

5 ~ A CROSS-CULTURAL AND SOCIAL- PSHYCOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Status Envy and Social Identity

In the peasant society of the first-century Mediterranean world, everyone had a social map, precisely defining one's position in terms of identity, kinship, and expected behavior.¹ Seeing Jesus in light of an ideal type of a fatherless figure in the first century C.E., can help to explain in a coherent way the individual facets of his life we thus far untangled; specifically, when one keeps in mind that in the peasant society of Jesus' world, the family revolved around the father.

The father and the mother were the source of the family, not only in the biological sense, but because their interaction with their children created the structures of society. A peasant economy was geared toward subsistence, the mere maintenance of the family, rather than investment in the future. This was the peasant father's goal and therefore the socialization process employed in such communities was one that fostered the child's dependence. In the 1960's, Harvard University conducted, from a social psychology perspective, a cross-cultural study on the father's position in the family as it relates to the process of identification of children.² This research, supported by cross-cultural material, was related to what is called the "status envy hypothesis." Specifically, the evidence focused on the effect of father absence in the household.

The outcome of the study differed from some other theories of identification in that, in terms of the hypothesis, a relationship that fully satisfies both parties is not conducive to identification. According to the status envy hypothesis, for a child to identify fully with adults, it is necessary that they openly consume resources that are denied to the child. In other words, love alone will not produce identification unless the people a child loves withhold from him or her something he or she wants. This is particularly true during the process of socialization. This process involves familiarizing the child with the privileges and disabilities fundamental to the structure of a particular society.

As part of the cultural rules in every society, there is a status system that gives the privileged access to resources for some positions in the system and, at the same time, debar other positions from controlling and consuming them. A resource is a material or nonmaterial commodity, such as food, water, optimum temperature, and freedom from pain, including punishment, which one person may desire, but over which some other person may have control. Symbolic resources include love, comfort, power, and success. Were these resources inexhaustible, and equally and completely available to all, there would be no learning by identification because there would be no such thing as status envy. This, however, is never the case. Nobody in a household in whatever society has unlimited access to every resource. Societal taboos make it practically impossible. It is inevitable that some resources will be withheld and that someone will want them. It is particularly true in agrarian societies with limited goods and that are patrilocal in nature. In societies with patrilocal residence, a man spends his whole life in or near his place of birth. This results in a core of closely akin blood-related male residents, supplemented by

wives drawn from neighboring communities. The women are literally and figuratively outsiders. It is the men who are the locus of power and prestige: the “adult males are the ones to be envied.”³ This hypothesis about the process of identification and the development of identity may be summarized as follows:⁴ identification is achieved by the imitation of a status role that is envied. This happens not overtly but in fantasy, and the driving force is envy of the person who enjoys the privileged status.

In every society, statuses have names or labels. In modern Western society, for example, there are the familiar kinship statuses of father, mother, uncle, aunt, brother, sister; the age-determined statuses of infant, child, adolescent, adult, and aged; the occupational statuses such as doctor, lawyer, clerk, and workman; and the sex-determined statuses of male and female. As said, the family, and especially the father, was at the center of the first-century Mediterranean world. Beyond the family laid the village, beyond that the city, and further still the limits of the world. This understanding of society served as an analogy for the concept “Kingdom of God.”⁵ The father’s role in the family was not only that of God’s representative but also the person who had to ensure that God was worshipped and obeyed. One had to belong to a family to enjoy God’s blessing, and, within the family, the father’s status was divinely ordained.⁶ And so, the divine and the human met each other at the most intimate level, the familial.

The identity of a person is his or her position or positions in the status system of a particular society. Three kinds of identity can be distinguished: attributed, subjective, and optative.⁷ *Attributed identity* consists of the statuses assigned to a person by other members of his or her society. *Subjective identity* consists of the statuses a person sees himself or herself as occupying. And finally, *optative identity* consists of those statuses a

person wishes he or she could occupy but from which he or she is debarred. The aim of socialization in any society is to produce an adult whose attributed, subjective, and optative identities are isomorphic: “I see myself as others see me, and I am what I want to be.” However, such isomorphism necessitates a transition marked by status debarment, which produces status envy and a reaching out from attributed to optative identity. That is, when an adult fantasizes of having a father, according to the status envy hypothesis, he or she would to become an adult who was deprived of the privilege of having a father during infancy. When society then permits him or her to occupy this privileged status, there is agreement on what he or she wants to be, on what society says he or she is, and on what he or she sees himself or herself to be.

Obviously, one’s optative identity derives from status envy and it should always be objective and realistic. In households where the father is absent, the wish to be a father is not as realistic as the wish to have a father. The wish to have a family seems realistic in a situation where the privilege of having a position in a family is debarred. According to this theory, a fatherless infant who has been given everything by his or her mother would not identify with her as he or she already occupies the privileged status. We can presume that if a man wishes to have a fictive family, he did not occupy a privileged status within his biological family during infancy. And one could continue on this line: if someone is said by members within the community of Israelites to be the son of Abraham and the son of God, these labels could express status envy and optative identity. The first name is an expression of a position within the extended genealogical family of Israel; the last the symbolical/fantasied expression of the mentioned position of having or being a father. In normal conditions, both types of labels are expressions of

attributed identity. Having a position in the family is an identification of secondary nature and having a father is a primary identification.

