The baptism of Jesus in Mark: a status transformation ritual

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ABSTRACT
Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (Mk 1:9-13) can be understood, from a social-scientific perspective, as a ritual of status transformation. By using insights from social-scientific theories of patronage and clientism, as well as from those of rituals and ceremonies, it is argued that at Jesus’ baptism his status is transformed to that of the new broker of the heavenly Patron. Jesus’ brokerage in Mark should be seen as the mediating of the Patron’s presence and availability to his clients, that is, the proclamation of the kingdom of God, the Patron’s new broadened inclusivistic household. After the results of the study are summarised, a few remarks in regard to the possible implications of this study for current historical Jesus research are made.

1 INTRODUCTION
Almost all literature on the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in Mark 1:9-11 is of the opinion that the meaning of Jesus’ baptism refers to at least one of the following: firstly, Jesus’ baptism is the beginning of his ministry: it is ‘the beginning of the ministry of God’s servant to all peoples’ (Schweizer 1979:38), ‘the sign for Jesus to launch upon his task’ (Barclay 1974:8), a Berufungsgeschichte where Jesus is called to begin his ministry (Pesch 1977:91; Gnilka 1979:52-53). Secondly, at Jesus’ baptism he became the son of God: it is ‘the time when he began to exercise his sonship (Schweizer 1979:38), a moment of identification (Barclay 1974:9), Jesus’ calling to be the son of God (Gnilka 1979:53), when Jesus became ‘der neue Adam und Menschensohn...Gottes einziger Sohn’ (Pesch 1977:93), or, in the words of Schmithals (1986:86), the moment when he became the adopted son of God. Thirdly, at his baptism Jesus is equipped for his ministry as the Son of God: it is a ‘moment of equipment’ (Barclay 1974:11), Jesus ‘ist der eschatologische Gesalbte, auf den Gottes Geist herabkommt’ (Pesch 1977:91), Jesus is ‘der eine und einzige und unüberholbare Bevollmächtigte Gottes’ (Schmithals 1986:87). Finally, Jesus’ baptism inaugurates the eschatological end-time: Jesus is ‘the bringer of the eschatological expected salvation’ (Schmithals 1986:85), Jesus ‘ist sein eschatologischer Vollmachträger’ (Pesch 1977:91).

Summarised, the above understandings of Jesus’ baptism by John are as follows: a man, Jesus from Nazareth, came to John to be baptised. During his
baptism he not only became the Son of God, but was also equipped by the Spirit to bring the eschatological end-time into realisation.

What we therefore have is not only an implied change in the identity or status of Jesus (from Jesus of Nazareth to the son of God), but also a possible change in existing social structures (the beginning of a new ministry, the time of the Spirit, the beginning of the eschatological end-time, i.e., the kingdom of God; cf. Mk 1:15).

According to Wedderburn (1987:363-371), seen from a cross-cultural perspective, baptism has to do with exactly such changes just mentioned, since baptism could be understood as a ritual, a rite of status transformation. Like all transformative rituals, it is centrally concerned with a radical restructuring of the participants’ identity, and consequently, with a redefinition of their status (McVann 1991b:151). Also, according to Alexander (1991:1), ‘ritual often acts as a form of protest against the existing social structure and contributes to social change’.

The aim of this contribution is to indicate that Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:9-13, combined with Mark 1:12-13 (Jesus’ temptation), could be understood as such a rite of status transformation (status reversal), a rite in which Jesus is appointed by the Patron as the broker of the ‘kingdom of God’, that is, the broker of the household of God, where God is available to all his clients, including the so-called expendables in society (cf. Lenski 1966:295; Lenski & Lenski 1982:215; Rohrbaugh 1993:221-233; Saldarini 1988:44). It is thus argued that Jesus baptism not only resulted in his own status reversal, but also, and as a result, in a change of the social structures of his time.

To argue this hypothesis, a social-scientific analysis of Jesus’ baptism in Mark will be done, making use of aspects of social-scientific theories about patronage and clientism and about rituals (and ceremonies). First these theoretical insights will be described, and then Jesus’ baptism in Mark 1:9-13 will be analysed as a rite of status transformation, using these theoretical insights. Finally, after the results of the study are summarised, a few end remarks in regard to the possible implications of this study for current historical Jesus research are made.

2 PATRONAGE AND CLIENTISM

According to Elliott (1987:39), ‘literary and epigraphic evidence from the Greco-Roman period abundantly attests of a Roman social institution as clientela, or, in modern terms, patronage and clientism’.1 This type of rela-

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1 See Elliott (1987:39-42) for a discussion of the sources available which attest such an institution in the Greco-Roman period, and therefore, as well as in first-century
tionship grew out of the principal of *reciprocity* (cf Carney 1975:169-171). Reciprocal exchange or reciprocity involved the giving of gifts, whereby the recipient of the gift was obliged to reciprocate. In this way a person of substance could acquire influence over a group of others, and could 'call in his debts' when needed (see Carney 1975:167).

Malina (1981:80) defines reciprocity as 'a sort of implicit, non-legal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one's sense of honor and shame'. In following Forster (1961:1178), he calls it a 'dyadic contract', and identifies two types of contracts, namely those between persons of equal status (colleague contracts or horizontal dyadic relations), and those between persons of unequal status, called *patron-client contracts*.

Unequal patron-client contracts are respectively defined by Elliott (1987:42) and Moxnes (1991:242) as follows (cf also Blok 1969:366; Carney 1975:171; Van Staden 1991:184-185):

It is a personal relation of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more persons of unequal status based on differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of 'goods and services' of value to each partner. Designed to advance the interests of both partners, a 'patron' is one who uses his/her influence to protect and assist some other person who becomes his/her 'client', who in return provides to this patron certain valued services. In this reciprocal relationship a strong element of solidarity is linked to personal honor and obligations informed by values of friendship, loyalty, and fidelity (Elliott 1987:42).

Patron-client relations are social relationships between individuals based on a strong element of inequality and difference in power. The basic structure of the relationship is an exchange of different and very unequal resources. A patron has social, economic, and political resources that are needed by a client. In return, a client can give expressions of loyalty and honor that are useful for the patron. (Moxnes 1991:242, following Blok 1969:336).

According to Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984:48-49; cf Moxnes 1991:248) the features that all patron-client societies (like first-century Mediterranean society) have in common are the following:

* they are particularistic and (usually) diffuse;
* they involve the exchange of a whole range of generalised symbolic media like power, influence, inducement and commitment;

Mediterranean society (cf also Landé 1977, Saller 1982, Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984, Stambaugh & Balch 1986, Saldarini 1988; Crossan 1991). Note that clients can be either a person or a group (cf Crossan 1991:63). A city, just as well as an individual, could also be a client to a powerful patron.

Symbolic media of interaction can be best explained by using money as example. Barter is the direct exchange of goods and does not require money or any other medium. But as society and economic interchanges become more complex, a symbolic
the exchange entails a package deal, so that generalised symbolic media cannot be given separately (e.g. concretely useful goods must go along with loyalty and solidarity);
* solidarity entails a strong element of interpersonal obligation, even if relations are often ambivalent;
* these relations are not fully legal or contractual, but are very strongly binding;
* in principle, patron-client relations entered into voluntarily can be abandoned voluntarily, although always proclaimed to be life-long, long-range or forever;
* they are vertical and dyadic, and thus they undermine the horizontal group organization and solidarity of clients and other patrons; \(^3\) and
* they are based on strong inequality and difference between patrons and clients.

