

## RELIGION IN THE IMAGINED NEW TESTAMENT WORLD: MORE SOCIAL SCIENCE LENSES

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### Abstract

*The task of New Testament interpretation entails reading sources with the use of comparative scenarios culled from the first century Mediterranean world and the interpreter's contemporary world (Malina 1991). A basic set of scenarios for New Testament interpretation requires some sort of explicit consideration of the comparative ways in which people understood themselves and their living together with others. Living with others inevitably entailed a perception of how a person's life was controlled by others and how to approach those others who controlled one's life. Obviously this perception of being controlled and of connection to the one(s) who controlled is fundamental to the social institution of politics (or government) as well as religion. For religion is always rooted in analogies drawn from the social experience of being controlled and of connection to those who control, whether in a kinship or a political framework. The purpose of this essay is to obviate anachronistic assessments of religion in New Testament times by situating the institution of religion within the framework provided by the stages of social bonding.*

### Introduction

The history of religion as institution can be articulated in the following way. Originally, religion was embedded exclusively in kinship. The reason for this is that in a presumed tribal organization, all social institutions were undifferentiated and coterminous, hence embedded in a kinship matrix that formed the tribe. Subsequently religion was embedded in both kinship and politics. The rise of central administrative places, the pre-Industrial city-state, saw the differentiation of the kinship group from the political institution, perhaps a specialized kin group that saw to collective effective action for the entire population. With this differentiation, religion takes two forms: kinship religion and political religion. Finally, with further differentiation resulting in the disembedding of religion to become a freestanding institution, the separation of 'church and state' is conceivable. The same stages are true of economics as institution. It too was embedded exclusively in kinship, then in kinship and politics and then disembedded to become a freestanding institution.

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What was the nature of the social pathways that allowed for interaction in this sphere of social control? Recently James (1992) has proposed a model in this regard relative to what he calls 'abstract 'community'.'. His model describes three stages, from tribe to kingdom to nation. Each stage marks a change in kind of relationship between controllers and the controlled. James calls the change, ontological, a radical step-level change. The purpose of this essay is to take James' contribution seriously and develop a typology of the main modes of social control in vogue in the New Testament period in order to compare it with the main modes employed in our own day. I focus solely on the New Testament period and today since my task is to develop a comparative social scientific model for New Testament interpretation. For persons not used to thinking abstractly, such a typology might sound a bit presumptuous since it will encompass two-thousand years and more of quite varied cultural experience. After all, are not human beings infinitely and indefinitely varied and variable? From the viewpoint of idiosyncratic and individualistic psychology, that undoubtedly seems true, at least for persons enculturated in individualistic ways (see Triandis 1989). But the typology I wish to present is a social one, and human social forms, like human social institutions, are quite limited in number (see Turner 1991).

The value of such a comparative model is that it renders explicit the often invisible lenses through which we at the close of the twentieth century consider our world. The model equally allows us to put on another set of lenses with which to view the world of Jesus and our ancestors in Christian faith. With these 'control' lenses in place, I will then consider 'religion' as it would look in the first century and in our own day.

## 1. Modes of Social Control

It is common knowledge that social interaction in the ancient Mediterranean followed the pathways of face-to-face living for the most part. Greene offers the following assessment:

An important observation which has emerged from fieldwork studies of the Roman countryside in Spain, Gaul, Britain and Syria is the peripheral nature of towns, which indicates that a wide range of trading transactions must have been conducted in rural markets. Of course, ancient historians have stressed for some time that no sharp division really existed between urban and rural life, and that their separation is an intrusive concept from the medieval period or the modern industrialised world. In the Mediterranean area, substantial sections of the populations of many towns have farmed the surrounding areas from their urban base right up to the present day. Literary sources make it clear that wealthy Romans owned large town houses and also country estates; in the provinces, some administrative capitals may have held that role not because of any intrinsic importance, but because they were located at a convenient meeting-place for the wealthy members of the town council, the curia. Recent archaeological research in the gardens of Pompeii and the 'black earth' of London has demonstrated that the division between town and

country should be blurred even further, both in early Roman Italy and late Roman Britain. (Greene 1986: 140).

Peter Brown observes that: 'The *face-to-face* community is the unit of Late Antique religious history' (Brown 1993: 3), and perhaps even earlier in Mediterranean history. But what is the meaning of a 'face-to-face community' with its characteristic face-to-face social control?

Perhaps the best way to imagine such a social structuring of relationship and the meaning it generates is to situate face-to-face social interaction within the series of modes of interaction that eventually emerged in European history. James, in his analysis of the historical modes of political institutionalization, notes three significant and step-level changes. He labels these sequential changes: face-to-face, agency-extended and disembodied-extended relations. The point in question is how did those controlling others in the polity have effect. First in the tribal setting, face-to-face social relations were quite normative in social interactions. Then with the rise of feudal kingdoms in the European Middle Ages, an agency-extended mode emerged typified by the presence of agents or middlemen normally interacting on behalf of significant persons, from pope and king down. Finally, about two-hundred and fifty years ago, with the emergence of the nation-state, a new mode characterized by James as the disembodied-extended mode arose. In this last mode individuals interact with no actual person at all, but only with disembodied extensions of significant persons, as presented in various media, beginning with print, and followed by radio, film, television, videocassette messages and the like.

In sum, characteristic forms of in-group political interaction from tribe to kingdom to nation-state have become increasingly abstract, even though as each form emerges, it seems quite concrete to those socialized in the form (James 1992: 335). We, for instance, consider T.V. images as rather concrete representations of concrete reality; when we watch and listen to a presidential address, we believe the president is actually, concretely, speaking to us. Of course, it is only electric impulses that we experience, not another actual and real person. For mnemonic reasons, I would label the forms of political control set out by James as (1) face-to-face; (2) face-to-mace; (3) face-to-space. The first looks to interaction with somebody who personally exerts direct control, whether symbolically (that is authority) or physically (that is force). Obviously this form of control does not disappear in subsequent periods. What does happen, though, is that it ceases to be the prevailing or characteristic mode in the political institution of the society. For eventually, face-to-face interaction gave way to the second mode in which those politically controlled interacted with persons serving as agents for those wielding authority. Finally a further mode emerged which looks to interaction with no 'body' at all, just with squiggles on a printed page, light on a screen, or electrons coursing over the face of a T.V. tube. With this last mode, persons wielding political authority control by making their directives known by means of disembodied media; after all it is not their 'personal' authority that they wield, but that of 'the people.'

