Locating Opportunities: Women, Ritualizations, and Social Experimentation in Early Jesus
Groups

by

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ABSTRACT

The descriptions of women found in early Christian texts are not consistent. In some cases women are depicted as powerful and influential individuals who contributed to the development of their religious community, while in other cases women are described as marginal and problematic. This dissertation is devoted to documenting and explaining the varying views on and positions of women in early Christian associations. Central to this project is the question if there is a connection between social experimentations, ritual performances, and the status of women in specific early Christian communities. This project demonstrates that women belonging to the earliest Jesus groups and later Christian groups found opportunities to exhibit agency and power as well as challenge social paradigms. However, this research also demonstrates that women belonging to numerous Greco-Roman and Jewish associations found the same opportunities. Rather than focus on specific worldviews or beliefs, this project suggests that we should consider what practices granted women the opportunities to challenge the idealized traditional Greco-Roman gender paradigms and obtain leadership positions.

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1. INTRODUCTION: LOCATING WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIAN GROUPS

The descriptions of women found in early Christian texts are not consistent. In some cases women are depicted as powerful and influential individuals who contributed to the development of their religious community, while in other cases women are described as marginal and problematic. These disparities beg us to consider why some women are depicted as holding leadership positions while others faced restrictions. My dissertation will be devoted to documenting and explaining the varying views on and positions of women in early Christian associations.

There has been a tendency by scholars to use the categories of apocalypticism or eschatology to explain the development of early Jesus groups as well as their ensuing worldviews. As such, current research does not committedly account for social experiments and ritual performances as factors in determining status positions and leadership roles for women in Greco-Roman Jesus associations. Central to my research will be the question if there is a connection between social experimentations, ritual performances, the formation of social identity, and the status of women in specific early Christian communities. Succinctly, central to this research project are explanatory challenges that focus on the participation of women in early Jesus groups. Significantly, this project will also revise prevalent theoretical approaches engaged by scholars who explore the development of these Jesus groups.

This research project will test the hypothesis that the tendency towards an increasingly muscular patriarchy developed in tandem with a weakening of ritualized social experimentations. I will analyze how these parallel developments both restricted and provided opportunities for women members of early Jesus groups. Specifically, I will locate the emergence of non-conventional female roles within these parallel tendencies and address the question whether

second- and third-century status and leadership opportunities were enabled by an increasingly "manly" church that no longer re-imagined contemporary social structures. This project is compelling because it will address the primary issue of the relationships between social experimentation, ritualizations, and the status accorded to women. A redescription of the participation of women in early Jesus groups will provide insight into the choice of women to actively seek opportunities as well as contribute to the greater project of the social formation of early Christianity.[1] As will be demonstrated throughout this project, a redescription of women in the earliest Jesus groups does not simply redescribe women using the same theories and methodologies that have been traditionally employed. This redescription project will work with ancient data as well as challenge previous scholarship that considers the status and participation of women in the earliest Jesus groups. Following J.Z. Smith's methodology, I will rectify problematic analytical and theoretical categories and present the participation of women through a new lens. This approach is significant because it focuses on the women that participate in early Jesus group activities rather than credit potential opportunities to a saviour figure.

While considering historical evidence and ancient literature, this research project is primarily a theoretical project and its contributions are foremost theoretical contributions. This thesis challenges traditional paradigms employed to examine women in the earliest Jesus groups and uses ritual theory to demonstrate how performances enabled women to achieve levels of power and influence. This thesis will argue that there is a correlation between *pneumatic* groups and the possibility of social experimentation. I argue that the consideration and evaluation of

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[1] A more thorough description of a "Redescription" project will be considered at length later in this chapter. In particular, see the sections which consider J.Z. Smith and Burton Mack. Of particular importance is J.Z. Smith's four-step redescription process; description, comparison, redescription and rectification (Burton L. Mack, "On redescribing Christian origins," *MTSR* 8/3 [1996]: 256).

what people did (theory activities) rather than their theological ideas (beliefs) reveals why some women were able to obtain positions of stature.

Methodology and Theory: Some Preliminary Thoughts

Before the emergence of female asceticism and leadership in early Jesus associations can be located, it is imperative that preliminary methodological and theoretical matters are addressed. It may be perceived as unnecessary or even redundant to outline exactly how one will find, think about, and redescribe women belonging to specific early Christian groups. However, it is only with a consideration and evaluation of contemporary theoretical and methodological research that I can determine the most appropriate approach to locating the historical women who belonged to the earliest Jesus associations and later Christian communities. Succinctly, by deciding what theories and methods will be used in this project, I will also determine the types of results I will find.

If our goal is to get a glimpse of historical women in the developing Jesus associations, we cannot simply employ a "seek and you will find" approach. While this method will certainly lead us to find women or descriptions of women, we must ask ourselves whether these descriptions reflect the experiences of women during this period. Or more specifically, we must seriously question whether these descriptions can be trusted as accurate descriptions of historical women or whether these theories provide untainted results. Recent theoretical projects in religious studies and history have begun to encourage scholars to consider whether the women we find in ancient literature and modern interpretations of this ancient data reflect accurate representations of women. Specifically, these projects challenge us to differentiate between

women who belonged to early Jesus groups and the representations of women crafted by ancient authors and modern scholars.

The next section will outline the manner in which I will redescribe women in early Christian groups as well as rectify related misnomers and theologically-loaded categories. This first component will address the following questions: How should responsible scholars of religion approach early Christian communities? How have scholars reconstructed the participation of women in early Christian communities? What are the methodological approaches to women in religion and are they are adequate? How might the heavily drawn upon categories of apocalypticism and eschatology be related to the study of early Christian women?

A Project in Redescription and Rectification

Over the past few decades significant gains have been made in the development of theories of religion and methodological approaches that aim at a redescription of early Christian groups. Rather than engaging approaches that privilege Judeo-Christian theological concerns or a fabricated heritage,[2] these projects aim to eliminate the presumption that there is any essential Christianity as well as rectify misconceptions linked to a "Christian construction of history."[3] Though many theorists could be considered for this project, I will briefly outline crucial points made by a few influential scholars in the field of theory. Specifically, I will outline relevant key points from Jonathan Z. Smith's model of research into the history of religions, Burton Mack's description of Jesus groups as social experiments, Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller's theory of

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[2] David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory* 10 (1998): 5–24. Lowenthal considers heritage as a necessary fabrication of pedigree. Succinctly, he argues that "heritage relies on revealed faith rather than rational proof" (7). As such, heritage is based upon feelings rather than truth. Throughout this article, Lowenthal considers the differences between history and heritage, how heritage is used to reshape the past and the manners in which the public approves of fabrication. He demonstrates that heritage promotes superiority, establishes identity and attempts to establish uniqueness (7–11).
[3] Wilken, "The Use of the Past," in *The Myth of Christian Beginnings*, (Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1971), 1–26.

social formation and Willi Braun and William Arnal's theses on social formation, mythmaking, and retroactive descriptions.

Jonathan Z. Smith and "Privileged Data"

In order to research effectively and honestly, we must determine what type of history we are doing. And while this appears to be a straightforward and simple task, the divergent methodologies used and approaches taken in research on early Christian groups suggests that it is imperative that we closely consider exactly what it is we are doing. Luther Martin succinctly states that "the study of Christian origins should in no way differ from the study of anything past and, yet, historical studies of Christianity continue to 'privilege' the data with imagined origins. In contrast to such imaginative fictions, critical historiography is based on human events presumed to actually have occurred."[4] While one might expect that such research practices are employed in theological works or in research from centuries past, Jonathan Z. Smith's work, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* astutely demonstrates that this is not the case. Under the guise of historical research, some scholars continue to value Christianity over other religions in comparisons, impose the "extra-historical categories of uniqueness and the 'Wholly Other' upon historical data and the tasks of historical understanding," assign value rather than engaging in academic pursuits and protect the *sui generis* quality of Christianity.[5] Projects that aim to redescribe early Christian groups attempt to dehistoricize religious interpretations and studies that privilege Christianity. They describe

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[4] Luther H. Martin, "History, Historiography and Christian Origins," *Studies in Religion* 29/1 (2000): 69–89.

[5] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 25, 42–43, 46, 79.

early Jesus groups as they might have plausibly begun and determine why things happened in the fashion they did.[6]

Burton Mack and J. Z. Smith

Crucial to the redescription project is Burton Mack's article, "On Redescribing Christian Origins" and his use of J. Z. Smith's historical approach to religious groups. According to Mack, despite the fact that scholars recognize that the development of Christianity was not monolinear and homogeneous, many still hold onto "the big bang concept of Christian origins" and use the gospels to set the parameters of their study.[7] He demonstrates a scholarly catch-22 where the "New Testament is taken as proof for the conventional picture of Christian origins, and the conventional picture is taken as proof for the way in which the New Testament came to be written."[8] This is problematic because it sacrifices historical pursuits.[9] A redescription of early Jesus groups should employ a theory and methodology that, unlike Mack's catch-22, does not let early Christianity define the parameters of study.[10] Specifically, Mack argues that we need to provide an explanation for the development of early Christian groups that does not depend on "theories of religion that are focused on personal experience, transforming events, and dramatic breakthroughs."[11]

Mack proposes a better theory, one that makes "a [shift to a] theory of religion that gives the people their due."[12] He suggests a set of five propositions that drastically alter traditionally

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[6] Luther, "History, Historiography and Christian Origins," 70–72.
[7] Burton L. Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," *MTSR* 8/3 (1996): 247–248.
[8] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 251.
[9] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 252.
[10] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 252.
[11] Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 2.
[12] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 254.

accepted views of early Jesus groups. They include: "(1) Religion is a social construct. ...(2) Social formation defines the human enterprise. ...(3) Myths are more than fascinating fantasies, fuzzy memories, misguided science, or collective deceits. ...(4) Rituals are more than divine placations or magical attempts to challenge the powers of the gods. ...(5) Mythmaking and social formation go together."[13] These propositions challenge scholars to ask the questions what, why and how in social terms and thoroughly human terms. As cultural constructs, we need to determine what benefits and justifications early Christians made for their beliefs, their behaviours and their experiments. That is, Mack asserts that we should "redescribe Christian origins as a history of human inventiveness."[14] By considering the settings of the development of these groups, we deny "any initial postulation of 'uniqueness'"[15] and consider the conditions behind and the creativeness of people involved in the development of these groups.

In order to develop an appropriate methodology, Mack draws on J. Z. Smith's model of research into the history of religions. Mack describes J. Z. Smith's method "as the performance of four operations, not necessary in separate, sequential stages: description, comparison, redescription, and the rectification of categories."[16] It is this last operation, the rectification of categories and the use of a new term that causes Mack to be "giddy."[17] Smith's engagement in comparative studies does not end with a comparison. He argues that most scholarship engages comparison as a tool to consider similarities. The danger of such an approach is that it is homogenic, serves its own interests and forgets differences.[18] Smith's approach suggests that a historical comparison does not just tell us about how things were. Specifically, his approach

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[13] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 254–256.
[14] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 264.
[15] Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 117.
[16] Mack, "On Redescribing Christian Origins," 256.
[17] Mack, "On redescribing Christian Origins," 259.
[18] Jonathan Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (ed. Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 25–26.

challenges us to question the how, the why and the so what rather than only considering similarities.[19] For example, what circumstances granted women the opportunity to access authority and influence. Furthermore, by using new terms to accurately redescribe new research, we rectify problematic categories and misinterpretations of religious practices.

Ron Cameron, Merrill P. Miller and Social Experimentation

Attempts to redescribe early Christian groups and rectify problematic categories did not end with Jonathan Z. Smith and Burton Mack's methodological and theoretical approaches to research religious groups. Rather, scholars continued and still continue to work with Smith and Mack's approaches to religious groups. In 1995 the Society of Biblical Literature Conference began an ongoing consultation and then seminar on Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins which aims "to compare ancient mythmaking with modern theorizing or to understand mythmaking as a correlate to social formation."[20] This seminar has inspired numerous papers and projects which address problems in contemporary theories of religion as well as scholarly assumptions which need to be redescribed and rectified. Of particular significance for my project is Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller's hypothesis that

> [T]he plurality of the Jesus groups and the variety of mythologies they produced are better explained as reflexive social experiments than as responses to the historical Jesus or as generative forces set in motion by singular events and personal revelations. These experiments were concerned to shape meaningful collective identities in the face of constraints and challenges of the times and can be compared to similar sorts of social experimentation occasioned by the times.[21]

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[19] Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," 41.
[20] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 1.
[21] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 17.

This shift away from a Jesus individual and towards the groups themselves allows us to consider whether these developing groups were thoughtful constructions.[22] These scholars challenge us to use theories such as those set forth by Mack and Smith to determine how each specific group responded to contemporary circumstances.[23]

Following Durkheim, J. Z. Smith argues that "myths are not about nature. They are not primitive attempts to explain natural phenomena."[24] Rather, myths represent an intellectual activity that deals with reinterpretation.[25] Accordingly, it is by considering the intersections, junctions or moments of mythmaking and social formation that we can begin to rediscover and redescribe the groups in question.[26] Mack argues that scholars should "identify the shifts in imagery ... to mark the differences among the moments of mythmaking and social formation."[27] Mack further argues that not only should myths and rituals "be thought of as generated by social experimentation and formation" but he also insists that we must go beyond the rhetoric of mythmaking in order to find the communities or the social formation itself.[28] Mythmaking and social formation are not independent of each other; they go hand in hand, or "hand in glove," to use Mack's metaphor. Specifically, we need to tease out the generated moments and then find out who created them and what consequences they had. I suggest that this process will grant us the opportunity to take a glimpse into why individuals were attracted to such groups and why individuals found the prospect of social experimentation appealing.

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[22] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 21.
[23] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 21.
[24] Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 128–129.
[25] Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 107, 129.
[26] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 18–22.
[27] Burton L. Mack, "Backbay Jazz and Blues," in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 426.
[28] Mack, "Backbay Jazz and Blues," 427.

William Arnal and Willi Braun

In their consideration of the redescription project, William Arnal and Willi Braun consider the two key terms, social formation and mythmaking. Their theses not only provide clarity for the greater SBL redescription project but will also contribute invaluable insight for my current project. With regards to social formation they state:

> 1. The social is not an interest but a basic fact of human being. [Groups form because of common pursuits and desires for common ends...] 2. Human interests are radically social [and are constrained and shaped by social class interests and desires for well being...]. 3. Morphologically divergent socialities may show themselves to be similarly motivated social formations in a shared reality. [Early Christian social interests were not unique...]. 4. Relative to each other, early Christian groups are genetically independent. ... 5. Social formations are overlapping, convergent in some respects, divergent in others. They are never self-contained or pure.[29]

Arnal and Braun's five theses on social formation demonstrate the importance of considering the roles that human beings and their social interests play in the development of the groups that they form and join. If groups are not formed simply because individuals want to form groups, we must, like Arnal and Braun suggest, account for the coming together of social communities in terms of social and human terms. Specifically, we are dealing with human constructions which serve social purposes. Furthermore, their theses also suggest that early Jesus groups did not form for unique purposes or because of unique beliefs. As such, their approach does not give priority to Jesus groups over other contemporary groups.

As described by Arnal and Braun, mythmaking is a social phenomenon which creates ideas or concepts that once developed and established are taken to be self-evident by the group that formed them.[30] With regards to mythmaking they state:

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[29] William E. Arnal and Willi Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking: Theses on Key Terms," in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 462–463.

[30] Arnal and Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking: Theses on Key Terms," 464.

6. Ideas, including more or less elaborated myths, do not have motive force except they are given motive force in specific and immediate context. [Ideas do not have innate power but are used as tools by individuals in specific circumstances...] 7. Similarities of ideas, even when this similarity is the result of dispersal by some mechanism of transmission, is not automatically convertible to similarity or identity of motive force. [The same idea may motivate different types of actions...] 8. Mythologoumena do not elaborate themselves organically out of their internal force, so finding first, second, or any sequential station stops on the way to elaborated myths is not necessary to get at the relationship between mythmaking and social formation. [Because people develop myths, we need to re-evaluate all theories that assume social formation results from *Traditionsgeschichte*...] 9. Myths and mythmaking are ultimately effects, not causes of socialities. ... . 10. Linearity need not be eschewed in historical hypotheses but should not refer to ideas, concepts, or rhetorical constructions exclusively and primarily. [Because myths are not self-generating, a history that considers any form of linear progression will not satisfactorily answer questions regarding the influence of humans in the mythmaking process...] 11. Ultimately, ideas do not require an idealist analysis.[31]

Significantly, Arnal and Braun's theses suggest that humans create myths to serve social purposes. As such, we must consider why myths are created as well as their effects on the group. When considering early Jesus myths under this rubric, we once again consider that the development of Christian narratives is not unique or linear.

Arnal and Braun conclude their examination of social formation and mythmaking with a consideration of the relationship between the two terms. They raise two important points regarding these categories. First, they remind us of the important task of unearthing the connections between social groups and their ideas. Second, they insist that "mutual recognition is an effect rather than a cause of the proliferation of Christian groups."[32] As such, the development of social formations and myths are not dependent on other communities and their myths. The insight and clarification that Arnal and Braun bring to the redescription project remind scholars that social formation and mythmaking are not only human intellectual activities but that these categories are connected: groups are inspired and formed by human rather than divine activities

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[31] Arnal and Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking: Theses on Key Terms," 464–465.
[32] Arnal and Braun, "Social Formation and Mythmaking: Theses on Key Terms," 466–467.

and ideas. Furthermore, their theses demonstrate that early Jesus associations need to be re-examined because we should not assume (as much previous scholarship has) that these groups are linear, dependent upon each other, are genetically related or result from unique concerns or beliefs.

A Few Theoretical Conclusions

This brief examination of Smith, Mack, Cameron, Miller, Arnal, and Braun has not suggested that these theorists employ the exact same theoretical and methodological approaches in their redescription projects of early Christian groups. Rather, I have highlighted some key aspects of their methodological and theoretical approaches and demonstrated that these scholars have made significant contributions to the examination of the historical Jesus associations. Their individual redescription projects press us to tackle difficult questions which generally remain unaddressed. Clearly, as J. Z. Smith insists, we need to compare the data, redescribe the examples and rectify categories: we need an alternate paradigm or template.[33] "Redescription has to be consequential; it can be neither an essay in substitution not of symphony."[34] We should engage in research that will overthrow rather than reiterate misconceptions and misnomers. Such an approach is succinctly put forth by Jack N. Lightstone. "To wholly adopt the subjects' classifications, unable to move beyond them in acts of interpretation, is to become a member of the group, bound by its framework."[35] Drawing from Smith's research, Lightstone's approach challenges us to consider texts as data not as sources.

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[33] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction: Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins," 11–13.

[34] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Dayyeinu," in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 484.

[35] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 4.

If we are going to engage in critical historiography or consider ourselves responsible scholars, we will consider individuals as active participants in the making of their communities. We need to mull over more than Jesus or Paul or the misconception of united theological beliefs. There are more relevant and interesting questions that need to be considered: "But what about the map? What about explanations? What about finding some reasons for the particular attractions that these groups and their teachings may have had?"[36] If we are to determine why individuals were attracted to these groups and how their activities or performances seemed appropriate as responses to contemporary circumstances, we must give "these early Christians their due."[37] Rather than attempting to generate a discourse that demonstrates that these groups were different, special or unique, we should focus on why they were formed. "We would like to draw some pictures of these early Christians at their most energetic moments of constructing associations, practices, and rationales that can be explained and understood as human productions that made sense for their time."[38] We need to determine how human agency influenced the way that humans organized their communities and engaged in practices.[39] As will be demonstrated in a later chapter, this will include an examination of practices commonly referred to as rituals as well as a consideration of the parameters and usefulness of this category.

Method, Theory and Women

Taking into account the strides made by Burton Mack, J. Z. Smith, Ron Cameron, Merrill P. Miller, William Arnal, and Willi Braun in theories of religion and the redescription of early

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[36] Burton L. Mack, "Remarkable" in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004b), 470.

[37] Mack, "Remarkable," 474.

[38] Mack, "Remarkable," 473.

[39] Stanley K. Stowers, "Mythmaking, Social Formation, and Varieties of Social Theory" in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 492.

Christian communities, we should also conclude that the manner in which early Christian literature describes the activities and beliefs of women does not necessarily reflect how women *actually* participated within their religious communities. These redescription projects also encourage us to consider that the treatment of women in early Jesus associations was not universal but differed depending on time and location.[40] Furthermore, theories put forth in the redescription project suggest that we should not consider women belonging to Jesus groups or participating in early Christian performances as maintaining unique concerns or partaking in *sui generis* rituals. By acknowledging that social realities had the potential to change and that human beings held the opportunity to modify their social formations, we open the door to understanding the choices that women made to join or develop specific groups. To get to this I will first consider contemporary feminist theoretical and methodological approaches to women in early Jesus groups. Secondly, I will consider whether these approaches satisfactorily address the problems raised in the previously described redescription projects.

Feminist Scholars

Over the past several decades, scholars have changed the manner in which they utilize primary resources and interpret the participation of women in early Christian communities. Scholars like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Margaret MacDonald, and Ross Shepard Kraemer have challenged the traditional approaches to women in Christianity and have forced us to consider important questions. "Why does the premise that women as well as men have contributed to and shaped

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[40] Notable among the projects that redescribe the roles of women in early Jesus groups are Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002); Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The implications and content of these redescription projects will be considered at length in the methodology section.

culture, society, and religion seem so unlikely and extreme? A major reason can be found in an androcentric linguistic system and cultural mind-set that marginalizes women of all walks of life as well as disenfranchised men."[41] A feminist approach to the reconstruction of Christian origins attempts to abandon a literal approach to the New Testament and considers how and why the texts say what they say (as well as what they do not say).[42]

As feminist methodologies have established themselves in the academy, scholars have come to recognize that representations of women in ancient texts do not always reflect lived realities. Until recently, when attempting to examine the lives of women in early Christianity, scholars focused their research on biased perceptions and representations in ancient texts that were written by men. Shepard Kraemer states that there has been "an unarticulated assumption that human religion and human history were identical with men's religion and men's history."[43] A first step to understanding women's participation in religion, therefore, is to understand that their experiences and beliefs are different from those of men. As such, we need to examine women from a different vantage point and use a different lens than has been traditionally employed.[44] MacDonald argues that "instead of concentrating primarily on male attitudes toward women as has been done in the past, the focus should shift to reconstructing the lives of women."[45] Schüssler Fiorenza's work likewise suggests that previous approaches to the participation of women in early Christian communities were uncritical and defined by their

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[41] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), xviii.

[42] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* xix–xx.

[43] Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4. Gillman reminds us that the texts in question were "written by men reflecting what *they* thought about various matters; the texts do not offer women's perceptions about anything" (Florence M. Gillman, *Women Who Knew Paul* [Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992], 14).

[44] Gillman, *Women Who Knew Paul*, 14.

[45] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 199.

contemporary questions, interests and politics.[46] As such, an effective methodological approach must not only be aware of the androcentric nature of the ancient texts, but also must be aware of the contemporary cultural factors that motivate modern scholars in their research.[47]

MacDonald challenges scholars to research women in early Christian groups without focusing on the few key passages used to subordinate women in antiquity.[48] Schüssler Fiorenza also challenges scholars to approach texts differently. She suggests that new models must be used to "imagine the history of early Christian beginnings."[49] Her heuristic model is set to integrate women back into their history in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the development of Christianity.[50] The endeavour to use historical imagination to recover women's agency provides scholars with the opportunity to see old data in a new fashion.[51]

Schüssler Fiorenza puts forth a method of feminist critical hermeneutics that sets its sights on the historical reconstruction of women in early Christian communities. This method requires that theological motives be put aside in order that history might be restored.[52] Instead of taken for granted theological norms, "concrete historical situations" are taken into consideration.[53] As such, the purpose and benefit of Schüssler Fiorenza's methodology is a move from androcentric texts to a consideration of socio-historical contexts where women are no longer understood as absent or insignificant.[54]

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[46] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* xlvii, 42.
[47] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 43.
[48] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 199–200.
[49] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* xxviii.
[50] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* xlvi. In essence, Schüssler Fiorenza claims to restore the stories about women to Christianity as well as claim this history for both men and women (xlvi).
[51] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* l–li, liv.
[52] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 27. Though Schüssler Fiorenza argues that theological intentions should be bracketed and suggests that once a historical reconstruction is completed that a liberation theology should be established, this project will only consider her methodology as it relates to the historical examination of women in early communities. I will not consider how this research can be used in modern religious applications.
[53] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 33.
[54] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 29.

Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that we employ a method of hermeneutical suspicion to recover women's voices and lives. "We must find ways to break the silence of the text and derive meaning from androcentric historiography and theology. [...] we must search for clues and allusions that indicate the reality about which the text is silent."[55] This approach recognizes the social reality behind the construction of texts and considers texts as having practical objectives.[56] Once we focus on how women *actually* participated in early Christian communities, we will be in a better place to understand how these women influenced the development of Christian groups or used religious practices for individual gains.

Virginia Burrus provides valuable insight into the complexity of gender studies. She argues that when attempting to recover historical women we come face to face with more than clear-cut boxed gender issues. "Feminist traditions have themselves given rise to the acknowledgement that neither gender nor sexual difference operates independently of other structuring of power and other formations of identity or subjectivity. Class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and colonialism intersect with and thus inflect gender, inevitably and irreducibly. So too does religion."[57] As such, Burrus' theory stresses the point that recovering or redescribing actual women in the earliest Christian groups involves more than locating women. There are numerous other factors to consider. As determined by scholars such as MacDonald, Schüssler Fiorenza and Shepard Kraemer, the problem is not locating women but locating "real women." Burrus presses the argument further by determining that we must consider the circumstances and challenges that determine the status accorded to women. She further argues that we need to

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[55] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 41.
[56] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 49, 59.
[57] Virginia Burrus, "Mapping as Metamorphosis," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Boston: Brill, 2007), 3.

consider how religious and gender discourses often deal with the "power of transformation."[58] Or more succinctly, for the interests of this research project, when considering religious performances and gender, scholars should take into account the possibility that participants were presented with opportunities to change social circumstances.

Do these Feminist Theories and Methodologies Make the Grade?

It is undeniable that the works of these feminist scholars have significantly challenged the traditional manners in which women in early Christian groups have been depicted. Their research has led scholars to consider women in Jesus associations in their own right and as active participants in their religious communities. Specifically, feminist theories have challenged scholars to push aside androcentric views of women found in early Christian texts and consider women as agents in the development of early Jesus groups. However, when taking into account the previously considered redescription projects (specifically, theories put forth by Smith, Mack, Cameron, Miller, Arnal, and Braun), I feel compelled to ask, is this enough? Should we be pushing further? What can we achieve with gender generalizations? A significant problem in this area of study is that while we are aware that women were not absent members in Jesus associations, we are uncertain of why they participated in the fashions they did. Another problem within this field of study is that some feminist scholars have "recovered" women belonging to early Jesus associations within narrative myths. And while the use of women as tools within narratives can be revealing, they tell us more about a narrative or the author than historical women.

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[58] Burrus, "Mapping as Metamorphosis," 10.

Some feminist scholars, like Shepard Kraemer, MacDonald, and Schüssler Fiorenza, suggest that early Christian groups offered women greater access to participation and leadership. Willi Braun considers at length how this type of feminist criticism exposed a

> scholarly lack of interest and, upon returning to the archives of early Christianity with illumination from a searchlight powered by a 'hermeneutic of suspicion', announced both an 'eureka!' and 'alas!' The discovery was that at least in their earliest stages the most progressive Jesus and Christ associations were excited over egalitarian social experiments, and, in keeping with experimental gender egalitarianism, did not merely tolerate women but assigned them status and function that were not derived from dominant Graeco-Roman values and conventions concerning sex and gender.[59]

Braun continues to consider how this research depicts women that belonged to these early Jesus groups as the "silver lining in a dark androcentric cloud."[60] And while it is true that some women in antiquity may have been attracted to early Jesus groups for this reason, the redescription project has taught us that we should not assume that the attraction resulted from something unique or unprecedented. Specifically, we should be leery of or unsatisfied with theories that claim early Jesus groups offered women something that they could not find elsewhere. While it is possible that membership in Jesus groups offered women opportunities, the redescription theories I have examined suggest that we must look beyond Jesus for answers and give people "their due."

Braun's consideration of the depiction of women in the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of Thomas and the Pauline letters, texts considered to be "women-friendly", determines that these texts "are not 'women-friendly' after all."[61] Braun demonstrates that there is no origin of women's liberation in these early Jesus group texts. Rather he astutely demonstrates that the

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[59] Willi Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness in Early Christian Discourse," in *Religion & Theory* 9 (2002): 112–13.
[60] Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness," 108.
[61] Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness," 109–111.

discovery of this "women-friendly" participation in Christianity "is not historical as much mythistorical."[62]

Though Kathleen E. Corley's paper solely considers feminist myths of Christian origins as they pertain to Jesus, her arguments are nonetheless instructive for all redescription projects involving women in early Jesus associations. She argues that while many scholars describe Jesus as a feminist, revolutionary, radical, unique, unprecedented and incomparable that these depictions are coloured by Protestant rhetoric.[63] She appeals to J. Z. Smith's discussion of comparisons to demonstrate that these Christian feminists "appeal to gospel traditions about Jesus as containing the true teaching of the Church before it became corrupted into the male monarchical episcopate."[64] Corley also demonstrates that these scholars attempt to maintain uniqueness for early Christianity by demonstrating that Jesus' views and treatment of women were without comparison in the first century.[65] However, "Jesus was unique neither in his attitudes about women nor in his inclusion of women among his disciples at meals. Rather he would fit well within the boundaries of a progressive Jewish framework and well within the boundaries of Greco-Roman culture generally."[66] Many feminist scholars also argue that while a "pristine" Christianity overturned the oppression of women that by the second and third centuries the progress had been completely overturned and patriarchy reigned.[67] Corley argues that this feminist assumption is rather simple and does not appropriately address the social, political and economic circumstances which led to the decline of female participation in these Christian

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[62] Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness," 109.
[63] Kathleen E. Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," in *Reimagining Christian Origins* (ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig; Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996), 51–54.
[64] Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," 54.
[65] Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," 54.
[66] Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," 60.
[67] Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," 53–54.

groups.[68] Not only does Corley demonstrate that the treatment of women in early Christian groups was not without comparison and that Jesus did not save women from oppression, but she also reveals that the majority of feminist theory and research does not search for women in a historical fashion. Specifically, she argues that it privileges a Protestant theological agenda that argues for pristine origins and a corrupted Catholic interpretation.

Following Corley and Braun's claims of prevailing dubious research in the history of women in Jesus associations and informed by a selection of redescription theorists, I argue that a redescription of women in early Jesus groups should not assume a *sui generis* paradigm of gender expectations. Furthermore, I argue that considering the causes between elevated and restricted opportunities will help situate the development of Jesus groups within their greater social context. Rather than assume any type of linear gender expectations, I suggest that we would benefit from a consideration of the social circumstances and expectations of these developing communities. Specifically, we should ask questions like, how were these women involved in the social formation and mythmaking of early Jesus groups? Were these women involved in social experimentation? What aspects of social experimentation granted women the opportunity to engage in practices that would have been perceived as unconventional? Were these opportunities available elsewhere?

But what about Later Communities?

I suggest that while the theories of redescription and rectification I have examined are most often applied to the earliest Jesus groups, that they should also be engaged for later Christian groups. The move to make these theories and methodologies approaches relevant for all historical studies of religious communities is not without precedent. J. Z. Smith engages his theoretical approach

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[68] Corley, "Feminist Myths of Christian Origins," 61.

to describe, compare, redescribe and rectify problems in religious groups regardless of their geographical location or time. Whether Smith is discussing circumcision and identity in Judaism, early Christianities in context of other religious groups in late antiquity, the Atbalmin or "cargo cults" in Papua New Guinea or the mass suicide of the Peoples Temple in Jonestown Guyana, he engages the same theory and methodological approaches: all groups are held to his critical academic standard of research.[69] Furthermore, his research demonstrates that communities that appear drastically different on the exterior can provide valuable insight into our study of early Christian groups.

Following Smith's method and theory of redescription and rectify, this research project will consider the Pauline and Pastoral communities as well the development of the later Montanist groups as thoughtful, conscious, and reflective movements that need to be explored and explained. Specifically, I will consider the relevant texts and communities "at a particular moment in the history of early Christian groups and see how [they were] responding to [their] times."[70] The process of considering the Pauline, Pastoral and Montanist test-cases will grant me the opportunity to improve prevalent but inadequate theories utilized to consider these groups, consider what catalyzed the development of the New Prophecy groups, determine why some individuals felt attraction to these movements and contemplate how these groups engaged in social experimentation, social formation and mythmaking.

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[69] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Re: Corinthians" in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature), 2011.

[70] Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, "Introduction" in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 21.

Why Consider Apocalypticism or Eschatology?

When considering early Jesus associations it appears that apocalypticism and eschatology have both everything and nothing to do with the development of these groups. Many scholars employ a theory that attributes an apocalyptic or eschatological worldview to first century Christian groups and use such beliefs to explain the development of Christianity. However, recent research suggests that members of the earliest Jesus groups may not have originally held beliefs that fall in line with this modern understanding of a traditional linear apocalypticism. In his examination of this paradigm, "Cameron [shows] how eschatology has been deployed as a privileged ontological category, rather than a descriptive one, in the history of New Testament scholarship. … [T]he particular rationales of an apocalyptic imagination are obscured and apocalyptic eschatology is made to appear as the all-pervasive matrix of early Christianities."[71] As a category that has come to be used indiscriminately to demonstrate that Christian origins are unique and without comparison, eschatology requires a critical re-examination and rectification.[72]

Because of the prominence given to apocalypticism and eschatology as the catalyzing factors for the development of Jesus groups and their ensuing practices and beliefs, these categories must also be considered within a gendered context. Because my research entails a redescription of women in early Christian groups, I am challenged with four related tasks that are concerned with the category of apocalypticism. First, I must consider the historical value of traditional approaches to apocalypticism and eschatology in early Christian groups. Second, if such an approach is deemed insufficient, I am required to redescribe and rectify this category or flush it completely. Third, if it is determined that apocalyptic or eschatological worldviews should not be recognized as catalysts for the development of Jesus groups, it will be necessary to

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[71] Cameron and Miller, "Introduction," 5.

[72] Ron Cameron, "The Anatomy of a Discourse: On 'Eschatology' as a Category for Explaining Christian Origins," *MTSR* 8 (1996): 240–241.

determine what encouraged the worldviews and practices linked to these categories. Fourth, it will be necessary to consider the ramifications of such a move on the redescription of women belonging to developing Jesus groups. The combination of all four of these tasks will determine what influence if any, apocalypticism and eschatology (whether these terms are rectified, abolished or only a portion of them is deemed valid) had on the participation of women in early Christian groups.

2. CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTICISM

A general overview of secondary literature suggests that eschatology and apocalypticism are often used by scholars as explanations for the motivational forces underlying activities or beliefs of early Christians and for the development of the earliest Jesus groups. However, a thorough consideration of early Christian[73] apocalypticism and eschatology reveals that these worldviews are more complicated than ancient literature or modern interpretations suggest. Specifically, evidence suggests that the manner in which early Christians are remembered to have believed in an apocalyptic worldview does not reveal how these people conceived or put apocalypticism into practice. Recent studies by Cameron, Smith, and Ascough demonstrate that a reconsideration of apocalypticism and eschatology is warranted because these terms have been engaged in theological interests rather than in research that deserves to be called historical. They suggest that popular genealogical interpretations do an injustice to historical research because they employ an ideological approach that does not examine a first-century development.

Considering the criticisms that these scholars raise against the traditional approaches to apocalypticism and eschatology as well as the terminology associated with such concepts, my research requires an evaluation of the methodological value of traditional approaches to end-of-the-world expectations. However, before I can explore the possible implications, modifications or manipulations of apocalyptic beliefs and how such beliefs or aspects of these beliefs

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[73] Recent studies by Braun and Arnal suggest that the concept of a first century Christianity was actually created in the second century. "This is not to say, of course, that nothing happened in the first century, but it *is* to say few *Christian* things happened and that what happened in the first century is massively mediated to us by what happened in the second century or later" (Willi Braun, "The First Shall be Last: The Gospel of Mark After the First Century," in *Chasing Down Religion: In the Sights of History and the Cognitive Sciences* [ed. Panayotis Pachis and Don Wiebe; Thessalonike: Barbounakes, 2010), 56. Arnal aptly demonstrates that a united "Christian" identity was retroactively created to establish a shared tradition and identity where one did not previously exist (William Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis of 'Tradition' and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 [2011]: 193–215). As such, when I use the word "Christian" or "early Christianity," I do so with the recognition that these early Jesus groups were not united, had multiple identities and did not call themselves "Christian."

influenced the manner in which women could participate in early Christian communities, it is first necessary to explore 1) the methodologies and theories used to approach this terminology and 2) the socio-historical communities that many scholars argue came to hold eschatological and apocalyptic beliefs. It is imperative to understand if and why this literature was popular and under which circumstances it developed. Specifically, I will consider the possible conditions that could account for why some groups were more creative in envisioning social arrangements. This exploration will determine how it is possible for "responsible scholars" to talk about apocalyptic beliefs and eschatology in reference to early and developing Jesus groups.

In its examination of end of the world expectations, this chapter will explore the possibility that traditional approaches and understandings of Christian apocalypticism are no longer sufficient for understanding the beginnings of Jesus groups. While not challenging the possibility that early Jesus people came to hold apocalyptic beliefs, I will challenge the assumption that Christian apocalypticism developed as a continuous movement from Jewish roots. Furthermore, I will lay the groundwork to challenge the assumption that apocalyptic beliefs only consisted of physical world upheavals and the return of a saviour figure. I will suggest that either apocalypticism needs to be redefined as an immediate imaginative reinterpretation of contemporary beliefs or social structures or more beneficially that this term should not be used as a convenient short cut to understand the development of the earliest Jesus groups.

First, I will examine traditional methodological approaches to Christian apocalypticism found in modern scholarship. I will explore the primary settings of the ancient literature as well as popular contemporary interpretations of the ancient data. Second, using 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians as test-cases, I will demonstrate that the earliest Jesus people were not consumed

by redemption and retribution paradigms or a monolithic and determinative apocalypticism. Succinctly, I will argue that while some early Jesus groups may have held and produced what is commonly understood as apocalyptic beliefs and literature, that this should not lend to the argument that these beliefs initiated the birth of Christian communities. Third, I will demonstrate that the categorization of early Jesus groups as apocalyptic is driven by modern scholars with *a priori* theological assumptions rather than ancient data. Finally, I will demonstrate the benefits of reconsidering, reconstructing or eliminating the misnomer of apocalypticism in early Jesus groups. I will suggest, rather, that an interdisciplinary approach not governed by theological assumptions will help to reveal how early Jesus groups were formed.

Traditional Understandings of Christian Apocalypticism

Scholars who perpetuate the traditional approach to Christian apocalypticism insist that Jewish apocalypticism, as seen in the Hebrew Scriptures, explains Christian apocalypticism.[74] Accordingly, they argue that Jewish apocalypticism must be explored in order to appreciate the application of this worldview in Christianity.[75] The first section of this chapter will consider the primary settings under which this literature flourished as well as contemporary interpretations of the ancient data. Or more specifically, I will question what accounts for the popularity of this literature in antiquity and explore modern interpretations of Christian apocalypticism. The following research will consider the ancient social circumstances and histories under which modern scholars have concluded that the earliest members of Jesus groups came to adopt apocalyptic beliefs.

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[74] Glen J. Fairen, *As Below, so Above: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism and the Scribes of Qumram and Nag Hammadi* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2008), 5.

[75] Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Volume Two* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 543. The specific nature of this relationship will be examined in detail in a later section of this paper.

A Community in Crisis

In their examination of the economy and society in the Mediterranean world of the first century

C.E., Ekkehard and Wolfgang Stegemann demonstrate that social classes were based on social

inequalities where money, property, power, privileges and prominence were held by few.[76]

> The members of a society hold different social positions, which in turn decide
> their esteem and their choices in life. [...] At the top of the societies of the Roman
> Empire there was apparently a small elite group that was distinguished in the
> consciousness of ancient authors by their noble birth, leadership in public office,
> wealth, and esteem. [...T]he masses of the population [were] defined by the lack
> of the social traits that mark the elite.[77]

Essentially, society was divided where physical or mental efforts required for survival were held

in lower social regard than "the duties, businesses and capabilities that were reserved for the

elite."[78]

The majority of both the rural and urban populations were increasingly impoverished,

overtaxed, over indebted, worked in miserable conditions, and were treated poorly.[79] Not only

were the living conditions of the lower social stratum poor, but the chances or opportunities to

overcome such conditions were negligible. Stegemann and Stegemann describe the social classes

as impermeable: there was little opportunity for economic or social mobility.[80] "In societies with

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[76] Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 14.

[77] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 57–58. The minority upper classes looked down upon the majority of the population. Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 47.

[78] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 24.

[79] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 51–52. Roman society between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. was a slave based society. According to Bradley, roughly 33–40% of the population were slaves, a high percentage that was not seen in other Roman periods (Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 30). In her recent study, Joshel acknowledges an intense debate surrounding the exact quantitative measurement of slavery in the Roman Empire, but suggests a number between 20–30% (Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*, 7–8). Though the experiences of slaves differed and should not be considered as uniform, generally, the significant portion of the population belonging to the slave class were not treated as humans, but as objects or livestock, "devoid of human dignity" (Bradley, *Slavery and Society*, 53).

[80] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 93–94.

serious social difference, there is also unrest, conflict, and even rebellion."[81] As such, the general

atmosphere of the first century C.E. was one of crisis. Some people who belonged to the earliest

Jesus groups, potential converts as well as members of the greater society belonged to this

community of crisis and would have felt an attraction to groups or literature that offered potential

solutions or enlightenment to their contemporary economic, emotional and social plights.

The Attraction

According to Meeks, it is possible to understand the socio-historical circumstances behind first-

century Jesus groups, and specifically Pauline communities, in terms of millenarian movements.

"A millenarian movement looks forward to a series of events in the immediate future that will

radically transform the existing relationships of power, prestige, and wealth."[82] Members of such

millenarian groups normally imagine a future where their living circumstances are drastically

changed and suffering is alleviated. Meeks suggests that individuals belonging to these groups

"nurse strongly felt dissatisfactions."[83] Though members are described as deprived, one cannot

limit their deprivations to economic status. "It is not their absolute level of poverty or

powerlessness that counts, but the way in which they perceive their status relative to significant

other groups."[84] As such, Meeks suggests that individuals who lack the opportunity to control

their lives are more likely to be attracted to movements that offer a promise to get ahead.

However, the attraction of millennial movements lies beyond real-life deprivations and an

opportunity to gain control: the apocalyptic dream is not just a fantasy but an opportunity for

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[81] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 95.
[82] Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 172.
[83] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 172.
[84] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 172.

individuals to make sense of their world in a symbolic way.[85] Symbolism is an important part of

the historical process where individuals are provided with the opportunity to deal with conflicts

or confrontations.[86] "[The] millennial myth provides not just fantasies or reversal, but also a

comprehensive picture of what is wrong and why, and of how life ought to be organized."[87]

Because of feelings of crisis, millennial myths are accompanied by a drastic reorganizing of

leadership paradigms where the traditional is coupled with a new vision.

Meeks suggests that the Pauline Christians do not fit within the millenarian movement

paradigm because early Jesus people were not socially or economically deprived.[88] Though I am

hesitant to accept this blanket generalization,[89] Meeks makes an intriguing comment about the

well-to-do Christians. He suggests that "although the evidence is not abundant, we may venture

the generalization that the most active and prominent members of Paul's circle (including Paul

himself) are people of high status inconsistency (low status crystallization). They are upwardly

mobile; their achieved status is higher than their attributed status."[90] In this case, the Pauline

groups fit within the millenarian paradigm because the members perceived their relationship to

other groups as problematic and inconsistent, and so they sought advancement and consolidation

of their worth. "We might guess that people who have advanced or declined socially, who find

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[85] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 172–73.

[86] E. P. Thompson, *Zero Option* (London: The Merlin Press, 1982), 21.

[87] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 173.

[88] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 173. In the second chapter of his book, Meeks examines at length the complexity and diversity of social stratification in the early Christian groups as well as the community at large. For example, specific references to individuals of wealth, including Prisca, Aquila, Chloe and Philemon suggest that Paul influenced individual from a variety of social and economic backgrounds (*The First Urban Christians*, 51–73). Evidence found in the Pauline letters suggests that members of all social levels were included in Jesus groups.

[89] If we do accept that some Christians belonged to disadvantaged or impoverished social classes, it is plausible that such individuals did seek social and economic relief or hope for a future of reversal.

[90] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 73.

themselves in an ambiguous relation to hierarchical structures, might be receptive to symbols of

the world as itself out of joint and on the brink of radical transformation."[91]

Scholars who subscribe to a traditional understanding of Christian and Jewish apocalyptic

literature suggest that apocalypses were "written out of actual distresses," though the distresses

behind the texts may be significantly different.[92] These scholars describe apocalyptic literature in

general terms as crisis literature despite the fact that the underlying crisis behind the texts is

different.[93] Cohn describes individuals who subscribed to apocalyptic literature as a conquered

people who used these texts to turn "to a distant past for strength to face a present and a future

that they had no way of influencing."[94] Though Collins suggests that apocalyptic literature

served as a tool for leaders to exhort and console their audience,[95] he also implies that the

audience needed to be exhorted or consoled. In an attempt to make sense of suffering and

oppression as well as provide encouragement, apocalyptic literature insists that God would soon

or has already begun to "reassert himself, destroying the forces of evil and [establish] his people

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[91] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 174.

[92] Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Volume Two* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 2:598; Vielhauer and Strecker, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 598; John Joseph Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 38.

[93] For example, while this chapter has considered a crisis of identity, poverty and lack of power that characterized the communities of the first-century, the book of Daniel is often argued to result from a turbulent Israelite history where there was a growing opposition against foreign rule (Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001], 166). This particular example also suggests that the Jewish people, though subject to the rule of others, were looking forward to a period when they would reign and all other kingdoms would be crushed. Arguably, evidence for a turbulent Israelite history can be found in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream. In response to Nebuchadnezzar's concerns, Daniel claims that "in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" (Dan 2:44). Daniel's interpretation of this dream suggests that apocalyptic literature reflects more than a literary style. This expectation of uncertainty and the hope of a future are arguably also present in the crisis of first century Jesus people.

[94] Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and The World to Come*, 167.

[95] Collins, 22–23. Leaders or authors could use apocalyptic literature to "shape one's imaginative perception of a situation and so lay the basis for whatever course of action it exhorts" (Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 41–42).

as rulers over the earth."[96] The texts present their revelations as received from God and indicative of a determined future where "there will be a final judgment. There will be an afterlife when human beings, including the resurrected dead, will receive their just rewards and punishments."[97]

Modern Interpretations of the Christian Crisis and Christian Apocalypticism

Traditional approaches to Christian eschatology insist that as a daughter religion, it is natural that early Christianity maintained models of prophetic Jewish apocalypticism.[98] Scholars who accept this model insist that a consistent literary style proves continuity[99] where Christian apocalypticism is the final progression from Jewish apocalypticism.[100] These scholars also hold that the period of crisis and hope experienced by the Christians further prove a relationship of apocalyptic continuity or transition with their Jewish ancestors.

In general terms, the traditional approach to apocalypticism argues that the Israelites "maintained that God had revealed to them the future, in which he would soon over throw the [oppressive] forces of evil, [...] establish his kingdom on earth"[101] and enjoy a period of redemption. These scholars argue that the major tenets of Jewish apocalypticism (namely future

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[96] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 246.

[97] Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 164–65.

[98] Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 194. These scholars base their argument on the fact that Jesus and the first followers of the Jesus movement were Jewish and continued to follow the Jewish law or maintained Jewish customs. Scholars argue that examples of the influence of Judaism upon the Jesus movement can be found throughout the gospels and the Pauline letters.

[99] Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 558.

