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Jesus of Nazareth, Paul of Tarsus, and the Early Christian Challenge to Traditional Honor and Shame Values

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Drake Stanley Levasheff

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Jesus of Nazareth, Paul of Tarsus,

and the Early Christian Challenge

to Traditional Honor and Shame Values

by

Drake Stanley Levasheff

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

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Christianity originated in what has often been described as an honor-shame culture. In Mediterranean antiquity, society, rather than the individual, defined both worthy behavior and a person's worth. While who and what was honored varied according to location and community, the ultimate result was a stratified society that judged some persons as honorable and not others.

Jesus of Nazareth and his earliest followers challenged their society's deeply held values by honoring those judged unworthy and rejecting traditionally sanctioned behavior. Paul of Tarsus embraced Jesus' provocative vision and adapted it as he established Christ-worshiping

communities throughout the Mediterranean region. The former persecutor's encounter with the crucified, resurrected Christ fundamentally changed his understanding of Israel's God (Yahweh) along with what and who was honorable; in particular, all those in Christ were worthy of honor and urged to an honor-sharing life in imitation of Christ. Later canonical writings embrace and develop the challenge that Jesus and Paul presented.

The challenge to traditional honor and shame values that began with Jesus and was embraced by Paul and other canonical writers, continued in Christianity as it spread to Rome, Asia, Carthage, and across the Mediterranean region through the middle of the third century. Significant continuities endured, including the emphasis on non-retaliation, humility as a worthy path, the honor-sharing use of power, and the glory of suffering for Christ. At the same time women gained honor through martyrdom and chastity.

While Christianity challenged its culture's deeply embedded values, the dominant culture eventually altered the nascent faith's teachings on honor. The canonical writings embraced the shared honor of all Christ worshipers, but later sources returned to a patriarchal, hierarchal vision of community that emphasized the honor of some at the expense of others. At the same time, the spectacle in the arena so shaped onlookers' perception of martyrs that the honor of dying for Christ in later sources far exceeded earlier writings' estimation of martyrdom.

Christianity persisted in critiquing society's conclusions about what behavior was honorable and who should receive honor well into the third century. Jesus' honor-sharing life and humiliating, sacrificial death had left their mark.

The dissertation of Drake Stanley Levasheff is approved.

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DEDICATED TO

Judson Drake Levasheff

2004-2007

“Children are a gift from the Lord.”

Psalm 127:3 (NLT)

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INTRODUCTION

Honor all people.
- 1 Peter 2:17

Rank must be preserved.
- Cicero, *Pro Cnaeo Plancio* 15

Jesus of Nazareth and the early Christ-followers challenged their society's deeply held values regarding who gets honor and what behavior is honorable. Western culture assumes that all people are created equally, so when we approach sayings found in early Christian literature like "honor all people" (1 Pt 2:17) we take it for granted. Yet we fail to recognize that men and women of the ancient Mediterranean world did not think that all people were created equally. For a society in which some, such as the emperor, were worshipped for their name and exploits and others were deemed worthless as rubbish, equality was out of the question. Such distinctions were embraced and celebrated; thus, Cicero declares, "Rank must be preserved." All people were not equal, so people were not treated equally.

In light of the fundamental inequality of Mediterranean Antiquity, the early Christians' treatment of the dishonored was startling. Honoring everyone contradicted a primary social norm and challenged the social hierarchy. The early Christians honored the unworthy; they inverted these deeply embedded cultural values.

Challenging these values was unexpected in a society that prized honor above everything else. Honor was a scarce commodity worth dying for; it took generations to accumulate, but

could be lost in an instant. Some have described honor as one of the foundational values of the Mediterranean world during the first four centuries CE.

Honor and Shame in Anthropology and History

Social-scientific models related to honor and shame have been employed to analyze early Christianity for a relatively short time. The origin of these models goes back to the seminal work of Julian Pitt-Rivers and J. G. Peristiany, who brought honor and shame to the attention of cultural anthropologists. *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* presents the collective evidence for significance of these values, identified by the work's editor, Peristiany, as characteristic of Mediterranean culture.[1] Pitt-Rivers' contribution to the same volume on "Honour and Social Status" demonstrates that, for Mediterranean people, group perception shapes the identity of individuals as much as self-perception.[2]

Bruce Malina's groundbreaking work, *The New Testament World*, offered new avenues for the study of early Christianity by employing cultural anthropology.[3] His assumption was simple: Mediterranean anthropological models could provide new insights in the study of early Christian documents because there was continuity between Antique and present-day Mediterranean culture. As a result, honor and shame were brought to the forefront, and presented as "the pivotal values" of the world in which early Christianity began and flourished.

[1] J. G. Peristiany, *Honor and Shame; the Values of Mediterranean Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965).

[2] Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honor and Shame; the Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristany (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 22-71.

[3] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 1st ed. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981).

This would later lead to an explosion in the analysis of early Christian texts in light of honor values.

At the same time, cultural anthropologists continued their discourse about honor and shame in Mediterranean society. David Gilmore's call for a refinement of the concept[4] was followed by further dialogue at the American Anthropological Association's Annual Meeting in 1983. These papers, published in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, contributed insights concerning the link between manliness and honor, the influence of the Abrahamic religions' theory of procreation on honor and shame values, and the distinction between honor and shame societies.[5] With *Honor and Grace in Anthropology* (1992), J. G. Persistany and Julian Pitt-Rivers reengaged the discussion of the subject by noting the relationship between honor and issues of the sacred.[6]

Honor and shame continued to be evaluated in the context of discussion about continuity of culture within the Mediterranean. Based on their survey of countless studies, historians Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, in their highly-regarded work *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, conclude that honor and shame have been widely embraced in non-aristocratic circles throughout the region for some time—at least as far back as the Middle Ages and perhaps to Antiquity.[7] Indeed, they emphasize not only the breath of its adoption, but

[4] David D. Gilmore, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982): 175-205.

[5] David D. Gilmore, ed., *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, American Anthropological Association Special Publication #22 (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987).

[6] J. G. Perstiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers, eds., *Honor and Grace in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[7] Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford [U.K.]; Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2000).

also the far-reaching impact that honor and shame exercise in the everyday life of these communities.

The work of a number of classicists provides strong evidence that these values were deeply embedded in Ancient Mediterranean civilization as well. E. R. Dodds argues in his seminal discussion of Greek religious experience, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, that while Greek culture in Antiquity reflects a significant concern for shame, an emphasis on guilt develops in the late Archaic and early Classical age.[8] In *Merit and Responsibility,* A. W. H. Adkins presents Ancient Greece as a shame society—one in which individuals guarded their reputation above all else—emphasizing its boundlessly agonistic character.[9] Bernard Williams later challenges Adkins, arguing that in Homeric literature the competitive nature of Greek culture is checked by the individual's sense of their own and others' honor.[10] Scholars continue to discuss the degree to which these values held sway in Ancient Greek culture, but their significance is highly probable.

Recent monographs have demonstrated how widespread and influential honor and shame values were among the Romans. In *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World,* J. E. Lendon reveals that the values deeply influenced their political relations in the context of his broader discussion of how the Roman government worked in the first four

[8] E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 17-43.

[9] A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960).

[10] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 79-81.

centuries CE.[11] Carlin Barton's *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* vividly illustrates how deeply embedded honor was in the Roman psyche.[12]

Unsurprisingly, a wide number of early Christian and New Testament scholars appreciate the significance of honor and shame values in Mediterranean Antiquity. The numerous works published in recent years emphasizing the importance of honor values for the analysis of New Testament documents provides evidence for this; while there are too many to name, a few are especially noteworthy. In 1992 Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh published their *Social-Scientific Commentary of the Synoptic Gospels*, which employed anthropological models in its analysis of Matthew, Mark and Luke.[13] The work gives a prominent place to honor values in its examination and became the first of many social-science commentaries Malina would be involved in writing.[14] A few years later, David deSilva introduced *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* in which he studied the role honor played in the canonical text's argument and asserts that the author of Hebrews employed "honor and shame language to drive his appeal" so that his audience would adhere to Christian values.[15] Another study, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* by Barth Campbell, employed rhetorical criticism while teasing out the honor-shame terminology in 1

[11] J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1997).

[12] Carlin Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[13] Bruce J. Malina, and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Scientific Commentary of the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

[14] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

[15] David deSilva, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

Peter.[16] DeSilva followed this with *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation*, a work that discussed the ways New Testament writers made use of honor discourse when communicating with their audiences.[17] That same year, Robert Jewett published *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph over Shame* in which he employed illustrations from recent motion pictures to demonstrate the meaning of honor language used by Paul.[18] John Elliott later offered his own perception of the honor and shame values at play in 1 Peter through combining and modifying two of his earlier essays into *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social Scientific Perspective*.[19]

As the honor/shame lens became more widely employed in the study of early Christian texts, commentators critiqued how it was utilized and suggested ways to sharpen its usage. In one prominent example, "'Honor' among Exegetes," Gerald Downing questioned whether honor-shame values were "pivotal" or even "universal" in the New Testament world and whether that world's perspective was different from the modern outlook.[20] While Downing concluded that the lens had value as a heuristic tool, he argued that for the above reasons it needed to be employed only when the values were explicit in a passage.

A few things must be said in response to Downing. First, Horden and Purcell's even-handed assessment which concluded that honor and shame values have been both widely and

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[16] Barth Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998).

[17] David deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

[18] Robert Jewett, *Saint Paul Returns to the Movies: Triumph over Shame* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1999).

[19] John Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007).

[20] Gerald Downing, "'Honor' Among Exegetes," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61(1999): 53-73.

deeply held in the Mediterranean for some time, at least from the Middle Ages, has already been noted. Furthermore, numerous studies demonstrate the presence of these values in the Ancient Mediterranean—and the cumulative force of the research, mentioned previously here, indicates that these values were deeply embedded in Greco-Roman civilization. The breadth and extent of the evidence makes Downing's assertion that such values are neither distinct from our own Western outlook nor pervasive within Ancient Mediterranean society ring hollow.[21]

However, citing Persistany and Pitt-Rivers, Downing rightly emphasizes that what is considered honorable in one setting may be viewed as shameful in another; variables such as class and geographical region influence the shape of these values.[22] Furthermore, his expressed concern that the lens has sometimes been applied too broadly[23] is well-taken. To some degree, Downing's critique aids those who employ social-scientific tools in their study of early Christian history, providing encouragement to clarify assertions and sharpen arguments.

While Downing's point about using discretion when reading honor values into passages has value, his perspective on its application is too narrow. In particular, the suggestion that the lens be applied only when honor/shame language is employed is questionable—and fails to recognize that all cultures function with their own basic assumptions that regulate social interactions. By assuming that all cultures function with the same unspoken rules as his own culture, Downing makes the same mistake he accuses Malina and others of making by too broadly applying his twenty-first century Western perspective.

[21] Ibid., 55-58.

[22] Ibid., 57.

[23] Ibid., 57-59.

Finally, Downing's article has great significance for this study. In a number of cases, including his discussion of the Cynics' critique of "love for honor" and Jesus' challenge to hypocrisy in the canonical gospels, he asserts that their perspectives run counter to the way Malina and others would expect from these texts.[24] But the polemical nature of much of the evidence indicates their perspectives reflect a backlash against dominant culture;[25] indeed, the critiques offered by Jesus and the Cynics actually demonstrate the relevance of these values for understanding ancient Mediterranean society. In this study, I will argue that that Jesus and his earliest followers rejected traditional conceptions of theses values; ultimately, they inverted what was honorable and shameful and challenged the way honor was achieved and apportioned.

Honor and Shame Defined

Honor can be defined as a person's self-perception plus their social group's perception of them.[26] The person who has honor is the one who is perceived as fulfilling the community's code.[27] Because of the role of perception, there is no honor without a community to provide approval. Thus, honor is determined by an individual's community or reference group—be it blood kin, village, city, or the imperial court.

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[24] Ibid., 63-66.

[25] In the same way, I believe this explains the strong emphasis on *honor virtue* over *honor precedence* that Louise Joy Lawrence finds in Matthew (Louise Joy Lawrence, "'For truly, I tell you, they have received their reward' (Matt 6:2): Investigating Honor Precedence and Honor Virtue," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 [2002]: 687-702). Lawrence finds strong evidence within the Hebrew Bible of an emphasis on honor virtue; however, Jesus' challenge of honor precedence may be indicative of a situation in which the ruling priests in Jerusalem and their retainers among the Pharisees had adopted the competitive values of their Roman patrons.

[26] *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd rev. and expanded ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 52.

[27] Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 15.

Shame is a value closely related to honor; the term is used in two ways. First, it speaks of a person's loss of group value due to a lack of sensitivity to societal concerns; thus, those who do not stay in line with the community's expected behavior are considered "less than valuable."[28] The term is also employed as a positive characteristic: someone who is said to have shame stays in line with the community's expected behavior. Not all Mediterranean groups focus on honor and shame equally.[29] Nevertheless, both honor and shame values are evident in the literature of Christianity's formative period.

A person's honor is determined by a variety of factors, and may change over time. On the basis of their family name and reputation, a man is recognized as having "ascribed honor" that he begins with, independent of anything he has done.[30] Only through adoption or grant of special privileges, such as citizenship, may a man add this honor during his lifetime;[31] these usually come through persons such as "God, a king, aristocrats" who "can claim honor for others and can force acknowledgment of that honor because they have power and rank to do so."[32] One may also accumulate or "acquire" honor; such would be aggressively pursued through one's public actions.[33]

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[28] David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 25.

[29] Stanley Brandes, "Reflections on Honor and Shame in the Mediterranean," in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, American Anthropological Association Special Publication #22, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 123.

[30] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 3rd ed., 32.

[31] deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 28.

[32] Bruce J. Malina [with Jerome H. Neyrey], "Honor and Shame in Luke Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 28.

[33] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 3rd ed., 33.

Wealth, though unnecessary to have honor, was advantageous both for the acquisition and maintenance thereof. It provided opportunities for reputation enhancing activities such as patronage and contribution for the collective good of the community. In addition, wealth meant that material resources were available to provide for the most basic needs of an individual or family; a family who did not have what they needed to retain their home, land, food, and clothing lost in the court of public opinion and saw their honor diminish. Yet a person could possess wealth and not honor, especially if such was gained dishonorably.

The distinction between honor and wealth in Mediterranean antiquity is helpful in consideration of the ancients' use of terminology. For example, πτωχός ("poor") is often understood to refer to material poverty. Yet, for people who prized honor over money, it seems unlikely that πτωχός would signify anything other than want of honor. Indeed, Bruce Malina argues persuasively from an analysis of the use of πτωχός in the New Testament that the term, while including an economic aspect, emphasizes a person's inability to retain one's standing due to difficult and debilitating circumstances.[34]

Honor, like other valuable commodities, is in limited supply.[35] An individual or family cannot gain honor without another individual or family losing it. Thus, in honor cultures, males who are not friends or blood kin are potential rivals; they have a special responsibility to pursue honor for the family.[36] For this reason, such cultures are described as agonistic, since competition for honor and other scarce resources is prevalent.

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[34] Bruce Malina, "Wealth and Poverty in the New Testament and Its World," *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 354-67.

[35] Brandes, "Reflections on Honor," 122.

[36] S. Scott Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus and Reversal of Honor at Table," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels,* eds. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina, and Gerd Theissen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 179.

In honor cultures, individuals often seek to accumulate honor through public competition with rivals. These contests—identified as "challenge and riposte"—are socially recognized means of achieving honor.[37] The competition begins with a positive or negative challenge from one individual to another, such as the giving of a gift or, on the other hand, an insult. Public perception of this action determines whether it is considered a challenge or not; without a witness who attaches significance to the action, there is no contest. Assuming the audience recognizes the challenge, the one challenged must respond or risk losing honor while their opponent gains it.

Competition for honor is never to occur between relatives in such cultures. Rather, honor is shared within a family unit. As the head of the family, the father is the embodiment of the family honor and is "responsible for the honor of the group with reference to outsiders."[38] Thus he may gain or lose reputation in the sight of the community based on the behavior of his wife or any of his children. In the ancient Mediterranean world, such "collective honor" may also be observed in voluntary groups such as cities and associations.[39]

As with other societies, those concerned with honor and shame require differing behaviors from men and women. Honor, while prized in both men and women, is identified as a primarily male value and has been described as "social masculinity" since public assertiveness rather than activity in the bedroom determines manliness.[40] A man's domain is outside the house since honor may only be acquired in public view and at the expense of rivals.

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[37] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 3rd ed., 40.

[38] Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke Acts," 39.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Brandes, "Reflections on Honor," 122.

Conversely, shame is primarily a feminine virtue. Because female sexuality is a precious commodity in such communities, it must be safeguarded. A woman is thus sensitive to group perception, guarding her chastity and exercising restraint. Staying within the home protects women from the appearance of sexual impropriety and maintained their reputation.

The critical role of an audience to determine honor had further implications in the ancient Mediterranean world. Boasting, which is referenced repeatedly in early Christian texts, was a public claim to honor; it was up to an audience to evaluate such a claim. Praise also occurred in public, but it was different in that it honored someone besides the speaker. Furthermore, just as to praise or glorify was to publically honor the recipient, glory refers to honor that was publically displayed.

Early Christian Challenge to Traditional Honor Values

The attention paid to these issues has made it increasingly clear that early Christians challenged contemporary conceptions of honor and how it was acquired. In his study of μακάριος in its cultural context and the biblical tradition, K.C. Hanson argued that the term is employed in Matthew 5:3-11 to describe "conditions and behaviors which the community regards as honorable."[41] In light of this conclusion, even the most basic survey of the passage is startling because the list includes people in the most unfavorable circumstances: the poor, mourners, and the persecuted, among others. This is not whom one would expect to see on anyone's *honor roll*!

Jerome Neyrey, in *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, came to similar conclusions about these values in early Christianity. He applied Hanson's hypothesis regarding

[41] K.C. Hanson, "How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 100-101.

μακάριος in Matthew 5:3-11 and concluded that the passage calls for the honoring of those who would be dishonored in that culture.[42] Additionally, he argued that the Antitheses in 5:21-48 represent a rejection of competition for honor so prevalent in such cultures.[43] Finally, Jesus' rejection of the practice of performing piety to be noticed in 6:1-18 constitutes a "vacating of the playing field": men were told to "withdraw" from the public spaces they entered to compete for honor.[44] According to Neyrey's argument, Matthew 5 and 6 present a call to honor those whom society deemed dishonorable and to stop pursuing honor in socially mandated ways.

In *Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret*, David Watson employed a social-scientific perspective on secrecy and on honor and shame values to challenge Wrede's conclusions about the "messianic secret" in Mark.[45] Rather than reflecting an attempt on the part of Jesus or Mark to keep Jesus' messianic identity a secret, the passages show Jesus—from the perspective of Mark's first audience—"periodically resisting the honor he was rightly due."[46] Later, he is found "offering a new understanding of how honor and shame should be assigned."[47] Thus, Jesus' behavior in this area is best interpreted not as keeping his true identity secret, but as demonstrating the challenge to honor and shame that he would teach when mentioning the prime position of children in the kingdom (Mk 9:33-36; 10:13-16) and explaining the way he exercised authority for the sake of others (Mk 10:35-45).

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[42] Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 164-189.

[43] Ibid., 190-211.

[44] Ibid., 212-227.

[45] David Watson, *Honor among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

[46] Watson, *Honor among Christians*, 139.

[47] Ibid.

A recent examination of the Epistle to the Philippians in light of the social context of its audience brought to light Paul of Tarsus' challenge to traditional honor values. In *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi,* Joseph Hellerman pointed out that rank and status were of great concern to the citizens of Philippi, as evidenced through first-century honorific inscriptions from this Roman colony.[48] Against this background, Hellerman argued, Paul presents a Christian alternative to the Roman *cursus honorum*, embodied in the Christological hymn of chapter 2: God honors those who use their power for the sake of others.

Mark Finney has asserted that a similar challenge to honor and shame values is central to 1 Corinthians in *Honour and Conflict in the Ancient World: 1 Corinthians in Its Greco-Roman Social Setting*.[49] Finney concluded that the problems Paul faced in Corinth had to do with new converts who had entered the community but continued to embrace their pre-conversion social values related to honor. In response to this challenge, Paul articulated a "counter-cultural paradigm for life as a Christ follower" by urging the community to consider "that most horrific of symbols, the cross of Christ, with all the cultural stigmatism of shame that this brought."[50] Paul thus emerges as one who challenged traditional honor values; such a counter-cultural approach was not limited to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

[48] Joseph Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[49] This summary is dependent upon his 2006 presentation to the Irish Biblical Association, which he describes as an overview of his work (Mark Finney, "Conflict and Honour in the Ancient World: Some Thoughts on the Social Problems behind 1 Corinthians," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 29 [2006]: 24-56).

[50] Finney, "Conflict and Honour," 25.

The Early Christian Challenge to Honor and Shame Values

In light of the significance of honor values in Mediterranean Antiquity, the challenge of these values in early Christianity warrants additional consideration. Such analysis is further necessitated by the absence of any systematic appraisal. Therefore, this work focuses on a few key questions: How did the early Christians challenge the deeply embedded honor and shame values of their environment? Where did such teachings originate? Do they continue as part of the tradition in later periods? Recent advances in the study of early Christianity and the breadth of available literature makes an investigation of these questions possible.

The early Christian challenge to traditional honor and shame values was rooted in the sayings and the activity of Jesus of Nazareth. Chapter one addresses a prominent example of this through Jesus' "radically inclusive, status-leveling, and honor sharing table fellowship," which S. Scott Bartchy demonstrated as a challenge to these deeply embedded values in "The Historical Jesus and Reversal of Honor at Table."[51]

The writers of the canonical texts followed Jesus' redefinition of honor values. In no place is this more evident than in the writings of Paul of Tarsus, who continued in Jesus' teaching in this area as he carried out his commission as apostle to the Gentiles throughout the Mediterranean region; Paul's thoroughgoing challenge as he endeavored to resocialize these new Christ-followers will be addressed in chapters two and three. This reversal of honor is also evident in 1 Peter and Revelation, which emphasize the high honor of those in Christ and of those suffering for Christ in the face of shaming persecution; these are the subject of chapter four.

The early Christian challenge to honor continued beyond the New Testament canon. *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *The Didache*, *First Clement*, and *The Shepherd of Hermas* present the

[51] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 175-84.

challenge to honor and shame values extant in Christian communities in the Mediterranean near the end of the first century—albeit with some discontinuity—as chapter five demonstrates.

Reversal of honor and shame values continued in varied streams of the early Christian movement during the second century CE, with a significant emphasis on the honor of those who suffer for their profession of Christ; this is the subject of chapter six. It was evident in Asia Minor, as demonstrated in the letters of Ignatius, the Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. The writings of Irenaeus and the "Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" demonstrate the challenge to these values in Gaul in the latter half of the second century. *The Epistle to Diognetus*, which perhaps originated in the last half of the second century, takes for granted what earlier writings have already concluded regarding the honor of martyrdom and provides an apology to outsiders.

Finally, chapters seven and eight address the evidence of these values' continued presence in third century Carthage, with special attention to the honor of martyrdom and to women's avenues to honor. Chapter seven considers *The Passion of Perpetua* and the writings of Tertullian, which originate in the early third century. The writings of Cyprian, the bishop-martyr of mid-third century Carthage, vividly demonstrate the impact this challenge had on a community when persecution came; this is the subject of chapter eight.

The study's conclusion draws together the varied and complementary streams in the early Christian challenge to honor. In particular, it considers what energized this perspective and what led to the diversity represented. As will become evident, the cumulative impact of data will demonstrate that a strong challenge to traditional ancient honor and shame values was central to the teaching and behavior of the early Christian movement well into the third century CE.

CHAPTER 1:

JESUS OF NAZARETH AT TABLE

> This raised a dispute about the dignity of places, for the same seat is not accounted honorable amongst all nations; in Persia the midst, for that is the place proper to the king himself; in Greece the uppermost; at Rome the lowermost of the middle bed, and this is called the consular; the Greeks about Pontus, and those of Heraclea, reckon the uppermost of the middle bed to be the chief.
>
> Plutarch, *Symposiacs* 1.3[52]

Jesus of Nazareth is remembered as having challenged his society's deeply embedded honor and shame values, as recent studies in Matthew,[53] the so-called "Beattitudes,"[54] and Mark have demonstrated.[55] Cumulatively, these works provide a preliminary picture of Jesus as one who taught and behaved in ways that upset these values as a central part of his kingdom proclamation.

However, a pair of works by Scott Bartchy addressing Jesus' table fellowship provide perhaps the most significant evidence that Jesus of Nazareth strongly critiqued his culture's traditions about who received honor and how it was acquired. In his article on "Table

[52] Translation from William Watson Goodwin, *Plutarch's Essays and Miscellanies* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1909).

[53] Neyrey, *Honor and Shame.*

[54] K. C. Hanson, "How Honorable! How Shameful!," 81-111.

[55] Watson, *Honor among Christians.*

Fellowship" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*,[56] Bartchy demonstrates that Jesus' practice and teaching in this area was both radically inclusive and status-leveling. Bartchy's later article, "The Historical Jesus at Table and the Reversal of Honor" goes a step further, arguing persuasively that, in addition to the above, in his practice and teaching "Jesus sought to undermine traditional meal practices that provided easy opportunities for males in his culture to seek honor and display their acquired or ascribed honor."[57]

The focus of this chapter will be to summarize and, when possible, to bolster Bartchy's fundamental assertion that Jesus of Nazareth challenged the dominant views about who should receive honor and how honor was acquired. To that end, the significance of shared meals in the first century world will be addressed. Furthermore, the chapter will demonstrate how widely attested Jesus' radically inclusive and status-challenging practice was. An analysis of Jesus' table fellowship in Luke 14 in light of the way both the Qumran community and the early Christ-worshipers represented by the *Didache* reinforced traditional social codes through their practice of commensality will strongly support the assertion that Jesus' teaching and practice challenged how honor was acquired. As will become evident, Jesus' perspective lays the groundwork for the early Christian inversion of cultural values.

What's in a Meal?

Bartchy begins his discussion by recognizing the valuable contributions Mary Douglas and other cultural anthropologists have made to our understanding of table fellowship in the

[56] S. Scott Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," in *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels,* eds. Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 796-800.

[57] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 175.

ancient world.[58] It is now widely recognized that being welcomed to a meal had deep meaning in the first century world and had become "a ceremony richly symbolic of friendship, intimacy, and social unity."[59] This meant that only "social, religious, and economic equals" would be invited to share a meal, for only these were "in a position to return the favor in a relationship of balanced reciprocity;" thus, meals reinforced "fundamental social values, boundaries, statuses, and hierarchies."[60] They were a microcosm of the larger world that Jesus and his earliest followers inhabited.

Thus, for Jesus to engage in such countercultural meal practice was significant. Indeed, Bartchy is not alone in asserting that Jesus of Nazareth challenged the social order by virtue of his distinctive practice of table fellowship; for example, John Dominic Crossan and Jerome Neyrey both reach the same conclusion.[61] As will be apparent, Jesus' honor-sharing table fellowship stood in stark contrast with exclusive, hierarchical meal practices found in the Qumran community and the practice of early Jesus-groups reflected in the *Didache*.

Reinforcing or Challenging Social Codes through Table Fellowship

One need to go no further than contemporary practice of table fellowship to conclude how deeply encoded such practices were in Jesus' world. Bartchy employs examples from the

[58] See for example, Mary Douglas, *Purity & Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

[59] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 176.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid. See Crossan's *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) and Neyrey's "Ceremonies in Luke-Acts: The Case of Meals and Table Fellowship," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 361-87, for more details.

house of Israel and early Jesus-group tradition to demonstrate that very thing—and to illustrate how their religiously-sanctioned meal practices reinforced social codes.[62]

The Qumran community, which lived about twenty-four miles outside of Jerusalem by the Dead Sea and was a priestly group founded in response to a dispute with the high priest in Jerusalem following the Maccabean revolt, practiced such rigidly-structured table fellowship. New members of the community could only share a meal with others in the community after a full year (1QS 6.16-17). One could partake in the "drink of the Congregation" only when offered full membership, which was granted after two years (6.20-21). Members guilty of slander were excluded from the common meal for one year (7.16). Perhaps most significantly, the "Rule of the Congregation" stipulates a "hierarchical order of honorable seating;" thus, this socially mandated ordering of table fellowship is further reinforced through religious rule.[63]

Similar structure is found within the *Didache*, which reflects the perspective and practice of early Jesus groups in the first century CE and probably originated in Syria or Palestine. The document declares that the Eucharist is exclusively for those who have been baptized (*Did.* 9.5). Furthermore, the *Didache* emphasizes that community members were to give their first fruits to the prophets, "for they are your high priests" (13.3). Again, religious sanction serves to reinforce exclusive, hierarchical table fellowship that was endemic in Jesus' environment.

In contrast with the Qumran community that preceded him and the Jesus-groups represented in the *Didache* that followed him, many of Jesus of Nazareth's meal practices diverged from those accepted in Mediterranean antiquity. The difference leads Bartchy to assert:

> "Thus, to the criterion of double dissimilarity, long familiar to New Testament scholars, we should add the strong subcriterion of dissimilarity of cultural values. Application of

[62] Bartchy, "Jesus of Nazareth," 176.

[63] Ibid., 177.

> this criterion supports the claim that deviant, inclusive, status-leveling, honor-reversing meal practices were indeed characteristic of the behavior and teaching of the historical Jesus."[64]

This evidence thus supports our fundamental assertion that Jesus of Nazareth challenged honor and shame values by virtue of his distinctive table-fellowship praxis and teaching. As will be evident, such is well-attested among the sources.

Jesus' Inclusive, Status-Leveling Table Fellowship

As noted avove, Scott Bartchy's conclusions in "The Historical Jesus and Honor Reversal at Table" build on his earlier article on "Table Fellowship" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Of particular importance is the strong case—which reflects scholarly consensus—presented in the article regarding Jesus' radically inclusive, status-leveling meal praxis and teaching, which was "a central strategy in his announcement and redefinition of the in-breaking rule of God."[65]

Bartchy's article presents broad evidence for "an intentionally and symbolically open table"—as attested in both multiple sources and multipleforms. The following sources are included:

- Mark
- The Synoptic sayings source (Q)
- Luke's unique material
- *Gospel of Thomas* (likely)

At the same time, these various forms are evident:

- Controversy stories – Mark 2:15-17 par. Matthew 9:9-13 and Luke 5:29-32
- Kingdom parables – Luke 14:15-24 par. Matthew 22:1-13; *Gos. Thom.* 64
- Pronouncement stories (Luke 13:28-29; 14:12-14)

[64] Ibid.

[65] Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," 797.

- Opponents' criticisms (Matthew 11:18-19 par. Luke 7:33-34)
- A summary (Luke 15:1-2)[66]

Of particular interest is the saying of Jesus found in the Synoptic saying source (Q), Matthew 11:18-19 and the parallel in Luke 7:33-34, which states: "For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, 'Behold a glutton and drunkard, a friend of toll collectors and sinners.'"[67] Bartchy's analysis concludes that this odd saying is authentic in light of the following evidence:

- The strange charge against John, which is without parallel.
- The charge against Jesus is both embarrassing and un-rebutted.
- Jesus' use of φίλος ("friend"), which is otherwise absent from Matthew, Mark, and Synoptic saying source.
- The saying reflects a Galilean context.[68]

The cumulative impact of this evidence is consequential, demonstrating that Jesus of Nazareth regularly associated with such outcasts and immoral people. Bartchy thus emphasizes the significance of Jesus' radically inclusive table fellowship:

> "In his message and table praxis, eating with anyone who would eat with him, Jesus challenged the central role played by table fellowship in reinforcing boundaries and statuses widely believed to be sanctioned by God. His use of table fellowship as a divine tool for undermining boundaries and hierarchies made him an enemy of social stability in the eyes of leading contemporaries."[69]

[66] Ibid. Jesus is also remembered as practicing radically inclusive table fellowship on at least two other notable occasions: sharing a meal with 5,000 (Mk 6:37- 44 par. Mt 14:13-2, Lk 9:10-17, and Jn 6:1-16) and welcoming his betrayer to Passover meal in spite of the fact that he knew what Judas had planned for later (Mk 14:18-21 par. Mt 26:21-25, Lk 22:21-23, and Jn 13:21-30. Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," 799).

[67] Mt 11:18-19: "ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης μήτε ἐσθίων μήτε πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν· δαιμόνιον ἔχει. ἦλθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν· ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[68] Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," 797.

[69] Ibid.

In light of the broad evidence, Jesus' challenge in this area also extends to "criticism of hierarchical human relationships." Both Mark and the material unique to Luke attest to this, as do the following forms:

- Pronouncement stories – Mark 9:33-37 par. Luke 9:46-48; Mark 10:42-45 par. Matthew 20:25-28 and Luke 22:24-30
- Parables – Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14
- Brief sayings – Matthew 23:11-12
- Symbolic narrative and comment – John 13:3-16[70]

Bartchy rightly notes that since shared meals reinforced status differences, "the meal setting for Jesus' challenge of this social practice, which are emphasized by Luke 14:7-11; 22:24-30 and by John 13:3-16, would have rung true for their readers in the ancient world."[71] Jesus of Nazareth's practice of status-leveling table fellowship served as a vivid, radical critique of the hierarchical meal practices of his society.

Jesus' Honor-Sharing Table

"The Historical Jesus and Honor Reversal at Table" builds upon Bartchy's earlier article on "Table Fellowship" by demonstrating that Jesus' meal praxis and teaching also challenged cultural values by redefining how to obtain honor. In a culture that taught men to pursue honor for themselves and their family through competition in the public realm, "meals were an especially prominent venue for the reassertion of one's honor and for seeking to acquire more."[72] In fact, doing so at a meal was just the natural thing to do: "men who sought the best seats and

[70] Ibid.

[71] Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," 797-98.

[72] Bartchy, "Jesus of Nazareth," 178.

the places of honor were behaving precisely the way their mothers and fathers had raised them to behave."[73]

This perspective has significant implications when applied to the content related to table fellowship in Luke 14, as Bartchy demonstrates.[74] He begins by discussing the parable contained in verses seven through eleven, which Jesus offers in response to the competitive table fellowship practice that he observed (v. 7). He warns them not to seek out the best seats when invited to a wedding feast, for such a person would find himself diminished were the host to choose to displace him for another, sending him to the last position (vv. 8-9). Rather, in line with Proverbs 25:6-7, he urges them to select the place at the foot of the table, postulating that the host might see and publically honor them by offering a better seat (v. 10). Jesus' concluding statement, that "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 11) has great significance in terms of honor and shame: those who pursue a position of honor beyond their current status will be shamed and those who accept their situation will be honored.[75] In other words, Jesus counsels his listeners that the path to honor in his eyes is not through competition for it, but rather through sharing it.

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[73] Ibid., 179.

[74] In this, Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh (*Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998]) contribute significantly to Bartchy's analysis.

[75] Such coheres with Jesus' teaching and behavior elsewhere. In Mark 12:38-39 (par Mt 23:6, 7; Lk 20:46) after being questioned in the temple, he warns his followers against scribes because of their showy dress, their love of public praise, and the way they pursue the seats of honor at synagogues and banquets. Luke 11:43, in material unique to that gospel, has Jesus addressing similar issues in another context, as he harshly denounces Pharisees in response to their judging him for eating with unwashed hands, "How shameful of you, Pharisees! For you love to sit in the seat of honor in the synagogue and greetings in the marketplace." (Lk 11:43: "Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς Φαρισαίοις, ὅτι ἀγαπᾶτε τὴν πρωτοκαθεδρίαν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς" [Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*]. My translation from the Greek text. For more on translating οὐαί as "how shameful!," see K.C. Hanson's "How Honorable! How Shameful!") I conclude that while similar to Mark, the Lukan saying is independent from it. This is due to the inclusion of fewer details in different order, different contexts, and the shift from third person to second person.

Jesus' parable of the great banquet follows in Luke 14:15-24 (par Mt 22:1-14) with a similar challenge to honor-enhancing dining practices. As Bartchy notes, the parable draws them in "by telling them about a man who was about to give a great dinner and to invite many guests—a man with whom they all could identify." But the story ends unexpectedly, with Jesus "describing an utterly transformed social order in which the poor and outcasts are given preference, 'those incapable of participating in the social games of reciprocity and status augmentation.'"[76] In so doing, Jesus identified the poor, weak, and marginalized as his own table companions and infuriated both "his host and his other honor-seeking guests, whom Jesus had sought to shame."[77]

Jesus of Nazareth's challenge to conventional, status-enhancing meal practices had significant implications for his followers, as Bartchy notes. Of utmost importance is that it "opened the door for them to practice table fellowship across status lines, and eventually across ethnic barriers as well."[78] At the same time, Bartchy rightly emphasizes the tension Jesus' critique would have created:

> "There seems little doubt that Luke's emphasis presented 'hard bread' to the elite community members among his audience. For by participating in such a socially inclusive, honor-reversing community, they placed themselves in jeopardy of being cut off from the prior social networks on which their own status depended."[79]

To a great degree, elite acceptance of this new approach to table fellowship would significantly influence how it was received among the early Christ-worshipers, since their meetings frequently occurred in the homes of those who had wealth and honor.

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[76] Bartchy ("The Historical Jesus," 180) quoting Joel Green (*The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT [Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmanns, 1997], 563).

[77] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 180.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

Jesus' Challenge to Honor at Table and Beyond

Jesus of Nazareth's reversal of honor at table is reflective of his broader critique of these deeply-embedded cultural values. Bartchy notes how the historical Jesus is remembered to have challenged these codes in line with key characteristics of honor:

1. "Honor is still a pivotal cultural value, but now both birth honor and acquired honor have been made irrelevant."[80] As Bartchy's "Table Fellowship" article conclusively demonstrates, Jesus' radically inclusive, status-leveling table fellowship was emblematic of a broader shift in redefining honor and shame.

   A brief survey of the canonical gospels provides strong evidence that this perspective extended beyond meal praxis. A woman's place was usually confined to the private realm, but Jesus is remembered as having welcomed women among those who travelled with him (Lk 8:1-3)[81] and engaged in conversation with unclean, sinful women (Jn 4:3-42; Jn 8:1-11). In line with his commensality with toll collectors discussed earlier, Luke recounts Jesus staying in the home of Zacchaeus, a chief toll collector (19:1-10). Furthermore, Mark indicates on more than one occasion that Jesus welcomed children into his company in spite of their humble position as the youngest and most vulnerable in society (9:33-37; 10:13-16).[82]

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[80] Ibid., 181.

[81] As Malina and Rourbaugh have noted, this sort of behavior would have been identified as deviant, arousing suspicions of elicit sexual conduct (*Social-Scientific Commentary of the Synoptic Gospels*, 334).

[82] In the realm of public honor, children had little to offer: they had neither precedence nor permanence. Jesus is said to have identified serving them as an exceedingly humble role (Mk 9:33-36) and to have contrasted them with the "wise and intelligent" (Lk 10:21 par Mt 11:25). Alan Wheatly (*Patronage in Early Christianity: Its Use and Transformation from Jesus to Paul of Samosata* [Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011], 14) notes the implications of the latter in Jesus' practice as a broker of Yahweh's patronage: "These were terms of honor and lack of honor. This statement also indicates that we may expect an inversion in the actions of God's broker with regard to those honored."

2. "Instead of seeking honor for himself, Jesus was prepared to be humiliated rather than to play the traditional male game of one-upmanship."[83] His challenge in this area did not stop at rejecting table fellowship for competitive status enhancement, but, as Bartchy also notes, continues by declaring the merciful, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness sake as "honorable."[84]

   Jesus was remembered to have practiced what he taught in this area. His servile self-description of Matthew 11:29, "I am meek and humble in heart,"[85] reflects such an outlook. Paul's appeals to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1) and Christ Jesus having "humbled himself" (Phil 2:8) also support this conclusion.

3. "In contrast to the prevailing assumptions about life, honor was not in limited supply for the historical Jesus. His God offered an unlimited supply of honor; in turn, those honored by God had the social resources to give honor to others without fear of diminishing their own."[86] Jesus' early followers' readiness to do so—from Paul of Tarsus and his communities to Christians in third century Carthage—provides significant evidence of this perspective.

4. "Nonretaliation thus became the only honorable response to a challenge to one's personal honor."[87] Bartchy points to Jesus' saying from Luke 6:29 (par Mt 5:39-40)

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[83] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 181.

[84] Ibid.; for more on rendering μακάριος as "honorable" in Matthew 5:3-11 and Luke 6:20-24, see K.C. Hanson's "How Honorable! How Shameful!"

[85] Mt 11:29: "πραΰς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[86] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 181.

[87] Ibid.

as evidence: "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other as well; and whoever takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either."[88]

5. "Meals became an especially prominent venue for this outrageous giving of honor to all, around a radically inclusive table."[89] As we will see, Paul of Tarsus and the communities he founded imitated Jesus' practice.

As we have seen through Scott Bartchy's "Table Fellowship" and "Jesus of Nazareth and Reversal of Honor at Table," there is strong evidence that the historical Jesus challenged the deeply embedded honor values of his society, as demonstrated by his radically inclusive, status-leveling, and honor sharing meal praxis. This provided a vivid demonstration of the inbreaking rule of God that he proclaimed. As we will see, his followers were deeply influenced by this perspective and imitated his practice and teaching for centuries to come.

Yet none rivals Paul of Tarsus for his broad embrace of these values—from the inclusive, status-leveling table fellowship that he defended again and again to the humble, sacrificial life that he lived in imitation of the life and death of Jesus. In fact, as Paul brought his gospel to Jews and Gentiles throughout the Mediterranean, he contributed significantly to the development of this perspective—which was central to his proclamation.

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[88] Lk 6:29: "τῷ τύπτοντί σε ἐπὶ τὴν σιαγόνα πάρεχε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἴροντός σου τὸ ἱμάτιον καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα μὴ κωλύσῃς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[89] Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus," 182.

CHAPTER 2:

PAUL OF TARSUS, PART 1

Jesus' teaching and lifestyle had inverted first century Mediterranean honor-shame values. Many viewed his vision of the world to be compelling and transformative. But it was a vision that ran against the grain of the dominant culture; there was no guarantee that his followers would continue his way of life.

Contrary to what many commentators claim, Paul became a follower who was faithful to what Jesus did and taught. As will become evident, this extended to this former persecutor's teaching and practice regarding honor and shame. In his travels throughout the Mediterranean world, Paul's perspective on honor was challenged in many ways as he endeavored to resocialize Gentiles who had joined the Christ-worshipping communities. In the process, he communicated these counter-cultural values in rich and compelling ways for his urban audiences. The breadth and volume of his words addressing the subject indicate that the reversal of honor was central to Paul's understanding of the gospel, as demonstrated by a chronological[90] review of the undisputed Pauline corpus, which will be the task of the next two chapters.

[90] While it is not my intention to provide a thorough discussion of the chronology of Paul's letters, it seems fitting to provide the rationale for my ordering of the corpus: Some consensus exists regarding the dating of 1 Thessalonians (late forties to early fifties CE), 1 Corinthians (53 or 54 CE), 2 Corinthians (55 or 56 CE), and Romans (55 to57 CE), but Galatians and Philippians continue to be the subject of serious debate. Galatians has been dated as early as late forties and as late as mid fifties CE; in light of the absence of reference to the Jerusalem council—which likely occurred between 48 and 51 CE and would have served as decisive in Paul's argument against the agitators—and other evidence, I conclude that Galatians is the earliest, shortly before 1 Thessalonians. The dating of Philippians hinges upon where one believes Paul was imprisoned: that he views death as a possible

GALATIANS

> And at that very moment my eyes were opened and I knew that I was naked of the righteousness with which I had been clothed. And I wept saying, 'Why have you done this to me, that I have been estranged from my glory with which I was clothed?'… And I took its [the fig tree's] leaves and made for myself skirts.
>
> Eve explaining what happened after she had eaten from the tree of knowledge in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 20.1-5[91]

Righteousness or right standing before God was a critical concept in Second Temple Judaism. There was a diversity of thought as to what it required depending on whom you asked, whether it be Essenes, Pharisees, John the Baptizer, or Jesus' adherents. In Galatians, for example, Paul writes in opposition to "Judaizing" rival preachers who had come to Galatia after he left and asserted that circumcision, among other things, was necessary for righteousness and membership in the covenant community.

With his rivals, Paul agreed that righteousness defined a person's standing in the community; however, because they disagreed about what it took to have right standing before God, they came to strikingly different conclusions about honor. While the position of his "Judaizing" opponents preserved the status quo with regard to what was honorable, emphasizing externals like circumcision and ethnic identity, Paul's perspective constituted a challenge to honor values in the first-century Mediterranean world. What was on the outside and in the flesh

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outcome and was a Roman citizen indicates that he was imprisoned in Rome and not Caesarea Maritima, Ephesus, or Corinth when he authored Philippians, putting the dating of the correspondence between 60 and 63 CE.

[91] Translation from *Apoc. Mos.* 20.1-5, in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol.2, Expansions of The "Old Testament" And Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), 281.

did not matter. Righteousness was not based on externals, but on the glorious new identity the Galatians had put on in Christ (3:26-29).

The content of Paul's argument inverted cultural values; his approach did as well. He repeatedly embraces as honorable situations or perspectives that others would identify as shameful. In no place is this more evident than in his evaluation of his own ministry.

Human Judgment Rejected

Paul's challenge of the honor values of his society is evident from his first presentation of the letter's argument. After his declaration of amazement that they are "turning away" from the gospel he preached "to another gospel" (1:6),[92] Paul issues a curse against anyone who would preach a different gospel to them (v. 8), and another curse directed toward those who were already among them preaching a "Judaizing" version of Paul's gospel (v. 9). In verse ten, he follows with two rhetorical questions: "For am I now seeking the favor of men or God? Or am I trying to please men?"[93] In light of Paul's harsh words in verses eight and nine, verse ten carries an ironic tone, as if to say, "Now, does that sound like the language of one whose main concern is to gain the approval of others?"[94] As will be evident, verse ten indicates that Paul rejected the court of public opinion—which was critical in determining an individual's "honor rating"—and was concerned with only God's judgment of him.

[92] Gal 1:6: "Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ] εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[93] Gal 1:10: "Ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν;" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[94] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX.: Word Books, 1990), 19.

Paul is hardly the first person in antiquity to deny that he was a "man pleaser."[95] Indeed, the use of the term was prevalent, as was the particularly notable variation of the label, that of "the flatterer."[96] But if other users of the term assumed and continued in line with the honor values of that world, how can Paul's words in verse ten be construed as a rejection of those values? A closer look at the verse's two questions and conditional clause makes his rejection of traditional honor values evident.

Q1: For am I now persuading men or God?
Ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν;

Q2: Or am I seeking to please men?
ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν;

C1: If I were still trying to please men,
εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον,
I would not be Christ's slave
Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἤμην.

Presented above, a parallel becomes evident: Paul sets pleasing or seeking the favor of men in contrast to pleasing God or being Christ's slave. He emphasizes that he has chosen the alternative of pleasing God over pleasing men. Paul's claim of God's judgment, and not men's, distinguishes his use of "man pleasers" from that of others in antiquity who hold to traditional honor values.

This distinction becomes all the more evident in light of the conditional clause at the end of the verse.[97] If Paul were still trying to please men (which he was not), then he would not be Christ's slave (which he was). "Christ's slave" is an emphatic self-identification. Since Christ

[95] Hans Dieter Betz (*Galatians : A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 55) notes that "man pleaser" (ὁ ἀρέσκος) is widely discussed in antiquity, citing Aristotle *EN* 2.7.13; 4.6.1; 9.10.6; Theophrastus *Char*. 5; Plutarch *Lib. educ.* 4D; 6A.

[96] Betz, *Galatians*, 55.

[97] Longenecker (*Galatians*, 19) points out that this is a second class conditional clause (contrary to fact).

was Paul's master, he alone could judge Paul; human evaluation was irrelevant.[98] Furthermore, the label reflects Paul's "transvaluation of values:" being a slave in that world was widely-recognized as humiliating, shameful and disadvantageous, let alone the slave of a slave, i.e. Christ, who died a slave's death.[99] But Paul perceived this position as one of honor, perhaps in light of the way figures from the Hebrew Bible, such as Abraham, Moses, David, and others are described as a "slave of Yahweh."[100]

Paul's rejection of the "man pleaser" characterization for himself might be in response to accusations from his opponents, who claimed that he had not told the whole truth to the Galatians when he preached to them, "purposely trimming his message so as to gain a more favorable response."[101] Whether the opponents had so labeled Paul or not, he wanted to make the source of his honor clear: he was not concerned with the human court of opinion, but with God's assessment of him. Explicitly, Paul was Christ's slave and no "man pleaser;" implicitly, he defined his opponents as "man pleasers." As will become evident, Paul continues to highlight this contrast throughout Galatians.

Indeed, Paul's assessment of the "pillars in Jerusalem" (2:1ff.) vividly displays his rejection of the human court of opinion. He sought their help to confirm the gospel he received by revelation, but in his own assessment of these leaders he indicates that their "high reputation" did not matter to him (v. 6). This was based on the fact that "there is no partiality with God" (v.

[98] Cf. Rom 14:4: "Who are you to judge the servant of another?"

[99] Note the discussion of slavery and crucifixion in light of the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 in the next chapter.

[100] S. Scott Bartchy, "Slave, Slavery," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 1099.

[101] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 18.

6; cf. Romans 2:11).[102] They might have walked with Jesus in his ministry, but none of that mattered because God did not look at the face of a man (as "πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει" [v. 6] literally states) or judge based on externals. Therefore, Paul was unconcerned about what anyone else thought. Perhaps it was this perspective that allowed Paul to stand up to Peter when he perceived that fundamentals of the Gospel were being challenged.

His dispute with Peter in Antioch (2:10-21) demonstrates Paul's attentiveness to honor values in the Christ-following community and provides evidence that those who would "Judaize" Gentile believers are "man pleasers," while Paul continues as a faithful slave of Christ.

The narrative tells a simple story. In line with the practice of the church in Antioch and Paul's understanding of the gospel, Judeans and Gentiles shared a common table with each other.[103] Such fellowship was no small thing due to the previously mentioned dietary laws and table fellowship practices of Judeans in the Mediterranean world, which were emblematic of Judean exclusivity. In line with Jesus' "radically inclusive" and "non-hierarchical" table fellowship,[104] the Antiochene practice challenged widely-recognized social distinctions related to status and ethnic identity and indicated that Judeans and Gentiles shared the same honor; it reflected a situation in which Judeans and Gentiles were equal partners in Christ. When Peter first visited Antioch, he shared in this practice (v. 12). However, the visit of some Christ-following Judeans from James led to a change in behavior on Peter's part; he gradually withdrew

[102] Gal 2:6: "πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[103] Antioch appears to have been a trailblazer in this regard and became known for including Gentiles in the gospel, such that word of their proclamation to and inclusion of Gentiles found its way back to the assembly in Jerusalem, who sent Barnabas as their emissary (Acts 11:20-22). Barnabas brought Paul into the community soon after that (Acts 11:25-26); one may easily infer that the openness of the Antioch community made a strong impression on Paul, who had earlier persecuted Christ-followers in Jerusalem and pursued them to Damascus, at least in part due to their challenge to Judean exclusivity (Acts 6:8-14; 9:1-3).

[104] Bartchy, "Table Fellowship," 796-800.

and then separated from Gentile Christ worshipers (v. 12).[105] Other Judeans in the community followed his example; his influence was such that even Barnabas, a leader in Antioch and Paul's coworker in ministry to the Gentiles, followed suit (v. 13).

Paul was unwilling to let such behavior, which was not "in line with the truth of the gospel,"[106] stand unchallenged; so he opposed Peter to his face (v. 14). He describes Peter and the other Judeans separating from the Gentiles as pretense (v. 14), as if they were acting in such a way to appease those who had come from James. Paul went so far as to assert that Peter's actions were motivated out of fear of those of the circumcision (v. 12). Thus the narrative provides evidence that Paul was no "man pleaser," but constrained only by his service to Christ (cf. 1:10); Peter and those with them who had (inadvertently) "Judaized" Gentile believers (v. 14) were, however, susceptible to that charge. Ultimately, the apostle to the Gentiles demonstrates that he was not compelled by human judgment (and the court of public opinion); he was concerned with Yahweh's judgment.

Shared Table, Shared Honor

Nevertheless, Paul's rejection of human judgment is a secondary consideration in his argument. His emphatic defense of the shared table of Gentiles and Judeans in the passage, which may have been influenced by the open way he was received in Antioch after being known as a persecutor, stressed that Gentile Christ-followers did not need to "Judaize" and adopt the

[105] While Paul's perspective on Peter's actions is clear, it must be noted that the writing presents only one side of the story. Peter's vacillation seems understandable in light of his role as an apostle to the Judeans and his relationship with the Judean Christ-followers. It must have been a difficult situation for one who clearly valued Antioch's one table of Judeans and Gentiles and was remembered as having a pivotal role in bringing uncircumcised Gentiles into the movement (Acts 10:1-11:18).

[106] Gal 2:14: "οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

customs or laws of the Judeans to be full members of God's new covenant community in Christ; indeed, he urged them not to do so. The common table of Judeans and Gentiles in Christ was evidence that the two peoples were equal partners, sharing the same honor. From Paul's perspective, the actions of Peter and other Christ-following Judeans to separate from Gentile believers communicated a different message: Gentiles would need to be circumcised to have equal standing with Judeans in Christ, or worse, to be in Christ at all. This is evident in the question he recalls posing to Peter: "If you, being a Judean, live like a Gentile and not a Judean, how is it that you are compelling Gentiles to live as Judeans?"[107]

Paul's argument in vv. 14-21 gives the impression that Peter was not in disagreement with him about the content of gospel, even that Gentiles could be justified by faith in Christ (v. 16). If Paul's testimony about the situation is to be believed then disagreement was not about the correct teaching, but about the implications of that teaching. As an apostle to the Judeans, Peter may have been interested in maintaining an impression of separation in order to ease the reception of the gospel among Judeans. As an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul judged that God's justification of Judeans and Gentiles by faith meant that Gentile Christ-followers shared the same honor and table as their Judean counterparts. Paul concludes that the equal standing of all in Christ was non-negotiable and central to the gospel; the passage that follows demonstrates that he taught this to his earliest converts.

The Shared Honor of All of God's Sons

> For you all are sons of God in Christ Jesus through faith; for as many of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves in Christ. There is neither Judean nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no male and female; for you are all one person in Christ

[107] Gal 2:14: "εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῇς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν;" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

> Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:26-29)[108]

After his narrative about the origin of his gospel and his interaction with other apostles (1:11-2:21), Paul proceeds to talk about Abraham, the promise of the Spirit, and the Torah (3:1-25). A key portion of Paul's argument is that Gentile Christ-worshippers, in light of the presence of the Spirit among them and the promise of God to Abraham, have equal standing with their Judean counterparts by virtue of their adoption as sons of God. Paul refers to them as "sons" and not simply "children" to emphasize their position as heirs (3:29) since inheritance was passed on only through sons in Paul's patrilinial society.[109] Paul addresses their privileged position in Galatians 3:26-29; as will be evident, this new identity has significant implications for the honor of all who are "in Christ Jesus."

The passage follows a discussion about the role of the Torah. According to Paul, it had a role as a tutor or minder (παιδαγωγὸς, vv. 24, 25). But that time had passed. Now that "faith has come" (v. 25), their legal standing is no longer defined by the Torah, but by Christ Jesus (v. 26)—a new era had dawned! Thus Paul could declare, "You are all sons of God in Christ Jesus through faith" (v. 26).[110] They all had the honor of being called "sons of God," an unspeakable privilege, especially for the Gentiles. Implicitly, this takes for granted that God is their Father (as Paul has noted three times in the epistolary prescript [1:1-5]), which is significant in a society

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[108] Gal 3:26-29: "Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε. οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ᾽ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι." (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[109] For further discussion of how Paul employs the language of ethnicity and kinship to describe Yahweh's relationship with humans, see Caroline E. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[110] Gal 3:26: "Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

which ascribed honor to a person based upon patrilinial descent. Just like Abraham (3:6ff.), the promise was theirs by faith. Paul emphasizes that the unspeakable privilege was theirs "in Christ Jesus;" having trusted Christ, they were part of new community that reflected his values and were partakers of his Spirit (3:22; cf. Rom 8:9).

Paul is not finished speaking of the benefits that his audience attained in Christ. He continues, explaining the claim of verse twenty-six in verse twenty-seven, "for as many of you have been baptized in Christ have clothed themselves with Christ."[111] The language may correspond with the physical experience of baptism in which the convert, after being taken under water and raised up, put on a new garment.[112] The initiate therefore joined a new community and had put on Christ like a garment.[113]

Why does Paul employ the clothing imagery here? Many have asserted that Paul is speaking of the believer's position before God; when God looks at persons who are in Christ through faith, he sees the righteousness of Christ, and their standing is secure. While this explanation has merit for interpreting Paul, in general, here it falls short of a complete picture on two accounts. First, it fails to consider the societal function of clothing. In Paul's honor-oriented world, appearances were critical. Clothing was significant, as it communicated such things as a person's race, status, and sex and helped others determine an individual's place in society. One could say that it functioned as a representation of an individual's honor.[114]

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[111] Gal 3:27: "ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text. In this case, γὰρ indicates that what follows explains v. 26.

[112] F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 186.

[113] Paul also employs the "putting on" language to emphasize the virtues that those in Christ were to practice (cf. Eph 4:24ff. and Col 3:10ff.).

[114] In no place was this more evident than in the senatorial toga, which had a purple stripe on the edge and was reserved for male members of the Roman senatorial class.

Explaining Paul's clothing imagery in verse twenty-seven in terms of righteousness before God also falls short because it neglects the social implications of his words. While the interpretation bears in mind the individual's position before God (the so-called vertical dimension), it fails to consider his or her position before the community (the horizontal dimension). This one-dimensional reading of the passage is out of line with the rest of Galatians, which addresses social issues and identifies competing communities along with discussions about various groups' standing before God. When Paul speaks of "putting on Christ," one must read it as alluding both to a believer's social standing and to God's judgment of them. Paul thinks that the clothes really do "make the human:" baptism into Christ gives a person both honor and righteousness.

An elaboration of the change in standing for those in Christ is presented in verse twenty-eight. It begins with three opposing pairs: "there is neither Judean nor Greek" (οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην), "there is neither slave nor free" (οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος), and "there is no male and female" (οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ). The concluding statement of verse 28 provides the basis for Paul's claims in the first half of the verse: "For you all are one person in Christ Jesus" (πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Thus Paul connects the rejection of society's fundamental distinctions and the unity of Christ's community with baptism through which they had put on Christ.

The opposing pairs have great significance, both for their content and their collective force. The opposition between Judean and Greek is well-documented. For Judeans, society was divided into two groups: God's people who originated in Judea and enjoyed the covenant marked by circumcision, and the Gentiles (Hellenes or "the nations") who were uncircumcised and

worshipped other Gods. While their categories were not the same, non-Judeans divided the world in similar terms, evaluating other people based on their region of origin.

The second pair also reflects a fundamental societal distinction in Paul's world: that between slave and free. Slaves made up a sizable portion of the population—"at least a third of the inhabitants of most major urban centers."[115] The legal gulf between these two opposites was deep and palpable—and universally recognized in the first century Mediterranean world.

Paul addresses a third fundamental distinction: that between male and female. The contrast is easily recognized today and was even more obvious for Paul's audience. They had a clear indicator in dress. Women and men could be found in different spaces as well: while men could be found alone in public space, that realm was not for women, who were usually confined to their homes unless accompanied by a father, husband, or a brother.

Individually, each distinction-rejecting statement is significant. Collectively, Paul's words present a radical reconfiguration of individuals and community, for they reject the fundamental distinctions of Mediterranean people in antiquity. Geography, slavery, and sex were among the primary categories used to judge people. For example, Greek philosophers are said to have expressed gratitude to the gods that they were men and not women, Greeks and not barbarians.[116] As the distinctions are made, it becomes clear: some situations were greatly preferred to others. In general, it was more honorable to be a Greek than a foolish barbarian, to be free rather than in servitude, to be a man rather than a woman.

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[115] S. Scott Bartchy, "Slavery (Greco-Roman and New Testament)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 67.

[116] Bruce Longenecker (*Galatians*, 157) cites the following example: "'that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian' (attributed to Thales and Socrates in Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.33, but to Plato in Plutarch's *Marius* 46.1 and Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* 3.19.17)."

A more striking parallel to the pairs in verse twenty-eight has been traced to the second century CE, found in the benedictions that were likely recited with morning prayers "Blessed be He [God] that He did not make me a Gentile; blessed be He that He did not make me a boor [i.e., an ignorant peasant or a slave]; blessed be He that He did not make me a woman."[117] What accounts for the similarity? It is possible that Paul was acquainted with a similar benediction in his upbringing and recited it repeatedly before his apostolic call—for the conservative nature of the liturgy and thus this prayer suggests that it predated Paul.[118] Whether verse twenty-eight is dependent upon a similar benediction or not, this is certain: the pairings reflect a Judean understanding of three fundamental distinctions among humanity. Paul, however, rather than adopting the voice of the petitioner and giving thanks that he occupies the most honorable position, declares that in Christ the distinctions that separated people and identified some as more worthy than others are eliminated. Everyone—Judean and Gentile, slave and free, male and female—can revel in their high standing, because they all have put on Christ. The barriers between them, by which they were divided and ordered, were eliminated; so Paul says, "You are all one person in Christ Jesus" (v. 28).[119] In God's eyes, all shared the same honor.

It is easy to conclude that this rejection of honor distinctions is fundamental to Paul's thought. There is strong evidence that the content of verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight

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[117] From *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth of Nations*, tr. S. Singer, 2nd rev. ed. [London: Eyer & Spottiswoode, 1962] 6-7) cited in Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157. These three *bĕrākôt* are credited to R. Judah ben Elai (c. 150 A.D.) in t. Ber. 7.18 and j. Ber 13b, but to R. Meier (his contemporary) in b. Menah. 43b.

[118] For a discussion on the nature and early dating of this prayer, see S. Scott Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of I Corinthians 7:21* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 164-65 (especially footnotes 565-567).

[119] Gal 3:28: "πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

reflects an early Christian or perhaps early Pauline tradition—significant parallels are evident throughout the Pauline tradition. Both 1 Corinthians 12:13[120] and Colossians 3:11[121] repeat the rejection of distinctions between Judean and Gentile, slave and free. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 7:18-22 follows the pattern of Galatians 3:28, as Paul addresses the circumcised and uncircumcised (vv. 18-19), slave and free (vv. 21-22) in the context of his discussion of marriage.[122] Galatians 3:28 and I Corinthians 12:13 both relate the end of distinctions to baptism; strikingly, the reference to baptism is unnecessary for the argument of both passages. Colossians 3:10-11 also relates the two—but implicitly.

The challenge to his former map of the world was at the forefront of Paul's mind, influencing his thought and providing a basis for his epistolary arguments. It seems very likely that this tradition, whether it can be traced to Paul or predated him,[123] had some connection to baptism; for this reason, many identify this as a baptismal teaching. Significantly, this tradition which stood so prominently in Pauline thinking and was likely repeated to new converts at baptism, emphasized the end of fundamental societal distinctions and the equal honor of all in Christ.

The section of Paul's argument in Galatians 3 concludes, stating, "If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."[124] Having already been acknowledged as God's honorable sons (v. 26) regardless of how the world defined them (v. 28),

[120] 1 Cor 12:13: "εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

[121] Col 3:11: "ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

[122] Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*, 162-65.

[123] No parallels to the tradition can be found outside of Pauline literature.

[124] Gal 3:29: "εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ᾽ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι." (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Paul declares that those who belong to Christ share the distinction of being Abraham's descendents and, therefore, heirs of the promise he received (v. 29). As was noted, this is a position that Gentiles occupy apart from circumcision; the verses that follow go on to state emphatically that they possess the honor of sons and heirs apart from the law (4:4-7). The honor of being in Christ far surpassed that of those who were still under the Law, who were no different from slaves in status (4:7)!

Rejecting the Honor of Circumcision and Embracing the Shame of the Cross

As Paul approaches the end of Galatians, he shifts to a final appeal concerning circumcision: in 5:1-12, he asserts that the ritual brings nothing to those in Christ and actually serves to sever their ties with him. They had gained righteousness and honor in Christ (cf. 3:26-29); but the cut that the "Judaizers" argued would enhance their status and make them members of God's covenant people actually cost them a great deal. Circumcision meant that Christ would be no benefit to them (v. 2) and made them a debtor to the law (v. 3) from which Christ had already freed them (v. 1). Paul could not have been more emphatic about the decision to seek the law's justification through circumcision: those who do so "have been cut off from Christ" and "have fallen from grace" (v. 4).[125] The righteousness and honor they received through faith in Christ was lost to those who sought to enhance their standing through circumcision. In the end, circumcision or uncircumcision meant nothing for those in Christ (v. 6); and so Paul's audience had nothing to gain and everything to lose through practicing this ritual of ethnic identification.

Given his argument in the previous verses, Paul makes a confusing statement about circumcision in verse eleven: "But brothers, if I were preaching circumcision, why am I being

[125] Gal 5:4: "κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ…τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

persecuted?"[126] Had some of the "Judaizers" claimed that Paul was preaching circumcision as a justification for what they were encouraging the Galatians to do? Peder Borgen has demonstrated, in light of Philo's debates about circumcision, that some Judeans concluded that the rite logically followed for Gentiles who had already adopted the Torah's ethical practices.[127] In his missionary preaching Paul had already exhorted his Gentile converts to set aside a litany of behaviors that were not a fit for the kingdom of God (cf. 5:21-22); his opponents thus seemed to have concluded that since he preached "ethical circumcision," he would have advocated the physical rite to finish the job.[128] But Paul emphatically rejects this perspective and cites the persecution he experienced as evidence that he was not preaching crucifixion (v. 11).

If Paul were preaching circumcision, he concludes that he would not be troubled by Judeans: if it were the case (ἄρα, "then"), "the stumbling block of the cross has been eliminated" (v. 11).[129] As before, Paul embraces the shame of the cross—in that it allowed for Gentiles to have equal standing in Christ apart from circumcision. What potentially brought shame was ultimately at the heart of the gospel, and Paul believed that there was nothing more honorable.

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[126] Gal 5:11: "Εγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι;" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[127] Peder Borgen, "Observations on the Theme 'Paul and Philo': Paul's Preaching of Circumcision in Galatia (Gal. 5: 11) and Debates on Circumcision in Philo," in *Die Paulinische Literatur Und Theologie: Skandinavische BeiträGe : AnläSslich Der 50. JäHrigen GrüNdungsfeier Der UniversitäT åRhus = the Pauline Literature and Theology : Scandinavian Contributions*, edited by Sigfred Pedersen (Århus: Aros, 1980), 86-91. Borgen's discussion pays special attention to De Migratione Abrahami 86-93 and Quaestiones in Exodum 11:2.

[128] Borgen, "Observations," 89-91.

[129] Gal 5:11: "κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

As in 1 Cor 1:17, Paul describes the cross as a σκάνδαλον to the Judeans, who view the inclusion of the Gentiles into Yahweh's people apart from circumcision as shameful.

Honor, Shame, and the Crux of the Issue

As Paul's letter reaches its conclusion, his epistolary purpose is brought more clearly into focus, and he presents his argument one last time in his own hand for dramatic effect (6:11ff.).[130] Paul's conclusion is direct, emotional, and emphatic. In the end, there are not only two distinct gospels, but also competing messengers. Those who are urging the Galatian believers to be circumcised are concerned with appearances, wishing "to make a good showing (εὐπροσωπῆσαι) in the flesh" (6:12).[131] They may have accused him of being a "man pleaser" (cf. 1:10), but they were the ones concerned with appearances.

Paul's accusation against his opponents takes a turn that warrants further consideration: he says that their concern to "make a good showing" (εὐπροσωπῆσαι) is because they do not want to be "persecuted for the cross of Christ" (v. 12).[132] Bruce Winter has argued that a key motivation of the "Judaizers" was to keep the external appearance as a Judean (and not mixed) group in order to maintain their position as members of a *religio licita* and so avoid "the civic obligation to participate in the imperial cult."[133] In fact, Paul's use of εὐπροσωπῆσαι indicates that their action was intended to secure positive legal standing; getting Gentile Christ followers

[130] While one could easily conclude that Paul's comments about the size of his script reflect self-consciousness about clumsy writing, the transition implies that Paul is making a final, emphatic appeal: "It is more probable, therefore, that Paul wants to underscore the importance of what he has to say in these last words" (Betz, *Galatians*, 314).

[131] Gal 6:12: "θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[132] Gal 6:12: "ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[133] Bruce Winter, "The Imperial Cult and Early Christians in Roman Galatia (Acts Xiii 13-50 and Galatians Vi 11-18)," in *Actes du Ier congres international sur Antioche de Pisidie*, eds. M. Taslialan T. Drew-Bear, and C.M. Thomas (Paris: de Boccard, 2002), 70-71. While *religio licita* is a later term and there is some disagreement about whether it actually described a legal status within Rome, Winter argues that Judeans actually enjoyed a "special" status, as evidenced by "the exemption given specifically to the Jews concerning their weekly meetings, and other concessions, not least of all exemption from the cult" (70 fn30).

circumcised (hence this was done "through the flesh") would allow Judeans to continue in fellowship without losing their protected status.[134] It was a small price to pay for the "Judaizers," who maintained their appearance as members of a protected group and so avoided shaming persecution for "the cross of Christ" (v. 12). Paul's accusation may thus be restated in this way: "The cross of Christ made a way for Gentiles to be equal partners with Judeans in the promise of Abraham without being circumcised. By encouraging your circumcision, they are attempting to avoid exposure to shaming persecution that is part and parcel with following Jesus."[135]

Paul regards the efforts of the "Judaizers" to compel circumcision as ironic in light of their behavior, for they ("those who are circumcised") do not keep the law themselves (6:13). As Paul already noted in his contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in 5:16-26, the works of the flesh do not result in the fulfillment of the Law. He concludes that circumcision, with its emphasis on the flesh (σὰρξ), is not a reliable way of controlling behavior and it leads to a variety of vices (5:17-21); rather, the presence of the Spirit helps believers produce its fruit, including love and the other virtues that follow (5:22-24).[136] If circumcision is of no value for Gentile believers in fulfilling the Law, then why do the "Judaizers" constrain them to be circumcised? Because, Paul reasons, rather than being persecuted for the cross of Christ (which included Gentiles without circumcision), the "Judaizers" wanted to boast in the cut

[134] Winter, "Imperial Cult," 73-75.

[135] Paul's claim in 6:12 addresses just one dimension of the Judaizers' motivation, i.e. that they were compelling these Gentiles to be circumcised to avoid persecution. However, as has already been noted, ethnic identity also appears to be a motivating factor and table fellowship also had a related role since many Judeans would have viewed Gentile dining practices as foreign and even detestable. Furthermore, as the situation with Peter demonstrated, Judeans who shared a table with Gentiles risked offending the sensibilities of other Judeans.

[136] As Borgen ("Observations," 91-92) rightly notes, this contrasts the perspective of Philo and other Judeans who concluded that circumcision had a role in removing immoral passion and pleasures; for Paul, the cross of Christ and the Spirit accomplishes this (Gal 5:24).

completed in the flesh of these Gentiles.[137] [138] Paul repeats the critique that he has used level his opponents with throughout the letter, namely, that they are wrongly concerned with outward appearances, which are out of line with the new order of things in Christ.

Paul's basis for boasting could not be more different from that of his opponents; and it carries rhetorical power: "May I never (μὴ γένοιτο) boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14).[139] Such a claim to honor could not be more startling—and is ultimately calculated for emphasis: Paul reproves his opponents for their effort to avoid the shame of a shared table with the uncircumcised and persecution through compelling Gentile Christ worshipers to be circumcised. Their actions demonstrated that they were ashamed of the cross, whereas Paul embraced and even boasted in something that was both a byword for and a symbol of humiliation.[140] To Paul the world had changed; circumcision, which could be perceived as a mark of honor in the flesh, did not matter; and the crucifixion of Messiah, which appeared to be the final humiliation for a failed rebel, was cause for ultimate boasting. What was honorable had been radically redefined.

The former persecutor elaborates on the significance of the cross: through it "the world was crucified to me, and I was crucified to the world" (v. 14).[141] It was the end of the world as

[137] Winter ("Imperial Cult," 70-72) notes the savvy and political influence of the Judean community Pisidian Antioch in relationship to the civic authorities as they opposed Paul and Barnabas. In the face of this sort of opposition (whether we identify Pisidian Antioch as the destination of the letter or not) it seems plausible that having Gentile Christ followers circumcised would have been honorable and served to enhance their standing in the eyes of hostile Judean countrymen.

[138] Cf. Paul's discussion of Judean boasting on account of the Law and their special relationship with Yahweh in Rom 2:17-22.

[139] Gal 6:14: "μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[140] Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 87-88.

[141] Gal 6:14: "δι᾽ οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται κἀγὼ κόσμῳ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

he knew it: since Paul was crucified to it (and it to him), the world no longer served as the audience who would evaluate what he did in the matrix of traditional honor. His own countrymen would have been horrified by his commensality with uncircumcised Gentiles, but it did not matter, for "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but new creation" (v. 15).[142] The old world was permanently severed from him,[143] and the externals (including circumcision and uncircumcision) of that old world were irrelevant in the new order of things, so he would share a table with anyone in the Messiah's community. The analogy to 3:27-28 is unavoidable: in Jesus the Messiah, the externals that the world used to judge people and evaluate their worthiness are gone, and henceforth believers would be judged by their new-creation identity in which they are clothed with the righteousness and honor of Christ.[144] Those who understood, and followed this new order of things, had the honor of being called the "Israel of God" (v. 16).

Paul concludes his letter with an emotional and rhetorically powerful entreaty that has great significance for this discussion of honor values: "From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear the brand marks (στίγματα) of Jesus in my body" (v. 17).[145] The accusations of Paul's opponents (that he was a man pleaser who had withheld some of the gospel) and the subsequent

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[142] Gal 6:15: "οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστιν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[143] So Bruce (*Galatians*, 271) writes: "Because Paul has been 'crucified with Christ' (2:19), the cross is a barrier by which the world is permanently 'fenced off' (*estaurotai*, perfect) from him, and he from the world."

[144] J. L. Martyn thus aptly expresses what the cross meant to Paul: "By the same token, Paul says that Christ's cross brought about his own crucifixion to the cosmos. He thus uses the image of crucifixion to emphasize his own lethal separation from his previous, cherished and acknowledged identity. With this event, that is to say, Paul ceased to be known by others on the basis of his place in that old cosmos of the Law (1:13-16)." (J. L. Martyn, *Galatians : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 564.)

[145] Galatians 6:17: "Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

response of the Galatians had grieved Paul. Therefore, he alludes to his στίγματα ("brand marks") as an emphatic reason that these troubles should end and that his audience should embrace the gospel as Paul had delivered it to them.

What are these στίγματα of Jesus? While στίγματα has diverse meanings, two bear consideration. First, it may refer to a mark or scar on a person's body. The second meaning follows the first closely, defining it as a mark or scar on a slave used to signify his or her owner. The genitive Ἰησοῦ that follows describes the scars in Paul's σῶμα: they were marks like those Jesus received in his crucifixion, marks that Paul received on account of his ministry among the Gentiles for Jesus. Ultimately, these marks indicated that Paul was a slave who belonged to Jesus and not a man pleaser as his opponents had tried to label him.

These are not the kind of marks that one would reference to win an argument, at least not in the old κόσμος.[146] Paul bore the marks of shaming persecution, whether by whip, rod, or some other instrument. As Jennifer Glancy has noted, such marks would not have identified him as valiant and honorable but as dishonorable and servile[147]—these were marks to be concealed! Nevertheless, Paul treats these scars, which he likens to the στίγματα of a slave, as a badge of honor and his final emphatic argument against his opponents. The "Judaizers" boasted in one mark in the flesh, circumcision, and compelled Gentile Christ worshipers to have the same mark, but Paul bore marks in his σῶμα indicative of the honor and service of Jesus—marks that the man-pleasing "Judaizers" sought to avoid. In the new world, Paul believed that he occupied

[146] Martyn (*Galatians*, 568) concludes that Paul's στίγματα "reflect the wounds of a soldier sent into the front trenches of God's redemptive and liberating war"—and are therefore indicative of honor and valor. However, J.A. Glancy ("Boasting of Beatings [2 Corinthians 12:23-27]," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 [2004]: 107) notes that "not every scarred body told an honorable story."

[147] Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings," 134-35.

(with Christ) the honorable position, and his appeal to that position in verse 17 is decisive. The Galatians would have seen and remembered these marks on Paul.[148]

Conclusion

Paul's perspective in his letter to the Galatians represents a radical departure from Mediterranean honor values. His understanding of Yahweh led him to a different set of conclusions about honor from those of Gentiles or other Judeans. In particular, the crucifixion of Jesus had turned the world of honor and shame upside down and eliminated the fundamental distinctions among Mediterranean people in antiquity.

At the most basic level, Paul had been severed from the world and its judgments through "the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ" (6:12). As a result, Paul perceived his suffering in ministry to the Gentiles as a badge of honor, embracing his identity as "Christ's slave" (1:10) and appealing to the persecution-induced στίγματα in his body as a demonstration that he belonged to Jesus (6:17). At the same time, he is willing to oppose Peter to his face (2:11) and shows no deference to the so-called "pillars" of the Jerusalem church, because God does not show partiality (2:6); the world's way of assigning honor meant nothing to him.

At the heart of Paul's reversal of honor values in Galatians is the elimination of boundaries between Judean and Gentile in Christ. This is why he defends a shared table to Peter in Antioch (2:11ff.). Furthermore, he asserts that being circumcised or uncircumcised does not

[148] Paul himself mentions in 4:13-15 that he came to them due to an infirmity (δι᾽ ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς, v. 13). That Paul mentions that his condition might have caused them to "despise" (ἐξουθενήσατε) or "disdain" (ἐξεπτύσατε) him makes it very likely that the nature or cause of his condition was shameful (v. 14); based on Paul's own descriptions of the numerous persecutions he faced (see especially 2 Cor 6:4-5 and 11:23-27), it is probable that his infirmity was caused by shaming persecution. Furthermore, if we believe that some portion of Acts 14 describes Paul's early ministry among his audience, then we may confidently assert that they had seen such marks on his body. Indeed, that Paul even chose to reference τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ in his body implies that they knew exactly what he was talking about!

enhance a person's honor (6:15)—demonstratively asserting that circumcision for Gentile Christ worshipers would ultimately nullify the impact of the cross for them (5:2) and only serve to give his opponents occasion to boast while they avoided persecution (6:12).

The rejection of distinctions goes deeper than just that between Judeans and Gentiles and is central to Paul's gospel. Because everyone in Christ is a son of God and heir according to the promise (3:26-29), everyone has equal ascribed honor. In no place is this more emphatic than in Paul's reference to the creed they had likely heard when they were baptized: those who had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ—and so, whether Judean or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, they shared his honorable position (3:27-28). This constituted a fundamental challenge to a society that operated based on various distinctions between people, a challenge that Paul would continue to articulate throughout his ministry; if they were all sons of God in Christ, then they all now had high honor in God's eyes which should be reflected in how they viewed and treated each other.

1 THESSALONIANS

"You, boy, who owe everything to a name."

Mark Antony to Octavian in Cicero's *Philippics*[149]

Who's your daddy? Few things meant more to a person in the first century CE Mediterranean world than the identity of one's father. Not only did the father determine one's economic situation, but also the value of a person's family name. Significantly, this relationship had a vital impact on one's honor since family name and lineage were central to evaluating ascribed honor.

