Re-Making the World: Christianity and Categories

Edited by
TAYLOR G. PETREY

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Essays in Honor of Karen L. King

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Preface

On behalf of the volume's editors, the joy we had in this project was in putting all of this together in honor of Karen L. King, who has profoundly influenced each of those involved, and so many more. She has instructed us all in her classroom teaching, scholarship, and mentorship. What's more, she has taught us through her dignity, integrity, and character as she has faced trials and triumphs. We put this volume together to honor her contributions to the field, to celebrate her 65th birthday, and to wish her well as she begins her retirement. She has a rich legacy.

I first met Karen L. King as a masters student at Harvard Divinity School in 2002 and later became a doctoral student in the New Testament and Early Christianity program. I took numerous classes with her and she eventually became my adviser and directed my dissertation. I learned from her to think in new ways and to push boundaries, and I shared in a vibrant intellectual community among her students and colleagues. This has been a singular privilege in my life. Since then, she has continued to mentor me, and I am so fortunate to count her as a friend.

I want to thank my co-editors Carly, Ben, AnneMarie, and Laura for their work bringing this to fruition. Putting this volume together with my colleagues has been an incredible privilege. Working with such a distinguished list of contributors whose essays offer significant advances in scholarship on a number of key questions was a thrill. The friends who comprise the editorial team were diligent and collegial and supportive of one another, and we all drew closer together in our collaboration and friendship. We all worked to conceive of the scope and subjects of the volume, shared the editorial work, and assisted one another in making decisions. Special thanks to Carly who secured funding to help complete the project. On behalf of my associates, we wish to thank Colby Gaudet for his copy-editing. We also thank the team at Mohr Siebeck including Katharina Gutekunst, Elena Müller, and Tobias Stäbler who supported this volume and shepherded it along the various stages toward publication.

We offer congratulations to our dear colleague and friend Karen and wish her all the best in the next phase of her career. Many happy returns.

Kalamazoo, MI, USA, March, 2019 Taylor G. Petrey

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Introduction

Benjamin H. Dunning and Laura S. Nasrallah

Telling the story of Karen King's many contributions to the study of New Testament and early Christianity is a difficult task. One distillation of her decades of work in the field is found in an important 2008 chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, "Which Early Christianity?" The very title gives us a glimpse into King's contributions, which provide data and analytical tools for investigating the varieties of early Christianity. In this chapter, she offers a succinct formulation of one of the most pressing historiographical issues in early Christian studies:

> Throughout the history of Christianity, diverse beliefs and practices would ebb and flow on the tides of historical change and conflict, navigating and sometimes floundering with ever-shifting geographical, social-political, and cultural contexts as Christianity expanded from a tiny movement to a global religion. The issues, actors, and contexts would vary, but diversity would continue to characterize Christianity, even in the face of powerful claims to unity and uniformity. The question is how to represent this ever-shifting diversity adequately.[1]

The drive to present (true) Christian belief and practice as singular runs deep in the tradition, inflecting many of its earliest narratives and theological claims and even cutting across specific positions that conflict with one another. We can see the template for what King calls "the master narrative of Christian origins" emerging at least as early as the conclusion to the Gospel of Luke:[2] "And [Jesus] said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'" (24:46–48 NRSV). Here Jesus reveals a supposedly pure, original gospel to his disciples and charges them as witnesses to carry this deposit to the rest of the world. The book of Acts further clarifies that this initial deposit is entrusted first and foremost to twelve male followers and that their charge entails both pneumatic empowerment and a specific geographical mandate, which subsequently shapes the text's narrative arc: "But you will receive power when the

[1] Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies,* ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 66.

[2] King, "Which Early Christianity," 67.

Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8 NRSV). Diversity of opinion and dissension within the movement are therefore presented either as temporary and eventually resolved (Acts 15) or as the seeds of heresy, threatening the otherwise unbroken chain of truth – as in the case of Simon, a believing and baptized follower of Christ (8:13) who, by virtue of his conflict with Peter, comes to be figured by numerous sources in the later tradition as diabolically inspired and the father of all heresies (see, e. g., Justin, *1 Apol.* 26, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23; 3, preface).

