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Honor and Shame:
*How Paul Addressed and Countered New Testament-age Culture in His First Letter to the Corinthian Church*

The aim of this monograph is to provide a socio-historical exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 10-14 and Matthew 5-7. Paul's letter to the Corinthian church was written to a specific culture during the first century. In order for one to properly understand the letter in context, one must understand the audience and the historical background from which he is writing. The New Testament culture of the Greco-Roman world operated under certain social systems, or codes, that were understood by everyone, one of these being the honor/shame code. First Corinthians addresses the honor code of the time period, and counters it as Paul outlines the proper way that the "Jesus-group" members must conduct themselves. In doing so, he urges the members of the Jesus-group to avoid the practices of their pagan neighbors and live in such a way that is righteous and attractive for evangelism. There are predominant themes that emerge out of 1 Corinthians 10-14 that will be discussed at length. These themes include honor for the individual as it relates to their piety in worship, the individual acquisition of wealth and prestige and how that relates to their involvement in the Church and finally how one's personal reputation reflects the honor of the whole group. These themes will be the predominant ideas discussed in this critical analysis of the 1 Corinthian 10-14 chapters.

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Introduction

Our story takes place in a Greek house church in Corinth. One can easily imagine the windows being covered to help shroud this first century church from anyone that might be spying on their treasonous meeting. Also, it is not hard to imagine the only light in the room coming from dimly lit lamps making it difficult to see anyone else in the room except the messenger who was tasked with this dangerous and potentially deadly journey, as they deliver the words of their friend Paul to the church. All eyes were resting on the messenger as he began to read the words penned by Paul at the end of his time in Ephesus.

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2 White, L. Michael, From Jesus to Christianity (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 184, "...there were no church buildings in Paul's day, nor would a distinctively Christian church architecture evolve for nearly three centuries."
3 Richards, Lawrence O. New Testament Life and Times (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 360, "The city of Corinth lay on an isthmus controlling access to two seas, the Aegean on the east and the Ionian on the west. This prosperous ancient city, called 'the bridge of the seas,' had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. It was reestablished in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar and populated with army veterans and freedmen."
4 deSilva, David A. Honor, Shame, Kinship and Purity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 45, "It is noteworthy that maligning, reproach, beatings, imprisonments and financial ruin are mentioned frequently and explicitly, but lynching or execution only rarely: their neighbors were trying to reclaim these wayward members of their society."
5 White, L. Michael, From Jesus to Christianity (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 185, "The owner of the house where the church met on a regular basis was considered its host and patron, and he or she also exercised considerable authority within the group. Phoebe (Rom 16:2) and Gaius (Rom. 16:23) were important benefactors to Paul and their respective churches at Corinth."
6 Malina, Bruce J. The New Testament World (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 44, "First century Christians (closely after Jesus' resurrection) were not killed but pressured by society (i.e. maligning, reproach, beatings, imprisonments and financial ruin) (1 Pet 2:12, 3:16, 4:12-16)."
7 Missler, Chuck. Learn the Bible in 24 Hours (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), p. 226, "There are allusions to an earlier letter, so 1 Corinthians could well be the second letter Paul wrote to them."
8 Deissmann, Adolf. Light from the Ancient East (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 236, "Now we know that St. Paul did not write his letters with his own hand, but dictated them."
9 Wright, G. Earnest. Reader's Digest: Great People of the Bible and How They Lived (Sydney: The Reader's Digest Association Pty. Ltd., 1974), p. 404, "The man most responsible for carrying the Christian faith to the Greco-Roman world beyond Palestine was Paul. Beginning his career as a fierce persecutor of the earliest followers of Jesus, he experienced a miraculous conversion, and from that time on he practiced Christian evangelism so zealously and successfully that he went down in history as the revered "apostle to the Gentiles."
That night, the people of Corinth heard from the messenger both praises as well as brutally honest chastisement for their behavior while Paul was away. To have a cursory reading of Paul's words it is understandable to think he is being overly harsh in some places of the text. However, it is unfair, as well as incorrect, to interpret an almost 1900 year old letter through the lens of Western culture. To truly uncover the original intent there must be some work done to unearth what Paul's words would have meant to a first century Greco-Roman believer in their Mediterranean world. To apply our current world view simply will not do. Ben Witherington III unpacks this truth well,

We must show respect for the original historical authors and the meanings that they encoded into their words and sentences and discourses and seek first to understand what they wrote on their terms, not ours. This, of course, requires actual historical study of the biblical text. This is not an optional extra feature added to understanding the

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11 Wright, G. Earnest. Reader’s Digest: Great People of the Bible and How They Lived (Sydney: The Reader's Digest Association Pty. Ltd., 1974), p. 413, "Yet in this profoundly pagan city, Paul founded his most successful church.", "The dedicated disciples at Corinth would help spread the gospel into the Gentile world."

