ABSTRACT

VIETS, CHAFFEE WILLIAM. Montanism in Second/Third Century CE Anatolia: A Hybridist Mystery Religion. (Under the direction of S. Thomas Parker.)

The purpose of this research is to provide an alternative lens to use in the study of Montanism than that offered by the dominant paradigm developed during the last two centuries. Most scholars assume or assert that the earliest Montanists in Phrygia, in ancient Turkey, sprung from within the local, rural Christian community of Pepouza. As such, most modern research has omitted considerations of anything beyond incidental contact with so-called ‘pagan’ cults in the surrounding area. I will argue that Phrygian Montanism can be viewed from its inception as a religion with several parental contributors, embodied as an eclectic amalgam of multiple forms of Christianity, the cult of Cybele and Attis, the cult of Dionysius, the oracle cult of Apollo, and other sources including Judaism. In this sense, it rather resembled not merely a Christian ‘heresy’ as several Ante and Post Nicene fathers asserted in their polemical tracts, nor an offshoot of a polytheistic cult, but instead a unique mystery religion, neither wholly ‘pagan’ nor Christian in composition. In other words, Montanism might be viewed alternately - regardless of what its founder(s) believed this “New Prophecy” represented - as an independent mystery religion, separately practiced while simultaneously overlapping the various Anatolian Christianities, ‘pagan’ cults, and state-sponsored religions of the eastern Roman Empire. Within this context, arguments about its source, placement, acceptance and religious validity within the ‘pagan’ or Christian historical worlds become tangential. Seen as an island, a new vision of Montanism arises,
one defined more comprehensively by the social, cultural and religious traditions of Anatolia, and a Christianity that began with Pauline missionary activity 100 years prior to Montanism’s rise in Phrygia. I intend to argue this thesis by presenting an outline of Anatolian culture and religion as it relates to the emergence of Montanism in rural Phrygia before showing how it represents a uniquely structured hybrid mystery religion with both Christian and ‘pagan’ elements.
Montanism in Second/Third Century CE Anatolia: A Hybridist Mystery Religion

by
Chaffee William Viets

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

History
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2009

APPROVED BY:

William Adler John M. Riddle

S. Thomas Parker
Chair of Advisory Committee
DEDICATION

To my family, who have endured my absenteeism of body and attention for far too long. This thesis is the culmination of your faith in me to finish well the task I began in 2005, if not long before. My profound love and gratitude to all of you.
BIOGRAPHY

Chaffee William Viets was born 22 November 1974, in Carmichael, California, USA, and raised a non-denominational Christian. After moving to Oklahoma, Texas and North Carolina, he graduated in succession from West Forsyth High School in Winston-Salem, NC (1993), and North Carolina State University in Raleigh (1998), where he had been awarded a John T. Caldwell Scholarship and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. For the past decade, Chaffee has served as associate director of two prestigious scholarship programs at NC State, all the while studying Latin, classical Greek, Roman history and ancient Mediterranean religion on the side. Among his more colorful experiences, Chaffee has received an in person “daily affirmation” from Saturday Night Live’s Stuart Smalley (aka Al Franken) and dined with Henry “The Fonz” Winkler. At 26, he completed the Marine Corps Marathon, en route circling a Pentagon still in ruins from 9/11. He has excavated at Jordan’s only Red Sea port, embraced a statue of Trajan near London’s Tower Bridge, given a tour of Diocletian’s palace in Split, Croatia, and walked where the apostle Paul tread in ancient Ephesus (in modern Turkey). Aside from a burgeoning interest in Montanism, Chaffee is a strong advocate of interfaith and ecumenical dialogues informed by accurate historical understanding of religion. He is the spouse of Kathryn Marie (Ernest) Viets, also an alumna of NC State, and the father of two boys, Nicholas Wil“Liam” Viets (4 yrs.) and Colin Robert Viets (nearly 2 yrs.), who have yet to attend university. All four reside in Apex, NC, and attend St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completion of this thesis has involved blood, sweat and tears – literally – though I will spare such stories here. Suffice it to say, without the support and encouragement of a great number of people, this thesis might never have been written.

My father and two teachers, Chip Mula and Carol Vogler, early in my life inculcated in me a love of history that has never diminished. Jim Crisp, my first professor of history at NC State, taught me the essence of critical thinking in historical investigations. Akram Khater, my last undergraduate professor of history, taught me humility by awarding me the only B+ I ever earned in my favorite subject. Steven Vincent taught me historiography and further contributed to my attempt at scholarly improvement by awarding me the only ‘A-’s received during my graduate study; he did, however, soften the blow with fine mead. Nancy Mitchell made my entrance into the graduate program seamless and warm. I am sincerely grateful to all my instructors.

My fellow graduate students have been a great source of mutual support and friendship. Stephanie Brown, Andi Shelton, Linda Spagnola, Rani Battle, and Mike Bazemore number among the many who have endured stories about my thesis topic with patience and, ever so occasionally, actual interest. They are among the very few who have.
Alex Miller – a fellow reader of history – has been my partner in countless historical and political discussions, which have yielded humorous, yet poignant, wisdoms. Lara and Tim Crowley have offered similar contributions to my knowledge base and walked with me through the agonies and ecstasies of thesis/dissertation writing. Several other friends – who know who they are – have encouraged me through thick and thin.

Janice Odom – my supervisor – gave me the time to finish this degree and thesis. Such generosity and patience have and will make all the difference in so many ways. John Riddle has been a friend, a colleague, and finally, a thesis committee member. I am honored to know him beyond the great scholarship he has produced.

Bill Adler, whether he knows it or not, helped me to understand the nature of Christianity perhaps better than anyone I have read or spoken to. His agreement to serve on my committee has made an incalculable difference in the end product. Frs. Jonathan Woodhall and Bob McKeon have provided other insights, and the former also a tidy collection of *Journals of Early Christian Studies*.

Tom Parker, my most dedicated advisor, has taken the 14-year walk with me through the annals of Roman history, with a stop in Jordan along the way. He introduced me to ancient history, Josephus, the middle east, his wonderful wife Mary and daughter Grace, and most essentially and providentially, Montanus. How many people are truly our instructors, employers, directors and friends? If you squint really hard, he even looks like Indiana Jones.
My parents, Terry and Marilyn Viets, my in-laws, Tom and Pat Ernest, and my wife Kate Viets, have given me more support than I ever deserved. Even my firstborn Liam (4 yrs.) selflessly told me I had until Christmas 2008 to finish before he would require me to stop writing. I am sure Colin (nearly 2 yrs.) would say the same if he could. To them, and God, I owe everything that I am.

Despite all the help I have received, it goes without saying that I bear all responsibility for any errors that may be present in this work.
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* Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*, xii, xiv, 73-74 does not attribute the *Ref.* to Hippolytus.
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PREFACE

My reading of scholarship in the field of religious historical studies has led me to conclude that despite sincere attempts to write from a nonreligious angle, all researchers still intimate their doctrinal leanings.¹ I feel compelled, as a consequence, to reveal my spiritual background: I am a Christian hybrid of evangelical and Roman Catholic traditions. In some respects, this dually influenced belief system makes me an ideal person to write about a movement that has been called ‘heretical’ by the post Nicene “Church” and yet championed by modern Protestants. Nonetheless, I have no illusions about the impossibility of complete objectivity and recognize that I must seek to acknowledge and store away neatly my modern, Christian, male, and Western biases (and there are no doubt others). As it is, my research has not inclined me to view the mid to late second century “New Prophecy” of Montanism as an unfairly excised, pre-modern proto-Protestant sect, nor as a heretical opponent of Anatolian clerical authorities that Constantine, his imperial heirs, and the Catholic/Orthodox Churches vanquished in the waning centuries of antiquity.

Still, I cannot help speculating about what non-Christian influences touched the New Prophecy or its founder(s) in its early stages. Did Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla believe that they were restoring charismatic and pneumatic elements to the Christian church, or were they charlatans whose organization of money collectors simply bilked funds out of Christians like some corrupt television evangelists? As a secular historian, I am fortunate that I can

avoid answering such questions by examining only what practices and characteristics composed Montanism in its Phrygian homeland.

Phrygian Montanism, in my opinion, blended almost as much ‘pagan’ supernatural beliefs and practices as Christian with Anatolian culture and traditions. Whatever its founder(s) believed about the source and purpose of the New Prophecy, its rituals and practices, when analyzed from a secular perspective, reveal its character as a hybrid mystery religion. Structurally, it contains elements of mysteries both Christian and ‘pagan’ in derivation. Yet because the study of Montanism during the last two, perhaps even three, centuries has focused on “the desire to answer the question of how the ancient catholic church evolved,” scholars have tended to discuss questions of heresy and orthodoxy. It goes without saying that I intend to take a different approach.

Whatever form Montanism assumed at birth, I believe any ‘pagan’ trappings largely fell away when it departed Phrygia for lands in the Western Roman Empire. Thus it should not surprise readers as to why most scholars have contextualized Montanism almost entirely within late Antique Christianity and not more broadly. I am sympathetic to their arguments, but my instincts do not compel me to follow their lead. Christine Trevett summarized neatly

\footnote{2 The term ‘pagan’ represents a pejorative term applied by Christian writers to several non-Jewish, non-Christian religions of the Greco-Roman world. It is problematic but remains our best term at present to use in describing them. See the “Connotations and Semantic Miscellany” section below for further discussion.}


\footnote{4 Trevett, Montanism, 9, acknowledges that a minority of scholars has asserted significant ‘pagan’ influence touched Montanism. In doing so, curiously she lists Ernest Evans, who, in a single short sentence introducing Montanism in his translation of Tertullian’s Against Praxeas, accepted without question Montanus’ former role as a priest of Cybele. Since this work contains not an argument but literally a short statement, I would suggest that it should not have been the focus of a historiographical review regarding ‘pagan’ influences on Montanism.}
the approach scholars should take – and indeed several are just beginning to do so – in researching the topic: “Montanism merits study not because it can continue to provide ammunition in centuries-long wars of words about authority, charisma, women’s ministry and more. It deserves study not least because in the present century new fields of scholarship (decipherment and interpretation of new-found epigraphy, study of the phenomenon of ancient prophecy both Christian and otherwise, the sociology of religion and psycho-history) are bringing fresh insights to bear on what we think we know if it.”

5

To my knowledge, no one has attempted to classify Montanism uniquely within the broader body of religion present in the Roman Empire. It typically is placed in close quarters with Christianity even if only marginally. New studies on the phenomenon of ancient prophecy in particular have convinced me the time is ripe for doing so. I intend to review Montanism as a religion derived from eclectic Anatolian sources, including ‘pagan’ and Christian. So too shall I attempt to classify Phrygian Montanism as a mystery, one hybrid in composition. Whether ‘the Three’ New Prophets were consciously aware of it or not, there is no doubt they incorporated ‘pagan’ and mysterious elements – in addition to a renewed emphasis on Christian charismata – into the soul of the movement. The result, acknowledged universally by historians, is that Montanism resonated with some Christian clergy and lay people while it conversely disturbed others.

5 Ibid., 12.
CHAPTER 1: BEYOND HERESY

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house” (Mt 13:57). The opposite could be said of three self-proclaimed prophetic mediums appearing about 157 CE in the eastern land of Phrygia in the Roman province(s) of Asia (and Galatia), or modern day Turkey. These ‘prophets,’ known by scholars as ‘the Three,’ inaugurated what would become a peculiar yet popular religion known as Montanism. According to the ancient church historian Eusebius (ca. 260s-339), a recent convert to Christianity named Montanus appeared successively in the villages of Ardabau and Pepouza. He proclaimed messages of revelation allegedly inspired by the Holy Spirit as mentioned in the Gospel of John. Two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, soon joined him and quickly became prominent figures in the dissemination of the faith. In identifying the source of these three individuals’ revelations, Eusebius quotes an unnamed source using an imprecise Greek term *hagion pneuma*, meaning “a holy spirit,” (H.E. 5.16.1-10) to describe their source of inspiration contra the terms used in the New Testament, whether to *hagion*

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6 All Biblical references are abbreviated according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.) and are taken from Coogan, ed., *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New Revised Standard Version).
7 Unless otherwise indicated, from this point forward, all dates are Common Era (cf. AD).
9 Some scholars believe that Priscilla may have founded the New Prophecy. The possibility will be discussed in succeeding chapters.
10 For details on the author known by Montanist scholars as ‘the Anonymous,’ see the ‘Survey of Ancient Sources Section’ below. His name will hereafter in notes be abbreviated as ‘Anon.’ and Eusebius as ‘Eus.’
pneuma ("the Holy Spirit") or paracletos (“Advocate” or “Comforter”). This minor
distinction leaves no doubt that Eusebius’ ‘Anonymous’ source presumed the wellspring of
inspiration was a diabolical, numinous entity instead of the ‘Comforter’ whom Jesus foretold
would follow (Jn 14:26). The mocking implication is that Montanism was either heterodox or
inspired by a ‘pagan’ daimoniōn (“demonic spirit”).¹¹

Yet Montanism, in both its early and late forms, has not been considered a ‘pagan’ or
satanic religion, but instead a Christian heresy by scholars of the last three centuries, almost
without exception. While this movement undoubtedly drew on some of the core beliefs that
would become central to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, the similarities
of its rituals to those practiced by adherents of non-Christian cults and faiths in the Roman
Empire calls into question most scholars’ assumption that it unequivocally should be
considered a Christian movement. For example, the Three delivered ‘oracles’ in a paraenetic
and enthusiastic state of “demented” (ekphronos) ecstasy that in its frenzied manner held
this mean it was not Christian? No. Yet while Phrygian Montanism did emphasize a renewed
movement of the Holy Spirit in the Anatolian churches, it borrowed from its inception more

¹¹ Ancient authors are referenced in this thesis using in-text citations following guidelines of the Chicago
Manual of Style (15th ed.) and according to standard numbering for classical texts (e.g. LCL series). I have taken
most sources from LCL or GCS critical publications, though some are referenced in Ronald E. Heine, The
Montanist Oracles and Testimonia (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989), which uses typically CC,
CSEL, GCS, OECT, PG, PL and SC editions.

¹² The discussion of the manner of prophecy is key to understanding what parts of Phrygian Montanism likely
derived from ‘pagan’ sources. For a good summary of the issues, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "The Original
I follow the treatment of Tabbernee, et al., in referring to the summarized/quoted works of the Anonymous,
Apolinaris, Apollonius and Serapion in Eusebius and the Anti-Phrygian in Epiphanius so as to differ between
what the ancient sources restated versus asserted firsthand. To the point, ‘ap.’ indicates the Latin apud
(“within”) following Tabbernee’s practice, et al.
substantially from surrounding cults than the current consensus would allow. For example, like the Great Mother cult, it prominently involved women in positions of honor and influence. Certainly women were important in Christianity as well from its earliest decades, but they were becoming marginalized by increasingly dominant and patriarchal Christian groups of the second century. Since it seems clear most of these same scholars admit that ‘pagan’ cults influenced Montanism practiced in Asia Minor to some degree minor or major, a renewed consideration of its religious composition is due, undertaken from a perspective more inclusive of other religions flourishing in the Roman Empire. I hope that by shedding new light on Phrygian Montanism, its relevance both in the study of ancient Mediterranean history and modern religions, especially extensively and amorphously blended ones, will gain momentum.13

I propose to challenge the prevailing scholarly opinion that Phrygian Montanism emerged solely within Christianity – it may or may not have depending on how one’s concept of its source is constructed14 – but rather to categorize it as an intersection of Christian and ‘pagan’ mystery religions, specifically with respect to ritual, not doctrine. This is especially obvious when one considers that if a) Christianity was a mystery religion as some scholars have asserted15 and b) several ‘pagan’ cults were mystery religions, and c)

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13 Trevett, Montanism, 9-10.
14 Like some dissenters, I believe Montanism’s derivation cannot be strictly confined within Christianity; it must have simultaneously emerged out of ‘pagan’ mysteries. See Greville Freeman, "Montanism and the Pagan Cults of Phrygia," Dominican Studies 3, no. 4 (1950); Balfour W. Goree, "The Cultural Bases of Montanism" (Dissertation, Baylor University, 1980); Alf Thomas Kraabel, "Judaism in Western Asia Minor under the Roman Empire, with a Preliminary Study of the Jewish Community at Sardis, Lydia" (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1968).
Phrygian Montanism derived elements exclusively from both ‘a’ and ‘b’ (which I shall show using several other scholars’ research in Chapter 3), then Phrygian Montanism empirically must have been a mystery religion of a blended nature according to the transitive relations property used in logic theory and philosophy. A few scholars have examined claims of ‘pagan’ influence, only to conclude by rejecting Montanism’s non-Christian origin and maintaining the status quo argument, viz. that however infused with Anatolian cult elements, it remained in essence a Christian heresy not a ‘pagan’/Christian blend. In my opinion, such arguments ignore its overall place within the broader world of ancient Roman religion.16

Taking this position contradicts the consensus asserted by modern scholars, some of whom have found in Montanism a polemical tool for Protestant or Catholic debates, e.g. Christine Trevett.17 It is noteworthy that most scholarship on Montanism conducted during the last three centuries has originated within university departments of religion, divinity schools, or seminaries, not the field of history. While scholars in the fields of religious studies, classics, and history often work together and research similar topics, they are nonetheless not without their paradigmatic frameworks. To the point, most scholars of Montanism are not historians, but experts in the fields of religion and Patristic studies.18

While their contributions remain essential to any study on Montanism – and they produce the

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17 From Trevett, Montanism, 12: “So here is a confession: I stand in the Protestant camp, heir to a seventeenth-century radical Puritanism to which Montanism has sometimes been compared. I’m sure some readers will think that it shows.” Cf. op. cit. pp. 2-3 n. 5.
18 Ibid., 6-15.
majority of such scholarship – it is no surprise that in 2005 a scholar trained in ancient
history took a different position with respect to its religious derivation.19

Vera-Elisabeth Hirschmann asserted in her Ph.D. dissertation that Christian and
‘pagan’ sources significantly shaped Montanism from its origins. Now a published book,
*Horrenda Secta* has generated both acclaim and criticism, and has helped confirm my
opinions about ‘pagan’ influences on Montanism and provided a starting point for my own
argument about defining it as a blended mystery religion. It has led to a reevaluation of
Montanism’s heterodox status, according to Montanist expert William Tabbernee. “No
longer can it be said that Montanism was unaffected by the ‘pagan’ cults of Phrygia[,] …
[F]rom its very beginnings [it] exhibited characteristics which are more compatible with
aspects of ‘pagan’ religions … than with contemporary Christianity.”20 While Tabbernee
appears to isolate here a very small group of scholars who would ever state that Montanism
was untouched by Phrygian cults, he is in fact more likely targeting the prevailing consensus
that non-Judeo-Christian religions of Anatolia only marginally contributed to Montanism.

Building on Hirschmann’s argument for Montanism as a religion heavily indebted to
paganism, this thesis shall make the case that Phrygian Montanism was a ‘pagan’-Christian

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19 Note that while Hirschmann is now a professor of theology at the University of Heidelberg, she earned her
Ph.D. in ancient history. See [www.theologie.uni-hd.de/wts/lampe/hirschmann.html](http://www.theologie.uni-hd.de/wts/lampe/hirschmann.html) for her *curriculum vitae*;
Review* 8, no. 38 (2006); William Tabbernee, “Review of Hirschmann’s *Horrenda Secta*,” *JECS* 14, no. 4

20 The concept of “contemporary Christianity” is quite problematic, because there were still competing
Christianities in the second century, each claiming to be the authentic version. The problem is addressed
somewhat in the introduction to Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*, where he uses inverted commas around the terms
‘catholic’ and ‘orthodox,’ to connote the lack of established ecclesiastical agreement. My technique, however,
attacks the problem differently and involves taking a regional approach, as will be seen below.
mystery religion differing substantially from the faith practiced within other Christian
‘churches’ in Asia. This argument is not mutually exclusive from acknowledging that
primitive Christianities embraced charismata that resembled those later practiced by Phrygian
Montanists. Instead, I intend to demonstrate Montanism’s composite nature, tying a
significant portion of Montanism’s rituals to ‘pagan’ sources, especially those in Asia Minor.
Therefore, I shall start in the next chapter by discussing the primordial religious soup that
existed in Anatolia, which made possible Montanism’s emergence on the scene, before
showing Montanism’s ‘pagan’ character and its operation as a late Antique mystery religion
in the final chapter.
CONNOTATIONS AND SEMANTIC MISCELLANY

To orient the reader, several terms need clarification, the first of which is the term “Montanism” itself. The movement this thesis focuses upon has had various names. The ancients living within and adjacent to the Roman Empire referred to it by several names. These include “The (New) Prophecy,” “the (Cata)Phrygian heresy,” and the heresies of the Pepuzites or the Priscillianists or the Quintillianists. Other terms for Montanist groups, which I believe have been unconvincingly argued to have arisen decades or centuries after the Three were active, include Artotyrites and Tascodrougites. Early Montanists preferred the “(New) Prophecy,” while detractors tended to use locales and leaders’ names as a basis of appellation. Other names existed for the movement in later decades and centuries, but these will not be considered here since they fall outside the context of Montanism’s original, second-century Asian setting.