In no situation was this truth more evident than in the relationship between Julius Caesar and Octavian (who would later become Augustus). Julius Caesar was Octavian's uncle; Octavian was adopted by Caesar as a condition of the dictator's will. By the time Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, he had acquired unparalleled power in the Roman Republic and his name was widely revered. Octavian took full advantage of his father's honorable name, referring to himself as "Caesar" for some time prior to his adoption's ratification in 43 BC. Octavian's assertiveness, daring, and shrewd application of power are widely recognized and were indispensible to his ascent to *imperator*. But his rise to and ultimate consolidation of power is unthinkable apart from the name, "Caesar," which he inherited from his father.

As shall be seen, Paul of Tarsus emphasized that the early Christ worshipers had an honorable father, God himself. In a situation such as the one that Christ-followers in

[149] Cicero *Phillipics* 13.11.24-25: "o puer, qui omnia nomini debes." My translation of the popular Latin quote.

Thessalonica faced, the relationship and resulting identity and honor that accrued to them would have a significant impact. From the foundation of their community, they experienced serious opposition for their faith—having dealt with an angry mob who seized a leading member and who chased their founder out of the city (Acts 17:5-10; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14). Their afflictions did not end when Paul left, for they continued to encounter shaming persecution (1 Th 3:2-4, 7). In the face of opponents' attempts to exert social control, Paul emphasized their relationship to God as Father who called them to behave in a way that challenged cultural values as they waited for his Son's return as savior and judge.

The Honor of God's Chosen Sons

The high honor of those in Christ is pivotal to Paul's message to his Thessalonian audience from the beginning. Central to this is their exalted status as God's children who were in fact chosen by him: "…in the presence of God our Father, because we know, brothers loved by God, that he chose you" (1:3-4).[150] Paul had already identified God as their Father in the letter's opening (1:1). He then repeats the assertion that God is their Father (v. 3) and notes that they are beloved siblings (v. 4). In a society that attached honor to blood and family name, being God's children put them in a position of highest honor.

Their desirable situation is enhanced by the fact that they were chosen (ἐκλογή, v. 4); the context demonstrates that God had in fact elected them. Paul's usage of ἐκλογή implies that he views God's election of them in line with that of Israel, for he employs the term elsewhere only

[150] 1 Th 1:3-4: "ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν, εἰδότες, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ [τοῦ] θεοῦ, τὴν ἐκλογὴν ὑμῶν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

within Romans in reference to God's prior choice of Israel (9:11; 11:5, 7, 28). The reference echoes God's election of Abraham (Neh 9:7);[151] they were his!

Different Crowns, Different Honor

If the Thessalonians had value to God, they also had value to Paul, as he emphasizes later in the correspondence: "For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting – is it not you – in the presence of our Lord Jesus, in his παρουσία? For you are our glory and joy."[152] The expression is emphatic and is meant to emphasize how deeply he cares for them. He describes their value rivaling that of "the victory wreath paced on the heads of victorious military commanders or the winners of athletic contests to signify their achievement;"[153] the Thessalonian community had considerable worth to Paul.

The crown's value has as much to do with what it represented as with the materials that composed it. Ultimately, a crown meant honor for the person wearing it—whether they wore one on account of athletic achievement, military victory, or something else. In Paul's case, his "glory" (v. 20), his crown was the community in Thessalonica. In Christ's παρουσία, he would boast and glory in their community. While one must not make too much of Paul's statement here in light of his purpose to express how deeply he cared for them, it is significant to note that Paul's honor was bound up in the faith and well-being of the communities he served. This is hardly the expected way of relating for men in antiquity.

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[151] F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 13.

[152] 1 Th 2:19-20: "τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως- ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς- ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ; γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά." (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[153] Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 124.

Pride of Place at the Lord's Royal Arrival

Paul's discussion of the resurrection of the dead and the Lord's παρουσία (4:13-18) is well-worn ground for commentators and contributes to the larger conversation about the early Christian redefinition of honor values. The broader context appears to indicate that he had taught them about the παρουσία when he had been with them. Paul's formerly pagan audience would have probably understood the term in the context of "a state visit to a city or province" by an emperor or another high official.[154] More and more frequently, especially in the Greek east, the rulers were "being thought of as the manifestations of deities who required elaborate ceremonies and honors when they visited the various cities of the Empire."[155] The imagery thus describes Christ as coming in such a way so that all—including the powers of this age—would recognize him as κύριος and give him the honor he was due.[156] Rulers' forceful dealings with usurpers in such contexts anticipated the divine judgment that Christ would bring at his παρουσία.[157]

Paul had described Christ's return as his παρουσία, but his explanation had apparently not sufficiently addressed the resurrection of the dead. Thus, the passage begins, "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep in order that you may not also grieve as the rest who have no hope" (4:13).[158] One could only conclude that deaths in the community had caused concern and led them to ask what would happen to those who died before the Lord's παρουσία.

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[154] N.T. Wright (*The Resurrection of the Son of God* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003], 217) notes that παρουσία "has become a technical term for this kind of imperial 'visitation'. Properly, *parousia* means 'presence' as opposed to 'absence'; Paul can use it in that way of himself..."

[155] Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 125.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Wright, *Resurrection*, 217; Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 125.

[158] 1 Th 4:13: "Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Joseph Plevnik's analysis of the passage, in light of first century CE understandings of assumption and resurrection, has significantly advanced the conversation about 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.[159] Plevnik notes that traditions about the "taking up" or assumption of individuals existed in both Greco-Roman and Judean tradition distinctly from resurrection; such was reserved for the living and was usually granted only to "extraordinary" persons.[160] In light of such tradition, it is not surprising that Paul's audience would have questions about the dead and the παρουσία. His distinct comments within the passage about resurrection (v. 14) and then assumption (vv. 15-17) indicate that the Thessalonians were concerned about this very question: would the dead participate in the assumption that occurred in the Lord's παρουσία?[161]

Paul's description of the event could not have answered the question more clearly: those who had died would be raised just as Christ had been (v. 14) and would be caught up to join him in the clouds (v. 16). Paul is also careful to note that the dead would not be in an inferior position, either. The living would "certainly not precede" the dead to their disadvantage (οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν, v. 15)[162]; indeed, "the dead in Christ would rise first" (v. 16).[163] Ultimately, the members of the community who had fallen asleep would participate in the παρουσία and would have first place when they met the Lord in the air.

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[159] Joseph Plevnik, "The Taking up of the Faithful and the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46 (1984): 274-83.

[160] Ibid., 278-80.

[161] Ibid., 280-82; Helmut Koester, "Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society,* ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 159.

[162] Wanamaker (*Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 172) notes that I. Howard Marshall (*1 and 2 Thessalonians : A Commentary* [Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2002], 127) "maintains that the verb φθάσωμεν has the sense of 'doing something before someone else and so of gaining an advantage over him [*sic*].'"

[163] 1 Th 4:16: "οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

What is the significance of this meeting? And why would it be so important to Paul's audience that the dead take part and have pride of place? N. T. Wright notes that ἀπάντησις (v. 17) refers to "a meeting outside the city, after which the civic leaders escort the dignitary back into the city itself."[164] Thus, when they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, it is not to stay in the same place but to return with him: "they will 'meet' the lord as he comes from heaven (1.10) and surround him as he comes to inaugurate God's final transformative, judging-and-saving reign on earth as in heaven."[165] Participation in the meeting to accompany him in his return would have been an honorable thing; in a world that emphasized precedence, rising first for that meeting would have further enhanced their position.[166]

The public nature of such a meeting and the return into the city carries great significance as well. Just as escorting the emperor or another dignitary into a city would have improved the standing of a civic leader, so also participation in the Lord's παρουσία would have enhanced the honor of those in Christ. The early Christ worshipers in Thessalonica had suffered at the hands of their own countrymen for their profession (2:14-15); the persecution they experienced occurred publicly (Acts 17:1-10) and would have caused shame. Their visible participation in the Lord's παρουσία would vindicate them and serve to restore—and, ultimately, increase—the honor of both those who had died in Christ and those who remained alive.[167]

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[164] Both Wright (*Resurrection*, 217-18) and Koester ("Imperial Ideology," 160) note that this reflects the technical usage of ἀπάντησις, which refers to such a formal meeting between the ruler and civic dignitaries.

[165] Wright, *Resurrection*, 218.

[166] F. F. Bruce (*1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 104) is on the right track when he describes the situation and the audience's perspective: "Some of their number had died recently, it appears, and they wondered if those departed friends might not miss something to which survivors to the Lord's Advent could look forward—some participation of the glory of the occasion perhaps."

[167] In the same way, Wanamaker (*Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 125) points out the public nature of the event and emphasizes the Thessalonians' vindication: "While Paul does not make the point here explicit, the Thessalonians' belief that their Lord would return to bring judgment would have given them a sense of power over

Retribution Rejected—To Their Shame

Among Paul's concluding exhortations stands one final challenge to traditional honor values: "Make sure that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all people" (5:15).[168] The command appears to be simple and innocuous, even positive: in all situations and to all people, whenever evil was done to them they were to respond for the good of others. But in agonistic Mediterranean culture where honor was in limited supply, the instruction would have seemed foolish to men who were socialized to respond in kind when challenged. Retribution functioned as a protective, face-saving measure that preserved the honor of the individual who responded; as with Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek" (Mt 5:38-40), failure to respond to an affront would have diminished their honor.

Paul's rejection of retribution may on one level be understood in light of his reconfiguration of family that was predicated on the belief that God was Father and Jesus' followers were therefore brothers and sisters;[169] blood kin were called to such constructive behavior toward one another as was pleasing to their father.[170] But the parallel instruction to pursue good to one another and everyone at all times (v. 15) presents a further challenge to Mediterranean honor values: behavior that was constructive within the family would have brought shame when directed toward outsiders. Kindness to opponents would have invited further insult and diminished them and their family. Paul was calling the Thessalonian community to behavior that was distinctive from what was expected and reflected an

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their oppressors. As the followers and servants of the Lord they would be honored participants in the public manifestation of Christ while their enemies would experience the fearful judgment of the Lord."

[168] 1 Th 5:15: "ὁρᾶτε μή τις κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ τινι ἀποδῷ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε [καὶ] εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[169] S. Scott Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29 (1999): 71-72.

[170] Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 35ff.

understanding of God similar to Jesus, who was remembered to have described God as a shameless Father who was gracious to both the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45).

Conclusion

Paul's correspondence to the Thessalonians provides another early window into his perspective on who should receive honor. His unplanned departure from Thessalonica and the intense opposition their community faced led him to emphasize the honor of those in Christ and command behavior that would protect them from further violence. Paul thus describes them as sons and daughters of a father who had chosen them in the same way God had elected Israel (1:5-6), harkening back to his honor enhancing declaration to the Galatians that they were all sons of God in Christ (Gal 3:26). In the face of shaming persecution, he reminds his audience that participation in the Lord's παρουσία would result in their honor and vindication, assuring them that this would be the case whether they were dead or alive when it occurred (4:13-18). Such an honorable identity and future allowed them to approach each other and those on the outside in a distinctive way, as Paul called them to reject retaliation when affronted and respond by doing good (5:15), just as Jesus had taught (Mt 5:38-45).

As I will now show, a trying relationship with the church he had founded in Corinth challenged Paul to find new ways to communicate his distinctive perspective on honor as he endeavored to resocialize the fractured community.

1 CORINTHIANS

> Oratory is "a profession than which you cannot imagine any in the whole country more productive of practical benefits…or that does more to enhance a man's personal standing, or that brings more honour and renown here in Rome, or that secures a more brilliant reputation throughout the Empire and in the world at large."
>
> Aper in Tacitus, *Dialogue*[171]

Honor, wisdom, and eloquence were inextricably connected in Paul's world. From Isocrates through the Roman rhetoricians of the first and second centuries CE, the close connection among the three was widely demonstrated.[172] The content of an argument could only take a person so far; indeed, for most hearers the form and eloquence of speech demonstrated the wisdom of the message and, ultimately, the speaker. As witnesses from the age of Aristotle to Cicero to Paul testify, wisdom in the form of eloquent speech gained honor and prestige for the speaker. Such was as true in Corinth as it was in the rest of the ancient Mediterranean world.[173]

It is therefore no wonder that Paul spends the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians discussing wisdom. The subject was so important to Paul because he lived in a world and wrote to a community that emphasized eloquence as a visible demonstration of wisdom and, ultimately, honor. This was especially relevant because there were apparently some within his audience who were unhappy with Paul because they believed he lacked eloquence. Why would they want to be associated with such a shameful leader?

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[171] Translation from William Peterson and Maurice Hutton, *Agricola* (London; New York: W. Heinemann; The MacMillan Co., 1914).

[172] See A. D. Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chs. 3-5. While these chapters provide an overview of ancient rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of eloquence and the essential role of the audience in judging speech, each one in its own way demonstrates the relationship between wisdom, eloquence, and honor.

[173] Ibid., 144-46.

Paul, however, asserts that the question was not about wisdom—at least not in the way that they reckoned it. In fact, the nature of the gospel message ran counter to the way that many in his audience had come to understand wisdom. At the core of his gospel was a crucified messiah—how could the world's way of allotting wisdom or strength or honor stand when the message of the cross was so foolish and humiliating?

Because the proclamation was thus, the only one who could speak with authority about the proper course was the one who by his method, life, and message conformed to the gospel. Who better to do so than their apostle, whose very life embodied its shame, weakness, and foolishness?

Redefining honor is central to Paul's purpose in 1 Corinthians. His letter to the church in Corinth may include answers to questions they had previously posed to him (see 7:1, 25; 8:1 et al), but he begins by addressing a fundamental concern – factions in their community (vv. 10, 11). In many ways, the key issues that contributed to the divisions in Corinth could be traced to the world's way—and especially the elites' way—of awarding honor. Whether in the critical discussion about wisdom and their attachment to certain leaders (chs. 1-4), in the passage about the Lord's meal (11:16ff.), or his body analogy (ch. 12), Paul's counterargument challenges the accepted way of relating and reverses course in terms of honor.

Redefining Wisdom and Honor

Pursuit of honor caused many to identify with certain leaders—and so people claimed to be followers of Paul or Apollos or Peter (1:10-12). But Paul, attacks the world's way of doing

things, asserting that the world's wisdom is foolishness in light of the cross of Messiah and that the world's way of meting out wisdom and honor had been inverted.

The argument begins in 1:17-25, where Paul claims that God made foolish the wisdom of the world (v. 20) through the cross of the Messiah (v. 18). As it has already been noted, having wisdom was implicitly honorable in the Hellenistic world; thus, as Paul notes, "the Greeks seek after" it (v. 22). So when he declares that the wisdom of the world has been made foolish, Paul's challenge to honor values comes to the forefront.

This is not a small thing, but rather a frontal assault the world's system of awarding honor. While those in Christ see the cross for what it is—the power of God—the world only sees foolishness (v. 18). And who could blame them? Crucifixion was the way to put down the lowly, slaves, and rebels while exposing them to public humiliation.[174] But, according to Paul, God set his crucified Christ out for the world to see, as a challenge; and, as he had seen in his mission throughout the Mediterranean,[175] it confounded both Judeans and Gentiles because it was both offensive[176] and foolish[177] (v. 23). If God's weakness and foolishness was demonstrated in Christ, it was found to be stronger and wiser than men—to their shame (v.

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[174] Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 86-88.

[175] Ibid., 89.

[176] Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], 75) notes BAGD, which indicates that "σκάνδαλον" did not merely refer to a stumbling stone, but something that is offensive. Ben Witherington (*Conflict and Community in Corinth : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* [Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995], 109), points out that σκάνδαλον is to be understood as more than just something that "trips one up . . . , but rather something that grossly offends, something scandalous."

[177] "As Hengel notes, Paul's word for folly here 'does not denote either a purely intellectual defect nor a lack of transcendental wisdom. Something more is involved,' something more closely akin to 'madness'" (Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76, quoting Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 1).

25).[178] Ultimately, Paul concludes, God's wisdom and honor are demonstrated in his humble and weak Messiah!

Paul's challenge to traditional honor values becomes emphatic in the paragraph that follows (vv. 26-31). He uses his audience's experience in Christ to demonstrate his point, and in doing so he states his argument more forcefully. Paul urges them to consider what they were when they were called (τὴν κλῆσιν ὑμῶν, v. 26), noting that despite the fact that few of them were considered wise, powerful or of noble birth (all indicating low social location),[179] God chose them. In fact, God choose them even though many were "foolish" (τὰ μωρὰ), "weak" (τὰ ἀσθενῆ), "low-born" (τὰ ἀγενῆ), and "despised" (τὰ ἐξουθενημένα)—they were "nothing" (τὰ μὴ ὄντα). In choosing them, God "put to shame" (καταισχύνῃ) the wise and powerful—and "nullified" what is (vv. 27-28). In the realm of honor, everything had changed![180]

Furthermore, Paul's admonition to them to consider their calling (v. 26) and his declaration that "God chose" them (vv. 27-28) indicate an improved status for his audience. When they were called—and when God chose them—they were considered "foolish," "weak," "low-born," and "despised," but that is not their situation at the time Paul addresses them. By

[178] David A. Black (*Paul, Apostle of Weakness. Astheneia and its Cognates in the Pauline Literature* [New York: Peter Lang, 1984], 252) asserts that this concept is part of a larger theme for Paul: "The central idea in the Pauline weakness motif is that the greatest revelation of divine power has occurred in the person and work of Jesus Christ in the midst of his human and earthly existence" (252). For Paul, Christ's experience of weakness and shame—especially through his crucifixion—serves as the foundational reason that the world of honor had been inverted.

[179] Commentators make both too much and too little of this passage—either using it to argue that a large number of elites were in the community or ignoring what it says about the presence of elites altogether. The simplest conclusion about the composition of the community based on this passage is that there were a few among them that were elites and of noble birth, for Paul says, "Not many of you were wise according to the flesh, not many powerful, not many of noble birth" (οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς). This is consistent Gerd Theissen's study which concludes that though few, elites were members of the Christ worshiping community in Corinth; his analysis demonstrates that Christ followers could be found among diverse strata in the city (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982], 69-119).

[180] Gordon Fee (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 79) rightly states, "His point in getting them so to consider themselves is that in calling out a people for his name God showed no regard for their present values—worldly wisdom or merit. Indeed, in calling *them* he chiefly chose those who are a living contradiction to those values."

virtue of God's choosing them, they no longer occupied a position of disadvantage; it therefore comes as no surprise that Paul would later say, "All things belong to you" (3:21).

If Paul's audience is in the foreground in this passage, the cross of the Messiah is in the background. Paul has already called the message of the cross "foolishness" (1:23). As he moves from foolish to weak to insignificant and finally to despised, it must be noted that he follows the path of the Messiah, who the Psalmist gives voice to, "I am despised and rejected by men" (Ps 21:17). God chose and honored Jesus—the resurrection demonstrated this—and, in the process, laid low the world's order and all that is!

Furthermore, since Christ is God's wisdom, through whom his audience became "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (v. 30), no one could claim to have accomplished this on his or her own. Paul's argument therefore concludes emphatically, quoting Jeremiah 9:24: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (v. 31).[181] Because God had chosen the weak and foolish things of the world and given them so much through Christ—including the honor of knowing divine wisdom—there was no room for them to claim honor through boasting, as Paul emphasizes throughout 1 Corinthians.[182]

Such a situation was very different from what they expected. They had learned to play their society's games related to honor and shame, working for "social advancement" and "public recognition and standing;" but with his challenge to their whole way of relating, "Paul's gospel must have come as a shock to many."[183] Indeed, much is made of how removed early Christ

[181] 1 Cor 1:31: "ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[182] Boasting was clearly a significant issue in this community: "The sheer quantity of καυχ-words in 1 and 2 Corinthians alone would suggest that Paul is writing to people for whom boasting is a prized activity," with καυχάομαι and its cognates appearing thirty-nine times in 1 & 2 Corinthians and fifteen times in the rest of Paul (T.B. Savage, *Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians*, Vol. 86, *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 54.)

followers were from their society by their lack of participation in certain civic events, but it is seldom noted how the challenge to honor-shame values made them relate dramatically differently within their fellowship and with those on the outside. This was all the more significant because they were not as homogeneous as other voluntary societies and came from diverse social strata.[184]

When Paul continues his argument about wisdom in chapter two, his challenge to honor values continues as well. Having rejected wisdom as conceived by many in Corinth, Paul seeks to present it on different terms. This is no more evident than with "the rulers of this age,"[185] the ruling authorities. The world would reckon them as wise and powerful. But Paul argues that they are foolish because they have not acknowledged God's program. In fact, they missed it so badly that they "crucified the Lord of glory" (2:8). And their time is up; they are being brought to nothing (2:6).

This had concrete implications for the community. The few elites among them retained their position of honor through relationship with the very powers that had been so foolish as to crucify the Lord of glory and had ultimately come to nothing because they did not embrace God's wisdom (2:6-8). What did this mean for their standing and credibility? Would Paul's

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[183] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 119.

[184] Theissen (*Social Setting*, 106) makes this point after his analysis of social strata in I Corinthians: ". . . it can be said that Hellenistic primitive Christianity was neither a proletarian movement among the lower classes nor an affair of the upper classes. On the contrary, what is characteristic for its social structure is the fact that it encompassed various strata—and thus various interests, customs, and assumptions. E. A. Judge [in *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century*, 60] has correctly emphasized this: 'The interests brought together in this way probably marked the Christians off from the other unofficial associations, which were generally socially and economically as homogeneous as possible. Certainly this phenomenon led to constant differences among the Christians themselves . . .'"

[185] 1 Cor 2:6, 8: "τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

words have meant enough to diminish the so-called wisdom of those who had bought into the world's program? If 2 Corinthians is any indication, then, no.

Regardless, Paul emphasizes that those who have the Spirit have the honor of knowing God's "mystery." No one else has seen or understood it (v. 9)! Secret knowledge holds real benefit, as countless Corinthians in this period would have understood through their knowledge of the Eleusinian mysteries, just forty miles away from their city. But those who have the world's wisdom of lofty speech miss out on it. The Spirit is the Spirit of revelation, and therefore honor (v. 10).

But the world's rulers had been given their chance: God revealed Christ to them as his wisdom and power, and they did not recognize him, instead crucifying the Lord of glory. Their end was coming; they would be held accountable for their folly (2:6-8).

Putting Apostles in Their Place - The Last One

Paul's argument demonstrates that he perceived that a large portion of his audience had bought into the wisdom of the world and its rulers, sizing individuals up and meting out honor accordingly. It was this same wisdom that had taught them to boast in the leaders they were attached to (1:12). Paul therefore challenges the practice—for the Lord had already determined that the rationalization of the so-called wise was actually foolishness.

On one hand, boasting is rejected because of the exalted position everyone in Christ occupies. "All things belong to you all" (3:21).[186] There was safety and honor in being Christ's.

[186] Hans Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians : A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], 80) and others "maintain that Paul has borrowed 'a Stoic maxim,' that 'all things belong to the wise man,' i.e., he is lord over all that comes to him from without (see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* 6.37: πάντα ἄρα ἐστι τῶν σοφῶν, "for all things belong to the sage'; 7.125.8 . . . .If so, then Paul not only adopts the maxim, but makes it a principle for Christian faith and for the acceptance of 'the message of the cross,' which is otherwise folly in ordinary human eyes." Again we see that Paul has turned the world's sense of wisdom and honor on its head; it is not the sage who possesses everything, but those in Christ!

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas actually belonged to them (v. 22), so their statements about belonging to leaders (1:12) were foolish! What is and what would come was theirs, so they could feel secure about their present and future circumstances.

Paul asserts that it would be foolish to make too much of who the apostles were, for they were no more than servants and stewards (4:1). And he goes so far as to say that he does not care what they think—or what anyone thinks (v. 3). Paul was a servant—and so he was only concerned with how God, his master, judged him (v. 4). The people in Corinth might have judged Apollos or Cephas to use better rhetoric[187] and thus to be more honorable, but it would not matter to him—he was only trying to please his master. Paul's refusal to play the game went so far that he decided against even judging himself (v. 3). His rejection of judgment would have struck a discordant note with his audience, for it was expected that they would judge a speaker—indeed, they relished their role as arbitrator![188] Paul would not reckon wisdom and honor in the world's way and at the world's time; ultimately, he had judged that their opinion missed the mark.

Those who judged in the present time might have been tempted to judge based on the world's values, so Paul counsels his audience not to judge before the proper time. Only when

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[187] Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 137) points out that it was natural and expected for Paul's audience to judge speakers based on their rhetoric and speaking. Indeed, James A. Davis (*Wisdom and Spirit. An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18-3.20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984], 143) notes a similar perspective within Jewish traditions in Hellenistic period that Paul may be countering in 1 Corinthians, as they exhibited "a tendency to distinguish between individuals in regard to their possession of wisdom" and emphasized "eloquence as a quality of the person gifted by God to understand, interpret, and impart wise guidance and teaching."

[188] A. D. Litfin (*St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, 86) notes that this was their accepted role: "…Greek audiences understood their role as judge and played it to the full. They delighted in the power of oratory, and ultimately in the power of the listener. As they became rhetorically astute, the evaluation of speakers became second nature to them. . . . When Aristotle deals with the audience as judge in the *Rhetoric* he is merely describing the reality the orator must understand and be prepared to face. If a speaker is to become an effective persuader, he must learn to appreciate the tyranny of the audience over his every effort. In fact, he must embrace it and use it to achieve his goals. To reject the judgeship of the audience is to forfeit the dynamic of rhetoric."

Christ comes, when what is in shadows sees the light of day and the secrets of men's hearts are reveled will it be time to judge (v. 5). And only the Lord would judge.

A second challenge to Mediterranean honor values is evident in the passage: the motives of the heart and things currently hidden in darkness would determine praise or commendation. Thus Paul states emphatically, "Then praise will come to each man from God" (v. 5).[189] In honor societies where public perception is everything, what was not seen is irrelevant and does not play into their assessment. Paul concludes that praise would not only come from different source at a different time, but also on a different basis.

It seems clear that Paul perceives that at least some in his audience had continued in the world's way of reckoning honor and wisdom. But to Paul their judgment was out of line with reality and out of line with what the apostles were experiencing in the present age (vv. 8-14); indeed, if they judged things in the world's way, they would have to conclude that apostles like Paul and Barnabas were inferior to them (v. 7). Paul's response to their mindset is emphatic:[190] he challenges their lofty self-perception by reminding them that what they have is a gift, asking, "What do you have that you did not receive?"[191]—a question that demonstrates that their boasting, which was a claim to honor, was mistaken (v. 7).

Paul may have emphasized that judgment and reward were reserved for Christ's coming (v. 5), but he leaves no doubt that he was unhappy with the Corinthians' mindset—for the apostle

[189] 1 Cor 4:5: "τότε ὁ ἔπαινος γενήσεται ἑκάστῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[190] Note Paul's move from addressing them in the second person plural to the second person singular for emphasis.

[191] 1 Cor 4:7: "τί δὲ ἔχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

judged that they themselves thought that they already occupied positions of honor now. They were rich, they had all that they needed, and were living like kings; the repetition of the word "already" (ἤδη) in verse eight implies that his audience behaved like they already possessed everything, like kings. Paul wished that were true so that he and his ministry partners could rule with them (v. 8)!

But Paul's description of the experience of the apostles would emphatically demonstrate how wrong the Corinthians were and illustrates how much he believed the world had changed in terms of honor values. As leaders, the audience would have expected an elevated position for them—as would be for leaders in that world. But in Paul's mind, God had intentionally put them out there for all to see as "last of all, like those sentenced for death"[192]—they were a spectacle for all to see and demonstrated God's countercultural wisdom and honor that had been previously expressed in the cross (v. 9; cf. 1:18). He and other apostles had experienced the worst that life had to offer: they had been hungry and without a roof on their heads, had suffered for their proclamation of the Gospel, and were forced to work with their hands[193] (vv. 11-12). Beyond that, they were leaders and yet had chosen to respond from a position of weakness and humility, as those who were subservient. When cursed, they blessed. When persecuted, they accepted it. When slandered, they chose to conciliate rather than defend their honor by responding in kind (vv. 12-13). It is no wonder that they were treated as "the refuse of the

[192] 1 Cor 4:9: "ἐσχάτους ἀπέδειξεν ὡς ἐπιθανατίους" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text. Whether Paul's imagery refers those in "the last events of the spectacles" who had been "condemned to die" or to those at the "end of the procession" who had been "condemned to die in the arena," the imagery vividly depicts a shameful position. For a fuller discussion of the options, see Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 174-75.

[193] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 143: ". . . Paul adds that he works with his own hands. This is important because the well-to-do usually considered manual labor too demeaning for any real teacher or philosopher (cf. Epictetus Diss. 3.22.45-47)."

world" and "the dregs of all things" (v. 13)[194]—like the corpses of those who had been put down at the spectacles and then exposed shamefully in death[195]—for they had inverted centuries of male socialization by failing to respond to a challenge. The world that watched could only conclude that they were foolish, because that is what they were in the world's economy!

Ultimately, this passage reveals a fundamental challenge to Mediterranean honor values: judgment of present circumstances was fruitless because it all would be left to Christ at his coming. Indeed, that leaders in the nascent movement both suffered and chose behavior that brought shame reinforces the idea that judgment of honor-standing was withheld in the present day and reserved for God's judgment.

Paul challenged them in terms of wisdom and honor, but he did not wish to incite a *riposte* from them. He therefore clarifies that he does not mean to shame them (v. 14)—for he rejected competition for honor and did not want them to take his words as a challenge. Indeed, Paul refused to relate that way—he was honor-bound to behave in a way consistent with the honor-sharing gospel he preached.

Paul's countercultural approach to leadership is also demonstrated later in his discussion regarding what to do with food sacrificed to idols (8:13-9:19). Indeed, he chooses a position of disadvantage and makes it clear that he considers the willful giving up of his rights as central to his ministry of the gospel (8:13-9:22). Compelled to preach the gospel, Paul takes pride in doing so without charge (9:18). This decision to give up his own rights results in his becoming a slave to all men, for he serves all without thought to his own rights (9:19-22). In the process, Paul

[194] 1 Cor 4:13: "περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου…πάντων περίψημα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[195] V. Henry T. Nguyen, "The Identification of Paul's Spectacle of Death Metaphor in 1 Corinthians 4.9," *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007): 500-501.

embraces a position of dishonor—that of a slave (v. 19), of weakness (v. 22). No doubt he hoped that his example, in imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1), would provide an honor-sharing model that they would also follow.

Women, Prophecy, and Shame

Paul later turns to the question of women prophesying and praying in the community (11:2-16). In general, Paul would appear to assert that both men and women should be permitted to pray and prophesy provided that they follow accepted traditions with regard to the length of their hair or perhaps whether they wear some other covering. Such interpretation appears to put the apostle in the position of defining people based upon appearances or even defending his society's status quo in regard to what was honorable for men and women. After previously challenging the world's way of mapping people with regard to race, gender, and status—and ultimately regarding honor—would Paul revert to the world's way of thinking about people?

An analysis of the passage with sensitivity to issues related to gender roles, the significance of head coverings, the open public character of the Christ followers' gatherings, and honor reveals that Paul's instructions were motivated by concern to preserve the honor of members of the community in the eyes of outsiders. The outlook of Galatians 3:28-29 which was evident in the Pauline communities had provided liberties previously unavailable to women in the Mediterranean world; and they were relating to fathers, brothers, and husbands differently from the ways they had previously. It was inevitable that tensions would arise as men and women were resocialized. As will be seen, Paul corrects the behavior of some women who had brought public shame to their men.

After praising his audience for adhering to authoritative traditions he had entrusted to them (11:2), Paul offers the following instruction:

> "But I want you to know that the head (ἡ κεφαλὴ) of every man is Christ, and the head of a wife is the husband, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with something coming down from his head brings shame (καταισχύνει) to his head, and every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered brings shame (καταισχύνει) to her head. For it is one and the same as the woman who has had her head shaved. For if a woman will not cover her head, then let her cut her hair off; but since it is shameful for a woman to cut her hair off or shave it, let her cover her head."
>
> "For on the one hand a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the wife is the glory of her husband."[196]

While much of the collective energy spent interpreting this passage emphasizes defining κεφαλὴ, remembering what Bruce Malina calls "the moral division of labor" between men and women helps further clarify the significance of this passage. As already noted, men and women in ancient Mediterranean society functioned with different roles and responsibilities pertaining to honor and shame. While men were associated with honor which was acquired in the public realm, women were associated with shame and were kept out of public spaces in order to avoid shameful situations. Because a woman's honor was embedded in her husband, brother, or father, her behavior reflected on that man; if a woman did anything shameful it reflected poorly on the man in whose honor she was embedded.[197]

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[196] 1 Cor 11:3-7: "Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνήρ, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός. πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ. πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτῳ τῇ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς· ἓν γάρ ἐστιν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐξυρημένῃ. εἰ γὰρ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται γυνή, καὶ κειράσθω· εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν γυναικὶ τὸ κείρασθαι ἢ ξυρᾶσθαι, κατακαλυπτέσθω. Ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων· ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστιν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[197] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 3rd ed., 46-48. That is not to say that Paul preferred this social reality; numerous passages (see, for example, 1 Cor 7:39-40) indicate that Paul allowed women to function independent of a father or brother's authority. However, as we read Paul's instructions concerning men and women, it is critical to note that he is forced to do so in the context of social realities he does not support.

The passage appears to reflect that reality. In Paul's world the head (κεφαλὴ) could be understood as a synecdoche for and the preeminent part of the whole body;[198] it is not surprising, therefore, that it also became the representation of the whole body's honor. Because Christ is preeminent, Paul indicates that what man does reflects on Christ; in the same way, because of man's preeminent place as κεφαλὴ of the woman, what a woman does reflects upon the man in whom she is embedded (v. 3). In particular, if a man prays or prophesies with his head covered or having long hair, he "brings shame" upon his κεφαλὴ, Christ (v. 4). In the same way, if a woman prays or prophecies without her head covered, she "brings shame" to her κεφαλὴ, i.e., the man she is associated with and perhaps her own head (v. 5).[199] Paul seems to reiterate these points from a more positive perspective later in the passage when he asserts that the man is the εἰκὼν ("image") and δόξα ("glory") of God and woman is the δόξα ("glory") of man (v. 7).

While Paul provides instruction for men and women, his emphatic statements concerning women's hair and coverings in verses five and six indicate that women's behavior in this context was his primary concern. Apparently, women in the community were exercising their liberty by prophesying without covering their heads.[200] In Greco-Roman and other veiling cultures, going without a head covering exposed a woman to sexual vulnerability and was disruptive to social order; by one move these women were welcoming shameful, penetrating glances and

[198] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 820.

[199] Just a few verses later, in his instructions about the Lord's meal (11:17-34) Paul also uses καταισχύνω ("put to shame") to describe what some wealthier members in the assembly were doing to the poor among them (v. 22). In both cases, Paul's exhortations demonstrate that he was unwilling for members of the community to pursue their own freedom or honor at the expense of others.

[200] Commentators are divided as to whether Paul is addressing veiling or the length of a woman's hair. However, if the reference is to hair length, the issue appears to be much the same: by cutting their hair women would appear to be rejecting their gender roles and, as a result, the role of their husbands in a demonstrative way. Such behavior would also have brought shame upon their husbands—the very sort of thing Paul wanted to avoid.

emphatically rejecting the authority of their husband, father, or brother.[201] Such behavior from women would have brought shame upon their κεφαλὴ as Paul indicates (v. 5). Paul was no defender of the old world's order of patriarchy; his gospel had liberated women and provided them with new privileges and avenues to honor, but he forbade the exercise of freedom in Christ at the expense of others and, ultimately, exhorted women not to exercise their freedom at the expense of their husband, father, or brother's honor.[202]

Honor and Schisms at the Lord's Meal

In light of the way he exhorted his audience to give honor to each other, it is not surprising that Paul thought the Corinthians' practice of the Lord's meal, which seemed to conform to the world's stratified approach to table fellowship, required correction. His rebuke in 11:17-22 indicates as much and demonstrates his emphasis on shared honor in the community. The issue is connected to a central concern of his in the letter: σχίσματα ("schisms," v. 18; cf. 1:10). Ultimately, the way the Lord's meal was practiced accentuated the gap between the wealthy and the poor—perhaps through sharing an exclusive meal for elites at the beginning, withholding delicacies from the poor, or distributing portions according to status.[203] Those who are wealthy in possession and status were only doing what they always did—sharing a table with

[201] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 234-35.

[202] A fine distinction is being made here, and it is significant one: Paul does not defend the status quo with regard to women; rather, he instructs his audience to take a course of action in light of society's status quo. The behavior of these women would have brought shame on the men they were associated with and Paul could not allow such to continue when he always urged them to give honor to one another (cf. Rom 12:10).

[203] Theissen's thorough analysis of the passage (in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 145-74) concludes that elites were indulging in an elaborate meal before bread and wine were shared for the Lord's meal. While some differ on individual details (for example, Witherington [*Conflict and Community*, 249- 50] has the meal being served in separate rooms according to status), the central issue of honor and status distinctions is widely recognized.

their equals and giving preference to those at the top, without regard for the poor.[204] But in the process their lavish, excessive dining brought "shame upon" brothers and sisters who had nothing (v. 22) in the same way wives prophesying without a head covering had done to their husband (11:5). Paul judged that the behavior caused division and showed contempt to God's assembly—earning them harsh rebuke (v. 22). The wealthy of the world might have behaved this way, but Paul would not tolerate behavior that elevated one group in the church at the expense of others—especially their celebration of this sacred meal that was so attached to the early Christ worshipers' experience of Jesus,[205] who was remembered for his honor-sharing table fellowship. Everyone in Christ shared the same honor and therefore was to enjoy the same access to the community table.

One Body, Shared Honor

Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12 provides another window into his perspective on how his world had changed in terms of honor and how he believed it influenced life in Christ's community. Having declared that the Spirit apportions gifts to "each one individually just as he wishes" (v. 11),[206] Paul points out that all of them belong to the same body—Christ's (v. 12). To support this, he refers to their baptism: "For by one Spirit we all

[204] Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," 73-75.

[205] For further discussion of the early Christ worshipers' experience of Jesus at table, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity : A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 137-79.

[206] 1 Cor 12:11: "διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἑκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

were baptized into one body, whether Judeans or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we all were made to drink from one Spirit" (v. 13).[207]

As has been previously noted, Paul views this as fundamental. As in Galatians 3, he references an apparent baptismal creed to emphasize what Christ-followers share. In the prior passage, the emphasis was on the shared righteousness and honor that was theirs. The present passage emphasizes their shared membership in Christ's body through the Spirit.

Paul assumes this reality and uses it to argue that in Christ, there is a hereto unrealized level of mutuality. Just as with parts of a body, they might have looked at a member of the community and judged that one was lacking in honor;[208] but Paul warns them not to judge based on appearances because "the parts of the body that seem weaker are actually more necessary" (v. 22).[209] Every part belongs and has a necessary role, but honor is given to those that lack it (vv. 23, 24)—to the end that there be no σχίσμα in the body (v. 25).[210] At the same time, joy is shared by all when one member is honored (v. 26). In a very real sense, Paul is saying that every member of the assembly shares the same honor, regardless of social location. This stood in

[207] 1 Cor 12: 13: "καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἓν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[208] Martin (*The Corinthian Body*, 94-95) thus notes how significantly Paul's comments diverge from that society's ordering of the body: "The remarkable thing about Paul's imagery is not his use of status terms, which often occur in rhetorical applications of the body analogy to homonoia issues, but his claim that the normally conceived body hierarchy is actually only an apparent, surface hierarchy. The genitals, he says, may *seem* to be the most shameful part of the body; but from our very attention to them—our constant care to cover them and shield them from trivializing and vulgarizing public exposure—demonstrates that they are actually the most necessary of the body's members, those with the *highest* status....Hence the ambiguity here: Paul admits that the genitals, the 'necessary' members, seem to be the weaker; but, by their very necessariness, they can demand high status. They have a legitimate claim, therefore, to honor and care from the other body members. Through his play on words, Paul both admits and denies the low status of the weaker members of the body."

[209] 1 Cor 11:22: "τὰ δοκοῦντα μέλη τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενέστερα ὑπάρχειν ἀναγκαῖά ἐστιν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[210] Note Paul's assertion that the σχίσμα of 11:17ff. was caused by the rich actually "shaming those who have nothing." For him, community would come through shared honor for every member rather than forcing members into society's predefined, hierarchical roles.

stark contrast to a society that celebrated such distinctions and would have given precedence to those "more attractive and important members."[211] Indeed, it is all the more surprising that Paul makes this challenge to societal honor values in the context of imagery that was frequently used to reinforce the social hierarchy.[212]

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul's perspective on the shared honor of those in Christ has everything to do with their common membership in his body; some, based on their status or situation might have appeared to be weak or shameful, but Paul rejects such judgments based on externals, however natural they might have seemed. These appear to be foundational to his perspective on honor and shame.

Silencing Shameful Speech

Few passages in 1 Corinthians have been discussed as intently by commentators as 14:34-35.[213] Upon first appearance, it seems to define Paul as a defender of the status quo in regard to women and honor.[214] However, close analysis with sensitivity to Mediterranean

[211] Wheatly, *Patronage in Early Christianity*, 34.

[212] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 94.

[213] Due in large part to the subject matter, word usage, and textual history of this passage, a diversity of opinions exists on the interpretation and origin of this passage. See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 529-31, for an overview of the various interpretive options and perspectives.

[214] An increasing number of commentators question whether this section is Pauline, citing some combination of the following arguments: that it significantly different than other undisputed Pauline passages that demonstrate leading roles for women, that it is inconsistent with his prior support of women prophesying in the churches in 11:2-16, that it contains much non-Pauline vocabulary, and that its textual history provides evidence that it is a later addition. While the challenge of fitting this passage within Paul's larger body of work is acknowledged, the arguments against Pauline authorship are not compelling. Indeed, the overwhelming repetition of vocabulary and concepts within verses thirty-four and thirty-five in the immediate context provides strong evidence that the verses originated with Paul: the references to learning (μανθάνω, vv. 31, 35), being quiet or silent (σιγάω, vv. 28, 30, 34), the church/assembly (ἐκκλησία, vv. 4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33, 34, 35), speaking (λαλέω, 24 times in chapter 14, including vv. 34, 35), and individuals submitting themselves (ὑποτάσσω with middle voice, vv. 32, 34). The nature and breath of the section's continuity with the immediate context in concepts and vocabulary strongly supports Pauline authorship. And as will be demonstrated, there is also strong continuity between 11:2-6 and 14:34-35—which supports the conclusion that the section is Pauline.

cultural values indicates that Paul was motivated by the desire to protect the honor of men in the community. Thus, the passage reads:

> The women (αἱ γυναῖκες) are to be quiet in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them submit themselves (ὑποτασσέσθωσαν), just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful (αἰσχρὸν) for a woman (γυναικὶ) to speak in the assembly.[215]

This section's position within Paul's larger argument about the exercise of prophecy in the assembly starting at the beginning of chapter fourteen colors how one reads his prohibition; Paul himself had already indicated that women could prophesy (11:2-16), but here exhorts those who are married to ask their husband at home.

What is behind this directive? It appears that after prophecy had been given, women were speaking up in the context of the meeting and through questions they had asked or the way they had asked them had behaved shamefully (αἰσχρὸν, v. 35) and humiliated their husband, father, or brother—thus, Paul exhorts them to ask their questions at home (v. 35). Women had freedom in Christ, but they were to exercise it submissively and not to speak up as they had done (v. 34) in order to avoid bringing shame upon their men (v. 35). Paul's guiding principle here is not the defense of the status quo regarding men and women, but rather his concern that women exercise their freedom in ways that do not diminish the honor of their husband, father, or brother. Honor was always to be given.

Commentators have long read this passage in light of Paul's prior conversation in 11:2-16 due to the common subject matter and the challenge of reconciling his approval of women prophesying (11:3, 5) versus his prohibition of their speaking in the assembly (14:34-35).

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[215] 1 Cor 14:34, 35: "αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

However, the greater correlation may be the principle behind both of Paul's commands: his concern that women would not exercise their freedom in Christ in a way that would bring shame upon their men, mentioned twice in chapter eleven (11:5 [καταισχύνει], 6 [αἰσχρὸν]) and once in chapter fourteen (14:35 [αἰσχρὸν]). Since the man (whether the woman's husband, father, or brother) was the embodiment of the family's honor as κεφαλὴ (11:3-5) and the woman was the glory of the man (11:7), women were to choose to submit themselves and behave in a way that honored the man in whom they were embedded.

A Glorious Ending

As Paul approaches the end of the correspondence he addresses honor in the context of human bodies and the resurrection of the dead. The key sentence answers the question, "What kind of body will they [the dead] come with?"[216] Paul explains:

> It is sown perishable,
> it is raised imperishable;
> it is sown in dishonor,
> it is raised in glory;
> it is sown in weakness,
> it is raised in power;
> it is sown a natural body,
> it is raised a Spirit-enabled body.[217]

This completes Paul's earlier thought when he compares the situation of the Corinthian believers with that of the apostles; he alludes to his situation, which involved public dishonor, and hints at future glory for all followers of Christ, even if his Corinthian brothers and sisters behaved as though they already possessed it (4:8-13). Paul had experienced the dishonor of the

[216] 1 Cor 15:35: "ποίῳ δὲ σώματι ἔρχονται;" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[217] 1 Cor 15:42-44: "σπείρεται ἐν φθορᾷ, ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει· σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

present situation with a natural body. He believed that in the next age, all of those in Christ, the second Adam (Romans 5:12-19), would be raised with a glorious, Spirit-powered body that bore resemblance to Christ's body (15:45-49). Their situation, which involved shame and dishonor on account of the Lord Jesus, would not be the end of the story; it would be reversed in the end when they received new bodies.

Conclusion

Much of Paul's challenge to honor values of his day, then, is made in the context of arguments about wisdom with the goal of challenging the perspective that had created σχίσματα in the community.

At the heart of Paul's challenge to wisdom and honor is the cross of Christ. Although Jesus' crucifixion was a byword for humiliation from the world's perspective, the apostle Paul viewed it as the event that had shamed and ultimately destroyed the wisdom of the world (1:18-25) and the "rulers of this age" that upheld it (1:28; 2:6) because of its saving power (1:18). God was clearly pleased to confound the wisdom of the wise and to turn man's perception of honor upside-down (1:20-25). Since wisdom, righteousness, and honor came in Christ Jesus, eloquence was irrelevant and human boasting was prohibited (1:30-31).

In Paul's view, God was pleased to challenge man's wisdom, so it makes sense that God would choose the weak and foolish to be part of his people. Paul notes that few of them were wise, powerful, or of noble birth when they were called (1:26). Furthermore, it is striking that God would choose leaders who both suffered degradation and humiliation (4:9-12) and who chose to function in a subservient, shameful way (4:12-13; 9:19, 22)–it was a spectacle that revealed the confounding wisdom of God for all to see (4:9)! What had been considered wise,

strong, and honorable had been shamed—again, the world's perspective on honor had been inverted.

Members of Christ's community possessed wisdom and honor in abundance. They receive it through the Spirit's help, wherein those who love God receive his secret wisdom, which the rulers of this age missed to their shame and undoing (2:6-10). In Christ, they share the honor of a great inheritance, for everything belongs to them (3:21). Paul emphasizes that their honor is shared—as expressed in the open, distinction-rejecting table of the Lord's meal (11:17-22) and his analogy of the body in which all members share the same honor regardless of how things might have appeared (12:12-26). Together, they all had the promise of a glorified body at Christ's coming (15:42-49). Ultimately, Paul believed that those in Christ shared great ascribed honor, they were to freely give honor to one another, and they were promised great glory in the future that was yet to be revealed.

It is not surprising, then, that ultimate judgment and reward was withheld until Christ's coming (4:5). No wonder Paul would not subject himself to any other judgment—for Christ was his master and only judge (4:1-4). Ultimately, the wisdom of the current age and its rulers was foolishness—how could they be trusted to judge in view of God's secret wisdom (2:6-8)?

Paul surely hoped that the correspondence would persuade his audience to embrace his perspective on honor rather than that of the rulers of this age. Unfortunately, after 1 Corinthians and at least one contentious visit to Corinth, the situation deteriorated further. The result would be a rich and striking defense of his challenge to honor against opponents who placed great emphasis on eloquence and external appearances. As will become evident in the next chapter, this situation and his defense would lead to Paul to a new expression of the honor challenge that would be evident in his later correspondence as well.

CHAPTER 3:

PAUL OF TARSUS, PART 2

Analysis of Paul's earliest uncontested writings in the last chapter has demonstrated that he closely followed the challenge to honor and shame values taught and demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth. In particular, Paul of Tarsus emphasized the shared honor of all in Christ and a similar open, inclusive table. Furthermore, in the same way, he refused to engage in expected, aggressive, male behaviors when affronted and instructed the communities he founded to do the same; he urged them to show honor to other members of their assemblies.

Paul's later writings also contain many similarities to Jesus' teaching and behavior. However, they also reveal how adept he was at adapting and interpreting received tradition to address the circumstances that his audience faced. As I will show, Paul's experience of difficult circumstances shaped how he articulated the challenge to honor and shame values. In no place would this be more evident than in 2 Corinthians.

2 CORINTHIANS

> He was unusually handsome and exceedingly graceful at all periods of his life, though he cared nothing for personal adornment….His expression, whether in conversation or when he was silent, was so calm and mild, that one of the leading men of the Gallic provinces admitted to his countrymen that it had softened his heart, and kept him from carrying out his design of pushing the emperor over a cliff, when he had been allowed to approach him under the pretence of a conference, as he was crossing the Alps.
>
> From Suetonius' description of Augustus in *Life of Augustus* 79[218]

Outward appearance was critical to the dominant culture in Paul's time, so significant that assessment of an individual's physical make-up became fundamental to describing a person—whether in biography or panegyric. Prevailing wisdom said that physical characteristics and affect of a leader were demonstrative of his character: an honorable man looked and sounded honorable. From the perspective of his Corinthian audience, Paul disappointed in this area—with his humble physical presence and his lack of eloquence (2 Cor 10:10).

If Paul's appearance underwhelmed his audience, so did his teaching and weak behavior which challenged the dominant society's understanding of who and what was honorable. As in his earlier writing to the Corinthians, Paul ties his ministry method to the reversal of honor that was central to his gospel. Clearly, Paul takes this emphasis further in 2 Corinthians. As I will show, the challenge of his rivals and misgivings of others in the assembly led Paul to behave in ways that went against the way men were socialized and assert all the more strongly that honor values had changed. Weakness, according to the dominant view of strength, was at the heart of

[218] Translation from John Carew Rolfe, *Suetonius* (London: W. Heinemann, 1914).

his message and ministry, and his comfort with weakness was a demonstration of the conviction that God's honor and power were "made perfect in weakness" (12:9-10).[219]

The Shame and Glory of Paul's Ministry

At the time Paul wrote this letter[220] there were still those in Corinth who were critical of his ministry; his repeated use of invective indicates[221] that his opponents were stronger and more numerous by the time he sent 2 Corinthians. For his part, Paul offered a defense as he had in his earlier writing to the church there. However, he acknowledged that his position was in its very nature shameful, that his ministry and gospel required him to behave in honor-sharing, face-diminishing ways, and that his work was effectual only because of God's transcendent power.

[219] 2 Cor 12:9, 10: "ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελεῖται" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[220] The question of whether 2 Corinthians was one document or a collection of documents continues to be widely contested. Because the conclusions of this study are not contingent upon either theory of origin, little time will be spent addressing the question.

That being said, the strongest arguments support the conclusion that what is called 2 Corinthians was written by Paul as a single correspondence. Many commentators have noted that the flow of the letter is disjointed or confusing at one or more places—for example, the transition in 6:11-14 seems abrupt and makes little sense. However, the disjointedness of the letter could just as easily serve as an argument against the composition of an editor, for one would expect the work of an editor to flow better. Furthermore, manuscript evidence for the composite theory is notably absent.

Reviewing 2 Corinthians in the context of honor and shame also supports the single-correspondence theory. Paul's challenge to these values is always evident and often poignant in the document; indeed, one gets the impression throughout that Paul was challenging an audience who had bought into the world's way of relating in terms of honor and had rejected the shame implicit in the gospel message.

[221] Notable examples include Paul's refusal to name his opponents and his labeling them as "super apostles" (11:5; 12:11) and "false apostles" (11:13). At other points such as 11:7-12 ("But did I commit a sin…if I preached the gospel to you free of charge…") and 11:20-21 ("For you tolerate if one enslaves you…"), the tone becomes antagonistic and indicates there was some breach in the relationship.

Paul addresses this point early on in his thanksgiving which begins in 2:14; doing so in this context indicates that the shameful nature of Paul's ministry is a central theme in what follows.[222]

In no place is the shamefulness of his ministry more evident than when Paul declares that God always "leads us in triumphal procession" (θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς, 2:14).[223] Evidence suggests that he uses the term to reference Roman triumphal processions, but commentators disagree about the meaning of the metaphor.[224] Did Paul really mean to imply that God was leading him and his coworkers in procession like defeated enemies and slaves? This seems to be the most obvious reading of the passage. But it is a startling self-description, and the nature of it has led some to question such a reading: are we to believe that Paul would present himself as a defeated enemy of God? It is not beyond Paul to describe himself as a slave of Christ (cf. Phil 1:1; Rom 1:1) or of his audience in Corinth (2 Cor 4:5), taking a label with serious social implications. Indeed, if one accepts that he would use and embrace the label of slave, it is plausible that he would describe himself as God's defeated enemy led out in triumphal procession.[225]

But what did Paul intend to communicate? And how would his audience have understood θριαμβεύω? Peter Marshall asserts from a review of Greek and Latin literature that

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[222] Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Cor. 2:14-3:3 within the Context of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1986), p. 11 notes this in view of P. T. O'Brien, "Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul," *Supplements to Novum Testamentum*, Vol. XLIX, 1977, p. 263: "…rather than being merely an unexpected explosion of gratitude which found its expression in a hymn of praise, O'Brien's study forces us to reexamine II Cor. 2.14f. as a carefully crafted, thesis-like statement which not only encapsulates the main theme(s) of its section (i.e. 2:14-4:6 (7:4)), but also contains an implicit paraenetic appeal to his readers."

[223] 2 Cor 2:14: "πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[224] See especially Hafeman, *Suffering and the Spirit*, 24-39.

[225] Peter Marshall, "A Metaphor of Social Shame: THRIAMEYEIN IN 2 Cor. 2:14," *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983): 312.

the term may have been "a metaphor of social shame."[226] Just as defeated foes were exposed publicly to shame by being led out in triumphal procession by their conquering general, so Paul and his coworkers were exposed to shame in their ministry for Christ.[227] In doing so, "he depicted himself as a socially disadvantaged person;" it was in this sort of situation of weakness that the power of God was manifest in his work.[228] Paul readily embraces a label of shame and challenges his audience to decide whether the "fragrance" his ministry gave off—in conformity with Christ—smelled like life or death (vv. 15-16).

A term Paul frequently uses to describe himself and his partners in ministry,[229] διάκονος, carries a negative connotation as well. What is a διάκονος? It is frequently rendered as "minister," in reference to the office in the church.[230] But the term often referred to a servant or menial messenger, as well.[231] Paul certainly viewed what he was doing as a sacred duty. But it is worth noting that he is perfectly comfortable describing his position with terms that could label him as lowly and menial. Again in his self-designations Paul willingly occupies a shameful position and way of relating.

While Paul is transparent about his own limitations and humble in his self-designations, he is emphatic about the glory (δόξα) involved in the ministry to which he was called. The first covenant had δόξα, but the new covenant surpasses it in δόξα through the Spirit (3:7-11).

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[226] Marshall, "A Metaphor," 302.

[227] This is extremely similar to 1 Cor 4:9. In both cases, Paul and his partners occupy a tenuous, shameful position, on display for the whole world to see.

[228] Marshall, "A Metaphor," 316-317.

[229] E.g. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23; Gal 2:17; Eph 3:7; 6:21; Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7.

[230] E.g. Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12; 4:6; *1 Clement* 42.4, 5; *Ignatius to the Ephesians* 2.1; *Polycarp to the Philippians* 5.2, 3; *Didache* 15.1.

[231] E.g. Mt 20:26; 22:13; 23:11; Mk 9: 35; 10:43; Jn 2:5, 9.

Because of the δόξα of the new covenant and the promise of God's help through the Spirit in his ministry, Paul is bold and does not obscure the message, in spite of the shame of the cross (vv. 12-13). Rival apostles and doubters in Corinth may have been confounded by "how one so unimpressive as Paul" could have claimed to be an apostle,[232] but the message he carried was full of glory.

In Paul's view, the δόξα of the new covenant had serious implications for all of those in Christ. Simply by beholding the δόξα of the Lord, they are transformed from one degree of δόξα to another (3:18). This transformation and honor enhancement comes to those in Christ through the Spirit (v.18)—and its permanence demonstrates the superiority of the δόξα of the new covenant.[233] "What counts, Paul argues, is not the appearance as it exists in this age, but as it is transformed into the image of Christ—an image of suffering and weakness through which the power of God becomes present."[234] Ultimately, Paul indicates that honor is acquired in different ways than anticipated—simply through being in Christ—and that the present age is inadequate to judge what really is honorable.

Covering Up the Cross

While Paul embraced the δόξα of the new covenant and of the cross, one may conclude he believed that his critics in Corinth were put off by the gospel he preached. He judges their approach as disgraceful and underhanded (4:2)—in the process, they had effectively veiled the gospel (4:3). This was contrasted with his open statement of the truth—which he viewed as his

[232] Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 103.

[233] David A. deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 126.

[234] Ibid., 126.

sacred duty before God (4:2). What exactly were Paul's opponents doing? Whatever it was, Paul describes it as walking in "craftiness" (πανουργία) and "adulterating" (δολοῦντες) the word of God (4:2). One can easily infer that Paul's critics were hiding something that everyone agreed was unseemly to outsiders: the crucifixion. Indeed, in prior correspondence to the Corinthian Christ-followers, Paul had acknowledged that the message of the cross was "foolishness" (μωρία) to those who were perishing (1 Cor 1:18).

Paul's proclamation would not gloss over the cross; he would not put a veil over it, as he apparently believed his critics in Corinth did (vv. 1-3). On the contrary, he declares Jesus openly. He does so because the very thing that outsiders thought was shameful brilliantly demonstrated the glory of God (vv. 4, 6). In no place was the glory more evident than in the face of Christ (v. 6). At its most fundamental level, honor and glory had been inverted.

From Slavery and Shame to Power and Honor

Since the world of honor had been reversed, Paul willingly embraced a humble position. It had to be surprising to others for him to identify himself and his partners as slaves to the Corinthian community (4:5). But as in other contexts (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; 1 Cor 7:21-23), Paul takes the status-poor position in view of how honor had changed in Christ. This is all the more striking in light of the way he had "humbled himself" (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν) before them and refused their financial support (11:7f.)—a step that would have shocked the elites who made the offer[235] Accepting it would have enhanced his standing and that of the elites, but Paul declined

[235] Peter Marshall (*Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987], 177) notes that the offer (probably in the form of a gift) was intended to secure friendship with Paul. Such offers were seldom rejected and never without creating enmity. In light of his refusal, it is no surprise that some in Corinth opposed Paul. While it is hard to be certain whether this is the primary reason for the deteriorated relationship between Paul and his audience, as Marshall concludes, his decision to rebuff their offer certainly contributed to their falling out.

to embrace the part of client and would not accept a position that fit into society's way of distributing honor based on position, status, and wealth;[236] that he chose to "humble himself" in the process would have added to the appearance of servitude.[237] In a startling move, Paul chooses to be called a slave rather than a client, challenging the way his audience pursues honor and understands leadership.

But this is consistent with how Paul describes his work to the Corinthian audience. What he brought in his ministry was a treasure, but he himself was frail and servile like a clay pot (4:7).[238] This sort of description was unexpected for males in antiquity, who were expected to speak from strength since the message was intrinsically connected to the messenger.

Nevertheless, Paul goes even further, describing himself and his ministry partners as vessels that are just barely in one piece (4:8-9)[239]—hardly the paradigm of honor. To endure punishment like servile pots was humbling, but to accept blows of affliction (v. 8) and persecution (v. 9) like they did set them apart as outcasts. They carried in their body the dying of Jesus (v. 10)—which points to his shameful manner of death and not simply suffering—if only

[236] It is easy to overlook the implications of the Corinthians' offer of help and of Paul's refusal in the context of first century Mediterranean patronage and honor values. Marshall emphasizes the significance of the offer and what Paul's acceptance would have meant (*Enmity in Corinth*, 243ff.).

[237] The associated term ταπεινὸς generally carries a negative meaning and was often employed to describe a slave's mentality (Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin, *Philippians* [Columbia: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004], 87-88).

[238] The fragility and ignoble nature of "earthen vessels" is widely recognized (cf. Lev 4:2; 2 Tim 2:20; and many others). Savage (*Power through Weakness*, 165-66) argues that the term implies "weakness" and "cheapness"—characterization which seems fitting for the context.

[239] This is the first of Paul's "tribulation lists" found in 2 Corinthians (see also, 6.4-5, 8-10; 11.23-29; 12.10). Robert Hodgson notes the similarity of Paul's lists to those found in contemporary Judean and Hellenistic literature and identifies significant parallels; in particular, it is clear that he employs a common literary convention (Robert Hodgson, "Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 74 [1994]: 59-80).* What Hodgson does not note, however, is one significant distinction between Paul's list and all of the others: Paul's lists all catalog his own tribulations, whereas the others speak of those of others. It is one thing for Plutarch to speak of the travails of the hero Heracles or Arrian to speak of the Alexander the Great, but it is quite another for someone in Paul's circumstances to expose his own weakness, frailties, and shame.

because they suffered the same sort of shaming treatment that he did, again and again. Ultimately, Paul shows that his ministry in which he suffered so much "conforms to the pattern of Christ."[240] In a society that emphasized that externals depicted an individual's ultimate value, Paul asserts that it was not appearance, but Christ's inward, animating power and glory that demonstrated his real honor and status.

John Fitzgerald has noted that Paul's catalogue of hardships here and elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence bears striking resemblance to those Hellenistic moralists who employed such lists to extol the power and serenity of the suffering sage.[241] Paul's triumph differs from that of other such men in that "the catalogue of Paul's hardships in 4:8-9 serves to show that the great power at work in him is divine rather than human. *His catalogue of hardships is thus a catalogue of God's power at work in him.* Furthermore, his claim that God is active in him is part and parcel of the boasting in which he is engaged in this letter of self-commendation."[242] Paul's catalog is distinct from his contemporaries in another significant way: the weaknesses and frailties he exposes are his own. And even if the theme of divine power enabling the sage to overcome is present in Stoic authors,[243] it is never a writer attributing to someone else's power his own overcoming trying circumstances.

But it was at this very place of shame that the power of God was made manifest to the audience. Their very existence bespoke humility; therefore Paul mentions Jesus repeatedly in the

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[240] Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 172.

[241] John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar's Press, 1988), 166ff.

[242] Ibid., 171.

[243] Ibid.

passage (4:10 [2x], 11 [2x]) without the exalted title "Messiah," and he uses "Lord" only when referencing the resurrection (v. 14). The life-power of Jesus was evident among them when they withstood shaming and persecution that reeked of death and, nevertheless, somehow endured.

Honor would follow where the power of God was evident. Paul believed God would raise them just as he had raised the Lord Jesus (v. 14)—the honor therein was implicit. The affliction and persecution they faced was actually working an incomparable weight of glory (v. 17). Their actual status was not as it appeared.

This presents a significant challenge to how Paul's world's distributed honor. On the outside, all that people saw with Paul and his partners was decay (v. 16); but within, renewal and glory were at work (vv. 16-17). He counsels against judging honor in the present based on externals—how his society functioned—and admonishes his audience to look to things that are inward and future…and, ultimately, more permanent (v. 18). This perspective ultimately explains how Paul could embrace the position and labels of shame: he knew deeper things were at work.

Paul could challenge honor values and reject his society's way of defining honor because he believed that God would have the final say. Believers would ultimately appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and all that mattered was pleasing him (5:9-10). Some aspects of Paul's approach may have been unpalatable to his audience, including those who took pride "in the face" (ἐν προσώπῳ, v. 12); but everything was manifest to God (v. 11), who was concerned with the heart (v. 12).[244]

[244] V. H. T. Nguyen (*Christian Identity in Corinth : A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus, and Valerius Maximus, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum neuen Testament, 243* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008]) has noted that this emphasis on externals—and especially the *persona* or πρόσωπον of an individual—was an essential part of Greco-Roman self-definition. In light of this tendency and the apparent "obsession" that the Corinthians had with externals, Nguyen concludes that Paul's challenge to those who take pride ἐν προσώπῳ (v. 12) "is specifically alluding to" their "preoccupation with the superficial aspect of *persona*, which appears to be also at the root of the issues in 2 Corinthians" (143ff.).

Ultimately, Paul's reversal of honor values—which is so evident in his lack of concern for the temporal and visible—is based on the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Christ died and rose on behalf of all (v. 15), and as a result no one is to be evaluated according to the flesh—according to externals (v. 16). Paul himself at onetime judged Jesus according to the flesh—see Paul's persecution of the church. But he knew him that way no longer. The Damascus road changed his perspective and convinced him that Jesus was the risen Christ. And if Christ was not to be judged based on those externals, neither were those in Christ (v. 17)! Because all have died and been raised in Christ, all things have become new, and the old way of judging honor based on externals is over.

A Ministry of Honor and Dishonor

With the old way of judging honor over, it is no surprise that Paul would describe his ministry in ways that challenged traditional honor values. He emphasizes that the shape of his ministry reflected his desire to avoid causing offense or being discredited (6:3); while Paul had a solid group of supporters in Corinth, his tone and expression of care once again indicate that he faced vocal critics of how he discharged his ministry.

Paul has previously described his ministry as shame-inducing. He does so again prominently in his defense here, commending himself to his Corinthian audience in a litany of taxing and humiliating circumstances (vv. 4-5).[245] In some cases¸ these are not simply humble circumstances—they are the experience of someone who has been shamed at the hands of others

[245] Fitzgerald (*Cracks in an Earthen Vessel,* 192) notes that the repetition of concepts in this catalog of hardships from the one in 2 Corinthians 4 reinforces Paul's point: "The repetition of items from a previous catalogue is traditionally for *emphasis*, and Paul's repetition of θλῖψις serves both to increase the significance of this term in the initial catalogue of 2 Cor 4 and to heighten its importance here in the second. Furthermore, by the repetition of items from a previous catalogue and the introduction of new ones, an author not only reminds his readers of the previous catalogue but suggests to them that what follows is to be understood as a *supplement* to that initial list."

through afflictions, beatings, and imprisonments. Furthermore, the last three hardships in the list, ἐν κόποις, ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις, ἐν νηστείαις—his so-called "occupational hardships" (v. 5)[246]—reflect his low position and poverty. Ultimately, Paul willfully engages in a ministry that causes him to lose face and chooses to live in a way, through his hard toil and refusal of financial support, that prevents him from retaining an honorable position. Again, he hardly fits the mold of the "strong" leader.

His situation is mixed at best, for honor and shame, fame and infamy are all part of his experience as a servant of God (v. 8). It should come as no surprise that he describes his situation as paradoxical. His ministry occurred in the same age as Christ's, and if they judged Jesus based on externals, then it is no surprise that they would do the same with Paul. It may have looked as though they were dying, poor, and in possession of nothing, but in truth they were very alive, and had the honor of possessing and giving much (vv. 9-10). Ultimately, Paul's ministry followed the pattern of Jesus in its reversal of honor.

Christ's Countercultural Model: Exchanging Honor for Poverty

Just as his ministry embodied the reversal of honor values, Paul believed that the believers' must do the same. To that end, he frequently employs the example of Jesus—which is paramount in his call for the Corinthians to fulfill their vows for a contribution to his collection for the Judean saints: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich" (8:9).[247] It is easy to miss the significance of this statement in the realm of honor and shame.

[246] Ibid., 193.

But in Jesus' world of patronage, riches were a means to honor and begging-poverty created a situation where a person was unable to hold their honorable position. Therefore, while someone with wealth might use it through patronage to gain honor, they would not have given to the point of poverty and so lose the means to gaining honor. By becoming poor for the sake of others and willfully giving up his position, Jesus challenged his society's values and provided an example of giving honor to others. To the elites in Corinth who had offered Paul a gift in order to secure the honor and recognition, the apostle offers a countercultural model of giving: sacrificial giving that would not secure honor and would cost the resources necessary to secure honor in the future. Ultimately, Paul presents Jesus' life and teaching as a startling challenge to his society's ways of exercising power and acquiring honor.

A Shameful Ministry, a Foolish Minister

As Paul looks ahead to visiting Corinth en route to delivering the collection to Judea, he pleads with them not to force him to approach them with boldness. Of all things, he bases his entreaty on Christ's meekness and gentleness (10:1); could it be that Paul is thinking about Jesus' response to his accusers? This seems to be the case, and it presents a serious challenge to male ways of relating; just as Jesus responded in meekness and gentleness when affronted, Paul reasons, so also should his followers!

There are those who look at Paul and their conflict "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα, v. 2) and judge based on "outward appearances" (κατὰ πρόσωπον, v. 7); he rejects their behavior out of hand! Their actions appear to be driven by pride (v. 5), but the Apostle calls them to

[247] 1 Cor 8:9 "γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι᾽ ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὤν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

obedience (v. 5) and meekness (v. 2). And unlike Mediterranean men of his era, Paul is reticent to boast (v. 8)[248]; indeed, his only claim on them is that they fall within the area that God had Paul and his co-laborers pioneer (vv. 13-17). His opponents, in their way of judging by appearances, assessed themselves through comparison to others, but Paul would have nothing of it (v. 12). While they subjected themselves to human approval (vv. 12 and 18), Paul would boast in the Lord (v. 17) and wait for his approval (v. 18). Paul thereby challenged honor values of the day, which, as has been noted, taught men to compete for honor in the public realm.

If their behavior was different from his own, Paul judges that his opponents were preaching another Jesus (ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν) as well (11:4). "If the opponents are preaching ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν, then perhaps it is because their Jesus is not making the same moral requirements on them as he does on Paul, that is to say, not producing in them the same servant-like humility."[249] Perhaps a significant part of the issue was that they neglected the essential elements about Jesus that the apostle preached, that namely he was both crucified (1 Cor 1:23) and Lord (2 Cor 4:5).[250] "In Paul's thinking, their error arises from a false understanding of the cross. They have ignored its offensiveness and bypassed its shame. They have shown little interest in a Jesus of humility, a gospel of suffering or a Spirit who affirms that Jesus is Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3)."[251]

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[248] Paul rejects boasting on his society's terms; however, in chapters ten through thirteen, Paul embraces boasting on a different basis—in his own weakness. Cf. David A. Black, *Paul, Apostle of Weakness. Astheneia and its Cognates in the Pauline Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984) 131.

[249] Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 156.

[250] Thurs, Savage (*Power through Weakness*, 153) asserts: "In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul writes 'we preach...Jesus Christ as Lord' (κηρύσσομεν...Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον). In 1 Corinthians 1 he says 'we preach Christ as crucified' (κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον). This suggests that in Paul's mind there is a unity between preaching Jesus as Lord and proclaiming Christ as crucified. Indeed, as the apostle underscores in another epistle, it is precisely in dying the death of a slave (δοῦλος) on a cross that Jesus demonstrates what it means to be Lord (κύριος, Philippians 2:5-11). At the heart of the keryma thus lies a paradox which draws together two seemingly contradictory features about Christ, his humility and his lordship."

[251] Ibid., 157.

Paul's opponents have either rejected or forgotten the cross, and so doing have embraced another Jesus; otherwise, they would have imitated his humble, honor-sharing approach, and that of Paul, his minister.[252]

As Paul continues, his descriptions of his own ministry and of himself become increasingly absurd and countercultural; and yet, if he had earlier described his apostolic experience as being led in triumphal procession for all to see (2:14), it is no surprise that he would present the shame in his ministry so vividly. He proclaimed the gospel to them "free of charge" and behaved in a way that "exalted" them by rejecting their assistance (11:7)—an approach that prevented either party from enhancing their status through a patron-client relationship.[253] Yet he refused to back down from his position; indeed it appears that his rhetorical strategy was to embrace the "foolishness" therein.

Paul's allusion to the behavior of his opponents is a classic example of him speaking absurdly and embracing the foolish position (11:20-21). Apparently his rivals whom he labelled "super apostles" (τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων, v. 5; 12:11) conformed to the pattern of male socialization in antiquity, using aggression to gain honor at the expense of others (v. 20). By comparison Paul was weak, refusing to engage in the zero-sum game of competing for honor (v. 21). He would not exalt himself at the expense of others or participate in the games his society

[252] S. Scott Bartchy ("'When I'm Weak, I'm Strong': A Pauline Paradox in Cultural Context," in *Kontexte der Schrift, Band II*, hrsg. Christian Strecker [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2005], 56.) rightly notes that the life and teaching of Jesus has as much to do with Paul's change as the crucifixion: "The sharply counter-cultural perception of power that Jesus taught and demonstrated, with his execution on a Roman cross as a central symbol, had created a profound upheaval in Paul's own sense of honorable behavior."

[253] As noted, Paul's refusal of support should be understood as refusing to become the client of elites in Corinth. His own statements indicate that he preferred being identified as their slave (4:5) rather than defining his relationship with them in terms of the dominant cultural values that set apart one party as a patron and another a client based on aid one offered to another.

instated to distribute honor—for this was against the new creation values he had embraced in Christ.[254]

Rather, Paul embraces a ministry full of dishonor, as evidenced in his inventory of shaming persecutions, hardships, and honor-poor circumstances that he endures as a "servant of Christ" (διάκονος Χριστοῦ, vv. 23-33). As noted previously, there was humility in the label, and one wonders whether his rivals in Corinth were willing to embrace the shameful connotations that frequently went with the title (v. 23). He had faced authorities' attempts to force conformity through imprisonment (v. 23), floggings (v. 23), forty lashes from Judeans five times (v. 24), three times beaten with rods (v. 25), and even a stoning (v. 25). He endured the trouble of shipwreck (v. 25) and danger from countless sources (v. 26). And so many of his circumstances can only be described as shameful—whether it be the hard work that was unbecoming to an honorable man or the poverty that resembled those at the bottom, without food, drink, or clothing (v. 27). Such experiences can only be described as weakness—and Paul actually boasted about these things (v. 30). The passage builds to an emphatic story that reveals Paul's disgrace in verses 32 and 33 as he recounts escaping Damascus ignobly by being lowered from a wall in the city by basket:

> "In the first century the highest military award, the *corona muralis*, was reserved for the man first up the wall in the heat of the battle. In Paul's moment of danger he was lowered through the wall in a basket! Such an event would have been regarded as profoundly humiliating and certainly not worthy of one's boast."[255]

In the same way, Paul's description of the revelation he received and his thorn (12:1-7) brings his "boasting" to a final culmination. His thorn, an illness, was given to him so that he

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[254] Bartchy ("'When I'm Weak'," esp. 52-56) vividly describes the contrast between the expected male pursuit of honor in the first-century world and Paul's "cruciform" way of life.

[255] Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 63.

"would not become arrogant" (v. 7 [2x]).[256] It is very likely that this illness was either "physically disfiguring" or "socially debilitating" and, in a society that judged a speaker based on externals, it would have made him appear inferior to his opponents.[257] His audience would have been aware of the issue, but it is nonetheless striking that Paul would bring up this point of weakness and shame. This serves as a culmination of the argument in which "Paul is deriding himself as the 'worse' man according to the Corinthian values and glorying in that fact."[258]

Why did Paul behave this way? Certainly his rhetorical strategy involved playing the fool. Yet there was a compelling reason that Paul boasted in weakness and shame. The basis comes from his experience of an unsurpassed revelation and his "thorn in the flesh" (12:7), a thorn which he pleaded with the Lord to remove (12:8). Out of his weary pleading comes a fundamental truth: God's power is "perfected in weakness" (v. 9). This is why Paul is content to boast in weak and shameful things like distresses and difficulties, insults and persecutions: he has found that this is the very place where the power of God is made manifest (v. 10). But why must this be the case? "Why *must* the glory of God be revealed in human shame?" Paul's answer is telling: "It is because only in shame can there be a demonstration of divine power."[259] His rivals and their patrons in Corinth defined strength as their world did in terms of competition and domination of the weak, but the apostle's weakness in which he imitated Christ's life given for others bespoke power that could only come from Christ.[260] Paul's audience would have to choose between these two competing and incompatible ways of life.

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[256] 2 Cor 12:7: "ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[257] Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, 153.

[258] Ibid., 380.

[259] Savage, *Power through Weakness*, 169.

Conclusion

Paul's prior visit to Corinth had been a difficult one. There were lingering problems with the community because they continued to subscribe to the dominant society's understanding of what was honorable and shameful. This figured prominently in the leaders they decided to embrace: Paul's lack of eloquence, his weak personal presence, and his refusal of their patronage made him seem inferior to the strong, well-spoken "apostles" who had come into their midst and accepted their support (see 2 Cor 11:20-21). Paul's relationship with the Corinthian community sat precariously; the situation required a clear defense of Paul's apostleship, as well as the values and model that had shaped it.

Rather than apologize for his apostolic ministry, Paul emphasizes that the nature of Christ's honor-sharing life and humiliating death had made its shameful shape non-negotiable. Thus, Paul exposes how deeply troubling and face-diminishing his ministry had been throughout this writing; since God had willed to shame Paul and his coworkers publically as though he were leading them in triumphal procession as defeated enemies (2:15-17), the apostle reveals what contemporaries would have taken pains to hide. Thus, he would not conceal the cross as he thought his opponents did, but proclaims it in a straightforward manner (3:7-13; 4:2-3). Paul describes himself and his ministry partners as servants (3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23) and refuses honor-enhancing patronage, choosing rather to embrace the appearance and label of a slave (4:5; 11:7). He emphasizes the humility of his situation by comparing himself and his partners to lowly, servile clay pots, and describing the trying, shameful circumstances they faced as they carried the dying of Jesus in their bodies (4:7-12). He would emphasize the shameful persecution and humiliating circumstances they faced again and again (6:3-10; 11:23-27).

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[260] Bartchy, "When I'm Weak, I'm Strong," 60.

Paul revealed the humility of his situation as he did in the correspondence because he knew that God determined what was honorable. His situation and ministry may have looked shameful, but Yahweh was the ultimate judge of what he did and said (2:15-17; 5:9-11). Furthermore, those who focused on the outward and the temporal missed the fact that the afflictions were inwardly working an eternal glory (4:16-18). That same emphasis on externals had led Paul to misjudge Christ, but he did so no longer and had therefore stopped judging others on the same basis (5:16-17); he urged his audiences to do the same (10:2, 7).

Glory and honor therefore took on a new shape. By virtue of knowledge of Christ, those in Christ were being transformed into the likeness of his glory through the Spirit (3:18; 4:6). Suffering for Christ would actually result in great glory (4:16-18). Rather than pursuing honor through exploiting power and exalting themselves (11:20-21), they were to use their power for others (8:9) and exercise meekness (10:1) in the imitation of Christ. Those who lived such a life in the service of Christ faced hardship and shame, but the status-enhancing power of God followed as well (12:7-10). Thus, while he rejected the claim to honor implicit in the boasting in one's wealth and position, Paul exposed and boasted in his weaknesses, which ultimately demonstrated the grace and power of God (12:9).

While no other community challenged Paul the way the one in Corinth did, the other congregations he corresponded with remained tied to honor values that were incompatible with Paul's gospel. In his correspondence to Rome, where precedence and competition were deeply embedded in dominant culture, Paul would assert that reconfiguration of honor norms was at the heart of his gospel.

