Globethics Repository

Globethics

Spirituality for the Shamed Tsinoys with Disabilities: The Shamed Jesus in the Book of Hebrews

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Shao-Tan, Amanda
Publisher	Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS)
Rights	All rights reserved
Download date	2026-11-05 09:23:19
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/170296

[AJPS 21.1 (February 2018), pp. 5-31]

Spirituality for the Shamed Tsinoys with Disabilities: The Shamed Jesus in the Book of Hebrews[1]

by Amanda Shao-Tan

Introduction

"Face" (面子[2]) is an important commodity for the Chinese.[3] One of the many Chinese concepts for shame is 失面子,[4] literally "loss face." When one feels ashamed, one cannot face other people because of this "loss of face," the face being a representation of oneself.

While shame is a universal phenomenon, it is deeply ingrained in the psyche of Chinese Filipinos, or Tsinoys,[5] both in individuals and in

[1]This article was first presented as "Spirituality for the Shamed Disabled" in the 2012 Theological Forum of the Asian Theological Seminary entitled "*Walking with God . . . Christian Spirituality in Asian Context,"* February 9-10, 2012, at the Union Church of Manila, Makati, Philippines.

[2]Another word is 臉.

[3]Shame is important in Chinese culture due to the influence of Confucius' teaching. Basically, shame in Confucianism is not a negative emotion, for shame is "an emotion as well as a human capacity that directs the person inward for self-examination and motivates the person toward socially and morally desirable change." Jin Li, Lianqin Wang, and Kurt W. Fischer, "The Organization of Chinese Shame Concepts," revised manuscript submitted to *Cognition and Emotion*, January 3, 2003, https://pdfs.semanticsscholar.org/6802/904e2aaff733c68b488d3bea7d0d9c53 ea43.pdf (accessed July 18, 2017).

[4]丢臉 is another way of expressing "loss face."

[5]By Tsinoys, I refer to Chinese who migrated to the Philippines several decades ago and/or those born to these Tsinoy migrants, whether they have acquired Filipino citizenship or not. Tsinoys do not refer to the new wave of Chinese migrants who, in the last decades, have taken permanent residency in the Philippines or who are residing temporarily in the Philippines to do business or to study. Although these two groups have cultural and value similarities, the reason I have made distinction between these two groups—the old migrants with their locally born descendants, and the recent migrants—is because the upbringing, culture, and values of these two groups are distinct and different. For when and why the word "Tsinoy" was coined, see Juliet Lee Uytanlet's missiological study, *The Hybrid Tsinoys: Challenges of Hybridity and Homogeneity as Sociocultural Constructs among the Chinese in the Philippines in the Twenty-First Century*, American

groups.[6] Whenever Tsinoys, or any of their family members, have any disability they are even more inclined to develop shame.

Growing up with a congenital disability, I, a Tsinoy, have felt ashamed of my body. Parts of me are disproportionate and disfigured. These parts look ugly to me. Some parts either do not function or they mal-function. Non-functioning and mal-functioning sometimes cause embarrassing "accidents." This deformed and dysfunctional body of mine does not measure up against the normal. Thus, the sense of shame has become rooted in my inner psyche. Though I have felt this way, by God's providence, the significant people around me—parents, siblings, and friends in school and at church—never showed aversion to my different body, so I thought this sense of shame was just my own personal feeling about my physical condition. It never occurred to me that shame in relation to disability is also an issue among my people-group, the Tsinoys.

It was not until a few years back that my colleague/friend/church mate, Professor (Prof.) Cristina Arcayan-Co, also a Tsinoy, jolted me with her stories of visitation of young Tsinoy mothers in their homes. She told me about parents who hid their disabled infants at home. Wanting to protect their kids from public spectacle, and because of shame, the parents had not let people know that they had children with disabilities.[7] In a recent text correspondence with Prof. Arcayan-Co, who

---

Society of Missiology Monograph Series 28 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 3. For Uytanlet's classification of Tsinoys as one of the groups among the six groups of Chinese Filipinos, see pp. 10, 191, https://books.google.com.ph/books?id=HdbPDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA192&lpg=PA192&dq= hybrid+tsinoy&source=bl&ots=WJHNkQAeO3&sig=BzhcSZFvywQJckijwp2OzJ9dJOg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiIiq_agZDVAhWDXbwKHRiQCcAQ6AEILjAD#v=onepage&q=hybrid%20tsinoy&f=false (accessed July 17, 2017).

[6]For the shame culture and its inculturation among Tsinoys, see Jose Vidamor B. Yu, *Inculturation of Filipino-Chinese Culture Mentality*, Interreligious and Intercultural Investigations, vol. 3 (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2000), 70-71, 127-128, https://books.google.com.ph/books?id=c4WqAOKb5c8C&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70& dq=shame+in+the+chinese+filipino+culture&source=bl&ots=Zvvd3LgcCh&sig=O17RPJprqCufK46rNyaU4i8CbFQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiK3rTj8eHUAhVFNpQKHUFHAbsQ6AEIMDAC#v=onepage&q=shame%20in%20the%20chinese%20filipino%20culture&f=false (accessed June 29, 2017).

[7]At around the same time, I had a phone interview with a Tsinoy Christian mother whose daughter has congenital disabilities. As a mother of school-age children, she had many opportunities to interact with other Tsinoy mothers. These mothers, in the course of chatting with this mother, would eventually open up that they have children with disabilities as well. But they would reveal it only after this mother candidly talked about her daughter (Interview on February 6, 2012). Somehow, this mother's acceptance and forthrightness about her own daughter's disabilities enabled these mothers to open up to her. Without her openness about her daughter, no one would have learned about the existence of these "unknown" and "hidden" peoples.

ministers among parents of disabled children, she reports that she does not see "hidden" children as much as before. Tsinoy parents are now more open about having special children, but generally they still avoid talking about them.[8]

Not only do the family members of the person with disabilities feel shame, the person with disabilities (PWD), more often than not, absorbs this feeling of shame, either from society or from their own family members. While being different has become a fad in this post-modern world, I suspect that being different in terms of disability is still not acceptable among the Tsinoys, and for people of most cultures.[9]

A Brief about This Article

I would like to address the Tsinoys' feeling of shame due to disability (disability shame) by reading the Book of Hebrews (Hebrews) from the angle of shame. Hebrews presents an empathetic and empowering Jesus who is worthy of emulation in his responses to shame. Tsinoys, with their disability shame, should be able to relate to Jesus' personal shame experiences and appropriate his experiences to nurture their own spirituality. Eventually, they may point people without disabilities to the way to face struggles with shame.