12 Deissmann, Adolf. Light from the Ancient East (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 237, "St. Paul wrote this letter with the full strength of his personality, putting it all the varied emotions that succeeded and encountered one another in his capricious soul- deep contrition and thankfulness towards God, the reformer’s wrath, irony and trenchant candour towards the vicious."

13 Richards, Lawrence O. New Testament Life and Times (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 359, "No wonder Paul's writing here is so vigorous!"


15 Deissmann, Adolf. Light from the Ancient East (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 1, "So too the book which preserves an echo of the message of Jesus and his apostles: the New Testament is a gift from the East. We are accustomed to read it under our Northern sky, and though it is by origin an Eastern book, it is so essentially a book of humanity that we comprehend its spirit even in the countries of the West and the North."

16 Horsley, Richard A. and Silberman, Neil A. The Message and the Kingdom (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1997), p. 128, "For the pagans, Jesus Christ was seen as a universal, heaven-sent Redeemer figure, whose Israelite origins and scriptural associations offered a time-honored religious background that may have offered an attractive alternative to the myths of the pagan mystery gods."


18 Witherington III, Ben. The Indelible Image (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 41, for further explanation, see "Original Context Rules"

19 White, L. Michael. From Jesus to Christianity (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 3, "In some cases, knowing who wrote the book and who read it can help us understand the when and why...In other words, we have to employ the tools of history in order to read the story, even when the story is about history or is apart of the history."
New Testament; it is essential to the study of the New Testament. Not even New Testament theology or ethics should be studied in a non-historical manner.

Therefore, we must begin our task of understanding the historical perspective Paul is writing from with the understanding of social structure. As Bruce Malina states, "If meaning derives from a social system, while wording (e.g. speaking or writing) simply embodies meaning from the social system, then any adequate understanding of the Bible requires some understanding of the social system embodied in the words that make up our sacred scripture." In the first century Greco-Roman world these systems were the strict code in which a society operated. One of the paramount social systems was to live in a world which operated around the concept of honor and shame; or to put it more generally to live a life of honor and not bring shame to the family, household or community. To truly understand the thought pattern of Paul it is imperative to take an in-depth look at how honor and shame shaped his relationship with his congregation in Corinth. Simply stated, Paul's way of life, including how he instructed others, centered on the ideas of piety, prestige and corporate honor within the Church.

20 Wright, G. Earnest. Reader's Digest: Great People of the Bible and How They Lived (Sydney: The Reader's Digest Association Pty. Ltd., 1974), p. 416, "In his letters, Paul expounded the basic tenets of his theology. Unlike the Gospel writers, Paul was less concerned with the life and teachings of Jesus that with his death and resurrection and their meaning for mankind. For Paul, the ultimate manifestation of God's power and love for undeserving mankind was in the resurrection, Jesus' victory over sin and death."
23 deSilva, David A. Honor, Shame, Kinship and Purity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 18, "New Testament culture possessed "certain values, such as honor, and codes of forming and maintaining relationships, such as patronage and kinship, and ways of ordering the world, expressed frequently in terms of purity."
24 Buttrick, George A., ed. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Vol 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 639, "The New Testament uses the term "honor" primarily in reference to man. It contains numerous admonitions, however, against a person seeking honor for himself. The place of honor at feasts (Luke 14:7-8, 20:46) or the honor one has in virtue of his office (Heb 5:4) The Christian is urged to bestow honor freely and gladly upon those whom honor is due (Rom 12:10, Phil 2:29, 1 Tim 5:3, 6:1, etc.) Should he be required to suffer dishonor, they need not indicate either his faithless to his calling as a man or his infidelity to god."
25 Witherington III, Ben. The Paul Quest (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 248, "The story of Paul and of Christians. Paul is interested in the entire story of humankind from beginning to end. When he reaches the climax, the story of Christ, he focuses overwhelmingly on the end of the Christ story- the death and resurrection- though Christ's coming and true humanity are also emphasized."
Honor through Piety and Worship

In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul writes that when the Corinthians come together, each has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation of scripture. It is understood that the early Jesus group members met with one another to worship and to express their piety to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Their different ways of worship were not welcome to others whose beliefs differed and therefore the believers in Corinth were confronted with a multitude of social pressures.

Their multitheistic pagan neighbors worshiped several gods and goddesses and the Caesar, who was considered the living god and savior of the people. In 1 Corinthians 10:12, Paul emphasizes that "Christians cannot participate in any public or social event which is not dedicated to a pagan deity." At the time, this was particularly difficult. Unlike in western culture today where there is separation of church and state, in the Greco-Roman world worship existed everywhere - on the streets, in temples.