ROMANS

> In his journey, as he was crossing the Alps, and passing by a small village of the barbarians with but few inhabitants and those wretchedly poor, his companions asked the question among themselves by way of mockery, if there were any canvassing for offices there; any contention which should be uppermost, or feuds of great men one against another. To which Caesar made answer seriously, "For my part, I had rather be the first man among these fellows than the second man in Rome."
>
> Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*[261]

To understand the importance of precedence in the ancient world, one need not go any further than Rome. For a large part of the first century BC, Rome was embroiled in civil wars that had been caused by competition for the first place within the state. From Pompeii to Caesar, to Mark Anthony, and finally to Octavian, great men fought for the leading place in Italy and, ultimately, the Mediterranean. In many ways, what they experienced demonstrated the importance of precedence and competition for honor that was evident among elite men.

Through the transition from republic to empire, regardless of who exercised authority, there was never any question what city had first place. Rome was home to the ruling elites. Rome was where the Senate met. Rome was the leading city of the Mediterranean, and its people embraced the honor of having the first place.

It is for this very reason that Paul chooses to challenge the dominant culture's honor values in his correspondence to the city. In fact, his teaching about honor is embedded in and central to his larger argument about his gospel in Romans. For Paul, the gospel involves God's plan to save both Judean and Gentile on the basis of faith, bringing them together as one people.

[261] Translation from John Dryden and Arthur Hugh Clough, *Plutarch's Lives, Volume Ii* ([S.l.]: Digireads.com, 2009).

What becomes evident throughout the letter is that for Paul the old order of precedence, of judging based on geographical origin, of ascribed honor is now over.

This is replaced with a new order. What had been shameful—including a crucified Messiah—was now honorable. Gentiles, though perceived as outsiders, were received without circumcision. Shameful persecution was boasted about. Everyone was to be treated with honor.

Paul's Obligation to the Honorable and Shameful

Paul's audience would have noted his challenge to honor values in the letter's prologue. It becomes evident very early on that Paul rejects the old order of honor, and he declines to give preference to those who would have traditionally received it. While he emphasizes his desire to visit Rome, Paul declares, "To both Greeks and Barbarians, to both the wise and foolish, I am obligated" (v. 14).[262]

Paul's audience would not have taken his words for granted; in a city that embraced the first place in the Empire, it is hard to overlook such a revaluation of values. He declares that he is under obligation to both Greeks and Barbarians, to the wise and the foolish. As has already been seen, allusions to wisdom and foolishness were full of implications in the honor game—it was always more honorable to be wise than to be foolish. In the same way, geography contributed to one's standing: a Greek origin was to be preferred to a Barbarian one. This was the cultural norm. But Paul rejects the status quo. His call to be an apostle to the Gentiles (1:1, 5) and his service to God (1:9) meant that he was obligated to both the honorable and the shameful.

[262] Romans 1:14: "Ἕλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Why would Paul need to make such a statement? It is important to note that this is stated in the context of his larger apology for not visiting them sooner and his expression of desire to visit Rome because he cared for them (vv. 8-15). An inquisitive member of his audience might have probed, "Why haven't you made it to Rome yet? We are an important church in the Imperial Seat!" Paul anticipates such thoughts and may be understood as saying, "You are an honorable people in the most honored city of the empire. But I haven't visited you before because the old order of precedence is gone. God has called me to both the first and the last."

Paul's Gospel: Shame, Power, and Precedence

Paul's statement of 1:16-17 demonstrates the reversal of honor while it encapsulates his conception of the gospel:

> "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Judean and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith."[263]

While it is easy to misunderstand Paul's assertion that he is "not ashamed of the gospel" (v. 16) in our cultural context, reading it in the matrix of ancient Mediterranean social values elucidates it. Shame was more than an inward problem for a male in antiquity. It was an indication that the person who had shame had either transgressed the community's values and suffered loss of face, or had come out on the short end of the stick in confrontation and therefore lost honor to an opponent.

[263] Romans 1:16, 17: "Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Why did Paul express this about his gospel? Was there something about it that had created problems for him and other believers in the public realm? Was there something disadvantageous about it?

There was plenty to be ashamed of with Paul's gospel. On the one hand, the shaming crucifixion of Messiah is a good place to start. As has already been noted, crucifixion was the preferred method of humiliating upstarts and rebels; it was an extremely unlikely way to start a movement. Paul's experience as a preacher throughout the Mediterranean would have put this at the forefront of his thought: there was no honor to be found in a crucified messiah, only shame and humiliation.[264] If one were going to talk about it, one had to be prepared. But in the minds of most, it was something that one did not even whisper about.

Another real source of shame with the Gospel was that it embraced outsiders who did not follow the covenant. Paul preached a gospel that included outsiders—Gentiles were full members without receiving the mark of the covenant, circumcision. He shared a table with the uncircumcised, and embraced them as brothers. But that tainted him and made him less than honorable. How could Paul be true to the covenant and reflect the honor of God's people if he embraced those who were not?

There are good reasons to accept either of the above explanations of Paul's perspective. There were ample reasons to be ashamed of Paul's gospel (at least to outsiders). But Paul rejects such complaints. He had heard them in every assembly and city that he had visited, but he was not persuaded. "For in it the power of God unto salvation is revealed" (v. 16)—the experience of shaming persecution was persistent, but Paul was also acutely aware of the potency of the Gospel. That power trumped the perceived weakness and shame—for power displayed in the

[264] Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 89.

public realm marked one as honorable. Ultimately, Jesus' resurrection identified him as praiseworthy and imbued Paul's gospel with potency.

Paul challenges the old order of precedence and honor in the prologue of Romans, but it appears that he reaffirms it in the declaration that follows. While presenting the Gospel as "the power of God to salvation" he asserts that it is "to the Judean first, and also the Greek" (v. 16). Paul's statement asserts Judean precedence in the gospel. Does this mean he makes exceptions on precedence when it comes to geographical origin or religious background?

As a matter of salvation history, Paul asserts that the Judeans are first. While reading through Romans, one must at least acknowledge this much. They are first in wrath, first in glory and honor (2:9-10). They have much in way of advantage—including circumcision and the oracles of God (3:1-2; cf. 9:4-5). For Paul, Judean precedence is undeniable.

In fact, too little is made of πρῶτον ("first," v.16) in the study of Romans 1:16-17. In a world in which honor and precedence meant everything (especially in Rome), Paul's use of "first" here is significant. Roman Gentile Christ worshipers would have taken this assertion as an affront because everyone cherished primacy. And Judeans would have anticipated an affirmation of their elevated position in God's economy. Both would have been watching closely to see how Paul dealt with this. Paul challenges precedence by embracing it, as will be evident; he could identify Judeans as first without flinching because he believed that having the first place was irrelevant.

Judean Precedence Rendered Irrelevant

Paul's invalidation of Judean precedence begins in chapter two, as he addresses God's judgment of all human sin. He reasons that God is the most righteous judge, "who will pay back *each person* according to his deeds" (v. 6).[265] Such words would have seized the attention of Judeans within his audience, for they indicate that God deals with individuals and not simply people groups. On top of that, Paul asserts that there is no difference between Judeans and Gentiles when God apportions out judgment and glory (vv. 6-10; cf. also "no distinction" in 10:12). The argument culminates in an emphatic statement: God does not make distinction between Judean and Gentile on the basis of descent because he "does not show partiality" (v. 11).[266]

Paul draws from a rich heritage when he asserts God's impartiality. From the tradition of the people of Israel to the writings of the Jewish people, Yahweh's impartiality was widely recognized. Jouette Bassler suggests in *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* that "This application seems to have developed out of the canonical emphasis on equal justice for the great and small, with these social categories given a collective interpretation and equated respectively with the powerful oppressing nations and with Israel."[267] But the statement was

[265] Romans 2:6: "ὃς ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text—emphasis added.

[266] Rom 2:11: "οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωπολημψία παρὰ τῷ θεω" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[267] Jouette M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality : Paul and a Theological Axiom*, Vol. 59, *Dissertation Series / Society of Biblical Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 44. Examples of the canonical emphasis on equal justice include: Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 19:7; Job 34:19; and Psalm 82. The axiom is applied in reference to Israel's relationship with powerful Gentile nations in *Ps. Sol.* 2:15-19, 32-35; *2 Bar.* (esp. 13:8-12); *1 Enoch* 63:1, 6b-9.

"never seen as blurring the distinction" between Judeans and Gentiles, even if it concerned the relationship between the two.[268]

Paul's assertion that there is no partiality with God diverges from this tradition in a single and significant way: he uses it to indicate that God does not make distinctions between Judeans and Gentiles in terms of judgment or grace. Whereas the statement was used before to the advantage of the small (Israel) against the powerful (Gentile nations), Paul uses it to challenge Judean precedence in the sight of God. Judean and Gentile are equally recipients of glory and honor for righteous deeds, and equally recipients of wrath and judgment for unrighteousness. So Bassler asserts that "with Jews and Gentiles, and in the final assize God recompenses all men impartially according to a strict but neutral standard of merit."[269] As in 1:16-17, grace (and, ultimately, judgment) comes to everyone on the same basis; God does not make distinction between Judeans and Gentiles.

Judean Claims to Honor Fruitless

Having established that God is impartial, Paul addresses Judean claims to honor in 2:17-29. They are proud of the name "Judean," they "rely" on the law, and they boast about God (v. 17). But Paul asserts that their claims to honor and their use of Torah are fruitless because of their failure to obey the law, which dishonored God—thus the good name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them (v. 24). What good is their boasting if they disobey the law and dishonor God?

In this context, Paul's comments about circumcision in verses twenty-five through twenty-nine make sense.

[268] Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, 44.

[269] Ibid., 137.

> "For circumcision has value if you practice the law; but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be accounted as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised and fulfills the law will condemn you who have the written law and circumcision but are a transgressor of the law. For a person is not a Judean who is one externally, nor is circumcision something external in the flesh. But a person is a Judean who is one internally and true circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit and not by the written law. And the praise of such a person is not from humans but from God."[270]

Circumcision only has value if the circumcised person practices God's law (v. 25); implicitly, Paul affirms it as an honorable cut on those terms. But it accomplishes nothing for the circumcised man who does not keep the law—in fact, his "circumcision has become uncircumcision" (v. 25), to his shame. On the other hand, the uncircumcised person who keeps the law has the honor of circumcision—even if he does not have the physical mark; such a person stands in judgment of the Judean who fails to keep the law (v. 27). The discussion culminates in Paul's critical statement about honor and circumcision in verse 29: the external mark of circumcision (and being a Judean), though it may bring honor in some circles, does not bring the praise of God; that comes to the person who obeys the law from the heart. This assertion looks ahead to all among the Judeans and Gentiles who have the powerful presence of the Spirit—and, as a result, obey the law.

In a few short sentences, Paul has effectively changed the terms of the honor discourse. Circumcision had value, but not because of what was done to a person's body. The name "Judean" still carried honor, but it was attached to something inward—the Spirit's work to circumcise a person's heart (v. 28; cf. Deut 30:6). Honor was no longer based on externals such

[270] Rom 2:25-29: "Περιτομὴ μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσῃς· ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖς, ἡ περιτομή σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν. ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσῃ, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν λογισθήσεται; καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου. οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

as ethnic identity. The labels no longer held the same meaning. In fact, there was even the iconoclastic conclusion that a Gentile who lived a righteous life would actually judge a Judean (v. 27)! Ultimately, the audience had changed: it was Yahweh who determined what was praiseworthy and not man (v. 28), and he did not judge people on the basis of ethnic identity.

As his argument continues in Romans 3, Paul is emphatic about the position of Judeans in God's economy and in the public realm. He acknowledges that there is some advantage (ὠφέλεια, v. 1) in circumcision because they were entrusted with the "oracles" of God (λόγια, v. 2). But in answer to his rhetorical question directed at Judean Christ worshipers, "Are we any better than they?"[271] Paul responds emphatically, saying, "Not at all"[272] because both Judeans and Gentiles are under the power of sin (v. 9). In spite of the fact that they were under the law, and had its benefits, they failed to keep it (vv. 10-18). The litany of charges is spoken not to Gentiles, but to those under the law (Judeans). The outcome is that the mouths of Judeans, who were inclined to boast in the law and circumcision, are silenced; their boasting is finished because they could not be justified by the works of the law (vv.19-20). The Judeans who had the law and the Gentiles who did not are equal before God and neither is righteous before him.

In a very real sense, Paul summarizes the positions of Judeans and Gentiles in the realm of honor in Romans 3:22-23: there is no distinction between Judean and Gentile, for all fall short of the glory of God. Gentiles dishonored God through idolatry and sexual immorality—and these led them to dishonor in which they degraded themselves and increasingly abandoned what was natural (1:18-32). Judeans dishonored God by their boasting, which they did in tandem with

[271] Rom 3:9: "προεχόμεθα;" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[272] Rom 3:9: "οὐ πάντως" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

their failure to obey God's law; their actions were such that the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles (2:1-3:8).

Boasting, Abraham, and Circumcision

Having established that there is no distinction between Judean and Greek, Paul makes a related point, saying, "boasting is excluded" (3:27). But why? And how should we understand his reasoning? Based on Paul's earlier argument, he could have said that boasting was eliminated on the basis of works of the law. The Judeans' failure to keep the law prevented them from boasting—what is there to boast about if your deeds are not righteous? And Gentiles could not boast based on works. All would have shared the shame of their failure to be righteous.

But Paul chooses another route, saying that boasting is excluded "by a law of faith" [273] and not "works" (v. 27). Trusting Christ brings righteousness to all. Because all have equal standing, and their standing is not based on what they accomplished or circumcision or descent, then boasting is excluded. Everyone in Christ shares the honor of a righteousness not their own.

In the verses that follow, Paul cites Abraham and, to a lesser degree, David, as evidence for his argument the boasting is excluded. He begins with Abraham, their forefather, and the one with whom Yahweh made his covenant. Judeans would be sensitive and attuned to anything said about him. If Abraham had nothing to boast about before God, how could they? If Abraham's position before God had everything to do with faith apart from circumcision, then they could not rely on circumcision for their place.

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[273] Rom 3:27: "διὰ νόμου πίστεως" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Early on, he makes a contrary-to-fact conditional statement: "For if Abraham was justified by works, then he has something to boast about" (4:2).[274] In verse 3, Paul clarifies his previous statement: he asserts through Scripture that Abraham was not justified through works, but by believing God. Therefore—and Paul does not make this explicit, but it is assumed—Abraham has no reason to boast. But the patriarch is honored before God and man because he is righteous through the gift of God on account of his trust (v. 5).

David's pronouncement in Psalm 31 serves as the perfect supporting example for Paul's argument: "How honorable are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; how honorable is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin" (vv. 7-8).[275] Paul introduces the pronouncement as a *makarism* (v. 6). As has been noted, *makarisms* identified individuals as honorable in light of a judgment that God has made about them or His favor to them. In verse six, Paul he says that "David pronounces a *makarism* upon those whom God has reckoned as righteous."[276] The person who has the righteousness of faith is also the one who has honorable standing. But this is no reason to boast. Why? Because his or her standing is not based on accomplishments, but on the gift of God.

Furthermore, God has concealed what would have shamed them in the community—their iniquities. What would have redounded to their humiliation, God has eliminated. They are both righteous and honorable!

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[274] Rom 4:2: "εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[275] Rom 4:7,8: "μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι· μακάριος ἀνὴρ οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσηται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[276] Rom 4:6: "Δαυὶδ λέγει τὸν μακαρισμὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ᾧ ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Having delivered a punishing blow to Judean boasting, he challenges Judean uniqueness in circumcision. Abraham, Paul asserts, was reckoned as righteous through faith before he was circumcised (vv. 9-10). Therefore, Judeans cannot exclusively lay claim to him as their father; Gentiles who are righteous by faith without circumcision have a claim on him as well (v. 11). The honor of circumcision—at least to the degree that elevated Judeans above Gentiles—was gone. And their righteous father, to whom they traced their descent, was shared with outsiders. For Paul, the righteousness of faith clears out heights of honor and depths of shame so that all who trust Christ share the same honorable position. Descent and circumcision do not bring righteousness and honor. Rather, all in Christ share the righteousness, and, therefore, honor that come through faith. So Paul may assert in a statement that echoes Jesus' *makarism* (Mt 5:5) that the descendents of Abraham (Judean and Gentile), who are righteous by faith, will "inherit the world" (v. 13).

The Honor of the Justified

Paul demonstrates the benefits of those justified by faith starting in chapter five of Romans. The enhanced honor that they have in Christ is a core emphasis.

Paul begins speaking about their increased ascribed honor in a way that seems unlikely: through an allusion to slavery. One is inclined to think of slavery in light of humanity's longing for freedom and liberation. But as Paul speaks of slavery in Romans 6:16-23, there is another element to consider: slave ownership in the context of honor and shame. While it is tempting to view all slaves as equal, they were not, for slaves occupied a variety of positions in the social pyramid corresponding to the identity of their master.[277] The slave of someone who occupied a low social position would, as expected of slaves, be near the bottom of society. Conversely,

[277] Bartchy, "Slavery (Greco-Roman and New Testament)," 66.

being a slave to an elite person could actually elevate the status of an individual. In the same way, slavery to sin led to shame (v. 21). But in Christ, and free from sin, one became a slave to God—one's status increased dramatically (v. 22). So Paul asserts that the honor of those in Christ has been enhanced.

A second illustration reinforces the change in honor standing. Paul employs a marriage analogy to explain the relationship to the law for those in Christ (7:1-6). Explicitly, he speaks of the benefits of being bound to "the one who was raised from the dead" rather than to sin (v. 4). Being bound through marriage to sin resulted in different offspring than belonging to Christ: they produced offspring for death when bound to sin, but bear offspring for God once bound to Christ. Thus, being wed to Christ gives his followers a superior position because they produce more honorable offspring than those that were not. Once again, Paul extols the honorable position of those in Christ.

Paul continues to emphasize their promising situation in chapter eight. He bases his reasoning upon the presence and work of the Spirit in the believer: those who live according to the capabilities of their flesh die, but those who belong to Christ have the Spirit, are led by that Spirit, and are sons of God (v. 14). Those in Christ have a new situation—they become sons, not slaves, and they occupy a significantly elevated position (v. 15). Paul's point culminates in an emphatic declaration: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ" (vv. 16-17).[278] No one

[278] Rom 8:16-17: "αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ. εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι· κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

surpasses the honor of God and Christ—and believers share in that elevated position—confirmed by the presence and testimony of the Spirit.

Paul's declaration about the honor of being in Christ is followed by a simple, significant qualifier: we are God's children and heirs "if we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (v. 17).[279] Suffering with and for Christ is a prerequisite for being glorified with him. This is why Paul boasts in his sufferings (5:3): he anticipates final vindication. Paul does not outline it clearly here, but clearly Christ's suffering and resurrection as an object lesson for Christ's followers.

Paul's sufferings for Christ brought shame and humiliation, as his audience had also experienced. But Paul attempts to insulate them against future suffering by reminding them of future glory. "For I consider that the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us" (v. 18).[280] He reasons that even the creation awaits the day—that the glorious sons of God would be revealed (v. 19). Creation waits because it will throw off decay once the children of God are revealed—sharing in the glorious freedom that is theirs (v. 22). But Paul notes that until then, the creation and the sons of God share the same experience of groaning; the creation awaits restoration, and Christ's followers await the revelation of their true identity as glorious sons of God (v. 23). Ultimately, Paul says to his audience: "I know who you are. You know who you are. But your true identity is hidden. Even the creation waits for you to be revealed. In the meantime, like creation, we groan because things are not as they will be. But

[279] Rom 8:17: "εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[280] Rom 8:18: "Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

our true identity is determined and secure. And it will be revealed in due time that we have the glory of God's sons."

The short term may involve waiting and groaning for the Spirit's help, but Christ's followers' future was now secure. Paul's progression demonstrates this emphatically: they are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (vv. 28-30). In each case the action is done by God. In each case, the action is in the past. Those in Christ may therefore conclude that while the present experience does not validate their true identity, their place with God and future glory are secure.

The words that follow in verses 31-39 only serve to reinforce Paul's argument in prior verses. The future hope of believers is not in vain. God demonstrated his love by offering up his son. Would he withhold the inheritance he promised them (vv. 32-33)? Even in the midst of the travails of life and persecution that threatened to decrease or lessen their honor,[281] their real worth was undiminished, for their honor exceeded that of a conquering general (vv. 35-37). The external appearance was that of lamb to the slaughter, a pitied victim, but in reality they exceeded the worth of a victor in triumphal procession.

At the same time, and equally important, no one could make a charge against them. Because God justified them, they were righteous (v. 33). Again, their position was one of honor, for righteousness was honorable.

[281] Paul quotes from Psalm 44:22 in v. 36: ἕνεκεν σοῦ θανατούμεθα ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐλογίσθημεν ὡς πρόβατα σφαγῆς (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). Read in the context of the entire psalm, it seems that by comparing their situation as that of lambs being led to slaughter, Paul is referencing both its vulnerability and shamefulness. When one interprets "we win a most glorious victory" (ὑπερνικῶμεν, v. 37) in light of the reference to from Psalm 44, it seems fair to conclude that Paul has both triumph and honor in mind; indeed, it was hard to separate the two in Roman thought.

Having established the honorable position of all in Christ, and discussed God's dealings with Israel, Paul cautions Gentile believers against pride (9:13-24). Yes, Paul gloried in his ministry to the Gentiles (v. 13). Yes, Gentile believers have the honor of being grafted into Christ and sharing in his riches (v. 17). But their situation was not something to boast about—for they got there by a gracious gift through faith, not through their own achievement (vv. 18-19). Thus, he admonishes them not to be proud, but to stand in awe for what God has done for them (v. 20). Ultimately, those in Christ—Judeans and Gentiles—occupied the honorable position; but they did not act the way their society is accustomed to seeing the honorable act. They refused to make public claims to honor through boasting. There was a reversal, and it was based on the idea that only one is worthy of honor—God. Paul makes this point soon hereafter. In so doing, he rejects the world's way of competing for honor and position within Christ's community.

New Mindset, New Behavior

Paul, having completed the theological underpinnings of his argument, shifts to exhortations in 12:1. The verse is pivotal within Romans, looking back to the unfolding of the mercies of God through his reconciliation of both Judeans and Gentiles in Christ (cf. Eph 2:19-22) and using said mercies as a basis for the exhortations that follow. Paul's initial and perhaps summary exhortation emphatically calls them to a change of perspective in regard to honor.

Paul urges his audience not to be shaped by the world's patterns, but to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (v. 2).[282] So he asserts that their way of viewing things is critical and endeavors to elaborate on this exhortation in verses three through eight. Specifically, he

[282] Rom 12:2: "μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοὸς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

calls for a change of mind in regard to how his audience thought about themselves: "I say to everyone not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but with sober judgment" (v. 3).[283] They had learned to think of themselves and to relate in a certain way; and some in their community thought they had cause to elevate themselves. But Paul, echoing earlier assertions about boasting, addresses their interior life: thought that elevated individuals above others, especially in Christ's community, was out of place. Sober judgment recognizes that the many who are one body in Christ share the same ascribed honor—even while their gifts differ (vv. 4-8; cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27). As Bruce Winter has aptly noted, this exhortation challenged Roman law and society, which were arranged in such a way as to emphasize status distinctions and favor those who were at the top of the social order.[284]

This passage is foundational for what follows, for this sober way of thinking opens the way for better ways of relating. Paul's challenge to traditional honor values is evident in the exhortations that follow.

It begins just a few sentences later when they are called to "outdo one another in giving honor" (v. 10)[285]—reversing generations of traditional male socialization. In a society where all goods were in limited supply, Mediterranean boys were taught to outdo one another in competition for honor, and an honorable man cherished honor more than life. But in light of his "profound redefinition of family," which identified God alone as father and believers as brothers and sisters, Paul calls for a different way of relating that gives honor freely and rejects the

[283] Rom 12:3: "Λέγω γὰρ…μοι παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ᾽ ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[284] Bruce Winter, "Roman Law and Society in Romans 12-15," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*, ed. Peter Oakes (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002), 76-79.

[285] Rom 12:10: "τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

assumption that it is a scarce commodity; they were to treat each other as though they were blood kin.[286]

Paul continues to challenge the agonistic way of relating in the next sentence, saying: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" (v. 14).[287] When shamed, they were not to repay with dishonor—rather, they offered a different sort of challenge by responding with a blessing. Through Christ, the world had changed for them, and they acted accordingly; they gave honor, even when it cost them something.

Paul picks up where he left off in chapter twelve when he exhorts them to think the same way toward one another (12:3). He instructs them not to think too highly of themselves, but to associate with the lowly (v. 16). Such behavior had concrete implications—it was against social protocol to associate closely with those who were beneath one's own social status. People who stooped to associate with those who were inferior risked being diminished—so to heed Paul's exhortation would most certainly damage the standing of people of higher status. But this was an essential part of the Apostle to the Gentiles' teaching: those who had honor shared it, and everyone was worthy of honor in Christ's community.

As noted in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, the new perspective Paul advocated also influenced how believers responded when affronted. In the world of challenge and riposte, retaliation was deemed necessary in order not to lose face. But Paul urges his audience to "repay no one evil for

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[286] Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," 71-72.

[287] Rom 12:14: "εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας [ὑμᾶς], εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Paul's shift from participles to indicative here may indicate that he is quoting teaching tradition (from Jesus?). It appears as though his use of διώκοντας in v. 13 (repeated in v. 14) triggers his use of the tradition in v. 14. Note that Paul shifts back to participles in v. 16.

evil" (v. 17).[288] He urges peace with all, even if peace necessitates ceding one's right and responsibility to defend his or her honor (v. 18). Vengeance, often practiced as a face-saving measure in conflict, was rejected (v. 19). When those in Christ were challenged, their response was countercultural and counterintuitive: their riposte, their way of overcoming, was now through grace and good to the one affronting them (vv. 20-21). In a world where gifts were given only to those who were worthy of them, this was nonsense, and would have elicited surprise and derision from rivals and witnesses.[289] But all of this was in strong continuity with Jesus' teaching, which preached non-retaliation and spoke of God as a shameless father who gave grace "to the just and the unjust" (Mt 5:38-45).

The implications of the new mindset Paul espouses are evident in his discussion of community relations and eating in chapter fourteen, providing further insight into his approach and presuppositions regarding honor and shame. In line with Jesus' teaching about prayer, fasting, and giving (Mt 6:1-16), Paul emphasizes that only God determines what is honorable. "Let not the one who eats despise the one who does not, and the one who does not eat pass judgment on the one who does, for God has welcomed them" (v. 3).[290] Such judgment is forbidden; for God, like a master with his slave, is the one who has final judgment on his own (vv. 4, 10, 11)—he determines who ultimately has honor. Since all will give account to him, judgment is left to God (v. 12).

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[288] Romans 12:17: "μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[289] This is especially true in Rome, where an affront called for retaliation and frequently resulted in one party dragging the other to court in order to publicly humiliate them, as Winter notes ("Roman Law and Society," 79). See 1 Corinthians 6.

[290] Rom 14:3: "ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενείτω, ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

In his discussion about community relations and eating, Paul reasons that the fundamental concern is the honor of God. In eating or abstaining, believers do so in honor of God; in life or death, those in Christ are God's and live for him (vv. 6-8). When all give account before God, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall give praise to God" (v. 11).[291] God will receive the honor due to him.

Having again exhorted his audience to be of the same mind toward one another (15:5; cf. 12:3), Paul describes concretely the meaning a few verses later. He urges them to "receive one another, just as Christ has received you" (v. 7).[292] This exhortation apparently came in response to a situation in which Judean and Gentile believers were in the practice of meeting in house churches defined by geographical origin[293]—such a scenario seems highly probable in light of the divide between these two groups in antiquity.[294] So Paul again challenges the prevailing wisdom about honor and shame, urging his audience to give honor without regard to such distinctions. Christ serves as the model for such community-building behavior, since he

[291] Rom 14:11: "κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[292] Rom 15:7: "Διὸ προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ὑμᾶς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[293] Francis Watson provides an important argument in favor of this perspective in "The Two Roman Congregations: Romans 14:1-15:13," in *The Romans Debate*, edited by Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 203-15.

[294] As noted below, προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους ("receive each other") can easily refer welcoming an individual (esp. into one's home). Additionally, a situation in which Judeans and Gentiles are meeting for worship in separate homes nicely explains why Paul expresses his desire that they glorify God "with one accord, in one voice" (ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν ἑνὶ στόματι, v. 6) and then follows with the ground to the exhortation of v. 7 that Christ became a διάκονον to both the circumcised and the Gentiles (vv. 8-9). While διάκονος could have referred to a number of different kinds of "helpers" or "servants," it would be easy to see the term as alluding to the "service" hosts provided by welcoming other Christ worshipers into their home and sharing a common table. Finally, v. 10 references the emphatic call from Deuteronomy 32:43 for Gentiles to "rejoice" (εὐφράνθητε) with God's people, the Judeans, which again supports the assertion that Paul was calling for his audience to cease meeting in separate house churches according to regional/ethnic origin.

"accepted you" for the glory of God (v. 7); if Christ could share honor by accepting those who were perceived to be beneath him, then they could too. Paul reasons that if Christ could condescend to accept them from his high position to glorify God, then they could receive each other.

When Paul urges them to "receive" (προσλαμβάνεσθε) one another (14:1; 15:7), it is an appeal to welcome each other into fellowship.[295] Where religious tradition or ethnic identity divided them, Paul exhorts them to extend hospitality that would have challenged honor values. As noted, commensality was only shared with family and those who were considered status equals; now they were challenged to go against prevailing norms in a notable way and to embody the reversal of honor values in their relationships.

Conclusion

This survey of Romans reveals that a reversal of traditional honor values is at the heart of Paul's argument—and, ultimately, at the heart of his gospel. From the beginning, he rejects the world's way of apportioning honor through precedence—both for Rome (1:14) and for Judeans (1:16-17; cf. 3:22-23). At the same time, he emphasizes that God (as revealed through Jesus) does not show partiality (2:10), which renders Judean claims to honor fruitless (2:17-29; 3:22-23, 29). Rather, God graciously gives honor to everyone he justifies, independent of circumcision, as Paul demonstrates through the example of Abraham (4). The high honor of those in Christ is reinforced directly and indirectly in the heart of Paul's discussion about the law and the Spirit (6-8): first, through his illustration about slavery to righteousness instead of sin (6:12-23); next,

[295] The term clearly implies physical acceptance in Paul (cf. Rom 14:1, 3; Philemon 13.) In Acts, the term generally refers to welcoming someone into a home (18:26; 28:2) when it does not refer to taking in food (27:33, 36). "Welcome" seems like the obvious translation in this context.

through his picture of marriage to Christ rather than sin (7:1-6); and, finally, through his emphatic presentation of the blessings of adoption (8:14-37).

The shared honor of everyone who was in Christ, by the mercy of God, had serious implications. Gentile Christ-followers had no basis for boasting because their place among God's people was a result of God's mercy (9:13-24). Life in the community was radically altered, beginning with a new perspective involving shared honor for all (12:1-3). Honor was given freely and confrontational practices intended to defend their honor were rejected (12:10-19). Furthermore, human judgment based on externals was set aside because God would ultimately be the judge—and God would receive the glory (14:3-12). Finally, they were called to welcome each other into their homes and to their tables without regard to ethnic identity, which challenged the prevailing culture's standards regarding honor (15:5-7). In Christ, and as a result of the mercy of God, Paul exhorted his audience to bestow honor differently than ever before, which bore striking resemblance to Jesus of Nazareth's teaching and practice.

Christ Jesus' example was at the heart of Paul's reversal of honor. As I will show, Paul employs Jesus' example to fundamentally challenge the Roman *cursus honorum*; this institution was central to how elites achieved honor and was deeply embedded in the culture of the *colonia* of Philippi.

PHILIPPIANS

> And what is most serious is that these men, not for the sake of what is truly best and in the interest of their country itself, but for the sake of reputation and honours and the possession of greater power than their neighbours, in the pursuit of crowns and precedence and purple robes, fixing their gaze upon these things and staking all upon their attainment, do and say such things as will enhance their own reputations.
>
> Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* 34.29[296]

Honor was a serious pursuit of Paul's contemporaries. Whether in Rome or its *coloniae* throughout the Mediterranean, participation in public life was frequently the means by which men acquired honor, as they advanced through civic offices. The stakes were highest in the Empire's capital city, where elite men enhanced their standing and rose in the pecking order with each successive office—from *quaestor* to *consul*. At the same time, in demonstration of the ingenuity of Rome and the universal pursuit of honor, imitations of the *cursus honorum* became an integral part of life in the *coloniae* as well.

The sheer volume of inscriptions from the early Imperial period vividly demonstrates that the *cursus honorum* was an important part of life in the Roman *colonia* of Philippi; Paul's audience would have been susceptible to its influence.[297] In light of the apostle's pervasive challenge to first-century Mediterranean honor values in his prior letters, Paul's decision to address honor in the context of the *cursus honorum* in his correspondence to the Philippians is not surprising. Indeed, a close reading of the document indicates that Paul employs allusions to the *cursus honorum* as part of his larger attempt to supplant dominant social values and to exhort

[296] Translation from J. W. Cohoon, and H. Lamar Crosby, *Dio Chrysostom : Volume 3* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press ; W. Heinemann, 1971), 365.

[297] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 108-9.

his audience to behavior that would stop dissension, build community, and encourage endurance in the face of shaming persecution.

A Surprising Introduction

Paul's greeting stands in stark contrast to that of his other letters. Instead of referring to himself as ἀπόστολος, which he does in most other writings, he states that both he and his companion in ministry, Timothy, are lowly δοῦλοι ("slaves," 1:1).[298] Since slaves were part of the bottom strata of society, such a self-designation would have undoubtedly shocked Paul's audience, who, by virtue of their membership in the *colonia* Philippi, were very status-conscious.

Why would Paul choose to include such a surprising label while omitting the honorable one? As founder of their community, and an apostle, he may have had honor, but he chose the self-designation to emphasize humility. Perhaps Paul does so because Christ Jesus himself had chosen to "empty himself, taking the form of a slave" (2:7).[299]

His epistolary greeting varies in another significant way from his prior writings: in addition to utilizing the common identifier for his recipients, ἁγίοις ("holy ones"), he also mentions ἐπισκόποις and διακόνοις ("bishops" and "deacons," 1:1). Since Paul never identifies such officers as recipients in any other writings, one must ask why he twice chooses to vary from his common greeting. This second variation in Paul's greeting is connected to the first, as Joseph Hellerman aptly observes:

> "Paul's intentions become most transparent when we place the anomalous presence of 'bishops and deacons' alongside the omission of 'apostle' and Paul's self-designation as

[298] Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastoral Epistles all include some form of ἀπόστολος in the greetings.

[299] Philippians 2:7: "ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

> 'servant' in the salutation. In marked antithesis to cultural norms relating to honor, office, and social status, Paul begins, at the outset of his epistle, to model a principle expressly stated, and exemplified in Jesus, later in the letter (2:5, 6-8)."[300]

This challenge to societal norms relating to honor continues throughout Philippians.

Responses to Paul's Imprisonment

Paul's description of his own imprisonment also provides evidence societal norms had changed for the early Christ worshipers. Where Paul was incarcerated is uncertain.[301] But without question, imprisonment was viewed as shameful gin the ancient Mediterranean world, a reason for which friends and family frequently abandoned prisoners, as Craig Wansink notes:

> "Distance between the incarcerated and their friends and family resulted not only from the fear of those who were free, but also from the shame which seemed to be an inevitable part of incarceration. Regardless of why prisoners found themselves in prison, their mere presence there often was seen as pointing to unscrupulous, immoral or illegal activity. Thus, in *Ap*. 28B, Plato has an imaginary interlocutor ask Socrates that which was on the minds of many: 'Are you then not ashamed, Socrates, of having followed such a pursuit, that you are now in danger of being put to death as a result?' Regardless of whether one was actually guilty of any crime, imprisonment in itself was seen as reason for shame."[302]

While one may conclude the Philippians' care for Paul while incarcerated was due to their strong love for him, such love does not sufficiently explain their actions. It is not only true that Paul received aid, but he also observes that his brothers in close proximity responded with courage in their witness (v. 14).[303] This is because they had identified Paul's course as desirable

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[300] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor,* 121.

[301] This study assumes that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus. For a thorough discussion of the possible origins of the letter, see Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, xxxvi-xliv.

[302] Craig Wansink, *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments (*Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 135.

[303] John Reumann (with reference to Schenk and Loh) notes that the verse includes "a threefold emphasis on the courage of Christians: they are confident (πεποιθότας), they dare or venture (τολμᾶν), they do so fearlessly (ἀφόβως). They were witnesses for Christ before Paul's imprisonment, now (taking περισσοτέρως with πεποιθότας)

and even honorable. They had seen Paul's chains, noted they were for Christ (v. 13), and risked suffering in the same way he did; these brothers and sisters had concluded that Paul's imprisonment was a worthy path. This is confirmed later in the passage when Paul asserts that the Philippians had been "graciously granted the privilege" (ἐχαρίσθη, v. 29) of suffering for Christ with him.[304] Paul had previously proclaimed the shame of his apostleship in order to exhort other communities to follow his example and embrace his understanding of the gospel, rather than the model and perspectve of his opponents. However, one cannot escape the impression that the brothers and sisters in Rome and Philippi had embraced suffering for Christ to a greater degree than other communities. In any case, due to the positive response Paul encountered in his imprisonment, the development of his thought, or the conclusion that this situation required a different approach, Paul explicitly states that suffering for Christ is an honorable path.

Paul, however, faced opponents who did not share his values or his humility. Seeing his vulnerability, some were "motivated by envy and strife" (διὰ φθόνον καὶ ἔριν, v. 15) when they preached Christ. As Paul describes their "selfish ambition" (ἐριθείας, v. 17), it brings to mind his opponents in Corinth who exercised their authority in a domineering manner (2 Cor 11:19-20) and seemed to gloss over the shame of the cross (2 Cor 4:2-3). Rivals may have sought to cause him harm in his tribulation (v. 17), but Paul exemplified forgiveness and joy (v. 18).[305]

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more confident" (John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], 245).

[304] Note the New Revised Standard Version's translation, which preserves the link to χάρις: "For he has *graciously granted you the privilege* not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well" (italics mine).

[305] "The fact, however, that he could conquer his indignation with forgiveness and could replace his irritation with joy (v. 18) provides a model for Christian living and thus is a sufficient reason for allowing this exposure of the darker side of Christian conduct to stand" (Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 48).

Cultural norms called for a strong response when affronted, but Paul responded with humility and modeled behavior he would later exhort the Philippians to follow; he would stress such countercultural conduct through the example of Christ Jesus (2:1-11). As has been noted in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and Romans 12:17-19, such a meek, non-confrontational response was consistent with Jesus' teaching but contrary to male socialization; it would have been perceived as shameful in Paul's society.

Yet, although Paul refused competition for honor, his defense of the gospel had everything to do with honor. He was concerned that he would not be ashamed (ἐν οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι, v. 20) but would proclaim the message "with all boldness" (ἐν πάσῃ παρρησίᾳ, v. 20). However, if the shame would have been his for failure of bold proclamation, Paul contended not for his own honor but so that Christ "would be made great" in his body (μεγαλυνθήσεται, v. 20); it was not about the honor of the messenger, but of the one who sent him. Whether through Paul's living or dying, Christ would be magnified (v. 20). He would not pursue honor for himself.

Paul's Choice: Death with Honor or Living for Others?

A significant gap exists between living and dying. It is therefore surprising that Paul should speak about his situation as a choice between the two, "I am hard-pressed from both directions" (v. 23). How would Paul choose death? Was he, as some scholars have concluded, contemplating suicide?

Such a question is highly relevant, because Paul perceived that he had a choice, saying, "I do not know which I will choose" (v. 22).[306] The best rendering of αἱρήσομαι indicates that he knew he had "the actual ability to make a choice."[307] But what choice did he have? Arthur Droge has argued that Paul was deciding between living in prison and *voluntary death*—with the second option repeatedly chosen by prisoners in Paul's time who sought to escape the loneliness and indignity of imprisonment.[308] However, the context and popular philosophical tradition about imprisonment present a different picture of Paul's situation. As Chris Wansink notes, the apostle's choice might have been in line with that of Socrates and other philosophers who had been accused and incarcerated: should they speak boldly at their defense and risk death to maintain their honor or respond demurely and be freed?[309]

A survey of the broader context appears to support Wansink's supposition. Paul, and those who support him, perceived that he had the responsibility to speak publicly in defense of the gospel (εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι, v. 16). In this context, he mentions his expectation that he would not be put to shame (οὐδενὶ αἰσχυνθήσομαι, v. 20), but that he would continue speaking boldly (ἐν πάσῃ παρρησία, v. 20). We find that Paul's self-description reflects

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[306] Phil 1:22: "τί αἱρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[307] As Wansink (*Chained in Christ*, 101) notes: "Although the Greek word αἱρέομαι can have connotations of both 'choosing' and 'preferring', to translate this term with the English verb 'prefer' results in ambiguity. When αἱρέομαι is translated as 'prefer', persons who do not know Greek are left unsure of whether the preference reflects the actual ability to make a choice." And in the two other usages of the middle form of this verb from the New Testament—in 2 Thessalonians and Hebrews, the meaning is the same. "Both of these instances support the definition of this verb found in Liddell and Scott: the actors are 'choosing', they are 'taking for themselves'." Review of contemporary Greek texts "demonstrates that these New Testament examples represent typical Greek usage of this verb."

[308] See A.J. Droge, "*Mori Lucrum*: Paul and ancient Theories of Suicide," *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988), 263-86; "Did Paul Commit Suicide?" *Bible Review* 5 (1989): 14-21; "Suicide," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, 225-31; and A.J. Droge and J.D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide & Martyrdom Among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1992).

[309] Wansink, *Chained in Christ,* 121. Wansink aptly cites the descriptions of Socrates' situation by Xenophon (*Ap.* 9), Aristotle (*Ap.* 38E) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.1.164-65).

the situation of a philosopher in his day. Given his incarceration, there was potential that if he behaved as a good philosopher, his frank defense of the gospel could lead to execution. Indeed, death seemed natural for those concerned with pursuing honor.

Paul, however, chooses differently. Certainly, he holds out the possibility and even expresses his desire for death (v. 23);[310] this seems to heighten the significance of his choice. In spite of his conclusion that death would be κέρδος ("gain," v. 21)—could Paul be thinking in terms of acquiring honor?—he chooses the path of Christ's humility and an other-centered attitude (v. 21; 2:4ff.). While Christ's path of humility and concern for other's interests led him to the most shameful of deaths (2:8), Paul's path involved setting aside death with honor and living for others through the shame of imprisonment (1:25).[311] He wanted them to follow his own example of sacrifice for the sake of the community.[312]

The Ἀγών of Heaven's Citizens

Paul's series of challenges to honor norms in Philippians culminates with an imperative beginning in verse 27: "Only conduct yourselves as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."[313] Paul urges them to embrace the behavior he and other "brothers" model and to reject

[310] Philippians 1:23: "τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῷ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

[311] J. L. Jaquette ("A Not-So-Noble Death: Figured Speech, Friendship and Suicide in Philippians 1:21-26," *Neotestamentica* 28[1994], 189) offers a penetrating observation about the passage: "But the carefully crafted parallelism between Christ and Paul must not lead us to overlook an equally shrewd antithesis. Paul makes a subtle yet implicit contrast between himself and his Lord. Instead of surrendering his life as Christ did, Paul relinquishes his death....Both Paul and his Lord surrender something extremely valuable. But what they sacrifice is different" (189). With Droge, Jaquette concludes that Paul speaks of suicide in 1:20-24. While Paul relinquishes death, it seems clear that he lets go of the sort of death that Socrates was said to have chosen in similar circumstances: one with the honor of speaking boldly, assertively challenging opponents without backing down.

[312] Wansink, *Chained in Christ*, 115-19.

[313] Philippians 2:27: "Μόνον ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text. Reumann (*Philippians*, 263-64) rightly notes the civic

the destructive behavior of his opponents. Against rivalry (cf. vv. 15, 17), they were to stand firm in one spirit (v. 27). Rather than competing for or defending their own honor—which was expected in Paul's world[314]—he calls them to contend together (συναθλοῦντες, v. 27) for the sake of the gospel of Christ; Paul's response to his opponents' ill-motivated proclamation of the gospel (vv. 13, 17-18) serves as the perfect example. In same way as the "brothers" who were not ashamed of Paul's imprisonment but spoke boldly (v. 14), the apostle asserts that they were "granted the privilege" of suffering for Christ (v. 29, ἐχαρίσθη). Indeed, they had seen Paul's ἀγών ("contest") and were engaged in a very similar one (v. 30); much like athletic competition, it was a struggle, but an honorable one.[315] The cumulative effect of Paul's argument is significant: the Philippians must live in a manner worthy of their heavenly citizenship; they must reject competition for honor, which was evident in Mediterranean antiquity, and embrace struggle and suffering together for Christ as an honorable path.

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undertones in v. 27, especially between πολιτεύεσθε and ἀξίως in light of inscriptions found in the Greco-Roman world that speak of men doing things worthy of the king, citizens, and gods.

[314] Such competition for honor was a common thing, as Richard S. Ascough (*Paul's Macedonian Associations*: *The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2003), 144) notes: "Alongside unity and cooperation, voluntary associations emphasized interpersonal rivalry and competition, with particular attention to *philotimia*. Such 'love of honour' was the motivating factor for many benefactors of the associations. In contrast for this striving for honour in the associations, Paul's injunction that the Philippians 'do nothing from selfishness or conceit' indicates that they are not to compete with one another but 'in humility count others better' than themselves (2:3)."

[315] Victor Pfitzner (*Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967], 190) indicates that Paul's employment of the Agon motif can be traced to popular moral philosophy of his day. While Paul employs the same terminology, he changes its significance: "It has been transferred from *individualistic 'moral ethics'* to 1. an *'apostolic ethos'*, to an illustration of the nature, conditions and rules which apply to the office of the Apostle and the minister of the Gospel, and 2. to *a description and characterization of the life of faith* and its conditions." Though the image ultimately came through popular philosophy, Pfitner concludes that Paul's usage of the motif most closely parallels one found in IV Maccabees, which emphasizes that "The contest of the martyrs is not only against persecution and suffering, but also the struggle for the preservation of godliness in suffering" (191). Pfitzner notes early on in his study that the love of fame and pursuit of honor are at the foundation of the motif (16-18).

Elevating Humility

Paul continues his challenge to honor norms leading to the Christ hymn in 2:6-11. As he exhorts his audience, he instructs them to regard one another as more important than oneself "in humiliation" (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνη, 2:3). Here is another situation in which Paul's instruction would have challenged the sensibilities of his audience, for ταπεινοφροσύνη and its cognates always carried a negative connotation outside of Christian literature. Rather than being a virtue, it was "a servile characteristic of inferior classes" or was identified with "meanness."[316] In the same way, the associated term ταπεινὸς ("humble") generally carries a negative meaning[317] and "was frequently employed and especially so to describe the mentality of a slave."[318] Nevertheless, Paul calls his audience to ταπεινοφροσύνη prior to describing Christ's example. It is no surprise that Paul employs a related term in the *Carmen Christi*, saying that Christ Jesus "humbled himself" (ἐταπείνωσεν 2:8). Ultimately, Paul elevates behavior associated with inferiority, low-status, and weakness to the highest virtue; this would have been startling to his audience who was deeply concerned with honor, such would have been startling. The apostle had again inverted cultural norms!

[316] Reumann, *Philippians*, 308-309, includes countless examples of the negative connotations associated with this term outside of Christian literature, including Epict. 3.24.56 and Jos. *JW* 4.9.2.

[317] For example, Aristotle associated ταπεινὸς "with 'servile' (*Eth. Eud.* 3.3, Lft.' cf. 1231b.9 and 19); Plato, with 'not free' (*Leg.* 4.774c); Arrian, with 'low-born, ignoble' (Epict. 1.3; cf. Aristot. *Eth. Nic.* 4.8 1124b.22)" (Reumann, *Philippians*, 309).

[318] Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 87-88. Acts 20:18, 19 exemplifies this connection between self-humiliations and servants in a speech attributed to Paul: "you know how I lived among you the whole time, slaving...with humiliation and tears" ("ὑμεῖς ἐπίστασθε…πῶς μεθ' ὑμῶν τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἐγενόμην, δουλεύων…μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ δακρύων" [Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*]. My translation from the Greek text.). The speech rings with authenticity, both in terms of vocabulary and status reversal. Such is emphatic and serves as the first thing Paul says to his audience.

Carmen Christi as *cursus pudorem*[319]

As we have seen, Paul's correspondence to the saints in Philippi begins with a reversal of honor norms. This reversal comes to the forefront and increases in intensity as the writing approaches the heart of its argument in the Christ hymn of 2:6-11. While it was significant for Paul to challenge societal values through appeal and his own example, doing so through the example of Christ made an emphatic, memorable statement for his audience.

A close analysis of the passage reveals that Paul brings a direct, far-reaching challenge to his brothers and sisters in the Roman *colonia* of Philippi. Indeed, Joseph Hellerman argues persuasively in his monograph *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi* that the epistle fundamentally challenges the tradition that ordered life in Rome and its *coloniae*, the *cursus honorum*. Jesus' example inverts the *cursus*:

> "…Paul's portrayal of Jesus consists of three progressively degrading positions of social status in the Roman world, corresponding to the structure outlined above, as Jesus descends a *cursus pudorum* from equality with God (Status Level One), through the taking on of humanity and the status of a slave (Status Level Two), to the public humiliation of death on a cross (Status Level Three)."[320]

Paul might have found other ways to express how things had changed, but it is difficult to imagine him finding a more emphatic means of expressing it.

> "Most striking…are the terms δούλου (v. 7) and σταυροῦ (v. 8), which represent, respectively, the most dishonorable public status and the most dishonorable public humiliation imaginable in the world of Roman antiquity. That a crucified δοῦλος is identified in the ensuing verses as one who is greatly honored by the deity - indeed, logically so (διὸ καὶ, v. 9) - utterly redefines social relations as understood among persons in the ancient world."[321]

So Paul aims for nothing less than social transformation through the Christ hymn of 2:6-11.

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[319] This is the subtitle of Joseph Helleman's aptly titled *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi:* Carmen Christi *as* cursus pudorum.

[320] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 130

[321] Ibid., 131.

As the hymn opens, Christ begins in an exalted position "in preparation for the ensuing humiliation of his *cursus pudorem*."[322] When Paul asserts that he was ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ("in the form of God," v. 6), he does so to emphasize Christ's glory and locate Christ at the pinnacle of the social order.[323] Yet, as will be seen, he handles his high position in an unexpected way.

How Christ responds to his exalted position has been the subject of debate. What is to be made of ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο (v. 6)? Some conclude it speaks of equality with God as something "to be taken by force," inferring that it was something that Christ did not already possess. However, Roy Hoover's broadly recognized study concludes that the phrase is a widely-attested idiomatic expression referring to someone choosing whether "to exploit something" already "at one's disposal." Tthus, Paul actually states that Christ chose not to exploit what was already his.[324] Christ's example stands in stark contrast "with prevailing Roman convictions and practices relating to honor and social status"[325]—for who would choose to embrace a shameful position rather than utilize his or her resources to maintain and/or enhance honor?

Having occupied the most exalted position in verse six, the only direction Christ could go was down. Many have disagreed about the Christological significance of ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν ("he emptied himself" v. 7), but all would agree that the words vividly express Paul's point: willingly traversing between the glory of God and the humiliation of a slave (μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, "taking on the form of a slave," v. 7) was enormously significant. Δοῦλος carried strong negative connotations for Paul's status-conscious audience due to the fact that being a slave was

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[322] Ibid.

[323] Ibid., 132.

[324] Roy W. Hoover, "The HARPAGMOS Enigma: A Philological Solution," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 118.

[325] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 135.

the epitome of dishonor.[326] Δοῦλοι occupied varied positions within the social pyramid based on the identity of their master,[327] but Paul's use of slave terminology—in line with popular use—was unquestionably intended to identify Christ's position as one of dishonor, inferior to all free people.[328]

The passage concludes what Paul's audience would have viewed as a stunning descent, indicating that Christ "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (v. 8).[329] As noted above, crucifixion was both a gruesome and humiliating way to die. Adding to its shame was the fact that it was commonly used to execute slaves; in fact, the method was so widely used "that the expression *servile supplicium* ('slaves' punishment') came to be used as a technical phrase of sorts to refer to death by crucifixion - even where non-slaves were concerned."[330] It seems difficult to imagine a more dishonorable, degrading death in Paul's world.

Nevertheless, the passage's description of the situation makes it even worse. Christ did not merely suffer crucifixion, but he deliberately "humbled himself" (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν, v. 8) unto a slave's punishment; such would have been repulsive to free men, who had aversion to subservience.[331] Furthermore, Paul notes Christ's obedience (ὑπήκοος, v. 8) to accept death by crucifixion and in so doing "continues to portray Jesus as acting in a manner which sharply

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[326] See Hellerman's thorough analysis of slavery, honor, and social status in *Reconstructing Honor*, 136-42.

[327] Bartchy, "Slavery (Greco-Roman and New Testament)," 66.

[328] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 138-40.

[329] Phil 2:8: "ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυρου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[330] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 146-47. In particular, Hellerman notes that the term is a reference in the example of Scipio Africanus, who "crucified a group of Roman deserters in Africa during the war with Carthage" (147).

[331] Ibid., 143.

contrasts with the cultural values and social codes of the leading municipal figures of first-century Philippi."[332] Christ has thus reached the bottom; his *cursus pudorum* is complete.

Christ's confounding descent is not the end of the story, however. Whereas the watching world perceived humiliation and shame, Yahweh judged his behavior to be honorable: "Therefore God also exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (2:9-11).[333] In the Greco-Roman world, the status of the one conferring an honor determined its significance; because of God's exalted position, there was no greater conferral of honor available. The efficacy of God's grant of honor was beyond question: every knee in heaven and earth and under the earth would bow (v. 9), and every tongue would confess that Jesus is Lord (v. 10).[334]

The conjunction διὸ ("therefore" v. 9) emphasizes that God exalted Christ for the very reason prevailing society rejected him: because he used his power to serve others. "Such a utilization of power - indeed, a voluntary relinquishing of power and prestige - would have struck members of the Roman elite as abject folly;"[335] but through the example of Christ, Paul defines this as the path of honor. The Christ hymn in 2:6-11 challenges the accepted way of achieving honor in Roman *coloniae* and supplants the *cursus honorum* with Christ's *cursus pudorem*.

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[332] Ibid., 143-44.

[333] Phil 2:9-11: "διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[334] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 150-51.

[335] Ibid., 148

Ultimately, Paul is not simply describing a change in honor norms. By employing Caesar's title κύριος for Jesus Christ (v. 11) Paul presents him as a rival emperor.[336] In fact, he does not simply present an alternative emperor, but radically redefines what authority and empire should look like.

The Model of Epaphroditus

Paul's challenge to social norms related to honor continues with his description of Epaphroditus (2:25-30). The fact that he is sending Epaphroditus to Philippi gives him an occasion to use him as a sacrificial, humble model in the same mold as Christ Jesus: "Hold men like him in high regard, for he nearly died for the work of the Lord, risking his life in order to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me" (vv. 29, 30).[337] Paul had earlier used honorable labels like συστρατιώτην ("fellow-soldier," v. 25) and ἀπόστολον ("apostle," v. 25) to describe Epaphroditus, but that would hardly have identified his service within the range of honorable male behavior: risking his life to visit Paul in his shameful imprisonment. But again, behavior not previously recognized as honorable was now worthy.

Putting Aside Prior Claims to Honor

Having laid out a counter-cultural path to honor through the examples of Christ Jesus (2:4-11) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30), Paul now presents the accepted way of acquiring honor as

[336] Mikael Tellbe, "The Sociological Factors behind Philippians 3.1-11 and the Conflict at Philippi," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 55 (1994): 111-13.

[337] Phil 2:29, 30: "τοὺς τοιούτους ἐντίμους ἔχετε, ὅτι διὰ τὸ ἔργον Χριστοῦ μέχρι θανάτου ἤγγισεν παραβολευσάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ, ἵνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρός με λειτουργίας" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

worthless. First, he warns his audience against circumcision (3:2-4). Then he renounces his own prior pursuit of honor in order to know Christ (3:5-14).

The section begins with cutting invective. "Beware of the dogs, those evil-workers, those mutilators of the flesh!"[338] It seems apparent that Paul has Judean opponents in mind, due to the fact that each of the terms are "inversions of Jewish boasts."[339] Indeed, it appears that these opponents were "Judaizers:" there is no evidence that these are Judeans urging Gentile Christ-followers to become circumcised; they seem involved in the community; and they bear resemblance to the Judean Christ-worshiping agitators of Acts 15 and Galatians.[340] The statement that follows implies that Paul speaks into a situation where his audience was being told that they would enhance their position in the new community by being circumcised: he says that they are already "the true circumcision" (v. 3), they glory in their crucified Messiah (rather than circumcision, v. 3), and they do not put confidence in the flesh (v. 3). This is in contrast to the opponents who apparently saw the world much the same way Paul did before his encounter with Jesus (vv. 4f.).

Paul's warnings give the impression that circumcision was attractive to his audience in Philippi because they perceived it would enhance their honor.[341] Gentile believers in these nascent communities had grown up in a religious environment that had expected multiple

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[338] Phil 3:2: "Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[339] Tellbe, "The Sociological Factors," 98.

[340] Ibid., 98-100.

[341] Other motivations may have influenced Paul's audience. Mikael Tellbe ("The Sociological Factors behind Philippians 3.1-11 and the Conflict at Philippi," 97-121) argues persuasively that Judaism's positive legal position in Rome and its *coloniae* may have made circumcision desirable in light of the persecution they had experienced.

initiation rites.[342] After baptism, which they may have identified with mystery initiation, it would have been natural for them to expect further initiations to enhance their status and bring revelation.[343] Circumcision would have seemed like a natural next step and an opportunity to enhance their position for Paul's status-conscious audience. It is in this context that Paul indicates that they "put no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3); his strong response emphasized that he rejected his society's popular ways of gaining honor through religious rituals like circumcision and that he would not judge people on this basis either.[344] In contrast to men of his day who made bold, public claims to honor, Paul boasted not in himself but in Christ Jesus (v. 4).

While he himself had previously pursued honor in such ways and could say he had "reason to put confidence in the flesh,"[345] he would do so no longer. But Paul's refusal to do so does not keep him from expressing the basis for his earlier confidence in himself:

> "Circumcised on the eighth day,
> from the people of Israel,
> from the tribe of Benjamin,
> a Hebrew of Hebrews,
> as to the law, a Pharisee,

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[342] Luke Timothy Johnson (*Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1998], 84-85) notes this perspective in his analysis of ritual imprinting in the context of early Christianity: "Their cultural expectation (or imprinting, if you allow) was that one initiation would lead to another. The reasons for seeking circumcision, in other worlds, may have had much less to do with theology than with the logic of ritual practice in antiquity and the tendency of religious people to seek perfection, that is, to finish the course on which they have set themselves."

[343] Johnson (*Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, 87-88), citing V. Turner (*The Ritual Process*), J. La Fontaine (*Initiation*), and M. Milner Jr. ("Status and Sacredness") concludes that status enhancement is part of the experience for initiates at all levels into secret societies; he reasons that such factors would have an impact on Gentile Christ followers' decisions to be circumcised.

[344] Cf. 2 Cor 5:16, in which Paul states that "from now on we do not regard anyone according to the flesh" ("ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἴδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα"). He bases this on the assertion that "even though we have known Christ this way, but now know him thus no longer" ("εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν" [Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*]. My translation from the Greek text.). Ultimately, Paul infers that since people were wrong when they judged Christ based on externals, it would be wrong to judge anyone else on this basis as well; in light of the new creation reality (2 Cor 5:17), no one was to be judged according to the flesh!

[345] Phil 3:4: "Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

> as to zeal, persecuting the church,
> as to righteousness which comes from the law, blameless."[346]

While this is similar in content to Paul's other lists of achievements in 2 Corinthians 11 and Galatians 1, Joseph Hellerman notes its similarity to another source:

> "The manner in which Paul outlines his inherited status and achievement in Judaism would have pointedly resonated in a Roman setting, where the display of one's honors in *cursus* form was familiar to all. Listeners steeped in the social world of Roman Philippi could hardly have heard Paul's list of accomplishments without immediately reflecting upon the multitude of inscriptions that confronted them on a daily basis with the honors and achievements of their fellow-colonists."[347]

This represents "Paul's pre-Christian *cursus honorum*," as he presents his prior, Judean claims to honor in an Imperial context.[348]

Paul's description of his former claims to honor would have resonated—especially in light of the presence of "Judaizing" opponents—making his renunciation in verses seven and eight all the more staggering to his status-conscious audience in the *colonia* of Philippi: these former sources of boasting he considered "loss" (ζημία, v. 7) and "rubbish" (σκύβαλον, v. 8). Paul's contemporaries would have identified his prior course as honorable, but Paul identifies as worthless what would previously have been a source of boasting, and he warns his audience against a path that promised honor but in truth did not deliver in the eyes of God. He thus models and ultimately calls his audience to a lifestyle that radically challenged dominant society's definition of honor.

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[346] Phil 3:5, 6: "περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[347] Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 123.

[348] Ibid.

Rejecting the Shame of the Cross

Having set aside his own prior claims to honor, Paul addresses the behavior of his "Judaizing" opponents, which was at odds with his own. He emphasizes this contrast by structuring polemical statements about his opponents in 3:18-19 in a similar way to his affirmation of his audience in 3:3. Demetrius Williams notes the striking parallels:[349]

"3.3 ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή,	3.18-19 πολλοὶ γὰρ…τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὧν τὸ ὧν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια
οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες,	ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες.
3.3 For it is we who are the circumcision,	3.18-19 For many live….as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction;
who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh	their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things."

Paul's comparison could easily be described as the contrast between "the true circumcision" and "the false circumcision;" the pairings provide a vivid picture of Paul's perception of his opponents' behavior. He rejects their emphasis on kosher laws, saying, "Their god is their belly" (v. 19).[350] Whereas Paul and his audience "boast in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3)[351], the opponents inverted this notion: "their minds are set on earthly things" (v.

[349] Demetrius Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 223* (London; New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 224.

[350] Phil 3:19: "ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[351] Phil 3:3: "καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

19)[352] so they put confidence in the flesh. They should have "boasted in Christ Jesus" with Paul and the others, but they had chosen to glory in something that was shameful (v. 19); they emphasized circumcision when they should have gloried in Christ.

Ultimately, Paul's contrast between 3:3 and 3:18-19 illustrates why he would label them as "enemies of the cross of Christ" (v. 18).[353] Paul believed that salvation had come to all people through Christ—whether they were circumcised or not (Rom 1:16-17; Gal 3; Eph 2:14-17). To urge Gentile Christ-worshipers to be circumcised, turned them away from the glory of the cross of Christ—God's ultimate work of salvation—and toward confidence in circumcision and the accompanying legal requirements. The prospect of being circumcised might have been desirable for Gentile Christ-followers who wanted to enhance their honor or avoid persecution, but those who championed such a path had done a shameful thing and thus revealed themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul's conclusion that Christ's crucifixion allowed Gentiles to be equal partners among God's people was a stumbling block (1 Cor 1:23) and a source of shame (Rom 1:16) to these Judean Christ-worshipers. But Paul would glory in Christ Jesus, who suffered the most shameful death of crucifixion. Furthermore, he declined to give honor based on externals, including circumcision and ethnic identity. Again, Paul challenges the honor values of his society.

[352] Phil 3:19: "οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[353] Phil 3:18: "τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Χριστου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

The Coming Glory of Heaven's Citizens

Those who remained in Christ, who followed Christ's self-emptying example of humility and ultimately suffered for and with Christ, would end up sharing the same sort of honor restoration as he had (2:9-11).[354] Paul asserts as much in 3:20-21:

> For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation into one similar to his glorious body.[355]

A life that followed in the steps of Christ's *cursus pudorum* (2:5-11) and Paul's renunciation of prior claims to honor (3:4-8) would mean real losses for Christ-worshipers in a status-conscious setting such as Philippi—ultimately leading to shame and humiliation. Thus, Paul describes their bodies as bodies "of humiliation" (v. 21). But as in the παρουσία of a Caesar to save one of Rome's colonies, Paul says that the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ will transform the Christ-worshipers' situation (v. 21); in particular, their bodies will be changed into glorious bodies in the pattern of that of their exalted Lord. They may not look like citizens of heaven today, but Paul asserts that their true identity will be revealed in the end—and it is one that reflects the transcendent honor of those in Christ Jesus.

What a Gift Means

As the letter approaches its conclusion, Paul addresses the significant matter of the gift he had received from them through Epaphroditus. Paul's imprisonment had made his situation dire. It is impossible to know what—if any—help he was receiving from other assemblies that he had planted, but the gift from Philippi came to Paul in a time of need. Prisons did not provide for the

[354] Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*, 231.

[355] Phil 3:20, 21: "ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

needs of the incarcerated, making it impossible for an individual to provide for oneself; and prisoners were frequently abandoned by friends.[356] Paul's comments here reflect both his gratitude for their aid under the circumstances and his desire that they avoid concluding that his receipt of their gift acknowledged that he was their client and they were his patrons.

After rejoicing at the aid they provided to him, Paul begins a brief section expressing his self-sufficiency (vv. 11-13): "Not that I speak from need, but I have learned to be content in any circumstance."[357] He may have been in a desperate situation and had, of course, expressed joy at having received their assistance, but he clearly wanted them to understand that he did not rely on them (v. 11).[358] One could forgive the Philippians if they believed that they had become his patrons through their financial assistance, but Paul emphasizes that he never requested their aid (v. 10), and he apparently seeks to avoid having their relationship defined in terms of patrons and clients.[359] Paul rejects the world's way of distributing honor via the patronage system; this perspective was inconsistent with the high honor that those in Christ shared.

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[356] Wansink, *Chained in Christ*, 134.

[357] Phil 4:11: "οὐχ ὅτι καθ᾽ ὑστέρησιν λέγω, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔμαθον ἐν οἷς εἰμι αὐτάρκης εἶναι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text. Paul employs the classic philosophical and particularly Stoic virtue of αὐτάρκης ("self-sufficient, content"). In the apostle's effort to contextualize their gift, he speaks of himself using virtues his Macedonian audience would have understood and embraced.

[358] While Martin and Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 259) emphasize Paul's desire not to have his "personal independence...compromised in any way," his description in vv. 14-19 of their partnership indicates the issue is less about Paul staking out his "personal independence" and more about defining the nature of his relationship with them—whether they were partners, connected as patron and client, or connected some other way (i.e. through Christ).

[359] Ascough (*Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 154-55) explains Paul's situation and communications more fully: "In Philippians 4:10-20 Paul seems to recognize that the result of the Philippians' places him in the role of client, but his debt would be one of having to honour the Philippians, an awkward social position for the founder of a community. Paul's language in 4:14-19 is aimed at not allowing the Philippians to think that a patron-client relationship has been established with him in their debt. He makes it clear that he did not complain of his current condition (4:11) nor did he ask them for help (4:16) This is an important clarification, as most benefactions in antiquity came about as the result of the client requesting funds from the patron."

Close review of the argument of verses 14 through 20 indicates that Paul was trying to frame their assistance in the context of a different paradigm. Chris Wansink concludes that Paul intentionally discusses the gift, at this point in the letter, "so that he could shape how the Philippians viewed" the gift they had sent through Epaphroditis. Wansink explains:

> "This was not simply a present. Paul was in prison. As a prisoner, he would have needed support from outside of the prison. And the Philippians' gift to him likely provided him with his basic needs. Paul, however, does not want the Philippians to see their gift merely as support for the imprisoned. Paul wants them to see it as an opportunity for them to grow together through their shared commitment to the gospel."[360]

The language Paul employs in this section appears to support this assertion; Paul speaks in terms of partnership and worship, and he then asserts that God would be the one to repay their gifts to him.

References to partnership run throughout verses fourteen through sixteen. Paul mentions that they have done well to "share with" him in his imprisonment (συγκοινωνέω, v. 14). In the revealing sentence that follows (vv. 15-16) Paul describes how thoroughly they had been involved with him. He indicates that they were alone among the churches in financially supporting his work, speaking in terms of business partnership (ἐκοινώνησεν), and he uses the vocabulary of commerce (δόσεως καὶ λήμψεως) in reference to "the debit and credit sides of the ledger" (v. 15).[361] Paul notes that they sent help for him on more than one occasion when he was in Thessalonica (v. 16). This echoes his affirmation of their partnership with him from the letter's opening (esp. vv. 5, 7) and places their assistance to Paul in the context of shared effort for the purpose of the Gospel. Finally, he speaks of "the profit that would accrue to their

[360] Wansink, *Chained in Christ*, 129.

[361] Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 270.

account,"[362] implying that their ongoing involvement in his ministry would result in spiritual benefits. Describing their financial support in terms of a business partnership was intended to discourage them from concluding that their gift in his need had created a patron-client relationship; Paul thus maintained his countercultural perspective that honor was to be shared in Christ's community.

Paul then employs language from civic worship to explain their gift. His earlier description of Epaphroditus as a "minister" to Paul's need (λειτουργὸν, 3:25), and of their gift as ministry (λειτουργίας, 3:27), would have prepared them for such a perspective. He thus addresses their assistance: "I am fully supplied because I received from Epaphroditus what you sent – a fragrant aroma (ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας), an acceptable sacrifice (θυσίαν δεκτήν), well-pleasing to God (εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ)" (v. 18).[363] Although Paul "was the immediate recipient of their generosity, the ultimate recipient was God."[364] Again, Paul reframes their gift: it did not change their relationship into an honor-enhancing, patron-client tie; rather, it was worship to God. That God is the ultimate recipient of the gift is reaffirmed in the sentence that follows, since he is the one who will repay what they gave to Paul by providing "for all their needs according to his glorious riches" (v. 19).[365]

Paul's response to their contribution brings up another significant issue in regard to honor norms: Paul handled money that was contributed to him differently than those in other voluntary

[362] Phil 4:17: "τὸν καρπὸν τὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον ὑμῶν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[363] Phil 4:18: "πεπλήρωμαι δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ᾽ ὑμῶν, ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας, θυσίαν δεκτήν, εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[364] Martin and Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 272.

[365] This follows naturally from Paul's self-designation of "slave of Christ" (1:1): they were giving to a slave in the context of the work he was doing for his master. It is therefore only natural that God and not Paul would be the one repaying them for the gift.

associations. Richard Ascough has noted that "voluntary associations did often contribute money for their founders." But the use was entirely different, as the resources were spent on honorary inscriptions and crowns, compared to "Paul's use of the financial support to found other communities….The Philippians do seem to have defined themselves from their formative stage as being involved in supporting their founder in his efforts to found other communities."[366] It would have been acceptable for Paul to have utilized support to enhance his own honor through crowns and/or inscriptions, but he chose rather to set aside accepted avenues to pursue honor (cf. 3:4-9) and use his power for the sake of others through the establishment of new communities.

Conclusion

Paul's correspondence to believers in Philippi represents a repudiation of traditional pursuit for honor and introduces alternative paths, paths that would have been perceived as shameful in Paul's world.

From the beginning, Paul challenges honor values by modeling and calling his audience to the counter-culture value of humility. Outside of the Christ-confessing communities, humiliation was perceived as shameful and servile. However, Paul demonstrates humility in his greeting, whereby he identifies himself as a slave rather than an apostle and specifically addresses bishops and deacons within his audience (1:1). He also exhorts them to "humiliation" (ταπεινοφροσύνη, 2:3) prior to the Christ hymn where he emphasizes Christ's humility and obedience to death on a cross (2:6-8). Paul calls on his audience to embrace a shameful, servile path that he had modeled in 2 Corinthians but had never previously required of an audience.

[366] Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 152-53.

At the same time, Paul rejects the old way of competing for honor. Paul faced serious opposition from "brothers" in his affliction; but rather than challenging them, he rejoices that Christ is preached (1:18). He emphasizes that as heaven's citizens their call is to reject competition-induced strife, as Jesus taught (Mt 5:38-45), and to contend together for the Gospel (1:27-30).

Philippians presents compelling evidence that imprisonment and suffering for Christ's sake came to be perceived as honorable within the Pauline communities; they had embraced their founder's reconfiguration of honor-shame values. Very early in the correspondence, Paul describes how his imprisonment—which would have been perceived as shameful in broader society—actually resulted in his brothers and sisters proclaiming Christ boldly (1:13-14). At the same time, the aid and visitors Paul received from the Philippian assembly, and from others, indicates that those in the communities Paul founded did not identify his imprisonment as shameful. Indeed, Paul asserts that suffering for Christ was actually a gift that they had been granted (1:29).

Perhaps the most compelling messages in Philippians come through the models Paul presents, models that invert traditional honor values and emphasize community-building. Early in the letter, Paul shares his deliberation about his own imprisonment and trial and concludes that he would reject death with honor in the mold of Socrates and choose to live, because it would be more helpful for his audience (1:21-23). The Christ hymn (2:6-11) is pivotal to the writing's argument and presents an alternative to the *cursus honorum* that Paul's audience would have been familiar with; indeed, Christ's example of status-renouncing incarnation and death for the sake of others reversed Roman honor values. Epaphroditus' sacrificial model of aiding a

prisoner is meant to be understood in the same way—they were to hold men like him in high regard (2:29-30).

As with the Christ hymn, Paul's renunciation of his former claims to honor (3:5-8) is meant to be read through the lens of the *cursus honorum*. At the same time, Paul's rejection of his former boasts counters the efforts of Judean missionaries; they were promoting circumcision for Gentile Christ-worshipers to avoid persecution (3:2-4) and were ultimately ashamed of the cross (3:18). Paul emphatically argues that the old avenues to honor (including circumcision) were worthless, and he warns his Gentile brothers against them.

The Philippians' gift to Paul has great relevance in the context of honor and shame. It would have been easy for the Philippians to view their gift as one that defined the dynamics of their relationship, situating them as patrons and Paul as their client. Paul delicately avoids such a conclusion by emphasizing their partnership in service for Christ, the lack of any request on his part, and the nature of their gift as a sacrifice to God—one that God himself would repay (4:10-19). As a result, neither Paul nor the Philippians would see their honor enhanced through the gift, but, as with all things, the glory would be God's (4:20).

CONCLUSION

Paul of Tarsus lived in a society that prized honor above everything, even life itself. In that context, it is no surprise that Paul addresses issues related to honor throughout his letters—one would expect him to address the issues of his time and culture. But a thorough review reveals that addressing honor and shame was actually central to Paul's purpose. Again and again, the questions he addresses with his communities are connected to honor: Who gets honor? What constitutes honorable behavior? Why didn't his approach align with that of the honorable leaders they respected? Paul's answers sound a discordant note: he frequently challenges who receives honor and what behaviors are honorable because his encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus had changed everything.

The sheer volume of references and their place within Paul's correspondence indicates that these questions concerning honor were at the heart of his gospel and apostolic praxis. As one reads through the Pauline corpus, it is evident that his understanding of the gospel had a strong social dimension. Being in Christ not only meant justification before God, but it promised ascribed honorable standing in both the present and at the eschaton and required honor-sharing behavior within the community.

Each correspondence in this study brings its own contribution, and the end result is a compelling mosaic that connects Paul's perspective to that of Jesus and distinguishes Paul's from that of the dominant culture.

The Shape of Paul's Challenge

As has been noted, Paul's challenge to honor is multi-dimensional. A core claim that Paul makes throughout his letters is that everyone in Christ shares high ascribed honor.

The High Honor of Those in Christ

One prominent expression of this idea was Paul's assertion that God was their Father. Those in Christ were defined by a deep and abiding reality: they had the desirable situation of being sons and daughters of God, who had actually chosen them as he had Abraham (1 Thess 1:3-4). Their standing as God's children meant that they had the honor of being his heirs (Rom 8:14-17), ultimately sharing in the blessings God had promised Abraham (Gal 3:26¸ 29).

The Spirit's presence had a role in improving their situation as well. Only those in Christ had the Spirit and therefore had revelation of his divine wisdom—which none of the rulers of this age understood (1 Cor 2:9, 10). Because they beheld the glory of God in the face of Christ, they were being transformed from one degree of glory to another through the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18; 4:4, 6). The Spirit's presence also increased their honor because it could do something the flesh could not do: produce righteous fruit in them (Gal 5:22-23).

Paul also emphasizes the enhanced honor of those in Christ in a variety of examples within the argument of Romans, illustrating the centrality of these issues to his gospel. It begins with his discussion of Abraham's faith; Paul identifies this patriarch as the father of everyone who believes, noting the honor of those whom God justifies (Rom 4:6-8) and emphasizes that those who are of faith, both Judeans and Gentiles, share their father's inheritance (4:9-13). As the argument develops, Paul continues to emphasize the honor of being in Christ through other comparisons: first through the enhanced position of being God's slave instead of sin's slave (6:12-23) and then through bearing Christ's honorable progeny rather than that of sin (7:1-6). It culminates with Paul emphasizing that although their true identity as God's children may have been obscured because of their suffering for Christ, their honor exceeded that of a conquering general at his triumph (8:18-37).

The Shared Honor of Those in Christ

From Paul's perspective, the exalted position of those in Christ was always shared; this is consistent throughout his writings. As one person in Christ (Gal 3:28) and members of the same body (1 Cor 12:12-27; Rom 12:3-8), they all enjoyed the same honor of being attached to their head, Christ. As has already been noted, the body metaphor was employed ubiquitously to exhort group solidarity; but what distinguished Paul's approach was that he actually utilized the metaphor to tear down rather than reinforce hierarchy (1 Cor 12:22-25; Rom 12:3).

Paul's radically open table also emphasized the shared honor of those in Christ since everyone had a seat without regard to ethnic identity or status. Such was evident early on when he recounted his confrontation with Peter over withdrawing from fellowship with Gentiles (Galatians 2:10ff.). The same issue appears in his appeal in Romans 15:7 that they welcome each other: Judean and Gentile had shared honor in Christ and were to join in worship and commensality together (Rom 14:1-15:12). Finally, Paul's rebuke of elites in Corinth, who shamed those who had nothing in the Lord's Meal, emphasizes the shared honor of those in Christ regardless of status and calls them to stop practicing table fellowship that reinforced distinctions (1 Cor 11:17-34). Paul's inclusive, honor-sharing table fellowship has strong continuity with that of Jesus of Nazareth, who was remembered to have practiced and taught a radically open table. Yet Paul goes a step further than Jesus, who was not remembered to have shared table with Gentiles,[367] by welcoming people regardless of ethnic identity and urging others to do the same.

Perhaps Paul's strongest expression of the shared honor of those in Christ is found in Galatians 3:28, a baptismal creed that was fundamental to his thought: "There is neither Judean

[367] It must be noted that Jesus *is* remembered to have shared a table with Zacchaeus, a Judean who lived like a Gentile.

nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no male and female; for you all are one person in Christ Jesus."[368] Paul thus reinforces the high position of all in Christ with a creed that undermines the fundamental distinctions between people in terms of ethnic identity, status, and gender. He continues to challenge these distinctions throughout his ministry, but is forced to place parameters on the behavior of women, in the context of worship, in order to avoid bringing shame on their men; individuals always had freedom in Christ, but they were to use their power for the sake of others.

