

THE SOCIAL
WORLD OF JESUS AND
THE GOSPELS

Bruce J. Malina



London and New York

CONTENTS

	<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
	<i>Introduction</i>	xi
PART I: THE QUESTION OF READING		
1	READING THEORY PERSPECTIVES	3
PART II: THE QUESTION OF FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN PERSONS		
2	FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN PERSONS: A PRELIMINARY VIEW	35
3	THE MEDITERRANEAN SELF: A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL	67
4	MARY AND JESUS: MEDITERRANEAN MOTHER AND SON	97
PART III: THE QUESTION OF SIGNIFICANT ROLES IN THE FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN		
5	WAS JESUS A CHARISMATIC LEADER?	123
6	PATRON AND CLIENT: THE ANALOGY BEHIND SYNOPTIC THEOLOGY	143

CONTENTS

**PART IV: THE QUESTION OF TIME
AS FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN
VALUE**

- 7 CHRIST AND TIME: SWISS OR
MEDITERRANEAN? 179

**PART V THE QUESTION OF THE
RECEIVED VIEW**

- 8 THE RECEIVED VIEW AND WHAT IT
CANNOT DO 217

- Index* 242

FIRST-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN PERSONS

A preliminary view

INTRODUCTION

It is curious, to say the least, that many Americans read the Bible and claim to understand what its authors mean. For early Christian authors and their audiences were radically different from contemporary US Bible readers in the way they thought of persons. Americans inevitably consider persons individualistically, as psychologically unique beings. This feature is apparent from our television programming from the nightly news through soaps to talk shows. If these shows are any indication, they demonstrate that Americans are totally bent on understanding the self, on solving individual problems individualistically, on realizing individual potential. The stories we share and which rivet our attention invariably point to the individual self pursuing its self-fulfillment in an unfriendly, often hostile social world (Berman 1987:100–102). When Americans take up their Bible, they inevitably bring the same set of expectations to their scriptural reading as they bring to their TV viewing. In both persons are always understood individualistically and psychologically. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest an alternative scenario for imagining the Mediterranean persons who appear on the pages of the Bible, specifically on the pages of the gospels and letters. In this alternative scenario, persons are not considered individualistically; in fact, first-century Mediterranean persons never thought psychologically in the way we do. Even speaking of those human beings as “persons” is somewhat of an anachronism since there is no word for “person” in Hebrew, Greek or Latin. Hence when I use the word “person” of biblical personages and their contemporaries, I mean only “individual human being.”

First-century Mediterraneans knew other people “socially,” in

terms of gender-based roles, in terms of the groups in which a person was ever embedded, and with constant concern for public awards of respect and honor. I should like to call this way of understanding persons a scenario of the strongly group-bound individual, or strong group collectivistic person for short. This sort of individual contrasts with the mainstream US person who is weakly group-bound and most often feels himself or herself not bound to any group at all. This is the weak group individual, the individualistic person, for short.

I therefore suggest that perhaps biblical authors and their original audiences perceived human beings and human activity quite differently from people in the US. Perhaps they thought rather differently about who a person might be and what might be the expected range of human behavior. Such a suggestion is not terribly surprising. The fact is that for some time now, historically minded critics of the Bible have called attention to the deviant personality types described in biblical books. Among more recent authors, Heikki Räisänen, for example, has argued that in his letters, St Paul shows himself to be a less coherent and less convincing thinker than is commonly assumed; Paul's conception of the law is inconsistent, unintelligible and unarguable (1986:3–24). Räisänen's arguments are quite persuasive. Yet granted that Paul developed the type of argument that he did, why would first-century eastern Mediterranean people respect and give allegiance to a person who was incoherent, unconvincing, inconsistent, unintelligible and opaque? Given their mode of attachment to Paul, were the apostle's Greek-speaking audiences derived from a first-century Mediterranean in which "a strong individualism prevails in most segments of Greek society alongside of a search for community" (Dooan 1989:49), or is such a description simply a retrojection of contemporary US experience into the world of early Christianity?

What sort of scenarios for understanding human beings both as persons and as groups must contemporary readers bring to their gospel and epistle reading so that their authors might be understood in a fair and equitable manner? Recent attempts at understanding Mediterranean persons include Stendahl's hypothetical intuitions about Paul deriving from his history of ideas approach (Stendahl 1963), quite similar to Rappaport's approach to Josephus' personality (Rappaport 1976). Such intuitive approaches offer little by way of testable explanation. On the other hand, Theissen's psychobiology (1987) and Callan's rather straightforward psychological assessment (1987, with an excellent overview of previous psychological studies)

overlook the difficulties involved in psychological analysis. Psychologically oriented historians as a rule give little attention to the problem of selecting some adequate analytic framework from the many that exist (Prochaska 1979). Moreover, they often ignore the obstacles to an adequate psychological assessment of absent, idiosyncratic subjects which have been well articulated by Stannard (1980). Stannard's arguments have not been shaken by the insistence, for example, of Doohan (1984) or Vanhoye (1986) that it is necessary and legitimate to study Paul's unique personality in terms of modern psychology. The question is how to carry off the task in some intellectually responsible manner.

Given the various constraints involved in dealing with individual, unique personalities in cross-temporal and cross-cultural perspective, it seems that at present the best we can attempt is a type of regional character study, patterned after the national character studies of the 1940s and 1950s. These studies have been picked up once again, now under the label of social psychology (see Seelye 1985:35-6). In our case the goal will be a social psychology built upon a circum-Mediterranean modal personality, along with the idiosyncrasies of the culture and distinctiveness of social structure in the given time and place. On the basis of such a configuration, we might discuss cultural groups and the types of personalities such groups might allow for.

To begin with, then, I submit that early Christian authors and their audiences did not at all comprehend the idea of an individual person in his or her uniqueness. To underscore this aspect of Mediterranean perception I open with a consideration of the strong group individual.

MEDITERRANEAN PERSONS

As a cultural orientation, US individualism is still a totally alien way of being a person in the Mediterranean region. If this is true today, it certainly was true of the past. Geertz has tried to develop a somewhat precise and specific definition of the "individual" as founded in current, mainstream US behavior. He tells us that the individual here is "a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background." And he goes on to note that this way of being human is, "however

incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures" (Geertz 1976:225). To understand the persons who populate the pages of the canonical Christian writings, then, it is important not to consider them as individualistic. No first-century person would see Jesus or anyone else as *personal* Lord and Savior. First-century Mediterraneans were simply unaware of the personal, individualistic, self-concerned focus typical of contemporary American experience. Given Mediterranean social experience, such self-concerned individualism would appear deviant and detrimental to other group members. For group survival it would be dysfunctional, and hence dangerous. Behavior that indicates self-concerned individualism is noticed, but it is disdained and variously sanctioned. If those people were not individualistic, what or how were they?

For people of that time and place, the basic, most elementary unit of social analysis was not the individual person considered alone and apart from others as a unique being, but the dyadic person, a person always in relation with and connected to at least one other social unit, usually a group. Contrast, for example, an American and somebody like Paul attempting to explain why they might regard someone as abnormal. The American will look to psychology, to childhood experiences, personality type, to some significant event in the past that affects an adult's dealing with the world. Biography in the US is a description of psychological development in terms of singular events of an individualistic, unique person passing through the psychological stages of life. An abnormal person is assessed as one who is psychologically "retarded," or one who is deviant, because "neurotic" or "psychotic" through "having been an abused child," and the like (see Malina and Neyrey 1996).

