Toward understanding management in first century Palestine

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to describe the role of management in first century Palestine, and point to implications this has for subsequent management scholarship, especially Weber's widely accepted argument that contemporary management theory and practice is grounded in a Judeo-Christian ethic.

Design/methodology/approach – The literature on the role and activities of managers in first century Palestine is reviewed and used to evaluate management scholarship that draws on biblical writings from this era.

Findings – Managers played an increasingly important role in all aspects of social life in first century Palestine, and functioned as go-betweens amongst households that were embedded in a web of patron-client relationships. Based on analysis the paper contends that it seems unlikely that the core features of the Protestant Ethic would have been a prominent part of the Judeo-Christian ethic in first century Palestine. The paper's contention is consistent with the observation that in first century Palestine, the hallmarks of the Protestant Ethic – such as "calling," "rationalization" and "spiritual (vs political) salvation" – would have been welcomed by the social elite but would have been perceived as a threat by the poor, whereas the historical record indicates that first century exemplars of the Judeo-Christian ethic were instead welcomed by the poor and perceived as a threat by the elite.

Research limitations/implications – The paper questions whether the hallmarks of the Protestant Ethic as described by Weber represent a plausible interpretation of the biblical record. The paper also provides a basis for challenging common assumptions in the literature that contemporary management theory is based on a biblical Judeo-Christian ethic.

Practical implications – This paper may facilitate a more accurate interpretation of historical texts as they relate to management, and inform the study and development of alternative ways of managing.

Originality/value – The research described here provides a foundation for examining aspects of Weber's widely accepted thesis, as well as the writings of modern scholars.

Keywords Judeo-Christian, First century Palestine, Roman Empire, Patron-client relationships, Household management, Weber's Protestant Ethic, Management history, Work ethic

Paper type Literature review

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The most influential of Max Weber's considerable body of work is *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, first written over a century ago (Weber, 1958; original 1904/1905). One indication of its influence within the management literature is the widespread agreement among scholars that contemporary management theory and practice are based on a Judeo-Christian ethic (e.g. Dyck and Schroeder, 2005; Golembiewski, 1989; Herman, 1997; Jackall, 1988; Nash, 1994; Novak, 1982, 1996; Pattison, 1997; Pfeffer, 1982; Stackhouse *et al.*, 1995, p. 108). Even so, as with any influential scholarly work, various aspects of Weber's argument have been challenged (e.g. see Etzrodt, 2008; Jones, 1997). Questions such as whether religious values are merely a product of their socio-economic context rather than a compelling force all their own (e.g. Tawney, 1926/1962), whether Protestants actually economically outperform other faith groups (de Jong, 2008), and whether Weber accurately reflected the teachings of Protestants during the Reformation (e.g. Tawney, 1926/1962; Walzer, 1965) have all been raised.

Another issue that Weber himself raised is whether the Protestant Ethic of the Reformation is plausibly consistent with the ethic that is embedded in the Judeo-Christian scriptures (Weber, 1958, p. 79, 83, 203; also echoed in Perrow, 1985, p. 282). This issue is only now beginning to receive serious research attention. Increasingly contemporary scholars writing in secular management journals argue that, rather than supporting contemporary management theory and practice, biblical teachings may in fact point to an alternative paradigm (e.g. De George, 1986, p. 429; Dyck and Schroeder, 2005; Naughton and Bausch, 1994; Rossouw, 1994, p. 562; van Wensveen Siker, 1989). For example, a recent study (Dyck *et al.*, 2009) examined this issue by analyzing one of the most-cited biblical passages referred to by management scholars – the Parable of the Talents, found in Matthew 25: 14-30. The authors show how it has traditionally has been interpreted via the lens of the Protestant Ethic, but then they go on to provide a plausible alternative interpretation using a very different lens.

This concern about whether or not the Protestant Ethic is consistent with a biblical ethic is also related to, but distinct from, other streams in management studies. For example, Gary Hamel describes a recent meeting attended by a number of notable management scholars (e.g. Eric Abrahamson, Chris Argyris, Henry Mintzberg, C.K. Prahalad, Peter Senge) who are suggesting that contemporary management theory and practice is becoming obsolete, and explicitly points to the merit in drawing from theology to develop an alternative approach to management (Hamel, 2009, p. 93, 94). This is consistent with Weber's much earlier call for the development of alternative management that is based on new prophets and old ideas (see Weber, 1958, pp. 182, 277-78).

Interest in how theological and spiritual concerns influence management is also evident in the Academy of Management's creation of the *Management, Spirituality and Religion* interest group and in the growing growth in popular books in this area (e.g. Elinsky, 2005, p. 11). It is also front and center in the post-secular/"theological turn" associated with notable leading philosophers (e.g. Derrida, Marion, Habermas), which for management scholars involves asking what management theory and practice might look like if it were based on ideas like altruism and thereby escape from the iron cage of materialistic self-interests (e.g. Bradley, 2006; Harrington, 2007; Simmons, 2008; Westphal, 2006).

Of course, issues like the "theological turn" and calls to draw from theology to develop Management 2.0 can encompass a wide variety of religious and other spiritual traditions, and thus clearly go beyond concerns related to biblical teachings or the Protestant Ethic per se. Nevertheless, given the role played by the Protestant Ethic in the development of Management 1.0, a better understanding of management in biblical times and a better understanding of the plausibility of the Protestant Ethic promise to make an important contribution to these streams in the management literature. Specifically, in order to determine whether the Protestant Ethic as developed during the Reformation actually represents a plausible interpretation of the first century scriptural text – and, by extension, to ascertain whether contemporary management theory and practice are consistent with a Judeo-Christian ethic as it would have been understood in first century Palestine – we must first understand the political and socio-economic context in which that scriptural text was written.

This brings us to the twofold goal of this paper. We will first examine the nature of management in various sectors of society in first century Palestine, as this is the time and period where Jesus lived and stories about him were written (collectively known as the New Testament)[1]. We then use this information to evaluate whether the Protestant Ethic represents a plausible interpretation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures.

As it turns out, relatively little research has focused on the nature of management in first century Palestine, but this is not because management was unimportant in that era. The Roman empire – in terms of its geographic size, real national product (equivalent to about 1.7 tons of gold), and population (about 55 million people) – was larger than any western nation until the mid-nineteenth century (Goldsmith, 1984), and its real genius was its management expertise (George, 1968, p. 22; see Svyantek, 1999). Nor is the lack of research on management in first century Palestine due to managerial incompetence among the people of that era (and earlier). The influence of the Hebrews on civilization was substantial, despite their small numbers, in part because of their management skills. For example, the scriptural account of Moses' management approach "affords us one of the earliest and most commonly available records of a philosophy and plan for organization" (George, 1968, p. 11).

Perhaps we lack a comprehensive analysis of management in first century Palestine because the meaning of "management," as we know it, would have been foreign to its inhabitants. Even so, historians studying that period have called for exactly a study like ours:

> It is only with such a change in perspective that modern scholars can expect to be able to reconstruct the history of ancient business management. Historical discourse should not be reluctant to use the modern concepts and criteria to formulate the theoretical basis for the study of a range of activities that clearly fall outside the sphere of interest of ancient writers (Aubert, 2001, pp. 18-19).

Our paper is organized as follows. We first describe two overarching features of first century society in Palestine that are important for understanding the context in which management was practiced – the concept of the household, and the importance of patron-client relationships. Next, we examine the interplay between three societal sectors – religion, business, and government – because that helps us understand the role of managers and the practice of management in that culture. We then describe four core dimensions of the Protestant Ethic that developed during the Reformation, and analyze the extent to which they represent a plausible interpretation of the New

Testament writings. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our study for future research.

Two key characteristics of society in first century Palestine

As we consider life in first century Palestine, it is helpful to describe its geographical location, which occupies some of the same region of modern day Israel. The borders were fairly fluid, especially during the political upheaval in that region in the first century, but the boundaries of first-century Palestine stretched from the territory of Idumea in the south (near the southern portion of the Dead Sea), to the upper Galilee in the north (perhaps 20 miles north of Lake Galilee), to the Mediterranean in the west, and to the territories of Perea, the Decapolis and Nabatea in the east (about 50 miles east of the Jordan River) (Reed, 2007, p. 50).

The social organization of first century Palestine was characterized by:

- an emphasis on "households" (the vast majority of people – including the emperor, the tenant farmer, the merchant, and the centurion – each belonged to a household); and
- patron-client relationships (which provided the glue that held different households in society together).

