

Growing Up Female in the Pauline Churches: What Did She Do All Day?

Carolyn Osiek

In our attempts to see and understand the lives of first generation Christians, it is important to go beyond the belief and ritual systems to comprehend the ordinary daily life that sustained members of the community as they engaged those belief and ritual systems.¹ As with all such attempts for the world of Imperial Rome in which they lived, large portions of the population are not available to us because they are poorly, if at all, represented in the surviving evidence. That

1. The title of this paper was inspired by a yet unpublished paper by Professor Elizabeth McNamer of Rocky Mountain College, *Digging up Women: What Did She Do All Day? Bethsaida Tells Us*. A new window into the lives of women in Pompeii was provided by the unpublished 1997 doctoral dissertation of Liisa Savunen at the University of Helsinki: "Women in the Urban Texture of Pompeii." I am most grateful to Professor Ria Berg at the Academia Finlandia in Rome for bringing this resource to my attention there in 2013.

information gap works in several directions. The lives and attitudes of the elite are disproportionately represented, while the vast majority of ordinary people, the poor, most slaves, the underclasses of all kinds leave only elusive traces.

There have been extensive discussions in recent years about the social status of the first generations of Christian believers in the cities of the Eastern Empire.² What emerges from the evidence is a clear indication that they were not among the elites of the cities in which they lived, but for the most part, neither were they the poorest and most abject, bearing in mind that economic level and social status in Roman society were not at all the same. These people belong to a small group: nonelites who have left a written record.

The information gap cuts another way, too: within every social level and class, half the population, its women, are underrepresented in the surviving evidence. In the past forty or so years, scholars have not been without interest in the women of Greek and Roman antiquity and early Christianity. The bibliography is now ample, but most of these studies focus on the women we do know about, whether in the Greek classics, the literature of the Roman elite, or the New Testament and other written texts of early Christianity.

In working with the literature, there is always the question: how much can what we know about elites be extrapolated to help our thinking about others in the population? Many values of the society are probably continuous, and it has been shown, for example, that the patronage system worked at many levels, that the stratification of society was pervasive at all levels, and even that elite women set clothing and hair styles that others sought to imitate.

There have been many discussions by historians and archaeologists as to whether the Vesuvian towns were ordinary Campanian towns or unusual in some way. For our present purposes, they are seen as typical central Italian towns from the Augustan period until their destruction in August 79 CE. Their residential buildings span economic levels, from elegant *domus* to crowded rooms behind shops or on upper floors. It

2. For instance, Horrell 1996; Meggitt 2000; Friesen 2004; Longenecker 2010.

is true that because of the extensive preservation of ordinary things like wall graffiti, there are elements that exist at Pompeii and nowhere else (e.g., *programmata* or political endorsements). It cannot be argued that this practice was unique to Pompeii, because, with the exception of Herculaneum,³ we simply do not have anything as well preserved from anywhere else for comparison.

It has often been pointed out that Roman writers such as Vitruvius and Cornelius Nepos drew a cultural difference between typical Greek and Roman houses with regard to gender: while the Greek house was said to segregate persons in the house by gender, keeping women unseen by male visitors, the Roman house did not. Rather, the matron of the house was to be found in the midst of the household's activity.⁴ Moreover, the distinctions between "public" and "private" were not what the modern reader would expect, for business was thoroughly integrated into residential life, and "public" referred primarily to what belonged to or was operated by the state.⁵

This means that for the life of women, the expected categories of "private" and "public" do not hold either. What did they do in the city? Just about everything that men did except military service, elected public office, voting, and heavy labor. The Roman woman participated widely in the "public" life of marketplace and business, and elite women attained a true public role as priestesses of popular cults, which, in Pompeii, included that of Venus, one of the patron deities of the city.⁶

The present paper is an attempt to use the archaeological resources of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other select sites to infer what life was like for the majority of girls and women who walked their streets and lived in their houses, and so extrapolate to the streets and houses of other cities of the Empire, even that minority who embraced this new Eastern religion of a crucified and resurrected Jewish god.

