

# The Family in the Jesus Movement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible continuity between the Jesus movement before Jesus' death and the movement of his disciples after his resurrection in their attitude towards the family. The "anti-familial" sayings of Jesus are studied, together with other gospel traditions which suggest a positive attitude towards family. By placing these sayings in the framework of the mass peasant movement launched by Jesus, we can be more precise about the goals of the disciples within that movement. This research reveals the importance of the Jesus group and of the households that their preaching reached, in explaining the continuity between the pre- and post-Easter periods of the Jesus movement in their attitude towards family.

One of the most relevant aspects in the history of the beginnings of Christianity that has not yet been sufficiently explained is the evolution that can be observed regarding attitudes toward the family and the household. The documents produced during the first two Christian generations witness to a process that begins with Jesus' apparently anti-familial attitude, continues with the critical acceptance of the family in the first generation (Paul's letters and Mark) and concludes with an enthusiastic acceptance of the household structure in the second generation (Luke–Acts and especially 1 Timothy and Titus).

The most problematic aspect of this evolution is the discontinuity that appears to exist between the Jesus movement before his death and that of his disciples after his resurrection. B. J. Malina has explained this discontinuity in terms of a shift from the realm of political religion to that of domestic religion. His explanation is based on his characterization of first-century Mediterranean society according to which religion was not an independent system, as in post-industrial societies, but was embedded in the domestic and the politic domains. According to Malina, the transition of the Jesus movement from one environment to the other explains the different attitude regarding the family and the household in both phases of the movement (Malina 2001: 154–59). Other authors suggest that this change of attitude was due mainly to the necessity of the movement to exist in a society based on the family institution (Aguirre 1998: 100–10). Some others, finally, minimize this discontinuity by underscoring the importance that the kinship metaphor had in the deeds and in the sayings of Jesus (Hellermann: 64–72).

In the pages to follow I will concentrate on a concrete aspect of this problem. I will try to find out what Jesus' attitude was toward the family and whether Jesus used the kinship metaphor to define the relationships among his disciples. The answer to these questions will be the point of departure to ascertain whether or not continuity exists in this concrete aspect of the Jesus movement.

## Jesus' Attitude towards the Family

A large number of pre-Easter traditions contained in the Gospels suggest that Jesus had a non-familial or even an anti-familial attitude. This attitude is manifested above all in the frequently imposed demand that his closest disciples break ties with their own families (Mark 1:16–18; 19–20 and 10:28–30; Q 12:52.53; 14:26; Q 9:57–58. 59–60). This is an especially significant demand because it is coherent with his own lifestyle which was characterized among other things by the lack of a permanent residence (Q 9:58), by his itinerant existence (Mark 1:14–29), and by his renouncing of marriage (Matt 19:12). This lifestyle presupposes a break with his family, which appears explicitly in some gospel passages (Mark 3:20–21, 31–35; 6:1–6a). These passages about the breaking of family ties have a solid historical foundation and come most probably from the pre-Easter tradition (Guijarro 2001: 211–22).

There are other traditions, however, in which there is a much more positive evaluation of the family institution. Jesus gives a positive assessment of the duties of sons and daughters toward their elderly parents (Mark 7:6–13) and of marriage (Mark 10:2–12), and he even proposes family relationships as a model that his disciples should follow (Mark 3:31–35;

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10:28–30). The Gospels have also preserved the memory of disciples sent to announce the good news of the kingdom to households (Mark 6:10; 10:5–7), and the reports that he and his disciples were taken in by some families (Mark 11:11; 14:3; etc). This positive attitude towards family structures also appears indirectly in the fact that he celebrated Passover with his disciples (Lang: 281; Hellermann: 67). The Passover meal was basically a family celebration, and the fact that Jesus celebrated it with his disciples indicates that the group understood itself according to the model of family relationships.

The different approach that appears in these two groups of traditions has posed two questions that are still a topic of discussion among scholars. The first is: Did Jesus have an anti-family attitude or not? And the second: Did he use kinship metaphors when referring to his group of disciples or not? These two questions have to do with the continuity between the pre-Easter phase of the Jesus movement and the post-Easter one. If Jesus did not have an adverse attitude toward the family and if he used kinship metaphors to refer to the group of his disciples, then the continuity between the two phases would be greater than is commonly recognized.