Applied to a different context, but referring to the Eastern Mediterranean, Crossan says that “to be a child was to be a nobody, with the possibility of becoming a somebody absolutely dependent on parental discretion and parental standing on community.”⁸ In other words, arrangements in infancy lead to primary identification; whereas those in childhood lead to secondary identification. But there could also be a discrepancy between these two identifications because of status debarment on the primary level that needs to be resolved by an initiation ritual.

Cross-cultural studies yield significant variables bearing upon the hypothesis as postulated. Specifically, the social structures of a sample of societies were judged for the degree to which the father and adult males in general occupy privileged statuses as perceived by the infant and later by the child.⁹ One such measure of privileged status, and therefore of status envy in childhood, is provided by the sleeping arrangements that appertain to a society.¹⁰ Because it is the place where resources of greatest value to a child are given or withheld, a child’s bed is at the center of its world during infancy. Those who share sleeping arrangements with the child become the child’s models for primary identification, and the key question in this regard is whether or not the father also sleeps with the mother. A baby sleeping on his or her own in a separate room is something quite unique. In thirty-six out of sixty-four societies examined, the parents sleep apart during the nursing period so that the infant can enjoy the mother’s exclusive attention. In the remaining twenty-eight societies, the parents sleep together with the child either sleeping in the bed with them or placed in a crib or cradle within reach of the

mother. It follows that, in terms of the hypothesis, the different situations prevailing would have a profound effect on the child's primary identification. If the parents sleep together, they both bestow and withhold resources so that the envied status would be in either parent. The infant perceives the juxtaposition of privilege to be between himself or herself and an adult. On the other hand, where the parents sleep apart, the mother assumes a vast importance in the child's life. The juxtaposition of privilege is between the child and mother and, because she sometimes withholds resources, she is the person who is envied. In societies where infants enjoy their mother's exclusive attention in terms of sleeping arrangements, the optative identity of boys may be expected to be cross-sexual in nature, while those reared in societies where, because of the sleeping arrangements both adults withhold resources and are therefore envied, the optative identity of boys is more likely directed to adulthood as such.

Residence patterns provide the conditions for secondary optative identity also in the case where sex-determined statuses are relatively unprivileged because of primary cross-sex optative identity. Patrilocal societies would produce a conflict between primary and secondary optative sex identity when there are exclusive mother-child sleeping arrangements. In societies with maximum conflict in sex identity, for example, where a boy initially sleeps exclusively with his mother but the domestic unit is patrilocal and hence controlled by men, initiation rites at puberty function to resolve this conflict in identity. In the above-mentioned sample of sixty-four societies, there are thirteen in which there are "elaborate initiation ceremonies with genital operations"¹¹ takes place. All thirteen of these societies have the exclusive mother-infant sleeping arrangements which, according to the hypothesis, cause a primary feminine identification. Furthermore,

twelve of these thirteen have patrilocal residence that produces the maximum conflict in identity and hence the need for an institution such as an initiation rite to help resolve this conflict. Initiation rites serve the psychological function of replacing the primary feminine identity with a firmly established male identity.¹² This is accomplished by means of hazing, deprivation of sleep, tests of manliness, and painful genital operations, which are rewarded with the high status of manhood if the initiate endures them unflinchingly. By means of the symbolic death and rebirth through the initiation rites performed at puberty, a male born in these societies leaves behind the woman-child status into which he was born and is reborn into his optative status and identity as a man.¹³ It is also referred to as a “clarification of status.”¹⁴

With regard to the first-century Mediterranean world, the nature of the roles performed in the family by men, women, and children correlated with the “division of honor into male and female.”¹⁵ The family from which someone came was called the “family of orientation.” The “family of procreation” was involved in the roles of the women in the family whose “exclusiveness” was defended by the males. Male honor, symbolized by the testes, was associated with not accepting slights, standing up to other males, exercising authority over the family, and defending its honor. Female honor, symbolized by the hymen, related to sexual exclusiveness, reserve, caution, modesty, and timidity. Although a mother’s sexual purity was the concern primarily of her husband, it impinged also on her male children. Furthermore, males were involved in the purity of their daughters and sisters. The father of a household was not merely a begetter, but also a provider and protector.¹⁶ So it was not a child’s birth that made the child a part of a household, but the father’s decision to adopt the child into the household.¹⁷ This, rather

than birth, was the beginning of life and the father exercising the power of life and death over his offspring was a “godlike being.”

Although women fulfilled the primary, gender-specific role of childbearing, the mother of a household was empowered to ensure that the other female members of the household regularly bore children as well.¹⁸ Her role as manager of the household was not gender-specific. The responsibility for ensuring that everyone was fed and that the food would last entailed careful stewardship of the resources which the village allocated to her household. The responsibility necessitated absolute control over this aspect of household life.¹⁹ The mother was not only the childbearer and the manager of the household, she was also the teacher of its women and children. As to boys, this role was transferred to the father once the boy became a young man and participated in the communal labor of the village. As storyteller, the mother communicated the traditions of the community to her children. Apart from practical skills, she taught them all kinds of wisdom as well.²⁰ Typical female behavior included taking the last place at the table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion, and attempting to heal wounds.²¹ All these acts are to be found among the list of the authentic deeds of the historical Jesus.

Various studies²² that focused on the factor of father-absent households in the early life of boys support the postulated hypothesis of status envy. Specifically, some of these studies indicated that “war-born” boys from father-absent households not only behaved like girls in fantasy behavior but also showed very little aggression.²³ This kind of performance derived from the boys’ first or primary identification. Their secondary identification led to behavior, overtly and in fantasy, that produced father-like performance. In her book, *Beyond Patriarchy: The Images of Family in Jesus*, Diane

Jacobs-Malina²⁴ poses a very interesting thesis that Jesus' role was most like that of the "wife of the absent husband."

