

The Face of Honor-Shame in John's Apocalypse

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Introduction

Images of shame-honor permeate John's Apocalypse.¹ The book reflects Scripture's rich spectrum of shame-honor imagery, narratives and vocabulary, not only because the cultures of the biblical world revolved around those pivotal values which structured everyday life,² but

¹ See Revelation 1:3, 4, 6, 7, 17; 2:5-6, 10, 26-28; 3:4-5, 9, 17-18, 21; 4:11; 5:9-10, 12-14; 6:9-11, 15-17; 7:9-10, 12, 14-17; 10:1; 11:8-13; 12:7-10, 11; 13:4-8, 16-17; 14:1-5, 7, 8, 9-11, 13; 15:2, 3-4; 16:5-7, 10-11, 15; 17:5-6, 16; 18:1-24; 19:1-6, 7-9, 11-21; 20:4-6, 11, 15; 21:1-22:21; 21:3-4, 23-26, 27; 22:3, 4, 14, 15. Words for honor and honoring appear frequently (τιμή: 4:9, 11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 21:26; δόξα: 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12, 13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 18:1; 19:1, 7; 21:11, 23, 24, 26; δοξάζω: 15:4; 18:7). Words for shame, slander, blasphemy also appear (αἰσχύνη: 3:18; ἀσχημοσύνη: 16:15; βλασφημέω 2:9; 13:6). Revelation's engagement with honor and shame language goes well beyond its use of the word groups. See, David A. deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 71, (1998): 79-110.

² E. Randolph Richards and Richard James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 127-232; Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 67, 67-114; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 3. See also, Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 31-89; Richard M. Davidson, "Shame and Honor in the Beginning: A Study of Genesis 4," in *Shame & Honor: Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Andrews University Theological Seminary, 2014), 43-76; Teresa Reeve, "Mission and Shame: Lessons from Jesus' Interaction with the

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because “honor and shame are foundational realities in God’s mission and salvation that flow through the entire Bible.”³ So also, because Revelation’s story as Scripture’s last book of stories is ultimately about God’s honor and God’s “face,” not just our own.⁴ It is a reality which advances and culminates the eschatological vision of seeing God “face-to-face” (22:4)⁵—the cosmic conflict ended, Eden with its Tree of Life restored and accessible, human beings graced with divine honor, the crest-fallen face of shame forever gone, the intimacy of true understanding of God and a right relationship with him.⁶ Beholding God’s face is the culmination of some of the greatest hopes of the Bible.⁷

In the meantime, however, the honor of the people of God (seven churches and the faithful through history) is relentlessly challenged.⁸ They are marginalized, shamed, eliminated. Questions abound: What is honor? At what cost is honor to be safeguarded? Whom to honor and

Pharisees and Law-Scholars in Luke 11:37-54,” in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2014), 203-218; David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 43-94; E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 113-136.

³ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 67. Moskala points out that shame-honor concepts are already “present in the first three chapters of the Bible and they form the foundation for the rest of God’s Word.” Jiří Moskala, “Reflections on the Concept of Shame and Honor in the Biblical Creation and Fall Narratives,” in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Missions, Andrews University, 214), 28, 29.

⁴ 1:16-17; 4:8-11; 6:16; 22:4). See, Jayson Georges, “Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before: The Gospel the World is Waiting For,” *Mission Frontiers* (Jan/Feb, 2015): 10.

⁵ Revelation 1:4-8, 13-18; 4:1-5:14; 6:10, 16; 7:9-12, 15; 10:5-7; 11:15-19; 12:10, 17; 14:1-5, 7, 12, 14-15; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 18:20; 19:1-6; 7-10; 19:11-16; 20:11-12; 21:34, 5-6; 22:4.

⁶ “In Genesis, human beings become hostages to distrust, alienation, fear, and the need to keep distance. In Revelation, the reversal is complete. The *face* and the *name* are linked, suggesting that seeing and knowing are indistinguishable. What pertains to the outside (face) also applies to the inner reality (name).” Sigve K. Tonstad, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 332.

⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 774.

⁸ Revelation 2:8-11; 3:7-13; 11:7-10; 12:17-17; 13:7, 16-17; 14:12; 17:6; 16:4-7; 18:24. See, deSilva, “Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John,” 81-85.

why? What values do honor and shame prioritize, enforce, reinforce?⁹ Honor-shame is everywhere, but not everywhere the same.

Throughout Revelation's visional trajectory, God is working to exalt humanity from shame to honor.¹⁰ In effect though, "saving people from shame to honor establishes God's reputation as the only true source of honor and glory."¹¹ Shame-honor realities loom large within Revelation's atonement/theodicy movement.¹²

Instruments of Moral Persuasion

Revelation is a highly rhetorical work: a powerful instrument of persuasion.¹³ Its rhetorical features invite both moral reflection and response as they intentionally impact the reader's worldview understanding together with his/her inner attitudes, feelings and thoughts.

⁹ Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes*, 127-143.

¹⁰ 2:7; 22:14-15; 21-22; cf. Gen 3; Rev 12:1-2, 9-10. Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 82.

¹¹ Georges, "Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before," 10.

¹² Beginning with its first doxology (1:5-6) important themes in addition to shame and honor unfold within the Revelation's atonement theology: divine love, human sin, blood (sacrificial/substitutionary), liberation from sin's bondage through the shedding of blood, a new status in relation to God and the world as a result of the shed blood, and theodical worship [Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 35; James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 67]. Verses 7 and 8 move the reader further in shame-honor and theodicy realities. Doxology and honor-shame/theodicy are organically linked in Revelation. Doxology is the context or framework in which theodicy issues are voiced, 1:5; 5:9-10, 12; 7:9-14; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-7. The mix of shame-honor, redemption, and theodical realities of Revelation's atonement theology are rich (4:8-11; 5:1-14; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 12:10-11; 13:8; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 16:4-7; 17:14; 18:20; 19:1-6; 20:11-15; 21:1-8; 22:1-5, 10-17). See Larry Lichtenwalter, "Atonement in Revelation-Part I: Love, Substitution, Liberation, Doxology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 28, no. 2 (2017): 37-38, 41, 48-49; Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006); Tonstad, *Revelation*, 127-130.