[100] Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 543. It is important to bear in mind that the ideas and concepts presented by specific Jewish apocalypticism are not uniform or standardized: there are a variety of forms, subsets, and characteristics (Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 554). Furthermore, the exclusion or non-inclusion of certain expected apocalyptical elements in literature should not preclude the text from the category of *apocalypsis*. In particular, the variations in the expected type of saviour among the Jewish apocalyptic texts are notable. Some apocalyptic texts describe a type of national Davidic king while others depict a redeemer figure or judge (e.g., Isaiah vs. Daniel).

[101] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 244.

judgment, hope, redemption, vindication, dualism, the two-age doctrine and imminent expectation)[102] can be detected, albeit somewhat modified, within some early Christian literature.[103] Those who supported God, accepted Jesus' teachings, repented and endured would participate in the in-breaking of heaven or the future kingdom of heaven while those who did not would be destroyed.[104] Scholars have made the evaluative determination that the prominence of these features in the literature prove that Christian apocalypticism is a progression or completion of Israelite apocalypticism.

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[102] I began my research into the tenets of Jewish and Christian apocalypticism for my Master's thesis at Concordia University. Angela Brkich-Sutherland, "The Relationship Between Apocalypticism and the Status of Women in Early Christianity" (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 2007).

1) <u>Dualism or the doctrine of the two ages</u>: There are two fundamental components to all reality. "The forces of good were headed by God himself, the forces of evil by his superhuman enemy" (Vincent P. Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 [1985]: 246). The concept of dualism also extends to the belief of a doctrine of two ages where history is dichotomized: the present age is deemed as evil and the future period where God will reassert himself is good. Vielhauer and Strecker elaborate on this idea and describe "this Age [as] temporary and perishable, [and] the Age to come [as] imperishable and eternal" (Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 549). Furthermore, there is no continuity between the Ages: the new Age is transcendent and results from the complete annihilation of the present Age (Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 550).

2) <u>Pessimism and hope for the beyond</u>: Though God will rule again in the future and those who side with him will benefit, the present world does not offer any reward because it is dominated by evil forces (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 246). The authors of apocalyptic literature focus upon the devaluation of the present period, criticize current moral decay, predict the final catastrophe which annihilates the current world order and provide hope for the future (Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 550–51).

3) <u>Vindication and universalism</u>: God's intervention entails a universal redemption where all people, living or dead, will be judged. This component of apocalypticism is greater than national eschatology because all humans, not only the Israelite population, will be required to prove their righteousness. Eternal reward will be given to those who had taken God's side and eternal punishment will be given to everyone else (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 248). The employment of this characteristic in a text offers the possibility that all individuals have the opportunity to escape destruction.

4) <u>Imminence and determinism</u>: God's reassertion and the destruction of evil forces are expected at any moment. Because it was believed that the end of the world was imminent, people were encouraged to repent, remain faithful and endure sufferings (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 248; Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 552–54). Furthermore, all events surrounding redemption and retribution are believed to be fore-ordained and proceed according to a fixed plan.

[103] Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 57; Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 195. For example, Ehrman, Vielhauer and Strecker and Branick.

[104] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 250–78; Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 197.

Christian Apocalypticism

Scholars often claim that the earliest primary sources depict Jesus as an apocalyptic teacher who prophesies that evil will be overthrown in the near future and a good kingdom will reign.[105] Some scholars interpret this early literature as evidence for a realized eschatology that depicts Jesus as currently overthrowing evil and ushering in a new beginning. Many scholars also insist that early Jesus followers believed this message and expected an imminent end to their suffering. A brief consideration of Christian apocalypses will prove valuable to determine whether early Christian literature contains and supports this worldview.

Following the definition of apocalypticism and master-paradigm set forth by John Collins in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*,[106] Yarbro Collins determines that there are 24 early Christian texts that can be described as apocalypses.[107] Though the texts that Yarbro examines differ in the degree to which they reflect the master-paradigm, she determines that they share several common characteristics.

> All of the works studied contain heavenly revelation communicated by a heavenly mediator. Most of the texts have a visionary element either in the form of a simple vision account or in the form of an otherworldly journey. Most of these also contain revelation in the form of dialogue between seer and mediator or a discourse of the heavenly mediator. […] The transcendent character of the revelation and the seer's dependence on the heavenly world are often expressed by a description of the seer's ecstatic reaction or by his or her requests addressed

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[105] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 250. An example of such destruction and restoration can be found in 1 Corinthians 15: "Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:24–26 NRSV).

[106] "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (John Joseph Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* [ed. John Joseph Collins; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979], 9).

[107] Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses" in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 62.

to the mediator. Temporal elements involve an interest in the past and contain expectations of the future.[108]

Though the fashion in which the apocalypses depict future expectations differ, Yarbro Collins divides the literature into two main overarching categories: 1) those which subscribe to "both cosmic and personal eschatology"[109] and 2) those which limit future hope to personal afterlife.[110] Again, while the texts differ, they all offer individual hope for an afterlife.[111]

As stated by Collins, while Revelation is the only apocalypse included in the New Testament, "the Synoptic Gospels and the writings of Paul […] are colored by an apocalyptic worldview to a significant degree."[112] Cohn's research also suggests that while the genre of canonical literature is not an apocalypse, apocalyptic themes play a prominent theme in the gospels.[113] According to Vielhauer and Strecker, the references to the "kingdom of God" and the "Son of Man" provide the strongest link to apocalyptic worldviews.[114] Though this chapter will

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[108] Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," 66–67.

[109] Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," 67.

[110] Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses," 68.

[111] While Yarbro Collins' examination of apocalypses offers insight into a literary genre, her paper does not examine apocalyptic teachings found in the New Testament because they fall outside of the task of her research.

[112] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 256. The claim that Jesus was an apocalyptic teacher who prophesied the end of the current world order is substantiated through a genealogical interpretation of apocalypticism in Q, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and the authentic Pauline epistles.

[113] In his examination of Mark and Q, Cohn describes Jesus as "obsessed with the coming of the kingdom and the elimination of the forces that obstruct it" (Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, 194). Many scholars turn to Matthew and Q for evidence of the expectation of the imminent end of the world. In Matthew the author warns the Pharisees of the wrath to come: "every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 3:7–10). This warning of fire and destruction, which is likely borrowed from Q, becomes more violent: "his winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt 3:11–12). Those who do not subscribe to the appropriate beliefs or actions will be punished while those who do will benefit. Scholars who subscribe to the traditional approach to apocalypticism also often claim that Matthew makes reference to Isaiah when instructing on the kingdom of heaven. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'The voice of one crying out is the wilderness'" (Matt 3:2–3).

[114] Vielhauer and Strecker, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," 569. While the title "Son of Man" is most commonly found in Mark, it is also referenced in the other gospels. Examples of Mark's reference to Jesus as the Son of Man can be found throughout the gospel. A commonly referred to example of this usage includes Jesus' instruction to the disciples "to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9–13). Jesus also foretells the coming of the Son of Man in Mark. "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven" (Mark 13:26–27). This reference is also made in Matthew 24: 29–31 and Luke 21: 25–28. Mark connects the title of Son of Man with a future period when he

criticize the validity of traditional approaches to apocalypticism, it is worth noting that certain

passages in New Testament literature could be interpreted as maintaining eschatological

expectations.[115] That is, although I argue that apocalypticism or eschatology are not helpful as

categories to understand the development of Jesus groups or their activities, this does not mean

that literature supporting characteristics of these worldviews did not exist.

Evidence for eschatological beliefs is most often drawn from Pauline literature. Paul's

letter to the Thessalonians contains the most explicit reference to the Parousia and has the most

explicit reference to the end of the world.[116]

> For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are
> left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.
> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the
> archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in
> Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up
> together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall
> always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:15-17).

Ehrman argues that these repeated references suggest that the "most important belief about Jesus

to the Thessalonians […] was that he was soon to return from heaven in judgment on the

earth."[117] Though the nature of their eschatological expectations is debated, numerous scholars

argue that this letter proves that the Thessalonians expected their current plight to end.

Meeks argues that while 1 Thessalonians is often used as a case study for eschatology,

the use of apocalyptic language is found throughout the Pauline epistles. The consistent use of

apocalyptic language and imagery in the letters indicates that the worldview was "intelligible and

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discusses Jesus' return and the impact that such a return will have upon people. "Whoever is ashamed of
my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of that one will the Son of Man be ashamed when he
comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

[115] Though there are numerous examples which could be drawn to demonstrate that it is possible to
interpret the New Testament as being littered with apocalyptic insights, for the sake of brevity only a few
will be provided.

[116] Jesus' imminent return is mentioned in every chapter (2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:1–11).

[117] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 307.

important to his followers."[118] Scholars also use 1 Corinthians as proof that Christians expected

an imminent end and lacked concern for a long-term future. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15

Paul describes the passing of the present world, the mystery of the Parousia and the requirements

for salvation. "We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of

an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor 15:51-52). He also instructs the Corinthians to live their lives

with an awareness that the current state of affairs would change.

> I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on let those
> who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though
> they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing,
> and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the
> world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is
> passing away (1 Cor 7:29-31).

Though we are not able to draw any direct conclusions about the beliefs or activities of the

communities from Paul's instructions, the letters make us aware that one leader engaged

eschatological instructions or apocalyptic imagery to instruct his audience.

Testing the Hypothesis: Where is the Apocalyptic?

Although the traditional approach to Christian apocalypticism is widely accepted, evidence

suggests that the theory of a Jewish completion or transition does not accurately reflect the

historical development of first-century Jesus groups. This portion of the chapter will use 1

Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians as socio-historical test-cases to determine the value of the

traditional genealogical approach to Christian apocalypticism.[119] These test-cases will suggest

that the Pauline communities of Corinth and Thessaloniki, though assumed to maintain

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[118] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 171.
[119] Though numerous texts could have been selected for a socio-historical examination (see Yarbro Collins, "The Early Christian Apocalypses,"1979), for the sake of brevity and continuity with the remainder of my project, I have selected 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians.

apocalyptic and eschatological beliefs by many contemporary scholars,[120] did not initially expect

an imminent end of the world and the parousia or ensuing return of their saviour. Engaging the

theoretical and methodological approaches set forth by J. Z. Smith, Burton Mack, Ron Cameron,

Merrill P. Miller, William Arnal, and Willi Braun, I will now consider whether we can consider

these groups as historically apocalyptic.[121] I will also utilize DeMaris' methodological approach

to re-examine Corinth and Thessaloniki.

> The New Testament rarely speaks directly about ritual practice and reveals only
> slightly more indirectly, which necessitates a strategy for getting at those rites.
> Reading between the lines, whatever form that might take, is certainly necessary.
> To recover the early church's ritual life, an interpretive model will be essential for
> teasing out a maximum of information from the data we have.[122]

As such, I will not assume that descriptions and instructions provided by Paul in his letters

accurately reflect actual circumstances in the Pauline communities but consider what purposes

such instructions serve.

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[120] While there is scholarly debate surrounding Paul's apocalyptic theology and his application of this worldview, scholars who employ the traditional approach to Christian apocalypticism generally argue that Paul and his communities were indebted to the concept of the apocalyptic (Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 171–72). Scholars who hold this traditional view of Christian apocalypticism argue that the Pauline communities came to accept the Jewish tradition of an imminent end where they would be saved from evil and began to prepare for an imminent future that included the coming of the Kingdom within their lifetime. The contemplation of the meaning of Paul's apocalyptic worldview continues to be debated and interpreted in modern scholarly and theological works. "What Paul's apocalyptic framework means two thousand years later remains an open field for theological reflection. Perhaps the apocalyptic images used by Paul will remain indispensable symbols directing us to the mystery" (Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul?" 675). Most of the debate surrounding Pauline apocalypticism centres on the issue of a realized eschatology versus future expectations of an imminent end of the world.

[121] Specifically, I will utilize Jonathan Z. Smith's model of research into the history of religions, Burton Mack's description of Jesus groups as social experiments, Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller's theory of social formation and Willi Braun and William Arnal's theses on social formation, mythmaking and retroactive descriptions.

[122] Richard DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

Corinth in Context[123]

Evidence, including the founding charter of Corinth, suggests that death and dying played an important role in the lives of Corinthians. Evidence also suggests that Corinthians held the belief that the living and the dead were separated, were concerned with death and caring for the dead and fixated on the successful transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead.[124] By examining the manner in which the Corinthians cared for the dead and engaged in ritual practices revolving around death and burial we gain insight into their beliefs.[125] That is, by studying the dead we can learn about the living.

There is a substantial amount of archaeological evidence for burial practices at Corinth.[126] While the manner in which individuals were buried and the tombs are varied, a few points of commonality are of interest. For example, many burial sites were accompanied with funerary offerings, personal effects, lamps, and painted scenes. Walbank concludes that bowl and

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[123] Though the Greek city of Corinth was dismantled, sacked and defeated by Rome in 146 B.C.E., archaeological records suggest that the city itself was not completely destroyed, G. D. R. Sanders, "Urban Corinth: An Introduction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 26; Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 7–8. "There was a partial and selective destruction of Greek structures and the city walls. As a result, Corinth was deprived of its civic and political identity" but did not remain vacant as squatters settled the area (Sanders, "Urban Corinth," 26; Winter, "After Paul Left Corinth," 8). When the first settlers arrived in 44 B.C.E., Corinth was subject to the implementation of Roman design, the imposition of Roman culture, the use of Latin and the importation of various official and fringe religious beliefs and practices (Sanders, "Urban Corinth," 27, 59; Winter, "After Paul Left Corinth," 8, 14, 21). Bookidis recognizes "three different simultaneous levels in the operation of religion in Early Roman Corinth" (Nancy Bookidis, "Religion in Corinth: 146 B.C.E. to 100 C.E." in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* [ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005], 163). Religious practices include official Roman cults, Greek cults that became part of Roman practices and fringe Greek cults. Walbank suggests that while we know that numerous religious practices and beliefs co-existed, it is not possible to determine how and when the ideas and practices coalesced (Mary E. Hoskins Walbank, "Unquiet Graves: Burial Practices of the Roman Corinthians," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* [ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005], 249). Also see Nancy Bookidis, "Religion in Corinth," 141–64.

[124] This is evident in the baptism of the dead and the use of Jesus in curse tablets (Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 250).

[125] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 249.

[126] For an examination of various archaeological burial sites, see Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 249–80.

cup offerings suggest that food and drinks were provided for the dead and were believed to provide sustenance for the deceased.[127] In one case, a pitcher was buried above the body to guarantee the reception of libations.[128] Evidence also suggests that mortuary meal rituals were a continuous ordeal.[129] These practices were understood by some individuals to be necessarily incessant: they required constant effort and resources. The interpretation of these practices as expressing a "sense of continuity between the living and the dead" is supported by inscriptions found throughout the Mediterranean.[130]

The relationship between the deceased and their family or friends was two-fold: 1) the survivors wished to guarantee their dead relative or friend a safe passage to the afterlife. Though dying was not believed to be unnatural, the transition to the afterlife was perceived as difficult and requiring assistance.[131] Concern for safe passage to their afterlife is exhibited in the burial of coins in the deceased's mouth or hand.[132] The attempt to ensure safe travels or concerns for "liminality" is also evident in painted tombs which depicted the pleasures that were expected to be bestowed upon a person in the afterlife;[133] 2) the living wished to protect themselves from people who had died. Physical evidence suggests that "the dead were considered to be a source of supernatural, and often malign, [sic] influences from which the living had to be protected."[134] Because death was believed to cause disruptions for the living, successful transitions were

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[127] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves ," 258, 272–73.

[128] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves ," 272.

[129] In one tomb, vessels "suitable for both cooking and serving a meal" were found (Walbank, "Unquiet graves," 272–73). Archaeological studies suggest that such findings are consistent with "kitchen facilities" found in other tombs" (Walbank, "Unquiet graves," 273).

[130] Festivals, private family occasions and anniversaries were established to offer food to dead relatives and friends (Walbank, "Unquiet graves," 273)

[131] Richard E. DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology," *JBL* 114 (1995): 676.

[132] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 274.

[133] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 263.

[134] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 265.

believed to ensure stability.[135] Furthermore, it was believed that dead individuals could be

employed for personal causes if honoured, while they could cause fearful trouble if ignored.[136]

1 Corinthians in Light of Historical Evidence

If the Corinthians were concerned with death and burial rituals before Paul's arrival, we must

consider the extent to which his letter reflects a community that accepted an apocalyptic

genealogical transition from Judaism to Christianity. Rather than assume the traditional

approach, we need to recognize the possibility that the Corinthians were attracted to and adapted

portions of Paul's instructions that related to their contemporary beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, we must also consider Paul's use of apocalypticism and eschatological images and

the possibility that he edited or manipulated the Jesus message to make it more palatable to

individual groups. This is supported by Paul's inconsistent use of apocalyptic and eschatological

images in his letters as well as his flexible theology that was adapted to the necessities of specific

communities.[137] This test-case does not suggest that the Corinthians did not come to hold an

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[135] Walbank, "Unquiet Graves," 274; DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion," 675.

[136] Christine M. Thomas, "Placing the Dead: Funerary Practice and Social Stratification in the Early Roman period at Corinth and Ephesus," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 290. The use of the dead by individuals in the ancient world as safeguards is evident in the use of curse tablets. While the translation of 1 Cor 12:3 is currently debated, it is not unrealistic to suggest that Paul's statement, "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!', refers to the use of Jesus in curse tablets (Winter, "After Paul Left Corinth," 173–76). As such, not only did the Corinthians placate their dead relatives and friends for assistance, but they also attempted to employ Jesus. It is also worth noting that some individuals in the Roman Empire who wished to establish their prominence would often resort to rich burials. "Very rich burials show the instability of the elite and their need to legitimate themselves vis-a-vis other classes that might aspire to power" (Thomas, "Placing the Dead," 292). As such, the obsession with death and burial practices in Corinth may also reflect concerns for social and political power.

[137] Branick, "Apocalyptic Paul?," 668. Parrish considers at length the use of language as a tool when he explores similarities between the Imperial cult and Paul's "gospel". Considering Horsley's examination of Paul's "gospel", Parrish concludes that Paul instructed his communities systematically and places his message in direct competition with that of the Caesar (John W. Parrish, "Speaking in Tongues, Dancing with Ghosts: Redescription, Translation, and the Language of Resurrection," *Studies in Religion:* 39/1 [2010]: 25–45). "Paul rather uses these terms to present Jesus Christ as the lord and saviour who has displaced Caesar as lord and saviour " (Richard A. Horsley, "Paul's Assembly in Corinth: An Alternative Society," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth* [ed. Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005], 386). Though many scholars

apocalyptic worldview, but does strongly suggest that the traditional paradigms that explain the

circumstances under which they came to hold these beliefs are inadequate. Furthermore, it forces

us to consider that the modern understanding of the category apocalyptic may be too narrow.

Thessalonians Test-Case[138]

Unlike Corinth, Thessalonica did not leave an abundance of archaeological evidence for burials.

However, Richard Ascough demonstrates 44 inscriptions that provide evidence for participation

in diverse voluntary associations are revealing.[139] With a detailed analysis of the relationship

between the Christian community and professional voluntary associations, he demonstrates that

the inclusion of eschatological images in 1 Thessalonians results from concerns about dead

members rather than theological questions.[140] I will briefly summarize Ascough's findings and

demonstrate how they relate to the study of apocalypticism and the previous Corinthian test-case.

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suggest that Paul's instructions are spiritual, Parrish argues that Paul depicts Jesus as a "counter-emperor": provides an anti-imperial message with his use of eschatological terminology (Horsley, "Paul's Assembly in Corinth," 385–86; Parrish, *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing with Ghosts*, 25-45).

[138] Richard S. Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism' and the Jesus Associations at Thessalonica and Corinth" in *Redescribing Christian Origins* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). Though defeated in 168 B.C.E. by Rome, the city of Thessalonica did not lay in complete ruin. In fact, "[t]he city retained the right to govern itself according to its ancestral laws and to have its own officials" (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 156). As such, while Thessalonica was under Roman occupation, the city did not lose its' Greek roots. Thessalonica, which became the capital of Macedonia in 146 B.C.E., benefitted from civic privileges and commercial successes (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 156). Many of the religious practices of the Thessalonian people were dedicated to indigenous gods, but by the Hellenistic and Roman periods, foreign deities were introduced and became popular (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 156–57). Like other ancient cities, Thessalonica honoured the Roman emperor, Roman patrons and Roman client rulers with honorifics and inscriptions. "Romans received honors at Thessalonica not because of who they were but rather because of what they did" (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 158).

[139] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 158; Pantelis M. Nigdelis, "Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonike: In Search of Identity and Support in a Cosmopolitan Society," in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike* (ed. Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14. According to Ascough, Thessalonica "provides the richest evidence for voluntary associations in Macedonia ("Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 158).

[140] Richard S. Ascough, "A Question of Death: Paul's Community-Building Language in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18," *JBL* 123 (2004): 529.

Drawing from evidence of the working class nature of the Thessalonians and the prominence of voluntary associations in antiquity, Ascough astutely demonstrates that a more complete understanding of Thessalonica is achieved if we consider the socio-historical circumstances under which specific worldviews develop, are maintained or manipulated. Ascough determines that Paul maintained a positive outlook towards manual labour and exhorted his followers to continue with their travails: "work with your hands, as we directed you, so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one" (1 Thess 4:11). Paul's reference to his own arduous labour in 1 Thess 2:9 and his exhortations suggest that contact and candidacy for proselytizing was facilitated by participation in the same type of trade.[141] Furthermore, the local shops where Paul encountered the candidates and "worked night and day" so as to not "burden" them were likely linked with a professional voluntary association.[142] Ascough argues that Paul's use of verb ἐργάζομαι (to work) when discussing both manual labour and the building of the religious community suggests that "it is likely that the leaders at Thessalonica continued with both kinds of activity, manual labour alongside community members and the labor of community formation. If so, the leaders of the Thessalonians are like the leaders of many voluntary associations."[143] Paul's willingness to accept the association leaders as the religious community leaders demonstrates that he did not impose a pre-set leadership structure upon the Thessalonians and instructed his community as per their own specific local circumstances.[144]

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[141] Richard S. Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association," *JBL* 119 (2000): 314–15.

[142] 1 Thess 2:9, Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community," 315.

[143] Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community," 318. In his final exhortations to the Thessalonians, Paul encourages the community "to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess 5:12). While this passage could refer strictly to religious leadership, it is also possible that this reference relates to leaders of the association who as a result became leaders of the religious group. If this is correct, then we are again presented with a positive outlook on manual labour.

[144] Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community," 318.

Ascough outlines three different types of voluntary associations in antiquity: 1) religious associations; 2) professional associations; 3) funerary associations.[145] It is estimated that approximately one third of the Roman population belonged to voluntary associations with some individuals belonging to more than one group.[146] "Although ancient voluntary associations were not formed solely for the purpose of burial of their members [as they served social functions], it is clear that death, burial, and memorial figured prominently in the collective lives of association members."[147] The associations ensured the proper burial of its members, took part in actual burials, maintained tombs, produced inscriptions for the deceased, and bestowed honours and organized annual commemorations for those that endowed such celebrations.[148] These activities announced membership and provided individuals and groups with a sense of community and a distinct identity. "Funerary monuments, including inscriptions, 'seem to speak the language of belonging.' Funerary practices reflect a 'strategy of social differentiation' insofar as the type and extravagance of one's memorial reflect one's status. They are also a means of 'cultural integration' since they function as symbols that one has a place within the larger social context."[149] The inclusion of burial practices in the responsibilities of voluntary associations made death an important part of group identity, even for those individuals who have already died.[150]

By examining the fashion in which apocalyptic language in 1 Thessalonians functioned within its specific community, we can appreciate Paul's use of on-the-spot mythmaking to

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[145] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 160. The development of funerary associations developed after our period of interest in the second century (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 160).

[146] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 160.

[147] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 151, 161.

[148] Ascough, "A Question of Death," 510–15; Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 162–66; Nigdelis, "Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonike," 29–33.

[149] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 168.

[150] It was believed that death rituals had the capacity to preserve relationships between the living and the dead (Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 172).

address specific concerns regarding the inclusion of the deceased in the community. Ascough

raises several important points: 1) despite the fact that the Thessalonians were not Jewish, the

popular "apocalyptic" style of literature used by Paul would have made sense; 2) Paul used

apocalyptic language because it was a valuable tool to convince them that Jesus was necessary.

> How better to instill superiority than to threaten destruction? When one
> announces a coming cataclysmic destruction and then promises 'deliverance' only
> to those who would align themselves with this god, and this god alone, it plays
> well in a community already used to such discussions. This does not make them
> 'apocalyptic' or millenarian, just scared of destruction. No matter where Paul
> derived the seeds of this fledgling myth (e.g., Jewish apocalypticism), it plays in a
> somewhat distinctive way for his Thessalonian audience.[151]

As such, the Thessalonians were not apocalyptic but were the subjects of an "identity forming

stunt" and; 3) the concern about the dead is related to the prominent cult of the dead.[152]

Ascough proceeds to reconstruct and redescribe the Thessalonian community as heavily

influenced by the cult of the dead and having included deceased individuals in their living

voluntary association. Because the dead had never ceased to be part of their community, the

group was concerned about the status of deceased individuals in their new association.[153] As

such, according to Ascough, their question about the dead is not theological but about social

belonging.[154]

I agree with Mack and Ascough that "we can almost see Paul working it out on the spot,

desperately trying to find a way to answer the question about those who had died."[155] Paul uses

apocalyptic and eschatological themes to address a specific community that had specific

concerns, held hero cult tendencies and was formed like an association. His use of rhetorical

tools allows him to present the Thessalonians with understandable and tangible concepts as well

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[151] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 175.
[152] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 175.
[153] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 178.
[154] Ascough, "A Question of Death," 509.
[155] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 179. Quoting Mack, 111.

as social practices with which they can to redefine themselves and align themselves with a new deity. "Thus, although there are some similarities between the Thessalonian Christian community and the voluntary associations, Paul also reflects a desire for a community *ethos* different from that found in the associations. Yet it is still significant that Paul uses voluntary association language to produce this different community *ethos*."[156] Essentially, Paul uses voluntary association language and eschatological images to "sell" membership to his new group or "rebranding" of a preexistent group. Paul also uses apocalyptic language to build his community, establish an identity and provide the Thessalonians with hope in an understandable context.[157] The mythmaking and social formation that results from concerns about dead individuals helps us to understand not only how early Christian groups formed, but provides us with glimpses of how worldviews were used as tools to establish identities.

Where do we go from Here?

Cameron, Smith and Ascough demonstrate that we need to redefine apocalypticism and eschatology because these terms can no longer be used to explain the development of early Christian groups. Specifically, Christian groups and their ensuing worldviews did not originate because of traditional linear understandings of apocalyptic and eschatological worldviews. Their research indicates that the development of early Jesus groups is more complicated and should also be considered on an individual basis.[158] Their projects also raise other important issues that must be considered when engaging these terms (as well as all categories) when reconsidering

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[156] Ascough, "The Thessalonian Christian Community," 322.

[157] Ascough, "Paul's 'Apocalypticism'," 178. In an attempt to demonstrate that there is still hope and that the dead are still full members of the community, Paul engages an apocalyptic theme which considers the dead to be sleeping: individuals who have died will not only resurrect, but will precede the living.

[158] For example, the success, failure or attraction of "Christian" beliefs or practices in one Jesus group may not be the same as those of another group.

early Christian groups. First, it is necessary to stop using theological assumptions or "extra-historical categories of uniqueness" as part of a historical task.[159] Second, rather than using modern theological apocalyptic assumptions to understand first-century Jesus groups, we need to identify why some groups held these beliefs and under what conditions these beliefs flourished.[160] As opposed to the traditional approach, this method considers historical contexts, human motivations and personal needs. It also provides us with the opportunity to explore the fashion in which rituals and literature can promote and establish group unity and identity. This interdisciplinary approach will reveal that some early Christians may have adopted eschatological imagery and language consciously or unconsciously for strategic, practical or functional purposes: "eschatological argumentation was an ordinary feature of mythmaking and social formation."[161]

Significantly, this approach challenges several assumptions made in the traditional approach to apocalypticism and eschatology in early Christian groups: 1) that the earliest Jesus people held apocalyptic expectations; 2) that early Jesus groups held the same apocalyptic expectations; 3) that apocalypticism was never used as a means to an end and; 4) the validity of the category "apocalyptic." While the majority of scholarship accepts a narrowly defined category of apocalyptic beliefs and uses this term to conveniently explain "Christian origins," we must be prepared to accept that other practices or beliefs might in fact better describe early Christian worldviews or practices. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to consider the circumstances under which individuals feel empowered to redescribe contemporary structures than assume that they do so because they expect the world to end. This move would then permit

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[159] Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 42.
[160] Cameron, "The Anatomy of a Discourse," 240.
[161] Cameron, "The Anatomy of a Discourse," 241.

future research to consider how some later groups used the *eschaton* as a catalyst for the changes they wanted to instigate.

Conclusions

As has been demonstrated, the study of early Christian apocalypticism and eschatology in early Jesus groups is not uncomplicated or straightforward. Specifically, the way that the earliest Christians are thought to have held apocalyptic beliefs does not accurately reflect their actual beliefs or practices. Because I have determined that the traditional understandings of apocalypticism and eschatology as categories which explain the development of early Jesus groups have been created *après le fait*, I must also determine what use, if any, these terms serve in "responsible" academic research. Or more succinctly, do the words apocalypticism and eschatology have any value for my specific research project which considers opportunities for women to gain positions of leadership and authority in early Jesus groups?

Considering the problematic uses of the terms apocalyptic and eschatology as well as the propensity of some scholars to use these categories to explain Christian beginnings, I suggest that the traditional use of a genealogical model is not acceptable for the academic pursuits of early Christian studies. As such, this chapter has served the important purpose of setting the traditional understandings of apocalypticism and eschatology aside when considering the development and rescinding of female authority in early Jesus groups. We are therefore left with the options of either redefining the terms apocalyptic and eschatological or eliminating the use of these terms completely. While a myriad of approaches or test-cases might be engaged, for my current project I suggest that a good starting point to determine the usefulness of redefining or flushing the misnomer apocalypticism is to consider what exactly might be perceived or

interpreted as apocalyptic. Specifically, we need to determine the circumstances under which

members of the early Christian groups envisioned social changes, challenged established social

norms and what practices granted individuals the opportunity to test boundaries. This

consideration must also determine if other categories may provide more clarity and hold less

theological baggage.

3. RITUAL THEORY

The previous chapter demonstrated that the study of early Christian apocalypticism and eschatology in early Jesus groups is not uncomplicated or straightforward. With the use of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians as test-cases, I demonstrated that the way the earliest Christians are thought to have held apocalyptic beliefs does not accurately reflect their actual beliefs or practices. Because I have determined that the traditional understandings of apocalypticism and eschatology have been created *après le fait* and are motivated by theological rather than historical concerns, I must also determine what use, if any, these terms serve in "responsible" academic research. Or for the sake of this research project, do the categories apocalypticism and eschatology have any value for redescribing the participation of women in Jesus groups? The preliminary research suggests that we should not engage these paradigms as convenient short cuts to explain why women were able to achieve positions of power and influence in early Jesus groups.

By acknowledging that apocalyptic beliefs and eschatological expectations cannot explain the development of early Jesus groups or their ensuing worldviews, we also recognize that individuals, including women, are responsible for their own actions and opportunities. This acknowledgement is supported by theorists such as Smith, Mack, Cameron, Miller, Arnal, and Braun who suggest that approaches to religious groups must "give people their due." As we recognize that apocalyptic beliefs did not bring about the opportunities we are examining, we need to determine the cause for these "chances." Specifically, what did individuals do in order to create these opportunities? I suggest that a fruitful place to begin is ritual theory.

Ritual Theory

Recently various fields and disciplines have come to see ritual as an important area of study. As a result, numerous contributions and developments have been made in the interdisciplinary field of "ritual studies" over the past several decades. While a consideration of rituals is certainly not new (scholars have been considering ritual as a central factor to cultural studies for over a century) the manner in which scholars have traditionally approached these activities has been challenged.[162]

As described by Catherine Bell, "ritual has become a topic of interest in its own right, not merely a tool for understanding more embracing social phenomena. Indeed, ritual has simultaneously become an object, a method, and even something of a style of scholarship on the American scene."[163] Rather than a component of a larger area of study, ritual has become a topic in itself. Dennis Owen argues that scholars have recently become enthusiastic about the study of ritual and suggests that such enthusiasm will likely continue. Succinctly, he states that "[w]ith [a] burst of new energy, which seems likely to sustain itself for some time to come, it should not be surprising to find the field in a process of redefinition, rethinking fundamental assumptions and even cherished texts, particularly in light of religious studies' awareness of its capacity to construct the very things it claims to be studying."[164] Ritual studies are not only undergoing a transformation, but new insights into rituals are changing the manner in which groups and the literature they produce are understood. Furthermore, as will be seen later in this chapter, scholars

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[162] Ronald Grimes has often been noted as a type of "father" of ritual studies. While he does not claim to have invented the study of rituals, his approach to these practices has encouraged other theorists to consider ritual as a sub-discipline. He states that "ritual studies, or 'ritology,' is a new field, not because doing ritual or thinking about it is new, but because the effort to consolidate methods from the humanities and social sciences for the study of ritual in a context that is free to be cross-cultural and comparative is new. It is new as a distinct sub-discipline of the academic study of religion" *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (New York: University of America Press, 1982), preface.

[163] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

[164] Dennis E. Owen, "Ritual Studies as Ritual Practice: Catherine Bell's Challenge to Students of Ritual," *Religious Studies Review* 24 (1998): 23.

have come to use ritual theory to explore broader issues of anthropology, sociology, religion,

economics, and politics. Of significance for this research project, scholars have begun to use

ritual studies to better understand developments in religious communities. Because her research

has come to be understood as a "*tour de force*,"[165] for the purpose of this research project, the

influential work of ritual theorist Catherine Bell is especially informative.[166]

Understanding "Rituals": The Development of a New Lens

Rejecting all earlier claims that rituals were primitive activities or futile "magical activities," Bell

argues for an approach or methodology that recognizes the power and complexity of the actions

performed by participants. While one might expect that the culmination of her research would

provide a new theory of ritual, she purposely avoids any conclusions that would include a

paradigm designed to "characterize all instances of ritual."[167] Rather, she insists that her research

is meant to explore "ways of not thinking about ritual as well as ways of rethinking the idea and

the data."[168] As such, Bell's research does not provide a new theory of ritual but provides us with

tools for a new beginning.[169] As stated by Bell, "I have not proposed a new theory of ritual

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[165] Owen, "Ritual Studies," 23.

[166] Despite the fact that she spends a significant portion of her book deconstructing Clifford
Geertz's article "Religion as a Cultural System," I suggest that some aspects of his theory on ritual are still
applicable and function within Bell's views on ritual. Specifically, while Bell strongly disagrees with
Geertz's interpretation of the ritual process or how rituals work, she does not appear to challenge his larger
understanding of rituals, symbols and authority. In fact, her consideration of why rituals are performed, she
never disputes the possibility that rituals can be used to reinforce social paradigms. Though this section will
focus on Bell's proposals for a new approach to ritual, I will also consider Geertz within the context of
Bell's research.

[167] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 219. Ronald Grimes considers the issue of attempting to provide an all-
encompassing definition of "ritual." He determines that cursory exploration of the category "ritual"
demonstrates that the use of this term is not consistent. For example, some scholars define ritual as innately
religious while others circumvent any religious qualities. Grimes argues that while the process of
determining what we should consider as ritual can be valuable that set definitions are not required to further
research. Specifically, it is possible to discuss qualities and consequences of ritualized behaviour without
formal definitions (Ronald Grimes, "An Introduction" in *Ritual, Media, and Conflict* (ed. Ronald L. Grimes
et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9–15.

[168] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 219.

[169] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 218.

because I believe that a new theory of ritual, by definition, would do little to solve the real

conundrums that the study of ritual has come up against."[170] Rather, Bell provides us with a new

framework from which we can further consider ritualized activities. Specifically, she proposes a

new lens from which we can consider ritual.

Bell begins her research by addressing and challenging problems she finds in

contemporary ritual theory. Of significance, Bell problematizes the separation of mind and body

that characterizes the majority of ritual scholarship. She maintains a connection between the

two.[171] Furthermore, she argues that rituals should not be considered as thoughtless physical

actions expressing prior ideas.[172] As per Bell, rituals are something much more complex that

need to be reconsidered within a new framework. Whereas previous scholars have suggested that

participants in rituals engaged in irrational, emotional or cathartic behaviours and researchers

held the tools to interpret their actions,[173] Bell suggests that individuals who participate in ritual

are best understood as active agents in a relationship with the rites themselves.[174]

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[170] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 140.
[171] Catherine Bell, "The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4 (1990): 300. Bell's research determines that the mind should not hold a superior position to the body and that mind and body should not be dichotomized. Through the use of practice theory and the critical examination of human activities in ritualization, Bell astutely focuses on the body and the use of the body in her studies. Specifically, Bell focuses on the manner in which the body utilizes strategies and schemes. "The strategies of ritualization are particularly rooted in the body, specifically, the interaction of the social body within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal environment" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 93). Bell further argues that the body symbolizes the social person. "It appears we are now reappropriating the image of the body: no longer the mere physical instrument of the mind, it now denotes a more complex and irreducible phenomenon, namely, the social person" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 96). Comaroff places the body at the center of social practices and deems the body to "[mediate] all action"(Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 97). Bell argues that a ritualized body is "invested with a 'sense' of ritual" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 98). In fact, she argues that the body plays a key role in the structuring of the environment. "[T]hrough a series of physical movements ritual practices spatially and temporally construct an environment organized according to schemes of privileged opposition" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 98). The schemes are then impressed upon the body by the environment (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 98).
[172] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 19.
[173] Owen, "Ritual Studies," 24.
[174] The importance and perhaps primacy of the body becomes evident in Bell's consideration of power and ritual. To be sure, not all ritual theorists prior to Bell consider humans as passive participants. For example, Clifford Geertz considers participants in rituals as engaging in "cultural performances" (202). While he certainly credits the ritual itself for having the power of something akin to agency, his theory nevertheless requires active participation. Bell's position is different because humans play an important (albeit uninformed) role in the process and output.

Bell's research in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* proceeds to reconsider the term or paradigm "ritual" and develops strategies to obtain more complex understandings of this category. Rather than perceiving ritual as an inflexible category imposed upon certain activities, Bell suggests that "it may be more useful to look at how human activities establish and manipulate their own differentiation and purposes-in the very doing of the act within the context of other ways of acting."[175] In particular, Bell's research successfully determines why the actions and activities associated with rituals are understood to be different. While often deemed special, Bell notes that rituals are only distinct social practices "insofar as they deliberately work to contrast themselves with other forms of practice."[176] Aligning herself with practice theorists, most notably with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Bell argues that the ritual activities are not unique to rites. Specifically, Bell argues that "ritual is a *way* of acting:"[177] a way of differentiating acts done in rituals with acts done in everyday life.

> In a very preliminary sense, ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualization is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane,' and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors.[178]

According to Bell, the activities or actions are not distinct but the manners in which they are understood make them different. Notably, Bell determines that it is more appropriate and accurate to use "ritualization" to discuss ritual activities. By employing the term "ritualization," Bell engages an active noun to refer to a specific way of doing things or acting. Specifically, in the case of ritualization, individuals act in a specific fashion in order to provide distinctions. As

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[175] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 74.
[176] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 302.
[177] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 302; Catherine Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," *Worship* 63 (1989): 31–41.
[178] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 74.

such, individuals that participate in ritualization are not participants in thoughtless acts: they are actively engaged in a process.

Because Bell argues that ritualization is best understood as a way of acting, she also argues that practice theory is a good place to start when considering how one activity differentiates itself from another.[179] Drawing from Bourdieu's discussion of *habitus*, she determines that not only do a set of dispositions "give shape and form to social conventions," but that *habitus* should also be considered as "the principle by which individual and collective practices are produced and the matrix in which objective structures are realized within the (subjective) dispositions that produce practices."[180] Drawing from practice theory, Bell argues that a main feature of ritualization includes the relationship between the participant and the activity. Succinctly, Bell holds human activity as the focus of practice theory and development of ritualization.

Bell outlines four features of practice that highlight human activity: "[p]ractice is (1) situational; (2) strategic; (3) embedded in a misrecognition of what it is in fact doing; and (4) able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world [...]."[181] According to her exploration of practice theory and these four features, Bell determines that we must consider (1) the situations or circumstances behind the practice rather than just the practice itself; (2) that practice should be considered in terms of effective strategies, schemes and manipulations; (3) a fundamental feature of practice is "misrecognition" where practices are able to structure, address particular problems and can be used as tools while participants are not able to see exactly what is happening and; (4) individuals are motivated to participate in ritualization because there is a

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[179] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 74–75.
[180] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 79.
[181] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81.

dominant sense of that practices have a redemptive hegemony.[182] A redemptive hegemony is

defined by Bell as the framework to maintain or change visions of order and power. "It is a

strategic and practical orientation for acting, a framework possible insofar as it is imbedded in

the act itself."[183] Succinctly, Bell's theory states that practices can respond to a specific situation

with strategies that participants are not aware of. Bell's ritualization focuses on how some

practices are unconsciously distinguished from others and what these practices accomplish by

having been differentiated from other practices.[184]

Powerful Ritualization

Armed with the theory of ritualization, "we are now disposed to find ritual powerful not only in

the shaping of a social ethos, but also in the articulation, redefinition, and legitimation of cultural

realities."[185] Or differently, because this approach recognizes that practice is strategic and

situational, practice theory grants us the opportunity to determine how participants use their

bodies to deal with circumstances. "[R]itual is never simply or solely a matter of routine, habit,

or 'the dead weight of tradition.'"[186] Rather, this approach recognizes that ritualization is

powerful. Importantly, Bell's research does not claim that ritualization can solve a problem or

contradiction.[187] Rather, she argues that ritualization can effect "a complete change in the very

definition of the situation itself–a change that practice does not see itself make."[188] Ritualization

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[182] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81–85; Bell, "The Ritual Body," 300–304.
[183] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 85.
[184] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 89.
[185] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 299.
[186] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 92.
[187] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 105.
[188] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 302.

only sees the end result or the rectification: ritualization does not see how the problem is solved but can see that the situation is improved.[189]

Having addressed the questions of "what is ritualization" and "how does ritualization accomplish its' goals," Bell turns her attention to the relationship between ritual and power. She asks the question, "When and why do the strategies of ritualization appear to be the appropriate or effective thing to do?"[190] Bell considers theories that understand ritual as promoting conformity and continuity as well as other theories that suggest that ritual provides opportunities for transformation. Bell notes that power and ritual are "intrinsically interrelated."[191] She further argues that power is not "a thing to be possessed and deployed by particular institutions. It resides only in practices themselves."[192]

While not discussing a possible relationship between continuity and discontinuity, Bell acknowledges that rituals appear to both maintain and challenge the status quo. Of interest, rather

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[189] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 109. "Ritualization does not see how it actively creates place, force, event, tradition, how it redefines or generates the circumstances to which it is responding" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 109).

[190] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 167.

[191] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 301.

[192] Bell, "The Dynamics of Ritual Power," 306. When considering practices in terms of continuity and discontinuity, Geertz's research proves to be particularly valuable. Geertz argues that symbols are produced in ritual performances. These symbols confirm and reinforce contemporary social paradigms. As per Geertz, these rituals provide the participants with models for their beliefs and reality. "In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms turn out to be the same world, producing thus [...a] idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality" (Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," 201). In other words, Geertz argues that two distinct realms, the realm of ritual and the realm of reality, are brought together in formal actions. These rituals or formal actions cause participants to believe that reality is transformed for the length of the ritual. The authority attached to the symbols produced during the ritual maintains current interpretations of world ordering (Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," 207). Because Geertz's examination focuses on production of symbols and the maintenance of paradigms, many scholars assume that his theory only supports the notion that rituals maintain the status quo. And while there are scholars that only consider ritual performances as confirming and reinforcing social paradigms, there are also scholars that examine the potential for change in ritual. Bell cites Comaroff's consideration of ritual practices as modes of resistance as an example of such an argument. Drawing from Taussig and Stowers, the proceeding chapter will consider the concept that banqueting and meal practices in antiquity offered individuals the opportunity to experiment with idealized social paradigms. I suggest rather that Geertz's model allows for both maintenance and innovation. If we consider that participants in ritualization or performances acknowledged that practices could be used as opportunities to challenge social paradigms, the temporary potential for change could be included in the maintenance of the status quo. As such, the opportunity for change is part of the maintained social paradigm. We will again see in the proceeding chapter that this can be understood in terms of banqueting and meal practices where individuals participated in widely acceptable practices that promoted cohesion and stability while at the same time provided them with an environment in which they could test or experiment with social boundaries.

than accepting that rituals do both, Bell raises the more interesting question of how rituals both

provide social control and promote change at the same time.[193] Specifically, Bell nuances the

problem by considering the process.

> [R]itualization, as a strategic mode of action effective within certain social orders,
> does not, in any useful understanding of the words, 'control' individuals or
> society. Yet ritualization *is* very much concerned with power. Closely involved
> with the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption
> of the way things really are, ritualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment
> of power relations. Hence, the relationship of ritualization and social control may
> be better approached in terms of how ritual activities constitute a specific
> embodiment and exercise of power.[194]

Bell argues that ritual does not control participants but rather "it constitutes a particular dynamic

of social empowerment."[195] Ritual is not an activity used to accomplish other purposes (Bell

cites power, politics and social control) but consists of practices that produce and negotiate

power relations.[196] Succinctly, Bell demonstrates that "ritualization is first and foremost a

strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular

social organizations."[197] According to Bell, ritualization does not reflect society but is a

functional mechanism.[198] It is therefore necessary to determine the circumstances under which

ritualization is an effective strategy. "Ritualization is a strategic play of power, of domination

and resistance, within the arena of the social body."[199] Power is not external to ritual but is

intrinsic.

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[193] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 169–70. "Ritual mastery is the ability—not equally shared, desired, or recognized—to (1) take and remake schemes from the shared culture that can strategically nuance, privilege, or transform, (2) deploy them in the formulation of a privileged ritual experience, which in turn (3) impresses them in a new form upon agents able to deploy them in a variety of circumstances beyond the circumference of the rite itself" (Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 116).
[194] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 170.
[195] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 181.
[196] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 196.
[197] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 197.
[198] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 197.
[199] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 204.

Although it is difficult to address in narrative succession relationships that are simultaneous and meant to elude the structure of explicit articulation, a variety of perspectives taken up in turn may provide more specificity about the way in which power is negotiated in ritual and how ritual strategies construct distinct forms of domination and resistance. The following four perspectives are essentially artificial but useful devices: (1) how ritualization empowers those who more or less control the rite; (2) how their power is also limited and constrained; (3) how ritualization dominates those involved as participants; and (4) how this domination involves a negotiated participation and resistance that also empowers them.[200]

Therefore, individuals conducting and participating in ritualization experience empowerment. Ritualization has the ability to deploy strategies and schemes in such a fashion that it can effectively manipulate social order and form experiences.[201] Ritual does not just reflect powerful social paradigms or shape social characteristics or beliefs but has the power to articulate, redefine, and legitimate cultural realities.[202]

A Question of Ritual Terminology

Catherine Bell's research raises an important point regarding the use of appropriate terminology in the discussion of "rituals." We have seen that Bell engages practice theory and suggests that the use of the verb "ritualization" provides a more accurate representation of the practices.[203]

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[200] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 211.

[201] Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 216–17.

[202] Bell, "The Ritual Body," 299.

[203] In her examination of other theories used to describe these practices, Bell goes to great lengths to criticize their terminology. In particular, Bell is critical of performance theory and deems that this approach is flawed for its acceptance of the necessary roles of both actors and observers as well as the depiction of the practices as dramas. While Bell makes valuable arguments for discrediting the use of performance theory as a descriptor for the activities of participants (namely the assumption that there needs to be an audience or drama), it is debatable whether the term or verb performance itself as a descriptor of the activities in ritualization needs to be sidelined. Bell's problem with the term performance seems to be linked to the problematic assumptions that have been connected with performance theory. If we accept as she does, that terms associated with problematic theories do not provide good descriptors, we would be left with very few terms in which to deal with the topic at hand. To push this argument further, we would be required to utilize only terms that cannot be faulted and theories that are wholly accurate. Considering that research in ritual studies is still developing, I find the rejection of the term performance problematic.

