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THE MONTANIST NATURE OF THE NANAS INSCRIPTION (STEINEPIGRAMME
16/41/15)

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The Nanas inscription, a fourth-century Christian epitaph found a few miles southeast of Kotiaion (in the Tembris valley), glorifies the prophetess (προφήτισσα) buried there for her incessant “prayer and intercession” (εὐχαῖς καὶ λιτανίαις)¹ and “hymns and adulation” (ὕμνοις καὶ κολακίαις). The complete inscription, with restorations and brackets differing slightly from those of William Tabbernee,² is as follows:

- προφήτισσα
Νανᾶς Ἑρμογένου
εὐχῆς καὶ λιτανίης
προσευνητὸν ἄνακτα
5 ὕμνοις καὶ κολακίης
τὸν ἀθάνατον ἐδυσώπι·
εὐχομένη πανήμερον
παννύχιον θεοῦ φόβον
εἶχεν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς·
10 ἀγγελικὴν ἐπισκοπὴν
καὶ φωνὴν εἶχε μέγιστον
Νανᾶς ἠὺλλογημένη.
ῆς κημητήριον []
μαειτο[] σύ-
15 νευνον πολὺ φίλτατον ἄν-
δραν ἦλθε μετ[ὰ []
ἐπὶ χθονὶ πο[λυβοτείρῃ]
νους ἔργον []
ἀντεποίησε []
20 ποθέοντες [] ἐτιμ[ήσ-
αντο μέγιστον []
εἰς ὑπόμνημα []

Scholars almost universally have held that Nanas was probably a Montanist,³ but in 1999 Christine Trevett challenged this view, arguing that Nanas’ prophetic abilities were perfectly

¹ On women as especially effective intercessors, see Karen Jo Torjeson, *The Early Christian Orans: An Artistic Representation of Women’s Liturgical Prayer and Prophecy*, in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, eds. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley, 1998) 42–56.

² See William Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (NAPS Patristic Monograph Series 16; Macon, 1997) 420–21 (cf. his edited text as well as his fig. 77, and see there for epigraphical details). See also Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, Band 3: *Der “Ferne Osten” und das Landesinnere bis zum Tauros* (Munich/Leipzig, 2001) 349–50 (no. 16/41/15).

³ Tabbernee lists the inscription as “definitely Montanist” (*Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, 575), yet registers room for doubt when by heading his discussion “Nanas, a Montanist(?) prophetess” (ibid., 419).

in line with the non-Montanist stream of Christianity found in fourth-century Phrygia, and that her married status and theory of prophetic inspiration were inconsistent with viewing her as a Montanist. The present contribution revisits the issues raised by Trevett, and adds new support for the old consensus. As Trevett recognizes, lines 10–11 seem to be important for understanding who Nanas was: these lines credit her either with “angelic visitations and speech . . . in greatest measure” (Tabbernee, Trevett) or (reading μεγίστων) “visitations from angels, and voices . . . from the exalted ones” (Merkelbach–Stauber, cf. Haspels). As we will see, the conjunction of “angelic visitations” with “(angelic) speech in greatest measure/voices from the exalted ones” represents the key to Nanas’ identity, and there appear to be more resonances with that phrase within patristic writings than scholarship has discovered.

The Montanist Connection

Citing the presumably charismatic nature of Christianity in fourth-century Phrygia, Trevett contends that all of the abilities listed in the Nanas inscription could also be found among catholic prophetesses of the time.⁴ She notes that Christian epigraphy from this area has been “variously identified as catholic, Montanist or Novatianist”,⁵ and denies that we can spell out the differences between these groups with respect to the sort of supernatural workings attributed to Nanas: “[G]iven the geographical area of its origins and the fact that the epitaph refers to a prophet, the tendency has been to equate Phrygian with Montanist, Montanists with female prophets, and to categorise the woman and her friends as heretical.”⁶ She welcomes Robin Lane Fox’s more impartial judgment: “Not every biblical ‘prophetess’ in Phrygia was a Montanist.”⁷