¹³ See David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 79-110; deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John"; John T. Kirby, "The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1-3," *New Testament Studies* 34.2 (1988): 197-207; David L. Barr, ed., *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in Revelation*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium 39 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

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It not only displays attitudes and feelings, it elicits them.¹⁴ A response is assumed and expected. One cannot follow the book's moral/spiritual trajectory and remain the same. Neutrality is impossible. The combination of Revelation's effective symbols, familiar words arranged in unexpected rhythms, images artistically juxtaposed unexpectedly and its artful narrative plot, are key to the moral power of its rhetoric.¹⁵

Shame and honor are used strategically as rhetorical instruments of moral/spiritual commentary and persuasion. However, shame and honor themes are no mere rhetorical instruments toward persuasion. They reflect ontological, existential and relational/social realities. They prioritize, enforce and reinforce values.¹⁶ Through them, the "Apocalypse works on the motivations of the hearers and, in fact, persuades them to choose certain courses over others as the paths to greater 'advantage.'"¹⁷

Revelation offers both "shame → honor" and "honor → shame" perspectives. In doing so it confirms the question of honor/shame as present everywhere, but not everywhere the same—as per the book's Cosmic Conflict contest with its protagonist (Christ), working toward the stories' goals and the antagonist (Satan), working against the goals. Differing values are at play in different honor/shame contexts (seven

¹⁴ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), 144-145.

¹⁵ Our purpose here is not to adopt rhetorical theory or criticism as our mode of moral analysis. Rather, we want to recognize its interpretive import for ethics and include it in our understandings of the modes of moral discourse used within the book of Revelation. For discussion on rhetoric in Revelation see, Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*; David A. deSilva, "Final Topics: The Rhetorical Functions of Intertexture in Revelation 14:14-16:21," in *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. Duane F. Watson (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 215-241; deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*; M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 51-59; Edith M. Humphrey, "In Search of a Voice: Rhetoric Through Sight and Sound in Revelation 11:15-12:17," in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Greg Carey (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 141-160; Greg Carey, "Introduction: Apocalyptic Discourse, Apocalyptic Rhetoric," in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Greg Carey (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 1-17; Robert M. Royalty, "The Rhetoric of Revelation," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 596-617.

¹⁶ Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes*, 127-143.

¹⁷ deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," 81.

churches, Babylon/Jerusalem, Three Angel's messages, commandments of God, blood of the Lamb, etc.). Group identity, values and boundaries emerge for reflection, moral orientation and choice.¹⁸

Shame and honor comprise a tacit moral value system (including values, norms and behaviors) in which the "highest good" is honor (respect) and the "greatest evil" is shame and humiliation.¹⁹ Modern cultures and worldview systems contrast honor and shame with "guilt/innocence" and "fear/power,"²⁰ but in Revelation all three perspectives are seen in relation to humanity's fall from God's ideal. Together shame/honor, guilt/innocence, and fear/power reflect "the three dimensions of sin (shame, guilt, fear)."²¹ While our focus here is shame

¹⁸ Revelation 3:3-5; 3:17-22; 5:12; 7:14; 9:20-21; 12:11; 12:17; 14:1-5; 14:12; 18:1-24; 21:7, 8, 27; 22:14-15. See honor-shame discussion of "Us and Them"—group identity, values, and boundaries in Richards and James, *Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes*, 205-232.

¹⁹ The word "*tacit*" is important because most would not consider the honor and shame dynamic to be an ethical system *per se*, but would rather appeal to some other foundation for understanding of what constitutes the highest good, i.e., values, commands, pleasing God, etc. Nevertheless, honor and shame are such powerful human realities that in many predominately honor/shame social contexts they become default moral points of reference as defined by one's community—whether or not some so called honorable or shameful behavior in that community is in fact moral/immoral or ethical/unethical. It is in this sense that "tacit" is used and which the honor/shame dynamic becomes an unspoken ethics. This distinction points individual moral agents beyond honor and shame itself toward moral foundations and behaviors, which provide better reference for ethics and the true nature of their motives and action. Honor and shame are dynamic and relational concepts. See the discussion in Larry L. Lichtenwalter, "Toward the Moral Vision of Honor and Shame in Biblical Perspective: Worldview, Identity, Character," in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2014), 113-121; James Gilligan, *Why Some Politicians Are More Dangerous Than Others* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 105. Aristotle asserted, "Honor is clearly the greatest of external goods" and described the "great-souled man" as the one who has the right disposition in relation to honors and disgraces (*Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3.9–12).

²⁰ See Gordon R. Doss, "Shame/Honor, Guilt/Innocence, Fear/Power," in *Shame and Honor: Presenting Biblical Themes in Shame and Honor Contexts*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University 2014), 90-98; Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Time Press, 2016), 113-136; Ronald Muller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2001); Mark Naylor, *Fear, Shame and Guilt* (<http://impact.nbseminary.com/89-fear-shame-and-guilt/>, 2010 [cited April 9 2021]).

²¹ Doss, "Shame/Honor, Guilt/Innocence, Fear/Power," 91. Doss continues: "An inadequate understanding of sin will cause an inadequate understanding, experience, and proclamation of salvation to others."

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and honor, Revelation offers commentary on and hope for all three of sin's consequences.

By their very nature, shame/honor-based cultures structure moral vision and action in relation to significant others. They connect personhood and personal ethics to one's group and its values. In effect, the group of identity for an individual defines one's identity and duty. Neither shame nor honor then, is fully experienced apart from some larger social context (whether real or imagined),²² but rather in a "face-to-face" relational paradigm where the individual is seen and watched. All things are done before other's eyes and in the open. And so, the proverb, "Shame [honor] is in the eyes." Honor is either ascribed to individuals by others or achieved by them.