In addition to Eisenstadt and Roniger, Malina (1981:80) notes that dyadic contracts (i.e., patron-client contracts) are initiated by means of a positive challenge, like the acceptance of an invitation to supper, or of a benefaction like healing. To accept an invitation with no thought of future reciprocity implies acceptance of imbalance of society (see also Silverman 1977:12; Waterbury 1977:354; Saller 1982:37-38; Moxnes 1991: 251). Jesus' calling of Levi (Mk 3:13-17), for example, leads to the response of Levi inviting Jesus to dinner. Jesus' acceptance of this invitation again puts him in the position of repayment. Malina (1981:81) notes that it was exactly this sort of dyadic relationship that bothered Jesus' critics when he ate with 'sinners and tax-collectors'. \(^4\)

Medium is used to effect economic exchange and aid economic relationships. Money then becomes such a symbolic medium of interaction. It is in this regard that power can be seen as a symbolic medium of interaction in society. It is to be distinguished from a raw act of physical force, which is not in itself constitutive of social interaction in society. It is best seen as political power, in that it does not require the actual exercise of physical force, but rather has the capacity to be used in many situations within a society which recognises it. Power as symbolic medium still depends upon the ultimate capacity to coerce behaviour, but its use in a functioning society is usually symbolic and its permanence is protected by social legitimation (see Parsons 1969:352-404).

\(^3\) An example of a horizontal patron-client relationship is the correspondence between Cicero and Manius Aecilius Glabrio as two social equals (see Cicero, *Letters to his friends* 7.30, cited by Crossan 1991:61). The case of Trajan and Harpocras, as brokered by Pliny, is an example of a vertical relationship (see Pliny, *Letters* 10.5, 6, 7, 10, cited by Crossan 1991:62-63).

\(^4\) Other examples of patron-client relationships in Mark are people who approached Jesus for 'mercy': Jairus, the leader of the synagogue (Mk 5:22), the woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years (Mk 5:25) and the healing of a blind man, called Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46).
Malina (1981:82) also notes that in patron-client relationships the dyadic relationship obliges no wider a group than the individuals (and perhaps their embedded females and children) who went into such a patron-client relationship. Consequently, it would be quite normal for the disciples of Jesus to squabble with and challenge each other, since they had ties with Jesus and not to each other (e.g. Mk 9:33–34).

Another important aspect in regard to patronage and clientism is that which is called *favouritism* (Malina 1988:5–8). In following Landé (1977:xv), Malina (1988:5) states that the larger goal pursued by means of dyadic relations is favour, something received on terms more advantageous than those which can be obtained by anyone on an *ad hoc* basis in the market place (or which cannot be obtained in the market place at all). Favouritism, therefore, is the main quality of such relationships. The New Testament is heavily sprinkled with the vocabulary of favouritism, such as benefaction, reward, gift and grace. In horizontal dyadic relationships between individuals of equal status and power, favours and help, usually of similar quality, are exchanged in time of need. In vertical dyadic relationships (i.e. patron-client relationships between individuals of highly unequal status, power or resources), however, the exchange of favours and help is of a qualitatively different sort: material for immaterial, goods for honour and praise, force for status support, and the like (see Malina 1988:7).

Such patron-client relationships are commonly employed to remedy the inadequacies of all institutions, that is, to cushion the vagaries of life for social inferiors. Thus, the slave might be protected against the risks of being sold, killed or beaten, while the slave owner obtains the trust and commitment of the slave in question. Therefore, what a patron-client relationship essentially entails is endowing and outfitting economic, political or religious institutional arrangements with the overarching quality of kinship. Such relations

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5 In this regard, the most recent study of Mitchell (1992:255–272) on the notion of friendship in Acts 2:44–47 and 4:32–37 can be mentioned. In first-century Mediterranean society generosity toward others was facilitated by friendship, but frequently largess was kept within social boundaries. Horizontal friendship was the norm because the element of likeness dictated that it be kept between social equals. Friendship between non-equals was possible, but then it took on the trappings of patron-client relationships and the expectations changed. Friendship therefore was a vehicle for wealth, status and power for the ruling elite of Luke’s day (Mitchell 1992:272). Mitchell goes on to argue that Luke, however, uses friendship to equalize relationships in his own community. Luke portrays the early Jerusalem community in Acts as a community of friends who show how friendship can continue across status lines and the poor can be benefited by the rich. Redefining friendship this way helps Luke to achieve his social objective: encouraging the rich to provide relief for the poor in his community.
'kin-ify' and suffuse the persons involved with the aura of kinship, albeit fictive or pseudo-kinship. And since the hallmark of kinship as a social institution is the quality of commitment, solidarity or loyalty realised in terms of generalised reciprocity, patron-client relationships take on these kinship dimensions. Thus, economic, political and religious interactions now take place between individuals bound together by mutual commitment, solidarity, and loyalty in terms of generalised reciprocity, rather than the balanced reciprocity of unconnected equals or the negative reciprocity typical of superiors to their subordinates.

Malina (1988:3-18), for example, applied this model of patronage and clientism (especially using the concept of favouritism), to understand and present the God of Israel. In short, his argument is as follows: God, as the heavenly patron, allows vertical dyadic alliances with the people of Israel. Jesus, in announcing this arriving patronage and by gathering its clientele, sets himself up as broker. He recruits a core group to facilitate his brokerage and enters into conflict with rivals in the same profession. With his core group and new recruits, Jesus founded a person-centered faction to compete for limited resources bound up with brokerage with the heavenly Patron. The vocabulary of grace, favour, reward and gift all pertains to this brokerage. With the end of Jesus’ brokerage career, his core group emerges as a group-centered faction with features of its own.

6 The notion of broker can be defined as follows (Crossan 1991:60): ‘A broker...is one who sustains a double dyadic alliance, one as client to a patron and another as patron to a client.’

7 Malina (1988:24-27) defines a faction as follows: ‘A faction is a coalition of persons (followers) recruited personally, according to structurally diverse principles by or on behalf of a person in conflict with other person(s) with whom they (coalition members) were formerly united over honor and/or control of resources and/or “truth”’ (Malina 1988:24; his italics). In terms of this definition, Malina argues that the Jesus-movement can best be described as a faction. Jesus personally recruited his followers, his movement was in conflict with the Pharisees, scribes, Herodians and Sadducees in competing for the same prize (pleasing the God of Israel) and it fit into the whole polity of Israel, therefore trying to build up as large a following as possible with the minimum expenditure of limited resources. Elliott (1990:1-31), however, differs from Malina on this point. According to him, the Jesus-movement can best be described as a sect, in the sense that ‘under particular conditions the Jesus movement ceased to be regarded by the corporate body of Judaism as a Jewish faction...and gradually began to assume the character and strategies of a Jewish sect’ (Elliott 1990:11). Some of the changing conditions under which this shift from faction to sect occurred are the following: the increase in the quantity and quality of social tension and ideological differences between the Jesus-movement and the corporate body of Israel, a recruitment on the part of the movement of persons previously excluded by conventional interpretation of the Torah, a claim on the part of the movement to embody exclusively the authentic identity of Israel, a replacement on the part of the movement of major institutions, a regard on the part of the movement of the parent body as distinct from
When Jesus thus called God 'father', what he did was to apply kinship terminology to the God of Israel, the central and focal symbol of Israel's traditional political religion. This sort of 'kin-ification' is typically patron-client behavior (Malina 1988:9). God the 'father', is therefore nothing less than God the patron.8 '[T]he kingdom of God'9 would therefore be God's patronage and the clientele bound up in it (Malina 1988:9-10). To enter the kingdom of God would therefore mean to enjoy the patronage of God, the Heavenly Patron, and hence, to become a client; and the introductory phrase, "the Kingdom of [God] is like" would come out as "the way God's patronage relates and effects his clients is like the following scenario" (Malina 1988:10).

In this regard Aalen (1962:240), describes Jesus' conception of the kingdom of God as 'a new state of affairs, a definite outpouring and sending of powers..., as restitution of mankind, a fulfillment of the world'. Also, for Aalen (1962:226) kingdom is not only kingship or reign, but a community, a 'house'.10 Malina (1988:10) further argues that all the Synoptics agree that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, that is, the enjoyment of the patronage of God, and each gospel accounts a heavenly voice witness to Jesus as beloved son (cf Mk 1:11), as the one who enjoys special divine patronage (cf Moxnes 1991:248). It is therefore no surprise then that Jesus' essential emphasis was on the readily available patronage of the God of Israel for all his clients. Of course, the place where God was traditionally and readily available was the temple. In Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, however, clients could now approach the divine Patron without officialdom, regardless of their social standing.

