifically Christian marks but can be identified as such by a number of other, often, cryptic or esoteric criteria such as isosephism (i.e. number codes) and ambiguous iconography.⁵⁵⁶ These inscriptions were generally seen as being found in areas where the potential or actual persecution was an existential reality, something which in the case of Eumeneia the little literary evidence we have confirms. Whether, however, such clear cut delineation between hidden confession and open confession inscriptions can be made on such grounds remains a matter of debate.

Sebaste.

Heading north along the Roman road from Eumeneia the next important settlement one arrives at is Sebaste where the road breaks off into north-eastern and north-western trajectories.⁵⁵⁷ Founded by Augustus in Sebaste marks the eastern extremity of the Banaz Ova.⁵⁵⁸ Like Eumeneia Sebaste is bounded to the east by Burgaz-Dağ and part of the *conventus* of Apamea. Epigraphically we have evidence for a *gerousia* here, like at Hierapolis, as well as

⁵⁵¹ Boyarin (2005).

⁵⁵² *CB* II.362.

⁵⁵³ *CB* II.371.

⁵⁵⁴ *CB* II.369.

⁵⁵⁵ *CB* II.353-354.

⁵⁵⁶ On "Crypto-Christian Inscriptions" I refer here to Prof. Tabbernee's unpublished article in the forthcoming *Dictionary of early Christian Art and Archaeology*. I must express my thanks to Prof. Tabbernee for sharing his work with me on this and other points.

⁵⁵⁷ Ramsay (1896b:581f.).

⁵⁵⁸ On the Banaz Ova see the discussion of Ramsay (1896b:569-599).

for various officials such as *archons* and *strategoi*.⁵⁵⁹ Archaeologically few monuments survive, those that do are scattered between modern Sivasli and Seljüklü. With regards to Christianity a few scattered literary remnants refer to Sebaste, largely in the later martyrological literature.

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Epigraphically Ramsay saw Sebaste as marking a shift in monumental style, shifting from the *bomos* type most common in the cities of the Menander valley like Eumeneia, to the more popular 'doorstone' type further east. On this phenomena Ramsay wrote:

'In this district we meet a new class of sepulchral monument, a slab of marble or other stone carved to imitate a doorway. The doorposts, the two valvae, the lintel, are all indicated; one or two knockers are usually carved on the door; and symbols referring to the ordinary life of the deceased person are often represented on the panels, a basket, a strigil, a mirror, or something of the kind.'⁵⁶¹

While this may be the case, it should be noted that 'doorstone' designs can be found further east, and their absence in the Menander valley cities seems to be the exception to the rule in Phrygian funerary monuments rather than a specifically geographical shift the further east one travels.

With regard to Christian evidence, the earliest epigraphic attestation is *IPhyrChr* 34, which reads:

Mēnophilos and his wife, Ammia, for his brother Paithos, a Christian; and Alexandria for Paithos, her husband; and their children (for their father), made (this monument) in his memory.⁵⁶²

While Gibson suggests this must be a monument from Acmonia,⁵⁶³ Tabbernee has instead suggested that it is more likely to have been from Sebaste given the find site.⁵⁶⁴ Tabbernee

⁵⁵⁹ *CB* II.472.

⁵⁶⁰ Mullen (2004:105).

⁵⁶¹ Ramsay (1896b:582). For more on this and typological discussions see Lochmann (2005). Waelkens (1986).

⁵⁶² *IPhyrChr* 34 [Trans. Gibson].

⁵⁶³ Gibson (1978:106f.).

⁵⁶⁴ Tabbernee (1997:179).

categorises this inscription as possibly Montanist. In addition to this CB II.449 demonstrates that the use of the 'Eumeneian Formula' had spread northwards, this inscription reading:

'Antonios, son of Pollion, erected the *hierōn* for himself and his Aurelia Ammia, daughter of Zenodotos, and for his children. If some other would some other [corpse], he will reckon with God. The year 340 (Sullan era=256 C.E.), 9th month, 20th Day.'⁵⁶⁵

The next, and only major settlement before Cotiaenum was Appia which marked the centre of the imperial estate of Aragua. This region began the important area of the Upper Tembris Valley which was a haven for pre-Constantinian Christianity, and the home of the important 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions and it therefore requires a slightly lengthier treatment as a fitting place to conclude our survey.

The Upper Tembris Valley.

The Upper Tembris Valley (the territory around the modern Porsuk Su) is nestled in the North-Western area of the Anatolian Plateau.⁵⁶⁶ With the Phrygian highlands to its east the valley is surrounded by foothills and mountain ranges. To the west are a range of mountains separating the valley from the neighbouring Aezani district, known by their modern name as Abiye Dağ. To the south mountains separate it from the Phrygian Pentapolis.

The modern town of Altıntaş sits around 1000 metres above sea level, one of the lower valleys of the Anatolian plateau. Climatically it belongs to the region of Central Anatolia and is today suitable for staple grains, grape production, and animal husbandry (largely sheep in antiquity, but also cattle and horses).⁵⁶⁷ The soil, according to Mitchell, is a:

'...grey or grey brown loam, which covers most of central Anatolia to a depth of a metre or more. Where it has not been overworked its bearing capacity and fertility are good, at least for cereal crops of wheat and barley, cultivated on rotation of one year fallow and one year sown. However, the broken limestone marl from which it is

⁵⁶⁵ CB II. 449 [Trans. Mine].

⁵⁶⁶ For maps see Gibson (1979) and (1979b) and Mitchell (1993a).

⁵⁶⁷ For a general discussion of agricultural regions in modern Turkey see Erinc & Tunçdilic (1952:179-203); Mülâym (1969:423-37).

derived makes it far more porous than the red loam, and cropping, or vegetation of any sort, is heavily dependant on the annual rainfall.⁵⁶⁸

Unlike much of the Mediterranean in antiquity,⁵⁶⁹ this region was not constrained by the environmental strictures of the Mediterranean climate, being one of the rare continental climates found in the Graeco-Roman world. However, we need to recognize that the Anatolian peninsula sits on something of a geographical fault line between the fertile crescent, the Mediterranean, the plains of the Black Sea region and the Steppes of Central Asia, and its reliefs mark a great deal of regional diversity.⁵⁷⁰

The Altıntaş valley sits in what is geographically called the Anatolian interior, a region which is marked climatically by semi-continental regime. Dewdney describes this climate as:

‘There is a large temperature range between the sub-zero (centigrade) means of January and the heat of summer which is somewhat alleviated by the altitude. Rainfall totals are small over most of the region and are strongly influenced by the relief. Thus the Konya ova and the Malatya basin are the driest areas in Turkey with annual totals of less than 300mm (12 inches). The rainfall regime shows a pronounced spring maximum followed by a rather dry summer and autumn and a cold, damp winter. The spring rainfall, however, comes largely in thunderstorms so that the number of rain-days is much smaller than in the winter months.’⁵⁷¹

The natural shield created by the mountains could significantly impact on an area of the Upper Tembris valley nestled within. This could be both potentially problematic or beneficial depending on several factors. While annual rainfall in the Anatolian interior peaked at as much as 600mm (25 inches) in those regions further to the West, the conditions of the Tembris valley were more likely those of the more centralized, semi-arid areas around the Anatolian plateau, where annual rainfall peaked at as little as 400 mm (16 inches) per annum.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Mitchell (1993a: 144).

⁵⁶⁹ Migeotte (2009: 15-18).

⁵⁷⁰ Dewdney (1971:34).

⁵⁷¹ Dewdney (1971:39).

⁵⁷² Dewdney (1971: 35).

The difference, however, between the Anatolian and interior and the Aegean coast lies in that the Interior's semi-arid climate means that despite adequate rainfall, moisture levels are relatively low.⁵⁷³ As Dewdney notes:

‘... it is apparent that moisture shortage is a major problem for Turkish agriculture since semi-arid or sub-humid climates occur over the greater part of the settled and farmed areas of the country. The only exceptions to this rule are the narrow coastal lowlands along the Black Sea and parts of the Aegean coastal zone, both of which have consequently become areas of specialized and highly productive agriculture.’⁵⁷⁴

What this all translates to with regard to our task here is that conditions, while fertile, were borderline and that subsistence crises were likely common.

While this region is still used for scattered agriculture today, this is largely that of barley and staple grains.⁵⁷⁵ Epigraphic and literary evidence indicates that in antiquity the Altintas plain was used for viticulture,⁵⁷⁶ as practiced in the Anatolian region from as early as Hittite times.⁵⁷⁷ Evidence also indicates the farming of some form of staple grains, utilizing the oxen-drawn plough common in antiquity. Animal husbandry was also important in this region during antiquity, as demonstrated by the large number of votive inscriptions related to sheep flocks and cattle collected by Robert, Drew-Bear and Lochmann and a number of classical references to the quality of Phrygian and Galatian wool.⁵⁷⁸

Of the surviving evidence for Christians in this region we have the important ‘Christians for Christians’ inscriptions, which require some discussion here. The Christian inscriptions of the Upper Tembris valley number some twenty four inscriptions dated by Tabbernee’s reckoning from between c. 225CE-394 CE. Of these inscriptions one is specifically dated to the year 333 (τλγ) of the Sullan era= 248/9 CE though it is at least possible, on stylistic grounds, that some

⁵⁷³ Dewdney (1971:39).

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Erinç & Tunçdilik (1952: 182 Fig. 2).

⁵⁷⁶ Waelkens (1979:277f.).

⁵⁷⁷ Gorney (1995:133-174).

⁵⁷⁸ Broughton (1959:618-620). Drew-Bear (1999); Lochmann (2005).

date as early as the first quarter of the third century.⁵⁷⁹ The vast majority are *stelai* of the Altıntaş C type, a style of stele developed from the classical Phrygian ‘door-stone.’

The inscriptions are all made of the local variety of marble. Phrygian marble, known as *pavonazetto*, was one of the finest marbles available in the ancient world and was mined at various regions throughout the region, chiefly at Docimium and Synnada, however, subsidiary quarries were also known in the Upper Tembris Valley at Altıntaş, Cakirsaz and Obruk Tepe.⁵⁸⁰ It has been generally accepted that these smaller quarries were used only intermittently for Imperial exploitation (i.e. during the time of Trajan to decorate the famous Arch of Trajan) and were at other periods leased out to ‘private contractors.’ With regard to costs and quality we are largely in the dark. The relief work on the monuments (see below) was of a relatively high quality. With regards to the cost of marble inscriptions we are unfortunately completely at a loss, with only one inscription from the Phrygian highlands surviving which contains a price.⁵⁸¹

With regard to onomastics the inscriptions feature very little worthy of comment. Compared with a large database of urban Christian inscriptions from the Phrygian city of Eumeneia the percentage of native Phrygian names and *Lallnamen* (onomatopoeic names particularly common amongst indigenous Phrygians) is no greater amongst these rural inscriptions than their urban counterparts, something which may have some bearing when we look at some of the arguments below. The vast majority of those recorded are citizens, and none use any status indicators, such as the term *threptoi*, which would indicate servile status.

Linguistically they contain all the hallmarks of later *koine* Greek which are attested on inscriptions throughout Asia Minor, such as the confusion of the dative and genitive cases. However, this need to lead us to the conclusion of some earlier scholars that this showed the people were less familiar with Greek at this period (though this is of course a possibility), palaeographical and grammatical errors, as demonstrated by the fascinating study of Sosini, can arise from any number of reasons resulting from both social, cultural and procedural reasons; linguistic ineptitude being only one of them.⁵⁸² Moreover, one of the most notable things about early Christian epigraphy in Phrygia is that its rise to ascendancy is

⁵⁷⁹ Waelkens (1986).

⁵⁸⁰ Fant (1989: 39f.).

⁵⁸¹ *IPhry*Haspels 70.

⁵⁸² Susini (1973:39-48).

contemporaneous with a revival (in Greek script) of the use of the Phrygian language on inscriptions, and that despite this not a single one of the growing corpus of so-called Neo-Phrygian and bilingual Greek/Phrygian inscriptions is identifiable as Christian (the vast majority being demonstrably pagan).⁵⁸³

With regard to iconography the earlier inscriptions tend to be less ornate than those of the later period. The earliest *IMont* 26 contains an ornate rectangular pediment which depicts the common Phrygian motif of two lionesses resting their front quarters upon an injured bull enclosed in a semi-circle, this scene is a common one in Phrygian and Lydian art from as early as seventh century BCE (a similar picture appearing on the famous 'Lion Rock' tomb). On either side of this are depicted fish and dolphins, both iconographic elements common in Christian and pagan inscriptions. *IMont* 29, which is otherwise an unremarkable inscription contains a bird, identified by Calder (and followed by Tabbernee) as a dove, above what appears to be a hatched-basket again encircled in a semi-circular relief on the pediment. According to the *editio princeps* of Ramsay *IMont* 30 contained two yoked oxen between the second and third lines but the monument is no longer extant. *IMont* 31 is a sarcophagus lid which contains a wreath encircling a Latin cross, a common Christian iconographic element found more often on later stones.

The iconographic elements become significantly more interesting when we move onto the inscriptions which are dated by Tabbernee to between 275-313 CE. All of these inscriptions contain iconographic elements, in sharp contrast to the more simplistic earlier inscriptions; these elements are also increasingly distinct. *IMont* 37 is a rectangular stele with a rounded (?) pediment with incised palmettes. The body of the stele is decorated with a border of grape vines, a motif which reoccurs in *IMont* 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and in slightly variant forms on *IMont* 48, 51.

These viticultural iconographic elements were common on inscriptions for a number of different reasons in antiquity. Firstly (1) as a representation either of Christ as the true vine or in some early Eucharistic sense (this occurs most likely in the earliest dated Christian

⁵⁸³ See below pp. 249-261.

inscription);⁵⁸⁴ Secondly (2) as an indication of agricultural fertility concerns, for instance, in Dionysian votive stele;⁵⁸⁵ or thirdly (3) (often tied up with (2)) as an indication that the person erecting the inscription was a vine-dresser or labourer involved in viticulture. With regard to these inscriptions we can perhaps conclude given that the above examples, *IMont* 48, 43, 41, 38 all show a stylized pruning hook known as a *falx vinitoria* in addition to the grapes, that in these cases be an indication of the profession of the commemorated. However, in a number of cases with the stylized grape-vine border which depict similar implements of daily life, tools of viticulture are markedly absent we must caution here that these may appear only on stylistic grounds, probably prefabricated stones from the same workshop.⁵⁸⁶ Outside of the Christian inscriptions of the Tembris valley Waelken's records a number of examples of viticulture inscriptions and of votive inscriptions dedicated to Dionysus and for this reason I would caution against reading any Eucharistic or specifically Christian symbolic content into these inscriptions.⁵⁸⁷

The depiction of animals, such as yoked-cattle and horses, is also featured.⁵⁸⁸ While in some cases these may again be stylistic and prefabricated (appearing in an identical place in a number of the inscriptions) it is likely that at least in some of these cases the reliefs indicate the deceased was engaged in some form of animal husbandry. Literary evidence records the breeding of horses in Phrygia during antiquity,⁵⁸⁹ and the environmental conditions of the plains of the Upper Tembris valley were ideal for such an enterprise. Similarly, the use of cattle, most likely for agricultural purposes was common, and given the number of votive inscriptions dedicated on behalf of cattle in nearby regions suggests that this form of agriculture was of some importance for the livelihood of local farmers.⁵⁹⁰

What most of these iconographic elements seem to demonstrate, when combined with the patchy literary evidence for socio-economic life in Asia Minor,⁵⁹¹ is that the owners of these

⁵⁸⁴ On this theme see Snyder (1985:26). For the possibly use in the earliest Christian inscription see Calder (1955:33f.).

⁵⁸⁵ See above pp. 89f.

⁵⁸⁶ On some of these pre-fabrications see Lochmann (2005). On the possible Christian nature of the workshop see Johnson (1994:341-366).

⁵⁸⁷ Waelkens (1977:280f.).

⁵⁸⁸ For cattle: *IMont* 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 48, 51. For horses: *IMont* 40.

⁵⁸⁹ Broughton (1959:617f.).

⁵⁹⁰ For a list of dedications on behalf of cattle see Drew-Bear (1999:47f.).

⁵⁹¹ See below pp. 170-197.

monuments were most likely rural people engaged in agricultural labour on the so-called *Tembrion* estate.⁵⁹² Whether we can make any further deductions is a matter of scholarly hypothesis and given our very sparse evidence with regard to life on Imperial estates generally, I prefer here to air on the side of caution and not make any further deductions other than that the owners were agricultural workers.

This survey, while by no means complete, gives us something of a epigraphical glimpse into the diverse world of the Anatolian Mid-West and the important position which the early Christians occupied there. This survey also demonstrates the problematic nature of the evidence, and the significant degree (at least for the third century and probably earlier) of community interaction between Jews, Christians and pagans.

In the end, however, peace was not always the order of the day in these cities and as we will see below sporadic cases of persecution are known. However, far from acting as deterrents to the spread of Christianity in this region, paradoxically they seem to have lead to the opposite. Persecution, by forcing Christians to flee during such times, helps to account both for the significant Christian presence in rural regions of Asia Minor, but moreover for the long-term survival of 'dissenting' Christian groups in these same regions well into late antiquity. To put this another way, the physical geography of central Anatolia, coupled with the predominance of villages and the diffuse presence of law-and-order all combined to mitigate the effectiveness of any persecution becoming widespread. Bearing this in mind it is important to look in some in more detail at the nature of the predominantly rural corner of the Roman empire.

⁵⁹² On this region see Ramsay (1890:144f.).

Conclusion.

This survey in Chapter 2b. by no means exhausts the vibrant and diverse indigenous religious life which prospered in Asia Minor during the Antonine era and beyond, though it does serve as a broader socio-religious matrix within which Montanism thrived and indicates that the indigenous religious life of Roman Anatolia was much more diverse than scholars have often given it credit. Having now surveyed some of the features and the prevalence of elements of the varied religious life of this region it is now incumbent to survey the Anatolian Mid-West city by city to look at how these cults, the Jewish communities and the early Christians interacted and co-existed.

Chapter 3. The Rural Milieu.

3.1 The Rural Milieu: Religious Dissent in Peasant and Agrarian Societies.

With perhaps the exception of Roman North Africa and late antique Egypt the study of early Christianity has focused almost exclusively on the world of the *polis* and the experience of Christians in the urbanized culture of the Roman world. The implications of this have been explored in some depth by sociologist Rodney Stark in his recent book *Cities of God* which combined a novel statistical approach with a number of hypotheses in order to understand some of the social patterns which marked early Christianity, particularly focusing his effort to providing a quantitative aspect to debates over what many scholars see as unquantifiable data.⁵⁹³

One of the analyses Stark makes is with regard to the various early Christian heresies and their concentration within cities. The sixth chapter of the book aims to draw ‘...attention to heretical movements that did attract popular support: Marcionism, Valentinianism, Montanism and Manichaeism...’ and to test a number of hypotheses concerning their diffusion.

Stark’s work provides some curious inroads with regard to our topic of the Montanist milieu. Firstly, having established that Montanism must be understood as a heresy, but not as one of the corollaries of ‘Gnosticism,’ Stark proposes two hypotheses which he subsequently tests with his statistical data. The first of these hypotheses is that *Montanist congregations were not more common in cities having heretical schools*. His second hypothesis is that *Montanist congregations were more common in larger cities than in smaller ones*. Both hypotheses were confirmed by strong statistical correlations.⁵⁹⁴

From Stark’s prior research and methodological work this was to be expected. Following Fischer’s ‘theory of subcultural deviance’ Stark expected to find that a ‘heretical’ group would

⁵⁹³ Stark (2006:22f.) summarises his aims as:

‘A major purpose of this book is to demonstrate that quantitative methods can help to resolve many debates about early church history. Even so, the heart of the book is not statistical, but theoretical and substantive. Hypotheses do not simply fall out of the sky; they ought to be derived from theories and theses; and theses, in turn, must be situated in an adequate historical context if the subsequent hypothesis-testing is to be of intellectual significance. However, given adequate contexts, testing well-formulated hypotheses through quantitative analysis of adequate indicators will put historical studies of the early church on firmer footing - even when the results show that what most historians believe about something is in fact true!’

⁵⁹⁴ Stark (2006:173-175).

flourish particularly in the urban milieu as found in representative larger cities of the Graeco-Roman world.⁵⁹⁵ On an empire wide scale this would certainly be the case, particularly given the flow of migration and high population turnovers in cities and Stark's results are understandable from this viewpoint.⁵⁹⁶ However Stark's exploration of Montanism as an empire-wide urban movement fails to take due cognizance of the fact that its roots, and its heartland remained in Phrygia and in the semi-urbanized cities and villages therein.

With regard to how religious movements spread and their development on an Empire-wide scale one would have difficulty disagreeing with Stark's macrosociological conclusions, indeed his findings both in *Cities of God* and his earlier book *The Rise of Christianity* add further, more nuanced sociological reasons for a number of hypotheses historians had been proposing since at least the nineteenth century.⁵⁹⁷ However, with regard to Montanism one must here depart from Stark's interpretation, noting a factor about Montanism which in many ways denies his sociological expectations. That is, Montanism, had its origins as a rural movement, and the bearers of Montanist religion were largely (though by no means homogeneously) rural dwellers.

This factor flies in the face of most accepted theory with regard to the sociology and diffusion of religions which sees cities as the cultural hubs of any civilization and the most likely place where innovations and deviant ideas would find a sympathetic hearing. This is not, however, to impugn the usefulness of sociological theory in understanding Montanism. Rather, it simply means that we must look to different methods of inquiry which better serve the analysis of a rural milieu. One line of inquiry which has offered significant promise in this regard is the problematic area of Millenarian movements.

595 Fischer (1975:1319-1341); Stark (1991:77-88).

596 Stark (1997:147-163).

597 Dodds (1965:102-138); Frend (1984); Harnack (1961[1908]); Latourette (1937); MacMullen (1986).

3.2. Montanism and Millenarianism.

The phenomenon of millenarian movements has been one of the key interests of sociologists, anthropologists and historians over the past century.⁵⁹⁸ The failed utopian dreams of extremist regimes in Russia and Nazi Germany sparked an explosive interest in the relationship of these modern utopias with other historical manifestations of millenarianism.⁵⁹⁹ This situation is well summarized by the pessimistic English philosopher John Gray in the opening paragraph of his iconoclastic book *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*:

‘Modern politics is a chapter in the history of religion. The greatest of the revolutionary upheavals that have shaped so much of the history of the past two centuries were episodes in the history of faith – moments in the long dissolution of Christianity and the rise of modern political religion. The world in which we find ourselves at the start of the new millennium is littered with the debris of utopian projects, which though they were framed in secular terms that denied the truth of religion were in fact vehicles for religious myths.’⁶⁰⁰

While one need not agree with Gray’s overall argument, he does make a salient point, millenarian (or utopian, chiliastic, apocalyptic) movements have been a fundamental part of the religious consciousness for much of the history of Christianity and are certainly not limited to this milieu.⁶⁰¹ Nor is Gray alone in his estimation, even a cursory look at the bibliography of millenarian studies, for instance for the period from 1969 to 1975 indicates just how extensive the study of the phenomena is. Similarly, by simply looking at the table of contents of Thrupp’s (ed.) *Millennial Dreams in Action* one is immediately impressed by the historical influence which millenarian movements have had over the past two thousand (or more) years.⁶⁰² Moreover, the popularity of Norman Cohn’s seminal and engrossing book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, and its inclusion on the *TLS 100 Most Influential Books Since the War* is further

⁵⁹⁸ For a bibliographical survey of earlier work see Schwartz (1976:1-15). For the most recent in-depth survey and discussion see Trompf (2000:103-124).

⁵⁹⁹ On this phenomena see Cohn (2004 [1970]).

⁶⁰⁰ Gray (2007:1)

⁶⁰¹ For a good glossary of the often imprecise terminology used in this regard see Baumgartner (1999:ix-xi).

⁶⁰² Thrupp (1970).

testament to the importance which millenarian movements have been accorded during the late twentieth century, perhaps tellingly as we approached the dawn of the third millennium.

With its undeniable, though sometimes problematic,⁶⁰³ eschatological elements Montanism - perhaps often by means of a retrojection of later historical developments- has received something of a pride of place as the first historical example of such a movement, and features as such in the opening chapter of Cohn's important study.⁶⁰⁴ While scholars in sociology, anthropology and history have often commented on the millenarian characteristics of Montanism,⁶⁰⁵ few have focused on one key point and one which will provide an important hermeneutic key for understanding of the 'Montanist Milieu' developed here.⁶⁰⁶ That is, that Montanism was an example of a predominantly rural movement of religious dissent shaped by a complex combination of social, cultural, institutional, geographical and religious factors as these impacted on what Thonemann called the 'Anatolian Mid-West.'⁶⁰⁷

This is not, however, to say that no scholars have commented on this and it is important here to give a brief overview of some of those scholars who have undertaken such work. In an important article 'The Origins of the Montanist Movement: A Sociological Analysis' published in 1989 Daniel H. Williams made a thoroughgoing and sociological sensitive argument for categorizing Montanism as a millenarian movement, himself expanding on earlier suggestions found, for instance, in the work of John Gager.⁶⁰⁸ Among the other factors which Williams cited in support of his argument was the following:

'While millennial movements have been widely distributed geographically they do not occur everywhere. More often they cluster in the so-called 'backwoods' areas or rural regions, as opposed to urban centres. Talmon describes this attraction to millennial movements as essentially a 'pre-political' phenomenon. That is, millennial hopes most appeal to that part of the social strata which is politically passive, having no or little experience of political organization, and hence no political power. To this can be

⁶⁰³ Much debate has gone into the issue of Montanist 'eschatology' see Hill (1993:140-146); (2001:143-159); Tabbernee (2007); Trevett (1996:95-105)

⁶⁰⁴ Cohn (2004 [1957]:25f.).

⁶⁰⁵ Festinger et al. (1956:6f.); Lewis (1971:26); Worsley (1968: 235); Gager (1975:142).

⁶⁰⁶ Williams (1989:336) suggests the importance of this but due to spatial constraints does not develop its potential.

⁶⁰⁷ Thonemann (2009:222-235).

⁶⁰⁸ Gager (1975).

added the simple observation that rural societies are more compact, homogenous, and so more vulnerable to radical change than the polyglot nature of urban societies.⁶⁰⁹

For Williams, and as will be demonstrated in greater detail below, the vicissitudes of the Anatolian peasant were clearly of a 'pre-political' nature.⁶¹⁰

Williams' work drew heavily on that of Yonina Talmon, who argued that the bearers of such 'pre-political' beliefs are usually 'peasants' and agreed with Hobsbawm that strong links between millennialism and peasant movements have long been noted in the field of peasant studies.⁶¹¹ However, it is only in combination with a number of other factors that millenarian movements will tend to manifest themselves, and it is worth giving a brief survey of these before going on to demonstrate their applicability to the situation in the mid to late second century Anatolian Mid-West.

The first of these factors is the over-arching definition of a 'Millenarian Movement' which Talmon describes as '...religious movements that expect imminent, total, ultimate, this-worldly collective salvation.'⁶¹² While the nuances of this expectation differ considerably across cultures and regions, the over-arching factors which help to manifest such a belief, other than a system of beliefs conducive to such expectation, can be summarized quite succinctly. Millenarianism features a belief or beliefs that the impact of this millennial event will be 'ultimate,' that is, it will be a permanent and complete shift in the fortunes of the collective group. Secondly, the belief was 'imminent.' This was not to take place at some undefined period in the distant future but was in the very process of occurring, and this immediacy was manifested by a number of signs and portents, often taken from the religious culture of the group involved. Thirdly, that the salvation was collective, that is for the entire collective group in question, and that this was 'this-worldly,' that is, salvation was viewed in a predominantly (though by no means exclusively) terrestrial sense. This often manifested itself in the building or establishing of a specific holy local by the elect (e.g. various millenarian 'New Jerusalems').

⁶⁰⁹ Williams (1989:336).

⁶¹⁰ On politics of peasantry see Hobsbawm (1973:3-22).

⁶¹¹ Hobsbawm (1973:7); Talmon (1966:184f.).

⁶¹² Talmon (1966:159).

Fourthly, these movements were often accompanied by forms of religious ecstasy and enthusiasm,⁶¹³ as Talmon writes:

‘The ritual is often enthusiastic and involves wild and often frenzied emotional display. In many millenarian movements we encounter cases of hysterical and paranoid phenomena, mass possession, trances, fantasies. The emotional tension manifests itself also in motor phenomena such as twitching, shaking and convulsions which spread swiftly through wide areas. Ecstatic dance figures prominently in other movements.’⁶¹⁴

Fifthly, these movements are often messianic, with the charismatic leadership being invested with messianic qualities and powers.⁶¹⁵ Sixthly, they are organizationally diffuse, often containing a core of devoted members and a broader group of sympathetic followers with more or less involvement or commitment to the movement.⁶¹⁶ Seventhly, they are often antinomian or hypernomian, either abrogating traditional norms or following them with a sense of ascetical rigorism.⁶¹⁷

Aside from these key features, Talmon further defines these movements into a number of opposites, for instance, historical or mythical, temporal or spatial, catastrophic or redemptive, particular or universal. Noting that each of these opposites is conditioned by the particular social circumstances surrounding the millenarian group in question.⁶¹⁸

In addition to these manifest aspects of millenarian movements there are a number of causative factors which typically precipitate their manifestation. Firstly, are factors which can be collectively called ‘multiple deprivation,’ which Talmon defines as:

‘....the combined effect of poverty, low status and lack of power. The effect of multiple deprivation accounts for the prominence of members of pariah groups and pariah peoples among the promulgators and followers of millenarism. The low status of such groups derives from their despised ethnic origin and cultural tradition, and from their

⁶¹³ For more on the important issue of ecstasy see Eliade (1964); Lewis (1971); Nasrallah (2003).

⁶¹⁴ Talmon (1966:168).

⁶¹⁵ Talmon (1966:170).

⁶¹⁶ Talmon (1966:171f.).

⁶¹⁷ Talmon (1966:178f.).

⁶¹⁸ Talmon (1966:173-180).

limitation to menial and degrading occupations imposed upon them. Being at the bottom rung of the social ladder on so many counts, they are attracted to the myth of the elect, and to the fantasy of a reversal of roles which are important elements in the millenarian ideology.'⁶¹⁹

Second among these causative factors is either 'cumulative deterioration' that is worsening social conditions with little hope of change, or sudden 'crises' as Talmon notes:⁶²⁰

'Many of the outbursts of millenarianism took place against a background of disaster: plagues, devastating fires, recurrent long droughts that were the dire lot of the peasants, slumps that caused widespread unemployment and poverty, calamitous wars. These catastrophes which bring in their wake hunger, illness, cruel death and degradation, engender a deep sense of doom and a fervent craving for salvation.'⁶²¹

Thirdly is the more general idea of '...markedly uneven relation between expectations and the means of their satisfaction.'⁶²² Such situations manifest themselves from a group's lack of access to power in a given society and the related issue of 'relative deprivation.'⁶²³ Fourthly, as already noted, millenarianism can manifest itself under various political structures, as Talmon notes:

'When it emerges in societies with fairly or well developed political institutions it appeals mainly to strata which are politically passive and have no experience of political organization and no access to political power. Instances of such " non-political " strata in societies with a more or less developed political structure are the peasants in feudal societies, the peasants in isolated and backward areas in modern societies, marginal and politically passive elements in the working class, recent immigrants and malintegrated and politically inarticulate minority groups.'⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Talmon (1966:181).

⁶²⁰ On the impact of disasters and crises see Barkun (1986).

⁶²¹ Talmon (1966:81).

⁶²² Talmon (1966:182).

⁶²³ On issue of 'relative deprivation' see below p. 220.

⁶²⁴ Talmon (1966:185).

It should be noted here, however, that millenarian movements are not always uneducated or backwards and often attracted dissatisfied intellectuals or members of the higher social strata for various reasons.⁶²⁵

While this is a by no means complete analysis of the complex phenomena of millenarian movements in their various historical forms it does provide a very useful model for bringing together many of the seemingly disparate elements in older scholarship on Montanism which had unduly tried to seek a single causative matrix in which to situate Montanist origins.

That the rural regions of the Anatolian Mid-West during the mid to late second century, then, were a fertile ground for a millenarian movement is beyond dispute, however, to date few scholars have dwelt on this issue in anything but a cursory manner. To say a connection exists, as scholars have, is one thing, to demonstrate and explain such a connection in sufficient detail is quite another.⁶²⁶ It is worth here briefly surveying some of the approaches undertaken in this regard and their relative merits.

Most successful in this regard, to date, is the aforementioned work of Williams. However, due to spatial constraints he was unable to fully articulate a number of points and often saw his millenarian hypothesis as mutually-exclusive in relation to other hypotheses. For instance, he largely discarded the insights of earlier scholars who had pointed to the links between Anatolian indigenous religion and Montanism, in a way separating the 'Phrygian character' from its religious heritage, discounting the often highly nativistic nature of millenarian movements.⁶²⁷ In similar manner, while he points to the rural origins of Montanism, he has been too quick in this regard to dismiss this without exploring its broader implications for understanding Montanism in its social milieu, that is, the structural elements of rural life in the Anatolian Mid-West which could feed into rural discontent. Similarly, conclusions drawn by other scholars, for instance, about the role the predominately rural nature of Montanism played are not uniform and a worth briefly discussing.

⁶²⁵ Talmon (1966:185-192).

⁶²⁶ To date Williams (1989:331-351) remains the best and most complete analysis of this.

⁶²⁷ Williams (1989:332). On 'Nativism' see Clemhout (1964:14-15); Köbben (1960:117-164); Lanternari (1963); Linton (1943:230-240).

Most recently, Alistair Stewart-Sykes published an important article on the reasons for the original condemnation of Montanism.⁶²⁸ After refuting various past arguments (perhaps prematurely), and like other scholars reducing the complexity of Montanism to a single causative factor, Sykes settled on the following conclusion:

'The possibility that the movement originated as a protest against the encroachment of urban leadership, would explain the continuing presence in later Montanism of bishops in even the smallest villages, would explain why it is so late in the history of the Asian episcopate that the dispute occurs, and would accord with the picture presented most clearly by Trevett of a movement which grew over a period of time rather than being the invention of an individual. It would, moreover, cohere with the significance of Montanism's rural origins which have been revealed by our examination of the late second-century objectors. If its resistance to urban leadership is the primary cause of the recognition of Montanist prophecy as distinct from that practised in the Church then that rural origin would in turn lead to the dispute over the manner of the presentation of the prophetic gift as the rural prophets are identified increasingly with pagan prophets, and finally lead to institutional organisation of the Church by organising itself in a manner contradictory to that of the Church.'⁶²⁹

While Stewart-Sykes, then, remains cautious about pushing early models which focus on the eschatological elements of Montanism too far, he instead focuses an institutional difference over leadership models as a key element in the tensions which caused Montanism to split from the mainstream church, a hypothesis proposed by Ramsay as long ago as 1895,⁶³⁰ and stated in detail by Ritschl and Harnack's works.⁶³¹ Here the issues of Montanism are reduced to internal tensions within the Christian community and pay little head to the broader societal matrix within which these tensions are played out and exacerbated.

This said, Stewart-Sykes also notes, earlier in the article, that such leadership models may tie in with more socio-economic realities, noting:

⁶²⁸ Stewart-Sykes (1999:1-22).

⁶²⁹ Stewart-Sykes (1999:21f.).

⁶³⁰ Ramsay (1895:436-438).

⁶³¹ See above pp. 18-47.

‘In drawing its leadership from the class of householders Christianity followed the same pattern that was common throughout Asia for magistracies and priesthods, since the householder would have the means and the status to offer patronage for the cult. Episcopal office, as it developed through the century in Asia, was thus based on the position of the householder. By offering salaries to his officials Montanus undercut this manner of organisation; unlike his or her catholic counterpart the Montanist ecclesiastical leader need not have been a person of property since she or he could be supported by the Church.’⁶³²

For Stewart-Sykes then Montanist ‘stewards’ (ἐπίτροποί), then, should not be understood as greedy prophets for money but rather as something akin to ‘worker-priests’ among the agricultural peasants of Central Anatolia, subject to all the socio-economic vicissitudes of peasant life, though like most scholars he only mentions this in passing.

Moving on, in contrast to Stewart-Sykes more piecemeal interpretation and strictly historically orientated approach is the study of Thomas Paul Roche in his SUNY 2000 doctoral dissertation *Montanism as a Prototypical Example of Christian Sectarianism: The New Prophecy and the "Spiritual Christian" Sect*. In adopting the popular typological constructs from Bryan Wilson’s work *Magic and Millennium* Roche concluded that:⁶³³

‘Finally, it seems quite clear that a central component of Montanism was Montanism was a rural and ethnic Christian protest movement. In Phrygia, Montanism largely drew its adherents from the rural, native Phrygian highlanders, and much of Montanism can be shown to have been a specifically Phrygian form of Christianity, opposed to the ever-increasing power of the urban, Greco-Roman elite which dominated the 'orthodox church' of the era.’⁶³⁴

While Roche’s argument is open to quite severe criticism on a number of historical and methodological grounds his emphasis on the rural and ethnic elements of Montanism is likely correct (though at times too credulous or reductionist). More positively what Roche has hit on is that it is not helpful to reduce the complexity of Montanism down to one of the hypothetical

⁶³² Stewart-Sykes (1999:19).

⁶³³ Wilson (1973).

⁶³⁴ Roche (2000:2)

types listed in our introduction without doing violence to the evidence and the careful work of previous scholars.

Similar to that of Roche is the work of Melanie Kierstead in her 1997 Drew University doctoral dissertation entitled *The Socio-Historical Development of Montanism*. Adopting a more nuanced and eclectic methodology than Roche, Kierstead wrote:

‘My thesis is that it is necessary to identify the indigenous elements of the social and religious culture in Phrygia and clarify their influence on the New Prophecy before the phenomenon can be fully appreciated as a religious movement in its own right, with its own distinctive appeal in the Greco-Roman world.’⁶³⁵

While Kierstead does explore these issues her conclusions are largely related, like those of Stewart-Sykes and Roche, to the interpretation of Montanism as an intra-Christian struggle over sociological norms, rather than a broader struggle of Christianity in its entire social context. While Kierstead does draw on some sociological language and theories, much of this is borrowed second hand from the work of Williams and shows no inclination to read more deeply into the theoretical literature (e.g. Talmon).

Similarly, much of Kierstead’s reconstruction of Anatolian indigenous religion is taken second-hand from various theses on the Graeco-Roman background of the New Testament, works which sadly often lack the rigor of having gone beyond New Testament scholarship or ‘backgrounds’ in their analyses of evidence.⁶³⁶ As a result of this Kierstead’s treatment of Anatolian indigenous religion is, like many scholars, extremely problematic (an issue we will return to in Chapter 5) and her treatment of extraneous social factors which we focus on in Chapter 4 is limited to a single page.⁶³⁷

Finally, and problematically, Kierstead’s reconstruction of various Montanist beliefs and practices which brought them into an intra-Christian conflict with the emerging ‘Orthodox’ Church is almost entirely reliant on the idiosyncratic opinions of Tertullian, who, as is still common amongst scholars, taken as the example *par excellence* of Montanist teaching, rather

⁶³⁵ Kierstead (1997:2).

⁶³⁶ On this problem of ‘NT Background’ with relation to the study of Judaism see Kraabel (1982:445-464).

⁶³⁷ Kierstead (1997:138).

than a later and geographically distinct representative of different interpretations of an original tradition.⁶³⁸ This all might sound rather critical of Kierstead's work, however, at times she does demonstrate some important points, particularly with regard to the questions of geography and Phrygian language which we will explore in Chapter 5.

With these differing conclusions from Williams, Stewart-Sykes, Roche and Kierstead in mind coupled with the long historiographical tradition from which they draw their inspiration it becomes necessary to delve more closely firstly into the question of rural life of the peasants of Central Anatolia as this can be reconstructed in the remainder of this chapter, followed by analyses of other contributing factors in the chapters that follow. In order to understand Montanism outside of the restrictive confines of an intra-Christian sectarian movement we need to establish a broader frame of reference to explain various features of the Montanist movement in its original form.

⁶³⁸ On the reasons for treating Tertullian separately Lawlor (1908:481-499) still remains pertinent.

3.3. The Nature of the Evidence.

Compared to other provinces of the Roman empire the epigraphic yield from Asia Minor is promising for reconstructing something of the institutional and administrative life of that region, as Thonemann has noted recently (echoing the earlier confidence of Mitchell):⁶³⁹

‘Thanks to an extraordinary abundance of epigraphical evidence, mostly of the Roman imperial period, we are probably better informed about rural life in the Phrygian highlands than for any other part of the ancient world.’⁶⁴⁰

This said, the problems remain immense and involve a fair degree of hypothetical and synchronic reconstruction. This perennial problem of documentary evidence (even when coupled with literary sources) has been well rehearsed and here it will suffice to quote Sir Moses Finley:

‘Numerous as they may seem to be, they constitute a random selection in both time and place, and they often lack a meaningful context. It is hard to exaggerate. I cannot think of an ancient city, region or ‘country’, or of an institution (with two related exceptions to which I shall return in a moment), of which it is possible to write a systematic history over a substantial period of time.’⁶⁴¹

While Finley’s statement might seem fundamentally negative it should not deter us from at least attempting a careful synchronic reconstruction, and such reconstructions, as demonstrated by Fergus Millar’s monumental *The Emperor in the Roman World* are erudite exercises which are by no means futile.⁶⁴² While such works have their critics (in the case of Millar largely for his methodological remarks in the preface)⁶⁴³ they also provide a framework within which later historians can refine and critique the conclusions drawn. No historian can write a truly definitive history of any aspect of the ancient world, all we can do is build, improve, or refocus past attempts and the latter will be the modest goal of this chapter.

⁶³⁹ Mitchell (1993:143-197; 1993b:122-150).

⁶⁴⁰ Thonemann (2009:224).

⁶⁴¹ Finley (1985:11).

⁶⁴² Millar (1977).

⁶⁴³ De Ste. Croix (1981:81f.) Hopkins (1978:178-186).

3.4. Methodological & Terminological Considerations.

In order to temper the evidential problems a number of heuristic measures will be adopted here in order to draw out some key contributing factors for understanding the long-established and agreed conclusion of historians regarding the predominantly rural milieu of Montanism. It should be said at the outset that the use of such theories cannot work to replace absent data but rather to help in elucidating and focusing our use of the data available and proposing hypotheses drawn from analogous situations. The danger of using such theories in ancient history has been well summarized by Ramsay MacMullen, who (rightly) lamented the often vague connections and far-fetched comparisons drawn between the Cargo cults of Papua New Guinea and early Christians, however, it is my contention here that the benefits, when used cautiously, far outweigh the negatives, particularly when we are dealing with such a problematic situation as rural history.⁶⁴⁴ Indeed, as Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in an important historiographical essay:

‘We cannot be positivists, believing that the questions and the answers arise naturally out of the study of material. There is no general material until our questions have revealed it.’⁶⁴⁵

The heuristic use of the social sciences here will help us to focus some of these questions, to look comparatively and analogously at similar social and historical situations and to draw hypothetical parallels in order to elucidate and interrogate the meager data available.

Rural history, like urban history, presents a whole plethora of unique problems and questions.⁶⁴⁶ Coupled with the aforementioned evidential problems of ancient historians these problems might be seen as a further impediment to our task, but rather they provide an opportunity for innovation. The past century has seen an immense amount of effort poured into fields such as rural sociology, peasant studies and the historiography of rural communities, and it is our contention here that such research provides a new heuristic lens from which to view the Montanist milieu.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁴ MacMullen (1986:7f.).

⁶⁴⁵ Hobsbawm (1997:271).

⁶⁴⁶ For a discussion of some of these problems see Le Roy Ladurie (1979:79-220).

⁶⁴⁷ De Ste. Croix (1981:208f.). Hilton (1975:4).

While on the one hand much of this study of rural civilization has almost exclusively been confined to later and better documented periods of history,⁶⁴⁸ on the other hand it has helped to shape a number of hypothetical propositions about rural life which can provide a useful platform from which to build a reconstruction in ancient times. This is particularly true of what historians have begun to see as the key elements of peasant life and rural social systems, or what the pioneering French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie called 'Rural Civilizations.'⁶⁴⁹

Before progressing further, however, it is important that we make a number of terminological decisions with regard to the phenomena of the rural society in Roman Asia Minor. Following the work of Gerhard Lenski and others the term we will use for the social organization of this region (and more broadly the Roman Empire) is that of an 'agrarian society,' more specifically an 'advanced agrarian society.' The nuances of this will become apparent in the following pages. Secondly we will refer to the social organization of the rural people of Asia Minor as that of a 'peasant society'.⁶⁵⁰ These terms are, of course, problematic and their use in ancient history requires a significant amount of unpacking.

In his important study *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* Gerhard Lenski defined 'Advanced Agrarian Societies' as those which were marked by their reliance on agriculture on the one hand, and the concentration of power over the surpluses produced by agricultural labor by a normally urban elite.⁶⁵¹ To follow the succinct definition given by Rodney Stark 'agrarian societies' are those '...Societies that live by farming. Although they were the first societies able to support cities, they usually require that about 95 percent of the population be engaged in agriculture.'⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁸ E.g. Le Roy Ladurie's important works on Medieval Languedoc (1977); (1978).

⁶⁴⁹ Le Roy Ladurie (1979:79) defined these as:

'Any attempt to define rural civilization must begin with a set of contrasts. To talk of the countryside assumes that there are cities; to talk of peasants assumes that there are townspeople. Rural civilization is a seamless fabric which unites a certain number of cellular groups – villages, parishes, rural communities. Depending on their circumstances, such groups may be surrounded or dominated by powers and/or social and economic forces outside, or superior to, the cells in question. Among such powers and forces, which may coexist with, or succeed, each other, we might number feudalism, the twos, states, trade and industry, capitalism, bureaucracies (whether party or state) etc. Every village, as Mendras has pointed out, is thus enclosed both within a surrounding society (other villages) and by an over-arching or dominant society (city-dwellers, feudal powers, capitalists, bureaucrats, priests or policemen).'

⁶⁵⁰ This has been defined in its broadest sense by Redfield (1956)

⁶⁵¹ Lenski (1966:189-296) provides the outline of Lenski's theory in detail.

⁶⁵² Stark (2001:283).

Dividing his discussion over a number of topics Lenski lists a number of the factors which are most common across such societies and which provide a cross-cultural model from which to structure our inquiry. Firstly, as already noted in Stark's definition, demographically, the vast majority of the population in such societies '... were always simple peasant farmers, and city dwellers and townsfolk never more than a small minority.'⁶⁵³ That this was the case in the Roman Empire, and particularly Roman Asia Minor, need hardly be defended, though it suffices here to quote Mitchell's educated guess that the rural-urban ratio was likely around 10:1 and that:

'[Central Anatolia had]...a rural population of about 7, 280, 000, and a total of 8, 190,000, rather more than half the population of Asia Minor. If anything, this figure is probably an underestimate.'⁶⁵⁴

Secondly, and perhaps most important for our purposes here, are the economic features, noted by Lenski as:

'Normally, in agrarian societies, the economic surplus was carried to the ruling classes and their dependants. As a result, all of the more advanced agrarian societies resembled a tree or plant with a system of feeder roots spreading over a vast area, tapping the surplus and moving it, by stages to the ultimate consumers, the urban population. At the outer limits of this system were thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of small peasant villages, each typically containing a few hundred residents.'⁶⁵⁵

That this is again a truism concerning Roman Asia Minor hardly needs establishing, as will become apparent below.⁶⁵⁶ Thirdly, in order to control such a social structure, some kind of administration was needed, in this case largely provided by bureaucratic and social structures which reinforced the established hierarchy.

This bureaucratic apparatus was normally called the 'retainer class' and included the various tiers of governmental authority. The common people of the countryside and cities were

⁶⁵³ Lenski (1966:200)

⁶⁵⁴ Mitchell (1993:244)

⁶⁵⁵ Lenski (1966:206)

⁶⁵⁶ See below pp. 162-165.

largely uninvolved in the machinery of governance (i.e. they were pre-political) except as the normally passive producers of an agricultural surplus. Within the Roman society of Asia Minor those with power were largely the direct or indirect agents of Roman rule, that is, the proconsul and his staff and the various procurators, *negotiatores* and *conductores* of the imperial properties. In addition to these were the native elites or settlers from abroad who made up the decurial class of the various small cities, particularly as these functioned as overseers of imperial taxation and administration of the civic χώρα.⁶⁵⁷

Finally, and of particular interest for our study, is the nature of religion in agrarian societies. Generally agrarian societies would idealize some sense of, at least symbolic, religious uniformity, though due to their normally multi-ethnic or colonial basis this by necessity was quite broad. This said, the group solidarity occasioned by communal religious celebrations became particularly important, though more so in the cities than in the countryside, as Lenski writes:

‘One of the natural consequences of such developments was the gradual weakening of family and local cults and the simultaneous strengthening of national faiths. These cults seldom disappeared, as evidenced by the survival of the cults of the saints in Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and of cults of household and village godlings in Hinduism; but they were usually incorporated as subsidiary elements in the politically dominant national faith.’⁶⁵⁸

Such a situation can be seen in the Roman Asia Minor in the interaction between civic deities and the imperial cult, which, while never a ‘state religion’ certainly played an important role in the religious life of some larger cities and certainly an important role of maintaining community solidarity and identification with the wider world of the Roman empire.⁶⁵⁹ This said, the peasants of the Anatolian Mid-West continued to foster the popular rural cults independent of imperial patronage during this period.⁶⁶⁰ Of course such a situation could inevitably lead to group conflicts and on this point Lenski makes the important observation:

⁶⁵⁷ See below pp. 170-197.

⁶⁵⁸ Lenski (1966:209).

⁶⁵⁹ On the imperial cult see below pp. 175-178.

⁶⁶⁰ Price (1984:95-100).

‘One other feature of the religious situation which deserves special attention is the appearance of organized conflict between religious groups, sometimes on a major scale. This is virtually absent in simple societies. The reason it developed in agrarian societies are many and varied. In part these conflicts reflected a growing cultural pluralism and diversity which resulted in tensions between ethnic groups, between classes, between country folk and city people, and last but not least, between uninspired religious functionaries and their charismatic critics and rivals. Frequently several of these factors worked together to generate religious conflict.’⁶⁶¹

That Montanism is in many ways representative of such a multi-faceted conflict will become clearer as we progress. For now it will suffice to say that past scholarship has indicated that a conflict over the control of ecclesiastical office between civic householders and the rural peasantry was one issue at stake in the Montanist crisis.

Having established these very broad criteria with regard to the applicability of Lenski’s sociological categories pertaining to the ‘agrarian society’ to Roman Asia Minor it is now incumbent on us to look particularly at the segment of this population among which Montanism seems to have been most active, the peasantry, and how the social sciences can help us to better understand their situation.

Words like ‘transhumant’ and ‘peasant,’ need to be carefully nuanced in historical study lest we slip into romantic notions of bucolic farmers in some quaint English hamlet, or shepherds with anachronistic turbans and crooks of the type more representative of a children’s nativity play than what might approximate to the lived reality in Roman Asia Minor. Even ancient writers were wont to describe rural life with an unrealistic degree of romanticism and simplicity (e.g. Virgil’s *Ecologues*), and such a characterization has not ceased to be the case in propagandistic writings of more recent times.⁶⁶²

Be this as it may the Roman Empire was predominantly reliant on agriculture for its survival, and just as Teodor Shanin could say during the late 1970s without exaggerating that peasantry

⁶⁶¹ Lenski (1966:209).

⁶⁶² Garnsey (1976:224).

makes up the majority of the world's population,⁶⁶³ Ramsay MacMullen could equally note in his perceptive arguments about the problems of studying the peasantry in the Roman Empire:

‘No one doubts that peasants made up the great majority of the population throughout antiquity, but they have received no synthetic or comprehensive study.’⁶⁶⁴

This historical neglect of the peasantry can be attributed to a number of factors, though the most important (already alluded to) is the problem of evidence.

The question has to be asked, however, if we reject the literary fancy of writers like Virgil what, exactly, do we mean by the term ‘peasant’ and what factors does this term cover with regard to Roman Asia Minor. It becomes necessary, then, to discuss a number of definitions given of ‘peasantry’ and to adopt one which has the most relevance and utility for our purposes here.

As a broad definition of ‘peasant’ we will begin with the definition given and discussed by an ancient historian (and nearly the only one) who has treated this phenomenon. Peter Garnsey, in his pioneering (and sadly not sufficiently followed up) work, defined peasantry as:

‘...small producers on land who, with the help of simple equipment, their own labor and that of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for meeting obligations to holders of political and economic power, and reach nearly total self-sufficiency within the framework of a village community.’⁶⁶⁵

This definition, drawn largely from the extensive writings of Teodor Shanin, is noted by Garnsey to have one ‘fatal flaw,’ as he continues:

‘This definition marks off the peasant, smallholder or tenant (the categories are not mutually exclusive), from, on the one hand, the entrepreneurial farmer growing cash crops for the market, and on the other, the primitive cultivator or pastoralist isolated from the world outside his community. I am reluctant to admit political as well as economic dependence as a defining characteristic of a peasantry, because I wish to accommodate not only those peasant communities (no doubt the majority) that were locked into political relationships with cities or a central state, but also the pre-polis

⁶⁶³ Shanin (1979:11).

⁶⁶⁴ MacMullen (1974b:253).

⁶⁶⁵ Garnsey (1976:44).

rural communities of early Greece such as the Boetia of the poet Hesiod, where economic practices and moral values were largely recognizably 'peasant', and under-urbanized regions that were largely independent of or loosely attached to urban centres.'⁶⁶⁶

This second statement by Garnsey demonstrates two initial factors which should be considered. The first is the idea of political dependence. Garnsey's study takes a significantly wider chronological scope than what is proposed in this study and the issue of political dependence, whether that encompasses being tied to an imperial estate or the *territorium/chora* of a *polis*, is not for our purposes here an issue of contention. Under the empire of the Antonines the territories of Phrygia, however remote, were under the *de iure* political jurisdiction of the Roman state, whether that be under the immediate auspices of a slave/freedman procurator, or the devolved power of the city council.⁶⁶⁷

That villagers were in a relationship of submission when compared with their civic counterparts was made abundantly clear long ago by Rostovtzeff in what remains an important treatment of this topic, when he wrote:

'Besides the land which was divided among the citizens (*kleroi*), many of the ancient Greek cities possessed extensive tracts which were cultivated and inhabited by natives. From the Roman point of view these villages were 'attached' or 'attributed' to the city; from the Greek point of view the villages were inhabited by 'by-dwellers' (*paroikoi* or *katoikoi*) who never had had or were never destined to have the full rights of municipal citizenship.'⁶⁶⁸

The second factor discussed by Garnsey, which is more important for us here, is the problematic nature of one of the key discussions of 'peasant studies' generally and that is, what precisely are the defining criteria for who is, and who is not a 'peasant'?⁶⁶⁹

This problem of criteria, however, is not limited to the anthropological study of 'peasants' and has also been felt in the related field of rural sociology. While a criteria, for instance, of 'rural'

⁶⁶⁶ Garnsey (1976:44f.)

⁶⁶⁷ See below pp. 170-197.

⁶⁶⁸ Rostovtzeff (1979 [1926]: 255f.).

⁶⁶⁹ De Ste. Croix (1981:210f.).

might be something as simply as: a person or family living outside of an urban environment the gradations between a non-urban dwelling artisan who commutes to the city for work and a non-urban subsistence farmer who has little or no contact with the urban milieu are often very subtle and hard to delineate.

Instead, then, of opting for a stringent set of criteria, it is more useful and realistic to borrow from a dated, though still heuristically useful, idea from rural sociology, that of the 'rural-urban continuum.'⁶⁷⁰ The 'rural-urban continuum' can be succinctly defined as '...the conception that, rather than a simple contrast between rural and urban communities, there exists a gradation of types of community, in terms of their size, density of population, extent of division of labor, isolation, sense of community solidarity, rates of social change etc.'⁶⁷¹ The 'rural-urban continuum' as a concept, then, can be applied to the great diversity of social relationships which were to be found in Roman Asia Minor and which we will define in more detail below.

With regard to the defining criteria of the peasantry, the problem is equally complex and in lieu of this, and before moving on the definitions provided by the social scientists, we must define who we might historically include under the rubric of 'peasants.' In his highly polemical study *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* G.E.M. De Ste. Croix divides the peasantry into the following types:

1. Freeholders who had absolute ownership of their plots.
2. During the Hellenistic period, men who in practice were virtually absolute owners for the duration of their lives, but who held their land on condition of performing military service, and who could not transmit it directly to their heirs without the endorsement of the king. (In practice, such lots often became eventually equivalent to freeholds).
3. Tenants who either (a) held on lease, for their lives or (much more commonly) for a term of years (which might in practice be renewable at the option of one part or the

⁶⁷⁰ On the rural-urban continuum see in particular Beegle (1950). For its problems see Newby (1980:1-140) and Pahl (1966:299-327). Much of the problem with this category has been posed by the increasing complexity of industrial and post-industrial societies and need not directly concern its utility here.