King's "Which Early Christianity" and her larger corpus ask that we pay attention to nascent templates for making sense of difference in Christianized terms, such as the one found in Eusebius of Caesarea's enormously influential *Ecclesiastical History* in the early fourth century:

> It is my purpose to record: the successions from the holy apostles and the periods extending from our Savior's time to our own; the many important events that occurred in the history of the church; those who were distinguished in its leadership at the most famous locations; those who in each generation proclaimed the Word of God by speech or pen; the names, numbers, and ages of those who, driven by love of novelty to the extremity of error, have announced themselves as sources of knowledge (falsely so-called) while ravaging Christ's flock mercilessly, like ferocious wolves; the fate that overtook the whole Jewish race after their plot against our Savior; the occasions and times of the hostilities waged by heathen against the divine Word and the heroism of those who fought to defend it, sometimes through torture and blood; the martyrdoms of our own time and the gracious deliverance provided by our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ of God, who is my starting point. (1.1.1–2; trans. Maier)[3]

Here we see more fully articulated a trajectory that has served, more or less, as the basic hegemonic narrative of Christian origins for the greater part of two millennia. There is rhetorical power to this plot, a story of twists and turns whereby God managed to preserve Christian truth, embodied in Jesus Christ, through all sorts of external attacks, until finally bringing about deliverance through the Emperor Constantine. And yet, while this may be a compelling plot, it is also a selective one. It is an account of certain locales, communities, and events but not others. It is an account that erases legitimate debates whose outcomes were genuinely not known in advance, whitewashes competing visions of Jesus' teaching and why it matters, and positions diversity that could not be easily assimilated or coopted as irredeemably beyond the pale.

Unsurprisingly, alternative evidence abounds, and King's career has been steeped in detailing and explaining such evidence. Eusebius's rhetorical alignment of a fixed origin ("my starting point" – that is, Jesus Christ as singular and singularly understood) with essence and truth works to obscure the otherwise

[3] Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius – The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 21.

seemingly obvious historiographical insight that whatever point we fix as *the* beginning is always, historically speaking, already a point in the flow. In this particular case, the tradition itself problematizes any notion of a singular point of origin, insofar as the New Testament preserves four conflicting accounts of Jesus' life, death, and ongoing significance (the last not necessarily always aligned with bodily resurrection in a straightforward way). Many more possibilities and stories exist or did exist at some early point, even if now lost.

For example, the Gospel of Mary – with its theological promise of a Jesus who dialogues with a woman, on the one hand, and whose words allow for a questioning of the very idea of sin, on the other – is only one voice, but a key one that King has made accessible through her translation and contextualization of the text. Yet evidence for debate and contrary opinions at Christianity's very start is not limited to this one early (perhaps second-century) extracanonical text. Diversity characterized Christ-following communities from the very beginning. In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul buttresses his appeal for unity with the acknowledgment that "it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ' (1:11–12 NRSV). Citing this passage, King notes, "It would seem that the questions 'Which Christianity? Whose Christianity?' were posed very early, even before the gospels and most of the New Testament literature had been composed, and at a time when the number of believers must have been very small indeed."[4] Yet the drive to answer definitively the question of "which early Christianity" in the singular by way of domesticating or demonizing difference appears to be equally early – and to extend through the tradition in ways not limited to the New Testament or other texts that later came to be classified as "orthodox" (see, e. g., Apoc. Pet. 76–79; Testim. Truth; Ptolemy, *Flor.* 33.3.2–3).[5]

Karen King's work shows that Christianity was diverse from its first moments – even before the word "Christian" was coined – and insists that scholars must engage both in deep historical work and in ethical reflection. Whatever one's goal in reconstructing early Christianity, she argues, "such work should be based in an adequate comprehension of the multifarious practices of early Christians, including their constructions of identity and difference."[6] To this end, a class that King has long taught, titled "Orthodoxy and Heresy," deconstructs the history of those terms. In this course, as in her publications, King demonstrates how ancient Christians accused each other of heresy – a term originally emerging from the Greek *haeresis*, meaning "choice" or "sect" or "school" – and

[4] King, "Which Early Christianity," 66.

[5] See Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 53.

[6] King, "Which Early Christianity," 81.

made claims of orthodoxy for themselves. In the introduction to her translation of the Apocryphon of John, she explains that "[early Christians] developed distinct ways of contesting orthodoxy and heresy, and in so doing they created discourses of identity and difference that would pervade the West for millennia to come."[7] King has long argued that the texts discovered at Nag Hammadi in the mid-twentieth century should not be read as "Gnostic," but instead as part of the diversity of early Christianity. Her expertise in the Coptic language has allowed her to bring these texts into the orbit of mainstream scholarly conversations within early Christian studies. One important aspect of King's work has been to break down the barriers that ecclesial and scholarly traditions have constructed between various forms of Christianity in antiquity. Thus, in her work, a text from the so-called gnostic author Valentinus can sit alongside one from Origen, and Irenaeus can join the conversation even as the Apocryphon of John does.

King does this sort of work by precise attention to the details of ancient literature. Her first book, *Revelation of the Unknowable God,* is a text, translation, and explanation of *Allogenes*, a challenging text within the Nag Hammadi codices.[8] Her *Gospel of Mary of Magdala* makes that fascinating dialogue between Mary and the Savior accessible to popular audiences. *The Secret Revelation of John* provides in lucid translations the extant versions of the Apocryphon of John; she contextualizes the text within Jewish and Christian interpretive trends in antiquity and shows the way in which its imagination of a utopian Divine Realm still draws from the "central values that underlie the power arrangements current in the Mediterranean world under Roman domination."[9] Her co-publication with Elaine Pagels of *Reading Judas* provides an accessible translation and discussion of the fragmentary Gospel of Judas, a text that indicates, according to King's interpretation, that the very idea of and meaning of a martyr was contested among early Christians.

