



The aqueduct at Caesarea Maritima

“The city itself was called Caesarea, and is beautiful in both materials and construction. In addition, he also built a theater of stone in it. And on the south side of the harbor, further back, an amphitheater sufficient to seat a large crowd of people and conveniently located with a view of the sea” (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.340–41). The aqueduct at Caesarea was important for supplying the freshwater needs of the city. A first-century aqueduct was constructed under Herod, and this additional aqueduct was built during the reign of the Roman emperor Hadrian. (Photo by Douglas E. Oakman)

CHAPTER 1

Catching the Drift

Introduction to the Social System of Roman Palestine

<i>Key</i>	agrarian society	honor	norms
<i>Terms</i>	anachronism	institution	peasant
	cultural system	Israelite	shame
	domain	Judean	values
	ethnocentrism	model	
<hr/>			
<i>Chapter</i>	Growing Awareness of the Biblical Social World / 3		
<i>Outline</i>	Developing More Adequate Scenarios / 6		
	Addressing Critiques / 14		
	Applying the Perspectives / 17		
	Suggested Reading / 17		

A model is an outline framework, in general terms, of the characteristics of a class of things or phenomena. This framework sets out the major components involved and indicates their priority of importance. It provides guidelines on how these components relate to one another. (Carney 1975:7)

If the purpose of generalization is to simplify one's view of a complex reality and thereby to make it more comprehensible, this can, of course, be done only at the cost of ignoring certain specific elements in the phenomena about which generalizations are being developed. (Kautsky 1982:xii)

The Bible has been a familiar book in American life, although growing biblical illiteracy is making it less so these days. Its stories and metaphors still remain fundamental to knowledgeable discourse within our society. But while we may have been raised from childhood on the birth stories of Jesus or

sayings from the Sermon on the Mount, the very familiarity of these texts may instill in us a misleading sense of identification with the Bible's characters and situations.

In the scholarly world, it is common knowledge that a number of serious obstacles stand in the way of our understanding the

Bible. Some of these have been obvious for centuries. The fact that the New Testament was written in a foreign language, a form of Greek known as *koine* (common), has been addressed since the early centuries of the Christian era. Even before Jerome translated the Vulgate (the whole Bible in Latin) in the fourth century, New Testament books had been translated into Coptic (an Egyptian language highly influenced by Greek), Syriac (a Semitic language related to Hebrew and Aramaic), and an earlier Latin version.

While learning the biblical languages is fundamental, however, it is far from the only interpretative barrier to an informed reading of the text. The further one stands from the original situation of a document, the more discipline one needs to bridge the gaps. The rise of modern exegetical methods may baffle, enrage, or appear irrelevant to the beginning student; but they have developed, especially since the European Enlightenment (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), as systematic approaches addressing the gaps between the situations of modern readers and those of the ancient documents.

Research Tip 1

Access our accompanying Web site for this volume at:

www.fortresspress.com/hansonoakman

There you will find additional maps, photos, chronologies, ancient documents, and Web links that complement each chapter.

We study history to help account for the distances in time and historical experience. Historical geography helps us imagine the physical world of the text: the terrain, rainfall, vegetation, natural resources, political boundaries. Archaeology helps to place the Bible within a real material context. A whole range of literary disciplines examines both the shape of the present text (for example, narrative and poetic forms) and its development through oral and written processes: tradition history, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism, literary criticism.

While all of these methods of study are important, it is fundamental to recognize that the biblical texts convey meanings derived through a specific culture and particular social arrangements. For the most part, ancient documents refer to their contemporary social systems only indirectly. They assume that their readers share their world and know what they mean by **patron** [3.40], what sort of taxation is in effect, or how a certain **faction** [3.19] fits into the social matrix. Our difficulty as modern Western readers is to relate meaningfully to documents that are the products of a radically different world in terms of **institutions** [3.30] and **values** [3.56]. We do not share important social understandings with the writers of these texts. Because our social and cultural experiences do not match those of the biblical authors, we can be seriously misled about what they mean (Malina and Rohrbaugh 2003:6–8).

Growing Awareness of the Biblical Social World

While the social sciences have their roots in the nineteenth century, it was not until the twentieth century that they began to emerge in the forms recognizable today: psychology, sociology, anthropology, and all their subdisciplines. It is macro- and systems sociology, together with anthropology, that inform us in this volume. The experiential gaps bridged by these disciplines have to do with culture and social institutions. Not only do we live in a different linguistic environment, historical period, and physical space, but we live in a substantially different social world. At the most obvious level, we live under a different form of government, and this affects our perspective significantly. Even the various forms of modern Judaism and Christianity are significantly different from the **movements** [3.36] that gave them birth in the first century. Industrial capitalism was unknown in ancient societies. But this barely scratches the surface of differences between modern U.S. culture and first-century Palestine.

1. Most of us have never encountered some of the most common first-century Palestinian social institutions, for example, patronage/clientage, household slavery, a resident foreign army. And conversely, first-century Palestinians would not share some of our most common institutional experiences, for example, voting, public education, free choice of spouses and careers. The challenge, then, is to imagine ourselves “into” the world of the people we encounter in the New Testament. This requires conceptualizing

scenarios—ways of acting, thinking, valuing, perceiving, and structuring the world—appropriate to their life-world.

