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### The Chief Heretical Groups of the Early Church

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**THE CHIEF HERETICAL GROUPS OF THE EARLY CHURCH.**

A Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary

in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**Bachelor of Divinity**

by

**Louis C. Gerhardt**

**Concordia Seminary  
April 15, 1941**

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The first part of the thesis is devoted to a study of the history of the subject. It is found that the study of the subject has been carried out in a very haphazard manner. The only general agreement among the various writers is that the subject is of great importance. The various writers have given different views on the subject. The only one who has given a definite answer is the writer of the present thesis.

**Body of Thesis**

The second part of the thesis is devoted to a study of the present state of the subject. It is found that the subject has been studied in a very haphazard manner. The only general agreement among the various writers is that the subject is of great importance. The various writers have given different views on the subject. The only one who has given a definite answer is the writer of the present thesis.

The third part of the thesis is devoted to a study of the future of the subject. It is found that the subject has been studied in a very haphazard manner. The only general agreement among the various writers is that the subject is of great importance. The various writers have given different views on the subject. The only one who has given a definite answer is the writer of the present thesis.

The fourth part of the thesis is devoted to a study of the present state of the subject. It is found that the subject has been studied in a very haphazard manner. The only general agreement among the various writers is that the subject is of great importance. The various writers have given different views on the subject. The only one who has given a definite answer is the writer of the present thesis.

### Introduction.

Peace and unity within the Church of the first and second century was as unattainable then as it is today. The early church experienced internal conflicts more trying than many of the persecutions and with results far more disastrous. Christianity had been given to the world as the only true religion, the only religion professing Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven whereby salvation could be had. Many systems of religion and thought existed which likewise claimed to deal authoritatively with man and his soul, however conflicts between christianity and these pagan religions were either short-lived or caused little opposition. The real trouble and dis-unity lay internally.

The principal causes of these conflicts were: 1) perversion of the Gospels by Jewish legalism; 2) conflicts and heresies promoted by the intermingling of Christianity and paganism; 3) conflicts due to laxity of morals and discipline; 4) conflicts due to the hierarchial tendencies of the clergy, and 5) controversies concerning questions of doctrine and practice.

One or more of these causes brought about all the heresies of the first century down to the present time. In the following presentation we find that Gnosticism is due to cause one, Monarchianism arose out of causes five and two, and Montanism from causes two, three and four. <sup>1</sup>



### I. A. Ebionism.

The Judaizing sects have the distinction of being the oldest heretical group which entered as a disturbing influence into the development of Christianity. The Jews opposed Christianity at its birth, arrayed themselves against Christ and his entire movement during His lifetime, and finally when they received Christianity they received it after their own fashion having merely the shell instead of the kernel.

These Jews realized that Jesus was the promised Messiah, that He had fulfilled the law to the letter, yet they thought of Him merely as an example, not realizing that His statement, "I am the Lord of the Sabbath", meant that the worship of God no longer was confined to particular times, places, or events, but in spirit and in truth. Christ brought about a new spiritual creation. However to give up the Mosaic law and ritual was the stumbling block of the Jewish Christians, and the cause of the schism between Jewish and Gentile Christianity.

Jewish Christianity was partly separatistic and partly heretical. The former limited this obligation to the law to Christians of Jewish descent, while the latter outdid the Old Testament monotheism by applying a monarchianism that denied the divinity of Christ. Later this distinction resolved itself into two distinct bodies, the Nazareans and the Ebionites proper.<sup>1</sup>

The name Ebionites is the source of much speculation. Many of Church Fathers derive the name from the supposed founder Ebion

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1. Kurtz, Church History. Vol. 1. p-120

Hippolytus--philosophumena; Tertullian--Haereticus, De Carne Christi; and Epiphanius--Haereticus).<sup>1</sup> The second explanation derives the word from the Hebrew פִּיזָה meaning poor. The word is then used in a threefold manner, a) poor because they believed in a poor, abject, crucified Messiah like Jesus, b) according to Eusebius it refers to those who cherished low and mean opinions of Christ, and c) because of their abject poverty.

The first assumption that the name comes from the found is inaccurate and must be discarded. No mention of such a person has ever been found or made. Regarding the three uses of the word poor, the third one appears more plausible, when we compare the interpretation "poor people" with another group within the sect, the Nazareans. As the term Nazareans described that sect so it is thought that the word "poor" describes the Ebionite sects. There also seems to be no doubt that the Ebionites took the word poor and prided themselves because of that fact.<sup>2</sup> This view is now accepted by all modern church historians.

Epiphanius places the origin of this sect to a small company of Christians who fled to Pella after the destruction of Jerusalem. Hegesippus in Eusebius claims that one Thebutes after the death of Bishop Symeon, in Jerusalem about the year 107, made a schism among the Jewish Christians and led many to apostatize because he was not elected to the vacant bishopric. The sect was found in Palestine and the surrounding countries, on the Island of Cyprus, in Asia Minor,

1. Schaff, F. History of the Christian Church. Vol. I p-120

2. Heuser, Augustus, General History of the Christian Religion and Churches Vol. 1. p-346

and even in Rome. They existed in small numbers till about the fifth century, but already in the middle of the second century they were of little significance. Those that remained, lost their national character and were amalgamated with Pauline Gentile Christianity. <sup>1</sup>

Ebionism had two major branches, the Common type, which was the more numerous and consisted of three groups. The major one of these is known as the Pharisaic Ebionites, because of their legalistic approach to Christianity. It is thought that they were the successors of the Judaizers opposed by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. The second major branch was the more mild of the two and are commonly known as the Nazareans. <sup>2</sup>

The teaching of the Ebionites, Irenaeus reports, were taken from the Pentateuch, and from a Hebrew Gospel which is thought to have been a corruption of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The writings of Paul were rejected for he was considered an apostate from the law and because of that fact they would have nothing whatsoever to do with him. <sup>3</sup>

The Common or Pharisaic Ebionites taught Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, but only a mere man like Moses and David, born through a natural conception between Mary and Joseph, for to accept a man as the Son of God was to them pagan mythology. The Messianic calling first arose in him at the time of the baptism by John, when a higher spirit joined itself to him. The basis of this statement is found in the Hebrew Gospel which records the baptismal story and adds the following phrase, "This day have I begotten thee". They however deny that Jesus was a combin-

1. Kutz, Op. cit., Vol. I p-121

2. Schaff, P. Op. Cit., Vol. II p-433

3. Irenaeus, The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I p-521.

ation of the divine and the human natures. He became both justified and the Messiah because of his legal piety. For this reason he was named Christ of God and Jesus, since none of the rest of the world has observed the law completely. Following this line of reasoning, they further claimed that any man may become a Christ when he fulfills the law of Moses. <sup>1</sup>

Christ's death was an offense to them, but they consoled themselves with the promise of the second coming which they believed would bring about an earthly Messianic Kingdom. Circumcision and the whole ritual of the law was made and confessed as a necessity to salvation for all men. Christ was the supreme Lawgiver, Teacher, and King. Jerusalem was still the city of God, the centre of Theocracy. The destruction of the city did not shake their faith in this belief for the Messiah they believed when he returned to judge the world would then build a greater and better Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>

Jerome, Augustine, and Theodoret acknowledge a moderate counterpart of the pharisaic Ebionism under the name of Nazareans. In the beginning they were simply Jewish Christians who kept up the ancestral customs of the Sabbath and circumcision, which they observed in addition to the Sacraments and services of the Christian church. They claimed Christian liberty in performing these rights and recognized the rights of Christians who did not hold to their views. They undoubtedly originated in Jerusalem and then moved to Pella, a small town on the east bank of the Jordan. After a revolt under Bar Cochba, they returned to dwell in the city of Aelia Capitolina built up out of the ruins of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>

1. Hippolytus, The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. V. p-114  
 2. Heander, A. Op. Cit., Vol. 1 p-348  
 3. Waterman, L. The post-Apostolic Age. p-178

