

TABBERNEE, William – *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*. Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism (Patristic Monograph Series 16). Mercer University Press, Macon, 1997. (23 cm, XL, 722, 12 maps, 42 plates). ISBN 0-86554-521-9. \$ 45.00.

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In 1989 Ronald E. Heine published *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* as volume 14 of the Patristic Monograph Series. In this collection he included only two Montanist inscriptions, since the editor of the series had decided that a companion volume would be devoted to the epigraphic material related to Montanism. This companion volume is the book reviewed here. In fact, Tabbernee did much more than collecting all remaining inscriptions which give evidence of Montanism; his book contains a discussion of all epigraphic material which other reputable scholars have related to Montanism, even though Tabbernee himself concludes in many cases that the presumed Montanist origin of this material cannot bear the scrutiny of criticism and should be classified in mainstream Christianity, or may even not be Christian at all.

As the title indicates, this collection also includes some testimonia; perhaps these testimonia, two in number, should have been included in Heine's volume. These two texts, in Syriac, originate from the sixth century and are about the bones and the tomb of Montanus and his women. In Tabbernee's collection these testimonies constitute Part I. Parts II-VI contain careful descriptions of roughly 100 Montanist and allegedly Montanist inscriptions, from the second to the sixth century. These parts are introduced by historical surveys of the position of Montanism in the Roman Empire in the respective periods. The sections on the epigraphic material include its provenance and date, the current location, the *editio princeps*, a description, the text, a translation, other editions and publications, variant readings, further references, line drawings or facsimiles, photographs on one of the 42 plates, and commentaries and discussions. Thus, an impressive range of epitaphs, tomb stones, funerary altars, and engraved names, formulas, and illustrations is presented. Most of the testimonies were found in Asia Minor, especially in Phrygia, some of them originate from Rome and from Numidia. In some cases the original epitaphs are no longer extant, so that we have to rely on the relevant publications in former centuries.

The material contains testimonies to a female presbyter, to a prophetess who was visited by angels, to a pastor martyred during the persecution in 310-313, to three κοιωνοί (regional bishops), to a patriarch, to a lamp-bearing virgin and ἡγουμένη, to the veneration of saints - to mention only a few examples.

However, of the 95 main inscriptions or testimonia and six supplemental inscriptions discussed by Tabbernee, he classifies only 17 inscriptions as definitely Montanist, 4 as likely Montanist, and 12 as possibly Montanist. In his view, which he himself characterizes as 'minimalist', all other inscriptions are unlikely or definitely not Montanist. Whereas A. Strobel claimed that the so-called Eumeneian formula 'he will be answerable to God' was linked with Montanism, Tabbernee rejects this hypothesis. The same is true for the 'Christians for Christians' formula, which has frequently been considered Montanist because of its open confession of Christianity; according to Tabbernee, however, this cannot be substantiated. With regard to the presumed Montanist circle at Carthage, to which Tertullian is said to have turned after leaving the catholic church, Tabbernee main-

tains that this group, in spite of its disposition towards the New Prophecy, in fact never left the official church. This implies that some inscriptions and mosaics from Carthage, which others considered Montanist, are considered catholic, or probably catholic (or Donatist or even Jewish) by Tabbernee. In comparison with the 'maximalist' view according to which, on the basis of dubious criteria, many materials were claimed to have a Montanist origin, I think the sober approach adopted in this book is more convincing, even though it may at times seem unsatisfactory.

Tabbernee's discussion of the inscriptions is cautious and balanced. With regard to one of his suppositions only I would make a critical remark. On p. 129-131 he considers the possibility that the names engraved in an underground chamber in Rome belonged to syncretistic Christians or to Gnostics because the frescoes in this chamber represent Homeric scenes. Tabbernee is right, I think, in his reluctance to ascribe these frescoes and the engraved names to Montanists, and his ascription to Gnostics may be right. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to deny them to mainstream Christians. Mainstream Christians were able to make extensive references to Greek myths and to Homer as the example of Clement of Alexandria proves; in his view the Greek poets could be interpreted allegorically as witnesses to the Gospel.

Of course, this remark does not take away anything from the merits of this book. The last chapter contains a 'General Conclusion', in which the author gives a survey of the data he collected from the inscriptions. Since our knowledge of Montanism suffers from the scarcity of direct sources, these conclusions are most valuable. They concern the location of Montanist communities and their social identity, which is subdivided into nomenclature, marital status, kinship, ethnicity, provenance, occupation, wealth, rank, titles, and social network. In these sections, 'definite Montanists' are distinguished from 'likely Montanists', 'possible Montanists', and 'unlikely Montanists'. Some of Tabbernee's conclusions are that Montanists were not related, either by blood or by marriage, to people who belonged to the higher strata of Roman society. On the whole they were Greek-speaking free inhabitants of the Roman Empire who, as a class, received Roman citizenship in 212. Although Montanists in general were not rich, the people named in the inscriptions were wealthy enough to purchase graves and to commission tombstones or sarcophagi. Montanists belonging to lower socio-economic groups, however, are not represented in these epigraphic data. Some of the leadership roles in the Montanist church I already mentioned above; it appears that the occurrence of female leaders, which is typical for Montanism, is confirmed by the inscriptions.

The volume is completed by numerous appendices, a bibliography, comprehensive indices of names, references to other editions, indices of Greek and Latin words, ancient literary texts, subjects, topographic names, and maps. This carefully edited book is itself a magnificent monument of the remains of Montanism and is thus a most valuable contribution to Montanist studies.

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