Focusing on the "submerged and subordinated social world of women in patriarchal society," Jacobs-Malina²⁵ considers the "nineteenth-century western debate over the Jesus of history versus the Christ of faith" as irrelevant to the discussion in her book. However, exactly because of her focus, I regard the quest for the historical Jesus as central to her thesis, although I agree that in a particular sense, with regard to her hypothesis, it does not matter whether the perspective of theology or sociology provides one's point of departure. From the perspective of *theology*, fatherlessness would refer to an "absent father in heaven"; from the point of view of *sociology*, the same phenomenon would be studied in terms of analogies in everyday society—thus, in terms of the ideal type of being fatherless in first-century Palestine.

From the perspective of the belief (attested to in Luke's gospel and elaborated upon in some post-New Testament documents) that God, the absent Father who is in heaven, impregnated Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, Jacobs-Malina studies the behavior of the wife of an absent husband in the patriarchal first-century Eastern Mediterranean society. By reading the Gospel of Mark and also investigating other themes in Mark and in the Pauline tradition, Jacobs-Malina finds that Jesus, the "fatherless son" did not act according to the expected role of the eldest son in a patriarchal family, but rather like that of the wife of the absent husband. She suggests that the image of Jesus reflected in the gospels is reminiscent of that of the idealized wife/mother as established in the life-world of Jesus. Acting on behalf of an absent Father in heaven, his primary role was the maintenance of God's household on earth.²⁶ In patriarchal societies, the belief is

commonly held that a male presence is necessary lest a woman bring shame on the family. So, if her husband is absent, a woman has to serve his interest by strictly conforming to his wishes or instructions. This results in close social scrutiny. A husband's absence imposes on his unsupervised wife even more rigorous expectations of decorum than those that are normally applied. Although he is absent, he remains present to his children through his wife as his authorized agent, who has the responsibility to ward off any challenge to her husband's prerogatives. This role, with its attendant rights, obligations, values, and activities, Jacobs-Malina²⁷ claims, furnishes a good analogy or conceptual frame of reference for the role we see Jesus fulfilling in the gospels in his relationship to God, to his followers, and to outsiders. Domestic settings, as can be seen in the "concrete language of parables," served as analogies for God's kingdom, revealing the absent Father, whose household Jesus was authorized to create and maintain.²⁸ My hypothesis differs from that of Jacobs-Malina. I do not metaphorically regard Jesus' relationship to God as one of husband and wife but, according to textual evidence, as father and son. I see this relationship as the product of the historical Jesus' "fantasy" caused by being "fatherless" in life.

According to the Freudian Oedipal complex,²⁹ the child's identification with its father originates in the child's desire to be like the father, but that this is later replaced by the drive to replace the father in the mother's affections. Is my thesis just another modern version of the Oedipal complex? Or, is my image of the first-century Jesus the very beginning of the process that Hubertus Tellenbach³⁰ identifies in his *Quest for the Lost Father* [*Suchen nach dem verlorenen Vater*]? Contrary to Freud's contention that the father is at the center of consciousness,³¹ Tellenbach is of the opinion that the role of

the father figure has vanished today from the Western psyche. In the seventies, Tellenbach was the chairperson of the Department of Clinical Psychopathology at the Psychiatric Clinic in Heidelberg, Germany. From years of experiencing young schizophrenics (in German: *Hebephrenen*) he found that the father played no role whatsoever in their lives.³² According to Tellenbach, the disappearance of the father today is the result of a long process. He traces this process back in art and literature. From a macro-sociological perspective, it might be seen as something that has its roots in the period in which “simple agrarian societies” in the Middle East developed into “advanced agrarian societies.”³³ Although kinship ties remained of great importance for individuals throughout the agrarian era, they were no longer the “chief integrating force” in advanced agrarian societies.³⁴

Such profound economic changes, especially with regard to Herodian Palestine, had an inevitable effect on kinship patterns and social relationships. The extended family (the *beth-av*) was slowly breaking up.³⁵ The Hellenistic period inaugurated far-reaching change for many Israelites who had previously lived in extended family units, subsisting through communal labor on isolated farms. They now found themselves most commonly in nuclear families living and working on large estates.³⁶ It seems that only two options were open to peasants if they needed to adjust to their income when their families disintegrated because their “agroeconomic” base was removed.³⁷ They could either increase their production or reduce their consumption. The former strategy necessitated putting more labor into their pieces of land, but in terms of the returns, this was hardly worthwhile. So they were propelled to supplement their income from the land. They

could hire themselves out as day laborers doing seasonal agricultural work or working temporarily in the fishing industry, or perhaps as craftsmen.³⁸

Neighbors of the courtyard of the village, which became the only viable economic unit, started to function as a socially supportive unit. This was true of village life in the ancient Mediterranean world, and, as children seldom left the village on attaining adulthood, neighbors increasingly constituted the socioeconomic basis of relationships.³⁹ Villagers were generally related to each other by ties of blood or marriage. Furthermore, marriage arrangements in Judean society were very tightly linked to the way in which the temple cult in Jerusalem was organized. The temple cult also determined both the classification of people and politics. This meant that “holiness was understood in a highly specific way, namely as separation.”⁴⁰