I will begin by briefly defining spirituality and disability, after which I will explain the basics of shame, and how PWDs develop shame. Factors that contribute to the shame of Tsinoys with disabilities (TWD) will be touched on. Then, I will also examine the relationship between spirituality and disability shame.

Spirituality and Disability

Spirituality

Spirituality is humanity's essence. Though spirituality cannot be captured empirically, it still can be discerned circumstantially,

[8]"I don't see that [referring to hiding special children] anymore. What is more common is that they avoid talking about their child. They don't like to tell you their child's diagnosis. They are not comfortable talking about their 'special' child." Text correspondence on July 13, 2017.

[9]I am aware that my sense of the prevalent disability shame among Tsinoys is anecdotal based on my own observations and experiences rather than backed up by quantitative research.

philosophically, existentially and theologically.[10] Spirituality permeates our beings and gives meaning to all of life.[11] Although it is difficult to define,[12] it is in essence, the integral and interconnected relationships with God, oneself, the community, and the environment.[13] These varied relationships are what afford meaning and purpose in life[14] and thus show a person's spirituality.[15]

Disability

The concept of disability has moved from the medical perspective, to the social model, to the bio-psycho-social model, and currently to the cultural model. From the medical viewpoint, disability refers to a loss, abnormality or impairment that limits one's functioning ability within the range of what is considered normal.[16] The functional disability may be physical, psychosocial, developmental, or mental. Some disabilities are obvious, while others are not obvious. Examples of the former are acute autism, or the physical features of people with Down syndrome. Illustrations of the latter include diabetes, or mild attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD).

The social model of disability views attitudinal and environmental barriers as causes of disability, because these impediments deprive PWDs of equal opportunities to fully, and effectively, take part in society.[17] An example of an attitudinal barrier is the perception that

---

[10]D. O. Moberg, "The Reality and Centrality of Spirituality," in *Aging and Spirituality: Spiritual Dimensions of Aging Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, ed. D. O. Moberg (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2001), 4-5.

[11]J. A. Thorson and T. Cook, Jr., eds., *Spiritual Well-Being of the Elderly* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1980), xiii, as cited by Moberg, 15.

[12]Moberg (16) says that spirituality is "identifiable only through indirect observation and an artificially abstracted breakdown of its component parts and dimensions."

[13]J. Armatowski, "Attitudes toward Death and Dying among Persons in the Fourth Quarter of Life," in *Aging and Spirituality*, 79.

[14]A. E. Soerens, "Spiritual Care by Primary Health Care Providers," in *Aging and Spirituality*, 102.

[15]This paragraph is lifted almost verbatim from Amanda Shao Tan, "Spirituality of Disability: The Indwelling of the Sacred in the Aberrant," *Phronēsis* 14, nos. 1 & 2 (2007): 7.

[16]Definition made by the World Health Organization in "World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons," United Nations Enable, 1982, 1, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa01.htm (accessed July 19, 2017).

[17]The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, English Version, August 2012 (Bonn, Germany: International Paralympic Committee, 2012), 3, https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/120818093927 291_2012_08+ The+UN+Convention+on+Rights+of+Persons+with+Disabilities_ENG.pdf (accessed July 19, 2017).

PWDs have no capacity to earn a living. It includes not making accommodations to enable PWDs to be part of the work force. An environmental barrier may be an electrical post blocking the sidewalk, thereby hindering wheelchair users from maneuvering safely outside their homes.

The bio-psycho-social model fuses the medical and social model. Thus, disability is defined as "the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)."[18] Disability under this model considers hindrances arising from the bidirectional interaction between an individual's impairment and discriminating social barriers.

The cultural model does not negate the biological impact, nor hindrances to functioning arising from discrimination and physical structures, but, additionally, it takes into consideration a society's worldview. Hence, the understanding of disability arises from the medical perspective, from societal barriers, and can also be discerned from a culture's socio-political situation, its legal dimensions, and its literature and films.[19] For the purpose of this paper, the cultural model will be assumed.

Shame

Shame, a universal phenomenon,[20] is a human emotion.[21] It is "self-conscious" in that it involves the awareness of self and involves self-reflection based on "some internally or externally imposed standards."[22] It develops as a result of ideals that are societally generated. Each family or society develops its own standards, values, and ideals. Through

---

[18]World Report on Disability (Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Press, 2011), 4, http://www.who.int/disabilities/wor ld_report/2011/report.pdf (accessed July 19, 2017).

[19]Jeremy Schipper, *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 15-21.

[20]Jing Zhang, "Understanding the Concept of Shame in the Chinese Culture," *NYS Child Welfare/Child Protective Services Training Institute*, 4 (2015): n.p., http://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/cgi/viewpoint.cgi?article=1006&context= cwcpstriaininginstitute (accessed July 31, 2017).

[21]June Price Tangney and Rondo L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 2 and 57.

[22]Tangney and Dearing, 140, and Bai Lin and Ng Bee Chin, "Self-other Dimension of Chinese Shame Words," *International Journal of Computer Processing of Languages*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2012): 52, doi: 10.1142/S1793840612411141, https://www.researchgate .net/publication/263905550_Self-other_Dimension_of_Chines e_Shame_Words (accessed July 24, 2017).

socialization, two things happen: first, members of each group are informed of standards and ideals of the group. Second, members absorb the significance attached to those ideals and standards which become valued goals to be achieved.[23] Members of each family, or society, thus measure themselves against these important, treasured, familial, and societal goals. When people do not achieve these goals, they feel they do not measure up, and thereby feel shame.[24] As such, standards, ideals and the significance attached to them are social constructs.[25]

Shame is not just an affect. It develops from "cognitive activities [which] involve the evaluation of an individual or his or her actions in regard to the individual's standards, rules and goals."[26] One evaluates oneself as "no good."[27] In this "highly negative and painful state," one's behavior, thoughts, and speech are disrupted.[28]

Although shame is a negative assessment, it can, as a neutral human experience, be healthy. It is profitable when the attachment of importance to certain societal values and behavior leads to fear of being humiliated, and thus thwarts immorality, and facilitates order in society.[29] It is not beneficial when the attachment is to societal ideals that have nothing to do with morality and civil order. A simple example of

---

[23]"Socialization is important in the development of shame . . . not only because it is an important source of information about rules, standards, self, and so on; more importantly, it is primarily responsible for endowing those standards with significance, and making adherence to those standards an important goal for the individual. Significance is the crucial feature distinguishing appreciations from ordinary cognitive processes." Karen Caplovitz Barrett, "A Functionalist Approach to Shame and Guilt," in *Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment, and Pride*, eds. June Price Tangney and Kurt W. Fischer (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1995), 50; also see pp. 51-57. See Tangney and Dearing, chap. 9 for individual, familial and other social factors involved in the development of shame.

