Early Christian Sex Change. The Ascetical Context of "Being Made Male" in Early Christianity

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EARLY CHRISTIAN SEX CHANGE.
THE ASCETICAL CONTEXT
OF “BEING MADE MALE”
IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

EARLY CHRISTIAN SEX CHANGE.
THE ASCETICAL CONTEXT
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Jennifer L. Henery, B.A., M.A.
Marquette University, 2011

In nearly all of the accounts of the lives of holy women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the Apocryphal Gospels, and the Acts of the Christian Martyrs eschatologically motivated enkrateia or martyrdom is imaged by women being made male. In these texts sex change imagery is most spectacular as it is manifested in a plethora of ways. Women change sex and become male by dressing like men, by transcending the gender roles of women and assuming the gender roles of men, by becoming physically or bodily male, and by simply being called men or male. Most scholars look to philosophy, heresy and sociology for an explanation of this transformational imagery and explain the imagery as the liberation of women from a patriarchal society or as indicative of the empowerment of women to teach and preach. What they fail to take into account is that the transformation of the holy woman is primarily theological and that it stands in continuity with the portraits of the transformation of holy men and women before and after our texts.

This dissertation shows that in the second and third century Christian stories containing transformational imagery of being made male, the vision of the eschaton motivates individuals to lives of enkrateia and martyrdom. Individuals who choose encratic lives or the life of martyrdom become holy and are described in imagery reflective of the eschaton. The eschatological vision in these texts is the product of Biblical tradition and Second Temple Judaism; visions of the eschaton explain the future state as a return to prelapsarian Eden, as participation in the heavenly temple, and as victory in the eschatological battle. This vision is the context in which transformational imagery should be read. Its content gives meaning to the transformational imagery of being made male.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jennifer L. Henery, B.A., M.A.

The journey of the narrative of this dissertation only partly appears on the page. Parallel to the academic endeavor of showing the eschatological context for the transformational imagery of being made male, is my encounter with the transformed holy men and women in ancient texts as well as those guides on my journey, both living and dead, who are in the process of becoming holy. In order to properly offer my gratitude to those who aided in this journey and to show my academic interests in transformational imagery, it is to the narrative that does not appear on the pages of my dissertation that I turn.

Making acknowledgements is a difficult thing. Words can never express my indebtedness first to my grandmother Emma, who in simplicity of life and generosity of heart introduced me to God as her companion and guide who was transforming her into a holy woman. She taught me Christ-like lessons, not from her lips but from her life. In her kindness and Christ-like charity, she acted the part of Christ with naturalness and ease and grace that rendered her every gesture lovely. I do not have the privilege to be here today because of my perseverance and my intellectual acumen alone, but because of the perseverance and faithfulness of my grandmother, who told me stories, sang to me, loved me and showed me what the process of a life being transformed looked like.

The beginning of my academic exploration is credited to David and Kathy Carlson, professors from Franklin College who showed me that love, life, literature, and theology were about a human journey and encouraged me to ask questions. When my grandmother died I became easily detoured by different signposts. I needed to fill both the life of the head and of the heart and turned to the study of academic theology and philosophy. I read Flannery O’Connor stories and Karl Barth and learned to reconcile the perplexities of the Old Testament with the Wellhausen theory of J, E, D, P. I began to explain away the academic inconsistencies that I saw in religion and thought made religion not worthy of academic inquiry. So much of what I was reading about God in those theology books, though, did not sound like or look like, the study of God that I watched in my grandmother’s life. Through their teaching and love, David and Kathy taught me to search and to ask questions and to be open to a journey rather than to just pursue answers or to argue my point.

Then there is the Community of the Transfiguration, more precisely Sister Mary Luke and Mother Ann, my Martha and Mary, who proved to be more than guideposts on my journey. Like my grandmother they were and are true beacons reflecting the light of Christ preparing me for a place both in this life and the afterlife. After being introduced to the academic challenge of the study of theology, I was to go to seminary. I was not going to become a minister or to learn to preach God to other people, but to ask questions, to figure this God thing out. I was going to read theology and learn the history of the text and translation of the Bible and to understand the development of the Church. If I understood it, it would make sense.
The summer before I was to enter seminary, I accepted a job working as a summer camp counselor for the Community of the Transfiguration, an Episcopal convent. I was to take impoverished inner city boys to the country for summer vacation so that their lives could be transfigured by love and an opportunity to see the world lived out in a different way. Little did I know it would be my life that would be transfigured.

The sisters showed me madness in life. Their life seemed unreasonable, extreme, and romantic. There was an utter seriousness to prayer, to work, to choir, to reading, to study, to silence, and to everything else that was a part of their life. Their life was mad: they prayed for hours every day, they ate breakfast and lunch in silence, they had sisters who were contemplatives, and sisters who ministered to the poor. Some sisters visited people in jail, some played with children, and some educated wealthy children. They did not get married nor have children. Surely, God could not be asking for this.

On one of the drives to the country, where we took the boys on vacation, Sister Mary Luke read to me a book called *Three Religious Rebels* which was about the founding of the Cistercian order. For the first time in my life Christ’s exhortation to “sell all you have, give it to the poor, and come and follow me,” made sense. These nuns were as mad as Christ and I wanted to love and study and pray with this seriousness. I put off seminary to be at the convent for a year. My Martha, Sister Mary Luke, allowed me to be mad. I read with seriousness. I played with seriousness, I prayed with seriousness, and I loved with seriousness. In the books she handed me I read of monks and nuns whose lives were transformed by a call from God to singular service, men and women who became transformed by God’s grace. I listened to music that praised God from the depth of the soul. But, it was my Mary, Sister Ann, who showed me that I needed to listen to God. During that year I was surrounded by the liturgy and the communion of saints, and the divide between heaven and earth at times seemed very transparent. As I burned passionately for God and devoured books on and about the religious life, Mother Ann would softly and gently offer tempering words: “You know Jennifer, I read in a book once, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’” Again in my life, I watched people being transformed into holy women.

And then the convent sent me away. At first it was just to study. Then it was so that I would listen for the will of God. I tried to study with the madness that I learned at the convent. I tried to pray with the madness I saw at the convent. I wanted to go home to the convent.

I ended up at Marquette.

There my journey became an intense encounter with texts and people. Very early in my academic career I was introduced to Saint Augustine by Dr. Barnes. I had read through Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* before. I knew the saint’s religious journey. I knew the story of the pears and the origin of the term “original sin.” I knew Saint Augustine used philosophy to explain theological ideas, but as we read Augustine in Dr. Barnes’s class I met a pilgrim who struggled with scripture, who changed his exegesis of scriptural texts in polemical contexts, who wrote a book to retract things that he thought once when he was young. Dr. Barnes introduced me to saints as they were becoming saints.
It was also in this class that I was introduced to the transformational imagery of being made male. In Augustine’s *City of God* he argues against those who say that women will be resurrected as men. This seemed very curious to me. I was attentive to the images that patristic writers used to talk about people who became holy. Augustine talked about people becoming luminous and angelic, but why did some people think that women became men when they became holy and were resurrected? This was very perplexing and rather annoying. I knew holy women. I read about women becoming holy. I watched them become holy. I wanted to become a holy woman, too. But, why did they, why did I need to be a man to be holy?

It is to Dr. Barnes madness in the exploration of Augustine that I am indebted for the topic of my research. With Dr. Barnes, we read philosophy to understand Augustine. For a while the way in which I explained the transformational imagery of becoming male was through the lens of Platonic philosophy. Secondary literature affirmed this explanation. Several scholars argue that Philo’s oppositional use of male and female is the source of the transformational imagery of becoming male. But, Augustine did not necessarily affirm this explanation. Augustine’s call to transformation and to holiness was an encounter with scripture in conversation with the narrative of saints before him. He read about the call of the gospel to St. Anthony to sell all he had and come and follow Christ. Similarly, Paul’s epistles called Augustine.

I began reading Augustine to try to figure out what he thought happened in the resurrection and why he made the choice to live the ascetic life that he wrote about in the *Confessions*. I started down this academic rabbit hole and became intrigued by Augustine’s changing exegesis of the Genesis narrative in defense of the resurrected state and the ascetic life. As I began reading 4th century texts on the ascetic life, especially Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina, On Virginity*, and *On the Making of Man*, I saw again the connection between what God originally created us to be and how we were to be transformed in the resurrection. Under Dr. Barnes and Father Alex, I began researching Macrina and Gregory’s notion of *apocastasis*, or the eschaton as a return to the beginning. For a while, a long while, I was convinced that the transformational imagery of being made male was explained by understanding how the early church understood anthropology, by understanding the creation of man before the fall. I spent a lot of time reading about the exegesis of the Genesis narrative in the early church.

In *The Life of Macrina*, I also discovered Thecla as a model of the transformed holy woman. I was curious as to why the story of Anthony led Augustine to the ascetic life and how Thecla was the name given to Macrina to illumine her holiness. These questions led me to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and to the story of a woman who was motivated to a life of *enkrateia* because of Paul’s preaching on the eschaton. The story told of Thecla’s transformation into a holy woman. One of the images used to describe Thecla’s transformation was the imagery of being made male. I began searching for this image in other texts. I quickly discovered six other stories of first through third century women who were motivated to lives of *enkrateia* and martyrdom because of the eschaton. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Gospel of Thomas, Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, all of the women who were eschatologically motivated to *enkrateia* and martyrdom are transformed and in the description of their holiness they are
made male. These texts became the foundation for my scholarly exploration of the context of the transformational imagery. The imagery used in these texts to describe holy men and holy women is derived from the visions of the eschaton that is present in each text.

When I began reading the secondary literature about these texts to understand where the specific imagery of being made male came from, none of it talked about this imagery as a way of talking about women becoming holy. There was no connection to Gregory calling Macrina “Thecla” as a way of foretelling her holiness or between Augustine talking about those who thought women became men in heaven. None of the scholarship was reading the transformational imagery of women being made male in the context of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom.

In fact, there was very little secondary scholarship on the transformational imagery of becoming male in the second and third century stories. Some scholars use the texts in defense of modern theological positions. Because of the overtly patriarchal and at times misogynistic climate of the early church, the imagery of “becoming male” is myopically interpreted as an indication of women’s liberation from the oppressive contexts in which they find themselves. Becoming male in the texts is read as the patristic evidence for women being priest or as indication of the liberation of women from a patriarchal world.

The contemporary scholarship made little sense to me. The exploration of this academic question, and spiritual and academic journey to understand the transformation into holiness and the imagery of being made male, seemed to be taking an especially long time. What I did not understand, was that time was the very thing that would clarify for me the source of this transformational imagery. I kept searching in the fourth century and the centuries that followed for the meaning of the imagery in second and third century texts. I marked out all of the uses of the transformational imagery of holy women becoming male in Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa, and Jerome, and was attentive to the theological discussions they were having and to the condemnation and retraction and the re-writing of the imagery.

While this academic archeology was going on, I got married. As I dug through patristic texts on the ascetic life and martyrdom, and read the Gospel of Luke and Matthew being used as a call to Christians to the ascetic life, God called me to marriage. I wanted to be a nun. I loved the madness of Mother Ann and Sister Mary Luke. I loved the madness of Augustine and Macrina. I loved the imagery used to describe Macrina’s holiness as she lay dying. But, God called me to marriage and motherhood. First, I married Charles and inherited three teenagers and then my husband and I had a daughter. This new madness clarified much of the meaning of transformational imagery: marriage and motherhood changed how I could be transformed into holiness and I now understood that it was the context that gave meaning to transformational imagery. I now knew that to understand the transformational imagery of being made male in the second and third century texts, I would have to understand the context of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom.

In scholars’ attempts to explain the transformational imagery of women being made male from modern perspectives, they often overlooked or underexplored the immediate context of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom that
transforms the lives of both men and women. When both men and women are transformed through the en克拉tic life and the life of martyrdom they are described with transformational imagery reflective of the eschaton.

In order to understand the images of the eschaton and the Christian life which it motivates in context, it is first necessary to understand the second and third century understanding of eschatology, en克拉tiea, and martyrdom. The examination of the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the Gospel of Thomas and the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, the Acts of Thomas, Acts of Paul and Thecla, and the Acts of Andrew, shows that the vision of the eschaton is illustrated with various imagery: the anxiously anticipated future is imaged as the heavenly temple, the protological garden of Eden, and as the reward for the eschatological battle. The image of the holy man and holy woman in our primary source texts is reflective of the eschatological vision in these texts. When men and women choose lives of en克拉tiea and martyrdom that are motivated by these various explanations of the eschaton, they become holy and are transformed. Holy men and women return to a prelapsarian state where there is no gender and no procreation and they become angels. Putting on Christ, holy men and women fight in the eschatological battle and are rewarded with crowns of immortality. Transformed holy men and women become temples of Christ prepared for the indwelling of Christ and are overshadowed like the tabernacle. The imagery of holy women being transformed into men is best understood within this context of eschatologically motivated en克拉tiea and martyrdom and as one of several images reflective of the vision of the eschaton.

This imagery is one tradition, one layer among several which are woven together. The second and third century vision of the eschaton, and the second and third century explanation of en克拉tiea and martyrdom are the products of common sources; first, the Biblical literature and the apocalypses of Second Temple-era Judaism; second, these traditions have been read through the New Testament portraits of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The anticipation and realization of the eschaton motivate en克拉tiea and martyrdom. This anticipation and restoration is expressed by symbolic language and transformational imagery: martyrs appear in the form of Christ, Christ appears in the form of apostles and as old and young men, wives leave their husbands and husbands their wives in order to become temples of God and like the angels. Ascetics shine with radiant splendor, victors receive crowns, and women are made male.

As I said before, making acknowledgments is a difficult thing. While the people I have mentioned in my academic and spiritual journey have been invaluable for the narrative, I would be remiss if I did not markedly highlight those to whom my immediate debt is greatest. Father Alex who in his monastic generosity and Christ-like charity, painstakingly went over every line of this manuscript, continually offering scholarly suggestions for the improvement of the work and providing spiritual council that aided in the scholarly examination of the texts that I was exploring. During every attempt and delay and meandering that I encountered these past seven years while trying to bring my defense to fruition, Father patiently waited, gently chastised and perpetually encouraged.

To Emily Randall, a gigantic debt of gratitude is due. In the eleventh hour when I could no longer see the trees for the forest, or more precisely the past tense buried in the
historical present, she judiciously corrected every page, every punctuation mark, and every errant tense. Those errors that remain are solely mine. She was more than conscientious and did more than her editorial duty. In the end, Emily’s questions about theology and narrative and spiritual transformation allowed me to be a teacher. I could explain in text and story, example and writing, the transformational imagery that illustrated women becoming holy. I introduced Emily to a whole new body of literature and imagery of holiness and she allowed me to be faithful and helped me to finish this dissertation.

The other way in which Emily was most helpful was as a friend. In that role Emily joins a choir of angels who in their individual ways are responsible for helping me to finish this project. Dawn and Dana, my oldest friends, were always companions on the journey. They never thought I had lost my mind when I sought after the madness of life. In fact, they always told me I was the smartest person they knew – high praise from people who have been your best friends since you were twelve. Kim Jones, who shares my morning cup of coffee, thousands of miles removed, always knew the right balance between talking about our kids and asking me when I am going to finish this thing, has taught me perseverance and faithfulness. To my companions on the academic journey, Trish and Constance, Doctor Lewis and Doctor Nielsen who shared many a pint and many a martini arguing the finer points of theology and refining my thoughts. Especially to Connie, who also shares in the journey of faith and is willing to be a godparent for my daughter.

Thanks are also due to great conversation partners, Dr. Dempsey and Dr. Orlov. When I first began searching for texts that highlighted transformational imagery, Dr. Orlov would eagerly hand me three more and suggest that I learn to read Syriac so that I could read five or six others. His enthusiasm was exciting and encouraging. Dr. Dempsey, like Father Alex, read many earnest attempts at a beginning narrative of my dissertation. Her questions allowed me to clarify what I was trying show. Her ability to intermingle an interest in academic texts and my side projects of kayaking and chicken farming, also allowed her to gently encourage a focused conclusion to my project. For that I am very thankful.

I would remiss if I did not particularly thank Gale Prusinski, the person who makes the theology office run. Gale’s diligence allows all graduate students to easily mind all of the hoops that need to be jumped through in pursuit of degrees and allows them to tend to coursework and writing.

The last acknowledgment, while it should be the easiest to make, is the most difficult. To Charles and Maggie, whom God granted to me as the context for transformation into holiness. In my madness, as a wife and a mother, and as a scholar and a teacher, the challenge is to understand the transformation into holiness when the eschaton does not motivate one to a life of radical enkrateia and martyrdom.

As a priest, Charles exhorts people from the pulpit to Love God! Love Jesus! Be saints! What he shows in his life are the same things to which the characters in my second and third century texts witness. He shows how to be a man of prayer, how to love God and how to become Christ. As a scholar in his own right, Charles could edit my manuscripts and help me clarify theological points. In his wisdom, he knew that I needed to be left alone. He knew that I did not need him to be my priest. I did not need him to be my director. I did not need him to be my editor. I am thankful that he had the wisdom to
know that I needed him to be my husband. I am thankful for the space he gave me to be on a journey. I am thankful that he was willing to pick up our daughter from school and do math homework, that he was willing to go grocery shopping and cook dinner. He was willing to come with me to present academic papers and let me be excited when I met the scholars who wrote the books that he assigned his students to read. Charles’s constancy and ability to provide quiet encouragement and even quieter impatience, allowed me the space and time to finish this dissertation and to be a mom and a wife, a teacher and a scholar. Thank you.

Lastly, to Maggie, the reason that I came to understand that it was the context that gave meaning to the transformational imagery used to describe holy women. I love the madness of the ascetic life and saw in it the context to become transformed into a temple for the indwelling of Christ, to become angelic, and to become Christ. Maggie knows that because I take her to her convent and she watches Mother Ann and the sisters work and I read to her the texts that I am reading for this dissertation. She knows the story of Perpetua becoming a martyr and the lions licking Thecla’s feet. Maggie also knows what transformed holy women look like who are not nuns. I tell her the stories about my grandmother and stories of saints like Monica, Augustine’s mother, and Margaret of Scotland, the mother of eight children, whose feast we celebrate tomorrow. What Maggie does not know, is that God has given her to me as the context of my transformation into holiness. In order to show Maggie what a life of madness, devoted to God and open to transformation looks like, God calls me to a life of utter seriousness to prayer, to play, to love, to study, and to teach. To be transformed.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In early ascetic literature and in Christian literature of late antiquity, the anticipation and realization of the eschaton motivates enkrateia\(^1\) and martyrdom.\(^2\) This anticipation and restoration is expressed by symbolic language and transformational imagery: martyrs appear in the form of Christ, Christ appears in the form of apostles and as old and young men, wives leave their husbands and husbands their wives in order to become temples of God and like the angels, ascetics shine with radiant splendor, victors receive crowns, beasts speak and refuse to devour intended martyrs, men bear children, and women are made male. Much of this symbolic language and transformational imagery has been examined by scholars and has been shown to be reflective of Biblical imagery and Jewish and early Christian understanding of apocalypse and eschatology.

The transformational imagery specific to changing sexes,\(^3\) the language and imagery of women being male, however, receives little contextual scholarly attention and has for the most part been left to elucidation through the prism of modern concerns. This anachronistic reading largely ignores related transformational imagery and reduces the

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\(^1\) The primary definition given for the Greek term *enkrateia* is “self-discipline” and “temperance,” of which meanings were applied beyond ideas about sex and virginity which we are talking about here. Henry Chadwick, “Enkrateia” in *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 5 (1962), 343-365.


\(^3\) In recent theological conversation there is discussion about how one speaks about the relationship between one’s genital body and gender identity. For example, see Gilbert Herdt, *Third Sex, third gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York: Zone Books, 1996). In part, this conversation is largely anachronistic to our conversation because for our authors the nature of human beings was not extrinsic to their sexual identity. I recognize that there is a modern scholarly conversation about the use of the terms sex and gender wherein sex is used to talk about the physical body being male or female and the term gender is used to speak about how one lives in that physical body. In this dissertation “sex change” or the term sex includes both sex and gender.
transformation of women to their liberation from the social world of the second and third century church. Some modern scholarship uses this transformation to argue that women functioned as priests in the early church and that they acquired social positions equal to men.⁴ In general, modern scholars argue that transformational imagery specific to women highlights temporal social liberation, rather than understanding the imagery as reflective of the apocalypse or the eschaton. This modern imposition of woman’s liberation has been at the expense of understanding the transformational imagery of changing sexes in their encratic and martyrrologic context with eschatological motivation.

Sex change imagery, like other transformational imagery, is extant in early texts about Christians who, in anxious anticipation of the eschaton, are motivated to choose lives with encratic features both in the broad sense, which includes dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, and in the normally restricted sense of virginity and marital continence.⁵ It is also present in those accounts of faithful Christians where eschatological anticipation motivates Christians to martyrdom. This is the context that has largely been ignored by modern scholarship. Thus, the aim of this dissertation is to elucidate the meaning of transformational imagery in early Christian

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texts by understanding how sex change imagery reflects the contemporary context of eschatological salvation.

In nearly all of the accounts of the lives of holy women in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*\(^6\), the *Apocryphal Gospels*\(^7\), and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*\(^8\), eschatologically motivated *enkrateia* or martyrdom is imaged by women being made male. In these texts sex change imagery is most spectacular as it is manifested in a plethora of ways. Women change sexes and become male by dressing like men, transcending the gender roles of women and assuming the gender roles of men, by becoming physically or bodily male, and by simply being called men or male. The following representative texts serve to introduce and highlight the transformational imagery of changing sex.

In the *Acts of Thomas*\(^9\), the *Acts of Andrew*\(^10\) and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*\(^11\), the appearance of women is changed by their adoption of male guise, becoming male by


transvestism. In the *Acts of Thomas*, Mygdonia chops off her hair and rends her garments. In the *Acts of Andrew* both Maximilla and Iphidama change into male clothing. Transformation by transvestism is exemplified by the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. After Thecla is saved miraculously from martyrdom and baptizes herself, she dresses in men’s clothes and sets out in search for Paul:

> But Thecla yearned after Paul and sought him, sending about in all places; and it was told her that he was at Myra. And she took young men and maids, and girded herself, and *sewed her mantle into a cloak after the fashion of a man*, and departed into Myra, and found Paul speaking the word of God, and went to him. But he when he saw her and the people that were with her was amazed, thinking in himself: Hath some other temptation come upon her? But she perceived it, and said to him: I have received the washing, O Paul; for he hath worked together with thee in the Gospel hath worked with me also unto my baptizing.

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12 *Acts of Thomas*, 385; Bonnet, 224-225.

13 *Acts of Andrew*, 140, 143, 146; Prieur, 467, 477, 499.

14 *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 246; Lipsius, 266.
This transformational imagery wherein holy women become male also manifests itself literally in the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Martrydom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

“Becoming male” occurs by metamorphosis, women became physically or bodily male. In the collection of Jesus’ sayings known as the *Gospel of Thomas*, entering heaven is conditioned on women becoming male. Peter, arrogantly proclaims that Mary should not be with the disciples as “women are not worthy of life.” Jesus replies, rebuking Peter by saying that he “will lead (Mary) to make her male, in order that she too may become a Living Spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

This bodily sex change occurs more obviously in two early martyrologies, the *Martrydom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* and the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* and in

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16 “The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas” in Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 106 – 131. This work includes both the Latin text and the English translation on folio pages. All subsequent citations will be listed as the *Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, followed first by the page number of the English text and then of the Latin text.


18 *Gospel of Thomas*, 296-297.
the Acts of Paul and Thecla. In the *Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, Perpetua is given visions of the eschaton while she is in prison. In her fourth vision, the vision which reveals the means by which she will die, Perpetua enters into the amphitheater to battle an Egyptian. As she is being prepared for battle, Perpetua becomes a man:

> I looked at the enormous crowd who waited in astonishment. I was surprised that no beast was let loose on me; for I knew that I was condemned to die by the beasts. Then out came the Egyptian against me, of vicious appearance, together with his seconds, to fight with me. There also came up to me some handsome young men to be my seconds and assistants. My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man. 19

Felicitas’ martyrdom likewise highlights the transformation of the body of a woman into a man’s, namely that of Christ. Felicitas is pregnant when she enters prison. She prays that her child will be born prematurely so that she could face martyrdom with her companions. Her prayer is answered. During her labor Felicitas replies to the taunts of one of the prison guards regarding the pain of early childbirth by proclaiming that “what I am suffering now I am suffering by myself, but in the martyrdom another will be inside me who will suffer for me, just as I will be suffering for him.” 20

This Christological transformation is repeated visually in the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*. The description of Blandina’s martyrdom highlights her hanging on a post “in a form of a cross” 21 whereupon the witnesses to her torture “with their physical eyes... saw in the person of their sister him who was crucified for them.” Miraculously surviving that

19 *Martyrdom and Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, 119,118.


brutality she further inspires her brothers, as she wins the crown of immortality having “put on Christ.” Similarly, in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Thecla is brought in naked into the amphitheater. There, the Governor weeps and marvels at her inner strength as she assumes the shape of Christ on the cross and mounts the pyre.²²

Becoming male in these early Christian works also is illustrated by designation; women are called male, manly, or masculine. In the Acts of Andrew, Maximilla, a woman, is called “man.” Exhausted by Maximilla’s enkrateia, Aegeates threatens to torture Andrew if Maximilla refuses to return as his wife. Maximilla desperately seeks Andrew’s counsel and prayers. Andrew advises Maximilla to remain continent and applauds her saying, “Well done, O Man, you who are learning what is not yours and desiring what is yours.” He also commends her for knowing her true nature proclaiming:

O man, you understand all of these things in yourself, namely that you are immaterial, holy, light, akin to the unbegotten, intellectual, heavenly, translucent, pure, superior to the flesh, superior to the world, superior to powers, superior to authorities, over whom you really are…²³

In general, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Apocryphal Gospels and the Acts of the Christian Martyr also witness to the transformational imagery of changing sexes by cross gendering. In the second and third centuries biological sex determines social and cultural gender roles.²⁴ The reversal, challenge, or rejection of these social, cultural, and biological gender roles is manifested by women who assume the roles of male gender. In

²² Acts of Paul and Thecla, 243; Lipsius, 250.

²³ Acts of Andrew, 130, Bonnet, 40.

these specific texts the examples are abundant. In each of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* the women rejected their societal and household roles by refusing to marry and to bear children. In many of the texts against social restraint, women travel openly and freely. In all of the texts women begin teaching and exercising charismatic authority.

When briefly introduced in this way sex change imagery does not seem so radical. To modern readers in a world where the cover of *People Magazine* pictures a bearded transsexual man with the daughter to whom he just gave birth, this imagery may not seem at all strange. Christians who find their liturgy replete with marriage and bridegroom imagery will also not find this imagery surprising. Nor will many modern Christians be surprised by women dressing like men and exercising liturgical authority. Surely, students of Church History are not oblivious to this imagery as church fathers repeatedly hymn women as “beyond their sex,” or as “manly.” Yet, in second and early third century texts that tell the story of eschatologically motivated sexual renunciation and death, sex change imagery, or imagery about sex at all may seem a little misplaced. Thus, it is no surprise that in addition to this sex change imagery being variedly manifest in early Christian texts, it receives theological attention not long after it is used, and is also condemned in different ways.

Before leaving Alexandria in 202 a.d., Clement commented on the imagery of becoming male in his third chapter of the *Miscellanies of Notes of Revealed Knowledge*

25 http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20210491,00.html

in Accordance with the True Philosophy, or Stromateis27 where he discusses the role of marriage and enkrateia in the early church. He acknowledges three sources for sex change imagery: heresy (namely Gnosticism), secular disciplines (especially philosophy), and the eschatological motivation for enkrateia. In this context Clement does not condemn the imagery, just some of the sources for the imagery.

Direct and indirect condemnation of sex change imagery would, however, begin. Around 340 a.d. several Bishops in Northern Asia Minor assemble to discuss ecclesial matters. The synodal letter and the anathemas that follow that council at Gangra28 condemn Eustathius’ and his followers’ teaching and practice of radical enkrateia.

Specific to the issue of changing sexes the synod condemns women wearing the clothes of men and cutting off their hair. Interestingly, the synod offers differing explanations for this behavior. The synodal letter and its anathemas condemn a change in dress as a breach against the “common custom of dress.” As a result of this violation the letter claims that Eustathius’ slave followers were “acting insolently towards their masters,” and that


women too were “disregarding decent custom” by wearing the clothes of men. While the council seems offended by the infraction against custom, their canons also reveal that the motivation for Eustathius and his followers was not challenging or overturning social customs of dress, but rather motivation by *enkrateia*. The opening paragraphs of the synodal letter and Canons 13 and 17, quoted in full, clarify the point:

Against custom, women wear the clothes of men, since they think they can achieve holiness in this way; under the pretext of piety some have even had their natural hair cut off.

When under the pretext of asceticism a woman changes her clothing and puts on men’s clothes instead of the usual women’s clothes, she is excommunicated (Canon 13)

When under the pretext of asceticism a woman cuts off her hair that God gave her in order to remind her of her dependence, and she thereby abolishes, as it were, the commandment of obedience, she is excommunicated. (Canon 17)

The Bishops at Gangra see the imagery of women changing sexes by cross dressing and cutting their hair as a violation of custom and as an abolishment of God’s established hierarchy of the sexes which Paul explains in his first letter to the Corinthians. The canons also make it clear that for Eustathius and his followers the imagery and practice of changing sexes by cross dressing and women cutting their hair is related directly to Christian ethics, namely asceticism, piety, and the assumption of achieving holiness by cross dressing.

Within a few decades the condemnation of sex change imagery is taken up by Emperor Theodosius who issues a religious law to Tatianus in Milan that, like the

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29 I Corinthians 11:2-16
Council of Gangra, condemns women cutting their hair. 30 This denunciation is part of a two part law. The first part of the law speaks about widows in the church and the appropriate dispensation of their goods. In this first part of the law Theodosius explicitly refers to Paul’s Epistles. The second part of the law again references Paul’s letter to the Corinthians in order to condemn women who cut their hair “contrary to human and divine laws.” Theodosius’ law also tells us that these women cut their hair “at the instigation and persuasion of some professed belief,” a belief which prohibits them from entering the Church and from receiving the sacraments of the Church. Theodosius threatens Bishops with excommunication if priests allow these women into Church. 31

In the next thirty years Augustine too would denounce the sex change imagery of women becoming male. In the City of God he specifically addresses those who, motivated by Paul’s Epistles, taught that women would be resurrected as men. Augustine says that there are those who interpret Paul’s call to Christian unity and transformation into the telos aner, perfect man, to mean that woman are to be resurrected as men. 32 Augustine also says that these same people interprets Paul’s preaching to the Romans, on the hope of the final fulfillment, to mean that woman being “formed to the image of the


31 For further discussion of the Theodisian Code see the dissertation of Philip Tilden “Religious Intolerance in the Later Roman Empire: The Evidence of the Theodisian Code,” 2006.

32 Augustine, City of God, XXII.1. This is a discussion about an exegesis of Ephesians 4:13.
son,” will be resurrected as men.\textsuperscript{33} This is also how they interpreted Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.\textsuperscript{34}

Augustine’s denunciation of sex change imagery in the eschaton is complicated. In denouncing the belief that women will be resurrected as men, he argues that women would be resurrected as women because being a woman is a part of their nature. Augustine ties sex change imagery to \textit{enkrateia} by renouncing \textit{enkrateia} in order to condemn sex change imagery. What is curious is that Augustine repeats traditional arguments for \textit{enkrateia} such as the lack of marriage in heaven, and marriage as a result of the fall and adapts them in order to argue against women being resurrected as men.\textsuperscript{35}

These direct proscriptions against the transformational imagery of changing sexes explicitly refers to the practice of women donning male garb, cutting their hair, and becoming physical men. The condemnations of the council of Gangra and the Law of Theodosius suggest that this behavior was denounced because it overturned customary dress codes, and the divinely inspired hierarchy of the sexes as established in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. Both also offer their opponents rationale for cross-dressing: “instigation and persuasion of some professed belief,” and asceticism and piety, respectively. Augustine’s later condemnations do not address the temporal expression of women becoming men, but rather deal with the eschatological manifestation of sex

\textsuperscript{33} Romans 8:29

\textsuperscript{34} I Corinthians ; Genesis 2:22

\textsuperscript{35} For a discussion about Augustine’s changing views on the motivation for asceticism see Jennifer Henery, “Jovinian’s Proposal: Augustine’s Changing Views on Marriage and their Consequence for Virginity,” in Augustine, other Latin writers: Studia patristica, vol. XLIII; with index auctorum and table of contents of vols. XXXIX – XLIII, ed. Young, Frances Margaret (Leuven [u.a.]: Peeters, 2006).
change imagery. Nevertheless, his condemnation of women becoming men in the resurrection highlights the eschatological motivation for and against the imagery.

The indirect condemnation of the sex change imagery of women “becoming male” occurs as the result of the general condemnation of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and the *Apocryphal Gospels* and then in the re-writing and re-telling of these early stories. The general condemnation of the collected *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and *Apocryphal Gospels* is due to their use by schismatic or heretical groups who practice radical *enkrateia*. The five extant *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* which differed in regard to their origins of time, place, and theological tendencies are first brought together in the Manichean corpus and condemned in that context. They are additionally condemned because of their use by Pricillianists, Apostolics, Encratites, and Origenists.\(^36\)

Nevertheless, stories from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and *Apocryphal Gospels* continued to be transmitted as independent histories. Origen, Gregory Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, Ambrose, Gregory the Great, and others continued to use and to refer to individual texts. Many stories also survived in their re-writings. The clearest example is the re-writing of the story of Thecla from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is a section of the *Acts of Paul* which is transmitted independently from the whole Act. Thecla becomes a holy example for women in the early church.\(^37\) In using and adapting the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, early church fathers re-write Thecla’s life. The clearest example can be seen in Gregory of Nyssa’s re-writing of Thecla’s life when he


hymns his sister Macrina as being secretly named Thecla. In the *Life of Macrina*, Gregory goes out of his way to compare Macrina to Thecla in her holiness, yet at the same time he graphically highlights the fact that Macrina is physically a woman, rather than one who became male through transevestism. Curiously, while eliminating sex change imagery by transvestism, he continues to use the imagery of sex change by praising Macrina as one who goes beyond her nature.

The *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* that employ the same eschatologically reflective transformational imagery of changing sexes as the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and *Apocryphal Gospels* do not meet condemnation. In fact, the martyr stories are read during the liturgies celebrating the martyrdom of the saints.

The broad use and condemnation of the transformational imagery of changing sexes in an array of texts across geographical borders and spans of time means that the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Apocryphal Gospels, and Acts of the Christian Martyrs* cannot form a closed or even textually related canon of material with a unified theological system or even that they use transformational imagery of changing sexes in a univocal manner. In fact, no two texts from the extant material from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the Apocryphal Gospels, and the Acts of the Christian Martyrs* share the exact same use of the transformational imagery of changing sexes. Likewise, the condemnation of the sex change imagery of becoming male offers various explanations for the imagery. However, all of the direct and indirect condemnation of sex change

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imagery relates only to the sex change which occurs to women and specifically only to that which manifests itself physically, by transvestism or metamorphosis.

Like the patristic response to sex change imagery, modern scholarly explanation of the transformational imagery of changing sexes has primarily, if not exclusively, focused on the imagery of being made male. The varied use and condemnation of sex change imagery in early Christian texts also has been reflected in diverse scholarly explanations which, following Clement, can be summarized under three headings: heresy, secular context and asceticism.

The Council of Gangra and the Theodosian Code show that one aspect of the condemnation of sex change imagery results from its being against the common customs of culture. It is this social and cultural context which has predominated in scholarly explanation of the sex change imagery of becoming male. Scholars interested in the social and cultural context of sex change imagery investigate the literary, medical, and philosophical sources for the imagery. These scholars turned to Greek novels, philosophical explanations of the role of sex, and the contemporary medical explanations of being male and being female. Some of this scholarship simply attempts to determine possible antecedents for the imagery: Greek novels and myths had transvestite saints, contemporary philosophy talked about “becoming male.” Most of the scholarly interest in second and third century incidents of sex change imagery, however, divert into an inquiry about what sex change imagery says about the attitudes towards women in the apocrypha.

The majority of these scholars who explore sex change imagery are interested in the transformation only in so far as it plays a part in early Christian texts by and about women. The primary concern of this scholarship is to understand the role and perspective
of women in the early church. For some scholars this means that the imagery of women becoming men is seen as a capitulation to the misogyny and sexism of the early church.\textsuperscript{39} For others, those who highlight or concede to a cultural gender-bias in the early Church, the transformation of women into men in this literature is read as women transcending the limitations of their culture in order to play the role of leaders in the Church.\textsuperscript{40} Rosemary Rader writes of Perpetua’s sex change,

> It vividly portrays Perpetua’s conscientious objection to certain restrictive elements within third-century Carthaginian society, and symbolically suggests that her liberation from these restrictions was accomplished through a transcending of the expectations placed upon her female sexuality.\textsuperscript{41}

For Rader, Perpetua’s choices for martyrdom are motivated by a protest against and liberation from an oppressive third-century Carthage. Rader’s conclusions are representative of scholars interested in other texts by and about women that include the sex change imagery of women being made male.

The challenge that sex change imagery presents to cultural and social custom, is cause for its direct and indirect condemnation not long after it is first used in early Christian texts. So it is not unreasonable that scholars examine the social and cultural context of sex change imagery. The indirect condemnation of sex change imagery also


\textsuperscript{41} Rader, 3.
occurs because of its presence in texts which were used by heretical groups. Modern scholarship consequently also seeks to explain sex change imagery as a heretical motif, especially associating the imagery with Gnosticism. In fact, when sex change imagery is examined by looking at particular cases, such as the well known instance from Logion 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, it is almost always explained as a Gnostic metaphor reflective of Gnostic anthropology.\(^\text{42}\)

What is curious about modern scholarship is that scholars look to the cultural and social context and to heresy as sources for sex change imagery, yet they do not fully examine the third source for early Christian use and condemnation of the imagery, namely *enkrateia*. The bizarre second and third century sex change images from the *Apocryphal Gospels*, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, suggest that women must change their sex in order to participate in the kingdom of heaven and the context in which that sex change occurs is *enkrateia* or martyrdom.

In order to understand why modern scholarship reads the transformational imagery of changing sexes in this limited way, it is first necessary to summarize the scholarship and to understand its interest in sex change imagery. Understanding the modern examination of sex change imagery allows us to limit anachronistic concerns in order to better understand how the imagery of women being made male vividly portrays the transformation of an early Christian motivated to a life of martyrdom and *enkrateia*.

In the last thirty years there has been a great deal of speculation about the authorship of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, much of which has argued for a

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community of women writing for women. Through the aid of literary theory, sociology, psychology, and feminist ideology, three American scholars, Virginia Burrus, Stevan L. Davies, and Dennis R. MacDonald conclude that the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* and particularly those sections pertaining to women are derived from a community of women who practice sexual continence as an expression of their emancipation from the social institution of patriarchal marriage, and the misogynistic restraints of society.\(^4^3\) Burrus articulates well the peculiarly feminine sensibility and point of view which these scholars advance: “These stories focus on a positively portrayed heroine and offer no satisfying roles with which men could identify. The male characters (husbands and governors) are not only villainous, but are unsuccessful in their villainy as well.” From this perspective the transformational imagery of changing sexes, particularly that of “becoming male,” is presented as evidence of the liberation of women, albeit bound to the patriarchal language of the first centuries of the church.

This is not to say that sex change imagery is explained exclusively through sociology, psychology, and feminist ideology as the liberation of women from the particularly oppressive social setting of the second and third century. Female cross-dressing has long received attention from scholars who address the imagery of “becoming male” as it appears in fifth, sixth, and seventh century hagiographical transvestite

legends. At least eleven *vita*e of transvestite female saints are published during this period and are arguably textually related. Explicitly written to highlight the oppressive situation a woman finds herself in, whether it be the inflexible expectations of marriage by parents, the constraints of an existing marriage, or the life of prostitution, each of these stories offers variations on the same theme. The act of transvestism allows a woman incognito to enter the monastic life unhindered by binding family or social constraints. Each disguised saint enters the monastic life and later is confronted by some situation which challenges her holiness and threatens discovery: Mary is accused of rape and paternity, Apolinaaria has a demon-inspired illusion of pregnancy, Eugenia, Susannah, and Theodora resist sexual advances of female visitors only then to be accused of sexual abuse. These incidents result in the public revelation of the saint’s true identity, either before or after death. The discovery causes amazement on the part of the observers, allowing the hagiographer to celebrate the secret holiness of the women.

These stories, differing in content and context from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Apocryphal Gospels* and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, are not our primary concern. The secondary literature about these legends and the imagery of “becoming male,” though, is of interest as it has been the lens through which this imagery is generally understood regardless of the question of literary dependence between these later stories and the second and third century texts. Much of the secondary literature

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44 E. Patalgean (L’histoire de la femme desasguisée en moine et l’évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance,” *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3,17 (1976), 600. Patalgean lists 12 narratives of female transvestite saints: Saints Anastasia (Anastasios), Apolinaaria (Dorotheos), Athanasia (wife of Andronikos), Eugenia (Eugenios), Euphrosyne (Smaragdus), Hilaria (Hilarion), Mary (Marinos), Matrona (Babylas), Pelagia (Pelagius), Susannah (John), and Theodora (Theodoros). For English translation of many of these texts see Alice-Mary Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996).
investigating the imagery of “becoming male” in these later *vitae*, as much of the literature concerning the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, is primarily concerned with questions about women’s social roles or about how the early church “constructs” women’s gender identity. More importantly, some of this scholarship offers explanations of this later sex change imagery by considering preceding incidents of sex change imagery in early Christian texts. Therefore, an introduction to the scholarship which examines female transvestism in fifth, sixth, and seventh century texts, underlies the current understanding of the meaning of sex change imagery in early Christian encratic and martyrological texts.

The study of the fifth through seventh century primary texts witnessing to the transformational imagery of “becoming male” in large part mirrors changing methodological approaches in the academic fields of bible and history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hagiographical legends about the saints are dismissed as pulp fiction and thus not considered as serious historical literature deserving of individual scholarly investigation. Therefore, scholarship employs a history of religions approach which investigates the philological connections among texts and turns to classical and mythological sources as a way to approach these hagiographical legends. In 1879 a German scholar named Hermann Usener notes that a number of the transvestite saints in fifth to seventh century hagiographical texts have names that are epithets of Aphrodite of Cyprus. He also points out that the feast day of several of these transvestite saints is close to the festival celebrating Aphrodite, who he claims was bisexual. He makes further connections to the goddess of Amathus in Cyprus, who is regarded indiscriminately as Aphrodite or Aphroditos, and who wears the dress of a woman with
the beard of a man. In the sacrifices offered at this shrine the men dress as women and the women as men. From this evidence he concludes the fifth to seventh century hagiographical legends and in particular that of Pelagia were the Christian development of the legend of the bearded and bi-sexual Cypriot Aphrodite who is renamed Aphroditos.45

Conceding the philological investigation by Hermann Usener, Ludwig Radermacher suggests that the second century Thecla also belongs to this group of saints. He suggests though that rather than looking to Aphrodite as the background for Thecla’s transvestism one should turn to the fifth book of the second century b.c. Ephesian Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes by Xenophon of Ephesus, and the Spartan practice of the shaving of brides heads. In this Greek novel Thelxinoe disguises herself as a man in order to avoid an unwanted marriage and in order to elope with her true love. Thecla, Radermacher argues, like Thelxinoe, dresses as a man to avoid marriage and runs away with her true love, Paul or Christ.46

The limits of these investigations are subsequently highlighted by scholars who employ new academic methods. Turning to an emphasis on discovering the context and background of texts, Heinrich Guänter accepts some philological connection between Aphrodite/ Aphroditos and the transvestite saints, but notes that Usener’s study fails to explain the source or meaning of transvestism or even to make a connection to the earlier

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occurrences in Thecla. Guanter also points out that there were several transvestite saints who share no relation at all to Aphrodite of Cyprus.

Father Delehaye in *The Legends of the Saints* presents a counter thesis to Usener; he suggests that these transvestite legends of the fifth to seventh century are all romanticized version of the life of Pelagia as presented by John Chrysostom and Ambrose. Unfortunately, this idea does not do anything to help explain the meaning of the imagery. Father Delehaye also is not careful in his dating to establish textual dependency: one of these transvestite legends, *The Life of Eugenia*, and the *Acts of Paul* where the Thecla story is found, predates the writings of Chrysostom and Jerome as well as the *Life of Pelagia*, so they could hardly be a romanticized version of her life.\(^{47}\)

Both theses of Father Delehaye and Radermacher are challenged by the work of Rosa Söder. She illustrates that it is very possible that the second through fourth century Greek romances could have influenced the fifth to seventh century legends of the transvestite saints. In her argument she points to the transvestite disguise in the works of the Greek authors Apuleius, Iamblichus, and Achilles Tatius (6.1). She also notes in passing the presence of the transvestite disguise in the *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of Philip*.\(^{48}\) In doing so she eliminates the possibility that either Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes* or Chrysostom and Ambrose’s reminiscences of Pelagia could have been the sole and immediate origin of the transvestite imagery in


fifth to seventh century legends. Söder’s interest in identifying antecedents of the fifth to seventh century hagiographical texts challenges identification of background texts through philology, but nevertheless emphasizes identifying the hagiographical motif of transvestism with classical antecedents.

