

"Despising the Shame of the Cross": Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative

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ABSTRACT

The passion narrative in John 18-19 is profitably viewed in terms of the values of honor and shame. A model of this anthropological concept is presented, which stresses the form of the typical honor challenge (claim, challenge, riposte, and public verdict). This model then serves as a template for reading John 18-19 to surface the phenomena of honor and shame in that narrative and to interpret the endless confrontations described there in their appropriate cultural perspective. Thus from the narrator's point of view, Jesus maintains his honor and even gains more in his death; he is in no way shamed by the events.

I. INTRODUCTION

New Testament authors reflect the general perception of crucifixion in the Greco-Roman world as "shame" (Heb 12:2). Various classical authors give us a sense of the typical process of crucifixion, which at every step entailed progressive humiliation of the victim and loss of honor (Hengel: 22-32):

A. Crucifixion was considered the appropriate punishment for slaves (Cicero, In Verrem 2.5.168), bandits (Jos. War 2.253), prisoners of war (Jos. War 5.451) and revolutionaries (Jos. Ant. 17.295; see Hengel 1977:46-63).

B. Public trials ("misera est ignominia iudicorum publicorum," Cicero, Pro Rabinio 9-17) served as status degradation rituals, which labelled the accused as a shameful person.

C. Flogging and torture, especially the blinding of eyes and the shedding of blood, generally accompanied the sentence (Jos. War 5.449-51 & 3.321; Livy 22.13.19; 28.37.3; Seneca, On Anger 3.6; Philo, Flac. 72; Diod. Sic. 33.15.1; Plato, Gorgias 473bc & Republic 2.362e). Since, according to m. Mak. 3.12, scourging was done both to the front and back of the body, the victims were nude; often they befouled themselves with urine or excrement (3.14).

D. The condemned were forced to carry the cross beam (Plutarch, Delay 554B).

E. The victim's property, normally clothing, was confiscated; hence they were further shamed by being denuded (see Diod. Sic. 33.15.1).

F. The victim lost power and thus honor through pinioning of hands and arms, esp. the mutilation of being nailing to the cross (Philo, Post. 61; Somn. 2.213).

G. Executions served as crude forms of public entertainment, where the crowds ridiculed and mocked the victims (Philo, Sp. Leg. 3.160), who were affixed to crosses in odd and whimsical manner, including impalement (Seneca: Consol. ad Marciam 20.3; Josephus, War 5.451).

H. Death by crucifixion was often slow and protracted. The powerless victim suffered bodily distortions, loss of bodily control, and enlargement of the penis (Steinberg 1983:82-108). Ultimately they were deprived of life and thus the possibility of gaining satisfaction or vengeance.

I. In many cases, victims were denied honorable burial; corpses were left on display and devoured by carrion birds and scavenger animals (Pliny, H.N. 36.107-108).

Victims would thus experience themselves as progressively humiliated and stripped entirely of public respect or honor.

The issue, however, lies not in the brutal pain endured. For among the warrior elite, at least, the endurance of pain and suffering were marks of andreia or manly courage (e.g. Hercules' labors; Paul's hardship catalogues: e.g. 2 Cor 6:3-10; 11:23-33). Silence by the victim during torture was a mark of honor (see Isa 53:7; Cicero, In Verrem 2.5.162; Josephus, War 6.304). Mockery, loss of respect, and humiliation were the bitter parts; the loss of honor, the worst fate. Although the gospels record in varying degrees the physical torture of Jesus, they focus on the various attempts to dishonor him by spitting on him (Mark 14:65//Matt 26:67; see Mark 10:33-34), striking him in the face and head (Mark 14:65//Matt 26:67), ridiculing him (empaizô: Mark 15:20, 31; Matt 27:29, 31, 41), heaping insults upon him (oneidizô: Mark 15:32, 34; Matt 27:44), and treating him as though he were nothing (exouthenein, Luke 23:11; see Acts 4:11).

This study of the Johannine passion narrative views it precisely through the lenses of honor and shame. We suggest that despite all the shameful treatment of Jesus, he is portrayed, not only as maintaining his honor, but even gaining glory and prestige (Malina and Neyrey 1988:95-131). Far from being a status degradation ritual, his passion is seen as a status elevation ritual. This hypothesis entails a larger consideration, namely, the importance of honor and shame as pivotal values of the Mediterranean world (Malina 1981:25). We presume that the original audience would have perceived Jesus' passion in these terms.

Modern readers, however, are not cognizant of these pivotal cultural values. We understand neither the grammar of honor nor appreciate the social dynamics in which they play so important a part. If we would interpret the narrative of Jesus' death from the appropriate cultural point of view, we must attempt to see things through the lenses of ancient Mediterranean culture, which were those of honor and shame. In the cultural world of the New Testament, Jesus' death by crucifixion was acknowledged as a most shameful experience. Paul merely expressed what others perceived when he labelled the crucified Christ as a scandalon to Jews and môria to Greeks (1 Cor 1:23). The author of Hebrews explicitly calls the cross "shame" (aischynês, 12:2).

The gospels acknowledge that prophets are denied honor in their own villages (atimos, Mark 6:4//Matt 13:57). They tell of messengers sent to a vineyard, who are wounded in the head and treated shamefully (êtimasán, Mark 12:4). But the early Christians counted this type of public shame as honor: ". . . rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor (atimasthênai) for the name" (Acts 5:41). Honor and shame, then, are integral parts not only of the language patterns which describe the fate of Jesus and his disciples, but a basic element in the way the Christian storyteller perceives and deals with suffering, rejection and death.

II. A BRIEF GRAMMAR OF HONOR AND SHAME

Greeks, Romans and Judeans all considered honor and shame as pivotal values in their cultures (Adkins, 1960; Malina, 1981; Gilmore, 1987). From Homer to Herodotus and from Pindar to Paul (Nagy: 222-242; Friedrich: 290), men lived and died in quest of honor, reputation, fame, approval and respect. Lexical definitions offer a wide range of overlapping meanings for honor/timê: (1) the price or value of something,

(2) respect paid to someone, (3) honorary office, (4) dignity or status, (5) honors or awards given someone (Schneider: 169-71). Paul Friedrich offers a social grammar of honor based on Greek epic poetry: "The structure of Iliadic honor can be stated in part as a larger network that includes propositions about honor and nine honor-linked values: power, wealth, magnanimity, personal loyalty, 'precedence,' sense of shame, fame or 'reputation,' courage, and excellence" (290).

A detailed grammar of honor can be found in Malina 1981: 25-50 and Malina and Neyrey 1991a:25-65. But a summary of it may aid readers unfamiliar with the topic. Honor comes to someone either by ascription by another (birth, adoption, appointment) or by one's own achievement. Achieved honor derives from benefaction (Luke 7:5; Diod. Sic., 6.1.2), military prowess, success at athletic games, and the like. In the warrior culture of Greece and Rome, honor accrues to prowess in battle (see David and Goliath) or endurance in labors (Heracles; see 2 Tim 4:7-8). Yet most commonly honor is acquired in the face-to-face game of challenge and riposte which makes up much of the daily life of individuals in villages and cities.