Trevett and Lane Fox may have a point, although it would certainly not count for much if there were other grounds for identifying Nanas as a Montanist. Still, in pursuit of the point that Trevett and Lane Fox make, it is worth asking what we can know about the general scene in Phrygian Christianity. Fortunately, we can speak directly to the make-up of Christianity not only in fourth-century Phrygia but in Kotiaëion itself, for the historian Socrates tells us that the local bishopric there was occupied by a Novatianist (*H.E.* 4.28). W. M. Calder has suggested that “Novatianist”, in this context, really means “Montanist”: “there is no doubt that in many places Montanism fused with Novatianism, and appeared in a Novatianist guise in the 4th century. The change of name, for it was little more, appears to have taken place at Cotiaëium about the

⁴ Christine Trevett, ‘Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had’: Nanas of Kotiaëion, in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, eds. Pauline Allen, Wendy Mayer, and Lawrence Cross, vol. 2 (Brisbane, 1999) 259–77. Stephen Mitchell compares the attributes of Nanas with those of a fellow Phrygian named Epitynchanos, a pagan prophet (*Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, vol. 2: *The Rise of the Church* [Oxford, 1993] 47).

⁵ Trevett, ‘Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had’, 259. See the section on “Phrygian Christianity” in Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church*, vol. 2: *The Second Christian Century* (Cambridge, 1957) 174–91.

⁶ ‘Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had’, 262.

⁷ Trevett, ‘Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had’, 264 (a near quotation from Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* [New York, 1987] 747 n. 11). In identifying Nanas as a catholic Christian, Trevett reverses an earlier judgment, in which she states that Nanas is “probably” a Montanist (*Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* [Cambridge, 1996] 171). On Christian prophetesses in Asia Minor, see Johannes Hofmann, *Christliche Frauen im Dienst kleinasiatischer Gemeinden des ersten und zweiten Jahrhunderts: Eine prosopographische Studie*, *VigChr* 54 (2000) 283–308. See also Heinz Kraft, *Die altkirchliche Prophetie und die Entstehung des Montanismus*, *TZ* 11 (1955) 249–71.

beginning of the 4th century.”⁸ It is possible that Calder’s reconstruction is based upon what he “knows” from the supposed strength of Montanism in the region – making his argument circular – but the possibility he outlines is worthy of consideration. The point of all this is that the intrinsic likelihood of a prophetess from this area being a Montanist is perhaps greater than Trevett admits. Nevertheless, both possibilities must be entertained and we must turn to indicators other than population percentages.

Trevett’s negative argument is partly carried by the currents of the recent reclassification of the “Christians for Christians” inscriptions found throughout Phrygia as catholic, rather than Montanist.⁹ Some of these inscriptions were found in the upper Tembris valley, which makes the issue of their classification possibly relevant for the Nanas inscription. But the Nanas inscription is not of the “Christians for Christians” variety, and, given the chronological and geographical distribution of the “Christians for Christians” slogan, one must wonder whether it was used to distinguish catholic from Montanist believers. Wilhelm Schepelern suggests that the letters Π Π on a Montanist epitaph from Dorylaion (4th c. CE?) stand for Πνευματικὸς Πνευματικῇ, and that this expression comprises a Montanist response to Χριστιανοὶ Χριστιανοῖς.¹⁰ This reconstruction supports the view that the “Christians for Christians” inscriptions were intended to distinguish the deceased as non-Montanist. The absence of the “Christians for Christians” slogan would then not guarantee that a grave bearing Christian images and phrases is Montanist, but it would at least admit the suspicion.

It should be noted that, beyond her efforts to level the varieties of Christian expression in fourth-century Phrygia, Trevett only adduces two rather weak points against a Montanist provenance for the Nanas inscription: (1) Nanas was married (or widowed), in contrast to “Quintillianist” prophetesses who were, in the official sense, dedicated virgins,¹¹ and (2) Nanas’ prophecies were (according to Trevett’s interpretation) mediated by angels, while those of Montanus were not. In response to the first point, there is no reason, especially given the model of Priscilla and Maximilla, to think that a woman could not become a “virgin” prophetess after being married

