# Fatherlessness in first-century Mediterranean culture:
# The historical Jesus seen from the perspective of cross-cultural anthropology and cultural psychology

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## Abstract

*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. In first-century Mediterranean culture, fatherlessness led to marginalization. Seen against the background of the patriarchal mind set of Israelites in the Second Temple period, a fatherless son would have been without social identity. He would have been debarred from being called child of Abraham (that is child of God) and from the privilege of being given a daughter in marriage. He would be denied access to the court of the Israelites in the Temple. In this article, with the help of cross-cultural anthropology and cultural psychology, the life of the historical Jesus is explained in social-scientific terms against the background of the marriage regulations determined by the Temple. The historical Jesus is seen as someone who suffered the stigma of being fatherless but who trusted God as father.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research on the quest for the historical Jesus published in this article is preceded by three other articles. I argued that the starting point of the quest could be moved beyond Jesus' relationship to John the Baptist (Van Aarde 1995:325-356). Thus far, Jesus' baptism was seen by historical-critical exegetes as the point of departure. However, I am convinced that one can move from the baptism scene backwards to Jesus' childhood in spite of all the legendary stuff that clouds the nativity stories. Yet in taking such a step one should be aware of historiographical pitfalls. In subsequent articles I proposed a social-scientific model for an understanding of the social identity of children in Mediterranean culture (Van Aarde 1997a) and the notion 'adopted as God's child' (Van Aarde 1997b). I also demonstrated that Joseph, the father-figure who adopted Jesus,

should probably be seen as a legendary figure (Van Aarde 1998). Such an argument has led up to the conclusion that Jesus should be seen as fatherless. In a male domina-ted patriarchal world, fatherlessness means trouble. Seen against the background of the marriage arrangements within the patriarchal mindset of Israelites in the Second Temple period, the 'fatherless' Jesus would have been without social identity. He would have been debarred from being called child of Abraham, that is child of God. Access to the court of the Israelites in the temple where mediators could facilitate for-giveness for sin would be denied to him. He would be debarred from the privilege of being given a daughter in marriage.

In the peasant society of Jesus' world the family revolves around the father. The father and the mother are the source of the family, not only in the biological sense, but because their interaction with their children creates the structures of society. A peasant economy is geared toward subsistence, the mere maintenance of the family, rather than investment in the future. This is the peasant father's goal and therefore the socializa-tion process employed in such communities is one that fosters the child's dependence. 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 beha-vior (see Scott 1990:79; depending on J H Neyrey).

In this article, with the help of cross-cultural anthropology and cultural psycho-logy, I shall explain in social-scientific terms an ideal-typical situation of someone who got the stigma of being fatherless but who trusted God as father. This research could be of help to restore authenticity in the lives of many people today. One of the most urgent social problems of our time is the fact that millions of children are growing up fatherless — not only a concern in the third world but also elsewhere, as can be seen in the title of David Blankenhorn's (1995) book *Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem*. On the wrapper of this book Don Browning, Professor of Ethics and the Social Sciences at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, writes: 'Fatherless America is the strongest possible refutation to a thesis widely held in our society — that fathers are not really important. David Blankenhorn exposes the multi-ple ways our culture has convinced itself of this falsehood and shows how to reconsti-tute fatherhood for the future.' This article is about the historical Jesus who filled the emptiness caused by his fatherlessness by his trust in God as his father.

## 2. STATUS ENVY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

In the 1960's a cross-cultural study on the father's position in the family as it relates to the process of identification of children was done from the perspective of social psycho-logy at Harvard University.[1] This research, supported by cross-cultural material, was related to what is called the 'status envy hypothesis'. Specifically, the evidence focuses

on the effect of *father absence* in the household. The outcome of the the inquiry differs from some other theories of identification in that, in terms of their hypothesis, a relationship that fully satisfies both parties is not conducive to identification. According to the status envy hypothesis, for children to identify fully with others, it is necessary that they openly consume resources, which are, however, denied to the children. 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 of every society, there is a status system which gives privileged access to resources for some positions in the system and, at the same time, debars other positions from controlling and consuming them. A resource is a material or non-material 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. Such, 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 which 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, 'adult males are the ones to be envied' (Burton & Whiting 1961:89).