⁶⁷¹ Jary & Jary (1991:544).

other or both), or (b) were what English lawyers call “tenants at will,” subject at any time to the possibility of being ejected or of having their terms of occupation made more onerous (e.g. with a higher rent).⁶⁷²

While these types are useful for recognizing some of the historical continuities and discontinuities of peasant life (and as a corollary avoiding the application of a static notion of peasantry over the periods of Graeco-Roman history), for our purposes the first two are anachronistic. While we cannot be totally sure that freeholders did not exist in Roman Asia Minor (they did, for instance, in Scaptopara in nearby Thrace during the mid-third century),⁶⁷³ the evidence inclines towards relationships of tenancy, particularly in the important regions of the imperial domains. Similarly, tenancy in return for military service, as de Ste. Croix’s definition indicates, was not widely practiced in the Roman Empire (at least in the form defined above) and most of the peasantry on the imperial domains of Roman Asia Minor were exempt by virtue of their status as imperial *coloni*.⁶⁷⁴ Despite these problems de Ste. Croix’s types are useful for the initial task of highlighting that tenancy (of various shades) was the norm (at least until the late third century) with regard to a peasant’s relationship vis-à-vis the land on which they resided.⁶⁷⁵

With regard to anthropological and sociological definitions of peasantry we must take into account a number of observations and propositions, none of which are mutually exclusive but which at the same time the absence of any one (or two) of these factors need not exclude from an inclusive set of criteria. Various scholars have proposed various ‘ideal types’ of peasantry,⁶⁷⁶ however for our purposes here we will work in particular with three such discussions, those of Shanin, Hilton and de Ste. Croix.

Teodor Shanin, the pioneering scholar of ‘peasant studies’ in his introduction to the collection of papers entitled *Peasants and Peasant Societies* outlined four factors which he saw as making up a general type of peasantry, he lists these four factors as follows:

⁶⁷² De Ste. Croix (1981:213f.).

⁶⁷³ *IGBulg*.IV.2236. On this inscription see Hauken (1998:74-139).

⁶⁷⁴ See below pp. 170-197.

⁶⁷⁵ Rostovtzeff (1926 [1979]:366f.).

⁶⁷⁶ For various discussions see the papers published in Shanin (1971).

1. The peasant family farm as the basic unit of multi-dimensional social organization.
2. Land Husbandry as the main means of livelihood directly providing the major part of the consumption of needs.
3. Specific traditional culture related to way of life of small communities.
4. The underdog position – the domination of peasantry by outsiders.⁶⁷⁷

Each of these four categories of Shanin's 'General Type' of a peasant apply to the rural farmers of Anatolia, though in varying degrees according to the geographical strictures (for instance animal husbandry was necessary in less fertile highland regions),⁶⁷⁸ though before elucidating how they apply to the 'average' Anatolian peasant it is important to compare them with two additional discussions to flesh out a more historically applicable typology.

In his work de Ste. Croix preferred as a starting point the additional criteria proposed by Medievalist Rodney Hilton in his 1973 Ford Lectures, these are:

- (i) They possess, even if they do not own, the means of agricultural production by which they exist.
- (ii) They work their holdings essentially as a family unit, primarily with family labor.
- (iii) They are normally associated in large units than the family, that is, villages or hamlets, with greater or lesser elements of common property and collective rights according to the character of the economy.
- (iv) Ancillary workers, such as agricultural laborers, artisans, building works are derived from their own ranks and are therefore part of the peasantry.
- (v) They support super-imposed classes and institutions such as landlords, church, state, towns by producing more than is necessary for their own subsistence and economic re-production.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ Shanin (1971: 14f.).

⁶⁷⁸ Haspels (1971:163).

⁶⁷⁹ Hilton (1975:13).

This list of Hilton's specifies the broader role of larger societal units such as the village in the lives of peasants than Shanin and moreover opens the door to the inclusion of those he calls ancillary workers. Hilton's analysis also takes cognizance of the issues of 'class' which were so dear to both he and de Ste. Croix and help to give greater emphasis to the issues of conflict which these manifested (whether explicit or implicit).⁶⁸⁰

Taking Hilton's list, supplemented by that of Shanin, de Ste. Croix finally gave seven criteria for defining a peasant.

1. Peasants (mainly cultivators) possess, whether or not they own, the means of agricultural production by which they subsist; they provide their own maintenance from their own productive efforts, and collectively they produce more than is necessary for their own subsistence and reproduction.
2. They are not slaves and are therefore not legally the property of others; they may or may not be serfs or bondsmen.
3. Their occupation of land may be under widely differing conditions: they may be freeholders, lessees (at rent in money, kind, or shares, and combined or not with labour services), or tenants at will.
4. They work their holdings essentially as family units, primarily with family labour, but occasionally with restricted use of slaves or wage-labour.
5. They are normally associated in larger units than family alone, usually in villages.
6. Those ancillary works (such as artisans, building and transport workers, and even fishermen) who originate from and remain among peasants may be considered as peasants themselves.
7. They support superimposed classes by which they are exploited to a greater or less degree, especially landlords, moneylenders, town-dwellers, and the organs of the State to which they belong, and in which they may or may not have political rights.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸⁰ As is well-known both de Ste. Croix and Hilton were open communists. However, the use of the term 'class' need not lead to an accusation of Marxism. As Finley (1981:9-10) warned we must be wary of: '...the bad habit of pinning the Marxist label on any and every political analysis that employs a concept of class, a habit which ignores the long history of such an approach, in one form or another, in western political analysis ever since Aristotle.'

⁶⁸¹ De Ste. Croix (1981:210f.).

As we have indicated above, de Ste. Croix's definition is broad enough to include the shifting situation over the course of Graeco-Roman history, but for reasons outlined above here only certain kinds of land occupation will be relevant. This said, however, de Ste. Croix's definition provides a usable rubric which we can work with to outline the situation of the Anatolian peasant in Roman Asia Minor. What we will attempt below, is to look individually at each of these seven propositions and to flesh out in historical and institutional terms how each of these might be evidenced and reconstructed from the evidence of rural Anatolia.

The above discussion may at this point seem rather abstract and theoretical and it is important here to solidify some of its concepts in terms of ancient society. What follows then will address two key areas. Firstly will be something of a synchronic portrait from the surviving evidence demonstrating the applicability of Shanin's four categories by constructing a hypothetical 'average Anatolian peasant.' Secondly, will be a survey of the institutions of law and order under which our hypothetical 'average Anatolian peasant' was contained, and finally a brief outlines of the structures of land use, tenure, and taxation which impacted on his or hers everyday lives.

3.5. The Average Anatolian Peasant: A Reconstruction.

As we have reiterated the issue of agricultural production as one of the key defining features of a macrosociological analysis of Roman Asia Minor, the explicit types of ownership and tenancy were often complex. Much of our subsequent discussion will demonstrate that a great deal of the agricultural work in which the Anatolian peasant engaged in was undertaken on imperial lands. This satisfies (1) of de Ste. Croix's criteria as well as underlying (4): the vast degree of labor which the 'average Anatolian Peasant' engaged in was not on the public lands but on private plots under various tenancy arrangements. The family unit remained, as MacMullen indicates in his *Roman Social Relations*, the primary source of production.⁶⁸²

The Anatolian peasant family, at times spanning as many as three generations under a single roof, was a closely knit unit, with the males laboring daily in the village fields in order to meet both their own subsistence needs and those of absentee landlords, neighboring cities, or military garrisons. Generally the women would be involved in child-rearing, household duties and perhaps textile production, though it is almost certain that they would have also been engaged in more menial labor.⁶⁸³

It is, then, perhaps not surprising to find that the commemorations which survive in stone often include a sizable extended family, perhaps indicating that these dwelt under the same roof. References are to relatives rather than civic institutions or loyalties. Take, for instance, the metrical epitaph of Sōsthenēs from Aykırıkcı in the Upper Tembris valley, which reads:

'Here the earth holds Sōsthenēs, a man regretted for his beauty and greatness and especially for his temperance, of every virtue and having glory among men; at thirty years I died; I caused to wither the soul of my wife, with whom I lived together three years, from whom I had one child; my parents lie here before me. Alexandros, presbyter, with his wife, Appē, and their daughter, Kyrilla, and their granddaughter Domna, for his foster siblings Sōsthas and Domna and Sōsthenēs their dearest son-in-

⁶⁸² MacMullen (1974:16).

⁶⁸³ For the severe historiographical problems with studying rural women in the ancient world see Scheidel (1995: 202-217); (1996:1-10).

law, made (this grave), (in memory), Christians for Christians. By God, do not abuse (the tomb)!'⁶⁸⁴

Epigraphic evidence further demonstrates, at least idealistically, something of the division of labor which took place in these family units. Numerous epitaphs, for instance, for Christian women in the Upper Tembris valley contain images of the spindle and distaff, carding combs and other implements of textile production.⁶⁸⁵ For men, the standard implements of rural labor are abundant, the ox-drawn plough, a viticulture knife (*falx vinitoria*), the *dolabra*, in some cases even what appears to be some kind of saw for felling trees.⁶⁸⁶ The iconographic program of these monuments is distinctively bucolic in its nature and while no doubt many of the elements were pre-fabrications it is sensible to conclude with Waelken's that:

'Yet the only thing that matters to our study is to discover among this artistic stock those scenes whose choice must have been influenced by local geographical, economic or social conditions. In this way Phrygian monuments of Roman imperial times give us valuable information in the field of agricultural production and peasantry.'⁶⁸⁷

Indeed, some writers were much more explicit in their status as peasants, for instance the inscription of Menekrates, a farmer from the Hermos valley near Sardis in Lydia, which reads:

'I had the good fortune to place my livelihood in my crops, and I loved to break up the clods of earth for the grain-bearing shoots; nor did my hands rest from their labor, until the day's warmth departed from the sun's setting rays; and with the joy of Demeter, I took delight in guiding the plough.'⁶⁸⁸

While primarily production took place with a familial context, the importance of the village cannot be understated, as Mitchell points out:

'A family in isolation cannot sustain the effort required, so the settlement must be of a certain critical mass, with enough men and oxen to work the soil and produce the

⁶⁸⁴ *IPhryChr28* [Trans. Gibson (1978:79)]

⁶⁸⁵ *IMont* 38, 39, 42, 44, 47, 48, 49, 51.

⁶⁸⁶ Yoked Cattle: *IMont* 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 41, 43, 47.48.49. 51. Viticulture Implements: *IMont* 38, 41, 43, 47, 48, 49, 51.

⁶⁸⁷ Waelkens (1977:278).

⁶⁸⁸ Quoted by Thonemann (2009:224).

grain. On the other hand pre-industrial transport technologies make it impossible to till land which is a long distance from people's homes, for to travel more than about five kilometres from the settlement to tend the fields would consume more energy than the crops grown there could supply. In practice this meant that most villages would have a population of between 200 and 1000 inhabitants.⁶⁸⁹

Village life was that of a small cell of families working together to till the land. Their relations with the outside world, however, were somewhat limited. Aside from markets, which in the Roman empire tended to concentrate in certain towns or districts, and at times rotate between these (like the *assize*),⁶⁹⁰ rural peasants would often have very little contact with the broader life and institutions of Roman life. This in turn could be both advantageous or detrimental depending largely on the whims of the landowners or imperial agents, though a relationship of distinctive distrust often eventuated, as MacMullen writes, drawing on a more recent example:

‘Economic ties between urban and rural centers are thus of the closest. They are not friendly. The two worlds regard each other as, on the one side, clumsy, brutish, ignorant, uncivilized; on the other side, as baffling, extortionate, arrogant. Peasants who move to a town feel overwhelmed by its manners and dangers and seek out relatives or previous emigrants from the same village to settle among. Rent- or tax-collectors who come out to the country face a hostile reception and can expect attempts to cheat and resist them, even by force. They respond with their own brutality. It is just such confrontations with an external enemy – government officials, landlords’ agents, crop damage by herds, or a quarrel over land or water with people of another locality – that unite the village.’⁶⁹¹

That land husbandry was the key element of the life of the Anatolian peasants goes without saying and is well attested both in the literary sources like Galen and Aelius Aristides,⁶⁹² but also in the iconography of inscriptions alluded to above.⁶⁹³ It is also certain that most of the peasants of Anatolia were, by necessity, involved in the production of grain and barley, which

⁶⁸⁹ Mitchell (1999:33).

⁶⁹⁰ MacMullen (1970:33-41).

⁶⁹¹ MacMullen (1974:15f.).

⁶⁹² For these sources see Mitchell (1993:165-170).

⁶⁹³ See in particular Drew-Bear (1999:45).

remain to this day staple crops in this region of Turkey and that their diet was largely made up of their own produce, a dim dietary prospect if Galen is to be believed.⁶⁹⁴

Rural Anatolia, unlike many rural regions, preserves a great amount of useful epigraphic evidence which can give us some insight into the traditional nature of the Anatolian highland communities.⁶⁹⁵ The immense number of *Beichtinschriften* and votive inscriptions indicate both the precarious nature of agricultural life,⁶⁹⁶ a constant fear of the death of flocks or the failure of crops, but equally a fear of issues of law and order. The isolated nature of many of the village communities meant that the administration and policing of criminal matters was largely absent, instead the wronged peasant left this up to the vengeance of the gods, through the means of traditional ritualistic invocations.⁶⁹⁷ Similarly, the great civic cults and indeed the imperial cult, are notably absent from many of these regions,⁶⁹⁸ and the survival of local cults, as demonstrated by the studies of Thomas Drew-Bear was a notable feature of Anatolian life.

To conclude this brief reconstruction perhaps the best documented (both in Asia Minor and elsewhere) phenomenon of rural life was that of exploitation and coercion. As we will see below the Anatolian peasant was subject to the abuses of bailiffs, procurators, soldiers and his fellow peasants. These very broad theoretical brush strokes which provide us with a heuristic key as to what kind of social relationships to expect in a rural civilization like the Anatolian hinterland, we can begin to sketch out the ways in which this functioned with regard to specific written and documentary facts pertaining to Roman Asia Minor.

⁶⁹⁴ Galen *CMG* V.4.2 [Trans. Mitchell (1993:168)].

⁶⁹⁵ See Drew-Bear (1999:40-43).

⁶⁹⁶ See above pp. 93-96.

⁶⁹⁷ MacMullen (1974:39).

⁶⁹⁸ Price (1984:91-100).

3.6. Agrarian Life in the Anatolian Mid-West.

The most important set of monuments for the study of early Christianity in Asia Minor are the 'Christians for Christians' inscriptions found in the region of the Upper Tembris valley.⁶⁹⁹ While the identification of these as Montanist has been exhaustively debated since their original publication by W.M. Ramsay in the late 1800s, their historical importance does not lie in this alone.⁷⁰⁰

Rather, their greatest importance lies in the fact that these are monuments not of urbane city folk, but of rural farmers, who preserved for posterity not only their names but the implements of their professions and everyday life on what was most likely a large imperial estate.⁷⁰¹ These monuments are stark reminders of an important factor in the growth of the church in Asia Minor which had been evidenced since the early second century, that is, that Christianity spread not only in the cities of the Aegean coast, but far inland to the rural hamlets and villages of Phrygia and its surrounding regions.

It was in the inland regions of Phrygia, Lydia, Galatia and Mysia that Christianity, and in particular its Montanist variety, took a strong hold amongst the rural population and in the case of Montanism maintained itself well into the sixth century.⁷⁰² To quote the great Abbé Duchesne Phrygia was '...essentially an agricultural country, and inhabited by a simple and gentle folk; their native rites were of fabulous antiquity and they had not been very deeply influenced by Hellenism.'⁷⁰³ In order, then, for us to understand the implications of this for understanding the Montanist milieu it is paramount that we look in more detail at the vicissitudes of rural life in Central Anatolia.

In his masterful survey *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* Michael Rostovtzeff noted that Asia Minor was a region dominated by large tracts of agricultural land dotted by villages and the occasional small *polis*, which, even by the meagre criteria of Pausanias' notorious checklist regarding the infrastructure of the classical *polis*, hardly met the

⁶⁹⁹ Gibson (1978). Tabbernee (1997).

⁷⁰⁰ On the question of Montanist provenance and the opinions of various scholars see Tabbernee (1997); Gibson (1978:131-136).

⁷⁰¹ On the important inscription from the Aragua estate (MAMA X.114) see Hauken (1998:140-161). On the other estates see Strubbe (1975:229-250).

⁷⁰² Procop. *Arc.* XI.22-23.

⁷⁰³ Duchesne (1965 [1909]:190f.).

criteria which many modern scholars would associate with the urban milieu of the great cities of the Aegean Coast of Asia Minor.⁷⁰⁴ While much of Rostovtzeff's work, and indeed his overarching economic theory had been challenged repeatedly over much of the twentieth century,⁷⁰⁵ his characterization of Asia Minor has largely withstood the test of time.⁷⁰⁶ This has been most recently reiterated, for instance, in Peter Thonemann's chapter on Asia Minor in Andrew Erskine's *Companion to Ancient History*, where he writes:

'To the west, between the Galatian steppe and the Aegean valleys, lies the rolling highlands of Phrygia, eastern Lydia and Mysia. The Anatolian mid-west was a land of villages, with a mixed economy of agriculture and animal husbandry.'⁷⁰⁷

What this means for our work here, and compared with our theoretical discussion above of the defining features of peasantry and rural societies, is that MacMullen's adage quoted above, that is, that the vast majority of the population of the Roman Empire be included under the heading of peasantry, holds especially true for the area of Central Anatolia in Roman Asia Minor and in particular for a large percentage of the population who made up both the broader early Christian community and Montanist communities in the second and third centuries.

Having already established a taxonomy of features which have marked peasant life from a comparative sociological view in Parts D and E of this chapter and given at least a working set of theoretical features which we maintain are applicable for the ancient world, it is now necessary to bring this discussion down the from the reified world of theories into the more concrete, yet problematic, world of historical institutions.

The first step in this process is to provide an institutional and to some extent legislative backdrop to the largely un-narrated lives of the Central Anatolian peasants. While we often have little evidence to work with on individual biographies, we are furnished with comparatively abundant evidence which allows us to place strictures on the possibilities and

⁷⁰⁴ Rostovtzeff (1979 [1929]:257). Paus. X.4.12.

⁷⁰⁵ On the debates over Rostovtzeff and Moses Finley's alternative theories see Morris' introduction in Finley (1999 [1973]:ix-xxxvi).

⁷⁰⁶ Mitchell (1993:225f.).

⁷⁰⁷ Thonemann (2009: 224).

probabilities of rural life in this time and place and to assess some of the main challenges and opportunities which faced the Central Anatolian peasants during the Antonine age.

While, as noted in the above paragraph, evidence for institutional elements is comparatively abundant it is still not perfect and while a number of scholars have written a great deal on these questions over the past century, some issues must necessarily remain vague.⁷⁰⁸ This matter is further complicated by the fact that the major scholar to have dealt with agrarian issues in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, Elena Golubcova, wrote extensively only in Russian,⁷⁰⁹ and moreover during the turbulent years of Soviet Rule, under which issues of peasantry and agrarian reform were a highly politically charged, not to mention potentially controversial issue (as indicated by the fate of Andrei Chayanov, the great Russian theorist of peasant economies).⁷¹⁰ For the purposes of this work, and owing to the author's ignorance of the Russian language, the focus here will necessarily deal mainly with scholarship produced in an Anglophone, Francophone or German speaking milieu.

This is not, however, to suggest that this will unduly impact on the scope of this work. The most extensive survey of life in Roman Asia Minor, Stephen Mitchell's monumental two-volume survey *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Roman Asia Minor* contains a remarkable degree of detail regarding these questions, well-supplemented by older works such as David Magie's *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Victor Chapot's *La Province Romaine Proconsulaire D'Asie*, the extensive work of Louis Robert and Thomas Broughton's extremely useful, if slightly dated, survey in the *Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* series. Most recently Andrew Gregory, in his unpublished 1997 Columbia University dissertation *Village Society in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* has furnished interested scholars with a massive catalogue of resources as well as careful synthesizing of a number of technical questions about rural life.⁷¹¹

It would be remiss here to cover much of the groundwork already established by these scholars, though it would be equally remiss not to give a thorough analysis of certain

⁷⁰⁸ See above p. 149.

⁷⁰⁹ A number of articles were published by Golubcova between in the *VDI*. See Golubcova (1967:25-44); (1969:45-64); (1972); (1977); (1982:254-259). Many give a summary in English or French which indicate the author's distinct ideology interests.

⁷¹⁰ This problem and its relations to the Soviet Era is discussed in Shanin (1972). On the fate of Andrei Chayanov see Shanin's introduction to the English translation of Chayanov's work (1986:1-24).

⁷¹¹ Broughton (1950); Chapot (1967); Gregory (1997); Mitchell (1993), (1993b), (1999).

institutions which could directly feed into the causes which may have precipitated and exacerbated the Montanist movement, particularly as these pertain to socio-economic issues. As a result of this, and bearing in mind what has already been said in Part B of this chapter regarding the potentiality that Montanism was a 'millennarian' reaction against the more negative aspects of rural life in the second century, much of what follows will dwell on the more negative side of life in this region. While it would be extremely superfluous and nigh on impossible to provide a 'total history' of the more functional and beneficial institutions of Roman rule it should suffice to say that these were many and that while in the past pro-imperialist historians like Ramsay have been perhaps too laudatory of these elements, we cannot deny that elements of Roman rule did provide some semblance of security and prosperity, though obviously more often for a select few at the top of a social hierarchy.

3.7. The Structures of Roman Rule in Rural Asia Minor.

With regard to understanding the social structures and contextual background against which our early Christian subjects lived it is important to begin with a broad social survey tracing the devolution of administrative power from its imperial centre to the local and rural level. Since the role of the emperor is a massive topic which only concerns us in passing we will begin this survey at the provincial level.⁷¹²

Administration, Law and Order.

In traditional geographical reckoning the province of Asia covered the geographical territory from the Western coast of modern day Turkey as far as the river Halys in the East, though as times changed provincial boundaries shifted and were redrawn.⁷¹³ From its gradual annexation into the Roman provincial system over the period of the late Republic and early Empire, Asia Minor was a proconsular province, ruled by a governor (proconsul) appointed by the Senate in Rome.⁷¹⁴

Proconsuls were appointed annually, and would appoint most of their own administrative staff before departing for their tenure in office.⁷¹⁵ As the celebrated correspondent and tutor of Marcus Aurelius, Cornelius Fronto, proconsul of Asia under Antoninus Pius, demonstrates in a letter outlining his preparations before taking up the role as governor (proconsul) of Asia:

‘Thus I made careful preparations for whatever concerned staffing the province, so that I could the more easily cope with the heavy business by the resources of my friends. I summoned to my home my neighbors and friends, of whose honor and integrity I was sure. I wrote to my acquaintances at Alexandria to hurry to Athens to meet me there, and I assigned these men the charge of my Greek correspondence. I also urged to come distinguished men from Cilicia, as I have a great many friends in the province, since I have always defended the pleas of Cilicians, both public and private, before you. I also called to my side from Mauretania a great friend of mine who is very

⁷¹² For the most complete discussion of this see Millar (1977).

⁷¹³ Tabbernee (2008) unpublished gives a good survey of the history of Asia as a province and its developments over time. Thonemann (2009:222-225).

⁷¹⁴ Burton (1975:92-106).

⁷¹⁵ For a broad legal survey relating to senatorial provinces see Berger (1952:660).

dear to me, Julius Senex, to give me aid not only of his honor and energy, but also of his military experience in hunting down and repressing brigands.⁷¹⁶

The staff of a proconsul normally included, among the more important functionaries, a number of legates responsible for performing various judicial duties, in particular overseeing the collection of taxes by the cities. The proconsul's roles were manifold and are summed up well in the Roman jurist Ulpian, who puts chief (after a number of matters of protocol on arriving) the appointment and mandating of powers to legates, who would act in his stead in all but the most serious legal matters (e.g. trials involving the death penalty), and also on his behalf in the role of *correctores* (city auditors) and *censitores* (census takers).⁷¹⁷ He was expected to investigate temples and public buildings to keep them from falling into disrepair and to encourage cities (according to their means) to continue the upkeep of such important vestiges of Roman rule.⁷¹⁸ All these functions, though applied in a different function can be found evidenced in Book X of Pliny the Younger's letters.⁷¹⁹ Pliny has bequeathed to us a detailed, if at times nauseating, correspondence of questions he directed to the Emperor Trajan during his governorship of Pontus-Bithynia between 111/112 C.E.

From his arrival we see Pliny engage in firstly civic duties relating to the finances of cities and their various building works.⁷²⁰ Pliny is involved in overseeing religious celebrations, notable among them the birthday and accession of the Emperor,⁷²¹ and of overseeing repairs both of civic infrastructure and of religious buildings (for instance the moving of a temple of Cybele in Nicomedia).⁷²² Similarly Pliny is demonstrated as allotting military troops to various individuals, including imperial procurators and prison-wardens.⁷²³ Perhaps most importantly Pliny is represented as overseeing a number of 'capital cases' including those of a group of Christians and it is here that we begin to see the full powers which a governor had (in Pliny's

⁷¹⁶ Fro. *Ant.*, VIII [Tran. Jones].

⁷¹⁷ On the various kinds of legates see Berger (1953:539-541).

⁷¹⁸ Ulp. *dig.* xvi. 4-13.

⁷¹⁹ For the text of these letters and an important historical commentary see Sherwin-White (1966).

⁷²⁰ Plin. *Ep.* X.23, 39, 37.

⁷²¹ Plin. *Ep.* X.35, 52.

⁷²² Plin. *Ep.* X. 49.

⁷²³ Plin. *Ep.* X.27, 19, 21.

case a *legatus Augusti*, though the same applied to governors appointed by the senate).⁷²⁴

Ulpian summarizes the coercive powers of the proconsul as:

‘Whereas the proconsul has the fullest jurisdiction, the functions of all who at Rome administer justice, as quasi-magistrates or outside the normal course of law, belong to him.’⁷²⁵

What this means is that all juridical functions could be exercised by a proconsul, by virtue of his possession of the Roman *imperium*; and in many ways a proconsul was a law unto himself.⁷²⁶

These legislative powers included that vague, yet very important area of Roman law, which features so heavily in the prosecution of Christians, the procedures of the so-called *cognitio extra ordinem*.⁷²⁷ Among other things this *imperium* meant that during his tenure of office he was answerable to no one in the province bar the emperor himself, though in some recorded cases official delegations to Rome after his office for maladministration.⁷²⁸ This said, however, some legal situations (which we will come to below) were better left tactfully alone by a proconsul, for instance any action brought against an imperial procurator.⁷²⁹

With regard to military jurisdiction we know that a proconsul held the *ius gladii* which enabled him to carry the sword and execute military personnel and civilians of non-citizen status;⁷³⁰ however Ulpian notes: ‘...no proconsul has grooms of his own, but soldiers perform this service in their place in the province.’⁷³¹ This meant that a proconsul was not dispatched with his own military staff or legions, however, while this is the case he would often elicit the services of friends and able administrators, as demonstrated by Fronto above.

While then, the Romans inherited and adopted many of the customs established in Asia Minor under various Hellenistic monarchs, their rule concentrated power largely in the person of the proconsul and his relationships with various political units such as cities and territories. The

⁷²⁴ Plin. *Ep.* X.29, 96.

⁷²⁵ Ulp. *dig.* xvi.4-13.

⁷²⁶ On *imperium* see Berger (1953:493f.).

⁷²⁷ On this see Berger (1953:394). On this matter as it relates to the Christians see the celebrated exchange between Sherwin-White (1952:199ff.) and De Ste. Croix (1963:7ff.). It should be noted that the term *cognitio extra ordinem* is in some ways a modern construct see Streeter (2006:1-24 esp. 14).

⁷²⁸ Ulpian, *On the edict*, XXXIX..

⁷²⁹ Ulpian, *On the Office of Proconsul*, I.

⁷³⁰ Garnsey (1968:51-9). On the *ius gladii* see Berger (1953:529).

⁷³¹ Ulpian, *On the Office of Proconsul* I.

aspects of these relationships was complex, involving various relationships of patronage, delegation and oversight, but one of the most important institutions was the annual judicial assize or *conventus*.⁷³²

Every year the Proconsul was required to engage in an annual judicial assize, travelling to various centres in order to hear important cases which had often been set aside by civic authorities for special consideration as well as to deal with any financial irregularities in the cities visited.⁷³³ With regard to the situation during the second century Burton has argued that:

‘....normally a second-century proconsul and his three legates were theoretically responsible for holding courts at probably fourteen assize-centres in Asia during their tour of duty, that is Pergamum, Apamea, Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Cyzicus, Miletus, Philadelphia, Philomelium, Synnada, Cibyra, Alabanda, Adramyttium and Halicarnassus. Minor alterations to this picture are possible, but nothing that would change the essential pattern.’⁷³⁴

Such a position of holding these important events in cities led their characterization as an important, sometimes celebrated event, as Saddington writes ‘...Usually he [the Proconsul] travelled through his province during his term of office, holding assizes at important centres. His arrival would attract large crowds, and often coincided with the celebration of important religious festivals. The atmosphere could easily become heated.’⁷³⁵ A good example of such a celebration can be seen during Pliny’s visit to Nicomedia, about which he writes:

‘We have celebrated with appropriate rejoicing, Sir, the day of your accession whereby you preserved the Empire; and have offered prayers to the gods to keep you in health and prosperity on behalf of the human race, whose security and happiness depends on your safety. We have also administered an oath of allegiance to the troops in the usual form, and found the provincials eager to take it, as a proof of their loyalty.’⁷³⁶

⁷³² For a good, cautious summary of this see Chapot (1967:351-357).

⁷³³ Plin. *Ep.* X.43 (at Byzantium).

⁷³⁴ Burton (1975:94).

⁷³⁵ Saddington (1998:104).

⁷³⁶ Plin. *Ep.* X. 52 [Trans. Radice].

Accordingly the annual assize could be seen as a flashpoint for provincial Christians, with its often ostentatious displays of loyalty bringing Christians into the gaze of the people and the authorities for their conspicuous non-compliance (particularly as this related to the civic cults). This said, the fact that it was the proconsul alone who could, at least *de iure*, inflict the death penalty and that by virtue of the short annual tenure of office, combined with the sheer geographic expanse, meant, as suggested in Chapter 2, that such events were of less impact on early Christians than some documents might suggest. As Burton succinctly concludes:

‘...vast though the powers of the proconsul were in theory, there were severe physical restraints upon the manner in which he could exercise them; his interventions were bound then to be unevenly spread geographically, and sporadic in their frequency. The governor's tour and the assize-system should provide the proper historical starting point for any modern attempt to construct a convincing model of the development, operation and limitations of the civil administration of the provinces of the empire.’⁷³⁷

In order to see the importance of these geographical limitations in action we need only turn to the evidence we have for martyrdoms in Asia Minor during the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. Of the confirmed six or so martyrs, all were tried and executed in one of the assize centres, even if, as in the case of the Christians of Eumeneia they were natives of elsewhere.⁷³⁸ In a very real sense, then, Bowersock's hypothesises about the civic role and context of martyrdom and persecution largely holds true,⁷³⁹ and the impact in rural regions, on account of geographical and logistical factors was significantly tempered except in times of crisis.

In addition to the annual assize of the proconsul, perhaps the most visible evidences of Roman rule were the presence of Roman legionaries and the imperial cult (the latter which we will treat below as an imperial as well as religious institution).

Over the course of the second and third centuries a number of Roman legions were posted in the cities of Asia Minor, for instance in Eumeneia we know that the *legio XII Fulminata*, *cohors I Claudia Sugambrorum veterana equitata*, and the *cohors I Raetorum* were all posted at various

⁷³⁷ Burton (1975:106).

⁷³⁸ See above pp. 100-107.

⁷³⁹ Bowersock (1995:41).

times.⁷⁴⁰ This said, their role was largely to protect important travel and trade routes and maintain the peace, rather than any civic or territorial policing function. This said, as Pliny's correspondence suggests, these troops could at times be used by imperial procurators, for instance during the ever-problematic duty of tax collection, as Pliny writes:

'I thought it best to leave him [Gemellius the imperial procurator] meanwhile the soldiers I found in his service, especially as he was just setting out to collect corn from Paphlagonia, and at his request I also gave him to mounted soldiers as an escort.'⁷⁴¹

However, that these soldiers were not always well-behaved is well-attested, both in epigraphic evidence and in legislative sources.⁷⁴² During the period, however, in which Christianity first spread into Asia Minor (the first and second centuries) the countryside of this area was marked by the complete absence of wars and the massive burdens which the presence of active military can inflict on civic and rural life.⁷⁴³ Similarly, only one piece of evidence exists, for the use of soldiers in the arrest and prosecution of a Christian during Asia Minor, and this is significantly later than our period (i.e. under Decius).⁷⁴⁴

The Imperial Cult in Rural Asia Minor.

The presence of imperial cult while almost ubiquitous with the world of the Aegean coast cities of Asia Minor is a more problematic question when we move into the Anatolian hinterland, and one which scholars (particularly those of early Christianity) have often been too quick to see as the major flashpoint between Christians and the civic authorities. Such a view is well represented, for instance, in the work of Jones who writes:

'From the perspective of early Christianity, the worst abuse in the Roman Empire was the imperial cult. Honors which should be reserved for God alone could not be bestowed on men.'⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴⁰ Mitchell (1993:121f.).

⁷⁴¹ Plin. *Ep.* X.27 [Trans. Radice].

⁷⁴² Mitchell (1993:124).

⁷⁴³ On the impact of war in village societies see Gregory (1997:454) who writes:

'The largest group of casualties in any armed conflict in antiquity was the rural peasantry who stood in the way of hostile forces.'

⁷⁴⁴ See below pp. 180-182.

⁷⁴⁵ Jones (1980:1023)

Of course for Christians the participation within the imperial cult was an affront to their beliefs,⁷⁴⁶ but how often the actual situation of emperor worship actually led to persecution, as distinct from the involvement of Christians in more mundane forms of civic pagan cults, is often overstated. As Price observes in his discussion of the matter:

‘In the persecutions of the Christians the cult of the emperors was less important than the cult of the gods. Emperors and others were mostly concerned to enforce sacrifices to the gods. These sacrifices might be made on behalf of the emperor, but it was only exceptionally that sacrifices to the emperor were demanded.’⁷⁴⁷

Christian conflict with the imperial cult, then, was not so much a causative factor in persecution as an *ex post facto* issue when Christians were brought before a proconsular tribunal (as in the trials described by Pliny).⁷⁴⁸ This said, the imperial cult, particularly in the larger cities, was often intimately related to the civic cults. For instance, in Ephesus the reconstruction of the towering Antonine Altar set up during the reign of Marcus Aurelius shows an intimate iconographic linkage between the imperial family and the gods, acting in unison for the well-being of the Empire.⁷⁴⁹ Often, indeed, imperial cultus was performed as an ancillary to the worship at local civic temples.

One of our most important pieces of evidence for the manner of confrontation which took place between the Christians and the imperial cult can be found in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. In this text Polycarp is explicitly asked by the Proconsul:

‘Swear by the emperor’s Genius?’⁷⁵⁰

To which Polycarp gives a predictably negative response. However, that we do not confuse the issue here we must note that the crowd (or indeed the governor) is not seeking Polycarp’s punishment here simply for a refusal of imperial cult, but rather for being ‘...the destroyer of our gods – the one that teaches the multitude not to sacrifice or do reverence.’⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁶ This is well evidenced by Tert. *Apol.* XXXV.2-3 etc.

⁷⁴⁷ Price (1984:221).

⁷⁴⁸ This is well argued by Millar (1973:145-163).

⁷⁴⁹ On this see Price (1984:158f.).

⁷⁵⁰ *M. Polyc.* IX.

⁷⁵¹ *M. Polyc.* XII.

While, then, subtle distinctions can be made between the two types of sacrifice, the Christians, with their view of sacrifice, could fathom making none of these sacrifices, though the extent to which they were forced, at least in the surviving sources, is not unambiguously the case and a significant divide can be drawn between the civic and rural aspects of religion here. The centre of the imperial cult was, like the other vestiges of Roman rule, a civic affair. As Mitchell notes:

‘Religious activity in the cities of the empire was, with rare exceptions, explicit and public, often involving the whole community in a unified celebration of the gods. Its significance lay in rituals in which all could observe and in which many citizens participated.’⁷⁵²

It was in such a place, regardless of the exact nature of the sacrifices required, that Christians who had refused to sacrifice would have been most visible and in which the heightened nature of religious fervour, particularly in a period of disaster like the late second century, could easily find themselves in an uncomfortable situation.

The rural situation, however, like in so many other ways was significantly less policed and its cults of a much different nature and this is a very important point to make as it helps us further reinforce Mitchell’s immutable law of geography which helped in a large part to protect Christians.⁷⁵³ As one sees from Map V in Price’s study, as one approaches the rural agricultural and pastoral country of the Anatolian interior the presence of Imperial Cult dwindles, being only found in Phrygia, for instance, in the relatively urbanized cities of Eumeneia, Hierapolis, Laodicea and Synnada.⁷⁵⁴ We can well imagine then something of the content of the petitions made by Christians for the emperor as being of the kind found by the Rabbi in *Fiddler on the Roof* ‘God keep the Czar – far away from us!’⁷⁵⁵

It is interesting to note, then, that when we turn to the evidence for persecutions during the reign of Marcus Aurelius which are so often deduced as evidence for Montanist anti-Roman sentiment that it is precisely these civic locations which feature as areas where Christians were arrested and tried (if they were not transported to an assize capital as was the case with the

⁷⁵² Mitchell (1993:113). This point is made even clearer by Bowersock (1995: 41-57) who contextualizes the whole process of martyrdom within the civic milieu.

⁷⁵³ Mitchell (1999:46).

⁷⁵⁴ Price (1984:xxv, 264f.).

⁷⁵⁵ Cited in Jenkins (2008:237).

Eumeneian Christians).⁷⁵⁶ Montanism as a predominantly rural movement was probably spared much of the brunt of persecution by the simple factors of geography, as Price notes concerning Mysia, Montanus' place of origin '...there were few cities and they did not develop until the second century A.D.'⁷⁵⁷

Rural regions in Asia Minor had their own indigenous cults, largely unreflective of those found in the more urbane cities and almost entirely lacking in elite urban patronage or interest (with the exception of large sanctuaries).⁷⁵⁸ The nature of these cults, however, was also considerably different, with private individual votives playing a significantly great role in the aspects of cults than communal worship (though that is not to say that the latter was not entirely lacking).⁷⁵⁹

Indeed, as Price notes, a combination of lack of communal organization, or elite involvement in rural cults, such as those represented by the votive inscriptions collected by Drew-Bear,⁷⁶⁰ combined with the break in the dominant influence of Greek culture in these regions meant that the key flashpoint for persecution and confrontation between Christians and pagans which existed in the city was largely circumvented.⁷⁶¹ It is best here, then, to conclude our discussion of the imperial cult more positively with Mitchell that:

'Given the strength of rural Christianity in Asia Minor by the end of the third century, the failure of the persecutions may be readily understood.'⁷⁶²

Banditry.

Other law and order problems which often mar agrarian societies, for instance banditry, itself a phenomenon best viewed with Hobsbawm as a form of economic revolt,⁷⁶³ were largely absent

⁷⁵⁶ Euseb. *h.e.* V.17.

⁷⁵⁷ Price (1984:94).

⁷⁵⁸ On Anatolian rural religion see above pp.83-92.

⁷⁵⁹ Price (1984:97) makes this point explicitly:

'In general the cults in the highlands of Phrygia and in other parts of the countryside of Lydia and Phrygia were not highly organised. For instance, a random sample of the extensive evidence for the cult of Zeus Bronton reveals only dedications by individuals, not by communities, and in a third of these cases the dedication is combined with an epitaph.'

⁷⁶⁰ Drew-Bear (1999:45-47).

⁷⁶¹ Drew-Bear (1999:33).

⁷⁶² Mitchell (1993b:65).

⁷⁶³ Hobsbawm (1969).

from Phrygia, at least in any sustained form, unlike the neighbouring region of Cilicia which to this day is famous for its absence of law and order.⁷⁶⁴ Indeed, Gregory is quick to note that ‘...there were regional differences in the intensity of bandit activity: banditry will always flourish in areas of weak governmental control, low urbanization or low population density.’⁷⁶⁵ As we have discussed in Chapter 2 Phrygia, and in particular the regions of the Menander valley cities like Eumeneia and the rural regions of the Upper Tembris valley, do not quite fit this geographical portrait, though in many ways Montanus’ home in Mysia certainly did.⁷⁶⁶

Near contemporary with Montanus we hear of the bandit chief Tilloboros, whom the satirist Lucian compares with the false prophet Alexander, except that the latter was ‘...a far more savage brigand, since our hero [Alexander] plied his trade not in forests and mountains, but in cities, and instead of infesting just Mysia and Mount Ida and harrying a few of the more deserted districts of Asia, he filled the whole Roman Empire.’⁷⁶⁷ In many ways then we can see why Fronto, in his assumption of proconsular duties, was so keen to make sure he had a specialist like Julius Senex on board.⁷⁶⁸ While such conditions as banditry and kidnap probably did not overly affect the early Christians of Asia Minor, with the exception of the third century Gothic incursions in Asia Minor,⁷⁶⁹ they are worth mentioning as another potential danger of rural life, and moreover for what they reveal of the strained manner in which law and order was enforced in these rural regions.

Interestingly, though it must be treated with caution, the Apollonius’ narrative in Eusebius records that Alexander, one of the Montanists’ so-called martyrs was in fact arrested on a charge other than simply being a Christian, the passage reads:

‘But the matters related to Alexander might be well known to those who wish, he was condemned by Aemilius Pompinus, proconsul in Ephesus, not for the name [i.e. as a Christian], but for the robberies he had dared, already being a transgressor.’⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁴ This view is argued by Broughton, however Gregory (1997:454ff.) disagrees.

⁷⁶⁵ Gregory (1997:455).

⁷⁶⁶ On Mysia and its shifting situation see Gregory (1997:458f.).

⁷⁶⁷ Lucianus. *Alex. II* [Trans. Harmon].

⁷⁶⁸ See above pp. 170f.

⁷⁶⁹ On this matter during the Gothic incursions in nearby Cappadocia see Gr. Thaum. *ep. can.* I-IX.

⁷⁷⁰ Euseb. *h.e.* V.18.9.

The Greek terms used here is ληϊστήρ a term which among its various nuances can be understood as referring to a bandit rather than a mere thief (κλέπτης), and παραβάτης which has the sense of a wanted criminal. While it would be imprudent to push this reference too far it does open the intriguing possibility that a Montanist was involved in some form of banditry, though its reporting in a hostile source does bring it into question.⁷⁷¹

Policing.

While nothing truly akin to a modern police force existed in the Roman world there were various functionaries (similar to bailiffs in later periods) who performed policing functions.⁷⁷² These included the liturgical *munera* of the εἰρηνάρχος, παραφύλακος and ὄροφύλακος and their associates as well as various auxiliary soldiers. While within the cities of Asia Minor the prosecution and punishment of criminals was largely a matter for the local magistrates and population, or in capital cases the proconsul and his legates, examples can be found of these para-policing functionaries acting on behalf of civic officials, though perhaps we might better call them posses as their means and methods were more gung-ho than we might expect today.

Both the ὄροφύλακος and the παραφύλακος were given ‘...the duty to tour outlying villages of the city territories,’ though their functions were largely in smaller matters and ‘...neither of these forces were capable of dealing with serious crime.’⁷⁷³ We have some evidence for such functionaries working within Phrygia, for instance, an ἀρχιπαραφύλακος is recorded in Dorylaion in the North of Phrygia, whilst a ὄροφύλαξ is recorded in Hadrianopolis in eastern Phrygia, in addition to evidence from Hierapolis (see below).⁷⁷⁴ Chapot suggested that these two groups were largely under the auspices of various procurators and were largely concerned with imperial holdings, particularly with maintaining the integrity of imperial lands against undue exactions or interference, an opinion somewhat confirmed from the evidence from Pliny cited above.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷¹ MacMullen (1966:207-209).

⁷⁷² Nippel (1984:20-29).

⁷⁷³ Jones (1971 [1940]:212).

⁷⁷⁴ For Dorylaion see *IGR* 4.524; for Hadrianopolis see Sterrett, *EJ* 166,156.

⁷⁷⁵ Chapot (1967:377).

More serious crimes were dealt with the εἰρηνάρχος. An example of how such pseudo-policing officials could work can be found once again in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* which records how Herod, the ‘police captain’ (εἰρηνάρχος) along with the police and cavalry (διωγμῖται καὶ ἵππεῖς) arrived to arrest Polycarp as he fled to a country estate. This reference is equally revealing of the function of such para-policing functionaries by recording that they came armed ‘...with the usual arms as though against a brigand.’⁷⁷⁶ While this is an allusion to Matt. 26:55 and serves the literary and theological function of equating Polycarp’s arrest and suffering to that of Christ (the theme of *Imitatio Christi* being a key element of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*) as indicated by the words of Fronto above concerning his recruitment of Julius Senex for ‘...his military experience in hunting down and repressing brigands,’⁷⁷⁷ the chief role of these para-policing functionaries was the suppression of brigands and the arrest of wanted individuals. That such duties could often become violent, even when dealing with presumably meek and mild Christians, can be seen from the Decian era *Martyrdom of Pionius*, where one of the διωγμῖται are recorded as seriously assaulting Pionius during his arrest.⁷⁷⁸

Soldiers could also be used for policing functions, particularly when violent confrontation was likely (e.g. Pompey’s special *imperium* against the pirates), in the imperial period these could act either alone or together with these para-policing functionaries, a good example being the *Martyrdom of Saint Conon*, which records:

‘They [the outraged civic authorities] asked the prefect for an auxiliary force to search in all the areas that they thought suspicious. An auxiliary soldier by the name of Origen went along with this Naodorus [the temple verger and city councillor] together with the police captain’s staff and a few others, and they found the blessed Conon in a place called Carmena, watering one of the imperial gardens.’⁷⁷⁹

This example also brings up one of the problems of such policing forces with regard to the imperial patrimony and private estates. As Jones points out, citing an inscription from Hierapolis in Phrygia, these policing functionaries who dealt with the city χώρα or *territorium* were expressly forbidden from ‘...demand[ing] hospitality from the villagers over and above

⁷⁷⁶ *M. Polyc.* VII [Trans. Musurillo].

⁷⁷⁷ *Fro. Ant.*, VIII [Tran. Jones].

⁷⁷⁸ *M. Pion.* III.

⁷⁷⁹ *M. Con.* II. [Trans. Musurillo].

lodging, wood, and chaff, and reproves them for extorting 'crowns' from the village headmen,' while these stipulations were made in inscriptions (no doubt indicating that they had been flaunted), additional evidence from Hierapolis indicates that among their para-policing functions was '...to deal with shepherds who graze their flocks in other people's vineyards.'⁷⁸⁰

That analogous functionaries existed on imperial estates seems abundantly clear, though the jurisdiction of estates was problematic, given to the factor of what might be seen as overlapping jurisdictions in certain areas (i.e. those imperial holdings which encroached on the *territorium* of the cities). It is here, then, that we must look at the other chief functionary alongside the proconsul in the Anatolian countryside: the imperial procurator.

The Procurator.

The exact functions of the various kinds of imperial procurators, who functioned in various ways across both the imperial and Senatorial provinces, have been a source of great debate, not least over the exact meaning of Tacitus' statement about a *Senatus Consultum* regarding procuratorial jurisdiction under Claudius in 53 C.E.,⁷⁸¹ which reads:

'Several times in this year, the emperor was heard to remark that judgements given by his procurators ought to have as much validity as if the ruling had come from himself. In order that the opinion should not be taken as a chance indiscretion, provision – more extensive and fuller than previously – was made to that effect by a senatorial decree as well.'⁷⁸²

While the exact details of these debates are not directly relevant to our purpose here, one factor of jurisdiction is, that of the exact powers delegated to a procurator on imperial domains. Millar summarizes his opinion as follows:

'A formal jurisdiction was exercised by procurators within the bounds of imperial domains. This jurisdiction was exercised by *equites* and *liberti* alike.'⁷⁸³

⁷⁸⁰ Jones (1971 [1940]: 212)

⁷⁸¹ For a discussion of these issues see Millar (1964:180-7); (1965:362-7) and Brunt (1966:461-89).

⁷⁸² Tac., *Ann.* XII.60.

⁷⁸³ Millar (1964:187).

Contrary to this opinion is that of Brunt, who was significantly more cautious about the powers delegated to procurators in these areas instead insisting that:

‘None of this evidence suggests that procuratorial jurisdiction ever belonged par excellence to the procurators of imperial estates. We find them to some extent in enjoyment of juridical powers that belonged to city magistrates within city territories, and to some extent concerned with cases which there was a fiscal interest. It is only jurisdiction of the first kind that differentiates them from the other procurators.’⁷⁸⁴

While Brunt is cautious he does grant a number of powers to the procurator of an imperial estate which were denied to regular procurators (that is the proconsul’s legates) performing fiscal functions in Senatorial provinces. These powers included, among others, the right to inflict corporal punishment on free men (not Roman citizens), the imposition of fines, and the beating and expulsion of troublesome elements on their estates. Brunt has also suggested (drawing on the Phrygian evidence) that procurators could also be liable for ordering *angareia* on imperial properties, again arguing that this would have functioned in the same way in which civic councils would impose *munera*.⁷⁸⁵

What seems certain, despite this debate, is that there is no evidence that procurators on imperial estates (*procuratores patrimonii Caesaris*) were not delegated the *ius gladii* and thus had no power to try and execute offenders, indeed later legislation indicates that a procurator must be present if one of his *coloni* were brought before the governor on trial, and that he was responsible for the *colonus* showing up at court.⁷⁸⁶ However, whether this later legislation applied in an earlier period is difficult to surmise. What we do know from this early period, and what is particularly important in understanding the over-lapping jurisdictions are two factors. Firstly, was the procuratorial power recorded in a rescript from Antoninus Pius which prevented the entry of ‘troublemakers’ into an imperial domain.⁷⁸⁷ These troublemakers could be anything from soldiers trying to unlawfully extract services from the *coloni*, as is evidenced in a number of later inscriptions dealt with below, or even civic officials attempting to levy

⁷⁸⁴ Brunt (1966:486).

⁷⁸⁵ Brunt (1966:484f.).

⁷⁸⁶ Chapot (1967:377) refers to the procurators power ‘...comprenant le droit de vie et de mort sur les colons...’

⁷⁸⁷ *dig.* I.19.3.1.

munera and liturgies on *coloni* living on imperial estates which overlapped with various civic *territorium*.

Secondly, as observed above with regard to proconsular jurisdiction,⁷⁸⁸ there were certain unwritten boundaries which a proconsul would be wary about crossing. The most important of these regarded the imperial patrimony ruled largely by the emperor's procurators (often freedmen or members of the *Familia Caesaris*).⁷⁸⁹ Such figures are well-attested in the region of the Phrygian plateau, where as indicated above imperial patrimony included not only vast estates like those of Tymion and Aragua, but also the extensive marble quarries of Synnada, Docimium and surrounding areas.⁷⁹⁰

This evidence for the existence of procuratorial jurisdiction in Phrygia is quite extensive, though not without problems particularly with regard to terminology.⁷⁹¹ For the most part the Greek ἐπίτροπος is used to define a procurator, though the exact nature of a procurator's role is spelt out with additional qualifying terms in Latin which are not explicitly translated in the Greek.⁷⁹² The most important of these is distinguishing between freedmen procurators, slave procurators (from the *familia caesaris*) and *equite* procurators.⁷⁹³ A second, less difficult terminological problem, is differentiating between a procurator of a private estate and that of an imperial estate. In order to understand the way in which much of the terminology is ambiguous and problematic it is best to give a brief survey of the Greek epigraphic evidence from Phrygia and surrounding regions.

For the most part the inscriptions of Asia Minor refer specifically to the ἐπιτρόπος τῶν Σεβαστῶν, or alternatively ἐπιτρόπος τῶν κυρίων αὐτοκρατόρων, designations which seems to include not only procurators on imperial estates (*procurator patrimonii Caesaris*) but also normal procurators involved in fiscal administration (*procurator Augusti*). However, these qualifications are often not made. The Ağa Bey Köy inscription, for instance, refers to an equestrian procurator (τὸν κράτιστον ἐπίτροπον),

⁷⁸⁸ Ulpian, *On the Edict* XXXIX.

⁷⁸⁹ On these see Weaver (1972:267-281).

⁷⁹⁰ For a summary of the evidence for procurators see Broughton (1950:652-654).

⁷⁹¹ This is well-summarised by Chapot (1967:374f.).

⁷⁹² For the variety in Latin terminology and these distinctions see Berger (1953:653-655).

⁷⁹³ For details on the procurators in the *familia caesaris* see Weaver (1972: 267-281).

Hauken takes κράτιστον ἐπίτροπον as referring to one of the equestrian procurators/legates (at least two) who were commissioned to Asia during each proconsulate.⁷⁹⁴ However, elsewhere the phrase is used more clearly of equites with the qualification τὸν κράτιστον ἐπίτροπον τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ. The same inscription refers to the estate there as ‘the master’s estate,’ a designation which given the lack of further qualifiers might equally suggest that it the procurator in question was in-fact a private procurator.⁷⁹⁵

With regards to *liberti* or *slave* procurators from the *familia Caesaris* the Sülümenli inscription published by Frend refers to a certain Aurelius Threptos, who given his servile cognomen was possibly an enfranchised member (*libertus*) of the *familia Caesaris*. The same inscription mentions an additional three procurators who reiterate the decision under Aurelius Threptos during later periods, though their status is unclear.⁷⁹⁶

Within the Synnada area, an area with sporadic but extensive quarrying interests, we have evidence for a number of procurators. One such inscription records Aurelius Aristainetos ‘...the most righteous procurator of Phrygia,’ (τὸν δικαιοτάτον τῆς Φρυγίας ἐπίτροπον)⁷⁹⁷ set up an inscription for Aur. Athenaion Akulios, the first archon (πρῶτον ἄρχοντα ἀρχόντων), an inscription which in itself shows the often close ties between civic officials and procurators.

An inscription from Kotiaion records ‘the most honoured procurator of the emperors’ (τοῦ κρατίστου ἐπιτρόπου τῶν Σεβαστῶν), Julius Julianus who was considered ‘...the *hegemon* of the territories of both Phrygia and Caria.’ (τῆς ἡγεμονίας μέγῃ Φρυγίας τε καὶ Καρίας).⁷⁹⁸ Another inscription from Afyon Karahisar records

⁷⁹⁴ Hauken (1998:44).

⁷⁹⁵ Keil & Premerstein (1914) no. 55.

⁷⁹⁶ Frend (1956:46ff.). Translation given in Levick (1985:57-60).

⁷⁹⁷ MAMA IV.63 [Trans. Mine].

⁷⁹⁸ SEG 32.1287 [Trans. Mine].

Hermes and a slave of a procurator of the emperors and a *liberti* named Titus Aelius Alypus.⁷⁹⁹

These procurators were involved not only in the running of imperial estates and quarries (*procurator metallum*), but also within the civic life, as demonstrated by an inscription from Hierapolis which records an imperial procurator for his euergetism which is dedicated by ‘...the most honoured association of the purple dyers.’ (ἡ σεμνοτάτη ἐργασία τῶν πορφυραβάφων).⁸⁰⁰

Elsewhere in the Menander valley around Laodicea-ad-Lycos there was an imperial procurator P. Aelius Ammianos, which demonstrates that within this heartland of early Christians at least some vestiges of imperial rule vied for control of the unruly countryside.⁸⁰¹

Procurators could also function territorially, that is within the areas of former tribal lands, for instance in the inscription of Aelia Maximilla ‘...the most honoured wife of the most honoured procurator of Troknades’ in Phrygia.⁸⁰² Elsewhere we (probably) have the same individual, here named as Aur. Markionos who is described as ‘...the procurator of the Lords Caesars,’ mentioned along with Aur. Demetrios, ‘...the high priest of the Emperors,’ demonstrating again the ways in which such functionaries were also linked to the religious institutions of civic life.⁸⁰³

Another inscription from Apollonia records Aurelius Apollonius ‘...the most honoured procurator of the Emperors’ from the council and people of Apollonia, colonists from Lycia and Thrace.’⁸⁰⁴ This same individual is mentioned elsewhere.⁸⁰⁵ Earlier inscriptions also record procurators of the elders of Asia and others may record private *epitropoi*, for instance T. Flavius Asklepas.⁸⁰⁶ Rural inscriptions from the region of Aizanoi, adjacent to the Upper Tembris valley and the important Aragua estate, records that the ‘...most enlightened city of

⁷⁹⁹ *SEG* 41.1414.[Trans. Mine].

