Class 6b

JESUS IN FEMALE FORM: THE MONTANIST PROPHETS OF MOUNT PEPUZA

Outline

- Historical Background
- Women's Roles in the New Prophecy
- Making Them Heretics
  - In the early days of the movement
  - Centuries later

The New Prophecy

Historical Background
The New Prophecy
Historical Background
- Began in late 100s, continued into 600s
- Spread from Asia to Rome, North Africa
- Key ideas
  - prophetic and charismatic; revivalist; a spiritual renewal movement
  - apocalyptic: expectation that a New Jerusalem would appear
  - 2 women were among its founding prophets
  - Conducted eucharists and other rituals; held office
  - embraced martyrdom and ascetic rigors (unlike others?)
- Women leaders “violated” church order; but a heresy? That is a later development

The New Prophecy
Making Them Heretics: Gendered Elements
- By the 4th century, “right thinking” Christians darkened the portrait of the Montanists
  - Founders must have been models of evil
    - Their ecstasies were not “proper” prophecy
    - They left husbands and embraced celibacy; perhaps even annulling marriages; but they were not “real” virgins
  - Soon charged with false prophecy and demon possession ("poisonous reptiles")
  - Portrayed as sexually adventurous
  - “wild and excitable women”

The New Prophecy
Making Them Heretics: Gendered Elements
- This rhetoric functions to prohibit present and future women from exercising prophecy, authority or office
  - Montanism…is the spectre at the feast, or the stick with which to beat potentially uncompliant women over the head. (Trevett, p. 23)
  - For example, the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a document against women’s ordination in 1971 in which they argued that the constant tradition and practice of the church not to ordain women is divine law; only heretical sects allowed this