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28 deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 74, "Pressures to conform to the values of the Greco-Roman culture or Jewish subculture, and temptations to assess worth and honor in light of those alien values, do not come only from outside the Christian community. After all, every member of the church during the first generation of its existence in a given locale was first socialized into one or the other of those cultures."
29 Wright, G. Earnest. *Reader's Digest: Great People of the Bible and How They Lived* (Sydney: The Reader's Digest Association Pty. Ltd., 1974), p. 420, "Christianity had certain similarities to pagan beliefs, especially to the Late Hellenistic mystery religions. These cults were built around the myth of a dying and rising god."
30 deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 45, "To the outsider, this Jesus movement appeared to undermine the sacred and central values of society, pulling formerly good and reliable people into a subversive cult."
31 *Ibid.*, p. 46, "Piety was indispensable to an individual's good reputation, especially since reverence toward the gods was interwoven so deeply into domestic, social, civic and political aspects of Greco-Roman life… The rejection of the gods by the Christians made them 'atheists' and colored them as a subversive element in the society, a potential cancer in the body politic."
32 Horsley, Richard A. ed. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), p. 20, "The emperor was called "God" (theos), and the main purpose of the [imperial] cut was to cultivate and express 'piety' (eusebeia, devotion and socially oriented commitment) towards him."
35 White, L. Michael, *From Jesus to Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 52, "Most inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world gladly worshiped a wide variety of gods and goddesses. Some were part of civic life and festivals; others were tacked to family life and rituals of birth and death; and still others were safe-guards against the vagaries of fickle Fate."
and in homes. As deSilva puts it, "Strict avoidance of participation in idolatrous worship meant that the Christians would need to remove themselves from much of the public life of their city."36 Furthermore, Ramsey MacMullen writes, "There existed…no form of social life…that was entirely secular. Small wonder, then, that Jews and Christians, holding themselves aloof from anything the god's touched, suffered under the reputation of misanthropy."37 In his letter, Paul addressed the confusion that most believers were facing when it came to eating meals with meat,38 (eidolothyton),39 sacrificed to idols.40 This left early believers stuck with the question; Was it dishonorable to eat from the table of a nonbeliever if such idols were worthless? According to MacDonald,

With respect to meat sacrificed to idols, Paul may be prohibiting believers from public participation in a cultic meal (and activity that might be construed as such) but allowing the consumption of all foods in a private setting. Beyond this general distinction, however, Paul seems to be allowing believers to face considerable ambiguity in their relations with outsiders. In 1 Cor 10:31-341 Paul gives a theological explanation for his actions which help clarify the discrepancies in his thought. Once again, we discover the tension arising from a simultaneous interest in both avoiding and evangelizing outsiders. The conscience of a brother or sister must be protected, but possibilities for the evangelization of outsiders must not be overlooked. Paul seeks to please them all in order to save all.42

Temple and home worship were places where people conducted their religious activities. Temples in the ancient world were places where the gods or at least local manifestations of them were thought to dwell…On important festival days, however, the temple staff and worshippers of a particular deity would also take to the streets in procession—sometimes solemn, sometimes festive—followed by sacrifices, rituals, and even meals back at the temple. It was a grand show, and people might come from far and wide to participate. Of course, the temples benefitted, too.”36 deSilva, David A. Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 47.
38 Gundry, Robert H. A Survey of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 364, ”Most meat in the butcher shops had come from animals sacrificed to idols. The gods received a token portion…(after sacrifice)...the meat went up for sale. Christians should not eat food sacrificed to idols if it damages the conscience of observers who feel idols have divine existence.”
40 I Cor 11:2-11, NIV.
41 Malina, Bruce J. and Pilch, John J. Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 106, "Paul now concludes this section (1 Cor 10:31) with an exhortation to do everything for God's glory, including eating and drinking. ‘Glory’ in an honor and shame context, refers to the outward things one does, the visible behavior one follows, that reveal one's social standing or honor. To glorify God means to act in a way that honors God. In context, yielding one's entitlements glorifies God.”
Paul speaks in favor of evangelizing outsiders and unifying all members of the Jesus group through the formation of consistent worship practices. Through our Western lens we may have the tendency to interpret this section of scripture with much scrutiny, particularly the way Paul addresses the women of the church. Similar red flags may be raised over 1 Corinthians 10:14-33. One thing 21st century Christians must remember is that Paul is speaking to an androcentric society in which males dominated all aspects of culture. According to Malina and Pilch, "In their behavior, the Jesus group husbands and wives are expected to honor the source of their honor. To honor another is to show respect, to behave in a way that brings honor to another." It wasn't disrespectful for Paul to address the issue of women's heads being covered during prayer, he was simply reminding them to follow the normal social pattern of the day and age. Their head covering was in reference to their hair being braided,