⁸ W. M. Calder, *The Epigraphy of the Anatolian Heresies*, in *Anatolian Studies Presented to Sir William Mitchell Ramsay*, eds. W. H. Buckler and W. M. Calder (Manchester, 1923) 59–91, esp. 64. Adolf von Harnack also argues that Montanists are depicted as Novatianists in parts of fourth-century Asia Minor (*The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* [2 vols.; London, 1904–1905] 2.356). See Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, 356–57. On Novatianist tendencies (i.e., a rejection of second repentance) within the earlier Montanist movement, see Frederick Charles Klawiter, *The New Prophecy in Early Christianity: The Origin, Nature, and Development of Montanism, A.D. 165–220*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1975, pp. 283–94. Mitchell discusses the Novatianist presence in Phrygia, but does not relate this presence to the Montanists (*Anatolia*, vol. 2, *The Rise of the Church*, 98–99). See Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia*, 347–49. On the existence of a Montanist community in Kotiaion, Tabbernee writes that it “is theoretically possible, as there is evidence of Montanists in nearby Dorylaion ([cf. Tabbernee no.] 63) and, probably, Nakoleia ([cf. Tabbernee no.] 55)” (*ibid.*, 418). Nanas’ tombstone is outside the city.

⁹ See Elsa Gibson, *The “Christians for Christians” Inscriptions of Phrygia* (HTS 32; Missoula, MT, 1978) 131–35. Cf. Wolfgang Wischmeyer’s bibliographic review essay of Gibson’s book (*JbAC* 23 [1980] 166–71).

¹⁰ *Der Montanismus und die phrygischen Kulte* (Tübingen, 1929) 80–82.

¹¹ Trevett writes, “Unlike the Quintillianist prophets, Nanas was not a dedicated virgin. The Carthaginian women (possibly just catholic or of New Prophecy persuasion too) were probably also dedicated virgins, so that Nanas’ married/widowed state may be a small pointer to the non-Montanist character of this prophet” (“*Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had*”, 266). On the offices of virgin and widow, see Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1976) *passim*; Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: A Historical Study* (San Francisco, 1986) 23–32.

or losing a husband. If Perpetua was a Montanist, as I believe she was,¹² then even motherhood did not hold a Montanist woman back from experiencing prophetic visions.¹³ In response to the second point, we must take a closer look at what the inscription could mean by ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν . . . μέγιστον.

The proper interpretation of ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν . . . μέγιστον is an item of some importance for understanding the Nanas inscription. For the moment, let us consider the possibilities afforded by construction accepted by Trevett, that ἀγγελικὴν modifies φωνήν. The rendering “angelic speech” is too ambiguous to be of much help: while φωνή elsewhere can be used to signify angelic voices,¹⁴ it can also signify angelic languages.¹⁵ By itself, the term ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν could therefore refer to any of a variety of activities, including conversing with angels, prophesying through angelic mediation, or speaking in angelic tongues (glossolalia).

Being visited by angels and hearing angelic voices was apparently emblematic of attaining to a higher plain of spirituality or divine favor. John J. Gunther notes that, according to the testaments written in their names, the patriarchs conversed with angels on a regular basis:

According to the Testament of Jacob, “it was his custom (συνήθεια) daily to speak with angels”. While he was “making his prayers unto God day and night, angels came to seek after him, watching over him, saving him, giving him strength in all things”. It was likewise customary for Isaac and the holy angels to converse daily (T. Isaac). Abraham, too, was “companion of the holy angels” (T. Abr. 16, longer).¹⁶

¹² The fact that the shepherd in Perpetua’s first vision gives her a piece of cheese within a eucharistic setting indicates that Perpetua was an Artotyrite, which is consistent with a Montanist (but not a catholic) identity. This should be considered in light of the fact that there were many Montanists within the church at Carthage. (We must ignore Herbert Musurillo’s unexplained rendering of *caseus* as “milk” instead of “cheese” [*Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Introduction, Texts and Translations* (Oxford, 1972) 113].) As Timothy David Barnes writes, “The theological character of the *Passion* is Montanist through and through” (*Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* [Oxford, 1971] 77). See also John de Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church: A Study in the Ecclesiastical History of the Second Century* (Cambridge, 1878) 138–41; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women’s Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York, 1992) 159–63; Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994) 172–75. Of course, others are not convinced: Maureen A. Tilley contends that the evidence for Montanist influence in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* is “characteristic of African Christianity generally during the second through fourth centuries” (The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2: *A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza [New York, 1993] 829–58, esp. 834).