The question of Jesus' attitude toward the family has been answered in basically two ways. Some authors think that Jesus did not have an anti-family attitude and explain the imposed demand of his closest disciples to break with their families as a strategy that did not affect the family institution as such. Others, however, think that Jesus directly attacked the family in order to undermine patriarchal ideology.

Among the first group is G. Theissen. According to him, in the early Jesus movement there were two types of disciples: the wandering charismatics, from whom Jesus demanded the renunciation of family ties, and the sedentary followers who remained at home and supported the itinerants. This implies that the sayings of Jesus that require his closest disciples to break ties with their own families, and the memory of his own lifestyle without home or family, do not necessarily imply an anti-family attitude, because only a small group of disciples would have been affected. According to Theissen, breaking with the family would be a way of "self-stigmatization" that aimed at the charismatization of Jesus and his closest disciples (Theissen & Merz: 186–90).

The second answer to this question can be found in E. Schüssler Fiorenza and R. Horsley. Both of them agree that the demand to break with one's own family was addressed, not to a reduced group of disciples, but to all of them. This means that the sayings about breaking away from the family contain a criticism of the patriarchal family (Schüssler Fiorenza: 151–54; Horsley: 231–45).

The second question that the aforementioned traditions raise has to do with the use of kinship metaphors when referring to the group of disciples, and could be formulated like this: Did

Jesus conceive of this group as a surrogate family? A "surrogate family" is a group of people that, not having an actual kinship relation, relate to each other as if they did (Pitt-Rivers: 408–13). This type of fictive kinship was and is very common in traditional Mediterranean societies because of the centrality of the family in them. Because of this the majority of significant relationships follow the model of kinship relations.

B. J. Malina, building on the assumption that the preaching of Jesus should be placed in the context of political religion and not in that of domestic religion, believes that Jesus' statements concerning his group of disciples as a surrogate kin-group reflect a post-Easter situation, when the disciples began to adopt the model of the family institution (Malina 1999: 30–32). Other authors, however, maintain that Jesus applied that model to the group of his disciples, although with an important innovation: in the new family formed by them there would be no place for the father, the patriarchal symbol of authority (Mark 3:31–35; 10:28–30; Matt 23:9). The disciples were invited to join a new family of brothers that had God as their only father (Schüssler Fiorenza: 151–54; Theissen & Merz: 188–90).

The diversity of the responses to the questions that the gospel traditions raise about Jesus' attitude toward the family indicates that a consensus on this topic has not yet been reached. And this is due, in part, to the fact that some of these responses are conditioned by the ideological presuppositions of industrialized Western culture. To advance toward a clarification of this fundamental problem of the beginnings of Christianity, it is necessary to place these traditions in the context of the movement initiated by Jesus, keeping in mind that it had its origins within the framework of First-century Mediterranean society (Malina 2001a; Hanson & Oakman). The lifestyle of Jesus and that of his closest disciples, as well as the relationship that they established with other disciples who remained in their own households, should be understood in this social context.

## The Jesus Movement before his Death

I start with a characterization of the Jesus movement that in my opinion fulfills these characteristics. It has been proposed recently by D. Fiensy (1999). According to him, Jesus was the leader of a peasant mass movement, similar in many aspects to others that arose in the Roman Empire and in Palestine at that time (Fiensy 1999: 10–14).

From the viewpoint of the social sciences, a movement is something more lasting than a revolt or an occasional protest and less than an organized party. It is a mass movement when it surpasses the boundaries of the extended family or village. And it is a peasant movement when most of its members come from the peasantry, which in agrarian societies comprises the vast majority of the population (Lenski: 243–48). These move-

ments may have different purposes, but in antiquity they always had a religious component that served to legitimate them (Fiensy 1999: 3–4).