James explains that agency-extended forms of control and interaction (what I call 'face-to-mace') actually emerged 'in a quasi-regulated way in feudal Europe' (James 1992: 322). For biblical scholars, this poses a problem. How might one characterize the mode of control that we all learn about with the emergence of various imperial systems before the European feudal period (for example: Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman)? Those systems were no longer characterized by the face-to-face forms of tribal groups. And yet, as James indicates, these empire systems did participate in some of the features of feudal agency-extended social formations. However the key characteristic that he notes for the agency-extended mode is that representatives or agents of central institutions, including clerics and tax collectors, came to minister to geographically separated groups of people who, at the face-to-face level, continued to have few points of connection with other groups. Now these representatives or agents served the institution, the monarchy, the church. Obviously to serve monarchy or church is to serve a personification, that is, to serve the institution personified. Now it seems to me that this is the rather central difference between the feudal agency-extended form and previous forms. For ancient emperors did utilize agency-extended forms of control, only the agents served emperors not empires; they served a specific monarch, not the monarchy. Thus with a change of kings, former staff and clients 'fall from grace' or must establish new relations (see 1 Kings 2:1-9). In the Roman empire, the Roman bureaucracy was the *familia Caesaris*, not some enduring 'civil service.' The emperor's role toward his ingroup was that of patron; what he doled out was favor; and persons who facilitated access to the emperor were brokers or intermediaries (see Millar 1977). Now since the modes of political control and access to controllers in vogue during the pre-New Testament period and during the New Testament period were essentially patronage oriented, and since agents were in fact intermediaries or brokers, I would call this mode broker-extended. Patronage essentially 'kin-ifies' relations between the controlled and those in control (see Malina 1988). Hence the institutionalization of patron-client relations would mark a meaningful movement from face-to-face kinship embedded politics to a new form. This form was politics disembedded from kinship; it was a free standing patronage politics form. What the controlled populace sought was favor (Latin: *gratia*, and Greek: *charis*), never rights, since they had none. In the mnemonic sequence I previously suggested, I would call this second stage (of four, now) 'face-to-grace.'

Face-to-face interactions presuppose comradeship with one's family and village mates. Face-to-grace interactions are based on comradeship with one's fellow fictive and non-fictive ethnics in an *oikoumene* under the control of a patron, hence with a politically central personage with whom one might have fictive kin ties. Face-to-mace, agency-extended interactions are based on comradeship with fellow subjects of a local king or bishop, with fellow worshippers of a local god, vertically associated in a hierarchy of lesser and higher kings, bishops and sacred places. Finally, face-to-space, disembodied-extended interactions look to fellow citizenship with a national mass of permanently anonymous strangers. While all four forms of social interaction exist in the contemporary world, such was obviously not the case in Mediterranean antiquity.

## **2. Modes of Political Social Interaction: An Overview.**

The contemporary nation-state is actually less than three hundred years old. Yet that form of polity seems such a stable and permanent social form that many biblical interpreters speak as though human beings must have always had equivalents of it. Ever since sedentarization and the founding of 'city-states,' from Neolithic Jericho in the West to Mohenjo Daro and Harappa in the Indus Valley, there must have been nation-states. Yet the fact is that those ancient 'city-states' were face-to-face communities. It seems that two significant step-level changes were required before the nation-state emerges. On the other hand, for understanding the New Testament, it was that form of political social interaction that emerged with ancient city empires, from Assyria onward, that is most significant. I consider each briefly (for these perspective, I am indebted to James).

### **2.1. Face-to-Face Modes of Social Interaction.**

Face-to-face integration maintains the continuing association of persons predominantly by co-presence. Social integration is rooted in directly embodied and/or particularized mutuality of persons in social contact. Tribal society has this level as its sole form. The limitations and possibilities of interaction are defined by the modalities of co-presence, reciprocity, continuity and concrete otherness. Kinship based on the existential significance of being born of a particular body into lines of extended blood relation is a key social form of face-to-face integration. A person remains bound by blood or affinity even after death, hence ancestorism is a significant feature of such groups.

This mode of integration is not 'natural.' As a matter of fact, it has to be learned and attended to after it has disappeared as the central organizing principle of a group. For example, James notes that the proverb: 'Blood is thicker than water' dates only to the early 17th century. The demand for national unity based on 'blood and soil' as Zionists and Nazis articulate it, arises only long after the ontological setting of being bound by kinship and locale has been qualitatively reconstituted. The need to reconstitute 'blood and soil' as the basis for nation building indicates how radically this mode of integration has changed.

Therefore instances of face-to-face interaction are constitutively different when set in the context of subsequent, radically different levels of integration. They are radically different today from what they were in the past.<sup>1</sup>

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1. In spite of Zionist 'Bible games' and U.S. Christian fundamentalist biblical warrants, the present occupiers of Palestine are strong in ideology but quite weak in their understanding of the biblical promises of land and seed forever. To begin with, the land cannot be owned in face-to-face arrangements; rather it supports tribes and is owned by God. And second, centrally focused seed or blood relations require patriarchy and the central role of the patriarch. Democracy and the modern nation-state that underpins it is diametrically opposed to 'blood and soil' ideologies. But totalitarianism, even in the form of Israel's 'master race democracy,' requires some form of 'blood and soil' ideology.

## 2.2. Face-to-Grace Modes of Social Interaction.

Broker-extended integration maintains the continuing association of persons with those in control of their well-being predominantly by means of interpersonal relations with those who can mediate with sources of power. Those in control exercise their authority by means of a bureaucracy consisting of personal representatives, often slaves, who form the imperial or elite household (for the household of Caesar, see Weaver 1972). The representatives of the emperor themselves, being household members, really have no power on their own; they have no forces at their command. Yet they can be effective on behalf of others because of their influence and inducement abilities. Imperial bureaucrats interact with geographically separated groups by means of local elites, themselves often personally (face-to-face) connected to the emperor (such as Herod the Great). Just as merchants selling the identical wares were grouped together in the same quarter of the ancient city, yet were not in competition, so too with brokers. There really were no competitive networks of brokers; instead there were brokers with varied clientele, with different specializations, with access to different sources of power along a vertical continuum (see Wallace-Hadrill 1990).

Ancient empires, from Assyrian to Roman, were personal bureaucratic empires, with their bureaucracy personally beholden to the emperor. Thanks to Hellenism, the Roman Empire conceived of its Greek speaking adherents as civilized, as constituting the central occupants of the inhabited world, the *oikoumene*. They communicated through the medium of a civilized and civilizing language (Greek) linking various ethnic communities to a cosmopolitan order of power. Yet this classical ecumenical community linked by civilizing language had a character distinct from the imagined communities of modern nations. One crucial difference is that English (once dimly French) is not the language of civilization, but of economics. Furthermore, Roman confidence in the unique civilizing quality of Greek and thus Roman ideas about admission to membership in their *oikoumene*. Romans looked with approval on barbarians who painfully learned Hellenistic (rather than Roman) ways. People grouped in ethnic entities eventually considered each other part of a common *oikoumene*, the inhabited 'household' world under the patronage of the emperor of all. Roman expansion by conquest brought civilization in its wake. While insisting on fitting recompense, for their efforts, Romans sought to civilize all the inhabitants of the *oikoumene*, not to simply conquer them.<sup>2</sup> And it was Hellenism that the Romans

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2. Roman conquest entailed tribute and taxation. To call such conquest and its aftermath 'oppression' is quite anachronistic. 'Oppressed' people are oppressed essentially because they are denied their rights. But no one in the period knew he or she had 'rights,' legal, human or otherwise. There was the respect due to certain persons by custom (e.g., to 'honor' father and mother), but to call this a 'right' is to switch cultural perspectives. Perhaps it is important to note here that as regards the culture of the first century Mediterranean, 'materialism was not deeply engrained in the culture' (Humphreys 1993: xx). To take goods and services in exchange for civilization would be considered quite fair. Goods could be material and non-material and reciprocity would follow regardless of the physical or non-physical nature of the goods in question. It was later in the Medieval period that simony became a problem; it was not so for early Christians who believed in a material recompense for preaching, teaching and perhaps healing (e.g., 1 Tim 5:18; a tradition found already in Matt 10:10 -- food for teaching; Luke 10:7 -- wages for teaching).

sought to propagate, not Roman power (see Veyne 1989: 385-415). The contiguous centripetal circles of ethnic groups in the *oikoumene* was replicated in the ethnic enclaves of various *poleis* (cities) after the model of the catholic empire that Alexander envisioned. *Patria* is still a person's birthplace, the *pater* still has supreme control over the kin group. Yet, at face-to-face level, the *pater* extends to one's patron as well, and the *patria* covers the birthplace of all who would seek patronage. It was the *pater patriae*, the supreme patron of the fatherland, who deserved supreme honor (the title of August, Cicero and others; see Elliott 1990: 176).