Philological connections and narrative connections to classical texts are made by Usener, Guänter, and Söder, allowing them to argue that these Christian transvestite narratives are derived from Greek romances. But none of these investigations shows a linear textual connection between fifth to seventh century texts and the antique texts upon which scholars think the texts are based. In fact, most of these authors leap over the second and third century images of transvestism which were to be found in Christian literature. As well as ignoring early examples of sex change imagery by indiscriminately reducing this imagery to its derivative presence in hagiographical literature, these authors devalue the significance of the image in early Christianity. In an attempt to establish a particular source for the transvestite motif, these early scholars fail to read the texts closely and ask questions regarding the use or the significance of the transformational imagery of “becoming male.” The limitations of these methodological approaches become clear as one looks to the literature of the past sixty years that has shown a new interest in hagiographical and apocryphal material. Applying psychological, anthropological, literary, and socio-historical methods, modern scholarship turns to establishing the significance or meaning of sex change imagery.
In 1961 Marie Delcourt specifically addresses the issue of the transvestite saint in an appendix titled “Female Saints in Masculine Clothing.” She takes a broad representation of texts which include the transvestite motif and approaches the texts from a psychological perspective, asking what the psychology of the saint tells us about the context of the legends. Delcourt highlights the idea that in many of these legends the act of transvestism signals a violent rupture from the saint’s culturally accepted way of life to the service of an ideal androgynous perfection: the saint is no longer bound to culturally based gender roles and is free to live a life bound neither by male or female gender roles. The rupture occurs by either the challenge to or abandonment of family and authority and a renunciation of sexual activity. The tension leading to ideal androgynous perfection is illustrated by a change in appearance: women become men. Delcourt equates female transvestism with the male physical expression of this ascetic tension, castration. Based on this analysis, Delcourt concludes that the act of transvestism should not be understood through the lens of Greek mythology but in the context of early Christian asceticism, influenced as it was by Gnosticism and its most radical forms of asceticism, which call for total renunciation of material possessions and all sexual life.

A little over ten years later, Jon Anson rejects Delcourt’s interpretation in terms of the saints’s psychology. His problem was methodological. He argues that the fifth to seventh century legends were not about real women or even characterizations of real women and therefore investigating their psychology told us nothing. He argues that

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49 Marie Delcourt, Hermaphrodite: Myths and Rites of the Bisexual Figure in classical Antiquity (London: Studio Books, 1961), 84-102.

Delcourt fails to recognize that, with the exception of the second century Thecla narrative, all of the legends of transvestite saints are the products of male monastic communities. As such, the psychological investigation should be made of the male monks writing these legends for other male monks.

Anson begins his investigation by contrasting the second century Thecla to the hagiographical saint legends produced by the monks of the Egyptian desert. Unlike the Thecla narrative which could have at least been historical fiction, he argues that later legends are pure fiction, merely stories. As such they must be investigated in the context of the monastic communities in which they are written in order to understand the ritualistic thinking that develops these transvestite saints. A detailed examination of six transvestite saint’s legends, that originated in Egypt at the monastic settlement at Scetis, leads Anson to conclude that in the context of a male society dedicated to celibacy and given to excesses of anti-feminism, female transvestitism is evidence of a monastic psychology that illustrates the tension between monastic hostility to women and the longing for female presence.

Anson argues that the context of these later fictional narratives changes the meaning of the transformational imagery of becoming male that was also present in the second century Thecla narrative. He thinks that the Thecla narrative is at least historical fiction, based on historical context. From this context he roughly presents possible background sources for Thecla’s transvestism: montanism, gnosticism, and the encraticism of Eustathius of Sebaste. Of these possible sources for Thecla’s transvestism Anson highlights the encraticism of Eustathius because condemnations of the sect illustrate that the act of female cross dressing was being challenged and that these
transvestite women were real and a threat. Anson also indicates that his interest is not so much in establishing a particular background for the imagery as it is in suggesting ritualistic thinking. Therefore, he goes on to suggest that the transvestism of Thecla is a mimetic device which “signaled and effected a transformation of self, the birth of a new identity, not only in the name of Christ but in the body as well.”

Stephen J. Davis takes up the work of Jon Anson not in an attempt to understand the psychology of the community which produced these hagiographical legends, but to suggest that they should be read from the context of prior Christian texts and larger cultural discourses. Following the work of Jon Anson, Davis agrees with his theory of Christomimeicism. Unlike Anson, Davis presents a relationship between fifth to seventh century examples of transvestite ascetics and Thecla, and applies Thecla’s imitation of Christ to the later ascetics, simply because they are all transvestite ascetics.

Methodologically, Davis’ thesis is based on the literary practice of intertextuality. For him, “intertextuality simply refers to the practice of authors quoting or alluding to earlier sources in writing their own texts.” Following this literary theory, Davis notes an allusion to the Thecla narrative in some of the later transvestite legends which allows him to apply Anson’s theory of Thecla’s Christomimeicism to the later saints. In a similar manner he presents the garment change to male vestiture as evoking a christological intertext; the Pauline baptismal formula of Galatians 3.27-28: “As many of you as were

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baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus.” When read in light of this intertext, Davis argues transvestism functions as a metaphor for being one in Christ Jesus. He goes on to argue that this christomimeicm envisions a “unification of opposites” in Christ, which overturns the traditional binary conception of gender identity. Davis argues that this is not the bisexual prototype of Genesis 1.27 but rather an androgynous ideal. He illustrates this destabilization of gender by citing early Christian communities who variedly viewed Christ as androgynous, as a woman in eschatological visions, as the incarnation of the female, divine Wisdom, and who illustrate Christ in the form of Orpheus, the androgy nous figure of Greek myth. His resulting conclusion was that the imagery of “becoming male” specifically in transvestism “contributes to the destabilization of bipolar gender categories.” Unfortunately, Davis fails to illustrate the textual connection between the donning of male apparel and the changing of garments, with either the Epistle to the Galatians or the Genesis narrative.

Like Davis, Evelyne Patalgean turns away from a psychological approach. Rather than turning towards literary theory she turns toward a socio-historical description of how

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54 Davis, “Crossed Texts, Crossed Sex,” 35. Epiphanius, Panarion 49.1 describes a vision experienced by the Montanist prophetess Quintilla, in which Christ appeared to her in female form; for a discussion of this vision, see Christine Trevett, Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 167-70

transvestite legends reflect Christian thought and practice in late antiquity. She too looks at the later hagiographical stories that are specifically about women assuming male dress and living in disguise. Applying anthropologist Lévi-Stauss’s structuralist analysis of myth she attempts to describe how the stories of transvestite saints would have functioned in early Byzantine culture. She, like John Anson, places these stories in a monastic culture. As such she argues that the central motif of transvestism challenges social models of male authority and female subjugation and is a model of “transgressive sanctity” that challenges male authority in marriage. In doing so, the transvestite imagery becomes indicative of female individuality and autonomy. Like Anson, Patalgean suggests that the male monastic culture had a latent fear of women, who represent a fundamental obstacle to salvation. Their production of these transvestite legends propose a model of female sanctity in which the female is negated.56

This secondary literature about fifth to seventh century transvestite legends is relevant in so far as it has broadly become the standard way of understanding the imagery of “becoming male.” It is also important as it reflects changing methodological approaches to hagiographical literature and consequentially to the understanding of this transformational imagery. Tangentially, some of this literature even touches on the earliest witnesses of sex change imagery found in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles thus becoming particularly relevant for our investigation. Unfortunately, the scholarly isolation of the imagery of the transvestism of women makes the transformational imagery of women becoming male an issue about women’s liberation from cultural

56 Patalgean, 600-616.
context. What is neglected in these studies is the immediate context in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* of eschatologically motivated martyrdom and *enkrateia*.

This previous scholarship, though, is helpful. In approaching the fifth to seventh century transvestite hagiographical legends, Jon Anson clearly differentiates between the early transvestism of Thecla and the later legends. His purpose in doing so is to highlight the difference between the communities in which they were written. This is helpful because in the later cycle of texts, sex change is central to the story, while in earlier examples the issue of “becoming male” is not the focus. In the earlier witnesses of sex change imagery there are also divergent contexts of “becoming male” not only because, as Anson suggested, the earlier examples could have been about real women whereas the later ones are about fictional women, but also because the genres in which the earlier examples of “becoming male” appear are varied. Furthermore, the later hagiographical stories employ a common literary cycle: 1. ascetic retreat or flight from the world, 2. transvestism or disguise and seclusion, 3. revelation of sexual identity.57 These texts also share the practice of a name change; when the saint is disguised as a man she takes on the name of a man.58 These differences between the fifth to seventh century and second and third century texts are enough to eliminate the later hagiographical legends from our primary concern.

57 Anson, 7; Patalgean, 600-604.

58 Ibid., 600-602. As indicated by these changes Anna/Euphemianos; Apolinaria/Dorotheos; Eugenia/Eugenios; Euphrosyne/Smaragdus; Hilaria/Hilarion; Mary/Marinus; Mary/Babylas; Pelagia/Pelagios; Theodorea/Theodoros; Susannah/John.
Stephen J. Davis’s engagement with historical text based on a postmodern literary theory resulted in conclusions that are interesting but unprovable from an historical perspective. Thus, they do little in helping us to understand what the imagery of “becoming male” contextually means in the first three centuries of the church. His hypotheses, albeit unsubstantiated, at least suggests the possibility of scriptural and textual explanations for sex change imagery.

Marie Delcourt’s appendix on Christian women in male clothing is similarly helpful in narrowing our concerns. In rejecting a classical or mythological background to transvestite legends she turns to early Christian asceticism. She broadly highlights early Christian asceticism and its relationship to Gnosticism and suggests that it is radical asceticism that influences this imagery. Her analysis points out divergent and competing theoretical and practical expressions of early Christian asceticism. This is important in that it helps us remember that the widespread use of sex change imagery cannot be classified as orthodox or heretical; these terms are not only anachronistic but also reveal a poor methodological approach to history.

Jon Anson has been exceptionally helpful in highlighting the sex change imagery in The Acts of Paul and Thecla and suggests possible sources and explanations. Although Anson’s parallel presentation of transvestism in ascetic sects of early Christianity does little more than further Delcourt’s witness to the widespread use of the image, his theory of christomimeicmism and Thecla’s “becoming male” as her symbolic transformation into Christ did offer a contextual argument for the specific imagery.

This secondary literature is also useful because the study of fifth to seventh century hagiographical legends has led some scholars to tangentially investigate earlier
incidents of the transformational imagery of “becoming male.” Building upon this research, some modern scholars have consequentially addressed the imagery of sex change in early Christian texts from an historical perspective. Their investigations are narrow, typically looking at only a few texts and not asking questions about the relationship between texts employing the specific transformational imagery of “becoming male.” But these new approaches are beginning to consider the philosophical and eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* and martyrdom. Thus, this scholarship provides a foundation for understanding early sex change imagery within the context of its use.

Elizabeth Castelli examines the sex change imagery in the *Gospel of Thomas* in reference to the larger framework of Greco-Roman thought as well as its intersection with Christian asceticism and martyrdom. In *I Will Make Mary Male*, she argues that the acts of dressing in men’s clothing and cutting one’s hair short functions in this early Christian literature, and especially in the *Gospel of Thomas* as “bodily signifiers.” These are signs of how early Christian society is reevaluating and destabilizing traditional gender differences in the context of a theology that calls for personal and corporate transformation. Castelli examines Logion 22 and 114 from the *Gospel of Thomas* as well as the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* and considers the broad ideological framework of the notion of the female becoming male. She suggests that the expression of sex change imagery is based on the importation or use of Platonic anthropology and the idea of “oneness,” wherein male signifies virtue and female, passions, and a movement towards holiness means the ascension to male virtue.

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Continuing an investigation of the *Gospel of Thomas*, Kari Vogt is particularly attentive to the anthropological and soteriological roots of this imagery; she begins looking at “becoming male” as a shared image in early Christianity and Gnosticism. She first explains the Gnostic background for the image. She then examines a few texts that overlap in the Gnostic and Christian world: *The Gospel of Thomas*, the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, and Clement of Alexandria’s use of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* in his *Stromateis*. Her investigation focuses on the notion of “becoming male” by designation, or being called male or manly. In this narrow investigation, Vogt contextually highlights scriptural motivation for this imagery. She highlights Ephesian 4:13, about “becoming the perfect man,” and Romans 8:29, “to be formed in the image of the Son,” foundation for this sex change imagery.

The imagery of “becoming male” also has been tangentially addressed by authors examining early Christian texts in which it is employed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey presents the transvestite saint as the theological symbol of reversal that ultimately embodied the theological paradox of redemption. Her investigation is limited to Syriac examples of “becoming male” and takes into consideration the theological framework of anthropology and soteriology. She is attentive to the scriptural foundation of this imagery and its basis in the creation narrative. Her broader research in Syriac literature leads her

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to conclude that the “(transvestite nun) motif crystallizes the misogyny that has become an integral part of the Syrian Church.”

The most thorough examination of the transformational imagery of “becoming male” is a part of Kerstin Aspergren’s 1990 book that investigates the recurring theme of androcentricism in literary, philosophical, and theological texts. Like Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth Clark, and Kari Vogt, Aspergren is interested in the notion in Graeco-Roman culture that man was the standard by which humanity was measured. Each of these authors notes that the consequence for women is that in order for them to reach human perfection they have to in some sense become male. Addressing the transformational imagery of becoming male by designation in fourth century texts, Elizabeth Clark concludes that in the context of an androcentric culture, authors, like Jerome, who call a woman male or praise her as manly acknowledge her full humanity that transcends gender stereotypes. In contrast, Kerstin Aspergren sees the imagery of


64 Elizabeth Clark, Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986).


“becoming male” as a reinforcement of Greco-Roman androcentricism and ultimately as an indication of the misogyny of the early Church.67

In her thorough study, Aspergren begins by summarizing Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics view of women. She presents their understanding of biology and procreation as well as their views on women’s role in society, family, and marriage. In this review the Stoic view of moral equality between the sexes stands out as radically different from the previous hierarchical view of the sexes.

This philosophical survey is followed by a chapter on Philo’s theories of biology, generation, and the practical roles of women in society, marriage and the family. The misogynistic picture she paints of Philo reflects the consensus of scholars such as R. Baer68 and Dorothy Sly.69 Aspergren here focuses on Philo’s oppositional use of male and female as a reflection of his other ontological polarities, e.g., intelligible/sensible; good/evil. She does, however, qualify these comparisons by illustrating Philo’s hierarchical systems in which woman can be good when obedient to men in marriage just as senses can be good when obedient or properly ordered in relation to intelligence.

It is Philo’s misogynistic and androcentric views that Aspergren highlights as being repeated in her assessment of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of the Christian Martyrs. Although she argues that Thecla and Perpetua positively assert

67 Aspergren, The Male Women.

68 R.A. Baer, Philo’s Use of the Categories Male and Female. (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

their full humanity and transcended gender stereotypes, she reads the sex change imagery of becoming male as reinforcing cultural androcentrism.

The historical approach employed by the last four scholars is extremely helpful in that it offers some contextual starting points for the understanding of the transformational imagery of “becoming male.” Although Castelli overlooks the variation in texts, in which sex change imagery occurs and downplays the anthropological and soteriological contexts, she presents a philosophical anthropology that provides an explanation for sex change imagery. The resource from her study is the importance of philosophical systems for the authors of early texts which use the imagery of “becoming male.”

Kari Vogt is helpful in that she presents possible scriptural motivations for this patristic sex change image; she also draws attention to the fact that this imagery is shared by various communities including Christian and Gnostic. Although she does not necessarily connect the use of scripture texts with specific texts or incidents, she is successful in putting the possible scriptural sources and the various communities in which this imagery occurs into the conversation.

Susan Ashbrook Harvey similarly contributes to the conversation. She introduces the use of the imagery of “becoming male” in the Syriac church and suggests that it is reflective of anthropological and soteriological ideas presented in scripture, especially the creation narrative. Her conclusions that this imagery results from the misogynistic tendencies of the Syriac Church undermined some of her work. Nevertheless, she successfully highlights the importance of anthropology and soteriology and its connection to the creation narrative for the understanding of our transformational imagery.
Kersten Aspergren’s major study, like Vogt’s provides philosophical background for the sex change imagery of “becoming male.” She also does a thorough job of integrating the social world in which these texts were written which clearly indicate a hierarchical understanding of gender in society. But in reading the androcentrism of Graeco-Roman society against a modern concept of the full and equal participation of women in society and the Church, Aspergren fails to understand this sex-change imagery as a part of transformational imagery in general which should first be read in its eschatological context that motivate *enkrateia* and martyrdom. She also dismisses the incidents wherein men assume female roles or qualities as reinforcement of this androcentrism suggesting these texts only illustrate the submission expected from women.

As we begin to examine primary texts, we concede that present scholarship has shown that there are philosophical motivations behind the ascetic contexts which employ the transformational imagery of “becoming male.” We are also reminded that there are at times coexisting and competing expressions of Christianity and particularly asceticism which use simultaneously the transformational imagery of “becoming male.” Most importantly, we are reminded that we must at least attempt to read primary texts through the prism of a contemporary rather than modern lens, in order to understand what the imagery of “becoming male” means to early Christians.

Scholarship has been successful in illustrating possible social contexts in which texts employing the transformational imagery of “becoming male” are written and in which lived the women of early Christian centuries. Because of the overtly androcentric and at times misogynistic climate of the early church the imagery of “becoming male”
has been widely interpreted as indication of women’s liberation from the oppressive contexts in which they find themselves. Ancient authors mirroring the contemporary social practices unarguably weave the familial subjugation of women into their narrative. Some of these texts also indicate that when women choose to follow the ascetic life they abandon their societal roles. It is for this reason that the imagery of “becoming male” has been inadequately summarized as illustrating the achieved goal of the “liberation of women,” and “the overthrow of family and social structure.”

Undeniably, the gender laden imagery of “becoming male” is specifically used to highlight the transformation of women. As this imagery is exclusive to the experience of women, it has to be conceded that there is a cultural and contextual situation in which gender language and categories are expressed. It is also necessary to note that this is also the cultural and contextual situation that produces the transformational imagery wherein men are described as bearing children, acting as midwives and becoming brides.

Within these texts the content of the eschaton is drawn from diverse sources, including the Biblical and apocalyptic traditions as well as from Hellenistic philosophy and Greco-Roman culture. Scholarship largely exploits the background of Hellenistic philosophy and Greco-Roman culture in its understanding of sex change imagery, but an examination of the eschaton is not the focus of these scholars. In an examination of early Christian eschatology as it is found in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, some scholars have highlighted the and apocalyptic background. A few have even illustrated how the Biblical and apocalyptic background images the eschaton. What is lacking in scholarship is a clear understanding that changing sex images the eschaton. This study, a textual examination of how

As the specific topics of \textit{enkrateia}, martyrdom, and the eschaton are central to the understanding of sex change imagery in these second and third century texts, chapter two offers a contextual understanding of eschatology, \textit{enkrateia}, and martyrdom. The early Christian community inherited concepts of the eschaton from Biblical and Second Temple Jewish sources. The eschatological hope that the early church inherited variously understood future hope as the restoration of Israel, as an act of new creation and covenant restoration, and in some cases as the resurrection of individuals to the eschatological temple. The early Christian community assumed and reworked these concepts of eschatology through the narrative of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Christian communities used Biblical and Second-Temple images and narrative to speak about what had happened to Jesus after he died and what would happen to Christians, both as a community and as individual believers. While there was no univocal way to speak about the eschaton, eschatological belief motivated early Christians: what individuals and communities believed was going to happen to them when Christ returned or when they died, influenced how they lived. Matrydom and \textit{enkrateia} were ways of life motivated by the eschaton. Before exploring our primary source texts which highlight eschatologically motivated martyrdom and \textit{enkrateia}, chapter 2 will provide context for that endeavor.

Chapters three, four and five offer summaries of the second and third century texts from the \textit{Acts of the Christian Martyrs, Apocryphal Gospels, and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles} that contain the imagery of changing sexes. In the \textit{Apocryphal Acts of
the Apostles and Apocryphal Gospels eschatology motivates enkrateia both in the broader sense which includes dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, and in the normally restricted sense of virginity and marital continence. In the martyrologies, the imminence of the eschaton does not motivate enkrateia in the sense of urging sexual renunciation or dietary restrictions: both Felicitas and Perpetua have young babies and reference is made to their husbands and within the story would be martyrs share in great meals of refreshment. Instead in these texts eschatology motivates martyrdom and imminent participation in the eschaton. From highlighting the eschatological motivation for martyrdom and enkrateia in these texts it becomes evident that the imagery used to describe the holy men and women in these texts is derived from the contextual vision of the eschaton. In the rehearsal of each narrative, chapters three, four, and five show that sex change imagery, like other transformational imagery is reflective of the eschaton.

The texts highlighted in these three chapters contain sex change imagery and share eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom. Chapters three, four and five also show that the eschatological visions conceived of in different ways can similarly motivate enkrateia and martyrdom. In these texts the holy lives of Christians who are motivated to enkrateia or martyrdom by eschatology are expressed in images that reflect the varying sources of eschatological content. Varying sources of eschatological content also share imagery. The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the Apocryphal Gospels, and the Acts of the Christian Martyrs shares sex change imagery the nevertheless reflects varying visions of the eschaton. The eschaton is envisioned as the victory in an eschatological battle, as the return to the Edenic garden, and as an ascent to the heavenly temple.
In each of the texts from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, that highlight the transformational imagery of changing sexes, the content of the eschatological vision that motivates *enkrateia* and martyrdom is diversely drawn from Biblical and apocalyptic traditions as well as from Hellenistic philosophy and Greco-Roman culture. As the scholarship rehearsed in this introduction indicates, the philosophical, social and cultural background has been significantly explored. While some of that exegesis is helpful, largely overlooked are the immediate theological sources for transformational imagery in the Biblical and apocalyptic traditions of Second Temple Judaism as assumed and reinterpreted by the early Christian community. Chapter 6 turns to an exploration of these sources.

By way of conclusion, chapter seven rehearses the thesis that the transformational imagery of being made male that is present in many second and third century martyrological and ascetical texts is imagery reflective of the eschaton employed to illustrate the transformation of the holy woman. The second and third century context of sex change imagery, namely eschatologically motivated *enkrateia* and martyrdom, had roots in Greco-Roman culture, Hellenistic philosophy, as well as Biblical and apocalyptic traditions. Even with these diverse and substantial roots, sex change imagery was directly and indirectly condemned in the early church. The direct and indirect condemnation of sex change imagery presents contemporary explanations for the transformational imagery of changing sexes including heresy, secular context and asceticism. Modern scholarship, like the patristic interpretation, primarily focuses on the first two explanations. The continued use of sex change imagery in later Christian text begs for an examination of the
third source for sex change imagery, asceticism. When the early texts that employ sex change imagery are examined one discovers that sex change imagery, like other transformational imagery, finds its theological source in the Biblical and apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism read through the lens in the New Testament. Read through this lens, the transformational imagery of changing sexes has little to do with the misogyny of the early church or the right of women to be priests. Instead, the imagery is a part of the early Christian communities developing understanding of the eschaton and its implications for the life of early Christian women.
CHAPTER 2: ESCHATOLOGY, ENKRATEIA, AND MARTYRDOM: DEFINING TERMS FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Christian eschatology, enkrateia, and martyrdom in the first three centuries were subject to interpretive shifts that resulted in a wide range of positions in the early church on the understanding of the last things and how individual believers and the communities to which they belonged were expected to live and die based on that for which they hoped. In order to understand how the transformational imagery of changing sexes is reflective of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom, it is first helpful to have some general sense of early Christian eschatology, martyrdom, and enkrateia.

A brief introduction to the second and third century understanding of eschatology will show that although there was no univocal understanding of future hope in either Second Temple Judaism or in the early Christian community, there was some general consensus on the understanding of resurrection. The basic meaning of resurrection in the Second Temple period is assumed and reworked in early Christianity so that the notion of eschatology speaks about what happened to Jesus and what will happen to Christians in the Christian communities. Regardless of the timing of these events, whether the eschaton happens individually now or later, or collectively now, or later, the imagery used to talk about the eschaton is derived from the Second Temple period. The texts, which are our primary concern, read that imagery through the life of Christ.

Like the concept of eschatology, the second and third century concept of martyrdom was developed in Second Temple Judaism and was assumed and reworked by the early Christian community. A brief introduction to the Second Temple background of
the concept of martyrdom illustrates that the early Christian communities saw their witness and persecution in language similar to the Second Temple martyrdoms: they were willing to die rather than blaspheme the name of God and desecrate the Temple. Early Christianity had assumed and reworked the concept of God and temple, however, so that it was Jesus that the early church confessed. As Christian persecution continued, first at the hands of the Jews and then at the hands of the state, early Christians saw in their persecution and immanent death the imitation of Christ’s passion. Because Christ was victorious and received resurrection, they too were confident that in imitation of Christ they would receive eschatological reward for their suffering. This eschatological reward motivated early Christians to martyrdom. Imagery derived from the eschaton is employed to indicate the transformation of Christians in early Christian martyrologies.

The relationship between the eschaton and *enkrateia* is similiarly witnessed to in early Christian tradition and in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, and *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. The following brief introduction to *enkrateia* shows that beginning with the New Testament witness, eschatology motivated *enkrateia*. From the beginning there were also divergent explanations about the requirement of *enkrateia* and its relationship to the eschaton. If the eschaton was immanent or if it had already occurred, then some Christians thought they were to live encratic lives as a reflection of the escaton. Others believed that *enkrateia*, in its restricted sense, was only a part of the world to come and argued against those Christians who taught *enkrateia* as a condition for the eschaton. The primary sources that employ the transformational imagery of changing sexes witness to eschatologically motivated *enkrateia*. Imagery derived from
the eschaton is employed to indicate the transformation of Christians in text which illustrate early Christian *enkrateia*.

ESCHATOLOGY

In a strict sense Christian eschatology is the religious doctrine concerned with “last things,” the resurrection of Christ, the physical death of the individual, the intermediate state after death, the second coming of Christ, the final resurrection of the body at the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. By the second and third centuries, the time period during which the *Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of the Egyptians, Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, and Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* were written, the early church espoused variant explanations of the eschaton. Many positions were articulated as to when Christ would come again and as to what the resurrection of those in Christ would be. There was no great consensus on how the resurrected life would be worked out in practice or even when. There were questions about how Christians should be living their lives now as they waited for Christ’s return. There were questions as to whether the resurrected life would be like this life or whether it would require a transformation. There was also great indecisiveness about where resurrected life would

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be lived, in a spiritual heaven or in a corporeal heaven, or perhaps on a newly created earth.

The second and third century texts which highlight sex change imagery witness to the diversity of visions of the eschaton. These texts also illustrate that disparate explanations of eschatology motivate Christian behavior in different ways: *enkrateia*, or self-control, both in the broader sense which includes dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, and in the normally restricted sense of virginity and marital continence, and martyrdom, being a witness to faith in Christ which resulted in being killed, were motivated by shifting eschatological ideas.

Most modern scholars agree on two things in regard to Christian eschatology: first, Jesus’ followers believed that he had been raised from the dead after his crucifixion and appeared to some of his followers, and second, that the early spread of the Christian gospel and Christian behavior was motivated by that belief.\(^{71}\) What the scholars do not agree on is what resurrection meant both for Jesus and his followers. Some argue that the disciples only thought they saw Jesus after his death, a kind of vision based on “religious intoxication,” or “enthusiasm.”\(^{72}\) Others challenge the notion of resurrection by questioning the death and burial of Jesus. John Dominic Crossan speculates that Jesus’ body was either left on the cross or buried in a shallow grave where it would have been

\(^{71}\) For a detailed look at modern scholarship on the resurrection see Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), ch.1.

devoured quickly by animals. Even those scholars who agree that after Jesus’ death he was resurrected and appeared to his disciples disagree on the nature of Jesus’ appearances. Explanations for Jesus’ post resurrection appearances include Jesus’ appearance in a miraculous noncorporeal supernatural way. In *Resurrection Narratives*, Reginald Fuller describes Jesus’ resurrection appearances as “visionary experiences of light, combined with a communication of meaning.” Recently, there has been a shift in New Testament theology that supports the view that Jesus was raised bodily. This theory has been most persuasively argued by N.T. Wright in his monumental work, *The Resurrection and the Son of God.* Wright argues that what the early church believed about and taught about the resurrection of Jesus was grounded in the eschatological expectations of Second Temple Judaism and in the context of pagan philosophy.

With great detail, Wright rehearses pagan and Second Temple Jewish background in order to understand the meaning of resurrection in the New Testament. He concludes that whether the Second Temple Jewish texts are talking about their expectations of a bodily resurrection or whether the pagan sources are expressing their incredulity that such a thing would ever happen, the Greek word ἀναστασία almost always refers to bodily resurrection. The pagan sources illustrate many possibilities for the answer to the question, “What happens to you when you die?” None of which includes bodily resurrection.

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resurrection. The Second Temple Jewish sources, Wright argues, illustrate a developing understanding of the concept of resurrection which by the second century was used in two interrelated senses:

Resurrection, therefore, seems to possess two basic meanings in the Second Temple period, with considerable fluidity between them. In each case the referent is concrete: restoration of Israel (‘resurrection’ as metaphorical, denoting socio-political events and investing them with the significance that this will be an act of new creation, of covenant restoration); of human bodies (‘resurrection’ as literal denoting actual re-embodiment).

Wright argues that anyone using the term ‘resurrection’ in this period would have been understood to be speaking about these meanings of resurrection. What this period does not do is offer specifics about how resurrection would be worked out either in a socio-political way or in the way in which the body would be resurrected or what it would look like when it was. When speaking about individual bodily resurrection these texts are clear, though, about the fact that resurrection had not happened yet and would not happen until the last days. Resurrection spoke of a bodily resurrection after an intermediate state following the death of an individual.

Wright argues that this Second Temple Jewish understanding of resurrection is the meaning that early Christians assumed and reworked. After a detailed analysis of all of the New Testament passages that speak about resurrection, Wright concludes that the New Testament modifies the Second Temple meanings of resurrection. First, resurrection

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78 Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 204.
as a metaphor for Israel’s return from exile is absent in the New Testament and is replaced by the metaphorical meaning that denotes “the concrete, bodily events of Christian living.”

This new metaphorical use of resurrection was a way of bringing to articulation the experience and belief of Jesus’ earliest followers: the Christian life belonged within a historical narrative which began with Jesus’ resurrection and ended with the resurrection of all believers, and that the divine Spirit who accomplished the first would accomplish the second, and was even now at work to anticipate and guarantee that final event.

Likewise, the New Testament also modifies the second notion of resurrection. The Jewish notion of bodily resurrection as what happens to the individual after life after death has been divided into two. In the New Testament version, Jesus has already been resurrected and, at his return, all of his people will be resurrected. The New Testament also offers some clarification about what that resurrected body will be; incapable of dying and requiring transformation.

Not everyone agrees with N.T. Wright’s unified picture of a single belief about life after death in the New Testament. Both Brian Daley and Alan Segal are far more attentive to the full speculation about life after death in the Jewish and pagan worlds of late antiquity and to the possible influences that those beliefs could have had on early

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79 Ibid, 373.

80 Ibid.

81 Daly, The Hope of the Early Church.

Christian thought. Although Segal agrees with Wright that the predominant understanding of the resurrection in the first century was bodily, he argues that this view is mostly present in the Gospels and less so in Paul.\(^83\) Both Segal and Daley show that belief in bodily resurrection was equivocal in the early church.

While modern scholarly positions that argue for the Christian understanding of resurrection being read back onto the belief of Jesus and his followers seem untenable, these arguments witness to a diversity of thought about how resurrection is to be understood in reference to the early church as well as highlighting the wide spectrum of beliefs about eschatology in the early church. One of the modern problems in discussing eschatology is the inessential modifiers that scholarship has appended to the word eschatology in order to emphasize or argue for a theological position. In order to counter scholarship which was eliminating the eschatological motivation for Christian behavior in the New Testament, some scholars began modifying eschatology with the word “consistent” in order to indicate the relationship between what is expected of the Christian now and in the future state. Some scholars interpreted the eschatological passages in the New Testament as referring to the ministry of Jesus and his lasting legacy and qualified eschatology with the word “realized.”\(^84\) Likewise “fulfilled” eschatology meant that the New Testament's predictions of "the end of the age" and the coming of Christ refer to events that have already occurred. Reginald Fuller and Georges Florovsky both speak about eschatology already beginning in Jesus Christ’s life, death, and

\(^83\) In *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Wright argues for the primacy of Paul and certainly for Paul’s understanding of bodily resurrection.

resurrection and continuing in the early church but, not yet fully realized. They modify eschatology with the phrases “proleptic” and “inaugurated,” respectively. Part of this modification of the word eschatology sought to explain when the eschaton would or had occurred.

At the risk of dismissing these conflicts in modern scholarship, for the purpose of this dissertation, eschatology is broadly conceived of as “the doctrine of the last things,” and deals with topics such as the resurrection of Christ, the physical death of the individual, the intermediate state after death, the second coming of Christ, the final resurrection of the body at the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. I would also propose that the differing and often times conflicting views in modern scholarship with regard to the eschaton are reflective of the varied eschatological emphases in the early Church which resulted from the diversity of Christian communities, ecclesial challenges, and the variety of sources from which the content of eschatological teaching was drawn.

In chapters three, four, and five, we shall examine the second and third century texts which highlight the transformational imagery of changing sexes: the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of the Egyptians, The Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, and the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas. The purpose of the following chapters is to highlight the eschatological context of our primary

texts and to illustrate how that context motivates martyrdom and *enkrateia*, and further to illustrate how transformational imagery is reflective of the eschaton.

**MARTYRDOM**

We write unto you, brethren, an account of what befell those that suffered martyrdom and especially the blessed Polycarp, who stayed the persecution, having as it were set his seal upon it by his martyrdom (1.1)... Blessed therefore and noble are all the martyrdoms which have taken place according to the will of God (2.1)... seeing that when they were so torn by lashes that the mechanism of their flesh was visible even as far as the inward veins and arteries, they endured patiently, so that the very bystanders had pity and wept; while they themselves reached such a pitch of bravery that none of them uttered a cry or a groan, thus showing to us all that at that hour the martyrs of Christ being tortured were absent from the flesh, or rather that the Lord was standing by and conversing with them (2.2)... And giving heed unto the grace of Christ they despised the tortures of this world, purchasing at the cost of one hour a release from eternal punishment. And they found the fire of their inhuman torturers cold: for they set before their eyes the escape from the eternal fire which is never quenched; while with the eyes of their heart they gazed upon the good things which are reserved for those that endure patiently, things which neither ear hath heard nor eye hath seen, neither have they entered into the heart of man, but were shown by the Lord to them, for they were no longer men but angels already.\(^{86}\)

This selection from a mid second-century letter, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, provides the first incident for the technical meaning of the word martyr. This text is not only viewed as the first occurrence of a new technical meaning of the word martyr, but it

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is also seen to be the first “official” act of martyrdom, as well as the document which
inaugurated a new genre, and the beginning of a new ideology of martyrdom.³⁷

Technically, until the middle of the second century the Greek word μάρτρος simply
meant “witness.” Arndt and Gingrich’s Lexicon records the following meanings for
μάρτρος in the New Testament: a witness in the legal sense; or figuratively, “anyone who
can or should testify to something;” or “witnesses who hear a divine message.” After the
the Martyrdom of Polycarp the new technical meaning for the word μάρτρος becomes
“one who is persecuted and killed as a witness for their faith.”

Because the word martyr did not carry with it a technical sense of being officially
killed for being a witness until the second century, modern scholarship seems to be at
odds about what martyrdom means and what a martyrdom narrative must include to be
considered such. There are three main positions represented by a diversity of scholars.
The first position is best articulated by W.H.C. Frend in his 1965 Martyrdom and the
Persecution of the Early Church. Frend’s lasting legacy is the development of T.W.
Manson’s argument

The change in the meaning of the word (martyr) took place in the early
Church, but preparation for it had begun much earlier, and it can be traced
in the Old Testament and in the extra-canonical Jewish writings.”³⁸

Frend then continues, “As in so much of the doctrine and practice of the primitive
Church, the Christian view of the martyr’s role prolongs but also supersedes Judaism.”³⁹

³⁷ Bowersock, Martyrdom and Rome, 17.

464-65.

³⁹ W. H. C. Frend, Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church, 80. Following H.A. Fischel,
To understand martyrdom in the early Church, Frend turns to the preceding Jewish tradition. In particular, he points to a time period of persecution under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, reflected in Daniel, the books of Maccabees, and Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal writings as the starting point of the martyr tradition. These texts record the stories of faithful Jews who were willing to be put death rather than break the Law. Central to Frend’s thesis are the execution of Eleazer and the family of seven sons and their mother in 2 and 4 Maccabees. King Antiochus, having taken the Jewish Temple decreed that on pain of execution Jews should abandon their traditions. Women who had their infant sons circumcised were thrown off the ramparts with their infants around their necks and a group of Jews who observed the Sabbath were burnt alive in caves. Eleazer, a ninety year old scribe chose to die rather than to eat pork. Also, a detailed account is given of the torture and execution of a mother and her seven sons who refused to eat unclean meat. Frend argues that the influence of this Jewish martyrological tradition can be seen in the early Christian martyrologies.

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92 2 Maccabees 6-7 and 4 Maccabees

93 2 Maccabees 6:1

94 2 Maccabees 6:10

95 2 Maccabees 6:11

96 2 Maccabees 6:18-31
The second position intentionally opposes Frend. G. Bowersock in *Martyrdom and Rome* challenges Frend and argues that the early Christian church’s concept of martyrdom had little to do with Judaism, and was rather the product of the Roman culture into which Christianity was born and then the Christian tradition was read onto the Jewish one. For Bowersock the Christian version of martyrdom had no antecedents and was “alien to both the Greeks and the Jews.” Bowersock argues that the theology of Christian martyrdom was created in Graeco-Roman urban centers and “depended on the urban rituals of the imperial cult and the interrogation protocols of the local and provincial magistrates.” Thus, for Bowersock it was the legal trials and spectacle of the games that shaped the genre of Christian martyrdom.

Much of Bowersock’s argument hinges on the dating of texts and a socio-historical model that draws strict boundaries between Jewish and Christian communities and between Jewish and Christian thought and Graeco-Roman thought. He argues, without much evidence, that the dating of the Maccabean texts are late and therefore could not have influenced Christian tradition. In his attempt to separate Judaism and Christianity, Bowersock teeters on the position that Christianity has no Jewish roots.

Daniel Boyarin challenges these seemingly opposite positions suggesting that their fault is the same: assuming “that Judaism and Christianity are two separate entities, so that it is intelligible to speak of one as the point of origin of a given practice.” Instead

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98 Ibid, 54.

of arguing for influence one way or the other, Boyarin argues that the relationship between early Christianity and Judaism was more fluid and that the new elements in Christian martyrdom are shared between both Jewish and Christian communities and result from a model of contact and dialogue between two emerging traditions, Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.  

For our purposes this conversation is important for two reasons. First, we concede that any use of the word martyr in the technical sense that predates The Martyrdom of Polycarp is anachronistic. Second, because being a martyr finds its technical meaning in The Martyrdom of Polycarp, scholars often look to this text as both the background for subsequent accounts of martyrdom and as the beginning of a Christian theology of martyrdom. Bowersock argues against the Jewish background for martyrdom in part because the technical meaning for martyrdom did not emerge until The Martyrdom of Polycarp. But even he concedes that Christians drew their inspiration from Jesus’ life and death as well as from Second Temple notions of “martyrdom” and eschatology. Although Boyarin sees a shared milieu in the development of Christian and Jewish notions of martyrdom, he finds sympathy with Bowersock and seeks to understand the meaning for Christian and Jewish martyrdom in the second, third, and fourth centuries, after the Martyrdom of Polycarp. The Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the primary source martyrologies which witness to the transformational

100 Ibid.

imagery of women being made male, were written within 25 to 50 years of the *Martrydom of Polycarp* depending upon the relative dating of all three texts. Frend’s project of trying to understand the technical meaning of martyrdom by turning to the development of the idea of martyrdom from within Judaism, therefore, is one that needs to be adopted for this dissertation. In order to understand the eschatological motivation for martyrdom, we need to look to sources of martyrdom.

The *Martrydom of Polycarp* is certainly a new kind of genre and interacts with the secular world of Graeco-Roman civilization so Bowersock and Boyarin’s attempt to understand the greater context for a meaning of martyrdom cannot be dismissed. But in the context of understanding second and early third century texts only antecedent and contemporaneous pagan and Jewish sources are helpful in understanding transformational imagery.

Unarguably, Polycarp of Smyrna was neither the first Christian to witness to his faith nor the first Christian to be killed for that witness. But until this second century text “martyr” could be used in all of its varied meanings and thus was not understood in its technical sense. Sometimes martyr simply meant witness, in a judicial sense. On occasion some martyrs were persecuted because of their witness, but not killed. In fact the use of the term “martyr” often spoke about both the one doing the killing and the one being killed. And sometimes the one being killed as a faithful witness is never called a martyr. In the account of the stoning of Stephen in the Book of Acts, it is those who stone him and lay their garments at Saul’s feet that are called μάρτυς, or witnesses, not Stephen. Later, when Paul is telling his version of this story he calls Stephen a martyr,
not specifically because he died but because he confessed the death of Christ.\textsuperscript{102} When Ignatius of Antioch is being taken to chains to Rome he writes letters to local communities and expresses his eagerness about his imminent death and the opportunity that awaited him to imitate Christ and become a true disciple.\textsuperscript{103} But nowhere does he refer to his fate as becoming a μάρτυς, or a martyr.

The \textit{Martydom of Polycarp} provides the technical definition for martyrdom. However, the idea which the technical term martyr later comes to articulate is quite evidently developing in the New Testament and the early Christian record of those who were being killed for their faith. The Gospel narrative, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Apocalypse speak about the Christian being expected to confess the name of Christ and if need be to suffer for that confession.\textsuperscript{104} Jesus’ suffering would be continued in the lives of his followers and they would be persecuted like the prophets before them. “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.”\textsuperscript{105} Disciples also knew that they would suffer persecution in the imitation of Jesus.\textsuperscript{106}

In the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles persecution was to be expected, accepted and suffered joyfully. When Christians are first persecuted in the Book of Acts

102 Acts 22:20

103 Bowersock, \textit{Martyrdom and Rome} 77.

104 Matthew 10: 32-33

105 Matthew 5:11-12

they rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name,”

When Saul is converted, God explains to Ananias that Paul is chosen to carry his name to the Gentiles, and kings, and sons of Israel. God says he will show Paul how he must suffer for the sake of His name. Paul taught that suffering and death is what it means to be called as an apostle. Sharing in Christ’s suffering guaranteed a share in his future glory, their reward would be ‘the crown of righteousness.’

The Book of Acts clearly indicates that Stephen was killed because of his profession of faith. After Stephen was appointed as a deacon he was “full of grace and power” and “did great wonders and signs among the people.” A group of Jews disputed with Stephen and when they could not argue with him they convinced men to accuse Stephen of saying that Jesus will destroy the Temple and change the laws that Moses delivered to them. As Stephen listened to the charges all of those “who sat in the council and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” When the high priest asked Stephen if this is what he taught. Stephen replied with a rehearsal of the lives of the Patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament in order to illustrate the “culmination of prophetic suffering in the age-long encounter between righteousness and backsliding and

107 Acts 5:41
108 Acts 9:16
109 II Corinthians 4:11, 6:9; 11:23
110 Romans 6:3-11; I Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 5:1
111 II Timothy 2:5 4.8; II Thessalonians 2.19; Philippians 4:1
112 Acts 6:8
113 Acts 6:10-15
hardness of heart.” When the council heard this they were enraged. Stephen then has a vision which assures him of his fate; he “gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” When Stephen proclaimed this vision, the council cast Stephen out of the city and stoned him. While he was being killed, like Christ at his crucifixion, Stephen prays that his spirit be received and for his enemies forgiveness.

The book of Acts also records the murder of James and the arrest of Peter, but does not explain why the Christians were being arrested save that it brought the Jews pleasure. We know from Paul’s own account that before his conversion, he persecuted Christians to death, delivering both men and women to prison. Saul felt that he needed to do many things to oppose the name of Jesus and to that end he said that in Jerusalem not only did he imprison Christians with the authority of the high priests, but that he also cast his vote that they should be put to death.

After hearing Stephen’s teaching and of the vision that Stephen was granted at his death, Saul went on his way to Damascus to bind any men, women, or children that belonged to the Way. Upon that road Saul has a vision and is converted to Christianity. After this vision Paul begins a journey of spreading the gospel on missionary journeys around the Roman Empire. On several occasions Paul is arrested and accused of teaching

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114 Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 84

115 Acts 7:55

116 Acts 22:4

117 Acts 26:9, Galatians 1:13-17

people against the law of Moses and prophesying against the Temple, and preaching Christ as the Son of God.\textsuperscript{119} Paul continually preached against circumcision, Jewish dietary restrictions, and other teachings of the law. Paul argues that the council wants to kill him because of his beliefs in the resurrection. During Paul’s ministry he spends nearly five years in prison or as a prisoner. Paul frequently teaches about the call to be a witness. Frend argues that “In Paul’s mind suffering for the faith and the task of witnessing to it were equally urgent and inextricably interwoven.”\textsuperscript{120} And like Stephen’s account, the narratives of Paul’s persecution and trials imitate that of Jesus.’ Paul’s writings saw the suffering of Christians as a share in Christ’s suffering and his future glory.\textsuperscript{121}

The theme of death as a result of bearing witness continued to be developed in the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation, written in 95/96 a.d. during the oppression of the reign of Domitian, records the visions of John of the upcoming struggle. John suffers exile as a result of bearing witness to Christ.\textsuperscript{122} In the book John is taken on a journey around the seven churches of Asia Minor. The message to the church at Smyrna is encouragement to be faithful even unto death. The reward will be the crown of life.\textsuperscript{123} In the letter to the church at Pergamum, we are told of Antipas who died for his faith.\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{119} Acts 22:27
\item\textsuperscript{120} Frend, \textit{Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church}, 86.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Romans 6:3-11
\item\textsuperscript{122} Revelation 1:9
\item\textsuperscript{123} Revelation 2: 8-11
\item\textsuperscript{124} Revelation 2:13
\end{enumerate}
It also refers to the "two witnesses" who were killed and their bodies left in the streets of Jerusalem, and there is the numberless crowd of saints "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," who suffered, and who dwell before the altar of heaven. Also in his visions, John sees ‘the souls of them that had been slain for the Word of God.’ In the Book of Revelation faithful witness unto death would be rewarded with the resurrection. Those who persecuted the martyrs would be cast into the lake of brimstone. John’s vision illustrates a cosmic battle between good and evil, between those who were faithful and those who were unbelievers.