In our examination of each of these characteristics, we focus on the implications for management theory and practice. Note that, consistent with other scholars writing about that historical period, we will draw upon Greek, Roman, and Jewish sources in order to describe the socioeconomic norms and institutions in that area and at that time (e.g. Crossan, 2007; Hanson and Oakman, 1998; Reed, 2007). The reason for this is threefold. First, some of the ideas that influenced first century Palestine came from the outside of its borders (e.g. virtually every study of households in Palestine cites Aristotle's seminal writing because it served as a foundation for subsequent thinking and writing on that topic). Second, the influence of Roman ideas and institutions were clearly important due to the Romanization of Palestine at the time. Third, there are not enough primary data about Palestine itself to provide a full picture of management in that region in the first century.

Management and the household

The "household" represented the basic building block of social and economic life in first century society in the Middle East (Gotsis and Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2004). Indeed, the modern word for economics comes from the Greek word *oikonomia,* which means household (*oiko*) management (*nomia*). In his book *Polis*, written about 350 BCE, Aristotle provides arguably the most profound analysis of the household among ancient writers (Nagle, 2006; Stahel, 2006; Wilson, 2005). According to Aristotle, in order to understand the larger society, we need to understand the management of the household.

There are at least two key differences in the concept of a "household" 2000 years ago compared to today. First, whereas a modern household typically includes a two-generational nuclear family – that is, parent(s) with child(ren) – in ancient times a household often included two or three generations plus servants/slaves (Hanson, 1989). Households were kinship-based (the masters and their immediate family), but they were often comprised of many families, including families of unrelated slaves and servants. Indeed, it was not unusual for households to have 100 or more members (Balch, 1981; Judge, 1960). Second, whereas the modern household is mainly a unit of consumption (i.e. members are employed outside the household in order to earn money to meet its needs), in ancient times the household was both a consuming and a producing unit. In fact, households were the primary productive units in ancient society (Herzog, 1994). The great majority of households were in the agricultural sector, but they could also be found in fishing, pottery, carpentry, and other industries. Contemporary households, because they are not self-sustaining, would have been seen as deficient by ancient standards (Nagle, 2006).

Perhaps the closest modern analogy to the ancient household is the family business, but even that does not quite capture the ancient idea of the household:

> However, it was much more than a business enterprise. The driving force of the *oikos* economy was not profit in the modern sense of the term. The *oikos* was a moral and religious entity in its own right whose purpose was not just the generation of legally recognizable citizens, but the proper formation of morally acceptable members of the particular *polis* community where it was located, and the passing on of the household's religious cults to future generations. Material resources were intended primarily to sustain this enterprise; they were to be held in trust for the next generation. In that sense, even the property of the *oikos* was not purely private (Nagle, 2006).

Aristotle's view of household management. Aristotle saw a prototypical "complete household" as having three different components:

(1) a husband and wife;

(2) children; and

(3) slaves and/or freemen (note that these three components are also evident in the "Rules of How to Manage a Household" – often called *Haustafeln* – found in biblical writings like Colossians 3:18-4:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:9; I Peter 2:13-3:7; see Balch, 1981).

Aristotle also identifies four key managerial relationships implicit in a household (for a more nuanced discussion of the different types of households, see Hanson, 1989). The first was the "constitutional" relationship between a husband and wife, where both parties were equal but each had different roles in managing the household. For example, wives were usually in charge of the within-household religious life and the children's early education, but husbands took over the socialization of sons when they were about six or seven years old (Nagle, 2006). The wives' supervisory roles never ceased, and they performed their socializing/educative function without the assistance of a formal public school system. The husband's role was to manage most of the other aspects of the household.

Second, the nature of the relationship between parent and child was more "royal," where the parent "rules by virtue both of love and of the respect due to age . . . For a king is the natural superior of his subjects, but he should be of the same kin or kind with them, and such is the relation of elder and younger, of father and son" (Arisotle, *Polis*). In this model, children are essentially seen as "junior parents" or as "household-masters-in-waiting."

Third, the relationship between master and slave was akin to the relationship between a master and his possessions. Aristotle suggests that slaves have virtually no deliberative capacity, and that it is best if they are under the rule of a master (*Polis*).

Finally, and of particular importance for our study, Aristotle notes that the acquisition of wealth (*chrematistics*) is an important sub-role in household management, but warns against acquiring wealth as an end in and of itself (Dierksmeier and Pirson, 2009). Only a limited amount of wealth is required to "live well." When people strive to maximize their wealth, or strive for an easy life, then their overall quality of life drops:

> Hence some persons are led to believe that getting wealth is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well; and, as their desires are unlimited they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit . . .
>
> There are two sorts of wealth-getting, as I have said; one is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honorable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural, and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest (Aristotle, n.d., *Polis*, Book 1, part IX: 16, and part X: 17).

Other ancient views on household-management. Subsequent notable Roman writings about household management are provided by Cato the Elder (second century BCE), Varro (first century BCE) and Columella (first century CE) (Aubert, 2001). Not everyone subscribed to Aristotle's views that *chrematistics* should remain subservient to the overarching goals of *oikonomia,* and some ancient writers considered moneymaking to be the "most important" division of household management were (Balch, 1981).

Alongside competing views about the relative importance of *chrematistics*, there seems to have been an increase in the *size* of many households (e.g. Kloppenborg, 2008). For example, at the extreme, the emperor was sometimes depicted as the master of a household that encompassed the entire Roman Empire (Judge, 1960, p. 32; Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis, 2009, p. 102). Increased household size had two important implications for management theory and practice. First, it meant that there was a need to divide large households into different sub-units, which is evident in the household management writings of the day:

> The most striking features of their descriptions are the stress they put on division of labour, and the existence of a rather sophisticated chain of command, from individual workers, skilled or not, to foremen, overseers, supervisors, administrators, and landowners (Aubert, 2001, p. 8).

Aubert (2001) also notes that organizing principles that were used to manage households were increasingly being drawn from the military sector.

Second, this increase in size was necessarily related to an increase in the prevalence of absentee landowners because the master of a household could no longer oversee the household because of its size and because parts of it were scattered in faraway lands. As a result, there was an increasing reliance on professional managers (variously known as stewards, brokers, retainers, accountants and scribes)[2]. The increase in size often went hand-in-hand with an increasing emphasis on *chrematistically*-minded management practices. For example, professional managers may have had incentives to prove their worth by maximizing financial returns for masters, and/or to line their own pockets. In any case, there was an increasing emphasis on conspicuous consumption among the elite during this time, though this may have been less pronounced in backwaters like Galilee than in places like Judea (Judge, 1960, p. 30; Weber, 1952).

The patron-client relationship

The patron-client relationship – with its specific reliance on reciprocity – is significantly different than the modern Western idea of contracts and transactional economics. Patron-client reciprocal exchanges in ancient societies signaled ongoing relationships (versus one-time transactions) between two parties of unequal status (Destro and Pesce, 2003). The patron offered the client a wide variety of benefits, including protection against enemies, support in legal cases, food, money and political appointments (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, pp. 70-71; Moxnes, 1988, p. 42). Clients responded by giving honor, information, political support, loyalty, and tributes to their patrons. Loyalty to the patron could be expressed in different ways, including performing specific tasks, collecting information that might be beneficial to the patron, and collecting taxes for the patron. The client was also expected to bring honor to the patron, and to do whatever was necessary to increase the patron's status within society[3]. Patron-client relationships were mutually beneficial, and were characterized by an almost sacred obligation. These relationships often became hereditary, and clients who defrauded their patron in any way faced severe punishment.

The relationship between the emperor (the patron) and the kings in various provinces (the clients) provides an oft-used example of the key elements of the patron-client relationship. The emperor – who was based in Rome and controlled all political and military appointments in the Empire – was the most powerful patron in the Roman Empire. An important part of managing the Empire's military, financial and religious bureaucracies was left to regional "client-kings" who were appointed by the emperor. These client-kings, who ruled specific geographical areas, pledged allegiance to the emperor and paid him tribute. The position was usually hereditary (i.e. based on households, but subject to Roman approval), and usually included substantial financial and military resources (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 170). Client-kings were responsible for building and maintaining infrastructure in their domain, and they paid homage to Roman rulers by constructing various public works and temples to honor Roman gods.

Patron-client dynamics also governed relationships lower in the social hierarchy, including "micro-level" relationships within small villages (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 73). For example, landowners (patrons) provided estate managers (clients) with a good salary, political connections, military protection, and a residence. The landowner trusted the manager to make important decisions regarding the estate, and the manager reciprocated by running the estate, making financial decisions that were in the best interest of the landowner, and keeping the slaves/peasants satisfied. Whereas patrons dispensed first-order resources like land and jobs, managers dispensed second-order resources like access to patrons and strategic contacts (deSilva, 1996, p. 93; Kloppenborg, 2008).