It is essential to reemphasize my focus on only Montanists in Phrygia during the first 50-100 years of its existence. North African and Roman Montanists did not, on the whole, exhibit overly ‘pagan’ practices within them, at least not remotely close to the degree that Phrygian Montanists appear to have done. Thus, except in places where more precise terminology is appropriate, I shall refer to the religion as ‘Phrygian,’ ‘Anatolian,’ or ‘Asian

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21 For discussion on the secret nature of rituals within two Montanist sub-sects, see Trevett, Montanism, 201. I am inclined to believe these groups, called Artotyrites and Tascodrougites, were in fact not derived versions of Montanism, but present from the very beginning or at least within the first decades of Phrygian Montanism. I will discuss evidence in Chapter 3.
Montanism,’ after the name of its founder, or as ‘The New Prophecy,’ the movement’s self-ascribed name.22

A problematic term, ‘pagan,’ has been tried, rejected, and tried again in an attempt to find a more precise term for the host of non-Christian, non-Judaic religions and cults in and around the ancient Mediterranean world. In modern common vernacular, the term conjures up images of spells and sacrifices among witches and Druidic priests. Yet I would argue by borrowing a phrase from Winston Churchill, it is the worst form of description of these religions…except for all the rest. Thus, while woefully inadequate, ‘pagan,’ highlighted in inverted commas, will refer broadly to all non-Judeo-Christian religions of this period and locale except where clarification is necessary.23

“Mysteries” is another term of potential confusion. Mysteries were rituals, typically secret in nature, which connected mortals with deities in enigmatic ways. They are most often associated with cults of worship supplemental to ancient civic religion involving gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon. For example, worshipping the Olympian gods with public sacrifices was a natural part of life for the Greeks whereas conducting secret rites in honor of Demeter at Eleusis was additional; the latter of these can be considered a mystery. Contrary to the more specific preferences of some scholars, for clarity, I shall refer to any of these unusual pieties where they are encountered by the terms “mystery,” “mystery cult,” or

23 For a similar treatment in modern scholarship, I would refer the reader to a discussion of the topic in a recent sourcebook by A.D. Lee, ed., Pagans and Christians, 10-11.
“mystery religion.” This is important only in keeping these religious manifestations separate from civic worship.

Perhaps the most critical terms to define in this analysis are “catholic,” “orthodox,” and “heresy.” For more than three centuries after the death of Jesus, Christians debated and argued what beliefs and practices comprised authentic Christianity. As such, the word catholic, meaning “universal,” hardly is sufficient to describe the broad array of church practices of the second century. Nor does orthodox, meaning “straight” or “right,” carry clear meaning for the host of Christian manifestations of the period. “Heresy,” perhaps the most problematic term, is defined by history’s winners. In the original Greek, hairesis meant “a taking” or “a choosing” and in a Christian context, connotes any group that practiced and/or defined their faith in a manner contrary to that of any other Christian group presuming divinely sanctioned authority. I will avoid any discussion of the Montanists or other Christian groups that attempts to assert an essentialist myth of orthodoxy. While some scholars have called concepts, beliefs, rituals, and practices that the Churches of Rome and Constantinople eventually would accept by the terms “catholic” or “proto-orthodox,” for example, because they prefigure modern sentiments of these terms, I believe they are best avoided. ‘Heresy’ will only be used to describe the opinion of ancient sources who referred to Montanism in such a way. It should then follow that I will not here address later divisions

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between the Orthodox and Catholic churches because they are essentially irrelevant and certainly chronologically outside the framework of this thesis.\footnote{Pagels, Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas, 5-6.}

**MONTANISM AS A MYSTERY RELIGION?**

Scholars’ insistence that Montanism was a movement of almost purely Christian essence is unconvincing, particularly because of the high percentage of ‘pagan’ influences. That the “New Prophecy” gained a large following within a few decades of its founding suggests that Montanus’ success in proselytizing his Anatolian brethren may have been more a socio-cultural phenomenon than a matter of preference for one religious belief over another. For example, this area of Asia Minor had a long history of accepting women’s elevated roles in cult worship of the Great Mother (called *Magna Mater*, *Cybele*, and *Mētēr Theōn* as well), which had operated for more than a millennium in Anatolia. That two of Montanism’s first three revelators were female seems less consistent with second-century Anatolian Christian patriarchal norms than with worship of a native Phrygian goddess. Nonetheless, careful scholars cannot ignore the New Prophets’ *loci operandi* within the Christian churches of Phrygia. The ancient sources do not tell of great conversions of pagans to Christianity but of Christians to Montanism.\footnote{Stephen Mitchell, Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor, Vol. I: The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 19-22.} However, such evidence does not diminish, in my opinion, the argument for Phrygian Montanism’s emergence on the scene as a hybrid Christian/‘pagan’ mystery religion.
A possible analogy between how I am suggesting Phrygian Montanism be viewed is in the perspective scholars have taken with regard to Gnosticism. Gnosticism has in several respects been seen as a religious and philosophical nexus among Christianity, Neo-Platonism, and the classically defined mysteries, and especially in the last case with respect to the secret *gnosis* or “knowledge” it supposedly revealed. Phrygian Montanism, I would argue, should be treated the same way except that Neo-Platonism falls outside the scope of this topic. Mysteries, however, fix at the center, and represent a natural – though it should be stressed *not* doctrinal – structural analogy between Gnosticism and Montanism.

Several definitions of the mysteries exist and the number of religions that can be considered among them grows exponentially with each scholarly variant on the established criteria. However, modern consensus identifies a specific set of Greco-Roman cults (though Christianity’s inclusion is often debated) and a set of criteria by which to classify them – a lowest common denominator of sorts. In a recent chapter on the mystery religions, Sarah Iles Johnston suggested the following basic traits:

- “Mystery cults demanded secrecy; initiates were forbidden to divulge what they had experienced (‘mystery’ comes from Greek *myein* [to close]).
- “Mystery cults promised to improve initiates’ situations in the present life and/or after death.
- “Initiates garnered these advantages by establishing a special relationship with divinities during initiation.
- “Mystery cults were optional supplements to civic religion, rather than competing alternatives (this is why we call them ‘cults,’ rather than ‘religions’).
- “Myths were associated with these cults, which narrated tales of the cults’ divinities.”

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Pace Johnston, I take issue only with her apparent exclusion of Judaism as a civic religion (since Christianity competed with it) and offer a caveat regarding the issue of secrecy. Walter Burkert, whose Ancient Mystery Cults represents the standard text on the subject, has stated, “Mysteries were initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred.” Montanism did involve secret initiations, certainly within possibly divergent sects, and perhaps even the main movement. However, the ancient sources, to which we will now turn, are unfortunately vague on this topic with respect to Phrygian Montanism. Logically speaking, these writers must have lacked complete ‘gnosis’ of undisclosed rites.29

**Survey of Ancient Sources**

A key issue for all scholars of Greco-Roman history is the trustworthiness of ancient sources, especially with regard to religion. Phrygian Montanism drew a great number of critics, and we have more of their assertions and narratives about the movement than we have of extant writings by the New Prophets or adherents. Such is often the case with history’s losers, and indeed Montanism lost, dying centuries before the close of the first millennium.

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To start, one must rely on four patristic authors, all but one hostile to Montanism, who provide essential, extant information: Eusebius, Epiphanius, Tertullian, and Hippolytus.\textsuperscript{30}

Eusebius served as bishop of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine and authored several books on the history of Christianity. His most famous work, \textit{Historia Ecclesiastica} ("The Ecclesiastical History")\textsuperscript{31} in which he details the history of the church, yields information essential to any study on Montanism. The major contribution of the work is Eusebius’ narrative of events relevant to early Montanism. He relies on several sources (all lost) from the late second and early third centuries. An unnamed source, dubbed "the Anonymous" by modern scholars, is utilized extensively (\textit{ap. H.E.} 5.16-17). Apolinarius, Bishop of Heirapolis, near Pepouza in southwest Asia Minor, also figures among Eusebius’ references (\textit{ap. H.E.} 4.27) and one of Jerome’s; in the latter is referenced a work by Apolinarius titled \textit{Against the Cataphrygians} (\textit{Vir.} 26). Eusebius also cites Apollonius, described merely as a "writer of the church," (\textit{ap. H.E.} 5.18) and Serapion, Bishop of Antioch (\textit{ap. H.E.} 5.19).

While Eusebius provides a great amount of information about the Phrygian Montanists, he appears biased due to exaggerated narratives and his habit of taking his sources at face value.

Epiphanius (ca. 315-403/5) became the Bishop of Salamis on Cyprus ca. 367 and his major work, the \textit{Panarion omnium haeresium},\textsuperscript{32} or “Medicine Chest Against All Heresies,”

\textsuperscript{30} For a well developed and focused treatment of sources antagonistic to Montanism, see Tabbernee, \textit{Fake Prophecy}, esp. xxxii-xxxiii; on Montanism’s demise, see Trevett, \textit{Montanism}, 2.


(in practice “Panarion”) was written during the 370s. He relies on oral sources, observational conjecture, and an unidentified person who may have been a Phrygian but has also been called the “Anti-Phrygian” indicating a source from somewhere else. (Pan. 48.1-13). The major strengths of the work are its breadth and the quantity of information about the revelations/oracles of the first Three (or four) Prophets. The purported weakness of Epiphanius is that he confuses some tenets of Phrygian Montanism with those of perhaps later divergent Montanist groups, namely the Artotyrites and Tascodrougites. However, I will take issue in my third chapter with the suggestion that these groups were completely separate sects. Epiphanius’ inaccurate dating and reliance on oral sources, two hundred years after Montanism emerged on the stage, are more difficult problems for historical researchers and admittedly complicate the degree to which we can rely upon him.

Tertullian (ca. 160-225), the founder of so-called Latin Christianity, was himself a later Montanist adherent, born in North Africa and active as a theologian at the turn of the third century. He wrote several works containing apologies for Christianity during what scholars have called his ‘catholic’ and ‘Montanist’ phases. The strength and weakness of his writings is generally the same issue. As a North African Montanist, he provides a great deal of firsthand knowledge about his faith, but as such is biased toward it. Second, some of his writings pertain to Phrygian Montanism, but this is not always clearly distinguishable from

33 Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, 264.
34 For speculation on source as non-Phrygian vs. Phrygian, see ibid., 50-53; cf. Trevett, Montanism, 48.
35 Trevett, Montanism, 2.
36 See Heine, Montanist Oracles, x-xi, for opinion on Epiphanius’ sources and oracles.
information about devotees practicing in North Africa or Rome. Next to Epiphanius, he provides the highest number of oracles attributed to the Three.\textsuperscript{38}

Hippolytus lived in the late second century and exerted influence as a bishop in or near Rome during the early third century.\textsuperscript{39} While brief, his description of Montanists in \textit{Refutatio omnium haeresium} ("Refutation of All Heresies") serves as the earliest, certifiably extant reference we have of the New Prophets.\textsuperscript{40} Along with Hippolytus, a small but important source is a letter from Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. Dated to the mid third century, it appears to describe the acts of a third century Asian prophetess.\textsuperscript{41}

Holy writings figure prominently in studies of the ‘official church’ and of those it calls heretics. Several key writings from what would become the New Testament as well as some apocryphal/deuterocanonical texts yield information essential to understanding the Phrygian Montanists’ views on eschatological events and the role of women in Christian ministry. Of particular interest are Paul’s epistles to various churches, John’s Apocalypse (i.e. Rev), and the apocryphal/deuterocanonical 2 Esdras (i.e. 4 Ezra). Other holy writings such as the \textit{Martyrium Polycarpi} ("Martyrdom of Polycarp") and the \textit{Pastor Hermae} ("Shepherd of Hermas") are presented in one of two volumes entitled “The Apostolic

\textsuperscript{38} Tertullian’s works are too numerous to cite here. I will include them as each is referenced in this thesis.
\textsuperscript{40} Hippolytus, \textit{Hippolytus Werke III Refutatio Omnium Haeresium}, ed. Paul Wendland, GCS 26 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916). The possibility that Hippolytus was not the author of this work has been suggested by some scholars; for the most recent summary of the argument, see Tabbernee, \textit{Fake Prophecy}, 73-74.
Fathers,” which has recently been re-translated by a distinguished historian of Christianity, Bart Ehrman.42

Ronald Heine captures much of the remaining primary sources in a tidy collection. The value of The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia (not to be confused with Tabbernee’s similarly titled work), published in 1989, cannot be overstated. “Oracle” is the common nomenclature among historians of Montanism for ecstatically delivered, paraenetic and enthusiastic prophecies allegedly uttered by Montanus, Priscilla, Maximilla or other New Prophets. In this sense the oracles resemble the prophecies uttered by the Oracle at Delphi. Heine’s work contains the extracts of most known ancient references to authentic Montanist oracles, i.e. those recounted by Eusebius, Epiphanius, or Tertullian, et al, along with extant accounts of ancient sources about Montanism. In preparing his grouping, Heine began with the original collection published in 1919 in French by Pierre de Labriolle, but neatly arranged the source material into categories based on chronology and authenticity as determined generally by scholarly consensus. Heine has used critical editions of the sources (e.g. GCS) in preparing his translations. A particular strength is that the original languages are listed opposite the English on each page, allowing for easy reference and comparison. The major weakness is that he omitted nearly 100 oracles from Labriolle’s collection, which he believes are irrelevant. Still, nearly 48 different primary sources are represented.43

43 Heine, Montanist Oracles; Pierre Champagne de Labriolle, Les Sources De L’histoire Du Montanisme: Textes Grecs, Latins, Syriques, Pub. Avec Une Introduction Critique, Une Traduction Francaise, Des Notes Et Des "Indices" (Fribourg (Suisse) and Paris: Librairie de l'Universitâe (O. Gschwend); Ernet Leroux, 1913).
Referenced above, William Tabbernee is perhaps the leading authority on Montanism today, and with regard to the ancient sources, his first major contribution came in the field of epigraphy.44 While one of his most recent major publications includes an analysis of the vast assembly of ecclesiastical and imperial enemies Montanism attracted,45 his first major work, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, has catalogued hundreds of inscriptions as well as Syriac testimonia to inscriptions.46 Thus, it is no surprise that his early research on the subject was largely archaeological. In 2000, he announced, along with Peter Lampe, that he had discovered the holy cities of Phrygian Montanism, i.e. Pepouza and Tymion;47 the preliminary excavation results were published May 2008.48 A major strength is his archaeological analysis of the context and authenticity of items; incidentally, he takes the same approach with written sources, as his critical review of the opponents of Montanism is quite thorough and informative. The other two articles by Tabbernee referenced in this paper regard Montanist discoveries from the material record. Together these sources provide details relevant to any historical study on the subject.

45 Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*.
SURVEY OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

The first scholars to take up the subject of Montanism may not have considered categorizing it as a mystery religion, but they did recognize the influence of ‘paganism’ and Judaism. As early as the seventeenth century, C. Baronius and L.S. le Nain de Tillemont were discussing Montanism, followed by G. Arnold, Mosheim, Walch and Wernsdorf in the eighteenth. We have become familiar with these scholars through references to them in the work of Nathanael Bonwetsch. His writings, along with others authored by German scholars, provided the substantial basis of Montanist research in the nineteenth century.49

19th Century and Early 20th Century Writers

Frederick Klawiter’s review of modern scholarship up to 1975 provides a neat categorization of Montanism based on the socio-religious origins asserted by predominantly German, but also French and English scholars. They define it as a heterodox Christian movement or a return to primitive and/or Jewish Christianity, but they also saw in Montanism significant ‘pagan’ influences, especially taken from the cult of Cybele and Attis (Attis was the consort of the Great Mother).50 Most of these scholars saw Phrygian Montanist

49 Trevett, Montanism, 5 Regarding the present study, I owe a great debt to scholars with regard to research not conducted in English inasmuch as my French is out of practice and I do not read German as of yet. Such, I trust, is to be forgiven of one writing a thesis as part of MA degree requirements. I have synthesized a broad range of opinion on these foreign language sources where possible and have provided appropriate citations. However, all Greek and Latin terminological translations are mine unless otherwise noted, and most passage translations are taken from Heine. I am indebted to Frederick Klawiter, Rex Butler and Christine Trevett, who have reviewed painstakingly and summarized the German works (most thoroughly Klawiter) as well as the seminal work on oracles in French by Labriolle.

religion as developing within Christianity. On the other hand, there were scholars, especially German-speaking ones, who gave some credence to ‘pagan’ connections. They favored an approach made popular in Germany by the Religionsgeschichteschule, or “history of religions school,” which sought to expand the notion of religious studies as an academic, rather than theological, field. Ramsay, for example, an English-speaking scholar, noted that “Montanists tended to ‘Phrygianise their beliefs,’ which meant that … the enthusiasm and involvement of women, typical of the Cybelene cult, shaped their religion.” Despite Ramsay’s assertion, which is in itself not compelling, this latter group of scholars rejected explanations of Montanism’s non-Christian origin.

Chief among these German scholars was Wilhelm Schepelern, who undertook the most in-depth study until this century of the influence of the “Phrygian cult,” or the cult of the Magna Mater, on Montanism. According to Klawiter, he identified four major parallels between Phrygian Montanism and the Cybelene cult: ritual tattooing among Cybelenes resembled the pricking of infants with bronze needles to obtain blood for their Eucharistic sacrament; the use of cheese instead of blood in the Christian communion revealing a possible link to a sacrificial act to the Great Mother calling for protection of agriculture and livestock; ceremonies in which seven virgins dressed in white robes carried torches to inspire weeping among Christians mimicked the virgins who mourned Attis during the spring

51 See Schwegler (1841), Hilgenfeld (1850, 84), Baur (1851, 53), Soyres (1878), Bonwetsch (1881), Harnack (1883), Renan (1912), and Labriolle (1913). Their major works are listed below in "Additional Bibliography."
52 See Neander (1827), Ritschl (1850), Ramsay (1912) and Schepelern (1929). Their major works are listed below in "Additional Bibliography," except Schepelern who is listed in "Works Cited."
54 Butler, New Prophecy, 15.
festivals for the Magna Mater; and the high place ascribed to women in the cult of the Great Mother mirrored the roles of prophetesses in Montanism.\textsuperscript{56} What is unfortunate for Montanist historiography is that despite these four parallels, Schepelern found the penitential rite as practiced within the cult of Cybele and Attis too lenient when compared with the Montanist concept of forgiveness. He emphasized Johannine influences (i.e., those which Christians in Asia Minor believed, probably incorrectly, were written by John, being the Revelation and the Gospel of John, for example) on the Montanists and therefore abandoned any claim concerning the significance of connections with the Cybelenes.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{Scholarship since 1950}

The lack of interest in, or support for, a ‘pagan’ influence carried into scholarship of the last sixty years. The prevailing question continues to be a dialectic focused on Montanism’s consistency or lack thereof with Anatolian Christianities. Said another way by Klawiter, the focus on Montanism has been to ask how it figured in the development of the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Labriolle, a Roman Catholic, saw it – through a modern and anachronistic lens – as a Catholic heresy though nonetheless one Christian in character.

\textsuperscript{57} Butler, \textit{New Prophecy}, 15-16. Part of the reason modern scholars have rejected these similarities involves whether or not the groups involved were actually Montanist. For example, the use of bronze needles was ascribed by Epiphanius to the Tascodrougites, the cheese to Artotyrites, and the virgins in white to the Quintillianists. As I intend to show, these groups actually may have been Montanists, not aberrant cult sects. Throughout her monograph, Trevett takes for granted that Epiphanius’ late sources for these other groups imply too great a chronological separation between them and the Montanists. My reading of the literature suggests her assumption is persuasive only if one sees evidence in an argument from silence. \textit{Pace} Trevett, see pages 2, 9, 98, 177, 199-200, 202, 223, 226 and 254 for inadequately defended assertions regarding the late development of these groups.
So too Trevett, for example, describes it as a viable Christian movement, something akin to an ancient form of Protestantism, e.g. a religion whose adherents would counter the charges of Anatolian clerical authorities that the New Prophecy was not authentically ‘Christian.’

The question of substance of early Montanism continued to revolve around essentialist views of Christianity, its ‘heretical’ doctrines, and its paraenetic and enthusiastic nature. In simple language, this means that a minority of scholars focused on the frenzied nature of the prophecies; that is, the Three’s utterances were intelligible to others but delivered while being in a convulsive state brought on by possession by the deity. Hence, scant attention has been given to the broader world of Roman religion with only a few scholars arguing that Montanism was heavily influenced by ‘pagan’ cults.

