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# Soja's Thirdspace, Foucault's Heterotopia and de Certeau's Practice: Time-Space and Social Geography in Emergent Christianity

Harry O. Maier\*

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**Abstract:** »Sojas Dritter Raum, Foucaults Heterotopie und de Certeaus Praktiken: Zeit/Raum und Sozialgeographie im frühen Christentum«. This essay uses analytical tools developed by Edward Soja, Michel Foucault, and Michel de Certeau to investigate time-space configurations in the religious movements inaugurated by Jesus and promoted by Paul. The article begins with an account of the domination of time as a conceptual tool for analyzing both figures and their teachings to establish the context for an alternative space-time reading of the data represented in the New Testament and extra-canonical sources. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God is placed in the context of the monetization and hence disruption of traditional kinship and social structures. His parables, sayings, and the traditions associated with him represent thirdspace performances of his rural world. His proclamation of the Kingdom of God coheres with Foucault's notion of heterotopia in that it places listeners in places outside of place. His articulation of behaviours coincides with de Certeau's notion of tactics inserted within dominant social strategies. Through a reading of Paul's message against the backdrop of urban poverty Paul's motif of the church as body is seen as a thirdspace articulation of social groups, heterotopic place outside of place, and communal solidarity within the urban context of the Roman Empire.

**Keywords:** Galilee, household, Jesus, Paul, monetization, Roman city, space-time.

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## 1. Introduction

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Sebastian Dorsch (2013), in his introduction to this HSR Special Issue, argues that historical-anthropological concepts and practices of space-time offer great potential for historical social research (see also Rau 2013, 66-70). What does space-time have to do with the historical social study of the emergence of Christianity in the ancient world and what new insights does it furnish? This essay turns to spatial theory to consider first Jesus of Nazareth and then his apostle, Paul, under the aspect of Soja's (1996) notion of thirdspace, Michel

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Foucault's (1986 [1967]) closely related notion of heterotopia, and Michel de Certeau's (2007 [1980]) notion of spatial practices of every-day life. All three of these theoreticians have in common the analysis of creative uses and imaginative configurations of space for human practices. Foucault's notion of heterotopia, Soja's conceptualisation of thirdspace, and de Certeau's theorization of every day practice all share attention to human practices and their resulting configurations of time and space. This essay offers a social-geographical consideration of ancient figures and texts that too often find a wholly theological or lexico-graphical analysis, but without reference to conceptions of lived space in time, or practices of space-time appropriations. Accordingly, it seeks to explore socio-geographical space-time formulations not addressed in other methods of interpretation. After a consideration of a consensus of New Testament scholarship in which time rather than space or space-time dominates considerations of the movements gathered around Jesus and Paul, the essay seeks a corrective space-time investigation by interpreting evidence relating to Jesus of Nazareth as exemplary of rural space-time imagination and practice and then to Paul as similarly exemplary of a reconfigured set of urban practices. Following especially the lead of Edward Soja, the essay seeks to demonstrate that not time or space, but space-time considerations are critical to a social understanding of Jesus' historical teachings and emergent Christianity.

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## 2. The Domination of Time over Space in Modern Biblical Scholarship

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To consider Jesus and Paul socio-spatially is to join a steadily growing chorus of voices who have taken the "spatial turn" in the study of biblical texts that has so far been deployed with rich results in the interpretation of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible (Berquist and Camp 2008a; 2008b; Gunn and MacNutt 2002), but is at its early stages in the studies of Christian origins (Stewart 2012, 139-50). The reasons for this are too complex to outline here in detail and have been considered elsewhere (Keller 2005, 84-139). With reference to space-time formulations, it is time, not space that has too often been the topic of scholarly interest in the study of the emergence of Christianity as a religious movement in antiquity (Moxnes 2003, 6). Indeed, historical study of Christian origins betrays the general orientation of Modernity to privilege time over place (Casey 1997, ix-xii and 77; 1993, 3-21). What Edward Casey (1993, 11) describes as "the pandemic obsession with time" can readily be seen in modern treatments of Jesus and Paul. There is room here to cite only a few examples of such "pandemic obsession with time."