A distinctive trait of the Nazareans was their anti-pharisaic tendency. They denounced the scribes and pharisees as causing monstrous errors by their traditions. They also differed from their fellow Ebionites in that they acknowledged the apostle Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles on the basis of Isaiah 9, 1-2. This indicates why they allowed Christian liberty to the Gentiles and would not tolerate it among themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs "deathbed speeches put into the mouths of Jacob's sons", seems to be ascribed to a Nazarean writer. It deals with the sins and weaknesses of the sons of Jacob and also contains references to Paul, affirming the acceptance of Pauline Christianity. Jerome who visited Palestine at the end of the fourth century, described the Nazareans as people who tried to be both Jews and Christians and ended up by being neither. By their strict adherence to the Jewish law they gradually lost the fundamentals of Christianity. As to numbers the Nazareans were never a numerous body, and probably never influenced the growth of the church. A small number of them founded a curious sect in southern Babylonia, known as the gnostics.  
2

Waterman refers to a third sect of the Ebionites known as the gnostics, who existed one hundred and fifty years before the coming of Christ. Others as Gersheim, think their name comes from the Hebrew word meaning "outsiders." They obey the law of Moses, but ate no Passover and never attended the Temple worship. They wore white robes as a symbol of purity and because of this desire held themselves aloof

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1. Neander, A, Op. Cit., Vol. I p-349  
2. Waterman, L, Op. Cit., p-179-180

from the other Jews. They lived in their own community and no one owned individual possessions. Excommunications in their system meant nothing less than death by starvation as a deliverance of purged souls from the offending bodies. At the time of our Lord their number was about four thousand. They accepted the Lord as a prophet who freed Judaism from all elements offensive to the heathen mind. This group denied all historical Judaism, discarded all the Old Testament with the exception of a part of the pentateuch. They accepted the existence of two divine powers, a male principle- the son of God, and a female principle- the Holy Spirit. The male principle existed in Adam, and down the line culminating in Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Another sect of the gnostic s rejected the eating of flesh and the offering up of animals for sacrifices, claiming that it was foreign to the principle of Judaism. This sect produced a book called the "Steps of Jacob" in which the patriarch is represented as denouncing sacrifices and temple worship. It also contained a rule which required total renunciation of all earthly goods, complete poverty, as essential for religious perfection. It is not definitely known whether this group appeared before the beginning of Christianity in opposition to the Jewish worldliness or whether it was called forth by Christianity. While the Messiah's kingdom lay in the future, the earth was looked upon as the habitat of Satan. Thus whosoever wished to participate in the future kingdom must alienate himself from the possessions of this world. Because of this avowal of poverty they were also willing to be called gnostics.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Waterman, L. Ibid. p-185-187

2. Neander, Op. Cit., Vol 1. p-352

Of all the Pionitic writings only one caused a great stir in the church at large. In the third century there appeared under different names such as 'Clementine Recognitions, Itinerary of St. Clement, or the Clementine Homilies, the pseudo Clementine writings. It is a curious story idealizing a certain Clement of Rome. Of its authorship nothing is known.

The story deals with a roman gentleman Faustus, who sent his wife and his two sons to Athens. He waited ten years to hear from them. Becoming discouraged at the lack of news he leaves his youngest son Clement with friends and then sets out to search for his wife and children. He too disappeared. Clement after having reached manhood learns of Christianity and proceeds to Palestine to seek instruction from St. Peter. He hears the discourses between Peter and Simon Magus and becomes converted. At about this time Clement meets a beggar woman and discovers her to be his mother and she is subsequently also converted and baptized. Two former disciples of Simon Magus turn out to be the lost twin brothers and presently the father is discovered and he too becomes a Christian.

The book in general is dull and uninteresting, but it throws light on the conditions of the times. Its primary purpose was to draw attention away from the Apostle Paul and to make Peter and James, the Jewish disciples the leaders and princes of the Apostles. James who was the head of the Apostles ordered the rest of them, especially Peter, to go here and there and to return annually to report their progress.

This story was accepted throughout the Christian world and not even Rome objected to it. But however bad its mistakes about James it gives definite proof, concludes Waterman, that the Christian mind

of the third century was not deeply preoccupied with any corresponding mistake about a Petrine primacy.\*

The object of all this exaggeration of St. James as above mentioned was to draw attention away from the Apostle Paul. Both the Recognitions and Homilies represent the devil as sending forth Apostles and teachers to deceive the people, therefore they are to hold fast to the authority and teaching of James. Further the writer warns not to accept any teaching aside from the twelve Apostles especially those who shall be sent to show the word among the nations.\* Yet all these anti-pauline allusions were so veiled that the average Christian would not have suspected the falsity of the book. The fictitious story of St. Clement and his relation to St. Peter and James gave great impetus to the tradition that the successor at Rome was consecrated by St. Peter. Thus the Ebionitic forger did not succeed in his purpose, but nevertheless left a false mark that remains to this very day.

As to its influence, Ebionism was generally confined to men of the Jewish origin and religion, and did not affect the life and growth of the Church. They contributed little to religion with the exception of one Symmachus, who produced a translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language. In comparison to other translations this work is regarded as giving the clearest idea of the real sense of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Waterman, L, Op. Cit., p-183



### I.B. Elchasaites.

Like the Ebionites the Elchasaites also were a syncretistic Jewish christian sect. The origin of their name is of such conjecture. Delitzsch derived it from a hamlet, named Elkasi, in the province of Galilee. The church fathers agree that it came from the supposed founder, Elxai. The third and most probably explanation is derived from the Hebrew word  $\text{עֲלֵיָא}$  meaning "the hidden power of God." <sup>1</sup>

They arose, according to Epiphanius in the reign of Trajan about the year 101, in the region about the Dead Sea, where the Essenes lived. They have also been connected with the Sabaeans. Ancient Arabian writers spoke of these people as those who washed themselves, and who taught the existence of two principles, male and female.

The name Elxai, or Elkasi was also used or associated with a book, which, similar to the book of Mormon, was revealed by an angel. This angel was ninety six feet high, and had a stride of fourteen miles. He represented the Son of God, and was accompanied by a female angel, who represented the Holy Ghost. <sup>2</sup>

This book which set forth their esoteric doctrines was circulated among the members of this sect, who were bound under oath not to reveal its contents. Those that heard and believed this book received the remission of sins. The work contains a large amount of natural religion mingled with Judaistic and Christian ideas. Aside from the Book of Elxai, parts of the old Testament and of the Gospels were accepted and used. <sup>3</sup>

Their doctrine represented Jerusalem as the centre of the religious

1. Kurtz, Op. Cit., Vol. 1. p-122

2. Hippolytus, Op. Cit. Vol.V. p- 152

3. Gieselin, The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus, p-240

world, Christ as a creature, Lord of the Angels and creatures, and the Holy Spirit as a female principle. Their view of Christ is somewhat muddled. On the one hand they thought of him as an angel, and on the other hand as a continuous reincarnation. They however retained the virgin birth. The Lord's Supper was altered with bread and salt as the elements, eating of meat was strictly forbidden, and marriage was highly esteemed. Remission of faith in time of persecutions was allowed with the explanation that the mouth could deny the truth which the heart still maintained. St. Paul was denounced as a heretic and consequently the theme of Christianity was likewise denied. To them the law and circumcision constituted the essence of salvation.<sup>1</sup> Any act of adultery or fornication required another baptism. Oft-repeated washings or baptism was of common practice. The baptismal formula was administered in the name of God the Father, and God the Son. With this formula seven witnesses were required, which were heaven, water, holy spirits, oil, prayers of angels, salt and earth. In the act of baptism, clothing was also included. Baptism may, if desired, be self-administered. Stars were studied and the belief prevailed that the heavenly bodies guided the life and actions of the people.<sup>2</sup>

The sect was short lived, but its influence was passed on and is extant today in the form of Islam theology.