3. The preserved walls at Herculaneum do not contain *programmata*. The reason is uncertain.

4. Wallace-Hadrill: 1994: 8–9. See Cornelius Nepos, Preface 6–8; Vitruvius, *Architect.* 6.7.2–4.

5. The distinction between public and private is always highly constructed and variable; see Lopez and Penner 2012: 89–102.

6. Savunen 1997: 119–44.

Growing up in the Household

Where there are families, there are births, and they happened at home. While author-physicians like Galen and Soranus offered their advice about the process, it was mostly in the hands of midwives, slave or free. One legal text specifies the number and status of women who should be present as witnesses that the baby really is the legitimate offspring it is presented as.⁷ If a family house was the scene of a Christian group meeting, life still went on in the house. Business was conducted, meals were prepared, children played, and women gave birth, not only those within the family but female slaves as well. Even in the case of a more modest venue, like the back rooms of a shop or a room in an *insula*, ordinary life continued. We might imagine people arriving in the front of the house for a ritual meal and being distracted by cries of labor pains coming from a back room, or having to be careful where they walk because the children's toys have been left on the floor, or having a nursing woman join the assembly.

There were known methods of contraception that were of questionable effectiveness and methods of abortion that were dangerous. Some of these methods were described by physician-writers like Galen. The exposure of newborns was the most widely practiced method of family planning (not to be confused with infanticide, since it was commonly known where such infants would be left alive). There is no way of knowing how many infants died and how many were taken up by others and raised, usually as slaves, a free but time- and labor-intensive way of acquiring slaves. Hermas, author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, is a known example. He opens his writing by introducing himself as one who had been sold to a woman named Rhoda by *ὁ θρέψας με*, the one who had taken him in as an abandoned child and raised him as a slave (*Herm. Vis.* 1.1). As early as this issue is discussed in Christian writing, it is one of the declared lines of difference for Christians, as it is for some Jewish writers: those in whose name they write do not abort or expose infants

7. See Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch 2006: 53–55.

(Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.202–3; *Did.* 2.2; *Ep. Barn.* 19.5; *Apoc. Pet.* 8).⁸ Many exposed female children were brought up into prostitution, and some later writers offer a rather bizarre reason for not exposing infants: the child may grow up with unknown family of origin and thus, as an adult, unknowingly have sexual relations with a family member and so commit incest (Justin, *1 Apol.* 27). Caution should be raised in assuming that because certain writers claim these principles as official positions, everyone who belonged to their communities consistently followed them. Moreover, it was a handy piece of rhetoric to contrast the community to a stereotyped portrait of a morally depraved world in which they lived.

Slave and free children in a household must have spent their early years together, with difference of role coming only gradually. While there were ongoing discussions about the advantages of having a wet nurse, wet nursing was common especially when the new mother was exhausted by the delivery. The wet nurse was a woman relied upon not only to feed the baby but to begin socializing the child, so the fundamental bonding of baby to adult likely happened with the nurse rather than the mother. She was expected to be of outstanding morals, character, and personal integrity, whether slave or free, and not to have any undesirable speech or behavior traits that could be passed on to the child. Soranus goes so far as to weigh in on her physical size and the size of her breasts (medium size is best). She should speak good Greek so that the child will be exposed to the best speech (Soranus 2.18–20).⁹

Where Christian groups met in private houses, most of these houses must have normally been the locus of ordinary family life. Given the statements of Roman authors and what we know about the inclusion of women in all spaces in the house, it is doubtful that children would have been secluded in a special part of the house for most of the day. Especially when it was a case not of a spacious domus but of a few rooms behind a shop, children must have been part of all the daily

8. Further texts appear in Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch 2006: 50–53.

9. See further Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch 2006: 63–67.

activity and thus well integrated into the social unit. In other words, children were everywhere. It is somewhat puzzling that our texts do not mention them, as if they were not there. But unless the preference for celibacy was much earlier and more widespread than we think, they were there.



Figure 1.1: Young girl reading or writing (wallpainting from Pompeii; provenance unknown; MANN 8946).



