Culture, Society, and Embedded Religion in Antiquity

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Abstract

After the concepts of "society," "culture," and the "embeddedness of religion" have been reviewed from the standpoint of the social sciences, religion's place in antiquity is considered in relationship to the Judean temple, ecclesia and synagogue, and the controverted terms "Jew" and "Christian." The meaning of religion, and the role it plays in human affairs, is argued to be fundamentally dependent upon its location in society or culture

This essay is about the place of religion in society as the question pertains to Jewish and Christian origins. Perhaps it will also make a small contribution, in the memorable phrase of Karl Polanyi (relative to another such social placement), "to enlarge our freedom of creative adjustment, and thereby improve our changes of survival" (1977: xliii). We can truly survive, indeed thrive, only if we do so together in mutual understanding and appreciation by recognizing the common challenges that face us all.

Culture and Society

Since the foundation of modern social science, the relationship between culture and society has been central within the discussion though extraordinarily difficult to define. The place of religion has also been difficult to characterize, though it clearly participates in both culture and society (Bellah 1970a, 1970b). Emile Durkheim essentially investigated the meaning of "society" in his great dissertation THE DIVISION OF LABOR IN SOCIETY. There, Durkheim explored through a study of law the organization of "collective consciousness" and its relative strength and weakness within societies based in mechanical or organic solidarity. For Durkheim, "society" is a shared mental reality. If this sharing is strong, and the social parts become interchangeable, as it were, then a society of mechanical solidarity is in view. If this sharing is weak, and the social parts are unique and interdependent, then a society of organic solidarity is in view:

> The [mechanical] solidarity that derives from similarities is at its *maximum* when the collective consciousness completely envelops our total consciousness, coinciding with it at every point. At that moment our individuality is zero. . . . [Organic] solidarity resembles that observed in the higher animals. In fact each organ has its own special characteristics and autonomy, yet the greater the unity of the organism, the more marked the individualisation of the parts. Using this analogy, we propose to call "organic" the solidarity that is due to the division of labour [1984: 84–85].

When Durkheim came to write his last great work, THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE, he focused on the collective representations of society. These "categories," Durkheim believed, make human life possible at all; they are assumptions about life (1995: 321). Durkheim here revises Kant in a social direction. Collective representations are created and sustained in periods of "collective effervescence," among the simpler social arrangements of Australian tribes usually at the time of periodic group rituals. Durkheim believed such rituals are a universal social phenomenon. The collective representations exist "outside" the heads of the participants, hence do not refer simply to uniformity of thought, feeling, and action.

"Collective consciousness" and "collective representations," then, seem to represent in Durkheim's terminology respectively society and culture. Society refers to uniformity of thought, feeling, and action; culture provides opportunities to

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confirm uniformity (which is usually what happens), but also the possibility of new actions coming out of new interpretations of the collective representations.

Max Weber also struggled with this society–culture distinction. His traditional and legal types of authority confirm the basic values and norms of social action; however, the charismatic type of authority helps us to understand when action might take new turns. Society is compounded of all kinds of interests and meanings involved with social action. The interests and meanings of the few may sometimes or often dominate the actions of the many:

> Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest. "From what" and "for what" one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, "could be" redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world [Weber 1958b: 280].

In Weber's great discussions of religion, the exemplary and emissary prophetic types often stand at the heart of religious innovation. In the former case, Gautama Siddhartha within Indian religion; in the latter case, Socrates within Greek tradition or Moses and Jesus within Israelite tradition. Each type, however, affects action in the world differently. The exemplary prophet, in an other-worldly mode, withdraws into contemplation or idealistic pursuits; the emissary prophet, committed to ascetic, inner-worldly action, effects disciplined action as a "tool" of the god. These charismatic figures undertake innovations, usually in periods of dramatic change or crisis, by drawing creatively upon the resources of their respective cultures (Weber 1958b: 285; 1978: 439–51).