Although official persecution, like Nero’s, would not happen for 150 years, local persecutions were carried out in at least Rome, Jerusalem, Smyrna, Pergamum, Athens, Laodicea, Lyons, Vienne, Apamea, Alexandria, and Carthage. The reason for Christian persecution was often times vague and inconsistent. Christian were put to death on charges of being organized incendiaries, “hatred for their abominations,” and simply for being Christian. A correspondence between Emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger illustrated that in Pontus Christians were accused of vile crimes but were executed simply

125 Revelation 11:4-13
126 Revelation 7.13-17
127 Revelation 6:9
128 Revelation 20: 4,15
130 De Ste. Croix, 155.
for the profession of the name of Christian.\textsuperscript{131} Those convicted usually met agonizing death. They were crucified, set on fire, set to fight against gladiators and wild beasts, stripped and whipped, and literally ripped limb from limb.

Before the new genre of the martyr act, outside of the New Testament the sources describing the persecution and execution of Christians were predominately Christian epistles. As such not only do they include the persecution, tortures, and execution of Christians, but the developing theology of martyrdom. The New Testament tells nothing more about Peter and Paul’s death. Clement of Rome in his \textit{Letter to the Corinthians} (80-98) attests to the persecution and murder of Peter as well as his “departing to the place of glory due to him.” Dionysius, the Bishop of Corinth, in his Epistle to the Romans attests to Peter and Paul teaching in Corinth and in Italy and being martyred together there. Ignatius in his letter to the Ephesians\textsuperscript{132} hopes to imitate Paul by travelling to Rome and by “being slain for the sake of God.” Eusebius tells us that Paul was beheaded in Rome and Peter was crucified there under the persecution of Nero and that the inscription of their names on tombs is proof.

On the occasion of their martyrdom, Peter and Paul were not persecuted at the hands of the Jewish leadership as they, Stephen and James were in the New Testament. In 64 a.d. Nero introduced the first official persecution of Christians by the Roman government.\textsuperscript{133} As a way to deflect anger and suspicion against himself for the fire that


\textsuperscript{132} Ephesians 12:2

\textsuperscript{133} Eusebius, \textit{The History of the Church}, 104.
burned Rome, he accused Christians of starting the fire. Everyone claiming to be a
Christian was arrested and tortured in order to get the names of more Christians. Some of
the convicted Christians were fed to dogs. After this Christians could be condemned
simply on the charge of being Christians.134

Around 107 a.d. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was convicted by Trajan and was in
chains to be sent to Rome to be devoured by beasts for “carrying within [himself] Him
that was crucified.”135 On his journey through Asia Minor to Rome he wrote letters to
local communities. His letter to the Romans clearly articulates what motivates him to
martyrdom:

I write to all the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly
die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an
unseasonable goodwill towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild
beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to
God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild
beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Rather entice the wild
beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my
body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may not be found
troublesome to any one. Then shall I be a true disciple of Jesus Christ,
when the world shall not see so much as my body. Entreat the Lord for
me, that by these instruments I may be found a sacrifice to God. I do not,
as Peter and Paul, issue commandments unto you. They were apostles of
Jesus Christ, but I am the very least [of believers]: they were free, as the
servants of God; while I am, even until now, a servant. But when I suffer,
I shall be the freedman of Jesus Christ, and shall rise again emancipated in
Him. And now, being in bonds for Him, I learn not to desire anything
worldly or vain.136

134 De Ste Croix, 110.

135 The Apostolic Fathers, ed. J.B. Lightfoot, 2nd edn. (London, 1889), ii, 2; 363 ff; 383-91; 436ff; 480-
1ff.; 575-6. All further references to Ignatius’ letters will be listed as Ignatius, Title of letter, citation.

136 Ignatius, Letter to the Romans, 4
Ignatius sees his death in sacrificial terms. He also sees being a true disciple of Christ as dying as a witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the same letter he entreats the Romans to allow him to suffer and follow the passion of his God. (Rom 6.3) The reward for his martyrdom, his imitation of Christ is eternal life and the obtaining of pure light:

Him I seek, who died for us: Him I desire, who rose again for our sake. This is the gain which is laid up for me. Pardon me, brethren: do not hinder me from living, do not wish to keep me in a state of death; and while I desire to belong to God, do not give me over to the world. Allow me to obtain pure light: when I have gone there, I shall indeed be a man of God. Permit me to be an imitator of the passion of my God.\(^\text{137}\)

In his letter to Smyrna, Ignatius is teaching against those who taught that Christ’s sufferings were not real and instead gave meaning to martyrdom:

But if these things were done by our Lord only in appearance, then am I also only in appearance bound. And why have I also surrendered myself to death, to fire, to the sword, to the wild beasts? But, [in fact,] he who is near to the sword is near to God; he that is among the wild beasts is in company with God; provided only he be so in the name of Jesus Christ. I undergo all these things that I may suffer together with Him, He who became a perfect man inwardly strengthening me.\(^\text{138}\)

Ignatius repeats and strengthens the New Testament themes of being “in Christ,” of “imitation of Christ,” sharing in Christ’s suffering and the guarantee of reward. Although, he never uses the term martyrdom to talk about his persecution and impending death, Ignatius is interpreting suffering in death in a way that has preceded him and in a way that anticipates the technical sense in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

\(^{137}\) Ignatius, *Letter to the Romans*, 6

\(^{138}\) Ignatius, *Letter to Smyrna*, 4.2
The technical meaning of the word martyrdom and the symbolic world from which the early martyrrologies drew was well under construction in the New Testament and in early Christian epistles. In the New Testament both men and women were killed because they belonged to the church. Paul, had permission from the high priest to bind anyone who called on the name of the Lord. These accounts also offer detail about what the Church was teaching that would cause such violent reaction from their persecutors. Paul said that his persecution of Christians was to do anything to oppose the name of Jesus Christ. The account of Stephen’s martyrdom tells us that Stephen was killed because he was accused of speaking against the Temple by saying that Jesus would destroy the Temple and because his spoke against the necessity of keeping the Mosaic laws. Ironically, after his conversion, Paul too was arrested because he was accused of the Jews from Asia for teaching against the Law of Moses and for blaspheming the Temple. As explained earlier, Paul says that the Jews want to kill him because he professes the resurrection. The book of Acts also records that the Jews plotted to kill Paul for teaching Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. Early Christians understood their persecution as an imitation of Christ and were confident that they would receive an eschatological reward for their suffering.

The book of Revelation and many early Christian epistles record a different kind of persecution, that by the state, official persecution. These Christians were not being persecuted by Jews for teaching against the law of Moses or against the Temple or for

139 Acts 22
140 Acts 9:20-22
teaching the resurrection of Jesus and confessing his name. They were now being persecuted and killed simply for being Christians and were accused of being atheists. Nevertheless, the language that the Christian Epistles used to describe their persecution and imminent death continued the New Testament language of suffering for confession of Jesus name, imitation of Christ, and eschatological reward for suffering.

This new era of official persecution was the context for the new genre of martyr acts and passions. These tales recorded the first legal proscriptions of Christianity as well as the first official persecutions. An early third century introduction to The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas tells us that these early conversion accounts were recorded and told so that non-believers could see God’s supernatural grace and that the faithful be strengthened by the witness of martyrdom and accompanying visions, so that God may be glorified:

The deeds recounted about the faith in ancient times were a proof of God’s favour and achieved the spiritual strengthening of men as well; and they 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…For this reason we deem it imperative to set them forth and make them known through the world for the glory of God. Thus no one of weak or despairing faith may think that supernatural grace was present only among men of ancient times, either in the grace of martyrdom or of visions, for God always achieves what he promises, as a witness to the non-believer and a blessing to the faithful.  

141 De Ste Croix, 133 ff.

142 The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, 107. The prologue to the later Apophthegmata Patrum (Sayings of the Desert Fathers) echoes this: This book is an account of the virtuous asceticism and admirable way of life and also of the words of the holy and blessed fathers. They are meant to inspire and instruct those who want to imitate their holy lives, so that they may make progress on the way that leads to the kingdom of heaven.” Prologue translated by Benedicta Ward, The Desert Christian: Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection (New York: Macmillan, 1980).
To that end, many of these early martyr stories were read during the liturgy on the feast
days of the martyrs and local communities held celebrations honoring those who were
martyred.\footnote{Lucy Grig, \textit{Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity}. (London: Duckworth, 2004), 2.} Thus, \textit{The Acts of the Christian Martyr} are vital sources in understanding early Christian tradition. In these texts, when a Christian, woman or man, is motivated by the eschaton to choose a life of martyrdom, they are transformed.

\textit{ENKRATEIA}

In the Greek, \textit{ἐνκράτεια}, or \textit{enkrateia}, means “self-control”. By the second century \textit{enkrateia} was broadly understood to include dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation. In a restricted sense, \textit{enkrateia} simply connoted marital continence and specifically virginity. As is evident from the remarks on eschatology above, the early church had differing and often time conflicting views on eschatology. Those divergent views demanded varying ethical responses: if one believed the eschaton had already happened or that it was going to happen they would act differently than if they believed it was not going to happen. Similarly, there were a wide range of positions on \textit{enkrateia} with varied motivations and shared imagery by the time of the second and third centuries. In the \textit{Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles} and the \textit{Apocryphal Gospels} eschatology motivates \textit{enkrateia}, both in the broader sense and its normally restricted sense. Consequently, in order to illustrate that the transformational imagery in our primary texts is reflective of eschatologically motivated \textit{enkrateia}, it is first necessary to
understand the second and third century battles for encratic justification and condemnation. These conflicts within the Jewish and pagan framework of the early Christian tradition include not only interpretation of scripture but the early Christian tradition’s interaction with Judaism and Greco-Roman culture.

In all of its forms the New Testament only uses the word *enkrateia* nine times. In each of those cases it is connected with a discussion about eschatology. The end of the Book of Acts tells the story of the disagreement in the early church over the necessity of following the Old Testament law and about what is necessary for salvation. Paul is accused and arrested by the Jews for profaning the Temple by allowing Greeks to come into the Temple, and for stirring up the Jews by preaching that they were not required to follow the laws of Moses. In his defense, Paul asks to speak to the crowd. He tells them about his encounter on the road to Damascus, about seeing Jesus, and about his vision in Jerusalem when Jesus told him to get out of Jerusalem and go to the Gentiles. Paul then is examined before the Jewish council. He recognizes that some are Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection, and some are Pharisees, who do. He tells the group that he is a Pharisee and that he is on trial because he believes in the hope and the resurrection of the dead. A fight breaks out between the two Jewish parties and Paul is removed from the argument and put back in prison. The Jews plan to secretly assassinate Paul. Saved from this plot, Paul is taken to Caesarea to Felix the governor. Here Paul again proclaims his beliefs and maintains that he is merely on trial because of his belief in the resurrection. Felix defers ruling on Paul’s fate until Lysias the tribune arrives. In the meantime Paul is to be kept in prison where he is given great liberty and his friends are free to come and go. Felix, curious, asks for Paul to come and speak with him and his wife Drusilla, who
Paul takes this opportunity to speak to Felix and Drusilla about faith in Jesus to address three specific things, justice, *enkrateia* and future judgment.

While this passage says little more about the specific meaning of *enkrateia*, or continence, it is interesting to note that it is discussed in the context of teaching about future judgment. While the book of Acts never tells us what becomes of Drusilla and Felix, Josephus provides the only other historical reference to Drusilla and Felix and may offer some context to Paul’s exhortations. Josephus tells us that Felix seduced Drusilla with the help of Simon the Magician and persuaded her to abandon her marriage to the king of Emesa, Azizus. Perhaps this is why Paul chooses to speak to Drusilla and Felix about *enkrateia*, their need to exercise self-control in the context of marital fidelity.

The book of Acts says that Paul teaches the Asiatic Jews that they do not have to follow the laws of the Old Testament. Paul’s letter to the Galatians affirms the division between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the community of Galatia where there is disagreement about whether or not the laws of the Old Testament need to be followed. In this letter Paul even publically chastises Peter for his hypocrisy. When Jewish Christians are not around he lives as a Gentile, but when Jewish Christians are near he follows the teachings of the Old Testament and refuses to be with the Gentile Christians, thus inciting confusion within the community. Paul exhorts the Galatians to live “by the Spirit” and to “not gratify the desires of the flesh.” He creates a dichotomy between the life of the Spirit

144 Acts 24.

and the life of the flesh and tells the Galatians that if they “are led by the Spirit (they) are not under the law.” He continues to enumerate the works of the flesh and tells the Galatians if they do these things that they will “not inherit the Kingdom of heaven.” In contrast he lists those behaviors which are the fruit of Spirit and by implication, those which will “inherit the Kingdom of heaven.” Among the behaviors he includes is \textit{enkratiea}. Again, in this incident of \textit{enkratiea} there is a connection between the eschaton and \textit{enkratiea}, even though \textit{enkratiea} receives no further explanation as to its connotation. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the contrasting vices that do not lead to the Kingdom of heaven are sexual immorality and drunkenness.

The two letters of Peter,\textsuperscript{147} written not only to Galatia but to the whole of the northern part of Asia Minor, have three primary purposes: to encourage the local Christians to imitate Christ in their current persecution and to have hope, to strengthen their belief in the second coming of Christ, and to warn them about false teachers. In the second letter there is a connection between \textit{enkratiea} and eschatology. The author of the letter exhorts his readers to make every effort to grow in their faith by increasing in virtue, knowledge, \textit{enkratiea}, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Doing these things provides “an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The letter offers no more explanation as to the meaning of \textit{enkratiea}.

\textsuperscript{146} Galatians 5.

\textsuperscript{147} Most scholars consider the epistle to be written between 100 and 150 a.d. See Andrew Chester and Ralph P. Martin, \textit{The Theology of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude}. (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1994.)
Paul in his letter to the Corinthians again uses the word *enkrateia*, and offers more specificity as to its meaning. His first letter to the Corinthians primarily deals with the doctrinal and ethical problems that were dividing the Corinthian community. Paul receives news that the community at Corinth has been quarreling over which teacher taught them the faith and who was better. He also receives news that there are members of the community living immorally and no one is doing anything about it. Paul takes this as an opportunity to remind the Corinthians of the gospel that he once taught them and highlights for them the relationship between ethics and eschatology. In these first six chapters Paul directly addresses the topics of sexual immorality and prostitution in which he had been told the community had been engaged.\(^\text{148}\) Next Paul addresses the specific concerns about which the church had written him. Chapter 7 is a discussion about marriage and the single life. In this context *enkrateia* is specifically related to a conversation about sex. In this chapter Paul says that the present time is “constrained” and therefore people should live as though they were not involved in the world; those who are married should live as though they were not, those who were mourning as if they were not… ‘for the form of this world is passing away.’ Paul’s uses the word *enkrateia* twice in this chapter. In both instances he is advocating the married state and specifically conjugal rights within marriage for those who are unable to exercise self-control or *enkrateia*.\(^\text{149}\) For those who are able to exercise *enkrateia* Paul advocates the celibate life because the eschaton is near and because the celibate life allows for ‘undivided devotion

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\(^{148}\) The section about prostitution was about temple prostitution and the worship of idols.

\(^{149}\) I Corinthians 7:5 and I Corinthians 7:9.
to the Lord’ and can be attentive to being ‘holy in body and spirit.’ In Paul’s letter, enkrateia is encouraged because of the eschaton and connotes celibacy.

In chapter 9 Paul again returns to enkrateia, but here in the context of explaining why he should give up certain freedoms for the sake of the gospel and for his fellow Christians, like not eating meat from idol sacrifices if it causes another Christian to stumble, he explains the goal toward which he is working:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises enkrateia in all things. They do it to receive an perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Although Paul’s use of enkrateia here is broader than sexual behavior, enkrateia is exercised in order to obtain an imperishable wreath or crown. Clearly, he is speaking about resurrection here.

Paul uses this same contrast between perishable and imperishable in chapter 15, which is explicitly written to remind the Corinthians about the teaching on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Here Paul contrasts the difference between the present body and the resurrected body and how this change will happen.

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ”The first man Adam became a living

150 I Corinthians 7:29-32.

151 I Corinthians 8

152 I Corinthians 9:24-27.
being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.  

We will return to much of the transformational language in this section in later chapters.

For now, it is important to highlight that the exercise of enkrateia in chapter 9 is rewarded with an “imperishable crown.” The same contrast between imperishable and perishable that is in chapter 9 is highlighted in chapter 15 in a specific discussion about resurrection. Chapter 15 also is important because it says that in order to be raised, in order to be resurrected, one needs to be changed or transformed.

As early as the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century the Pastoral Epistles indicate that communities which Paul had established in Crete and

153 I Corinthians 15:50 -52

Ephesus were the stage for competing forms of Christianity that were already combating “false teachers” and struggling over enkrateia and its motivations. The introductory chapter of I Timothy explains that he was left in Ephesus to “charge certain people not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies.” Specifically, the young disciple in I Timothy is warned to be on guard against radical behavior, those who in the end time depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

The false practices of these “ascetic” opponents derive from “deceitful spirits” and “doctrines of demons” which are taught by false teachers. It is also apparent from this pseudonymous writings. See especially Paul. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

155 I Tim 1:3-11) I Tim 1:19-20 – the subject of those who teach differently is resumed here. Hymenaeus and Alexander are named as people who had ‘rejected conscience’ and so ‘made shipwreck of the faith’, and who Paul ‘had delivered to Satan in order that they may learn not to slander (1 Corinthians 5.5). These two people are never mentioned outside of the Pastoral (2 Timothy 2.17, 4:14). According to 1 Timothy 4:1-5 some believers would ‘depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons,’ ‘the pretension of liars and seared conscience’ mark these as in a far more perilous state than those previously mentioned. I Timothy 4:1-3 provides no direct refutation of celibacy. Indirectly the assertion that everything created by God is good, which echoes Genesis 1 seems to accept scriptures endorsement of marriage for procreation (2:15, 5:14) I Timothy only advocated celibacy for women over 60 (5:9-11) and seems to assume that any more general practice of celibacy would arrive from a denial of the goodness of God’s creation. That same denial is understood to give rise to abstinence countered by the assertion that God creates food to be received with Thanksgiving.

156 Most commentators on the Patoral Epistles assume ascetic groups to which is attributed itinerant preaching, sexual asceticism, and the emancipation of women from domestic confinement characterized in the Pastoral Epistles as “false,” either as Gnostic asceticism or as the type of asceticism represented by the Apocryphal Gospels. Martin Dibelius,, and Hans Conzelmann. *The Pastoral Epistles; A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972); Stevan Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows; Dennis MacDonald, Legend and the Apostle; David Verner,, The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1983); For a summary of preceding authors see Margaret Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996.). The Dibelius-Conzelmann commentary, in its discussion of the ‘false teachers’ (ET 65-67, notes that: “ If all these sections (which refer to false teachers) are interpreted as referring to the same heresy…a comparatively clear picture can be
warning that this radical asceticism is predicated in part on the eschatological drama as rejection of marriage and abstinence from food is expected in “the latter days.” Intrinsic to this warning is the author’s argument against the forbidding of marriage and abstinence from food, namely that “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”

Hence the argument against certain behavior in regards to food is countered by an allusion to the creation narrative, “For everything created by God is good.”

This protological defense for the permissibility of foods is likewise applied to the ordered, salvific nature of marriage and childbirth. Whereas those who “give heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” forbid marriage, the author of the epistle presents a disciplined view of marriage and the family. He orders that Bishops and deacons are to be the husbands of one wife and commands that they manage their children and households well. The letter even suggests appropriately directed sexuality in marriage can lead to salvation. This ordered, salvific nature of marriage and childbirth is based on the creation of Adam and Eve from the Genesis narrative and specifically on a

obtained. This interpretation is especially justified if one doubts the epistolary nature of the Pastorals and assumes that all polemical statements of the three epistles actually refer to the same heretical movement. If, on the other hand, an actual epistolary situation is presupposed, it is of course necessary to assume that certain definite allusion are comprehensible only to the addresses, and that every such allusion refers to a special case which we have no knowledge.” The commentary advocated the first position and takes all of the passages to refer to Judaizing Gnosticism, though it is recognized that the composite picture corresponds to none of the Gnostic groups known to us. Rather, the Pastorals are understood to provide polemic against a wide spectrum of Gnostic beliefs. (Davies, 90)

157 1 Timothy 4:4

158 “And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food…And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:29,31

159 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12
variant reading of Genesis 3:6\textsuperscript{160}. In I Timothy, married women are told to hold their peace with “total submission” as no woman is to have authority over her husband because Adam was created first.\textsuperscript{161} This submission, based on the created order, also seems to remedy the proclivity of women to be easily deceived and to be deceivers of men. This reading of the Genesis narrative argues only Eve was deceived and transgressed. It also allows for the salvation of women through childbearing. Thus false, extreme asceticism which forbids marriage and unregulated sexual conduct is condemned, and sexuality disciplined within the bonds of marriage and based on the creation narrative, is a means to resist temptation and unregulated passions.

The protological understanding of disciplined marriage excludes absolute celibacy, save for “true widows.” The epistle praises the “real” widow who has no family and is truly without a household and is dedicated to prayer and supplications day and night.\textsuperscript{162} Being admitted as a “true widow” is limited to those over 60 who have been married once and brought up children.\textsuperscript{163} Those “young widows” who abandon their marriage to Christ because of sensual desires are to be rebuked by Timothy. In fact, Timothy is instructed to refuse the position of widow to these young women and instead to urge them to marry, bear children, and run an ordered household. In doing so the


\textsuperscript{161} I Timothy 2: 12ff

\textsuperscript{162} I Timothy 5: 3-15

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
epistle is even arguing against the notion of voluntary celibacy rooted in the understanding of one being married to Christ.

Disciplined Christian life is motivated by the epistle’s understanding of the Genesis narrative which is read as refuting false ascetical practices which forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from food. The protological arguments for marriage and the enjoyment of God’s creation counter the “false teachers” who are motivated by eschatology and a notion of celibacy rooted in the eschatological marriage to the heavenly bridegroom.

It is this eschatological motivation of false teachers which is again highlighted in the second epistle to Timothy. The focus of II Timothy is on the personal betrayal of Paul by some of his associates rather than on the ordered household. But this epistle specifically mentions opposing teachers and lists the motivation of Hymenaeus and Philetus as error. They apparently spiritualized future eschatology, believing it to be a present reality, thereby swerving “from the truth by claiming that the resurrection had already taken place.” The epistle, however, does not refute this teaching, merely noting that some are being upset by it. Further the end of time is characterized by disordered behavior and countered by the same general ordered behavior recommended by the first epistle. Of note, highlighted in the list of disordered behaviors, is lack of self-control or enkrateia.

164 In Timothy, Hymenaeus with Alexander are described as rejecting conscience and suffering shipwreck in the faith and being turned over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme. see I Timothy 1.20.

165 Dibelius-Conzelmann, interprets this as Gnostic and understand the letter as a composition from a period later than Paul --- but Col 2:12-12, 3.1 and Ephesians 2:5-6 use resurrection language metaphorically of present Christian experience.
Like Timothy, Titus is left behind in Crete after initial missionary success to appoint bishops who could “give instruction in healthy teaching and also confute those who contradict it.” Among other things, the criterion for those to be appointed to be elders or Bishops is that they must be “blameless, the husband of one wife…and self-controlled,” practicing *enkrateia*. Although this epistle is vague about the teaching of these new elders, it lists as Titus’ opponents “those of the circumcision” and “those who give heed to Jewish myths and to the commands of people who turn away from the truth” and are engaged in “stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law.” Just as in Ephesus the presence of these opponents in Crete is disrupting the ordered life of the household.

These Epistles commonly accuse opponents of greed, deception, of not practicing what they preach and of verbal disputes and quibbles. These teachings of

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166 Titus 1:9
167 Titus 1:6-8
168 Titus 1:10
169 Titus 1:14
170 Titus 3:9
171 Titus 1:11
172 Titus 1:11, I Timothy 6:5
173 Titus 1:10, II Timothy 3:13
174 Titus 1:10, 3:8-9, II Timothy 3:5. In Matthew 23:3 Jesus tells the crowd and his disciples to observe what they Pharisees tell them but not what they do… because they preach but do not practice…
175 Titus 1:10, 3:9, I Timothy 1:4,6; 4:2, 6:4, 2 Timothy 2:14, 16,23
the opponents are unarguably vague and are overwhelmingly conventional. Where false teaching is specified it is usually condemned rather than refuted. The epistles to Timothy name only a few specific opponents, Alexander, Hymenaeus, and Philetus, as well as a few followers who have abandoned “Paul.” The Pastorals condemn the latter two for teaching a realized eschatology. Although these specific men are not accused of practicing radical asceticism, it is eschatology which motivates the forbidding of marriage and abstinence from food. The warning against these radical practices is refuted by an argument for marriage and the permissibility of food grounded in the authors’ reading of the Genesis narrative, namely that creation is good, and that Eve was formed from Adam and her submission to him ensures the proper ordered state. The epistle to Titus does not specifically address the eschatological or protological states and their impact on the conversation about sex and marriage. It does, though, conceive of the opponents as Jewish and quarrelling over the law.

The Pastoral Epistles are very different than Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, Galatians, and the churches of northern Asia. In those letters there was clearly a connection between enkrateia, or self control, and eschatology. And in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians the connotation of enkrateia clearly specified sexual renunciation. While Paul was very careful not to command celibacy he certainly made an exhortation for enkrateia, or celibacy, as an imitation of himself and Christ and as a way to be singularly devoted to God. The Pastoral Epistles advocate for enkrateia, but its definition

176 M. Davies, The Pastoral Epistles. B. Fiore, The function of personal example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles (Rome: Biblical Institute, Anelecta biblica, 1986), 105. Fiore demonstrates this horatory purpose, and suggests that the epistles were not occasioned by the immediate threat of an opposing system, but by the need to provide both positive and negative examples in this kind of literature
is explicitly not connected with sexual renunciation. In the Pastoral Epistles it is the opponents who connect sexual renunciation with the eschaton.

At the same time the Pastoral Epistles are being written, Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch are writing to Christian communities regarding dissension. It is in this context that they offer advice about *enkrateia*. In his Corinthians letter, Clement opens by praising the faithfulness of the Corinthians which had made them renowned in all the earth. One of the things he praises them for is instructing their wives to be faithful, obedient, and to manage their households with discretion. Clement continues by chastising the Corinthian community for the divisions among them which are grounded in envy. Regarding marriage he says, “Envy has alienated wives from their husbands, and changed that saying of our father Adam, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.’”177 His letter continues by instructing the Corinthians how to live peacefully together returning to their place of faithfulness. Here he teaches that *enkrateia* is a gift from God to the faithful. It seems that some in the community were boasting of the *enkrateia*, causing division between husbands and wives at large. So Clement reminds them that “he who is chaste in the flesh must not boast about it, but rather understand that it is another who grants him *enkrateia*.”178

It is the same reminder that Ignatius of Antioch offers in his letter to Polycarp of Smyrna. First Ignatius offers advice to Polycarp on the teaching of marriage:


178 Ibid, 1.38.2
Speak to my sisters, that they love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands both in the flesh and spirit. In like manner also, exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord of the Church...But it becomes both men and women who marry, to form their union with the approval of the bishop, that their marriage may be according to the Lord, and not after their own lust.  

Ignatius continues with advice regarding *enkrateia*. He says,

If any one can continue in a state of purity, to the honour of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting. If he shall boast, he is undone; and if he seeks to be more prominent than the bishop, he is ruined.  

Ignatius’ advice recalls Paul’s teaching on marriage in Ephesians, that a husband should love his wife as Christ loves the Church. When he turns to the issue of *enkrateia* he offers as motivation the emulation of the virginal state of the Lord, rather than the imminent eschaton which Paul offers for motivation for *enkrateia*. Ignatius’ letter also suggests division in the communities at Smyrna resulting over some boasting of their *enkrateia*.

Within sixty years of these Epistles, competing Christian communities on Crete were specifically wrestling with themes pertaining to marriage and chastity, specifically the degree of sexual continence necessary for the perfect Christian life. Eusebius in the fourth century records excerpts from several pastoral epistles of the Bishop of Corinth (166 – 175) to communities regarding marriage and celibacy. These letters indicate that in both Bishop Dionysius of Corinth and Bishop Pinytus of Knossus’ of Crete “orthodoxy regarding the faith is mirrored to perfection.” Yet the correspondence to which he briefly

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179 Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnians* V.

180 Ibid.
refers hardly indicates that the two Bishops were of like minds when it came to the issue of sexual continence as an alternative to marriage. His summary of the Dionysius correspondences concisely recalls this second century conflict.  

One letter, written to Pinytus, attempted to change the Cretian community’s practice of required celibacy. Appealing to Paul, Dionysius urged him not to put on his people the “heavy burden” of continence as being essential, “but to remember most people were weak creatures.” Pinytus’ reply likewise calls upon Paul and illustrates his unswerving defense of his position. He tells Dionysius that he admires and esteems him and urges him to send on another letter that is filled with “solid food” so that his flock may not be kept all their lives on a “milky diet” suited only for children. For Pinytus the obligation of continence as an alternative to marriage was a requirement for those Christians choosing to obey the full imperatives of salvation.

Both Dionysius and Pinytus use the apostle Paul to support and to justify their claims by making simple allusions to the apostle’s epistles. Dionysius’ appeal is specific to one of Paul’s discussions on marriage and celibacy. Dionysius’ reminder that most people are “weak creatures” in relation to the call to celibacy is inspired by Paul’s appeal concerning lack of control regarding sexual relations. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul concedes the permissibility of marriage because of temptation and lack of *enkrateia*. He notes that it is better that a man not touch a woman and that it is well for the unmarried and the widows to remain as he is, single. Yet, he also instructs that man

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182 I Corinthians 7: 1-11
and wife should remain celibate only for a period of time dedicated to prayer, lest Satan tempt them because of lack of self-control. Pinytus compares this moderate teaching of Dionysius and his appeal to human lack of strength to the nourishment suited only to babes.

Clearly Pinytus’ response adopted Paul’s language and reasoning. Highlighting the same Corinthian epistle that Dionysius employed, Pinytus argues that his strict position on *enkrateia* was fully obedient to Paul’s teaching that milk is fed to babes in Christ, men of the flesh as opposed to spiritual men. Spiritual men would not live according to the flesh and could remain as Paul, unmarried and single.

Eusebius relays no more about the context of the correspondence between Dionysius and Pinytus. From the vantage of the fourth century, though, he praises both Bishops and hymns Pinytus, the defender of radical *enkrateia*, as a perfect mirror of faith. We also know that Dionysius wrote a letter to the church at Amastris in Pontus. All that is said about the content of this letter is that the Bishop of Amastris is Palmas, that Bacchylides and Elpistus encourage him to write the letter, and that the letter included expositions of scripture and advice about marriage and celibacy. We do not know what that advice was, but we do how he advised Pinytus in Knossus.183

The disparate views on *enkrateia* which existed in the second century are not limited to Corinth and Crete, Ephesus, and Smyrna and Asia. Although the Pastorals mention those who had departed from the faith by forbidding marriage and abstaining

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183 Eusebius, *The History of the Church*: 183
from foods which God created, it is not until a few years after the correspondence between Dionysius and Pinytus that an heretical sect is identified with this teaching. Clement, the head of the catechetical school at Alexandria, when writing on heresy or offering instruction on Christian living, indicates that the Encratites derive their name from their actions, that they, like Greek philosophers who derive their teaching from barbarians, “know not marriage or the begetting of children,” and that they do not drink wine.

Though never mentioning the Encratites by name, Clement devotes the third chapter of his *Stromateis* to an explanation and refutation of opposing positions concerning enkrateia, broadly including attitudes towards sexual conduct, material possession, and dietary restrictions. Here he argues against licentiousness and extreme asceticism, claiming that “Either they teach that one ought to live on the principle that it is a matter of indifference whether one does right or wrong, or they set too ascetic a tone and proclaim the necessity of continence on the ground of opinions which are godless and

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184 I Timothy 4:3

185 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* vii. xvii

186 Ibid, 1.xv.


arise from hatred of what God has created.”\[189\] His adversaries that characterized the so-called encrateic position espouse a radical rejection of marriage.

The radical extremist position of *enkrateia* condemned by Clement includes an outright condemnation of marriage and was espoused by disparate groups for varied motivation. First, it was acquainted with Gnostics who based their condemnation of marriage on ontological dualism and a negative view of matter.\[190\] This Gnostic condemnation in general taught that the God who created the material world was a different God than the true heavenly Father. This material world was evil because it came from evil matter and an unrighteous creator. Secondly, there were radically encrateic Christians, like Tatian, a Syrian, who completely rejected marriage and procreation as fornication and corruption and considered total abstinence to be a condition for salvation, but were not ditheistic dualists. Thus, Clement battles against “those who under a pious cloak blaspheme by their continence both the creation and holy Creator, the almighty and only God, and teach that one must reject marriage and begetting of children, and should not bring others in their place to live in this wretched world, nor give any sustenance to death.”\[191\] Arguing that his opponents have “blasphemously accepted the ideal of continence for reason entirely godless,”\[192\] Clement attempts to quote all of the scriptures which oppose the heretics and to show the right rule of *enkrateia*. He argues against the heretics’ understanding of creation and the idea of celibacy in the garden. Condemning

\[189\] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, III.II.40

\[190\] Kari Vogt, “‘Becoming Male’: A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor.”

\[191\] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.VI

\[192\] Ibid, III.XVIII
the interpretation of the Matthean lessons on becoming eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven\textsuperscript{193} and the Lukan instruction that after the resurrection there is no marriage, Clement repudiates his opponents’ practice of \textit{enkrateia} resulting from a belief in realized eschatology. He also indicates that the heretics’s practice of \textit{enkrateia} based on the imitation of the Lord who neither married nor had any possessions in this world is misguided. He instead instructs that the Lord did not marry because he had his own bride, the Church, and that he was not in need of a helpmate after the flesh because he was no ordinary man.

Curiously enough, though, Clement’s primary argument for the proper understanding and practice of \textit{enkrateia} is becoming like the Saviour. For Clement the human ideal of continence or \textit{enkrateia} is not to experience desire at all. This goal is possible for both a celibate and for the one who is married. In fact, the \textit{enkrateia} which Clement teaches “is not merely a matter of sexual abstinence, but also applies to other things for which the soul has an evil desire because it is not satisfied with the necessities of life.” \textit{Enkrateia}, required by all Christians, does not exclude marriage and the begetting of children. In fact, Clement argues that

In general all the epistles of the apostle teach self-control and continence and contain numerous instructions about marriage, begetting of children, and the domestic life. But they nowhere rule out self controlled marriage. Rather they preserve harmony of the law and gospels and approve both the man who in accordance with the Lord’s will lives as a celibate, even as each individual is called, making his choice without blemish, in perfection.\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{193} Matthew 19:12

\textsuperscript{194} Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Stromateis} III.XII.86
Clement’s argument for *enkrateia* and against the teaching of the heretics and the heresiological sources of the second and third century only presents a limited perspective on the teaching of those being condemned. His writings, however, indicate that *enkrateia* in its broad sense, can be divided into two perspectives, a radical and a moderate form. First, those being condemned as Encrateites teach a radical *enkrateia* rooted in the exegesis of the Biblical creation narrative and view of the eschaton. Clement indicates that the motivation of this radical *enkrateia* is protological, Christological, and eschatological. It is protological in so far as it is motivated by the celibacy of Adam and Eve in the garden. It is Christological in that *enkrateia* is motivated by a desire to emulate Christ who did not marry or have possessions. And it is eschatological in that this teaching of radical *enkrateia* was motivated by a scenario of realized eschatology which was explicitly linked to Matthew’s teaching on those becoming eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven,\textsuperscript{195} the Lukan pericope affirming no marriage in heaven as the resurrected would be like unto angels,\textsuperscript{196} and Paul’s choice for celibacy which was based on the imminent eschaton.\textsuperscript{197}

Second, in condemning radical *enkrateia* which at its extreme forbids marriage, Clement presents a moderate form of *enkrateia* which allows, by God’s grace, celibacy and marriage. He argues

Continence is an ignoring of the body in accordance with the confession of faith in God. For continence is not merely a matter of sexual abstinence, but also applies to other things for which the soul has an evil desire

\textsuperscript{195} Matthew 19:10-12

\textsuperscript{196} Luke 20:34

\textsuperscript{197} 1 Corinthians 7: 25-31, 36-40
because it is not satisfied with the necessities of life. There is also continence of the tongue, of money, of use, and of desire. It does not only teach us to exercise self-control; it is rather that self-control is granted to us, since it is of divine power and grace. Accordingly, I must declare what is the opinion of our people on this subject. Our view is that we welcome as the blessed state of abstinence from marriage in those to whom this has been granted by God. We admire monogamy and the high standing of single marriage, holding that we ought to “bear one another’s burdens,” lest anyone who thinks he stands securely should himself fall.  

This moderate position on enkrateia which Clement articulates is also protological, Christological, and eschatological. It is protological in so far as Clement articulates the goodness of creation and God’s intention for humans to be created male and female for the purpose of procreation. It is Christological in that for Clement the primary argument for enkrateia, broadly understood, is becoming like Christ. Celibacy is allowed because Jesus was not married because he was already married to the church. And it is eschatological in that in practicing the virtue of enkrateia human beings will have no desires or passions and thus will become like God, the goal of the Christian life.

At the same time Clement is writing, Irenaues of Lyons is making similarly lively arguments against a group of heretics he calls Encratites who were inspired by Tatian who defined marriage as “fornication and corruption.” Eusebius records Ireneaus’ denunciation of those who

preached celibacy, setting aside the original creation of God and tacitly condemning Him who made male and female for the generation of human beings. They also introduce abstention from ‘animate things,’ as they call them, showing ingratitude to God who made all things.  

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198 Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis III.IV

199 Eusebius, History of the Church, 190, quoting Irenaeus, Against Heresies bk L.xviii. Ireneaus suggests that Tatian began teaching this heresy after Justin Martyr, his teacher, died.
Irenaeus does not go on, like Clement, however, to articulate virginity and marital continence as complimentary practices of *enkrateia*. In fact, his discussion of Paul’s conceding to marriage in his first epistle to the Corinthians comes up in a conversation regarding God’s granting of concession in the Old and new Testaments because of man’s hardness of heart and unwillingness to be obedient to God’s precepts. Irenaeus enumerates God’s concessions. He offers as an example Jesus’ conversation with the Pharisees in Matthew where the Pharisee asks whether or not it were legal to divorce one’s wife. There Jesus responds by saying that Moses grants divorces because of the hardness of people’s hearts. Irenaeus also remarks that this concession was added because of Adam and Eve’s unwillingness to be obedient, for in the beginning God made them male and female to be joined together as one flesh. Irenaeus follows this by illustrating that similar concessions continue in the New Testament. It is here that he refers to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians and his granting concession to marriage and marital fidelity to those who could not yet bear the freedom given in Christ, lest they turn away because of human weakness. Irenaeus’s point is not that virginity is a better choice, in the way that Paul suggests, but rather an emphasis on the freedom of the will. For Irenaeus, the Genesis creation narrative illustrates the original intent of creation of male and female for procreation. Adam and Eve’s disobedience lay in the fact that they

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201 Ibid.
had sex before God willed it. Likewise, the choice for virginity is thus in response to God’s will. 202

In these conversations *enkrateia*, or self control, broadly included dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, but also was used in a restricted sense to speak about virginity and continence within marriage. Glimpses into the conflicts within these communities indicate that extremely different and often times conflicting positions on the issue of sexual conduct coexisted and competed for primacy in the early church.

The second and early third century discussion and condemnation of *enkrateia* by the Pastoral Epistles, the epistles of Bishop Dionysius of Corinth, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenaeus of Lyons attest to both moderate and radical expressions of *enkrateia*. They also suggest that the radical positions which subordinated marriage to sexual continence and in the extreme denounced marriage as sinful are condemned as early as the beginning of the second century. Interestingly, they also indicate that the same encratic behavior and imagery can be based on varying protological, eschatological, or Christological motivation just as similar motivations can result in divergent imagery and ascetical expression.

Both radical and moderate forms of *enkrateia* with their varied motivations are attested to in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyon*, and *Martyrdom of

*Perpetua and Felicitas.* The primary purpose of those texts is not to make theological arguments for or against *enkrateia* but instead to witness to the transformation of those called into Christian fellowship. Although these texts may reflect differing motivations for *enkrateia* as well as differing expression of *enkrateia*, they share symbolic language and transformational imagery which is reflective of the eschaton. In these texts, when a Christian, woman or man, is motivated by the eschaton to choose a life of *enkrateia*, they are transformed.
CHAPTER 3: ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVATION FOR MARTYRDOM IN THE
ACTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MARTYRS

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we provided the context for understanding the genre of the martyr act as well as the developing definition and theology of martyrdom. The two particular martyr acts on which chapter three focuses our attention are late second and early third century texts which include detailed accounts of the martyrdom of women and the transformational imagery of becoming male. In the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, Blandina becomes male by becoming Christ. In the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, Felicitas too becomes Christ. Perpetua’s sex change is far more visually spectacular. When she is preparing to fight in the gladiatorial ring her clothes are stripped off of her, and suddenly she is a man.

Because of this imagery and because these are accounts about women, scholars, especially those interested in feminists studies, have in the last two decades turned their attention to the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.203 In large part their reason for

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exploring the text is to understand the role of women in the early church and in the culture of early Christianity. Because of the renewed interest in this text as well as new translations, some scholars have turned to the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* in order to explore its influence on later martyr acts as well as its relationship to Montanism. In contemporary academic work specifically about martyrdom, both the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* and the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* are oftentimes considered. Although the interest of this dissertation is the imagery of women being made male and the texts which include that imagery necessarily include women, the lens through which these texts need to be examined is not that of modern feminist studies. In the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, Blandina is the only woman named among her male companions, Epagathus, Marturus, Sanctus, Attalus, and Pothinus, Alexander, and Ponticus, and in the *Martyrdom and Perpetua and Felicitas* not only are Pertetua and Felicitas killed, but Revocatus, Saturus, and Saturninus are as well: the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* records the persecution and martyrdom of Christians.

The *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* is a second century letter written from immigrant Christian communities in what would be modern day France, back to their

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original community in modern day Turkey and Asia Minor. The purpose of the letter was to communicate the trials which they have been suffering and to share with their fellow Christians their faith and hope in redemption. The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas includes diary entries from Perpetua and Sanctus which record the persecution of Christians in early third century Carthage. It is framed by an introduction and conclusion which specifically says the account was preserved so that “honour might be rendered to God and comfort to men.” In order then to understand transformational imagery, and especially the transformational imagery of changing sexes, the starting point needs to be the martyrology. What is the understanding of eschatology that motivates early Christians to become martyrs? When a Christian, woman or man, chooses a life of martyrdom that is motivated by the eschaton, they are transformed. How is that transformation talked about, understood, and imaged?

This chapter first seeks to establish the eschatological motivation of martyrdom in the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and in the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the two second and early third century martyrologies that contain the transformational imagery of being made male. This is accomplished by providing detailed summaries of the primary source texts. These summaries highlight the eschatological motivation of martyrdom. The other objective of this chapter is to identify the transformational imagery of martyrdom that is reflective of eschatological motivation. Although the transformational imagery of changing sexes should be read in context with other transformational imagery, this imagery will be especially highlighted. Later, chapter 6,

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205 Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, 107,106.
will investigate the vision of Saturus as a way to explore the background of the sources for the vision of the eschaton. Understanding the origin of the transformation imagery, and particularly the imagery of changing sexes, illustrates the theological meaning of the imagery, namely being transformed into a holy man or woman.

**THE ACTS OF THE MARTYRS OF LYONS**

The only source for the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* is Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* written between 311 and 323 a.d. Eusebius tells us that in 177 under Lucius Verius and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius persecution broke out in Gaul and specifically in the cities of Vienne and Lyons. Although this is the only evidence for these martyr stories, almost all modern scholars would accept the letter as authentic and date the text to 177.

We have no idea why this persecution started. The letter certainly indicates that the persecution of Christians was an act of mob violence and that the accusation against the Christians was simply that they were Christians. Being a Christian meant to the mob that they were atheists, that they refused to worship the pantheon of the Gods, and in order to ensure their conviction these Christians were falsely accused of the crimes of incest and cannibalism.

Some scholars speculate that the reason for the outbreak of mob violence was recent legislation that had been passed by the Emperor and the Roman Senate which

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207 Theophilus in Antioch (Ad Autolycum iii.4), Justin in Rome (1 Apology 26) Athenagoras in Asia Minor (Legatio 3) and Tertullian in Carthage (Apology 7 and 8) cite this same allegation against Christians
allowed wealthy land owners to use criminals in the gladiatorial games rather than
gladiators thereby decreasing their costs for the games 90%. Frend notes that in the
debate the spokesmen for the Senators was a nobleman from Gaul, who praised the
legislation and made reference to a similar cost saving measure in Gaul, which allowed
trinqui, or sacrificial victims, to be substituted in the games. He suggests that Christians
were being used in this role.