⁸⁰⁰ *IHierapJ* 42.

⁸⁰¹ *CIG* 3939.

⁸⁰² *IGR* 4.546.

⁸⁰³ *MAMA* IV.4.

⁸⁰⁴ *CIG* 3970.

⁸⁰⁵ *MAMA* IV.150.

⁸⁰⁶ *MAMA* IV.334, 113.

Aizanoi,' set up an inscription for Aur. Theonas '...the most honoured procurator of Emperors.'

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What emerges from this fairly sporadic survey is that procuratorial jurisdiction was more ubiquitous in the hinterland of Phrygia than that of the proconsul, a factor which is in itself indicative of the geographical peculiarities of this area as a predominantly rural and agricultural region. While this is by no means a complete gazette of instances of different kinds of procuratorial jurisdiction found in Phrygia it does show that aside from the governor, the procurators as wielding widespread and potentially disturbing powers, as Mitchell wryly notes:

'An official in control of revenue had ample opportunities for corrupt behaviour, and it is not therefore surprising that qualities such as fairness and justice should be an occasion for comment on inscriptions, whether or not they were truly deserved.'⁸⁰⁸

That Christians were subject to such jurisdiction is clear but this could be either a potential menace or a benefit depending on the situation (in that it offered unsurpassed protection from many of the vicissitudes of banditry and other threats to security). In his important, though dated, study of the imperial domains, Pelham makes the potential benefits of life on an Imperial estate clear, and to counterbalance what will be said below about exploitation it is important to recognize these:

'Their exemption from all municipal and some fiscal burdens, the security against violence afforded by the presence of Caesar's imperial 'defensor,' and of the emperor himself, and finally the prestige enjoyed by 'men of the house of Augustus' would all tend to increase their prosperity and their populousness.'⁸⁰⁹

Like under any agrarian system, exploitations and official abuses of these systems took place and it is worth briefly surveying the evidence we have for this in Phrygia and the surrounding regions of Central Anatolia. With regards to the para-policing functions we have already noted that they could be heavy handed, but that they could engage in activities that were downright criminal is attested in a number of inscriptions from rural Anatolia.

⁸⁰⁷ *MAMA IX.17.*

⁸⁰⁸ Mitchell (1993:67).

⁸⁰⁹ Pelham (1890:298).

An important inscription, from Ağa Bey Köy (referred to above), published in English translation by Broughton, dates from the reign of Septimius Severus, which, while later (and subject to the declining conditions post-Marcus Aurelius) gives some sense of what these abuses could entail. It records how soldiers, here likely performing policing duties which would have earlier fallen on civic functionaries (the numbers of whom declined in the third century),⁸¹⁰ engaged in rather brutal repression of tenants.

‘...That some defense for their impudence may seem left them, they arrested nine, put them in bonds, and claimed that they were sending them to your most eminent procurators, since the eminent Aelius Aglaus is performing the duties of the proconsulate too. They exacted from one of the nine more than 1000 Attic drachmae as a ransom for his safety and let him go, but they held the rest in bonds, and we do not know, most divine of emperors, whether they will bring them alive to the most eminent Aglaus or dispose of them too as they did the previous ones. And so we have done the one thing possible for unfortunates thus cruelly deprived of life and kin, and the one thing possible for us; we have informed your procurator in charge of the police, Aurelius Marcianus, and your most eminent curators in Asia.’⁸¹¹

The situation at Ağa Bey Köy, as the rest of the inscription demonstrates, had gotten to such an extreme extent that the peasants had had enough and threatened to move both themselves and the remains of their ancestors off the imperial estate in protest.⁸¹²

Similarly the important inscription from the Aragua estate in the Upper Tembris valley, a region with a sizable Christian population, records similar offences to those at Ağa Bey Köy. Written during the reign of Philip the Arab, the inscription notes how:

‘For although we are living in the middle of a rural area and we are not close to a military encampment, we are suffering tribulations alien to your most happy times. On their travel through the territory of the Appians – leaving the main roads – soldiers, leading men from the town and your *Caesariani* are coming to us when leaving the

⁸¹⁰ Mitchell (1993:228); Gregory (1997:470).

⁸¹¹ *Keil & Von Premerstein* III. No. 55 [Trans. Broughton].

⁸¹² For a discussion of this inscription see de Ste. Croix (1981:216).

main roads, and they drag us away from our work, requisition our ploughing oxen and extort what is not owed to them whatsoever.’⁸¹³

These are certainly not isolated cases, especially during the troubled times of the third century. Another important inscription, this time from the Hermos Valley in Lydia, records how the *kolletiones* had been ‘...assaulting the village with intolerable burdens,’ to such an extent that it ‘...deprived even of the necessities of life.’⁸¹⁴ The examples of such behaviour could be piled up and indeed this far from exhausts the evidence, though it suffices to say as Gregory concludes in his discussion of this, ‘Physical assault, illegal imprisonment, extortion, are all mentioned, though presumably all underrepresented in official documents.’⁸¹⁵

Such abuses by para-policing officials and soldiers, however, were not the only burdens under which the Anatolian peasantry were forced to persevere. Indeed, in addition to these more violent of activities were the perennial issues of tenancy, taxation and the extractions and transport of produce.

Land, Tax and Tenure.

Intertwined with issues of law and order covered above were those of the nature of land production, taxation and tenure. We have briefly covered some of the issues of physical geography, environmental strictures and forms of agriculture in Chapter 2; however, here it is important we discuss the forms of land tenure and taxation which are evidenced in Asia Minor during the imperial period.

As has been noted above Central Anatolia was a land of villages and these were the centre of much of the social and religious life of the Anatolian peasants. However, their working lives were undertaken in the surrounding countryside, either as wage labourers, tenants and imperial *coloni* (γεώργοι).

From the Hellenistic era villages existed under various conditions, either situated in (1) the surrounding χώρα or *territorium* of one of the many (the proverbial five hundred) cities of the Anatolian peninsula; (2) as villages on private land owned by wealthy individuals (many of

⁸¹³ *MAMA* X. 16-22 [Trans. Hauken].

⁸¹⁴ *TAM* V.2.611. Translations taken from Gregory (1997:471).

⁸¹⁵ Gregory (1997:470).

whom would have dwelt in the cities); or (3) on large agricultural estates owned by a temple or the imperial domains.⁸¹⁶

The *χώρα* was the bread-basket of any antique city and the maintenance of its extent and jealous guarding of its produce were a common theme in the often passionate and potentially violent inter-city rivalries of antiquity.⁸¹⁷ The extent of this land could be quite large, for instance, Gregory notes that the *χώρα* of Pisidian Antioch covered a geographic expanse of 540 square miles. Changes in the control over this land and its alienation were frequent and waxed or waned with the loyalties and political fortunes of a city.⁸¹⁸ The *χώρα* was divided into privately owned lands in the vicinity of the city (or in some cases of another city), and that of public land (*γῆ πολιτική*), with the majority being taken up by the former.

The revenues and produce of the public land was the property of the city, but could be leased out to various producers (e.g. miners, fishermen, farmers) for a price. In addition to this the city would have the right to collect taxes and rents in the various villages which were found in their *χώρα*. The collection and form of rents differed considerably and no general rule can be laid down. Most was probably collected in kind, though the rate of these is uncertain. According to Mitchell the situation on rents differed on imperial estates, with ‘...the status of a *colonus* on one of these estates might often have appeared attractive since the tenant presumably paid only a single levy on his harvest, not a tax to the state followed by a rent to the landlord.’⁸¹⁹ While this may have been the case, we need to be aware of the higher rents on imperial properties and the related costs of transportation of dues, a burden which in all probability fell on the renter.

Scholars are often at odds as to whether the situation which is recorded in the North African inscriptions, on which a significant amount has been written, should be applied to the situation in Asia Minor.⁸²⁰ If this is the case (and here I agree with Mitchell and others that we should accept a similarity) then rental on imperial estates could be charged at as much as one third of

⁸¹⁶ On the different types of villages see Mitchell (1993:148f.) and Gregory (1997).

⁸¹⁷ For a brief discussion of such rivalries see Corbier (1991:211-239).

⁸¹⁸ Broughton (1950:903-917); Crawford (1976:35-70).

⁸¹⁹ Mitchell (1993:249).

⁸²⁰ Mitchell (1993:162-164).

annual produce, a significantly higher proportion than that normally extracted by private landowners or the civic *χώρα*.⁸²¹

That said, we do know that exploitation by these could also be considerable and when extractions were taken in kind this could be disastrous. Galen, writing contemporaneously with the rise of Montanism, speaks of the siphoning off of grain by the cities to such an extent that it left the countryside in a state of ‘food crisis,’ Galen’s report being especially interesting as it shows the extent to which a destitute peasantry would go to survive, often eating various inedible plants and suffering the often painful health consequences.⁸²²

The collection of taxes, normally delegated to the city, is a problematic matter but, as Jones notes ‘...the general rule was that the provincial governor with his officials apportioned the taxes between the cities and the cities then appointed collectors who extracted the taxes from their inhabitants and handed them over to the governor,’ however, in qualifying this general rule Jones does add the qualification that ‘...there were many temporary and local exceptions to this rule, and the functions of the city collectors and officials of the governor seem often to overlap.’⁸²³ By this phrase Jones is most likely referring to the often shadowy role played by the various kinds of procurators (outlined above) in the assessment of taxation, both in cities and rural regions.⁸²⁴

The direct collection of taxes in the civic *χώρα*, at least during the second and early third centuries, was largely performed by civic officers probably appointed by the ‘first ten’ or ‘first twenty’ (δεκάπρωτοι, *eiksaprotai*), important members of the civic βουλή, who were expected to be ‘...liable to make good deficits from their own property.’⁸²⁵ Evidence for this office in Asia Minor is sparse, though one is recorded at Laodicia ad Lycum, a certain Nikomachos, who in addition to being one of the δεκάπρωτοι was also σειτώνης that is the civic official in charge of the grain supply as well as ἐπιμελετὴς χωρίον, that is the curator of

⁸²¹ Loc. cit.

⁸²² Galen *CMC* 6.749ff. For a discussion see Corbier (1991:223).

⁸²³ Jones (1971 [1940]: 151f.).

⁸²⁴ On the problems of procuratorial jurisdiction and its often haphazard nature in Asia Minor see Mitchell (1993:67f.).

⁸²⁵ Jones (1971[1940]:151f.). For evidence see Ulp., *dig.* 50.4.3.10f.

the χώρα.⁸²⁶ This is interesting and further demonstrates the overlapping nature of much of the power structure which can be found in the cities of Asia Minor and the various openings for corruption which holding dual offices could afford. Another example of such a dual office holder records a δεκάπρωτος in Thyateira in neighbouring Lydia, who in addition to holding this office was also an εἰρηνάρχος.⁸²⁷ Similarly, also from Thyateira, we hear of a certain Markon who, in addition to being one of the δεκάπρωτοι held the offices of στρατηγός, σειτώνης, ἀγορανόμος (head of the civic market) and γραμματῆς (essentially a civic treasurer), though probably not concurrently.⁸²⁸

Such a situation, of course, could lead to abuses and heavy handedness, though the evidence for this is surprisingly sparse.⁸²⁹ Still in his veritable indictment of Roman economic crimes De Ste. Croix notes :

‘For the peasant, it was the tax collector who was the cause of the greatest dread...tax collection from the poor in Roman times was not a matter of polite letters and, as a last resort, a legal action: beating-up defaulters was a matter of routine, if they were humble people...’⁸³⁰

While some might accuse De Ste. Croix of exaggerating, particularly during times of relative economic abundance, the legal checks on such behaviour in the second century (such as limitations on physical attacks on Roman citizens), were likely of little meaning to the rural village, and as De Ste. Croix continues ‘...the native villager, especially if he was not a Roman citizen (as very few villagers were in the Greek-speaking part of the empire before 212), would have had little chance of escaping any brutal treatment which soldiers or officials cared to inflict upon him.’⁸³¹ The NT depiction of the hated taxman, then, is far from a literary commonplace, and amongst rural dwellers who already had limited rights his presence was likely one of menacing frequency.⁸³²

⁸²⁶ *IK Laodikeia am Lykos* 47.

⁸²⁷ *TAM* V,2 964.

⁸²⁸ *TAM* V,2 991.

⁸²⁹ Jones (1971 [1940]:275). Corbier (1991:220).

⁸³⁰ De Ste. Croix (1981:497f.)

⁸³¹ De Ste. Croix (1981:499).

⁸³² MacMullen (1974:36-8) paints a vivid and convincing picture of the conditions likely endured.

In Asia Minor we have already noted the extraction of poverty inducing amounts of tax was far from unknown in the second century and by the third century,⁸³³ as a corollary of the neglect of civic *decuriones* in performing civic offices conditions likely worsened, as military officials took over the burden (or boon) of collecting taxes in lieu of the earlier officials appointed by the cities.⁸³⁴

Those living in villages on the city *χώρα*, then, were subject to the direct exactions of the agents of landowners who filled the seats of the *βουλή* in the nearby city, a group of far from disinterested public servants if ever there was. However, those who were situated on private land could be significantly worse off.

The evidence for various sized plots of private land in the *χώρα* of cities is extensive and demonstrates no clear cut rules or trends.⁸³⁵ Here the peasants, while technically under the rule of Roman law, were subject to the procurators of their masters (*δεσπόται*), who while not invested with the powers of an imperial procurator had the potential to make life particularly unpleasant for peasants who found themselves unable to pay or in arrears. The use of extra-legal intimidation by such figures is well documented elsewhere in the empire, and at the risk of being cynical we have little reason to doubt that the same applied in central Anatolia.⁸³⁶ In addition to the intimidation by private procurators, additional taxation in such villages was probably also collected by the representative of the *δεκάπρωτοι*.⁸³⁷

The situation on Temple estates is problematic, and we can see this as being potentially threatening for Christians, however, evidence for Christian in such areas where these survived in the second and third centuries is non-existent, and so it is best to move on the issue of imperial estates.⁸³⁸

⁸³³ Mitchell (1993:252).

⁸³⁴ On a discussion of this see Mitchell (1993:253).

⁸³⁵ This is argued clearly by Svencickaja (1977:27-54).

⁸³⁶ MacMullen (1974:11f.).

⁸³⁷ See Corbier (1991:220).

⁸³⁸ It is worth noting here the stark contrast between the temple lands of Aizanitis and the geographically close Tembris valley, with the former containing no evidence for Christianity before the fourth century.

Land and Property.

With regards to production these estates functioned largely like the old seigniorial estates of Italy or other European and Latin American countries, where numerous individuals and villages might exist as share-croppers or agricultural labourers who were tied (either legally as was the case in late antiquity or nominally) to the land in question and who regarded themselves as the emperor's own tenants (e.g. Aragua). While the evidence for Asia Minor is unclear, it seems most likely that many of these tenants had engaged in emphyteutic tenure, that is, perpetual leases on the basis of cultivating unused lands, which had been in effect in some cases for a number of generations (e.g. Aragua). This is implied in the customary language used in these inscriptions, and the analogous situation from the large estates in Roman North Africa.⁸³⁹ For instance, the tenants described in the Ağa Bey Köy inscription above stress the nature that they and their ancestors had farmed these lands for a number of generations.

These estates, compared with the villages falling under the territorial jurisdiction of nearby cities, enjoyed (at least in principal) some degree of protection from the exactions which were placed on their freeholder neighbours, by virtue largely of custom and tradition. However, despite examples where the Emperor moved to protect the interests of his tenants (and by corollary his own interests), this was likely an exception rather than the rule. From what we know of elsewhere in the empire exploitation was common.

It should be noted here that much of the economic exploitation and extortion on these estates was carried out not by the procurators themselves, but rather by the *conductores* or μισθωταί, middle-men who leased large tracts of land from the procurators and sub-let these out to tenants (*coloni*). We have some evidence for the existence of such officials in Phrygia, probably functioning on both private and imperial estates. For instance, in the largely untamed Phrygian highlands, near Nacoleia, we have evidence for a certain Hermogenes, who is described as 'bailiff of the estates of Caesar,' an expression which occurs twice more in the territory surrounding Nacolea.⁸⁴⁰ Elsewhere such figures are simply described as bailiffs with

⁸³⁹ For a detailed discussion of the situation in North Africa see Kehoe (1988).

⁸⁴⁰ *IPhygHigh* 31.

no further qualification, perhaps (though it remains uncertain) indicating that they functioned in this capacity for private landlords.⁸⁴¹

Along with rights to share-crop, annual labour exactions were also expected of the tenants (*coloni*) of these imperial estates. While we have no figures for Asia Minor the extensive inscriptions from North Africa record these as around a third of their yearly produce,⁸⁴² coupled with duties of *corvée* for around six days - divided into two ploughing, two hoeing and two harvesting each year - working imperial land.⁸⁴³ It becomes clear that no universal standard was set from these, and inscriptions from North Africa demonstrate that a chief bone of contention between the procurators and *conductores* on the one hand, and the tenants (*coloni*) on the other was what the tenants described as ‘...increasing the shares of the crops or the provision of work of teams to the detriment of the tenants.’ The North African inscriptions record a level of economic corruption also, with *conductores* currying favour with the procurators by the means of gifts. While governors were recommended to be frugal in their acceptance of gifts, procurators were under no such impulsion and the motivation for self-gain seems to have never been far from such figures’ minds.

Within Asia Minor we have later evidence for similar extractions of labour, notably the Aragua inscription referred to above. This exploitation, however, could also take on other forms, particularly if soldiers were billeted in the area, is clear and as we have seen above this problem was especially exacerbated by the declining economic conditions of the third century.⁸⁴⁴

As in contemporary rural areas much of the population was concentrated in rural villages or hamlets, of which little or no evidence exists of direct interaction with Roman officialdom other than the procurators and their agents (or some patron, as is the case with the Aragua inscription above). The only exceptions to this being the villages which petitioned the Emperor to prevent the abuses of soldiers stationed in the nearby regions on imperial *coloni*.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴¹ *SEG* XLII.1195.

⁸⁴² *FIRA* I.102.

⁸⁴³ *FIRA* I.103.

⁸⁴⁴ Alföldy (1985:159-185)

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The general situation is well summarized by Stephen Mitchell (and largely agreed upon by Broughton)⁸⁴⁶ who writes:

‘The pattern to be observed in these instances may be summarized in the general rule that proconsuls did not address or deal directly with villages, but only through intermediaries such as local religious leaders, powerful private estate owners, or representatives of the cities to which the villages belonged. Conversely, individual villagers or village headmen did not approach proconsuls but relied on higher-status individuals to act on their behalf. This by no means implies that such contacts were legally or procedurally out of order, but may simply illustrate the wide gulf in status that separated the rural and urban inhabitants of Asia. The picture in any case is broadly confirmed by a larger category of evidence, the petitions from rural communities in Lydia and Phrygia, many originating from the inhabitants of imperial estates, which reveal the abusive behaviour of soldiers and officials at the end of the second and during the third century.’⁸⁴⁷

This situation, of course, had its advantages, particularly for Christians in that the urban phenomena of the imperial cult and the annual judicial assize were often distant realities and providing they kept cordial relations with their neighbours in the villages and paid their many exactions there seems to have been no impulse on behalf of procurators or the proconsul to go out of their way to harass them. The famous rescript of Trajan must be born in mind here as showing the relative prudence with which Roman officials maintained in regard to persecuting Christians, they were not to be sought out.⁸⁴⁸ Just as Jews hiding from the Nazis during World War Two often found sympathy and refuge in the countryside, so too it is likely that Christians would have found somewhat analogous conditions in the rural hinterlands of Roman Asia Minor.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁶ Broughton (1950:628) notes:

‘In spite of the real differences due to the diversity of dominant racial stock and the great variety of territorial units, there remained in the basic social structure an institution that provided the substance from which the varied organization of Hellenistic and Roman times could be built – the Anatolian village.’

⁸⁴⁷ Mitchell (1999:36).

⁸⁴⁸ Plin. *Ep.* X.97.

⁸⁴⁹ While from a later period and different geographic context it is interesting to note *M. Sab.* III.4. where the Gothic pagan villagers are sympathetic to the Christian saint Saba and endeavour to hide him.

Conclusion.

When Montanus begun to prophesy in the latter half of the second century the countryside of Central Anatolia where he won most of his adherents, and which later scholars were to call the Montanist 'Holy Land,' was a world of villages and agriculture touched only peripherally by the hierarchical social structures which marked the cultivated cities of the Aegean Coast. Still to argue for the complete absence of Roman institutions or law and order would be inaccurate. The Montanist 'Holy Land' was situated in a fertile agricultural region largely under the auspices of the small cities of the Menander valley and the various imperial estates which made up much of Phrygia. Roman rule was a reality for the peasants who inhabited these regions, though often only in the presence of the taxman or the agents of the procurator, or later in that of under-disciplined military marauders. Their experience, then, was likely different from those who chose martyrdom in the public sphere of the Aegean cities. For while Polycarp was consumed quickly on a pyre amid the jeers of a hostile crowd, the experience of the Anatolian peasant was from the slowly burning embers of Roman greed which more slowly consumed their bodies through torturous toil.

Not sought usually out for persecution, the fate of these peasants was to bear the tyranny of Roman rule less in terms of forced religious uniformity but in the slow and constant exploitation of their labour and livelihood. Like the sharecroppers of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* their religion was a charismatic outpouring of pent up emotion against the inescapable monotony of their desperate and precarious lives, and indeed in this situation it is difficult not to see an example of Marx's dictum of religion as '...the cry of the oppressed creature.'⁸⁵⁰

Thus the suffering of these peasants was not *prima facie* a result of their Christian confession, nor their abandonment of the cult of the gods, instead, it would seem more accurate to see Montanist enthusiasm as a response to the broader factors of geographical, social and economic conditions, than simply persecution as is so often argued. If such a hypothesis is to be maintained, however, it becomes incumbent on us to now look at why such a religious expression should erupt during the age of the Antonines.

⁸⁵⁰ Marx (1972 [1957]:38).

Chapter 4. The Historical Milieu.

4.1. Prolegomena.

Whether a historian likes it or not, the classically practiced discipline of history more often than not conjures up images of emperors and armies, kings and coups, rather than the doldrums of the vast majority of figures, who, to quote E.P. Thompson's monumental study *The Making of the English Working Class*, suffered from the '...enormous condescension of posterity.'⁸⁵¹ History has been, and often continues to be, an occupation with the political and cultural elite, to quote Eric Hobsbawm:

'Now the practical business of ruling-class politics could, for most of history until the latter part of the nineteenth century and in most places, normally be carried on without more than an occasional reference to the mass of the subject population. They could be taken for granted, except in very exceptional circumstances – such as great social revolutions or insurrections.'⁸⁵²

In terms of earlier periods, and particularly the period and region which concern us here, the evidence is largely etched on stone, as Susini's important study *The Roman Stonecutter* notes:

'There is a whole history to be written here, to be put together by means of inscriptions: history of men - of societies and cultures in their various stages - who chose to be remembered for the future through a monument that transmits their names, their features, or both; or the record or symbols of their trades, their public offices and their religious dignities; sometimes with the man's full name and portrait (sometimes even a full-size statue), but sometimes entirely on their own; next a history of the workshops, of the whole epigraphic background; and finally a history of what men thought and felt when they ensured their survival into future society, in a world to which survival was so important.'⁸⁵³

While significant parts of this study are dedicated to unraveling the opposite side of the historical coin, the world of a marginal religious movement in a provincial region, one must

⁸⁵¹ Thompson (1991 [1963]:12).

⁸⁵² Hobsbawm (1997 [1988]:267).

⁸⁵³ Susini (1973:62).

shift focus from the microscopic and local view to the macroscopic view of things in order to see some of the broader societal factors were shaping the Roman Empire of Montanus' day. Like the geographic and social factors discussed elsewhere in this work, this section serves to provide the stage, the props and the distant referential points which linked Montanus and his early followers with their contemporaries. The shared social world of the Roman Empire, however it was understood, imbibed or ignored by a cast of historical players.

This immediately places the scholar in a historical quandary, as Montanus' prophetic mission began c. 165 CE, against the backdrop of the reign of one of antiquity's most enigmatic and admired characters, the oft-called 'Philosopher-Emperor,' Marcus Aurelius, the last of the 'good emperors' of the second century and on whom David Magie commented '...[He was] the most righteous of all who had wielded the imperial power and undeserving of the many calamities which Fate allotted him...' ⁸⁵⁴ While it would be superfluous to repeat the long running debates over the dating of the origin of Montanism here, sufficing to say that as a movement, whatever the date given, it belongs squarely within the so-called 'Age of the Antonines.' ⁸⁵⁵

The so-called 'Age of the Antonines' has been exhaustively described by historians, from antiquity to the present, ⁸⁵⁶ but the general attitude which pervades these descriptions (even those that do not totally condone this view) was summarized in chapter 3 of Edward Gibbon's monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in which he wrote:

'If a man were called to fix the period in history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of civil administration preserved by Nerva, Trajan,

⁸⁵⁴ Magie (1950:667).

⁸⁵⁵ On the problems of dating see the summaries in Tabbernee (2007) and Trevett (1996:26f.). On earlier works see Schaff (1914 [1889]: 418 n. 1).

⁸⁵⁶ E.g. Birley (1966). Oliver (1970).

Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honor of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.’⁸⁵⁷

Lofty words indeed, but do they stand up to scrutiny? Not least for those who found themselves outside the well-patronized literary circles of Aelius Aristides, when he proclaimed that ‘Wars have so far vanished as to be legendary affairs of the past,’⁸⁵⁸ and:

‘A man simply travels from one country to another as though it were his native land. We are no longer frightened by the Cilician pass or by the narrow sandy tracks that lead from Arabia to Egypt. We are not dismayed by the height of mountains, or by the vast breadth of rivers or by inhospitable tribes of barbarians. To be a Roman citizen, nay even one of your subjects is a sufficient guarantee of personal safety.’⁸⁵⁹

Similar scenes of prosperity can be found with specific reference to Phrygia where Dio Chrysostom proclaims of the city of Apameia in the heart of Phrygia, ‘.

However, tempering the enthusiasm of Gibbon and these detached aristocrats, a darker, more melancholy view of life had begun to emerge and amid material prosperity, a vision begins to emerge through the lens of the historians’ kaleidoscope. E.R. Dodds labelled this period the beginning of what he called, following the poet W.H. Auden, an ‘age of anxiety,’ characterized by what he saw as ‘...the period when material decline was steepest and the ferment of new religious feelings most intense.’⁸⁶⁰ Whether one agrees with the particular psychology bent of Dodds is immaterial to the fact that even in an era acclaimed for its prosperity all that glitters is not gold.⁸⁶¹ Under the veneer of imperial splendour painted by Aelius Aristides’ orations, was the darker, perhaps unconscious, world of his *Sacred Tales*, a dream diary of poignant insight into the personal religion of at least one contemporary of Montanus.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁷ Gibbon (1972 [1855]:1).

⁸⁵⁸ Aelius Aristides, *Oratio* XXVI.70 [Trans. Keil].

⁸⁵⁹ Aelius Aristides, *Oratio* XXVI. 100 [Trans. Keil].

⁸⁶⁰ Dodds (1965:3).

⁸⁶¹ For a critique of Dodds see Brown (1968:542-558).

⁸⁶² On Aelius Aristides’ religion see Dodds (1965:39-45). Festugière (1960:85-104).

Underneath the shiny surface of Antonine splendor events were taking place over which even the most farsighted of rulers could hold no sway, neither then or now. The unpredictable yet devastating menaces of epidemic and natural disaster, an ever present threat to the subsistence peasant and urban dweller alike, emerged in Asia Minor and across the empire, and as the people sought existential answers to their plight figures like the Christian bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, the 'destroyer of our gods' who often bore the brunt.⁸⁶³

In Asia Minor, the civic prosperity praised to the skies by the panegyrists, appeared in a much more somber and fearful guise to the members of the fledgling cult of Christ. To its perhaps more thoughtful members, this age of civic prosperity afforded the chance of intellectual engagement,⁸⁶⁴ but to a writer in Phrygia like Papias of Hierapolis, the millennial reign seemed to be encroaching, manifesting itself in all manner of signs and portents. As early as the reign of Hadrian, Papias proclaimed:

'The days will come in which vines having ten thousand branches will grow. In each branch, there will be ten thousand twigs, and in each shoot there will be ten thousand clusters. Each cluster will have ten thousand grapes, and every grape will give twenty-five metretres of wine, when pressed...'⁸⁶⁵

Before such a time of promise could be entered upon by the Christians, a time of trial must inevitably come, and what was about to become a paradigmatic feature of Christianity in times of disasters, groups of believers sought comfort in such apocalyptic visions of renewal and prosperity as the world around them seemed to be collapsing. Before feast came famine, and before the millennium the tribulations like those described in Matthew 24:21. The echoing hoofs of the four horsemen of the Johannine Apocalypse were pounding in the ears of many a Christian, as both rumors and the realities of pestilence, earthquakes, and persecution, became manifest. Celsus, a staunch critic of the Christian menace lamented their ever present doomsday prophets and naysayers.⁸⁶⁶ On this note one can well believe the statement of the

⁸⁶³ *M. Polyc.* XII.

⁸⁶⁴ It is important that we remember that as well as the reaction that is Montanism, this was the age of the apologists. See Grant (1988:10f.).

⁸⁶⁵ Papias, *fr.* IV. [Trans. Roberts-Donaldson].

⁸⁶⁶ Origen, *Cels.* VII.8-9, 11.

Anonymous anti-Montanist polemicist when he claimed Maximilla ‘...prophesied wars and anarchy,’ and begin to understand the eschatological milieu from which such claims came.⁸⁶⁷

For the church, to quote but one scholar’s view of situation, the period spanning the reigns of the Antonine emperors, has been seen as both a ‘false dawn,’ and ‘years of crisis,’ which saw the transition from the seeming respectability and quasi-toleration of the period from Hadrian to Antoninus Pius to a situation where the Church has frequently been seen by historians as falling, along with the empire under the latter years of Marcus Aurelius, into a period of darkness and decline, of chaos and paranoia.⁸⁶⁸ Philip Schaff, the great German-American church historian, is quite representative in defining the reign of Marcus Aurelius as a period that ‘...gave rise to bloody persecutions, in which government and people united against the enemies of the gods and the supposed authors of these misfortunes.’⁸⁶⁹

The ‘misfortunes’ of which Schaff speaks, along with many a secular historian, were the initial signs of Gibbon’s decline and fall, the harbingers of the impending ‘third century crisis’ so often discussed and debated by historians.⁸⁷⁰ War, famine, pestilence and natural disaster were the order of the day, and with these came the inevitable questioning from the people of why? Many answers could be found for this, though two became particularly important.

For the Christians, as indicated above, these events were not just evidence from which to debate the historical causality of the chaos which marked much of the third century, but the existential realities of the times. The ‘Great Tribulation’ had arrived,⁸⁷¹ and at least for some the threats and promises sealed in the book of Revelation were becoming frighteningly manifest. Writing shortly after this period in a commentary on Daniel, the Anti-Pope Hippolytus characterized these feelings well:

‘At that time, there will be great trouble, such as has not been from the beginning of the world. For men will be sent through every city and country to destroy the faithful – some in one direction, and others in another. And the saints will travel from the west

⁸⁶⁷ Eusebius, *HE* V.16.18. [Trans. Grant].

⁸⁶⁸ Frend (1965:268-302).

⁸⁶⁹ Schaff (1996 [1858]: 55).

⁸⁷⁰ On the important religious outcomes of the ‘third-century crisis’ see Brown’s (1968:542-558) fascinating review of Dodds and Frend.

⁸⁷¹ On the theme of the ‘Great Tribulation’ see Herm. *vis.* IV. Also Bauckham (1974:27-40).

to the east and will be driven in persecution from the east to the south. But other saints will conceal themselves in the mountains and caves. And the abomination will war against them everywhere. By his decree, he will cut the saints off by sea and by land. By all available means, he will attempt to destroy them out of the world. And no one will be able any longer to sell his own property or to buy from strangers – unless he keeps and carries with him the name of the beast, or bears its mark upon his forehead.’⁸⁷²

For the ‘pagans’ the interpretation of these events was not necessarily eschatological but imminent, these were not as with many of the Christians the birth-pangs of the millennial reign, but the immediate results of theodicy, of angry gods and their awful wrath. Marcus Aurelius, for instance, amid the chaos of these events: ‘...summoned priests from all sides, performed foreign religious ceremonies, and purified the city in every way, and he was delayed thereby from setting out to the seat of war. The Roman ceremony of the feast of the gods was celebrated for seven days.’⁸⁷³ Of course it should be noted here that it is likely here that this was a local action, rather than an imperial wide decree or *supplicatio* as indicated in the spurious and problematic text of the *Vita Abercii*.⁸⁷⁴

Both reactions contribute to, and complicate, how we approach Montanist origins, for it is all too easy in what appears to be a protracted period of social distress, like those described in detail by Michael Barkun,⁸⁷⁵ to telescope events into an argument that the conditions were ripe for a classic millenarian movement.⁸⁷⁶ Millennialism, both inside and outside the Montanist milieu, was alive and well in the Christianity of this period, and it would be foolhardy not to note that Montanism checks most of the typological boxes.⁸⁷⁷ However, we ought to be extremely cautious in the way we approach the contributing factors, for the historical outcomes of such disasters are not foregone conclusions, nor indeed do chronological factors simply facilitate the composite and haphazard position often argued by scholars. What follows

⁸⁷² Hipp. *Dan.* XX [Trans. ANF].

⁸⁷³ *SHA* XIII.2-3.

⁸⁷⁴ Barnes (1968:39).

⁸⁷⁵ Barkun (1974).

⁸⁷⁶ This is the case in Williams’ (1989) important article. While I agree with that a number of these disastrous events contributed to the growth of Montanism, we cannot simply list events without careful attention to chronology and a discussion of the ways in which they influenced Montanist origins.

⁸⁷⁷ The number of scholars arguing for this are manifold. However, most of them owe their inspiration to Cohn’s 1956 classic *The Pursuit of the Millenium*.

will flow largely chronologically, listing and discussing some of the secular events which have been interpreted as having a direct or indirect causal link with the emergence of Montanism and their impact on the region of the Anatolian Mid-West.

4. 2 The 'Misfortunes' of the later Antonine Age.

The reign of Marcus Aurelius, as aforementioned, has been seen as a time of grave misfortune and ill-tidings for the Roman Empire as a whole and it was perhaps inevitable, as pointed out clearly by Grégoire that the persecution of Christians '...était en rapport direct avec la situation dès lors malheureuse de l'Empire.'⁸⁷⁸ This said, owing to the uncertainty with regard to dating the outbreak of Montanism, it is best that we begin with events in the province of Asia, during the reign of Antoninus Pius in order to give a chronological sketch of the dire events which transpired at this time.

The long reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE) was overall one of the quietest and most successful reigns in Roman history, not least for the provincials of Asia. This opinion has been held to such an extent that the great Russian émigré historian Michael Rostovtzeff could note that the provinces of Asia Minor during this time were '...rich and prosperous lands.'⁸⁷⁹ Such a positive outlook is repeated in highly rhetorical words by Keil in his discussion in the *Cambridge Ancient History* and while such a situation is never universal, there is probably a great deal of truth that administratively and militarily Antoninus Pius' reign was both quiet and prosperous.⁸⁸⁰ This said, it was obviously not without its isolated incidents, most notably a number of earthquakes which struck western Asia Minor.

While most scholars would treat the so-called rescript of Antoninus Pius in Eusebius as at the very least the result of considerable redaction along the lines of Christian sympathy it does tell us something of the dynamics of persecutions during this period.⁸⁸¹ The emperors, even in times of peace, had better things to do with their time and the prosecution of Christianity was

⁸⁷⁸ Grégoire (1951:30) the quote continues reading:

'La fin du règne de Marc-Aurèle, on le sait, est une période de catastrophes, de graves dangers militaire, d'invasions barbares qui firent presager dès lors le crépuscule de Rome et qui annoncent en tout cas la grande crise du milieu du III^e siècle, époque à laquelle, nous allons le voir, la masse instinctivement cherchait pour le frapper, l'ennemi intérieur.'

⁸⁷⁹ Rostovtzeff (1979 [1926]: 255).

⁸⁸⁰ Keil (1936:86) reads:

'The economic advance was reflected in every branch of life. Physical culture enjoyed increased expenditure on gymnasiums and baths. Education became a course of study culminating in instruction by a sophist as recreator of the Greek spiritual ideas.'

Keil's statement on how fantastic things were runs on for a number of pages.

⁸⁸¹ Euseb, *h.e.* IV.13. For a discussion of this see Sordi (1986: 69 n. 23). While Harnack attempted to argue for its authenticity Grégoire remained unconvinced but admitted the complexity of the question (1951:139). Barnes (1968:38) gives the most convincing view of the partial authenticity of this rescript.

left largely under the auspices of provincial governorship and the whims of the crowd.⁸⁸² Anti-Christian legislation or precedent (if we may speak of Trajan's rescript as such) did not change considerably over the period from Trajan to Commodus (*contra Sordi*),⁸⁸³ though due to the dearth of evidence in Roman jurists the whole question must remain problematic.⁸⁸⁴

For instance, that, as Barnes notes, the so-called 'new decrees' mentioned by Melito of Sardis concerning persecution in Asia Minor may have been not imperial edicts but rather that '...the innovation might be that the proconsul, in the edict normally issued by any governor on entering his province, has for the first time explicitly included Christianity among the offences of which he proposes to take cognizance,'⁸⁸⁵ is certainly possible, and the intentions of the incoming North African governor addressed by Tertullian's *Ad Scapulam* do add some weight to this, but for the most part we must remain silent with the positive evidence.⁸⁸⁶

As de Ste. Croix pointed out in his far-sighted and still unsurpassed study of early Christian persecution, the treatment of Christians is not a question which should be approached from the top-down but rather from the ground up, localized factors exacerbated or abated the impulse to persecution and it is to these we must look, particularly in the second century.⁸⁸⁷ This said, returning to our problematic rescript of Antoninus Pius, we have an example of exactly the kind of local event which we would expect to exacerbate the situation, as Eusebius records:

⁸⁸² This has long been recognized outside English language scholarship, for instance, Moreau (1956:73) could write:

'On aurait tort de vouloir lier trop étroitement le problème des persécutions à son seul aspect juridique. Les éléments passionnels, psychologiques et politiques ont toujours été déterminants.'

⁸⁸³ Sordi (1983:68-70).

⁸⁸⁴ For a discussion of this see Barnes (1968:39f.).

⁸⁸⁵ Mel. *fr.* II reads:

'For the race of the pious is now persecuted in a way contrary to all precedent, being harassed by a new kind of edicts everywhere in Asia. For unblushing informers, and such as are greedy of other men's goods, taking occasion from the orders issued, carry on their robbery without any disguise, plundering of their property night and day those who are guilty of no wrong.' [Trans. Roberts-Donaldson].

On this Barnes (1968:39).

⁸⁸⁶ Tert. *ad Scapulam* I.

⁸⁸⁷ De Ste. Croix (1956). Unfortunately many scholars still approach persecution from a top-down approach e.g. Jones (1980:1023-1054).

‘And in regard to the earthquakes which have been and are still taking place, it is not improper to admonish you who lose heart whenever they occur, and nevertheless are accustomed to compare your conduct with theirs.’⁸⁸⁸

Such a statement, if taken as containing at least a kernel of reliability, is well-fitted with the famous words of Tertullian regarding the cry of the masses:

‘...they [i.e. the people] think the Christians the cause of every public disaster, of every affliction with which the people are visited. If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is a famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is, “Away with the Christians to the lion!”’⁸⁸⁹

Excusing his penchant for rhetorical flair there is good reason to believe here that Tertullian is not over-exaggerating and that the words of the so-called rescript above indicate such public reactions occasioned by the earthquakes which occurred in Asia Minor during the reign of Antoninus Pius.⁸⁹⁰

These earthquakes, which effected important cities like Smyrna and Ephesus occurred most likely around 160/161 C.E. a time very close to the outbreak of Montanism.⁸⁹¹ This said, the fact that the rescript describes the earthquakes as those ‘which have been and are still taking place,’ means that there is certainly a strong likelihood that seismic activity continued sporadically as it previously had in the history of Asia Minor,⁸⁹² and as recent events in developed countries like New Zealand and Japan have shown, the impact would likely have been catastrophic, particularly for urban dwellers, though subsequently for those on whom they relied for their economic wellbeing.⁸⁹³ One need, of course, not look far in the world of early Christian imagery or worldview to understand how a Christians might react to such things, for the developing canon contained various references to such events as among the

⁸⁸⁸ Euseb. *h.e.* IV.13.[Trans. Williamson].

⁸⁸⁹ Tert, *Apol.* [Trans. ANF].

⁸⁹⁰ On this phenomena in later periods see Dodds (1965:114f.).

⁸⁹¹ For dating of this earthquake and an important gazette of sources see Guidoboni et al. (1994:236f.).

⁸⁹² See Guidoboni et al. (1994:235ff.) for the frequency of seismic activity in the Anatolian peninsula in the first ten centuries of the Common Era.

⁸⁹³ See above pp. 166-169.

signs of the impending last days (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12, 8:5, 11:13, 19, 16:18), not to mention those references found in so-called ‘apocryphal writings.’⁸⁹⁴

That such seismic activity would have elicited similar reactions from pagans seems clear, and as Guidoboni has pointed out in discussing this period ‘...Earthquakes seem, at any rate, to belong to that group of disturbing phenomena which led to what has been described as the late antique “age of anxiety.” They thus became a threat to public order, and had to be confronted with the increasingly solemn image of imperial power.’⁸⁹⁵

If earthquakes were to be seen as portents of divine displeasure, requiring both restitution with the gods and substantial economic measures on the part of the emperor and citizens,⁸⁹⁶ the same may equally be said of famine and pestilence, those other two galloping apocalyptic horsemen of Revelation.

The late fourth century author of the notoriously salacious *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* also mentions famine as a disturbing factors during the reign of the Marcus Aurelius, which in turn has naturally featured in lists of the ‘woes and tribulations’ compiled by historians to account for the rise of Montanism and various other secular occurrences, again we can simply refer to the developing canon, that treasure trove of cursed jewels (Mark 13:8) in order to give some idea of the potential for an eschatological interpretation.⁸⁹⁷

That famines, or as Peter Garnsey more accurately calls them ‘food-crises’ were a common occurrence in the Roman period is clear, and the risk both to urban and rural inhabitants of the empire was potentially catastrophic. The causes of such crises, at least in the immediate sense, were manifold, ranging from:

‘...Natural causes include insufficient or excessive rainfall, unseasonable cold or heat, damage to or destruction of the crop by pests, disease that hits farmers, thus impeding production, and storms at sea that hinder the import of staple foods. Man-made

⁸⁹⁴ Frend (1960:269) makes the solid observation that:

‘In town and countryside the aid of Aesculapius and the cleansing river deities was being besought by pagans, while in contrast, some Christians would be accepting the situation as an apocalyptic sign.’

⁸⁹⁵ Guidoboni et al. (1994:50). For a discussion of ways in which the ancients gave religious interpretations to seismic phenomena see Id. (1994:47-54).

⁸⁹⁶ On imperial responses to these earthquakes see Mitchell (1987:352).

⁸⁹⁷ *SHA Vit. Mar.* VIII, XI.

causes include warfare, piracy, speculation and corrupt or inefficient administration.’⁸⁹⁸

While we cannot be geographically specific about the reference in the *SHA* referred to above, that the Antonine plague, discussed below, could have contributed to a manpower shortage resulting in a food-crisis is possible, and some evidence does exist for the fixing of grain prices (a common response to food shortages and the fear of hoarding and price gouging) in Asia Minor during this period.⁸⁹⁹ Moreover, scholars have collected a substantial amount of material relating to a number of ‘food-crises’ which struck Asia Minor during the first and second centuries, one hitting in 162 C.E. only a few years before the onset of the Antonine plague and on the tail of the earthquakes in 160/161 C.E.⁹⁰⁰

We have already cited Galen’s estimation of some of the results of such a crisis on purely health grounds.⁹⁰¹ That such a famine would result in a heightened atmosphere of religious and social tension seems clear,⁹⁰² though Garnsey has observed things are not so clear cut:

‘Assessing religious responses to food crises (or the risk of food crisis) is a delicate operation. Consultation of oracles, seers and sacred books, religious innovation (including the introduction of new gods and cults), public ceremonies of purification or prayer, scapegoat rituals - these are signs that a community was experiencing something more serious than a mild shortage...It is difficult to go beyond this, without forcing the evidence, making naive assumptions about patterns of religious response in communities of similar religious culture, or indulging in shaky cross-cultural comparisons.’⁹⁰³

This said, the important (though vague) passage from the *SHA* recorded above does suggest that famine (among wars and pestilence) was a contributory factor to what Frend called Marcus Aurelius’ proverbial sacrifices.⁹⁰⁴ Moreover, a number of inscriptions survive (see

⁸⁹⁸ Garnsey (1988:20).

⁸⁹⁹ Jones (1940:217f.).

⁹⁰⁰ Rostovtzeff (1979 [1926]:598-601 n. 9).

⁹⁰¹ See above n. 717.

⁹⁰² See above pp. 139-148.

⁹⁰³ Garnsey (1988:22).

⁹⁰⁴ Frend (1965:269).

below) from common people and imperial officials beseeching the healing of Aesculapius and other deities amid the contemporary turmoil.⁹⁰⁵

What can be said with some caution, then, is that the great cities of Asia, themselves the normal theatre of persecution, were certainly the first to be effected by such events. However, it would be stretching the evidence too far to claim that the entire province, particularly the countryside, was beset by the kind of chaos which would result in phenomena such as widespread food rioting or fanatical scapegoating. While evidence for such reactionary behavior is sparse for the cities (see below) and almost non-existent for the countryside what can be argued is that the eventual economic impact was no doubt significantly higher in the countryside, where imperial aid and tax relief was less likely to spread. Indeed it is highly likely that the building programs occasioned by the earthquakes described above would have required excess funds, not only from the imperial purse, but likely also from the more intensive exploitation of the rural *χώρα*.⁹⁰⁶

The situation, then, affected different portions of the population in different ways and it is salient given the specific demographics of Montanism to briefly address this. The special situation of the urban milieu, with its concentration of population, its panopticon-like spatial restraints on behavior and its concentration of what Stark and others have called a 'critical mass of deviancy' meant that when something did go wrong, its impact was most intensely felt and scapegoats were much more readily available.⁹⁰⁷ This is an important point to make, as we must remember that evidence suggests that Montanism was a movement which predominated in the countryside, rather than in the city, and these factors bring into question the relative importance of persecution as a precipitating factor in the Montanist reaction. Similarly, if the impact of earthquakes and famines was severe then it was likely to have been stronger in a civic milieu, the same most definitely goes for that of plague, the third important event which marks this period.

⁹⁰⁵ Frend (1965: 269 nn. 11f.).

⁹⁰⁶ On the ways in which tax exemptions did not always apply de facto in the *χώρα* see Corbier (1991:225).

⁹⁰⁷ Stark (1993:147-162).

The Antonine plague as an event has undergone something of a literary adventure since its meager recording in the sources of second century.⁹⁰⁸ Alternatively blamed as a harbinger of the collapse in the third century or as a relatively mild outbreak of smallpox, scholars have constructed all manner of theories relating to its impact.⁹⁰⁹ Many of these theories, if not all, however, are wanting with regard to evidence and are often retrospectively applied from demographic and/or historical data about similar disease outbreaks in better documented periods. The general rule of thumb being, what holds true for the medieval 'Black Death' of c. 1381 should be equally applicable to the less documented (and potentially much less virulent) Antonine plague.⁹¹⁰

The primary sources with which we have to work for this event are extremely meager though what they can tell us is certainly suggestive. A short description given by Galen, himself a physician often chastised for his negligence of care during this time describes various symptoms such as coughing of blood, large pustules, fever.⁹¹¹ This gives us some indication of the symptoms with which this disease manifested itself, though despite various attempts of comparative historical epidemiology we can only make an educated guess as to the microbial culprit (most scholars suggest smallpox).⁹¹²

More interesting are the references to the local impact of the epidemic in Asia Minor given in Aelius Aristides who refers to the plague on at least three separate occasions all normally dated to around 165 C.E. The first of these references is vague, with Aristides' noting to his audience that he had spoken to them before '...when the plague was raging and the god [i.e. Aesculapius] ordered me to come forward.'⁹¹³ The second reference is considerably more detailed:

'A plague infected nearly all my neighbours. First two or three of my servants grew sick, then one after another. Then all were in bed, both the younger and the older. I was last to be attacked. Doctors came from the city and who cared for me and acted

⁹⁰⁸ For the most complete summary of recent scholarship see Bruun (2007:201-218).

⁹⁰⁹ Gilliam (1961:225-251); Littman & Littman (1974:243-255);

⁹¹⁰ For three important studies of the Black Death see Ziegler (1969); Gottfried (1983) and the essay collection edited by Bowsky (1971).

⁹¹¹ For a collection of texts in Galen see Littman & Littman (1974:245f.).

⁹¹² For a brief summary of views see Bray (1996:13-16).

⁹¹³ Aelius Aristides, *Or.* XXXII.6.

as servants. The livestock too became sick. And if anyone tried to move, he immediately lay dead before the front door.’⁹¹⁴

This reference is important as it demonstrates, though perhaps filtered through the devotional hyperbole of Aristides’ unwavering faith in Aesculapius, that the impact cut across the urban-rural divide and that whatever the disease was it also affected livestock, something which could be disastrous in an agricultural peasant society. The final reference of Aristides refers to the plague as ‘the great plague,’ and narrates the vision of one of his nephews, Hermias, who had died during this epidemic.⁹¹⁵

Therefore, in regards to its impact on rural Asia Minor we are slightly, though not much, better off with regards to data than elsewhere in the Empire (Egypt notwithstanding). Not least from the fascinating empire-wide demographic study of Duncan-Jones.⁹¹⁶ Explicit epigraphic evidence is rare, though at least one inscription from Hierapolis, in the Montanist heartland of central Asia Minor, reveals the fate of a Spartan soldier, probably freshly returned from Lucius Verus’ eastern campaign dying from what the dedicant vaguely describes as νόυσοϲ.⁹¹⁷

While it is most likely that Lucius Verus’ returning army followed the northern traffic route through Bithynia, that this allowed the disease to spread through important ancillary traffic routes into Phrygia and Lydia such as Hierapolis is clear from this inscription which helps to explain the presence of a number of other inscriptions in Hierapolis.⁹¹⁸

More interesting for our immediate concerns regarding the religious impact, however, are a number of funerary and votive inscriptions from Phrygia and Lydia.⁹¹⁹ Those of Hierapolis, beseech Apollos Lairbenos, to end what is seen as a divinely sent affliction, who according to an oracle responded with such words as:

‘But you are not alone in being injured by the destructive miseries of a deadly plague, but many are the cities and peoples which are grieved at the wrathful displeasures of

⁹¹⁴ Aelius Aristides, *Or.* XLVIII.38-39.

⁹¹⁵ Aelius Aristides, *Or.* L.9.

⁹¹⁶ Duncan-Jones (1996:108-136).

⁹¹⁷ *IG.* V.1.816

⁹¹⁸ Magie (1950:662).

⁹¹⁹ On a discussion of these oracles and translations see Parke (1985:150-157).

the gods. The painful anger of the deities I bid you avoid by libations and feasts and fully accomplished sacrifices.’⁹²⁰

Similarly an inscription from Lydia records the votive of a certain Flaccus who ‘...gave thanks to the gods for his flight from the vexatious plague together with his friends and relatives.’⁹²¹ Graphs assembled by both Broux and Clarysse and by MacMullen both show a near doubling of funerary inscriptions in frequency between the years of 165-169 CE, the exact years where we would expect a spike in mortality rates before the pool of potential victims slimmed.⁹²² The recording in a Lydian context is especially interesting in light of the strong presence in this region of the so-called ‘cults of divine justice,’ where a direct causal link exists between misfortune of either individuals or groups and some ritual impurity, sacrilegious action or neglect. In such a region it is not difficult to draw the tentative conclusion that a particularly recalcitrant group like the Christians would be seen as invoking the harsh theodicy of the sceptered gods of the Lydian hinterland, though this is by no means a foregone conclusion.⁹²³

In terms of literary evidence we know that around this time the plague hit nearby Abonouteichos north of Phrygia in Pontus, and that Alexander, the ‘false-prophet’ to whom we will return later, according to Lucian took advantage of this situation to fill his coffers (even though his attempts failed).⁹²⁴ As Lucian writes:

‘Sacred envoys were sent all over the Roman Empire, warning the various cities to be on their guard against pestilence and conflagrations, with the prophet’s offer of security against them.’⁹²⁵

As we can see then, the religious responses to this event were varied.

Most recently, in an intriguing and suggestive article, Polish scholars Wypustek and Donkow have pushed such suggestions further, arguing that with the rise in mortality from the epidemic

⁹²⁰ Parke (1985:153f.).

⁹²¹ *TAM* VI.761.

⁹²² Broux & Clarysse (2009:28); MacMullen (1986:237-238). On the normal course of an epidemic and some of its social ramifications in a macro-historical perspective see the extremely thought-provoking work of McNeill (1998).

⁹²³ Arnold (2005:429-49). Chaniotis (2004:1-43). Schnabel (2003:160-188).

⁹²⁴ Lucian, *Alex.* XXXVI.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

came a rise in concern over maleficent magic and accusations of sorcery.⁹²⁶ When combined with Wypustek's earlier work on the strong phenomenological similarities between contemporary magical practices and those attributed to the Montanists this opens the door for suggesting that if concerns were particularly high during this period with regard to magical crimes, Montanists, with their phenomenologically similar practices, would have been particularly targeted, certainly a tempting, if ultimately unverifiable thesis.⁹²⁷

More interestingly, Wypustek and Donkow's argument raises important questions over how the active behaviors of the Christian communities, misconstrued as some form of maleficent magic, as they often were in the pre-Constantinian era,⁹²⁸ could provide an additional explanation for contemporary pagan hostility, quite aside from the passive Christian absence from pagan ritual observances.⁹²⁹

Returning, however, to the primary evidence Duncan-Jones' argues that a considerable drop can be seen in epigraphic activity during this period, particularly in the marble-rich areas surrounding Docimium and in the Upper Tembris valley. For instances, Jones shows that marble production during this period is completely absent between 166-173 C.E. , while this is an interesting find, it relies on a rather restricted body of data, and is ultimately an argument from silence.⁹³⁰

Few scholars today would follow Boak's conclusions that the Antonine Plague was a major contributor to the manpower shortage which he sees as occasioning the so-called 'third century crisis.'⁹³¹ Though, as Stark has interestingly argued (following an earlier suggestion by Dodds), it may have actually been a contributing factor to the growth of Christianity during this period, provided, however, that we take a perhaps too idealized view of Christian pastoral care during this period.⁹³² Similarly, if we allow ourselves to work via the analogous hypothesizes similar to those engaged in with regard to epidemiology (i.e. comparison with later epidemics)

⁹²⁶ For evidence of such a response see Graf (1992:267-279).

⁹²⁷ Wypustek & Donkow (2006:123-132). Wypustek (1997:276-297). It should be noted here, however, that Wypustek does not (at least in the later article) push this conclusion and is careful not to over interpret the evidence.

⁹²⁸ On a brief yet provocative treatment of this complex topic see Morton Smith (1978:1-8). Also important is Aune (1980:1507-1557).

⁹²⁹ Wypustek & Donkow (2006:123-132).

⁹³⁰ Duncan-Jones (1996:129f.).

⁹³¹ Boak (1955:19, 26, 113 esp. 26).

⁹³² Stark (1997:73-93). Following Dodds (1965:133-138).

it may even be suggested that the seemingly peaceful and relatively prosperous conditions of the Upper Tembris valley Christians of the third century is certainly comparable to similar improved conditions in rural regions in the fifteenth century, the manpower losses actually working to improve the lot of those who survived following something of a Malthusian model.

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While the demographic impact may have been more limited, or indeed ultimately beneficial to Christians, the initial religious response from both Christians and pagans, combined with the economic fall-out from the combined effects of the plague, earthquakes and famines, would likely have been more extreme. Here the general lessons of responses to the Black Death are helpfully illustrative with regard to religious responses to epidemic disease, as Gottfried writes ‘...explanations of its causation were usually taken from Biblical exegesis, and high mortality was attributed to divine judgement.’⁹³⁴ Such a situation would almost inevitably lead to a level of apocalyptic fervor and while we must be cautious here in drawing too strong a comparison the rise of the enthusiastic, visionary and penitential Flagellants in fourteenth century Germany (in particular) this group do reveal an ‘...insight into the mind of medieval man when confronted with overwhelming and inexplicable catastrophe,’ which could be applied with some legitimacy to the Montanist milieu.⁹³⁵

Similarly the situation in Black Death can again become a useful heuristic key when we look at the response with regard to scapegoating minorities, as Ziegler writes concerning the impact of the Black Death on Jews:

‘When ignorant men are overwhelmed by forces totally beyond their control and their understanding it is inevitable that they will search for some explanation within their grasp. When they are frightened or badly hurt they will seek someone on whom they can be revenged. Few doubted that the Black Death was God’s will but, by a curious quirk of reasoning, medieval man also concluded that His instruments were to be found on earth and that, if only they could be identified, it was legitimate to destroy them. What was needed, therefore, was a suitable target for the indignation of the

⁹³³ Ladurie (1974:8-97).