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43 Ibid., p. 65, "However, even at this early stage, Paul's concern for decency and order is a beginning guide institutionalization in one particular direction. As time passes and patterns become more and more established we can expect there will be less room for more spontaneous rituals."
44 1 Cor 14:33-35, NIV
45 Richards, Lawrence O. New Testament Life and Times (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 395, "Yes the roles of men and women do differ: in the family, in society, and in the church. But role differentiation must not be distorted to suggest superiority/inferiority. And Paul's use of "head" here must not be taken to support a hierarchical view of male/female relations in the home or church.
46 Witherington III, Ben. The Paul Quest (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 44, "First, we must remember that the world in which Paul lived was indeed a male-dominated world. Honor was bound up with male ideology and seen as in essence a value for males to uphold. It was by and large only males who could aspire to public offices (with the exception of some women priestesses) or be lawyers, rhetoricians, masters of the games or leaders of armies (royal women such as Cleopatra were clearly anomalies)."
47 Witherington III, Ben. The Jesus Quest, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 32, "...like the rest of the Mediterranean world, was a patriarchal and androcentric society. It was not merely male dominated de facto, but was set up so that males would dominate, assuming almost all the power and leadership roles in society, both political and religious."
49 Hays, Richard B. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching First Corinthians (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 185, "To have the head "covered" would mean to have the hair tied up on top of the head, rather than hanging loose."
50 1 Cor 11:5, NIV.
51 Hays, Richard B. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching First Corinthians (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 186, "Thus, the argument in verses 4-6 is strictly an argument about honor and shame. The problem was that some of the Corinthian women were acting in ways that brought shame on the community by blurring the traditional lines of gender distinction and/or by appealing to act in a disgraceful or disorderly manner. Such conduct, Paul suggests, bring shame, particularly on the men of the church, whose "headship" is discredited by the disorderly behavior of the women."
52 Ibid., p. 183, "Rather than the freedom of women to prophesy with unbound hair, he instructs them instead to maintain the discipline symbolized by head coverings."
which was a status symbol of married women.\textsuperscript{53} Also, when Paul references "woman as the glory of man,"\textsuperscript{54} he means to say, according to Richards, "...woman was created from man, she completes man, and with man, makes the human race a realizable possibility. The excellencies of the female reflects credit on the male, from whose rib\textsuperscript{55} she was formed as his partner and equal."\textsuperscript{56} Women understood their role in terms of gender status\textsuperscript{57} in the society and they would have been wise to heed Paul's advice, not simply for the church's honor but for their own families' as well.

**Honor through prestige and wealth**

Another idea, or theme, that Paul addresses in his letter to the Corinthians is how honor is achieved through prestige and wealth. The town of Corinth was a wealthy\textsuperscript{58} Roman colony\textsuperscript{59} and as such, one's honor "was closely linked to wealth and power as well as authority."\textsuperscript{60} Bruce Malina provides great insight on this idea,

"Honor stands for a person's rightful place in society, his social standing. This honor position is marked off by boundaries consisting of power, gender status, and location on the social ladder... The purpose of honor is to

\textsuperscript{53} Malina, Bruce J. and Pilch, John J. *Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 107, "A married woman in public with unbraided hair surely shamed her husband. It was as shameful as having her head shaved. The behavior expected of married women at Jesus-group gatherings where they pray and prophesy is the same that is expected of them in public. Since in public they would not be seen with their hair cut off or shaved, neither should they come to Jesus-gatherings with their hair unbraided."

\textsuperscript{54} 1 Cor 11:7, NIV.

\textsuperscript{55} Gen 2:21, NIV.


\textsuperscript{57} Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 29-30, "Honor, as we shall see, is basically a claim to worth, that is socially acknowledged. Authority means the ability to control the behavior of others (symbolic reality, not force). Gender status (or roles) refers to the sets of obligations or entitlements. What you ought to do and what others ought to do for you- that derive from symboling biological gender differentiation."

\textsuperscript{58} Richards, Lawrence O. *New Testament Life and Times* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 360, "...and about the time of Christ's birth Strabo wrote that 'Corinth is said to be 'wealthy' on account of trade.' Another source of prosperity was the banking industry that flourished there. A third factor was the large colony of artisans who settled in Corinth. For instance, Corinthian bronze was prized throughout the Empire, and Corinthian lamps were exported to every land."