Honor resides in one's name, always an inherited name. Sons enjoy the honor of their father's name and membership in his clan. Hence, they are regularly identified as "the son of so-and-so" (e.g. 1 Sam 9:1-2; Ezra 7:1-6). Yet individuals might be called by honorific names such as "Rabbi" (Matt 23:7) or "Prophet" (John 9:17) or "Christ" (John 7:26). These labels, which are claims to precedence and honor, are likely to be bitterly contested.

Honor resides in certain public roles, statuses and offices. Fathers enjoy great honor in their households, which is sanctioned in the Ten Commandments. Most notably, honor was attached to offices such as king and high priest, as well as governor, proconsul and other civic or imperial offices. In the great tradition of the aristocrats, the hierarchical ranking of honor was clearly known (Garnsey: 221-71). But in the little tradition of peasants and artisans, such ranking was a matter of considerable debate and controversy, which we can observe in the squabbles over the seating at dinner tables (Luke 14:7-11).

Honor has "a strong material orientation" (Schneider: 170). That is, honor is expressed and measured by one's possessions which must needs be on display. Wealth in general denotes honor, not simply the possession of wealth, but its consumption and display: e.g. banquets, fine clothes, weapons, houses, etc. Hence it is not surprising to hear Josephus describing as "honor" the benefactions Vespasian bestowed on him: "raiment and other precious gifts" (War 3.408). Similarly he describes the honors given Daniel: "(The king) gave him purple to wear and put a chain of linked gold about his neck" (Ant. 10.240). Finally Josephus records Haman's suggestion to the Persian king on how to honor a friend: "If you wish to cover with glory the man whom you say you love, let him ride on horseback wearing the same dress as yourself, with a necklace of gold, and let one of your close friends precede him and proclaim throughout the whole city that this is the honour shown to him whom the king honours" (Ant. 11.254).

Anthropologists describe the physical body as a microcosm of the social body (Douglas: 115). The values and rules pertinent to the macrocosm are replicated in the way the physical body is perceived and treated. Let us examine how the body replicates honor. 1. The head and face are particular loci of personal honor and respect. A head is honored when crowned or anointed. Servants and courtiers honor a monarch by avoiding looking them in the face, that is, by the deep oriental bow. Comparably, to slap someone on the mouth, spit in their face, box their ears or strike their heads shames this member and so gives "affront" (Matt 26:67; Luke 22:63-64; Mark 15:17-20). 2. Clothing covers the dishonorable or shameful parts of the body (1 Cor 12:23-24), namely the genitals and the buttocks (Neyrey:??). Clothing, moreover, symbolizes honor: "Men are the glory of God and their clothes are the glory of men" (Derek Eretz Zuta). Elites signal their status by their clothing and adornment (Luke 7:25; see m. Yoma 7.5). Purple clothing was a particular mark of honor, worn by kings (Judg 8:26), priests (Exod 28:4-6; 39:1, 28-29; 1 Macc 10:20; 11:58), and nobles at court (Ezek 23:6; Esth 8:6; Dan 5:7; see Reinhold: 7-21, 48-61). Uniforms signal rank or office. Philo provides a striking example of the way clothing replicates honor in his description of Pharaoh's investiture of Joseph with symbols of status: ". . . royal seat, sacred robe, golden necklace, setting him on his second chariot, bade him go the round of the city with a crier walking in front who proclaimed the appointment" (Jos. 120). The costuming of Jesus in a purple robe and a crown of thorns mocks him with the normal trappings of honor. Being stripped of clothing, moreover, eliminates all marks of honor and

status; it also indicates a loss of power to cover and defend one's "shameful parts." 3. Bodily postures express honor. Masters sit at table, while servants stand and wait upon them (Luke 17:7-8; see 13:29). Twenty-four elders stand around the throne where God is seated; they fall down before him in worship (Rev 4:10). Proskynein describes a posture whereby someone bends low to kiss another, either on the hand or the foot; thus it comes to mean bowing before or showing respect for someone (Josephus, Ant. 11.209).

Yet in the perception of the ancients, honor, like all other goods, existed in quite limited supply (Foster: 304-5). There was only so much gold, so much strength, so much honor available. When someone achieved honor, it was thought to be at the expense of others. Philo, for example, condemns polytheism, because in honoring others as deities, the honor due to the true God is diminished: "God's honour is set at naught by those who deify mortals" (Ebr. 110; see Josephus, Ant. 4.32; War 1.559). When John's disciples lament to their master that Jesus is gaining more disciples and honor, they understand that Jesus' gain must be John's loss. John confirms this, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Thus claims to honor by someone will tend to be perceived as threats to the honor of others, and thus needs to be challenged, not acknowledged. In fact, two gospels state that it was out of envy that Jesus' enemies have handed him over (Mark 15:10//Matt 27:18; see John 11:47-48).

Philotimia or love of honor was a powerful driving force in antiquity. We are particularly interested in how this was played out in the rather ordinary circumstances of life. Honor must be both claimed and acknowledged. After all, it is the respect one has in the eyes of others. But honor claims are vulnerable to challenge, not acknowledgement. Challenges must be met with an appropriate riposte or honor is lost. All such claims, challenges, and ripostes take place in the public domain, and their verdict of success or failure determines the outcome of these games of challenge and riposte (Malina 1981:30-33; Malina and Neyrey 1991a:36-38, 49-51). Claim, challenge, riposte and verdict, then, constitute the formal elements in the endless contests for honor and respect.

Thus far we have discussed "honor," but we must be equally aware of "shame." Contempt, loss of face, defeat, and ridicule all describe shame, the loss of honor. The grammar of honor presented above can be reversed to describe "shame." Shame can be ascribed or achieved. In terms of ascribed shame, a magistrate may declare one guilty and so worthy of public flogging (2 Cor 11:23-25); a king may mock and treat one with contempt (Luke 23:11). God may declare one a "Fool!" (Luke 12:20). Thus elites and those in power may declare one honorless and worthy of contempt: ". . . exclude, revile, and cast out your name as evil" (Luke 6:22). Yet shame may be achieved by one's folly or by cowardice and failure to respond to a challenge. One may refuse to participate in the honor-gaining games characteristic of males, and thus bring contempt on oneself.

The bodily grammar for honor works also for shame. If the honorable parts of the body, the head and face, are struck, spat upon, slapped, blindfolded or otherwise maltreated, shame ensues. If the right arm, symbol of male power and strength, is bound, tied or nailed, the resulting powerlessness denotes shame. If one is publicly stripped naked, flogged, paraded before the crowds, and led through the streets, one is shamed. Shame results when one's blood is intentionally spilled, but especially when one is killed by another.

