

*HONOR Y VERGÜENZA:*

UNDERSTANDING HONOR AND SHAME IN LATIN AMERICA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MEQUON, WISCONSIN

MARCH 7, 2018

## ABSTRACT

The spectrum of guilt-shame-fear cultures has been studied by anthropologists for some time now. However, more recently Christian missiologists have begun to study the benefits and challenges each of these cultures present. Anthropologists and missiologists claim that shame culture includes the most people in the world. Examples of shame cultures include much of Asia and the Middle East, as well as Latin America.

This paper studies honor-shame cultures in Latin America and challenges they pose to Christian preachers. It also offers solutions to these problems, namely, building relationships with people and showing honor by evangelizing groups rather than individuals.

The research for this thesis was done by studying literature on shame cultures as well as anthropological studies of Latin America. For more insight, the author also interview missionaries who have served in Latin America.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural evangelism comes with many locked doors. A person who is unfamiliar with another culture may try to use their own cultural background to unlock these doors. However, the key does not fit, and the door remains locked. For this reason, missionaries look for keys in different cultures through carefully observing the people and forming relationships with them to unlock the doors and remove barriers to the gospel.

A key which has recently been discovered through anthropological study is the concept of the guilt-shame-fear spectrum of cultures. Where a culture falls on this spectrum will determine cultural values and attitudes. These terms describe how a culture reacts to sin and controls behavior.

This theory can be applied to Latin America. Latin America falls in many ways toward the shame end of the spectrum. Therefore, this paper studies what honor-shame cultures are and how they apply to Christianity. This paper also takes a special focus on the honor-shame cultures of Latin America, the challenges for evangelism in Latin America, and solutions for those challenges from an honor-shame perspective.

## 1-SPECTRUM OF CULTURES

Every culture follows a different paradigm to describe the morality of its members or to control their behavior. The typical categories which anthropologists divide these cultures into are guilt-innocence cultures, honor-shame cultures and power-fear cultures.<sup>1</sup> Western cultures like the United States and most of Europe are classified as guilt-innocence cultures.

People in guilt-innocence cultures generally base their behavior on what laws and rules tell them to do. The inner conscience is what guides a person's conduct based on feelings of guilt or innocence, or of "right" and "wrong." Jayson Georges describes guilt-innocence culture with this example:

One of my ... earliest childhood memories is of a guilty conscience for stealing a Hot Wheels fire truck from preschool. Even though no one witnessed me, my young conscience tormented me until I returned it the next day. Guilt needs no audience because it results from breaking an internalized code. Note the wording of the above sentence, "my young conscience tormented me." The punishment came from within, not from the involvement of others.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, a person who comes from a guilt-innocence culture can relate with Georges's story. From an early age, you have internalized rules from your parents and other authorities. When you have broken the rules, you have felt a strong sense of guilt. As a result of the internalized law, you have modified behavior to do "right" and avoid "wrong."

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1. Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures* (No publisher, 2014), Kindle edition, ch. 1, "Seeing New Realities."

2. Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL: 2016), 37.

Fear is another paradigm for behavioral control. Control by fear is typical in cultures where spirit worship is common. Georges writes, “Practices that placate the spiritual powers define acceptable human behavior.”<sup>3</sup> A person modifies their behavior and practices certain rituals which will appease the spirits who will, in turn, bless them. If a person fails to appease the spirits, these spirits will then cause evil in their life. For this reason, such people live in fear of the spirits and seek power to influence the spirits.

The majority of the world’s cultures, however, are classified as shame cultures. In 2014 Jayson Georges developed TheCultureTest.com to determine a person’s culture type. The data revealed that 80% of the global population comes from a shame culture.<sup>4</sup> Werner Mischke, also claims 70-80% of the world’s cultures are shame cultures because that percentage of the world’s cultures is collectivist<sup>5</sup> rather than individualist.<sup>6</sup> Asian and Middle Eastern cultures are especially honor-shame cultures. These cultures will be the central focus of this paper.

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3. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, ch. 2, “Culture.”

4. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 19.

5. The terms collectivist and individualist can then refer to honor-shame and guilt-innocence cultures respectively although the terms are not exactly synonymous. The term individualist refers to a culture being centered on individuals while a collectivist culture centers on groups. Honor-shame cultures are cultures which use honor and shame to control behavior; they are collectivist. Guilt-innocence cultures use guilt and innocence to control behavior and are individualist.

6. Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* (Mission ONE, 2015), Kindle edition, Section 1, ch. 3, “Why Our Blind Spot About Honor and Shame?”. Cf. , Henry C. Triandis. “Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism,” in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1989: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Richard A. Diensbar and John J. Berman (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

## 2-HONOR-SHAME CULTURES

The cultures that tend to be honor-shame cultures are also collectivist cultures. Harry Triandis, leading researcher on individualism-collectivism, describes collectivistic cultures this way:

Among the most important characteristics of people living in collectivist cultures relative to those in individualist cultures is the emphasis on *context* rather than on *content*. ... In collectivist cultures people give priority to ingroup goals rather than to personal goals. They pay more attention to norms than to attitudes. They see interpersonal relationships as more stable than do people in individualist cultures.<sup>7</sup>

Collectivist cultures are more concerned with the good of the group as a whole than with an individual's goals. No one is supposed to behave in a way that harms the group. The phrase, "It's my life, and I'll do what I want," won't be as prominent or widespread as in the United States.

To what groups does an individual belong? According to Georges and Baker, it is their family, ethnicity and country.<sup>8</sup> An individual belongs to several different groups all at the same time. This is true for both individualist and collectivist cultures. Triandis states,

In collectivist cultures people are interdependent within their in-groups (family, tribe, nation, etc.), give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behave in a communal way. ...

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7. Harry C. Triandis, "The Many Dimensions of Culture" *Academy Of Management Executive* 18 (February 2004): 90, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=buh&AN=12689599&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

8. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 45.



In individualist societies people are autonomous and independent from their in-groups; they give priority to their personal goals over the goals of their in-groups, they behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-groups.<sup>9</sup>

A person in a collectivist culture will feel loyalty to and pressures from those various groups.

Triandis also writes, “Collectivists see behavior as due to external factors such as norms and roles, more than due to internal factors, such as attitude and personality.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, because of this concern with relationships and sensitivity to the opinions, needs, and wants of the group, it is the group that defines what is right and wrong. Georges and Baker state it this way: “Honor-shame cultures do have morality, but their basis for defining right and wrong happens to be communal and relational (not legal or philosophical). For them, what is best for relationships and honors people is morally right; what shames is morally wrong.”<sup>11</sup>

Because it is the group which defines what is right and wrong, it is also the group which bestows praise or punishment on a person in the group. Therefore, a person is not guided so much by their conscience as by their group’s opinion of him or her. Georges and Baker write, “The classifications ‘honor-shame culture’ or ‘shame-based culture’ are etic (i.e., outsider) terms for describing social groups that utilize public reputation to control behavior.”<sup>12</sup>

Western culture operates differently. According to Georges and Baker,

Guilt-innocence cultures define what is acceptable through rules and laws. Governments, corporations, schools and even families establish rules to guide our behavior; people expect those rules to apply universally to all people at all times. A mature person is a "law-abiding citizen" with a strong internal sense of right and wrong. Guilt-oriented cultures do not simply emphasize rules and laws, but socialize people to internalize them

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9. Harry C. Triandis, “Individualism-Collectivism and Personality,” *Journal of Personality* 69 (December 2001): 909, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=s7324964&db=aph&AN=5487072&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

10. Triandis, “Individualism-Collectivism and Personality,” 909.

11. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 37.

12. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 35.

into a person's conscience. They rely on people's internal conscience (not external social pressure) to keep them from doing wrong.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, it may be difficult for a Westerner to understand how morality operates in honor-shame cultures. In honor-shame cultures, what is “right” is what is good for the group or the relationship. It follows, then, that what is “right” in a relational sense may not line up with what is “right” in a philosophical sense. For example, should I tell the truth and hurt my relationship, or lie in order to maintain the relationship? Triandis writes, “Lying is an acceptable behavior in collectivist cultures, if it saves face or helps the in-group. There are traditional ways of lying that are understood as correct behavior.”<sup>14</sup> Lying in guilt-innocence cultures is more likely to be considered wrong.

### **Identity and Roles**

Individual identity is important in the United States. There are TV programs which teach children to be “true to themselves.” In the workplace, people are judged based on how much they stand out. It is important to be who you are and not let anyone tell you otherwise.

The opposite is true in collectivist cultures. In these cultures, the individual’s identity is defined by their group. “You must be the person others expect you to be.”<sup>15</sup> For example, a man is head of his family. He also must uphold the reputation of his last name. At the same time, he has responsibility toward his country. His workplace is another group.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, he must behave in a way that brings honor to his family, his country and his group. He must perform his roles honorably.

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13. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 37.

14. Triandis, “Individualism-Collectivism and Personality,” 917.

15. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 35.

16. Triandis, “Individualism-Collectivism and Personality,” 909.

The result is that the focus in honor-shame cultures is placed on the person's identity rather than his or her actions. Werner Mischke writes, "Simply stated, shame is about *who I am*; guilt is about *what I've done*. It follows, as stated above, that shame is generally more painful than guilt."<sup>17</sup> In *Global Dictionary of Theology*, shame is defined as "a much deeper reality. It is not only the behavior that is wrong, but the person as well. The shamed self is a damaged, deficient self and falls short of some good goal or standard of excellence. [The self] is fundamentally flawed."<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, shame is the result of an identity crisis brought about by a person's failure to live up to group expectations. It is more painful because the sinful actions are seen as a part of a person's identity—"This is who I really am."

### **Types of Honor and Shame**

One type of honor is achieved honor. Georges and Baker explain achieved honor as honor which is "earned through one's own activities and accomplishments. It is based on individual performance, as in professional sports—make the game-winning shot and you are immortalized, but miss it and people think much differently of you."<sup>19</sup> This may seem like an individualistic idea of honor because it focuses on a person's individual achievements. In order to understand achieved honor in a collectivist society, it is also necessary to understand achieved shame.