This "face-to-face" rubric invites the question however, of how honor as a biblically informed moral virtue would or should significantly differ from and or relate to honor as a mere social status, privilege, precedence or merit, i.e., social construct.²³ Within Revelation's shame-honor motif, one wonders too, if honor is a moral value worthy of pursuit and, if so, can it be rightly considered the "highest good" or at least a pivotal cosmic conflict value in determining one's moral vision, choice, and destiny?

Contours of Revelation's Shame-Honor

Revelation's "shame → honor" / "honor → shame" paradigm opens a unique window into areas of moral reflection not often considered by western readers. Whether it's the first of the book's seven blessings (1:3), grace and peace conferred by the triune God (1:4-5), believers' change of status to a kingdom of priests to God (1:6), mourning of those who pierced Jesus (1:7), John's own fellowship of suffering with believers (1:9) or his face-down collapse before the shining face and penetrating fiery eyes of Jesus (1:17), the reader is straightway immersed in shame-honor realities. The tensions and challenges faced by the seven churches (2:1-3:22) further unfold shaming slander, imprisonment, rejection by society, untimely death and more. But it's not just society that challenges the reputation of believers—so also do John's prophetic

²² Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology In the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 79. Tennent argues that "the notion of a real or imaginary observing external audience is often internalized" (ibid.)

²³ Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 25.

voice and Jesus himself (3:1, 17).²⁴ Here too, John assigns shaming labels to the enemies of the people of God.²⁵

This brief sampling of Revelation's shame-honor discourse occurs within the book's first three chapters, and for purpose of this study, is only introductory, exemplary. It invites readers to read with new eyes as Revelation's shame-honor discourse further builds, becomes more graphic, crescendos and finally culminates. In the process, there are incredible assertions and reversals with both tacit and explicit moral commentary. We can observe only a few below.

On the one hand, Revelation points to the bestowal of honor. Divine judgment is the restoration of honor—both God's own honor, and that of the Redeemed.²⁶ God's vindication of the honor of the oppressed, marginalized and martyred is assured.²⁷ He overturns the disgrace heaped on His witnesses, who are left unburied after death (11:3-13). These disgraced beheaded experience the highest honors as they become co-regents with Christ (20:4; cf. 11:18).²⁸ This is also visible in the early sections of Revelation: the powerless are enthroned (2:26-27) and oppressors bow down at the feet of those who were unashamed of Jesus and elevated—made to know whom Jesus really loves (3:9). There are white robes, palm branches of victory, and the status of not just being able to stand with honor but stand before the honored throne of God and the Lamb.²⁹ Here roles are reversed. The self-sacrifice and death of the faithful brings more honor and exerts more moral authority than sheer coercive power of the oppressors (5:6, 9, 12; 12:11).

On the other hand, Revelation also illustrates dispersal of shame. Eternal shame comes to those who show greater concern for the so-called honor demands of culture than the honor of God.³⁰ Babylon and all who honor her are "thrown down, never to be found again" (18:21). She is

²⁴ deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," 83.

²⁵ Revelation 2:6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 20, 24; 3:9. Ibid., 85-87.

²⁶ Revelation 15:3, 4; 16:5-7; 19:1-6; 1:5; 5:9-10; 21:1-7. See also Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 89.

²⁷ Revelation 6:9-11; 11:18.

²⁸ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 70, n. 39.

²⁹ Revelation 7:9; 14:1; cf. 6:17. See also Joseph L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament 12, ed. Charles H. Talbert, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 69, 70. The question from the sixth seal forms an ironic contrast with the visions of the Lamb who is standing (5:6) and the innumerable multitude which are standing before the throne and before the Lamb (7:9).

³⁰ Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 88, 89.

stripped naked, eaten, burned (17:16). Those united against the Lamb are reduced to corpses unworthy of burial. The imagery of birds gorging on their rotting flesh is a symbol of utter destruction and disgrace (19:17-18, 21).³¹ Such God-imposed shame is not an end but a means of vindicating His glory and creating a new earth marked by true honor and glory.³²

These contrasting images of imparting honor and dispersing shame are implicit appeals for the readers of Revelation. The everlasting gospel urges readers to honor God: "*fear God and give glory to Him*" (14:6, 7). As Holy Creator, Sustainer, and first giver, God has indebted all living creatures in a profound patronage relationship (4:9-11) in which reciprocal honor can be distributed.³³ Furthermore, God's act of redeeming the faithful engenders a response of worship and service as willing bond-servants (7:14, 15; 22:3) among the characters in Revelation. For the readers Revelation makes a strong appeal to follow the example of God's faithful. Salvation brings status reversal, renewal: "*He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*" (1:5; cf. 5:10). Priesthood assumes access to God.³⁴ There is a privileged invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9). The defeated are given victory (12:11). God cleanses the filthy/defiled (7:14). The naked are clothed (3:17, 18; 19:8). The emphasis on God dwelling among His people and their being His own people speaks of honored, favored status (21:3).³⁵ People bring into the New Jerusalem the glory and honor of the nations, but nothing unclean enters it (21:23-27). "*There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads*" (22:3, 4). At the climax of Revelation, the New Jerusalem has honored insiders and shamed outsiders (22:14, 15).

Revelation thus redefines honor and also shame not as cultural markers of the first century, but of eternal values of God's kingdom. Contours of true honor emerge, and with them moral values and matters of character, i.e., holiness (4:8; 18:1-5), truth/truthfulness,³⁶ covenant faithfulness,³⁷ self-sacrifice (5:9-10, 12), purity (3:4; 14:5), justice (15:3-

³¹ Ibid., 89.

³² 5:13; 19:7-8; 21:23-27. Ibid.

³³ deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 127.

³⁴ Ibid., 137, n. 38.

³⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁶ 3:7, 14; 12:9; 14:5; 16:13-17; 19:2; cf. 1:5; 19:9, 11; 21:5; 22:6.