[24]Michael Lewis describes the physical and emotional states of shame this way: "The physical actions accompanying shame include a shrinking of the body, as though to disappear from the eye of the self or the other. This emotional state is so intense and has such a devastating effect on the self that individuals in such a state attempt to rid themselves of it. However, since shame represents a global attack on the self ('I am no good'), people have great difficulty in dissipating it." "Embarrassment: The Emotion of Self-Exposure and Evaluation," in *Self-Conscious Emotions*, 210.

[25]According to Barrett (25; also see pp. 39-41), shame is a social emotion. This means it is "(1) socially constructed, (2) invariably connected with (real or imagined) social interactions, (3) endowed with significance by social communication and/or relevance to desired ends . . ., and (4) associated with appreciations (appraisals) regarding others, as well as the self."

[26]M. Lewis, 210.

[27]M. Lewis, 210. Also see Tangney and Dearing, 24-25, 56-57, 63.

[28]H. B. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International University Press, 1971), n.p., as cited by M. Lewis, 210.

[29]Lin and Ng, 53. Also see Barrett, 41-42, 46-47.

this detrimental consequence is when one absorbs the contemporary fashion standard and feels ashamed for being deficient in terms of fashion.

Barren women in the ancient Jewish culture are examples of people who did not commit anything morally shameful, yet they experienced the social stigma that surrounds childlessness.[30] These women felt they fell short of social ideals and thereby felt "painfully embarrassed."[31] Their status was reduced and their social identity diminished.[32] Stigma, low status, and disability identity all contribute to a negative self-esteem. Infertility—which is a disability based on our definition—among Tsinoy women can likewise cause shame. How can a daughter-in-law face the in-laws who expect her to bear progeny to continue the family name? Thus, many infertile Tsinoy women often have a feeling of being a failure.

Shame feeling is thus developed from a cognitive negative self-evaluation. It is derived from perceiving that one does not live up to the societal constructs of what are deemed as important values, standards, expectations, norms, desires, ideals, or obligations.

Spirituality and Shame

We have said that spirituality refers to the interconnected relationships with God, self, society and environment that give meaning and purpose to life. Even as we claim that values which engender shame are social constructs, we do not, as people of God, dichotomize between the spirituality and shame because social constructs also come from God. In fact, through socially constructed standards and their significance and impact, whether healthy or not, shamed people have possibilities to develop meaningful relationships to themselves, others and God.

Some Contributing Factors to Tsinoy Disability Shame

Since this paper is for the Tsinoy shamed disabled and their families, I will cite two particular factors that can contribute to the development of shame for TWDs and their families. One is the way

---

[30]R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 52.

[31]Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution*, JSOT Supplement Series 346, eds. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 90; see Is 4:1.

[32]J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 143.

Scripture depicts disability. Since 90% of Tsinoys are Christian (this includes Roman Catholics and other groups)[33] the likelihood of exposure to Scripture is high. In Scripture, "lame" and "blind" are metaphors used to illustrate the weakness, and therefore the downfall, of political power (2 Sam 5:8b). [34] A crippled foot in Proverbs 25:19 characterizes undependability and betrayal when someone needed help the most. In Deuteronomy 28:28-29, blindness is depicted as a curse for violation of the covenant.[35] John 9:39, read in the context of the whole chapter, uses blindness as a metaphor to refer to the incapacity to grasp what Jesus said.[36] These passages illustrate the negative depiction of disability in the Bible. Disability metaphors that describe character deficiency and spiritual incapacity can aggravate the TWDs' and their families' feelings of shame or negative self-perception.

Perfection as an ideal is highly ingrained among many Tsinoys.[37] In many ways, TWDs cannot measure up to the goal of perfection set by the Tsinoy society. Perfection is idealized in looks and beauty,

---

[33]The figure is from an interview with Dr. Juliet Lee Uytanlet, missions' professor of the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines. Dr. Uytanlet heard this number from Dr. Teresita Ang-See, a speaker at the seminar "Chinese in the Philippines: New Studies, Current Issues, Future Directions," held at the Ricardo Leong Center for Chinese Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, on January 12-13, 2017.

[34]Jeremy Schipper, "Reconsidering the Imagery of Disability in 2 Sam 5:8b," *CBQ* 67 (2005): 432-434, also 434 fn 32.

[35]Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33-34, https://www.amazon.com/Disability-Hebrew-Bible-Interpreting- Differences/dp/05218 88077(accessed August 7, 2017).

[36]For a response to the issue of Scripture using disability as a negative metaphor, see Amanda Shao Tan, "Reading the Bible from a Disability Perspective: Grappling with the Necessity of Cure and with Disability as a Negative Metaphor," first presented at the ATESEA Golden Jubilee Celebration in Trinity Theological College, Singapore on November 27, 2007. The revised edition was presented at the ATS Kape Forum of the Asian Theological Seminary on February 27, 2012.

[37]"The importance of shame in Chinese culture is associated with the dominant social and moral thought of Confucianism. According to Confucian teaching, life's highest purpose is seeking self-perfection, as represented by the concept of ren (仁), which means becoming the most genuine, most sincere and most humane person one can be." Zhang. For a brief on Confucian value on perfectionism, see Ricci W. Fong and Mantak Yuen, "Perfectionism in Chinese Elementary School Students: Validation of the Chinese Adaptive/Maladaptive Perfectionism Scale," *Talent Development & Excellence*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2011): 204, http://www.iratde.org/issue2011/fong_final.pdf (accessed July 20, 2017), and Kenneth T. Wang, Robert B. Slaney, and Kenneth G. Rice, "Perfectionism in Chinese University Students from Taiwan: A Study of Psychological Well-Being and Achievement Motivation," *Personality and Individual Differences* 42 (2007): 1280, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223746424_Perfectionism_in_Chinese_universi t y_students_from_Taiwan_A_study_of_psychological_well-being_and_achievement_ motivation (accessed July 20, 2017).

independence, productivity, success in a job, or stature of a position.[38] If TWDs internalize the Tsinoy standard of external appearance, they will feel ashamed for not measuring up. TWDs, like any PWDs, due to environmental hindrances (and perhaps because of functional inabilities), are unable to participate in the regular work force. Lesser opportunities to work lead to financial difficulty. Less wealth means lower status. The inability to augment family income adds more to the shame, and in this case, adds the shame of uselessness and being a burden. The domino, and cumulative, effect leading to shame can be traced to disability and the adoption of Tsinoy values of seeking perfection.