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17. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, section 1, ch. 5, "Does it Hurt or Heal?"

18. William Dynress, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, et al., *Global Dictionary of Theology: a Resource for the Worldwide Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 815.

19. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 42.

Achieved shame is the shame brought about by a person's actions which change how society perceives him or her. Georges and Baker write,

One source of shame is improper behavior. Innocent mistakes like not flushing the toilet or tripping on stage can cause embarrassment. There is nothing technically wrong or harmful about those actions, but they expose us before other people and make us look for the nearest exit. Shame, however, is not just about embarrassing situations. For instance, consider how indicted criminals shield their faces from press cameras to avoid public exposure. Illegal behavior affects how society perceives a person, so they hide.<sup>20</sup>

It is the perception of the group which makes achieved honor and shame important in collectivist societies. In fact, achieved shame is prevalent in individualist societies as well. The difference is the importance of this achieved shame.

Achieved honor is also important in collectivist cultures. Honor-shame scholar Jerome Neyrey writes, "Achieved honor is earned the old-fashioned way, by effort and merit resulting in prowess in military, athletic, or artistic fields, by benefactions, and by the common practice of challenging another and taking his worth and value as one's own."<sup>21</sup> How this pursuit of honor is manifested in honor-shame societies will be examined below.

The other type of honor is called ascribed honor. This is honor which a person receives from his or her family, heritage or origin. Neyrey writes that ascribed honor "refers to the granting of respect and given to a person from members of the two basic institutions of antiquity, namely: family/kinship or state/politics."<sup>22</sup> This type of honor is much more difficult to lose because a person is born into honor before he does anything to earn it. Georges and Baker

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20. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 43.

21. Jerome H. Neyrey, "Questions, Chreiai, and Challenges to Honor: The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark's Gospel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60 (October 1998): 657, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=f5h&AN=1854914&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

22. Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 15.

illustrate this type of honor using the British Royal family.<sup>23</sup> Although the members of the Royal family may have many talents, their honor comes primarily from their lineage.

Again, to understand the impact of ascribed honor, it is also necessary to understand ascribed shame. Ascribed shame, like ascribed honor, comes from a characteristic of the person at birth. Georges and Baker write,

Groups ascribe shame to people with some “undesirable difference,” which is usually present at birth—for example, ethnicity, a physical malady or family association. Society attributes negative characteristics to all members of the stigmatized group purely on the basis of membership in the group. People sense disgrace for being associated with something or someone shameful. An invisible wall begins to separate “us” from “them.”<sup>24</sup>

A person who has a physical difference or comes from a different race or stands out in any other way will receive shame from the “normal” group.

Achieved and ascribed honor and shame can be found in any culture, even individualist, guilt-innocence cultures. With respect to honor-shame cultures, these two types have varying levels of importance depending on the honor-shame culture. However, what is important is public reputation as anthropologists Agneta Fischer, Anthony S. R. Manstead and Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera write: “Being an honourable person is determined not only by one's own attributes, actions, or status, but also by one's social reputation, or the actions or judgements of members of one's ingroup. In honour cultures the focal value of honour is expressed in a concern with one's public behaviour and with the avoidance of humiliation.”<sup>25</sup> This concern for public reputation is evident in the different ways people in different cultures pursue honor.

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23. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 41.

24. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 43.

25. Agneta H. Fischer, Anthony S. R. Manstead and Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera, "The Role of Honour-related vs. Individualistic Values in Conceptualising Pride, Shame, and Anger: Spanish and Dutch Cultural Prototypes." *Cognition & Emotion* 13 (March 1999): 151,

### **Pursuing Honor**

The pursuit of honor is not foreign to guilt-innocence cultures. People in the United States, for example, dream of winning American Idol or one day becoming a baseball superstar. This kind of fame brings honor to the individual and is even transferred in a small way to the person's family and friends. On a smaller scale, people seek honor in the workplace by outperforming their peers. They may brag to their friends about their accomplishments. However, this honor is centered on the individual rather than on the group. For this reason, the pursuit of honor appears different in collectivist honor-shame cultures.

In his book *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World*, Werner Mischke outlines some of the differences between guilt-innocence cultures and honor-shame cultures with respect to the pursuit of honor. One difference is that in honor-shame cultures, honor is limited. He quotes Jerome Neyrey and Eric Stewart who write,

All people do not view the world similarly. The industrialized West considers the world to be a limitless source of resources for an ever expanding economy that benefits all. A rising tide lifts all boats. But anthropologists who study other cultures, modern and ancient, inform us that other people see the world as a fixed and limited source of just so much grain, water, fertility, and honor. For them, this supply will never expand, and the benefits must be divided out between all people. Thus, one person or group's share increases only because it is being taken away from others. When people operating under the presumption that everyone is born into a family with only so much wealth, grain, siblings, and respect perceive others apparently getting more of the limited goods, the scene is set for conflict.<sup>26</sup>

This impacts how people pursue honor. Because there is a limited amount of honor, any honor a person gains must take away honor from someone else.

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<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=buh&AN=4428948&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

26. Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart, eds., *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 235.

However, how much people strive to take honor for themselves and away from others depends on the culture. For example, in Arab culture, people try to take honor from each other. Georges and Baker write, “Middle Eastern cultures compete for honor. They view conflict as a win-lose game. Confrontations are agonistic, meaning only one person walks away with honor.”<sup>27</sup> However, in Japanese culture, people see honor as a mutual endeavor. Again, Georges and Baker: “Far Eastern cultures like Japan strive for mutual harmony. Conflict is approached as a win-win or lose-lose game. Status is intertwined; I lose face if I shame you.”<sup>28</sup> The end goal—preserving honor—is the same. However, the manner of preserving honor varies among different honor-shame cultures.

In many cultures where conflict is seen as win or lose, honor is won through games of challenge and riposte.<sup>29</sup> Werner Mischke defines four steps to the protocol of challenge and riposte: “Claim of worth or value. Challenge to that claim or refusal to acknowledge the claim. Riposte or defense of the claim. Public verdict of success awarded either to the claimant or the challenger.”<sup>30</sup> A person claims to have honor or value and is challenged by another to that claim. The first person then defends his honor, and the group decides who is the victor.

These games of challenge and riposte can be verbal. An example often used are the dialogues between Jesus and the Pharisees. Marlene Yu Yap, biblical scholar and honor-shame researcher, writes,

One's claim to honor will be perceived as a threat to the honor of another; thus it needs to be challenged. Honor is attained through the social competition of challenge and response. The Gospels record a number of challenge-response dialogues mostly between Jesus on one side and Pharisees and scribes on the other. ... The Pharisees, upon hearing

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27. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 46.

28. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 46.

29. Riposte is a fencing term. It is a quick thrust following a parry. The fencer blocks his opponent's attack and quickly counters.

30. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, Location 1894.

the parables, recognized their defeat and loss of honor. Their disgrace caused an increase in honor for Jesus. This resulted in the increase of their hatred against him and their envy of him, which also explained their desire to have Jesus killed.<sup>31</sup>

However, these games do not consist only of verbal sparring. Sometimes, the challenge is met with violence.

A challenge met with violence is a matter of revenge. Mischke uses the example of the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. He writes,

The key dynamic underlying the Muslim reaction to “American imperialism” is honor and shame. Make no mistake about it: Honor and shame—honor competition—is the underlying dynamic of the events of September 11, 2001. The Muslim world had been shamed by the West, America and Israel—and Al Qaeda is taking revenge. Honor competition is the most combustible fuel for war; this is as true today as it has been for millennia.<sup>32</sup>

In order to restore one’s honor after a challenge, a person or a group may resort to violence. By defeating or eliminating the challenger, the person or group also eliminates the challenge to their honor. Thus, they win the game of challenge and riposte.

Another way to gain honor is through patronage. In honor-shame cultures, people with more resources are expected to care for people with fewer resources. Georges and Baker write,

Patronage refers to a reciprocal relationship between two unequal parties. The superior patron provides material goods to the client, and the client repays with nonmaterial goods such as loyalty, obedience or gratitude. The patron, like a parent, assumes responsibility for the welfare of the people. For example, he covers the hospital expenses, contributes a sheep for the community party or purchases coats for the poorer children in winter. In exchange for financial provision, the client becomes socially obligated to repay the patron with social capital. Along with verbal praise, clients can communicate gratitude with token gifts or acts of service.<sup>33</sup>

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31. Marlene Yu Yap, “Three Parables of Jesus Through the Shame-Honor Lens,” *Asian Journal Of Pentecostal Studies* 19 (August 2016): 209.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=aph&AN=119048820&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

32. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, section 1, ch. 6, “The Pathology of Shame in Our World.”

33. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 51.



By providing the resources people need, patrons receive praise and honor from their clients. They are known as the big man around town. Clients hold up their end of the bargain when they reward with praise. Thus, the honor balance is maintained.

However, these resources are not limited to physical goods. They also include help with finding jobs or making important connections. George and Baker write, “Patronage involves fulfilling a multifaceted social role. Patrons are expected to do many things: adjudicate community problems, lead conversations, initiate relationships, host large events, as well as pedestrian things like dressing respectfully and sitting at the correct seat at a meal.”<sup>34</sup> In a way, patrons act as the fathers to their clients. This is especially true because the focus is on relationships rather than on transactions.<sup>35</sup>

It is also worth noting that people can be both patrons and clients at the same time. Mischke writes, “In a trip to Thailand, the indigenous Christian leader with whom our agency partners told me that everyone in Thai society is involved in patronage. Everyone is both client and patron to someone. A father is a patron to a child. A sponsor is a patron to a sports team. A foundation is a patron to an orphan. An uncle is a patron to a niece or nephew.”<sup>36</sup> In some cultures, patronage is not just a business tactic or a political maneuver; it is part of the way of life.

Thus, patronage is an important part of honor-shame culture. It maintains the balance of honor between different people and is also another defined role for each person to play as both patron and client. As Georges writes, “Wherever honor is a prized commodity, there are

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34. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 148.