Among them, Greville Freeman identified important linkages between Montanism and ‘pagan’ rituals reminiscent of those practiced by worshippers of Apollo and Cybele. Since 1950, Freeman is the one of few English-speaking scholars to express acceptance of significant amounts of ‘pagan’ character in Montanism. Alf Thomas Kraabel is another. His 1968 unpublished dissertation on Judaism in Asia Minor touched on Montanism briefly to dispel notions that Jewish religion provided the basis of Montanist origins. He felt Phrygian Montanism reflected aspects of Anatolian ‘pagan’ piety and Christianity, not Judaism. He believed that any Judaic influence came through Ebionite (i.e. Jewish Christian) Christianity indirectly. However, his discussion was more about the lack of Judaic influence for

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58 Trevett, Montanism, 12.
59 Freeman, "Montanism and the Pagan Cults," 304, 07, 16.
Montanism than support for its ‘pagan’ nature.  

Balfour Goree, on the other hand, clearly favored a hybridist view of Montanism in his 1980 unpublished dissertation “The Cultural Bases of Montanism,” which allowed for both ‘pagan’ and Judaic contributors. Goree’s thesis stated that ‘pagan’ cults, Diaspora Judaism, and Anatolian Christianity contributed to the development and origin of Phrygian Montanism. I am sympathetic to his conclusions, though he receives barely more than a footnote in Trevett’s work and seldom appears elsewhere. Van Nuffelen expressed a similar question regarding the paucity of references to Goree’s work in his criticism of Hirschmann’s Horrenda Secta. I shall return in the next chapter to Goree’s findings.

Several other writers have contributed to the study of Montanism during the last half century, including Kurt Aland, Hans van Campenhausen, K. Froehlich, J. Massingherd Ford, W. H. C. Frend and of course, F. C. Klawiter. These authors have made significant contributions to the dialogue but only insofar as to strengthen the bulwarks of scholarship on Montanism as an Ebionite development, a return to primitive Christianity, and/or part of the ongoing discussion of the emerging Catholic church. Nonetheless, most of these scholars will figure at times in this thesis. The work of A. Daunton-Fear, important for the understanding of Montanus’ prophetic trances, also appears during this period of scholarship, and is discussed in the last two chapters of this thesis.

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60 Kraabel, "Judaism in Western Asia Minor," 149-50.
62 See Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta."
63 E.g., Daunton-Fear, "Ecstasies."
Since 1989 there has been a new wave of studies on Montanism, and I believe this is due to the exceptional work of Ronald Heine, William Tabbernee, and Christine Trevett. The major topics have centered on the origins of Asian Montanism, in part due to the great work on inscriptions, testimonia and oracles by Heine and Tabbernee. Also spurring interest were Trevett’s monograph in 1996, which included remarkable work on the dating of Montanus’ appearance on the religious scene. Tabbernee’s aforementioned work on the opponents of Montanism and most providentially, Tabbernee’s and Lampe’s publication of the discovery of Pepouza and Tymion followed in 2007 and 2008 respectively. In the past decade, Alistair Stewart-Sykes has authored a few articles on early Asian Montanism that are quite revealing in connecting ‘pagan’ cults to it, while Rex Butler has analyzed a purportedly Montanist account from North Africa. It was during this period as well that Hirschmann published her groundbreaking piece (2005). All of these authors will be discussed extensively in the succeeding chapters.

A final author of importance is Stephen Mitchell. While not a scholar of Montanism, his two-volume work, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, provides a near exhaustive history of ancient Turkey. Especially relevant to this study, found in his second volume, is his review of religion in the various regions of Anatolia, including Phrygia and the surrounding areas and kingdoms. *Anatolia* is an invaluable source on the political (vol. I), as well as cultural and religious environment (vol. II), out of which Montanism emerged.

65 Stewart-Sykes, “The Original Condemnation of Asian Montanism.”
66 Butler, *New Prophecy*.
In summary, this thesis will interweave Hirschmann’s views with those of most other scholars whom she has recently disputed. ‘Pagan’ and Christian sources from separate but adjacent provenances simultaneously formed a mystery religion embodied in Phrygian Montanism. While its founders likely viewed their inspiration as Christian, particular attention will be focused on how its Anatolian derivation, including ‘pagan’ and Christian elements, when broken down categorically, satisfy the criteria for a mystery religion.
CHAPTER 2: WHY MONTANISM EMERGED IN PHRYGIA

The prophetic movement of Montanism arose within the eastern Roman Empire in second century Turkey. This most general statement about the religion contains as little verifiable information as might be asserted by a responsible scholar, for most other facts about it are clouded by polemical bias and the loss of several primary texts to history such as Tertullian’s De ecstasi. This problem unfortunately is not unique in the field of history, and scholars of ancient and classical civilizations have learned to cope with this paucity of evidence using inference, arguments from silence, and deduction, et al, in order to establish basic details regarding a particular subject. In the case of Phrygian Montanism, several historians have argued persuasively for the acceptance of its dates, tenets, locations, and practices. This chapter will synthesize the ancient source material with modern arguments in an attempt to account for why Montanism emerged within southwest-central Asia Minor in the land of Phrygia. Furthermore, it will isolate the key cultural and religious factors present in Anatolia en route to explaining briefly why it did not appear elsewhere.

In the first section, I will provide an overview of political transitions occurring across several millennia in the Anatolian subcontinent, its (pre)history, and descriptions of its religious environs. Next I will focus on the founder(s) of Montanism, what is known or purported about each, and attempt to construct a picture of the movement in the second century in and surrounding its original geographic setting of the ethnically Phrygian portions of the Roman provinces of Asia and Galatia. Details of the beliefs and rituals espoused by early Montanist leaders, including those, in my opinion, which have been considered too dismissively as derivative and late by some scholars, will follow. To conclude the chapter, I
will pay particular attention to Montanist parallels with local ‘pagan’ cults and Christian holy writings. In discussing these issues, I will show how Phrygia provided the ideal cauldron for the emergence of Montanism before it transferred in altered form to Rome and Carthage.

**USE OF SOURCES**

Certain writers will receive more attention in this chapter than in other ones. Understanding who Montanus, Maximilla, and Priscilla were as well as forming an accurate picture of what they espoused, demands a critical and extensive review of primary sources, most of whom assumed positions hostile to the Three and by extension, Phrygian Montanism. While I have noted the importance in my introductory chapter of the patristic figures of Eusebius, Epiphanius, Tertullian and Hippolytus, other ancient sources, even if late, provide us with a fuller picture of Montanism. Regarding especially oracles, viz. purportedly divine paraenetic utterances, additional sources include the anonymous *Dialexis* (“Discussion of a Montanist and an Orthodox Christian”) and Didymus of Alexandria’s *De Trinitate* (“On the Trinity”).

Extra testimonia from the second and early third centuries are drawn from the anonymous *Martyrium Polycarpi* and the *Muratorian Canon* as well as from Irenaeus’ *Adversus haereses* (“Against Heresies”), and Firmilian’s *Epistula ad Cyprianum* (“Letter to Cyprian”) as well as arguably one of our earliest sources on Montanus, Hippolytus of

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Rome’s *Commentarius in Danielem* (“Commentary on Daniel”) and his *Refutatio*. Our only non-Christian source of note from the second century is Lucian, whose satirized “Alexander the False Prophet” (*Alexander falsus vates*) provides us with a possible archetypal model for Montanus. Accounts from the fourth century and later are too extensive to enumerate here, but include key works from Augustine and Jerome.

**ANATOLIA AND PHRYGIA: CHRONOLOGY AND CULTURE**

Christine Trevett’s scholarship has figured prominently in this thesis thus far, and her 1996 monograph on Montanism, the first in English since John de Soyres’ *Montanism and the Primitive Church* in 1878, remains an authoritative work on the subject. Thus, while I will continue to reference her research throughout this work, the necessity of providing background on Phrygian and Anatolian history has led me back to Stephen Mitchell, whose *Anatolia* provides extensive documentation and archaeological material on the region.

Anatolia occupied the land east of the Bosporus strait now called Turkey. Indeed, modern Turks still refer to the land east of Istanbul as the “Anatolian” side of the country. This territory has served as a whirlpool of sorts into which European, Oriental, and Middle

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71 Based on a conversation with an expatriate Turk living in Cary, NC, USA, April 2008.
Eastern elements have flowed for millennia. Sorting out the independent sources of cultural amalgam in this vast land would require a massive centrifugal instrument operating in four dimensions across terrestrial space and time. Indeed, renowned nineteenth century scholar Theodor Mommsen felt that making sense of the entirety of the history of Asia Minor was an impossible task. Mitchell suggested that “the character of Anatolia under Roman rule, and the consequences of integrating the region into the Roman Empire, are not best studied by limiting oneself to a single province.” His advice is especially relevant to the present study as ethnic descendants of the old kingdom of Phrygia, which collapsed in the seventh century BCE, lived across the territorial boundaries of what was Roman Asia and Roman Galatia during the second and third centuries CE (see fig. 1 below).

72 Mitchell, Anatolia, I, 3; see text and n. 3.
73 Ibid., 1, 9.
Figure 1. Roman provincial boundaries in Anatolia, 25 BCE to 235

Nonetheless, an understanding of the political history of Asia Minor provides a framework for understanding the various influences on this unique subcontinent. Several ruling entities controlled all or part of Anatolia during the last five millennia. After the prehistoric period, the Hittite Empire, ruling from Boğazköy, controlled the area throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Age. From the first millennium BCE through the seventh century BCE, the Phrygian kingdom at Gordium ruled much of Anatolia. The Persians and Alexander the Great each staked claim to Asia Minor before the third century BCE invasion

and settlement of Galatia by Celtic peoples.75 Beginning with the bequest of the Attalid kingdom in the western portion of Anatolia in 133 BCE as the new province of Asia,76 Rome inaugurated their gain and subsequent domination of Anatolian territories through a gradual transformation of Anatolian client states into regular Roman provinces. Indeed, the boundaries of those lands inhabited by ethnic Phrygians at the time of Montanus’ prophetic activity had actually solidified in the late first century.77 Rome’s imperium endured at least until the Arab and Persian invasions of ancient Turkey in the seventh century.78

These kingdoms and empires, that of Rome being most essential to the study at hand, account for only a fraction of the monarchical and imperial bodies to control Asia Minor over thousands of years, but are naturally relevant to studies focusing on the geographic distribution of ethnic Phrygians. Mitchell (see fig. 1 above) and Tabbernee both clearly place the Phrygian “homeland” in the province of Asia.79 However, Mitchell states that “Any attempt to indicate firm territorial boundaries for Asia … would be fundamentally misleading.”80 Our ancient sources and modern scholars alike place Phrygians in the lands of Anatolia outside the old kingdom of Phrygia. The Anonymous indicated that Montanus came from “Phrygian Mysia” for example (ap. Eus. H.E., 5.16.7), which is northwest of central Phrygia (see fig. 2 below). In describing the Phrygian evidence of the Cybelene cult, Lynn Roller discusses a large geographic territory including Lydia, Lycia and Bithynia –

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75 Mitchell, Anatolia, I, 1-3.
76 Ibid., 29.
77 Ibid., 29-41. See also II, 151-55.
79 Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, xxix-xxx.
80 See “Note on Map 3” in Mitchell, Anatolia, I, facing page 40.
essentially all of central and most of western Anatolia. Galatia absolutely must be added to this list, for when the Romans first encountered the *Magna Mater* in 204 BCE, known also as the Phrygian Mother, it was at Pessinus, a city we see in Roman Galatia during the first century (Strabo *Geo.* 12.5.3; 13.4.2).

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The political boundary changes leading to the presence of Phrygians in Roman Asia and Galatia, however, did not occur in a vacuum. The religious environments of Phrygia and the Anatolian subcontinent have been punctuated by a staccato of imports since the Persian Empire brought its dualist faith of Zoroastrianism to the region mid-first millennium BCE. Eventually, the apostle Paul evangelized Asia Minor in the first century, e.g. baptizing Phrygian Jews in the second chapter of Acts, which provided a critical mass for the surfacing of Anatolian Christianities in the region. This of course was a phenomenon not restricted to Phrygia, but enabled by other apostles’ proselytizing in Egypt, North Africa, and Syria, for example. In such context, Phrygian Montanism is best understood in the words of Alf Kraabel, a scholar of Diaspora Judaism, as a synthesis of “native Anatolian piety … [with] Anatolian Christianity.” Mitchell corroborated this idea: “Anatolian ‘pagan’ beliefs, which were accompanied by a severe moral code, provided soil where Judaism and Christianity readily took root.” I have no plans to focus on Judaism, but several scholars have seen in Montanism an heir to Ebionite or Jewish Christianity, and its relevance has been stated in other scholarly studies. My point in discussing Kraabel and Mitchell’s statements, however, is to show that Phrygia was ripe for the emergence of hybrid Anatolian religions – in some cases more and in others less pervaded by ‘pagan’ influences – in the second century.

While Paul and others established Christian communities in Phrygia, a century later they were led by presbyters and bishops, e.g. at Hierapolis or Ancyra, who in many cases saw Montanus’ teachings as inconsistent with Pauline, primitive and charismatic Christianities.

84 Kraabel, "Judaism in Western Asia Minor", 149-50.
85 Mitchell, Anatolia, I, 10.
So there were in fact at least two forms of Christianity in the region, one seemingly less affected by local Phrygian ‘pagan’ beliefs than the other, which of course was Montanism. Certainly in the mid to late second century, Irenaeus saw competing Christianities in Smyrna or Lyons, and no doubt some were more colored by Asian or Gallic influences than others (Haer. 3.3.4). In my opinion, the degree of blending was so prevalent in the seminal version of the New Prophecy found in Anatolia that it should not be considered bereft of all but an iota of ‘pagan’ practices.

Nonetheless, the (pre)history and political chronology of Asia Minor reveals much about the nature of its people and culture. As early as the sixth millennium BCE, we see evidence of religion in Anatolia at the site of Çatal Höyük. From then until the second century, a host of deities emerged or arrived in ancient Turkey, with devotees establishing cult centers throughout the land. For example, the fertility goddess at Çatal Höyük may have arrived at Pessinus in Phrygia in transmuted form as the Matar kubileya, Phrygian nomenclature for the more famous “Great Mother,” known alternately as “Cybele” to the Greeks or Magna Mater to the Romans. Her consort, a prince and shepherd named Attis, was often associated with her in a bloody myth.

Other gods came from Aegean and Mediterranean shores. The shrines of Didyma and at Claros on the western Anatolian coast boasted the most famous oracles of the Hellenic god

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Apollo after Delphi. One of the god’s “revelations” commanded the building of an altar in the upper Tembris valley in northern Phrygia.88 Dionysius or Bacchus, god of the vine and fertility, was well known across the Greco-Roman world, especially in Phrygia and Thrace.89

The cult of the god Asclepius, alternately known as the snake god Glycon, existed both on the Black Sea shores of northern Anatolia and at an oracular shrine in Aegeae, Cilicia.90

Aside from these gods, three others figure prominently in Anatolia and, along with the Matar kubileya, are found more often in the Phrygian heartland than any other region, according to Mitchell. Zeus was the most ubiquitous god as suggested by the number of temples to him present in Asia Minor. Phrygians honored as well an anthropomorphized god of “Holiness and Justice,” or Hosion kai Dikaion, and Mēn, whose cult center was at Pisidian Antioch and whose garb typically included the so-called Phrygian cap (cf. Mithras art) and a cloak. Indeed a plethora of divinities existed in Anatolia and Phrygia who aroused the piety and devotion of its native peoples. The added infusion of new religions such as Judaism and Christianity only served to diversify the spiritual options in Phrygia, and may have included a henotheistic god, Theos Hypsistos, “The Highest God,” sometimes so similar to Jehovah in epigraphy that one does not know if the deity being referenced is Jewish or some type of theurgical, neo-Platonic god.91

88 Mitchell, Anatolia, II, 11.
89 Meyer, ed., Ancient Mysteries, 63.
90 Lucian, Alex. Mitchell, Anatolia, I, 188.
91 Mitchell, Anatolia, II, 19, 36, 43-44.
A RECORD OF CHRISTIANIZATION?

How did Christianity infiltrate the rural villages of Phrygia? Consider Trevett’s description of the land and its people: “‘Phrygian’ could be a near synonym for ‘slave’ and for boorish hill-billy. Phrygia harboured religious groups of many kinds and was known to have ‘une certaine ardeur de mysticisme’, as Labriolle put it … they deplored vice and were unimpressed by the circus and the theatre … Here … was a part of the world for ‘the mystic, the devotee, the puritan’.” 92 Yet we have already seen that Phrygians worshipped many gods simultaneously, which of course was typical in the ancient world,93 so what types of inroads existed for Christian missionaries to convert Phrygians to an exclusionary faith in Jesus Christ? There is an answer here, if we ignore the dated claim of Daunton-Fear about the susceptibility of culturally backward societies to Christian syncretism,94 which though ethnocentric and smacking of Christian imperialism, suggests a slow route of infiltration.95 The presence of Judaism in Phrygia already familiarized the inhabitants with monotheistic religion. Yet Jews, on the whole, typically did not seek to proselytize gentiles. However, A. D. Nock suggests that pagans often came to synagogues to hear a famous speaker.96

Consider in more detail the role Diaspora Judaism played in the Christianization of Anatolia and Phrygia. The Seleucid king Antiochus the Great had moved about 2,000 Jewish families to Phrygia around 200 BCE, and we know of a great number of synagogues in

92 Trevett, Montanism, 18-19.
93 Nock, Conversion.
94 See Daunton-Fear, "Ecstasies," 651.
95 Trevett, Montanism, 16, 18.
96 Nock, Conversion, 62.
greater Anatolia from the Acts of the Apostles.\textsuperscript{97} Paul’s typical action as he proceeded through Asia Minor on his missionary journeys would be to begin preaching to Jews at their synagogues before approaching pagans.\textsuperscript{98} Yet, according to W. H. C. Frend, Jews and pagans typically lived together in a difficult balance, with pagans sometimes blaming Jews for their misfortunes.\textsuperscript{99} Regardless, it seems quite possible that more neo-Platonically oriented ‘pagans’ might have converted to Christianity due to a fondness for monotheistic Judaism. At the very least, incidental contact among ‘pagans’ with Christian missionaries at synagogues perhaps helped to promote proselytization. Frank Trombley has indicated that, however, the rate of evangelization in rural Phrygia during the second century is hard to establish due to the lack of Christian epigraphy before the fourth century.\textsuperscript{100}

Paul certainly was a proponent of exposing both Diaspora Jews and ‘pagans’ to the “good news.” In Athens, he told the Greeks there that their altar to an unknown god was in fact the Judeo-Christian God (Acts 17:23-34). Likewise, in Lycaonia east of Phrygia, where he and Barnabas were mistaken for Zeus and Hermes, he challenged the Lystrans’ understanding of the divine by suggesting he was not in fact divine but a spiritually empowered representative of the one Creator (Acts 14:8-18). Regardless, Paul’s missionary efforts did not entirely convert individuals in Greece or Asia Minor. For example, his first letter to the Christian community at Corinth, if it may be called “Christian” at this point,

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Mitchell, \textit{Anatolia, II}, 31; see also examples in Acts 14:1, 17:1-2, and 17:10-12.
reflects the challenges even as gifted a missionary as Paul faced in converting peoples deeply rooted in ‘pagan’ culture. Paul already had evangelized the area when he found out the neophytes there had continued to struggle with incest, fornication, avoiding food sacrificed to idols, and appropriate and reverent celebration of the communion meal (1 Cor 5, 6:12-7:40, 8:1-11:1, 11:17-34).

Certainly there were adherents in communities that Paul and other apostles reached which embraced Christianity’s exclusivity, e.g. Ephesus or Philippi (Acts 19:18-20, Philem 4:15),¹⁰¹ who – or so we are told – forewent fully their former polytheism in favor of Christianity’s soteriological promises. If scholarly consensus about Phrygia’s character is correct, then the majority of its people likely followed a path similar to the Corinthians, who had their share of struggles in becoming a distinct and devout ‘Christian community,’ regardless of what that term means in the late first century. On the other hand, Mitchell argues that “The indigenous inhabitants of central Anatolia preserved their own indigenous cults, little affected by outside influence, until the late Roman empire.”¹⁰² Robin Lane Fox further supports the idea of Phrygian religious implacability with a philological argument. The Phrygian language, it seems, kept a tenacious hold in Asia Minor even while Hellenization and early imperial Romanization caused Greek to displace the native tongues

¹⁰² Some letters written by Paul, or at least attributed to him, include his admonishments to the addressed communities to fix problems interfering with their new Christian life, e.g. Col 1:23, 1 & 2 Cor, et passim. See the reference to the threat of unnamed teachers of “local Phrygian religious practices” in the introduction to Colossians in Mitchell, Anatolia, II, 29. The point here is that some communities earned no rebuke from Paul for their continued participation in ‘pagan’ rituals, while others most certainly did, such as that of Corinth.
of Phrygia’s neighbors. If this linguistic durability is suggestive of Phrygia’s cultural intransigence, then perhaps Christianity either gained a tenuous foothold in the region amid a rural population that at best only remembered Cybele and Mên or, at worst for the clerical authorities in Asia Minor, continued to practice ‘pagan’ piety synchronously with Christian mysteries. I believe it was the latter in the case of the Montanists, and will display the evidence in Chapter 3. Let us now discuss the history of Anatolian Montanism and the practices and beliefs its adherents held in common.