As suggested by Bell, her own research does not provide a specific all-encompassing theory, but provides scholars with a new vantage point from which to consider ritual. Specifically, she seeks to encourage scholars to consider practices or rituals differently. By turning the noun into a verb, further developing the concept of ritualization, focusing on the activities of individuals or groups and citing the power of rituals, Bell certainly provides us with a new lens, a lens which can continue to be developed and challenged.[204]

<u>Ritual and Christianity</u>

Evidence indicates that the study of practices, performances and ritualization has become increasingly prominent and a topic of study in its own right. We now need to consider whether New Testament scholars are using progress made in ritual and performance studies to better understand the development and maintenance of early Jesus groups. I posit that the progresses made in ritual theory can shed light or "provide a new lens" in the examination of women and the abilities of some women to achieve positions of authority and influence in early Jesus groups.

While many scholars have previously given myths and narrative literature precedence over practices in the study of ancient Mediterranean communities, some scholars have recognized the centrality of rituals. Scholars such as Smith, Mack, Burkert, Horden, Purcell and Chaniotis have demonstrated that current paradigms used to understand the practices of ancient Mediterranean groups need to be pushed aside in favour of ones that reconceptualise society and place rituals at the forefront. Unfortunately, these redirections (while not having fallen on deaf

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[204] As Bell's "ritualization" is still a project in progress, I would also like to extend the same opportunity to the term "performance." As such, I suggest that the use of the term performance and verb perform to describe the activities associated with rituals is helpful. I suggest that performance or perform need not have an audience and need not be intertwined with drama. Specifically, when using the term performance, I do so with a more broad interpretation: as the execution of an action. Considering this definition of performance, there is no reason why one could not refer to the performance of ritualization.

ears) have not been heard by all scholars of early Christianity. Despite the fact that rituals practiced by first-century Jesus groups are instructive for our understanding of the development of these communities, "New Testament scholarship places ritual at the periphery, not the center, of its work."[205] DeMaris suggests that when compared to research conducted in other religions, "New Testament scholarship has been slower to study ritual or embrace the field of ritual studies."[206] As such, the engagement of ritual studies is still in what DeMaris deems to be a pioneering phase: the critical reconsideration of early Jesus groups with rituals "is only beginning."[207] Following Burton Mack's call for a redescription of early Christianity, Richard DeMaris suggests that a re-examination of early Christian rituals will lead to a better understanding of early Christian groups.[208] Specifically, by understanding what they did we can better describe who the earliest Christians were.

As research has come to focus more on the communities behind the text rather than the literature itself, scholars have gained more accurate understandings of the earliest Jesus groups.[209] DeMaris boldly claims that ritual is the only option for scholars seeking to get as close to New Testament groups as possible.[210] Lincoln's consideration of rituals and performances largely supports the claims made by DeMaris. "For over the course of the last decades, it has gradually become clear that ritual, etiquette, and other strongly habituated forms of practical discourse and discursive practice do not just encode and transmit messages, but they play an active and important role in the construction, maintenance, and modification of the borders,

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[205] Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.
[206] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 4.
[207] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 2.
[208] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 2.
[209] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 5.
[210] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 9.

structures, and hierarchic relations that characterize and constitute society itself."[211] As such,

early Jesus rituals are no longer merely interpreted as repetitive or re-enactments, but are

understood as generative, creative and as evoking emotional states.[212] Furthermore, the

consideration of rites in early Christian studies has revealed that public rituals promote group

cohesion and can offer "an alternative for the future construction of society."[213] Therefore, while

rituals standardize and repeat a practice, they can also form and reform society as well as bring

about change.[214] Stan Stowers considers the importance of practices and the understandings that

practices carry at great length in his article "The Ontology of Religion." Contrary to scholarship

that considers beliefs to be the main component of religion, Stowers determines not only that

understanding came from practices but that these activities and their understandings are "the

phenomena of which religion consists."[215] Stowers continues to consider the importance of

practice and determines that these activities are "the basic constituents of social formation."[216]

Following Theodore Schatzki's ontology of the social, he claims that practices or social activities

create social orders.[217] Or put more plainly, what people do and the rites that they perform make

them who they are.

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[211] Bruce Lincoln, "Banquets and Brawls: Aspects of Ceremonial Meals" in *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 75.

[212] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 8; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2. This approach to considering rituals in early Jesus groups is supported by the previously examined ritualization promoted by Catherine Bell.

[213] DeMaris, *The New Testament*, i. The ability of rituals or ritualization to both maintain continuity and promote change is also supported by Catherine Bell's research.

[214] Muir, *Ritual*, 6–7.

[215] Stanley Stowers, "The Ontology of Religion" in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2008), 443.

[216] Stowers, "The Ontology of Religion," 445.

[217] Stowers, "The Ontology of Religion," 441; Theodore Schatzki, *Social Practices: a Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Theodore Schatzki, "Practiced Bodies: Subjects, Genders, and Minds," in *The Social and Political Body* (ed. T. Schatzki and N. Natter; New York: Guilford, 1996), 49–78; Theodore Schatzki, "A New Societist Social Ontology," in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 33/2 (2000): 174–202; Theodore Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Social Change* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

Conclusions

With an acknowledgement that rituals play an important role in the formation and maintenance of early Jesus groups as well as provide individuals and groups with identities, we are now in a position to consider how early Jesus groups engaged in ritualization or performances. Specifically for this project, we are now able to determine how performances or ritualization in early Jesus groups provided women with opportunities to participate in leadership roles and garner influence within their group. When this project considers women and ritualizations, it recognizes women as active agents rather than women participating in thoughtless actions. The following descriptions of women in ritualizations recognize that their performances as complex processes that have the potential to both maintain and challenge social structures. As such, ritualization is not only just another word for ritual, but describes the relationship between the activities and the participants as well as the potential of the performance. It is this potential for an alternative that provides female participants with power.

4. SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION AND BREAKING BOUNDARIES

In his book, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity*, Hal Taussig analyses early Jesus association meals as rituals and works towards an approach that will enhance knowledge of these groups and the manners in which they developed their identity. Specifically, rather than assume (as it has been often done) that rituals are simply symbols or gestures, Taussig engages ritual theorists (including Catherine Bell, Jonathan Z. Smith, Pierre Bourdieu, Victor Turner and Mary Douglas) to convincingly argue that ritual "is now seen as social negotiation."[218] His approach necessarily reminds us that the rituals practiced at early Christian meals, while perhaps different in specific details, were not unique: all meals and banquets acted as rituals and offered the potential for both stability and change. Of particular importance for this project, Taussig suggests that rituals like Hellenistic meals provided individuals with an opportunity to address problematic issues and challenge difficulties in a "safe and constructed environment."[219] According to Taussig, these ritual activities acted as a "kind of social intelligence" where participants could reframe structures.[220] "Although these gatherings were known for their conviviality, they often also were the occasion for spontaneous address of controversial issues."[221] By utilizing ritual theories and methodologies set forth by Bell, Smith, Bourdieu, Turner, and Douglas, Taussig demonstrates that it becomes possible to better understand early Jesus groups as well as the importance that ritual performances played in the development and maintenance of these groups.

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[218] Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 57.

[219] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 66. Hal Taussig's examination of meals and rituals in his book, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation & Early Christian Identity*, will be examined at greater length in the Christ associations section.

[220] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 66.

[221] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 2.

This chapter will proceed to examine the Lord's Supper as described in 1 Corinthians as an early Christian ritual. I will consider this ritual not as a unique unprecedented event, but one that needs to be situated and understood within its greater social and historical context. Taking Catherine Bell's exploration of "ritualization" into account, this exploration will determine whether meals and banquets strictly reinforced the status quo or if they offered participants the opportunity to negotiate social issues. The test-case of banqueting and meal practices in early Jesus groups will provide the necessary background to consider the participation of women in ritualizations and the opportunities that performances provided. I suggest that by understanding food ritualizations, we can better understand opportunities made available to women in other ritualizations.

Meals and Banqueting

Though the Lord's Supper is at times presented as a unique and unifying ritual meal that was inaugurated by Jesus days before his execution, a consideration of this meal within its historical context reveals that this banquet was not *sui generis* or demonstrative of a unified community. As suggested by DeMaris, rituals are not created in a vacuum but are influenced by the surrounding context.[222] Following his project of redescribing early Christian groups, Mack considers the settings and circumstances of the ritual meals held in Pauline communities. While the focus of his research into the ritualization of meals is "the process of working out the Christ myth,"[223] Mack's consideration of meals as an opportunity for social formation is significant for the current considerations of social experimentation, the participation of women in religious performances, and identity formation. The following section will provide the necessary

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[222] Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in its Ritual World* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 7.
[223] Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 114–18.

background information for a general examination of meals and banquets in antiquity. Succinctly, this section will contemplate whether food is just food and whether meals are simply meals.

Meals in the Greco-Roman World

Considering the evidence for eating practices in antiquity, it would be unrealistic to think that Christians inaugurated the concept of banqueting or communal meals. Furthermore, it would be foolish to think that Christian meals uniquely enacted religious performances and reflected concerns for social circumstances. Rather, evidence suggests that food and meals played an important role in the development and maintenance of all groups and associations throughout antiquity. Philip Harland's examination of associations in ancient Mediterranean society demonstrates that regular banquets and meals were an intricate part of association life.[224] "Offerings of sacrificial victims, other foods, and libations with accompanying banquets were the touchstone of corporate religious piety in the Greco-Roman world, and we can assume that they were a regular part of all types of associations."[225] Evidence for banqueting and meal practices can be found in literature and art.[226] As these practices were prominent in antiquity, in order to properly understand the use of meals and banquets by early Jesus groups, we must understand these activities within their historical context.

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[224] Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 59. Harland uses archaeological evidence to demonstrate that such ritual practices were common throughout antiquity.
[225] Harland, *Associations*, 70.
[226] For a thorough consideration of the representation of meals and banqueting practices in antiquity, see Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Evidence found in art suggests that both men and women were present during meal practices.

<u>Meals as Social Boundary Markers</u>

In antiquity, food was never strictly perceived as the fuel necessary for survival or the maintenance of the body. Garnsey's exploration of ancient Greco-Roman meals and banquets indicates that these practices reveal more than dietary habits. Specifically, the circumstances surrounding eating practices suggest that food is not just food and that meals are not just meals. Evidence suggests that food, whether eaten alone or in a group, was fraught with meaning: "meals in general were about much more than eating."[227] In order to determine how ritualizations provided opportunities for participants, we must determine why scholars think that food practices mean something more and how these practices influenced the participation of women during meals.

Rather than purely sustenance, Garnsey's research indicates that "in any society, group eating and drinking highlight social attitudes, relationships and hierarchies." [228]Dunbabin further argues that banqueting played an essential role in the social fabric of ancient Greco-Roman groups.[229] Despite the fact that banqueting or meal practices could mean different things to different individuals and differ between groups,[230] Taussig suggests that they took similar forms and shared similar meanings.[231] Examples of these similarities or consistencies can be found in Garnsey's examination of food, nutrition and culture in antiquity.

> In Graeco-Roman society, food was a marker of ethnic and cultural difference. [...F]ood reflected the vertical social and economic distinction between rich and poor.[...] On the other hand, food involves 'commensality', that is 'sharing a table', with 'companions', that is 'sharers of bread'. Food assembles and binds together those linked by blood (family), class (the symposiasts of archaic and later Greece), religion (the Passover Seder, the Eucharist) and citizenship (the civic

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[227] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 22.
[228] Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xii.
[229] Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.
[230] Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, 2.
[231] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 23.

banquet). Food, then, stands as a pointer to distinctions of status, power and wealth, of group-separateness and –belonging, and of cultural differences in general.[232]

Garnsey's examination of food and communal meals reveals several points of interest: 1) the distribution of food was not even;[233] 2) the type of food that an individual acquired and ate demonstrated or reflected his/her power;[234] 3) the quality and quantity of what a person ate reflected their status in society as well as either their wealth or their poverty.[235] The allocation of food according to social status is exemplified in Bruce Lincoln's examination of the royal feast at Tara. He considers at length the seating arrangements schematic of the banquet hall as well as the distribution of food at this Irish ritual celebration held at the castle. Lincoln demonstrates that the diagram of seating arrangements represents "a quantified index of social standing."[236] A person's seat and portion of meat provided information for comparison. This information indicated exactly where a person ranked in society. "In all instances spatial relations within the hall mirrored hierarchic relations within society."[237] Dunbabin also argues that banqueting and meal practices served as social status indicators. "In the ancient world, to lie down to eat and drink while others stood to serve you was a sign of power, of privilege, of prestige."[238] We thus have evidence that food was not only about nourishment but about order in the community: meals provided a pattern for behaviour;[239] 4) diet and eating practices displayed otherness and determined identity. Garnsey argues that "portrayals of otherness [like eating...] are essentially self-referential, in that their function is to determine the cultural identity of the core-group by

[232] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 6–7.
[233] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 13.
[234] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 33.
[235] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 118.
[236] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77–78.
[237] Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 79.
[238] Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, 11.
[239] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 72; Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, 11.

reference to another community, so as to represent the latter as the opposite or at least significantly different from the former, and to the former's advantage."[240] Or put simply, you are what you eat and, 5) the food that individuals eat and the fashion in which they consume it "are an integral part of social behaviour and cultural patterns."[241] Succinctly, what people ate and how they ate it was determined by expectations and patterns.

Meals and Banquets as Unifying Experiences

Thus far this chapter has considered how food in antiquity (specifically what an individual ate or was allocated) not only provided nourishment but also demonstrated social status or hierarchy. However, there is more to meals and banqueting practices than markers of social status: meal and banqueting practices also served as a tool to confirm and demonstrate solidarity.

> Ceremonial eating and drinking are a conspicuous feature of ancient society. They brought together families and their guests, patrons and their dependants, politicians and their friends, aristocratic youth, members of occupational groups, social groups, religious brotherhoods, the soldiery, the citizenry, the population of a town. Large or small, these displays of commensality or collective consumption carried significance well beyond the nutritional function of the meal that was consumed.[242]

While the overarching paradigm of the gatherings demonstrated difference, cohesion was also promoted. Garnsey argues that meals and banquets were "the obvious place for interaction, conversation and relaxation, the place and the occasion where friendship was strengthened and cultural attainment displayed."[243] Those who participated in the ritualizations reaffirmed membership in a group.

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[240] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 65.
[241] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 80.
[242] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 128.
[243] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 136.

Not unlike Garnsey, Taussig also outlines the characteristics of a meal or banquet

typology. However, Taussig's typology includes and outlines specific activities undertaken at the

meal practices. These characteristics include:

> the reclining of (more or less) all participants while eating and drinking together
> for several hours in the evening [;] the order of a supper (*deipnon*) of eating,
> followed by an extended time (*symposion*) of drinking, conversation, and
> performance [;] marking the transition from *deipnon* to *symposion* with a
> ceremonial libation, almost always wine [;] leadership by a "president"
> (*symposiarch*) of the meal—a person not always the same, and sometimes a role
> that was contingent or disputed [;] a variety of marginal personages, often
> including servants, uninvited guests, "entertainers," and dogs.[244]

Taussig further argues that meals played an important role in expressing social values and

consolidating community. He suggests that the dynamics of the meal rituals affected social

boundaries, social bonding, social obligation, social stratification and social equality.[245] Citing

Matthias Klinghardt he states that "all of these details were regulated in order to enable, or even

to guarantee, community."[246]

Banquets, Gender and Social Laboratories

Despite the fact that these banqueting practices asserted social continuity, Taussig demonstrates

that they also offered participants the opportunity for change. He argues that while following a

paradigm or format, banquets also offered the participants an opportunity to challenge the status

quo and experiment with the allocation of social status.[247] "There were astonishing similarities in

the basic structure and the flow of these festive meals. There was indeed a common cultural form

and norm for what one did at the meals. However, within the general form, there was generous

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[244] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 26.
[245] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 29.
[246] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 27; Matthias Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft: Soziologie und* Liturgie *frühchristlicher Mahlfeiern* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1996), 155–56.
[247] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 31.

room for improvisation."[248] Taussig describes these meals as complex and creative rituals that

acted as a type of social laboratory.[249]

Of interest for research involved in the redescription of women in antiquity, Garnsey

considers the relationship between gender and food allocation and determines that the hierarchy

of food distribution is prevalent along gender lines. "[F]ood behaviour reflects the social

hierarchy and social relationships. So the status of an individual in the household and in society

at large will be crucial in food allocation. [...F]ood allocation [...] does [...] *not* act in the interests

of women. It is likely enough that in patriarchal societies [...] females would be given a less

generous share of the family food resources than males."[250] Garnsey suggests that the values of

patriarchal society in antiquity resulted in the unequal distribution of food resources among men

and women as well as boys and girls.[251] Thus, traditionally in both private and public meals, men

were treated and fed superiorly to women. Lincoln's research in banqueting supports this claim.

Citing the feast at Tara, he claims that outside of the queen's presence, women were restricted

from the banquet hall and were not granted participation.[252]

While the majority of research, like that presented by Garnsey, suggests that the

prevailing meal practices included the subordination of women in banqueting and meal practices,

Taussig's research in meal rituals as social laboratories indicates that in some circumstances

women were granted greater access to these practices.[253] His research suggests that in some cases

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[248] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 6.
[249] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 76.
[250] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 101.
[251] Garnsey, *Food and Society*, 108.
[252] Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 79.
[253] Dunbabin's exploration of meals as depicted in ancient art suggests that women did participate in banqueting practices. She suggests that practices are much more complicated than the traditionally idealized Greek or Roman meal standards (*The Roman Banquet*, 23). Furthermore, she argues that differences existed between the Greek and Roman practices and that change in expectations took place over the Hellenistic period (*The Roman Banquet*, 24). Dunbabin's research suggests that some women were depicted in these scenes as prominent, powerful, and wealthy as well as in reclining positions. As such, evidence suggests that women did not only play the roles of

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women participated in banqueting rituals with men and in some cases in the same fashion as their male counterparts. As such, the questions of interest are "why" and "how"? Taussig's research responds to such questions: "Of course, the occasional woman reclining accomplished [the renegotiation of gender expectations and the] (re)thinking about males and females."[254] Furthermore, while men and women may have participated in the banquets in different fashions, their presence questioned male privilege and forced the participants to consider their attendance. "Whether there were women occasionally reclining with men, women sitting in a somewhat segregated manner, or women sitting at the feet of men, these meals reproduced the tension around women's rights in the larger society in a way that allowed for retrenchment, insight, or social change."[255] While banqueting practices did not serve as a type of gender-equalizer in antiquity, at times Hellenistic ritual meals engaged in practices that reconsidered the participation of women in meals and greater society.

Jesus Association Meals

Taussig argues that while individuals gathered during the pre-Hellenistic period in groups or clubs, there was an "explosive interest" in associations/meal clubs during the Hellenistic period.[256] This phenomenon was widespread and a variety of groups with numerous interests and social backgrounds collected and began to meet and have banquets.[257] Products of their social environment, the members of the earliest Jesus groups would have also "abounded in enthusiasm for the creation of alternative social networks."[258] Drawing from Kloppenborg, Harland and

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servants, maids or entertainment in banquets. Art represents some women as participating in the same their male counterparts (*The Roman Banquet*, 67–68, 114, 178, 180).

[254] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 70–71.
[255] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 71.
[256] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 88.
[257] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 88–89.
[258] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 90.

Ascough's research into early Jesus groups as Christ associations, Taussig argues that these groups, like Hellenistic associations, also engaged in group rituals or practices[259] where they took the opportunity to enjoy friendships or connections, reconsider allegiances, negotiate identities, address concerns and question the manner in which they convened.

As meals were a central activity for Hellenistic associations, they also held an important place in Jesus associations. Furthermore, practices and opportunities found in banqueting and meal practices in Hellenistic associations were also found in Jesus associations. "Regardless of what interpretation some leader of a commensal group might provide, a meal is going to have much of its potential for meaning to participants and observers simply because it is recognizable within the logical possibilities of eating socially in that culture."[260] Meals in Jesus associations were able to do what they did because there was a precedent for such activities in Hellenistic meals.

Stowers convincingly argues that members of the early Corinthian Jesus group were likely to have compared and understood their dining practices *vis-à-vis* the common meal practices at the time (specifically, "the common meal at home; meals involving animal sacrifice; memorial meals for the dead").[261] Following this line of argumentation, Ascough maintains that voluntary associations, including Jesus associations, were concerned with and struggled to maintain appropriate behaviour at gatherings, including meals: legislation was instated and enforced.[262] He further argues that first-century Christianity was "meal-centered" and was

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[259] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 90–100.
[260] Stanley K. Stowers, "Elusive Coherence: Ritual and Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 10–11" in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* (ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1996), 74.
[261] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 74; Stanley Stowers, "On Constructing Meals, Myths and Power in the World of Paul," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL. Louisiana, New Orleans, 1996), 2–3.
[262] Richard Ascough, "Of Memories and Meals: Greco-Roman Associations and the Early Jesus-group at Thessalonike" in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike: Studies in Religion and Architecture* (ed. Laura Nasrallah et al.; Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 60.

concerned with "well-ordered and well-organized dinner parties."[263] Recognizing that early Jesus

groups were structured like Hellenistic associations and thus the members held similar concerns

and engaged in rituals practiced by these groups, we are better prepared to consider what role

banqueting played in the development of Jesus associations.

Because meal practices were an important component of association practices, Taussig

argues that banquets played an essential role in the development of Jesus groups. His position is

corroborated by my previous examinations of Hellenistic banquets and meals: food is not only

nourishment but represents something more complicated. "Such commensality has a social

dimension that is linked to wider issues of community building. Meals are times of solidifying

social bonds, networking, mourning and rejoicing, and establishing the *koinonia* (fellowship) that

is to mark the association. They also constitute the locus where boundaries around that *koinonia*

are maintained and regulations are implemented to sustain it."[264] As described by Ascough, ritual

meals serve as a tool to outline a group and determine how their group functions.

Despite the fact that the Lord's Supper is remembered as inaugurating a Christian

sacrament, a theory that considers these ritual within their social context reveals that these

activities are points of social formation and mythmaking.

> If the meaning of the Lord's Supper is the words of institution that Paul and the
> gospels provide, then it might easily be incomparable. But if I think of it as an
> eating practice, then I immediately notice that it shares central and numerous
> similarities with practices common to cultures throughout the Mediterranean. Any
> person from that world would immediately recognize it as a type of eating
> practice and already possess many of the skills necessary to participate.[265]

Meals had potential for understanding because individuals were able to recognize the practices

and then use and modify them as desired. They "appropriated it and [displayed] it in a new

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[263] Ascough, "Of Memories and Meals," 64.

[264] Ascough, "Of Memories and Meals," 57.

[265] Stanley Stowers, "On Constructing Meals," 2–3.

way."[266] Despite the fact that the banqueting ritual was appropriated and modified by early Jesus groups, we should not assume that the potentials and opportunities that arose from these rituals were different or unique. We must consider that all association-like groups, including the Jesus groups, engaged in social formation and identity development at meals or banquets. Taussig argues that "[t]he social experimentation and values of early Christianity were shaped [...] primarily at their meals, and a large proportion of those meals occurred in association-like 'Christian' groups."[267] While I am hesitant to accept that meals or banquets were the sole major location where identities were challenged and shaped, I am convinced that meals and banquets did provide a circumstance where participants felt an opportunity to experiment.[268]

Meals, Banqueting and Social Experimentation

Stowers argues that the Pauline groups, like Greeks in general, were concerned with the formation of groups and the identity of people who ate together.[269] "In the Lord's dinner and in Greek sacrifice, who is in or outside the community is not simply predetermined in some juridical or definitional way, but is negotiated in the very exercise of the skills of mythmaking, testing and eating."[270] Braun considers the importance of meals as segregative practices in determining who is an insider and who is an outsider. Of interest, Braun argues that the euphoria which participants in meals experience "may be at least as much the result of the pleasure gained

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[266] Stowers, "On Constructing Meals," 13.
[267] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 100.
[268] This research project will also consider other significant performances that provided opportunities for challenging the status quo but will first continue to explore exactly how meals and banquets engaged in social experimentation.
[269] Stowers, "On Constructing Meals," 11.
[270] Stowers, "On Constructing Meals," 9.

from those who are delectably absent, not invited, as from those who are present."[271] Or put

differently, participants feel pleasure not only because they are united in a group, but also

because they are depriving others of inclusion.[272]

Rather than focusing on an ideal Greco-Roman meal typology (though a single type is not

likely to exist), Braun argues that we should consider what commensal groups do with meals.[273]

Stowers argues that meals and banquets were not only socially acceptable and expected forums

of identity building but were also perceived as instances for opportunities for the developing

Jesus groups. "These meals—because of their already established socially formative place in the

Hellenistic world—evoked social experimentation. They allowed early Christians to try out new

behaviours [...]. The meals became a laboratory in which a range of expressive vocabularies

explored alternative social visions."[274] Because rituals could enact social change and formation

as well as experiment with difficult social issues, early Christian meals became the place of

negotiated and improvised identities and new behaviours. "The festive meals of early

Christianity were a social stage on which early Christian identity was elaborated."[275] Taussig

further argues that meals provide us with the opportunity to understand the negotiation and

development of early Christian identities. Banquets enable us to contemplate how individuals

belonging to Jesus groups understood their relationships and statuses *vis-à-vis* other insiders and

outsiders.

> [A] major social practice can help us understand the social dimensions of early
> Christianity itself. [...U]nderstanding the meal as a primary location for social

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[271] Willi Braun, "'Our Religion Compels Us to Make a Distinction': Prolegomena on Meals and Social Formation" in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians, and Others* (ed. Zeba Crook and Philip A. Harland; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 41–55.

[272] Braun, "Prolegomena on Meals," 52–53; Claude Grignon, "Commensality and Social Morphology: An essay of Typology" in *Food, Drink, and Identity: Cooking, Eating, and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages* (ed. Peter Scholliers; Oxford: Berg, 2001), 23–33.

[273] Braun, "Prolegomena on Meals," 44–47, 54–55.

[274] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 20.

[275] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 19.

gatherings clarifies key questions about early proto-Christian identity. What were their social values? How did various such groups understand their relationships among themselves? Among men and women? Jew and Greek? Patron and client? [...] Slave, free, and master? Those in positions of honor and those shamed?[...] What important hopes [...]? What new conflict came into focus?[276]

Banquet and meal ritualizations provided members of Jesus associations with the opportunities to question their positions both within and outside of their group as well as test boundaries or categories in an attempt to modify their current membership status.

As banqueting ritualizations were prominent in early Jesus associations, many examples could be provided as a test-case. However, as this thesis will culminate in a consideration of the conditions under which women achieved positions of leadership, influence and power, this section will consider a few examples that also explore gender. Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians is particularly relevant as this section directly precedes the praying and prophesying women.

A Meal in 1 Corinthians

In his examination of meal rituals, Stowers demonstrates that banqueting practices maintained gender divisions.[277] His research also demonstrates that gender divisions were promoted before the banqueting performances began, specifically with the preparation of meals and the allocation of food responsibilities. "[W]omen cooked bread (or grain porridge) at home for everyday meals; men sacrificed animals at home and at other sites for special meals, feasts."[278] And while this division of food related tasks may be seen as only demonstrative of greater social gender

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[276] Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 8–9.
[277] Stowers' argument is supported by the general examinations of banqueting and gender divisions maintained in these practices in ancient Mediterranean groups.
[278] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 74.

dynamics, in groups that debated what types of food should be served, the connection between women and bread becomes important.

While meal ritualizations followed a general format or paradigm, they also served a variety of functions (such as a celebration, religious festival, mourning or club meeting) and differed in formality (some meals were formal while others were more casual or common). While common meals, like formal events, included a religious element (offerings, thanksgiving and/or blessings), they were distinct in that meat was generally not consumed. "The eating of meat constituted the highest form of eating in relation to the gods and involved some form of sharing the meat with the gods."[279] Stowers suggests that while attempts were made to differentiate the Lord's dinner (as described in 1 Corinthians) from both ordinary and sacrificial meals, this ritualization is closer to a common meal. Specifically, while members of the Corinth Jesus group held a ritualized meal, they did not sacrifice an animal or consume meat.[280]

> Sacrificial offering of meat effected an even more elaborated social indexing by specifying those who provided the offering, those who prepared the offering, those who made the distribution, and those to whom distribution was made in a particular hierarchy of portions. Only men killed, portioned, and distributed the meat. While everyone present would get bread, only the immediate family and/or social equals might get meat; and the meat might be given in lesser portions to women, children, people of lower classes, and those unrelated or noncitizens, if they got any at all. Paul's letter allows us no direct evidence, but in light of the code of food we are right to ask if the well-to-do might have excluded social inferiors from meat that they had provided in eating what Paul describes as their 'own dinner' that they ought to eat at home (1 Cor. 11:21-22).[281]

Stowers' examination of Corinthian meal practices is important for two reasons: 1) he suggests that a meal consisting of bread would have confused those of upper classes who expected meat.[282] I further suggest that this shift in paradigm (a meal that was formal and common) would

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[279] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 74–75.
[280] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 74–75.
[281] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 76.
[282] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 76.

have raised concerns for all participants whether members of upper or lower classes; 2) because

the course consisted of bread rather than meat, women became the main providers for the meal.

Stowers suggests

> that the chapters echo the powerfully effective tensions of the ritualized eating
> practices themselves. Sometimes meat is not just meat or bread just bread, even
> bread that symbolizes someone's noble death. Paul and the members of his
> communities may instinctively have sensed but did not see that their eating was
> negotiating a new place in the larger code of eating. [...] They did not see that they
> were reproducing and negotiating an order of gender and social relations, the
> 'natural.' Paul's followers also did not see that their new order of ritualized bread
> and wine, rather than meat, fit a new order of power in the city detached from the
> land.'[283]

Though the degree to which members of the Corinth Jesus group were aware of the negotiation

processes included in their meal rituals is debatable, the effects of these negotiations are evident.

Not only did these renegotiated meals change the code of eating, but they also reconsidered the

social hierarchy.

Stowers connects the Corinthian meal renegotiations with the praying and prophesying

women in the following chapter. "One might also well ask if the gender rebellion reflected in the

women prophets of chapter 11 who would not wear veils might have been promoted by the

ambiguities in the new meal practices. Bread over meat might be sensed as a loosening of the

order of gender."[284] Whether these practices are directly connected or not, at the very least we

have evidence of two ritualizations that demonstrate a challenge to the idealized expected gender

standards.[285]

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[283] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 78–79.
[284] Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 76.
[285] This project will continue an examination of the praying and prophesying women in Corinth in a later
chapter. I will argue that the ritual performances of praying and prophesying also provided individuals with an
opportunity to challenge socially acceptable paradigms.

<u>A Meal in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew</u>

In his consideration of the Syro-Phoenician woman pericope found in Mark 7:24–30 and

Matthew 15:22–28, Taussig considers the extent to which negotiations of women's power in

early Jesus groups mirrors gender negotiations found in the first-century Mediterranean world.[286]

He suggests that the only way to understand this account is to consider this parable within its

historical context. Taussig argues that we need to explore the negotiation of women's powers in

the Hellenistic period and the development of narratives. "[T]he allusions to controversy about

who attends meals place this chreia in the social formation of the early Jesus movements. By

virtue of its belonging to the corpus of Jesus movement material, it reveals- whether its origins

are within the Jesus movement or beyond- an early Jesus movement debate about women at

meals."[287] The inclusion of the healing of the Syro-Phoenician's daughter by Mark and Matthew

suggests not only that women attended early Christian meals or banquets but also that a debate

surrounding the place of women at meals occurred in the earliest Jesus groups.[288] Specifically,

there is a concern about the manner in which women are included in the Jesus groups as well as

their rights at meals and banquets.[289]

Regardless of how the authors address the issue of women's banqueting rights, the

narrative in Mark 7:24–30 and Matthew 15:22–28 demonstrate that "the issue of women's place

at meals was still actively being negotiated in Mark's community."[290] Taussig further argues that

meal practices provide us with the opportunity to consider community dynamics. "What

becomes clear [in the examination of meal and banqueting practices] is a complex process of

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[286] Hal Taussig, "Dealing under the Table: Ritual Negotiation of Women's Power in the Syro-Phoenician Woman Pericope," in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* (ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1996), 264–79.
[287] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 267.
[288] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 267.
[289] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 268–69.
[290] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 270.

ritual negotiation concerning women's power in the various communities."[291] Following Mary

Douglas, Stowers argues that "meals tend to be especially expressive in a ritual manner of the

negotiation of social order. [...] It is the question of who is important in the group in what way

that meals address regularly in a ritual manner. This has to do with the arrangement of seating,

the kinds of foods offered to various persons, the order of foods served."[292] Considering the

dynamics of ritual meals in the first century Mediterranean and the opportunity to challenge

social order, Taussig suggests that the Syro-Phoenician's miracle story points towards the

existence of a re-negotiation of women's power and place as well as male/female relations

during community meals.[293] The issue was not whether or not women should be fed, but about

gender relations. Because these communities did not have clear cut paradigms about how women

should be treated or valued, meals provided members with an opportunity. "A major reason that

these communities' attended to women at meals was the advantage the meals provided in

negotiating the complex differences in power and gender in the communities themselves."[294]

According to Taussig, discussions and experimentations with food, meal practices and gender

were enabled by circumstances. "At a time when gender roles were being hotly debated in

Hellenistic cultures, the flexibility and openness of these new 'Christian' groups made their

meals especially easy loci for the signification of the power of women in their communities."[295]

Significantly, Taussig determines that 1) gender issues and negotiations were not specific to

early Jesus groups; 2) meal and banqueting practices provided opportunities for individuals to

negotiate gender issues and; 3) early Jesus groups were more flexible and open than other

groups. While agreeing with the first two of these points, I suggest that there is a lack of

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[291] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 271.
[292] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 272.
[293] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 272.
[294] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 273.
[295] Taussig, "Dealing under the Table," 275.

evidence to determine that early Jesus groups were indeed more flexible and open to social negotiations. The argument of openness and flexibility will be explored further in later chapters.

<u>Conclusions</u>

With the goal of determining the usefulness of the categories apocalyptic and eschatological to describe the participation of women in early Christianity, I have considered ritual theory and have examined the meal and banqueting practices in early Jesus groups. I previously suggested that scholars often engage a traditional understanding of apocalypticism and eschatology to explain the beliefs and practices in early Jesus groups. This theoretical (and theological) approach has determined that members of the earliest Christian groups envisioned a drastically different future and innovatively re-interpreted socially acceptable paradigms because they were apocalyptic. The two previous chapters suggest that ritualization and practice studies have thrown a spoke in this theoretical apocalyptic wheel. Specifically, I suggest that the meals and banqueting test-case reveals that these practices provided participants with the opportunity to envision a different future and rework social paradigms. I argue that apocalypticism and eschatology are not terms that must be engaged to describe Jesus groups that experiment with or re-interpret social paradigms. This chapter has demonstrated that meals practices that offered participants opportunities to experiment with social boundaries were not only practiced by Jesus groups but throughout antiquity in the Greco-Roman world.

Research conducted by Taussig and Stowers provides us with evidence that members of association or clubs used banquets as safe environments to address difficult social issues. As such, meals provided early Christians with the opportunity to engage in ritual social experimentation where boundaries of status, gender and diversity were challenged. By focusing

on what participants do with meals rather than on the meal itself, these practices demonstrate that identity was flexible and malleable through ritualizations. I posit that early Jesus groups engaged in practices that challenged social paradigms because they, like other associations, found the opportunities to negotiate issues they found problematic.

The recognition that practices rather than beliefs played the key role in social experimentation in early Jesus groups is significant for this thesis project because evidence suggests that some women were active participants in these practices. Following the progress made in ritual theory and the arguments made for negotiation opportunities found in banqueting and meal ritualizations, this project will now consider other practices that offered the opportunity for social experimentation in early Jesus groups.

5. SPIRIT, ACCESS, AND AUTHORITY

Thus far this project has explored how practices, activities, and behaviours rather than

worldviews can help scholars understand the development of groups. I have also suggested that

ritualization need to be considered in order to understand the opportunities available to women in

early Jesus groups. Specifically, I suggest that in order to trace the developments and restrictions

of leadership positions, we must consider ritualization rather than rely on prescriptive

instructions and generalized categories (like apocalypticism and eschatology).[296] I suggest that a

good place to begin one's research into the availability of leadership positions or roles available

to women in early Jesus associations is to determine what practices provided women with

opportunities for authority, power or influence.

This project has explored the possibility that communities which participated in social

experimentation, ritualizations (like banqueting and meals) provided individuals with the

opportunity to challenge social expectations and boundaries in a safe environment.[297] I will now

turn to another venue of participation where individuals, both men and women, achieved power,

influence and leadership opportunities. First, I will briefly consider the traditional uses of

pneuma in academic research. I will question whether current interpretations of the word *pneuma*

as "The Holy Spirit" reflect modern theological concerns.[298] Second, I will proceed to consider

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[296] It has become clear that ancient religious instructions as well as modern theological interpretations of such data are no longer sufficient to explain the activities or beliefs of the earliest Jesus groups.

[297] As will be seen in later chapters, I will suggest that some individuals in leadership positions may have perceived activities that engaged in social experimentation as problematic. Specifically, some group leaders may have disapproved of the uses of rituals when the participants expected that reinterpreted social boundaries in ritual practices should extend into all daily activities and practices.

[298] I. M. Lewis describes the problematic interpretations of *pneuma*, healings and possession succinctly. He states that "[p]ossession studies do thus indeed tend to mirror the current fashions of anthropological theory and, if we are not careful, the voices of those we seek to report are in danger of being silenced as we pursue our own ethnocentric preoccupations" (I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* [New York: Routledge, 2003], xii.). As such, we are once again reminded to be mindful of our theories and methodological approaches when examining religious groups.

how access to *pneuma* affected an individual's status within their group. I will consider whether access to *pneuma* provided individuals with the opportunity to gain influence and power.

Defining the Discussion

A significant amount of research has been conducted in the use of "spirit" or *pneumatology* in early Christian groups. However, when faced with this research, we should remember that "quantity is not quality" and that quantity does not guarantee consistency. The term *pneuma* is not uncontroversial. And while the exact "nature" of *pneuma* has been debated amongst believers since its incorporation into Jesus groups, it seems that many modern scholars have not fared better in defining the term. There is a lack of agreement among scholars as to what *pneuma* means and how it should best be translated. Following the goals of the redescription project, I suggest that before examining the influence and understandings of Spirit, spirit, spirits or *pneuma* in early Jesus groups that we must determine what early Jesus groups meant when they referred to *pneuma*. Or more succinctly, what does *pneuma* mean?

Some Traditional Approaches and a Twist

An attempt to identify one single traditional approach to "Spirit" studies is difficult because evidence suggests that even among "traditionalists" there is no consensus. Prominent debates surrounding the traditional approaches include 1) the issue of "being born with Spirit" vs. "becoming filled with Spirit"; 2) the role of the Hebrew Scriptures and Judaism in forming Christian *pneumatology* and; 3) the manner in which the Spirit is depicted or realized by early Christians. One consistency that can be found in the majority of scholarship that treats "spirit" traditionally is the exegesis of *pneuma*. References to *pneuma* are traditionally translated as the

Holy Spirit. As per Gunkel, *Spirit* refers to the power of God that works through individuals.[299]

Traditionally understood, the main way that an individual demonstrated that he/she was filled with Spirit, or conversely the main way that the Spirit demonstrated that an individual was filled with itself was through prophecy.[300] While this approach bolsters a theology that promotes access to "The Spirit," it does little to reveal actual uses of *pneuma* in early Jesus groups. The search for *pneuma* is further complicated by the fact that this term is not Jesus-group specific and that different groups in antiquity may have understood *pneuma* in different ways.

With the goal of determining an accurate interpretation of *pneuma*, this section will proceed to explore traditional interpretations of The Spirit in the New Testament, the issue of Spirit vs. spirits as well as consider what is meant by the term *pneuma*. This chapter will engage Dale Martin, Paul Robertson and J. Z. Smith to demonstrate that a historical approach to *pneuma* should not interpret this term as the single Christian Spirit. I will then demonstrate how a reconsideration and rectification of the term *pneuma* will help determine how women participated in activities of prophecy and ecstatic worship. This exploration will also determine that like banqueting and meal practices, prophetic ritualizations also include aspects of social experimentation.

Traditional Understandings of the Spirit

As noted by Gunkel himself, when he began his study on the Spirit, his predecessors and peers had written very little about the topic. There was no reflection on *pneuma* and other scholars had

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[299] Hermann Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (trans. R.A. Harrisville and P.A. Quanbeck II; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 35; John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 3.

[300] Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 30–38; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 6.

yet to consider its effects.[301] In his work, *Filled with the Spirit*, John R. Levison outlines the

beginnings of modern pneumatology and considers Hermann Gunkel to be a 19th-century pioneer

of *pneuma* studies.[302] He considers Gunkel's research to be a "benchmark in the study of the

Spirit."[303] Gunkel's focus on the effects of the Spirit, the importance of Judaism in understanding

early Christian pneumatology and the significance of Paul's use of the Spirit still resonate in

modern research.[304]

This project will proceed to consider a general paradigm engaged by scholars who

approach *pneuma* as the Spirit.[305] John D. Harvey's research provides a fruitful starting point

because while his exegesis of the "Spirit" passages and practices in Christian communities are

problematic, his investigation illustrates two important problems: 1) his research intentionally

argues that the relationship between individuals and the Spirit is not single-facetted because, not

all groups engaged the Spirit in the same fashion, and; 2) his research unintentionally

demonstrates that the majority of *pneuma* research has a single (and often Trinitarian) vision of

pneuma. This research, in conjunction with Gunkel's three areas of focus, will be used as a

starting point from which we can consider, reconsider and reconstruct *pneuma*.

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[301] Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 2.

[302] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, xiv– xxvi. Though Gunkel was informed by the Gottingen theological faculty that his research on the Holy Spirit was lacking, Levison argues that the majority of late 19th and 20th century German scholars (like Heinrich Weinel, Paul Volz, Hans Leisegang and Friedrich Buchel) were influenced by his *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes*.

[303] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, xxi.

[304] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, xvii–xxv. This is evidenced by the fact that numerous copies of Gunkel's work were requested after his book went out of print. There was such a high demand for the text that the publisher elected to publish the book again (Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 1).

[305] Numerous modern texts could be used to explore the issues surrounding the Spirit debates. For the sake of brevity, I will use John D. Harvey's research. Other modern scholars that deal with research into the Spirit include but are certainly not limited to Gordon Fee (*God's Power Presence*), Friedrich Wilhelm Horn (*Das Angeld des Geistes*), Max Turner (*Power From on High*) and Gerard Verbeke (*l'Evolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoicism a S. Augustin*).

<u>Harvey's *Anointed with the Spirit and Power*</u>

Harvey's research is beneficial for a critical examination of *pneuma* research because he engages traditional theological approaches to beliefs and practices. Specifically, Harvey uses New Testament literature to establish a Christian Spirit paradigm. And while his project does not help scholars understand the historical role or influence of *pneuma*, by considering his research we become well aware of many pitfalls in contemporary spirit research.

Harvey's research engages several descriptions of the Spirit (his translation of *pneuma*) found throughout the New Testament. However, his research places the greatest stock and value in understanding the Spirit as described in the *Acts of the Apostles*. His interpretation of Spirit in *Acts* forms an over-arching paradigm which he engages to provide exegesis for Spirit-filled activities and relationships in all ancient and modern groups. As I have previously stated, while this approach is clearly problematic for historical, geographical, and temporal reasons, his interpretations of Spirit exemplify a major problem in traditional interpretations of *pneuma*.

When considering *Acts*, Harvey describes *pneuma* as a single all encompassing Spirit that effectively ensured the survival of the church. He argues that "[t]he Holy Spirit is the apostles' resource when the church faces its first opposition, the source of the church's first revival, the solution to the church's first problem, the strength of the church's first martyr, and the sender of the church's first missionary team. He guides in corporate decision-making, and he places leaders in positions of authority over local congregations."[306] According to Harvey's interpretation, the Spirit is something/someone that is uniquely Christian and a resource which is accessible to those who believe. Furthermore, Harvey depicts the Spirit as an all protective powerful entity which can solve all problems and promote faith.

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[306] John D. Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit and Power* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: P & R Publishing, 2008), 124.

Harvey's research gives priority to passages in the New Testament that support the claim that an individual can be full of the Spirit, filled by the Spirit or filled with the Spirit.[307] Succinctly, Harvey's Spirit research does not consider other spirits in the context of early Jesus group pneumatology. As stated by Harvey,

> Luke's characteristic phrases for Holy Spirit empowerment in Acts are *full of*, *filled*, and *filled with*. He occasionally connects those phrases with healings, signs, and wonders, but that theme is secondary. Such phenomena serve to validate the truth of an individual's witness. The primary emphasis in Acts is empowerment for witness. The witness speaks the truth with boldness, with power, and with effectiveness (which is demonstrated by church growth). The witness remains faithful in the face of opposition, even to the point of martyrdom. [...] Although Luke highlights the role of Spirit empowerment in the extension of the church, he also includes the role of Spirit empowerment in church life. Being *full of* the Spirit frequently appears as a qualification for those in leadership roles (see especially Peter, Stephen, Barnabas, and Paul). That fullness results in effective witness. The Spirit sets apart individuals for special tasks and sends them out on those tasks. The Spirit also provides wisdom and discernment for decision-making, administration and shepherding.[308]

Harvey's interpretation places great importance on faith as well as the power of the Spirit in the development of the church and leadership. It is of interest that Harvey only briefly mentions healings, signs, and wonders: he deems these *pneuma* activities to be secondary.[309] By sidelining the themes of healings, signs, and wonders, he neglects to consider uses of *pneuma* in their historical context. By disregarding these aspects of *pneuma,* Harvey relieves himself from the task of considering non-Christian or pluralistic Christian *pneuma* activities that involve healings, signs and wonders.

Though Harvey relies on *Acts* to establish a Spirit paradigm, he argues that "Paul is the undisputed New Testament theologian of the Holy Spirit, mentioning the Spirit 102 times in his

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[307] Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit*, 124.
[308] Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit*, 138–39.
[309] Levison also considers the types of *pneuma* activities as described in Acts. He claims that as per Acts, the spirit (or the holy spirit) "inspires speech, prophecy and tongues, even occasional miracles, perhaps even scattered visions, but *never* practical acts, such as waiting on tables" (243). Of interest, Levison focuses more on the use of *pneuma* by group members rather than focusing on the impact of Spirit on the success of the church.

letters. [...] Eighty-eight of Paul's references to the Holy Spirit occur in Romans, 1 and 2

Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians."[310] Unfortunately, the majority of Harvey's qualitative

research attempts to connect his interpretations of the Spirit in *Acts* with the Spirit as described in

Paul's letters.[311] Despite a veiled theological bias,[312] Harvey's research suggests that access to

the Spirit grants individuals both influence and status within their religious group.[313] While my

redescription project will not consider leadership opportunities originating from a theological

understanding of the Holy Spirit, the recognition of a relationship between *pneuma* and power

will be considered in light of ritualizations and social experimentation.

Zoning in on the Problem

This brief examination of one traditional approach provides a background from which we can

consider problems with contemporary Spirit research. In order to determine how *pneuma*

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[310] Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit*, 143–44. To be sure, Harvey is not the only scholar who argues that Paul's letters show a great interest with spirit. Levison argues that Paul, above all other early Christian authors is the most "enamored" with the spirit (253). Paul himself offers advice on spiritual gifts and urges the Corinthians to pursue the gift of prophecy because it is comprehensible, edifying for the church, rather than glossolalia, which is not (1 Corinthians 14). He recognizes that prophesies may be false and, consequently, instructs the Thessalonians not to quench the spirit, by which he means that the community should neither despise prophecy nor accept it uncritically, without discernment (1 Thess 5:19–21)" (Levison, 233). Because my research project engages Pauline groups as test-cases to consider the circumstances under which women could obtain leadership roles and positions of influence, Harvey's exegesis of Spirit in the Pauline epistles is also of interest. I suggest that by determining how and the frequency that *pneuma* or access to *pneuma* is employed in the Pauline Epistles, we can begin to consider whether *pneuma*-related rituals promoted social experimentation or shifted social paradigms. For the purposes of my project, Harvey's theological interpretation of the Pauline letters as illuminating an *a priori* Spirit does not help one to uncover actual uses of *pneuma* by early Jesus groups. However, his quantitative study of the terminology and the prominence he attributes to the frequent use of the category in these texts is not insignificant.

