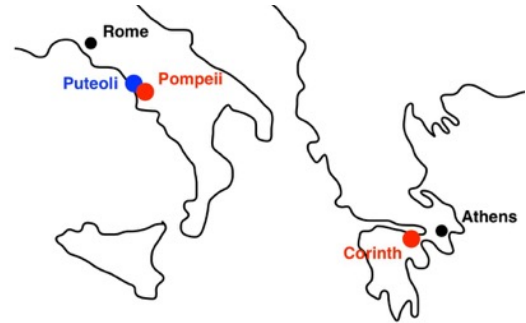


Entering Early Christianity via Pompeii

Character cards

The early Christian groups, whether in Corinth, Rome, or smaller places like Lystra or Puteoli, were made up of a mixture of types of people. The model craftworker house church was developed by considering known craftworker housing in Pompeii. In addition to several types of people in that model, the character cards below include some other kinds of people evidenced in NT texts.



Because of the sort of evidence used from Pompeii, the focus of this set is on socio-economic types: other sets could be designed with, e.g., an ethnic and/or religious focus. Another limitation is that none of us is a first-century person. Use of the cards can't give us a full knowledge of what actually went on—but it does give us crucial help in thinking about the early Christians as a range of types of first-century people, facing a range of issues.

Holconius



A skilled craftworker who runs a cabinet-making business.

Holconius is a freedslave and has a wife, three children, three slaves, an apprentice and an elderly relative. He rents a fair-sized house from his ex-master and hosts a group of 40 Christians. Holconius' household is far from elite but he is some way from being poor. He can afford to decorate his house in a modest style and his wife owns some jewellery.

Sabina



A low-skilled craftworker who runs a stone-masonry business with her husband. They are freedslaves in their mid forties, and have no children. They rent a small workshop which has a side room for eating and sleeping. Their main concern is where their next meal will come from and they required support from other Christians when Sabina's husband injured his hand.

Primus



A slave of low status in the house of a Corinthian magistrate. Primus is middle-aged and performs hard, physical work stoking fires. He has little contact with the master's family and so is unlikely to win the favour or tips required to gain freedom. But he enjoys the status he has with other Christians as a 'brother'. He also has a new hope that justice will be served when their Lord Jesus returns.

Iris



A twenty-year old slave girl who belongs to the owner of a bar. Her work includes cleaning the property in the morning and serving at the bar in the afternoon and evenings. Iris is also pimped out by her master to the bar's clientele. Most of the money this earns goes to the owner but she is also allowed to keep a little for herself—part of which she uses to support other Christians. However, she worries about what the rest of the church think of her occupation.

Theodosia



The wife of Holconius. They both joined a group worshipping Jesus five years ago through their business contacts with the craftworkers Prisca and Aquila. They have recently lost some customers due to their strange religion. Thankfully they have mitigated their losses by selling Theodosia's jewellery and by learning additional skills, though she worries what the other women will say.

Lysilla



An elderly lady who was taken in by Theodosia after she was made destitute. Lysilla now looks after the children. She used to follow the cult of Isis but received only token support when she fell into difficult times. She has since become a follower of Jesus but worries about her family who do not know anything about him.

Gaius Iulius Cleander



An aristocrat with Roman citizenship who once served as a magistrate of Corinth. He lives in a town house with his family and slaves. Gaius' wealth comes from farmland and from a couple of workshops which he rents out. He joined a Christian group a year ago and has given up worshipping the household gods. Other religious duties are harder to avoid.

Nikodikos



A carpentry apprentice from the nearby town of Cenchreae who is training under Holconius. Nikodikos hopes to repay his teacher by contributing to his business and by taking his good reputation back to Cenchreae next year. Nikodikos is also baptised. He does not know how his parents will react to his new religion.

Jason



A merchant who sells pots in Corinth and the surrounding villages. Jason's business connections are maintained through his membership at a society of Athena-worshippers, which he still attends despite getting baptised as a Christian. Jason has sponsored various apostles who arrived at Corinth after Paul left, and he likes the reputation these teachers give him as a man of culture among his peers.

Eurynomos



The steward of a house of a wealthy man. Eurynomos is trusted by his master to manage 10 other slaves and is permitted to live with his 'wife', Nikassa, in private quarters. Nikassa and some of the other slaves have recently begun worshipping Jesus. Eurynomos is attracted by their talk of freedom. However, he is concerned about what a rival might say to his master that could jeopardise his good standing.

Who was Paul?



A historical Jewish Christian leader who set up the church at Corinth with two other craft-workers, Prisca and Aquila, sometime between 49–52 CE (Acts 18:2-3). A couple of years later, Paul wrote a concerned letter to the church that addressed disputes over leadership, sexual ethics, legal battles and participation in temple meals that were dividing the church. Differences in social and economic status were probably key factors in the problems at Corinth.

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