## 2.1 Apocalyptic as the Mother of Christian Theology

The New Testament scholar and theologian Ernst Käsemann (1969, 40) famously stated that Jewish-Christian apocalyptic is “the mother of all Christian theology”.<sup>1</sup> Jesus was of course not a Christian theologian, nor, according to Käsemann, was he an apocalypticist. Rather it was the reinterpretation by his disciples of the Jesus event – his death and resurrection – with the help of early Jewish apocalyptic ideas that gave rise to Christian theology. Apocalyptic transformed Jesus of Nazareth into the enthroned Christ and the coming eschatological Son of Man – a figure that in first-century BCE apocalyptic Jewish literature had come to be associated with divine judgment at the end of time (Collins 1998, 177-93). Christianity’s

central motif was the hope of the epiphany of the Son of Man coming to his enthronement; and it is a question whether Christian theology can ever make do, or be legitimate, without this motif which arose from the experience of Easter and determined the Easter faith (Käsemann 1969, 46).

Others, while not replicating Käsemann, have similarly centred an account of emergent Christianity on time. Oscar Cullmann (1964), for example, in a study that remains more than sixty years after its first appearance a chief departure point for much scholarship, agreed with Käsemann that Christian theology is oriented to futurist eschatology. However, he hypothesized that it was not so much apocalyptic but the creation of historical time that birthed Christianity. It is in the in-between time of Christ’s resurrection and his Second Coming that theology takes its rise in the working out of Christ’s mission in the world as necessary historical event.<sup>2</sup> Here it is the delay of Christ’s Second Coming and not the Parousia itself that is determinative. *Heilsgeschichte*, a Sacred History that begins in the Hebrew Bible and continues through the church’s history until concluded in Christ’s return, has replaced an imminent eschatology. Although these studies by Käsemann and Cullmann appeared more than half a century ago, this temporal orientation dominates New Testament studies. Thus Georg Strecker recently stated, “[O]ne cannot doubt that the awareness of the delay of the Parousia was not an insignificant element in the formation of early Christian tradition” (Strecker 2000, 328).

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<sup>1</sup> In what follows, the term eschatology expresses an understanding or theory of the end of time or religious expectations of the future; apocalyptic (eschatology) refers to an understanding of the present and future marked by upheaval, turmoil, often mythic/symbolic visions, periodization of times, heavenly journeys, esoteric teachings reserved for an elect audience, and ultimately divine intervention. As such the terms should be distinguished from “apocalypse” – a word used technically to describe a genre of ancient literature – and “apocalypticism” – a term used to describe social processes relating to temporal expectations. For further discussion see Collins (1998, 11-21).

<sup>2</sup> The German title signals the temporal aspect more dramatically: *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Cullmann 1954).

## 2.2 The Delay of the Parousia and the Development of Christianity

If we turn to scholarly consideration of Paul, we discover that, as with the study of Jesus, time trumps space. Hans von Campenhausen (1969) dedicated a still standard study of the emergence of Christianity to a story of the replacement of the charisma of Paul and his first followers with ecclesiastical authority, the inevitable product of the delay of the Parousia.<sup>3</sup> Recent studies of Paul make apocalyptic or eschatology *the* central feature of the Gospel Paul preached and the churches he left behind (Beker 1990; Wright 1991; Martyn 1998). One might summarize these treatments as studies of time out of place. Place – the geography of people, of ideas, of movement, of physical identity – receives barely a mention, if at all. Indeed, the only function place has in these studies is to furnish the backdrop for the temporal dimensions of beliefs about Jesus and his role in a divinely appointed history.

## 2.3 Space-Time Reconsideration

A spatio-temporal consideration focuses on different matters than the ones outlined thus far. Here the interest is not in a theology of time, but a social geographic consideration of time and space, or time in space and space in time. Space-time consideration, I hope to show, calls attention to a neglected feature of Christian origins, where space is not swallowed up by time, but where time and space are contingent upon one another and where a full appreciation of early Christian consideration of time cannot ignore space, or vice versa. Time and space, neither time on the hand nor space on the other, were the mother of Christian theology. Or if one prefers to move beyond the mothering metaphor, let us call time and space the recombinant DNA that combined in unique ways to create a new religious movement in the Roman Empire. What happens to considerations of emerging beliefs about Jesus as a new religious movement in the Roman Empire when we invite space into time or place time in space? How might we consider Jesus and Paul if we refocus our attention in this direction? In the following discussion of Jesus and Paul, respectively, I will first describe the general social, economic, and spatial conditions under which they, and more importantly, their followers lived. Each created unique formulations of space and time. Jesus did so in the face of the steady monetization of his native Galilee; Paul did so under the cramped conditions of the Greco-Roman city. Each transformed their specific social geographies through imaginative reconfigurations of time and space as vehicles for new forms of sociality: heterotopias or thirdspaces that overturned typical practices of time and space with provocative new ways of behaving. De Certeau's model of daily practice, espe-