Rather than going to great lengths to explain why Christians were being
persecuted or how they were put to death, Eusebius says the reasons it is important to
preserve the letter is because it witnesses to “the unshakable determination of the
champions of true religion, their courage, and endurance, their triumphs over demons and
victories over invisible opponents, and the crowns which all this won for them at the
last.” His introduction to the second century letter, says that the letter “contains not
only the historical record but the lessons to be drawn from it.” A rehearsal of the text will
emphasize that the martyrs saw their act in eschatological terms. The eschaton motivated
individuals to turn away from their current lives to a life of certain death and reward. This
transformation is described in eschatological imagery. Martyrdom is described as an
eschatological battle between Christ and the Adversary and employs the language of war
and athletic competition. Those athletes and warriors who imitate and participate in the

was exorbitant and could spiral out of control when patrons tried to outdo one another.

says that although this is interesting it has no concrete support.

contest as Christ win the battle and receive crowns. In anticipation of their eschatological reward the martyrs are transformed, becoming brides of Christ and being prepared for the wedding banquet. Those Christians who deny their faith are stillborn and those who profess their faith are given a second birth. Those in their martyrological battle suffer without pain, smell like Christ, and have radiant countenances. The reward of the eschatological battle is also envisioned as an ascent to the heavenly Temple and to an eschatological garden.

The historical record of the letter tells us, Christians in Lyons were banned from their homes, the market places and baths and then all public places. Then an enraged mob assaulted them, beat them, and stoned them before they dragged them to the forum to be interrogated by the tribune and city authority. When the accused confessed to being Christians they were thrown into prison to await the return of the governor. At the first hearing in front of the governor a distinguished young Christian named Epagathus requested a hearing so that he could speak in defense of the Christians and argue that they were innocent of atheism and impiety. Dismissing his request the governor asked Epagathus if he too were a Christian. He confessed and was killed.

Arrests continued. In order to obtain a full confession from the Christians, not only were more Christians arrested, but their pagan servants as well. Fearing the punishment that the Christians were suffering many of these servants falsely accused the Christians of Oedipean marriages and dinners in the name of Thyestes. Even those who had not been against the Christians, upon hearing these things became furious with Christians and they were tortured.
The arrests and persecutions continued and included Christians from Vienne, a city 20 miles down the Rhone River. Among those arrested Sanctus, Maturus, Attalus, and Blandina were named specifically. The Christians were repeatedly tortured in hopes that they would recant their profession of faith. They did no such thing. In fact, Sanctus the deacon would say nothing save “I am a Christian.” When the physical torture did not work, the prisoners were confined to dark and difficult places. Many Christians were strangled and died in prison. Among those who were interrogated, tortured, and left to die was the 90 year old Bishop of Lyons, Pothinus.

Marturus, and then Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus were taken into the arena for a day of gladiatorial games that was especially designed for them. Marturus and Sanctus were tortured by being whipped, mauled by animals, and by having their flesh burnt. Sanctus continued to declare simply that he was a Christian. At the end of the day they were sacrificed. Next, it was Blandina’s turn. Blandina was hung on a post in the form of a cross and wild animals were let loose on her. When none of the animals touched her she was remanded to the jail for later trial. Attalus was then called for. He was led around the arena behind a sign which read, “this is Attalus, the Christian.” But when it was ascertained that he was a Roman citizen, he too was returned to the jail.

During this continued time in jail, many of the Christians who had recanted their faith, returned once again to their confession and were beheaded. All Christians who were Roman citizens were also beheaded, except for Attalus. Persecutions continued. When a doctor named Alexander came before the tribunal in defense of the Christians and in order to encourage them, he too declared that he was a Christian, and was
condemned to the beasts. The next day he and Attalus were brought to the arena. After they were repeatedly tortured, they were killed.

On the last day of the gladiatorial games Blandina and a fifteen year old boy named Ponticus were brought into the arena. For days they had been forced to watch the torture of others in the games in hopes that they would recant and swear to the pagan idols. They both were subjected to every torture of the arena. Blandina encouraged and strengthened Ponticus until he nobly gave up his spirit. Blandina was the last to be killed. She was scourged, toss to the animals, burnt, and then put into a net and exposed to a bull. At last she was sacrificed.

The letter then records what the governor and the mob did with the bodies of the martyrs. Those who were strangled in prison were fed to the dogs. Soldiers stood guard over the mound of dead bodies so that the Christians could not bury them. After six days, the bodies were burned and then swept into the Rhone river so that not a single relic would be left. By doing this they believed that they could deny the Christians the resurrection.

Surrounding this historical narrative are the lessons to be drawn for the martyrdom in Lyons. The first lesson was to be drawn from the civil restriction of Christians: “The Adversary swooped down with full force, in this way anticipating the final coming which is sure to come. In opposition, with God’s grace the Christians were able to endure and take on the “attacks of the Evil One.”211 The historical persecution and execution of the Christians in Lyons is described as an eschatological battle that those

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211 Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 63,62.
arrested and persecuted would win. The Christians were also able to endure the physical abuse of the mob because they “sped onto Christ, proving without questions that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in [them].”212 And when the first person was murdered, the young Epagathus, for confessing he was a Christian, he was called a noble, a “true disciple of Christ, following the Lamb wherever he goes.”213 The continued torture of the Christian was understood to be Satan trying to make Christians blaspheme God.

This eschatological battle was described in the imagery of war and athletic games. When Sanctus and Blandina withstood torture and continued to profess Christ they became noble athletes. Sanctus in the midst of his torture was “cooled and strengthened by the heavenly fountain of the water of life that flows from the side of Christ.”214 And as Christ suffered in him he achieved great glory and overwhelmed the Adversary. The reward for these noble athletes after a “brilliant contest and glorious victory” was the victor’s crown, the crown of immortality. Attalus, being “nobly trained in the Christian discipline” entered the arena as a “warrior.” Attalus, “sustaining the most intense conflict,” being tortured that day and on another occasion, was finally sacrificed. As he was being tortured “a sacrificial savour” arose from his body.215

212 Ibid.

213 Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 65,64.

214 Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 69,68.

215 Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 73,72.
The historical record of the martyrs’s trial continued to teach lessons. When Blandina was put on a post for the wild animals she became encouragement for her fellow Christians:

for in their torment with their physical eyes they saw in the person of their sister him who was crucified for them, that he might convince all who believed in him that all who suffer for Christ’s glory will have eternal fellowship in the living God.\(^{216}\)

As she suffered further ordeals, Blandina was to “make irreversible the condemnation of the crooked serpent.” She would “give inspiration to her brothers, for she had put on Christ, that mighty and invincible athlete, and had overcome the Adversary in many contests.”\(^{217}\)

Some Christians, being weak and untrained, denied their faith. They were called stillborn. Those who remained faithful encouraged those who continued to be arrested because even in prison the Christians “advanced joyously, with majesty and great beauty mingled on their countenances, so that even their chains were worn on them like some lovely ornament, as for a bride adorned with golden embroidered tassels, exhaling at the same time the sweet odour of Christ, so that some thought they had anointed themselves with a perfume of this world.”\(^{218}\) Because of their witness many of the Christians who denied their faith returned to their confession. Thus,

The dead were restored to life through the living…the virgin Mother experienced much joy in recovering alive those whom she had cast forth stillborn. For through the martyrs those who had denied the faith for the

\(^{216}\) *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, 75,74.

\(^{217}\) Ibid.

\(^{218}\) *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* 77,76.
most part went through the same process and were conceived and quickened again in the womb and learned to confess Christ.\textsuperscript{219}

When at last it came time for Ponticus and then Blandina to die on the last day of the games, Blandina was described as a “noble mother encouraging her children” and after sending “them before her in triumph to the King…” she hastened to rejoin them. She rejoiced as if she were “invited to a bridal banquet instead of being a victim of the beasts.”\textsuperscript{220}

The close of the letter describes the act of martyrdom. The martyrs were “eager to imitate and emulate Christ.” Here, in 177, martyrs are technically defined, “They were indeed martyrs, whom Christ had deigned to take up in their hour of confession, putting his seal on their witness by death.”\textsuperscript{221}

THE MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA AND FELICITAS

In 202 Severus Septimus, the African Roman Emperor who ruled from 193-211, enacted a law prohibiting the spread of Christianity and Judaism. As a result, widespread and violent persecution erupted in Carthage, Alexandria, Rome, and Corinth. Clement of Alexandria says of the persecution, “Many martyrs are daily burned, confined, or beheaded, before our eyes.” For the occasion of the birthday of the emperor’s son, Geta, the proconsul in Carthage sought to make a spectacle of the persecution of local

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{220} Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 79,78.

\textsuperscript{221} Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, 83, 82.
Christians. It is this persecution that *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* records.

Regardless of a late manuscript tradition and the limited testimony for the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, scholars argue for an early third century dating for the text in large part based on accepting the historicity of the events narrated, and the interpretation of historical events in *Martyrdom*. They also argue that it is perhaps the earliest Latin manuscript in Christian literature. Unfortunately, the external evidence from the manuscript and textual history of reception as well as the external literary testimony of the sources that discuss, refer to, or quote the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* is limited. The text exists only in ten manuscripts from the ninth through seventeenth century; except for a 1668 Latin manuscript and an 1889 Greek manuscript, all of the extent material is fragmentary. This late and fragmentary manuscript tradition is further complicated by the external literary testimony for the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*.

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222 Regarding the dating of events to March 7, 203, see Timothy David Barnes, “Pre-Decian Acts Martyrum,” in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 19, 1968, pp. 509-531, especially 521-525. The earliest calendar on which Perpetua and Felicitas are listed is the *Feriale Ecclesiae Romanae* of 354. This calendar lists the March 7, 203 date. Scholars seem to accept this date without a lot of historical warrant: Cecil Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage. Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian*. (Cleveland, Oh: Pilgrim Press 1992), 13.

223 The original language has been the object of much scholarly debate. For a rehearsal of scholarship and the most current arguments see Jacqueline Amat (ed.), *Passion de Perpetue et de Felicite suivi des Actes* (Sources Chretiennes, 417), Paris 1996, pp51-66. Jan Bremmer argues that the Greek version is considered to be a translation that may have reproduced a better and more original Latin than has survived until present, Jan N. Bremmer, *The Vision of Satur in the Passio Perpetua*, in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome. Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst, (edd.) Florentino Garcia Martinez and Gerald P. Luttikhuiizen, (Leiden 2003) 55-73.

224 Manuscript tradition for the reconstruction of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* also considers several fragments that seem to be summaries of the martyrdom which would have been read liturgically on the Feast day of Perpetua and Felicitas.
Between 210 and 213, Tertullian, writing in North Africa, offers the first external reference for Perpetua in *De Anima*. He refers to Perpetua’s first vision as evidence that only martyrs can enter heaven before the final Resurrection.²²⁵ This reference is hardly proof of an early third century text. In fact, it is not until the fourth century that a text of Perpetua’s martyrdom is provable. In three sermons between 400 and 420, Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, makes reference to Perpetua and Felicitas.²²⁶ In these sermons Augustine was preaching on the Feast Day of Perpetua and Felicitas and provides for us the first recorded evidence for an extant text for the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. The problem with this evidence for a text tradition is that while Augustine’s sermons contain many details that are reflected in the medieval manuscripts of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, they also record some traditions that are not reflected in the later manuscripts: Felicitas, not Saturus, seems to accompany Perpetua on her heavenly journey. Nevertheless, whether Felicitas or Saturus was Perpetua’s companion, this fourth century witness preserves a textual tradition for Perpetua’s visions and becomes a critical witness for the textual and traditional reception for the story of Perpetua.

In its final form, the text consists of two rare first person accounts of early Christian martyrdom. The largest section records Perpetua’s account of arrest, baptism, imprisonment, condemnation to the beasts, and visions. To this is added Saturus’ account of the visions he had in prison. These autobiographical reports are prefaced by a prologue

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that argues for the importance of these accounts as “new prophecies” and “new visions”
for the glorification of God and the building up of the Church. Perpetua’s and Saturus’s
narratives are appended by an account of the fate of the martyrs. The narrator’s telling
of the actual martyrdom summarizes well the Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and
Felicitas’s emphasis on eschatology and its motivation for martyrdom:

The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the
amphitheatre joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with calm faces, trembling, if
at all, with joy rather than fear. Perpetua went along with shining countenance and calm
step, as the beloved of God, as a wife of Christ, putting down everyone’s stare by her
own intense gaze.

A rehearsal and discussion of the final text will emphasize that the martyrs saw
their act in eschatological terms. The eschaton motivated individuals to turn away from
their current lives to a life of certain death and reward. Perpetua and Saturus both have
eschatological visions. Three out of five of those visions offer conflations of the Biblical
theophanic visions. Following each vision the martyrs are transformed. Their
transformation is described through the use of imagery which reflects the eschatological
state. When they choose the eschatological life, they are motivated to live chaste lives,

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227 Scholarly conversation speculates that the editor of the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas was
Tertullian. C.I.M.I. Van Beek, ed Passio Sanctarum Perpetueae et Felicitatis, Vol.1 (Nijmegen: Dekker
&Van de Vegt, 1936), 92-96 who argues that Tertullian is the editor. J.W. Halporn, “Literary History and
Tertullian being the editor is unprovable at best. Against this see T.D. Barnes, Tertullian: A Historical and
Literary Study, rev.edn. (Oxford, 1985), 79-80 and 329. David M. Scholer, “‘And I was a Man’: The
Power and Problem of Perpetua,” Daughters of Sarah 15 (September-October 1989):11 argues without any
evidence that a woman edited and published the text.

228 The Martyrdom and Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, 125,127, 124,126
free from the cares of earthly domestic life; they become Christ; they have shining
countenances; they become brides of Christ; they become children; and are made male.

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* can be divided into twenty-one
sections. The introduction and conclusion of the work, written by an narrator, emphasizes
that sections 3 through 10 and sections 11 through 13 are records of Perpetua’s and
Saturus’s persecution and visions in their own words: “Such were the remarkable visions
of these martyrs, Saturus and Perpetua, written by themselves.” The prologue tells us
that several catechumens are placed under arrest: Revocatus and his fellow slave
Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, and Perpetua. Perpetua is described as a well
educated, young married woman from a good family. From the narrative we also know
that she has a brother who is also a catechumen, she has an infant son who is still nursing,
and that her parents are still alive. No mention is made of her husband.

Sections 3 through 10 of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* record
Perpetua’s own account. Her narrative does not explain why the catechumens were
arrested. She begins instead by explaining to her father why she cannot deny her faith and
professes, “I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian.” She also tells
us in the next several days while they are waiting to be charged, that they are baptized
and that she asks for “the perseverance of the flesh.” Once imprisoned, the catechumens
are placed in a hellish dark hole until the deacons Tertius and Pomponius bribe the
soldiers so that they could be moved to a more comfortable place. Perpetua is able to

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229 Ibid, 123,122
nurse her starving baby and places him in the care of her brother and mother until she is
granted permission for her baby to stay with her in prison.

At this point, Perpetua has the first of her four visions and interprets her vision to
mean that they would have to suffer and that from now on their hope was no longer in
this temporal life, but rather in the life of her vision:

I saw a ladder of tremendous height made of bronze, reaching all the way
to the heavens, but it was so narrow that only one person could climb up at
a time. To the sides of the ladder were attached all sorts of metal weapons:
there were swords, spears, hooks, daggers, and spikes; so that if anyone
tried to climb up carelessly or without paying attention, he would be
mangled and his flesh would adhere to the weapons.

At the foot of the ladder lay a dragon of enormous size, and it would
attack those who tried to climb up and try to terrify them from doing so.
And Saturus was the first to go up, he who was later to give himself up of
his own accord. He had been the builder of our strength, although he was
not present when we were arrested. And he arrived at the top of the
staircase and he looked back and said to me: 'Perpetua, I am waiting for
you. But take care; do not let the dragon bite you.'

'He will not harm me,' I said, 'in the name of Christ Jesus.'

Slowly, as though he were afraid of me, the dragon stuck his head out
from underneath the ladder. Then, using it as my first step, I trod on his
head and went up.

Then I saw an immense garden, and in it a gray-haired man sat in
shepherd's garb; tall he was, and milking sheep. And standing around him
were many thousands of people clad in white garments. He raised his
head, looked at me, and said: 'I am glad you have come, my child.'

He called me over to him and gave me, as it were, a mouthful of the milk
he was drawing; and I took it into my cupped hands and consumed it. And
all those who stood around said: 'Amen!' At the sound of this word I came
to, with the taste of something sweet still in my mouth.  

230 The Martyrdom and Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, 111,113; 110,112.
After Perpetua’s first vision she continues with her narrative. A few days after her first vision Perpetua’s father comes again to the prison to persuade her to recant her faith. Interestingly, after her father begs her as his daughter, he throws himself before Perpetua and addresses her not as his daughter but as a woman. Perpetua tries to comfort her father and tells him that “it will all happen in the prisoners dock as God wills.”

One morning after breakfast, the catechumens are hurried off to a trial. When Perpetua is to be examined by Hilarianus the governor, her father once again pleads with her to abandon her faith. The governor implores Perpetua to recant and to offer sacrifice. Perpetua is asked again if she is a Christian. She again declares, “Yes, I am.” The governor passes sentence on the catechumens and condemns them to the beasts. In high spirits they returned to the prison. Back in prison, Perpetua sends Pomponius, the deacon, to retrieve her infant son from her father. Her father refuses. By God’s will the infant no longer needs to nurse and Perpetua’s milk supply dries up without causing her discomfort.

At this point Perpetua’s second and third visions occur. Perpetua sees her seven year old brother, Dinocrates, who had died from a horrible face cancer. Dinocrates comes out of a dark hole and he is suffering, hot, thirsty, pale, and still disfigured from his cancer. Perpetua and Dinocrates are on opposite sides of an abyss. In front of Dinocrates is a pool full of water but it is torturously above his reach and he can not reach it to drink. Perpetua awakes from this vision realizing that her brother is suffering and she prays for him night and day.

When the Christians were transferred to the military prison where they would fight the beasts, Perpetua has her third vision, part two of her vision about her brother,
Dinocrates. Perpetua sees that her brother is cleaned and refreshed. His facial cancer is healed and there is a scar where the wound once was. The pool of water that he could not reach is now accessible. Above the rim of the pool floats a golden bowl from which Dinocrates can drink his fill as the bowl remains full. When he finishes drinking, Dinocrates goes off to play, “as children do.” Perpetua awoke realizing that Dinocrates had been delivered from his suffering.

Perpetua’s fourth and final vision occurs the day before she and her companions were to fight with the beasts. At the end of her vision Perpetua knows that her battle would be with the devil and that she would be victorious:

Pomponius the deacon came to the prison gates and began to knock violently. I went out and opened the gate for him. He was dressed in an unbelted white tunic, wearing elaborate sandals. And he said to me: 'Perpetua, come; we are waiting for you.'

Then he took my hand and we began to walk through rough and broken country. At last we came to the amphitheatre out of breath, and he led me into the centre of the arena.

Then he told me: 'Do not be afraid. I am here, struggling with you.' Then he left.

I looked at the enormous crowd who watched in astonishment. I was surprised that no beasts were let loose on me; for I knew that I was condemned to die by the beasts. Then out came an Egyptian against me, of vicious appearance, together with his seconds, to fight with me. There also came up to me some handsome young men to be my seconds and assistants.

My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man. My seconds began to rub me down with oil (as they are wont to do before a contest). Then I saw the Egyptian on the other side rolling in the dust. Next there came forth a man of marvelous stature, such that he rose above the top of the amphitheatre. He was clad in a beltless purple tunic with two stripes (one on either side) running down the middle of his chest. He wore sandals that were wondrously made of gold and silver, and he carried a wand like an athletic trainer and a green branch on which there were golden apples.
And he asked for silence and said: 'If this Egyptian defeats her he will slay her with the sword. But if she defeats him, she will receive this branch.' Then he withdrew.

We drew close to one another and began to let our fists fly. My opponent tried to get hold of my feet, but I kept striking him in the face with the heels of my feet. Then I was raised up into the air and I began to pummel him without as it were touching the ground. Then when I noticed there was a lull, I put my two hands together linking the fingers of one hand with those of the other and thus I got hold of his head. He fell flat on his face and I stepped on his head.

The crowd began to shout and my assistants started to sing psalms. Then I walked up to the trainer and took the branch. He kissed me and said to me: 'Peace be with you, my daughter!' I began to walk in triumph towards the Gate of Life. Then I awoke.\textsuperscript{231}

After this vision, the section of the \textit{Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas}, that is ascribed to Perpetua ends and the vision of Saturus begins immediately. Saturus’s vision also foretells what is to happen to them after they die: they are carried to east to a heavenly garden by angles, taken into the luminous heavenly throne room where they are greeted by an aged man, and then returned to the garden with their fellow martyrs. We will return in detail to this vision in chapter 6.

The remainder of the \textit{Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas}, sections 14 - 21, is an epilogue which recounts the death of the martyrs. The longest section records the fate of Perpetua and Felicitas. First we find out that Felicitas was eight months pregnant when she was arrested and that she and her companions prayed that she might deliver early so that she might join them in the martyrdom. When she was giving birth one of the prison guards chided her saying, “You suffer so much now – what will you do when you are

\textsuperscript{231} \textit{The Martyrdom and Saints Perpetua and Felicitas}, 117,119; 116,118.
tossed to the beasts? Little did you think of them when you refused to sacrifice.” Felicitas replied, “What I am suffering now, I suffer by myself. But then another will be inside me who will suffer for me, just as I will be suffering for him.”

The epilogue also tells us that on the day before the martyrs were to thrown to the beasts, the day that Perpetua had her vision of combat as a man with the Egyptian, the martyrs shared together in a “love feast.” They also spoke to the mob about God’s judgement and the joy that they would have in suffering. On the day of the emperor’s birthday, the day of the martyrs’ “victory,” the would be martyrs “marched from the prison to the amphitheatre joyfully as though they were going to heaven.” As they entered the arena, Perpetua began to sing a psalm: “she was already treading on the head of the Egyptian.” The men fought an assortment of wild animals, leopards, bears, and wild boars, each according to the death they had prayed for. Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped naked and placed in a netting to face a wild heifer. The sex of the unusual animal was intended to match the sex of the martyrs. The crowd was horrified by the youth of Perpetua’s naked body and by the milk dripping from Felicitas’s breast so the women were dressed in unbelted tunics and then thrown to the heifer. Both women were tortured by the animal. None of the martyrs died from their flesh wounds, though, and the mob requested their bodies be brought to the center of the amphitheatre so that they could witness their throats being cut. The martyrs, torn and broken, got up and walked to the center of the stadium, sealed their martyrdom with a ritual kiss of peace, and prepared to be killed by the sword. Saturus was the first to die. Perpetua had to suffer more pain. The gladiator who was to kill her was trembling and instead of cutting off her head, nicked one of her bones. Perpetua took his hand and guided it to her throat. The epilogue says of
Perpetua, “It was though so great a woman, feared as she was by the unclean spirit, could not be dispatched unless she herself were willing.”

The Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas do not tell a story of how Perpetua chose to become a Christian or even why she was being persecuted. We know that her parents were not Christians and that her father begged her to renounce her faith. We also know that Perpetua was newly married and that she had just given birth to a baby boy. No further mention is made of her husband or of Felicitas’s husband even though Felicitas is eight months pregnant. From the first person narratives of Perpetua and Saturus and from the framing introduction and conclusion, the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas clearly communicate that the eschaton is the destiny for the martyr.

ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVATION FOR MARTYRDOM IN THE MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA AND FELICITAS AND ACTS OF THE MARTYRS OF LYONS AND THE RESULTANT TRANSFORMATIONAL IMAGERY

As is evident from Eusebius and the compiler of the Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas, future generations continued to read martyr texts and to look in them for meaning in their own time of trial and for motivation towards their own eschatological reward. In the introduction to the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, Eusebius tells us what makes that story “famous for all time” is the “unshakable determination of the champions of true religion, their courage and endurance, their triumphs over demons and victories over invisible opponents, and the crowns which all this won for them.” The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas says that the martyrdom should be
understood as proof of God’s favour and the spiritual strengthening of men. The fact that someone edited the diary of Perpetua and Saturus and that the account at Lyons was a letter certainly suggests that early Christians were at least hearing these martyr accounts. If the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is representative of early Christian practice it is possible that early communities gathered at the graves of martyrs on the anniversary of their death so that they could celebrate the “birthday” of the martyr both as a “memorial for those who have already fought the contest and the training and the preparation of those who will do so one day.”\(^{232}\) For what were early Christians training and what was the reward for those who fought the contest?

In *The Blood of the Martyrs*, Joyce Salisbury talks about the role of dreams and visions in records of Christian martyrdoms.\(^{233}\) She notes that the seers had three kinds of dreams. The first type of dream was a prophetic dream that foretold the seer’s future death. The second kind of dream foretold the future that awaited the confessors after they were martyred. And the third type of dream was instructive and offered advice to the communities that would be left behind. The first two types of dreams and visions are clearly eschatological: they are about the confessors’ imminent death and expected reward. These dreams motivated and comforted the confessors because they were sure signs that God would be with them during their contest and that they would emerge victorious and be rewarded. Salisbury also explains that in Christian martyr dreams, unlike their pagan counterparts, the confessor not only provided the dream, but the

\(^{232}\) Martyrdom of Polycarp, 17,16.

interpretation as well.234 Thus, when future generations read or heard these martyr accounts the imagery of martyrdom had a clear referent: the martyr account explained the imagery used.

Two out of Perpetua’s four visions in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua* predict her death and assure her salvation: four out of five visions present images of the life after death which awaits the martyrs. After Perpetua’s dreams, she tells us what they mean. The *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* does not include dreams or visions and is not an autobiographical account of martyrdom. It is a letter, written by a Christian witness to the persecution and martyrdom in Lyons, to a community thousands of miles away. In his introduction to the letter, Eusebius tells us that the letter provides not only the historical record of martyrdom but also an explanation of what it means. The letter is the vision scenario in reverse. All of the visions and explanations of martyrdom use eschatological language.

It is quite easy to see these two martyr texts as being about the eschaton. The texts are about Christians who are about to be killed because they are Christians. The story and imagery in the texts is all about that persecution, execution, and anticipation of what happens next. In this chapter then, we turn to the way in which martyrdom was motivated by the eschaton. In doing so, I will look at two of the things the martyr experience tells us about: the martyr’s imminent death and the life after death that awaited the martyr. In doing so, I will highlight the language used to speak literally and symbolically of martyrdom.

234 Ibid, 83-84.
Martyrdom as Eschatological Battle

It is quite obvious that the context of these martyrologies is the ancient gladiatorial games and that Christians were being literally persecuted and literally killed. All of the characters in these texts are arrested, interrogated, tortured, and murdered. Many of them wrestle with gladiators and animals. Bowersock is correct, then, in seeing these historical games as a literal source of contest language in the martyr texts which gives meaning to the later metaphor of the martyr as athlete and warrior when the context is no longer the amphitheatre. In focusing on the literal context of the gladiatorial games for background of the meaning of imagery in the martyrologies, Bowersock overlooks the fact that many of the martyrs did not die in the midst of the arena fighting with man and beast. Many of them starved to death. Some of them were beheaded and burned. For Christians in the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the battle which was raging was not against gladiators, jailors, and lions, but it was an eschatological battle. Regardless of whether those arrested battled with beasts and men or were tortured and beheaded their ordeal was described as a contest between Christ and the Devil. In the literal context of the gladiatorial games, the language used to describe the contest is apocalyptic, predicting the final eschatological battle. In this eschatological battle the oppressors, the mob, the jailors, the gladiators, the interrogators are all described with the imagery of the Adversary. Martyrs are often described as athletes and warriors. As athletes and warriors in an eschatological battle the ultimate result for these martyrs was victory. The victory was not theirs because they

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were good athletes or warriors and won a contest in the amphitheatre. In fact they all died. Rather their assured victory was in Christ, over death and over Satan.

The *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* opens with the literal public persecution and then arrest of the Christians. From the beginning this is explained in apocalyptic terms: the Adversary trained his minions in preparation for the final apocalyptic battle against God’s servants. The combatants, God’s servants, armed with God’s grace charge into battle against the slaves of Satan, assured that their present sufferings would not be compared to the eschatological glory they would receive. In every instance where a Christian is arrested and tortured, the jailer or the inquisitor is metaphorically referred to in diabolical terms. When the servants or the Christians are arrested they are “ensnared by Satan.” When the confessors are tortured “Satan strove to have some word of blasphemy escape their lips,” The confinement and torture of the Christians are “acts of the Devil.” Those onlookers who railed against the Christians and who rejected Christ were “sons of perdition.” When a certain Biblis recanted her confession of Christ, the “Devil thought he devoured her.” After the death of all of the confessors, the battle continued to rage. The people who were stirred by the “wild Beast” and not humiliated by their defeat desecrated the bodies of the martyrs and swept their ashes into the Rhone river thinking they still could overcome God and deprive the martyrs of their final victory, the resurrection.

In contrast those confessors and martyrs are described in the language of victorious athletes and warriors. When all the wrath of the mob fell on several of the Christians, Marturus and Blandina were praised as “noble athletes” No matter what torture was applied to Blandina, she “like a noble athlete got renewed strength with her
confession of faith.” Later, in speaking about the varied types of martyrdom that confessors would face, the letter speaks about the noble athletes who win brilliant contests and glorious victories, and the great crown of immortality. Again, Martus’s and Sanctus’s repeated torture is seen as their defeating their opponents in many contests and their current torture is being fought for their victor’s crown. When Attalus enters the arena he enters as a warrior, having been nobly trained.\(^\text{236}\) When Blandina is hung on a post in the form of a cross she encourages her brothers as she “put on Christ, the mighty and invincible athlete.” In doing so, she overcame the Adversary in many contests and won the crown of immortality. Blandina’s contest is thus linked quite explicitly to transformation into Christ and the ultimate victory in the eschatological battle.

Similiarly, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* is also intentionally given an eschatological setting at the end time when young men and women are given visions, “a consequence of the extraordinary graces promised for the last stage of time.” The editor of the texts offers the literal detail of the martyrdom of the Christians in Carthage. Revocatus, Saturninus, and Saturus were first scourged before a line of gladiators. Saturninus was exposed to many beasts and then was finally bitten by a single leopard. Perpetua and Felicitias were thrown to a mad heifer. In the end all of the confessors were finally killed by having their throats cut. Perpetua and Saturus’s visions, as well as the editor’s narrative present the imagery of eschatological battle. Perpetua’s first and fourth vision are prophetic dreams and assure Perpetua that God would be with the confessors

\(^\text{236}\) Those who had at first confessed Christ and then recanted, were also talked about in athletic imagery. They were untrained, unprepared, weak, unable to bear strain of great conflict
during their impending ordeal and that they would emerge victorious. Before Perpetua’s first vision, her brother comes to her and tells her that she is privileged and that she should ask for a dream so that she may know whether she is to be condemned or set free. At the conclusion of her vision Perpetua reports to her brother that they would suffer and die and that their hope would no longer be in this world. The beginning of the dream briefly foretells her battle. The imagery of her contest was a ladder reaching to heaven that was covered with metal weapons. At the foot of the ladder is an enormous dragon. The beast or dragon in Perpetua’s first vision makes war against the holy ones, but Perpetua declares that in the name of Christ the beast would not hurt her and stepped on his head.

Later, when she awakes from her fourth dream where she wins the gladiatorial contest with the Egyptian by stepping on his head, she interprets the dream to mean “that it was not with wild animals that I would fight but with the Devil, but I knew that I would win the victory.” Perpetua clearly understood her martyrdom as the eschatological battle between Christ and the Devil, and that victory would be hers in Christ.

When the editor tells of the actual martyrdom, he too uses imagery of the eschatological battle. He records that the confessors went to the amphitheatre as if they were marching to heaven. As Perpetua is brought into the arena she is singing as if she were already treading on the head of the Egyptian. The animal that is choosen to attack Perpetua and Felicitas is said to be prepared by the Devil. The gladiator who cuts her throat is an “unclean spirit” and the only way he could kill her is for she to allow it.

The athletes and warriors in the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas did not win the battle in the amphitheatre: they were all killed.
Victory for the Christians meant physical death in the arena. The battle that they were fighting as warriors and athletes was an eschatological battle against Satan. In order to win this battle the confessors saw their ordeal in Christological terms. Blandina “put on Christ, the invincible athlete” and Perpetua, taking on the name of Christ, defeated the Devil. The martyrs were imitating Christ in his death and resurrection. They suffered with Christ and he with them and they were rewarded with Christ.

The Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons and the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas identify the martyrs with Christ, as confessors, as imitators of Christ and participants in Christ.237 The close of the letter of Lyons explicitly states that the martyrs were “intensely eager to imitate and emulate Christ.” For them Christ was a martyr, the “true and faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the prince of life.” Only those “whom Christ has deigned to take up in their hour of confession, putting his seal on their witness by death,” could be called martyrs. Thus, confession, participation in the suffering and death of Christ and participating in his victory become central themes in martyrdom.

In the context of the martyrologies nearly every person who is condemned is so because of their confession of Christ, because of identifying themselves with Christ. Epagathus is killed for his clear confession of being a Christian. Blandina is tortured because of her confession, “I am a Christian.” Sanctus repeated his answer, “I am a Christian,” to every question the interrogators asked of him. When they asked if he were a slave or free man, he said “I am a Christian.” When they asked him what city he was from, he said “I am a Christian.” When they asked his race, he said “I am a Christian.”

237 Pagels, Gnostic Gospels – convincingly argues that the difference between Gnostic and orthodox views of martyrdom are directly affected by the historicity of Jesus’ death. The Gnostics who denied Jesus actually died, disdained martyrdom.
Alexander, a local doctor, was also martyred when he confessed that he was a Christian. Perpetua, when her father tried to persuade her to recant of her confession, told her father that she could not be called by any other name than what she was, “a Christian.” In her first vision she proclaimed that the serpent would not harm her, “in the name of Christ Jesus.” And when repeatedly questioned, Perpetua continued to declare that she was a Christian.

This identification with Christ also meant suffering and dying with Christ. In the opening martyrdom in the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, Epagathus is hymned as a “true disciple of Christ,” one who “follows the Lamb wherever he goes,” namely to death. Pothinus at age ninety is dragged in front of the tribunal. Although he is exhausted and infirm, he awaits his martyrdom. Blandina, in one of her many episodes of torture, is hung on a post in the form of a cross so that wild beast might devour her. The spectators marvel at the suffering which Blandina endures, admitting “that no woman had ever suffered so much in their experience.” Imitations of Christ’s suffering are also present in the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas. Many confessors demand that they be scourged by a line of gladiators so that they may “obtain a share in the Lord’s suffering.” When Perpetua continues to confess Christ all of the confessors are condemned to the beasts.

Not only do the martyrs suffer with Christ, but Christ suffers with the martyrs and in doing so strengthens them. In the the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, Felicitas is in great pain during her premature labor and a jailors mocks her about the greater pain she will suffer in the arena. She replies, “What I suffer now, I suffer by myself. But then another will be inside of me who will suffer for me, just as I will be suffering for him.” When Christ suffers with the martyrs, the suffering brings comfort. While Blandina is
being repeatedly tortured, her confession of faith “brought her refreshment, rest, and insensibility to present pain.” Sanctus’s confession of faith is said to be like a “heavenly fountain of the water of life the flows from the side of Christ” which cools and strengthens him. Sanctus’ body is battered and bruised beyond recognition but “Christ suffered in him” and showed that “nothing is to be feared where the Father’s love is, nothing painful where we find Christ’s glory.”

In martyrdom the Christian confesses Christ and participates with Christ in his suffering. The Christian also participates with Christ in death and that death is often expressed in sacrificial language. Even if, as Frend speculates, Christians in Gaul were being substituted for sacrificial victims in the amphitheatre, the language of sacrifice is also connected with the sacrifice of Christ in the martyr texts. Sanctus, and Martus after their confession of faith and repeated tortures were in the end “sacrificed.” Alexander and Attalus, after confessing they were Christians and enduring the most intense conflict were also “sacrificed.” And after being tossed about by a wild animal, Blandina lost perception of her torture because of her “hope and possession of all that she believed in and because of her intimacy with Christ.” She too was then “sacrificed.” While this language literally could refer to the confessors being killed, it is also interesting the texts use the sacrificial language of incense. At one point in the narrative a comparison is made between those who had denied their faith and those who confessed they were Christians. Those who confessed their faith were described in anticipatory imagery, as if

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they were already enjoying the reward of their contest. These confessors are described as 
exhaling “the sweet odor of Christ.” Later when Attalus was being tortured by being 
burned, a “sacrificial savour arose from his body.”

Having “put on Christ” and become imitators and participants in Christ, martyrs 
are described as athletes and warriors engaged in an eschatological battle with Satan. Not 
only do the martyrs share in Christ’s suffering, but they share in his death and victory 
over death and Satan. Pothinus endures his infirmed old age until his martyrdom so “that 
Christ might triumph in him.” Blandina’s suffering in the form of Christ encourages all 
who were undergoing their ordeal. She “put on Christ, that mighty and invisible athlete,” 
overcame the Adversary and won the crown of immortality. Putting on Christ and 
winning her battle, Blandina also made “irreversible the condemnation of the crooked 
serpent,” and overcomes death. The noble athletes who endure a “brilliant contest and 
noble victory” win a crown of immortality.” The martyrs death is a part of an 
eschatological battle.

The eschatological battle also uses language not characteristic of the gladiatorial 
amphitheatre, yet still related to the martyrs’ relationship with Christ. Those confessors 
who were awaiting martyrdom were imaged as brides, as preparing for a bridal feast. In 
the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons those Christians who were imprisoned simply for their 
confession of Christ “were comforted by the joy of martyrdom, their hope in the 
promises.” These confessors with majestic and beautiful countenances were joyful and 
wore their chains “like some lovely ornament as for a bride adorned with golden 
embroidered tassels.” Later, when Blandina was finally to be killed she rejoiced “as 
though she had been invited to a bridal banquet.” Similiarly, when Perpetua was being
led into the amphitheatre, on the day of her “victory” she was joyful as if she were going to heaven. She went along with a “shining countenance…as the beloved of god, as a wife of Christ.” In contrast to the confessors in Lyons, those who denied their relationship with Christ were dejected, downcast, and void of all beauty. Those who had never known faith had “no knowledge of the wedding garment.”

In contrasting the confessors as beautiful brides of Christ to those who had rejected Christ, the author of the letter tells us that the marriage was fruitful: those who were arrested confessed their faith and increased the number of the martyrs. The imagery of birth is used to contrast those who were born to new life in martyrdom and those who were dead. When the Christians in Lyons were arrested some were ready to become martyrs and made a full confession of their faith. Others were unable to do this and were “stillborn.” The confessors continued in joyful imprisonment and through their witness restored the dead to life. Many of those who could not previously confess Christ were reborn.

When Alexander stood before the tribunal and urged Christians to make their confession “it was clear that he was one who was giving birth. Imagery of being born through confession of Christ and giving birth by encouraging others in their confession, is developed into the imagery of motherhood when Blandina, “like a noble mother encouraging her children,” was the last to be martyred having sent her fellow confessors, her children, on before.

The martyrs’s death was interpreted in the context of the eschaton. As a part of the eschatological battle, martyrs confessed Christ, imitated Christ and “put on Christ.” They shared in his suffering and as athletes and warriors in the final battle with Satan.
Victorious they were awarded crowns of immortality. As brides of Christ, confessors marched to the eschatological wedding banquet. Martyrs were born to new life and those who were encouraged by Satan to deny Christ were stillborn. The martyrs’s visions and narrative interpreted their temporal suffering in eschatological terms and assured victory. It is to that victory and the visions which foretold the future that awaited the confessor after they were martyred that we now turn.

**Eschatological Reward**

The martyr letter from Lyons had a lot to say about the literal and metaphorical battle the martyrs had to fight. Besides, a few passages which anticipate the “joy of martyrdom” and “their hope in the promises,” the letter says little more about the martyrs’s life after death save that they won the crown of immortality. Four out of five dream visions in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, however, offer great detail about the future that awaits the martyrs after death.

In Perpetua’s first vision and in Saturus’ single vision they are both shown the future place where they would go after their death. Perpetua’s vision opens with her contest with the devil at the bottom of a ladder. Saturus’ vision begins with the declaration that they had died and “put off the flesh.” Both Perpetua and Saturus ascend to an immense garden. In Perpetua’s vision, she goes by way of a ladder up to the heavens and in Saturus’ vision, he and Perpetua are carried by four angels (who do not touch them) up a gentle hill until they see an intense light. In the garden Perpetua sees thousands of people in white garments surrounding a tall grey haired shepherd who is sitting was milking sheep. The Shepherd calls her a child and offers her a drink of the milk. She wakes with the sweet taste in her mouth assured that this was to be her future.
Saturus’ vision of the life after martyrdom is even more descriptive. When Saturus and Perpetua reach the garden he sees beautiful trees and flowers. The angels that were carrying them greet other angels in the garden and put the Martyrs down so that they can greet fellow martyrs who were killed before them. Beyond the garden there was a gate guarded by angels. On the other side of the gate was a place constructed of light and in that place was an aged man with white hair and a youthful face sitting on a throne. Around the throne were elders and voices ceaselessly chanted “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Perpetua and Saturus were invited to come into the room and greet the Lord. The angels outside the gates put on white robes and entered the room. The aged man on the throne was so enormous that Perpetua and Saturus could not see his feet and had to be lifted up to be able to offer him a kiss. After the exchange of peace the elders to Perpetua and Saturus to “go and play” and they returned to the garden. In the garden they recognized other martyrs and were sustained by a “delicious odor.”

In chapter six we will use Saturus’s compact vision as a way of exploring the Biblical and apocalyptic sources for eschatological imagery. Here we focus on Perpetua’s vision as a mean to highlight the eschatological motivation for martyrdom and to highlight the transformational imagery of changing sexes. Perpetua’s fourth vision is teeming with obvious references to Biblical ascents and theophonic visions. Her vision opens with a clear reference to the Biblical story of Jacob’s ladder. In the story of Jacob’s vision which begins in Genesis 28, Jacob is beginning a personal exile from his family. One night he lays down his head upon a rock to sleep. Jacob dreamt that there was a ladder set upon the earth whose top reached to heaven. In his dream the Lord stood above the ladder and identifies himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham and the God of
Isaac and he promises Jacob that he will be with Jacob wherever he goes and that he will bring him back to this place. When Jacob awoke he proclaimed that this place was “awesome,” the “house of God,” and the “gate of heaven.” He then took the stone that he was sleeping on and set it upright and anointed it with oil as the means to consecrate that spot as a holy spot for the Lord. Like in Jacob’s dream, the ladder in Perpetua’s dream was the gateway between heaven and earth. When she woke up she interpreted the dream to mean that they would suffer and that their hope was no longer on earth but that God would bring them to heaven, the place of her vision, just as God promised Jacob that he would bring him back to the place of his dream.

Perpetua’s dream also draws on other Biblical ascents and theophonic visions. Unlike Jacob’s vision where there is no mention of God’s appearance or celestial court, Perpetua’s vision offers descriptions both of God’s appearance and the heavenly realm. When Perpetua arrived at the top of the ladder she saw an huge garden, and in the middle sat a tall grey-haired man in shepherd’s garb. Surrounding the man where many thousand people in white garments. The shepherd greeted her as his child and offered her a drink of milk. The reference to a heavenly vision of a grey-haired man recalls Daniel’s theophanic vision from Daniel 7 as well as John’s vision recorded in the Book of Revelation. In Daniel’s vision he sees “one that was ancient of days” sitting down on a throne. His clothes were white as snow and “the hair of his head like pure wool.” Surrounding this enthroned ancient of days “Thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”

The theophanic vision in the Book of Revelation echoes this physical description from the Book of Daniel. In John’s first vision he sees “one like the son of man, clothed
with a long robe with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow.” In John’s vision this “son of man” is not seated on the throne like the “Ancient of Days” from Daniel. There is another on the throne, who John is taken to see by the “son of man.” In this vision, unlike Daniel’s vision, and like the Jacob’s vision, the physical appearance of God is not provided. Like other theophanic visions in the Old Testament, men cannot see God but they behold his glory which signifies his presence.

John’s vision also provides an explanation of those clothed in white robes also highlights the imagery of the heavenly shepherd who greets Perpetua in her first vision. At the throne, John watches the slain lamb open a scroll with seven seals. When the fifth seal was opened “those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne” were given white robes. Before the opening of the seventh seal John also witnessed a great multitude “standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.”\(^{239}\) One of the elders asked John who were the people clothed in white robes. The elder explained to John who these people were:

These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his Temple; and he who sits upon the throne of God and serve him day and night within his Temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of

\(^{239}\) Revelation 7:9
the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Imagery from Perpetua’s first vision is also evident in the Gospel of John that also makes a clear reference to Jacob’s dream as well as paralleling Jesus, the Lamb of God, and the Son of Man. John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the “Lamb of God,” and Andrew, who had been following John, asked Jesus where he was staying. Jesus replied, “Come and See.” Andrew then goes to proclaim to his brother Peter that they had found the Messiah and brought him to Jesus. Jesus begins calling his disciples and after he calls Philip, Philip invited Nathaniel to come to Jesus saying, “Come and See.” When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching he said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Nathaniel proclaims Jesus the “Son of God” because he knew who was. Jesus, likening himself to Jacob’s ladder, tells Nathaniel that he will see greater things: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” This reference to Jacob’s ladder is used again in John’s Gospel when Nicodemus comes to Jesus. When Nicodemus proclaims to Jesus that he must be a “teacher come from God” because he had performed signs by changing water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana and by driving the money lenders out of the Temple, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless on is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Confused Nicodemus wonders how one can be born again, how he can enter his mother’s womb. Jesus clarifies by telling Nicodemus that “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”

240 John 1:51
When Nicodemus continues to be confounded, Jesus tells him that he does not understand heavenly things and referring to Jacob’s ladder again says, “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”

In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Perpetua’s first ascent to heaven follows this pattern from John’s gospel. After the catechumens were arrested Perpetua proclaims to her father that she is a Christian. She was then baptized. When she prepared to climb the ladder in her vision, Saturus warned her to be careful in case the dragon of enormous size that lay under the ladder, bite her. Perpetua proclaimed that the dragon would not harm her, “in the name of Christ.” Taking on Christ, Perpetua stepped on the dragon and ascended to heaven.