⁹³⁴ Gottfried (1983:12).

⁹³⁵ Ziegler (1969:88).

people, preferably a minority group, easily identifiable, already unpopular, widely scattered and lacking any powerful protector.⁹³⁶

We need only replace the terms 'Black Death' and 'God's instruments' with appropriate second century terms in order to understand something of the religious mentality which confronted the unpopular Christians. We need only look at the inscription cited above and the observations made by Wypustek and Donkow to see that such a situation was to have a profound and dangerous mark on the collective unconscious of the age.⁹³⁷ In this sense there is a great deal of truth in Dodds' characterization of an 'Age of Anxiety.'

What this above survey of evidence demonstrates, at least on a balance of the arithmetic of the possible, is that conclusions, such as that drawn by Williams have some truth. As Williams writes:

'It is out of this environment that the 'New Prophecy' came forth. The combination of natural disasters and political/religious oppression - a perceived breakdown in the present order - made conditions ripe for millennial expectations. Undoubtedly, the ravages of plague, the threat of war, and the powerless and vulnerable position of Christians in a rural village of Phrygia.⁹³⁸

While certainly this is true of an urban milieu we cannot easily hypothesize for a rural milieu (despite Williams' insistence that it is usual for millenarian movements to break out in just such regions),⁹³⁹ if anything compared to the cities it was the rural centers which may have fared considerably better, at least in terms of the immediate consequences of epidemics, earthquakes and famines. Though as Aristides' quotes about his own estates demonstrate the impact did reach such regions, and if we take his comments about the death of livestock at face value the potential implications on the balance of rural life may have been disastrous.

So, while we cannot make too many hard and fast conclusions on the impact this is not to say that they would not suffer more in the long-term, not least from more forceful extractions of

⁹³⁶ Ziegler (1969:98).

⁹³⁷ Wypustek and Donkow (2006:123-132. The inscription in question was published by Graf (1992:267-279).

⁹³⁸ Williams (1989:338).

⁹³⁹ Williams (1989:336).

tax and produce which often follow natural disasters. This brings us into a more political sphere of taxation and the extraction of produce, one element which Frend (at least) saw as a contributing, if not occasioning factor in the rise of Montanism.⁹⁴⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, the socio-economic position and standing of the Anatolian peasants who made up the backbone of the original Montanist movement varied considerably, however, as peasants they were almost always subject to the whims of the more powerful, and given the great deal of scholarship which has linked agrarian discontent and the rise of religious dissent, it is a question which should be looked at in more detail.⁹⁴¹

With the exception of Frend, the socio-economic factors contributing to the rise of Montanism had largely, if not completely, gone unnoticed and while there is a strong case for arguing that Frend's hypothesis was largely a typological argument developed from his earlier work on the Donatists in North Africa, more recent discoveries, not least those made by Tabbernee and Lampe, certainly reopen the question.⁹⁴²

In his recent popular history *Prophets and Gravestones*, Tabbernee suggests in the very first chapter in his description of the travels of Zotikos and Julian to exorcise Maximilla at Pepuza that much of the land they are passing, the Montanist holy land *par excellence*, was '...part of an imperial estate where free tenant farmers grew crops that are taxed heavily by absentee Roman emperors.'⁹⁴³ In their preliminary report of the site and methodological discussions Tabbernee and Lampe, however, are less circumspect and raise the genuine possibility that elements of Montanism should be understood within the sociological/anthropological milieu of nativistic or millenarian movements of protest amongst colonial peoples such as those popularized in early Christian studies by theoretical work of Bryan Wilson.⁹⁴⁴ For instance, Lampe writes:

⁹⁴⁰ Frend (1984:535f.).

⁹⁴¹ As Talmon (1966:181) in her foundational article on Millenarianism notes:

'Many of the outbursts of millenarism took place against a background of disaster: plagues, devastating fires, recurrent long droughts that were the dire lot of the peasants, slumps that caused widespread unemployment and poverty, calamitous wars. These catastrophes which bring in their wake hunger, illness, cruel death and degradation, engender a deep sense of doom and a fervent craving for salvation.'

⁹⁴² For these comparative inferences see Frend (1952:59, 86).

⁹⁴³ Tabbernee (2009:7).

⁹⁴⁴ Wilson (1970) has had a long history of use amongst scholars of early Christianity.

‘Among other factors, socio-economic reasons can be identified that allow us to establish correlations between socio-economic conditions and religious phenomena. The Tymion inscription of the year 205 C.E. published in this volume, could suggest that the ecstatic Montanism, called Tymion “Jerusalem” and spreading rapidly in Phrygia, probably also was attractive to some of the economically stressed tenant farmers who are mentioned on the epigraph and lived in Tymion on an imperial estate. The ecstatic religious praxis offered a vent to those who were burdened economically.’⁹⁴⁵

From what we have argued above, while the immediate impact of earthquakes, plagues and famines was probably more felt in the urban centers of Western Asia Minor, the ultimate burden of loss of life and the subsequent economic down-turn would likely fall more squarely on the shoulders of the Anatolian peasants, the economic base on which the superstructure of Roman Asia Minor rested, and it is in this regard that Tabbernee and Lampe can contend that ‘...such prophecy tended to relieve some of the socio-economic stresses caused by illegal taxes and harsh methods of collecting dues.’⁹⁴⁶

This kind of economic turmoil is likely to result in a social cleavage between the urbane culture of the cities and that of the countryside, along the lines of what sociologists call ‘relative deprivation’ and as Tabbernee and Lampe have suggested ‘...it would be useful to explore the parallels between ancient Montanist prophetism and the strikingly similar present day phenomena in Africa.’⁹⁴⁷ That such social cleavages can be seen along the classical lines of the Church-Sect model has been argued, for instance, by Robert Grant, who suggested that among other things Montanism represented the tension between those urbane Christians who were attempting to make peace with the Roman state, and those rural Christians who were moving into further confrontation (here exacerbated in terms of voluntary martyrdom).⁹⁴⁸ Such a model is certainly suggestive, however it does rest on a particular interpretation of the primary

⁹⁴⁵ Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:144f.).

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁷ Tabbernee & Lampe (2008:146).

⁹⁴⁸ Grant (1970: 169) reads:

‘What underlay the symptoms, however, was the Montanists’ basic concern. They were reviving apocalyptic eschatology, based on Jewish and Jewish-Christian documents, from which the churches had gradually been turning away. Their revival of primitive Christian concerns was basically irrelevant for the leaders of the late second-century Christianity and for their followers as well. The church was coming to terms with Graeco-Roman culture and finding a place for itself in the world.’

evidence regarding Montanist attitudes to martyrdom, a factor which we will return to below.⁹⁴⁹

With regard to the comparison of Montanism with phenomenologically similar movements in the modern world, there is certainly room for hypothetical interpretations, and such similarities have long been recognized in the social sciences.⁹⁵⁰ The single example of Kimbanguism, with its 'heretical' trinity of '...the Father, of Simon Kimbangu, and of Andrew Matswa,' and its localization of millennial promises concerning the New Jerusalem in Africa, is certainly intriguing and opens the door to the suggestion that Montanism, like Kimbanguism, can find some explanation in its roots as '...the spontaneous result of the impact of the white man's presence on native society - an impact which, having generated more and more pressures during two world wars, was inevitably bound to create far-reaching disturbances.' Moreover, the explicitly agrarian context of Kimbanguism and the ways in which Christian missionary propaganda provided an interpretative matrix for Simon Kimbangu and his followers show further similarities which are hard to sweep aside.⁹⁵¹

Of course such comparisons can go too far and should not play too free with the facts, as Ramsay MacMullen wryly noted of such sociological comparisons with regard to Kimbanguism (as a most helpful example):

'His [Simon Kimbangu's] story might alert us to points in the evidence from antiquity which deserve special attention; but, naturally, we have acquired no new information. Kimbanguism may, further, be aligned with similar movements in Africa and elsewhere, and the similarities may be framed into general statements; but those, too, can be heuristic, nothing more. They certainly supply no reason for saying that ancient conversions "must have been" motivated in such-and-such ways, simply because those are the ways that have been observed in certain living societies.'⁹⁵²

While MacMullen perhaps goes too far here, perhaps the best way to deal with such comparisons is not to make a comparison on a phenomenological or historical level (however

⁹⁴⁹ See below pp. 228-242.

⁹⁵⁰ Festinger et al. (1956:6f.); Lewis (1971:26); Worsley (1968: 235); Gager (1975:142).

⁹⁵¹ On Kimbanguism see Lanternari (1963:1-26); Ndiokwere (1981:46-55); Wilson (1970:368-373).

⁹⁵² MacMullen (1984:7).

inviting they may be), but rather to demonstrate them theoretically, in this case, through the aforementioned ideas of 'relative deprivation' and the characteristics of millenarian movements, and moreover only after having given a plausibly historical contextualisation of the evidence.

By applying the simple idea of 'relative deprivation' to the evidence we have surveyed a plausible theory for the Montanist milieu presents itself and is worth exploring at least in summary fashion here. A succinct definition of 'relative deprivation' reads:

'...the feelings felt and the judgments reached when an individual or members of a group compare themselves – and especially their social situation – adversely with some other individual within their group or with another group...The notion is that it is not absolute standards which are important making such judgments but the relative standards, or frame of reference, in terms of which people make judgments.'⁹⁵³

Due to its attitudinal nature such a situation is less likely to occur from long-term but steady exploitation but to be exacerbated by a sudden '...change in the relative positions of social groups,' such change, moreover, has been seen as '...a potent source of political upheaval and revolutionary change.'⁹⁵⁴

Such an attitudinal shift can then be exacerbated most often by a significant shift in the socio-economic situation of a social group, in this case the Anatolian peasant following the immediate and long-term economic results of a period of natural disaster, plague and famine. Combined with the already present influence of millenarian tendencies within the church of Asia Minor as the chief 'frame of reference' for Anatolian Christians it is not difficult to see here that Montanist prophetism shows a strong affinity with what Lantenari called 'religions of the oppressed.' This said, I do not believe we can reduce Montanism to such a movement, and here I agree with MacMullen's perhaps slightly naïve conjecture that it is '...each context in its entirety and uniqueness that must govern any situations,' and that in order to take account of some of the other important historical trajectories argued by scholars it would be wise to turn to another important facet of Montanist identity: its link with Phrygian religion and culture.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁵³ Jary & Jary (1991:526)

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁵ MacMullen (1984:7).

However, before turning to this it is important to look briefly at another extrinsic factor which has been hypothesized as a key catalyst for the rise of Montanism, that of persecution.

4.3 Persecution under the Antonines.

As aforementioned the specifics of persecution must be dealt with on a regional as well as chronological scale. It is not enough to say there was an outbreak of persecution in Gaul in 177 CE and to argue from this, as many scholars have done, that Marcus Aurelius was indifferent or actively inclined toward the persecution of Christians.⁹⁵⁶ In reality the emperor's involvement in persecution was at best second hand, and the periodization of emperors into good and bad on the grounds of their persecution of Christians is in many ways untenable.⁹⁵⁷ The celebrated correspondence of Pliny and Trajan aside, it seems highly unlikely (despite the picture often painted by scholars) that every emperor carefully weighed up the issue of a few annoying Christian sectarians in the provinces and issued a 'new edict.' Certainly for Christian writers like the apologists, such things were of paramount importance but in the grander scheme of the Roman empire it is worth noting that Christianity barely ever receives a mention.

This said, oceans of ink has been spilt on this question by scholars over time, and in order to give as full a picture as possible it is necessary here to briefly look at some of their theories and the problems these pose with regard to the Montanist milieu. The reign of Antoninus Pius was described by Frend, in his massive study *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, as a 'false dawn' a period in which Antonine enlightenment left the Christians largely at peace with at least one frightening exception, the celebrated *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

The salient facts of this event can be summarized briefly. During the celebrations of what the text describes as the 'Great Sabbath' and after a certain Germanicus refused to recant his faith before the governor, the crowd cried out, 'Away with the Atheists! Go and get Polycarp!' And so a series of events took place in which the elderly bishop of Smyrna, demonstrably a well-known local identity, was pursued and tried before the governor, and refusing to recant, burned alive. Aside from the theological and apologetic motives which pervade the text, in which we see (not for the first time) the theological interpretations of martyrdom and the conduct of martyrs, the text also belies an important aspect of the martyr narrative: its civic context.

⁹⁵⁶ The opinions on Marcus Aurelius' attitude differ considerably between scholars see Phipps (1932:167-201). For a survey of earlier opinions see Keresztes (1968:321f.) . More recently Frend (1965: 268-302); Sordi (1983:70-78).

⁹⁵⁷ For the most complete discussion of Marcus Aurelius and the Christians see Brunt (1979:483-520).

In his important study, *Martyrdom and Rome*, Glenn Bowersock makes an important, though presumably often missed statement regarding persecution:

‘The early martyrdoms in the period down to Constantine are a conspicuously urban affair. They do not occur in the mountainous regions of Greece, or in the remote parts of central Anatolia, or in the near eastern steppe, or on the fringes of the Sahara in North Africa. For the most part, they take place in the greatest cities of the Roman world, predominantly in the eastern part of it.’⁹⁵⁸

Whether we like it or not, martyrdom belongs to the world of ancient spectacle, to the world of the urban milieu which it shares with gladiators, sophists and the crowds. Indeed, while still discerning God’s will on the matter of his death, Polycarp prudently fled into the countryside. This is a particularly important point when we consider the geographical diffusion of Montanists, for if they were not a primarily civic movement, but the product of the less organized and less policed rural hinterland, then the caricature of the Montanists as a vehemently anti-Roman church of the martyrs is called into question. While there is certainly no question that some Montanists were martyred,⁹⁵⁹ and moreover that they (like most of their contemporaries) celebrated such a situation and welcomed it, that they were deliberately provocative or anti-Roman needs to be demonstrated from the primary evidence, which when analyzed seems markedly lacking. This question requires a brief excursus.

⁹⁵⁸ Bowersock (1995:41).

⁹⁵⁹ As even Eusebius’ sources could admit (Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.6).

Conclusion.

As this chapter has demonstrated the immediate historical milieu in which Montanism thrived was influenced considerably by the issues which befell the Roman Empire in the latter years of Marcus Aurelius. While in the past scholars have followed Frend in attributing Montanism's rise here to widespread persecution resulting from earthquakes and plague, this thesis has argued that persecution itself was a lesser factor than the socio-economic and existential impact of the plague and sociological responses to such an event. In arguing for Montanism as a dissenting movement opposing Roman rule by martyrdom Frend is certainly approaching the truth, however, it seems better to see its opposition to less brutal forms of oppression, like those found in Schaff's 'misfortunes' of the Antonine age, where the structural abuses of the Roman agrarian system led to Montanism's growth as a millenarian religion of protest.

Chapter 5 – ‘The Land of Heathen Orgies’: Ethnicity, Culture and Religion as the backdrop for Montanism.

5.1. Prolegomena.

The classic criticism levelled at Marxist interpretations of religious phenomena is that such an analysis - which reduces religious behaviour and beliefs to superstructural epiphenomena ultimately related to the base of economic realities - is an oversimplification, and while we can note that Marxists are not always so economically determinist their paradigm of interpretation can be problematic.⁹⁶⁰ This might seem like a tangential way of beginning our discussion in this chapter: however, given the analysis provided in Chapter 4, and our argument for the strong socio-economic factors in characterizing the ‘Montanist Milieu’ it is important here to note that we cannot reduce the causes of this to these factors alone.

This chapter, then, will function as a bridge to elucidate a further element of the ‘Montanist Milieu’ which applies less to the geographical and socio-economic strictures of Roman Asia Minor and more to the socio-cultural and religious world of the ancient Phrygia, some elements of which we have touched on in Chapter 2. Why it is important to hold these pluriform aspects in an ambiguous and eclectic tension can be summarised by looking at a number of historiographical tendencies which are still being felt in recent scholarship on the social interpretation of religious dissent.

In her little cited but immensely important article ‘Byzantine Heresy: A Reinterpretation,’ Nina Garsoïen pointed to what she perceived as the artificial division of studies of Byzantine heresy into three categories: the proletarian, ethno- regional and dualist. While the latter does not concern us here, the former two heuristic categories, used by many Byzantine scholars and indeed scholars of earlier (and later) religious dissent, are of paramount importance in understanding myriad of influences which contributed to the ‘Montanist Milieu.’⁹⁶¹

The first category is the so-called (1) ‘Social Interpretation,’ (or ‘proletarian thesis’) whereby heresy is reduced (or at the very least strongly conditioned by) issues of class struggle and in particular conflict. The classic example of this, as observed by Garsoïen, is the work of

⁹⁶⁰ Stark & Finke (2000:28-41); On Marxist theories of religion and their relative utility see Pals (1997:124-157) and Thrower (1995:161-182).

⁹⁶¹ Garsoïen (1971:87-113).

Friedrich Engels on the German proletariat and its role in the peasant revolts of the Radical Reformation.⁹⁶² The example of Engels might make some scholars recoil in disgust but it should be pointed out that similar theories, adapted to varying degrees by historians of both Marxist and non-committal ideological persuasion, have achieved promising results.⁹⁶³

However, the use of this paradigm of interpretation for the earlier New Testament period has fallen on almost completely deaf ears, its lack of popularity likely being intimately tied up with the triumph of the 'New Consensus' view of Christian origins generally, that is, that Christians were a socially pretentious, upwardly mobile element in the Roman civic population and not (as previously thought) a movement of backwards social undesirables.⁹⁶⁴ However, as demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4 above such a social approach, when properly nuanced, does bear some interesting results with regard to some of the movements which thrived in Phrygia, but is in need of further contextualization.

The second category Garsoien calls the (2) 'Ethno-regional Thesis;' by this thesis, which is particular importance in this study, Garsoien means that heresies become associated with certain geographic areas or ethnic populations, in particular Phrygia and the Phrygians. This categorical designation is intimately intertwined with (1) in that it argues that a particular section (class, group) within society was either more inclined to found or more susceptible to the lures of heretical teachings. This thesis also brings up questions, largely untouched by Garsoien, concerning ethnographical writing and racial stereotyping. To put this another way, it is likely no accident that the Montanists were known almost exclusively in antiquity as the 'Phrygian heresy.'⁹⁶⁵

This said, Garsoien's rejection of this category in the Byzantine period is quite sensible with regard to Phrygia (i.e. that Phrygia as an inland, largely highland region was less susceptible to law-enforcement than the urban centres of Western Asia Minor and subsequently a good haven for heretics fleeing persecution), though perhaps an over-simplification. It is likely that factors of regional peculiarity also played a role, though this needs to be carefully nuanced

⁹⁶² Engels (1926 [1850]).

⁹⁶³ For our purposes here Frend (1952) is a prime example.

⁹⁶⁴ The classic expression of this position can be seen in Judge (2008 [1960]). This is something of a caricature of the complexities of the 'New Consensus' view. For further discussion see Meggitt (1998).

⁹⁶⁵ See below pp. 249-251.

with regard to ideas regarding the 'character' of rustic and Phrygian people, and the strictures of physical and political geography.⁹⁶⁶

Garsoien's heuristic division reflects the interests of scholars during this period, with the Cold War still raging and Marxist historians having a long tradition of turning their heuristic tools on religious movements,⁹⁶⁷ and provides a necessary corrective which was both welcome and useful. Perhaps of more importance, and certainly more widely known, was the great Cambridge classicist A.H.M. Jones' important essay 'Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?'⁹⁶⁸ What Jones' article was reacting against were what he saw as similar tendencies within the academic establishment to impose what he deemed as the anachronistic social categories onto the complex social realities of late antiquity. Incidentally, such a concern had already been raised by De Soyres in 1851 with regard to Montanism when he wrote: 'There is much that is attractive in this theory, more especially at a time when the historical influence of nationality is given perhaps an excessive share of attention.'⁹⁶⁹ Like Garsoien's work, Jones' makes a number of sobering and important methodological points but more than Garsoien his work has had unforeseen negative consequences in historiography.

What both Jones' and Garsoien's work did was, to a large extent, bring under undue suspicion interpretations which saw socio-economic and nativistic motives as playing a key role in the emergence of dissenting religious movements in antiquity. Indeed even today it is not difficult

⁹⁶⁶ On the problems of the ethno-regional thesis Garsoien (1969:93) writes:

'Certain regions have also been singled out as breeding grounds of heresy, Phrygia and the north-eastern theme of Armeniakon in particular. But Phrygia has been blamed for so many heresies - Novatians, Sabellians, Montanists, Athniagoi, the Paulicians themselves - that the suspicion arises that it was as much a convenient refuge, not too distant from the capital, in time of trouble, as a heretical district by nature.'

⁹⁶⁷ Indeed much of Garsoien's important work on the Paulicians (1967:24) was in direct dispute with interpretations come from Soviet Scholarship, writing:

'In 1947 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Armenian SSR set before Armenian scholars the problem of tracing the history of class struggle and of revolts against foreign oppressors in Armenia. As a result, basing themselves on Engels' interpretation and generally neglecting the theological aspects of the heresy, Soviet scholars view the Paulician movement as a proletarian revolt against the oppression of the feudal nobility. In their opinion, this opposition expressed itself in theological terms, but these were intrinsically of little importance.'

⁹⁶⁸ Jones (1959:280-298).

⁹⁶⁹ De Soyres (1851:103).

to find quotations of Jones' seemingly devastating conclusions,⁹⁷⁰ for instance concerning Asia Minor he wrote:

'It has been claimed that in Asia Minor the areas where the rigorist sects prevailed coincided with those where native languages survived. This is not the whole truth, for, as we know from Socrates, there were in Constantinople, Nicomedia, Nicaea, and other great cities cultivated Novatians, like their delightful bishop Sisinnius, who when asked by censorious members of his flock why, being a bishop, he took two baths a day, replied: 'Because I have not got time for a third.' But the bulk of the more fundamentalist Novatians were Phrygians and Paphlagonians, and Socrates is surely on the right line when he explains this fact by saying that these people were naturally not addicted to the horse races and the theatre, and regarded fornication with horror. He holds that the austerity of the Phrygians and Paphlagonians is due to the climate - they lie in the zone between the Scythians and the Thracians who are inclined to violent passions, and the peoples of the East, who are subject to their appetites. The truth surely is that they were simple country folk, whose life was necessarily somewhat austere, and that they were naturally attracted by a severe doctrine which condemned indulgences to which they were not prone. The fact that they spoke an indigenous language is an index merely of their rusticity, and not of any mysterious affinity between Novatianism and Phrygian national culture.'⁹⁷¹

That Jones here somewhat replaces the imposed categories of 'nationalism' and 'socialism' here with equally spurious early twentieth conceptions of geographical and environmental determinism is clear, however, the chief problem with Jones' critique for our work here can be brought out by looking at what he was explicitly attacking.

Jones' strongly opposed the 'nationalist' interpretations of heresy such as those proposed by Woodward and overtly 'socialist' interpretations of heresy such as those proposed by, for

⁹⁷⁰ An example for instance can be found in Choat (2006:126). Also important here is the lengthy discussion in MacMullen (1966:199-209).

⁹⁷¹ Jones (1959: 298).

instance, Macek.⁹⁷² Terminologically and categorically Jones' critique is correct in that religion was a more dominant and important factor of life than any idea of proto-Nationalism in the Late Antique world, and moreover that class struggle is a problematic category to use in antiquity (though perhaps less so than Jones originally thought, as later demonstrated with great passion by his pupil de Ste. Croix).⁹⁷³ Indeed, Frend, one of the targets of Jones' study, was careful to note what was correct and what remains problematic in Jones' conclusions:

'We should be surprised to find a Montanist or a Donatist leader describing their opposition to the religion of the catholic clergy in terms of nineteenth-century nationalism. Yet when confronted by the emphasis on prophecy and martyrdom, and on the literal interpretation of the New Testament, especially its apocalyptic passages that characterized both these movements, the historian may be pardoned if he asks himself whether a pattern emerges that links the various rural Christianities in the early Church with each other; and distinguishes their outlook from that of the more conventional established communities in the cities.'⁹⁷⁴

While several elements of Frend's various theses regarding Montanism can be found wanting, his observation that social, 'national/ethnic' and geographical factors need to be taken into account is well taken, though with the addenda drawn from Jones we need to understand how these functioned within the society and mentalities of second century Asia Minor rather than in later periods.

Jones and Garsoien, in contrast to Frend, shut the door to (by implication, even though Jones' intention in itself was to stress this)⁹⁷⁵ to the interpretation that religion could be the means of

⁹⁷² Woodward (1914). Jones explicitly cites Woodward and Frend (1952) as examples of the national or social interpretation which he is targeting. Macek's (1965) work on the Hussites, however, provides a much better example of a socialist interpretation than Frend's work.

⁹⁷³ On the issue of 'class struggle' as an ancient category see the *magnum opus* of De Ste. Croix (1981). Also useful is MacMullen's discussion (1966:192-241).

⁹⁷⁴ Frend (1972:39).

⁹⁷⁵ Jones (1959: 295) makes this point explicit:

'The nationalist and socialist theories which I have been discussing seem to me to be based on a radical misapprehension of the mentality of the later Roman Empire. Today religion, or at any rate doctrine, is not with the majority of people a dominant issue and does not arouse major passions. Nationalism and socialism are, on the other hand, powerful forces, which can and do provoke the most intense feelings. Modern historians are, I think, retrojecting into the past the sentiments of the present age when they argue that mere religious or doctrinal dissension cannot have generated such violent and enduring animosity as

expression and interpretation of socio-cultural and socio-economic grievances. This fact needs to be born in mind, and is well summarised by the sociologist and scholar of the interaction of religious and social movements Vittorio Lanternari:

‘Religion is a primary means of communication in less complex societies and embodies the fundamental values that give meaning to life: in such societies and/or sub-cultures, all the states of crisis caused by oppression, deprivation or frustration, and all the hopes for betterment, are expressed in mythic-ritual symbols.’⁹⁷⁶

What this statement means for our study is that while it has often proved tempting to label Montanism as a nationalistic, socialistic or peasant rebellion, and reduce its origin or aspirations to any one of these aspects, we need to realize that these are all merely heuristic labels and conceptual frameworks, and often highly anachronistic ones at that. The two points to stress, however, are that on the one hand Montanism was an explicitly religious movement whose causes cannot be reduced to any one of these epiphenomena, but on the other hand Montanism was also a response to social stimulus from the surrounding social, cultural and religious conditions, what we have called the ‘Montanist Milieu.’ Montanism as a religious movement existed, and should be understood as existing and manifesting in a constant tension of various existential factors, none of which can be given too much priority but at the same time none of which can be easily dismissed. Bearing this in mind, then, we need to ask the question of how ethno-regional factors played a part in shaping this milieu.

that evinced by the Donatists, Arians, or Monophysites, and that the real moving force behind these movements must have been national or class feeling.’

⁹⁷⁶ Lanternari (1974:487).

5. 3. The Phrygian Cultural Milieu.

Like the majority of the Roman Empire the cultural area of Phrygia only fell under Roman rule over an extended period of time and had already been subject to various sovereigns throughout the Hellenistic era. Despite various shifts in sovereignty between the Attalids, Seleucids and Galatians, the Phrygian people, particularly in the more geographically isolated regions, had managed to maintain a considerable degree of cultural and linguistic continuity, particularly with regard to religion and they continued to be viewed in literature as a distinct ethnic group well into late antiquity.

a. Language.

Perhaps the best indicator of ethnic identity within any region of the Roman Empire is the survival of an indigenous language and this has always been a key element in ethno-regional interpretations of heresy and dissent in Egypt and North Africa.⁹⁷⁷ The same, too, has held for Asia Minor, though the evidence here is significantly more problematic. Firstly, while a significant corpus of Neo-Phrygian inscriptions survives, at last count around 113, no substantive body of literature survives comparable to the massive output of Coptic or Syriac literature.⁹⁷⁸ Secondly, and most importantly (though often ignored by scholars), of the evidence for Neo-Phrygian over the late second and third centuries, not a single inscription survives which is identifiably Christian, indeed the great majority of such inscriptions are explicitly dedications to important deities like Selene or one or other of the indigenous Mother of the gods cults, or grave imprecations eliciting the protections of the autochthonous spirits, as Brixhe writes:

‘Although in the Paleo-Phrygian era it had acceded to all the written registers, public and private, sacred and profane, in the Neo-Phrygian period the language was confined to the sacred domain, having become the language of a colonized people.’⁹⁷⁹

The perennial problems of studying dead languages are well evidenced in this instance and worth noting, as MacMullen makes clear in his study of provincial languages of the Roman Empire:

⁹⁷⁷ Holl (1908:240-254); MacMullen (1966b:1-17).

⁹⁷⁸ Brixhe (2002:779).

⁹⁷⁹ Brixhe (2002:870).

'Technical aspects may be left to the experts in linguistics, whose surveys of the minor tongues show the obscurity of the subject: the vitality, the distribution according to social classes or to any but the most general geographical areas, the extent of literacy of the speakers or their bilingualism, are matters for mere guess-work, in almost every case.'⁹⁸⁰

Taking MacMullen's wise words as a point of departure it is worth briefly giving a brief outline of our evidence for the Phrygian language, since it was famed in the ancient myth of Psammetichus recorded in Herodotus as the oldest of human tongues.⁹⁸¹

Despite the rather misleading map given by Calder in *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* VII,⁹⁸² the areas which embraced the Phrygian language were almost exclusively situated on the eastern slopes of the Phrygian highlands, with probably some pockets in areas like the Upper Tembris valley which ran through the central plateau. The furthest west Neo-Phrygian inscriptions are found in the area of Dorylaion in the North and near Sagalassos in the southern part of the Phrygian cultural area.⁹⁸³ The greatest concentration, however, of Phrygian language inscriptions is found in the area of Phrygia Paroreios east of Apollonia stretching as far as Psibela about thirty miles east of Laodicea Combusta.⁹⁸⁴

Within these areas there is significant evidence for bilingualism and it is highly probable that most people had at least a smattering of Greek, which functioned much as German did in *Mitteleuropa* in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as the *Kultursprach*, particularly amongst an urban elite. Anderson identified a number of epitaphs in what he called Phrygian Greek, and certain linguistic peculiarities indicating limited knowledge of Greek in inscriptions of this region are common.⁹⁸⁵ Despite this functional bilingualism we need to reckon with the fact that along with Greek culture and migration came a sense of superiority aimed at

⁹⁸⁰ MacMullen (1966b:1).

⁹⁸¹ Hdt. II.2.

⁹⁸² For this map see Klawiter (1975:73)

⁹⁸³ Brixhe (2002:779) writes:

'The Neo-Phrygian speech area (delimited by Konya, the northern tip of Tuz Gölü, Eskişehir, Kütahya, Dinar, with the highest density on the western border and to the north/northwest of the northern tip of Tuz Gölü.'

⁹⁸⁴ Klawiter (1975:69-74) using Calder's map sees Synnada as the Western most point of Phrygian speaking in around 250 CE, Trevett (1996:18) agrees, though thinks that it may have been spoken earlier in nearby districts (e.g. the Upper Tembris Valley).

⁹⁸⁵ Anderson (1906:183-227).

Volksprachen and the ethnographic stereotypes which this entails. To speak Phrygian was tantamount to babbling, and while the implications of the passage in the Anonymous Anti-Montanist that Montanus spoke in ‘foreign voices’ (ξενοφωνεῖν) certainly has a more theological meaning it is an interesting aspect of anti-Montanist polemic to be aware of.⁹⁸⁶ As Brixhe writes:

‘The Phrygian elite (like the Galatian) was quickly Hellenized linguistically; the Phrygian tongue was devalued and found refuge only in the countryside, in the weakly urbanized periphery areas defined above.’⁹⁸⁷

This said, two very salient facts need to be emphatically restated here. As aforementioned while a substantial corpus of Neo-Phrygian inscriptions do survive, not one is identifiable as Christian, let alone Montanist, and a large majority can be explicitly demonstrated to be pagan votive or funerary dedications (largely of the grave imprecation type particularly common in Asia Minor). The second important fact is that the heartland of Montanism, outlined in Chapter 2, while certainly belonging to Phrygia geographically is, with the possible exception of the Upper Tembris valley, completely void of Neo-Phrygian inscriptions. West-Central Phrygia (Thonemann’s Anatolian Mid-West) particularly the region of the Meander valley cities, and the surrounding estates were, at least linguistically, significantly more Hellenized, though that relies on largely urban epigraphical evidence.⁹⁸⁸ While geographically, as indicated, we should expect to find in these isolated valleys evidence for indigenous languages, as yet no evidence has been evinced.

This, however, does not preclude the existence of Phrygian speakers among the Christians in the surrounding χώρα of cities or the imperial estates in these regions but it does tell us that the language probably had a stronger hold across social boundaries in the Eastern areas of Phrygia, particularly in the southern areas surrounding Pisidian Antioch and Laodicea Combusta, where inscriptions are often bi-lingual and show the adoption of the *nomen Aurelii* or *tria nomina* (at least a tangible sign of partial Hellenization).

⁹⁸⁶ Several scholars, such as Kierstead (1997:62) and MacMullen (1966b:208) have stated explicitly that the Montanists spoke Phrygian.

⁹⁸⁷ Brixhe (2002:780).

⁹⁸⁸ See above pp. 97-136.

As Jones' quote above demonstrates, a long tradition of scholars have drawn a parallel here between areas of indigenous language and the existence of heretical or marginalized communities, the examples par excellence of Garsoien's ethno-regional thesis.⁹⁸⁹ That the Phrygian language certainly did survive until at least until the fifth century is clear as evidenced by the story in Socrates of Constantinople concerning Selenas, a half Goth, half-Phrygian Arian (Psathyrian) bishop who apparently preached in both tongues.⁹⁹⁰ This said, however, we need to be careful about how far we press this linguistic factor in antique heresy, particularly as it applies to Asia Minor.

As long ago as the early 1920s Holl had argued in a still oft-cited article that the use indigenous languages in Asia Minor (in particular Phrygia) often coincided with the areas where heresy was most predominant, stating 'Ein buntes Gewimmel von Sekten! Man gewinnt fast den Eindruck, als ob das Innere Kleinasiens ein gelobtes Land der Dissenters gewesen wäre.'⁹⁹¹ This conclusion has been uncritically taken up by MacMullen, Frend and others, but as the Jones quote above demonstrates it is evidentially problematic.

This problem is best exemplified with regard to Novatian communities to which Jones refers. Here there is a strong correlation between the existence of a Novatian community and evidence for the Neophrygian language. This is particularly marked in the existence of Novatian communities in remote areas of the eastern highlands, and particularly in the villages surrounding Laodicea Combusta. Similarly, Novatian inscriptions often contain the use of *Lallnamen* and indigenous names, both of which can be identified as social indicators for members of a less Hellenized indigenous population.⁹⁹²

While these above facts are beyond dispute we need to recognize that the Novatian community, which survived perhaps as late as the Montanist communities, was also widespread in the cities and often high in the late antique imperial bureaucracy and aristocracy. The Novatians had earned the begrudging respect of many of the orthodox party for the sufferings under the Emperors of Arian sympathies like Constantius II and Valens, and

⁹⁸⁹ Frend (1952:59); Holl (1908:252); MacMullen (1966b:2).

⁹⁹⁰ Soc. *h.e.* V.22. The Psathyrians were one of the many schisms within the fourth century Arian party only mentioned in this context.

⁹⁹¹ Holl (1908:252).

⁹⁹² Mitchell (1993:175).

seemed to have maintained at least four churches in the Imperial capital at Constantinople during the fourth and fifth centuries (albeit outside the Theodosian walls in the notorious quarter of Galata).⁹⁹³

Ethnicity.

Moving aside from issues of language we need to deal with the perennial bugbear of ethnicity. Montanism was consistently known as the τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φρυγῶν, that is, the ‘heresy of the Phrygians,’ a designation on which Clement of Alexandria passes the comment:

‘Some of the heresies get their title from a name, as that from Valentinus, and that from Marcion, and that of Basilides...Others are named from a place, as the Peratici; still others from a race, as the Phrygians.’⁹⁹⁴

Few writers other than Labriolle have given any detailed treatment of this factor and its relevance in the reconstruction of Montanism, and while he was dismissive it is important to see what he said. In his thorough treatment of Montanist history *La crise montaniste* Labriolle dedicated the first nine pages to speaking about ‘...le tempérement Phrygien,’ though his negative opinion concerning its influence is apparent from the first sentence in which he writes:

‘Je crois que l’on a beaucoup exagéré l’importance du rapport qui aurait uni Montanisme à la Phrygie, son pays d’origine.’⁹⁹⁵

Despite this negative conclusion Labriolle goes on to survey some of the references in classical literature to Phrygians, beginning with Herodotus, some of which we will look at in more detail below. Alas Labriolle’s presupposed conclusions here are largely drawn from the work of W.M. Ramsay, and his various hypotheses concerning the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor during the second century which we have looked at in Chapter 2 and his dubious reconstructions of Phrygian religion which we will deal with below.

⁹⁹³ For the best overview of the Novatian’s later period see Gregory (1975:1-18). Most of the evidence comes from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates of Constantinople and the inscriptions published by Calder (1923:59-91)

⁹⁹⁴ Clem. *Str.* VII.17.101.1 [Trans. Heine].

⁹⁹⁵ Labriolle (1913:1).

While as we have seen August Neander was quick to note the Phrygian elements in Montanism other scholars have been all too eager to parrot the reductionist understandings of 'enthusiastic Phrygian religion,' of nineteenth century encyclopaedists and Ramsay. Schaff, for instance referred to Phrygia as the home of '...a sensuously mystic and dreamy nature-religion,'⁹⁹⁶ whilst Renan wrote of the Phrygians as '...silly and simple,' and Montanism as a religion of '...clowns and countrymen.'⁹⁹⁷ For such scholars, who also draw parallels between Montanism and later 'charismatic' movements within Christianity, the Phrygian elements of Montanism were another example of the below par and rustic nature of this backwoods sectarian movement.

While these scholars have been too eager to parrot commonplaces about Phrygian religion, the importance of indigenous Phrygian religion and ethnicity and its implications for how we understand the Montanist milieu and its reconstruction become clear when we survey what others ancient writers often wrote concerning the Phrygians and their gods.⁹⁹⁸

The discourse on ancient ethnography is a burgeoning field, and for our purposes here it would be superfluous to delve into methodological debates.⁹⁹⁹ What is useful, for our purposes here, is to give definitions of ethnic stereotypes and ethnic portraits. The former, following Bohak, can be designated as '...any generalizing statement that describes the character and behavior of a given ethnic group.'¹⁰⁰⁰ For example, Australians are lazy. Keeping with Bohak's definitions:

'By "ethnic portrait," on the other hand, I refer to the overall image that emerges when we combine the different stereotypes associated with a single ethnic group in Greco-Roman literature. It is, in other words, the supposed "collective persona" of any given nation that I seek to examine, or those qualities which were considered typical of that ethnic group as a whole.'¹⁰⁰¹

⁹⁹⁶ Schaff (1996 [1858]:417).

⁹⁹⁷ Renan (1880 [1876]:118).

⁹⁹⁸ For an incomplete collection of stereotypes see LaBriolle (1913:1-13). Trevett (1996:18f.) mentions that Phrygians were seen in antiquity as "boorish" and "hill-billy" but does not pay much heed to these stereotypes.

⁹⁹⁹ For a discussion of these see the study of Hall (1989).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Bohak (2005:209).

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid.

For example, Australians are lazy, drunk, and misbehaved whilst outside their own country. Often, as any assessment of the evidence will reveal, these 'ethnic portraits' are often internally contradictory and often tell us more about those writing and the power-relationships between them (in this case the Romans and Greeks) and the group described. Though, similarly, even these distorted and often rhetorical or polemical caricatures can also have an air of truth about them, after all Australians are on the whole quite fond of their leisure time and statistically rather fond of alcohol.

This said, with regard to the type of ethnographic portraiture of which we are speaking it can be safely said that '...the Phrygians, for example, were far more prominent on that score, and were also noted for their cowardice, villainy, and other negative qualities,'¹⁰⁰² certainly the Phrygians were often singled out with particular opprobrium for having deplorable national characteristics. It is worthwhile, then, to look at some of these ethnic stereotypes and the 'ethnic portraits' to which they have given rise to in antiquity and in later scholarship.

Perhaps the most stereotypical image was that of the Phrygian as a slave, and a disobedient one at that, according to Herodas (and taken up elsewhere by Cicero)¹⁰⁰³ it was something of an ancient proverb that the only way to improve a Phrygian was to beat them.¹⁰⁰⁴ This theme, which Hall calls '...an eternally popular topos in comedy,' is perhaps most apparent in Euripides' *Orestes* in the scenes of the frightened, gesticulating and babbling Phrygian slave, crying as he runs from Agamemnon's palace and the drawn swords of Orestes and Pylades:

'Greekish sword – kill dead! Trojan scared, oh. Run, run, jump in slippers, fast, fast, clop-clop clamber over roof. Hole in beams, inside court, jump down boom!'¹⁰⁰⁵

Such an image had a perennial appeal in Graeco-Roman culture, so much so that by the late second century, none other than Tertullian, a Montanist sympathizer, if not active member, could proclaim:

'The subject of national peculiarities has grown by this time into proverbial notoriety. Comic poets deride the Phrygians for their cowardice; Sallust reproaches the Moors for

¹⁰⁰² Bohak (2005:210).

¹⁰⁰³ Cic. *Flac.* XVII.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Herod. II.100.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Euripides, *Or.* 1368-1373.

their levity, and the Dalmatians for their cruelty; even the apostle brands the Cretans as "liars."¹⁰⁰⁶

Perhaps the most thorough going example of this ethnographic portrait in Latin literature is found in the forensic rhetoric of Cicero, particularly in his *Pro Flacco*. Here on several occasions Cicero heaps scorn upon the Phrygian's (and the Asiatic more generally) dishonesty, provincialism, and generally distasteful character.¹⁰⁰⁷ For instance, Cicero draws a comparison the sobriety and sensible Romans he is addressing citing that they '...are not now about to decide on the constitution of Lydians, or Mysians, or Phrygians, who, under the influence of some compulsion or excitement, have come before you.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Here we see once again the stereotype of the 'excitable Asiatics' concerning whom Cicero goes on to write that Phrygians, so boorish and uncultured, would become so overcome by greed that at the offer of a basket of figs a Phrygian would eat himself to death.¹⁰⁰⁹ Of course these stereotypes function here in the context of forensic rhetoric and it is important to note another of Cicero's comments which reads:

'Nor indeed did the witness himself, when he saw the seal, say that we were producing a forged document, but he alleged the worthless character of all Asiatics, a matter which we willingly and easily grant to him.'¹⁰¹⁰

It is clear from this statement that Cicero is playing a game of *ad hominem*, if he cannot refute the evidence drawn up against Flaccus, he can always discredit the witnesses before his Roman audience, as representatives of the 'worthless character of all Asiatics,' of whom the rather xenophobic citizen's of the Roman Republic were all too familiar.

Like all ethnographic stereotypes from antiquity these remarks need to be treated with caution and treated within their literary and social context, though sadly few scholars seem to have disputed their general and impartial accuracy, Ramsay (for instance) is scathing in the various ethnographic portraits he paints of the Phrygians:

¹⁰⁰⁶ Tertullian, *de Anima* XX.3 [Trans. Holmes].

¹⁰⁰⁷ Cicero is also scathing of the local Jewish population in this same work, for an analysis of his rhetoric in this regard see Wardy (1979:596-609).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Cic. *Flac.* II.1.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Cic. *Flac.* XVII.1.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cic. *Flac.* XVI.1.

‘But in these qualities we may see rather the effect of their situation than an index of their [the Phrygians] real character. They were far from the sea and the opportunities of travel and intercourse; they had few products except slaves in their country that would reward and stimulate trade; the opportunity of getting education from contact with other races was denied them, and their religious system, so far from favouring education, tended to keep them on a lower social plane than their Greek neighbours; Greek coast colonies surrounded them on three sides, and the keen, enterprising, quick-witted, highly-trained colonists regard with extreme contempt the slow, apathetic, contented, and unutterably ignorant Phrygians, incapable of being roused or excited by any cause except their vulgar and degrading superstitious rites.’¹⁰¹¹

Ramsay’s view here is that the Phrygians were always a weak, insipid ‘racial stock’ comparable to the ‘Turkish Peasant’ of his own day,¹⁰¹² sadly, however, in a great deal of scholarship Ramsay’s prejudices, on which an entire thesis could be written,¹⁰¹³ have been carried on wholesale and this becomes particularly prevalent in many scholarly estimations of Phrygian religion.¹⁰¹⁴ That Ramsay was uncritical in his synchronistic compilation of evidence and ethnic stereotypes is abundantly clear elsewhere in his writings, for instance:

‘In this picture of Phrygia, as Greeks and Romans have handed it down, the living characteristics of a real people are clear. Scanty and vague as is the picture, it is at least true and convincing in the general effect. The people stands before us in its general type. Every traveller will recognize in it the modern, so-called "Turkish," peasantry of the same country; and he sees before him every day in the country the same old conflict between the quick-witted, subtle, enterprising Greek, and the slow,

¹⁰¹¹ Ramsay (1907:31).

¹⁰¹² Ramsay (1907:31-4) contains Ramsay’s account of the “racial degeneration” of the Anatolian peninsula through inter-breeding between Phrygians, Greeks and Galatians. Even Frend (2003:90) noted about Ramsay (whom he otherwise admired): “This book opens with Ramsay’s credo. Asia Minor was ‘like a bridge between Asia and Europe’, and, a little further on, ‘the very character of the country has marked it out as a battleground between the Oriental and the European spirit’, much to the disadvantage of the former. As mentioned, these restraints he was to repeat 15 years later. During his travels in Phrygia he had mused whether the Phrygians or Carians were an ‘Aryan people’, European conquerors better equipped in war ‘than opponents armed in slighther Oriental style’. For a scholar and a man of action of the time as was Ramsay in the 1880s the superiority of the ‘Aryan Europeans’ over ‘Asiatics’ was a simple fact of life.”

¹⁰¹³ For some other examples of Ramsay’s poor opinion of the Turks (1897b:32, 37, 39, 41, 43).

¹⁰¹⁴ See below pp. 266.268.

dull, contented Turk. The modern peasantry has reverted under the pressure of similar external conditions, and through the influence of the same natural surrounding, to the primeval Phrygian type. Whatever pride of religion and stock was for a time imparted to the landsmen by the Turkish intermixture has not [sic.] almost disappeared, since the Turks ceased to be a dominant warrior caste.'

This quote is important on two notes. Firstly as it confirms Ramsay's prescription to many nineteenth century notions concerning race and racial degeneration which found their most strident expression in the writings of Stewart Chamberlain (in particular the notorious book *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*).¹⁰¹⁵ Such theories were indeed popular amongst historians (sadly in particular those of a German persuasion)¹⁰¹⁶ and little criticized.¹⁰¹⁷ Secondly, and more commented on today, is its creation of an East/West dichotomy and the subsequent argument for the moral ascendancy of the partisans of Western culture (here the Greeks) and a dim view of the partisans of Eastern culture (the Turks). While the categories and discursive trends studied in Edward Said's *Orientalism* can prove extremely damaging for ancient historians (particularly by denigrating the great work of past masters with modern political correctness), Ramsay is certainly one case where the combination of scholarship and colonialist patriarchy is readily apparent and this cannot be easily swept under the carpet owing to Ramsay's widespread influence.

Despite Ramsay's vilification drawn from what he calls the 'picture of Phrygia, as Greeks and Romans have handed it down,' if one turns to other sources the picture of the Phrygians which emerges immediately gives warning to the contradictory and haphazard nature of ancient (and modern) ethnographic portraits.

Perhaps the most cited of the ancient sources by nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars concerned with Montanism is the important statement given in the fifth century

¹⁰¹⁵ On Chamberlain and his influence in ancient history see the (negative) remarks of Cumont (1956 [1911]:291 n.6).

¹⁰¹⁶ See for instance Seeck (1921[1897]:344).

¹⁰¹⁷ The striking exception here is Cumont who criticized this idea as early as 1905, see Cumont (1956 [1909]: 25f.).

historian Socrates Scholasticus, a Constantinopolitan writer with some sympathetic leanings to marginalized parties within the Church.¹⁰¹⁸ In book IV Socrates writes:

‘The Phrygians are a chaste and temperate people; they seldom swear: the Scythians and Thracians are choleric; the Eastern nations are more disposed to immorality; the Paphlagonians and Phrygians to neither: they do not care for the theatre or the games; prostitution is unusual.’¹⁰¹⁹

While this passage is often quoted as a prime example of the Phrygian people’s natural austerity, it is very important here to contextualize it within its literary setting. As many a scholar has noted Socrates is particularly informed when it comes to the history of the sectarian Novatians,¹⁰²⁰ to such an extent that more than one historian has suspected his allegiance to this group. It is in the context of discussing this group, whom he compares with the Phrygians (and identifies as particularly important within the geographic region), that this passage occurs. The ethnicity of the Phrygians, then, becomes an ethnographic explanatory tool by which Socrates attempts to explain their adherence to a rigorist Christian sect.

However, yet another stereotypical trajectory, again seemingly contradictory, runs through into the ‘ethnographic portrait’ of these Phrygians, that of the effeminate or gender-bending Phrygian priest, parading through the streets of Rome or Athens and generally causing a ruckus.

For instance in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in sharp contradistinction to the eponymous Roman ancestor Aeneas, the very incarnation of Roman values,¹⁰²¹ is the ‘effeminate Phrygians,’ whom Ascanius taunts:

‘But ye are clothed in embroidered saffron and gleaming purple; sloth is your joy, your delight is to indulge in dance; your tunics have sleeves and your turbans ribbons. O ye Phrygian women, indeed! – for Phrygian men are ye not – go ye over the heights of Dindymus, where to accustomed ears the pipe utters music from double mouths! The

¹⁰¹⁸ Urbainczyk (1997:4).

¹⁰¹⁹ Soc. h.e..IV.28.

¹⁰²⁰ On this question see particularly the work of German scholar Walraff (1997); (1997b.170-177). Also informative is Allen (1990:265-289).

¹⁰²¹ For this parallel see Verg. A. IX.598-610.

timbrels call you, and the Berecynthian boxwood of the mother of Ida: leave arms to men, and quit the sword.'¹⁰²²

From the late Republic onwards the Phrygian features in Latin literature almost exclusively in reference either to slavery as noted above, or in reference to the notorious *Galli*, the eunuch priests of Cybele. For instance, Lucretius' infamous description of the religious processions of the *Galli* in Rome:

'A thunder of drums attends her, tight-stretched and pounded by palms, and a clash of hollow cymbals; hoarse-throated horns bray their deep warning, and the hollow pipe thrills every heart with Phrygian strains. Weapons carried before her, symbolic of rabid frenzy, to chasten the thankless and profane hearts of the rabble with dread of her divinity. So, when first she is escorted into some great city and mutely enriches mortals with some wordless benediction, they strew her path all along the route with largesse of copper and silver and shadow the mother and her retinue with a snow of roses.'¹⁰²³

This image can be found across Latin literature, from the sensationalist Suetonius who speaks of '...the day when the worshippers of the Goddess Cybele began their annual wailings and lamentation,'¹⁰²⁴ to the satirical Juvenal who writes:

"...Now here come the devotees of frenzied Bellona, and Cybele, Mother of the Gods, with a huge eunuch, a face for lesser obscenities to revere. Long ago, with a sherd, he lopped his soft genitals; now neither the howling rabble nor all the kettledrums can out shriek him. A Phrygian mitre tops his plebeian cheeks.'¹⁰²⁵

The wild *Galli*, like Hare Krishnas in the cities of the West today, were a highly visible and audible manifestation of the religious diversity of the Roman Empire, and also an example of the suspicion and sensationalism which surrounded foreign cults in Rome. As with the Bacchanals, cast out from Rome in the 180s BCE, these foreign priests, while slowly institutionalized were still viewed as a prime example of the excesses and degeneracy of the

¹⁰²² Verg. A.. IX. 615-620 [Trans. Fairclough].

¹⁰²³ Lucret. II. 616-628

¹⁰²⁴ Suet. *Otho* VIII.

¹⁰²⁵ Juv. VI.512-516.

east by Latin writers, their behaviours being held up as moral exempla of how a austere Roman was not to behave.¹⁰²⁶

The image of the *externa superstitio*, the foreign cults which had found their way to Rome during its territorial expansions through slaves, merchants and foreign auxiliaries, became a quintessential part of Roman literature and functioned as a literary foil against traditional Roman values. Indeed this is a *topos* borrowed from the earlier world of classical Greek literature in which the invocation of the 'Phrygian' and the 'Thracian' played as much on religious difference as ethnic, the two being intimately intertwined, as Hall writes:

'Tragic evocation of the 'Thracian' or 'Asiatic' Dionysus or of the 'Phrygian' Mother does not represent reference to recognizably barbarian gods but externalization of the *furor*, strangeness, and wildness, the 'un-Hellenic' and 'irrational' facets of accepted Greek cults. The Greeks may have conceptualized Dionysus and the Mother as imported barbarian gods, but their concepts 'Thracian' and Phrygian' had entered the domain of metaphor.'¹⁰²⁷

While these quotes represent some of what many modern observers would see as politically incorrect moments of these towering scholars they do bring out a central difficulty in attempting to unearth the religious situation of Anatolian people in antiquity, that is, they begin from an undeniably rhetorical construction of the Anatolian social situation and go on to make sweeping generalizations which can subsequently be applied to any and all Phrygians who appear in the pages of history. A better way of progressing, is to proceed from the evidence on the ground, the thousands of votives, funerary and other epigraphic remains which speak directly to the day-to-day religious beliefs of the Phrygian people, to which we will now turn.

¹⁰²⁶ On the bacchanals and their crimes see Livy. On a good discussion of 'externa superstitio' and the Roman reception of eastern cults see Turcan (1996:1-27).

¹⁰²⁷ Hall (1989:154).

5.3. Phrygian Religion: A Classic Portrait.

Perhaps the most memorable statement from Henry Milman's otherwise mediocre treatment of Montanism in his nineteenth century *The History of Christianity*, a statement later approvingly reproduced by the seminal Roman Catholic detective novelist Ronald Knox,¹⁰²⁸ was to summarize Phrygia as '...the land of heathen orgies.'¹⁰²⁹ As we have already ascertained in chapter 1, while perhaps lacking the rhetorical flair of his near contemporary Milman, August Neander was also emphatic about the role of Phrygian religion and its socio-cultural environment on the origins and development of the nascent Montanist movement.

Indeed, such an interpretation was so widespread that scholars concerned with the so-called 'mystery religions' like Cumont, Turcan, Vermaseren, who were otherwise unconcerned with Montanism, could note in passing with no further qualification the way in which Montanism was so obviously influenced by the cults of Asia Minor.¹⁰³⁰ As Marvin Meyer (the most recent example of this trend) has written:

'In the highlands of central Anatolia lies the region of Phrygia, a mountainous region with fierce terrain as well as a fierce religious tradition. Phrygia has produced or influenced the nature of such extraordinary deities as Dionysios, Sabazios, and, as we see in this chapter, the Great Mother (Magna Mater) and her lover Attis. Thus, we are not surprised to find that in the same area of Phrygia a Christian prophetic movement termed Montanism arose in the second century C.E. and celebrated the sort of religious enthusiasm and ecstasy, in Christian guise, for which Phrygia has long been famous.'¹⁰³¹

Both Neander and Milman, not to mention others cited above, working out of nineteenth century ethnographic and geographic frameworks, were products of their time and while we might be tempted to chastise them for that most cardinal of modern academic sins 'orientalism' it is the contention here that we need to take their work seriously and meet their

¹⁰²⁸ Knox (1961[1950]:25).

¹⁰²⁹ Milman (1867:69).

¹⁰³⁰ Cumont (1956 [1911]:. This trend finds its fullest expression in Graillot (1912:403-411) continues into the present for instance in Ferguson (1970:31); Meyer (1987:113); Turcan (1996:45) and Vermaseren (1977:187).

¹⁰³¹ Meyer (1987:113).

contentions head on.¹⁰³² In order to understand how Montanism has been so consistently linked with Anatolian religion we need to understand how scholars have interpreted and constructed the latter phenomenon as an ancillary to the ethnographic portraiture of the 'wild and effeminate Phrygian,' and how these reconstructions tie in with some of the key problems in studying ancient religions as well as ancient cultures.