By virtue of this perspective, Paul rejected precedence, the widely-recognized and distinctly Roman cultural value. As such, he quickly mentions to them that visiting the Christ-worshipers in Rome, the imperial seat, was no more important than visiting any other community (Rom 1:14). At the same time, while Paul indicated that the gospel was first to Judeans and then to Gentiles (Rom 1:16-17), he later notes that Judean precedence was irrelevant because "all had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23; cf. also 2:9-11).[369] The rejection of precedence was another area of strong continuity with Jesus, who was remembered to have turned precedence on its head by giving pride of place to the last (Lk 13:30).

Honor: A Gracious Gift

Everyone had ascribed honor in Jesus' community, so Paul emphatically reminded his audiences again and again that their position in Christ and all that they had was a gift from God. This understanding of grace meant that boasting was rejected—whether it was based on heritage

[368] Gal 3:28: "οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[369] Rom 3:23: πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

(Rom 2-3), their inclusion among God's people (Rom 9:18-19), or the leader with whom they identified (1 Cor 4:6-7). At the same time, Paul urged them not to think too highly of themselves, since everything had been apportioned by God (1 Cor 12:18; Rom 12:3), and to follow Christ's example of humility (Phil 2:3).

Honor-Sharing Communities

The life Paul called his audiences to—one touched by the grace of God—looked qualitatively different from that of the dominant culture. From the beginning to the end of the decade or so that Paul was writing his undisputed letters, he exhorted his audiences to honor-sharing behavior in line with Jesus' teaching and practice.

Paul urged his audiences to use their power for the sake of others, in imitation of Christ (Phil 2:6; cf. Mk 10:35-45), instead of exploiting it for their own interests. For example, in the context of his discussion about eating meat sacrificed to idols, Paul emphasizes that he gives up his own rights and "makes himself a slave to all"[370] for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23). Paul's exhortations to women in Corinth about praying and prophesying with head coverings (1 Cor 11:2-16) and about their disturbing speech (1 Cor 14:34-37) must be understood in this light; he urges them not to exercise their liberty in ways that bring shame to their men. He also reminds the same audience of Christ's example of costly, honor-diminishing giving in order to secure their promised contribution for the Judean saints (2 Cor 8:9). Paul's mention of Epaphroditus' sacrificial service on his own behalf in the Philippian correspondence is also intended to encourage others to imitate this sort of community-building behavior (Phil 2:25-30). Leveraging one's own advantages was expected in the dominant culture, but Paul always

[370] 1 Cor 9:19: "πᾶσιν ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

emphasized that those in Christ must be prepared to use or even relinquish their power for the sake of others.

In the latter part of his correspondence, Paul introduced a new, closely-related expression of the honor-sharing lifestyle he had exhorted his audiences to follow: they were to be "humble." In line with Jesus' well-attested humble approach to leadership, Paul himself modeled this behavior both in his service to the Corinthian community without charge (2 Cor 11:7)[371] and then by choosing to live for others rather than to die with honor (Phil 1:21-25). He goes so far as to exhort them to "humiliation" in mind, which was hardly a Roman virtue (Phil 2:3). Paul's development of this countercultural virtue culminates in the example of Christ, who first became a servant and then "humbled himself to become obedient to death" (Phil 2:7, 8).[372]

Rejecting the World's Avenues to Honor

At the same time, Paul exhorted his audiences to reject the dominant culture's way of achieving and demonstrating honor. However much they might have lost face by not responding to a challenge, in keeping with Jesus' teaching they refused to retaliate or compete for honor. As brothers—and offspring of the same Father—they would not repay evil for evil (1 Thess 5:14-15; Rom 12:17-18) or take vengeance (Rom 12:19). Paul modeled this behavior himself when rival preachers caused him trouble or affronted him, choosing not to respond in kind (Phil 1:15-18; 2

[371] When one reads Paul's usage of ταπεινὸς ("humble" – 2 Cor 7:10; 10:1) and ταπεινόω ("to humble" – 2 Cor 11:7) in 2 Corinthians in reference to himself, it is hard to escape the impression that Paul is doing so because his opponents in Corinth have described him as such. Interestingly, what may have been a putdown by Paul's opponents in Corinth becomes a cardinal virtue in Philippians (2:4; 2:8). When he is "weak" in the eyes of his opponents, Paul is strong in Christ.

[372] Phil 2:8: "ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Cor 10:1) and urging his audience to do the same (Phil 1:27; Rom 12:14). Rather than competing to save or gain face, they would "outdo one another in giving honor" (Rom 12:10).[373]

Claims to honor, though commonplace in the rest of the world, were also said to be out of place. As was noted before, Paul rejected their proud boasting because all that they had came from God (Rom 9:18-19; 1 Cor 4:6-7; Rom 2-3); in order to demonstrate the foolishness of their boasting, Paul exposed and boasted in unmentionables such as the cross (Gal 6:14), the shameful circumstances he endured (2 Cor 11:16-30), and his socially debilitating thorn (2 Cor 12:1-10). While it was common for founders of associations and other such leaders to have honorific crowns given to them, Paul would instead glory in the health and well-being of the communities he established (1 Thess 2:19-20; Phil 4:1).

Paul carefully avoided being caught in patron-client relationships, which were calculated to enhance the position of both parties. In Corinth, Paul refused the financial assistance of certain members, preferring the shameful position of humbling himself and preaching the gospel to them free of charge, as though he were their slave (2 Cor 11:7; cf. 4:5). Paul was forced to take a different approach with the community in Philippi due to his imprisonment; while he was not in a position to refuse their help, he took great pains to describe the assistance he received from them in terms of business partnership and civic worship, emphasizing that the ultimate recipient was God (Phil 4:10-19).

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Paul's inversion and ultimate rejection of the *cursus honorum* in Philippians constitutes a final challenge to how honor was achieved in both Rome and the *coloniae*. In fashioning a hymn to Christ as *cursus pudorum* (2:6-11) and

[373] Rom 12:10: "τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

identifying his own personal *cursus* as rubbish (3:5-11), Paul rebuffs not simply his culture's values, but the shape of the Empire.

The Cross and the End of the World

Throughout Paul's ministry, he emphasizes that the cross fundamentally changed how he viewed the world, especially in regard to honor and shame. Because Paul had participated with Christ in his crucifixion (Gal 2:20), he had irrevocably been severed from the world (Gal 6:14)—the world was no longer in position to judge him; therefore a good showing in the flesh became irrelevant (Gal 6:12). In fact, the world was not even equipped to judge, for the epoch-shattering crucifixion of Christ had revealed its wisdom as foolishness (1 Cor 1:18); the rulers of this age failed to recognize true wisdom and honor and, so doing, "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:6-8). Paul therefore considered his prior pursuit of honor as "rubbish" and set it aside in order to know Christ (Phil 3:4-9).

In particular, Paul refers to "the cross of Christ" to assert his shame-embracing position and expose the foolishness of his opponents' adherence to dominant cultural values. He employs it in 1 Corinthians to demonstrate the foolishness of emphasizing eloquence in preaching (1:17-18). On two other occasions, Paul refers to "the cross of Christ" to expose the true nature of "Judaizing" rivals as opposed to the gospel (Gal 6:12-14; Phil 3:18). Paul's assertion in the prologue of Romans that he was not ashamed of the gospel with its inclusion of the Gentiles must also be read in this light (1:16-17).

Embracing the Shame of the Present

Since the crucifixion had transformed Paul's relationship with the world in terms of honor and shame, it is only natural that his interpretation of his own experience as an apostle would be shaped by this reconfiguration of values. In his earliest extant correspondence, Paul exposes shameful scars he received through persecution—he calls them τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησου—and appeals to them to silence his opponents (Gal 6:14). In more than one situation, he asserts that God was deliberately exposing him and his apostolic companions to violent, public humiliation—first as those sentenced to death in the arena (1 Cor 4:9) and then as those led as defeated foes in triumphal procession (2 Cor 2:14)—as a demonstration of Yahweh's reversed wisdom and honor. Paul repeatedly describes himself and his companions as weak and servile, likening them to servants (διάκονοι – 2 Cor 3:6; 11:23), slaves (δοῦλοι – Gal 6:17; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 1:1), and clay pots (2 Cor 4:7-9); their humiliating circumstances were so similar to Christ's that he describes them as "carrying the dying of Jesus in the body" (2 Cor 4:10).[374] He again and again exposes the shame of his situation as a minister and apostle—both in terms of the circumstances he endured (2 Cor 6:4-5; 11:23-33; 12:1-7) and the face-diminishing, honor-sharing approach he embraced (2 Cor 11:20-21)—in order to challenge his audience's understanding of leadership, power, and honor (2 Cor 12:8-10). It is a testimony to the effectiveness of his message and model that, near the end of his ministry, Paul's communities treat his imprisonment for Christ as honorable and not shameful: they support him in prison (Phil 4:10-20) and proclaim the gospel with greater boldness (Phil 1:13-14). The perspective of his audience had developed so significantly that he could easily speak of their suffering as an

[374] 2 Cor 4:10: "τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

honorable path; he describes it as a contest (ἀγών) and indicates that suffering for Christ was a privilege they had been granted (Phil 1:29-30).

Anticipating a Glorious Ending

Just as Jesus had done (Matt 5:10-12), Paul taught again and again that their honor-sharing, face-diminishing lifestyle along with their endurance of shaming persecution would ultimately be vindicated; it would redound to great glory (2 Cor 4:13-18; Rom 5:2-3; 8:18-21). Both the exaltation and anticipated return of Christ were foundational to this perspective.

Paul's encounter with the resurrected Jesus demonstrated that God had vindicated both Jesus and his way of life. Thus, the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 pivots at "therefore, God exalted him" (v. 9),[375] emphasizing that Yahweh's grant of honor came precisely because of the way he shamelessly used his power for the sake of others. In the same way, Paul uses similar language in Philippians 3:20-21 to affirm that those in Christ who share in his self-emptying humility and who suffer like him will share a status-restoration like his.

Christ's return would make their expectation reality. The Lord Jesus Christ would return for his own, both the living and the dead; risen, they would have the honor of being escorts in his royal appearing in plain sight of countrymen who had subjected them to public humiliation for their profession of faith (1 Thess 4:13-18). Just as Christ was raised, they would be raised; and their weak, dishonorable bodies would be transformed into glorious, powerful bodies (1 Cor 15:42-44). Their current appearance was frail and servile—and obscured their true identity as God's children—but Paul believed the sufferings they were experiencing were actually producing surpassing, eternal glory (2 Cor 4:13-18; Rom 8:18-21). All of this would occur when

[375] Phil 2:9: "διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Christ returned and their "humiliated" bodies were turned into bodies that were like his glorious body (Phil 3:20-21).

Changing Judgment: A Different Audience, a Different Time

Paul employed a series of arguments emphasizing that the world's judgment was rejected in favor of God's judgment, shifting the audience and ultimately redefining what was honorable and shameful. The shift in audiences was a natural corollary of Paul's earlier assertion that the world could not understand true wisdom and honor as evidenced by its decision to crucify the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:6-8); their judgment which was based on externals had failed them in regard to Christ and therefore rendered their current assessment of those in Christ as fruitless (2 Cor 5:16-17).

Paul frequently emphasized this shift in audiences, which was in line with Jesus' rejection of human judgment in favor of the Father's judgment (Matt 6:1-18), when he referred to himself, ministry partners, or Christ-worshipers as slaves or servants of Christ or God. After strongly announcing disapproval of his opponents' message in Galatians, he concludes that such bold expression confirms that he is not a man-pleaser but Christ's slave, concerned only with pleasing God (Gal 1:8-10). As a servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God, Paul was not concerned about how the Corinthian community judged him, but rather desired to be found faithful to God who could see hidden things and would judge in the end (1 Cor 4:5). He employs similar rationale when he addresses what members of his Roman audience choose to eat, asking what right they had to judge a servant of another; God would ultimately judge when each person stood before him (Rom 14:3-12). Paul's perspective reveals a shift not only of audience, but a

temporal shift from present to future and a spatial shift from outward to inward because God ultimately judges based on motives and in light of hidden things (2 Cor 5:9-12; cf. 4:18).

This perspective on God's judgment had wide-reaching implications for Paul. Because Yahweh was impartial, Paul did not give deference to men just because they were leaders (Gal 2:6), as demonstrated by his rebuke of Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:11ff.). God's impartiality also meant that judgment and mercy came to both Judeans and Gentiles (Rom 2:9-11).

Paul's Thought Development

The strong continuity in Paul's challenge to dominant cultural values in regard to honor and shame seems natural in light of his world-altering experience of the risen Jesus, which engendered his perspective on the Fatherhood of God and participation with Christ. Whether it was the shared honor of those in Christ, the face-diminishing, honor-sharing lifestyle he emphasized, or the glorious ending they awaited in the face of shaming persecution, Paul's broad viewpoint was consistent. Differences were usually the result of Paul adapting his message to the situation.

That is not to say that Paul's thought in this area does not develop or deepen. Rather, the situations he faced in his effort to resocialize Gentiles pushed him to clarify his message and create new ways to communicate the challenge to traditional honor values. A notable example of this is Paul's instructions about women in the context of prayer and prophecy in 1Corinthians 11 and 14. He had previously expressed the shared honor of those in Christ in emphatic ways through a baptismal tradition (Gal 3:27), but some women had exercised their freedom in ways that brought shame to their men (1 Cor 11:4-7; 14:35). Paul responds by calling them to submissive behavior that saves face for their men in the eyes of outsiders (1 Cor 11:10; 14:34,

35). Paul also changes how he expresses the baptismal tradition by excluding the phrase making the male-female distinction (1 Cor 12:13) in order to avoid further misuse or misunderstanding.

Paul is also forced to adapt his approach toward accepting material assistance from communities. Shortly after he founded their community, Paul accepts aid from the Philippians—which they seem to have interpreted through the lens of a business partnership—to plant other communities (Phil 4:15-17). He later rejects a gift from the Corinthian community to avoid being enmeshed in a patron-client relationship that would have reinforced the dominant honor values that Paul rejected (2 Cor 11:7).[376] When imprisoned in Rome, he is left with no choice but to accept aid from Philippi for his own needs, but then he is careful to define their relationship as other than a patron-client attachment (Phil 4:10-19).

Paul's humiliating confrontation in Corinth and subsequent difficult correspondence with that community appears to have influenced his perspective in regard to humility in his apostleship and for all Christ-worshipers. Paul had previously described himself as a slave (Gal 6:17; 1 Cor 9:19), but it is in 2 Corinthians that he begins to use the servile language of humility to describe his behavior and apostleship. Later, in Philippians, he emphasizes humility again, but this time speaks of its importance in the believers' life, in imitation of Christ Jesus (2:8; cf. 2:3).

Another development in Paul's thought has to do with the way he describes the shameful elements of his experience as an apostle after 2 Corinthians—especially in Philippians. From Galatians through 2 Corinthians, the shame of his ministry is expressed again and again. For his audience he bares marks from beatings and whippings that bespoke lowliness and servitude (Gal 6:17). He compares his ministry to the experience of the spectacle of death (1 Cor 4:9) and then to being led as God's defeated foe in triumphal procession (2 Cor 2:14-17). In both cases he

[376] Interestingly, while they are happy to create a patron-client relationship with Paul, the Corinthians had been slow to fulfill their promise to contribute to Paul's collection for their Judean brothers and sisters (2 Cor 8:6-10). Had they decided against the gift because it would not enhance their reputation in Corinth?

emphasizes that God had intentionally done so to expose his servants for all to see. However, there is a shift in Philippians: Paul speaks of suffering for Christ as a noble contest (1:27, 30), emphasizes that suffering is a privilege that they have graciously been granted (1:29), and declares his deep yearning to share fellowship with Christ in his sufferings (3:10). Furthermore, the response to his imprisonment mentioned in Philippians reveals that believing brothers and sisters perceived his chains for Christ as honorable—many preached the gospel more boldly (1:12-14), and the Philippians provided financial support rather than leaving him without aid (4:10-19).

Paul's Far-Reaching Reversal of Honor

From start to finish, the challenge to the dominant culture's honor values is central to Paul's teaching and behavior. It was at the center of his apostolic practice. It was at the heart of his gospel. And it provided the pattern for life in Christ. In all of this, his preaching and praxis demonstrate strong continuity with what Jesus modeled.

Paul's perspective was based on his experience of the risen Christ and energized by two of the central myths of early Christianity: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and God's identity as Father. These created a framework upon which Paul developed his thought. The challenge of resocializing Gentiles in this area required flexibility; each situation was somewhat different and he frequently had to adjust his approach and the way he communicated the reversal of honor. His experience of shaming persecution, harsh opposition, and imprisonment ultimately shaped his understanding and expression of how these deeply held values had changed.

To some degree, Paul's inversion of honor and shame mirrored his eschatological outlook. Those in Christ had high honor as deeply-loved children of God since the glory of the

new creation was emerging. Their embodiment of the new creation values of giving honor and acting humbly struck a discordant note within a society defined by the old creation. But just as God had raised and exalted Jesus, he would one day do the same for those in him, vindicating them and giving them new, glorious bodies when the old world gives way to the new.

CHAPTER 4:

1 PETER AND REVELATION

Jesus of Nazareth and Paul after him presented a fundamental challenge to their society's values with regard to honor and shame. Not only did they urge men to behave contrary to the way they were taught, but they treated all people with honor regardless of their perceived worth in society. The resocialization process was often challenging, but the result of their efforts was a network of communities that gave honor to all people—from the least to the greatest—and eschewed competition for honor and public claims of it that were evident throughout the first-century Mediterranean world.

The spread of Christ-worshipping communities throughout the Mediterranean region precipitated continued development of the movement's honor and shame values. In particular, as assemblies were planted and took root in Asia, early Christians were forced to consider their relationship with society at large. As will be evident in this analysis of 1 Peter and Revelation, these often-trying interactions yielded further developments in the challenge to honor values while early *topoi* continued to be employed.

1 PETER

> A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Therefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believe in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions.
>
> Plutarch, *Moralia* 140D[377]

As the movement spread into Asia, early Christians faced challenges regarding how they would engage outsiders. In no place was this more evident than with the situation of a wife who had begun to worship Christ but occupied the household of an unbeliever. In the moral division of labor, a wife was supposed to demonstrate shame by "shutting the front door" and remaining within to avoid even the appearance of infidelity. Plutarch applies this more broadly by emphasizing fidelity to a husband's gods, so not to subject him to shame. Such requirements made it challenging for believing wives and others to navigate households that were unfriendly to their faith; many found themselves in uncomfortable, marginalized positions.

How does one speak to those isolated believers? First Peter addresses his audience in Asia as they face trials while attempting to engage their household and society at large (1:6). Some are suffering unjustly (2:19-21) for the sake of righteousness (3:14, 17). Because they were suffering in the flesh as Christ did, they were to "arm themselves" with Christ's attitude (4:1). They faced "a fiery ordeal" and "testing" because they were Christians (4:12-14, 17). No wonder Peter describes them as foreigners and marginalized outsiders (1:1, 17; 2:11).[378]

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[377] Cited by David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 26 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1981), 85.

[378] Commentators such as John Elliott (*A Home for the Homeless : A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy : With a New Introduction* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1981], 19-20) assert that πάροικος and παρεπίδημος were technical terms indicating that they were 'resident aliens' and 'temporary visitors' in Asia 1 Peter's audience functioned as second-class citizens due to status as aliens in Asia. While there some disagreement as to whether the writing uses these terms to indicate a concrete legal standing, the way these and

Their proximity to their opponents determined the nature of the persecution that 1 Peter's audience faced. They encountered verbal abuse, including slander (καταλαλοῦσιν, 2:12; cf. 2:15), insults (λοιδορούμενος, 2:23; λοιδορίαν, 3:9), reviling (ἐπηρεάζοντες, 3:16) and reproach (ὀνειδίζεσθε, 4:14).[379] In view of this evidence and the absence of reports of physical violence, most scholars conclude that the persecution 1 Peter's audience faced was confined to vocal opposition and insult, including from within their own households.

Verbal abuse was not physical violence, but it created its own set of problems in an honor-shame culture.[380] As Steven Bechtler rightly notes, the sort of affronts they experienced were not taken lightly and left them diminished[381]; their opponents intended for them to lose face, as they did if they failed to respond. In spite ofwhat it might cost them in the interchange with their opponents, 1 Peter exhorted them to follow a countercultural path: they were not to return evil for evil but to follow the honor-sharing example of Christ. At the same time, the writing assures them of their high position as God's elect (1:1; 2:9) and members of his household (2:5; 4:14); he emphasizes that a cruciform life in which they did not engage in the honor challenge

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other terms are employed in 1 Peter indicates that they are marginalized, social aliens. (See, for example, Steven Bechtler, *Following in His Steps* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 81, for a critique of Elliott.)

[379] Thus Elliott (*Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 65) notes: "The Greek terms denoting this abuse are those typically employed to describe the process of verbal attack, ridicule, and public shaming…"

[380] Steven Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, 94) emphasizes the significant connection between suffering and honor in 1 Peter: "the key to understanding the problem of suffering in 1 Peter lies in the letter's use of the language of honor and dishonor. The bare statistics alone are impressive: If we consider only the most obvious words from the honor semantic field, we find the δοξ- root fourteen times in the letter, the τιμ - root six times, and ἔπαινος twice. Accompanying these terms are several that denote dishonor or shaming, most notably καταισχύνω (twice) and αἰσχύνομαι (once)." Of course, such statistics alone are not indicative of key themes, but, as will be evident, honor, shame, and suffering are closely connected in 1 Peter.

[381] Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 97-103.

Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, 103) stresses the centrality of this issue to the correspondence: "The essence of the problem addressed in 1 Peter, therefore, is the pervasive threat to honor inherent in the relentless verbal attacks of non-Christians against the letter's addressees. For the intended readers, adherence to Christ had issued in conflicts with their neighbors that threatened to undermine their place in society."

would lead them to great honor, as it had for Christ (3:14-21; 4:12-14). They had an exalted place (2:4-10) and the promise of a great inheritance (1:4).

Chosen Aliens

First Peter distills their situation into a simple form by addressing its audience as "chosen aliens" (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις, v. 1).[382] On one hand, they are chosen and elect (ἐκλεκτοῖς), blessed with the descriptor that the God of Israel had given his covenant people[383]; this term was carried over to describe the church in other New Testament passages.[384] Because of the exalted position of Yahweh, the one who had chosen them, they were endowed with great honor.

But they are also aliens (παρεπιδήμοις). On one level, this appears to emphasize their separation from the world and its values, as 2:11 implies, because they have another home—as commentators have long recognized. But παρεπιδήμοις has further significance, indicating that they were outsiders in a vulnerable situation and at the mercy of their city's or town's population.[385] It is critical to recognize both the positive and negative implications of their situation—Peter's audience may have had another home, but they were marginalized in their

[382] "Not a few commentators correctly note that the juxtaposition of ἐκλεκτοῖς and παρεπιδήμοις (which is unique in biblical literature) affirms for the addressees that they are God's chosen and informs them that being God's chosen entails an alien existence in society. In Michaels's words, 'The addressees are "strangers" because of (not despite) being chosen.' The metaphor ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς, thus, expresses, in terms of the LXX people of God, the letter's fundamental conception of Christian existence as liminal with respect to society at large" (Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 137).

[383] For example, 1 Chron 16:13; Ps 104:6, 43; 105:5; Is 43:20; 45:4 (LXX).

[384] For example, Rom 8:33; 2 Tim 2:10; Rev 17:14.

[385] For example, note Polybius *Histories* 32.6 (which addresses the situation of Greeks in Rome) and Gen 23:4 and Ps 38:13 (LXX) (Abraham in Canaan). Like other foreigners, they relied upon the good will of their hosts for their well-being.

current home and occupied a tenuous position.[386] This is especially true in light of how strangers are treated in honor-shame societies.

A parallel with Abraham is in the background of this description. Like Abraham, they are both "elect" and "aliens." Some of them, like Abraham, had left their father's household to follow Yahweh and had ended up outsiders. Yet, concurrently, they had been brought into a new household with a new Father (1:3) and, like Abraham, had been promised a secure inheritance (1:4, 5)[387]; this surely meant enhanced honor for those who had seen their status diminished as a consequence of their faith.

Unexpected Honor

Peter continues to emphasize their high honor in the face of opposition, even if its full revelation is delayed. They had encountered various trials (πειρασμοῖς, v. 6) in the form of shaming slander and putdowns.[388] But rather than redounding to their shame, it actually serves as "proof" of their faith that results in praise (ἔπαινον), glory (δόξαν), and honor (τιμὴν) at the

[386] "In general terms the letter offered consolation and encouragement to suffering Christians who lived on the fringes of the political and social world of Asia Minor. More specifically, the strategy of its authors was to counteract the demoralizing and disintegrating impact which such social tension and suffering had upon the Christian sect by reassuring its members of their distinctive communal identity, reminding them of the importance of maintaining discipline and cohesion *within* the brotherhood as well as separation from Gentile influences *without*, and by providing them with a sustaining and motivating rationale for continued faith and commitment" (Elliott, *A Home*, 148).

[387] Karen Jobes (*I Peter* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005], 28-44) speculates that 1 Peter's audience may have been displaced from Rome due to disturbances Christianity had caused there and as a consequence of Imperial colonization policies. If so, the blessings 1 Peter offers to his audience may have further significance: "Moreover, since wealth and inheritance were most often vested in land in the first-century world, a displacement from one's homeland meant that whatever property one stood to inherit would be of uncertain benefit, if any….Thus, the loss of inheritance and family rights could lead directly to feelings of hopelessness. But even if the Christians to whom Peter writes have not been physically displaced, their new life as Christians affected their social status" (Jobes, *1 Peter*, 85).

[388] As has already been noted, this includes slander (καταλαλοῦσιν, 2:12; cf. 2:15), insults (λοιδορούμενος, 2:23; λοιδορίαν, 3:9), reviling (ἐπηρεάζοντες, 3:16) and reproach (ὀνειδίζεσθε, 4:14).

return of Christ (v. 7). Thus the tests that would have diminished them were going to demonstrate their exalted position in the end![389]

They were not aware how exalted their position actually was! The opposition they faced and severed relationships would have brought shame, but their knowledge of the gospel (v. 12) put them in an enviable, even honorable position: "As their 'rebirth' implies a preceding death and termination of old associations and allegiances (social and religious), so the gospel of the sufferings and glory of Christ, which was shared exclusively with them by the Holy Spirit, distinguishes and exalts them by the Holy Spirit, distinguishes and exalts them above even the prophets of old and angels."[390] Their embrace of the gospel did not ultimately diminish them, but enhanced their ascribed honor.

Yet their concrete circumstances indicated that the full realization of their true standing was withheld until a future time. In this notion, Christ appears to be the prototype: his "sufferings" came first and then "glories" followed (v. 11). The fact that God "raised him from the dead and gave him glory"[391] was intended to provided "hope." It is easy to infer that they could hope, just as Christ suffered and was given glory, that their shameful situation would be reversed; and they would be given glory as well. First Peter later makes this connection explicit.

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[389] Betchler (*Following in His Steps*, 182-83) thus states: "First Peter 1:6-7 implies that the suffering-commendation sequence is typical of Christian life. Moreover, not only is commendation said to follow suffering, it is said to be the purpose for suffering. The addressees have to suffer for a brief time in order that (ἵνα) their faith might ultimately be shown to result in praise, honor, and glory. That is to say, the course of the Christian life is not merely suffering and subsequent honor but suffering and *consequent* honor. Furthermore, 1 Pet 1:7 implicitly connects Christ's glorification with that of believers: The final disclosure of Christ's glory will usher in the praise, honor, and glory of his followers."

[390] Elliot, *Conflict*, 30.

[391] 1 Peter 1:21: "τὸν ἐγείραντα αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ δόξαν αὐτῷ δόντα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

The High Honor of God's Household

Believers' connection with Christ in both his suffering and vindication is again presented in the section addressing him as "a living stone" (λίθον ζῶντα, v. 4):

> "As you come to him, a living stone which has been rejected by men but is chosen and honorable in God's sight, you yourselves as living stones are being built into a house(hold) of the Spirit to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God through Christ Jesus. For in Scripture it says, 'Behold I lay in Zion a chosen and honorable cornerstone and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.' Therefore, to you who believe he is honorable, but to those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected, this has become the cornerstone' and 'a stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall;' they stumble because they disobey the word, to this they were appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession, so that you may declare the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."[392]

The continuity between Christ's experience and theirs begins with the acknowledgement that he was "rejected by men" (2:4), a situation they had encountered themselves. But if they had shared his experience of slander and abuse, they also shared his honor: he was "chosen" by God (v. 4), just as they were (1:1).[393] In 1 Peter's world, the audience was critical to determining honor; in this case, only Yahweh's opinion mattered, and he had determined that the living stone

[392] 1 Pet 2:4-10: "πρὸς ὃν προσερχόμενοι λίθον ζῶντα ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων μὲν ἀποδεδοκιμασμένον παρὰ δὲ θεῷ ἐκλεκτὸν ἔντιμον, καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες οἰκοδομεῖσθε οἶκος πνευματικὸς εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους [τῷ] θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. διότι περιέχει ἐν γραφῇ· ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιὼν λίθον ἀκρογωνιαῖον ἐκλεκτὸν ἔντιμον καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ καταισχυνθῇ. ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμὴ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, ἀπιστοῦσιν δὲ λίθος ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας καὶ λίθος προσκόμματος καὶ πέτρα σκανδάλου· οἳ προσκόπτουσιν τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν. ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς· οἵ ποτε οὐ λαὸς νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ, οἱ οὐκ ἠλεημένοι νῦν δὲ ἐλεηθέντες" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[393] Karen Jobes (*1 Peter*, 146) points out the correspondence between the experience of Christ and the audience: "Peter's readers can no doubt relate to the experience of rejection, since they too were being rejected by their society as unfit. Here Peter reintroduces the theme of election (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1-2) and associates the rejection of the Living Stone with the rejection of those who come to him. The parity of Jesus' experience with the experience of Peter's readers is a conceptual structure throughout the book."

was both "chosen" and "honorable" (2:4).[394] The world's verdict was incorrect, and what they derided as shameful was actually honorable.

Therefore, coming to Christ, the living, chosen, and honorable stone promised to enhance their position. In particular, "being built" as "living stones" into an οἶκος πνευματικὸς (v. 5) had great significance for their status. For some time, scholarship concluded that οἶκος πνευματικὸς referred to a spiritual temple; the consensus was based on the accepted meaning of οἶκος as a temple, the imagery of stones built up, and their description as a "holy priesthood" engaging in the ritual of "offering spiritual sacrifices" (v. 5). However, in the last part of the twentieth century, John H. Elliott has advanced the argument that οἶκος refers to "household," which fits within the semantic range for the term; Elliott's perspective has gained wide acceptance.[395] Central to Elliott's assertion has been that the household theme permeates the letter[396] in contrast to "the absence of cultic interest elsewhere in the document" outside of the current passage.[397] Jobes rightly observes, however, that οἶκος may intentionally carry a double meaning, referring to their community both as a household and temple. She notes that Peter could have easily

[394] John Elliott (*1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 410-11) concludes that these terms have deeper significance: "The terms 'elect' (*eklektos*) and 'honored' (*entimos*) derive not from Ps 117 but from Isa 28:16, which is cited in v. 6. They are adjectives describing the honor conferred by God upon Jesus, in contrast to his rejection by humans. Thus 'elect' and 'honored' serve as our author's equivalents of the more traditional concepts of 'resurrected' and 'glorified' (cf. 1:11, 21; 3:18de; 5:1; Rom 1:4; John 11:4; 12:23; 1 Cor 15:3-4)." In light of the intended "parity" between Christ and readers, such would have carried great significance for the letter's recipients, offering honor and permanence.

[395] That is not to say that the question is entirely resolved. However, anyone who addresses the use of οἶκος in 1 Peter 2:5 must contend with Elliot's conclusion.

[396] Elliott (*A Home*, 201) presents the following list of sections as evidence that the household a key part of the Petrine strategy: household of the Spirit (οἶκος πνευματικὸς, 2:5); household of God (τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεου, 4:17); being build up (οἰκοδομέω, 2:5); household slaves (2:18); live together (συνοικέω, 3:7); and household stewards (οἰκονόμοι, 4:10).

[397] Elliott (*A Home*, 169) responds to those who emphasize cultic language to define οἶκος πνευματικὸς as spiritual temple: "The weaknesses of such studies lie in the tendency to exaggerate the cultic language of 2:5 over against the theme and purpose of 2:4-10 as a whole, to ignore the absence of cultic interests elsewhere in the document, to fail to inquire regarding the meaning and function of the household concept within the situation and composition of 1 Peter in general, and to overlook the diverse social and political implications which the household had in the cultural milieu of 1 Peter."

employed ναός or ἱερόν if he had meant to "refer unambiguously to a holy building," which supports the taking οἶκος to mean household.[398] At the same time, the building ("stones" [vv. 4 and 5], "built up" [v. 5], and "cornerstone" [v. 6]) and cultic language ("priests" and "sacrifices" v. 5) in the immediate context supports rendering οἶκος as "temple." Ultimately, wordplay seems to best explain the usage here:

> "The double meaning of *oikos* suggests a metonymy that allows an easy shift from the temple image to the community it houses, 'a holy priesthood' (2:9) and 'the people of God' (2:10). The same double meaning is in view in 4:17. A similar use of temple imagery with reference to the community is found in the Qumran materials (Gärtner 1965: 72-79; Snodgrass 1977-78: 101-2). John's revelation presents a similar fluidity in the image of New Jerusalem being both a city and a people (Rev. 21:2)."[399]

Both renderings carry a similar significance, emphasizing that Peter's audience belonged to a grander, permanent community[400] that was the special possession of Yahweh (cf. "a people for God's possession," v. 9): just as the household belonged to the *pater*, so also temple was the exclusive possession of its deity.[401] Not only did their identity as an οἶκος emphasize belonging,[402] but it provided a stark contrast to the humble, shameful situation they faced as πάροικοι ("strangers," v. 11), marking them as honorable.[403]

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[398] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 150.

[399] Jobes (*1 Peter*, 150) references B. E. Gärtner's *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) and K. Snodgrass's "I Peter II.1-10: Its Formation and Literary Affinities" (*New Testament Studies* 24 [1977-78]: 97-106).

[400] Elliott thus notes (*A Home*, 199): "In contrast to the individualism of the cults, on the other hand, the Christians household offered incorporation into a family, a place for permanent belonging, a supportive circle of brothers and sisters."

[401] For example, the authority of a Roman *paterfamilias* in his household was unquestioned, such that the state seldom intervened in the domain; patriarchs throughout the Mediterranean also exercised a free hand in their household. In the same way, the temple was understood to be the special possession of a deity; that recognition caused those who approached to do so with great care and even fear to avoid offending the deity.

[402] While my emphasis here is the enhanced honor of their situation, the importance of belonging should not be missed, as Elliott (*A Home*, 195) points out: "Membership in the household of God entails an intimate degree of familial relationship. The *oikeioi* of God are the 'children of God, sons and daughters of the divine *pater familias.* Through the new bond of faith they are 'sisters' (*adelphai*) and 'brothers' (*adelphoi*) of the Lord and in the Lord."

The Scriptural reference beginning in verse six strongly reinforces the honor of coming to "the living stone" (v. 4). As in verse four, the stone is identified as "chosen" and "honorable," but the passage goes further by identifying the audience with that stone and to emphasize the honor of being associated with the stone. By virtue of their relationship, they "would not be put to shame" (v. 6). To them, the stone is honorable, but "those who do not believe"—who berated and slandered them—stumble over the stone to their own undoing and discover the stone to be the most important stone in the house (v. 7). Thus the troubles the audience faced "are not a sign that God is rejecting them but are the very opposite: the various ways they are being rejected correspond to the rejection experienced by the Living Cornerstone and confirm their election as living stones in God's building program."[404] The shaming persecution experienced actually confirmed their (honorable) position in Yahweh's design; conversely, their opponents revealed themselves as destined for ultimate humiliation.

Peter's emphasis on the honor of those who believe intensifies starting in verse nine; indeed, the broad structure of the passage indicates that coming to and being built into Christ, the living cornerstone (vv. 4-8), serves as the basis for honorific titles bestowed on believers in verses nine and beyond.[405]

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[403] Elliott (*A Home*, 184) rightly notes the influence of the Hebrew Bible on 1 Peter related to these terms: "In the Old Testament, as in 1 Peter, the contrast of the *oikos* and the *paroikia* of Israel was a striking means for depicting the oscillating rhythms of Israel's history. The juxtaposition of *oikos/paroikoi, paroikia* and their paronyms (e.g., *oikodomein, oikein/metoikia, metoikein; apoikia, apoikismos*) and synonymous or related factors (e.g., landedness/landlessness) was used to express the contrasting experiences of having a home or being at home versus losing or being uprooted from home. Such juxtaposition graphically express the alternating patterns of Israel's socioreligious integration, disintegration and reintegration."

[404] Jobes, *1 Peter*, 151.

[405] So, Becthler (*Following in His Steps*, 188): "In 2:4-10, therefore, 1 Peter establishes the fundamental nexus of relations and oppositions among Christ, his followers, and their detractors that will provide the means by which challenges to honor coming from non-Christians can be evaluated and countered within the Christian communities. In particular, honor is inextricably linked to Christ: One's honor is a product of one's relationship

- "a chosen race" (γένος ἐκλεκτόν, v. 9) – This title hearkens back to the description of Israel in Isaiah 43:20. As has been noted, being "chosen" or "elect" offers an honorable position; this is especially significant since the value of election is a function of the one who elects and it is Yahweh who has elected them. This title is even more apropos since Isaiah 43:20 addresses an exilic setting; like Isaiah's audience, Peter's recipients were marginalized outsiders. They were experiencing disgrace in their community, but held in high honor in Yahweh's sight.
- "a royal priesthood" (βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα, v. 9) – This and the remaining two epithets look back to Exodus 19:5-6 and Yahweh's liberation of Israel from slavery. Again, the title identifies Peter's audience as honorable since priesthood set a person apart, providing special access to a deity.[406] That the adjective "royal" was attached served to further enhance their position!
- "a holy nation" (ἔθνος ἅγιον, v. 9) – As before, Peter identifies his audience with a label that previously belonged to Israel. In this case, it identifies them as a nation and not simply scattered individual people. Furthermore, they are a holy nation, set apart for Yahweh's purposes; the shame of dispersion is replaced with the honor of collective belonging.
- "a people for God's possession" (λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, v. 9) – Once more, the emphasis is on a collective identity attached to Yahweh after the model of Israel. J. Ramsey

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with Christ, the one honored by God. Those who place their trust in the chosen and honored (corner)stone who is Christ will not be put to shame but will receive honor both now and at the eschaton."

[406] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 161.

Michaels concludes that Peter's use of εἰς is future-oriented, indicating that they are "a people destined for vindication."[407] In place of shame, they have a promising future.

Therefore, it is not simply the cornerstone who is chosen and elect (vv. 4, 6), but the stones built into him (vv. 5, 9). Elliott thus concludes:

> "Stress on the idea of election thus permeates this unit from start to finish, frames the unit as an inclusion, and represents an integrating theme, according to which the different traditions employed here have been united. The election of both Jesus and believers identifies them as demarcated and dignified, elite and exalted in God's sight. The elect status once claimed by Israel as a concomitant of its exclusive covenant with God is now claimed by those in union with God and God's elect one."[408]

As part of a new iteration of Yahweh's program, Peter's often marginalized and seemingly diminished audience occupies an enviable position; in this case, perception did not mirror reality since their situation closely aligned with that of the chosen, honorable stone (v. 5), as did their destiny. Their collective identity as God's people (v. 10) set aside prior disgrace; indeed, they had supplanted Israel as the special recipients of mercy (v. 10) and occupied a privileged, exalted position.[409] Ethnic identity, which determined so much in the realm of honor and shame, had no relevance here.[410]

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[407] J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1988) cited in Jobes, *1 Peter*, 162-63.

[408] Elliott, *1 Peter*, 411.

[409] Elliott (*A Home*, 149) emphasizes the significance of this description: "At the same time these images and epithets of socioreligious distinctiveness, and particularly the stress upon the election of the believers, were designed to underline their extraordinary status as the elect and holy people of God and thus to foster their self-esteem over against the demeaning slander of their opponents. The expropriation, and not simply the sharing, of the honorific titles and prestige of Israel ratified the separation of messianic sect from its parent body. The superiority of the sect over its parent was affirmed through stress upon the living hope, incorruptible inheritance and announcement of salvations which were received by Christians alone. By calling attention to the inversion of values which characterized the Christian brotherhood, 1 Peter gave assurance to slaves, women, and others of low social rank that 'in Christ' all believers were equal recipients of the grace of God. Bearing the name of Christ, religious zeal and humility were transvaluated from being marks of social scorn to occasions of divine blessing."

[410] Elliott (*Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 80) stresses the irrelevance of ethnic identity in 1 Peter's understanding of what's honorable: "honor ultimately in ascribed not by blood and birth, as convention would dictate; nor is it achieved by any heroic act of valor and *andreia*, that is, manliness or courage. It is rather conferred

The Freedom and Submission of the Servants of God

Their exalted position as God's people had serious implications for how they behaved—both in their interaction with outsiders and their treatment of those within the family of faith, who shared the same honor. Theirs was a liminal identity, with their experience colored by their position in God's household as "beloved" and offset by their status in society as "strangers and aliens" (v. 11).[411] So, while they occupied a high place, they were called to "submit" themselves "to every human authority" (Ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει, v. 13). This exhortation was not due to inferiority, society's ordering of people, or because someone else compelled them to do so, but rather "for the Lord's sake" (διὰ τὸν κύριον, v. 13); they belonged to another country, another household with incredible privileges at their disposal, but while they sojourned on earth they were called to behavior that honored their Father.[412]

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through an act of divine grace; through the favor of a God who removes the mighty from their seats and exalts those of low degree; through a divine patron who liberates slaves and raises them to the status of sons and daughters, who covenants with a lowly house of Jacob and exalts it to the status of God's very own special possession, his elect and holy people, and who incorporates disgraced strangers and aliens into a graced family of God."

[411] 1 Peter 2:11: "Ἀγαπητοί, παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, 134) further describes the liminality of their situation: "Christian life is thus an existence 'betwixt and between' history and the eschaton. A more temporally liminal view of Christian existence can scarcely be imagined. The temporal context of Christian life is the end-before-the-end that was introduced at Christ's manifestation on earth and will be consummated at the revelation of his glory. First Peter's depiction of the temporal liminality of the Christan life contains within it one very important element of the letter's total answer to the problem of the suffering of its addressees. The duration of their suffering will be short; the imminent appearance of their salvation is beyond doubt."

[412] Emphasizing their separation as strangers and aliens picks up part of Peter's meaning. However, the degree to which these terms identified them as marginalized and vulnerable must not be overlooked, especially in this passage. They had a home, exalted status, and legal rights—but all of those were in another country. So they lived beneath their status and legal right for a time.

Contra Goppelt (Leonhard Goppelt, Ferdinand Hahn, and John E. Alsup, *A Commentary on I Peter* [Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993],176), who interprets the passage in line with a misunderstanding of κλῆσις in 1 Corinthians 7: "The instruction is not directed against the zealot's rebellion against authority, but, according to the only direct data from the early period, 1 Corinthians 7, against the acetic-pneumatic emigration out of life's stations...The Pauline principle states, as has become clear: 'Each is to remain in the station in which he or she was called' (7:17, 20, 24)….Subjection of oneself means primarily that the person who has become a 'foreigner' in relation to society through the summons to faith nevertheless enters into the ways of life of the society in which he or she stands." See S. Scott Bartchy, "The Domestication of a Radical Jew : Paul of Tarsus," in *Maven in Blue Jeans: A Festschrift in Honor of Zev Garber*, ed. Steven L. Jacobs (West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press,

Thus, they are called to live as "as free men and women" (ὡς ἐλεύθεροι, v. 16); they are free from every human authority, but due to their position as people who belong to another homeland they are to submit themselves (v. 13). They are not obligated to their current land to fit into its ordering of things, but rather their submissive behavior is due to their obligation to God as his "slaves" (θεοῦ δοῦλοι, v. 16); their Father's will and not society's ordering of things would determine who and what was honorable.[413] As a result, certain things were required for certain people in submission to God: honor for all men, love within the household of faith, reverence for God, and honor for the king (v. 17).[414] Their behavior is based not on society's structure that elevates one at the expense of others, but rather on their obligation to God as his servants; indeed, it is not just the king that receives honor, but all men![415] This commitment to honoring all men may be connected to the command to "show hospitality without complaint" (4:9) which could have been complicated by status distinctions and put elites in the uncomfortable position of losing face while accepting inferior guests who lack the capacity to return the favor (cf. Lk 14:12-14).

Ultimately, this passage (2:11-17) not only reorders their behavior around their membership in God's household and their submission to his will rather than the world's authority structures, but serves as the basis for the honor-sharing exhortations that follow. Before

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2009), 7-16.

[413] Elliot (*Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 73) rightly notes that this emphasis reflects a shift in which audience would determine what was honorable: "First, the essential criterion of honorable conduct is not simple public opinion but the 'will of God' (2:15; 3:17; 4:2, 19) and reverence for God (2:17, 18; 3:2, 16; cf. also 2:14 ['because of the Lord]; 3:4 ["in God's sight"] and 'mindfulness of God' [*syneidēsis*] 2:19; 3:16, 21]). Those who revere and obey God have no cause to fear harm or intimidation (3:5, 13)."

[414] 1 Peter 2:17: "πάντας τιμήσατε, τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπᾶτε, τὸν θεὸν φοβεῖσθε, τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

[415] So, Goppelt (*1 Peter*, 189): "Christians demonstrate honor to all people, not only to the powerful and the rich but also to slaves, who are without honor and without rights; all are taken seriously as creatures of God and are thus recognized as human beings."

identifying how they should behave in individual relationships (as with slaves [2:18-20], wives [3:1-6], and husbands [3:7]), Peter speaks in more general terms about their behavior in the social order, in light of their new identity.[416] They had increased rights and exalted status in Christ as members of God's household, but they were to behave in ways that honored others and enhanced God's reputation within their community.

The directives to slaves, wives, and husbands that follow begin with the group they address and follow with imperatival participles. In each case, audience members are called to hold their rights loosely and use them for the sake of others, especially those outside of the community. Thus, though they had worth in Christ, household servants (οἰκέται) were commanded to "submit" themselves (ὑποτασσόμενοι)— regardless of how their master treated them (2:18). In a world that treated servants as property, it is significant that they are here addressed as free moral agents. Furthermore, the emphasis on doing so regardless of how their master behaved may imply that some would have identified service to a harsh master as beneath them—perhaps as a consequence of their standing in Christ. Slaves thus engaged their role submissively and honored their masters; this flowed out of their honor-sharing commitment in Christ rather than a command to fall back into the world's structures.

In the same way, wives, although liberated in Christ, were called to exercise their freedom by submitting to their husbands (3:1). But the reason for the command had changed:

[416] See especially Jobes' (*1 Peter*, 178) comments about 2:17, which reference A. B. Spencer ("Peter's Pedagogical Method in 1 Peter 3:6," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10 [2000]: 107-190): "These general instructions about Christian relationships form the immediate context of the specific instructions to servants, wives, and husbands that follow. In fact, the verbs translated 'submit' (2:18; 3:1) and 'live with' (3:7) are all participles, the first two being forms of the same verb found here in 2:13, ὑποτάσσω (*hypotasso*). Spencer concludes that the instructions to the household that follow are syntactically connected to these four directives enjoined on all believers, further specifying the command to be subject to all human authorities (2:13). Proper household relationships 'are one type of submission to one human creation, ancient marriage' (Spencer 2000: 111). Although the syntactic connection may be debated, certainly the instructions for relationships within the household must be read within the larger social context of the church, one's relationship to God, and pressing sociopolitical considerations."

they did so not due to the authority of the husband, but in order that those who did not believe would be influenced by their behavior (3:1). In a sense, the authority of the husband had been challenged when wives joined the new community, embraced a new deity with distinct values, and rejected those that the husband worshipped;[417] the middle path that Peter called for involved not a recovery of the husband's authoritative position, but reengagement based on a submissive attitude dictated by the woman's Christian profession. Peter thus restores wives to relationship with their husbands, but with new energy and motivation.

Husbands were also to behave differently to their wives in a way that challenged these deeply-held values. Instead of exercising their power in a self-serving manner, they were called to live with their wives "in an understanding way" as a "weaker vessel" and to "show them honor" since they were "fellow heirs of the grace-gift of life."[418] By virtue of her weakness as a woman with her high position as a fellow heir, she was to be the recipient of honor; the usual heavy-handed way of relating expected for men was replaced with a gentle, even weak-appearing approach that showed regard to women. Men were therefore called both to use their power for their wives, because they were weak, and to share honor with them because they were both heirs of God's grace—such reflected the shared honor of their new household in which only God was father. Things had certainly changed!

[417] Such a decision was likely to create problems in the home, as Jobes (*1 Peter*, 203) explains: "Why would a wife's conversion likely provoke antagonism from her husband? In Greco-Roman society it was accepted that the wife would have no friends of her own and would worship the gods of her husband (Plutarch, *Advice* §19)."

[418] 1 Peter 3:7: "Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν…ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Rejecting Retaliation and the Path to Honor

Their testimony called them to act in a countercultural manner in other contexts. In no place is this more evident in their response to verbal challenge, as emphasized in the example of Christ:

> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you leaving an example that you should follow in his steps: who committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth, who when he was reviled did not revile in return, and when he suffered, he did not threaten, but kept entrusting himself to the one who judges justly.[419]

Household servants—and ultimately the entire audience—were to endure patiently and not respond when maligned (2:19-20). But in this agonistic culture, retaliation was not simply common, it was expected. Hence, Christ's behavior when he suffered was unnatural: by virtue of such a weak response, he accepted the shame and reproach directed at him. In this manner, Peter demonstrates through Christ's example that embracing non-retaliation and the accompanying shame was actually a path to honor. Such a life of trust would ultimately lead to his vindication by "the one who judges justly" (2:23).

Non-retaliation is later commanded for the entire audience. They were not to return "evil for evil" or "insult for insult," but, as Christ had taught (Mt 5:38-43 par Lk 6:27-35), were called to give a blessing (3:9 cf. 2:1); verbal competition for honor was replaced with giving honor, therein inverting cultural values.[420] Such behavior reflected humility (ταπεινόφρονες, v. 8),

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[419] 1 Peter 2:21-23: "εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκλήθητε, ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ὑμῖν ὑπολιμπάνων ὑπογραμμὸν ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἴχνεσιν αὐτοῦ, ὃς ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν οὐδὲ εὑρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ, ὃς λοιδορούμενος οὐκ ἀντελοιδόρει, πάσχων οὐκ ἠπείλει, παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως·" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[420] Retaliation was accepted in this environment, but in at least one case Plutarch suggests a similar course of action, as Elliott (*Conflict, Community, and Honor,* 69-70) points out, "The advice is akin to that of Plutarch in his discourse on 'How to Profit By One's Enemies.' He quotes Diogenes' statement: '"How shall I defend myself against my enemy?" By proving yourself good and honorable' (*Profit* 4, *Moralia* 88B). He then goes on to observe: 'If you wish to distress the man who hates you, do not insult him as lewd, effeminate, licentious, vulgar, or illiberal, but be a man yourself, show self-control, be truthful, and treat with kindness and justice those who have to deal with you' (*Profit* 4, *Moralia* 88C)."

which, as has been noted, was tantamount to exhorting hearers to a servile way of life. Peter's audience was again called to embrace a low position and refuse competition for honor.[421]

Their decision to vacate the honor challenge by refusing retaliation would actually result in an enhanced situation as demonstrated a few verses later: "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are honored" (3:13).[422] What the world identified as shameful was actually a path to honor. Peter alludes to Christ's final outcome (3:18, 21), seemingly as evidence for his above assertion: after he suffered unjustly for our sins (3:18, 21), Jesus Christ was resurrected and exalted to heaven, "at the right hand of God" with "angels and authorities and powers subject to him" (3:21-22).[423] Jesus Christ had suffered unjustly, but his path led him to the highest place of unparalleled honor and power.

Peter later emphasizes the honor of suffering unjustly for their faith, making the connection between their experience and that of Christ more explicit[424]:

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[421] Speaking of 2:15 and 3:16, Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, 102) asserts: "These passages portray a situation of recurring confrontations between the intended readers and their nonbelieving neighbors in which the addressees were being reviled and falsely accused of engaging in antisocial behaviors. Consistent with the honor-shame model, the letter views the reputation of both parties, the accuser and accused, as at risk in these confrontations. Such encounters constitute challenges to honor and , as such, cannot be resolved without one side being shamed. What 1 Peter hopes for is that the challengers will be dishonored rather than the letter's readers."

[422] 1 Peter 3:13: "ἀλλ᾽ εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Elliott (*1 Peter*, 623) notes that this statement is in line with other *makarisms*, which regularly challenge honor-shame values: "The NT contains over 40 instances of such exclamations of honor, all of which involve social imputation of esteem to an individual or group for manifesting desirable behavior and commitments. What is remarkable about the makarisms of Jesus and early Christianity is that they so often challenge conventional expectations and values. Instead of acknowledging the honor of the wealthy and the powerful, Jesus and his followers regularly attribute honor to the despised, the destitute, and the oppressed."

[423] 1 Peter 3:21-22: "δι᾽ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ [τοῦ] θεοῦ πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανόν ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[424] "1 Peter 4:12-19 recapitulates and expands on what has already been stated on the issue of suffering. This unit does not mark a caesura or break in the line of thought but a crescendo" (Elliott, *1 Peter*, 770).

> "Beloved, do not be bewildered at the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you, but to the degree that you are sharing the sufferings of Christ rejoice, so that you may also rejoice and exult when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are honored[425], because the Spirit of glory and of God is resting on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or even as a meddler. But if any of you suffers as a Christian, let them not be ashamed, but glorify God because you bear this name."[426]

The fiery ordeal that was meant to refine them (4:12; cf. 1:6-7) had serious implications in terms of honor and shame. Outsiders had "reviled" (ὀνειδίζεσθε, v. 24) them for the name of Christ,[427] attempting to shame them into renouncing their faith;[428] the label "Christian" was a simple, succinct way to demean them.[429] But Peter asserts that their experience of shame for the name of Christ actually identified them *with* Christ. If they shared in his sufferings, they were to rejoice at the expectation that they would exult with joy at the revelation of his glory upon his return (v.

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[425] Elliott (*1 Peter*, 782) emphasizes that this *makarism*, like 3:14, is very similar to "the dominical saying recorded by Matthew and Luke….it is probable that *makaroi*, like the verbs 'rejoice' and 'reproach,' echoes this saying of Jesus in its earliest Q formulation."

[426] 1 Peter 4:12-16: "Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ ξενίζεσθε τῇ ἐν ὑμῖν πυρώσει πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν γινομένῃ ὡς ξένου ὑμῖν συμβαίνοντος, ἀλλὰ καθὸ κοινωνεῖτε τοῖς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθήμασιν χαίρετε, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι. εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται. μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος· εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[427] Elliot (*1 Peter*, 779) explains the significance of ὀνειδίζεσθε in the broad context of 1 Peter: "This verb is virtually synonymous with other terms used earlier to describe the treatment experienced by the addressees ('slander' [*katalaleo*, 2:12; 3:16]; 'insult' [*loidoreo, loidoria*, 2:23; 3:9], 'disparage' [*epereazo*, 3:16]; 'malign' [*blasphemeo*, 4:4]). This indicates once more that the suffering presumed in this letter was a result of verbal abuse and public humiliation rather than of official incrimination….The situation envisioned here, as elsewhere in the letter…is not one of formally organized, legal persecution or prosecution but the informal and sporadic public shaming of those who follow the Christ and bear his name."

[428] "The nature and weapons of the attack on these followers of Jesus Christ are a classic example of public shaming designed to demean and discredit the believers in the court of public opinion, with the ultimate aim of forcing their conformity to prevailing forms and values" (Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 67).

[429] Elliott (*1 Peter*, 790-91) takes the Latin use of term *Christianos* to imply that it means "followers, partisans, or clients of Christ" and concludes from the Acts 26:28 interchange between Paul and King Herod Agrippa II that it carries a negative connotation: "The mocking tone of Herod Agrippa's remark suggests that the label had a derogatory overtone from the outset, so that it meant, not simply 'partisans of Christ,' but something like 'Christ-lackeys,' shameful sycophants of Christ, a criminal put to ignominious deal by the Romans years earlier, in 30 CE."

13).[430] Christ too had suffered shamefully, but his proved to be an honorable path with a glorious ending. As in 2:21-23, Christ's suffering, his response, and ultimate glory are mentioned so that 1 Peter's audience would identify with his experience.[431] Thus, being "reviled for the name of Christ" was honorable rather than shameful, and God's Spirit, which was the Spirit of glory, rested on them (v. 14)—they occupied a privileged position! It is no wonder, then, that they were exhorted not to be ashamed, but to "glorify God" because they bear the name "Christian" (v. 16)[432]; their identification with Christ's death, exaltation, and soon-to-be-revealed glory had reversed honor-shame values.[433]

Authority, Submission, and Humility in Christ's Community

While much of 1 Peter's emphasis is on the audience's behavior among outsiders, it pivots to discuss relationships within the Christian community near the end of his correspondence, beginning with an exhortation to elders:

[430] This is connected to the larger idea within 1 Peter, as Elliott (*1 Peter*, 777) indicates: "It echoes the thought of 1:8 (*en tei apokalypsei Iesou Christou*), where the same connection between present and future rejoicing is made (1:6-9). In the case of Christ as well, suffering was followed by glory (1:11, 19-21; 2:4; 3:18-22; 5:1bc). Therefore, believers who share in his innocent sufferings likewise can look forward to sharing in his glory at his final revelation (cf 1:7-8, 13; 5:1. 4, 10)."

[431] Bechtler (*Following in His Steps*, 180) identifies this as a key thread that runs throughout 1 Peter: "The letter in effect superimposes Christ's experience onto that of his followers so that Christ's experience becomes the interpretive lens through which Christian experience is viewed and the template that describes the shape of the Christian life. By juxtaposing the Christian's suffering with that of Christ's, and the Christian's destiny with Christ's glorification, the letter reconfigures the relationship of suffering to honor and thereby offers its readers a means of enduring reproach without losing honor."

[432] 1 Peter is unique in adapting the tradition this way, as Elliott (*1 Peter*, 776-77) points out: "According to the Petrine author's formulation, rejoicing is not a condition for being honored (as in Matthew and Luke) but a result of sharing in the sufferings of Christ (v 13a). Being honored (by God), on the other hand (v 14b), is a direct contrast with being reproached and shamed by others. This honor is manifested in the fact that the divine Spirit of glory rests upon those reproached (v. 14c). In these two respects this Petrine adaptation of the tradition is unique in the NT."

[433] This passage echoes Jesus' saying of Mt 5:11-12/Lk 6:22-23 - in particular in connection to rejoicing in suffering and the honor that accrues (Elliott, *1 Peter*, 776).

> "Shepherd God's flock among you…not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples the flock and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are young in faith,[434] be subject to the elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves in humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, in order that he might lift you up at the proper time."[435]

The reversal of honor values previously evident in 1 Peter continues in this section. Elders, as shepherds and leaders, embraced a leadership approach that stood in stark contrast to the autocratic behavior of the emperor that was repeated in families and homes throughout the Roman Empire. The *pater* of the household had a free hand in his domain; that he used his power to enhance his position was without question. But authority in the Christian community was to be exercised otherwise: elders served as examples rather than "lording it over" those in their care, in line with the model of Christ (cf. Mk 10:36-46) and the call earlier to "give honor" to their wives (3:7). If they lost power, prestige, and glory in the short term, they would ultimately gain a crown that was unfading and full of glory "when the chief shepherd appears" (v. 4).

Such a humble approach would have seemed weak, inviting a challenge from other men in the community, especially from those who were newly socialized. Thus, the call for new believers was "to be subject to the elders" (v. 5); as with the exhortations to slaves, women, and husbands, the relationships were not defined by society's structure, but rather by deliberate

[434] Elliott (*1 Peter*, 838) concludes that νεώτεροι refers not simply to those who are younger, but to new converts. Just as the description of elders' behavior emphasizes character and faith development over precedence or age, so, too, this term refers to the members' Christian maturity.

[435] 1 Peter 5: 2-6: "ποιμάνατε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ… μηδ᾽ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου· καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον. Ὁμοίως, νεώτεροι, ὑποτάγητε πρεσβυτέροις· πάντες δὲ ἀλλήλοις τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνην ἐγκομβώσασθε, ὅτι [ὁ] θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιτάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. Ταπεινώθητε οὖν ὑπὸ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ὑψώσῃ ἐν καιρῷ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

decision to humbly give up their rights. An honor-sharing community required both leaders and followers to release what they would otherwise pursue as an entitlement or prize.

Peter's exhortation that all should "clothe themselves in humility toward one another" (v. 5) mirrors the prior guidelines for husbands (3:7) and leaders (5:3) and balances the calls to be submissive elsewhere (2:18; 3:1, 5; 5:5). Elliott thus observes:

> "In the Christian household of God, as distinct from the society at large, our author notes, order and harmony are maintained not simply by respect for superiors. Rather, even social superiors are to demonstrate humility toward their social inferiors, for before God all mortals, regardless of their social station in life, are humble subjects. Thus a call for subordination to those in authority (5:5a; cf. 2:13-17, 18-20; 3:1-6) is followed and balanced by an insistence on the humility of *all toward one another* (cf. 3:8; 5:5b-6). Mutual humility of all members would defuse any attempts at domination on the part of husbands and leaders and ensure the harmony, unity, and cohesion of the community..."[436]

Not only is this "insistence on humility of all toward one another" critical for the "harmony" and "cohesion of the community," but also it reflects broader assumptions about the shared, honorable position that they occupied by virtue of coming to Christ. Peter clearly emphasizes community solidarity based on shared honor, rather than on authority structure; the honor and love everyone received within the household of faith and in Christ would have served to bring order to the community and carry members through the affronts and reviling they experienced as "Christians."

The call to humble themselves "toward each other" (v. 5) and "under the mighty hand of God" (v. 6) integrates and completes the letter's submission emphasis nicely. The initial exhortation was to "be subject" (Ὑποτάγητε, 2:13) to every human authority. Their high position in God's household (2: 4-10) meant that they were free in regard to others, but they were called to use their freedom as God's slaves (2:16); they therefore gave honor to all men (2:17).

[436] Elliott, *1 Peter*, 847.

Though free, servants were called to "be subject" to their masters (ὑποτασσόμενοι, 2:19); wives were to do the same (ὑποτασσόμεναι, 3:1, 5). Since submission was part of their call as free men and slaves of God (2:16), it required embracing the characteristic approach of a slave[437] by humbling themselves under God's mighty hand (5:6). Though humility was shameful and unsavory in the broader world, it was embraced as a virtue and an honorable thing in God's household; this challenge to honor values is an important theme in 1 Peter.

Conclusion

"Chosen foreigners" (v. 1) is how Peter first addresses his audience; the term aptly presents 1 Peter's broad description of the audience throughout the correspondence. They have high honor because they are chosen by God and members of his household, but, on account of the name of Christ, they are marginalized outsiders and targets of shaming reproach in their current environment.

In no place is 1 Peter's emphasis on the honor of believers more significant than in the passage emphasizing their connectedness to Christ, the living stone, and membership in God's household (2:4-10). The passage, which emphasizes election and community cohesion, demonstrates that their faith gave all of them an enhanced position. This is strikingly similar to Paul's emphasis on believers' shared honor in Christ, which came to them through their union with him by faith.

Their high standing freed them from being defined by the world's structures and from obligation to all but God. But as his servants, they were called to be subject to human authorities, giving up their rights and giving honor to all men (2:13, 16-17). This honor-sharing

[437] As we have earlier noted, humility was characteristically used to describe slaves and was therefore unpalatable to the broad span of society that was concerned with their honor.

approach was to be lived out concretely in their relationships (2:18; 3:1, 5, 7; 5:3, 5); it culminated in the exhortation to embrace the servile virtue of humility in relation to each other and God (5:5-6). This perspective closely follows both Jesus of Nazareth and Paul's emphasis on humility—both by their teaching and behavior.

At the same time, they were also to be characterized by a refusal to retaliate or return reproach for reproach (3:9). Retaliation was expected and often judged necessary in ancient Mediterranean society, but they chose to challenge status quo and risked losing face by refusing to respond when affronted.

The cost of such behavior is mitigated by Peter's emphasis on the honor of suffering for Christ's sake (3:14; 4:14). In a real sense, as they suffered for the name of Christ, they actually shared in his sufferings (4:12-16). Ultimately, the honor of suffering is vindicated through the example of Christ, an example that ties together the refusal of retaliation and the honor of suffering for righteousness (3:9-22); this is a significant development in that it appears to connect the honor-sharing teaching of Christ to his honorable suffering, resurrection, and exaltation. Yet Christ is more than an example: from start to finish, the correspondence connects the suffering and glory of Christ to the present suffering of those in Christ and the glory that awaits them when he returns (4:13-16). This is presented implicitly early in 1 Peter and becomes explicit as the letter develops. The correspondence aptly concludes by referring to Yahweh as "the God of all grace who calls you to his eternal glory in Christ;" though they suffered in the present time, but in Christ they had honor and hope for future vindication and glory (5:10).[438]

[438] "The letter's conclusion (5:10-11) completes this conceptual framework by assuring the believers one last time, of the glory, grace, and honor to which they have been called despite their suffering" (Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor*, 77).

Later authors would continue to develop this theme and emphasize the honor of suffering for righteousness; this perspective would persist as the early Christians navigated a society that was increasingly hostile to them and their exclusive worship of Christ, as it did in Revelation.

> The *neoi* honored Gaius Julius Sacerdos: the *neokoros* of goddess Rome and of god Augustus Caesar; priest of Tiberius Claudius Nero; and gymnasiarch of the 12th Sebasta Romaia for the five gymnasia, who supplied oil for the washings throughout the whole day at his own expense, who provided for their games [those of the *neoi*] and also for those of the *ephebes*, renewing the ancestral laws and customs according to what is most noble.
>
> Inscription from provincial temple of Rome and Augustus Caesar in Pergamon[439]

At the end of the first century CE, around the time that Revelation with written, imperial worship flourished in Asia. In addition to provincial temples in Pergamon, Smyrna, and Ephesos, municipal cults thrived throughout the region.[440] These provided opportunities for local elites to emphasize their alignment with imperial power while enhancing their status, as the inscription honoring Gaius Julius Sacerdos demonstrates.[441] Such wealthy patrons celebrated the Roman order and acquired such honorific titles such as *neokoros* (who maintained the sacred precinct)[442] and priest.

In light of this situation, the Apocalypse of John raises numerous questions related to worship, honor, and engaging dominant culture. The audience would need to determine how they responded to imperial power and cult. It was necessary to consider the implications of such

[439] Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*: *Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: New York, 2001), 31. The above is Friesen's translation of *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes* 4.454.

[440] Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 25-76.

[441] That is not to say that the allure of supporting and participating in the ruler cult should be understood exclusively in terms of such political and economic considerations. Such a reductionistic understanding of ruler worship is to be rejected. However, the current study focuses on the political and economic considerations due to their relevance for honor and shame values.

[442] For further discussion of the term, see Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesos, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

decisions for their social standing, access to patrons, and economic livelihood. Revelation's challenge to the status quo emphasizes the worship of God alone, the honor of fidelity to Christ, and the shame and ultimate destruction of those who participated in the idolatrous, unjust Roman system.

Surprising Encounter with the Risen Christ

John's prescript and initial vision identify key themes related to honor that are addressed in the remainder of Revelation. The greeting from God the Almighty, the Spirit, and the Son emphasizes the glory of God alone (1:4-5). The description of Christ as "ruler of the kings of the earth" (v. 5)[443], the emphasis on his final vindication at his return (v. 7)[444], and the encounter with him in all his glory (vv. 12-18) demonstrate his ultimate victory and honor while emphasizing that he was a faithful witness in suffering (v. 5); this reality serves as the basis for the inversion of values and the paradoxical descriptions of persecution and empire. At the same time, this section underscores the honor of witnessing for Jesus Christ through the example of John (τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, vv. 2, 9), the glory of the saint's position in him as priests who will rule (v. 6), and the identification of the churches as golden lampstands (v. 12).

The letters to the seven churches that follow provide insight into the situation of the book's first audience. They deal with a number of issues, including shortcomings such as flagging love for Christ (2:4, 5), their lack of good deeds (3:1, 2), and the shame of spiritual blindness and nakedness (3:15-17), but the critical question has to do with being faithful

[443] Rev 1:5: "ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[444] Revelation 1:7 stresses the final vindication of Christ at his appearing. He had been slaughtered publically (cf. 5:6 et al) and shamefully, but "every eye" would see him at his coming, including those who had stabbed him. In the end, they would see him as the exalted son of man, "coming in the clouds," (cf. Dan 7:13) and recognize that they had misjudged him, leading to their ultimate demise.

witnesses in the Roman Empire: Would they succumb to the temptation of idolatry and immorality through the imperial cult and conspire with a system opposed to God (2:2, 6, 14-16, 20-24)? Or would they patiently endure in the face of poverty and tribulation (2:9-10), suffering as faithful witnesses (2:13)? As later becomes evident, Revelation urges "that God be properly honored and served at the expense of other claimants, such as the Emperor,"[445] and "portrays the Roman Empire as a system of violent oppression…of political tyranny and of economic exploitation."[446] Ultimately, John emphasizes the honor of obeying the prophecy (1:3) and faithful witness through persecution (1:5; 2:10, 13) against the shame of conforming to that system and embracing its values; he urges his audience to choose those actions that will lead to eternal rather than temporary honor.[447]

Oriented around the Throne

The beginning of the second major section of the book, which follows the letters to the seven churches of Asia, prepares the reader for the oracles that follow. John was "in the Spirit" and saw "a throne standing in heaven" and "one sitting on the throne" (4:2).[448] Everything is oriented around the throne: the twenty-four elders (v. 4), the four seraphs (v. 6), and the worship that goes on "night and day" (vv. 8-11); furthermore, unfolding wrath and judgment proceed from the throne. Richard Bauckham correctly asserts: "heaven is the sphere of ultimate reality:

[445] Ben Witherington, *Revelation* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

[446] Richard Bauckham (*The Theology of the Book of Revelation* [Cambridge (England); New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 35) sees evidence of Revelation's harsh judgment of Rom in its the references to the beast (chapters 13 and 17) and the harlot of Babylon (especially chapters 17-18).

[447] David deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71 (1998), 108.

[448] Rev 4:2: "Εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

what is true in heaven must become true on earth. Thus John is taken up into heaven to see that God's throne is the ultimate reality behind all earthly appearances."[449] Revelation stresses that worship, glory, and honor are to be directed always and only toward the throne; the source of judgment and all that is unveiled is at the throne. The Apocalypse reveals Roman power as pretense and its emperors as pretenders, despite their authority on earth; they are unworthy rivals of the one true God. Furthermore, since everything was oriented around the throne, the one on the throne determined who and what was honorable and shameful. Revelation shifts the audience that determines honor from Roman authority and its retainers on earth to the one who sits on the throne in heaven. This is foundational in the challenge to dominant cultural values that follows.

Steven Friesen has aptly observed that the imperial cult in Asia had such an ordering effect. Temples, such as the provincial one in Smyrna or the municipal one (referred to as the Sebasteion) in Aphrodisias, "constructed a cosmology with an imaginary geography centered on the city of Rome;" this had the practical effect of ordering cities and provinces around Roman authorities and the elites that contributed to the cult.[450] Friesen concludes that the throne in Revelation functions in a similar way, ordering authority and reality.[451] Just as proximity to Roman authority (as expressed in the various inscriptions throughout temple areas and support of the cult) identified elites as powerful and honorable, so proximity to the throne and the Lamb

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[449] *Theology*, 31.

[450] Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 162. In this, Friesen is dependent on S.R.F. Price's *Power and Persuasion: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), which stresses among other things the ways the imperial cult transformed civic spaces and connected subjects to the emperor: "Many societies have the problem of making sense of an otherwise incomprehensible intrusion of authority into their world. . . . They attempted to evoke an answer by focusing the problem in ritual. Using their traditional symbolic system they represented the emperor to themselves in the familiar terms of divine power. The imperial cult, like the cults of the traditional gods, created a relationship of power between subject and ruler" (247-48).

[451] Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 162.

identifies all saints, faithful witnesses, and martyrs as honorable.[452] Further analysis of Revelation reinforces such positive judgments about those in Christ, while it emphasizes that those aligned with the injustice, immorality, and violence of the Roman Empire are shameful.

Worthy is the Lamb that Was Slaughtered

The throne's fundamental place in ordering reality makes the appearance of the Lamb in chapter five all the more startling. "The Lord God Almighty" alone receives unceasing worship from the angels and elders around the throne in a scene that reflects a sovereign's court (4:8-11).[453] But the introduction of the scroll in the right hand of the one who sits on the throne triggers events in heaven and sets the stage for fundamental changes in reality (chapter 5).

The scene in chapter five is full of surprises. The appearance of the scroll leads to a weighty question: "Who is worthy" to open it (v. 2)? The situation is heightened when no one is found worthy to do so (v.3); this crisis brings John to tears (v. 4). The problem is solved and tension resolved when one of the elders explains that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Shoot of David, has conquered[454] so as to open the scroll and its seven seals" (v. 5).[455] But explanation gives way to surprise when John sees who the elder speaks of: in the midst of the throne stands a

[452] While the term μάρτυς later takes on a different significance in later Christian writings, specifically referring to martyrs (those who would ultimately "witness" through their death), it must be noted that Revelation employs the term broadly to refer to all who testify to Christ (see especially 2:13; 11:3; 17:6).

[453] "John describes heaven not so much as a temple but as an oriental or Roman sovereign's throne hall. God reigns like an Oriental or Hellenistic ruler in the splendor of unapproachable light surrounded by the highest beings of the celestial court" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation : Vision of a Just World* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 59.).

[454] Revelation employs the verb νικάω ("conquer" or "overcome") seven times prior to this passage—in each of the letters to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Indeed, conquering is the fundamental objective and exhortation for the churches collectively. This eighth use of νικάω in Revelation would have defined the term for the audience and vividly illustrated the book's key exhortation to them.

[455] Rev 5:5: "ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ, ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ σφραγῖδας αὐτοῦ" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Lamb that appears as though it had been slaughtered (v. 6). Revelation identifies the victim as the victor.[456]

An even greater surprise follows: the slaughtered Lamb is revealed not simply as a conqueror, but as an object of worship. When he takes the scroll, the elders and the living creatures fall to their faces in worship,[457] singing a new song to the Lamb (vv. 7-10); John then hears and sees "myriads and myriads" of angels around the scene in heaven offering their own worship to the Lamb (v. 11-12). The praise reaches a crescendo when all of creation offers a song of praise (v. 13). Significantly, Revelation incorporates the Lamb into worship in a monotheistic, Jewish context. Furthermore, the reason for his worship is noteworthy: the Lamb conquers (v. 5) and is declared worthy (vv. 9, 12; cf. vv. 2, 4) because he was slaughtered (vv. 6, 9, 12). Ultimately, Christ's shameful crucifixion serves as the basis for the exaltation described in Revelation 5; Paul emphasizes different themes, but the weight and result is similar to Philippians 2:6-11—Christ's exalted place of worship as Lord of all creation follows his humiliating death. This reality, with the slaughtered Lamb taking the place of worship alongside the one who sits on the throne, serves as the basis for Revelation's challenge to honor and its interpretation of events in the Roman Empire, Asia and the seven churches.

The Lamb's appearance and worship in the midst of the throne function similarly to John's description and initial vision of the risen Christ in chapter one. Revelation's epistolary

[456] Friesen (*Imperial Cults*, 200) describes the tension evident in the scene and carried throughout the book: "Even as John synthesized in Jesus such images as the Davidic ruler, Servant of the Lord, and the sacrificial Lamb, he refused to homogenize them. Instead, we are left with startling, unresolved juxtapositions: a lion who appears as a lamb, a slaughtered lamb that lives, a victor who is vanquished. The result is a complete redefinition of omnipotence. Strength and authority belong not to the one who has practiced violence but rather to the one upon whom violence has been inflicted. The image of victory is thereby inverted. This point is driven home throughout the rest of the text by the primary identification of Jesus as 'the Lamb that was slaughtered.'"

[457] J. R. Harrison ("The Fading Crown: Divine Honor and the Early Christians," *Journal of Theological Studies* 54 [October 2003]: 514) observes that the scene of the elders casting down their crowns before the throne reflects critique of supporters of Roman power: "…the book of Revelation offers a 'sarcastic commentary' as much on the corrupt provincial elites in their grab for power and wealth as on the imperial cult itself."

greeting presents him as "the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the Earth" (1:5).[458] This verse succinctly describes the story of Christ in the form of a three-step status transformation: (1) as a witness (μάρτυς), he was faithful unto death (cf. 2:10, 13; 3:14); (2) shaming crucifixion was not his end and so he is "firstborn of the dead;" and (3) his vindication and exaltation is complete as he takes the place of authority as "ruler of the kings of the Earth."[459]

Christ's vindication is further emphasized in verse seven, which begins with a quote from Daniel 7:13 that identifies him with the Son of Man who comes to judge: "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail because of him."[460] He had suffered humiliation and died the most shameful of deaths, but Christ had been vindicated and was revealed as the glorious, risen Son of Man who would execute Yahweh's final judgment. Those who had "pierced him" and exposed him to the shame of crucifixion would see him in his glory; in his final and full vindication, they would wail in woe and humiliation.

The vision of the risen Son of Man in theverses that follow (vv. 13-18) demonstrates in vivid imagery what the earlier verses describe. The encounter surprises and alarms John, and so he "fell down at his feet as though dead" (v. 17). This was a figure of dignity and honor, clothed

[458] Rev 1:5: "ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[459] This three-fold transformation is intended to exhort his audience to similar faithful witness (cf. 2:10, 13; 3:14), with the expectation that they will follow his triumph over death (cf. 1:18; 11:11, 12; 15:2-4) and share in his position of honor and rule (3:21; 5:10;). "All three of these traits are presented as models for John's audience – they should be faithful unto death, they will receive a good resurrection like Christ's, and they will rule with him over the earth (see Rev. 20)" (Witherington, *Revelation*, 76).

[460] Rev 1:7: "Ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. ναί, ἀμήν." (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

in a robe reaching to his feet with a golden sash across his chest (v. 13)—priestly raiment.[461] His visage was glorious—totally other—with a head and hair "white like white wool" and eyes "like a flame of fire" (v. 14); his face forced one to turn away, shining "like the sun in its strength" (v. 16). Yet averting one's eyes from his face failed to resolve the issue, for his feet emitted the bright heat of a furnace (v. 15). The sword from his mouth and his hands, that firmly held seven stars, emphasized his power and authority (v. 16). This was a far cry from what John had known and experienced of Jesus, as demonstrated in his reverent response.

The juxtaposition between what is seen and heard is striking, just as it is in the scene where the Lamb takes his place in the midst of the throne; the voice explains all that he has seen. "Do not be afraid! I am the first and the last and the living one; and I was dead, and, look, I am alive forevermore, and I hold the keys of death and Hades" (vv. 17-18).[462] The glorious one who looked like "a son of man" was actually Jesus Christ: the one who had suffered the most shameful of deaths in crucifixion was now revealed as vindicated, exalted, and mighty. We also see that a three-step status-transformation, patterned like the one in verse six, is repeated in verse eighteen: Christ moves from shaming death ("I was dead") to life ("I am alive forevermore") to exaltation and authority ("I hold the keys of death and Hades").

What is revealed about Jesus Christ in Revelation's opening and then in the Lamb's appearance in heaven proceeds to the next step when he begins to open the scroll that represents Yahweh's authority over the Earth (6:1).[463] The Lamb's slaughter had truly meant victory,

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[461] Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John : A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 54. Cf. Ex 28:4; 29:5; 39:29.