2. First-century social institutions were configured and related in ways different from our own. In U.S. society, **religion** [3.48] and **economics** [3.13] are explicit **domains** [3.11] (groups of institutions), while in Palestine, indeed, most of the ancient world, religious and economic institutions were embedded in **kinship** [3.31] or **politics** [3.42]. By embedded we mean that they did not exist substantially apart from the larger domains. They were conceived and they operated as particular manifestations and subsets of political and kinship institutions. Kinship relations interpenetrated political, economic, and religious institutions; **power** [3.44] relations structured village, economic, and religious life.

To illustrate the last point, Herod the Great not only expanded the Jerusalem Temple Mount with tax monies, but built temples in **honor** [3.25] of Roman **emperors** [1.21] and gods. The emperor of Rome was not only supreme commander of the government and military *Princeps* (head man), but was *Pontifex Maximus* (highest “priest”) of Roman religion and posthumously voted divine **status** [3.53] by the **Senate** [1.73]. Successive political rulers of Palestine—Macedonians, Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Romans—appointed the Jerusalem **high priests** [1.38]. And immediately before the Roman era, the **Hasmoneans** [1.34] ruled Judea as both **kings** [1.13] and high priests.

By contrast, one of the things that sets U.S. society apart from much of the rest of

the world (throughout history!) is our “separation of church and state”; this would have been incomprehensible to people of any religious **group** [3.23] in the ancient Mediterranean. The United States Constitution guarantees that Congress shall not institute a state religion, support any religion with taxes, or prohibit the practice of religion. Because social institutions are interactive, this right (and the laws, regulations, and public policies that enact it) has been a matter of bitter contention within government and the courts throughout U.S. history, for example, in cases involving school prayer, nativity scenes on public property, state support for parochial schools, and Native American use of peyote in religious rites.

In the United States, education as a whole is regulated by the government: the federal Department of Education, the state departments of education, and local elected school boards. But actual schools may be specifically run in any of the four major social domains (family, politics, economy, religion). The majority of K–12 schools are operated by local political bodies—local boards of education, which may be connected to a township, city, or county. But schools may also function as an arm of a religious group—“parochial schools.” They may also be run in the economic domain by a private corporation or individual—“proprietary schools,” including “virtual” schools online. And children may be educated by their parents or a surrogate in “home schools,” a rising phenomenon in the United States since the 1980s.

3. The values-orientation in U.S. society is quite different from first-century Palestine.

One can determine a society’s foundational values by asking what criterion of decision-making comes up most often, what dominates the value-vocabulary, and what is threatened the most if it is lost. In the ancient Mediterranean as a whole, and Palestine in particular, scholars have focused upon the “honor/shame complex” as the base values (Peristiany 1965; Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 1992; Gilmore 1987; and Malina 2001a:27–57). Briefly, the honor/shame complex implies that the maintenance of honor—for one’s self, one’s family, and one’s larger groups—is absolutely vital to life. This entails reputation, status, and sexual identity. The vocabulary of honor and **shame** [3.50] is extensive in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.

In U.S. society it would be hard to place anything in the culture higher than economics. This does not mean that everyone in the society is a “money-grubber.” But it does mean that economics is taken as a fundamental determinant in almost all social transactions, and our metaphors are dominated by economic references. A few examples will make the point:

- One of our most prevalent American phrases is “the bottom line”; referring literally to the final accounting total, it is used metaphorically to mean any central point or conclusion.
- Quality is often assessed in terms of cost: a house, a car, an education, a vacation.
- The most powerful committees in Congress are arguably the finance and budget committees.

- People often leave family, church, and friends to pursue better-paying jobs.
- Couples postpone marriage, and churches do not pursue ministries if they “can’t afford it.”
- A person’s public status correlates closely with his or her income and assets; actors and athletes are given multimillion dollar contracts, while teachers are often laid off when school boards cannot even meet their very basic salaries.

4. The relationship of the individual to the group is significantly different in modern U.S. culture from that in the ancient Mediterranean. U. S. culture places an extraordinarily high value on the individual in a variety of ways (**weak-group orientation** [3.57]). Individual rights are held as not only constitutional, but sacred. Individualism, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, personal identity, self-determination, and autonomy are all highly valued, discussed, and sought after (note the magazine *Self*). Americans may act loyally, but we expect and exercise a high degree of freedom and liberty in our actions and associations. Workers change careers an average of five to seven times during a lifetime. We have a high divorce rate: approximately 45 percent of **marriages** [3.34] end in divorce. A typical Protestant congregation or parish is composed of members who grew up in different denominations. The American ideal is to attend college away from home and move out of one’s parents’ home. And we are highly mobile in terms of our housing, moving often both within a city and around the country to find employment

or a suitable climate for retirement.