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1. Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia Vol. IV. p-113.  
2. Hippolytus, op. Cit., Vol. V. p-132-133

I.O. Nicolaitans.

Some of the Church Fathers, among them Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus favor the view that the Nicolaitans were the followers of Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch and one of the seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem. <sup>1</sup> Irenaeus took note of such a sect as existing in his time, and he traced it back to the deacon Nicolas supposing this sect to be the one mentioned in the book of Revelation. <sup>2</sup> Neander doubted the assertion of Irenaeus that the word Nicolaitans was the proper name of a sect, and he claimed that the passage in Revelation merely related to a class of people who were seducing Christians to participate in sacrificial feast of the heathen. The name may also be taken in a purely symbolical sense, signifying corrupters, seducers of people like the word Balaam.

$\aleph \bar{\iota} \bar{\gamma}$ νικο	+	$\alpha \lambda$ λαος
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Clement of Alexandria also spoke of such a sect, but did not believe that the Nicolas of the Acts was the founder of this sect. Clement defended Nicolas saying that the man lived in honourable wedlock to his death and left pious children behind him. Thus, concluded Neander, Irenaeus was not wrong in assuming the sect, but in ascribing it to Nicolas.

It was also customary for sects to attach themselves to apious person or celebrated name in order to influence their doctrine. This is assumed by some to be the case with the Nicolas of the Acts, the contention is also further upheld by the fact all references to him by the sect have an apocryphal aspect. Neander believes that this sect belonged to an

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1. Tertullian, The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. III. p-650  
 2. Irenaeus, The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I. p-382  
 3. Clement of Alexandria Ante Nicene Fathers Vol. II p-385

anti-Judaistic party and followed therefore the Apostle Paul. This sect then having found a reference in the Judaizing John who referred to them as a sect, probably used this as evidence of their antiquity and then assumed Nicolas of the Acts as their founder. To do this was the method of many of the Gnostics of the early days who chose their leader from persons mentioned in an unfavorable light from the Old and New Testaments<sup>1</sup>.

they taught the principle that the flesh must be abused, and according to Hippolytus they lead lives of unrestrained indulgence, practised adultery, ate things sacrificed to idols with the purpose of mortifying the body. The sect was not accused of any errors from the faith, but only with licentious conduct and a disregard of the command to abstain from meats of idols and fornication.

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Neander, A. Op. Cit., Vol. I. p-453.

### Monarchianism

The name Monarchianism is derived from the Greek word *μοναρχία* meaning a "single origin", and is given to a group of sects that arose within the Gentile Christian Church in the second century. "The first great cause of all things must be a single cause", was their common slogan. The Father is God "inoriginate", God in himself alone and of himself alone. Monarchianist was the common name of that period for the anti-trinitarians, and was given to these sects by Tertullian in his battle with them. Today they are known as Unitarians, because of their stress on the numerical unity of the God-head. <sup>1</sup>

The history of the Monarchian movement is as obscure as its origin. Even the current distinctions between them is not free from objections. The Monarchians are distinguished by the following names; dynamic Monarchians, also called Adoptionists because they taught that Jesus became a Son of God by adoption not because he was such by nature, secondly, <sup>2</sup> patripassianism, which identified the Logos with the Father. The name was coined for them by Origen, because it taught that the <sup>3</sup> father suffers, and finally, the Modalistic Monarchians who taught Christ as a mode of the activity of the Father. These terms were countered by subordinationism which taught the personal independence of the Logos from the father and the Spirit.

The Monarchian heresy to some extent seems to have been an indirect result of Monism, which had made much of the Gospel of St. John and therefore some opponents of Montanism in Asia Minor, the Alogi in particular

1. Schaff, P. op. Cit., Vol. II p-572

2. Ayer, L. C. A Source Book for Ancient Church History. p-172

3. Walker, W. A History of the Christian Church p-73

went to the extreme and rejected the entire fourth Gospel and of course the doctrine of the Logos. In this struggle philosophy played a great part and was placed on a par with the Scriptures. Platonic philosophy was used to defend the doctrine of Christ's divinity, while those opposed to this view leaned toward Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Some at various occasions accepted one and then another view, but rarely fought it, while the monarchian sects fought more violently among each other than they did with the subordination theory of the Church.

In this sect we must distinguish two distinct classes, 1. the rationalistic or dynamic Monarchians who denied the divinity of Christ, or explained it as a mere power, and 2. the patripassianist or Modalistic Monarchians who identified the Son with the Father and admitted at most only a modal trinity, that is, a threefold mode of revelation but not a tri-personality. The second class accepted the deity of Christ but also a pantheistic notion that approached Gnostic Docetism. The first one prejudiced the dignity of the Son and the other the dignity of the Father, but the latter was by far the more Christian and therefore met with greater acceptance. The divinity of Christ was firmly believed, but they sacrificed to it his independent personality which they merged in the essence of the Father. They taught that the one supreme God became man, so that the son is the Father veiled in the flesh. Thus the Modalists were more dangerous than their rationalistic brethren and for a number of years had the support of the bishop seat at Rome.

#### II. A. Dynamic Monarchianism

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1. Neander, A. Op. Cit., Vol. I. P-582

The first form, the Dynamic Monarchianism arose in a form of Jewish monothelism which rose no higher than Ebionism. After it was defeated in the Church it arose outside of it on a much grander scale, and forms the major part of present day Mohammedanism.

As a class this group should be considered as Catholic. They were in harmony with their opponents except in points of controversy. They had many of the pre-catholic characteristics. Their deviation from the catholic canon points to a period before the formation of this canon. Though their concept of God was a bond between them yet it is impossible to find a distinct line of demarcation. The sources of information consist mainly of the accounts of the opponents who to a great extent in some cases distorted and misrepresented the doctrines of their antagonists. All of these heresies arose in the east, and had little following there. "All roads lead to Rome", so everyone who had something new to say went there.

#### The Alogians.

The Alogians or Alogi are a sect of Asia Minor that arose about the year 170-180. Little is known of them. They derived their name from Epiphanius, who gave it to them because of their aversion to the doctrine of the Logos. They started in opposition to the chiliasm of the Montanists and their claims of prophecy and prophetic gifts. Because of this, and their extreme rationalism, they rejected all that was mysterious. Therefore the brunt of their criticism fell on the Apocalypse and the Gospel of St. John, which ascribed to the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. The Apocalypse was rejected because of its chiliastic contents and the Gospel of

John because of the use made of the Paraclete and because of the Logos doctrine. These two books the Alogi attributed to the Gnostic Cerinthus. In relation to the Gospel of St. John, the Alogi maintained that it had numerous discrepancies when compared with the other three Gospels. To them John was distinctly deotic because of its abrupt transition from the Logos to the ministry of Jesus. Of the Johannine epistles no information as to their stand is accessible, but it is supposed that these were likewise rejected. This supposition is derived from a writing of Hippolytus in which he defended the Johannine epistles.

Of their Christology nothing is known except that they rejected the Logos and the "birth from on high". Their chief interest lay in the human side of Jesus. From this it is deduced that they greatly emphasized baptism, although no definite statement to verify this can be found. This sect was the first to apply historical criticism to the Christian writings and tradition. Of the length of their existence or influence nothing is known.<sup>1</sup>

#### Theodotians.

The second Monarchistic sect known as the Theodotians derived its name from its founder Theodotus. He sprang up from Byzantium where he had denied Christ in a persecution, with the apology that he denied only a man; still holding to a supernaturally begotten Messiah. He arrived at Rome about the year 190 and founded a sect there and soon afterwards he was excommunicated by Bishop Victor. He seems to be a man of good education

1. Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia, Vol. IV. p-454



and was highly esteemed before his apostasy. His doctrine of the God-head is an outgrowth of that of the Alogians. In his attempt to justify his dynamic monarchianism he gave as proof a one-sided interpretation of scripture passages referring to the human nature of Christ. <sup>1</sup>

The philosophumena affirms Theodotus's orthodoxy in theology and cosmology. His Christology consisted of this that Jesus was only a man although born through a peculiar union between God and Mary in agreement with a special decree of God. Christ did not receive special divine essence until after a life of perfect purity the Holy "host descended on Him at the time of his baptism in order to give Him power to perform his mission. Christ had no pre-eminence above mankind, he was only more righteous. Followers of Theodotus claimed that He became God through His resurrection, and others again denied this.