Perpetua’s trodding on the dragon’s head also echoes imagery from the eschatological visions in the Book of Revelation as well as the protological imagery from the Genesis narrative. In the 12th chapter of Revelation there is a vision about a woman and the dragon which portrays the conflict between Christ and Satan. In this vision, a pregnant woman who was about to give birth appeared in heaven who was clothed with the sun and stood on the moon. On her head she had a crown. In this vision there also appeared a great red dragon. The dragon waited for the women to give birth so that he might devour her child. When the child was born he was taken up to the throne in heaven. The dragon, defeated by the angel Michael and his angels, was thrown out of heaven with his angels to the earth.

Although the imagery of the dragon in heaven is evident in the Book of Revelation, the imagery of Perpetua trodding on the dragon’s head alludes to the Genesis creation narrative. The book of Revelation identifies the dragon as Devil and Satan (Gen
12:9). In the Book of Genesis the serpent who tempts Eve to eat fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden is cursed by God. God tells the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.” Perpetua, having declared herself as belonging to Christ, trods on the serpent’s head.

Although not explaining the afterlife that awaits martyrs after their death, Perpetua’s second and third vision provides further detail about life after death. In her vision, where Dinocrates is relieved from his suffering, certainly draws on the same eschatological imagery from the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation that was echoed in Perpetua’s first vision. In the Gospel of John there is an exchange between a Samaritan woman and Jesus where Jesus offers the woman water that will cause her to never thirst again, “water which will become in him a spring of living water welling up into eternal life.” John connects this living water to the eschatological life; the water Dinocrates drinks satisfies his thirst while never running dry and relieve him from his suffering. In the Book of Revelation John has a vision of the eschatological throne. Flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb was the “river of the water of life.”

This imagery of water’s connection with healing and the eschatological vision surely draws upon the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation which Perpetua’s other visions have reflected.

When Perpetua awakes from her fourth vision about the battle with the Egyptian she understood that she would emerge victorious. The imagery of her vision, the defeat of

\[241\] Revelation 22:1-2
the devil, the “man of marvelous stature,” entering though the gate of life, the stripping and changing of garments, again echoes the eschatological imagery. In this fourth vision the Egyptian is identified with the devil. Like in her first vision where she trod on the devil which echoed the protological narrative from Genesis as well as the eschatological vision from the Book of Revelation, Perpetua trods on the devil’s head. Like in her first vision of Jacob’s ladder as the gate of life, her battle with the devil from which she emerges victorious become he entrance in to the gate of life through martyrdom. The imagery of Perpetua being made male is also seen in this context of eschatological battle and entrance into the heavenly Temple. In the fourth vision she is stripped and anointed with oil in preparation for her battle with the devil. At the close of her vision Perpetua knows that in Christ she will emerge victorious from the eschatological battle. In this context the stripping of Perpetua, her maleness, her victory in battle, and consequential reward can be explained through multifaceted imagery. In the Book of Revelation, the servants of the son of God are anointed on their forehead and are clothed in white robes and are given palm branches in their hands. These are those who were victorious in the eschatological battle and now stand before the throne and the Lamb in the midst of them will be their shepherd.\textsuperscript{242} The imagery of anointing with oil is also apart of the baptism ritual of the early church. When Christians were baptized they were stripped and anointed with oil.\textsuperscript{243} Here the newly baptized Perpetua, having put on Christ, would do combat with the devil and emerge victorious. Similiarly, the imagery of anointing is also derived

\textsuperscript{242} Revelation 7.

\textsuperscript{243} Salisbury, 109.
from the Old Testament practice of priests being anointed before they can enter the Temple or the Holy of Holies. Perpetua, in this vision is awarded with the eschaton, which is imaged as a return to the Eden garden and as entrance into the eschatological Temple.

CONCLUSION

*The Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* and the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, are second and early third century martyr acts that employ the transformational imagery of being made male. Blandina and Perpetua both become male by being transformed into Christ. The visions of Perpetua also witness to the transformational imagery of becoming male when Perpetua is prepared for gladiatorial battle and when she is stripped she is made male. This transformational imagery is one of several images in these two texts which describe the transformation of an individual who is motivated to become a martyr by the vision of the eschaton. In these texts is vision as an eschatological battle, as an eschatological Temple, and as the return to the Edenic garden. The imagery used to describe holiness is reflective of those states. In chapter 6 we will return to the eschatological battle, the heavenly Temple, and the heaven garden in order to understand the origin of this eschatological imagery as well as the resultant transformational imagery.

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244 Exodus 28:4, 30:30; Leviticus 7:36; 10:7; Number 3:3
INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 we provided the developing definition and theology of enkrateia. In the second through fourth century many apocryphal texts were written which were concerned almost exclusively with the life, death, work, and preaching of Jesus Christ. Some of the texts that have been categorized as Apocryphal Gospels are written in the same form and style as the canonical Gospels. Some are simply collections of sayings. Others seem to be a collection of sayings with commentary. The two particular Apocryphal Gospels, on which chapter four focuses our attention, are first and second century texts which include the transformational imagery of women being made male. Both of these Gospels appear to be collections of sayings or dialogues. We know very little of the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians and the complete Gospel of Thomas, a collection of Jesus’ sayings does not include narrative detail about Jesus’ birth, ministry, or passion, that the canonical gospels record. In the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians Jesus


247 Both and English translation and the primary source original can be found in April D. DeConick, The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel (London: T & T Clark, 2006.)
tells Salome that death will lose its power when being male and female is transformed. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, death is also overturned and the Kingdom of Heaven is inaugurated when there is no longer male and female. In this Gospel Jesus also tells Peter that Mary Magdalene will be able to enter heaven when he himself leads her and makes her male.

The manuscript evidence for these two Gospels is sparse: the only extant text for the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* is found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, and the extant manuscript of the *Gospel of Thomas* was not completely unearthed until the last half of the twentieth century. From their historical condemnations, scholars knew that these texts existed: through the sixth century these texts were oftentimes listed among those works that were considered heretical and connected to Gnosticism. Since the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas* over 50 years ago, the scholarly exploration which has dominated has been to read the texts through the lens of their condemnation as Gnostic texts. In American scholarship the nuanced explanation is to admit that the *Gospel of Thomas* cannot be connected to a specific Gnostic school, but that there is a general gnosticism in the text that is indicated by realized eschatology, heavenly origins, world renunciation, and a return to the divine. This perspective continues and when

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applied to the transformational imagery of being made male, the imagery is read as reflective of Gnostic anthropology.\textsuperscript{251} Even though a gnostic reading of these gospels became dominate, the initial scholarship on the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} focused primarily on the prevalence of encratic themes.\textsuperscript{252} In his early research on the \textit{Gospel of Thomas}, Gilles Quispel, who was one of the first people to examine the text, even speculated that the \textit{Gospel of the Egyptians}, was the encratic source for the \textit{Gospel of Thomas}.\textsuperscript{253} Following in the footsteps of Quispel, April De Conick has returned to the earliest readings of the text and has methodically challenged the Gnostic reading of the \textit{Gospel of Thomas}.

In sister monographs, DeConick develops a new “rolling corpus” model for understanding how and when the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} came into its present form. Her method, based on studies on orality and rhetorical composition, proposes that the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} began as an early speech Gospel organized around eschatological themes. As the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} was read in local communities and developed, many sayings were amended and accretions were made to the text. DeConick’s idea is that later sayings were added for the changing needs and demands of the community. One of the major changes that the community had to deal with was the issue of eschatology. In the beginning there was a sense of eschatological imminence but as time continued and the community’s

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Kari Vogt, “‘Becoming Male’: A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor”
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eschatological expectations did not occur, the community reinterpreted its expectations and Jesus’ sayings. Rather than waiting for an imminent eschaton, it interpreted the Gospel to be speaking about an immanent eschaton and began reading its Gospel through a mystical lens. Rather than waiting for the eschaton to happen, the community began living as it already had and it was already participating in the eschaton. For DeConick, it was this immanence that demanded encratic behavior. DeConick’s thorough work highlights the eschatological, mystical, and encratic nature of the *Gospel of Thomas.* It will be to her work that we turn for an understanding of the eschatological motivation of *enkrateia* in the *Gospel of Thomas."

In these *Apocryphal Gospels*, eschatology motivates *enkrateia*, both in the broader sense that includes dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, and the normally restricted sense of virginity and marital continence. In these texts, when a Christian, woman or man, chooses a life of *enkrateia* that is motivated by the eschaton, they are transformed. In order then to understand transformational imagery, and especially the transformational imagery of changing sexes, the starting point needs to be the understanding of *enkrateia*. It is quite evident that the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of Thomas* share an eschatological motivation for *enkrateia*. This similarity by no means necessitates that the individual *Gospels* form a closed or even textually related canon of material with a unified

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theological system or even that they explain the eschaton and its related imagery in a univocal manner.

Besides the witness in Clement, we know very little of what the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* said. Because of the limited extant text of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, we can only rely on its contextually limited explanation of the eschaton which employs the same transformational imagery that a much more detailed *Gospel of Thomas* presents. This chapter first seeks to establish the eschatological motivation of *enkrateia* in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, early first and second century *Apostolical Constitutions* that contain the transformational imagery of being made male. This is accomplished by providing detailed summaries of the primary source texts. These summaries highlight the eschatological motivation of *enkrateia*. The other objective of this chapter is to identify the transformational imagery of *enkrateia* that is reflective of eschatological motivation. Although the transformational imagery of changing sexes should be read in context with other transformational imagery, this imagery will be especially highlighted. Later, chapter 6 will investigate the vision of Saturus from the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* as a way to explore the background of the sources for the vision of the eschaton. Understanding the origin of the transformation imagery, and particularly the imagery of changing sexes, illustrates the theological meaning of the imagery, namely being transformed into a holy man or woman.

**THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS**

Scholars knew that there was a text in early Christianity called the *Gospel of Thomas*. Hippolytus in Rome in his refutation of the Naassenes mentions the latter's use
of it. Origen in Alexandria around 233, in his first homily on Luke, mentions the *Gospel of Thomas* in a list of heterodox gospels, and Eusebius lists it among the works of the heretics. But until 1948, when French scholar Jean Doresse, saw a manuscript in the Coptic Museum in Cairo that had been found in December of 1945 at Nag Hammadi, no one had any idea what the *Gospel of Thomas* said. What was found at Nag Hammadi were 13 leather bound papyrus codices which included 52 texts. The papyrus dated to the mid-fourth century, around 340 a.d. In the second codex was a complete Coptic translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* which included 114 sayings. This text also shed light on three manuscript fragments that had been discovered near Oxyrhynchus in Egypt in 1897 and 1903. In a garbage dump in Oxyrhynchus, Greek fragments dated between 130 and 250 had been found, but scholars had little concrete evidence to understand whence these fragments came. With the discovery of the Coptic manuscripts scholars knew that they had discovered fragments of several sayings from the *Gospel of Thomas*.

The extant manuscript evidence dates from 130 to 340 a.d. but, scholars have been divided on the issue of dating the *Gospel of Thomas*. Those scholars who think that it is an independent document give the text an early date, between 50 and 140 a.d. Scholars who think that the Gospel is dependent on other texts including the canonical Gospels, argue for a date after 140 a.d. DeConick argues for a developing text which can be dated between 30 and 120 a.d. Her model of development of the Gospel argues for an original composition in Aramaic in Jerusalem which quickly travelled to Syria where the text was translated and

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255 Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.7.20.


adapted within the life of the local community. Thus, dating can be considered both early and late. From the extant textual evidence it is also obvious that the text was translated into Greek and Coptic.

The gradual accrual of sayings which formed the *Kernel of the Gospel of Thomas* occurred between 30 and 50 a.d. and included over half of the sayings in the complete Gospel. DeConick speculates that this *Kernel* includes five speeches of Jesus which were organized around eschatological themes. The first speech is about eschatological urgency and about the necessity to behave according to the truth revealed to them, and about taking that message to others. The eschaton is so close that Jesus is already judging the earth and individuals already have access to the heavenly throne where they can bow down and worship. In the second speech, Jesus explains what is necessary to be a true disciple during eschatological times. True disciples will not only be comforted by Jesus’ presence, but will also be persecuted like him. Jesus admonishes his hearers that the situation is so urgent they should not be worried about daily necessities. The emphasis in speech three is about the necessity of being singularly devoted to Jesus and following him alone. Speech four then turns to those who are worthy to know the truth that Jesus is revealing. The last speech turns to the imminent revelation of God’s Kingdom. These revelations include the luminous presence of God for those who are near Jesus, worshipping God before the throne.

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destruction of the Temple, and apocalyptic imagery of the harvest and heavenly banquet.

According to DeConick, this Kernel Gospel, written in Aramaic was, taken to Syria as a part of the mission from Jerusalem. Between the years of 50 and 120 a.d. this Kernel was translated into Syriac and accretions were added. When the community in Syria did not see evidence of the eschaton happening or coming they began asking questions. The accretions that were added during this time were question and answer units and answer dialogues, which allowed the community to interpret the Kernel sayings for their contemporary setting. In these questions the community asks specific questions about the eschaton. They ask when and how the eschaton will happen. They ask what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like for us? They ask what they will be like when they enter the Kingdom of Heaven and when they will see Jesus. And they ask when the dead will achieve rest. The answers to their questions indicate that the community had misinterpreted the eschatological expectations in the Kernel Gospel. The accretions show that instead of waiting for the eschaton to come or anticipating a future eschatological event,

261 Logion 71. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas, 226.
262 Logion 57. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 193
263 Logion 64. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 209-210.
264 Logia 18,51,113. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 101, 182, 295
266 Logion 22. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 115.
267 Logion 37. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 151.
268 Logion 51. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 182
the community now interpreted the eschatological event as already being present, already being established on earth. As a consequence of an already present Kingdom, Jesus could be revealed to them immediately and directly. In order to show that their community’s revised hermeneutic of the original Kernel was the right interpretation, DeConick shows that the present community collapsed the eschatological expectation, and in order to demonstrate that the eschaton was present, used the question and answer dialogues. Next, between 80 and 120 a.d., accretions were added to these dialogues which show that the community developed the idea of a fully present Kingdom on earth. If the Kingdom of Heaven was already present, then individuals in the community needed to live like they were already participating in that reality: the fully present Kingdom demanded enkrateia.

As indicated previously, the community which used the Gospel began asking specific eschatological questions about the Kingdom of Heaven. The Gospel of Thomas includes six dialogues which deal specifically with the Kingdom of Heaven. The themes presented in these six dialogues are repeated in other logia to show how the community would live in an immanent Kingdom.

*The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Tell us, how will our end come about?’ Jesus said, ‘Have you discovered the beginning that you seek the end? Because where the beginning is, the end will be also. Whoever will stand in the beginning is blessed. This person will know the end, yet will not die.*

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271 Ibid., De Conick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas* 32. Texts in italics are argued by DeConick to be accretions, while texts in regular type are Kernel.

The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Tell us, what is the Kingdom of Heaven like?’

He said to them, ‘It is like a mustard seed, smaller than all seeds. But when it falls on cultivated soil, it put forth a large branch and becomes a shelter for the birds of the sky.’”

Jesus saw little babies nursing. He said to his disciples,

‘These little ones nursing are like those who enter the Kingdom.’
They said to him, ‘Will we enter the Kingdom as little babies?’

Jesus said to them, ‘When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below. And when you make the male and the female into a single being, with the result that the male is not male nor the female female. When you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the Kingdom.]’

His disciples said, ‘When will you appear to us? When will we see you?’
Jesus said, ‘When you strip naked without shame, take your garments, put them under your feet like little children, and trample on them. Then [you will see] the Son of the Living One and will not be afraid.’

His disciples said to him, ‘When will the dead rest, and when will the new world come?’

He said to them, ‘What you look for has come, but you have not perceived it.’

His disciples said to him, ‘When will the Kingdom come? It will not come by waiting. It will not be said, ‘Look! Here it is!’ or ‘Look! Here it is!’ Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread out over the earth, but people do not see it.’

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274 Logia 22. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 115. [ ]square brackets indicate lacunae or effacement and their possible reconstructions. Page x.

275 Logion 37. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 151.

276 Logion 51. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 182.

277 Logion 113. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 295.
These sayings from the complete Gospel indicate that the Kingdom of God had already come and was present on earth and as a result the people in the community could see Jesus. Logia 18, 22, and 37 also indicate that the community understood the Kingdom to be a recreation of the prelapsarian Edenic state. Invoking the Genesis creation narrative these three Logia tell us that the immanent Kingdom of Heaven is a return to the protological condition. This community exists as in the pre-fallen state before death, before Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Logion 22 furthers this protological return where the community is returned to the original image, where each part of the individual, the eye, the hand, the foot is made new. Logion 17 explicitly says that being a disciple of Christ returns one to Paradise where one is sustained by five trees.

Logion 22 also shows that participation in this prelapsarian community requires the community to become “little ones” or “little babies.” Becoming a “little one” is understood to be a return to the presexual Adam before the distinction of male and female. The idea of becoming children in a prelapsarian state is present in Logion 4 where it is the child who knows about the place of life and teaches the old man. The idea of becoming little children in the Kingdom of Heaven is present again in Logion 37 where in order to see Jesus, little children must strip naked and trample on their garments.

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and not be ashamed. This protological imagery recalls the creation of the man and woman in Genesis 2 and their being unashamed and naked with one another.\textsuperscript{280} After they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were aware of their nakedness and hid from God and were afraid.\textsuperscript{281} Before God put Adam and Eve out of Eden, he clothed them with garments of skin.\textsuperscript{282} In Logion 37, this clothing imagery is reversed. The little children remove their garments and trample them underfoot and are naked and unashamed like the man and woman before eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.\textsuperscript{283} The imagery of becoming children and stripping or changing garments is also highlighted by Logion 21 where Mary asks Jesus who the disciples are like. He responds, “\textit{They are like little children sojourning in a field that is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, ‘Leave our field! In front of them, they strip naked in order to abandon it, returning their field to them.’}”\textsuperscript{284} Logion 37 illustrates well how the eschaton, here immanently experienced, motivates \textit{enkrateia}. Living in a prelapsarian Edenic state, the community was asexual, neither male nor female. This asexual, childlike state was encratic. Several other Logia in the complete Gospel highlight this relationship between eschatology and \textit{enkrateia}. The children who know about the kingdom in Logion 4 become single ones. The

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{280} Genesis 2:25
  \item \textsuperscript{281} Genesis 3:10
  \item \textsuperscript{282} Genesis 3:20
  \item \textsuperscript{283} April D. DeConick, and Jarl Fossum. “Stripped Before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas.” \textit{Vigiliae Christianae} 45.2 (June 1991): 123-50.
  \item \textsuperscript{284} Logion 21.
\end{itemize}
accretion to Logion 23 says that those whom Jesus chose will “stand as single people.” Logia 16, 49, and 75 all speak about celibates. These monks are from the Kingdom of Heaven and will return, they reject their earthly family, are able to enter the bridal chamber, in the Kingdom they will stand before God.

THE GREEK GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS

The only explicit extent quotations of the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians are five fragments of a dialogue between Salome and Jesus which Clement of Alexandria preserves in his discussion of marriage in the third chapter of his Stromateis. Before

285 This is the Coptic word μονωχος. In "The 'Single One' in the Gospel of Thomas, Klijn shows this is equivalent of the singles ones used in other Logia. It is important to differentiate between these words because the Greek monochos is not know until the fourth century. Its use here is the precursor of the Greek usage. See on this subject the following A.Guillaumont, Les semitismes dans l'Évangile selon Thomas: essai de classement, Studies in Gnosticism & Hellenistic Religions 1981, 202-203; Quispel, G., L'Évangile selon Thomas et les origines de l'ascèse chrétienne, in: Aspects du Judéo-Christianisme: Colloque de Strasbourg, 23-25 avril 1964, Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1965, 35-52; and especially Françoise Morard, "Monachos, Moine. Histoire du terme jusqu'au IVe siècle", Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 20 (1973) 332-411.

286 Logion 49. De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas 179.


288 Logion 75, De Conick, Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas, 232.

289 W. Schneemelcher rehearses the history and arguments for possible citations of the Gospel of Egyptians but concludes that apart from Clement’s expressly declared usage of the Gospel of the Egyptians nothing else can of certainty be claimed for this apocryphal Gospel. Other possible evidence for the Gospel of the Egyptians includes the Second Epistle of Clement c.xii.2 : “ For the Lord himself being asked by some when his kingdom should come, said: When the two shall be one, and the outside (that which is without) as the inside (that which is within), and the male with the female neither male nor female.” No manuscripts for the Gospel of the Egyptians are known to have survived up to the present day. However, references to it are found in the form of quotations in other texts. The two most important sources are Clement of Alexandria’s Stromata book III and Hippolytus Refutation of all Heresies, book V chap. 2. The former is important because it contains the earliest reference to the work while the latter provides detailed background information. References to the text can also be found in Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis’ Panarion. The lack of references to the gospel before 150 suggests that it became popular in the second half of the second century. It is reasonable to assume that Clement received the text early in its dissemination because he lived in Alexandria, Egypt, the probable area of its production.
leaving Alexandria in 202 Clement had written a collection of books or essays on various subjects. This *Miscellanies of Notes of Revealed Knowledge in Accordance with the True Philosophy*, or *Stromateis*, covered a variety of subjects including the relationship between philosophy and Christian truth, faith, marriage, martyrdom, symbolism, mysticism, and the search for truth. Clement begins his third book by briefly introducing a wide range of views on the permissibility of marriage in order to assert that the truth regarding the teaching on marriage is to “bless abstention from sexual intercourse and those to whom it comes as a gift from God…and to admire monogamy and respect for one marriage only.”

In order to dismiss heretical views on marriage, Clement divides his opponents into two categories, those who make no distinction between right and wrong and therefore live a life of licentiousness, and those who are extreme ascetics arguing for absolute abstinence from marriage and consequentially procreation. In arguing against the latter, including the Encratites and Jullian Cassianus, who “teach that we ought not accept marriage and childbearing or introduce yet more wretches in their turn into the world to provide fodder for death,” Clement cites the Greek *Gospel of the Egyptians*. He offers these five sayings not found in the four traditional Gospels in order to show that the heretics misinterpret their own texts:

> When Salome asked, “How long will death maintain its power?” the Lord said, “As long as you women bear children.”

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290 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III,4; 258.

291 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III,45; 284.

292 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III,45; 284.
Those who attack God’s creation under the pious name of self-control (*enkrateia*) quote the words spoken to Salome, which we have mentioned previously. I fancy the passage comes from the Gospel of the Egyptians. They maintain that the Savior personally said, “I am come to destroy the works of the female.” “Female” refers to sexual desire, and its works are birth and decay.  

Salome said, “How long will human beings go on dying?”…the Lord answered with circumspection, “As long as women give birth.” (Stromateis III.64)

When Salome asked when she would know the answer to her question the Lord replied, ‘When you trample underfoot the integument (garment) of shame, and when the two become one and the male is one with the female, and there is no more male and female. In the first place, then, we have not this saying in the four Gospels that have been delivered to us, but in that according to the Egyptians.’

Clement’s use of these four citations of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* indicates that his opponents used the text for their radically encratic ideals. His point is not necessarily to condemn the work. In fact, Clement offers to the heretics a corrective interpretation of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* as well as an exegesis of other passages from the text which he says supports a choice for either celibacy or marriage and clarifies the point that marriage is cooperation with the work of creation:

She said, “Would I have done better if I never had a child?” Suggesting that childbearing was not a necessary obligation. The Lord replied in the words, “Eat every plant but do not eat a plant whose content is bitter.”

This redress against those espousing radical *enkrateia* includes an exposition of canonical scripture in order to further illustrate the heretic’s misinterpretation. In engaging a

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293 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.63; 295


discussion about the motivation for *enkrateia*, Clement’s treatise offers us not only fragments of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, which interestingly preserve the transformational imagery of changing sexes motivated by protology, but it also conserves eschatological and Christological motivations for varying degrees of *enkrateia*.

When Clement deals with Julius Cassianus as a specific heretic who uses the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* he shows that the heretic’s exegesis of the Gospel links the practice of *enkrateia* with protological state, the original condition of humans in paradise before the fall. Consequentially, sexual intercourse and women bearing children are signs and consequences of the fallen world. According to Clement, Cassianus teaches an anthropology clearly influenced by a Platonic view in which the soul is divine in origin and only comes to this world of birth and decay because of the feminine desire (*epithymia*) for procreation and consequential death.\(^{296}\) When God expelled them from this divine realm he clothed Adam and Eve with “tunics of skins,” which Cassian thinks are our bodies.\(^{297}\) God never intended for these human bodies to have sexual intercourse and to be ruled by the earthly values of being born and engendering. In fact this innovation was the result of a diabolical trick.\(^{298}\) In the garden the snake took the practice of sexual intercourse from the irrational animals and persuaded Adam to have sex with Eve.

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\(^{296}\)Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.91; 314

\(^{297}\) Philo *Allegorical Interpretation* III.69: *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, 137.

\(^{298}\) Also for the notion of marriage being introduced by the devil, see Tatian cited in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.81-82, 89, 306-307, 312.
The heretics further claim that the understanding of the sinful nature of sexual intercourse being called “knowledge” is indicated in the Genesis narrative and the eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After Adam and Eve ate from the tree they were naked. Later, after their expulsion from the garden, Adam “knew” Eve and they had a son. Adam and Eve’s transgression of the commandment not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is explained by the use of the phrase “knew.” When Adam “knew” Eve and she bore him a son, it is obvious that “knew” means that they had sex. So when Adam and Eve ate of the tree and “knew” they were naked, this also indicates that they had sex. God had told them that they were forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and if they did, they would die. When Adam and Eve had sex they brought death into the world. *Enkrateia*, sexual abstinence, would return them to the pre-fallen state.\(^{299}\) It is ironic that Clement argues against Julius Cassianus’s position of radical *enkrateia* based on his exegesis of the Genesis narrative because Clement too reads “knowledge” in the Old Testament as the sexual union of man and wife, and also understands this action to be connected to their expulsion from Eden.

When Clements quotes the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* he is mounting an argument against those who “attack God’s creation under the pious name of *enkrateia*” and wish to “dissolve the marriage bond,” arguing that “intercourse is polluted” and that “marriage is instituted by the devil.” Clement’s quotations first offer two versions of a question put to the Lord which establishes a relationship between the cause and effect of

\(^{299}\) Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.81,104; 306, 322
the postlapsarian state, marriage and death: “How long will death maintain its power?” and “How long will human beings go on dying?” The Lord’s answer to Salome’s question in both cases is the same: “As long as you women bear children” and “As long as women give birth.” The relationship between death and procreation conditioned by an enocratic reading of the Genesis narrative is most fully articulated in this context by Cassianus.

When Clement quotes Cassianus’ exegesis of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* he does not include the question which Salome asks, but the Lord’s answer is thematically similar: “When you trample underfoot the integument (garment) of shame, and when the two become one and the male is one with the female, and there is no more male and female.”

Clement tells us that Cassianus understands the “garment of skins” to be our bodies and that these were granted after the first fall from the divine realm. In the context of the Genesis narrative these “garments of shame” are the gendered bodies given at the first fall which resulted from the desire for procreation and death. Although Clement does not include explicitly Cassianus’ vision of the prelapsarian heavenly state, he does indicate that it did not include marriage, procreation, or consequential death. From Cassianius’ use of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* the prelapsarian state also was void of gendered bodies and the differences between male and female.

Cassianus’ use of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* and his protological motivation for *enkrateia* also help to explain Clement’s early quotations of the *Greek Gospel of Philip* Logia 71 and 78 says that before the separation of Adam and Eve death did not exist. In the Valentinian view of the primordial fall: the eschaton is conceived as the restoration of the original unity of male and female). See also Excerpta ex Theodotos 21,2-3; 67, 2-4 and 68.

301 Also see the discussion in Chapter 5 below on the garments of shame in the *Acts of Thomas.*
Referring to the encratites’ use of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* teaching on the relationship between procreation and death, Clement adds that the encratites also teach that the Lord says, “I am come to destroy the works of the female.”  

Clement adds, “‘Female’ refers to sexual desire, and its works are birth and decay.” Whether or not the encratites exegesis of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* includes this explanation, it would only further support a protological motivation for *enkrateia*. In fact it is a conflation of Cassianus’ double fall, the soul being effeminized by desire and Adam and Eve being prevailed upon to imitate the irrational beasts in sexual intercourse. It is the overturning of this double fall and the Lord’s freeing us “from the relationship of the sexual organs and from these shameful appendages” which is the motivation for *enkrateia*. Returned to the prelapsarian state these encratites were already a “new creation” no longer inclined to sin.

Clement’s full quotation from Cassianus’ work which illustrates his interpretation of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, most succinctly illustrates the postlapsarian nature of gendered bodies and the sinful nature of sexual intercourse:

> In his book *On Self Control* or *On Celibacy* he says, and I quote, “No one should say that because we have the parts of the body that we do, with the female shaped one way and the male another, one for receiving and the other for inseminating, sexual intercourse has God’s approval. For if this disposition was from the God towards whom we are eagerly pressing, he would not have blessed eunuchs, and the prophet would not have said that they are ‘not an unfruitful tree’ taking an analogy from the tree for the man who by deliberate choice emasculates himself from ideas of this sort.

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303 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III 92; 314

304 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III 62; 294
In an effort to defend his godless opinion he adds, ‘How would it be unreasonable to bring a charge against the Savior if he malformed us and then freed us from his mistake and from partnership with our genitals, appendages and private parts?’ In this view he is close to Tatian. But he left Valentinus’ school. That is why Cassian says, ‘When Salome asked when she would know the answer to her question the Lord replied, ‘When you trample underfoot the integument (garment) of shame, and when the two become one and the male is one with the female, and there is no more male and female.’”

According to the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the way in which death is overcome is through *enkrateia*, by abstaining from sexual intercourse and the engendering children. Clement’s attribution of quotations of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* to the encratites clearly indicates for them *enkrateia* is motivated by the protological state which was void of marriage/sexual intercourse, birth and death. The sign of a return to this prelapsarian state is the eradication of gender, the transformational imagery of changing sexes.

The eradication of marriage, procreation, and consequential death is also a part of the encratites eschatological motivation for *enkrateia*. Clement tells us that the encratites say, “they have already attained the state of the resurrection, and on this account reject marriage.” Similiarly, they quote the saying “The children of the age to come neither marry nor are given in marriage.” Clement’s counter arguments explicitly link the heretics teaching to an exegesis of the Lukan narrative where Jesus is answering

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307 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.48; 285

308 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III.80; 305
the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection. The Sadducees want to know if
according to the law of Moses seven brothers married the same wife but were all
childless, whose wife she would be in the resurrection. The Lord replies:

The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are
accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the
dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any
more, because they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, sons of the
resurrection.309

The Lukan version of Jesus’ dialogue with the Sadducees is far more instructive
than its gospel parallels in Matthew and Mark.310 In these gospels Jesus’ reply to the
Sadducees simply says “in the resurrection one takes neither wife nor husband, but is like
the angels in heaven.” The encratite exegesis of the Lukan narrative emphasizes a conflict
between the “children of this age” and those who are worthy of the resurrection, “sons of
God, sons of resurrection.” The condition of the “children of the resurrection” is equal to
the angels and differs from the “children of this age” in two important ways, first they do
not marry and second, they do not die. Because Clement’s encratites believe that their
“citizenship is in heaven,” not on earth,311 and that they are the “sons of the resurrection,”
they attain life immortal and consequently have no need of marriage.

The encratites turn to the discussion on the resurrection because of its instruction
on how to participate in the eschaton. For the same reason, they look to Jesus’ discussion

309 Codex Bezae (D) has in v35 before “marry and given in marriage” “are begotten and beget.” See
“Asceticism and Anthropology: Enkrateia and ‘Double Creation’ in Early Christianity.” Asceticism. Ed.

310 Mt 22.29-30 and Mark 12:18-27

311 Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis III.95; 315-316. Based on Phil 3.20
with his disciples on the matter of divorce. In Matthew, the Pharisees test Jesus by asking him about the permissibility of divorce according to the Mosaic law. When Jesus explains that Moses permits divorce because of human hardness of heart, but that anyone who divorces his wife is really committing adultery, the disciples decide that “it is not expedient to marry.” Jesus encourages their conviction for the “kingdom of heaven”:

Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been made so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this teaching, let him receive it.\textsuperscript{312} It is the eunuch, like the sons of the resurrection, who participates in the Kingdom of Heaven.

ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVATION FOR ENKRATEIA IN THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS AND THE GOSPEL OF THE EGYPTIANS, AND THE RESULTANT TRANSFORMATIONAL IMAGERY

Both the Gospel of Thomas and the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians indicate that enkrateia is motivated by the eschaton. They also both indicate that the eschaton is envisioned as a return to the protological state, therefore enkrateia is also protologically motivated. The result of enkrateia being eschatologically and protologically motivated is that the transformational imagery used to talk about one who is motivated to enkrateia is drawn from the eschatological and protological states. In both texts individuals who participate in the eschaton are immortal, celibate, like the angels, become children, and return to a prelapsarian asexual state.

\textsuperscript{312} Matthew 19: 3-12
The few extant lines preserved in a secondary text hardly permit us to summarize the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* with attention to transformational imagery. However, the five fragments that have been preserved interestingly maintain sex change imagery: gender is eradicated and women no longer give birth. Clement’s citation of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* and his commentary upon it and his opponents use of it, though, preserve a protological motivation for *enkrateia* and specifically show transformational imagery of changing sexes linked to a return to the prelapsarian state. This protological motivation for *enkrateia* is thoroughly explained by Clement’s arguments against radical *enkrateia* and his defensive exposition of scripture. Clement’s opponents use the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* to support their idea that Adam and Eve having sex is what brought death into the world and that *enkrateia* would return them to the original protological state. Further exegesis of the Genesis narrative indicates that this original protologolical state was not sexually differentiated. Adam and Eve sinned as differentiated male and female and as a result they were given garments of skins, “the robes of shame,” and could now die. In order to participate in the eschatological state sexual differentiation and the garments of skin needed to be renounced. By doing so the encratites who used the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* believed that they had recreated the protological state and were living in the eschaton. They were transformed and were “neither male nor female” or were “becoming male.” They would remove their “garments of skin,” become children, and become immortal.

Clement shows that the encratites using the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* understood the final state to be a return to the beginning, to Eden. In his condemnation of radical *enkrateia*, he also highlights that the *enkrateia* was motivated an interpretation of
the Lukan vision of the eschatonation where “the children of the age to come neither marry or are given in marriage.”\textsuperscript{313} The encratites believed that they were “sons of the resurrection,” “the sons of God.” As such they were like the angels who do not marry and cannot die. This eschatological motivation of \textit{enkrateia} also highlights transformational imagery: those practicing \textit{enkrateia} become angels, do not marry, and are immortal.

Many of the same themes are present in the \textit{Gospel of Thomas}. As we saw above, the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} indicates that the community believes it is already participating in the eschaton. In the \textit{Gospel}, both the eschaton envisioned as the heavenly Temple and the eschaton envisioned as a return to Eden motivate \textit{enkrateia}. Eschatological themes included in the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} are worshiping in front of God’s throne, standing like angels, participating in the heavenly banquet, and the harvest motifs of sowing and reaping. When these themes are combined with protological ideas, individuals are motivated to \textit{enkrateia}.

In the \textit{Gospel of Thomas} the end is described as being like the beginning, a return to the protological state where there is no death. The Gospel also tells us that this original state is described as a genderless state where “the male is not male nor the female female” and where a woman “will make herself male” to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Likewise the state is conceived of as a childlike state, a state of innocence, before Adam and Eve were clothed with garments of shame, or garments of skin. The text also says that in returning to this beginning disciples will be celibate, \textit{μοναχος} or single ones. This is the transformation that happens to Mary when Jesus makes her male.

\textsuperscript{313} Luke 20:34-36
CONCLUSION

The *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of Thomas* are first through third century *Apocryphal Gospels* that employ the transformational imagery of being made male. In the extant text of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* Jesus tells Salome that death will lose its power when being male and female is transformed. In the *Gospel of Thomas* death is also over turned and the Kingdom of Heaven is inaugurated when there is no longer male and female. Jesus also tells Peter that Mary Magdalene will be able to enter heaven when he himself leads her and makes her male. This transformational imagery is one of several images in these two texts which describe the transformation of an individual who is motivated to become an encratite by the vision of the eschaton. In the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* the eschaton is envisioned as a return to the protological state, the prefall Edenic garden. While the geographical place of the eschaton is not described, the context of the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* explains that those inhabiting heaven are angels and they do not marry. The imagery used to describe holiness is reflective of those states. Holy men and women return to a prelapsarian state where there is no gender and no procreation and they become angels. In the *Gospel of Thomas* the eschatological state is envisioned as a return to the protological state and as the eschatological Temple. Transformational imagery reflects that vision, human beings are asexual, become children and become angels. In chapter 6 we will return to the heavenly temple and the heavenly garden in order to understand the origin of this eschatological imagery as well as the resultant transformational imagery.
CHAPTER 5: ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVATION FOR ENKRATEIA IN THE
APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2 we provided the developing definition and theology of enkrateia. In the second through fourth century many apocryphal texts were written which record the career and fate of one or more of the apostles. The three particular Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles on which chapter five focuses our attention are late second and early third century texts which include detailed accounts of the conversion to enkrateia of women and the transformational imagery of becoming male. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Thecla offers to cut her hair short as a sign of her conversion. Later, after her self-baptism, she begins dressing like a man and is sent to preach. In the Acts of Thomas, Mygdonia chops off her hair and rends her garments. In the Acts of Andrew, Maximilla is hymned as a man.

Many scholars have been interested in these works because they highlight women. As a result, they have turned to these stories in an attempt to understand the historical and social role of women in the second and third centuries. Each of the stories from the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles contains parts of a similar conversion episode: each Act includes the conversion of a beautiful woman whose husband, fiancé, or lord is of high social standing in the community in which the Apostle has just entered; the woman is

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314 Acts of Paul and Thecla, 243; Lipsius, 252

315 Acts of Thomas, 385; Bonnet, 224-225

316 Acts of Andrew, 130, Bonnet, 40.
persuaded by the Apostle’s teaching to withdraw from her husband and take a vow of
virginity; the heroine’s noted beauty causes trouble between the Apostle and the man in
her life who opposes the Apostle, thus resulting in the imprisonment of the Apostle and
often times the virgin as well.\textsuperscript{317} Because of this similarity, these narratives have been
grouped by scholars as “chastity stories” and analyzed according to categories used to
describe the characteristics of folktales.\textsuperscript{318}

This analysis reduces the conversion stories of women in these \textit{Apocryphal Acts}
to reproductions of prior oral traditions which originated with women and were intended
for audiences of women. The socio-historical approach to this literature focuses on
women’s pursuit of autonomy in the second and third centuries; advocates of this
approach argue that a choice for chastity allows women to break out of socially
proscribed roles.\textsuperscript{319}

This social-historical approach has been accurate in its observation that all of
these stories include \textit{enkrateia}, broadly understood as sexual renunciation or chastity. It is
also reasonable to speculate that these “chastity stories” tell us something about the social
and cultural milieu in which they were written. But to reduce these narratives to social
commentary oversimplifies the theology in the narrative. The broad focus of secondary
literature on the cultural and social milieu has largely ignored the theological motivation


\textsuperscript{318} Ibid. See also Stevan Davies, \textit{The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts}

\textsuperscript{319} Burrus, \textit{Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts}. 
for *enkrateia*, or sexual continence, namely the diverse and developing eschatology of the second and third centuries.

In the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* eschatology motivates *enkrateia*, both in the broader sense that includes dietary restrictions, voluntary poverty, and sexual renunciation, and the normally restricted sense of virginity and marital continence.\(^{320}\)

In these texts, when a Christian, woman or man, chooses a life of *enkrateia* that is motivated by the eschaton, they are transformed. In order then to understand transformational imagery, and especially the transformational imagery of changing sexes, the starting point needs to be the reasons for the *enkrateia* they highlight. It is quite evident that the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of Thomas* share an eschatological motivation for *enkrateia*: in all three *Apocryphal Acts* men and women choose lives of *enkrateia* because of the eschatological preaching of an apostle. This similarity by no means necessitates that the individual *Acts* form a closed or even textually related canon of material with a unified theological system, or even that they explain the eschaton and its related imagery in a univocal manner.\(^{321}\) It is also possible that variant explanations of the eschaton employ the same transformational imagery. This chapter first seeks to establish the eschatological motivation of *enkrateia* in the *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Thomas*, and *Act of Andrew*, the three second and early third century

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\(^{320}\) The primary Greek definition of *enkrateia* is “self discipline” and “temperance” which extends beyond the sexual sphere. Even though Clement of Alexandria understood the broader meaning, early Christian writers normally restricted their conversation to issues of sexuality.

Aprocyphal Acts of the Apostles that contain the transformational imagery of being made male. This will be accomplished by providing detailed summaries of the primary source texts. These summaries will highlight the eschatological motivation of martyrdom. The other objective of this chapter is to identify the transformational imagery of enkrateia that is reflective of eschatological motivation. Later, in chapter 6, we will explore these theological elements of enkrateia alongside the theological elements of martyrdom and their possible antecedents in order to understand the transformational imagery in the text.

THE ACTS OF PAUL AND THECLA

From the canonical Acts of the Apostles we know that in 47-48 a.d. Paul and Barnabas travelled to central Turkey as a part of their first Missionary journey. In modern day Konya, or Iconium, they preached to Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue. A couple of years later, Paul returned with Silas on a second missionary trip to Iconium. The Acts of Paul and Thecla also chronicle stories from one of Paul’s trips to Iconium where he preached in house churches. Within these Acts, there is a story of the conversion of Thecla, a young aristocratic woman who lived in Iconium. This story circulated both as an independent story called the Acts of Paul and Thecla, and as a part of a larger work called the Acts of Paul.

The external evidence of the manuscript tradition, the textual history of reception of the Acts of Paul, and the external literary testimony of sources that discuss, refer to, or

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322 Acts 14:1-5 and Acts 14:21

323 Acts 16:2
quote the *Acts of Paul* is prolific. From this evidence scholars have concluded that the latest possible date for the writing of the *Acts of Paul* is between 196 and 206 AD. The earliest possible date for the *Acts of Paul* is less definite. Some evidence could date the *Acts of Paul* all the way back to the time when the events were reported to have occurred, during Paul’s missionary trips to Iconium. Most scholars, though, are more cautious with a later date of writing, perhaps about 160 A.D. From external textual evidence

The first external literary testimony for the *Acts of Paul* appears in treatise on baptism written by Tertullian in Carthage, North Africa between 196 and 206 AD: “But if certain Acts of Paul, which are falsely so named, claim the example of Thecla for allowing women to teach and to baptize, let men know that in Asia the presbyter who compiled that document, thinking to add of his own to Paul’s reputation, was found out, and though he had professed he had done it for love of Paul, was deposed from his position. How could he believe that Paul could give a female power to teach and to baptize, when he did not allow a woman even to learn by her own right? Let them keep silence he says, and ask their husbands at home.” Ernest evans, ed and trans., *Tertullian’s Homily on Baptism* (London:SPCK, 1964)36-37.

For several translations of the relevant text and translations see A. Hilhorst, “Tertullian on the Acts of Paul,” 150-53; Evans, *Tertullian’s Homily*, 35-37, 97-101. Tertullian was writing against a Cainite woman who argued that baptism was not a necessary sacrament of Christianity. In chapter 17, Tertullian refers to the *Acts of Paul* and to the example of Thecla. There is a technical scholarly conversation about whether or not Tertullian was actually referring to the *Acts of Paul* as a complete work which included the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The reason for much of this argument is whether or not the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was written by a woman or at least originated as oral tales told by and for a community of women. If Tertullian is referring to an presbyter from Asia Minor writing the whole of the *Acts of Paul* then the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was not written by a woman for a community of women. If on the other hand, Tertullian was not referring to the whole of the *Acts of Paul* then this community of women could exist. For this discussion and those scholars arguing for specific female communities and authorship see Steven L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: the Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980) 104-09 and in his “Women, Tertullian, and the *Acts of Paul*,” in *Semeia 38: The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 139-43; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983)34-53); Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Studies in Women and Religion Volume 23; Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1987)67-8.

There is architectural evidence that a Queen Tryphaena who is a relative of Caesar and who is mentioned in the *Acts of Paul* lived between 38 and 68 AD, possibly in Iconium. See W. Rordorf, “Tradition and Composition in the *Acts of Thecla: The State of the Question,” *Semeia 38*, 46.

This date is based on several arguments: a Roman inscription of a Pompeia Sosia Falconilla, who is suspected to be the daughter of Queen Tryphaena, referred to in the *Acts of Paul*; on the similarities of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* to the ancient novel that was popular at this later date; the argument that the *Apocryphal Acts* first existed as oral tales and then only later as written texts; and the argument that dating at an earlier date based on architectural evidence was flawed logic as the *Apocryphal Acts* were fictional.
and the manuscript tradition, scholars have also concluded that the original language in which the *Acts of Paul* were written was Greek. Quickly, though, it was translated into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin and was known and used in at least Asia Minor, Rome, North Africa, Cесeara Maritima, and Alexandria by the beginning of the third century. The history of textual reception indicates that the *Acts of Paul* was at the same time widely used, widely read, and widely condemned.

Scholars have reconstructed the *Acts of Paul* from fragmentary evidence. The section of the *Acts of Paul* that records the conversion of Thecla and is sometimes referred to as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, survived as a nearly complete manuscript because it circulated both as part of the *Acts of Paul*, and as an independent manuscript tradition that supported the cult of Saint Thecla that was centered in Asia Minor in the fourth and fifth century.327

A summary of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* will show that internal evidence from the manuscripts of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* highlights an emphasis on eschatology and its motivation for *enkrateia*: Paul’s preaching on the resurrection and *enkrateia* motivates several individuals to choose to turn away from their current wealthy, married or betrothed lives. When they choose this new life their lives are transformed. This transformation is described through the use of imagery which reflects the eschatological state: when the characters choose the eschatological life and are motivated to *enkrateia*, they resemble angels; they become Christ; they become temples; and they change gender.