Figure 1.2: A female with writing implements (wallpainting from Pompeii; provenance unknown; MANN 9074).

Education for women was not even primarily about literacy, except perhaps in the wealthiest families. Training included production of food and clothing, household management, and eventually sexual initiation. It also included training in character and those virtues most highly prized in women. While numbers of girls in elite and prosperous houses were educated to literacy, especially in their own homes, we presume that the majority were not. Yet their learning in household management was highly skilled and highly prized.

In more comfortable homes, as soon as children were able to contribute to the social and economic activity of the household, the differences between daughter of the house and daughter of a slave would become apparent. Early education would consist of each girl receiving instruction for the acquisition of skills for her future life. In

the case of a household of greater means, the daughter of the house would begin to learn the traditional spinning, the skills of household administration towards her future role as wife and mistress of the house, and perhaps literacy. The most familiar image of the matron at home, however, was that of spinning and weaving to produce her own cloth to clothe her family: loom weights were found in every garden excavated by Jashemski in Pompeii.¹⁰ The female slave children of the household would be educated in their household duties and perhaps in some special skill, like cooking or hairdressing. If elite women like Eumachia and Mamia, two outstanding female patronal figures in Pompeii, raised daughters, they would be educated in civic responsibility and leadership. In a family of modest means involved in trade, perhaps the difference between slave and free would not be so marked because free and slave worked alongside each other in common labor for the support of the domestic unit.

In a rare supposition that men had anything to do with this training of girls of every status, Xenophon, in his description of household management, prescribes that the husband of a new fifteen-year-old bride should teach her everything she needs to know to manage her new household (*Oeconomicus* 7–9). This is highly unlikely; most of the instruction came from other women household managers, notably the girls' mothers.¹¹ How did mothers do this in shops and work places where they spent their days? In the *fullonica* of L. Veranius Hypsaesus (6.8.20) in Pompeii, there are paintings of women carding wool and perhaps making garments.¹² If this is a depiction of their activity in the room, did some of them bring their daughters to learn the trade? Two women named Holconia and Attia Calliste operated a brick factory, with brick stamps bearing their names. Holconia, a member of an elite family (two of whose men embellished the theater),¹³ was probably an elite woman operating the business. Attia Calliste was probably her freedwoman agent. Did she bring her daughter along to the shop to

10. Savunen 1997: 95. See Jashemski 1979.

11. Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch 2006: 146–47, 286n6; MacDonald 2014: 133.

12. Savunen 1997: 97.

13. Berry 2007: 137–38.

learn the trade?¹⁴ The names of eleven female spinners are known from a graffito in the House of M. Terentius Eudoxus (6.13.6).¹⁵ Did some of them bring their daughters to learn the skill by observing or even trying it out? Was Julia Felix, owner of a large property with rental units, training a daughter to take over its management?

How did Christians adapt their own traditions and beliefs in the raising of their children? In Christian texts, 1 Tim 5:10 and Titus 2:3–5 are important testimony to the already established tradition of women teaching the next generation to continue on the same path. A woman tested to be enrolled among the widows must have raised and educated her children, and older women were to train younger women in character and virtue. Training in both household and trade skills were taken for granted.¹⁶

It is rather surprising that there is no evidence of the distinctively Christian education of children until the late fourth century, and then it comes from the expectations of ascetic leaders for the raising of elite girls who will in turn, like their mothers, be ascetic leaders (e.g., Eustochium, daughter of Paula, colleague of Jerome). They were to learn especially the Psalms and Wisdom of Solomon, and were not to study the Song of Songs until last, so that they would understand it in the context of the whole of Scripture (Jerome, *Epist.* 107, 128).¹⁷ Earlier, it seems that Christian girls and boys were educated in literacy through the same use of Homer and Virgil as their peers from other traditions, though this would have created ideological conflicts. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that the Septuagint was used as a Greek reader by Christians much earlier, but there is no surviving evidence.