Theodotus tried to base his doctrine on the Scriptures. Eusebius states that they examined of a divine truth whether or not a connected or disjoined form of syllogism could be formulated. In short they abandoned Holy Scriptures for a study of logic. <sup>2</sup> His citations have been preserved and show us that the Council had been established already at this time. Following the same line of exegesis as the Alogi, he appealed to Deuteronomy 18, 15. Jeremiah 17, 9; Isaiah 53, 2-3; Matthew 12, 32; Luke 1, 35; John 8, 40; Acts 2, 22; and I Timothy 2, 5. All these passages lay great emphasis on the humanity of Christ, and as such are used to place Christ on a lower level. From Matthew 12, 32, "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man,

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1. Tertullian, Op. Cit., Vol. III p-654

2. Eusebius, Op. Cit., p-202

it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him", it is deduced that the Holy Ghost is superior to the Son of Man, while from Deuteronomy 18, 15 "the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee", they argue that even the risen Christ was not God. In Luke 1, 35 this sect stressed the phrase "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee", and misread the rest of the verse. In the Gospel of John the word "word" was interpreted as "spirit".<sup>1</sup>

The followers of Theodotus were few, and the attempt of two of them, Theodotus, the money changer, and a certain Clepiodotus to found a church in Rome after being excommunicated by Pope Zephyrinus, failed. For a short time they had their own bishop Natalius who was paid 150 denarii a month for holding that office. He however was a weakminded person who haunted by visions and beaten one night by the good angels hastened to Bishop Zephyrinus and begged for mercy. He was readmitted into the church.<sup>2</sup> From the statements of the author of the "Little Labyrinth" we learn that Theodotus the younger used the same methods as his predecessors. They used their system of exegesis, text criticism, and the study of logic, mathematics, and natural sciences entirely in the cause of their theology. They substituted in contrast to orthodox catholicism the empiricism of Plato and Zeno, grammatical for allegorical exegesis, and a more original for the traditional text. Nothing remains of their works, but their writings confirm them in their own concepts of Christ as a man in whom the Spirit worked to a greater degree than in anyone else.

It is not clear in what manner Theodotus the younger differed from

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1. Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia, Vol. IV p-454  
2. Eusebius, Op. Cit., p-202

the elder, but it is evident from the Philosophumena that there was a controversy. Many writers following the example of Hippolytus, ascribe the foundation of the sect of Melchisedecians to this younger Theodotus. This is based on Hippolytus's interpretation of Theodotus's exegesis of Hebrews 5, 6, 20; 7, 3-17. This man sought by anaxegesis of the above mentioned passages to prove that Melchisedec was "dunamis tis megiste", and more glorious than Christ, the former the original, and the latter the copy. The inferiority of Christ to Melchisedek is based on the passage "thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek." This man was considered the advocate before God and a high priest for mankind. Christ was a priest too, but of lower degree. They argued that Melchisedek was fatherless, motherless, and without genealogy, of whom neither the beginning nor the end can or has been comprehended. Christ, on the other hand, was born of a woman, and is a descendant of David, therefore since Melchisedek's parentage is hidden he is the one of heavenly origin.

On the basis of their exegesis of I Cor. 8, 6? "but to us there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him", Christ was made to compete the Holy Ghost, the name of Jesus here being stricken out. Thus this group maintained that the only divine essence besides the Father was that of the Holy Ghost who was identical with the Son of God. This Holy Ghost appeared to Abraham as the "King of Righteousness." Jesus was only a man given or anointed with the Holy Ghost consequently he was inferior to the Holy Ghost and not the true Son of God. <sup>1</sup> On the basis of this statement the question arises—can they be classified with the

Monarchianists, for they no longer held the numerical oneness of the God-head?

#### Artemas.

About thirty years after the arrival of theodotian christology, an attempt was made by Artemas to revive the old Christology. He lived about 340 and claimed that all his ideas were first used by the Apostles themselves and preserved in the Gospels till the time of Victor, but then were corrupted. He declared the doctrine of the Trinity an innovation and a restoration of heathen polytheism. Because of this he was excommunicated by Zephyrinus, who was then bishop of Rome.

Euclid and Aristotle were placed on a higher plane than Christ, and mathematics and dialectics were esteemed higher than the Gospels. This indicates an intellectual revolt against mystery, and shows the use of Aristotle by some against the divinity of Christ, as Plato and others were used to establish it. This sect accused the Roman Church as being obscure in true doctrine, and the accusation was substantiated by Hippolytus in his philosophoumena, when he stated that Zephyrinus and possibly Victor, against the opposition of the Church, favored patripassianism, and in behalf of this doctrine condemned the Artemonites.<sup>1</sup>

In the West dynamic Monarchianism expired after about forty years with Artemas and his group; but in the East two attempts were made to reintroduce it, one of which under Beryllus of Bostra failed, but the other under Paul of Samosata succeeded for a time.

Paul of Samosata.

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<sup>1</sup> I. Schaff, P. Op. Cit., p- 574-575 Vol. III

paul was bishop of Antioch and may be described as a man without religion, without conscience, shrewd, clever, ambitious, who used the ministry as a means from poverty to power and in this he was very successful. He was the favorite of Zenobia, Jewish queen of Palmyra. Through her influence he became Bishop of Antioch between 251-260. At the same time he was appointed civil governor of Antioch with a salary of about 8000 dollars. He was proud and conceited, loved applause, and used his power, civil and religious against anyone who dared withstand him. He embraced the heresy of the Roman monarchians and attempted to revise theology in such a way that it suited his Jewish patroness and her counsellors.<sup>1</sup>

paul taught that the Father, son and Holy Ghost are one person. we may distinguish Logos, son Wisdom, Holy Spirit, but only as qualities of God. God sent forth the Logos from eternity and begat Him, so the Logos may be called Son though he remains an impersonal power. The Logos worked in the prophets. The Logos worked to a greater degree in Moses and to the highest degree in the virgin-born Christ. The Logos dwelt in the man Jesus without changing him. Paul appeals for support to John 14, 10, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me, the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Mary gave birth to a man and the man not the Logos was baptized with the Spirit. As Jesus advanced so the Father endowed him with miraculous powers, so that he finally became a Redeemer and Savior of mankind and finally became inseparably united with God forever. He tried to show that the belief that Jesus was by nature

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1. Waterman, L. Op. Cit., p-430-431

the son of God led to ditheism. <sup>1</sup> The Logos and the Holy Ghost were identical. He also made the distinction of the Logos propheticus from the Logos endiathetos, the one as working in the prophets and the other as latent in God the father. <sup>2</sup>

While gabbellianism tended toward pantheism which confounded God and the world, paul went to the opposite extreme and fixed an impassable gulf between God and the creature, there being no relationship between God and man. The Logos according to paul is in relation to God as reason is related to man--likewise the spirits relation to God as nothing other than the spirits relation to man. He only conceded that the divine reason dwelt in Christ to a greater degree than in anyone else. <sup>3</sup> To convey these ideas he banished Church Hymns which he considered an innovation, and allowed only the psalms and Scriptures, which he then altered to his own sense and teaching.