The ordinary Mediterranean person, in the past and present, is not psychologically minded. In fact Mediterraneans, as a rule, are anti-introspective. For elite ancients, basic personality derives largely from ethnic characteristics which are rooted in the water, soil and air native to the ethnic group. Aristotle, for example, has noted:

Let us now speak of what ought to be the citizens' natural character. Now this one might almost discern by looking at the famous cities of Greece and by observing how the whole inhabited world is divided up among the nations. The nations inhabiting the cold places and those of Europe are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and skill, so that they continue comparatively free, but lacking in political

organization and capacity to rule their neighbors. The peoples of Asia on the other hand are intelligent and skilful in temperament, but lack spirit, so that they are in continuous subjection and slavery. But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent; hence it continues to be free and to have very good political institutions, and to be capable of ruling all mankind if it attains constitutional unity. The same diversity also exists among the Greek races compared with one another: some have a one-sided nature, others are happily blended in regard to both these capacities.

(*Politics* 1327b1–2 Loeb)

Fuller explanation of how the characteristics of various ethnic groups derive from the places they inhabit, the air they breathe and the water they drink is clearly set forth in the Hippocratic corpus, becoming common knowledge among elites, and points of honor among non-elites as well (*see Airs, Waters, Places*; Strabo, *Geography*). And just as ethnic groups have their own geographical location, they likewise evidence geographically rooted ethnic stereotypes by which other groups might assess them. For example, Tiberians have “a passion for war” (Josephus, *Life* §352 Loeb); Scythians “delight in murdering people and are little better than wild beasts” (Josephus, *Against Apion* §269 Loeb); “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12); in “the seamanship of its people...the Phoenicians in general have been superior to all peoples of all times” (Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.23 Loeb); “this is a trait common to all the Arabian kings” that they do “not care much about public affairs and particularly military affairs” (Strabo, *Geography* 16.4.24 Loeb).

Furthermore, with their unsurprising ethnocentrism, ancient Mediterraneans divided the peoples of the world in terms of their own broad ethnic reference group and the rest of the world. Thus while Greek writers in general spoke of “Greek and Barbarian” (for example, Strabo, *Geography* 1.4.9 Loeb; also Paul at Rom. 1:14), Paul of Tarsus would speak of “Judean and Greek” (Rom. 1:16 and *passim*; 1 Cor. 1:24 and *passim*; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), a perspective evidenced in the narrative of Acts (Acts 14:1; 18:4; 19:10,17; 20:21).

Ancient biography is a description of a person’s having fulfilled stereotypical roles that cluster to form a sort of typical prominent or deviant status, with no particular attention paid to psychological

developmental stages apart from raw physiological growth periods (i.e. childhood and adulthood). What is distinctive about a person's life is not psychological or personal development but the events that a person had to confront (read, for example, any of Plutarch's *Lives*). For the abnormal, a Mediterranean such as Paul, for example, would say "Satan prevented us," "hand him over to Satan," "they are sinners," "he was possessed." Plutarch explains the demise of those responsible for the death of Julius Caesar as follows:

However the great guardian genius (*megas daimon*) of the man, whose help he had enjoyed through life, followed upon him even after death as an avenger of his murder, driving and tracking down his slayers over every land and sea until not one of them was left, but even those who in any way soever either put hand to the deed or took part in the plot were punished.

(*Lives: Caesar* 59.2 Loeb)

And Josephus tells us that in a battle with Sulla and royalist troops outside of Bethsaida Julias, his horse, stumbled in a marshy spot, and he broke his wrist; "and my success on that day would have been complete had I not been thwarted by some demon" (*Life* §402 Loeb). Such designations of abnormality indicate that "the person is in an abnormal position because the matrix of relationships in which he is embedded is abnormal" (Selby 1974:15). The problem is not within a person but outside a person, in faulty interpersonal relations. There really is nothing psychologically unique, personal and idiosyncratic going on within a person at all. All people in a family, neighborhood or town situated in a distinctive region are presumed to have the same experiences. If any distinctions hold, they are regional and gender-based.

This does not mean that strong group people have weak egos. Once egos are formed in such cultures, individuals are strong enough not to alter in the slightest, even in an alien environment with hostile and competing values. The strong group person has an ego embedded in the group. As a matter of fact, all members of the group share a mutuality of perspective, a virtual identity with the group as a whole and with its individual members. There is no polarity or binary opposition between the individual and the group in which he or she is embedded. Such an embedded ego carries within values and voices which echo years after one might be transplanted to some new location. The formation and thorough embeddedness of the ego in the social reality of the group is much like the formation and

embeddedness of the embryo in the womb. Thus the embedded, strong group ego is a mode of social psychological being, just as the embryo emergent from the womb is a mode of biological and psychological being.

In other words, to paraphrase Geertz,

our first-century person would perceive himself as a distinctive whole *set in relation* to other such wholes and *set within* a given social and natural background; every individual is perceived as embedded in some other, in a sequence of embeddedness, so to say.

(Malina 1993:68)

Such persons define themselves rather exclusively in terms of the groups in which they are embedded; their total self-awareness emphatically depends upon such group embeddedness. To paraphrase M. Bowen (1978), one might say that such persons are immersed in and share “an undifferentiated ethnic ego mass.” And they believe that other persons are part of such an undifferentiated mass as well. For example, since in Mediterranean perspective all Americans form an undifferentiated ethnic ego mass, it would be impossible for a Middle Easterner to view the kidnaping of a single American as a random act. There is nothing random about kidnaping a person belonging to an opposing group since any group member equally well represents the whole group.

Strong group persons do not seem to go through the stages of ego formation typical of Western individualistic persons. Although they are single beings, individual persons, presumably unique in their individual being as Americans are, their psychological ego reference is primarily to some group, not primarily to some unique self. It is groups that are unique, not individual persons. If it is true to say that ego always mediates between group needs (the collective) and individual needs (the unique), then weak group individualists suppress consciousness of group needs and keep individual needs in constant focus. On the other hand, strong group individuals suppress consciousness of individual needs and keep group needs at the forefront of their attention. The strong group problem is that it is usually the immediate group’s (family, faction, village, neighborhood of a city) needs that are the focus of interest, not that of the total ethnic group. Josephus, for example, notes that for the Israelite priesthood, it is this larger society that is of concern: “At these sacrifices prayers for the welfare of the community must take

precedence of those for ourselves; for we are born for fellowship, and he who sets its claims above his private interests is specially acceptable to God” (*Against Apion* §196 Loeb); here “private interest” means private group-interest, not private individual-interest as it would mean in the US. For such strong group persons, “I” always connotes some “we” (inclusion of the “I”). While the “I” is a single individual, one can presume that any communication from such an “I” is invariably a communication from a “we.” And all strong group persons know what “we’s” are involved in their singular interactions.

We might say, with good reason, that a type of social as opposed to psychological awareness pervades strong group persons. They are not psychologically minded at all. They are simply not introspective. For example, consider the institution of keeping females away from males. Philo tells us:

Market-places and councils-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men both in war and peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.

(*Special Laws* 3.169 Loeb)

This is a gender division of space, male and female space, men’s and women’s quarters. Such separation is replicated by other gender-based space prohibitions (at the common outdoor oven or common water supply) as well as by the presence of persons whose task it is to maintain such separation, for example, chaperons.

For an understanding of biblical morality, it is important to realize that such techniques for gender separation indicate that behavioral controls exist in the social situation, not in the individual conscience. Behavioral controls are social, deriving from a set of social structures in which all persons are expected to participate and to which they are to adhere. Quite definitely, behavioral controls are not within the person. Hence behavioral controls are definitely not “psychological,” inwardly assimilated and under the control of the choice of “conscience.” It is situations that are controlled and that control, not individual persons following internalized norms. Group members invest the controlling and controlled situation with the full force of custom. Consequently, people do not expect others to control

their behavior by following internalized norms; the individual conscience is simply not an ethical norm, sacred or otherwise (Hall 1959:114).