One of the most characteristic traits of this type of movement is that its leaders come, not from the peasantry, but rather from a different social class. In general, peasants are reluctant to revolt. They realize that an unstable situation would endanger their existence. Besides, they do not perceive that the roots of their situation lie in the system. Only when their situation becomes unbearable do they join a movement, with the sole purpose of making their situation more tolerable. In those circumstances a leader that comes from the outside, generally from an upper class, provides them two services: he organizes for action and articulates the goals. Artisans, priests, and retainers usually are leaders of this type of movement because their place as intermediaries between the elite and the peasants permits them to be in contact with the great tradition (Fiensy 1999: 6–10).

The data that we have about the Jesus movement before his death fits very well with this description. On the one hand, Tacitus (ANN. 15:44), Flavius Josephus (ANT. 18:63) and the four canonical gospels agree that a large crowd from different places followed Jesus. On the other hand, we know that Jesus was not a peasant, but an artisan (Mark 6:3). Unlike peasants, who were closely bound to the earth, artisans had greater mobility, which allowed them to be in contact with elite families to whom they provided services (Fiensy 1997; 1999: 14–20). In fact, as G. Theissen has rightly observed, Jesus' teaching reflects and proposes a series of aristocratic values, most probably as a result of his contact with elite families (Theissen 1989).

The situation of Palestine at the time of Jesus was very favorable to the appearance of this type of movement because the urbanization process and the trade economy promoted by the Herodian rulers were having very negative consequences for the peasantry (Guijarro 1997: 43–46). In such a situation, a prophet announcing the imminent intervention of God could easily stir up a movement that would attract a good number of peasants. In fact, we know that the Jesus movement was not the only one that appeared at that time. The Pharisee Gamaliel cites two of them in his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:36–37), and Flavius Josephus mentions some others (Horsley–Hanson).

The success that Jesus' preaching had among the peasant masses that followed him would be very difficult to explain if he had a clearly anti-familial attitude. The family was not only the basis of Israelite society, but also the main source of identity among individuals, so that an attack on the family would be interpreted as an attack on traditional societal values and on the Israelite religion. On the other hand, the family was not the cause of the progressive social degradation under which Herodian Palestine was living, but rather its main victim, and it

is very unlikely that Jesus would have intended to contribute even more to the destruction of the traditional family.

Jesus' preaching must be placed in a different context. His message clearly belongs to the political religion of Israel. He proclaims and enacts the decisive intervention of God as king and patron of his people. Jesus' preaching does not directly relate to the family, and it would be anachronistic to see in his sayings about the family rupture an explicit attack against it. These sayings and the demands that they imply may be better explained taking into account the type of movement initiated by Jesus, above all when we consider that they were always directed toward his nearest followers, to whom he entrusted a very specific task.

### Leadership in the Jesus Movement

One of the most characteristic traits of the Jesus movement was the composition of the group of disciples that shared leadership functions with Jesus. Jesus called his closest followers for the express purpose of assisting him with the task of announcing the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. This group, symbolically made up of twelve disciples, must be distinguished from the multitudes that followed Jesus and from the individuals who approached him to ask for some blessing or favor. Frequently, the members of this smaller group of disciples functioned as intermediaries between Jesus and the people, and there is a very ancient tradition in which Jesus sends them to announce the same message that he announced.

The Gospels do not agree on who belonged to this group of disciples. The Synoptic Gospels assume that it was formed by the Twelve, but the Gospel of John mentions them only once, and grants a greater place to other disciples. On the other hand, among the four lists that name this group of disciples (Mark 3:16–19; Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13), there are remarkable differences. This means that Jesus' closest disciples could have been more than twelve, and it is even possible that the composition of the group varied over time. This, in fact, would have facilitated its reconstruction after Judas' death (Acts 1:15–26). In any case, the institution of the Twelve was well rooted in tradition. It seems evident that Jesus attached a symbolic value to this group relating to Israel.

As has been frequently observed, being a disciple of Jesus may be differentiated from other forms of discipleship known in Palestine at that time (Hengel: 16–37; Pesce). The main difference lies in the purpose for which Jesus called his disciples, because it was this purpose that determined the nature and demands of his call, as well as the way of life they assumed and the relationship that they established with him. The fact that Jesus called them to join a group with a concrete purpose is also relevant. Studies about group dynamics show that they may have an external or an internal purpose. Groups that have an

external purpose give priority to the task for which they have been gathered, while those that have an internal purpose are more centered on satisfying the needs of members. As a matter of fact these two purposes usually exist simultaneously within all groups, but one of them always prevails over the other and defines the nature of the group.