Of course Hellenistic peoples of the empire believed in the non-arbitrariness of the spoken sign. The signs were emanations of higher reality, not randomly fabricated representations of it. Think of 'Alpha and Omega' as summing up the nature of God in Revelation, or the fact that the 'name' of a being signified its essential reality. In effect, ontological reality is best apprehensible through a single, privileged system of re-presentation: the civilizing language of Greek, the language of Greco-Roman Hellenism. And, as civilizing language it was imbued with an impulse largely foreign to nationalism. There was, in fact, no nationalism in ancient empires. There were ethnic groups defined and determined by place of birth and nurture and sky overhead, but no 'nations' as in 'nationalism'. To live in the *oikoumene* was to be civilized, and the civilizing language of Greek encapsulated the impulse towards conversion. Conversion, as usual in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, did not mean the acceptance of particular religious tenets. Rather it meant a sort of resocialization through the gateway of the culture shock that comes with being engulfed in a culture different from one's native experience. A Hellenistic person would consider it a sort of alchemic absorption into the life of the *oikoumene*. The barbarian becomes 'Greek,' that is Hellenized. The whole nature of a person's being is malleable.

The Old Testament was translated, hence translatable, into civilized language; it was as civilizable as persons who spoke Hebrew, Aramaic or any other Semitic language. The New Testament, in turn, was written in the civilizing language itself, in Greek. For Christians, the Word of God, the sacred speech, was the person Jesus, not the New Testament documents. Within Christian groups, all languages were equidistant (and thus interchangeable) signs for the world, quite separate from the personal Word of God (apart from Alpha and Omega and the various untranslated utterances: Maran atha, Talitha Qumi, Amen, Abba, Alleluja).

Discreet social entities consists fundamentally of ethnic groups located on the land of their birth, covered by a segment of the sky that impacted on group members and influenced ethnic traits. Group boundaries were determined by the presence of the last of group members in a given landscape. For people in this context, elite 'lords' were the only imaginable form of social control. To be 'lord' meant to have total control of persons, animal and things in one's domain. This was right and proper. Of course the 'lords' themselves were controlled by local kings, themselves controlled by the

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Similarly, Romans would in no way think it 'exploitation' to take material goods and service in exchange for civilization.

Roman emperor. This was not so much a vertical hierarchy as it was a sequence of precedence laid out horizontally in centripetal fashion over the *oikoumene*.

Face-to-grace control had only aural writing. The technology of writing expands memory techniques, but even as written, documents had to be read aloud. The authority of the document depends on the authority of the reader. Official documents were read by personal representatives of the emperor or king, while documents of revelation were directed to royal personages alone. Sacred documents were to be read and interpreted by personal representatives of the deity (e.g., 2 Kings 22--23, and see Festugière 1950: 336-54).

And of course, the focal behavior controlling interactions looked to patronage and patron-client relations (see Malina 1988; Moxnes 1991). This was the prevailing interactive mode throughout the *oikoumene*.

### 2.3. Face-to-Mace Modes of Social Interaction.

With European feudalism, agency-extended relations between the controlled and the controller emerge. Agency-extended integration maintains the continuing association of persons predominantly by means of representatives of institutions. An agent here is a person who acts on behalf of a person with an institutionalized social role. This is acting as legal representative, as a legally empowered middleman or medium. Agency, the process of exerting power or being in action on behalf of another, is exercised on behalf of an institution, such as religion or the government.

Networks of agency-extension overlapped, often in competition. The bishops agents might conflict with the local lords or the monarchs. An abstract political concept of space was created at this stage. Such abstract space prescinded from persons who occupied space and gave it its social identity. For example, Israel ceased to be the people occupying a given land, but became the land itself. Thus the social identity of space is transformed into real estate. As previously noted, at the face-to-face level, *patria* is a person's birthplace (*pater* has supreme control); at agency-extended level, *patria* is the kingdom the *communis patria*; persons could now kill their very own *pater* for the *patria*. At the face-to-grace level, the bureaucracy consists of the monarch's servants, his *familia*; at the agency-extended level the bureaucracy moves more to servants of the kingdom or state, regardless of the monarch. In Western Christendom, an agency-extended creation, the bureaucracy consists of servants of the church, with the pope himself now 'servant of the servants of God,' the bureaucrats who support him.

Western Christendom as it emerges in feudalism, Islam as well as the Byzantine empire are instances of the agency-extended integration levels. Western Christendom with the Roman Pontiff, in control even of its Holy Roman Emperor, constituted a cosmically central entity through the medium of a sacred language (Latin) linked in a superterrestrial order of power. Islam with its sacred Arabic and Byzantium with its Greek felt quite the same. Yet such sacral communities too linked by sacred languages



had a character distinct from the imagined communities of modern nations. One crucial difference was the older communities' confidence in the unique sacredness of their languages, and thus their ideas about admission to membership. Now, in effect, ontological reality is apprehensible only through a single, privileged system of re-presentation: the truth-language of Church Latin, or Qur'anic Arabic, or Byzantine Scriptures and Fathers (similarly Mandarin Examination Chinese). And, as truth-languages imbued with an impulse largely foreign to nationalism, these languages too embodied the impulse towards conversion. As previously, conversion did not so much the acceptance of particular religious tenets, but total absorption into a way of life: Catholic, Islamic or Orthodox, whatever the case may be. The barbarian unbeliever becomes Christian or Muslim. The whole nature of a person's being is sacrally malleable. The Sacred Scriptures must be preserved in their sacred languages, the languages of the prevailing institutions.

Furthermore, the fundamental conceptions about social groups were centripetal and hierarchical. *Oikoumene* yields to *ekklesia*, or *umma*. The astonishing power of the Pope in Christendom (and *mutatis mutandis* of the Emperor in Byzantium or of the Caliph in Islam) is only comprehensible in terms of a trans-European, 'international,' literate clerical order and a conception of the world, shared by virtually everyone, that the bilingual intelligentsia, by mediating between vernacular and Latin (or Greek or Arabic), mediated between earth and heaven. The awesomeness of papal excommunication (or imperial or caliphate condemnation) reflects this cosmology.

While patrimonial authority (extended kinship, reciprocal loyalty) and patronage continued unabated, there were new face-to-face modalities. At the level of controlling authority, the newest form was 'followership.' 'Followership' here means the highly personal, face-to-face bonding between a chief or central personage and his retinue of near peers. A monarch followership would include locally based agents (*comites* or counts over a 'county'), circulating agents (*missi dominici*), and extended family members serving as bishops or as abbots. From about 800 to 1300 feudal followership was interpreted by Roman law as though it existed from Roman times.