¹³ My use of “prophetic visions” here is informal, and not intended to challenge Jan Fekkes III’s observation that the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* distinguishes between prophecies and visions (*Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation* [JSNTSup 93; Sheffield, 1994] 44 n. 70).

¹⁴ E.g., London Ms. Or. 6794 (Angelicus M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* [3 vols.; Bruxelles, 1930–31] 1.29; 2.104), Rossi Gnostic Tractate (ibid., 1.73; 2.186). See the comments in ibid., 3.42–43; Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 2: *The Archeological Evidence from the Diaspora* (Bollingen 37; New York, 1953) 166.

¹⁵ E.g., PGM 13.139–40. See also the reading φωνῇ τινι ἰδίᾳ ὕμνουσῶν τὸν θεόν for *Corp. Herm.* 1.26: it is difficult to judge whether the reading ἰδίᾳ is more original than the alternative reading ἡδεῖα, but the latter looks like it has been influenced by the “sweet” singing of the muses at the beginning of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (see ll. 7–14, 39–43, 68–70), although a different word is used there.

¹⁶ *St. Paul’s Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings* (NovTSup 35; Leiden, 1973) 195–96.

It would appear that the idea of an angelic visitation could be combined with the angelic-mediation view of prophetic inspiration, or alternatively that the angels involved could be presented more as *dramatis personae* in their own right, with little to do with prophetic inspiration *per se*.¹⁷ In the case of Nanas, explicitly labelled a “prophetess”, a theory of prophetic inspiration is the more reasonable assumption, especially in view of Tertullian’s references in *De anima* 9 (quoted below). This fits with a Montanist context (albeit not exclusively): in another context, Tertullian cites the Montanist Prisca (Priscilla), who claims that Montanists “see visions; and, turning their face downward, they even hear manifest voices, as salutary as they are secret” (“visiones vident, et ponentes faciem deorsum etiam voces audiunt manifestas tam salutare quam et occultas” [*De exhort. castitatis* 10]). The fact that these voices are not explicitly called “angelic”, however, causes this text to support an altogether different construction of ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν . . . μέγιστον, which we examine below.

Although she admits that ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν . . . μέγιστον “is open to more than one interpretation”, Trevett argues that it refers to angel-mediated prophecy, and sets her interpretation of “angelic utterances” as angelically mediated prophecies in contradistinction to Montanus’ claim to speak through the direct inspiration of the Lord – “I am neither an angel nor an envoy, but I, the Lord God, the Father, have come” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.11).¹⁸ If Montanus predicated the superiority of his prophecy upon its unmediated nature, Trevett argues, then Nanas’ prophecies, which were mediated by angels, could hardly be those of a Montanist. But even if we grant that ἀγγελικὴν modifies φωνήν and that the resulting term might refer to angel-mediated prophecy, it is still not clear that these words would conflict with a proper understanding of Montanus’ dismissal of angelic mediation. For example, Montanus’ choice of words may have been intended to settle the identity of the “Paraclete” of whom he so often spoke (and who so often spoke through him), since some angel cults in Asia Minor apparently regarded the “Paraclete” as an angelic being.¹⁹ Alternatively, Montanus’ choice of words may have been determined by a one-upmanship against the followers of Cerinthus: assuming that Eusebius’ *précis* of Cerinthus’ eschatology is not based upon Caius’ errant assumption that Cerinthus wrote Revelation, it would appear that Cerinthus made angelic revelations a prominent part of his message (see Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.28.1–2), and that the movement he began was still thriving at the time of Montanus’ prophetic activity.²⁰

¹⁷ For the latter scheme, none of the known examples are Montanist. The post-Constantinian hero legends of famous monks also depict regular conversations with angels. According to the seventh-century *Symeon the Holy Fool*, an artisan witnesses Symeon “at the baths conversing with two angels” (§ 154; trans. Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius’s Life and the Late Antique City* [Transformation of the Classical Heritage 25; Berkeley, 1996]). For an earlier account, cf. the *Acts of Paul*, transparently based upon 1 Cor 13:1, in which Paul speaks *glossolalically* with an angel face to face.