Managers were not restricted to estate management, but were also evident in government, households, religious institutions, and the military (Herzog, 1994, p. 57). Because managers played the role of both client (to their patrons, whom they honored) and patron (to the people they managed), they had to act honorably and be trusted by both. This dual patron-client role is evident in many sectors of ancient society. Client-kings were both clients of the emperor and patrons to their subjects. The emperor was a client of the Roman gods and a patron of the entire empire. Jewish high priests were clients of both Jehovah and the emperor, and patrons to the Jews. Household masters were clients of the political and/or religious leaders and patrons to the rest of the household.

Social structure and hierarchy in first century Palestine

Keeping in mind the two key concepts of households and patron-client relationships, we now turn to an analysis of the social structure and hierarchy of first century Palestine (see Lenski, 1984; Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Figure 1 summarizes the hierarchical relationships between three important sectors of society in first century Palestine: religious, business, and government. Four hierarchical levels of social status are also evident:

(1) the elite, who typically occupy the apex of the hierarchy based on the family they were born into;

(2) the professional class, which includes people with special education and/or skills who perform leadership roles in each sector;

(3) the working class, which includes artisans and laborers in diverse areas of endeavor; and

(4) the social outcasts like bandits, former peasants who had lost their livelihood, and people with certain conditions like leprosy (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 89).

For completeness, Figure 1 also includes the supernatural gods and spirits that were thought to influence the lives of individuals in that culture.

Management and the religious sector

Unlike the modern idea of separation of church and state, or the separation between private and work life, in the first century the political, work, and religious realms were very much intertwined and mutually supportive (Rapinchuk, 2004, p. 98). Kloppenborg (2006, p. 324) observes that "'Religion' (for which Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek do not even have special words) was not a separable aspect of culture but was embedded in the two main foci of life: the family and the Polis." For analytical purposes, we will here follow the lead of others who have separated out the religious, economic and governing sectors (e.g. Herzog, 1994). We first provide an overview of the Imperial cult (as it is typically referred to in the literature; Reed, 2007), and then describe the key institutions and figures of the Jewish religion in first century Palestine.

The Imperial cult. The Roman Empire had its own an Imperial cult, complete with civic priests and public temples. Religion played a central part in home life in the Greco-Roman period, with each house having a shrine (*lararium*) that had been set aside for worship of the household gods (Reed, 2007, p. 113). Colleges of priests were in

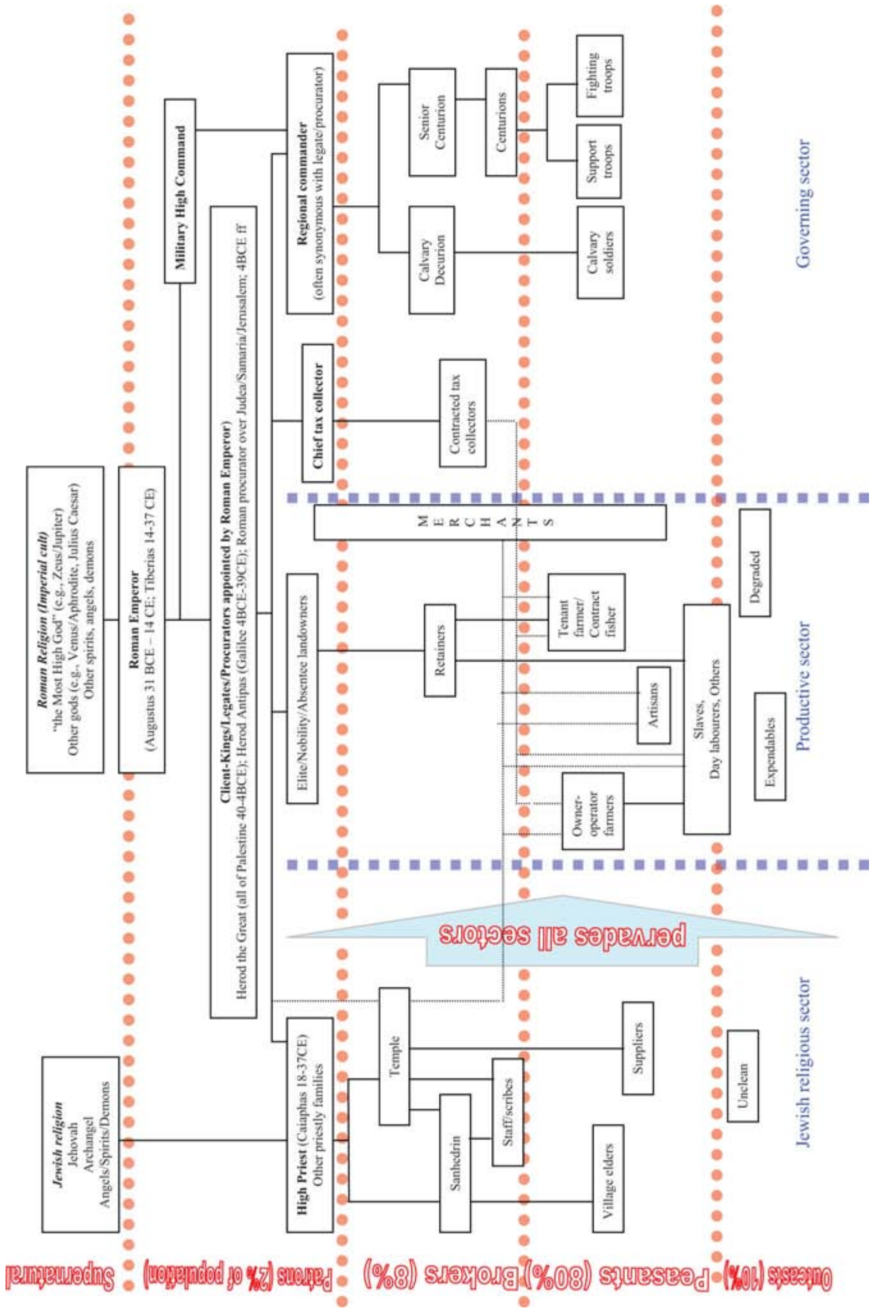

Figure 1.
Organization chart of first century Palestine showing relative status (vertical dimension) by social sector (horizontal)

charge of civic religion, and they acted as brokers between the people and their gods, with the emperor being seen as a leading broker (Neyrey, 2005, p. 476)[4]. In the Imperial cult it was natural that the gods would be seen as patrons, and humans seen as clients (Neyrey, 2005).

As shown in Figure 1, the "household of God" that stood at the apex of the Imperial cult had three types of members that can be seen to parallel human households:

(1) the head of all the other gods (Zeus/Jupiter, aka "King of Kings");
(2) lesser gods (including stars, which were considered gods at the time); and
(3) other lower nonhuman beings (Malina, 2001, p. 104).

The patron-client relationship is evident in many of the names given to God, and commonly used both in the Imperial cult and subsequently in the Christian religion. These included Master, Father, Lord, Creator, King, and Savior (Neyrey, 2005). What is striking is how emperors were clearly seen as brokers between the gods and the people. For example, the Senate divinized Julius Caesar upon his death, proclaiming that a comet over Rome was Julius Caesar taking his place among the gods. Starting with his son (Caesar Augustus) every subsequent emperor called himself "Son of God," and that inscription along with a depiction of the comet/star in heaven is found on virtually every coin minted in the Roman Empire (Reed, 2007, pp. 101-102). Because Romans believed that peace and military victories were divinely sanctioned, and because Emperor Augustus brought military peace and prosperity, he was routinely called Son of God, God, Lord, Savior, Redeemer, Liberator, and Divine (e.g. Reed, 2007, p. 47).

Familiar as they were with the rules governing human patron-client relations, people "could not help but presume that the same rules applied to the heavenly version" (Neyrey, 2005, p. 483) and recognized that, as clients, humans owed their gods honor and praise:

> If subordinates sought to have effect on their superiors, they had recourse to inducements and influence. Inducement included all sorts of gifts, services, presents, while influence entailed reasons for doing what one wanted, hence requests, petitions, entreaties and the like. In language of embedded religion, inducement is called sacrifice, influence is called prayer. Sacrifice of any sort is a form of inducement directed to the deity (Malina, 1996: 29; cited in Neyrey, 2005, p. 485).