On the other hand, a person is expected to lose control in certain social situations, while persons in the vicinity are required to furnish the restraining force. For example, close women relations are to attempt to jump into the grave of the deceased but also to be held back by others; individuals ready to square off in a fight expect those around them to hold them back; feuds go on escalating, yet mediators are to intervene to restrain the feuding parties (see Boehm 1984). Similarly, Mediterraneans have traditionally believed that a male could not possibly suppress the strong urges that surely take possession of him every time he is alone with a pre-menopausal woman. And women are considered even more unable to resist males. Persons of both sexes, then, do not expect personal inhibition to suffice to control their behavior; rather “will power” is expected to be furnished by other people (Hall 1959:66–7). Consequently, being strongly embedded in a group entails strong social inhibition along with a general lack of personal inhibition.

The stories and ethical systems of Israelite Yahwism, Mediterranean Christianity, Rabbinic Jewish religion and Islam have duly codified these social, anti-introspective and non-individualistic beliefs. The values and lines of behavior which tend to strengthen group cohesion are considered positive values, virtues. On the other hand, those values and lines of behavior which can in any way be detrimental to group cohesion are considered negative values, vices or sins. Notice that all biblical ethical inventories, whether the traditional Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2–17), or the directives of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), or the listing of “the evil things that come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:21), or Paul’s catalogue of the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19–21; see also 1 Cor. 6:9–10)—all these are essentially and fundamentally concerned with the maintenance and strengthening of group cohesion. These inventories highlight dysfunctional behaviors that directly lead to inner-group antagonisms and group dissolution. As such they are directed to members of the group, whether it be Israel (Ten Commandments), the revitalized house of Israel of Matthew (which is not to be “like the Gentiles who salute only their brethren” Matt. 5:47), or the community using Mark’s gospel, or Paul’s Corinthian and Galatian Christians.

In other words, these ethical lists are not universalizing. They are not even remotely concerned with individual spiritual development,

growth in holiness, paths of perfection, personal relationship with God and the like. They are not lists of vices to be avoided by the individual soul in its journey back to God. They all presume the presence of other people, either other group members or outsiders, since they are aimed at maintaining good relations especially with fellow group members. Such codification points to the strong group quality of such ethical systems. Sanctions against their transgression would be sought in community control rather than individual responsibility (for example, Deut. 21:18 or 1 Cor. 5:3). To understand how Mediterranean persons are socialized in strong group fashion, one must begin, it would seem, with the main social institution of the region, kinship.

SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH KINSHIP LENSES

While all human societies presumably are witness to kinship institutions, the Mediterranean world treats this institution as primary and focal. E.T.Hall (1959:144) has noted relative to some male who wishes to invite a female out for a date:

The choice as to whether he acts or not is his. What is not his to decide fully is the language he will use, the presents he can give her, the hours he can call, the clothes he can wear, and the fact that in the United States the woman has the ultimate say in the matter.

Now Hall continues, quite apropos our discussion here:

An American these days will not normally consider the revenge of the brothers as a price for seeing a woman without her family's permission, nor will it cross his mind that she might lose her life if she chooses to be intimate with him. These are not "alternatives" which occur to him as he is weighing the choice of patterns available to him. Death of the woman and revenge on the man are within the expected range of behavior in the less Europeanized parts of the Arab world. This sort of example is rather obvious and is the type of point which has been made many times and dismissed just as many times. Our rationalization is that it is "uncivilized" to kill one's sister just because she was intimate with a man. What we often don't know and have difficulty accepting is that such patterns fit into larger overall patterns and that what is being guarded is not the sister's life

(though she may be deeply loved) but a centrally located institution without which the society would perish or be radically altered. This institution is the family. In the Middle East the family is important because families are tied together in a functional interlocking complex. The accompanying network (and obligations) satisfies many of the same functions that our government satisfies. The sister is a sacred link between families and, like the judge in our own culture, she has to remain above reproach. Thus it is usually necessary to take a second look at the more obvious differences in behavior because they often hide or grow out of more fundamental differences that are just beginning to be studied: differences which control behavior in a way that was never dreamed of, that are not conventions implying a choice but rules that are so constant that they are not recognized as rules at all.

(Hall 1959:144–5)

In fact in the whole Mediterranean world, the centrally located institution maintaining societal existence is kinship and its set of interlocking rules. The result is the central value of *familism*. The family or kinship group is central in social organization; it is the primary focus of personal loyalty and it holds supreme sway over individual life. Family integrity is to be valued above all. To understand familism better, to better develop the scenarios necessary to “read” Mediterranean communications better, we shall contrast it with the US central value of economic success. For Americans and a growing number of northern Europeans, the main social institution is economics.

Economics in the US

As US persons grow up they find that almost all the social arrangements which circumscribe the life of their community are centered on the single issue of the production and consumption of goods. Decisions about marriage are largely determined by one’s ability “to afford to get married,” and it surely costs exorbitant amounts of money to get elected to political office, even though the office itself is not bought! Adult self-worth is pivoted on income generation, and police logs are full of daily listings of thefts and burglaries, while a significant amount of attention is given to preventing the possibility of private property transgression. A huge

military machine is maintained at great cost largely to protect American economic interests all over the world. US foreign policy moves in the same direction, with little if any concern for the freedom, democracy and well-being of other peoples. The overall value of the illegal drug trade, so vital to the payment of Third World debt to US banks, is always assessed in terms of its street dollar value, never in terms of the number of families ruined, individuals crippled, persons dead.

The reason for this pervading awareness of property rights is that economics with its focal communicative behavior in quantitatively assessed production and consumption is central. The management of the economic area is not only linked to the sexual (kinship) and political areas, but also constitutes the very basis of all the strategies in these two domains. Credit means economic credit. Kinship, religion and politics are embedded in economics, i.e. the norms of kinship, religion and politics are determined directly or indirectly by economics. Here persons owning and/or controlling wealth ultimately make the laws that determine the social order; the wealthy rule. If the Reagan administration demonstrated anything from 1980 to 1988, it is the truth of the aforementioned observations. And the situation has not changed with Bush or Clinton.

All this cannot fail to create a definite self-image in the minds of both men and women, as well as a definite image of the physically and mentally incapacitated classes. The poor are judged to be poor largely, if not exclusively, because of their unwillingness to take up gainful employment and adhere to the rules of the economic game. Young people grow up believing that success means economic success, that profit orientation (called "greed" in the Mediterranean) is virtuous, that regardless of the demands of public communal well-being, private property is sacred. The present distribution of wealth is largely due to self-made individuals and their desire to "earn" more while keeping the competition at bay. Thus, were it not for the property rights of the wealthy classes, the rules for "fair" competition and the legal punishment that would be meted out to competitive individuals if caught in theft, burglary or market manipulation offense, all the prohibitions hammered into a person would be unable to inhibit him or her from realizing his or her greed orientation by acquiring and utilizing all the valued things he or she might encounter. And the young person comes to consider the US enculturated acquisitive drive (drive to succeed, success orientation) so strong that only the legal and social impediments to acquiring and consuming

more prevents a person from further pursuit of his or her desire. The image which the young person has of the goods of youth (cars, money, clothing, etc.) complements this self-image. The drive to acquire such goods is equally strong, and should he or she but manage to acquire one of them, everything that youth can have and do would soon be his or hers. In fact, as the popular view has it, the status-giving quality of goods is greater than personal qualities by far. What one has, what one possesses, what one controls through ownership are far more important than what sort of person one is. Consider the moral and intellectual fiber of the publicly known wealthy, such as federal officials (for example, at HUD and the IRS in 1989), government appointees, ambassadors and the like.