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The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* begins in the midst of the local church in Iconium. As believers gathered together at the house of a married man named Onesiphorus, Paul breaks bread and proclaims the “word of God concerning self control/ *enkrateia* and resurrection/ *anastasis*.”

The thirteen Beatitudes that Paul preaches present the eschatological motivation for *enkrateia*.

In each Beatitude, Paul not only persuades the assembly to give up their previous ways of life and to adopt the ethics summarized in the Beatitudes, but he also offers the assurance of the consequential eschatological reward.

These Beatitudes, like the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew, refer to a future eschatological reward, but present recompense is not excluded.

Thecla, a maiden of a good family in Iconium, is sitting entranced in the window of a neighboring house devoting herself to Paul’s teaching on the Beatitudes. For three

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328 *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 239; Lipsius 238.

329 Paul’s message presents a series of beatitudes reminiscent of those found in Matthew 5 save their clearly ascetic emphasis.

330 Each of the beatitudes follows a similar grammatical pattern: “the blessed are those who,” the ‘*makarios ho*’, that functions as an exhortation and the apodosis ‘*hoti*..’ which contains the promise of a future reward.

331 Stephen Davis, Defense of Women’s Right to Baptize. Glenny: I Cor 7:29-31 (54) “The beatitude series shows a clear connection with Paul’s teaching and some similarity to the beatitudes of Matthew 5 and Luke 6. The clearest similarity to I Cor 7 occurs in the beatitude “Blessed are those who have wives as if they had them not, for they shall inherit God.” The phrase …is a verbatim reproduction of I Cor 7:29b. Other similarities between Paul’s sermon in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and I Cor 7 reinforce this connection. In a later beatitude Paul declares “Blessed are they who through love of God have departed from the form of this world, for they shall judge the angels. The Greek word form occurs only twice in the NT, in I Cor 7.31 and Phil 2.7, and the occurrence in I Cor 7.31 warrants serious comparison with the APTH since both texts employ form in the construction “form of this world”. Both the Corinthian and Theclan texts stress virginity and continence as key themes. This evidence supports Schnemelcher’s conclusion concerning the language in the *Acts of Paul*. He states: The authors language is uniform, and to a large extent that of the NT. In particular the Pastorals and the Acts have been used, but so also have the Gospel’s and Paul’s letters. Here however it is scarcely a question of exact quotations, but rather of linguistic and conceptual agreement on the basis of the knowledge of the NT Literature.”

This essay in part argues against MacDonald’s argument that the APL are closer to the epistles than the pastorals are to Paul’s teaching.
days and three nights she neither eats nor drinks. So moved by Paul’s message, Thecla leaves her fiancé Thamyris to follow Paul. Distressed at her daughters bizarre behavior, Theocleia sends for Thamyris and tells him that Paul is upsetting the city of the Iconians, teaching all of the woman and young people that go in to him to “fear one single God only, and live chastely.”

Thamyris runs into the streets and searches among those listening to Paul for someone to tell him about this teacher “who deceives the souls of young men and maidens, that they should not marry but remain as they are.”

Demas and Hermogenes, adversaries of Paul, deny knowing Paul but proclaim to Thamyris that Paul “deprives young men of wives and maidens of husbands, saying ‘Otherwise there is no resurrection for you, except ye remain chaste and do not defile the flesh, but keep it pure.’” Thecla’s mother and the jealous Thamyris are so enraged that they go to the governor and denounce the apostle as a magician who bewitches the young people of the city so that they no longer wish to marry.

Paul is arrested at Thamyris’ insistence and the Proconsul demands that Paul explain who he is and what it is that he teaches. Paul proclaims,

The living God, the God of vengeance, the jealous God, the God who has need of nothing, has sent me since he desires the salvation of men, that I may draw them away from corruption and impurity, all pleasure and death, that they may sin no more. For this cause God sent His own Son, whom I preach and teach that in him men have hope, who alone had compassion upon a world in error; that men may no longer be under judgment but have faith, and fear of God, and knowledge of propriety, and love of truth.

332 Acts of Paul and Thecla, 240; Lipsius 242

333 Acts of Paul and Thecla, 241; Lipsius 243

334 Acts of Paul and Thecla, 241; Lipsius 244.

335 Acts of Paul and Thecla 242; Lipsius 246.
Theocleia’s accusation, Demas and Hermogenes deception, and Paul’s confession succinctly summarize the teachings in the opening Beatitudes: the eschaton is the goal and the reward for those who keep themselves pure by practicing *enkrateia*.

This preaching of the connection between resurrection and *enkrateia* is dominant in nearly every episode of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Half of the Beatitudes explicitly highlight sexual continence and the consequential reward:

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.  
Blessed are they who have kept the flesh pure, for they shall become a temple of God.  
Blessed are the continent, for to them will God speak.  
Blessed are they who have wives as if they had them not, for they shall be heirs to God.  
Blessed are they who have kept their baptism secure, for they shall rest with the Father and Son.  
Blessed are the bodies of virgins, for they shall be well pleasing to God, and shall not lose the reward of their purity. For the word of the father shall be for them a work of salvation in the day of his Son, and they shall have rest for ever and ever.  
Blessed are they who have renounced this world, for they shall be well pleasing unto God.

The remaining Beatitudes teach fear and knowledge of God and their consequential reward:

Blessed are they who have fear of God, for they shall become angels of God.  
Blessed are they who tremble at the words of God, for they shall be comforted.  
Blessed are they who have received the wisdom of Jesus Christ, for they shall be called Sons of the most high.  
Blessed are they who have laid hold upon the understanding of Jesus Christ, for they shall be in light.  
Blessed are they who through love of God have departed from the form of this world, for they judge angels and at the right hand of the Father they shall be blessed.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy, and shall not see the bitter day of judgment.  

The story of conversion to the virgin life and the reaping of the eschatological rewards of the Beatitudes is illustrated throughout the *Acts of the Paul and Thecla*. Paul arrives in Iconium with the “face of an angel.” There in Onesiphorus’s house, in the presence of Onesiphorus’s wife and children and a community gathered together, Paul preaches the Beatitudes. In response Onesiphorus later leaves “the things of this world” and is portrayed as a model Christian belonging to the category of the blessed (*makarioi*) who have wives as if they had none and therefore will be heirs of God.

Thecla also renounces the things of this world. Bribing the guardsmen and jailers with gifts of bracelets and mirrors, Thecla steals away from her home and joins Paul at the prison by night. The next day Paul is scourged and cast out of the city. Theocleia, Thecla’s mother, begs the governor to have her daughter burned at the stake because she had abandoned her marriage and family, “in order that all the women that have been taught by this man may be afraid.” As Thecla is taken to the theatre to be burned, she “sought after Paul, as a lamb in the wilderness looks about for the shepherd. And when she looked upon the crowd, she saw the Lord sitting in the form of Paul.” Increasing in faith, Thecla reaps her first rewards of the Beatitudes: she is strengthened and comforted when she sees Jesus metamorphosed into Paul.

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336 *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 239-240; Lipsius, 238-239.


338 *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 242 ; Lipsius, 248, 249.

339 *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 242 ; Lipsius, 250.
The governor marvels at Thecla’s strength and power as she is brought naked into the arena to be burned. There she mounts the pyre of wood, making with her body the form of the cross. When the fire is lit and blazes up, God takes pity on Thecla and saves her by causing a cloud to overshadow the arena; this cloud extinguishes the fire with rain and hail.  

Spared from the amphitheater Thecla goes in search of Paul. When she finds him hiding in a tomb with Onesiphorus, Thecla tells Paul that she will cut her hair short and follow him wherever he goes. To this Paul replies, “The season is unfavorable, and thou art comely. May no other temptation come upon thee worse than the first, and thou endure not and play the coward!” Thecla begs Paul to baptize her so that no temptation would fall upon her. Paul refuses, telling Thecla to have patience.

Paul and Thecla next go to Antioch. As they enter the city, a Syrian official named Alexander is enthralled by Thecla’s beauty and thinking Paul and Thecla are together tries to entice Paul to give up Thecla by giving him money and gifts. When Paul denies being betrothed to Thecla, Alexander tries to embrace her. Outraged, she rips his cloak and tears off his crown. Condemned for sacrilege Thecla is bound to a lioness and led in the procession of the wild beasts. The crowds are amazed when the lioness’ licks Thecla’s feet. Tryphaena, a widow of the royal family begs that she have Thecla in place of her own recently deceased daughter, for she saw in a dream that Thecla would pray for her daughter. Under Tryphaena’s protection Thecla’s request to remain pure until she fights the wild beasts is fulfilled.

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340 Acts of Paul and Thecla 243; Lipsius, 249.
On the day of the games, Thecla is thrust into the arena before several wild beasts. There a lioness defend her against a bear before falling to a lion. As Thecla prays many beasts are let loose upon her yet no beast can do her harm. As she finishes her prayer she turns and sees a pit full of water. Believing that her last day has come, Thecla throws herself into this pit that is full of deadly seals and baptizes herself. The seals are killed by a lightening flash. The overshadowing cloud isreminiscent of the cloud indicating God’s presence in the tabernacle and Temple,\textsuperscript{341} again protect Thecla and act as a covering for her nakedness when she is thrown to the beasts: “And there was about (Thecla) a cloud of fire, so that neither could the beasts touch her nor could she be seen naked.”\textsuperscript{342} Consequently, the beasts could not touch her and she was not seen naked. This self-baptism for Thecla was the seal of the commitment to chastity and a guarantee against temptation.

Tryphaena, overwhelmed by the ferocious beasts attacking Thecla, faints and is thought dead. Confused by this tragedy, the governor releases Thecla asking her first what was protecting her. She replies,

I am the handmaid of the living God. As to what I have about me, I have believed in him whom God is well pleased, His Son. For his sake not one of the beasts touched me. For he alone is the goal of salvation and the foundation of immortal life. To the storm tossed he is a refuge, to the oppressed relief, to the despairing shelter; in a word, whoever does not believe in him shall not live, but die forever.\textsuperscript{343}

\textsuperscript{341} See chapter 6 below.

\textsuperscript{342} Acts of Paul and Thecla 245 ; Lipsius, 260-61

\textsuperscript{343} Acts of Paul and Thecla 245 ; Lipsius, 263-64
Challenged by this confession, the governor commands that clothes be brought to Thecla. Thecla rebuts, “He who clothed me when I was naked among the beasts shall clothe me with salvation in the day of judgment.”

Clothed by God as the tabernacle was overshadowed, Thecla is released by the governor and returns to Tryphaena’s where she instructs the household “in the word of God.” Surrounded by young men and maidservants Thecla leaves, dressed in a “cloak after the fashion of men,” and travels to find Paul. In Myra she tells him of her journey. From there she returns to Iconium, supported by the riches of Trypheana, who has renounced the ways of the world. Framing the story, Thecla finally returns to Onesiphorus’s house where she prays,

My God, and God of this house where the light shone upon me, Christ Jesus the Son of God, my helper in prison, my helper before governors, my helper in the fire, my helper among the beasts, thou art God, and to thee be the glory for ever. Amen.

The Acts of Paul and Thecla clearly indicates that the motivation to a life of enkrateia is eschatological. Paul’s preaching highlighted in the opening beatitudes promises eschatological recompense for encratic behavior. Although these Beatitudes contain exhortation and promise of future reward, the Acts of Paul and Thecla uses transformational imagery to indicate the present reality of the eschaton. As an indication of her purity of heart, Thecla sees God: Jesus appears to her in the form of Paul.

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344 Acts of Paul and Thecla 246; Lipsius, 264
345 Exodus 40
346 Acts of Paul and Thecla 246; Lipsius, 265
347 Acts of Paul and Thecla 246; Lipsius, 268
her flesh pure, Thecla becomes a temple of God, and is overshadowed like the tabernacle. Renouncing the world, Thecla becomes pleasing to God. Onesiphorus and his wife practicing sexual abstinence in their earthly marriage become blessed, well pleasing to God. Fearing God, Paul is seen with the face of an angel. Immanent eschatological experiences of hearing God speak, eternal resting with the Father and Son, and being in the light, are also present in the Acts of Paul and Thecla.

Connected to these immanent eschatological experiences are the incidents throughout the narrative of the transformational imagery of changing sexes. Thecla’s physical transformation is accomplished by metamorphosis and transvestism. When first arrested with Paul Thecla is condemned to be killed by burning. As she mounts the funeral pyre she is described as taking on the form of a cross. She becomes like Christ: sex change by metamorphosis. When she is saved by an overshadowing cloud filled with rain and hail she tells Paul that she will cut her hair short and follow him: sex change by transvestism. This transformation by transvestism actually materializes later in the story. Temple imagery is used to describe Thecla’s naked body being covered by God. When she appears in the arena clouds cover her naked body just as they overshadow the Temple Thecla baptizes herself in a pit of seals. Upon her release she clothes herself “in a cloak after the fashion of men.”

THE ACTS OF ANDREW

In the New Testament we learn that Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist who later followed Jesus with his brother Peter. It was Peter and Andrew who were fishing at Capernaum when Jesus called them to become “fishers of men.” Andrew was with Peter, James, and John, when Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple. It is Andrew who brings to Jesus the boy with loaves and fishes for the feeding of the five thousand. By the end of the second century or at least by the beginning of the third century, The Acts of Andrew records Andrew’s missionary journeys and his martyrdom.

While the Acts of Andrew may have been the longest of the Apocryphal Acts and therefore should have had the greatest chance of surviving, at least in part, there are no remnants of the original Greek text. The reconstruction of the Acts of Andrew depends on

349 John 1:35-42
350 Mark 1:16-18 and Matthew 4:18-20
351 Mark 13:3
352 John 6:8-9

Because of textual reconstructions scholars now set the date of The Acts of Andrew at the end of the second century or at the beginning of the third. The dating of the Acts of Andrew is relative to the dating of the other Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles as scholars suspect the Acts of Andrew imitate the Acts of Paul and the Acts of John, both of which were written before the end of the second century. And the Acts of Andrew influenced the Acts of Thomas, so it has to be written before the end of the third century. The oldest direct mention of the Acts of Andrew is by Eusebius who lists it among the writings that are written by heretics and are absurd and impious. The Coptic Papyrus Utrecht I, which contains the translation of a section from the Acts of Andrew, confirms that it was known in Egypt in the 4th century (the papyrus is dated to this period). In his Panarion Epiphanius reports that the writing was used by the Encratites, the Apostolici, and the Origenists. The Acts of Andrew was probably written in the second half of the 2nd century. The place of origin is unknown. Between the 3rd and the 9th century it became known and read everywhere, in Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Armenia, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Gaul, and Spain. It was particularly successful in circles of a dualistic and ascetic tendency, especially among the Manicheans and Priscillianists. It was condemned in the Decretum Gelasianum, but this did not result in its disappearance. Rather it lived on in the form of revisions and extracts. The trail vanishes in the West in the 6th century, in the East in the 9th.
a sixth-century Latin summary of the Acts of Andrew by Gregory of Tours, as well as Greek, Coptic, and Armenian fragments of the texts. Its similarities with the Acts of John and the writings of Clement of Alexandria suggest its place of composition was probably Alexandria.\textsuperscript{354}

The Acts of Andrew records a story similar to the story of Thecla in the Acts of Paul. Andrew’s preaching converts Maximilla, a woman of high social standing. The historic textual evidence for the episode in the Acts of Andrew that introduces us to Maximilla is eclectic, due to the wide variety in the extant versions. Nevertheless, a narrative emerges. A summary of the narrative highlights an emphasis on eschatology and its motivation for \textit{enkrateia}. Andrew’s preaching moves Maximilla to turn away from her wealthy, privileged, pagan life to a life of \textit{enkrateia}. In this narrative several others also abandon their lives to follow the teaching of Andrew: those named are Iphidama, Maximilla’s servant, Stratocles, Maximilla’s brother-in-law, and, Stratoles the servant of Maximilla’s husband, Aegeates. Transformation in the Acts of Andrew is described through the use of imagery which reflects the eschatological state as a return to the protological state: when one chooses the eschatological life one is motivated to \textit{enkrateia} and is transformed, becoming Christ, “immaterial, holy, light, akin to the unbegotten, intellectual, heavenly, translucent, pure, superior to the flesh,”\textsuperscript{355} and change gender.


\textsuperscript{355} Acts of Andrew, 130; Bonnet 40.
Maximilla is introduced soon after Andrew enters Patras. Having heard reports of Andrew’s healing Sosius’s terminal illness and a paralytic man, Maximilla, the proconsul Aegeates’s wife, sends her servant Iphidama to “see, speak with, and hear Andrew.”[356] Iphidama meets Sosius who “instructs her in the word of God and divine healing.”[357] She reports this and the words she heard from Andrew back to Maximilla. A few days later Maximilla becomes sick and sends for Andrew. Andrew responds to the summons and heals Maximilla’s fever, for which the proconsul offers him one hundred silver coins. At the same time that Maximilla is healed, Aegeates leaves for Rome to visit the emperor Nero.

Simultaneously, Stratocles, Aegeates’s brother, arrives in Patras from Italy; he had petitioned Caesar to be released from military duty to pursue philosophy. Stratocles is soon introduced to the apostle Andrew as well: Andrew heals Stratocles’s beloved servant Alcmanes from demon inspired madness. Following these healings, Maximilla is eager for Andrew to stay with her and Stratocles so that through Andrew’s speaking Stratocles might believe in the Lord. Andrew himself addresses Stratocles and bids “the man slumbering inside you to be brought into the open.” Andrew uses the imagery and language of midwifery, instructing Stratocles’s inner man to “bring forth” and offers his help to Stratocles in giving birth to his inner man.

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[357] (ibid)

[358] This episode only exists in part in GE and in at least one of the Greek witnesses E and L. It is however alluded to by the reminiscence of the proconsul’s offering Andrew money.
While Aegeates is away several references are made to the brethren (συγκρετεδικον) gathering night and day, and being glad and fortified in Christ. During this time Maximilla, Stratocles, Iphidama, Alcamanes, and many others are “sealed” by Andrew. On the Lord’s day Aegeates returns from Rome while the brethren are gathered listening to Andrew. After the brethren leave Maximilla’s bedroom, Aegeates finds Maximilla praying. Joyful to hear his name in her prayers, he embraces Maximilla. She admonishes him for trying to kiss her mouth after prayer. In the prayer that he did not properly hear, Maximilla was praying to remain pure: “And deliver me now from the unclean union with Aegeates and keep me pure and chaste, serving you my God alone.” She then sends for Andrew so that he can lay hands on her and pray over her. He quickly comes and prays that her soul remain pure and that she be protected from the foul corruption of intercourse with her husband. He prays that the wild and ever untamed enemy, here Maximilla’s visible husband, be put to sleep and that she be united with her inner man. “Thus possessing a firm faith in (God) she may grasp her own kindred (συγκρετεδικον) when she is separated from the pretend.”

The episode that follows is rather bizarre. In order to meet daily with Andrew and to remain pure, Maximilla pays a beautiful servant, Eucleia, to sleep deceptively with Aegeates so that she does not have to. After several months Eucleia insists that Maximilla pay her more. Soon after she refuses to sleep with Aegeates, but begins bragging of the arrangement to the other servants, and showing off the money and jewels she has acquired. Angered at her insolence and Maximilla’s deception, several of Aegeates’

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359 Acts of Andrew, 139; Prieur.
servants tell him of the whole affair. The proconsul is furious with Eucleia and, still wanting to protect his wife, he cuts out Eucleia’s tongue and cuts off her extremities and throws her to the dogs. He also crucifies the three servants who told him of the affair. Then after the entire situation is explained to him by one of his servants, Aegeates throws Andrew into prison and places guards around the prison and Maximilla’s room. Protected by baptism, though, “the whole multitude of the faithful was confirmed in the hope of the Lord, all gathering together without fear in the prison, along with Maximilla and Iphidama.”

Aegeates continues his duties as proconsul and one day while acting as a judge he suddenly remembers the affair with Andrew. He rushes home and presents Maximilla with an ultimatum. If she does not become the woman she was, sleeping with him, having intercourse and bearing his children, he will torment her by torturing Andrew. Maximilla responds by going to Andrew at the usual time and relaying the entire demand to him. Andrew exhorts Maximilla to remain steadfast, separated from “a polluted and foul way of life.” He urges her, “the wise man,” to preserve her noble mind steadfast. Andrew also praises Maximilla singing,

Well done, O nature, you who are saved despite your weakness and though you do not hide yourself.
Well done, O soul, you who have cried aloud what you have suffered and are returning to yourself.
Well done, O Man, you who are learning what is not yours and desiring what is yours.
Well done, you who hear what is being said. For I know that you are more powerful than those who seem to overpower you, more glorious than those who are casting you down in shame, than those who are leading you away to imprisonment. If, o man, you understand all of these things in yourself,

360 Acts of Andrew, 144, Prieur
namely that you are immaterial, holy, light, akin to the unbegotten, intellectual, heavenly, translucent, pure, superior to the flesh, superior to the world, superior to powers, superior to authorities, over whom you really are…\textsuperscript{361}

The words which Andrew speaks are also heard by the other brethren and pierce Stratolcles like a “fiery arrow” so that he sits weeping and sighing uncontrollably. When Andrew inquires about this, Stratocles tells Andrew that he weeps because he knows that Andrew will leave and he will be at a loss for someone to care for and love him. Stratocles tells Andrew that it is he who has planted the seeds of salvation in him and without him these seeds will not be fruitful and grow.

Maximilla, being convinced by that which Andrew says, “becoming what [his] words signified,” returns to the praetorium to tell Aegeates of her decision to “say farewell to her whole life in the flesh.” Aegeates, true to his word, turns his mind to the murder of Andrew. Maximilla, “the Lord going before her in the form of Andrew,” goes with Iphadamia to the prison and again hears Andrew’s teaching. Stratocles attempts to thwart Andrew’s crucifixion, but Andrew joyfully goes to the cross continuing to instruct the brethren. After Andrew dies, Maximilla takes his body and buries it. She chooses “a holy and quiet life, and supplied with the blessed love of Christ spends it along with the brethren.”

In the particular section which contains the episodes about Maximilla and Stratocles, the rationale for sexual renunciation and the incidents of sex change imagery

\textsuperscript{361} Acts of Andrew, 130; Bonnet 40.
wherein Maximilla is hymned as “O man,” and Stratocles brings forth children, Maximilla and Stratocles are converted to Andrew’s way of life first by his power to heal and then by his teaching. Having heard reports of Andrew’s healing Sosius’ terminal illness, and a paralytic man, Maximilla sends her servant Iphidama to “see, speak with, and hear Andrew.” Iphidama first encounters the newly healed Sosius who “instructs her in the word of God and divine healing.” She reports this and the words she heard from Andrew back to Maximilla. When Maximilla becomes ill with a fever she sends for Andrew. As Stratocles is returning home to dedicate himself to a life of philosophy, he is confronted with the demonic possession of his servant Alcmanes. Maximilla sends for Andrew and Stratocles is challenged by Andrew’s healing powers as he releases Alcmanes from the demons possessing his mind. After these initial encounters there are no other episodes of Andrew’s healing as an introduction to the ways of the apostle. Instead there are repeated incidents of Andrew’s teaching. The rest of the narrative is centered around the daily meetings among Stratocles, Maximilla, Iphidema, and all the brethren (συγγενεῖα).

Andrew’s direct conversations with Maximilla and Stratocles and all of the brethren who gather daily present a clear picture of his soteriology. The present state of mankind is captivity to demonic powers which wish to separate us from God. The parts of mankind related to God, the soul (ψυχη), spirit (πνεῦμα), mind (vous), and man (ανθρωπος), are under subjection to things earthly, time (χρονος), movement

362 Acts of Andrew 134, Bonnet
363 Acts of Andrew, 130; Bonnet 40.
(κινησις), multiplicity (τα πολλα), becoming (γενεσις), and vain labors.\textsuperscript{364} The soul has gone astray and the mind has been brought down and become estranged from itself.\textsuperscript{365} Because of the deception of the devil man does not realize that he is in this state.\textsuperscript{366} The acts and teaching of Andrew challenge man to apprehend his true nature, to recognize the destroyer through the Savior to whom he truly belongs and who understands the earthly, and to take refuge in God to perfect the imperfect. Perceiving the true self allows man to realize that he is “inmaterial, holy, light, akin to the unbegotten, intellectual, heavenly, pure, superior to flesh, superior to the world, superior to powers, and superior to authorities.” The consequences of this discernment are a renunciation of all that belongs to the fleshly body. Those brethren who are of like nature (συγγενεια) and perceive their true selves live ascetically. They eat simply, renounce sexual intercourse and consequentially procreation, and give up material wealth and public office and societal customs. Their reward is nothing less than the Lord bestowing himself upon the brethren and they are hymned with transformational language. Maximilla is praised as “the wise man”\textsuperscript{367} Andrew and the other brethren are described as luminous, and Jesus appears as Andrew and as a beautiful young boy.

This picture of salvation history and the transformational imagery used to illustrate the new way of the Apostle is clarified by the apostle’s explicit admonition to

\textsuperscript{364} Acts of Andrew, 128; Bonnet .

\textsuperscript{365} Acts of Andrew, 130; Bonnet 40.

\textsuperscript{366} Acts of Andrew, 133-135

\textsuperscript{367} Acts of Andrew, 131
Maximilla to remain pure when she relays to him Aegeates ultimatum. Aegestes threatens Maximilla that either she become the woman she was, sleeping with him, having intercourse with him and bearing his children, or he will torment her by torturing Andrew. Andrew exhorts Maximilla to remain steadfast, saying,

And I rightly see in you Eve repenting and in myself Adam being converted: for what she suffered in ignorance you to whose soul I direct my words are now setting right again because you are converted: and what the mind suffered which was brought down with her and was estranged from itself, I put right with you who know that you yourself are being drawn up. For you yourself who did not suffer the same things have healed her affliction; and I by taking refuge with God have perfected his (Adam’s) imperfection: and where she disobeyed, you have been obedient; and where he acquiesced, there I flee; and where they let themselves be deceived, there we have known. For it is ordained that everyone should correct his own falling.  

Here Andrew explicates his teaching on Christian asceticism and particularly on sexual renunciation. In his teaching to Maximilla he exegetes the Genesis 2 narrative and interprets Adam and Eve’s transgression in the garden as resulting from sexual intercourse. Maximilla redresses Eve’s deficiency by her conversion to Andrew’s message of Christ and a commitment to sexual renunciation. Andrew reiterates the Genesis 2 narrative and the transgression of sexual intercourse by cautioning Maximilla not to be “won over by the seductions of Aegeates and the flatteries of the serpent, his father” by “returning to her formal sexual acts.”

In drawing a parallel between Eve and Maximilla and between Adam and himself, Andrew not only highlights the involvement of sexual intercourse in the fall, but he also

368 Acts of Andrew, 130

369 MacDonald, 379
illustrates that the damage of the fall can be reversed by becoming perfect through seeking refuge in God by returning to the protological state. This reversal is underlined by Andrew’s exclamation, “As Adam died in Eve because of the harmony of their relationship, so even now I live in you who keep the command of the Lord and give yourself over to the state of dignity of your true being.” Interestingly though, it does not seem that Adam and Eve are the protological couple as much as they are the first to witness to that state of ignorance to which belong those who have not attained their full brightness. Not knowing their true nature, they are deceived by the devil and turn to transitory existence exemplified by sexual intercourse. In this state of ignorance, deceived by the enemy, and unaware of her true nature, Eve is the first to be seduced by the devil and disobeys God. Adam turns away from God and acquiesces in Eve’s deception. This is the state to which belong all who do not know their true nature. Maximilla and Andrew do more than return Adam and Eve to the moment of ignorance before they choose to turn away from God by being deceived by the devil, they attain full brightness and are recognized by God because they know their true nature.

This protological state or the state of the true nature is not merely explained in the Act of Andrew, but we are told what it looks like and its opposites. We are also given an explanation for the devil’s behavior in his seduction of Adam and Eve:

From the beginning of all things, and, if I may so put it, from the time when he who is without beginning came down to be subject to his rule, the enemy, the opponent of peace, draws away (from God) whoever does not

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370 Acts of Andrew, 130

371 Acts of Andrew, 133
belong to him but is only one of the weaker and has not attained to full brightness and cannot yet be recognized.\textsuperscript{372}

The \textit{Acts of Andrew} clearly indicate that the motivation for \textit{enkratiea} is eschatological. The eschatological condition is specifically understood to be a return to the protological condition. Transformational imagery in the \textit{Acts of Andrew} reflects an eschatological return to the protological state. Connected to these eschatological/protological experiences are the incidents throughout the narrative of transformational imagery: the Lord bestowing himself upon the brethren who are hymned with transformational language. Maximilla is praised as “the wise man,”\textsuperscript{373} Andrew and the other brethren are described as luminous, and Jesus appears as Andrew and as a beautiful young boy. The transformational imagery of changing sexes also appears in this context. Andrew and Stratocles’s sex change is accomplished by being metaphorically cross-gendered: Andrew acts as a midwife and Stratocles gives birth to his inner man. Maximilla’s transformation of gender is accomplished by metamorphosis: when Maximilla rejects foul intercourse with Aegeates and asks Andrew for support, he acknowledges her transformation by calling her “O man,” and declares that she has become the same nature as Christ.

\textsuperscript{372} \textit{Acts of Andrew}, 130

\textsuperscript{373} \textit{Acts of Andrew}, 131
**THE ACTS OF THOMAS**

Of the five *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Acts of Thomas* are the last to be written and are the only ones which exists in their entirety in both its Syriac and Greek versions. Thought to have been originally compiled in East Syria in the first half of the third century, the text that has survived has undergone revision and assimilation to a developing viewpoint in line with the mainstream Church. Wide circulation of both

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375 The principle witnesses to the work are in Greek and Syriac; the surviving manuscripts in both languages bear marks of revision, a fact that has led to extensive debate on the original language. For a discussion of the debate and the reason why the Syriac takes precedence, although the surviving Greek is in many cases closer to the original than the extant Syriac, see Harold W. Attridge, “The Original Language of the Acts of Thomas,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, International Judaism and Christian Origins* (ed. Harold W. Attridge, John J. Collins, and Thomas H. Tobin; College Theology Society Resources in Religion 5; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990), 241-50.


377 Gregory Riley, *Thomas Tradition and the Acts of Thomas*, SBL 1991 Seminar Papers. 533. Dennis Ronal MacDonald, “Introduction: The Forgotten Novels of the Early Church,” in idem, ed., *The Apocryphal Acts of Apostles* (Semia 38; Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986). *This is especially true of the Syriac version, which reflect “…Syriac Christianity at a later stage in which special attention was paid to man’s free will and the resurrection of the body.”* Cf A.F.J. Klijn, “the Acts of Thomas, 16” According to Bornkamm, the Syriac contains many catholicizing revisions: G. Bornkamm, “the Acts of Thomas.” Although it was mainly through orthodox hands that the *Acts of Thomas* survived it does seem that there is
Greek and Syriac versions of the work both in its full form and in excerpted forms has ensured the survival of the text. The internal evidence from the extant text indicates that the choice for *enkrateia* is motivated by the eschaton. In the *Acts of Thomas* the eschaton is presented as a protological return, a return to the pre-fallen Edenic state, and Christological, that in the eschaton one enters into communion with Christ or becomes Christ. In the *Acts of Thomas*, as in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and the *Acts of Andrew*, individuals choose to turn away from their current wealthy, married or betrothed lives in order to follow the apostles call to *enkrateia* which is motivated by the eschaton. This transformation is described through the use of imagery which reflects the eschatological state: when one chooses the eschatological life, one is motivated to *enkrateia*. One is consequentially transformed; one looks like an angel, one becomes Christ, a temple, a bride, and one changes gender.

These *Acts*, like the other *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, chronicle the mission of a named apostle. In India, Thomas, like Paul in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, travels from town to town exhorting listeners to abandon their lives of earthly appetites and ignorance and join him in the life of the spirit. His preaching of purity and sexual chastity causes division as he convinces wives and husbands to “abandon filthy intercourse,” remain in chastity, and “marry” the eternal bridegroom in heaven, Jesus.\(^{378}\)

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\(^{378}\) *Acts of Thomas*, 343-345; Bonnet, 115-122.
preaching and the story of its consequential conversion is laden with transformational imagery.

As imagery presented in the first act is shared through the entire Acts of Thomas, a summary of the first act which relates the apostles dividing up missionary regions and Thomas being sent to India will serve to highlight transformational imagery in the first six loosely related acts. Acts seven to thirteenth are staged at the court of King Misdaeus, an Indian king, and thematically focus on the conversion to enkrateia. It is within these acts that the transformational imagery of becoming male by transvestism is highlighted.

The first act opens with the story of the apostles drawing lots to see which missionary lands they will serve. When Thomas draws the lot to go to India he declines, arguing “weakness of the flesh.” Even after the Savior appears to him at night\textsuperscript{379} pledging his grace and comfort, Thomas refuses to obey.

The next day at noon Jesus meets the Indian servant Abban in the marketplace; Abban was in search of a carpenter to build a fabulous palace for King Gundaphorus. Jesus sells Thomas to him for uncoined silver.\textsuperscript{380} When Jesus delivers Thomas to Abban, Abban asks Thomas, “Is this your master?” The apostle confesses, “Yes, he is my Lord.” Abban then instructs Thomas that he has been bought from Jesus. Thomas beseeches the Lord and prays for strength, vowing to do God’s will Thomas takes nothing with him save his purchase price and boards the ship bound for Andropolis, a royal city.

\textsuperscript{379} (Acts 18.9: 23:11 night appearance of the Savior to Paul – encouraging/strengthening Paul to take different mission trips)

\textsuperscript{380} Matthew 26:15.
From its opening chapters the *Acts of Thomas* is replete with Biblical allusions that highlight the central theme of the eschatological heavenly marriage. The call to union with the heavenly bridegroom and consequential call to *enkrateia* is developed in the opening act by Thomas’s attendance at a wedding and Thomas’s explicit preaching to the newlyweds. As Thomas and Abban enter the city they hear a herald’s proclamation that everyone is to attend the wedding of the King’s daughter:

> And the king has sent out heralds to proclaim everywhere that all should come to the wedding, rich and poor, bond and free, strangers and citizens; but if any man refuse, and come not to the marriage, he shall be accountable to the king.  

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This invitation echoes the Matthean parable comparing the kingdom of heaven to a king who gives a marriage feast for his son. 382 In the parable those initially invited refuse to come and are subjected to the king’s punishment. In order to fill the banquet hall, the Matthean parable tells the king extends his invitation to everyone in the main streets. In the *Acts of Thomas*, this scriptural allusion begins the transformation of an earthy wedding into the true marriage with the heavenly bridegroom.

The theme of the true and heavenly marriage that leads to earthly virginity is made explicit by Thomas’s wedding hymn and his preaching to the newlyweds. While at the wedding, Thomas sings a hymn with double meaning. On one hand, it is the hymn of the marriage of a young maiden, on the other it is the hymn of the marriage of Christ and

381 *Acts of Thomas*, 340; Bonnet, 104.

382 Matthew 22
the Church and the heavenly marriage or union of Christ with the faithful. Thomas sings:

The maiden is the daughter of light,
Upon her rests the majestic effulgence of kings,
Delightful is the sight of her,
Radiant with shining beauty.
Her garments are like spring flowers,
And a scent of sweet fragrance is diffused from them.
In the crown of her head the king is established,
Feeding with his own ambrosia those who are set under him.
Truth rests upon her head,
By (the movement of) her feet she shooes forth joy.
Her mouth is open, and that becomingly,
<For (with it) she sings loud songs of praise.
Thirty and two are they that sing her praises.
Her tongue is like the curtain of the door,
Which is flung back for those who enter in.
<Like steps her neck mounts up S>
Which the first craftsmen wrought.
Her two hands make signs and secret patterns, proclaiming the dance of the blessed aeons,
Her fingers open the gates of the city.
Her chamber is full of light,
Breathing a scent of balsam and all sweet herbs,
And giving out a sweet smell of myrrh and (aromatic) leaves.
Within are strewn myrtle branches and all manner of sweet smelling flowers>,
And the <portals> are adorned with reeds.
Her <groomsmen> keep her compassed about, whose number is seven,
Whom she herself has chosen;
And her bridesmaids are seven,
Who dance before her.
Twelve are they in number who serve before her
And are subject to her,
Having their gaze and look toward the bridegroom,

383 Manuscript evidence indicates that the Wedding Hymn was an addition to this part of the text. Robert Murray. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition.* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 131ff. Murray indicates that the hymn inserted here allows for a transition from the wedding of the King’s daughter, to the wedding of Christ and the church.
That by the sight of him they may be enlightened;  
And for ever shall they be with him in that eternal joy,  
And they shall be at that marriage  
For which the princes assemble together,  
And shall linger over feasting  
Of which the eternal ones are accounted worthy,  
And they shall put on royal robes  
And be arrayed in splendid raiment,  
And both shall be in joy and exultation  
And they shall glorify the Father of all,  
Whose proud light they received,  
Which has no deficiency at all,  
And they drank too of his wine  
Which gives them neither thirst nor desire;  
And they glorified and praised, with the living Spirit,  
The Father of truth and the Mother of Wisdom.\textsuperscript{384}

This hymn could be easily understood as a song about the marriage of a man and a woman, especially since Thomas is singing it at a wedding feast. The placement of the wedding hymn, though, provides a transition from Thomas being a guest at an earthly wedding to his preaching on the eschatological motivation for \textit{enkrateia}, namely the heavenly marriage to the immortal bridegroom.\textsuperscript{385}

After the singing of the wedding hymn Thomas is commanded by the king to enter into the bridal chamber. There he entreats Jesus to do for the bridal pair all things “useful and profitable.” Laying hands upon them, Thomas instructs the couple that Jesus will be with them. After all of the attendants leave the bridal chamber and the bridegroom lifts the veil of the bridal chamber in order to sleep with his wife, he sees Jesus in the

\textsuperscript{384} Acts of Thomas, 341-342

\textsuperscript{385} Brock, Sebastian P. “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter (Eichstätter Beiträge, 4; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982) 11-40
likeness of Thomas talking with her. Jesus sits them down and bids them to abandon “filthy intercourse” and its consequential misery of unprofitable children. Alternatively he invites them to receive “that incorruptible and true marriage” entering into the bridal chamber “which is full of immortality and light.” In this marriage, keeping their souls “pure unto God,” the bridal pair will bring forth spiritual children. Hearing Jesus,’ words the couple “refrain from filthy passion.”

In the morning when the king and queen question their daughter and her husband about their virginity, the bridal pair pledge their love to the heavenly bridegroom. The bride declares the she has abandoned this temporary earthly marriage and refuses to have intercourse with a short-lived husband because she is yoked to the true man. Likewise the bridegroom proclaims that for love of the Lord he is saved from a life of corruption.

Throughout the Acts of Thomas the preaching of an eschatological marriage, contracted in the heavenly bridal chamber of light and immortality, stands in direct opposition to an earthly marriage in darkness. This dichotomy is further illustrated as a choice between a union with Christ that brings forth life, and an earthly marriage that necessitates participation in “filthy intercourse” which brings forth burdensome children bound to death. Thus the imagery of spiritual childbirth and spiritual children or fruits is introduced.

The concluding act of the first section, act six, tells the story about a young man who after hearing Thomas preach about enkrateia tries to persuade the young innkeeper, with whom he is sleeping, to join him in a life of chastity. She refuses. To save her from committing adultery with another, he slays her. This evil plot is discovered when the young man’s hands wither as he holds them out to receive the eucharist. Thomas forgives
the young man and takes him to the dead innkeeper that he may through faith in Jesus Christ raise his mistress from the dead. When she awakes she tells a tale of her journey to hell. Thomas uses her story to highlight the chasm between the life of death and corruption and that of the union with Christ. This act concludes the section with a rehearsal of Thomas’s successful missionary endeavors followed by Thomas’ prayer of thanks and petition. Fittingly, the concluding petition and line of this section juxtaposes the temporal earthly marriage with that of the eternal heavenly one:

Look upon us, Lord, for thy sake we have left our bodily consorts and our earthly fruits, that we may share in that abiding true fellowship and bring forth true fruits, whose nature is from above, which none can take away from us, with whom we abide and they abide in us.\textsuperscript{386}

The second half of the \textit{Acts of Thomas}, acts seven through thirteen, is centered around the court of King Misdaeus and are primarily focused on conversion to \textit{enkrateia}. Each of these Acts tells the conversion from the “horrid intercourse” of earthly marriage to the incorruptible fellowship of heavenly marriage. By the conclusion of this section all are converted: Mygdonia and her husband Charisius, Tertia and her husband, the King Misdaeus, Siphor the captain and his wife and daughter, and Vazan, the son of King Misdaeus, and his wife.

The ninth and tenth acts which tell the story of Mygdonia’s conversion and witness to her transformation of changing sexes by transvestism, repeatedly make clear the distinction between the earthly and heavenly marriage, between death and life, darkness and light, and between sickness and health. Mygdonia’s story is interesting

\textsuperscript{386} \textit{Acts of Thomas}, 364; Bonnet, 177
because it begins with her conversion by Thomas’ preaching and transitions into a story about Tertia’s conversion by Mygdonia’s preaching about heavenly marriage, the “incorruptible fellowship.

At the opening of act nine Mygdonia forces her way through a crowd to hear Thomas preaching and hears his contrasting the life of eternal condemnation with that abiding fellowship of Christ. Thomas’s preaching of *enkrateia* causes Mygdonia to lament that she lives in a desert country and is like an unreasoning beast in her conduct. Thomas invites Mygdonia to abandon her former ways and then repeating the language of the opposition between earthly and heavenly marriage, he commands her to depart in peace, abandoning the “fellowship of procreation” that is a matter of condemnation and enter into the “true communion” with Jesus, who alone abides forever.

The dichotomy between Mygdonia’s choice for heavenly marriage and consequential earthly virginity is contrasted repeatedly with Charisius’ explicit desire to sleep with his wife. 387 Siphor tells Thomas that Charisius will never allow Mygdonia’s choice for celibacy. 388 Thomas simply explains ‘If the Lord has truly and surely risen in her soul, and she has received the seed sown, she will neither take thought for this transient life nor fear death.” To this Mygdonia declares that she has truly received the seed sown and “will bring forth fruit like to such seed.”

After this, Mygdonia unabashedly sets herself against Charisius and her earthly marriage. When he anxiously pleads with her to explain why she will not sleep with him

387 *Acts of Thomas*, 375,376, 386, 389, 390; Bonnet,206, 210, 227-228, 233,237.

388 *Acts of Thomas*, 375; Bonnet, 206.
or eat with him she prays, “Lord God, Master, merciful Father, Saviour Christ, do thou give me strength that I may overcome Charisius’ shamelessness, and grant me to keep that holiness in which thou dost delight, that I too through it may find eternal life.” When Charisius finishes eating he comes in to force himself on Mygdonia; she then declares: “Henceforth thou hast no place with me, for my Lord Jesus who is with me and rests in me is greater than thou.”

Charisius is not so easily dissuaded and comes again to her, crying that he was robbed of his spouse and imploring her to return to him and to his bed. Mygdonia even more explicitly proclaims her love to her new eternal bridegroom:

He whom I love is better than thee and thy possessions. For thy possession is of the earth and returns to earth; but he whom I love is heavenly, and will take me with him into heaven. Thy wealth shall pass away, and thy beauty shall vanish, and thy robes and thy many works; but thou shalt remain alone with thy transgressions…Remind me not of thy deeds toward me; for I pray the Lord that thou mayest forget, so as to remember no more the former pleasures of the bodily intimacy, which will pass away like a shadow; but Jesus alone abides forever, and the souls which hope in him. Jesus himself will set me free from the shameful deeds which I did with thee.

As if Mygdonia’s declaration of love did not show adequate resolve for a new life, Charisius again entreats Mygdonia to come to him as she formerly did as his wife. This time Mygdonia explicitly tells Charisius that she is no longer married to him but to the true bridegroom:

That time required its own, and this time also. That was the time of beginning, but this of the end. That was the time of a transitory life, but

389 *Acts of Andrew*, 376; *Bonnet*, 210

390 *Acts of Andrew*, 386; *Bonnet*, 226
this of eternal. That was of passing pleasure, but this of one that abides forever; that, of day and night, but this of day without night. Thou hast seen that marriage, which passed away and remains here on earth, but this marriage abides forever. That fellowship was one of corruption, but this of life eternal. Those attendants are short-lived men and women, but these now remain to the end. That marriage was founded on earth, where there is a ceaseless pressure; but this on a fiery bridge, whereon grace is sprinkled. That bridal chamber is taken down, but this remains forever. That bed was spread with coverlets, but this with love and faith. Thou art a bridegroom who passes away and is destroyed, but Jesus is a true bridegroom, abiding immortal for ever. That bridal gift was money and robes that grow old, but this is living words which never pass away.\textsuperscript{391}

After this declaration of intent and betrothal to the immortal bridegroom Jesus, Mygdonia is baptized, together with Siphor, his wife and daughter, and Marcia, her nursemaid, who all have vowed to keep themselves pure. Their stories too echo the imagery of the heavenly marriage.