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Imperial cult could be characterized by its polytheism and its concern for civic cults (Reed, 2007, p. 107). The Roman Empire respected the traditional religious practices and beliefs in its territories, except when those beliefs threatened basic Roman rule (Reed, 2007). The Imperial cult and its public temples in Palestinian cities like Caesarea were physically near, but culturally distant from the Jewish population. Communities in the middle of Galilee and its overwhelmingly Jewish population did not have any signs of the Imperial cult, even if cities had been built to honor the emperor (e.g. Tiberius in Galilee) (Reed, 2007, p. 50).

The Jewish religion. Unlike the Imperial cult, with its multiple gods, the Jewish religion had only one God, Jehovah. Jews also believed that all things were possible with Jehovah, while the Roman and Greek elites believed that gods had limitations (Malina, 1996, p. 104). Angels and other spirits were evident in the beliefs of both groups. Note also that Christianity's idea of the trinity corresponds to the idea of a traditional household of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Just as the emperor served as the highest priest (*pontifex maximus)* and supreme broker between heaven and earth for the Imperial cult (Reed, 2007, p. 103), in the Jewish religion the high priest served as a broker between God (the patron) and the rest of humanity (the clients). For example, only the high priest was permitted to enter the Presence of God – the Holy of Holies located in the inner sanctum of Jerusalem's Temple – and then only once a year.

The High Priest was officially appointed by one of the emperor's clients (e.g. the client-king or prefect in Jerusalem). Romans were sensitive to local religious customs, but in first century Palestine local religious leaders from elite families were under the thumb of the Romans. The decision about who would be the High Priest was shaped and influenced by patron-client dynamics (i.e. the choice was influenced by which Jewish high priestly family would serve as the best client for the emperor). Thus, the high priests were an important point of intersection between the general Jewish population and the Roman authorities.

High priests walked a fine line between keeping their Roman occupiers satisfied, while at the same time trying to exercise leadership and spiritual authority over the general Jewish population. The high priests often sided with Rome when conflicts between Jews and Romans arose, suggesting that they were more concerned with retention of their power than they were with the well-being of the people (Horsley, 1987, p. 110)[5]. Herzog (2005, p. 47) observes that many Jews viewed some of the high priestly families as traitorous consorts of Rome. The priestly class:

> [. . .] ignored the widening gap between the rich and the poor by exacerbating the use of indebtedness to alienate peasants from their land and reduce them to the status of tenants or day laborers, and they ignored the increase of social tensions and hostility generated by the cycle of oppression and exploitation that they encouraged.

Managing the Temple in Jerusalem was a major task. For Jews, the Temple

> [. . .] provided a locus of divine presence, a cosmic centre understood to be the navel of the world. It was the place where heaven and earth converged, hence the control centre for God's dealings with the world. As such it legitimated both the monarchy and the nation (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 416).

As expanded by the client-king Herod the Great, the Temple was the largest sacred precinct in the Roman empire and considered to be one of the wonders of the world. Jerusalem's population of about 32,000 (around 30CE) would increase five-fold for major festivals like Passover or Pentecost. The task of managing the Temple fell to the high priest and other high priestly families, who controlled its ritualistic, administrative, and economic aspects.

Managing the ritualistic aspects included planning for regular sacrifices and purifications, regular prayers/liturgy/music, and special festivals. Priestly activities were performed by 24 priestly family groups ("courses"), where each served a week on two separate occasions through the year (Daniel-Rops, 1962, p. 380). As many as 1,500 priests were available for weekly services, and thousands of animals were sacrificed annually (Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

On the administrative side, the high priestly families also oversaw a "police force" that was made up of Levitical family members (the force was essentially a private army). The police force maintained order in the Temple, ensured that people followed purity laws within the Temple walls, and executed transgressors who entered sections of the Temple that were off-limits. The high priestly families also convened the Sanhedrin (described below).

On the economic side, the high priestly families managed the purchase and storage of Temple provisions and the collection of the Temple tax (all male Jews twenty years and older were expected to annually send a Temple tax of two denarii)[6]. The staff to carry out these duties included two overseers, seven accountants, three treasurers, various people in charge of special treasuries (e.g. bird offerings, libations, clothing for priests), and scribes and moneychangers. In addition to coordinating the supplies needed to run the Temple, these activities also established quasi patron-client relationships with the households of suppliers. "Select families made the ritual breads; provided ritually pure oil, flour, wine; made the incense used in the holy place of the temple itself; and acquired and kept the herds of animals that were ritually acceptable for temple sacrifices" (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 150).

A 71-member tribunal of elite priests known as the Sanhedrin was made up of various elite clergy, scribes, and legal experts who enjoyed high status lineage and large households. The activities of the Sanhedrin – which functioned as a senate in Judea – extended far beyond the relatively narrow and private domain of worship. The Sanhedrin controlled civil administration and was responsible for remitting taxes to the local Roman government. It made decisions regarding most legal matters, and acted as a judiciary body within the Jewish community. It handed down legal pronouncements in criminal cases, property disputes, divorce hearings, and religious matters such as Jewish purity laws. The presiding officer of the Sanhedrin was the high priest, the most important person in Judea after the Roman Governor (Daniel-Rops, 1962, pp. 53-55).

The Sanhedrin was organized in a clear bureaucratic style, with a top leader, a "board of directors," a treasurer, a "defense minister" who was in charge of the Temple guard, and a captain that oversaw sacrifices in the Temple. The majority of the members of the Sanhedrin were wealthy landowners, and they managed the financial transactions related to land in Jerusalem that belonged to the Temple. Therefore, the treasury board had numerous tasks regarding financial business specifically dealing with the Temple.

The elite Jewish priests regularly tried to influence the common Jewish people in Palestine. But village elders – even though they were linked to the Temple and the Sanhedrin – enjoyed considerable autonomy from the priests, especially within Galilee, which had a different history and proximity to the elite Jewish families than Judea (Rapinchuk, 2004; see Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 147).

Most of the interactions between village elders and the larger community took place in village synagogues, where religious, commercial (business), and legal activities were carried out. Archeological evidence suggests that the term synagogue sometimes refers to meeting halls, and at other times to a public space that served as a gathering place within a village (Levine, 2000). With regard to religion, peasants came to the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath. The reading of the Torah was commonplace in the synagogue, and by the first century BCE "weekly ceremonies featuring the communal reading and study of the holy texts had become a universal practice" (Levine, 2000, p. 139). Regular weekly interaction between the peasants and the elite occurred in the synagogue and the entire community was devoted to such activity. In terms of commerce, stores were also present within the synagogue complex. Market items such as pottery and glass appear to have been sold in the synagogue. This trade took place between local Jews and Jews from other locations that had traveled to a specific destination (Rosenfeld and Menirav, 2005, pp. 211-220; Levine, 2000, p. 55). Legal decisions were also made in the synagogue regarding property issues and business transactions.

Management and the productive sector

Business activity in first century Palestine was based on three fundamentally different assumptions than modern-day business. First, the meaning of profit was different because it was assumed that if one person became wealthier, someone else would become less wealthy. Total wealth was therefore seen as a zero-sum game, and the modern idea of "growing the economic pie" was foreign to the thinking of the time (Gotsis and Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2004, p. 12, 15; Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 111; Osiek, 1991). Second, there was still a traditional belief that honorable economic activity had more to do with producing goods in a life-sustaining way than with a primary emphasis on *chrematistically* maximizing financial gain (Aubert, 1994). The *chrematistic* approach to economics was likely more evident in cities like Sepphoris and Jerusalem than it was in smaller villages in Palestine. Moreover, it could be counter-productive for landholders to mistreat their tenants enough to make them leave, because this would create a labor deficit, which would be costly to replace, and mistreatment could also lead to forms of insolence and resistance, which could slow production. Third, whereas today business is an important sector of society (e.g. political decisions are influenced by factors that enhance *chrematistic* economic interests of business), in ancient societies business concerns were seen as subservient to the political elite (e.g. as providing the means for rulers to extract taxes) (Aubert, 1994). These differences must be kept in mind as we consider the key actors in the productive sector in first century Palestine.

Landowners, the economic elite, and nobility (patrons). This group represented about 1-2 percent of the population and occupied the top rung of the social hierarchy (Herzog, 1994). By the first century, the top 3 percent of Roman society accounted for 22 percent of total personal income (Goldsmith, 1984). The wealth of the members of this group was often based on the power of the family they had been born into – how much land it owned, how much access to religious-political power it had, and so on. These landowners often achieved their wealth thanks to their religious genealogy, with families of high priests more likely to be wealthy. The elite prided themselves on living off the so-called surplus produced by the peasants, and treated work and money-making with contempt (Herzog, 1994, p. 69).