THE NEW PROPHECy: FonDER(S) AND FAITH

The origin and dating of Montanus’ revolutionary movement remain opaque and hidden. Ecclesiastical sources Epiphanius and Eusebius respectively bracketed the start of his mission between a highly suspect 85 (Anti-Phrygian ap. Pan. 48.2.7) and a more reasonable 177 (Eus. ap. Jer. Chron. 20, 47). Despite uncertain dating of its emergence, current scholarship favors the late 150s or the 160s. To begin this study, let us reconstruct biographical sketches of the enigmatic yet charismatic religious leaders of Montanism before the 150s/160s, that is, prior to the advent of the New Prophecy.

105 While T. D. Barnes’, “The Chronology of Montanism,” JTS 21, no. 2 (1970) dating remains one of the most important opinions on the subject, but is slowly becoming outdated, especially with Trevett’s exceptional reappraisal. By stripping away a number of these bishops’ inconsistencies, Trevett, Montanism, 26-45, esp. 42-45 convincingly has curtailed this window to the decade of the 160s, though she admits earlier possibilities. Cf. Butler, New Prophecy, 14.
Our most substantial sources of information come primarily, but not exclusively, from hostile sources. Eusebius and Epiphanius wrote 150-200 years after the Three prophets proselytized the inhabitants of western Anatolia. In contrast, our earliest certifiable reference to them is from Hippolytus of Rome, who lived at least a generation after Montanus began preaching. So we are some degrees away from a reliable, contemporary primary source either antagonistic or sympathetic to Montanus. Who was he? The date and location of Montanus’ birth is open to wide speculation, but he likely was raised in western Anatolia, perhaps in Mysia where he is first said to have shared his enthusiastic message.

“There is said to be a village called Ardabav in Phrygian Mysia. There, they say, first, when Gratus was proconsul of Asia, a recent convert to the faith named Montanus, in his soul’s immense ambitious desire, gave the adversary access to himself and was carried away as by the Spirit, and suddenly experiencing some kind of spurious ecstasy, he was inspired and began to speak and say strange things, prophesying, as he pretended, contrary to the custom related to the tradition and succession of the Church from the beginning” (Anon. ap. Eus. H.E. 5.16.7 trans. Heine).

For more than 1,000 years, ethnic Phrygians had resided in parts of what would become two provinces: southeastern Roman Asia, including Mysia, and western Roman Galatia. Montanus almost certainly became an adherent, and possibly a priest, of one or more ‘pagan’ cults, serving Apollo and/or Cybele, even perhaps Asclepius, though I believe this last possibility is extremely remote. While Jerome wrote that Montanus was abscisum et semivirum, a “castrated half-man” (Ep. Marc. 41.4), evoking the disturbing image of a

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107 Trevett, Montanism, 16.
gallus, i.e. a priest of Cybele and Attis, the Dialexis placed him in the service of Apollo,\textsuperscript{108} and Didymus the Blind of Alexandria called him the hiereus eidolou, or “priest of an idol” (\textit{Trin.} 3.41.3). Based on similarities of prophetic style and evangelical organization, Montanus also resembled Lucian’s Alexander, who served as the mouthpiece of Glycon, known better from the divine pantheon as Asclepius (\textit{Alex.} 18). Regardless of Montanus’ specific religious heritage, the sources are clear that he was not originally a Christian but a recent convert to Christianity (Anon. \textit{ap. Eus. H.E.} 5.16.7). As a convert, Montanus almost certainly brought ‘pagan’ practices into his ministry, and it clearly indicates that his former faith preceded his Christianity.

According to the Anti-Phrygian, Montanus started prophesying in 157, in the nineteenth year of Emperor Antoninus Pius (\textit{ap. Epip. Pan.} 48.1.2).\textsuperscript{109} Shortly thereafter, he came to the west central Phrygian town(s) of Pepouza (and Tymion) where he spread his “New Prophecy.” It is hardly a stretch then to see how Phrygian Montanism would have sprung up from both ‘pagan’ and Christian loins. If Christ was the groom, then Cybele or the like was the bride, metaphorically speaking. How else do we explain Montanus’ organization of assemblies, appointing of money collectors and arranging for the payment of salaries to religious personnel, including prophets? He also taught his adherents a new way of rigorous living, though this aspect almost certainly hailed from the Christian side of the religion. Again, let me stress that these elements do not imply Montanus thought of himself after his

\textsuperscript{109} Again, for an extensive discussion of dating, see Trevett, Montanism, 160.
conversion as ‘pagan,’ but clearly he did not unpack such baggage after arriving in Ardabau or Pepouza. Klawiter has pointed out that Montanus as described here resembles rather strikingly Lucian’s figures of Alexander and Peregrinus Proteus. Nonetheless, whether through charisma or some other stratagem, Montanus quickly attracted a following that revered him, including two women known as Priscilla (or Prisca) and Maximilla (Hip. Ref. 8.19). As a group, they claimed direct inspiration from the “Holy Spirit,” or *Paracletos*, promised by Jesus (Jn 14:25-26).

Information concerning the early lives of Montanus’ co-leaders Priscilla and Maximilla is scarce. Jerome called them “rich and high born ladies” indicating they were women of noble family lines (*Ctes. 133.4*). While Trevett comments on the possibility that one or both of the women may have founded the New Prophecy, and I will discuss this more-than-remote possibility in the succeeding chapter, for the present let us assume these women joined Montanus as prophetesses. About the same time they left their husbands to assume a second, if still artificial or spiritually assumed, virginity (Apollonius *ap. Eus. H.E.* 5.18.3). Hippolytus and Eusebius indicate the Montanists authored books and uttered oracles (*Ref. 8.19; Vit. Const. 3.66*), the latter recorded as Labriolle, Heine, et al, have shown through their cataloguing of material from primary sources. Like Montanus, they aroused

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112 Trevett, *Montanism*, 159-60.
113 Cf. similar notions in pagan cults in Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta."
the ire of the clerical authorities in Anatolia and possibly Thrace, who tried to exorcise the women of their “evil spirits.”

The later lives of the Three resemble that of Judas Iscariot, with at least Montanus and Maximilla being accused by the Anonymous of suicide by hanging (ap. Eus. H.E. 5.16.13). Unfortunately, their ultimate fates are lost in the past as no reliably certain gravesites have been found, notwithstanding the testimonia of Michael the Syrian as to the so-called bones of Montanus, which were thought to have been destroyed at Pepouza about 555 by John of Asia. Nonetheless, the continuity of the religion shows that these three prophets did not promote their teachings without assistance. Several other figures in Montanism succeeded to power in a variety of hierarchical positions, e.g. Theodotus (Eus. H.E. 5.3.4). We shall return to such administrative heirs later in the next chapter, for the promulgation of the faith after Montanus yields some parallels with mysteries in the region.

More germane to the discussion at present is the nature of Montanist faith. What, if anything, was new about this prophecy? Christian prophets, we are told by Irenaeus in Against Heresies, had existed since apostolic times and continued in some second century church bodies (3.11.12). Seers from various cults and faiths permeated the ancient Mediterranean world. Nothing about prophecy in and of itself was unusual. However, the new revelations delivered – and the manner in which the Montanists uttered them – exacted a

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116 Cf. Mt 27:3-5 for an account of Judas’ death.
117 Tabbernee, Montanist Inscriptions, 35-47.
118 Nock, Conversion.
visceral reaction and the notice of lay and clerical Christians for three reasons: their message, mode, and claim of prophetic authority.

**CREDOS OF THE ORIGINAL MONTANISTS**

This characterization of Montanist belief and practice derives from several ancient sources, and we should begin with their message, because it is the first element – in contrast to the manner of prophecy – to be attested reliably in our ancient sources. Some scholars of Montanism begin their works with polemical writers such as Augustine since these sources provided quite colorful stories about the Three. Other historians have favored beginning with the density of information detailed by Epiphanius and Eusebius. Occasionally, one sees the possible source of the *Martyrium Polycarpi* as the opening reference on Montanism in modern works due to its mid second century dating. I favor Tertullian from North Africa and Hippolytus of Rome, as they provided the earliest discussion of the “New Prophecy” and “Phrygians,” their respective terms for the Montanists (*Marc. 3.24, 4.22; Ref. 8.19*).\(^{119}\) Indeed, there may be accurate references in later sources, but none of Eusebius’ Asian or Gallic sources are extant nor is Epiphanius’ Anti-Phrygian source available.\(^{120}\) Earlier sources including Irenaeus (*Haer.*) and the anonymous *Passio SS. Felicitatis et Perpetuae* (“The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas”) are vague concerning the specific identity of


\(^{120}\) Trevett, *Montanism*, 65.
the ‘Montanists’ allegedly described or the Three. Likewise, we cannot be certain that the Muratorian Canon referred to “Cataphrygians” who were led by Montanus, Priscilla, or Maximilla because they are not mentioned by name.

Tertullian’s perspective must always be treated with delicacy, as he is both a leading protagonist for Montanism and yet likely co-opted it toward his own designs. Nonetheless, we can verify several of his statements with other authors and cannot afford to ignore his testimony. Much of what Tertullian espoused regarding Montanism directly relates to the new rigorism the New Prophets preached, e.g. encouraging men to abstain from sexual relations with their wives (Exh. cast. 10). Hippolytus’ material corroborates this rigorism in part and is focused particularly on what he felt was the inappropriate preeminence Montanists accorded Priscilla, Maximilla, and Montanus (Ref. 8.19, 10.25). Omitting items that may derive from Roman or North African Montanism, we learn then the following core beliefs from Tertullian and to a smaller degree, Hippolytus:

- A holy minister should “administer purity of life” as purification produces harmony (Tert. Exh. cast. 10.5).
- Those who are pure can “see visions, and … “hear salutary voices” clearly (Ibid. 10.5).
- Remarriage is not permitted, and righteous people hate flesh and seek the Spirit. (Ibid. Res. 11).

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122 Tertullian, Opera IIb, ed. E. Kroymann, CSEL 70 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1942).
123 I use as criteria Tertullian’s ascription of doctrines or practices to the original ‘Three’ prophets, or oracles that are corroborated by other authors as having come from Montanus, Priscilla or Maximilla. Elsewhere he gives credit to prophecies from other individuals in the Carthaginian community. While I believe that some of these references to the Spirit also are indicative of Phrygian Montanist belief, I have chosen not to validate them here and approach what we know about Asian Montanism via Tertullian more, rather than less, conservatively. For examples of oracles uttered by other prophets, see Tertullian, An. 9.4 pp. 70-71.
• Fasts from liquid aid in purification, and additional or longer fasts than usual are to be desired and practiced. (Ibid. Jejun. 1, 12; Hip. Ref. 8.19, 10.25). 124
• God the Father is creator of all things and one part of the Trinity (Tert. Prax. 2, 13).
• New Jerusalem will descend to earth in Asia Minor, perhaps at Pepouza (Ibid. Marc. 3.24). 125
• The Paraclete can reveal knowledge through a mortal vessel who is unaware of such action and yet simultaneously in complete control of his or her senses (Ibid. 4.22). 126
• Sins of certain types should not be forgiven (Ibid. Pud. 21.7).
• Martyrdom should be sought (Ibid. Fug. 9.4). 127
• One marriage or one of abstinence is best; remarriage is wrong (Ibid. Marc. 1.29). 128

The details gleaned from these earliest sources indicate Phrygian Montanists held austere behavioral expectations, Trinitarian credos and a chiliastic belief about Zion descending to earth from on high. Most of this information from Tertullian assumes the form of apologetics for beliefs about rigorist behavior. Likewise, though antagonistic to Montanism, Hippolytus’ modest contributions from Rome attack the establishment of fasts and the reverence given to Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla as prophets. He seems unaware of the paraenetic, enthusiastic nature of Montanist revelations, and Tertullian provides only one oblique reference to the frenzied manner of prophecy. What accounts for this overwhelming focus on message, especially when ancient and modern curiosity about

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124 Tertullian, Opera I, eds. A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa, CSEL 20 (Vienna, 1890).
125 The Latin is clear here: orientali indicates east of Carthage, but not necessarily at Pepouza. See Revelation 21.1-22:5 for a description of “New Jerusalem.”
126 This belief seems reasonable to expect of Phrygian Montanists, but in truth is simply a logical argument from Tertullian.
127 Tertullian, Opera IV, eds. V. Bulhart and J.W. Ph. Borleffs, CSEL 76 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1957).
128 On assumption that the last three bullets are authentic oracles of “The Three” despite the Prophets not being mentioned by name, see oracles 7-9 in Kurt Aland, “Bemerkungen Zum Montanismus Und Zur Früchchristlichen Eschatologie,” in Kirchengeschichtliche Entwürfe, ed. Kurt Aland (Güterslohe: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1960), 143-48. Note that while Tertullian states that the Paraclete will not forgive sins of adultery and fornication, it is not clear those two sins are also the ones that the Three would have identified as unforgivable.
Phrygian Montanism has been tied largely to its rapturous and pneumatic nature? The following section will attempt to provide an answer to this curious silence.

**ECSTATIC: TO BE OR NOT TO BE**

Were someone to walk into a Catholic Church in Boston today and begin convulsing as if afflicted with St. Vitus’ Dance, with eyes rolled back in the head, uttering revelations that demanded strict new behaviors in anticipation of the imminent coming of the Christ, it is safe to say they would be noticed, and daresay, feared or ostracized. This is not to say that such individuals are not ‘Christian;’ indeed who can ultimately make that statement with any objective certitude? However, as a rather dramatic example, it does show why similar spectacles in Phrygia also drew attention, but rather than creating trepidation they inspired a devoted following (Anon. *ap. Eus. H.E. 5.16.7-8; Hip. Ref. 8.19*). As we shall see, the people of Anatolia were well acquainted with both enthusiastic prophecy and its delivery through a human vicar by a deity.

A brief aside regarding the semantic pitfalls of discussing ‘ecstasy:’ Alistair Stewart-Sykes quite rightly noted that, “The term ‘ecstatic prophecy’ … should be abandoned because it is confusing due to the various possible meanings of the term ‘ecstatic,’ because it neither describes a particular form of prophetic delivery nor an identifiable method of gaining inspiration, and because ecstasy need not involve a loss of self-control.”¹²⁹ In particular, he discusses differences between “visionary inspiration,” for example in how

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Peter experiences ecstasy and then reports what he has seen (Acts 10:9-16) and ‘enthusiastic prophecy’ whereby an individual is possessed by a deity in a rather wild state. Both types of ecstasy had parallels existing within Christianity and ‘pagan’ religion. However, the Phrygian Montanist version almost exclusively was reported as being enthusiastic and frenzied in nature, which owes more to its rural Phrygian heritage, one quite similar to the original religions of the region. More of this issue will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Our best descriptions of the manner of Montanist prophecy come from Asian writers. True, in his polemical tract Adversus Marcionem (“Against Marcion”), Tertullian stated, “that ecstasy, that is being out of one’s senses, accompanies the divine gift” of prophecy (4.22). However, this reference does not accompany a reference to the Paraclete, but an unnamed prophetess in third century Carthage. Turning then to our earliest extant Asian reference, we see Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea, in a letter to fellow bishop Cyprian of Carthage dated to 256, describing the actions of a Montanist prophetess during the crisis of Roman imperial succession in the third century, ca. 235: “A certain woman … represented herself to be [an] ecstatic [extasin]… prophetess … filled with the Holy Spirit … She used to say that she was hurrying to Judea and Jerusalem, making out as if she had come from there” (Ep. Cyp. 75.10). It is unclear whether the ecstasy was frenzied or not from Firmilian’s Latin.

130 Ibid., 4-5.
Nonetheless, about 75 years after the Three began their movement, we see our first direct witness to an Anatolian “New Prophet” in ecstasy.\textsuperscript{132}

**THE RELIABILITY QUESTION: WHAT ELSE DO WE KNOW OF MONTANISTS?**

Turning to the fourth century for details about the mode of Montanist prophecy, we encounter first Eusebius and then Epiphanius. Their accounts, like those of Tertullian, must be treated skeptically but seriously. Eusebius does claim to cite authoritative accounts from Asian clergy who confronted the New Prophecy in person, or from firsthand witnesses. We have no reason to doubt his access to such writings, but historians must remain cognizant that both Eusebius and his Asian sources were hostile to Phrygian Montanism and its perhaps intentional attempt to usurp prophetic authority from Anatolian Christian bishops and priests.

His earliest source, Apolinarius the Bishop of Hierapolis near Pepouza,\textsuperscript{133} is barely mentioned except that he wrote tracts in the early 170s against the prophets, and represents Eusebius’ only firsthand witness; however, he provides no direct quotations from Apolinarius (\textit{ap. H.E.} 4.27, 5.19.2; \textit{ap. Jer. Chron.} 20, 47). We must turn to the Anonymous to see our first emphases on Montanist use of what he pejoratively called “spurious ecstasy” practiced in a manner contrary to his opinion of ecclesiastical tradition, e.g. in a discomposed state. This source probably wrote in the 190s and had encountered Montanism in nearby Ancyra in

\textsuperscript{132} I do not include here Clement of Alexandria as his stay in Cappadocia yielded little more than a brief discussion of polemical terminology, indicating Montanists called their Asian Christian opponents, “psychics,” i.e. those focused on the body and not the spirit; see \textit{Stromata} 4.13.93.1 pp. 94-95.

\textsuperscript{133} For dating, see Tabbernee, \textit{Fake Prophecy}, 16.
the Roman province of Galatia.\textsuperscript{134} He decried the Montanist use of “frenzied speech” and cited Miltiades’ argument based on Christian writings against the employment of ecstatic prophecy (\textit{ap. H.E.} 5.16.7/14/18, 5.17.1). About the same time Tertullian was writing, Eusebius’ other major source, Apollonius, provided descriptions of Montanus’ leadership of the movement and a picture of the prophetesses’ dress and behavior. They were said to have dyed their hair, painted their eyelids, worn jewelry, used dice-boards, and committed usury (\textit{ap. H.E.} 5.18.2, 18.11).

Epiphanius may shed more interesting light on the lives of the Montanists, yet he is one of the later sources (end of the fourth century), and we cannot be sure his unidentified source either is Asian or is ancient, but I have discussed the nature of his provenance in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, he provides some of our only descriptions of Montanist rituals that may or may not be identifiable with Montanists known specifically as Tascodrougites or Artotyrites. In particular, Epiphanius associates certain practices of these so called ‘sects’ with one or more of four groups, the Cataphrygians, Priscillianists, Quintillianists, or Pepuzians, but indicates clearly in two parts of the \textit{Panarion} he “cannot say precisely” which one (48.14, 49.1). I am of the opinion that we must either reject Epiphanius based on his uncertainty about the group(s) in question, or conversely assume his honest admission of ignorance marks him to some degree as a reliable historian. This concept runs counter to Trevett’s treatment of Epiphanius as a trustworthy narrator, and reveals one of the rare flaws in her scholarship.