8 What is interesting in Mark is that in all four times that Jesus refers to God (Mk 8:38; 11:25; 13:32; 14:36), he uses the title father.
10 By using inter alia the work of Aalen, Oliver & Van Aarde (1991:379-400) also argue that the concept of the kingdom of God can be understood as the 'household of God'. They argue that Jesus, by using this concept, introduced a specific relationship between God and the believers, namely that of 'father' and 'children', derived from the analogy of his own relationship with God. Understood as such, Jesus constituted the concept kingdom of God not in terms of a king and his subjects, but in terms of a patron, the father and clients, the children.
Jesus however behaved not as a patron but as a broker, in that he put prospective clients in touch with the heavenly Patron. He proclaimed the ready enjoyment of God’s patronage and, by healing, teaching and forgiving sins, he took up the role of broker relative to the patronage offered by God to Israel. Or, in Malina’s words:

In the gospel story, Jesus takes up the role as broker, not as patron.... In the gospel story, Jesus launches on a... serious task, given the embedded quality of religion in the first century. He is a broker of the Kingdom of God, offering to put people in contact with a heavenly Patron who, in turn, is ready to provide... resources of a political, religious, and economic sort (Malina 1988:13-14).

On the question of why Jesus became a broker, Malina (1988:14–15) answers as follows. People choose to become brokers, as a rule, when two necessary and sufficient criteria are met: firstly, the structure and content of a person’s social network must be sufficient to allow for brokerage, and, secondly, a person must be willing to use that social network for personal gain in order to develop a profession or means of livelihood. In regard to the first aspect, the features of time, centrality and power are of importance. In this regard Malina (1988:15) states that Jesus learned from John the Baptist not only of God the Patron with a renewed and growing clientele, but also learned of his own ability to accept the position as broker between the patron and his traditional clientele, Israel. At the time John was imprisoned, Jesus started to devote himself to this brokerage full time. Relationships had to be served, and Jesus had time. The more time one has, the more and wider social relations can be created. By recruiting a faction to participate in this brokerage, Jesus also put himself in a good position to service relationships with excellent opportunities for success. Finally, Jesus also had power, especially over unclean spirits/demons and different kinds of sickness, as well as teaching abilities that were ‘not like the scribes’.

Jesus, as broker, acquired the following benefits (Malina 1988:15–16): he acquired a personal network of relationships between people, especially in Capernaum, since those he summoned there to form his coalition came readily. Because of his services (e.g. healings and teaching), he amassed debt, was invited to homes, his fame spread and he acquired social standing. The effect of all this was that Jesus effectively destroyed rival communication networks, that is, those of the temple, scribes and Pharisees. Jesus’ conflict

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11 According to Boissevain (1974:148-149) the difference between a broker and a patron is the following: a patron has resources such as land, goods and power, and always stays ahead of his competitors. A broker, on the other hand, is someone who has special contact with someone who has resources like power and land.
with the scribes and Pharisees thus might be viewed as competition to gain monopoly of access to the heavenly Patron.

This insight of Malina, namely that the main analogy behind the Synoptics is that of God as patron and Jesus as broker, was taken up by Moxnes (1991:241-268) and refined further. According to Moxnes, the ministry of Jesus represents an important transformation of the very basis of patronage. According to the patron-client model, patron-client relationships are held together by reciprocity within a structure of great inequality between patron and client, especially when it comes to resources and power (Silverman 1977:12; Waterbury 1977:354; Saller 1982:37-38). Jesus, however, acted as broker, but without expectations of reciprocity in terms of gratitude, or in terms of assessing debt or power. According to Moxnes (1991:264), Jesus removed the power aspect from the patron-client relationship in that he wanted social relationships to function on the basis of an equal status before God, in which all are fictive kin in God’s household. It was therefore a radical departure from a situation in which wealth, status and power determined social relations.

This transformation of the basis of patron-client relationships is argued by Moxnes as follows: in first-century Palestine there were large differences between centre and periphery, between city and village (e.g., Jerusalem and outlying regions like Galilee), and between God and human beings. These contrasts affected all areas of power: political, economic and religious. Because the distance between these two centres was so great, no immediate or direct contact was possible. In such a stratified society, a broker was needed to function as middleman, for example, between city and village, or God and humans. Also, brokers normally came from the ‘upper’ section of society, from the cities, and in terms of God-human relationships, from those who worked in the temple.

As such, the priestly elite in Jerusalem, as well as the Pharisees in Galilee, were brokers. In Jewish society, power was ultimately linked to God and access was granted to God through the temple and the Torah. The priests therefore served as brokers in terms of the temple in Jerusalem, and the Pharisees as brokers in terms of the Torah. The priests as brokers, however, did not facilitate access to God, but blocked it instead. This, for example, became the theme of several of the conflict scenes between them and Jesus. People who were in need of healing or salvation came to Jesus. But the Pharisees, for example, tried to use the Torah to stop them by means of arguments based on legality and the sabbath laws (cf Mk 2:23-3:6). Thus, the leaders that were supposed to be brokers did not fulfill their function or role.

On the other hand, Jesus as broker started a new fellowship in Galilee (the periphery), and his clients followed him on his way to Jerusalem, the
centre. Jesus as broker, however, was not a broker on the centre-periphery axis (coming from the centre as the priests and Pharisees did). Jesus did not have access to the traditional channels to God via the temple and the Torah. Instead, he came from Galilee, from the periphery, and also identified himself with the periphery, the rural and the lowly (Moxnes 1991:258). This did not conform to the model of ‘mediation’ or brokerage from the centre to the periphery as practiced by the elders, scribes, priests and, for that matter, the Pharisees. As a mediator from the outside, Jesus was therefore rejected by the elite.

While being in Galilee, and on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus redefined patron-client relationships in terms of a new (broadened) household of God. He ate with sinners and tax-collectors without looking for reciprocity (Mk 2:13–17), healed many without asking them to follow him (e.g. Mk 8:22–26) and sometimes even tried to get away from the crowds (Mk 6:31). When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, and the disciples argued the question of who of them was the greatest (which was normal in patron-client relationships; see again Silverman 1977:12; Waterbury 1977:354; Saller 1982:37–38), he taught them: ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all’ (Mk 9:35). When James and John asked to sit at his right and left hand in his glory, Jesus answered: ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers [i.e. patrons] lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But this is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great amongst you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all’ (Mk 10:42–44). These are statements of Jesus, according to Moxnes (1991:259), that represent a new concept of leadership and patronage.

3 RITUALS (AND CEREMONIES)

According to Turner (1969:94–103), the concept culture can be seen as the whole array of interlocking symbols and sets of symbol systems in any society. Culture, one can also say, is the symbol systems it produces, and these systems also provide the means, namely rituals and ceremonies, in, by, and through which society is ordered. Rituals and ceremonies serve the purpose of ordering, that is, drawing and redrawing boundaries around both natural and social spaces of societies and identifying them as ‘good or bad, inside or outside, clean or unclean, high or low’ (McVann 1991a:334). In short, rituals and ceremonies construct and maintain a cosmos; they are building blocks of culture (cf Turner 1969:99; Sahlins 1976:78; McVann 1988:97, 1991a:334).

Ceremonies and rituals are distinguished from each other in terms of the following different features (see Malina 1986:139–142; McVann 1991a:334–
335): in the course of routine daily living, individuals take special time off, either to pause from routine or to intensify aspects of it. When the pause occurs regularly, it is called a ceremony. If the pause is irregular, it is called a ritual. Ceremonies are therefore predictable (when planned), and rituals unpredictable (when needed), in terms of daily routine. These pauses, moreover, are under the care of specific people. Those who preside over ceremonies, are called officials (e.g. father/mother presiding over a meal or a priest conducting a temple sacrifice), and those who preside over rituals are called professionals (e.g. physicians, judges, clergy).12

Furthermore, ceremonies function in terms of the confirmation of values and structures in the institutions of society. Institutions are patterned arrangements, sets of rights and obligations (called roles), of relationships among roles (called statuses), and of successive statuses or status sequence(s) which are generally well-recognised and are regularly at work in a given society.13 Institutions encompass kinship, politics, education, religion and economics. Ceremonies, therefore, confirm the social institutions which structure life shared in common. They confirm the respective statuses of persons in these institutions, even as they effectively demonstrate solidarity among all those who gather together and give shape to them.