In **agrarian societies** [3.1] like that of ancient Palestine, the needs of the group take precedence (**strong-group orientation** [3.54]). Loyalty to family, clan, village, political faction, and religious group is fundamental. The integrity of the group is more important than self-reliance. This entails a highly limited degree of either geographical or social mobility; poor but ambitious farmers do not eventually become wealthy merchants, and farmers from one village do not move to another because they can purchase more productive vineyards. This does not mean that **peasants** [3.41] do not know what an individual is, or that the individual has no importance; rather, the social weight is placed on the group over the individual. This is rooted not in totalitarianism or Orwellian “group-think,” but in survival; a peasant family or village cannot sustain itself if everyone “does their own thing.” The precariousness of life among peasant subsistence farmers cannot tolerate radical individualism. And the attachment to the family land prohibits treating it as a commodity: it is where their honor has been established, it is their basis for livelihood, and it is where their ancestors are buried.

Modern scholarly treatments of the Bible are not immune from these misunderstandings, and important scholarly works available today on the background to the Gospels have not taken the perspectives offered by the social sciences adequately into account. The contemporary reader requires theory-informed **models** [3.35] or scenarios for reading the Gospels and enhancing the reader’s

knowledge and understanding of how major social institutions referred to there worked. Models and scenarios, as special glasses, help us to compensate for our own “inexperience” in the biblical world.

Developing More Adequate Scenarios

Social institutions make the value concerns of a social group operational. They are “fixed ways of realizing values. . . . A social institution is like a set of railroad tracks of a specific width laid out in a given direction toward a specific end or goal” (Pilch and Malina 1998: xvii). Institutions are specific sets of social relationships (for example, families, **banking** [1.6], the army, churches) that are concrete, even though they may take on different forms. In the United States, for example, financial institutions are quite diverse while overlapping in function: federal and state banks, savings and loans, thrift and loans, mortgage companies, credit unions, annuity funds, investment groups, moneylenders, and “loan sharks.” In American life, the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) acts as a formal institution that functions to facilitate the interface of two other institutions, the school and the family.

Social institutions can be grouped at a higher level of abstraction into “domains,” or what Nolan and Lenski call “institutional systems” (2006). Sociology and anthropology identify four primary social domains: kinship, politics, economics, and religion (some additionally place education and law at this level). Each of these domains is usually

composed of several institutions. Once these domains take on concrete or specific form, they are identifiable as institutions; just as there is no such thing as “fruit” (an abstraction) apart from apples, oranges, pears, “kinship” does not exist apart from marriages and divorces, parent-children relationships, and **inheritance** [3.29] practices. These domains are not absolutely separate spheres of life; rather, they appear as different sets of institutions that may overlap or interact on an occasional or continual basis.

In the past century, the social sciences have centered around two major theoretical streams: structural functionalism and conflict theory. A *structural-functionalist approach* emphasizes the forms of a society, the functions its parts play, and assumes that the society seeks equilibrium among its different parts and groups. The goal is to understand why the social structures and relationships work the way they do and how each part contributes to the efficient working of the whole. Structural functionalism is part of the philosophical tradition of idealism. The major drawback of this approach is that it tends to accept social inequities and the domination of one group over others simply as “givens.”

In many ways, the society in which Jesus lived was structurally dysfunctional, since it gave inordinate power and privilege to a very few. A *conflict approach*, therefore, attends to the tensions between social factions, institutions, and subcultures that are the product of power relations in which one group seeks to dominate, control, manipulate, or subdue the others for its own advantage.

	Functionalist	Conflict
1. <i>Interests perceived as</i>	Uniting	Dividing
2. <i>Social relations viewed as</i>	Mutually advantageous	Exploitative
3. <i>Social unity achieved by</i>	Consensus	Coercion
4. <i>Definition of society</i>	System with needs	Stage for class struggle
5. <i>Nature of humanity</i>	Requires restraining institutions	Institutions distort basic human nature
6. <i>Inequality viewed as</i>	Social necessity	Unnecessary, promotes conflict
7. <i>The State</i>	Promotes common good	Instrument of oppression
8. <i>Social class</i>	Heuristic concept	Objective social groups with different interests

Figure 1.1 A Comparison of Structural-Functionalist and Conflict Approaches

Conflict theory seeks to understand who benefits from the social structures and how conflict is managed: “lumping it,” avoidance, coercion, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or adjudication. This approach is identified closely with the materialist tradition, mindful that adaptive and economic pressures have shaped social relations. (Figure 1.1 is from Sanders 1977:9, based on work of A. E. Havens.)

The principal theoretical frameworks we employ are macrosociology (which focuses upon the major types of societies in terms of their primary modes of subsistence; Nolan and Lenski 2006); systems sociology, as represented in the work of Talcott Parsons and others (Parsons 1966, 1971, 1978; Bellah 1970; Turner and Beeghley 1974); and cultural anthropology (which focuses upon values and institutions; Keesing 1975; Gilmore 1987; Malina 2001a). First-century Palestine was an advanced agrarian society, and

only kinship and politics were explicit social domains. Economics, religion, and education were all “embedded” in kinship or politics.

The narrower foci of our social-scientific research will be Mediterranean culture and peasant studies and, more specifically, Palestinian society. Besides being an advanced agrarian society, first-century Palestine was shaped by several dominant forces: the Israelite tradition (linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage), the Roman Empire (political control), and **Hellenism** [1.36] (the pervasive cultural influence over the whole Mediterranean and Middle East).