This hypothesis about the process of identification and the development of identity may be summarized as follows (Burton & Whiting 1961:85): Identification is achieved by the imitation of a status role that is envied. This happens not overtly but in fantasy or play, and the driving force is envy of the person who enjoys the privileged status to which is aspired.

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.

The family, and especially the father, was at the center of the first-century Mediterranean world. Beyond the family lays 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' (Scott 1990:79). The father's role in the family was not only that of representative of God but also the one 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 (see Hamerton-Kelly 1979: 27). 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 (Burton & Whiting 1961:85). *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, to become an adult who wishes to have a father a person, according to the status envy hypothesis, would be 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 applied 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, John Dominic Crossan (1991:269) says that 'to be a child was to be a nobody, with the possibility to becoming a somebody absolutely dependent on parental discretion and parental standing on community.' In other words, arrangements in infancy lead to primary identification; whereas those in childhood to secondary identification. But there could also be a discrepancy between these two because of status debarment on the primary level which needs to be resolved by an initiation ritual.

Cross-cultural studies yield significant variables bearing upon the hypothesis as postulated. Specifically, social structure of a sample of societies was judged for the degree to which the father and adult males in general occupied privileged statuses as perceived by the infant and later by the child (see Burton & Whiting 1961:88-89). One such measure of privileged status and therefore of status envy in childhood is provided by the sleeping arrangements that appertain to a society (cf Whiting, Kluckhorn & Anthony 1958:359-370).

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 its own in a separate room is something quite unique. In 36 out of 64 societies examined, the parents slept apart during the nursing period, so that the infant enjoyed its mother's exclusive attention at night. In the remaining 28 societies, the parents slept 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 postulated, 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 either parent. The infant perceives the juxtaposition of privilege to be between itself 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 her and, because she sometimes withholds resources, she is the person who is envied. In societies where infants enjoy their mothers exclusive attention in terms of sleeping arrangements, therefore, the optative identity of boys may be expected to be primarily of a cross-sexual nature, while those reared in societies where, because of the sleeping arrangements, both adults withhold resources and therefore are envied, the optative identity of boys is more likely to be 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 where you have exclusive mother-child sleeping arrangements. In societies with maximum conflict in sex identity, for example, where a boy initially sleeps exclusively with his mother and where 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 64 societies, there are 13 in which there are 'elaborate initiation ceremonies with genital operations' (Burton & Whiting 1961:90). All 13 of these have the exclusive mother-infant sleeping arrangements which, according to the hypothesis, would cause a primary feminine identification. Furthermore, 12 of these 13 had patrilocal residence which would produce 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 (see Burton & Whiting 1961: 90). This is accomplished by means of hazing, deprivation of sleep, tests of manliness and painful genital operations, which will be 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 (cf Whiting, Kluckhorn & Anthony 1958). It is also referred to as a 'clarification of status'.[2]

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' (Malina 1993:48-55). The family from which someone came, is called the 'family of orientation'. The 'family of procreation' is involved in the roles of the women in the family whose 'exclusiveness' is defended by the males. Male honor, symbolized by the testes, is 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, relates to sexual exclusiveness, reserve, caution, modesty and timidity. Although a mothers's sexual purity is the concern primarily of her husband, it impinges also on her male children. Furthermore, males are 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 (cf Matthews & Benjamin 1993:8). So it was not a child's birth that made it a part of a household, but the father's decision to adopt it into the household (cf Matthews & Benjamin 1993:10). 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 child-bearing, the mother of a household was empowered to ensure that the other female members of the household regularly bore children as well (cf Matthews & Benjamin 1993:25). Her role as manager of the household was not gender-specific, and 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, and this necessitated absolute control over this aspect of household life (cf Matthews & Benjamin 1993:25). The mother was not only the childbearer and the manager of the household, she was also the teacher of its women and children. In respect of boys, this role was transferred to the father once the boy became a young man, participating 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 (cf Matthews & Benjamin 1993:28-29). Typical female behavior included taking the last place at table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion and attempting to heal wounds (see Malina 1993:54).