On the other hand, rituals function in terms of status transformation. They take place between social structures in order to mark the transition or transformation of some person or group from one state to another, or from one set of duties and obligations to another. Rituals thus change the status and/or roles of persons: Those who have been excluded from aspects of societal life, for example, the sinners, can be brought back into the life of society by means of rituals which signal status reversal (e.g. from ill to clean/acceptable or from impure to pure). The time focus of ceremonies is therefore past-to-present (how things were in the past are again confirmed), and that of rituals present-to-future (how things were in the past will now be different in future).

12 It is therefore possible that one person (e.g., a Pharisee) can be an official, professional and a patron at the same time. As an official he can, for example, preside over a meal, as a professional he can declare someone clean, and as a patron he has resources (e.g. the ability to forgive sins or to declare God present) that clients would want.

13 According to Van Staden (1991:194), the notion status can be defined as a collection of rights and duties which accord people a position in a social system. Such a position stands in relation to other positions in social systems, and is in each system endowed with a specific measure of social prestige. Status should be seen as separate from the individual status-bearer, because it is not a quality of individuals, but an element of social systems. Status is inextricably linked to the notion of role. A role is seen as the dynamic aspect of status, the putting into effect of rights and duties. Like status, roles are not attributes of the acting individual, but elements of the social system.
As indicated above, rituals, unlike ceremonies, are concerned with status reversal/transformation or passage from one role or status to another. People may move horizontally up or down the social scale, or laterally from inside to outside. Ritual transformation of status may either occur voluntarily, or involuntarily (e.g., trial and execution). These transformations of status, however, are nearly always and everywhere surrounded by complexes of symbols (McVann 1991a:336). Seen as such, rituals provide the participants with the means of understanding the way the world is perceived by their social group and a way of participating in its patterns. Thus, ‘ritual is a symbolic form of expression which mediates the cultural core values and attitudes that structure and sustain society’ (McVann 1991a:336).

Rituals, furthermore, are characterised by a three-step process involving the following (Turner 1969:93–130):

* separation;
* liminality-communitas; and

Individuals undergoing status transformation rituals tend to experience separation in three ways: separation from people, place and time. Separation from people encompasses the separation of the participants from the ordinary rhythm of the group’s life (e.g., a young man who is to be married). At the point of ritual separation, the initiand(s) and the place of initiation also become ‘off-limits’ (Turner 1967:97). The initiands also are removed to a place separated from the locus of ordinary life, because the experience into which they will enter is very much ‘out of the ordinary’. The place chosen for the rite is usually a ‘sacred space’, like mountains, forests and deserts. Separation of time refers to the fact that, usually, the participants in a ritual are thought to be removed from the normal flow of time. They leave ‘secular’ time, and enter ‘timelessness’. During the ritual, time is broken up in new or unfamiliar ways. The usual times for eating, sleeping, working and learning are altered, and sometimes even reversed.

In regard to the second step of the process, namely liminality-communitas, the term liminality refers to the negative side of the ritual process and describes the state into which the initiands are brought by virtue of their separation from the everyday familiar world. This is their ‘threshold’ period. During the liminal period, initiands, who are cut off from the persons and activities who shaped their life beforehand, in a sense ‘disappear’, or ‘die’. They are required to abandon their previous habits, ideas and understandings about their personal identities and their relationships with others in the society. During this stage they lose their previous status as well. They are also perceived as dangerous or as a pollution to those outside the ritual process, because they could not be situated within clear lines or boundaries. Com-
munitas, on the other hand, refers to the positive side of the ritual process, to the initiands’ recognition of their fundamental bondedness in the institution into which they are being initiated.

The final step of the ritual process, aggregation, usually starts with ritual confrontation where the initiands are challenged in terms of their new roles and statuses. However, by virtue of the ritual, the larger society acknowledges that the initiand now has the capacity required for fulfilling his new role within it. His status in the community has then been redefined.

The ritual process as explained above also involves certain ritual elements, which help effect passage to the new role and status, namely the initiands, the ritual elders and certain ritual symbols (Turner 1969:130-151). The initiands are the people who individually, or as a group, experience the status transformation ritual and so acquire new roles and statuses in society. The ritual elders are those persons officially charged with conducting the ritual. They see to the strict enclosure of the initiands and supervise their activity. The ritual elders are thus ‘limit breakers’, or ‘boundary jumpers’ (see Malina !986:143–153; McVann 1991a:337–338). Unlike other people, they are licensed to deal with initiands who are in the dangerous or polluted state of liminality. They are immune to the powers harmful to those outside the process because they have been appointed to conduct the ritual and have themselves previously been transformed by it (Turner 1967:97). The elders see to it that the preconceived ideas of the initiand(s) about society, status and relationships are wiped out. They also instill new ideas, assumptions and understandings that the initiands will need to function effectively when they assume their new roles after their aggregation.

Finally, ritual symbols take various shapes. Normally they are ‘sacred objects’ like skulls, rings, candles and books. They are objects that are ‘out of the ordinary’, which provide a focus for the initiands during liminality and ensure that the initiands concentrate on the values and attitudes of the new statuses which are symbolically concentrated and highlighted in these objects.

It is especially McVann (1988:96–101; 1991a:333–360; 1991b:151–157) who has used aspects of cultural-anthropological theory described above as a model to investigate certain aspects of the Gospel of Mark. According to McVann, the passion in Mark can be seen as a transformation ritual (McVann 1988:96–101), along with the baptism of Jesus and some of Jesus’ miracles in Mark’s story of Jesus (McVann 1991b:151–157).

4 JESUS’ BAPTISM AS A STATUS TRANSFORMATION RITUAL

In the above section it was indicated that any ritual has two important aspects, the ritual process, combined with certain ritual elements. The ritual process is characterised by a three-step process of separation, liminality-
communitas and aggregation. The ritual elements, which help to effect a passage to a new role and status, are the initiand(s) themselves, the ritual elder(s) and certain ritual symbols.

When these salient features of the ritual process are applied to Mark 1:9-13, it appears as follows: in terms of the ritual elements listed previously, Jesus is the initiand, and John the Baptist functions as the ritual elder/limit breaker presiding over the ritual process (Mk 1:9). The ritual symbols in Mark 1:9-13 are the water of the Jordan, the heavens that are torn apart, the dove that descends onto Jesus, as well as the voice which comes from heaven. To these can also be added the wilderness and ‘Satan’.

In terms of the ritual process, Jesus is first separated from his own people because he joins the people/crowds from ‘the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem’ (Mk 1:5) to be baptised by John. According to the narrator, these people are in a liminal state because they have separated themselves from the ordinary social world to come to John for repentance. What they seek is a status transformation from sin to purity (Mk 1:5). Among them is Jesus. Separated from his family in Nazareth, where he previously most probably worked as a carpenter (Mk 6:3), Jesus is pictured by the narrator as also leaving for the Jordan to be baptised by John. In terms of separation from place, Jesus thus moves from Nazareth to the Jordan and also later to the desert, or rather, a lonely place14 (Mk 1:12). During his transformation ritual, Jesus is also separated from time in that he is tempted by ‘Satan’ for forty days in a lonely place.

In terms of liminality-communitas, Jesus’ liminality can be seen in the fact that Jesus comes from Nazareth as a carpenter, but during his sojourn and experience at the Jordan, he actually becomes a ‘nobody’. He is, according to the narrator, not a carpenter anymore, and indeed nothing more than just that: He is somebody who is being baptised by John. In terms of communitas, he enjoys communitas with John and the others who have come down to the Jordan to be baptised.