From these classic social analyses of religion, it is likely that the term *religion* encompasses both cultural forms present in the collective representations (myth) and social practices formative of collective consciousness (ritual). These forms "ground" both society and culture, are constitutional, so that religion is present in varying degrees in both. Yet religion may both legitimate social order and call it into question. Religion is not simply or merely the reflex of interests, as Marx thought, but interacts with various interests pertaining to human reproduction, production, collective action, and social coordination. As both Durkheim and Weber saw, religion is that part of culture that "reflects" upon society, either confirming or disconfirming. Such preliminary theoretical reflections suggest that religion might be embedded sometimes more within social matrices (captive to powerful interests) and sometimes more within cultural matrices (freely interpreted).

Culture, then, is a reservoir of representations of society; society refers to the habits and institutions of behavior implementing culture. The two spheres overlap and interact, but are not identical. Religion stands within both as a constitutional element.

Embeddedness

Embedded journalists in the Iraqi war have given a striking illustration of the meaning of another central term in this discussion. Journalists have the obligation to ferret out the truth, and to report it fairly and accurately to the public. In the Iraqi war, however, journalists have been embedded within the ranks, and for strategic reasons denied the right to convey information about location, movement, or casualties. It would seem that the veracity of the old statement "truth is the first casualty of war" is affirmed in a new way, and the idea that truth can become subservient to power is illustrated in powerful fashion. These embedded reporters have illustrated what happens when important cultural forms, norms, and tasks are embedded in the sphere of military power—their ideal role and function is compromised and distorted. It may be that all of culture is so implicated, at least some or even most of the time.

The scholarly use of the notion of "embeddedness" seems to derive from Karl Polanyi. In attempting to account for why the ancients had no explicit concept of economy, Polanyi wrote, "The prime reason for the absence of any concept of the economy is the difficulty of identifying the economic process under conditions where it is embedded in noneconomic institutions" (1957: 71). Though applied originally to "embedded economy," embeddedness can help us to understand the relationship of other social spheres or domains. Religion, then, may be embedded within family, politics, or economics; and these can become embedded in religion as a cultural radical as well. Since religion inheres also in culture, the group's collective representations, it may support innovations in action within various social contexts (Oakman 1994: 220–51; 2001: 102–31; Hanson & Oakman).

Max Weber too was well aware of the interaction of religion with the various human "spheres" (family, economic, political, esthetic, erotic, intellectual). Along similar lines, Robert N. Bellah has analyzed Islam's historic relationships within the "dramatistic contexts" of world, polity, family, and self (Weber 1958a: 323–59; Bellah 1970c: 146–67).

The functioning of Mediterranean culture, society, and religion has been analyzed within certain constraints—especially core variables of honor and shame, strong-group orientation, agonistic intergroup relations, dyadic personality, and the like. These socio-cultural constraints seem to be a consequence of adaptive pressures within the historical–geographic situation of Mediterranean societies (common constraints that explain uniform cultural features at a high level of abstraction—Malina 2001). Recognizing these constraints is necessary to avoid anachronistic and ethnocentric interpretations. For instance, it is

anachronistic to use postindustrial economic experience to understand preindustrial agrarian economies; it is ethnocentric to expect to find individualism within group-oriented biblical texts.

Related to the problems of anachronism and ethnocentrism is the distinction between emic and etic terms. "Emic" terms incorporate the natives' point of view; "etic" terms represent the view of the outsider or the perspectives of comparative experience. Social models and theories must incorporate both emic and etic dimensions, but the emic take on significance as "data" only when "put into perspective" by models and theory.

Based on Polanyi's work, and incorporating also comparative insights of Gerhard Lenski (1984) and John Kautsky (1982), the general functioning of "embeddedness" in antiquity might be understood according to this simple model:

- Religion, politics, and economics embedded within elite interests can be predicted to serve organization and legitimation of a social system to benefit those elites. Order is the primary social goal and value. Religion is shaped significantly in the direction of what Weber called a "theodicy of good fortune," a justification of the status of the elite group. Order is seen as rooted in a natural or cosmic pattern, and expressed in impersonal arrangements of political economy. This situation is well described through a systems approach.