Various studies[3] which focus 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 be-- haved like girls in fantasy behavior but also showed very little aggression (see Burton & Whiting 1961:93). This kind of performance derives from the boys' first or primary identification. Their secondary identification led to behavior, overtly and in fantasy, which produced father-like performance.

In her book, *Beyond patriarchy: The images of family in Jesus*, Diane Jacobs-Malina (1993:2) poses a very interesting thesis that the 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-Malina (1993:8) considers the 'nineteenth century western debate over the Jesus of history vs. 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. 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 beha-
vior of the wife of an absent husband in the patriarchal society of the first-century East-
ern Mediterranean.

Reading the Gospel of Mark and also investigating other themes in Mark and in the
Pauline tradition, she 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 main-
tenance of God's household on earth (Jacobs-Malina 1993:2).

In patriarchal societies the belief is commonly held that a male presence is neces-
sary 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
resulted in close social scrutiny. A husband's absence imposes on his unsupervised
wife even more rigorous expectations of decorum than those that normally applied. Al-
though he was absent, he remained present to his children in his wife as his authorized
agent, who had the responsibility to ward off any challenge to her husband's preroga-
tives. This role, with its attendant rights, obligations, values and activities, Jacobs-
Malina's (1993:6) 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 fol-
lowers 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 (Jacobs-Malina 1993:7).

Sigmund Freud (see Hamerton-Kelly 1979:38) held that the child's identification
with its father originates in the child'e 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 Jacobs-
Malina's thesis just another version of the Oedipal complex? Or, is her image of Jesus
the very beginning of the process that Hubertus Tellenbach (1976:7-11) identifies in his
'Quest for the Lost Father' ['Suchen nach dem verlorenen Vater']?[4] Contrary to
Freud's contention that the father is at the center of consciousness (cf Hamerton-Kelly
1979:5), Tellenbach is of the opinion that the role of the father figure has vanished to-
day from the Western psyche. In the seventies Tellenbach was the chairperson of the
Department of Clinical Psychopathology at the Psychiatric Clinic in Heidelberg, Ger-
many. From years of experiencing young schizophrenics (in German, the so-called
'Hebephrenen') he found that the father played no role whatsoever in their lives.[5] Ac-
cording to Tellenbach the disappearance of the father today is the outcome of a long
process. He traces this process back in art and literature. To me, it might, from a

macro-sociological perspective, 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' (cf Lenski, Nolan & Lenski [1970] 1995:188-222). Although kinship ties remained of great importance for individuals throughout the agrarian era, these were no longer the 'chief integrating force' in advanced agrarian societies (Lenski, Nolan & Lenski 1995:213).

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 (see Fiensy 1991:132). 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 (see Fiensy 1991:121). Only two options were open to peasants if they needed to adjust to their income when their families disintegrated because their 'agro-economic' base was removed (see Wolf 1966:15). They could either increase their production or reduce their consumption. The former strategy necessitated putting more labor into their piece of land, but in terms of the returns, this was hardly worthwhile. So they were propelled to try to supplement their income from the land. They could hire themselves out as a day laborer doing seasonal agricultural work or working temporarily in the fishing or pottery industry, or perhaps as a craftsman (see Fiensy 1991:95; Crossan 1998:223-230).

Neighbors of the courtyard of the village, which became the only viable economic unit, started to function as a social 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 socio-economic basis of relationships.[6] 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 Jerusalem Temple cult was organized. The Temple cult also determined both the classification of people and politics. This means that 'holiness was understood in a highly specific way, namely as separation' (Borg 1987:86).

> 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.

(Borg 1987:86-87)

When someone, according 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, even with close relatives. Status envy would therefore come as no surprise.

## 3. THE JERUSALEM CULT

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 only constituted as a group in 68-70 CE 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 which 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 which Josephus called the 'Fourth Philosophy' are questions which are not relevant here (see Van Aarde 1994:152-157). What is important for the purposes of this article, 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 which 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 to be found in the aristocratic Hasmonic family, had ruled over the temple state in Jerusalem since the Maccabean war in the second century BCE. Since then, high priests had been appointed from the ranks of this family, which meant that the regulation of cultic acts by the priests (which included the collection of offerings) was being compromised by family interests. Offerings formed the basis of a system of taxation which 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 (see *inter alia* Stegemann & Stegemann 1995:43-44).