[311] "Paul uses no characteristic phraseology for Holy Spirit empowerment. Instead, he describes the work of the spirit in a variety of ways and as permeating every aspect of Christian living. He includes the Spirit's role of empowering effective witness and fostering church life (as in Acts). The Spirit teaches the words necessary to witness to the work of the cross. The Spirit distributes spiritual gifts and makes those gifts effective. The Spirit promotes the overall good and corporate unity of the body" (Harvey, *Anointed with the Spirit*, 167–68).

[312] Specifically, Harvey's attempt to convince his audience of the Holy Spirit's nature and power.

[313] Elaine M. Wainwright considers the relationship between power and God. "Religious power in the Lukan world has its source in God and is therefore considered Holy," (*Women Healing/Healing Women: The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity* [Oakville: Equinox, 2006], 161. Wainwright thus connects leadership and influence with an outside power.

influenced early Jesus groups, it is necessary to consider the historical validity of traditional Spirit paradigms. We need to evaluate the assumption that New Testament literature references to *pneuma* solely refer to a unique Christian Holy Spirit that propelled the development of the Christian Church and its teachings.

Like other previously considered paradigms, we must remember that it is imprudent to take modern theological assumptions about *pneuma* as historical.[314] Redescription requires looking beyond instructions, exploring circumstantial evidence and considering contemporary uses of *pneuma* beliefs and practices. This endeavour challenges us to consider whether "the Spirit" is a valid translation for the term *pneuma*. My goal is not to explain away religion but to "try to isolate the particular social and other conditions which encourage the development of an ecstatic emphasis in religion."[315] We are thus concerned with the manners in which early Jesus groups interpreted *pneuma* and ecstatic practices as well as the impact of such practices on the development of these groups.

Is *pneuma* only the Holy Spirit?

As one begins to explore contemporary research that engages *pneuma*, it becomes evident that the term is not defined or treated consistently. While many scholars like Harvey translate the term narrowly as a single and all-powerful Spirit, other scholars define the term more widely and see the possibility of multiple spirits or types of spirits.[316] Of significance, scholars who research

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[314] As is becoming evident in this project, major problems lie in research that; 1) uses modern interests to re-write the past and; 2) uses ancient literature at a superficial level to describe the activities of a group: instructions found in early Christian literature are prescriptive and reflect the position or intentions of the author.

[315] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion,* 24. "Jesus research, and New Testament research generally, dismisses claims to supernatural events per se, but tends not to dismiss claims to belief in supernatural events. The field quite correctly acknowledges that beliefs have powerful historical consequences" (Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer : Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* [New York: Continuum, 1995], 17).

[316] For example, in her consideration of healing women in early Christianity, Wainwright examines women who are healed from evil spirits and infirmities. And while her focus is certainly the genderization of healing, her

the effects of numerous spirits and demons effectively demonstrate that we should not consider

pneuma as one single Holy Spirit.[317] Pushing this line of argumentation further, we may argue

that because *pneuma* practices or performances were not inspired or propelled by one Spirit but

by numerous spirits, we may also surmise that this form of ritualization was not uniquely

Christian but readily available to a variety of people. In fact, while "the language of filling with

the spirit would become the most popular way of expressing the spirit's presence for first-century

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research contains some points that are relevant for the present study. She claims that "[o]ne of the key of the world constructed by the Lukan narrative is the active presence of spirits of various kinds and demons. The word [*pneuma*] or spirit, whether good or evil/unclean, occurs thirty-six times in this gospel compared with nineteen in Matthew, twenty-three in Mark and twenty-four in John" (Wainwright, *Women Healing*, 160. The focus on the Lukan narratives was also seen in the Harvey test-case. In her study, Wainwright also argues that the term *daimonion* occurs more frequently in the Lukan literature). Rather than a single Holy Spirit, Wainwright considers plural forms and types of *pneuma* (and *daimonion*) in New Testament literature.

[317] Fred Dickason's treatise on cures for demon possession does not provide a great deal of (or any) relevant information for a historical study. His book clearly follows a theological model that promotes Christian faith and belief in one Holy Spirit. And while Dickason's book did not convince me that church leaders (ancient or modern) can cure individuals of demon possession, his research does make it clear that individuals (past and present) believed in many types of spirits. Dickason states that "[m]ore than one hundred references to demons sprinkle the New Testament. Four Greek terms definitely refer to demons. *Daimon* is used once in the critical editions of the New Testament (Matt. 8:31). *Daimonion* occurs 63 times, and *pneumata* (spirits) 43 times. The general term for angels, *angelos*, describes demons in several contexts (Matt 25:41; Rev 12:7, 9)" (C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and The Christian* [Chicago: Crossway Books, 1992], 22). Though the intention of his work is clearly to demonstrate that only God will save individuals from all things evil, his test-cases and exegesis suggest that the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit with power or the ability to inspire or enter people. "Demonization is always presented as a spirit inhabiting a human. This is evidenced by the expressions such as 'for the demons had entered him' (*eiselthen...eis auton*). Here the spirit who is external to the man is seen as invading his body, most likely the control centers of the brain that affect his mind, behaviour, and physical strength" (Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 40). Dickason uses 1 Corinthians as a test-case to demonstrate that not all ecstatic experiences resulted from a relationship with the real God. He states, "The Corinthians were not only confused, but they were also naive and presumptuous. They supposed all miraculous tongues were of God. Paul reminded them that they should have been aware of demonically induced tongues, having observed them while in their former pagan life: 'You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to dumb idols, however you were led. [...] (1 Co. 12:2–3). [...] Notice the passive verbs describing their being led astray; these indicate control from demons who energized the idolatrous worship" (Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 126). "Demons can produce deceptive miracles. Like Satan they may interfere with the laws of nature to produce 'all power and signs and false wonders' (2 Thess. 2:9)" (Dickason, *Demon Possession*, 26). He further argues that evil spirits distract individuals from the real God. While this theological claim is not helpful for a redescription of early Jesus groups, his exegesis reveals that belief in a variety of spirits was possible. For example, whether or not Dickason or Paul believed that the Corinthians were led astray by evil spirits is not really important for my project. "In opposing God, wicked spirits promote false world religions and a maze of cults of Christendom. Whether it be in animistic religions where superstition, magic, and the worship of spirits bring men into bondage, or whether it be in attractive philosophical systems seemingly promoting good, the dynamic is the same- demons distracting from the only true and living God and from His unique Son, the only Saviour for the whole world" (Dickason, 28).

Christians," [318] evidence suggests that *pneuma* practices were widespread or universal during the time period. "It spans a wider array of cultures, including Israelite, Greco-Roman, early Jewish, and early Christian literature."[319] As such, neither the term *pneuma* nor the paradigms associated with this category are unique or *a priori* to Jesus groups.

Following a redescription methodology, Jack Lightstone considers divine beings. While his examination of magicians and holy men does not directly fall into *pneuma* research, I suggest that his interpretations and conclusions are transferrable. Lightstone's comparison of magicians and holy men provide us with a paradigm with which we can consider individuals who experience different types of *pneuma* (the perceived good and evil). Lightstone argues that "[w]hat distinguishes the magician from the (true) Holy Man seems to be an issue of authority."[320] While both groups of individuals have influence, the differences between the magicians and the holy men lie in their perceived leadership and intimacy with the divine. According to Lightstone, magicians, like their counterparts, enjoy power and access to the divine realm. "The 'working charms' portray the virtuoso as an intimate of the divine realm. His prowess in ascending to heaven, there to view or hear divine secrets, his appeal to have divine beings as constant companions—these concerns appear with marked consistency among the 'magical' materials. So to seek 'mystical' experiences grounds the authority of the theurgist and provides the measure of the extent of that authority."[321] While the holy man was also believed to have access to the divine realm, it was understood that he/she also had a special relationship with beings in this realm. "Intimacy with divine beings remains integral to claiming the status of Holy Man or Divine Man. While the latter and the 'magician' may (at times) produce the same

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[318] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, xxv.
[319] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, xxv.
[320] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 30.
[321] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 31.

theurgic results, that intimacy sets them apart and guarantees the Holy Man unqualified success, particularly against demons (the partners of the magician)."[322]

Because of a professed hierarchy, not all magicians and Holy Men enjoyed equal status.[323] Their attributed individual statuses were determined by the types of divine beings that they were believed to employ. By identifying some practitioners as magicians rather than Holy Men, authors or leaders attempted to safeguard an authority and restrict individuals from blurring boundaries.[324] "[W]hat my Holy Man does is the power of heaven: what yours effects is mere magic, or illusion and trickery."[325] The typology (the goodness or badness) of the divine beings that magicians or holy men could call upon varied between groups and individuals: one person's Holy Man was another person's magician.

I suggest that Lightstone's comparison of magician and holy man enlightens the *pneuma* debate. First, his research astutely demonstrates that there were numerous and various spirits that individuals sought out in antiquity. Individuals in Greco-Roman antiquity believed that access to a variety of divine powers or spirits was available. Second, the prestige that spirits received depended upon the group or individual evaluating them: not all individuals granted the same status to a particular spirit. Third, power, influence and leadership could be determined by one's ability to access certain spirits or divine beings.

When is the Power Available?

Scholars who engage with a traditional approach to *pneuma* do not necessarily agree when access to spirit (or The Spirit) was possible. While some scholars suggest that access was limited

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[322] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 31.
[323] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 32.
[324] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 39.
[325] Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred*, 104.

to the early church or to specific types of individuals, others argue that access continues into

modern communities and is not limited to a type of person.[326]

Engaging with a traditional *pneuma* approach, Stanley M. Burgess describes people of

the Spirit as "individuals and groups who evidenced [...c]harismatic-like spiritual gifting,

worship, and experience."[327] He further argues that individuals who have access to the Spirit are

not described in early Christian literature in a cookie cutter fashion. "Christian peoples of the

Spirit also have differed on biblical gift lists. Virtually all individuals and groups represented [...]

have considered themselves to be Spirit 'gifted.' By this they meant that God had given to them

special qualities or abilities not given to the rest of the church. They claimed to be spiritually

unique or chosen to live the Christian life more perfectly [...]."[328] Succinctly, Spirit skills are not

unique: different individuals are believed to have different gifts or different types of access to the

Spirit during different periods of time. He argues that the opportunity to access to Spirit is

always available: there is no designated time or type of individual.

To be sure, this project will not attempt to determine whether individuals were gifted by

the Spirit. Such a project would only deal with theology rather than historical research seeking to

redescribe early Jesus groups. Rather, I suggest that we should consider the significance of

claims that access to *pneuma* continued for centuries (and some even argue millennium) after the

end of the first century.[329] Levison argues that the concern with prophesies and prophetic

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[326] Huizing and Bassett alongside Georges Combet and Laureat Fabre have edited a two part book titled *Experience of the Spirit/Healing and the Spirit* which included several articles about how individuals, of both past and present societies, perceived the Spirit and its involvement in their Christian lives: *Experience of the Spirit* (ed. Peter Huizing and William Bassett; New York: A Crossroad Book), 1976 and *Healing and the Spirit* (ed. Georges Combet and Laureat Fabre; New York: A Crossroad Book, 1976). Every single article in this collection is written from a Christian theological standpoint and considers all references to *pneuma* as references to the Holy Spirit.
[327] Stanley M. Burgess, *Christian Peoples of the Spirit* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 1.
[328] Burgess, *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 2.
[329] There is an assumption made by some scholars that early Christianity saw much glossolalia while the period after 250 C.E. saw little speaking in tongues (Christine F. Cooper-Rompato, *The Gift of Tongues: Women's*

activities in the Pauline literature continues in later texts. For example, in 1 Timothy, the Pastor

discusses the nature of Timothy's call to a position of leadership as well as the gift which he has

been bestowed. Furthermore, not only were prophesies made about Timothy (1 Tim 18), but he is

informed that he should not neglect his gift (1 Tim 4:14).[330] The concern with false prophets and

the use of *pneuma* by pretenders can also be found in the Gospels of Matthew (Matt 7:21–23)

and John (1 John 4) as well as 2 Peter (2 Pet 2:1).[331] Citing numerous early Christian texts and

authors (including the *Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, The Odes of Solomon,* Justin Martyr,

Irenaeus, Hippolytus of Roman and Tertullian of Carthage), Burgess aptly demonstrates that

research supporting the argument that spiritual gifting ended in the first century is historically

inaccurate.[332] Burgess' consideration of ancient authors indicates that some leaders

"underst[ood] prophetic ministry to be normative, together with gifts of healing and even raising

the dead. [...T]he early church is shaped by struggles between prophetic forces and those of

institutional order."[333] His research demonstrates that while extraordinary, these groups did not

believe that access to the Spirit was out of the ordinary.

A Few Brief Conclusions about the Traditional approach to *pneuma*

This brief examination of traditional approaches to *pneuma* has revealed several problems. We

have evidence that 1) an approach that translates *pneuma* (as understood in antiquity) as solely

the Holy Spirit is historically inaccurate and 2) an approach that limits prophesy and other

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Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages [Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010], 10).
Rompato also argues that these practices are more prominent in the Middle Ages than previously assumed
    [330] A consideration of *pneuma* activities and the relationships between these practices and the
status accorded to women in the Pastoral Epistles will be considered in greater detail in a later chapter.
    [331] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 233.
    [332] Burgess, *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 4–5.
    [333] Burgess, *Christian Peoples of the Spirit*, 4–5. Burgess provides the Montanist groups as
evidence that prophetic groups continued to exist and flourished. These Montanist groups will be examined
in detail later as test-cases when I consider leadership opportunities available to women in early Jesus
groups.

pneuma-related activities to the first century is unfounded. These issues challenge us to engage a redescription approach that considers the use of *pneuma* in its contemporary historical context.

De-Spiritualizing *Pneuma*

In his article, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma: Modernity, Religion, and Anachronism in the Study of Paul," Robertson argues that the word *pneuma* is best left untranslated.[334] He argues that "this ancient *pneuma*-supported understanding of the cosmos, the gods, and thus religion is substantially different from the typical, modern view of religion in the West."[335] His theory is supported with my previous considerations of the traditional approaches to *pneuma*. Not unlike the problem of traditional approaches to apocalypticism, Robertson determines that *pneuma* reveals a tension between historical approaches and theological scholarship.[336] He states that "the modern concept of spirituality itself is related to the Greek word *pneuma*, which is almost universally translated as 'spirit' or the even more inaccurate 'Spirit', whose capitalization lends the concept normative theological and ontological weight derived from modern, Western conceptions influenced heavily by Protestant-Lutheran thought."[337] Robertson not only seeks to rectify the use of *pneuma* as a misnomer but also provides a solution for this problem.

> Leaving words untranslated that are conceptually important to religious texts and practices facilitates the keeping of historical context. By leaving such words untranslated, my co-authors and I argue, we can avoid modern valences and associations with these words. This is especially true with *pneuma*, for, as suggested [...], a 'spirit' in the modern West is something that is wholly apart from the physical, material realm and what is spiritual lies beyond this world entirely.[338]

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[334] Paul Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma: Modernity, Religion, and Anachronism in the Study of Paul," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (forthcoming).
[335] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."
[336] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."
[337] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma." These translations are evidenced in the previous sections that considered traditional approaches to *pneuma*.
[338] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."

Robertson successfully argues that by leaving *pneuma* untranslated, we can avoid assumptions and theological exegesis. Or more succinctly, by leaving the term untranslated, we recognize that ancient understandings of *pneuma* differ from modern western interpretations and fourth-century exegesis. Robertson's research also demonstrates that ancient authors did not hold consistent views of *pneuma*. He argues that it is important to give primacy to the varieties of ancient sources rather than commentaries that promote a single Spirit view.[339]

Robertson uses an ancient Mediterranean medical physiological lens to demonstrate that *pneuma* discussions do not necessarily deal with the emotive (as assumed in modern discourse). He argues that in order to properly understand *pneuma*, we must explore its relationship with the body. Specifically, Robertson argues that we must understand how the ancients (including Paul) understood *pneuma* to interact with the heart (*kardia*).[340] Because this interaction entails a bodily component, he suggests that access to *pneuma* entails a physical transformation that affects piety.[341] Levison also considers *pneuma* in terms of physical change. "Greek and Roman prophets, often female ones, would enter states of ecstasy when they would be filled with *pneuma*, whether that *pneuma* was construed as the breath of a god or a physical vapor that rose into the lungs of a prophet."[342] And while I am not convinced that individuals in early Jesus groups never considered the emotive when dealing with *pneuma*, Robertson makes a strong case for a return to the Greek term rather than a modern translation which does not incorporate the multitude of factors and components associated with the category *pneuma*.

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[339] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."
[340] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."
[341] Robertson, "De-Spiritualizing Pneuma."
[342] Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 121.

Spirit and the Body

Dale Martin's research in ancient understandings of the body challenges traditional approaches to the Spirit and locates *pneuma* in a historical context. In *The Corinthian Body*, Martin considers how early Christian discourses about *pneuma* and power were influenced by contemporary interests. Martin describes his project as follows,

> By locating pneuma on the terrain of medical and other upper-class discourses, I provide a context in which its roles in Paul's rhetoric may be perceived anew. I do not wish to argue that Paul's ideas *came from* Greek medical theories or the practices and language of magic or physiognomy. What I *will* argue, though, is that each of these discourses is driven by unspoken logics of corporeal constructions and is implicated in particular ideologies that construe the body in certain ways as a result of certain interests.[343]

Martin begins his research of the Corinthian body and *pneuma* with a consideration of how ideologies are formed. Significantly, Martin argues that an ideology is more than ideas or beliefs: "[I]deologies diffuse themselves throughout societies and classes even when they are not recognized."[344] He suggests that ideologies reveal more than what individuals think or believe (whether consciously or not). He further argues that this study reveals how language is connected to power relations and how one individual/group dominates or triumphs over another.[345] Of interest for this research project, Martin's approach illuminates how discourses about *pneuma* and the body reflect concerns about power. Martin's approach varies significantly from the previously examined traditional approaches because he maintains the focus of his research on the community rather than a faith in a Holy Spirit or Christian God.

Martin uses the term ideology to describe a system of symbols that upholds and promotes a social system. He employs this term to denote a social system where a power structure and a

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[343] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), xiii.
[344] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xiv.
[345] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xiv.

ruling group is supported and maintained.[346] Martin uses the conflicting descriptions and

reflections of the body in 1 Corinthians to evidence competition among groups in Corinth over

the perception of the body and the establishment of power structures.[347] The conflict in Corinth

reflects struggles over power, class, economics and the relationships. His research suggests that

socio-economic positions "promoted theological conflicts. These conflicts stemmed from

conflicts over ideology, differences in world view that correlate with different class positions."[348]

Therefore, all issues including the hierarchy of the church, ritualizations involving speaking in

tongues, access to *pneuma* as well as the veiling of praying and prophesying women, are directly

concerned with the relationships between groups of people and the struggle to affirm status.[349]

Bruce Winter also makes a connection between *pneuma* ritualizations and conflicts in Corinth.

According to Winter, 19.26% of the lines in 1 Corinthians deal with issues related to spiritual

gifts.[350] Winter suggests that we should consider what causes this interest in spiritual gifts. He

further determines that Paul's main concerns in Corinth are with divisions and conflicts in the

community.[351]

After establishing that *pneuma* does not refer to the Holy Spirit and is not uniquely

engaged or employed by Christians, Martin proceeds to consider the relationship between

pneuma and body. He suggests that the ancients believed that *pneuma* surrounded them and "was

the life-giving material for the members of the body, nourishing the body through a complex

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[346] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xv.
[347] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xv.
[348] Martin, xvii. Martin clearly outlines how hierarchy or power discourses influenced ancient worldviews and vice-versa. "[F]orms of the social exercise of power recur in dominant symbol systems- and vice versa. Particular ways of exercising social power are echoed (and perpetuate themselves) in particular linguistic matrices" (Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 146).
[349] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xvi–xviii.
[350] Bruce, Winter, "The 'Underlays' of Conflict and Compromise in 1 Corinthians" in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflicy* (ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott; Boston: Brill, 2003), 140.
[351] Winter, "The 'Underlays' of Conflict," 142. Winter determines that 44.83% of the lines in 1 Corinthians deal with conflict (Winter, "The 'Underlays' of Conflict," 148).

interaction of elements. [...] The body is a refinery for processing, among other things, pneuma."[352] While not deeming the relationship reciprocal, Martin determines that people in antiquity believed that *pneuma* and the body interacted. I suggest that a discussion of the body and the conflicts associated with the body in Corinth will provide insight into the discussion of *pneuma* and provide insight into how individuals in antiquity attempted to engage spirits.

As has been suggested, Martin's research demonstrates that individuals or bodies were not equal in antiquity: a social hierarchy was ever present.

> [A]ll the various aspects of the self were hierarchically arranged. A firm social hierarchy existed within the body of the ancient person, favoring male over female, strength over weakness, superior over inferior. Each individual body, moreover, could be placed confidently at some location in the physiological hierarchy of nature. In other words, each body held its hierarchy within itself, and every body occupied its proper place in the hierarchy of society and nature. Health was threatened when that hierarchy was disrupted.[353]

According to Martin, these beliefs were ingrained in ancient discourses. Successful attempts to modify beliefs or practices generally conformed to acceptable forms of hierarchy. Accordingly, Martin argues that Paul would have had to use socially accepted understandings of the body and hierarchy to convince the Corinthians that his theology and ethics were appropriate and valid for their group.[354]

Social tools, like homonoia speeches (concepts of unity, union and order) were instated to maintain the idealized hierarchy. "The ideological purpose of homonoia speeches was to mitigate conflict by reaffirming and solidifying the hierarchy of society."[355] Martin argues that it was believed that inequalities or differences in status and power were necessary for the survival of the group. "In fact, since opposites are necessary for each other's existence, it would appear that

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[352] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 21–22.
[353] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 34.
[354] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 37.
[355] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 40.

the weak and poor are necessary to balance the strong and rich—in this city as well as the cosmos. Homonoia has as its aim not equality or strength for all members but the preservation of the 'natural' relation of strength to weakness."[356] The primary interests of this ideology included the maintenance of hierarchy not the abolition of social status. Thus, inequalities were expected, promoted and accepted. Martin states, "[i]ndeed, there existed in the Greco-Roman world a conservative ideology, which may be called benevolent patriarchalism, that maintained social hierarchy by urging the lower class to submit to those in authority and the higher class to rule benevolently and gently, accommodating its own demands in order to protect the interests of those lower down the social scale."[357] In simple terms, individuals belonging to the lower class were expected to submit and upper class people were expected to be nice.

Martin argues that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians exhibits concerns about the maintenance of balance or homonoia in the group. Paul's continuing stresses over hierarchy in Corinth "demonstrates that the problem of disunity at Corinth derives from issues related to status."[358] Though Paul's language may suggest that the conflict in Corinth resulted strictly from disparities between individuals of higher and lower status, Martin suggests that the circumstances behind his rhetoric may be more complicated.[359]

While Paul appears to maintain contemporary *homonoia* ideologies, his stance on hierarchy seems to draws its divide between insiders and outsiders of the Corinthian Jesus group. His approach to status and power within the group is more complicated. Martin argues that,

> He consistently demands that the 'haves' modify their behaviour to mitigate status differences in their observance of the common meals. Since this advice flew in the face of accepted practice and common sense of the upper-class ideology and

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[356] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 41.
[357] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 42.
[358] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 56.
[359] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 58. Paul considers some of the Corinthians to be "puffed up" (Martin, 65).

required that the higher-status Corinthians adjust both their expectations and their behaviour to accommodate the needs of those of lower status. And that in itself, in Greco-Roman culture, would have meant a reversal of normal status expectations.[360]

By restricting the upper class Corinthians from eating idol meat at the Lord's Supper (as many did at well to-do Greco-Roman dinner parties), Paul reversed social expectations and sided with the "weaker" members of the group. By attempting to eliminate divisions in meal practices, Paul also attempted to disrupt established hierarchies.

Speaking in Tongues: Access to *pneuma*

Though Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 12 appear to place an equal importance on all skills, his presentation of *glossolalia*, the behaviour or attitudes of the group towards this activity and the ability of all members to access *pneuma* reveal that speaking in tongues was understood to be a highly valued skill by the Corinthians. As a project in theory engaging in redescription, my research recognizes that Paul's instructions to the Corinthians regarding unity (regardless of their inconsistencies) do not necessarily reflect the hierarchy ideologies that were ideally upheld during antiquity. To redescribe this Jesus group, we need to consider the incidental evidence and determine what Paul attempted to correct. "[S]ince Paul's ultimate goal in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is to lower the assessment of glossolalia among the Corinthians and to argue that it is less valuable for the assembly than is prophecy, it would appear that the Corinthians themselves accorded high status to speakers in tongues."[361] Succinctly, the Corinthians may have valued glossolalia more than Paul.

When considering the value of *pneuma* gifts, Martin states that "[t]he disruptive hierarchy of the body of Christ, according to Paul, is nowhere more evident than in his

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[360] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 75.
[361] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 96.

discussion of speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12-14). [...S]peaking in tongues has ruptured the

Corinthian church precisely because glossolalia carries status implications. [...Paul responds to]

divisiveness owing to different valuations being assigned to different gifts, with tongues as the

implied higher-status gift."[362] The Corinthian group faced divisions because a higher status was

given to those who performed the coveted *pneuma* ritualizations. By instructing that speaking in

tongues results from divine discourse, Paul suggests that *glossolalia* is a high-status activity of

significance.[363] According to Paul, the high-status that has been attributed to *this ritualization* is

now only available to Jesus followers.

> Christians, however, possess esoteric knowledge communicated by the stuff of
> divine rationality, pneuma. Just as pneuma is the highest element in the human
> body, the element of human thought and the essence of life itself (2:11), so the
> divine pneuma is the substance of the communication of divine wisdom (2:10-11).
> The pneuma of 'this world'- which, according to physicians and physicists,
> enabled perception and thought [...] is only a weak and misleading [...] false copy
> of the pneuma shared by God and Christians. The latter is the pneuma with which
> Paul deals and which is the source of true wisdom [...]. Other human beings
> *cannot* [...] be receptors of the divine pneuma because they are not pneumatically
> constituted persons; rather, they are *psychikoi*—that is, possessors of mere
> animalistic life, not pneumatic life. By now, Paul has turned the tables by
> introducing a completely different status mechanism and reserving the high-status
> indicator, the possession of pneumatic—hence divine— knowledge, for Christians
> only.[364]

Martin's examination of Corinthian *pneuma* suggests that for Paul real *pneuma* could only be

held by individuals who belonged to a Jesus group. And while Paul argues that only Jesus

followers can access wisdom from the divine, incidental evidence indicates that both members

and non-members participated in *pneuma* ritualizations. As these ritualizations were not unique

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[362] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 87.
[363] 1 Cor 14:2; Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 87–88.
[364] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 63.

to Pauline Corinthian, a distinction was made between *pneuma* practices for insiders and outsiders.[365]

While traditional Spirit scholars have argued for a unique Christian practice, evidence suggests that these conclusions do not have a historical basis. "Historians of religion have pointed to several accounts of unusual speech in Greco-Roman society as parallels to early Christian glossolalia [...]. [W]e do find several references in Greco-Roman literature to speech acts that look very much like the Corinthians speaking in tongues."[366] Drawing mainly from Dio Chrysostom, Martin argues that people outside of Jewish and Christian groups also believed that deities or superior non-human beings spoke to individuals in non-human languages.[367] He further argues that "all these references to angelic language of esoteric speech portray it as unequivocally high-status behaviour, often connected with leadership roles."[368] Though scholars have tended to associate *glossolalia* with activities of lower-status groups, Martin successfully demonstrates that esoteric speech was a high status indicator.[369] Martin further claims that Paul "speaks of the pneuma as the element that comes from God and enlivens the church. It extends throughout the church, giving life to it and functioning as the stuff of divine epistemology. [...Pneuma is an essence that moves] in and out of human bodies."[370] It was believed that those who participated in such activities represented spiritual perfection and partook in the activities of a higher realm. As such, they were often granted authority in the group. "To share [the] language

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[365] This is also evidenced by the previous examination of numerous types of spirit as well as Lightstone's consideration of magician and holy man.

[366] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 88. This is supported by Lightstone's research and a general belief in good and bad spirits in antiquity.

[367] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 89–90.

[368] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 90. Martin uses Lucian's expose of Alexander of Abonoteichus (2nd century C.E.), Irenaeus, Tertullian, Dio Chrysostom and Iamblicus for evidence of prophecy and speaking in tongues as a high-status activity (90–91).

[369] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 88.

[370] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 172.

is to share the status that goes with it."[371] Wainwright also considers the relationship of power

with access to the divine realm. When examining women who heal and are healed in the Gospel

of Luke, she argues that religious power is considered to be holy because it was believed that

such authority came from God.[372]

In his examination of the hierarchy of *pneuma* and *nous*, Martin argues that spirit and

mind should not be understood as dichotomously irrational and rational. While some research

suggests that *pneuma* ritualizations of *glossolalia* and prophecy are irrational and represent a

lack control, redescriptions should acknowledge that these are modern interpretations of ancient

circumstances. As understood by authors in antiquity, *pneuma* ritualizations were not irrational:

"the pneumatic realm of discourse *is* a language in itself; it has its own form of rationality hidden

from the 'common.' The language of angels is still a language, not an arbitrary jumble of

irrational jabbering."[373] Individuals living in antiquity believed that the language of *glossolalia*

was important and immortal because *pneuma* was not human but divine.

Martin's research suggests that not all Corinthians that spoke in tongues were individuals

of high social status. However, "it does suggest that they *may* have been, given that people in

Greco-Roman society regularly associated esoteric speech with other high-status indicators."[374] I

support Martin's proposition that *pneuma* ritualizations, including prophesying and *glossolalia*,

were high-status indicators that would have been associated with high-status individuals. I also

support his claim that these activities were not limited to individuals of high-status. Similar to the

use of banqueting as a safe environment to engage in social experimentation, I propose that

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[371] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 91.
[372] Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women: The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity*, 161.
[373] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 96–100.
[374] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 91.

pneuma ritualizations also provided individuals, regardless of their religious and group

affiliations, with such opportunities.

Martin suggests that Paul uses rhetoric to align himself with the "Strong" as a glossolalist

while at the same time giving up this *pneuma* ritualization out of respect for those who cannot

speak in tongues.[375] To be sure, Martin's examination reveals much about Paul's perception of

the body and his desire to raise the "Weak" at the expense of the "Strong." However, I suggest

that Paul's urge to adjust the Corinthian ritualizations is more revealing. Specifically, Paul's

instruction reveals a division in the group: not all individuals had the same abilities to participate

in *pneuma* ritualizations. Martin's examination of contemporary understandings of prophetic and

esoteric ritualizations reveals that participants of *pneuma* practices were highly valued. The high-

status ritualizations like *pneuma* access, prophesy and *glossolalia* provided participants with the

opportunity to gain a leadership position. While these performances were perceived as high-

status activities, they did not exclude "Weak" or low-status or individuals. According to Martin,

"weak" individuals had the opportunity to become high-status because of their prophetic or

glossolalia skills.[376] I suggest that conflicts would have become prominent when "Weak"

individuals began participating in "Strong" activities and assuming positions of authority.

Martin argues that Paul challenges the conservative hierarchy ideology and pollution

anxieties that are upheld by the "Strong."[377] However, he does not extend this judgement into the

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[375] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 103.
[376] Martin argues that "Paul sharply disagrees with one segment of the church and its acceptance of the conservative ideology of benevolent patriarchalism. To this point, perhaps, Paul has seemed more innovative, or even radical, than much modern popular opinion has taken him to be, and many readers may find that a comfort" (Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 135). And while Martin suggests that an examination of pollution and body is necessary before we consider whether Paul is liberal or an egalitarian, I suggest that for my research project the activities of Paul's communities is more important than Paul's worldviews. To be sure, Paul's instructions could have influenced the groups he instructed. However, the dichotomies and disunity as presented by Paul reveal that the Corinthians did not foresee a community that treated all members as equals.
[377] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 197.

venue of the male-female hierarchy.[378] While the topic of Paul's interpretation of gender roles is not uninteresting, a redescription project is interested in the evidence that demonstrates that women engaged in *pneuma* ritualizations and achieved positions of power.

Redescription: Rescuing the *pneuma*

While at first glance it may only appear fruitful to compare and redescribe communities of similar temporal locations, J. Z. Smith demonstrates that such assumptions are unwarranted. His research demonstrates that some more modern groups can provide insight into ritualizations of early Jesus groups. In recent anthropological research

> Papua New Guinea, along with Melanesia, has been the site of important discussions of a widespread 'new' religious pattern: a concomitant increase, within the same locale, in both native Christianities, especially Pentecostalisms [...], and nativistic movements (that is to say, the invention of new traditionalisms). One important point of intersection between these two 'new' religious forms has been healing, often spirit-healing. These matters are just beginning to find place in the agenda of scholars of religion.[379]

Though previously considered as an "important site for theorizing about religion in terms of data from indigenous cargo cults," Smith's exploration of the Atbalmin settlements (3000 individuals divided into groups of 30-40 people) reveals that much more can be learned from these groups.[380]

Demonstrating that a conversion to Christianity among the Atbalmin did not require an abandonment of their indigenous religion, Smith argues that they continuously negotiated their identities. Specifically, both the Christian and nativistic movements simultaneously influenced

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[378]Rather, Martin suggests that despite the fact that women were able to obtain greater roles and respect in Paul's groups that he reinforces the traditional gender hierarchies assumed in the Greco-Roman communities (Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 198–99).

[379] J. Z. Smith "Re: Corinthians," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 342.

[380] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 342.

the practices of the Atbalmin. Citing Bercovitch, Smith demonstrates that they are both Christian

and non-Christian at the same time.[381] Smith cites two major elements in New Guinea studies

that help us to redescribe the participation of the formation of early Jesus groups, in this case the

Corinthians: 1) a small group can absorb many changes over a brief period of time and 2) a small

homogeneous group can explore and experiment with "multiple modes of religion."[382] Smith

aptly demonstrates that practices and beliefs should not be considered permanent or unchanging.

"As a generalization, all of this makes more plausible the presumption of the coexistence of

multiple experiments by early 'Christian' communities as well as their localism. It alerts us to the

presence of sorts of changes not necessarily captured by the historical record."[383] Or more

simply, the Atbalmin community demonstrates that there is more going on than what is described

in ancient religious literature and propaganda.

Like the Atbalmin, Smith suggests that the Corinthians experienced displacement,

replacement and held a plurality of practices. Informed by studies of the West Papuan refugees

and their interest in ancestors and the land of the dead, he cautions scholars to avoid the

"dominant paradigm within the New Testament scholarship of Easter/Pentecost."[384] Rather, he

suggests that the Corinthian Jesus group regularly linked the dead with spirits and interacted with

these "beings." Like the Atbalmin, the resettled Corinthians were concerned about their

relationship with dead ancestors left behind in their homeland. Smith suggests that the terms

pneumata and *pneuma* in Corinth may refer to their honoured dead ancestors.[385] A "spirit myth"

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[381] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 343–46. The people in the Atbalmin community appear to have adopted Christianity within their own indigenous context (Smith, 2004, 345). E. Bercovitch, "The Alter of Sin: Social Multiplicity and Christian Conversion among a New Guinea People," in *Religion and Cultural Studies* (ed. S. Mizruchi; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 211–35.
[382] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 346–47.
[383] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 347.
[384] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 348.
[385] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 348–49. In his examination of the dead and their tombs in the Greco-Roman Judaic world, Lightstone notes that the deceased performed a mediating function between the heaven and earth. And

or a conglomerate of ideas including a type of "spirit myth" may have proved attractive to the

Corinthians because it made their dead ancestors more mobile: the honoured dead were no longer

left behind and continued to play active roles.[386] The ritual practice of baptising the dead in 1 Cor

15:29 may therefore be interpreted as experimentation surrounding *pneuma*.[387]

It is of interest that Smith also cites the promise of participation as motivating factors for

membership or attraction in both the Atbalmin and Corinthian groups.[388] As small groups that

valued networks, both the Atbalmin and the Corinthians would have foreseen opportunities in

"an enlarged Christian landscape."[389] Such opportunities would have encouraged social and

ritual experimentation as well as identity negotiations.

**What can we say about *pneuma?*

This chapter has outlined general paradigms of traditional approaches to *pneuma* and has

demonstrated that a conventional translation of *pneuma* is problematic because it supports

modern theological interpretations. I proceeded to consider the ground-breaking redescription

projects conducted by Robertson, Martin, and Smith that examine *pneuma* in its historical

context. Their research demonstrates 1) that *pneuma* should not be translated as a single Holy

Spirit because there are many different understandings and types of *pneuma* in antiquity; 2) that

by considering varieties of texts from different communities from different time periods, we

recognize that *glossolalia* ritualizations are not isolated practices; 3) that *pneuma* is best left

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while the Hebrew Scriptures establish boundaries regarding dealing with the dead, Lightstone demonstrates mediatory cults became popular in antiquity (41). Like J. Z. Smith, Lightstone argues that some of the dead were able to join the living Holy Men through ritual activities, or the commerce of the sacred (62).

[386] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 351. Engaging in a redescription project, Smith argues that a Christ myth would not have been attractive to the Corinthians because Jesus was not depicted as dead. "[T]hen this violates the fundamental presupposition that the ancestors and the dead remain dead, even though they are thoroughly interactive with their living descendants" (350).

[387] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 351.

[388] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 351.

[389] Smith, "Re: Corinthians," 351.

untranslated; 4) that numerous groups in antiquity practiced *pneuma* ritualizations; 5) that *pneuma* ritualizations like *glossolalia* and prophecy were practiced by men and women from all classes; 6) that *pneuma* discourses reflect concerns about hierarchy; and 7) that *pneuma* ritualizations encouraged social and ritual experimentation. Having considered the category *pneuma*, *pneuma* ritualizations and the opportunity for experimentation during these activities, we can proceed to discuss how these ritualizations impacted the participation of women in early Jesus groups.

6. ECSTATIC RELIGION

This research project has argued that many categories, terms and paradigms employed in the

research of religious activities in historical groups come with theological baggage. Of particular

importance to practices and ritualizations, I have considered how many modern interpretations of

pneuma and *pneuma* practices in early Jesus groups have been coloured by unsupported

presuppositions. As such, we should not be surprised when we encounter other ritualizations in

early Jesus groups that are fraught with academic misinterpretations. This chapter will continue

to explore ritualizations and the impact that these practices had on the participation of women

and their ability to influence members of their early Jesus groups.

Exorcism and Ecstatic Practices

Lewis effectively demonstrates that when dealing with exorcism and ecstatic practices,

modern movies and novels are not the only medias guilty of being interested in the outrageous

performances.

> Few of the more substantial works in this area of comparative religion pause to
> consider how the production of religious ecstasy might relate to the social
> circumstances of those who produce it; how enthusiasm might wax and wane in
> different social conditions; or what functions might flow from it in contrasting
> types of society. In a word, most of these writers have been less interested in
> ecstasy as a social fact than in ecstasy as an expression, if a sometimes
> questionable one, of personal piety.[390]

Lewis argues that even scholars who study these performances with the goal of better

understanding the religious activities of groups appear to be more interested in the theatrical

aspects of ecstasy and possession of these practices.[391] And while for some individuals it may be

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[390] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 18.
[391] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 22.

more interesting to consider the theatrical, this does very little to help us understand how individuals in Greco-Roman Mediterranean groups understood exorcism or possessions.

Possession and Jesus

Like other prominent Jesus scholars, Stevan Davies attempts to find the historical Jesus by interpreting and understanding early Christian literature. And while this project need not concern itself with the issue of a historical Jesus, Davies' recognition of the prominence of healing and possession practices is significant. Rather than attempting to answer the question "what did he teach," he starts "with the question 'how did he heal.'"[392] Succinctly, Davies' book argues "that the historical fact that Jesus was understood to be possessed by the spirit of God was caused by understandable historical factors and that his spirit-possession led, during his life, to understandable consequences in accord with reliable elements of the biographies we have."[393] Davies argues that spirit possession played a key role in the development and growth of Jesus groups. He argues that "Jesus as a spirit-possessed healer, is the best modality through which to understand the *historical* Jesus."[394] While the redescription project certainly raises issues with searching for a historical Jesus, Davies' approach is not all for naught. While I do not believe that Davies' project leads us to find a historical Jesus, I do believe that his research raises important points about the belief of possession and healing in antiquity.

The Greater Study of Possession and Ecstatic Practices

Davies considers the prominence of possession beliefs and practices in antiquity. "In the Palestinian culture of Jesus' time possession was considered possible, as is attested by spirit-

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[392] Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (New York: SCM Press, 1995), 15.
[393] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 18.
[394] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 21.

inspired prophets abroad in the land, and spirit-possessed oracles in neighbouring lands, and by the idea that there were numerous demon-possessed people. The modality of possession, then, was commonly accepted."[395] These practices were commonplace and individuals who could access *pneuma* and become possessed were acknowledged as having authority.

Though possession and ecstatic practices may appear to be individual activities, like other *pneuma* practices, these ritualizations can also be understood as group practices. "The practice of spirit-possession is essentially social in nature. Rarely do individuals enter a possession state in solitude for their own personal benefit. People who become possessed do so in the presence of others and communicate with others."[396] While the motivations for engaging in possession practices are certainly debatable, we will see that benefits bestowed upon individuals for this skill set are not insignificant.

In an attempt to demonstrate that common circumstances surrounding possessions can be established, Lewis examines ecstatic possessions from different time periods and geographical locations. Davies considers the prominence of possession and ecstatic practices in both ancient and modern communities. "Erika Bourguignon surveyed 488 cultures that anthropologists have examined in some detail, and concluded that in 90 percent of those cultures forms of religious trance and/or religious possession took place with some regularity."[397] As responsible scholars we must consider the impact of these ritualizations on the groups that value these practices.

Supporting previous examinations of *pneuma* and power, Lewis claims that "[t]ranscendental experiences of this kind, typically conceived of as states of 'possession', have given the mystic a unique claim to direct experiential knowledge of the divine and, where this is acknowledged by others, the authority to act as a privilege channel of communication between

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[395] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 59.
[396] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 35.
[397] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 28.

man and the supernatural."[398] Individuals who experienced possession, especially ancestral

possessions were often granted respect within their group.[399] Drawing on the work of

Oesterreich, Lewis suggests that the practices of possession and communicating with the dead

decline once groups no longer attribute power and status to belief in spirits.[400] Succinctly, when

groups do not provide power to *pneuma*, individuals tend to experience fewer possessions.

Lewis' research suggests that possessions and contact with the dead had a direct

correlation with the amount of power and authority an individual received from ritualizations.

Furthermore, while such practices or contact may originally be connected with a type of trauma,

his research also suggests that such interpretations are not limited to illness. "Possession may

initially appear as a form of illness or trauma. Yet ultimately it is regarded as the mark of divine

inspiration, the certain proof of a person's fitness for pursuing the religious vocation, and the

basis for the assumption of leading ritual roles and positions."[401] Davies suggests that any

possession experiences had the potential to change social dynamics and status relationships.[402]

Lewis considers the benefits or issues associated with possessions or ecstatic experiences.

He determines how individuals have used access to the divine as an opportunity or tool to access

authority. Furthermore, Lewis argues that individuals who have already achieved leadership

positions engage ecstatic experiences or possession when they seek to enhance or solidify their

authority within a group. "[R]eligious leaders turn to ecstasy when they seek to strengthen and

legitimize their authority."[403] His interpretation of possession or ecstasy as "prestigious

commodit[ies] which could readily be manipulated for mundane ends, opens the door to the sort

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[398] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 15.
[399] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 127.
[400] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 21; T.K. Oesterreich, *Possession, Daemoniacal, and Other, among Primitive Races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times* (Great Britain: Kessinger Publishing, 2003.
[401] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 119.
[402] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 38.
[403] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 29.

of sociological treatment which [his] book advocates."[404] His exploration of the engagement of possessions and ecstatic practices suggests that these rituals 1) "may serve as the basis of authority for a charismatic leader's authority" [...and]; 2) "can equally well be applied to authorize innovation and change."[405] Like the previous consideration of *pneuma*, Lewis' research determines that access to some form of the supernatural provided individuals with power and authority. He further argues that such influence grants individuals with the opportunity to empower social changes.

Possession and Social Experimentation

While not claiming that possession cults solely serve the purpose of social transgression, Lewis makes a convincing argument that the ritualizations provide practitioners with opportunities. Of importance to this research project, Lewis examines the importance of such practices for individuals belonging to lower social classes and the female gender. "For all their concern with disease and its treatment, [...] women's possession cults are also, I argue, thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex. They thus play a significant part in the sex-war in traditional societies and cultures where women lack more obvious and direct means for forwarding their aims."[406] However, Lewis' research also demonstrates that when researching possession cults of groups that engage in ecstasy we should not only limit our considerations to the female gender. Indirectly referencing common and popular modern misconceptions of hysterical women performing wild acts to receive attention, Lewis quickly nips such approaches and conclusions in the bud. "It would no doubt be satisfying to male vanity to interpret the

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[404] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 19.
[405] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 23. These arguments are also supported by the previous examination of Bell's ritualizations.
[406] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 26.

marked prominence of women in the possession of cults which we have just discussed as the reflection of an inherent, and biologically grounded female disposition to hysteria. Unfortunately, however, this conclusion is untenable because in practice these movements are not entirely restricted to women."[407] His research demonstrates that in the case of women's ecstatic religion practices and female possession cults that we are not simply dealing with hysterical or crazy women.

Lewis argues that groups which engage these ecstatic or possession practices also include men who experience discrimination.[408] He provides the example of tarantism to demonstrate that men in some groups turned to possession practices when they suffered from discrimination in a stratified society. According to Lewis, "tarantism had a particular appeal for men whose social circumstances were unusually oppressive or constricting."[409] These practices granted individuals, both men and women, whether rich or poor, the opportunity to gain a position of power, authority and respect.[410] "Since, as well as women more generally, these cults evidently also attract men of servile origin and of other oppressed categories, we should expect to find further examples in highly stratified, in egalitarian polities elsewhere."[411] Lewis extends his research to beyond gender into areas of social, political, and economic realms. He demonstrates how all individuals who participated and performed in possession cults and lived ecstatic experiences could gain social opportunities and engage in social experiments.

Similar to Taussig's consideration of banqueting practices, Lewis argues that ecstatic ritualizations provide the possessed participant with an effective means to challenge leaders.

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[407] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 90.
[408] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 27.
[409] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 90.
[410] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 90.
[411] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 96–97. Lewis provides the example of the Pokomo shamans in Tanzania. It is important to note that while such groups may prove to be especially attractive to individuals who feel disenfranchised with contemporary social paradigms, it was not uncommon for individuals of higher status to also hold faith in these rituals (Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 101).