[462] Rev 1:17-18: "μὴ φοβοῦ· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾅδου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[463] Fiorenza (*Revelation*, 60-61) explains the significance of the scroll: "The enigmatic symbol of the sevenfold sealed scroll has received many different interpretations; however, it seems best to derive its meaning

wherein he had conquered evil and demonstrated his worth to redeem humanity and take the scroll (5:4-7).[464] His action ultimately triggers the judgment of the beast (which represents the imperial power of Rome), the false prophet (representing Rome's retainers in Asia), Babylon (Rome), and all in league with them; it presages the vindication of his own. This will manifest in such a way when he returns and triumphs over them, taking his place of rule and authority (19:11-21; cf. 1:7).

The multiple visions of Jesus Christ in Revelation serve as the basis for the inverted reality presented in the prophecy and the challenge to honor values evident in the book. Throughout the Apocalypse—from the opening vision, to his appearance in heaven, to the judgment he executes, and concluding in his return and rule—Christ demonstrates that things had changed and honor values had been inverted. Christ's victory and vindication is fundamental to the challenge to honor values, not only due to his example, but also due to the forthcoming evidence that believers participate in his victory, vindication, and, ultimately, enhanced honor.

The Honor of the Redeemed

The Apocalypse of John emphasizes that those who belong to Christ and who are faithful to the end will occupy a position of honor in spite of the temporary disgrace.[465] In a number of

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from its compositional context. According to ancient Oriental mythology, the highest God possesses books or plates in which the destiny of the world is inscribed. In the ritual enthronement of the Great King, these books are given to the king as a sign that he now has power over the world. This power entails the rendering of judgment and the execution of justice as the primary role of the emperor. If this contextualization is correct, the author appears to picture the enthronement of Jesus Christ as rule and judge of the world and of its destiny by stressing that only the Lamb is worthy to receive the sealed scroll and open its seals. Rev 5:12 confirms such an interpretation of this visionary rhetoric insofar as the hymn explicitly states that the Lamb's 'taking over' or 'receiving' of the sevenfold sealed scroll means receiving power and honor."

[464] Bauckham, *Theology*, 74.

[465] DeSilva, "Honor Discourse," 108-109: "The visions consistently move the hearers to identify with (and thus seek to embody the behaviors of) those who are honored before God's court, and to avoid those courses of

ways, the book illustrates the final honor of the redeemed, but perhaps the most striking is in its description of Christ-worshipers as conquerors.

Conquerors

Νικάω is a critical term in Revelation, employed seventeen times. The verb refers to triumph, overcoming, or conquest; such victory in battle accrued honor for its participants in ancient Mediterranean society. In an agonistic context where honor was in limited supply, glory went to the victor in battle; this is all the more true in light of Rome's martial influence. The Apocalypse of John embraces the term and similatneously redefines it to fit the book's rhetorical objectives; this redefinition of νικάω is at the heart of the book's transposition of reality and reversal of honor.

John's molding of the term begins in the letters to the seven churches (chapters 2 & 3). The letters usually follow a consistent form: they begin with praise, continue with an assessment of the situation along with an exhortation to a certain course of action, and conclude with a promise for "those who conquer" (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). The structure thus defines the honorable path for each church and identifies the required course of action with "conquering" or "overcoming." In particular, overcoming is demonstrated by faithfulness to their testimony in the face of shaming persecution—even unto death—in the letters to Smyrna (2:9-10), Pergamum (2:13), and Philadelphia (3:8, 10). At the same time, the churches in Pergamum (2:14-16) and Thyatira (2:20-23) are exhorted to avoid idolatry and food sacrificed to idols. Both of these messages about overcoming reflect challenges facing their community: some apparently endured opposition because their profession had been at odds with their cities' practice, while others were

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action that, while they will lessen the tension between themselves and society, will ultimately lead to open and lasting disgrace before God and the holy angels."

commanded to avoid engaging in local cult. In both cases, the Apocalypse exhorts them to embrace a path that rejected engaging in practices that their neighbors would have viewed as constructive and necessary; this kind of behavior would have been perceived as shameful and would mark them as ἄθεοι or, even worse, as part of a *superstitio*.[466] But for the Apocalypse, embracing such a path of shame and potential suffering was described as "conquering" and judged as honorable; they endured temporary disgrace for the sake of eternal glory.

The Lamb's appearance in the midst of the throne (ch. 5) repeats and intensifies the book's message about shameful suffering, as has already been noted. After the repeated promises to conquerors in the letters to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), the scene in chapter five demonstrates honorable behavior by showing the crucified Christ, the Lamb that had been slaughtered, as the consummate conqueror. In one brush stroke, Revelation inverts honor and reality by exalting the victim of the slave's death to the pinnacle of power, authority, and glory. After emphasizing the importance of "conquering" in the letters to the churches, the writing provides a fuller definition of the term by demonstrating that the victim is the victor.

The vision of the two witnesses (chapter 11) appears to emphasize this theme as well, underscoring the honor of faithful testimony unto death. The witnesses are described as lampstands (v. 4), imagery that identifies them as churches (cf. 1:7, 20); the miracles of drought and plagues (11: 6) fashion their ministry as prophetic in the mold of Moses and Elijah. After their time of testimony is finished, the beast from the abyss (which represents Rome's imperial power) is allowed to conquer and kill them (v. 7). Their bodies are shamefully left exposed in the public square (vv. 8-9); all who see rejoice at the deaths at these prophets who had tormented them (v. 10). But humiliation is not their end, for God raises them back to life (v. 11) and they

[466] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians As the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 48ff.

are called up to heaven, delivered in a cloud for their enemies to see (v. 12). Their departure is followed by an earthquake that reflects God's judgment and kills seven thousand; in response to the vindication of these prophets, those who watched gave glory to God (v. 13).

The vision of the prophets redefines conquest and honor in much the same way as the vision of the slaughtered Lamb. Whether the vision refers to specific churches or simply to the church's ministry in general,[467] their faithful, prophetic ministry is with power, even though it is initially ineffectual and results in their defeat at the hands of Roman authority (v. 7); this defeat and the shameful exposure of their bodies to the celebrating throng bespoke humiliation (vv. 8-10). But their vindication is equally as public as their humiliation: God would raise them up and they would be delivered to heaven on a cloud in the watching eyes of all (vv. 11-12).[468] John's audience would have understood this countercultural message: the shaming persecution some experienced for their testimony—even to death—would not be the final outcome for them; God would raise them, vindicate them, and restore their honor for their enemies to see. Suffering and disgrace for Christ at the hands of Roman authority would bring final victory and honor.

The emphasis on the victim as the victor continues in the vision of the dragon and the woman—who, based on her raiment, should be identified as a queen (chapter 12). After she gives birth to her child (v. 5), she flees from the dragon into the wilderness and is given a safe place there (v. 6). Next, following a cosmic battle between the dragon and God's angels, the dragon is cast down from heaven (vv. 7-9). In light of his situation, the dragon unsuccessfully pursues the woman in the wilderness (vv. 13-16); in his anger at her, he hunts the rest of her

[467] Witherington (*Revelation*, 158-59) suggests these alternatives, namely that the prophecy is meant to refer to the church at large or to Smyrna and Philadelphia, for example, in particular.

[468] Revelation 1:7 appears to have similar significance, but for Christ in his return: "He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him."

descendents, who keep "the commandments of God" and "the testimony of Jesus" (v. 17). A loud voice in heaven further explains the vision:

> "Now have come the salvation and the power and the ruling of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony and did not love their life when faced with death. For this reason, rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them. But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great wrath, for he knows his time is short."[469]

The queen is broadly indentified with God's people or, perhaps, Israel.[470] The dragon is revealed as Satan, who has been cast down from heaven because of the rule of Christ. And the queen's "other descendents" represent Christ-worshipers, who conquer through fearless, faithful testimony—which, for some, leads to death.

As occurs elsewhere in the Apocalypse, the vision redefines reality. In light of what they have seen, the audience can look past the chaos and persecution some face to conclude that Satan has been cast down and and Christ is ruling. Edith Humphrey rightly describes the vision's reorienting effect and connects it to prior visions:

> "The earthy rampage of Satan is the demonstration of God's victory, and the fall is linked inversely with the effective blood of the Lamb and the martyrdom of the faithful. Things are not as they seem, for martyrdom and death equals victory, and the very fury of Satan's earthly activity signals that God is already the Victor. Whereas Luke connects the same topic of Satan's fall in Luke 10:17-20 to a successful and dramatic ministry, the Apocalypse instead offers a fugitive and exiled queen as the sign of God's rule. This queen pictures for John's audience both the host of martyrs and also the living faithful,

[469] Rev 12:10-12: "καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν· ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγωρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός. καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου. διὰ τοῦτο εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες. οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν, ὅτι κατέβη ὁ διάβολος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔχων θυμὸν μέγαν, εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ἔχει" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[470] The duration of her time in the wilderness (12:6) is the same as that of the prophecy of the two witnesses (11:3). In light of the parallel testimony and suffering associated with the woman's descendents and the two witnesses, it may be that the two visions identify similar circumstances and, ultimately, similar groups. If this is the case, association of the woman broadly with God's people and not simply Israel makes sense.

> who are sheltered (even in their harassment) by God, and who are also promised glory. In terms of argumentation, John's visionary logic throughout the apocalypse is convoluted, yet powerful: Rejoice because of your seeming failure; rejoice in spite of death, for death implies life. The Lamb is a Lion (5:5-6), the fugitive is a queen, and the dragon is already judged."[471]

Thus, we see the language of conquest is again employed to redefine honor and shame values: victims are victors and suffering through shaming persecution leads to glory in light of the rule of Christ and Satan's fall.

Honor to the Conquerors

The Apocalypse of John not only redefines conquest by identifying the victim as the victor, but it also emphasizes that honor will come to the victors again and again. The letters to the churches are replete with examples of promises to those who conquer. The church at Thyatira is promised the honor of authority "over the nations" and to rule "with a rod of iron," just as Christ received the same authority and honor (2:26-27). Christ offers the church in Sardis the prestige of white garments[472] and promises to acknowledge them before his Father (3:5). In a context that emphasized the honor of a good name, he offers the church in Philadelphia the benefit of new names: the name of God, the name of the new Jerusalem, and his new name (3:12). Finally, Christ offers the honor of sitting with him on his throne to the church in Laodicea (3:21). To these communities for whom faithfulness meant diminished prospect,s if not suffering and shame, the Apocalypse of John offered promise of greater, eternal glory. If

[471] Edith M. Humphrey, "In Search of a Voice: Rhetoric through Sight and Sound in Revelation 11:15-12:17" in eds. Greg Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist, *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999), 155-56.

[472] Bruce Malina and John Pilch (*Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], 60) explain the significance of being clothed in white: "White garments, the proper attire for beings from the realm of God, point to persons of eminent worth….White was the color of the toga associated with victory. These are honored persons, entitled to precedence and acknowledged prominence."

they doubted that, they only need to view the example of the slaughtered Lamb, who took his place in the midst of the throne and received glory, honor and praise with "the one who was and is and is coming" (5:5-14; 1:4).

Revelation is emphatic about the eternal honor of those who overcome, as other scenes indicate. The final vindication and ascension into heaven of the two witnesses, who were conquered by the beast, demonstrates the final outcome and status restoration of those who are faithful unto death (chapter 11). A later scene before the throne emphasizes this same theme: the group of one hundred and forty-four thousand from the previous scene who had "died in the Lord" (14:1-16),[473] the same ones who had "conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name," stood on the sea of glass holding "harps of God" (15:2) and sang "the song of Moses" and "of the Lamb" (15:3).[474] Those who were faithful, who conquered because they resisted the Imperial system and worship of the emperor, received the honor of worshipping in the presence of the throne of God and embraced an honorable, priestly role.[475] After the appearance of the new heavens and Earth, this emphasis on the honor of overcoming culminates with a staggering promise: "He who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son" (21:7).[476] Since the Apocalypse presents God as deserving of all power and

[473] See Bauckham (*Theology*, 94-101) for an overview of the section's flow and the connection between the martial and harvest imagery of chapter 14 and Exodus imagery of 15:2-4.

[474] Rev 15:2-3: "τοὺς νικῶντας ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἑστῶτας ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν ὑαλίνην ἔχοντας κιθάρας τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ ᾄδουσιν τὴν ᾠδὴν Μωϋσέως τοῦ δούλου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν ᾠδὴν τοῦ ἀρνίου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[475] Cf. 1:6; 5:10; 7:15; 20:6; 22:3-5.

[476] Rev 21:7: "ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

glory, and alone worthy of worship, the grant of sonship from God for the victorious and the inheritance of the new heavens and Earth is the highest honor available to man![477]

Are All Saints Martyrs?

The Apocalypse of John presents an uncompromising vision of discipleship. In no place is this more apparent than in his central emphasis that conquering is the responsibility of all of the saints, with all that it entails. As noted, the pivotal scene when the Lamb first appears in heaven associates overcoming with being slain (5:5, 6). The two faithful witnesses, who represent the church, are conquered, shamefully exposed in death, raised back to life, and caught up to heaven (11:3-12). The vision of the woman and the dragon that follows presents the saints as conquerors of the dragon by "the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony,"[478] not as those who cling to life "when faced with death" (12:11). Finally, the multitude that dies in the Lord (14:1-16) and are revealed wearing white in heaven (cf. 6:11), having conquered the beast (15:2-4), reinforces the impression that the central discipleship theme of the Apocalypse emphasizes the likelihood or necessity martyrdom.

Does John envision all saints as martyrs in the coming confrontation with the Roman power?[479] The above examples appear to state as much; the Apocalypse provides an uncompromising vision of discipleship. It is a perspective that gives the prophecy rhetorical

[477] Alternatively, Malina and Pilch (*Revelation*, 246) conclude that the verse should be understood through the lens of receiving patronage from God. However, the consequence of the promise is the same either way: this is a "significant" and "unimaginable" gift.

[478] Cf. 7: 9-17. Bauckham (*Theology*, 75-76) reads this reference to "the blood of the Lamb" to identify the blood of martyrs with it: "…the reference to 'the blood of the Lamb' is not purely to Christ's death but to the deaths of the Christian martyrs, who, following Christ's example, bear witness even at the cost of their lives. But this witness even as far as death does not have an independent value of its own. Its value depends on its being a continuation of his witness. So it is by the Lamb's blood that they conquer."

[479] Bauckham, *Theology*, 92-93. Bauckham (p. 93) rightly notes that John seems to envision "faithful Christians still alive at the parousia (3:20; 16:15)."

force, presenting the confrontation with Rome as absolute; imperial authority would allow for no rivals and would call into question their fidelity to the one true God.[480] The perspective appears to set the stage and precedent for the later emphasis on martyrdom as the way of discipleship in the letters of Ignatius and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. It also anticipates the imagery of contest found throughout "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" and *The Passion of Perpetua*. In Revelation, as with these other texts, death became "a sign of favor" that challenged "the dominant culture's mechanisms of social control."[481]

Revelation's Makarisms

The *makarism* is another medium in the Apocalypse that emphasizes the reversal of honor-shame values, while it affirms those in the audience who keep the prophecy. As has been noted earlier, *makarisms* are sayings that declare their approval for honorable people. In keeping with Revelation's use of the number seven, there are seven *makarisms*.

The Apocalypse employs these sayings to praise honorable behavior in conflict with the demands of the majority culture—a culture that pushed them to compromise worship of the true God through idolatry and align with an imperial system that was violent and immoral. Very early in the book, we find a *makarism* emphasizing the value of reading it: "How honorable is the one who reads and those who listen to the prophecy and who heed what is written in it" (1:3).[482] The remaining *makarisms* follow later in the book, after the vision of the woman and

[480] Ibid., 93.

[481] deSilva, "Honor Discourse," 110: "The increasing number of martyrs throughout the second and third centuries, and the veneration of such figures, testifies to the importance and pervasiveness of such 'social engineering' strategies within the early church."

[482] Rev 1:3: "Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

the dragon (12:5-12). In response to the scene of the one hundred and forty-four thousand set apart as martyrs (14:1-6), the warning of impending judgment (14:7), the announcement of Babylon's fall (14:8), and admonition against worshipping the beast (14:9-11), the second *makarism* declares, "How honorable are those who die in the Lord from now on" (14:13).[483] Then Christ offers another to those who are prepared for his coming (16:15; cf. Mt 25:1-13). After the wedding of the Lamb, when his bride is announced, the fourth *makarism* is given for "those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" [484] (19:9). Martyrs and those who had not worshipped the beast receive praise next: "How honorable and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; the second death has no power over these, but they will be priest of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (20:6).[485] The sixth *makarism* repeats the first, albeit with greater intensity since it is spoken by the Lord: "How honorable is the one who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:7).[486] Just a few verses later, Jesus Christ proclaims the final one: "How honorable are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city" (22:14).[487] The series culminates with *makarisms* spoken by God and then Christ, emphasizing the eternal

[483] Rev 14:13: "μακάριοι οἱ νεκροὶ οἱ ἐν κυρίῳ ἀποθνῄσκοντες ἀπ᾽ ἄρτι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[484] Rev 19:9: "μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[485] Rev 20:6: "μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῇ πρώτῃ· ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ᾽ ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ [τὰ] χίλια ἔτη" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

In the case of this verse, their identification as honorable is explained by their exalted role as priests and kings (cf. 1:7; 5:6).

[486] Rev 22:7: "μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[487] Rev 22:14: "Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν, ἵνα ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

honor of choosing the right path and rejecting the pressure of the majority culture to conform and engage the imperial cult.

Honor, Shame, and the Judgment of God

As noted above, the throne has an effect of ordering reality within Revelation; all worship, glory, and honor are to the one who sits on the throne. Moreover, judgment proceeds from the throne. This occurs at the will of and within the timetable of the one who sits on the throne. Ultimately, God's judgment is at the heart of the Apocalypse's reversal of honor and shame values.

This reversal of honor and shame by virtue of the judgment of God is most evident in the contrasting ends of the two cities of the Apocalypse, which are personified by women: Babylon, which represents Rome, and the new Jerusalem. All of the action in the prophecy builds to their ends; ultimately, everyone is connected to one city or the other, with differing implications in terms of honor and shame.

Identifying Rome with Babylon was a natural step in the Christian tradition in light of the group's Judean heritage: Babylon was against God and the place of exile for his people, emblematic of Gentile idolatry and immorality. In Revelation, she is pictured as a harlot (17:1) riding the beast (which reflected her dependence on Roman power, 17:3), drunk on the blood of the saints (17:6), immoral (17:2), full of blasphemies, and teeming with every unclean thing (17:3-4; 18:2-3). Many had shared in her wine (17:2) and many benefited from commerce with her (18:3, 11-13). The kings of the earth relied upon her while committing immorality with her (18:9).

Revelation demonstrates, emphatically and vividly, that any trust in Rome was misplaced. As demonstrated in the prophecy of her destruction, she was a shameful, vile whore who was drunk on blood and power; her days were numbered (14:8; 16:9; 17:14; 18:2). The perspective of the Apocalypse on Rome is evident both through the imagery it employs and through the time spent describing its demise (14:8; 16:19; chapters 17 and 18; 19:1-3). God's wrath was coming for Rome, both to emphasize the vindication of his servants who had suffered at her hands (18:20; 19:1-3) and his judgment on this city that dominated Mediterranean life (17:15-18). This served as a severe warning to those who were in league with her: they had acquired profit, authority, and honor through her, but this was a shameful city that God had promised to judge.

The new Jerusalem is the antithesis of Babylon and embodies all that the old Jerusalem aspired to be in its best days. Clothed in fine linen, bright and clean (19:18), the city is pictured as a radiant bride coming down from heaven (21:1-2, 9-11). While Babylon, the harlot, rides the beast, Jerusalem will be wed to the Lamb (21:2, 9). She was bright and full of glory because God and the Lamb were there (21:22-24). To be a citizen of such a city would have been perceived as a great honor; she was promised as an inheritance for those who had overcome (21:7). The contrast between the cities and its citizens could not be more striking: judgment and shame characterized one city, while glory and honor characterized the other.

At the same time, the Apocalypse challenges these deeply embedded cultural values by emphasizing that God's judgement is impartial. This is demonstrated by the repeated use of "the small and great" (οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι), frequently employed to emphasize the comprehensive nature of the group addressed, irrespective of their standing. But its repetition,

especially speaking in terms of reward and judgment, make the theme of God's impartiality explicit, and indicates that he makes no distinction between people regardless of status:

- "And your wrath came and the time came for the dead to be judged and to reward your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear your name, *the small and the great*" (11:18).[488] In this situation, the emphasis is on the fact that all of the dead will be judged and all of the saints to be rewarded, independent of status.
- As the judgment of Babylon is completed and the wedding supper of the Lamb is announced, a voice appeals to the saints to rejoice, due to the benefits all will receive without regard to status: "Give praise to our God, all you his bond-servants, you who fear him, *the small and the great*" (19:5).[489]
- After the announcement of the wedding supper of the Lamb and his return to execute judgment, an angel declares that judgment is about to occur and calls for the birds of the air to be ready: "Come, gather for the great supper of the Lamb to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of generals, the flesh of the powerful, the flesh of horses, and those who ride them, the flesh of all, both free and slave, and *small and great*" (19:17-18).[490] This event repeats the emphasis on God's comprehensive, impartial judgment,

[488] Rev 11:18: "καὶ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ διαφθεῖραι τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[489] Rev 19:5: "αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πάντες οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ [καὶ] οἱ φοβούμενοι αὐτόν, οἱ μικροὶ καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[490] Rev 19:17-18: "Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

with the added pairing "free and slave" (ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων, v. 18)—which was one of this society's fundamental ways of grouping people according to status.

- The final mention comes during the last judgment before the great white throne: "And I saw the dead, *the great and the small*, standing before the throne, and the scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is of life; and the dead were judged from the things that were written in the scrolls, according to their works" (20:11).[491] This example concludes the theme emphatically: the great and the small would not be judged based on their stature, but impartially, according to what they had done.

Thus, while the Apocalypse acknowledges the inequity of society with the juxtaposition of the great and the small,[492] it emphasizes that the disparity would ultimately be corrected by the one who judges justly. John demonstrates vividly what Paul and other New Testament writers so clearly assert: God is impartial.

Conclusion

The audience of Revelation in Asia faced a challenging situation: how would they engage a society ordered around the worship of the Roman emperor and allegiance to his brutal, oppressive empire? The answers were not easy, and the varying responses described in the

[491] Rev 20:12: "καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἑστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοίχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοίχθη, ὅ ἐστιν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

[492] So Friesen (*Imperial Cults*, 191-92) discusses "the polarizing effect of the rhetoric. John portrays the extreme limits and ignores the middle ground, suggesting a theory of society as a place where resources are distributed unequally. He treats even imperial offices with little precision. All rulers are 'kings,' all courtiers are 'great ones,' and all military officers are 'chiliarchs.' The Seer apparently felt no compulsion to recognize the nuances of status and power. He could paint society with a broad brush because he considered the options to be limited and clear. People are defined within standard categories involving biological, social, financial, and governmental distinctions. The fine points are irrelevant when the disparities are acknowledged."

letters to the churches indicate that this was a significant, costly decision. The decisions people and churches made determined the shape of their relationship with local elites who provided resources for the cults,[493] exercised power, and possessed connections that were a matter of life and death. Shaming persecution was one of a few consequences; but the other potential losses—wealth, relationships, and status—held great significance.

The Apocalypse of John exhorted them to countercultural behavior that would cost them greatly. Central to that challenge was the throne and its reordering of reality; the one who lives forever was worshipped there (chapter 4), the authority to rule was given there (5:7), and Yahweh's decisive judgment originated there. The throne functions as a centering reality. Yahweh, not the Roman pretender, was worthy of worship. He alone determined who and what was honorable.

Also at the heart of Revelation's reorientation of reality is the Lamb who was slaughtered. The Lamb, which represents Christ, "has conquered;" he is "worthy to open the scroll" and thus take authority to rule (5:5-6). The sacrificial victim overcomes and honor and shame are inverted:

> "The only real victory in Revelation is the sacrificial death of Jesus. All other victories are subsidiary and are won by stubborn confession of that death. Victory belongs to the victim….Imperialism finally meets its match: resolute weakness."[494]

Not only is the one who was dead encountered alive (1:18), but he would return to rule—and all would see his vindication (1:7).

The honor of the saints followed that of the slaughtered, victorious, worthy Lamb. Conquering was the worthy path and, while discipleship called for a variety of things, Revelation

[493] Ibid., 179.

[494] Ibid., 216.

emphasizes how faithful witness unto death is victory and the critical path to eternal glory (5:5-6; 11:7-12; 12:10-11; 15:2-4). This emphasis inverted traditional honor values and anticipated the development of early second-century writings that presented martyrdom as true discipleship and a key path to honor; "social engineering" as found in Revelation impacted many hearers.[495]

Finally, God's judgment in the Apocalypse contributes to the book's challenge to honor values. Rome, the seat of the Empire, is identified as a whore who is destined for judgment while the new Jerusalem is full of glory; one's final status and situation is bound up in the city which he or she occupies. Furthermore, Yahweh's impartial judgment of the small and the great was contrary to the ancient Mediterranean world's valuing of persons. The one who sat on the throne and the Lamb who had been slaughtered, judged differently than did Rome and the provincial elites. Ultimately, everyone would have to choose between the temporary honor offered by the Roman Empire and the eternal honor of the one who sits on the throne.

[495] That the likely intended context for reading Revelation was the Lord's meal served to reinforce this, as Friesen (*Imperial Cults*, 179) notes: "The specific ritual for which he wrote was the Lord's Supper. Two arguments support this claim. First, the language of worship permeates the book in the frequent use of hymns and acclamations of god. Beyond the formal elements of worship, however, there are also phrases, interjections, blessings, and short doxologies. All of this builds the case for a general worship setting in Revelation. A second argument points specifically to the Lords' Supper ritual. David Barr, in a comparison of the language of Revelation with the instructions in *Didache* 9 for celebrating the Eucharist, lists more than 20 parallels. A good number of the parallels come from the end of Revelation, especially from Revelation 22, suggesting that John expected that his Apocalypse would precede the taking of communion on the Lord's day. In effect, he was defining how communion should be understood through his narrative. The ritual of the Lord's Supper would confirm the mythology John laid out."

CONCLUSION

Christianity's spread into Asia subsequently challenged early Christians faced as they endeavored to live out their faith in an increasingly hostile environment; this had a significant impact on the movement's honor and shame values. To be faithful to their Christian calling they would face a complex, seemingly contradictory situation: they were "chosen aliens" (1 Pet 1:1) who had the honor of being the elect of God, yet they functioned as marginalized outsiders in their cities and even their own homes. Furthermore, the path to honor and victory was through suffering as a victim of brutal oppression (Rev 5:5-6; 11:7-12; 12:10-11; 15:2-4).

Their position as God's chosen people enabled them to endure faithfully. For the communities 1 Peter addressed, this meant that they would endure suffering without retaliating (1 Pet 3:9) and would give honor freely since they were God's servants (1 Pet 2:18; 3:1, 5, 7; 5:3, 5). Members of their city and even their household would reproach them or threaten worse. But Christ had shown them the honorable path, and they were to follow by suffering in the same way for his sake (1 Pet 2:21; Rev 5). Indeed, he was not simply their example—they suffered *with* him and would also share in his glory when he returned (1 Pet 4:13-16; Rev 21). As will be evident in the chapters ahead, this perspective would leave an indelible mark on early Christianity.

CHAPTER 5:

TRANSITIONS: FROM THE FIRST

TO THE SECOND CENTURY

Jesus' challenge to honor values exercised a significant influence on the earliest groups that formed around his teaching and worship. As years went on and the movement grew, the pull of the dominant culture was strong, and these communities faced both external and internal threats that would influence how they embraced Jesus' challenging perspective.

Jesus and Paul significantly influenced what the later communities did and taught, but in many cases the communities chose other responses to the dominant Roman culture. In some cases, the distinction was small; in other cases, they set aside earlier tradition and returned to the broader society's principles and perspective. Nevertheless, early Christian communities continued to challenge the values of their society at the end of the first century and well into the second century CE.

THE DIDACHE

> When he approaches the Council of the Community he must not touch the pure-food of the Many, until he has been examined concerning his spirit and his work until one full year is completed…
>
> The Community Rule from the *Dead Sea Scrolls* (1 QS 6.16-17)[496]

How were new converts trained in the teachings of Jesus and his disciples in the earliest Christ-worshipping communities? What did those communities look like? And how did Jesus' challenge to honor and shame values shape their instruction and fellowship? These questions come to the forefront in *The Didache*, a manual employed by Christ-worshipping communities in Syria and/or Egypt as early as the first century CE.[497]

The Didache carries forward Jesus' challenge to honor and shame values in many ways by emphasizing non-retaliation, humility, and the importance of impartiality. But at the same time, the document diverges from Jesus' teaching with regard to how hospitality and table fellowship are practiced.

Responding to Honor Challenge

The Didache emphasizes from the beginning that there are two ways: "the way of light" and "the way of darkness" (1.1). After summarizing the way of light as following the command

[496] Translation from James H. Charlesworth, and Frank Moore Cross, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994).

[497] For a discussion of the dating and origin of *The Didache*, see Robert Kraft, "*The Didache*," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, 197-98.

to love God and one's neighbor and presenting a negative version of the golden rule (1.2), the challenge to honor and shame values approaches the forefront:

> "The teaching of these words is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what credit is it if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But you must love those who hate you, and you will not have an enemy….If someone gives you a blow on your right cheek, turn to him the other as well and you will be perfect."[498]

Thus, the manual emphasizes the rejection of retaliation and the refusal to defend one's honor by including it at the beginning of its teaching. Those who chose to follow *the way of light*, in line with the teaching of Jesus, were not to respond to verbal affronts and abuse ("curse," 1.3) with a riposte, but rather a gracious word ("bless," 1.3); they were to offer the kindness of praying and fasting for enemies and persecutors (1.3).[499] In the same way, they were to respond to the physical violence of slapping their cheek by turning the other (1.4; cf. Mt 5:38 // Lk 6:29).[500] This beginning section, which is at the heart of *the way of light*, emphasizes the same type of countercultural response to an honor challenge as found in the teaching and behavior of Jesus, also repeated by Paul of Tarsus. It was a call to reject the way men had been socialized to defend their own honor and embrace a "weak" response that was certain to diminish them.

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[498] *The Didache* 1.3-4: "τούτων δέ τῶν λόγων ἡ διδαχή ἐστιν αὕτη· Εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμῖν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὑμῶν, νηστεύετε δὲ ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς. ποία γὰρ χάρις, ἐὰν ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας ὑμᾶς; οὐχὶ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς μισοῦντας ὑμᾶς καὶ οὐχ ἕξετε ἐχθρόν….ἐάν τίς σοι δῷ ῥάπισμα εἰς τὴν δεξιὰν σιαγόνα στρέψον αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην καὶ ἔσῃ τέλειος" (Joseph Barber Lightfoot, John Reginald Harmer, and Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, Third Edition [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2007]). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[499] There is significant disagreement as to whether this reflects literary dependence on Luke 6:27-28, 32-33, 35 // Matthew 5:44-47 or exposure to other tradition that predates those gospels. For two contrasting assessments of *The Didache*'s use of earlier tradition, see Jonathan A. Draper, "The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*" in *The Didache in Modern Research*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72-91 and Christopher M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache*" in *The Didache in Modern Research*, 92-128.

[500] Aaron Milavec (*The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* [New York: Newman Press, 2003], 767-68) identifies the social setting of this command as tensions within the family unit in response to a child's joining the community: "The Jesus movement threatened family unity. Parents, frustrated at their inability to verbally persuade their children of the folly and shame of their new commitments, finally lashed out at them—striking them on the left cheek."

With the Humble and Against Partiality

As we have already noted, people in ancient Mediterranean society were defined by their associations—including their connections, dining partners, and living companions. *The Didache* calls its hearers to a revaluation of people and emphasizes choosing humble associates over the great, and humility over self-exaltation: "Do not exalt yourself or permit your soul to become arrogant. Your soul shall not associate with the lofty, but live with the righteous and the humble."[501] Aaron Milavec proposes a practical consideration to explain the appeal that would have protected one from idolatry and immorality:

> "The hidden costs of getting involved with the rich, however, had also to be taken into account. To begin with, one now had to be willing to modify one's designs and one's standards of quality in order to meet those demanded by the rich patron and his go-betweens. Then, too, one would be expected to receive and to accept invitations to dinner that might compromise one's religious affiliation or one's moral standards."[502]

But beyond the potential risk involved, the command rejects what would have been a lofty, desirable place. Could Yahweh's disposition toward the proud (cf. Prov 3:34) be behind this, as it is in New Testament exhortations (cf. Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5)? Though the guide does not explain why, it is emphatic about rejecting society's path of honor through patron-client relationships with elites.

While broader society judged based on appearances, *The Didache* also unequivocally rejects this course. Hearers are counseled not to judge based on the face (πρόσωπον) of a person—they are not to "show partiality" (4.3). In the same way the guide urges masters not to make orders in anger to their slaves, because God "comes not to call according to reputation"—

[501] *The Didache* 3.9: "οὐχ ὑψώσεις σεαυτὸν οὐδὲ δώσεις τῇ ψυχῇ σου θράσος οὐ κολληθήσεται ἡ ψυχή σου μετὰ ὑψηλῶν ἀλλὰ μετὰ δικαίων καὶ ταπεινῶν ἀναστραφήσῃ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[502] Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life,* 223.

he does not look at a person's face when he calls (4.10).[503] Ultimately, a person's social status should not be a basis for determining how to treat someone because God did not look at such distinctions;[504] this perspective is directly in line with the canonical documents' perspective.

Impartial, but Not Entirely Inclusive

While *The Didache* emphasizes viewing people impartially, not everyone would be welcomed to the table. All who came to the door in the name of Christ were to be welcomed (12.1); however, to share in the Lord's meal required baptism (9.5). This instruction found its basis in the word of the Lord: "Do not give what is holy to dogs" (9.5).[505] The meal and the baptized community were sacred and honorable, but those on the outside were considered profane.

Conclusion

The Didache picks up at much the same place that Jesus and the canonical writers left off. Retaliation and riposte—which were traditionally sanctioned, male responses to affront—were rejected; this was at the heart of *the way of light* (1.3-4). The humble were embraced and self-exaltation was rejected (3.9); it is no wonder this is the case, for they were to judge impartially (4.3) just as God called people impartially (4.10).

However, the communities who used this manual parted ways with Jesus and Paul in one significant way: they practiced exclusive table fellowship, allowing a place at the Lord's meal

[503] *The Didache* 4.10: "οὐ γὰρ ἔρχεται κατὰ πρόσωπον καλέσαι" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[504] Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, & Life,* 164.

[505] *The Didache* 9.5: "Μὴ δῶτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσί" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

for only those who had been baptized (9.5). The honor of the sacred meal would not be shared with outsiders.

As will be seen, the battle for self-definition within these early Christian communities would lead other writers to further emphasize distinctions from the outside. In no place is this more emphatic than in *The Epistle of Barnabas*, outlined in the next section.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

> Apion also tells a false story, when he mentions an oath of ours, as if we "swore by God, the Maker of the heaven, and earth, and sea, to bear no good will to any foreigner, and particularly to none of the Greeks."
>
> Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.11, speaking about the Jews' attitude toward non-Jews[506]

Christianity's relationship with its mother religion is at the background of much of the nascent movement's literature. Within the body of writings, perhaps no work presents a harsher critique of its Judean brothers and their interpretation of scripture than *The Epistle of Barnabas*. At the heart of the work is the "contrast between the two peoples and the Two Ways," which serves as "a governing idea throughout the letter" and promotes "the right choice between Judaism and Christianity."[507]

This distinction has a significant impact on *Barnabas'* understanding of who is honorable. In particular, the writing emphasizes the honor of Christians above that of Jews in ways that go beyond other writings. At the same time, it challenges honor and shame values in much the same manner as earlier literature, emphasizing impartiality and holding forth humility as a consummate Christian virtue.

[506] Translated by William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987).

[507] Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 204.

Heirs of the Covenant

The Epistle of Barnabas speaks vigorously about the honor of its Christian audience, emphasizing their identity as sons and daughters of God and their position as heirs of the covenant. The theme is evident from the beginning, as the letter's opening demonstrates: "Greetings, sons and daughters, in the name of the Lord who has loved us, in peace" (1.1).[508] Thus, *Barnabas* speaks explicitly about their identity as sons and daughters of God, which, as we have noted, is a high honor. This succinctly states one of the writing's central themes: namely, that Christians, and not Jews, are heirs of the covenant.

The Epistle of Barnabas later develops this theme in greater detail:

> "…be on guard now, and do not be like certain people; that is, do not continue to pile up your sins while claiming, 'Our covenant remains valid.' In fact, those people lost it completely in the following way, when Moses had just received it. For the scripture says: 'And Moses was on the mountain fasting for forty days and forty nights, and he received the covenant from the Lord, stone tablets inscribed by the finger of the hand of the Lord.' But by turning to idols they lost it. For thus says the Lord: 'Moses, Moses, go down quickly, because your people, whom you led out of Egypt, have broken the law.' And Moses understood and hurled the two tablets from his hands, and their covenant was shattered, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in him."[509]

[508] *The Epistle of Barnabas* 1.1: "Χαίρετε υἱοὶ καὶ θυγατέρες ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος ἡμᾶς ἐν εἰρήνῃ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[509] *The Epistle of Barnabas* 4.6-8: "προσέχειν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ μὴ ὁμοιοῦσθαί τισιν, ἐπισωρεύοντας ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν λέγοντας ὅτι ἡ διαθήκη ἡμῶν μένει· ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνοι οὕτως εἰς τέλος ἀπώλεσαν αὐτήν, λαβόντος ἤδη τοῦ Μωϋσέως. λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή· Καὶ ἦν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ ὄρει νηστεύων ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν διαθήκην ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, πλάκας λιθίνας γεγραμμένας τῷ δακτύλῳ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ κυρίου. ἀλλὰ ἐπιστραφέντες ἐπὶ τὰ εἴδωλα ἀπώλεσαν αὐτήν. λέγει γὰρ οὕτως κύριος· Μωϋσῆ Μωϋσῆ, κατάβηθι τὸ τάχος, ὅτι ἠνόμησεν ὁ λαός σου, οὓς ἐξήγαγες ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου. καὶ συνῆκεν Μωϋσῆς καὶ ἔριψεν τὰς δύο πλάκας ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ συνετρίβη αὐτῶν ἡ διαθήκη, ἵνα ἡ τοῦ ἠγαπημένου Ἰησοῦ ἐνκατασφραγισθῇ εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν ἐν ἐλπίδι τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

The point is simple and straightforward: the covenant does not belong to the Jewish people as they claim (4.6); that claim is a "delusion."[510] The covenant was given to Moses, but Israel lost it due to idolatry—Moses' emphatic action of hurling the tablets to shatter them demonstrates this reality (4.8). This happened so that the writer and audience of *Barnabas* might receive the covenant of Jesus (4.8); as Reidar Hvalvik concludes, "They lost it so that we could get it."[511]

In order to reinforce and demonstrate the significance of this thesis, *The Epistle of Barnabas* employs the language of inheritance, implicitly identifying its Christian audience and not the Jews as honorable. It is they who are "the heirs of the covenant" (κληρονόμοι τῆς διαθήκης, 6.19). *Barnabas* further emphasizes this by turning to the examples of God's choice of Jacob over Esau (13.2-4; cf. Gen 25:21-23) and Jacob's decision to place his right hand on Joseph's second son, Ephraim, and bless him, rather than Manasseh, the first born (13.5; cf. Gen 48:11-20); these examples support his thesis that his Christian audience, and not the Jews, have the honorable identity of "heirs of the covenant" (13.1, 6). It is because of the Lord's suffering on their behalf that they and not the Jews are "the people of inheritance" (λαὸν κληρονομίας, 14.4; cf. 14.1-4; 4.6-8). High honor thus belongs to Christians and not the Jews; this stands in stark contrast to Paul and other canonical writers who emphasize the exalted position of believers without denigrating their Judean counterparts.

[510] *Barnabas'* perspective is emphatic:"Jewish understanding of themselves as covenant people is delusion: they have never been a covenant people, which is a title exclusively reserved for Christians, and hence to seek a share in their covenant is ludicrous" (J. Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994], 69).

[511] *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant*, 175-76.

Impartiality and Humility Emphasized

As with many of the canonical writings and *The Didache*, *Barnabas* emphasizes that God will not judge the way the world does, based on appearances, and neither should those in his community. This fundamental challenge of honor values appears first in the context of the writing's discussion of the last days: "The Lord will judge the world without partiality" (4.12).[512] God would not look at the face of a person nor judge based on appearances. Because of this perspective *Barnabas* is critical of the inequitable judgment that was characteristic of the Roman system and gave advantage to wealthy elites at the expense of the poor (20.2). Such an approach was shameful and part of the way of darkness.

There is general agreement that *Barnabas'* discussion of "the two ways" draws from a common tradition with that of *The Didache.* It is not surprising, therefore, that when *Barnabas* addresses "the way of light," it would present a challenge to dominant cultural values with regard to honor and shame much the same way as it did in *The Didache*.

> "You shall not exalt yourself, but shall be humble-minded in every respect. You shall not claim glory for yourself" (19.3).[513]
>
> "Do not be intimately associated with the lofty, but live with the humble and righteous" (19.6).[514]

Thus, "exalting oneself" and "claiming glory" are rejected (19.3); it has already been noted that not pursuing honor in these ways went against male socialization, which taught them to compete

[512] *The Epistle of Barnabas* 4.12: "ὁ κύριος ἀπροσωπολήπτως κρινεῖ τὸν κόσμον" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[513] *The Epistle of Barnabas* 19.3: "οὐχ ὑψώσεις σεαυτόν, ἔσῃ δὲ ταπεινόφρων κατὰ πάντα. οὐκ ἀρεῖς ἐπὶ σεαυτὸν δόξαν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[514] *The Epistle of Barnabas* 19.6: "οὐδὲ κολληθήσῃ ἐκ ψυχῆς σου μετὰ ὑψηλῶν, ἀλλὰ μετὰ δικαίων καὶ ταπεινῶν ἀναστραφήσῃ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

in the public realm through assertive action and boasting. Not only were they to embrace humility (19.3), but they were to associate with "the humble" rather than "the lofty" (19.6; cf. *The Didache* 3.9). They therefore eschewed the associations that dominant culture emphasized as a path to honor, and embraced behavior and relations that outsiders would have thought shameful. Such decisions were honorable within Christian circles, but would have been thought foolish by the broader community.

Conclusion

The Epistle of Barnabas reflects a number of similarities with *The Didache* and the canonical sources. God's impartiality (4.12) and the requisite call to judge without respect to persons are emphasized (20.3). Humility and association with the humble is righteous and honorable (19.3, 6).

Christians possessed the covenant along with authoritative interpretation of scripture, which enhanced their position. *Barnabas* emphasizes this through greeting them as God's "sons and daughters" (1.1) and by demonstrating that they are "heirs of the covenant" (6.9; 13.1, 6; cf. 4.6-8; 14.4). But this strong emphasis departs from the canonical tradition with its emphatic rejection of the Jewish people. *The Epistle of Barnabas* diverges from Pauline literature and 1 Peter by emphasizing Christians' honor as heirs of the covenant rather than through identification with Christ.

The early Christian challenge to dominant cultural values related to honor would continue to change, made evident through two writings that originated in Rome in the late first century or second century CE.

1 CLEMENT

> It is clear also what is the power of honor and how it can cause party faction; for men form factions both when they are themselves dishonored and when they see others honored...
>
> Aristotle, *Politics* 5.2.4[515]

Jesus, Paul, and the earliest Christ-worshippers presented a strong challenge to traditional honor and shame values. However, there was no guarantee that later Christians would follow in their steps. *First Clement*, an epistle written from Rome to Corinth at the end of the first century, provides an example of how the communities that followed made decisions and dealt with difficulties in light of earlier teaching and examples.

In this case, the removal of presbyters by members in the Corinthian church community precipitates correspondence from leaders in Rome by Clement, who served as secretary to the group and was likely an imperial freedman.[516] While a variety of factors may have contributed to the situation, *1 Clement* implies that competition for honor[517] and conflict between the rich and

[515] Translated by Harris Rackham, *The Politics* (London: W. Heinemann, 1932).

[516] In light of the name attached to the book from its earliest textual tradition and the description of Clement by *The Shepherd of Hermas* (*Vis.* 2.4.3) as one who wrote to other churches on the behalf of the Roman Christians, it seems likely that someone named Clement wrote the epistle and perhaps served as the secretary for the Roman community behind the correspondence. James Jeffers (*Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 25-34, 48-89) argues that Clement was an imperial freedman connected to Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Titus Flavius Clemens; that Clement carries her husband's name contributes to this assertion. In support of Jeffers' conclusion is Dio Cassius' indication (*Roman History* 67.14) that Domitilla's rejection of Roman gods and embrace of Judaism was behind her exile by Domitian, Eusebius' (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.18) assertion that she was a Christian, and archeological evidence related to Domitilla (including a catacomb connected to her and a later church that met on what appears to have been her property).

While the identity of the writer *1 Clement* is uncertain, with scholarly convention, we will refer to him as Clement.

[517] Odd Magne Bakke, *"Concord and Peace": A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 302-16.

poor[518] had a significant influence on the factionalism and removal of the presbyters. The letter attempts to persuade[519] the Corinthian audience to remove the new presbyters and reinstate the old ones. *First Clement* diverges in significant ways from the canonical writings both in its assumptions and rhetorical approach.

Concord, Peace, and Hierarchy

Recent interpretation of *1 Clement* in light of ancient rhetoric has contributed a great deal to the understanding of his correspondence. In particular, Odd Magne Bakke has demonstrated in "*Concord and Peace": A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition* that the writing employed familiar *topoi* used in response to social and political unrest.[520] Bakke's conclusion that ὁμόνοια ("concord;" see especially 63:2) is the book's central theme is evidenced both by the variety of and significant terms in its semantic field found in 1 Clement[521] in addition to a compositional analysis of the text.[522]

This theme carries with it significant assumptions about reality, order, and authority. In particular, due to the hierarchal nature of the Greco-Roman society that was evident in its political life and discourse, it is not surprising that *1 Clement* embraces the same hierarchical

[518] Ibid., 289-302.

[519] While some analysis of *1 Clement* has emphasized the evidence the epistle provides for the primacy of Rome, Andrew Gregory ("1 Clement: An Introduction," *Expository Times* 117 [2006]: 226-27) notes that the genre employed, called *sumbouleutikon*, was not indicative of command but rather persuasion: "it is used by those who wish to persuade others to reach for themselves a successful resolution to difficulties that they face, not to force them to submit to those who offer them counsel…. The church at Rome writes to the church at Corinth of its own free will, but the form in which it does so makes it clear that it could not take for granted that its counsel would be either welcome or in any way binding at Corinth."

[520] Bakke, "*Concord and Peace,"* 62-280.

[521] Ibid., 62-204.

[522] Ibid., 205-280.

assumptions.[523] This fact has major implications for the writing's conclusions about honor, reserving it for those at the top.

Order, Patronage, and Honor

> Clement provides an early indication of where he thinks the source of the sedition lies:
>
> "From this came jealousy and envy, strife and sedition, persecution and anarchy, war and captivity. So people were stirred up: those without honor against the honored, those of no repute against the highly reputed, the foolish against the wise, the young against the old."[524]

Two groups are identified: those in the first group were "without honor," "of no repute," "the foolish," and "the young" (v. 3); and those in the second included "the honored," "the highly reputed," "the wise," and "the old" (v. 3). According to *1 Clement*, the first group was engaged in sedition due to jealousy against the second. A close analysis of the groups reveals that the division was between those who had little honor or status and those who possessed both honor and status; as was noted in prior chapters, wisdom and age were identified with honor.[525] The passage stands in stark contrast to Paul's reversal of honor presented to the same church decades

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[523] Based on his conclusion that Clement was an imperial freedman (addressed above) and the names of those who delivered the letter to Corinth, and in light of the letter's broadly sympathetic perspective toward Roman authority, Jeffers (*Conflict*, 89) concludes that the community behind *1 Clement* had benefited from the Roman system: "In view of the evidence, therefore, it is probable that Clement's house church represented a small group of Christians who had benefited from the Roman system, unlike the majority of their poorer brothers. They were, in effect, a social elite among the congregations of Rome and had greater wealth, more education, and more hope for a comfortable life on earth." It is therefore not surprising that they would consciously or unconsciously embrace Roman cultural values as part of their faith.

[524] *1 Clement* 3.2-3: "ἐκ τούτου ζῆλος καὶ φθόνος, καὶ ἔρις καὶ στάσις, διωγμὸς καὶ ἀκαταστασία, πόλεμος καὶ αἰχμαλωσία. οὕτως ἐπηγέρθησαν οἱ ἄτιμοι ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐντίμους, οἱ ἄδοξοι ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐνδόξους, οἱ ἄφρονες ἐπὶ τοὺς φρονίμους, οἱ νέοι ἐπὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[525] Bakke (*"Concord and Peace,"* 296-97) concludes that the first three pairings refer to a divide according to status. It is noteworthy that all four pairings reflect the distinctions related to honor, including the fourth ("young" and "old") which touches on the issue of precedence. Bakke (*"Concord and Peace,"* 293-96) also rightly notes that such divisions go back to the Pauline period.

before: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and chosen the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:27).[526]

When *1 Clement* 3.2-3 is read in light of *1 Clement* 38, one can see that at least part of the author's concern is with the failure of the poor and the lowly to occupy their proper place in society's ordering.[527]

> "So in our case let the whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each of us be mutually subject to our neighbor, in proportion to each one's spiritual gift. The strong must not neglect the weak, and the weak must respect the strong. Let the rich support the poor; and let the poor give thanks to God, because he has given him someone through whom his needs may be met. Let the wise display wisdom not in words but in good works. The humble person should not testify to his own humility, but leave it to someone else to testify about him."[528]

Clement employs the body imagery as Paul did (1 Cor 12); in contrast to Paul, who adapts the popular image to challenge hierarchy and emphasize the shared honor of those in Christ, Clement makes use of it to reinforce Roman societal norms related to patronage and hierarchy.[529] In particular, Clement emphasizes how essential it is for the material and status-poor (i.e. "the weak" and "the poor") to "respect" or "regard" the wealthy in status and honor (i.e., "the strong" and "the rich"); the implication appears to be that they are to honor them as they would their

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[526] 1 Corinthians 1:27: "ἀλλὰ τὰ μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός, ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τοὺς σοφούς, καὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός, ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

David Horrell (*The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence : Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996], 279) rightly points out the contrasting attitudes that Clement and Paul have toward the "poor," "weak," and "foolish."

[527] Bakke (*"Concord and Peace,"* 297-98) is well-justified to connect the two passages and their emphasis on honor and status.

[528] *1 Clement* 38.1-2: "Σωζέσθω οὖν ἡμῶν ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ὑποτασσέσθω ἕκαστος τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ, καθὼς ἐτέθη ἐν τῷ χαρίσματι αὐτοῦ. ὁ ἰσχυρὸς τημελείτω τὸν ἀσθενῆ, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενὴς ἐντρεπέσθω τὸν ἰσχυρόν· ὁ πλούσιος ἐπιχορηγείτω τῷ πτωχῷ, ὁ δὲ πτωχὸς εὐχαριστείτω τῷ θεῷ, ὅτι ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δι᾽ οὗ ἀναπληρωθῇ αὐτοῦ τὸ ὑστέρημα. ὁ σοφὸς ἐνδεικνύσθω τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐν λόγοις ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς· ὁ ταπεινοφρονῶν μὴ ἑαυτῷ μαρτυρείτω, ἀλλ᾽ ἑάτω ὑφ᾽ ἑτέρου ἑαυτὸν μαρτυρεῖσθαι·" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[529] Jeffers (*Conflict*, 132-133) agrees and notes that popular patron-client practice was at the background of how Clement thought Christians should relate. Cf. Bakke, *"Concord and Peace,"* 181-82.

leaders.[530] On the other hand, the poor and weak are to fulfill their role simply by receiving.[531] Thus, both are urged to fulfill their place within the patronage system; as expected in Roman society, honor and regard are apportioned to the powerful and assistance to the weak. The end result is that honor is only given in one direction, and the poor and weak are left without.

When *1 Clement* 3.2-3 and 38 are considered together, the concerns of the Roman congregation come into focus: *1 Clement* complains that the poor have not fulfilled their role as good clients who occupy their expected position by respecting the place of their (elite) leaders.[532] Rather, they were "stirred up" to "sedition" and thus usurped the rightful, honorable leaders (3.3). Such behavior did not fit with concord and peace or the accepted, hierarchical structure, which gave honor to one group and not the other.

This perspective appears to inform the Christology of *1 Clement* as well. Such is evident as Christ is identified as "the Scepter of the majesty of God" (16.2) under whom a hierarchical structure of authority resides, with everyone taking his or her place (37). Furthermore, three passages identify him as a sort of patron: first as "the patron and helper of our weaknesses" (τὸν προστάτην καὶ βοηθὸν τῆς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν, 36.1), then as "the high priest and patron of our souls" (τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ προστάτου τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν, 61.3), and finally, in line with the

[530] ἐντρέπω ("respect" or "regard" [with honor] is employed throughout the LXX (46 times) with a range of meanings, including: to humble or submit oneself (as before God) (Ex 10:3; 2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron 7:14; 12:7, 12; 34:27), to be subjugated (for example, Judges 3:30; 8:28; 11:33), to be ashamed or humbled (2 Chron 30:15; 1 Esdras 8:51, 71; Ezra 9:6; Ps 34:4, 26; 39:15; Sir 4:25; Isa 41:11; 45:16, 17; 50:7; Eze 36:22; Dan 3:44), to regard with respect or honor (Wis 2:10; 6:7; 4:22). In the New Testament it is employed nine times, meaning to shame someone (1 Cor 4:14; 2 Th 3:14; Tit 2:8), respect humans (Lk 18:2, 4), and to speak of the respect due to a greater such as a father or authoritative representative (Mt 21:37 // Mk 12:6 // Lk 20:13; Heb 12:9). Clement uses the term in 21.6 in reference to the respect and high regard all are to have for leaders; that the appeal is set between those related to Jesus Christ (who was to be revered) and those who are older (who are to be honored) seems to indicate that there should be regard with honor.

[531] This stands in stark contrast with that Paul's understanding of spiritual gifts, which lumps material gifts with spiritual gifts (cf. Rom 12:6-8); everyone makes a contribution, creating a level playing field and shared honor.

[532] Bakke, *"Concord and Peace,"* 314-15.

second, as "our high priest and patron" (τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ προστάτου ἡμῶν, 64.1). Hence the writing appears to structure a Christian patronage system, a hierarchy beneath Christ that would extend to apostles and then to presbyters and ministers; in a way, it serves as a kinder, gentler image of the empire. Ultimately, grace and help come down, but honor and power reside near the top.

Humility: A Convenient, Christian Virtue

First Clement applies a variety of arguments to persuade the Corinthian audience to its desired course of action to restore concord and return to prior leadership. One significant appeal, in terms of quantity of references, is the call to humility. This uniquely Christian virtue serves as a convenient tool in the letter's call to order and ultimately hierarchy.

As we have noted, Jesus and Paul introduced the counterculture virtue of humility into the Christian community,[533] but the Romans largely identified it as an abhorrent, servile characteristic.[534] Bakke identifies ancient Greek authors who present ταπειν- roots as virtues, but all of them trace to the fourth century BC or earlier.[535] In light of the negative response to this term in the more recent context, it is not surprising that no precedent is found for its use as a virtue when the question of unity and sedition in a political community is involved.[536] If humility is so notably absent as a virtue in discourse for unity, then why does it figure so prominently in *1 Clement*? As I will demonstrate, the author identified it as a powerful tool to

[533] See especially the discussion of Luke 14, 2 Corinthians 11, and Philippians 2.

[534] See the earlier discussion related to Philippians 2.

[535] Bakke, *"Concord and Peace,"* 129-30.

[536] Ibid., 131.

call the small, weak, and poor into line;[537] humbling themselves was just what they were expected to do to serve the divinely ordained order.

In addition to identifying humility as the honorable path, the epistle emphasizes that its mirror image of exalting oneself is the shameful path. Thus, those who had usurped the "rightful" leaders and their supporters are urged to take a lower position. But the call to humility and against self-exaltation was directed with a simple assumption: those with elite standing could assert a superior position and not be accused of exceeding their place because their community embraced society's values, giving greater honor to status and material wealth.

The call to humility and against arrogance or self-exaltation occurs early in the book. It begins in 13.1 with a call to "humble-mindedness" (Ταπεινοφρονήσωμεν) and against arrogance (ἀλαζονείαν). *First Clement's* appeal to Christ's humility a short time later provides the epistle's most emphatic call to this counter-cultural virtue:

> "For Christ is with those who are humble, not with those who exalt themselves over his flock. The majestic scepter of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, did not come with the pomp of arrogance or pride (though he could have done so), but in humility, just as the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him…"[538]

[537] Given the purpose of the letter, it is understandable that *1 Clement* would not call elites and leaders into line. But given the author's view of leadership, it seems clear that he thinks there is no reason for them to humble themselves since they are in their appropriate position at the top.

David I. Rankin ("Class Distinction as a Way of Doing Church: The Early Fathers and the Christian Plebs," *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 [2004], 299-300) observes that Clement was one of a few early church fathers who made distinctions in the church in much the same way as Roman society divided between *ordo* and *plebs*, with elites taking leading roles and non-elites occupying the laity; since Clement assumed such a divide, he would assume such distinctions in his response. So doing, he embraces a very hierarchical, Roman way of ordering community.

[538] *1 Clement* 16.1-2: "Ταπεινοφρονούντων γάρ ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός, οὐκ ἐπαιρομένων ἐπὶ τὸ ποίμνιον αὐτοῦ. τὸ σκῆπτρον τῆς μεγαλωσύνης τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, οὐκ ἦλθεν ἐν κόμπῳ ἀλαζονείας οὐδὲ ὑπερηφανίας, καίπερ δυνάμενος, ἀλλὰ ταπεινοφρονῶν, καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐλάλησεν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

In this, the writing covers well-worn Christological ground in the early church, emphasizing Christ's humble example as did the canonical gospels and Paul.[539] The call to humility next turns to numerous Biblical examples, including Elijah (17.1), Abraham (17.2), Job (17.3-4), Moses (17.5-6), and David (18). The appeal to biblical examples of humility ends with the following:

> "Accordingly, the humility and subordination of so many people of such great renown have, through their obedience, improved not only us but also the generations before us, and likewise those who have received his oracles in fear and truth. Seeing then that we have a share in many great and glorious deeds, let us hasten on the goal of peace, which has been handed down to us from the beginning…"[540]

The section concludes with a final appeal to prior examples, emphasizing their "humility" and "subordination" while identifying their deeds as "great" and "glorious" (19.1). Humility is therefore honorable and leads to "the goal of peace," which is central to the writing's purpose.

The honor of humility continues to have a prominent role in the correspondence as it begins its appeals to concord and order. Following 1 Clement's demonstration of creation as an example of God's ordered, hierarchical harmony (20), the argument returns to the necessity of humility and a rejection of exalting self over the order that he has put into place. The section explicitly and implicitly relies on the dominant Roman cultural values of hierarchy and patriarchy.

> "It is right, therefore, that we should not leave the post which His will has assigned us. Let us rather offend those men who are foolish, and inconsiderate, and lifted up, and who glory in the pride of their speech, than offend God. Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us esteem those who have the rule over us; let us honor the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God; let us direct

[539] See, for example, Mark 10:36-46, Luke 22:24-27, and Philippians 2:4-11. Note that while both the canonical gospels and Paul emphasize Christ's example of humility to call the powerful to humble, honor-sharing behavior, Clement employs it to bring order to the community under its leaders.

[540] *1 Clement* 19.1-2: "Τῶν τοσούτων οὖν καὶ τοιούτων οὕτως μεμαρτυρημένων τὸ ταπεινόφρον καὶ τὸ ὑποδεὲς διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς οὐ μόνον ἡμᾶς ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς πρὸ ἡμῶν γενεὰς βελτίους ἐποίησεν, τούς τε καταδεξαμένους τὰ λόγια αὐτοῦ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. πολλῶν οὖν καὶ μεγάλων καὶ ἐνδόξων μετειληφότες πράξεων, ἐπαναδράμωμεν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραδεδομένον ἡμῖν τῆς εἰρήνης σκοπόν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

> our wives to that which is good….Let your children be partakers of true Christian training; let them learn of how great avail humility is with God how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind."[541]

Thus, immediately following the demonstration of the order and harmony with which God governs creation, the book's argument turns to an appeal for order-reinforcing virtues. None should "leave the post" (λειποτακτεῖν) to which God's will has assigned them (21.4). The exhortation, which employs military terminology, has a subtle hierarchical tone: each person is to remain in their proper place and not pursue a position above their order.

The encouragement not to "leave the post" is recapitulated and developed in the verses that follow (21.5-8). Verse five continues the appeal of verse four by emphasizing that offending the "foolish" and "lifted up," "who glory in the pride of their speech," is preferred to offending God, as leaving their post would do; these actions align with humility and order required of them. Verses six through eight then elaborate on the idea of verse four by concretely stating what it looks like in the context of the community. Christ must be revered, leaders must be held in esteem, and the aged must be honored (v. 6); thus they are called to order themselves under what *1 Clement* views as proper authority. At the same time, the passage lays out suitable instruction for young men (v. 6), wives (vv. 6-7), and children (v. 8); "humility" is held out as a key virtue that children should be taught (v. 8). Not only does the section emphasize the importance of staying in the ranks and not leaving one's post, as with military hierarchy (v. 4),

[541] *1 Clement* 21:4-6, 8: "δίκαιον οὖν ἐστὶν μὴ λειποτακτεῖν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. μᾶλλον ἀνθρώποις ἄφροσι καὶ ἀνοήτοις καὶ ἐπαιρομένοις καὶ ἐγκαυχωμένοις ἐν ἀλαζονείᾳ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν προσκόψωμεν ἢ τῷ θεῷ. τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, οὗ τὸ αἷμα ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη, ἐντραπῶμεν· τοὺς προηγουμένους ἡμῶν αἰδεσθῶμεν, τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τιμήσωμεν, τοὺς νέους παιδεύσωμεν τὴν παιδείαν τοῦ φόβου τοῦ θεοῦ, τὰς γυναῖκας ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν διορθωσώμεθα….τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ παιδείας μεταλαμβανέτωσαν· μαθέτωσαν, τί ταπεινοφροσύνη παρὰ θεῷ ἰσχύει, τί ἀγάπη ἁγνὴ παρὰ θεῷ δύναται, πῶς ὁ φόβος αὐτοῦ καλὸς καὶ μέγας καὶ σώζων πάντας τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁσίως ἀναστρεφομένους ἐν καθαρᾷ διανοίᾳ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Alexander Roberts, et al, *Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenæus*. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994.)

but it lays out what following one's orders looks like in the varied positions one occupies (vv. 6-8). The passage's alignment with Roman cultural values becomes all the more evident when we observe that this is the first Christian "household code" that is not directed to individual parties, but rather to the *pater*.[542] Hence, the passage espouses the Roman values of hierarchy, precedence, and patriarchy in the interest of harmony and order.

First Clement's emphasis on the honor of humility and the shame of arrogance and self-exaltation continues to the end of the correspondence. It appeals to the audience, "Let us clothe ourselves with concord and humility" (30.3);[543] and, likewise, it emphasizes the blessing of humility and the curse of arrogance (30.8). Later, the writing emphatically labels those who are "eager to exalt themselves"[544] (i.e., the usurpers) as "senseless," "without understanding," "foolish," and "ignorant" —ultimately shameful (39.1).[545] In the same way, those who "think themselves superior" ought to be "more humble-minded" (48.6). Humility again is emphasized as honorable, "For it is better that you to be found small but included in the flock of Christ than to have a preeminent reputation and yet be excluded from his hope" (57.2);[546] while those who exalt themselves are excluded, the humble-minded are included (58.2). This theme reaches its crescendo in the prayer prior to the letter's conclusion: "You humble the pride of the proud; you

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[542] Jeffers (*Conflict*, 123) notes that this contrasts with New Testament codes, which address the various household members individually.

[543] *1 Clement* 30.3: "ἐνδυσώμεθα τὴν ὁμόνοιαν ταπεινοφρονοῦντες" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Roberts, et al, *Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenæus*.

[544] *1 Clement* 39.1: "ἑαυτοὺς βουλόμενοι ἐπαίρεσθαι" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Roberts, et al, *Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenæus*.

[545] *1 Clement* 39.1: "Ἄφρονες καὶ ἀσύνετοι καὶ μωροὶ καὶ ἀπαίδευτοι" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation from the Greek text.

[546] 1 Clement 57.2: "ἄμεινον γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μικροὺς καὶ ἐλλογίμους εὑρεθῆναι ἢ καθ᾽ ὑπεροχὴν δοκοῦντας ἐκριφῆναι ἐκ τῆς ἐλπίδος αὐτοῦ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

destroy the plans of nations; you exalt the humble and humble the exalted" (59.3).[547] All of this serves the author's appeal to concord and order.[548]

For Clement, emphasizing the honor of the uniquely Christian virtue of humility served the broader appeal for concord and peace. In contrast to Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, and others, the writing employs its call to humility to reinforce accepted dominant cultural values related to hierarchy, patronage, and patriarchy. As the writing's ultimate acceptance in Corinth and beyond[549] demonstrates, there were a large number of Christians at the end of the first century who preferred the order that societal norms offered against the fluidity of freedom and equality for all. Ultimately, *1 Clement* embraces the honor of humility—especially for poor, weak, and humble—but sets aside the shared honor of all in Christ.

The Honor of Falling into Order behind God-Ordained Leadership

The appeal to order plays a significant role in the argument of *1 Clement*. It begins with the example of God's governing of creation (20) and continues throughout. The passage that follows (21.4-8), which was discussed above, emphasizes that humbly falling into one's place within God's order is honorable, while leaving it through self-exaltation is shameful (21.4-5); Clement puts leaders and elders at the top under Christ and calls upon each *pater*, rather than the subordinate household members, to enforce the order beneath them (21.6-8). The correspondence later recapitulates this theme, again emphasizing the order of creation (33.1-6)

[547] 1 Clement 59.3: "τὸν ταπεινοῦντα ὕβριν ὑπερηφάνων τὸν διαλύοντα λογισμοὺς ἐθνῶν τὸν ποιοῦντα ταπεινοὺς εἰς ὕψος καὶ τοὺς ὑψηλοὺς ταπεινοῦντα" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[548] First Clement also includes the following parallel themes to the end that those who have "left their post" (cf. 21.4) will return to God's ordained hierarchy: the honor of being forgiven (50.5-7), of backing down and accepting exile (54.1-3), and of the reproved (56.1).

[549] Gregory, "1 Clement," 224.

and the necessity of submitting to his will (33.7-8). It then appeals to the example of the angels' submission to God's will (34.5).

A pair of hierarchical images follow to emphasize the value of remaining in one's place. First, Clement looks to the example of the Roman military:[550]

> "Let us consider the soldiers who serve under our commanders[551]—how precisely, how readily, how obediently they execute orders. Not all are prefects or tribunes or centurions or captains of fifty and so forth, but each in his own rank executes the orders given by the emperor and the commanders. The great cannot exist without the small, nor the small without the great. There is a certain blending in everything, and therein lies the advantage" (37.2-4).[552]

The emphasis is clear: as with soldiers, the great and small are to occupy their place and "obediently" execute their "orders" (37.2) according to their rank (37.3). The "blending" and "advantage" lies in the fact that "the great" occupy their high role of rule and "the small" follow orders (37.4). Clement's martial imagery thus emphasizes hierarchy and status distinctions, whereas Paul had challenged dominant cultural values and emphasized the shared honor of all in Christ.[553]

First Clement's use of body imagery works in much the same way. The correspondence embraces the popular metaphor, with hierarchical order from head to feet, and all functioning

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[550] There has been much discussion by scholars as to whether Clement refers to the Roman or Jewish army due to his reference to πεντηκόνταρχοι ("captains of fifty," 37.3), which are referenced in the Old Testament but have no precedent in Rome. Jeffers (*Conflict*, 139-40) rightly notes that the reference to "captains of fifty" likely reflects an errant understanding of the Roman army since no Jewish army existed at the time.

[551] Jeffers (*Conflict*, 140) points out the apparent disconnect of Christians identifying Roman officers as "our generals" and ordering the church in the same way. It is no wonder that Clement is comfortable with leaders functioning the same way, with a heavy hand, as patrons.

[552] *1 Clement* 37:2-4: "κατανοήσωμεν τοὺς στρατευομένους τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ἡμῶν, πῶς εὐτάκτως, πῶς ἐκτικῶς, πῶς ὑποτεταγμένως ἐπιτελοῦσιν τὰ διατασσόμενα. οὐ πάντες εἰσὶν ἔπαρχοι οὐδὲ χιλίαρχοι οὐδὲ ἑκατόνταρχαι οὐδὲ πεντηκόνταρχοι οὐδὲ τὸ καθεξῆς ἀλλ᾽ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι τὰ ἐπιτασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων ἐπιτελεῖ. οἱ μεγάλοι δίχα τῶν μικρῶν οὐ δύνανται εἶναι, οὔτε οἱ μικροὶ δίχα τῶν μεγάλων σύγκρασίς τίς ἐστιν ἐν πᾶσιν, καὶ ἐν τούτοις χρῆσις" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[553] Cf. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 279.

"harmoniously" together (37.5). As has been noted above, the section that follows emphasizes the importance of falling into one's position as good clients[554] within the patronage system; this is a means of preserving the body (38.1-2). Again Clement parts ways with Paul, who, employs the body imagery *against* the grain of dominant culture to challenge hierarchy and emphasize the shared honor of all in Christ (1 Cor 12).

The emphasis on order continues to play a significant role as 1 Clement approaches its conclusion. Temple worship and the related system are said to demonstrate the Lord's desired order (40) and lead to an appeal to follow (41). Christ's appointment of apostles, who then appointed bishops and deacons, emphasizes this order (42); Clement employs a story about Moses, Aaron, and the priesthood from Numbers 17 to reinforce the point (43). The section concludes with a strong appeal to the order that was left by the apostles (44.1-2), while emphatically opposing the removal of the presbyters (44.3-6).[555]

Conclusion

The occasion of strife in Corinth has served as the basis for three essential early Christian letters. Conflict prompted Paul of Tarsus to write two letters to the church that tell us a great deal about his understanding of authority, unity, and honor. The removal of presbyters from Corinth prompted members of the Roman Christian community to write to their sister church in Greece and address similar themes. As has already been noted, *1 Clement* brings subtle yet significant differences in perspective as it offers solutions.

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[554] Bakke, *"Concord and Peace,"* 314-15.

[555] Jeffers (*Conflict*, 123-24) notes that Clement assumes that rulers function in the church much the same way a *paterfamilias* (sic.) does in the family: unquestioned and with a free hand. Such a model seems consistent with the way he directs his household code, speaking to the *paterfamilias* (sic.) and not to other members.

If, as has been argued by Jeffers, *1 Clement* was written by an Imperial freedman from a household out of the Flavian dynasty, the shift in perspective from Paul is easy to understand. The point-of-view from the top of the social strata is distinctly different from the rest of society; it is no wonder that his writing embraces and Christianizes Roman social values instead of rejecting them. It makes sense that Clement employs the common *topoi* of concord and peace from political discourse in his attempt to persuade his audience to reinstate what he views as the proper leaders; its significant hierarchical and patriarchal assumptions present a significant departure from the canonical writings. *First Clement's* call to harmony and order is understandable in light of the situation. However, this very Roman perspective on the ordering of persons, of emphasizing status distinctions, and of economic standing leads to significantly different conclusions concerning honor and shame from those of Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, and others: it takes for granted that God put society's traditional status distinctions in place. Therefore, it is easy to see how the writer would conclude that a great ocean separated the honor of the powerful from that of the weak.[556]

Clement's emphasis on the honor of humility and shame of self-exaltation is a powerful tool to reinforce the order that brings concord and peace. He employs the appeal to bring the small in line behind the great, which represents a parting of the ways with the canonical tradition. Contrary to prior writings, the correspondence chooses not to employ the appeal in order to secure humble, cruciform leadership in the imitation of Christ; *First Clement* instead views church officeholders much the same way he views the *pater* in his household, without questioning his authority and without concern for the leader's behavior. In the same way, the

[556] Ibid., 104.

small are called to fall in line beneath the great like clients beneath their patrons; failure to do so and supporting rival leaders instead was tantamount to being a bad client.

First Clement's Christology reflects this fundamental separation from the canonical documents. It removes images of Christ's nearness to all of those in the ἐκκλησία: Christ is no longer connected to the body as the head, no longer a co-heir with other sons of God, and no longer a servant. Rather, he is described as distant, high above: as "the scepter of the majesty of God" (16.2); as "patron" (36.1; 61.3; 64.1); and at the top of the church's hierarchy, having appointed his apostles, who in turn appointed bishops and deacons (37; 42). This leads to a different kind of community from that created by Jesus and Paul. On the surface, *1 Clement* espoused the same virtues as they did, but these were merely cosmetic differences from what was a thoroughly Roman structure of life together, where honor resides only at the top.

To break free from these Roman cultural norms was very difficult. Perhaps for this reason, Christian writers contemporary to *1 Clement*, and those that followed in the second century CE, would chart a similar course. In light of the writing's broad acceptance in the second and third centuries, it is difficult to escape the impression that it exerted significant influence in Mediterranean Christian communities. Certain honor-sharing virtues would be championed, but the very Roman hierarchical structure and consolidation of honor at the top, in the hands of elites and leaders, would persist.

THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

> Both parties should receive a larger share from the friendship, but not a larger share of the same thing: the superior should receive the larger share of honor, the needy one the larger share of profit; for honor is the due reward of virtue and beneficence...
>
> Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 8.14.2

In the first half of the second century—after *1 Clement* was written—*The Shepherd of Hermas* was also composed in Rome. The self-identified prophetic writing, which was immensely popular in the early church, spends significant time addressing such critical issues as repentance for post-baptismal sin, the nature of the Church, and the sins and weaknesses present therin. In addition, concerns related to persecution and the responsibilities of the wealthy are at the forefront of *Hermas'* perspective.[557] Such concerns are especially important in light of the apparent social composition of the prophecy's audience: the infrequent, direct address to the poor, combined with repeated teaching and exhortation for the wealthy, upwardly mobile, indicate that the book was written for freedmen and women who were engaged as tradesmen or craftsmen and who frequently had access to significant material resources.[558]

The Shepherd of Hermas thus tacks an interesting course in terms of honor and shame. It offers a compelling challenge with regard to honor as it endeavors "to proclaim a theology of the poor in a church of the rich;"[559] in particular, it envisions a new relationship between the wealthy and the needy on the basis of shared honor. Furthermore, *Hermas* follows the canonical writings with its emphasis on the honor of those who are persecuted for the sake of Christ. As I will

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[557] Joseph Verheyden, "The Shepherd of Hermas," *The Expository Times* 117 (2006): 399-400.

[558] Carolyn Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: An Exegetical-Social Investigation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 55, 91-132.

[559] Ibid., 136.

show, the prophecy's challenge frequently addresses its audience of wealthy freedmen and women in ways that focus on their love for honor and desire to climb the social ladder. It capitalizes on this central motive to achieve desired changes in their relationship with society and their handling of their wealth.

The Slaves of God

The Shepherd of Hermas' challenge to honor values is particularly evident in its use of the phrase "the slaves of God" (οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ), which is employed at least thirty-five times in the writing. Echoing back to the Old Testament and Revelation, the construction emphasizes believers' submission to God and his claim on them.[560]

The phrase's significance could not have escaped *The Shepherd of Hermas'* audience of freedmen and women. They would have spent many years as slaves of human masters and understood the claim a master had on them. Upon manumission, they had taken on the family name (*nomen*) of their master,[561] which served as an asset for them as they attempted to climb the social ladder. *Hermas'* use of the construction not only emphasized God's claim on them but also reoriented their pursuit of honor: they were not ultimately attached to their former master and his family, but were defined as slaves of their master, Yahweh. This was a high honor that the entire audience—and all those in Christ—shared. The title demanded a perspective different from the former freedmen and women who employed their wealth to pursue honor and climb the social ladder.

[560] Bartchy, "Slave, Slavery," 1101.

[561] Bartchy, "*Mallon Chresai*," 81.

An Honorable Seat Reserved for Those Who Suffer

Shepherd of Hermas emphasizes that suffering for the Christian profession of faith is honorable. In fact, the writing emphasizes that the place of suffering is a desirable, honorable position. Nowhere is this more evident than in the vision of the tower; as his guide, the elderly lady (who represents the church), prepares to show him this central vision in the prophecy. Then a significant exchange occurs:

> "Then she raised me by the hand and led me to the couch, and said to the young men, 'Go and build.' And after the young men had gone and we were alone, she said to me, 'Sit here.' I said to her, 'Lady, let the elders sit down first.' 'Do as I say,' she said. 'Sit down.' Then when I wanted to sit down on the right side, she would not let me, but indicated to me with her hand that I should sit on the left side. Then as I thought about this and was sad because she would not permit me to sit on the right side, she said to me, 'Are you sad, Hermas? The place on the right side is for others, who have already pleased God and have suffered for the sake of the Name. But you fall far short of sitting with them. But persevere in your sincerity, as you are now doing, and you will sit with them, as will all who do what they have done and endure what they have endured.'" (9.7-9)[562]

The action begins with the lady inviting him to sit down with her (9.7). He responds and expresses concern for order: should not the elders have precedence and take an honorable seat before him (9.8)? When she again invites him to sit, he seeks the seat to her right and is rebuffed—a response that grieves him because it would have humilitated him before the woman (9.9); in this, Hermas' attitude represents his entire community, who would have desired the seat

[562] *Shepherd of Hermas* 9.7-9: "καὶ ἐξεγείρει με τῆς χειρὸς καὶ ἄγει με πρὸς τὸ συμψέλιον, καὶ λέγει τοῖς νεανίσκοις· Ὑπάγετε καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε. καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἀναχωρῆσαι τοὺς νεανίσκους καὶ μόνων ἡμῶν γεγονότων λέγει μοι· Κάθισον ὧδε. λέγω αὐτῇ· Κυρία, ἄφες τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους πρῶτον καθίσαι. Ὅ σοι λέγω, φησίν, κάθισον. θέλοντος οὖν μου καθίσαι εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη οὐκ εἴασέν με, ἀλλ᾽ ἐννεύει μοι τῇ χειρὶ ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἀριστερὰ μέρη καθίσω. διαλογιζομένου μου οὖν καὶ λυπουμένου ὅτι οὐκ εἴασέν με εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη καθίσαι, λέγει μοι· Λυπῇ, Ἑρμᾶ; ὁ εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη τόπος ἄλλων ἐστίν, τῶν ἤδη εὐαρεστηκότων τῷ θεῷ καὶ παθόντων εἵνεκα τοῦ ὀνόματος· σοὶ δὲ πολλὰ λείπει ἵνα μετ᾽ αὐτῶν καθίσῃς· ἀλλὰ ὡς ἐμμένεις τῇ ἁπλότητί σου, μεῖνον, καὶ καθιῇ μετ᾽ αὐτῶν, καὶ ὅσοι ἐὰν ἐργάσωνται τὰ ἐκείνων ἔργα καὶ ὑπενέγκωσιν ἃ καὶ ἐκεῖνοι ὑπήνεγκαν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

of honor.[563] His response provides her with an opportunity for a teachable moment for Hermas and his audience in the Roman church: the lady asks if he is grieved and proceeds to explain that the seat on the right is reserved for those who have "pleased God and suffered for the sake of the Name" (9.9). *The Shepherd of Hermas* thus indicates—in line with canonical writings—that suffering for Christ is honorable.