- Non-elite interests (including both declassed elites and non-elites) embedded within elite religion, politics, and economics will either adapt to suffering through religion (Weber's "theodicy of suffering") or attempt to access collective representations without elite authorization in order to resist and even overthrow that order. Finding meaning in suffering and seeking a reordering are primary social goals and values. Reordering is legitimated through an appeal to a higher religious court, and carried through in familistic or quasi-familistic arrangements. This situation is better understood through lenses of conflict theory.

The table at right suggests that a non-reductive approach, i.e., one that does not simply collapse the distinction of society and culture, requires consideration of how both have been imagined in the two major theoretical streams of modern social science. (The table is adapted from Sanders 1977: 9, based on work of A. Eugene Havens.)

It is important to keep the concerns of both systems and conflict approaches in play in the discussion. All of the foregoing theoretical considerations are now applied to several controverted issues pertaining to Jewish and Christian origins.

The Jerusalem Temple as System of Political Economy and Social Archetype

In the scholarship of Jewish and Christian origins today,

Torah and Temple (perhaps also Land), synagogue and "church" (assembly), and "Jew" and "Christian" are focal interests. Interrelated social institutions and cultural terms are in view; also important is that the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE led to a significant restructuring of the Pharisaic and Jesus movements as they emerged during the post-war situation respectively as Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. This whole area of discussion is bedeviled by analytical unclarities about culture, society, and embeddedness, as, for instance when Judaism and Christianity are thought of as groups merely divided over theology and sealed off from ethnic or political realities, or when synagogue, assembly, and Temple are seen as "purely religious" institutions.

The central status and role of the Jerusalem Temple within late-Israelite tradition stems in important respects from the Josianic Reform and Deuteronomy (Althann: 1016). It would seem that Josiah embraced Israelite religion as a bulwark of his kingdom (2 Kings 23). The centralization of the cult was an expression of the embedding of Israelite religion within the political interests of the late-Davidides (Deut 12:5). The Deuteronomists also achieved power through this reform (see, e.g., Deut 17:8).

In the post-exilic period, of course, Judahite priests of the family of Jedaia (Ezra 2:36) assumed status and power in the rebuilt Temple. The Temple took on a central political function under the Persian Empire, Hellenistic kingdoms, and early Roman Empire. Its economic requirements increased over the centuries. This can be seen not only in terms of the priestly dues, but also in terms of the sacrificial requirements of the Hasmonean and Herodian Temples.

	Systems Approach	Conflict Approach
Interests	Uniting	Dividing
Social relations	Advantageous	Exploitative
Social unity	Consensus	Coercion
Society	System with needs	Stage for class struggle
Human nature	Requires restraining institutions	Institutions distort human nature
Inequality	Social necessity	Promotes conflict, unnecessary
State	Promotes common	Instrument of oppression
Class	Heuristic device	Social groups with different interests

The priestly dues can be shown to have increased significantly in the post-exilic period. Not only is this clear from the growth of the temple tax from one-third shekel annually in Nehemiah's day (Neh 10:32) to one-half shekel annually in Josephus's time (ANTIQUITIES 18.312; Matt 17:24); it is also clear from the various dues inferred from priestly traditions. Schürer shows that sacrifices, regular dues, and irregular dues became quite onerous (1979: 257–74). The Priestly Code of

the Pentateuch connected sins with sacrificial obligations or vows, so that moral sins became material debts (Belo 1981: 39, 44, 47, 56). The resulting Temple sacrificial system itself organized the production of Judea and depended even on neighboring regions (Oakman 1993b: 259–60). Diaspora Judeans also sent their temple taxes on a regular basis, but the Qumran group (at least according to 4Q159) resisted annual payment. The Temple was therefore a center of taxation, illustrating religion embedded in political economy (Hanson & Oakman: 139–53).

In the mind of priestly elites and most Judean villagers, the Temple held not only enormous prestige but also numinous awe. Not only was the Herodian temple physically imposing, but it represented in physical construction and ritual activity the entire cosmos. The vestments of the high priest were bejewelled and adorned with colors that literally mapped the world. For the cosmic symbolism of the Solomonic Temple, see Meyers: 359–60; for the cosmic significance of priestly vestments, Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 3.179.