Common Christian Meetings

Activities in church communities, whether in *domus*, *insulae*, or other venues, involved more than a weekly common meal. In the early second century, Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 10.96) received reports in his

14. Savunen 1997: 51.

15. Berry 2007: 119.

16. MacDonald 2014: 136–47.

17. Osiek 2012: 401–7.

province of Bithynia-Pontus of Christian groups that met early in the morning “to sing hymns to Christ as if to a god.” They also must have met for regular sessions of training and preparing for new members, continuing education for the newly baptized—likely to have been given in gender-segregated groups—and providing hospitality to traveling brothers and sisters, either in the house in which such meetings took place, or elsewhere with members of the congregation. Here as elsewhere, widows were key players (see 1 Tim 5:9). The community bases were also centers of communication and networking, used to pass on news of visitors and their information from other churches, or about local events, including the births of children to members of the congregation. In this capacity, needs arising for members would also be addressed: a sickness or death in a family that necessitated attention and support and perhaps left an orphan in need of adoption; or a new birth in a household that needed a wet-nurse. These family issues would mean the deep involvement of women, as always the mainstays of family life. Seeing to the family needs of members would have been an important part of the lives of women in the congregation. It was not, therefore, a case of gathering once a week and no contact between meetings. Members must have known each other well and had frequent contact so that when they did come together for the weekly meal, there was already a depth of sharing of life.

When the congregation gathered for the weekly ritual meal, if they met in the residence of a family, children were there as part of it regardless of whether the residence was spacious like, for example, the House of Caecilius Jucundus at Pompeii; cramped, like a small group of rooms behind a shop, such as along the street in the *Insula Arriana Polliana*; or in an apartment building like the *Casa a Graticcio* at Herculaneum. If the congregation met elsewhere than where they lived, did the children come along? If we assume that teachings of traditional family harmony somewhat like the household codes were part of general instructions, perhaps all would hear them together, or perhaps instruction was separated by sex, or by legal status. It can be argued that the inclusion of children in the exhortations to family

harmony is meant for adult children, not minors. A good illustration is the trouble that Hermas has with his children, for which the female revelatory agent rebukes him: the parents are not controlling their children, who are sinful and lawless – the content of their transgressions unfortunately unspecified (Herm. *Vis.* 1.3.1–2, 3.1–2). Yet parents would certainly have wanted their minor children to be present to hear about their obligations to obey their parents, as they still do.

There are no references to children attending the ritual meal until far later, when the meeting is certainly in a hall rather than a domestic or small informal setting and is no longer a meal. The third century *Didascalia* says that, at the assembly, men sat in front, women behind, and children either stood apart or with father or mother as they chose (*Didasc.* 12 [2.57]). The *Didascalia* also gives some glimpses of family advice and practices that must have been going on earlier as well. Christians were encouraged to adopt orphans of believers and to raise children with strict discipline. Girls should be provided husbands. Sons should not carouse and get into trouble, but should be given wives as soon as possible so as to avoid fornication (*Didasc.* 17 [4.1]; 22 [4.11]).

Marriage and Widowhood

Marriage, childbearing, and often widowhood were part of the normal cycle of every woman's life. Consistent evidence leads to the conclusion that boys were older than girls at first marriage by as much as ten years, resulting in more widows in the population than widowers. Some of the spotty surviving evidence from Roman texts and inscriptions indicates that girls married at a younger age in elite families than in nonelite families.¹⁸ If this is so, the reason is readily understood: in elite families, daughters were a valuable asset for forming alliances with other families, so the earlier, the better, even sometimes before puberty. When such a political motive was not at

18. Hopkins 1965: 309–27. In general, the earlier evidence is for marriage of girls at 12–15. The later Christian evidence is for marriage slightly later, at 16–18. This does not necessarily mean that Christians deliberately changed the marriage pattern, but more likely that customs were changing at a later date.

stake, and a girl's labor contributed to family income, there was no urgency.

At marriage, a girl moved into another family and residence that was not her own. There were probably a large number of believing families with Roman citizenship, especially in Corinth and Philippi, both founded as Roman colonies. By the second quarter of the first century, Roman marriage was probably *sine manu*, by which the girl remained a member of her own *familia* instead of being embedding into her husband's *familia*, as had been done previously with *manus* marriage. The change in marriage custom is thought to have happened because families of brides resisted alienating their property into another *familia*. The probably unintended result was greater control of the wife's own property on her part, and, at the same time, greater ambiguity about her familial membership, since she remained a member of her own *familia* while living in that of her husband.