\textsuperscript{59} White, L. Michael, *From Jesus to Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 177, "The status of colonia, or colony, was highly prized, since it automatically gave the city special privileges in the Roman administration, and its citizens were considered Romans.

serve as a sort of social rating which entitles a person to interact in specific ways with his or her equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed social cues of the society.\(^{61}\)

In light of this it is easy to see that for most Corinthians their quest for honor placed greater emphasis on establishing one's reputation as being affluent and benevolent\(^{62}\). According to Ben Witherington III, "In Paul's world, the quest for honor and praise was one of the most important forces in binding society together and preserving the male-dominated status quo."\(^{63}\) With this said, one can understand how difficult it must have been for the more wealthier members of the Jesus-group in Corinth to hear Paul's words of seeking humility\(^{64}\), though the group was mostly comprised of people, "from the lower classes\(^{65}\) and slaves."\(^{66}\)

The poor\(^{67}\) were attracted to the gospel message\(^{68}\) because it would ensure them to be heirs of a heavenly kingdom, knowing that while on earth they would most likely receive no inheritance.\(^{69}\) This

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\(62\) Ibid., p. 37, "One's good name, that is, one's reputation, holds the central concern of people in every context of public action and gives purpose and meaning to their lives, again like money does in our society. Prestige derives from the domination of persons rather than things. hence, any concern people show for the acquisition of goods derives from the purpose of gaining honor through beneficence, not through the act of possession and/or keeping of what one has acquired. Thus, money, goods, and any sort of wealth are really a means to honor and any other use of wealth is considered foolish."

\(63\) Witherington III, Ben. *The Paul Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 45, "Note, however, that though the Greco-Roman world was a world of self-promoters seeking public recognition and honor, this was not because they wanted to stand out from the crowd but because above all else they wanted to be recognized by and so be one of crowd, in particular the elite of society."

\(64\) Ibid., p. 45, "Humility in the Greco-Roman world was not really seen as a virtue or an honorable thing, especially in a man. Indeed the very term we translate "to humble" in the New Testament would normally mean to have the mind of a slave or to act in a slavelike fashion."

\(65\) White, L. Michael, *From Jesus to Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 181, "...at least some of the Corinthian followers were of higher socioeconomic status, even though most were not. Some key issues later in the letter, particularly conflicts over attending elite pagan dinner parties (chaps. 8-10) and divisions arising in the Lord's Supper (11:1-34), seem to depend on these socioeconomic divisions."

\(66\) Ernest, *Great People of the Bible and How They Lived*, 413.

\(67\) Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 99, "In peasant societies, poor is not exactly a designation of social rank or reference to the lowest standing in a series of ranks. As a matter of fact, being poor is not primarily an expression of class or economic rank at all. The culture that we study has its prime focus in and pivotal value in kinship, in belonging, and in the social order based on honor and shame."

\(68\) Witherington III, Ben. *The Indelible Image* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 135, Discussion of the "poor in spirit": "When one is aware of one's poverty, including the poverty of the spirit, one is made aware of one's dependency on God. A person who is aware of this is already experiencing the reign of God."

\(69\) Witherington III, Ben. *The Jesus Quest*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 69, "...the discussion of the Beatitude 'Blessed are you who are poor' (Lk 6:20; cf. Mt. 5:3). [Crossan] rightly points out that the term ptochoi does not
meant that in regards to honor, the poor were found in want by society, including the Church. DeSilva writes that, "James and Paul both combat the tendency to honor the rich above the poor, thus replicating within the community the majority culture's conviction that a person's honor or worth is proportionate to his wealth (see 1 Cor 11:20-22, Jas 1:9-10, 2:1-9).\textsuperscript{70} No matter what the believer's social rank was within the body of the Jesus-group, they were to worship and live for God's approval instead of the approval of others\textsuperscript{71} and treat everyone equally.\textsuperscript{72}

Another issue Paul addresses in his letter, in regards to proper worship practices, is that of speaking in tongues. Richards writes, "This sheds much light on the problem at Corinth, they carried over assumptions of their faith from paganism. Speaking in tongues\textsuperscript{73} was worth noting in the pagan temples."\textsuperscript{74} This meant that members of the Jesus-group were concerned with their social standing\textsuperscript{75} in the group based on their spiritual gifting (pneumatika).\textsuperscript{76} Speaking in tongues might have been viewed

