

Peter Lampe / Heidrun E. Mader (eds.)

# »Montanism« in the Roman World

The New Prophecy Movement from Historical, Sociological, and Ecclesiological Perspectives. Festschrift for William Tabbernee on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday



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Peter Lampe, Heidrun E. Mader

## Introduction

From March 16 to March 18, 2023, a first *International Symposium on the New Prophecy* was held at the University of Cologne to honour the outstanding Montanist scholarship of William Tabbernee at the occasion of his 80th birthday. The symposium papers and additional studies are presented in this *Festschrift*. Fifteen scholars from nine countries<sup>1</sup> contributed to this first-ever collective volume on the New Prophecy.

The title of the book refers to this early Christian movement as "Montanism". As this designation has become the established scholarly label, it did not make sense to forgo it entirely. However, being a polemical term, "Montanism" was not used before the fourth century<sup>2</sup> and misleadingly insinuates that Montanus was the only, or the main, founder of the movement. We prefer the term "New Prophecy", which was the self-designation of the movement. The authors of this volume alternate both terms. The following overview of the studies shows the focal points of the anthology. At times, results of studies differ or may trigger dissent, letting the reader participate in an ongoing scholarly debate.<sup>3</sup>

### Laudatio

Heidrun E. Mader opens the volume with a laudatory speech honouring William Tabbernee. The stages of his life are reviewed, which spanned three continents and included numerous leadership positions in academia, theological societies, and church institutions. Most importantly, his publications, especially those on Montanism, are presented and discussed along with other reviewers who are quoted,

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1 Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

2 E. g., μοντανιστάς, τοὺς ἐνταῦθα λεγομένους Φρύγας (Acta Conciliorum, *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum II: Canones* 7.22); ἀπώλεια τῶν Μανιχαίων καὶ τῶν Μοντανῶν, καὶ Σιμωνιανῶν, καὶ Ἀρειανῶν, καὶ Πνευματομάχων (Athanasius, *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem*, MPG 28. 672.18); Οὐαλεντίνους τε καὶ Κηρίνθους καὶ Βασιλίδας καὶ Μοντανούς καὶ Μαρκίωνα (Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 3.9.54).

3 Usually, the Montanist logia are cited using W. Tabbernee's new classification (W. Tabbernee, "The Montanist Oracles Revisited", in U.E. Eisen/H.E. Mader (ed.), *Talking God in Society: Multidisciplinary (Re)constructions of Ancient (Con)texts* [Festschrift P. Lampe, vol. 2; NTOA 120/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020] 317–343). When logia are cited from ancient sources such as Tertullian, Tabbernee's numbering is added in parentheses.



providing a comprehensive overview of the groundbreaking oeuvre of the foremost scholar in the field of the New Prophecy.

#### The Beginnings of the Phrygian New Prophecy

*Bernard Doherty* examines the origins of the New Prophecy from a sociological perspective. (1) He critically reviews earlier attempts to use the New Prophecy as an illustrating example of various ideal-typical sociological models of emerging charismatic and sectarian religious movements. (2) As these attempts lacked historical soundness, he proceeds to use Rodney Starke's *social-science model of revelations* as a heuristic tool when analysing the primary sources. To understand the sociological conditions under which people come to believe that they receive communications from a god, various factors are identified that influenced the successful rise and longevity of the New Prophecy and its call to rigour – such as an environment characterised by ecstatic religious fervour; social crises; or perceived inadequacies of conventional religious and secular institutions in dealing with the crises.

*Peter Lampe* contextualizes the emergence of the Phrygian New Prophecy in the *pandemic* under Marcus Aurelius, which raged from 165 to 168 CE and flared up repeatedly. Both the new prophetic movement and the Antonine pandemic spread rapidly across the Roman empire in the same time window. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, a range of Montanist oracles is reinterpreted and the rise of the new prophetic movement partly explained. Light is shed, for example, on its apocalyptic mood as well as its ecstatic practices and asceticism and their hoped-for health-promoting effects. In parallel, pagan religious (prophetic/oracular) responses to the pandemic are discussed as coping mechanisms and supposed "remedies" in the disaster of the plague. An appendix, rescutinising all available evidence, confirms a dating of the beginnings of the New Prophecy in the middle or second half of the 160s CE.

#### North Africa and the New Prophecy

*David E. Wilhite* investigates the existence of a possible (schismatic) Montanist group in North Africa, with a negative result. Looking at the *Passion of Perpetua* and its reception, Cyprian's works, North African inscriptions, the anti-Montanist propaganda, and Tertullian's works, he does not find sufficient evidence for such a group or any opposition to Montanists in North Africa. All these sources were located within the Catholic church, including Tertullian. In North Africa, in Tertullian's time, he alone mentioned the New Prophecy as a contemporary phenomenon, citing prophets from Phrygia (probably from literary sources), but this does not evidence a North African group adhering to the Phrygian New Prophecy; seemingly "Montanist" practices such as ongoing prophecy that Tertullian defended also

existed in the Catholic church. A shift by Tertullian to the Phrygian New Prophecy movement or a Montanist phase of Tertullian remain difficult to prove.