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 land, while less was passed down by the supposed 'patrons' to the needy. In this way, taxes more than doubled (see Fiensy 1991:100-101). Galilean peasants, for instance, not only had to pay Temple tax and supply the Sadducean elite with their offerings, but also 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, poverty increased and some unfortunate beggars even started finding it difficult to survive on charity. Thus this 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 (cf Scott 1990:141-159).

Leftover food was not something which fitted into the Jerusalem Temple cult. The purity regulations of this cult consisted, inter alia, of strict dietary prescriptions. 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 this. 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 whether God in fact received what God was own![7]

Only the 'most important priest' could enter the 'purest' place in the Temple, and only on the 'purest' Sabbath of the year, the 'big day of reconciliation'! In this way, the exclusivist and hierarchical purity regulations were ordered by means of prescriptions governing the calendar, circumcision, and diet (see Dunn 1991:28-31). But the author of Luke-Acts tells us that Jesus lived in such a way as if the temple, by implication, did not have outer courts (see Conzelmann 1963:123; especially with regard to

Acts 21:30). Matthew (12:1-8), in its turn, emphasizes Jesus' indifference towards the rules relating to the Sabbath and the Temple cult. Paul (Gl 6:12-13) says that Jesus' death on the cross metaphorically refers to the hypocrisy which accompanied the practice of circumcision, while Mark (7:14-23) hands 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 Hasmonic 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 (see Gärtner 1965:18-21; Klinzing 1971:50-93). The Essenes considered the Jerusalem Temple cult to be completely corrupt (cf 1QpH 8:8-13; 12:9). To them the Qumran community took the place of the 'true Temple' (cf 1 QS 5:6; 8:5; 9:6).

The policy of the Pharisees as 'opposition party' was particularly ingenious (see Saldarini 1988:234). Instead of replacing the 'house of God', they broadened it by extending the regulations which related to the Jerusalem Temple cult 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 (see Neusner 1973:75; Elliott 1991a:211-240; 1991b:102-108). Even the design of the house was modelled 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 (see Neusner 1979:47), together with the manifold dietary and purity prescriptions, transform 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 disintegrating because of the heavy burden of Temple tax. Cereal and animal offerings as well as of sin-offerings and toll money, which was to be payed at strategic places on the roads to markets in the cities, were demanded. A rebelliousness against their own royal elites, as against the pagan oppressors, lay very close to the surface. The desire for a 'popular' messianic king grew (see Horsley & Hanson 1985). 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.

## 4. CHILD OF ABRAHAM — CHILD OF GOD

Nevertheless, an Israelite peasant far in 'Galilee where the heathens 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 means 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' (cf Bultmann [1964/1966] 1971:310-311 note 5), 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.[8] On the other hand, this 'Wisdom of God' was taken to apply to Israel only.[9] Convention insisted that 'pious' peasants also make 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 in 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 (see Richardson 1992:513).

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 which was determined through blood relations. The group was supplemented by spouses who came from neighboring towns. This was a society which was characterized, for the sake of self-preservation and survival, by strong competition as far as 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 (see Malina 1993:159-161): 'reconciliatory', 'aggressive' and 'defensive'. The term

'marriage strategy' is meant to indicate that marriage regulations were related to the way society was organized. The above-mentioned three types are 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.[10]

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' (see Malina 1996:50). Marriages were geared towards the continuation of the 'holy seed', that is, of the physical 'children of Abraham' (see Malina 1993:137-138). The practice of circumcision and admission to the Temple as the place of God's presence is 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' (see Bossman 1979:32-38). These marriage arrangements were embedded in the stratification of people from holy to less holy to impure (see Jeremias 1969:271-273; Neyrey 1991:279; Funk 1996:202):[11]

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 or adultery)
8. The fatherless (those who grew up without a father or a substitute father and therefore were not embedded within the honor structures)
9. Foundlings
10. Castrated men (eunuchs)

11. Men who had been eunuchs from birth
12. Those with sexual deformities
13. Hermaphrodites (bisexual people)

14. Heathens (non-Israelites)

The principle behind this classification is related to the marriage regulations which 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, among others, the reading of the Scriptures.