\begin{footnotes}
\item deSilva, David A. \textit{Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 75.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 57, "...believers are instructed to live for God's approval rather than human approval. They are to seek the circumcision of the heart that God values rather than circumcise their flesh so as to gain the approval of conservative Jewish Christians (Rom 2:29). They are to seek God's approval for their pious actions (whether prayer, fasting, or almsgiving) rather than engage in these actions for the sake of human approval (Mt 6:1-18)."
\item Richards, Lawrence O. \textit{New Testament Life and Times} (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 397, "As far as shared meals are concerned, those of different social classes at the same dinner would normally be provided with very different quantities of food...In following this practice, 'you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing' (11:22)."
\item Gundry, Robert H. \textit{A Survey of the New Testament} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 366, "Charismata (gifts) and glossolalia (speaking in tongues) make up the subject matter of chapters 12-14. Many hold that the speaking in tongues discussed here by Paul consists of ecstatic speaking, not a speaking in bonafide human languages."
\item Horsley, Richard A. and Silberman, Neil A. \textit{The Message and the Kingdom} (New York: Grosset/Putnam, 1997), p. 179, "Paul minced no words with the group he identified as his main opponents in Corinth: the small group of social climbers who were attempting to use their patronage of the Jesus Movement to boost their civic status- just as other Corinthian notables in the city utilized patronage of other associations and cults."
\item Malina, Bruce J. and Pilch, John J. \textit{Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul} (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 113, "pneumatika...should be translated spiritual phenomena. First century experience where all goods were perceived as limited, nothing was free. Anything one accepted from another required some sort of reciprocity at some time-no connotation of gift at all! The spirit in question, is the spirit of God."
\end{footnotes}
as a more honorable "gift" to receive from the Holy Spirit than others. It is easy to see how a new believer might find it more honorable to speak in tongues and therefore covet those who have this gift. Therefore, Paul deems it an imperative to address this covetous tendency in 1 Corinthians 14:1-25, with much emphasis on verses 18 and 19, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue." (NIV) For members seeking honor through the acquisition of a more reputable Spiritual gift, that being in their eyes the gift of tongues, they were put to shame by Paul's words. Paul further encourages the believers to heed his warning that over enthusiastic use of the gift may be a deterrent for what he, as well as the Church, eagerly wanted, evangelism.

**Corporate honor**

The final theme Paul addresses in his first letter to the Corinthians is corporate honor or how the honor of one person affects the honor of the whole group. DeSilva gets at the heart of this in saying, "It is

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77 Hays, Richard B. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 208, "Therefore Paul shifts to the term "charismata" in verse 4 (and thereafter in vv. 9, 28, 30, and 31), the semantic difference is significant: verbal displays of spiritual inspiration must be interpreted as God's gifts of grace (charis), not as a personal achievement of property of the speaker. For that reason, verses 4-11 particularly stress the sovereign initiative of God in allocating and empowering all spiritual gifts in the community."

78 Missler, Chuck. *Learn the Bible in 24 Hours* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), p. 228, "The Holy Spirit is looking for fruit - we should be inspecting fruit, not gifts."

79 1 Cor 12:7-11, NIV.

80 Witherington III, Ben. *The Indelible Image* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 255, "[Paul] is all for fervency in the Spirit with the aim of serving the Lord and one another. It is interesting how Paul sees the Spirit the one who not only stirs up emotions but also monitors them and keeps them holy (cf. Rom 8:15-16, 26; 1 Cor 14:14-16; Gal 5:22-23)."

81 Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 366, "Through valuing tongues-speaking too highly the Corinthians have been overusing the gift. Paul devalues it and insists that its use be orderly and limited."

82 MacDonald, Margaret Y. *Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 60: The Pauline Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 42, "Paul does not hesitate to state in 1 Cor 14:22-5 that the opinions of outsiders are important. He is worried about the over-enthusiastic use of the gift of tongues in the Corinthian community. Instead of becoming a believer, the unbeliever who hears them speaking in tongues may conclude that Christians are mad. (1 Cor 14:23)."

83 deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 61, "Paul will even call a local congregation to take up a certain course of action out of concern for its honor in the eyes of the other congregations of believers (2 Cor 8:24; 9:1-5), and also to conform to the norms followed by the larger Christian culture (1 Cor 7:7; 11:16; 14:33)."
not only about an individual's sense of worth, but the coordination and promotion of a group's defining and central values: preservation in the midst of a complex web of other cultures and honor/dishonor as it is attained and enacted. Furthermore, Malina explores the idea of corporate honor with distinction between individualistic and corporate honor:

Honor has both individual and corporate or collective dimensions. Whenever the honor of another is bound up with an individual's own honor, that individual is required to defend and represent the honor of all bound up with him, and at times, her. This sort of collective honor is to be found in natural and optional groupings. Natural groupings, like ascribed honor, befall a person and depend on the circumstances beyond the person's control. Relations within the natural groupings are sacred, blood, or pure relationships that tie persons directly together. Optional groupings, like acquired honor, result from calculated choices usually made under social duress. Relationships within optional groupings are focused on posts and functions and these posts and functions are considered sacred and pure, although many different people can hold them. The heads of both natural and optional groupings set the tone and embody the honor rating of the group.