The self-image of the producer/consumer is practically identical with this through various stages of life. A person is brought up to believe that once one has the consumer goods one longs for, one will be irresistible to others, successful and uncontrolled by anyone. Therefore one must never allow oneself to be found in a situation of want or lack. The average US person has been taught to believe from childhood that it is quantities that count; the good aspects of persons and the good things in life are those that are duly quantifiable. *How much* and *how many* are the best indicators of human meaning. And it is only external circumstances that can prevent a person from acquiring a portion that would significantly raise one's social standing. These views and expectations are, of course, self-fulfilling. In a society in which everybody believes that, unless prevented by circumstances, a person can in fact "make it" economically, they will behave accordingly. The wealthiest individuals in the country are duly listed annually (for example, in *Forbes*, while *Fortune* lists the most "successful" corporations).

Thus the acquisition of goods is both sought after and feared. While such acquisition is urgently sought after in the competition to "make it," once the goods have been acquired there is great fear in losing what has been acquired so dearly. Various sorts of savings plans and insurance policies are geared to allay such fear and to provide the security that ultimately counts, and that is economic security. Both emotions of guarding what one has and competing for more are experienced with considerable intensity. Perhaps this intensity can be taken as an indication of the intensity of childhood repression of acquisitive interest, i.e. being "selfish" or "self-willed." After adolescence this repression creates a strong sense of frustration for most US persons as they try to "make it." If,

however, the social controls break down, or are eliminated, the repressed acquisitiveness engendered by the frustrated drive to have breaks through to the surface and seeks its expression for mainstream “good” Americans in white-collar crime, in petty thefts and tax cheating, as well as other property-focused aggression. Such aggression expressed as “greed” is also found in the attempt of the wealthy to acquire economic advantage through political control, i.e. through holding office, supporting those in office, influencing legislation, all focused on the amassing of ever greater wealth. The 110 or more cases in which members of the Reagan administration and/or their appointees were indicted and/or convicted point to such crimes in the name of wealth and wealth acquisition (a list of persons involved can be found in *Time*, May 25, 1987). Surely those cases are merely the tip of a pervading iceberg of behaviors deriving from US mainstream values.

That the foregoing considerations make sense to some extent to most Americans simply points to their presence in US society. The Mediterranean, on the other hand, does not share this central concern with money or with the economic institution(s) of society.

Kinship in the Mediterranean

Anyone living in the Mediterranean will quickly realize the heavy emphasis on and concern regarding gender-specific behavior as well as on the sinfulness of sex and its desirability. Traditionally, as Mediterraneans grow up, they find that almost all the social arrangements which circumscribe the life of their community are centered on the single issue of preventing the possibility of sexual transgression. While these arrangements have changed to a great extent in the cities of southern Europe, they are still alive in Mediterranean villages, European and non-European (see Gilmore and Gilmore 1979; Saunders 1981; Sabbah 1984). The reason for the traditional emphasis on the prevention of sexual transgression is that kinship, with its focal communicative behavior in cohabitation, is central. Here “the management of the sexual area is not only linked to the economic and political areas, but also constitutes the very basis of all the strategies in these two domains” (Sabbah 1984:15). Credit is more a matter of one’s honor rating based on kinship than of collateral in goods. Even today, religion, politics and economics are embedded in kinship, i.e. the norms of religion, politics and

economics are determined directly or indirectly by the kinship institution. Here well-born persons rooted in the “best” families control society in their role of patrons. Hence the constant concern to show that one is well-born and from the best of families (for example, Josephus, *Life* §1–6 Loeb; the genealogies in Matthew and Luke; Paul’s pedigree in Phil. 3:5).

The extreme Mediterranean emphasis on the human genitals (for example, circumcision, phallus as evil-eye apotropaic, castration concerns), on sexual transgression and on the male’s uncertainty of his maleness are part of the same scenario, as I shall describe subsequently. Here I wish to note that focus on legitimate cohabitation and the constant threat of sexual transgression fail to create a definite self-image in the minds of both men and women, as well as a definite image of the opposite sex. Young people grow up believing that were it not for the segregation of the sexes and the vengeance that would be surely meted out on the young man if caught in a sex offense, all the prohibitions hammered into him would be unable to inhibit him from having intercourse with the first woman he encountered. Young men come to consider their own sex drive so strong that only the physical impossibility of sexual access to the women of his social circle (because of their segregation, supervision, etc.) prevents them from satisfying their urges. The image young men are provided of girls and women complements this self-image. Of course, this image of females has been developed and maintained by males. According to this picture, the female sexual drive is equally strong. So should he but manage to corner any female alone, she might put up a wild show of resistance at first, but once he as much as kissed her, she would give in and readily become his. In fact, it is popularly assumed that a woman’s lust is greater than that of a man, hence the even greater urgency to keep women duly circumscribed.

Women, in turn, are enculturated to believe this feminine self-image. Girls are brought up to believe that once they might find themselves alone with a male, they would be unable to resist his advances. Therefore the proper female must never allow herself to be found in such a situation. Girls are taught to believe from childhood that the central human being is the male—his honor replicated symbolically in his sexual drive. Thus from childhood, girls are led to believe that the mere sight of a woman is sufficient to arouse a man sexually, and only external, social circumstances can prevent him from having his way with her. These views and expectations

are, of course, self-fulfilling. In a society in which everybody believes that a man and a woman will inevitably have sexual relations unless prevented by circumstances, both of them will behave accordingly.

Sexual relations apart from marriage are invariably prohibited and therefore feared because of possible loss of paternal or fraternal honor. A young woman who has had sexual relations apart from marriage becomes unmarriageable, and hence an economic burden to her aging parents or brothers. Yet such sexual relations are spoken of as most desirable and therefore sought after. Both the fear of sexual relations and the desire for them seem to be experienced with considerable intensity. This feature can be taken as an indication of a desire for the mother that is especially strong and strongly repressed, as in areas where the father-ineffective family prevails (see Carroll 1986:222). The repression of this desire is tantamount to a childhood repression of sexual interest. After adolescence this repression creates an intense feeling of frustration which expresses itself in the agonistic aggression typical of the region.

Mediterranean families are structured variously, just as value preferences in the region differ from society to society. There are traditional endogamous communal structures typical of the Eastern sector as well as various nuclear family arrangements (see Hanson 1989a, following Todd 1985). Beyond these significant local variations, however, what Mediterraneans have in common relative to kinship is that inheritance follows the male line and that males represent the family to the outside (Hanson 1990), while females are expected to uphold the inside. Furthermore, there is a preference for marrying persons as closely related as possible; this is the well-known Mediterranean endogamy (Hanson 1989b). Finally, Mediterraneans are occasionally polygynous (legally, in Islam, illegally in Christian countries with a mistress system). We might say, then, that the Mediterranean family is patrilineal and rooted in a sharp gender division of labor. And since kinship is the focal institution, the family of this sort is the norm for understanding all other groupings. Thus any larger social aggregates are considered mere extensions of the family, enlarged super-families. All significant groups are usually the offspring of a single eponymous ancestor whose progeny have dwelt in a given land from time immemorial. Hence, in biblical perspective, note the ultimate unity of all Israelites, Romans, Arabs and any other chthonic people, and of all Mediterranean mankind from the original, single, Middle Eastern "earthling" (this is what the Hebrew *'adam* means).