From the nineteenth century an increasing disciplinary divorce has been taking place between the related fields of classical studies, and its work on the study of ancient religions, New Testament scholarship as an increasingly independent field of study within theological education, and the study of Church History.¹⁰³³ This divergence of paths, while having many benefits, has also had the negative result of an overspecialization in any one discipline to the expense of related disciplines, and a restrictive methodology by which understandings of the other disciplines is undertaken through the means of often woefully outdated handbooks and a veritable 'canon' of acceptable 'background' references.

While there is hope with this situation, the treatment of Phrygian religion and the ethnographic stereotypes surrounding the Phrygian people has not, to the best of this author's knowledge, benefited from this. The imaginative reconstructions of these groups continue unabated, often being used to buttress a rather blatant and even sectarian theological interpretation.¹⁰³⁴ From the myriad of ancient sources has emerged what Angus called 'Phrygianism,' a term we will use here to designate a haphazard reconstruction of indigenous Anatolian religion and Phrygian culture drawn from geographically, chronologically and typologically diverse sources, with little or no study of the social and literary context from which they are drawn.

As a corollary of this fragmentation of education and its negative results is the additional fact, which we have outlined above, that Montanism is normally situated firmly as a topic within the study of *Kirchengeschichte* and any links proposed between it and indigenous Anatolian religion are often piecemeal phenomenological parallels. Such a historiographical approach

¹⁰³² This issue is raised by Roller (1999:20-24) with regard to Ramsay.

¹⁰³³ For the fragmentation of theological education see the important study by Farley (1983). Also Bradley & Muller (1995:11-31).

¹⁰³⁴ For an example see Arnold (2005:429-449) who emphasizes the negative aspects of Phrygian religion in an attempt to paint the Galatians as a classic example of a ritualistic and formalist religion.

often falls victim to the *Antike und Christentum* dilemma of viewing pagan religion through isolated ritual or written fragments whilst viewing Christianity as a synthetic whole.¹⁰³⁵

These methodological problems have plagued the study of Montanism, which has tended to place the distorted lens of 'Phrygianism' on-top of the historical evidence for Montanism and over interpret the relationship between the two through what appear to be isolated (though often compelling) similarities.¹⁰³⁶ It is the contention here that this approach, while often producing interesting results, fails to account for difficult methodological issues with regard to the comparative study of ancient religions, particularly as these have been explored by continental European scholars of the history of religions.

In addition to this danger of comparison has been the problematic fact that 'Phrygianism' is firmly and often uncritically situated under the often misleading category of 'mystery religions.'¹⁰³⁷ To quote Samuel Angus as a representative example:

'Two centres of the ancient mysteries, the wild plateau of Phrygia with its emotionalism, and Thrace, the homeland of Dionysiac-Orphic mysteries, have exercised an enormous influence in the religious history of Europe.'¹⁰³⁸

While Angus goes on to qualify his statement by noting that the cults as practised in Phrygia were more integral examples of indigenous Anatolian religion rather than the more exotic and syncretistic 'Phrygianism' as it was developed elsewhere, he still continues to treat the two distinct tropes as a synthetic whole, thus retrospectively applying much later developments both in thought and ritual, onto the less developed elements of indigenous Anatolian religion as they were practised in Phrygia itself.

The result of this is that 'Phrygianism,' has emerged as a classic type of the 'mystery cult' and has been reified into a highly organised and institutionalized 'Church' with an empire wide following.¹⁰³⁹ As a result of this, the highly diverse world of indigenous Anatolian religion has been reduced to a 'catholic' version of 'Phrygianism' exemplified in the celebration of the

¹⁰³⁵ Marksches (2006:17-33).

¹⁰³⁶ For a discussion of such treatments see below pp. 303-306.

¹⁰³⁷ For a very informative discussion of the problems surrounding 'mystery religions' see the fascinating study of Smith (1990) and Iles Johnson (2007:98-111).

¹⁰³⁸ Angus (1975 [1928]:43f.).

¹⁰³⁹ For this language of 'Church' see Angus (1975 [1928]).

Megalensia in Rome as it is recorded in sometimes polemical Latin sources. It hardly needs be said that categorizations of religion from later periods here have been violently imposed upon indigenous Anatolian religion in order to give them more coherence than can be demonstrated or even hypothesized by the evidence.

By the use of such anachronistic typologies and the inappropriate use historical evidence a compelling vision of 'Phrygianism' has come together from the synchronic and typological portraits painted in the synthetic studies of earlier scholars like J.G. Frazer and to a lesser extent Franz Cumont and Richard Reitzenstein.¹⁰⁴⁰ This image, in various forms, has continued well into contemporary scholarship and in order to understand both its use in previous studies and its problematic nature it is important here to define some of its contours in a heuristic typology.

This typology of 'Phrygianism' then can be defined by a number of elements: (1) 'Phrygianism' was an unchanging ahistorical example of a primitive matriarchal religion centred above all on the worship of a Mother Goddess; (2) 'Phrygianism' found its expression in ostentatious and emotive displays of public pageantry including the use of loud cymbals, flutes, and shrieking devotees of the goddess; (3) 'Phrygianism' was marked by its eunuch priests, famed for their cross-dressing, shrill voices, begging and sexual impropriety; (4) 'Phrygianism' was marked by its orgiastic and violent rites of castration, self-mutilation and trance like possession. In addition to these four major aspects of the typology of 'Phrygianism' can be added its corrupting appeal on women (as with all other 'oriental' cults bar Mithraism).

Having drawn the contours of this typology in broad brush strokes, it is important now to survey the pervasive influence of this construction in popular scholarship before turning to the more careful attempts to address the question of Montanism and indigenous Anatolian religion. This can only be done by a brief history of scholarship.

¹⁰⁴⁰ See Cumont (1956 [1911]:46-72); Frazer (1906:161-207); Reitzenstein (1978 [1927]). The latter scholar, however, is cautious about this and does attempt, with modest results, to construct a diachronic analysis of Phrygian religion through time. However, his focus does specifically deal with the development of "Phrygian" cult in Rome itself, rather than its presumed developments within its homeland. For a critique of Reitzenstein and other earlier scholars' methods see Lancellotti (2000:10-29).

5.4 'Phrygianism': a History of Scholarship.

The story of 'Phrygianism' and its rhetorical construction, as we have seen above (and we will see again in more detail below), actually dates to antiquity, and the complex discursive and rhetorical relationships which Graeco-Roman writers had with all things 'oriental.' The theoretical side of this question has been explored well and will not overly concern us here; rather we will look at how such discursive commonplaces have bequeathed to us a problematic view of indigenous Anatolian religion which requires more careful and nuanced study and how the problem of Anatolian religion relates directly to scholarship on Montanism.

While the roots of 'Phrygianism' can be traced to antiquity, it is beginning with the encyclopaedic reconstructions of ancient culture that began to take form from the seventeenth century onwards that a complex of ideas begin to regather around the people and religion of Phrygia, interestingly concurrent with what Said saw as the birth of the modern discourse on 'Orientalism.'¹⁰⁴¹ To give an example of this in English language scholarship it is perhaps best to look at the influential *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry on 'Phrygia,' from the ninth edition edited by Thomas Spencer Baynes and first published in 1823.

Beginning with typical geographical considerations, drawn largely from Strabo and Pliny the Elder, and some amusing attempts to link the Phrygians with one of the many biblical tribes, the entry reads:

'The ancient Phrygians are described as superstitious, voluptuous, and effeminate, without any prudence or foresight, and of such a servile temper, that nothing but stripes and ill usage could make them comply with their duty; which gave rise to several trite and well known proverbs.'¹⁰⁴²

Among these 'proverbs' the author obviously quotes the famous words of Cicero concerning beating slaves cited above.

After going on to various conjectures about 'Phrygian' culture, the writer continues.

¹⁰⁴¹ Said (1979) remains the classic expression and discussion of this matter.

¹⁰⁴² Baynes (1892[1823]:849-953).

‘We have already said, that the Phrygians were superstitious; their idols were consequently very numerous. The chief of these was Cybele, who went by a variety of names. They also worshipped Bacchus under the name *Sabazios*; and his priests they called *Saboi*.’¹⁰⁴³

Not long after this edition, in the handy schoolboy’s *Beeton’s Classical Dictionary*, the author of the entry on Phrygia wrote:

‘The Phryges were, in the Roman times, servile and voluptuous; their music, grave and solemn, as opposed to the gayer Lydian mode, was early borrowed, with the flute, by the Greeks. Phrygia was the chief seat of the worship of Cybele, the mother of the gods, and also noted for the orgies of Bacchus.’¹⁰⁴⁴

This citation does appear in tone as something of an abridgement of the earlier article from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, though the point it makes is clear, these earlier scholars, understandably working from predominantly literary sources attempted admirably to reconstruct a synthetic portrait of what we are calling ‘Phrygianism,’ the result was that a standardized literary *topos*. It would be possible to collect numerous other examples of such synthesizing treatments, however, the point is made clearest by perhaps the most influential of these encyclopedia entries, predictably from W.M. Ramsay.

In his highly influential article in the Hasting’s *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* Ramsay begins by noting that ‘...it is impossible to write any sketch of Phrygian religion without continuous reference to the history and the ethnology of the Phrygian people,’¹⁰⁴⁵ going on to admit that ‘We trace their history by scanty references in the ancient historians, by archaeological remains, and by inscriptions, the sources being all very inadequate.’ Despite this admission, Ramsay’s article goes on to sketch a remarkably imaginative reconstruction of ‘Phrygian religion.’ Beginning with the history of the Phrygian migrations from Thrace Ramsay notes the matriarchal aspects of pre-Phrygian Anatolia, basing his evidence not on any archaeological evidence (for which an abundance was known at the time) but on dubious assertions from a positivistic reading of Homer’s *Iliad*. Going on from this Ramsay jumps

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Beeton (1871:191-192).

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ramsay (1914:900).

between the subjects of ethics, mystery initiations including ritual prostitution and self-mutilation, for which no evidence within Phrygia itself exists, and defining these mysteries as ‘...a single uniform institution at all mystic seats.’¹⁰⁴⁶

His description, which runs to eleven two-column pages, constructs an almost systematic theology of ‘Phrygianism’ and its ritual practices, drawn largely from extremely problematic texts like Hippolytus of Rome concerning the heretical Naasenes,¹⁰⁴⁷ a fertile imagination and perhaps a whiff of Victorian repressed sexuality. The authors cited span the entire chronological and geographical expanse of the ancient Mediterranean, and one is given the distinct impression that Ramsay was being paid by the word.

Ramsay, whose influence has remained steady throughout the twentieth century, exemplifies at a somewhat more considerable length the views found in other nineteenth century encyclopaedias and provides a useful starting point for surveying the use of ‘Phrygianism,’ as a key *topos* in our understanding of the ‘Montanist Milieu’ and from here it is useful to treat its various features thematically.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ramsay (1914:905).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hipp. *haer.* V. On the extreme problems of this passage see the in-depth study of the Naasenes of Lancellotti (2000).

5.5. Elements of 'Phrygianism': (1).

The first feature of 'Phrygianism' according to the typology proposed above is that it was marked by an unchanging ahistorical example of a primitive matriarchal religion centred above all on the worship of a Mother Goddess. This caricature of Phrygian religion, irrespective of the popularity of Cybele in the Anatolian Mid-West,¹⁰⁴⁸ is tied up with the broader issue of what the nineteenth century scholar Bachofen famously labelled as *Mutterrecht*.¹⁰⁴⁹ In his famous *Das Mutterrecht: eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur*, first published in 1861, Bachofen argued that *Mutterrecht* ('Mother Law') was a necessary but primitive stage in the development of all human religions, however, as he notes:

'The matriarchal forms are observed chiefly among the pre-Hellenic peoples and are an essential component of this archaic culture, upon which they set their imprint as much as do patriarchal forms upon Greek culture.'¹⁰⁵⁰

For Bachofen, the key features of this stage of religious development, which even Bachofen admitted were markedly lacking in evidence, were largely exemplified in various myths, for instance:

'...the union of immortal mothers wedded to mortal fathers, the emphasis on maternal property and the name of the maternal line, the closeness of maternal kinship, which gave rise to the term "mother country," to the appellation "motherland," the greater sanctity of female sacrifices, and the inexpiability of matricide.'¹⁰⁵¹

Despite its frequent application to the Phrygians, for instance explicitly by Ramsay,¹⁰⁵² Bachofen was cautious about applying this theory directly to indigenous Phrygian religion (preferring to treat Lycia as a key example), however, this has not stopped other scholars from

¹⁰⁴⁸ For a dated but fairly complete survey of the evidence for the Anatolian Mid-West see Graillot (1912:346-411).

¹⁰⁴⁹ On Bachofen see Stavru (2005:730-33).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Bachofen (1967 [1861]:71).

¹⁰⁵¹ Bachofen (1967 [1861]:71).

¹⁰⁵² Ramsay (1914:908) writes: 'To this old custom the name 'matriarchate' is commonly applied in English, but the name is not correct, and the German term *Mutterrecht* is more suitable to the real character of that early family system. It was not the case that the mother was the ruler, but it was the case apparently that right, law, inheritance, and descent were reckoned in terms of the mother and not of the father, and that influence and freedom of life were a birthright of women.'

doing so, so much so that Lynn Roller and Philip Borgeaud, two important contemporary scholars of the cult of Cybele could both comment on this, the former writing: 'In most of these works after Ramsay, the existence of matriarchy in Anatolia is stated as an apparent fact, with no documentation brought forward in support.'¹⁰⁵³

With regards to the connections between Montanism and Phrygian religion many scholars have taken up this position on Anatolian religion in order to bolster their arguments that the undeniably important role of Prophetesses in early and subsequent Montanism was a direct borrowing from indigenous Anatolian religion, for instance, Brian Goree writes:

'The strongest cultural influence upon the Montanists for including women within the clergy and even the hierarchy came from the pagan religions around them. The sect had its beginning in a milieu where the female principle had been venerated for thousands of years. In the Phrygian form the worship of the Great Mother, the priests of Cybele (the Galli) were eunuchs dressed in women's clothing with long hair fragrant with ointment. In addition, there were numerous priestesses who took part in the cult.'¹⁰⁵⁴

However, perhaps the best example of this tendency to emphasize the *Mutterrecht* theory is Kierstead who wrote, parroting both Ramsay and Bachofen:

'Asia Minor was a matriarchal and matrilineal society. Women played a pivotal role. Ancestry was determined according to the mother's lineage. The mother was the head of the family, and relationships were determined through her. Property was passed to the eldest daughter. Position in society was determined based on the mother's status. Unknown paternity was not a mark of shame. A man identified himself by indicating his name, his mother's name and his female ancestors.'¹⁰⁵⁵

While it would be a disservice to claim that women were merely the silent and passive actors in Phrygian history it would be an equal disservice to push this extreme view on the Phrygian

¹⁰⁵³ Roller (1999:13). Borgeaud (2004:xi-xiv).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Goree (1980:159f.).

¹⁰⁵⁵ Kierstead (1997:63f.).

cults and society of the second century.¹⁰⁵⁶ In lieu of the evidence evinced by Kierstead and others we need to revise how far we push this aspect.

Firstly, the primary evidence adduced by Kierstead and other scholars working in the field is all drawn, via Bachofen, from significantly earlier sources, for instance Herodotus, who wrote in the fifth century BCE in reference to Lycians:

‘They have, however, one singular custom in which they differ from every other nation in the world. They take the mother’s and not the father’s name. Ask a Lycian who he is, and he answers by giving his own name, that of his mother, and so on in the female line. Moreover, if a free woman marry a man who is a slave, their children are full citizens; but if a free man marry a foreign woman, or live with a concubine, even though he be the first person in the State, the children forfeit all the rights of citizenship.’¹⁰⁵⁷

While this might have held true in the Lycia of Herodotus’ day, by the age of the Antonines the matter was quite different. One need only evidence the abundant epigraphic evidence to see that such a reckoning of lineage was anything but common, though it should be noted that in neighbouring Lycia women still seem to have held some prestige.¹⁰⁵⁸

Despite this, the popularity of this theory and its uncritical repetition beginning with Ramsay can be seen in nearly all substantial works on Montanism and the Phrygian cult. Kierstead, Goree, Roche and Klawiter, all take this caricatured notion of matriarchal ‘Phrygianism’ and in turn cite it as a major factor in the growth of Montanism and in particular the high status of women in the movement, to cite Goree again as an example:

‘In addition to being worshipped, the women of Anatolia played a significant role in leading the worship of their societies. In the Hittite culture the queen served as high priestess and, no doubt, women occupied lesser roles in the religious hierarchy as well.

¹⁰⁵⁶ See below pp. 303-306.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Hrd. I.173 [Trans. LCL].

¹⁰⁵⁸ Kearsley (1999:189-211); Roller (1999:11f.).

Women also served as priests and officials in the cult of Cybele and even the men wore women's clothing and hair styles.¹⁰⁵⁹

While this is certainly true in some respects, our evidence for female priests of Cybele during the Antonine era (or indeed in the Roman period generally) is completely absent, and the worship of a feminine deity hardly definitively proves a higher status for women more generally or even in cultic institutions, the mixed image of the effeminate *galli*, combined with the widespread veneration of Cybele being a key example of this.¹⁰⁶⁰

It must be granted that women did hold a number of high ceremonial offices in the various priesthoods of Asia Minor, particularly those of the Imperial Cult, and as indicated in Chapter 2 they seem to have also held high positions in the Jewish synagogues (though whether or not this is purely honorary is open to debate).¹⁰⁶¹ For instance, Kearsley, in a number of articles, has commented on this aspect of civic life, writing in one place:

‘In noting the fact that certain women played a notable and individual role in a variety of fields within the Greek cities of the early imperial period, the lack of evidence that women of all strata of society could or did attain such independence from their domestic context must be emphasised. It was only by virtue of their wealth and their family connections that some women stepped beyond the conventions of social anonymity and domestic fidelity, so clearly defined in the literary sources of the time.’¹⁰⁶²

Other scholars have tended to agree on this point, noting that a dual standard seemed to be applied between women on a basis of wealth and social standing.¹⁰⁶³ That, then, the role of women in Phrygian indigenous religion needs to be the explanation for the high-status of women in Montanism is not a foregone conclusion (nor indeed a likely explanation). Indeed if we take Jerome's claim that Maximilla and Priscilla were of relatively high birth it stands to reason that they might have equally expected to maintain their prophetic office in terms of

¹⁰⁵⁹ Goree (1980:49).

¹⁰⁶⁰ Roller (1999:11f.).

¹⁰⁶¹ On a discussion of women's religion in Asia Minor which includes pagans, Jews and Christians see Trevett (2006:167-273). On the specific issue of women in the Jewish synagogue see Broton (1982); Rajak & Noy (1993:75-93); Trebilco (1991:102-126).

¹⁰⁶² Kearsley (1992:27).

¹⁰⁶³ MacMullen (1980:208-218); Van Bremen (1996).

their social standing, and the earlier tradition of Christian prophetesses in Asia Minor, rather than as a corollary of a proto-feminist strand in indigenous Phrygian cults.¹⁰⁶⁴

Goree's example given above is a general example of the tentative nature of any conclusions about the role of indigenous religion in the role of women in Asia Minor, but it is worth noting that the *Mutterrecht* theory has continued to be pervasive with regard to the overemphasis given to the cults of Cybele and Attis as the example par excellence of Phrygian religion, and the most likely source of Montanist religious fervour.

Elements of 'Phrygianism' 2.

The second key element in the scholarly reconstruction of 'Phrygianism' is that it found its expression in ostentatious and emotive displays of public pageantry including the use of loud cymbals, flutes, and shrieking devotees of the goddess. Here, however, we are on somewhat more solid grounds, at least as regards the rituals of Magna Mater in Rome and here it is worth briefly going through the elements of the annual festivals of the *Megalensia* and the 'Phrygian *Frühlingsfest*.'

The story of the introduction of Magna Mater into the Roman pantheon is well-known and hardly needs an in-depth retelling here. In essence, in 204 BCE during the crisis of the Second Punic War and amidst strange meteorological phenomenon the Sibylline Books were consulted by the Roman augurs and found to prophesy that:

'...if ever a foreign enemy should invade Italy, he could be defeated and driven out if Cybele, the Idaean Mother of the Gods, were brought from Pessinus to Rome.'¹⁰⁶⁵

After the Senate received additional confirmation from the Oracle at Delphi, the Romans proceeded to send a deputation to King Attalus of Pergumum and import the cult of Magna Mater from Pessinus in Galatia in the form of a meteorite.¹⁰⁶⁶ From this time on annual celebrations were held known as the *ludi Megalenses*. It is from this festival that a number of later scholars who explored the links between Montanism and Phrygian religion reconstructed

¹⁰⁶⁴ On women's prophetic religion see the important chapter in Eisen (2000:63-87); Trevett (1996:151-197).

¹⁰⁶⁵ Liv. XXIX.10. [Trans. de Sélincourt].

¹⁰⁶⁶ For an outline of this story and its transformations see Toutain (1909:299-308).

what they called the 'Phrygian *Frühlingsfest*,' and so in order to look at this it is important to give some reconstruction of these festivities.¹⁰⁶⁷ It is also from what we know about these rites, and the eunuch priests who officiated them which we will explore below, that the most characteristic features of 'Phrygianism' have been reconstructed.

In order to understand these rituals, or at least to shed some light on elements of the aetiological and symbolic meaning, it is necessary to take a step back and look briefly at the mythological narratives which underpin these celebrations. While it is dangerous to generalise, it can be said that behind nearly all the rituals of any of the 'mystery cults' can be found some kind of mythological explanation or aetiology.¹⁰⁶⁸ Like all ancient myths however there are various strata of tradition and additional elements introduced over time, and a great deal of debate has gone into what the original core of any such myths is. This can be said equally for the myths of Cybele and Attis, particularly as they related to the mythico-ritual complex of Attis and Cybele.¹⁰⁶⁹ By mythico-ritual complex, we will here adopt the terminology of Ugo Bianchi, who notes:

'...the story of the god, and the nature of the mythical-ritualistic Mystery itself allow us to get an insight into the meaning and consequences of initiation, by means of which the neophyte acquires privileges and is promised happiness in this life and in the life after death.'¹⁰⁷⁰

For the purposes of getting some idea of the mythico-ritual complex surround Attis and Cybele we will work in particular with the text found in the third century Christian writer Arnobius of Sicca and supplemented by the account found in Pausanias which scholars such as Hepding and Toutain have identified as the earliest version of the story.

The key source identified as the core of the Cybele and Attis myth by Hepding is the so-called *hieros logos* of Pessinus in Galatia, the most important centre of the Cybelic cult originally recorded in the third century BCE by Timotheus the Eumolpid.¹⁰⁷¹ While this source does not

¹⁰⁶⁷ Schepeleern (1929:105).

¹⁰⁶⁸ On such theories and their problems see the classic study of Kirk (1974).

¹⁰⁶⁹ For discussions of this see Gasparro (1985) and Lancellotti (2002). Most useful is the short treatment of Toutain (1909:299-308).

¹⁰⁷⁰ Bianchi (1976:2).

¹⁰⁷¹ Burkert (1987:73). For the sources and analysis of this see Hepding (1903:98-122).

survive in its entirety Hepding has quite successfully reconstructed its content in Greek and Latin from the later parallel accounts of Pausanias and Arnobius (and other fragmentary writings).¹⁰⁷²

Timotheus, best known to history as one of the 'religious advisors' of Ptolemy I,¹⁰⁷³ was described by Tacitus as a Eumolpid, that is, a member of the hereditary priesthood of Eleusis. Plutarch calls him an *exegetes*, that is, an interpreter of the rites of the cult of Eleusis. Such an experiential background gives Timotheus' account an important place in narrating and interpreting the public and ancient mystery cult surrounding Attis and Cybele, and from this mythology it is possible to hypothesize both the personal and ritual importance of the praxis of this cult.¹⁰⁷⁴

The work in which the most complete version of this 'Pessinuntine' version of the myth of Attis and Cybele is contained is Arnobius of Sicca's *Adversus Nationes*.¹⁰⁷⁵ This fascinating text, written sometime during the great persecution whilst Arnobius was still a catechumen and allegedly to prove his allegiance to Christianity. The work is a sustained attack on the author's pagan past, but coming from a new convert, and an educated one at that, it becomes an invaluable tool for reconstructing the mythical-ritual complex of the Attis and Cybele cult.

The legend begins,¹⁰⁷⁶ speaking of a rock, named Agdus, in the wilds of Phrygia, originally thrown to the earth by Deucalion and Pyrrha. As is quite typical of many an ancient myth, while Cybele was sitting minding her own business Jupiter arrived to lust after her, and after his romantic overtures were rejected he proceeded to ejaculate on the rock Agdus. The rock Agdus thus conceived and after a gestation of ten lunar months gave birth to the hermaphrodite Acdestis (Agdistis). Acdestis was something of a problem child, having imbedded the poor qualities of both sexes, Arnobius writes:

¹⁰⁷² See Burkert (1987:155 n. 37).

¹⁰⁷³ Tac. *Hist.* IV.83. Plu. *De Is. Et Os.* XXVIII.362a.

¹⁰⁷⁴ On theoretical discussions of this use of *hieros logos* see Burkert (1987).

¹⁰⁷⁵ For background on this author see Quasten (1950b:383-92).

¹⁰⁷⁶ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* V. [Trans. McCracken] cited in Meyer (1987:116-20).

‘Violently he plundered, laid waste, wherever his monstrous spirit led him. He cared not for the gods nor men, now did he think anything more powerful than himself; he despised earth, heaven, and the stars.’¹⁰⁷⁷

Again as a common literary theme in myth a council of the gods was convened in order to decide how to deal with this and Liber acting unilaterally spiked Acdestis’ favourite drinking hole and whilst the hermaphrodite slept tied a rope between his penis and legs so that when Acdestis awoke from his drunken stupor he emasculated himself.

From the diffuse bleeding caused by this act sprung a pomegranate tree complete with fruit and Nanas the daughter of the king (or river) Sangarius, whilst wandering in the Phrygian wilds was most impressed by these delicious looking fruits and placed one down her top. This led to her becoming pregnant, and her father became enraged by this and locked her up in her room with no food as punishment. The Mother of the Gods takes pity on Nanas and sustains her throughout the pregnancy, but when the child is born, Sangarius orders it to be exposed.

The exposed child, again like so many of classical myth, is found by strangers and reared on the milk of a he-goat. Thus the child is named Attis, which is explained etymologically as derived from the Phrygian word for goat, or from the Lydian word for handsome.

Both Cybele and Acdestis naturally fall in love with this enchanting youth, much to the chagrin of King Midas of Pessinus who now arranges for the beautiful youth to marry his daughter. Acdestis storms the wedding in a jealous rage and creates pandemonium amongst the guests, and Attis, himself driven mad runs off into the hills and castrates himself under a pine-tree.

Like Acdestis’ emasculation, the blood from Attis’ produces new flora, this time a violet which wraps itself around the pine-tree. The bride laments the death of her bridegroom and commits suicide. Cybele then takes the body of Attis, along with the pine-tree, back to her cave and together with Acdestis bitterly beats her breasts in lamentation. The myth continues:

‘Jupiter refuses Acdestis’ request that Attis might come back to life. But what is possible by concession of fate, this he grants without objecting: that his body should not decay, that his hair should ever grow, that the very smallest of his fingers should

¹⁰⁷⁷ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* V.

live and alone reacted by continued motion. Satisfied with these favors, Acdestis, it is said, consecrated the body in Pessinus, and honoured it with annual rites and with a sacred ministry.¹⁰⁷⁸

Such a summary gives the broadest outline of the events of the myth, largely bypassing some of the aetiological or naturalistic aspects of it. Arnobius later goes on to outline the ritual elements derived from this myth which we will treat below. A second foundation myth, often referred to as the Lydian version, while interesting is not directly relevant to our purposes here (being unrelated to the mythico-ritual complex we will discuss below).¹⁰⁷⁹ Having now given a broad outline of the mythological narrative behind the cult of Cybele and Attis we must now turn to the rituals themselves, in particular those of the *ludi megalenses* and the Phrygian *Frühlingsfest*.

Our most complete piece of evidence for the public celebration of the *ludi Megalenses* is that contained in the festal calendar inscription of Furius Dionysius Philocalus dated to 354 CE.¹⁰⁸⁰ While this piece of evidence is late, and a great deal of debate has ensued as to when exactly this festal pattern was finalised, it provides us with a convenient outline with which to treat the rituals of the cult of Attis and Cybele as they were best known throughout the empire.¹⁰⁸¹ This calendar also show how the rites of Cybele were celebrated in Rome at a time in which much of the important anti-pagan and heresiological polemic was being written, an aspect which may have fed into the literary constructions of Montanism that we will explore in some detail below.¹⁰⁸²

According to the Philocalus calendar the festival began on March 15th, known as the *Canna intrat*. On this day was celebrated a procession of the entry of the reeds, which were cut from the river Almo, purportedly in commemoration of the early days of Attis' life when he was left exposed among the reeds on the banks of the river Gallus only to be rescued by shepherds.¹⁰⁸³

¹⁰⁷⁸ Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* VII.

¹⁰⁷⁹ For a synoptic account of the Lydian version see Lancellotti (2002:52-60).

¹⁰⁸⁰ *CIL* I² p. 260 sourced from Fishwick (1966:193).

¹⁰⁸¹ What follows is drawn largely from the work of Vermaseren (1977:113-124) with supplementary material from other sources such as Alvar (2008); Borgeaud (2004:90-3); Cumont (1956 [1911]:56f.); Fishwick (1966:193-202); Graillot (1912); Nilson (1967:640-666); Turcan (1996:44-47) and Thomas (1984:1500-1535).

¹⁰⁸² See below pp. 303-306.

¹⁰⁸³ See texts of Julian *Or.* V and Sallustius, IV.

Most sources on this particular aspect of the festival are late, though some are contemporaneous with the calendar of Philocalus. The Emperor Julian (the “Apostate”) noted a connection between the reeds and Attis’ castration, whilst the Byzantine writer John of Lydus speaks of a bull taking part in these processions, being led to sacrifice as a fertility offering (likely a reference to the late practice of the Taurobolium). This part of the rituals was most likely undertaken by the *collegium* of the *cannophori* (‘reed-bearers’) who are evidenced in the Western provinces from the reign of Antoninus Pius (and perhaps earlier).¹⁰⁸⁴ This group was non-exclusive, and contained both male and female and even children as members.¹⁰⁸⁵

Following this was a period of fasting and sexual abstinence, both noted features of Montanism from the early account of Hippolytus of Rome.¹⁰⁸⁶ Both these features were likely long present elements of the cults mythico-ritual complex and are described and justified in some detail by Julian in his *Fifth Oration* and in a very similar way by Sallustius in his *On the Gods and the Cosmos*.¹⁰⁸⁷

For Julian, who as Hepding notes aims to ‘...in seiner fünften Rede ausführlich zu begründen,’¹⁰⁸⁸ the reason for abstaining from certain foods is tied up with cosmogonic and mystical principles. According to his Neoplatonic allegorical reading of the rites,¹⁰⁸⁹ Julian interprets the myth of Attis as the soul of the initiate aiming to attain true knowledge and unity with the first cause Attis, representing the Neoplatonic ‘One,’ by ascending and escaping the ‘prison’ of earthly existence, this can be hampered by eating of fruits of the earth which grow under the earth. In Julian’s allegorical interpretation these fruits growing under the earth incline toward worldly, lower things rather than aspiring to the heavens and beyond (understood here not as spatial dimensions but metaphysical levels), as Julian writes:

¹⁰⁸⁴ Fishwick (1966:193f.).

¹⁰⁸⁵ Thomas (1984:1531).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Hipp. *haer.* XXXIIIf.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Sallustius, *On the Gods and the Cosmos* IV.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Hepding (1903:155).

¹⁰⁸⁹ On the complexity of Neoplatonism see Remes (2008).

‘And so, in the first place, the life-generating god who is our providence does not allow us to use to nourish our bodies fruits that grow under the earth; and thereby enjoins that we turn our eyes towards the heavens, or rather above the heavens.’¹⁰⁹⁰

While it is highly doubtful that Julian’s account was the original interpretation of the fasts it does give us incidental details on the kinds of foods which were considered taboo during this period, which included the abstinence from pork, fish, and most interestingly, as we will see below, root vegetables. Interestingly a fast was not imposed on all forms of meat, an aspect which even Julian felt was in need of some explanation/apology given the Neoplatonic penchant for vegetarianism.

Similarly, the abstention from sexual intercourse, once again a common feature of ‘mystery religions,’ is often considered a feature of the rites during this preparatory period. However, the source most often cited (for instance by Vermaseren) is a description (interestingly enough) by Tertullian in his ‘Montanist’ writing *On Fasting*, is not explicit. In this account he writes:

Tertullian, <i>De ieiunio</i> II.4	Tertullian, <i>On Fasting</i> II.4
<p>4. Xerophagias uero nouum adfectati officii nomen et proximum ethnicae superstitioni, quales castimoniae Apim, Isidem et Magnam Matrem certorum eduliorum exceptione purificant, cum fides libera in Christo ne Iudaicae quidem legi abstinentiam quorundam ciborum debeat, semel in totum macellum ab apostolo admissa, detestatore eorum qui sicut nubere prohibeant, ita iubeant cibis abstinere a deo conditis.¹⁰⁹¹</p>	<p>“Xerophagies, however, (they consider) the novel name of a studied duty, and very much akin to heathenish superstition, like the abstemious rigors which purify an Apis, an Isis, and a Magna Mater, but a restriction laid upon certain kinds of food; whereas faith, free in Christ, owes no abstinence from particular meats to the Jewish Law even, admitted as it has been by the apostle once for all to the whole range of the meat-market- (the apostle, I say,) that detester of such as, in like manner</p>

¹⁰⁹⁰ Julian, *Or.* V.173 B [Trans. Cave].

¹⁰⁹¹ Latin text from *CCEL* XX (1890).

	as they prohibit marrying, so bid us abstain from meats created by God.” ¹⁰⁹²
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The question which follows is whether *castimoniae* here refers specifically to abstention from sexual intercourse, or whether it refers (more likely from the context) to fasting practices. Either way, as the later Neoplatonic interpretations of Sallustius and Julian discussed above indicate, Attis’ physical relationship with the Nymph in Sallustius’ version of the myth (based on elements from Pausanias) was seen as indicative of his having crossed the limits and thus we can surmise that an initiate was likely expected to learn from this the value of sexual abstinence as a means for the purification of the soul on its ascent to the One.¹⁰⁹³

Either way, after this period of abstinence on the 22nd of March came the procession of the entry of the tree (*arbor intrat*). In this an effigy of Attis was attached to a pine-tree decked with purple ribbons and carried in a procession into the temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine. This represented the pine tree under which Attis collapsed after his act of self-castration, with the purple ribbons representing the violets which grew from his scattered blood.¹⁰⁹⁴ Like with regard to the *canna intrat* this duty was undertaken by a *collegium*, in this case the *dendrophori*, who it is said cut the tree before dawn from the sacred pine-wood of the goddess which according to Vermaseren was a part of every *Metroon*.¹⁰⁹⁵

Within Rome, this procession was later joined by priests of Mars, and was marked by the mourning of Attis. This process is described by the fourth century Astrologer convert to Christianity Firmicus Maternus.¹⁰⁹⁶

‘The Phrygians who dwell in Pessinus by the banks of the Gallus River assign the primacy over the other elements to the earth, and maintain that she is the mother of all things. Then, desirous that they too should get themselves a set of annual rites, they proceeded to consecrate with annual lamentations the love affair of a rich

¹⁰⁹² Tertullian *de Ieiunio* II. [Trans. Thelwall].

¹⁰⁹³ On sexual abstinence in Neoplatonism see Brown (1988:178-189).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* V.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Vermaseren (1977:115).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Firmicus Maternus, *The Error of the Pagan Religions* III.1.[Trans. Forbes].

woman, their queen, who chose to avenge in tyrannical fashion the haughty snub that she suffered from her young beloved. In order to satisfy the angry woman, or perhaps trying to find consolation for her after she repented, they advance the claim that he whom they had buried a little while earlier had come to life again; and since the woman's heart burned unbearably with over-weening lover, they erected temples to the dead youth.'

Elsewhere Firmicus takes exception to the 'scientific theories' of Neoplatonists like Julian and Sallustius and makes light of what he sees as the absurdity of the dramatic mourning and symbolic funeral of Attis which takes place during their yearly rites.¹⁰⁹⁷ Once again this ritual mourning has sometimes been seen as important by scholars of Montanism, who believe it may be the basis of the Quintillian rites described by Epiphanius (and perhaps narrated in the hagiography of Theophilus of Ancyra).¹⁰⁹⁸

After this day arrives the most dramatic and often commented on part of the ritual. The day of blood (*dies sanguinis*) was a cause of scandal to Romans and Christians alike.¹⁰⁹⁹ According to the prevailing interpretation it was on this day that the ritual castration of the Phrygian priests took place, described evocatively in a number of sources which we will explore below. Vermaseren also believes (contrary to other scholars) that it was on this day that the specific act of the Taurobolium was performed, a matter to which we will return later.¹¹⁰⁰

This bloody rite of purgation was likely followed by further fasting, before on the morning of the 25th of March the *hilaria* was celebrated. This is universally attested only in later sources, and none without its problems.¹¹⁰¹ Essentially this is normally interpreted as a day of joy celebrating the 'rebirth' or 'resurrection' of Attis (or at least his fingers), for instance, Cumont describes this event as:

'On March 25th there was a sudden transition from the shouts of despair to a delirious jubilation, the Hilaria. With springtime Attis awake from his sleep of death, and the joy

¹⁰⁹⁷ For the entirety of Maternus' polemic see Firmicus Maternus, *The Error of the Pagan Religions* III.1-5.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Epiphanius, *haer.* XLIX.2.3-6. For the 'syncretising' interpretation of this text see Benko (1993:148f.).

¹⁰⁹⁹ For details of this see below pp. 290-302.

¹¹⁰⁰ Vermaseren (1977:115).

¹¹⁰¹ Vermaseren (1977:119).

created by his resurrection burst out in wild merry-making, wanton masquerades, and luxurious banquets.’¹¹⁰²

Within the fourth century Neoplatonists the *hilaria* is given the interpretation of a celebration of the reascent of Attis to the divine sphere, various witnesses between Suetonius and the sixth century Neoplatonist Damascius give various accounts and interpretations,¹¹⁰³ though for the sake of our purpose here it is probably suffice to say that Philocalus’ order is probably substantially correct.

Whether Attis should be represented as a ‘resurrected’ deity has been greatly debated since Frazer published the epoch-making *Golden Bough* in 1890, as has the extent to which Attis can be depicted as a ‘saviour God’ according to some typological patterns.¹¹⁰⁴ Some scholars, such as Lambrechts and Fear, have argued that Attis was only deified and ‘resurrected’ in the second century in response to Christianity,¹¹⁰⁵ and that the figure of Attis was himself only a very late addition to the cult of Cybele.¹¹⁰⁶

However, Gasparro is probably right in dismissing this interpretation and in her assertion that :

‘...Despite late appearance in sources Attis is probably an original figure in the mythico-ritual cycle. His lack of adoption in Greek sources is due to the antipathy felt toward castration and eunuchism generally.’¹¹⁰⁷

The precise meaning of the various mythological strata surrounding Cybele and Attis was bewildering even to the writers of antiquity, who as Sallustius demonstrates, were more than capable of reading their myths on multiple levels. Moreover, the exact meaning and interpretation of ritual elements could quite easily have been lost due to the vicissitudes of time and the transmission of our sources. Despite the synchronic reconstruction above, we do not have anything like the liturgical handbooks of modern worship. In concluding then, it seems fair to follow the cautious (and verbose) conclusion of Gasparro on matters of resurrection and soteriology when she writes:

¹¹⁰² Cumont (1956 [1911]: 57).

¹¹⁰³ For a survey of these writers see Vermaseren (1977:119-121).

¹¹⁰⁴ For a detailed discussion of these questions see the extensive study of Gasparro (1985).

¹¹⁰⁵ Fear (1996:37-50). Lambrechts (1951:44-60).

¹¹⁰⁶ On the late addition of Attis see Bowden (2010:92f.).

¹¹⁰⁷ Gasparro (1985:26).

‘In conclusion, the features peculiar to the character of Attis and his cult allow us to define as mystic: the mythical-ritual complex concerning him, in so far as it is a cult which celebrates a divine vicissitude characterised by a profound pathos, in which the adept participates ritually, establishing a more intense and immediate relationship with the deity. In it there occurs that interaction between the divine, cosmic and human levels in which the destiny of the god and the destiny of man are not identical but enter into a live and deeply felt "sympatheia."’¹¹⁰⁸

In this sense then, while Attis may have been resurrected and had soteriological functions, these can be defined as achieved by worshippers through some kind of ‘*Imitatio Attis*.’ Such a broad conclusion, however unhelpful, is probably all that can be safely drawn from the evidence.

Following the *hilaria*, whatever its explicit meaning, on the 26th of March came the *Requietio*, a day of rest after the wild emotions of the previous nine days. Little is known of this day other than its name. Following this was the final part of the long celebration, the *Lavatio* (bathing), which took place on the 27th of March. This involved the bathing of the statue of Cybele in the Almo river, described by Ovid when he says:

‘There is a place where the smooth Almo flows into the Tiber, and the lesser river loses its name in the great one. There a hoary-headed priest in purple robes washed the Mistress and her holy things in the waters of Almo. The attendants howled, the mad flute blew, and hands unmanly beat the leather drums.’¹¹⁰⁹

This final purification ceremony has been described very well and unproblematically by Turcan, who writes:

‘When they arrived at the banks of the Almo (now the Acquataccio), the high priest, draped in his purple robe, plunged the goddess into this tributary of the Tiber and rubbed her with ashes. The chariot and all the religious furnishings, sacrificial knives and vessels, were also washed. The Mother was asked if she agreed to return to

¹¹⁰⁸ Gasparro (1985:63).

¹¹⁰⁹ Ov. *Fast.* IV.

Rome. We do not know how she replied, but the procession then performed a U-turn to music, under a shower of blossoms, amid dances and pantomimes. Goddess of the earth and harvests, Cybele gave the countryside her blessing for abundant crops.”¹¹¹⁰

This concluded the rites of Cybele and Attis as they had developed by the fourth century as a public celebration in the city of Rome.

It is this wild spring festival which has bequeathed to antiquity the classical image of the cults of Phrygia, despite the fact that a great deal of Roman layering has gathered on top of the original rite. Whether such a rite was practiced in this highly organized form at Pessinus itself is problematic and a question which from the surviving sources cannot be answered. What we do know is that by the second century Pessinus was in something of a decline and evidence for the ornate cultus is entirely restricted to Roman sources. The layering, however, of the various strata of the myth does seem to suggest that we must be cautious about creating a ‘catholic’ form of the rite, or even a core *stratum* free from accretions. In terms of the rhetorical creation of ‘Phrygianism’ this demonstrates clearly that drawing any parallels with Montanism requires that we acknowledge this multi-layered and complex mythico-ritual complex and assess the level each phenomenological element’s geographic and chronological diffusion before engaging in haphazard and anachronistic portraiture. On this note, and bearing the lessons outlined above, it is important now to turn to the third element of the rhetorical complex of ‘Phrygianism;’ the infamous eunuch priests of the goddess.

Elements of ‘Phrygianism’ (3).

As we have already noted in passing above, the third key element in the discursive construction of ‘Phrygianism’ was that it was marked by its eunuch priests, famed for their cross-dressing, shrill voices, begging, sexual impropriety, self-mutilation and interestingly enough their spurious prophecies during what modern anthropologists call ‘possession trance.’¹¹¹¹ This element of ‘Phrygianism’ and its phenomenological attributes have long been

¹¹¹⁰ Turcan (1996:47).

¹¹¹¹ On the matter of ‘Possession trance,’ see the extensive study of Lewis (1989). For a critique of applying ‘possession trance’ comparisons to Montanism and other ancient phenomena see the interesting study of Nasrallah (2003).

seen as the example par excellence for linking Montanism with Phrygian religion,¹¹¹² with various facets of Montanist behaviour being linked with the wild rites of the *Galli* and their disreputable practices.¹¹¹³

What we know about these priests is vague and like all aspects of 'Phrygianism' constructed from a diverse range of sources ranging from pre-history up to Byzantine encyclopaedists, though for our purposes here it will pay to give some outlines of the historical background and discursive construction of the 'Phrygian Eunuch Priest.'

As aforementioned in Chapter 2, the worship of Cybele, as one of the almost ubiquitous mother goddesses of the ancient east, probably dates back to prehistoric times, however, for the purposes of our survey we will bypass the possible (though unlikely) antecedents in Hittite and pre-Hittite Anatolian religions and begin with the cult as it began to manifest itself in classical Athens, for it is here that the discursive construction of the priests of the goddess begins.¹¹¹⁴

The cult of the mother of the gods was introduced into Athens around the sixth century BCE, ostensibly to appease the goddess after the murder of one of her μητραγύρται.¹¹¹⁵ These μητραγύρται were itinerant begging priests, discussed in various fragmentary sources under different titles and briefly in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in a discussion of begging, the latter reading:

'Thus, to say (for you have two opposites belonging to the same genus) that the man who begs prays, or that the man who prays begs (for both are forms of asking) is an instance of doing this; as, when Iphicrates called Callias a mendicant priest (μητραγύρτην) instead of a torch-bearer, Callias replied that Iphicrates himself could not be initiated, otherwise he would not have called him mendicant priest (μητραγύρτης) but torch-bearer; both titles indeed have to do with divinity, but the one is honourable, the other dishonourable.'¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹² Baslez (2009:1-17) ; Benko (1993:137-169); Hirschmann (2005); Schepelern (1929).

¹¹¹³ For a full bibliography of the *Galli* see Sanders' *RAC* entry (1972:984-1034).

¹¹¹⁴ On a brief survey of Hittite Religion see Wright (2004:189-196). For possible links see Hirschmann (2005:62f.).

¹¹¹⁵ Julian, *Or.* V. On the cult of *Meter Theon* in Athens see Borgeaud (2004:11-30); Roller (1999:143-185).

¹¹¹⁶ Arist. *Rhet.* III.2.10. Also, for a later description see Ap. *Met.* VIII.24.

Already, then, at this early juncture the priests of Cybele, as presented in literary form, were depicted as beggars involved in some form of initiations who were viewed as somewhat beyond the pale of acceptable civic religious life, as Burkert concludes ‘...they were often treated with contempt.’¹¹¹⁷

It is also at this early stage that the traditional iconographic portrait of the Mother of the gods becomes standardized and it is through this standard portrait that we can begin to see evidence for a second aspect of the literary picture of her priests, that of the raucous theatricality of their processions. Bowden describes this iconography succinctly as:

‘The iconography of the Mother of the Gods developed through the sixth century and reached a more or less fixed form by around 500 B.C. She is depicted in Greek art sitting on a throne; she has a *phiale*, a shallow dish used for libations, in her right hand, and a *tympanum*, a drum like a large tambourine, in her left; she usually has a lion beside her.’¹¹¹⁸

Along with this iconographic portrait can be compared the words of the *Homeric Hymn to Meter Theon*, part of which reads:

‘Sing to me, clear-toned Muse, daughter of great Zeus, of the Mother of all gods and all human beings; she takes pleasure in resounding of castanets and tympana and the roar of flutes, the cry of wolves and bright-eyed lions, the echoing mountains and the wooded glens. And so I salute you in song, and all the goddesses together.’¹¹¹⁹

Despite, then, these early associations with musically raucous processions and begging no image, however, of an explicitly eunuch priests emerges until the Hellenistic period, and it is this absence which has led scholars to see Attis as a later accretion in the mythic-ritual complex of Cybele mentioned above.¹¹²⁰ At this time we find a series of the epigrams preserved in the *Palatine Anthology* which mark the beginning of the composite portrait which was to endure well into late antiquity.¹¹²¹

¹¹¹⁷ Burkert (1987:35).

¹¹¹⁸ Bowden (2010:84).

¹¹¹⁹ h. Hom. *Mo*. [Trans. Bowden].

¹¹²⁰ Bowden (2010:92f.).

¹¹²¹ For a complete study of these epigrams and their literary history see Cameron (1993).

Around six of these epigrams describe these eunuch priests by an almost identical story involving a *Galli* taking shelter in a cave and then being forced to chase away a marauding lion by clashing his loud cymbals. In these stories these priests of Cybele are described as:

‘The priest of Rhea, when taking shelter from the winter snow-storm he entered the lonely cave, had just wiped the snow off his hair, when following on his steps came a lion, devourer of cattle, into the hollow way. But he with outspread hand beat the great tambour he held and the whole cave rang with sound. Nor did that woodland beast dare to support the holy boon of Cybele, but rushed straight up the forest-clad hill, in dread of the half-girlish servant of the goddess, who hath dedicated to her these robes and this his yellow hair.’¹¹²²

This literary image, of an effeminate *gallus*, with colourful robes and dyed hair, in addition to the already established imagery of the begging μητραγύρτης, served to create a new literary *topos*. Elsewhere in the epigrams this *gallus* (under various names) is described as ‘...a begging priest of Cybele.’¹¹²³ His behaviour is described as ‘...goaded by fury of the dreadful goddess, tossing his locks in wild frenzy, clothed in woman’s raiment with well-plaited tresses and a dainty netted hair-caul, a eunuch,’¹¹²⁴ who, when confronted with the lion ‘...uttered from his lips the piercing shriek they use, and tossed his whirling locks, and holding up his great tambour.’¹¹²⁵ From these epigrams onward, the literary construction of the effeminate *gallus*, shrieking and beating his drum becomes a standard literary fixture, destined to become particularly popular amongst Latin writers.

Most of our descriptions of the *galli*, which all to some extent follow this standard imagery, arise during the first century B.C.E, following the dramatic arrival of Cybele in Rome in 204 B.C.E. and the subsequent establishment of her cult as a permanent fixture in the Palatine and the annual celebration both of the *megalensia* in April and the Spring Festival in March.¹¹²⁶ The stories regarding the introduction of the cult of Magna Mater have been detailed above, however, what concern us more are the references to her cult and in particular the processions

¹¹²² AP VI.217.

¹¹²³ AP VI.218.

¹¹²⁴ AP VI.219.

¹¹²⁵ Loc. cit.

¹¹²⁶ On Cybele in Rome see the important articles of Beard (1994:164-190) and Alver (2008:240f.).

as they are evidenced in Rome itself.¹¹²⁷ Most of these cultic references, while not exclusively, occur in Latin poetic sources and these are worth surveying.

Ovid, a poet fond of bawdy and erotic themes, writing during the first century B.C.E. describes the beginnings of the *Megalensia* festival, celebrated annually in honour of Magna Mater:

‘Let the sky turn three times on its axis,
Let the Sun three times yoke and loose his horses,
And the Berecynthian flute will begin sounding
Its curved horn, it will be the Idaean Mother’s feast.
Eunuchs will march, and sound the hollow drums,
And cymbal will clash with cymbal, in ringing tones:
Seated on the soft necks of her servants, she’ll be carried
With howling, through the midst of the City streets.’¹¹²⁸

This same annual event, is described elsewhere in a number of sources. Lucretius, the atheistic and highly sceptical Epicurean, writing around the same time as Ovid concerning his atomistic cosmology writes:

‘The Galli come: And hollow cymbals, tight-skinned tambourines
Resound around to bangings of their hands;
The fierce horns threaten with a raucous bray;
The tubed pipe excites their maddened minds
In Phrygian measures; they bear before them knives,
Wild emblems of their frenzy, which have power
The rabble's ingrate heads and impious hearts
To panic with terror of the goddess' might.
And so, when through the mighty cities borne,
She blesses man with salutations mute,
They strew the highway of her journeyings
With coin of brass and silver, gifting her

¹¹²⁷ For the introduction of Magna Mater into Rome see Liv. XXIX.10.4-11.8.

¹¹²⁸ Ovid, *Fasti* IV.

With alms and largesse, and shower her and shade
With flowers of roses falling like the snow
Upon the Mother and her companion-bands.
Here is an armed troop, the which by Greeks
Are called the Phrygian Curetes.¹¹²⁹

The image then, cuts across literary genres, featuring as a theatrical character, a myth for allegorical interpretation, or as the topic of risqué poetry.

Just as the Phrygian eunuch could cross literary genres, so too could he/she cross genders (or be totally without gender).¹¹³⁰ Most famous of all these references from the late Republic is Catullus' *Poem* LXIII, which evocatively describes the madness and castration of a *Galli*, and a subsequent shift in grammatical gender taking place dramatically with the implementation of his castration:

'Plunging toward Phrygia over violent water
Shot on wood-slung Berecynthian coast
Attis with urgent feet treads the opaque ground
Of the Goddess, his wits fuddled, stung with phrenetics
Itch, slices his testicles off with a razor-flint,
Sees the signs of new blood spotting
The earth, knows arms, legs, torso, sans male members and
SHE
Ecstatically snatches in delicate hands
The hand-drum of Cybebe, the hand-drum
Of forest rites and Cybebe's torture
With nervous fingers taps the hollowed hide
Shakes it and shaking summons the Mother's brood.'¹¹³¹

By this time, then, the figure of the effeminate *gallus*, both as a sight in Rome and as a popular figure of Latin literature was extremely well attested, so much so that in describing the

¹¹²⁹ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* II.614-625. [trans. Leonard].

¹¹³⁰ On this see Roller (1997:542-559); Roscoe (1996:195-230).

¹¹³¹ Catul. LXIII. [Trans. Whigham].

Augustan period Suetonius, in his typical sensationalist style, could tell of the mirth of the crowded theatre as Augustus' young effeminacy was compared to that of a *gallus*:

'One day at the Theatre an actor came on stage representing a eunuch priest of Cybele, the Mother of the Gods; and, as he played his timbrel, another actor exclaimed:

'Look, how this invert's finger beats the drum!'

Since the later phrase could also mean, 'Look how this invert's finger sways the world!' the audience took the line for a hint at Augustus and broke into enthusiastic applause.'¹¹³²

By the first century C.E. the use of this literary *topos*, however, was not confined to Latin writers, for instance, Dionysus of Halicarnassus, a much more matter-of-fact author writing in Greek records the rites performed at Rome and their disapproval:

'The rites of the Idaean goddess are a case in point; for the praetors perform sacrifices and celebrated games in her honour every year according to the Roman customs, but the priest and priestess of the goddess are Phrygians, and it is they who carry her image in procession through the city, begging alms in her name according to their custom, and wearing figures upon their breasts and striking their timbrels while their followers play tunes upon their flutes in honour of the Mother of the Gods. But by a law and decree of the senate no native Roman walks in procession through the city arrayed in a parti-coloured robe, begging alms or escorted by flute-players, or worships the god with the Phrygian ceremonies. So cautious are they about admitting any foreign religious customs and so great is their aversion to all pompous display that is wanting in decorum.'¹¹³³

Of course, not all such first century C.E. descriptions were as matter-of-fact as that of Dionysus, and the wild ecstasies of these immigrant priests continued to draw attention in other literary genres.

¹¹³² Suet. *Aug.* LXVIII [Trans. Graves].

¹¹³³ D.H. II.19 [Trans. LCL].

Juvenal in his *Satires* continues the more disparaging aspects of this literary image. Juvenal is (predictably) more biting in his phraseology, revealing something of the ‘cultured xenophobia’ which was a hallmark of the first century Roman intelligentsia,¹¹³⁴ mocking his countrymen for the ‘...Phrygian act they baulk at – slashing off that useless member.’¹¹³⁵ Elsewhere he provides another standardized picture of a *gallus* in Rome:

‘...Now here come the devotees of frenzied Bellona, and Cybele, Mother of the Gods, with a huge eunuch, a face for lesser obscenities to revere. Long ago, with a sherd, he lopped his soft genitals; now neither the howling rabble nor all the kettledrums can out shriek him. A Phrygian mitre tops his plebeian cheeks.’¹¹³⁶

Here we see enter into this image another key theme, that is that of the literary syncretisation of Cybele with other similar goddesses, in this case Bellona, an equally controversial Roman goddess most often cited in classical literature for the bloody self-mutilation or ‘slashing’ of her devotees. A good example of Bellona’s reputation can be found in the first century B.C.E. poet Tibullus, who’s first *Elegy* reads:

‘Thus runs the God’s commandment, this Bellona’s high-priestess
With utterance inspired prophesied to me.
When in trance, possessed and shaken by the goddess,
She fears no roaring flame or flailing scourge,
Slashes he own arms in frenzy with a double axe,
Unscathed soaks the image in a stream of blood,
And standing there with wounded breast and skewered flank
Chants Bellona’s warning oracles...’¹¹³⁷

This literary syncretism of the two goddesses was to become a marked feature of Latin descriptions of the Cybele cult, and has led to later scholars often uncritically combining of the different bloody acts of the Bellona cult (cutting with double axes) with those of the Cybele cult

¹¹³⁴ For a classic but still useful discussion of Roman ‘xenophobic’ attitudes see Baldson (1979).