We also take a comparative approach to be not only helpful but essential, since ancient social information is incomplete and social interpretation depends so heavily upon social type and context. Our work attempts to build upon analogies and comparisons to other cultures and societies in order to operate from the known to the unknown. These parallels will

derive predominantly from “Third World” (or better: “Two-thirds World”) cultures. At various levels of abstraction, cultures that share common characteristics with ancient Palestine inform our understanding of its parts:

- advanced agrarian societies that employ horticulture, plow-farming, viticulture, herding, and fishing;
- societies that are composed predominantly of peasant populations;
- societies that include household slaves but are not “slave economies”;
- societies that have clearly demarcated social hierarchies set within aristocratic empires; and
- honor/shame societies.

The closer the analogies to Palestine in terms of time and space, the fewer cultural hurdles one needs to account for; but more distant parallels can also be of use as a result of their common characteristics. For example, sheep and goat herding may play different roles in different cultures, but the animals nonetheless pose similar challenges and requirements, whether in twenty-first-century Kenya or first-century Galilee—they have to be grazed, milked, protected, medically attended, sheared, bred, and exchanged (bought and sold or bartered); they are vulnerable to disease, theft, predation, and wandering. Particular techniques for dealing with these issues may vary, and comparisons are not only informative but vital.

The use of explicit models is vital to a social-scientific approach. This means articulating a clear configuration of how a social

structure or institution fits together, what its dynamics entail, where the conflicts lie, and who benefits from it. The alternative to employing an explicit model is not working without presuppositions, but employing an implicit model. The goal of modeling is not to force data into a preconceived mold or pigeonhole. Rather, it presents a hypothesis of a meaningful configuration of the known data and the presentation of a believable scenario for human relationships. The idea is to account for the available data, not dispense with data that does not conform to a preconceived model. It also facilitates proposals to account for missing data. As new or non-conforming data come to light, the model may need to be adjusted, modified, or completely replaced. One must not become so wedded to a particular model that the maintenance of the model takes precedence over the data. Rather, one should work back and forth from data to model and back to data (Malina 1991b).

This book employs two major types of diagrams: (1) systems models that indicate how elements of an institution work or show relations of structural components, and (2) tabular charts that break out components of an institution to highlight their function or composition. Diagrams and models are deployed in chapters as needed, though more general comparative considerations are raised initially in each chapter’s “Models” section.

While the social sciences predominate in our methodology, we are also aware that other methods must be taken into account. Since we deal with real life-worlds, history, archaeology, and historical geography come

The Mustard Seed

The disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us what the Reign of Heaven is like.” He said to them, “It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a large plant and becomes shelter for birds of the sky.” (Gos. Thom. 20)

into play. Since we deal with texts that have emerged from oral tradition and have gone through a variety of literary processes, questions of tradition history, source, form, and redaction must also be attended to. Our concern, however, is not to focus primarily on literary history or the editorial perspectives of the evangelists, but on the social situation of Palestinian peasant life confronted by Jesus and the earliest groups of his followers.

We work with a number of critical hypotheses about the relationship between Jesus and the Gospels: Jesus died around 30 C.E., during the prefecture (**prefect** [1.61]) of Pontius Pilate (26–36 C.E.). Paul’s letters were composed in the 50s C.E. Collections of Jesus material began to be made before the earliest gospel, with at least a first edition of **Q** [2.14] (a collection of Jesus’ sayings used by Matthew and Luke) by 50 C.E. A strong scholarly consensus sees the first three New Testament Gospels, called “Synoptics” because of their similar presentation of the story of Jesus, as interdependent narratives.

Mark was written during or immediately after the **First Judean Revolt** [1.28] (66–70 C.E.). Sometime between 75 and 90 C.E., Mark was being used as one of the two major sources, along with **Q**, in the composition of Matthew and Luke. John, appearing after 90 C.E., formulates the latest Jesus traditions

within the New Testament. Another gospel outside of the New Testament requires mention. The **Gospel of Thomas** [2.5] (discovered in 1945 at **Nag Hammadi** [2.9], Egypt) is a fourth-century Coptic document emphasizing esoteric knowledge as the way to salvation. *Thomas*, however, likely originated out of first-century traditions: three Greek fragments of *Thomas* exist from early in third-century Egypt. Since the *Thomas* tradition originally came from Syria, time had to elapse for the tradition to migrate to Egypt. This puts the gospel’s origins back before 200 C.E. Linkage to “Judah the Twin” (Judas Didymus Thomas) and similarity in genre and content to **Q** suggest an origin in second- or late first-century Syria. *Thomas* is comprised of Jesus’ sayings, very much like those of **Q**, although the form of individual sayings and the order of sayings differ substantially (which speaks against direct borrowing from the completed Synoptics). Further, words of the historical Jesus occasionally seem more accurately preserved in *Thomas* (for example, *Gos. Thom. 20*). Therefore, modern social and historical assessments of Jesus have taken the *Thomas* tradition quite seriously (see Patterson 1993).