The first action taken against him resulted from accusations of heresy and misconduct brought against him by bishops under him in Syria. A council met and the charges were laid against him, but the gathering believed that it had been misinformed because of the subtle and plausible explanations which paul offered. These were accepted and the council dispersed. Firmilian, however a few years later convened another council. This time Malchion, a presbyter of Antioch, also a dialectician and rhetorician courageously and with skill unmasked paul in a public disputation. Paul, now confronted with this tide of opposition against him, recanted

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1. Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia, Vol. IV. p-457

2. Kurtz, Op. Cit., Vol. I p-181

3. Heander, A, Op. Cit., Vol. I p-601-602

and promised to make amends. The assembly again trusted him. Paul's recantation soon proved to be false, and a third council was called. Firmilian, the able leader, died on the way at Tarsus and Helenus of Tarsus then presided in his stead. This council then deposed and excommunicated Paul, and placed Domnus a grandson of Paul's predecessor, Demetrian, in the bishops seat. <sup>1</sup>

The immediate deposition of Paul could not be executed because of Zebodia, and he remained in office for four years, the church being divided. Finally in the year 272 after the subjugation of the Queen by the Emperor Aurelian, and after consultation with Italian bishops the order was executed.

In this council two things demand attention. 1. The election of Domnus was irregular. This was however necessary because of the power which Paul had over the people at Antioch and under such conditions no free election was possible. The second thing of importance was the condemnation of the Greek word homo-ousios, as heretical. This word later changed its sense and became the watchword of orthodox Christology. Paul argued, according to Athanasius, that, if the Father and Son were consubstantial, then there was an ousia above them to the unity of which they were both subordinate. Because of this, the word was condemned. Thus within a period of sixty years the use and failure to use this word were both condemned. <sup>2</sup>

The result of this great controversy was the fall of Dynamic or Adoptionistic Monarchianism, and secondly the establishment of the Alexandrian theology with their terms--logos, ousia, prosopon, indispensable to the formation of dogma. Thirdly the suppression of this heresy was a political triumph of the Roman party over those in Syria.

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1. Gieseler, L. Op. Cit., p-432

2. Peakes Jackson, The History of the Christian Church to A.D. 451. p-157-168

The influence of Paul did not die out with his deposition, but continued on to later harass the Church with much more vigor and determination than it had thus far shown, for in the fourth century under the leadership of Lucian of Samosata and his followers it developed into Arianism. The direct followers of Paul were also perpetuated in the Paulicians of Armenia, whose writings bear his name.



### I.L.B. Modalistic Monarchians

The real danger to the Logos-Christology arose about the years 180-240 in the modalistic form which regarded Christ as God in person and as the Father incarnate. The advocates of this heresy were known as Modalists or Patripassianists in the West and Sabellians in the East. Their chief opponents were Tertullian, Origen, Novatian, and Hippolytus. Patripassianism may be characterized as the precursor and the first crude form of Modalism, originating in the second century in Asia Minor from whence it moved to Rome where, after a bitter struggle it secured a foothold in the third century. Hippolytus says this controversy troubled the entire church, and Origen states that at his time the "economic" trinity and the application of the concept of the Logos to Christ was regarded with suspicion by the majority of Christians. The popularity of this form of Christology in the East is reflected by the innumerable apocryphal acts of the Apostles which represent the modalistic Christology. In the West especially at Rome, Monarchianism in this form became entrenched to such a degree that it became the official teaching of the Roman Bishop, due primarily to the struggle with Gnosticism. Modalistic Monarchianism did not last long however for it had accepted the aid of science; of Stoicism, and was thereafter on the road to a pantheistic concept of God.

The Modalistic Monarchians held that Christ was the Father and that the father himself had been born, had suffered, and had died. If Christ is God then he must surely be the Father, therefore if Christ suffered, God suffered. They however retained the distinction between the Father and Son saying that it was merely nominal, except in so far as it was redemptorial,

since the one God because of His birth as man, appeared as the Son. God is invisible, visible, incomprehensible, comprehensible, unconquerable, conquerable, unbegotten, begotten, immortal, mortal, as he wills.

When asked to explain the Biblical passages that distinguished the Son from the father, they replied that the flesh made the father the son, or that the Redeemer, the flesh, man, Jesus--was the Son, and the Spirit, God, Christ--was the Father. To support this view they appealed to Luke 1,35. Thus their doctrine came relatively close to that of the Artemonite heresy.

In the conflict with these classes of Monarchians, the Church developed the doctrine of the Trinity both in the Western and the Eastern Churches. In the Eastern Church the doctrine of subordination became established in connection with the Hypostatical view of the Logos. The Western Church began with the doctrine of subordination, accepted along with the hypostatical view, to make more prominent the unity of the divine essence along with their distinction. The doctrine next passed over to the Alexandrian school who then proceeded to remove all relations of time and analogies.<sup>1</sup>

The Hypostatical view rejected and refuted the Monarchians' identification of the Father with the Son by clear Biblical arguments, but tradition favored the Monarchians, and their opponents risked approximating Gnosticism in their speculation against them. Tertullian and his disciples tried valiantly to silence their opponents but were unable to because their Logos was an inferior divine being, their view likewise conflicting with liturgical tradition that taught the coequality of Father and Son.<sup>2</sup>

1. Meander, A. Op. Cit., Vol. I. p-535-536

2. Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia, Vol. IV. 439-460.

Praxeas.

The first proponent of this branch of Monarchianism was Praxeas, a confessor of Asia Minor who brought his heresy to Rome. Here in Rome he dissuaded the Bishop Victor and compelled him to recall his letters of peace to the Phrygians which gave them fellowship and acknowledged their gifts of prophecy. Thereupon he expounded his views of patripassianism and gained Victor over to his teaching. The error of Praxeas appears to have been originated in his desire to maintain the unity of God which he thought only could be done by uniting the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost as one. He did not say however that the Father and the Son were one. Likewise he did not say that the Father actually died, but of a sympathy (copati) of the Father and the Son, considering the relation of the Father to the Son as that of the spirit to the flesh. Tertullian met him in vindication of Montanism with crushing logic and then charged him with having executed two commissions of the devil. "By this, Praxeas did a two-fold service for the devil, he drove away prophecy and brought in heresy, he put to flight the paraclete and crucified the Father." Praxeas defended himself by appealing to Isaiah 45, 5; John 10, 30 "I and the Father are one", and John 14, 9 "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Tertullian in his arguments used the passage ps. 27 "Thou art my son this day have I begotten thee", and Isaiah 42, 1, "Behold my Son whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom I am well pleased, I will put my spirit in Him and He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.

After his success in Rome Praxeas went to Carthage to promulgate his heresy there, but he met Tertullian, who later relates that Praxeas recanted.<sup>1</sup>

1. Tertullian, Op. Cit., Vol. III pp 597-598; 605-606

### The Noctian Heresy.

A second heretic of the same character was Noctus of Smyrna, who published his views about the year 300 A.D. He appealed to Romans 9,5 as the basis of his teaching, where Christ is called "the one God over all." When he was first called before the presbyters he denied the accusations brought against him. The second time, however, he held firm to his error saying that his doctrine enhanced the glory of Christ. Hippolytus placed him in the same group with the pantheistic philosophy of Heraclitus which viewed nature as the harmony of all antithesis.<sup>1</sup> Thus Noctus taught that the same divine being must be able to combine opposite attributes to itself. One father and God of the universe who became visible when he wished in the various forms of the Trinity. The Father is meant when the Son is spoken of and the Father suffered and died, when the Son died. Two of his disciples Epigonus and Cleonenes propagated this doctrine in Rome and won Bishop Zephyrinus over to their views. This heresy was later accepted and taught under the bishop Callixtus of Rome. Hippolytus claimed that Noctus derived his doctrine from Epigonus, while others hold that the reverse was true.<sup>1</sup>

### Beryllus of Bostra.

Beryllus of Bostra, about the year 214, introduced a new heresy which denied the personal pre-existence and the independent divinity of Christ, but at the same time believed in the indwelling of the divinity of the Father in Christ during his earthly life. This teaching is a bridge between patripassianism and Sabellian modalism. He tried to prove that the personality of Christ was of purely human origin and that He had no personal existence before his

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1. Hippolytus, Op. Cit., Vol. V. p-148.225

incarnation. The divinity of Christ was derived from the Father thus denying the hypostasis of the Logos, but he was forced in order to evade the position of the patripassianists to give the Logos a hypostatical existence after the incarnation by recognizing "an efflux of the divine essence rather than the whole deity of Christ." The Synod of Bostra condemned him, but that didn't phase him till he met Origen, who likewise had been summoned to Bostra for he too was accused of heresy. At their meeting Origen convinced him of his error, pointing out the existence of a human soul in Christ. Beryllus is said to have thanked Origen for setting him right. This is one of the few early theological disputations that promulgated unity instead of greater divisions.