Over time, as conspicuous consumption became a sign of status (Herzog, 1994), wealthy families were motivated to create more wealth by planting cash crops (rather than food that nourished the workers) and by increasing the size of their estates (by taking away land from smaller landholders who were unable to pay their debts)[7]. Peasants were often in debt because they had inadequate "surplus" to feed a growing population and because of unrealistic demands made upon them. For example, peasants had to borrow money because typically 50 percent or more of their total crop yield went to pay tithes, tolls, and tribute to various sources (Kloppenborg, 2008, p. 60; Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 349).

Factors contributing to the rise in absentee landowners included the development of cities (with their physical and cultural amenities that attracted the well-to-do), increasing landowner involvement in politics and the military (Aubert, 1994, p. 120), and the absorption of smaller landholders. Rome transformed the regions it conquered into subsidiaries that served the elite. Economic systems were usually the first to be "Romanized" because money and power were closely linked. In order to funnel the fruits of distant laborers to the center, Rome would often undertake commercialization projects that encouraged the growth of urban centers which served as marketplaces where people from surrounding towns and villages brought their wares to be traded and taxed (Crossan, 2007, pp. 97-104). Crossan succinctly summarizes this process as: "Romanization by urbanization for commercialization" (Crossan, 2007, p. 100). Each of these developments contributed to an increased need for managers.

Managers. The majority of the estates were owned by wealthy landholders (patrons) who hired managers (clients) to manage their estates. Landowners paid for all of the operating costs of the estate and collected the proceeds from the manager. In order to maximize their financial return, landowners often converted lands from food crops that were used to feed farm households (e.g. wheat) to cash crops (e.g. olives, grapes) (Kloppenborg, 2008)[8]. Landowners often used monetary rewards to help ensure the diligence and loyalty of their managers (Aubert, 1994, p. 147). Compared to day labourers, managers' incomes could be greater by a factor of two or four or more (Kloppenborg, 2008).

Managers conducted business with tenants, slaves, servants, and local merchants on behalf of the landowner (Moxnes, 1988, p. 60). Managers had a substantial amount of power and authority, and the absent master placed great trust in them. Grounds for dismissal included negligence, incompetence, misuse of discretion, or embezzlement. Without the patronage of the landlord, a manager could easily fall into the social outcast class; thus, being fired could be like a death sentence. Managers therefore occupied a powerful, but vulnerable, position (Aubert, 1994, p. 148).

Merchants. Representing about 5 percent of the population, merchants were an intriguing social group. On the one hand, they were despised because they engaged in a wholly (unholy) *chrematistic* activity. They did not produce anything, but rather relied on selling items for more money than they purchased them. Because this was viewed as a variation of usury, merchants were seen as godless people, as were tax collectors (Malina, 2001, p. 98). Very few merchants were wealthy because transportation and distribution of goods was costly and dangerous, and banditry was not uncommon (Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Taxation and tolls also limited opportunities to gain wealth by trading and moving goods (Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Most merchants were essentially poor peddlers or retailers, but some business people were rich (Daniel-Rops, 1962).

Merchants were active in local village markets where goods were exchanged, bartered, bought, and sold. The larger towns – such as Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Caesarea – had markets twice a week, and people from surrounding smaller villages expended considerable effort to bring their goods to these markets in spite of the risks that were inherent in transporting goods through rural areas. Markets in larger towns also had permanent money-changers, and were also the site of court hearings. In larger markets and metropolitan centers, middlemen or market vendors facilitated trade between parties. Smaller towns held markets intermittently and focused on exchange within just one village (Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

Small retail shops were evident in both villages and in larger cities. Specialty shops sold a narrow line of goods (for example, pottery, gold, bread, meat, etc), while "general stores" sold a broader group of products. The number and variety of shops was proportional to the size of the town. For example, bread was usually baked in homes, but there were bakeries in the larger urban centers (Rosenfeld and Menirav, 2005, pp. 40-50).

The elite members of society were ambivalent towards merchants. On the one hand, they were dependent on merchants for imported luxury goods and for conspicuous consumption, so they supported them. Herzog (1994, p. 71ff) suggests that it was the emergence of merchants that increased the demand for luxury items among the elite. On the other hand, the elite looked down upon anyone who worked with their hands or who made money from commercial activity. Echoing Aristotle's fears regarding merchants, Herzog (1994, p. 69) suggests that the negative attitude of elites toward merchants may have been:

> [. . .] rooted in a deeper anxiety and had a different source, for the coming of the merchants represented the beginning of a different economic order in which profits could be calculated and risks could be subjected to rational scrutiny. With merchants came the commercialization that would fundamentally change the economics and thus the politics of these empires. Aristocratic antipathy toward merchants seemed to intuit the increasingly important role of merchants in a changing social and political order.

Artisans. Artisans possessed specialized skills such as carpentry, weaving, leather-working, pottery-making, stone-cutting, and tent-making (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 110). Artisans represented about 3 to 7 percent of the population. Peasants usually made their own clothing and processed basic food. With the emergence of the merchant class, artisans' work became more specialized (Herzog, 1994, p. 71). Although they possessed specialized skills, artisans were still considered manual laborers and were therefore looked down upon by the elite class (Herzog, 1994: 63). After the rebuilding of Jerusalem's Temple was completed in 62 CE, it was said that 18,000 artisans were out of work (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 150). It has been speculated that Jesus' father Joseph (a carpenter or builder) moved his family to Nazareth to find work in nearby Sepphoris, which was undergoing rapid expansion at that time (Reed, 2007).

Farmers. Between 75 and 80 percent of the workforce was involved in agriculture (Goldsmith, 1984). Farmers near small towns divided their time between working the fields and selling their crops directly to consumers (either close-by neighbors, or people that came to trade at the local market). There were both independent and tenant farmers in first century Palestine (Kloppenborg, 2008). Independent farmers owned small parcels of land and worked it with their families and hired help. These were the prototypical households described by Aristotle. They were more common in Galilee than in Judea, where the Temple and elite Jewish families resulted in more absentee landholders. Independent farmers were free to dispose of any agricultural surpluses as they saw fit. During the plowing or seeding seasons, they employed day laborers if their household was not able to handle the workload.

In contrast, tenant farmers worked land that was owned by others. Tenant farmers (equivalent to modern-day sharecroppers) paid rent to the landlord in one of three ways: as a percentage of the crop, as a fixed amount of the crop, or as a fixed cash amount (Herzog, 1994). It was not unusual for independent farmers to become tenant farmers after they lost their land because of financial problems (land cost about 250 denarii for 0.6 acres).

Fishers. The fishing industry was hierarchically organized, highly regulated and taxed, and many middlemen were involved. Preserved Galilean fish were Palestine's most famous export products (Gotsis and Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2004). Fishing was controlled by the client-king who sold fishing rights to brokers (or tax collectors), who in turn contracted with fishing families and often provided them with capital to pay for fishing equipment. Fishing households often worked together in cooperatives or syndicates in order to meet their contractual obligations to their brokers and to manage their labor needs. If there were not enough workers in the family to process an unexpectedly large catch, day laborers would be hired to fill in on a temporary basis (Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Taxation and regulations also applied to fish buyers, processors, and distributors, all of whom required separate licenses from a broker or tax collector.

Fishing households relied on artisans and merchants for nets, boats, anchors, and repairs. Fish processors who prepared the fish for the marketplace relied on merchants, farmers, and artisans for things like salt, wine, and oil used in the preservation of fish. All goods and services were taxed. Preserved fish and sauces that were distributed by the merchants to various markets were taxed at ports and on land routes as well (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, pp. 106-109; Hanson, 1997).

Slaves. Slaves were owned by their master, and considered to be a part of their master's household (Aristotle, *Politics*). The cost of slaves in Jewish Palestine probably ranged in price from 200-500 denarii (Kloppenborg, 2008, p. 57). In some ways, slaves enjoyed more security than servants, because when a household lacked enough resources to retain both slaves and servants, the master would keep the slaves as a possession. Some slaves worked at very high levels of responsibility – for example, serving as retainers or managers for their masters – but most slaves performed manual labor (e.g. plowing, hoeing, and harvesting). They worked up to ten hours per day, and were also expected to pay direct (e.g. per person) and indirect (e.g. tolls, duties) taxes.