\textsuperscript{134} Trevett, \textit{Montanism}, 30.
I digress here pointedly to establish a precedent for my treatment of Epiphanius in contrast to that of other scholars, namely Trevett. Numerous times in her book Montanism, she references his source material without qualifying it as truly or pseudo Montanist, likely or dubiously applicable. For example, she begins a section on Quintilla (a later prophetess) with the following declaration: “It was at Pepouza that Quintilla or Priscilla encountered Christ in female form.”135 Putting aside the so-called Gnostic parallels, in this case, Trevett relates a rather unusual story from Epiphanius at face value. Yet at other times, especially when regarding the Artotyrites or Tascodrougites, she dismisses his claims due to their “stem[ming] from a later period of Montanism” or by stating “the sources concerned were late.”136

I sympathize with Trevett’s inconsistency, for when dealing with ancient and frequently incomplete accounts, scholars are often left to surmise history to the best of their abilities based on instinctual or observational conjecture. Regardless, it cannot be assumed that Epiphanius’ descriptions about groups that may have formed in the third century, e.g. the Artotyrites, indicate that such details are not applicable to the original Montanists. For my part, I am not certain that they actually did arise later, and Trevett even admits to the significant possibility that Priscilla founded Montanism. If that is the case, then Priscillianists that Epiphanius muddles with Artotyrites and Tascodrougites may in fact imply that none of these groups are derivative but instead (co-)seminal. In any case, Schepelern took

135 Ibid., 167.
136 E.g. Ibid., 2, 9.
Epiphanius’ accounts seriously enough to consider them integrally in his book on Montanism’s potentially ‘pagan’ origins, despite his ultimate conclusions.\textsuperscript{137}

What did Epiphanius have to say about Montanists and their coreligionists? With regard to the original Montanists, Epiphanius employed the use of an unidentified source, who likely hailed from Anatolia but not Phrygia, known as the Anti-Phrygian.\textsuperscript{138} He attacked Montanists’ enthusiastic and allegedly Pneumatic prophecy as novel and diabolical, but also corroborated the religion’s rigorist expectations (\textit{ap. Pan. 48.3.8-4.3, 48.9.1-10}). In addition, he – like Tertullian – provided quotes from the prophets, and these will be discussed in turn (Ibid. 48.10.1-13.8). Now among the Tascodrougite and Artotyrite Montanists, whom again Epiphanius regarded as deriving from Cataphrygians, \textit{Priscillianists}, Quintillianists, or \textit{Pepuzians}, we encounter some characteristically Phrygian rituals.

The Tascodrougites, meaning “nose-peggers,” take their name from ostensibly having placed their index fingers alongside a nostril when praying as a show of affected sorrow or righteousness, as we are told by Epiphanius. More disturbing is the account provided by Epiphanius, Jerome in his \textit{Epistula ad Marcellam} (“Letter to Marcella”), and Augustine in \textit{De haeresibus} (“On Heresies”), that Tascodrougite Montanists pierced infants with bronze needles to procure blood for the Eucharistic sacrifice, although Augustine attributes these acts to Cataphrygians and \textit{Pepuzians}. “For at a certain feast, they pierce a child, just an infant, throughout its whole body with bronze needles and procure its blood for themselves, in their devotion to sacrifice, of course” (\textit{Pan. 48.14}; cf. \textit{Marc. 41.4}, cf. \textit{Haer. 26-27}).

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 48.
Artotyrites, or “bread and cheesers” also prepared their communion in a fashion inconsistent with Gospel accounts, including dairy among the ingredients in their paschal meal. This last story comes again from Epiphanius and Augustine. “But they call themselves Artotyrians from the fact that they set forth bread and cheese in their mysteries [(mysteria)], and in this way celebrate their mysteries [(mysteria)]” (Pan. 49.2; cf. Haer. 28).

Our ancient sources have provided us with a vivid description of Montanist behavior, in substance and manner, as well as some doctrine. Inclusive to the preceding discussion has been the issue that real tension between Christian clergy in Anatolia and the Three clearly stemmed from an argument of apostolic vs. prophetic authority. We will discuss this item somewhat more in depth below. Nonetheless, the ecstatic manner, rigorist instruction, and chiliastic nature of the religion resonated strongly with Phrygians. Indeed, we are not told of the community of ordinary people resisting the prophets, again, only the clergy. Assuming Christian clergy were more apt than lay individuals to hold fast to emerging doctrine that justified their authority, we must look to the religious and cultural climate of Phrygia and Anatolia to comprehend fully the reasons for this divergent and disproportionate response.

**MONTANIST PARALLELS WITH ANATOLIAN RELIGION AND CULTURE**

To this point the discussion has focused on the New Prophecy and the general background of Anatolia and Phrygia. We turn now to the similarities found between Montanism, on the one hand, and the religions of Asia Minor overall and Phrygia.
specifically. If indeed we are to make the case in the next chapter that Montanism was a distinct, if late, mystery religion, we must first establish its ‘pagan’/Christian hybrid nature.

Before turning to specific examples, let me first address the term ‘syncretism.’ Fritz Graf reminds us that the term originated from “Christian missionary theology,” which “censur[ed] the admixture of native religious traditions to Christian belief and practice in a colonial setting.” He and I prefer the more neutral term “hybridity,” which I have typically used in this paper.139 ‘Syncretism,’ frankly, does not apply when discussing Phrygian ‘paganism’ blended with Christianity, as it implies Montanism somehow formed as a result of the Three’s deliberate identification of ‘Christian’ and ‘pagan’ concepts and practices while promoting their Pneumatic message. We do not know what the Three ultimately intended aside from claiming they served as active conduits of the Holy Spirit’s new prophecies. The issue at hand, however, is not whether or not various Christianities in the ancient world were prone to cultural assimilation of local ‘pagan’ elements; indeed they were. But we must avoid convenient categorizations that belie a more real sense of religious spectra in the ancient world generally, and in Anatolia specifically. Instead, we must ask, how extensive was the blending of ‘pagan’ and Christian within Phrygian Montanism? I intend to elucidate the proportion in the next chapter while discussing components of its mysterious nature.

Demonstrating or refuting the blended nature of Montanism has largely focused on the cult of Cybele and Attis. Schepelern wrote about Cybelene parallels in which he

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concluded ultimately that Christianity did not derive from what he calls the Phrygian cult.\textsuperscript{140} Balfour Goree, in his 1980 unpublished dissertation, asserted that Montanism was “a hybridist movement which drew upon principles found in the cult of Cybele, Phrygian Judaism and … Christianity.”\textsuperscript{141} Interestingly, no ancient source actually asserts the connection with the Great Mother directly.\textsuperscript{142} Jerome’s reference to Montanus’ “castrated” (\textit{abscisum et semivirum}) self does not include any reference to Attis, Cybele or their associated epithets (\textit{Marc.} 41.4). Why then, has this cult received such attention with regard to Montanist studies? Clearly the idea of castration is evocative enough to direct the attention of the church fathers and modern scholars toward Cybele.

Castrated individuals in that area of the ancient world were undoubtedly identified with the goddess’ priests more than with any extremely devoted Christians who likewise rid themselves of their “groin’s burden.”\textsuperscript{143} The idea that Montanus was a \textit{gallus}, a castrated priest of Cybele, figures prominently in this connection of course, as well as the idea of enthusiastic ecstasy, a quality common to both the New Prophecy and the \textit{Magna Mater} cult. Despite the fact that we do not know for sure if Montanus was castrated, to understand the origin of the assumption, we must ask, “In what way was the cult of Attis and Cybele ecstatic?” and turn to myth and ceremony to understand its frenzied nature.

\textsuperscript{141} Goree, "Cultural Bases," v.
\textsuperscript{142} Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta."
Several versions of the story of Attis and Cybele exist, and Goree chose Pausanius’ 
_Graecia Descriptio_ ("Descriptions of Greece“) as his template (7.17.9-12).\textsuperscript{144} Cybele was a godess born when Zeus’ seed spilled on the earth. She later fell in love with a handsome young man named Attis, and when he attempted to marry a mortal princess, “struck him with madness” which caused him to castrate himself thereby causing death by exsanguination. Later, with Zeus’ help, Cybele was able to resurrect Attis and establish rituals in his honor at Pessinus in Phrygia. These rituals grew into a cult with secret initiations and a related theological identity, complete with religious views on penance and the afterlife.\textsuperscript{145}

Clearly the ecstasy of the cult refers to the mindset of an individual, in this case Attis, who would emasculate himself purposely, notwithstanding Origen’s presumably rather sane choice of undergoing castration. In 204 BCE, in order to satisfy a sibylline oracle, the Romans reluctantly imported and privately promulgated the cult.\textsuperscript{146} They abhorred its bloody outcomes, as one would expect, more than the Jewish rite of circumcision, which they already considered genital mutilation. Goree notes that nonetheless the cult was practiced in isolation in Rome, if publicly in Phrygia, on March 24, the _Dies sanguinis_ or “Day of Blood.” It involved “fanatical celebrants” known as _galli_ who “imitated Attis by castrating themselves” and painfully empathized with the god’s passion.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{145} Burkert, _Ancient Mystery Cults_ , 6. The afterlife reference derives from the _taurobolium_ dated to the second century by Burkert.
\textsuperscript{146} Goree, "Cultural Bases," 39-40. To be fair, this assertion of the Romans’ reluctance to embrace the Great Mother’s rites is challenged in Roller, _In Search of God the Mother, et passim_.
\textsuperscript{147} Goree, "Cultural Bases," 45.
Where do we stand with understanding the similarities between Montanism and the cult? If Montanus was a galli, and not merely a convert from paganism, then we have a physical connection to Cybelene worship. We have a clue beyond Jerome’s reference that implies Montanus’ religious heritage. Again, in Phrygian the term Matar kubileya means “Mountain Mother,”¹⁴⁸ and its linguistic relation to the name of the Latin noun montanus should be obvious. Perhaps “Montanus” was an epithet given to him as a servant of Cybele. While we cannot be certain, the likelihood is increased due to other connections with the cult. A statement I have already made is that the enthusiastic nature of public rituals (and perhaps private mysteries) of the Magna Mater conveys clear linkages with Montanist prophetic style.

Hippolytus provided perhaps a second clue in his mention of “the teachings of demons,” or didaskaliai daimoniōn, which might be regarded as an indictment of Montanus’ former ‘pagan’ priesthood (Comm. Dan. 4.20). It is commonly understood that in the ancient world, many Christians believed that the ‘pagan’ gods were nothing more than satanic spirits in a polytheistic guise. Hippolytus could have referred to Montanus’ oracles as the teachings of a lunatic, a liar, a diabolically possessed individual, even a foolish layman, but he connected them with diabolically ‘pagan’ doctrines. I will admit that an argument could be made that Hippolytus’ reference applied to the Montanist community of Rome, but if so, why connect demonic teaching with, for example, Montanus’ institution of a fast (nesteian) on the Sabbath, especially since the Three hailed from Anatolia? It also is possible that these

“teachings” refer to the “Holiness and Justice” god worshipped in Phrygia, since we know from the Anti-Phrygian that Montanus called the more excellent man “just,” who will shine more brightly than the sun, while the “saved” man will outshine only the moon (ap. Epip. Pan. 48.10). These teachings may also refer to special fasts undertaken by Cybelene worshippers in preparation for consumption of a sacred meal.149

These connections primarily concern the person of Montanus. What about Montanist practices not focused specifically on the prophets? Schepelern noted other similarities based primarily on Epiphanius’ accounts about the variously called Montanists known as Artotyrites, Tascodrougites, Priscillianists, Quintillianists, or Pepuzians. Women were given pride of place as priestesses of the Great Mother, similarly to Priscilla, Maximilla, and Quintilla, though again, early Christians accorded prominence to women as well.150 Part of Cybelene processions included seven weeping virgins dressed in white who carried torches, and Epiphanius described a similar spectacle witnessed among Montanists: “In their church seven virgins with lamps often come in, if you please, dressed in white, to prophesy to the people. They deceive the congregation with a show of some sort of inspiration and make them all weep by shedding tears and pretending to mourn for humankind, as though to encourage them to the mourning of penitence.” Lastly, Schepelern matched tattooing practices in Cybelene worship with Montanist rituals of pricking infants with bronze needles (see Epip. 49.2; cf. 48.14-15). Strangely enough, Schepelern concluded, based on a rather tenuous connection in epigraphy between Attis and the Phrygian god Lairbenos, that

149 Cf. 1 Tim 4:1.
150 Trevett, Montanism, 9.
Montanism did not derive from the Great Mother cult since the two religions represented “contrary views on the subject of penance” which I can only assume, not reading German myself, that he determined from reading Tertullian, a *North African* Montanist.\(^\text{151}\)

Similarities abound in other cults in Anatolia that employed the use of oracles, especially the cult of Apollo. Aside from the fact that sometimes Cybele and Apollo were worshipped together in Montanus’ likely home of origin, Phrygian Mysia, it is well known from antiquity that Apollo was believed to “possess” his prophetic vicars, the Sibyls, and delivered oracles through them.\(^\text{152}\) Daunton-Fear discussed the possibility that Montanus may have been a priest of Apollo before his Pneumatic prophesying began, using the *Dialexis* as his source.\(^\text{153}\) Mitchell has stressed the importance of oracular shrines of Apollo at Claros and Didyma in the province of Asia, and noted that the god was believed to have taken human form at Didyma. In Phrygia at Çavdarli, a statue of Phoebus (Apollo) has been found that attests to the many oracles received by the dedicant. We also see reference to an Apollonic shrine in Mallus of Cilicia and an Asclepian shrine at Abonoteichus (Luc. *Alex.* 10, 29, 36).\(^\text{154}\) To be fair, *Alexander* was a satire, but the prominence and hold of oracular religions in Anatolia, according to Lane Fox and Trevett,\(^\text{155}\) should not be underestimated when considering their possible influence on Asian Montanism. Indeed, Eusebius’ source Apollonius tells us of dice boards used by the Three (*ap. H.E.* 5.18.11), and as Mitchell

\(^{152}\) Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta."
\(^{153}\) Daunton-Fear, "Ecstasies," 650.
\(^{155}\) Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 241-61; Trevett, *Montanism*, 78.
relates, “In almost every city of the southwest, through Lycia and Pisidia, a dice oracle stood in the civic centre to be used for routine consultation [of the divine].”

Little needs to be restated regarding Christian beliefs present in Phrygian Montanism – they are quite prevalent – but an account of why Christians in Phrygia saw familiar scriptural doctrines in Montanism bears more than brief mention. The Montanist movement emphasized such Christian concepts that the Paraclete promised by Jesus had come, the notion of apocalyptic expectation regarding the New Jerusalem was to be fulfilled imminently, and of course, that the Holy Spirit was still interacting in human affairs after the apostolic era through prophecy (Jn 14:26). Familiarity with holy writings and some of its chief characters give us the best understanding of Anatolian Montanist Christianity, and why when the movement arrived in Rome and Carthage, it carried mostly Christian aspects rather than ‘pagan’ ones.

Paul outlined the charism, or “gift,” of prophecy in his first Letter to the Corinthians (12:4-11). Yet when Montanus began preaching, no Bible had been codified and a wide array of Christian writings circulated in the Roman Empire and other lands. Some would indeed eventually gain the imprimatur of the official churches (Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Slavonic Orthodox). Certainly Christians of the time would have had access to the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John (where we see the Paraclete mentioned) and the Apocalypse (Rev), the letters of Paul and epistles attributed to other apostles; however, they would have been familiar with other works such as the Pastor Hermae and the additional

156 Mitchell, Anatolia, I, 13.
books of *Esdras* (Ezra). Some scholars, such as Pagels, have even suggested the Montanists embodied Gnostic tendencies or rose up in refutation of them, and indeed the people of Pepouza would certainly have been exposed to non-canonical, so-called Gnostic gospels (cf. angel worship in Colossians); however, neither Montanist practices nor oracular sayings seem to imply a fixation either way with Gnostic thought, and such comparisons are simply specious.\(^{158}\) The body of scripture available, as will be shown, provided ample holy evidence for the acceptance of absorption of Montanism in Phrygia by Christian *ecclesia* (“churches”) there.

One of the chief criticisms levied against Phrygian Montanism by later church fathers was the high role of women (Epip. *Pan.* 49.3, 51.33, 79.1). Ironically, despite Paul’s often caustic and apparently misogynist precepts, much exists in his letters, which the Prophetesses and others would have accepted as justification for their spiritual practices. That Paul valued the role of women in his ministry is difficult to dispute entirely, given his Letter to the Romans in which he asks the Christian community there to show respect to one of his assistants, Prisca, who helped save his life (16:3-4). Furthermore he commends a deaconess name Phoebe to the community named in Romans (16:1-2). In his Letter to the Galatians he declares that there is no distinction between men and women in Christ (3:28). Even more compelling, in the first pastoral Epistle to Timothy, which most New Testament scholars actually ascribe not to Paul but to another writer of the second century, the author discusses

\(^{158}\) Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, 85. Cf. the mention of angel worship in Col 2:18, which has been associated with the practices of some Gnostic groups.
the behavior of a deaconess, which attests to the importance of women in Christian ministry after the first century (3:8-13).159

Now while Paul does admonish women to be silent in church, there is no evidence among the oracles concerning the Three that women delivered their supposed revelations during ecclesial liturgies (notwithstanding my vivid hypothetical example above of a “prophet” in a modern Catholic church in urban America). In fact, one could argue that the frenzied, enthusiastic nature of the delivery of the oracles indicates they could have spewed forth at any time and place. If outside the church, and people were standing around the prophetesses as surely they were, then their activity did not contradict Paul’s stricture. If, however, the utterances did come forth in a church, perhaps asserting the voice was really that of the Paraclete or God served as a legalistic justification that the women were not actually speaking. While this is speculation, the idea of reconciling religious behavior with scriptural references is hardly new, and one can see how Montanism found a ready home in the Anatolian Christian communities. In either case, the fact that women’s roles were diminishing in the second century among several Christian groups suggests that the continued role of women in high positions in Montanism could reflect either or both primitive Christian or ‘pagan’ parallels.

Another explanation of why the local Christians would have accepted Montanist prophecies may come from Origen. He writes in Contra Celsum (“Against Celsus”) that part and parcel of some – in his words – ‘Christian’ prophecies were words “unintelligible, and

frenzied, and totally obscure, whose meaning no intelligent person could discover” (7.9). The character of these words matches New Testament descriptions of the practice of speaking in tongues, or *glossais*, often called *glossolalia*. Again, Paul described several spiritual gifts, or *charismata*, in his first Letter to the Corinthians, including the practices of prophecy and *glossolalia*, both in the same verse (12:10). Likewise, Eusebius tells of the widespread practice of *charismata* during the period of Montanism’s rise (*H.E.* 5.3.4). Paul, later in the Letter, instructs the Christians there to “be eager to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues” (12:39). It would hardly matter to many Christians in Phrygia that Paul adds in the next verse only to do so “decently and in order” (12:40).

Trevett discusses another scriptural possibility linked with Eusebius’ account, viz. that the Montanists claimed a place in the line of *prophetic*, not apostolic, succession, which was particularly linked with Asia Minor. This claim, if real, could of course directly challenge the authority of the clergy in Phrygian Christian churches. In Acts, people with the gift of prophecy are mentioned in connection with Paul (21:10). Following Eusebius and Trevett’s analysis, the prophetic gift passed from the daughters of the apostle Phillip – and a man named Agabus – to a man name Quadratus. He was believed to have written a letter to the Emperor Hadrian in the mid-120s about the harassment of Christians. The line then is purported to have passed from him to Ammia of Philadelphia. The Anonymous implies that Montanus or the Three claimed prophetic succession from Ammia (*Eus. H.E.* 5.17.3-4). If

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161 See Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 28-29, on the Syriac link of ‘Qr’ys.’
the people of Philadelphia and nearby Phrygia commonly accepted such a line, then the Prophets’ sacred inspiration may well have seemed completely reasonable to the community. However, that the Three even felt they needed to assert a line of prophetic succession suggests that the clergy in Anatolia found their manner of prophecy abnormal – I would suggest ‘pagan’ – and the New Prophets had to provide an apology of Christian provenance to counter them.

Further analysis of scripture, especially the book of Revelation and other apocalyptic writings, suggests additional parallels. D. H. Williams argued that “an amalgamate of Christian apocalypticism and native Phrygian enthusiasm” provided a climate conducive to Montanism’s rise. He discusses how, according to Eusebius, the area had experienced earthquakes and a great plague under Marcus Aurelius, ca. 161-180 (H.E. 4.13.1-7) and how natural disasters figure prominently in increasing eschatological expectations among people. One can imagine the people of Phrygia were emotionally ready for deliverance from such calamity and the prophets’ oracles would provide just that.

Apocalypses by their very nature refer to the end of the world and describe in great but often obscure detail how the terminus will be reached. Williams says chiliastic movements often involve a terrestrial culmination, not one in the heavens or in paradise. As

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162 On succession of line, see ibid., 34, and Trevett, Montanism, 33-36.
such, the events described in Revelation seem to embody not only several of Williams’
criteria, but also some specifically related to people in Asia, notably within Philadelphia.  

I mentioned Philadelphia above with regard to the concept of prophetic succession
and the person of Ammia. Yet its importance cannot be overstated with regard to the question
at hand of parallels with Montanism. At first glance, a claim that Jerusalem would descend
onto a plain in ancient Turkey seems laughable, and the oracle provided by Epiphanius from
Priscilla/Quintilla, equally baseless (Pan. 49.1). Unless one carefully reads the portion of
Revelation directed to the church at Philadelphia, which no doubt the Prophets had, he or she
might miss an important promise: “I will write on you [Philadelphia] the name of my God,
and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes out of heaven” (Rev 3:12,
cf. 2 Esd 9:26, 10:27). The use of the name of the city Philadelphia likely does not simply
mean a geographic location, but the Christian community located there. What if the
community or some of its members moved, as was not uncommon in this period, either
because of localized persecution or massive earthquakes in the region? To the west is the
Aegean Sea and to the south, is the Mediterranean. Due east, however, is Phrygia.  