"The possessed person exerts pressure on his superior without radically questioning his superiority. He ventilates his pent-up animosity without questioning the ultimate legitimacy of the status differences enshrined within the established hierarchical order."[412] Lewis further claims that "if enthusiasm is a retort to oppression and repression, what it seeks to proclaim is man's triumphant mastery of an intolerable environment."[413] However, as demonstrated by Lewis and the previous examination of banqueting and prophesy ritualizations, performances could lead to a temporary lessening of traditionally acceptable oppressions or dichotomies. To be sure, Lewis does not negate the possibility that some participants engaged in these practices with the whole-hearted belief that they were possessed by a type of spirit. However, his research makes us aware that other options need to be considered. "[D]ifferent participants are psychologically engaged in the possession rituals to different extents. For some individuals it means a great deal, for others very little. Some participants, while enjoying the religious aspects of the cult in a conventional way, have their sights firmly and even consciously and calculatingly set on the ancillary external benefits—the influencing of their superiors and that exaction of propitiatory gifts from them."[414]

While not directly challenging leaders who have already obtained status within the group, possessions or ecstatic ritualizations provide the opportunity for new individuals to obtain authority and power. "[P]ossession plays a significant part in the enhancement of status. [This] enables people who lack other means of protection and self-promotion to advance their interests and improve their lot by escaping, even if only temporarily, from the confining bonds of their allotted stations in society."[415] Lewis describes these movements as protests which do not detach

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[412] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 28.
[413] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 30.
[414] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 176.
[415] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 114.

the participants from society.[416] Davies also considers the social implications of possession

ritualizations.

> A person possessed has immediate claim to temporary group leadership, a state of affairs that causes no difficulty in established cults. In groups still in the process of hierarchical stratification, however, the elevated statuses accorded to spirit-possessed persons will usually lead to conflict between possessed persons and persons intent upon asserting personal or titular authority. Because possessed persons enjoy an upward alteration in social status during the period of their possession, more often people of relatively low social status, marginal people, people in condition of social oppression, choose to join possession-oriented groups.[417]

Davies suggests that spirit-possessed persons have the opportunity to gain social status and

influence in their respective groups. Furthermore, the opportunity to change their social status

encouraged individuals of lower social statuses to join groups that valued ritualization practices.

Lewis supports the argument for social enhancement with an examination of groups where

possession rituals and ecstatic practices changed the allotted status of some individuals.

According to Lewis, "[a]mongst the Eskimo there are many [...] accounts of the rise to

fame and fortune of shamans whose origins were full of misery and privation."[418] He suggests

that a consideration of this group reveals that spirits appear or are believed to appear to "show a

special predilection for the weak and oppressed."[419] In the case of the Eskimo, individuals who

belong to lower status rungs are not only accepted as having the opportunity to access "divine

beings," but are sought out by other members of their groups. Lewis' research suggests that some

individuals may have attempted to validate ecstatic experiences in order to escape difficult social

conditions.

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[416] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 114.
[417] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 39.
[418] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 61.
[419] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 64.

Lewis also examines several African groups to demonstrate that married women often claim spirit possession when oppressed by social circumstances. "The prime targets for the unwelcome attentions of these malign spirits are women, and particularly married women."[420] Of particular importance, Lewis suggests that not all spirit possessions resulted from outside influences. He suggests that in some cases the inspiration for these possessions came from within. "Where they are given little domestic security and are otherwise ill-protected from the pressures and exactions of men, women may thus resort to spirit possession as a means both of airing their grievances obliquely, and of gaining some satisfaction."[421] These claims of ecstatic ritualizations provided women with an opportunity to "pursue their interests and demands in a context of male dominance."[422] Lewis' case studies suggest that some women in Africa, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and China as well as women in the Victorian period who found themselves in situations "of domestic stress and conflict" used this tactical approach.[423] They "successfully manoeuvre their husbands and menfolk."[424] Succinctly, Lewis argues that these women used ecstatic ritualizations and possessions as methods to obtain goals.

Davies also argues that individuals who are considered lower status are more likely to practice certain types of ecstatic ritualizations. "[I]nstances of demon-possession are found to occur most commonly among individuals who are the most subordinate members within family structures: wives and children."[425] Davies cites I. M. Lewis for support. "[W]omen and other depressed categories exert mystical pressures on their superiors in circumstances of deprivation and frustration when few other sanctions are available to them."[426] Lewis also states that

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[420] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 67.
[421] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 68.
[422] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 71.
[423] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 76.
[424] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 77.
[425] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 81.
[426] I. M. Lewis. *Religion in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 39.

> [t]he happily married wife who is content with her lot is much less likely to resort to possession that her harassed sister whose married life is fraught with difficulty. [...] The keenest recruits and the most committed enthusiasts are women who, for one reason or another, do not make a success of their marital roles, react against new domestic confinement or who, having fulfilled these roles, seek a new career in which they can give free rein to the desire to manage and dominate others.[427]

Lewis argues that women who are happy with their social status and circumstances are less likely to engage in practices that engage social experimentation.

It has been suggested by some scholars that women who participate(d) in ritualizations of possession are attempting to return to a former type of paradise. Lewis takes a different approach to these ritualizations. He argues that such performances are attempts to move toward independence and power. "Frequently it seems that social changes which have swept their men forward have left them struggling behind, desperately seeking to catch up."[428] Evidence suggests that ecstatic ritualizations provided women with opportunities. Because the possessing spirits are given authority, the possessed individuals are also given powers of influence. The power attributed to the spirits grants the possessed individual with an opportunity to "manipulate their superiors [...] within certain limits."[429] As such, possession has and can be used as a tool by disillusioned peoples to put pressure upon the upper class members of society.[430] "Peripheral possession expresses insubordination, but usually not to the point where it is desired to immediately rupture the relationship concerned or to subvert it completely. Rather it ventilates aggression and frustration largely within an uneasy acceptance of the established order of things."[431] Lewis describes this move as an attempt by the "underdog" to get attention, engage in

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[427] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 171.
[428] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 87.
[429] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 104.
[430] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 107.
[431] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 108.

self-fulfilling prophesies and receive the perceived endowment of power.[432] Davies also

considers membership in possession groups and possession activities as strategies to better one's

social position. "Spirit-possession is often a way that certain individuals work around restrictions

imposed by their economic, sexual, or social status, and so it will most often be found in

societies where those restrictions are rather clearly defined."[433] Though Davies claims that these

experiences were more prominent in groups with clearly delineated social structures, evidence

also suggests that these practices were also prominent in developing groups and groups that

engaged in social experimentation.

Davies also considers the possibility that uninitiated individuals may have come to

participate in possession practices when they recognized the benefits associated with these

ritualizations. "When spirit-possession is considered possible and desirable, when it is modeled

by others (the preacher or members of the audience) who attest to the benefits of the state, then

uninitiated individuals are quite prone spontaneously to achieve the state."[434] The ability of

women to "join in" ecstatic ritualizations and gain an opportunity for authority and influence

lends to the argument that practices rather than beliefs attracted new members.

The Rebuttal of Powers

Despite successful attempts by some individuals to improve their status and influence through

the use of ecstatic ritualizations, the acceptance of new power did not always go without

challenge. Lewis examines the usage of exorcisms as a restriction tool by leaders. "Exorcism [...]

is indeed frequently employed to control and contain unruly and excessively enthusiastic ecstatic

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[432] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 109.
[433] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 40.
[434] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 58.

(especially women)."[435] Of interest, Lewis notes that in the 11th-century Japanese literary work *The Tale of the Gengi*, spirit possession was not only common among the lower classes but was also used by women belonging to the imperial court in Japan.[436] In her study of these "grand ladies," Doris Bargen describes possession as the "woman's weapon."[437] According to Lewis, the beginnings of a female possession cult in Japan during this time period were put in check through exorcisms performed by male priests.[438] He extends his research into African groups to determine that "exorcism is regularly employed to control wayward female mystical tendencies (and those of men of similar subordinate status)."[439]

Following Lightstone's analogy, we are once again provided with a test-case that recognizes that one individual's access to the divine is another individual's access to magic. In the most general terms, it was believed that individuals could be possessed by either "good" or "bad" *pneuma*. The quality or status of the *pneuma* which possessed an individual depended on the group that contemplated the possession. Furthermore, sometimes individuals within the same group could not agree upon the status of a possession.[440] Whether or not these Japanese women actually experienced ecstatic practices is not relevant for the current research project. What is interesting for this study are the attempts to quash these practices and to separate these women from individuals in leadership positions. Lewis examines the circumstances when access to possession or *pneuma* is granted and when such ritualization practices are restricted and are deemed evil.

> In peripheral cults, or in separatist religious movements [...], possession,
> interpreted as a religious experience, indeed as a benediction, is open to all

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[435] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, xv.
[436] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, xvi.
[437] D. G. Bargen, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of the Gengi* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii press, 1997), 15–24.
[438] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, xvi.
[439] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, xvii.
[440] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 31–32.

participants. In central morality religions, however, inspirational possession has a much more limited currency. It is in fact the hallmark of a religious elite, those chosen by the gods and personally commissioned by them to exercise divine authority among men. Since, moreover, this is the idiom in which men compete for power and authority, there are always more aspirants than positions to fill. In this competitive situation where authentic enthusiasm is a scarce commodity, and where many feel themselves called but few are actually chosen, it is obviously essential to be able to discriminate between genuine and spurious inspiration.[441]

According to Lewis, groups that are developing or are perceived as peripheral tend to accord individuals of all statuses with greater opportunity to participate in possession ritualizations. Furthermore, these groups are more likely to recognize varieties of these ritualizations and the participants as valid or authoritative. Oppositely, in groups that are further developed and have an established hierarchy, there tends to be more discrimination between valid and invalid ecstatic or possession experiences. While Lewis ties possession activities to both central and peripheral groups, he suggests that such ritualizations in central groups are limited and restricted to those in positions of power.

Lewis recognizes the importance of considering individuals of diverse social statuses when considering ecstatic ritualizations. He argues that some individuals belonging to lower social classes or statuses may have played an important role in the development of groups. For the purposes of this research project, his analysis of women and possession ritualizations is noteworthy. "And even if they were eventually co-opted by a central male establishment, it seems that peripheral female ecstatics may often have pioneered new religions. Women seem to have played a major if much ignored, role in religious change and innovation."[442] Thus, as argued by Lewis, in some developing groups women used possession practices or ritualizations to challenge patriarchy as well as satisfy personal goals. In some cases these performances were accepted and in others they were rejected. Once groups became established, evidence suggests

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[441] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 152.
[442] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 155–56.

that leaders sought to curtail the participation of lower status individuals and challenge or deny

their positions as leaders because it was no longer perceived as necessary. Despite the tendency

to focus on the later restrictions, it is nevertheless important to recognize the agency and

influence of these women during the period when their ritualizations were granted authority by

the group. "It is thus no accident that throughout history, and in many different religions,

established churches have sought to control and contain personal inspiration."[443]

Conclusions: Returning to Possession and Ecstatic Ritualizations in Early Jesus Groups

This chapter considered Davies' suggestion that Jesus was understood by his contemporaries as a

healer that was possessed by a *pneuma*. His research suggests that "Jesus the healer and Jesus the

exorcist should be understood to have played a social role based on one underlying paradigm."[444]

This paradigm is not one that is specific or unique to early Jesus groups. "A healer does what

works, and a healer works within a system of healing methods established by his or her

culture."[445] Davies' research demonstrates that Greco-Roman groups in antiquity were familiar

with and expected that individuals within their group could and possibly would become

possessed by *pneuma*.[446] His conclusions provide insight into the ritualizations and expectations

of members of the earliest Jesus groups.

Considering the previous exploration of possession ritualizations as tools for opportunity,

I suggest that we push this argument further. "By analogy to cross-cultural anthropological

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[443] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 156. While Lewis makes a strong case for attempts to control possession and ecstatic performances by leaders once groups are more developed, I am hesitant to dichotomize ritualization with ecstatic expression (as he does). To be sure, groups which are no longer perceived as developing or peripheral may restrict the use of ritualization activities. However, this research project has provided evidence to support the argument that ritualizations should not only be understood in terms of a central group. Furthermore, the previous chapters considering ritual theory and ritualization suggest that ecstatic expression is likely best understood as a ritualization itself.

[444] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 100.

[445] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 146.

[446] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 152–53.

studies we can presume that most of Jesus' clients were presently in situations of social, mainly family stress, and that for them demon-possession was a somewhat effective, but socially unacceptable, coping mechanism."[447] Like the previously examined *pneuma* practices, we can surmise that members of the earliest Jesus groups used possession and ecstatic ritualizations as opportunities for social experiments. "Under conditions of social stress arising from factors both external to and internal to their social group (their surrogate family), they spontaneously became spirit-possessed and from that point on formed themselves into a missionary spirit-possession cult."[448] Davies argues that with possession practices, members of early Jesus groups also experienced opportunities to challenge social paradigms and change (even if only temporarily) their social status. "Healing, the power to guide others, and so forth are tasks spirit-possessed persons have in nearly all the possession cults known cross-culturally. [...T]hrough possession-experience, and possession induced role enactments, people of low or marginal social positions are able temporarily to experience very high status within their groups."[449]

Davies argues that *pneuma* possession ritualizations in Jesus groups lasted for only one or two generations.[450] "Spirit-related phenomena did decline rapidly, and predictably, through the first decades of Christianity. The novelty wore off, the initial members grew older, the intracult social circumstances changed."[451] Astutely Davies argues that "the status of the self-identity of spirit-possessed Christians necessarily would have been a central issue in the formative Christian movement, stemming from the fact that spirit-possession was the defining

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[447] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 89.
[448] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 171.
[449] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 180.
[450] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 174.
[451] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 176.

characteristic of movement members."[452] Davies argues that spirit-possession offered individuals with the opportunity to "reinvent their frames of reference."[453]

After this brief consideration of possession and ecstatic ritualizations, we are prepared to return to Jesus group practices and can consider how possession practices and ecstatic worship can help us understand the participation of women in early Jesus groups. While it is true that individuals in leadership positions may have attempted to restrict *pneuma* practices like possession ritualizations as hierarchies became more developed, this project will continue to question whether instructions should be considered as reflective of real practices. Using the Pauline, Pastoral, and Montanist test-cases, this project will suggest that individuals continued to find opportunities to engage in *pneuma* ritualizations. I suggest that it is fruitful to consider later Jesus groups and the responses of some individuals to the development of a patriarchal structure that attempted to limit the participation of women in certain practices.

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[452] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 187.
[453] Davies, *Jesus the Healer*, 194.

7. WOMEN IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Research that aims at redescriptions of early Christian communities reveals that the manner in which ancient literature describes the activities and beliefs of women may not necessarily reflect how women *actually* participated within their religious communities. Furthermore, these redescription projects have discovered that the treatment of women within different religious communities likely differed depending on time and location.[454] A comparison of the evidence for female leadership and opportunities found in the Pauline epistles with that found in the Pastoral letters suggests that the social make-ups of early Jesus groups were not fixed.

The following two chapters will argue that the status, role, and function of women within early Christian communities were not static and perceptions of the female gender continuously developed. The acknowledgement that social atmospheres had the potential to change allows us to understand the development of later communities and the choices that women may have made to join specific groups. Furthermore, once we establish that the participation of women differed between communities, we are better prepared to consider why their status and activities differed. More specifically, equipped with 1) the theoretical approaches set forth by the redescription project as well as ritual theorists; 2) the realization that ritualizations (for example, banqueting and *pneuma* practices like prayer and prophesy) provided individuals with an opportunity to experiment with social paradigms in a controlled environment and; 3) the evidence for women in Jesus associations, we can determine why some early Jesus groups appeared to offer women greater levels of participation than other Jesus groups.

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[454] Notable among the projects that redescribe the roles of women in early Jesus groups are Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002); Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The implications and content of these redescription projects are considered at length in the methodology section.

Providing the necessary background to establish that the status of women was not fixed in early Christian groups, this chapter will consider the opportunities for leadership, influence and participation of women in the Pauline communities.[455] First, I will examine named women in Pauline communities and discuss how prescriptions provide further glimpses into the actual practices of women.[456] Second, by examining early Christian women within the context of Greco-Roman gender ideologies and practices, I will indicate what opportunities women found in these communities. Using the Pauline letters and the test-case of the praying and prophesying women in Corinth, I will consider what these groups offered women in terms of participation and status. I suggest that these groups reworked the public/private and honour/shame divisions and that this revision made place for women in previously restricted social activities.

Women in the Pauline Epistles

When seeking evidence for the participation and opportunities for women within early Jesus groups, the Pauline letters do not disappoint: not only are women mentioned in the Pauline letters, but there are also specific instructions and references made regarding the activities, beliefs and behaviour of women. Though much scholarship has been devoted to Paul's beliefs and intentions, we must consider the possibility that his instructions do not accurately represent the manner in which his letters were interpreted by those who received them. As such, the challenge which has been taken up by feminist scholars is not to determine whether women participated within Pauline communities, but to determine whether the epistles reflect the lives of

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[455] I have elected to examine and consider the participation of women in the Pauline and Pastoral communities for several reasons. First, the Pauline letters include some of the earliest available literature for Jesus groups and as such provide me with the opportunity to consider these communities during their earliest development. Second, both the Pauline and Pastoral letters make explicit and implicit references to the participation of women in the religious communities. Third, these two sets of literature reflect different periods of development in Christian groups.

[456] This study will entail an examination of both the direct and indirect evidence of the activities of women in the Pauline epistles: the texts are prescriptive rather than indicative.

real women and how developing Jesus groups reacted to this literature. Specifically, feminist scholars have come to the conclusion that the depiction of an idealized socially invisible woman does not provide evidence that women were actually invisible.[457] Feminist scholars have provided ample evidence that "there are a number of references to women in Paul's letters and other early Christian literature, which suggests to us that women were not silent subordinate creatures in the first churches, but part of the active leadership of the nascent communities."[458] As such, feminist New Testament scholars have successfully demonstrated that women were not invisible in early Jesus groups.

The first section of this chapter will examine the status of the named women in the Pauline letters and discuss how Paul's letters provide the opportunity to glimpse at the actual practices and lives of women in antiquity. Because Pauline literature is incidental and responds to specific socio-historical circumstances, this study will examine both direct and indirect evidence[459] when considering the status and activities of women who joined Pauline groups.

Approaching the Topic and a Methodological Sidebar

In the past several decades, significant strides have been made in the study of women within early Christian communities. Scholars like Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Margaret Y. MacDonald and Ross Shepard Kraemer have engaged redescription approaches that challenge

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[457] Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, "Gazing Upon the Invisible: Archaeology, Historiography, and the Elusive Wo/men of 1 Thessalonians" in *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonike* (ed. Laura Nasrallah et al.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 81.

[458] April D. DeConick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 63.

[459] I will demonstrate that it is not possible to take early Christian literature at face-value because the texts are prescriptive rather than accurately indicative. Sometimes evidence indicates that there is a discrepancy between textual instructions and restrictions placed on women, on the one hand, and the "actual" status accorded to women and their roles within their communities, on the other. Therefore, there is a need to read between the lines in order to get an accurate description of the communities and the situations to which Paul is responding.

the traditional approaches to women in Christianity and encourage us to consider important

questions. "Why does the premise that women as well as men have contributed to and shaped

culture, society, and religion seem so unlikely and extreme? A major reason can be found in an

androcentric linguistic system and cultural mind-set that marginalizes women of all walks of life

as well as disenfranchised men."[460] A feminist approach to the reconstruction of Christian origins

attempts to deconstruct a literal approach to the New Testament and considers how and why they

say what they say (as well as what they do not say).[461]

As feminist methodologies have acquired status in academic settings during the past

several decades, scholars have come to recognize that representations of women in ancient texts

do not always reflect lived realities. Until recently, when attempting to examine the lives of

women in early Christianity, scholars focused their research on biased perceptions and ancient

texts that were written by men.[462] Shepard Kraemer states that there has been "an unarticulated

assumption that human religion and human history were identical with men's religion and men's

history."[463] A first step to understanding women's participation in religion is therefore to

understand that their experiences and beliefs are different from those of men. We need to

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[460] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), xviii.

[461] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xix–xx.

[462] The majority of feminist scholarship argues that the majority of ancient literature was written by and for men. A new study by Kim Haines-Eitzen which examines the gendered body and literature suggests that women were not completely absent from the economics of texts. While the evidence suggests that "women were less educated and literate than men throughout antiquity" and women from lower classes obtained less education than women from higher classes, there is also evidence that some women participated in the maintenance and transmission of texts (Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 20, 24–25). Specifically, evidence suggests that women participated in the roles of authors, patrons, scribes, and book lenders (Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest*, 23–38). Though the texts considered in this section are generally believed to be written by men, it is nevertheless important to indicate that some women did play a role in the production and promotion of literature. As such, while we cannot know with certainty to what degree they participated in the economics of literature, we are best to re-evaluate the assumption that the world of books and texts was entirely a world for men (Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest*, 37–38).

[463] Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4. Gillman reminds us that the texts in question were "written by men reflecting what *they* thought about various matters; the texts do not offer women's perceptions about anything" (Florence M. Gilman, *Women Who Knew Paul* [Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992], 14).

examine women from a different vantage point and use a different lens than has been traditionally employed.[464] MacDonald argues that "instead of concentrating primarily on male attitudes toward women as has been done in the past, the focus should shift to reconstructing the lives of women."[465] Schüssler Fiorenza's work supports this conclusion: she suggests that previous approaches to the participation of women in early Christian communities were uncritical because they accepted sources at face value. Furthermore, she suggests that these approaches were defined by their contemporary questions, interests and politics.[466] As such, new feminist methodological approaches are aware of the androcentric nature of the ancient texts and are cognisant of contemporary factors that motivate modern scholars in their research.[467] This redescription project will consider women as active participants of social formation, mythmaking and experimentation.

MacDonald challenges scholars to think outside of the box and research women in early Christian groups without focusing on the few key New Testament passages traditionally used to subordinate women.[468] Schüssler Fiorenza also challenges scholars to approach texts differently. Specifically, she suggests that new models must be used to "imagine the history of early Christian beginnings."[469] Her heuristic model, which includes the critical examination of texts and reading between the lines, is set to integrate women back into their history in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the development of Christianity.[470] The endeavour to use

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[464] Gillman, *Women Who Knew Paul*, 14.
[465] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 199.
[466] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xlvii, 42.
[467] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 43.
[468] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 199–200.
[469] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xxviii.
[470] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xlvi. In essence, Schüssler Fiorenza claims to restore the stories about women to Christianity as well as claim this history for both men and women (*In Memory of Her*, xlvi).

historical imagination to recover women's agency provides scholars with the opportunity to see old data in a new fashion.[471]

Schüssler Fiorenza puts forth a method of feminist critical hermeneutics that sets its sights on the historical reconstruction of women in early Christian communities. This method requires that theological motives be put aside in order that history might be restored.[472] Instead of taken for granted theological norms, "concrete historical situations" are taken into consideration.[473] The purpose and benefit of Schüssler Fiorenza's methodology is a move from andocentric texts to a consideration of socio-historical contexts where women are no longer understood as absent or insignificant but are recognized as active participants in their communities.[474]

Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that we employ a method of hermeneutical suspicion to recover women's voices and lives. "We must find ways to break the silence of the text and derive meaning from androcentric historiography and theology. [...] we must search for clues and allusions that indicate the reality about which the text is silent."[475] This approach recognizes the social reality behind the construction of texts and considers texts as having practical objectives.[476] Once we recognize how women *actually* participated in early Christian communities and consider their activities in their historical ritual context, we will be in a better place to understand how these women influenced the development of Christian groups or used religious practices to satisfy personal needs. Johnson-DeBaufre astutely describes the task of the

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[471] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, l–li, liv.
[472] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 27. Though Schüssler Fiorenza argues that theological intentions should be bracketed and suggests that once a historical reconstruction is completed that a liberation theology should be established, this chapter will only consider her methodology as it relates to the historical examination of women in early communities. I will not consider how this research can be used in modern religious applications.
[473] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 33.
[474] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 29.
[475] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 41.
[476] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 49, 59.

feminist historiographer as one not only of imagination but of reconstruction. She argues that research must determine "the ways that people in various situations of domination resist, claim, and construct identity, survive, perform transgressions and disruptions, and imagine alternative worlds."[477]

Recognizing Some Issues

A general examination of the status of women in early Christianity is impossible because the instructions and descriptions in the literature are not consistent. While one might expect discrepancies in the treatment of women in diverse texts,[478] the issue is further complicated by the fact that some texts authored by the same individual are inconsistent in their treatment of women. For example, Paul's letters do not treat women consistently nor do his letters indicate a universal response to his instructions. Phoebe is commended as a deaconess in Romans 16:1–2,[479] but women are instructed to be silent and submissive in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.[480] But what then of attempting to examine the status of women in early Christian groups? Perhaps the baby should not be thrown out with the bath water. I suggest that the discrepancies should not discourage us from attempting to rediscover and rewrite women's history but should prevent us from generalizing experiences.

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[477] Johnson-DeBaufre, "Gazing upon the Invisible," 82.

[478] For example, while the Pauline Epistles list some women as co-workers or leaders within early Christian communities, deutero-Pauline material or pseudonymous Pastoral Epistles are used to support "the view of Paul as a male chauvinist" (Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 182–83).

[479] "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well" (Rom 16:1–2 NRSV).

[480] "As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (1 Cor 14:34–35).

Named Women in the Pauline Epistles

Chloe

In 1 Corinthians Paul claims that "it has been reported to [him] by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among [them]" (1 Cor 1:11). Though this brief reference does not indicate Chloe's status, the inclusion of Paul's source of information provides indirect evidence about one real woman's social position. "The very phrase 'Chloe's people' offers a clue as to her status in society at large and possibly also in the Corinthian community."[481] While Paul was not speaking of gender equality or even about the types of practices available to women, his reference suggests that Chloe was able to exert some form of influence.[482]

In the case of Corinth, it is a woman who serves as a valuable source of information and alerts Paul of divisions and quarrels in the Christian community.[483] Paul's reference to Chloe reveals "that Paul knows more about [the divisions in religious affiliation] in Corinth than what he was allowed to know in the letter written to him" by the Corinthians.[484] The fact that Paul corrects the behaviour of the Corinthians based on information brought to him by "Chloe's people" suggests that he trusts Chloe as a reliable source and does not dismiss her because she is a woman.[485] If Wire's postulations that Paul uses Chloe's name to "add credibility" to his letter are correct, we may also surmise that these Corinthians, at minimum those who "belonged" to her, perceived Chloe as a credible individual.[486]

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[481] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 200.
[482] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 200–201.
[483] Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 41.
[484] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 98.
[485] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 41.
[486] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 41.

While there appears to be a consensus that Chloe was a significant member of the Corinthian community, there is debate surrounding the identity of her people. Witherington argues that Chloe was likely a prominent and influential businesswoman from Corinth whose people were most likely to be slaves that acted as business agents.[487] However, there is no evidence to prove that Paul's statement does not refer to Chloe's biological or immediate family. Regardless of the specific identity of "Chloe's people", the make-up of Greco-Roman families suggests that she was possibly the "head of the household" and had the financial resources to maintain these individuals and pay for their travel.[488] As such, in either case, she held a position of influence.

The Ladies in Romans

Paul's letter to the Romans does not include gender specific instructions; however, his letter mentions several women by name. Included in Paul's list of prominent Christians are Prisca who is noted for risking her life for Paul, as well as Junia who was imprisoned with Paul and is given the title apostle.[489] Of particular interest in Paul's list of notable Christians is the recommendation or commendation of "[their] sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae" (Rom 16:1). Carolyn Osiek and Kevin Madigan determine that the language that is

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[487] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 99.

[488] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 200. Though a reference to Chloe's biological familial may appear to diminish her attributed status, the make-up of Greco-Roman families suggests otherwise. In Chloe's case, her family could include her entire household because Greco-Roman families would have also included extended family, "her slaves, freed-persons, or dependent workers" (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 200).

[489] Rom 16:3–7. There has been some debate surrounding the gender of Ἰουνιᾶν. While the declension of the name allows for either a male or female gender, only the name Junia (rather than the male Junias) is attested in antiquity (Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest*, 91). Specifically, the name Junias, in the masculine form is not found in ancient Greek literature (DeConick, *Holy Misogyny*, 64). As such, we may consider that during Paul's time that women were able to obtain the title "apostle" (DeConick, *Holy Misogyny*, 65).

used by Paul in this passage is typical of recommendation letters written during antiquity.[490] Paul

instructs the community to treat Phoebe in a welcoming and hospitable manner because "she has

been a benefactor of many and of [himself] as well" (Rom 16:2). The title διάκονο and the

recognition that Phoebe receives suggests that women had the opportunity to obtain status and

influence in some of the Pauline communities.

Paul's description of Phoebe also provides insight into the activities of women of

influence: Paul "[…] implies that she played an important part in the development of the Pauline

mission."[491] Though Phoebe's title διάκονος does not indicate a move towards gender equality,

her ability to obtain a title generally reserved for men of stature within the religious community

is significant. Walters argues that "the terms Paul used to commend Phoebe are no different from

those he would have used if he had been commending a man."[492] While Phoebe's title διάκονον is

often translated as "deaconess," the Greek suggests that Paul did not distinguish between Phoebe

and male deacons: he uses the male title to describe Phoebe.[493] In the same epistle Paul also uses

the term ἀποστόλοις, a term which was also generally used sparingly and reserved for men, to

describe Junia. Not only is Junia an apostle, but she is described as prominent among the

apostles.[494] The titles given to Phoebe and Junia suggest that in some specific cases women were

able to achieve the same positions and titles as their male colleagues. Though Phoebe's actual

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[490] Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documented History* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 12.

[491] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 208. Despite the fact that we do not know the exact ancient understanding of the term "deacon," the attribution of this title to Phoebe suggests that she played an influential role. James Walters, "Phoebe and Junia(s)- Rom. 16: 1-2" in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Carroll D. Osburn; Joplin, Miss.: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 182–84; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 208).

[492] Walters, "Phoebe and Junia(s)," 172.

[493] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13.

[494] Considering Paul's defense of his "apostleship," it seems unlikely that he would use the title loosely. Paul takes great lengths to prove that he is no less than the other apostles in Galatians. Furthermore, he instructs the community that he received the gospel directly from Jesus through a revelation (Galatians 1–2).

role within the Church is never described,[495] Paul's reference suggests that she ministered

"powerfully […] on behalf of a variety of people— not only women."[496] Both men and women

were expected to "welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints" (Rom 16:2). Despite the

fact that Greco-Roman social expectations dictated that women should only teach other women,

Walters argues that Phoebe was perceived as a religious leader by both men and women.[497]

Madigan and Osiek also agree stating that there is no evidence to suggest that Phoebe was only a

minister for women.[498]

Paul's description of Phoebe as a προστάτις or benefactor suggests that she was a high-

status individual to whom Paul was indebted. Furthermore, the designation suggests that she

acted as a patron for both men and women.[499] Also, Paul's recommendation that the community

assist her as she assisted the church suggests that she obtained "a significant level of both

economic means and social independence."[500] DeConick makes a convincing argument that

Paul's use of the term *prostatis* should not hold different meanings for male and female members

of the early Jesus groups. She argues that when one considers the historical, linguistic, and

archaeological evidence that this designation was not used differently for men and women.[501]

According to MacDonald, Phoebe's ministerial role may have included supporting poor

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[495] This issue is further complicated by the fact that "the duties of deacons in this period are not well understood" (DeConick, *Holy Misogyny*, 66). Madigan and Osiek suggest that the role of deacon may have included "not only ministerial service but also some kind of official representation of the community" (*Ordained Women*, 13).

[496] Walters, "Phoebe and Junia(s)," 190. Not only is there no information about Phoebe's ministerial activities, but there is also little evidence for the practices of deacons. "What exactly a deacon did at this point is not clear, but it may have involved not only local ministerial service but also some kind of official representation of the community" (Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13).

[497] Walters, "Phoebe and Junia(s)," 184–85.

[498] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13.

[499] Rom 16:2; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 208–9; Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13.

[500] Rom 16:1–2. Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Paul on Women and Gender," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 224.

[501] DeConick, *Holy Misogyny*, 65.

members of the community as well as providing for travellers.[502] Phoebe, therefore, is not only successful in securing the title deacon, but is also acknowledged as providing her community with the type of support that is most often provided by men. Madigan and Osiek push this argument further and claim that as a benefactor of Paul that Phoebe was likely wealthy and an individual of higher social status than he was.[503]

Euodia and Syntyche

In the final chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians, he urges Euodia and Syntyche "to be of the same mind in the Lord" (Phil 4:2). While it appears that Paul's intention is to resolve a dispute between two women, his exhortation also includes information about their role in the development of Jesus groups. Paul states that they "struggled beside [him] in the work of the gospel" (Phil 4:3). His concern with the dispute between Euodia and Syntyche suggests that they played an important part in the church and were valued as team members.[504] MacDonald and Pollard argue that this exhortation reveals that women played an important role in the missionary movement and are recognized for their efforts.[505] Pollard takes this argument further and argues that the reference to Euodia and Syntyche "seems to indicate full participation [of women] in the missionary effort."[506] Because Greco-Roman society generally held as an ideal the division of society into public and private dichotomies, the missionary movement required the participation of women who could solicit membership in the domestic realm. While male missionaries had

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[502] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 58. This argument is supported through MacDonald's characterization of the criteria used to determine the most influential members of the church. Like Crispus and Stephanus, Phoebe is deemed to be well-to-do (58).

[503] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13.

[504] Florence M. Gillman, *Women Who Knew Paul* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 46–47.

[505] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 204–6; Paul J. Pollard, "Women in the Earlier Phillippian Church (Acts 16:13–15; Phil 4:2–3 in Recent Scholarship" in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Carroll D. Osburn; Joplin, Miss.: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 275–80.

[506] Pollard, "Women in the Earlier Phillippian Church," 275.

restricted access to the private sphere due to concerns for propriety, female missionaries had the opportunity to educate women in the domestic realm because they were women. This indirect evidence suggests that missionary women, like Euodia and Syntyche, worked alongside men, traveled and undertook the esteemed task of instructing others.

General Conclusions about Named Women

This brief examination of named women in the Pauline letters reveals that some women "were prominent members of the community and acted as leaders."[507] While Paul's references to Chloe, Phoebe, Junia, Euodia, and Syntyche do not provide explicit information about the extent to which these women were able to exert their powers and influences, they do suggest that women were able to achieve some level of influence, recognition and respect. Furthermore, these references suggest that women played important roles in the development of early Jesus groups and were able to achieve some positions of authority or power.[508]

General Pauline Instructions Regarding Women

Since the Pauline epistles are occasional letters addressed to entire communities, one might expect that these documents would include more general instructions and information about the participation and expected behaviours of women. While an examination of specific named women is invaluable, a general study of the "gendered" instructions provided by Paul provides a

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[507] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 201.

[508] There is hardly agreement among scholars regarding the implications of the power and influences of the real women mentioned in the Pauline epistles. MacDonald argues for a type of gender equality in the ranks of leadership. "The references to specific women in Paul's letters indicate that women's leadership in this early period was neither different than that of men nor of lesser value to the community than the contributions of men" (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 210). Pollard takes a position opposite of MacDonald and suggests that feminist findings are too optimistic. He argues that there is no evidence that suggests that women were leaders at Philippi and that some religious positions were only available to men (Pollard, "Women in the Earlier Philippians Church," 280). Perhaps we should consider a position within these two extremes. Though the references suggest that some women were able to achieve positions of status within their communities, I suggest while it is possible that in some cases that some women held positions equal in status to men that it has yet to be proved that all positions were equally esteemed.

lens through which we can peer into the status and participation of the majority of women in these groups. When examining Paul's prescriptive instructions, MacDonald argues that scholars need "to see through Paul's teachings on how women *should* behave in order to catch a glimpse of how women *actually* behaved."[509] She astutely asserts that we must take into account the possibility that Paul is not describing the actual behaviour of women, but is attempting to correct "behavioural problems." This methodological approach is helpful to unearth the actual historical activities of real Christian women. The next portion of this chapter will use 1 Corinthians 7 as a test-case to consider how Paul instructed one community on the participation of women as well as how the community interpreted his directions.

1 Corinthians 7

When considering the status and participation of women in the Pauline epistles, 1 Corinthians 7 provides us with much to ponder.[510] Considering the occasional nature of Pauline literature, it is likely that Paul is responding to "the matters about which [they] wrote" (1 Cor 7:1): he is addressing a particular concern or problem as well as attempt to change behaviour.[511] Taking the occasional nature of the letters into account, a methodological approach that seeks to redescribe the participation and roles of women should not only consider what Paul is attempting to correct but also examine 1 Corinthians 7 with the goal of determining how the Corinthians may have creatively interpreted Paul's message to experiment with identity and boundaries.

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[509] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 211.
[510] Like many other topics, the nature and intent of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7 is debated among scholars. While some scholars suggest that this chapter indicates that Paul attempted to create an environment that supported gender equality (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 133), other scholars insist that these verses do not presented any form of systematic ethics (Norbert Baumert, *Woman and Man in Paul* [Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1996], 23).
[511] Baumert, *Woman and Man in Paul*, 23–25.

Paul's response to the Corinthian inquiry regarding whether "it is well for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7:1) provides a valuable test-case for this study because it deals with activities and behaviours of women as well as issues of sexuality and the choice of some individuals to abstain from sexual relationships.[512] Though Paul wishes that everyone could imitate his celibate lifestyle, his response suggests that he recognizes that this choice was not always possible or desirable. If unmarried or widowed women can practice sexual self-control, it is better for them to remain unmarried and focus on matters of God.[513] However, women who are married should not be considered as lesser individuals because of their marital status: it is better for individuals to remain "in whatever condition [they] were called" (1 Cor 7:24, 28).[514] Paul's concern for married individuals and their position or status within the group suggests that the Corinthians held asceticism in high regard and did not give the same respect to individuals who engaged in physical intimacy. The choice for celibacy and the high esteem given to this lifestyle raises several interesting questions: 1) did married or virginal women in Corinth choose a life of celibacy? 2) why would these women choose this lifestyle?

Some scholars suggest that in light of traditional gender expectations in the Greco-Roman world, celibacy and the option of a new lifestyle would have attracted women to the church in Corinth.[515] They further propose that remaining celibate and unmarried would have freed women from the traditional gender obligations (of devoted wives and child bearers) that were idealized.

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[512] Baumert, *Woman and Man in Paul*, 27. The choice of some Corinthians to maintain a celibate lifestyle is particularly pertinent for this project because this choice would not have "always been understood by the others" since Greco-Roman society centered on the ideal of the family (Baumert, *Woman and Man in Paul*, 27).

[513] 1 Cor 7:8–9; 32–35; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 84; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 211.

[514] It is therefore preferable for married women to remain married and virgins to remain virgins (1 Cor 7:25–28). Paul insists that people should maintain a celibate lifestyle if they can do so without anxiety. Anxiety about maintaining a celibate life can lead to distraction from "devotion to the Lord" because their energies will me miss-focused (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 136). It is for this reason that Paul states that "it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor 7:9).

[515] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 139; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 211–13.

The rejection of these gender standards provided women with the opportunity to participate in activities or roles that were generally restricted to men. Because women were valued for their "domestic female qualities," celibacy was perceived as a threat to the traditional household structure and the lifestyle that some men came to expect.[516] It is argued that marriage was believed to maintain social stability and control the female population. A choice for celibacy rejected the duty of populating male-run communities and directly challenged the authority that men held over women's bodies.[517]

The opening passages in 1 Corinthians 7 provide "a monotonous series of parallel statements about mutual obligations of men and women."[518] When women were ideally expected to be subject to their husbands' full authority, Paul's instruction for mutual obligation and mirroring treatment would have been perceived as radical.[519] Generally, women were not granted any authority over their husbands and could only hope to influence their families silently.[520]

MacDonald suggests that Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthian 7 demonstrate an attempt to "balance more extremist ascetic tendencies in Corinth"[521] with a particular interest in the behaviour of women.[522] She argues that Paul's approach suggests that Corinthian women valued the role that celibacy and virginity played in achieving their goal of "personal holiness, not

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[516] MacDonald, "Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters," 211–12; Michael Massey, *Women in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30.

[517] Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 43–44. Concern for such rejection of the traditionally acceptable gender roles of wife and mother was expressed through laws and legislation where women were legally required to be married between the ages of 20 and 50 (MacDonald, "Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters," 212). Furthermore, "unmarried and childless women experienced restrictions on inheritance and were denied certain privileges of legal independence" (MacDonald, "Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters," 212).

[518] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 133; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 82–83. "Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Cor 7:2–4).

[519] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 82–83.

[520] Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, 49.

[521] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 133.

[522] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 134.

pleasing the Lord."[523] MacDonald's theory suggests that some Corinthian women experimented with a celibate lifestyle with the personal goal of liberating themselves from traditionally accepted gender roles. This innovative use of celibacy by some women stands in contrast with Paul's promotion of celibacy for unhindered worship. MacDonald's suggestion that women may have chosen a celibate lifestyle for liberation purposes suggests that they engaged in experimental activities and saw their identity as malleable.

Though a celibate lifestyle offered women a type of transcendence over traditional Greco-Roman boundaries, marriage also offered women the opportunity to play an important role in early churches.[524] Paul states that it is better for individuals to remain in mixed marriages if possible. "And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him" (1 Cor 7:13). MacDonald argues that women who lived in mixed marriages encountered difficult or challenging situations because they were forced to live on the border of Christianity and the rest of society.[525] While Paul does not single out wives to remain in mixed marriages, it is likely that Paul is encouraging women to remain in marriages despite hostility and physical harm being a possible threat. Generally, when male heads of households converted all those under their authority converted as well.

Despite the fact that these married Christian women were not granted any social liberation or ministerial titles, they had the opportunity to exercise a certain amount of unsung power.[526] The Corinthians are told that women who remained in mixed marriages had the

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[523] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 136.

[524] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 202–4.

[525] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 196–204. An example of this challenge can be seen in 1 Pet 3:1–6 where the author claims that some women who lived in mixed marriages were treated with hostility and suffered because they did not "share [their] husband's customs and religion" (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 198, 200). "Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1 Pet 3:1–2).

[526] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 85; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 199, 203.

opportunity to save their husbands and their children. "For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife. […] Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband" (1 Cor 7:14-16). In most cases, upon divorce "children remained with their fathers" and became alienated from their mothers.[527] Women who remained married to their gentile husbands continued to hold the opportunity to influence their children[528]: "Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (1 Cor 7:14). MacDonald also suggests that women in mixed marriages could be effective missionaries and win new female converts if they were cautious and followed the expected gender roles.[529] Despite the fact that these women can be perceived as perpetuating gender expectations, they are proof that power and influence can also be found within traditional roles.

Considerations on Celibacy

This Corinthian test-case provides both prescriptive instructions for the expected behaviour of women as well as incidental evidence of real women's actual behaviour within a developing Jesus group. While many scholars have focused upon the intentions of Paul as either a liberator or oppressor, I suggest that it is more fruitful to look behind his instructions. A project that engages in the redescription of early Jesus groups needs to look at the groups themselves not just at the author attempting to encourage and correct behaviours. It is by considering the moments of transgression or intersection that we can see mythmaking and social formation in progress.

 In the case of 1 Corinthians 7, it is revealing that the Corinthian community appears to have toyed with the idea of celibacy as the preferred lifestyle for both men and women. Paul's

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[527] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York: Schoken Books, 1995), 158.
[528] 1 Cor 7:14; Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 85.
[529] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 202–3; MacDonald, "Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters," 214.

response that marriage is acceptable for those who cannot suppress their sexual desires suggests that some individuals left their marriages for the preferred celibate lifestyle. Furthermore, his insistence that individuals in mixed marriages remain as they are also suggests that some women left their families behind for the opportunity of celibacy. It appears that some women interpreted Paul's teachings to suit their individual goals: they experimented with expected gender boundaries. While it is not possible to determine the celibate women's various and specific motivations, we can see that their behaviour crossed traditional gender expectations and granted them access to previously inaccessible roles.

The Praying and Prophesying Women in Corinth

In a previous chapter I considered how banqueting and meal rituals as well as access to *pneuma* granted participants with the opportunity to engage in social experiments and test social boundaries. Of significance for this research project, I have suggested that these practices offered individuals the opportunity to transcend social boundaries in a controlled environment and participate more fully in their association or group. After a consideration of the status, power, influence, and opportunities accorded to women in Pauline Jesus groups, I will proceed to consider opportunities for social experimentation and negotiations in these early Jesus groups.

As the focus of my research project includes an examination of the relationship between opportunities for female leadership and social negotiations, I will consider incidental evidence for a ritualization that placed women at the apex of experimentation and discourse. Using Paul's instructions to the prophesying women in Corinth as a test-case, I will consider how women that prayed and prophesied with uncovered loose hair found an opportunity for a new religious

practice, innovatively re-interpreted social paradigms, and reworked public/private and honour/shame dichotomies.

In his exhortation to the Corinthians, Paul discusses the appropriate manner for women to pray and prophesy. "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? Does not nature itself teach you that if a mean wears long hair, it is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering" (1 Cor 11:13-15). A Paul focused reading of 1 Cor 11 might suggest that as lesser individuals women were not permitted to fully participate in religious rituals. Paul claims that "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved" (1 Cor 11:4-5). Through the use of imagery, Paul informs the Corinthians that the manner in which an individual participates in rituals of prayer and prophecy depends on their gender. Men, Paul says, should not be covered because they are "the image and reflection of God." Oppositely, women require a veil because they are the reflection of man and were created "for the sake of man" (1 Cor 11:7-9). Paul uses gender distinctions as a tool to argue that unlike men, women are required to have a symbol of authority on their heads (interpreted by many as a veil) and are required to wear their hair up.[530]

While one could speculate about Paul's acceptance or rejection of traditional gender standards or whether he supported female prophesying, a redescription project of women in early Jesus groups focuses elsewhere.[531] A project that aims to reconsider how one should think about women in the earliest Jesus groups and redescribe early Christian practices in Corinth should be

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[530] 1 Cor 11:10, 15.

[531] In her examination of the unveiled women in Corinth, DeConick determines that women felt they were freed from social restraints, "tore off their veils" and toppled the male hierarchy (*Holy Misogyny*, 62). She further argues that Paul felt they overstepped appropriate boundaries and acted licentiously (*Holy Misogyny*, 73). Her research suggests that women were acting in a manner that was contra popular practices. Rather than focusing on Paul, this project will focus on the activities within their greater community.

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reluctant to accept this text as an accurate description of real practices and ask the pressing questions: What does this text actually tell us about the community to which it is addressed? Why did women act in this fashion? What were they attempting to accomplish? What enabled these activities? Related to this line of questioning, I.M. Lewis raises several important questions regarding the interpretations and implications of possession: "(W)hat do the women and men involved in possession themselves think it is about? In what circumstances do people become possessed? What are the social and political implications of possession? How does it demonstrably affect peoples' lives?"[532]

A consideration of the circumstantial evidence behind Paul's instruction for Corinthian women to cover their heads enables us to sneak a glimpse at how women in Corinth prayed and prophesied. Or more succinctly, by considering what Paul attempts to correct, we can reconstruct what types of ritualization practices were taking place. In this case, Paul instructs women to change their coiffure (regardless of his reasons) because women were praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered and their hair untied.

Some scholars argue that the participation of women in ritualized prophecy suggests an attempt to eliminate sexual distinctions.[533] Wire argues that by engaging in prayer and prophecy in the same fashion as the male participants, specifically with their heads unveiled, women rejected established Greco-Roman expectations of behaviour and attempted to create a community without sexual differences.[534] Talbert pushes this line of argument further and claims that "certain Christian women discarded their head coverings and led in public worship in a way

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[532] Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, xxi.
[533] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 130; MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 215–16.
[534] Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 126, 130.

that said to their culture, 'We have transcended our femaleness.'"[535] While this research indeed

contributes to the understanding of motivating factors and what women might have gained from

prophesying and praying with their heads uncovered, there remains another important question to

consider: under what circumstances were women able to participate in these activities? Or rather,

what social atmosphere allowed for women to innovatively re-interpret traditional gender

paradigms?

The Gender Atmosphere

While not arguing for uniformity, many scholars suggest that the Greco-Roman world had an

overarching gender structure where men and women were treated differently. The ancient gender

structure was considered to be ontological of the human species. Generally, women and

femininity were considered to be inferior to men and masculinity. This inferiority was

understood to be a "state of nature."[536] It is this understanding of nature or ontology that led

individuals to draw assumptions and conclusions about the behaviour, activities and

characteristics of women. Women were understood "by nature incapable of sufficient moral

restraint; or, to put it the other way round, women are morally unreliable, in regard to both sexual

behaviour and financial expenditure."[537] While both men and women were believed to be

potential victims to passion, women were understood to be more susceptible. Because they were

understood to be susceptible, women were perceived as more dangerous.[538] Braun also considers

the perceived deficiencies of femaleness found in Greco-Roman gender ideologies. In a

consideration of ontology, he argues that the reordering of the cosmic world and the recasting of

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[535] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishers, 2002), 90.
[536] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 112–132.
[537] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 113.
[538] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 113.