Estate managers ensured that slaves had decent food and housing, and in return expected loyalty from the slaves. Ineffective behavior on the part of the manager might disrupt productivity and cause the estate owner unwanted publicity. The challenge for managers was to optimize the work of slaves.

Day laborers. Day laborers were hired literally for the day by farmers, fishermen, and others who needed short-term manpower. Day laborers also traded with other peasants at local markets (Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Day laborers were generally freedmen or former landowners who could not pay their debts and had lost their land. Day laborers did not have the patron-client benefits of protection, a steady income, and food that slaves had. Due to the seasonal and unpredictable nature of the tasks they performed, they were often out of work (Kloppenborg, 2008).

Artisans also occasionally fell into this group. They worked as day laborers if their wares were not in demand, or if they needed extra food or money. Day laborers were considered to be the second lowest-class in society because they did not hold a permanent position, had no job security, and no steady income. Over time, and due to the insecurity of this social position, individuals from this group tended to leave their kinship group and turn to banditry (Moxnes, 1988, p. 58).

Social outcasts/expendables. The lowest social class contained individuals who were on the periphery of society (the sick[9], the outcast, and the poor). Social outcasts represented between 5 and 10 percent of the population; they often resorted to a life of banditry and crime. Social outcasts were usually cut off from the rest of society due to their lack of purity, their sins, or their traitorous actions (Moxnes, 1988, p. 52). This group included individuals who were considered expendable (e.g. the children of farmers who could not afford to feed their families) and individuals who practiced the "despised trades" and were segregated from the population having nothing left but "to sell their bodies or their animal energies" (Herzog, 1994, p. 65). For them

> [. . .] life was brutal and brief; characteristically, they lasted no more than five to seven years after entering this class, but the size of the expendable class remained more or less stable because its ranks were constantly being replenished from the classes of peasants, artisans, merchants, and the unclean and degraded immediately above it (Herzog, 1994, p. 66).

Management and the government sector

Management activity was important in three main areas of the government sector: rulers, tax collection, and the military.

Rulers. As noted above, households and patron client-relationships were hallmarks of Roman governance structures, and nowhere was this more evident than Palestine in the first century. Herod the Great, who ruled the region from 40 to 4 BCE under the title "King of the Jews," was one of Caesar Augustus's most trusted client-kings and one of antiquity's most prolific builders (e.g. Masada, Herodium)[10]. His building projects honored his patron (e.g. the city of Caesarea was named after his patron), he built temples to the Imperial cult in cities with a low Jewish population, and he held various sporting and musical competitions to honor the emperor. Herod, in turn, served as a patron or benefactor to the Jews, most notably by enlarging the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to make it the largest sacred complex in the Roman Empire (Reed, 2007, p. 49, 86). Herod also cultivated relationships with elite Jewish families by marrying two wives from those families (Hanson, 1989; Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

The importance of households can be seen in the way Herod the Great's kingdom was divided among members of his household after his death (his three sons), who further upheld Herod's household legacy. For example, Herod's son Herod Antipas ruled the regions of Galilee and Perea from 4 BCE-39CE under the title of tetrarch (lit., quarter-kingdom). Like his father, he honored his patron with building projects, for example naming his new lakeside city Tiberius (after Augustus' successor, Emperor Tiberias). Another great building project of Herod Antipas was Sepphoris, which grew to a population of about 10,000. Sepphoris was located just four miles away from Nazareth (where Jesus lived and worked until he was about 30 years old), and would have had a great effect on the economy and provided construction jobs for artisans like Jesus' father.

Rather than client-kings, some geographic regions were managed by legates, prefects or procurators (all of whom were clients, directly or indirectly, of the emperor). A legate was an army general of senatorial rank. If there was only one legion (a unit of the army comprised of 6,000 soldiers) in a province, the legate was also the governor but in regions where there was more than one legion there was a legate who presided over them all. During the time of Jesus, the region of Judea was under the direct rule of the prefect Pontius Pilate (client), who was under the rule of the Syrian Legate (patron) who had command of the closest Roman legion (Hanson and Oakman, 1998)[11]. This had occurred because Herod's oldest son had been sent into exile for mismanaging the regions he had inherited (Reed, 2007, p. 50).

Taxation. The Roman emperor collected taxes and tributes from all parts of the Empire (Hanson and Oakman, 1998). Each client-king had a chief tax collector and various local tax collectors to ensure that the tribute requirements of Rome were met. Many different taxes were levied on Roman territories, including head taxes, market taxes, transit tolls, port taxes, rent for city-controlled resources, and labor for state projects like roads and municipal water supplies.

Direct taxes were levied on land, crops, and slaves. In the regions of Galilee, direct taxes brought in about 200 talents per year (one talent = 6,000 *denarii*; Carson, 1984, p. 516), and the regions of Judea and Samaria brought in about 600 talents (Daniel-Rops, 1962, p. 162). There were also "indirect" taxes, which included transportation tolls, import/export tolls, and various market taxes. This often led to conflict with different groups, such as tradesmen, artisans or merchants, who did not always agree with the amount being collected. Tax structures were often complicated and conflicting. For example, client-kings such as Herod the Great imposed large tax burdens on landowners in order to finance the army, and also to meet Roman tribute requirements. Landowners, in turn, increased the amount of rent they charged their tenants (who also had to pay a variety of other religious and Roman taxes). These actions widened the gap between the elite and the poor, and were advantageous only to the elite (Hanson and Oakman, 1998: chapter 4).

The chief tax collector employed local tax collectors who were contracted to collect from cities, towns, and villages (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 415). They had to pay the tax allotted to Rome in advance and then organize the collection in their geographical region. This helps to explain why they collected more than they paid to Rome, and thus gained a reputation for attaining wealth by dishonest means (Moxnes, 1988, p. 84). While some local tax collectors became rich through this process, many did not. Local tax collectors were often "rootless people unable to find other work" (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 415), and had a reputation for being exploitative. Rabbinic moralists disliked tax collectors because they were dishonest, whereas both artisans and rich people disliked them because they saw tax collectors as lower-class citizens. Day laborers and the very poor, who had nothing that could be taxed, may not have felt such contempt towards tax collectors (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 416).

The military. The Roman Empire's standing army (about 130,000 troops) was created in order to secure current lands and to expand the empire. It also helped to collect taxes from groups of people who were reluctant to pay. Military high commanders were chosen by the emperor, who made various alliances that served his own interests and were favored by certain families of nobility. Below this upper level of military officers were ample opportunities for managers from non-aristocratic households to advance and hold rank.

The military high command – appointed by the emperor – was centered in Rome and was comprised of senior army officers who were distinguished on the basis of their birth, usually from elite Equestrian and Senatorial class families that had significant connections to the emperor. Officers commanded a unit for a two-month rotation (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 184).

The army was divided into legions (6,000 members), which were overseen by legates who were appointed by the emperor. Often the regional commander of a legion would have dual responsibilities, including military and political (e.g. legate, procurator). The legion in first century Palestine was overseen by a legate in Syria, but the local procurator/prefect in Judea and the tetrarch in Galilee would have been regional commanders in their jurisdictions (Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

The 6,000-member legions were further subdivided into ten cohorts. Each cohort had 480 men (except the first cohort, which had 800), and was led by a senior centurion. A similar military rank was the Decurion, who commanded a squadron of 30 Roman cavalry soldiers (Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

Cohorts were further subdivided into six centuries, and each century had 80 infantrymen and 20 support troops (e.g. architects, engineers, surveyors, surgeons, craftsmen), and was under the rule of a centurion. The centurion was responsible for the day-to-day life of soldiers and acted as the field commander. Reporting to the centurion was a Second-in-Command (*Optio*), a Guard Commander (*Tessararius*), and a Treasurer (*Signifer*).

Centuries were further subdivided into groups of 8 soldiers who shared a tent and ate meals together. They were comprised of basic soldiers and some non-fighting specialists, all of whom received about the same pay. The lowest rank belonged to the auxiliary soldiers, who were paid approximately 225 denarii per year. During occasions when more military personnel were required by the army, the standing military could be enhanced with mercenaries, bandits, or enforced recruitment of peasants (Herzog, 1994, p. 57). None of the soldiers in first century Palestine were actually from Rome (Herzog, 1994, p. 58).