In terms of the third step of the ritual process, aggregation, Jesus is tempted by Satan in a lonely place. During his temptation Jesus demonstrates his loyalty to the voice in heaven that called him his beloved son during his baptism. After this, Jesus then goes to Galilee and starts to proclaim the good news of God. His status has thus been changed, according to the narrator, from being a carpenter to one who proclaims the good news of God.

14 I prefer to translate εἰς τὴν ἔρημον in Mark 1:12 and 1:13 as ‘a lonely place’ and not as desert or wilderness. The reason for this choice is that the same word is also found in Mark 1:35; 6:31 and 35, and in each case it refers to a lonely place, a place where other people are not present. It is also not impossible that Mark uses the word as a symbol for loneliness.
5 JESUS' STATUS TRANSFORMED: TO WHAT?

From the above, it is clear that Jesus' baptism, when looked at from a perspective informed by theory of rituals, can be seen as a status transformation ritual. McVann (1991a:333–360), for example, applied such a model of rituals to the baptism of Jesus as narrated by Luke, and came to the same conclusion. What is not so clear, however, is the status that should be accredited to Jesus after his baptism. According to McVann (1991a:341–358), Jesus' status reversal should be seen as that of an initiand who takes on the role of a prophet, although 'Mark ... does not tell us what is meant by "prophet" or when Jesus assumed that role' (McVann 1991a:342).

His argument is based on two assumptions: first, on the ground of Jesus' relationship with John the Baptist, and second, on the grounds of Mark 6:15 and Mark 8:28 where Jesus is said to be 'Elijah, or John the Baptist or one of the prophets'. According to McVann (1991a:342), the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist especially lies in the fact that they both called sinners to repentance. Although this can be said of Mark 1:15, it is interesting to note that nowhere else in the rest of the Gospel is Jesus calling people directly to repent from their sins. In relation to his second argument, it may well be true that some saw in Jesus certain traits that could link him to the image of a prophet. However, the question can be asked whether Jesus is portrayed by the narrator as a prophet, or rather, whether some of the characters in the narrative are portrayed by the narrator as perceiving Jesus to be some prophet (cf e.g Mk 6:15, 8:28).

However, before I further argue my case, let us turn first to still another interpretation of Jesus' status transformation during his baptism. According to Waetjen (1989:68–69), Jesus' baptism has the effect of radically transforming his status, rendering him as a marginal outsider. From this it is clear that Waetjen, although not applying the above described social-scientific model of rituals to understand Jesus' baptism as a status transformation, nevertheless

15 Regarding the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, Crossan (1991: 237) asserts that the Gospel of Thomas 78 and Q (Lk 7:24-26/Mt 11:7-9) attest that Jesus, in submitting himself to John's baptism, eventually must have also accepted John's apocalyptic expectation of the kingdom. However, according to Crossan (1991:237-238), the Gospel of Thomas 46 and Q (Lk 7:28/Mt 11:11) can be seen as contradicting the above mentioned relationship between Jesus and John. On the grounds of the latter two texts he argues Jesus changed his view of John's mission and message, because he came to see himself as already being 'in the kingdom'. In this regard the point of view of Hollenbach (1982:203) is also worth mentioning: 'Jesus started his public life with as serious commitment to John, his message and his movement, and...Jesus developed very soon his own distinctive message and movement which was very different from John's.'
sees it as such. According to him, Jesus' baptism especially effected his marginality in relation to the overarching power structures of the society in which he lived. By becoming wholly unobliged toward society, Jesus also became wholly marginalised and expendable. Through baptism a status is thus created whose existence constitutes a protest against the old and implies a new order, new values and attitudes, and new modalities of community living.

Although I do agree with Waetjen to a large extent that Jesus' vision of society was indeed something radically new, and included a vision of new modalities of community living, I disagree in that Jesus should be seen as 'the New Human Being' after his baptism, the 'new Human Being' who is totally unobliged to the society and discharged of all debts and obligations to society (Waetjen 1989:71). This conclusion of Waetjen, of course, is the result of making use of Burridge's understanding of salvation as understood in millennial movements.

The main reason for not agreeing with Waetjen, and McVann for that matter, is my conviction that we should look for an answer to the question of Jesus' status after his baptism in the text itself, or more specifically, in the prologue of the Gospel. Previously, I have indicated that the spatial structure of Jesus' itinerary in the prologue of Mark (Mk 1:1-15) corresponds with that of his itinerary in the rest of the Gospel (see Van Eck 1993:308-309). As such, the spatial structure of Mark 1:1-15 can be seen as a 'programmatic prolepsis' of the spatial structure in the rest of the Gospel (see especially Van Eck 1993:308). In the prologue of Mark, Jesus came from Galilee and underwent a status transformation in Judea (at the Jordan) to equip him for 'work to be done' in Galilee. Moreover, the prologue also gives us a clear indication of what Jesus' 'work' in Galilee is going to be: to proclaim the kingdom of God.

I propose therefore, that Jesus' baptism in Mark's prologue should be understood as a status transformation to that of being the new broker of God's kingdom and God's presence. This conclusion is based on the following five arguments:

First, in Mark 1:11, the voice from heaven, who can readily be identified as that of God himself, is telling Jesus that '[y]ou are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased'. By these words God is appointing Jesus as his broker, as the one in whom he is pleased. This corresponds to what Malina (1988:5-8) calls favouritism. Because God favours Jesus, he is appointed as his broker. Or, in the words of Malina (1988:10):

All the Synoptics agree that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of Heaven, i.e., the proximate enjoyment of the patronage of God, and they all have a heavenly voice witness to Jesus as beloved son, i.e., one who enjoys special divine patronage (Malina 1988:10).
In this regard, Patte (1987:23–28) also noted that the name given to a child by parents (in first-century Mediterranean society), was sometimes related to the identification and vocation in fulfilling a particular role or performing a task. To name a child, therefore, was to accept such a child legally and socially as one’s own (cf. Duling 1991b:12). By calling Jesus his ‘Son, the Beloved’, the Patron therefore not only accepted Jesus legally and socially, but also gave him a particular role to fulfill. And this role was that, in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God, clients could now approach the divine Patron without officialdom, regardless of their social standing.

Second, by announcing this arrived patronage16 (cf. Mk 1:15), and by starting to gather up its clientele (see e.g. Mk 1:16–2:17), Jesus set himself up as broker (Malina 1988:2). Therefore, by reacting in the way he did, it is clear that at his baptism the narrator wants to tell us Jesus became the broker of God, the patron. This is also confirmed by the fact that Jesus’ clients (e.g. the disciples), when they are called, immediately react positively to the challenge set before them (see e.g. Mk 1:16–20).

Third, it is interesting that Jesus, in all four instances in which he refers to God in Mark (cf. Mk 8:38; 11:25; 13:32; 14:36), uses the term ‘father’. What Jesus therefore did was to apply kinship terminology to the God of Israel. This sort of ‘kin-ification’ is typically patron-client behavior (Malina 1988:9). ‘God, the ‘father,’ is nothing less than God the patron’ (Malina 1988:9).

Fourth, according to Alexander (1991:2–3), rituals create social conflict by relaxing or suspending some of the requirements of everyday social structure, making alternative social arrangements possible. As Waetjen (1989:68–69) indicated, Jesus’ baptism can be understood as Jesus becoming wholly unobliged to the status quo ante, and now able to reorder society in terms of new patterns and values. This is precisely what Jesus started to do after his baptism, namely create a new (broadened) household among the crowds (including the expendables in society) along new lines of understanding God as the Patron, and as a consequence, new lines of understanding society as well (see Van Eck 1993:307–390).