The distinctive form of authority at the agency-extended level was legal authority. Legal authority is ascribed authority, authority conferred on a person because of the office he (or she, e.g., for abbesses) held. In the feudal there was confusion between person based and office based authority, usually in favor of traditional face-to-face values. People eventually believed they owned and were their office. The person was now sacred because he (rarely she) embodied a sacred agency.

Agency-extended integration required the possibility of storing and transmitting information across time and space in a way that stretched the capacities of personal or word-of-mouth memory. Writing here was an embodied medium of extension. It was basic to the stabilization of the varied forms of centrally administered agency extension. Writing here continued to be spoken, oral or prepared writing, hence personalized and concrete utterance, contextualized by the presence of some speaker, the embodied presence of some extended agency for social interaction and integration.

Writing stays aural throughout this state. It becomes ocular, a disembodied medium of extension, only at the next level of integration. Ocular writing, disembodied writing, required a series of separations. Printing would separate speaker from document (15th century); the telegraph separated sender from message (19th century); while ocular writing coupled with low levels of literacy would separate high status and low status languages (20th century).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.4. Face-to-Space Modes of Social Interaction

Disembodied-extended integration maintains the integration of persons by means of networks of connections where modalities of face-to-face interaction, clientelism, and the continuing practices of intermediate agents are not salient features of political control and social relation. In disembodied-extended political social interaction, humans as bodily beings are discounted by technologies of communication and exchange across time and space, the 'information society.' Actually this mode of social interaction emerges only with the nation-state.

The nation-state has its roots in the dawning Humanism of the Renaissance period. At that time a number of persons sensed that the events of classical history and legend and as well as those of the Bible were not separated from the present simply by a span of time. Rather completely different conditions of life existed in the past. The subsequent discovery of new lands made it possible for Europeans to think of Europe as only one among many civilizations, and not necessarily the chosen or the best. Finally, out of multiple experiences and experiments in the Americas, Europeans learned to think in terms of the following imagined realities: nation-states, republican institutions, common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems, and the like. Thinking in terms of these categories entailed the liquidation of their conceptual opposites: dynastic empires, monarchical institutions, absolutisms, subjecthoods, inherited nobilities, serfdoms, ghettos, and so forth.

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3. 'Essentially, I have been arguing that the very possibility of imagining that nation only arose historically when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men's minds. The first of these was the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth, precisely because it was an inseparable part of that truth. It was this idea that called into being the great transcontinental sodalities of Christendom, the Ummah Islam, and the test. Second was the belief that society was naturally organized around and under high centers-monarchs who were persons apart from other human beings and who ruled by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation. Human loyalties were necessarily hierarchical and centripetal because the ruler, like the sacred script, was a mode of access to being and inherent in it. Third was a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical. Combined, these ideas rooted human lives firmly in the very nature of things, giving certain meaning to the everyday fatalities of existence (above all death, loss, and servitude) and offering, in various ways, redemption from them. The slow, uneven decline of these interlinked certainties first in Western Europe, later elsewhere, under the impact of economic change, discoveries' (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drive a harsh wedge between cosmology and history. No surprise then that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways' (Anderson 1991: 36).

Furthermore, the validity and generalizability of the American experience (South America as well as North America) as blueprint were undoubtedly confirmed by the plurality of the independent states that soon arose. In effect, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, a model of the independent national state was available for pirating by human groups around the world (Anderson 1991: 37-65).

Media at this level do not rely on prior face-to-face relationship of sender and audience (newspapers, TV, PC, internet). Yet they assume ontological continuity of the embodied office holder and the disembodied sets of images by which he or she is made present to the governed. The nation-state thus consists of distant, privatized and/or still localized strangers integrated by media as disembodied-extended linkage, providing new immediacy. We are there with a new nationalism at the Olympics, athletic finals and Gulf War. People speak and act in the name of the nation while effectively acting to displace it.

The experience of change, that is time, is made even more abstract. When it comes to tradition, features to be handed down have to be chosen by individuals rather than experienced as engulfing and supporting them. Tradition is now a self-consciously maintained, selected set of practices. And human bodily presence is rendered equally abstract. Physical co-presence has to be chosen by individuals, again rather than engulfing and supporting them. Co-presence is a self-consciously maintained, selected set of persons with whom one might wish to interact, often passively (while watching TV shows, the news, on the phone).

Finally, space too is now extremely abstract. Space is not the land of one's birth and nurture, but rather a territory marked off and controlled by some central power. Allegiance to such territory can be and often is chosen by individuals. Territorial affiliation has to be self-consciously maintained.

## 2.5. Summary of The Four Modes

James concludes that modern nations only become possible within a social formation constituted in the emerging dominance of relations of disembodied extension. With each new level of integration, the previous level is reconstituted in terms of the dominance of the more abstract level, and yet the new level is viewed as equally 'concrete' as the previous one. These levels of social relations are part of the reconstitution of the form of one's circle of everyday associations: with fellow kin, fellow ethnics, fellow subjects, fellow citizens. They do not occur on the same plane of development, but mark step-level, even ontological, changes. Previous levels of ontological being are emptied at the intersection of the old and the new level. Figure 1 on the following page offers a comparative set of traits as regards these modes of political social interaction.

### 3. Antiquity: Face-to-Face and Face-to-Grace Perspectives.

Perhaps the easiest access to the face-to-face and face-to-grace perspectives of antiquity is to draw a sharp picture of the present main mode of social interaction rooted the recent phenomenon of the nation-state. The nation-state is about two-hundred-fifty years old, rooted in the Enlightenment and the various American revolutions of the 18th century. Nations are imagined communities. Anderson notes:

In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson 1991: 6).

Nation-states are imagined in terms of clear 'national' boundaries, well-marked in the soil as one crosses national boundaries, as well as on maps as any atlas will clearly prove. Anderson aptly observes:

These days it is perhaps difficult to put oneself empathetically into a world in which the dynastic realm appeared for most men as the only imaginable 'political' system. For in fundamental ways 'serious' monarchy lies transverse to all modern conceptions of political life. Kingship organizes everything around a high center. Its legitimacy derives from divinity, not from populations, who, after all, are subjects, nor citizens. In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centers, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another. Hence, paradoxically enough, the ease with which pre-modern empires and kingdoms were able to sustain their rule over immensely heterogeneous, and often not even contiguous, populations for long periods of time. (Anderson 1991: 19) 6

Social geographers define territoriality as 'the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area' (Sack 1986: 19).<sup>4</sup> In the face-to-grace *oikoumene* of the Romans, territoriality is like a water-filled sponge in which each ethnic group, like each bubble in a sponge, maintains its own shape while sharing the same water, the water of Romanized Hellenism. In face-to-mace situations, the geographic area over which territoriality is more like ripples emanating from a center, with ever lower and disappearing outward wavelettes marking off the end of central influence. It is only with face-to-space abstract nation-states that territoriality embraces a clearly marked off geographic area and with a governmental claim to sovereign rights over the area and with travelers required to have passports!