The plausiblity of the Protestant Ethic

The material in the preceding section suggests that managers were playing an increasingly important role in all aspects of social life in first century Palestine, and that they functioned as go-betweens amongst households that were embedded in a web of patron-client relationships. Building on this information, we can now address the question of whether the Reformation's Protestant Ethic – which underpins modern management – is actually consistent with a Judeo-Christian ethic that would have been plausible in first century Palestine. Although scholars have had some difficulty succinctly defining Weber's idea of the Protestant Ethic (e.g. Hammond and Williams, 1976; Hassan, 1971; Jonassen, 1963), there is general agreement that it includes four fundamental ideas:

(1) *Calling*. Individuals are called and have a duty to perform their jobs. "The only way of living acceptable to God was . . . solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the *individual* by his [sic] *position* in the world" (Weber, 1958, p. 80; emphasis added here). Weber also noted that ". . . faithful labor, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God" (Weber, 1958, p. 178).

(2) *Rationalization*. Individuals are called to rationalize their work in order to maximize the fruits of their labour as a sign of God's blessing.

> True to the Puritan tendency to pragmatic interpretation, the providential purpose of the division of labour is to be known by its fruits . . . to a quantitative and qualitative improvement in production, which is identical with the good of the greatest number. Wealth is . . . not only morally permissible, but actually enjoined . . . *The attainment of it [i.e. wealth] as a fruit of labour in a calling was a sign of God's blessing* (Weber, 1958, p. 162, 163, 172; emphasis added here).

(3) *Asceticism*. Individuals should not use their time or money to engage in frivolous activities that will distract them from their calling. "Waste of time is the first and deadliest of sins . . . Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury . . . is worthy of absolute moral condemnation" (Weber, 1958, pp. 157-158). Asceticism is seen as the opposite of hedonism and self-indulgence, and it favored restricted consumption, especially of luxuries (Weber, 1958, p. 120, 194, and 171). Sharing is also an element of asceticism. Quoting John Wesley, Weber (1958, p. 175) notes that Christians should gain all they can and save all they can, but he also adds "and give all they can."

(4) *Spiritual salvation*. According to Weber, overarching social and political institutions were of little concern to the founders of the Protestant Ethic, which emphasizes individualism and personal responsibility.

> The *salvation of the soul and that alone* was the centre of their life and work. Their ethical ideals and the practical results of their doctrines were all based on that alone, and were consequences of purely religious motives (Weber, 1958, pp. 89-90, see also pp. 96, 150, 160; emphasis added here).

Weber cites many scriptural sources that Reformers invoked to support the Protestant Ethic, and one that he frequently alludes to nicely captures all four of its dimensions: the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30; see Weber, 1958, p. 55, 67-8, 73, 163, 170, 268). In the parable, God is likened to a master going on a journey who appoints three managers to manage different amounts of money (calling). The first two managers work and double the master's assets (rationalization), whereas the third buries the money and fails to even collect interest. Upon his return, the master commends the two managers who frugally doubled his assets (asceticism) and selects them for further work in his household (salvation), whereas the third manager is deemed worthless and thrown outside into the darkness. This particular interpretation of the parable clearly supports all four elements of the Protestant Ethic as characterized by Weber.

But there is a plausible alternative interpretation of the parable that does not support all four elements (Dyck *et al.*, 2009). In the alternative interpretation, the master in the parable does not represent God, but rather is simply an exploitive boss, who does not even seek to fulfill his calling as a patron in terms of his first century obligations to his clients ("I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed" (Matt 25: 26)). The two managers who double their boss's wealth are adhering to the rationalization criterion for themselves and their boss, but they are violating it in the larger sense because they are widening the gap between rich and the poor, and are not achieving the greatest good for the greatest number. Instead, the rich get richer, and the resulting wealth is hoarded without regard for the sharing that should be part of *asceticism* ("For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him" (Matt 25: 29)). The non-chrematistic third manager is thrown "outside, into the darkness" and thus is treated like sheep were (they spent the nights outdoors). But, as we learn in the passage immediately following the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 31-40), *salvation* is not for the first two managers. Rather, it is the sheep who inherit the kingdom of God, much to the surprise of the relatively-coddled goats (who spend the nights indoors).

In order to determine which of these two alternative interpretations is more plausible – and more generally to examine whether the four dimensions of the Reformation-era Protestant Ethic represent a plausible interpretation of the original Judeo-Christian ethic – we must examine them in light of our earlier discussion of management in first century Palestine (Bailey, 1976). It turns out that the first two dimensions the Protestant Ethic seem implausible in the first century context, while the evidence is mixed for the other two dimensions.

First, with regard to the Protestant Ethic concept of a "calling," Weber identifies numerous passages in ancient Hebrew sacred texts similar to Martin Luther's understanding of calling. This suggests that the basic idea would have been familiar in first century Palestine (Weber, 1958, p. 204), however, it does not automatically follow that the idea of a calling was part of the New Testament message. We would expect that the Protestant Ethic idea of a calling – and in particular its implications about perpetuating socio-economic structures that were characterized by widening gaps between the rich and the poor – would have been better-received by the elite members of first-century Palestine society than by members of the lower classes. But historians, biblical scholars, and theologians all agree that it was the elite who were most threatened by, and opposed to, the teachings of Jesus, whereas his message was embraced by those who occupied the lower rungs of society (e.g. Dodd and Gotsis, 2007). It seems questionable that the concept of a calling would have been a prominent part of Jesus' message.

Second, rationalization and maximization of wealth were increasingly observable in first century Palestine, and there was increased interest in *chrematistics*. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the elite would have welcomed any ethic that legitimized their wealth as a sign of God's blessing (Weber, 1952, p. 255). Yet, it is the elite who were generally opposed to Jesus' message, and the poor who generally supported it. Once again, it seems doubtful that the Protestant Ethic concept of rationalization was a key part of Jesus' message.

Third, the Protestant Ethic's emphasis on asceticism would not likely have been well-received by the first century elite, who lived in relative luxury and were becoming increasingly involved in conspicuous consumption[12]. The poor, in contrast, may have viewed asceticism as a non-issue or they may have welcomed it if they thought it would encourage the rich to share more of their wealth. Thus, our historical analysis of management in first century Palestine lends support to this dimension of the Protestant Ethic, suggesting that asceticism may well have been evident in Jesus' message. This would help to explain why the first century elite were opposed to his teachings.

Fourth, with regard to the focus on spiritual salvation, recall that the Protestant Ethic emphasized individualism and personal responsibility, and placed relatively little emphasis on social and political institutions. But, as we have seen, political and religious issues were tightly intertwined in first century Palestine, and many (most?) Jewish people would have defined salvation as freedom from Roman rule. When Jesus' listeners heard words like "Son of God" and "Savior" – words commonly used to describe the Roman Emperor – it would have been natural for them to think in terms of political salvation. So, here we have a dilemma. On the one hand, it seems unlikely that Jesus' salvation message would have ignored political or socio-economic institutions and issues. Indeed, the two topics Jesus taught about most often were the "kingdom of God" and money (Dyck and Schroeder, 2005), and his message prompted such a negative response from political leaders that he was executed. This would seem to challenge the Protestant Ethic view that Jesus and his message did not fully engage the political and socioeconomic issues of his day, and focused instead solely on spiritual issues. On the other hand, it is clear that Jesus did not promise political salvation in the way that many people wanted or expected (e.g. "My kingdom is not of this world," John 18: 36). As well, Jesus' death can be seen as the ultimate symbol of submission to Roman domination. This lends support to the idea that the Protestant Ethic emphasis on spiritual salvation was indeed consistent with the first century message of the Judeo-Christian ethic.

On balance, an analysis of the contextual variables of first century Palestine does not lend compelling support to the argument that the Protestant Ethic (as characterized by Weber) represents a plausible interpretation of the scriptural text. There appears to be very little support in Jesus' message for the first two dimensions of the Protestant Ethic (i.e. individuals being called to their station, and rationalization and financial wealth being a sign of God's blessing), but there is some support for both the third and fourth dimensions (emphasis on asceticism, and a primary emphasis on spiritual salvation).

Discussion

The question of whether the Protestant Ethic of the Reformation period is consistent with the ethic of the first century Judeo-Christian scriptures is beginning to receive serious attention by mainstream management scholars, especially among those who raise concerns about shortcomings associated with the contemporary management paradigm. They argue that a new paradigm – which emphasizes altruism and an escape from the iron cage of materialism – needs to be developed for management. The increasing support for this move is evident in several areas, including the establishment of the *Management, Spirituality and Religion* interest group in the Academy of Management, and in the "theological turn" associated with leading philosophers.

Given these developments, we adopted two main goals in this paper:

(1) to describe the role and meaning of management in first century Palestine; and

(2) to evaluate whether the Protestant Ethic – which is widely seen as underpinning contemporary management theory and practice – represents a plausible interpretation of the Judeo-Christian ethic in its first century context.