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<sup>3</sup> Similarly Schweizer (1961).

cially his understanding of tactics, furnishes a unique and insightful way of investigating these new behaviours and the time-space formulations they entailed. We turn first to Jesus under the aspect of space-time.

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### 3. Jesus of Nazareth and the Monetization of Roman Galilee

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The place to begin such consideration in the case of Jesus of Nazareth is to locate him in time and space under the historical and spatial features of first-century Roman Palestine. Social geography affords us considerations otherwise usually passed over in other treatments (Arnal 2001; Freyne 2001; Moxnes 2010, 90-106). In 14 CE the client ruler Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39 CE) founded the cities of Tiberias and Sepphoris and began to mint coins. Arnal (2001, 134-55) has demonstrated that Antipas' introduction of coinage resulted in a transformation of the Palestinian economy of Jesus' day from one centred in barter and communal kinship structures to a monetized economy centred in monetary exchange for goods produced. As money and taxation entered a world of farmers living slightly above subsistence, the traditional kinship structures that had allowed for communal cooperation and mutual support began to break down with the flow of rents, taxes, and religious tithes to urban centres (Oakman 1986, 60-72). The need for liquid capital was increased by landowning elites who settled Antipas' new cities (Reed 1994, 203-19). This was reinforced by Antipas' conscious promotion of a social-economic and geographical order oriented toward Rome. His city, tellingly named Tiberias, was modelled after Roman urban ideals (Sawicki 2000, 133-53). Traditional kinship structures, as well as relations to land and produce, broke down as taxation and debt, urbanization, liquid capital, and the creation of a wealthier group who possessed increasingly larger landholding transformed the social world of Jesus' contemporaries. This in turn resulted in disenfranchisement, share cropping, surplus labour from those no longer on land, debt, indenture and so on.

#### 3.1 Jesus' Parables and Space-Time Imagination

The economic world of Jesus' parables presumes this world. To name only a few instances arguably coeval with Jesus: surplus labour hired at different times of the day to receive the same pay (Matthew 20:1-16); unjust stewards who govern the lands of absentee landlords and who enslave share croppers with debt (Luke 16:1-8); a city-dwelling land-owner who sends servants to collect his rents and tenants who treat them violently (Mark 12:1-12 par); a son squandering his considerable financial inheritance in a distant land (Luke 15:11-32); a wealthy man leaving massive amounts of capital for his slaves to invest in his absence (Luke 19:12-27 par); enemies stealing into a neighbour's

field to sow weeds amongst tares (Matthew 13:24-30); the discovery of a treasure buried in a field (Matthew 13:44).<sup>4</sup> One readily recognizes the *Sitz im Leben* such parables presuppose as a world that has been monetized and where new forms of social relationships have upset traditional ones. It is a world where city and country are economically set against one another; where Jesus describes his rural audiences as a town built on a hill (Matthew 5:14) and where he pillories the wealthy landholders for building ever larger barns to store their surplus grain (Luke 12:16-21), presumably for when markets will fetch greater prices. These motifs, especially as found in the parables, were reworked as they entered the Synoptic Tradition. There they were translated from their rural locations to use in worship and instruction in cities, and were thus often dramatically revised, edited, emended, and so on, so that they lost all but the genetic heritage of their rural origins.