King's careful work in translation and the production of accessible editions needs to be situated within her larger undertaking of reconsidering the historiography of early Christianity. Her *What is Gnosticism?* exposes the way in which a scholarly category, once invented, was then naturalized as a historical phenomenon. She demonstrates that what is at stake in the scholarly work of defining Gnosticism is a theological and ideological struggle not unlike those that we find in early Christian texts, which worked to include and to exclude various proximate others. She also illuminates how much is at stake for scholars as they approach the project of telling the story of Christian origins. Scholarly interpretations of how similar Christianity was to Judaism, or how many affini-

[7] Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1.

[8] Karen L. King, *Revelation of the Unknowable God: With Text, Translation and Notes to NHC XI, 3 Allogenes* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1995).

[9] King, *Secret Revelation of John*, 173.

ties Christianity had with so-called Hellenistic philosophy or with celebrations of knowledge found among those then labelled "Gnostics," reveal something about ancient texts and communities. But they reveal just as much about the scholars' own times and commitments: how they define Christianity, how they define Judaism, what assumptions they make about how a pure and sui generis religion can emerge.

King's work emerges from the traditions of historical criticism, which produced such narratives of the origins of Christianity and its distinctiveness from – and/or similarities to – "Judaism" and "Gnosticism." But her work also breaks from historical criticism in important ways. The advent of historical criticism within modern New Testament scholarship opened up new possibilities for interpreting ancient evidence, not only providing methodological tools to render early Christian diversity more easily visible, but also situating it within new historical narratives. Walter Bauer's landmark thesis that the earliest forms of Christianity were regionally specific – that is, originally characterized by a highly localized diversity of belief and practice – is well known.[10] While critiquing many facets of Bauer's analysis, scholars have built on and amplified his larger thesis, integrating newly discovered textual evidence (e. g., Nag Hammadi, Oxyrhynchus) along with familiar sources in order to reconstruct distinct and bounded (hypothetical) communities of early Christians. Here particular locales, noteworthy theological positions or interpretive techniques, and the authority of individual apostles have all functioned in various combinations to demarcate putative social formations. As King summarizes, "Texts were read as reflections of the historical situations of communities that produced them. Theological differences in the texts frequently (and problematically) came to be read as ciphers for communities in conflict."[11]

These historiographical techniques rely on questionable methodological assumptions; accordingly, more recent scholarship has done much both to clarify the theoretical issues and to question the historical conclusions that such assumptions yield. A rich tradition of feminist biblical interpretation has emphasized that early Christian texts are tendentious and rhetorical. These texts do not reflect a preexistent social reality in a simple or straightforward way, but rather work to persuade readers, inducting them into and/or confirming their place within particular systems of truth and meaning.[12] As Elizabeth Clark reminds us from the standpoint of the so-called linguistic turn, the evidence

[10] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971).

[11] King, "Which Early Christianity," 69.

[12] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); see also discussion in Katherine A. Shaner, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality,* ed. Benjamin H. Dunning (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

we have from the ancient world does not necessarily lend itself to techniques of analysis drawn from the social sciences: "social-scientific appropriations obscured the fact that scholars of late ancient Christianity deal not with native informants, nor with masses of data amenable to statistical analysis, but with texts – and texts of a highly literary, rhetorical, and ideological nature."[13] Frederik Wisse puts a finer point on one of the key historiographical difficulties that afflicts the project of reconstructing Christian origins: "It is as difficult to disprove that specific communities were the real referents of early Christian literary texts as it is to prove it … [T]here are simply too many contingencies that bear on the composition of literary texts to allow inferring indirect evidence from them about the historical situation in which they were written."[14] But if this point is granted, what then? How might we sift, organize, and evaluate the evidence differently in order to tell the history of early Christianity otherwise?

To tell a different history of early Christianity, we must question not what analytical categories we ought to use, but the very nature of categorization itself: what it is, how it works, whom it serves in any given context, and to what ends. Jonathan Z. Smith rightly notes that "'otherness' is not a descriptive category, an artifact of the perception of difference or commonality … Something is 'other' only with respect to something 'else.' Whether understood politically or linguistically, 'otherness' is a situational category. Despite its apparent taxonomic exclusivity, 'otherness' is a transactional matter, an affair of the 'in between.'"[15] King has been at the forefront of thinking through the challenges and the opportunities that these insights pose to the task of narrating the history of early Christianity. The formulation of a way forward that she has offered to the field remains characteristically her own:

> Given that there are many ways to map difference, and given that any categorization of early Christian diversity will both illumine some things and distort or hide others, depending upon its aims …, any resulting typologies would necessarily be positional and provisional; that is, they would be understood as scholarly constructs intended to do limited kinds of carefully specified intellectual work in order to serve some particular end.[16]

Elsewhere, she specifies, "I have suggested that to think hard and speak differently require revising our notions of tradition and history, reshaping discourse,

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[13] Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 159.