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4. 'Territoriality for humans is a powerful geographic strategy to control people and things by controlling area. . . . Territoriality is a primary geographical expression of social power. It is the means by which space and society are interrelated. Territoriality's changing functions help us to understand the historical relationship between society, space, and time' (Sack 1986: 5).

Figure 1: Comparative Chart of Four Modes of Political Social Interaction.

Face-to-Face	Face-to-Grace	Face-to-Mace	Face-to-Space
Paterfamilias.	Patron-Client.	Followership.	Democratic State.
Patriarchal family, generalized reciprocity.	Patronage, reciprocal loyalty of clientship, birth ascribed authority.	Followership of near peers (counts, bishops, etc.), office based ascribed authority.	Democratic rights and obligations, office based on acquired authority.
Person to person contact.	Broker-extended contact.	Agency-extended contact.	Disembodied-extended contact.
Direct contact with authority.	Direct contact with broker, then with authority.	Indirect contact with authority.	No contact with authority.
Wandering and/or fixed place.	Fixed places connected by overlapping networks of personal agents.	Fixed places connected by overlapping networks of bureaucratic agents (clerics).	Mobile populations connected by overlapping networks of information.
People see each other as fellow kin, fellow village mates.	People see each other as fellow ethnics.	People see each other as fellow subjects.	People see each other as fellow citizens.
People associate with authority by co-presence.	People associate with authority by personal representatives or personal agents.	People associate with authority by personal institutional representatives or bureaucrats.	People associate with authority by impersonal institutional representatives or bureaucrats.
Interaction: reciprocal, continuous, with concrete others.	Interaction: reciprocal, sporadic, with concrete patron.	Interaction: centralistic, sporadic, with representatives.	Interaction: centralistic, sporadic, impersonal bureaucrats.
Space is coterminous with extended kin groups: shaped like a single centripetal circle.	Space is coterminous with ethnic groupings: shaped like contiguous centripetal circles.	Space is coterminous with controlled groups: shaped like a tinker-toy configuration.	Space is territorial, clearly marked off and controlled; shaped by boundaries on a land mass.
Patria means birthplace: space is people inhabiting space.	Patria means birthplace: space is people inhabiting space: bureaucracy is familia of reigning king.	Patria is kingdom ruled by monarchy: space is group occupied: bureaucracy is servant class of kingdom.	Patria is territory of the national state: space is territory: bureaucracy is civil service of state.

Language is vehicle of magic: truth language and power language.	Language is vehicle of revelation: sacred language and civilizing language.	Language is vehicle of unique truth, with ontological qualities: sacred language not to be translated.	Language is pragmatic tool of low context society.
Polity coterminous with kin groups and ancestors.	Polity forms imperium of various ethnic groups in vertical form, with various sacred/cosmic centers.	Polity forms single centripetal and hierarchical structure, cosmically central.	Polity is heterogeneous, boundary oriented and horizontal.
Adherents of polity are kin.	Adherents of polity are the civilized.	Adherents of the polity are the saved.	Adherents of the polity are fortunate citizens.
Legitimacy of kin group (polity) derives from divinity.	Legitimacy of king derives from divinity.	Legitimacy of monarchy derives from divinity.	Legitimacy of government derives from the governed.
Polity defined by birth processes.	Polity defined by center and centripetal relations.	State defined by center and porous boundaries.	State defined by demarcated territory.
Information: face-to-face memory.	Information: aural writing, i.e. read aloud by personal representatives.	Information: aural writings, i.e. read aloud by official representatives.	Information: ocular writing, i.e. disembodied communication.
Copresence: individuals are engulfed and supported by the physical presence of others.	Copresence: individuals are engulfed and supported by the physical presence of others.	Copresence: individuals are engulfed and supported by the physical presence of others.	No presence: copresence is chosen, with no one to support much less engulf others.
Tradition rooted in shared memory engulfs and supports the group.	Tradition in written form interpreted by ethnic group specialists to support the group.	Tradition in written form interpreted by officials to support the group.	Traditions self-consciously maintained and selectively culled.
Time rooted in nature and organic processes.	Time rooted in nature and calendric in shape, determined by groups specialists.	Time rooted in social forms (bells, sundials) to guide daily organic rhythms, plus calendars determined by officials.	Time rooted in social forms (clocks, watches) and prescinding from daily organic rhythms.
Space determined by place of kin group's origin and location.	Space determined by ethnic group's origin and location plus greater connecting network.	Space rooted in allegiances to and territories of controlling monarch (or bishop or Pope or sultan).	Space is territorial affiliation and allegiance chosen by the individual.

Any considerate reading of the New Testament requires empathetic assessment of the modes of interaction in face-to-face and face-to-grace societies. Social groups at the time were always ethnically centripetal, arranged in terms of precedence in the *oikoumene*. They were focused on central personages, such as a father in the patriarchal family or local ruler in a kingdom or emperor in the empire. Social structure was concerned with power, hence premised on vertical dimensions. There were no landed, territorial boundaries to mark off any social unit. While farm land had boundary stones, those who farmed the land lived together in villages, where they were bound together in face-to-face living as village mates, often kin. Then there were also common lands to village livestock. But there were no village or town boundaries, and certainly no kingdom or national boundaries (form a comparative model of 'territory,' see Sack 1986: XXX). Lands were known in terms of their inhabitants. For example, the land of Israel did not mean the land called Israel, but the land where an ethnic group of persons called Israel lived. It would seem that modern maps of bible lands are really ethnocentric, not unlike the maps of Africa and the Middle East drawn up by nation-states in the colonial period.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Dealing With Religion Before Nation States

Before the rise of nation-states with their characteristic and presumed separation of church and state, religion must have been part of the state, otherwise how could it be separated out? Yet even biblical scholars as well as historians of religion from societies vaunting separation of church and state as a distinctive feature do not reflect on that contention. For these scholars frequently deal with the 'religion' of ancient Israel or the 'religion' of early Christians without qualification, as though it were so easily disembedded from its institutional moorings in politics and kinship. It is quite common in the world of biblical scholarship as well as among ancient historians to find such straightforward and anthropologically innocent statements as: 'In the ancient world in general, and in Israel in particular, the dominant beliefs and institutions were explicitly religious and were embodied in traditions passed on from generation to generation,' (Collins 1983: 2). Similarly: 'Religious affirmation was the business of the biblical writers, and the business of many of those whose deeds and words have been recorded by them' (Addinall 1994: 137). Most who research and describe ancient religion rarely tell us what it is they are specifically dealing with. Yet some will sprinkle their work with pop-psychological descriptions of the function of religion. For example, MacMullen (1981: 57) informs us that religion serves to satisfy some common emotional wants. Religion is what 'actually stimulates its inhabitants to significantly different levels of emotion in the service of their god or gods' (MacMullen 1981: 65). He even finds modern popular sociology in antiquity: 'It was certainly recognized throughout antiquity . . . that religion served to strengthen the existing social order' (MacMullen 1981: 65). In sum the topic of religion is presumed

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5. Note the bewilderment among Arabs about the recent U.S. insistence on boundaries between Kuwait and Iraq! As for biblical maps, perhaps instead of boundaries marking off Samaria, Galilee etc. with lines, maps ought only have blobs of color indicating the affiliation of the population in given areas.

to be self-evident to the modern reader. And the social settings and functions of religion are equally presumed to have been much as they are today.