### 3.2 The Kingdom of God as Space-Time

It is precisely here that socio-geographical considerations of space-time begin to show their value as conceptual tools for historical study. The Gospel passages listed above find their context in narratives that present Jesus as a typically rural character who travels through Galilee to speak of and announce the “Kingdom of God.”<sup>5</sup> Jesus’ proclamation of the rule or Kingdom of God has usually been related to a view of the future, whether apocalyptic, eschatological, “even now – but not yet,” and so on.<sup>6</sup> In other words, time and not space has been the chief orienting feature of the debate over the meaning of the phrase. However, when considered spatially in the light of the social situation sketched above, one should rather interpret his notion of the Reign of God not so much as a timely formulation of the future, but as reconstitution of the present by way of a new formulation of space-time. Moxnes (2010, 90-106) takes up spatio-temporal dimensions of Gospel narratives and privileges landscape rather than time as the determining motif in the quest for Jesus’ understanding

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<sup>4</sup> Each of these represent complex histories of redaction there is no room to trace here. For their origins with Jesus and editorial accretions, see Scott (1989). These are illustrative examples only; parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas* confirm the picture represented here and are taken up by Scott.

<sup>5</sup> For discussion of the numerous biblical and extra-canonical passages that present Jesus’ teaching of the Kingdom of God, as well as the massive scholarly apparatus dedicated to the study of it during the last century, see Dunn (2003, 383-468).

<sup>6</sup> Dunn’s encyclopedic survey of scholarly treatment of the Kingdom of God reveals the degree to which contemporary interpretation has focused on the temporal rather than spatial elements of Gospel and extra-canonical passages that present the God’s Kingdom. Dunn himself (2003, 480-867) links Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom with unfulfilled prophecy. Temporality is the sole determining feature of the Kingdom of God: “Perhaps we should simply infer that ‘the kingdom of God’ for Jesus was an alternative way of speaking of the age to come, of heaven, and of the way heaven impacts on earth” (866).

of the Kingdom of God. Whatever Jesus may have expected for the future, the Gospel narratives associated with his name place him in time and space, a space that is notably rural, and a time that disrupts the monetized space-time formulations of his contemporary social world. The intrusion of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus is not so much imminent, but placed in the here and now. The parables are often prefaced in a space/time of the here and now by the saying, “The kingdom of God is like...” (Mark 4:26, 30; Luke 13:18, 20), but even where they are not they function as vehicles for displaying in space/time encapsulations of God’s reign, and so place that reign even as they anticipate it.

### 3.3 Heterotopia, Thirdspace, and the Kingdom of God

The theorizations of space-time by Michel Foucault in his discussion of heterotopia, and of Edward Soja in his conceptualization of “thirdspace” are particularly fruitful categories for a socio-geographical treatment of the evidence presented thus far. For Foucault, heterotopia describes a transgressive practice of space often in imagination, usually underground, that includes a reconceptualisation of time that is at home in the space or topography being imagined. Heterotopia represents “counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” He continues by noting the task of imagination in the conceptualization of heterotopia: “Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (Foucault 1986, 24). Heterotopia, Foucault famously quips, is place outside of all places and time outside of all times. Edward Soja (1986, 154-63) discusses Foucault’s heterotopia, in his own formulation of “thirdspace,” as a means of bringing rigour and definition to the Foucauldian treatment. Thirdspace is: “the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality [...] directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking” (Soja 1986, 163).

Soja’s emphasis on the deconstructive aspects of thirdspace is especially informative in coming to a space-time analysis of the material under consideration here.

### 3.4 De Certeau and Kingdom of God Tactics

Certainly the material that we can confidently state comes directly from Jesus (Funk 1993) offers us an account of Jesus who takes place and spatialises and retemporalises it so that it becomes the kind of heterotopia and deconstruction of spatiality Foucault and Soja describe. To these we can add Michel de Certeau’s conceptualization of daily practices of space. For de Certeau (2007, 29-42), although social blueprints may seek to orchestrate behaviours along scripted and predictable modes of behaviours, individuals show great ability to prac-



tice such blueprints in their own creative ways. De Certeau describes “strategies” as blueprints for space-time practices (the production of objects on an assembly line, for example). In distinction to strategies are “tactics” – the appropriation of time and space for unconventional and idiosyncratic ends (a worker on an assembly line makes a gift for her friend and so uses the company’s time and space for a unique end). According to de Certeau (2007, xix), tactics insert themselves into dominant strategies, borrow from them, upset them, and transpose them into a new register of meaning and action. “A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over entirely, without being able to keep it at a distance.” Since tactics exist in another’s space, “it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.’ Whatever it wins it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities.’”