Additionally, for the Tsinoys, having good progeny is important to perpetuate one's name. To give birth to a congenitally "defective" child thus brings shame. Hence, good genes and reproductive fitness are valued.[39] The daughter-in-law, who would want to bear the prized grandson to continue the paternal line, would be at a loss to face the in-laws who expect, if not a male grandson, at least a *healthy* granddaughter. For Tsinoys who acquire disabilities as adults, the significance attributed to values such as beauty, independence and productivity also apply.

Shame, Disability Shame, and Spirituality

Interestingly, the above explanation of shame, its generation, and some contributing factors to Tsinoy disability shame, show us that ultimately, disability shame is no different from the shame of non-TWDs. Both groups feel shame. The way shame is engendered is also the same—through socialization. The values both TWDs and non-TWDs uphold are not disparate either. What may be dissimilar between these two groups is that TWDs, because of their loss of what society considers normal, can more easily feel deficient and easily develop shame. With the propensity to feel ashamed, TWDs are in a better position to experience Jesus' shame in ways that make them lead the way for non-TWDs. In other words, disability shame of TWDs becomes an opportunity for spiritual growth and even spiritual leadership!

---

[38]Though we cannot generalize, in a collective culture like that of the Chinese, their self-conscious emotion of shame is construed interdependently, in that one views oneself shamefully considering one's relationship to others. Lin and Ng, 52-53, 57-58, 74.

[39]This is the societal value I grew up with. Even now, one rarely sees Tsinoy females with obvious disabilities get married.

Shame in the Book of Hebrews

To nurture spirituality through TWDs' shame experiences, the theme of shame in the Book of Hebrews offers many instructive points. The book is addressed to first century people who lived somewhere in the Mediterranean. In the culture around this area, honor and shame are important values. To suffer shame is a painful affliction, a suffering of no mean intensity. The recipients of the book of Hebrews[40] were reeling under the damaging effects of shame due to their faith in their leader who was shamed, Jesus Christ.

In the time of Jesus, to be nailed to a cross—whether for a Jew, Greek or Roman—was an ultimate disgrace.[41] Primarily done to non-

[40]There are three views regarding who the recipients were: Jewish believers, Gentile believers or a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. For the arguments for Jewish Christians as recipients, see Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 470-472. For the position that the recipients were Gentile Christians, see James Moffatt, *Hebrews: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC, ed. Alfred Plummer (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), xv-xvii. For the argument that the believers were of mixed ethnic backgrounds, see David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic/Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2004), 776-778.

Whether the Christian recipients were Jews or Gentiles or an ethnic mix, we know for sure that they were second generation believers (2:3-4) who lived in the first century. There is no clear clue where they lived exactly. We can safely say that they lived in the Mediterranean area. But based on the first century situation in that area, if the recipients were Jews, even if they had lived in Palestine, they would have had exposure to the Greco-Roman society, culture and perhaps even literature. The recipients were probably well versed in the Hebrew Scripture and could read Greek. This can be gleaned from the author's extensive use of the Hebrew Scripture in terms of allusions and quotations, and in his citation using the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture. Knowledgeable in the Hellenistic Jewish way of interpretation and influenced by Greek philosophy, the author seems to be a Jew who had extensive exposure to Hellenistic thoughts and writings. Ronald E. Clement, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 37, 40 and 40, fn 13, 44. For the recipients' connection with Roman Christianity, see deSilva, 2004, 789. For the proposed date of pre-70 CE, see Achtemeier et al., 472 and deSilva 2004, 788-789.

[41]David Chapman notes that the both the Greco-Roman and Jewish culture viewed the cross as shameful, although shame is mostly implicitly referred to in Jewish literature. *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2, Reihe 244 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 217-219, 253, http://khazarzar.skeptik.net/books/crux01.pdf (accessed June 28, 2017). For the first-century AD pagan Roman writers'—Pliny the Younger and Tacitus—contempt for Christians who worshipped a crucified criminal, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 2-3. Tacitus, in his *Annals* 15.44 reported of Nero's blaming the Christians for the fire that destroy a great part of Rome: "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their

Roman criminals, rebels and slaves, [42] the "sins" themselves should have had caused embarrassment for the offenders. Moreover, to be hung naked in a prolonged, conspicuous place was shameful in itself.[43] For a Jew, the additional connotation of one being cursed by God further fueled the shame.[44]

In Hebrews, the author writes of Jesus dying on the cross, a death penalty meant for lowly criminals, for wrongdoers.[45] It was a humiliating death. Like a typical criminal, Jesus was hung naked in a public place to be shamed. He suffered cruel blows, mocking, and spitting, all which were done in contempt and derision (Heb 13:13[46]).[47] Additionally, the Jews would have considered Jesus, also a Jew, cursed by God. In their eyes, he was an outcast, thus he suffered the shame of rejection (Heb 13:12-13[48]).

---

abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular." Early Christian Writings, http://www.earlychristian writings.com/text/annals.html, (accessed July 1, 2017).

[42]Hengel, 46-63.

[43]Chapman, 70.

[44]For the ancient Jewish witness that the suspension in Deut 21:22-23 refers to crucifixion, see Chapman, 148-149, 173, 176. For the perception of the suspended person as cursed by God as witnessed in the LXX, Old Latin, 11QTemple and *Targum Neofiti*, see Chapman, 176, 216-217, or as one cursing God (=blasphemer), see Chapman, 119-120.

[45]Jesus was accused of blasphemy and of breaking the Sabbath, both of which are considered criminal offenses in the Jewish religious trial courts (Mk 14:63-64; Matt 26:65-66; Jn 5:18).

[46]Ὀνειδισμόν refers to unjustified verbal insult. See Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 2 (New York: United Bible Society, 1989), s.v. 33.389 "ὀνειδίζω, ὀνειδισμός, οῦ."

[47]Matt 26:67; Mk 14:65, 15:19; Matt 27:28-31//Mk 15:17-20; Lk 22:63-65; 23:11.

[48]In Heb 13:12, the juxtaposition of ἔξω τῆς πύλης and ἔπαθεν shows that the shame of rejection was due to Jesus' suffering on the cross. And in Jesus' suffering "outside the gate" the author pictures Jesus excluded from the sacred Temple precinct. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 542. We have already noted that Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer and a Sabbath breaker. For a Jew, Heb 13:12 would have made them recall in their Scripture that one is stoned ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς for cursing or blaspheming God (Lev 24:13-16, 23) and for breaking the Sabbath (Num 15:32-35; cf. Ex 31:14-15, 15; 35:2). Thus Heb 13:12-13 depicts pictures of the rejection of Jesus.