Tabbernee suggests that Philadelphia represented an ecclesiastical district known in
later Montanism. The district may likely have developed at some point from the work of the
Three’s spiritual progeny. One of its chief leaders, known as a koinonos, or “associate” may
have resided 100 km to the northeast, according the location and inscription on his
tombstone. Such a distance suggests that Philadelphia held a position of nominal diocesan

164 Ibid., 335.
165 On migrations see Firmilian, Ep. Cyp., 75.10.
importance, not geographic. Thus, when Tabbernee announced in 2003 the discovery of the
two holy cities of Pepouza and Tymion east-northeast of Philadelphia, a major geographic
connection was formed among the three cities.\textsuperscript{166} By conservative estimate, using a map
published by Tabbernee (see figs. 3, 4), Pepouza lies not more than 75km away, probably
less. Thus multiple links between Philadelphia and Montanism become apparent:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map2.png}
\caption{Asia Minor\textsuperscript{167}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{167} Tabbernee, \textit{Fake Prophecy}, taken from map on inside back cover (left).
Figure 4. West-Central Phrygia

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168 Ibid., taken from map on inside back cover (right).
one of prophetic succession via Ammia; a scriptural one via Revelation; an ecclesiastical one via the tombstone of a later Montanist leader; and a geographic one since the findings regarding Pepouza have been confirmed.169

More broadly, the links between Christianity and Montanism, often taken for granted, become more apparent when connecting them with holy writings. Likewise, the assumption that Montanism arose within Christianity, while attractive and partially correct, derives from scholarship that glosses over a simple, yet essential point about the character of early Phrygian Montanism. Simply because Montanism found a home in the Phrygian Christian community does not prove the axiom that it did not import substantial ‘pagan’ influences into its general operation as a movement, which Hirschmann has asserted functioned like a cultic organization.170 That it contained beliefs and practices derived from both ‘pagan’ and Christian sources compels us to recognize its hybridist substance.

Regardless, the chief aim of this chapter has not been to show Montanism as either Christian or ‘pagan’ in origin, though I hope I have made that argument intrinsically. Instead, the question has been why Montanism emerged in Phrygia. The links with Anatolian culture and religion stand on their own. There is but one remaining point to make, and that is a response to the question, “Could Montanism not have arisen in Rome or Carthage just as easily as Phrygia?” Perhaps, but I think these possibilities are unlikely. The apocalyptic expectation present in Asia Minor diffused into Phrygia easily and, as has been mentioned,

169 Tabbernee and Lampe, Pepouza.
this was the hub of *enthusiastic* and paraenetic ecstatic religion in the ancient Mediterranean world. Neither Tertullian’s rigorism nor Rome’s increasing consolidation of ecclesiastical power would have led to the emergence of the New Prophecy in their respective milieus. We also should refrain from looking at Montanism in the forms in which it was transferred to Carthage or Rome, which appears from our sources to have shed its Phrygian underclothes while retaining Christian vestments. As we shall see in the next chapter, the lack of mystery religions deriving in the west, with Mithraism perhaps excepted, mandated that a new, hybridist mystery religion such as Montanism, almost by definition would form in the eastern Roman Empire.
CHAPTER 3: THE MYSTERIES OF MONTANISM

CHRISTIAN, ‘PAGAN’, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Before discussing Phrygian Montanism as a mystery, it is essential to acknowledge
the status of Christianity within the broader context of such religious cults in the Roman
Empire. Christianity, of course, preceded and anticipated Montanism, and despite an
exemption from “mystery cult” status granted to it by several scholars – e.g. F. Cumont, W.
Burkert, and S. I. Johnston – this revolutionary sect deriving from Judaism certainly was a
“mystery.”¹⁷¹ None of the works by the historians just noted places the Nazarenes, as they
were originally called, in their list of mystery cults/religions.¹⁷² I have treated Christianity as
a mystery in the preceding chapters without much explanation as to my position, which
should now be clear. While scholars are divided on the issue, I believe we must treat
Christianity as a mystery despite its distinctive elements that support its extraction from such
a typology.¹⁷³ In that vein, when we construct a Venn diagram of Christianity and ‘pagan’
mysteries such as the cult of Cybele and Attis, we can see in their intersection compelling but

¹⁷¹ Franz Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism (New York: Dover Publications, 1956); Burkert,
Ancient Mystery Cults; Johnston, ed., Religions. These scholars simply omit Christianity from these
publications.
“Galileans” used by the emperor Julian in Against the Galileans.
¹⁷³ I am of the opinion that Christianity was a mystery religion and yet transcends the concept. While it satisfies
the criteria I put forth earlier in this thesis, marked differences separate it from the others. For example, it
focused on a living man whereas the others focused on a mythical god(dess), e.g. Jesus vs. Dionysus or Isis.
Initiatory and mystery acts, while they may have been based on sanguinary stories, did not involve blood as in
the cult of Cybele and Attis, or Mithraism (taurobolia were part of both in later stages). Secret rituals like
baptism or celebration of the Eucharist were not conducted privately for secrecy’s sake, but for safety from
Jewish and Roman authorities. Contrast Christian practices with ‘pagan’ mystery rituals, which were conducted
generally in secret but without fear that authorities would punish these mystai if discovered (e.g. several
emperors were initiates).
opaque evidence of a hybridist mystery religion, and Montanism neatly exemplifies it. The New Prophecy, for all its Christian trappings, reflects mysterious elements present in both ‘pagan’ and Christian mysteries, and at the same time, novelties not present in either.

One of my intentions in this chapter is to demonstrate how slippery a task it is to categorize Montanism solely as ‘pagan,’ ‘Christian,’ ‘heretical,’ or any other type of specific faith or spurious offshoot. Religion does not lend itself to such tidy delineations, because its lines are almost always blurry and the ancient world is no exception. For example, while Christian denominations in America represent a spectrum of beliefs and practices that might include such labels as “Presbyterian” or “Baptist,” each one can be subdivided and simultaneously extended to overlap with other representations of Christianity. Furthermore, what is voodoo other than West African polytheism mixed with Catholicism? Montanism represents a nexus among several religions and clearly exhibits the qualities of a mystery.

William Tabbernee recently has summarized some popular scholarly theories about Montanism, stating that it derived from roots ‘pagan,’ Jewish, eschatological, charismatic, rigorist, Gnostic or anti-Gnostic.¹⁷⁴ In his words, “Montanism must not be characterized as a mixture of Phrygian paganism and Christianity, a Jewish-Christian sect, a pro- or anti-‘Gnostic’ heresy, an exaggerated form of apocalyptic Christianity, or an attempt to preserve or restore the original form of Christianity. Montanism should be defined as an innovative prophetic movement intent on bringing Christianity into line with what it believed to be the

ultimate ethical revelation of the Holy Spirit through the New Prophets.” Some modern Christians described by Trevett probably would agree with Tabbernee, thinking of it as an ancient form of Protestantism (even if they do not use that term *per se*).  

None of these ideas are new, but neither have they been accepted or rejected by scholarly consensus. I mention this by way of reminding the reader that Montanism, like other ancient religions, manifested itself in various forms across the Roman Empire. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the ‘Montanism’ that centers at the heart of this thesis must be clearly bracketed before analyzing it. Though our ancient sources and modern scholars frequently outline categories of Montanists while setting forth their effusive arguments, conglomerations do form and have led to misconceptions regarding the Phrygian Montanists, especially among patristic writers.

**EARLY PHRYGIAN MONTANISM: DELINEATION AND COMPOSITION**

Tabbernee notes that Montanism spread to almost every sector of the Roman Empire. It is essential then that I clarify the geographic and chronological limits of the specific incarnation of the “New Prophecy” asserted herein to be a hybridist mystery religion. While I have used Tertullian and Hippolytus, who wrote from North Africa and Rome respectively, to describe some of the oracles of the prophets, I am focusing the scope of my

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175 Ibid., 424.  
research on Phrygia. Evidence from Anatolia and other parts of the empire undoubtedly figure in the discussion, but should not be taken to imply an assertion, for example, that Montanism in Rome or North Africa resembled the faith of Phrygian Montanists. Secondly, since I am limiting my discussion to the late second and first half of the third centuries, my argument will be forced here into the realm of circumstantial evidence; however, the arguments of scholars on Montanism are themselves rife with speculation. Modern scholars have relegated some Montanist groups to the margins of the discussion because the sources were “late.” I disagree with this premature assumption as will be shown. Yet I am not suggesting that a distinct Montanist mystery religion absolutely and without question dominated its Phrygian epiphany, only that viewing it as such provides another vehicle for historians to understand it. This is consistent with other scholars’ methodological treatment of the New Prophecy. For example, some have suggested that Montanism should be viewed as an attempt to restore charisma or eschatology or Ebionite aspects to Christianity. Seeing this religion as a hybrid mystery broadens rather than limits scholarly assumptions, which frequently derive from arguments from silence as much as from historical evidence.

Hence this chapter will focus on what is known about the Montanists from polemical sources and how that information should be treated, especially regarding the possible origins of the names of so-called Montanist sub-sects. The groups in question may in fact not be divergent entities at all, but either incorrectly or additionally applied terms for what were in

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178 Ibid., 1. The authors imply, I think correctly, that Phrygian Montanism did not spread to other parts of the Roman Empire.
179 Trevett, Montanism, 9.
180 See Tabbernee, Trevett, et alia.
fact Phrygian Montanists or evolutionary heirs of the Three. Indeed, the question of who founded the New Prophecy bears directly on this issue. An alternate suggestion of its founding not by Montanus will be addressed in context, followed by an argument for considering the ‘sub-sects’ as essentialist versions of Phrygian Montanism. Next will be a brief discussion of the nature of religions that derived from officially sanctioned State worship (e.g. worship of the pantheon, Judaism), followed by a final analysis of Phrygian Montanism’s components that compel its consideration as a late antique mystery religion. Key elements will be ancient descriptions of Montanism as a mystery, elucidation of its doctrines and especially rituals, and its dual ‘pagan’/Christian status.

The nature of bias with respect to Montanism is no different, notwithstanding some exceptions, than with any ancient topic. Some of the sources that might be the most revealing are not extant or not contemporary. In the former case, the Anonymous, Apollonius, and Hippolytus tell us that the Montanists authored several books (ap. Eus. H.E. 5.17.1; ap. ibid. 5.18.1; Ref. 8.19), and of course I already have mentioned Tertullian’s lost De ecstasi, which contained in its seventh book a refutation of Apollonius’ work against the Montanists (ap. ibid. 5.18). So we have little from the Phrygian Montanists except some inscriptions and none from the second century appear to contain any definitive Montanist lexica (e.g. names of the prophets, “New Prophecy,” or koinonos, i.e. “Montanist regional bishops”).

181 Clement, Protrepticus in Clement of Alexandria, ed. G. W. Butterworth, LCL 92 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 2.11-123. Descriptions of the mysteries by ancient sources, including Christianity, tend to contain certain terms, such as mysteria (“mysteries”) or orgia (“secret rites”).
182 For these terms and the lack thereof, see Tabbernee, Montanist Inscriptions and Tabbernee, "Montanist Regional Bishops," 249-80.
contemporary polemical sources for the most part are only quoted through later sources such as Eusebius, Epiphanius and Filastrius. The last, Filastrius (or “Filaster” d. between 387-397), was a heresiologist like Epiphanius and Irenaeus, serving as bishop of Brixia. He offered little more than Epiphanius other than treating the ‘later’ sects as separate entities and probably, though not certainly, used Epiphanius as a source.183

This dearth of specifics about adherents and the dogma of the New Prophecy in Phrygia have left open a door for wild speculation about the Montanists by the later ancient sources, such as the cannibalizing of infants. Indeed, that specific charge was leveled by the same person who first called the New Prophets by the name Montanoi (“Montanists”), Cyril of Jerusalem (Cat. 16.8).184 Cyril died ca. 386, so we can see that about 200 years passed between the rise of the prophecy and his coining of the term “Montanists” to describe the group. Since the charges of infanticide are probably fabrications (Jer. Marc. 41.4),185 can we also assume that just because Cyril dubbed followers of the New Prophecy “Montanists” that it was the most appropriate or well-matched term? In fact Hippolytus, one of our earliest extant sources, levels his charges against the two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, prior to attacking Montanus, collectively calling the Three loosely by the name “Phrygians” (Ref. 8.19, 10.25). I will return to this issue regarding the precedence of women below.

The point is that we not only have problems characterizing the Montanists, but our lack of pro-Montanist and early anti-Montanist sources make it difficult to know even what

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185 See several other doubtful references to infanticide in Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*, 350-51, *et passim*. 
best to call them. Such a problem bears repeating because it directly affects how certain scholars view the nature of this religious group. Historical study of ancient religion and philosophy in the Roman Empire is fraught with uncertainty, and the fact that the term Montanism has come down to the present as the name of this ‘heresy’ is perhaps little more than chance or a preference for patriarchal reference. The paucity and bias of evidence on this movement – relative to that which is available, for example, on the Protestant Reformation – is complicated further by the slippery task of dividing fact from fiction and science from faith, especially when Patristic authors dominate in quantity among the ancient sources amicable to Christianity, and perhaps among all late antique sources on the subjects of Roman religion and cults.

I will deliberately divert the reader’s attention at this point to a discussion of what names we can consider as legitimately pertaining to Phrygian Montanism and those we cannot. This issue bears directly on what latitude there is for considering supposed sub-sects in a discussion of the components of a Phrygian Montanist mystery religion. Earlier we saw that the Jews called the first Christians “Nazarenes,” and the fourth century emperor, Julian the Apostate, called them “Galileans.” Suetonius called Jesus, the founder of the faith, “Chrestus,” (Claud. 25.4) an obvious corruption of the Greek Christos, the term used in Luke (2.26, 9:20). So we can see that originally, the practitioners of this new movement within Judaism were called by geographic nomenclature. It is doubtful, however, that followers of Jesus referred to themselves so blandly, and equally unlikely that he referred to his message

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as “Jesusism,” nor called his followers “Jesusites.” Instead, we see a progression. The leader of the movement, in this case, Jesus, preached a nameless message, or perhaps something later referred to by his followers as the “good news.” Another name of uncertain origin was “the Way” or “the Way of the Lord” (Acts 9:2, 18:25, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22). Their detractors then described them by their locale or people of origin, e.g. Nazarenes, and finally, at Antioch, outsiders probably called the gentile Christians there after the name of their founder, in this case, Christianoi (Acts 11:26), taken from Jesus’ Greek epithet Christos or “the anointed one.” This last name eventually became the dominant term.

So what parallels emerge when we follow the same pattern with Montanists? The founder(s) of the movement referred to it as the “(New) Prophecy” – which of course could be “good news” – and their enemies called them after the race “Phrygians” or a similar “Cataphrygians.” The logical conclusion is that the followers called themselves Montanists, Priscillianists, or Maximillianists. To my knowledge, no group is attested as the Maximillianists, leaving only the first two. This begs the question, if there was a group called Priscillianists (at the beginning!), could it have been coequal to Montanists or even superseded them, and if so, why? Epiphanius, our first source, and thus admittedly late, essentially equated “Cataphrygians” and “Tascodrougitans” with the “Montanists” (Pan. 48.14). Separately, but adjacently, he merges “Priscillianists” with the “Quintillianists,” “Pepuzians,” and “Artotyrites” (49.1). Since Cyril and Epiphanius both wrote in the latter half of the fourth century, are we accurate in referring to the followers of the Three as

Montanists? Trevett noted that “Catholicism thought in terms of heresies with a nameable and male head.” She also mentions that Origen, in a commentary on 1 Corinthians (14.36), “argued strongly against the activities of Montanist prophetesses without showing interest in Montanus at all.”\(^\text{188}\) While she ultimately believes that Montanus was at least a head if not the head, she accords tremendous significance to Priscilla’s influence.\(^\text{189}\)

Why is this important? Aside from the issue about who founded the religion and that such a person may have been female in an increasingly patriarchal Christian world, it suggests that we do not know with certainty what any of the groups mentioned by Epiphanius and noted in other authors’ works et passim distinctly believed, practiced, taught, wrote, etc. In Trevett’s own words, “In fact little tends to be known of most of the groups, beyond the name and brief, sometimes bizarre, descriptions which an ancient author provides.”\(^\text{190}\) Thus I cannot help but be surprised that Tabbernee and Trevett virtually without reservation write of the alternate groups Epiphanius mentions as merely sub-sects and the chief reason being that he and other sources on them are late. This is especially notable since Tabbernee states that “as early as the second century, there was a tendency for Montanists to name themselves, or be named, after local leaders.”\(^\text{191}\)

It seems clear that the groups Epiphanius mentions alongside Montanism and Priscillianism – since they cannot be proven to be separate entities – are worthy of further consideration as devotees of some predominate, even original, form of Phrygian Montanism.

\(^{188}\) Trevett, Montanism, 159; Origen, Fragments of Commentary on 1 Cor. in JTS 9 (1908).
\(^{189}\) Trevett, Montanism, 162.
\(^{190}\) Trevett, "Fingers up Noses," 258.
\(^{191}\) Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, 330.
For example, the Tascodrogitans took their name, according to Epiphanius, from the *Phrygian* language, not Latin or Greek (*Pan.* 48.14). The other names should be self-explanatory in their connection to Phrygia, with the exception perhaps of the Artotyrites, but nonetheless Epiphanius equated them with both Priscillianists and Pepuzians, whose attachments to the region and what is being called Montanism should be obvious. In addition, it almost goes without saying that there exists a very real possibility that the names of supposed sub-sects could in fact simply be nicknames for Phrygian Montanists! In the present day we see the same with respect to the eponym “Mormon,” which is not the official name of the Church of Latter Day Saints, but only a name derived from their holy book.

A counter example also is relevant here. Rex Butler recently argued for the inclusion of the anonymous *Passio Perpetuae* in the body of work in North Africa that represents pro-Montanist literature there, viz. the works of Tertullian. He believes that because Montanism was accepted in the West, the influence of Phrygian cults on the forms of the religion that transferred to North Africa as well as Rome could not have been substantial since Christians in North Africa focused on the Pneumatic influence of the Paraclete and not the extremely enthusiastic aspects of it.\(^\text{192}\) Indeed, the version of the faith in that region, it appears, was so congruous with the local proto-catholic church there that the so-called “Tertullianists” did not see themselves as separate.\(^\text{193}\) In other words, the Montanism that transferred to North Africa


only took its Christian portions, leaving behind the ‘pagan’ mysteries seemingly present in the New Prophecy. Tabbernee has said as much in his most recent publication.\textsuperscript{194}

**SEPARATE BUT EQUAL OR INEQUIVALENT?**

Most of the mysteries derived from the common, civic worship of a famous or notorious god and/or goddess, where the parent religion yielded a new cult, e.g. Judaism begat Christianity, Zoroastrianism begat Mithraism (at least the latter case is likely). The generation of such cults often begins with moving beyond a set of beliefs or myths about a god or goddess to participation in specialized rites and secret *mysteria* devoted to one or more deities. Conversely, the ‘pagan’ pantheons of various civilizations of the ancient world often simply represented a class of ruling deities to whom homage and worship were owed to avoid divine wrath or to secure divine favor. Classic examples proliferate in Homeric writings in which sacrifice to a patron or local deity occurs before setting sail, engaging in battle, etc. To be clear, Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia was no mystery cult act, but an extreme act within the confines of civic Achaean religion. Yet the *taurobolium* enacted in the worship of the *Magna Mater* and her consort was indeed a cult act that developed in the later stages of a cult that originated in the civic worship of the Anatolian Great Mother in the early first millennium BCE.\textsuperscript{195} So to understand whence Montanism

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\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 131.

derived, its forebear religious influences must be described beforehand. Let us start with Christianity like most other scholars who have undertaken research on the New Prophecy.

I start here because the question of origin dramatically affects assumptions about Phrygian Montanism. Most assume that it began within Christianity and grafted ‘pagan’ effusions to itself that had little to do with doctrine or belief. Consequently, historians have drawn conclusions along that line, attacking the religion as merely a ‘pagan’ influenced sect operating within ecclesiastical contexts. Patristic sources, of course, used derogatory terminology to describe it, saying it was “demonically inspired.” By now it should be apparent that I have approached this religion from neither a ‘pagan’ nor a Christian window, but looked at it through a double pane of the two. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I looked at the scholarly consensus for what determines a “mystery” and placed the various rituals, doctrines and operational descriptions (e.g. of itinerant “prophets” collecting money) into a matrix that cross listed parallels with known mystery religions. What emerged was neither predominantly Christian nor ‘pagan.’