Andrew McGowan points out that Tertullian's apology for *fasting* did not intend to mark an eccentric departure from catholic Christianity but to enhance solidarity among Christians, with fasting being seen as a collective marker that defined the Church against the world. By contrast, Tertullian's less rigorous *psychici* opponents in Carthage used voluntary fasting largely as a marker of individual identity and a means of internal self-differentiation. The tension between Tertullian's more rigorous "Montanist" associates and the *psychici* was therefore a matter of differing concepts about the role of ascetic practice in community formation. McGowan's analysis touches upon the different fasting practices in not only Carthage but also the larger context of ancient Mediterranean dietary asceticism, including ancient Jewish, Greco-Roman, and other early Christian fasts with their various forms, purposes, meanings, social and ritual contexts. Relationships between fasting and other phenomena (e. g., ecstasy, prayer, penitence, baptism, fundraising) are considered.

Petr Kitzler explores Tertullian's *Jenseitstopographie*, especially his concept of paradise: Temporarily, until the completion of times, the martyrs dwell in paradise and the other deceased faithful in the *sinus Abrahae* (Luke 16:19–31). While the latter is a nobler section of the subterranean underworld (separate from the section of hell), paradise is shown to be a "celestial" location under God's heavenly altar (Rev 6:9), probably a part of heaven, possibly also heaven as such. This topographic reconstruction challenges the interpretations by David Wilhite and William Tabbernee, who consider Tertullian's paradise a (third) section in the underworld, with Tabbernee, however, adding that, after 208 CE, Tertullian relocates the martyrs' paradise under God's heavenly altar.

Megan DeVore reexamines the relation between the New Prophecy and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. She suggests that two of the authorial voices in the multi-layered *Passion* conveyed an anti-Montanist perspective to the heterogeneous Christian community of Carthage. There both the New Prophecy (via published oracles and local prophetic charismatics) and anti-Montanism (via literature as well as local perspectives) were present. The *Passion* guides readers by presenting an exemplary non-Montanist, yet favourable, interaction with prophecies and visions (without, e. g., asceticism and moralism). The article explores parallels and differences between (1) the *Passion* and contemporary anti-Montanist polemics and (2) the *Passion* and the New Prophecy, showing a polemical intertextuality with, for example, the Montanist Logia 21 and 23.

In Barbara Crostini's analysis of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, the two martyrs are portrayed as single mothers, independent of male guardianship and performing in public. By contextualizing them within the panorama of Severan women, the article shows that Perpetua and Felicitas represent a special type of active, legally and spiritually empowered, independent women. As such, they epitomise ideals

of womanhood promoted by the Syrian Empress Julia Domna and illustrated by biblical heroines on wallpaintings at Dura Europos. Parallels are uncovered between Perpetua and Julia Domna (e.g., their role as Ceres). By contrast, the women of the Phrygian New Prophecy differed from the Carthagian prophetic martyrs by following the paradigm of prophetesses without child and families ties. The "catholic" character of the *Passio* is affirmed.

Echoes of the New Prophecy in the Writings of Lucian of Samosata, Celsus, Origen, Epiphanius, and Honorius's legislation

Ronald E. Heine traces references to the New Prophecy in Origen's writings. Mentioning the New Prophecy for the first time in *De Principiis* (about 229/230 CE), only mildly criticising it, Origen most likely encountered Montanism for the first time in Rome in 215 CE. Three main objections to the Montanists surface in his writings: They misunderstand the role of the *Paraclete* who does not reveal new truths but old truth by aiding in the interpretation of Scripture, which Origen considers a prophetic function. Secondly, Origen opposes the *ecstatic character of prophecy* and, thirdly, the *public speaking of women*, not the prophesying of women per se. The objections focus on praxis rather than doctrine, without Origen considering the Montanists heretical. He counts them among the "simple" in the church.

Ilaria L.E. Ramelli examines the relation of *Lucian of Samosata* and *Celsus* to the New Prophecy. In his *Peregrinus*, Lucian may have attributed some Montanist characteristics to his protagonist to reinforce the satiric colouring of his portrayal of Peregrinus as prophet, miracle worker, author, and even "god" (cf. Montanus as God's mouthpiece). Further intersections between Montanists and Peregrinus include geographical and ethical clues (e.g., contempt for death, dietary prohibitions). Like Marcus Aurelius, Celsus probably did not distinguish between Montanism and Christianity in general, attributing Montanist traits to Christianity at large. He reprimands voluntary and theatrical martyrdom of Christians, their irrationality and stubbornness, and considers them dangerous to the Roman empire because of their spirit of opposition and lack of service to the empire. Supporting digressional remarks deal with the dating and historical setting of the Celsus/Origen exchange as well as women in church offices.