35. Transactions refer to interacting with another person with a goal in mind. When a person goes to the store, they interact with the cashier to complete the sale, not necessarily to build a relationship.

36. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, section 2, ch. 7, “Honor/Shame Dynamic #7: Patronage.”

appropriate cultural mechanisms for upper-class citizens to exercise their power or display their wealth in exchange for honor and endearment from the lower classes."<sup>37</sup> Patronage is not just a part of the culture but an important part of acquiring honor.

Closely connected with patronage is the role of hospitality in honor-shame cultures. Inviting guests over for a lavish dinner is an opportunity for a person to play the role of patron and accumulate honor.<sup>38</sup> It is also an opportunity to honor the guests by providing them with the very best. This is why to American eyes people in other cultures may seem overly generous or inviting, much more so than in Western culture.

Hospitality also serves the function of incorporating strangers into the inner circle because it is a chance to make new relationships or strengthen current ones.<sup>39</sup> Relationships are important in collectivist, honor-shame cultures, and because of this the importance of hospitality is raised to another level. Hospitality is motivated by a desire to strengthen bonds with others as well as communicating honor to both the host and guests.

In honor-shame cultures, especially ones which lean more heavily toward that end of the spectrum, the entire culture is structured around honor and shame. This can be seen in how people defend their honor in challenge and riposte games as well as in the system of patronage ingrained in the society. However, it is not just pursuing honor which these cultures are structured around. They are also structured around avoiding shame.

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37. Jayson Georges, "From Shame to Honor: A Theological Reading of Romans for Honor-Shame Contexts" *Misiology* 38 (July 2010): 297, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001798521&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

38. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 58.

39. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 58.

## Avoiding Shame

One of the ways of avoiding shame in honor-shame cultures is through maintaining purity, although the standard of purity varies from culture to culture. As Georges says, this does not refer to personal hygiene, but “the cultural evaluation of peoples’ appropriateness and acceptability.”<sup>40</sup> Standards of purity are especially important in cultures guided by religious texts. For example, in the Middle East, the Quran defines what is pure. People must keep halal by only eating food allowed by the Quran.

The desire for purity also leads to different rituals for purifying oneself. Biblical scholar Mark McVann writes,

Having honor, on the other hand, means having a proper, "clean," status, one publicly recognized as worthy of maintenance and defense because it makes up part of the ordered, pure cosmos. If ritual focuses attention by framing—that is, by drawing boundaries—and if honor-shame protects status and the status quo by focusing on the defense of boundaries drawn, then it seems reasonable to conclude that honor-shame, precisely because it replicates concern with boundaries, is a cultural phenomenon deeply rooted in ritual.<sup>41</sup>

These rituals serve to protect honor and also remove shame. For example, in Islam, a woman must purify herself with ritual washing to make herself clean again.<sup>42</sup> A similar ritual can be seen in the Bible when the Pharisees criticize the disciples for not performing ceremonial washing before eating.<sup>43</sup>

One thing that can be noted from descriptions of purification rituals and other parts of honor-shame cultures is that the standards of honor and shame are arbitrary. Alisha Craddock,

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40. Georges, “From Shame to Honor,” 297.

41. Mark McVann, "Reading Mark Ritually: Honor-Shame and the Ritual of Baptism," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 181, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000903571&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

42. Mischke, *The Global Gospel*, section 3, ch. 9, “A Gospel Shaped by the Dynamic of ‘Purity?’”.

43. Mark 7:1-5.

professor of biblical studies at Manhattan Christian College notes in a paper on First Corinthians, “The problem with the concept of honor is that no quality is honorable in and of itself. Honor is always mediated through the perception of others, which is called the Public Court of Reputation (PCR).”<sup>44</sup> This is why standards of honor and shame differ between cultures.

Likewise, there is nothing inherent in the rituals which make them purifying. They do not actually take away wrongdoing if that is their purpose. They do not make a person clean again after sex as if the act of sex, used in a God-pleasing way, was wrong.. However, this does not mean these rituals are worthless. Georges and Baker writes, “Purity regulations maintain group boundaries and human identity. Every culture deems certain times, places and actions to be ‘sacred cows’; doing those things is what it means to be ‘us.’”<sup>45</sup> The rituals of each culture define the people who practice them as a part of the group. Those who do not practice them are excluded. Therefore, to avoid shame people follow the purity standard in their culture.

Another way people avoid shaming themselves and others in honor-shame cultures is through indirect communication. This means that they do not bluntly say anything that may cause shame to themselves or another person. Georges and Baker describe it this way,

Words are for the purpose of managing relationships and social identities, not presenting information. Harmony takes priority over ideas. Truth in communication is defined relationally, not logically. Being truthful means being loyal in your relationships, respecting others and helping preserve face.<sup>46</sup>

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44. Alisha Paddock, "First Corinthians 11 in a post-honor culture." *Stone-Campbell Journal* 16 (Spring 2013): 85,  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001954076&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

45. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 56.

46. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 52.

To people in Western culture, this may seem deceptive or appear that people are lying. However, just because a person does not speak the truth directly does not mean the truth is not spoken. It is simply spoken indirectly.

Many honor-shame cultures are also high context cultures. People in high context cultures are much more sensitive to non-verbal clues than people who are in low context cultures.<sup>47</sup> They read body language, listen to tone of voice and watch gestures to see the real meaning behind the words. In low context cultures, like the United States, this is not as necessary because Americans tend to say what they mean. In fact, if someone in American culture speaks indirectly, she may be asked for clarification, and if she refuses to give it, she may be considered duplicitous or deceptive. However, in an honor-shame culture, speaking indirectly is acceptable because the truth is gleaned from other context clues.

The truth is communicated in honor-shame cultures, but not only with words. In fact, the words may not communicate the truth at all. This means asking questions like “How did they say it?” or “What was their body language?” or “What is our relationship?” From a Western standpoint, it may seem less than honest. However, “lying is an acceptable behavior in collectivist cultures, if it saves face or helps the in-group. There are traditional ways of lying that are understood as correct behavior.”<sup>48</sup> What is truly important is saving face and preserving the relationship.

When people do bring shame on themselves and the group, the shame must be addressed. While some causes of shame can be remedied with ritual or with reconciliation, other causes of shame are dealt with through exclusion.<sup>49</sup> If a person persists in his or her shame, the group must

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47. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 53.

48. Triandis, “Individualism-Collectivism and Personality,” 917.

49. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 38.

act. It cannot risk that the person's shame becomes the group's shame. Thus, it excludes the shameful person in order to remove shame from the group.

This is why shame is such a powerful control for behavior in collectivist culture. People in collectivist cultures are much more intertwined with their groups than those in individualist cultures. The group determines a person's role; the group is a person's security. Thus, exclusion from the group for shamefulness is a strong warning against non-conformity and defiance.

However, there are people in collectivist cultures who do not conform to society's role for them or stubbornly continue in shamefulness. These people are called "shameless."<sup>50</sup> Shameless would seem to be a term of honor because a person without shame would logically have unlimited honor. However, a shameless person is one who ignores the shame brought on by his or her actions and continues in them as though they were not shameful. Therefore, because these people ignore the shaming which society uses to bring their behavior under control, they make themselves shameless; they make themselves a pariah.

People avoid shame in order to remain a part of their group. They do this through maintaining purity codes adhering to the group's standards. They also speak indirectly, relying on body language and context to communicate the truth without shaming the person to whom they are speaking. All these measures for avoiding shame are practiced to prevent exclusion.

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50. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 43-44.

### 3-HONOR AND CHRISTIANITY

The reason to understand honor-shame cultures is twofold. First, as stated above, many cultures in today's world follow the honor-shame model for behavioral control. In order to better serve these cultures, missionaries need to understand the relevance of their message in the context of the people they are serving. If a missionary is serving in an honor-shame culture, he needs to know how to present the gospel in a way that is scriptural as well as relevant. This does not mean changing the gospel, but instead presenting the same universal message in a contextual way.

Second, the cultures to whom God spoke in Scripture were also in many ways honor-shame cultures. This is true for both the audiences of the Old and New Testaments. Roland Mudge, professor in the pre-seminary studies department of Concordia University Wisconsin, writes about honor and shame in the Old Testament in his article "Yahweh's Counter-Cultural View of Honor and Shame." In this article, he writes, "The [Hebrew Bible] presents a complex situation where Yahweh's view of honor and shame competes with the view of the nations. The nations and many Israelites assume that wealth and power constitute honor, but Yahweh asserts that human honor is based on a positive relationship with him."<sup>51</sup> When God speaks to honor-shame cultures, he clearly states that he makes the standard for honor and shame.

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51. Roland R. Mudge, "Yahweh's Counter-Cultural View of Honor and Shame," *Conversations With The Biblical World* 34 (2014), 118, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=rft&AN=ATLAn3939270&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Georges and Baker add another example. They write,

The Abrahamic covenant is saturated with promises of honor: land, a great nation, divine blessing, a great name, abundant offspring, royal descendants and being the source of universal blessing. God's covenant with Abraham was an invitation to a life of honor. Abraham's family would be global mediators of God's blessing to all people. God, as a loyal patron, even covenanted to vindicate Abraham's descendants if other nations dishonored them—"him who dishonors you I will curse." God's covenantal promise of honor is the answer to the shameful plight of humankind. God's promise to Abraham underscores all of Israel's history, and climaxes with God's unique relationship with David.<sup>52</sup>

Note that honor-shame cultures use other words to express honor and shame. Jason Georges cites words like land, a great nation, divine blessing, a great name, etc. as examples of honor given to Abraham. In order to see where honor and shame are in the Bible and in anthropological study, one must understand the terminology of honor and shame.<sup>53</sup> This is true in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

Honor-shame values are also present in the New Testament. Marlene Yu Yap writes, "As Mediterranean society is basically shame-based, the New Testament people, its authors and readers were also culturally shame-based."<sup>54</sup> She then cites three parables of Jesus as examples of honor and shame in Mediterranean culture.