The Shame of the Recipients and Their Potentially Shame-filled Responses

The recipients of Hebrews were not new to their own, and their Christian community's, public exposure to shame (10:33[49]). A major factor that contributed to their devaluation—and therefore shame—before their neighbors and society was their faith in their shamed leader, Jesus Christ. As a result of their identity with this disgraced leader, some among the recipients likewise suffered the public humiliation of being imprisoned like criminals (10:34a; 13:3). To be identified with "bad elements" of society—that is, Jesus and their imprisoned co-believers—would taint these recipients' own reputation, something that they did not want to happen.

In addition, there was the corresponding loss of property—a cause of public scorn[50]—due to their belief in Jesus (10:32-34). Economic downfall was a loss of family honor, for wealth represented family pride.[51] Such losses contributed to the recipients' alienation from the rest of their community. So, like their leader Jesus, the recipients suffered shame as outcasts from their society. In a communal culture, to be ostracized brings about major pain.

By the time the author wrote to them, the recipients had become weary in their multi-faceted struggles of losses and shame. Being ashamed, with their own sense of unworthiness before the community, the recipients were tempted to disengage themselves from the cause of shame: Jesus and other believers. Some of them stopped identifying with other believers, as shown by their failure to meet with them (10:25). In their weariness, in the midst of struggles of shame and rejection, they had become inattentive in receiving God's Word (2:1; 3:7-8, 15; 5:11).[52]

---

[49]In 10:33, θεατριζόμενοι means being made the object of public shame. Louw & Nida, s.v. 25.201 "θεατρίζω." For the meaning of ὀνειδισμοῖς, see fn 46. Louw and Nida (s.v. 33.389 "ὀνειδίζω, ὀνειδισμός, οῦ") translate 10:33 this way: "you were made a public spectacle by insults . . ."

[50]From Lane's (vol. 47B, 299-300) convincing presentation of the parallelism in the chiasm of 10:33a ("sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction") with 10:34b ("and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property"), we see that the loss of property invited public shaming. All quotations in this article are taken from the ESV unless otherwise indicated.

[51]*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VIII, ed. Gerhard Friedrich; trans. & ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 170-171, s.v. "τιμή," by J. Schneider.

[52]Lane names their attitude as "apathetic," "a lack of responsiveness to the gospel and an unwillingness to probe the deeper implications of Christian commitment and to respond with faith and obedience. . . ." William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 137.

In this immaturity in the knowledge of God's Word, they had not grown in their discernment of good and evil (5:11-14). They were even tempted to renounce their belief in Jesus (3:12; 4:1, 11; 6:4-6; 10:26-29), thereby potentially shaming Jesus again (6:6[53]; 10:29[54]).[55]

Enabling Strategies in Hebrews for Dealing with Shame

The author of Hebrews wants to encourage the disheartened shamed recipients. One of the things he does is to turn the recipients' focus on Jesus. He begins by fostering affinity between Jesus and the recipients. Then, he establishes the capacity of Jesus to empathize with what they are going through, after which he discusses Jesus' ability to strengthen them, and finally, he shows the way Jesus handled shame.

The Empathetic Shamed Jesus

The first thing the author does is to emphasize that the shamed Jesus is able to understand, and feel, with the shamed recipients. He did so by drawing the recipients' attention to the intertwined identities of Jesus in 2:10-18.

Jesus suffered shame as a human being

We already said that Jesus suffered shame. And more than just experiencing shame, the Hebrews author highlights that the pre-existent[56] Jesus suffered shame as a human being, an idea that is given

---

[53]In 5:11-6:12, the author warns the recipients against leaving the faith, in which they would act as if they were crucifying Jesus again, and put him to public disgrace (παραδειγματίζοντας) (6:6).

[54]To leave Jesus is to treat him with disdain. Lane, vol. 47B, 295. The NET translates καταπατήσας as contempt, which the author pictured it with the degrading image of trampling Jesus under one's feet.

[55]Peter S. Perry, "Making Fear Personal: Hebrews 5.11-6.12 and the Argument from Shame," *JSNT* 32.1 (2009): 100, reprinted, http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journals Permissions.nav, http://JSNT.sagepub.com, doi: 10.1177/0142064X09339645, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed January 31, 2012).

[56]The divinity of Jesus is also affirmed in this book. See 1:2c-3b; 3:1-6. For Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God, see Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology, reprinted (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 29-35. For the argument of the pre-existence of Christ in 1:7-12, see Victor (Sung Yul) Rhee, "Christology in Hebrews 1:5-14: The Three Stages of Christ's Existence," *JETS* 59/4 (2016): 723-727, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/59/59-4/JETS_59-4_717-29_Rhee.pdf (accessed July 28, 2017); contra Rhee's view that vv 8-9 refer to Christ's exaltation and not to his pre-existence, see Lane, vol. 47A, 30-31.

prominence in this book. Hebrews 2:14a-b explicitly refers to Jesus' humanity when the author writes, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he [that is, Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things [τῶν αὐτῶν]." "Same things" (v 14b) refer to the "flesh and blood" (v 14a), which is an idiom referring to being human.[57] A few verses later, Jesus is said "to be made like his brothers in *every respect*" [author's italics] (v 17). In the previous context of 2:10-18, in vv 6-8, the author, quoting Ps 8:4-6, speaks of Jesus' humanity also.[58] In the subsequent verse, 2:9, the author points to Jesus' suffering of death as a human being for humanity.[59] In other words, Jesus experienced fully whatever human beings experience. Jesus' punishment on the cross was shameful. Jesus felt shame in his suffering as a human being. In fully identifying himself with humanity, this shamed Jesus can empathize with the shamed recipients.

Jesus at the forefront of vicarious suffering shame as male sibling

Aside from underscoring the humanity of Jesus, the author of Hebrews also pictures Jesus as male sibling[60] in God's household or family. Although the book of Hebrews does not explicitly name Jesus as brother in God's family, the book uses familial language in portraying Jesus.[61]

---

[57]For the meaning of "flesh and blood," see Louw & Nida, s.v. 9.14 "σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα." For the different meanings of "flesh and blood," see Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, eds. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), s.v. "Body," under "The Body of Bone, Flesh and Blood," 105; "share" (κεκοινώνηκεν) and "partook" (μετέσχεν) do not share the same Greek root but they are "virtually synonymous". Lane, vol. 47A, 61.