Jesus' disciples were clearly a group with an external purpose oriented to a task (Malina 2001: 152–53). This type is usually an organization at the service of a social movement, and this is precisely what we observe in the group of disciples gathered around Jesus. They were called by him with the purpose of promoting, sustaining and driving the peasant mass movement that awaited the imminent intervention of God as king and patron of his people.

Jesus' lifestyle and the demands he imposed on his disciples are significant in this context because many of them came from families that could offer them security, support and identity. In first-century Galilee there were different types of families and not all could offer to their members the same level of support and identity. The five disciples about whom we have some information (Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Levi) did not belong to the lowest class represented by peasant families, but rather to a higher social level. This was surely the case with James and John, whose father owned a boat and hired day laborers, and with Levi, who had a position as a tax collector (Guijarro 1997: 57–61). Their social location was similar to that of Jesus, because their trade allowed them to be in contact with peasants and the upper classes at the same time, so that they met the basic requirements to become leaders of a peasant movement.

The renunciation of work was a concrete aspect of the act of breaking with the family, because the family was the primary unit of production. This is a relevant aspect, because before abandoning their work to follow Jesus, these disciples could have been involved in the trade process promoted by the Herodian rulers. A few years ago S. Freyne (110–12) raised some interesting questions about the coincidence of the ministry of Jesus and the emergence of Sepphoris and Tiberias, and with them of a new economy. In my opinion, all these aspects are related and reveal the enormous symbolic meaning of the voluntary renunciation of the family.

This existential option of Jesus and his disciples is significant also in the context of the situation of the peasant masses that were suffering the consequences of the policies carried out by the Herodians rulers. These policies, supported by landowners, merchants, and retainers who benefited from them, had dramatic consequences for the peasant families. The most important one was the loss of land, which inexorably passed on to the hands of a few (Fiensy 1991: 75–132; Freyne 105–12). Now, land was the basic support of the traditional family, so that the loss of land had as a consequence the disintegration of peasant families. Without land and without family support, individuals had to work as slaves

for the landowners, joined the growing ranks of resistance groups, or increased the numbers of city beggars.

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For what purpose would Jesus have asked his disciples to break their family ties when many peasants were being forced to do this? Could it be a strategy of identification through which the leaders of the movement, including Jesus, took on themselves the vital situation of those they led? In peasant mass movements leaders gain credibility in the measure they assume the lifestyle conditions of the peasantry, and given the centrality of the family in that society, the disintegration of the family would be the trait that best defined the situation in which they were living.

The breaking of family ties, which seems to have characterized the lifestyle of Jesus and his closest disciples, acquires a very precise meaning in this context. Its purpose was not to criticize patriarchal structures, nor to propose an ascetic model; neither was it the result of well timed conflicts, nor a manner of self-stigmatization toward a later charismatization, but rather a prophetic action coherent with the image of a God who is beside the poor and needy and accompanies those who are victims of injustice.

Breaking with the family was, therefore, a condition that Jesus imposed on those he invited to share with him the leadership of the movement he was launching with his preaching and ministry. In Jesus' time that attitude had consequences which are difficult to imagine today, since the family played an important role in the life of individuals. In that society, for example, poverty meant the lack of family support, and not, as among us today, the lack of economic resources (Malina 1987). Detached from their families, the disciples became true beggars (*ptôchoi*) and assumed an uprooted and wandering lifestyle that made them credible to peasants that lived in a similar situation. The Beatitudes and other teachings in which Jesus exhorts his disciples to put all their trust in God have a special meaning in this context (Neyrey).

It is interesting to observe that all these teachings refer to God as a father who looks after his children and gives them what they need. This familial metaphor is especially frequent in Jesus' instructions to the disciples, while the image of God as king is predominant in Jesus' teaching to the multitudes (Mark 1:15; 4:26–32). The *imitatio patris* (imitation of the father) is one of the main motivations of Jesus' behavior and inspires some of his teach-

ings to his closest disciples. They are invited to behave as children of God: they should put all their confidence in him and expect everything from him (Guijarro 2000: 61–62). This means that the disciples could find in their relationship with God what they have given up by detaching themselves from their own families.