My inspiration for this line of inquiry actually was Christine Trevett, who ironically favors a Christian provenance for Phrygian Montanism. In her 1995 article, colorfully titled “Fingers up Noses and Pricking with Needles,” she makes reference to several subsects of the New Prophecy in Phrygia, citing evidence from Epiphanius, Filastrius, et al. as would be expected. Yet rather than seeing these groups as divergent from original Phrygian Montanism, I considered that such divergence among so-called ‘heretics’ was not

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196 Trevett, Montanism, 9-10.
197 Trevett, "Fingers up Noses," 258-69.
the result of Christian infighting, but that such a plethora of ‘pagan,’ Jewish, and Christian influences pervaded the region. If Phrygian Montanism was wholly Christian in nature, would not the “oracles” received by the Three and their successors logically guide its development toward a single eschatological and rigorist vision rather than toward a variety of rituals and dogmas that evoke images of a hybridist mystery religion? In the next section, I hope to show that one cannot equate Phrygian Montanism solely with developing Christian faith in the second century; neither can it be seen as a predominate outgrowth of ‘paganism.’

**MONTANISM AS A MYSTERY RELIGION**

We do not have the luxury as historians and scholars of religion to discount sources because they do not fit our particular assumptions. Trevett, in critiquing Heine’s omission of nearly 100 oracles collected by Labriolle, wrote in 1996, “… they [the oracles] have sometimes been too readily dismissed [by Heine] as trivial, lacking in the *gravitas* [emphasis Trevett] of scriptural pronouncements or meaningless. I disagree. *Such judgments are unworthy of serious scholarship* [emphasis mine], for they fail … to take account of the fact that the material has come to us in attenuated form, subject to redaction, wrenched from the saying’s original context and used in the propaganda war which was being waged.”

I quote Trevett above to make a point about how we treat some of our later sources, because our information about the so called sub-sects of Phrygian Montanism already discussed does not mean that the groups themselves are late, unaltered, confused,

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exaggerated or even divergent. To that point, I readily admit that some sources are not fully trustworthy and for that reason, among others, my argument is based on a perspective of viewing Phrygian Montanism as a mystery religion rather than an a priori statement about what it was. We cannot ultimately know for sure. However, except where it is clear by scholarly consensus that one of our sources was clearly incorrect or his authenticity is highly dubious, I will refer to especially Epiphanius, Filastrius, Jerome and Augustine in this argument for Phrygian Montanism as a hybridist mystery, in addition of course to the Phrygian Montanist beliefs I noted in the previous chapter courtesy of Tertullian. The Anonymous and Apolinarius, sources contemporary with early Phrygian Montanism (and probably with at least one or more of the Three), I plan to reference not as fourth century extracts from Eusebius, but second century authors found preserved within Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica, in keeping with the methods used by most modern Montanist scholars.199

In the first chapter of this thesis, I provided a list of elements central to the mysteries. However, I did not include an exhaustive list of mysteries because not all are relevant here. My intention is to give a snapshot of the body of evidence and groups that could be discussed. Indeed, the question of whether or not ‘pagan’ cults affected Phrygian Montanism really is not in question, though my reading of Montanist scholarship implies a considerable, and I think flawed, opinion that such influences on it were negligible or insignificant.200 For example, Stephen Benko argues convincingly for Montanism’s partially ‘pagan’ roots in a

199 Cf. multiple works cited in this paper by Freeman, Tabbernee, Trevett, et al.
chapter on Montanism and the Great Mother, yet seems reluctant to embrace fully that teleological truism, stating that “Montanism was a Christian movement, although perhaps a deviant one.”201 I am perplexed by such unusual and antithetical conclusions. As I will show, Phrygian Montanism reflects a sampling of elements from different mysteries and cults, both Christian and ‘pagan.’ Without evaluating what the founders may have thought their movement was, let us determine the nature of its characteristics by evaluating each criterion considered to be essential to classification as a mystery in turn, beginning with the promise of union with the deity.

**Union with the Divine and Ecstasy**

One of the first things we learn of the New Prophecy is that Montanus, a recent convert to Christianity, came from the village of Ardabau in Phrygian Mysia and, according to the Anonymous, began to experience numinous possession and ecstasy (ap. Eus. H.E. 5.16.7). Much rightly has been made of the issue of ecstasy in Montanist scholarship – better termed among Phrygian Montanists as *paraenetic enthusiastic prophecy*, but in the case of defining a mystery religion, it has more to do with mode of prophecy than mysterious content.202 For that reason, I will focus only on its connection with ‘pagan’ manner of oracular utterance. Instead, let us focus now on the Anonymous’ statement above, which immediately tells us that at least some of the influences on the founder existed outside central

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Phrygia, whether Christian or ‘pagan.’ It is likewise natural to expect that there was some cultural osmosis between Montanus and the greater region of Asia Minor. The logical question is, “Where else do we see cultic behavior that includes possession and enthusiasm?”

As Mitchell has pointed out, one of the chief sources of oracular inspiration in Anatolia was the cult of Apollo at Didyma and Claros in Asia Minor.\(^{203}\) Indeed, the ‘Orthodox’ character in the \textit{Dialexis} called Montanus a “priest of Apollo.” Virgil describes the Pythian priestess of Apollo: “Struggling in vain, impatient of her load, / And lab'ring underneath the pond'rous god, / The more she strove to shake him from her breast, / With more and far superior force he press'd; / Commands his entrance, and, without control, / Usurps her organs and inspires her soul.” (\textit{Aen.} 6.77).\(^{204}\) Is this not similar to descriptions of the Anonymous, the Anti-Phrygian, and Firmilian of Montanist prophet(esse)s in enthusiastic paraenetic, or at the very least ecstatic, trances? (\textit{ap.} Eus. \textit{H.E.} 5.16.6-10; \textit{ap.} Epip. \textit{Pan.} 48.3.4-4.1; \textit{Ep.} Cyp. 75.10).

But again, we are focused on the possession of a mortal by a god(dess). Consider the following oracle from Montanus, quoted by the Anti-Phrygian preserved by Epiphanius: “For Montanus says, for instance, ‘Behold, man is like a lyre; and I flit about like a plectron; man sleeps, and I awaken him; behold it is the Lord who changes the hearts of men and gives men a heart’.” (48.4.1). Scholars agree that this represents Montanus serving as an intermediary between the Paraclete, who possesses him here, and the followers Montanus addresses (it

\(^{203}\) Mitchell, \textit{Anatolia}, II, 12.
does not mean that Montanus claimed he was the Paraclete). A counterargument for this being a Christian situation of divine possession is that Phrygian Montanists would no doubt have known that the author of 1 John admonished the faithful to reject spirits that do not confess the name of Jesus Christ (4:2-3). It seems odd then that of Heine’s authentic oracles, only one, and it uttered by Maximilla not Montanus or Priscilla, mentions the name of “Christ,” i.e. Christos (Anti-Phrygian ap. Epip. 48.12.4). Trevett has acknowledged as much in passages from of the Gospel of John (15:26; 16:14) but stops short of finding the Montanist oracles dubiously Christian, which at the very least seems possible. Tabbernee has noted that North African prophecy, which Tertullian acknowledges was reduced greatly in spasmodic fervor (An. 9.4), differed substantially from accounts of Phrygian Montanism. Remember too that Paul, in addressing the Christian community of Corinth, adds that prophecy should not be accompanied by discomposure (1 Cor 14:32).

I stress this issue because Montanist prophecy in Phrygia looks a great deal more like that of its ‘pagan’ forebears than that of its Christian brethren. Likewise, when the concept of “speaking in tongues” or glossolalia is introduced, we see more parallels with ‘pagan’ mysteries. Irenaeus, who hailed originally from Asia Minor, provides a description of Gnostic glossolalia: “Basema, Chamosse, Baoenaora, Mistadia, Ruada, Kousta, Babaphor, Kalachthei” (Haer. 1.21.3).207 Christian intelligible, or paraenetic, prophecy was not interpreted, but glossolalia, a form of mantic prophecy, was (1 Cor 14:5), and Daunton-Fear

205 Trevett, Montanism, 66.
206 Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, 135-37.
207 Irenaeus, Haer. Tom. 1.
has asserted that Montanist prophecy *in paraekstasia* clearly differed from the New Testament charismatic gift of *glossolalia* Paul described. Montanist revelations in Phrygia indeed resembled the type of prophecy seen in the cult of Apollo.\(^{208}\) True that the cult of Apollo does not satisfy *all* of the elements outlined by modern scholars as characterizing the mysteries, but Apollonic possession, again, reflects a ritualized union with the god of prophecy, and thus satisfies one of the criteria.

Let me stress again that ecstasy itself does not appear to have a *mysterikos* ("of or pertaining to the mysteries") quality, but it accompanies divine possession and warrants discussion. Dionysian adherents also experience such possessions *amentia* ("being out of one’s mind"), through biennial *orgia* ("secret rites") in which they imbibed wine thought to contain the spirit of the god, feeling possessed by him as a result.\(^{209}\) We also see parallels with Lucian’s prophet Alexander, who according to Benko, resembled Montanus not only in the type of information that came from his oracles, e.g. instructions for daily living, but in manner: “Alexander … ha[d] occasional fits of madness and causing his mouth to fill with foam … and toss[ed] his unconfined mane like a devotee of the Great Mother … [and] utter[ed] a few meaningless words” (*Alex.* 12-13).\(^{210}\) Celsus, as represented in Origen, described such individuals as follows:

> “Many, he says, who are nameless, prophesy readily for any reason whatever, both in temples and outside them … And each one commonly and customarily says: ‘I am God,’ or ‘a son of God’ or ‘a divine spirit, and I have come’ …

\(^{210}\) Lucian, *Alex.*; Benko, *Virgin Goddess*, 141.
After they have brandished these words, they subsequently add words that are unintelligible, and frenzied, and totally obscure, whose meaning no intelligent person could discover, for they are obscure and void of meaning” (Cels. 7.9).

Now while mantic enthusiastic divine possession as disparaged above represented for Celsus the schemes of charlatans, for “prophets” and their followers, it embodied the revelation of secret information by one “full of the god,” known in Greek as entheos or in Latin, plena deo. The concept in these terms equates unification with the god as total synchronicity.\(^{211}\) Now while we see parallels with Lucian’s Alexander and Apollo’s Pythia and Sibyl, interestingly, the most honored goddess in and around Pepouza who provided oracles to her devotees was none other than Cybele.\(^{212}\) Indeed, regarding his own survey of Pepouza, Lampe has acknowledged that future scholars working the site need to pay more attention to trajectories stemming from ‘pagan’ prophecy into Christianity, an area long dormant in Montanist studies but slowly awaking now.\(^{213}\)

When speaking of female goddesses, one inevitably arrives at the topic of priestesses, specifically, presbyters who are female, and not just those who are Christian. Women figure quite prominently in ancient ‘pagan’ prophecy perhaps due to the idea of virginity being requisite for divine inspiration, e.g. the Vestal Virgins.\(^{214}\) Such purity can be found as well in the idea that Priscilla was said to be a renewed parthenos (“virgin”) by Apollonius (ap. Eus.

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\(^{211}\) On mantic prophecy, see Stewart-Sykes, "The Original Condemnation of Asian Montanism," 3-8; see also Benko, Virgin Goddess, 143.

\(^{212}\) Benko, Virgin Goddess, 154.

\(^{213}\) Tabbernee and Lampe, Pepouza, 146.

\(^{214}\) Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta," has indicated in some cases that pagan “virgins” were not actually literal virgins.
Regardless, whether one looks at the Sibyls or the Pythia in Delphi, such examples lend more credence to the idea that Priscilla may have founded Phrygian Montanism or was chosen by Montanus as a co-seer, an issue to which I referred in the previous chapter. This is relevant to the study at hand because it not only suggests ties between ‘pagan’ and Montanist conditions of unity with the divine contingent upon sexual continence, but also suggests that the Priscillianists Epiphanius describes are not divergent from Montanists, but the reverse.

What does this mean about Phrygian Montanism as a mystery? While Christianity since Paul was becoming increasingly patriarchal, Phrygian Montanism was more invested in female leadership, e.g. two of the Three were women, and the so called sub-sects derived their names from those of their female leaders. Tabbernee even has suggested two examples of Montanist epigraphy probably indicate a deaconess, and another quite likely reflects a female presbyter. If this is true, does Phrygian Montanism reflect increasingly patriarchal Anatolian Christianity or a ‘pagan’ religion such as the cult of Cybele or perhaps Apollo? Both, to be sure, but most priestesses known to us in the ancient world were ‘pagan’ rather than Christian.

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215 Cf. Tertullian Exh. cast. 10.
216 Cf. Gal 3:28, Rom 16:1, et passim with the comments of Hippolytus (Ref. 8.19, 10:25) and Epiphanius (Pan. 49.2-3), for example.
217 Tabbernee, Montanist Inscriptions, 374, see nos. 7 and 3.
Having discussed the role of women in Montanism, let us remember that on the topic of merging with the divine, such unity differed in format between the ‘pagan’ examples above and Christian prophecy, which did not include frenzied possession (cf. Shep. Imag. 2.3.4; 1 Cor 14:32). Instead, in Christianity, the unification with the divine was characterized by a second element of the mysteries, notably the sacred meal, known as the “Eucharist” or “communion.” Phrygian Montanists undoubtedly participated in the Christian communal sacrament, so we need to look at how their religion reflects this criterion in ‘pagan’ mysteries. Consider the cult of Dionysius (also known as Bacchus), which Marvin Meyer indicates was connected to both the land of Phrygia as well as mountainous and forested environments. Within its mysteries, a bloody rite merged human with the divine through a certain type of sacred meal known as the omophagia, or “eating raw flesh” of an animal; this complemented the ritual of drinking of wine thought to contain Dionysius’ spirit. The frenzied, ecstatic worshippers of the god would run amuck through the forest and mountains, catching wild animals tearing them apart before devouring them uncooked. What we see here is the consumption of blood not symbolically but in its substantive form. Epiphanius, Filastrius, and Augustine all speak of bloodletting rituals among Montanists in Phrygia involving the pricking of infants to procure blood for mixing with bread in their Eucharist.

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Epiphanius even describes some of their ecstatic states as *ekbaccheōs* or “bacchic” (49.3).

Another link to the Phrygian Montanist sacred meal emerges alongside the Great Mother cult. Schepelern and Hirschmann both tied the cult of Cybele to the so-called “bread and cheeser,” or Artotyrite, practice of using cheese or curdled milk instead of wine at the Eucharist (Epip. *Pan.* 49.2). Offerings of milk/cheese were made to Cybele during the *Ludi Megalensia*, or games held in honor of the goddess and her emasculated consort, Attis. While some scholars have dismissed this as nothing more than a part of the *agape* meal, or “love feast,” it seems intriguing that a meal so central to the Christian Eucharist would be celebrated somehow differently than with bread and wine as outlined during the Last Supper. Combining the elements of Christian communion and offerings to the Mother goddess would indeed explain such an incongruous circumstance.

**Secret Initiation Rites**

Admittedly, such descriptions may be fanciful or polemical in nature. Jerome, for one, did not prefer to believe such bloody, gruesome tales, being critical of his sources on that point, and I think therefore more reliable on other points. Regardless, the pricking of infants does seem to suggest a different parallel with another mystery, that of the cult of

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221 Van Nuffelen, "Review of Horrenda Secta."
Cybele and Attis. In some sense, the pricking of an infant suggests by definition a secret initiatory rite, i.e. due to age, especially when its purpose was not bloodletting, but tattooing, and represents a third characteristic of the mysteries. Schepelern and Freeman argued that the rites described by Epiphanius – and I would add those by Filastrius, Augustine, and Jerome – were corrupted stories that stemmed from the tattooing of babies within the Great Mother cult. Ritual acts in which the faithful are marked have parallels in both Christian and ‘pagan’ cults. Of course in some Christian communities infants were anointed with the sign of the cross using oil (Hip. *Trad. apost.* 22), which left no mark, but in Mithraism and the cult of Cybele rituals occurred that left signs on the body, presumably scars or ink impressions of some type (Prud. *Perist.* 10.1075-90). Even Tabbernee, whom we know does not think Montanism owed much to ‘pagan’ cults, admits that “it is possible that the Montanists form of signing left a permanent mark,” and acknowledges that Phrygian Montanism likely took tattooing from the cult of Cybele, albeit from what he assumes was a sub-sect that diverged from the parent religion. More interesting is that in the area of Pepouza, bronze needles and an Attis statuette were found, further suggesting the influence of the cult of Cybele on Phrygian Montanism. The rather important piece to discern here is that an initiatory rite more similar to ‘pagan’ traditions than Christian baptism or confirmation occurred within Phrygian Montanism.

225 Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy*, 356, 87. He does, however, point out there are possible sources in this practice from Rev 21 that might have been used by Quintillians or Pepouzians.
The Language of Mysteries

Another way of looking at the mysteries beyond examining their identifying elements is through the language used to describe them. Clement of Alexandria is a good starting point. He attempted to trace the origin of terms in Greek described as *mysterikos*, or “relating to mysteries,” in a work about the cult of Dionysus (*Prot.* 2.11-24). Terms such as *mystai* (“devotees/initiates of the mysteries”), *orgia* (“secret rites”), et al. figure among his descriptions (Ibid. 2.22, 2.13). Epiphanius, Filastrius, Jerome and Cyril describe Phrygian Montanism more or less by the same terminology. For example, Cyril of Jerusalem described one of their rituals as a *mysterion*, or “mystery” (*Cat.* 16.8). Epiphanius used the terms *mystagogion* (“initiation into the mysteries”), *myesthai* (“to be initiated into the mysteries”), *mysteria* (“mysteries”), and *orgion* (“secret rite”) (*Pan.* 48.15, 49.1-3). Filastrius and Jerome, writing in Latin not Greek, also used *mysterium* (“mystery”) and *sclerata mysteria* (“polluted mysteries”) respectively (*Haer.* 49; *Marc.* 41.4). These terms are equally applicable to those ancient sources used to describe Christian mysteries; nonetheless, based on Clement’s semantics, the terms are just as applicable to ‘pagan’ mysteries. In addition, such figures as the emperor Julian used the same type of terms.227

Improvement of Life and Access to the Afterlife

One of the more attractive aspects of the mysteries was the promise of an improved life or afterlife. After all, to use a rather stark example, why would a Gallic priest of Cybele

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and Attis emasculate himself except in hopes of bettering his terrestrial or posthumous existence? The Greek concept of Hades or the Hebrew vision of Sheol could not have inspired ancient humans that death led to joy and happiness. For others, mortal life could be improved by devotion to a god or goddess of one of the mysteries. Apuleius’ character Lucius certainly believed that devotion to Isis would improve his earthly life, and such a belief is not merely a product of the novelist’s fanciful imagination but a reflection of some contemporary religious attitudes.  

For the Phrygian Montanists, we have some extant knowledge of what they believed doctrinally about how to improve their lives in either case. Let us begin with a discussion of the specific rituals or behaviors that the Three instituted to bring about the soteriological assurances sought by initiates of the mysteries. They generally fall into three following categories: purifying behavior, absolution of sins, and eschatological expectation. Certain aspects share relative synonymy with both ‘pagan’ and Christian mysteries.

Let us begin with the oracles of the founders. The Anti-Phrygian tells us that Montanus revealed in his prophecy that actions on earth affect the quality of afterlife one can expect. Montanus said, “Why do you call the more excellent man saved? For the just, he says, will shine a hundred times brighter than the sun, and the little ones among you who are saved will shine a hundred times brighter than the moon” (ap. Epip. Pan. 48.10.3). What the distinction is between being “just” and being “saved” is subject to speculation, but it seems clear that for Montanus, one who leads a life of justice is better than one who simply lives

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well enough to be saved. This is perhaps some reference to Jesus’ admonition to store up
treasure in heaven (Mt 6:21) or the Seer’s vision of 144,000 “blameless” men who follow the
“Lamb” (Rev 14:1-5), or the Anatolian god called Hosion kai Dikaion (“Holiness and
Justice”). The concept here of justness is too elusive to pursue in philological or exegetical
depth. Rather, look at the oracle from Priscilla as preserved by Tertullian: “For purification
produces harmony,” she says, “and they see visions, and when they turn their faces
downward they also hear salutary voices, as clear as they are secret” (Exh. cast. 10.5). This
utterance clearly refers to the fact that those who are purged of base elements are prone to the
reception of prophecies as an earthly reward (i.e. while alive).

