
Butler provides a close reading of the *Passion* of Perpetua and Felicity (hereafter *Passion*) seeking evidence there of the “New Prophecy.” His study is in the tradition of Henry de Valois, the first to claim the *Passion* was Montanist. The difficulty with such scholarship—and Butler appears to understand this—is the assumption that the early “New Prophecy” was a coherent movement with a consistent core of beliefs—one whose proponents believed themselves to be a faction in opposition to orthodoxy. Even if one grants that the New Prophecy followers were an *eclesiola in ecclesia* in Carthage, they were never at odds with Catholics before 210, not proscribed until late in Pope Zephyrinus’s reign (ca.199-217, some years after the Redactor completed the *Passion* ca. 206), and not condemned until the mid-third century.

Butler believes that the *Passion* is entirely Montanist. He begins with a solid introduction to Montanism, tracing it from its Phrygian roots to its arrival in Carthage sometime just before 203. His second chapter argues that Tertullian is the likeliest editor, and that all three voices are Montanist. Tertullian has frequently been believed to be the editor because of his prominence in this church and not because the evidence for his authorship is compelling. I see no unassailable arguments, linguistic or theological, to attribute editorship to Tertullian, nor is there textual support for Butler’s claim that Perpetua submitted her diary to the Redactor. There is no evidence that Perpetua knew the Redactor, and even less that he was a “trusted colleague,” with whom she shared a common belief. Conversely, one could argue with greater textual fidelity that she had no idea who the Redactor was, since her final words “let whoever wishes to write about it, do so” (*si quis voluerit, scribat*) can hardly be read as a charge to a friend.

Chapter 3 is a close reading of selections from the *Passion*. Space allows only a sample of his many points. There is no trace of New Prophecy in
Africa before the *Passion* and hence there can be no competition with the established church before 203. Butler reifies “New Prophecy,” “Catholicism,” “orthodoxy,” and “heterodoxy” before they have clearly defined borders in Carthage. What does it mean to label a Christian “Montanist,” or “Catholic” in Carthage in 203? Allowing that there are elements in the three narratives which seem proto-Montanist, none are heterodox, nor were they viewed so by orthodox contemporaries. Granted that the Redactor’s sympathies do support a New Prophecy reading, they are not in opposition to a putative rival faction. Perpetua and Saturus’s diaries, unlike the Redactor’s, are, in part, recollections of dreams and follow little programmatic trajectory. Butler, following Barnes, argues that Montanists approved of voluntary martyrdom but that the Catholics did not. Butler believes Saturus’s surrender is evidence of his Montanism. “Voluntary” martyrdom, however, is not easily categorized. All catechumens arrested in 203 were potentially voluntary martyrs, since they knew their conversion was a crime. All six could recant before the procurator Hilarianus’s interrogation. Yet all behaved as did their countrymen, the Scillitan Martyrs (ca. 180), testifying volitionally to their Christianity, knowing such admission would be fatal.

Butler’s suggestion that Perpetua spoke in tongues because of her use of the expressions *orationem facere* and *προσεύχεσθαι* is thoughtful but not convincing since such a conclusion is not necessary to explain her language, nor is this passage’s relation to Rom 8.26 compelling. Paul’s στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις, if glossolalia, would be a singular sort, since it is not an utterance. Perpetua uses *ingemescere* to mark her fervor. There is no textual imperative to read it as glossolalia. The verb appears in the Vetus in this sense (cf. Ex. 22.3, Ps. 55.18, and 2 Cor. 5.2; Butler’s use of the Vulgate has little authority for the *Passion*). Augustine used *ingemescere* to describe the intensity of his and his mother’s prayers; neither instance suggests glossolalia (*Conf.* 5.8.15; 6.3.1). Butler accepts Robinson’s emendation of “singing” (*canebant*) for “falling” (*cedeabant*) in Saturus’s dream of the trees in the *locus amoenus* (XI.6). While the image of “singing” is attractive (cf. 1 Chron. 16.33), not a single manuscript records it, and, more importantly, the idea of *cedeabant* better suits Saturus’s theme. Falling leaves suggest a season’s end, a life cycle complete, death leading to new life. Saturus and Perpetua have just died. Their bodies fall away, and their spirits, now freed from matter, travel celestially. Is this not analogous to the leaf freed from the branch and falling free in space? Butler argues that the martyrs’ dreams are ecstatic trances. He astutely notes that *somnium* is