Given the principle of familism, individuals participate in all larger social groupings only through their family (domestic and political religion, occupation groups, political factions). All adults (those in middle or upper rungs of family hierarchy) would oppose any change that might disrupt or weaken the family since their social security is intimately bound up with the structure as it stands. Where familism is central and family the actual framework of life, a person learns to relate to others on a highly *social, ingroup-oriented* basis. A basic prerequisite for a truly social and ingroup-oriented exchange is for the interacting persons all to believe that they have some common bonds to tie them to the same group, from shared blood to mutual acquaintances to common heritage. They have to come to see that somehow they are members of the same group; they are “brothers” or “kinsmen.” The family, the village or city quarter and the work group facilitate relations generally confined to group members in such social organizations of intense social interaction. In other words, without some sort of perception that a given individual and the person with whom he or she interacts are somehow attached to each other, somehow related to each other, interpersonal behavior remains extremely wary. Should there be nothing in common between them except common humanity, then the interaction is viewed as totally fraught with danger, like coming across a foreigner, an unfamiliar tree or dog or some other unexpected and unknown circumstance. On the other hand, given the dynamics of traditional Mediterranean demographics, apart from invasion, military occupation or enslavement, for such people to encounter an unknown person was an extremely rare occurrence in the past, and slightly more frequent today.

NO CHILDREN, ONLY SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Mediterranean parents do not beget children. Rather the babies born are immediately evaluated in terms of gender, as male babies and female babies, as boys or girls (cf. biblical birth announcements). The underscored gender differentiation of offspring from birth replicates the Mediterranean mode of marking off the world in terms of gender. Just as selves are male and female, so are the categories of others, nature, time, space and God(s). “For Providence made man stronger and women weaker...and while he brings in fresh supplies from without, she may keep safe what lies within” ([Ps.-Aristotle =] Theophrastus, *Oeconomica* 1344a4 Loeb). Males represent the family

to the outside; females keep it intact on the inside. Males own everything in the family that goes to the outside; females are in charge of what stays on the inside. Males defend the family from the outside; females maintain its integrity on the inside. The Mediterranean gender division of labor carries over quite emphatically into all spheres of life, unlike in US experience, where explicit gender division is confined, as a rule, to cosmetics, clothes and most public rest rooms.

Furthermore, since these male and female babies are enculturated into strong group families, they are quickly attuned to the fact that they are sons and daughters of certain fathers and mothers whose honor and shame engulf them. All the various members of the family will interfere in a person's life to steer or mislead. This is especially notable for males with their outward orientation. A male may not make decisions without consulting his near relatives and the senior members of his group. He lives in a compact organization in which everyone knows everyone else's business. From infancy on, males and females are trained to locate themselves securely within their group. Thus every utterance or deed goes through the censorship exercised by a person's ingroup orientation. Outgroup influences are minimal, and extraordinary behavior is rare. What might seem odd to non-Mediterraneans (for example, concern with the evil-eye, women with power to cast spells, sorcery accusations and the like) all fall within categories quite at home in the culture at large. The result is that all or most social contacts, as in any traditional society, are emphatically ingroup oriented and intense, with a resulting *personalization of problems*. This means that every obstacle is a person-related problem whose resolution marks a return to normalcy and whose non-resolution escalates an already wary, anxious way of living. Thus nearly all of life's problems are with "who's," not with "what's."

This emphasis on the ingroup-oriented, social dimensions of life is most vividly illustrated by the Mediterranean attitude toward space and the planning of residential quarters. Eickelman (1989:106) has noted that even a small town might have thirty to forty neighborhoods or quarters in the perception of its residents. One's neighborhood or quarter consists of households

claiming multiple personal ties and common interests based on varying combinations of kinship, common origin, ethnicity, patronage and clientship, participation in factional alliances and spatial propinquity itself.... Only those clusters of households evaluated as sustaining a particular quality of life

are known as quarters.... [C]omponent households in a quarter assume that they share a certain moral unity so that in some respects social space in their quarter can be regarded as an extension of their own households. This closeness is symbolized in a number of ways: the exchange of visits on feast days, assistance and participation in the activities connected with births, circumcisions, weddings, and funerals of component households, and the like.... Because of the multiple ties which link the residents of a quarter, respectable women who never venture to the main market can circulate discreetly within their quarter, since the residents all assume a closeness to each other.
(Eickelman 1989:106–7)

The point is that houses put together in a section of town do not form a neighborhood or city/town quarter. Residential space “is not principally in terms of physical landmarks but in shared conception of the social order” (Eickelman 1989:107). Perceptions and assessments of the spatial order are rooted and follow one’s understanding of how people are situated and relate to each other; that is the social order.

In the Mediterranean world, infant boys are pampered, while infant girls are often treated strictly. More efforts are made to safeguard and preserve the life of a boy child, who is more valuable, than that of a girl. In the first century, the Judean people consisted primarily of male ethnics, “the sons of Israel,” “the sons of Abraham,” “the house of Israel,” with the woman’s position quite ambiguous. The same held true of Christian groups: God did not talk *through* women unless when unmarried, their fathers were present (for example Philip’s daughters in Acts 21:8–9) or unless when married, their husbands were present and duly respected (as Paul insists in 1 Cor. 11:2–16), or unless they were beyond childbearing age (as in Luke 2:36–7). That the angel of the Lord appears to Mary in Luke (and not to a male as in Matthew) concerning the birth of Jesus is not that extraordinary in the question of childbirth. For as a rule, God did not talk *to* women either, although there is a “biblical policy” which “allows women characters to hold direct discourse with God (or his agent) only in a ‘procreative’ context” (Fuchs 1982:153). And this is fully in accord with the “gender division of labor” characteristic of the circum-Mediterranean.

The traditional Mediterranean gender evaluation of offspring would seem to result in distinctive outcomes rooted in upbringing

(Bouhdiba 1977). Little boys learn that their maleness consists in not being female, with little more information than that. The reason for this is that for the first seven or more years of his life, the boy is always with women whom, he is later informed, he is expected *not* to be like. Adult males are not to be found around the house, as a rule, during most of the day. In such father-deficient arrangements role models are either not continually present or when present have little to do with children. Hence the boy is encouraged to live out a male role which is problematic and largely elusive. Consequently, as in other androcentric societies,

masculinity must be won not only through internal and external struggle, but also through continual affirmation. Manhood therefore is not only “created culturally” in these societies, as has often been observed, but also culturally and publicly sustained. Inevitably both the conferral and maintenance of masculinity carry visibly competitive overtones, especially in societies which emphasize sexual distinctions, at least through invidious comparison. Conversely femininity may depend more often on natural functions and is therefore often less problematical.

(Gilmore 1987:9)

Given the focus of the kinship institution and the familism rooted in it along with the male obligation to maintain the family and represent it to the outside, Sabbah’s observation is quite apropos to envisioning economics embedded in kinship and its social psychological bearing:

For example, given the exaggeration of the erotic dimension, certain economic problems are experienced as sexual problems. This is the case with a man’s economic failure. The unequal distribution of wealth, widespread unemployment, the chancy character of jobs and wages reduces the buying power of males (if they have any). And since virility in patriarchal Muslim society is defined in terms of economic power, economic failure is experienced by the male as castration, as a problem with virility, as impotence. In the same way, the invasion by women of economic spaces such as factories and offices, which is an economic fact of development, is often experienced as erotic aggression in the Muslim context, where the female body, defined as *‘urya* (nudity), has been neutralized by the traditional

structuring of space (seclusion of women and the wearing of the veil when moving through male space).