The commonality between these two oracles suggests unification with the deity as a
reward for upright behavior and lifestyle, but, in Montanus’ version, it is after death (one
presumes close proximity to the divine in heaven) and in Priscilla’s it is during her mortal life
in the form of prophetic possession. These improvements in the quality of one’s spiritual
existence, however, are contingent upon actions, rituals, or absolutions that must be
undertaken. In the case of Phrygian Montanism, fasting, sexual continence, avoidance of
remarriage, and penitence were prescribed for a righteous life.229

Fasting in the ancient Mediterranean world was by no means the purview of either
exclusively ‘pagan’ or Christian devotees. Abstention from food and drink appears
throughout our ancient sources. However, when connecting the Phrygian Montanist form of
fasting with possible influences, some interesting items appear. For example, Iamblichus

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229 Trevett, Montanism, 105.
speaks of how a priestess of Apollo fasted the day before issuing prophecies (Myst. 3.11), suggesting that possession by the god is contingent on fasting. Hippolytus wrote that Priscilla and Maximilla “devised new fasts, feasts, and the eating of dry food and cabbage, declaring that these things have been taught by those females” (Ref. 8.19). Apollonius said the same except that he stated that it was Montanus who “legislated fasts” (ap. Eus. H.E. 5.18). Eating dry food, i.e. xerophageō, seemed to have little support from the clergy of the late second or early third centuries, perhaps including Anatolian representatives, since we know that Tertullian had to defend the ritual in highly rigorist North Africa (Jejun. 1), and Hippolytus decried such novelties. Perhaps that was because the rigorist and ascetic practice held more in common with ‘pagans.’ Consider that Lane Fox has pointed out that “Oracular inspiration … derive[d] from a hungry trance, and debates on its nature were to have a long history. They were picked up by Christian leaders in the 160s and 170s who used them against their own ‘false’ prophets,” i.e. the Phrygian Montanists. Elsewhere he states “In the ‘pagan’ world, fasting was deliberately practised at cults and oracles to ‘receive’ the gods’ inspiration … ‘pagan’ doctors were well aware that … psychic experience [was] livelier if [one’s] diet was drier.” Indeed, even Tertullian likened xerophagies to “the abstemious rigours which purify an Apis, an Isis, and a Magna Mater, by a restriction laid upon certain kinds of food” (Ibid. 2.103).

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231 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, 205.
It would seem that the chief aim of dry fasting was purification of the prophet in order to bring about a possession by the divine, stimulation of a state of *enteos*. Montanist practices closely related issues of sexual deprivation and avoidance of second marriages. This is clear in the North African manifestation of the religion, but we have only polemical stories of Priscilla and Maximilla in the Asian context. Two related issues figure here: digamy, or remarriage after the death of a spouse (or presumably after divorce from one unfaithful to the connubial bed), and second, rigorist celibacy within a first marriage. Tertullian never connected digamy explicitly with an oracle of the Three, but Trevett suspects that the source of its prohibition or admonitions against it derives from the original Prophets.\(^{233}\) The Anti-Phrygian, in opposition to the Prophets, felt the founders had done so and Apollonius, in likewise manner, thought Montanus had taught the dissolution of marriage or at least remarriage (*ap. Epip. Pan*. 48.9.5-8; *ap. Eus. H.E.* 5.18.2).

While I know nothing of a ‘pagan’ analogy to this practice, the issue of celibacy as a precursor to unification with the god(dess) has several parallels mentioned above. Virginity or celibacy, of course, was typically thought to be requisite for merging with the god in an ecstatic, prophetic state (whether frenzied or not). Perhaps this is why Maximilla and Priscilla were said to have left their husbands, on the authority of the ‘Paraclete’ present in Montanus, and the latter was called anew a “virgin” (*Apollonius ap. Eus. H.E.* 5.18.3). In the case of these females, their decision to rededicate their bodies to a pre-sexual state has to be considered a symbolic choice since literal restoration of their maidenhead would have been

\(^{233}\) Trevett, *Montanism*, 113.
impossible. I make this point because males seeking to become celibate in the ancient world sometimes took more drastic physical measures.

The most direct connection between a ‘pagan’ cult and Phrygian Montanism, at least in the case of Montanus, involved the linkage between celibacy and castration. One of the more notorious of the initiation rites known from the mysteries, as we have already seen, involved the Dies sanguinis, or “Day of Blood,” which occurred within the Magna Mater (Cybele and Attis) cult. At the end of a long, raucous procession during the Megalensia, new initiates of the Cybelene priesthood, in a frantic state, would cut off their testicles. According to Benko, “Severing of the genitals has been understood primarily as an attempt to conform to the goddess as closely as possible, to assimilate oneself to Cybele, so as to be able to serve the goddess more perfectly.”234 In myths of Attis and Cybele, this act by the Galli, or her androgyne priests, is sometimes viewed as an attempt to relive the dying and rising mystery of Attis’ passion and especially as a vehicle for becoming the goddess’ consort (Ovid Fas. 4.223-44). Cybele could expect her mortal consort to be more faithful than Attis had been: an emasculated spouse would be unable to engage in “extramarital” intercourse.

There are two key points when noting the similarity between celibacy, virginity, castration and prohibition of digamy. First, there are Christian parallels to Montanus’ alleged castrated state: Origen did the same when surrounded by female students, either to avoid criticism and, I suspect, in observance of Jesus’ encouragement for people to remove physical features that cause sin (Eus. H.E. 6.8.1; Mt 5.29, 18.9; cf. Mt 19:12). Second,

234 Benko, Virgin Goddess, 78.
Montanus, so far as is mentioned in the ancient sources, did not require that adherents of the New Prophecy geld themselves. This point relates to my earlier discussion of Priscilla and Maximilla becoming celibate. In ancient Asia Minor, castration for men could lead to death by exsanguination. Infibulation, the analogous procedure for women in which the vaginal opening is sewn shut, simply was not practiced (it originated in Africa). Montanus’ call for celibacy and rejection of digamy was as close to Cybelene devotion to the goddess as he could expect of his followers with regard to Christ, especially when his aim was purity as a way to become closer to the divine (cf. Tert. *Exh. cast.* 10.5).

Again, the basis of similarity between Phrygian Montanism as described above and the mysteries is largely one of improving daily life on earth, purifying one so he or she can enjoy unification with the god while still here on earth. Yet the promise of the afterlife figured in the Asian religion as well. It was marked chiefly by two concepts: the retention of sins and chiliastic expectation. There is little to say about the issue of forgiveness except that in the New Prophecy, sins of adultery and fornication after baptism likely received no clemency on the part of the Montanist clergy, which is in keeping with what we have just seen with regard to celibacy and digamy. Further, Schepelern pointed out that the Cybelenes administered some type of penitential rite for their followers, but he found it divergent enough from Phrygian Montanism to assume no common source. In short, options for public atonement existed and Cybelene priests could forgive, whereas in Phrygian Montanism no one but the god could forgive the sins of lust.235 It also is notable that such a view on

penitence is one of the only evidences of doctrinal differences between Montanists and the leaders of the Anatolian (and perhaps North African) Christian churches.

The afterlife represented a focal point of interest in the mysteries. Devotees, in order to guarantee access to the afterlife, would often become neophytes of multiple mysteries in hopes that they covered all their soteriological bases so-to-speak. For Phrygian Montanists, this meant initiation into the religion through a mix of Christian and ‘pagan’ rituals (baptism, pricking/tattooing with needles, celebration of some form of sacred meal). Afterwards, however, one needed to focus their earthly life on remaining sinless and pure. This was in anticipation not only of a Christian life after death, which could come as a result of martyrdom or simply due to natural causes, but also of the divine meeting the faithful while still alive. For example, Phrygian Montanists, as shown above, believed in the imminent descent of the New Jerusalem at Pepouza and Tymion (Tert. Marc. 3.24).\footnote{Tabbernee and Lampe, 
Pepouza, back cover et passim.} Dionysian worshippers shared eschatological expectations, according to Graf, especially when it came to the Orphic component of the religion.\footnote{Fritz Graf, ”Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions of Interpretation,” in 
Masks of Dionysus, ed. T. H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).} Benko tells us the followers of Dionysius conceived of celestial space flowing with milk, honey and nectar.\footnote{Benko, Virgin Goddess, 66, 140.} This otherworldly focus is in itself nothing remarkable, but does reinforce the focus of Phrygian Montanism on improving life and preparing for a meeting of heaven and earth.
Reenacting Divine Myths Publicly and Privately

The rituals enacted above to bring about union with the deity in this life or the next occurred in both public space and private locations. The very word “mystery,” however, implies that secret acts predominantly and intrinsically figured among these religions. Some, such as the Eleusinian mysteries were especially secret, with individuals put on trial for profaning or revealing them while others represented a mixture of initiations and mysteries preceded by festivals.\textsuperscript{239} These public celebrations could involve reenactments of the divine myths, such as the \textit{Dies sanguinis} portion of the \textit{Megalensia} in the Magna Mater cult, which symbolized the passion of Attis.

With regard to Phrygian Montanism, like all the mysteries, we do not have the \textit{complete} benefit of knowing exactly what festivals, myths, and secret initiations occurred. However, what is known contains both Christian and ‘pagan’ mysterious elements. Adherents of the New Prophecy in Phrygia believed in the passion and resurrection story of Jesus of Nazareth and the \textit{parousia} or “second coming” of Christ. We already have discussed celebration of the Eucharist and – one presumes – the Easter mass as well. They baptized infants or young children, if our later sources are to be believed. Clearly, Phrygian Montanism owes much to Christianity for that part of its heritage.

What is gleaned from ‘pagan’ mysteries? Epiphanius tells of a ceremony in the Priscillianist/Quintillianist/Artotyrite churches in which “seven virgins with lamps often come in, if you please, dressed in white, to prophesy to the people. They deceive the

\textsuperscript{239} Meyer, ed., \textit{Ancient Mysteries}, 4, 9.
congregation with a show of some sort of inspiration and make them all weep by shedding
tears and pretending to mourn for humankind, as though to encourage them to the mourning
of penitence. They have woman bishops, presbyters and the rest” (Pan. 49.2.3-5). This
resembles, according to Benko and Freeman, the traditional bewailing of Attis’ death, the
Arbor intrat or “the entry of the tree” and other Cybelene processions (e.g. the Hilaria) in
which lamps were carried by virgins in white and the eunuch galli shed tears for the deity.240

This description above, presenting one of the few liturgical descriptions of a Phrygian
Montanist mass, elaborates on a direct link between it and a ‘pagan’ religious procession. Yet
it is one of the more baffling elements of the New Prophecy, projecting from its very core,
which I would suggest is borrowed more directly from ‘pagan’ religions than Christianity.
The concept of Montanist prophets being possessed by the Holy Spirit in a plena deo state of
enthusiasm is what I have chosen to call the “Montanist myth of the Paraclete.” I elaborated
on the person of the Paracletus in the previous chapters, discussing that this was the
name/term one of the apostle John’s disciples used in writing the Gospel of John.241 It was
this Holy Spirit from which the Three claimed inspiration. However, how the first Montanists
characterized the Paraclete is quite inconsistent with the Holy Spirit as discussed in Acts and
the “Advocate” or “Comforter” mentioned first in Jn 14:26 (“the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that
I have said to you”). He is described using an appositive grammatical framework in this
passage so one can see that paracletos and hagion pneuma are equated. Understandably then,

240 Benko, Virgin Goddess, 159; Freeman, "Montanism and the Pagan Cults," 308.
the passages in Acts that reference the *hagion pneuma* (Acts 1:5, 1:8, 2:4, 2:38, 4, 8:16, 11:15, *et passim*) clearly speak of new Christians receiving the Holy Spirit after baptism, during the imposition of hands, and at Pentecost. In these references and several others throughout Acts and the New Testament, the “Holy Spirit” is thought of as an assistive, inspirational, and protective numinous force emanating from the Triune God as one of three hypostases.

While I do not doubt the Three likely believed they were being possessed directly by the Holy Spirit, the essence of the “Montanist myth” lies in personifying the Paraclete to such an extent that he does not simply imbue man with boldness, truth and help during times of trouble as in the New Testament. Rather, the author(s) of the New Prophecy managed to convince others that the Paraclete promised in the Gospel of John descended from Heaven not as a spirit of comfort to *all* Christians, but as an anthropomorphic manifestation of the divine who possesses only a *few* human beings as passive instruments, causing them to enter a frenzied state and to speak as the literal mouthpiece of the Paraclete. Nowhere in the New Testament is this type of experience with the Paraclete described. The closest would be Pentecost, where some thought the spirit-filled disciples were “drunk” (Acts 2:1-4, 15). Descriptions of prophet(esse)s in hysterical states match more closely to the cult of Apollo, Cybele, or Dionysius as I have already shown. Let us not also forget that Christians who sought to disassociate themselves with Manichaeans rejected the idea of the Holy Spirit coming to mankind in an anthropomorphic form.
NON-RITUALISTIC SIMILARITIES WITH THE ‘PAGAN’ MYSTERIES

Other similarities with ‘pagan’ cults may not involve the accepted characteristics of the mysteries, but their connection to non-Christian, non-Jewish cults provides support for Phrygian Montanism being a hybrid religion. These parallels are worth mentioning in any study of Montanism but especially relevant here where similarity to known and accepted mystery religions suggests that the character of its Phrygian manifestation is indeed mysterikos. Hirschmann recently has disagreed with Schepelern’s ultimate conclusion that only Artotyrites and Tascodrougitans were affected by ‘pagan’ cults, thus suggesting close relationships with Phrygian Montanists from the very beginning.242 Indeed, unlike North African Montanism, which grew within the church there, Asian Montanism was forced outside the context of several of the Anatolian churches and hence became more susceptible to innovations that derived from outside Christianity.243 Peter Lampe, Tabbernee’s colleague and co-author of Pepouza and Tymion, has indicated in his discussion of methods of the archaeological surface survey that “ancient ‘pagan’ religiosity especially in Phrygia was sometimes interwoven with early Christianity. Phrygian inscriptions and imageries often reveal a peaceful coexistence of the Christian and ‘pagan’ populations, which influenced each other reciprocally.”244 How might this have played out with regard to Phrygian Montanism?

242 See Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, 122-23, for details of this scholarly disagreement between Schepelern and Hirschmann.
243 Ibid., 131-32.
244 Tabbernee and Lampe, Pepouza, 144.
The first evidence of cross-cultural blending is that several sources seem to agree that Montanus was a convert to Christianity and perhaps even a priest of his former faith (Eus. H.E. 5.16-17; Dia.; Did. Trin. 3.41.3). From which faith did he convert? We cannot know for sure but we have some interesting clues already discussed in this thesis. Jerome considered Montanus to have been a eunuch, a gallus, or something of the sort and this clearly implies his connection with the cult of Cybele. Additional support comes from the idea that the word montanus, meaning “mountain” in Latin, may be an epithet applied to the man hailing back to the Phrygian word for the Mother goddess, Matar kubileya, or “Mother of the Mountain.”\(^{245}\) Apollonius relates that Montanus appointed money collectors (ap. Eus. H.E. 5.18.2), which he says is a sinful practice for Christian prophets (Ibid. 5.18.4; cf. Did. 11, 12; Shep. Mand. 11.12) and is quite similar to the alms-collecting practice of Cybele’s mendicant priests (metragyrtai) or “those who gather for the Mother.”\(^{246}\) He also asks if Montanist prophets are supposed to dye their hair, wear makeup and love ornaments, which implies these were in fact either women (presumably Priscilla and Maximilla) or effeminately dressed galli, and which further connects them to the Phrygian paganism and Cybele (5.18.11).\(^{247}\) Still, we are left to speculate because no ancient source actually says Montanus was an adherent of the Phrygian Mother. It certainly is possible that such descriptions were mendacious fabrications of several church fathers across space and time, but I do not believe the evidence overwhelmingly supports such a claim.

\(^{245}\) Graf, "Ancient Mediterranean Religion," 7-8; Roller, In Search of God the Mother, 122.
\(^{246}\) Ibid., 165.
\(^{247}\) Trevett, Montanism, 105.
Another possibility is a connection with the oracle cult of Apollo. The Orthodox character in the *Dialexis* calls Montanus a priest of Apollo. I already have made the case for Apollo’s influence in Asia Minor, but consider this idea: it is well known that in the ancient world Christians considered the shrines of ‘pagan’ gods to be the homes of demons. If writers such as the Anonymous thought Montanus was deceived by a “devil and spirit of error” (*daimon kai en planes pneuma*), then is it not possible he was referring to ‘pagan’ divinities? (*ap. Eus. H.E. 5.16.8*). In addition, the oracle of Apollo expressed great frenzy while *entheos* and serving as his mouthpiece. Such possession by the deity in order to deliver an oracle seems less Christian than ‘pagan.’

There are other options. Epiphanius describes some of the Montanist prophecies as delivered in a “bacchic” state, and Hirschmann has suggested that Montanist ecclesiastical officers known as *koinonoi* derived from Phrygian paganism (*Pan. 49.3*).248 Jerome accuses the prophetesses of ‘paganism’ (*Vir. 40*).249 One could spend a great amount of energy and effort finding every possible parallel and linkage between Phrygian Montanism and ‘pagan’ cults. Instead, I would conclude that scholars are better off simply “accept[ing] the probability that in Montanism Christianity absorbed significant elements from the ‘pagan’ cult of Magna Mater” and in my estimation, at least two others.250

250 Benko, *Virgin Goddess*, 159.
CONCLUSION

Modern studies of Montanism generally can be divided into two groups: those which assert the sect arose in Phrygia from within the emerging ‘Christian’ church, and those which identify it as a corruption of the faithful by a (former) devotee of ‘pagan’ cult(s). The former body of opinion has more adherents among scholars and many among late antique theologians. Yet whether secular or clerical in background, the questions of most concern have fixed often on the degree of its authentic Christian essence in proportion to the dogmas of the Anatolian and other churches, and the claims its founder(s) made while in enthusiastic states. Tertullian assumed it was perfectly consistent with the teachings of the church in North Africa, which makes us wonder how different Montanism was there. Irenaeus reserved judgment, if indeed he even made one, since he never actually mentioned the New Prophets by name. Eusebius, Jerome and Augustine roundly condemned it as heresy, one arising from the demonic possessions of the “Adversary,” i.e. Satan, or his diabolical minions. Some early church figures (e.g. Apolinaris ap. Eus. H.E. 4.27) argued Montanism was charismatic Christianity perverted by its namesakes’ residual paganism, but promoted by him as legitimate Christian worship. Religious claims from past to present have varied along a spectrum, and where intersections have existed, boundaries have been blurred. Pentecostals and the ‘house church’ movement view Montanist Christians as a wholly viable sect that fell out of favor with the clergy of the Anatolian churches. Conversely, patristic sources of the second and third centuries tended toward condemnation of Montanus and his followers as

251 Trevett, Montanism, 9-10.
252 Ibid., 12.
tools of satanic forces dressed in ‘pagan’ couture. Ironically, tacit acceptance *ex post facto* of
the Montanist practice of ecstatic prophecy has been affirmed in recent times through the
Vatican’s imprimatur of entranced, divinely inspired visions and messages from saints and
the Virgin Mary. Perhaps this is because the prophecies in this case are given through what
Stewart-Sykes has called “visionary inspiration” rather than in enthusiastic mode.\(^{253}\)

Scholarly assertions have differed or agreed with clerical perspectives as one might expect,
with substantial variance. Yet the points of view have diverged with little exception, placing
the movement anachronistically within primarily ‘catholic’ or ‘heretical’ camps. Some have
seen Montanism as arising predominantly out of a Christian context while others claim it
stemmed from ‘pagan’ cults and subsequently grafted itself onto the Phrygian community of
Christians, though the latter are a minority. Eusebius considered Montanus a ‘pagan’ convert
who corrupted the Christian communities of Ardabau, Pepouza and Tymion with his aberrant
claims. Surprisingly, few scholars have outright characterized Montanus and his fellow
‘prophets’ as charlatans on par with discredited television evangelists like Jim Baker or cult
leader Jim Jones, which I must admit is not out of the realm of possibilities given what we
know about Montanus’ charismatic – in the modern sense of the word – and infectious
personality and leadership.

I have to wonder if Phrygian Montanism really started within the Christian church
and then grafted a substantially high number of “bizarre aspects” (to borrow a phrase from
Tabbernee) of ‘pagan’ practice onto it, or if instead Montanus injected himself straight from

‘pagan’ religion into the Christian community in Ardbau or Pepouza and soon thereafter preached a subconsciously blended faith to it.⁵⁴ There simply is not enough extant information to know for sure, but any argument for a hybrid and mysterikos nature is just as viable as any of the other Christian, Ebionite, or Gnostic interpretations. Expanding the scholarly dialectic on this question of the nature of Phrygian Montanism began with Schepelern and continues with Hirschmann. I hope my contribution to the dialogue will benefit it in some modest way.

⁵⁴ Tabbernee, Fake Prophecy, 137.
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