To be holy meant to be separate from everything that would defile holiness. The Jewish social world and its conventional wisdom became increasingly structured around polarities of holiness as separation: clean and unclean, purity and defilement, sacred and profane, Jew and Gentile, righteous and sinner...“Holiness” became the paradigm by which the Torah was interpreted. The portions of the law which emphasized the separateness of the Jewish people from other peoples, and which stressed separation from everything impure within Israel, became dominant. Holiness became the *Zeitgeist*, the “spirit of age,” shaping the development of the Jewish social world in the centuries leading up to the time of Jesus, providing the particular content of the Jewish ethos or way of life. Increasingly, the ethos of holiness became the politics of holiness.⁴¹

When someone, according to this politics of holiness, was considered as a nobody, such a person, according to society, would have no identity and would experience a tense relationship with villagers and even with close relatives. Status envy would therefore

come as no surprise. Calling God father and negating the importance of patriarchy goes hand in hand. This disposition amounts to a redefinition of the whole system of holiness. It created not only tension between Jesus and his relatives, but also between him and the proponents of the Judean temple cult. Eventually it led to his killing by the Roman authorities. At the center of Jesus' disposition lies a different understanding of who God is and who humankind is. To apprehend this understanding we need to know more about the Jerusalem cult and its ideology with regard to fatherlessness.

The Jerusalem Cult and Marriage Arrangements

At the time when the Jesus movement originated, the Israelites, besides the Samaritans, were subdivided by Josephus into four factions: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. The latter group was constituted as a group only in 68-70 C.E. during the Jewish War. Prior to this time, the term "zealot" had only referred to those who were diligent about faithfully following the law. Whether the Zealots were related to the militant group that since the late fifties of the Common Era had become active and were known as the "Sicarii" ("swordfighters"), and whether both the Zealots and the Sicarii grew from the movement Josephus called the "Fourth Philosophy," are questions that are not relevant here.⁴² What is important for the purpose of this study, however, is that Israel was a temple state and that the "policies" of all these groups, including the vision of Jesus, were determined by their respective perspectives on the purity ideology of the Jerusalem temple cult—an ideology that marked the conventions of the entire

Israelite society as exclusivist and hierarchical. It circumscribed familial, political, economic, and religious life.

The Sadducees, whose origin is found in the aristocratic Maccabaeon-Hasmonaean family, had ruled over the temple state in Jerusalem since the Maccabean War in the second century B.C.E. Since then, high priests had been appointed from the ranks of this family, which meant that the regulation of cultic acts by the priests (including the collection of offerings) was being compromised by family interests. Offerings formed the basis of a taxation system that was supposed to be grounded in the economic values of reciprocity and redistribution. By means of the products of their small-scale farming, the “people of the land” supplied the aristocratic temple elite with goods. Because of the system of patronage, the elite, as patrons, had to reciprocate by looking after the needy. Religion, economy, family interests, and politics were therefore interwoven in this society. The equilibrium between “patrons” and “clients” in this hierarchically stratified society teetered on a knife’s edge.⁴³

As the hierarchical ladder became longer because more taxes had to be supplied to the rulers on the higher rungs of the ladder, the peasants towards the bottom had to supply more surpluses on smaller bits of land, while less was passed down by the supposed “patrons” to the needy. In this way, taxes more than doubled.⁴⁴ Galilean peasants, for instance, not only had to pay temple tax and supply the Sadducean elite with their offerings, but also had to pay the Herodian royal house. Herod and the high priest, in turn, had to pay tributes to the emperor. The extended families in the peasant community started breaking up and poverty increased, and some unfortunate beggars even started finding it difficult to survive on charity.

Thus, the following picture supplied the content for a story by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (16:19-31): a beggar lies before the closed gates of a wealthy master; curs overwhelm the weakened man by greedily grabbing from him the leftover food thrown outside the gates of the rich aristocrat and even start mauling the half-dead person; he has only God to help him. This is what the name “Lazarus” means.⁴⁵

Leftover food was not something that fit into the temple cult in Jerusalem. The purity regulations of this cult consisted of strict dietary prescriptions, among others. In the same way that there was pure and impure food, there were also pure and impure animals. Dogs and pigs were symbols of impure people. Pure people were the “sons of Abraham.” Circumcision was a visible sign of purity. When Israelite men were older than twenty they could enter into the outer court of the Israelites of the “holy place,” the temple. They had to do this to entreat God by means of “gifts,” which had really been given to them by God, to forgive them their infringements of the purity laws. The priests received these “gifts” and they brought the offerings to God, although, in the meantime, the emperor would also receive his share. However, it remained a question to Jesus if God in fact received what was God’s own!⁴⁶

Only the “most important priest” could enter the “purest” place in the Temple, and only on the “purest” Sabbath of the year, the “Day of Atonement!” In this way, the exclusive and hierarchical purity regulations were ordered by means of prescriptions governing the calendar, circumcision, and diet.⁴⁷ But the author of Luke-Acts told us that Jesus lived as if the temple, by implication, did not have outer courts.⁴⁸ Matthew (12:1-8), in turn, emphasized Jesus’ indifference towards the rules relating to the Sabbath and the temple cult. Paul (Gl 6:12-13) said that Jesus’ death on the cross metaphorically

referred to the hypocrisy that accompanied the practice of circumcision, while Mark (7:14-23) handed down the tradition that Jesus ridiculed the customs relating to dietary prescriptions.