This theme is further emphasized in the verses that follow. It begins with Hermas' question, "What have they endured?" The lady responds:

> "'Listen,' she said: 'scourges, imprisonments, severe persecutions, crosses, wild beasts, for the sake of the Name. This is why the right side of holiness belongs to them, and to anyone who suffers because of the Name. The left side belongs to the rest. But to both, to those sitting on the right and to those sitting on the left, belong the same gifts and the same promises; the only difference is the former sit on the right and have a certain glory. And you are very eager to sit on the right with them, but your shortcomings are many. Nevertheless you will be cleansed of your shortcomings; indeed, all those who are not double-minded will be cleansed of all their sins to this day'" (10.1-2).[564]

Hence, those who faithfully endured shaming persecution had the honor of sitting on the right (10.1). The lady is emphatic: "the same promises" and "the same gifts" are for those on both sides, but those on the left "have a certain glory" (10.2). It was natural, therefore, that Hermas

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[563] This appears to be part of the rhetorical strategy of *The Shepherd of Hermas*: again and again, Hermas appears to stand in the place of his entire community. Edith Humphrey argues persuasively for this in *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse, and the Shepherd of Hermas* ([Sheffield, England : Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 142); in the process, Hermas changes as the lady (the church) changes: "Hermas, no less than the Lady, is a corporate figure, and hence he is told repeatedly to stop dwelling on his own shortcomings, so that he can concentrate on the problems and glory of the Church which he represents. What Hermas experiences, we experience: what he sees reflected in the transformations of the Lady are reflections of the Chruch herself. As Hermas hears divine words, reads and writes divine sentences, and beholds a divine spectacle, he moves, in the words of the young man, from weakness and despair to renewal and 'manful' action (3.12.2-3)."

[564] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 10.1-2: "Τί, φημί, ὑπήνεγκαν; Ἄκουε, φησίν· μάστιγας, φυλακάς, θλίψεις μεγάλας, σταυρούς, θηρία εἵνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματος· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκείνων ἐστὶν τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη τοῦ ἁγιάσματος, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν πάθῃ διὰ τὸ ὄνομα· τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν τὰ ἀριστερὰ μέρη ἐστίν. ἀλλὰ ἀμφοτέρων, καὶ τῶν ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ τῶν ἀριστερῶν καθημένων, τὰ αὐτὰ δῶρα καὶ αἱ αὐταὶ ἐπαγγελίαι· μόνον ἐκεῖνοι ἐκ δεξιῶν κάθηνται καὶ ἔχουσιν δόξαν τινά. σὺ δὲ κατεπιθυμεῖς καθίσαι ἐκ δεξιῶν μετ᾽ αὐτῶν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὑστερήματά σου πολλά· καθαρισθήσῃ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστερημάτων σου· καὶ πάντες δὲ οἱ μὴ διψυχοῦντες καθαρισθήσονται ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

was eager to sit on the right (10.2)—he desired honor like any other Mediterranean man. The prophecy appeals to this yearning, urging its audience to fidelity in suffering "for the Name" that they may occupy the best seat. Thus, the explanation of the couch reinforces and further develops *Hermas'* perspective on the glory of suffering: promises and gifts are to all, but glory is reserved for those who faithfully endured shame. This stands in contrast to Paul and the other canonical writings, wherein all shared the same honor by virtue of being united with Christ.

Honor, Precedence, and the Vision of the Tower

While Hermas and the lady are seated on the couch, she shows him the vision of the tower, one of the crucial images in *The Shepherd of Hermas.* He sees a tower built upon the waters from square stones found in the water or on the land (10.4-5). The lady explains that the tower is her, the church (11.3). Hermas then proceeds to ask her about the various stones built into the tower (11.3). The lady explains about the first group of stones:

> "'Now hear about the stones that go into the building. The stones that are square and white and fit at their joints, these are the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons with purity and reverence; some have fallen asleep, while others are still living. And they always agreed with one another, and so they had peace with one another and listened to one another. For this reason their joints fit together in the building of the tower.'" (13.1)[565]

Thus the first group of placed stones represents faithful apostles, bishops, and other leaders in the church who were in agreement with each other. Hermas inquires about the second group of stones added:

[565]*The Shepherd of Hermas* 13.1: "Ἄκουε νῦν περὶ τῶν λίθων τῶν ὑπαγόντων εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομήν. οἱ μὲν οὖν λίθοι οἱ τετράγωνοι καὶ λευκοὶ καὶ συμφωνοῦντες ταῖς ἁρμογαῖς αὐτῶν, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διδάσκαλοι καὶ διάκονοι οἱ πορευθέντες κατὰ τὴν σεμνότητα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπισκοπήσαντες καὶ διδάξαντες καὶ διακονήσαντες ἁγνῶς καὶ σεμνῶς τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς τοῦ θεοῦ, οἱ μὲν κεκοιμημένοι, οἱ δὲ ἔτι ὄντες· καὶ πάντοτε ἑαυτοῖς συνεφώνησαν καὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς εἰρήνην ἔσχαν καὶ ἀλλήλων ἤκουον· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ οἰκοδομῇ τοῦ πύργου συμφωνοῦσιν αἱ ἁρμογαὶ αὐτῶν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

> "'But who are the ones that are dragged from the deep and placed in the building, whose joints fit together with the other stones already used in the building?' 'They are those who have suffered for the name of the Lord'" (13.2).[566]

Those who experience shaming persecution for the Lord are therefore placed into the tower second. They are followed by those who "walked in the uprightness of the Lord" (13.3)[567] and the young in faith, who are "faithful" (13.4). Some others are thrown aside because of sin, but have promise of being built into the tower because they wish to repent (13.5). There are others that were unfit and cast aside because they are wicked (14.1), or did not remain in the truth (14.2), orare not at peace (14.3), or mix a bit of lawlessness with righteousness (14.4).

The explanation of the vision continues with Hermas' question about the final group of stones to be added into the tower:

> "'And who are the white and round stones that do not fit into the building, lady?' She answered me and said, 'How long will you be foolish and stupid, asking about everything and understanding nothing? These are the ones who have faith, but also have the riches of this world. Whenever persecution comes, they deny their Lord because of their riches and their business affairs.' And I answered her and said, 'Then when, lady, will they be useful for the building?' 'When,' she replied, 'their riches, which lead their souls astray, are cut away, then they will be useful to God. For just as the round stone cannot become square unless it is trimmed and loses some part of itself, so also those who are rich in this world cannot become useful to the Lord unless their riches are cut away. Learn first from yourself: when you were rich, you were useless, but now you are useful and beneficial to life. Be useful to God, for you yourself are to be used as one of these stones'" (14.5-7).[568]

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[566] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 13.2: "Οἱ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ ἑλκόμενοι καὶ ἐπιτιθέμενοι εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν καὶ συμφωνοῦντες ταῖς ἁρμογαῖς αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν ἑτέρων λίθων τῶν ἤδη ᾠκοδομημένων τίνες εἰσίν; Οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ παθόντες ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[567] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 13.3: "ἐπορεύθησαν ἐν τῇ εὐθύτητι τοῦ κυρίου" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[568] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 14.5-7: "Οἱ δὲ λευκοὶ καὶ στρογγύλοι καὶ μὴ ἁρμόζοντες εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τίνες εἰσίν, κυρία; ἀποκριθεῖσά μοι λέγει· Ἕως πότε μωρὸς εἶ καὶ ἀσύνετος, καὶ πάντα ἐπερωτᾷς καὶ οὐδὲν νοεῖς; οὗτοί εἰσιν ἔχοντες μὲν πίστιν, ἔχοντες δὲ καὶ πλοῦτον τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. ὅταν γένηται θλῖψις, διὰ τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτῶν καὶ διὰ τὰς πραγματείας ἀπαρνοῦνται τὸν κύριον αὐτῶν. καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῇ λέγω· Κυρία, πότε οὖν εὔχρηστοι ἔσονται εἰς τὴν οἰκοδομήν; Ὅταν, φησίν, περικοπῇ αὐτῶν ὁ πλοῦτος ὁ ψυχαγωγῶν αὐτούς, τότε εὔχρηστοι ἔσονται τῷ θεῷ. ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ λίθος ὁ στρογγύλος, ἐὰν μὴ περικοπῇ καὶ ἀποβάλῃ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τι, οὐ δύναται τετράγωνος γενέσθαι, οὕτω καὶ οἱ πλουτοῦντες ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι, ἐὰν μὴ περικοπῇ αὐτῶν ὁ πλοῦτος, οὐ δύνανται τῷ κυρίῳ εὔχρηστοι γενέσθαι. ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ πρῶτον γνῶθι· ὅτε ἐπλούτεις, ἄχρηστος ἦς, νῦν δὲ εὔχρηστος εἶ καὶ

Therefore, the final group that may be added to the tower is those who have faith and riches, represented by the white, round stones. The lady's correction of Hermas over his question about this group indicates the significance of the question—it should have been obvious to him (14.5)! Due to their wealth and "business affairs," which may hint to their identity as freedmen and women, they deny the Lord when persecution comes (14.5). She is emphatic about what would need to happen next for them to be added: they must have their riches, "which lead their souls astray," cut away (14.6). The lady states, adding emphasis, that Hermas himself, a freedman, had experienced this (14.7). In this, her words to Hermas serve to encourage the prophecy's broader audience: they are to be useful to God and will be used in the building as well (14.7).[569]

The vision provides insight into *The Shepherd of Hermas'* perspective regarding who receives honor. In Rome, a city where precedence was relied upon and celebrated, the order the stones were added to the building would have been significant. Apostles, bishops, and other leaders were fit into the building first and held a place of honor. Those who had suffered persecution for the Lord's sake followed; the shame they endured for their profession meant that they would be placed into the tower after the elders and other leaders. Those who walked in uprightness and the faithful young were next. Only after this are the wealthy mentioned; and here, some are cast aside and others are only built into the tower after their wealth is taken away. Ultimately, leaders and those who suffer have precedence while the wealthy are last; this would have served as an emphatic message to the freedmen and women who had been accumulating

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ὠφέλιμος τῇ ζωῇ. εὔχρηστοι γίνεσθε τῷ θεῷ· καὶ γὰρ σὺ αὐτὸς χρᾶσαι ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν λίθων" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[569] Cf. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities*, 142.

possessions and were pursuing the status that goes hand in hand with wealth.[570] This vision presents a perspective entirely distinct from that of the canonical writings, which again and again emphasize the shared honor of all in Christ.[571] In pursuit of the purpose and to motivate them to right behavior, it imagines a situation in which the wealthy were at a disadvantage; nevertheless, it represents a reconfiguration of society's way of meting out honor.

Rich and Poor in the Church

The Shepherd of Hermas discusses the wealthy and the poor with significant implications regarding honor. The vision of the tower contributes significantly to the perspective; the exhortations to the wealthy that follow the vision continue in this vein.

First, the lady offers a simple appeal: they are to care for and help one another while they share their abundance of food with those in need (17.2). Some have so much food that it weakens them in body and spirit, while others do not have enough and are wasting away; this brings harm to those who have but do not share (17.3-4). She warns that judgment is coming, and those who do not help the hungry will be left on the outside of the tower (17.5). The section builds to an emphatic warning for those with wealth who occupy the lead role in the churches:

> "Beware, therefore, you who exult in your wealth, lest those in need groan, and their groaning rise up to the Lord, and you together with your good things be shut outside the door of the tower. Now, therefore, I say to you who lead the church and occupy the seats of honor: do not be like the sorcerers. For the sorcerers carry their drugs in bottles, but you carry your drug and poison in your heart. You are calloused and do not want to cleanse your hearts and to mix your wisdom together in a clean heart, in order that you many have mercy from the great King."[572]

[570] Osiek, *Rich and Poor*, 128-32.

[571] Compare, for example, description in 1 Peter 2:9 of the people of God as a spiritual household or a temple, built into Christ.

[572] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 17.6-8: "βλέπετε οὖν ὑμεῖς οἱ γαυρούμενοι ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ ὑμῶν, μήποτε στενάξουσιν οἱ ὑστερούμενοι, καὶ ὁ στεναγμὸς αὐτῶν ἀναβήσεται πρὸς τὸν κύριον, καὶ ἐκκλεισθήσεσθε μετὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὑμῶν ἔξω τῆς θύρας τοῦ πύργου. νῦν οὖν ὑμῖν λέγω τοῖς προηγουμένοις τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῖς

The warning applies to those who "exult" in their wealth, to church leaders, and those who "occupy the seats of honor" (17.6-7); this passage may have congregations like that of *1 Clement* in mind, where the wealthy occupied leading roles.[573] The critique about occupying the seats of honor hearkens back to Jesus' indictment of Jewish leaders in Mark 12:39 and Luke 11:43; in this case, it is the church leaders who are engaged in shameful behavior. Those with honor are labeled as shameful and called to change their ways.

The writing's first parable (50.1-11) later makes a similar assertion about the elite practice of accumulating lands and constructing homes and buildings to gain honor and prestige. The messenger—in this case, the shepherd—begins by making a statement and asking a question to Hermas:

> "'You know,' he said, 'that you who are servants of God (οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ) are living in a foreign country, for your city is far from this city. If, therefore, you know,' he said, 'your city in which you are destined to live, why do you prepare fields and expensive possessions and buildings and useless rooms here?'" (50.1)[574]

Lightfoot's translation of οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ as "servants of God" obscures the force of *Hermas'* language (50.1); as noted, the phrase is best rendered "the slaves of God" and alludes to the claim Yahweh had upon them. In view of God's claim and their future in his city, the shepherd questions their accumulation of possessions in order to scale the social ladder.

πρωτοκαθεδρίταις· μὴ γίνεσθε ὅμοιοι τοῖς φαρμακοῖς. οἱ φαρμακοὶ μὲν οὖν τὰ φάρμακα ἑαυτῶν εἰς τὰς πυξίδας βαστάζουσιν, ὑμεῖς δὲ τὸ φάρμακον ὑμῶν καὶ τὸν ἰὸν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν. ἐνεσκιρωμένοι ἐστὲ καὶ οὐ θέλετε καθαρίσαι τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ συνκεράσαι ὑμῶν τὴν φρόνησιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν καθαρᾷ καρδίᾳ, ἵνα σχῆτε ἔλεος παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ μεγάλου" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[573] Cf. Jeffers, *Conflict in Rome*, 117.

[574] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 50.1: "Οἴδατε, φησίν, ὅτι ἐπὶ ξένης κατοικεῖτε ὑμεῖς οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ· ἡ γὰρ πόλις ὑμῶν μακράν ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης· εἰ οὖν οἴδατε, φησί, τὴν πόλιν ὑμῶν ἐν ᾗ μέλλετε κατοικεῖν, τί ὧδε ὑμεῖς ἑτοιμάζετε ἀγροὺς καὶ παρατάξεις πολυτελεῖς καὶ οἰκοδομὰς καὶ οἰκήματα μάταια" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

He continues by telling a parable about a person who lives in one city, but whose home is in another. The Shepherd describes the peril of abiding by the laws of the current city that conflict with those of the home city; in particular, erecting buildings and homes and accumulating fields in a foreign land puts them at odds with their home city (50.2-4). At any time, the lord of the current city could ask him to leave because he does not follow the city's laws—where would they go if they have not kept the laws of their home city and are thus rejected by that king as well (50.3-5)? Rather than pursuing excess, and ultimately traditional honor, the command is to purchase no more than the necessary items so that they would not be exposed to shame or insult when returning to their home city (50.6-7).

The parable concludes with an exhortation to the wealthy that challenges accepted values related to possessions and honor.

> "'So instead of fields, buy souls that are in distress, as anyone is able, and visit widows and orphans, and do not neglect them; and spend your wealth and all your possessions, which you received from God, on fields and houses of this kind. For this is why the Master made you rich, so that you might perform these ministries for him. It is much better to purchase fields and possessions and houses of this kind, which you will find in your own city when you go home to it. This lavish expenditure is beautiful and joyous; it does not bring grief or fear, but joy. So do not practice the extravagance of outsiders, for it is unprofitable to you, the servants of God (τοῖς δούλοις τοῦ θεοῦ). But do practice your own extravagance, in which you can rejoice'" (50.8-11).[575]

Wealth, fields, and property could be used to enhance a family's place in the social hierarchy; for example, freedmen like Clement and others in Rome were using wealth and possessions to

[575] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 50.8-11: "ἀντὶ ἀγρῶν οὖν ἀγοράζετε ψυχὰς θλιβομένας, καθά τις δυνατός ἐστι, καὶ χήρας καὶ ὀρφανοὺς ἐπισκέπτεσθε, καὶ μὴ παραβλέπετε αὐτούς, καὶ τὸν πλοῦτον ὑμῶν καὶ τὰς παρατάξεις πάσας εἰς τοιούτους ἀγροὺς καὶ οἰκίας δαπανᾶτε, ἃς ἐλάβετε παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ. εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐπλούτισεν ὑμᾶς ὁ δεσπότης, ἵνα ταύτας τὰς διακονίας τελέσητε αὐτῷ· πολὺ βέλτιόν ἐστι τοιούτους ἀγροὺς ἀγοράζειν καὶ κτήματα καὶ οἴκους, οὓς εὑρήσεις ἐν τῇ πόλει σου, ὅταν ἐπιδημήσῃς εἰς αὐτήν. αὕτη ἡ πολυτέλεια καλὴ καὶ ἱλαρά, λύπην μὴ ἔχουσα μηδὲ φόβον, ἔχουσα δὲ χαράν. τὴν οὖν πολυτέλειαν τῶν ἐθνῶν μὴ πράσσετε ἀσύμφορον γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῖν τοῖς δούλοις τοῦ θεοῦ· τὴν δὲ ἰδίαν πολυτέλειαν πράσσετε, ἐν ᾗ δύνασθε χαρῆναι·" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

acquire honor for their descendents.[576] But the Shepherd is adamant that the wealthy in the Christian community should buy a different kind of field: they should use their wealth to help those "in distress," especially orphans and widows who were among the most vulnerable in society (50.8). Their master, God, had given them riches for this very reason, to minister to those in need (50.9). Caring for the poor among them was tantamount to buying lands, houses and possessions in their home city; not only did it provide security, but it ensured that they would be met with praise, not shame, when they arrived (50.9). Their unbelieving neighbors practiced a certain kind of extravagance, but such behavior would be unprofitable for "the slaves of God" (τοῖς δούλοις τοῦ θεοῦ); rather, caring for the needy was their calling and they were to exercise it joyfully (50.10-11). Wealth, then, could aid one in acquiring honor, but not in the same way as it had before—since they were slaves of God, everything had changed.

The parable of the two cities is followed by that of the elm and the vine (51.1-10), which discusses the relationship between the poor and the rich in Christian community. Like the elm and the vine, these two groups are "well suited to one another" (51.1). The parable finds its starting point after Hermas observes the two together while walking in the country (51.1); it was a common practice in Italian viticulture to pair the elm with the vine in order to get better production from vines.[577] The Shepherd explains the relationship of the two, who are both "slaves of God" to Hermas: while the elm bears no fruit on its own, it becomes fruitful when it supports the vine and even surpasses the vine. On the other hand, the vine without the elm produces fruit on the ground that ends up rotting and really only provides abundance when it

[576] One poignant example of the lengths Roman freedmen would go to in order to enhance the status of their family is found in the Temple of Isis in Pompei, which the freedman Numerius rebuilt and dedicated to his six year old son, Numerius Popidius Celsinus, in order that he would be granted a privilege his father could never have: being incorporated into the Pompeian curia.

[577] Osiek, *Rich and Poor*, 78-79.

rests on the elm (51.2-4). While the shepherd does not explicitly explain which is the elm or the vine, the implicit conclusion is that the rich are like the elm, while the poor are compared to the vine. The rich have their wealth, but they produce fruit that is "small and weak" with "no power above," and they are "poor in the things of the Lord" (or "Master") because they are "distracted by their wealth," neither praying nor confessing much (51.5). But when they help the poor, who offer powerful intercession and confession, the rich become fruitful; they believe they will be rewarded by God (51.5). In response, the poor pray for the wealthy and express their thanks to God for their sharing;[578] the rich then aid them even more because they see that the poor's intercession on their behalf is effectual (51.6). The parable concludes with the following explanation:

> "'They both, then, complete their work: the poor work with prayer, in which they are rich, which they received from the Lord; this they return to the Lord who supplies them with it. And the rich likewise unhesitatingly share with the poor from the wealth that they received from the Lord. And this work is great and acceptable to God, because the rich understand about their wealth and work for the poor by using the gifts of the Lord and correctly fulfill their ministry. So as far as people are concerned, the elm does not seem to bear fruit, and they neither know nor realize that if a drought comes the elm, which has water, nourishes the vine, and the vine, having a constant supply of water, bears double the fruit, both for itself and for the elm. So also the poor, by appealing to the Lord on behalf of the rich, complement their wealth, and again, the rich, by providing for the needs of the poor, complement their souls. So, then, both become partners in the righteous work'" (51.7-9).[579]

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[578] Jeffers (*Conflict at Rome*, 143) observes that this is an adaptation of the patron-client relationship which envisions poor clients thanking God instead of the wealthy. The parable later redefines the relationship further, envisioning both as servants of the same Lord (51.7-9).

[579] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 51.7-9: "ἀμφότεροι οὖν τὸ ἔργον τελοῦσιν· ὁ μὲν πένης ἐργάζεται τῇ ἐντεύξει ἐν ᾗ πλουτεῖ, ἣν ἔλαβεν παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου· ταύτην ἀποδίδωσι τῷ κυρίῳ τῷ ἐπιχορηγοῦντι αὐτῷ. καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ὡσαύτως τὸ πλοῦτος ὃ ἔλαβεν παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἀδιστάκτως παρέχεται τῷ πένητι. καὶ τοῦτο ἔργον μέγα ἐστὶν καὶ δεκτὸν παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, ὅτι συνῆκεν ἐπὶ τῷ πλούτῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἠργάσατο εἰς τὸν πένητα ἐκ τῶν δωρημάτων τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἐτέλεσεν τὴν διακονίαν ὀρθῶς. παρὰ τοῖς οὖν ἀνθρώποις ἡ πτελέα δοκεῖ καρπὸν μὴ φέρειν, καὶ οὐκ οἴδασιν οὐδὲ νοοῦσιν ὅτι, ἐὰν ἀβροχία γένηται, ἡ πτελέα ἔχουσα ὕδωρ τρέφει τὴν ἄμπελον, καὶ ἡ ἄμπελος ἀδιάλειπτον ἔχουσα τὸ ὕδωρ διπλοῦν τὸν καρπὸν δίδωσι, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῆς καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς πτελέας. οὕτω καὶ οἱ πένητες ἐντυγχάνοντες πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὑπὲρ τῶν πλουσίων πληροφοροῦσι τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτῶν, καὶ πάλιν οἱ πλούσιοι χορηγοῦντες τοῖς πένησι τὰ δέοντα πληροφοροῦσι τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν. γίνονται οὖν ἀμφότεροι κοινωνοὶ τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ δικαίου" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

The shepherd asserts that just like the elm and the vine, the rich and the poor complement each other. The poor intercede with the Lord on behalf of the rich, and the rich share "the gifts of the Lord" they have received with the poor (51.7, 8). The rich and poor, previously described as "slaves" (51.2, 4), are "partners" (51.9), each using their access or help from their Master to aid the other.[580] It was not a patron-client relationship between rich and poor, but rather, they were both "slaves" who served the same "Master" and helped each other.

The emphasis on commonality bears striking resemblance to how *1 Clement* explains the relationships between the rich and poor in the Christian community. As we have noted before, *1 Clement* emphasizes a degree of mutuality: "The great cannot exist without the small, nor the small without the great. There is a certain blending in everything, and therein lies the advantage" (37.2-4).[581] But as the correspondence develops this thought, it becomes clear that Clement's idea of interdependence reflects the dominant culture's values related to patrons and clients: the rich are to help the poor and the poor are to respond by giving respect and honor (*1 Clement* 38.2-3). The patron-client relationship is altered slightly: the poor offers thanks to God rather than the rich (*1 Clement* 38.2); however, the passage preserves the position of honor and power for the wealthy. In contrast, *Hermas* envisions a different sort of mutuality—one in which both are slaves who aid the other out of what they have received from the Master (*The Shepherd of Hermas* 51.7-8); they share a common patron and the same honor, whereas *1 Clement* reserves regard and honor for the wealthy.

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[580] *Hermas'* audience, which appears to have included wealthy freedmen and women, would have heard a servile tone in the appeal to the rich of 51.7: when they gave to the poor, they were sharing gifts from "the Master" (τοῦ κυρίου) and their action was tantamount to "table service" (τὴν διακονίαν).

[581] *1 Clement* 37:4: "οἱ μεγάλοι δίχα τῶν μικρῶν οὐ δύνανται εἶναι, οὔτε οἱ μικροὶ δίχα τῶν μεγάλων σύγκρασίς τίς ἐστιν ἐν πᾶσιν, καὶ ἐν τούτοις χρῆσις" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

After its emphasis on mutuality, *Hermas* concludes with an emphatic statement about the wealthy who understand their role in the community: "How honorable are the rich who also understand that they have been made rich by the Lord, for the one who comprehends this will be able to serve, doing some good" (51.10).[582] This *makarism* is significant in that it is the first known *makarism* in Christian literature directed at the wealthy;[583] conversely, the poor and the lowly are frequently identified as μακάριοι ("honorable") in other writings.[584] The saying provides a fundamental challenge to honor values, qualifying what makes the rich honorable: namely that they understand that they are slaves whose wealth comes from their master and are able to use it for "some good." In particular, the honorable path for the rich involves using their wealth to "serve" or "minister to" others (διακονῆσαί). Roman society identified a variety of paths to honor, which we have discussed, including patronage, civic building, feasting, and competition; it is significant that *Hermas* identifies serving with their wealth as the path to honor for rich Christians.[585]

Conclusion

The Shepherd of Hermas adds its own perspective concerning the early Christian challenge to honor. With a deft understanding of what drives the wealthy, *Hermas* labels what

[582] *The Shepherd of Hermas* 51.10: "μακάριοι οἱ ἔχοντες καὶ συνιέντες ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου πλουτίζονται· ὁ γὰρ συνίων τοῦτο δυνήσεται καὶ διακονῆσαί τι ἀγαθόν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation from the Greek text.

[583] Osiek, *Rich and Poor,* 88.

[584] See for example Luke 6:20-22 (par. Mt 5:3-6, 11); 1 Peter 3:14; 4:14; Revelation 14:13.

[585] Alan Wheatly's (*Patronage in Early Christianity*, 57-64) observations about patronage and *The Shepherd of Hermas* provide perspective. The audience, which was composed predominantly of freedmen and women, appears to espouse the "prevailing paradigm" about patronage in Roman society which expected that wealth would be employed to enhance the honor of patrons by bringing "profit" and "recognition." However, the writing champions another perspective, which was more in line with the teaching of Jesus and Paul: the wealthy are urged to use their resources for the poor in the community without expectation that their action would gain them clients or honor in the world's accounting of things.

they had thought honorable as shameful and vividly demonstrates that those who had held their wealth and status in society's sanctioned way were at risk of being excluded. On more than one occasion, Hermas feels tension as he speaks with his guide; in this he represents his community as he is ultimately transformed after experiencing both correction and shame.[586]

The writing pursues this purpose, challenging accepted ways of achieving honor again and again. One of *Hermas'* favored ways of describing believers is as "slaves of God,"[587] an identification that emphasized God's claim on them and provided a fixed position for everyone. When his first guide, the lady, invites Hermas to recline, he is aggrieved because she will not permit him to take the seat on the right, because he had not suffered (9.7-9). Then, in the vision of the tower, apostles, bishops, those who have suffered, and the pure are first included (13.1-2); the rich are only added after their wealth has been taken away (14.5-7). Further insights revealed through parables indicate that the wealthy have honor and a place in the community only if they used their property in a manner that pleases the Lord—which is to serve the poor (17, 50, 51). At the same time, *Hermas* distinguishes itself from its contemporary in Rome, *1 Clement*, by emphasizing the mutuality of rich and poor and concluding that both are "slaves of God," who is their Master, and they bring benefit to each other.

While *The Shepherd of Hermas* employs a Roman hierarchical perspective in pursuit of its rhetorical purpose, the shape of the hierarchy is distinctly countercultural. Not only do the wealthy find a different place, but, as with Paul's writings, 1 Peter, and Revelation, suffering for Christ is identified as honorable. At the same time, *Hermas'* embrace of hierarchy within the

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[586] Cf. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities*, 142.

[587] As has already been noted, the term is employed at least 35 times in *Hermas* (Bartchy, "Slaves, Slavery," 1101); see for example 51.2, 4.

community, though slightly mitigated by its emphasis on believers as "slaves" of God, has much more in common with *1 Clement* than with the canonical writings.

CONCLUSION

As Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean, the movement's perspective with regard to honor and shame developed in a variety of ways. Noteworthy parallels exist between the canonical writings and the early writings addressed in this chapter. However, on more than one occasion, the writings in question adopted the assumptions and values of the dominant culture.

The Didache and *The Epistle of Barnabas* demonstrated significant continuities with the canonical writings. In no place was this more evident than in their exhortations to embrace humility, refuse self-exaltation, and judge impartially. As with the earlier documents, *The Didache* rejected retaliation. In the same way, *Barnabas* emphasized the high honor of being God's sons and daughters.

But these writings also parted ways with earlier tradition through their relationship with those outside the community. In a significant departure from Jesus and Paul, the *Didache* community practiced exclusive table fellowship. Furthermore, *The Epistle of Barnabas* is emphatic in its rejection of the Jewish people.

In perhaps the same period, but from Rome, *1 Clement* and *The Shepherd of Hermas* formulated their own responses to dominant cultural values with regard to honor and shame. While *1 Clement* embraces virtues that represented a challenge to honor values, its embrace of fundamental Roman assumptions related to honor, patronage, and hierarchy results in a radically different vision than that of the canonical writings. This is particularly evident in its response to the schism in the Corinthian church: Clement turns to the popular political *topoi* of concord and peace, which were rife with hierarchical and patriarchal assumptions, to persuade his audience to reinstate leaders that had been removed. Thus, *1 Clement* on one hand embraces a very Roman

perspective on the ordering of persons, status distinctions and economic standing, while on the other hand it employs a call to the Christian virtue of humility to bring his listeners in acquiescence with this ordering of persons. It is a perspective that plays to the interests of the powerful, covering Roman hierarchy with an exterior of Christian values. This perspective, in contrast to that of Jesus, Paul, and other canonical writings, identifies some within the community as more honorable than others.

This is not surprising in light of the makeup of the community behind *1 Clement*. In a congregation that included imperial freedmen, it was natural to embrace hierarchy and a well-ordered society in which everyone occupied a set place based on their status. Leaders exercised the unquestioned authority of fathers—it was never right to question them—and those with wealth and status had more honor than the poor. Those who opposed the rightful leaders, rather than falling in line behind them, were bad clients.

The Shepherd of Hermas also addresses an audience of freedmen, though none had connections to the imperial household or the position that went along with it. Significantly, the writing tacks a different course, emphasizing the peril of misused wealth and the shame of the world's way of accumulating riches and wealth; it stresses that serving the marginalized with one's wealth as the avenue of honor. Indeed, in the writing's central vision of the tower, *Hermas* asserts, in a society that emphasized precedence, that the wealthy would only have a place in the church after the leaders, those who had suffered for their profession, and those who were pure. Ultimately, the wealthy would be added to the building only after their wealth was cut away.

While *Hermas* does not embrace *1 Clement's* hierarchy within the church of the strong over the weak, the prophecy does embrace its own pecking-order. All had the same gifts and promises, but those who suffered for their profession occupied the seat of honor. Thus, though

Hermas embraces a different order than *1 Clement*, both still stand in stark contrast with the canonical writings. In the conception of these Roman writings, someone within the community still has precedence over others—this perspective diverges from Jesus' free honoring of all and the emphasis of Paul, 1 Peter, and the Apocalypse on the shared honor of all of those in Christ.

Thus, as time went on, the early Christians continued to embrace certain honor-sharing virtues, but the shared, high honor of those within the community was no longer universally embraced. I will argue that this continued to be an issue in the early second century; a strong emphasis on the high honor of suffering for Christ is found in writings that surfaced in Asia during that period.

CHAPTER 6:

ASIA AND SURROUNDING REGIONS

IN THE SECOND CENTURY

The Christian writings of the late first and early second centuries charted a variety of courses in regard to honor and shame. Some of them actually mitigated the challenge of the earlier period; others largely embraced the challenge to honor and shame values found in the canonical writings, and they developed their perspective on that basis.

The writings found in the following chapter fall primarily into the latter camp. As developments changed and the movement faced strong opposition from without and within, the letters of Ignatius, Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," Irenaeus, and *The Epistle to Diognetus* all draw from canonical writings to deal with these issues. As a whole, the writings emphasize the honor of suffering for Christ. The path of suffering, in imitation of Christ, was glorious, and it invited countless others to follow it.

THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

> "You are making your father and me, your friends and relatives, into the carriers of your disgrace."
>
> Lydus to Pistoclerus in Plautus' *Bacchises* 380-81[588]

The letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, present a fascinating situation: Ignatius is an embattled church leader in the early second century who is being taken to Rome to be executed for his faith. His journey from Antioch to the seat of the Empire under Roman guard provides occasion for him to engage and correspond with the church in Rome, five churches along his anticipated path to Rome, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.[589] In the process, his writings provide a window into the second century Christian world, by way of one leader's perspective on ecclesiology, orthodoxy, and Christology.

Ignatius' letters also address the issue that is at the forefront of his mind on his way to Rome: his impending execution for being a Christian. The authorities had sentenced Ignatius to death; but his writings explicitly identify suffering for Christ, and in the imitation of him, as honorable. In the same way, he notes that at least some were not ashamed of his situation and asserts that supporting him in his march toward martyrdom was honorable because such a death brought honor to God. Ignatius defined what would have otherwise been shameful as honorable, following the path of earlier writings and laying the groundwork for later developments in early Christianity's challenge to the dominant cultural values.

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[588] Translated by Barton, *Roman Honor*, 209.

[589] While modern versions of Ignatius' epistles contain seven letters, it took a great deal of time for this consensus to develop due to the various purported collections of his writings. For a discussion about the basis of this consensus and how it developed, see Paul Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 1)," *The Expository Times* 117 (2006): 487-89.

The Honor of Suffering for Christ

Ignatius again and again identified suffering for Christ and martyrdom in particular as honorable. It was a path that had been chosen for him; he repeatedly expressed his desire to be worthy of this path.

In this, Paul is the consummate example that Ignatius desired to follow. As he continued on his journey to Rome, he viewed Ephesus as a fitting signpost toward his final destination:

> "I am a convict…I am in danger…You are the highway of those who are being killed for God's sake; you are fellow initiates of Paul, who was sanctified, who was approved, who is deservedly blessed (ἀξιομακαρίστου)—may I be found in his footsteps when I reach God…" (*Ephesians* 12.1-2).[590]

Ephesus was "the highway" of Christian martyrs; whom he had in mind beyond Paul is unclear, but perhaps he expected to join Paul in meeting members of the Ephesian community (cf. Acts 20:17-38) en route to his impending execution for Christ. Many have noted that Ignatius viewed his ministry of letter-writing in imitation of Paul;[591] this passage demonstrates that he interpreted his journey toward martyrdom in Rome through Paul's story as well. Just as his forerunner showed himself worthy of honor (ἀξιομακαρίστου, *Eph.* 12.2), so Ignatius hoped to follow his honorable path. To remain faithful to Christ in death was honorable, as Paul had demonstrated and Ignatius planned to imitate.[592]

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[590] Ignatius, *Ephesians* 12.1-2: "ἐγὼ κατάκριτος…ἐγὼ ὑπὸ κίνδυνον….πάροδός ἐστε τῶν εἰς θεὸν ἀναιρουμένων, Παύλου συμμύσται, τοῦ ἡγιασμένου, τοῦ μεμαρτυρημένου, ἀξιομακαρίστου, οὗ γένοιτό μοι ὑπὸ τὰ ἴχνη εὑρεθῆναι, ὅταν θεοῦ ἐπιτύχω" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[591] See, for example Robert F. Stoops, "If I Suffer…Epistolary Authority in Ignatius of Antioch," *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 161-78.

[592] As noted, Paul refers to the positive response of those who watch his imprisonment and proclaim the gospel boldly in Philippians 1; Ignatius was clearly moved in a similar way by Paul's example.

Ignatius emphasizes the high honor of martyrdom and suffering for Christ throughout his correspondence. He clearly believed that God had chosen it for him, for he says that God had judged him "worthy" to bear the name of martyr (*Mag.* 1.2), by grace (*Smyrn.* 11.1); his chains for Christ brought praise to the churches that aided him on the journey (*Mag.* 1.2). Having been set on this path, Ignatius deeply desired to suffer, but he was unsure whether he was worthy of it (*Trall.* 4.2). He perceived that the fate of martyrdom was so worthy of honor that he was "eager to obtain" it and feared somehow that he would be disqualified; for this reason, he sought prayer from the Trallian community that he would be "reckoned worthy" (*Trall.* 12.3). Indeed, for Ignatius, suffering for Christ was "achieving real selfhood"[593]—in a very real sense this was true because as a male in Mediterranean antiquity, honor was a matter of life and death, and Ignatius believed that suffering for Christ would bring great honor.

Ignatius' *Epistle to the Romans* emphasizes the honor of death for Christ's sake and reveals that Ignatius was concerned that some in his audience might be stirred by love or envy to pursue his release. He wished to make it to Rome in chains—and hoped he would be "reckoned worthy to reach the goal" by the will of God (*Romans* 1.1).[594] At the same time, he believed that they were capable of interceding to prevent his execution—and feared that their love would prevent him from completing the honorable path he was walking (1.2-2.1). Though he was a bishop in Syria far from Rome, God had judged him worthy to bring him to the west for execution; he pleaded with them not to prevent this, since such a death would be a good thing (2.2).

[593] "In Ignatius the 'self' does not really come into being until it suffers; suffering is not simply something that happens to a person. Rather, it is the means of achieving real selfhood. Ignatius told his readers that he was not yet 'someone' and would not be until he was perfected in Jesus Christ, that is, martyred (Eph. 3.1)" (Judith Perkins, "The 'Self' as Sufferer," *Harvard Theological Review* 85 [1992], 264).

[594] Ignatius, *Romans* 1.1: "θέλημα ᾗ τοῦ ἀξιωθῆναί με εἰς τέλος εἶναι" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

Ignatius appears to emphasize the rightness of his destiny because he believes that some in Rome would envy his position. He therefore reminds them that they "never envied anyone" and called them to instruct their community not to envy him (3.1)—he clearly perceived his path as an honorable one and thought others would think the same. For this reason, he wanted them to pray that he would have strength to desire death for Christ rather than failing to complete his path (3.2). Ignatius then emphasizes his yearning for martyrdom (4-6) and that he desires to die for Jesus more than the honor of ruling "over the ends of the earth" (6.1). His appeal to them not to prevent his execution culminates in his request that they take his side and God's side rather than that of "the ruler of this age" (7.1). In particular, he urges them not to "let envy dwell" among them (7.2). He then appeals again to them to pray for him that he "may reach the goal" (8.3).

Ignatius believed that execution for Christ was honorable; therefore, he stressed that his pending martyrdom was an honorable thing. At the same time, he anticipated that some in the Roman Christian community would envy his position, so he addressed this potential response directly. He seemed to acknowledge what an honorable thing it was for him to come from Antioch in the east and have the honor of being executed in Rome (2.2). Would such an honor for a bishop outside of Rome have elicited envy from Christians in the seat of the Empire? Ignatius seems to have believed so. This concern for the sensibilities of his Roman audience may have led to his strong emphasis on how worthy the church is—which is far more emphatic than what is found in his other greetings!

What was behind Ignatius' conclusion that suffering as a Christian was an honorable path? At the heart of this appears to be his understanding of the cross, which is heavily influenced by 1 Corinthians 1:

> "My spirit is a humble sacrifice for the cross, which is a stumbling block to unbelievers but salvation and eternal life to us. Where is the wise? Where is the debater? Where is the boasting of those thought to be intelligent?"[595]

With Paul, Ignatius appears to conclude that Jesus' crucifixion, which the wise viewed as a stumbling block, was honorable. Those "thought to be intelligent" boasted, but the cross brought "salvation and eternal life." Ignatius therefore offered his spirit as "a humble sacrifice for the cross;" he would embrace the shame of execution for Christ's sake.

The Churches' Response to Ignatius

In light of Ignatius' assertion that suffering for Christ is honorable, it is not surprising that he would conclude that aiding him on his journey to Rome is also honorable. When he makes entreaty to the Ephesian community that their deacon, Burrhus, might stay, he emphasizes that it would be "for your honor and the bishop's" (*Eph.* 2.1); thus both the community and the bishop, who occupied a position similar to that of a father in the communities,[596] would have their reputation enhanced. In the same way, when he writes to the church in Philippi from Troas he mentions the companionship of Burrhus, who the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna sent as "a mark of honor," saying that the Lord would "honor them" for this aid (*Phil.* 11.2). The aid that the churches offered was significant and helped Ignatius continue faithfully on his path; in this way, his chains "sang the praises of the churches" (*Mag.* 1.2).

[595] Ignatius, *Ephesians* 18.1: "Περίψημα τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα τοῦ σταυροῦ, ὅ ἐστιν σκάνδαλον τοῖς ἀπιστοῦσιν, ἡμῖν δὲ σωτηρία καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. ποῦ σοφός; ποῦ συζητητής; ποῦ καύχησις τῶν λεγομένων συνετῶν;" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

[596] For additional analysis of Ignatius' perspective on the bishop taking a fatherly role in the Christian community, see Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1969), 101.

As with all persecution, the authorities' death sentence for Ignatius was intended to shame him while warning others against a similar path; it would have been natural for some to be ashamed of Ignatius in view of his chains and destination. However, he emphasizes that some were not. He praises the Smyrneans because they "did not despise," nor were they "ashamed of," his chains (*Smyrn.* 10.2). He also affirms that their bishop, Polycarp, loved his chains *(Pol.* 2.3). Whatever impact it had on their reputation or whatever risk was involved in associating with him, they engaged and supported Ignatius; one may conclude that they believed Ignatius' situation was honorable, as Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* later demonstrates.

Honor for God and Defeat for Satan

Ignatius viewed his pending execution in the context of a broader struggle, involving both the honor of God and the defeat of Satan. Ignatius states emphatically that his path of suffering brought honor and not shame to God. He was "sent for the honor of God" (*Eph.* 21.1) and had been "judged worthy of serving the honor of God" (*Eph*. 21.2). In the same way, those who aided him on his journey did so "for the glory of God" (*Mag*. 15; *Rom.* 10.2). In fact, when he anticipates intervention on his behalf from members of the church in Rome, he urges them to take God's side and not that of "the ruler of this age" (*Rom*. 7.1); Ignatius emphasizes that envy would have been behind efforts to free him (*Rom.* 7.2).

Conclusion

The letters of Ignatius emphasize a simple and significant point: suffering and death for Christ, which seemed shameful to those on the outside, brought honor to God. For this reason, it was honorable for Ignatius to walk this "worthy" path. In the same way, the churches supported

Ignatius and were not ashamed of his chains because he brought honor to God through his suffering.

The letters of Ignatius clearly had resonance in early Christianity and beyond. This fact itself demonstrates that significant numbers from the generations that followed challenged cultural values by identifying suffering for Christ as honorable. At the same time, this perspective would influence countless others in the decades that followed—in Rome, Asia, and beyond.

POLYCARP'S *LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS*

> [a] most distinguished crown ... and a splendid and imperishable renown
>
> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 14.9.6[597]

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, stands as a significant figure in the era of the apostolic fathers. He is among those who aided Ignatius of Antioch in his journey to Rome as a prisoner and received one of his letters. The account of his execution as a Christian is recorded in vivid and compelling detail in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp.* The post-apostolic father Irenaeus sat under his teaching at a young age[598] and was greatly influenced by him.

While Irenaeus indicates that Polycarp wrote numerous letters,[599] the one extant letter attributed to him and acknowledged as authentic is his *Letter to the Philippians*.[600] Written in response to a letter from Philippi shortly after Ignatius was believed to have been martyred, the work addresses critical issues related to righteousness and an avaricious deacon named Valens. In view of Ignatius' praise of Polycarp (*Pol.* 2.3) and his community (*Smyrna* 10.2) for not being ashamed of his chains, it is no surprise that *The Letter to the Philippians* reflects a similar perspective on suffering for Christ to that of the Syrian bishop, likening its honor to that of a

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[597] Translation from J.R. Harrison, "The Unfading Crown," 518.

[598] Irenaeus, *Letter to Florinus* (in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.20.8), cited by Michael Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, *Letter to the Philippians*," *Expository Times* 118 (2006): 53.

[599] Irenaeus, *Letter to Florinus.*

[600] See Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna," 62, and Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 1)," 490-92, for questions about the letter's authenticity and their relationship to the dating and authenticity of *The Epistles of Ignatius*.

Some have suggested that *Philippians* preserves not one but two letters. For a brief discussion of the two letter theory, see Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, *Letter to the Philippians*," 60-62.

crown. At the same time, continuity with Paul and not *1 Clement* is evident in Polycarp's vision of the Christian household, which affirms the moral agency and honor of men and women.

Honor of Suffering for Christ

Polycarp follows the same course as Ignatius, Hermas, and canonical writings in identifying suffering and execution for Christ as honorable. While praising them in the greeting for the aid they provided for Ignatius and his companions, Polycarp identifies "chains" as "the diadems of those truly chosen by God and our Lord" (1.1)[601]; those persecuted for their profession were selected for the "renowned" path and honored. Indeed, to emphasize this very thing, Polycarp adapts two of Jesus' *makarisms* found in Matthew 5, urging them to remember "what the Lord said as he taught:…'how honorable (μακάριοι) are the poor and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God'" (2.3).[602] Their suffering for righteousness is honorable; the basis of their honor is in the fact that God has granted them his kingdom.

After emphasizing the honor of being persecuted for "righteousness' sake," Polycarp goes on to stress that Paul and others who were martyred should also be recognized as μακάριος ("honorable," 2.3). He first does so when acknowledging the apostle's correspondence with them, mentioning the wisdom of the "the honorable (μακαρίου) and glorious Paul" (3.2). Later, Polycarp makes a strong appeal for endurance:

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[601] *To the Philippians* 1.1: "διαδήματα τῶν ἀληθῶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἐκλελεγμένων" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

[602] *To the Philippians* 2.3: "ὧν εἶπεν ὁ κύριος διδάσκων·…μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ καὶ οἱ διωκόμενοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation of the Greek text.

> "I urge all of you, therefore…to exercise unlimited endurance, like that which you saw with your own eyes not only in the honorable (μακαρίοις) Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, but also in others from your congregation and in Paul himself and the rest of the apostles. Be assured that all these did not run in vain, but with faith and righteousness, and that they are now in the place due them with the Lord, with whom they suffered" (9.1-2).[603]

Thus, in keeping with Jesus' *makarism*, Polycarp identifies those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake as honorable (μακάριος); indeed, Polycarp only uses the term for those who have been martyred for Christ. He then affirms that their suffering was not in vain, for they were now "in the place due them" and with the Lord, "with whom they suffered" (9.2). This echoes Polycarp's earlier adaptation of Matthew 5: that those "persecuted for righteousness' sake" are "honorable,"for they have received "the kingdom of God" (2.3), which was "due them." In this same vein, Paul is again identified as "honorable" (Latin *beatus*, 11.3) as the writing approaches its conclusion.[604] Polycarp thus appears to set a precedent followed by later martyrdom accounts: associating μακάριος exclusively with Christian martyrs.

Polycarp's decision to keep the letters of Ignatius, and that of the church in Philippi to request them, as 13.2 indicates, demonstrates that they also viewed martyrdom as honorable. While Ignatius was a bishop, it is unlikely that his writings would have been held in regard unless they carried special authority and significance. His martyrdom appears to have given him the honor and authority to be heard. Polycarp and others retained Ignatius' writings because they truly believed that suffering for Christ was honorable.

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[603] *To the Philippians* 9.1-2: "Παρακαλῶ οὖν πάντας ὑμᾶς…ἀσκεῖν πᾶσαν ὑπομονήν, ἣν καὶ εἴδατε κατ᾽ ὀφθαλμοὺς οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς μακαρίοις Ἰγνατίῳ καὶ Ζωσίμῳ καὶ Ῥούφῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις τοῖς ἐξ ὑμῶν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ Παύλῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀποστόλοις· πεπεισμένους ὅτι οὗτοι πάντες οὐκ εἰς κενὸν ἔδραμον ἀλλ᾽ ἐν πίστει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ, καὶ ὅτι εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ, ᾧ καὶ συνέπαθον" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation of the Greek text.

[604] Is *beatus* how μακάριος is translated into Latin for *To the Philippians*? The context appears to support this, given how the adjective is used to describe Paul in 3.2. The use of *beatus* in place of μακάριος in the Vulgate's translation of Matthew 5:2-11 seems to support this. But this can only be confirmed by accessing a Latin translation of 2.3, 3.2, and 9.1; unfortunately, the availability of this manuscript is significantly limited.

Raised with Christ

The honor of martyrdom in the footsteps of Paul, Ignatius, and others is connected to the simple assumption that death is not the end. Polycarp writes with this perspective in the background. Those who die in Christ will be honored because they will be raised and will receive glory just as he did.

Polycarp describes this reality early in the correspondence. He begins by saying that God "raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave him glory and a throne at his right hand" (2.1).[605] The construction is similar to what Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation emphasize: Jesus' shaming crucifixion was followed by his vindication through resurrection and the restoration of his honor through God's grant of glory and a throne at his right hand.[606] Furthermore, just as Polycarp follows the canonical writers by emphasizing Christ's vindication and subsequent glory, he similarly connects believers' final destination with Christ's: "But the one who raised him from the dead will raise us also, if we do his will and follow his commandments and love the things he loved…not repaying evil for evil or insult for insult or blow for blow or curse for curse" (2.2).[607] In a strikingly similar way to 1 Peter, which links non-retaliation, the example of Christ, and believers' vindication and glory, the passage asserts that the audience's resurrection depends upon them not retaliating when affronted; thus, Polycarp counsels his audience not to conform to the world's way of protecting individual and family honor, but to wait for God's vindication.

[605] *To the To the Philippians* 2.1: "τὸν ἐγείραντα τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ δόντα αὐτῷ δόξαν καὶ θρόνον ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

[606] Cf. Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet 1:11, 21; Rev 5.

[607] 2.2; cf. Phil 3:20-21; 1 Pet 4:13-14; Rev 3:21.

The writing recapitulates this message later to exhort them to behavior that is pleasing to and worthy of God. Polycarp states: "If we please him in this present world, we will receive the world to come as well, inasmuch as he promised that he will raise us from the dead and if we prove to be citizens worthy of him, we will also reign with him—if, that is, we continue to believe" (5.2).[608] The promise for a worthy life is "the world to come," resurrection from the dead, and reigning with God; those who continue in faith and please him will have the honor of all of these things. The life God had called them to would have left them diminished in the world's way of accounting, but it would also result in great glory in the end.

Polycarp's Christian Household

Polycarp employs his own ordering of the Christian household, which embraces a similar perspective to Paul, as opposed to the patriarchy and hierarchy evident in *1 Clement.* He appeals to his audience—addressing fathers and husbands—saying, "Let us first teach ourselves…" (διδάξωμεν ἑαυτοὺς πρῶτον, 4.1). They were "then also" (ἔπειτα καὶ, 4.2) to teach their wives[609]; in this Polycarp appears to align with Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:45 that the wives learn at home. He further directs them to teach the widows (4.3).[610] After the

[608] *To the Philippians* 5.2: "ᾧ ἐὰν εὐαρεστήσωμεν ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, ἀπολημψόμεθα καὶ τὸν μέλλοντα, καθὼς ὑπέσχετο ἡμῖν ἐγεῖραι ἡμᾶς ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ ὅτι, ἐὰν πολιτευσώμεθα ἀξίως αὐτοῦ, καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν αὐτῷ, εἴγε πιστεύομεν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

[609] The construction "πρῶτον… ἔπειτα καὶ" ("first…then also" 4.1-2) indicates that the verb διδάξωμεν ("let us teach") is assumed for 4.2; the implication is that the audience should first teach themselves and then their wives.

[610] As with the wives, the verb διδάξωμεν ("let us teach") is assumed for widows 4.3 in light of the parallel in case (accusative) and number (plural) with the wives (4.2). Widows thus appear to function in Polycarp's household in much the same way as a wife does, under the protection and care of the *paterfamilias*.

exhortation of 5.1, which appears to signify a transition,[611] Polycarp emphasizes the appropriate behavior for other members of the community: deacons (5.2), young men (5.3), virgins (5.3), and presbyters (6.1). Thus, men and unattached women are addressed directly as moral agents, but wives and widows are not; honor is thus shared among all, with *paterfamilias* exercising some responsibility over wives and widows in their care.

Conclusion

Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* thus reflects a variety of influences in the context of the challenge to traditional honor and shame values. On one hand, it continues in line with the canonical writers with its emphasis on the honor of suffering for Christ, which it connects to the honor of being raised with Christ. Polycarp's emphasis here bears striking resemblance to Ignatius, who is emphatic about the glory of suffering for Christ's sake; indeed, Polycarp takes the step of employing μακάριος ("honorable") exclusively for those who have been martyred. At the same time, aligned with Paul and against *1 Clement*, Polycarp embraces a leading role for husbands with their wives but rejects patriarchy and hierarchy; in so doing, he emphasizes the honor of all.

Polycarp's perspective in regard to the honor of suffering for Christ would influence later writers. This is especially evident in the account of his death for his Christian profession, recorded in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp.*

[611] William R. Schoedel, *The Apostolic Fathers; A New Translation and Commentary, Volume 5, Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, ed. Robert M. Grant (New York: T. Nelson, 1964), 19.

THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

> Who—only let him be a man and intent upon honor—is not eager for the honorable ordeal and prompt to assume perilous duties?
>
> Seneca, *On Providence* 2.2[612]

Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp demonstrate that second century Christians followed the canonical writings and honored suffering for the sake of Christ. Indeed, these writings are emphatic about giving honor to such people and presenting them as an example to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and his apostles. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* continues in this tradition and represents the first in what would become a long tradition of extra-biblical accounts of Christian martyrs.[613]

This compelling presentation of the martyrdom of the revered bishop of Smyrna has been widely discussed; it rings with authenticity, and most agree that it is a first-hand account. From the very beginning, Polycarp is put forth as an exemplary martyr (1.2; 20.1) who suffers in conformity with Christ[614] and in line with the gospel (1.2). He does not come forward eagerly, exposing his brothers and sisters to harm, but lovingly (1.2) "in accordance with the will of God" (2.1). Polycarp's martyrdom is "honorable and noble" (2.1); the victorious and worthy nature is

[612] Translation from Carlin Barton, *Roman Honor*, 40.

[613] For an introduction to the genre and a survey of early Christian accounts, see Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom : Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Note also the Timothy Barnes' earlier article that surveys the pre-Decian accounts, "Pre-Decian *Acta Martyrum*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 509-31.

[614] The writing presents countless parallels between Polycarp's path to martyrdom and Christ's passion, including his time in prayer prior to capture (5.1), prediction of his own capture and death (5.2), the involvement of an official named Herod in his capture (6.2), and others. For a discussion of these parallels, their plausibility, and other questions related to the authenticity of the writing, see Sara Parvis, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," *The Expository Times* 118 (2006): 108.

demonstrated through the motif of the contest with Satan (2.2). These themes are carried on throughout the writing as Polycarp remains faithful through capture, trial, and execution.

The Honor of Martyrdom

At its heart, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* emphasizes that suffering for Christ is an honorable path and presents Polycarp as an exemplary model. With all of the others who lost their lives (2.1), the writing identifies him as μακάριος ("honorable") for his martyrdom (1.1; 19.1; 21.1; 22.1, 3). As with the bishop's *Letter to the Philippians*, μακάριος appears to be employed in this writing to refer exclusively to martyrs.

The writing makes it clear that not all martyrdoms are honorable. The introduction points out that Polycarp suffered in accord with the gospel: in particular, he did not seek his own interests, but considered his "brothers and sisters" in love (1.2). Quintus, on the other hand, forced himself and others to come forward voluntarily; then, when faced with going to the wild beasts, the man swore by the emperor and offered sacrifice (4). The writing emphatically rejects this path of voluntary martyrdom, refusing to praise such actions: "for this reason therefore, brothers and sisters, we do not praise those who come forward, for the gospel does not so teach" (4).[615]

Polycarp chooses a different and, according to the writing, more honorable path. He first purposes not to leave Smyrna but defers to the persuasion of many and leaves the city (5.1). In the eyes of the writer, the bishop's decision to leave the city is not understood as evidence of cowardice, but rather indication that he is concerned about the community he serves and not

[615] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 4: "διὰ τοῦτο οὖν ἀδελφοί οὐκ ἐπαινοῦμεν τοὺς προδιδόντας ἑαυτούς ἐπειδὴ οὐχ οὕτως διδάσκει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

overly eager to be martyred; indeed, his decision to leave town permits him the opportunity to continue in prayer for saints (5.1). When, however, he receives a vision of his pillow burning, he concludes that it is God's will that he be burned alive (5.2) and later refuses to escape again when the opportunity presents itself, saying, "The will of God be done" (7.1). Ultimately, Polycarp is presented as fulfilling his lot (6.2)—for God had chosen him for his glory (20.1). In fact, when he is placed on the pyre to be burned, he is found expressing gratitude to God that he was considered worthy to be found among the martyrs (14.1-2); Polycarp's path is an honorable one which God had chosen for him.

Death, Victory, and Glory

In order to emphasize this point, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* in congruence with Revelation's approach, uses the imagery of the contest to emphasize the glory of Polycarp and the other martyrs' choice. This is demonstrated from the beginning of the writing:

> "Honorable and noble, therefore, are all the martyrdoms that have taken place in accordance with the will of God (for we must reverently assign to God the power over all things). For who could fail to admire their nobility and patient endurance and loyalty to the Master? For even when they were so torn by whips that the internal structure of their flesh was visible as far as the inner veins and arteries, they endured so patiently that even the bystanders had pity and wept. But they themselves reached such a level of bravery that not one of them uttered a cry or a groan, thus showing us all that at the very hour when they were being tortured the martyrs of Christ were absent from the flesh, or rather that the Lord was standing by and conversing with them….And in a similar manner those who were condemned to wild beasts endured terrible punishments—they were forced to lie on sharp shells and afflicted with various other forms of torture in order that he might, if possible, by means of the unceasing punishment compel them to deny their faith—for the devil tried many things against them" (2.1-2, 4).[616]

[616] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 2.1-2, 4: "Μακάρια μὲν οὖν καὶ γενναῖα τὰ μαρτύρια πάντα τὰ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονότα· δεῖ γὰρ εὐλαβεστέρους ἡμᾶς ὑπάρχοντας τῷ θεῷ τὴν κατὰ πάντων ἐξουσίαν ἀνατιθέναι. τὸ γὰρ γενναῖον αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπομονητικὸν καὶ φιλοδέσποτον τίς οὐκ ἂν θαυμάσειεν; οἱ μάστιξιν μὲν καταξανθέντες, ὥστε μέχρι τῶν ἔσω φλεβῶν καὶ ἀρτηριῶν τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς οἰκονομίαν θεωρεῖσθαι, ὑπέμειναν, ὡς καὶ τοὺς περιεστῶτας ἐλεεῖν καὶ ὀδύρεσθαι. τοὺς δὲ καὶ εἰς τοσοῦτον γενναιότητος ἐλθεῖν ὥστε μήτε γρύξαι μήτε στενάξαι τινὰ αὐτῶν, ἐπιδεικνυμένους ἅπασιν ἡμῖν ὅτι ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ βασανιζόμενοι τῆς σαρκὸς ἀπεδήμουν οἱ μάρτυρες τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μᾶλλον δέ ὅτι παρεστὼς ὁ κύριος ὡμίλει αὐτοῖς.…ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ οἱ εἰς τὰ θηρία κατακριθέντες ὑπέμειναν δεινὰς κολάσεις, κήρυκας μὲν ὑποστρωννύμενοι καὶ ἄλλαις ποικίλων βασάνων ἰδέαις κολαζόμενοι ἵνα, εἰ δυνηθείη,

Their suffering is thus described as "honorable" and "noble" (2.1). What is the basis of this description? The writer observes their "nobility," "patient endurance," and "loyalty to the Master" (2.2), as demonstrated through their response to the tortures that they faced (2.2-4). When opposed and tortured, they showed the noble virtues befitting to a warrior; for both *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and Revelation, death for the sake of the Christ is worthy of honor.

Polycarp and the other martyrs are described much the same way as many of those of Revelation—in battle with the devil. The trials and tortures they faced were indicative of Satan's work; the writing comments that he had "tried many things against them" (2.4). The account affirms that the devil did not prevail against them and offers the example of "the most noble" (γενναιότατος) Germanicus who encouraged others by his example and "fought with the wild beasts in an outstanding way" (3.1);[617] the young man is presented as engaged in contest against the devil rather than merely as a victim. The imagery thus presents the martyrs as noble champions who have gained glory through death[618]—which the watching crowds affirm (3.2).

Polycarp's exchange with the proconsul and his subsequent execution is fashioned in much the same way. As he enters the stadium to face the official, a voice is heard from heaven,

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διὰ τῆς ἐπιμόνου κολάσεως εἰς ἄρνησιν αὐτοὺς τρέψῃ· πολλὰ γὰρ ἐμηχανᾶτο κατ᾽ αὐτῶν ὁ διάβολος" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation of the Greek text.

[617] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 3.1: "ὃς καὶ ἐπισήμως ἐθηριομάχησεν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[618] *The Martyrdom of* Polycarp thus presents themes employed again and again by Christian authors, as Robin Lane Fox (*Pagans and Christians* [New York: A. A. Knopf, 1987], 436) explains: "In Christian texts, martyrs were idealized as athletes and prizefighters in a supernatural combat. Their struggle was less with the worldly officials than with the Devil, which stood behind them. Justin had already written to tell the Emperor Pius that persecution was not the work of the Emperors, but of wicked demons: historians of administration have been slower to take this point. Christians transposed the imagery of the earthly arena and its pagan games to their own martyrs' combats with Satan."

saying, "Be strong, Polycarp, and show yourself a man" (9.1).[619] Indeed, as he engages the proconsul, Polycarp shows himself as an honorable and faithful witness, while the proconsul fails to conform to legal procedure by giving him a proper hearing (cf. 10.1).[620] Furthermore, he is faithful in death. Upon his death, the writing offers this assessment of his martyrdom as victory: Polycarp "was now crowned with the crown of immorality and won a prize no one could challenge" (17.1).[621] Indeed, the account conceives of his martyrdom as victory over the proconsul: "By his endurance he defeated the unrighteous magistrate and so received the crown of immortality" (19.2).[622] What is true for the Christian martyrs of Revelation is true for Polycarp: death is victory.

Conclusion

The Martyrdom of Polycarp therefore follows in the tradition of Revelation, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* in identifying martyrdom for Christ as an honorable path. In this, it offers a significant qualification: offering oneself up for martyrdom or forcing others to do so was not a worthy path. Furthermore, it employs μακάριος ("honorable") exclusively to describe martyrs, a practice which it likely inherited from Revelation or

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[619] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.1: "Ἴσχυε Πολύκαρπε καὶ ἀνδρίζου" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation of the Greek text.

Lightfoot et al (*The Apostolic Fathers,* 315) compare it to Joshua 1:7; this reference may be at the background, but the emphasis on manly valor is evident.

[620] For further discussion of the proceedings as presented in the text and the Proconsul's apparent failure to follow Roman traditions of justice, see Parvis, "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," 109-10.

[621] Judith Perkins (*The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Presentation in the Early Christian Era* [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], 111) thus emphasizes the significance of how Polycarp's death is presented: "The martyrs are never portrayed as victims, but their ordeals are incorporated into the universal and traditional ideology of the athletic games."

[622] *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 19.2: "διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καταγωνισάμενος τὸν ἄδικον ἄρχοντα καὶ οὕτως τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στέφανον ἀπολαβών" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians.* The account envisions, in much the same way as Revelation, the profession of faith and resulting martyrdom as a noble contest against powerful opponents that accrued honor to the one who suffered. Death was victory!

This perspective would prove compelling for later writings as well.

"THE LETTER FROM THE CHURCHES OF VIENNE AND LYONS"

> The slave dared not say outright what he wished to say.
>
> Plato, *Phaedrus* 3[623]

As the Christian message spread throughout the Mediterranean region, so did persecution of the growing number of Christ-followers. But, as in earlier settings, these challenges demonstrated how radically the movement's honor and shame values diverged from that of its social context.

The early church annalist Eusebius of Caesarea provides an example of this in a letter from his *Ecclesiastical History* that appears to originate in late second century Gaul. This letter, purported to be from the churches of Vienne and Lyons, recounts serious persecution in the region that resulted in the martyrdom of numerous people from their churches. It begins with the mob's anger and continues when the civic officials and governor become involved at the behest of the crowds. The imprisonment and torture leads some to recant while others die in confinement. The account culminates with the death of a few notable leaders among the martyrs, including the slave Blandina, who epitomizes the honor of the martyrs in spite of her frailty and the shame of her circumstances.

The correspondence reveals a thoroughgoing, significant challenge to traditional honor and shame values. It first does so through what may be the letter's central message that suffering and martyrdom for the name of Christ is honorable. In the process, the writing also demonstrates Christian martyrdom as an avenue through which the weak, status-poor, and marginalized could achieve honor.

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[623] Translation from Joseph Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 140.

Honorable Saints in Noble Contest

"The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" emphasizes that suffering and martyrdom for the Christian profession are honorable through the metaphor of the noble contest. Rather than victims exposed to shame, they are engaged as athletes and contend against powerful enemies. Suffering persecution and death for their profession is victory rather than defeat and brings glory and honor. In the process, it becomes evident that they neither suffer nor triumph alone—their victory is through and with Christ unto the Father's glory. In these, the correspondence bears similarities to Revelation and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp.*

What the martyrs endure is envisioned as a conflict that ennobles participants. They are described as "noble" (γέννᾶος, Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.17, 19, 36, 54), endure "nobly" (γενναίως, 5.1.7, 20, 54), and give "noble" testimony (5.1.30). These "athletes" (ἀθλητὴς, 5.1.19, 36) are engaged in "contest" (ἀγὼν, 5.1.11, 36, 40, 42 [2x]). This is a far cry from defining them as shamed victims, as their persecutors have attempted to do.

What also becomes apparent is that they are dealing not merely with their persecutors—the mobs, civic officials, and governor—but engaged in contest against the greater adversary, Satan; in this, the correspondence follows Revelation and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Their contest would result in one of two outcomes: they would be faithful through severe suffering for their profession, even unto death, and be victorious, or they would deny their faith and be defeated (5.1.18, 23-24, 39, 52). Indeed, the situation of the servant Blandina demonstrates this: she endured numerous rounds of torture, having thus overcome "the crooked serpent" and "adversary" in "many contests" (5.1.42). Whether their persecutors (5.1.18, 24, 39, 58) or the greater foe are mentioned (5.1.6, 23, 27, 42), the account envisions a very real contest against

powerful opponents—and so suffering and death could truly be described as overcoming (5.1.36, 54, 58).

If the nature of their opponents looked to another world, so did their reward.[624] The glory they garnered through suffering was subject to a future revelation (5.1.6).[625] What they had done was glorious in God's sight (5.1.17; cf. 5.1.23, 27, 35). Through their deaths, they had won the "crown of immortality" (5.1.36, 42).

In particular, since God had judged the martyrs' behavior as honorable, they gain an honorific title. Just as Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* describe martyrs as μακάριος ("honorable") and employ the term exclusively for them, so also does the correspondence (5.1.4, 19, 27, 29, 47, 54). Later writings from third-century Carthage would use the term's Latin equivalent, *beatus,* in a similar fashion.

Another similarity to canonical sources involves the letter's association of the believers' suffering and glory with Christ. Sanctus, a deacon from from Vienne, did not suffer alone when his body lost its shape, but Christ also suffered in him—demonstrating "great glory" defeating "the adversary" (5.1.23). It was Christ who negated the devil's "torments" through "the endurance of the honorable saints" (5.1.27).[626] Pothinus, the old and diseased bishop of Lyons, was kept alive through persecution in order that "Christ might triumph" through his martyrdom (5.1.29). Finally, it was only through putting on "the great and invincible athlete, Christ"[627] that

[624] Perkins (*The Suffering Self,* 119) thus relates the cosmic significance of their enemies to the gravity of their reward: "By such labeling, the Christian texts banish their enemies beyond the natural world itself, and display the scope of the drama martyrs see themselves enacting in the theater of martyrdom. They look for power and vindication, not in this world, but in the transcendent world to come."

[625] "[They] did indeed prove that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Eusebius *EH* 5.1.6; cf. Rom 8:18).

[626] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.27: "διὰ τῆς τῶν μακαρίων ὑπομονῆς" (Eduard Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte* [Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908]). My translation from the Greek text.

the "small," "weak" and "despised" woman Blandina "overcame the adversary in many contests" (5.1.42).[628] As a result, their sufferings "greatly glorified" Christ (5.1.47) and allowed them to offer "one wreath" of "various colors" to the Father (5.1.36).

New Avenues to Honor for the Marginalized

In the process of redefining what is honorable, "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" also defines martyrdom as a path to honor for the low and weak. This is demonstrated especially vividly through the example of Blandina, the slave woman and Christian martyr. It is difficult to understate her importance to the story; not only is Blandina mentioned throughout the story, but hers is the final martyrdom described.

The letter's first presentation of Blandina depicts her as a paradox, a "character" who "manifests the Christian inversion of societal categories"[629]: "through [her] Christ showed that things which are mean and obscure and contemptible among men are vouchsafed great glory with God" (5.1.17).[630] She is described as "mean," "obscure," and "contemptible;" the narrative later indicates that she's a slave (5.1.18). Indeed, she is perceived as so weak that her fellow believers, including her owner, fear that Blandina's weakness would cause her to waiver in her profession (5.1.18). But her status, sex, and weakness would make her a perfect example of

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[627] Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.42: "μέγαν καὶ ἀκαταγνώιστον ἀθλητὴν Χριστόν ἐνδεδυμένη" (Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*). Translation from Kirsopp Lake, John Ernest Leonard Oulton, and Hugh Jackson Lawlor, *The Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1926).

[628] Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.42: "διὰ πολλῶν κλήρων ἐκβιάσασα τὸν ἀντικείμενον" (Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*). Translation from Lake, Oulton, and Lawlor, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

[629] Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 113.

[630] Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.17: "δι᾽ ἧς ἐπέδειξεν ὁ Χριστός ὅτι τὰ παρὰ ἀνθρώποις εὐτελῆ καὶ ἀειδῆ καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητα φαινόμενα μεγάλης καταξιοῦται παρὰ θεῷ δόξης" (Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*). Translation from Lake, Oulton, and Lawlor, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

Christ's power in weakness, inverted social categories, and reversal of honor values. She endured, and the ordeal provided evidence that the lowly in men's eyes receive glory from God.

The account describes Blandina's endurance as remarkable. Her first day of torture ended with her tormentors stopping because they had no more torture to do—and they acknowledged "that they were beaten" (5.1.18); as the torture went on, "the honorable woman, like a noble athlete, kept gaining vigor in her confession" (5.1.19).[631] Later, she was taken to the arena and endured being hung from a stake for the wild beasts (5.1.42). The account describes her preservation "for another contest:" "…for small and weak and despised as she was, she had put on the great and invincible athlete, Christ; she had overcome the adversary in many contests, and through the struggle had gained the crown of immortality" (5.1.42).[632] The writing thus recapitulates the earlier statements about her low status, inferiority, and weakness, and then recognizes that because she had "put on" Christ, "the great and invincible athlete," she had been both victorious and crowned.

Blandina's martyrdom is the final one recounted. Though a slave, she is described as honorable (μακάριος) and likened to a "noble mother" who has sent forth the earlier martyrs, like children, to a glorious ending (5.1.54). Then, she "departs" with joy, and so demonstrates that her exit is in honor and not shame (5.1.54). The woman enters "an essentially male context," the arena—which would have certainly shocked the audience[633]—and vividly demonstrates the early Christian inversion of honor values.

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[631] Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.19: "ἡ μακαρία ὡς γενναῖος ἀθλητὴς ἀνενέαζεν ἐν τῇ ὁμολογίᾳ" (Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*). Translation from Lake, Oulton, and Lawlor, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

[632] Eusebius, *EH* 5.1.42: "ἡ μικρὰ καὶ ἀσθενὴς καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητος μέγαν καὶ ἀκαταγνώνιστον ἀθλητὴν Χριστὸν ἐνδεδυμένη, διὰ πολλῶν κλήρων ἐκβιάσασα τὸν ἀντικείμενον καὶ δι᾽ ἀγῶνος τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στεψαμένη στέφανον" (Schwartz, *Eusebius Kirchengeschichte*). Translation from Lake, Oulton, and Lawlor, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

[633] Francine Cardman, "Acts of the *Woman Martyrs*," *Anglican Theological Review* 70 [1988]: 147-48.

Blandina is thus evidence of a world turned upside-down. Shaming persecution and martyrdom for Christ's sake is glorious. A contemptible, weak, female slave is honored by God. Death is victory.

Conclusion

"The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" demonstrates that the challenge to honor and shame values evident in the earlier writings had extended to Gaul as well. At the heart of the inversion of honor values was the metaphor of noble contest which the composer employs to great end in his account of persecution and martyrdom. Martyrs are valiant athletes rather than victims. Their human foes function with cosmic forces at the background. Death for the sake of their confession is victory—and redounds to great, eternal glory. No wonder the writing describes the martyrs as μακάριος just as Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* do, perhaps due to the influence of Revelation.

The slave woman Blandina emerges from the contest as the example par excellence of the early Christian challenge to traditional honor values. She is lowly and weak, a woman and a slave, and yet in the economy of Christ she shows forth as the most valiant of all the martyrs, surpassing even the martyred bishop Pothinus. In the final account she stands alone as the honorable mother who has encouraged and sent the other martyrs, her children, on as "triumphant to the king" (5.1.54).

IRENAEUS OF LYONS

> "You are blessed beyond all men upon earth, for I have revealed to you these mysteries."
>
> The Savior to Peter in *Pistis Sophia* 1.37[634]

Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons responded to authorities' opposition with uncompromising fidelity to their Christian profession that expressed itself in a revaluation of honor; they embraced the shame of persecution for their profession. Irenaeus of Lyons, who studied under the teaching of Polycarp in his youth and late in the second century succeeded the martyred bishop Pothinus in Lyons, did not address the external threats that his predecessors faced; rather, his landmark work *Against Heresies*, responds to Gnosticism and other heterodox perspectives from within the Christian movement. In spite of the fact that his writings address different circumstances, Irenaeus also presents a challenge to traditional honor values.

Irenaeus responds to Gnostic and related teaching by thoroughly critiquing both their doctrine and behavior; it is in the latter critique that he embraces the canonical writings' perspective on honor and shame. In response to heterodox teaching that emphasized esoteric knowledge for an elite group, he challenged their boastful arrogance and urged the distinctly Christian virtue of humility. At the same time, Irenaeus embraces Jesus' rejection of retribution and vacates the honor challenge. In both of these areas, he embraces countercultural values championed by Jesus and the canonical writers.

[634] Translation from Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, *Pistis Sophia* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 121.

Against the Self-Exaltation of the Heretics

Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* adds a strong critique of the heretics' way of life in addition to his thorough analysis and critique of their teaching. In particular, he asserts again and again that the emphasis that many of them place on hidden knowledge given to a special, enlightened group is inconsistent with the gospel; such a perspective led to arrogant, lawless behavior. Thus, when speaking of the Valentinians, who he claims are engaged in the "impiety" of seducing married women, Irenaeus laments that "they highly exalt themselves, and claim to be perfect, and the elect seed" (*AH* 1.6.4).[635] Since they have access to secret tradition, they think they are enlightened and occupy an exalted position and so justify their contemptible behavior; Irenaeus emphasizes that such boastful claims to honor are shameful—especially in light of the behavior that accompanies it. In the same way, he later identifies their behavior as wicked and laments their "arrogance" and attitude of superiority (*AH* 1.31.3). Ultimately, the claims of such people are "vainglory," and their path to restoration must ultimately be the counter-cultural path of "humbling themselves" (*AH* 2.11.2).

Indeed, Irenaeus describes the perspective of such men who claim superiority based on knowledge—whether Valetinus, Ptolemaeus, or Basilides—as boasting or vainglory. Such men "maintain that they have searched out the deep things of God," but reveal ignorance on countless things (*AH* 2.28.9).[636] They are revealed as something less than they claim to be and their claims to honor are rejected.

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[635] Ireneaus, *Against Heresies* 1.6.4: "semetipsos extollunt, perfectos uocantes et semina electionis" (Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Contre les Hérésies* [Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1979]). Translation from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1* (Buffalo: Christian Literature Co., 1885).

[636] Ireneaus, *Against Heresies* 2.28.9: "qui altitudines Dei exquisisse se dicunt" (Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Contre les Hérésies*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers.*

Irenaeus employs distinctly Christian, countercultural virtues and vices in his argument against heterodox teaching. By rejecting their claims as vainglory and self-exaltation and emphasizing that such men should humble themselves,[637] he reverses traditional honor values as the canonical writers, *The Didache*, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, and *1 Clement* do.

Refusing the Honor Challenge and Retribution

Against Heresies also conforms to earlier tradition's challenge to honor values through its rejection of retribution and by refusing even to participate in honor challenge. Indeed, Irenaeus' emphatic message in this regard recapitulates significant teaching from Jesus:

> "[Jesus] commanded [His disciples] not only not to hate men, but also to love their enemies;…and not only not to strike, but even, when themselves struck, to present the other cheek [to those that maltreated them]; and not only not to refuse to give up the property of others, but even if their own were taken away, not to demand it back again from those that took it; and not only not to injure their neighbours, nor to do them any evil, but also, when themselves wickedly dealt with, to be long- suffering, and to show kindness towards those [that injured them], and to pray for them, that by means of repentance they might be saved--so that we should in no respect imitate the arrogance, lust, and pride of others" (2.32.1).[638]

Thus, in following with Jesus' teaching, when challenged with a blow to the face, they were not to respond in kind (cf. Mt 5:39 par Lk 6:29). When asked for others' property or even their own,

[637] Irenaeus further describes God's perspective on the humble in *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 60, emphasizing his impartial judgment: "Now, *Not according to opinion shall he judge, and not according to speech shall he reprove: but he shall judge judgment for the humble, and shall show mercy to the humble on the earth*—(by this) he the more establishes and declares His godhead. For to judge without respect of persons and partiality, and not as favoring the illustrious, but affording to the humble worthy and like and equal treatment, accords with the height and summit of the righteousness of God: for God is influenced and moved by none, save only the righteous" (Translation from the Armenian by J. Armitage Robinson, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* [New York: Macmillan, 1920]).