Fate as an oppressive and maleficent principle impacted the treatment of women. "It is not a huge leap from imagining the perceived cosmic conflict as a gender war to identifying femaleness as part and parcel of human deficiencies that require divine cure."[539] Braun also considers Greco-Roman thoughts on human physiology. He determines that the ancient theory of monosexuality (where individuals were understood to be placed or standing on a continuum between male and female poles) valued masculinity. Male characteristics like "virtue, excellence, courage, self-control, strength" were binary opposites of female qualities.[540] According to Braun, "the 'totality' of Graeco-Roman culture was univocal: humans with female bodies represented humans of deficient personhood."[541]

As a direct result of these understandings of women and femaleness, the majorities of women were attributed low political and social status, given fewer opportunities than men and were treated as inferior beings that were dependents in all aspects of their lives.[542] To be sure, not all men were granted the same opportunities as other men. Furthermore, not all men had the same opportunities as women. However, there are several general paradigms which remain prevalent. Women were praised and judged to be the best "because their lives are dedicated to serving their husbands and maintaining their households."[543] There was a great focus on women maintaining the roles of wife and mother. This is not to suggest that there is no evidence of intelligent women. However, the great importance placed upon the roles of wife and motherhood, along with the belief that women were ontologically different than men, restricted

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[539] Willi Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness in Early Christian Discourse," in *Religion & Theology* 9 (2002): 112–13.

[540] Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness," 113–14.

[541] Braun, "Body, Character and the Problem of Femaleness," 115.

[542] David Cohen, "Seclusion, Seperation, and the Status of Women in Classical Athens," in *Women in Antiquity* (ed. Ian McAuslan and Peter Walcot; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 134–15; Gillian Clark, "Roman Women," in *Women in Antiquity* (ed. Ian McAuslan and Peter Walcot; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 36–53; Lefkowitz "Influential Women," in *Images of Women in Antiquity* (ed. Averil Cameron and Amelie Kurt; Australia: Croom Helm Ltd., 1983), 50.

[543] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 62.

the manner in which women participated in society. Lefkowitz argues that there is little evidence "that it is possible or desirable for women to adopt any pattern of existence other than those traditionally assigned to them."[544] Women that were notable for achieving positions of power and influence or making "extraordinary achievement[s]" were most often "aristocrats, and almost always related to an important man."[545] Clark argues that in many cases a free woman's main occupation was to run a household.[546] She further argues that the restriction of women to the household and limitations in legal and social structures may have frustrated women.[547] "Women did not vote, did not serve as *iudices*, were not senators or magistrates or holders of major priesthoods."[548] We should not use these characterizations as rules to examine women in all ancient societies, but I suggest that this model provides us with a vantage point from which we can start considering the participation of women in early Jesus groups. For this reason a brief consideration of the honour and shame paradigm engaged by Margaret Y. MacDonald and David Cohen is warranted.

According to these scholars, the reciprocal nature of honour (a value typically embodied by men) and shame (a fault typically embodied by women) had a direct impact on what we call gender distinctions and expectations.[549] The embodiments of honour and shame were believed to determine the respect or disrespect a family received: women who did not live according to the gender standards brought shame to her family. In an attempt to guarantee their familial honour and household integrity, men guarded and controlled their female relatives, were vigilant over

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[544] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 60.
[545] Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, 61.
[546] Clark, "Roman Women," 48–49.
[547] Clark, "Roman Women," 52.
[548] Clark, "Roman Women," 49.
[549] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 27–30; Cohen, "Seclusion, Seperation, and the Status of Women," 136–42.

their chastity and forcefully separated them from the public.[550] Men and women became associated with dichotomous public and private spheres and were expected to act within the limitations of such spheres in order that sexual purity could be "both guarded and demonstrated to the community."[551] Ideally restricted to the private sphere, women accessed the public through the back door: they "exercised their influence through men and not over them."[552]

Having outlined general gender expectations in the Greco-Roman world, we are prepared to consider if the Corinthian women fit in this paradigm and whether they found their participation sufficient. I suggest that a consideration of archaeological evidence for Corinthian female hairstyles and head-coverings will help determine the social atmosphere and the degree to which female prophets innovatively broke social customs. "The artifacts from Corinth that portray women suggest that Paul's advice that women wear their hair long was in harmony with Greco-Roman customs."[553] By no means uniform, the hair of women depicted on coins, marble portraits, figurines, and statues is generally long and tied up.[554] In line with social conventions, Paul states that women should wear their hair *peribolaion* or wrapped and fastened rather than down.[555] Citing Dionysiac rituals, Thompson argues that local customs dictated that women could only let their hair down publicly "on special occasions, such as mourning, some Greek wedding ceremonies, or religious rites."[556] Thus, while Corinthian practices allowed for women to unleash their hair during specific occasions, Paul argues that women should maintain fastened

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[550] Macdonald, *Early Christian Women*, 28–29.

[551] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 29–30; Cohen, "Seclusion, Seperation, and the Status of Women," 136–37.

[552] Gregory E. Sterling, "Women in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds (323 BCE-138 CE)," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Carroll D. Osburn; Joplin, Miss.: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 72; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 79.

[553] Cynthia L. Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* (1988): 112.

[554] Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul," 107–111.

[555] Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul," 112.

[556] Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul," 112 citing Dionysiac rites.

hair. This instruction is important for my research project for two reasons: 1) Paul's instructions in conjunction with archaeological evidence suggest that Corinthian women acted in manners contra the idealized gender social expectations; and 2) the loosening of hair during ritualizations was not specific to early Corinthian practices.

As depicted by the portraits of women in Corinth, the choice of women to pray unveiled may not be untypical of the area. Thompson argues that communities with which Paul was more familiar (specifically southern Asia Minor, Syria and Arabia) supported the veiling of women in public. However, Corinthian women felt that they had a choice to uncover their heads. Because it seems reasonable to suggest that the women depicted in the portraits would wish to be perceived as respectable, "[…o]ne may [also] infer that bareheadedness in itself was not a sign of a socially disapproved lifestyle."[557] The choice of Corinthian women to pray and prophesy unveiled may not have been perceived by the Jesus group as ground breaking but is notable none-the-less. I suggest that the circumstances when women, whether belonging to early Jesus groups or other associations, found the opportunity to "let their hair loose" is significant. This test-case presents evidence that women belonging to various associations in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world, not only the early Corinthian Jesus group, participated in rituals with their hair unveiled and down.

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the manner in which women are described in the earliest Jesus group literature does not reflect the activities of women who belonged to Pauline groups. This chapter has engaged redescription goals and has considered feminist approaches and research set forth by scholars like MacDonald, Shepard Kraemer, Schüssler Fiorenza and Clark. I have

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[557] Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-Coverings, and St. Paul," 112.

presented evidence that women were active participants in the earliest Jesus groups. By examining the circumstances surrounding the recognition of named and sometimes titled women in the Pauline epistles, I have demonstrated that women were able to achieve positions of power and influence. Of particular significance, this chapter has also demonstrated that in the case of the praying and prophesying women in Corinth, we should be leery of arguing that such powers and influences were restricted to women who belonged to early Jesus groups. As will be seen later in this project, this test-case demonstrates the need to drastically reconsider current feminist methodological approaches that prioritize the practices of women in Jesus groups over those women belonging to other associations.

8. WOMEN IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Having completed an examination of women in the early Pauline communities, I will now proceed to consider evidence for women in the later communities that come into view in the post-Pauline Pastoral epistles. As was stated in the previous chapter, a comparison of the evidence for female leadership and opportunities found in the Pauline epistles with that found in the Pastoral letters suggests that the social make-up of early Jesus groups was not fixed. This chapter will test the hypothesis that women who lived in Pauline communities were granted greater influence and leadership opportunities than women who lived in the later communities that claimed Paul as their foundational authority. I will examine the Pastoral epistles for evidence of female leadership and participation as well as consider incidental evidence found in the Pastor's instructions for appropriate behaviour of women. I will then examine the development of patriarchy by engaging the comparative method to contrast evidence found in the Pauline epistles and the later Pastoral letters. This comparison will reveal that leadership became concerned with long-lasting religious and social structures and moved to privilege male leadership and restrict female roles and functions.

The Pastorals

Though the Pastoral epistles are short in length, these texts provide us with a substantial amount of information reflecting the behaviour and expectations of women. Because these letters consist "of instructions concerning Christian living and social interaction," it is not surprising that women are included among the exhortations.[558] It is by engaging the hermeneutics of suspicion and considering the prescriptive instructions in conjunction with incidental evidence for actual

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[558] Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 386.

behaviour that we can better understand how women acted in the Pastoral communities and how such behaviours were received by the leaders. We need to look beyond the surface of the Pastor's instructions to determine how women acted.

Unlike the evidence considered from the Pauline epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus focus on limiting or restricting the behaviour of women, do not name any women and do not discuss the contributions of women in a positive fashion. The Pastor's instructions suggest that the author did not approve of some of the women's activities and believed that corrective behaviour was necessary. As such, it would be foolish to assume that the Pastor's prescriptive instructions which were intended to correct "misbehaviours" accurately reflected the actual behaviour of women.[559] Furthermore, it would be uncritical to assume that the "indiscretions" committed by these women only consisted of a falling away from community practices and were not supported by the larger Pastoral community.[560]

Though the exact nature of the relationship between the prescriptive instructions and actual participation of women in the Pastoral epistles is uncertain, it is probable that women's attempts to uphold positions of influence and authority were challenged and condemned by male leadership. Whether or not attempts to subordinate women were accepted without disagreement is another question.[561] Following redescription goals, this chapter will consider how the

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[559] While prohibitions and instructions directed at behaviour suggest that this behaviour is present, there is no way to be certain that such activities or behaviour are taking place.

[560]"Perhaps it is better to recognize that in any society there is an interplay between ideal standards and actual behaviour, but that the latter is not necessarily to be seen simply as a falling away from the former. Individuals and groups consciously 'define, manipulate, interpret, ignore, violate, and, ultimately, reproduce' the acknowledged codes of law and ethics, both in their social practice and in the construction of underlying implicit social norms. As ever, rules, practice, and explanatory discourse are interconnected within actual socio-historical contexts" (Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 159. Quoting D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 18–24).

[561] The question of acceptance or resistance to subordination will be considered at length in later sections of this research project.

contributions of women were censored, how they were not silent and how they actively

participated in their religious community.

Positions of Authority

In the most general sense, the Pastoral letters "desired to bring Paul's authority to bear upon the

changed circumstances of church life, reflect the life of a community where the balance between

isolation and engagement of the world has shifted towards greater engagement."[562] The Pastor

used Paul's name to redefine early Jesus associations and reorganize leadership structures. "In

comparison to earlier Pauline writings, the Pastorals are striking for the evidence they provide

for church offices."[563] Unlike the references made to titled women in the Pauline letters, women

are no longer granted the opportunity to hold positions of authority in the Pastorals. Furthermore,

as per the Pastor, the organization of the church was to become strictly regulated and under the

authority of irreproachable men.[564]

> The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task.
> Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible,
> respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not
> quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well,
> keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way- for if someone does
> not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's
> church (1 Tim 3:1-5)?[565]

This list of requirements for the position of bishop suggests that the Pastor sought leaders that

would evoke respect within and outside of the religious community: "[the bishop or deacon]

must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the

devil" (1 Tim 3:7). The Pastor's quality control process for selecting leaders extends from an

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[562] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 155.
[563] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 155.
[564] 1 Tim 3:1–13.
[565] The Pastor also sets out a similar list of requirements for deacons in his letter.

internal realm to the public sphere where outsider perception is influential.[566] His list of

qualifications is both preventative and responsive: he is responding to current "inappropriate"

behaviour because he is seeking positive engagement with the outside community.

While the author never explicitly states that women are to be excluded from leadership

positions, the implied disqualification is best understood in conjunction with the appropriate

behaviour outlined in 1 Tim 3. Though the Pastor makes a reference to women in his discussion

of the requirements of deacons, there is no evidence that the author supported the appointment of

female deacons. "Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all

things" (1 Tim 3:11). Though the translation of this passage from Greek is literal, there is debate

surrounding the rendition of γυναῖκας. Greek does not have different terms for the words "man"

and "husband" or "woman" and "wife."[567] While the NRSV translates this word (from the noun

γυνή) as "women," other translations and some scholars suggest that "their wives" is a more

accurate translation. An interpretation that focuses on women as wives is supported by the

author's requirements that individuals who aspired to the position of bishop keep his house in

order and his children submissive. If accurate, this interpretation suggests that the realm of

leadership is entirely male and necessary qualities extend into familial requirements.[568]

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[566] The letter to Titus also provides a list of requirements for elders and bishops. Elders are
required to be "blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery, and
not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-
tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness,
prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled" (Titus 1:6–8).

[567] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 18.

[568] Madigan and Osiek argue that in these passages γυναῖκας is best translated as woman rather
than wife. They support their argument with the description of Phoebe in Romans (*Ordained Women*, 18).
While this translation seems to be a trend among feminist scholars, the content of 1Timothy does not
support the argument that the Pastor supported the inclusion of women in leadership roles. I suggest that
this translation might reflect modern interests.

Appropriate Dress and Appearance

The Pastor's concern with women drawing unwanted attention extended beyond leadership roles and positions of authority. In 1 Timothy 2:8–12 the Pastor states that "women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (1 Tim 2:8-12). In these verses the Pastor attempts to regulate the appearance, activities and status of women.

In antiquity, clothing and adornments were perceived as markers of ethnicity, social rank, economic status and moral character.

> Dress was a significant preoccupation for Judeans and Christians in antiquity. Dress, whether material or metaphoric, figured significantly in daily life, in texts, and in ritual practices. It functioned in a range of ways: as a way to construct and communicate identity, as a means to conform or distinguish, as a locus of dispute and resistance, or as a path to or expression of holiness. Clothing, adornments, and modes of dressing, therefore, can be a productive windows through which to study religiosity on the ancient world.[569]

As demonstrated by Kristi Upson-Saia, early Christian leaders were concerned with the dress of their members because it communicated a message to both insiders and outsiders. Clothing and dress were recognized as markers of identities and boundaries and could be used to maintain unity or assert difference.[570] Dress can also identify or evoke a "type" of individual. "Dress, in short, communicates by playing on expectations. Thus a modification to conventional dress codes can signal a slight or complete rejection of community values and identities and it

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[569] Alicia J. Batten, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and Kristi Upson-Saia, "What Shall We Wear?" in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity* (ed. Alicia J. Batten, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and Kristi Upson-Saia; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 1. Batten, Daniel-Hughes and Upson-Saia note that dress and clothing are different terms. Dress refers "to a wide range of items and functions" including ensembles, adornments, inscriptions or the arrangement of body parts ("What Shall We Wear," 15).

[570] Batten, Daniel-Hughes, and Upson-Saia, "What Shall We Wear," 2–3.

regularly solicits comment from observers."[571] The type of dress worn by an individual signals their status, gender or role. Challenges to traditional dress would draw attention.

"[E]arly Christians claimed that the simple dress of their members—especially of their women—proved that they possessed greater virtue than their pagan neighbours."[572] Upson-Saia argues that by restricting women to modest clothing and forbidding adornments, leaders sought to use women as evidence of superior morality and proof that their group was able to overcome their weakest members' faults and vices.[573] As pieces of evidence, women became potential "showpieces" of Christian groups.[574] In antiquity it was believed that ornamentation, jewellery, cosmetics and lavish clothing were "markers of feminine vice [...] that communicated feminine vanity, decadence and super-sexuality."[575] Women who adorned themselves in this fashion were also understood to be seductive, greedy, overly concerned with self-satisfaction, improperly using wealth, idolatrous, sexual depraved, and deceptive.[576] Considering the relationship between outward appearance and morality, the Pastor restricted the dress of women in attempt to gain honour for this Jesus association.

The Pastor's prescriptions also seek to restrict the manners in which women are able to contribute to the development of their religious group.[577] In 1 Timothy 2:8–12, the Pastor uses the Genesis creation story to rationalize the submission and subordination of women. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and

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[571] Batten, Daniel-Hughes, and Upson-Saia, "What Shall We Wear," 10–11.
[572] Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[573] Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 7–14.
[574] Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 35.
[575] Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 14.
[576] Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 22, 41.
[577] Attempts to silence women have a long history in early Christian literature and can also be seen in non-Jesus group ideals. For a consideration of silence in early Christian literature see Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Plaimpsest*, 4–5. Of interest, Haines-Eitzen suggests that the presentation and discussion of women's roles in texts was malleable and manipulated through scribes and copying (*The Gendered Palimpsest,* 8). This line of argument provides a strong support for scholars who argue that 1 Cor 14:34–35 was interpolated and does not indicate that Paul sought to silence women.

became transgressor" (1 Tim 2:13-14). Though perceived as members of a lesser gender, the Pastor insists that women were granted the opportunity for salvation if they followed the appropriate gender expectations. Women were instructed that they could be saved "through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (1 Tim 2:15). According to the Pastor, women were not permitted to teach and were restricted to silence and submission because they were women: female assertiveness was considered dangerous. These instructions coupled with leadership quality control paradigms suggest that women were only valued by the Pastor for their capacity to conform to idealized traditional gender roles. The concerns with how women learned, participated in religious activities, and achieved salvation suggest that the Pastor attempted to prevent women from crossing into a venue which could garner outside criticism.[578]

Power Wielding Widows?

Though the Pastor acknowledges the possibility that women could achieve the title and status of χήρας or widow, a position that entailed social and financial support, he sought to restrict membership. In 1 Timothy 5:3 the Pastor states that only "real" widows should be provided with title and status: "Honour widows who are really widows" (1 Tim 5:3). As outlined in his letter, the Pastor considers "real" widows to be virtuous women beyond childbearing age who subscribe to traditional gender expectations and are completely dependent upon the group.[579] "She must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown

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[578] The Pastor's instructions for female silence and submission can also be found in Titus where he consistently exhorts on the activities and expectations of women. "Tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they might encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:3–5).

[579] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 162–63.

hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way" (1 Tim 5:10). According to the Pastor, women who did not fulfill this list of qualifying requirements were not worthy of being considered χήρας. As such, the women that the Pastor found lacking were no longer granted the privilege, honour or financial support associated with the title widow.

The author's fixation on traditional household rules and his objection to granting younger women the status of widow suggests that some leaders were concerned with the extent to which women participated in the group. The Pastor accuses younger women as having incurred "condemnation for having violated their first pledge. Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say" (1 Tim 5:12-13). These passages indicate that the Pastor has concerns about the activities of young widows and that these women were perceived by some as causing problems.[580] His charge suggests that some younger widows took on a ministerial role that involved travel (or household visits) and instruction.[581] The refusal of some widows to maintain an oath of celibacy was also seen as problematic. "In the case of the Pastoral epistles it seems that what outsiders are saying about early Christian women is being internalized and transformed into a teaching about the behaviour of women."[582] The Pastor responded to the threat of shame by promoting strong male leadership and requiring conformity to the traditional Greco-Roman gender roles.[583]

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[580] Ehrman, *The New Testament,* 387.
[581] The criticism of women as travelling gossips was not unique or specific to early Christian women. Of interest, the criticisms "reflect the informal female communication network that functions in most traditional cultures, which men typical disdain because they are excluded from it" (Madigna and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 22).
[582] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 159.
[583] 1 Tim. 5:4; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 59–60.

The Women behind the Pastorals

Using the feminist methodological approaches set forth by MacDonald, Schüssler Fiorenza and

Shepard Kraemer coupled with the theoretical approaches outlined by Smith, Mack, Cameron,

Miller, Arnal, and Braun, we may reconsider the Pastoral epistles in view of their prescriptive

instructions and incidental evidence. As in the case of the Pauline letters, a theory project

engaged in redescription recognizes that the Pastor's instructions do not reflect the historical

lives of women but are attempts to solve "problems."[584] Again, by engaging the hermeneutics of

suspicion and considering the historical social circumstances that provoked the literature, it

becomes possible to understand how women actually participated in the Pastoral groups.

Specifically, we ask: why did the Pastor include such weighty restrictions on women?

If the instructions in the Pastoral epistles are taken at face value as reflecting historical

circumstances, we would conclude that women were not active participants in these groups.

However, a consideration of the Pastor's intentions to restrict the behaviour of women suggests

that he believed that such restrictions were necessary.[585] If women had acted within idealized

gender boundaries and had been silent and submissive, the Pastor would not have needed to

insist that "[he permits] no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (1

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[584] See Ulrike Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes": Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik der Pastoralbriefe* (WUNT 2/65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994). In her examination of women's place in the ethics and theology of the Pastoral Epistles (specifically prohibitions, requirements of silence, necessity of goods works, subordination and the restrictions placed on the office of widow found in 1 Tim), Wagener argues that the Pastor's establishment of household codes represent a move towards authoritarianism and a response to the problem of women. Specifically, Wagener describes the ethics and instructions in the Pastoral epistles as a strategy to restrict active, influential, ascetic and charismatic women as well as secure the role of men in the community (*Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes,"* 235, 238–239). In a review of Wagener's research, Braun succinctly describes the *Frauenproblem* as "a conflict of interests between men and women, a conflict that consisted of a contest over leadership positions" (Willi Braun, review of Ulrike Wagener*, Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes"; Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik der Pastoralbriefe, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 402–3). There was a conflict over the manner in which power was distributed (Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes,"* 245). Like Braun, I support Wagener's suggestion that there is a perceived problem with power distribution along gender lines. However, also like Braun, I am hesitant to accept that the *Frauenproblem* is the only motivating factor behind the household ecclesiology.

[585] Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes,"* 235–45.

Tim 12). The hermeneutics of suspicion suggest that women in the Pastoral communities acted in a fashion that the author considered improper and drew unwanted attention to the group. It is because women taught men and held authority in their groups that the Pastor sought damage control.[586] Furthermore, we should not assume that the Pastor's instructions and restrictions reflect the needs or attitudes of the individuals he addressed. For example, "[w]hile the author of the Pastorals depicts the visits as frivolous and lacking in ministerial purpose, we should not assume that the young widows themselves understood their activities this way."[587] It is more plausible that these women recognized the significance of their ability to access the private realm and took initiative to instruct and convert other women. We should also not assume that the Pastoral groups did not support the full participation of these women in their associations. We cannot conclude that because the Pastor sought to restrict the activities of women that the male members of the group also sought this restriction.

While on the surface apologetic literature appears to address the concerns of "outsiders," the majority of the readers of the Pastoral epistles were "insiders."[588] Noting the audience of the

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[586] MacDonald explores the type of unwanted pagan attention that the Pastor sought to eliminate in her book, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*. Her research demonstrates that an examination of "the interplay between early Christianity and the Greco-Roman world [... illustrates] how pagan sources can add to our knowledge of early Christianity itself" (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 60). The sources that criticize the participation of women in early Christian groups offers scholars insight into the perception of outsiders as well as possible contributing source to restrictions placed upon women in Christian literature. In *Octavius*, Minucius Felix cites anti-Christian polemic attributed to the Roman orator Marcus Cornelius Fronto. Though he never offers any salient examples of problematic incidents involving women, Fronto criticizes their nature as gullible and weak. Furthermore, he problematizes the participation as well as the visibility of women in Christian groups and takes issue with the blurring of the public and private domains (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, 59–60; Octavius 8–9). Felix's text demonstrates that outsiders were concerned about the manner in which Christian women participated in the public world and men participated in the domestic realm. "The heart of Christianity's threat lies in rendering the public sphere and extension of the private. […] However much of the reality of church as 'new family' facilitated the involvement of women, it clearly also heightened Christianity's offensiveness and left women vulnerable to scrutiny" (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 61). The anti-Christian polemic lends insight into the desire of church leaders to conform to traditional Greco-Roman standards and restrict the participation and influence of women (MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 62–65).
[587] MacDonald, *Early Christian* Women, 158.
[588] Judith M. Lieu, "Their Wives Are as Chaste as Virgins, Their Daughters Modest: The Role of Women in Early Christian Apologetics," in *The Making of Christianity: Conflicts, Contracts, and*

letter, we should consider that the Pastor is not only trying to circumvent criticism and impress outsiders. He also attempted to correct these practices for a perceived benefit of these groups. In these apologetic texts, the description of and instructions for women served the purposes of 1) demonstrating the superiority of their morals compared to those of non-members; 2) maintaining the integrity of the group's female bodies and;[589] 3) developing the concept of a Christian identity and the place of women in this category.[590] The use of women as identity markers or tools suggest that the author sought to both maintain and challenge contemporary ideals about traditional gender boundaries.

Conclusions

The Pastor lays out rigid organization structures that place strict rules upon the selection of male leadership and does not permit women to hold positions of authority.[591] The list of requirements for leadership candidates suggest that the Pastor was concerned about the qualifications and appearances of authority figures and sought to find men that were beyond the reproach of outsiders. The Pastor did not want unconventional behaviour drawing unwanted attention to Jesus groups. According to MacDonald, the Pastorals "clearly display an effort to establish rules to govern the lives of women in the community, to limit their involvement in certain ministerial roles, and to ensure that they remain faithful to their duties as wives in a Greco-Roman

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Constructions: Essays in Honor of Bengt Holmberg (ed. Samuel Byrskog and Magnus Zetterholm; Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 104.

[589] "Books and bodies were vulnerable and the fact that pains were taken to protect both books and bodies alludes to their power" (Haines-Eitzen, 9).

[590] Lieu, "Their Wives Are as Chaste as Virgins," 103–27.

[591] 1 Tim 3:1–13. "The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?"

household."[592] This evidence suggests that while the Pastor was concerned with the activities and behaviour of both men and women in Jesus associations that he focused on reformatting the participation of women.

Judith Lieu argues that in apologetic literature "the real subjects of this discourse are in each case the men who have to prove their difference, their integrity, their control, and their masculinity. The women of the Apologies have little to tell us about the hopes and achievements of the real women of the early Christian movement."[593] By changing the focus of the research from women to the author, Lieu's methodology considers the source of the restrictions. However, I suggest that it would be premature to argue that the Pastoral epistles do not provide us with any evidence of the achievements of women. As we have seen, the fact that the author attempts to restrict the activities of women suggests that they were prominent in the group. By considering the source, the participants and the greater practices of women in antiquity, we can better understand the manners in which women participated in these groups.

The restrictions and instructions which delineate the appropriate selection processes and organization provide us with a glimpse into the changing role of women within early Jesus groups. Or put differently, these limitations make us aware of an attempt to restrict the participation of women. As demonstrated in this chapter, women in the earlier Pauline groups had the opportunity to engage in leadership roles and challenge idealized gender expectations and the later Pastoral restrictions suggest that the author believed that limitations were necessary. Using the hermeneutics of suspicion, the texts suggest that while women belonging to both the Pauline and Pastoral groups may have exercised authority, male leadership in the later groups grew concerned about the activities of women.

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[592] MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 155.
[593] Lieu, "Their Wives Are as Chaste as Virgins," 127.

A Few General Conclusions about Opportunities and Restrictions

Though Paul's concern of public perception in his letters is not absent, unlike the Pastor, his instructions for women do not limit opportunities for participation and influence. A comparison between the Pauline and Pastoral women suggests that male leadership became concerned with long-lasting social structures including the moves to privilege male leadership and restrict female roles and functions. In light of the evidence presented in the past two chapters, we must consider whether the participation of women in the earliest Jesus associations and as such their identity as female Jesus followers was found to be too imaginative for later leaders. In other words, evidence suggests that the practices of women belonging to the earliest Jesus groups were challenged and some male leaders attempted to establish participation paradigms that would not challenge contemporary leaders or "raise eyebrows" with non-members.

Through a consideration of prescriptive instructions, circumstantial evidence and the hermeneutics of suspicion, we have addressed some questions but have raised others. I have demonstrated that women in the later Pastoral groups faced restrictions that were not prevalent in the earlier Pauline communities. And while the Pastoral epistles demonstrate that women did not act within the idealized silent and submissive paradigm, the letters exhibit a concern with the development of hierarchy and patriarchy as well as apprehension with outsider opinion and the restriction of the participation of women.

While scholars convincingly argue that some second century male leaders were concerned with the perception of their groups by outsiders, there are other questions which need to be addressed. For example, did second-century male leaders become uncomfortable with the

participation of women in Jesus groups strictly because of a concern with the perceptions of non-members? Evidence presented in this project indicates that it is not prudent to assume that the only reason attempts were made to restrict the activities of women was because leaders were concerned with the responses of non-members. Such a claim would suggest that non-member women consistently followed the idealized traditionally accepted Greco-Roman ideals and never crossed gender boundaries. The previous chapters on banqueting, meal practices, *pneuma* practices and the brief consideration of hairstyles in antiquity reveal that this is indeed *not* the case. Suggesting that there is possibly nothing *a priori* or innately special about the treatment of women in the earliest Jesus associations, evidence tells us to look beyond the existence of these groups for answers. Considering the previous examinations of banqueting, *pneuma* and the prophesying women in Corinth, I suggest that we will find answers in the practices of ritualizations in Jesus groups.

9. SPIRIT IN THE PASTORALS

This research project has demonstrated that the categories apocalyptic and eschatological should not be used as convenient short cuts to explain the development of early Jesus group practices or beliefs. This project has suggested that these paradigms are not fruitful to explain the developments and restrictions of leadership for women in early Jesus groups. Rather, the previous chapters have presented evidence that ritualizations (like meal and banqueting practices as well as *pneuma* practices) provided participants with opportunities to engage in social experimentation and challenge socially accepted paradigms.

After considering the descriptions and incidental evidence of women in the Pauline and Pastoral groups, we now have the necessary background to determine how ritualizations impacted the participation of women in Jesus groups. This chapter will determine whether *pneuma* practices or social experimentations, like prayer and prophecy, found in the Pauline letters can also be evidenced in the Pastoral epistles. This chapter will determine if there is any evidence for social innovations or experimentations despite the inclination of the Pastor to promote rigid leadership qualifications and paradigms. Succinctly, this chapter will consider whether women in the Pastoral groups had the opportunity to experiment during ritualizations like the praying and prophesying women in Corinth. Of significance for this project, this chapter will consider the possibility that the opportunities for women to participate and gain leadership positions within early Jesus groups are directly linked to their practices and ritualizations.

Women and Social Experimentation in Pauline and Pastoral Groups

This project used 1 Corinthians 11 as a test-case to consider the ritualizations of prayer and prophesy by women in Corinth. While these ritualizations were not the only performances that

women in early Pauline Jesus groups practiced, their involvement in these particular

ritualizations is notable. First, their participation in this ritualization is made clear in Paul's letter.

Second, the manner in which women practiced these ritualizations was seen as problematic by

Paul but perhaps not by other members of their group. And while Paul takes issue with the

fashion these ritualizations are performed (hairstyle issues), he does not take offence with the

fact that women are participating in *pneuma* activities. The evidence in 1 Corinthians, coupled

with evidence found in other Greco-Roman ritualizations found in association practices, suggests

that participation in *pneuma*-related activities provided women with the opportunity to cross

some gender boundaries and engage in social experimentation.

The previous chapter that examined and redescribed the Pastoral women demonstrates

that attempts were made by the author to limit their participation in their Jesus groups. This

chapter also suggested that the Pastor's concerns with long term structures and outsider

perception were important factors in his development of the restrictions placed upon women. I

suggest that an examination of ritualizations (or lack of ritualizations) that provided opportunities

for experimentation in the Pastoral letters will help determine how and why attempts were made

by at least one male leader to restrict women.

What do the Pastorals tell us about Ritualizations, *pneuma* and Experimentation?

Before exploring the impact of ritualizations on the opportunities for women in the Pastoral

communities, I will first consider evidence in the Pastoral letters for practices that engaged in

social experimentation as well as investigate the manner in which the author describes access to

pneuma. More precisely, I will present evidence or the lack of evidence for activities that

enabled social experimentation and the reinterpretation of the idealized traditional social boundaries.

Unlike the Pauline epistles, the Pastoral letters do not provide direct evidence for ritualizations that provided opportunities for testing the idealized traditional social boundaries. Unlike Paul, the Pastor does not discuss appropriate behaviour for banqueting or meal practices, nor does the Pastor discuss group ritualizations involving prophesying. Nor does the Pastor directly address the issue of *pneuma* or *pneuma* practices in relationship to the majority of the group. To be sure, I do not think that this evidence or lack of evidence necessarily suggests that the author of the Pastoral epistles does not acknowledge or promote any ritualizations. However, considering his instructions regarding the importance of the idealized traditional structure, we should not be surprised that the Pastor does not support activities that could potentially challenge the social structures. Rather, when discussing practices, these epistles only address the activities of a few select individuals who have been given authority by "recognized" leadership.

Leaders and the use of *Pneuma*

Previous chapters in this project considered how individuals from numerous social classes and both genders engaged in *pneuma* ritualizations. Evidence suggests that in antiquity men and women from both upper and lower classes were known to prophesy and speak in tongues. Evidence also suggests that these individuals were able to garner influence and status within their group because of their *pneuma* skills. The Pastor, on the other hand, does not discuss the value or the possibility of *pneuma* practices amongst the general membership of the group. The Pastor only refers to *pneuma* in two places in 1 Timothy.

In the first case, the Pastor justifies and validates his instructions, teachings and the appointment of Timothy with prophecies. "I am giving you these instructions Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you might fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience" (1 Tim 1:18–19). This passage suggests that according to the Pastor, Timothy's appointment was validated with an appeal to prophecy. While we do not know the exact content or nature of the prophesies, they may be little more than predictions, the use of προφητείας as a source of teachings and authority in the letter suggests that at the least the Pastor recognized them as a tool to legitimize Timothy's role as a leader. To be sure, the group's understandings of prophecy and *pneuma* ritualizations may have differed from the Pastor's. In fact, there is no evidence that the Pastor recognized any *pneuma* ritualizations. However, historical and literary evidence suggests that the argument for authority from prophecy would have made sense to this group.

Unfortunately the Pastor does not reveal the source of these prophecies. However, we are not at a complete loss. If we consider the author's interpretation of leadership and the roles and influence that these individuals held over the majority of the group,[594] I suggest that it is possible to surmise who he believed had the opportunity to engage in prophetic activities. His instructions on social structure and the requirements for leadership suggest that for the Pastor authoritative prophecies or predictions for leadership came from the elite. If the Pastor's instructions suggest that only individuals in leadership positions can engage in prophecy, we have very little reason to believe that he would have argued that the ordinary members, much less women, prophesied authoritatively about Timothy.

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[594] For an in-depth examination of idealized social structures in the Pastoral epistles, see the previous chapter on women in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

The second mention of prophecy in the Pastoral epistles reveals the source of Timothy's gift. "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress" (1 Tim 4:14–15). Again, there is no evidence to suggest that the Pastor uses the term prophecy to describe the same activities that Paul does. As previously suggested, prophecy could refer to predictions or perhaps in this case could be a rhetorical term used to provide authority to the selection of Timothy. Regardless, it is noteworthy that once again prophecy is discussed as an authority or power available to elite members of the group. As depicted by the Pastor, these practices are not engaged by the masses and are only available to only a few leaders.

For the purposes of this research project, the Pastor's inclusion of prophecy in his instructions to Timothy is interesting for one reason. Different from the previous examination of 1 Corinthians, the Pastor only discusses prophecy or anything possibly related to *pneuma* in terms of leaders. As previously stated, the Pastor does not consider prophecy or *pneuma* ritualizations performed by the majority of group members. In fact, he does not discuss *pneuma* ritualizations at all. As we have already seen, the hermeneutics of suspicion have taught us that instructions do not necessarily reflect lived realities. In other words, just because the Pastor does not attribute prophecy or *pneuma* ritualizations to the greater community does not mean that they did not engage in these practices.

The Greater Community and "Unauthorized" *Pneuma* Practices

Though the Pastor only possible refers indirectly to the abilities of some leaders to prophesize (regardless of what this exactly entails), his letter is not completely void of the description of the

practices of the general populace of the group. I suggest that his references and instructions

regarding *pneuma* activities (specifically, πνεῦμα, πνεύμασιν πλάνοις, and δαιμονίων) might

provide insight into "unauthorized" use of the Spirit by non-leader group members.

In his warnings against false teachings and the importance of appropriate training, the

Pastor includes an exhortation about *pneuma* and the need to reject and abandon malevolent

beings. He states, "[n]ow the spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith

by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars

whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from

food [...]. Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales" (1 Tim 4:1–3, 7). While

exhortations against false teachings or teachers were certainly not new, I propose that this

instruction needs to be understood within its historical circumstances. Or put differently, did

these instructions result from new motivations?

Because the Pastoral epistles place great importance upon the development and

maintenance of an appropriate hierarchy, we should consider what impacts these types of

developments had on ritualizations. We also need to determine whether attempts were made to

restrict access to *pneuma*. Specific for this project, it is particular interesting to consider whether

"deceitful spirits," the teachings of "demons" and "unauthorized" *pneuma* ritualizations can be

attributed to women. Or put plainly, were "unauthorized" *pneuma* ritualizations performed by

women automatically considered by some leaders as daemonic?

As has been previously suggested, the quality control processes instated by the Pastor

reveal a concern for the types of men selected for positions of power, instruction and influence. I

have also suggested that the Pastor's attempts to restrict the activities of women in these groups

imply that he believed that such limitations were necessary. The Pastor exhibits concern with

who taught and what was taught. The Pastor instructs Timothy to "[s]how yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us" (Titus 2:7-8). On the surface, the Pastor's instructions suggest that he is concerned with outside perception of their groups. His concern with outside perception here is consistent with that found with the selection of leaders as well as the dress and behaviour of women. However, by using the hermeneutics of suspicion, we may surmise that the Pastor considered competing teachings and prophesy as unsound and requiring censorship. Evidence in the letter suggests not only that there was concern with outsider perception but also that there were conflicting teachings and non-leadership personnel laying claim to authority. The Pastor further instructs, "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith" (1 Tim 6:20-21). Once again, we are faced with an instruction that refers to false knowledge and profane chatter within the group. The Pastor's concern with "unauthorized" discussions is further supported by the description of the power wielding widows that were considered in the previous chapter. In 1 Tim 5:12-13, the Pastor accuses younger women as having incurred "condemnation for having violated their first pledge. Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say." Again, this passage suggests that women participated in ministerial roles and instructed members of their group. The Pastor's response to their activities again suggests that he understood their behaviour as problematic and wrong.

We should not assume that the participants of these activities believed that they were doing anything wrong or held "false knowledge." Just because the Pastor considers the actions of

these "chatty" and "contradictory" women to be inappropriate does not suggest that the participants also understand their practices and participation in these terms. This is best understood with Lightstone's previously considered interpretation of the holy man and the magician. We are thus faced with a situation where "good" and "bad" depends on the eye of the beholder.

While the Pastor does not reveal the source of what he deems to be false knowledge or instructions, I suggest that we are once again not at a complete loss for discovering who the Pastor found culpable. His letters attribute some of the problematic behaviour and teachings to "unauthorized" *pneuma* ritualizations. I previously stated that as according to the Pastor, the use and interpretation of πνεῦμα by non-leaders resulted in πνεύμασιν and πλάνοις δαιμονίων. As such, these practices were perceived by the Pastor as akin to manipulation and distorted the "real" message. What did not fall in line with his conception of acceptable early Jesus group teachings and practices were aligned with evil. Because the women that participated in a leadership capacity taught a competing view, they were held in contempt by the Pastor.

As has been astutely demonstrated by redescription projects, we cannot consider early Christian groups as homogenous units linked to each other. Rather, different Jesus associations practiced different ritualizations and interpreted teachings as per their specific circumstances. Evidence suggests that not only were groups different from each other but that there may have been competing messages or practices within individual groups.[595] This is evident in the just considered case of the "chatty" women and old wives' tales. As groups began to develop hierarchies, some leaders, like the Pastor, placed restrictions on the manners in which members could participate in Jesus groups. In the case of 1 Timothy, women were restricted by the Pastor

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[595] This is particularly evidenced in the examinations of conflict in the Pauline and Pastoral epistles.

from teaching roles. One conflict that arose both between and within groups centered on who had access to *pneuma*, who could interpret *pneuma* and who could prophesize. Some leadership attempted to limit who had the authority to participate in *pneuma* ritualizations. Individuals who did not qualify were depicted as malicious. The restrictions placed on women and the opposition of their leadership roles and teachings demonstrates that there is a gendered opposition to their activities. The Pastor's instructions for women and their exclusion from activities they understand to be beneficial accentuate how a male patriarch has become stressed over their influence in these groups.

What about Social Experimentation?

This research project previously considered the development of hierarchy and patriarchy paradigms in the Pastoral epistles. I suggested that the prescriptive instructions in these letters do not represent the actual activities practices of women within these groups. Rather, I argued that literature like the Pastorals demonstrates a concern by some leaders with the authority that women achieved in these developing Jesus groups.

This chapter has considered the lack of descriptions of "acceptable" *pneuma* ritualizations in the Pastoral epistles. I have demonstrated that practices which were used as an avenue for social experimentation in earlier Jesus groups became limited or were restricted by some leaders in later Pastoral communities. I suggest that the restrictions placed *on pneuma* ritualizations and as such social experimentation limited who could access positions of authority. This evidence suggests that women who belonged to Jesus groups where leaders restricted social experimentation and *pneuma* ritualizations (like the Pastoral communities) did not have as many opportunities for participation as women who belonged to communities which engaged in

performances or ritualizations that included social experimentation (like the Corinthian

community). Whereas previously their authorities as *pneuma* performers were accepted by

leaders, in later communities they were maligned. Women who previously were understood to be

leaders, acted as prophets and were involved in *pneuma* ritualizations are now depicted as

promoting profane myths and old wives' tales" (1 Tim 4:1–3, 7).

A Study that Raises Many More Questions

While these conclusions provide answers to some questions, they also raise many others. For

example; why would some leaders have attempted to restrict social experimentation? Do social

experimentation and ritualizations have any effect outside of "ritual time?" What if social

experiments were no longer only social experiments? What if the testing of boundaries during

ritualizations became common place in regular daily activities? Are restrictions based on

concerns for criticism or competition for power? Did individuals use ritualizations as a stepping

stool for power? Were restrictions linear, did they develop constantly and consistently over time?

To be sure, these questions are important for the development of ritual theory and the

redescription of women in the earliest Jesus groups. These are the types of questions that this

project will now address.

10. WOMEN AND THE MONTANIST COMMUNITY

This project has demonstrated that with the emergence of feminist biblical scholarship, there has been a re-evaluation of our assessment of the status, opportunities, and participation of women within early Jesus groups. Instead of solely focusing upon texts that support and re-enforce the traditional idealized Greco-Roman gender roles, feminist scholars have widened their search to include texts in which women appear with roles of leadership and the opportunity to participate in activities that were previously restricted to men.

Though such feminist scholarship has done a great deal to reconstruct and recover the lives of women in early Pauline and Pastoral communities, important questions regarding the participation of women remain unanswered. For example: did women willingly accept the later impositions of community leaders? What happened when women did not accept the restrictions of these new reformed roles? Were these restrictions universal or did individual communities respond to gender issues differently? How did ritualizations performed by women differ between groups? Did ritualizations in later groups still provide women with opportunities to engage in social experimentation?

Informed by feminist methodologies, I will examine the circumstances under which women achieved positions of leadership and influence in a time period when scholars assume that male leadership had eliminated the threat of female power.[596] I will utilize the third- and fourth- century Montanist community as a test-case to examine the status and opportunities offered to women in one rather popular form of Christianity that challenged the form of Christianity that would become dominant in the post-Constantinian period. I will then proceed to

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[596] Ross Shephard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 2002); Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

examine *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, a document believed to originate from a

Montanist group.[597] This document provides insight into the manner in which a Montanism

group interpreted a woman's perception of her leadership and the status and authority that her

community accorded her. As demonstrated in this text, confessor-martyrs were accorded a

position of influence and the power of interceding on behalf of Christians. I will examine how

Perpetua's impending execution provided her with the "power of the keys" where she was

granted the status of a minister and the power to forgive sins.[598] This source coupled with

information about the Montanists will allow me to identify specific reasons why some Christians

joined Montanist communities despite the attendant personal and social risks.

The Montanists

The Montanist movements developed in the second century and thrived until the fourth and fifth

centuries when they were quashed by the prevailing "orthodox" church.[599] Though the

movement was opposed early in its development, it was not short-lived and had a lasting impact

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[597] I will consider at length the authenticity and authorship of this document as well as the scholarly debate surrounding the origins and theological sympathies of this text. While some scholars argue that this text is not a Montanist document, I will argue that the *passio* includes New Prophetic sympathies.

[598] It was the imaginatively constructed belief that Perpetua was martyred and received special privileges from the divine (rather than simply executed by the state) which provided her with power and influence.

[599] Christine Trevett, *Montanist: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–2. Rex D. Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence of Montanism in The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 14. Trevett and Butler acknowledge that dating the beginnings of Montanism is difficult and the available sources are contradictory. With a thorough examination and consideration of Eusebius, Epiphanius, the Anonymous, Apollonius and socio-historical circumstances, Trevett suggests that the 160s are the most likely years for the rise of the movement (*Montanist*, 26–45). Though many scholars argue that the 170s are a more likely date for the development of the movement, Trevett convincingly demonstrates that the "seeds of the prophecy" would have to have been spread beforehand (*Montanist*, 38). As such, Montanists' success resulted from something that "already existed" (*Montanist*, 38–39). Furthermore, the settings of the 160s, specifically plague, warfare, earthquakes, and harassment cause individuals to seek hope. Trevett argues that Montanism offered them the promise of hope (*Montanist*, 42–43). Butler also considers an earlier date for the beginnings of Montanism. He suggests that while the New Prophecy likely spread to Rome in the early 170s that Montanus' prophesying likely began around 157 (*The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 14). Butler's dating seems to bring Eusebius' dating of 171 and Epiphanius' dating of 157 into a type of compromise.

on the Christian community. As described by Trevett, "[I]t was hard to kill."[600] Because there was resistance to Montanist groups and the majority of the sources that describe these movements are anti-Montanist, when considering the evidence for the New Prophecy we must read with the goal of seeing past prejudices and polemics.

The geography of the beginnings of Montanism is unclear and debated. It is said that the founding figure of Montanism began to prophesy with ecstatic behaviour in "Arbadau," a city located somewhere between Philadelphia and Pepuza.[601] The tradition holds that followers of Montanus proceeded to gather at Pepuza and Tymion.[602] Though the exact locations of these villages or cities are uncertain, Trevett argues that the reality of the geographical development of Montanist is directly related to areas where apocalyptic speculation was prominent. She suggests that members of the New Prophecy held success in geographical areas that already held apocalyptic worldviews: they adopted these tendencies and made these beliefs their own.[603] The majority of evidence for Montanism derives from groups in Asia Minor, Rome and Carthage; however, evidence also suggests that the movement reached Egypt.[604] The "geographical hub"[605]

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[600] Trevett, *Montanism*, 3.

[601] Trevett, *Montanism*, 15, 22, 26. It is not clear whether the village "Arbadau" was selected by Montanus for its religious resonance or if the name was designated by the Prophets afterwards. There is a location with a similar sounding name found in 4 Ezra. In this text, "a city built and set on a plain" is promised to the faithful (Trevett, *Montanism*, 25). The name of the field and its variants, Ardat (Ardab and Ardaf) has been linked to "Ardabau" because like its "namesake" it was sparsely populated and situated in a similar landscape. Furthermore, Zion was expected to appear without foundation (Trevett, *Montanism*, 25). Citing Tabbernee's search for Pepuza, Butler also argues that the location of the New Jerusalem bears similarity to the one described in Revelation 21 (*The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 12–13).

[602] Cities which were titled "Jerusalem" by the Prophets.