The Essenes and the Pharisees may be viewed as the parties in opposition to the Sadducees. The control by the Sadducees of “God’s house,” in the eyes of Jesus a “cavern where robbers live” (cf. Mk 11:17), was to both the Essenes and the Pharisees a source of resentment. How could they neutralize this power? They were not of Hasmonaean descent and high priests were not born from them or appointed from their own elite families by self-appointed people in power as a result of nepotism! What the Essenes did was simply to leave Jerusalem and replace the temple with their own community at Qumran.⁴⁹ The Essenes considered the Jerusalem Temple cult to be completely corrupt.⁵⁰ To them, the Qumran community took the place of the “true” temple.⁵¹

The policy of the Pharisees as “opposition party” was particularly ingenious.⁵² Instead of replacing the “house of God,” they broadened it by extending the regulations that related to the temple cult in Jerusalem to that sphere where Pharisees could exercise control! Each house of each “son of Abraham” was seen by the Pharisees to be a replica of the temple.⁵³ Even the design of the house was modeled on that of the temple. Women, and children were limited to their quarters, just as in the temple in Jerusalem. Above all, the regulations surrounding meals, in particular the Sabbath meal which was a replica of the sacrificial temple meal,⁵⁴ together with the manifold dietary and purity prescriptions, transformed the country households into “holy places.”

To the peasant community, in which families were already poverty stricken, these prescriptions by the Pharisees were a heavy yoke. Families had started to disintegrate because of the heavy burden of temple tax. Cereal and animal offerings as well as sin-offerings, and toll money, which were to be paid at strategic places on the roads to markets in the cities, were demanded. A rebelliousness against their own royal elite, as against the pagan oppressors, lay very close to the surface. The desire for a “popular” messianic king grew.⁵⁵ Gang leaders who sporadically opposed the authorities were seen as “messiahs” and, often, brigands who attacked patrols by the Romans or Herodians were offered hiding places. Publicans were, as tax collectors, hated as if they were thieves who had personally robbed the people.

Nevertheless, an Israelite peasant far in “Galilee where the Gentiles live” (1 Mac 5:15; Mt 4:15) could not ignore the cult of Jerusalem all that easily! After all, as Jesus reportedly said in the Gospel of Matthew (23:2): the Pharisees, as representatives of this cult, “sat [on the] chair of Moses,” and this meant that they had the authority to interpret the “Law of Moses.” Despite the fact that the Pharisees referred to the peasants, the “people of the land,” as “ignorant with regard to the Torah,”⁵⁶ the Law of God formed the conscience of each “true Israelite.” The Torah contained the conventional wisdom. On the one hand, “God’s Wisdom” was equated with the Torah.⁵⁷ On the other hand, this “Wisdom of God” was taken to apply to Israel only.⁵⁸ Convention insisted that “pious” peasants also made the journey to Jerusalem for big religious festivals and to pay temple tax. The collectors of the temple tax also went from Jerusalem to the countryside to collect the taxes. This was done if the people had not deposited their share into the treasure chest in the outer temple court, or had not exchanged their “incorrect” coins (at a

considerable commission) for the correctly minted silver coins (as prescribed by the Torah) at the money tables.⁵⁹

In addition, the marriage regulations determined by the temple would have continually reminded a Galilean of Jerusalem. Marriages took place in all households, also those in the Galilean countryside. The rules prescribing who could marry whom were determined by the Torah. The hierarchy making up the pattern of the temple community was clearly visible in the post-exilic marriage regulations. We have to remember that the world of the Bible was patriarchal in nature, with everything happening in terms of the interest of the head of the family. We have seen that this world can also be described as patrilocal. A spouse remained a “stranger” in her husband’s household until she gave birth to a son. In communities with patrilocal residence, the man spent his entire life in or near the place of his birth. This led to a nuclear group of male persons that was determined through blood relations. The group was supplemented by spouses who came from neighboring towns. This was a society that was characterized, for the sake of self-preservation and survival, by strong competition in politics and the economy were concerned. Identity functioned within the bounds of the group. Therefore, one must distinguish between the “family of procreation” and the “family of orientation.” In the first case one might refer to someone as “Simon, son of Jonah,” and, in the latter, to the “sons of Abraham.”

Three types of marriage strategies can be distinguished in the world of the Bible:⁶⁰ “reconciliatory,” “aggressive”, and “defensive.” The term “marriage strategy” is meant to indicate that marriage regulations were related to the way society was organized. The three marriage types were broadly related to three successive periods in the life of Israel:

the period of the patriarchs, the period of the kings, and the post-exilic second temple period.⁶¹ Regulations with regard to marriages during the post-exilic second Temple period were determined strongly by cultic purity regulations. Thus, for instance, marriages were only allowed when they took place within the ambit of one's own group of families, the "family of procreation"; that is, the "house of Israel."⁶² Marriages were geared towards the continuation of the "holy seed," that is, of the physical "children of Abraham."⁶³ The practice of circumcision and admission to the temple as the place of God's presence was closely related to this. The commandment on divorce, by means of the marriage reform regulations (Neh 9-10; Ezra 9:10), was meant to achieve the dissolution of undesirable "mixed marriages."⁶⁴

These marriage arrangements were embedded in the stratification of people from holy to less holy to impure:⁶⁵

1. Priests;
2. Levites;
3. Full-blooded Israelites;

4. Illegal children of priests;
5. Converts (proselytes) from heathendom;
6. Converts from the ranks of those who had previously been slaves, but had been set free;

7. Bastards (born from mix-marriage unions or through incest);
8. The fatherless (in Aramaic: *s^etuqin*) (those who grew up without a father or a substitute father and therefore were not embedded within the honor structures);
9. Foundlings (in Aramaic: *a^asupin*);
10. Castrated men (eunuchs);

11. Men who had been eunuchs from birth;
12. Those with sexual deformities;
13. Hermaphrodites (bisexual people);
14. Gentiles (non-Israelites).