One parable in particular which she cites is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. She notes how the son dishonors his father by requesting his inheritance before his father has died<sup>55</sup> as well as how the father honors his son by restoring him to the community through a feast.<sup>56</sup> These are all consistent with the honor-shame values outlined above, such as patronage, hospitality and

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52. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 75.

53. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, ch. 4, "Ministry." Some examples given of honor-shame terms and metaphors: family, adoption, inclusion, purity, loyalty, reputation, harmony. These are the kinds of words which speak to an honor-shame culture.

54. Yu Yap, "Three Parables of Jesus Through the Shame-Honor Lens," 207.

55. Yu Yap, "Three Parables of Jesus Through the Shame-Honor Lens," 210.

56. Yu Yap, "Three Parables of Jesus Through the Shame-Honor Lens," 212-213.



defense of honor. Thus, honor-shame values are present in the culture in which Jesus lived, namely the Jewish culture of the first century AD.

Honor-shame values were also present in the Greco-Roman culture which was the audience of Paul's preaching and letters. Jayson Georges, in an article on honor and shame in the letter to the Romans, writes, "Although the book of Romans has been the assumed canon and starting point of individualistic, Western theology constructed around guilt and forgiveness, we will now explore the centrality of honor and shame in Paul's theological argument."<sup>57</sup> He then goes on to cite God's honor,<sup>58</sup> man's failure to honor God because of sin,<sup>59</sup> and salvation through Christ which restores honor to believers.<sup>60</sup> Again, the terms honor and shame are not always present, but other terms and metaphors in the New Testament do speak to honor-shame cultures.<sup>61</sup>

The ancient Roman world was indeed an honor-shame culture. Frederik Juliaan Vervae, professor at the University of Melbourne, writes,

The ancients amply attest to the paramount importance of honour and shame, or loss of face, as pervasive drivers of social interaction, expectation and self-regulation. As Cicero implicitly attests in *De Republica* 5.4, the quest for an honourable reputation and fear of shame significantly compounded the dread of penalties ordained by law.<sup>62</sup>

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57. Georges, "From Shame to Honor," 298.

58. Georges, "From Shame to Honor," 298.

59. Georges, "From Shame to Honor," 299. He specifically cites Romans 1:18-32. Verse 21 is especially in view: "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

60. Georges, "From Shame to Honor," 301. Cf. Romans 8:17: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

61. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, ch. 4, "Ministry." Cf. footnote 53.

62. Frederik Juliaan Vervae, "Understanding Ancient Civilisations: Honour and Shame in the Roman Republic." *Agora* 50 (October 2015): 15, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=ehh&AN=112839896&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

However, it must be noted, as Vervaeke does, that the values of honor and shame were present alongside the “dread of penalties by law.” Because of this, some cautions of applying the honor-shame model to Christianity will be discussed below.

However, before stating the cautions of the honor-shame model, it is helpful to summarize how Christians in honor-shame cultures present the message of sin and grace. As stated above, as regards honor and shame, the Bible teaches that God determines the standard for honor and shame, and his standard often stands in opposition to human standards of honor and shame. Honor and shame are not values determined by human beings.<sup>63</sup> God is the source of true honor.

Rob Siirila, missionary with 34 years of experience in China, proposes a different approach to presenting the gospel than the one to which Western Christians are accustomed. Rather than focusing on the removal of guilt, in honor-shame cultures it is more effective to focus on the removal of shame and the restoration of honor. He writes, “A broken relationship with a loving Father may touch a person more deeply than a guilt-based ‘you broke the rules’ presentation. The Prodigal is a good example of shame removed by a father who took the shame on himself.”<sup>64</sup> The father took the shame on himself by running to meet his shameful son and accepting him back into the family.

Therefore, a biblical presentation of the gospel for an honor-shame culture would follow this example:<sup>65</sup> God is like a rich uncle who had great honor. In order to increase his honor, he created the world and human beings, and he gave honor, authority and rule over creation to them.

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63. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 69.

64. Rob Siirila, e-mail message to author, November 26, 2017.

65. [www.honorshame.com](http://www.honorshame.com), “Back to God's Village,” YouTube video, 4:39, Posted January, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLQmgPT-xOU>. The following is a summary of this video.

However, the devil tempted Adam and Eve to seek honor for themselves by eating the forbidden fruit. This was an act of disloyalty that shamed God, and in order to save face, God banished Adam and Eve from his village to the other side of the river. There, they had their own children who inherited their shame. These children, the human race, added their own shame to the shame they inherited through their sins.

In order to restore their honor, human beings created their own standards of honor. Some created their own religious codes for everyone to follow in order to gain and maintain honor. Others established standards in society such as proper dress and flaunting of wealth to acquire honor. However, all these human means of gaining honor have failed and, in fact, have brought more shame.

Therefore, God, the honorable, rich uncle, became man and entered our shameful world. His name was Jesus. Unlike us, he was infinitely honorable. He also gave honor to those shamed by society; he healed those who were excluded for their diseases and ate with people at the lowest rungs of society. He perfectly honored God.

Because of his honor, the leaders of the people became jealous of Jesus. They arrested him, put him on trial, mocked him, whipped him, beat him, spit on him, and had him crucified. Crucifixion was the ultimate form of shame. But, Jesus was infinitely honorable. The shame he bore on the cross was not his own. It was ours. Through his death on the cross, he broke the power of sin and shame.

Jesus did not remain in shame forever. God the Father exalted him by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in honor and glory forever. Now, those who trust in him have their shameful sin removed. Through faith in Jesus, people are made worthy to enter

God's presence in heaven when they die. Through his plan of salvation, God confirms his infinite honor and restores honor to human beings.

The terms are different, but the gospel is there. Jesus' vicarious atonement is there, but presented in a new way. It is still justification by faith, but, in this case, a better name for it is reconciliation by faith because the emphasis is the restoration of human beings to God's family. This reconciliation by faith is still objective because God declares human beings acceptable because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Thus, the Bible does speak to honor-shame cultures and in honor-shame language. In both the Old and New Testaments, God speaks in terms of honor and shame to audiences living in cultures with those values. Therefore, Christians can also preach and teach in terms that are relevant to people in honor-shame cultures.

### **Cautions for Applying the Honor-Shame Model to Christianity**

Although understanding honor-shame is helpful for understanding the cultures which follow this paradigm, there are some cautions that need to be understood. These cautions come from an understanding that the world's concept of honor and shame are not the same as God's concept of honor and shame. It is necessary to compare both concepts in order to understand how to preach and teach in honor and shame cultures.

#### Cautions for Shame

Mankind's main problem is sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, it was their sin which brought punishment on them. Consider what God said to the man:

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

“Cursed is the ground because of you;  
 through painful toil you will eat food from it  
 all the days of your life.  
 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
 and you will eat the plants of the field.  
 By the sweat of your brow  
 you will eat your food  
 until you return to the ground,  
 since from it you were taken;  
 for dust you are  
 and to dust you will return.”<sup>66</sup>

The man and the woman disobeyed God by eating from the tree from which he forbade them to eat. Their sin was the cause of their punishment. Their sin would result in their death. God restates this in Ezekiel 18:20, “The soul who sins is the one who will die,” and in Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” A solution for sin is mankind’s primary need.

A person’s sin also brings results with it. One result which it brings is objective guilt before God. Everyone who sins is guilty before God. It is written in Leviticus 5:17, “If anyone sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, even though they do not know it, they are guilty and will be held responsible.” Because a person is guilty, it means they are deserving of punishment. Even if they do not know they are guilty, they nevertheless stand guilty before God. This guilt is not based on how the person feels, but on their status before God. This is objective guilt.

Objective guilt leads to objective shame. Objective shame is an unworthiness to stand in the presence of the infinitely honorable God. In other words, objective shame excludes people from God's family. Consider Isaiah 59:2: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” In many ways, objective

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66. Genesis 3:17-19.

shame is the same as objective guilt because it refers to a person's status before God: guilty, deserving punishment, unworthy, excluded.

Just as there are objective guilt and objective shame, there are also subjective guilt and subjective shame. These could also be called guilt-feelings and shame-feelings. Both of these feelings can come as a result of sin. For example, after David sinned, he wrote, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." He felt guilty because of the sin he committed.

Likewise, sin also brings feelings of shame. After Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame for what they did and hid from God.<sup>67</sup> When Jesus' disciples argued about who was the greatest, they were too embarrassed to tell Jesus about it.<sup>68</sup> When a person knows they've sinned, their first reaction is often to hide what they've done.

Although these shame-feelings can be a result of sin, they are not humanity's main problem. The main problem is still sin. For one, shame-feelings can be a result of something other than sin. Georges and Baker write about more general shame-feelings: "One significant source of shame is the failure to meet expectations. Because we cannot live up to expectations or be who we are supposed to be, we feel inadequate."<sup>69</sup> The expectations they mention may not be biblical expectations. They may be expectations from family or from society. Not living up to human expectations can also bring shame. Sometimes, these expectations may even contradict what Scripture says.

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67. Genesis 3:10.

68. Mark 9:33,34.

69. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 220.

The gospel does speak to this kind of shame. In this case, the gospel proclaims that people find true honor in Christ rather than in the honor of the world. However, finding true honor in Christ is only a result of the central message of the gospel which is the forgiveness of sins.

Even the shame a person feels because of sin is not the main problem for humanity. A person may never feel shame for their sin but still stands guilty before God. Their sin results in separation from God. The problem is not the separation itself, but what separates: their sin. The solution then must be the removal of their sin through Jesus Christ.

The key to preaching is to get to the heart of the issue. A Christian in honor-shame cultures cannot only preach to feelings of shame. He must also preach to the objective status of shame people have before God. However, preaching about shame-feelings does have its place. John Piper, chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary, writes, “Well-placed shame (the kind you ought to have) is the shame we feel when there is good reason to feel it. Biblically that means we feel ashamed of something because our involvement in it was dishonoring to God. We ought to feel shame when we have a hand in bringing dishonor upon God by our attitudes or actions.”<sup>70</sup> By preaching about shame-feelings brought about by sin against God, a missionary can lead people to see their objective shame before God.