Despite this powerful history and magic, the "central place" of the Jerusalem Temple and its controlling priests was not accepted without demur. In the late Hellenistic period, the Tobiad family usurped the high priest's role in respect to direct taxation (Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 12.161, 178). In the struggles around Hellenization, Onias IV founded an Egyptian Temple of Yahweh (Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 13.63). And, of course, the Samaritans and the Qumran group challenged Judean supremacy.

Synagogue and *ekklesia* derive from the needs of diaspora Judaism and the burgeoning Jesus movement. And both are grounded in Israelite cultural traditions.

The situation of Passover also illustrates the importance of the distinction between society and culture. After the Deuteronomists, the Passover festival was mandated to take place in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:21–23; Deut 16:5–6). The Judean garrison at Elephantine had to have its Passover celebration authorized by Darius (Cowley 1923: 44–45). But Passover was a collective representation in Israel, not entirely under the control of the centralized priestly establishment. It involved the memory of Israel's liberation, and lay Israelites continued to conduct the sacrifice of the Passover lambs (MISHNAH PESAHIM 5:5–6; Josephus WAR 6.423; ANTIQUITIES 3.248). Finkelstein long ago, with refined social sensibilities, traced some of the implications of this for the development of the Passover midrash (1938: 291–317; 1943: 1–8; more recent scholarship dates the service to the post-70 CE period).

According to Finkelstein, important parts of the Haggadah are Ptolemaic. Most significantly, Finkelstein noted that elements of the service could be edited by Jerusalem scribes to mollify Egyptian rulers and that elements could also be interpreted so as to incite crowds to rebellion (1942: 293). Even if the Haggadah is late, it is clear from Josephus that Passover gatherings under the early Empire could become occasions of riot and violence (Oakman 2001: 126–28).

Saldarini can assert without further ado that first-century Judeans celebrated Passover only by pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1984: 16). Certainly, there is evidence that Judeans made the pilgrimage for this purpose, but it does not follow that Judeans far from Jerusalem would not have observed the Passover meal (recall the Elephantine garrison). A case can be made that the meal-tradition associated with Jesus of Nazareth was a Passover meal-tradition. To restate briefly what has been argued elsewhere, Jesus of Nazareth seems to have shared with Judas of Gamala and Zaddok a passion for liberty in the name of God alone, demonstrated interest in the Passover as evident in the Q-beatitudes of Luke 6:20–22 that probably echo themes of the Passover Haggadah, and of course identified with the bread and wine of Passover as in the Last Supper words (Oakman 2001: 102–31).

Synagogue and *Ekklesia* as Centers of Order and Discontent

In scholarship on early Judaism and Christianity, synagogue and "church" are frequently (and anachronistically) discussed as free-standing religious centers. Perhaps also, they are considered along the lines of community centers or voluntary associations. The latter approach at least begins to reckon with the emic meaning of the social realities of the terms. Certainly, synagogue and *ekklesia* derive from the needs of diaspora Judaism and the burgeoning Jesus movement. And both are grounded in Israelite cultural traditions.

Greater clarity, however, can be achieved regarding the function of these social centers if they are understood as embedded within familistic or political relations—Judean, urban, imperial.

The Hellenistic period unfolded generally as a story of successive kingdoms and empires (Ptolemies, Seleucids, Hasmoneans, Romans). The classical *polis* or city-state became embedded within the households of monarchs or the city-territory of Rome—i.e., it was embedded within powerful families (royal or imperial). In this sense, the classical city-state was *derated* as a center of power by incorporation into larger power-spheres. But the organizing principle of the largest power-sphere remained an expression of a powerful family. So in the ancient Mediterranean world, politics was how the most powerful family or families treated everyone else. (The *polis* and the *amphictyony* also originated in extended family networks—mutual-aid networks based

on real or imagined kinship.) Moreover, the institutional language of the *polis* (*ekklesia* or assembly of free citizens, *gerousia*, etc.) was also inflated through employment in the organization of villages or small towns and even Greco–Roman voluntary associations. So even villages arrogated to themselves the honorific offices of the Hellenistic cities; and voluntary associations, as much about honor as anything else, were purely local affairs (organization of villages or small towns in Syria—Harper: 116–45; voluntary associations—Wilson: 3).