The principle behind this classification was related to the marriage regulations that were obtained during the second temple period. They also determined who could marry whom and who could enter into the temple, where “God’s people” met for the reading of the Scriptures, among other activities.

The above-mentioned fourteen groups may be divided into seven categories.⁶⁶ The priests, Levites, and “full-blooded” Israelites formed the first three categories. Illegal (not illegitimate) children of priests were children born of marriages that were inadmissible to priests. A priest was forbidden to marry a woman who already “belonged to a man,” like a widow, divorcee, or a woman who had been raped. These “illegal children” of priests formed, with both groups of proselytes, the fourth category. Bastards, the fatherless, foundlings, and the castrated formed the fifth category. Jeremiah⁶⁷ said the following about the “fatherless” and the “foundlings:”

We have no information worthy of note on the *fatherless* (men whose father was unknown) and the *foundlings*. They were forbidden marriage with both Israelites of pure descent and with illegitimate children of priests (M. Kidd. iv.1), for their father, or their parents were unknown. In fact, they were suspected of bastardy (cf. M. Ket. i.8-9); and on the other hand the possibility could not be excluded that they might without being aware of it, contract a forbidden marriage with a relation (b. Kidd. 73a).

Those born eunuchs, those with deformed genitals, and hermaphrodites, in other words, people who could not marry at all, made up the sixth category. People with another ethnic orientation, those, in other words, outside of “God’s people as people of the covenant,” formed the seventh category. Any involvement with these people was very strongly discouraged in Israel.

The second last category, the sixth, could make no biological contribution to the continuation of “holy seed,” the “children of Abraham.” “True Israel,” actually, consisted only of the first three categories. They could, with certain limitations, freely intermarry. People from the fourth category (“illegal children” of priests and proselytes) did belong to Israel and were allowed to marry Levites and “full-blooded” Israelites, but daughters among these “illegal children” and daughters of proselytes were under no circumstances allowed to marry priests. The fifth category was simply deemed “impure;” people outside of the covenant, doomed, as far as the temple in Jerusalem was concerned, not to approach any closer than the temple square, the “court of the Gentiles;” they were obliged to live as if God did not exist,⁶⁸ people labeled as not forming part of the children of Abraham and therefore not being children of God. If a man like this wanted to get married, he could do so only with an “impure” woman, among whom the Gentiles too were categorized. Otherwise such a person remained unmarried. In a society in which the honor of a man, in fact his entire social identity, was determined by his status as a member of the family of Abraham and his contribution to the physical continuation of that family, one’s status as being unmarried had, to put it mildly, serious implications.

The image of the historical Jesus as the fatherless carpenter, the unmarried son of Mary, who lived in a strained relationship with his village kin in Nazareth, probably

because of the stigma of being fatherless and, therefore, a sinner, fits the ideal type of the fifth category described above. Although innocent as a child who was not supposed to know the nature of sin, the historical Jesus was denied the status of being God's child, doomed not to transmit the status of proper covenant membership and, therefore, not allowed to enter the congregation of the Lord in the light of the ideology of the temple and its systemic sin.

Yet Jesus was someone who shared the vision of John the Baptist that remission of sin could be granted by God outside the structures of the temple. Both before and after his baptism and breach with John the Baptist, Jesus was noted for association and friendship with "sinners," and his trust in God as his Father. This attitude is certainly subversive towards the patriarchal values that underlined the marriage strategy of the second temple period. The historical claim may therefore be made, in terms of the criteria of the period of the second temple, that Jesus was regarded as being of illegitimate descent in the sense of his being fatherless. On account of this "permanent sin" fatherless men (boys over the age of twenty) were not allowed to enter the Temple (cf. Deut 23:3) or to marry a "full-blooded" fellow Israelite.⁶⁹

John Pilch⁷⁰ made a valuable contribution with regard to child rearing in the Mediterranean world and its application to the life of Jesus. It was not Pilch's intention to distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith as recorded in the New Testament. Although one can, therefore, disagree with his statement that Jesus' "parents successfully socialized him into his cultural world, and Jesus' behavior bears witness to their success," the results of Pilch's study remain of special importance for my own research. The point is that Pilch shows how ambivalent Mediterranean society was in

respect of its value system, since both the feminine quality of nurture and the male quality of assertion were emphasized.

In early childhood, the boy learned nurturing values, but these became displaced by the “clarification of status” that marked his passage at puberty from the gentle world of women to the authoritarian world of men. It is a kind of transformation that developed out of a parenting style in the Near East through which the boy learned from his father (or male-next-of-kin) that “Abba isn’t Daddy” in the Western sense of the word, to use the words of James Barr!⁷¹ In the aggressive and hierarchical world of men, Jesus learned, according to Pilch, to reject the comfort of childhood and the warmth of feminine values and to embrace instead the rigors of manhood, subjecting himself in unquestioning obedience to the severity of the treatment that his father and other males might inflict on him.