[638] Ireneaus, *Against Heresies* 2.32.1: "qui et non solum non odire homines, sed et inimicos diligere iussit; et non solum non peierare, sed neque iurare praecepit; et non solum non male loqui de proximis, sed ne quidem racha et fatuum dicere aliquem, si quo minus reos esse huiusmodi in ignem gehennae; et non tantum non percutere, sed et ipsos percussos etiam alteram praestare maxillam; et non solum non abnegare quae sunt aliena, sed etiam, si sua auferantur, illis non expostulare ; et non solum non laedere proximos neque facere quid eis malum, sed et eos qui male tractentur magnanimes esse et benignitatem exercere erga eos et orare pro eis uti paenitentiam agentes saluari possint, in nullo imitantes nos reliquorum contumeliam et libidinem et superbiam " (Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Contre les Hérésies*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

they were not to pursue its return; this is directed in light of Jesus' appeal to "give to those who ask of you…and do not demand it back" (Lk 6:30; cf. Mt 5:42). Rather, when harmed or injured, they were to respond with patience and kindness, praying for the one who had affronted them (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27). Retaliation, the response that would have secured their honor and that of their family, was rejected; rather than demonstrating arrogance or pride, they gave honor to those unworthy of it through praying for them (cf. Mt 5:44). Again, Irenaeus embraces a counter-culture approach related to honor in line with the teaching of Jesus, Paul, 1 Peter, and Polycarp, among others.

Conclusion

Against Heresies stands in contrast to Irenaeus' forerunners in the second century with its weighty theological response to heterodox teaching within the Christian community. While it addresses different themes, it remains in continuity with these and earlier Christian writings in its inversion of honor-shame values. Boasting and claims to elite knowledge are rejected and humility is embraced. Furthermore, with other writings, Irenaeus embraces Jesus' shameful refusal to engage the honor challenge.

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

> For the moment this is the line I have taken with all persons brought before me on the charge of being Christians. I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished.
>
> Pliny the Younger (*Letter* 10.96) to the Emperor Trajan in 112 CE[639]

The early Christians were moved by their martyrs and leaders who refused to deny their faith, taking great pains to preserve their memory, but, unsurprisingly, those outside the community had questions about such behavior. *The Epistle to Diognetus,* an early Christian apology, reflects this reality at its outset, purporting to explain "what God they believe in and how they worship him, so that they all disregard the world and despise death" (1.1).[640] In the process, the writing, which likely traces to the late second century but has an uncertain origin,[641] emphasizes the inversion of honor values and the worthy path of those who suffer for Christ. At the same time, it illustrates another fundamental challenge to expected values by demonstrating their rejection of retaliation in the face of such shaming persecution.

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[639] Translation from Betty Radice, *Letters, and Panegyricus* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969]).

[640] *The Epistle of Diognetus* 1.1: "πῶς θρησκεύοντες αὐτὸν τόν τε κόσμον ὑπερορῶσι πάντες καὶ θανάτου καταφρονοῦσι" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[641] For an introduction of the writing and its origin, see Paul Foster's "*The Epistle to Diognetus*" (*The Expository Times* 118 [2007]: 162-68).

Disregarding the World and Despising Death

The early Christians' disregard of their society's traditions and embrace of shameful death had caused such consternation for outsiders that they became known for this sort of behavior. The explanation that *The Epistle of Diognetus* provides for their actions is a simple one: "They are dishonored yet they are glorified in their dishonor; they are slandered, yet they are vindicated" (5.14).[642] Their suffering and abuse brought vindication; at the same time, their ordeal, though it involved dishonor, also led to their glory. What would lead the author to say this?

It is reasonable to believe that their perspective on persecution was informed by earlier tradition. Had they known about Jesus' teaching on the matter? Or that of 1 Peter or Revelation? Though the passage does not state it explicitly, it is possible that *The Epistle of Diognetus* had prior writings in mind.

What the writing does make explicit is that their violent, public deaths actually served as evidence that their path was honorable. *The Epistle of Diognetus* adopts the same conclusions as Revelation, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" in regard to the significance of their ordeals, identifying them as victors and not victims: "[Do you not see] how they are thrown to the wild beasts to make them deny the Lord, and yet they are not conquered? Do you not see that as more of them are punished, the more others increase?" (7.7-8)[643] Indeed, the apology concludes that their suffering actually encourages other

[642] *The Epistle of Diognetus* 5.14: "ἀτιμοῦνται, καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἀτιμίαις δοξάζονται· βλασφημοῦνται, καὶ δικαιοῦνται" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

[643] *The Epistle of Diognetus* 7.7-8: "<οὐχ ὁρᾷς> παραβαλλομένους θηρίοις, ἵνα ἀρνήσωνται τὸν κύριον, καὶ μὴ νικωμένους; οὐχ ὁρᾷς ὅσῳ πλείονες κολάζονται, τοσούτῳ πλεονάζοντας ἄλλους;" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

Christians to faithful witness unto death. Such honorable deaths were not to be despised, but rather imitated.

Near the end of the first source within the document—which finishes at 10.8—the apologist not only emphasizes the honor of suffering for Christ, but expresses his expectation that Diognetus would ultimately recognize the wisdom of their decision and honor of their path when he sees the judgment that is coming.

> "[T]hen you will both love and admire those who are punished because they refuse to deny God, then you will condemn the deceit and the error of the world, when you realize what is the true life in heaven, when you despise the apparent death here on earth, when you fear the real death, which is reserved for those who will be condemned to the eternal fire that will punish to the very end those delivered to it. Then you will admire those who for righteousness' sake endure the transitory fire, and you will consider them blessed [μακαρίσεις], when you comprehend the other fire…" (10.7-8).[644]

The present world is full of "deceit" and "error," not to be compared to the true life that is to come. And the "transitory fire" Christians presently endure because of their profession does not compare to the "fire" that is to come—*The Epistle to Diogentus* contends that the one who sees the difference will consider them "honorable" (μακαρίσεις, 10.8) and will despise death as they do (10.7; cf. 1.1). Thus, as the writing appears to approach its original conclusion, it provides one final demonstration of how the early Christians had inverted cultural values by honoring those who suffered and died for their confession.

[644] *The Epistle of Diognetus* 10.7-8: "τότε τοὺς κολαζομένους ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ θέλειν ἀρνήσασθαι θεὸν καὶ ἀγαπήσεις καὶ θαυμάσεις, τότε τῆς ἀπάτης τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς πλάνης καταγνώσῃ, ὅταν τὸ ἀληθῶς ἐν οὐρανῷ ζῆν <ἐπιγνῷς,> ὅταν τοῦ δοκοῦντος ἐνθάδε θανάτου καταφρονήσῃς, ὅταν τὸν ὄντως θάνατον φοβηθῇς, ὃς φυλάσσεται τοῖς κατακριθησομένοις εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, ὃ τοὺς παραδοθέντας αὐτῷ μέχρι τέλους κολάσει. τότε τοὺς ὑπομένοντας ὑπὲρ δικαιοσύνης θαυμάσεις τὸ πῦρ τὸ <πρόσκαιρον,> καὶ μακαρίσεις, ὅταν ἐκεῖνο τὸ πῦρ ἐπιγνῷς…" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). Translation from Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers.*

Non-Retaliation and the Paradox of Christian Experience

The Epistle of Diognetus also demonstrates the early Christians' challenge to traditional honor values by mentioning theirrefusal of retaliation. A few examples within a series of paradoxes about the believers' experiences reveal the extent to which they continued to diverge from sanctioned defense of their own honor: "They love everyone, and by everyone they are persecuted….They are reviled, yet they bless; they are insulted, yet they show honor" (5.11, 15).[645] The Christian practice is thus described as love for everyone; when affronted, they respond by giving honor rather than trying to preserve their own honor through retaliation. In this they follow a long tradition within the movement of choosing a weak response rather than the sanctioned male response that would have defended their honor.

Conclusion

Not much is certain about *The Epistle of Diognetus*: its origin is shrouded in mystery, its author is unknown, and its authentic conclusion is lost. Nevertheless, the probable late second century document demonstrates Christianity's continued challenge to traditional honor and shame values. In an era where Christ's followers gained a reputation for despising death, the writing emphasizes the honor of such a path. Furthermore, it displays that their ongoing practice in the face of affront was the weak response of non-retaliation—a sure way to lose face. These perspectives would continue to be influential within growing faith, well into the third century.

[645] *The Epistle of Diognetus* 5.11, 15: "ἀγαπῶσι πάντας, καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων διώκονται. λοιδοροῦνται, καὶ εὐλογοῦσιν· ὑβρίζονται καὶ τιμῶσιν" (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*). My translation of the Greek text.

CONCLUSION

Christianity flourished in Asia and beyond in the second century; its growth in this area and era can hardly be discussed apart from the writings of and accounts related to three bishops. The first, Ignatius of Antioch, passed though the area en route to his martyrdom in Rome and left a lasting influence through his letters. Polycarp of Smyrna, the second and an addressee of one of these letters, sent a collection of Ignatius' writings with his own instructions to Philippi; he would later suffer his own memorable death for Christ and leave a significant mark as well. Before serving as bishop of Lyons and writing the landmark *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus studied under Polycarp's teaching as a boy in Smyrna; that he avoided martyrdom in the persecution addressed above that claimed Pothinus, his predecessor in the bishopric and numerous others may be due to a fortuitous trip to Rome on church business. Whatever the origin and province of *The Epistle to Diognetus*, it is evident that Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenaeus and their related writings helped precipitate the questions among outsiders that the apology would attempt to address. Together, these demonstrate how the early Christian challenge to honor values continued and developed.

The honor of suffering for Christ, which was emphasized in the canonical writings and *The Shepherd of Hermas*, is a significant theme in the letters of Ignatius, Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians, The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," and *The Epistle of Diognetus.* Each in its own way stresses the high honor of martyrdom, which may follow from the influence of Revelation in light of its origin in Asia and significant emphasis on suffering for Christ unto death. Μακάριος ("honorable"), which is often used by Revelation to identify honorable behavior (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14), is employed exclusively to describe martyrs in Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians, The Martyrdom of*

Polycarp, and the correspondence from Vienne and Lyons; this appears to demonstrate the influence of the Apocalypse. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" present the martyrs in contest with the devil and imperial opponents, which bears striking resemblance to the saints' conflict with Satan in Revelation; Ignatius views his own experience through the same lens, describing his pending martyrdom as for "the honor of God" and his opposition as acting on Satan's behalf. Many were not ashamed of Ignatius on his journey, others requested and distributed his letters, and Polycarp's martyrdom inspired a new genre of writing; this demonstrates the degree to which the movement had embraced persecution and death for Christ as honorable.

Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* adapts additional themes from canonical and other early writings. With Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation, Polycarp emphasizes the honor of being raised with Christ—whatever they may have lost would eventually be restored. In addition, Polycarp embraces an approach similar to Paul and 1 Peter in regard to patriarchy, envisioning wives in submission to their husbands but treating other members of the Christian community as independent moral agents; this stands in contrast with *1 Clement, The Shepherd of Hermas,* and the letters of Ignatius, which envision bishops as exercising the power of a *paterfamilias* and so diminishes the honor of others in the community.

"The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" goes even further to empower women through the example of the slave Blandina. Though lowly and physically weak, her martyrdom reveals a new path to honor for women. In the process, she exemplifies the early Christian inversion of honor and shame values.

Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, and *The Epistle of Diognetus* adopt Jesus of Nazareth's teaching on non-retaliation and rejection of competition for

honor, teaching that challenges honor-shame values. Significantly, this tradition is also employed by Paul, 1 Peter, *The Didache*, and *1 Clement*.

Finally, Irenaeus adapts a key emphasis from Jesus in his arguments against heterodox doctrine: he laments their boasting and self-exaltation and identifies the countercultural path of humility as their way of restoration. Paul, 1 Peter, *The Didache*, *Barnabas*, and *1 Clement* all articulate a similar perspective, albeit in different contexts.

As time passed and Christianity grew and spread, the movement's challenge to traditional honor-shame values would continue and change. This will be evident in the final two chapters, which address Carthage in the first half of the third century.

CHAPTER 7:

EARLY THIRD CENTURY CARTHAGE

Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, and countless early Christians challenged Mediterranean society's honor-shame values in deep and significant ways. The movement presented a compelling alternative to the dominant culture, with its emphasis of the shared honor of all those in Christ and its rejection of competition for honor. Furthermore, the assertion that suffering for Christ's sake was honorable took deep root and exerted significant influence as many faced opposition in their homes, neighborhoods, and cities; such perspective seems to have influenced both martyrs and those who recounted their stories.

Christians in third-century Carthage were greatly influenced by this perspective, as members of the community faced hardship and even death for their confession. In the process, their actions challenged the Roman socio-political order as they often undermined the authority of fathers. In particular, women like Perpetua, whose diary serves as the basis of one of the more compelling a*cta martyrum*, challenged fatherly authority in the home and the church, stimulating continued development of early Christian honor-shame values.

THE PASSION OF PERPETUA

> "Open your dresses, bare your arms, knot the sleeves around your thighs, let your legs give open access to your wombs. There is no chastity when you're a slave; you wear a veil for marriage, not for rape!"
>
> Hecuba to Troy's defeated women in Seneca's *Trojan Women* 88-91.[646]

What power could a woman in the ancient world exert in response to male aggression? *The Passion of Perpetua,* written from North Africa at the beginning of the third century CE, demonstrates that a young woman could exercise tremendous authority in her family, church, and city in that era. The account vividly illustrates the capacity even a young mother has to influence societal mores. With her courage in harrowing circumstances and her assertiveness when confronted with patriarchal and political authority, Perpetua overturns Roman hierarchy in Carthage, endures a serious ordeal as a victor rather than a victim, and presents a surprising challenge to traditional honor-shame values.

While *Perpetua* is vivid and startling in its own right, the writing expresses the divergence from dominant culture evident in earlier writings. Suffering for the Christian profession is a worthy path, and martyrs are engaged in noble contest against the devil. Rather than rejecting those who are imprisoned for their faith, members supported the incarcerated without shame as though they were their own brothers and sisters. Their kinship in the Christian faith meant that they shared equal standing and honor in the community regardless of gender, status, and position. The young noblewoman Perpetua is at the heart of this inversion of societal values and stands as an empowered woman, intractable and strong against the urges of her father

[646] Translation from Lucius Annaeus Seneca and Frederick Ahl, *Trojan Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) quoted in Barton, *Roman Honor*, 187.

and demands of the Roman authority; Perpetua's strength increases through her imprisonment, suffering, and death for her Christian profession.

The young noblewoman Vibia Perpetua's diary serves as the heart and basis of *The Passion of Perpetua.* After a brief introduction to the writing, which appears to envision Perpetua's story through the lens of Montanism[647] and claims to provide eyewitness testimony to the suffering of Perpetua and her fellow martyrs, the diary carries the narrative for the first ten chapters.

The protagonist, who had recently given birth to a son and was among a number of catechumens who were arrested, demonstrates that martyrdom is an honorable path worthy of imitation. After her baptism (3.5), Perpetua receives a vision that foretells that she would be condemned: she and Saturus scale a narrow ladder, stepping on the dragon's (Satan's) head and climbing past various weapons to make it into a garden (heaven) with a shepherd (God) and thousands of people clothed in white (4.8).

Following this first vision, Vibia Perpetua is urged to abandon her faith. First her father, in his second recorded visit to the prison, pleads with her to change course (5.1-4). Later, she is brought before the procurator Hilarianus, who urges her to sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors; when she refuses, she is sentenced to death *ad bestias* (6.3-6).

Perpetua later receives three other visions. The first envisions her brother Dinocrates, who had died some years before as a boy, suffering (7). Upon seeing his affliction, she prays and receives a vision indicating that he had been delivered from his suffering—salvation had come to him (8). The diary culminates in her final vision, which she receives the day before she

[647] Sarah Parvis ("Perpetua," *The Expository Times* 120 [2009]: 368), for example, notes elements of the movement's language and perspective within the introduction: "But the argument of the editor has given many scholars pause, because it employs the technical vocabulary of Montanism, otherwise known as the 'New Prophecy'."

was to go to the beasts: in it, she is led to the amphitheater and experiences her coming ordeal not as a victim, but as a male champion who overcomes an Egyptian and receives a branch signifying victory (10). Perpetua envisions what was to happen to her in the arena as "contest" against Satan (10.14-15); this understanding would influence the perspective of the narrator in the chapters that follow.

The account builds to the martyrs' ordeal in the arena. It reveals Saturus' vision of his and Perpetua's deliverance to heaven (11-13). Later, Perpetua's slave and fellow-catechumen Felicitas delivers her daughter "two days before the contest" (15). Perpetua's boldness with the military tribune to request better circumstances for all of the prisoners is also mentioned (16).

The writing culminates in the martyrs' exposure to the beasts. Perpetua and the others go to their deaths with boldness, composure, and faith; the narrator makes it clear that the events occur in conformity with what had previously been revealed in the visions (18-21). A postscript concludes the *Passion*, emphasizing the martyrs' significance for the church: "Ah, most valiant and blessed martyrs! Truly you are called and chosen for the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord! And anyone who exalts, honors, and worships his glory should read for the consolation of the Church these new deeds of heroism which are no less significant than the tales of old."[648] (21.11) Anyone who has studied the reception of this writing in compelling detail knows that it has fulfilled its stated purpose, having influenced countless readers.

[648] *The Passion of Perpetua* 21.11: "O fortissimi ac beatissimi martyres! o uere uocati et electi in gloriam domini nostri Iesu Christi! quam qui magnificat et honorificat et adorat, utique et haec non minora ueteribus exempla in aedificationem Ecclesiae legere debet" (Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972]). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

From Shameful Victims to Noble Champions

Among the most significant messages *The Passion of Perpetua* presents is that of the honor of martyrdom. The narrative highlights this perspective in countless ways.

Early in Perpetua's diary, she recounts how her brother described her as "greatly privileged" and encouraged her to ask for a vision (4.1). The vision she receives, her first one, serves to reinforced her standing as "greatly privileged" and honorable. In the vision, she sees a narrow ladder with weapons on both rails and a dragon at the bottom (4.3-4). Next, she sees Saturus, who was not among her fellow prisoners, scale the ladder first; upon reaching the top, he calls to her: "I am waiting for you" (4.6). She follows, stepping on the dragon's head;[649] Perpetua's repetition in Latin "calcarem, calcavi" emphasizes "her treading on the dragon's head and begins a pattern that stresses the priority of the lower half of the body over the upper that continues through her narrative" (4.7).[650] After defeating the dragon and scaling the ladder, she finds her way to a garden and encounters a gray-haired shepherd who welcomes her among thousands clothed in white, saying, "I'm glad you have come, my child" (4.9).[651] Based on what she saw, Perpetua concludes that she would be martyred.

The vision vividly demonstrates that her path of suffering would be honorable, transforming the shame of her circumstances into glory. She overcomes the dragon, who represents Satan, treading on his head as Christ did (cf. Gen 2:15). Her movement up the ladder from low to high implies an elevated position; when she comes upon a garden with a shepherd it is clear that she occupies heaven, a far more advantageous place. Not only that, but she has the

[649] The imagery appears to reference the promise of Genesis 3:15 that Adam's seed would trample the serpent's head; like Christ, Perpetua would have her own victory over Satan.

[650] Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 106.

[651] *The Passion of Perpetua* 4.9: "Bene venisti, τέκνον" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

privilege of being welcomed by God, represented by the gray-haired shepherd, as "my child;" in a society that attached honor to family name, there was no better father. The path before her would ultimately enhance her standing.

Perpetua's fourth vision, which she saw the night before her martyrdom, would accomplish much the same thing as the first, transforming the shame of being executed *ad bestias* to the honor of noble contest. She recounts being led to the amphitheater and her surprise at finding a crowd, but no beasts there (10.5). Rather, she encounters a "vicious" Egyptian, who was there with his assistants to fight her (10.6). In preparation for the contest, her clothes were stripped off—and she discovers that she was a man, readied for the match (10.7). The stakes of her fight are made clear by the gladiator trainer of "marvelous stature:" defeat would mean death at the hand of the Egyptian, but victory, the reward of a branch with golden apples (10.9), like the apples awarded "at Apollo's games in Carthage, the occasion of her imminent death."[652] Fists flew; as her opponent grasped for her feet, she kept striking his face with her heals (10.10). Then, after she pummeled him and grabbed his head, he fell and she "stepped on his head" (10.11). The fight concludes with shouting from the crowd, songs from her assistants, and a kiss from the trainer with the greeting, "Peace be with you, my daughter!" (10.12-13).[653] Edith Perkins explains the significance of her vision:

> "Each detail of the contest affirms the dominance of the lower half of the body. This Christian victory is explicitly offered in terms that emphasize the subversion of the top by the bottom, metaphorically conveying a subversive social message. Perpetua accepts her prize, walking from the arena through the victors' gate in triumph (*in gloria*)."[654]

[652] Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 439.

[653] *The Passion of Perpetua* 10.13: "Filia, pax tecum" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[654] Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 110.

This vision inverts reality: execution as a Christian actually brings honor and the shameful exposure of a young woman to the beasts by civic authorities is to be understood as her triumph. Perpetua concludes after awaking from her dream, "I realized that it was not with the wild animals I would fight but with the Devil, but I knew that I would win the victory" (10.14).[655]

The imagery of Perpetua's fourth vision continues the narrative's redefining of honor. As a martyr for her confession, she would not be a powerless victim; instead, she was engaging with Satan in noble contest. When her body is exposed before the watching crowd and a vicious foe, she discovers that she is not revealed in feminine shame, but as a man in all his strength. The authorities meant to make a spectacle of her, but her vision subversively redefined her death as an encounter in which she would trample Satan under her feet and overcome the authority that condemned her. Her victory, won at great cost, would gain her the cheers of the watching crowd, the prize of the golden apples, and safe passage into the victor's gate.[656] The honor she had gained is reinforced by the words of Christ, the gladiator trainer, who addresses her as "my daughter" (10.13); again, her place in God's family secures her a place of honor. The dream thus creates an alternate reality: a woman is a man; being thrown to the beasts is actually noble contest; and persecution and death for Christian profession is actually honorable rather than shameful.

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[655] *The Passion of Perpetua* 10.14: "et intellexi me non ad bestias, sed contra diabolum esse pugnaturam; sed sciebam mihi esse uictoriam" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[656] Perkins (*The Suffering Self*, 111) aptly summarizes the significance of this vision, which concludes Perpetua's diary: "In her final vision, Perpetua rejects a conception of herself as a victim, an object supplied to the beasts. Throughout her narrative she has become increasingly aware of her power. She withstands her father and the governor, receives vision communications through which she releases her brother from his sufferings; she has been empowered by her experience of pain. Her presentation of herself as an athletic contestant continues this self-understanding. Traditionally the games conferred prestige and renown on the participants, but not without cost." One might even infer that Perpetua's pain is so empowering because she had already embraced from earlier Christian tradition what was revealed in her visions: that suffering and death for Christ brought glory and honor.

The vision of the amphitheater redefines Perpetua's understanding of her martyrdom that continues throughout the writing. She describes the night before her death as "the eve of the contest"[657] and then again refers to her pending execution as "the contest" (10.15). The narrator picks up this usage of "contest," later in the writing as well.[658]

Following Perpetua's diary, the narrative turns to a vision Saturus had prior to "the contest." Though it is not subversive in the same way as Perpetua's visions, it is full of surprises and also stresses the honor of martyrdom for Christ. The vision describes Perpetua and Saturus' arrival to heaven after their execution. They are delivered there by four angels (11.2); when they arrive, they are greeted by four other angels who "pay them homage" and remark "in admiration" when they see the martyrs, "They are here!" (11.7) The two are asked to enter and "greet the Lord" (11.10); upon entry they witness a scene similar to the cosmic court of Revelation 4, with the elders worshiping and crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (12.2). Saturus imagines the Lord as a white-haired, aged man with a youthful face; the martyrs' interaction with him is intimate as they

[657] G. W. Bowersock (*Martyrdom and Rome* [Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 33-34) observes the differing language employed in the Greek and Latin manuscripts, which seems to indicate the original language of Perpetua's diary: "The Greek at this point is far more precise than the Latin, and in my opinion it serves as a guarantee that Perpetua did indeed write in Greek. 'I have written these things up until the eve of the φιλοτιμίαι.' This stunning use of a word that we normally associate with ambition, benefaction, and high civic achievement is used by Perpetua to describe her own torture and execution. But the Latin equivalent for φιλοτιμία is *munus*, and rightly so. In Greek of this period φιλοτιμία denotes precisely a public spectacle offered by a civic magistrate. When a *munus* is again repeated in the Latin version, however, as Perpetua observes that anyone who wishes can write of what is going to happen, the Greek is markedly more vivid, 'what is going to happen in the amphitheater' (τὰ ἐν ἀμφιθέατρῳ γενησόμενα). The use of φιλοτιμία and the variant naming the amphitheater, when the Latin has *munus* both times, provide powerful support for the view that Perpetua wrote her account in Greek."

Bowersock's point here is persuasive and reinforces the conclusion that contest ("*munus*") is an important theme in *The Passion of Perpetua* that the editor wishes to reinforce—and returns to again and again.

[658] For example, 15.4; 21.2. The theme is also emphasized later in the narrative as the day of their execution is described as "the day of their victory" (18.1), through the description of Felicitas as a "gladiator" who would "fight the beasts" (18.3) and noting that Perpetua "was already treading on the head of the Egyptian" when she sang a hymn (18.7).

kiss him and he touches their faces with his hand (12.5). They depart with a "kiss of peace" from the elders (12.6).

An encounter outside the gates adds a surprising, interesting dimension to the vision. After they leave the presence of the Lord, they encounter the bishop, Optatus, on the right and the presbyter, Aspasius, on the left; both were in sorrow (13.1). The two fall to Saturus and Perpetua's feet and ask them to make peace between them (13.2); the martyrs respond with surprise that their leaders would fall to their feet and lovingly embrace them (13.3). Perpetua and Saturus attempt to settle the quarrel, but are prevented by the angels, who seem to want to close the gates on the bishop and presbyter (13.4-7).

The vision emphasizes the honor of the martyrs in significant ways. They are carried by the angels to heaven. Everyone—from the angels to the elders to the leaders—holds them in high esteem. They are welcomed into the Lord's presence and greeted intimately by him. It is clear that they are held with high honor.

Saturus and Perpetua's interaction with the bishop and presbyter is noteworthy and calls attention to the martyrs' high standing. The leaders fall to their feet and plead for their help[659]—actions that are all the more significant in light of Perpetua's gender![660] Their respective locations provide notable contrast as well, since Perpetua and Saturus are invited in while the church leaders appear to be at risk of being shut out of the presence of God. Thus, the martyrs—

[659] As Frederick Klawiter ("The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing the Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," *Church History* 49 [1980]: 259) points out, this is one of the countless examples of the authority confessors and martyrs exercised in the early church, "Whatever the full meaning of the episode, it seems to imply at least that one destined for martyrdom had the power of the keys and can utilize it to bestow peace on other Christians."

[660] Significantly, this is not the first time in the narrative that a male authority falls to Perpetua's feet and pleads with her; her father also does so in one of his prison visits (5.5). Perpetua's suffering for her Christian profession displaces church and family hierarchies.

including a woman—find themselves in an honorable position, ahead of the church leadership hierarchy.

The description of the day of their execution continues the writing's emphasis on the honor of the martyrs and martyrdom. The day is introduced as "the day of their victory" (18.1). Felicitas, who had given birth just two days before, was described as a "gladiator" who would "fight the beasts" (18.3). When resisting the garb of Saturn and Ceres to the authorities, Perpetua is described as "noble" (18.4); later, as they enter the arena, the narrator observes that she had begun the battle already through singing a psalm, saying that "she was already treading on the head of the Egyptian" (18.7), in reference to her fourth vision.[661]

The martyrs' behavior in the amphitheater only serves to reinforce their honor. After Perpetua was knocked down by a mad heifer, she returned to her feet and fastened her hair back in place "lest she might seem to be mourning in her hour of triumph" (20.5).[662] Peter Brown acknowledges the significance of her actions:

> "She would not be seen with her hair flowing loose, as if she were a woman 'dissolved by her mourning. For this was the day of her own good cheer, the day of her triumph in the Lord. Hers was a *munus*, a public display. Her spirit-filled courage enabled her to outdo the mood of solemn celebration, in which the citizens of Carthage had gathered, on the birthday of the heir apparent, to humiliate and annihilate their enemies, with a playful exuberance that was a peculiarly chilling aspect of the Roman order."[663]

As in other parts of the narrative, Perpetua is presented in the mold of the strong, subversive woman who will not be overcome; as before, shame is redefined as honor.

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[661] *The Passion of Perpetua* 18.7: "Perpetua psallebat caput iam Aegyptii calcans" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[662] *The Passion of Perpetua* 20.5: "ne in sua gloria plangere uideretur" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[663] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in the Early Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 75.

The final description of the martyrs' deaths also reinforces their honor, as they courageously and dispassionately face their deaths:

> "And so the martyrs got up and went to the spot of their own accord as the people wanted them to, and kissing one another they sealed their martyrdom with the ritual kiss of peace. The others took the sword in silence and without moving, especially Saturus, who being the first to climb the stairway was the first to die. For once again he was waiting for Perpetua. Perpetua, however, had yet to taste more pain. She screamed as she was struck on the bone; then she took the trembling hand of the young gladiator and guided it to her throat."[664] (21.7-9)[665]

They all encounter death willingly and without resistance. Perpetua epitomizes this approach, ultimately guiding the sword to her own throat; she "gets the better of everyone involved in her death."[666] It is significant that, the narrative describes them as actively engaging contest rather than as shamed victims. Fittingly, the writing ends with the following postscript about the martyrs:

> "Ah, most valiant and blessed (*beatissimi*) martyrs! Truly you are called and chosen for the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord! And anyone who exalts, honors, and worships his glory should read for the consolation of the Church these new deeds of heroism which are no less significant than the tales of old." (21.11)[667]

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[664] Francine Cardman ("Acts of the *Woman Martyrs*," 147-48) notes the surprising nature of the women martyrs and their impact on their audience: "To a public accustomed to the physicality of the athletic contest or the brutality of gladiatorial combat, this practice is not particularly shocking in itself. But the introduction of women into the essentially male context is. To see Blandina or Perpetua engaged in mortal combat is strangely unsettling, not only for contemporary readers, but also for second- and third-century witnesses. Their physical endurance is astonishing to the crowd, a point of pride and perhaps uneasiness to the authors of the acts….Perpetua's youthful beauty and Felicitas' recent childbirth arouse the pity and horror of the spectators….The public violence of contest and combat is not the usual context of women's bodies. Already out of place in that world, women martyrs pass beyond its confines with a shattering of sensibilities."

[665] *The Passion of Perpetua* 21.7-9: "ut gladio penetranti in eorum corpore oculos suos comites homicidii adiungerent, ultro surrexerunt et se quo uolebat populus transtulerunt, ante iam osculati inuicem, ut martyrium per sollemnia pacis consummarent. ceteri quidem inmobiles et cum silentio ferrum receperunt: multo magis Saturus, qui et prior ascenderat, prior reddidit spiritum; nam et Perpetuam sustinebat. Perpetua autem, ut aliquid doloris gustaret, inter ossa conpuncta exululauit, et errantem dexteram tirunculi gladiatoris ipsa in iugulum suum transtulit" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[666] Parvis, "Perpetua," 367. Parvis continues, "Perpetua and her companions have made a mockery of judicial attempts to make an example of them, or so the narrative would have us believe; they have proved that even novice Christians can die an exemplary death."

[667] *The Passion of Perpetua* 21.11: "O fortissimi ac beatissimi martyres! o uere uocati et electi in gloriam domini nostri Iesu Christi! quam qui magnificat et honorificat et adorat, utique et haec non minora ueteribus

While Musurillo translates *beatissimi* as "most blessed" in the passage, the preferred rendering appears to be "most honorable." *Beatus* (the basis for the superlative *beatissimi*) is the Latin equivalent of μακάριος, which we have already noted is best interpreted as "honorable" in the Greek text;[668] since the Vulgate employs *beatus* for μακάριος in the New Testament, it appears that such reflects popular Latin usage in the period.[669] The only other usage of *beatus* in *Perpetua* is found in 14.2, in reference to the "*most honorable* martyrs Saturus and Perpetua."[670] *The Passion of Perpetua* follows Polycarp, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" in its use of μακάριος, or its equivalent, exclusively to describe martyrs as honorable.

Starting with Perpetua's diary and throughout the narrative, *The Passion of Perpetua* demonstrates the honor of martyrdom in vivid colors. Perpetua and her fellow martyrs are described throughout the story as noble and honorable—in their interaction with those who would dissuade them from their course, in response to governing authorities, and in their "contest" in the amphitheater. Furthermore, the visions of Perpetua and Saturus illustrate the deep reality behind the current circumstances: their course is honorable, not shameful; it elevated them within the church hierarchy; and it would lead to their vindication in the end. All of this is

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exempla in aedificationem Ecclesiae legere debet" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[668] Greek translation from J. Armitage Robinson, *The Passion of S. Perpetua* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1891).

[669] Since the Vulgate dates to the late fourth century (about two centuries later) such an assertion is at best tentative. However, as we will see, *beatus* continues to be employed in Latin writings in similar fashion in the middle of the third century.

[670] *The Passion of Perpetua* 14.1: "martyrum beatissimorum Saturi et Perpetuae" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*; italics mine.

striking and significant for Perpetua, who sets aside the honor of bearing and raising a worthy son—the sanctioned route of honor for a woman in Mediterranean antiquity—in order to become a martyr and the *matron Christi* (18.2).

New Father, New Family, New Values

At the heart of *The Passion of Perpetua*'s inversion of honor and shame values is a radical challenge to patriarchy. Such is especially evident in Perpetua's rejection of her father's authority and her embrace of a new father (God) and a new, surrogate kin group (the Christian community). Her costly behavior fundamentally challenges the Roman system and ultimately leads to a radical redefinition of what is honorable.

The relationship between Perpetua and her father differs from the expected relationship between father and daughter. While traditional family roles required a daughter to carefully protect her reputation in order to avoid bringing shame to her father, Perpetua's profession of faith leads her on a course that brings her father public humiliation. As the narrative progresses, Perpetua is increasingly empowered and honored for her suffering while her father is diminished.

The first conversation between the Roman *pater familias* and his daughter is recorded early in the writing. Perpetua's father wishes to dissuade her from her position, but does not succeed:

> "He does not, in fact, attack Perpetua but departs 'vanquished,' as Perpetua says, 'along with his diabolical arguments' (3.3). 'Vanquished' (*victus*), Perpetua's new identity, as a Christian, allows her to begin her narration by presenting herself as overcoming her father, the *pater familias,* the pivot of legitimate authority in the Roman system."[671]

Through her resistance to her father's "diabolical arguments" (3.3), Perpetua creates a gap between her and her father that will only widen as the narrative develops.

[671] Perkins, *The Suffering Self,* 105.

After Perpetua is baptized, her father returns to visit her and urges her to change course. He emphasizes the negative impact it would have on him and the rest of her family: "Do not abandon me to be the reproach of others. Think of your brothers, think of your mother and your aunt, think of your child, who will not be able to live once you are gone. Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us!" (5.2-4)[672] He then falls to her feet and addresses her as "mistress" (5.5).[673] This is hardly the behavior one would expect from a father addressing a daughter; Perkins rightly concludes that "[t]he entire scene is presented in terms of radically reversed hierarchy."[674] As the scene concludes, Perpetua is the one who shows calm and courage as she responds to her father's pleadings and concern for his own reputation; she expresses her trust in God (5.6).[675] Again, the daughter rejects traditional loyalties[676] and is empowered, while the father loses face and their relationship fractures.

Their final conversation, shortly after Perpetua's confession before Hilarianus, completes the dissolution of their relationship. He again visits her in prison; Perpetua's recounting of the interchange "underscores the reversed hierarchical world her conversion has brought into being."[677] After pulling hairs from his beard and throwing them down, he falls to her feet (9.2).

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[672] *The Passion of Perpetua* 5.2-4: "ne me dederis in dedecus hominum. aspice fratres tuos, aspice matrem tuam et materteram, aspice filium tuum qui post te uiuere non poterit. depone animos; ne uniuersos nos extermines. nemo enim nostrum libere loquetur, si tu aliquid fueris passa" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[673] As has already been noted, Perpetua's father is not the only male leader in the narrative who falls to her feet; both the bishop Optatus and the presbyter Aspasius fall to her feet in the vision of Saturus (13).

[674] Perkins, *The Suffering Self,* 107.

[675] Parvis, "Perpetua," 370.

[676] Joseph Hellerman (*The Ancient Church as Family*, 171) emphasizes the significance of Perpetua's disregard of her father's wishes: "The primary focus of traditional piety and loyalty in Mediterranean society is, of course, one's patrilineal kinship group. In rejecting her father's pleas and his authority, Perpetua radically disassociates herself from the most pivotal values of the world in which she lives."

[677] Perkins, *The Suffering Self,* 109.

The cumulative impact of these actions is stunning: "This body imagery, enacting the downthrow of what is above, continues, in a visual rendition, the challenge that Perpetua's continued disobedience to her father's authority constitutes."[678] Ultimately, the father, whose power serves as the anchor of the Roman system, is revealed as impotent as he leaves the narrative, never to return; Perpetua is abandoned by her father.

However, the narrative vividly demonstrates that Perpetua is left neither fatherless or without a family.[679] In fact, in two of her visions God is her father. In her first vision, the gray-haired shepherd, who represents God, addresses her as "child" (4.9). Later, the gladiator trainer in the fourth vision, who also represents God, calls her "daughter" after she defeats the Egyptian (10.13).

In the same way, the narrative emphasizes a strong sibling bond within the Christian community and among the martyrs. Members of the church provide aid to the confessors while they are imprisoned, "in accordance with Mediterranean kinship norms;"[680] in one case they bribe prison officials to provide them with better circumstances for a time (3.7). The vision of Saturus describes the fellow-believers they encounter in heaven as "brethren" (13.8). Later, the martyr Felicitas entrusts her newborn daughter to another believer—described in the narrative as a "sister" (15.7).[681] Finally, Perpetua exhorts her fellow martyrs to filial affection while they face their ordeal in the amphitheater: "You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another"

[678] Ibid.

[679] Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 171.

[680] Ibid., 172.

[681] Joseph Hellerman (*The Ancient Church as Family*, 172) observes deeper significance to Felicitas' entrusting her daughter to the care of another believer: "Since Perpetua is identified as 'a newly married woman' (2.1), it is reasonable to assume that she acquired her slave, Felicitas, before marriage. Upon the death of Perpetua and Felicitas, the slave's infant daughter would have been the legal property of Perpetua's father. It is singularly striking, then, to discover that 'one of the sisters (that is, a Christian) brought [Felicitas's newborn child] up as her own daughter' (15.7)."

(20.10).[682] Joseph Hellerman concludes that "the Christians at Carthage viewed themselves as a surrogate kinship group."[683] This perspective may be confirmed by Perpetua's "kiss of peace" to her fellow martyrs—which included slaves—without regard to status (21.7).[684]

The new father and family relationships ultimately challenged the dominant cultural values. In particular, everyone in the community was to receive honor. Such is exemplified in the vision of Saturus, who describes both a bishop and a presbyter falling to his and Perpetua's feet (13.2). As noted, this episode illustrates the honorable position of the martyrs and it challenges hierarchy by placing a newly-baptized woman on equal standing with (or above) a bishop. Perpetua and Felicitas' ordeal in the amphitheater furthers the challenge to cultural values: when knocked down by the "maddened cow" Perpetua rises to her feet, raises the slave girl Felicitas up, and stands with her, hand in hand, in the arena. Sarah Parvis comments on the significance of this action:

> "And in that gesture her theology of the family of God is most perfectly encapsulated. The young *matrona*, well born, and liberally educated, who chose to throw her lot in with slaves and criminals and be their mother and sister and daughter, is to be brought down by the Roman judicial and gubernatorial system, as a class traitor and a family traitor, and made an example of. But she brings the judicial system down, and brings her companions up, lifting Felicity from the dust to stand beside her, undefeated, *matrona* and slave together."[685]

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[682] *The Passion of Perpetua* 20.10: "In fide state et inuicem omnes diligite" (Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*). Translation from Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*.

[683] Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 169.

[684] David Wilhite (*Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities* [Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2007], 87) notes the deep significance of such actions: "[Michael] Penn finds that Christians incorporated the kiss on the lips, an act performed between kin, in order to realign the group boundaries of its members, as shown by the many examples of converts who refused to kiss member of their own *domus* or *familia* after receiving the 'kiss of peace.' When examining the sources from North Africa, Penn notes that the familial kiss among Christians crossed class boundaries, as when Perpetua, 'well-born' (*honeste nata*, *PSPF* 2.2) kisses other martyrs who are slaves."

Wilhite's reference is to Michael Penn, "Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 162.

[685] Parvis, "Perpetua," 371.

Perpetua stands in the midst of a hierarchal, stratified society and by her actions brings down patriarchal and judicial authority and raises up her new kin group.[686] Within the family of faith, honor is shared—between slave and free, and between bishop and new convert.

Conclusion

Ignatius of Antioch and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* have demonstrated the tremendous influence early Christian martyrs had on the movement's honor and shame values. They helped chart a course in which these communities distinguished themselves from the broader culture, especially by identifying suffering and martyrdom for Christ as honorable.

The Passion of Perpetua continues in the same tradition while adding its own community-altering perspective. Martyrdom for Christ is once again revealed as full of glory; the imagery of contest is used to underscore the honor, not shame, of their death. The account also follows by exclusively employing *beatus*, the Latin counterpart to μακάριος, to describe martyrs as honorable. However, *Perpetua* goes further with its radical vision of slave and master, male and female, and bishop and convert, sharing the same status as siblings within the family of faith. Francine Cardman aptly explains why the ordeals of Perpetua, Felicitas, and other women, including the slave Blandina from second century Gaul, so profoundly impacted their communities:

> "In their passage from life to death, women martyrs profoundly unsettled the social and familial relationships on which their world depended for its coherence. Cultural sensibilities were shattered by the graphic demonstration of women's suffering and the toleration of public violence against their bodies. The ambiguities of female

[686] Cardman ("Acts of the *Woman Martyrs*," 147) describes the impact of Perpetua and other women martyrs: "Social, political, and familial relationships are thus profoundly disturbed. Conversion to Christianity, especially for women, begins the dismantling of the patriarchal household, impending martyrdom hastens its disintegration."

> sexuality—its beauty, vulnerability, and reproductive capacity—were heightened as female bodily experience was both confirmed and contradicted in martyrdom. For women especially, the making of a martyr meant the unmaking of the body—her own as well as her world's."[687]

As destructive as these ordeals were for both men and women, they became formative for their communities. The influence of martyrs like Perpetua will become evident in writings of another Christian from Carthage at the turn of the third century, Tertullian, the father of Latin Christian theology.

[687] Ibid., 150.

TERTULLIAN

> That which appears most splendid is done with great and exalted spirit and in disregard of the concerns of mortal life.
>
> Cicero, *On Duties* 1.18.61[688]

In the same period that Viba Perpetua and her fellow catechumens were executed for their confession at Apollo's games in Carthage, Tertullian was in the city contending for Christianity against threats that he perceived from within and without. Tertullian's writings—including his apologetical, anti-heretical, and moral works—provide a window into North African Christianity at the turn of the third century. Furthermore, they detail the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values in that context.

Tertullian is widely recognized as a brilliant writer and the Latin church's first theologian. Yet for all of his brilliance, modern readers have expressed an aversion toward him, labeling him as harsh—a misogynist and a radical. Nevertheless, Tertullian stands as a one of Christianity's significant apologists and reveals a great deal about the movement in early third century Carthage.

His range of writings reflect strong continuities with Jesus, Paul of Tarsus, and the Christian writings that followed them in regard to honor and shame; at the same time, Tertullian uniquely contributes to the movement's challenge to these deeply-held cultural values. He describes new avenues for women to achieve honor while warning them against the dangers of not wearing a veil. In a period that witnessed significant persecution, Tertullian emphasizes suffering and martyrdom for Christ as a glorious route, employing the imagery of contest and battle to make his point; under the influence of Montanism, his perspective on these issues goes

[688] Translation from Barton, *Roman Honor*, 44.

to an extreme, as he rejects the option of fleeing persecution. Furthermore, he continues with earlier tradition by rejecting riposte and emphasizing God's impartiality.

Living Like Angels, Dressing Like Women

With the Christian movement's growth, continence was increasingly valued, as men and women attempted to transcend the shame that went along with sex—so they avoided it altogether. Tertullian strongly asserts what earlier writers only implied about this practice: that continence is honorable.

Tertullian emphasizes this in *To My Wife* when he discusses her options if he were to precede her in death. He reminds his wife of Christian women ("sisters") they have known who have chosen continence after they were widowed:

> "To meet these its counsels, do you apply the examples of sisters of ours whose names are with the Lord, ----who, when their husbands have preceded them (to glory), give to no opportunity of beauty or of age the precedence over holiness. They prefer to be wedded to God. To God their beauty, to God their youth (is dedicated). With Him they live; with Him they converse; Him they handle by day and by night; to the Lord they assign their prayers as dowries; from Him, as oft as they desire it, they receive His approbation as total gifts. Thus they have laid hold for themselves of an eternal gift of the Lord; and while on earth, by abstaining from marriage, are already counted as belonging to the angelic family. Training yourself to an emulation of (their) constancy by the examples of such women, you will by spiritual affection bury that fleshly concupiscence, in abolishing the temporal and fleeting desires of beauty and youth by the compensating gain of immortal blessings" (1.4.3-5).[689]

[689] Tertullian, *To My Wife* 1.4.3-5: "Et tu aduersus consilia haec eius adhibe sororum nostrarum exempla, quarum nomina penes dominum, quae nullam formae uel aetatis occasionem permissis maritis sanctitati anteponunt. Malunt enim deo nubere. Deo speciosae, deo sunt puellae. Cum illo uiuunt, cum illo sermocinantur, illum diebus et noctibus tractant, orationes suas uelut dotes domino assignant, ab eodem dignationem uelut munera maritalia, quotienscumque desiderant, consequuntur. Sic aeternum sibi bonum, donum domini, occupauerunt, ac iam in terris non nubendo de familia angelica deputantur. Talium exemplis feminarum ad aemulationem te continentiae exercens, spiritali affectione carnalem illam concupiscentiam humabis, temporalia et uolatica desideria formae uel aetatis immortalium bonorum compensatione delendo" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*, Vol. 1-2, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* [Turnholti: Brepols, 1954]). Translation from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

In essence, Tertullian describes such women as "wedded to God," "dedicated" to him (1.4.3-4). By choosing continence, they are "already counted as belonging to the angelic family" (1.4.4)—that is, they experience the honor of being like the angels, free from the impurity associated with sex, which is the ultimate outcome of those who are Christ's.[690] If she follows their example, she will "gain immortal blessings" (1.4.5). By choosing continence when she loses her husband, the widow receives the blessings and the honor of the next world.

Tertullian makes the honor of such a choice explicit later in the writing. He goes so far as to assert that choice of continence is more honorable for a widow who chooses it than a young virgin who has never experienced married life:

> "For, concerning the honours which widowhood enjoys in the sight of God, there is a brief summary in one saying of His through the prophet: 'Do thou justly to the widow and to the orphan; and come ye, let us reason, saith the Lord.' These two names, left to the care of the divine mercy, in proportion as they are destitute of human aid, the Father of all undertakes to defend. Look how the widow's benefactor is put on a level with the widow herself, whose champion shall 'reason with the Lord!' Not to virgins, I take it, is so great a gift given. Although in their case perfect integrity and entire sanctity shall have the nearest vision of the face of God, yet the widow has a task more toilsome, because it is easy not to crave after that which you know not, and to turn away from what you have never had to regret. More glorious is the continence which is aware of its own right, which knows what it has seen. The virgin may possibly be held the happier, but the widow the more hardly tasked; the former in that she has always kept 'the good,' the latter in that she has found 'the good for herself.' In the former it is grace, in the latter virtue, that is crowned" (1.8.1-3).[691]

[690] This sentiment within the early Christian movement is perhaps first expressed in a saying attributed to Jesus from Luke 20:34-36 (NASU; par. Mk 12:25; Mt 22:30), "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection." For a thorough discussion of this perspective and its development within early Christianity, see Peter Brown's *The Body and Society*.

[691] Tertullian, *To My Wife* 1.8.1-3: "Nam de uiduitatis honoribus apud deum uno dicto eius per prophetam expeditum: *iuste facite uiduae et pupillo, et uenite disputemus, dicit dominus.* Duo ista nomina, in quantum destituta auxilio humano, in tantum diuinae misericordiae exposita, suscipit tueri pater omnium. Vide, quam ex aequo habetur qui uiduae benefecerit, quanti est uidua ipsa, cuius assertor cum domino disputabit! Non tantum uirginibus datum, opinor. Licet in illis integritas solida et tota sanctitas de proximo uisura sit faciem dei, tamen uidua habet aliquid operosius, quia facile est non appetere quod nescias et auersari quod desideraueris numquam. Gloriosior continentia quae ius suum sentit, quae quid uiderit nouit. Poterit uirgo felicior haberi, at uidua laborosior: illa, quod bonum semper habuit, ista, quod bonum sibi inuenit; in illa gratia, in ista uirtus coronatur" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

Tertullian looks to Isaiah's prophecy to emphasize the honor "widowhood enjoys in the sight of God"—a "gift" not offered to virgins (1.8.1). Furthermore, he reasons that the task of a widow is more toilsome because the virgin turns away from something she has never experienced, while the widow gives up something she has already known; such that "the continence which is aware of its own right" is "more glorious" (1.8.2). The passage then reaches its climax, noting that the virgin has been graced with "the good," because virginity is "grace" that is "crowned," but that the widow finds for herself "virtue, that is crowned" (1.8.3). The former receives the honorable position as a gift; the latter achieves it for herself. Both virginity and continent widowhood are honorable paths for women, but the latter exceeds the former. It is significant that both paths are encouraged for women, since the traditionally sanctioned path for female honor was to marry, and birth worthy male offspring.

Whatever honor there was in continence, in general, and virginity, in particular, did not eliminate in Tertullian's reckoning the necessity of veiling for virgins, to conform with societal standards. As Peter Brown notes, the practice of going without a veil had been accepted in other Christian communities as an expression of the virgin's liberation and the broader community's hope:

> "[P]articularly in Syria, high hopes gathered around the gesture of sexual renunciation: to have renounced sexual activity meant something more than to have brought sexual urges under control by rigorous self-discipline. Renunciation and baptism into the Church declared the power of sex null and void. Possession of the Holy Spirit conferred by baptism was thought to lift men and women above the vast 'shame' of the human condition. To stand unveiled among believers was to declare the fullness of the redemption brought by Christ. These were symbolic gestures, limited to the assembly of the believers, and permitted only to continent women. They may not have had any appreciable effect on the day-to-day behavior of the average Christian man and woman.

> Yet, in the church at least, an unveiled, continent woman was a stunning sight. Her open face and free hair summed up the hope of all believers: 'I am not veiled because the veil of corruption is taken from me'; . . . I am not ashamed because the deed of shame has been removed from me.'"[692]

As I will show, Tertullian rejected such behavior both on the grounds that it was boastful and that it raised sexual desire among members of the congregation.[693]

While Tertullian expresses these ideas repeatedly in his writings, a passage from *On Prayer* succinctly communicates this viewpoint. He begins by noting the contradiction between their unveiling in Christian worship and veiling in public. Then, he critiques such behavior as boasting and vain exhibition by quoting Paul: "If it is a gift from God and 'thou hast received it, why dost thou boast,' says the Apostle, 'as if thou hast not received it;'"[694] such behavior is "vanity" (22.9). Furthermore, their action "condemns other women" because it invites other women to the same sort of exhibition (22.9). At the same time, it creates a risk for the virgin herself to lose the very thing she "boasts of" and endangers others by arousing sexual desire; she should have "blushed" at the "shame" of her exposed head (22.9). "The misogyny to which Tertullian appealed so insistently was, in his opinion, based on unalterable facts of nature: women were seductive, and Christian baptism did nothing to change this fact."[695] In this, the third-century apologist diverges from the first-century apostle: while Paul emphasizes female head coverings to avoid humiliating husbands in the Corinthian community (1 Cor 11:1-16), Tertullian emphasizes the vanity of exhibitionism and the threat of female sexuality.

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[692] Brown, *The Body and Society*, 80-81; quote from *Acts of Judas Thomas* 10, in A. F. J. Klijn, trans., *The Acts of [Judas] Thomas*, (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 69.

[693] Brown, *The Body and Society*, 80-81.

[694] Tertullian, *On Prayer* 22.9: "Si Dei gratia est et *accepisti*, *quid gloriaris*, inquit, *quasi non acceperis*?" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[695] Brown, *The Body and Society*, 81.

On the Veiling of Virgins, which he composed later, under the influence of Montanism, reinforces this perspective. Just as it was chastity for a man to blush in shame if he saw an unveiled virgin, so it was for a virgin to blush when seen (2.5); virgins were to remain covered and avoid the risk of provoking sexual desire. Furthermore, virgins had an honorable place, but "public honor" was prohibited (9.6); they were called to avoid such a path since their honorable position was given by God (13.3-6).

Tertullian clearly believed that women's choice of dress was frequently motivated by their desire to enhance other's perception of them. Just as he described virgins going without veils as vanity and pursuing public honor, he identifies rich dress as doing the same thing. In *The Apparel of Women*, Tertullian asserts that such pursuit of glory and self-exaltation was not fitting for those who "profess humility" (3.2). This mirrors the exhortations in earlier Christian writings toward humility and to avoid pride.

"Condemned, He Renders Thanks"

As in prior writings and the contemporary *Passion of Perpetua,* Tertullian repeatedly presents martyrdom as honorable.[696] As time goes on and he is increasingly influenced by Montanism, his position becomes more and more extreme.

Christians experienced persecution in Carthage at the turn of the third century and Tertullian's writings often have that harsh reality at the background. In his *Apology*, written to a Roman audience, he addresses the injustice of such actions and defends Christians against

[696] Eric Osborn (*Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, [Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997] 247) connects the "austerity" of Tertullian's position on martyrdom to Stoicism's influence on him.

numerous accusations. In particular, he describes the Christian's response to being identified and accused as a Christian:

> "But what is there like this in the Christian's case? The only shame or regret he feels, is at not having been a Christian earlier. If he is pointed out, he glories in it; if he is accused, he offers no defense; interrogated, he makes voluntary confession; condemned he renders thanks. What sort of evil thing is this, which wants all the ordinary peculiarities of evil-fear, shame, subterfuge, penitence, lamenting?" (1.12-13).[697]

The Christian's response is to glory in her profession, and not to deny it; condemnation brings gratitude, because martyrdom for Christ is implicitly honorable.

Tertullian later explains the Christians' willingness and even desire to suffer and be martyred for their profession in the writing. He compares their response to a soldier going to war:

> "Well, it is quite true that it is our desire to suffer, but it is in the way that the soldier longs for war. No one indeed suffers willingly, since suffering necessarily implies fear and danger. Yet the man who objected to the conflict, both fights with all his strength, and when victorious, he rejoices in the battle, because he reaps from it glory and spoil. It is our battle to be summoned to your tribunals that there, under fear of execution, we may battle for the truth. But the day is won when the object of the struggle is gained. This victory of ours gives us the glory of pleasing God, and the spoil of life eternal.
>
> But we are overcome. Yes, when we have obtained our wishes. Therefore we conquer in dying; we go forth victorious at the very time we are subdued."[698]

Tertullian explains that just like a soldier going to war, the Christian enjoys the "glory" and "spoils" that come from it—"the glory of pleasing God" and "the spoil of eternal life" (50.2). He

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[697] Tertullian, *Apology* 1.12-13: "Christianus vero quid simile? Neminem pudet, neminem paenitet, nisi plane retro non fuisse; si denotatur, gloriatur; si accusatur, non defendit; interrogatus vel ultro confitetur; damnatus gratias agit. Quid hoc mali est, quod naturalia mali non habet, timorem, pudorem, tergiversationem, paenitentiam, deplorationem?" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[698] Tertullian, *Apology* 50.1-3: "Ergo, inquitis, cur querimini, quod uos insequamur, si pati uultis, cum diligere debeatis, per quos patimini quod uultis? Plane uolumus, uerum eo more, quo et bellum miles. Nemo quidem libens patitur, cum et trepidare et periclitari sit necesse. Tamen et proeliatur omnibus uiribus et uincens in proelio gaudet qui de proelio querebatur, quia et gloriam consequitur et praedam. Proelium est nobis, quod prouocamur ad tribunalia, ut illic sub discrimine capitis pro ueritate certemus. Victoria est autem, pro quo certaueris, obtinere. Ea uictoria habet et gloriam placendi Deo et praedam uiuendi in aeternum. Sed obducimur. – Certe, cum obtinuimus. Ergo uicimus, cum occidimur, denique euadimus, cum obducimur" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

describes their glory in paradoxical fashion, much the same way as is evident in *Perpetua*, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and "The Letter from the Churches in Vienne and Lyons:" they "conquer in dying" and are "victorious" when "subdued" (50.3; *The Apparel of Women* 3.3).[699] As with earlier Christian writers, death becomes victory and dishonor becomes honor; again, the church reverses cultural values.

What is behind Tertullian's ideology regarding the honor of martyrdom? He provides some insight in *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting,* which explains the necessity of martyrdom against the denials of heretics, whom he compares to scorpions.[700] He refers his audience to Revelation, asking to whom "the conquerors" in the writing refer, and then provides and justifies his answer:

> "Who, pray, are these so blessed conquerors, but martyrs in the strict sense of the word? For indeed theirs are the victories whose also are the fights; theirs, however, are the fights whose also is the blood. But the souls of the martyrs both peacefully rest in the meantime under the altar, and support their patience by the assured hope of revenge; and, clothed in their robes, wear the dazzling halo of brightness, until others also may fully share in their glory. For yet again a countless throng are revealed, clothed in white and distinguished by palms of victory, celebrating their triumph doubtless over Antichrist, since one of the elders says, 'These are they who come out of that great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'" (12.9-10).[701]

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[699] Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome,* 63.

[700] T. D. Barnes (*Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], 171-72) notes stasis in Tertullian's perspective on this issue: "Tertullian's attitude to martyrdom changed with the passing years. That is a platitude; but one whose truth has rarely been accurately perceived. For generations the *Scorpiace* was expounded as an expression of Tertullian's Montanism. That can be shown to be clearly impossible, since it accepts a view of apostolic succession incompatible with any sort of belief in the New Prophecy. The *Scorpiace* must be redated to 203/4, and therefore understood as representative of orthodox opinion in Carthage."

[701] Tertullian, *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* 12.9-10: "Quinam isti tam beati uictores, nisi proprie martyres? Illorum etenim uictoriae, quorum et pugnae, eorum uero pugnae, quorum et sanguis. Sed et interim sub altari martyrum animae placidum quiescunt et fiducia ultionis patientiam pascunt et indutae stolis candidam claritatis usurpant, donec et alii consortium illorum gloriae impleant. Nam et rursus innumera multitudo albati et palmis uictoriae insignes reuelantur, scilicet de Antichristo triumphantes, sicut unus ex presbyteris, hi sunt, ait, qui ueniunt ex illa pressura magna et lauerunt uestimentum suum et candidauerunt ipsum in sanguine agni" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

As has been already noted, the conquerors of Revelation are meant to represent all believers: they are faithful in their witness to Christ, even unto death. Tertullian, however, concludes that the Revelation goes further, identifying the conquerors as "martyrs in the strict sense of the word" (12). He supports this claim by turning first to Revelation 6, with the scene of the souls of the martyrs under the throne; they are under the throne with the glory of dazzling raiment, awaiting others who will "fully share in their glory" (12). Then, he references the multitude in Revelation 7 before the throne, emphasizing their dress in white, the "palms of victory," and "their triumph…over the Antichrist" (12). Tertullian turns to the imagery of Revelation to justify the necessity of martyrdom and, so doing, emphasizes the honor implicit in the action. He appears to go so far as to conclude that all who "conquer" are martyrs, which goes a step farther than Revelation, which envisions all believers as conquerors, but not necessarily martyrs.

In the same vein, just as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" and *The Passion of Perpetua* compare martyrdom to contest, so also does Tertullian;[702] this is among his favorite ways to explain the significance of martyrdom. Tertullian makes use of it in *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting*, when he describes all that is involved in a contest (*munus*)—the pains and testing involved for competitors, the "superintendent" (*agonothetes*, Greek: ἀγωνοθέλης) of the games, the watching crowd, and the rewards for victory (6). God is likened to the patron of the games—he has every right to define the rules and determine rewards. The contest by his choice—where his own "troop" of competitors fight, before the watching eyes of the world, the angels, and other powers, to test

[702] Owing to the work's temporal and geographical proximity and the Montanist bent of the writing, some have theorized that Tertullian was the editor of *The Passion of Perpetua.* For further discussion, see for example Barnes, *Tertullian*.

their strength, skill, and perseverance. God will reward the victors with the glorious prizes due them; just as no victor is aware of his injury when he receives his award, so also the martyr. Tertullian thus explains that God is justified in testing his own and emphasizes the honor that comes to those who gain victory through death (6).

To the Martyrs uses similar imagery, comparing martyrdom to contest and describing God as the superintendent. Tertullian addresses it to a group of imprisoned Christians awaiting execution:

> "In like manner, O blessed, consider whatever is hard in your present situation as an exercise of your powers of mind and body. You are about to a noble contest in which the living God acts the part of superintendent and the Holy Spirit is your trainer, a contest whose crown is eternity, whose prize is angelic nature, citizenship in heaven, and glory for ever and ever" (3.3).[703]

The imagery is practically identical; the only distinction is the mention of the Holy Spirit as the trainer and the specific rewards offered in the current passage. The implication is the same: God is doing the testing and their martyrdom will result in great reward—with an "angelic nature," heavenly citizenship, and everlasting glory (3.3). G. W. Bowersock rightly notes the parallel between God's role here and Christ's role in Perpetua's fourth vision, who also sets the rules and rewards in her *munus* against the Egyptian (*The Passion of Perpetua* 10.8).[704] Likewise, Tertullian emphasizes their future glory, alluding to worldly contest and emphasizing to these confessors that in light of the sacrifices people make for "earthly glory," the sufferings they endure are nothing compared to the "glory" and "reward" coming to them (4.9).

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[703] Tertullian, *To the Martyrs* 3.3: "Proinde uos, benedicti, quodcumque hoc durum est, ad exercitationem uirtutum animi quodcumque hoc durum est, ad exercitationem uirtutum animi et corporis deputate. Bonum agonem subituri estis in quo agonothetes Deus uiuus est, xystarches Spiritus Sanctus, corona aeternitatis, brabium angelicae substantiae, politia in caelis, gloria in saecula saeculorum" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[704] Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 51.

Tertullian's perspective on the honor of martyrdom and the imagery he employs continue in later writings. In fact, his viewpoint intensifies under the influence of Montanism.

One notable example of this is Tertullian's perspective from *On Flight in Times of Persecution.* In a key passage, he collapses a number of his prior arguments together to emphasize the honor of faithful witness in persecution:

> "In still another sense, a persecution can be considered as a contest. And who decrees any contest if not the one who provides the crown and the prizes? You will find this contest decreed in the Apocalypse where He proclaims the rewards of victory, especially for those who really come through persecution victorious, and in their victorious struggle have fought not merely against flesh and blood, but against the spirits of wickedness. Obviously, then, the superintendent of the games and the one who sets the prize is the one who decides who is the winner of the contest. The essence, then, of a persecution is the glory of God, whether He approves or condemns, raises up or casts down" (1.5).[705]

Tertullian addresses the theme of the contest, emphasizing the authority of the superintendent to set the prize and to determine who wins the games (1.5). In this case, he describes persecution as contest and emphasizes that God has determined the struggle, the victor, and the "rewards of victory;" persecution's "essence" is "the glory of God" (1.5). His justification for utilizing the theme is found again in Revelation; he collapses the writing's imagery of conquest into that of contest. But the implication is much the same: God has ordained the contest, God provides crowns and rewards to the victor, and victory, even if the end is death, brings great glory.[706]

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[705] Tertullian, *On Flight in Times of Persecution* 1.5: "Sic et agonem intelligi capit persecutionem. A quo certamen edicitur, nisi a quo corona et praemia proponuntur? Legis edictum agonis istius in Apocalypsi, quibus praemiis ad uictoriam inuitet uel maxime illos, qui proprie uicerint in persecution, uincendo luctati re uera non adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed aduersus spiritalia nequitiae. Ita agnosces ad eundem agonithetam pertinere certaminis arbitrium, qui inuitat ad praemium" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[706] Tertullian's perspective here has intensified to the point that he views staying and facing persecution as the ordained route for all Christians. He had previously condoned flight as preferable to staying and risking denial of faith; Barnes (*Tertullian,* 177) describes his changing perspective in *To My Wife, Of Patience,* and *On Flight in Times of Persecution*: "Compare flight from persecution: it is permitted and better than apostasy under torture; but what is permitted is not necessarily good. This is not a mere repetition of the statements in the *De Patientia*. Tertullian has changed his position if only slightly. Flight from persecution he no longer regards as normal: he now condones it as a *pis aller* for the weaker brethren. But this intermediate position was vulnerable....For, on this view, flight represents a declension from ideal standards of conduct. But why should back-sliding be condoned? An

In 204 CE, a Christian soldier refused to wear the garland given yearly to all solders in his legion. As a result, he was imprisoned and his actions elicited anti-Christian sentiment within the empire. Some Christians apparently criticized the soldier's action, but Tertullian presents a rousing defense of the soldier while castigating his critics in *On the Crown*.

Among Tertullian's arguments is one he articulates again and again: that suffering for Christ, and martyrdom in particular, is an honorable course. He first asserts that the soldier's choice meant awaiting "the white laurel crown of martyrdom" which was more worthy than the one that had been offered (1.3).[707] Later, Tertullian makes a similar point, stressing that refusal of the garland was fitting because Christ wore a crown of "thorns and thistles" and endured "scornful abuse," "degradation," and "vileness" from "cruel tormentors" (14.3). Some would seek other crowns the world had to offer, but those pale in comparison to the crown Christ received after he wore the thorns (14.4). Tertullian then elaborates on the story of the crucifixion and exaltation for emphasis: "It was after the gall He was given a taste of honey, and He was not hailed as the King of Glory by the angels until He had been proscribed on the cross as 'King of the Jews;' being first made by the Father a little less than the angels, He was then crowned with glory and honor" (14.4).[708] Gaining the crown of glory and of Christ meant first bearing shame for his name.

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honest Christian ought to have the courage of his convictions. Montanism resolved the contradiction. The Holy Spirit had spoken through Montanus and the two prophetesses: 'Desire not to die in bed, in childbirth or from fever, but in martyrdom, to glorify him who suffered for us.' After his conversion, Tertullian was soon deriding the views he had once shared."

[707]Tertullian, *On the Crown* 1.3: "de martyrii candida…coronandus" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[708] Tertullian, *On the Crown* 14.4: "at quin et fauos post fella gustauit, necante rex gloriae a caelestibus salutatus est, quam 'rex Iudaeorum' proscriptus in cruce, minoratus primo a patre modicum quid citra angelos, et ita gloria et honore coronatus" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

Tertullian then asserts that God invites his people to be rewarded with a greater crown; they should keep their heads "untainted" by the world's crowns (15.1). He turns to Revelation to underscore the glory of the crowns that await those who decline the world's crowns:

> "To him who conquers He says: 'I will give the crown of life.' Be you, too, faithful unto death; fight, too, the good fight whose crown the Apostle feels so justly confident has been laid up for him. The angel of victory, also, who, riding a white horse, goes forth to conquer, receives a crown, and another adorned with a rainbow which [in its fair colors] is like a celestial meadow. The elders, too, sit crowned with golden crowns and the Son of Man Himself, wearing such a golden crown, shine forth above the clouds. If such beautiful images are seen in the vision of the seer, what will the realities themselves be? Feast your eyes upon those crowns, savor those odors, and do not demean your brow with a little chaplet or a twisted headband, when your destiny is to wear a diadem. For Christ Jesus has made us to be as kings to God and His Father, so why bother with a flower that is destined to die?" (15.1-2)[709]

Refusing the soldiers' garland came at great risk, but it was the cost of faithfulness. Those who, like Christ, wore the crown of thorns and suffered would receive a far greater crown. What Revelation had demonstrated vividly about the glory destined for the faithful, Tertullian highlights with question: why wear an inferior garland "when your destiny is to wear a diadem," the adornment of a king (15.2)? Those who shun the world's glory and suffer shame and death because of their fidelity to Christ, are destined for great honor.

In view of the honor associated with suffering for Christ, Tertullian indicates that it is common for Christians to support those suffering for their faith; this is also similar to the situation described in *The Passion of Perpetua*, wherein the community provides support consistent with that offered by blood kin. He explains that those who face hardship for "their

[709] Tertullian, *On the Crown* 15.1-2: "*Qui, uicerit,* inquit, *dabo ei coronam uitae. Esto* et *tu fidelis ad mortem decerta* et *tu bonum agonem*, cuius coronam et apostolus repositam sibi merito confidit. Accipit et angelus uictoriae coronam, procedens in candido equo, ut uinceret, at alius iridis ambitu ornatur caelesti prato. Sedent et presbyteri coronis aureis coronati eodemque auro et ipse filius hominis super nubem micat. Si tales imagines in uisione, quales ueritates in repraesentatione? Illas aspice, illas odora. Quid caput strophiolo aut dracontario damnas diademati destinatum? Nam reges nos deo et patri suo fecit Christus Iesus" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

fidelity" to the faith "become the nurslings of their confession" (*Apology* 39.6).[710] These include the imprisoned, along with those who suffered other popular Roman punishments such as being sent to the mines or "banished to the islands" (*Apology* 39.6). In essence, Tertullian provides evidence that Christians in Carthage were not ashamed of those who had been punished by authorities for the sake of their faith.

An Unexpected Response to Violence

One accusation Tertullian and other early Christian authors addressed was that Christ-worshipers were impious, and that their impiety to the Roman gods brought plague, unrest, and other disasters to the Empire;[711] their accusers viewed this behavior as disloyalty to Rome. Tertullian responds to these allegations in his *Apology* by explaining that Christians pray *for* the emperor; when accused of making that claim in falsehood and flattery, he stresses that they are commanded to do so in their "sacred books" (31.1). Rather than retaliating, they are taught to "supplicate God" for their enemies and "beseech blessings" on their persecutors (31.2). They offer sincere "affection," "fealty," and "reverence" to the emperors as God commands them to do (36.2).

After underscoring what Christians will do for their enemies, Tertullian also describes what they will *not* do. In a notable series of contrasts, he sets Christian behavior against numerous examples from antiquity; while most men take no regard for others, Christians are conscientious about their treatment of others and will not retaliate (46.14-16). No one among

[710] Tertullian, *Apology* 39.6: "alumni confessionis suae fiunt" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[711] As Wilken (*The Christians as the Romans Saw Them,* 48-67) points out, Romans wrote repeatedly about their *pietas* to their gods and often attributed their people's success to their *pietas*, which was believed to secure divine providence. Worship that failed to align with tradition was viewed as suspect.

them does "harm even to his foe" (46.15); neither would one see a Christian attempting "plots against the state" even when "persecution was scattering them abroad" (46.16).

According to Tertullian, then, Christians functioned in a fundamentally countercultural way toward their enemies and those who mistreated them. Rather than retaliate and defend their honor, they would follow the teaching of their holy books; they would pray for and bless those who opposed them. Christians continued in the teaching of Jesus, Paul of Tarsus and other earlier writings by vacating the honor challenge and offering a weak response when affronted or opposed.

"Good Deeds Are Not Due to Emperors Alone"

Not only does Tertullian describe how Christians challenge traditional honor values by eschewing the accepted male response when confronted, but he also demonstrates that they do so by dealing impartially with all men. As noted, this honor-sharing perspective is evident in his *Apology* when Tertullian describes the sincere respect and allegiance that they give to the emperors because God commands it of them (36.2). Yet such actions are "held to be necessary in the case of all men as well as emperors" (36.2).[712] He explains:

> "Deeds of true heart-goodness are not due by us to emperors alone. We never do good with respect of persons; for in our own interest we conduct ourselves as those who take no payment either of praise or premium from man, but from God, who both requires and remunerates an impartial benevolence. We are the same to emperors as to our ordinary neighbors. For we are equally forbidden to wish ill, to do ill, to speak ill, to think ill of all men. The thing we must not do to an emperor, we must not do to any one else: what we would not do to anybody, a fortiori, perhaps we should not do to him whom God has been pleased so highly to exalt" (36.3-4).[713]

[712] Tertullian, *Apology* 36.2: "quam circa omnes necesse habet, exhiberi" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[713] Tertullian, *Apology* 36.3-4: "Neque enim haec opera bonae mentis solis imperatoribus debentur a nobis. Nullum bonum sub exceptione personarum administramus, quia nobis praestamus, qui non ab homine aut laudis aut praemii expensum captamus, sed a Deo, exactore et remuneratore indifferentis benignitatis. Iidem sumus imperatoribus ex ipso, qui et uicinis nostris. Male enim velle, male facere, male dicere, male cogitare de quoquam

Tertullian asserts that Christians show regard to all men and not simply to emperors; they were never to "do good with respect of persons" (36.3). God "remunerates…an impartial benevolence" and expects his people to do the same (36.3). They are "the same to emperors as to [their] ordinary neighbors," and therefore do good and not evil to everyone (36.4). Instead of respecting persons and judging based on society's ordering of things, Christians gave honor to everyone.

Tertullian later stresses God's impartiality in his *Apology* by explaining that all people share the evil and good that befalls a community. He does not judge with regard to appearances nor even with regard to his own, but "deals with all sorts of men alike" (41.3). This corresponds with the canonical and later writings, which emphasize that God is not a respecter of persons.

For this reason, God showed special favor for the lowly. The world highly regarded the great and they received great benefits, but the lowly were in need of his help. Tertullian's description of their "agape feasts" in his *Apology* illustrates the special concern God, in the Christian understanding, had for those at the bottom:

> "Our feast explains itself by its name the Greeks call it agape, i.e., affection. Whatever it costs, our outlay in the name of piety is gain, since with the good things of the feast we benefit the needy; not as it is with you, do parasites aspire to the glory of satisfying their licentious propensities, selling themselves for a belly-feast to all disgraceful treatment, but as it is with God himself, a peculiar respect is shown to the lowly" (39.16).[714]

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ex aequo uetamur. Quodcumque non licet in imperatorem, id nec in quemquam; quod in neminem, eo forsitan magis nec in ipsum qui per Deum tantus est" (*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

[714] Tertullian, *Apology* 39.16: "Cena nostra de nomine rationem sui ostendit: id uocatur quod dilectio penes Graecos. Quantiscumque sumptibus constet, lucrum est, pietatis nomine facere sumptum, siquidem inopes quosque refrigerio isto iuuamus, non qua penes vos parasiti affectant ad gloriam famulandae libertatis sub auctoramento uentris inter contumelias saginandi, sed qua penes Deum maior est contemplatio mediocrium"(*Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*.

Tertullian asserts that their feast is given to benefit the needy rather than for immoral, disgraceful behavior—which he claims his audience is apt to pursue. Christians give their meals "in the name of piety" for the needy, because in their community, just as it is with the Christian God, "a particular respect is shown to the lowly" (39.16). In second-century Carthage, the church shows regard to the poor, honoring the unworthy; Tertullian explains that they do so because God is concerned about those who are at the bottom. For this reason, they continue in honor-sharing practices that defy cultural norms and trace back to the earliest days of the movement.

Conclusion

Tertullian's writings represent a challenge to traditional honor and shame values influenced by canonical and other earlier writings, while also deeply connected to the times and contemporary literature from North Africa.

There is strong continuity with prior sources. Tertullian echoes numerous earlier writings when he speaks of how Christians are taught to pray for and bless their enemies rather than engage the honor challenge through retaliation. He addresses the oft covered territory of God's impartiality, which behooves Christians to deal impartially with others; as with earlier writings, this influences their practice of commensality, which shows respect for the lowly.

The trajectory of early Christian writings increasingly moved from honoring those who suffered for Christ's sake to emphasizing martyrdom as the ultimate path to glory. Tertullian concludes that suffering for Christi is honorable, but the expectation—especially in *On Flight in Times of Persecution*—is that martyrdom would be the glorious ending for all those in Christ. This is not surprising in view of his use of Revelation to present martyrdom as the paradigm of Christian honor; while the Apocalypse envisions faithfulness even unto death, Tertullian calls for

faithful deaths. The imagery of combat and contest is his preferred way to describe the honor of this path; in this he follows Revelation, the letters of Ignatius, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," and *The Passion of Perpetua.*

As with *Perpetua* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," Tertullian envisions new paths of honor for women in the church. Continence is a particularly noble path; those who chose it after losing their husbands have even greater honor. This honorable path did not permit them to transgress cultural norms by removing their veil in Christian worship; this is contrasted with Paul, who embraced the idea of new freedom for all women but entreated wives to keep their heads covered in order to show honor to their husbands (1 Cor 11:1-16).

Tertullian would exert significant influence on Cyprian, who served as bishop of Carthage in the mid third century. The next chapter will demonstrate Cyprian's challenge to traditional honor values, which reflects great continuity with Tertullian.

CHAPTER 8:

CYPRIAN AND THIRD CENTURY CARTHAGE

Perpetua and Tertullian presented a compelling re-envisioning of honor and shame values in early third century Carthage. Their perspective was deeply influenced by the canonical writings and later sources, especially those associated with Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Irenaeus of Lyons. These North African writings would in turn significantly influence Cyprian, who served as Bishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century.

Cyprian was indebted to each of them and adopted their perspective in a variety of ways. At the same time, the challenges of his era would also lead him to choose his own path that would ultimately reinforce, rather than reverse, the values of the dominant culture.

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

> "Let the enemy understand that our men are unconquered, and let them fear those spirits that rage while ready for death. They will try to tempt us with an offer of terms; they wish to destroy our resolve with the hope of living a dishonorable life."
>
> Lucan, *Civil War* 4.505-508[715]

The Christian movement faced major challenges in the middle of the third century. Not only would the church face its first, multiple, empire-wide persecutions, but the situation would create serious questions about reintegration of those who had offered sacrifice or used subterfuge to avoid punishment.

Perhaps the most significant Christian voice to address these issues would come from North Africa. Cyprian, an elite Roman citizen from Carthage, converted to Christianity late in life, was elected to the bishopric shortly thereafter, and was martyred about a decade after his conversion in 258 CE. During his tenure as bishop, he composed numerous writings intended to secure the health and unity of the church in Carthage, North Africa, and throughout the Roman Empire.

In the midst of these circumstances, Cyprian of Carthage would advance the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values. He follows a rich tradition both in third-century Carthage—including *Perpetua* and Tertullian—and the prior writings throughout the Mediterranean. At the same time, his characteristic Roman, patriarchal leadership would result in changes to the challenge as he responded to opponents from within and without the church.

Cyprian's teaching and behavior, which flowed from these deeply held values, address a variety of issues. His hierarchical, patriarchal perspective assumes a divide between clerics and

[715] Translation from Barton, *Roman Honor*, 53.

laity and a fatherly position for the bishop, resulting in elevated honor for some and not others. Those who suffer for Christ are honored—especially martyrs and confessors; his correspondence demonstrates that others in Rome and Carthage shared this perspective. With Tertullian, who exerted a significant influence on him, Cyprian also emphasized the honor of continence. In an attempt to encourage those with resources to good works, he urged them to give not to enhance their own prestige, but because charity and sacrificial service were honorable. Finally, he remains in continuity with earlier writers by supporting non-retaliation. Ultimately, the distinctive character of the bishop's writings, correspondence, and situation casts light on the development of early Christianity's response to societal norms related to honor and shame.