In turn, sociologists of religion and social anthropologists in their wake have been in search of generalizable principles for a model of religion that might fit all societies, past and present (see Morris 1987). They have given considerable attention to ancient societies to supplement the limited data concerning the religious life of unadulterated contemporary primitive religious systems. In the attempt to avoid anachronism and ethnocentrism, a number of biblical scholars have turned to the sociology of religion to provide models for the understanding of religion in New Testament times (for example, to Wilson 1975). But since the sociology of religion derives from the study of contemporary religion, it would seem that the best the sociology of religion can do for biblical scholars is to tell us what New Testament people would be like if they lived today.

The situation is quite comparable in the field of economics. Those concerned with comparative economics and economic anthropology witness to a schism based on a methodological dispute labeled the substantivist-formalist (or primitivist-modernist) controversy. Substantivists believe economic systems of the past cannot be understood in terms of modern systems at all. Peasant and other pre-industrial economic systems were always embedded in kinship and or politics (see esp. Polanyi 1968). Hence while all human societies have an economic institution to provision society, this social institution was not the free-standing, separate, object of concern that it has become for us, notably after the 18th century (the Enlightenment, U.S. as Enlightenment experiment, and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776). The economic institution existed substantively, as domestic economy or as political economy, but not as 'the economy.' Formalists would argue that even though this was the case, nevertheless modern principles and models of the economy fit all societies of all times, in their own way (see Lowry 1979; Dalton 1961). This debate and its models are quite on target when it comes to the study of religion. For the fact is a separation of church and state, of religion and politics, was inconceivable until the same period (and in terms of the same ideology) as the split of economics from politics and kinship. For it was the Enlightenment, and the U.S. as Enlightenment experiment, that proposed the dislodging of established religion from politics. If this were indeed a novel step, what was society like before the great separation. Obviously religion was embedded in politics and kinship, just as economics was.

#### 4.1 Basic Social Institutions

Nowadays, for purposes of analysis, it is common to distinguish four basic social institutions or structures. Social institutions are fixed forms of phases of social life. These institutions serve as means or ways to realize basic human values concerned with meaningful human social survival. The four basic social institutions may be called kinship, economics, politics and religion. Briefly, kinship is about naturing and nurturing people; it is held together by commitment (also called: loyalty or solidarity)



and forms a structure of human belonging.<sup>6</sup> Economics is about provisioning a group of people; it is held together by inducement, i.e. the exchange of goods and services, and forms the adaptive structure of a society. Politics looks to effective collective action; it is held together by power and forms the vertical organizational structure of a society. Finally religion deals with the overarching order of existence, with meaning; it is held together by influence: i.e. it provides reasons for what exists and the models that generate those reasons. Hence, religion forms the meaning system of a society, and as such feeds back and forward into the kinship, economic and political systems, unifying the whole by means of some explicit or implicit ideology (see Figure 2 on the next page).

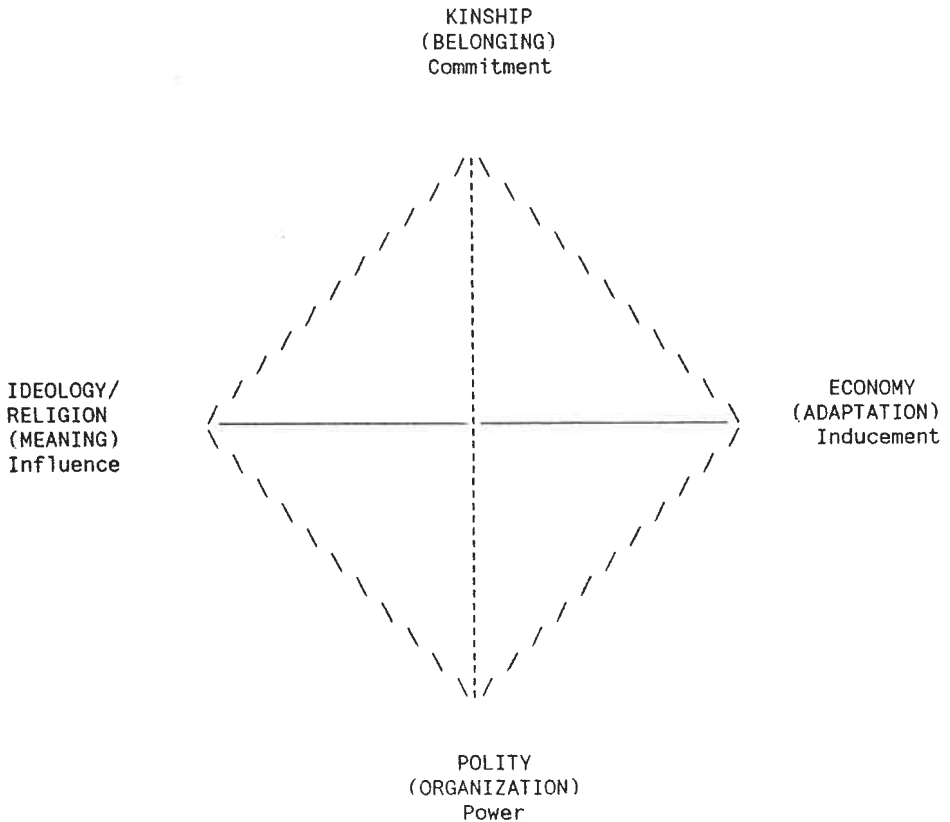
The documents contained in the Bible surely antedate the Enlightenment. The authors of those documents simply did not deal with religion or economics as areas of consideration separable from kinship and politics. Rather it was kinship and political norms that determined how economic and religious perceptions and behaviors were conceived and articulated. In other words, the authors of biblical documents were enculturated in societies in which the social institutions of kinship and politics were the exclusive arenas of life. Biblical documents come from a world where there was domestic religion and political religion, as well as domestic economy and political economy. Hence biblical authors never spoke of economics purely and simply; their language was never used to express systems of meaning deriving from complexified and technologically oriented society. This was not because their language could not be used to speak of economics and religion, of technology and science. Modern Hebrew and Greek speakers do in fact speak of these matters. Rather, the reason for this absence is that the social systems of the period simply did not focus on free-standing economic and religious institutional concerns. Technology was boring, best left to anonymous manual workers and slaves. Consequently, the vocabulary and system of distinctions in the various ideologies expressed in the Bible worked in kinship and politics. Conceptions of the henotheistic '*God of Israel*' are expressed in kinship and political terms. The language of covenant and law was and is derivative of politics, just as the language of worship and ritual was and is derivative of kinship and political forms of behavior. There is no developed biblical terminology descriptive of the pragmatics of adaptation (economics) and those abstract meanings rooted in it. Hence, biblical literature reveals a vocabulary and syntax employed to realize a range of meanings expressing belonging (the dimension rooted in kinship) and power (the dimension rooted in politics), but almost nothing to express reasoned influence (the dimension rooted in the meaning or religious institution) and inducement (the dimension rooted in economics). Rather, influence (religion) is made to work through belonging and power, not on its own terms since these terms are always inflated (wild assertions and exaggerations). Moreover, inducement (economics) has to be converted through and into belonging (e.g., wealth is meaningless unless convertible into non-

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6. Kinship systems are notoriously difficult to describe and define in detail. The same is true of the fictive or pseudo-kinship relations that express and constitute belonging, solidarity or loyalty. For attempts at definition, see Verdon 1981 and notably Keen 1985; for the Roman world see Saller 1984, Hanson 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1994.

or), and thus has no focus in and of itself. This lack of economic focus is replicated in the prohibition of interest for loans (e.g., Deut 23:19-20). Similarly, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, this lack of focus reveals itself in disdain for the status and role of merchant<sup>7</sup> and for acquired wealth (see Malina 1993: 103-7).