16 The fact that the narrator of Mark is depicting Jesus as the broker of God’s kingdom can also be detected from his usage of ἡγεμόν in Mark 1:15. The verb is in the perfect, a tense in Greek which refers to an Aktionsart of ‘what happened in the past but continues to be of relevance for the present’ (cf. Kelber 1974:11). Also, in modern semantics, the Aktionsart of the perfect is seen as ‘static’, that is, it relates to a factual state of affairs. If this interpretation of ἡγεμόν is seen as correct, it can be deduced from Mark 1:15 that the narrator is telling the reader that Jesus, because of the voice from Heaven, understood God was appointing him as his broker. The kingdom has thus already started, Jesus is ‘in the kingdom’ and now he must broker it to the house of Israel. It is also interesting that Mark 1:15 is a distinctively Markan statement, as it is reformulated in Matthew 4:17 and omitted by Luke (see Crossan 1991:345).
Finally, I want to argue that Jesus became broker of God’s kingdom because, according to the narrator of the Gospel, God’s kingdom was a brokerless kingdom (using Crossan’s term—1991:225-416). In the everyday life of the Jews at the beginning of the first-century CE, the relationship between God and man was expressed by the Shema, a prayer composed of three segments (Dt 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num 15:37–41) which the faithful were to bind to the hand and the forehead and the doorposts (Foerster 1955:154; 1968:106–107), or as Kee (1984:247) puts it: ['O]n the heart, on the frontlets between the eyes, and on the doorposts'. This prayer (named after the first word in Dt 6:4) had to be recited twice daily by every observing Jew and had essentially two elements: The confession that the God of Israel was an only God and, as a consequence, the setting apart of the believing Jews from those people who were not acceptable to God. The prayer thus served as a mnemotechnic device by means of which all were reminded of the vital importance of keeping God’s commandments, failing which all kinds of life-threatening sanctions were invoked (Van Staden 1991:1). It was, to cite Neyrey (1988:82), ‘a sacred profession of belief which distinguished Jews from all other peoples in the ancient world’. The concepts imbued by the Shema, therefore, were to remain a persuasive directional force in the everyday lives of the Jewish people.

This means that the core value of Judaism was God’s holiness, expressed by the utterance found many times in Leviticus 11–25, namely ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’. The creation was seen as God’s ultimate act of ordering and classifying the world. All things in creation (especially society and the physical body) had to replicate and express the divine order of classification, discrimination and order of the creation (cf Douglas 1966:53). This understanding of ‘holiness’ also came to be embodied especially in the central symbol of Israel’s culture, the temple (Neusner 1979:103–127). This again led to maps of places, persons, time and things being developed which helped the observant Jew to know what and who belong when and where. This function of the temple is described as follows by Elliott (1991:318–319):

For Judaism, the temple as Israel’s central holy place represented the chief visible symbol of its identity as God’s holy people. The holiness of its space, its personnel (priests [hierieis]—‘holy functionaries’; chief priests [archiereis]; Levites), its sacrifices, and the laws [and maps] of holiness it enforced symbolized a holy people’s union with the Holy One of Israel. This link between holy place and the holy people and their demarcation from all that was unholy was derived from the Torah; and it was elaborated, maintained, and legitimated in an ideology and system of holiness which defined Jewish identity and regulated all aspects of Jewish life (Elliott 1991:218–219).
A specific symbolic hierarchy thus regulated Jewish life: creation-
temple-

At the pinnacle of the temple were the high priest\(^{17}\) and the chief
priests.\(^{18}\) Allied with the Sadducean faction,\(^{19}\) and controlled by the Roman

\(^{17}\) That the high priest was the person with the most influence in the temple can
clearly be seen in Mark in that only when Jesus is brought before the council (San-
hedrin; see Mk 14:53-65), is the high priest referred to in the narrative. During Jesus'
trial before the Sanhedrin, it is the high priest who gets Jesus 'accused' after the other
members of the Sanhedrin were not able to do so, and it is on the basis of his inter-
pretation of Jesus' answer in Mk 14:62, that the others decide to condemn Jesus as
deserving death. It is also the high priest's slave whose ear is cut off when Jesus is
arrested (Mk 14:47), which indicates that he knew of the plan of the priests, scribes
and elders to kill Jesus. In using Lenski's social stratification of agrarian societies (see
Lenski 1966:214-296), Duling (1991a:1-29) places the high priest among the ruling
classes, the people who had the most power and privilege in first-century biblical
Palestine. The high priest in Jesus' time was most probably Joseph Caiphas.

\(^{18}\) In following Lenski (1966:284), Saldarini (1988:41-42) and Fiensy (1991), Duling
(1991a:1-29) is of the opinion religious leaders like the chief priests, the scribes and the
elders can be seen as part of the governing and retainer class, retainers who served the
needs of the ruler and the governing class. They consisted of perhaps five percent of
the population and, in a certain sense, shared the life of the elite, but not in its direct
power. As a group they had great impact on society and culture, as can especially be
seen in the trial(s) of Jesus. They gained the most power when the governing class
ceased to be effective rulers, or, in the case of Palestine (and especially Jerusalem), they
gained power because they had control over the temple. According to Saldarini
(1988:154-155), this becomes clear when Mark tells the reader it is the chief priests who
went to Pilate because they were the dominant group in Jerusalem, especially in deal-
ing with the Romans and the larger political and social issues of the Jewish com-

\(^{19}\) The sources regarding the Sadducees give so little information that great care and
restraint is needed in characterising them (Saldarini 1988:298-308). Most treatments of
the Sadducees in the first century assume that all the chief priests and the leaders in
Jerusalem were Sadducees. However, Josephus does not say all Jewish leaders were
Sadducees, but only that those who were Sadducees came from the governing class.
Duling (1991a:1-29) is also of the opinion that only a few Sadducees were part of the
ruling class, and the rest were part of the governing and retainer classes. This concurs
with the point of view of Van Aarde (1993:26-27): the Sadducees most probably were
prosperous, part of the retainer class and sometimes also part of the governing class.
Because of this, they can be portrayed as a voluntary group who, on the surface, stood
for the maintenance of the status quo. On the subjacent level, however, they were a
non-voluntary group who evolved out of the Hasmonean aristocratic families and,
therefore, strived to keep the control of the temple and the Sanhedrin in the hands of
the elite/aristocratic families. According to Josephus, the Sadducees were religiously
conservative and rejected the belief in the afterlife as well as the new customs being
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS IN MARK

governor, this priestly aristocracy represented the power of the temple over all aspects of Jewish political, economic, social and cultural life. With the scribe-lawyers and elders (consisting of some of the family heads of the aristocratic Jewish families or the landed lay aristocracy), they also constituted the Sanhedrin.

The scribes were the official interpreters of the Mosaic law (Torah). According to the narrator of Mark, they constituted a further arm of the temple apparatus. From Mark 14:53 and Mark 15:1 it is clear that they held a key position in the Sanhedrin and represented the link between temple authority and Torah observance. In Mark, this is very clearly depicted by the narrator describing some of the scribes who opposed Jesus on Galilean soil as coming from Jerusalem, from the temple (cf Mk 3:22; 7:1). Also, in relation to the scribes, the synagogue was the extension of the temple on Galilean soil.

A further key aspect of the temple was the Pharisees. The Pharisees, developed by the Pharisees. They therefore wished to retain the status quo, as Jewish life was organised by the temple. The Sadducees occur only once in Mark (cf Mk 12:18). We have to suppose, in following Saldarini (1988:154), that they were part of the temple structure and were opposed to Jesus because his customs diverged from the traditional.

It is easy to discern that the priestly aristocracy was controlled by the Roman governor, because Herod appointed high priests who would enhance his power or at least would not be a threat to it (Saldarini 1988:308). Herod also made them wealthy by granting them large parts of land (Fiensy 1991:160). From Mark we get the same impression, because the high priest had, according to the narrator, many servant-girls and slaves (cf Mk 14:47; 66).

When Mark refers to the council (Mk 14:53, 15:1), it should be supposed he refers to the Sanhedrin. According to Mark, the Sanhedrin consisted of the high priest, chief priests, the scribes and the elders (cf Mk 14:53: 15:1). In a recent study, McLaren (1991:188-225) has tried to make a case that there never was an institution like the Sanhedrin. Crossan (1991:367-390), on the other hand, is of the opinion that Jesus never was tried by the Sanhedrin.