³⁷ 11:19; 12:17; 14:12; 21:3-7; 22:3-5. No greater statement of a promise kept can be found in Scripture affirming the Holy Creator's covenant faithfulness to His creation

14; 19:1-4), action/conduct (14:12), worship (14:7), reconciliation (7:9, 10), and moral agency (12:11). This includes glimpses into the holy character of God, human nature, the value of human life, the nature of sin, evil and the demonic powers as well as the enduring issues in the cosmic conflict also open for reflection.

The Driving Question

Revelation's driving question throughout is about "whom to honor" and "at what cost" that honor is to be preserved.³⁸ Valuation is assumed. It should come as no surprise to Adventist scholars that Revelation concentrates its shame and honor discourse within its chiasmic apex (chaps 12-14), and in particular, the Three Angels Messages of 14:6-13.³⁹ The Three Angels point the most strongly to the book's rhetorical strategy and its use of shame and honor discourse.⁴⁰ According to deSilva, "a close reading of honor discourse in Rev 14:6-13 becomes the anchoring point for an analysis of the rhetorical impact of the whole."⁴¹ Within the Three Angel's messages, the first angel's message of the everlasting gospel helps define honor-shame language (14:6). In this passage, we find answers to important shame-honor questions: Whom to honor? Who is shamed? What is the pathway to shame? Or to honor? What is the cost of honor and its legacy? And, what are eternal values and boundaries?

The first question—Who deserves to be honored?—not only for the first century setting. The first angel proclaims with a loud voice "*Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters*" (14:7). In the first century, it was culturally mandated to bring offerings to the gods and the emperor at most private and public social functions. But Revelation contrasts this with worship only to God:

(Rev 21:5). See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1999), 50-53.

³⁸ deSilva, "Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John," 87. This is evidenced in the letters to the seven churches, every hymn occurring in the book, the throne-room drama, the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude, the opened heavenly sanctuary with its display of the covenant commands, the third plague and others where individuals refuse to repent. So also, are the song of Moses and the Lamb, the rider on the white horse, the white throne judgment, etc.

³⁹ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 110.

“The angel summons them to give honor where it is due, to the God who created all things and thus claims the gratitude and reverence of all living creatures as the divine Patron of all. Moreover, God’s Day of Judgment approaches—the day on which God will mete out honor and dishonor, reward and punishment. Those who have honored God in their lives may anticipate approval on that Day, whereas those who have failed to honor God may anticipate becoming the objects of God’s satisfaction of God’s honor.”⁴²

Who is shamed? The second angel announces the collapse of Babylon’s reputation and what is truly honorable: “*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality*” (14:8). Together with chapter 18 and its invitation to escape Babylon’s judgments, Revelation provides vivid moral commentary on what is deemed shameful. Babylon is caricatured as arrogant, proud, corrupt, exploitive, oppressive, and blasphemous. It is an incredible picture of fallen human civilization and depicts the complete control of the political, religious, commercial and cultural apparatus of society by the Satanic power structure (chapters 13, 17, 18). It provides a compelling glimpse of the power of corrupt culture by linking imagery from religion, politics, entertainment, sensuality, immorality, and consumerism (18:3, 7, 9, 14). Babylon lives luxuriously and is marked with futile human endeavor. The evocative language points to Babylon culture’s voracious materialistic consumerism, its ruthless pursuit of pleasure, its emphasis on sexuality and sensuality, and a spirituality that is independent of God. Furthermore, it traffics in human lives (18:13) and kills prophets, saints and the innocent (18:24). These actions and the values behind them are deemed unacceptable and shameful.

Coming out of Babylon is an escape from shame to honor (this includes a moral escape—not just theological or doctrinal).⁴³ The invitation to come out of Babylon is both personal and concrete—“*so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*” (18:4, 5). Here shame and guilt overlap—unfolding two facets of Revelation’s moral horizon. It is a strong wake-up call to break

⁴² Ibid., 90.

⁴³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 898.

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off personal identification with any religious, moral, or political system that is not in line with the Eternal Gospel and the corresponding life or honor it envisions in the New Jerusalem.⁴⁴ In contrast Revelation replaces this shameful community by describing a new identity and value-system in the context of a new community of God and His followers.

The Third Angel outlines the pathway to shame—worship of the Beast rather than the worship of God—together with disgraceful punishment in the presence of an honorable audience.⁴⁵

If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name (14:9-11).

“The rhetorical impact of such a message upon the hearers is clear: participation in the shameful ways of Babylon, whatever benefits it might bring in terms of relieving tension between church and society now, would ultimately lead to disgrace and disadvantage.”⁴⁶

Yet the pathway to honor⁴⁷ is clear, i.e., dogged non-violent resistance against cultural norms of shame and honor through the faithful keeping of God’s covenant commands (God’s definition of values and honorable practice). Throughout the book, God’s covenant commands are commitments under siege.⁴⁸ This includes maintaining one’s grip on the faithfulness of Christ’s work in their behalf (14:12; cf. 12:17). Such are considered saints (*holy*) upon which Revelation’s second of seven blessings is pronounced (14:13). A voice from heaven announces: “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their

⁴⁴ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 523-538.

⁴⁵ deSilva, “Honor Discourse and the Rhetorical Strategy of the Apocalypse of John,” 101.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁸ 1:9; 2:10, 20; 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:1-8; 12:1, 2, 6, 11-17; 14:12; 17:14; 18:20. See, Tonstad, *Revelation*, 210.

deeds follow with them." It is heaven's imprimatur on the cost and legacy of honor.

Death is normally a dishonoring reality, but dying "in the Lord" is deemed an honor. There is honor in faithful obedience and self-sacrificing service to God. There is honor in a lifelong journey in the same direction of moral/spiritual integrity. There is honor when the Spirit can evangelistically use one's lived life in personal witness of what it means to "live in the Lord" and then, "die in the Lord." Revelation earlier records how believers "loved not their lives when faced with death" (12:11). Why? Because the freeing blood of Jesus enabled them to overcome accusing shame and guilt (12:10-11). Honored through the blood of Jesus (1:6; 5:9-10; 7:14; 12:11), they return honor in both their life and death.