¹¹³⁵ Juv. II.115.

¹¹³⁶ Juv. VI.512-516.

¹¹³⁷ Tib.I.6.43-50 [Trans. Lee].

(castration with a pottery sherd).¹¹³⁸ This reputation for bloody forms of self-mutilation was to play a key role in later Christian polemic against the rites of Cybele, and may have contributed to the portraits of Montanism found in the heresiological sources.

Of course it was not just these ostentatious and at times violent public displays which drew the Roman ire, like proverbial stories which circulated about the Jews of Rome,¹¹³⁹ the *galli* were often associated with disreputable practices in pursuit of money, preying in particular on the proverbial gullible Roman matron. For instance Juvenal writes mockingly that 'Rich ladies send out to hire their own tame Phrygian prophet,'¹¹⁴⁰ in order for him to woo crowds with cheap parlour tricks, a feature we will return to below.

With all their associations with dishonesty and effeminacy it comes as no surprise that the violation of the Romans' often-prudish sexual *mores* came to play another key part in the slanders against the *galli*, perhaps the most explicit example being one of the first century poet Martial's infamous (and often untranslated) epigrams:

'What, licking women down inside there, Gallus?
The thing you should be sucking is a phallus.
They cut your cock off, but not so to bed,
Cunt-lover: what needs doctoring now's your head.
For while your missing member can't but fail,
Your tongue still breaks Cybele's rule, it's male.'¹¹⁴¹

Martial was not the only writer to describe the reputed sexual proclivities of the *Galli*, with Apuleius in his normal suggestive fashion describing the drunken escapades and attempted rape of a well-endowed young man by a troupe of itinerant begging *Galli* before his protagonist, the brave ass, saves the day by raising the alarm with a 'He...Haw...He...Haw.'¹¹⁴²

¹¹³⁸ This is clearly a tendency in Graillot (1912:126). See also Vermaseren (1977:115f.).

¹¹³⁹ For instance those told by Josephus concerning the expulsion of Jews from Rome under Tiberius see J. A. J. XVIII.81-84.

¹¹⁴⁰ Juv. VI.585.

¹¹⁴¹ Mart. III.81 [Trans. Pembroke].

¹¹⁴² Apul. *Met.* VIII.29-30 [Trans. Lindsay].

Almost synonymous with accusations of sexual perversity in any rhetorical context we can equally expect to find accusations of violence, and again in literary terms the *Galli* were again proverbial not only for their wild dancing and cacophonous parades, but also for the sheer violence of their rites and for purported self-mutilation. For instance Apuleius further describes the performances of his perverted *Galli* in Syria:

‘Every now and then they dug their teeth into their own flesh; and as finishing effect each man slashed his arms with the two-edged sword that he flourished. There was one of them pre-eminently ravished with religious ecstasy. Panting out deep sighs from his heaving breast as if filled to bursting with the divine breath, he acted the part of a raving lunatic – as though the presence of the gods did not raise many above himself but depressed him into disease and disorder...With a babbling parade of inspiration the fellow began testifying against himself, pouring out a deal of idiocies about the way in which he sinned the Inexpiable sin, and calling upon his own hands to take vengeance upon him.’

After describing this self-flagellation, Apuleius writes:

‘You could see the ground thickly sprinkled with the epicene blood that gushed from the sword-cuts and whip-weals.’

While this description describes a distinctly Syrian cult, the aforementioned uncritical syncretism of various orgiastic goddesses and cults meant that its applicability to the rites of Cybele elsewhere has been taken for granted, though all the same it remains possible that the *dies sanguem* of the annual Spring Festival at Rome may have contained similar spectacles.¹¹⁴³

While it is almost certainly a later development of the cult, it is important to mention here the Taurobolium, a veritable blood baptism described in great detail in the later Christian writer Prudentius, who writes:

‘... Yes, in order to sanctify himself, the chief priest wears a peculiar band on his head, his temples bound with sacrificial fillets for the rite and, moreover, his hair fastened in a golden crown, in a silk rob belted in the Gabine fashion [round the waist] he is

¹¹⁴³ For a discussion of these sources see Graillot (1912:126f.) and Hepding (1903:160f.).

lowered into a trench dug deep underground. Over his head they construct a scaffold of criss-cross planking, leaving spaces open between the joints and then in many places they cut or bore through the surface to make a large number of holes in the wood with a sharp point so that many little openings are left visible. To this place an enormous bull with a fierce and shaggy forehead is led in procession hung with garlands of flowers across his shoulders or around his horns, while the victim's forehead gleams with gold and the shine of the plate reflects his bristles. The brute beast to be sacrificed is placed in position and they tear open his chest with a consecrated hunting-spear. The wide wound spurts out a stream of hot blood which pours in a steaming flood onto the plank scaffolding below and spreads out in a wide and seething pool. Then it seeps in a shower through the numerous holes formed by the thousand gaps and drips down in a foul dew which the priest buried beneath welcomes, bowing his filthy head to take every drop, his clothes and his entire body made rotten. He even throws back his head, presents his cheeks to the stream, puts his ears under it, his nose, his lips and bathes his very eyes in the flow. ..¹¹⁴⁴

The history of this violent rite has been the subject of a great-deal of controversy, though it seems almost certain that it was a development not present in a cultic form until at least the Antonine period and not common until the aristocratic pagan revivals of the fourth century which drew Prudentius' and a number of other Christian writers' ire.¹¹⁴⁵ It can be stated quite emphatically that there is no positive evidence that the cult was practiced with regard to Cybele in Asia Minor, despite the claims of Rutter.

Indeed, as time progressed the bloody and violent nature of these pagan rites was to be emphasized with a greater amount of detail, particularly in Christian writers like Arnobius of Sicca, Prudentius and Firmicus Maternus, and the various pseudonymous or anonymous anti-pagan Latin writings of the late fourth century.¹¹⁴⁶ However, before turning to the adoption of these common places by Christian apologists and polemicists, it is important to note a further

¹¹⁴⁴ Prudentius, *Peristephanon* X.1010-1040 [Trans. Croke & Harries].

¹¹⁴⁵ On the Taurobolium see Duthoy's (1969) excellent study and Rutter (1968:226-249); though with reservations about the origins of this practice in Asia Minor. On the Fourth-Century Taurobolium spoken of by Prudentius see McGlynn (1996:312-330).

¹¹⁴⁶ For an excellent collection of these sources see Croke & Harries (1982:73-97).

aspect already alluded to above, that is, the association of the priests of Cybele with prophecy (often of a spurious nature).

Despite the relatively positive image of the *galli* as political go-betweens in Polybius' historical account of their prophetic activities during Manlius' eastern campaigns,¹¹⁴⁷ the reputation of the prophetic elements within the cult of Cybele, like related itinerant prophets, was shady at best. As Plutarch, a priest and apologist for the oracle of Delphi wrote:

'However, the thing that most filled the poetic art with disrepute was the tribe of wandering soothsayers and rogues that practised their charlatanry about the shrines of the Great Mother and of Serapis, making up oracles and using their own ingenuity, others taking by lot from certain treatises oracles for the benefit of servants and womenfolk, who are most enticed by verse and poetic vocabulary. This, then, is not the least among the reasons why poetry, by apparently lending herself to the service of tricksters, mountebanks, and false prophets, lost all standing with truth and the tripod.'¹¹⁴⁸

That Plutarch wasn't the only first century figure to view these itinerant prophets with some suspicion has already been demonstrated by the comments of Juvenal above, and elsewhere Apuleius speaks of the *galli* in the *Metamorphosis* as fooling a farmer by '...means of some fortune telling roguery.'¹¹⁴⁹ However, though it is not until the second century that we see a combination of the traditional features of the *galli* being associated with an explicit charlatan figure, here the infamous Alexander of Abonoteichos.

The second century saw a number of writers taking aim at excessive religious practices, of particular importance here Lucian of Samosata and Celsus. Lucian's *Alexander the Oracle-Monger* is a biting satire on the historical figure of Alexander of Abonoteichos, and leaves little to the imagination with regard to the kind of polemic surrounding spurious itinerant prophets at this time. Among Lucian's various other literary descriptions, many of which bear a remarkable similarity to those launched at the *galli* and Montanus, Alexander is described for his ostentatious appearance:

¹¹⁴⁷ Plb., XXI.26.6; 37.5.

¹¹⁴⁸ Plu, *De. Pyth. Orac.* 407c. [Trans. LCL].

¹¹⁴⁹ Apul. *Met.* VIII.29.

‘Alexander meanwhile went on in advance; he had now grown his hair and wore it in long curls; his doublet was white and purple striped, his cloak pure white; he carried a scimitar in imitation of Perseus, from whom he now claimed descent through his mother.’¹¹⁵⁰

Equally, his attempts at publicity are described as ‘...like the fanatics who collect money in the name of Cybele, he climbed on to a lofty altar and delivered a harangue, felicitating the city upon the advent of the God now to bless them with his presence.’¹¹⁵¹ Lucian further draws on the poor reputation of the *galli* by describing the kind of fraudulent and theatrical religious gestures which impressed Paphlagonians writing:

‘...They were mostly superstitious and well-to-do; one had only to go there with someone to play the flute, the tambourine, or the cymbals, set the proverbial mantic sieve a-spinning, and there they would all be gaping as if he was a God from heaven.’

¹¹⁵²

For in Lucian’s purportedly sober and sensible mind the rabble were little better than sheep,¹¹⁵³ and thus the kind of religious trickery common amongst the *Galli* and depicted with regard to Alexander were perfect for fooling the rabble unawares.

Of course Lucian was not the only writer of the second century lamenting these ostentatious prophetic figures roaming from city to city, and their prophecies of doom or downright charlatanism.

Celsus, or what has survived of him in Origen’s Christian refutation, is equally scathing of various prophets and mocks the Christians for their similarity with the excessive cults of Cybele and other foreign gods, writing:

‘...anyone who believes without testing a doctrine is certain to be deceived. We have plenty of examples in our own time: the sniveling beggars of Cybele, the soothsayers,

¹¹⁵⁰ Lucianus. *Alex.* XI.

¹¹⁵¹ Lucianus. *Alex.* XIII.

¹¹⁵² Lucianus. *Alex.* IX.

¹¹⁵³ Lucianus. *Alex.* XV.

the worshippers of Mithras and Sabazius; those gullible believers in the apparitions of Hecate, and assorted other gods.’¹¹⁵⁴

From these various sources, then, it is clear that pagan writers had a clearly constructed idea of the excessive ‘Phrygian’ religion, though its applicability outside Rome or its practice in Asia Minor itself is almost completely silent. Indeed, from what little evidence survives, the *galli* still seem to have enjoyed a respected social status within their homeland.¹¹⁵⁵

Cybele in Christian Writers.

Of course the polemic does not stop with these classical writers, but filters almost unchanged into the anti-pagan polemics of the earliest Christian apologists.¹¹⁵⁶ In the second century the fiery Tatian the Assyrian mocks the myth of Cybele by writing:

‘And, besides, how are those beings to be worshipped among whom there exists such a great contrariety of opinion? For Rhea, whom the inhabitants of the Phrygian mountains call Cybele, enacted emasculation on account of Attis, of whom she was enamoured.’¹¹⁵⁷

For Tatian, the complete ambiguity of pagan religion told against its veracity, and the sheer madness of the *galli*’s acts provided a key trope. Tatian’s teacher, Justin Martyr, could make equal claims, following earlier writers of drawing a link between the *galli* and sexual perversion writing:

‘And there are some who prostitute even their own children and wives, and some are openly mutilated for the purpose of sodomy; and they refer these mysteries to the mother of the gods.’¹¹⁵⁸

Similarly Theophilus of Antioch is keen to draw attention to the utter depravity of a cult which demanded ritual castration, writing:

¹¹⁵⁴ Cels. *Apud Origenum*. VII.4-5[Trans. Hoffmann].

¹¹⁵⁵ Bowden (2010:96-98).

¹¹⁵⁶ On the apologists see Grant (1988).

¹¹⁵⁷ Tat. *orat.* VIII.2 [Trans. Ryland].

¹¹⁵⁸ Just. *1 apol.* XVII.

‘And if you speak of the mother of those who are called gods, far be it from me to utter with my lips her deeds, or the deeds of those by whom she is worshipped (for it is unlawful for us so much as to name such things), and what vast taxes and revenues she and her sons furnish to the king.’¹¹⁵⁹

Numerous other sources could be sourced on this popular topic for abusing pagans,¹¹⁶⁰ though the intention is clear, the Cybele cult and its well-known excesses, whether rhetorical or factual, provided a useful tool for *ad hominem* arguments against pagans.

Amongst the Latin Fathers, all of whom were products of a classical education, the *topos* of the effeminate *Galli* and the cult of Cybele continued to be particularly powerful rhetorical tools against pagan religion.¹¹⁶¹ Tertullian’s frequent attacks on the *galli* were to start a long tradition of critique culminating in Jerome’s designation of the Mother of the gods as the ‘Mother of the Demons,’¹¹⁶² whilst the former’s near-contemporary Minucius Felix, in his fictional dialogue the *Octavius* could write:

‘I am embarrassed to mention Dindymus sacred to Cybele; ugly old crone that she was (as well she might be, being after all the mother of a large number of gods), she failed in her efforts to seduce her own paramour, whom, unluckily for him, she found attractive. And so she castrated him – her object must have been to make a eunuch-god! Because of this legend her Galli go so far as to sacrifice the virility of their own bodies in their worship of her. These are no longer sacred rites; they are tortures.’¹¹⁶³

Here Minucius’ Christian Octavius is mocking the pagans earlier claims concerning the moral excellence of the cult of Cybele established from its foundational myth, a theme to which Augustine was to return to at some length in his famous *Civitas Dei*.¹¹⁶⁴

As the final literary skirmishes took place in the late fourth century between pagans and Christians such figures as Ambrose and Symmachus,¹¹⁶⁵ Christian polemicists savoured in

¹¹⁵⁹ Thphl. Ant. *Autol.* I.10; see also I.9.

¹¹⁶⁰ For a useful collection of ‘Christian’ sources see n. 1252.

¹¹⁶¹ On this see Fear (1996:37-50). Sanders (1978:1062-1091).

¹¹⁶² Jerome, *Commentary on Hosia* I.4.14. On this theme see Dölger (1941:72).

¹¹⁶³ Minucius Felix, *Octavius* XXII.4.

¹¹⁶⁴ For the numerous references in Augustine see Fear (1996:27-50).

¹¹⁶⁵ On this period see Chuvin (1990). Markus (1990:21-43).

making increasingly disparaging references to the cult of Cybele and other so-called 'mystery religions,' so much so that Fear has suggested, quite plausibly, that the cult of Cybele may have become a centre piece of the last flourishing of paganism amongst the Roman aristocracy, a contention certainly supported by the Neoplatonic commentaries of Julian and Sallustius discussed above.¹¹⁶⁶

By this time, however, the polemic had, like in early Latin poetic writers, been largely fossilized into a standard literary pastiche with little development. Indeed, by the time of Augustine, of whom Vermaseren writes 'the ancient motif of the *galli* is one of St Augustine's favourite topics,'¹¹⁶⁷ the ideas had become time worn and largely unoriginal. Only Prudentius, with language which has seen him labelled both the Christian Virgil and the Christian Juvenal,¹¹⁶⁸ could breath any life into the these unoriginal *topoi*, contributing both his bloody poem on the Taurobolium, and his fascinating poetic depiction of the ritual-branding of the priests of Cybele which reads:

'Why speak of seals and marks of consecration here?

The pagans thrust fine needles into blazing fire

And when red hot they brand their members

With the darts

Whatever portion of the body is thus stamped,

Thus they believe is rendered holy by the mark.

When from his mortal frame the breath of life

Departs,

And to his sepulchre the sad procession moves,

On these same parts thin plates of metal are impressed.

A sheen of gold all shining overspreads the skin

And hides the portions by the fiery needles burned.

These sufferings the pagans are compelled to bear,

¹¹⁶⁶ Fear (1996:27-50).

¹¹⁶⁷ Vermaseren (1977:181).

¹¹⁶⁸ Marie (1962:41-52).

These writes the gods impose upon idolaters:
Thus Lucifer makes sport of those he has ensnared;
And brands their wretched bodies with tormenting fires.¹¹⁶⁹

And so by the late fourth century, almost contemporary (and sometimes by the same authors) as the most detailed of the heresiological accounts were coming to the fore, we have phenomenologically similar themes taking pride of place in the polemics against the now retreating pagans. This brings us then, to the evidence for Montanus' pagan credentials, which we will explore before looking at the broader *Religionsgeschichte* parallels proposed as pagan influences on Montanism.

¹¹⁶⁹ Prudentius, *Peristeph.* X.1076-1090 [Trans. Eagan].

5.6. Montanus the Pagan Priest.

The image painted of Montanus within the literary polemics against Montanism is at times strikingly similar to that painted of the *galli*, and to any literary reader of antiquity these parallels would have helped to solidify the rhetorical purpose of these authors in blackening Montanus as a dangerous charlatan and false prophet.

Montanus was ‘a certain recent convert’ (τινὰ τῶν νεοπίστων) according to the earliest sources and is later described condescendingly by Jerome as a ‘...a castrated half-man’ (*abscisum et semivirum*).¹¹⁷⁰ A near contemporary source, the fourth century anonymous anti-Montanist dialogue, makes a similar explicit claim that Montanus was ‘...a priest of Apollo,’¹¹⁷¹ whilst Didymus the Blind calls him a ‘...priest of idols.’¹¹⁷²

If these more explicit claims were not enough, in one of our earliest sources, the Montanists are chastised for a number of strikingly similar practices found among the eunuchs of Latin literature, Apollonius writes:

‘Tell me, does a prophet dye his hair? Does a prophet paint his eyelids? Does a prophet love ornaments? Does a prophet play at dice-boards with dice? Does a prophet lend money at usury? Let them admit where these things are right or not, and I will show that they have been done among them.’¹¹⁷³

The question which arises from these references then, and which has received various answers over time, is whether these are veiled references to Montanus’ earlier, or continuing involvement, as a *galli*?

As we have seen the image of the *semiviri*, the proverbial ‘half-man’, had already had a long-life in the Latin literature of antiquity which Jerome, at least before being chastised by God in a dream, so cherished,¹¹⁷⁴ and so it is not surprising that he uses this term on purely stylistic grounds, perhaps intending to inflict no slur or pagan associations upon Montanus.

¹¹⁷⁰ Jerome, *Ep.* XLI.4.

¹¹⁷¹ *Debate of a Montanist and an Orthodox Christian*. Text and translation in Heine (1989:123).

¹¹⁷² Didym. *Trin.* III.

¹¹⁷³ Euseb. *h.e.* V.18.11 [Trans. Heine].

¹¹⁷⁴ On this amusing episode see Jerome, *Ep.* XXII.30.

This said, it is equally unsurprising that he chooses such a rhetorically loaded designation and indeed one which, given Montanus' Phrygian heritage, a literary reader could not help but draw certain conclusions. The evidence is equally stacked each way, and finding a solution to this question remains difficult.

What has further puzzled scholars (though in reality it need not have) is the relation between Jerome's closeted remarks and the more open condemnations of the Anonymous anti-Montanist dialogue and Didymus the Blind. How could Montanus be both a priest of Apollo and of Cybele? Of course as we have seen above with regard to epigraphic evidence,¹¹⁷⁵ this is hardly an antinomy in the ancient world, and that it should be a problem shows something of the problematic view of religious exclusivity which modern religious conceptions can bring to the fore. While Hirschmann has demonstrated clearly that it was perfectly acceptable to be both,¹¹⁷⁶ the combining of evidence from Jerome and the others may perhaps be more demonstrative of the Christian polemicists syncretising of pagan cults into one composite picture of ritual atrocity.

More problematic is the evidence cited above from Apollinarius about the effeminate appearance of Montanus. While this is certainly possible, and would perhaps provide a context the Tertullian's later seeming embarrassment and concerns for dress-standards, it seems more sensible here, appealing to what had been said of Alexander of Abonoteichos above, to see this as borrowing from the already established image of the begging charlatan prophets of Cybele in order to blacken an opponent. That the issue of the 'false prophet' is a key topos in early heresiological anti-Montanist literature we will see below in Chapter 6, however, that pagan associations could play a part in this rhetoric seems an equally plausible suggestion to that proposed by Hirschmann. Here Stewart-Sykes seems to have the stronger argument noting:

'Given the extensive role which prophetic religion, particularly connected to the cult of Apollo, played in rural Phrygia in the period, the charge of pagan prophecy laid against the Montanists was perhaps an obvious one. It is beyond the evidence to go into the question of what influence the practice of the shrines had on the new prophecy;

¹¹⁷⁵ See above pp. 83-96.

¹¹⁷⁶ Hirschmann (2005:142).

although a degree of syncretism is always possible, given the wide distribution of Montanism it is unlikely that the influence was significant.¹¹⁷⁷

Whatever the case may be Hirschmann and others have made intriguing arguments for the particularly 'pagan' nature of Montanus' prophesying, the former writing:

Demgegenüber steht das montanistische Verständnis des Kontaktes zwischen Gott und Prophet in direktem Contrast. Charakteristisch für den Umgang zwischen Mensch und Gott ist das bei Epiphanius (48,4ff.) wiedergegebene Orakel des Montanus, in dem er den Menschen mit einer Leier vergleicht.¹¹⁷⁸

While this may be the case, the argument for a strong separation between Montanist prophecy and that of other Christians at the time has been overstated to say the least and has involved scholars in a great deal of speculation on consciousness of prophets during the utterance of divine mandates.¹¹⁷⁹ For instance, the oracle indicated by Hirschmann and others for arguing this point is found, almost verbatim in a number of 'orthodox' second century sources such as Pseudo-Justin, Athenagoras and the Odes of Solomon.¹¹⁸⁰

While the discussions concerning the conscious states of these various forms of prophecy have often contained some very erudite speculation, for instance by Nasrallah and Hirschmann, the question must remain as to whether the very sources from which they are working, all heresiological, are not actually attempting to use these ancient discursive commonplaces of 'Phrygianism' to stigmatize the Montanists by association.

It would be unfair to reduce all the references to the cult of Cybele and the Phrygians as the direct result of an ingrained xenophobia. Many of the comments found, for instance in Latin poetry, were more the result of their own discursive traditionalism and the controlling strictures of literary and rhetorical convention. In this sense, then, we must be cautious about applying any of these references *a priori* as disinterested examples of anthropological ethnography. They are all part of the construction and strictures of discursive frameworks

¹¹⁷⁷ Stewart-Sykes (1999:11).

¹¹⁷⁸ Hirschmann (2005:141).

¹¹⁷⁹ See Hirschmann's discussion of this point (2005:86-90). For a different perspective see Ash (1976:227-253).

¹¹⁸⁰ Athenag. *leg.* IX; *Odes of Solomon* VI. On these references and a discussion see Ash (1976:238 n. 82) and Bevan (1928:158-182).

rather than related to the genuine epistemological object of lived encounters with Phrygian people.

The same applies for the popularity of the Phrygian *topoi*, in particularly the effeminate *galli*, in Latin Christian literature. As Sanders concludes in an important article on this:

‘Quant à l’évaluation chrétienne des *galli*, elle confirme pratiquement en tous points les accusations que les moralistes et satiristes païens avaient formulées à leur égard.’¹¹⁸¹

It would be superfluous to go into too much detail here,¹¹⁸² sufficing to say that the early Latin Christian writers, as inheritors of a great deal of Latin culture, were able to take these themes and to use them, not only in their polemics against the excesses and immoralities of pagan religion, but also as stylistic ready-made literary portraits to demonstrate their own moralizing.

That the early Christian authors, for all their moralizing, were not above the abject abuse of the earlier pagan satirists is clear to anyone who has given an even perfunctory reading to the fiery treatises of Tertullian, and it takes little imagination to see how the adoption of classical derogatory *topoi* of the effeminate Phrygian could easily jump to mind in a literary minded Christian like Jerome sat down to attack those infuriating Montanists disturbing his circle of middle-aged female patrons.¹¹⁸³ Again the Latin cognate of τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φρυγῶν, *cataphryges*, no doubt played an influence on how its detractors chose to portray it.

¹¹⁸¹ Sanders (1978:1083).

¹¹⁸² For a detailed look at a case study of this see Appendix 4.

¹¹⁸³ Jerome, *Ep.* XLI.

5. Conclusion: The Revelations of the New Prophecy.

Conclusions.

As demonstrated Chapter 1's survey of scholarly opinions from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century,¹¹⁸⁴ when the question of Montanism went into something of a hiatus,¹¹⁸⁵ historiography of this issue has passed through several key augmentations and trajectories, summarized under the seven headings on page four (repeated below). It is worth briefly summarizing here the findings of this thesis with regard to these seven headings and how this work has contributed to the broader scholarly discussion of Montanism and early Christianity in Asia Minor.

(1) "Primitive Christianity," clinging to the apostolic forms of Johannine prophetic Christianity against a tide of second century institutionalization exemplified in writers like Ignatius of Antioch.¹¹⁸⁶

(2) A movement arising either directly from or heavily influenced by Phrygian pagan cults, whether these be Apollo, Cybele or Bacchus (or a syncretistic mish-mash of the three).¹¹⁸⁷

(3) A movement arising from either the Diaspora Jewish population of Asia Minor or one of the sects of so-called Jewish-Christians like the Ebionites.¹¹⁸⁸

(4) A political protest movement arising from the exploitative imperial policies in rural Phrygia.¹¹⁸⁹

(5) A highly eschatological orientated movement which exhibits various facets of modern sociological and anthropological theories relating to Nativism, apocalypticism or millenarianism.¹¹⁹⁰

¹¹⁸⁴ See pp. 18-47.

¹¹⁸⁵ Twentieth century scholarship on Montanism has tended to scorn over-arching theories and focus instead on primary evidence and the rejection of overarching schema. It has tended to take Harnack's version of a Johannine "Primitive Christianity" as a given (e.g. Aland 1960). Historiographically this is best demonstrated in Tabbernee (2007) and Trevett (1996).

¹¹⁸⁶ E.g. Harnack (1914 [1895]).

¹¹⁸⁷ E.g. Scheepelern (1929).

¹¹⁸⁸ E.g. Massingberd-Ford (1966:145-268)

¹¹⁸⁹ E.g. Frend (1988:25-36).

(6) An ascetic movement and forerunner to monasticism.¹¹⁹¹

(7) As an enthusiastic proto-Pentecostal movement akin to any number of enthusiastic sects from the Quakers to the Methodists.¹¹⁹²

That Montanism represented a form of “Primitive Christianity” emerging from the Johannine Biblical tradition and a “revitalization movement”¹¹⁹³ spurning the increasing institutionalization of the early second century has been an aspect strongly emphasized by Protestant scholars like Ritschl and to a lesser degree Schaff. Such a position has become the de facto position of contemporary scholarship, whether it acknowledges the roots of this position or not. This position, while it contains merits, was and is, indicative of the social milieu of eighteenth and nineteenth century German, English and American Protestantism and the dearth of serious treatment of Montanism as a historical phenomenon amongst Roman Catholic scholars.¹¹⁹⁴ On the one hand the “Primitive Christianity” thesis drew on the German and American tendency, derived from philosopher-theologians like Friedrich Schliermacher and William James, of focusing on experiential aspects of religious experience, placing undue emphasis on the ecstatic and charismatic aspects of Montanism rather than its own institutional elements. On the other hand, however, this position anticipated and shaped the later theoretical insights of scholars like Ernst Troeltsch (and other social scientists), who have seen Montanism as a reactionary Sectarian development against sociological trajectory toward a more Church-like structure clearly visible in the second century milieu.

This theory of “Primitive Christianity,” found its greatest champion in Adolf von Harnack and as a result of his magisterial influence placed the idea of Montanism as a classical sectarian movement squarely in the forefront of future scholarship. This thesis, as discussed below, presents a clear challenge to elements of this sectarian construction of Montanism by demonstrating that tension with the Roman state was less paramount than often argued. Montanism was sectarian, but no more so than early Christianity generally. By demonstrating this point this thesis has demonstrated clearly that while some developments in sociological

¹¹⁹⁰ E.g. Williams (1989:331-351).

¹¹⁹¹ E.g. Smith (1995 [1931]:34).

¹¹⁹² E.g. Robeck (2010:413-429).

¹¹⁹³ For “revitalization movements” see Wallace.

¹¹⁹⁴ For a discussion of how theological developments in American, continental and English denominations interacted during this period see Noll (2002); (2003).

theory, particularly that regarding millenarian movements covered in Chapter 3.2 and Rural societies in Chapter 3.4, are of great heuristic value in future such discussions of the applicability of such theories must be undertaken with great historical scrutiny rather than the broad passing references to Montanism which abound in sociological literature (see below). This thesis has demonstrated here that while historians have been out-dated in their sociology, sociologists have remained out-dated in their history and have continued to demonstrate the applicability of their theories by reference to the outdated historiographical trends of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the origins of the “Primitive Christianity” thesis was clouded by, among other aspects outlined in Chapter 1, a received Protestant tradition of seeing any post-biblical doctrinal development as indicative of corruption and decline.¹¹⁹⁵ As Chapter 1 indicates this image was further exacerbated by tendencies in Pietism in Germany but also in the kind of religious culture arising in the United States from the ‘Second Great Awakening’ which dwelt explicitly on this decline theme in the widespread notion of the ‘Great Apostasy’ advocated by groups arising from the ‘Second Great Awakening’ like the Campbellites (the ‘Disciples of Christ’) and in another way the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the ‘Mormons’).¹¹⁹⁶ A similar situation took place in Britain under the influence of seminal writers like John Nelson Darby, who increasingly spurned any form of established ecclesiastical organization.¹¹⁹⁷

This thesis has demonstrated that coupled with the influence of this Anglophone scholarly tendency to see Church history as one of decline, were earlier religious developments on both sides of the Atlantic. In Germany (and to a lesser degree England) the popularity of pietism from the eighteenth century (and nascent Evangelicalism in England and the US) and a more experientially oriented religious culture contributed to a somewhat more positive view of the Montanists than those of previous centuries. For many, the Montanists became early Protestants who challenged the institutionalization of papism, a view which was probably exacerbated by the widespread anti-Catholicism in both nineteenth century England (over

¹¹⁹⁵ For the various versions of this historiographical tendency see the controversial arguments of Mormon historian Hugh Nibley (1961:131-154).

¹¹⁹⁶ On this period see Jenkins (2000).

¹¹⁹⁷ On this see Sandeen (1979).

fears concerning Catholic emancipation) and the America (where rumours of Catholic atrocities caused widespread civil unrest).¹¹⁹⁸

Such a positive shift in emphasis reached its apogee in the famous statement of John Wesley quoted on page one and the work of Philip Schaff (an important bridge-builder between German and Anglophone Church historiography). However, as argued in chapter 1, Pietism's importance in historiography rightly belongs to Johannes Mosheim and Gottfried Arnold and their early attempts to steer historiography away from the Reformation tendency to dress contemporary theological polemic in the garment of Church history. Through the almost canonical influence of these two scholars on subsequent German and Anglophone studies (in the case of the latter through the direct influence of Wesley and Schaff) a key development was made in redefining Montanism from the broad category of a heresy to be refuted as a latent tendency in the Christian tradition to be examined and explained. While contemporary theological polemics invoking Montanism have not totally disappeared from historiography they are far more circumspect following these writers.

As Chapter 1 argues this turn away from refutation to historical explanation was furthered by contemporary philosophical developments, in particular the inordinate influence of a simplified form of Hegelian dialectic. Best exemplified by F.C. Baur and the Tübingen School this development worked as an explanatory tool for charting the development of Montanism from the New Testament Church. However, this overly rigid and schematic application of a Hegelian paradigm, rather than helping develop historiographical practices actually resulted in placing a sharp wedge between the various theological trajectories contained in the nascent Christian canon, which in turn influenced the second and third of the headings mentioned on page twelve. By emphasizing a clash between the (seemingly) diametrically opposed Judaic and Hellenistic trajectories in the New Testament, scholars were in some ways forced to explain Montanism as either an overly Jewish aberration (a "Judaizing sect") or a syncretistic Hellenistic tainting of the "pure" (read: New Testament) Christian tradition. By resorting the thesis-antithesis-synthesis structure of Hegelian dialectic scholars were forced to reify "Montanism" into one of their ready-made categories doing violence to the historical evidence in the process.

¹¹⁹⁸ On anti-Catholicism see Jenkins (2003).

As shown in Chapter 1 Schwegler (and later Massingberd-Ford) attempted to situate Montanism firmly in the more Judaic side of the camp, emphasizing the likely influence of the diaspora Jewish population of Asia Minor. As Chapter 2 has demonstrated this position was built on a series of highly problematic assumptions about the so-called “Syncretistic” nature of the Jewish communities in Phrygia and a tendency still often inherent in scholarship more broadly to draw far too sharp a distinction between the pure, unadulterated Judaism of the Rabbis (itself largely a development of the second century), and the corrupted Judaism of the diaspora. Additionally both Schwegler, and later Massingberd-Ford, were working with less historical documents, and in the light of the subsequent monumental discoveries at Qumran and Nag Hammadi their entire thesis of Jewish origins can no longer hold water.

The other side of this coin, exemplified in the numerous adumbrations of the third heading of page twelve, has been the historiographical tendency to emphasize the apparently indigenous elements in Montanism which it inherited from its Phrygian social milieu. Under this broad trajectory Montanism was seen as a syncretistic aberration of Christianity and the violent and ecstatic religious life of the Anatolian plateau. While this approach has most recently been restated by Hirschmann it relies on a dated conception of Phrygian culture and religion which has been outlined in Chapter 5 under the collective title “Phrygianism.”

Like an increasing amount of scholarship, best exemplified by Mitchell and in the context of Roman Egypt David Frankfurter,¹¹⁹⁹ which argue for a more cautious approach to the dizzying diversity of local religious life in the various geographic locales of the Roman Empire, Chapters 2 and 5 of this thesis have both argued that this diversity has seldom been recognized by scholars since Ramsay, who despite collecting overwhelming local evidence to the contrary have been content with repeating platitudes about the violent orgiastic ecstasy of the *galli* as they appear in the geographically and culturally distinct ethnic portraiture and stereotyping of Roman poetry and later Latin heresiologists.

As a result of the detailed chronological reconstruction of the various aspects of “Phrygianism” in Chapter 5, coupled with the careful and systematic discussion of the variety of local religious expressions and cults in Chapter 2, this thesis concludes that early theories of Phrygian influence (resurrected recently by Hirschmann) are at best over-simplifications. Montanism

¹¹⁹⁹ Frankfurter (1998); Mitchell (1993).

certainly drew from its socio-religious context, but to locate, as previous scholars have these influences from a single and largely artificial trajectory like that provided by “Phrygianism” fails to take into account the influence of other equally important religious phenomena present in second century Asia Minor. This thesis has also demonstrated some places in which we might be able to discern this indigenous influence.

The presence of the morally rigorous *Beichtinschriften/Sühninschriften*, discussed in Chapter 2b. 4, clearly demonstrate that we cannot simplify Phrygian religion as a wild, orgiastic and violent faith. From a purely functionalist perspective we can see that rather than encouraging wild and licentious behavior, as that depicted in the Roman poets and Latin heresiologists discussed in Chapter 5, tendencies within Phrygian religion as exemplified by the *Beichtinschriften/Sühninschriften* were clearly concerned with ordered social behavior and the maintenance of social order amid the often lawless regions of the Anatolian Plateau. Such a functional conclusion is further supported by the institutional and legal survey of Chapter 3 which demonstrates clearly the limits to Roman rule in the geographically isolated regions of Central Anatolia. The moral rigor for which Montanism increasingly became known should be seen as at conditioned by both its adoption of early Christian asceticism and moral rigor and the notions of divine justice and theodicy which are so manifest in the pagan *Beichtinschriften/Sühninschriften* and the grave imprecation formulae which are common across pagan, Christian and Jewish epigraphic habits.

Such a conservative and morally austere religiosity, as demonstrated in Chapter 2b.4, was further conditioned in the case of Montanism by the largely rural or semi-rural environment in which Montanism flourished. Far from the large metropolitan cities of the Aegean coast, Montanism thrived both in the village world of the Anatolian plateau and Upper Tembris valley and the small cities and surrounding countryside of the Meander valley. Chapter 2b.5, through its extensive resume of epigraphic evidence for this region clearly demonstrates that Christianity in this region cut across various social cleavages to take strong root in this region.

As this thesis has argued consistently in Chapter 3 this was not just because of the popular appeal of Christian ideas but also because of the strictures of physical and social geography. In a time where Christianity was at best a social disability and at worst a death sentence the relative geographical isolation and civic autonomy offered the Christians of Central Anatolia, and by extension the Montanist movement (which was the predominant Christian expression

in Phrygia at this time), helped to encourage the spread of this movement amongst various social strata. Like the Polygamist Fundamentalist Mormons of contemporary Utah and Arizona,¹²⁰⁰ it seems clear from examples discussed in this thesis like Eumeneia, with its predominantly Christian civic council, that Christians had taken hold in entire cities and villages of this semi-rural region and built up an edifice which cushioned the impact of any particular persecution which might come their ways. Central Anatolia, by the accidents of geography, became a haven for dissent and heresy which was to continue well into the time of the Ottomans.

Strangely, however, Christianity also thrived on the more Roman controlled imperial estates and here its manifestation in a Montanist form is particularly interesting. As Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis argue Montanism was a strong presence on these rural estates which were outside the autonomous control of the cities and the traditional jurisdiction of the Roman governor. Controlled by procurators and their bailiffs who were largely unaccountable to the governor or the autonomous cities, Christians thrived on imperial estates like Aragua in the Upper Tembris valley.

The reasons for this are quite paradoxical and deserve further explication. On the one hand the relative deprivation of the peasants discussed in chapters 3 and 4 almost certainly contributed (as it has throughout history) to the widespread adoption of Christianity amongst *coloni*. The abuses of procurators and bailiffs documented in Chapter 3 on the one hand alienated the peasants and drove them into adopting Montanist Christianity as a religion of protest, but on the other hand the mere presence of such powerful overseers protected these “tenants of Caesar” (*coloni caesaris*) from both the judicial gaze of the provincial governors assize (who, as argued above, was required to exercise due discretion when interfering the the *patrimonia* of the Emperor), and from the kinds of mob violence or private sycophancy which threatened their urban counterparts. It also made little sense for procurators to persecute Christians here, unless extraneous circumstances occasioned it, these Christian *coloni* were their source of income and as the old mafia saying goes, you can’t get money from a dead man.

While, then, persecution was certainly not unknown, as argued extensively in Chapter 4 (and its two excursi) it cannot be seen as a strong causative factor in the rise of Montanism as has

¹²⁰⁰ On these groups see the Bradley (1993) and Kraukauer (2004).

been maintained by Frend and others. Persecution was an urban phenomenon, and its most visible manifestations were in the large urban cities of the Aegean coast like Smyrna, not the smaller cities of the Meander valley. In the countryside its impact was severely impeded by the nature of the judiciary which was limited to the yearly assize of a provincial governor and the limits of Roman rule. If Millar's calculations are taken seriously such an assize would require him to try almost a case a minute and surviving martyr accounts clearly show that trying recalcitrant Christians could take a great deal longer.¹²⁰¹

In concluding that persecution was not the primary causative factor in the birth of Montanism the two excursi of chapter 4 also demonstrates that the traditional historiographical image of Montanism as a movement of 'voluntary martyrs' clearly holds no weight. By a careful look at the evidence this thesis has demonstrated that while 'voluntary martyrdom' was an issue amongst early Christians it was by no means unique to Montanism. Indeed, as this thesis has argued, it is questionable whether Montanists practiced it at all! This conclusion has important implications for the traditional understanding of Montanism as the quintessential Christian sect on a collision course with the Roman empire which warrants further study.¹²⁰²

While persecution was clearly not as great a factor (if a factor at all) in the rise of Montanism socio-economic causes almost certainly were. As argued in chapter 4 of this thesis the contemporaneous rise of Montanism with the Antonine plague cannot be seen as merely coincidental. As historical analogies drawn from the fourteenth century "Black Death," coupled with contemporary epigraphic and historical evidence from secular writers like Aelius Aristides and Lucian of Samosata, demonstrate, such a widespread epidemic would provide a highly fertile ground from which a traditional millenarian movement, which Montanism almost certainly was, to manifest. The widespread death rates and existential angst of such a situation, coupled with the socio-economic impact of high mortality rates could (at least temporarily)¹²⁰³ easily have acted as a spark to ignite apocalyptic fantasies of an already eschatologically inclined Christian minority. In this sense Dodds' famous "age of anxiety" was

¹²⁰¹ Millar (1988:254).

¹²⁰² The author is currently writing on this topic for a forthcoming publication.

¹²⁰³ As argued above in the long term high mortality rates would likely work to the advantage of survivors, though this could take a generation or two. See Chapter 4.

certainly a factor in the rise of Montanism, though less for the reasons traditionally adduced by scholars like Frend, Klawiter and others.

Having rehashed the key conclusions drawn in the previous chapters, and challenged many of the scholarly shibboleths which have impeded further research into the issue, it is now an opportune time to take this new analysis one step further and utilize recent sociological theories to provide a coherent view of the early rise of Montanism which helps harmonize these historical and historiographical conclusions from the previous chapters.

Having hopefully demonstrated the complexity of the 'Montanist Milieu' and shed further light on a number of outstanding questions to do with the 'social history' of Montanist origins it is now important to tie together the various strands of what we have concluded. In order to do this I will adopt Rodney Stark's 'theory of revelation' and demonstrate how this can be applied to Montanus and allows us to bring together the disparate and seemingly mutually exclusive elements of traditional interpretative theses discussed in our introduction.¹²⁰⁴ Before doing so, however, it is worth drawing together the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters.

¹²⁰⁴ Stark (1991b: 239-251); (1992:19-34); (1999:287-308).

6.1. The early Church and Social Science.

While from the early days of the sociology of religion and Church/Sect theory the early Church has featured heavily in many studies,¹²⁰⁵ the problems of conceptions surrounding this are often overlooked and oversimplifications are made. This problem has often been exacerbated by the use of anachronistic categories and methods of analysis and a refusal to take seriously more up-to-date theories from prominent sociological theorists.¹²⁰⁶ It is the contention of this conclusion that such theories can help to illuminate our understanding of the complex processes of boundary marking which occurred between various Christian groups in antiquity, and help us move away from anachronistic notions of essences and origins which have often plagued scholars, and delivered often mediocre results.

While few scholars have taken up the task in earnest, a number of recent works, particularly dealing with the complex phenomenon of 'Gnosticism',¹²⁰⁷ pointed the way to understanding the complex formations of identity which were taking place in the early centuries of the Common Era. This study will attempt to take some of the insights of these scholars a step further by applying them to the complex problem of Montanist origins a subject which has been a topic of significant debate since the early nineteenth century.¹²⁰⁸ It is the contention of this study that by moving away from the question of essences, and the problems of tracing influences, relationships and trajectories within early Christianity, and between early Christianity and its socio-religious environment, a clearer and more sociologically nuanced picture of the pluriform development of the Montanist movement can be conceived.

Rather than privileging one relationship or influence over others, it is the contention here that a myriad of relationships and influences often going back and forth between various movements and trajectories within early Christianity, early Judaism and the socio-religious milieu of central Asia Minor provided a backdrop for understanding the coherent emergence of Montanism as a new religious movement, in the parlance of sociology: a cult. By approaching Montanism in this way the diverse and multi-lateral processes which contributed to the

¹²⁰⁵ This is particularly the case, for instance, with regard to the works Max Weber (1956[1922]) and his student Ernst Troeltsch (1960[1911]).

¹²⁰⁶ This lamentation can be found in Stark (1997:23-6).

¹²⁰⁷ Particular mention should be made here of the works of Williams (1996); Logan (2006) and Scott (1995:109-22).

¹²⁰⁸ For outlines of this debate see above.

burgeoning and growth of this movement can be better understood in terms of complex social processes and interactions, rather than in terms of reductionist theories of essences.

The state of the question.

The early Christian church, from its very inception, held a privileged place for the gift of prophecy,¹²⁰⁹ that was arguably until the mid-second century and the rise of an obscure Phrygian prophet named Montanus, whose revelations would have an enduring effect on subsequent Christian history.¹²¹⁰ Like most religious innovators, Montanus was almost immediately chastised and condemned by what was seen by many scholars as the increasingly institutional church of the second century and this negative sanction can still be felt in certain circles right through to the present.¹²¹¹ Given the rapidly growing phenomenon of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, both in developed and developing countries, where issues of healing, exorcism and supernatural revelation are paramount normative experiences amongst the faithful,¹²¹² coupled with the recent rediscovery of the Montanist holy city of Pepuza,¹²¹³ it seems a prime moment for re-exploring the revelations of the self-designated New Prophet Montanus and his female prophetesses.

¹²⁰⁹ For thorough overview of this topic see Aune (1993) and Forbes (1997).

¹²¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of this issue see Ash (1976).

¹²¹¹ Although some scholars, notably Trevett (1996) and Tabbernee (2007) have been more positive about the Montanist movement, other scholars still use it as an example for refuting what they perceive as the theological errors of modern Pentecostals e.g. Robeck (2010:413-429).

¹²¹² Jenkins (2002).

¹²¹³ Tabbernee & Lampe (2008).

6.2. A Theory of Revelations.

The theoretical study of revelations, defined here as *communications believed to come from a divine being*,¹²¹⁴ as a sociological phenomenon is still in its infancy stages, and is still likely to be viewed with suspicion by some scholars of religion. The combined influence of Marxian and Freudian attitudes on the social sciences (despite Marx's constant warnings about the danger of ideologies) has meant that the dominating sociological paradigm for understanding religious behaviour, and revelation in particular, has been one in which the bearers of revelation are dismissed as either fantasists or frauds.¹²¹⁵ Even seminal articles,¹²¹⁶ like Wallace's study of revitalization movements, found it possible to reduce elements of religious behaviour to unresolved parental issues which form the basis of Freud's own attack on religion.¹²¹⁷ This said, a number of studies of religious revelations published by Rodney Stark over the past thirty years provide a step forward in understanding and theorizing about religious revelation within a social scientific paradigm, without indulging either overly negative or credulous interpretations.¹²¹⁸

It is not my purpose here to wade heavily into the discussion of theoretical problems surrounding theories of religious revelation but rather to outline and apply the one theoretical approach of Stark's to see how it illuminates the career of Montanus. However, before progressing to this, it is incumbent on me to briefly discuss the use of social science theories when they have been directly applied to the Montanist phenomena.

In some of the most cited works dealing with charismatic and deviant religious movements written during the twentieth century, both in the study of history and the social sciences, Montanism has received at least a passing nod as an early example of such a movement.¹²¹⁹ Moreover, as noted above, within the study of early Christianity at least one scholar, Daniel Williams, has looked in depth at the potential for using social scientific types for understanding

¹²¹⁴ Stark (1999:289).

¹²¹⁵ Stark (1979:171-188).

¹²¹⁶ Wallace (1956:270).

¹²¹⁷ Freud (1961 [1927]).

¹²¹⁸ Stark (1985:171-88). Stark's work has not been without (largely undue) criticism, for critiques of Stark see Bryant (1997); Clark (1997); Malina (1997)

¹²¹⁹ Cohn (2004 [1956]: 13-28); Festinger (1956:6). Gager (1975:21). Niebuhr (1929).

Montanism.¹²²⁰ While Williams' work is enlightening and a step in the right direction it is already over twenty years old and it is my belief that it is now possible and beneficial for the question to be readdressed, albeit from a different angle.

Williams (following Gager's earlier comment)¹²²¹ outlined a convincing and well-documented argument for why Montanism should be classified under the rubric of "Millenarian" movements.¹²²² The problem with such a designation, however, is that while we might be tempted to adopt an umbrella like ideal-type like those proposed by Wallace ("Revitalization Movement") or Cohn ("Millenarian Movement") we run immediately into problems in further categorising Montanism into one of the ever growing number of more specific subtypes. This is because, quite simply, like all religious movements Montanism is in many ways highly unique and defies categorization. While descriptive ideal-types and subtypes have their place in the study of sectarian religious groups, they are most often sketched through phenomenological criteria such as glossolalia, ecstatic frenzy, socio-economic deprivation, nativistic rebellion, or any number of correlates which may only be very marginal to the general timbre of a given movement.

Rather than applying a reified ideal-type, my purpose here is to follow a set of deductive propositions and to see whether and to what extent they are relevant to an understanding of the social origins of Montanism. These propositions are general enough to have application across a wide chronological span and acknowledge various socio-cultural variations without being so general as to evade utility.¹²²³

The potential problems created by an ideal-type approach will be immediately apparent to any historian who has studied the historiographical debates surrounding the Montanist movement in the past one hundred and fifty years.¹²²⁴ Over this period historical argument has centred on questions of finding the roots of the Montanist phenomenon, and explaining the various

¹²²⁰ Williams (1989:331-51). More recently Roche (2000) argued in his doctoral dissertation that Montanism should be classified under Wilson's type of a "Spiritual Christian Sect," while Roche does have some interesting arguments it will suffice to say here that his thesis has severe methodological and historiographical problems.

¹²²¹ Gager (1975:21).

¹²²² See above pp. 139-148.

¹²²³ The overall deductive theory from which these propositions are drawn can be found in Stark & Bainbridge (1987).

¹²²⁴ See above pp. 18-47.

strange religious phenomena attested amid the often highly rhetorical comments made in heresiological sources like Epiphanius of Salamis.

6.3. Montanus the Sociologists Prophet.

The Stark theory of revelation adopted here has its origins in his work in collaboration with William Sims Bainbridge on cult formation in the 1970s and 1980s.¹²²⁵ As part of their general program of drawing insights from rational choice theory for application in the sociology of religion Stark and Bainbridge sort to apply a three-fold division in types of religious innovators: the psychopathological model, the entrepreneurial model and the subcultural evolution model,¹²²⁶ Stark summarised these by writing that:

‘The first gives systematic statement to the psychopathology model. Here revelations are traced not simply to mental illness, but also to abnormal mental states induced by drugs or fasting. The second model substitutes chicanery for psychopathology and characterises some religious founders as entrepreneurs. Finally, we proposed a subcultural evolution model of revelation wherein a small group, interacting intensely over a period of time, assembles a revelation bit by bit, without anyone being aware of the social processes taking place. Here, at least, we made room for revelations involving neither craziness nor corruption.’¹²²⁷

As the outline above demonstrates (and as many scholars have been more than willing to follow) Montanism would seem *prima facie* to fit the first model, or perhaps more generously with its in-group of prophets and prophetesses under the third. Other scholars, citing the passage in Apollonius of Ephesus concerning the paid itinerant Montanist prophets, may even suggest the second option, particularly as some early Christian sources frowned upon such charlatan behaviour.¹²²⁸

To apply any of these three models, however, would be to take the rhetorical attacks of anti-Montanist critics as factual statements. This would ignore the blatant use of classical heresiological *topoi*, particularly of the concept of possession and the negative sanctions surrounding “ecstatic” and wild religious fervour in sections of Greco-Roman culture

¹²²⁵ Stark & Bainbridge (1987: 155-93).

¹²²⁶ For a thorough discussion of these three models and the propositions relating to each see Stark & Bainbridge (1985:171-188).

¹²²⁷ Stark (1999:288).

¹²²⁸ E.g. *Did.* XI.

generally,¹²²⁹ bolstered by a select exegesis from the gospel of Matthew (particularly the chapters dealing with false prophecy).¹²³⁰

Moreover, to focus on the negative corollaries of the ecstatic manifestations would be failing to see the appeal such behaviour can have for establishing authority within phenomenologically similar religious traditions like Haitian Voodoo or Candomblé.¹²³¹ While such behaviours may be marginal when viewed from the normative standards of the Great Church, particularly if the scholar studying them is viewing the movement through the eyes of the sober pews of their own Sunday service, we need to bear in mind that at this early stage glossolalia and ecstatic prophecy had not yet been condemned (though writings like 1 Corinthians had counselled caution). It is more likely that its eventual decline directly resulted from the Montanists behaviour; this is a question, however, which will not be discussed here.¹²³²

After subsequent reflection Stark and Bainbridge realised the inadequacy of this threefold model, and after a study of the revelatory experience of LDS Church President Spencer W. Kimball regarding the admission of African-Americans to the Mormon priesthood, Stark slowly developed a new theory of normal revelations.¹²³³ The utility of this theory was developed and demonstrated in two further articles with reference to religious figures such as Moses, Jesus, the Prophet Mohammad, Joseph Smith Jnr. and even the Rev. Sun M. Moon.¹²³⁴ The theory contains eleven propositions which combine to help explain the conditions under which people could believe that they are receiving revelations, and how this might shape the content and form in which the revelation is received and communicated.

For the remainder of this conclusion I will work through each of these propositions, and see how they apply to the revelations of the New Prophecy and its founders. The first proposition states that *revelations will tend to occur when (a) there exists a supportive cultural tradition of*

¹²²⁹ The highly rhetorical and constructed nature of these discourses has been recently argued in the work of Nasrallah (2003).

¹²³⁰ On the creation of this discourse see Boulluec (1984).

¹²³¹ For an interesting recent discussion of this with relation to Bahian Candomblé see Van De Port (2005:149-79). For the role of charisma and authority in Haitian Voodooism see the classic study of Métraux (1972 [1959]).

¹²³² Ash (1976:227-252).

¹²³³ Stark (1992:21).

¹²³⁴ Stark (1999:287-308); (2005:30-56).

*communications with the divine and (b) the recipient of revelation(s) has direct contact with a role model, with someone who has had such communications.*¹²³⁵ This proposition, stated in a slightly different form in early work of Stark, relates to the importance of maintaining what Stark has called “cultural capital,” for a new religious movement to succeed a degree of cultural capital must be maintained, this earlier proposition stated that *new religious movements are likely to succeed to the extent that they retain cultural continuity with the conventional faith(s) of the societies in which they seek converts.*¹²³⁶

As Chapter 2 above outlined Montanism had its origins in a culturally plural region of rural Asia Minor, where influences from Phrygian paganism and Judaism existed side by side with those of the nascent Christian movement. Montanism’s maintenance of the combined cultural capital of this diverse region would have provided a strong stimulus to its growth and long-term success within Phrygia and neighbouring regions, a few examples will help illuminate this.

Hierapolis, a city early influenced by the Montanist movement, was a religious melting pot and provides an excellent example of the plural religious traditions of central Anatolia. In his historical geography Strabo speaks of a famous temple of Apollo Kareiros, a deity who communicated revelations through oracular means, located near the lethal (and potentially hallucinogenic) vapours of a nearby cave.¹²³⁷ The cult’s importance in the town is well-evidenced by the predominance of theophoric names referring to Apollo in the surviving inscriptions.¹²³⁸

The city also had a thriving Jewish community which has left numerous inscriptions and seems to have been very active in the civic community generally.¹²³⁹ Hierapolis is mentioned as having a Christian community in Colossians (4:13) and was widely held from early times to be the burial place of Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8) and his prophetic daughters,¹²⁴⁰ to whom an early Church in the city was dedicated.¹²⁴¹ Indeed it was from their prophetic succession which

¹²³⁵ Stark (1999:291).

¹²³⁶ Stark (1996:136).

¹²³⁷ Strabo *Geography* XIII.4.14.

¹²³⁸ *IHierapJ* 4, 30, 32, 34, 40, 53, 60, 76, 78, 106, 114, 117, 135, 138.

¹²³⁹ Miranda (1999:109-55). Harland (2006:222-244).

¹²⁴⁰ Euseb. *h.e.* III.30f.

¹²⁴¹ Tabbernee (2009:281-286).

the Montanists traced their own prophecy, with the anonymous anti-Montanist making the statement:

‘...but the false prophet in abnormal ecstasy, upon whom follow licence and fearlessness. For while he begins with voluntary ignorance, he ends with involuntary madness of soul, as has been stated. But they cannot show any prophet under either the Old or the New who was moved by the Spirit after this manner, neither Agabus nor Judas nor Silas nor the daughters of Philip, nor Ammia in Philadelphia nor Quadratus, nor can they make their boast of any others whatever not belonging to their number. For if, as they say, the women followers of Montanus succeeded to the prophetic gift after Quadratus and Ammia of Philadelphia, let them show which of their number, who were followers of Montanus and the women, succeeded to it.’¹²⁴²

The city was also home to the late second century anti-Montanist bishop, Abercius, whose epitaph has occasioned great discussion amongst epigraphists for over a century.¹²⁴³ This poetic epitaph, draws on the language of visions common to the Asiatic Christian tradition (‘...to see the queen, golden-robed and golden sandalled; a people I saw there which had a splendid seal...’), and alludes to the wide travels of Abercius demonstrating the kind of Christian milieu in which Montanus’ revelations were uttered and spread.