### 3.5 Jesus’ Heterotopic Practices

The Gospel narratives preserve the historical kernel of the heterotopic tactics of Jesus in representing him in practices that upset normalizing customs and traditions. The stories he tells and the tales told about him have as their *mis-enscene* recurring daily practice: eating, hospitality, caring for the sick, tending domestic duties and so on. Space and time together become transformed as avenues for new modes of sociality and religious meaning making. The most obvious place this happens is in the eating practices of Jesus. In a Lukan passage that is almost certainly historical, Jesus is condemned for being a glutton and a drunkard (Luke 7:33-24; cf. Matthew 11:19), in contradistinction to John, whose asceticism is rejected as inspired by Satan. In a similar passage he tells followers to leave all and follow, even if this means rejecting traditional ancestral customs: “Let the dead bury their dead” (Luke 9:60). Such criticisms have as their probable historical backdrop Jesus’ challenging of traditional obligations of family and kin and rather invited his listeners to consider themselves as incorporated into new kinship structures centred on his proclamation and radical teachings of the demands of Torah. Unlike John the Baptist, whose orientation is to a Messianic future, Jesus’ orientation seems to have been on a messianic present, perhaps which he directly associated with himself. The presence of this present was made active in eating together, finding one another as kin, and in an intensification of the demands of Torah and their realization as the sign of the “kingdom of God” that has come in Jesus’ teaching and proclamation. The sayings we can confidently attest originate with Jesus reorganize space and time in new household models of fictive kinship, where those who do the will of God are brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers (Mark 3:31-35 par), where a woman who sweeps her house for a lost *drachma* becomes a metaphor for divine action (Luke 15:8-9), and social boundaries are overturned in conviviality (Luke 15:2; cf. Mark 2:15-16; Matthew 9:10-11; Luke 15:30;

19:7). These domestic space-time reconfigurations find their place in the Galilean world of peasants and the disenfranchised.

### 3.6 Conclusions

The important thing for the space-time configuration considered here is how Jesus practices a world whose traditions have been uprooted through tax and monetization and where he discovers in households, in meals, in welcome of one another, in transgression of boundaries designed to keep separate, a new order, a new space-time configuration where once estranged people, or people who would not consider themselves as kin, find themselves brothers and sisters in a new order. If my argument here is correct, it is impossible to conceptualize Jesus' improvisation of his Jewish tradition without reference to a new space-time configuration that has emerged as a consequence of a disruption of old space-time formulations in an older socio-economic organization of society. The modern New Testament categorization of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom/Rule/Dominion of God as a "fully realized eschatology" (the kingdom of God is *now*) speaks, again, volumes about the time-obsessed orientation of generations of New Testament scholars. To speak of Jesus' proclamation as the practices of time in space and the practices of space in time urges a reconceptualisation of Jesus away from him as a unique actor in history toward a consideration of him as embedded in a social world, discovering through the challenges of new socio-economic forms of organization and new ways of interpreting and understanding Israel's heritage, and specifically Israel's relationship to its land and its bounty. Here the ones who eat bread in the Kingdom of God find in their houses, and in their welcome of one another, that the reign of God has come and has invited them to reconceptualise the present with the help of Israel's prophetic and priestly traditions. If Jesus comes to end anything, it is both space and time he ends, not one or the other, by a new vision of both in the light of a new reality his messages embody and the imaginative practices he enacts. Jesus invites listeners to use imagination to step into a new configuration of time and space.

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## 4. Paul

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As Jesus' movement moved from its rural Palestinian origins toward new urban settings, time and space were again reconceptualised to adapt to shifting needs and social goals. It has become a doctrine now for over a century, mostly under the influence of Ernst Troeltsch, that the first urban Christ followers were recruited from a burgeoning artisan class of city-dwellers. For Troeltsch (1912, 67-83), Paul was the inventor of love patriarchy. This idea received revi-

sion through the work of Gerd Theissen (1974, 145-74; see Horrell 1996, 126-98, for discussion and critique).