The Naked Face

Revelation's imagery of shame and honor is incomplete without a "face." Face reveals who one is. It is the subtle yet visual autobiography of each person. To behold someone's face is to gaze deeply into his or her being. It is a demanding form of intimacy.⁴⁹ To hide one's face expresses shame, guilt, and embarrassment.

Final images from the 6th seal unfold existential realities of "shamed face" as individuals seek to hide themselves in order to avoid God's "face": "*hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne*" (6:17 ESV).⁵⁰ It echoes some of the earliest human action of shame in the story of Eden when Adam and Eve attempt to hide from God because they know their sin (Gen 3:8).⁵¹ Here, human beings intuit their existence in a moral universe and do so with shame in relation to the face of a personal God.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., 332.

⁵⁰ The Greek word *πρόσωπον*, most often translated "presence" means "face" "countenance" and is used above all for the face of God: as the aspect of God that concerns man (*πρόσωπον*, *NIDNTT*). It nuances personal and relational realities: 4:7; 6:16; 7:11; 9:7; 10:1; 11:16; 20:14; 20:11; 22:4. Revelation also uses the word *ένωπιον* which nuances more a position in front of an object, whether animate or inanimate, and which is regarded as having a spatial orientation more than relational: 1:4; 2:14; 3:2, 5, 8-9; 4:5-6, 10; 5:8; 7:9, 11, 15; 8:2-4; 9:13; 11:4, 16; 12:4, 10; 13:12-14; 14:3, 10; 15:4; 16:19; 19:20; 20:12

⁵¹ David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998), 83.

⁵² 6:9, 10; cf. 15:3, 4; 19:1, 2. One could say here that God also holds Himself accountable by allowing questions of theodicy: 1) holds them accountable; 2) promises to

Later, as the millennium ends, when God appears in the cosmic conflict's final judgment, there again is that awesome reality of "face" as even a personified heaven and earth flee the divine presence (20:11-15).⁵³ The judgment scene is initiated by a full revelation of God seated upon "a great white throne" with His "face" fully exposed to the astonished gaze of all. In this moment, there is a full, unveiled encounter with God. As the lost were compelled to flee in shame from God's face when Jesus returns (6:15-17) so also now, the face of God is again unbearable because they have formed within themselves a character that is so contrary to the holy God of Love—and everything that is truly honorable. They are now at the precipice of the second death (20:14).

Again, looking into someone's face is "a demanding form of intimacy"⁵⁴ especially when it is the face of God.⁵⁵ The divine face brings a consuming holiness and glory that invades one's inner world, piercing moral consciousness. This is a phenomenon already experienced by John himself when, beholding the sun-like radiant face and fiery eyes of the Eternal Christ (1:14, 16). He falls prostrate—"like a dead man"—at Jesus' feet,⁵⁶ The commanding figure of the risen, exalted, glorified and holy King of Kings is more than John had ever seen before. Something he could not handle. No human being can.⁵⁷

The "face" of Revelation's honor and shame indirectly introduces the reality of human conscience (6:16; 20:11; 22:4). Conscience is expressed in images of innocence, integrity, and hope (6:9; 7:9; 14:1-5; 15:1-4; 22:4) as well as that of guilt, shame, and fear (6:17; 20:11). Both guilt and shame are in view, as in reality, feelings of guilt and shame overlap. We feel guilt for what we *do*. We feel shame for who we *are*. Individuals

hold their persecutors accountable; and 3) and allows Himself to be held accountable by their very question.

⁵³ πρόσωπον as in reference to God 6:16 and 22:4—and the dragon 20:14; cf. 4:7; 7:11; 10:1; 11:16.

⁵⁴ Tonstad, *Revelation*, 332.

⁵⁵ Daniel's reaction to a similar vision was the same (Dan 10:9-10, 15-16). Isaiah, Ezekiel and Paul too, experienced the existential reality of shame, guilt and fear when catching a glimpse of God (Isa 6:1-5; Ezek 1:28; Acts 9:4).

⁵⁶ As he did earlier on the Mount of Transfiguration—conscious of his weakness and sinfulness before a holy, commanding Lord (Matt 17:6).

⁵⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 181.

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feel guilt because they *did* something wrong. But they feel shame because something *is* wrong.⁵⁸

Such self-awareness and awakened conscience often blur against the community's voice in moral judgment and action within an honor and shame context.⁵⁹ But the sharp analytical distinction between shame and guilt, which many try to make, cannot be maintained. For here, "in-person" before the face of God, individual human beings intuit their existence in a moral universe and do so in relation to a personal God.⁶⁰ Shame, guilt, and fear converge. In the end, it is individual shame or honor that matters (22:11-15). So also, is the question of internal versus external moral initiative/restraint.⁶¹ Moral being (character) is gauged not socially by what others might or might not see, but by "who one is when no one sees but self and God" (1:17; 2:23).⁶² Revelation's "eyes" raises important implications relative to honor/shame and individual moral agency.⁶³ Its conclusion turns intensely personal where its word to "the

⁵⁸ "In reality, the feelings of guilt and shame overlap. We can feel shame for what we do and we can feel guilty for who we are. Guilt and shame are fluid feelings that never stay in their own place quite like we would label them." Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 11.

⁵⁹ By their very nature, honor/shame-based cultures structure moral vision and action in relation to significant others. They connect personhood and personal ethics to one's group and its values. In effect, others define one's identity and one's duty.

⁶⁰ 6:9, 10; cf. 15:3, 4; 19:1, 2. One could say here that God also holds Himself accountable by allowing questions of theodicy: 1) holds them accountable; 2) promises to hold their persecutors accountable; and 3) and allows Himself to be held accountable by their very question.