The above-mentioned fourteen groups may be divided into seven categories (see Malina 1993:159-161). The priests, Levites and 'full-blooded' Israelites formed the first three categories. Illegal (not illegitimate) children of priests were children born of marriages which were inadmissible to priests. A priest was forbidden to marry women who already 'belonged to a man', like widows, divorcees or women 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. 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 inter marry. 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 mary 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 so-called 'court of the gentiles', which is to say that they were obliged to live as if God did not exist (see Sanders 1993:229): people labelled 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.

## 5. CONCLUSION

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. According to this ideal type, 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 he 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 that in terms of the criteria of the period of the Second Temple, Jesus was regarded as being of illegitimate descent in the sense of his being fatherless. On account of this 'permanent sin' of theirs, 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 (see [Babylonian] Y'bamot 78b; cf Fiensy 1991:165).

John Pilch (1991) 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' in-tention 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 his study remain of special importance for my own research. The point is that Pilch shows how ambivalent Mediterranean society was in respect its value system, since both the feminine quality of nurture and the male quality of assertion were emphasized. In early childhood the boy learnt nurturing values, but these became displaced by the 'clarification of status' that marked his pas-sage at puberty from the gentle world of women to the authoritarian world of male values. It is a kind of transformation which develops out of a parenting style in the Near East through which the boy learns 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 (1988:28-47)! In the aggresive 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 Capps (1992:21) 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 (1994) 'the paternity is canceled or erased by the theological metaphor of the paternity of God.' The resources which were withheld in Jesus' case would be those which 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 an 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 'mother-like' manner as an adult. It can be seen in his sayings and deeds in which he advocated and acted a behavior of taking the last place at table, serving others, forgiving wrongs, having compassion and healing wounds. Given this interpretation, status envy seemingly produced a performance of the 'wife of the absent husband', as Diane Jacobs-Malina (Jacobs-Malina 1993:2) ingeniously remarks, and which is metaphorically resembled in God's fatherhood of Jesus. At the same time, such a 'conflict laden' performance caused spontaneous, if not intentional, anti-patriarchal behavior.

Jesus' attributed identity seems to consist in his fatherless status, 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 in the status he saw himself occupying: the protector and defender of the honor of outcasts, like marginalized women and children, giving the homeless a fictive home. And finally, Jesus' optative identity, which consists in that status he wished he could occupy but from which he was debarred, seems to be a child of Abraham, child of God — that could be the reason why the fatherless Jesus called upon God as his father.

### END NOTES

[1] 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*.

[2] John Corbett (1983:312), 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'.

[3] See, *inter alia*, Blankenhorn (1995); Bach (1946:63-79); Grønseth (1957:97-114); Lynn & Sawrey (1959:258-262); Tiller (1957:115-137); Mitscherlich (1969); Tripp-Reimer & Wilson (1991:1-27); Stearns (1991:28-52); Marciano (1991:138-161); Adams, Milner & Schrepf (1984); Bowen & Orthner (1991:187-217); Jurich, White, White & Moody (1991:237-262); Herzog (1982:163-174); Angel & Angel (1993); Mott (1990:1-27).

[4] The University of Heidelberg organized, against the backdrop of the revolutionary student protests of the late sixties, a three-year seminar in the early seventies on the role of the father figure in Egypt, Greece, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Tellenbach acted as the editor of the seminar proceedings which were published in a book with the title *Das Vaterbild in Mythos und Geschichte*. Jan Assmann made the contribution with regard to Ancient Egypt; Lothar Perlitt with regard to the Old Testament; Hans-Georg Gadamer focused non Greek philosophy; Werner Lemke on Greek poetry; and Günther Bornkamm on the father figure in the New Testament.

[5] According to Tellenbach (1976:7), the Oedipal 'Phase des Vaterprotestes in der Vorgeschichte so gut wie immer fehlte.'