III. IRONY: TURNING SHAME INTO HONOR

Since there are two parties competing in the passion narrative, there are two perceptions of what is occurring. The enemies of Jesus bind, slap, spit upon, blindfold, flog, strip, and kill Jesus; their actions are all calculated to "mock" and "revile" him. In their eyes they have shamed Jesus. But the gospel, while it records these actions and gestures of shame, tells quite a different story. In the evangelist's eyes, Jesus' shame and humiliation is truly the account of his glory: "Ought not the Christ suffer and so enter into his glory" (Luke 24:26; see Acts 14:22; Heb 2:10). Indeed, in the Fourth Gospel, his death is regularly described as glory and glorification (John 7:39; 12:28; 17:5; see 21:19). Or, to paraphrase Paul, foolishness, weakness and shame in human eyes are wisdom, strength and honor in God's eyes (1 Cor 1:20, 25). Thus the story of Jesus' shame is ironically understood by his disciples as his "lifting up," his exaltation, his enthronement, in short, his honor. The issue might be rephrased: Who gets to judge whether the crucifixion is honor or shame? If the public verdict rests with the Judeans, then Jesus is shamed. But if God gives a

riposte or if Jesus demonstrates power by his death, then the community of believers renders Jesus a verdict of honor.

This ironic perspective is part and parcel of the principle that Jesus constantly narrates, that last is first, least is greatest, dead is alive, shame is honor (Duke 1985:95-116, 126-38). Hence, two perspectives need to be distinguished as we read the account of Jesus' crucifixion: in the eyes of outsiders and enemies, his crucifixion is unqualified shame! But in the eyes of his disciples, it is ironic honor! Let us now take these abstract notions of honor (and shame) and use them as an exciting and illuminating lens for perceiving the passion narrative of Jesus, the honorable one.

IV. HONOR AND SHAME IN JOHN 18-19

A. Arrest (18:1-11). Although capture and arrest normally denote dishonor, this narrative presents a scene of honor both displayed and maintained. First of all, honor means power and control (de la Potterie 1989: 29). In this regard, when the cohort approaches Jesus, he steps forward to take charge of the events. By claiming that "Jesus knew all that was to befall him" (18:4), the narrator signals Jesus' control of the situation (see 19:28). Moreover, he questions the powerful forces gathered against him: "Whom do you seek?" In the cultural scenario of honor and shame, the questioner generally acts in the challenging or commanding position (see Mark 11:27-33).

At his remark, "I am he," the soldiers "drew back and fell to the ground" (18:6), leaving Jesus standing. Honor is thus signalled by bodily posture. Commentators regularly note that Jesus' "I AM" can be read as the divine name which he is granted to use (Neyrey 1988:213-20). Falling to the ground characterizes human reactions in the presence of the glory of God (Ezek 1:28; 44:4) or at least an honor-bestowing posture in the presence of a superior person (Dan 2:46; Rev 1:17). At a minimum, Jesus enjoys such a prominent and honorable status that armies fall at his feet. Even if Dodd is correct that the narrator is drawing on psalms describing how one's foes stumble and fall when attacking (Dodd: 76-77), nevertheless some vindication or riposte to a challenge is evident. If this language describes Jesus' heavenly status, then he enjoys the same honor as God, an honor which God commands (5:23). To use God's name, "I AM," might be considered as an act of power; and honor is always attached to power.

The narrator repeats the sequence of events in 18:7-8, which doubles the impression of Jesus' strength and honor. His control of the situation extends even to his command about the safe departure of his disciples: "Let these others go" (18:8). Weak people do not tell a cohort of Roman soldiers what to do. This proves, moreover, that his word of honor is trustworthy: "This was to fulfil the word which he had spoken, 'I did not lose a single one of those you gave me'" (18:9). Thus the narrator presents Jesus firmly in control: knowing all that will happen, asking questions, controlling events, giving commands, and receiving profound respect from his would-be assailants. He is without doubt the most honorable person in the situation.

Jesus' commanding posture reminds the reader of the Noble Shepherd discourse, where he disavowed that he was a victim and claimed power even over death: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (10:18). Since power is one of the public indices of honor, Jesus' ability to protect his sheep as well as his power to lay down his life indicate that he suffers no shame whatever here. Nothing happens against his will, so he is in no way diminished.

Yet others in the narrative see the scene differently. Simon Peter draws his sword and strikes at one of the arresting crowd, which we must interpret as his riposte to the perceived challenge to Jesus' honor. In other circumstances, his action would be labelled an honorable act, namely, the defense of one's leader against an honor challenge. Jesus himself states this: "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, that I not be handed over to the Jews" (18:36). Normally failure to respond to a challenge is shameful, but here Jesus explains that it is precisely out of honor that he refuses to resist, that is, out of respect for the will of his Father: "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" (18:11). Peter's riposte, then, is

unnecessary; for, as obedient son, Jesus' honor is not threatened. Indeed, it belongs to the virtue of andreia or courage to endure what must be endured (Seeley: 117-41). And courage of this sort is an honorable thing.

B. Jewish Investigation (18:12-14, 19-24). Outsiders see only that Jesus has lost power: "The cohort seized Jesus and bound him" (18:12). His captors take him to the private chambers of Annas, a very powerful enemy, who questions Jesus. Recall that questions are generally challenges. When questioned, Jesus delivers a bold response: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together" (18:20). Jesus claims that he has acted as an honorable man, always appearing in the appropriate male space, the public arena, and speaking boldly and clearly. His parhêsia (bold speech) denotes courageous and honorable public behavior (see 1 Thess 2:2). In contrast, this gospel declares as shameful people who are afraid to speak openly about the Christ (9:22-23; 12:42; see Phil 1:20).

The narrative interprets Jesus' bold speech as a riposte to Annas' challenging questions. Jesus commands his interrogator, "Ask those who have heard me. They know what I said" (18:21). This occasions a severe counter-challenge from one of the officers standing by, who "struck Jesus with his hand" (v. 22; see 19:3). The gesture was surely a slap in the face, thus giving an "affront" to Jesus. It is similar to the blows given Jesus according to the synoptic accounts (Matt 26:67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-64; see Matt 5:39). But Jesus is not silenced or humbled as was Paul, when struck by Annas' servant (Acts 23:4-5). He gives an appropriate riposte, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (18:23). Thus he withstands the insult and continues to speak boldly, even having the last word.

C. Roman Trial (18:28-19:16). The very fact of being put on trial can itself be an honor challenge, simply because the accused experience their claims to honor (name, worth, reputation) to be publicly challenged. We modern people at times have idealized trials as occasions not only to clear one's name, but to put the system itself on trial, that is, to challenge the challenger. Our judicial process, moreover, functions on the presumption of innocence. Not so the ancients, where guilt was presumed. It was inherently shameful to be seized and publicly charged with wrongdoing, "This man...is an evildoer" (18:30).