Together with these instructions referring to the disciples' relationship with God, we find others that refer to the relationships of the disciples among themselves. In them, Jesus rejects the attitudes that characterize interaction with outsiders (competitiveness, searching for honor and power, etc.) and proposes as a model reciprocal solidarity, which is the most characteristic trait of the relationships within the kin-group (service to others, placing oneself in the last place, etc.). The second and third Passion predictions contain this kind of teaching (Mark 9:35; 10: 43–45). In Mark these instructions are addressed to the community leaders, but the sayings of Jesus contained in them reflect an instruction centered on reciprocal solidarity, which is characteristic of kinship relationships.

These teachings about the relationship of the disciples among themselves and with God reveal that Jesus configured the group of his closest disciples according to the model of the family. He formed with them a surrogate family, in which they could find support, protection and identity. The gospel scene in which Jesus declares that his true family are his closest disciples, those that put into practice God's will (Mark 3:31–35), is therefore a faithful reflection of the kind of group formed by Jesus and his disciples.

These premises about leadership in the Jesus movement permit us to draw three conclusions. First of all, we can affirm that the disciples gathered around Jesus had an external purpose. They were oriented toward the concrete task of promoting and leading a peasant mass movement centered on the imminent coming of the reign of God. Second, it is very probable that, in order to carry out this task, those disciples closest to Jesus, who did not come from the peasantry but rather from higher social strata, had to assume a lifestyle that involved rupture with their own families. Finally, this group of disciples did not remain in a totally needy situation, because they formed, together with Jesus, a new family of brothers and sisters that had God as father.

### Mission to Households

As we have observed, Jesus called a group of disciples to help him in the task of announcing by word and deeds the imminent arrival of God as king and patron of his people. This purpose appears in an explicit way in the traditions about the commissioning of the disciples. In them we find a series of recommendations concerning reception and rejection in households that can help clarify the attitude of Jesus toward the family. To achieve this clarification we must explain the role of the *house-*

*hold* in the mission entrusted to the disciples: Did Jesus actually send them to households in order to announce the coming of the kingdom of God; Did some of these households receive them and offer them effective support?

The tradition of the commissioning of the disciples has a solid historical basis. It has come down to us in three different versions (Q 10:1–12; Mark 6:7–13 and GThom. 14). The various coincidences between the first two are an indication that both come from an older tradition, while the relationship of both of them to the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas reveals that this instruction was composed with sayings that Jesus uttered in different circumstances. This cluster of sayings is, in the opinion of J. D. Crossan "the most important unit for understanding the historical Jesus, the Common Sayings Tradition, and the continuity from one to the other," and constitutes "the clearest evidence that Jesus and his earliest companions had not just a vision but a program" (Crossan: 325–26).

The following is a synopsis of the versions found in Mark and Q, according to the reconstruction of the Critical Edition of Q (Robinson-Hoffman-Kloppenborg):

Mark 6:10–12	Q 10:5–12
10 Whenever you enter a <b>house</b>	5 Into whatever <b>house</b> you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house!"
stay there	6 And if a son of peace be there, let your peace come upon him; but if not, let your peace return upon you.
until you leave that place	7 And in that house remain, eating and drinking what they provide, for the worker is worthy of one's reward. Do not move around from house to house.
	8 And whatever town you enter and they take you in, eat what is set before you;
	9 and cure the sick there and say to them, "The kingdom of God has reached unto you."
11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you,	10 But into whatever town you enter and they do not take you in, on going out from that town
shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them	11 shake off the dust from your feet.
	12 I tell you: For Sodom it shall be more bearable on that day than for that town.

In Mark's version the messengers are exhorted to remain in the households that take them in and to shake off the dust of the place that does not receive them (Mark 6:10–11). In the Q ver-

sion, however, the instruction is much more detailed, and the mission to households (Q 10:5–7) is clearly distinguished from the mission to the city (Q 10:8–12). In the mission to households only the possibility of being taken in is considered, while in the city mission we also find instructions about how to behave in case of refusal. In Mark as well as in Q the instructions about the mission to households are found first, and their tone is clearly more positive than those related to the city.