Maria Dell'Isola focuses on the heresiological portrayal of Montanus and Maximilla not only as false prophets but also as *false martyrs*. According to anti-Montanist rumours related by the Anonymus (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.16.12f.), Montanus and Maximilla committed suicide. However, they were not persecuted; only suicides provoked by persecution were considered a form of martyrdom (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.41.7; 8.6.6; 8.12.3–5; *Acts of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice*). Thus, the rumours classified the two founders of the New Prophecy as charlatans, such as Theodotus (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.16.14) and Lucian's Peregrinus, who claimed

divine inspiration but were allegedly possessed by demons when they committed suicide. These cases suggest that the polemical repertoire of "demon possession" and "false martyrdom" was used across cultures in both Christian and pagan circles. The rumours of Montanist suicides satirically alluded to the Montanists' desire for martyrdom, which is expressed in some of the logia of the New Prophecy.

*Andrzej Wypustek* focuses on Epiphanius's *Panarion*, 49.1, which cites a Montanist logion claiming that a female Christ came to a prophetess in her sleep. The paper investigates Epiphanius's redactional framing of the oracle without attempting to interpret the original oracle itself, which may have had a meaning different from Epiphanius's understanding. For Epiphanius, wanting to discredit the New Prophecy, the oracle implied a homoerotic relationship between the female Christ and the prophetess. This reading, placed into the context of Greco-Roman homoerotic narratives, matches Epiphanius's other sexualisations of heretical practices.

*Geoffrey D. Dunn* links Emperor Honorius's law of 407 CE against the Montanists in the *Codex Theodosianus* with a note in the *Liber Pontificalis* about Innocent I. The note states that the Roman bishop expelled adherents of the New Prophecy from their homes in Rome and sent them into exile in a monastery. Inscriptions (*IMont* 72, 93, 95) confirm the presence of Montanists in Rome at the end of the fourth century. Contrary to the assumption that Innocent simply took advantage of the 407 law, Dunn suggests that (1) the Roman bishop himself was the driving force behind this law issued by the imperial court in 407, similar to African bishops who had pushed for laws against Donatists. (2) At court, Stilicho exercised the imperial legislative function on behalf of the emperor rather autonomously until 408 CE; he likely formulated the 407 law at Innocent's request. Consequently, the Roman bishop persuaded the empire to carry out his "dirty work" by providing him with legal protection to expel the Montanists from Rome.

#### New Prophets and Mainstream Christians in Asia. Fourth-Century Ecclesiastical Conditions and a Possible Precursor around 200 CE

*Alistair C. Stewart* defines the position of the Phrygian *presbyter* *Ammion* at the dawn of the third century (*IMont* 4) not as clerical "in the narrow sense" of celebrating sacraments and presiding over a congregation but as clerical in the wider sense of having the respected status of either an older ascetic widow commissioned with prayer and instruction of the youth or an older patroness of a church. This view is supported by comparing fourth-century evidence: the rarely discussed *Testamentum Domini* (probably catholic); *Laodicea Canon* 11; *Acta Philippi* (as well as *Apostolic Church Order*; *Martyrium Matthaei*). Whether Ammion was Montanist or catholic cannot be determined. In Asia, still in the fourth century, New Prophets and other Christians shared extensive common ground, which included

appreciation of prophecy. The common ground is explained by shared origins, not by positing an influence of the New Prophecy on mainstream Phrygian Christians.

#### A Systematic-Theological Impetus for Today's Churches

*Gyula Homoki's* systematic-theological paper attempts to make treasures of the New Prophecy fruitful for today's churches. Leaving past negotiations about "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" of the New Prophecy to history, the article propagates a dialogical concept of divine revelation, which is not completed but an *ongoing dynamic* process between God and human beings. In addition, *the contextual character* of theology is appreciated, as the dialogical nature of prophetic proclamation leaves room for the inclusion of human elements in the revelatory process: The cultural and social situatedness of the New Prophecy is not seen as a flaw that a "pure" gospel must overcome. Rather, divine revelation is inevitably linked to the specific circumstances of human life.

*William Tabbernee's* bibliography rounds off the volume, presenting, inter alia, a captivating Montanist bookshelf to readers.

Heidelberg and Cologne, March 2024

P.L. & H.E.M.

