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NOWE PROROCTWO

Historia i doktryna montanizmu



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Summary

Modern works present Montanism, first of all, as an ecstatic and rigoristic movement which developed in Asia Minor, starting from the middle of 2nd century. Without trying to deny such nature of Montanism, this text primarily describes the movement as the last phase in the life of a church structure that developed in Antiochia in Apostolic times and dominated for a while both in Antiochia and in some circles and centers in Asia Minor. A dominating role of prophets and their enormous authority in churches was a distinctive feature of the structure. Already the Acts of the Apostles mention the triad of apostles, prophets and teachers. The dominating role of prophets was closely related to the expectation of early Parusia. At the same time, it evolved (The Shepherd) towards a vision of spiritual men who strengthen and confirm the believers in life in the Spirit. Even though the structure as such no longer existed when Montanus appeared, the perception of the Church it involved and the recognition of the role of prophets were still common in Asia Minor. The Judeo-Christian theology of the Church is also important for the understanding of Montanism. All participants in the Montanist dispute understood the Church in the light of that theology, thus, they perceived it as a pre-existing spiritual being, bound to Christ already in pre-existence. Therefore, belonging to the Church meant belonging to God and to Christ. Prophets and martyrs, acting in the power of the Spirit, were regarded as an important sign of the Church's authenticity.

Thus, in the first phase of Montanism, an emphasis was placed on the discernment of the authenticity of prophets, which was performed according to the traditional rules developed in Antiochian and Syro-Palestinian churches. Such discernment was of fundamental importance, as those circles were deeply convinced that where there were true prophets, the true Church was also present. The initial discussion seems to be focused on the issue of prophetic "ecstasies". The key question was whether a Christian prophet could speak in ecstasy, as Montanus and his companions did. The criterion of the "holiness of life" was another important element of discernment. It took shape of, among others, the requirement of celibacy, which may be regarded as one of the sources of Montanist rigorism. The presence of martyrs was yet another criterion of the authenticity of the Church. Hence the cult of martyrdom, which developed in Montanist communities. It was only the permanent division in Minor Asiatic churches that put an end to the significant role of prophets in Christian communities. Those events seem to have definitively terminated the tradition of church structures based on the triad of apostles, prophets and teachers, which originated in Antiochia. Almost simultaneously, a dispute on Montanus began in Rome. It should, however, be regarded as the second phase of the dispute, as it was carried out on an entirely

different level. Rome had already had permanent Church structures built around a monarchical episcopate, thus, it was possible to look at Montanus from a certain distance. The dispute was, therefore, deepened and enriched in new topics. First of all, it created another opportunity to discuss the primacy of Rome, also in regard to the Apostolic churches in Asia Minor. The discussion was then extended to the canon of the Scriptures and the interpretation, or even recognition, of the writings of St John, particularly John 14-16, which deal with Parakletos. At that point Ireneus joins in. He offers no direct defense of Montanists, but, at least, he reprimands his adversaries for the lack sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit in the Church and for the rejection of John's writings. The follow-up of the Montanist dispute is related to Tertullian, who further elaborated the topics raised in Rome. He incorporated his belief in the authenticity of Montanus' prophecies into the theory of the ongoing action of Parakletos in the Church. Parakletos is the one who completes the work of Christ and overcomes the weakness of flesh, strengthening the believers and making them capable of fulfilling higher moral standards. This attitude of Tertullian resulted in his moral rigorism: permitting only one marriage and denying the forgiveness of sins committed after the baptism. More seriously, his theory of Parakletos resulted in a certain relativity of the role of bishops: the most important thing was to be filled with the Spirit and not remain psychic. It has to be noted, however, that even during his Montanist period, Tertullian's rule of faith remained unchanged, and it is not certain whether one can talk about a formal schism in his case. Tertullian's interpretation of Montanism had a long-lasting impact on African churches, becoming an important source of inspiration for Donatist theology: its rigorism and making the validity of sacraments conditional on the holiness of the minister.