[6] Fiensy (1991:135) refers to the work of, *inter alia*, Harper (1928:106).

[7] 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 & Hoover (1997:102-103).

[8] See, *inter alia*, Sirach 1:25-27; 6:37; 15:1; 19:20; 24:23; 33:2-3 and Baruch 4:1.

[9] See, *inter alia*, Ben-Sirach 24:8-2 and Wisdom of Solomon 10:1-21.

[10] 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. Thus, 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) daughters (Gen 29:10); Amram, Moses' father, married his father's sister (his aunt) (Ex 6:20; Num 26:57-59). Because married women were completely embedded in the structures which determined their husbands' honor and shame, 'sexual hospitality' characterized the patriarch-immigrant period. Women were 'offered' to others for the sake of the attainment of higher social status and economic advantage. Thus, for instance, Abraham offered Sarai to the Pharaoh for the sake of economic advantage (Gen 12:14-16). Lot offered his daughters, in the presence of his future sons-in-law, to the men of Sodom for the sake of the honor of his guests (Gen 19:6-9). The eldest and youngest daughters of Lot's children (according to legend the ancestors of, respectively, the Moabites and Ammonites) were sired by Lot himself (Gen 19:31-38). Abraham offered Sarai, his father's daughter, in order words, his half-sister, to whom he was married (Gen 20:12), to king Abimelech of Gerar for the sake of privilege in a new country (Gen 20:1-18). Jacob was prepared to overlook the rape of Dinah, his daughter with Leah, by Shechem, although Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, did not leave it unavenged (Gen 34:30-31; 49:5-7). But, on the other hand, Reuben dishonored his father Jacob (Israel) by committing incest with Bilhah, Jacob's slave wife (Gen 35:21-22; 49:3-4). In this period polygamy was customary. In this regard, we read, *inter alia*, about Abraham (Gen 16:1-4; 25:1-6), Isaac (Gen 24:67), Esau (Gen 20:34; 28:9) and Jacob (Gen 29:21; 30:12) who were married to more than one wife. In the pre-

exilic monarchical period, the *reconciliatory* strategy merges into the *aggressive* one. The story of Shechem's rape of Dinah, which was avenged by her brothers, is already an indication of this new marriage strategy. In terms of this strategy, the father attempted, in as far as limitations on incest allowed for it, to choose for his daughters spouses who formed part of the 'family of orientation'. In this way the collective family honor was strengthened. The father's sons, in turn, were, in view of patrilocal custom, encouraged to marry women who were not related to the family. Viewed in this way marriages, therefore, formed part of a competitive (agonistic) society in which the heads of families aggressively attempted to attain greater geopolitical power at the cost of outsiders. This strategy presupposed polygamy and the ruthless authority of the head over his family. In this regard, one read about king David (see 1 Sam 25:39-43; 27:3; 2 Sam 3:2-5) and, especially, about king Solomon (see 1 Ki 11:1-5). Having too many wives from unrelated tribes ('families of orientation'), however, resulted in conflicting interests. The stories about, among others, Solomon (1 Ki 11:1-3), Rehoboam (1 Ki 14:21-24) and Asa (1 Ki 15:11-14; 22:46) are germane in this regard. 'Sexual hospitality' was, during this period, seen as an assault on the honor of the man, as the married woman as well as unmarried daughters were inextricably part of the domain of the man. Adultery was therefore viewed as a serious offence against the authority of another man. The seduction or rape of an unmarried girl no longer resulted in her henceforth belonging to the violator. Only the father could decide this (Deut 22:23-27), and the brothers would certainly take revenge (Gen 34:30-31). Divorce could be arranged on the basis of an agreement between men. According to Deut 24:1, a divorce could be granted, which would decree that a man had lost his rights over his previous spouse. He therefore could not take her back if she wanted to get married again. Only men had legal personality. Widows and unmarried divorcees could, however, like men enter into juridical agreements. 'Sexual hospitality' was prohibited (Deut 24:4), something also related to the objections of the prophets to Temple prostitution (Hos 4:14-19; Jer 5:7-9; Esek 16:22).

11 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).

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