Heidrun E. Mader

## **Laudatio for Professor William Tabbernee**

In his milestone book on the New Prophecy, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments*, published in 2007, William Tabbernee reveals that he became interested in the subject already as a sixteen-year-old teenager when someone gave him a copy of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. He tells us:

I was immediately captivated by the poignant stories of the heroic deaths of Polycarp at Smyrna, of Blandina at Lyons, and of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage. I could hardly put down the beautiful, leather-bound volume with its graphic illustrations of men being beheaded and women being burned at the stake for the sake of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

We thank the person who gave him this book,<sup>2</sup> which triggered a life's work of Montanist scholarship and made William Tabbernee, to quote Timothy Barnes, "the world's leading scholarly authority on Montanism".<sup>3</sup>

Barnes's words are echoed by C.M. Robeck, who, like Barnes, has reviewed each of Professor Tabbernee's books on Montanism:

[William Tabbernee] is currently regarded as *the* foremost authority in this field. No contemporary scholar knows more about Montanism than does he. The study of Montanism has been a half-century passion of his, a passion that has led him to author or coauthor four major volumes and a substantial number of articles on the subject. Tabbernee's work is fair and balanced. His qualifications include not only his literary work as an historian, but also the work he has done with Professor Peter Lampe of the University of Heidelberg in coordinating and leading a series of archaeological surface surveys in Turkey (formerly Asia Minor), which ultimately identified two of the most important Montanist centers, Pepouza and Tymion.<sup>4</sup>

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1 W. Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reaction to Montanism* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 84; Leiden: Brill, 2007) ix.

2 Not surprisingly, the person who gave Tabbernee the book was a Sunday school teacher.

3 T.D. Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", *Cristianesimo nella storia* 31 (2010) 945–956, on p. 948.

4 C.M. Robeck, Jr., "Montanism and Present Day 'Prophets'", *Pneuma* 32 (2010) 413–429, on pp. 421–422.

In 1978, in Australia where he grew up William Tabbernee received his PhD at the University of Melbourne. Professor Graeme W. Clarke, the renowned expert on Cyprian and North African Christianity, was his *doktorvater*. Dr. Tabbernee's dissertation, entitled *The Opposition to Montanism from Church and State*,<sup>5</sup> was examined by Professors Timothy D. Barnes (University of Toronto) and Edwin A. Judge (Macquarie University).

In 1955, William Tabbernee and his parents had started a new beginning after World War II in Europe, emigrating to Melbourne from Rotterdam in the Netherlands where William had been born on April 21, 1944. Before commencing theological studies, Dr. Tabbernee's first career was as a schoolteacher, serving as Head Teacher at Swan Reach Primary School in Gippsland, Victoria (1966), and History and English Teacher at Newlands High School in Coburg, a suburb of Melbourne (1967 to 1968).

After William Tabbernee had earned a Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA[Hons]) at the University of Melbourne, a Licentiate in Theology (LTh) and Diploma in Religious Education (DipRE) at the Melbourne College of Divinity, and a Diploma in Ministry (DipMin) at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Melbourne, he went abroad and obtained a Master of Sacred Theology (STM) at Yale Divinity School in the United States in 1973. At Yale, he studied primarily under Professors Rowan A. Greer and Jaroslav Pelikan, with the latter supervising Tabbernee's STM thesis on *The Greek Apologists*.

In 2002, the University of Melbourne acknowledged the outstanding international academic career of their excellent alumnus and awarded Dr. Tabbernee his second earned doctorate, the Doctor of Letters by Examination (LittD), the highest doctoral degree for the Humanities in the Australian academic system.

After completing his PhD at the University of Melbourne in 1978, William Tabbernee initially remained in Australia, teaching as Lecturer in Christian Thought and History at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Glen Iris, a Melbourne suburb. In 1981, he became principal of the College, leading the institution for ten years. Simultaneously he served as co-president of the Evangelical Theological Association (ETA), an accredited teaching institute of the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD). The Evangelical Theological Association consisted of the Churches of Christ Theological College and Whitley College/The Baptist College of Victoria.

In 1984, the State Government of Victoria informed the Churches of Christ Theological College that its historic campus at Glen Iris would be compulsorily acquired

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5 W. Tabbernee, *The Opposition to Montanism from Church and State: A Study of the History and Theology of the Montanist Movement as Shown by the Writings and Legislation of the Orthodox Opponents of Montanism* (PhD diss.: University of Melbourne, 1978). The degree was conferred in May 1979.

to make room for a new freeway. After negotiating compensation, helping to design new buildings, and raising necessary funds, Dr. Tabbernee spearheaded the move of the College in 1989 to a brand-new campus at Mulgrave, another Melbourne suburb.