Besides these Gospels, we draw where appropriate or necessary from the **Old** [2.10] and New Testaments, the **Dead Sea**

Scrolls [2.3], the **Apocrypha** [2.1] and **Pseudepigrapha** [2.13], Egyptian papyri, the works of **Josephus** [2.7] and **Philo of Alexandria** [2.12], the **Mishnah** [2.8], the **Talmuds** [2.18] of Palestine and Babylon, and various Roman writers. Many of these writings are available in English translation (consult *glossary 2: "Ancient Documents, Collections, and Authors,"* and *bibliography 1: "Ancient Documents"*).

Aspects of the issues we discuss are still highly debated by scholars. For instance, contemporary scholarship has not reached substantial agreement on where authentic Jesus material lies within the Gospels or how to identify first-century material within the voluminous traditions from the **rabbis** [1.68]. Only within the past few decades have refined methods of tradition criticism emerged that will perhaps allow greater consensus. A number of recent books on the Jesus traditions have offered careful and detailed analyses of that material (for example, Crossan 1991; Kloppenborg 2000). Such work is extremely important.

Fortunately, we do not always have to decide exactly whether a tradition is "authentic" or how it has assumed the written form we have. We situate discrete narratives and sayings about Jesus within broader social systemic or structural relations so that typical meanings dependent upon knowledge of institutional structures can be recovered. In our perspective, there is significant difference between elite meanings and non-elite meanings, and we examine the Jesus tradition consistently with reference to non-elite interests. Likewise, the rabbinic traditions present a

mostly idealized picture of the Jerusalem temple, and we have hazarded to use some of these where a harsher reality or less flattering picture comes through (as we shall discuss related to Hillel's *prosbol* or the sayings of rabbis regarding the high priestly families). These procedures depend upon two important conclusions: (1) **Scribes** [1.72] were embedded in elite interests that preserved both the Jesus and the rabbinic traditions. The formations of the biblical canons were the product of power **elites** [3.14] in both Judean and later Christian communities (Coote and Coote 1990). The Gospels do not obscure the perspectives and concerns of disaffected elites and non-elites. The ministry of Jesus in Galilee took place almost entirely in villages and the countryside among the peasants: farmers, fishers, **artisans** [3.3], and day laborers. His activity involved a serious critique of the "powers that be," a fact that is central, not peripheral, to the tradition. (2) Historians focus on dissonant elements in tradition as clues to historical reconstruction (since later communities tend to idealize their own origins). In the future, a more comprehensive social analysis of both scribal traditions needs to be undertaken (see Horsley 2007). For the present, our approach requires some simplifications and compromises if our study of institutions is to stay within a reasonable compass.

Scholars have worked diligently over the past three centuries to date, locate, and interpret all of these ancient documents. But often the continuities and connections of these documents' life-worlds in terms of cultural practices and social structures have

been overlooked. While historians have often focused upon the fine nuances of difference between Judea and Galilee—or even between upper and lower Galilee—they have generally been less interested in seeing the unities at a higher level of abstraction. By comparison, one could reasonably focus on the many differences between Canadian and U.S. societies. The political form of Canadian government is parliamentary, while the United States employs a bicameral Congress; but at a higher level of abstraction, both are constitutional

democracies. In anthropological terms, these two countries share a great deal in the way of language, cultural heritage, geography, education, law, religion, kinship patterns, communication, literature, and so forth. It all depends upon what level of abstraction one focuses on. A balance must be maintained between the general and the particular, between the typical and the unique. In social-scientific perspective, our primary focus will be on the typical and general in its application to understanding the particular and unique.

The Terms Judean and Israelite

It is common to read in translations of the Bible as well as in the scholarly literature the term Jew where we have employed Judean. This does not derive from some prejudicial inclination to take something away from the historical Jewish community, but from an interest in being more precise when discussing the first-century scene. The issues are not, however, unambiguous or without problems.

When comparing the Old Testament, writings of Josephus, New Testament, Philo, and others, one can see that context is everything. What was originally the kingdom of Judah was renamed Yehud as a Persian province. The Romans could refer to the geographical region as Palestina, and to all the inhabitants as Judeans. But they would also use the term Judean for ethnic Judeans living in Greece, Italy, or Egypt. This is analogous to other ethnic designations. Inside the various regions of greater Palestine, a writer might distinguish a Judean from a Galilean. But in referring to all those with allegiance to the state religion in Jerusalem, they would often use the more encompassing term Israelite (for example, John 1:47; Acts 2:22). Israelite is also the most common term in the Mishnah.

As Louis H. Feldman, renowned Josephus scholar at Yeshiva University, notes in his translation and commentary of Josephus's Antiquities: "I normally translate the Greek term Ioudaios as 'Judean' rather than the more customary 'Jew/Jewish,' on the model of other ethnic designations (Egyptian, Babylonian, Athenian, etc.) of the period" (2000:xiii). It is on this basis that we use the terms Israelite and Judean in this book rather than Jew.

In addition to Feldman, for the complexity of the historical and linguistic issues, see Schwartz (2005), John H. Elliott (2007), and Mason (2007); but see also Cohen (1999) and Marquis (2007).