(Sabbah 1984:17)

Furthermore, Nawal El Saadawi has perceptively noted an aspect of Arab childrearing that fits the Mediterranean in general:

The tendency to exaggerate a boy's feeling for his own ego and masculinity will usually end in an inferiority complex, since he will always feel that he is unable to rise up to the image expected of him. On the other hand, a tendency to exaggerate the need for a girl to withdraw, and to shrink into an attitude of passivity (under the guise of femininity and refinement) tends to build up in her a form of superiority complex which results from the feeling of being better than the image that has been created for her. A superiority complex creates masochistic tendencies in women, and an inferiority complex breeds sadistic and aggressive tendencies in men. Both of these are compensatory mechanisms and are the two faces of the same coin.

(Saadawi 1982:81)

If the evaluation and rearing of children in the eastern Mediterranean is in fact traditional, there is little reason to expect first-century persons not to have shared the tendencies described above. Males will tend to be sadistic and aggressive, willing to inflict pain on everyone except ingroup adult males (friends and family) in order to realize their goals, whether these others be children, wives or enemies. On the other hand, females will be masochistic, yet with an inflated sense of importance, especially after marriage and a son. And it will be sadism and aggression on behalf of the family that will be underscored as male virtue, while women will be lauded for their heroic masochism. The replication of these traits in Mediterranean values should bear out their controlling influence on behavior.

NO PARENTS, ONLY FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Just as offspring are rated in terms of gender, so too are parents. The roles of father and mother, just like the husbands and wives who play them, rarely if ever touch or overlap. The father dominates the family and represents it to the outside. Everything that relates the family outwardly is controlled by the father and is male: inheritance, land in the surround, jural relations (i.e. relations on the father's

side), farm animals and implements, adult sons. On the other hand, everything that maintains the family inwardly is in the mothers purview and is generally female: the kitchen, non-jural relations (i.e. relations on the mother's side), milkgoats and other household animals, chickens, unmarried daughters, resident daughters-in-law, boys until old enough to be with the father.

Mothers and sons

While sibling relations are close, the mother-son bond is vaunted as the closest of Mediterranean affective relations. It is a distinctive by-product of Mediterranean childrearing practices. This mother-son attachment is based on mutual *need*: hers for a son to demonstrate her maturity and value to the ingroup, and his for a nurturing, caring figure in face of the general absence of adult males and the rather cruel process of "being a man." For what is distinctive of Mediterranean males is gender-identity ambivalence, revealed in their vehement abhorrence at or disavowal of everything "feminine." The result is a continued defense, through honor/shame polarities and prohibitions, against unacceptable female identifications.

According to contemporary Freudian psychology, the reason for this is that the primary (preoedipal) ego identification of children is with mothers, with the nurturing parent. Boys have to switch their gender identification to fathers during the oedipal stage (while girls do not), and this identification process involves a dis-identification from mother followed by a counter-identification with father. This process of dis-identification and counter-identification is impeded in the absence of available fathers or male surrogates who might act as counter-role models or psychic magnets (see Carroll 1986). In the Mediterranean, boys are raised under domestic arrangements excluding adult males, and hence lack discriminate male objects during this developmental period.

This male remoteness has two important ramifications given the other related factors described here. First is that boys, confined to a female-dominated space, are denied an accessible male figure with whom to identify at the precise time that the primary gender-identity formation process is going on. Second is the consequent emotional closeness and affective "symbiosis" of mothers and sons—a pan-Mediterranean trait. In Portugal the "mother-son bond is thought to be the strongest possible

bond between two human beings” (Cutileiro 1971:112). In Italy this bond is the “primary axis” of family continuity (Parsons 1969:55); in Greece it is “indestructible” (Campbell 1964:168). Moreover, this uniquely powerful bond originates in a domestic scene in which the boy often perceives the mother—typical in Mediterranean societies—as dominant or “incharge” or as the “primary handler of the family’s financial resources” (Rogers 1975:734–735). One may argue reasonably, therefore, that these widespread structural features impede a solid male gender identity and promote early psychic identification with the more accessible parent, the mother.

(Gilmore 1987:14–15)

Plutarch tells us that once Alexander the Great received a letter from Antipater denouncing Alexander’s mother. But “after reading a long letter which Antipater had written in denunciation of her, he said Antipater knew not that one tear of a mother effaced ten thousand letters” (*Lives: Alexander* 39.7.688 Loeb). On the other hand, there is an abiding feeling that the world is secretly run by women, another perpetual challenge to masculine autonomy.

Fathers and sons

Gilmore likewise makes a point, deriving from the previous one, that has to do with the traumatic rupture of removal of the boy from female society into the society of men. This removal takes place without ritual and symbolism: there is no facilitating male initiation ceremony or rite of passage for this stage. In societies where boys are confined to the feminine domain until puberty or so, adolescent boys are usually subjected to stressful or painful rites of passage by which they “become” men and renounce female associations. Mediterranean societies lack such formalized rituals. Hence, without clear-cut consensual rupture with femininity and without biological markers to signal manhood, each individual male must prove himself according to group expectations. The male lives with the constant threat of being considered feminine unless he can demonstrate otherwise. Hence the need for continual and unrelenting proof focused on honoring the penis as repository of manhood and mirror of masculine ego in the cult of phallic potency through sexual triumphs.

The result is the Mediterranean hypermasculine syndrome, which, as Gilmore notes, “almost always includes a distancing dread of the

feminine” and “a phallogentric worldview.” The dread of and separation from the feminine points to the underlying belief that the masculine is both the overwhelmingly powerful self-definer and inherently endangered. Consequently males are ever vigilant and defensive when it comes to their maleness. Dread of the feminine derives from the residue of primary female identifications which are never fully eliminated. This dread and resulting separation from the female represent a “reaction formation” or masculine protest against unacceptable wishes to be like the mother, to be dependent, not to have a penis.

The result is a distancing dread of the feminine and is the phallogentric worldview.... A major theme in this attitude is its defensiveness: it is a panegyric to what is, the phallus, since this contributes the minimal anatomical definition of a cherished manhood. But it is also a prophylactic stance, reflecting a fear of loss, or impairment, or diminishment of the male genital through the hostile action and shaming of other men or domineering women.... Hence the compensatory hypervaluation of the male genital and the almost priapic obsession with phallic assertion in the ethnomasculinities of the Mediterranean societies.

(Gilmore 1987:13)

Relative to clarifying the social outcomes of the gender division of labor in the Mediterranean, Gilmore observes:

[T]here is the unusual degree of absence of Mediterranean males generally from domestic affairs, reinforced by the rigid separation of public and private worlds...there is lack of institutionalized *rites-de-passage* from boyhood to a public conferral of masculinity in the Mediterranean cultures.... A rigid spatial and behavioral segregation of the sexes and the consequent domestic division of labor is probably the most striking physical characteristic of Mediterranean community life.... The virtual absence of males from the home implies that boys as well as girls are reared until puberty in an exclusively female environment.

(Gilmore 1987:14)

It is unmanly for a father to stay around the house, to remain much in the house, to be concerned and involved with childrearing, not to avoid childrearing concerns, to give any child care, to act other than

formally and distantly with his children, to stay remote from his children.

As for *fathers and daughters*, we might note here that their lives are rather completely separated. A daughter is subordinated to her fathers authority, rarely sees him in a situation suitable for interacting and remains with him for but a short part of her lifetime. At the earliest marriageable age she is surrendered to her in-laws after proper ritual passage focused on the marriage transaction (on the social psychology of family relations, see Cuisenier 1975:438–47).