By and large, corporate honor depends on the unity of its members, which was essential to the survival of the early church. Paul utilizes, in the entirety of 1 Corinthians 12, the metaphor of a body and its many parts to express this idea. He attacks the idea that one part lacks importance over the others and stresses how essential each part of the body is in making it function correctly. First

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84 Ibid., p. 25.
87 Ibid., p. 42.
88 Ibid., p. 28.
90 Eph 4:1-6, NIV.
Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV) states, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." The idea is that one member of the body may be weaker than the others, but they still hold just as much importance as the stronger members; stronger in the sense of being the more pronounced role or gift performed in the Church that might receive more prestige from the congregation.

Next, In Matt 7:16-20 (NIV), we learn from Jesus that a tree is known by its fruit. If a member of the body deviates from living a righteous life in community with other believers their actions warrant chastisement from the group. The very survival of the Jesus Movement depended on the faith and unity of its followers, especially with the degree of persecution they were faced with on a daily

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93 Malina, Bruce J. and Pilch, John J. Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 114, "The weaker members are indispensible (v. 22) those clothed with greater honor are the less honorable; those treated with greater respect are in fact less respectable. In sum, those given greater honor are inferior members. Second, regardless of honor ranking, members must have mutual care for one another. If one suffers, all suffer, if one is honored, all rejoice."

94 Ibid., p. 114, "The charismata [gifts] are given to everybody in the Jesus group. They are identified as services and activities. In what follows, these services and activities have a collectivistic function, to support and uphold the Jesus group. In other words, they are not given for the good of the individual who possesses a charisma. Rather, for charismata to emerge, persons are required to be of service or to act on behalf of another. They are phenomena experienced by each person in the group and induced by God's spirit for the common good of the group."

95 deSilva, David A. Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 91, "In the Greco-Roman world (including the Jewish subculture), being is reflected in doing: one is what one does; a tree is known by the nature of its fruits; good people do virtuous acts; the one who does what is shameful is a shameful and base person."

96 Richards, Lawrence O. New Testament Life and Times (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), p. 386, "The 'so it is [also] with' (houtos kai) alerts us to perhaps the NT's primary metaphor intended to help us understand the nature of the church. In Romans, Paul taught that by faith the believer is joined to Jesus in an indissoluble union. Now he teaches that those united to Christ are also united to one another, in as organic a relationship as that which obtains between the limbs and organs of a body."

97 Malina, Bruce J. and Pilch, John J. Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), p. 105, In reference to 1 Cor 10:32-33, "Individual group members are not to offend the people with whom they live…Again the theme is not to seek one's own entitlement but to seek what benefits the many so that the many may be saved."

98 Ibid., p. 111, "Hence to 'discern the body' refers to group awareness, to being attentive to one's fellow Jesus group members, who together form the 'body of Christ', as Paul will shortly explain (12:12). The point is to avoid condemnation, Jesus-group members must be attentive to how they treat others in the group, otherwise the Lord will discipline us in order to form us in the proper ways to behave (the meaning of paideuo in vs. 32) so that we will not be condemned with 'the world', that is, the rest of society."
basis. Deviance\textsuperscript{99} from the group's values means punishment from the group. New Testament authors, like Paul, use the language of honor/shame to articulate this Christian value. They seek to make the church the new "court of reputation"\textsuperscript{100} and reinforce the commitment from their congregation members with acts of love, service and faith, and censure those who didn’t commit.\textsuperscript{101}

A final thought on this subject is warranted. A well documented custom in the Greco-Roman culture of Christians is that believers would be confronted with a verbal challenge\textsuperscript{102} from a non-believer. The honorable person would in turn, be pressured to offer a riposte,\textsuperscript{103} or honorable answer, in response to the verbal challenge. Failure to do so would be deemed as "dishonorable" by the general public witnessing the exchange.\textsuperscript{104} Jesus' words in Matt 5: 38-41 (NIV) attacks this honor/shame exchange by urging his followers to not trade an "eye for an eye" and to "turn the other cheek" when faced with someone who challenges them.\textsuperscript{105} In attempts to maintain the honor of the group and the reputation of the Jesus-movement, an individual must act quite contrary\textsuperscript{106} to their upbringing in Greco-Roman society if they are to follow Jesus.\textsuperscript{107} Jesus epitomizes 1 Cor 13:3-5 (NIV)\textsuperscript{108} in his last hours

\textsuperscript{99}MacDonald, Margaret Y. \textit{Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 60: The Pauline Churches} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 42, "According to Bryan Wilson, the tension between mission and world rejection found in conversionist sects often takes the form of a tension between the desire for separation from the outside and the desire for social respectability. Endeavouring to please all is connected with a wish to be respected by all."