Likewise, ancient economy was organized within the family. Peasant and village formed the backbone of agrarian societies; prominent landlords controlled the energies and product of peasants. The elite value of leisure—for war, politics, or culture—was possible only because agrarian taxation siphoned off any surplus in the village.

Religion might occupy a domestic (family) or political (city, royal, imperial, temple state) location. As previously stated, the collective representations rooted in powerful historical traditions and experiences were carefully controlled and manipulated by powerful interests, but also (because available through corporate rituals) were "beyond control" and might be reinterpreted by charismatic figures in relation to agrarian discontent. As Weber puts it, "Wherever the promises of the prophet or the redeemer have not sufficiently met the needs of the socially less-favored strata, a secondary salvation religion of the masses has regularly developed beneath the official doctrine" (1958b: 274). Robert Redfield, along similar lines, distinguished between "great traditions" and "little traditions":

> In a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities [1960: 41–42].

With these conceptual distinctions in mind, then, we can turn to thinking about synagogue and *ekklesia* of Jesus-followers as centers of order and discontent.

What can be known archaeologically about pre-70 Palestinian synagogues is still under vigorous discussion (Levine; Magen; Riesner). Hoenig is of the opinion that the post-70 CE synagogue emerged out of the "public square" *r'ḥov* of the Israelite town (*ir*), and not the *bet-ha-kenes-set*, which was the place of administration before 70 (452). He does not see synagogues as places of religious service in Judea or Jerusalem before 70 CE; synagogues as "houses of prayer" seem to have existed only outside of Judea: "It may therefore be inferred that in Judea before 70 CE there were no synagogues (houses of prayer) similar to our modern concept nor was there a synagogue in the Temple precincts" (448–52). What is clear is that synagogues, i.e. places of gathering, had more general

social purposes and functions before 70 CE.

Thus, the structures identified as synagogues at Gamala, Magdala, and Masada seem designed to facilitate face-to-face meetings. It is probable that such structures were multipurpose community buildings. Nothing to date has been found in them to indicate ritual space, such as the *bema* of the Byzantine-period synagogues. Certainly, the Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem indicates ancillary uses of synagogues as pilgrim centers. These inferences of function denote "order." Institutional innovation rests on preexisting patterns (public square, administrative house) embedded in Judean ethnic or political arrangements.

Though many of the appearances of Jesus in synagogues in the canonical Gospels are likely fictional, issues of social order and especially discontent come into view. The synagogue (as well as the Temple) is a place of conflict in the Gospel of Mark. The conflict in Mark is largely around purity issues (Mark 2:16), what may be done on the sabbath (Mark 2:24), and what may be claimed apart from the temple (Mark 2:7). The Pharisees in Mark represent interests embedded in Judean politics; Jesus' activities come into conflict with those interests both in Galilee and Jerusalem. It is likely that these Markan conflicts, along with the data in the Q woes against the Pharisees (Luke 11:42–44) and Josephus's LIFE, reflect the Galilean politics of the late Second Temple period (Mark 3:6). Hence, they reflect embedded religion.

Turning to the Jesus movement in context of the Greco–Roman world, we find the term *ekklesia* used as a designation for the meeting of Jesus-followers, recalling the assemblies governing the Greek *poleis*. It is also possibly related to the *qahal* at Qumran. Here orderly assembly is in view, in the case of both Paul's *ekklesiai* and those of Acts. Stegemann & Stegemann (188, 263) discuss the political meanings of *ekklesiai*, but the term is inconsistently rendered by "churches" or "assemblies." And though the political significance is considered, an apolitical meaning in the end seems stressed.

Yet it is increasingly recognized that the Pauline apostolate or commission was conducted within an imperial context. As Neil Elliott comments:

> Richard Horsley and Neil Silberman have contended that the *Iudaismos* in which Paul says he had advanced (Gal 1:14) was "not merely a matter of religious observance but a movement of political activism and autonomy by diaspora Jews." Thus Saul's "zeal" was directed toward "the end of ensuring community solidarity and security in Damascus" against "the specific political threat" posed to the larger Jewish community by the Jesus movement [23].