#### 4.1 The Urban Setting of Emergent Christianity and Ernst Troeltsch's and Gerd Theissen's Models of Love Patriarchalism

The apostle to the Gentiles went about the Mediterranean world as an artisan plying his trade; along the way he met other similar artisans. Like Paul, they were not all drawn from the poorest population of the Empire, but a few were of some means – that is, they possessed the wealth to travel, to receive some good level of education, and even to have the surplus time thanks to their economic status to engage in religious speculation and dissemination of teaching (Meeks 2003, 51-74). In Theissen's formulation, love patriarchalism captures the Pauline ethic of making use of existing socio-economic structures but transforming them through love so that they become a means of new communal organization and mission. Thus, Paul famously does not condemn slavery, or even urge slaves to seek their freedom (1 Corinthians 7:21). For Paul, "the form of this world is passing away" (7:29-31). Hence masters, slaves, wives, and children express the new form of the world that is about to arise through conducting themselves with mutual love and service as the expression of the resurrected Christ who lives amongst them and whose body they form.

Theissen's sociological apparatus is largely functionalist in orientation, that is, intellectual and ideological formulations are homologous with social realities, and they function to preserve social homeostasis. From this perspective, the notion of social deconstruction as presented by Foucault and Soja seems remote. However, it is important to recognize that Theissen views Paul's churches from a single vantage point, namely from those with some means. If we shift attention away from the wealthier of Paul's listeners – the patriarchalists – to larger demographic and spatial considerations, a richer, more nuanced, and complicated picture emerges, a picture that Soja, Foucault, and finally de Certeau help to interpret.

#### 4.2 First-Century Urban Space and Demography

Recent socio-economic and demographic analysis, based on contemporary models of economic subsistence, suggest that roughly 1.5% of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire lived amidst extreme levels of luxury. With the exception of some very few artisans, freed persons, and slaves, perhaps 15%, who lived usually at a level far above subsistence, just less than 85% of the Empire's inhabitants lived below, at, or just above subsistence (Friesen and Scheidel 2009, 61-91; Friesen 2004, 323-61; Oakes 2004, 367-71). This data is important because it shifts the focus away from Theissen's rather middle-class sounding love patriarchalism to attend to the more brutal realities of urban life in the Roman Empire. Accurate and representative models are difficult to de-

termine, of course, from scattered evidence. But two models are very helpful for reconstructing the space of early Christian assemblies. First, we consider a model that relates emergent Christianity to crowded urban insulae or urban apartments. Second, we consider the socio-economic organization of urban neighbourhoods that developed around and within insulae.

In a recent study of Paul's letter to the Romans, Peter Oakes (2009, 80-97) has related the demography of ancient Pompeii to Roman urban realities.<sup>7</sup> While Balch (2008, 42-58) considers the ancient peristyle house the typical setting for meetings of early Christ followers of the kind Paul addresses in his letters, attention to the average living conditions of urban dwellers in insulae or apartment buildings gives us a better sense of ancient Christian space. Thanks to the work of Peter Lampe (2003), who has carefully reconstructed the demography and social geography of Paul's followers named in Romans 16:3-23, we can relate typical demographic realities in Pompeii, a city analogous to Rome, to the capital, and arguably urban centres across the Empire. Lampe's analysis of names shows that the first Roman Christ followers were either slaves or freedpersons, living in the poor areas of Rome, where ethnic populations lived, as well as significant numbers of homeless people. A cross-section of the urban population of Pompeii indicates that just over 1% lived in spaces over 400 sq. metres. These would include mother, father, children, artisan slaves, and domestic slaves. Below them were a slightly larger number who lived in spaces of 300-400 sq. metres, comprised of artisans or officials who also possessed domestic and artisan slaves. These owned shops in rented property as well as upper room apartments, or single or two room apartments in buildings nearby. Below these were those who lived in spaces of 20-300 sq. metres. These included workers, who rented one bedroom accommodation shared with others, and included parents, children, and sometimes extended family. Below them was the vast majority of the urban population comprised mostly of slaves as well as some homeless people. Slaves lived in elite households or the few houses of successful artisans and sometimes amongst those who owned shops.

Since Theissen's model has created a picture of emergent urban Christianity centred amongst those who lived in spaces of 300-400 sq. metres, models of Christianity have been skewed in favour of a viewpoint that considers the patronage of the well to do and its benefits as the chief demographic feature and model of social organization of early Christ followers. In fact, this model is dominated by the picture of Paul in the Book of Acts, an account that follows the career of Paul as he travels amongst well to do artisan patrons who organize churches in their homes. This is problematic, historically, because the author of Acts concentrates his attention on creating a picture of Paul and his followers as emerging from more well to do artisan circles and as such probably reflects

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<sup>7</sup> I base the demographic and spatial descriptions that follow on Oakes' study.

the social world of Acts, perhaps sometime in the early-to-mid second century, rather than the realities of as much as a century before (Pervo 2006). In fact, the spatial reality of emerging urban Christianity was one dominated by poverty, subsistence, early mortality, and transience. Of the apartments 20-100 sq. metres, where the majority of the Rome's inhabitants lived, these were rented on a monthly basis and even on a daily basis in the smallest apartments. They were without windows, cooking facilities, access to water, or sanitation.