[14] Frederik Wisse, "Indirect Textual Evidence for the History of Early Christianity and Gnosticism," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke,* ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge, Stephen Emmel, Karen L. King, and Imke Schletterer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 227, 229.

[15] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 275.

[16] King, "Which Early Christianity," 72–3.

categories, and methods, and above all, rethinking the ethically informed goals of historical analysis."[17]

One way to revise our notions of tradition and history, King suggests, is to move away from a static model of strictly delineated "communities in conflict" to one that attends to the variegated and ever evolving work of ancient identity formation. Such an approach eschews the essentializing assumption that early Christian difference was simply *there* – and is thus now available to the contemporary historian as a kind of fully formed "found object" to be situated uncritically within a historical narrative. Rather, this approach "aims to understand the discursive strategies and processes by which early Christians developed notions of themselves as distinct from others within the Mediterranean world (and were recognized as such by others), including the multiple ways in which Christians produced various constructions of what it meant to be Christian."[18] It includes being attentive to both the ways in which Christians sought to carve up the world into "us" and various forms of "them" (Jews, Greeks, Romans, etc.) and also the rhetorical strategies they used to conjure internal plurality into being by way of marking certain differences among Christ-followers as those that made a difference (the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy).

King also analyzes what early Christians said and wrote as a mode of *practice*, following the insight, expressed well by Foucault, that "to speak is to do something – something other than to express what one thinks …. [A] change in the order of discourse does not presuppose new ideas, a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations in a practice, perhaps also in neighbouring practices, and in their common articulation."[19] Here King has been one of the key scholars to introduce to the field of early Christian studies the work of the sociologist and practice theorist Pierre Bourdieu.[20] Drawing on Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, field, and *doxa*, among others, she has unpacked with clarity and precision the complex logics whereby early Christian discursive formations impose regularity while allowing for some modicum of improvisation, spontaneity, and change. "The results of this historiographical method," she contends, "[is] to demonstrate where and how the 'textual' resources, cultural codes, literary themes, hermeneutical strategies, and social-political interests of various rhetorical acts of Christian literary production, theological reflection, ritual and ethical practices, and social construction simultaneously form multiple overlapping continuities, disjunctures, contradictions, and discontinuities,

[17] King, *What Is Gnosticism?*, 236, with reference to Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 274.

[18] King, "Which Early Christianity," 73.

[19] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 209.

[20] King, *What Is Gnosticism?*, 239–47; see also Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

both locally and trans-locally."[21] King's emphasis on practice works to decenter the primacy of high literary or theological texts in the project of historical reconstruction. Yet, as noted above, her work does not neglect close textual analysis (and indeed, many of her signature contributions have been in the interpretation of specific early Christian texts), but rather resituates these texts as one kind of evidence among many, always in dynamic relation to alternative genres of textual evidence, material culture, institutions, and other social structures.

This work of resituating, redescribing, and recategorizing entails ethics. For as her former and current students can attest (ourselves included), in both her research and her teaching, King not only poses questions of practice – i. e., what work does the historical data under analysis *do* within a given cultural field? – but also relentlessly asks: what is at stake for the ancient world, the contemporary world (with an eye to the plurality of worlds and selves – scholarly, religious, etc. – that we all inhabit), and the complex interplay between the two in how we both formulate and answer such questions? Questions King regularly poses in the classroom insist on historical precision. Her oft repeated question "What is the evidence evidence of?" makes colleagues and students alike turn to situate a piece of evidence in a broader social and political context of power; the simple question requires the difficult two-step path of describing the evidence and contextualizing it adequately, not allowing oneself to be swayed by the rhetorical context of an ancient text or the assertions of modern scholars about the nature of the evidence. Her frequent phrase "good to think with" (bonnes à penser), borrowed from Lévi-Strauss, pushes students and colleagues alike to notice tropes in early Christianity and to consider the varied use of an idea – suffering, for example, or a paradigmatic female figure such as Mary Magdalene – toward ethical ends in antiquity and today.