TYPICAL PERSONALITY FEATURES

In comparison with mainstream US Bible readers, the Mediterraneans depicted in those texts were expected to be ever vigilant concerning their gender-based behavior. Here, given space constraints, I focus mainly on males since this is the general thrust in ancient Mediterranean literature. Males were free to express their feelings unreservedly. When they described themselves they tended to exaggerate. They believed that important events in their lives were caused by persons rather than impersonal causes. Finally, in their conversations, they felt it important to communicate how they felt far more than to articulate some interesting fact or other. Let us consider each of these features in turn.

Expression of feelings

Mediterranean cultures, as previously noted, usually provide a vent through which suppressed emotions can, at least occasionally, break into the open. This culturally approved outlet is the flare-up of temper, flashes of anger, aggression and violence, which are condoned by society and readily forgiven. This type of behavior tends to veer from one extreme to the other, being polarized between the two contrasting syndromes of self-control and wild outbursts of aggressiveness. While these seizures last, Mediterraneans are permitted to follow their feelings and go on a rampage. Hostility can thus easily become non-rational. Once they pass, sincere contrition follows, accompanied by bafflement and a total lack of comprehension of what one has done and how one could have done it. This sort of behavior, however, is generally confined to males, who are otherwise expected to show their emotions. Thus that Jesus felt sorry for various people is frequently noted (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke

7:13). Herod (Matt. 2:16), Jesus' fellow villagers in Nazareth (Luke 4:28), the ten against James and John (Matt. 20:24), the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 21:15) and Jesus himself (Mark 10:14) are described as indignant, i.e. showing displeasure, indignation, for some reason or other. Paul's letter to the Galatians fits this category as well. Males who do not show their feelings are suspected of lacking a vital human trait, hence not dependable (Patai 1983:67). The show of emotion was an attribute of the honorable man. Thus we are told that Caesar pronounced a eulogy for his young wife (which was unusual since this was done only for older women) resulting in popular sympathy "so that they were fond of him, as a man who was gentle and full of feeling" (Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar* 5.2 Loeb). Caesar burst into tears when reading and thinking about Alexander's kingship as a youth (11.3 Loeb); and he wept at the death of his mortal enemy, Pompey (48.2 Loeb). Similarly, "Cato was the only one to commend his course [Pompey's], and this from a desire to spare the lives of his fellow citizens; for when he saw even those of the enemy who had fallen in the battle, to the number of a thousand, he burst into tears, muffled up his head, and went away" (41.1 Loeb). Finally, when Cicero took leave of his brother, "after embracing one another and weeping aloud, they parted" (Plutarch, *Lives: Cicero* 47.2 Loeb). Males read and write poetry (along with the poems in the Bible, note, for example, how Alexander the Great often sponsored poetry contests, mentioned by Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 4.6.666; 29.1.681 Loeb). They are not expected to be too logical. They embrace and kiss in public (Matt. 26:48 and parallels; Luke 7:45; Acts 20:37; Rom. 16:16, etc.) and speak of their emotional attachment to each other (Phil. 1:8; Christians are urged to be emotionally attached to each other: Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:1; 1 Pet. 3, 8). Women are considered to be coldly practical (see Prov. 31:10–31).

Cathartic communication

As is generally known, the strong group persons described in the gospel narratives and Pauline letters are perceived as "endowed with a heart for thinking, along with eyes that fill the heart with data; a mouth for speaking, along with ears that collect the speech of others; and hands and feet for acting." In the abstract, human beings "consist of three mutually interpenetrating yet distinguishable zones of interacting with the environment: the zone of emotion-fused thought, the zone of self-expressive speech,

and the zone of purposeful action” (Malina 1993:74). Lack of alignment or overemphasis of one of these three functional planes of human existence, thoughts, words and actions is often indicative of ill health (see Pilch 1985).

Relatively to communication, we might say that when Mediterraneans speak with each other, their main focus is interpersonal in that the purpose of their interchange, no matter what else is going on, is always to maintain emotional ties, to get along, to continue some personal interaction or ingroup relation. It would seem that the thought processes of Mediterraneans are relatively less focused on “what is really going on” than on how the group feels about what is really going on. Consider the trouble to which post-Enlightenment biblical scholars have gone to figure out the content, the intellectual message, of the gospel! What, in fact, is the message of the gospel? Is this a misstated question?

It would seem that our Christian sources themselves are instances of interactive, cathartic-oriented communication. We read that both Jesus and Paul were after people changing their attitudes, not information sharing. Their appeal was one of emotion-fused thought, and hence far more than a simple intellectual solicitation. And the change they sought meant largely a greater relationship of attachment and loyalty to the God of Israel (Jesus) or to God in Christ (Paul). Similarly, the gospel narratives themselves tell far less about “what really happened” than about how group members ought feel about what happened and so be further attached in loyalty to God. In this the gospels are quite true to their cultural environment. To use categories other than those from which the documents derived will only lead to dissatisfaction and frustration, as demonstrated by reaction to modern, post-Enlightenment scholarship.

Since catharsis is far more significant than the content of communication, the mere verbal expression of a state of affairs is taken by the speaker as if it were an actual fact in evidence. What this means is that rather frequently, conversation in a Mediterranean setting that is not pragmatically oriented (i.e. directed to some concrete outcome, such as buying and selling) generally has no focal, intellectual meaning, even no conceptual message at all. Such dialogue is a series of statements or expressions that shows conversation partners not what a speaker is thinking but what is in the speaker’s heart, how a person feels about a situation. Thus conversation is expected to allow one to empty oneself out, to cleanse oneself emotionally. In literature, the genre of this sort of conversation is a

diary or journal, while as an oral form it is not unlike soap opera monologues. A person thus thinks aloud, listening to himself or herself in an expression of feeling and attitude. Thus the Mediterranean custom of several persons speaking at once. The subject is always the collectivistic self, always put into situations of pressure by others. While US soaps have the individualistic self measuring its own claims to happiness, or stating its own consciousness, or simply letting off steam, Mediterranean conversations have the collectivistic self measuring its own claims to honor, stating its own feelings about authorities, letting off steam provoked by pressures of opposed groups. What matters in the Mediterranean perspective is not the actual state of things, but the emotions which the state of things arouses. This cathartic dimension of conversation might well account for numerous features of the Pauline letters as well as the dialogues that become monologues in John.

Since catharsis, emotion, and interpersonal loyalties are intimately bound up in communication, the limitations of the real usually do not serve as a check upon what is being ideally described. Consider the divine birth of Alexander the Great from Olympias and the God Zeus Ammon (Plutarch, *Lives: Alexander* 2–4 Loeb). Of the divine Alexander, Plutarch observes: “In general, he bore himself haughtily towards the Barbarians, and like one fully persuaded of his divine birth and parentage, but with the Greeks it was within limits and somewhat rarely that he assumed his own divinity” (28.1.681 Loeb). At death, Alexander’s body stayed incorrupt: “Most writers, however, think that the story of the poisoning is altogether a fabrication; and it is no slight evidence in their favor that during the dissensions of Alexander’s commanders, which lasted many days, his body, although it lay without special care in places that were moist and stifling, showed no sign of such a destructive influence, but remained pure and fresh” (77.3.707 Loeb). In the context of such biographical features, John’s gospel does not seem terribly unusual.