¹⁸ ‘Angelic Visitations and Speech She Had’, 262 n. 8. As evidence for the angelic mediation of prophecy, Trevett points to the phrase “the angel of the prophetic spirit” in Hermas mand. 11.9, the mention of the “spirits of the prophets” in 1 Corinthians 14, and the mediating role of the angels in Revelation’s letters to the seven churches (ibid., 273).

¹⁹ In her earlier book, Trevett writes that, in Montanism, “Paraclete has replaced *angel* (as figures in the Revelation), demythologising and replacing the figure with the spirit of prophecy” (*Montanism*, 252 n. 53).

²⁰ That Cerinthianism was still a going concern in the late second century is supported by Stephen C. Carlson’s suggestion (so far unpublished) that the Muratorian Fragment (whatever its date) punningly alludes to Cerinthus when it states that “it is not fitting to mix gall with honey” (*fel enim cum melle misceri non congruit*): the name *Cerinthus* means “bee-bread”, a food made from bitter pollen and honey (see Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 11.17).

These possible explanations for Montanus' words raise the question of whether he intended this theory of nonangelic inspiration to take up a permanent home within Montanist theology. It is not at all clear that Montanists anywhere and everywhere would have resisted the doctrine of a prophetic angel. There is really no reason to assume that Montanists opposed the double theory of prophetic inspiration (if that is what it is) that we meet in connection with the woman in Tertullian, *De anima* 9:

We also have been judged worthy of the prophetic gift. . . . We have among us now a sister whose lot it has been to be endowed with various gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by an ecstatic vision during the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church. She converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord, and she sees and hears sacred matters [*conversatur cum angelis, aliquando etiam cum domino, et uidet et audit sacramenta*].

In this passage, "angels" and "the Lord" denote different sources of prophetic inspiration, so that, although this woman's prophetic utterances are usually mediated by angels, they are also, on occasion, mediated by the Lord himself.²¹ There is a good possibility that this woman was a Montanist, especially if Tertullian's first "we" refers to a charismatic party within the Church,²² but it is not necessary to insist that she is: she at least shows that these two theories of prophetic inspiration are not mutually exclusive. In point of fact, there is a range of positions concerning the mutual validity and relative worth of angelically-mediated prophecy *vis-à-vis* divine prophetic enthusiasm. As Ithamar Gruenwald writes, "No [biblical] prophet would have boasted of the fact that his vision was the result of angelic mediation. However, the apocalyptists were used to nothing better and made it a privilege."²³ At the same time, however, there were others who did not see things that way, as the view of Pseudo-Philo indicates: "And [Samuel] said to [Eli], 'With your right ear pay attention, with your left be deaf. For Phinehas the priest has commanded us, saying "The right ear hears the LORD by night, but the left an angel"' (LAB 53.6).²⁴ It should also be noted that one need not reach for an alternative to Trevett's understanding of "angelic voices" to fault her supposition that these words are incompatible with Montanist identity: Why should a rejection of angelic mediation of prophecy be requisite for Nanas' Montanist identity if it manifestly is not requisite for Tertullian's Montanist identity?

Because φωνή can also mean "language", it is also necessary to consider one last possibility for the construction that Trevett accepts: "angelic voices" may actually refer to an angeloglossic understanding of speaking in tongues. Trevett assumes that all of Nanas' listed abilities relate directly to her prophetic office, and suggests that this counts against any attempt to interpret

²¹ Martin Parmentier supposes that this passage illustrates a connection "zwischen den Gaben der Prophetie und der Zungen" (Das Zungenreden bei den Kirchenvätern, *Bijdragen* 55 [1994] 276–98, esp. 289). His ability to read glossolalia into the text so easily – a reading that is not impossible but which requires more of an explanation than he offers – is probably owed to his consistent use of the term "Engelsprache" to denote the simple alternative to a xenoglossic understanding of glossolalia.

²² As William Tabbernee argues, however, this woman apparently conversed with angels during the catholic liturgy, and not in a separate Montanist setting (Remnants of the New Prophecy: Literary and Epigraphical Sources of the Montanist Movement, in *Studia Patristica* 21, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone [Leuven, 1989] 193–201, esp. 196–97).