After Mygdonia’s baptism she is visited by Tertia, King Misdaeus’s wife. Tertia has been sent to Mygdonia to demand that she return to her former ways and to her “true husband Charisius.” Betrothed to the eternal bridegroom and baptized, Mygdonia preaches to Tertia about the eternal marriage with the true bridegroom:

\begin{quote}
Thou standest in the transient life, the eternal life and salvation thou knowest not; and perceiving not the incorruptible fellowship thou art afflicted by a corruptible fellowship. Thou standest clothed in robes that grow old, and dost not desire the eternal; and thou art proud of this beauty that vanishes, but takest no thought of the ugliness of the soul. And in a multitude of servants thou art rich, but hast not freed thine own soul from slavery; and thou dost plume thyself in thy glory before the many, but dost not redeem thyself from the condemnation unto death.\textsuperscript{392}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{391} Acts of Andrew, 389; Bonnet, 233

\textsuperscript{392} Acts of Andrew, 392; Bonnet, 241
Throughout the *Acts of Thomas* it is clear that the eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* is a choice for union with Christ in the heavenly bridal chamber.\(^{393}\) An introductory allusion to the Matthean parable on the heavenly marriage banquet opens the scene in which Thomas enters the land of the Indians and introduces a contrasting presentation between bodily wedlock and heavenly marriage. Opposing imagery contrasting heavenly and earthly marriage, life and death, light and darkness, health and sickness, and truth and error is maintained throughout the entire work. Repeatedly, followers of Thomas leave the sexual communion of earthly marriage and enter into heavenly union with Christ as the true bridegroom. As a result they no longer bear burdensome children who are condemned to death; rather they give birth to spiritual and immortal fruit.

The opening act which acquaints the reader with the heavenly marriage as the eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* also introduces the Christological motivation for *enkrateia*, namely becoming temples worthy of inhabitation by Christ and becoming like Christ. When Jesus in the form of Thomas sits with the newlyweds he warns them of the dangers of “filthy passion” and invites them into the eternal marriage with the heavenly bridegroom. Jesus tells them, “If you abandon this filthy intercourse you become holy temples.”

Later in Act nine Mygdonia hears Thomas preaching an encratic sermon contrasting heavenly and earthly marriage. He condemns the evil temporal world that consists of adultery, murder, theft, avarice, and “all disgraceful deeds, especially those of

\(^{393}\) Acts of Andrew, 396 – 398; Bonnet, 251-257.
the body,” “the horrid intercourse…whose outcome is eternal condemnation.”

Alternatively he invites his listeners to walk in holiness that “gives eternal life and sets death at nought.” Thomas explains that “Holiness is a temple of Christ, and he who dwells in it receives it as a habitation.” Convinced by Thomas’ preaching Mygdonia throws herself at his feet and begs him to pray for her

that the companion of the God whom thou dost preach may come upon me, and that I may become his dwelling place and have part with you in the prayer and hope and faith in him, and that I too may receive the seal and become a holy temple, so that he may dwell in me.

Thomas obliges her and prays for all who pressed upon him: “I pray and entreat for you all, brethren, who believe on the Lord, and for you sisters who hope in Christ, that the word of God may settle upon all and tabernacle in you.” Thomas then hymns Mygdonia’s soul as a possession of the Lord and her body a dwelling place of God and responds to her conversion with a series of Beatitudes that clearly connect the encratic state with the heavenly kingdom and the indwelling of Christ:

Blessed are the holy, whose souls have never condemned them; for having gained these (souls) they are not divided against themselves.
Blessed are the spirits of the holy, and those who have received the heavenly crown intact from the aeon appointed for them.
Blessed are the bodies of the holy, because they have been counted worthy to become temples of God, that Christ may dwell in them.
Blessed are ye, because you have power to forgive sins.
Blessed are ye if you lose not what is committed to you, but with joy <and gladness> bring it with you.
Blessed are you holy for to you is it given to ask and receive.
Blessed are you meek, because God has counted you worthy to become heirs of the heavenly kingdom.
Blessed are you meek, for you are they who have conquered the enemy.
Blessed are you meek, for you shall see the face of the Lord.

\textsuperscript{394} Acts of Thomas\textsuperscript{373}; Bonnet, 202
Blessed are you who hunger for the Lord’s sake, because for you is rest preserved and from now on your souls rejoice. Blessed are you quiet, (because you have been counted worthy) to be freed from sin<…>.  

In these Beatitudes Thomas explicitly justifies the command for sexual continence in the language of transformation into a temple to allow the indwelling of Christ. Similar language is maintained throughout the conclusion of the acts.

The opening act introduces not only the imagery of becoming temples worthy of the indwelling of Christ, but also presents the transformational imagery of becoming Christ as a Christological motivation for *enkrateia*. The *Acts of Thomas* develops transformation by Christomemesis through the use of the motif of the twin. In the Acts this transformational imagery is most obviously presented by Thomas being called Judas Thomas, or Judas the twin. Not only is Judas called Jesus’ twin, but Jesus is mistaken for him in appearance. This relationship is further deepened by the placement of Jesus’ words from the gospel on Thomas’ lips. More subtly, Thomas and his followers are transformed into Christ by mimicking his life and teachings. Through the use of allusions to both the Old and New Testaments, the story of Thomas mirrors Jesus’

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395 *Acts of Thomas*, 375; Bonnet, 207.

396 In the East Syrian tradition Judas, the brother of James the Lord’s brother was associated with Judas, not Iscariot, and thought to be the twin brother of Jesus. Mentioned as Thomas Didymus in the fourth Gospel. A.F.J. Klijn, ‘John XIV 22, 1970, 88-96. J.J. Gunther, ‘ the Meaning and the Name ―Judas Thomas‖, *Le Meseon* 93, 1980, 113ff.

passion thereby presenting Thomas’ transformation into Christ. Similiarly those entering into union with Christ, become like Christ, living an encratic life.

The first act opens reminiscent of the beginning of Jesus’ passion in the garden of Gethsemane. Thomas, because of “weakness of flesh,” declines his mission to India. Even as Jesus appears to him at night assuring him all will be well, Thomas implores Jesus, “Send me where thou wilt – but somewhere else!” It is in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus paradoxically prays that the cup be removed from him and that the Father’s will be done. It is also there that he is apprehended and led to his crucifixion.

It is this Biblical story that is recalled by Thomas’s story. While Thomas is talking to Jesus an Indian merchant appears; he had been sent by King Gundaphorus to find a carpenter. Jesus tells Abban that he has a slave who is a carpenter and is willing to sell him for three pounds of silver. This sale recalls the sale of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. In the morning when Jesus led Thomas to Abban, the merchant asked Thomas if Jesus was his master. Thomas replied, “Yes, he is my Lord.” But when the merchant tells Thomas that he has been bought from Jesus, Thomas, like Jesus before the High Priest being charged to reveal whether he was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, was silent.

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398 There is the issue of the name of Judas Thomas and the issue of Thomas being Jesus’ twin – but this obvious paralling of Jesus and Thomas is only more fully and intricately developed through the use of scriptural allusions and Thomas being “made” Jesus

399 In the Syriac the coinage is 20 pieces of silver -- this is related to Genesis 37 and Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers – this OT imagery in the Syriac Church is connected to the Jesus narrative.

400 Mathew 26:63
With this action, Thomas is becoming like Christ. The following morning when Thomas is to board the ship to Andrapolis, he prays as Jesus had in the garden, “thy will be done!” The passion theme and the parallel between Thomas and Jesus continues as Thomas goes to the wedding of the daughter of the King of Andrapolis. At the banquet Thomas is reclining as others were eating and drinking. When those around him ask why he neither ate nor drank, Thomas replies, “For something greater than food or drink am I come hither, and that I may accomplish the king’s will.” Thomas’ ascetic behavior of abstaining from food or drink echoes John’s Gospel; Jesus, when asked why he neither eats nor drinks, answers, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.” This chapter from John also presents the preaching of Jesus on the imminence of the eschaton and a proclamation that he is indeed the Messiah.

The eschatological context of Thomas’ answer is further reinforced when Thomas continues saying, “For the heralds proclaim the king’s (commands) and whoever does not listen to the heralds shall be liable to the king’s judgement.” The command to which Thomas refers is the invitation to the wedding proclaimed by the king’s heralds at the opening of the act:

And the king sent out the heralds to proclaim everywhere that all should come to the wedding, rich and poor, bond and free, strangers and citizens; but if any man refuse, and come not to the marriage, he shall be accountable to the king.

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401 John 4:34

402 Acts of Thomas, 340; Bonnet, 104
As previously indicated, this invitation holds a double meaning. In the narrative not only does it function as an invitation to the earthly wedding of the daughter of the king, but as an allusion to the scriptural invitation to the heavenly banquet.\textsuperscript{403} It functions in transforming the earthly marriage into an eschatological one. Combined with Matthew’s invitation to the eschatological banquet is an allusion to the transformation into Christ based on Paul’s letters. In the letters to the Galatians, Colossians, and in the first letter to the Corinthians Paul speaks about putting on Christ, about being the body of Christ, about clothing oneself with the new man.\textsuperscript{404} In each of these letters participation in Christ is delimited. The invitation to the eschatological wedding feast in the Acts of Thomas echoes the abolition of distinctions of those incorporated into Christ. Thus Thomas presents his mission and the doing of the king’s will as an invitation to the eschatological feast and transformation into Christ.

\textsuperscript{403} Matthew 22:1-14

\textsuperscript{404} Galatians 3:27-28: 
\textit{As many of you were baptized into Christ and have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.}

\textsuperscript{1} Corinthians 12:12-13 
\textit{For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.}

\textsuperscript{Col}ossians 3: 1-11 
\textit{So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry) On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living hat life. But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all in all!”}
The relationship between the eschatological and Christological motivation for *enkrateia* and the transformation of Thomas by means of allusion to Christ’s passion is furthered by Thomas’s anointment with oil and by a crown being placed on his head and a reed in his hand. Again the narrative has a dual meaning. Anointment with oil would have been a common wedding practice. In the context of Christ’s passion and the eschatological wedding banquet it is also reminiscent of Christ’s anointment in preparation for his burial.\(^{405}\) This passion parallel is further established by Thomas’s wearing of a crown and holding of a reed evoking the passion of Jesus as described in Matthew 27:28-29.

The passion motif and eschatological and Christological motivation for *enkrateia* is furthered throughout the acts by the act of anointing. Thomas’s anointing in the opening act foreshadows Thomas’s own passion reminiscent of Jesus’ passion. It also serves as an interpretation of the ritual anointing that functions as an initiation ritual in the later acts. This anointing makes disciples fit for participation in the life of Jesus.\(^{406}\) Each anointing episode in the *Acts of Thomas* is also connected with Thomas’s preaching and teaching of *enkrateia*, thereby joining eschatological and Christological motivations for *enkrateia*.

The acts concerning King Gundaphorus’s and Mygdonia’s anointing illustrate well this relationship between the Christological and eschatological motivation for *enkrateia*. The second act tells the story of Gundaphorus, who had sent Abban to find a

\[^{405}\] Matthew 26:6-13: Mark 14:3-9: John 12:1-8

\[^{406}\] *Acts of Thomas* 349, 350, 366, 401; Bonnet, 140, 142, 184, 266.
carpenter who would build for him a palace. As already mentioned, it was Thomas who, like Jesus, was a carpenter. The king entrusts Thomas with a large sum of money and continues to send him more, trusting Thomas is building this palace for him. When the king returns he discovers that no visible palace has been built. In an attempt to condemn Thomas, the king’s friends explain that Thomas had been giving all of his money to the poor, healing the sick, and driving out demons. Their reproach of Thomas ironically hymns him as the perfect disciple, evoking the injunctions demanded of the disciples by Jesus. The king is told that Thomas “continually fasts and prays, and eats only bread and salt, and his drink is water, and he wears only one garment whether in fine weather or in foul (winter), and takes nothing from anyone, and what he has he gives to others.” When the king demands an explanation Thomas explains that the palace is one which the king will only see when he departs this life. The king, like the authorities in the passion narratives of Christ, considers how he should put Thomas to death.

While this was taking place, the king’s brother Gad fell ill and died. He was taken by angels on a heavenly journey. There he sees the palace which Thomas had built for his brother. Gad returns to his brother in order to convince him to sell to him this grand palace. The king and Gad then understand the eschatological recompense for Thomas’s works and entreat Thomas to pray for them that they might be worthy inhabitants of the eschatological palace. Thomas prays that they may be united to Jesus’ flock by the cleansing of his washing and by the anointment with oil, preserving them from the error

\[407\] Matthew 10:9
that surrounds them. Gad and the king follow Thomas and, like Thomas begin giving to all those in need.

When Gad and the king request the “seal of the word,” Thomas commands them to bring forth oil and seals them. Having received the seal, the new disciples hear the voice of the Lord saying, “Peace be with you.” As they have not received the additional sealing of the seal however, they can not see him. Thomas then takes the oil and pours it over their heads praying this invocation:

Come, holy name of the Christ that is above every name.
Come, power of the Most High, and perfect compassion.
Come, thou highest gift.
Come, compassionate mother.
Come, fellowship of the male.
Come, thou (fem,) that dost reveal the hidden mysteries.
Come, mother of the seven houses, that thy rest may be in the eighth house.
Come, elder of the five members, understanding, thought, prudence, consideration, reasoning; communicate with these young men!
Come, Holy spirit, and purify their reins and their heart, and give them the added seal, in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁸

When Gad and the king are sealed there appears to them a young man holding a torch. Thomas says to the Lord, “Beyond our comprehension, Lord, is thy light, and we are not able to bear it; for it is greater than our sight.”⁴⁰⁹

Immediately following the double anointment of Gad and King Gundaphorus, Thomas preaches an encratic sermon to “men and women, boys and girls, youths and maids, vigorous and aged, whether you are slaves or free.” Thomas begins this encratic

⁴⁰⁸ *Acts of Thomas*, 349; Bonnet, 141-142

⁴⁰⁹ *Acts of Thomas*, 350; Bonnet, 142.
sermon in the context of anointment and eschatological promise again echoing the
dichotomous Pauline formula which delimits participation in Christ. Thomas demands his
hearers abstain from fornication and avarice and the service of the belly.” As this sermon
concludes an act whose story illustrates Jesus’ eschatological teaching on heavenly
treasure it is thus fitting that Jesus words are to found on Thomas’ lips as he assures his
listeners of their eschatological recompense for enkrateia:

If you then escape from these (fornication, avarice, and the service of the belly), you become free from care and sorrow and fear, and there remains with you that which was said by the Saviour: Be not anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will take care of itself.\footnote{Matthew 6:34} Remember also that word which was spoken before: Look at the ravens and consider the birds of the heaven, that they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and God provides for them. How much more for you, O ye of little faith.\footnote{Matthew 6:26; Luke 12:24}

The Christological motivation for enkrateia, namely becoming like Christ, is emphasized in this act involving King Gundaphorus. Thomas participates in a story that recalls Jesus’ teaching on the heavenly kingdom and eschatological recompense. The placement of Jesus teaching on Thomas’ lips helps to illustrate Thomas’s transformation into Christ, as does Thomas being described as the perfect disciple obedient to Christ’s injunctions for self renunciation. Participation in Christ is further illustrated by the anointment of Gad and King Gundaphorus which recalls Thomas’s anointment in the opening act which alludes to Christ’s passion.

In the second half of the Acts of Thomas the story of the conversion of Mygdonia also connects an anointing episode with encratic teaching, thereby joining eschatological...
and Christological motivations for enkrateia. Throughout the ninth act which tells of the conversion of Mygdonia, the eschatological motivation for enkrateia is clearly presented as a call to the heavenly marriage. When Mygdonia finally convinces her husband and Thomas that she has chosen the heavenly bridegroom she instructs Thomas to “give her the seal.” After Thomas anoints and baptizes Mygdonia “there was heard from above a voice saying: ‘Yea, Amen.’” This heavenly announcement furthers the connection between anointing and becoming Christ.

Later in the act, Mygdonia, after inviting her nursemaid to be baptized, hopes for her eschatological recompense. She repeats the baptismal formula from Galatians:

May the remaining days of my life be cut short for me, mother, and may all the hours become as one hour, and may I depart from life, that I may go the more quickly and see that beautiful one whose fame I have heard, that living one and giver of life to those who believe in him, where there is neither day and night, nor light and darkness, nor good and evil, nor rich and poor, male and female, no free and slave, no proud that subdues the humble.412

The recitation of the Pauline baptismal formula in the context of anointing echoes the opening invitation to the King of Andrapolis’ daughter’s wedding highlighting another connection between the eschatological wedding feast, anointing, and becoming like Christ.

Thomas’s imitation of Jesus’ passion presented in the opening act and developed throughout the text ends with Thomas’s martyrdom. A conflation of the passion narratives from the gospel introduces Thomas’s martyrdom:

412 Acts of Thomas390, Bonnet, 337.
And they dragged him off and brought him to king Misdaeus. <But when the apostle stood> before the king, the king said to him: ‘Tell me who thou art, and by what power thou dost perform these things.’ But the apostle remained silent. And the king commanded his subjects that he should be scourged with a hundred and twenty-eight lashes and flung in bonds into the prison. And they put him in chains and led him away. The king and Charisius considered how they might put him to death. But the crowd worshipped him as a god. And they had it in mind to say: ‘The stranger insulted the king as a deceiver.’\textsuperscript{413}

Allusions to Christ’s passion are obvious. Thomas like Jesus is questioned about his authority to teach and heal. Thomas like Jesus is scourged. Thomas like Jesus remains silent. The authorities wanted to put Thomas to death, as they did Jesus. Thus as the narrative transforms Thomas into Christ, the appellation becomes rather fitting.

The transformational imagery of becoming Christ through imitating Christ’s passion surfaces again at Thomas’ martyrdom in the last act of the \textit{Acts of Thomas}.\textsuperscript{414} In these final scenes Misdaeus considers in what manner he should put Thomas to death, “for he was afraid of the crowd which stood around, since many believed him, and even some of the leading people.” Misdaeus’ dilemma again echoes that of the chief priests considering in what way they could get rid of Jesus. The Indian king remedies his situation by having soldiers lead Thomas “outside the city” to be killed. This obscure detail echoes Jesus’ crucifixion as he, too, was killed outside the city.\textsuperscript{415} The last

\begin{equation}
\textsuperscript{413} \textit{Acts of Thomas}, 379; \text{Bonnet, 218}
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\textsuperscript{414} \textit{Acts of Thomas}. 402-405; \text{Bonnet, 269-286}
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\textsuperscript{415} \text{John 19:17; Acts 7:58}
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appearance of Thomas in the concluding act recalls Jesus’ post resurrection dialogues and his ascension\textsuperscript{416}:

But Siphor and Vazan were unwilling to go down into the city but after spending the whole day there they passed the night there also. And Judas (Thomas) appeared to them and said: ‘I am not here. Why do you sit here and watch over me? For I have gone up and received what is hoped for. But arise and walk, and after no great time ye shall be gathered to me.’”\textsuperscript{417}

The opening act which introduces the eschatological motivation for \textit{enkrateia} through the theme of a heavenly marriage also introduces the Christological motivation for \textit{enkrateia} through the notion of becoming like Christ and becoming temples worthy of the indwelling of Christ. This opening act introduces, thirdly, a protological motivation for \textit{enkrateia}, namely the return to paradise. Entwined in this eschatological and Christological motivation for \textit{enkrateia} is the contrasting of the immortal, spiritual, and asexual ontological prelapsarian state of humanity with a postlapsarian mortal, bodily, and sexual existence. Human beings come to know the truth about the loss of their originally created state and are called to \textit{enkrateia} which recreates paradisal asexual immortality.\textsuperscript{418}

Through allusion to Biblical texts the \textit{Acts of Thomas} recall the Genesis creation narrative and in so doing illustrates the dichotomy between the pre and post-lapsarian states. The bride and groom’s explanation for their encratic behavior is a response to Jesus’ preaching about abandoning “filthy intercourse” and becoming holy temples

\textsuperscript{416} Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6, John 20:17

\textsuperscript{417} \textit{Acts of Thomas 404}; Bonnet, 285.

\textsuperscript{418} \textit{Acts of Thomas 344, 350, 372-373}; Bonnet, 116-117, 143, 200-202
unburdened by children. When the King and Queen of Andrapolis enter into the bridal chamber they question their daughter as to why she sits unveiled and unashamed separate from her husband. In part the bride proclaims the motivation for her encratic behavior as her betrothal to the heavenly bridegroom. But she also explains to her parents that she does not veil herself because the “mirror of shame,” “veil of shame,” or “garment of shame” is taken from her and that she is “no longer ashamed or abashed, because the work of shame or bashfulness has been removed." She also offers to them that she is not afraid and that she is joyful as the day of joy was not disturbed. In this explanation for enkrateia the bride alludes to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden.

In the Acts of Thomas, the bride’s explanation to her parents highlights three important things: her lack of shame, her lack of fear, and the removal of the “garment of shame,” “veil of shame,” or “mirror of shame.” Each of these is a reversal of the punishments of the garden. When God created man and woman they were naked and unashamed; when they realized that they were naked after their disobedience the hid themselves as they were ashamed. When God questions them, the man replies that they hid because they were afraid. God consequentially clothes them with “garments of skins” and expels them from the garden. The removal of this garment, like the lack of shame and fear, signals a return to the garden.

419 Genesis 3:7,21 see also Gospel of Thomas, logion 37
Without presenting garment change imagery the bridegroom in the opening act also presents a dualism between the postlapsarian state and protological state to which the bridegroom is returning. He prays:

I thank thee, lord, who through the stranger wast proclaimed and found in us; who hast removed me from corruption and sown in me life; who didst free me from this sickness, hard to heal and hard to cure and abiding for ever, and didst implant in me, sober health; who didst show thyself to me and reveal to me all my condition in which I am; who didst redeem me from the fall and lead me to the better, and free me from the things transitory but count me worthy of those that are immortal and everlasting; who didst humble thyself; who didst not withhold thy mercy from me that was ready to perish, but didst show me to seek myself and to recognize who I was and who and how I now am, that I may become again what I was; whom I did not know, but thou thyself didst seek me out; of whom I was unaware, but thou thyself didst take me to thee, whom I have perceived, and now cannot forget; whose love ferments within me, and of whom I cannot speak as I ought, but what I can say about him is short and very little does not correspond to his glory; but he does not blame me when I make bold to say to him even what I do not know; for it is for love of him that I say this.  

Comparing the consequential world of the fall and the return to the protological state the groom’ song continues allusions to the Genesis narrative.  

This theme of protological return is also evident in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, or the *Hymn of Jude Thomas, the apostle, when he was in the country of the Indians*. When Thomas is imprisoned and waiting for Mygdonia’s husband to figure out how to kill him,  

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420 *Acts of Thomas* 345; Bonnet, 120ff.

421 *Acts of Thomas*, 350 and 372 continues this theme of protological dualism. In Thomas’ encratic sermon following Gad and King Gundophorus’ anointing Thomas preaches that “insatiate desire brings the soul into fear and shame” continuing the idea that fear, shame, and desire are consequences of the fall.

422 The title of the hymn is only given in the Syriac as the *Hymn of Jude Thomas, the apostle, when he was in the country of the Indians*. The hymn of the pearl is handed down in only one Syriac (BM Add 14654) and one Greek MS (B 35 of Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome): see Poirier, “l’Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas: Etudes de la tradition manuscritpe’ OrChrAn205, Rome 1978.
Thomas begins singing a story. The song tells of a young prince who is sent by his parents to the far away country of Egypt in order to retrieve a pearl from a dangerous serpent. When the boy leaves home he has to remove his splendid robe and his purple toga. His parents write a promise on his heart that when he recovers the pearl he will be clothed in his robe and toga and he will share with his brother in the inheritance of their kingdom. The boy goes to Egypt and dresses himself in the clothes of the Egyptians and eats their food. He falls into a sleep and completely forgets his mission. Grieved by their sons fate, the king and queen send the prince a letter that flies like an eagle to Egypt. When the boy reads the letter he remembers his mission, casts a spell on the serpent, claims the pearl, removes his unclean garments, and follows the letter home. On his way home he receives the splendid robe and toga that his parents had promised to him. When the prince sees the robe, he discovers his true self reflected in it like in a mirror. Precious stones are covering the robe and the image of the king is depicted all over it. The robe speaks to the prince and tells him that he had grown by virtue of the Father. The prince puts on the robe and goes up to the kingdom to worship the splendor of the Father.

Assuming that the Acts of Thomas were Gnostic, most scholars interpreted this hymn through the lens of Gnosticism. Recent scholarship no longer makes that assumption. Han Drijvers in his introduction to the Acts of Thomas in a later edition of Schneemelcher, says

The Hymn is a symbolic portrayal of the life of Adam, the man who of his own free will left his Father’s house, Paradise, with a part of his inheritance. His parents…took from him the splendid robe, the image of

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God….Then the whole process is put in reverse…the Hymn of the Pearl deals with man’s expulsion from and his return to the paradise of god.

The placement of the hymn in act nine further connects the protological theme with the theme of heavenly ascent. Just after this hymn Mygdonia tells her husband, “He whom I love is heavenly and will take me with him into heaven.”


Paul, Andrew, and Thomas explicitly preach eschatologically motivated enkrateia. When individuals choose lives of enkrateia they are transformed. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla eschatological motivation for enkrateia is explicitly articulated from the opening of the Act where Paul preaches in Iconium. His opening Beatitudes, which are illustrated with transformational imagery throughout the narrative, highlight the connection between the resurrection and enkrateia. The Beatitudes introduce the narrative by telling us that those who have a pure heart, pure flesh, are those who are celibate. They will see God, become temples of God, and speak to God. Those who are prepared for the eschaton will also become angels of God, sons of the most High, and be in the light. The narrative illustrates that those who follow Paul’s preaching are transformed in conformity to the eschatological reward. Thecla becomes Christ. She becomes a temple. She sees God. Paul becomes an angel and becomes Christ.

424 Acts of Thomas, 330-3
In the *Acts of Andrew* eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* is developed throughout the entire *Act*. The *Act* which concerns Maximilla’s conversion to *enkrateia* highlights well the eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* and its resultant transformational imagery. In this section an invocation of the Genesis narrative explains that Adam and Eve’s transgression was a result of sex. Repeatedly, the *Acts of Thomas* speak about marriage, sex, and procreation as “life in the flesh” and as “a polluted and foul way of life” which the devil deceived Adam and Eve into choosing. The eschatological state in the *Acts of Andrew* then is a return to the prelapsarian state before the deception of the devil and before sex. Andrew’s preaching is aimed at teaching an understanding of the true self, one that is immortal, luminous, asexual, and heavenly. In order to understand and become one’s true self, one is called to renounce all things that belong to the flesh and practice a life of *enkrateia*. Such a person returns to a prelapsarian state where there was no sex and subsequently no procreation, no death, and no division of sexes, and a childlike state.

In the *Acts of Thomas* eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* is developed from the opening act wherein immediately upon landing in Andrapolis, or man-city, Thomas is pressed into teaching and praying for the newly betrothed couple, the daughter and son-in-law of the king. Here Thomas’ preaching has as its aim union with the heavenly bridegroom and consequential earthly celibacy. The opening act which acquaints the reader with the heavenly marriage as the eschatological motivation for *enkrateia* also introduces the Christological motivation for *enkrateia*, namely becoming temples worthy of inhabitation by Christ and becoming like Christ. Also, introduced in this section is the protological motivation of *enkrateia* which has as its aim the restoration of the state of
paradise and the original condition of human nature. These three themes are developed throughout the corpus of the *Acts of Thomas* and transformational imagery, including that of changing sexes, illustrates the immanent experience of the heavenly marriage banquet, the transformation into Christ and becoming temples worthy of the indwelling of Christ, and the Edenic garden.

CONCLUSION

*The Acts of Paul and Thecla, The Acts of Andrew and The Acts of Thomas* are second-third century *Apocryphal Acts* that employ the transformational imagery of being made male. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Thecla changes sexes by cutting her hair short and dressing like a man as a sign of her conversion. The *Acts of Thomas* also highlights sex change through the imagery of changing clothes: Mygdonia chops off her hair and rends her garments. In the *Acts of Andrew*, Maximilla is hymned as a man when she faithfully resists her husband’s sexual advances. This transformational imagery is one of several images in these two texts which describe the transformation of an individual who is motivated to become an encratite through the apostle’s preaching of the eschaton. The imagery used to describe holiness is reflective of that state. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Paul’s preaching assures eschatological rewards for *enkrateia*. Transformed holy men and women become Christ, resemble angels, become temples and see God. The *Acts of Andrew* the eschatological state explain a return the prelapsarian state in Eden. Unlike
the *Acts of the Martyrs*, where the return to the Edenic state was imaged through a
description of the geography of paradise, here the return to Eden is presented as a return
to the pre-fall anthropology of Adam and Eve. The *Acts of Thomas* also employs the
vision of the eschaton as a return to prelapsarian anthropology. It also images the
eschaton as a heavenly bridal chamber and as the eschatological temple.
Transformational imagery in this text is reflective of that eschatological vision:
transformed holy men and women become brides of Christ, temples prepared for the
indwelling of Christ, and luminous and asexual like Adam and Eve in the garden. In
chapter 6 we will return to the heavenly temple and the heavenly garden in order to
understand the origin of this eschatological imagery as well as the resultant
transformational imagery.
Chapter 2 presents working definitions for early Christian understandings of eschatology, martyrdom, and *enkrateia*. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 offer summaries of the *Acts of the Martyrs*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* which include the transformational imagery of changing sexes. These summaries highlight the fact that eschatology motivates martyrdom and *enkrateia*. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, visions of heaven motivated and assured they would be martyrs so that they “marched joyfully to their death as though they had already been rewarded with heaven.” The *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* not only present the historical narrative of the martyr act, but interpret the act in light of the eschatological reward. In the *Apocryphal Acts*, Paul, Andrew and Thomas, preach about the eschaton and exhort their hearers to be transformed through lives of *enkrateia* reflective of the eschatological state. In the sayings from the *Apocryphal Gospels*, living lives of *enkrateia* makes immanent the eschaton.

In each of these texts the eschaton is presented through visions and the preaching of the apostles. In the stories presented in chapters three, four, and five, those who are transformed because of choosing lives of martyrdom and *enkrateia* are described with imagery reflective of the eschatological state imaged as a return to the pre-fallen state of paradise, as an ascent to a heavenly garden, as an entrance into the heavenly temple and the divine throne room filled with angelic beings, as a marriage feast, and as the reward for battle. These stories then are about the transfigured holy man, more specifically in the interest of this dissertation, the transfigured holy woman. This chapter attempts to explain
the background of the imagery used to describe one who becomes holy in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*.

As chapter 1 illustrates, most scholars look to philosophy and sociology for an explanation of the transformational imagery of changing sexes in our primary texts. What they fail to take into account is that the transformation of the holy man or woman is primarily theological and that it stands in continuity with the portraits of the transformation of holy men and women before and after our primary texts. In a festschrift, Hieromonk Alexander Golitzin writes about the origin of the holy man and paints a picture of holy men across time, cultures, and countries. He highlights Christianity’s heritage in Judaism as the root of the transformed holy man who exemplifies the continuity of the images of holiness from Second Temple Judaism, through early Christianity, to modern day Greece and the island of Mt. Athos where his own life was transformed in the knowing of a holy man, his *geronta* Archimandrite Aimilianos, who, although separated by time and space, lived in communion with the holy men in his narrative.\(^\text{425}\) Into the picture of transformed holy men, Father Alexander places Perpetua and her companions and the prince from the *Hymn of the Pearl*. What he has to say about the origin of the transformed holy man in Christianity is worth repeating as it is this background that needs to be explored in order to understand the transformed holy woman in our primary texts. He writes,

Allow me then to repeat that the sage or holy man..., is a product of common sources: first, the literature of late Second Temple-era Judaism, especially the Wisdom tradition and, particularly, the apocalypses, with their visionary mediators of heavenly secrets; second, these traditions have been filtered through and given specific shape by the New Testament portrait of Christ. To use the language of contemporary cosmologists, the Christian Gospel acted on these currents like a kind of theological “singularity”, a center of overshadowing gravitational force that acted to attract to itself the several themes that I have mentioned in this essay-together, certainly, with many others from the Old Testament that I have not mentioned- and to bend them into a new configuration around the figure of the Risen Christ. If the Latter is the “place” of God par excellence, Himself transfigured and acting to transfigure humanity (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7–4:6), theophany in short, and Giver of saving life and knowledge, then those who come after him clothed in His likeness are likewise theophanic, temples of god and “places” of divine revelation and salus.426

This is the lineage of the transformed holy man that we must understand in order to see its presence in the second and third centuries in the Acts of the Christian Martyrs, Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and the Apocryphal Gospels. The background of “Second Temple-era Judaism, especially the Wisdom tradition and, particularly, the apocalypses...filtered through and given specific shape by the New Testament portrait of Christ” provides the explanation for the transfigured holy man/woman in our texts.

After the discovery of many texts at Nag Hammadi, Qumran, and Oxyrhynchus, scholars have been working to define apocalyptic literature, the apocalyptic genre, and apocalyptic imagery. In part this endeavor was necessary because until the discovery of these Second Temple era Jewish texts, and specifically the discovery and dating of I Enoch, scholars thought that Daniel in the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament were the oldest apocalypses. Scholars who studied these apocalypses focused on the cataclysmic end of the world and collective eschatology presented in these

426 Ibid., 438.
two works. The preoccupation of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation with the cataclysmic end and collective eschatology was the lens through which all other texts had been categorized as apocalyptic. Eschatology was understood as cataclysmic because it would happen at the culmination of time and would be a great battle. It was collective because in Daniel the question of eschatology considered the collective restoration of Israel and the Book of Revelation considered the collective salvation of those in Christ. Understanding apocalypses through this lens reserved eschatological reward or participation to the collective cataclysmic end.

The discovery of ancient texts in the middle of the 19th century encouraged scholars to re-evaluate the characteristics of apocalyptic literature, the apocalyptic genre, and apocalyptic imagery. In 1979 John Collins edited a collection of essays about apocalyptic literature for an edition of the Society of Biblical Literature’s journal, Semeia. In his introduction Collins defined “apocalypse” as

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, in so far as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, in so far as it envisages another, supernatural world.427

Three years later Christopher Rowland published a book titled, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity. He observed that in apocalyptic texts “certain individuals have been given to understand the mysteries of God, man, and the universe," so “To speak of apocalyptic...is to concentrate on the direct

revelation of heavenly mysteries." Martha Himmelfarb, in a recent introduction to a general introduction to "the apocalypse" and its literature, highlights the interests characteristic of the apocalyptic genre: "the last judgment and cataclysmic end of the world, reward and punishment after death, the heavenly temple, the divine throne room, and astronomical phenomena and other secrets of nature." In her work, intended for an academic audience, Himmelfarb notes that not all ancient apocalypses are concerned with the cataclysmic end or communal eschatology and highlights instead the other elements in ancient apocalypses, including the ascent to heaven, the vision of the divine throne, the heavenly temple, transformation or transfiguration, the hosts and ranks of angels, the note of light and splendor, and the contours of heavenly geography which include the mysteries of the present and future worlds, e.g., the origins of creation, and the places and nature of post-mortem rewards and punishments.

All of these elements appear, some of them repeatedly, in our primary texts. While the Acts of Perpetua is technically the only one of our primary source texts that has an apocalyptic ascent vision, all of our texts are colored by this apocalyptic worldview to

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429 Himmelfarb, *The Apocalypse*, 2

430 E.g., The Ascension of Isaiah, Apocalypse of Abraham, Testament of Levi, Testament of Isaac, etc.

a significant degree. This can best be illustrated by analysis of Saturus’s vision in the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*. This single vision provides the densest illustrations of the vision of heaven presented in our primary texts and will serve as our point of reference to explicate the origins of eschatological imagery.

As explained in chapter 3, *The Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas* are accounts of martyrdom in the early third century in Carthage. This context of Saturus’s vision clearly articulates that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the primary lens through which martyrdom is understood. The martyr texts themselves clearly articulate martyrdom as “putting on Christ,” as suffering with Christ, participating in the eschatological battle with Christ, marriage to Christ, and being rewarded with Christ.

Our initial interest is what lies behind these images and behind the transformation of the holy men and women in our texts, the literature of late Second Temple-era Judaism, particularly, the apocalypses. In the *Act of Perpetua and Felicitas*, both Sanctus and Perpetua have visions which are prophetic and foretell of their future death. Their dreams also foretell the future that awaits the confessors after they are martyred. One of Perpetua’s four visions and the single vision of Saturus are ascent visions. Previously, chapter three recorded Perpetua’s vision in full and discussed both Perpetua and Saturus’s visions in order to illustrate how their visions of the eschaton motivated them to martyrdom. Here we will focus on Saturus’s vision:

We had died, he said, and put off the flesh, and we began to be carried towards the east by four angels who did not touch us with their hands. But we moved along not on our backs facing upwards but as though we were climbing up a gentle hill. And when we were free of the world, we first saw an intense light. And I said to Perpetua (for she was at my side): ‘this is what the Lord promised us. We have received his promise.’
While we were being carried by these four angels, a great open space appeared, which seemed to be a garden, with rose bushes and all manner of flowers. The trees were as tall as cypresses, and their leaves were constantly falling. In the garden there were four other angels more splendid than the others. When they saw us they paid us homage and said to the other angels in admiration: ‘Why they are here! They are here! Then the four angels that were carrying us grew fearful and set us down. Then we walked across to an open area by way of a broad road, and there we met Jucundus, Saturninus, and Artaxius, who were burnt alive in the same persecution, together with Quintus who actually died as a martyr in prison. We asked them where they had been. And the other angels said to us: ‘First come and enter and greet the Lord.’

Then we came to a place whose walls seemed to be constructed of light. And in front of the gate stood four angels, who entered in and put on white robes. We also entered and we heard the sound of voices in unison chanting endlessly: *Holy, holy, holy!* In the same place we seemed to see an aged man with white hair and a youthful face, though we did not see his feet. On his right and left were four elders, and behind them stood other aged men. Surprised we entered and stood before a throne: four angels lifted us up and we kissed the aged man and he touched our faces with his hand. And the elders said to us: ‘Let us rise.’ And we rose and gave the kiss of peace. Then the elders said to us: ‘Go and play.’

…Then we went out and before the gates…the angels…seemed as though they wanted to close the gates. And there we began to recognize many of our brethren, martyrs among them. All of us were sustained by a most delicious odor that seemed to satisfy us.432

In the ascent vision of Saturus the theme of heaven as temple dominates. Related to this theme is the idea of heaven as garden or Eden, and the visionary as priest.

Understanding these themes, developing from the Old Testament Biblical narrative through the Second Temple era apocalypses, read through the lens of the New Testament portrait of Christ, provides some background for the transfigured holy woman in *The

432 Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, 119-123, 118-122

The ancient Israelites who built the tabernacle and the Temple as a way for God to dwell within their midst, certainly had no sense that the heavenly realm was open to them. They were restricted to earth while they were alive and to Sheol when they died. For most of the Old Testament writers, heaven was not the place where people went after they died and certainly not before. Eschatology or future hope was not a question about what happened after you died, but rather focused on the fate of Israel and the land promised to her. In a few cases, exceptional human beings, a few who had been chosen by God, as prophet, priest, or king have visions of heaven in order to reinforce or redirect the covenant between God and man. In very rare cases, some of these humans visited or joined the heavenly realm. This opened up the possibility that the heaven realm was accessible to human beings and that some human beings even had a place in the heavenly realm.

Most scholars examining the vision of heaven and the ascent to heaven in Biblical texts and the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the Second Temple era show that the heaven which is revealed to visionaries or the heaven to which visionaries ascend is frequently understood as the divine assembly where God is enthroned as king or as the heavenly temple. Both of these images share the vision of God’s throne. Nearly every

433 Walther Zimmerli, 1971, hardly discusses individual eschatology at all.

434 N.T. Wright rehearses the development in the belief of resurrection starting with the Israelites covenant hopes. Resurrection

435 The bibliography on the motif of heaven as the divine palace or assembly is extensive, but of especial note is Marc Brettler, God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor, JSOTSup 76 (Sheffield:
Biblical vision of heaven speaks of God’s throne. The prophet Michaiah sees God’s throne, 436 Job sees God’s throne, 437 David sees God’s throne, 438 the Sons of Korah see God’s throne, 439 Ethan the Ezrahite sees God’s throne, 440 Jeremiah sees God’s throne, 441 Ezekiel sees God’s throne, 442 Daniel sees God’s throne, 443 and the Apostle John sees God’s throne. 444


436 1 Kings 22:19
437 Job 26:9
438 Psalm 9:4 and 7, 11:4
439 Psalm 45:6, 47:8
440 Psalm 89:14
441 Lamentations 5:19
442 Ezekiel 1:26, 10:1
The dominant imagery in the Old Testament is that of God enthroned as king in the divine council. The Psalmist proclaims: “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he passes judgment and Yahweh sits enthroned as king forever.” An example of a throne vision which exemplifies the imagery of God enthroned in the divine council comes from the prophet Micaiah’s throne vision in 1 Kings:

Then he (Micaiah) said, “Therefore hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne and all the hosts of heaven standing besides him on the right and the left. Then Yahweh said, ‘Who will entice Ahab so that he will go up and fall at Roamoth-gilead? And one said one thing and another said another until a spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh and said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then he (Yahweh) said, ‘You shall indeed entice him. Go out and do it.’”

The understanding of heaven as the divine council is reinforced by the purpose and the vision as well as the protocol in front of the council. In the visions, the purpose of the divine council is always judgment. The divine council surrounding God carries out his will and the prophet who has the vision becomes a participant in the divine council by communicating what he saw. Heavenly throne visions also highlight monarchical protocol, permitting only those who are prepared to enter into the presence of the divine king. In

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443 Daniel 7:9

444 Revelation 4:1-11

445 Psalm. 82:1

446 Psalm 29:10

447 I Kings:22:19-22

448 I Kings, 22:19; Isaiah  6:1; Psalm 82; Zexhariah 3:1-10; Job 1:6-12.
Isaiah’s vision, the prophet is purified by the burning coals of the altar before he may be addressed by God while Ezekiel falls prostrate before the throne before he is bid to stand before it.449

In the Old Testament narratives the principle terms for this heavenly residence of God is *hekal* or “palace” and *bayit* or “house.” These terms are also used for a king’s earthly palace. The technical term for Jerusalem where God’s Temple was located is *maqom*, or place. In 1 Kings 8, King Solomon makes a speech dedicating the first Temple. In it he explicitly links the earthly Temple with the heavenly palace:

> Then Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh in front of the whole community of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven and said, “O Yahweh, god of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or earth below who keeps the covenant and the loyal love for your servants who walk before you with their heart… “But will God really dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven, even the vast heaven, cannot contain you, much less this temple that I have built! Turn to your servant’s prayer and his plea, O Yahweh my god, and hear the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to toward this place of which you said, ‘My name shall be there,’ so that you may hear the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and your people Israel that they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven your dwelling place, hear and forgive.”450

In the Biblical narrative concerning Solomon’s Temple, Yahweh dwells simultaneously in the Temple in Jerusalem and in his heavenly palace. To offer prayers at the earthly Temple is to have one’s prayers heard at the heavenly throne. King Solomon’s speech makes an explicit link between God’s place on earth (the Temple) and God’s place in heaven (the heavenly palace). The throne visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel make explicit the

449 Isaiah 6:6; Ezekiel 2:1-8

450 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30
gateway between the Temple and heaven. Both have visions of God in his heavenly palace surrounded by his heavenly court, and the imagery used to describe his heavenly throne is reflective of the cherubim throne which was placed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Thus, Solomon’s Temple became the natural place to encounter God.

From their commission by God, the tabernacle and then Solomon’s Temple, were the place intended to be built by the Israelites according to a divine “pattern” so that God might dwell in their midst. After describing all of the instruments that Moses should make for the Tabernacle, God reminds Moses to make them after the pattern, “which was showed to you on the mountain.” Similarly, David is given the “pattern” for the Temple “by the spirit” and in the writing of God’s hand. This “pattern” included the directions for the architecture complex of the Temple as well as for all of the instruments for Temple service and for the service of the priests. God’s earthly dwelling should be built and the ritual practiced therein should be “patterned” after God’s instruction so that God could dwell in heaven and on earth.

Something happens, though, between the throne vision of Isaiah and that of Ezekiel that changes the relationship to heaven forever. In Isaiah’s Temple vision, the Jerusalem Temple, the place of the prophet’s call, opens up into a glimpse of the

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453 I Chronicles 28: 12

454 I Chronicles 28:19
heavenly Temple and the hem of the divine robe fills the earthly Temple. In the Jerusalem Temple, Isaiah sees a glimpse of heaven and the divide between heaven and earth is open. In Ezekiel’s vision, Ezekiel watches the cherubim prepare to carry the Glory of God out of the Temple because it is so defiled that it is no longer inhabitable for God.

In the opening chapters of Ezekiel, Ezekiel is sitting on the banks of the river Chebar and has a vision of the chariot throne and watches as God departs from the defiled earthly Temple. Before the close of the book, Solomon’s Temple has been destroyed. Ezekiel is then granted a vision of the eschatological temple. A heavenly man takes Ezekiel on a tour of the temple area, the gates, and the outer and inner courts.

The hand of the Lord was upon me…and set me down upon a very high mountain…When he brought me there, behold there was a man, whose appearance was like bronze..and he was standing in the gateway.

He is then led into the temple itself. The tour and description of the temple follows the “pattern” of Solomon’s Temple familiar from I Kings 6-8. Ezekiel’s guide takes him to the see the “most holy place,” a phrase familiar from I Kings 8:6 used to describe the Holy of Holies. Ezekiel is then led out of the gate that faces east and is shown the temple complex. Chapter 43 then begins with this dramatic and powerful scene, the return of Yahweh to his sanctuary. Ezekiel is taken to 'the gate facing east', and there 'the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east'.

455 Ezekiel 40:1-6

456 Ezekiel 41:4

457 Ezekiel 43:2
Then he brought me to the gate that faces eastward; and behold, the Glory of the God of Israel coming from the east! His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth was illuminated by his Glory. And the vision that I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the River Chebar, and I fell upon my face. And the Glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate that faced eastward. Then the spirit lifted me up and brought me to the inner court, and the Glory of the Lord filled the house.\footnote{Ezekiel 43:1-5}

God says to Ezekiel,

As for you, mortal, describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern; make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, and its whole form — all its ordinances and its entire plan and all its laws; and write it down in their sight...so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances.\footnote{Ezekiel 43:10-11}

Some Israelites interpreted God giving Ezekiel the pattern of the divine temple as prophecy to rebuild the Temple when they returned from exile. Those who were critical of the behavior of the exiled and returning Israelites and especially the priests, understood Ezekiel to mean that the true temple was now in heaven and only in heaven. Martha Himmelfarb notes that this “marks the beginning of a trend to dissociate God’s heavenly abode from the Temple in Jerusalem.”\footnote{Martha Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, 11-13.} For these Israelites, the Second Temple never became anything more than a mere copy of the heavenly temple. If one wanted to see God, they would have to find another way.