A summary of some of the attributes of Palestinian society with which we will deal may help orient the reader to its cultural context (see also the glossaries):

- Foundational values complex: honor/shame orientation
- **Patriarchal** [3.39]: elder males' domination of public life
- **Gender divided** [3.21] in terms of **roles** [3.49] and social space
- Kinship patterns: patrilineal, patrilocal, endogamous, and complex **dowry-giving** [3.12]
- Group orientation: strong-group rather than weak-group
- Domination of cities over villages
- Government: **imperial province** [1.40] of Roman Empire combined with **client-aristocracy** [3.8]
- Patronage/clientage as a powerful mechanism in vertical social relationships
- Advanced agrarian subsistence: plow-farming, viticulture, herding, horticulture, fishing
- Economy: tributary economy in which "surplus" is consumed by a distant, elite minority
- Peasants: formed vast majority of population but were dominated by urban elites
- Life expectancy: approximately twenty years for live births and approximately forty years for those who lived past five
- Religion: centrally regulated by the state, hierarchical, and focused on sacrifice and communal ritual
- Time orientation: taking cultural cues

from the tradition rather than merely present needs or anticipation of future exigencies

- Literacy: highly limited; culture passed on predominantly orally

The society of Roman Palestine was not static during this period. It is important to appreciate that institutions were sustained and contested by human agency as well as shaped by tradition and material factors and concerns. A systems model can illustrate major elements shaping all social institutions in the Palestine of Jesus as in figure 1.2.

This model provides an overview of the way Palestinian society in the time of Jesus was structured (see John H. Elliott 1993:64–65), attempts to overcome the problems of anachronistic **ethnocentrism** [3.16] identified above, and indicates why this book assumes the form and structure it has. The graphical aids and detailed discussions of the following chapters elaborate the general perspective offered here.

The *social system* is the general domain of human social institutions. The arrows in the diagram indicate how other factors condition the system; arrows in both directions indicate reciprocal influence. For Palestine in the time of Jesus, and Mediterranean culture generally, kinship institutions conditioned politics; both in turn conditioned (and are conditioned by) religion and economy. Elite families controlled society, which they tended to view as part of their "household." Caesar's "family" (clients, slaves) helped him to administer the far-flung Roman Empire. Education and religion were conducted

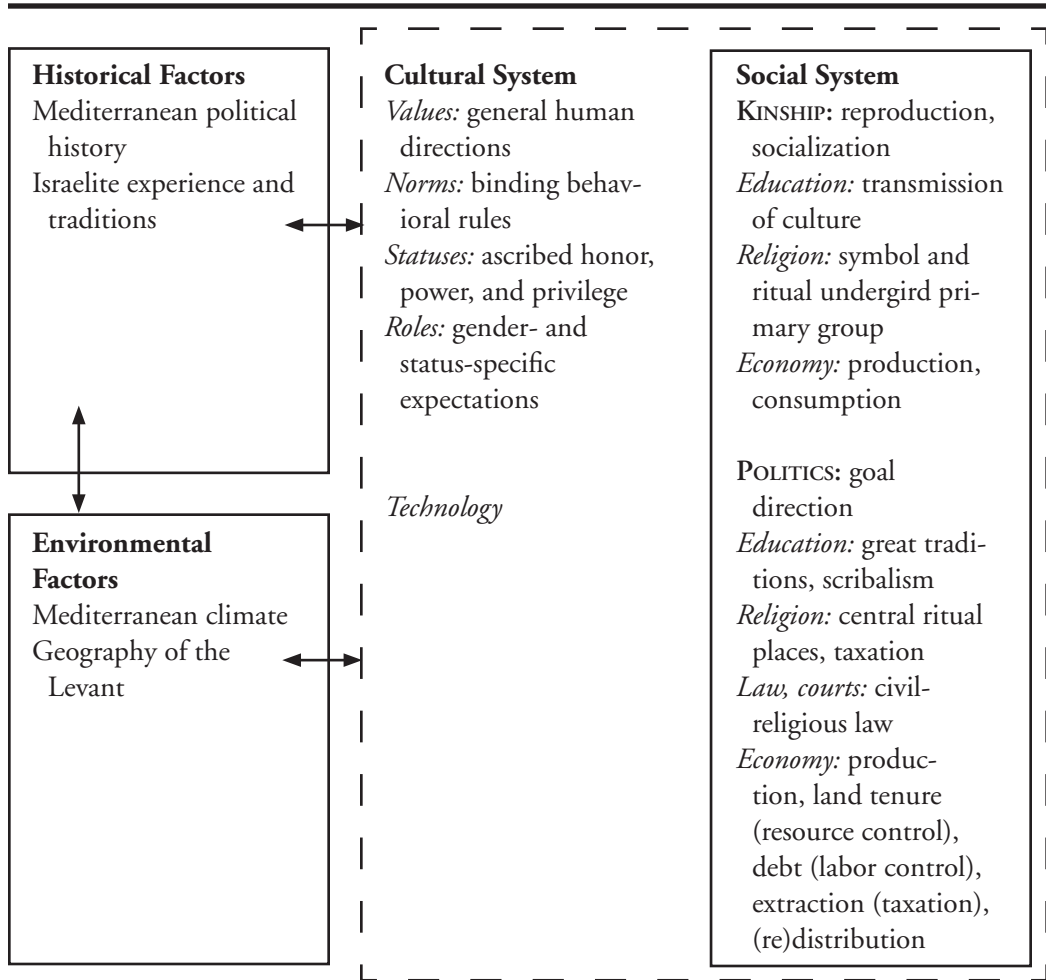


Figure 1.2. A General Model for First-Century Palestinian Society

The social system makes values, norms, and roles of the culture operational. In ancient Palestine, kinship provided the basis for all other institutions.

within both familial and political contexts. Domestic education and religion helped in the socializing of children and the transmission of culture. Domestic economy was concerned with provisioning the household, and its basic goal was consumption.