²³ *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism* (BEATAJ 14; Frankfurt am Main, 1988) 44.

²⁴ Daniel J. Harrington (trans.), Pseudo-Philo, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (2 vols.; Garden City, NY, 1985) 2.297–377.

ἀγγελικὴν . . . φωνήν as a reference to glossolalia. But glossolalia would have been prized among prophets, especially as an intercessory tool, and it is conceivable that an inscription hailing one's prophetic and intercessory abilities would include mention of the abundance of his/her glossolalia.²⁵ Glossolalia appears to have been widespread among the Montanists. It was during his Montanist years that Tertullian wrote that baptizands should ask for, and expect to receive, charismatic gifts (*Concerning Baptism* 20.5; cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Intro. Gal.* 7–10). In writing this, he probably had glossolalia in mind, since it is the only charism mentioned every time the book of Acts refers to signs following baptism. Eusebius (dependent upon the “Anonymous” source) describes Montanus' prophesying with the terms πνευματοφορέομαι, κατοχή, παρέκστασις, ἐνθουσία, and λαλεῖν καὶ ξενοφωνεῖν (*Eccl. Hist.* 5.16.7), and writes that the two prophetesses λαλεῖν ἐκφρόνως καὶ ἀκαίρως καὶ ἄλλοτριότροπως (*Eccl. Hist.* 5.16.9).²⁶ If Perpetua was a Montanist, as I argued above,²⁷ then there is even evidence within her martyrdom account that Montanist glossolalia was connected with intercessory prayer: the likeliest explanation for Perpetua's sudden blurting out of Dinocrates' name during communal prayer (*Mart. Perp.* 7.1) is that ecstatic outbursts were common in Carthage. This surprise mention of Dinocrates, together with the allusions to Rom 8:26 in Perpetua's subsequent deep sighing for her brother's pain (7.2), suggests a context of glossolalic prayer.²⁸ It is of note that the glossolalia connection is not entirely dependent on the Tabbernee/Trevett parsing of the text: August Strobel takes φωνήν by itself to refer to glossolalia (“(die Gabe der) Zunge”), with no connection at all to the mention of angels.²⁹

²⁵ The roles of prophet and intercessor were not wholly separate. As Torjeson writes, “A fixed distinction between speaking to God (prayer) and speaking for God (prophecy) belongs to a later period” (*The Early Christian Orans*, 48).

²⁶ See Emile Lombard, *Le montanisme et l'inspiration: A propos du livre de M. de Labriolle*, *RTP* 3 (1915) 278–322, esp. 299–300; Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA, 1984) 34–36; Trevett, *Montanism*, 89–91. Not everyone is happy with the thesis that the Montanists spoke in tongues: Christopher Forbes even claims that the thesis of Montanist glossolalia “collapses under even slight scrutiny” (*Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* [WUNT 75; Tübingen, 1995] 160). He writes, “the evidence of Eusebius, who knows of collections of Montanist oracles, and actually cites the contents of some of them, makes it luminously clear that these oracles were delivered in plain Greek” (*ibid.*, 160). Forbes's supposition that a community was not glossolalic if it also exhibited the gift of vernacular prophecy is curious, to say the least, especially in the light of Paul's discussion of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12–14, in which Paul both describes and prescribes this precise mixture of charismatic workings. (Froehlich commits himself to the same problematic either/or: the “very existence [of intelligible Montanist oracles] contradicts the repeated charge that the Montanist prophets uttered inarticulate speech” [Montanism and Gnosis, 97].) What really “collapses under . . . slight scrutiny” is Forbes's contention that ξενοφωνεῖν (in Eusebius) refers to the strangeness of the content of what is spoken, rather than the foreignness of the expression (*Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment*, 161): such a meaning leads to an unlikely rendering for Eusebius' more complete expression λαλεῖν καὶ ξενοφωνεῖν (*viz.*, as “saying [intransitive] and speaking strange things”?).

²⁷ See n. 13.