Moreover, Paul's proclamation of the cross promoted a movement that the authorities must only have seen as subversive of Roman order.

Richard Horsley says of Paul's assemblies (1997: 8): "However vague he was about social forms in 'the kingdom of God' which was presumably coming at the 'day of the Lord' and (the completion of) the resurrection, in his mission Paul was building an international alternative society (the 'assembly') based in local egalitarian communities ('assemblies')." Perhaps the Pauline usage also had the undertone of "citizen assemblies" of the *basileia tou theou*, i.e. as embedded in God's power. 1 Corinthians 2:6 is suggestive of political tensions between the Roman *imperium* and the *ekklesiai* as outposts or colonies of the royal center. Paul, as a native of Asia Minor, would have been familiar with the Hellenistic colony-cities of Judean mercenaries founded by the Seleucids to control the local inhabitants. *Ekklesia* does not appear in 1 Peter, the writer of which tends to think in household terms (1 Peter 4:17). This terminology may stem from either Judean ethnic foundations or the Asian temple-state (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Rev 1:6; 2:12; 21:22; Ezek 47–48). John H. Elliott rejects the link between household and temple state (2001: 414–17; see to the contrary Oakman 1993a: 206, 211).

Whether the "household of God" as in 1 Peter, or the *ekklesia* of the royal colony, the Jesus-group reflects religion embedded in kinship or politics. Embeddedness, moreover, does not strictly entail reductionistic conclusions since (especially in Asia Minor) cultural innovations begin to appear particularly in the Pauline tradition. For instance, the cosmic symbolism of Colossians functions to keep imperial realities in perspective while enjoining new moral behaviors within family and local community and supporting a locally-transcendent vision of human being in the universal *ekklesia* (Col 1:18, in a way similar to Stoicism).

"Jew" and "Christian" in the First Century

The difficulty of emic and etic perspectives, and the distinction between culture and society, is perhaps most apparent in the scholarly debate about the terms *Ioudaios* (in the New Testament, passim), *Ioudaismos* (Gal 1:13), and *Christianos* (1 Peter, Acts) as these appear in the first-century documents. Are these equally insider and outsider labels? Does *Ioudaios* denote "Jew" (in a cultural sense) or "Judean" (in a social sense)? Or can the two dimensions be so neatly distinguished? Certainly with respect to these terms, we are most aware of the cultural transitions since the first century.

Cohen has given a persuasive recent account of the ancient meanings of the term *Ioudaios* (1996: 211–20; 1999: 69–106). He analyzes the term under the headings of birth/geography, religion/culture, and politics (1999: 70). It is not difficult here to see that he struggles with the Mediterranean organization of society (birth and politics) and culture (religion). The important question, if "Jew" denotes religio-cultural identifica-

tion, is how far Jews existed (in either emic or etic terms) before the Talmudic period. Cohen understands "Jew" as a function of religion or culture as "someone who believes (or is supposed to believe) certain distinctive tenets, and/or follows (or is supposed to follow) certain distinctive practices; in other words, a *Ioudaios* is a Jew, someone who worships the God whose temple is in Jerusalem and who follows the way of life of the Jews" (1999: 78–79). He thinks this definition is met in the cases of Izates (Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 20.38–39) and Atomos (Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 20.142). In each case, however, the definition still does not recognize the ethnic and political dimensions of "worship" and "following the way of life." For Izates is not free to define what this means, but must adhere to the counsel of the Galilean Eleazar ("You ought not merely to read the law but also, and even more, to do what is commanded in it," Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 20.44, LCL), and must also fear the political consequences of to metathesthai in terms of loss of throne (Josephus, ANTIQUITIES 20.38, 47). Atomos is a Cyprian by birth, but said to be among the friends of Felix and a Judean. By inference, Atomos is present in Palestine as a client of the Roman governor. Hence the meaning of *Ioudaios* is intertwined with imperial politics and ethnic relations. How otherwise is Atomos free to become a "go-between," while Felix is not?

