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Gail P. Streete
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VIOLATED AND TRANSCENDED BODIES

*Gender, Martyrdom, and Asceticism in Early
Christianity*

Gail P. Streete

Rhodes College



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Gail P. Streete

Rhodes College

Author for correspondence: Gail P. Streete, gstreete1@comcast.net;

ABSTRACT: Given its eschatological orientation and its marginal position in the Roman Empire, emergent Christianity found embodiment, as an aspect of being in the world, problematic. Those identified and identifying as Christians developed two broad responses to that world as they embraced the idea of being in, yet not of, it. The first response, martyrdom, was witness to the strength their faith gave to fragile bodies, particularly those of women, and the ability by suffering to overcome bodily limitation and attain the resurrection life. The second, asceticism, complemented and later continued martyrdom as a means of bodily transcendence and participation in the spiritual world.

KEYWORDS: asceticism, concepts of body, early Christianity, gender, martyrdom

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