Preaching only about shame-feelings without preaching about sin creates an empty gospel. Such preaching focuses people on themselves and on the world rather than on Christ and on heaven. An example of this kind of preaching is liberation theology. Liberation theology is outside the scope of this paper but the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes it this way:

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70. John Piper, “Faith in Future Grace vs. Misplaced Shame,” in *Faith in Future Grace*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2012), 129.

Liberation theology, religious movement arising in late 20th-century Roman Catholicism and centred in Latin America. It sought to apply religious faith by aiding the poor and oppressed through involvement in political and civic affairs. It stressed both heightened awareness of the “sinful” socioeconomic structures that caused social inequities and active participation in changing those structures.<sup>71</sup>

From an honor-shame perspective, liberation theology focuses on the shameful status of the oppressed. It preaches that true honor comes through Christ. However, its focus is not on heavenly honor, but rather on worldly honor. This is an empty gospel which does not lead people to the forgiveness of sins through Christ. Correct preaching of law and gospel are needed to free people from worldly shame.

#### Cautions for Honor

In Christianity, honor means true honor before God. The Apostle Peter describes what true honor before God is: “For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ So the honor is for you who believe.”<sup>72</sup> True honor before God comes through faith in Christ. He removes the sin which shames. He removes the obstacle between God and man. He shares his honor with those who believe in him.

People do not earn this honor for themselves as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8,9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” No one can boast about themselves in this honor

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71. “Liberation Theology,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberation-theology>.

72. 1 Peter 2:6,7 (ESV).



because the honor belongs completely to God. No one can even boast in the works they do through faith.<sup>73</sup> Through faith, God honors believers with Christ's honor.

Honor through Christ is not an earthly honor. In fact, honor through Christ may bring earthly shame. Jesus tells his disciples as much in Matthew 10:22, "You will be hated by everyone because of me." Recognizing the difference between godly honor and earthly honor is important.

As is the case with preaching about shame, preaching about honor must have its focus on true honor before God. If a different honor is in view, such preaching is an empty gospel. For example, when it is preached that faith in God and service to him guarantee earthly success, people's focus is drawn away from Christ and pointed to themselves and the world. This message cannot save people because it does not show them the true honor that comes through the forgiveness of sins. As before, correct preaching of law and gospel shows people the path to true godly honor.

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73. Luke 17:10: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

#### 4-HONOR AND SHAME IN LATIN AMERICA

Many scholars categorize Latin America as an honor-shame culture.<sup>74</sup> However, as John Chance writes, “References to [Mediterranean honor and shame literature] in Latin Americanist ethnography have been exceedingly rare, even in works on machismo and gender roles.”<sup>75</sup> Few have written on honor and shame in modern Latin America so far. However, it is important to understand how honor and shame are manifested in Latin American culture.

In addition, it is also important to note that honor and shame values are not the same throughout all of Latin America, just as they are not the same throughout all of East Asia or the Middle East. Therefore, what is stated here may not be true of all Latin Americans, but it does describe what happens in general in Latin America.

#### **Honor and Shame in Colonial Latin America**

The values of honor and shame were indeed present in colonial Latin America. Mark Burkholder writes, “Honor embodied interrelated concepts of nobility, Catholicism, ‘pure blood lines’ (*limpieza de sangre*), privilege, precedence, title, office, form of address, dress, and the lifestyle that the conquistadors, first settlers, and later Castilian emigrants carried to colonial

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74. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 19. Yu Yap, “Three Parables of Jesus Through the Honor Shame Lens,” 207.

75. John K. Chance, "The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice," *Semeia* 68 (1994): 140,  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001013796&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Spanish America.”<sup>76</sup> The Spanish brought their Mediterranean honor-shame values with them, and these became part of the culture of the territories which they conquered and settled.

Ascribed honor was an important part of this culture. A person who had an important last name, for example, could expect to receive more honor. Sandra Gayol, professor at the *Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento* in Buenos Aires, Argentina, writes, “[The] elites would bring their genealogy into play, boasting of their grandparents and appealing to easily identifiable surnames associated with those who fought in the wars of independence.”<sup>77</sup> Even if a person had done nothing to earn honor for himself, he could still claim honor on the basis of his connections. Likewise, not only the first conquerors who had gained honor for themselves, but also their descendants had a claim to honor and land in the New World.<sup>78</sup> This claim to honor by association is a trend that has continued for centuries.

Connected with the honor of a good name were extravagant displays of wealth. The rich in colonial Latin America would display their wealth in order to show off their honor to others.<sup>79</sup> As honor was seen as a limited commodity, it was not enough to simply have wealth, but to have more than others.

Hospitality was an important part of colonial Latin American society. According to Burkholder: “Generosity and hospitality also characterized the noble lifestyle in the New World and similarly represented honor for, ‘beneficence transforms economic power into honor.’”<sup>80</sup>

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76. Mark A. Burkholder, “Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America,” in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, eds. Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), Kobo edition, ch. 1.

77. Sandra Gayol, “‘Honor Moderno’: The Significance of Honor in Fin-de-Siecle Argentina,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84 (2004): 493, doi:10.1215/00182168-84-3-475.

78. Burkholder, “Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America,” 16.

79. Burkholder, “Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America,” 11.

80. Burkholder, “Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America,” 31.

Using one's wealth to throw lavish parties was seen as a way to gain honor for oneself by showing off. As stated above, this is an important purpose of hospitality in an honor-shame culture.<sup>81</sup>

Because of the nature of ascribed honor in honor-shame cultures, there naturally existed various social classes in colonial Latin America. This was, in turn, based on the "purity" of a person's blood, i.e., those who had more Spanish blood had more honor. Burkholder writes, "Spaniards in the Americas considered themselves at the apex of a multiracial social structure in which all persons without pure Spanish blood were inferior."<sup>82</sup> Thus, people were classified according to how much Spanish blood they had. Because a person could not change how "pure" his blood was, it would be difficult to advance from one stratum of society to the next. Thus, social classes could be rigidly maintained.

Rigid social classes are a result of following one's role in a collectivist society. As stated above, "in an honor-shame culture, every person has a proper role. People maintain honor by behaving according to that role."<sup>83</sup> Thus, to maintain honor in colonial Latin America, it was expected that the elite behave according to their role as leaders of society and that those in the lower classes also conform to their role. This would maintain balance in society. Of course, there were abuses to this system such as oppression caused by greed for more honor. This does not mean, however, that the social roles in Latin America were unjust in and of themselves. This does not excuse the mistreatment of many people by those in positions of power.

Ways of achieving honor apart from the honor granted through familial connections was also present. One way to achieve honor was through games of challenge and riposte outlined

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81. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 58.

82. Burkholder, "Honor and Honors in Colonial Spanish America," 39-40.

83. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 56.

above. In early colonial times, these challenges would sometimes end in violence. Lyman Johnson, professor emeritus of history and Latin American studies at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte writes, “The connection between honor and violence was clearest in the early colonial years, when conflicts among conquistadors often led to bloodshed. The violent conflict between Cortés’s followers and his enemies, . . . and between the Pizarro and Almagro factions in early Peru provide good illustrations of this pattern.”<sup>84</sup> The use of violence to settle honor disputes, therefore, was present in colonial Latin America as is true for other honor-shame cultures. Other places where games of challenge and riposte were present were in the courts and in bureaucracy.<sup>85</sup>

Colonial Latin America was certainly an honor-shame culture. These values of honor and shame were handed down over the centuries and shaped the culture of Latin America.

### **Honor and Shame in Modern Latin America**

The honor-shame values present in colonial Latin America still have vestiges in modern Latin America. Although some values have less importance than in the past, many honor-shame values can still be found in Latin America.

Latin America is a collectivist society, and this means relationships are important. Life in Latin America is centered around the relationships a person has with his or her various groups. As a result, maintaining those relationships is vital. Skye Stephenson, director of the Global Education Office at Keene State College with a doctorate in international relations from Tufts

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84. Lyman L. Johnson, “Dangerous Words, Provocative Gestures, and Violent Acts,” in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, eds. Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), Kobo edition, ch. 5.

85. Lyman Johnson, “Dangerous Words, Provocative Gestures, and Violent Acts,” 5.

University, writes, “Closely linked with the attention accorded to *vergüenza* is that given to maintaining the feelings of interconnection and *cariño* between individuals.<sup>86</sup> Thus, any action or comment that might be perceived as disrupting the sense of group harmony and affection can be judged as shameful.”<sup>87</sup> If the group harmony is disrupted, this brings shame on the person, and even worse, the possibility for exclusion. The result is people may hold back and tend to rely on indirect communication to convey the truth. They may even avoid the truth altogether. This is key component of an honor-shame society.

One of the most important in-groups in Latin America is the family. Of all the groups of which a person is a part, this is the group he or she depends on most. Therefore, any threat to the social harmony of the family could be devastating. Stephenson writes this about Latin American families:

Of all the different realms in SSSA culture where *personalismo* is manifested, its presence is strongest in intimate relationships—typically family members and close friends. This should not be surprising, because it is among such familiar people that the strongest *cariño* can be exchanged and where the greatest possibility for accessing the alma of the other exists. Due to the great value accorded these intimate relationships, most SSSAs devote the greatest time and personal attention to them, frequently giving preference to family and friends over broader-based and less personalized human groupings such as clubs and organizations, both secular and religious.<sup>88</sup>

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86. *Vergüenza* means “shame.” *Cariño* means “affection.”

87. Skye Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans: Bridging Hemispheres (InterAct series)* (Intercultural Press, Incorporated, 2003), 62.

88. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 51. Two terms need to be defined: 1) SSSAs refers to Spanish Speaking South Americans and 2) *personalismo*, which Stephenson says is “a way of structuring human interactions in which--as the term implies--the personal element is emphasized. Illustrations of this personal element include creating ties of emotional warmth, preferring face-to-face communication whenever possible, having at least some knowledge about another's personal life (i.e., family, children, health, partner, etc.), and enjoying a sense of interconnectedness.” Cf. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 48.