There is thus among Mediterraneans a relatively greater discrepancy between thought and speech on the one hand and action on the other. In action, one is hemmed in by experience and the reality which it leads one to perceive. Yet for Mediterranean ingroup members, thoughts and words have higher and independent truth rating; they manage to retain a relative independence from reality (see Patai 1983:310–11). As the focus of ingroup interaction moves from the real to the ideal, the honor of all involved is duly maintained

and protected, if not increased. The emotion generated serves to bind group members more closely over against outgroups and to fill them with the mutually felt esteem needed to carry on in an often hostile world.

Personal causality

In a setting where the value of group membership and personal causality far outweigh goods, things and objective or “scientific” explanations, nearly all significant dimensions of living are personalized as well. Patai cites Tütsch (1959:141–2), who notes:

[T]he personalization of problems goes so far in the Arab countries that even material, technical difficulties accompanying the adoption of elements of Western civilization are considered as resulting from human malevolence and felt to be a *humiliation*. The Arabs, who have accepted Western law and European institutions, whose clothing, food, means of transportation, yes, life as a whole, are more and more determined by Western technology and science, of course experience always new “humiliations” which in other places would be considered normal difficulties of growth, and eliminated. Where the Arab encounters an obstacle he imagines that an enemy is hidden. Proud peoples with a weak “ego structure” tend to interpret difficulties on their life path as personal humiliations and get entangled in *endless lawsuits* or throw themselves into the arms of *extremist political movements*. A *defeat in elections*, a risk that every politician must face in a democracy, appears to be such a humiliation that an Arab can thereby be induced without further ceremony to take up arms against the victor and the legal government, or to ally himself with those who promise him success the next time.

(Patai 1983:284)

What Tütsch says of Arabs holds for village Mediterraneans in general. The point is that the Mediterranean feels enemies and humiliations where Americans make allowances for material, objective and, in any event, impersonal difficulties. Similarly, successful outcomes when dealing with material, objective and impersonal difficulties such as lighting a fire, slaughtering an animal, finding something lost, or completing any task is considered triumph, a “victory” in which an enemy is vanquished.

Consequently, it would seem extremely important for the Bible readers to realize that to explain defeats and successes in terms of impersonal, objective factors instead of attributing them to personal factors would be to move into an unfamiliar terrain for a first-century Mediterranean. In other words, the explanatory models with which we are at home are totally alien to anything and anyone we might encounter in the Bible. The personages of the Bible keep personal factors operative, and this exclusively. And with personal factors operative, success indicates ability to overcome personal antagonists with the gratification that comes from this, while failure means personal impotence with the depression that this provokes.

CONCLUSION

This chapter is intended to provide a general orientation for the modern Bible reader as he or she attempts to imagine the types of persons found in the pages of his or her scriptural reading. I have suggested that first-century Mediterranean persons were strongly group-embedded, collectivistic persons. They were most concerned with family integrity. Since they were group-oriented, they were socially minded, attuned to the values, attitudes and beliefs of their ingroup. Because of their ingroup enculturation, they were used to assessing themselves and others in terms of stereotypes often explained as deriving from the geographical location of their group. Furthermore, since these persons were strongly embedded in a group, their behavior was controlled by strong social inhibitions along with a general lack of personal inhibition. Their prevailing social institution was kinship; familism was foremost in people's minds. And the primary way in which they made sense of the world was in terms of gender, by viewing persons as well as things, time and space in terms of male and female (for more information, see Malina and Neyrey 1991; 1996).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berman, Ronald (1987) *How Television Sees its Audience: A Look at the Looking Glass*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Boehm, Christopher (1984) *Blood Revenge: The Anthropology of Feuding in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Bouhdiba, A. (1977) "The Child and the Mother in Arab-Muslim Society."

- pp. 126–41 in L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz (eds) *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies*. Princeton: Darwin.
- Bowen, Murray (1978) *Family Therapy as Clinical Practice*. New York: Aronson.
- Callan, Terrance (1987) “Competition and Boasting: Toward a Psychological Portrait of Paul.” *Journal of Religious Studies* 13:27–35.
- (1990) *Psychological Perspectives on the Life of Paul: An Application of the Methodology of Gerd Theissen*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen.
- Carroll, Michael P. (1986) *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cuisenier, Jean (1975) *Economie et parenté: leurs affinités de structure dans le domaine turc et dans le domaine arabe*. Paris/La Haye: Mouton.
- Doohan, Helen (1984) *Leadership in Paul*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier.
- (1989) *Paul’s Vision of Church*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier.
- Eickelman, Dale F. (1989) *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Fuchs, Esther (1982) “Status and Role of Female Heroines in the Biblical Narrative.” *Mankind Quarterly* 23:149–60.
- Geertz, Clifford, (1976) “‘From the Native’s Point of View’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding.” pp. 221–37 in Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (eds) *Meaning and Anthropology*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Gilmore, David D. (1982) “Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11:175–205.
- (1987) “Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor.” pp. 2–21 in David D. Gilmore (ed.), *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association #22). Washington: American Anthropological Association.
- Gilmore, Margaret M. and David D. Gilmore (1979) “‘Machismo’: A Psychodynamic Approach (Spain).” *Journal of Psychological Anthropology* 2:281–300.
- Hall, Edward T. (1959) *The Silent Language*, Garden City: Doubleday.
- (1983) *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Hanson, K.C. (1989a) “The Herodians and Mediterranean Kinship, Part I: Genealogy and Descent.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19:75–84.
- (1989b) “The Herodians and Mediterranean Kinship, Part II: Marriage and Divorce.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19:142–51.
- (1990) “The Herodians and Mediterranean Kinship, Part III: Dowry and Inheritance.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20:10–21.
- Malina, Bruce J. (1986) *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation*. Atlanta: John Knox.
- (1993) *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Malina, Bruce J. and Jerome H. Neyrey (1991) “First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual.” pp. 67–96 in Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.) *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

- (1996) *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Patai, Raphael (1983) *The Arab Mind*. Rev. ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Pilch, John J. (1985) "Healing in Mark: A Social Science Analysis." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15:142–50.
- Prochaska, James (1979) *Systems of Psychotherapy: A Transtheoretical Analysis*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey.
- Räsänen, Heikki (1986) *The Torah and Christ: Essays in German and English on the Problem of the Law in Early Christianity*. Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran Julkaisuja 45. Helsinki: The Finnish Exegetical Society.
- Rappaport, Uriel (1976) "Josephus Ben Matitiahū [Flavius]: Remarks on his Personality and Deeds." *Ha-Umah* 15:89–95 (English trans. M.Mor).
- Saadawi, Nawal El (1982) *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Boston, MA:Beacon.
- Sabbah, Fatna A. (1984) *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*. Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland. New York: Pergamon.
- Saunders, George R. (1981) "Men and Women in Southern Europe: A Review of Some Aspects of Cultural Complexity." *Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology* 4:435–66.
- Seelye, H.Ned (1985) *Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.
- Selby, Henry (1974) *Zapotec Deviance*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Stannard, David E. (1980) *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stendahl, Krister (1963) "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West." *Harvard Theological Review* 56:199–215.
- Theissen, Gerd (1987) *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*. Trans. John P.Galvin. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Todd, Emmanuel (1985) *The Explanation of Ideology: Family Structures and Social Systems*. Trans. David Garrioch. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Tütsch, Hans E. (1959) *Vorderasien in Aufruhr*. Zurich: Neuen Zürcher Zeitung.
- Vanhoye, Albert (1986) "Personnalité de Paul et exégèse paulinienne." pp. 3–15 in Albert Vanhoye (ed.), *L'apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style et conception du ministère*. Louvain: Louvain University/Peters.