The trial episode (18:28-19:16) can be described as an extended game of charge and refutation or challenge and riposte. This occurs on several levels. First, those who deliver Jesus engage in their own challenge-riposte game with Pilate. Pilate claims the honor of procurator and magistrate as he questions them ("What accusation?" 18:29). They challenge him by asserting their own power ("If this man were not an evildoer..." v. 30), which leads to Pilate's riposte ("Take him yourselves....," v. 31). For the moment Pilate wins, as they are forced to admit their own powerlessness and Pilate's power: "It is not lawful for us..." (v. 31). This challenge-riposte game between Pilate and the Judeans will continue in 18:39-40 and 19:6, 12-16. But the main contest focuses on the formal process of Jesus before Pilate, which is itself an elaborate game of challenge and riposte.

Commentators note the alternation of scenes in the trial from outside to inside, and even the chiasmic shape of the narrative. Raymond Brown (859) provides the following arrangement (for minor variations, Gibling, 1986:223).

1. Outside (xviii 28-32) 7. Outside (xix 12-16a)

Jews demand death Jews obtain death

2. Inside (xviii 33-38a) 6. Inside (xix 9-11)

Pilate questions Jesus Pilate talks with Jesus

about kingship about power

3. Outside (xviii 38b-40) 5. Outside (xix 4-8)

Pilate finds Jesus not guilty; Pilate finds Jesus not guilty;

choice of Barabbas "Behold the man"

4. Inside (xix 1-3)

Soldiers scourge Jesus

Commentators, moreover, are wont to contrast these scenes as "public" (outside) and "private" (inside). Yet the designation "private/inside" is misleading here, for we should not imagine Pilate and Jesus having a *tete-a-tete*. And even if the narrative action occurs "within" the Roman compound, it is still a "public" place occupied by Roman soldiers, and not the "private" world of the household (cf. 12:1-8; 13:3-5). Dodd's remark that there are two stages, "a front stage and a back" (96), seems more accurate. It helps to articulate that all events here are "public" and so honor is always at risk. Yet the narrative distinction between "going within" and "going out" serves to distinguish the various scenes and different audiences. The "outside" public scenes are the honor contests between Pilate and the Judeans. The so-called "inside" scenes, which comprise the *cognitio* of the trial between judge and the accused, are also public in that they occur in the public forum of the Roman courtyard or praetorium, whether this be the fortress Antonia (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.292) or the new palace of Herod (Benoit 1952:545-49). The "outside" crowds are informed of the results of the "inside" contest, which affects their challenge-riposte game with Pilate. The honor-shame dynamic, then, occurs on both "stages," but between different sets of contestants.

Trials under Roman jurisdiction have a formal structure which is helpful to note (Sherwin-White: 12-20; Neyrey, 1987:509-11):

Formal Elements of a Roman Trial 1st 2nd

1. arrest..... 18:1-11 -----
2. charges..... 18:28-32 19:7
3. judge's *cognitio*..... 18:33-38a 19:8-11
4. verdict..... 18:38b 19:12
5. judicial warning..... 19:1-6 -----
6. sentence..... ----- 19:13-16

This structure indicates that Jesus' trial went through two cycles of forensic process. It helps, moreover, to clarify the roles of Pilate, Jesus and the crowds, especially in terms of the four formal elements of an honor contest. The crowds, who function as the witnesses or accusers in the forensic process, *challenge* Jesus' *claims*. Pilate, the judge, examines these challenges and determines whether Jesus' claims are honorable or not. Jesus, who is on trial, is challenged precisely as to his honorable status.

Yet forensic process is only one formal way of describing the action in the narrative. Each of the two confrontations ("inside": Jesus vs Pilate; "outside": Pilate vs crowds) is similarly structured in terms of the social dynamics of honor challenges (claim/challenge/riposte/public verdict). Even as we spell out the forensic process which formally structures the narrative as a whole, we must attend to the specific differences in the challenge/riposte dynamics of the "inside" and "outside" scenes of the story, for which the following diagram might prove useful.

Inside Forum: Outside Forum:

The Trial of Jesus before Pilate The Struggle between Pilate and the Crowd

claim: Jesus' status *claim:* Pilate's authority

challenger: Pilate *challenger:* the crowds

riposte: Jesus' defense of *riposte:* Pilate solicits the crowd's disloyalty

being a king to God and loyalty to Caesar

public verdict: innocent *public verdict:* Pilate's title over the cross

Charges (18:29-33). This gospel mentions that Roman soldiers participated in the seizure of Jesus (18:3); their presence indicates that Jesus was in some sense arrested. The charges against him which Pilate investigates are formal challenges to his claims to honor and status: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (18:33; see also 19:7, 14, 19). From the beginning, Jesus has been acclaimed as a most honorable person, and so enjoys a singular portion of ascribed honor. On the basis of God's own prompting, John the Baptizer acclaimed him "Son of God" (1:34). Disciples acknowledge him as "the Messiah" (1:41) and "Son of God and King of Israel" (1:49). Even a leader of the Judeans accepts him as "a teacher come from God" (3:2). According to the story, various people acclaim him "savior of the world" (4:42), "prophet" (6:14; 9:17), "king" (6:15; 12:13-15), and "Christ" (7:26). In the game of honor and shame, all of this constitutes the claim of honor, the public identity and reputation of Jesus, which is now challenged in this trial.

Cognitio (18:33-38). The judge's cognitio of Jesus in his judicial quarters serves as the forum where Jesus' honor claims are both challenged and defended. On the level of rhetoric, Pilate asks questions which challenge Jesus, whose riposte is initially the clever strategy of answering a question with a question (see Mark 11:28-33; 12:14-16). Pilate challenges with a question: "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus parries with his own question: "Do you say this of your own accord ...?" Pilate asks more questions: "Am I a Jew?" . . . "What have you done?" . . . "So you are a king then?" . . . "What is truth?" On the narrative level, then, Pilate is perceived as asserting his own honor claims as the embodiment of Roman authority by his rhetorical posture as the figure whose duty it is to ask questions and so challenge others. This initial exchange sparkles with honor challenges. Pilate asks a question, presumably concerning the charge against Jesus. By questioning Pilate, Jesus might be said to be giving a riposte: "Do you say this of your own accord..." (v. 34). Pilate's response is not only scorn ("Am I a Jew?"), but a mockery of Jesus. How shameful, he points out, that "Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over" (v. 35). Thus, judge and accused, besides going through the formalities of a forensic process, spar and take the measure of each other -- very un-forensic behavior.

This sparring game quickly fades, for the narrator wishes to portray Jesus giving a solemn riposte to the challenges to his identity and authority. Pilate challenges Jesus' "kingship," a very noble and honorable status, which he vigorously defends. Twice he proclaims, "My kingship is not of this world" (18:36, 37). If his kingship is not of this world, it must belong to another world (8:23), that is, God's world, which is eternal, unchanging, and truly honorable. Although this "world" was once a worthy recipient of divine favor (3:16; 4:42; 10:36; 12:47), it quickly proved hostile to Jesus. He became an alien here in this world and met only challenge and opposition (1:9-10; Meeks, 1972:67-70). The world's hostility, then, constitutes an ongoing challenge to Jesus' honor. But the assertion that his kingdom is not of this world implies that he belongs to a better kingdom, which must triumph over the hostility experienced here. Although challenged on earth, Jesus belongs to a kingdom where he is honored as he should be (5:23; 17:5, 24; see 8:23).