The scribes must not be understood as cultic officials, but rather the official interpreters of the Mosaic law. According to Saldarini (1988:272-275), the title scribe covered many roles in society and was used for individuals in several social classes and contexts. In terms of biblical literature, scribes had an effect on wisdom writing and the Pentateuch. They did not seem to have formed a unified class or organization in the canonical gospels, though groups of scribes might be characterised as belonging to a given class and status, mainly the governing and retainer classes (see Duling 1991a:1-29). In Mark they are associated with Jerusalem and the chief priests and as such can be seen as part of the governing and retainer classes. The fact that their teachings are referred to in an offhand way would suggest they were recognised as authoritative teachers of Jewish law and custom (cf Mk 1:22).

Neusner (1973a) argues that the Pharisaic disillusionment with the Hasmoneans, and therefore with their definition of Israel as fundamentally a politically autonomous state, led them to appropriate the cultic code of scripture for the informal assembling of the faithful in the home or a gathered small group. Thereby, they transferred the
who enforced the temple purity regulations even more rigorously, extended the norms of the temple and priestly holiness to 'the bed and the board of every observant Jewish home' (Elliott 1991:221). Except for the maps of persons, places, things and times, the Pharisees had their own special map, namely the map of meals. They claimed to speak for the replication of holi-

code from sanctuary to the setting of table fellowship (Neusner 1973a:45-96). This transition from being a political interest group to that of a religious interest group is described by Van Aarde (1993:24-25; following Neusner 1973b:45-78;) as follows: the rule of Hycranus, Janneus and Salome Alexandra in the Hasmonean period (142-37 BCE) is portrayed by Josephus as a struggle for power between the governing and retainer classes. During the rule of Hycranus, the Pharisees strived for (political) power. During the rule of Salome Alexander, for example, the Pharisees, in a certain sense, 'ruled' over the Jews. After the rule of Salome Alexander, however, they lost much of their power. According to Van Aarde, this portrayal of the Pharisees by Josephus fits agrarian society's accommodation of political groupings and social factions. The Pharisees are portrayed as being part of the retainer class in relation to the governing class. The governing class tended to select other groups in society which could serve their own rule the best, and in the time of Salome Alexandra, it was the Pharisees. During the Herodian period (40 BCE-70 CE), the Pharisees still played an important role, especially in regard to the Sanhedrin. At certain times they were loyal supporters of Herod, for example, Samaias and Pollion. Later, however, they formed a coalition with Feroras and because of this, were hated by Herod. During this time, Josephus typifies the Pharisees as numbering six thousand. In the period after the fall of the temple, Josephus refers to the Pharisees especially in regard to incidents during which the Pharisees would not accept gifts from the ruler of the day. From this it can be deduced that, during the time after the fall of the temple the chief priests, some elites and also the Pharisees most probably were part of the governing class. As a group, the Pharisees, however, still did not have any real political power. According to Neusner (1973a:3-12, 45-80), the dominant features of the Pharisees were the following: 1) The Pharisees were a sect of pious laymen who sought to extend into the day-to-day living of ordinary Jews the concerns of ritual purity usually associated only with priests and the temple; 2) The Pharisees were especially known for their ritual purity rules which organised and classified times, persons and things. It was integral to their sense of separateness to know or to determine what was permissible or proscribed, clean or unclean; 3) Pharisaic purity concerns were especially focused on agricultural rules which specified not only what one may eat, but also out of which dish or vessel and with whom; and 4) the Pharisees developed traditions which either clarified and specified the Old Testament laws or which amplified the law's principles, making them applicable to new situations. Their tradition extended a fence around the law (see Neusner 1973a:3-12, 45-80). According to Saldarini (1988:282-285), the Pharisees probably sought a new, communal commitment to a strict Jewish way of life based on adherence to the covenant. By doing this, they sought to capitalize on popular sentiment for rededication to or reform of Israel. The Pharisees also should not be seen as a simple group with a limited, concrete goal, but a long lasting, well connected and voluntary corporate organization which sought to influence Jewish society and entered into many mutual relationships to accomplish their aims. Seen as such, they can be typified as forming part of the retainer class.
ness in non-temple situations, and for ordinary (non-priestly) people who did not live close to the sacred place of the temple. Tactically, they claimed influence over other territory. They focused on the ordinary, but necessary daily activity of eating. And so, in speaking about meals, they claimed authority over a highly visible, external activity around which they built many hedges from the tradition of the elders.

In terms of the maps of places, persons, things and times referred to above (see Douglas 1966:41-57; Malina 1981:131-137), boundaries and lines in a place like Galilee, which was far from the temple, became very important (Wright 1992:209). In a sense, one can say the Pharisees replicated the elaborate temple rules by applying them to ordinary table fellowship. The people who were not allowed to enter the temple also could not eat with the observant Jew. This meant, for instance, that a blind person was not only forbidden to enter the temple, but also could not sit down and have a meal with his family. People who were not ‘whole’ (i.e. unclean), therefore, were ostracised from their families. Also, certain animals which were not allowed to be offered in the temple were classified unclean, that is, unproper and unsuitable for the table. Priests in the temple had to conform to certain purification rites before they were allowed to preside over the sacrificing of the offers, so observant Jews had to wash their hands before they could eat. Symbols were therefore created, namely symbols of purity and impurity, or clean and unclean.

Outside the house, the purity lines called for a careful avoidance of contact with all that was judged impure or unholy, like sinners, lepers, the blind and lame, corpses and tax collectors. People who crossed boundaries were labelled sinners and were not permitted to live inside the walls of the cities. The Pharisees also built a ‘fence around the law’ to make sure no purity line nor boundary was crossed. Their attitude therefore was to exclude, not to include. Everyone had to be watched to see if he/she should be labelled as a deviant to keep society intact and to make sure no boundaries were transgressed.

This then, was the ‘religious top-structure’ of first-century Judaism, a top-structure which lead to a brokerless kingdom. The high priest was part, or at least a retainer of the Roman government (Fiensy 1991:160), as were the chief priests and scribes. The scribes walked around in long robes and wanted to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. They wanted to have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets, but also devoured widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance said long prayers in public (cf Mk 12:38-40). The temple became an economic and a political institution (cf Belo 1981:186-191; Waetjen 1989:183), and the guardianship of the temple by the chief priests and scribes was selfserving. Maps meant more tithes, and
more tithes meant more money. The vineyard leased to them was used for their own benefit, and not to God’s advantage (Mk 12:1–12; cf Van Eck & Van Aarde 1989:794). Furthermore, outside the temple, the Pharisees burdened people with the law, and thus did not aid their entrance into the kingdom, but rather blocked it. The Patron was there, his presence was available. There were also many clients, but there were no brokers. The brokers had their own patrons and these patrons were of more importance than the heavenly Patron.

With this as background, we can now return to our main argument, which is that Jesus *inter alia* became the broker of the kingdom because the kingdom was brokerless. According to Seeman (1992:11), patronage is a model of social exchange which is defined in contrast to formal social relationships. Formal relationships are normative interactions based on compulsion and negative sanctions. Partition in such relationships is based on ascription rather than choice. According to Seeman (1992:11), the temple in Jerusalem was the focus of formal political and economic relationships based upon ascribed ethnic inclusion within the polity of Yahweh’s people, Israel. Temple sacrifice was the ritual production of this system, being normative and constituting an enactment of balanced reciprocity. Purity norms constituted the ideological basis of the temple.

By contrast to such formal relations, patronage is an informal form of interaction—it is an *‘addendum to or replacement of formal relations’* (Seeman 1992:11; my emphasis). It involves a personal exchange of valued symbolic or material resources based upon unequal access to power. Patronal relationships are normally regarded by holders of formal authority as deviant. However, patronage is generally sought out by clients because the formal interactions are perceived to be inadequate for realizing subsistence needs or other objects.