We know, particularly from funerary commemorations, that in many households, slaves lived in family units. Though not allowed legitimate marriages, they nevertheless used the language of marriage on their tombstones, so presumably also in life. While these family units could be separated at any time, it was to the advantage of slave owners to keep them together for stability and harmony in households.¹⁹

Remarriage was common and even enforced by the Augustan marriage legislation, which, however, was of dubious widespread effect. Remarriage was discouraged by Paul (1 Cor 7:32-40) and by the author of 1 Timothy for older widows (1 Tim 5:9), but mandated for younger widows by 1 Timothy (1 Tim 5:14). The ambiguity of 1 Timothy may be a nod to both worlds, the growing disapproval of remarriage and the romantic ideal of the *univira*, but also acquiescence to the larger Roman ideal of remarriage for younger widows who were still of reproductive age. Paul's discouragement, while clearly a matter of his opinion, may have kept some widows in Pauline communities from remarrying, though others probably went ahead and remarried

19. Martin 2003: 207-30.

anyway. Moreover, a majority of communities were probably not under Pauline control. But if the community of widows was already beginning to be organized into the service organization that we know it later became, many may have opted for this role, which was recognized by the churches as an important contribution.²⁰



Figure 1.3: Woman painter (wallpainting from House of the Surgeon; MANN 9018).

20. Osiek 1983: 159–69.

Beyond Domesticity

There are 750 women whose names appear in about 790 inscriptions in some written form at Pompeii: 62% on wall graffiti, 24% in stone, 11% on amphora, 2% on wax tablets, and 1% on domestic objects. On the basis of 160 years of the town's existence and its estimated populations, this is about 2% of the total number of women who lived, worked, and died there. Not surprisingly, the vast majority are from the last years of the city, so that the percentage of living women represented in the inscriptions is much higher, but impossible to calculate exactly.²¹ The large number on wall inscriptions (62%) comprises many different contexts and purposes.

Women could not vote, but they were free to endorse candidates for municipal office and to use their influence in any way. A unique feature of Pompeii is the preserved *programmata* or political endorsements found painted on walls throughout the town. Their number suggests a higher level of literacy than would otherwise have been supposed. Forty-seven women were *rogatores*, endorsers asking for support for their candidate. Women endorsers comprise 14.5% of the total, while groups of more than one *rogator* comprise 16%, and some of them also include women.²² The remaining 70% of the endorsements are made by men.

Given what we know about the active role of women in political campaigning in Pompeii, there is no reason to suppose any less activity of women in other cities with elected office. It should be assumed that any Roman colony (like Corinth and Philippi) had elected annual magistracies. Larger cities of the Empire like Thessalonica and Ephesus should also have had elections for local office. The women who endorsed candidates on the walls of Pompeii were not the city's elite. They are for the most part otherwise unknown. The women who appear in the Pauline letters and Acts are of a similar social location as the women of Pompeii who actively engaged in political endorsements

21. Savunen 1997: 9.

22. Savunen 1997: 20.

of their friends, neighbors, and patrons. The women of the Pauline churches may well have been involved in election campaigns in their own cities. They were thus not spared from the political tensions present in every city, the kinds of tensions that probably spilled over into most social gatherings, including those of Christians.²³