This gospel speaks of a ruler of this world, who will be Jesus' chief challenger. But even this powerful figure "has no power over me" (14:30); he will be cast out (12:31) and judged (16:11). Thus Jesus boasted to his disciples, "I have overcome the world" (16:30). This powerful challenger appears at times to be Satan (Schnackenburg:2.391). But as the passion narrative progresses, even the Roman emperor will qualify as a rival of God (19:12, 15). Yet if Jesus' kingship were of this world, his followers would do the honorable thing and "fight, that I not be handed over to the Jews" (18:36, e.g. Peter). The vindicator of his kingship, then, must be a most powerful person also "not of this world," namely God. He will give the riposte for King Jesus (12:28; 17:1). But the claim that Jesus is a king stands defended: "You say that I am a king; for this I was born, and for this I have come into the world" (18:37). Jesus makes another claim that pertains to his kingship, "Every one who is of the truth hears my voice" (v. 37). This directly echoes the remarks about the shepherd in 10:3-4, 26-27 (Meeks 1967:66-67). If "shepherd" is a metaphor for king (i.e. David, the Royal Shepherd), then Jesus reaffirms his honor as king. Good and honorable people, he says, acknowledge this honor claim by "hearing my voice." Whether scornful or cynical (Brown: 869), Pilate's retort, "What is truth?," indicates that he rejects this claim.

Verdict (18:38b). The source of Jesus' honor, while not made explicit here, will shortly be made clear to the court (19:8-11). Yet the reader knows that Jesus enjoys maximum ascribed honor from the most honorable person in the universe, namely, God (see 5:36-38; 12:27-28). All that Jesus is, has and does comes from God (5:19-29). The reader knows that he comes from God and is returning to God (13:1-3; 17:1-5), where he will be glorified with the glory he had before the creation of the world. At this point in the trial, Jesus has given an adequate riposte to the challenge to his honor; he is a king and defends that claim. On the narrative level, Pilate's forensic verdict of innocence tells the reader, at least, that Jesus' claims are publicly judged to be honorable: "I find no crime in him" (18:38). Honor defended is honor maintained. Yet the public verdict in this honor contest remains unclear, for the crowds to not accept this.

In acknowledging a custom, Pilate offers to those who have just challenged Jesus' honor the release of this same "King of the Jews" (18:39). This should be interpreted as Pilate's personal challenge to the crowd (Rensberger: 92-94). Their challenge to Jesus had just been rejected (v. 38), and now Pilate taunts them by inviting them to accept Jesus in the fullness of his honor claim, "Will you have me release to you the 'King of the Jews?'" (v. 39). Pilate asks Jesus' challengers publicly to accept a riposte to their challenge, and so to admit defeat in this game. His question, then, continues the honor-shame contest between himself and the crowd (see 18:29-31). Yet, the crowds give a counter-challenge to Jesus' honor claim and Pilate's gambit: "Not this man!" The shame of being disowned by one's own occurs again (v. 35); Jesus' enemies prefer the release of Barabbas, a thief or social bandit, to him (18:40). The contest between Pilate and the crowd continues as a stalemate.

Judicial Warning (19:1-5). Pilate gives Jesus a "judicial warning," such as Paul received when five times lashed and three times beaten with rods (2 Cor 11:24-25; see Acts 5:41). Judicial warnings were intended to inflict pain but especially to humiliate and disgrace troublemakers. In essence, Jesus is beaten and mocked. Even if the technical terms "mock" and "mockery" do not occur here (cf., empaizô Matt 27:29; Mark 15:20; Meeks 1967:69), native readers whose world is structured around honor and shame know what is going on. In the honor culture of ancient warriors, stoic endurance of physical pain denotes courage and honor (andreia). But to be mocked is by far more painful than the physical beating because it produces the most dreaded of all experiences, shame.

As regards his body, Jesus is shamed by being stripped naked, bound and beaten in the public forum of the Roman soldiers. His head, the most honorable member of his body is mocked with a "plaited crown of thorns." His body is dressed in purple, the royal color. Many of the soldiers "struck him with their hands," surely on the face or head, and sarcastically acclaimed his honor, "Hail, King of the Jews" (19:3). Each of these ritual gestures has been shown to be a characteristic element in the honoring of Persian and Roman rulers. Alföldi study lists the following elements of a coronation: proskynêsis/bending the knee (11-16, 45-70); acclamation, especially as dominus (38-45, 209-10); crown (17-18, 128-129, 263-67); clothing (143-56, 175-84, 268-70); scepter (156-57, 228-35); throne (140-41, 159-61). Thus a mock coronation ritual occurs (Blank: 62; Meeks 1967:69-72), whose primary function is to shame Jesus, the alleged King of the Judeans.

But if the actors in the drama are portrayed as shaming Jesus, it does not follow that readers of this gospel must concur. On the contrary, insiders have been repeatedly schooled in irony to see Jesus' death as his "lifting up" to heaven (3:14; 8:23; 12:32) or his "glorification" (12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5). The grain of wheat dies and falls into the ground, but thereby lives and bears fruit. In short, the gospel inculcates an ironic point of view that death and shame mean glory and honor. The mock coronation of Jesus, which in the eyes of outsiders means shame, truly betokens honor to insiders. In terms of Jesus' honor, it truly is a status elevation ritual. Although ironically invested with imperial honors, Jesus nonetheless is acclaimed as honorable, especially in his shame (Duke: 132-33). Rensberger describes this scene as Pilate's humiliation of the Judeans by the sarcastic presentation of a Roman's interpretation of Jewish messianic hopes (93-94).

New Charges/New Cognition (19:7, 9-11). Pilate then brings forth this Jesus who has been mocked and dishonored. I do not know when modern readers started thinking that such a presentation was supposed to inspire sympathy for Jesus, because in the culture of the Levant such a scene would provoke laughter and derision. Crowds regularly gathered at public executions to participate in the mockery (see Matt 27:38, 39, 41). The crowds react here in predictably cultural ways by continuing their dishonoring of Jesus: "Crucify him! crucify him!" (19:6). Rejection by one's ethnos and delivery to the Romans would be shame enough (18:35, 40); now his own people call for his shameful death.

With Pilate's verdict of Jesus' innocence, the trial should be over ("I find no crime in him," 19:5, 6). But a new charge is made, which constitutes a new challenge to Jesus' honor: "By our law he ought to die, for he made himself the Son of God" (19:7). The crowds consider this "claim" to be so serious a charge as to warrant the death sentence. And so a new trial ensues to deal with the new charge.