If a “clarification of status” is lacking because of fatherlessness, one can anticipate a diffused identity. It is likely that status envy could cause, as Donald Capps⁷² suggests with regard to Jesus, the “child...as an endangered self” to desire “to be another man’s son.” In the words of Jane Schaberg,⁷³ “the paternity is canceled or erased by the theological metaphor of the paternity of God.” The resources that were withheld in Jesus’ case would be those that a father was expected to give his son. Since Jesus called God his Father, it seems that the followers of Jesus interpreted his suffering as a filial act of obedient submissiveness to God, his heavenly Father.

Because of the assumption that his primary identification was never “clarified” by a secondary identification, the fatherless Jesus seemingly behaved in womanlike manner as an adult. It can be seen in his sayings and deeds, in which he advocated and acted with behavior

like taking the last place at the table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion, and healing wounds. Given this interpretation, status envy produced spontaneous, if not intentional, anti-patriarchal behavior.

Jesus' attributed identity seems to consist of his fatherless status, or his being as the members of his society perceived him. This position, assigned to him because of the purity ideology during the second temple period, would lead to his debarment from being child of Abraham, that is, child of God, a nobody who was not permitted to marry a "full-blood Israelite." Jesus' *subjective identity* seems to consist of the status he saw himself occupying: the protector and defender of the honor of outcasts, like abandoned women and children, and giving the homeless a fictive home. And finally, Jesus' *optative identity* which consists of that status he wished he could occupy but from which he was debarred, seems to be child of Abraham, that is, child of God—that could be the reason why the fatherless Jesus called upon God as his Father.

END NOTES

1. Scott, Bernard B. 1990, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*, p. 79; depending on Jerome H. Neyrey.
2. At a symposium during which the evidence of this research was tabled, Roger V. Burton of the National Institute of Mental Health and John W.M. Whiting of Tulane University shared a paper. A shortened revision of the paper was published in 1961 in the *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*.
3. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father and Cross-Sex Identity," p. 89.
4. Cf. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 85.
5. Scott, Bernard B. 1990, *Hear Then the Parable*, p. 79.
6. See Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus*, p. 27.
7. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 85.
8. Crossan, J.D. 1991, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, p. 269.
9. See Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," pp. 88-89.
10. Cf. Whiting, J.W. M., Kluckhorn, R. & Anthony, A. 1958, "The Function of Male Initiation Ceremonies at Puberty," pp. 359-370.
11. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 90.
12. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, p. 90.
13. Cf. Whiting, J.W. M., Kluckhorn, R. & Anthony, A. 1958, "The Function of Male Initiation Ceremonies at Puberty."
14. John Corbett 1983, "The Foster Child: A Neglected Theme in Early Christian Life and Thought," p. 312, centering in on the "spoiled identification" of foundlings in the Greco-Roman world in terms of Victor Turner's concept of "liminality," refers to this kind of "rebirth"/"resurrection"/"integration into the community" as a "clarification of status."
15. Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 48-55.
16. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE*, p. 8.

17. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, *Social World of Ancient Israel*, p. 10.
18. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, p. 25.
19. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, p. 25.
20. Cf. Matthews, V.C. & Benjamin, D.C. 1993, pp. 28-29.
21. Cf. Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World*, p. 54.
22. See, inter alia, Blankenhorn, D. 1995, *Fatherless America: Confronting our Most Urgent Social Problem*; Bach, G.R. 1946, "Father-Fantasies and Father-Typing in Father-Separated Children," pp. 63-79; Grønseth, E. 1957, "The Impact of Father Absence in Sailor Families upon the Personality Structure and Social Adjustment of Adult Sailor Sons," pp. 97-114; Lynn, D.B. & Sawrey, W.L. 1959, "The Effects of Father-Absence on Norwegian Boys and Girls," pp. 258-262; Tiller, P.O. 1957, "Father Absence and Personality Development of Children in Sailor Families," pp. 115-137; Mitscherlich, A. 1969, *Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology*; Tripp-Reimer, T. & Wilson, S.E. 1991, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Fatherhood," pp. 1-27; Stearns, P.N. 1991, "Fatherhood in Historical Perspective: The Role of Social Change," pp. 28-52; Marciano, T.D. 1991, "Religion and Its Impact on Fatherhood," pp. 138-161; Adams, P.L., Milner, J.R. & Schrepf, N.A. 1984, *Fatherless Children*; Bowen, G.L. & Orthner, D.K. 1991, "Effects of Organizational Culture on Fatherhood," pp. 187-217; Jurich, A.P., White, M.B., White, C.P. & Moody, R.A. 1991, "Internal Culture of the Family and Its Effects on Fatherhood," pp. 237-262; Herzog, J.M. 1982, "On Father Hunger: The Father's Role in the Modulation of Aggressive Drive and Fantasy," pp. 163-174; Angel, R.J. & Angel, J.L. 1993, *Painful Inheritance: Health and the New Generation of Fatherless Children*; Mott, F.L. 1990, "When is a Father Really Gone? Paternal-Child Contact in Father-Absent Homes," pp. 1-27.
23. Burton, R.V. & Whiting, J.W.M. 1961, "The Absent Father," p. 93.
24. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, *Beyond Patriarchy: The Images of Family in Jesus*, p. 2.
25. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, *Beyond Patriarchy*, p. 8.
26. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 2.
27. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 6.
28. Jacobs-Malina, D. 1993, p. 7.
29. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father*, p. 38.
30. Tellenbach, H. (Hrsg.) 1976, *Das Vaterbild im Mythos und Geschichte: Ägypten, Griechenland, Altes Testament, Neues Testament*, pp. 7-11. The University of Heidelberg organized, against the backdrop of the revolutionary student protests of the