²⁸ See David Christie-Murray, *Voices from the Gods: Speaking with Tongues* (London, 1978) 35; Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, *Das Angeld des Geistes: Studien zur paulinischen Pneumatologie* (FRLANT 154; Göttingen, 1992) 205. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. thinks that the allusion to Rom 8:26 points only to a “remote possibility” of glossolalia (*Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* [Cleveland, 1992] 42–43). On the prophetic gifts in Perpetua's Carthage, see Joyce E. Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York, 1997) 62–71.

²⁹ *Das heilige Land der Montanisten: Eine religionsgeographische Untersuchung* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 37; Berlin, 1980) 99–100. Strobel connects φωνή with Eusebius' ξενοφωνεῖν (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.16.7).

Merkelbach's Construction of ll. 10–11 and the Significance of a Parallel Formula in Origen

A different construction of the inscription has been adopted by Merkelbach, who translates ll. 10–11 as “Wartung durch die Engel hatte sie und Stimme der Höchsten”. C. H. Emilie Haspels apparently holds to the same construction, as she attributes to Nanas “the gift of hearing voices”.³⁰ It is worth asking whether the pairing of “angelic visitations” with “voices of exalted ones” might shed light on the issue. In this connection, it is instructive to note that this pairing is apparently formulaic, and possesses a literary/rhetorical element that extends beyond the Montanist movement. The same pair of spectacular privileges is ascribed to the primordial humanity by Origen: “And the divine word according to Moses introduces the first humans as hearing divine voices and oracles, and often beholding the angels of God coming to visit them” (καὶ ὁ θεῖος δὲ κατὰ Μωυσέα λόγος εἰσήγαγε τοὺς πρώτους ἀκούοντας θειοτέρας φωνῆς καὶ χρησμῶν καὶ ὁρῶντας ἔσθ’ ὅτε ἀγγέλων θεοῦ ἐπιδημίας γεγενημένας πρὸς αὐτούς; *Con. Cels.* 4.80 [author’s translation]; cf. 8.34). According to Origen’s formula, the protological glory is represented by experiences apparently identical with those attributed to Nanas. It is important to note that Origen refers to these divine privileges to make an argument for which they are not precisely suited: he goes on to discuss God’s assistance during the dawn of humanity, before “progress had been made toward understanding . . . and the discovery of the arts”, and as a means of subduing threatening beasts. He uses the hearing of “divine voices” and the seeing of “angels of God coming to visit” to symbolize God’s assistance in general, but without any real interest in these privileges *per se*. This suggests that Origen is calling upon a stock image of the protological glory, a suggestion that may shed light on the Nanas inscription. If this description of humanity’s golden dawn was fairly widespread, as its status as a “stock image” implies, it would appear that the ἀγγελικὴν ἐπισκοπὴν καὶ φωνὴν . . . μέγιστον ascribed to Nanas serve to identify her with the blessedness of that bygone epoch. Nevertheless, such a connection does not remove the probability that our inscription also refers to actual experiences that characterized Nanas’ prophetic office. In other words, the memory of Nanas’ experiences may have been stylized into an echo of primordial blessedness, or (perhaps more likely) this formulation may have been a sort of cognitive filter for her own understanding of her charismatic experiences.

Of course, if we accept that ἀγγελικὴν ἐπισκοπὴν καὶ φωνὴν . . . μέγιστον echoes the same formula used by Origen, we are still faced with the task of unpacking its more immediate referent within Nanas’ life. What does it mean to describe Nanas’ charismatic privileges through recognizably protological imagery? As everyone knows, throughout Jewish and Christian sources, eschatological blessings are envisioned as a return to the protological glory (*Endzeit als Urzeit*). Once we recognize (with the help of Origen) the ultimate protological reference behind the Nanas inscription, its function as a more immediate eschatological reference becomes rather obvious. In other words, Nanas’ participation in angelic visitations and exalted voices marks her as having returned to the protological glory, and this in turn is evidence of the endtime outpouring of the prophetic spirit.

It is this double aspect of the phrase ἀγγελικὴν ἐπισκοπὴν καὶ φωνὴν . . . μέγιστον, I submit, that points us in the direction of Montanism. In an earlier study, I argued that the Montanist depiction of Pepuza and Tymion as “Jerusalem” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.1.3; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*

³⁰ Merkelbach and Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*, Band 3, 349; Haspels, *The Highlands of Phrygia: Sites and Monuments*, vol. 1: *The Text* (Princeton, 1971) 216.

