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SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to examine the way in which the earliest followers of Jesus experienced the rites of baptism and the Eucharist, which in turn could aid us to comprehend what kind of value baptism and the Eucharist might add to our lives today. My point of entry reflects that of current research which indicates that baptism and the Eucharist can be perceived as symbolic rites. Rites consist of rituals and ceremonies, and in this case baptism can be described as an initiation and status transformation ritual, while the Eucharist can be seen as a ceremony of integration and participation. As with other symbols, the earliest baptism and Eucharist carried *meaning* because they were performed for a *reason* and they added *value* to people's lives.

Extensive research has already been carried out on the origins of baptism and the Eucharist. However, it has not been investigated whether this ritual of initiation and ceremony of participation could be understood anew if one takes the contemporary knowledge of alternate states of consciousness into consideration.

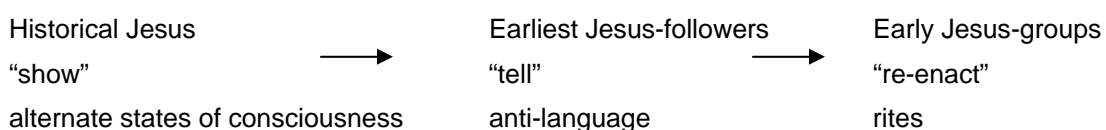
As a result of cross-cultural anthropological investigations we know that only ten percent of people all over the world today do not experience common alternate states of consciousness, while the rest of humanity do. The premodern mythical world of the biblical period displays continuity with this finding – people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean world experienced alternate states of consciousness as an ordinary part of life. Only in the Eurocentric world have we – the ten percent exception to the rule – attempted to interpret baptism and the Eucharist as cognitive dogmatic constructs.

The hypothesis of this study aims to demonstrate that the initiation and participation ritually expressed by the two “sacraments” can be “better” explained against the background of alternate states of consciousness. However, a model

is necessary to verify or falsify the legitimacy of this hypothesis. Research into alternate states of consciousness creates a theoretical problem because, even though these states can be experienced simultaneously by more than one person in a group, experiences of alternate states of consciousness represent individual mental and psychological states. Each experience is unique and in the first instance a personal experience. In other words, without empirical evidence of what an individual has really experienced during an alternate state of consciousness, some research findings may be jeopardized, because of the impossibility of ascertaining the religious meaning and value attributed to a specific alternate state of consciousness experience. Yet, we do have access to texts as well as archeological and paleontological findings which show that there is a correlation between alternate states of consciousness and certain rites. The study illustrates that these alternate states of consciousness were verbalized in “anti-language”, which is the model I employ.

“Anti-language” constitutes the language that is used by an anti-society, which in turn can be described as a conscious alternative to another society. The earliest Jesus-followers formed such an anti-society, into which they were initiated by means of baptism and in which they participated by means of the Eucharist. Consequently, the purpose of the study is to indicate that the ritual initiation and ceremonial participation of the earliest Jesus-followers were the result of alternate states of consciousness as expressed in anti-language. The study aims at redirecting extant research concerning the origins of the “Christian” baptism and the Eucharist by means of a multidisciplinary methodological approach. One of the import and relevant issues addressed in this study can be found in the enhancement of social inclusivity as an ideal in the present day.

Summary:



Keywords:

- Alternate states of consciousness
- Anti-language
- Anti-society
- Rite
- Ritual
- Ceremony
- Baptism
- Eucharist
- Initiation
- Status transformation
- Integration