Political religion, evident in the Jerusalem temple, enforced loyalty to the deity and the

payment of taxes (“offerings”) through divine law (**ideology** [3.27]) or group pressure. Political education, carried on by organized schools of scribes, led to the authoritative accounts of social arrangements. Scribes also concerned themselves with law. Judean civil law had divine sanction through Moses and affected the operation of the law courts.

The Jesus Movement and Christianity

Just as we distinguish between Judean state religion (organized around the temple and sacrifices, led by priests) and later rabbinic Judaism (organized around the synagogue and the interpretation of the rabbis, codified in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud), it is also appropriate to distinguish between the Jesus movement and later Christianity. The movement led by Jesus and his earliest followers was focused on the renewal of Israel under the key phrase “the reign of God.” It was solely focused on ethnic Judeans, primarily in Galilee, and one of the earliest designations for the movement seems to be “the Way” (as in Acts 19:23). Christianity is the world religion that developed in the late first century and early second century, spreading throughout Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, and then the world. It includes the later doctrines of the Trinity, the creeds, the sacraments, and the New Testament canon. The term Christianos (Christian) is used three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16), each time evidently as a derisive term by outsiders. See John H. Elliott (2007).

However, at the time of Jesus, Hellenistic-Roman law also affected the lives of peasants. Political economy, managed by political kin, was concerned with what was produced, and its major goal was to control the distribution of what was produced.

Culture represents the accumulated symbolic social information necessary for the structuring and directing of the social system. The *culture* box is displayed with a dotted line because culture is borne within the social system by its transmission within the family or political society.

No social system is static, but all societies are conditioned by *historical factors*. For first-century Judea, Israelite experience and traditions were formative of the basic culture, especially of a strong sense of historical purpose (consider the eschatology of apocalyptic Judean writings). Political history, too, played an important role: in Jesus’ day, **Judeans** [1.43] had lived under foreign rul-

ers for almost six hundred years. Technology, like tools, pottery, clothing, weapons, influenced the social system in terms of productive capacity or limiting the extent to which power could be projected at a distance.

Social scientists debate the role of ecological adaptation in the formation of human culture and social institutions. Without resolving that debate, it is important to recognize that *environmental factors* like climate and geography affect both culture and social institutions. For example, environmental adaptation in the rugged and climatically challenging eastern Mediterranean world has led to the prevalence of strong-group orientation there.

Addressing Critiques

In this revised edition of *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, we have been mindful of critical reviews and communications about various

aspects of the book. We appreciate that other scholars took the time to read the book and offer constructive criticisms. Perhaps the following remarks will not persuade all, but we will at least give a response.

Harold Hoehner and several others (private communications) have been concerned that the word “Palestine” is used anachronistically, since the Romans did not designate the area *Palaestina Secunda* until Hadrian’s time in the second century, and that this usage obscures reference to the area as Judea. This is a fair criticism, but it fails in a number of respects.

The authors of this volume are extremely mindful of the difficulties around a number of emic/etic designations, for example, Judea/Palestine or Judean/Jew (see sidebar on p. 11). In this case, we needed to place emphasis on the etic, macroeconomic realities of a first-century region (the Roman Empire), as well as to characterize social-systemic realities pertaining to all areas. The more general term *Palestine* covers the whole area from the Negeb to Upper Galilee.

Even the emic (first-century) designations are not unambiguous. Ancient or emic usage of the word “Palestine,” more as a regional indicator than designation of political/administrative units, goes back to the fifth century B.C.E.: Herodotus, *Histories* 1.105; 2.104, 106; 3.5; 7.89; Ovid in several works (Augustan period); Mela de *Chorographia* 1.63 (c. 40 C.E.); Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 5.66 (before 79 C.E.); and even Josephus, *Ant.* 1.145; 8.260; *Ag. Ap.* 1.168–71 (Flavian period):

Nor, again, has our country been ignored even by Herodotus of Halicarnassus, who has an evident, if not explicit, allusion to it. Speaking of the Colchians in his second book, he makes the following statement: “The Colchians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians are the only peoples with whom the practice of circumcision is primitive. The Phoenicians and the Syrians of Palestine admit that they learnt it from the Egyptians. The Syrians on the banks of the rivers Thermodon and Parthenius, and their neighbors the Macrones, say that they have adopted it recently from the Colchians. These are the only circumcised peoples in the world, and it is clear that they all imitate the Egyptians. Of the two countries of Egypt and Ethiopia, I cannot say which learned the practice from the other.” Herodotus thus says that the Palestinian Syrians were circumcised; but the Judeans are the only inhabitants of Palestine who adopt this practice. He must, therefore, have known this, and his allusion is to them. (LCL revised)

Of a similar nature are the difficulties around the words “Judean” and “Jew.” A number of contemporary scholars have insisted that “Judean” is the right translation of *Ioudaios* for our period, as a designation of the way of life in this particular geographic area (see sidebar on p. 11).