⁶¹ In honor and shame contexts individuals tend to avoid doing wrong, not because they are necessarily concerned about right or wrong (or even understand right from wrong), but because others are watching. Likewise, they do what is right not because it is right, but because doing so brings (or maintains) honor. Maintaining honor becomes the highest value. It is a tacit ethics. In other words, in shame and honor contexts, "One is who he is when he is in the presence of others." Actions that might be considered right or wrong are not attached directly to honor or shame. Nor are they internalized as part of personhood or conscience. See my discussion, Lichtenwalter, "Toward the Moral Vision of Honor and Shame in Biblical Perspective: Worldview, Identity, Character," 111-149.

⁶² See my discussion in Larry Lichtenwalter, "Ethics for the Invisible: Moral Being and Action when No One Sees," in *The Global Ethics Crisis: An Adventist Response*, ed. Shawna Vyhmeister (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist University of Africa, 2015), 35-45.

⁶³ 1:14; 2:18; 4:6, 8; 5:6; 19:12.

one” is direct, explicit, and urgent (22:11, 12; cf. 17-19).⁶⁴ The question of honor will always be personal.

Matters of individual personal conscience and choice are thus integral to the biblical worldview of honor, honorable behavior, and the vindication of reputation within the cosmic conflict.⁶⁵ In the end, one has personal responsibility to maintain honor: “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame” (16:15). Such comes in view of the keeping of the book’s covenant commands and other moral issues of the cosmic conflict.⁶⁶

Yet, with unashamed intimacy, the redeemed will behold God’s face: “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (22:4). Already in the book’s flow of thought, there have been images of the redeemed standing with honor before the Holy One who sits on the throne (7:9-10; 14:1-5; 15:1-4). At this point though, the *face* and *name* of God are linked, “suggesting that *seeing* and *knowing* are indistinguishable. What pertains to the outside (face) also applies to the inner reality (name).”⁶⁷ As God’s name—His inner reality of character—is on their foreheads, their knowing God and likeness to God go hand in hand.⁶⁸ Nothing honors God more than to reflect who He is in each

⁶⁴ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2002), 201.

⁶⁵ 1:7, 17; 2:10, 17; 3:3-5; 6:15-17; 14:10; 15:1-4; 16:15; 22:11-12; cf. Dan 7:22; 12:2, 3, 13; Job 13:18; Ps 7:8. It is characteristic of biblical apocalyptic to focus on the importance of the individual as separate from the group rather than just the corporate community of faith (as per human nature in Hebrew thought where community takes precedence over the individual). Biblical apocalyptic gives promise of personal rewards and punishments, bodily resurrection as opposed to immortality of the soul, and asserts human beings as a unitary psycho-physical unit with freedom to make one’s own choices about whether or not they will be on God’s side or that of evil. Individual ethics and honor in apocalyptic thought is expressed in the importance of free will, accountability in judgment, the articulation of moral norms and values (including the law of God) to which human beings will be held accountable. See Larry Paul Jones, *Preaching Apocalyptic Texts* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1999), 9-23; Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972).

⁶⁶ 12:17; 14:12; cf. 21:8, 27; 22:14-15.

⁶⁷ Tonstad, *Revelation*, 332.

⁶⁸ While Revelation does not use the word *character*, character is nevertheless integral to its moral vision in relation to shame/honor, guilt/innocence and fear/power. Beatrice S. Neall, *The Concept of Character In The Apocalypse With Implications For Character Education* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983). *Being* and *doing* connect within the warfare worldview. Even God’s *being* and *doing* matter (15:3, 4; 19:1-6; 4:8). The character of God, the Lamb, the powers of evil, of human beings, is

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individual's character and life. God's name (character) in the forehead of the redeemed reveals the incredible power of His transforming grace in response to each person's choice to honor Him alone in thought and action.

Ultimately, all—whether redeemed or lost—stand before God's throne and see His face.⁶⁹ But all will not think the same thoughts or feel the same feelings as they meet the undimmed reality of God's "face." Moral being (character) is gauged not socially by what others might or might not see, but by "who one is when no one sees but self and God" (1:17; 2:23).⁷⁰

Revelation's depiction of the "bare face" of God alerts readers to the reality that—at the core—honor is no mere social or cultural convention. Revelation's face motif asserts the intimacy and relational dynamic of honor and shame in relation to God alone. God is the real "highest good." The universal standard and highest embodiment of honor is God Himself!⁷¹ This compels the reader to live morally and upright in keeping with the person and character of God. In this way human beings are honored or dishonored based on how they relate to God: do they honor or dishonor Him?⁷² This enormous shift in perspective lifts one's understanding of honor and shame beyond and above the blurry inconsistencies and relativism of human cultural perspectives, assessments, valuations and applications.⁷³ And it reminds individuals that they are incapable within themselves of reaching such an overwhelming criterion.

If indeed, God is the measure of what is honorable, then we are not left to our own cultural limitations and judgment in living honorably before others or in helping others know what is truly honorable and dishonorable. Undoubtedly, Revelation's covenant commands nuance moral values and action in relation to what God considers honorable.⁷⁴

each in question. As the book concludes, character has been questioned, revealed, tested, proven, and for all eternally closed. The conclusion of Revelation asserts that final honor and shame have been conferred.

⁶⁹ 6:10; 14:6, 7; 20:11, 12.

⁷⁰ See my discussion, Lichtenwaller, "Ethics for the Invisible," 35-45.

⁷¹ 4:8; 14:6, 7; 15:3, 4; 19:1-7.

⁷² 14:6-12; 15:1-18:24; cf. Ezek 36:19-23.

⁷³ See Lichtenwaller, "Toward the Moral Vision of Honor and Shame in Biblical Perspective," 117-124.

⁷⁴ 11:19; 12:17; 14:12. In a similar imagery Revelation notes moral realities of what is considered *clean* and *unclean*. Clean fine linen is associated with righteous acts (19:8).