The comment that Latin Americans devote more time to family than another grouping such as a church is particularly interesting. It means that in the social hierarchy of a typical Latin American, the family and time spent with them will take precedence over church activities.

Connected with the importance of relationships is the importance of acceptance. What other people think is important in Latin American culture. Stephenson writes,

Because human relationships are accorded such importance, most SSSAs are quite concerned with what other people think of them. "Fitting in" and "being accepted" by others—especially those with whom one has close personal ties—are highly valued. So too is social approbation, at least from one's own circle of intimates or social equals. Thus, the opinions of others are often given significant weight in evaluating personal behavior and deciding upon appropriate actions.<sup>89</sup>

This contrasts heavily with individualist, guilt-innocence culture where doing one's own thing is seen as a positive attribute.<sup>90</sup> Ignoring the opinion of others, especially family and close friends, is considered dishonorable even if the specific term is not used. Thus, the desire to honor others and avoid shame for oneself causes a person to seek their approbation and opinion.

Another trait of the collectivist society in Latin America is how relationships affect business and other dealings. As stated above, the closest ties in Latin America are family and close friends. Good relationships with many people, especially important people, is the grease which makes a person's life successful. Stephenson writes, "SSSAs ... openly acknowledge their debt to their family and friends in the work arena and usually try to cultivate personal ties with as many people as possible in order to help promote and consolidate their professional careers."<sup>91</sup>

Who you know is more important than what others know about you. If a person tries to ask a

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89. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 61.

90. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 55.

91. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 64.

favor of someone with whom he or she does not have a relationship, it could be considered shameful since the person is overstepping the boundaries.

This is because, in a way, there still exists a class structure in Latin America, much more so than in other Western countries. Stephenson writes, “For most SSSAs, class affiliation is a crucial aspect of identity, and knowledge of one’s place in the hierarchy as well as that of others influences the dynamics of social interactions and self-perception.”<sup>92</sup> She also mentions that class is tied to more than just wealth. It also has to do with connections, personal history and education.<sup>93</sup> Just as in other honor-shame societies, it is important to maximize honor by playing one’s role and minimize shame by not overstepping one’s bounds.

However, although it is important to play one’s role, this does not mean it is impossible to advance from a lower class to a higher class. Stephenson notes that class in Latin America “is not as rigidly structured as a caste system. Possibility for social mobility does exist in the region although it tends to be more difficult to achieve than in English-speaking North America (ESNA).”<sup>94</sup> With a good education and advantageous connections, a person can advance and be successful.

Another practice which relates to success and socially mobility is patronage. The system of patronage is closely connected both the family and the church. One expression of patronage in Latin America is through the choosing of *compadres* and *padrinos*. Eugene Nida, well-known linguist writes,

In many segments of Latin society the parents’ obtaining for their children a *compadre* “godfather” or *comadre* “godmother” of a higher status is a means of going up in social rank. This is only a kind of indirect benefit, but it does serve to enhance the prestige and tie the social units together.

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92. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 69.

93. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-speaking South Americans*, 70.

94. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-Speaking South Americans*, 70.



Obtaining a *padrino* is another important method of advancing in social standing. A *padrino* is a person who agrees to help his 'client' in business, often guarantees loans, protects him against abuse by other elite, seeks opportunities for his advancement, and introduces him to a higher social group than the person enjoys at the time. In return the 'client' always supports the *padrino's* ambitions. If the *padrino* should ever have need, the 'client' is supposed to help to the limits of his resources.<sup>95</sup>

In the honor-shame culture of Latin America, *padrinos* give honor their clients by giving them the help and resources they need to advance. In return, the clients honor their *padrinos* by supporting their ambitions and goals. This is faithful to the typical honor-shame patronage model discussed above.

### *Machismo*

One cannot talk about honor and shame in Latin America without discussing one of Latin America's most well-known stereotypes: *machismo*. Latin Americanist John Chance suggests that honor and shame values ought to be used to examine the value of *machismo* in Latin America.<sup>96</sup> What follows is a brief sketch of *machismo*.

*Machismo* is more than simple manliness. At its core it is a game of honor and shame, both of the man's honor and of the woman's honor. The man must defend his honor by defending the honor of the women in his family. Lyman Johnson writes,

Masculine culture judged that a man's failure to act with proper courage and physical skill was, in effect, an admission that his wife or other female family members could not be defended. His cowardice and incompetence, manifested as a failure to avenge shame or humiliation, was therefore understood to mean that liberties could be taken with his female relatives.<sup>97</sup>

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95. Eugene Albert Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans: With Special Reference to Religious Values and Movements* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), 93.

96. Chance, "The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice," 140.

97. Johnson, "Dangerous Words, Provocative Gestures, and Violent Acts," 10.

If a woman of his family becomes dishonored in some way, this reflects on the man as well and brings dishonor to him. Thus, *machismo* is intertwined in the Latin American honor-shame culture. It is especially related to the values of purity and honor as a limited commodity.

The value of purity in *machismo* is connected to sexual purity in women. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, professor of colonial Latin American history at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, writes,

[Women] upheld their family honor not only by remaining chaste throughout their lives, but by acting only in a reputable manner so that their conduct would reflect favorably upon their families. For women honor was intimately bound first to their virginity before marriage, then to fidelity to their husbands, and finally to their chasteness as widows. Their sexual behavior (or rather lack of it) reflected upon the men associated with them. Thus a woman who defied these rules not only stained her own honor but also that of her father, her brother, and her husband.<sup>98</sup>

Particularly noteworthy is that the woman's honor was intimately connected to the honor of the men in her family. Because of this there was the need for men to protect the honor of the women in their families for their own honor's sake.

Although the emphasis on sexual purity for women may have diminished since colonial times<sup>99</sup>, it still exists on some level. Mirna E. Carranza, associate professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, writes,

Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and other women in the community transmit it as an 'absolute law' that prescribes 'a set of practices and behaviors.' Among Latin American people who have immigrated to North American countries, *marianismo* is often exemplified by females having strict curfews, being discouraged from going away to college, and being generally constrained in exploring their sexuality before or outside marriage. Above all, Latina women are taught to repress their sexuality and to rely on men to teach them about sex within the context of marriage. Women are encouraged to emulate the Virgin Mary in terms of purity and sacrifice; they are viewed as the nurturers

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98. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, "A Slap in the Face of Honor: Social Transgression and Women in Late Colonial America," in *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, eds. Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), Kobo edition, ch. 7.

99. Skye Stephenson, "Understanding Spanish-Speaking South Americans," 87.

of the family and are expected to subjugate their own goals for the well-being of their families.<sup>100</sup>

Even if these values are not strictly practiced, they are still taught among Latin Americans.

Purity, especially sexual purity, is still an important value in modern Latin America.

However, this expectation of purity is not two-sided. The wife is expected to remain faithful to her husband even though he cheats on her with other women.<sup>101</sup> This relates to the other value connected with *machismo*: the concept of honor as a limited commodity.

While the man is indeed expected to protect the honor of his family, in some regions of Latin America, he also has the opportunity to increase his honor through sexual conquest. Eugene Nida even writes, “Husbands ... are more or less expected to have affairs with other women.”<sup>102</sup> This does not mean that every Latin American man cheats on his wife or even has sex outside of marriage. However, there does exist a societal expectation that a man will show his manliness through sexual conquest.

The concept of honor as a limited quantity results in the emphasis on sexual purity among women. When a man sleeps with a woman who is not his wife, he takes the honor of another man for himself. If a woman sleeps with a man who is not her husband, she is said to *ponerle cuernos*, that is, to put horns on the husband, to make him a cuckold. It is an insult to his manliness that she would sleep with another man. The honor is taken from him and given to another. In addition, he is shamed.

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100. Mirna E. Carranza, "Value Transmission Among Salvadorian Mothers and Daughters: Marianismo and Sexual Morality," *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 30, no. 4 (2012): 313, doi:10.1007/s10560-012-0291-z.

101. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 61.

102. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 59.

The ideal behind *machismo* is well-meant. It places the man as a strong leader of the family to protect his wife and children and provide for them. However, the abuses of male dominance over women and sexual immorality are not excused by the intention. These are the reasons *machismo* has a bad reputation. Nevertheless, what *machismo* does highlight are the values of honor and shame in Latin America.

Honor and shame values are present in Latin America making it an honor-shame culture. There are games of challenge and riposte, systems of patronage, unwritten purity codes, and especially a strong emphasis on relationships, all hallmarks of honor-shame cultures. This means that many of the same challenges present with evangelizing to other honor-shame cultures will be present in Latin America as well.

### **Guilt and Fear in Latin America**

Although Latin American countries are in many ways honor-shame cultures, they also have many aspects of guilt-innocence cultures. In fact, according to honorshame.com, Latin Americans are the most balanced culture.<sup>103</sup> Missionary Mike Hartman also notes this: “I believe Mexicans typically feel extremely guilty about many things. This, in my opinion, is the result of the strong influence of the Roman Catholic church in their country.”<sup>104</sup>

As an example, Missionary Hartman included a link to a video in his e-mail. It shows people making a pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Virgin Mary in Mexico City. He comments, “Why are those people making the pilgrimage if guilt isn’t playing a part? What about the main

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103. www.honorshame.com, “The Data on Global Cultural Types,” <http://honorshame.com/data-global-culture-types/>. The site even notes that this makes Latin Americans “the most difficult to figure out.” This is based on data from TheCultureTest.com, a survey which measures where a certain culture falls on the guilt-shame-fear spectrum. In fact, Latin America even has many elements of fear culture.