The fact that these mission instructions have been transmitted independently by Mark and Q indicates that this is a very ancient tradition, but it also reveals that this tradition continued to be significant for the disciples of the first generation. To grasp their original tone, we must keep in mind that they were pronounced in the context of the Jesus movement before his death, that is to say in the context of the peasant mass movement led by Jesus and his closest disciples. When placed in this framework, the instructions about the mission to households pose three interesting questions for the topic of our research.

The first one, concerning their purpose, may be formulated like this: What was Jesus' objective in sending his closest disciples to households? In Mark's version there are two purposes: to cast out demons (Mark 6:7) and to preach conversion (Mark 6:12:), but the second is clearly redactional. That means that in the tradition before Mark there was only the purpose of casting out unclean spirits (Twelftree: 122–27). According to the Q version, however, Jesus sent his disciples to announce peace and to practice open table fellowship (Q 10:5–7).

These two actions, exorcism and open table-fellowship, that appear in Jesus' sayings as the purpose of the mission charge, reveal the situation of the peasant families to which the disciples were sent. These families were suffering the pressure caused by the marketization of the economy and the urbanization process. They were running the risk of forgetting the traditional values of hospitality and solidarity. In this situation, Jesus' messengers announced with their behavior that God was at the point of intervening as king and patron of his people. In this way, not only was disintegration avoided, but also small groups were created in which the reign of God was received and enacted (Horsley: 231–45).

The second question concerns the strategy. If Jesus' proclamation belongs to the realm of political religion, it might be asked why Jesus sent his disciples to households. But this contradiction that we perceive between the political horizon of Jesus' message and his domestic strategy is only apparent. In the Hellenistic–Roman world the house and the city were not two separable entities. Aristotle's thesis, according to which every city is made up of households and "every household is a part of the city" (POLITICS 1252a–1253b) was then an axiom (Cicero, DE OFFICIIS I, 17; Philo, DE IOSEPHO 38–39). It is therefore reasonable that Jesus' strategy combined activities in plazas or open areas with those in houses. If the household was

the basic cell of society, Jesus could not omit it from his plan to make the good news reach everyone. Recreating the household was the best way to recreate society from its roots.

The last question concerns the results of this mission and can be formulated in this way: What were the effects of the disciples' mission to households? There are two facts that can help answer this question. The first one is the contrast between the hospitality in houses (Q 10:5–7; Mark 6:10) and the rejection in the cities (Q 10:8–12; Mark 6:11) that we perceive in the instructions mentioned above. It seems that they refer to two successive phases of the mission. In the first phase the message was addressed to households. This phase had a much more positive result than the second one, in which the message was addressed to cities. The second fact is that this mission to households most probably gained some families for the Jesus movement. They offered hospitality and support to Jesus and his closest disciples in Galilee (Mark 1:29–31; 2:15–17, etc.), as well as in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas (Mark 11:11; 14:3–9; 12–16; Luke 10:38–42).

We can conclude, therefore, that Jesus sent his disciples into households to announce the good news of the kingdom through healing and open table-fellowship. The purpose of this commissioning was to reconstruct society from its roots, recreating in its basic cells, the households, the traditional values of solidarity and hospitality and establishing in them new relationships of brotherhood and sisterhood. The result of this mission was that some of the households joined actively in the Jesus movement and offered shelter and support for the leaders of the group.

### The Failure and Continuity of the Jesus Movement

The peasant mass movement initiated by Jesus ended in failure, as many other mass movements did. The opposition it endured in Galilee discouraged many of its followers (John 6:66–71; Mark 8:27–30), but it was above all the events of the last days in Jerusalem that caused the end of the movement. In the Passion narratives, composed with didactic intentions, Judas' betrayal, the abandonment of the Twelve and Peter's denial play an important role, but what is more surprising in them is the change in attitude among the multitudes that had followed Jesus.

We must keep in mind that the arrest and death of Jesus took place during the Passover festival, when many pious Jews made pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It is most likely that among those pilgrims there were some of Jesus' Galilean followers, who had accompanied him to the holy city (Mark 11:1–10). This fact makes more significant the contrast between the initial attitude of the multitudes that followed Jesus in Galilee and even cheered him upon entering Jerusalem, and their final reaction of rejection and condemnation.