Reversal from Shame to Honor

Revelation's graphic imagery of "a Lamb standing as if slain" (5:6) unfolds a profound reversal of honor-shame perspectives together with the values each would reinforce. John's Lion/Lamb imagery asserts the moral power of self-sacrifice (rather than positional or overwhelmingly coercive power) and thereby demonstrates that heaven's values are profoundly different than political or religious powers on earth. The shame of being slain opens toward the honor of *overcoming*. An erupting heavenly celebration unfolds heaven's view of such reversal:

And they sang a new song, saying, "**Worthy** are You to take the book and to break its seals; **for You were slain**, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "**Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (5:9-12).

While elsewhere Jesus has ascribed honor,⁷⁵ here honor is achieved honor. The emphasis in the Lamb imagery lies in the action of having been slain. The Lamb's blood redeems, cleanses, empowers, and removes shame and guilt.⁷⁶ As the faithful witness, who conquers through self-sacrifice (5:5, 6), Jesus stands as a paradigm for the action of the faithful community who also conquer through self-sacrifice and this constitutes the basis for true honor.⁷⁷

The transition passage which threads Revelation's story of the seven churches (Rev 1:9–3:21) together with that of the sealed scroll (Rev 4:1–11:19) asserts the believer's moral affinity with the person and work of Jesus: "*To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat with my Father on his throne*" (Rev 3:21).

Unclean is associated with immorality, lying, and abominable practices (17:14; 21:27; cf. 22:15).

⁷⁵ Exod ascribed honor: firstborn (1:5), Lion from Judah, Root of David (5:5); David's decedent, bright morning star (22:16).

⁷⁶ 1:5; 5:9, 10; 7:14; 12:11.

⁷⁷ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (London, New York: T & T Clark, 1996), 175.

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The phrase “*as I also overcame*” is instructive.⁷⁸ The believer’s overcoming is compared to Christ’s overcoming.⁷⁹ This overcoming, and the honor that comes with it, represents an explicit linking of Christology and honor/shame values in the Apocalypse.⁸⁰ Overcoming is one of Revelation’s major themes, as per the promises in John’s letters to the seven churches⁸¹ and the subsequent unfolding of the experience of both Christ and His people in the conflict between good and evil.⁸²

This close relationship between Christology and honor in the book of Revelation suggests that Jesus’ own suffering-reigning-resisting victory is the model for *being* in the world.⁸³ For the followers of the Lamb this also becomes the model for their lives as they are likewise marginalized and killed by the religious and political forces in Revelation’s narrative. This sacrificial life also has profound moral authority, influence, and power as witnesses in service to a lost world. The believers become witnesses to save others within the cosmic conflict (11:1–13; 12:11, 17; 14:1–13).⁸⁴ But even more importantly, this reversal motif informs the book’s theodicy in relation to the question of substitutionary atonement.

Theodicy is a major theme of John’s Apocalypse: encapsulating the justice and mercy of God, as well as His love and judgment. It reverberates in virtually every section of the book⁸⁵ raising questions not only about God’s reputation but the very nature of the atonement in light

⁷⁸ The concept of conquering is applied to both Jesus (3:21; 5:5; 17:14) and His people (2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7).

⁷⁹ Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 312.

⁸⁰ Loren L. Johns, “The Origins and Rhetorical Force of the Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1998), 221. See also, Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 69.

⁸¹ 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

⁸² 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7.

⁸³ Johns, “The Origins and Rhetorical Force of the Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John,” 211, 213.

⁸⁴ The imagery of the slain Lamb, the souls under the altar, the two witnesses, the patient endurance of God’s people, the threat of death, etc. illustrate the underlying moral theme of the Apocalypse—the power of self-sacrifice, the power of good over evil, and the power of love. There is moral power in suffering for what is right (Rev 2:10; 6:9–11; 12:10). There is moral power in the simple voicing of one’s own testimony about Jesus (Rev 12:11). There is moral power in steadfast nonviolent resistance (Rev 2:2; 12:17; 20:4). There is moral power in words of truth (Rev 1:2, 9, 16; 2:12, 16; 3:8, 10; 6:9, 11; 19:13, 15, 21; 20:4; 21:5; 22:6).

⁸⁵ Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

of God's character.⁸⁶ Two broad understandings of what atonement signifies in Revelation currently compete for primacy: 1) whether atonement in Revelation "signifies primarily a sacrificial death that expiates sin and puts humanity right with God";⁸⁷ or 2) whether it refers to "the larger cosmological significance of Christ's death as it relates to the overcoming of evil and the working out of God's purposes on earth."⁸⁸ The former would see atonement as substitutionary relating to realities of human sin and the need for redemption. There would be both objective and subjective aspects of atonement. The latter would be revelatory, relating primarily to questions of theodicy and the reputation/character of God. The latter would also see Christ's death as exemplary—a model for believers to follow.⁸⁹ At bottom, it would be "anti-sacrificial,"⁹⁰ i.e., "anti-substitutionary."

Revelation though, does not offer an either/or as if to prioritize one over the other. Both theodicy and redemption are substitutionary based and the latter is part of the movement towards the former.⁹¹ From the perspective of Revelation's cosmic conflict, the question of God's honor is pivotal.⁹² God is concerned about His own honor.⁹³ The cry from those under the altar reflects the theodicy cry of the ages (6:9-10). If God is holy and true, why does He not act decisively in judgment and promised vengeance? Without doubt, the "destiny of humanity is inextricably tied to God's final vindication, when 'every knee shall bow, every tongue

⁸⁶ Grant R. Osborne, "Theodicy in the Apocalypse," *Trinity Journal* 14 (1993): 63-77; Osborne, *Revelation*, 38-40, 565, 581, 663, 696-698.

⁸⁷ Loren L. Johns, "Atonement and Sacrifice in the Book of Revelation," in *The Work of Jesus Christ in Anabaptist Perspective: Essays in Honor of J. Denny Weaver*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver and Gerald J. Mast (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2008), 129.