For example, in her "Christianity and Torture," King explicitly confronts the issue of the lack of a condemnation of torture in New Testament texts, and the ethical problems this raises:

> Some might wonder why I, as a Christian who opposes torture, go to such lengths to expose the possibilities within Christian tradition for supporting torture …. Opposition to torture on religious grounds will not be effective without acknowledging and addressing the fact that enculturated ways of thinking and structures of feeling cultivated in Christian stories, images, and theological discourses are implicated in a wide variety of attitudes and behaviors, both for and against torture …. How do religious communities, human rights advocates, or other voices effectively engage this tradition without enabling its potential for violence? This is a dilemma not only for believers but for all whose heritage includes these and similar cultural "logics" of feeling and thought.[22]

[21] King, "Which Early Christianity," 80–81.

[22] Karen L. King, "Christianity and Torture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence,* ed. Michael Jerryson, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Margo Kitts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 302.

Elsewhere, King argues, "The task at hand is to enable an ethics of critical-reflexive practice in historiography and theology … we must explore critically [religious traditions'] past and potential implications in violence as well as liberation, in injustice as well as justice. Critical practice necessarily involves accountability."[23] Such critical self-reflexivity need not lead to the disavowal or dismantling of the tradition. Rather, King avers, "For myself and others, the ethical point that follows from diversity is not relativism, but the need to take responsibility for how scripture and tradition are read and appropriated."[24]

Karen King's publications and teaching upend facile uses of New Testament texts and simple narratives of early Christian history. Her work has demonstrated, with philological, historical, and historiographical precision, the effervescence of what we call early Christianity but might well call early Christianities: the leadership of women; the complexities of theological debates over the worth of the body, sin, and martyrdom; the possibilities for transformative modes of thought; and, indeed, the scholarly and ideological stakes of how we define the ancient religious formations we study. The scholars in this volume engage her signature contributions to the field in three parts or acts. The first act treats the topic of categories, celebrating the sort of work that King did in *What is Gnosticism?*, which fundamentally pushed us to throw away a scholarly construction of people called Gnostics that we had naturalized as existing in early Christianity or even before. The second act treats the topic of women and gender. Since her first edited volume, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, and her contributions to feminist projects such as *Searching the Scriptures*, King's work has long helped to open our eyes to evidence for the agency, significance, and power of women in earliest Christianities, the variety of ways in which gender could be performed in antiquity, and the engagement of early Christian texts in ethical debates that demonstrate how sexual practices and theology go hand in hand.[25] The third act focuses on historiography, asking how we can write different histories of the earliest Christianities that King has helped us to see, or different stories of women and gender in the study of religion.

Categories

One of the major contributions of Karen King's work has been to question what used to look like stable categories in the history of early Christianity: Gnosticism, orthodoxy, heresy; her work exposes the ways in which theological and scholarly communities either have invented or have continued to trade in labels that limit

[23] King, *What Is Gnosticism?*, 246.
[24] King, "Which Early Christianity," 81.
[25] Karen L. King, ed. *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

our understanding of the diversity and choices available among earliest Christian communities. Several chapters engage the question of category criticism.

In "Mark 7:1–23, Finally," Daniel Boyarin begins by acknowledging the significance of King's work and conversations with her for his own developing sense of how the categories of "Jews" and "Christians" can obscure our understanding of ancient interactions in antiquity. He then offers a detailed analysis of Mark 7, reading the words of Jesus regarding food and cleanliness within halakhic debates of the time. He argues that Mark 7:1–12 not only presents an attack on Pharisaic deviations from Leviticus, but also demonstrates that Jesus kept kosher – or that the Gospel of Mark thought he did.

Elaine Pagels's "How John of Patmos' Readers Made Him into a Christian" questions whether the category of "Christian" can be applied to the visions of the Apocalypse of John. She offers a resounding no, joining those who have pointed out John's Jewishness. Her chapter shows that John's engagement with Isaiah's prophecy fits within the logic of Jewish prophetic material and offers a vision of the entry of Israel, and then repentant Gentiles, into a new Jerusalem.

T. Christopher Hoklotubbe's chapter, "What is Docetism?," suggests that we set aside our modern category (and subcategories) of docetism. We should instead look for "more productive classifications and more dynamic questions about the representation of Jesus' body in early Christian literature." Treating a span of literature and figures such as the epistles of John, the corpus associated with Ignatius of Antioch, Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus, the Gospel of Peter, Julius Cassian, Saturninus and Cerdo as we know them from Irenaeus and (Pseudo) Tertullian, and the Acts of John, Hoklotubbe shows a variety of Christian responses to the idea of Jesus' body. He writes, "Following the exemplary critical insights and pedagogy of King, I strive to (re)enchant students with the ambiguity, creativity, scriptural interpretation, the pastoral and polemical motivations, and existential stakes involved in early Christian questions about the nature of Jesus' human experience that were by no means simply apparent – Christianity was still 'in the making!'"