Let us view this new charge from the perspective of honor and shame. In antiquity people were constantly "making themselves" something, that is, claiming a new and higher status or role (Acts 5:36). Hence the public accusation that Jesus makes himself something functions as a challenge to a perceived empty claim, a common phenomenon in antiquity (kenodoxos and alazôn; see Acts 8:9; 12:22-23; Josephus, War 2.55, 60; Ant. 17.272, 278). This sort of challenge to Jesus occurred regularly throughout the narrative (1) ". . . making himself equal to God" (5:18); (2) "Who do you make yourself to be?" (8:53); (3) "You, a mortal, make yourself God" (10:33); (4) "He made himself the Son of God" (19:7); (5) "every one who makes himself a king . . ." (19:12). In the course of this narrative, the author has consistently dealt with this charge by dividing the charge/challenge: (1) it is denied that Jesus "makes himself" anything, but (2) it is defended that he is such-and-such (Neyrey 1988:20-23). For example, Jesus claims in 5:19-29 that he is "equal to God." This is no empty claim, for he insists that God has granted him both creative and eschatological powers and the honor attached to them. The Father (1) shows him all that God is doing (5:20), (2) has given all judgment to the Son (5:22), (3) has granted the Son also to have life in himself (5:26), and (4) has given him authority to execute judgment (5:27; Neyrey 1988:20-25). Thus, Jesus does not "make himself" anything, for that would be a vainglorious claim and thus false honor. But he truly is "equal to God," "King," and "Son of God," because these honors, roles and statuses are ascribed to him by the most honorable person in the cosmos, namely, God (see the ascribed honor of being "made king" in 6:15).

It is not, moreover, accidental in the gospel traditions that Jesus himself rarely claims to be prophet, king, son of God, etc. These tend to be ascribed to him either by God (13:31; 17:5, 24; see Mark 1:11; 9:7) or by others: (Son of God, 1:34, 49; Christ, 1:41; 10:24; King, 1:49; 6:15; 12:13; Savior, 4:42; and Prophet, 4:19; 6:14). Thus the tradition steadfastly maintains that Jesus is an honorable person in two respects: he does not seek honor by making vain claims to such-and-such a status, but he is regularly ascribed great honor by others. The reader, then, has been schooled how to interpret this new charge against Jesus, rejecting any sense of a vainglorious claim and affirming the truth of the honor ascribed to Jesus.

The new forensic charge requires a new cognition by the judge (19:8-11). Pilate asks the appropriate question in terms of honor and shame: "Where are you from (pothen)?" (19:8). True honor is ascribed honor; and ascribed honor is a function of one's father and clan or one's place of origin (Malina and Neyrey 1991a:32-34, 39-40; 1991b:85-87). Concerning place of origin, honor was earlier denied Jesus because he is from Nazareth, from which no good comes (1:46; see Titus 1:12). In contrast, Paul claims honor by coming from Tarsus, "no mean city" (Acts 21:39), and Jerusalemites claim honor from being born there (Ps

87:5-6). Concerning father and clan, it is an universal phenomenon in the Bible that when characters are introduced or described, they are always identified as the "son of so-and-so" or the "daughter of so-and-so." For, an individual's honor is bound with that of his or her father. The rules in the progymnasmata for writing an encomium all stress that writers begin their praise of someone by noting that person's family and place of origin (Lee: 188-206). All of the extant texts of the progymnasmata on writing an encomium start with praise for eugeneia, which consists in noting (1) origin (genos), (2) race (ethos), (3) country (patris), (4) ancestors (progonoi), and (5) parents (pateres). Hence Pilate tests Jesus' honor with the appropriate question, pothen ei su, which may refer either to his "place of origin" (8:23) or his parents (6:41-42). But the question directly touches Jesus' honor.

Jesus now remains silent (19:9). He neither defends himself nor offers a riposte to the challenge. Silence in the face of accusation is very difficult to assess; but in an honor and shame context it would probably be read as a shameful thing (see Neh 6:8). To fail to give a riposte to a challenge is to accept defeat and so loss of honor.

Yet readers have already been socialized in just this aspect of Jesus' honor, and so the riposte has been given in advance. Knowledge of whence Jesus comes (pothen) and whither he goes (pou) has been a major issue throughout the narrative. Outsiders either do not know (3:8; 8:14; 9:29) or falsely think they know (6:41-42; 7:27-28). Many times Jesus proclaims the correct answer, namely, that he comes down from heaven (6:38) or that he descends from heaven and ascends back there (3:13; 6:62). Insiders like the blind man accurately deduced the true "whence" of Jesus because of his power to heal (9:30). And finally the reader is told that Jesus comes from God and returns to heaven (13:1-2). Thus readers can answer Pilate's question; they know "whence he is," namely, a person whose parent is none other than God and whose "country of origin" is none less than heaven. His exalted honor, then, is secure in their eyes.

The narrative suggests that Jesus' silence in fact challenges Pilate's power, who then responds with new questions: "Will you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" (19:10). "Power" (exousia), an expression of honor, is at stake. Although Jesus gives no riposte to this new challenge concerning his origin, he does in turn offer a counter-challenge to Pilate's claim of power: "You would have no power over me unless it were given you from above" (19:11). Hence Pilate's power is a relative thing, for the truly powerful figure is not Caesar, from whom Pilate enjoys ascribed honor, but God, from whom all power flows (John 10:29). Emperors, kings and governors all owe their power and honor to God (Rom 13:1; 1 Tim 2:2; 1 Pet 2:13-17). This narrative, moreover, asserts that it is God's will and purpose that Jesus undergo this trial (John 12:27). God commanded that he "lay down his life and take it again" (10:17-18). Inasmuch as sons are commanded to "Honor their father" (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; Mark 10:19), the presentation of Jesus as the obedient one (Heb 5:8; see Mark 14:36//Matt 26:39//Luke 22:42) marks his actions here as honoring his Father and thus warranting the honor of an obedient son.

In fact, Jesus ironically states that even Pilate is behaving honorably because he acts in accord with the power given him from above. The dishonorable people are those "who have delivered me over to you" (19:11); they are the sinners. Thus in the confrontation between him and Pilate, Jesus remains successful; he suffers no loss of honor. In fact, he seems to have gained an ally of sorts in Pilate, his judge, "who sought to release him." Final Verdict and Sentence (19:12-16). In the next scene, the grand public tableau of the trial, the two sets of contestants play another episode of challenge and riposte. In terms of the Pilate-vs-Jesus contest, Pilate's move "to release him" functions as a definitive riposte to the various challenges made by the crowds to Jesus' claims to honor. Pilate thrice declares Jesus innocent, and so Jesus cannot be shown to be "making himself" anything. But in terms of the Pilate-vs-crowd contest, the latter issues one final challenge, not so much to Jesus' claims, but to the Pilate's riposte takes the form of a solemn judicial verdict and sentence. But the scene as narrated contains a fundamental ambiguity. The text states that "he (Pilate) brought Jesus out and sat down at the judgment seat" (19:13). Controversy surrounds the verb "sat down" (ekathisen), which may be read transitively (i.e. Pilate sat Jesus down on the judgment seat) or intransitively (i.e. Pilate himself sat down on the seat). Grammatical studies support both readings. Those who argue that Jesus was seated point to the irony of the powerless Jesus assuming the role of judge, a role, however, ascribed to him by God according to John 5:22, 27; 12:31. This reading would follow the gospel

axiom that last is first, weakest is greatest, the judged one is the judge, etc. Indeed it would be an extraordinary piece of irony for the dishonored Jesus to assume this position of great honor (see Luke 24:26).