Pompeii yields an abundance of information about women in business and trade. L. Caecilius Jucundus (5.1.26), an *argentarius*, a prosperous sales agent working on commission, probably son of a freedman, left a chest full of business records, 153 of which handled sales for private customers, mostly between 54 and 58 CE (the first thought to have been conducted by his father in 15 CE). Fifteen women hired him for sixteen sales, including sales of slaves. Only one of the sellers signed her own document; the others may not have been literate or were operating with a tutor. Women also gave loans to one another directly and recorded them in wall graffiti or wax tablets. Two women, named Dicia Margarit and Poppaea Prisca I. Note, recorded on a wooden tablet a contract between them in 61 CE, whereby Dicia lent 1450 sesterces to Poppaea, with two male slaves, Petrinus and Simplex, made over by *mancipatio* as collateral. If the debt was not paid by November 1 of the same year, Dicia Margarit could sell them at public auction and keep the revenue. However, if the sale price exceeded the debt, she owed the surplus back to Poppaea Prisca. Less formally, Faustilla gave two loans with a small amount of interest and left a graffito on a tavern wall to record it; for one of the loans, earrings were left as security.²⁴

Women in Pompeii like Vibia and Caesia Helpis were engaged in trade in fish sauce and wine. Campania was known for the production of perfume. Gavia Severa (7.7.5) was probably an *unguentaria*, as six *amphorae* bearing her name with different ingredients for perfume were found in her house. A fresco now known only through an earlier drawing portrayed the pressing of oil and a woman putting ointment

23. Welborn (1987: 85–111) argues that the discord at the Lord's Supper that concerns Paul in 1 Corinthians 11–12 does not have theological causes, but social and political ones. Thanks to Bruce Longenecker for this reference.

24. Savunen 1997: 68–69, 72, 101; Berry 2007: 119, 220.

on the hand of another woman while an assistant stood by with a moneybag. Laturina Januaria was a *calcaria*, exact meaning unknown: something to do with limestone, perhaps the owner of a quarry or a lime-kiln, or a retailer for building materials. Most interesting is the freedwoman Clodia Nigelia, a *porcaria publica*: a tender of pigs, probably those being readied for sacrifice to Ceres.²⁵

Julia Felix was proprietor of a large property near the amphitheater at Pompeii, and had advertised on the street face of the building the availability of parts of it on a long term lease of five years. The complex comprised rental dining rooms (*cenacula*), a bath complex (*balneum*), shops or food establishment (*tabernae*), a large garden area, a stable, and two domus that could be separated from the rest of the property. Her social status was freeborn but not from a *iustum connubium*, a legal marriage: she identifies her status as *Spf*. The fact that she would announce this condition of her birth must mean that while she moved in social circles largely composed of freedmen and women, she wanted to make clear that her paternity was of higher status than most. Whether the rental sign was old and renters had already taken possession, or whether she was still looking for renters in those fateful days of August 79 CE is unknown.

In this company, the *prostatis* Phoebe of Cenchrae (Rom 16:1–2); Lydia, merchant of purple cloth at Philippi (Acts 16:14); and Nympha, hostess of a house church in Laodicea (Col 4:15) would fit right in. Prisca and Aquila of Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus (Acts 18:1–3) must also have been merchants of the leather goods that they produced. Women members of the Pauline churches can be expected to have been doing everything that these Pompeiiian women were doing, with the exception of the elite roles of public patronage and priesthoods. The patronage structure worked at different levels, however, and it is plain from Paul's introduction of Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2 that a similar system was at work in their social circle as at more elevated social levels.²⁶

25. Savunen 1997: 87–89, 102, 108.

26. Osiek 2009: 143–52.

Women were drawn into lawsuits, like those found in a collection of legal records on wax tablets in the so-called House of the Bicentenary in 1938. Two suits were over a little girl of Herculaneum, Petronia Sp. f. Iusta, the first for custody by her mother Vitalis, and the second ten years later by another woman, Calatoria Themis, who claimed the now orphaned girl (along with her inherited property) as a slave. The dispute over Petronia's status at birth had come to an impasse with local magistrates and the case had been appealed to Rome in 75 CE. From the surviving evidence, no decision had yet been rendered by August of 79 CE. Christians did not exempt themselves from involvement in such lawsuits. Paul complains with agitation to the Corinthian community, who were taking each other to court, in his eyes a disgrace: they should have been able to settle disputes among themselves without involving judges who were outsiders. After all, "Don't you know that the holy ones will judge the world?" he thunders. So how could they drag their disagreements into public scrutiny (1 Cor 6:1-8)?²⁷