Figure 2: Four Basic Institutions of Human Society



Legend: SOCIAL INSTITUTION  
(SOCIETAL SUBSYSTEM)  
Mediating Symbol  
(for further information see Malina 1986a; 1986b)

7. Plutarch notes that merchants are simply not necessary in a society. He tells of Lycurgus who 'brought about the banishment from Sparta of everything not absolutely necessary. And, by reason of this, no merchant, no public lecturer, no soothsayer or mendicant priest, no maker of fancy articles ever made his way into Sparta' (*Sayings of Spartans* 226D Loeb III, 355).

## 4.2. Embedded Religion

Before the emergence of the nation-state embedded religion accounted for the contingency and ineluctability of a human existence. It was the ancestral God or gods, or the God or gods of the city who directly or indirectly controlled a persons particular genetic heritage, gender, life-era, physical capabilities, mother-tongue and so forth. These kinship and political deities offered comfort in face of human suffering: disease, mutilation, grief, age, death. Thanks to the deity's control of fertility, human mortality was transformed into continuity for continuity was symbolized in kinship, with offspring indicating connectedness, fortuity and fatality.

With the Enlightenment and the dusk of Christendom, some thinkers adopt a model of continued progress and change. Such a model entails intimations of step-level changes and positive growth that supercedes what preceded. Such thinking was, of course, hostile to hostile to continuity. But now nation-states come to offer the continuity that religion previously did. The develop the perception of an immemorial national unity, ancient history, and provable existence as a nation (e.g., note how modern Israelis insists Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the ancient kings and prophets, were all 'Jews,' -- presumably following the Mishnah and Talmud). 'France (and every nation-state) is eternal.' Nation-states 'always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny' (Anderson 1991: 9).

Consider figures 3 and 4 on the following pages, describing embedded economics and embedded religion.

Figure 3: Embedded Religion and Modes of Political Interaction:

Face-to-Face:

Economics embedded in kinship = face-to-face interaction normal (barter)

Face-to-Grace:

Economics embedded in politics = face-to-grace or broker extended interaction normal (government controlled political economy and agglomeration of taxes)  
with secondary economics (barter) embedded in kinship = hence face-to-face interaction secondary.

Face-to-Mace:

Economics embedded in politics = face-to-mace or agency extended interaction normal (government controlled political economy with centristic use of resources through taxation; resources used to maintain institutional hierarchy)  
with secondary economics (barter) embedded in kinship = hence face-to-face interaction secondary.

Face-to-Space:

Economics disembedded and free standing = face-to-space or disembodied extended interaction normal (the market)  
with secondary economics embedded in kinship (barter) as well as embedded in politics (government controlled economy) = hence face-to-face and face-to-mace interaction secondary.

Figure 4: Embedded Religion and Modes of Political Interaction**Face-to-Face:**

Religion embedded in kinship = face-to-face interaction normal. Religious behavior like customary barter.

God(s) related to as kin members; ancestorism normal.

**Face-to-Grace:**

Religion embedded in politics = face-to-grace or broker-extended interaction normal; religious behavior is government controlled at central political temples. Power, political and politico-religious, is retrieved from sources thanks to mediation of brokers/mediators: priests, prophets, free-lancers. Structures can be precarious.

However there is a secondary religion embedded in kinship = hence face-to-face interaction secondary, often replicating face-to-grace structures, e.g., home altar, private temple, favorite broker, etc.

God(s) related to as sources of power through brokers; ancestorism normal.

**Face-to-Mace:**

Religion embedded in politics = face-to-mace or agency extended interaction normal; religious behavior is institutionalized within government structure. Power, political and politico-religious, derives from God through agents of higher powers in hierarchical structures. Structures abide.

with secondary religion embedded in kinship = hence face-to-face interaction secondary. Previous private replications of face-to-grace structures now institutionalized as part replications of hierarchical structures, e.g., home shrines, patron saints, favorite priests, etc.

God(s) related to as royalty with agents; ancestorism normal.

**Face-to-Space:**

Religion disembedded and free standing = face-to-space or disembodied extended interaction normal. Religious behavior results from "need" forces (like market forces in economics).

with secondary religion embedded in kinship as well as embedded in politics (civil religion) = hence face-to-face and face-to-mace interaction secondary.

God(s) related to as disembodied force; group embedded God(s) and ancestorism equally available, but quaint.

#### 4.3. Religion and the Modes of Political Social Interaction.

In societies or segments of societies in which social integration is effected largely through face-to-grace interaction, religion is embedded in kinship and politics. The result is that kinship norms, forms and values configure religious behavior of the kinship, domestic sort (e.g., in households and spheres of concern to the kin group). But political norms, forms and values with secondary religion embedded in kinship as well as embedded in politics (civil religion) = hence face-to-face and face-to-mace interaction secondary.

God(s) related to as disembodied force; group embedded God(s) and ancestorism equally available, but quaint.

configure religious behavior of the political, public sort (e.g., temple worship, sacrifice, publicly required rituals for coronation, agriculture, warfare, calendar and spheres of concern to the public and its authorities).

First century embedded religion had both domestic religion and ritual as well as political religion and ritual. Political religion saw to the well-being of the city or town: temples with stone altars on which to sacrifice animals; hence temples smelling of burnt meat with blood, gore, heaps of animal skins; priests to hack up animals; festival days and games marked by a god's presence, multiple deities, divine emperors and equally heroic ancestors and the like. Then there were the stories of the gods and their public benefaction; these stories were publicly sung at festivals or other occasions. People also knew of specialized temples for healing, for divination, for specific devotions to cover distinctive aspects of life. What distinguished ancient religions was that there was no all-purpose religion. Domestic religion, on the other hand, looked to the well-being of the household. Ancestors, protective non-visible persons (genii, demons, spirits), household gods and family stories figured prominently here.

What is distinctive of face-to-face political religion is that it takes the shape of the political institution: rigidly institutionalized in hierarchical mold and made visible in the monarchic state. Whether headed by the Pope and whoever he appoints and controls as emperor and kings in the West, or headed by the Emperor and whoever he appoints and controls as patriarchs and bishops in the East, the fixed hierarchy makes visible the divine hierarchy, headed by the single and sole God, who rules the cosmos so providentially. The topmost person was the agent of God, while those elites below the topmost person were agents of their superiors. Thus in the West, the Pope was the agent of God, 'the vicar of Christ on earth,' the bishops agent of the Pope, priests agents of their bishops -- like that other divine appointee, the king, with his followership. Papal ritual is replicated in the court ritual which replicates church ritual. An international clerical corps ran the bureaucracy of the church and of the state. The faithful made pilgrimages to sacred power sites, just as the clerical estate moved in in its own pilgrimage to the state power sites. And along with this political religion, there was kinship religion to deal with domestic affairs: guardian angels, patron saints, home altars, endless folk practices (still to be witnessed in Mediterranean Christianity, see Sweeney 1984).