Conservative estimates of the density of imperial Rome range from population as densely populated as modern Kolkata (45,000/sq. km.) to one as high as almost twice that of Kolkata (88,000/sq. km.) (Lo Cascio 2006, 52-68; Storey 1997, 966-78). We should expect, then, a spatial situation in which crowded, disease ridden, filthy spaces form the *Sitz im Leben* of Paul's typical audience, not the houses of the better to do in a position to practise love patriarchalism (Scobie 1968, 399-433). Rome of course was not the Roman Empire, but existing models, for example from Pergamon, in Asia Minor suggest a similar picture (Trümper 2003, 19-43).

The second model, again, comes from Pompeii and Herculaneum, this time from Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (2003, 3-18), who argues that we should consider Roman insulae as organized not according to districts, but as cells centred around more well-to-do living quarters. In modern western cities those of different economic means live separately in poorer or richer neighbourhoods. Roman populations were not divided this way. Apartment blocks developed not through systematic city planning, but organically by the services arranged clustered around the more well-to-do, amongst whom artisans could find a market. Further, within the same apartment block typically lived those of the 15% who could afford luxury accommodation, usually on the ground to second floor, while above them the city's inhabitants were crowded into smaller and cheaper accommodation. Along the circumference of such insulae were usually shops, where merchants either lived in the back of, or rented one or two rooms above. Further, as these insulae grew they were clustered by those who plied the same trade. This enabled them to benefit from mutual support, shared religion, and even shared ethnic origins in a polyglot city. Wallace-Hadrill (2003, 3) calls these insulae "housefuls" rather than "households." Housefuls refers to the crowded demography in these tenements as well as the variations of socio-economic strata that were found living right beside one another.

### 4.3 Pauline Sociality as Thirdspace

How does this help us reconceptualise emergent urban Christianity and to consider space-time configuration? In the first place, it exhorts us, again, to step away from apocalyptic as the chief determining factor of an emergent religious movement. Indeed, it helps us understand why with the exception of a very few handful of verses, the bulk of Paul's teachings do not concern them-

selves with questions of the return of Jesus. Rather, his letters are dominated by attempts to outline models of sociality that accord with his Gospel. Those few texts that do relate to Paul's teachings of the end indeed have a significant role to play in his model of sociality. In the polyglot of the urban city Paul continually calls upon his listeners to transcend normalizing social divisions of gender, economic status, ethnic, and religious identity in favour of an overarching, trans-economic, trans-ethnic identity (Galatians 3:26-28). This makes sense in the socio-spatial context we have outlined above where a movement able to unite diversity is more likely to thrive in a fluid urban situation than one that does not.

This also urges us to reconsider the meaning of passages that are most apocalyptic in the Pauline letters. Paul, for example, invites his audience to have wives as though not married, to have dealings with the world as though not, since the present form of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). Here Paul deploys a conceptualization of time ("the present form of the this world *is* passing away" [emphasis by the author, H. M.]) that is most likely to succeed in assuring solidarity amongst people brought together in a diverse and densely populated social situation, especially in the highly fluid social situation of urban insulae, where rooms were rented on a monthly and even daily basis. Paul's orientation to spatial practices of time proves useful in shifting spatial and social configurations, so that time and space, reconfigured by Paul as "passing away" become a strategic means of negotiating urban realities.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.4 Thirdspace Reconceptualisation of Social Humiliation and Imperial Identity in Paul's Churches

Further, the religious narrative Paul outlines for his listeners, which is usually a story about God revealed in Christ's crucifixion, in his humiliation, and which includes the glorification of the humiliated one in resurrection and coming enthronement, weds poverty and time and finds its home amongst those who live in often highly impoverished social arrangements. Elsewhere, where he exhorts his listeners to contribute to common funds for the sake of care of the poor (2 Corinthians 8:8-15), he exhorts with narrative that tells the story of Jesus' who, although rich, became poor so that the poor who receive from him might be rich. The "housefuls" of the insulae become now the poor who from common funds become rich.