104. Mike Hartman, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2017.

guy being interviewed in the video, Alan? He tells about his mother making him crawl on his knees to see the Virgin when he was young because he had been bad. This is only one example of many pilgrimages that take place each year throughout Mexico.”<sup>105</sup> People make these pilgrimages in order to erase their guilt. This is a hallmark of a guilt-innocence culture.<sup>106</sup>

Latin American cultures also have aspects of fear culture. Eugene Nida describes the fear culture of Latin America this way:

On one level there is the almost purely indigenous religious system preserved by the *brujo* “sorcerer” and the *curandero* “medicine man,” with only a superficial addition of Spanish holy words, incantations, and Catholic images. At the other extreme there is the typical church-centered worship of the town-dwelling and Spanish-speaking Roman Catholic, whose beliefs and practices are quite orthodox except for a scattering of Indian magic and beliefs about native herbs and medicines and possibly about some evil spirits in a distant cave. Between these two extremes there are varying degrees of Christo-paganism, a kind of two-headed system which has two distinct, but noncontradictory, orientations. One the one hand, the person looks to the God of heaven, the priest, and the Church, and in this he is quite a good Roman Catholic. On the other hand, he also looks to *Dios Mundo* “the God of the World” (owner of the mountains, valleys, rivers, and springs), the sorcerer, and the *ermita* “local shrine.”<sup>107</sup>

There are attempts to appease the spirits as well superstition which rule the lives of some Latin Americans. These are hallmarks of fear culture.<sup>108</sup>

Although this paper focuses on the honor and shame challenges in Latin America, there are actually many other challenges which a Christian will face because of the guilt culture and fear culture in Latin America. On the other hand, with careful teaching, the missionary can

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105. Mike Hartman, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2017. The video can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/161776533>.

106. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, ch. 2, “Culture.” “Guilt cultures focus on actions. A guilty violator can remedy a bad action with another action—community service, paying a fine, jail time. Since the problem is a wrong action, the solution is a counterbalancing action that fits the misdeed. To alleviate guilt, a person must typically confess wrongdoing and/or provide restitution. The person who honestly takes ownership of wrongdoing is rewarded.”

107. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 106-107.

108. Georges, *The 3D Gospel*, ch. 2, “Culture.”

remove Latin Americans any barriers to the gospel because they can relate to the honor, innocence and power which the gospel provides.

## 6-HONOR AND SHAME CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA

Because of the differences between Latin American culture and North American culture, there arise some challenges in evangelizing to Latin Americans. Many of these challenges are brought about by the collectivist, honor-shame dynamic of Latin American culture. Three of these challenges are: 1) *confianza*, or lack of it, 2) reluctance to join the Lutheran church, and 3) class differences.

### *Confianza*

Breaking into any culture as an outsider is difficult and Latin America is no exception. Spanish speaking Latin Americans use a term, *confianza*, to describe trust between two parties. However, this word means more than just “trust.” Steven Alvarez describes it this way:

*Confianza* means reciprocating a relationship where individuals feel cared for. The sense of *confianza* is a feeling that translates between Latinxs<sup>109</sup> and Latin Americans, as it means the same in Spanish across regions. *Confianza* is [sic] humanizing process centered on local communities, which involves exchanging mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation.<sup>110</sup>

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109. Latinx is a gender-neutral term used in place of Latino(a).

110. Steven Alvarez, “Latinx and Latin American Community Literacy Practices en Confianza,” *Composition Studies* 45 (Fall 2017): 219-220, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=ns101346&db=ehh&AN=125991892&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

*Confianza* is built over time through relationships with other people. It cannot be earned in a few weeks, or even a few months. There must be a long period of time before *confianza* can be earned.

In Latin America, intimate relationships are valued.<sup>111</sup> Missionary Mike Hartman writes, “In Mexico ‘*confianza*’ (trust) is extremely important.”<sup>112</sup> Again, the role of the group in honor-shame cultures takes precedence over the individual. Outsider opinions are generally looked at with suspicion, especially if they challenge the group *status quo*.

Trying to build relationships can make evangelism more difficult because it slows down the process of sharing the gospel. This does not mean that the gospel does not have the power to convert souls even if *confianza* is lacking. However, a lack of *confianza* can serve as a barrier to the gospel being heard and accepted.

This also affects the methods of evangelism. In the United States, door-to-door evangelism has been typical for years, even if recently it is becoming less common. A lack of *confianza* makes door-to-door evangelism useless. Missionary Hartman writes, “We don’t knock on doors. I’m aware of very few that knock on doors. (People may in Hispanic communities in the US.) I have been told that even the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons don’t knock on doors as much in Mexico.”<sup>113</sup> Other methods of evangelism must be employed.

### **Church Membership**

Once the issue of *confianza* is overcome, another challenge must be confronted. This is the challenge of convincing people to become confirmed members of the Lutheran church.

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111. Stephenson, *Understanding Spanish-Speaking South Americans*, 51.

112. Mike Hartman, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2017.

113. Mike Hartman, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2017.



Again, this does not mean the gospel does not have the power to change minds and hearts, but rather that missionaries strive not to put any barriers in the way of the gospel.

Convincing people to join seems to be a struggle among Latin American missions. Missionary Hartman writes, “Typically, a prospect goes through a BIC class at least twice and then joins less than 50% of the time. There are many people who come to church, but never join.”<sup>114</sup> People are coming to church and hearing the Word of God. They are taking Bible Information Classes and learning about the truths of the Bible. Many believe the truth of salvation by grace alone and are saved. On the other hand, because they are not confirmed members, they do not share in the full benefits of membership, especially that of receiving the Lord’s Supper. From a human perspective, they do not participate fully in the practical side of church administration, meaning fewer strong leaders in congregations.

The cause of this challenge is strong social pressure to remain Catholic. Missionary Hartman writes, “Becoming a Christian means no longer being a Catholic. (Mexican Catholics are typically insulted if you call them a Christian. For example, our kids are regularly told by their friends, ‘We don’t believe in Jesus. We believe in Mary.’) ... Becoming Christian is seen as abandoning your Mexican heritage/culture.”<sup>115</sup> If one loses their social identity, he or she loses his or her place in society. This especially holds true within the family where other members of the family, especially elders, expect the family to be Catholic.

Part of life in an honor-shame culture means playing one’s role. If one’s role is to be Catholic, departing from that role brings shame. Although this person will be accepted into a

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114. Mike Hartman, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2017.

115. Mike Hartman, e-mail to author, November 23, 2017.

new family, the family of believers, he or she will be excluded from another group, possibly his or her own family. This fear of exclusion is another challenge for Christians in Latin America.

### **Social Distinctions**

Another challenge for Latin America missionaries is the issue of classism in Latin America. Eugene Nida describes this problem,

For example, not infrequently churches have flourished and grown for a period of five to ten years, only to be followed by twenty years of almost complete stagnation. Such churches seem to have reached a particular group within a community and then to have stopped growing. In some instances a few persons are won to the gospel in the initial attempts to start a new church, but their very presence in the church seems to prevent the entrance of others. In other churches the social standing of the members rises rapidly through improved education, greater ambition, and the indirect results of a higher sense of responsibility—characteristics which lead to greater financial rewards. However, the tendency is for such churches to lose touch with the very classes from which most of the members originally came.<sup>116</sup>

Although classism in Latin America is nothing like the caste system of India, there still is a distance between members of the lower classes and the upper classes. Thus, people of the upper classes may be turned off by a congregation with mostly people of lower classes. It would be shameful for them to worship there if a congregation more suitable to their social standing were available. Likewise, people of lower classes may feel unwelcome in a congregation where most people come from the upper classes. Worshiping there would in some ways highlight their lower status and cause shame.

However, this goes beyond simple classism. A person's reputation factors into his or her social standing more than wealth. Thus, Nida warns against forming congregations only from the marginalized of society:

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116. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 84.

If one succeeds only in isolating some of the disgruntled members of such a community and in making them the “leaders” of a newly formed church, it is very likely that one will never be able to penetrate very deeply into the community structure. Such a “church” will always be a kind of appendage to the social structure, isolated from its essential life and a haven only for the community outcasts.<sup>117</sup>

Community outcasts will be looking for a place of acceptance. They will naturally be the most drawn to the church because they have the most to gain from joining. A Christian will accept them with joy, but he must also be careful to include them in a group which also includes other members of the community. This is yet another challenge for Christians in Latin America caused by honor and shame.

These examples do present challenges to Latin American missions. The key to overcoming these challenges is first to understand them. Then, one must explore evangelism techniques which are relatable to honor-shame cultures.

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117. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 96.

## 7-HONOR AND SHAME SOLUTIONS

Each of the challenges examined above deals with relationships in honor-shame cultures. It may be the relationship between a missionary and an individual, a missionary and a group, or the relationship between different members of the same community. The methods to overcoming these challenges ought to be relational.

### *Confianza*

To overcome the challenge of a lack of *confianza*, a missionary needs to understand how to build *confianza*. Georges and Baker list eight ways to build relationships in honor-shame cultures. These eight ways are 1) making requests indirectly, 2) reconciling symbolically rather than through words, 3) becoming a client, 4) becoming a patron, 5) giving gifts, 6) being pure, 7) being a good guest, and 8) giving face.<sup>118</sup> Many of these have already been mentioned as important in Latin American honor-shame cultures. Being a good guest is also important in Latin American culture as hospitality is another value in Latin America.<sup>119</sup> All these help to build

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118. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 135.

119. Cf. Stephenson, 107-108: “What this usually implies is a clear distinction between host and guest and the desire to be the most gracious hosts possible. In fact, the hospitality of many SSSAs is legendary, as is illustrated by a famous saying that many people from this region use when entertaining—“*Mi casa es tu casa*” (“My house is your house.”)

“Although most hosts will patiently put up with faux pas from foreigners, knowledge of certain expectations can help make social encounters proceed more smoothly and promote a greater personal connection. Although it is not always expected, a small gift of flowers, chocolates, or wine will be warmly received. Even more important for making a proper first impression is to properly greet people, making sure to individually kiss, hug, or shake hands with everyone at the event.”

*confianza* so that people will be more willing to listen to the gospel message. Building *confianza* not only creates a greater personal connection with individuals, it also builds a missionary's reputation in the community. Again, this is important because it is not what a person knows that counts, but who a person is and who knows them. In many ways, a pastor can become "the guy" someone knows for spiritual issues much like a certain mechanic becomes "the guy" to fix cars. This system can be called "networking evangelism."