Authority, Order, and Honor in Cyprian's Christian Community

Cyprian faced significant challenges and serious rivals during his tenure as bishop of Carthage. In his attempt to preserve unity within the church, he relies on a hierarchical perspective and emphasizes the fatherly authority of the bishop. He repeatedly turns to these assumptions in appeals to community-building behavior. The end result is a stratified Roman perspective on honor that diverges from the canonical writings, but conforms to some earlier church fathers, including *1 Clement* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

The bishop was at the top of Cyprian's hierarchy and functioned with the authority and honor of a father. By virtue of his office, he operated as the head of the church; like a father, he possessed *potestas* over the community (*Ep.* 59.2; cf. *Ep.* 3.1; *On the Unity of the Church* 4). He was to be held in high regard, with the congregation rising upon his entry into the church (*Test. III*, 85).[716] Much like a father within his family, since he is head of the church, the church is

[716] von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 272.

embedded in the bishop; and without the bishop, there is no church (*Ep.* 66.8). Indeed, just as the father embodied the family's honor, so the bishop embodied the church's honor (*Ep.* 13.1). Honor and power were reserved for the leaders in Cyprian's writings, just as they were in *First Clement*; such was in line with the patriarchal, hierarchical Roman system.

Similary to *First Clement,* Cyprian embraced a divide between clerics and laity. When introducing candidates for ministry roles in Carthage, he refers to their preparation "for clerical rank" (*Ep*. 29.1.2). Cyprian always draws "a sharp distinction" between "clergy and laity" (*Ep*. 3.1, 3; 14.3; 16.1; 30.5; 33.1; 59.13).[717] This perspective emphasizes higher honor for the one group over the other (*Ep.* 33.1), with the bishop retaining the place of honor within the clergy.[718]

Cyprian's perspective reserves a special place in the church hierarchy for certain members of the laity. While he is careful to subordinate them to clergy, and especially the bishop,[719] he takes for granted that martyrs and confessors have a place of honor within the church. Furthermore, a special place behind the martyrs is reserved for virgins and the continent (*Ep*. 30,5; 33.1; 59.13; *On the Dress of Virgins* 3, 21). Finally, Cyprian also asserts that a prestigious place after the continent is set aside for those who use their resources for the poor (*On the Mortality* 26). Like *1 Clement* and *The Shepherd of Hermas,* among others, Cyprian exchanges the honor-sharing community of all those in Christ for a stratified one in which

[717] Ibid., 269.

[718] Perhaps in no place is this more evident place is this more evident than in the Roman clergy's address of Cyprian as "honored father" (*Epistles* 8.1.1; 30.1.1; 31.1.1; 36.1.1).

[719] Allen Brent (*Cyprian and Roman Carthage* [Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 273-86) notes the fine line Cyprian walks in his perspective on the martyrs and their issuing of letters of peace to the lapsed; Cyprian is careful to acknowledge the honor and authority of the martyrs while emphasizing their subordinate position to clergy. Cyprian addresses these issues at length in *On the Lapsed* and *On the Unity of the Church*.

special groups possess more and the appeal is for individuals to pursue honor through sanctioned paths such as martyrdom.

The Honor of Suffering for Christ

Cyprian inherited a rich tradition from *The Passion of Perpetua*, Tertullian, and earlier writings concerning the honor of suffering for the sake of the Christian profession. The empire-wide persecution that the church experienced during his tenure as bishop compelled him to draw from this tradition again and again. His writings and the letters he received from others—including prominent people in the church in Rome—indicate that the perspective he shared extended far beyond Carthage. That said, Cyprian was a strong proponent of the challenge to honor values in this area and exerted significant pastoral influence on the recipients of his writings; in so doing, he engaged in what may be described as effective social engineering.

Cyprian's contributions also reveal how highly public suffering and death for the sake of Christ were honored in third century Carthage. On multiple occasions, he appeals to the honor of martyrdom in exhortations to other honorable, sanctioned behavior. At the same time, Cyprian's attempts to shape his audience's perspective on the honor of martyrdom demonstrate how deeply this value had become embedded in the early Christian mindset. Cyprian demonstrates how significantly the public nature of martyrdom captivated his audiences and shaped the early Christian challenge to honor values.

Correspondence to Confessors and Martyrs

Martyrs and confessors gained an increasingly important role in the Christian community in Carthage during the persecutions of Decius and Valerian. They served as vital, visible

examples of faithful witness for other members of the community. Because of the widely held belief that martyrs could provide direct intercession before God after death, letters they wrote, offering peace to those who had fallen, were in demand. This started with the Decian persecution; such letters represented a challenge to the authority of the bishop, who, together with others within the clerical hierarchy, reserved the authority to grant peace to the fallen. Thus, Cyprian corresponds with confessors and martyrs in Carthage and Rome to preserve their reputation and encourage them to remain committed to the proper ecclesiastical leaders. His letters vividly demonstrate early Christianity's radical challenge to dominant honor and shame values, presenting public shame and humiliation for Christ as glorious.

While Cyprian wrote at least five letters to martyrs and confessors in Carthage, the one written in April, 250 CE, after the martyrdom of Mappalicus, presents a number of key themes related to persecution and suffering for Christ; he returns to these themes again and again throughout his writings. It begins with addressing his audience in a way remarkably similar to *The Passion of Perpetua*'s description of the noble woman and her companions as "most valiant and honorable martyrs" (21.11)[720]: he says they are "most valiant and honorable brothers" (10.1.1).[721] Were Cyprian and his audience familiar with *The Passion of Perpetua*? It seems possible, for in much the same way as their fellow Carthaginian martyrs a half a century before they are said to display the manly virtue of bravery through their confession and are thus described as *beatissimus* ("most honorable"). G. W. Clarke notes that Cyprian employs this

[720] *The Passion of Perpetua* 21.11: "fortissimi ac beatissimi martyres" (Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972]). My translation of the Latin text.

[721] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.1.1: "fortissimi ac beatissimi fratres" (G. F. Diercks and G. W. Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*, Vol. 3-3C, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* [Turnholti: Brepols, 1972]). My translation from the Latin text.

He also describes martyrs and confessors as "valiant" and "honorable" in *Epistles* 15.1.1, 28.1.1, and 28.2.4.

superlative exclusively to describe martyrs and confessors;[722] they are honored by God on account of their "faith" and "fortitude" in the midst of trying circumstances. The bishop of Carthage underscores this honor of faithful confession and martyrdom again and again.

After strongly asserting that they are honored by God, Cyprian describes what lies ahead as even more glorious. He employs the combat metaphor to describe their suffering as noble:

> "But confession now, with its sufferings, demands greater courage, yet it confers, correspondingly, brighter renown and nobler honour. The combat has increased, and with it the glory of the combatants. You have not hung back from the battlefront from fear of the tortures; rather the tortures have themselves incited you on to join the battlefront. Courageous, steadfast, you have advanced with generous self-sacrifice into the very heart of the fighting" (10.1.1).[723]

The situation had changed for Christians in Carthage with the policy of Decius; their confession would now cost them something (10.1.1). Cyprian withdrew into exile; the recipients of this letter were imprisoned, tortured, and threatened with execution. These circumstances would result in "brighter renown and nobler honour;" with an increase in "combat" came an increase in "glory." Cyprian describes faithful confession in the face of coercion as joining the "battlefront." They demonstrate "courage" and "self-sacrifice"—for their action serves their community—and they find their way into "the very heart of the fighting." In following with earlier examples from Revelation to Tertullian, the bishop of Carthage uses the imagery of combat to stress how honorable it is to suffer for their confession—to the end that they do not succumb to the temptation to comply with the demands of their torturers and offer sacrifice. Cyprian uses this metaphor often to encourage Christian brothers and sisters to faithful

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[722] G. W. Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, Volume 1 (New York: Paulist, 1989), 229. Compare, for example, *Epistles* 6.3.4, 10.4.1, and 10.4.4.

[723] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.1.1: "Confessio tamen praesens quantum in passione fortior, tantum clarior et maior in honore est. Creuit pugna, creuit et pugnatium gloria. Nec retardati estis ab acie tormentorum metu, sed ipsis tormentis magis estis ad aciem prouocati, fortes et stabiles ad maximi certaminis proelium prompta deuotione prodistis" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from G. W. Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage,* Volumes 1-4 (New York: Paulist, 1989).

witness;[724] trumpeting the honor of this difficult path was part of his strategy to encourage endurance and ultimately shape the values of his community.

Next Cyprian turns to a popular metaphor used in the canonical writings, second-century sources, and Tertullian; it describes martyrdom as glorious and valiant, urguing those who are still alive to be faithful unto death. Through martyrdom, he asserts, they win a crown of victory:

> "Some of your number, I hear, have already received their crowns; others are very close to winning their crowns of victory; and everyone immured there in prison in your glorious ranks is animated with the one and the same ardour and valour for the fray, as becomes soldiers of Christ in the encampment of God" (10.1.2).[725]

Cyprian explains that some had been martyred, "having already received their crowns," while some of his readers are "very close." As with earlier writings, martyrdom is crowned and death is victory; they are not dishonored victims but worthy "soldiers of Christ." This was a very popular metaphor in that day: Cyprian repeatedly employs the crown metaphor,[726] and his brothers in Carthage[727] and Rome[728] do as well.

The bishop adds yet another honorific description of faithful witness through persecution. The endurance of martyrs is "glorious contest:" "This fact has been proved by the glorious

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[724] See, for example, *Epistles* 10.4.4; 13.2.1; 54.1.1; 55.4.1; 57.1.1; 60.2.2, 5; 77.2.1; 80.2.

The martial imagery was advantageous for a number of reasons, beyond the way it vividly demonstrated the honor of suffering. Among other things, it allowed Cyprian to emphasize the testing that persecution involved and the patience and endurance necessary. The imagery also fit nicely into his hierarchical vision of Christian community, by allowing him to explain that those who suffer, like good soldiers, were expected to follow the commands of their generals.

[725] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.1.2: "Ex quibus quosdam iam conperi coronatos, quosdam uero ad coronam uictoriae proximos, uniuersos autem quos agmine glorioso carcer inclusit pari et simili calore uirtutis ad gerendum certamen animatos, sicut esse oportet in diuinis castris milites Christi" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[726] See, for example, *Epistles* 6.4; 10.2.1, 3; 10.4.3,4; 37.1.2; 58.8.1; 60.2.5; 76.1.2; 76.2.3; 76.4.2; 76.6.1; 80.1.3; 80.2.

[727] See *Epistles* 77.1.2; 78.2.2.

[728] See *Epistles* 21.1.2, 3; 21.2.1; 21.4.1; 31.1.1; 36.2.1.

contest[729] of our brothers. In leading the vanguard to victory over tortures they have given the others a model in fortitude and faith; they fought at the battlefront until the very battlefield collapsed, vanquished." (10.1.2).[730] This assertion, that martyrdom for Christ is *munis*, is the same metaphor used a half century before by *Perpetua* and Tertullian. Cyprian then reiterates how honorable their actions were by describing them in a leading role: forging ahead as models and fighting at the battlefront to lead the way for others. Their martyrdom, their contest, was honorable, as all could see and often imitate.

As Cyprian approaches his conclusion, he turns to the example of Mappalicus, who had been a leader among their number and a notable martyr. Mappalicus' situation serves as evidence of Christ's presence with the martyr:

> "The present battle has given proof of this. A voice filled with the Holy Spirit broke forth from the martyr's lips when the most blessed[731] Mappalicus, in the midst of his torments, cried out to the proconsul: 'The contest you will see tomorrow.' And the words he spoke giving witness to his fortitude and his faith, the Lord has fulfilled. A heavenly contest was staged, and the servant of God did win his crown, striving in the contest which he had promised" (10.4.1).[732]

This notable example brings together much of Cyprian's favorite imagery related to suffering for Christ, martyrdom, and honor. The current situation is a "battle." Again, the martyr is described

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[729] Cyprian employs the contest imagery in this way again and again. See also *Epistles* 10.2.2; 10.4.3; 37.3.1; 58.8.1; 80.2.

[730] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.1.2: "Probata res est certamine fratrum glorioso, qui ad tormenta uincenda ceteris duces facti exemplum uirtutis et fidei praebuerunt congressi in acie, donec acies succumberet uicta" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[731] Clarke's translation is employed here, but translating *beatissimi* as "most honorable" is preferable to "most blessed." For more information, see the discussion of *beatissimi* earlier in the chapter related to *The Passion of Perpetua*.

[732] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.4.1: "Documentum rei praesens proelium praebuit. Vox plena spiritu sancto de martyris ore prorupit, cum Mappalicus beatissimus inter cruciatus suos proconsuli diceret: 'uidebis cras agonem'. Et quod ille cum uirtutis ac fidei testimonio dixit dominus impleuit. Agon caelestis exhibitus et dei seruus in agonis promissi certamine coronatus est" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

as *beatissimi* ("most honorable"). In his prophetic speech to the proconsul, Mappalicus speaks of his coming martyrdom as *munis.* The *munis* ends with "the servant of God" winning "his crown." Mappalicus thus serves as the final and fundamental example of honorable martyrdom in the letter, mentioned by Cyprian to inspire them to similar exploits.

The bishop's letters to confessors in Rome retain the same message about the honor of martyrdom and many of the same themes. This is seen in a letter Cyprian sends to them in the summer of 250 CE. The persecution brought pressure without and conflict within; the leader in exile was compelled to solidify relations with heroes in the Roman church, affirm their faithful witness, and exhort them to uphold church discipline in regard to the fallen.

The correspondence begins with a lengthy affirmation of Roman Presbyters Moyses and Maximus along with other imprisoned confessors. He greets them in the same way as the Carthaginian confessors and martyrs in *Epistle* 10.1.1, as "most valiant and honorable brothers" (*Ep.* 28.1.1).[733] Having heard of their glorious confession, Cyprian expresses his deep admiration:

> "I have been filled with great joy and jubilation by the thought that the special favour of our Lord has prepared you, through your confession of His name, for your crown. You have been the front-line troops, the leaders into the battlefield of our day. It was you who inaugurated, by your own deeds of courage, the spiritual hostilities which God has willed should now be waged. It was you who shattered the enemy's first offensives at the outbreak of war" (*Ep.* 28.1.1).[734]

[733] Cyprian, *Epistle* 28.1.1: "fortissimi ac beatissimi fratres" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). My translation from the Latin text.

[734] Cyprian, *Epistle* 28.1.1: "laetatus satis et plurimum gratulatus quod uos confessione sui nominis parauerit ad coronam domini nostri praecipua dignatio. Vos enim primores et duces ad nostri temporis proelium facti caelestis militia signa mouistis. Vos spiritale certamen quod nunc geri deus uoluit uestris uirtutibus inbuistis. Vos surgentis belli impetus primos inmobili robore atque inconcussa stabilitate fregistis" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

Cyprian had joy because the favor of God had "prepared" them for their "crown" through their confession; they had been readied for the coveted, honorable martyr's crown because they had not denied the Lord's name when interrogated. He affirms his Roman brothers with similar imagery used to affirm the Carthaginian martyrs and confessors (*Ep.* 10.1.1), describing them as "front-line troops" and "leaders into the battlefield." They are the vanguard for the entire church, since Rome was the first to experience the persecutions initiated by Decius; they are valiant warriors with the first, most honorable place in battle. As formerly noted, Cyprian effectively uses martial imagery in reference to martyrdom and confession.

The Roman confessors had inaugurated the battle, but the first martyrs had been in Carthage (*Ep.* 28.1.2). By virtue of their place on the frontlines, he concludes that the Roman confessors deserved a share of the martyr's honor:

> "But he who has been a vanguard of the fray and has become a model in valour for his brothers, must enjoy a share with the martyrs in their honour. You have handed over to us here the crowns which your hands have wreathed, you have pass on to your brethren here the saving cup which your lips tasted first in pledge" (*Ep.* 28.1.2).[735]

The crowns belonged to the martyrs, but the Roman confessors' valor in battle meant that they shared their honor; due to their place in the field, they were first to lay their hands on the crowns and taste from "the saving cup" of suffering that had gone to the martyrs in Carthage. Cyprian stresses in this passage that confession, like martyrdom, was honorable.[736]

Cyprian's Effective Social Engineering

[735] Cyprian, *Epistle* 28.1.2: "sed qui in congressione praecedens exemplum uirtutis fratribus factus est, cum martyribus in honore communis est. Coronas uestra manu sertas inde huc tradidistis et de poculo salutari fratribus propinastis" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[736] Cyprian elsewhere describes Christian confession as "glorious" (*Ep.* 5.1.2; 54.1.1) and "highly esteemed" (*Ep.* 46.1.1).

The positive response from Rome indicates that Cyprian's encouragement had its desired impact; his letter helped shape the community and served as effective social engineering. The first indication of this comes from Roman presbyters and deacons who had delivered *Epistle* 28 to the confessors and reported of its favorable reception. Not only had his correspondence encouraged them to continue the discipline Cyprian had suggested for the lapsed, but it enervated them to stand faithfully against the threat of torture and death.

> "And at this point it is our duty to pay you, a duty we happily render, the greatest and most abundant of thanks. By your letter the darkness of their prison you have filled with light; you have visited them by the way through which you could gain entry; their hearts, stalwart in their faith and in their confession, you have refreshed by the comforting words of your letter; their triumphs you have lauded with fitting praises and you have thus inflamed them with even more ardent yearning for heavenly glory; you have driven onwards men already straining at the task; by the strength of your exhortation you have given fresh heart to those who we believe and pray will one day be victorious.
>
> It is true that all of this may seem to depend on the faith of those who confess and on the favour of God; nevertheless, as a result of your letter, they would seem to have become in some measure your debtors in their martyrdom" (*Ep.* 30.5.1).[737]

Cyprian's words refreshed their weary hearts and brought light to their dark prison. His honor discourse achieved its desired affect: having "lauded" their triumphs "with fitting praises," Cyprian "inflamed" their natural, expected, and very Roman "yearning for heavenly glory." So potent was his encouragement that the confessors felt they would be indebted to him upon their glorious martyrdom.

The touching response of Moyses, Maximus, and the other imprisoned Roman confessors in *Epistle* 31 further demonstrates the efficacy of Cyprian's letter. Not only had his correspondence comforted them in their distress and encouraged them, but it "enabled them to

[737] Cyprian, *Epistle* 30.5.1: "In quo loco maximas tibi atque uberes gratias referre debemus et reddimus quod illorum carceris tenebras litteris tuis inluminasti, quod ad illos uenisti quomodo introire potuisti, quod illorum animos sua fide et confessione robustos tuis adlocutionibus litterisque recreasti, quod felicitates eorum condignis laudibus prosecutus accendisti ad multo ardentiorem caelestis gloriae cupiditatem, quod pronos impulisti, quod ut credimus et optamus uictores futuros uiribus tui sermonis animasti, ut quamquam hoc totum de fide confitentium et de diuina indulgentia uenire uideatur, tamen in marturio suo tibi ex aliquot debitores facti esse uideantur" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

attain with a more ardent zeal the crown that was destined" for them (31.1.1).[738] He had become their instructor and teacher in enduring patiently; therefore, they believed he would share the honor of his "pupils" (31.1.3). In particular, his description of the martyrs of Carthage had inspired them:

> "…we have experienced great joy, great consolation and great comfort, especially in that, with the glorious and fitting words of praise, you have described, in the case of the martyrs, their glorious—death I was about to say, but I mean deathlessness. For their manner of leaving life deserved to have been celebrated in such language as yours, so that the events recounted might be told in words which matched the quality of their deeds. And so, as a result of your letter, we have watched the glorious triumphal processions of the martyrs; with our own eyes, as it were, we have escorted them on their journey to heaven, and we have gazed on them as they stand amidst the angels and the dominations and the powers of heaven.
>
> Indeed, with our own ears, we might say, we have even heard the Lord giving before His Father that testimony He promised to them He would render. It is this, then, which brings to our hearts daily encouragement and enkindles within us the ardour to reach such heights of honour" (31.2.1-2).[739]

Cyprian's vivid, articulate description of the martyrs' glory deeply moved them. Not only had he allowed the confessors to see the martyrs approach death in "glorious triumphal procession" (31.2.1), but he had allowed them to hear the Lord giving his promised testimony "before His Father" on the martyrs' behalf (31.2.2). His letter then had encouraged them and "enkindle[d] within [them] the ardour to reach such heights of honour" (31.2.2). Cyprian's honor discourse had again yielded its desired effect: to ensure that the community of Roman confessors continued faithfully.

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[738] Cyprian, *Epistle* 31.1.1: "proniore ad coronam destinatuam posemus peruenire" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[739] Cyprian, *Epistle* 31.2.1-2: "magna guadia, magna solacia, magna fomenta, maxime quod et gloriosas martyrum non dicam mortes, sed immortalitates gloriosis et condignis laudibus prosecutus es. Tales enim excessus talibus uocibus personandi fuerunt, ut quae referebantur sic dicerentur qualiter facta sunt. Ex tuis ergo litteris uidimus gloriosos illos martyrum triumphos et oculis nostris quodammodo caelum illos petentes proscuti sumus et inter angelos ac potestates dominationesque caelestes constitutos quasi contemplati sumus. Sed et dominum apud patrem testimonium suum illis promissum perhibentem auribus nostris quodammodo sensimus. Hoc est ergo quod et nobis animum in dies erigit et ad consequendos gradus tantae dignationis incendit" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

Cyprian, then banished to Cuburis due to his confession during the persecution under Valerian, exchanged letters with a group of Numidian bishops and their companions, who had been beaten with clubs and sent to the mines; the letters provide another example of the efficacy of his social engineering. In his letter, which was accompanied by monetary support, the bishop of Carthage strongly asserts the honor of his colleagues and the others on account of their profession using similar imagery to earlier writings (*Ep.* 76). They respond with letters of their own that express gratitude for his encouragement and financial assistance; each in its own way demonstrates the potency of Cyprian's affirmation of and appeal to honorable suffering for their confession (*Ep.* 77, 78, and 79).

Not only do their letters show Cyprian's capacity to encourage them to faithful witness, but they reveal how deeply his audiences had imbibed his imagery—they shared the same North African Christian heritage, and Cyprian wisely appropriated resonant language and metaphors. In each case, their correspondence indicates how much his letter encouraged them to continue in their confession (*Ep.* 77.2.2; 77.3.1; 78.2.1-2; 79.1.1-2). Furthermore, the confessors' letters are rich with the imagery he employed in his appeals to honor, including references to battle (*Ep.* 77.2.1; 78.1.1), the crown of martyrdom (*Ep.* 77.1.2; 78.2.2), and the honor of confessing Christ (*Ep.* 77.1.2; 78.1.2). Cyprian's appeals to honor connected with and encouraged the Numidian bishops and their companions in the mines.

Evidence of Widespread Use

Letters from other authors in Cyprian's collected correspondence indicate that the bishop drew from popular language and images in his arguments for the honor of suffering. An epistle from Roman leaders after the death of Fabian, their bishop, adopts the imagery of contest,

combat, and crown to underscore the honor of martyrdom (*Ep.* 8.1.1). An exchange between Celerinus in Rome and Lucianus, his friend awaiting martyrdom in Carthage (*Ep.* 21 and 22)[740], repeats a number of terms used by Cyprian to discuss the high position of those who confess Christ, describing them as honorable (21.1.1; 21.3.2; 21.4.1; 22.1.1, 2), mentioning the "crown" of martyrdom (21.1.2, 3; 21.2.1; 21.4.1), and stressing the glory of conquest (22.1.1). Finally, in the context of the controversy related to the lapsed, another letter from Roman presbyters and deacons speaks of the "crown" of martyrdom (*Ep.* 36.2.1).

Furthermore, Cyprian's various appeals to martyrdom in his other arguments indicate that the honor of martyrdom was widely accepted. Prior to either of the persecutions that would define his episcopate, in *On the Dress of Virgins,* the bishop appeals to the reward of martyrdom in order to accentuate the comparably high place of continence and exhort virgins to faithfulness; he says that while the martyrs' fruit is "a hundred-fold" and garners the first place, theirs is "sixty-fold" and second in honor (21). In the context of plague in Carthage, Cyprian references martyrdom in his call to charity for the infirmed and needy, asserting that such deeds garnered a white crown comparable to the honorable crimson crown given to martyrs (*On Works and Almsgiving* 26).[741] Later, he identifies both Cornelius and Lucius as martyrs[742] in his attempt to persuade Stephen, who succeeded them as bishop of Rome, to embrace his policy on reconciliation for the fallen. In order to preserve the prior bishops' "honor" and because of the

[740] This exchange of letters is fascinating in that it vividly illustrates the elevated position that martyrs occupied (even over confessors), especially in light of their capacity to write letters of peace on behalf of the lapsed. Indeed, in some circles it seems evident that martyrs occupied an elite class within the third-century church.

[741] Cyprian employs a similar argument in *On the Mortality* 26, emphasizing honor in the kingdom of heaven for the charitable—in the company of the apostles, prophets, martyrs and the continent.

[742] As Clarke (*Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, Vol. 4, 169) notes, Cyprian here defines martyrdom loosely: Cornelius confessed his faith and died in exile, though of natural causes, while Lucius was a confessor who safely returned to Rome after exile (*Ep.* 61.1.1, 2.3, 4.1).

"glory" of their martyrdom, Cyprian urges Stephen to conform to the policy Carthage and Rome had shared (*Ep.* 68.5.1).[743] Finally, he appeals to the honor of martyrdom in *On the Advantage of Patience* 16 in order to exhort his audience to forbearance in the context of doctrinal disagreements, asking, "Can you accomplish these things unless you maintain the steadfastness of patience and endurance?"[744] In all of this, Cyprian adroitly took for granted the honor of martyrdom and exploited his contemporaries' assumptions about martyrdom to support his arguments related to other issues.

The Honor of the Martyrs…and Others

Cyprian appealed to the honor of martyrdom effectively to accomplish his rhetorical purposes, but the esteem given to martyrs in the third century church created a significant challenge for him in his role as bishop. Because of the high regard for martyrs and the perception that they could offer powerful intercession upon death, some among the lapsed sought promises of intercession from martyrs; the voices of the martyrs, and the confessors who had been imprisoned with them carried great weight and emerged as a significant challenge for bishops in Carthage and Rome. Cyprian would not cede the authority of his office but "dared not confront the martyrs and their group head-on: their prestige was too high."[745]

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[743] Clarke (*Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, Vol. 4, 169) explains how Cyprian turned to martyrdom to strengthen his letter's argument to Stephen: "Cyprian has held in reserve his trump argument: not to foster the execution of the policy adopted by Cornelius and Lucius will be to besmirch their sacred memories (the threefold occurrence of *honor, honoremus,* and *honorificare* within three lines is not idle)—and those martyrs are none other than Stephen's own immediate predecessors."

[744] Cyprian, *On the Advantage of Patience* 16: "Poterisne ista perferre nisi patientiae et tolerantiae firmitate?" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, Vol. 5, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

[745] Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 253.

If the bishop could not directly confront the martyrs, how would he deal with them and their increasing power? He would blur the distinctions between martyrs and other members of the community and so extend "the concept of martyrdom to as many conditions and categories as it is humanly possible to stretch it to."[746] Thus, Cyprian's adaptation effectively elevated the status of many—including those who have their possessions confiscated, who are sent into and succumb in exile, and who die in flight while attempting to avoid idolatry.

Cyprian's blurring of the distinctions between martyrs and others is evident early in his episcopate. After the persecution of Decius, he composed his *On the Lapsed* in this period in response to serious questions about church discipline and the return to fellowship of "the fallen." The fallen were those who had compromised their faith through sacrifice or the acquisition of legal documents indicating that they had sacrificed. As Allen Brent points out, in chapter two of *On the Lapsed*, the bishop groups together imprisoned martyrs and confessors with those who escape physical punishment and flee into exile:

> "We find a subtle and devious shift in Cyprian's rhetoric in the passage. He begins by claiming that those who stood fast but escaped physical punishment were 'close to and *almost* joined to your own (*proximis et paene coniunctis*) [marks of praise]'. But he then claims that 'wholeness of faith' and 'integrity of heart' were not merely similar but in both cases the same (*eadem*). Such *integritas* and *sinceritas* he now claims are to be found in those who fled into exile, not, he believes, in order to escape martyrdom, but to experience one of its true forms."[747]

As Cyprian addresses his imprisoned brothers, he recognizes the honor of their profession and at the same time affirms the honor of others who had never joined them in prison on account of the faith.

[746] Ibid., 273.

[747] Ibid.

Cyprian's later letter to Thibaris in the early summer of 253 also redefines martyrdom, including those who die in flight. Their identification as a martyr is ultimately validated by Christ's witness in spite of the fact that no one else may be present to witness their demise:

> "To all who die in persecution for the honour of His name, He presents the recompense which He promised He would give on the day of the resurrection. Nor is the glory of such a martyrdom any the less because a man may not have died in the public gaze, witnessed by many: to die for Christ's sake is still the reason for his dying. That one Witness who puts martyrs to the test and gives to them their crowns provides adequate testimony for his martyrdom" (*Ep.* 58.4.2).[748]

Therefore, the only distinction Cyprian makes between the martyr who dies in the arena and the person who dies in flight to avoid idolatry, is human witness; since Christ is watching both, both share the same honor of being crowned for their faithful death.

Later that summer, Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, was banished to nearby Centumcellae, for his Christian confession and died of natural causes just a month into his exile. His death would provide Cyprian with further opportunity to expand his definition of martyrdom: although Cornelius apparently died of natural causes and not in a violent, public death, Cyprian honors him with the title of martyr in four different letters that would follow.[749]

Honor, Martyrdom, and the Audience

A critical dimension of the early church's redefinition of honor values, with regard to martyrdom and suffering for Christ, had to do with the public nature of what occurred. Cyprian and others spoke of what was happening as a contest or spectacle; these were terms that not only

[748] Cyprian, *Epistle* 58.4.2: "persectuionis causa pro nominis sui honore morienti praemium quod daturum se in resurrection promisit. Nec minor est martyrii gloria non publice et inter multos perisse, cum pereundi causa sit propter Christum perire. Sufficit ad testimonium martyris sui testis ille qui probat martyras et coronat" (*Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[749] *Epistles* 61.3.1; 67.6.3; 68.5.1; 69.3.2.
For further discussion about the death of Cornelius and the conflicting descriptions of his demise, see Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage,* Vol. 3, 88, 266.

acknowledged the struggle involved, but also the centrality of the audience who saw and judged what was done as honorable or shameful. One of Cyprian's early letters to confessors and martyrs in Carthange, which was intended to encourage them to continued faithful witness, speaks to the public nature of martyrdom and the response of the audience: "The throng of bystanders watched in wonderment this heavenly, this spiritual contest of God, this battle of Christ; they witnessed His servants stand their ground unfettered in voice, unsullied in heart, superhuman in valour" (10.2.2).[750] The bystanders "watched" and "witnessed" what was a "spiritual contest;" their "wonderment" indicated their verdict on what had occurred.

Cyprian's decisions related to his own final capture and martyrdom are indicative of the public nature of martyrdom and what that meant for the honor of those who suffered. Once he determined that the authorities had plans to capture and execute him for his Christian confession, he went into hiding and deliberately waited to turn himself in to authorities until the governor and his entourage had left Utica for their annual visit to Carthage—so that he would be martyred in his home city. Cyprian explains his reasoning in a letter to the leaders and people in bishopric:

> "…it befits a bishop to confess his faith in that city where he has been placed in charge over the Lord's flock, it is proper that the appointed leader in the Church should bring glory upon all his people by making his confession in their midst.
>
> For whatever a confessor-bishop speaks at the very moment he confesses his faith, he speaks under the inspiration of God and as the mouthpiece of all. But, in fact, the honour belonging to our illustrious Church will be vitiated if it is at Utica that I should receive sentence upon making my confession (whereas I have been appointed as bishop over another church) and it is from Utica that I should go forth as martyr to the Lord. For it is in your midst that I ought to be making my confession, it is there I ought to suffer, it is from there I ought to go forth to the Lord" (*Ep.* 81.1.1-2).[751]

[750] Cyprian, *Epistle* 10.2.2: "Vidit admirans praesentium multitudo caeleste certamen dei et spiritale, proelium Christi, stetisse seruos eius uoce libera, mente incorrupta, virtute diuina" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[751] Cyprian, *Epistle* 81.1.1-2: "eo quod congruat episcopum in ea ciuitate in qua ecclesiae dominicae praeest illic dominum confiteri et plebem uniuersam praepositi praesentis confessione clarificari. Quodcumque enim sub ipso confessionis momento confessor episcopus loquitur aspirante deo ore omnium loquitur. Ceterum

In Cyprian's opinion, it was only right that he should "bring glory" to the church under his care by confessing and dying there. Death in Utica, he reasoned, would have diminished the honor that belonged to the church in Carthage. Who the audience was and their opinion mattered a great deal in the realm of honor and shame; Cyprian was acutely aware of this in his last days. He thus approached martyrdom "with conspicuous enthusiasm and a sense of the dramatic potential of what was coming."[752]

Cyprian appreciated the audience's importance and role in rendering a verdict, but on more than one occasion he stressed that a human audience was not essential for death in Christ's name to be honorable. While he was in exile during the persecution of Decius, he urges presbyters and deacons in Carthage to care for confessors: those who died in prison before they could be tortured or executed in the arena were to be reckoned as martyrs as well (*Ep.* 12.1), and the date of their death was to be recorded so that it could be commemorated (*Ep.* 12.2). It was enough that their witness and death occurred before the eyes of God (*Ep.* 12.1). Later, he assures brothers and sisters in Thibaris of the honor of death for Christ regardless of who witnesses it:

> "And if, as he seeks flight among the lonely mountains, some brigand should overpower him, if some wild beast should attack him, if hunger, thirst, or cold should overcome him, or if, as he sails in desperate haste over the seas, storm and tempest should overwhelm him, Christ is there, watching over His soldier whenever the fighting may be. To all who die in persecution for the honour of His name, He presents the recompense which He promised He would give on the day of the resurrection. Nor is the glory of such a martyrdom any the less because a man may not have died in the public gaze, witnessed by many: to die for Christ's sake is still the reason for his dying. That

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mutilabitur honor ecclesiae nostrae tam gloriosae, si ego episcopus alterius ecclesiae praepositus accepta apud Vticam super confessione sententia exinde martyr ad dominum proficiscar, quandoquidem ego et pro me et pro uobis apud uos confiteri et ibi pati et exinde ad dominum proficisci" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[752] Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 62.

> one Witness who puts martyrs to the test and gives to them their crowns provides adequate testimony for his martyrdom" (*Ep.* 58.4.2).[753]

Wherever the death of one who dies in persecution occurs, "Christ is there"—whether his "soldier" is in flight or the arena. Cyprian reasons that "recompense" and "glory" would come to them, whatever the circumstance of their martyrdom. Indeed, he asserts that the glory is no less for those who died outside "the public gaze" than for those whose death is "witnessed by many." The honor comes not due to the judgment of the human audience but because the person dies for Christ's sake and because Christ, the "one Witness," who "puts martyrs to the test and gives to them their crowns," provides the necessary testimony for their martyrdom. Cyprian therefore strongly asserts that death for Christian witness is honorable, and such honor is undiminished regardless of who sees.

Cyprian's words about the importance and irrelevance of the audience of martyrdom provide a window into the third-century Christian challenge to honor values. The public nature of martyrdom accounted for the positive response of at least some to Christianity[754] and appears to be behind the authority martyrs gained in the church. Whereas Saturus' vision in *The Passion of Perpetua* identified martyrs as empowered mediators of conflict between church leaders in Carthage, Cyprian faced the challenge of shepherding a community in which martyrs and confessors were popular, existed in great numbers and exercised significant power. In any case,

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[753] Cyprian, *Epistle* 58.4.2: "Et si fugientem in solitudine ac montibus latro oppresserit, fera inuaserit, fames aut sitis aut frigus adflixerit, uel per maria praaecipiti nauigatione properantem tempestas ac procella submerserit, spectat militem suum Christus ubicumque pugnantem et persectuionis causa pro nominis sui honore morienti praemium quod daturum se in resurrection promisit. Nec minor est martyrii gloria non publice et inter multos perisse, cum pereundi causa sit propter Christum perire. Sufficit ad testimonium martyris sui testis ille qui probat martyras et coronat" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[754] Tertullian provides notable testimony to early Christian martyrdom affecting conversion. His description of people's response to martyrdom in *To Scapula* 5 cannot help but make one wonder whether martyrdom influenced his decision; in this regard, he rightly describes the blood of the martyrs as "seed" (*Apology* 50.13).

what they had done before the crowd's watching eyes in the arena was unmistakably honorable; that earlier Christian writings and authoritative tradition supported it seems to reinforce the glory of the martyr's path. However, Cyprian had to command presbyters and deacons to provide the same care and recognition to those who succumbed in prison as those who were martyred (*Ep.* 12.1-2). His emphasis on the honor of martyrdom, whether it is witnessed by crowds or not, implies that the honor of martyrdom was perhaps influenced more by what people saw in the "spiritual contest" and in the arena than by authoritative writings.

Cyprian, Continence, and Women's Paths to Honor

The continent had an honorable place in Cyprian's vision of the church. It is significant that Cyprian follows Tertullian in identifying continence as a means by which women can achieve honor. In no place is this more evident than in *On the Dress of Virgins*, which accentuates the glory of their path and exhorts them to behavior that will protect their reputation and the honor of the church.

Early in the discourse, Cyprian underscores the glorious, public role that virgins play in the church and thus heightens the importance of the forthcoming appeals. Their glory is "more eminent" than that of others, and so excites great interest (3). The virgin has the honor of being "the more illustrious portion of Christ's flock"[755] and enhances the honor of the church, serving as "the flower of the ecclesiastical seed"[756] (3). Virgins therefore occupy a glorious place and their presence adds radiance to the Christian community.

[755] Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 3: "illustrior portio gregis Christi" (Angela Elizabeth Keenan, *Thasci Caecili Cypriani De Habitu Virginum: A Commentary, with an Introduction and Translation* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1932]). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

[756] Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 3: "flos est ille ecclesiastici germinis" (Keenan, *Thasci Caecili Cypriani De Habitu Virginum*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

Cyprian's praise and recognition of their honorable position lays the groundwork for the correction that follows. While he provides a number of directives, two in particular have great relevance for the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values: his instruction that they avoid the baths (19-20) and that they not dress extravagantly (21). By going to the baths—where men and women occupied the same spaces disrobed—he asserts that virgins lay aside "honor" and "modesty" by exposing themselves to the eyes and hands of men (19). Such actions bring sorrow and shame to the church from those who should have brought glory; rather than achieving honor that the path of continence afforded them, they "cease to be virgins," are "corrupted" by "dishonor," and are found to be "adulterous" to Christ (20).

The prohibition of the baths is followed by a closely related one of extravagant dress; while the former urges virgins to keep their clothes on and not expose themselves to shame, the latter exhorts them to avoid rich clothing in order to gain the approval of others. Cyprian employs martyrdom to bring home his latter appeal: just as martyrs walked "the narrow way" to defeat the devil and the world and gain glory, the virgins were to "overcome dress" and "gold" so that they could also "conquer" the flesh and the world (21). Great glory was coming to virgins, only slightly less than that of the martyrs—the martyr's fruit was "a hundred-fold" while the virgin's was "sixty-fold"—so they were urged toward "endurance" through avoiding extravagant dress (21).

Cyprian concludes the discourse with a final appeal that trumpets the honor of virginity. "A great reward awaits" them if they continue faithfully along the path and heed his commands (22). At the same time, they "possess already in this world the glory of the resurrection;"[757] they

[757] Cyprian, *On the Dress of Virgins* 22: "Vos resurrectionis gloriam in isto saeculo jam tenetis" (Keenan, *Thasci Caecili Cypriani De Habitu Virginum*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

are "equal to the angels," free from "the contagion of the world" if they simply continue faithfully (22). He is emphatic about the glory they possess and the honorable reward that awaits them.

Continence is not the only path to honor that Cyprian envisioned for women. In *On the Lapsed* Cyprian describes women as walking the glorious path of martyrdom. He speaks of the countless, "crowned" (martyred) soldiers received by "Mother Church" into her arms "from the battle" (2). The "united bands" of warriors include both men and women: "With the triumphing men come women also, who, while contending with the world, have also overcome their sex; and virgins also come with the double glory of their warfare" (2).[758] Not only are there women who have achieved this honor and are thus "crowned," but there are some among them who enjoy the "double glory" of being both virgins and martyrs.

The Honor in Cyprian's Practice of and Teaching on Patronage

Upon first glance, Cyprian's teaching and behavior regarding patronage and honor appear to be at odds. On one hand, he appears to exhort the wealthy in the church to use their resources and power for the sake of others and the glory of God, and not to enhance their own prestige. But while it would be unfair to say that Cyprian used his power and resources in the same manner as most patrons in the Roman tradition, it seems evident that as bishop he did everything he could to enhance his standing and retain power; his hierarchical vision of the church placed himself as bishop at the apotheosis of precedence and honor among his city's clergy, who themselves were above the laity.

[758] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed* 2: "Cum triumphantibus uiris et feminae ueniut quae cum saeculo seum quoque uicerunt. Veniunt et geminata militiae suae gloria uirgines" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

To be certain, Cyprian's patronage does not fit easily either into the mold of traditional Roman, elite patronage or the honor-sharing approach Jesus and Paul of Tarsus taught. Because he perceived shortcomings in the system of elite patronage as it was popularly practiced, he did not use his resources in the way wealthy patrons did to further his own honor and gain public praise (*To Donatus* 11-14); rather, he gave liberally to assist poor and imprisoned Christians in Carthage as well as fellow bishops.[759] Cyprian did, however, give strategically, like other powerful patrons: it garnered him influence among North African bishops[760] and allowed him to secure the loyalty of clergy and needy in Carthage against the challenge of rivals.[761] In this way, his behavior as a patron fit with his understanding of church hierarchy: since clergy were a class unto themselves[762] and he was the bishop of Carthage, he leveraged his resources and power to retain his authority.[763] He did not employ patronage to improve his social status, but to retain the honor, position, and influence he had for the good of the church; this was patronage for Christian leaders in the mold of *First Clement*.

Cyprian's instructions for those who had wealth and honor challenged norms for patrons and called them to vacate the expected avenues of pursuing their own advantage through their

[759] See, for example, his contributions to Numidia of 100,000 sesterces to ransom captive Christians (*Ep.* 62.3.2) and of additional unnamed resources to aid confessors in mines (*Ep.*79.1.1).

[760] Geoffrey Dunn ("Cyprian and His *college*: Patronage and the Episcopal Synod of 252," *The Journal of Religious History* 27 [2003]: 1-13) concludes, in light of *Epistles* 59 and 64, that Cyprian, while functioning deferentially with other African bishops, employed his influence and resources to keep them united.

[761] Without question, Cyprian employed his own and church resources to secure the loyalty of clergy and others in Carthage. Geoffrey Dunn ("The White Crown of Good Works: Cyprian's Early Pastoral Ministry of Almsgiving," *Church History* 73 [2004]: 715-740) concludes that the expectations of the community in Carthage and the reality of the challenges he faced, especially during his exile under the persecution of Decius, led him to employ patronage even though his preference after conversion had been to reject traditional patronage with its expectations of something in return.

[762] *Ep*. 3.1, 3; 14.3; 16.1; 30.5; 33.1; 59.13; cf. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 269.

[763]Alan Wheatley's assessment of Cyprian's behavior and teaching about his own role in *Patronage in Early Christianity* is instructive. As bishop, Cyprian "often acted much as a great man would;" he had functioned as a patron and so exercised control in the church in Carthage (172-75).

use of power and possessions.[764] A prime example of this is found in one of his letters to Carthage near the end of the Decian persecution in which he contrasts two groups among the fallen: those who have acquired letters of peace through confessors and seek reintegration into the church without repentance and with a strong sense of entitlement; and those who have followed the church leadership's direction and have given themselves to the work of penitence and charity (*Ep.* 33). Cyprian's descriptions give the impression that the wealthy were to be found among both groups. They are evident in the first group, with its sense of entitlement, arrogance, and assertive challenge to leadership (33.1.2); such responses seem unlikely from those without wealth and status, but likely from those who had resources and power, which they expected would garner them advantages in the community. The mention of "glorious and noble works of charity in the churches"[765] by the second group appears to indicate that they had ample resources to provide aid; Cyprian indicates that they "never considered the Lord to be in their debt for what they have done,"[766] which implies that what they had offered was sizeable (33.2.1). The bishop's praise for the second group is significant and revealing: their deeds of charity are "glorious" and "noble," but their behavior is more consistent with that of a servant than a wealthy patron since they "act with meekness and humility" (33.2.1). Cyprian holds out this countercultural example in antithesis to those who employed their wealth to gain honor and

[764] At the same time, Cyprian was quick to recognize their natural competition for honor stimulated some to aid the poor: "And I am delighted to hear that in their charity our brothers *vie with each other* in large numbers to alleviate your difficulties with contributions of their own" (*Ep.* 13.7, translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*).

[765] Cyprian, *Ep.* 33.2.1: "in ecclesia simper gloriose et granditer operati" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

[766] Cyprian, *Ep.* 33.2.1: "opus suum numquam domino inputauerunt" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*.

advantage: he praises them for giving what they had with humility, a virtue more consistent with slavery than patronage. It is this free giving that he describes as "glorious" and "noble" (33.2.1).

Cyprian's *On the Mortality,* written in response to the plague in Carthage in 253, urges others to similar glorious and noble deeds of charity. He argues that the risk of aiding the infirmed, while it exposes one to great loss, is to be seen as a "battle" to be won; without the battle, there is no "victory" (12). But if there is victory, there is also a "crown" for those who choose the honorable path and risk their health and resources for the sake of others (12). Such service may be described as "training" for martyrdom, for "by contempt of death they prepare for the crown" (16),[767] a crown of great glory! As Cyprian builds to his conclusion, his final appeal provides insight into his intended audience, the wealthy within the church. After mentioning a list of honored groups within the kingdom of heaven, including apostles, prophets, martyrs, and the continent, he turns to a new group: "there are merciful men rewarded, who by feeding and helping the poor have done the works of righteousness—who, keeping the Lord's precepts, have transferred their earthly patrimonies to the heavenly treasuries" (26).[768] As such, a place of honor within the kingdom is offered for the wealthy who transfer earthly wealth "to the heavenly treasuries" by feeding and helping the poor (26).[769] In much the same way as *The Shepherd of*

[767] Cyprian, *On the Mortality* 16: "contemptu mortis paeparant ad coronam" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

[768]Cyprian, *On the Mortality* 26: "remunerate misericordes qui alimentis et largitionibus pauperum iustitiae opera fecerunt, qui dominica praecepta seruantes ad caelestes thensauros terrena patrimonia transtulerunt" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

[769] One of Cyprian's contemporary writings, *On Works and Almsgiving*, addresses similar themes related to charity, including its value for the wealthy, the honor of such deeds, and the final, promised reward: "An illustrious and divine thing, dearest brethren, is the saving labour of charity; a great comfort of believers, a wholesome guard of our security, a protection of hope, a safeguard of faith, a remedy for sin, a thing placed in the power of the doer, a thing both great and easy, a crown of peace without the risk of persecution; the true and greatest gift of God, needful for the weak, glorious for the strong, assisted by which the Christian accomplishes spiritual grace, deserves well of Christ the Judge, accounts God his debtor. For this palm of works of salvation let us gladly and readily strive; let us all, in the struggle of righteousness, run with God and Christ looking on; and let us who have already begun to be

Hermas and other earlier writings exhort, Cyprian emphasizies that the wealthy are to use what they have, not to ascend the *cursus honorum* through traditional patronage, but for the sake of the powerless in pursuit of the honor that only God gives.

Retaliation Rejected

Cyprian also follows earlier teaching by rejecting the retaliation sanctioned for males by society. Again and again, he prohibited such actions, which were often reckoned as a necessity to protect one's reputation. This refusal is evident in his discourse to Demetrius, a non-Christian friend, when he describes the Christians' response to their persecutors:

> "And because we may not hate, and we please God more by rendering no return for wrong, we exhort you while you have the power, while there yet remains to you something of life, to make satisfaction to God, and to emerge from the abyss of darkling superstition into the bright light of true religion. We do not envy your comforts, nor do we conceal the divine benefits. We repay kindness for your hatred; and for the torments and penalties which are inflicted on us, we point out to you the ways of salvation. Believe and live, and do ye who persecute us in time rejoice with us for eternity" (*To Demetrius* 25).[770]

Rather than seeking retribution, they respond with kindness and point their persecutors to "the ways of salvation;" in the face of violence, Christians respond in a way that would have been perceived as weak (26). He takes for granted this approach in his discourse to believers *On the Advantage of Patience*:

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greater than this life and the world, slacken our course by no desire of this life and of this world. If the day shall find us, whether it be the day of reward or of persecution, furnished, if swift, if running in this contest of charity, the Lord will never fail of giving a reward for our merits: in peace He will give to us who conquer, a white crown for our labours; in persecution, He will accompany it with a purple one for our passion" (26).

[770] Cyprian, *To Demetrius* 25: "Et quia odisse non licet nobis et sic Deo plus placemus, dum nullam pro iniuria uicem reddimus, hortamur, dum facultas adest, dum adhuc aliquid de saeculo superset, Deo satisfacere et ad uerae reigionis candidam lucem de profundo tenebrosae superstitionis emergere. Non inuidemus commodis uestris nec beneficia diuina celamus. Odiis uestris beniuolentiam reddimus et pro tormentis ac suppliciis quae nobis inferuntur salutis itinera monstramus. Credite et uiuite et qui nos ad tempus persequimini in aeternum gaudete nobiscum" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

> "What beyond;—that you should not swear nor curse; that you should not seek again your goods when taken from you; that, when you receive a buffet, you should give your other cheek to the smiter; that you should forgive a brother who sins against you, not only seven times, but seventy times seven times, but, moreover, all his sins altogether; that you should love your enemies; that you should offer prayer for your adversaries and persecutors? Can you accomplish these things unless you maintain the steadfastness of patience and endurance?" (16).[771]

Cyprian's point may be distilled to one simple question: how can they fulfill their responsibility not to retaliate and rather return honor for dishonor without patience? In the process, he reveals that such face-diminishing, honor-sharing behavior was expected within the Christian community. Cyprian therefore continues in a tradition of challenging male socialization that traces back to Jesus and Paul.

Conclusion

Significant continuities and discontinuities exist between Cyprian of Carthage and earlier Christian writings. The challenge of the times and serious opposition from within led him to embrace a hierarchical approach to Christian community that created a significant divide between clergy and laity. The clergy, including the bishop, had power and prestige; and the laity could achieve honor through sanctioned paths such as charity, continence, and, above all, martyrdom. By emphasizing hierarchy, he embraced a perspective more akin to Clement than to Jesus and Paul.

At the same time, Cyprian emphasized the honor of faithful Christian confession and martyrdom; this was in response to the persecution from without and the challenges he faced

[771] Cyprian, *On the Advantage of Patience* 16: "Quid deinde, ut non iures neque maledicas, ut tua ablata non repetas, ut accepta alapa et alteram maxilliam uerberanti praebeas, ut fratri in te peccanti non tantum septuagies septies sed omnia omnino peccata dimittas, ut diligas inimicos tuos, ut pro aduersiriis et persecutoribus precem facias? Poterisne ista perferre nisi patientiae et tolerantiae firmitate?" (Diercks and Clarke, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*). Translation from Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

within the church. As bishop of Carthage, he walked a fine line, exhorting the imprisoned to faithful confession while seeking to diminish the influence of many martyrs by blurring the distinctions between literal martyrdom and other forms of faithful confession. The popular embrace of martyrdom in Rome, Carthage, and perhaps other Christian circles required him to walk this line; he could not contradict what so many had seen with their own eyes—that death in the arena for Christ's sake was triumph! In this he both benefitted and suffered from the heritage of *The Passion of Perpetua* and Tertullian; martyrdom was honorable—and he emphasized this with the rich imagery he inherited of contest and battle. But, like the faithful dead in Saturus' vision, martyrs and confessors exercised sufficient authority to threaten a bishop; one wonders what might have occurred in an encounter between Cyprian and Perpetua, who persistently challenged hierarchy and patriarchy!

Yet, Cyprian followed *Perpetua* and Tertullian in acknowledging new avenues for women in regard to honor. By virtue of their continence, women could have "the glory of heaven" in the present age—a high honor. At the same time, as Cyprian acknowledged, the path of martyrdom also enabled them to achieve honor previously exclusive to men.

While Cyprian embraced hierarchy and functioned in the church in Carthage and North Africa as a patron, he taught those with wealth to spend it in ways that diverged from cultural norms. Rather than using their wealth to ascend the *cursus honorum*, they were instructed to be charitable and thus transfer their "earthly patrimonies" to heavenly ones; they were to humbly use their power for the sake of others.

Similar to other, earlier writings, Cyprian embraced the challenge to traditional honor values first expressed by Jesus and Paul by vacating the playing field in honor competition through non-retaliation. It was a way of relating that continued to resonate in years to come.

CONCLUSION: THIRD CENTURY CARTHAGE

After a great deal of silence and very little information about the church in Carthage, the third century saw an explosion of literature related to the burgeoning Christian movement. Some of the most significant sources, *The Passion of Perpetua* and the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian reveal a great deal about the Christian challenge to traditional honor and shame values in third century North Africa.

The continuities among the three are significant. In much the same way as Ignatius, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons," *Perpetua,* Tertullian, and Cyprian all emphasize the honor of martyrdom and frequently do so with the imagery of contest or battle. As with prior works, those who suffer are not merely victims but worthy participants in a very public encounter; in the same way, death is victory with great reward and honor. *Perpetua* and the works of Cyprian both indicate that martyrs occupy a prestigious place in the community and employ *beatus* exclusively to describe them as honorable; *Perpetua*, especially in the dream of Saturus, highlights this at a time when they were just beginning to exercise influence, while the bishop Cyprian is forced to deal with the challenges created by that popular perception of authority.

In a time where Christians suffered more and more for their profession, both Tertullian and Cyprian refused retaliation and urged the vacating of responding to the honor challenge. This continued with earlier Christian tradition that had begun with Jesus and was weaved throughout later writings.

All three writings, in their own way, demonstrated how women had gained new avenues for honor within the Christian movement in third century Carthage. Tertullian would stress the honor of continence for women and, as he often did, Cyprian followed the same path. In the

same way, all three show martyrdom offering women the potential for great honor within the church. Indeed, *Perpetua*, with its empowered noble and slave women, demonstrates the threat such developments posed to family, civil, and ecclesiastical authority. It is perhaps not so surprising, therefore, that Cyprian would adopt a hierarchical perspective to ensure order and unity within the church—and, perhaps, to reduce grounds for hostility from outsiders. The influential bishop of Carthage judged it wise to sacrifice the shared honor of all believers to protect his flock and for the sake of unity and order.

CONCLUSION

> [Christ Jesus], although he existed in the form of god, did not consider equality with God something to be exploited, but he emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God also exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.[772]
>
> Paul to the Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus of Nazareth presented a fundamental critique to his society's deeply embedded honor and shame values. Millions of people would eventually embrace his perspective; among them, Paul of Tarsus introduced what amounted to an inversion of dominant cultural values in regard to who gets honor and what behavior is honorable in the communities he established throughout the Mediterranean region. Jesus' challenge continued in the centuries that followed, though it often changed in response to pivotal events and the influence of the dominant culture.

This changing challenge begs fundamental questions. How did the different dimensions of the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values develop over time? What influenced the trajectory of their development?

[772] Philippians 2:6-11: "ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

As I have shown, the early Christian critique of these deeply held values changes significantly at the end of the canonical writings. Thus, I conclude this study by attempting to explain how the challenge to honor values developed after the canonical tradition.

Trajectories of the Early Christian Honor Challenge

Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus articulated a provocative critique of societal values that would persist and develop throughout the Mediterranean region, well into the middle of the third century. Yet, what was honorable and who received honor did not always remain consistent. Nevertheless, there are recognizable continuities between the challenge that Jesus and Paul presented and that of later sources.

Many of the sanctioned behaviors remained consistent throughout. However, the movement gradually shifted from giving honor to everyone to a hierarchy that gave prestige to those closest to the top of the social strata.

Non-Retaliation

Perhaps the most consistent, fixed critique of honor and shame values by the early Christians was found in the command not to retaliate. Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek and not respond when affronted (Lk 6:29) had serious consequences for his male listeners who were responsible to defend their honor in the public. Despite this, Jesus urged his followers to avoid competing for honor in their practice of table fellowship (cf. Lk 14:11) and beyond. Not only did canonical writers such as Paul (1 Thess 5:14-15; Rom 12:17-19) and the author of 1 Peter (3:9) follow this teaching, but later sources such as *The Didache* (1.3-4), Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 2.32.1), *The Epistle to Diognetus* (5.11, 15), Tertullian (*Apology* 31.1, 2; 46.14-16), and

Cyprian (*To Demetrius* 25; *On the Advantage of Patience* 16) did as well; this value reached a wide geographical and extended deep into the third century.

This new perspective would inspire Paul (Rom 12:10), 1 Peter (2:17), and Tertullian (*Apology* 31.2) to instruct their audiences to give honor to others, often by "blessing" them.

God's Impartiality

The Mediterranean world in antiquity judged people based on externals and their standing within the community, but God's impartiality was embraced within the Christian movement from its earliest period. Jesus taught that God gave his grace to both the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45) and demonstrated this perspective through his radically-inclusive table fellowship. In the same way, Paul stressed Yahweh's impartiality (Rom 2:9-11; Gal 2:11). Revelation shows continuity, asserting that God's judgment and wrath would come equally on "the small and the great" (Revelation 20:12). *The Didache* (4.3, 10), *The Epistle of Barnabas* (4.12), and Tertullian (*Apology* 36.2-4) make similar statements about God's impartiality. In the same way, Paul (Gal 2:6), *The Didache* (4.3), *The Epistle of Barnabas* (20.3), and Tertullian (*Apology* 36.2-4) all conclude that the necessary response for believers, perhaps in light of God's impartiality, was to act or judge impartially; the admonition to "honor all men" in 1 Peter 2:17 appears to have been offered from this perspective.

Power for the Sake of Others

One of the profound ways that Jesus' table fellowship influenced his followers was through his teaching that the wealthy should use their tables (and ultimately their power) for the sake of others (Lk 14:13-14). Paul of Tarsus embraced this, and highlighted the example of

Christ to teach the communities he founded not to exploit their power in pursuit of the next step in the *cursus honorum*, but to use it to humbly serve others (Phil 2:6-11). In the same way, Paul presents Christ as his example of costly giving—giving away everything as an alternative to retaining wealth for patronage (2 Cor 8:9).

Later writers embrace this honor-sharing perspective to varying degrees. *First Clement* envisions wealthy leaders in the role of patrons, who give to poor Christians expecting honor in return (21:4-6, 8; 38.1-2); the writing appeals to his audience's sensibilities about patronage to argue for reinstatement of prior leaders (3.3; 38.1-2), which indicates that the perspective diverged from the free giving that Jesus and Paul envisioned. On the other hand, *The Shepherd of Hermas* follows more closely with Jesus and Paul by emphasizing how the wealthy freedmen and women who often used their resources to improve their social standing were now to use it to purchase "souls that are in distress" (50.8); furthermore, it describes the relationship between rich and poor as one of mutuality, since both are "slaves" of the same Master (51, 52). The noble woman Perpetua would provide a vivid example of this by lifting the slave girl Felicitas off the ground in the arena as they awaited their execution (*The Passion of Perpetua* 20.6). Tertullian also describes wealthy Christians using their power for poor Christians through their practice of shared meals (*Apology* 39.16). Finally, while his practice of patronage often functioned to consolidate his influence and gain prestige, Cyprian urges the wealthy on numerous occasions to use their power for the sake of the poor (*On the Mortality* 12, 16; *On Works and Almsgiving* 26) and compares such behavior to acquiring "heavenly patrimonies" (*On the Mortality 26*).

Humility, the Slave's Virtue

Humility was closely aligned with this way of using power. While humility was rejected by Roman elites and identified as a servile virtue, employed to describe slaves, the early Christians used it again and again to describe an honor-sharing way of life; it was especially required among the movement's leaders and expected of the powerful. Throughout the literature, they emphasized that humility was honorable and that its foils, pride and self-exaltation, were opposed by God.

This virtue, which is rightfully traced to Jesus, is ubiquitous in the sources. Jesus' honor-sharing table fellowship embodied this again and again, and is most aptly demonstrated with Luke's remembrance of him saying at the Lord's meal, "Who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? But I am among you as one who serves" (22:27).[773] Jesus is also remembered as describing himself as humble (Mt 11:29) and as demonstrating humility (Phil 2:8; cf. 2 Cor 10:1). Paul himself became more explicit in applying this countercultural virtue, embodying it in his ministry to the Corinthian community (2 Cor 4:5; 11:7) and describing Jesus in the same way (Phil 2:7-8). First Peter instructs its audience to "clothe" themselves in humility toward one another rather than being proud (5:5-6). *The Didache* (3.9) and *The Epistle of Barnabas* (19.3, 6) both exhort to this virtue. By the time *1 Clement* was written, it had become widely accepted that Clement could appeal to this virtue to urge his Corinthian audience to reinstate prior leaders to their positions of authority (16.1-2; 19.1-2); his call to exercise humility to bring the non-elites in line rather than trumpeting honor-sharing leadership diverges from its use in earlier writings. Irenaeus rejects "self-exaltation" and embraces humility in his challenge to heterodox teachings that claimed elite knowledge (*Against*

[773] Luke 22:27: "τίς γὰρ μείζων, ὁ ἀνακείμενος ἢ ὁ διακονῶν; οὐχὶ ὁ ἀνακείμενος; ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν εἰμι ὡς ὁ διακονῶν" (Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*). My translation from the Greek text.

Heresies 2.6.4; 2.11.2). Finally, Cyprian praises humility as characteristic of some of the wealthy who aided the poor in the church (*Ep.* 33.2.1)

The High, Shared Honor of Those in Christ

Perhaps most distinctive about the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values was the way in which everyone in the community was worthy of honor. To the question, "Who gets honor?" the answer, especially in the earliest period, was resounding: "Everyone!"

Jesus of Nazareth and the canonical writings blazed a trail that later sources would follow to varying degrees. The radically inclusive, status-leveling, anti-hierarchical table fellowship that Jesus practiced left a deep impression on his followers and also his detractors, as the slogan about his eating habits from Matthew 11:19 appears to demonstrate. Paul of Tarsus was clearly influenced by Jesus' behavior, as his radically inclusive, anti-hierarchical table demonstrates (Gal 2:11ff.; 1 Cor 11:17-34); he goes even farther than his lord by sharing a table with Gentiles. Fittingly, then, he trumpets the high honor of all those in Christ as God's sons (Gal 4:1-7; Rom 8:18-37), a truth that he attaches to the baptismal tradition he employs with his converts (Gal 3:26-29). First Peter emphasizes this high, shared honor most poignantly as it describes its audience as a "chosen people" and a "spiritual house (hold)" (2:4-10). In the same way, Revelation provides vivid images of the honor of the saints, those who overcome with the Lamb: they will gain a rich patrimony as God's children (21:7), overcome as champions (12:10), and ultimately to reign with Christ (5:10). Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation all emphasize the high honor of those in Christ—frequently through the kinship metaphor—and thus provide the resources for them to continue an honor-sharing lifestyle despite the costs and to remain faithful in the face of shaming persecution.

While later writings assert that all those in Christ share the same, high honor, many revert to practices that were in conflict with the challenge but sanctioned by the broader culture. *The Didache,* for example, restricts the Lord's meal to those who have been baptized (9.5). *The Epistle of Barnabas* emphasizes that believers are God's "sons and daughters" (1.1) and "heirs of the covenant" (6.9; 13.1), but the line of exclusion with Judeans is harsher than anything found in the canonical writings. The hierarchical perspective implicit and explicit in *1 Clement* forsakes the earlier honor challenge; as with broader society, Clement reserves prestige for those at the top and envisions leaders as honored patrons within the church (21:4-6, 8; 38.1-2). *The Shepherd of Hermas* offers a mixed perspective, ordering its own hierarchy differently than does Clement, but emphasizing mutuality in its use of the term "slaves of God" (51:2, 4). Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* and Irenaeus in their distinct circumstances embrace the shared honor of all believers. *The Passion of Perpetua* retains continuities with the early challenge: Perpetua's challenge to political, patriarchal, and ecclesiastical authority and her public embrace of slaves as fictive kin makes *The Passion* a worthy heir of prior writings. Tertullian's description of the church's shared meals that give preference to the lowly (*Apology* 39.16) parallels the shared honor and table practiced and taught by Jesus and Paul. Finally, Cyprian of Carthage with his characteristically patriarchal and hierarchical perspective chooses a course more akin to *1 Clement* rather than Paul, emphasizing hierarchy, including a clear divide between clergy and laity (*Ep*. 3.1, 3; 14.3; 16.1; 30.5; 33.1; 59.13) and a few sanctioned paths of honor for laypeople (*Ep*. 30.5; 33.1; 59.13; *On the Dress of Virgins* 3, 21).

The change over time in this area is significant: what began as a movement that emphasized the high, shared honor of all in Christ as God's children, gradually became a

hierarchical structure that reserved honor for those at the top. Jesus' teaching and example were compelling, but the pull of the society's deeply-embedded values would prove irresistible.

Women and the Early Christian Challenge to Traditional Honor Values

The early Christian critique of traditional honor values enhanced the standing of women, but its shape changed as the broader challenge changed. Perhaps the most significant example of the early challenge is Paul's use of the baptismal tradition in Galatians 3:26-29, where he declares that they are all "sons of God" in Christ and heirs of the promise of Abraham, and that there is "no male nor female" in Christ; women as well as men shared the high ascribed honor of being in Christ as evidenced through their initiation into the community. In a departure from contemporary writers, Paul addresses women as free moral agents; from time to time he exhorts women not to exercise their new standing in ways that would bring shame to others (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-36), but this is best understood in view of their already elevated status. First Peter follows Paul, elevating women with all who were built into the spiritual house (hold) (2:5); at the same time, though wives had new freedom and honor, they were called to "submit themselves" to their unbelieving husbands for the sake of their profession (3:1-6).

The extra-canonical writings, by and large, see a shift in this regard. *First Clement*, with its hierarchical, patriarchal perspective subordinates women to their *pater familias* and (male) church leaders, who receive honor in the community (21.4-8). Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* shares a perspective more akin to Paul, embedding wives in their husbands but addressing unattached women as moral agents (4.1-6.1).

Changing times and circumstances provided new opportunities for women to enhance their standing. "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" presents the martyred slave

woman Blandina as the example par excellence of the early Christian inversion of honor values, who though weak had gained great glory with God (5.1.17). Perpetua stands as an honorable, empowered woman who chooses the glory of martyrdom for Christ's sake over the sanctioned path of bearing and raising an honorable son; her high standing is a direct result of her valiant, faithful witness for Christ through her "contest" in the arena (*The Passion of Perpetua* 10.5-14; 21.11). Tertullian envisions similar avenues leading to honor for women, especially continence (*To My Wife* 1.4.3-5). But the emphasis is not on the high standing they had in Christ, but rather deeds that achieve honor; Cyprian of Carthage makes this explicit by describing women as achieving honor in the stratified, Christian community through martyrdom (*On the Lapsed* 2) and continence (*On the Dress of Virgins* 20, 21). In this way, the enhanced standing of women in the church depended on the broader structure of the community: the earlier structure, which was compared to a family, gave honor to all in Christ, while the later hierarchy reserved honor for those who had ascended what was akin to a *cursus honorum.*

The Honor of Suffering for Christ

One key dimension of early Christian reversal of honor and shame values was the assertion that suffering for their profession was honorable; this perspective would provide a strong counter to the dominant culture's attempts at social control. What began with Jesus himself (Mt 5:11) continued to Paul, who described suffering for Christ as a "contest" (ἀγών) and privilege they were granted (Phil 1:29-30). First Peter employs *makarisms* to make the same point—suffering as a Christian was honorable (3:14; 4:14).

Revelation would continue what other canonical sources started while precipitating a fundamental shift in how the challenge was communicated. At the heart of the argument, the

examples of the Lamb who was slain (5:7) and the victorious martyrs (12:10; 15:2-4) exalted to a place of honor demonstrate that faithful witness in the face of satanic opposition was a worthy path—this perspective is consistent with earlier writings. The Apocalypse, like 1 Peter, utilizes *makarisms* to emphasize the honor of suffering for Christ; the significance of its use is demonstrated by the fact that they are employed seven times (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Furthermore, with Paul and 1 Peter, Revelation associates the coming honor restoration, for Christians who had been exposed to shame on account of their faith, with the exaltation and return of Christ (1:5-7; 2:26-27; 5:7, 10), who himself had been humiliated at the cross. All of these writings describe suffering for Christ as honorable and emphasize the glory that would come to them when the Lord returned for all to see; this was a corporate eschatology, inextricably linked to Christ.

But Revelation also prepares the way for a more individualized eschatology that underlined the death of martyrs as the critical, honor-transforming event and had little to no connection to Christ's shameful death or return in glory. Honor thus redounds to the martyrs at death in the writing (11:12; 15:2-4)—because, just as it is for the Lamb, death is victory (5:5-7). The writings that followed would embrace a similar vision to that of Revelation with its martial imagery and its uncompromising vision of Christian discipleship in a violent, oppressive empire.

The Apocalypse's great influence on later writings began with the sources that originated in or near Asia. Ignatius of Antioch stresses the honor of suffering for Christ and expresses great desire for martyrdom, viewing it as a glorious path in which God would triumph and Satan would be defeated. Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* not only concludes that suffering for their profession is honorable, but he employs the word μακάριος, which was broadly used to describe behavior that God honors, to exclusively describe martyrs; 1 Peter and Revelation had

previously used the word in their *makarisms* about suffering for Christ. Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* also follows Revelation and earlier sources through its emphasis on the honor that would come to believers at the return of Christ. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and "The Letter from the Churches of Vienne and Lyons" demonstrate strong continuity with Revelation's challenge: faithful witness and martyrdom are described as noble contest against powerful opponents, honor accrues to those who suffer, μακάριος is used exclusively to describe martyrs, and death is victory! While *The Shepherd of Hermas* does not call for martyrdom, it does continue the broader challenge to authorities' attempts at social control, describing suffering for Christ as honorable. In this context, where Christians had gained a reputation for despising death, *The Epistle to Diognetus* asserted to its non-Christian recipient that the martyrs' ordeals in the arena actually demonstrated that suffering for their profession was full of glory.

The North African sources followed Revelation and subsequent writings. In a context that faced increasing persecution, the challenge intensified and continued through the lens of individualized eschatology; the humiliating death and honor-restoring exaltation and return of Christ was forgotten. *The Passion of Perpetua* described martyrdom as a contest, presenting those who suffered, including women, as accruing honor and gaining prestige through (and at) their courageous death in the arena (10); *beatus*, the Latin equivalent of μακάριος, is used exclusively to describe the martyrs as honorable (14.1; 21.11). The martyrs were welcomed into the presence of God and asked to arbitrate between rival leaders (14). Tertullian employs similar themes, first presenting both suffering and martyrdom for Christ's sake as honorable in early writings and later describing martyrdom as the exclusive path to honor—which would come at death, when they were crowned (*To the Martyrs* 3.3). Significantly, Tertullian appeals to Revelation on more than one occasion to support his conclusion about the honor of martyrdom,

interpreting the imagery of the Apocalypse to present death for Christ in terms of war and also contest (*Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* 12.9-10; *On Flight in Times of Persecution* 1.5). Cyprian, who follows decades later, would conclude that both suffering for Christ and martyrdom were honorable (*Ep.* 10.1.1; 28.1.1, 2). With the earlier writings, he would use the imagery of battle (*Ep.* 10.1.1; 28.1.1), contest (*Ep.* 10.2.2; 10.4.1, 3; 37.3.1; 58.8.1; 80.2), and crowns (*Ep.* 10.1.1; 10.4.1; 28.1.1, 2) to describe the glory and honor that accrued to believers at the time of their confession and martyrdom; he also uses the superlative of *beatus*, *beatissimi*, exclusively to describe martyrs as honorable (for example, *Ep.* 10.1.1; 10.4.1; 28.1.1). The numerous letters Cyprian exchanged with confessors in Rome and North Africa indicate that the imagery he and earlier authors employed had its desired effect among recipients (*Epistles* 10, 28, 30, 31, 76, 77, 78, and 79).

Cyprian's writings had a similar, desired effect upon listeners as had earlier writings by insulating them against the authorities' attempts at social control. However, Cyprian differed from the earliest writings in another significant way: while Paul, 1 Peter, and Revelation describe suffering for Christ as honorable, the absence of a hierarchal vision of community prevents them from seeing such suffering as a way of achieving a place of honor in the community. Conversely, Cyprian assumes and appears to be forced to reckon with the reality that confession and martyrdom elevated individuals in the church's hierarchy. Saturus' dream (from *The Passion of Perpetua* 14) of a Carthaginian bishop and deacon at Perpetua's feet, pleading for her to judge between them, appears to present a similar vision to that of Cyprian. *The Shepherd of Hermas*, written a century or so earlier than when Cyprian served as bishop of Carthage, shares his hierarchal perspective and elevates the persecuted because of their suffering for Christ (9.7-9; 13-14).

Honor Challenge and Myth in the Earliest Tradition

The vision of Jesus, Paul, and other canonical sources represents a complete reconfiguration of first-century Mediterranean honor values. The audience changed from humans to God, whose concerns diverged significantly from that of pagan deities. Everyone had a seat at the table. Previously shameful behavior was identified as honorable. Humiliating persecution would actually result in great glory for those who suffered, beginning with the crucified Jesus.

All of this begs a significant question: What explains their change in perspective? Jesus had been executed in the most shameful and humiliating way, dying a slave's death. Before that, he had lived a life that sounded a discordant note among his contemporaries—sharing a meal with anyone who would eat with him, refusing to retaliate when affronted, and failing to pursue honor through expected, male avenues. What causes people to forsake the world's way of pursuing and distributing honor to follow such a leader and embrace a similar lifestyle?

It only makes sense if they had encountered Jesus alive after he was crucified, such as Paul on the road to Damascus and John on the Lord's Day at the beginning of his Apocalypse. Jesus' way of life and shameful death are only honorable if death is not the end. Paul had seen that Yahweh exalted him precisely because of his way of life and death (Phil 2:9); Revelation envisions him as the Lamb, accepting worship in the presence of the throne precisely because he was slaughtered (Rev 5:5-14).

The canonical tradition's challenge to dominant honor and shame values was also closely connected to the understanding of Yahweh as Father and Jesus' followers as a new family or household. All were welcome to the family table, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, and status. All shared the same honor which was accrued in relationship with God through Christ. Honor-

sharing and potentially face-diminishing behavior could be expected, and shaming persecution endured, because all drew from vast, limitless resources as heirs of God with all the rights that sons possess. This represented a fundamentally different understanding of divine power than that of contemporary, Mediterranean religions.

A Changing Challenge

The critique the early Christians brought to these deeply held values changed with time. Though they were in no way linear, these changes are so significant and fundamental that they cannot be explained solely by genre or situation. So, what explains how the challenge to honor values developed, especially after the continuity among the canonical writings?

The Challenge of the Times

Changing circumstances do not fully explain how the early Christian challenge to honor values developed, but they frequently precipitated and often shaped its development. J. P. Burns' observation about the development of North African theology is instructive:

> "The foundational contributions of the North African theologians - Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine - to the development of Latin Christian thought were nearly all immediately related to problems of Christian life in the church. Such theology can best be interpreted, appreciated and even appropriated by understanding it within the context of its original development."[774]

Such is also the case of early Christianity's distinctive honor values; it is the "problems of Christian life" that influence the values' development. Clement's retreat from the challenge others embraced in regard to shared honor is precipitated by a schism in Corinth. Cyprian's strong emphasis on hierarchy and power-consolidating, prestige-building patronage came in

[774] J. P. Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), viii.

response to Imperial persecution from without and rival leaders within the church. In the cases of Clement and Cyprian, both employed the best methods they had at their disposal; as men near the top of the social pyramid, they turned to approaches that were expected of those with elite social status. Hierarchy served the order and unity that they viewed as desirable, but negated the shared honor of everyone in the family of faith presented by Jesus and the canonical writers.

Historical circumstances did more than precipitate the changes that occurred related to the honor of suffering for Christ. Intensifying persecution and the disquieting, visible deaths of Christians in the arena because of their profession, exerted significant influence on how the challenge developed. Earlier writings had underscored the honor of suffering for the Christian profession, but things began to change when persecution spread and greater numbers were martyred. The spectacle brought martyrs like Perpetua to the forefront;[775] when people watched them die in the arena, going willingly to their demise, the imagery of contest resonated. The development of this challenge indicates that the witnesses of *The Passion of Perpetua* and Tertullian were not alone when they were moved by the martyrs; how could they deny what they saw in the arena? As bishop of Carthage, Cyprian was left to deal with the resulting situation: What was the best way for him to retain his authority as bishop against multiple rivals? And how would he encourage the faithful who feared dying for their confession outside the arena? Would it mean a loss of honor? It seems undeniable that the spectacle of martyrdom drove the development of this honor value.[776]

The Distance between Canonical and Later Sources

[775] Bowersock (*Martyrdom and Rome,* 50) underscores the significance of this public dimension in martyrdom: "Spectacle was an important element in martyrdom in the early Church. By trying to set an example, the Roman magistrates provided an entertainment. No early martyr was taken aside discreetly and executed out of sight, just as no interrogations were conducted in small towns."

[776] Indeed, there is no evidence of *acta martyrum* written about those who die in prison.

After observing the shift in perspectives that occurs over time, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a variety of factors created a distance between the honor challenge of canonical writings and later writings. In particular, the personal and temporal separation has to be acknowledged.

Since Jesus of Nazareth is rightly believed to be behind the early Christian critique of these deeply embedded values, it makes sense that distance from him could have an impact. As time went on, his teaching and way of life became more and more remote. Furthermore, the later writers address Jesus' humanity, suffering, and honor-sharing life less and less, but appeal to Christ's divinity and authority more and more frequently; his human attributes recede to the background while his divine attributes come to the foreground. Since the early Christian movement inverted honor values and emphasized God's heart for the weak and powerless, it is easy to see how the later Christology from above could blunt the challenge. *First Clement* is a perfect example of this, with its repeated mention of Christ as patron and the rare association of him with virtues like humility or using power for the sake of others.

Personal distance from apostles like Paul and others may have also had an impact. Not only did such people share authoritative teaching from Jesus, but they had familiarity with him and imitated his way of life. While the canonical tradition contains significant teaching from Jesus and his apostles, later Christians would have missed a simple and significant element: the experience of people who lived in conformity with the early Christian challenge to honor and shame values. This may be why the more explicit elements of the challenge such as non-retaliation and the honor of suffering remain consistent, while other, less explicit ones do not. Perhaps this is why Polycarp of Smyrna's *Letter to the Philippians* emerges as most similar to

the canonical writings among later works—since Polycarp is believed to have had contact with the apostle John in his early years in Asia.

The temporal distance appears to play into the way the sources present the honor of suffering for Christ. In the canonical period, it is attached to the glory that would accrue to believers in Christ's παρουσία. However, as time passed and expectation diminished, honor in suffering would be individualized, with martyrs "crowned" at their death.

As the movement grew, the shape of its challenge to these deeply embedded values would continue to change. Nevertheless, Christians would persist in critiquing society's conclusions about what behavior was honorable and who should receive honor. Jesus of Nazareth's honor-sharing life and humiliating death had left their mark.

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