[603] Trevett, *Montanism*, 26. While the category apocalyptic as traditionally understood is problematic, I suggest that we can argue that some elements or characteristics associated with what is traditionally perceived as apocalyptic can be found in these groups.

[604] Trevett, *Montanism*, 46. Trevett admits that we cannot with certainty outline all of the paths that Montanism took and it might reach further east and west (Trevett, *Montanism* , 53).

[605] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 11.

of the movement and first successes of the Prophets were made in or around "Phrygia, in the

towns of Cuman, Otrous and Hierapolis/Hieropolis."[606]

"The Seeds of the Prophecy"

If we accept that Montanism did not materialize from nothing but developed from what Trevett

deems the "seeds of the Prophecy," we must also acknowledge that the movement developed

within an already existing Christian community.[607] The movement was not sporadically formed

by outsiders. Trevett states it thus: "[T]here was a ready market for the Prophecy's message and

[...] Christians in Phrygia, Galatia, Asia and elsewhere would not have succumbed to the

Prophecy had not some of them been ill at ease with aspects of life [such as moral laxity] in their

churches."[608] These discomforts coupled with emotional and social trauma from a plague, wars,

earthquakes and intolerance likely encouraged individuals to seek comfort or hope.[609] Some

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[606] Trevett, *Montanism*, 49. Primary evidence for the presence of the New Prophecy in Phrygia is prominent in the second- and third-century works of Eusebius, Clement, Origen, and Firmillian of Caesara. All four of these authors directly connect the New Prophecy with Phrygia (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.3.4; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.13.93.1, 7.17.108.1; Origen, *Princ.* 2.7.3, 28; Firmilian of Caesara, Epistle 75 in *The Epistles of Cyprian*). *The Martyrdom of Pionius* also refers to "a man named Eutychian from the Phrygian heresy" (11.1–2). In his fourth-century work *Panarion*, Epiphanius argues that the New Prophecy honoured Pepuza and existed in Cappadocia, Galatia, Phrygia, Cilicia, and Constantinople (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.14–15). The Anonymous connects the New Prophecy with Asia, particularly Ardabav, Phrygia, and Galatia. He also mentions several leaders by name and references their geographical location; Zoticus of Otrous, Montanus of Phrygia Mysia, Zoticus from Cumane and Julian from Apamea (The Anonymous, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 5. 16–17). Apollonius states that the Cataphrygian heresy flourished in Phrygia (Apollonius, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 18.1). He also informs his readers that Pepuza and Tymion were named Jerusalem (ibid., 18.2). Primary evidence for the presence of Montanism in Rome can also be found in Eusebius' writings where he speaks of a dialogue in Rome between Gaius and Proclus over the New Prophecy (*Hist. eccl.*, 2.25.5–7, 6.20.3). Evidence for Montanism in North Africa is most commonly drawn from Tertullian and *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (again, the debate surrounding the authenticity of the *passio* as a Montanist document will be examined when Perpetua's authority is considered). Tertullian's works provide a valuable insider resource for New Prophecy teachings on religious practices and beliefs.
[607] Trevett, *Montanism,* 38–39.
[608] Trevett, *Montanism,* 39–40, 42.
[609] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 17; Trevett, *Montanism,* 26, 42, 44. Evidence for earthquakes in Cappadocia and Pontus can be found in Cyprian *Ep.* lxxv.10. Evidence for sickness or plague can be found in Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* Bk VI.6. Galen the physician also discusses a plague in 166 C.E. that struck the provinces between Mesopotamia and Rome (*Methodi Medendi* xii). Eusebius argues that Marcus Aurelius' reign began "with the social upheaval caused by earthquakes"

individuals found this hope in ecstatic prophecy and were attracted to the "unrestrainable

enthusiasm and the message [Montanism] preached."[610] The self-designated name of their group,

New Prophecy, aptly demonstrates their vision of the future of Christianity as something

reformed.[611] Uncomfortable with the outpouring of *pneuma* in "inappropriate" ecstatic prophecy

and the abandonment of traditional roles, other Christian groups eventually marginalized the

Montanists.[612]

Montanism in a Nutshell[613]

Arguing that the New Prophecy was a revival movement of individuals seeking novel practices

in the midst of the developing institution, Trevett also suggests that the movement is important

for understanding the development of Christian groups and responses to the institutionalization

of the church.[614] She also claims that Montanism continues to "merit study" because new

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(Trevett, *Montanism,* 42; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* iv. 13, 4). The 160s brought war for both the East (with the Parthians) Parthians) and the Italians (an invasion of Italy by the Germans and Slavs) (Trevett, *Montanism* , 42). Though there is debate surrounding the degree to which early Christians were persecuted, evidence suggests that some individuals faced intolerance or were executed (see *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* and Tertullian's *Apol*. Xl.2)

[610] Trevett, *Montanism*, 50.

[611] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 9. Trevett refers to this movement as "proto-Montanism" and describes the adherents as "rigorous, prophetic [and] women-tolerating Christians" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 41).

[612] Trevett, *Montanism*, 40. Originally, there was little that separated Montanism from other Christian groups. "Those things regarded as rigours and enthusiasm peculiar to the New Prophecy were in fact little removed from what might be found among other Christians" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 52). This is perhaps evidenced by the fact that the first responses to this movement by the Catholic Church were sporadic and not well organized. As such, we are forced to ask, if there was an obvious contradiction between the first teachings of the Prophets and the emerging Catholic Church would the response have been more swift and vicious?

[613] Members of this religious movement referred to themselves as "The New Prophecy" or "The Prophecy" while non-members called them Phrygians, Pepuzites, and names related to a prophet; for example, Montanists, Priscillianists or Quintillianists (Trevett, *Montanism*, 2).

[614] Trevett, *Montanism*, 6. Trevett demonstrates that this view of Montanism is most prevalent among Protestant scholars (6). Her text examines the significant studies in Montanism and suggests that Montanism in not only assured a place in history but is also valuable for understanding early Christian groups (*Montanism*, 12, 15).

feminist insights have challenged the traditional understanding of women's positions and

practices in antiquity.[615]

While individual Montanist groups were localized and thus varied in thought and

practice,[616] Trevett's general descriptions of the New Prophecy provide a good starting point

from which we can consider the movement.

> The New Prophecy believed in the outpouring of the Spirit and the appearance of
> a new, authoritative prophecy which brought fresh disciplinary demands to the
> churches. Women were prominent as leaders and the Prophets clashed with
> catholic representatives on matters such as the nature of prophecy, the exercise of
> authority, the interpretation of Christian writings and the significance of the
> phenomenon for salvation-history.[617]

According to Trevett's assessment, the Montanists can be considered as a Christian movement

that places a great importance on prophecy and offers women the opportunity to gain positions of

influence.

The Teachings of Montanism

Admittedly, we have very little information about the man attributed with initiating the New

Prophecy. Though in *Historia Ecclesiastica* Eusebius claims that Montanus was a recent convert

and committed suicide, the reliability of the source must be considered: these statements were

likely made to discredit Montanus and his New Prophecy.[618] According to Trevett,

> [a]ll we really know of Montanus from the early sources is that (i) the mode of his
> prophesying was noteworthy, with possession and ecstasy and strange manner of

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[615] Trevett, *Montanism*, 12.
[616] Unlike writers who have previously collated information about the movement and have made assumptions about uniform practices across geographical borders, Trevett recognizes local variations of Montanism in her consideration of the New Prophecy sources (*Montanism*, 46–76). However, when considering the content of the teachings, Trevett examines the areas jointly while acknowledging that there may have been local variations (*Montanism*, 13, 77–150).
[617] Trevett, *Montanism*, 3.
[618] John De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church: A Study in the Ecclesiastical History of the Second Century* (Cambridge: George Bell & Sons, 1878), 107; Trevett, *Montanism*, 77; Eusebius, *HE* v. 16,15; Eusebius, *HE* v. 16,7.

speech [...]; that (ii) he allowed marriages to be annulled and instituted new fasts [...], and that (iii) the small Phrygian towns of Pepuza and Tymion were, at his instigation, know by the name 'Jerusalem' [...]. Then (iv) he won followers and began to organize them [...].[619]

Through the criticisms of Montanus' prophecy, we learn that he lived somewhere in Phrygia (possibly Ardabau) in the second century, began a religious movement, was revered by his followers, was considered to be a prophet and had great organizational skills.[620]

The oracles considered by Trevett suggest that one of the most significant teachings in the New Prophecy was the promise of God's intervention.[621] "It was the function of the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete, to guide believers into understanding (as Tertullian argued) understanding of the teaching of the Scriptures [...]; and this was associated in Asian minds with the practice of prophecy itself [...]."[622] Evidence in the oracles also suggests that the Prophets promised immediate revelation and the "in-breaking of God's activity."[623] The oracles demonstrate that the Prophets interpreted the Scriptures and proclaimed promises, including God's intervention, for the present.[624]

Prophecy and the Paraclete

As the main manifestation of knowledge used by the Prophets, prophecy played a key role in Montanism. While prophecy was no longer common place in Christian groups, the *pneuma* ritualizations found in Montanist groups (prophecy, exorcisms, visions and foreknowledge) were not at odds with practices in the earliest literature[625] and were still practiced in some groups.[626]

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[619] Trevett, *Montanism* , 77.
[620] Butler, 10; De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 31–33; Trevett, *Montanism* , 77–79. Trevett considers the works of Eusebius, Epiphanius and Tertullian, the Anonymous (*Montanism* , 77–79).
[621] Trevett, *Montanism*, 81.
[622] Trevett, *Montanism*, 81.
[623] Trevett, *Montanism*, 82.
[624] Trevett, *Montanism*, 86.
[625] Including practices found in the previously considered Pauline and Pastoral literature.

While the Montanists engaged in *pneuma* ritualizations to a greater extent than the majority of other contemporary Christian groups, support for these practices could be found in ancient texts.[627] While their prophetic practices were supported by their use of texts, the New Prophecy claims of a superior relationship between the Paraclete and the prophesiers was perceived as problematic by non-members.[628]

The manner in which the Montanists prophesied in Asia Minor brought condemnation from outsiders who viewed their ecstatic practices as inappropriate.[629] They were charged with "ecstatic excesses, with Montanus carried away by the Spirit [...], unforeseen possession and (spurious) ecstasy [...]. Out of this came inspiration to speak [...] and to utter strange sounds [...]."[630] Succinctly, ecstasy was perceived by the emerging Church as an irrational loss of self-control.[631] It is noteworthy that the two female prophets, Priscilla and Maximilla, as well as some female followers engaged in these *pneuma* ritualizations. Didymus refers to "disciples of mad women [who] had simply failed to appreciate the meaning of ecstasy."[632] We thus have incidental evidence that women engaged in ecstatic prophesy and were not excluded because of their gender.[633]

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[626] Trevett, *Montanism*, 86–87.

[627] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 31. The New Prophets often used Scripture to support their ecstatic practices and trances (Butler, *The New Prophecy & "New Visions,"* 31). The roots of early Christian prophesy and *glossolalia* are often attributed to Paul. Specifically in 1 Cor 12 where Paul deems prophesy to be a gift from the Spirit. Other New Testament sources also include Peter, John and Revelations. However, Butler also suggests that the Montanists used the Hebrew Scriptures (the examples of Adam, Abraham, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel) to support their claims (*The Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 32). This practice was eventually curtailed.

[628] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 28.

[629] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 31.

[630] Trevett, *Montanism*, 87.

[631] Trevett, *Montanism*, 88–89. Though *glossolalia* was no longer a prominent feature of Christian communities during the early development period of the New Prophecy, this "gift" was prevalent "among the earliest Prophets" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 90–91).

[632] Trevett, *Montanism*, 88.

[633] A more detailed examination of women in the Montanist community as well as the opportunities that women found in Montanist groups will be examined at length later in this paper.

The three Prophets (Montanus, Maximilla and Priscilla) functioned as teachers, expanded the tradition, foretold the future and claimed to hold a special relationship with the Paraclete that granted them the opportunity to speak in the name of God:[634] they proclaimed in "the power of the Holy Spirit."[635] The Prophets served as mouthpieces and provided a connection between Jesus and the group. The Prophets' perceived connection with the Paraclete provided them with a significant amount of power and authority over the believers.

Eschatology?

While scholars often argue that Montanist groups held high eschatological beliefs and expected the imminent end of the world,[636] the primary sources do not show evidence of an "excess of apocalyptic fervour."[637] While the New Prophecy held visions of heaven, an ascent, an encounter with Jesus and hoped for the Redeemer's millennial reign, the argument that the earliest Prophets promoted an imminent end is not evidenced.[638] Powell and Trevett consider that the eschatological experiences of the New Prophecy differed from the types of experiences normally associated with eschatology. "We have an eschatology radically different from the apocalyptic futurism usually ascribed to the Montanists—an eschatology largely realised in a present

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[634] These visions were perceived as "supplementary to that communicated by Christ and His apostles" (De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 58).

[635] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 28. Trevett, *Montanism*, 93–94. Some scholars like De Soyres insist that the New Prophecy prophets maintained that they were in "very incarnation of the Paraclete" (*Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 59).

[636] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 35. Some scholars argue that eschatological expectations and the imminent return of the Christ were integral to Montanist beliefs (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 35; De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 77). As a result, this position holds that all other integral teachings and practices (like fasting and celibacy) were eschatological concerns (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 38–39).

[637] Trevett, *Montanism*, 99. While many individuals currently define apocalypse and eschatology as nouns that define the same term or paradigm, they are terms which can be distinguished. For a thorough examination of these terms please refer back to chapter 1.

[638] Trevett, *Montanism*, 98–99.

spiritual experience."[639] Though the prophets expected the return of Jesus, awaited the "things to come" as well as hoped for the intervention of God, redemption and future joys, a definitive timetable is lacking.[640] Trevett argues that "there was a Christian life to be considered in their own 'Jerusalem' communities, in which a foretaste of God's promises could be known."[641] This evidence suggests that we may only consider the possibility that the New Prophecy held apocalyptic tendencies in that they imagined a drastically different future or a newly realized present and re-interpreted teachings on discipline, practices and gender expectations. Considering the problematic uses of the categories apocalyptic and eschatological, I suggest that these terms not be used when discussing Montanist groups and that more specific terms be employed in their place.

Religious Practises

When categorizing New Prophecy ritualizations, the sources (ancient criticism including Apollonius and Eusebius, Tertullian, the Montanist oracles and modern commentaries) focus on three main issues: 1) fasting; 2) celibacy, marriage and digamy; 3) forgiveness and penance.[642] These practices suggest that the Montanists were rigorous in their discipline, a characteristic that segregated them from the majority of other Christian groups.

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[639] Trevett, *Montanism*, 100; Douglas Powell, "Tertullianists and Cataphrygians," *Vigiliae Christianae* 29 (1975): 43, 50.

[640] Trevett, *Montanism*, 100–102. Trevett argues that she does "not doubt that the Prophets were interested in 'the things to come' nor that they were certain Christ *would* return and that some time the Jerusalem of promise *would* appear."

[641] Trevett, *Montanism*, 103. Though prophesies included the return of the Christ and the establishment of a "new Jerusalem" at the Parousia, administrative arrangements or preparations for the future (salaries and collections) suggest that end time expectations were not imminent (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 59; Trevett, *Montanism*, 104).

[642] Trevett, *Montanism*, 105–19. Some authors, such as Butler, also argue that martyrdom was an area of vigorous discipline (*The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 38). However, evidence suggests that while members of the New Prophecy were encouraged to prepare for martyrdom, they were not instructed to actively seek death.

Evidence for fasting is drawn from Hippolytus, who speaks of prophetic individuals eating cabbage or radishes and fasts, and Tertullian, who discusses dry fasting and the addition of new fasts or festivals.[643] The importance of fasting did not lie in the achievement of a pure body, but was perceived as a means to an end, the "technical preparation" for the reception of a vision.[644] Non-members did not take issue with the practice of fasting itself but with the innovations resulting from the Montanists' prophetic fasts and visions.[645] Specifically, they disagreed with the manner in which the Montanists interpreted the Lenten fasting practices.[646]

Granting women the opportunity to annul their marriages and desert their husbands, the Montanist practice of "loosing and binding" marriages crossed traditional gender boundaries and was criticized as extreme by outsiders. The opportunity for sexual continence offered women freedom from the dangers of childbearing and other wifely duties.[647] Though some individuals dedicated their lives to Montanism in the form of sexual abstinence, there were also marriages

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[643] "But they devise new fasts, feasts, and the eating of dry food and cabbage, declaring that these things have been taught by those females. [...] But they err with those previously mentioned, and go astray by paying more attention to their words than to the Gospels when they appoint new and unusual fasts" (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.19, 10.25). "They censure us because we keep our own special fasts, because we frequently extend fast days into the evening, because we also practice the eating of dry food, stripping our diet of all flesh and all juice, and every succulent fruit, nor do we eat or drink anything that has the flavour of wine" (Tertullian, *Jejun.* 1). Trevett, *Montanism*, 105–6.

[644] Butler describes the rigorous discipline of the New Prophecy as resulting from a "need for holiness" (*The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 39). Trevett, *Montanism*, 106–7. Trevett connects the practices of the Prophets as well as those in hope of a vision with 4 Ezra and Daniel where fasting is directly related to the ability of a person to receive an apocalyptic vision or a vision experience (Trevett, *Montanism*, 107).

[645] Trevett, *Montanism*, 108.

[646] Jerome, Epistle 41, *To Marcella*, 3; Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 1: 9,15.

[647] Trevett, *Montanism*, 111. While it is possible to consider the choice for chastity by women as an attempt to maintain their virginity, Giulia Sissa demonstrates that the ancient concept *parthenos* (translated as virgin) cannot be equated with modern interpretations of the term virgin. Specifically, she demonstrates that "the Greek idea of *parthenia* did not require the presence of a seal over the genitals. [...A woman] could at any time recover her vaginal closure (Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990], 117, 170). As such, "sexuality and virginity were compatible" (Sissa, *Greek Virginity,* 91). Sissa also examines the manner in which women were considered virgins and reveals that virginity is related not only to sexual practices but self-mastery and the ability to maintain silence (*Greek Virginity,* 33–40). As such, when considering the virginity or chastity of members of the New Prophecy, I do so while accepting that this concept is complicated and does not mirror modern understandings of the term.

and children in these communities.[648] While chastity was perceived as ideal or superior,[649]

marriage and childbearing were not condemned.[650] Tertullian makes a clear distinction between

single and multiple marriages and strictly forbids digamy or remarriage. He states that "[w]e

recognize one marriage as we recognize one God."[651] He further argues that "[i]t is one thing to

make a law forbidding marriage; it is another to establish a limit to marrying."[652] Tertullian

argued that while the Paraclete did not preach abstinence, he did preach single marriage.[653]

Individuals who remarried were excluded from the Montanist communities.[654]

    While individuals who joined the Montanist movement would be forgiven for their

transgressions, the New Prophecy did not espouse unconditional forgiveness. "Tertullian said

that the 'new discipline [...] of the Paraclete was unforgiving of the post-baptismal sinner."[655]

Discipline was demanded of those who had been baptised and association with individuals who

erred was forbidden.[656] Because of the strict discipline required of members as well as the

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[648] Trevett, *Montanism*, 110.

[649] "Seize the opportunity not to be obligated to anyone in conjugal matters (cf. 1 Cor 7:3) nor to have anyone obligated to you, for this is advantageous even if you do not greatly desire it. You have ceased to be a debtor. How fortunate you are! [...] [B]y frugality of the flesh you will amass the Spirit" (Tertullian, *Exh. cast.* 10).

[650] Trevett, *Montanism*, 112, 114. "Celibacy is to the married state not as good to evil, but as the more favoured condition to the less" (De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 85). Again, like the case of fasting, these practices were not initiated by the Montanists nor were they completely viewed with hostility by other Christians. During the rise of Montanism, many non-members also engaged in the refusal of remarriage or celibacy (Trevett, *Montanism*, 111; De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 86).

[651] Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 4.

[652] Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 15.2.

[653] "And now as you reflect on these things you will easily persuade yourself how much more suitable it was for the Paraclete to proclaim one marriage and no more" (Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 3.11 in Trevett, *Montanism*, 112). As the Paraclete was perceived as providing comfort, it is not unexpected that the "Spirit" would grant individuals the opportunity to marry and maintain a sexual relationship within that one single marriage (Trevett, *Montanism*, 113).

[654] "[W]e very sternly exclude those who have been married twice because they dishonour the Paraclete by the irregularity of their discipline" (Tertullian, *On Modesty* 1 in Trevett, *Montanism*, 114).

[655] Trevett, *Montanism*, 114.

[656] While God could choose to forgive individuals where the Church could not, the only manner in which a guilty individual could guarantee their forgiveness is through martyrdom (Trevett, *Montanism*, 114).

inability to obtain forgiveness through penance, "some would-be Christians postponed baptism,"[657] a choice that suggests a fear of ostracism or marginalization.

Though Tertullian's stance on penance and forgiveness is rigorous, the first Prophets claimed the authority to pardon individuals for their sins.[658] "[T]he Church did indeed have the right to pronounce forgiveness, but it had to be the church of the Spirit with the 'spiritual' individual exercising such power."[659] Tertullian explains who can grant pardons.

> "Then show me, even now, O apostolic man, prophetic examples, that I may recognize your divinity, and appropriate for yourself the power to forgive sins of this kind. But if you have been allotted the duties of discipline alone, to preside not by supreme power, but by the functions of a minister, who are you or what is your greatness to grant pardon? Since you present yourself neither as a prophet nor an apostle, do you not lack that power to which granting power belongs? "But," you say, "the Church has the right to pardon sins." This I recognize and will more than you, for I have the Paraclete himself who says in the new prophets: "The Church can pardon sin, but I will not do it, lest they commit other offences."[660]

Not all leaders had the authority to forgive sins: only those who interacted with the "Spirit" had this power. However, as argued by Tertullian, this does not suggest that forgiveness was pronounced for all who sought it. "All things considered, it seems that the earliest church of the Prophecy and its confessors/martyrs possessed the power of the keys but that their tendency (in line with the Spirit's instructions?) was to bind."[661] Not only was the New Prophecy rigorous in

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[657] Trevett, *Montanism*, 155.
[658] Trevett, *Montanism*, 117.
[659] Trevett, *Montanism*, 117.
[660] Tertullian, *Pud.* 21.
[661] Trevett, *Montanism*, 118. Catholics as well as other Christian groups believed that martyrs awaiting their death as well as confessors possessed the power of the keys or the ability to forgive sins (Trevett, *Montanism*, 116). It is interesting to note that Tertullian did not grant these individuals this power to "loose" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 116–18). Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 119. While Tertullian denies the power of the keys or the power to forgive sins and grant peace to martyrs and confessors, Apollonius' enquiry into the absolution of his companion by an Asian martyr suggests that while forgiveness was not freely handed out, such an act was exercised at times (Trevett, *Montanism,* 118).

its discipline, but straying from the path of discipline was always taken seriously and forgiveness was only seldom given.[662]

A consideration of the perceived source of authoritative practices and the importance that the New Prophecy attributed to discipline provide insight into the conflict between Montanist groups and the emerging centrist church. "'[D]iscipline' was the key to the significance of the New Prophecy; that was what the Paraclete brought fresh to the Church, together with a right understanding of the Scriptures."[663] The Montanists believed that the Paraclete 1) revealed proper discipline; 2) gave them direction and visions; 3) reformed the community and; 4) provided insight into the correct interpretation of Scriptures. As such, the three Prophets and succeeding leaders challenged the authority of non-member leadership to teach and interpret Scripture properly, to establish proper practices and disciplines as well as forgive followers for their transgressions. "The prophets were claiming the moral and spiritual high ground": they claimed to have more spiritual knowledge than outside leaders.[664] Taking these claims to power and authority into account, it is not surprising that leaders who did not belong to Montanist groups did not support the New Prophecy claims of superiority.

Martyrs were honoured by Montanists as important and valued individuals who played an important role in the New Prophecy. The Montanists proposed that they were granted privileges while they awaited death, were granted immediate entry to heaven and would act as judges after the Resurrection.[665] While Montanists believed that martyrdom proved that "the power of the prophetic Spirit [was] among them," the crazed desire for martyrdom or death which is generally

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[662] De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 89.
[663] Trevett, *Montanism*, 119.
[664] Trevett, *Montanism*, 120; De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 103.
[665] Though martyrdom will be examined at length in the Perpetua test-case, this brief introduction to the topic is important for understanding the Prophecy's teachings. Martyrdom was perceived as a second baptism where Satan was defeated (Trevett, *Montanism*, 121). Though as we have seen, the willingness of Montanist confessors and martyrs to use the power of the keys to forgive individuals as well as the willingness of leaders to grant these powers varied.

associated with the New Prophecy is not evidenced.[666] There is a difference between being prepared for death and accepting and welcoming martyrdom from actively seeking to be martyred. While Tertullian claimed that "[t]he Paraclete *denounced* those who fled (especially clergy) and those who practiced bribery," he does not suggest that followers should be zealous for martyrdom.[667] Rather, one should recognize that the Paraclete would accompany and support the confessor/martyr through their trials *if* they had been chosen to die.[668] While Montanists viewed those who fled from martyrdom poorly, they did not hold a wish for death.[669] Martyrdom was something one should not avoid but should not actively seek.[670]

Sources and Authority

An examination of the sources of authority suggests that the Prophets appealed to the same sources as other contemporary Christian groups (including what would become the dominant form of Christianity in the post-Constantinian period).[671] Because of their "sharing" of sources, the Montanists were not charged by outsiders with using documents that were deemed "heretical." Non-members did not agree with or support the New Prophecy's innovative

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[666] Trevett, *Montanism*, 122–26. The claims that Montanism held martyrdom as an ascetic practice are most often evidenced by oracles quoted by Tertullian (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 42–43; Tertullian *Fug.* 9.4).

[667] "Those who have received him practice neither flight in persecution nor bribery to avoid it, since they possess him who will aid us in suffering, just as he will speak for us in the interrogation" (Tertullian, *Fug.* 14.3). Though portions of Tertullian's instructions on the soul and on flight might be interpreted as exhorting martyrdom, his instructions are best understood as instructions for appropriate actions once one has already been charged or exposed as a Christian (*An.* 55.5; *Fug.* 9.4); Trevett, *Montanism*, 127–28.

[668] Trevett, *Montanism*, 127–28. As such, in *The Passio of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the victims perceived themselves as privileged and no one attempted to save them from death (William Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage: Portrait of a Third-Century Martyr* [Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2009], 167).

[669] Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage*, 31.

[670] For example, Perpetua did not ask to be martyred but held firm in her beliefs once she was convicted (Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage*, 33).

[671] Trevett, *Montanism*, 129–33. Evidence suggests that the Prophets appealed to the gospels of Matthew and John, Revelation, Jewish Scriptures (particularly Genesis, Numbers, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalms) and most significantly Paul (*Montanism,* 129–33). However, we must also consider that the Montanists employed numerous other sources of which we are not aware. As we have little in the way of sources from the Montanist side, we cannot with certainty know all of the Scriptures and sources from which they drew.

interpretations of the documents from which they also claimed authority. "The interpretation of Christian writings played a large part in the first controversies of the Prophecy."[672] Specifically, the Montanists' claims of authority on all previous authoritative literature, their new interpretations of this literature and their assertion that they held the authority to receive revelations which illuminated literature was met with hostility.[673] Furthermore, the Montanist claim that New Prophecy revelations were more significant than those of the apostles was also perceived as problematic by the Church fathers.[674]

The Montanist groups' new interpretations of the Scriptures challenged the authority of non-member leadership, provided new insights into established practices, changed the nature of the covenant and added new literature to Scripture.[675] "Against the background of developing catholic ideas of authority and hierarchy such language must have carried overtones of dangerous democratisation."[676] Authority was no longer only available to a few leaders but was available to those who had access to the Spirit. Increasingly, the apostolic was being set against the prophetic and the authorities did not want to lose the "moral high ground to Prophetic Christians."[677] Oppositely, the Montanists claimed to bypass the authority of these non-member leaders by directly accessing revelations and visions.[678] More succinctly, the Montanists and the

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[672] Trevett, *Montanism*, 132.

[673] Trevett, *Montanism*, 133–34.

[674] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 33–34.

[675] "[N]ot only were the catholics arguing for the use of only certain writings but they were attempting to standardise [...] the way they were understood and interpreted" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 134).

[676] Trevett, *Montanism,* 136.

[677] Trevett, *Montanism,* 136–38, 146. Trevett claims that Montanism was important for the formation of the New Testament. The emerging institution wished to claim exclusive authority over a set of Scripture (*Montanism*, 138).

[678] Trevett, *Montanism*, 146.

proto-dominant group played a game of "Who's the Boss" where everyone wanted the coveted authority.[679]

Women and Montanism

The prominence of women in Montanist sources does not make the reconstruction of their lives within the New Prophecy uncomplicated.[680] Because the majority of primary sources deemed the Montanist women to be heretical, once again we must be cautious when drawing conclusions from hostile literature written by non-members. "The female heretic was 'the threatening image of a community with uncontrolled boundaries'—allegedly sexually adventurous, verbally and theologically untrammelled, divorced from her rightful sphere."[681] In order to gleam into their lives, we must engage the hermeneutics of suspicion. We must "inquire into the motives from which a historian is examining historical material" and determine how authors have shaped historical events, circumstances and individuals for their own purposes.[682]

Female Leadership–The Prophets

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[679] The emerging catholic institution condemned the Montanists and eventually eliminated the "threat" of the New Prophecy (Trevett, *Montanism*, 148). In Trevett's view, "the catholic side recognised realistically that this phenomenon could not be accommodated comfortably without serious disruption to the order it cherished and even to its own Christian self-understanding" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 149). Trevett astutely demonstrates that the Montanist force not only challenged the emerging catholic institution but also posed a viable threat to the successful establishment of their organization.

[680] The available sources for Montanism make numerous references to women as well as include prophecies, oracles and even a diary reportedly written by a woman.

[681] Trevett, *Montanism*, 152; Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 230.

[682] Elaine C. Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration: A Re-Examination of Two Prophetic Movements from a Contemporary Feminist Perspective* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), 15. John De Soyres, *Montanism and the Primitive Church*, 4.

Both "insider" and "outsider" sources suggest that women played an important role in the formation and maintenance of the New Prophecy. Butler argues that Montanists expected that the gift of the *charismata* would be given by the Spirit to both men and women.[683] As demonstrated by Priscilla and Maximilla, authority, prophecy, and ministry were religious gifts available to all members of the New Prophecy.[684] "Pricilla and Maximilla figured as large in the sources on Montanism as did the eponymous Montanus himself and, given that the acknowledged leadership of women is a rare phenomenon in the early Christian centuries [...] this fact is remarkable and deserves consideration."[685] Butler and Trevett argue that the two female Prophets were not likely dependent (spiritually or otherwise) upon Montanus, that they held influence over the group in their own right, were revered and likely performed the majority of the prophetic activities in the community.[686] Not only do primary texts discuss the participation of Maxilla and Priscilla in the formation of the New Prophecy, but texts attribute oracles to these women and suggest that they wrote texts for their communities.[687] Huber argues that women were empowered with "the authority of inspiration" because the New Prophecy stressed the ability of all individuals to be enlivened by "the freedom of the Spirit."[688]

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[683] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 30.
[684] Trevett, *Montanism,* 151–97.
[685] Trevett, *Montanism,* 158.
[686] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 10; Trevett, *Montanism,* 161–62.
[687] A collection of the oracles attributed to Maximilla, Priscilla, Quintilla and an unidentified prophetess can be found in Ronald E. Heine's, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1989), 3–7. Evidence for their influence and contributions within the New Prophecy can also be found throughout the works that dispute Montanism (notably The Anonymous 5.16.9, 13-21; Appollonius 5.18. 3, 12; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.1-2, 12.3-6, 13.1,7; Hyppolytus, *Haer.* 10.25; Origin, *Fr. 1 Cor.*14.36; Firmillian of Caesarea, in *The Epistles of Cyprian* 74.7; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.14; Didymus of Alexandria, *Trin.* 3.41.3).
[688] Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 1–5. Though unsubstantiated, some scholars consider Priscilla and Maximilla to be the two most important figures in the development of the New Prophecy. Jensen in particular insists that Priscilla was the most important Prophet in the Montanist movement (Trevett, *Montanism*, 159–62). However, Trevett rightly argues that there is a lack of evidence that proves that Priscilla and Maximilla assumed positions of priority and were the two most important figures in the development of the New Prophecy (Trevett, *Montanism*, 161–62).

Though the development of Montanism is generally ascribed to three Prophets,[689] Quintilla is also an important figure from whom we can gain an understanding of female leadership and the status given to women in the new Prophecy. Quintilla is noted for prophesying and gaining a following. Some scholars also attribute Firmilian of Caesarea's reference to the vision and ecstatic behaviour of the unnamed women to Quintilla.[690] Epiphanius also possibly attributes a significant vision to Quintilla: "Christ in female form, it is reported (for the words are not her own), appears to Quintilla in the room in Pepuza where she is sleeping. Christ, in bright robe, imparts [...] wisdom into Quintilla, revealing the (presumably hitherto unknown) relation of the promised Jerusalem to Pepuza."[691] Proving that women received important visions, this source also suggests that Jesus can also be understood in untraditional terms.

Ongoing Female Leadership

The participation of women in leadership roles was an ongoing process where women continued to prophecy, gain followers and lead communities. For example, Maximilla's female disciples prophesied and some of Quintilla's female virgin followers were given the title "prophetess."[692] Ancient texts also refer to the contributions of women and provide examples of women who achieved positions of power. Firmillian discusses a prophetess that was possessed by the Holy Spirit, prophesied, gained followers and preached.[693] Though her affiliation is uncertain, Trevett believes that Nanas provides an example of a powerful married woman who was supported by her husband. He recorded her "gifts on her gravestone, telling of her displays of speaking in

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[689] The development of the New Prophecy is generally attributed to Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla.
[690] Firmilian of Caesarea, *Epistle* 74.10 in *The Epistles of Cyprian*; Trevett, *Montanism,* 167–70; Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 36.
[691] Trevett, *Montanism*, 168–69; Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* v.19,3; Epiphanius *Pan.* xlviii.12,14.
[692] Trevett, *Montanism*, 170; Epiphanius *Pan.* xlix.1.
[693] Trevett, *Montanism*, 171.

tongues, of angelic visitation to her, of her powerful offerings of prayer."[694] Tertullian discusses

one modest prophetess who reached states of ecstasy during visions and another woman "who

had the unnerving sensation of being clapped on the neck by an angel while in church."[695] With

the goal of refuting the ability of women to engage in public activity, Origen discusses the

activities of Priscilla and Maximilla. In this case it is noteworthy that the prophetesses are noted

for defending their right to activities in the public realm.[696] *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and*

Felicitas is also a resource that is "rich in dreams, visions and the insights of women."[697]

 This evidence demonstrates that women played a significant role in the leadership of the

New Prophecy and acted in manners that were deemed "anathema to the catholics."[698] The New

Prophecy opposed restrictions imposed by the developing institution which consolidated its

power by controlling who taught, what was taught and what questions could be asked.[699]

"Montanists were anxious that *women*, no less than men, should be *wholly* disciples: disciplined

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[694] Trevett, *Montanism*, 171.

[695] Trevett, *Montanism*, 173; Tertullian *An*. ix.4; Tertullian *Virg*. xvii.

[696] Trevett, *Montanism*, 174; Origen *Catenae* in *Sancti Pauli Epistolas ad Corinthios.*

[697] Trevett, *Montanism*, 170. Though the nature of the authorship of this early third century document is debated, the story is reportedly told through the diaries of two martyrs which are encased in an editorial narrative claiming to be an eyewitness to the deaths of the martyrs (Butler, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration,* 1–6). This document will be examined at length as a test-case for the opportunities available to women in a third century New Prophecy community.

[698] Trevett, *Montanism*, 176.

[699] Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 6. Huber argues that "Spirit-filled movements" posit a potential threat to formal structures because "the authority of inspiration necessarily gave primacy to the Spirit. [...] Because it is impossible to limit the Spirit, or legislate the question of who will be its recipients, charismatic movements" offer women or other individuals in restricted positions opportunities for leadership and influence (*Women and the Authority of Inspiration,* 7–8). As such, women benefitted from periods which were governed by "Spirit-filled movements" (Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 11). Huber expands her argument and states that men belonging to the ecclesiastical structures took offensive measures when they felt that their authority was threatened (*Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 46, 62). Specifically, when men in positions of authority felt their powers challenged by the ability of women to achieve the same authority they attempted to restrict or eliminate the influences of women. Salisbury also considers the impact of prophecy on the church and determines that some leaders "welcomed authority over inspiration as a way to keep peace and unanimity in the congregation" (*Women and the Authority of Inspiration,* 156). By restricting inspiration and "Spirit-filled movements," church leaders attempted to enforce a unity that sidelined women.

and fervent, continent and spirit-filled, uncompromising and *seen*."[700] Some female leaders

crossed the ideal traditional gender boundaries, acted in the public sphere and rejected

contemporary idealized gender obligations. Not only did membership in the New Prophecy offer

the possibility of participating in ritualizations, exploring beliefs, exercising influence and

interpreting Scripture, but participation in this group also permitted women to choose an ascetic

lifestyle where they could "avoid the inconveniences of marriage and the pain of childbirth[,...]

travel[,...] use their education and wealth to benefit many"[701] as well as be respected and valued

for qualities not associated with traditional gender virtues.[702]

The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas: A Test-Case[703]

This test-case will test the hypothesis that Perpetua, as described in *The Martyrdom of Perpetua*

and Felicitas, held a position of authority and influence within her Christian group. First, I will

examine the general textual instructions in *the passio* that provide insight into a martyr's

authority and importance for the development of Christianity. Second, I will consider Perpetua's

brother's request for a vision and examine Perpetua's acknowledgement of her authority and

privileges. Third, I will examine "the power of martyrdom" and the extension of Perpetua's

privileges from the divine realm into the earthly realm. Specifically, I will examine how

Perpetua's impending martyrdom provides her with the "power of the keys" where she is granted

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[700] Trevett, *Montanism,* 176.

[701] Caroline White, *Lives of Roman Christian Women* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), xxi, xxiv–xxvi.

[702] While we may suggest that the New Prophecy valued and nurtured women for their religious and spiritual capacities where the establishing Church did not (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 64), we should be careful not to assume that this movement was egalitarian or emancipative in the modern sense of the words. While women were valued as important members of the religious community who could received visions from the Spirit, this "equality" was not extended to women outside of their community: there was no specific gender agenda.

[703] A portion of this study was presented at the Medieval and Early Modern Institute's sixth annual interdisciplinary Graduate Student Colloquium. Angela Brkich-Sutherland, "The Power and Authority of Perpetua the Proto-Martyr" (paper presented at the Medieval and Early Modern Institute's sixth annual interdisciplinary Graduate Student Colloquium, University of Alberta, February 26–27, 2010).

the status of a minister. Finally, I will consider how this test-case provides insight into Montanist communities and their perception of women.

Textual Instructions and Authority at the Outset

At the opening of *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*[704] before Perpetua's *passio*, the author reveals the important role that martyrs have in the development of Christianity. He claims that while ancient deeds "were a proof of God's favour and achieved the spiritual strengthening of men as well," that "recent examples […] will one day become ancient and needful for the ages to come, even though in our own day they may enjoy less prestige because of the prior claim of antiquity."[705] The author's claims are significant because they attribute the *passio* with the same value and prestige as ancient Scripture. The editor states that continuing revelations and visions are valid.[706] By acknowledging that the purposes of the texts "were set forth in writing precisely that honour might be rendered to God and comfort to men by the recollection of the past through the written word,"[707] the author claims that contemporary martyrs will be remembered: they hold and will continue to hold importance in the Christian community. By arguing that the *passio* is authoritative and by demonstrating that contemporary martyrs have authority, influence and a lasting impact and importance in Christianity, the author argues that the nature of Perpetua's authority makes her account authoritative.

The author brings the *passio* full circle when he again refers to the general importance of contemporary martyrs at the end of the text. "And any man who exalts, honours, and worships

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[704] Herbert Musurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106–31.

[705] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 107–9.

[706] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 127–28. The editor's insistence that these contemporary visions, interpretations and revelations are important, valid and authoritative suggests that they were challenged by non-members.

[707] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 107–9.

his glory should read for the consolation of the church these new deeds of heroism which are no less significant than the tales of the old."[708] Again, Perpetua's importance and authority are asserted because she is a contemporary martyr. As such, it is possible to examine the *passio* as describing Perpetua's leadership, proving her Scripture-like authority and demonstrating that the *passio* is virtually another Scripture or a continuation of the biblical narrative.

Perpetua's Authority and Leadership

In the introduction, the author states that "we hold in honour and acknowledge not only new prophesies but new visions as well, according to promise."[709] By including new prophesies and visions in his argument for the authority of this text, the author also argues for the authority and honour of Perpetua's prophecies and visions. The fact that Perpetua can receive divinely promised visions is intended to prove to the reader that she holds and fulfills a God-sanctioned authority.[710] The importance that the Montanist community placed on the reception of visions suggests that Perpetua was held in high esteem because of her perceived connection with God.[711]

Visions and Revelations

Given the importance that the author of the *passio* and the New Prophecy attributed to visions and prophecy, I suggest that it is likely that Perpetua would have discussed her visions and prophesied with her fellow prisoners. Once the group of confessors is imprisoned, Perpetua's brother says to her, "Dear sister, you are greatly privileged; surely you might ask for a vision to

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[708] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 131.

[709] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 107.

[710] We should consider this authority in light of the fact that the Montanist community was a prophetic movement where exorcism, visions, ecstasy, *glossolalia* and foreknowledge were key manifestations of the New Prophecy (Trevett, *Montanism,* 86–95).

[711] In the ancient world, it was believed that visions originated from a source outside of the dreamer: the visions were granted and delivered by God (Joyce E. Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Woman* [New York: Routledge, 1997], 93).

discover whether you are to be condemned or freed." Perpetua responds that she will ask for a

vision because she knows that she can "speak with the Lord."[712] These passages suggest that

Perpetua and her brother are confident in her abilities to receive a vision.[713] Butler goes as far as

to describe her brother's request as an expectation of "visions on demand."[714] This request is

significant for the examination of the nature of Perpetua's authority for two reasons. First, the

vision demonstrates that Perpetua has the ability to contact the Lord and her response suggests

that she expected to have visions.[715] Second, the request insinuates that an answer would be

provided and revelations would be shared. The request also suggests that either Perpetua was a

leader to whom other prisoners and believers looked to for prophecy or she had "a better

connection" with God. Trevett suggests that individuals like Perpetua would have acquired fame

and been sought after because of their ability to receive divine prophesies.[716]

Visions were held in high esteem and perceived as a privilege because the dream world

provided direct access to the divine world. Perpetua's authority and leadership as a proto-martyr

was therefore based on her direct connection with the heavenly realm.[717] Perpetua's positive

response to her brother's request proves that is confident in her ability to access the divine: she

acknowledges her power, authority and access to the divine world.[718] Perpetua's ability to seek

and receive a vision, as examined within the *passio* and its historical Montanist context,

demonstrates that she is granted access the divine, is recognized as an authority by her fellow

Christians, and is sought after by other believers for guidance and prophecy.

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[712] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 111.
[713] Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage,* 118; Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 49.
[714] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 64.
[715] Trevett, *Montanism*, 182.
[716] Trevett argues that "it is not remarkable that one who was of 'Prophetic' tendency should be
sufficiently honoured to have his writings studied by the faithful" (Trevett, *Montanism*, 34).
[717] The visions that proto-martyrs received were always perceived as authoritative and divine
(Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 97).
[718] Huber suggests that Perpetua claims that she has the power of the Spirit (*Women and the
Authority of Inspiration*, 53).

Perpetua's ability to receive and interpret visions is also prevalent when she unexpectedly remembers her deceased brother Dinocrates and takes the opportunity to pray for him. "At once I realized that I was privileged to pray for him. I began to pray for him and to sigh deeply for him before the Lord."[719] Perpetua proceeds to have a vision and realizes that her brother is suffering. Instead of despairing, she is "confident that [she] could help him in his trouble. […] And [she] prayed for [her] brother day and night with tears and sighs that this favour might be granted [to her]."[720] Perpetua acknowledges her power and authority by stating that she was confident that she could help her brother. In this case, Perpetua further explores the nature of her privilege by stating that she prayed, sighed deeply and wept that God would grant her a favour. In her next vision, she realizes that her actions were successful and that her brother has "been delivered from his suffering."[721] Farina describes Perpetua's actions as those of a person who felt "entitled to intercede for Dinocrates."[722] This passage suggests that Perpetua has been given the ability to heal and relieve suffering through intercession: her privilege entails the ability to seek the favour of restoration for either the living or the dead directly through God.[723]

Saturus' vision also provides insight into Perpetua's authority and power.[724] In his vision, he and Perpetua are recognized and given a special status by angels. The angels paid them "homage and said to the other angels in admiration: 'Why, they are here! They are here!'"[725] The

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[719] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 115.

[720] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 117.

[721] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 117.

[722] Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage*, 148.

[723] Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage*, 149. Marie-Louise von Franz and Aviad Kleinberg argue that this vision represents unresolved psychological issues within Perpetua's psychological development. Kleinberg claims that Perpetua's personal anxieties and fears about death and torture are revealed through this vision (Aviad Kleinberg, *Flesh made Word: Saints' Stories and the Western Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2008), 71; Marie-Louise Von Franz, *The Passion of Perpetua: A Psychological Interpretation of Her Visions* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 2004.). Though valuable for understanding Perpetua's possible state of mind, this psychological interpretation fails to examine the historical, social and textual circumstances and evidence.

[724] While the majority of *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* focuses on Perpetua, the author also includes Saturus' vision in the *passio*.

[725] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 121.

four angels carrying Perpetua and Saturus proceeded to grow fearful of them and set them down.

Saturus and Perpetua are acknowledged as believers of great significance: even those who have

reached the Gate of Life recognize the sacrifice they are about to make. Perpetua and Saturus

then walk into an open area where they are "met [by] Jucundus, Saturninus, and Artaxius, who

were burnt alive in the same persecution, together with Quintus who had actually died as a

martyr in prison."[726] This vision suggests that Christian confessor-martyrs are granted an elite

status and will be rejoined in heaven: Christians who have died from natural causes are not

included in this group. This group of martyrs is indeed privileged.

In Saturus' vision, he and Perpetua encounter the bishop Optatus and Aspasius the

presbyter. "They threw themselves at [their] feet and said: 'Make peace between us. For you

have gone away and left us thus.' And [they] said to them: 'Are you not our bishop, and are you

not our presbyter? How can you fall at our feet?'"[727] In this circumstance, two church leaders

seek the intercession of Perpetua and Saturus because they have a problem that cannot be

resolved with earthly solutions. Though the bishop and the presbyter's problems remained

unresolved, this passage suggests that martyrs and proto-martyrs were given a status elevated

beyond that of clerical authorities.[728] The privilege of heavenly intercessor has been extended

into the earthly realm where martyr-confessors can restore and forgive people.[729]

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[726] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 121.

[727] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 121–23.

[728] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 83.

[729] The authorship of *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* as well as the different portions of the text is highly debated. While some scholars insist that the document holds three authentic accounts, other research suggests that while martyrologies are important for examining the development of group identity, they cannot be construed as reliable historical accounts. I side with those who argue that martyrdom accounts were created to serve a social function and establish a group identity. As such, I am hesitant to credit the document to Perpetua, Saturus, and a firsthand witness. A brief consideration of the authentic authorship debate follows. Many scholars, like Butler and Farina, insist that while the authorship of the narrative is in debate that the diary accounts are authentic (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 4, 44–57; Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage*, 2–3). In his examination of the authorship of the *passio*, E. R. Dodds presents a convincing argument that the different portions of the *passio* have "unequal value" (E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from*

Why is Perpetua Given Special Status and What Type of Status is it?