16.8) had little to do with the apocalyptic idea of a new-creational city descending from heaven (with pearly gates and streets of gold, etc.), but that “Jerusalem” symbolized, as for the author of Sirach 24, the dwelling place of wisdom herself.³¹ This “wisdom”, in turn, was understood in terms of the prophetic unction, so that the Montanist headquarters, in laying claim to the name of Jerusalem, purported to be nothing less than the earthly home of the prophetic spirit. Against the tide of (esp. older) Montanist scholarship, I argued that the vision of Jerusalem descending at Pepuza had little to do with eschatological hopes. In this connection, however, a word of clarification is in order, because there are different types of eschatology, and we should not exclude them all at once. As Nicola Denzey writes, the passage from Epiphanius “reflect[s] a type of realized eschatology”: “If Pepuza had already been known as the New Jerusalem, Quintilla’s acknowledgment of this fact emphasized that the heavenly Jerusalem was already present for those who were spiritually aware.”³² While Montanist Pepuza-Jerusalem does not represent the sort of apocalyptic hope that we meet in the last chapters of Revelation, it does represent the more durative sort of eschatological hope associated with endtime spiritual outpourings, much like those we see in the book of Acts (esp. chap. 2).

For the earliest Christians, the outpouring of the holy spirit (experienced as the prophetic spirit) represented the arrival of an eschatological age. As a hope fulfilled in the midst of a pneumatological void (viz. the spirit’s departure from Israel), the gift of the spirit represented a return to a bygone age. This is the same sense of *Endzeit als Urzeit* that marked the Montanist understanding of the spiritual outpouring that they embraced. They saw the outpouring of the spirit as a restoration to an earlier glory. Although any movement within Christianity could have learned from the New Testament to see things that way, it is perhaps significant for understanding the Nanas inscription that the Montanists appear to be one group that did see things that way. This makes it all the more likely that Nanas was a Montanist after all. If she was not a Montanist, she (or her epigraphers) certainly had absorbed the Montanist way of thinking.

Conclusion

Although scholars are correct to call attention to the pneumatic quality of early Christianity in Asia Minor in general, and in fourth-century Phrygia in particular, that call cannot of its own right make a catholic out of the prophetess Nanas. Neither does the reference to Nanas’ abundance of angelic visitations and hearing angelic voices conflict with the Montanist understanding of prophetic inspiration, as the latter is revealed by either Tertullian or Epiphanius. On the contrary, the Nanas inscription has a great deal in common with the Montanist understanding of prophetic inspiration. This commonality includes not only the operational aspects of prophetic inspiration, but also its function as an emblem for a restorationist pneumatology.*

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³¹ John C. Poirier, Montanist Pepuza-Jerusalem and the Dwelling Place of Wisdom, *J ECS* 7 (1999) 491–507. See further Nicola Denzey, What Did the Montanists Read?, *HTR* 94 (2001) 427–48.

³² What Did the Montanists Read?, 446.

* For the Turkish abstract see p. 198.

ÖZET

“The Montanist Nature of the Nanas Inscription”

Makalede, Kotiaion (Kütahya) yakınlarında bulunmuş olan ve birçok kez yayınlanan, Nanas adındaki bir Hristiyan kadın peygamberin (*prophetissa*) yüceltildiği bir mezar şiiri yeniden incelenmektedir. Çoğu araştırmacı, burada adı geçen Nanas'ın erken Hristiyanlık devrinde Phrygia'da ortaya çıkan Montanist akımının bir temsilcisi olduğunu kabul etmekle birlikte, bu fikri reddeden diğer bazı bilim adamları da, Nanas'ın bir Montanist olamayacağını iddia etmekteydiler. Makalenin yazarı, erken Hristiyanlık dönemi kaynaklarını, İ.S. IV. yüzyılda Phrygia'daki Hristiyan inançlarını ve bu bölgede ortaya çıkmış olan Montanizm'in özelliklerini ele alarak bu itirazları reddetmekte ve Nanas'ın bir Montanist peygamber olduğuna ilişkin yaygın düşüncüyü savunmaktadır.