Despite his extensive academic, administrative, and fundraising duties as lecturer and principal in Melbourne, Dr. Tabbernee was still able to produce a number of important articles on Montanism,<sup>6</sup> laying the foundation for his first milestone book on the New Prophecy movement: *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, which later was published in the United States in 1997.<sup>7</sup>

Due to his scholarly merits and academic leadership qualities, Dr. Tabbernee became President and Stephen J. England Distinguished Professor of the History of Christianity at Phillips Theological Seminary, Oklahoma, USA, in 1991. Only two years later the degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) was conferred on him by Phillips University.<sup>8</sup>

Under William Tabbernee as president of the Seminary, which had been in dire straits before he came, its endowment increased by a factor of twelve. In the USA, as in Australia, he became involved in a move to a new campus, relocating Phillips Theological Seminary in 2003 from rented space in Enid and Tulsa, Oklahoma, to its own campus of 60,000 square feet on 7.5 acres in Tulsa. The move combined the Seminary's Enid and Tulsa operations, and the consolidated Seminary soon increased its enrolment to more than 250 equivalent full-time students.

During his tenure at Phillips Theological Seminary (1991 to 2009), Dr. Tabbernee published several milestone books on the New Prophecy. *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia* (1997) was followed by a trilogy of books, appearing one year after another: in 2007, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reaction to Montanism*; in 2008, together with Peter Lampe, *Pepouza and Tymion: The Discovery and Archaeological Exploration of a Lost Ancient City and an Imperial Estate*,<sup>9</sup> and in 2009, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians*.<sup>10</sup>

To quote Timothy Barnes again, who emphasises the importance of these milestone books for Montanist scholarship, referring first to the epigraphic corpus:

6 For a comprehensive list of Dr. Tabbernee's more than fifty publications on Montanism and closely related subjects, see Part 1 of William Tabbernee's Bibliography at the end of this volume.

7 W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series 16; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press/Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

8 Phillips University was an historically related but separate institution from Phillips Theological Seminary, which had become independent of the University in 1987.

9 W. Tabbernee/P. Lampe, *Pepouza and Tymion: The Discovery and Archaeological Exploration of a Lost Ancient City and an Imperial Estate* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

10 W. Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).



Tabbernee has published important articles on Montanism and produced the learned, scholarly, and immensely useful collection of *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia* ... [Ronald] Heine rightly saluted Tabbernee's collection as an indispensable tool for the study of Montanism even for an expert like himself (*Journal of Theological Studies*, N. S. 49 [1998], 822–828).<sup>11</sup>

Christine Trevett, another expert in the field of Montanist studies, similarly applauds *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*:

William Tabbernee followed his magnum opus doctoral dissertation ... with significant articles on Montanist epigraphy and ideology. Now Tabbernee has produced a work of still greater magnitude, which will earn him the gratitude of researchers in this field.<sup>12</sup>

Stephen Mitchell, one of these prominent researchers, acknowledges the importance of Tabbernee's corpus of Montanist and allegedly Montanist inscriptions for Montanist studies in an introductory note to his own article, "An Apostle to Ankara from the New Jerusalem: Montanists and Jews in Late Roman Asia Minor":

The following discussion repeatedly refers to Tabbernee 1997 = W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia, Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (North American Patristic Society Monograph 16, Mercer University Press). My debt to this remarkable example of Christian scholarship will be obvious.<sup>13</sup>

And in his recent book on Christians of Phrygia he writes:

Pride of place among the new investigators of the 'Phrygian Heresy' must be assigned to the Australian scholar William Tabbernee, whose collection of Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia established a benchmark in the collation of epigraphic evidence from the region.<sup>14</sup>

*Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia* contains 95 inscriptions which either are or have been considered Montanist by reputable scholars. As Sheila McGinn points

11 Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", 947–948.

12 C. Trevett, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series 16; Macon: Mercer University Press/Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), *CH* 67 (1998) 748.

13 S. Mitchell, "An Apostle to Ankara from the New Jerusalem: Montanists and Jews in Late Roman Asia Minor", *Scripta Classica Israelica* 24 (2005) 207–223, on p. 207.

14 S. Mitchell, *The Christians of Phrygia from Rome to the Turkish Conquest* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 117; Early Christianity in Asia Minor 4; Leiden: Brill, 2023) XIV–XV.

out, "T[abbernee]'s broad criterion for inclusion makes this an encyclopaedic work of inestimable value for Montanist scholars."<sup>15</sup>

Each inscription is presented with a full critical apparatus, a line drawing or facsimile and/or photograph, a new English translation, and an extensive commentary, including a discussion about the socio-economic status of the deceased and the validity (or otherwise) of designating the inscription "Montanist". The corpus also contains 23 inscriptions with the famous "Christians for Christians" formula, which are not Montanist, as Tabbernee concludes (to be precise, the formula alone cannot be regarded as a reliable indicator of Montanism). To quote McGinn again: "This volume is a fine example of how to sift epigraphic evidence and relate it to the literary data. Tabbernee's conclusion shows significant gains have been made in identifying the social location of Montanist Christians."<sup>16</sup>