Giovanni Bazzana's "Beyond Gnosticism: Pneumatology and Ecclesiology in 2 Clem 14" focuses on the theology and conversation partners of this difficult passage. Bazzana argues that the image of a pre-existent church makes sense in relation to other first- and second-century literature, especially the Shepherd of Hermas and aspects of Paul's 1 Corinthians. Christ, understood as *pneuma*, as well as an experience of spirit possession, were "foundational for membership in the Christ movement." Yet 2 Clement offers a surprising twist. Christ-followers are possessed not by *pneuma* but by *ekklesia*, a pneumatic entity, in that text.

Judith Hartenstein's "The Designation 'Gnostic' for the Gospel of Mary and Its Implications: A Critical Evaluation" takes up the Book of Allogenes and the Gospel of Mary. New fragments of the former from the Tchacos Codex allow for clearer parallels to be drawn between Allogenes and the Gospel of Mary.

Hartenstein shows that the Gospel of Mary has access to and understands what she terms a "mythologically founded alienation toward the world," but that it contains its own unique theology. Moreover, the text makes an unusual move in that it "depicts how esoteric knowledge is made public."

Marcie Lenk and Sarah Sentilles bring us to present-day categories. Lenk's "Parted Ways Meet Again: Messianic Judaism in Israel" alludes in its title to a long debate between scholars of antiquity: when did the ways between Christianity and Judaism part, if ever? She focuses on the Messianic Jewish community in Israel and the challenges that this community poses to a stable understanding of Judaism and Christianity and to legal status within Israel. After defining the term "Messianic Jew" and historically contextualizing Messianic Jewish traditions from the Hebrew Christians of the nineteenth century to the present, Lenk offers a survey that shows a range of Jewish messianic claims over time, within which "faith in Jesus as the Messiah has long been viewed differently." Lenk uses a variety of theoretical tools, from the postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha to the performance theory of Judith Butler, to make sense of the complex identity of Messianic Jews as a possible act of resistance to claims of stability that undergird the categories of "Jew" and "Christian."

Women and Gender

Carly Daniel-Hughes's contribution moves us from the "categories" subsection of the volume to "women and gender" by working on both. Her "Mary Magdalene and the Fantasy Echo: Reflections on the Feminist Historiography of Early Christianity" traces aspects of anglophone feminist historiography "to consider how the attachment to the category 'women' operated in the feminist historiography of early Christianity." Daniel-Hughes considers the particular historical and social-psychological forces that shaped fantasies of "women's solidarity" within this scholarship, as well as those that ultimately lead some feminists to challenge these. Weaving analysis together with the personal, she ultimately seeks to describe the affective landscape sustained by this critical feminist work and to reflect constructively on some of its negative effects, both for feminist historians and for those captivated by their work.

In her analysis of "Wise Women in the Gospel of John," Adele Reinhartz argues that the fourth evangelist is hardly proto-feminist. Yet her close analysis of five women in the gospel – Mary the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene – shows ways in which "the Gospel of John – perhaps inadvertently – does allow us to consider the behavior and qualities of these women separate from their re-domestication." Focusing on the narratives of these women "allows us to consider their wisdom, as exemplified by their behavior towards Jesus." For instance, analyzing Jesus' mother,

Reinhartz argues that "we may quietly appreciate the wisdom of a mother who can see beyond her son's rude behavior and is able to prompt him to act when and where he does not yet understand he should."

The women of Philo's *De vita contemplativa* and the Testament of Job are the focus of Angela Standhartinger's "Performing Salvation: The Therapeutrides and Job's Daughters in Context." Yet her contribution is nearly encyclopedic in the evidence it provides of representations of women's leadership in the Septuagint, New Testament texts, and the writings of the likes of Plutarch and Pausanias. These regular representations of women's ritual work and competence allow Standhartinger to argue that "While Philo's Therapeutrides and Job's Daughters remain literary figures, their cultic roles are by no means exceptional or historically implausible. To the contrary, female singers and dancers who act out parts of the central myth of a given religion are broadly attested also among their Greek, Roman, and later Christian sisters." The work allows us to see the cultic leadership of women in antiquity as represented in the literature of the time and even as performed in the retelling of such literature in ritual settings.

Margaret Butterfield's "The Widow, the Wife, and the Priestess: Tertullian's Life Plans for Widows in *Ad uxorem*" also takes up Standhartinger's theme of women's participation and leadership in cult. Tertullian, she notes, details "gentile" women's involvement in religious roles, including the Vestal virgins and the prophetesses at Delphi, and "provides chaste Christian widows with an identity parallel to that of the gentile priesthoods – the identity not of wife, but of altar of God." Tertullian focuses on the widow as wife – even as God's wife – precisely to avoid the danger of her role as sacerdotally powerful; yet the very image of woman as altar, as well as his detailing of the roles of religious leadership among non-Christian women, hints at the irrepressibility of some Christian women's religious authority.