Hierapolis is but one city amongst many who shared a cultural tradition of divine revelation within the area. In the nearby Lydian and Phrygian countryside; we have the evidence of the so-called “Confessional Inscriptions” (*Beichtinschriften*) which demonstrate how a deity revealed their displeasure toward a moral or ritual malefactor by means of illness. The divine origin of such illnesses was then as communicated through the means of a priest or some visionary experience (e.g. a dream).¹²⁴⁴ In some occasions these revelations are even relayed through divine intermediary figures such as angels, particularly in a group of inscriptions from nearby Caria.¹²⁴⁵

¹²⁴² Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.9-10.

¹²⁴³ Snyder (2003 [1986]:247-50). For a very good recent treatment of this epitaph see Hirschmann (2003:109-16).

¹²⁴⁴ Chaniotis (2004:1-43); Schnabel (2003:160-88).

¹²⁴⁵ See above. Sheppard (1980:77-101).

A final, and important example of the fertile ground which Phrygia and its surrounding regions laid for the Montanist revelations is the cult of Cybele, attended by its eunuch priests the *galli*, known for ritually castrating themselves while re-enacting the story of the mythic figure Attis.¹²⁴⁶ The *galli* were known for receiving revelations during their ecstatic, musical, and sometimes violent rites and parades, which are described in some detail by Ovid, Pausanias and others and which sometimes caused great controversy in Rome.¹²⁴⁷ The corpus of Cybelic inscriptions records votives to Cybele right across Phrygia and neighbouring regions where Montanism thrived.¹²⁴⁸ So obvious was this link that even early sources seem to imply that Montanus may have been a priest in this cult before his conversion, for instance, Apollonius of Ephesus states:

‘Tell me, does a prophet dye his hair? Does a prophet paint his eyelids? Does a prophet love adornment?’¹²⁴⁹

This sentence may be making reference to the image of the effeminate *galli*. Either way, Didymus the Blind and Jerome were even more explicit, specifically calling Montanus a eunuch and a pagan priest.¹²⁵⁰ Moreover, the *galli* had their chief sanctuary at Pessinus in neighbouring Galatia, a region which we know was early on receptive to the Montanist movement.¹²⁵¹

What these sources all demonstrate is that both parts (a) and (b) of Stark’s first proposition can be applied quite successfully to Montanus and the prophetesses. Montanism had its origins in a region which was teeming with the ecstatic religious fervour and a recognized and celebrated tradition of Christian prophetic revelation. Like Joseph Smith Jnr. in the “Burned-Over” district of upstate New York during the early 1800s Montanus’ found his Phrygian homeland was ripe for prophetic revelations.¹²⁵² Whether we see strong continuities as Hirschmann does, or a

¹²⁴⁶ For the most thorough study of the influence of indigenous religions on Montanism see Hirschmann (2005).

¹²⁴⁷ Roller (1999); Vermaseren (1977). For the most important collection of primary sources see Hepding (1903).

¹²⁴⁸ See above pp. 83-96.

¹²⁴⁹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.18.6.

¹²⁵⁰ See above pp. 303-306.

¹²⁵¹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.1.

¹²⁵² Bushman (1984); Cross (1950); O’Dea (1957).

more mitigated influence like Schepelern, the environment of Phrygia certainly held promise for such an expression of early Christian enthusiasm.

The second proposition of Stark's theory states that *many common, ordinary, even mundane phenomena can be experienced as contact with the divine.*¹²⁵³ This refers to more mundane religious experiences than the wild ecstasies explored above, such as the perception many religious people have of the presence of the divine during worship, private prayer or meditation. Tertullian discusses further revelations taking place within the worship of the charismatic community within Carthage, and similar phenomena are recorded in the likely Montanist *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas.*¹²⁵⁴

More important for our immediate geographical and social context is a later fourth century Montanist (though this has been disputed)¹²⁵⁵ inscription from Aklok in the Phrygian highlands, it reads:

[Here lies] a prophetess:

Nanas daughter of Hermogenes.

With prayers and intercessions [she besought?] the

Praiseworthy master; with hymns and adulations she implored the immortal one; praying all day and night long she possessed the fear of God from the beginning. Angelic visitations and speech she had in greatest measure: Nanas the blessed one, whose "sleeping-place"...a "sleeping companion," a much-loved husband, has gone together with [her]...into the all-nourishing earth, a matter [calling for a sad] mind...he [she?], in turn, prepared... Those who long after her have honoured her greatly...(erecting this stele) as a memorial.'¹²⁵⁶

What this inscription demonstrates is how Nanas could perceive a divine presence through various less ecstatic means, such as during hymn singing or intense prayer. Most, if not all, Montanists could potentially experience such revelations and they need hardly be chalked up

¹²⁵³ Stark (1999:292).

¹²⁵⁴ Tert. *de Anima* IX.4.

¹²⁵⁵ Hirschmann (2004:160-168); Poirier (2004:151-159); Trevett (1999:259-78).

¹²⁵⁶ *IMont68* [Trans. Tabbernee].

to psychopathology, indeed the vast array of inscriptions relating to divine communications confirms their normative nature in the social and cognitive world of Roman Asia Minor.

This brings us to the third proposition which states that *most episodes involving contact with the divine will merely confirm the conventional religious culture, even when the contact includes a specific communication, or revelation*. It is at this point that our assessment of Montanism from a theoretical point of view may become problematic. In the traditional view of Montanus it has often been stated that he believed himself to be the incarnate Paraclete, however, this is likely a misinterpretation and it is not explicitly claimed until the third century source used by Epiphanius.¹²⁵⁷ Indeed, if we view Montanus' initial revelations as divine revelations (using the "I" form) through the mouthpiece of Montanus and his prophetesses we find nothing that is out of kilter with the wider Christian culture, and indeed, often these revelations allude directly to biblical writings.¹²⁵⁸ The problem here, however, is that there is no established order in which Montanus and the prophetesses received their revelations and so we cannot measure whether as later propositions easily predict the content became more novel (heretical) over time (see below). The same goes for Schepelern's theory that the evidence of the later heresiologists (largely in the "schoolbook" tradition) shows an increasing "paganization" over time, a theory successfully refuted by Hirschmann.

The fourth proposition applies specifically to Montanus and the prophetesses, and is related to proposition one. *Certain individuals will have the capacity to perceive revelations, whether this be an openness or sensitivity to real communications or consists of unusual creativity enabling them to create profound revelations and then to externalize the source of this new culture*.

If as sources assert Montanus was a recent convert from paganism and had indeed been a priest in pagan cults it is likely that he had a sensitivity and openness to mystical experiences,¹²⁵⁹ and indeed the broader context of Roman Asia Minor shows just how normative such revelatory experiences were. The influence of Johannine Christianity, particularly Revelation, with its highly apocalyptic visions, and perhaps Jewish apocalyptic

¹²⁵⁷ It also occurs in a late fourth century North African inscription though this is problematic *IMont71*.

¹²⁵⁸ Groh (1985:73-95).

¹²⁵⁹ See above pp. 303-305.

works like the Sibylline Oracles (thought to have their origin in Asia Minor) may also have laid the necessary groundwork.¹²⁶⁰

This said, we can probably say without undue disparagement that Montanus was lacking in the level of “religious genius” under which Stark discusses this proposition, the Montanist oracles being no match for the ornate Arabic of the Quran or the prose of the Book of Mormon.

Montanus’ oracles drew on the language of scripture and were believed to be a fulfilment of this rather than superseding them,¹²⁶¹ it is in this sense that we should move onto Stark’s fifth proposition, which states that, *novel (heretical) revelations will most likely come to persons of deep religious concerns who perceive shortcomings in the conventional faith(s)*. What such shortcomings were at the stage we will return to under proposition six below.

The oracles indicate that Montanus and the prophetesses saw themselves as chosen by God as his interpreters and revealers of his will, for instance, Maximilla uttered:

‘The Lord sent me as a partisan of this task, a revealer of this covenant, an interpreter of this promise, forced, whether I will or not, to learn the knowledge of God.’¹²⁶²

It is easy how such a self-perception could lead to criticisms of the shortcomings of the Great Church (and other groups), two examples seem to speak of such things, for instance Prisca’s oracle:

‘They are flesh, yet they hate the flesh,’¹²⁶³

A theological concept significantly developed in the writings of Tertullian. Another example is one of Montanus’ more cryptic oracles:

‘Why do they say ‘the superman who is saved?’ Because the righteous man will shine a hundred times brighter than the sun, and even the little ones among you who are saved, a hundred times brighter than the moon.’¹²⁶⁴

¹²⁶⁰ See above pp. 56-60.

¹²⁶¹ Tabbernee (2007).

¹²⁶² Epiphanius *haer.* XLVIII.13.

¹²⁶³ Tertullian *De res. Carn.* 11.

¹²⁶⁴ Epiphanius *haer.* XLVIII.13.

This oracle is quite vague but it seems to draw to some extent on the concern of Jesus for the “little ones,” throughout the gospels (e.g. Matthew 4-5), and may indicate the anti-institutional nature often attributed to early Montanism or some manner of anti-Gnostic polemic.¹²⁶⁵

By the second century the Church had begun to achieve an ordered and routine hierarchy and was beginning to institutionalize many of its formerly prophetic charisma, the reaction of fringe groups to such an action, particularly those who held less institutional power was predictably one of rebellion and critique. Montanism, like Methodism or Quakerism after it, was in many ways similar to sects formed resulting from a reaction to a worldly church.¹²⁶⁶

Whatever the Montanists may have thought of the Great Church, it certainly thought less of them, this is best evidenced in Maxmilla’s own oracle in which she interprets the words of Matthew:

‘I am driven as a wolf from the sheep. I am not a wolf; I am word, spirit, and power.’¹²⁶⁷

The Montanists, however, found revelatory comfort during their persecution, with oracles like:

‘You are exposed to public reproach? It is for your good. He who is not reproached by men is reproached by God. Do not be disconcerted; your righteousness has brought you into the midst (of all). Why are you disconcerted, since you are gaining praise? Your power arises when you are seen by men.’¹²⁶⁸

This persecution and public reproach provides a good point to move on to proposition six, which states, *the probability that individuals will perceive shortcomings in the conventional faith(s) increases during periods of social crisis*. That persecution and social disasters were at least contributing factors in the development of the Montanist movement becomes clear when we view the historical context. Williams long ago observed the social crises which occasioned

¹²⁶⁵ The question of whether Montanism was an anti-Gnostic movement has often been discussed. It was most strongly stated by Neander, but has recently been challenged by Denzey (2001: 427-448) and Froehlich (1973:91-111).

¹²⁶⁶ For a dated but detailed discussion of this phenomenon as it relates to Christian history see Niebuhr (1929). For a sociological discussion see Stark & Bainbridge (1979:117-131).

¹²⁶⁷ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.17.

¹²⁶⁸ Tertullian *de Fuga* 9.

the birth of Montanism and following the work of Michael Barkun and Norman Cohn he notes:¹²⁶⁹

‘But unexpected natural disaster is by means the only cause for such social disruption. Political oppression, demographic shifts, economic depression, etc., all might constitute a catastrophic situation. Such prolonged conditions can cause or portend a form of social disintegration. As a consequence, expectations flare up as a reaction to the hardships and suffering almost a type of explanation.’¹²⁷⁰

As indicated above of particular importance here is the Antonine Plague, an outbreak of either smallpox or measles which swept across the east of the Empire with the returning Persian expedition of Lucius Verus and eventually killed a tenth or more of the urban population of the Empire.¹²⁷¹ We know from epigraphic evidence that Hierapolis in particular was hit by this plague, and evidence exists for other cities across the Anatolian interior and the Aegean coast.¹²⁷² Inevitably as with any widespread outbreak there occurred corollaries of labour shortage and famine, both of which may have further exacerbated the social situation of central Anatolia. Coupled with these factors, and particularly important in Phrygia, was economic deprivation, in particular the exploitation of the retainer class on the private and imperial estates which encompassed much of Central Anatolia.¹²⁷³ Frend in particular stressed this element, noting:

‘In retrospect, one may see Montanism as a religion of prophecy and protest, an expression also of oppositional tendencies among the articulate but less privileged social groups in Roman provincial society that found a responsive chord on the imperial estates of Phrygia. The defiant "Christians for Christians" inscriptions recall protest against ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike. Here were Christians for whom Tertullian spoke. The blood of the martyrs was their seed.’¹²⁷⁴

¹²⁶⁹ Barkun (1974); Cohn (2004 [1956]).

¹²⁷⁰ Williams (1989:336).

¹²⁷¹ Littman & Littman (1974: 243-55). Gilliam (1961: 225-51). McNeil (1998).

¹²⁷² Gilliam (1961: 235).

¹²⁷³ For a collection of inscriptions demonstrating this see Hauken (1998). Recently an argument for seeing Montanism as a response to this has been made in Italian by Mazza (2007:451-467).

¹²⁷⁴ Frend (1984b:535f.).

While quite extensive evidence certainly exists for such exploitation on these central Anatolian estates during the third century, the first and second centuries remains silent and we must remain cautious about retrospectively applying the situation in the third century back into the second century. We must also be wary of how far we can push this evidence for an additional reason, that is, historically the impact of plague and labour shortage has traditionally worked (for instance in the period after the initial onslaught of the Black Death in the 1340s) to at least temporarily improve the working conditions of the rural labour force rather than result in further exploitation,¹²⁷⁵ indeed we can see the population loss of the Antonine plague as paradoxically working in the rural labourers favour in increasing his bargaining power with local elites. Frend's argument here (and Williams') rests on three problematic assumptions.

Firstly, that Montanism was specifically a Phrygian native movement. While the New Prophecy was known as 'the Phrygian heresy' right into late antiquity, the exact reason for this is unclear. It is most likely that it refers to the geographical origin of the movement.¹²⁷⁶ Such a name would also carry the additional pejorative connotations which "Phrygian" carried in the ethnographic discourse of the Graeco-Roman world, as Trevett notes to be a Phrygian in antiquity was to be a 'slave' or a 'boorish hill-billy.'¹²⁷⁷ However what still remains problematic is that the historical evidence suggests that Montanism actually thrived in the most Hellenized area of Phrygia, and is notably lacking in the regions of Pisidia and east Phrygia where the large number of Neo-Phrygian inscriptions have been found.¹²⁷⁸ Moreover, it is evidenced that in communities like Eumeneian Christianity (and possibly Montanism) had achieved a great deal of worldly success, Christians even holding civic office as early as the late second century.¹²⁷⁹

Secondly, Frend and Williams (and to a lesser extent Stewart-Sykes) locate the Montanists as a rural movement. This is intimately tied up with the third assumption, that is, that the "Christians for Christians" inscriptions are in-fact Montanist, an assumption which has been debated since their discovery and which Gibson and Tabbernee have demonstrated to be

¹²⁷⁵ For a fascinating discussion of how this applies with regard to the peasants of Languedoc in Southern France see Le Roy Ladurie (1976).

¹²⁷⁶ See above p. 249.

¹²⁷⁷ Trevett (1996:18f.)

¹²⁷⁸ See above pp. 249-261.

¹²⁷⁹ See above pp. 100-107.

doubtful at best.¹²⁸⁰ If we exclude the “Christians for Christians,” inscriptions (which are uniformly to be found on the Aragua estate near Appia and Soa),¹²⁸¹ then the great majority of evidence for Montanism is to be found in urban districts such as Ancyra,¹²⁸² Thyateira,¹²⁸³ and Smyrna.¹²⁸⁴ This, however, need not be as large a problem as it may appear (at least in sociological terms). While the countryside of Asia Minor, and indeed the Graeco-Roman world in general was ridden with uncertainties, the urban milieu was no better. Indeed, from a sociological perspective Stark has demonstrated that the chaotic and unstable environment of the urban Roman empire laid the perfect foundation for the degree of subcultural deviance and critical mass of deviance for exotic cult movements to thrive,¹²⁸⁵ this is demonstrated nowhere better than in the concentration of various “mystery cults” across the major cities of the Empire.¹²⁸⁶

This moves us on to Stark’s next proposition, *during periods of social crisis, the number of persons who received novel revelations and the number willing to accept such revelations is maximized*. While we must be cautious about making too much of the socio-economic troubles which beset second century Asia Minor, the immense impact of the Antonine plague and the ever present threat of sporadic persecution no doubt left a number of Phrygians open to the Montanist cause, something alluded to by the anonymous anti-Montanist.¹²⁸⁷ As the Frend quote above demonstrates, the Montanists were perceived by some as a church of the martyrs, one of the more controversial later oracles recorded by Tertullian reading:

‘Do not hope to die in bed nor in abortion nor in languishing fevers, but in martyrdom, that he who suffered for you may be glorified.’¹²⁸⁸

These conditions, coupled with the general urban chaos narrated above and the pervasive influence of the book of Revelation and other eschatologically oriented works, are all important contingent factors which combine through our proposition to help explain the

¹²⁸⁰ Gibson (1978); Tabbernee (1997).

¹²⁸¹ *MAMA* X. 114.

¹²⁸² Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.1.

¹²⁸³ Epiphanius *haer.* LI.33.

¹²⁸⁴ *M. Pion.* XI.

¹²⁸⁵ Stark (1997:147-161).

¹²⁸⁶ Stark (2006:86ff.).

¹²⁸⁷ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.2-3.

¹²⁸⁸ Tertullian *de Fuga* IX.

widespread appeal of the Montanist movement, and indeed go some way to explaining why it spread to other urban centres in Italy, North Africa and Gaul.

While the evidence is sparse this proposition might also go some way to explaining the reappearance of the largely silent Montanist movement in several other periods of social chaos such as the Phrygian famine which caused a massive influx into of destitute Phrygian immigrants into Constantinople during the fourth century.¹²⁸⁹ Again during the chaotic period of the early sixth century Montanist missionary work is attested in the recently discovered inscription in Ancyra, which records Trophimus an apostle from Pepuza to Ancyra¹²⁹⁰ and the movement continued to thrive until the mission of John of Ephesus brought it to a fiery end.

The next two propositions can be treated together and state that, *an individual's confidence in the validity of his or her revelations is reinforced to the extent that others accept these revelations* and that *a recipient's ability to convince others is proportionate to the extent to which he or she is a respected member of an intense primary group*. As alluded to throughout this paper, Montanus achieved considerable success and seems to have achieved a significant following. Within the first polemics a number of prophesying members of the sect are mentioned, aside from Montanus, Maximilla and Prisca, the anonymous anti-Montanus records that:

‘...I came to Ancyra in Galatia, and found the local church ringing with the noise of this new (not, as they themselves say prophecy; but much rather, as will be shown) false prophecy.’¹²⁹¹

While he claims that his mission there was successful in confirming the Church of Ancyra in the truth (that is returning it to proto-orthodoxy), he records a number of other Montanists: Theodotus,¹²⁹² Themiso (and his followers),¹²⁹³ and Montanist martyrs at Apameia on the Meander.¹²⁹⁴ Apollonius of Ephesus also records Themiso and Alexander.¹²⁹⁵ Like most religious movements it is likely that Montanism spread along established social networks, and

¹²⁸⁹ Soz. *h.e.* VII.18-19.

¹²⁹⁰ Mitchell (2005:213f.).

¹²⁹¹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.1.

¹²⁹² Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.3.

¹²⁹³ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.4.

¹²⁹⁴ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.7.

¹²⁹⁵ Euseb. *h.e.* V.18.4-5.

the relocation of the prophets to their “New Jerusalem” at Pepuza further tightened the social bonds between the intense group, so much so that when Zoticus of Cumana and Julian of Apamea attempted to exorcise Maximilla they were physically restrained by Themiso and his followers.¹²⁹⁶

The intensity of the Montanist community at Pepuza seems to have continued over generations and as our next propositions suggest prophetic activity continued, *the greater the reinforcement received, the more likely a person is to have further revelations and the greater the amount of reinforcement received and the more revelations a person produces, the more novel (heretical) subsequent revelations will become*. It seems that in these later revelations, particularly those of the second and third generation Montanists, which became increasingly controversial. Epiphanius records an oracle which may come from the later prophetess Quintilla (Epiphanius is unsure whether it was Prisca or Quintilla) which reads:

‘Appearing as a woman clothed in a shining robe, Christ came to me [in sleep]; he put wisdom into me and revealed to me that this place is sacred and that here Jerusalem will come down from heaven.’¹²⁹⁷

Such a revelation, which some scholars such as Schepelern and Klawiter have seen as patently erotic and perhaps prefiguring the female mysticism of the Middle Ages,¹²⁹⁸ seems somewhat more novel than of earlier prophets and Jensen has suggested that this occasioned a schism in the Montanist community, bringing about the so-called Quintillians, she writes:

‘Apparently this group around Quintilla continued most consistently the heritage of the early New Prophecy, while in the overall movement there was a gradual accommodation to the hierarchical structures of Catholicism.’¹²⁹⁹

While Jensen is cautious about pushing this split too far, it does indicate what we know about the later development of Montanist hierarchy under patriarchs, *koinonoi* and bishops.¹³⁰⁰

¹²⁹⁶ Eusebius *HE* V.16.4. On the matter of the urban diffusion of religious movements see Stark (2006).

¹²⁹⁷ Epiphanius *haer.* XLIX.1.

¹²⁹⁸ Jensen (1996:163).

¹²⁹⁹ Jensen (1996:165).

¹³⁰⁰ Merkelbach (1998:113); Tabbernee (1993:249-80).

This leads us to the final proposition in Stark's theory, *as they become successful, religious movements founded on revelations will attempt to curtail revelations or to at least prevent novel (heretical) revelations*. This helps to explain the split and the factional nature which Montanism appears to us in the heresiological traditions contained in Epiphanius, Augustine of Hippo and Filastrius of Brescia.¹³⁰¹ While some elements of the New Prophecy, most likely the more marginalized with less to be gained from more institutional structures, wanted to maintain a more charismatic prophetic religion, whereas following Weber's classic theory of religious institutions, the general Montanist movement became increasingly hierarchical and routinized, as Stark writes:

'Several options exist. The movement can take the position that the age of revelations is ended, for all necessary truths have been told. This has been the usual Protestant stance. Or the capacity to reveal new truths may be associated with the leadership role - the charisma of the prophet is replaced by charisma of office, in Weber's terms. This has been the Roman Catholic and the Mormon choice. In either case, however, doctrine is stabilized sufficiently to sustain a changeover from prophetic to administrative leadership.'¹³⁰²

Like other religious movements then, Montanism itself became a victim of the phenomenon of sect formation owing to its need to come to terms with its long-term survival.

While scholars have sought the origins and development of Montanism in the diverse socio-cultural context of central Anatolia their conclusions have often overly stressed one primary influence over others, failing to recognise the cultural interaction and large degree of religious syncretism which was a hallmark of central Anatolian religion. This paper, through the means of Stark's socio-scientific theory of revelations has sought to demonstrate how a more complimentary and inclusive approach to the diverse religious phenomena manifested in Montanism can be instructive in explaining why the revelations of the New Prophecy were so successful and why the movement survived over four centuries even in the face of religious and legal sanction and active state persecution.

¹³⁰¹ For the references in these writers and later heresiologists see Heine (1989:110-179).

¹³⁰² Stark (1999:304).

The findings of this thesis suggest that the original revelations and teachings of Montanus and the prophetesses can best be understood through a socio-scientific understanding of what social factors work to occasion and maintain revelatory religious experiences, rather than through socio-scientific models which attribute their behaviour to psychopathology and entrepreneurial causes. This model takes seriously the broader context of central Anatolia as a proverbial hotbed of religious fervour, and helps us to better contextualise the highly polemical and rhetorical constructions of the anti-Montanist sources on which we are largely forced to rely in reconstructing Montanist history. This model, also, bypasses the problem of seeking an essence for Montanism in one particular religious tradition, and allows us to understand its origin as related to various interacting trajectories within the Anatolian religious milieu.

Appendixes.

Appendix 1. Phrygian Jews and Syncretism.

In terms of developing Rabbinic Judaism and its interactions with the Jews of Phrygia, scholars from Ramsay to Sheppard have often deduced the following passage from the Babylonian Talmud,¹³⁰³ Tractate *Shabbath* which reads:

'R. Helbo said: The wine of Perugitha and the water of Diomsith cut off the Ten Tribes from Israel. R. Eleazar b. 'Arak visited that place. He was attracted to them, and [in consequence] his learning vanished. When he returned, he arose to read in the Scroll [of the Torah]. He wished to read, Hahodesh hazeh lakem [This month shall be unto you, etc.], [instead of which] he read haharesch hayah libbam. But the scholars prayed for him, and his learning returned.'¹³⁰⁴

Following the older work of Neubauer they have consistently identified Perugitha as Phrygia,¹³⁰⁵ though as Kraabel and the editors of the Soncino edition have noted it is now almost certain that it actually refers to a village in northern Palestine.¹³⁰⁶ The implication of this passage for those who followed Neubauer's original contention was that it indicated the loss of the Hebrew (or Aramaic) language amongst the Jews of Phrygia and showed their lapsed observance and by implication their susceptibility to syncretism and the allure of neighboring pagan cults. That the argument rested on a problematic reading of a particular text is important, and as we will see below this has been a common means for which scholars have tried to argue for an entire hypothesis of 'Jewish syncretism' out of other isolated and textually problematic evidence.

In an important, though sadly often ignored article, 'The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions',¹³⁰⁷ Kraabel, the author of an extremely important thesis on the Jewish communities of Asia Minor, raised the issue of 'syncretism,' in particular taking aim at the long held out theory first proposed by the great Belgian scholar Franz Cumont that Jews in this

¹³⁰³ Ramsay (1897); Sheppard (1979:169).

¹³⁰⁴ *bShabbath* 147b [Trans. Freedman].

¹³⁰⁵ Neubauer (1967 [1868]:315).

¹³⁰⁶ Kraabel (1982:450); Sheppard (1979:169) acknowledges this but goes on to ignore it to strengthen his argument.

¹³⁰⁷ Kraabel (1982:445-464).

region, and indeed throughout the Graeco-Roman Diaspora, were involved in the syncretistic worship of the Thracian-Phrygian deity Sabazios.¹³⁰⁸ For Kraabel this contention was extremely problematic, but a key example of a problematic consensus which had developed among scholars that: ‘...the Jews of the western Diaspora eagerly offered the Gentile world a debased form of their ancestral religion, paganized to make it attractive to non-Jews.’¹³⁰⁹

While, as will be demonstrated below, Kraabel was most likely right in challenging this stereotype, it is important in lieu of the constant repetition of the link between Sabazios and Judaism to give a resume of the view and to briefly demonstrate why it is problematic and its relevance to understanding the Montanist milieu.

While a number of scholars such as Bodinger, Trebilco and Lane have challenged Cumont’s thesis on various points,¹³¹⁰ the former is correct in stating that ‘Un grand nombre de chercheurs ont accepté cette formule,’¹³¹¹ and certainly a great number still do.¹³¹² It is incumbent on us, then, to briefly look at Cumont’s thesis and reveal why it is problematic and to propose an alternative interpretation.

Cumont stated his case most fully in a 1906 article entitled ‘Les Mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,’¹³¹³ though his conclusions there are briefly summarized in his important and influential book *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*:

‘This mixture [i.e. between Jewish and pagan customs] certainly took place in the mysteries of Sabazius, the Phrygian Jupiter or Dionysus. They were very similar to those of Attis, with whom he was frequently confounded. By means of an audacious etymology that dates back to the Hellenistic period, this old-Thraco-Phrygian divinity has been identified with “Yahveh Zebaoth,” the Biblical “Lord of Hosts.” This

¹³⁰⁸ Kraabel (1982:450f.).

¹³⁰⁹ Kraabel (1982:449).

¹³¹⁰ For the most important challenge see Bodinger (2002:121-139). Lane (1979:35-38) challenges Cumont on textual critical grounds, showing the extremely problematic nature of the manuscript tradition of Valerius Maximus. Trebilco (1991:140-142) gives a good resume of the arguments against Cumont.

¹³¹¹ Bodinger (2002:130).

¹³¹² For instance see Angus (1975 [1928]:194); Oesterley (1935:113-158).

¹³¹³ Cumont (1906:63-79).

corresponding expression in the Septuagint has been regarded as the equivalent of the *kurios Sabazios* of the barbarians.¹³¹⁴

The 'audacious etymology' of which Cumont speaks is none other than a notoriously vague passage in Valerius Maximus, which has been subject to intensive textual criticism, it reads:

'Cn. Cornelius Hispalus, praetor peregrinus in the year of the consulship of Marcus Popilius Laenas and Lucius Calpurnius, ordered astrologers by an edict to leave Rome and Italy within ten days, because they were making profit on petty and silly minds by their own lies by a deceitful interpretation of the stars. The same praetor compelled the Jews, who attempted to infect the Roman customs with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius, to go back to their homes.'¹³¹⁵

Similar notions of so-called Jewish syncretism can be found in a number of other Graeco-Roman authors, though all these references, if anything, show a profound ignorance of Jewish beliefs among many Graeco-Roman authors.¹³¹⁶ At the outset it should be noted that Cumont's contention that Jewish and Christian monotheism may have affected local religious life in Anatolia is certainly possible,¹³¹⁷ however, the evidence on which he draws for his conclusions is extremely problematic and involves a number of tendentious logical leaps.

Firstly, the evidence he cites is geographically disparate and his chief source for what he sees as an Empire-wide tendency (perhaps supportable with regards to some Balkan's provinces) is, aside from the Valerius Maximus passage, a single and extremely problematic third century monument from the catacomb of Praetextatus in Rome which is almost certainly not Jewish but which demonstrates the relative tolerance of pagan mysteries in accommodating numerous deities.¹³¹⁸

Secondly, Cumont makes a tendentious link between the worship of Sabazios and that of *Theos Hypsistos*, which is completely lacking in evidence.¹³¹⁹ Thirdly, in Phrygia itself, the evidence

¹³¹⁴ Cumont (1956[1909]:64).

¹³¹⁵ Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* 1.3.3 [Trans. Williams].

¹³¹⁶ For a full set of references deduced see Cumont (1906:66f.).

¹³¹⁷ See below pp. 243-325.

¹³¹⁸ On this inscription, which is assigned Jewish provenance by Cumont on account of its use of the term *angelus bonus*, see Oesterley (1935:151-157).

¹³¹⁹ On this see Bodinger (2002:125).

for so-called Jewish syncretism (which Cumont does not delve into) is open to a number of more satisfying explanations, and there is an absolute epigraphic silence of anything indicating that the Jews of this region worshipped any deity other than that of their ancestors. Indeed, the evidence for the magical and syncretistic nature of Judaism in this region is largely drawn from polemical New Testament sources and highly problematic Talmudic passages and a tendency to read Jewish evidence through these lens.¹³²⁰ This said Cumont's emotive statement concerning the position of the Jews of Phrygia has become almost axiomatic in later scholarship:

‘Ces colonies juives, établies au milieu de Grecs et de Phrygiens idolâtres, ne purent conserver inaltérée la pureté de leur foi: ils oublièrent l’hébreu pour se servir exclusivement du grec, l’organisation de leur communautés fut imitée de celle des cités, ils autorisèrent ou tolérèrent les mariages mixtes, exercèrent à l’époque romaine le sacerdoce dans le culte des empereurs, et admirèrent une foule de pratiques et de superstitions païennes.’¹³²¹

Such statements by established scholars, alas, are likely to have a long afterlife even when supported by weak evidence.¹³²² Indeed, Cumont's thesis, if at times ingenious, under more careful scrutiny reveals itself as a textbook example of what Kurt Rudolph referred to as ‘literary syncretism’ whereby ‘...the establishment of particular relations can be undertaken by individuals without any connection in principle with more comprehensive encounters between cultures and religions,’¹³²³ put more bluntly a literary author makes a simple misinterpretation or error and a syncretistic relationship is drawn from there.

That such a digression may seem slightly out of place in a thesis dealing with Montanism, however, would be to miss one of the key theses of interpretation of Montanism, that is, its purported links with a syncretistic Jewish and pagan milieu. Religious syncretism in the Jewish

¹³²⁰ Kraabel (1989:447) notes this tendency:

‘Some aspects of Jewish history and thought became important for students of the New Testament and the early Church, but their findings were bound to produce an imperfect view of ancient Judaism since they were interested in it less for its own sake than as the background for understanding early Christianity.’

¹³²¹ Cumont (1906:64).

¹³²² Kraabel (1989:451) puts this bluntly:

‘What might originally have been constructed as a hypothesis soon assumed the status of fact.’

¹³²³ Rudolph (1987:8927).

communities of Phrygia has certainly been extremely overstated (if it existed at all), but it has been pressed by Cumont even further when he writes:

‘It is a fact, then, that Judaism influenced the worship of Sabazius, it is very probably that it influenced the cult of Cybele also, although in this case the influence cannot be discerned with the same degree of certainty.’¹³²⁴

Just as Cumont’s syncretistic interpretation of the Sabazios cult’s links with Judaism, regardless of the obvious impediment that there is only quite meager evidence for this cult in the Anatolian Mid-West during antiquity, has been shown to be at best problematic, at worst excessive, one must raise the question of the dangers of being too economical in one’s use of the originally polemic concept of ‘syncretism,’ a matter to which we will return to below in Chapter 5.¹³²⁵

It will suffice to say here that while not necessarily on intimate terms with the developing Rabbinic Judaism of the Mishnaic and Talmudic literature, it is probably stretching the evidence to suggest that the Jews of Asia Minor had abandoned their ancestral traditions to such an extent as to worship a wild Thracian-Phrygian deity or any other pagan deity for that matter. While as we will see common practices in epigraphic habit and expression certainly developed across Jewish, Christian and pagan lines within the cities of the Anatolian Mid-West, syncretism and loss of communal identity is not a necessary corollary of these similarities. It would be better to say that these groups adopted similar forms of expression in order to be understood by one another, whilst at the same time modifying them to maintain the important aspects of their identity. These groups were integrated but not totally assimilated.¹³²⁶

¹³²⁴ Cumont (1956 [1909]:65).

¹³²⁵ On the issues surrounding the term ‘syncretism’ see Rudolph (2005:68-85). See also the collection of studies in Leopold & Jensen (2005).

¹³²⁶ On the Jewish epigraphic habit and its similarities with pagans see Ameling (2009:203-234).

Appendix 2. Martyrdoms Under the Later Antonines.

Beginning with the reign of Antoninus Pius we have the evidence of a group of martyrs, possibly from Pergamum, whose transportation to and trial in Smyrna whetted the appetites of the local crowd to try their luck in disposing of their own Christian bishop, the celebrated Polycarp.¹³²⁷ Of course the general tenure of peace, and the reputation of Antoninus Pius among the 'good' emperors, has meant that scholars are often willing to either redate this event (e.g. Grégoire) to the reign of Marcus Aurelius,¹³²⁸ or to dismiss it as the result of an angry mob and not a slight on Roman governance (in itself not untrue, given that Antoninus Pius had absolutely nothing to do with it).¹³²⁹ This said, the fact that Polycarp is distinctly referred to as the '...destroyer of our gods,'¹³³⁰ by an unruly mob does suggest a considerable level of local antagonism, as Bowersock notes, probably exacerbated by the public and civic context in which he was operating.

The evidence for the reign of Marcus Aurelius is nearly as meager. The two events, which we have detailed descriptions are those in Gaul in 177 CE,¹³³¹ in the later years of Marcus Aurelius' joint reign with his disappointing son Commodus and the martyrdom of Justin Martyr in Rome around 165 C.E.,¹³³² under Marcus' erstwhile teacher Rusticus.¹³³³ Like the events of Smyrna we can see the events of Gaul as largely a mob action. Eusebius' vague suggestion that the beginning of Marcus Aurelius' reign as an occasion when '...the greatest persecutions were exciting Asia,'¹³³⁴ while suggestive, relies on his misdating of Polycarp's death, an event which has played a key role in the interpretation of the early history of Montanism.¹³³⁵ Two other events localized in Asia are mentioned briefly by Eusebius, the martyrdoms of Sagaris and Thraseas, both of which are based on scarce evidence and problematic.

With regard to Sagaris Eusebius quotes a letter of Polycrates of Epheus which mentions the support of Sagaris for the Quartodeciman cause '...And why should I mention Sagaris, bishop

¹³²⁷ *M. Poly.* I-III.

¹³²⁸ Grégoire (1951:138-146).

¹³²⁹ Grégoire (1951:138-146).

¹³³⁰ *M. Poly.* III.

¹³³¹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.1.

¹³³² *M. Just.*

¹³³³ Musurillo (1972:xviii).

¹³³⁴ Euseb. *h.e.* IV.15.1.

¹³³⁵ See below pp. 228-242.

and martyr, who sleeps at Laodicea.’¹³³⁶ A second source, which is more useful, are Eusebius’ quotes from the largely lost work of Melito of Sardis on the Passover, in which he writes of Sagaris being martyred during the proconsulship of Servilius Paulus.¹³³⁷ While no evidence survives of a Servilius Paulus, scholars know that a Sergius Paulus was governor of Asia in either the early or late 160s, the most likely date being 168 C.E.¹³³⁸ Given Melito’s local knowledge it is probably likely that he is correct here and so we do have one martyrdom taking place in the period, predicatably in the assize city of Laodicea-ad-Lycum (though it could refer to Laodicea Combusta).

With regard to Thraseas we have slightly more information, but this problematizes the issue considerably. It seems that he was a bishop of Eumeneia and a supporter of the Quartodecimans and like Sagaris is cited in the same letter of Polycrates of Ephesus as ‘...bishop and martyr from Eumeneia.’ That his martyrdom is to be linked to the reign of Marcus Aurelius may be inferred from extracts from the anti-Montanist writer Apollonius of Hierapolis who mentions Gaius and Alexander as martyrs from Eumeneia during this period,¹³³⁹ and indeed in the early Syriac Martyrology under its entry for the twenty-seventh of October reads ‘...at Eumeneia in the town of the Phrygians Traseas and Polykarpos and Gaius and eight others.’¹³⁴⁰

Alas we have little more information that this, other than a passage in the third century *Vita Polycarpi* which refers to a shrine or mausoleum of Thraseas in Smyrna during the third century.¹³⁴¹ It is probable, given the strictures of procuratorial judisdiction that Thraseas was martyred at Smyrna, though why here rather than the closer centre of Apamea-on-the-Menander like Gaius and Alexander is unclear, though perhaps given his status as a bishop we could speculate that Thraseas was treated differently. From the evidence we cannot reckon whether these two incidents are contemporaneous, though whatever conclusion we reach it seems clear that the evidence does not indicate that these were ‘widespread persecutions’ of the type described by Eusebius, but rather isolated cases probably arising in the day-to-day

¹³³⁶ Euseb. *h.e.* IV.15.1.

¹³³⁷ Euseb. *h.e.* V.24.4-5.

¹³³⁸ Euseb. *h.e.* IV.26.3. On the proconsulship of Sergius Paulus see Keresztes (1968:327 n. 12).

¹³³⁹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.

¹³⁴⁰ Lietzmann (1904:16).

¹³⁴¹ *Vita Polycarp.* XX.

business of proconsular assize hearings. With the exception of Polycarp, who seems to have been singled out for his leadership, there is no evidence which indicates that any persecutions went beyond the 'precedent' set by Trajan.

Elsewhere in this section Eusebius writes '...from them [the events at Lyons and Vienne] one can easily guess what happened in the other provinces of the Empire.'¹³⁴² While this might have indeed been the case, Eusebius sadly produces no evidence or even names and seems to contradict his own comments elsewhere claiming that Marcus Aurelius, after the fanciful story of the 'Thundering Legion' during his Sarmatian campaign (c. 175 C.E.) had '...threatened to execute any who attempted to accuse us.'¹³⁴³

Also sometimes dated to this reign, particularly by German scholars, is the text of the *Martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice* though this dating is problematic and again sometimes used as evidence of Montanist 'voluntary martyrdom' as we will see below.¹³⁴⁴ The same goes for the *Martyrdom of Pionius*, which is nowadays securely dated to the reign of Decius.¹³⁴⁵

What seems to emerge, then, from these references, almost all of which are found in Eusebius, is that they are fairly isolated examples and hardly indicative of a widespread persecution. It is perhaps better if we understand their recording as indicative of Eusebius' historiographical program, which makes explicit his intention to record '...the occasions and times of the hostilities waged by the heathen against the divine Word and the heroism of those who fought to defend it, sometimes through torture and blood.'¹³⁴⁶ That such isolated examples should be held up for emulation for Eusebius, writing during the so-called 'Great Persecution,' is clear, though we must also be suspicious that Eusebius is viewing such situations retrospectively from the vantage point of the 'Great Persecution,' and as a result somewhat exaggerating their impact.

Violent persecution need not be the sole factor aggravating the situation of Christians at this time, and Frend is certainly right in noting that Marcus Aurelius' reign did produce a number of

¹³⁴² Euseb. *h.e.* V.2.1.

¹³⁴³ Euseb. *h.e.* V.5.

¹³⁴⁴ Musurillo (1972:xv).

¹³⁴⁵ Robert (1994:9).

¹³⁴⁶ Euseb. *h.e.* I.1. [Trans. Maier].

works and highly placed figures who were hostile to Christianity on intellectual grounds such as Fronto (a one-time governor of Asia) and the Roman prefect Q. Iunius Rusticus,¹³⁴⁷ indeed the emperor himself may have declared his disdain in his celebrated *Meditations*.¹³⁴⁸ However, we must be cautious in pushing this hostility too far, and indeed Galen, wrote with some admiration of the Christians at this time. It is worth, now, briefly looking in particular at the vexed question of the relationship between Montanism and the Roman state.

¹³⁴⁷ On Fronto's opposition to Christianity see Minucius Felix, *Oct.* IX.6. On Rusticus see *M. Just.* I.

¹³⁴⁸ Frend (1965) gives an excellent summary of Celsus and other hostile figures during this period. On this passage in Marcus Aurelius see Brunt (1979:483-520).

Appendix 3. Montanism and the State.

The question of Montanism and the Roman state is one which is clearly exacerbated by the problem which most, if not all Roman officials had, with differentiating between proto-Orthodox Christians and Montanists, not least other groups deemed 'heretical.'¹³⁴⁹ As a result we cannot always be sure whether an attitude referred to by an author, for instance the famous passage in Marcus Aurelius concerning the Christians, reflects the beliefs of the 'Great Church' or one of the various sects which sprung up in certain localities.

Aside from the confusion of identification the problem of Montanism and the state has also been exacerbated by the taxonomic definitions of Montanism mentioned in our introduction. In order to demonstrate this, it is only necessary to quote important histories of the early Church which cover this matter, firstly W.H.C. Frend, an author who we have seen has contributed a great deal of insight into the understanding of Montanism through drawing strong parallels with Donatism, in his monumental work *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, writes:

'[Montanism] showed how in a rural backwater of the Roman Empire a blend of Judaism with native prophetic tradition and eschatological hopes could combine to form the living creed of a Church of the Martyrs.'¹³⁵⁰

What this statement, among others shows, is that once the *a posteriori* opinion that Montanism was a 'church of the martyrs' is accepted it can provide an easy means of arguing back, from a number of angles, to a way in which various interpretations can back up this assumption. The problem is, that if the logic of argument is reversed and we argue *a priori* from the evidence such a picture is far more problematic. The same logical fallacy occurs in Marti Sordi's *The Christians and the Roman Empire*, which reads:

'The Roman government had begun to regard the Christian communities as politically suspect, and the reason for this was the spread of Montanism, with its rigidly intransigent attitude to the state, its identification with the anti-Roman spirit of the

¹³⁴⁹ Celsus and Porphyry were exceptions here.

¹³⁵⁰ Frend (1965:294).

Jewish revolts, its openly provocative behaviour, its charismatic and prophetic claims and its thirst for martyrdom.¹³⁵¹

In reality all these anti-Roman issues, excluding its 'charismatic and prophetic claims' actually boil down to one issue, and one alone: the Montanist attitude to martyrdom. Claims to Montanist 'sectarianism' stand or fall on this one issue, one which is exacerbated by the fact that all Christians, whatever their stripes, were in some level of tension with the Roman state.¹³⁵² In order to understand how this attitude can be labelled 'sectarian,' it is worth briefly delving into the sociological discussion of what is normally labelled 'Church-Sect Theory.'

Since the beginning of the twentieth century and at least the work of Ernst Troeltsch, sociologists studying religion have drawn a distinction between churches and sects as the two predominant models for religious congregations.¹³⁵³ Originally these two model examples were drawn in terms of ideal types, that is, a reified abstract typology which encompassed any manner of distinguishing features. Over time such a methodology approach has proved to be problematic in the very least, with the number of ideal types multiplying *ad infinitum*. In order to move away from this seeming impasse Benton Johnson pioneered an approach which worked with a single continuum between churches and sects on which various religious congregations or movements could be situated by virtue of the level of tension which existed between the said religious movement and the state or predominant religious culture in a given society.¹³⁵⁴

By this approach movements in higher tension were deemed more sect-like, whereas religions in lower tension were more church-like. The question, then, becomes less one of fitting various religious congregations or movements into typological straight-jackets, than of how we measure tension with the state or predominant religious culture. Since the statistical and survey methods of analysis amongst modern sociologists are difficult nigh on impossible for an ancient historian to effectively utilize we must devise non-quantitative methods for analyzing sectarian tension. One of the best indicators of the degree of tension between a religious

¹³⁵¹ Sordi (1983:72).

¹³⁵² This is amply demonstrated by the short but thoughtprovoking study of Lopez (2004) who demonstrates the antipathy of nearly all pre-Constantinian sources to aspects of Roman rule and attitudes.

¹³⁵³ For a discussion of such theories see Johnson (1957:88-92); (1963:539-549); (1971:124-137)

¹³⁵⁴ For further on Johnson's theories and its development see Stark & Bainbridge (1979: 117-131);(1980:105-124); (1985).

group and its surrounding society, and certainly the most historically visible, is that of open, state-sanctioned and legally facilitated religious persecution, though as we have seen above this was only intermittent during the formative period of Montanism. Another way, we can measure it, however, is by looking at the confrontational stance and practices by various religious groups.

In around the year 213 C.E. Tertullian of Carthage published a work entitled *Flight in Time of Persecution* chastising those in the North African church who advocated fleeing during times of persecution, and exhorting his fellow Christians to remain steadfast under fire. Written during his so-called 'Montanist Period' this work has been seen as the example *par excellence* that Montanism was a movement which deliberately provoked martyrdom.¹³⁵⁵ This position, which was almost ubiquitous until recently, is normally argued from an anonymous oracle (often mistakenly attributed to Montanus) which Tertullian quotes which reads:

'Do not hope to die in bed nor in abortion nor in languishing fevers, but in martyrdom, that he who suffered for you may be glorified.'¹³⁵⁶

This position has been most recently restated in detail by Anthony Birley despite having been abandoned by a number of scholars since H.J. Lawlor first challenged this contention in 1908.¹³⁵⁷ However, this purported attitude of the Montanists gives us a good way of demonstrating how 'sectarian' Montanism was, and measuring at least something of its tension with the state. While certainly not statistical or quantitative, this does give us some empirical evidence with which to assess how true the picture painted by Frend and Sordi (and many others) really is.

The means by which we can move to test the sociological hypothesis of Johnson and others outlined above is to look at the evidence marshalled for maintaining the image of the Montanists as a group of anti-social and provocative individuals who often actively sought martyrdom at the hands of often unwilling, or at least lukewarm, imperial authorities or mobs. This attitude has been labelled, not without problems, 'voluntary martyrdom,' a coinage of the

¹³⁵⁵ On Tertullian's 'Montanist Period' and how it is normally dated see Barnes (1971:30-48).

¹³⁵⁶ Tert. *De fuga*. IX [Trans. Grant]. Grant (1957:95) attributes this oracle to Montanus.

¹³⁵⁷ Birley (2006: 99-127); Hirschmann (2005); Lawlor (1908:495-499).

British Marxist historian G.E.M. de Ste. Croix.¹³⁵⁸ A historical example of this kind of behavior can be found Tertullian of Carthage's *Ad Scapulam* written c. 212/213 C.E. in which Tertullian seeks to convince the newly appointed governor of Carthage P. Julius Scapula Tertullus Priscus to renege on his plan to prosecute Christians in his province.¹³⁵⁹ In this text a group of Christians provocatively present themselves to the Roman proconsul and demand to be martyred only to receive the rather unexpected result of being told the ancient equivalent of 'Go jump off a bridge!' ¹³⁶⁰

The definition, then, of a 'voluntary martyr', as it will be used here, was a Christian not who died or confessed after having been sought out by authorities or reported by sycophants (or *delatores*), but one who actively sought to provoke the authorities by presenting him or herself as a Christian, either during, or even in the absence of, a period of persecution or social tension.

The number of surviving examples of 'voluntary martyrdom' in the literature is, despite the vast martyrological oeuvre, relatively small. The reasons for this dearth of evidence are numerous, though perhaps most telling is that among the early Christian theologians between Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo, not one author sanctions such behavior,¹³⁶¹ not even Tertullian (despite the image portrayed by many scholars).¹³⁶² While it is unnecessary here to go into the theological arguments arrayed against 'voluntary martyrdom,' it is important to note that the discussion of the problem, far from suggesting that this was a rare occurrence, instead suggests that it was an ongoing issue, both for the conscience of the individual Christians and in the wider Christian community.

¹³⁵⁸ De. Ste. Croix (2007:153) writes:

“...It is impossible to doubt that the prevalence of voluntary martyrdom was a factor which both contributed towards the outbreak of persecution and tended to intensify it when it was already in progress.”

¹³⁵⁹ On the identity of Scapula see Birley (1991:81f.); (1992:53).

¹³⁶⁰ Tert. *Ad scapulam*. V.

¹³⁶¹ For a summary of these attitudes see Tabbernee (1985:33-44).

¹³⁶² This is well stated by Roberts (1924:41) who writes on Tertullian's attitude to martyrdom: 'Tertullian was for maintaining his principles, and suffering, if need be, for the faith, though he does not counsel rash and foolish courting of martyrdom. It is fidelity for which he stands. The coward earns his contempt.'

In his prosopography of 'voluntary martyrs' Jean-Louis Voisin cites only twenty-four examples of 'voluntary martyrdom' from ancient sources.¹³⁶³ Similarly in his study *De Ste. Croix* also cites twenty-four examples.¹³⁶⁴ Of these examples Birley has identified five as Montanist and thus examples of the so-called Montanist zeal for 'voluntary martyrdom.' It is these five examples to which we must now turn, though we should note at the outset that the mere fact that eighteen of the examples cannot be demonstrated to be Montanist is itself telling to the fact that this was certainly not uniquely Montanist behaviour.¹³⁶⁵

The first of these we have already cited, the example from the governorship of C. Arrius Antoninus from Tertullian's *Ad Scapulam*. Because this work was written during Tertullian's 'Montanist Period,' it has been argued that it must be a record of Montanist Christians.¹³⁶⁶ Such a conclusion is neither necessary nor indeed makes the best sense of Tertullian's attitude elsewhere.

In the other writings dated to his so-called 'Montanist Period' Tertullian is quick to identify when he is mentioning an individual associated with the New Prophecy, or citing its teaching.¹³⁶⁷ A second point to note is that far from being truly schismatic in North Africa, the evidence seems to suggest instead that Montanism existed as a conclave, something of a 'holiness club,' within the North African church of the late second and early third centuries.¹³⁶⁸

Indeed, while Tertullian does draw a theoretical distinction between *spiritalis*, that is, those who have accepted the teaching of the New Prophecy and *psychici*, those who have not, he does not deny the latter the status of Christians. Moreover, *Ad Scapulam* as a text is notable for its complete lack of appeal to Montanist sources, indeed it appears rather ecumenical when

¹³⁶³ Voisin (2005:351-362).

¹³⁶⁴ De Ste. Croix (2006:153-200).

¹³⁶⁵ De Ste. Croix (1963: 21) made this observation as long ago noting:

'Contrary to what is usually said, voluntary was by no means confined mainly to heretical or schismatic sects such as Montanists and Donatists, but was a good deal more common among the orthodox than is generally admitted.'

¹³⁶⁶ Frend (1965:271); Birley (2006:114) writes:

'Surely the reason why Tertullian knew about this episode that took place in a far off province more than thirty years earlier was because the Christians involved were fellow-Montanists.'

¹³⁶⁷ For a collection of examples see Roberts (1924:39-42).

¹³⁶⁸ On this see Butler (2005:9-43) with particular reference to *M. Perp.*

compared with some of Tertullian's other polemical writings.¹³⁶⁹ On these grounds, one could plausibly suggest that the contention that this group must have been Montanists on the grounds that Tertullian was a Montanist is flawed due to its understanding of the relationship between the Montanists and the wider North African church.

The chief argument with regard to this source proposed by Birley, however, rests on his interpretation (notably not elaborated) of the evidence provided by another source, the so-called Anonymous Anti-Montanist quoted in Eusebius concerning a set of rumors relating to the deaths of Montanus and his followers, which reads:

‘For report says that a maddening spirit drove both of them [Montanus and Maximilla] to hang themselves, thought not at the same time; and a persistent rumor at the time of each death said that thus they died and ended their life, after the fashion of the traitor Judas. Similarly, common report has it about that marvelous man, the –so to speak- first steward of their so-called prophecy, Theodotus, that once, on being lifted and raised heavenwards, he fell into abnormal ecstasy, and entrusting himself to the spirit of error was whirled to the ground, and so met a miserable end.’¹³⁷⁰

Here Birley sees a hint of what is written in Tertullian, that the proconsul, far from indulging the fanaticism of these Christians, explicitly told them ‘...if you wish to die, you have precipices or halters.’ For Birley it seems clear that these rumors regarding the deaths of the Montanists suggest that they took the proconsul's advice to heart and therefore that this further supports Montanist identification for the story in *Ad Scapulam*. Such a conclusion is understandable, but if we carefully read the text in Eusebius it becomes clear that the Anonymous' intention here is rhetorical, and indeed he reveals that he himself was doubtful as to the truth of these rumors.¹³⁷¹

The Anonymous Anti-Montanist is a heresiological source which aims to paint the Montanists as vividly as possible in the colors of the false prophets, particularly as these are foretold in the

¹³⁶⁹ This latter argument, however, does have its issues with regard to Tertullian's rhetorical strategy. A point kindly pointed out to me by Dr. Geoffrey Dunn.

¹³⁷⁰ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.3 [Trans. Grant].

¹³⁷¹ Euseb. *h.e.* V.16.3 ends with the comment:

‘But, my dear sir, let us not imagine we can be certain of a fact of this kind when we did not see it.’ [Trans. Grant].

Gospel of Matthew. For instance, in the passage leading up to a discussion of their deaths he mocks Montanist claims of being persecuted in a highly rhetorical use of biblical allusion. It is clear that this passage is drawing on Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees in Matt. 23:34-35 as those who murder the true prophets and in the text of Matthew the true prophets are immediately contrasted with foretold false prophets in chapter 24; whose image the Montanists are further made to mirror. This rhetorical construction is finally capped off with the parallels made between the deaths of Judas as reported in Matt. 27:3-10 and those of Montanus and the prophetesses.

Something similar can be seen with regard the death of Theodotus. While Birley interprets this passage as referring to death by a suicidal jump from a cliff (contrary to the clear meaning of the text), a heresiological interpretation of the passage is far more fitting. The death of Simon Magus, the paradigmatic father of heresies in early Christian literature, is narrated in the contemporaneous apocryphal *Acts of Peter* as occurring when in the process of levitation, caused by demons or magic, he is whisked violently to his death on the ground below by the prayers of Peter.¹³⁷²

Given the likely geographical provenance of the *Acts of Peter* in Asia Minor, I would suggest that the similarity between these two stories, both of which note the ecstatic flights of heretics and their subsequent violent demise are too similar to ignore.¹³⁷³

The second text claimed by scholars as evidence of Montanist enthusiasm for martyrdom is found in the second century *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and the story of the aborted 'voluntary martyrdom' of Quintus the Phrygian, which reads:

'There was a Phrygian named Quintus who had only recently come from Phrygia, and when he saw the wild animals he turned cowardly. Now he was one who had given himself up and had forced some others to give themselves up voluntarily. With him the governor used many arguments and persuaded him to swear by the gods and offer

¹³⁷² *Acts of Peter* XXXII.

¹³⁷³ On provenance of this text see Hennecke (1965:275).

sacrifice. This is the reason, brothers, that we do not approve of those who come forward of themselves: this is not the teaching of the Gospel.’¹³⁷⁴

This text has long been interpreted as evidence for Montanism, citing the fact that the most popular designation for Montanism throughout its history was ‘the heresy of the Phrygians’.

¹³⁷⁵ Two problems, however, can be found with this interpretation. Firstly it turns on the long-running debates over the date of the text itself and the origins of Montanism. Secondly, the syntactical differences between the designation of Montanism as the ‘heresy of the Phrygians’ (τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φρυγῶν) and the simple ethnic designation of ‘Phrygian’ (Φρύξ).