Eusebius' *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons* provides insight into explaining why

female Montanist martyrs, and in this case Perpetua, were able to achieve positions of power and

authority. Eusebius argues that imprisoned confessors have the ability to exercise "the power of

martyrdom" where they were granted the ability to intercede on behalf of Christians who had

denied their faith or failed to confess. [730] Essentially, imprisoned confessors were given the

privilege to forgive deniers. Klawiter states that "it is well known that in early Christianity,

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Marcus Aurelius to Constantine [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], 48). Based on the nature of the of the visions and the stylistic elements of the pieces of the document, Dodds argues that while Perpetua's visions are genuine, Saturus' vision is a later addition (*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 47–53). Dodds argues for the validity of Perpetua's diary based on the simple style, the strong possibility that the diary was written in Greek rather than Latin, the lack of marvels, the nature of her dream-like dreams as well as the request for the visions. Furthermore, Dodds argues that it is unlikely that a hagiographer or forger would include personal dreams where Perpetua encounters her dead brother or where she is transformed into a man (*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 47–53).Obviously, this analysis of the *passio* grants validity to the nature of Perpetua's authority and her ensuing influence within her Christian community. An examination of the impact of the authorship of Saturus' vision requires further examination. Though at first glance, an argument that denies the genuineness of Saturus' vision would appear to deny the value of Perpetua's Scripture-like authority, one can also argue that this later addition further adds to the honour that was attributed to Perpetua by her Christian community. If it is the case that Saturus' vision was a later interpolation, this later addition informs us that the author and audience recognized Perpetua as receiving privileges that placed her above earthly religious figures and granted her with direct access to the divine realm. As such, it was expected by this early Christian community that proto-martyrs received these privileges. Religious membership of the editor is also often debated amongst scholars. More specifically, while some scholars argue that the editor of the *Passio* is a Montanist, others argue that evidence is not conclusive. Butler's exploration of the religious tendencies of the editor suggests that while membership cannot be ascertained with certainty that the value placed on prophecy, new visions and the Holy Spirit sides with the New Prophecy (*The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 57). In his opinion, "the *Passion* reflected all aspects of Montanism" (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 88). "Overall, the emphases on the Spirit, new revelation, prophetic visions, women's leadership, eschatological expectations, rigorous discipline, and voluntary martyrdom, which were displayed either to a lesser degree or not at all in other acts, clearly set apart the *Passion* as a distinctly Montanistic document" (Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"*129). Farina adds that Perpetua and Felicitas' separation from their husbands is also representative of the Montanist belief that celibacy was preferred over marriage (*Perpetua of Carthage*, 52).

[730] Frederick Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," *Church History* 49 (1980): 255. "For they had this very conflict with him, the devil, on account of their genuine love, in order that the Beast being choked, might vomit forth those whom he thought he had already swallowed. For they assumed no airs of superiority over the fallen, but with those things in which they themselves abounded they aided the needy, displaying towards them the compassion of a mother. And pouring out many tears for them to the Father, they begged life; and he gave it to them, and they shared it with their neighbours." Peter Kirby, "Letter from Vienna and Lyons," translated by Roberts-Donaldson n.p.. [cited 12 Sept 12 2012]. Online: http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/viennalyons.html 5.40–41. Though Eusebius makes a clear distinction between confessors and martyrs in the *Hist. eccl.*, he attributes this power to all individuals who are imprisoned because of their Christian faith.

martyrs awaiting their death could exercise and manifest extraordinary power. They even had the power of the keys, that is, the power to forgive the sins of those who had denied the faith and were therefore thought to have lost salvation".[731] As demonstrated by Perpetua, it is by praying, shedding tears and prostrating themselves in front of God that confessor-martyrs could access divine grace and restore lapsed individuals or deniers back into their Christian community as full members.[732] By having and utilizing the compassion, proto-martyrs figuratively held the keys to the Christian community. The notion of martyrs as intercessors is supported by Peter Brown's use of the patron-client model to examine the cults of the saints.[733] Like saints, confessor-martyrs provided those who sought their help with security and assistance. Though we have seen that Tertullian rejected the use of this authority and evidence suggests that the rigorously disciplined Montanists tended to "bind" rather than "loose," the capacity to forgive provides insight into Perpetua's authority.

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[731] Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution," 254.

[732] The vision where Perpetua relieves her dead brother's suffering suggests that she has been given "the power of the keys" because the author directly attributes the reconciliation of her brother to the Christian community. Furthermore, Perpetua's ability to relieve her dead brother's suffering in her vision suggests that her authority is divinely granted and sanctioned by God (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 115–17). God recognizes Perpetua's intercession as a confessor-martyr and grants divine grace because of her compassion. Perpetua's actions parallel those described by Eusebius in the *Hist. eccl.*. Like the martyr-confessors described in *Hist. eccl.*, Perpetua has the capacity and the privilege to aid the needy, pour tears out before God and reinstate individuals back into the community. Though it is an indirect reference, her brother's request for a vision because she is privileged also provides evidence for Perpetua's power of the keys (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs,* 111). Considering that Perpetua had only recently come to believe in the message of Christianity and was only a catechumen when she was arrested, I suggest that she only received privileges because of her status as a confessor-martyr (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 109).

[733] Brown's use of the patron-client model provides insight into the nature of the cult of saints and its attractiveness. By drawing upon the concepts of ancient relationships, Christian writers provided the cult of the saints with a familiar and comforting background. The saint-client relationship was attractive because it was accessible to all Christians and provided them with protection, inspiration and reassurance (Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981], 52–53, 101). "In a world so sternly organized around sin and justice, *patrocinicum* and *amicitia* provided a much needed language of amnesty" (Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 65). The transmission of the patron-client model into the cult of saints provided Christians with an intimate relationship with which they were familiar. "What we have seen is not the growth of new beliefs within the Christian communities, but the restructuring of old beliefs in such a way as to allow them to carry a far heavier 'charge' of public meaning" (Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 48).

By giving Perpetua the power to relieve suffering and provide forgiveness, the author gives her an authority that was previously limited to a bishop-presbyter.[734] The community's acceptance of this authority or power (though one may elect to use it sparingly) explains why Perpetua is depicted as a powerful individual. Martyrdom was perceived as an indication that God had provided an individual with grace, favour and direct support.[735] As such, proto-martyrs were honoured by their community and given leadership roles.[736] There is a direct relationship between Perpetua's divinely supported privileges and her honoured privileged role within her community: the power of martyrdom and her access to the divine gave Perpetua earthly power.

What Does Perpetua Have to do with Montanist Women?

This test-case demonstrates that the author/editor of the *passio* and the communities that accepted this text as authoritative supported the view that women could become empowered and promoted to positions of leadership.[737] As described in the *passio*, Perpetua's gender did not exclude her from the opportunity to receive visions, intercede on behalf of others, act as a leader or access the divine realm.[738] Klawiter argues that "it is probable that from the beginning of

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[734] Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution," 254. As was previously examined, Perpetua's bishop-presbyter type actions are exemplified in Saturus' vision where she is approached by a bishop and a presbyter who are feuding (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs,* 121–23). These authoritative figures acknowledge Perpetua's divine authority and her power to reconcile: they recognize and accept the power of the keys.

[735] Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Standford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 102.

[736] Kleinberg elaborates on the nature of this status and argues that "humans are but clay that God can mold into a vessel of honor or of dishonor. […] She has become a vessel of honor. She does not wish to change" (Kleinberg, *Flesh Made Word*, 60).

[737] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 90; Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 55.

[738] Because Perpetua receives a vision where she discovers that she is a man, there is debate regarding the nature of her gender and the influence of gender on salvation, access to the divine and leadership. "My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man. My seconds began to rub me down with oil" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 119). While acknowledging the complexity of the issue of Perpetua's gender, I claim that evidence found in the *passio* indicates that her female physical attributes do not exclude her from the opportunity to access the divine realm regardless of any rejection or acceptance of acceptable gender roles. Kleinberg provides an interesting examination of Perpetua's gender, gender expectations, her transformation, the addition of male qualities and her transformation back to femininity (*Flesh Made Word*, 75–76).

Montanism, women were permitted to rise to ministerial status through their role as confessor-martyrs."[739] Though the previous examinations into Montanism indicate that this was not the only circumstance under which women could obtain power and influence,[740] this test-case provides one specific circumstance where women were respected for their access to the divine and could gain a position of authority.[741] All individuals, regardless of gender, were encouraged to be full public disciples.[742] By including Perpetua's visions and privileges in his narrative, the author provides a salient example of the opportunities for all men and women to engage in ritualizations, receive visions, prophesize, become confessor-martyrs, obtain presbyter-bishop influences and receive divinely granted powers influential in both the heavenly and earthly realms. Butler argues that the characterization of Perpetua as a leader above other leaders is distinctly Montanist.[743] He also insists that the ability of women to achieve positions of prominence in the New Prophecy "threatened the patriarchal presupposition of the Catholic redactor."[744] Though it is premature to assume that all cases where women achieved positions of authority in early Christian communities held Montanist tendencies, non-member reactions to such achievements suggest that these positions were not part of the institutionalized mainstream hierarchy.

More General Gender Insights

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[739] Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution," 251.

[740] As we have seen, Trevett argues that women within the New Prophecy were able to reach a more public participation than their Catholic counterparts because of differences in Church structure and ideals (Trevett, *Montanism,* 176, 184).

[741] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 90.

[742] This argument is supported by the author's reference to Acts 2:17–18 in the introduction. "In the last days, God declares, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and their sons and daughters shall prophesy [...]" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 107).

[743] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 96.

[744] Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions,"* 101.

Because prophecy was believed to lead to the glorification of Jesus and Christianity, it is not difficult to see why prophets and prophetesses were powerful within their communities. Tertullian though himself a church leader, grants those who had visions and prophesied authority: the prophets and prophetesses kept the community vibrant with new instructions, insights and glorification. His instruction on the importance of *pneuma* ritualizations including oracles, visions, and prophesies supports the statement in the introduction of the *passio* where the author argues that all individuals (regardless of gender) who receive visions are granted Scripture-like authority.[745]

Greater Conclusions on Perpetua and Montanism

After examining the New Prophecy and *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, we are better equipped to consider the questions in the introduction. Did women willingly accept the impositions later set upon them by community leaders? What happened when women did not accept the restrictions of these new reformed roles? Were these restrictions universal or did individual communities respond to gender issues and the formation of group identity differently? This project has demonstrated that women were able to achieve positions of leadership and power despite efforts of some male leadership to eliminate the threat of female power. The examination of the third- and fourth- century Montanist community in this chapter reveals that in some cases women were treated as spiritual equals, were believed to receive visions, prophesied and could obtain positions of influence. Evidence has also suggested that the extreme ideals of discipline also offered women the opportunity to annul their marriages, remain celibate and reject traditional idealized gender boundaries. *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* suggests that confessor-martyrs were given authority and the power of interceding on behalf of deniers:

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[745] Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 107–9.

women were provided with the power of the keys and acted like ministers when they awaited an impending martyrdom.

This research provides us with the opportunity to consider membership in specific early Christian communities as developments in community and identity. In the case of Montanism we have seen that the movement began within Christianity among individuals who found certain practices or lack thereof troubling. The New Prophecy and its amendments provided individuals with the opportunity to join a community that they might have found more palatable. Though the form of Christianity that would become dominant in the post-Constantinian period did not approve of the authority that these women claimed for themselves, they continued to exercise their power and leadership under "the authority of inspiration."[746] Individuals who sought a community where women had the opportunity to engage in ritualizations and achieve a position of influence or authority would have found the Montanist movement more attractive than Christian groups that promoted idealized gender dichotomies. The Montanist groups provide us with evidence that what individuals did, not a linear timeline, determined who they were. Specifically, ritualizations and practices provided individuals with the opportunity to challenge the status quo and experiment with boundaries.

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[746] Huber, *Women and the Authority of Inspiration*, 18.

11. WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

As was suggested at the beginning of this project, a great deal of scholarship promotes the participation and status of women in early Christian groups as far exceeding that of the contemporary non-Christian women. In particular, it is often argued that women in antiquity chose to join or convert to Christianity because these groups offered women equality and power that was unavailable elsewhere. This theoretical and methodological approach to the participation of women in early Jesus groups is problematic. This approach employs modern categories and terms not understood in antiquity and re-interprets ancient groups with theological (or other modern goals) rather than historical ventures. And while at first glance these early Jesus groups may appear to provide women with unprecedented opportunities, influence and positions of power, a project in redescription must look beyond a single movement or a single time period for answers.

This project in redescription has demonstrated that the ability or opportunity for women in early Jesus groups to participate in ritualizations or obtain positions of authority and influence should not be examined in terms of a timeline. I have considered the earliest Pauline groups, the later Pastoral groups and the third- and fourth-century Montanist groups as test-cases to determine whether the attempt to restrict the participation and power of women should be considered a linear and consistent development. The evidence presented in this project suggests that the participation of women, the opportunities available to them and attempts to limit or restrict women should not be considered in a broad sweeping fashion. The evidence has demonstrated that while traditional overarching gender categories or ideals provide a good vantage point from which we can begin to understand the participation of women in Jesus associations that each group needs to be examined individually.

This project has also demonstrated that paradigms like apocalypticism and eschatology cannot be used as convenient explanations for the development of worldviews associated with the earliest Jesus groups. Rather, this project has argued that practices, specifically ritualizations and performances, as well as the perceived access to *pneuma* influenced the status accorded to women in early Jesus groups. Thus far, this project had demonstrates that women in early Christian groups, regardless if they are first- (Pauline), second- (Pastoral), third- or fourth-century (Montanist) groups, received authority, power and influence from their practices and not by fiat of modern manipulated theological paradigms. The next step in this theory and redescription project is to consider the value of the "gender power" of ritualizations. It is necessary to determine whether opportunities, social experimentations and enhancements in gender status were only achieved with ritualizations in Jesus groups. To be sure, the previous examinations of banqueting and *pneuma* ritualizations suggest that early Christians were not the only associations or groups to find opportunities in practice.

A Starting Point

Research often suggests that new or developing religious movements are more egalitarian than groups that are firmly entrenched in society. It is often argued that these groups offer individuals (some of whom were previously treated as subordinates) the prospect of gaining leadership opportunities or positions of power. For example, "Stark and Bainbridge postulate that 'one of the things that attracts particularly ambitious women to cults is the opportunity to become leaders or even founders of their own religious movements'. Most such women will have been frustrated, but a few have succeeded. The lack of opportunity within their own religion will

sometimes drive women to convert to completely different traditions."[747] As suggested by these scholars, some women elected to join a developing or new religious movement because new opportunities were made available to them. It is further argued by some scholars that these individuals or female converts took an initiative to reject their current social circumstances.[748] Evidence suggests that some individuals used religious groups as a means to achieve power and influence. For this redescription project, it is necessary to determine whether the perceived opportunities offered to women in early Christianity were also available outside Jesus groups.

Ross Shepard Kraemer's Sourcebook: a Good Place to Start

Ross Shepard Kraemer first published a sourcebook on the participation of women in the Greco-Roman world in 1988. And while the texts, narratives, inscriptions, and epitaphs have been previously translated and published by various scholars, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* was the first text to assemble all of the texts relevant to the participation of women in religious activities in antiquity. While scholars previously tended to focus on contemporary theological issues, Kraemer's research focuses on "what women themselves did and thought within contexts that could be labeled 'religious' and in theoretical models that might enable [her] to analyze and explain whatever differences [she] might find when concentrated [her] research on women rather than, as had almost universally been the case previously, on men."[749] Since 1988, Kraemer modified this anthology and produced a new edition titled *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A*

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[747] Elizabeth Puttick, "Women in New Religious Movements," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* (ed. Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell; New York: Routledge, 1999), 157.

[748] Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 77.

[749] Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

Sourcebook. Her latest sourcebook aptly demonstrates that women were not only prominent in early Christian practices and literature but also participated in positions of influence in Jewish and Greco-Roman religious texts and activities.

As demonstrated by Kraemer's sourcebook, when considering the participation of women in ancient groups, there are numerous types of evidence which can be taken into account. The approximate 250 entries in her anthology include texts written by men about women and those assumed (by some scholars) to be written by women: they include instructions, narratives, myths, inscriptions, epitaphs, documents, contracts and honours. As with scholars who have raised similar concerns with the treatment of women in Christian texts, Kraemer also rightfully raises issue with the accuracy of the descriptions of women in Jewish and Greco-Roman ancient texts.[750] While she includes all relevant entries in her anthology, Kraemer justly hesitates to categorize all of the descriptions of women in ancient texts as accurate descriptions of real women untainted by the author's intentions.

Religious Office

As this project has as one of its goals to consider the conditions or circumstances under which women gained and lost positions of power and leadership in early Jesus groups, it is also worth considering briefly the actual lives of women in antiquity. In my previous examination of women in Pauline groups, I outlined the honour/shame and public/private paradigms often employed to consider women in antiquity. I determined that while these paradigms provided a vantage point from which we could begin to consider women in early Jesus groups that it was nevertheless important to avoid using sweeping generalizations when considering gender in antiquity. While the paradigms are still useful, it is best to examine communities or events individually if one

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[750] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 9.

wishes to gain a thorough perspective on what women did or how they were perceived in a specific group. As such, I used the honour/shame and public/private paradigms as starting points from which I could consider the opportunities offered to women in the Pauline Jesus groups. I previously determined that a strict comparison between the Pauline texts and these paradigms suggests that women were offered opportunities that were not available elsewhere. However, my exploration of banqueting and *pneuma* suggests that ritualizations and performances, not specific Jesus group beliefs provided women with opportunities for social experimentation.

I will now briefly proceed to consider a few non-Christian test cases to determine whether women belonging to other groups also benefitted from social experimentation. As demonstrated in Kraemer's sourcebook, evidence of female leadership in Greco-Roman antiquity enables us to gleam into the activities of women. "A significant portion of the evidence we have for women's religious activities [...] relates to their roles as officiants in religious rites and as officeholders in religious communities. This evidence is often quite concrete. Various inscriptions and epitaphs identify specific women as officials and leaders, whether in pagan, Jewish, or Christian contexts."[751] And again, while the Pauline, Pastoral and Montanist evidence that was previously examined suggests that we should not be surprised that women could hold positions of power and influence, the point of this test-case exercise is to determine whether such opportunities and experimentations were exclusive to Jesus groups.

As stated by Kraemer, in her examination of religious offices, her anthology focuses "on which offices women held and what activities, authority, prestige, honors, and responsibility went with those offices, as well as exploring how one attained religious offices including factors of family connections, financial contributions, and the like."[752] Though Kraemer provides

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[751] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 241.
[752] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 242–43.

numerous inscriptions and epitaphs, one detailed second-century C.E. inscription outlining the

honours given to Tata of Aphrodisias provides valuable insight.

> The council and the people and the senate honour with first-rank honours Tata,
> daughter of Diodorus son of Diodorus son of Leon, reverend priestess of Hera for
> life, mother of the city, who became and remained the wife of Attalus son of
> Pytheas the *stephanephorus*, herself a member of an illustrious family of the first
> rank, who, as priestess of the imperial cult a second time, twice supplied oil for
> athletes in hand-bottles, filled most lavishly from basins for the better part of the
> night [as in the day], who became a *stephanephorus*, offered sacrifices throughout
> the year for the health of the imperial family, who held banquets for the people
> many times with couches provided for the public, who herself, for dances and
> plays, imported the foremost performers in Asia and displayed them in her native
> city (and the neighbouring cities could also come to the display of the
> performance), a woman who spared no expense, who loved honour, glorious in
> virtue and chastity.[753]

Not only does this inscription bestow honours upon Tata of Aphrodisias for her service as a

priestess, but it reveals how influential and powerful this women was in Caria (Turkey) when she

was alive. As a crown-bearer and a member of an illustrious family, Tata acted as a revered

priestess for Hera and a benefactor for her community. Tata is depicted as both holding an

illustrious office as well as providing numerous services. And while the next brief section will

consider the participation of women in ritualizations and performances, it is notable that Tata

offered sacrifices and held banquets.

     Like their Greco-Roman counterparts, evidence demonstrates that Jewish women (as well

as Judaizers) also acted as benefactors, supported synagogues and received honours for their

contributions. In her examination of women in religious offices, Kraemer includes several

inscriptions and epitaphs which indicate that Jewish women held the titles head of synagogue,

elder and possibly priestess.[754] These inscriptions and epitaphs, while not providing as much

information and description of the women as the previously examined honours for Tata, none-

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[753] Kraemer, *Sourcebook*, 249.
[754] Kraemer, *Sourcebook*, 251–55.

the-less suggest that Jewish women could hold positions of authority or status. The following inscription, written by Rufina, forewarns individuals of using a tomb she organized for her slaves.

> Rufina, a Jewish [or "Judean"] woman, head of the synagogue, built this tomb for her freed slaves and the slaves raised in her house. No one else has the right to bury anyone (here). Anyone who dares to do (so) will pay 1500 denarai to the sacred treasury and 1000 denarai to the Jewish people [or "the Judean *ethnos*"]. A copy of this inscription has been placed in the public archives.[755]

This inscription provides information about the care for slaves as well as rules and regulations for the use or misuse of tombs. However, the author also provides us with important information regarding Rufina's social status. Specifically, the author states that Rufina is the "head of the synagogue" or the *archisynagogos*. The inscription also reveals that she had the financial wherewithal to own slaves and build them a tomb.

A Dionysiac Rite and the *Therapeutrides*

While the debate surrounding the participation of women in religious activities, festivals and practices may not be resolved, evidence suggests that women were active in Jewish, Christian and Greco-Roman ritualizations. Regardless of how authors felt about female participation in the practices, rites and observances they described, literature suggests that women not only had the opportunity to engage in religious performances which at times crossed the idealized gender boundaries but some women also had the opportunity to lead festivals and ritualizations. The following brief exploration of ritualization will consider the Dionysiac *Thiasos* and the *Therapeutrides* for female involvement in non-Christian practices.

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[755] Kraemer, *Sourcebook*, 251.

<u>Dionysiac Practices</u>

Ancient Mediterranean societies offered individuals numerous gods and goddesses to worship and a variety of performances and rituals to demonstrate one's dedication to a deity. While a study of numerous gods and goddesses and the involvement of women in practices or ritualizations dedicated to these deities is interesting, for the sake of brevity, I will briefly consider an instance of female Bacchic worship and an epitaph. But first, a brief glance at devotions to Dionysus.

Like many "mystery cults" in antiquity, the beliefs and practices of Dionysiac devotees are not clear. Many ritualizations were held in secret, performances often took place during private initiations, and practices and information was often only privy to members. As demonstrated by Kraemer, the evidence for participation and ritualizations is often contradictory and at times reflects half-truths and personal objectives. When considering the practices of women in the cult of Dionysus, Kraemer argues that "women's proclivity for the worship of the Greek god Dionysos was legendary even in antiquity. Yet precisely what women did in the service of the God Dionysos is not easy to determine."[756]

Despite the problems that one encounters when attempting to understand the "who, what, why, when, where and how" of Dionysiac worship, we are not at a complete loss to discuss practices. First, these groups held a variety of narratives or myths based on the betrayal, tragedy of Semele and the revenge of her son Dionysus.[757] Second, initiates of the Dionysiac cult were both male and female and both genders appeared to have participated in private mysteries.[758] Third, while some of the mysteries or practices were available to both men and women, some

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[756] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings,* 36.
[757] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 36–38.
[758] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 39–49.

ritualizations were restricted to female performances.[759] And while this is not the place to discuss the probabilities or even possibilities of women running wild through the forest, breastfeeding wild animals, ripping apart wild animals, engaging in sexual debaucheries or committing fraud, evidence found in inscriptions, epitaphs and literature suggests that some things can be said about women who participated in the rites. According to Kraemer,

> Several of their activities constitute explicit denials of their socially approved roles and inversions of male/female behaviour. [...] The Bacchae release their bound hair, which [...] we may see as a transparent symbol expression of their (temporary) loosening of the social constraints that formal hairstyles express. The physical actions of the Bacchae convey a similar message: they run, they dance not the stately controlled dances but wild maenadic ones. [...] They legitimize their departure from home, their abandonment of social responsibilities and relationships [...] by attributing their possession to an amoral divinity.[760]

As interpreted by Kraemer, the rituals performed by female initiates granted them the temporary opportunity to challenge the idealized traditional socially acceptable roles.

In an inscription found in Turkey (*LSAM* 48), the activities of a Dionysiac *Thiasos* ritual are regulated. For the purposes of this project the inscription is significant for two reasons: 1) it mentions women when outlaying appropriate behaviour and; 2) the leader is a woman. As stated by the author,

> Whenever the priestess performs the holy rites on behalf of the city..., it is not permitted for anyone to throw pieces of raw meat [anywhere], before the priestess has thrown them on behalf of the city [...] ...to provide [for the women] the implements for initiation in all the orgies... And whenever a woman wishes to perform an initiation for Dionysus Bacchius in the city, in the countryside, or on the islands, she must pay a piece of gold to the priestess at each biennial celebration.[761]

In the case of these Dionysiac practices, not only did women perform rites but finances for participation in the initiations were guaranteed. This Dionysiac ritualization was for maenads.

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[759] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 39–43.
[760] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 47.
[761] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 21.

However, of interest, there is evidence that women were provided with the opportunity to gain a leadership position where they could perform rites on behalf of the city. Though there is certainly debate surrounding the roles that women played in these ritualizations and whether such roles re-enforced gender expectations,[762] for the purpose of this project, at this moment it suffices to note that women (*Thiasos*) participated and were expected to participate in ritualizations where they were temporarily free of male presence.

An epitaph for a priestess of Dionysus describing her role was found in Miletus, Turkey. This third- or second-century B.C.E. inscription instructs individuals to remember Alcemeonis, a priestess of Dionysos, for her leadership. "Bacchae of the City, say 'Farewell you holy priestess.' This is what a good woman deserves. She led you to the mountain and carried all the sacred objects and implements, marching in procession before the whole city. Should some stranger ask for her name: Alcemeonis, daughter of Rhodius, who knew her share of the blessings."[763] Though this epitaph does not provide a great deal about the rituals which Alcemeonis led, the fact that such activities were public, led by a priestess and do not appear to have been limited by gender is notable. Kraemer argues that this inscription demonstrates that some Bacchic rituals were only performed and led by women.[764]

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[762] Participation in ancient festivals and rituals were the main ideal form of female public activity. The main concerns behind the festivals and the ritual performances included fertility and the maintenance of the established acceptable roles designated for women by men (such as the roles of dutiful wife and mother). Besides promoting fertility, these practices were also significant because they celebrated a woman's or a girl's transition from one sociosexual category to another (from being a child, to being eligible to marriage, to marriage, to bearing a child). When we examine ancient Mediterranean religious practices in terms of beneficial/non-beneficial or liberating/restrictive, we are faced with a challenge because the stories or festivals can be interpreted in different fashions. Specifically, they can be seen at the same time as both restrictive and liberating.

[763] Kraemer, *Sourcebook*, 21.

[764] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 41.

Therapeutrides

Though sources appear to suggest that there is more evidence for the participation of Greco-Roman women in public religious ritualizations than their Jewish counterparts, evidence indicates that Jewish women did participate in practices. While some sources like the Mishnah (*Niddah* 1.1–2.4) discuss issues of female purity during menstruation, other texts offer insight into the possibility of women partaking in group worship and ritualizations.[765] The first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria provides this type of evidence when contemplating the participation of women in religious practices. While the majority of his works consist of lengthy interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures, Philo also wrote apologetic treatises that provide us with a glimpse into the lives of first century men and women. Though a significant portion of *On the Contemplative Life* describes the problematic practices and beliefs of his non-Jewish neighbours, Philo also describes a Jewish group that lived outside of Alexandria.[766] Of particular interest to this research project, *On the Contemplative Life* provides insight into the ritualizations of women belonging to a group of contemplative Jewish ascetic monastics.[767] Philo claims that the members of this religious community are referred to as the *Therapeutai,* a term which can be translated as worshippers or healers.[768]

On the Contemplative Life describes the practices, rites and rituals of the *Therapeutai*: a group which can be divided into the *Therapeutai* (male members) and the *Therapeutrides*

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[765] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 74. As we have seen with other ancient documents, Kraemer rightly suggests that references to women in ancient rabbinic texts, "including the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Midrash Rabbah, and others" may reveal more about how the authors perceived women rather than the actual historical women that belonged to 3rd-7th century Jewish communities (74).

[766] Ross S. Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Egypt: Philo Judaeus on the Therapeutrides," *Signs* 14 (1989): 343.

[767] Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women," 342–70. Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 28.

[768] Gail Paterson Corrington, "Philo–On the Contemplative Life: Or, On the Suppliants (The Fourth Book on the Virtues)," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (ed. Vincent L. Wimbush; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 134, 137.

(female members). And while this group is important because it evidences an ascetic group of Jewish women in antiquity, for this project Philo's description is significant because it describes ritualizations and the status of the *Therapeutrides*.[769] As described by Philo, the practices of this group offered women the opportunity to devote themselves to a life of contemplation as well as actively participate and perform practices.

On the Contemplative Life presents readers with the opportunity to consider questions of gender equality or gender elimination. For example, Kraemer explores an "egalitarian impulse among the Therapeutics [...and] redefine[s] Therapeutic women as men."[770] And while a consideration of Philo's philosophies of gender or the *Therapeutai's* understandings of divine soul are interesting topics, for the purpose of this project, I will consider the actions or the ritualizations as evidence for the participation of women in a mixed gender community.

According to Philo, both male and female members of the *Therapeutai* community attempt to increase their knowledge and piety through prayer, devote themselves to training, read literature as well as compose songs and hymns in solitude.[771] Philo claims that after six days of seclusion dedicated to philosophy, the members of the community are united for the celebration of the Sabbath.[772] While the men and women are segregated by a type of enclosure (one side for men and the other for women) during their prayers and celebration, Philo makes it clear that women were included in the ritualizations and festivities.[773] "For indeed also women customarily participate in listening (like the men), having the same zeal and purpose."[774] Succinctly, while

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[769] Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women," 342.
[770] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, 113–17, 127.
[771] Corrington, "Philo," 140–42. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 25–29.
[772] Corrington, "Philo," 142. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life,* 30.
[773] Corrington, "Philo," 142. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 32.
[774] Kraemer, *A Sourcebook*, 30. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 32.

men and women were distinguished by gender during the ritualizations, the divisions did not restrict or limit the activities or performances of women as compared to the men.

Philo describes another festival that is held on the fiftieth day. While the majority of Philo's consideration of this ritualization involves a discussion of the practices of the *Therapeutai*, he does not fail to include the *Therapeutrides*.

> "Women eat together (here) also. They are mostly elderly virgins. They strongly maintain the purity, not out of necessity, as some of the priestesses of the Greeks (do), but out of their own free will, because of a zeal and yearning for Wisdom, which they are eager to live with. They take no heed of the pleasures of the body, and desire not a mortal offspring, but an immortal one, which only a soul which is loved by God is able to give birth to, by itself, because the Father has sown in its lights of intelligence which enable her to see the doctrines of Wisdom."[775]

Again, while Philo's consideration briefly explores the relationship between a woman's soul and God, it is women's activities or choices that provide evidence for ritualizations. First, women eat with men and are not described as receiving lesser portions. Though Philo does not discuss seating arrangements for women, he indicates that men stood "in a row in rank order" before reclining.[776] This division among men may suggest ranked seating for women as well, but this is strictly conjectured. What Philo does tell us about female meal practices is that while men and women banqueted together, they were divided by gender.[777] This banqueting practice may resonate with the previously examined opportunities for social experiments during certain meal practices. To be sure, Philo does not discuss experimentation. However, it is notable that; 1) men and women alike recline and eat together and; 2) that Philo is writing an apologetic text. If in fact this philosophical group existed, we may elect to approach Philo's apologetic descriptions with caution. It is plausible that he, like other apologetic writers, seeks to present these women as higher stock than non-member women. It is also plausible that he would attempt to do so while at

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[775] Kraemer, *A Sourcebook*, 30–31. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 68.
[776] Corrington, "Philo," 149. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 66.
[777] Corrington, "Philo," 150. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 69.

the same time not seeking to outlandishly challenge gender boundaries. Of interest, Philo describes women as having the capacity to choose an ascetic lifestyle. Philo ascertains that the *Therapeutrides*' state of purity enables them to gain knowledge and satisfy their craving for Wisdom. He also argues that while women leaders in Greek religions maintain an ascetic lifestyle because they were required to do so, the *Therapeutrides* freely make this choice.

After the banquet, the *Therapeutai* are said to hold a vigil and then a musical chorus. Both male and female choruses celebrate individually in the banquet hall and then proceed to sing together.[778] "[...] Seeing and experiencing this (salvation), which is a work greater than in word, thought and hope, both men and women were filled with inspiration and became a choir singing hymns of thanksgiving to God the Saviour. The men were led by Moses the prophet, and the women by Miriam the prophetess."[779] After the banquet and the singing, both *Therapeutai* and *Therapeutrides* returned to their individual chambers and resumed philosophical contemplation.[780]

This brief examination of Philo's *Therapeutai* provides insight into the opportunities for women in a Jewish ascetic group. This text suggests that women could participate in ritualizations, gain wisdom and become inspired. While much of Philo's description of the *Therapeutrides*' ritualizations includes a discussion of the division between the male and female participants (divided places of reverence in 33, of reclining in 69 or choir in 83-88), he nevertheless suggests that women participate in ritualizations. Furthermore, in the case of reverence and choir after the fiftieth day, while men and women were separated at the beginning of the rites, they are joined together in unison at the end.

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[778] Corrington, "Philo," 153. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 83–85.
[779] Kraemer, *Women's Religions*, 30–31. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 87.
[780] Corrington, "Philo," 154. Citing Philo, *Contempl. Life*, 89.

<u>Conclusions</u>

It was previously stated that research commonly suggests that developing religious movements are more egalitarian than groups with firmly established social structures. It is also often argued that these groups offer women the prospect of gaining positions of influence and power. Following this paradigm, a great deal of scholarship promotes the participation of women in early Christian groups as far exceeding that of the contemporary non-Christian women. Specifically, it has been argued that women in antiquity chose to join or convert to early Christianity because these groups offered a type of feminist equality and power that was unavailable elsewhere.

This chapter has considered the question of whether women in early Jesus groups experienced opportunities that were not found in other groups. Evidence found in inscriptions for Tata of Aphrodisias and Rufina the *archisynagogos* as well as the Dionysiac *Thiasos* and the *Therapeutrides* suggests that women in early Jesus groups did not experience unique powers and opportunities. An investigation in the practices of women belonging to Greco-Roman and Mediterranean associations as well as Jewish communities reveals that women acted as agents and found opportunities for power and influence in many groups. Succinctly, the perceived opportunities offered to women in early Christian groups were also available outside Jesus groups. This information is of particular importance to this research project because not only have we come to realize that ritualizations which engaged in social experimentation performed in early Jesus groups offered women opportunities, but women belonging to many different groups that engaged in such practices found opportunities for leadership, power and influence. It is *not*

an innovative Christian worldview or belief that made Christian women special but widespread

contemporary practices and ritualizations that afforded women such a characterization in various

religious groups or associations.

12. PRACTICES ENABLE POWER

Over the past several decades feminism and women's studies have found a place in academia. As a result, religious studies scholars have examined and continue to question the status accorded to women in religious groups. And while scholars have certainly come to some conclusions about women in early Jesus groups, there are still many questions that remain unanswered. For example, this research project has explored how scholars agree that the descriptions of women found in early Christian texts are not consistent and that in some cases women are depicted as powerful and influential while in others women are described as marginal and problematic. However, very little research actually presses the issue further to determine why some women are depicted as holding leadership positions while others faced restrictions.

My dissertation has been devoted to documenting and explaining the varying views on and positions of women in early Jesus associations. While there has been a tendency by scholars to use apocalypticism or eschatology to explain the development of early Jesus groups as well as their worldviews, like a supposed increase in the valuation of women, this project has challenged the validity of this approach and determined that it is historically inaccurate. Specifically, this project has looked elsewhere to find answers to what appeared to be an increase in the authority given to women in some Jesus groups.

Central to my research has been the question if there is a connection between ritualizations, social experimentations, ritual performances and the status of women in specific early Christian communities. Or put differently, this project has sought to determine if social experiments and ritualizations are factors in determining status positions and leadership roles for women in Jesus associations. Rather than placing worldviews or beliefs as catalysts, this project has placed practices and activities at its center.

This research project has tested the hypothesis that the tendency towards an increasingly muscular patriarchy developed in tandem with a weakening of ritualizations and social experimentations. With the use of ritual theory, this project has determined that these parallel developments both restricted and provided opportunities for women members of early Jesus groups. I located the emergence of non-conventional female roles within these parallel tendencies and suggest that second- and third-century status and leadership opportunities were enabled by an increasingly "manly" church that no longer re-imagined contemporary social structures.

A Trek with Necessary Detours

This project began with a consideration of appropriate methodologies and theories for examining early Jesus groups. I outlined relevant key points from Jonathan Z. Smith's model of research into the history of religions, Burton Mack's description of Jesus groups as social experiments, Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller's theory of social formation and Willi Braun and William Arnal's theses on social formation, mythmaking and retroactive descriptions. These scholars promote a redescription theory that seeks to rectify the problems arising from research that privileges Christianity and early Christian groups over other contemporary associations. These scholars also demonstrate the importance of examining the development of multiple Jesus groups and giving people "their due" rather than considering a view of Christian origins as extraordinary or unique. These redescription theories weigh importance on the practices and interactions of members of the early Jesus groups.

My project proceeded to consider how redescription projects have influenced feminist reconstructions of the valuation of women and the participation of women in early Christian

groups. I suggested that while significant gains have been made in the recovery of women in Jesus associations that many questions still remain unanswered. Of significance, this project raised the point that while research has provided evidence that women were present in the earliest Jesus groups and that some women gained the opportunity to participate in venues of leadership, power and influence, there has been little research that has attempted to explain why. I suggested that a good place to begin was Wiili Braun's and Elizabeth Corley's examinations of feminist myths in early Christian studies. Braun and Corley argue that while many scholars describe Jesus as a feminist, revolutionary, radical, unique, unprecedented and incomparable that these depictions are coloured by Protestant theological rhetoric. Corley argues that Jesus did not save women from oppression and demonstrates that the treatment of women in early Christian groups was not without comparison. Her research suggests that the majority of feminist theories do not search for women in a historical fashion but have predetermined goals that colours their findings.

The objectives of this project were to follow the goals of redescription and rectification of theories and also to recognize the importance of reconsidering feminist theories and methodologies further into a venue that recognizes human contributions rather than Jesus impact. In order to meet these objectives, I suggested that the best place to begin was with the problematic traditional paradigms of apocalypticism and eschatology. As many scholars use these categories as convenient short cuts for the development of the earliest Jesus groups and their ensuing worldviews, it was necessary to determine if they were indeed catalysts for the opportunities that women found in early Jesus groups.

The chapter on apocalypticism and eschatology determined that the use of these paradigms as shortcuts for explaining the development of the earliest Jesus groups is highly

problematic. I suggested that popular genealogical interpretations of apocalypticism and eschatology do an injustice to historical research because they employ an ideological approach that does not examine an actual first century development. This chapter served the purpose of setting aside traditional understandings of apocalypticism and eschatology as explanatory categories for the development and restrictions of female authority in early Jesus associations. I proceeded to suggest that we need to determine the circumstances under which members of early Christian groups envisioned social changes and challenged established social norms.

After acknowledging that apocalyptic beliefs and eschatological expectations cannot explain the development of early Jesus groups or their ensuing worldviews, I suggested that individuals, including women, are responsible for their own actions and opportunities. I then suggested that a fruitful place to begin considering what individuals did in order to create these opportunities is ritual theory. With an acknowledgement that the performance of ritualizations plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of early Jesus groups, I set the stage to consider how early Jesus groups engaged in ritualizations. By placing ritualizations at the forefront of this investigation, I was able to determine how performances or ritualization in early Jesus groups provided women with opportunities to participate in leadership roles and garner influence within their group.

The following four chapters used meal and banqueting ritualizations, *pneuma* ritualizations as well as ecstatic practices to demonstrate that it becomes possible to better understand early Jesus groups as well as the importance that ritualizations played in the development and maintenance of these groups. I suggested that these ritualizations enabled participants to engage in social experimentation and challenge (although perhaps only temporarily) traditionally accepted social paradigms. Important for this research project, these

chapters laid the background for considering the participation of women in Jesus groups. After determining how women were valorized in Jesus groups, I suggested that these chapters will lend to the determination of why women found opportunities in these practices to increase their levels of participation as well as garner power, leadership and influence in their groups.

The seventh chapter considers the representation of women in early Pauline literature. Engaged in redescription theories and methodology, this chapter examines prominent feminist approaches to the letters and considers historical women behind the literature. The examination of named women in Paul's letters suggested that some women were prominent members of Jesus associations and acted in leadership capacities. While Paul's references do not provide explicit information about the extent to which these women were able to exert their powers, they do suggest that women were able to achieve some level of influence, recognition and respect and played important roles in the development of early Jesus groups. This chapter also included a general study of the "gendered" instructions provided by Paul. I suggested that these passages provide a lens through which we can peer into the status and participation of the majority of women in these groups. The celibacy and sexual relationship test-case (1 Cor 7) and praying and prophesying women test-case (1 Cor 11) revealed that some women interpreted Paul's teachings and early Jesus practices to suit their individual goals. While it is not possible to determine the celibate women's various and specific motivations or the goals of the praying and prophesying women, evidence indicates that their behaviour crossed idealized traditional gender expectations and granted them access to previously inaccessible roles. Specifically, this chapter suggested that women in Corinth had the opportunity to engage in social experimentation.

The eighth chapter tested the hypothesis that women who lived in Pauline communities were granted greater influence and leadership opportunities than women who lived in the later

Pastoral groups. This examination of the Pastoral epistles suggests that the Pastor was concerned with the appearance, activities and behaviour of women in Jesus associations. Citing the Adam and Eve story, the Pastor instructed group members that the participation of women was to be reformed. Engaging the hermeneutics of suspicion, I argued that despite the instructions for women to be silent, submissive and unadorned that we should consider the circumstances that promoted these restrictions. Specifically, I argued that the Pastor included these instructions because women were not following the idealized traditional Greco-Roman gender dichotomies. Comparing the Pauline and Pastoral women, this chapter argued that some male leaders became concerned with long-lasting religious and social structures and moved to privilege male leadership and restrict female roles and functions. Concluding that we should not only chalk this response down to a concern with non-member criticisms, this chapter challenges us to look elsewhere to find answers for attempts to restrict the prominence and participation of women.

After considering the evidence for women in the Pauline and Pastoral groups, the ninth chapter determines how ritualizations impacted the participation of women in the earliest Jesus associations. This chapter determined that *pneuma* ritualizations and social experimentations like prophecy played a significant role in the opportunities available for participation Jesus groups. While the Pauline letters evidenced such ritualizations, the Pastor's promotion of rigid leadership qualifications and paradigms attempted to restrict these practices to a limited number of elite men. I further concluded that while the Pastoral epistles do show a valuation of *pneuma* ritualizations that they differ from the earlier Pauline letters because access to this authority had been drastically limited.

Some scholars suggest that the institution of male patriarchy, like that found in the Pastoral epistles, marked the end of female leadership in the early Christian Church. However,

upon considering later Jesus groups and communities, other scholars suggest that women continued to hold positions of power and influence in these associations and then churches. While their motivations may be theological rather than historical and their prioritization of the treatment of Christian women over the treatment of non-members is certainly dubious, their research does provide evidence for women in leadership positions. Specifically, while some scholarship ends their research with apologetic early second century documents, scholars like John Wijngaards engage centuries of literature to demonstrate that women were not excluded from positions of authority.[781] To be sure, the manner in which they were permitted to participate in these positions is debated. Nonetheless, the fact that documents name women as leaders or deacons is significant. For the purpose of this research project, this evidence means that women and many of their male counterparts did not accept the complete subordination of women or the restriction of their participation in religious activities.

The tenth chapter examined the Montanist groups as a test-case to determine the value of considering the development of patriarchy and restrictions placed on ritualizations performed by women as a linear movement. I considered the third- and fourth- century Montanist groups and *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* as test-cases to examine the status and opportunities offered to women in one rather popular form of Christianity that challenged the form of Christianity that would become dominant in the post-Constantinian period. I considered how women (the prophetesses, leaders and general members) played an important role in the formation, maintenance and promotion of the New Prophecy. This chapter also explored how both men and women participated in *pneuma* rituals: authority, prophecy and ministry were religious gifts available to all members of the New Prophecy. Citing New Prophecy practices and

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[781] John Wijngaards, *Women Deacons in the Early Church: Historical Texts and Contemporary Debates* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006).

references found in *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, this chapter determined that

women who participated in *pneuma* ritualizations had the opportunity to obtain authority, power

and influence. I determined that individuals who sought a community where women had the

opportunity to engage in ritualizations and achieve a position of influence or authority would

have found the Montanist movement more attractive than Christian groups that promoted the

idealized traditional gender dichotomies. Contrary to numerous contemporary Christian

communities, Montanist groups offered women participation in ritualizations, the exploration

and challenging of beliefs, authority and influence, the interpretation of Scripture, an ascetic

lifestyle, travel as well as be respected and valued for qualities not associated with traditional

gender virtues. These opportunities granted us the opportunity to identify specific reasons why

some Christians joined Montanist communities despite the attendant personal and social risks.

The Montanist groups provide us with evidence that practices and ritualizations, not a linear

timeline, determined how early Christian groups defined themselves. I suggest that ritualizations

and practices, not time frame, provided women with the opportunity to challenge the status quo

and experiment with boundaries.

The eleventh chapter argued that while at first glance the earliest Jesus groups may

appear to provide women with unprecedented opportunities, influence and positions of power

that a project in redescription must look beyond a single movement or a single time period for

answers. The evidence presented in the previous chapters of this project have suggested that the

participation of women, the opportunities available to them and attempts to limit or restrict

women should not be considered in a broad sweeping fashion. The previous chapters also

demonstrated that one should not consider the development of patriarchy or restrictions placed

upon the ritualizations and influence of women in a linear fashion. Rather, this project argued

that scholars should consider ritualizations as determining factors in the opportunities for women to participate and hold authority in early Jesus groups as well as later Christian communities.

The eleventh chapter considered the value of the "gender power" of ritualizations. This chapter considered evidence found in inscriptions for Tata of Aphrodisias and Rufina the *archisynagogos* as well as the Dionysiac *Thiasos* and the *Therapeutrides* and determined that women in early Jesus groups did not experience unique opportunities or authorities that were not found in other groups. This investigation led to the conclusion women belonging to Greco-Roman and Mediterranean associations as well as Jewish communities found agency and created opportunities for power and influence.

> It would be wrong, therefore, to read the apologists as 'ahead of their time,' and as representing for women new opportunities afforded by Christianity. They were appealing to debates current within the wider society, in order to define a place for the Christian movement that would both be recognized and respectable. They were also claiming to contribute actively to such debates; as we shall see, the deeply-rooted associations of philosophy with desire provided material ready for exploitation, and the offer of pholosophising to and for women was no guarantee of moral probity. Christian apologists were offering a model-in-practice of how it could be safely pursued.[782]

Of particular significance for this research project, this chapter demonstrated that there was no innovative Christian worldview or belief that made Christian women special. Rather, this chapter demonstrated that widespread contemporary practices and ritualizations practiced by numerous different groups afforded women opportunities to challenge idealized traditional gender expectations in various religious groups or associations. Women belonging to both the earliest Jesus groups and later Christian groups were tuning into opportunities that were there for all women to grasp.

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[782] Lieu, "Their Wives Are as Chaste as Virgins," 113–114.

The Implications

While engaged in a redescription project, this research project has done more than explore and describe women belonging to the earliest Jesus groups. To be sure, I have demonstrated that women belonging to the earliest Jesus groups and later Christian groups found opportunities to exhibit agency and power as well as challenge social paradigms. However, I have also demonstrated that while many scholars argue that Christian groups offered members a unique environment of gender equality that women belonging to numerous Greco-Roman and Jewish associations found the same opportunities. This project determined that rather than specific worldviews or beliefs, we should consider what practices granted women the opportunities to challenge the idealized traditional Greco-Roman gender paradigms and obtain leadership positions. As such, this project has contributed to the development of ritual studies or the study of ritualizations.

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