#### Sabellianism.

The term Sabellianism was applied to the modalistic Monarchians of the East about the beginning of the third century. The leader of this group, as the name indicates was Sabellius, who came from ptolemais in pentapolis, Africa. He followed along the path of Beryllus, but was more profound in thought than his fellow Monarchians. He first taught in Rome about the year 215, but was speedily excommunicated by Callistus. Here he was opposed by Hippolytus, the controversy also causing the excommunication of the latter.<sup>1</sup>

In the battle between the Monarchians of the East and the Hypostatic Christology was extremely bitter and was one of the great influences that took part in the forming of the Logos Christology. Also the fact that Mon-

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1. Heander, A. Op. Cit., Vol. I p-295

archianism in the East was called Sabellianism seems to indicate a schism between the two forms of Monarchianism there. Sabellians assigned an essential and necessary place to the Holyghost and this fact distinguished them from the other groups active in the east at that time. Sabellius used the three names of the Triad to express the three different phases of the one divine essence. God was a Monad dwelling in silence but who later revealed himself in the creation, secondly as the person of the Son, the Redeemer, and thirdly, in the person of the Holy Ghost as the maker and giver of life. Each is a prosopa, that is a character or form of manifestation of one God.

One of the remarkable and unique features of Sabellianism is that the Logos is placed on a higher plane than the Father. The Logos came forth from the Monad, and at the same time was represented as abiding therein while the Father was merely one of the prosopa.<sup>1</sup> Walker, on the other hand, states that one of the most essential features of Sabellianism was his equality of the Monads, and which he attributed as a step toward the doctrine of the unity and equality of the Trinity over the subordination of the Son and Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> The source of this doctrine according to Epiphanius was an apocryphal Gospel. In this Gospel Christ is said to have communicated to his disciples some similar notions respecting the relation of the Monad to the Triad.

Sabellianism like the other branches of its form failed due to the fact that it recognized in the historic Christ a mere transitory exhibition of God's power, and did not characterize the divine Christ as an eternal

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1. Peakes Jackson, Op. Cit., p-164

2. Walker, V. Op. Cit., p-74

determination of the essence of God." The Christians felt too great a need for a personal Christ to accept a theory which took from them His eternal presence. The heresy ~~was~~ made one contribution to the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, in that it broke the pre-eminence of the Father over the Son and Holy Ghost, thus preparing the way for Athanasius's and Augustine's Christology.

The Modalistic Monarchians led by Sabellius were opposed by Hippolytus. Zephyrinus was inclined toward the modalistic view, but his object was to avoid a schism at all costs. Calixtus, his successor, followed the same policy but with the intensification of the struggle he was forced to excommunicate both Sabellius and Hippolytus, proposing in their stead a Christology that bridged the two parties, by which the Roman Christians passed from Monarchianism to the Hypostatical view of Christology. "Hippolytus who fought Sabellius, was the most learned Christian writer in the city of that day. He was the great advocate of the Logos Christology in Rome, chronicler, calculator of Easter dates, apologist, and an opponent of all heretics. Throughout his life he was honoured highly by those who knew him, and at his death his followers erected the earliest Christian portrait statue known. Calixtus however charged him of being a worshipper of two Gods, and because of this Hippolytus broke with him and became rival head or 'counter pope' of Rome, a position which he held till his banishment in the persecution of the year 235.

Calixtus or pope Callistus I taught that the Father, Son and Logos were all names of one indivisible God, the Son being the proper designation of that which was visible, Jesus, while the Father was the

spirit in Him. The presence of the Father in Jesus was the Logos. The Father did not suffer on the cross, but suffered with the sufferings of the son, Jesus, yet the Father after He had taken unto Himself our flesh raised it to the nature of a deity by bringing it into union with Himself and made it one, so that Father and Son must be styled God. This indwelling of the divine persons he called (perichoresis). The whole doctrine is unclear and we cannot blame either Sabellius or Hippolytus for not accepting it. Yet it was a compromise that recognized a human Jesus raised to the divinity by the Father and made one with God. This compromise over the vast majority of the people in Rome and opened the door for later victory of the Logos Christology, where Tertullian wrote against Praxeas.



### III. Montanism.

The heresy known as Montanism grew out of the character of the natives of that section of the country from which it originated. Greek Christianity had a different tone than the Roman Christianity, and they in turn differed from English Christianity. A degraded people will adopt their own false notions to the Gospel of Christ when it is introduced. To study the background of the Phrygians is necessary in order to understand what brought about the Montanist heresy. Phrygian worship was a nature worship. To them life was a divine fact of the universe and the process of generation was considered a constant triumph over their arch-enemy death. The earth was the Great Mother, she was the Goddess of Liberty knowing no law, no restraint. Consequently the worship of the people was debaucherous, and her priestesses were consecrated to prostitution.

This then taught men to cultivate passion and emotion rather than to restrain it. Thus when Christianity made its appearance, people of this type were interested in two things, its prophecy and its speaking with tongues. Montanus then became the leader of these people. He accepted the Christian faith but proclaimed a new dispensation, namely, that of the Holy Ghost. Moses had been succeeded by Christ, but now the Holy Ghost succeeded, rather fulfilled, the promise of Christ.

Aside from the natural expression of the Phrygians other elements caused this heresy to unfold. In the second place in the majority of the churches the hope of an early second coming of Christ was growing dim. The consciousness of the constant inspiration of the Spirit in the Catholic Church was fading away. This decline of the present work of the

of the spirit brought about an increasing emphasis on His significance as an agent of revelation. On the contrary the Spirit had been the inspiration of prophecy in the Old Testament, likewise inspiring the New Testament writers. The Trinitarian formula of baptism included the Holy Ghost and was widely used at that time, then the Johannine Gospel represented Christ as promising the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Thus we find that the second century was convinced not only that the Holy Ghost was in association with God the Father and Son, but that Christ had promised the Holy Ghost's coming in more abundant measure in the future. It was this thought of special dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the belief in the end of the world and the fresh outburst of prophetic enthusiasm that are represented in Montanism. Thirdly Montanism arose in opposition to a slight laxity of moral, religious, and ascetical requirements in the church of the second and third centuries.<sup>1</sup> It opposed the realism and literature of the doctrine and facts of scriptural revelation; it opposed the secularization of the Church; and it opposed the hierarchial tendencies that were becoming more and more prominent.

Montanism is a combination of all the ascetic, rigoristic, and chil-  
iastic elements of the ancient church. This sect originally was not a  
departure from the true faith, but an over-emphasis of practical morality  
and discipline of the early Church. It was a super-puritanism against  
Gnostic rationalism and catholic laxity; the first example of an earnest  
and well meaning, but fanatical hyper-Christianity which ended in the  
flesh.

It originated in Asia Minor, in some insignificant village of the

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1. Walker, W. op. Cit., p-87-88

province of Phrygia, where Paul and his disciples had planted the congregations of Ephesus, Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. The movement began in the proconsulate of Gratus, this name evidently being a corruption of Quadratus. A Quadratus was proconsul in Asia <sup>Minor</sup> in 155, and another one in the year 160. Thus the Montanistic movement must have originated in one of these two years. By 177 the movement had been fully developed and according to the writings of Apollinaris, condemned. Polycarp's martyrdom occurred in the middle of the second century and accounts of this martyrdom show that at that time tendencies existed in Phrygia which correspond closely to the Montanistic view.