Finally, face-to-face social interaction spawned a separation of previous embedded religion from its political moorings. Consequently, an historical understanding of Mediterranean based religions before the 18th century requires a model of substantive religion. Such a model of substantive religion implies that if religious behavior is 'embedded' in patterns of life that are not primarily religious, religious conduct will be dominated by criteria other than purely religious ones. In other words, the operative categories will not be those of the sociology of religion: formal religion with its theology as orthodox or modernistic; liturgy as simple or high church; denominational organization as church, sect or cult; clergy as monastic or secular; piety as incarnational or eschatological; ethics as systematic or situational and world view as gloomy or hopeful.

In sum, the total cultural fabric consisted of politics and kinship. The formulations of an enveloping overarching, generalized order of existence was rooted in symbols interwoven in those specific social institutions that supported the broader goals of

society, that is in kinship forms and political forms. In other words, 'supernatural' beings will be members of kin or political units and treated in terms of those institutions rather than in terms of some free standing, discreet religious institution separated from kin and polity, from family and state. There would be no pretensions at universal religion until there would be a universal political institution (such as an empire) or universal kinship group (such as the Stoic brotherhood of males and the fatherhood of God).

#### 4.4. Religion and First Century Mediterranean Face-to-Grace Social Interaction.

In societies or segments of societies where social integration is effected largely through face-to-grace interaction, religion is now distinctively embedded in politics. Political norms, forms and values configure religious behavior. Yet face-to-grace forms exist together with the previously prevailing face-to-face forms and their religions embedded in kinship. For example, in a face-to-face perspective, the creation of the cosmos is procreation (not in Bible) or fabrication (like a potter in Gen 2:4ff.). With the coming of face-to-grace social integration and political religion, the creation of the cosmos is a ruler's command ('Let there be . . .' as in Gen 1:3ff.). Both perspectives exist side by side. This is the situation during the time of the New Testament.

The embedded religion typical of face-to-grace social interaction was political religion. It would be readily apparent to Greeks, Romans and Judeans that Christians really had no real religion like ethnic groups usually did. After all, Christians were not an ethnic group characterized by genotype and geography, as all ethnic groups were. Face-to-grace religion was a real, public religion was political. Political religions could be seen, smelled, touched, and heard. For there were temples, sacrifices, priests to slaughter animals, ritual symbols, ritual objects, daily sessions at the temple and the like.

The scenario most befitting the story of Jesus is one of politically embedded religion. Jesus proclaims his message, describes his task, and directs his symbolic actions at the pillars of politically embedded Israelite Yahwism. To proclaim the 'Kingdom of the Heavens,' with God's rule as imminent, is clearly a political statement in which religion is embedded. The same with talk of who is near or far from the kingdom, of what the kingdom of heaven is like, of praying to God for God's kingdom to come, of kingly judgment and kingly reward and punishment -- all these are political language for a first century person. Jesus taught in public, the arena of politics, and came to Jerusalem to proclaim his prophetic message at the very center of political religion, the Temple. And it was the political powers of that center, priests, council and prefect, that had him killed on the political pretext of his supposed claim to being 'King of the Judeans,' a group of people whose king was removed by Rome for incompetence, and replaced by a Roman prefect. While Jesus presented a prophetic proclamation concerning a forthcoming political overhauling of Israel's political

religion (the rule of God), Jesus' death in Jerusalem put the plan in abeyance. The followers of Jesus believed God raised Jesus from the dead, hence that Jesus would soon emerge as Messiah with power. At that time a Christian political religion would be constituted.

Meanwhile, as some modern scholars, have noted, Christian groups would be most like Greco-Roman clubs or collegia or schools. They met weekly in a private dwelling to eat together; some person gave a discourse on their way of life, perhaps with readings from their common library. Since they called each other 'brothers in Christ,' they clearly formed fictive kin groups. This was a form of religion patterned after domestic religion. Since it was like domestic religion but not actual domestic religion, I call it fictive domestic religion (see Rom 16).

Consequently, if the community of Matthew (and Mark and Luke) consider community members as 'brothers,' that is because with the death of Jesus, the political Jesus social movement came to a close. What emerged, thanks to God's raising Jesus from the dead, was a Christian association in fictive kinship form. Like the community of the Synoptics and John, Paul likewise stays within the vision of kinship embedded religion, i.e. domestic religion. For him and his followers, it is kinship terminology that articulates being 'in Christ,' with new birth, with Jesus the first-born of many, with brothers and sisters in Christ meeting in a brother's or sister's house. John, too, is concerned with how children of God are born. Love, better paraphrased as group attachment, is the requisite hallmark of Christian domestic religion. And it is the structures and values of fictive kinship that serve to articulate the Christian story with its theology and ethics until the Christian association is co-opted by Constantine. With this emperor and his official creeds and councils, Christianity is transformed into Christendom, politically embedded religion. It is in this form that Christianity leaves its not insignificant traces on the history of humankind until the Enlightenment and its separation of church and state, and its sequel, Romanticism, and its subjective views of religion.

## **5. Conclusion**

One of the key problems in a considerate reading of the New Testament is the understanding of the world that the reader brings to the task. A considerate reading would have the reader attempt to share in the scenarios of the author. The purpose of this essay is to contribute to such scenario building. For a considerate reading of the New Testament, a reader must use scenarios in which political religion and/or domestic religion figure prominently. Any scenario that filters out or excludes political and domestic relations and values as peripheral will have to be rather anachronistic, certainly ethnocentric. A considerate reading of the New Testament requires readers who can envision Jesus's social movement as religion configured by the parameters and concerns of politics. Similarly Christian associations will be envisioned as religion configured by the parameters and concerns of kinship. For it was in terms of face to face and face to mace interactions of a political and kinship

sort that the Jesus movement and subsequent Christian associations articulated their faith in the one God of all.

In a way rather parallel to the embedded and disembedded social institutions of economics and religion, persons bonded with each other in terms of face-to-face interactions, fact-to-mace interactions and face-to-space interactions.

Face-to-face interactions were rooted in kinship; hence it was kinship modes of face-to-face interaction that provided the social matrix for dealing with the larger world.

Face-to-mace interactions is agency-extended in nature. It emerged with the disembedding of politics from kinship. As politics became a free-standing institution (over against kinship), persons interacted with controllers of collective effective action and their power sanctions in terms of intermediaries or agents of the central power holder(s).

Finally some human societies witness disembodied-extended interactions. With the emergence of the nation-state, with the nation becoming a fully imaginary entity, persons interacted with representations (and not representatives) of controllers of collective effective action and with representations of their agents as well -- in terms of printed messages, newspapers, television and the like. Even interaction with the agents of centralized political entities now entailed dealing with an impersonal bureaucracy, often through media that keep the interacting parties at a distance (phone, letters, e-mail, etc.).

In other words, it seems the human community based its normal interactions with those that controlled its existence first personally, then through representatives, and finally through representations. Representatives, physically present, were viewed as agents and concrete substitutes for the person with whom one sought to interact. Finally representations themselves are considered as concrete substitutes for the presence of the person in question.



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