But there is another way in which the spatio-temporal dimension furnishes an understanding Paul more nuanced than a treatment that attends solely to time.

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<sup>8</sup> This spatio-temporal orientation is more compelling than alternative sociological explanations whose exclusive interest is in functional models of homeostasis, as in the case of Theissen, or in Weberian models of asceticism. Wimbush (1987), for example, deploys Weber's model of inner-worldly asceticism to account for Pauline detachment/use of worldly goods in a soteriological schema. A socio-geographical model rather directs attention to larger models of sociality and practices of space in space-time reconfigurations.

Particularly instructive is Soja's notion of thirdspace as the combination of practice, time, and space, united in ways that take pre-existing and normalizing space/time/practice configurations and upset them in often deviant, innovative, and unpredictable ways. In the case of Paul, what is remarkable about the terminology he uses to describe his assemblies in Christ is its civic and even imperial origins. Paul applies the terms often reserved for elites, government, and urban imperial ideals to the dwellers of his insulae. Thus they are "ekklesia" – the Greek political term for an assembly of citizens; they are people "whose citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Paul describes Jesus' coming as an imperial *adventus* where believers, now configured as civic rulers who go out the city gates to meet dignitaries, are governing elites (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Perhaps the most notable thirdspace appropriation is where Paul describes his listeners as the "Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27; cf. vs. 12-26; Romans 12:4-5). The body here is a topos from the classical period onward to describe the rightly functioning state, where all parts of the body (i.e. the city state) work and cooperate together for the sake of the common good (Martin 1995, 38-68). Seneca describes the emperor Nero as the head of the Empire, which is its body; if the head is healthy, Seneca teaches, the body will be healthy (*De Clementia* 1.5.2-3; 2.2.1). These were abstract philosophical conceptions, but they were graphically illustrated and penetrated private life by statues and monuments depicting emperors, governors, city patrons, as well as gods and goddesses, heroes, and mythic creatures in ideal classical forms (Maier 2013, 57-9). For Paul, it is Christ-followers from diverse socio-economic and ethnic worlds who are united in one body, and who together make a form fitting to God. The demography Paul celebrates as the Body of Christ is surprising. But more important is how he can cast that body in unanticipated and deviant ways. For example, as the church in Corinth competes with one another for honour and dominance based on the special spiritual gifts they have received from Paul, he denounces such rivalry with the help of the body topos. Where however one would expect him to invoke images of beauty and harmony, he rather turns to a description of giving honour to ugly and unrepresentable parts (1 Corinthians 12:22-26). It is not that Paul is aiming here for a model of space and time centred on the transformation of the ugly and unseemly into the beautiful, but that, amidst the humiliated and those considered not blessed by the gods with power, another model of space and time is revealed: the space of the housefuls of the marginalized; the times of the crucified; the demography of the humiliated. Thus Paul's model of sociality in time states that if one suffers all suffer, if one rejoices, all rejoice together, a model that he will continue to develop in 1 Corinthians 13. The union of space and time, not space or time, and least of all, time alone, are critical features of Paul's ideals of an emerging religious movement. Here Paul's call to practice solidarity with special attention to the humiliated represents a daring practice of traditional social codes and blueprints: Paul inserts tactics into dominant strategic organizations of space-time practices. Paul's

teachings short-circuit traditional cultural scripts of honour by inverting them and transforming them into means of religious solidarity.

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## 5. Conclusions

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Space has allowed for little more than a sketch of the social worlds of Jesus and Paul and the ways in which attention to space-time practices offers unique vantage points for interpretation of ancient data. The preceding discussion has shown how first century Roman Palestine and Mediterranean urban space and time gave rise to creative and imaginative formulations of social practices and religious self-definition. Foucault's heterotopia, Soja's thirdspace, and de Certeau's practices invite a reinterpretation away from a "pandemic obsession with time" toward consideration of space-time practice. If there was a single parent of an emergent Christian movement in the Mediterranean basin of the first century, it was the ability to imagine space and time and to marshal such imagination in the service of new social practices.

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