Our analysis suggests that modern management may indeed be based on Weber's description of the Reformation-era Protestant Ethic, but that it is questionable whether the fundamental dimensions of that Protestant Ethic represent a plausible interpretation of New Testament message in its historical and socioeconomic context. Put differently, modern management theory may well be fairly consistent with the Protestant Ethic, but that does not necessarily mean that it is consistent with biblical teachings in their socio-economic context.

Our analysis and framework depicted in Figure 1 should be helpful for future research in a variety of literatures, but perhaps especially for what the Academy of Management calls "Management, Spirituality and Religion" research. Ideally, our framework may serve as a modest "Rosetta Stone" for scholars interested in interpreting first century documents in the Roman empire in order to draw out implications for management theory and practice. Rather than simply assuming that Weber's description of the Protestant Ethic is an accurate representation of the Judeo-Christian ethic in its first century historical context, our study provides a more nuanced and historically-contextualized framework that can be used to interpret early Judeo-Christian writings. Thus, our framework should be of particular interest to management scholars who are writing for journals that link biblical materials to the theory and practice of management (e.g. *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business, Journal of Religion and Business Ethics, Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership,* and *Faith & Economics*).

Our study may provide a helpful point of departure to interpret specific management writings from first century Palestine – like the Parable of the Talents described above – or for a systematic analysis of a *series* of passages or related texts. For example, it might be useful for future researchers to use the categories depicted in Figure 1 to analyze each New Testament parable or, alternatively, to analyze other first century writings (e.g. Josephus). Such an analysis might examine whether biblical writings are more likely to focus on how managers should motivate subordinates to be more chrematistically productive versus how managers place greater emphasis on oikonomia. Along the same lines, research could also examine what first century documents say about how managers should treat subordinates versus how subordinates should treat managers. Research could examine how people in different social roles should treat one another, perhaps with particular emphasis on the economic realm or on the role of social outcasts.

At the very least, our study makes a contribution to the body of research related to Weber (1958), and in particular to those who assume that modern management is based on a Judeo-Christian ethic. While it may be true that modern management theory and practice are based on what Weber described as the Protestant Ethic that was evident in the sixteenth century, our analysis suggests that it is less plausible that modern management is based on a Judeo-Christian ethic that was evident in first century Palestine. This will be of interest to management scholars who wish to draw upon biblical writings as they embrace the "post-secular turn" and draw upon theology to inform the development of alternative management theory and practice.

Notes

1. We focus on this time period because these writings add the "Christian" part to the Judeo-Christian ethic (i.e. the Old Testament writings, like the Torah, are pre-Christian). Moreover, in Weberian terms, Jesus represents an analytical "ideal type" exemplar of the scriptural Judeo-Christian ethic. Recall that Weber used "ideal types" to develop his argument, suggesting that the only way to examine something like the Protestant Ethic or the spirit of capitalism is via "an historical individual, i.e. a complex of elements associated in historical reality which we unite into a conceptual whole from the standpoint of their

cultural significance" (Weber, 1958, p. 47). Weber uses Richard Baxter as his "ideal-type" representative of the Protestant Ethic (as well as drawing on exemplars like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Menno Simons), and he uses Benjamin Franklin as his "ideal-type" of the (secularized) meaning of the spirit of capitalism.

2. These terms are relatively interchangeable for our purposes. Scholars seem to use the etic terms retainer or broker when referring to what we classify in Figure 1 as the economic sector. This designation is often used when speaking of the "middlemen" in any sort of economic chain, whether it be tax collection or a fishing consortium. Merchants used these managers or retainers to organize sales of their merchandise and to arrange for the transport of merchandise. In the household management scheme, the emic term steward is more often employed than retainer. One could even argue that a steward seems to have more of a familial connotation or might be more closely related to notions of kinship within the household (not in a genetic sense but more like a "familial household"). Accountants might fall into the retainer category in the sense that this designation would belong mainly in the economic sector, and large estates might employ scribes as an adjunct to an *oikonomos*.
3. This was an important concept in antiquity because honor was viewed as a type of currency. The role of honor in any patron-client relationship is very important – just as important as any other aspect, including protection, food, etc. Because honor was a yardstick used to measure one's self-worth, it played an important role in all societal interactions, including the managerial role. For example, a steward in a household wanted to remain honorable in the eyes of the estate owner, but it was equally important that the slaves respected and honored the manager by obeying the manager's wishes. Therefore, success in one's career as a manager and in one's personal life (it is difficult to separate these roles) depended on one's standing or status in society, which in turn depended on honor (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 370).
4. Reflecting the patron-client relationships evident in other sectors of society, priestly offices in the Imperial cult could be purchased by the elite without religious training or lineage: "the ambitious elites acquired positions of power within their communities as they assumed priestly offices in the imperial cult." (Reed, 2007, p. 104 and 107).
5. After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70CE, the Roman Emperor Vespasian notes that the priests did not rule effectively because of ethnic differences. According Goodman (1987), most of the elite Jewish priests were Babylonian and not Palestinian. This situation was fairly typical of imperialist authoritarian structures, where the ruling class was often ethnically different from the rest of the population over which it exerted authority.
6. "A denarius was a standard day's wage in the first century. Two denarii would provide 3,000 calories for five to seven days or 1,800 calories for nine-12 days for a family with the equivalent of four adults. Two denarii would provide 24 days of bread ration for a poor itinerant. This calculation does not account for clothing, taxation, religious duties, etc." (Malina, 1996, p. 383; see also Daniel-Rops, 1962, p. 151). Two denarii could purchase 144 to 480 figs (Kloppenborg, 2008, p. 57).
7. These landowners had no desire to actually live on their land or to farm it themselves – farming was despicable work beneath their status – so they hired managers to act on their behalf (Aubert, 1994). One advantage of having managers is that this allowed the elite to have no direct hand in (ostensibly contemptuous) *chrematistic* profit-maximizing actions. The dispossession of land is one of the factors in the Judean uprising in the 60sCE. Apparently this was more of an issue in Judea and the area around Jerusalem than it was in Galilee, which did not have the same level of indigenous aristocracy/Jewish nobility (see Rapinchuk, 2004, p. 203). There was really no free market purchase of land, but rather peasants lost control of it when they were unable to pay off loans (Hanson and Oakman, 1998).

8. Managers could also help patrons to enlarge their landholdings. This might happen when smaller-scale households were unable to pay their crop-shares or taxes, and needed to borrow money from patrons. For example, even the Temple in Jerusalem would act like a bank in this way and, if the debt grew too large, would take ownership of the land (Herzog, 1994). This is one reason that the lands in Judea were more likely to be owned by absentee landholders than the lands in Galilee.
9. Malina and Rohrbaugh distinguish between disease (a biomedical malfunction) and an illness (a disvalued state of being). People with illnesses (such as leprosy) were not included in normative society and were isolated from others. They were considered "unclean" by society and therefore segregated (Malina and Rohrbaugh, 2003, p. 368).
10. The Jewish historian Josephus describes how Antipater, the father of Herod the Great, received citizenship and tax exemption from Julius Caesar after he provided the emperor with military support (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 73).
11. A prefect was a provincial governor of the Equestrian class. There was also a military component to this title and the prefect was responsible for collecting tribute for Rome (not directly, but through others). After 44CE, governors in Judea held the title procurator. A procurator was a Roman provincial governor, whose main task was tribute and tax collection. The procurator could be either of the Equestrian class or a freedman. This position was generally obtained through direct appointment by Rome (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, pp. 176-180). The position of Legate is a parallel to the proconsul in senatorial provinces and the prefect in Egypt. A proconsul was a governor of a Roman senatorial province who acted on behalf of the consul. This position is parallel to that of a legate in the imperial provinces (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p. 179).
12. Similarly, asceticism was not very popular among the elite during Reformation times. Weber notes that during the Reformation, the relative emphasis placed on asceticism varied by region: it was least prominent in regions "wherever the nobility or princes had the upper hand" and more prevalent "wherever the middle class was a social power" (cited in Kalberg, 2001, p. 318). That said, because of the patron-client norms in first century Palestine, the net effect of an ascetic lifestyle may have been relatively better for the first century elite than for the elite during the Reformation. Whereas elite patrons in the first century could gain highly valued honor and status by distributing their wealth, the elite during the Reformation faced different social norms where the social benefits of asceticism were not as clear. For example, because proponents of the Protestant Ethic believed that God wants everyone to work in their calling, they frowned upon the elite giving money to beggars (see Weber, 1958, p. 177, 268).

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