After Ezekiel’s vision of the heavenly temple and the heavenly throne, the next extant vision of the heavenly realm is Enoch’s vision in The Book of Watchers that dates...
to the early part of the second century b.c. In his vision, Enoch does something that no one does before,\textsuperscript{461} he ascends to heaven and enters the heavenly temple. If the Temple is now in heaven, in order to access it, Enoch must go to heaven.

The Book of Watchers focuses on the rebellion of the angels in heaven. In the context of this narrative Enoch ascends to heaven to learn how God is going to punish the Watchers, the disobedient angels.\textsuperscript{462} After arriving in heaven Enoch passes through a building of hailstone and fire.\textsuperscript{463} Enoch then passes through two houses in order to reach the throne of God. In the first house, between the floor of snow and the ceiling of water and lightening, fiery cherubim flash across the room. In this first house, Enoch is awestruck and falls to the ground in fear.\textsuperscript{464} The account continues with Enoch entering a second house that is larger and more splendid than the first. This house is built of fire. The floor is on fire and the ceiling has lightening and stars flashing across it. Inside this house, Enoch sees God on a throne,

\begin{quote}
And I beheld and saw therein a lofty throne; and its appearance was like the crystals of ice and the wheels thereof were like the shining sun, and (I saw) watchers, Cherubim. And from underneath the throne came forth streams of blazing fire, and I was unable to look at. And the glory of the Great One sat thereon, and his raiment was brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow.\textsuperscript{465}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{461} There two figures in the Old Testament who, according to standard Jewish and Christian interpretation, are reported to have ascended to heaven: Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1-12). 2 Kings 2 reports that Elijah and his disciple Elisha ‘continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven’ (2 Kgs 2:11). No further account is given of the journey to heaven or of what Elijah saw there. Gen 5:24, says of Enoch that ‘he walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.’

\textsuperscript{462} I Enoch 14:8 – 16:3

\textsuperscript{463} I Enoch 14:9. In the Ethiopic translation this is just a “wall.” Himmelfarb, \textit{Ascent to Heaven}, 14 -16.

\textsuperscript{464} I Enoch 14:9-13

\textsuperscript{465} I Enoch 14:18-20
Ezekiel’s influence on The Book of Watchers, the first ascent apocalypse, has been clearly articulated by Paul Joyce, Christopher Rowland, Martha Himmelfarb, and Christopher Morray-Jones, and Carol Newsome. After Enoch’s ascent, scholars can identify several later ascent visions which are deeply indebted to The Book of Watchers including 2 and 3 Enoch. Many other Second Temple era apocalypses show a thematic interest in heavenly ascent, the divine throne, heavenly angelic hosts, transfiguration and transformation, the fate of the dead, and the last judgment.

Central to that Temple and to the visions of the heavenly temple is the Holy of Holies and the vision of God on the throne. In the vision of the heavenly temple in Ezekiel, the prophet is escorted around the temple complex by a heavenly man of bronze, reflective of the divine glory. Ezekiel describes the “appearance of the likeness of the Lord:”

And seated above the likeness of the throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire, and there was brightness all about him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

Christopher Rowland sees this vision behind the visions of the heavenly throne in I Enoch and Daniel. In I Enoch, Enoch sees the chariot throne, but only see the

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467 Ezekiel 1:27-28

468 Rowland, Open Heaven, 97-98.
garment of God who is sitting on the throne. Daniel’s vision also describes God on the throne:

As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire came forth from before him.\(^{469}\)

Both visions highlight the white garments of God. Martha Himmelfarb suggests that that the white garments which God wears are derived from the plain linen garment that the high priest wore once a year to enter the holy of holies.\(^{470}\)

A connection between God’s luminosity, priestly preparation, and the visionaries transformation begins with Moses. In the book of Exodus both of Moses’ direct encounters with God occur on mountains. In the first he is tending sheep on Mt. Horeb and God appears to him in a burning bush. In order to draw near to the holy ground, Moses must remove his sandals.\(^{471}\) Then God sends him to the Israelites in Egypt to set them free. Later, after Moses has freed the Israelites from Egypt, he encounters God once again, this time at Mt. Sinai. The theophanies at Sinai assume that Yahweh dwells in heaven. From there he comes down to meet with Moses. When the Israelites reach the mountain, God comes to Moses “in a thick cloud” so that the Israelites can hear what he says. God tells the people to “wash their garments” and to refrain from intercourse in order to be ready for the third day when God will consecrate the mountain.\(^{472}\) On the third

\(^{469}\) Danial 7:9-10  


\(^{471}\) Exodus 3: 4-5  

\(^{472}\) Exodus 19
day the mountain is surrounded by a thick cloud and thundering and lightening. The mountain is wrapped in smoke because God had descended upon the mountain in fire. After returning to the people with a covenant from God, Moses returns to the mountain. He ascends the mountain and again encounters God. His face is transformed and is radiant because he speaks with the Lord.\textsuperscript{473}

In the Old Testament and literature of the Second Temple period there are several passages which include the garment of glory/light. First the imagery applies to God. In the Old Testament several passages speak of God as glory or as light.\textsuperscript{474} In Isaiah’s throne-vision, the motif of God’s robe is combined with the vision of God’s glory. Ezekiel’s throne vision also speaks of God’s glory and here it is connected with the metallic glow and fiery presence. The Psalms speak about God’s covering himself with light as a garment.\textsuperscript{475} In I Enoch 14:20, God, who is clothed with radiance and whiteness, namely a “sun-lit gown”, is called ‘the Great glory.’\textsuperscript{476} The imagery is also attributed to those who are transformed into glory. Ezekiel is met by a man “whose appearance shone like bronze” as well as a “man clothed with linen” reflective of the description of God enthroned. The angels in Ezekiel\textsuperscript{477} and Daniel\textsuperscript{478} also wear these garments of linen. The

\textsuperscript{473} Exod 34:29-30

\textsuperscript{474} Exodus 16:10; 24:16; 40:34; Number 14:21; Deut 5:24; 1 Chronicles 29:11, Isaiah 6:1, Ezekiel 1.28; 10:4 etc.

\textsuperscript{475} Psalm 104:2

\textsuperscript{476} In many other places in Enoch God is modified or called “Glory.” 14:19; 22:14; 25:7; 36:4; 40:3; 63.2; 75:3; 83.8; 91:13; 102.3.

\textsuperscript{477} 9:2-3, 11; 10:2

\textsuperscript{478} 10:5, 12:6-7
high priest is arguably, the embodiment of God’s glory.\textsuperscript{479} Wearing the garments of glory, he is the creator, divine warrior, and surrounded by a cloud of incense.\textsuperscript{480} 2 Enoch also combines these images of glory and investiture as a priest:

And the Lord said to Michael, ‘Go and extraxt Enoch from his earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory.’ And so Michael did, just as the Lord said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself, and I had become one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference.

The parallelism between God’s glory and the angels and visionaries’ glory suggests that the visionaries become angelic beings and divine: a transformation takes place. Those who enter heaven become divine.

In Saturus’s vision the place of the divine ascent is in the east, is a garden, and is the temple. Once Saturus and Perpetua are in heaven they enter in through a gate to the Holy of Holies and see the Lord seated on a throne surrounded by his heavenly council. The idea of heaven being the temple and paradise derives from the Second Temple period and is read into the New Testament where many of these images are applied to Christ and


\textsuperscript{480} Exodus 40:27, 34; I Kings 8:10; 2 Chronicles 5:11; Lev 16:12-13
his followers. Examining the development of these themes leads to an understanding of the holy man/holy woman in our texts.

The idea of the Garden of Eden being in the east, the heavenly realm as a verdant garden or paradise, and the temple being in the Garden of Eden is created by transposing the themes about the Garden of Eden from Genesis 1-3 to the heavenly realm. Many of the connections between the garden of Eden/paradise and the temple had arguably already begun in the Old Testament. In the Second Temple period when some Jews believed that the only true temple was in heaven, the Biblical story of Eden and its imagery as well as the imagery and ritual of the Temple began to be read onto heaven. Later, in early Christian communities some of this imagery was read into Christ and his followers.

The geography of paradise is one theme that connects Eden and the Temple. First the verdant garden of Eden, in the east, is read onto heaven. The creation narrative in Genesis 2 opens with God flooding the earth and then creating man. God then plants a fertile garden of Eden, full of trees, in the east. Out of Eden there flowed a river to water the garden. This Edenic imagery is used in Ezekiel to describe the geography of the heaven. When Ezekiel is given his tour of the eschatological temple, he sees water flowing from the throne of God in the Holy of Holies until it makes a river. On either side

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of the river all kinds of trees grow whose fruit is for food and leaves for healing.\textsuperscript{483} In the
Book of Watchers, Enoch is taken on a journey where he too sees the garden in the
east.\textsuperscript{484} Similar imagery is apparent in John’s vision in The Book of Revelation where
“the river of the water of life, bright as crystal (flows) from the throne of God and the
Lamb,” and on either side of the river is the tree of life. Several other apocalyptic texts
describe the heavenly realm as a verdant garden including 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and
the Life of Adam and Eve.

Ezekiel 28 also presents a variant version of the creation narrative which further
highlights the connections between Eden and the Temple, by reading Temple imagery in
Eden. In the story, man is created a perfect being in Eden, the garden of God, the
mountain of God. Here, instead of being covered with trees, this garden is filled with
stones of fire. The stones of fire are connected with the Sinai theophany in Exodus.
Ezekiel calls Eden the mountain of God. The creation narrative which refers to Eden as a
garden does not use that phrase. God descends on the mountain like fire\textsuperscript{485} and to those
watching the mountain as Moses meets with God describe “the appearance of the glory of
the LORD” as a “consuming fire on the mountain top.”\textsuperscript{486} The explanation of the priestly
vestments is given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the mountain of God. This is connected to the
perfect man in Ezekiel who is covered with the twelve precious stones which recall the
stones that cover the high priest’s ephod in Exodus 28:17 -20 and are a part of his Temple
\textsuperscript{483} Ezekiel 47:12
\textsuperscript{484} I Enoch 32
\textsuperscript{485} Exodus 19
\textsuperscript{486} Exod. 24:17
garments. I Enoch 24–27, the Testament of Levi 18:6 and the Apocalypse of Moses 29:1-6, and texts from Qumran also parallel Eden with the heavenly temple.\textsuperscript{487}

This relationship between Eden, the Temple, and priesthood is best highlighted in a second century B.C. apocalyptic text called the Book of Jubilees. In this book Moses receives a revelation on Mt. Sinai which consists of the rewriting of Genesis 1 to Exodus 16. In the Book of Jubilees, the Garden of Eden is a holy place,\textsuperscript{488} it is a place that belongs to the Lord\textsuperscript{489} and is understood as “the Holy of Holies and the residence of the Lord.”\textsuperscript{490} Chapter three is concerned with the rewriting of the story of the Garden of Eden. In the Book of Jubilees there is no account of the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden, no prohibition from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and no account of Adam hiding from God after his disobedience. In addition to these omissions the Book of Jubilees adds many interesting details which reinforce the idea that the garden of Eden is conceived of as the Temple, and more precisely the Holy of Holies.

In the Book of Jubilees, practices of purification and preparation which are associated with entrance into the Temple, are read into Adam and Eve’s admittance into Eden. In the Book of Exodus God instructed the Israelites to stay away from women for


\textsuperscript{488} Jubilees 3:12

\textsuperscript{489} Jubilees 4:26

\textsuperscript{490} Jubilees 8:19

Adam and Eve’s entrance into the garden is also directly related to Temple practice. Forty days after their first sexual relations Adam is permitted to enter the Garden, but his wife must wait eighty days. This entrance in the Garden/Temple is directly related to the Levitical codes which require a woman to observe seven days of impurity and 33 days of purification after the birth of a boy and fourteen days of impurity.

\textbf{References}

2. Chronicles 23:13; Leviticus 15:18; 22:4-7
3. I Samuel 21:4-5
and sixty-six days of purification after the birth of a girl. These purity laws are applied to Adam and Eve’s entrance into the garden.

The other way in which the rewriting of the Genesis narrative in the Book of Jubilees illustrates Eden as the Temple is by making Adam a priest. In the Book of Exodus, incense is burned in front of the Holy of Holies, a privilege given to the son of Aaron. In Jubilees, Adam acts as a priest when he burns incense as a pleasing fragrance at the gate of Eden. It is also indicated here that Adam covers his shame. In the Genesis story the covering of Adam’s shame is related to his knowing his transgression, but in Jubilees’ rewrite, it is connected with priestly service. In the Book of Exodus priests are explicitly instructed to cover their nakedness.

The Apocalypse of Moses connects this imagery of glory, Eden, and the Temple with Adam and Eve. Both Adam and Eve profess that before the fall they were clothed with righteousness and glory. The end of the story refers to Adam and Eve’s death and burial. Here Adam’s soul is taken up to paradise in the presence of God after it has been washed three times. Divine cloths of linen and silk are sent from the third heaven and oil from the oil of fragrance is sent down to prepare Adam’s body. Adam is being re-clothed with glory.

496 Leviticus 12.
498 Jubilees 3:27
499 Exodus 20:26: Exodus 28:40-43
501 Ibid., 31-43.
One other theme from apocalyptic literature needs to be considered, the cataclysmic end and collective eschatology. Earlier we noted that before the discovery of The Book of the Watchers, these were the two themes upon which most scholars focused in Daniel and The Book of Revelation. We shall not ignore these elements of apocalyptic literature.

In the book of Daniel, scholars have identified Daniel 7:9-14 as a chariot throne vision, just like those visions in Ezekiel and Enoch.\footnote{See I. Gruenwald, Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism (AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 36–37. Daniel’s vision of a white-haired figure on a throne, surrounded by what appears to be a crowded court of attendants, has been traced by C. Rowland back to the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord in Ezek 1:26–28, the most influential text in early Jewish mysticism (The Open Heaven [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 96).}

[9] As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire.\footnote{G. von Rad, Holy war in Ancient Israel (trans. M.J. dawn; Michigan; Eerdmans, 1991)} [10] A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; his court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.\footnote{\textcopyright 2002, 2003, 2007, 2012 by The American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.} [11] I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. [12] As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. [13] I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven here came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. [14] And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

What is different is the context of the heavenly vision, eschatological battle. The notion of Holy War in the Old Testament is complicated.\footnote{\textcopyright 2002, 2003, 2007, 2012 by The American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.} In Jewish tradition God fought on behalf of the Israelites, and through battle led his people into Canaan.
Although, scholars disagree about the development of the notion of holy war in the Old Testament what they do agree upon is that Deuteronomy presents two reasons for holy war, securing the land appointed for Israel and to keep the Israelites free from idolatry.\(^{504}\) If Israel did not resist contamination from foreign cultic practices, military disaster would befall them. This is the context of Ezekiel’s prophecy that the Temple would be destroyed and Israel conquered because of their idolatry. When the Temple was rebuilt, some Jews turned to Ezekiel to give voice to their dissatisfaction with the corruption of the priesthood and the idolatry of those returning from Babylon. In the context of the Babylonian exile and the rampant idolatry and assimilation of the Jewish people in exile, Daniel refuses to profess any other God than the God of Israel. As a consequence he is thrown to a den of lions. Although Daniel survives by divine intervention, the lesson is the same, martyrdom is to be preferred to idolatry. Daniel then has a dream of the eschatological battle where Israel, personified by the “Son of Man,” would triumph over all worldly powers. For the first time, Israel’s war for land and against idolatry was no longer restricted to the promised land. It now was about a cosmic battle. In Daniel one finds for the first time militant apocalypticism. If the war was no longer restricted to the promised land, neither was the reward. Daniel marks the beginning of a hope for Israel beyond the grave for individuals. The martyrs that were killed in the battle would “arise from the dust of earth and shine as stars in heaven.”\(^{505}\)


\(^{505}\) For a discussion of the role of Daniel in martyrdom see Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the early Church*, ch 2, and for a discussion of Daniel in the development of resurrection see N.T. Wright.
I Maccabees and II Maccabees take over the Holy war tradition from the Old Testament as well as the themes from the Book of Daniel. Elaine Pagels demonstrates how some Jewish apocalyptic groups between 165 B.C and 100 A.D produced apocalypses in which battle took place between heaven and hell. In these apocalypses true believers are marked out against the enemy.506

Several images develop from this Second Temple speculation about heaven. First the true Temple is in heaven. The detailed and interrelated description of that Temple connecting images from Moses on Mt. Sinai, to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Enoch, and Daniel, suggests that it is the restored first Temple that has been polluted by a corrupt priesthood and an unfaithful people. Second, if the temple is now in heaven, the temple needs heavenly priests. Angels and visionaries become priests. The liturgical roles and garments that heavenly beings wear echo the priestly rituals in the Old Testament. Priests must sacramentally prepare themselves to enter the holy of holies. Priests wash themselves with water before wearing the priestly garments. Priests also observe celibacy before their sacred duties. Investiture with sacred priestly garments signify that the wearer of such garments is unified with God.507 When the priest wears the sacred garments, he is unified with God’s holiness, because the garment is holy. In a sense, this means that the priest acquires a divine nature, because God himself wears righteousness and glory. In the Second Temple texts, what the heavenly angels wear and that with


which the visionary is clothed reflects the garments of glory/light of God suggesting they have acquired a divine nature. Third, heaven is the Garden of Eden or paradise, and imagery from the two places is reciprocal: heaven is a garden, Eden is a temple. Imagery from the Temple is read onto the Garden. Adam is a priest and clothed with glory. And fourth, the developing idea of the holy war in apocalyptic literature makes heaven accessible.

These are the themes which lie behind Saturus’s vision and explain the transformational imagery in our primary texts. The other important thing to consider is that the *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* are Christian texts. Much of the Old Testament and Second Temple imagery is present in Saturus’s vision, but it needs to be read through the context of Christian martyrdom and Christian narrative. The text itself clearly draws on both these sources.

*Temple Imagery*

In a recent book, Nicholas Perrin connects the temple imagery from the New Testament with the Second Temple era conception of the Temple. In doing so he builds on the work of his mentor, N.T. Wright, who characterized the movement Jesus led as a counter-Temple movement wherein Jesus as the living temple offers all that the Jewish Temple was suppose to offer, cleansing, feasting, forgiveness, and instruction.\(^{508}\) Perrin argues that faithful Jews in the Second Temple period were looking forward to the time when Yahweh would purge the wicked priests from the Temple and erect a new heavenly temple in its place. For Perrin, Jesus and his movement were the “the decisive

\(^{508}\) John 2:19- 21
embodiment of Yahweh’s eschatological temple.” Wright and Perrin’s arguments are based on the temple imagery in the New Testament. There temple imagery is used in two ways, the community is viewed as the temple, and Christ himself is viewed as the temple.

John’s gospel opens by applying Temple language to Jesus, “the Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us,” the same word used for the tent in the OT. John continues this shift in Temple imagery from structure to person in chapter two when Jesus drives out the money changers in the Temple and states that if they tear the Temple down, he will rebuild it in three days. John then clarifies what Jesus meant by this by stating "he was speaking of the temple of his body." At the end of John’s vision in Revelation this is made explicit when John says he saw no temple in the eschatological city because “its temple is the Lord God and the Almighty Lamb.”

The imagery that is most developed in the New Testament is the understanding of the Christian community as the new temple. One way in which the imagery is used is with the metaphor of being clothed with a building. Paul uses this imagery to talk about the human temporal body and the eternal body:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we are no longer naked.

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510 Revelation 21:22

511 2 Corinthians 5
Paul also uses this community as "bodily temple" idea in 1 Corinthians 6:19 when he states: "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you..." He also calls the body a “spiritual building”\textsuperscript{512} Quoting Ezekiel and Leviticus, Paul exhorts the community to be pure and dedicated to God, and likens them to the temple:

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live among them and move among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separated from them, says the Lord and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you.\textsuperscript{513}

Paul’s use of temple imagery applied to the body/community means that the community must avoid sexual immorality and avoid idolatry. The relationship between community as temple of God and an exhortation to purity is made most explicit by I Peter’s use of temple symbolism:

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{514}

Not only is this an exposition of temple as community, but it applies the concept of priest and sacrifice to the life of the Christian.

The Book of Revelation similarly uses this language. In the letters to the seven churches, the church in Philadelphia is told, "If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God,"\textsuperscript{515} Becoming a pillar in the temple of God means that the temple

\textsuperscript{512} (1 Corinthians 3:13).

\textsuperscript{513} 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

\textsuperscript{514} 2 Peter 2:4

\textsuperscript{515} Revelation 3.12
is made out of people, not brick and mortar. Further evidence that the temple is made up of people is that the "lampstands" that are mentioned are items that are found within the temple of God in the Old Testament. John informs readers that these lampstands represent the two witnesses. If the lampstands are not literal lampstands, then it stands to reason that the temple they reside within is also not a literal "temple" but encompasses the larger body of God's people. Additionally, Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 remind readers that anyone who has been cleansed by the blood of the lamb is a priest - and priests serve within the "temple."

Major themes in the Second Temple era literature included the concept of the priest’s preparation to enter the temple and the notion of the priest’s vesting being expressed in the language of putting on God or reflecting God’s glory. In the New Testament this imagery is taken over with the concepts of putting on Christ and being clothed in glory. The Pauline corpus highlights the idea of being baptized into Christ as putting on Christ.516 As in priestly investiture, identification with the divine being is accomplished through ritual washing and clothing. The priest is united with God and becomes holy. Christ here is the priestly garment.

**Heaven as the Garden of Eden**

Two images from the New Testament highlight the connection between Eden and heaven. First is the image of Jesus being the very source of heavenly water.517 In the Book

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516 Galatians 3:27, Romans 13:14

517 John 8 – Jesus being the source of heavenly water.
of Revelation Jesus/God is identified as the temple. The connection between presence and place, between Eden and the Temple and God’s presence is also present in the description of the one sitting on the throne in heavenly Jerusalem as well as in the description of the heavenly city. In the Book of Revelation, John sees God on the throne covered with the jewels of the priests vestment:

A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. Round the throne were twenty four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. From the throne issued flashes of thunder…and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.  

Later it is the heavenly city itself which is covered in these precious stones. Then after Jesus/God are described as the new temple, the Book of Revelations shows John the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb and on either side of the street the tree of life. The throne of God and the lamb is the new Eden.

The idea of Jesus being the origin of the water of life is highlighted in the New Testament. In the story of the woman at the well who asks for drinking water Jesus responds, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” John 4:13-14. In the Gospel of John not only is Jesus the source of living water, but so are all of those who follow him:

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518 Revelation 4:2-6

519 Revelation 21:15-21
On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.” 

The Book of Revelation also highlights Eden as one of the rewards for those who come out of the great tribulation and who wash their robes in the blood of the lamb and made them white. These martyrs have access to the tree of life which is located in the new city which will be given as a heritage to those who conquer.

The Pauline corpus presents a narrative that paradise was lost when Adam was driven out of Eden, and has now been regained by the work of Christ, the new Adam. Paradise has again become accessible. Jesus can tell the criminal crucified next to him, “today you will be with me in paradise,” and Paul can say he knew a man who was caught up into paradise. This Adam Christ motif is further developed by the idea of putting on Christ as the new man and a new Adam. In the Pauline corpus putting on Christ in baptism is talked about as becoming a new Adam and a new creation, as “putting on the new man,” and as putting on the image of the man of heaven by contrasting old man and new man, earthly man and heavenly man. The Adam-Christ motif, seems to presuppose that Adam had originally been clothed with divine elements.

520 John 8

521 Revelation 21.7, 22.14

522 2 Corinthians 12.2

523 Galatians, Romans 5:12-21

524 Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24

525 1 Corinthians 15:49-54
in the image of God, but was stripped of these elements at the Fall.\footnote{Sebastian P. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter (Eichstätter Beiträge, 4; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982) 11-40} Those who are united with Christ are restored to the original Adamic state.

*Eschatological Battle*

The notion of cosmic conflict is present throughout the New Testament and is highlighted in the Book of Revelation. Paul uses both military imagery and athletic imagery to describe Christian life as a struggle, battle, and contest.\footnote{V.C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif* (NovTSup, 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 87-93.} In several passages he employs the imagery of warrior to describe the Christian struggle.\footnote{Romans 6:13, 8:37; 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:3-5; Philippians 2:25; I Thessalonians 1:6-9.} More prevalent in Paul is the imagery of the athletic contest to describe this contest. The Christian life is a struggle or a contest, the goal of which is to win the eternal crown. Paul was even willing to endure having his body pummeled to win the prize.\footnote{I Corinthians 9:27} In developing this imagery Paul draws on the athletic contests of running and boxing. In the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul draws on the image of the arena to describe the suffering he endures for his calling in Christ: “God has exhibited us as apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men.”\footnote{I Corinthians 4:9} The battle before men and angels is a cosmic conflict. In 2 Timothy Paul’s life is summed up as an athletic contest:

\footnote{526 Sebastian P. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter (Eichstätter Beiträge, 4; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1982) 11-40
529 I Corinthians 9:27
530 I Corinthians 4:9}
For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight and finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.531

The other imagery in the New Testament that paints a picture of the eschatological battle is the imagery of “taking up ones cross.” In Mark’s Gospel Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”532 In Mark’s Gospel this call to discipleship is intimately connected with the notion of the eschatological battle. When Jesus declares that “the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again,”533 Peter objects. Jesus proclaims Peter’s denial of suffering to be from Satan. The rest of the gospel develops this theme of suffering means to follow Jesus and those who deny this are not worthy to follow Jesus are on the side of Satan. The reward of following Jesus is eschatological reward.534 Thus, in Mark, imitation of Christ in taking up one’s cross or in martyrdom is participation in the eschatological battle.

This imagery of the eschatological battle is illustrated most fully in The Book of Revelation. At the climax of his visions, John sees a vision of the eschatological battle.535

531 II Timothy 4:6-8
532 Mark 16:24
533 Mark 8:31
534 Mark 13:13
535 Revelation 12
But, the whole of the Book of Revelations is set up as a call to conquer, to participate in the eschatological battle. In the open letters to the seven churches, a dual is established between those that are faithful and the devil. Antipas is singled out as one whose faithful witness led to his death at the hand of Satan. Confession of Christ and standing firm against Satan and others unfaithfulness is an important theme in the letters to Thyatira and Philadelphia. When John writes to Smyrna, he tells them that they are about to be thrown into prison by the devil. A call to faithfulness is a call to martyrdom. For those who are faithful unto death, who conquer and who are slain, receive eschatological reward. The souls under the altar, slain for the Word of God are given white robes. Conquerors dressed in white robes walk with Jesus and are contrasted with the unfaithful dead who have soiled their garments. In order to receive their white garments these Christians must publicly confess the name of Christ.

CONCLUSION

In Saturus’s vision, a martyr who is engaged in an eschatological battle, envision heaven as a heavenly garden and as a heavenly temple and is assured of future reward. The context of Saturus’s vision is his impending execution for professing the name of Christ. Having put on Christ, the mighty warrior and noble athlete, Saturus’s would enter into the eschatological battle and is assured of heavenly recompense. His vision is a product of Biblical imagery and Second Temple-era apocalyptic imagery.

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536 Revelation 6.11

537 3:1-3:3
Like the visions of the eschaton in I Enoch and Jubilees, Saturus sees a heavenly garden. This is similar to the garden that Perpetua sees in her vision. While none of our other primary source texts have ascent visions, they also, highlight the eschaton as a return to the Edenic state. In anxious anticipation of a return to the prelapsarian state or in inaugurated participation in Eden, holy men and women in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, *Apocryphal Gospels* choose lives of *enkrateia*, and women are made male. *Enkrateia* and the transformational imagery of being made male is reflective of the prefall state were there is no sexual reproduction and therefore no need for gender. The *Acts of Andrew*, explicitly reads this imagery through the New Testament imagery of Christ becoming the new man and the new Adam. When holy men and women put on Christ, they too become a new man, a new Adam, in live in a new creation.

In the Book of Jubilees temple imagery is read onto the Edenic state. In the Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, I Enoch and the Book of Revelation the future state is envisioned as an eschatological temple. Both the architecture and ritual of the Temple is present in the eschatological visions in the Bible and Second Temple-era texts, and in Saturus’s vision. When Saturus and Perpetua ascend to heaven they are taken by angels into the heavenly throne room, were like Isaiah, Enoch, and Daniel, and John they see a large enthroned figure surrounded by a choir of angels. In the Temple narratives of the Old Testament priests must prepare to enter into the Holy of Holies, they abstain from sex, they are ritual unclothed and clothed in linen garments, and are ritually bathed. In the text from the Second Temple the ritual action of the priest is ascribed to visionaries and prophets. Likewise, in the martyr acts this imagery is taken over by the martyr. In the acts of martyrdom, the martyr act is often described as a ritual bath. Saturus’s vision opens
with the removal of the fleshly garment. Before the angels enter into the heavenly throne room they put on white garments. The later Greek text of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, actually say that Saturus and Perpetua put on the white garments.

In the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Temple preparation and Temple imagery is also read through Christ. In the New Testament Jesus is the temple. In these second and third century narratives, holy men and women put on Christ and become temples. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* this imagery of becoming the temple is most dramatically illustrated. Thecla is to be fed to a pit of ferocious seals. She is stripped naked and leaps into the pool of seals and baptizes herself. Through this ritual preparation she becomes a temple and is overshadowed by clouds and thunder and lightning, imagery derived from the overshadowing cloud and the pillars of fire associated with the tabernacle.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 detail the eschatological motivations for martyrdom and *enkrateia* in the *Apocryphal Acts*, *Apocryphal Gospels*, and *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. The eschaton is imaged as a return to the pre-fallen state of paradise, as an ascent to a heavenly garden, and as the entrance into the heavenly temple. The background for this imagery is Biblical literature and apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple-era. When individuals are motivated by the eschaton to choose lives of *enkrateia* and martyrdom, they become holy and are described with imagery reflective of the eschaton.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Strictly speaking, the conclusion of this dissertation should simply be a rehearsal of the narrative and arguments presented in this dissertation. To that task I will attend. In fairness, though, I should explain that my initial interest in the imagery of being made male began when I first encountered the imagery of women being made male in Augustine. In the City of God he teaches against those who said that in the resurrection women would be men. In an attempt to understand who taught that and why, and why Augustine argued against this position, I began reading Augustine to try to figure out what he thought happened in the resurrection and why he made the choice to live the ascetic life that he wrote about in the Confessions. I started down a rabbit hole and became intrigued by his changing exegesis of the Genesis narrative and his changing defense of the ascetic life. As I began reading 4th century texts on the ascetic life, especially Gregory of Nyssa’s Life of Macrina, On Virginity, and On the Making of Man, I saw again this connection between what God originally created us to be and how we were to be transformed in the resurrection. When I began researching Macrina and Gregory’s notion of apocastasis, or the eschaton as a return to the beginning, I also discovered the picture of a transformed holy woman. In the Life of Macrina, I discovered Thecla, whom Gregory recalled as a way of describing his Macrina’s holiness.

I was intrigued by Gregory’s description of the holiness of his sister and I was curious why the story of the ascetic Anthony, that Augustine retells in his Confessions, so motivates him to turn to God and to an ascetic life. I wanted to understand why Gregory

538 For more on this see my Henery, “Jovinian’s Proposal.”
thought it was easier to be celibate than to be married and why Thecla was the name he gave to his sister as a description of her holiness.

These questions led me to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and to the story of a woman who was motivated to a life of *enkrateia* because of Paul’s preaching on the eschaton. The story told of Thecla’s conversion to Christianity and her transformation into a holy woman. One of the images used to describe Thecla’s transformation was the imagery of being made male. This was the idea that Augustine was condemning. But, curiously, this is also the same story that Gregory of Nyssa was thinking about in order to foretell his sister’s holiness. But, he never mentioned Thecla being made male.

I began to search for this image in other second and third century *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. I quickly discovered six other stories of first through third century women who were motivated to choose lives of *enkrateia* and martyrdom because of the eschaton. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, and *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, all of the women who are eschatologically motivated to *enkrateia* and martyrdom are transformed and in the description of their holiness they are also made male!

These texts, though, are not just about women. They also describe the transformation of holy men. In nearly all of the accounts of the lives of holy men and holy women in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, the anticipation of the eschaton motivates faithful Christians to *enkrateia* or martyrdom. When men and women choose eschatologically motivated lives of *enkrateia* and martyrdom they are transformed. The imagery used to describe these
holy men and holy women is derived from the visions of the eschaton that is present in each text. In these texts martyrs appear in the form of Christ, Christ appears in the form of apostles and as old and young men, wives leave their husbands and husbands their wives in order to become temples of God. Like the angels, ascetics shine with radiant splendor, victors receive crowns, beasts speak and refuse to devour intended martyrs, men bear children, and women are made male.

When I began reading the secondary literature about the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons*, and *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, to understand where the specific imagery of being made male came from, none of it talked about this imagery as a way of talking about women becoming holy. There was no connection to Gregory’s calling Macrina “Thecla” as a way of foretelling her holiness or to Augustine talking about those who thought women became men in heaven. None of the scholarship was reading the transformational imagery of women being made male in the context of eschatologically motivated *enkrateia* and martyrdom.

In fact, there was very little secondary scholarship on the transformational imagery of becoming male in the stories from the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, the *Apocryphal Gospels*, and the *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. When scholarship did address the imagery of being made male it was usually explained by applying the scholarship that explored fifth, six, and seventh century incidents of women becoming male by transvestism. In these stories, women dressed as men and disguised themselves as monks in order to escape their familial circumstances. This extant secondary literature sought to explain the imagery of women being made male in the context of sociology, psychology,
and feminist ideology. Scholars approaching the texts from a psychological perspective identify female cross dressing as the equivalent of male castration, which witnesses to an early Christian psychology of total renunciation of material possessions and sexual life. Others who reject this psychological theory, present these texts as merely stories written by monastic communities for monastic communities. As such, transvestite saints are evidence of a monastic psychology that illustrates tension between the monastic hostility to women and the longing for female presence. Socio-historical approaches to the imagery suggest that legends of cross dressing saints reflect Christian thought and practice in late antiquity. This scholarship presents the idea that women becoming holy challenges male authority in marriage. This approach also suggests that there was a monastic fear that the female sex represents a fundamental obstacle to salvation. By illustrating women as men, the monks are presenting a vision of holiness in which the female was negated. These scholarly approaches to the transformational imagery of being made male suggest that the imagery was in early Christian texts, to illustrate the early Christian re-evaluation and destabilization of traditional gender differences in the context of a theology calling for personal and corporate transformation. Some scholars who specifically turn to the second and third century texts which employ sex change imagery, use the texts in defense of modern theological positions. This modern scholarship illustrates the social context in terms of when these texts were written and when the women lived. Because of the overtly patriarchal and at times misogynistic climate of the early church, the imagery of “becoming male” is myopically interpreted as an indication of women’s liberation from the oppressive contexts in which they find themselves. The
transvestism in the texts is read as patristic evidence for women being priests or an indication of the liberation of women from a patriarchal world.

The contemporary scholarship made little sense to me until I began to explore the contemporary context of the second and third century texts. The imagery was condemned directly through synods and the individual condemnation of authors such as Augustine. Indirectly the imagery was condemned through the denunciation of the stories that used the imagery and through the rewriting of the stories which changed or eradicated the imagery of being made male. I discovered that those who condemned the imagery read the imagery of women being made male as Gnostic imagery, as a challenge to social custom, and as reflective of ascetical practice. The historical condemnation of this imagery as a Gnostic image has encouraged some modern scholars to explain the image in that context. The historical circumstance of the imagery being condemned as a challenge to social norms encouraged many modern scholars to read the transformational imagery as a challenge to the patriarchy of the early Church and society. In fact, this has become the dominate reading of the transformational imagery of changing sexes.

Unfortunately, in scholars’s attempts to explain the transformational imagery of women being made male from modern perspectives, they have often overlooked or underexplored the immediate context of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom that transforms the life of both men and women. When in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles Paul, Thomas, and Andrew preach a call to the encratic life, they are not only calling women; they are calling men and families. When in the Acts of the Christian Martyrs Christians are condemned to martyrdom, not only women follow but men as well. Women as well as men renounce marriage. It is not only women who begin
living faithful encratic lives and then preach; men do as well. And when both men and
women are transformed through the encratic life and the life of martyrdom they are
described with transformational imagery reflective of the eschaton.

In order then to understand the transformational imagery of becoming male, the
aim of this dissertation is to explore transformational imagery in the context of
eschatologically motivated *enkrateia* and martyrdom. In order to understand the images
of the eschaton and the Christian life which it motivates in context, it is first necessary to
understand the second and third century understanding of eschatology, *enkrateia*, and
martyrdom. A brief introduction to eschatology shows that although there was no
univocal understanding of future hope in either Second Temple Judaism or in the early
Christian community, there was some general consensus on the understanding of
resurrection. The basic meaning of resurrection in the Second Temple period is assumed
and reworked in early Christianity so that the notion of eschatology speaks about what
happened to Jesus and what will happen to individual Christians and to the Christian
community. Regardless of the timing of these events, whether the eschaton happens
individually now, or later, or collectively now, or later, the imagery used to talk about
the eschaton is derived from the Second Temple period. The texts, which are our primary
concern, read that imagery through the life of Christ.

Like the concept of eschatology, the second and third century concept of
martyrdom was developed in Second Temple Judaism and was assumed and reworked by
the early Christian community. A brief introduction to the Second Temple background of
the concept of martyrdom illustrates that the early Christian communities saw their
witness and persecution in language similar to the Second Temple martyrdoms: they were
willing to die rather than blaspheme the name of God and desecrate the Temple. Early Christianity had assumed and reworked the concept of God and temple, however, so that it was Jesus that the early church confessed. As Christian persecution continued, first at the hands of the Jews and then at the hands of the state, early Christians saw in their persecution and immanent death the imitation of Christ’s passion. Because Christ was victorious and received resurrection, they too were confident that in imitation of Christ they would receive eschatological reward for their suffering. This eschatological reward motivated early Christians to martyrdom. Imagery derived from the eschaton is employed to indicate the transformation of Christians in early Christian martyrlogies.

The relationship between the eschaton and enkrateia is similiary witnessed to in early Christian tradition and in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Gospel of Thomas, Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, and Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas. A brief introduction to enkrateia shows that beginning with the New Testament witness, eschatology motivated enkrateia. From the beginning there were also divergent explanations about the requirement of enkrateia and its relationship to the eschaton. If the eschaton was imminent or if it had already occurred, then, some Christians thought they were to live encratic lives as a reflection of the eschaton. Others believed that enkrateia, in its restricted sense, was only a part of the world to come and argued against those Christians who taught enkrateia as a condition for the eschaton. The primary sources that employ the transformational imagery of changing sexes witness to eschatologically motivated enkrateia. Imagery derived from the eschaton is employed to indicate the transformation of Christians in texts which illustrate early Christian enkrateia.
The examination of the Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons, and Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians, and Acts of Thomas, Acts of Paul and Thecla, and the Acts of Andrew, in chapters three through five, show that the vision of the eschaton is illustrated with various imagery: the anxiously anticipated future is imaged as the heavenly temple, the protological garden of Eden, and as the reward for the eschatological battle. The image of the holy man and holy woman in our primary source texts is reflective of the eschatological vision in these texts. The second and third century vision of the eschaton, and the second and third century explanation of enkrateia and martyrdom is the product of common sources; first, the Biblical literature and the apocalypses of Second Temple-era Judaism; second, these traditions have been read through the New Testament portrait of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The future hope is illustrated as the heavenly temple. Imagery of the future temple is derived from the explanations of the tabernacle and Temple in Exodus and I Chronicles, and from the Heavenly throne visions in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel. Second Temple-era literature like I Enoch also develops the vision of the heavenly temple and makes it accessible through ascent and mystical vision. The geography and ritual of the first Temple is ascribed to the heavenly temple. Major themes in the Second Temple-era literature include the concept of the priest’s preparation to enter the Temple and the notion of the priest’s vesting being expressed in the language of putting on God or reflecting God’s glory. In the New Testament this imagery is taken over by the concepts of putting on Christ and being clothed in glory. The Pauline corpus highlights the idea of
baptized into Christ as putting on Christ. In Temple ritual the priest is united with God and becomes holy. Christ here is the priestly garment with which Christians are clothed.

The future hope is also illustrated as a return to the prelapsarian Edenic state. Imagery of the future Garden is derived from the Genesis creation narrative and the Second Temple-era literature that further develops the picture of Eden. In some of this literature, heaven is simply described employing geographical imagery from the garden, there are trees, and a river flowing as in Eden. In other texts, like the Book of Jubilees, the laws of the Temple are read onto the heavenly Garden. In order to return to the heavenly Garden, one must be purified or prepared like the priests entering the Holy of Holies, they must be purified by abstaining from sex, ritually washed, and clothed.

Images from the New Testament also highlight the connection between Eden and heaven. Jesus is imaged as the very source of Edenic and heavenly water, and the reward fighting the eschatological battle is a return to the heavenly garden. The Pauline corpus also presents a narrative that paradise was lost when Adam was driven out of Eden, and has now been regained by the work of Christ, the new Adam. Paradise has again become accessible through Christ.

Future hope is also illustrated as the reward for victory in the eschatological battle. The Old Testament notion of Holy War is quite complicated. One reason that Holy War was permissible in the Old Testament was to keep the Israelites free from idolatry. This is the context of the visions of heaven and the heavenly temple in Ezekiel and Daniel. Daniel had a vision of an eschatological battle where God would prevail against

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539 Galatians 3:27, Romans 13:14
idolatry. For the first time, Israel’s war for land and against idolatry was no longer restricted to the promised land. It now was about a cosmic battle. If the war was no longer restricted to the promised land, neither was the reward. This notion of cosmic conflict is present throughout the New Testament and is highlighted in the Book of Revelation. Paul uses both military imagery and athletic imagery to describe Christian life as a struggle, battle, and contest. The imagery of taking up one’s cross and following Christ is also connected to the imagery of the eschatological battle. The Book of Revelation most fully develops the idea of the eschatological battle, as the whole of the book is set up as a call to conquer, to participate in the eschatological battle. In both the Pauline corpus and in the Book of Revelation, participation in the eschatological battle with Christ assumes earning the rewards of that battle, an eternal crown of immortality and the white robes of martyrdom.

When men and women choose lives of enkrateia and martyrdom that are motivated by these various explanations of the eschaton, they become holy and are transformed. Holy men and women return to a prelapsarian state where there is no gender and no procreation and they become angels. Putting on Christ, holy men and women fight in the eschatological battle and are rewarded with crowns of immortality. Transformed holy men and women become temples of Christ prepared for the indwelling of Christ and are overshadowed like the tabernacle.

The imagery of holy women being transformed into men is best understood within this context of eschatologically motivated enkrateia and martyrdom and as one of several images reflective of the vision of the eschaton. This imagery is one tradition, one layer among several which are woven together. The anticipation and realization of the eschaton
motivates *enkrateia* and martyrdom. This anticipation and restoration is expressed by symbolic language and transformational imagery: martyrs appear in the form of Christ, Christ appears in the form of apostles and as old and young men, wives leave their husbands and husbands their wives in order to become temples of God and like the angels, ascetics shine with radiant splendor, victors receive crowns, and women are made male.

In the *Acts of the Martyrs of Lyons* and in the *Martydom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Blandina and Perpetua, and Felicitas all become male by being transformed into Christ. The visions of Perpetua also witness to the transformational imagery of becoming male when Perpetua is prepared for gladiatorial battle and when she is stripped she is made male. This transformational imagery is one of several images in these two texts which describe the transformation of an individual who is motivated to become a martyr by the vision of the eschaton. In these texts the final state is envisioned as an eschatological battle, as an eschatological temple, and as the return to the Edenic garden. The imagery used to describe holiness is reflective of those states.

In the *Greek Gospel of the Egyptians* the eschaton is envisioned as a return to the protological state, the prefall Edenic garden where those inhabiting heaven are angels and they do not marry. This is the context of Mary renouncing her gender which is necessary to marry and procreate. Holy women return to a prelapsarian state where there is no gender and no procreation and they become angels. In the *Gospel of Thomas* the eschatological state in envisioned as a return to the protological state and as the eschatological temple. Transformational imagery reflects that vision. Christ making Mary
male in order to enter heaven should be read in the context of the heavenly state being prelapsarian and asexual and angelic.

In the *The Acts of Paul and Thecla, The Acts of Andrew* and *The Acts of Thomas*, transformational imagery, including that of changing sexes, illustrates the transformation into Christ and becoming temples worthy of the indwelling of Christ, and a return to the Edenic garden. In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Paul’s preaching assures eschatological rewards for *enkrateia*. Transformed holy women become Christ, resemble angels, and become temples and see God. In the *Acts of Andrew* the eschatological state is imaged as a return the prelapsarian state in Eden and transformation is presented as a return to the pre-fall anthropology of Adam and Eve. The *Acts of Thomas* also employ the vision of the eschaton as a return to prelapsarian anthropology. They also image the eschaton as a heavenly bridal chamber and as the eschatological temple. Transformational imagery in these texts are reflective of that eschatological vision: transformed holy men and women become brides of Christ, temples prepared for the indwelling of Christ, and luminous and asexual like Adam and Eve in the garden.

This dissertation, I hope, has served as a clarifying lens through which to understand the transformational imagery of becoming male. These texts which employ sex change imagery are far more than social commentary or the stage upon which gender equality is played out. They are religious texts which present women and men as disciples actively involved in making salvation present and in doing so provide models of holiness.
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