

PREFACE

Behind every book is a story. The origins of this study on women, meals, and Christian origins go back to the original research I did for the book that became *Women and the Historical Jesus*. I presented what became chapter 5 of that book to the Jesus Seminar in the mid-1990s, and it was published early on in the *Forum* of the Jesus Seminar. At that time, I completed a sixty-three-page chapter on the funerary rituals, meals, and lamentation of women in antiquity and a chapter devoted to my thesis that the origins of the passion narrative could be found in the context of women's lamentation for the dead, for which I used cross-cultural documentation of women's laments. I also had a chapter on meals stories and the Gospels, and a chapter on the resurrection narratives interpreted in the context of women's funerary rituals and lament. That larger book draft, which was under contract

for publication at the time with Oxford University Press, was never published. At the time Dom Crossan received it, he was fully under the impression that my book would come out before his book, *The Birth of Christianity*. He therefore cited my forthcoming book at that time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dom Crossan for contributing his foreword, which puts the process of what happened to this research in its larger perspective and shows the significance of funerary rituals, lament, and meals for women's experience in antiquity and for reconstructing Christian origins. I would also like to acknowledge that my interactions with Dom about this material led to additional insight into the creative process between men and women in the primitive church that led to the development of the idea of the raising and appearing of Jesus, church liturgy, practice, and Gospel tradition.

Because I still hoped to publish this research eventually, due to its importance, I continued to update and refine my larger chapter on women, lament, and funerary meals. During the first year of grieving over the death of my husband in 2005, I came back to this research in the context of giving three presentations on meals, mourning, and Christian origins with Hal Taussig in the Jesus Seminar on the Road program. Through those presentations, I realized that I indeed had something additional to contribute to the discussion on Christian origins by refocusing my attention on the original area of my first research on women and meals. I therefore owe my kind and gracious colleague Hal Taussig a great debt, as it is only through our joint presentations and conversations during that year of grief that I came to see how this material could still be used to make an additional insight about the role of women in Christian origins by focusing on funerary meals and Greco-Roman associations. I also wish to acknowledge the critique and contributions of the Greco-Roman Meals Seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature, headed by Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig, who read my chapter on funerary rituals, lament, and meals in the fall of 2006 and gave me additional ideas and bibliographic sources, for which I am grateful. It should also be noted at the outset that the first to recognize the importance of the lament context for the shaping of Gospel traditions, including the passion narrative, was Marianne Sawicki, who published her work in her book *Seeing the Lord*. She presented this material first in the context of a Society of Biblical

Literature session on the anointing story, which I attended. I hope I have given her adequate credit in this book for first realizing the significance of the funerary context as a potential location of the creation and shaping of Gospel traditions, including the passion narrative.

Finally, I would like to thank the scholars who read and critiqued my tentative thesis for this book and gave me help in the areas of Q research, *Didache* research, and research on meals and associations, Richard Ascough, John Kloppenborg, Clayton Jefford, and of course Hal Taussig. Conversations with my good friend and colleague Richard Pervo over these many years have also always been supportive and stimulating. Amy-Jill Levine has also tirelessly responded to both my research and my numerous emails. I would also like to thank Alan Segal, Jennifer Glancy, John Kloppenborg, Hal Taussig, Carolyn Osiek, Ross Kraemer, Sterling Bjordahl, Amy-Jill Levine, Richard Pervo, Glenna Jackson, Alan Segal, Gale Yee, and Joanna Dewey for reading through early drafts of my manuscript. As always, I continue to be enriched by conversations with my friend of twenty-five years, Diana Bailey, who forces me to focus on the ways in which women contributed to the growth of early Christian worship and liturgy. Thanks go to my good friend Abby Frucht for being right.

Also, I would like to acknowledge my debt to the well-known psychiatrist and scholar of psychoanalysis and creativity John Gedo. Our correspondence of nearly twelve years, and my reading of his books on creativity, *Portraits of the Artist and the Emotional World*, greatly contributed to the formation of this thesis. I would like to publicly thank him for carefully responding by hand to each of my letters over these many years during many trying and turbulent times in my life. His words have given me not only comfort but great insight into myself and my own creative process. My debt to him cannot be overstated. I would not have progressed in my career, or finished this book, without his support and long correspondence. The process of research is ultimately the result of many conversations among scholars and friends, and I owe a tremendous debt to all those who helped me shape the thesis and focus of this book.

I should also say at the outset that my own experience of deep and overwhelming grief over the unexpected death of my husband in July 2005 has greatly altered some of my conclusions and has given me new insight into women's expression of grief in funerary rituals,

lament, and meals both in antiquity and in cross-cultural studies by cultural anthropologists. Ultimately it is my own experience of great grief that has given me further insight into the significance of this body of research for reconstructing the contribution of women to the shaping of primitive Christian tradition, practice, and worship. I, of course, dedicate this book to my much loved and now deceased husband, John C. Harris.