⁸⁸ Ibid. See J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); Sigve K. Tonstad, "The Book of Revelation and Reality," *Ministry Magazine* (January 2010): 22-24. Johns argues: "At one level the difference lies between different theories of the atonement—especially between Anselm's satisfaction theory and the Christus Victor theory. At another level the difference lies between the personal or individual appropriation of the power of the cross on the one hand, and the broader cosmological or social significance of the power of the cross on the other. At yet a third level, the difference is between a unique, once-for-all event and an exemplary event that is to be emulated by those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes." Johns, "Atonement and Sacrifice in the Book of Revelation," 125.

⁸⁹ Johns, "Atonement and Sacrifice in the Book of Revelation," 125.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Lichtenwalter, "Atonement in Revelation-Part I," 37-38.

⁹² 6:10; 12:10; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-7; cf. Job 1:6-2:10; Gen 3:1-5; Psa 74:10; 82:2.

⁹³ 14:6, 7; cf. Lev 10:3; Num 20:10; 27:14; Ezek 28:22; 39:13.

shall swear' to the goodness and justice of God's reign in the earth (Isa. 45:27; cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10-11)."⁹⁴ But also, without doubt, and equally so, the destiny of humanity is inextricably tied to Christ's substitutionary death.⁹⁵ Both are substitutionary based where man's redemption is part of the movement towards theodicy. The redeeming substitution by the blood of the Lamb unites vicarious suffering and victorious power and in the process enjoins theodicy and redemption.⁹⁶

Throughout Revelation's visional trajectory, God is working to exalt humanity from shame to honor.⁹⁷ In effect though, "saving people from shame to honor establishes God's reputation as the only true source of honor and glory."⁹⁸ Revelation merges the imageries of shame and honor, redemption and kingdom by intertwining the throne room of God with the cross of Jesus Christ. The vision of the "Lamb standing, as if slain" (5:6) reveals in one image the centrality of the cross at the heart of the cosmic conflict and demonstrates the reversal from shame to honor. This imagery of the Lamb is far-reaching.⁹⁹ It brings to both Christ's title and His work a vicarious and sacrificial capacity that cannot be successfully denied.¹⁰⁰ The designation stresses the redeeming work of the Lamb, uniting vicarious suffering and victorious power, sovereign kingship and redemption—and in the process theodicy.¹⁰¹ It underscores the holistic nature, cosmic dimension, historicity, and universal application of Christ's death. The sufferings of Christ are portrayed as an act in time, which has eternal significance.¹⁰² His death is both a historic

⁹⁴ Frank Yamada, "Shame," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 730. Cf. 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 9:20-21; 15:1-4; 16:4-7; 19:1-6; 10; 22:9.

⁹⁵ See Lichtenwalter, "Atonement in Revelation—Part I," 39-49.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁷ 2:7; 22:14-15; 21-22; cf. Gen 3; Rev 12:1-2, 9-10. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 82.

⁹⁸ Georges, "Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before," 10.

⁹⁹ See Ekkehardt Mueller, "Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation—Part 1: Jesus in the Apocalypse," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 21, no. 1-2 (2010): 276-305; Ekkehardt Mueller, "Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation—Part 2: Christ's Divinity," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22, no. 1 (2011): 66-83; Ekkehardt Mueller, "Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation—Part 3: The Lamb Christology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22, no. 2 (2011): 42-66.

¹⁰⁰ H. D. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ: In Faith, Revelation, and History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 73.

¹⁰¹ McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ*, 79.

¹⁰² 5:9; 12:10; 13:8. *Ibid.*, 80.

fact,¹⁰³ and an eternal fact (13:8) that never needs repeating (5:6; cf., Heb 9:28).¹⁰⁴ It is unique, efficacious, a mystery that challenges our reflection (cf. Heb 2:9; 5:11). Within the book's cosmic conflict narrative, it is *THE* unequivocal turning point of salvation history.¹⁰⁵ Because of His death, Christ is not only the Lord of history and human destiny, but also the exalted focus of celebratory worship (5:9-14; 6:1-8:1). Revelation portrays an atonement and theodicy theology that reverses shame into honor at the cross.

Conclusion

Revelation's honor-shame perspective reveals underlying eternal values. It reflects a tacit moral value system (including norms and behaviors) in which the highest good is honor (respect) and the greatest evil is shame and humiliation. In the unfolding drama of Revelation, the book clarifies whom to honor and visualizes the pathway to honor. On the other hand, shame and its pathway are defined and warned against.

This universal standard and highest embodiment of honor is God Himself. God alone is the measure of what is honorable. Honor is ultimately understood and experienced within a profound personal relationship with God. There, in relation with Him and turned toward His honorable face, grace is found (1:4-5; 22:21). God's grace does not shame. It honors. It lifts the shamed, guilty, and fearful to ecstatic wonder, praise, and joy.¹⁰⁶ It enables the redeemed to sing amazing grace without feeling like a wretch.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Jesus was crucified (11:8); pierced (1:7); died (1:18; 2:8); resurrected (1:5, 18; 2:8); exalted (5:1-14).

¹⁰⁴ The Lamb had been "slain," but, amazingly, it was "standing" (v. 6). Both verbs are perfect tense forms, suggesting the abiding effects of the actions.

¹⁰⁵ 5:1-10; 12:10-13; 13:8. Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1988), 153; David M. May, *Revelation: Weaving a Tapestry of Hope* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 92. In the center-point of the book, between its *inclusio* "grace markers" (Rev 1:4; 22:21), a loud voice in heaven announces with triumphant song God's victory over Satan's rule, the inauguration of God's rule in the world, and Christ's kingly authority (Rev 12:10-12). This is the cross event with substitutionary implications (Rev 12:11; cf. 5:6-10).

¹⁰⁶ 1:5, 6; 7:9-10, 15; 14:1-5; 15:2-4.

¹⁰⁷ Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve*, 119-124.

LICHTENWALTER: FACE OF HONOR-SHAME IN JOHN'S APOCALYPSE

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