Nowadays most scholars would accept Tabbernee’s dating of the origins of Montanism to around 165 C.E., a date between the two extremes of 156/157 C.E. given by Epiphanius’ and the date of 171/172 CE found in Eusebius; both notoriously problematic sources when it comes to matters of precise chronology.¹³⁷⁶ T.D. Barnes follows the later date given in Eusebius and many scholars, including Birley, have followed Barnes here.

The most common date given for the martyrdom of Polycarp, again most recently by Barnes, is 156 C.E.¹³⁷⁷ Since Birley accepts Barnes’ dating here for both the outbreak of Montanism and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* this, by his own admission, logically rules out Quintus as a Montanist, the events taking place around fifteen years before the foundation of Montanism. Despite this, Birley (following Frend’s earlier arguments) concludes, contrary to the evidence that:

‘...irrespective of when Montanus himself first took on an active role, there were already signs of the New Prophecy, or its spiritual roots, before the middle of the second century.’¹³⁷⁸

This, of course, works on circular logic. Quintus as a Phrygian who courted ‘voluntary martyrdom’ must have been influenced by Montanism because Montanists were ‘voluntary

¹³⁷⁴ *M. Poly.* IV [Trans. Musurillo].

¹³⁷⁵ For a survey of opinions on this matter see Tabbernee (1985:33f.).

¹³⁷⁶ Tabbernee (2007:xxix).

¹³⁷⁷ On various datings see Dehandschutter (1993:497-502); Barnes (1967:433-437).

¹³⁷⁸ Birley (2006:112); Frend (1965:198).

martyrs' even though there was no Montanism at the time of Quintus' aborted 'voluntary martyrdom.' The crux here being if Quintus was before Montanism, there is no early evidence for Montanism as desiring 'voluntary martyrdom' within the context of Roman Asia Minor.¹³⁷⁹ While it is possible that, as others have argued, this is a later textual emendation to attack Montanism the question arises as to why not be more explicit?

With regard to this point, while Montanism is almost always referred to by the phrase 'the heresy of the Phrygians,' (τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φρυγῶν) and indeed Clement of Alexandria notes that it took its name for this geographical region,¹³⁸⁰ not once in the extant literature is the noun Φρύξ alone used in reference to Montanism without the qualifying phrase. While this might seem like verbal quibbling, if the purpose of this text had been to malign or demonstrate Montanist practices a clearer designation could surely be expected, rather than the ambiguous ethnic designation Φρύξ.¹³⁸¹ Indeed, there are uses of the term Φρύξ elsewhere in the martyrological literature with the express meaning of simply a native of Phrygia, as well as examples of Montanists who are explicitly designated by the phrase 'the heresy of the Phrygians.'¹³⁸²

The third source cited is the *Martyrdoms of the Lyons and Vienne* a document securely dated to 177 C.E. Two examples of purported 'voluntary martyrdom' occur in this document. The first is that of Vettius Epagathus, which depicts Vettius, a person of some influence, as protesting the innocence of the condemned Christians, and when questioned, being a Christian himself, it reads:

'Then, when they were brought before the prefect and he had shown them all the cruelty he reserves for us, one of our number came forward, a man named Vettius Epagathus, full of love of God and of his neighbor.'¹³⁸³

¹³⁷⁹ It is best here to ignore the whole idea of Proto-Montanism proposed by some scholars as a means of circumventing this. Frend (1960: 289).

¹³⁸⁰ Clem. *stro.* VII.17.108.1.

¹³⁸¹ For further discussion of this see Tabbernee (1985:33-44).

¹³⁸² *M. Just.* IV. *M. Pion.* XI.

¹³⁸³ *M. Lyon.* I. [Trans. Musurillo].

This passage goes on to stress that Vettius possessed ‘...great devotion and fervor in spirit,’ and moreover, that he was ‘...called the Christians advocate (παράκλητος) and that ‘...he possessed the advocate within him’ (ἔχων δὲ τὸν παράκλητον ἐν ἑαυτῷ).¹³⁸⁴

The question of the Montanist identification of this text is tied up with three assumptions (1) that Montanists courted martyrdom; (2) the reference to spiritual fervor or charismata indicates a purely Montanist milieu; and (3) the designation of Vettius as παράκλητος of the Christians; παράκλητος being a Montanist watchword. However, the claim that these three things necessarily imply Montanism needs to be qualified.

With regard to the use of the term παράκλητος, as William Tabbernee has pointed out, this could just as easily be an anti-Montanist appropriation of Paraclete language, demonstrating Vettius’ actions as ‘...the action of a true Paraclete in contrast to the Montanist teaching about the Paraclete which had just been rejected.’¹³⁸⁵

With regard to spiritual fervor we need only refer the contemporaneous writings of Irenaeus of Lyons which demonstrate that the issue of spiritual gifts and charismata, probably occasioned by the links between Lyons and the churches of Asia, was a topic of active discussion in the Church of Gaul at this time.¹³⁸⁶ However, far from the outright rejection of such spiritual charismata Irenaeus had instead trodden the path of caution, not condemning prophecy but only false prophecy, writing:

‘He shall also judge false prophets, who, without having received the gift of prophecy from God, and not possessed of the fear of God, but either for the sake of vainglory, or with a view to some personal advantage, or acting in some way under the influence of a wicked spirit, pretend to utter prophecies, while all the time they lie against God.’¹³⁸⁷

The portrait given of Vettius Epagathus, far from being that of a false prophet as understood by a contemporary reflection on these issues, is highly laudatory of his spiritual attainments; containing no hint of disapproval.

¹³⁸⁴ *Ep. Lugd.* XI. [Trans. Musurillo].

¹³⁸⁵ Tabbernee (1985:39).

¹³⁸⁶ Robeck (1985:104-114).

¹³⁸⁷ *Iren. haer.* IV.33.6 [Trans. ANF].

While it is certainly debated whether this reference in Irenaeus applies implicitly to Montanism,¹³⁸⁸ it is likely that the esteeming of charismata amongst the Christians of Gaul is not evidence of their adherence to the New Prophecy but rather of their continued respect for spiritual gifts when understood in the correct sense. On the balance of the evidence (all of which we cannot for want of space here) it seems wise to conclude with Tabbernee that it is more likely that the Christians of Gaul opposed Montanist charismata rather than embraced it and that subsequently Vettius be considered an “orthodox” charismatic.¹³⁸⁹

This brings us to the second example given in this text, that of Alexander, which reads:

‘Among those that were being questioned was a man named Alexander, a Phrygian, who was a doctor by profession; he had spent many years in various parts of Gaul, and he was known practically to everyone because of his love of God and his outspokenness in preaching the word, for he did in fact possess a share in the charism of the apostles. He had been standing in front of the tribunal, and by his attitude he had been urging the Christians to make their confession; and hence to those who were standing in the area of the tribunal it was clear that he was as one who was giving birth. But the crowd grew annoyed that those who had previously denied the faith were now confessing it once more, and they cried out against Alexander that he was the cause of this. The governor then ordered him to appear before him and asked him who he was. When Alexander said that he was a Christian, he [the governor] flew into a rage and condemned him to the beasts.’¹³⁹⁰

Like Quintus in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* Alexander is identified as Montanist by virtue of his ethnicity and behavior. However, far from the standard portrait of one who gave himself up actively, Alexander’s martyrdom represents one of the occurrences, approved by proto-orthodox writers, in which an individual encouraged fellow Christians at trial to persevere in their competition for the crown of martyrdom, and was subsequently arrested.¹³⁹¹ In terms of the definition of ‘voluntary martyrdom’ adopted with regard to Montanism Alexander can only be tangentially considered as actively seeking martyrdom, given that the persecution was

¹³⁸⁸ For a discussion of this see Vallee (1981:34-9).

¹³⁸⁹ Tabbernee (2007:33f.).

¹³⁹⁰ *Ep. Lugd.* XLIX [Trans. Musurillo].

¹³⁹¹ Tabbernee (1985:35).

already under way. Like with Quintus above, his Phrygian ethnicity should be understood, on the grounds of syntax, as merely that, a designation of ethnicity rather than of sectarian allegiance. Again, when viewed in this way it is difficult to maintain that Alexander was a Montanist.

The fourth example given is found in the *Acts of Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice*. The text in question narrates how, '...While the proconsul was staying in Pergamum, the blessed Carpus and Papyrus were brought before him.'¹³⁹² There is no question here of volunteering, but rather a stand procedure whereby suspected criminals were brought before a governor, probably by *delatores* or *frumentarii* acting in their contemporary role as secret police, during his annual juridical assize. This said, Agathonice certainly volunteered, the text reading:

'There was a woman named Agathonice standing there who saw the glory of the Lord, as Carpus said he had seen it; realizing that this was a call from heaven, she raised her voice at once: 'Here is a meal that has been prepared for me. I must partake and eat of this glorious repast!'¹³⁹³

However, like with Alexander above, her volunteering was done under the theologically acceptable auspices of a 'sign from God.'¹³⁹⁴ Her identification as a Montanist has only been inferred by the Montanist identification made for Papyrus, who as we have seen did not volunteer. Even if Papyrus is identified as a Montanist, which is highly problematic and relies on dubious chronological and geographical claims made by Epiphanius,¹³⁹⁵ it does not necessarily follow that Agathonice was. Evidence from other martyr narratives demonstrates that often proto-orthodox and heretical Christians were tried and executed together, with no distinction being drawn by their accusers.¹³⁹⁶

The fifth example of so-called Montanist 'voluntary martyrdom' is taken from a statement of the second century anti-Christian critic Celsus which discusses Christians (never identified as Montanists) who openly disrespected the pagan gods, Celsus writes:

¹³⁹² *M. Carp. I.* [Trans. Musurillo].

¹³⁹³ *M. Carp. XLII f.* [Trans. Musurillo].

¹³⁹⁴ Droge & Tabor (1992:136f.).

¹³⁹⁵ Birley (2006:117) assumes that Epiphanius (*haer.* LI.33) is correct in asserting that between a certain date Thyateira, Papyrus' home town, was entirely Montanist. This is extremely problematic due to the conflict over the dating of this text and Epiphanius' notoriously bad chronology.

¹³⁹⁶ E.g. Euseb. *h.e.* V.16. *M. Pion.* XI.

‘Look, I approach the statue of Zeus or Apollo or any other god and insult it, and the god does not take revenge on me.’¹³⁹⁷

Birley interprets this in the sense of Christian provocation, interpreting the passage as referring to the later Christian practice of vandalizing pagan idols. However, this is an anachronistic interpretation. The evidence for pre-Constantinian ‘idol smashing’ amongst Christians is non-existent, the practice being instead prevalent in the post-Constantinian ‘Christian’ Empire.¹³⁹⁸ What was probably more likely involved here was a Christian spitting or exhaling to ward off evil, granted a potentially provocative act but by no means tantamount to voluntarily presenting oneself and declaring one’s Christian identity before a persecuting Roman official or taking to a pagan statue with an axe.¹³⁹⁹

Once the active element of ‘voluntary martyrdom’ is brought into question, the linking of this passage to Montanism becomes even more problematic, and relates to the interpretation of another passage in Celsus’ writings which reads:

‘But as Celsus promises to give an account of the manner in which prophecies are delivered in Phoenicia and Palestine, speaking as though it were a matter with which he had a full and personal acquaintance, let us see what he has to say on the subject. First he lays it down that there are several kinds of prophecies, but he does not specify what they are; indeed, he could not do so, and the statement is a piece of pure ostentation. However, let us see what he considers the most perfect kind of prophecy among these nations. “There are many,” he says, “who, although of no name, with the greatest facility and on the slightest occasion, whether within or without temples, assume the motions and gestures of inspired persons; while others do it in cities or among armies, for the purpose of attracting attention and exciting surprise. These are accustomed to say, each for himself, ‘I am God; I am the Son of God; or, I am the Divine Spirit; I have come because the world is perishing, and you, O men, are perishing for

¹³⁹⁷ Orig. *Cels.* VIII.38 [Trans. ANF].

¹³⁹⁸ Thornton (1986:122) states this emphatically:

‘There is in fact no direct evidence that Christians publicly insulted or destroyed pagan shrines or idols on any specific occasion before the end of the third century, and there is no evidence that those in positions of authority in the church during the first three centuries would have regarded such acts as virtuous or commendable.’

¹³⁹⁹ On this practice see Tert. *ad Uxorem* II.5.

your iniquities. But I wish to save you, and you shall see me returning again with heavenly power. Blessed is he who now does me homage. On all the rest I will send down eternal fire, both on cities and on countries. And those who know not the punishments which await them shall repent and grieve in vain; while those who are faithful to me I will preserve eternally.” Then he goes on to say: “To these promises are added strange, fanatical, and quite unintelligible words, of which no rational person can find the meaning: for so dark are they, as to have no meaning at all; but they give occasion to every fool or impostor to apply them to suit his own purposes.”¹⁴⁰⁰

While Birley is sure that this second reference from Celsus refers to his familiarity with Montanism and their provocative practices this is doubtful, indeed the Celsus reference is only included in the most recent edition of Montanist testimonials collected by Heine as an example of a pagan testimony to Christian prophets.¹⁴⁰¹ Even, however, if we accept that this reference is an allusion to Montanism it does not necessarily follow that the reference to disrespect of idols refers to the same Christians, or that this disrespect of idols can be included under the category of a provocative act leading to ‘voluntary martyrdom.’

Furthermore, there are a number of other reasons for rejecting a Montanist interpretation. Firstly, elsewhere Celsus shows some familiarity with the different sects which existed among the Christians, and was quick to point out inner conflicts between various factions. Therefore, although this is an argument from silence, it seems strange that he has not done so here.¹⁴⁰² Secondly, while the incidental details of the proclamations made by this group of ecstatic prophets are certainly similar to Montanist utterances, the same would go for any other uses of the “I” form of prophetic acclamation, a common occurrence in early Christian literature generally.¹⁴⁰³

Thirdly, we would expect Origen, who was certainly familiar with Montanism,¹⁴⁰⁴ to dismiss such words as mistaking Christianity for one of its sectarian offshoots. Finally, there is an

¹⁴⁰⁰ Orig. *Cels.* VII.9 [Trans. ANF].

¹⁴⁰¹ Heine (1989:9). Earlier this was included in the sources listed by Labriolle and others.

¹⁴⁰² Orig. *Cels.* V.61-65.

¹⁴⁰³ Aune (1983:313-316)

¹⁴⁰⁴ Orig. *Comm.in. Mt.* XV.30.

argument with regard to geography. Aside from this reference there is no sure evidence to assert that Montanism ever spread into Palestine or Phoenicia, not least during its early years before c. 180 C.E. when Celsus was writing, and throughout its long life, with the exception of North Africa, Rome and perhaps Gaul, it remained a distinctly Phrygian phenomenon. While none of these arguments alone suffices to refute Birley's interpretation, their cumulative strength suggests that his interpretation is at best questionable.

From the brief arguments sketched above it is reasonable to believe that on the grounds of our evidence, that is twenty-four examples of 'voluntary martyrdom,' only five can be identified as potentially Montanist, and not one of those five can be surely identified as Montanist. Given this interpretation of the evidence, coupled with the aforementioned misreading of Tertullian's teaching on 'voluntary martyrdom,' it would be wise to abandon, or at least admit that it is not proven, the hitherto held image of Montanism as a movement more zealous to provoke martyrdom than other groups in the early Christianity.

Sociologically it can certainly be granted, as affirmed above, that Christians at this time were in tension with the state, but following on from the inferred positive affirmation that if Christians were sectarians, Montanists must be worse sectarians is not supported by the evidence of the ancient sources, but rather by the statements and persistency of modern historians eager to make clear-cut statements about the aims of Montanism as a movement.

While this historiographical view might hold true for certain geographic regions in the empire during certain years, to telescope an entire period and deduce from a few poorly documented events such as the Antonine Plague, the barbarian incursions or the war with the east, a general *Zeitgeist* of gloom and doom, would be an oversimplification.

Bearing this in mind that we must continually shift the focus and assess the macro-societal vicissitudes of the empire with the general tendencies on the ground in rural Asia Minor. For while the urban world of the cities is often victim to the spirit of an age, with all its urbane polish and propaganda, the world of the countryside often remains untouched, constricted by the long-term rhythms of agricultural life. As with all events of Christianity before the advent of Constantine, we must rely largely (though not exclusively) on what can be gauged from the Eusebian narrative.

Appendix 4. A Note on Ethnography, Geography and Religion.

Just as the ethnographic and ethno-religious discourses bequeathed by ancient literary sources and modern syntheses have played such a pervasive role in reconstructions of early Montanism, so has the inextricable link maintained by scholars between the 'Phrygian' people and their geographic region. By this we mean a connection between the physical environment of the Anatolian highlands and the character, both social and religious, of the people who inhabited it. This approach to the so-called 'geography of religions' has held a strong sway over scholarship until the late twentieth century, perhaps best exemplified by the earlier but often cited works of Ellen Semple and Ellsworth Huntington.¹⁴⁰⁵ In her work Semple maintained what she saw as the strong 'environmental determinism',¹⁴⁰⁶ which worked on various "primitive" people and their religious beliefs.¹⁴⁰⁷

While such an approach is not entirely misleading, nor should it be met with modern political correct opprobrium, it has led to historians making broad generalizations and determinist judgments on ancient religious phenomena, for instance, Cumont writes:

'The religion of Phrygia was perhaps even more violent than that of Thrace. The climate of Anatolian uplands is one of extremes. Its winters are rough, long and cold, the spring rains suddenly develop a vigorous vegetation that is scorched by the hot summer sun. The abrupt contrasts of a nature generous and sterile, radiant and bleak in turn, caused excesses of sadness and joy that were unknown in temperate and smiling regions, where the ground was never buried under snow nor scorched by the sun. The Phrygians mourned the long agony and death of the vegetation, but when verdure reappeared in March they surrendered to the excitement of tumultuous joy.'¹⁴⁰⁸

¹⁴⁰⁵ See Semple (1914); Huntington (1924). On the 'geography of religions' more generally see Park (1994) and Sopher (1967).

¹⁴⁰⁶ For a discussion of this see Park (1994:95f.).

¹⁴⁰⁷ For example Semple (1914:41) writes:

'The cosmography of every primitive people, their first crude effort in the science of the universe, bears the impress of their habitat. The Eskimo's hell is a place of darkness, storm and intense cold; the Jew's is a place of eternal fire. Buddha, born in the steaming Himalayan piedmont, fighting the lassitude induced by heat and humidity, pictured his heaven as Nirvana, the cessation of all activity and individual life.'

¹⁴⁰⁸ Cumont (1956 [1909]:50).

While such environmental factors no doubt influenced aspects of Phrygian culture, to reduce their religious beliefs to a response to the weather or even the physical terrain of Phrygia is reductionist at best. While we must always take into account what Braudel called the *long durée* we must also be wary of such reductionism and freezing ancient religions and cultures in a static, unchanging cyclic view. Like early Christianity, and indeed Montanism, indigenous Phrygian cults developed and changed with the social (and environmental) vicissitudes of the ancient world, though not according to a predetermined or evolutionary design.

Tying these factors of ethnography, ethno-religious influences and geography together we arrive at the composite portrait of 'Anatolian Religion' which has maintained a strong influence on scholarship into the present, indeed Strobel's work finishes on a note of praise of Ramsay's prescience on this matter, writing:

'Insgesamt bestätigt sich somit das von W.M. Ramsay erstmals mit großem Einfühlungsvermögen und ausgezeichnetem Wissen gezeichnete Bild der Zusammenhänge. Im Blick auf das einheimische phrygische Element im Montanismus konnte er bereits schreiben, daß die Propheten und Prophetinnen, wie auch die Spannung und die Begeisterung jener überaus aufschlußreichen Phase der Religion, tief im Boden des phrygischen Landes verwurzelt gewesen seien. Es gehe demnach in keener Weise nur um einen Ableger des phrygischen Volkscharacters, sondern um eine Frömmigkeit, die gleichsam durch Luft und Boden, worin sie sich ernähalt hatte, zum Leben gebracht wurde.'¹⁴⁰⁹

This summarises the popular view of Montanism as at least influenced,¹⁴¹⁰ if not a direct descendant, of an artificially constructed 'Phrygianism,' which owes more to nineteenth and early twentieth century intellectual trends than to a balanced view of historical evidence. This said, not all scholars have been so negligent in their research and conclusions on this matter, and it is important here to move beyond the syntheses of general treatments of Montanism

¹⁴⁰⁹ Strobel (1980:97f.).

¹⁴¹⁰ Similar conclusions can be seen in Johnson (1975:142) and Ramsay (1908:183), who writes: 'The native Phrygian element in Montanism has been frequently alluded to, and need not be described in detail. The prophets and prophetesses, the intensity and enthusiasm of that most interesting phase of religion, are native to the soil, not merely springing from the character of the race, but bred in the race by the air and soil in which it was nurtured.'

and into the specific discussion of the relationship between Montanism and indigenous Phrygian cults as it has played out in more substantive works.

Appendix 5. Ritual Infanticide, Branding or Tattooing? A Question of Interpretation.

While the phenomenological parallels between the ecstatic behaviour of the Montanists and that traditionally associated with 'Phrygianism' must at best remain at best suspicious and tailored to a rhetorical strategy, other associations are far more striking and underneath the polemical and *ad hominem* flourishes of opponents some kernel of historical truth may yet be revealed. The most controversial of these *Religionsgeschichte* parallels are the apparent ritual innovations of Montanism recorded from the fourth century onwards; particularly those surrounding ritual infanticide and the variety of ingenious interpretations of this literary accusation.

Since the nineteenth century most scholars have been increasingly sceptical of any accusations made against the Montanists (or anybody else) of ritual infanticide, though many shied away from discussing the matter openly.¹⁴¹¹ For instance, De Soyres after beginning his discussion of the matter with the words: 'Lastly we must deal with a topic which, were it possible, we would gladly pass over in silence,'¹⁴¹² dedicates a number of pages to the question, though fails to directly mention what the 'topic' he is talking about actually is in quite the show of prudish Victorian circumspection.¹⁴¹³

Various writers have addressed this problem in different ways, from anthropological comparisons to rhetorical function, and while most have been dismissive, some, such as Benko, have attempted to reconstruct some facts behind the accusations (in this case made against the 'Gnostic' Phibionites).¹⁴¹⁴ With regards to the Montanists in particular, Rives in a revealing and interesting article seeks the origins of these accusations in the literary charges raised throughout the second century in pagan writers concerning Christians, and how they were addressed in the apologists.¹⁴¹⁵ Similarly, Aland seeks the source of these stories in the most

¹⁴¹¹ On this theme see e.g. Dölger (1934:188-228); Edwards (1992:71-82); McGowan (1994:413-430); Rives (1995:65-85); Waltzing (1929:209-238).

¹⁴¹² De Soyres (1878:99).

¹⁴¹³ Representative of this position is the footnote given to Cyril's catechetical lectures by Hamilton (1989:117 n.9):

'The charges of lust and cruelty brought against the Montanists by Cyril and Epiphanius (*Haer* 48) seem to rest on no trustworthy evidence, and are not mentioned by Eusebius, a bitter foe of the sect.'

¹⁴¹⁴ Benko (1967:103-119).

¹⁴¹⁵ Rives (1996:117-124).

complete account of this found in Minucius Felix's *Octavius* and the related texts of Tertullian, in particular *Ad Nationes*.¹⁴¹⁶

Following on from Aland's strong argument for the predominantly Johannine roots of Montanism;¹⁴¹⁷ Elm and Trevett have sort the origins in possible evidence here for some kind of mythical-ritual practice derived from a literalist interpretation of the book of Revelation (13:16-18), involving ritual branding or tattooing.¹⁴¹⁸ The most intriguing scholarly accounts of this story, however, have been those which have taken this tattooing or branding interpretation one step further and sort explanation in the socio-cultural milieu of the Anatolian interior, and reconstructions of its colourful religious life, and it is these that we wish to address in this section.¹⁴¹⁹

Before progressing to look at this, however, a brief survey of the writings in which this literary *topos* occurs and their diversity is important, in order to understand the nature of our sources and something of their literary and social context. The earliest explicit report of theme of Montanist ritual murder occurs in the fourth century writer Cyril of Jerusalem.

The *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril,¹⁴²⁰ described by Quasten as '...one of the most precious treasures of Christian antiquity,'¹⁴²¹ were probably delivered as sermons in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre sometime between 347-350 CE. Divided into two parts, the so-called *procatechesis*, for new initiates, and the mystagogical catechesis for neophytes, the lectures address the seriousness of Christian life and the demands which faith makes on an aspiring Christian. The mystagogical catechesis (XIX-XXII) dealt specifically with the meaning of the Christian sacraments.

It is in this catechetical context which we can understand the literary purpose of Cyril's accusation. Cyril in Lecture XVIII describes the purpose of the mystagogical Catecheses in detail, particularly noting that in them:

¹⁴¹⁶ Aland (1960:136).

¹⁴¹⁷ Aland (1955:109-116).

¹⁴¹⁸ Elm (1996:409-439). Trevett (1995:258-269).

¹⁴¹⁹ Schepeleyn (1929:122ff.).

¹⁴²⁰ For background on Cyril of Jerusalem see Quasten (1950c:362-77).

¹⁴²¹ Quastens (1950c:363).

‘You will be given proofs from the Old and New Testaments, first, of course, for the things that were done immediately before your baptism, and next how you have been made clean from your sins by the Lord ‘with the washing of water by the word,’ then how you entered into the right to be called ‘Christ’ by virtue of your ‘priesthood,’ then how you have been given the ‘sealing’ of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, then about the mysteries of the altar of the new covenant which had their origin here, what Holy Scripture tells us about them, with what virtue they are filled, then how these mysteries are to be approached and when and how received, and so, finally, how for the rest of your life you must walk worthily of the grace you have received both by deed and word, so as all to attain to enjoyment of eternal life.’

This stirring didactical passage lays out in detail the educational program which Cyril wishes to impart to his catechumens. However, before the catechumens can reach this stage of ‘mystagogical pedagogy’ they must first undergo a series of pre-baptismal lessons, which he briefly describes in the *Procatechesis*. Apart from remarks about the importance of the *disciplina arcani* and some amusing references to the need for an honest conversion (that is, not using catechetical lessons as an excuse to meet women),¹⁴²² Cyril notes in section X:

‘Attend closely to the catechising, and though we should prolong our discourse, let not thy mind be wearied out. For thou art receiving armour against the adverse power, armour against heresies, against Jews, and Samaritans, and Gentiles. Thou hast many enemies; take to thee many darts, for thou hast many to hurl them at: and thou hast need to learn how to strike down the Greek, how to contend against heretic, against Jew and Samaritan. And the armour is ready, and most ready the sword of the Spirit: but thou also must stretch forth thy right hand with good resolution, that thou mayest war the Lord’s warfare, and overcome adverse powers, and become invincible against every heretical attempt.’¹⁴²³

A clearer heresiographical intent, of marking boundaries and guarding catechumens against the wiles of heretics, could not easily be found in early Christian polemic. While Rives believed that the intent here was not heresiological compared to other late fourth century writers, this

¹⁴²² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* V. I use the term *disciplina arcani* here in a broad sense, not as an ancient descriptive category.

¹⁴²³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* X.

passage brings that conclusion into question.¹⁴²⁴ While Cyril's intent is, strictly speaking, didactic, a strong part of the pedagogical context of the late fourth century was that of guarding a specific, and here Pro-Nicene, confession of Christianity against the ever present threat of heresy. In marking the meaning of Christian identity, as espoused in Lecture *XVIII* above, Cyril considers it necessary to mark the boundaries of acceptable belief and practice against earlier (or contemporary) aberrations. It is in this context, then, that we must read the references concerning heretical groups given in Cyril's work.

Montanism is only addressed once in Lecture *XVI*, entitled 'On the Article, And in One Holy Ghost, the Comforter, Which Spake through the Prophets,' from which Cyril draws his didactic material largely from an exegesis of I Corinthians XII.1 and 4, that is:

'Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed'

And

'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit'

From a didactic purpose, then, it is immediately clear how Montanism would fit into this schema. Drawing on the words of Jesus in Matt 12:32, Cyril develops his pneumatology (3) and his interpretation of the appropriate response to spiritual gifts (2-4), in the process attacking the Marcionite separation of the Old and New Testaments (4) and the Sabellian confusion of the persons of the Trinity (4). However, the strong heresiographical intent begins with section 5 where Cyril begins to outline the in more detail contents and errors of the heretical teaching of Simon Magus, Valentinus, the 'Gnostics,' and Mani, concluding with:

'Yea, and great is their error, or rather their blasphemy. Such therefore abhor, and flee from them who blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and have no forgiveness. For what fellowship hast thou with the desperate, thou, who are not to be baptized, into the Holy Ghost also? If he who attaches himself to a thief, and consenteth with him, is subject to punishment, what hope shall he have, who offends against the Holy Ghost?'

Here we see how Cyril is marking boundaries and refusing fellowship to heretics. The catechumens are to refuse fellowship to those who have, in Cyril's eyes, blasphemed the Holy

¹⁴²⁴ Rives (1996:117f.).

Spirit and thus fall under the condemnation of Matt. 12:32. What follows are more extended treatments of Marcionism (7) before he arrives at his discussion of the Montanists, the passage in question reading:

‘Let the Cataphrygians also be thy abhorrence, and Montanus, their ringleader in evil, and his two so-called prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla. For this Montanus, who was out of his mind and really mad (for he would not have said such things, had he not been mad), dared to say that he was himself the Holy Ghost, — he, miserable man, and filled with all uncleanness and lasciviousness; for it suffices but to hint at this, out of respect for the women who are present. And having taken possession of Pepuza, a very small hamlet of Phrygia, he falsely named it Jerusalem; and cutting the throats of wretched little children, and chopping them up into unholy food, for the purpose of their so-called mysteries, — (wherefore till but lately in the time of persecution we were suspected of doing this, because these Montanists were called, falsely indeed, by the common name of Christians) — yet he dared to call himself the Holy Ghost, filled as he was with all impiety and inhuman cruelty, and condemned by an irrevocable sentence.’

This is chronologically our first allusion to ritual infanticide aimed directly at the Montanists, though its literary function has been made clear above. As Rives observed, like many writers before him, Cyril is most likely conveniently shifting the earlier accusations of ritual atrocities made against Christians in the second century (though largely abandoned in the third) onto the Montanists.¹⁴²⁵ This rhetorical device is clear when we look at Cyril’s telling words concerning this accusation:

‘Wherefore till but lately in the time of persecution we were suspected of doing this, because these Montanists were called, falsely indeed, by the common name of Christians.’

As this indicates, in conjunction to Cyril’s earlier reference to Irenaeus (6), this is very much a heresiographical trope. However, whether Rives is right here in his contention that Cyril has made some (deliberate) contextual faux pas is up for debate. While the trope of ritual

¹⁴²⁵ Rives (1996:119f.).

infanticide has a long and bloody history in Christian polemic against heretics and Jews whether this is whole story behind the accusations made against the Montanists is problematic.¹⁴²⁶

A number of second and third century sources survive narrating the so-called ‘Thyestean banquets’ of the early Christians.¹⁴²⁷ However, for the sake of our discussion it is best to deal with the most extensive of these that found in Minucius Felix’s *Octavius*, which reads:

‘To turn to another point. The notoriety of the stories told of the initiation of new recruits is matched by their ghastly horror. A young baby is covered over with flour, the object being to deceive the unwary. It is then served before the person to be admitted into their rites. The recruit is urged to inflict blows onto it – they appear to be harmless because of the covering of flour. Thus the baby is killed with wounds that remain unseen and concealed. It is the blood of this infant – I shudder to mention it – it is this blood that they lick with thirsty lips; these are the limbs they distribute eagerly; this is the victim by which they seal their covenant; it is by complicity in this crime that they are pledged to mutual silence; these are their rites, more foul than all sacrileges combined.’¹⁴²⁸

While Minucius’ account owes a great deal to the fiery rhetoric of Tertullian’s *Ad Nationes* this account gives us some idea of the kinds of rumours which were circulating at this time. However, in individual details, it has little in common with Cyril’s account, or later accounts in the heresiological ‘School-Book’ tradition relating to Montanism, other than the murder of an infant and it is worth noting these differences to determine how far Cyril and later writers were dependent on these earlier sources.

While the general theme of infanticide is present, the nature of the killing is different enough (particularly, as we will see in the more expanded accounts below) as to suspect a different

¹⁴²⁶ On this accusations reuse against the Jews see the controversial article of Van der Horst (2008:106-128).

¹⁴²⁷ A great deal of very erudite research has gone into this question, see n. 1289 above.

¹⁴²⁸ Minucius Felix, *Octavius* IX.5.

source for the accusations against the Montanists to this widespread topos in early anti-Christian polemic. Of the other accounts of this legend surviving from the first centuries Cyril's account is so vague in its details that we must be cautious in concluding how far he was not directly relying explicitly on an earlier written source such as Justin Martyr, or whether he was aware of another tradition related specifically to the Montanists.¹⁴²⁹

The question arises then whether Cyril's account have any literary relationship with the later accounts of Montanist infanticide. That is, is it the explicit origin of a later key element in the heresiographical arsenal against the Montanists? Or was Cyril already aware of some other report regarding Montanist rituals which no longer survives.

The answer to the first question is certainly yes. From Cyril onwards the trope, whether applied directly to the Montanists or one of its mysterious sub-sects is frequent and it is worth briefly surveying the fourth century aspects of this.¹⁴³⁰ However, with regard to the second the question becomes more vexed.

Chronologically the next account is that of Epiphanius of Salamis, a writer we have already encountered and one who is far from a neither dispassionate nor neutral witness. His account reads, in the first part:

<p>‘They say that a shocking, wicked thing is done in this sect – or in its sister sect, the one called the sect of the Quintillianists or Priscillianists, and Pepuzians. At a certain festival they pierce a child – just a little baby – all over its body with bronze</p>	<p>ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ αἵρέσει ἢ ἐν τῇ συζύγῳ αὐτῆς τῇ τῶν Κυϊντιλλιανῶν εἴτ’ οὖν Πρισκιλλιανῶν καὶ Πεπουζιανῶν καλουμένη, δεινόν τι καὶ ἀθέμιτον ἔργον φασὶ γίνεσθαι. παῖδα γὰρ κομιδῇ νήπιον ὄντα κατὰ ἑορτὴν τινα δι’ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος κατακεντῶντες</p>
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¹⁴²⁹ See above pp. 307-312. We have seen that the trope of ritual infanticide is markedly lacking from all the earlier heresiographical sources before the fourth century.

¹⁴³⁰ Later heresiographical sources add little in the way of information to our understanding of Montanism. By this stage heresiographical polemic had been largely solidified into a ‘school-book’ tradition with little genuine relation to its epistemic object see Cameron (2003:471-492).

needles and get its blood for sacrifice, if you please.’ ¹⁴³¹	χαλκαῖς ῥαφίσι τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ προσπορίζονται ἑαυτοῖς, εἰς ἐπιτήδευσιν δῆθεν θυσίας.
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The position of this statement is interesting in itself, as this sect of the Quintillianists is treated in some detail in the following section, however here this story is left out. The reason for this earlier placement is unclear, though the statement ‘they say...’ (φασί) does fit with the interpretation that this is a piece of tittle-tattle which Epiphanius has heard in his monastic sewing-circle rather than from a credible (or at least written) documentary source, a suspicion somewhat confirmed in other writers caution regarding this story.

While Epiphanius considers their ritual ‘...a shocking, wicked thing’ (δεινόν τι καὶ ἀθέμιτον ἔργον) he does not mention the death of the infant, only the use of ‘...its blood for sacrifice, if you please (εἰς ἐπιτήδευσιν δῆθεν θυσίας),’ which may tell against the use of any of the earlier written sources dealing with the accusations against the early Christians surveyed above, all of which are explicit about the murder and consumption of the sacrificed infant. As we have seen Epiphanius is confused as to the accuracy (or interpretation) of whatever his source is, particularly with regard to these so-called Quintillians, and it is possible that on account of the dubious or confused nature of the story he has decided to add it as titillating addenda to his heresiographical account.¹⁴³²

As noted, the nature of this ritual is significantly different to that described by Cyril above and is not easily reconciled with any of the earlier anti-Christian polemical discussions of infanticide. That Epiphanius has coloured an earlier account is possible, though if he were to do so then why not be explicit about the death of the child, or moreover mention more about the festival at which this takes place? Certainly as his account of the Phibionites shows Epiphanius was far from reticent about revealing even the most shocking of heretical rites and

¹⁴³¹ Epiphanius, *haer.* XLVIII.14.5-6.

¹⁴³² See below. Epiphanius was fond of reporting any and every rumour he could find about heretical groups and is not known for his critical use of his sources.

initiations, and in this latter example it appears quite clear that his report owes elements to the earlier anti-Christian polemics (here transformed into an anti-‘Gnostic’ trope).¹⁴³³

This makes his uncharacteristic reticence here all the more deafening and certainly causes us to question what is meant by this ritual. The explicit new elements to the story which emerge here is the use ‘bronze needles’ (χαλκαῖς ῥαφίαι) which itself may be of significant importance as we will see below.

Chronologically Epiphanius’ account is near contemporary with that of Filastrius of Brescia, an enigmatic writer about whom very little is known about. A native of Italy it is possible that he had encountered some Montanists there, though his trope refers specifically to those in Phrygia, a region which his account indicates he had no first-hand knowledge. His account reads:

‘They baptize the dead; they celebrate their mysteries in public; they apply the name Jerusalem to their village Pepuza, which is thus said to be in Phrygia, where Maximilla and Priscilla, and Montanus himself are recognized to have spent their useless and fruitless lives. This is also where both the Cynic mystery and the accursed impiety of an infant is celebrated. For they say that on the Passover they mix some blood of an infant in their sacrifice and so they send it forth everywhere to their pernicious and deceptive accomplices.’¹⁴³⁴

What exactly is meant here about ‘Cynic mystery’ is unclear, though it perhaps relates to accusations concerning the use of dogs to overturn lamps at the beginning of ritual orgies made in earlier anti-Christian writings or with the common image of the Cynics as completely antinomian.¹⁴³⁵ What is interesting is that Filastrius explicitly associates this trope with the Passover. In this case, given the associations of the Montanists and the Quartodecimans, it could refer to a paschal ritual celebrated by the Montanists. Filastrius’ use, however, of the trope of the ‘cynic mystery’ seems to suggest a possible reliance on the Latin texts of Tertullian

¹⁴³³ Epiph. *haer.* XXVI. For two interesting discussions on this text see Benko (1967:103-119); Lacarrière (1989 [1973]:93f.).

¹⁴³⁴ Filastrius of Brescia, *Book of Heresies* XLIX [Trans. Heine].

¹⁴³⁵ See Tert. *Ad Nationes* VII. On the reputed antinomianism of Cynics see Hadot (2002:109-111).

or Minucius Felix, both of whom discuss this accusation in some detail, or perhaps his near contemporary Pacian of Barcelona who mentions ‘...How many controversies have they [The Montanists] stirred up about the day of the Passover...’¹⁴³⁶

The next reference is even vaguer, coming in the aggravated letter of Jerome to Marcellina in Rome after she had been paid a visit by some Montanist evangelists, he writes:

‘I pass over their polluted mysteries which are said to be celebrated with reference to a suckling child and a victorious martyr. I prefer not to believe these infamous things; let everything that involves blood be false.’¹⁴³⁷

Jerome is here uncharacteristically charitable in not going into these things, probably feeling he has already made his point about those detestable Montanists. Interesting, however, is his mention of ‘...polluted mysteries’ and ‘...a victorious martyr,’ which may indicate a similar source to that of Augustine who we will deal with subsequently.

Writing between 428-429 C.E., nearing the end of his life (430 C.E.) was Augustine of Hippo.¹⁴³⁸ Virtually paraphrasing Epiphanius and also familiar with Filastrius’ work,¹⁴³⁹ Augustine’s *De Haeresibus* was a text destined for a long history of use in the anti-heretical polemics of the Western Church.¹⁴⁴⁰

‘For they are said to prepare their eucharist, as it were, from the blood of a year old child, which they draw off from its whole body by means of minute puncture wounds, and to mix it with the flour, and thence make bread. If they child die, they consider him to be a martyr; if he live, he is considered to be a high priest.’¹⁴⁴¹

Under his following entry, this time for the Quintillians, Augustine writes:

¹⁴³⁶ Pacian of Barcelona *Ep.* I.2. [Trans. Heine].

¹⁴³⁷ Jerome, *Ep.* XLI.4 [Trans. Heine].

¹⁴³⁸ On *De Haeresibus* Quasten (1978 [1950]:393).

¹⁴³⁹ For Augustine’s familiarity with these works see *Ep.* CCII.

¹⁴⁴⁰ For instance Augustine is clearly the source behind the polemical accusations made during the Middle Ages see Lambert (2002 [1977]:184).

¹⁴⁴¹ Augustine, *On Heresies* XXVI [Trans. Heine].

‘These also do with the blood of an infant what we said about that the Cataphrygians do, for they are said to originate from the former.’¹⁴⁴²

As with the case of Epiphanius, Augustine notes that the killing of the infant does not seem to be the intention of the rite (as in the earlier accusations made against the Christians) but rather the extraction of blood for means of what history has aptly (and notoriously) named the ‘blood libel.’ Again the striking detail, probably owing to Epiphanius is the use of ‘minute puncture wounds’ (*pore minutis punctionem*).

The final source, the so-called Praedestinatus an anonymous anti-Augustinian writer probably in Rome c. 450 C.E. is once again likely to be reliant in some aspects on Epiphanius’ or Augustine’s accounts, though he writes concerning Tertullian:

‘While Tertullian wrote all things well, first-rate, and incomparably, he made himself reprehensible only in this, that he defended Montanus...asserting that the story was false above the blood of the infant.’¹⁴⁴³

It is most likely here that the Praedestinatus has conflated Tertullian’s defence of Christians against charges of infanticide in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apology* with the later accusations made against the Montanists and Tertullian’s subsequent defence of the sect (despite Rives’ tentative theory otherwise).¹⁴⁴⁴ Like Jerome above, even someone writing apocryphally had doubts about this story, adding the addenda:

‘I pass over things which are reported as if they are not firmly established. We make known that they [the Montanists] obtain the blood of infants only so that we shall appear to be ignorant of all that is said of them.’¹⁴⁴⁵

What is meant by these diverse accounts, which in some aspects may date back to the second century anti-Christian accusations combated by the apologists, outside their obvious polemical function, seems to be tied up with (1) the idea of a Eucharistic rite; (2) perhaps celebrated as a paschal mystery; which (3) involved the mixing of the blood of an infant; (4) extracted by

¹⁴⁴² Augustine, *On Heresies* XXVII [Trans. Heine].

¹⁴⁴³ Praedestinatus, *haer.* I.26 [Trans. Heine].

¹⁴⁴⁴ Rives (1996:118); against Rives see Tabbernee [Unpublished].

¹⁴⁴⁵ Praedestinatus, *haer.* I.26 [Trans. Tabbernee].

means of ritual stigmatization, with the mix of the Eucharistic bread. The initiation does not explicitly refer, in any of the fourth century contexts, to come in the form of initiation rite.

This brings us then, to the theory that this refers to some kind of initiatory ritualistic marking, such as brand-marking or tattooing; first suggested by Schepelern and since elucidated in more detail by Tabbernee, Elm and Trevett. In order to understand this, it is important to briefly look at the idea and purpose of bodily marking in history and anthropology.

Ritual Tattooing and Branding.

Bodily marking, whether natural, such as a birth-mark, or deliberately inflicted, such as tattoos and brands, can be seen as setting a people apart, either sociologically as in the case of social outcasts or deviants, or religiously as material evidence for the operation of the supernatural. In terms of the kind of marking we are dealing with here it can be defined as:

‘...permanent marking, involves surgical or quasi-surgical operations on the surface of the body by means of cutting or piercing instruments, such as knives, needles or razors. The general purpose here is to leave indelible marks on the body, mute messages of irreversible status change, permanent cultural identity, or corporate affiliation.’¹⁴⁴⁶

The often painful nature of such rites has tied them in with rites of initiation and transition, indicative of a permanent shift in the status of the person undergoing such rites. Often those tattooed or marked, were singled out as specific class of priests or initiates in a secret society; for instance various types of religious functionaries included under the rubric of ‘shamans’ underwent either a symbolic dismemberment or self-mutilation as part of their near ubiquitous transition from a normal person to mediator between the divine and human realms.¹⁴⁴⁷ It could also function, as alluded to above, as a symbol of stigmatization to mark out deviant groups within a society, for instances slaves or criminals (for instance, penal tattooing).

¹⁴⁴⁶ Turner (2005:1001).

¹⁴⁴⁷ On this practice see Eliade (1964) on the religious aspects of self-mutilation see Favazza (1996:22-46).

From these purely anthropological remarks it is possible to look in more detail at the context within antiquity.¹⁴⁴⁸ In his article Jones has distinguished between a number of types of ritual marking. Firstly he differentiates between branding and tattooing, though notably arguing that the former was considerably less common in antiquity. From there he goes on to give a fairly full historical survey of the different practices and associations, noting in particular the largely punitive nature which tattooing took in Graeco-Roman culture.

In addition to these punitive aspects was that of particular cults adopting tattooing of their members, as a means of marking the initiates dedication to the god in question. This was certainly practiced in Syria, and in a more decorative function in Thrace, though it is not until the late fourth century that we hear about its association with the cult of Cybele in the passage from Prudentius.¹⁴⁴⁹ It is from this late association that scholars have proposed a strong *Religionsgeschichte* parallel, and it is worth once again quoting the passage from Prudentius again in full.

‘Why speak of seals and marks of consecration here?

The pagans thrust fine needles into blazing fire

And when red hot they brand their members

With the darts

Whatever portion of the body is thus stamped,

Thus they believe is rendered holy by the mark.

When from his mortal frame the breath of life

Departs,

And to his sepulchre the sad procession moves,

On these same parts thin plates of metal are impressed.

An sheen of god all shining overspreads the skin

And hides the portions by the fiery needles burned.

These sufferings the pagans are compelled to bear,

These writes the gods impose upon idolaters:

¹⁴⁴⁸ For a very full and useful survey of the evidence see Jones (1987:139-155).

¹⁴⁴⁹ On this important passage in Prudentius see Dölger (1929:1).

Thus Lucifer makes sport of those he has ensnared;
And brands their wretched bodies with tormenting fires.¹⁴⁵⁰

That this form of stigmatization was early assimilated to the practice of tattooing by earlier scholars of the cult of Cybele like Hepding, and Graillot,¹⁴⁵¹ with the latter writing:

‘Un autre rite est l’imposition des Stigmates. Les chrétiens la comparaient à leur sacrement de confirmation. Mais il ne s’agit pas ici d’une onction, comma dans la liturgie chrétienne. Les stigmates sont de veritables tatouages, opérés piqûres, au moyen d’aiguilles rougies au feu.’¹⁴⁵²

However, Franz Dölger, who wrote a number of foundational articles on ritual-branding and tattooing,¹⁴⁵³ preferred to identify this as the use of a brand-mark.

Debate has continued over whether specific incidences refer to tattooing or branding, though whatever the case a form of stigmatization was further syncretised, as in other aspects, into the idea of a common motif in the so-called ‘mystery religions,’¹⁴⁵⁴ though the extremely problematic nature of the sources here has been carefully demonstrated by Beskow.

In its associations with the ‘mystery religions’ it was perhaps also inevitable, particularly given the climate of scholarship in this area during the early twentieth century, that it came to be associated with the rite of confirmation in Roman Catholicism,¹⁴⁵⁵ particularly as a result of the allusion made in Tertullian *De praescriptione haereticorum* XL. A more permanent type of ritual-marking, as opposed to the case of early Christians chrismation, it should also be noted, was practiced by at least one Christian sect. The Carpocratians, described by Irenaeus and in more detail in Book III of Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromateis*, purportedly placed a mark behind the ears of their members,¹⁴⁵⁶ as Clement describes:

¹⁴⁵⁰ Prudentius, *Peristeph.* X.1076-1090 [Trans. Eagan].

¹⁴⁵¹ Graillot (1912:182); Hepding (1903:163 n. 3)

¹⁴⁵² Graillot (1912:182).

¹⁴⁵³ Dölger (1930:100-106; 107-116; 297-300); (1932:25-61; 204-209; 257-259).

¹⁴⁵⁴ For instance see Cumont (1956 [1903]:157).

¹⁴⁵⁵ See Smith (1990:54-84).

¹⁴⁵⁶ Dölger (1929:73-78).

‘Some of them mark their own disciples by branding them on the back of the right ear-lobe.’¹⁴⁵⁷

The question that arises from this is whether the ‘bronze needles’ mentioned by Epiphanius and alluded to by Augustine were in-fact used to mark the infant in some form of initiatory rite analogous or perhaps borrowed from similar initiatory rites used in the increasingly syncretistic late fourth century rites of Attis and Cybele.

The further questions which arise from this are whether the analogy between the bronze needles described by the above authors are the same as those referred to by Prudentius and we have here a genuine adoption of a rite from the cult of Cybele by the Montanists, or whether there is a phenomenological similarity between two ritual acts with completely difference symbolic meanings (as indicated by the practices of ritual marking widely observed by anthropologists across various cultures discussed above).

For Schepelern (and Freeman), after a careful analysis of the sources, the conclusion was clearly a case of both accidental and deliberate confusion by the heresiological writers.¹⁴⁵⁸

Schepelern, following to some extent Graillot, believed that the sources were the result of initial rumours filtered through time and obscured of a rite of ritual tattooing / ‘sealing’ akin to Roman Catholic confirmation, as he concludes:

‘Unter der Einwirkung solcher Gerüchte ist es leicht verständlich, wenn die Nachricht über ihre Tätowierungssitten sich in den odiosen Ruf verwandelte, der den Häreseologen zu Ohren kam.’¹⁴⁵⁹

Freeman, on the other hand, concluded that the confused nature of the heresiographical accounts surveyed above indicated that it was obviously a confused and little understood (at least by Christian writers) pagan intrusion of a ‘magical’ nature drawn from primitive Phrygian religion writing:

‘Such a ceremony would only have been intelligible in circles which had the Phrygian leaven of syncretism: ceremonial for its own sake, and not because it is symbolic, is a

¹⁴⁵⁷ Cl. *Str.* II.2.6.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Schepelern (1929:124-126).

¹⁴⁵⁹ Schepelern (1929:126).

much later development, and only in a locality where its magical effect was recognized could it have lived. It is for such reasons that this practice was probably conserved among the Montanists of Phrygia, but not by their co-sectarians elsewhere.¹⁴⁶⁰

Such conclusions were followed, with qualifications, by Strobel who concluded that the etiology of the practice from indigenous Phrygian practices as they were recorded in Prudentius was more likely than the proposal of Aland that it owed its roots to the earlier accusations of anti-Christian writers, writing:

‘Die antimontanistische Ketzerpolemik hat genau von diesem Moment des phrygischen Kults her ihr Greuelmärchen formuliert. Voraussetzung hierfür war das Wissen um die ursprungsmässige Verwandtschaft von phrygischer und montanistischer Religiosität.’¹⁴⁶¹

As scholars have debated the origins of this practice the question must be raised, then, about what possible source can be found for the roots of this ritual marking within a Christian context. Given the Johannine focus of much of the surviving Montanist material, Christine Trevett argued that perhaps the trope is to be understood as something of an anti-thetic rite marking the Montanists in sharp contradistinction to those marked by the beast in Revelation 13:16-18, which reads:

‘Also it [the Beast] causes all, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let any with understanding, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.’¹⁴⁶²

While no small amount of speculation continues amongst exegetes as to the meaning(s) of Revelation in these verses, Trevett may have been onto something when she wrote:

‘I am suggesting that what was here described was ritual scarring or tattooing (puncturing with needles). This is not a new suggestion. Such a practice would have

¹⁴⁶⁰ Freeman (1950:307).

¹⁴⁶¹ Strobel (1980:266f.).

¹⁴⁶² Rev. 13:16-18 [Trans. NRSV].

provided a distinguishing mark for the faithful *such as was written of when describing the faithless in the Book of Revelation.*¹⁴⁶³

Particularly when we bear in mind that the Phrygians were a culture with a long-history of slavery (including that to temple estates),¹⁴⁶⁴ and the established link between Montanism and the Johannine writings this may be a plausible interpretation. In addition to the idea of the marking, however, is the idea of associating the infant receiving the ritual marking with the elect described in Revelation 20, those who:

‘...had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not receive its mark on their foreheads or their hands.’¹⁴⁶⁵

During the initiation ceremony described by Augustine, the infant was considered a ‘martyr’ if it died during the ceremony, though if it survived it was considered a high priest (cf. Rev. 20:6). According to Trevett, then, it is plausible to see this initiation ceremony as a liturgical expression of the eschatological identity of the Montanist community as the elect paving the way from the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21).

Certainly Trevett’s interpretation is plausible and rather ingenious and one could certainly see how a literalist reading of New Testament passages like Galatians 6:17 or a inversion of those in Revelation 13 in a culture already familiar with ritual marking could manifest in such a way. One key problem, small but telling, remains. None of the heresiological writers above associate this ritual with a form of initiation, rather it is part of the mysteries of the Montanists, notably their Eucharistic rite. Its ritual comparison, then, to the sealing of Chrismation or Baptism is out of context and in this sense, irrespective of the incidental details of the ‘bronze needles’ it is probably to be understood not as a cultural borrowing initiation into the cult of Cybele and Attis, but rather as particularly blood-thirsty and contrived development in the accusations of ritual abuse which have plagued marginal religious groups throughout history.

¹⁴⁶³ Trevett (1995:260f.) Emphasis Trevett.

¹⁴⁶⁴ On this point see Elm (1996:419f.).

¹⁴⁶⁵ Revelation 20:4 [Trans. NRSV].

Moreover, in light of the literalism ascribed to the Montanists by Trevett one is left to ponder about how these could be reconciled with strict prohibitions on such matters as Leviticus 19:28, or general tropes against self-mutilation like Leviticus 21:5-17. While Trevett's theory is certainly a possibility Susanna Elm, following on from Trevett's work has given further explanation to why this accusation took place in the late fourth century.

For Elm, who treats the evidence exhaustively, the issue in the fourth century was one over the nature of authority and the increasing importance given to bishops among the aristocracy of Late Antiquity.¹⁴⁶⁶ For Elm the essential trope was that the bishop represented the theme of the *servus dei* par excellence, and that Montanist use of ritual-branding was akin to earlier practice of tattooing or marking temple servants. For Elm these accusations seems to have represented a discursive battle over who could lay claim to true servant-hood to the Christian God, the ritually-marked Montanists or the ecclesiastically sanctioned (and civically powerful) bishops. In order, then, to blacken the Montanists their practices were depicted in increasingly pagan colours as a means of further disassociating them from the Christian fold.

Elements of Elm's arguments are certainly compelling, particularly given what we have already observed about the increasing discursive associations between heretics and pagans in the late fourth century polemic and the increasing 'paganization' of accusations made against Montanus. The question remains, though, of how widespread such ritual-tattooing was in the cult of Attis and Cybele, or indeed whether this association was merely part of the late fourth century Christian literary syncretisation of various 'mystery cults' into a hybrid abomination.

Whatever the case may be here, and the arguments on both sides share equal virtues and problems, the *topos* of ritual infanticide and its layers of interpretation demonstrate, if nothing else, what Beskow had stated about similar discussions regarding the cult of Mithras:

'My task in this essay has certainly not been to discredit earlier scholars' work on the mysteries. We all make mistakes that will have to be corrected in the future. I would rather present a memento for our future research: that we cannot trust the results of

¹⁴⁶⁶ Elm (1996:439).

our predecessors, no matter how skilful they may have been, without investigating first the reasons why they came to their conclusions.¹⁴⁶⁷

In this vein we can see that what started out as a possible parallel in Schepelern and Freeman, through a series of erudite and ingenious studies, has blown-up into a fully-fledged and undisputed fact in the public domain. One need here only look briefly at a recent article in *Christainity Today* in order to see that what for Schepelern was a best a tentative conclusion has found its way into an established fact in the fascinating history of tattooing.¹⁴⁶⁸

To be fair, however, in the end it should be noted that such practices within a Christian milieu were not to begin or end with the Montanists (whether or not they actually practiced such things). Coptic Christians are still known for tattooing themselves,¹⁴⁶⁹ and historically so have the Bosnian Christian community.¹⁴⁷⁰ While the canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council held at Nicaea in 787 C.E. officially decreed tattooing a pagan custom not to be practised among Christians, it is clear that such practices have never wholly been rooted out (even amongst otherwise canonical Eastern Orthodox Christians), witness the number of fish tattoos amongst young Christians today.¹⁴⁷¹

¹⁴⁶⁷ Beskow (1979:500).

¹⁴⁶⁸ Johnson (2009).

¹⁴⁶⁹ Turner (2005:1002)

¹⁴⁷⁰ Hepding (1903:163 n. 3).

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