Networking evangelism happens when a missionary becomes known in a community. Because he has a good reputation, people come to him for help. These points of contact become opportunities to share the gospel. Missionary Guy Marquardt, who served in Brazil for 14 years, writes, "Networking evangelism was central to my ministry in Brazil. There I had no need to knock on doors to find prospects because there was a steady stream of people to visit who were somehow related to current members or other people I knew personally."<sup>120</sup> Instead of the missionary having to go door-to-door, the people come to him if he is known in the community as a spiritual leader. Thus, building *confianza* initially with some people makes building *confianza* with others in the community easier.

It is important to build good relationships, especially if a missionary is coming to an already established field, so that the members of his congregation will send others to him to hear about the gospel. Even if he is exploring a new mission field, building those initial relationships can lead to an evangelism network which he can rely on to produce contacts in the future. Network evangelism is a valuable tool for missionaries in Latin America because it allows missionaries to stand in an honorable position in the community where they are seen as leaders

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120. Guy Marquardt, e-mail to the author, November 26, 2017.

and, in a way, patrons. Although their own honor is not their goal, it can lead to an opportunity to talk about God's honor and how he lifts people up to honor through Jesus.

One example of building *confianza* is through English as a Second Language classes. During the author's vicar year at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Edna, TX, he had the opportunity to teach English classes alongside his other duties. The attendance was not phenomenal, but the small classes allowed for time to build relationships with the people who came. The author became friends with one man named Mario with whom he also began to play chess regularly. After a while, Mario began attending worship at Redeemer. A few months later, Mario remarked that this congregation had become his family. This was the result of *confianza*.

The point is not to illustrate that every church or mission in Latin America should begin English classes. Rather, it shows the effect of *confianza*. Missionary Hartman echoes this sentiment: "Relationships and events are valued over tasks and activities. In Mexico 'confianza' (trust) is extremely important."<sup>121</sup> If it were not for the opportunity to spend time with Mario, perhaps that relationship would have been lost. Although a pastor's job is busy, spending time with prospects leads to a friendship that will, God-willing, last into eternity.

### **Church Membership**

The biggest fear for people joining the Lutheran church is leaving behind their identity and their group, especially their family group. In a collectivist society, a person makes decisions based on the good of the group, and often the group makes decisions. Therefore, missionaries need to include the group in the decision making process.

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121. Hartman, e-mail to author, November 23, 2017.

Including the entire community is fairly easy in a small, rural society. Eugene Nida writes,

Many people have thought that the best approach to a face-to-face society is to preach the Good News to the entire group and to challenge the community to accept the gospel as a group. This procedure does not overlook the necessity of individuals making personal commitments, but it proceeds on the basis that a group accustomed to making group decisions should be confronted as a social unit.<sup>122</sup>

In order to include the whole community, one must first go to the leadership. Because of the strong hierarchical system in Latin America, people will be more inclined to listen to a missionary if the leaders accept him.

However, this is not so easy in urban Latin America. Communities are often not led by one “ruling” family. Nevertheless, the principle still holds true. A technique a missionary can use for evangelism is to evangelize entire families at one time. This allows families to make the decision as a group, with leaders of the family having their say. Georges and Baker write,

If a young person indicates interest in Jesus, it may be prudent to invite the entire family into the conversation. By sharing with the household leader and anticipating a family decision to follow Christ, we can limit the social upheaval of extracting an individual from their relational network. A missiological approach of community encounter involves helping people encounter Jesus as a community, not just individually.<sup>123</sup>

In this way, the honor of the leaders of the family is maintained as is the honor of the family. In addition, if the family converts, they are insulated from shame in society as they retain their most basic support group. Thus, group evangelism is an important of evangelism in Latin America.

An example of how group evangelism can work is the Berrospid family from Peru. The author had the privilege to live with the Berrospids for two years while teaching English in Carmen de la Legua – Reynoso, Callao, Peru, a city bordering the capital, Lima. When

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122. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 96. Ignoring the Arminianism in this statement, Nida is supporting the idea that groups who make decisions together ought to be evangelized together.

123. Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 187.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionaries came to Peru, they targeted this area and made contact with the Berrospids. Over several years, the family became Lutheran. However, one brother held out. His name was Roberto.

His family tried to convince him to become Lutheran, but he was a convinced Catholic. However, because of pressure from his family and their pastor, he eventually agreed to take classes. After he became Lutheran, he still had to convince his wife Betty. He eventually convinced her to take classes as well, and their whole family became Lutheran. Roberto even became a pastor in the national church in Peru.<sup>124</sup> This was partially a result of the group evangelism to Roberto's extended family.

It would be wrong to say this story downplays the power of the Word of God. If the Word were not powerful, none of the Berrospids would have believed, least of all Roberto. However, the group evangelism to Roberto's family and their commitment to the truth of Scripture broke down the man-made barriers in Roberto's mind so that he would at least listen to the gospel.

Although there are many benefits to group evangelism, there are some downsides. Missionary Mike Hartman mentions one: "The challenge is to get a group to be willing to listen to you. Becoming a Christian means no longer being a Catholic. ... So, practically, it can be hard."<sup>125</sup> If the leader of a group rejects the gospel, everyone else might as well, even though who were interested. Likewise, if a group does listen and the group as a whole rejects the gospel, it may be harder to convince individuals to listen as the group has already passed its judgment on the matter. In either case, then, it is important for the missionary to continue to work with

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124. To see more about this story, watch this video from AcademiaCristo.com: <https://vimeo.com/249575637>.

125. Hartman, e-mail to author, November 23, 2017.



individuals as the gospel is more important than the group. In the end, this method of evangelism cannot be accused of dishonoring the group, since the group was included in the decision making process from the beginning.

### **Social Distinctions**

The final challenge is creating a cohesive community of believers is the distinction between social classes. People of higher class may not want to associate with people of lower class. People of lower class may not feel worthy or want to associate with people of higher class. Although the distinction is not so great as in other parts of the world such as in India, it still may have an effect on who is willing to join a congregation.

In order to overcome this difficulty, Nida makes the same suggestion as above, namely that communities ought to be evangelized as a group.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the leaders of the community are honored and people may comfortably hear the message of the gospel because the leaders are also willing to listen.

This strategy intends to use the patronage system in Latin America. If a leader of the community becomes a believer, they can use their influence and contacts to find opportunities to share the gospel. Again, the example of the Berrospids stands out. Roberto's family has established a school in Peru which now has more than 1200 students. Each of these students receives not only a great secular education, but also Christian education from a Lutheran pastor. Although this has not brought many members into the congregation, it has allowed the pastor to share the gospel with thousands of children who may not otherwise have heard it.<sup>127</sup>

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126. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans*, 96.

127. [www.academiacrsto.com](http://www.academiacrsto.com), "Blessings from the Father," Vimeo video, 7:35, published January 3, 2018.

The Berrospids' standing as community leaders who are willing to serve others also shows the highly Catholic community that Lutheranism is not just some sect. Because they have a good reputation, this opens the door to more opportunities to share the gospel. Then, the true power of the Word is unleashed through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Although targeting groups may work, the same downsides mentioned in the previous section also apply here. Another downside to consider is that it is not likely that everyone in a group will believe. If a group does convert, some individuals in the group may only convert because it is to their advantage. They will convert because it maintains group harmony and will increase their standing in the group. While evangelizing to groups is key, it is important not to forget the individual once the group believes the gospel.

## CONCLUSION

Honor-shame cultures are different in many ways from the cultures from which most Lutheran missionaries come. Honor-shame cultures focus on groups of people rather than elevating the individual. Because of this, it may seem as though a person who listens to the outside opinion of his or her peers needs to break free from the group pressures. However, this is simply not a viable solution. It is not necessary that people break from their culture completely when they become Christians. Instead, they ought to become lights in their communities, showing how cultural values which are by and large not right or wrong can be practiced in a God-pleasing manner.

Latin America consists of many different honor-shame cultures. Although they have their differences, these cultures share many values which are hallmarks of honor-shame culture. Therefore, they also present some of the same challenges as other honor-shame cultures. Especially notable are the challenges of building *confianza*, overcoming reluctance to joining the church, and removing or working around class distinctions.

Each of these honor-shame difficulties also has an honor-shame solution. Building *confianza* can be accomplished through practicing honor-shame values to build a relationship with individuals and communities. Individual reluctance to joining a church can be overcome by evangelizing to groups with the hope that the group will believe the gospel. Social distinctions can be overcome with the same method of evangelizing the entire community.

It is difficult to evangelize in foreign cultures which have values which are different from one's own. However, when a person understand the culture, they are able to preach the gospel more effectively. A missionary can use the techniques mentioned in this paper to preach the gospel effectively in Latin America.

### **Further Research**

This thesis has focused specifically on the honor-shame culture of Latin America, its challenges, and solutions for this challenge. However, much research still needs to be done in this field. Below are some suggested areas for research.

First, each Latin American country has a different history as well as a different demographic. Some are more Spanish while others have large indigenous populations. Because of these differences, each Latin American country falls at a different place on the guilt-shame-fear spectrum of cultures. A thorough research into individual countries or a comparison of multiple countries would be helpful to understand mission work in a certain place or among a certain people.

Second, this paper has only given a cursory explanation of how Scripture speaks about honor and shame. Although some missiologists and theologians have exegeted the passages which speak about honor and shame, they often have a Reformed or Arminian perspective. A paper on honor and shame from a Lutheran perspective would help Lutheran pastors and missionaries use the terms of honor and shame in a more Lutheran setting.

Third, an exegetical and practical paper applying Scripture to various honor-shame settings would be helpful. For example, taking the book of Romans from an honor-shame

perspective and applying it to real life honor-shame challenges would be helpful to face those challenges in a practical way.

Finally, the United States has many aspects of honor-shame culture. Again, a study of how honor and shame present challenges in the United States would be helpful. It would also be helpful to study how the gospel speaks to those honor-shame challenges in the United States.

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