Violence and Death

We know next to nothing about death and burial practices of Christians in the first century. Only later will distinctive patterns emerge. Presumably they buried in the same way, used the same kinds of inscriptions if they could afford them, and mourned their dead with similar rituals as everyone else, especially returning to the grave on the anniversary of death for a ritual funerary meal, as continued and memorialized two centuries later in Roman catacomb portrayals. Wedding and funerary customs are some of the most enduring in a culture. Even into the early fourth century, some Christians put DM (*dis manibus*, a commendation of the deceased to the shades of the underworld) on their tombstones, evidence either of continuing religious syncretism, or that customs once marked with religious meaning no longer carry that meaning.

27. Berry 2011: 144-45, 226, 305.

Forty freedwomen are attested in commemorations at Pompeii, all well enough off to afford a monument of their own or to have someone else erect it in their memory.²⁸

Pauline Strictures

We must pose the question: did some of Paul's vigorously expressed opinions about the behavior of women have a dampening effect on women's lives in the Pauline communities? His rant about women's head coverings in the *ekklesia* (1 Cor 11:2–16) and prohibition of women speaking in the same *ekklesia* (whether or not authentically from Paul) (1 Cor 14:34–35) have wreaked their havoc through the centuries. Both passages, of course, are about decorum in the community assembly, a limited venue; they have arguably no bearing on the rest of everyday life. Is Paul just a stickler for what happens on Sunday afternoon?

For a long time, my judgment has been that when Paul arrived in Corinth, he suffered culture shock because of the more freewheeling customs he saw in this commercial Roman freedmen's colony, no more than a hundred years after its founding by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE. True, if we are to trust the chronology of Acts, he had already spent considerable time in Philippi and Thessalonica, two Macedonian cities with heavy Roman influence. In Philippi, he had already encountered two women leaders, Euodia and Syntyche, whose status in the community was sufficient that their dissension was causing major problems (Phil 4:2–3). However, if we read 1 Corinthians with the attempt to understand the common characteristics of this group, we see a variety of problems that Paul is trying to deal with all at once, partly on hearsay and partly in response to their inquiries to him (1 Cor 7:1). Prophecy plays an important role (1 Cor 11:5, ch. 14), and prophecy is notoriously hard to control. Women were very much part of the prophetic activity, and must have received his attempted regulation coolly.

The women of Pompeii, like their sisters in other parts of the empire,

28. Savunen 1997: 84.

must have been quite aware of the ideals of chastity, modesty, and reserve that were created by contemporary Roman theorists on family and household management, and of the structural imposition of male control in their lives, justified since Aristotle as according to “nature.” They found themselves between the traditional ideal of the *univira* and the more recent Augustan pressure—and perhaps also their own desire—to remarry; between the ideal of shy modesty and withdrawal and the economic need to be actively involved in production and marketing; between the injunction to submit to male authority and the modeling of other women before them who were able and even required to act independently. The evidence from Pompeii makes it clear that it was not the occasional woman who took initiative in business or trade and thus exercised economic independence, just as it was not the exceptional woman who was active in political and social life. Rather, these roles were part of the norm.²⁹ The women of Pompeii saw the public statues erected to Livia and local civic female patrons like Eumachia and Mamia, modestly enfolded in their *stola*, which was pulled over their head in the back to form a veil. At the same time, they were aware of the immense properties for both living and dead that were controlled by women, and of the day-to-day initiative exercised by other women in their workshops and businesses. They had to live in the tension between externally imposed ideals, whether civic or religious, and their own social realities.

When women made the decision to join the nascent groups of Christians that were growing up in many places, that tension did not recede but simply took on new words and forms. The same modesty, silence, and simplicity of adornment was enjoined (1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:8–15; 1 Pet 3:1–6), now from new sources.

What did she do all day? She did the same things that the women of Pompeii and of other cities and towns were doing: going about her daily work, raising her family, running her business, participating in her social and political networks, with the single difference that she

29. Hylan 2014: 3–12.

had found a new way of belief that shaped her responses to others, her ways of thinking, and her expectations beyond death.