Cohen thinks that ethnic Judeans "in the course of time," certainly by the turn of the eras, are reconceptualized as "religious associates" (and recognized by both insiders and outsiders as such). So, he sees significance in the use of terms like *thiasos* and *synagoge*, designating religious association and congregation, as well as parallels with other associations ("Egyptians" become Isiasts—1999: 80). What needs further consideration here is not so much the emic terminology, but its social significance. These transitions took place in the last two centuries BCE under the impact of royal wars, Roman expansionism, and intensive "Hellenization" (which after Hengel's work needs to be seen as political-cultural transformation). The terminology reflects not only the re-ordering of ethnic life, but also the resistance against royal/imperial power of "ethnics" appealing to a higher court (the God of the Judeans, Isis, etc.). The Jesus-movement also began in this way—with an appeal to a higher court ("the Kingdom of God") under a client ruler of Rome.

Christianos, as is well known, appears historically for the first time in the New Testament in only three places (1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26; 26:28). Elliott is certainly correct that the term was originally used by outsiders, non-Judeans, as a term of derision (J. Elliott: 789–96). This accords with what is known about Latin words with the *-ianus* ending: "This indicates its origin within Latin-speaking circles . . . where 'Christ' was regarded as a proper name (not a title)" (789). The earliest instance in 1 Peter also shows that "this name" is associated with suffering. Here, *Christianos* is clearly seen to have been embedded in the social relations of the imperial culture, i.e., not

as a free-standing, freely chosen, self-referential term for the early Christian movement. Acts 26:28, where the label appears on the lips of Herod Agrippa II, confirms this as well. The social experience related to the label *Christianos* was also embedded within the central Mediterranean cultural values of honor and shame, since 1 Peter 4:5, 13 promises the suffering *Christianoi* compensatory honor in the final judgment.

Conclusions

While difficult to distinguish both conceptually and in reality, culture and society must be seen as referring to different but interpenetrating dimensions in human action. Culture remains a repository of ideas and archetypes—written in texts, customs, rituals, and stones—that have a certain wildness in relation to convention and habitual action. Elites depend on normative interpretations of cultural forms to promote docile and tractable underlings; non-elites reinterpret the great traditions in order to meet their own social needs. Society refers to the well-worn paths of habit, custom, interests, and institutions. Elites control these as well; but as Weber saw, innovations emerge (through charismatic and frequently non-elite figures) with socio-cultural reinterpretations.

Religion has historically been close to the constitutional center of both culture and society. In the ancient world, religion was intertwined with kinship (ethnicity) and politics (cities, kingdoms, empires). Religion embedded in kinship signifies domestic cult and domestic metaphors (God/gods/goddesses as father/mother; adherents as brother or sister). Politics refers to how elite families treat everyone else. Religion embedded in politics signifies political religion (taxation, enforced customs) and political central metaphors (God/gods/goddesses as king/queen; adherents as citizens or subjects). In all of the archaic and historic religions this was so.

In the end, the ancient terms and issues of Jewish and Christian origins discussed in this essay cannot immediately be assumed to be our own. In some ways, the social and cultural distances between modern Christians and their origins are greater than between contemporary Christians and Jews! The social study of the beginnings of these two great world religions, however, can offer helpful perspectives in a world in which there are even greater challenges of analysis, understanding, and moral judgment ahead. Signposts regarding the challenges ahead can be found in numerous works: Armstrong, Juergensmeyer, and Taylor, to name a few. How society and culture will interact, how religion will appear, and what role religion will play, remain open and enduring questions. Since the Reformation in the West, and throughout the globalizing modern period, religion's place has become a matter of order, contest, and choice in very distinctive ways. Stephen Toulmin gives a powerful account of the role religion played in the emergence

of the "second phase" of modernity in the seventeenth century. The wars of religion led to a "quest for certainty" that belied the spirit of Renaissance openness and tolerance in modernity's first phase. The quest for certainty effectively addressed religiously-fueled ethnic and political conflicts on the one hand, but introduced new problems through the Enlightenment marriage of cosmology and politics on the other. Our challenges lie not only in accurate historical self-knowledge or contemporary Jewish–Christian dialogue, but in helping these great faith communities to live in peace among the global religions and contribute constructively to a hopeful future for all our children. To this end, distinguishing society and culture, and religion's place in both, will be an extraordinarily important task indeed.

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