But the literal reading of the passage portrays Pilate's riposte to the crowd's challenge to him. As judge and magistrate in charge of these affairs, including the exercise of the ius gladii, Pilate now assumes all of the trappings of his office. Honor is replicated in bodily posture as Pilate seats himself on his official seat, the bema, while the other participants stand (19:13). Exercising his authority, he issues a proclamation to the crowds: "Behold your king!" Rhetorically, this remark is a command ("Behold!") and an insult ("your king," see 18:39). It ostensibly upholds the original claims of Jesus by dismissing the challenges of the crowd. Thus the judge has rendered a third verdict of innocence (18:38; 19:4, 12), which functions as a riposte to the crowd's challenges to Jesus' honor. But the claim that Jesus is a king is no more acceptable to the crowds now than it was earlier.

Finally the two strands of the honor contests coincide. The crowds challenge Pilate's verdict, even as they shame Jesus: "Away with him . . . crucify him" (19:15a). Pilate had previously noted the shame of being disowned by one's own ethnos (18:35), which shameful action is now repeated. Ostensibly Pilate has lost the game, and his honor has been diminished. But he makes one last move, a final riposte to the power of the crowd.

Inasmuch as "king" has been the contested claim throughout the trial, Pilate demands of the crowd a formal judgment in the case: "Shall I crucify your 'king'?" (19:15b). Questions, of course, are challenging, and the response to this question brings maximum shame on Jesus' antagonists: "We have no king but Caesar" (19:15c). Their remark is an act of supreme dishonor to their heavenly Patron and Sovereign. At the conclusion of the Greater Hallel we find the following prayer:

From everlasting to everlasting thou art God;

Beside thee we have no king, redeemer, or savior;

No liberator, deliverer, provider;

None who takes pity in every time of distress or trouble.

We have no king but thee (Meeks 1967: 77).

It is the crowd who proves to be the "friend of Caesar," thus shaming God and God's anointed king. Rensberger notes that Pilate has once more humiliated his opponents by having them publicly deny their claims to a political messiah (96). Yet no reader would fail to note that God too is now mocked and must vindicate his divine honor. The advantage seems to lie with the crowd who bends Pilate to its will and succeeds in dishonoring Jesus ("Crucify him!").

A judicial sentence is pronounced, but one which is fraught with irony. The official judge, Pilate, apparently yields in this game of push and shove; his sentence is hardly honorable or just. Jesus' accusers, who earlier claimed that they had no legitimate authority to put a man to death (18:31), finally succeed in a plot that began in 5:18 and was solemnized at a rump trial in 11:50-53. Their success in having Jesus killed would be a mark of honor for them in the eyes of observers. But readers of the narrative know that this "sentence" is fully within the control of Jesus (12:32-33; 10:17-18) and the will of God. The sentence of a shameful death, then, is but an apparent loss of honor.

D. Title (19:19-22). The game of push and shove continues over the public title attached to Jesus' cross. Pilate's inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," may be read as a final ironic riposte by the narrator in defense of Jesus' honorable status, comparable to Caiaphas' ironic "prophecy" about Jesus' death

(11:51). It is also Pilate's act of authority in defense of his own embattled status. The title, which may be construed as another honor claim, is once again challenged by the Jerusalem elite, who urge a more shameful version: "This man said, I am King of the Jews." Again, they charge that Jesus vaingloriously assumes honors not rightfully his (19:7, 12). This time Pilate wins: "What I have written, I have written" (19:22). He has the last word.

E. Crucifixion (19:17-37). The normal sequence of events which accompany crucifixion was listed at the beginning of this study. In view of that, the shameful elements narrated in the crucifixion of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are the crucifixion itself, with Jesus' position as the middle figure in a triptych of criminals, themselves shameful persons (19:18). The mocking title over the cross publicly challenges Jesus' claim to honor and status. He is apparently stripped naked, for his clothing is confiscated by his executioners (19:23-24). The synoptics all record various persons "mocking" him (Mark 15:27-32; Matt 27:38-43; Luke 23:35-36), which is absent from the Fourth Gospel's account. Yet the very scene is a public humiliation (John 19:20); spectators would give public witness to the shame of Jesus' death (see Philo, Spec. Leg. 3.160). Thus to them he dies a brutal death, apparently a victim whose life was taken from him in violent fashion. His blood is spilled, without hope of vengeance or satisfaction. This is what outsiders see and count as shameful.

The narrator, however, instructs insiders to perceive this scene in terms of honor. First, Jesus does the honorable thing by his mother. She is presumably a widow, and now her only son is dying. In that culture, she has no male (husband or son) to defend her; she will suffer a tragic loss of honor with this death. But Jesus defends her honor by adopting as "brother" the Beloved Disciple, and by ensuring that his new kinsman will defend his mother's honor by "taking her into his own house" (19:27; see Acts 1:14).

Playing the role of a victim is shameful, especially when one's life is taken away. The eye of the imagination sees this in Jesus' death, but the ear hears differently in the narrative. Jesus is presented as the figure in control of events. He knows that all is now completed (v. 28) and he chooses to die, "It is finished" (v. 30). Death is noble or honorable when voluntary. Because the narrative has prepared us for this scene, we are not reading these honorable ideas into the text. Back in the exposition of the role of the Noble Shepherd in John 10, Jesus explicitly described the honorable character of his death. First, he knows it, and so manifests control over his life: "I lay down my life" (10:17); "I lay it down of my own accord" (10:18). Second, he is no victim; no one shames him by taking his life: "No one takes it from me" (10:18); no one shames him by having power over him: "I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again" (10:18b). Just as he manifested control and power at his arrest, so he is presented here as doing the same thing. Honor is thus maintained.

Finally his body is mutilated, a shameful act (recall the treatment of Hector's body by Achilles; see 1 Sam 31:9-10; 2 Sam 4:12; Jos. Ant. 20.99). The soldiers intend to break his legs and thus hasten death. Yet Jesus is spared this humiliation because he has already died. Moreover, the text puts an honorable interpretation on this by comparing Jesus' body to the paschal lamb, none of whose bones were broken (Exod 12:46; John 19:36). He dies, then, "unblemished." Nevertheless his chest is pierced, the wanton mutilation of a corpse. Yet as Josephine Ford has shown, the piercing of Jesus' side yields both blood and water, which in rabbinic lore constitutes a kosher object (1969:337-38). And so the narrator rescues Jesus' honor by indicating that this mutilation was controlled by God's prophecy through Zech 12:10.