Further, Jonathan Reed (in his review in *RBL* 1999) felt that we had obscured differences between Galilee and Judea. We wanted, however, to indicate the political parallels between client rule in Galilee and priestly

rule in Judea, and to stress the fundamental similarities of elite and non-elite institutional arrangements in both contexts. Reed seems to want more historical discrimination, but this seems at a level of abstraction finer than we wanted to pursue.

Reed and Richard Demaris (in his *JBL* review) stated that we had overemphasized the Jerusalem temple as the locus of political religion and neglected either its positive features or features of non-elite religion. This is a just criticism until it is remembered that the Jerusalem temple was excoriated in the literature of Qumran and that the Talmud vividly recalls Pharisaic criticism of temple rituals. Moreover, we do investigate the political nature of non-elite religion as a response to this situation. And we read Jesus of Nazareth as active within the political force fields of the religion of the elites. In this edition, we have said a bit more about the synagogue, but we fail to see evidence that it was a dedicated “religious building” at this time (if ever in antiquity). The reader must keep in mind that this book’s systems perspectives highlight through successive chapters the political nature of economy and religion as nondiscrete domains.

Pieter Craffert (in private communication) asked in a similar vein: “Do you assume that what applies for Judea also applies for Galilee? One cannot deny that the temple was an important institution in Judea, but is it also the case for Galilee? I ask the question because in your chapter it is not always clear what you mean/refer to. I get the impression that you also alternate between Judea and Galilee and Palestine in order not to ascribe

everything to Galilee on an equal base with Judea. Is this the case?” Certainly this is a fair question. Two notions immediately come to mind: Jesus’ conflict with the Pharisees, which we take to belong to his context as a conflict with temple-adherents (see below, p. 138), and the question about the temple tax (Matt 17:26). Part of the conflict in Roman Palestine, which the Romans probably happily encouraged under a prevalent divide and conquer (*divide et impera*) policy, was that between the Herods/Herodians and priests/Pharisees.

Mary Ann Sawicki (two reviews in *RSR* as well as in remarks in *Crossing Galilee*) is highly critical of our methodology. She thinks that we not only draw upon “outdated” social theory, but make a fundamental mistake in identifying “first-century Palestine as a ‘Mediterranean’ society with an ‘honor-shame’ ethos.” The reader will have to decide whether this is a fundamental methodological flaw, in light of her book and the voluminous scholarship on honor and shame. She also mentions errors of historical fact but does not disclose where they are (234).

A number of these criticisms could be answered at great length. We still want our book, however, to remain within a manageable compass, in order best to serve the audiences envisioned. And we believe that theoretical modeling has helped us to get the emphases just right regarding the social structures and social conflicts of first-century Palestine.

Applying the Perspectives

1. What stands out for you as the largest cultural gap between your own experiences and those of a person from first-century Palestine? What steps are necessary to bridge that gap?

2. Do you agree or disagree with our point that economics plays a dominant role in U.S. values orientation? Provide reasons for your point of view. Can you think of specific indicators that would add to our list highlighting the centrality of economics in U.S. culture?

3. Identify ways in which U.S. culture is highly functional and highly dysfunctional. How would these differ from first-century Palestine?

4. If first-century Palestine was an advanced agrarian society, how would you characterize contemporary U.S. society? What are the distinguishing marks of this form of society? What are the most significant ways it differs from an advanced agrarian society?

5. What proportion of the U.S. population lives and works on farms? How does that compare with first-century Palestine? What difference does this make in the functioning of each society?

Suggested Reading

Our focus on institutions and social structure is distinctive. For perspectives on Mediterra-

nean culture similar to those of this book, compare Neyrey (1991), Malina (2001), Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003), Pilch and Malina (1998), Rohrbaugh (2007), Pilch (2008), and Oakman (2008). The reader will find Duling (2003) to be an excellent introduction to the New Testament, with highly developed sensitivities to its agrarian social world.

For useful accounts of the development of social-scientific criticism of the Bible, the reader should consult John H. Elliott (1993) and Osiek (1992). Elliott's book has a fairly comprehensive bibliography of contributions to 1993 in this area. For reading guides on the New Testament and social science issues, see Rohrbaugh (1996).

For a comparative approach to U.S. culture, see Stewart and Bennett (1991).

Many excellent Bible atlases are available for help in locating places mentioned in this book. We recommend especially Aharoni et al. (1993). For basic information regarding historical geography, consult Avi-Yonah (1977). For information on the general archaeology of Palestine, see Murphy-O'Connor (1992), Finegan (1992), Rousseau and Arav (1995), and Meyers (1997). For specific issues relating to Jesus and archaeology, see the articles in Charlesworth (2006b). And for an excellent social history of the Jesus movement in the first century, see Stegemann and Stegemann (1999).