The corpus is divided into six chronological sections. Each section is introduced with a detailed overview of the history of the New Prophecy during the relevant period. Together, these introductions present a continuous history of Montanism from its origins in ca. 165 CE to its demise in 550 CE. As another reviewer puts it, "This book is ... a magnificent monument to the [physical] remains of Montanism and is thus a most valuable contribution to Montanist studies."<sup>17</sup>

Reviewing the second book on Montanism, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments*, Barnes praises Tabbernee's contribution to a deeper and better understanding of Montanism over the course of his academic career and commends the interpretation of Montanism that Tabbernee sets out in the conclusion of *Fake Prophecy*:

Montanism must not be characterised 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. Early in its history while still within 'mainstream' Christianity, the New Prophecy wanted to push Christianity beyond its then practices and structures which Montanists believed to be inadequate. However, the new practices

15 S.E. McGinn, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series 16; Macon: Mercer University Press/Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), *J ECS* 7 (1999) 171–173, on p. 171.

16 McGinn, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, 173.

17 R. Roukema, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series 16; Macon: Mercer University Press/Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 57 (2000) 688–689, on p. 689.

and structures which the Montanists introduced were denounced as novelties by the 'catholic' bishops, and the Montanists were forced to become a sect, implementing their Paraclete-revealed teachings outside of the context of the 'catholic' church. Centuries of ecclesiastical and imperial opposition followed. (424)

"That", Barnes declares, "is the considered and convincing verdict of a mature scholar who has devoted a lifetime of scholarship to Montanism and thereby earned the gratitude of us all".<sup>18</sup>

C.M. Robeck, in his review of *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments* concurs:

This volume provides the clearest and most compelling assessment of Montanism to date. One gets a sense of what the movement was really like, a balanced assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and a clear sense of why ecclesial and imperial leaders responded so strongly to its challenges.<sup>19</sup>

Having worked a lot with *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments* in my own dissertation,<sup>20</sup> I find the approach to the sources and the way Tabbernee structured the book most convincing and ideal to work with as a scholar of the New Prophecy. The book carefully analyses the writings or the legislation of each of the known ecclesiastical and imperial opponents of the New Prophecy and identifies the specific charges made against it under three main categories: pseudo-prophecy, novelties, and heresy. It then summarizes the reaction to those charges by adherents of the movement.

As Robeck points out, "Tabbernee concludes that Montanists were not guilty of many of the things of which other Christians accused them. They were often as orthodox as the rest, though there were genuine regional differences between them."<sup>21</sup>

I continue quoting Barnes on Tabbernee's third milestone book on Montanism, *Pepouza and Tymion*, published together with Peter Lampe. I quote Barnes at length this time, for the discovery of Pepouza and Tymion is a "spectacular climax" in Montanist research, as Alexander Weiss, a classicist colleague, has remarked in a review.<sup>22</sup>

18 Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", 956.

19 Robeck, "Montanism and Present Day 'Prophets'", 424.

20 H.E. Mader, *Montanistische Orakel und kirchliche Opposition: Der frühe Streit zwischen den phrygischen „neuen Propheten“ und dem Autor der vorepiphanyischen Quelle als biblische Wirkungsgeschichte des 2. Jh. n. Chr.* (NTOA 97; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

21 Robeck, "Montanism and Present Day 'Prophets'", 424.

22 A. Weiss, Review of Vera-Elisabeth Hirschmann, *Horrenda Secta: Untersuchungen zum frühchristlichen Montanismus und seinen Verbindungen zur paganen Religion Phrygiens* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner

"Tabbernee", Timothy Barnes continues, "is the world's leading scholarly authority on Montanism, not least because he has been instrumental in the discovery and subsequent archaeological exploration of its cult centre in Roman Asia Minor".<sup>23</sup> Barnes comments that in 2008 William Tabbernee

has published jointly with Peter Lampe of the University of Heidelberg, in parallel English and German texts with a Turkish translation following, *Pepouza and Tymion. The Discovery and Archaeological Exploration of a Lost Ancient City and an Imperial Estate* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter). The first five chapters of this describe the search for Pepouza and the discovery of its location through the ... discovery of an inscription. ... [In] July 2000 Tabbernee was shown an inscription in the Turkish museum of Uşak which referred to the *coloni* of Tymion and Simoe. He immediately recognised its significance and its topographical implications, which he explored in print in his article 'Portals of the Montanist New Jerusalem: The Discovery of Pepouza and Tymion,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), 87–93. ... The find-spot of the inscription implied that Tymion, which was known to be close to Pepouza, lay some distance from any of the places where modern investigators, including Tabbernee himself up to that point, had been searching.... The search for Pepouza was therefore renewed in a new location, and before the end of July 2000 Tabbernee ... [and Lampe and their team] identified a plausible site for Pepouza – a Roman and early Byzantine settlement next to what appeared to be a monastic complex.... an archaeological exploration of the site of Pepouza under the direction of Peter Lampe [followed].<sup>24</sup>