F. Jesus' Burial (19:38-42). Under other circumstances, the bodies of the crucified might be left to rot on the cross and become food for scavengers (see Rev 19:17-18). This final shame precludes reverential burial by kin, which is both a mark of honor and a religious duty. Yet in our narrative, purity concerns demand some rapid disposal of the corpses; and so the body of Jesus is buried.

This gospel narrates that Jesus' body received quite an honorable burial, despite the shame of his death. Joseph and Nicodemus bring a prodigious quantity of spices, "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds," enough spices for a royal burial (see 2 Chron 16:14 and Jos. Ant. 17.199). They perform the honorable burial ritual, "binding the body in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the

Jews" (19:40). A new tomb is at hand, where they honorably lay Jesus. Despite the shame of crucifixion, some honor is maintained by this burial.

V. CONCLUSIONS And FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Does a modern reader know anything new by reading with this lens? Does appreciation of honor and shame demand a reinterpretation of older scholarly opinions on various passages? What difference does it make to read John 18-19 in this light? All valid questions, which may not have simple answers.

A. Honor and Shame: A Native's Point of View. Honor and shame are not foreign categories imposed by a modern reader upon an alien, ancient culture, but values rooted in the very cultural world of Jesus and his disciples, whether Roman, Greek or Judean. In studying honor and shame, we have learned what these ancient people value, how they strive either to gain honor or maintain their reputation, and how honor is replicated in the presentation and treatment of the physical body. When we appreciate the typical form of a challenge/riposte encounter, we gain greater clarity into the common social dynamics of the male half of the gender-divided world of the first century in all its agonistic flavor. Appreciation of the ancient psychology of honor and shame offers an authentic cultural and historical sensitivity to the social dynamics of ancient persons. In looking through this lens, we see what the natives see.

B. Honor and Shame: Pivotal Values. Anthropologists claim that honor and shame constitute the pivotal values of the cultural world of the eastern Mediterranean, which includes Jesus and his disciples. When we examine a pivotal value of a given culture, we learn about its place in the larger system of behaviors, institutions, and structures in the social fabric of that world. By "value," we mean:

The word "value" describes some general quality or direction of life that human beings are expected to embody in their behavior. A value is a general, normative orientation of action in a social system. It is an emotionally anchored commitment to pursue and support certain directions or types of actions (Pilch-Malina xiii).

But a pivotal value in a culture implies a larger system within that culture. It colors the way roles and statuses are understood within institutions; it directs behaviors in certain ways; it forms the unspoken context or horizon behind vast areas of social interaction, which is known by the natives, if by no one else. When we appreciate the importance of "honor" vis-à-vis the ancient world, we are thereby capable of recognizing the systematic contours of the social dynamics of that period and of understanding its pervasive importance in the lives of the ancient author and his characters.

C. Honor and Shame: Structural Implications. Pivotal values do not exist in splendid isolation from the cultural systems in which they are embedded. Knowledge of the value of honor and shame invites readers into the larger cultural system in which we take note of the following replications and incarnations of this value. Scholars agree that the ancient Mediterranean was a gender-divided world, with specific places, tasks, tools and behaviors for males and females. Reading John 18-19 in the light of honor and shame makes salient the male half of that world: a public world where males constantly behave in ways which seek to gain or maintain honor. It is a world of swords and sharp speech, power and posturing, in short, a pervasively agonistic world. Since it is an entirely public world, each gesture, all clothing, every word communicates a claim to status and honor. In short, formal reflection about honor and shame spells out for the initiated what is implicit in the cultural world of the ancient documents, even as it introduces readers new to cultural issues to the basic and pervasive social dynamics of antiquity.

D. Honor and Shame: What is Common, Not What is Different. Anthropology focuses on what is common to a specific culture and what is shared by most of its members; it operates at a higher level of abstraction than historical studies which ferret out specific local and temporal differences. Thus it deals in generalities, common patterns, stereotypes, and the like. Whereas historical studies regularly concern themselves with what is "new" or "different" in certain circumstances, cultural studies ask what is typically going on. Thus cultural studies may not scratch the historian's itch for novelty. Historical critics might justifiably ask how

the Johannine use of honor and shame values differs from that expressed in Cicero, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom or Josephus -- a valid request, but on which deserves a study of its own.

Moreover, it may appear to some that honor and shame as expressed in the challenge/riposte form is a social dynamic so prevalent as to become a catch-all generalization. Mediterranean anthropologists go so far as to claim that every social interaction outside the home or kinship circle is likely to be a contest for honor acquisition or its maintenance. "Challenges" are expressed by positive actions, such as compliments, gifts, petitions, etc., as well as by negative ones, such as questions, verbal attacks, physical affronts, etc. (Malina 1981:30-33). One might ask whether Jesus ever appears in a public situation without some sort of challenge arising? Even forensic processes such as Jesus' trial are structured around honor; uses of power are never simply "power," but exercises in honor. Honor may be a minor factor in western social transactions, but it is the major value in Mediterranean ones and major values should surface with great regularity and be replicated in many areas.

E. Honor and Shame: A Reader's Responsibility. Knowledge of honor and shame, moreover, equips a person to be a more informed and culturally attuned reader. Nuances of social interaction and their meanings are made clearer. But the issue is not quantity of new insight, but rather quality. The value of using this model lies in its ability to ensure readers that they are seeing with the eyes of a native and so they become insiders in a cultural world quite different from their own. Learning about honor and shame and reading with this lens makes us better readers, namely, readers who listen as closely and accurately as possible to ancient speakers and writers. This duty of readers is all the more valid when modern, western readers attempt to understand communication from another culture. Thus readers who seek to avoid ethnocentrism must strive to appreciate the pivotal values of the world of writers removed from them in time and space. Honor and shame is just such a pivotal value and full appreciation of it ensures that contemporary readers are in tune with the characteristic modes of perceiving and acting embodied in ancient, foreign documents. The ubiquitous and perhaps generalized description of social interactions in term of challenge/riposte simply is a fact of that ancient world. Readers are surely better off knowing the incidence of this dynamic and its importance. Thus it is hardly an oversimplification to view every scene of Jesus' passion in the light of the ongoing game of push and shove.

F. Honor and Shame: From Hunch to Knowledge. Scholarship is rich in imaginative hunches. But hunches are not arguments, nor probabilities, nor sure foundations for further research. The formal knowledge of honor and shame articulated here serves to promote scholarly hunches into the realm of provable arguments; impressions yield to probability. Thus the quality of scholarly interpretation improves immeasurably.

Finally, this brief study cannot do certain things. Although it presented a concise grammar of honor, historically oriented readers would desire a fuller exposition of this value in the Hellenistic and Jewish worlds of antiquity. This study simply cannot satisfy that legitimate interest in the space allowed. Nor can it show in any detail just how a cultural reading using honor and shame would nuance older scholarly interpretations, some of which display remarkably intuitive hunches and others of which are totally ignorant of this value. Again, space does not allow. Rather it is the strength of all the articles in this study to fill in the gaps that escape the size and scope of individual articles.

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