In the Gospels we find some data that may help to explain this change. First, there is the influence of the priestly class, for which the movement initiated by Jesus surely constituted a threat. It is possible that they used the episode in the temple to turn the multitudes against Jesus, giving this symbolic action a meaning different from the one he intended (Sanders: 71–75). In agrarian societies the influence of the dominant classes over peasants is very great because peasants know that their subsistence depends on the elite. To this we may add that the pilgrims who accompanied Jesus could have perceived the action in the temple as an offense against the great symbol of Israelite tradition. All this would explain the change of attitude of the multitudes toward Jesus.

The Jesus movement was not different from other peasant mass movements in this regard. The majority of them failed because the peasants could not understand that the evils that plagued them had deep roots. Their main concern was short term subsistence, and when they saw it in danger, they abandoned the leader they had followed so enthusiastically. Palestinian history in the Roman period offers some examples of this phenomenon (Acts 5:36–37).

In contrast, however, to other contemporary popular movements, the Jesus movement continued after the death of its leader. It did not continue as a peasant mass movement, but rather as the movement of his disciples—the group that had followed Jesus as a surrogate family and then became the nucleus of the earliest Christian community (Acts 1:12–14)—together with the households that received the disciples' preaching and offered them support and hospitality during the time of Jesus' activity. It was this group of disciples that continued Jesus' project after his death, encouraged by the experience of his resurrection.

This is a decisive observation to understand why the family had such an important role in the disciples' movement after Easter and also to explain the apparent discontinuity between the pre-Easter phrase of the movement and the post-Easter one in their attitude toward the family. Upon losing the support of the multitudes—the peasants to whom Jesus' preaching was originally addressed—the movement that was initiated by Jesus was reduced to the group of disciples that he had called to help him as leaders of the movement. To this group belonged also the families that had accepted the message announced by these disciples. The first group had lived close to Jesus as a family of brothers that had God as father. The second one had accepted living those same values in their families. These two groups of disciples gave continuity to the Jesus movement, and this explains why the family had such an important place in the Christian groups that were emerging after Easter.

## Conclusion

It has been my objective in this study to find out whether

the importance of the family in the configuration of the group of Jesus' disciples after Easter was only the result of a process of social adaptation, or whether, on the contrary, that group was shaped *in the pre-Easter phase of the movement* after the model of kinship relationships. To this end, I have asked what Jesus' attitude was toward the family: what role did the family play in the movement initiated by Jesus, and did Jesus use the kinship metaphor to define the relationships among his disciples?

To answer these questions I started with a characterization of the Jesus movement as a peasant mass movement, similar in some aspects to other movements that arose in Palestine during the Roman period. The Jesus movement was, however, a peculiar one, and among its peculiarities one was crucial for its continuity: discipleship. Jesus gathered around him a group of disciples and asked them to take on the lifestyle of uprooted peasants to whom they would announce the good news of the imminent coming of God as king and patron of his people. This new lifestyle included breaking away from their families. In exchange Jesus offered them a new family in which they could live as brothers and children of God. He sent these disciples to announce to households the good news of the kingdom, through healing and open table-fellowship, and the result of this was that some of these households joined the movement and became the basic social structure of the movement.

The rejection of Jesus in Jerusalem and his death caused the movement to lose its social basis and fail as a mass movement. Nevertheless, the group of his closest disciples and the households that accepted their message, prompted by the resurrection experience, continued what Jesus had begun. Both groups were configured as surrogate families whose only father was God. This fact explains the importance that the family had in the groups of Jesus' disciples in subsequent generations.

The most important conclusion of this study is, therefore, that there exists a fundamental continuity in this respect between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter periods of the early Christian movement. But the study of this process also sheds light on another aspect of great significance in understanding the continuity between Jesus and the Church. As traditional ecclesiology affirms, the Church had its origins in the group of Jesus' closest disciples, namely, the Twelve. The seed of the community that arose after the resurrection was not the multitudes that followed Jesus, but rather this closest group of disciples.

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