Recently, Stephen Mitchell, in his landmark book on the Christians of Phrygia, confirmed William Tabbernee's and Peter Lampe's identification of Pepouza and Tymion: "He and Peter Lampe can also claim credit for identifying the location of the Montanist centres Pepouza and Tymion".<sup>25</sup> He acknowledged Peter Lampe's refutation of Christoph Marksches's scepticism against the identification: "Lampe, *Early Christianity* 7 (2016), 392, convincingly refutes the scepticism about the location of Pepouza of C. Marksches, *Montanismus*, RAC 24 (2012), 1202–4."<sup>26</sup> In a personal email to William Tabbernee, Mitchell wrote just a few days before his tragic death:

I finally got to Pepouza and Tymion myself [in 2023] ... No killer inscription identifying Pepouza came to light but I saw nothing to suggest that the identification is wrong! On

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Verlag, 2005), *H-Soz-u-Kult* (February, 2006), <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=20163>, accessed March 17, 2024.

23 Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", 948.

24 Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", 945–946.

25 Mitchell, *Christians of Phrygia*, XV.

26 Mitchell, *Christians of Phrygia*, 422 n. 364.

the contrary the village of Suleymaniye [sic, Şükraniye], clearly a standout site in the landscape, looked exactly right for the estate centre Tymion.<sup>27</sup>

The archaeological exploration of the sites of Pepouza and Tymion lasted for several years. I had the privilege to be part of it in 2002, when I got to know Bill. In addition to the book published in 2008, the field work generated important articles for Montanist scholarship. Tabbernee's approach of incorporating archaeological research into the study of regional theology in antiquity also bore fruit in the book he edited in 2014, *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration across Cultures and Continents*,<sup>28</sup> and in a collaborative volume on *Christianity in Roman Africa*, published in the same year.<sup>29</sup>

Before I comment on William Tabbernee's fourth book on Montanism, I want to mention his leading roles in many theological societies and institutions, including ecclesiastical institutions. His presidency of the North American Patristics Society (NAPS) and his work on the editorial board of its Patristic Monograph Series stand out. Further, Tabbernee, while still in Australia, was president of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS). In 1986/1987, he served as president of The Melbourne College of Divinity (now University of Divinity), which in 2007 made him a Fellow. In the American Academy of Religion (AAR), he was active in the steering committee for the "Archaeology of Religions in the Graeco-Roman World" and "Early Christianity in Roman North Africa" programme units, and in the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) he contributed to the programme unit "Contextualizing North African Christianity".

Turning to church institutions, Tabbernee's engagement in his own church, Churches of Christ in Australia/Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada, and in worldwide ecumenical Christianity is remarkable. He was moderator of the Australian Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order and, for more than twenty years (1985–2006), he served on the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order, engaging with notable representatives from other churches such as Bishop Desmond Tutu, biblical scholar Raymond Brown, theologians Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, as well as the Metropolitan (now the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church) Bartholomew, for whose nephews he used to take presents to Australia.

27 S. Mitchell, Personal Correspondence to William Tabbernee, January 24, 2024.

28 W. Tabbernee, *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration across Cultures and Continents* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014). For a list of Tabbernee's publications on Early Christianity other than Montanism, see Part 2 of William Tabbernee's Bibliography at the end of this volume.

29 J.P. Burns, Jr./R.M. Jensen (ed.), in collaboration with G.W. Clarke/S.T. Stevens/W. Tabbernee/M.A. Tilley, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

From 1989 to 2009, Tabbernee was a member of the International Bilateral Commission for Dialogue between the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, co-moderating this dialogue between the worldwide Churches of Christ/Disciples of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church from 2005 to 2009. Over forty of Dr. Tabbernee's publications relate specifically to ecumenical, interfaith, or denominational issues.<sup>30</sup>

After having retired from Phillips Theological Seminary in 2009, the Rev. Tabbernee was appointed executive director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches (OCC) in the following year. In this context, I quote him regarding the objectives of his strong ecumenical and interfaith engagement: "Sensitivity to each other's theologies and practices", he states, "must translate into common action and engagement, even with people with whom we differ theologically – including people of different faiths".<sup>31</sup>

William Tabbernee has received numerous awards for his interfaith work, including the *Interfaith Understanding Award*, presented by the Islamic Society of Tulsa, the Jewish Federation, and regional political organisations (2006),<sup>32</sup> the *Interfaith Award* of the Dialogue Institute of the Southwest (2016), the *Imam's Pioneer Award* of the Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City (2018), and the *Interfaith Leadership Award* of the Council on American-Islamic Relations – Oklahoma Chapter (2013 and 2018).