[58]"Man" and "son of man" are parallels. See Lane, vol. 47A, 48. "Son of man" can mean a typical human being, or the Messiah who is "the true, typical, authentic and representative human being." N. T. Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 15. Wright (15) supports this latter meaning based on the quote from Ps.110:1 in Heb 1:13. According to him, the author presents Jesus as the Messiah and True Human Being in order to show both Jesus' present position as the exalted Lord (2:7-8) and his future role in the new heaven and the new earth.

[59]"Who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus," (2:9a) means Jesus' "temporary abasement" as a human being. Lane, vol. 47A, 49.

[60]Wright and Patrick Gray propose that Jesus is the older brother of the recipients. Wright, 19. Patrick Gray, "Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology of Hebrews," *JBL* 122, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 338-340. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 6, 2017). Gray (336-337) believes that the author of Hebrews is familiar with the topic of sibling relationships in Hellenistic literature, particularly Plutarch's essay, "On Brotherly Love."

[61]See Gray, 338.

In 2:10-18 we find familial images. Sibling language is found in the word ἀδελφός in 2:11b, 12a and 17a.[62] In 2:13-14, the word παιδία, referring to the children of God, falls within the same familial semantic domain. The father image is found in 2:11.[63] In addition to 2:10-18, the father-son image in 1:5, son-household/family picture in 3:6, and household image in 10:21 support the family metaphors in this book.[64]

As Jesus' suffering death is tied to his being human, this suffering is likewise attached to his male image. The description of Jesus as the ἀρχηγός of salvation is in 2:10, the context in which the brother image of Jesus permeates (see above). As ἀρχηγός, this male sibling "blazed the trail of salvation along."[65] He opened up the way to salvation, and it was done through his suffering of death (vv 10b, 14). In other words, this brother Jesus did not merely feel for the sufferings of humanity, he even led the way in suffering the uncharted place of death. And the death was on behalf of his siblings,[66] with whom he was not embarrassed to be identified (2:11)! He was thus at the forefront of suffering for the shamed recipients with whom he fully identified.

In the male-dominated Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures, the male sibling takes up leadership in the family.[67] Likewise, in this spiritual

---

[62]The figurative use of the word brother (and sister) in Hebrews is also found in the Hebrew Scripture. For example, Hos. 2:1.

[63]In 2:11a, the comparatively literal translation "all have one source" in the ESV is dynamically translated as "all have on Father" in the NRSV. That Jesus and his siblings (2:11a, 'those who are sanctified") have the same Father is supported by the sibling image in 2:11b ("that is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.").

[64]πατήρ and υἱός in 1:5; υἱός and οἶκος in 3:6; and οἶκος in 10:21. For the meaning of οἶκος as a metonymy for members forming one family or household, see Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), s.v. 3624. "οἶκος," Accordance 10.4.5 (accessed July 5, 2017).

[65]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 80. Louw & Nida suggest that the significance of ἀρχηγός can be reflected in this translation: "who established a way of salvation and lead people to it," s.v. 36.6 "ἀρχηγός." That leadership is the predominant idea in 2:10, see R. J. McKelvey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 21, https://www.amazon. com/Pioneer-Priest-Christ-Epistle-Hebrews/dp/1610978617/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1501400875&sr=8-1&keywords=mckelvey+pioneer+and+priest (accessed July 30, 2017).

[66]The language for the beneficiaries of Jesus' death moved from the more generic to the specific. In v 9, Jesus died for "everyone," which is qualified as "many sons" in v 10, and is further qualified as Jesus' brothers in v 11. These were those who approached God through Jesus (7:25).

[67]In Gen 34:1-31, Simeon and Levi murdered all the Hivite males because the Hivite prince Shechem raped Simeon and Levi's sister Dinah. In 2 Sam 13:1-33, Amnon raped and did not marry his virgin half-sister Tamar, disgracing her further (Deut 22:28-29). Absalom, as the brother of Tamar, took her into his protective care and avenged on behalf of Tamar's shame by murdering Amnon.

community of the recipients, Jesus is indirectly upheld as a male member who is in the lead, especially in suffering on behalf of his shamed brothers and sisters, with whom he is in solidarity. The significance of his being male, and his suffering death, will be played out further in the next section.

In summary, the recipients received the encouragement in 2:10-18 that this Jesus, whom they were following, can empathize with them in their suffering and shame because, as a human being and brother, he is able to fully identify with them in their suffering. As a human being and brother, he suffered death and shame, not only ahead of his clan, he also he suffered on their behalf!

The Empowering Shamed Jesus

Jesus our high priest

The Hebrews author discusses brother Jesus' substitutionary shameful suffering in 2:10-18. He expands the idea of substitutionary suffering in the subsequent parts of his letter (4:14-6:20; 7:1-28; and 8:1-10:18) in order to further encourage the shamed recipients. In addition to the sibling metaphor in 2:10-18, the author juxtaposes the high priest metaphor in the same passage.[68] One focal feature of this human-brother Jesus' vicarious suffering is his appointment as eternal high priest for the reason that he met all the criteria for high priest.

A high priest acts for people before God. He has to first purify himself and sacrifice for his own sins, then he can offer sacrifices for sins on behalf of the people (5:1b, 3; 7:27). He can be sympathetic and understanding because he, being human, is weak (5:2; 7:28). He cannot assign himself this position, with its corresponding functions, but has to be appointed (5:1a, 4). Jesus fulfilled all these requirements.

Jesus is compassionate because he knew what it meant to be weak as a human being. Like any human being, he was tempted (4:15b; cf. 2:18). Yet he learned through his suffering what obedience means (5:8). In his weaknesses, he knew he needed God his Father. His authentic humanity found expression in the necessity of his dependence on God. In anguish, he trusted in God and prayed to him.[69] He understood the struggles that shamed people undergo in the midst of suffering. Hence

[68]Gray, 335-336.

[69]The petition of Jesus in 5:7 could either be to save him from death or to raise him up after his death. The latter must be Jesus' trusting prayer, for in 2:9-10, 14, the author talks about the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death (also see 9:15). Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 288.

4:15a says of Jesus, "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses."

Jesus also offered a sacrifice before God. It was not any animal but he, himself (9:11-14, 26b)! It was his own blood that he offered before God (9:12, 14). This was a one-time, unrepeatable, (7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14) mediating death which cleanses an individual's conscience (9:14; 10:22), purges sin (9:26),[70] appeases God's wrath, and thus reconciles people to God (2:17[71]).[72]

The sacrifice needed to be unblemished (Leviticus, passim). Jesus, as the sacrificial offering, stayed sinless in spite of sufferings. Throughout his earthly life and sufferings, he obeyed God's will (10:9a, 10) and remained morally pure (4:15b; 7:26; 9:14). So, Jesus himself fulfilled the condition of an unblemished sacrifice.