31. Cf. Hamerton-Kelly, R. 1979, *God the Father*, p. 5.
32. According to Tellenbach, H. (Hrsg.) 1976, *Das Vaterbild im Mythos und Geschichte*, p. 7, the Oedipal “Phase des Vaterprotestes in der Vorgeschichte so gut wie immer fehlte.”
33. Cf. Lenski, G., Nolan, P. & Lenski, J. [1970] 1995, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, pp. 188-222.
34. Lenski, G. *et al.* 1995, *Human Societies*, p. 213.
35. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period*, p. 132.
36. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, p. 121.
37. See Wolf, E.R. 1966, *Peasants*, p. 15.
38. See Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, p. 95.
39. Fiensy, D.A. 1991, p. 135. Fiensy refers to the work of, inter alia, Harper, M. 1928, “Village Administration in the Roman Province of Syria” , p. 106.
40. Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus – A New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship*, p. 86.
41. Borg, M.J. 1987, *Jesus – A New Vision*, pp. 86-87.
42. Cf. Van Aarde, Andries G. 1994, *Kultuurhistoriese Agtergrond van die Nuwe Testament: Die Eerste-Eeuse Mediterreense Sosiale Konteks*, pp. 152-157.
43. Cf., inter alia, Stegemann, E.W. & Stegemann, W. 1995, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte: Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christuskirchen*, pp. 43-44.
44. Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine*, pp. 100-101.
45. Cf. Bernard B Scott, *Hear then the parable*, pp. 141-159.
46. Mk 12:13-17 [parallel texts: Mt 22:15-22//Lk 20:19-26]; GosThom 100:1-4; Egerton Gospel 3:1-6. See Funk, R.W. & Hoover, R.W. 1997, *The Five Gospels – What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, pp. 102-103.
47. See Dunn, J.D.G. 1991, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity*, pp. 28-31.

48. See Conzelmann, H. 1963, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 123, 243; especially with regard to Acts 21:30.
49. See Gärtner, B., 1965, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament*, pp. 18-21; Klinzing, G. 1971, *Die Umdeutung des Kultus in der Qumrangemeinde und im Neuen Testament*, pp. 50-93.
50. Cf. 1 QpH 8:8-13; 12:9.
51. Cf. 1 QS 5:6; 8:5; 9; 9:6.
52. See Saldarini, A.J. 1988, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*, p. 234.
53. See Neusner, J. 1973, *From Politics to Piety*, p. 75; Elliott, J.H. 1991, “Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A contrast in Social Institutions,” pp. 211-240; Elliott, J.H. 1991, “Household and Meals versus the Temple Purity System: Patterns of Replication in Luke-Acts,” pp. 102- 108.
54. See Neusner, J. 1979, *The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism*, p. 47.
55. See Horsley, R.A. & Hanson, J.S. 1985, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the time of Jesus*.
56. Cf. Bultmann, R. [1964/1966] 1971, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, pp. 310-311 note 5.
57. See, *inter alia*, Sirach 1:25-27; 6:37; 15:1; 19:20; 24:23; 33:2-3 and Baruch 4:1. Cf. Witherington, B. 1994, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom*, pp. 114-116.
58. See, *inter alia*, Ben-Sirach 24:8-2 and Wisdom of Solomon 10:1-21.
59. See Richardson, P. 1992, “Why Turn the Tables? Jesus’ Protest in the Temple Precincts,” p. 513.
60. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 159-161.
61. The following information concerning the *reconciliatory* strategy during the patriarchal-immigrant period can be pointed out: Abraham emigrated to Canaan, which was already inhabited by people grouped in city states ruled by kings. Marriages were endogamic. This led to the insistence that the spouse had to come from one’s own family. Abraham married his half-sister (Gen 20:12); Nahor his brother’s daughter (Gen 11:29); Isaac his father’s brother’s (his uncle’s) son’s (his cousin’s) daughter (Gen 24:15); Esau, among other women, his father’s brother’s (his uncle’s) daughter (his cousin) (Gen 28:9); Jacob his mother’s brother’s (his uncle’s) daughter (Gen 29:10); Amram, Moses’ father, married his father’s sister (his aunt) (Ex 6:20; Num 26:57-59). Because married women

62. See Malina, B.J. 1996, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 50.
63. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 137-138.
64. See Bossman, D. 1979, "Ezra's Marriage Reform: Israel Redefined," pp. 32-38.
65. See Jeremias, J. 1969, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, pp. 271-273; Neyrey, J.H. 1991, "The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: "They Turn the World Upside Down,"" p. 279; Funk, R. W 1996, *Honest To Jesus*, p. 202. This hierarchical construct is inferred from m.Kiddushin (4:1); m.Horayoth (3:8); t.Rosh hash-Shenah (4:1) and t.M'gillah (2:7).
66. See Malina, B.J. 1993, *The New Testament World*, pp. 159-161.
67. Jeremias, J. 1969, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, p. 343.
68. See Sanders, E.P. 1993, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 229.
69. Cf. [Babylonian] Y'bamot 78b; see Fiensy, D.A. 1991, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period*, p. 165.
70. Pilch, J.J. 1991, "Beat his Ribs while He is Young" (Sir 30:12): Cultural Insights on the Suffering of Jesus."
71. Barr, J. 1988, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy'," pp. 28-47.
72. Capps, D. 1992, "The Desire to be Another Man's Son: The Child Jesus as an Endangered Self," p. 21.
73. Schaberg, J. 1994, "The Canceled Father: Historicity and the NT Infancy Narratives."