Silke Petersen sets aside the category of Gnosticism as unhelpful in her analysis, titled "Marriages, Unions, and Bridal Chambers in the Gospel of Philip." She notes how "disruptions" in the text – points where the reader or hearer might be confused – are a deliberate technique to slow down the reading process and to note that different levels of meaning are being deployed. Images like bread and the marriage chamber have multiple meanings. Petersen concludes that the Gospel of Philip's "bridal and marriage imagery is used to speak about community and ritual in terms of union and separation, thus interpreting something else rather than denoting a discrete ritual." Such language points to the close union of marriage in order "to speak about ritual, community, baptism, or incarnation."

A Valentinian Exposition, Tripartite Tractate, and sections of Irenaeus's *Against the Heresies* are closely attended to in Taylor Petrey's "Cosmic Gender: Valentinianism and Contested Accounts of Sexual Difference." He demonstrates that "so-called Valentinian texts do not offer a single perspective on gender, reproductive capacity, gender roles, bodies, hierarchy, or moral tendencies, and in

fact provide numerous models that challenge a heterogendered interpretation." After providing a history of scholarship on Nag Hammadi texts and gender analysis, Petrey demonstrates that we cannot easily reconstruct a singular cosmological schema from these texts nor the sexual practices of the communities that read and valued them. They instead provide "conversations … about gender and sexual difference," even suggesting that "disruptions to male-female complementarity" are a solution as well as a problem; Valentinian texts provide "queer alternatives to male-female complementarity."

Ronit Irshai's "Feminist Research in Jewish Studies: What's in a Name?" tries to put some order into what is called "feminist scholarship in Judaic Studies" by proposing to distinguish four categories within it. Those categories are not merely conceptual. They also serve as an analytical tool that can produce new research. The chapter presents several opinions on male homosexuality in order to consider how feminist scholarship that takes gender as an analytic category can produce new knowledge about the ways in which male and female identities are constituted in recent halakhah. Feminist critique, she concludes, can help in such analysis as it lays bare the mechanisms by which "'natural sex' is created."

Historiography

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's chapter, titled "Revisioning 'Christian' Beginnings," engages with the question of Christian origins, in order to underscore the contribution of the work of Karen King to early Christian historiography in a feminist key. She argues for the importance of feminist historiography in the revisioning of Christian beginnings. Karen King's feminist work on Gnosticism as well as on critical category formation and framework-analysis[26] continues to be pathbreaking in this work of a feminist re-description of early "Christian" history.

In "Locating the Religion of Associations," Stanley Stowers participates in and nuances historians' attempts to understand "synagogues" and Christian groups in light of associations. He creates a clear taxonomy of four modes of religiosity, and demonstrates that the bias of our data – which comes from literate and entrepreneurial experts – means that we can overlook how these groups participated in the religion of everyday social exchange.

Carlin Barton's contribution, titled "A Roman Historian Looking at Early Christian *religiones*: the *coniuratio* and the *sacramentum* in Second and Early

[26] See especially her book *What is Gnosticism?* and her recent articles "Which Early Christianity," and "No Longer Marginalized: From Orthodoxy and Heresy Discourse to Category Critique and Beyond," in *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History. Volume on "Early Christian Writings,"* ed. Outi Lehtipuu and Silke Petersen (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Third-century North Africa," argues that Latin-speaking African Christians of antiquity sought to sacralize themselves as individual persons and as groups. Barton unravels with philological precision the terms that Latin-speaking Christians used for themselves. Focusing primarily on Tertullian, she avoids our modern conceptions of religion, our mistranslations of *religio*, and our inattention to the significance of binding, framing, setting apart, which, she demonstrates, were fundamental acts in the process of sacralizing. In this way, her work asks questions at the intersection of historiography and philology. How do we translate words from our historical distance, and how do our misperceptions or even our desires drive such translation? By bringing attention to the details of ancient texts and to the investments of modern readers, Barton enlivens the complexities of late second- and early third-century Carthage and the Latin of its day.

Related historiographical questions drive Denise Kimber Buell's "This Changes Everything: Spiritualists, Theosophists, and Rethinking Early Christian Historiography." The chapter explores the nineteenth-century to mid-twentieth-century context of spiritualism and theosophy, showing how these practitioners and theorists were adjacent to and sometimes participants in academic conversations about biblical studies, classics, and early Christian history. Their understandings of spirit and flesh, of the enduring nature of what they thought was gnostic thought, of "a non-linear temporality – futures and pasts commingle in the present," and of ideas of mysteries and initiation were part of a larger discourse on early Christian origins and the nature of so-called Gnosticism. Buell shows that tracing the impact of theosophists and spiritualists is essential to understanding the historiography of early Christianity.