While serving as Executive Director of the OCC, he also taught in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Oklahoma. He retired as Executive Director Emeritus of the OCC in 2018 and moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife, the Rev. Dr. Kay Northcutt. He continues to teach online at various institutions, including Boston College, and to publish, such as his ground-breaking reclassification of Montanist logia,<sup>33</sup> and a chapter on Montanus in the new *T&T Clark Handbook of the Early Church*.<sup>34</sup>

I conclude this laudation for Prof. William Tabbernee with the recommendation to read his fourth book on Montanism, *Prophets and Gravestones*, an enjoyable

30 See Parts 3 and 4 of William Tabbernee's Bibliography at the end of this volume.

31 [https://tulsaworld.com/lifestyles/occ-names-tabbernee-new-executive-director/article\\_1f21c411-da6f-55fb-8984-2d67e78bb456.html](https://tulsaworld.com/lifestyles/occ-names-tabbernee-new-executive-director/article_1f21c411-da6f-55fb-8984-2d67e78bb456.html), accessed March 3, 2023.

32 <https://www.okumc.org/newsdetail/33116>, accessed March 3, 2023.

33 W. Tabbernee, "The Montanist Oracles Reexamined", in U.E. Eisen/H.E. Mader (ed.), *Talking God in Society: Multidisciplinary (Re)constructions of Ancient (Con)texts, Volume 2: Hermeneuein in Global Contexts: Past and Present* (Festschrift P. Lampe, vol. 2; NTOA 120/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020) 317–343.

34 W. Tabbernee, "Diversity Around a Prophet: The Case of Montanism", in I.L.E. Ramelli/J.A. McGuckin/P. Ashwin-Siejkowski (ed.), *T&T Clark Handbook of the Early Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2022) 234–242.

narrative history of Montanism that he started in October 2001 at Pepouza. The book took shape, as the author explains, when he recited draft chapters after dinner following a hard day's work in the field to an audience comprising "archaeologists, land surveyors, geophysicists, geomorphologists, archaeological architects, and other experts", who initially knew little about Montanism.<sup>35</sup> The book's subtitle describes its content as *An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians*. In his review of the book, Geoffrey Dunn acknowledges that "The word imaginative in the title may puzzle some, suggesting that this is a work of historical fiction". He adamantly declares, however,

This is not the case. Tabbernee provides a narrative account of the historical, literary, and epigraphic evidence or fleshes out existing narratives by incorporating topographical elements (along with photographs) from his own archaeological insights. What is imaginative about the book is the way he humanizes his account, suggesting the emotions of the characters and filling in the backgrounds of some of the narratives in Eusebius and others.<sup>36</sup>

In his own review of *Prophets and Gravestones*, Timothy Barnes confirms that

Tabbernee's historical reconstructions are serious history, not mere flights of fancy ... Tabbernee has himself read, pondered, and inwardly digested all the ancient texts and inscriptions which either are or may be relevant to Montanism, and he uses his imagination with decorum and restraint. Moreover, at the end of each section Tabbernee tells his readers what precisely the evidence is on which he has based his imaginative reconstruction. It is this feature which makes the book such a delight for a scholar to read, since one can compare each brief section of the modern imagined narrative with its ancient source or sources – and admire Tabbernee's skill in breathing life into these disjointed fragments.<sup>37</sup>

Susan Holman acknowledges that Tabbernee took a risk in writing an "imaginative history", but a risk worth taking:

Like the edge of the forest in dark fairy tales, the borderland of creative writing that lies between fact and fiction is for serious scholarly writers a threatening land of known and unknown risks. Even in historical narrative, few dare to publish unless they are willing

<sup>35</sup> Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones*, xiii.

<sup>36</sup> G.D. Dunn, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), *CHR* 96 (2010) 318–319, on p. 318.

<sup>37</sup> Barnes, "William Tabbernee and Montanism", 947.

to face scorn as less-than-serious scholars or are, alternatively, experts of such stature that they can welcome such risk as an opportunity to teach and inspire. Fortunately for early Christian history, William Tabbernee is a natural raconteur of the latter camp. ... [Tabbernee] ... brings the sources to life, moving us to new connections with these characters. *Prophets and Gravestones* is a daring, solid, and creative venture into a rare and undervalued crossover genre. It is hoped that such an imaginative history will pave the way for many more.<sup>38</sup>

Along with the reviewer quoted above, I think we may all agree that William Tabbernee is an expert in our field who more than enjoys his research, writing at the desk, exploring in the field, and discussing in the scholarly community. We thank him cordially for his work, especially for his milestone work in the field of Montanism, and for his always kind and bright scholarly and personal communication, through which we also got to know him beyond his books.

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38 S.R. Holman, Review of W. Tabbernee, *Prophets and Gravestones: An Imaginative History of Montanists and Other Early Christians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), *J ECS* 18 (2010) 654–655.