In section 2 it was indicated that such patron-client relationships were commonly employed to remedy the inadequacies of all institutions, that is, to cushion the vagaries of life for social inferiors. Therefore, what patron-client relationships essentially entail is endowing and outfitting economic, political or religious institutional arrangements with the overarching quality of kinship. Such relationships ‘kin-ify’ and suffuse the persons involved with the aura of kinship, albeit fictive or pseudo-kinship. And since the hallmark of kinship as a social institution is the quality of commitment, solidarity or loyalty realised in terms of generalised reciprocity, patron-client relationships take on these kinship dimensions. Patron-client relationships therefore, do not intend to exploit people. However, from what was said above, it is clear that the ‘official brokers’ of the kingdom started to exploit the clients, and as a consequence, lost their status as God’s brokers. Because of this, Jesus
became the broker of the kingdom of God. The formal relationship between the common people and the temple as the only access to God no longer worked.

6 SUMMARY

Baptism, like all transformative rituals, is centrally concerned with a radical restructuring of the participants' identity, and consequently, with a redefinition of their status (McVann 1991b:151). Baptism, therefore, can be understood as a rite of status transformation (Wedderburn 1987:363–371). Rituals, furthermore, often act as a form of protest against the existing social structure and contribute to social change (Alexander (1991:1).

In our analysis of Jesus' baptism in the prologue of Mark, as well as Jesus' ministry in the rest of the Gospel, it has become clear that Jesus indeed not only underwent a status transformation, but that his baptism also sparked off radical social change.

That Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God can be described in terms of the social institution of patronage and clientism was clearly indicated: Jesus, as the broker of the heavenly Patron, brokered to his clients the availability and immediate presence of the Patron, especially to the so-called expendables of his day. As such, Jesus remedied certain inadequacies of existing institutions, that is, he cushioned the vagaries of life for social inferiors. By creating a broadened (inclusive) household of God, Jesus thus endowed and outfitted economic, political or religious institutional arrangements with the overarching quality of kinship. He thus 'kin-ified' and suffused the persons involved with the aura of kinship, albeit fictive or pseudo-kinship.

However, Jesus was a 'new kind of broker'. He asked no reciprocity (e.g. Mk 5:19), no gratitude. Jesus also removed the power aspect from the patron-client relationship in that he wanted social relationships to function on the basis of an equal status before God, in which all are fictive kin in God's household. It was therefore a radical departure from a situation in which wealth, status and power determined social relations. Also, Jesus as broker started a new fellowship in Galilee (the periphery), and his clients followed him on his way to Jerusalem, the centre. Jesus as broker, however, was not a broker on the centre-periphery axis (i.e., coming from the centre as the priests and Pharisees). This did not conform to the model of 'mediation' or brokerage from the center to the periphery as practiced by the elders, scribes, priests and, for that matter, the Pharisees. As such, Jesus thus undermined the 'accepted' and existing horizontal group organization and solidarity of clients to their previous patrons/brokers.

When Jesus taught things like 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all' (Mk 9:35), or, 'You know that among the Gentiles
those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But this is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great amongst you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all’ (Mk 10:42–44), Jesus thus not only advocated a new concept of leadership and patronage, but also radically restructured the social structure of his day, at least implicitly.

This then is also the reason why Jesus became the new broker of the heavenly Patron: The ‘official brokers’ of his time made God’s kingdom a brokerless and exclusive kingdom, not readily available as it should have been. The kingdom that Jesus proclaimed, the new broadened household of God, was readily available, present and inclusivist. Jesus now was the official broker of the Patron. Therefore, in the narrative of Mark, Galilee, and not Jerusalem, is portrayed as the place where access to the Patron is available. And in Galilee there is no temple, only the house, the (new) broadened household of God.

A few final remarks: In section 1 it was indicated that Marcan scholars who use historical criticism as a hermeneutical tool understand Jesus’ baptism as the beginning of his ministry, a Berufungsgeschichte, the moment when Jesus became the son of God, the moment when Jesus was equipped for his ministry, as the inauguration of the eschatological end-time. Our above social-scientific analysis of Jesus’ baptism, in a certain sense, not only confirms these results, but also describes them in more explicit terms: Jesus is the son of God, in that he is the new broker of God, the Patron. Also, Jesus’ baptism inaugurates the eschatological end-time, the present and available inclusive kingdom of God.

Moreover, our analysis of Jesus’ baptism by John also corresponds with what Jeremias has said about Jesus’ baptism as early as 1971:

The baptism of Jesus had [nothing] to do with the forgiveness of sins....[Jesus’ baptism] introduced the time of salvation....Moreover, it is questionable whether it is really the intention of [Jesus’ baptism]...to put the preaching of repentance in first place, rather the announcement of the nearness of the reign of God (Jeremias 1971:42–47).

7 JESUS’ BAPTISM IN MARK: A WINDOW TO THE HISTORICAL JESUS?

John’s baptism of Jesus is most probably historical: ‘Dass Jesus von Johannes getauft wurde, gehört zu unserem sicheren historischen Wissen vom Leben Jesu’ (Schmithals 1986:82; see also Lohmeyer 1954:19–21; Barclay 1974:8; Pesch 1977:91; Gnirka 1979:51; Schweizer 1979:37; Wright 1992:447). Also, if one decides to take Crossan’s (1991:232) stratification of texts seriously,
Jesus’ baptism is attested to by three independent witnesses involving nine separate texts. Moreover, many scholars see Jesus’ baptism as possibly the starting point of the quest for the historical Jesus (e.g., Meier 1991:42; 407; Van Aarde 1993b:951-952).

The question I would like to ask in this regard is the following: can the above analysis of Jesus’ baptism in Mark (as a ritual of status transformation) make a contribution to current historical Jesus research? The answer: Possibly.

It was argued above that Jesus’ baptism in Mark’s prologue should be understood as a status transformation to that of being the new broker of God’s kingdom and God’s presence, a broker who proclaims the presence of the kingdom of God. Or, to put it differently: ‘the thrust of [the historical] Jesus’ life and work was that he trusted God as his Abba, and by doing so he redefined the kingdom of God in terms of a ‘brokerless’ household’ (Van Aarde 1993b:951). Jesus, therefore, had a specific understanding of God’s presence, and therefore addressed him as Abba.

Why this intimate term of address for God? According to Borg (1994:29-30), Jesus was, on the one hand, nonmessianic and noneschatological, and, on the other hand, a subversive sage, social prophet and a movement founder. He was also a spirit person. According to Borg (1994:32-33) spirit persons are known cross-culturally. They are people who have vivid and frequent subjective experiences of another dimension of reality. These experiences involve momentary entry into nonordinary states of consciousness and take a number of different forms, such as momentarily seeing or journeying into another layer of reality. Persons with these experiences share a strong sense of there being more to reality than tangible ordinary experience. Their experiences are noetic, involving not simply a feeling of ecstasy, but a knowing. ‘What such persons know is the sacred’ (Borg 1994:33). Moreover, spirit persons also share a second feature, in that they become mediators of the sacred.

In terms of the above definition of a spirit person, as well as our analysis of Jesus’ baptism in Mark as a status transformation ritual, it can indeed be argued that Jesus was some kind of spirit person. He not only had a specific experience of the sacred (by calling God Abba), but also mediated the sacred in terms of being the new broker of the brokerless kingdom of God (e.g., Jesus as authoritative healer and exorcist).

24 The three independent witnesses, according to Crossan (1991:438) are (1) the Gospel of the Hebrews 2, (2) Mk 1:9-11 = Mt 3:13-17 = Lk 3:21-22, the Gospel of the Nazoreans 2, the Gospel of the Ebionites 4, Jn 1:32-34, the Letter of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans 1:1c and, (3) the Letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians 18:2d.
To be a spirit person Jesus, at some point in his life, must have become ‘a religious seeker and embarked upon a religious quest’ (Borg 1994:27). We may further surmise, according to Borg (1994:27), that Jesus probably underwent, at some time or other, a conversion experience. A conversion that changed Jesus’ life from being a carpenter (cf Mk 6:3) to the new broker of the Patrons available kingdom. Was this experience in the life of the historical Jesus his baptism? Could Jesus’ baptism, therefore, be understood as a momentary seeing into another layer of reality, an experience that sparked off his unconventional ministry as social prophet and subversive sage? Our above analysis of Jesus' baptism in Mark suggests this to be so. However, this will have to be developed in much more detail in future.

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