Bernadette Brooten's chapter re-examines the depiction of enslaved persons in the Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons, which depicts a woman named Blandina as subverting the Roman slaveholding assumption that enslaved persons are weak in character. Blandina, who shares her mistress's religion and stands by it until the very end, is an owner's best possible enslaved laborer. In contrast to Blandina, "certain of our gentile slaves" enter the stage of the bloody drama as "also arrested." The Christians apparently expect these enslaved gentiles to suffer torture silently, which aligns with what other slaveholders expected. The Roman officials believe them, even though they speak freely and not under torture, which constitutes a breach of Roman criminal procedure. Brooten invites us to think about how these texts project ideals for enslaved persons rather than simply Christian heroism in the face of martyrdom.

With "The Gospel of Mary at Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. L 3525 and P. Ryl. III 463). Rethinking the History of Early Christianity Through Literary Papyri from Oxyrhynchus," AnneMarie Luijendijk returns to a text that Karen King has published and made widely known. Some might argue that the Gospel of Mary was a marginal source to the majority of Christians in antiquity, and the story of a woman who followed Jesus and understood his teachings better than did

the male disciples was a strange tale. By looking closely at one fragment of the Gospel of Mary from Oxyrhynchus, Luijendijk shows by the form and the hand of this papyrus that "Such texts, like the Gospel of Mary, which disappeared in the course of history, were not just random and aberrant sources. They were not merely the fodder of heresiologists, examples of disregarded sources. Rather, these sources circulated and were widely read, appearing in different forms and hands."

In an epilogue Sarah Sentilles draws the lens out, challenging us both to consider how we see and to investigate the visual as well as structural elements of racism. She argues, in "As If the Way We Think about the World is the Way the World Is," that "mis-seeing" others' bodies has violent results. Exploring language of eye-balling, the visible suspect, and the mug shot's origins in eugenics, as well as educating the "untrained eye" to see drone warfare, the deaths of Black men and women in the U. S., and casual racism, Sentilles challenges the reader to see differently pointing to analogous interventions made by Karen King.

Conclusions

King's scholarship has long worked to create a welcoming and capacious new world of possibilities for her fellow scholars, including those whom she has taught. In a quiet voice and with an intense value for loyalty, she has changed the face of early Christian studies, setting a large table with hospitality. She has helped to bring her beloved Coptic texts, which used to be considered marginal to the story of earliest Christianity, into conversation with the canonical and authoritative texts with which the field was already familiar. She has helped us to see how the voices and authority of women may be suppressed in a text, but the traces of such authority nonetheless remain, opening up possibilities for writing different kinds of history. She has consistently insisted that scholars consider their own ethics and the ethics of the texts that we study. In doing so, she has not only contributed to the intellectual diversity of the field, bringing in voices from feminist studies and anthropological theory in particular, and bringing marginalized texts into the full reconstruction of early Christian history, but also helped to create a diverse, international community of scholarly friends, whose words can be found in the pages ahead.

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I. Categories

Mark 7:1–23 – Finally

Daniel Boyarin

Having written about Mark 7:1–23 before,[1] I come back to it once more for a final time (no vow), because I believe that I have found further arguments for the interpretative direction in which I took the pericope previously, and because I am convinced that this is an absolutely key passage for understanding critical issues in the setting of the Gospels within the first-century Jewish world, a subject surely dear to the heart of the great scholar and dear friend whom this volume comes to celebrate and whom, I hope, my contribution will fully honor. This mode of honoring Karen is particularly apt, I think, as it was she who first disabused me of the notion that Jews were Jews and Christians were Christians and never the twain ever met, thus setting me on a long and very productive train of thinking, of which the present communication is but one rail car. The "bottom-line" of my reading, once again, is that this pericope, despite its reputation, represents perhaps the most "Jewish" passage in all of the Gospels. In this, I hope, final version of what I have to say about this chapter in Mark, I plan to revise my earlier arguments, sharpening them, cleaning them up, and supplementing them, taking into consideration as well objections to my reading recently offered by Joel Marcus, and in the end arguing for why I think that the interpretation I purvey here is not only preferable but well-nigh ineluctable. In conclusion, I will make a more expansive statement of why I find this a critical matter for the understanding of the earliest histories of both the Jesus movement and of the approach to Torah that characterizes the Rabbis of the second century on, and not – to paraphrase Meier – just a halakhic squabble.

Re-membering the Dismembered Discourse

If there may be said to be a common thread binding virtually all prior interpretation of this pericope, it is that the text is divided against itself.[2] Thus, for instance, to take some very recent and highly respected examples, Adela Yarbro Collins cites two of the major commentaries of the past generation:

[1] Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospel: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 102–128.

[2] See Jan Lambrecht, *Jesus and the Law: An Investigation of Mark 7, 1–23,* Analecta Lovaniensia Biblica et Orientalia 5 (Louvain: Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 1977), 29.