Montanus, the leader of the sect, came from a village of Nysia in Phrygia, called Ardaba, and is reputed to have been a "mutilated priest of Cybele," a man of no talents but of a burning zeal. He was subject to somnambulistie ecstasies and considered himself the inspired messenger of the promised paraclete. Eusebius makes the statement that Montanus even went so far as to pretend that he was the paraclete.<sup>1</sup> He however claimed to be a prophet of God sent by God as an inspired reformer of the whole Church life, which was to be elevated by him to the highest state of perfection. He soon converted two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who became his prophetesses, when he induced to leave their husbands, being given the title of "Virgins".<sup>2</sup> The mental condition of the prophets Tertullian calls "amentia an excidere sensu", and describes it in a way which suggest some sort of clairvoyance. These prophets, Apollinarius relates dyed their hair, stained their eyelids, erna-  
1. Eusebius, Op. Cit., p-182

mented themselves, and were very able with dice.<sup>1</sup> All the sayings of his prophetesses, Montanus had collected into quasi-Gospels, and were to be used and accepted along with the existing Canon.

The Church considered this form of prophecy unwarranted since it had not been the form of prophecy in the Old and New Testaments. The Montanists however appealed in support of their mode of prophecy to the examples of ecstasy in the Bible and at the same time claimed that their mode was proof of the importance of their revelation. Their prophecy was considered the fulfillment of the law of Christ and in it the promised paraclete had appeared, claiming the right to regulate life in the Church because the end of the world was approaching. The Montanist on the other hand did not claim to reveal further truths of salvation. The practical side of the new prophecy led it to defend the doctrine of the resurrection and to develop the doctrine of eschatology.

They based the right of their women to prophecy on the story of Miriam in the Pentateuch, and also the example of Deborah. The opposition however contended that prophecy had ceased with John the Baptist, and was sealed once and for all by the death and resurrection of Christ. Scriptural proof for their ecstasy they derived from Genesis 2, 7f; Psalm 66, 11; and Acts 10, 11. They also alluded to the prophecies recorded in Acts 15, 32; 27, 11; I Cor. 12, 28; and to John, the daughter of Philip, Anna, and Quadratus. Regarding their teaching of prophecy, prophets were not limited to any group or sect nor sex, secular purity being the only thing necessary to receive this new prophecy. They based these claims on the universal

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1. Gieseler, op. cit., p-190

priesthood of all believers. The Christians countered by the statement of St. Paul, who had admonished the Christians to look for the charismata, not however by its extraordinary supernatural appearances which marked their efforts, but by the degree in which the natural in them was permeated by the supernatural. Montanism however opposed itself to the combination or union of the natural with the supernatural. The human element must recede and only the ecstatic element was considered as belonging to genuine prophecy. Those who accepted the new prophecy were called spirituals, and all others were considered as carnally minded and unregenerate, therefore psychical.

The new revelations were not very bad in themselves. In the main they stressed a more ascetic life, but the question was deeper than this. If the Holy Ghost spoke through Montanus, then the whole Church must submit to whatever he and his two prophetesses proposed. Secondly, the Church considered the doctrine that the paraclete had not appeared until this late date, as an insult to the Apostle and that the legalism and legalistic requirements of the Montanists destroyed Christian liberty. Thirdly, the Christians considered the whole idea contradictory to the Scriptures, and quoted such passages as Isaiah 48, 4-5; Psalm 51, 16; Jeremiah 8, 4; Ezekiel 18, 23; Mark 7, 15; and Matthew 11, 19 to prove this contention. Those who opposed Montanism fell into the error of the opposite extreme, and denied many truths held by the Montanists. On the death of Maximilla about the year 150 the other two having died, the supposed gift of prophecy among them seems to have disappeared. Maximilla herself stated that with her death prophecy would end and the return of Christ would come to pass. The prophets were succeeded by the

Seneca, who were above the bishops and immediately after the patriarchs in clerical standing.

When persecution broke forth under Antonius, which caused the death of Polycarp, these three prophets went forth as reformers of Christian life. They proclaimed the coming of the Holy Ghost and of the millennial reign of pepusa, a small village in Phrygia which the new Jerusalem was to be. This place was associated with the wilderness of Revelation 12,14, where the followers were to await the end of the world.

The work begun by the three reformers went, however far beyond their intentions, spreading to Rome, and North Africa and threw the whole church into commotion and gave rise to the first synods which are mentioned after the Apostolic Age. The whole purpose of this new prophecy was to prepare the church for the approaching end. Seldom, if ever, were new forms introduced, but what had been hitherto voluntary now became a duty. The number of fasts were increased and the Jero-phagi, or half-feast, which excluded meats, soups, or juicy fruits were introduced. It was the habit of the montanist that wherever the church permitted a distinction between a laxer or stricter rule, they chose the latter, for example, flight during persecution was forbidden, and martyrdom encouraged. All these requirements were placed on the people, because the last days were at hand, and because the paraclete had ordered it so. Marriage should be no longer contracted, the reason being that because of the shortness of the time, the paraclete could annul the words of St. Paul as Christ had annulled those of Moses.

Montanism however did not remain in the East, but spread rapidly to

the west. It however differed from that of the East in that it discarded the extravagant chiliasm of the Eastern group. It stressed the continued work of the Holy Ghost and a more ascetic life, than that of the east. In Rome, Montanism was led by a certain Praxas about the year 200-215. A petition sent by the Christians at Lyon, persuaded Eutherus to publish letters of peace, but Praxas, who had just arrived in Rome dissuaded the bishop from his policy, and converted him to Monarchianism, and thereby incurred the wrath of Tertullian.

In what manner and at what date Montanism gained entrance into Africa is not definitely known. From Rome it most probably spread to Africa, amounting to little or nothing until Tertullian returned from Rome to Carthage and decided in its favor. At this time the Montanists party still enjoyed fellowship in the Catholic Church. This is borne out by the "Acts of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas", written some time later. The bishops and clergy together with the majority of the laity opposed this new ecstatic visionary prophecy, but an open breach did not appear till the year 206 when the persecution of Septimus Severus had ceased. Never however were they considered as heretics, but merely as a separatistic overstraining of views allowed by the Church." It was possible to leave this mild estimate of Montanism stand because there was little or none at all of the extravagant prophecy in Africa as in Asia Minor. The party that accepted Montanism were those who were opposed to the growing power of the clergy. They tried to make authority yield to spiritual illumination.

The continuation of the Montanistic Church is due largely to Tertullian, who was born about the year 150-155 of well-to-do parents

in Carthage. He studied law and practised it in Rome. He knew the Greek language, history, and philosophy. About the year 190-195 he was converted to Christianity, probably in Rome, whereupon he busied himself with a study of Christian literature both orthodox and heterodox. At Carthage he became a presbyter and remained such till his death about the year 222-225. The asceticism of Montanism appealed to him and it was concerning this that he broke with the Catholic Church, although he never formally seceded from it. He was one of the first ecclesiastical writers to use Latin and his style was vivid, readable, and very satirical. Tertullian was the head of the party in many respects such as mental acumen, as theological teacher, and apologist. His writings despite their Montanistic tendencies were held in high regard by the Catholic church. Montanus was hardly the man of sufficient importance and character to give him the credit of this great movement, although he should be recognized for having given this movement its initial impulse, an impulse of fanatical excitement under the leadership of a man as Tertullian is however in the main responsible for the widespread and lasting influence of Montanism.