In mediating between people and God by offering his unblemished self, and with his human experiences of weaknesses (which enabled him to understand people's plight), Jesus earned the credentials to be appointed as the high priest (5:5-10). As high priest, he represents his siblings to bring their concerns to God (9:24). Since he lives forever, and holds this position permanently (7:25),[73] his intercession is effectual.

The shamed recipients had been feeling weary and exhausted in following the shamed Jesus (12:5, 12[74]). Their endurance was faltering. There was a sense of weakness and powerlessness. Now in their spiritually immature and weakened state, they were tempted to reject Jesus. The ever-present high priest, Jesus, is always available through his intercessions, to empower them[75] so that they would not disgrace Jesus. They only needed to confidently approach this enabling, and empowering, Jesus (4:16; also see 10:19, 22).

---

[70]See Lev 16 on the annual Day of Atonement when the high priest offers sacrifices for himself and for Israel to purify the sins of Israel.

[71]For the meaning of propitiation in 2:17, see *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Development*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s.v. "Death of Jesus," 276. For a thorough study of this word, see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 144-213.

[72]In the author's mind, the background for the self-sacrifice of Jesus is the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16). The author selects elements of this annual ritual to argue that Jesus is the efficacious atoning sacrifice. Lindars, 91-94.

[73]For the appointment of Jesus in the order of Melchizedek and is thus a permanent high priesthood (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-28), see Lindars, 72-79.

[74]Παρειμένας χεῖρας ["drooping hand"] and παραλελυμένα γόνατα ["weak knees"] (v 12) are images of exhaustion and discouragement. Lane, vol. 47B, 427.

[75]I surmise that Jesus would empower them to endure the shame (see 12:1-3 below), which, based on 13:20-21, is part of fulfilling God's will.

Emulating the Shamed Jesus

To summarize, the author of Hebrews presents an empathetic, empowering, and shamed Jesus to spur on the discouraged recipients, so that they may avoid further shaming Jesus. But the author does not stop here. In 12:1-3, the author shows the three-pronged response of Jesus to the disgrace of crucifixion, and explicitly urges the shamed recipients to imitate Jesus. The three-pronged response—acknowledging the shame of the crucifixion, yet devaluing its shame, and enduring it by acting on the basis of faith—is expounded below.

Jesus acknowledged that crucifixion itself is shameful

Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus despised the shame of the cross. It is essential to note that Jesus did not deny that the cross is shameful. According to Hebrews' author, Jesus called the cross a shame (αἰσχύνης[76]). Jesus acknowledged, and accepted, what the people of his time considered shameful. He was sensitive to the fact that the cross—reserved for wrongdoers—was shameful, and he felt it keenly. There was no stoic repression of shame.[77]

Jesus devalued his society's significance of crucifixion shame but upheld God's values

While accepting the shame connected to crucifixion, Jesus took on another attitude regarding the disgraceful cross. The author emphasized the attitude of disdain or scorn,[78] a feeling born out of the view that something is valueless.[79] Jesus was able to reject society's view of dying on the cross as shameful because he reinterpreted the disgrace of the cross as honorable.[80] For a Jew, God's evaluation at the last judgment is

[76]Literally "the shame of it," "it" referring to the cross.

[77]deSilva, 1994, 445-446.

[78]καταφρονήσας means "to feel contempt for someone or something because it is thought to be bad or without value." Louw & Nida, s.v. 88.192 "καταφρονέω." NET translates καταφρονήσας as "disregarding," while NIV translates it as "scorning," a stronger word which fits more what the author puts forth.

[79]Using first-century Stoic/Cynic views and Jewish martyrdom literature on shame and opinion of those people that count, deSilva (1994, 446) argues that this means that Christ "considered valueless" the disgraceful reputation that dying on the cross would bring him before the Greco-Roman society.

[80]See deSilva, 1994, 456-457.

the basis for evaluation of what is honorable or disgraceful.[81] Based on what the Hebrews' author writes, we see that Jesus, like the other minority Jews, valued what God values.[82]

God values purity.[83] Jesus lived a sinless life as a human being, even though he was tempted; he did not do anything wrong that warranted the penalty of crucifixion (4:15; 7:26-27). He did not do anything wrong to shame God.

God values obedience. It was God's will that Jesus become a human being and die on behalf of those whom he would save (2:10, 17). We have already noted that Jesus became a human being and offered his body in one unrepeatable, vicarious, sacrificial death. This showed that Jesus valued what God wanted; he wanted, and yielded to, God's will and purpose (10:5-10, esp. vv 7 and 9). In his obedience to God, in which he suffered death (5:8[84]), God honored him with the high priestly status (5:9-10, see above; 2:7, 9).[85] So, although Jesus had endured a shameful punishment, he did not need to be ashamed, for even in the disgraceful death, it was an honorable act of purity and obedience to God.

Jesus endured suffering and shame by acting on the basis of faith

Jesus trail blazed the way to salvation (2:10). He also led the way in terms of managing shameful suffering. How? He acted on the basis of faith (12:2[86]). Faith refers essentially to "a moral quality of firmness, fidelity, and reliability."[87] It is the foundation of confidence in what is

---

[81]Citing Jewish intertestamental literature (Wis 2:19-20; 5:4-6; 2 Macc 6:19, 26, 31; 4 Macc 6:9-10; 11:2-6; 17:4-5), de Silva (1994, 443-445) shows that for the Jews, God is the standard "court of reputation" at the last judgment.

[82]In cultural anthropology terms, minority members must be moved to disregard "the opinion of the disapproving majority" and must uphold the values and opinion of one with higher reputation within their own group. "Both Greco-Roman philosophers and Jewish authors routinely point to the opinion of God as a support for a minority culture's values. Both admonish group members to remain committed to the group's values, for that is what God looks for and honors in a person." *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 521, s.v. "Honor and Shame," by David A. deSilva.

[83]In 10:22 believers are to draw near to God with hearts cleansed.

[84]ἔμαθεν and ἔπαθεν are play of words in 5:8. The word ἔπαθεν, from πάσχω, is always connected to the death of Christ in this book (2:9-10; 9:26; 13:12). Lane, vol. 47A, 122.

[85]More of God honoring Jesus below in "Reaping Honor for Doing the Honorable."