\textsuperscript{100}deSilva, David A. \textit{Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 55, "court of reputation- the sole body of significant others whose approval or disapproval should be important to the individual."

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{102}Witherington III, Ben. \textit{The Paul Quest} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 47, agonistic culture- every social interaction was perceived as an honor challenge "Everyone was seeking not merely to get what was coming to them but to rise in status and can a larger share of the limited good known as honor."

\textsuperscript{103}deSilva, David A. \textit{Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 29, "In the second instance, honor can be won and lost in what has been called the social game of challenge and riposte. It is this 'game,' still observable in the modern Mediterranean, that has caused cultural anthropologists to label this culture as 'agnostic,' from the Greek word for 'contest' (agon)."

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., p. 70.

\textsuperscript{105}Witherington III, Ben. \textit{The Indelible Image} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 255, "The joyful Christian is the one who looks forward in hope, not backward in anger, even when having to persevere through trials and suffering."

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., p. 256, "Paul wants a wholehearted service that includes serving the poor and involves menial tasks, the sort that only servants normally performed. Romans 12:17 is emphatic about not returning evil for evil. Here is a clear echo of Matthew 5:38-42 // Luke 6:29)."

\textsuperscript{107}Witherington III, Ben. \textit{The Paul Quest} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 248, "Christ not only stripped himself but also shunned any rightful human accolades or dignity, taking on the form of a servant or slave. How very differently he lived from most ancient persons, caught up in honor challenges and striving for more public recognition."
hanging on the cross\textsuperscript{109} as he displayed immeasurable kindness, did not boast of his heavenly reputation, and chose not to dishonor those who were hurling insults at him\textsuperscript{110} (even though he had the license to do so). Several times in Jesus’ ministry years was he confronted with verbal challenges from the Jewish religious leaders and from Satan.\textsuperscript{111} He consistently spoke truth, kept his composure, left his opponents baffled at the conclusion of his riposte, all the while maintaining the vindication of his own honor. First-century Christians and modern-day Christians are encouraged and challenged by His example of speaking with authority and wisdom in the face of evil.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Under the lens of the Greco-Roman cultural values of honor and shame\textsuperscript{112} it can be concluded that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians centered on the ideas of piety, prestige and corporate honor within the Church. The early church survived despite the intense persecution it faced from pagan society because the members had to defy many of the social norms of the day to maintain an honorable status within their group. Often times this even meant they would earn a status of shame from their pagan society in which they lived. These norms, though not all, of the early Church discussed so far left the early Church in a very precarious position in regards to the world they lived in. To value humility over prestige and wealth meant an honorable standing in the church but also might mean being punished by the pagan society that deemed this behavior as not honorable. Furthermore, adopting monotheistic

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\footnotetext{108}{“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”}
\footnotetext{109}{Robbins, V. K. \textit{Exploring the Texture of Texts} (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 81-2. “The second challenge to Jesus’ honor comes while he hangs on the cross, as people who pass by, chief priests and scribes, issue the mocking challenge that he should come down from the cross (15:30, 32). Again, Jesus is silent in the face of these remarks, a silence which itself communicates how deeply dishonored he is within the Mediterranean system. The failure to respond to such a challenge dishonors him.”}
\footnotetext{110}{Mark 15:3-32, NIV.}
\footnotetext{111}{Matt 4:1-1 and parallel passage Luke 4:1-13, NIV.}
\footnotetext{112}{deSilva, David A. \textit{Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 23, "The culture of the first-century world was built on the foundational social values of honor and dishonor"}
\end{footnotes}
worship in the face of rampant polytheism could often times insure extreme persecution from a world that loved their many gods and could not tolerate those who would not bow their knee to a statue of Cesar or worship at the local temple of that community’s god. Finally, the early church had to appropriately address the idea of appropriate worship practices for believers. That meant that members of the body could not carry over the religious practices they adhered to from their previous style of pagan worship. Furthermore, they had to begin to live a righteous life under a new honor code so as to not shame the honor of their fellow Jesus-group members, though they faced immense pressure to cave into their former ways of life.

We as 21st century believers have a hard time finding all of these meanings inside a text that we have no cultural relevance to. Therefore, it is imperative to learn the history of the society in which these people lived and died. It is all too easy to miss the important lessons offered to us from our early church fathers, brothers and sisters. The idea of honor and shame is alive and well today and we would be serving our Lord Jesus Christ to remember these lessons taught to us in the scriptures of 1 Corinthians.
Works Cited