Tertullian's greatest piece of work was his treatise *Contra praxeam*, which was the great answer of the Western Church to Monarchianism. The definition of his Christology in this work is however not acceptable in that he conceives of only one essence, which was shared by the three persons, and which he speaks of as one essence unequally divided. He says the father is the whole essence, but the Son is a portion of it. For proof he calls upon the words of the Lord "The father is greater than I." His great gifts and abilities however were marred by his narrowness, for he was unable to see any good in his opponents, in philosophy,



and went so far as to claim that heretics had no right to be heard and that the lapsed were traitors and should be shown no regard. Mercy shown to sinners was to him an offense. Tertullian's break with the Church seems to have resulted from one of these narrow views. He rejected the argument of Callistus who held that those guilty of carnal sins upon repentance could return to the Church.

In doctrine Montanism agreed with all the essential points of Catholic dogma. Tertullian did oppose infant baptism for the reason that mortal sins could not be forgiven after baptism, but since infant baptism was not yet a Catholic dogma, it mattered little. On the contrary he contributed to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity by maintaining a personal distinction in God over against patripassianism and all the forms of Ebionism. Tertullian conceived of religion as a process of development. In this process he distinguishes four stages, 1. Natural religion, or the innate idea of God that exists in man before conversion; 2. the legal religion of the Old Testament; 3. the Gospels during the early life of Christ; and 4. the revelation of the paraclete, that is the spiritual religion of the Montanists. They therefore called themselves by the term *persecution* or spiritual Church in distinction from the carnal Catholic Church. In allowing this, Tertullian gave the revelation of the Phrygian prophets on matters of practice an importance that interfered with the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

The Montanists held a universal priesthood including females over against the special priesthood of the Catholic Church. Women were used as deaconesses and even priestesses. (Iris 3, 11; Gal. 3, 28 being used as Scripture proof in allowing them to participate in Church work.

All this was a democratic reaction against the monopolization of all ministerial privileges and functions of the Church. The sect based its qualifications and appointment to the office of a teacher directly from the Holy Ghost, in distinction of the outward ordination and episcopal succession. It was on this point that they assumed a schismatic character, but all they did was to place another kind of aristocracy into the place of the condemned distinction of clergy and laity.

Another trait of Montanism was the visionary millennialism that Tertullian based on the Apocalypse. They were the most enthusiastic millennialists holding to a speedy coming of Christ. In praying "thy kingdom come", they looked for the end of the world. The result of this was utter contempt for the present order of things. The failure of the end of the world to come when it should have was one of the points that weakened the faith of their system, but at the same time increased the worldliness of the Catholic Church.

Asceticism and Church discipline was another characteristic of this fanatical sect. They raised a zealous protest against the ever-increasing worldliness of the Catholic Church, which in Rome under Zephyrinus and Callistus now established a scheme of indulgence for the grossest of sins. Truly this was worth protesting about, but the Montanists went to the opposite extreme and fell from evangelical freedom into Jewish legalism, in making this new discipline the chief office of the new prophecy. Montanism looked with horror upon all the enjoyments of life, even art. It forbade women to wear ornamental clothing and required all virgins to wear veils. It courted blood-baptism of martyrdom and condemned flight or concealment from persecution as a denial of

Christ. They multiplied fasts and other ascetic exercises, as the best preparation for the coming millennial reign, carrying them to the extreme. Montanism prohibited second marriage as adultery, and considered first marriage as a concession on the part of God to the sensuous infirmity of man. It taught the impossibility of second repentance and refused to allow the people who had lapsed to re-enter the Church. Tertullian considered all mortal sins (seven in number), committed after baptism to be unforgivable at least in this world. Those excommunicated remained for the rest of their lives in "status penitentium". They allowed unbaptized persons to attend all services; and had the habit of baptizing the dead. The Lord's Supper was celebrated with bread and cheese and it was done so says Augustine because the first men had presented offerings of the fruits of earth and sheep.

The bishops and synods in 170, although not united, declared this new prophecy the work of demons and applied exorcism which cut the Montanists off from fellowship in the Church. This assembly agreed that it was super-natural and as such could come either from God or the devil, and ascribed it to the latter. A second reason for excommunication consisted in this that the higher revelation made the works of the Apostles defective and incomplete. The synods followed fixed norms and definite authorities when handling these heretics. Apostolic tradition gave the answer, for many of the bishops had direct lines of descent from the Apostles themselves. Secondly the Canon of the New Testament, Thirdly, the Apostolic faith or Apostles Creed. With this array of evidence as a basis the Church expelled these heretical teachers. Matthew 11, 33 "the prophets and the law prophesied until John the Baptist---then they were to cease", became the watchword of the Christians thereafter.

In the west the sole opposition to this decree of Synods came from Gaul. Many of these people had migrated from Phrygia, and they now addressed a pious and orthodox letter to those of Asia Minor exhorting them to peace and unity. Irenaeus, their presbyter, was sent to Rome to persuade Eleutherus to be lenient with the Montanists. In North Africa, the Montanists were well received because of the national character of that country which toward a gloomy rigorous asceticism. In the middle of the third century a Synod met at Iconium and pronounced their baptism to be heretical, therefore null and void, making second baptism necessary in order to enter the Christian Church. At the Council of Nicea in 325, and at the council held at Constantinople, the validity of heretics baptism was admitted but that of the Montanists was again excluded because it was doubted that the paraclete of Montanism could be recognized with the Holy Ghost of the Catholic Church.

Opposition arose from individuals such as Claudius Apollinaris, Miltiades, and probably Melite. The Alogi went to the extreme in their opposition to the Montanists by denying the Johannine writings, which were the basis of Montanism. The Montanists' spiritual pride, the manifold extravagances committed by the prophets all helped to create an aversion to such a sect. These people reckoned Easter by the sun and celebrated it on the eighth day before the Dies of April, or on the following Sunday.

In the later centuries this sect was severely persecuted. The Emperor Constantine forbade them to have churches and to hold services. He took over all their places of public worship and gave them to the Catholic Church. Far stricter laws were laid on this sect by later emperors. These prohibited

all Montanistic writings, prohibited civil rights to them, banished their clergy to the mines. This forced them to exist in secret and by the sixth century all traces of them had disappeared. Augustine however, reports that a small body of Tertullianists continued in Carthage down to his time, and had been induced by him to return to the Catholic Church.

"The expulsion of Montanism helped to free the church from the charge of its being a narrow sect; made its consenting to the terms, demands and conditions of every day life easier, gave freer course to its development in constitution and worship dependent on these as well as in the further building up of the practical and scientific endeavours and generally advanced its expansion and transformation from a sectarian close association into a universal church opening itself up more and more to embrace all the interests of the culture of the age."<sup>1</sup>

Montanism also cast its influence upon the Catholic Church, which retains this influence down to the present day. Three of the Montanistic tendencies are now incorporated in the Catholic Church, namely, its fasting and feast days, its celibacy, and an asceticism as strict as anything Montanism taught, was later to find a place in the Church in the form of monasticism.

These various heretical groups caused the Church great difficulties, and impeded its missionary efforts, yet some sects wrought untold benefits to the formulation of Christian doctrine. These groups forced the Church into a deeper and more intense study of Holy writ, and a clarification of various teachings.

The Ebionites failed to influence the Church either for good or for evil, while the Monarchians and their heresy indirectly helped the Church to establish one of the central doctrines of Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity. Montanism, had it not been so fanatical, could have successfully combated the laxity in morals and discipline, and the hierarchial tendencies of the Roman clergy, but instead gave its strict asceticism to the Roman Church which it still maintains today.

It is likewise interesting to note that although these sects have long since disappeared, their false teaching is still evident today. The legalism of Ebionism is very much in evidence in modern protestant circles, and Monarchianism has changed only its name, Unitarianism being its twentieth century counterpart. Montanism with its strict asceticism and constant emphasis on man's life and duty is represented in Roman Catholicism. So although centuries have passed we too must face the same heretical teachings as confronted the earliest Church fathers.

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