[86]Lindars (111) interprets faith as a dative of manner, meaning one acts on the basis of faith. This is contrary to the understanding of faith as instrumental, meaning one acts by means of faith.

[87]Lindars, 109.

hoped for, in the unseen.[88] It acts "as though they [the unseen] were present and visible."[89] Faith thus acts confidently and enables one to grasp, and see, in the present what is unapparent yet real.[90] The faith that Jesus had enabled him to obey God to take up the cross, to bear[91] its shameful suffering. Faith gave him the confidence that the unseen and future joy was his as though it were present. The future joy refers to the joy of eschatological celebration (2:12)[92] that is appropriate for one's vindication and exaltation.[93]

Shamed Recipients were to Emulate Jesus

Hebrews exhorts the recipients to "ponder" (ἀναλογίσασθε[94]) (12:3) on this shamed Jesus. They were "to keep thinking about" (αφορῶντες[95]) (12:2) Jesus and they were not to allow anything to distract their attention from him. In their shame-tainted struggles, they were to center their thoughts on him who endured, not just the dying on the cross and the enmity that went with it, but also the accompanying shame.

This focused attention on Jesus was so that they might in their struggles emulate Jesus—their empathetic human brother/leader, their empowering high priest—attitudinally and behaviorally. They were to acknowledge that they felt shamed because their neighbors and society shamed them. They were to "despise" this shame by not attributing significance to their society's view of what consisted of shame. Furthermore, they were to proactively react to shame by embracing what is honorable in God's sight, and to act on that with faith. What is

[88]Lindars, 111.

[89]Lindars, 111.

[90]In Heb 11, the author holds up OT saints and alludes to the Intertestamental Maccabeans and prophets in the apocryphal *The Lives of the Prophets* (Lindars, 110 and 110 fn 111). These ancients of the Jews were society's rejects. Yet acting on faith, they were able to "see" the "yet to be seen," the heavenly city which was promised, which is to come and is to be rewarded in the future (v 16). This list led up to the leading model, Jesus.

[91]In v. 2, to endure means to "bear . . . a degrading experience." Lane, WBC 47B, 415.

[92]Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 154-155.

[93]Lane, WBC 47A, 60.

[94]Thayer, s.v. 357 "ἀναλογίζομαι," Accordance 10.4.5 (accessed July 13, 2017).

[95]Louw & Nida, s.v. 30.31 "ἀποβλέπω, ἀφοράω."

honorable is striving after virtues as suggested in vv 12-17.[96] By implication, if they did not act in faith, they were in danger of rejecting Jesus, and that would be shaming Jesus again (12:18-29).[97] Thus, the remedy to shame is to uphold honorable attitudes and behavior.

Solidarity with the Shamed

Familial, fraternal, and household metaphors abound in the letter to the Hebrews. Both Jesus and the recipients belonged to the household of God (3:6; 10:21). They were all brothers and sisters. To be siblings "means that they participate in the true family of God and so must act accordingly."[98] To be siblings is to be part of one another (see 3:14). This includes embracing each other's disgrace. Brother-high priest Jesus unashamedly identified himself with the shamed sibling-recipients. They, too, were to unashamedly bear his disgrace (3:14; 13:13).

Jesus did not abandon his siblings, but instead, lived and died for them, thereby incurring shame. In the same way, the recipients were not to disown their Christian siblings, including Jesus. Rather, they were to continue fellowshipping with fellow believers (10:25). Even under pressure, they were to continue to be present for their abused, and shamed, brothers and sisters as they had done so before (10:33b-34a), and were still doing (6:10).

Thus, the author's empowering strategy in handling shame was to push the recipients to do the honorable thing. They were not to abandon the shamed Jesus, and to be in solidarity with both him and their shamed siblings.

Reaping Honor for Doing the Honorable

To reiterate, in Jesus' life on earth, he accepted that dying on the cross in itself is shameful, from the point of view of the Romans, Greeks and Jews. But Jesus also knew that his dying on the cross, which was willed by God, and made him a victim of injustice, was not shameful. In fact, from God's point of view, he knew he honored God in sacrificing

---

[96]Lindars (113-114) points out additionally that faith "consists in the will to 'run with perseverance the race that is set before us' (verse 1). This suggests a positive striving after virtue" which are suggested in vv 12-17.

[97]See fn 53. Scattered throughout the book, the author calls to the recipients' mind their ancestors' negative role models of disobedience as warnings (2:2 in 2:1-4; 3:7-11, 16-19 & 4:2-5 in 3:7-4:13; 10:28-29 in 10:26-31; 12:25 in 12:18-29). 4:2 and 6:12, which are in the warning passages, and 10:38-39 imply the significant role of faith in following Jesus.

[98]*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. "Family," 268.

his life on behalf of his siblings! Jesus knew who had the definitive say as to what is honorable and what is shameful.

As a result of choosing the honorable path designated by God, Jesus eventually reaped honor. Interspersed throughout Hebrews, we read about God exalting Jesus. His status is above the angels (1:9[99]; 2:5-9) and above Moses (3:3). He was assigned the prestigious position, and function, of high priesthood, above that of the Levitical priesthood. His esteemed high priesthood was considered "great" (4:14). Forever he is ministering at God's right hand, a supreme, honorable, and powerful position (1:13; 8:1-2; 10:12-13; 12:2). The temporal earthly shame paled in comparison with all these honors.

The implied message was that doing the honorable, results in honor. This was an indirect encouragement for the recipients to choose the honorable, which is to persist in following Jesus. In the end, this determination would be repaid with honor (2:10).

The Shamed Jesus for the Spirituality of the Shamed Tsinoys with Disabilities

How can TWDs, with their disability shame, use the lessons learned from Hebrews to shape their spirituality, that is, their relationship with their inner self, God and others? Before we delve into the matter of fostering spirituality through disability shame, we should look into how being disabled can draw one closer to the shamed Jesus, both for PWDs in general, and for TWDs in particular.

The Advantages of Shamed Tsinoys with Disability in Relation to the Shamed Jesus

Sufferings push us to reframe life's perspectives. It reminds us of our frailties. It sharpens the way we see things. It clarifies the essentials from the non-essentials. Disability experiences, a kind of suffering, impel us to reflect on, and rethink about life, relationships, and priorities. Disability shame, which is a disability experience, provides an opening to think through values, attitudes and behavior.

Disability shame creates opportunities to relate to the shamed Jesus bidirectionally. Jesus experienced authentic human shame.[100] Because

[99]For the differing views regarding whether v 9 refers to Jesus' pre-existence with God or exaltation, see fn 56.

[100]The cause of the shame of Jesus is different from those of PWDs though. Jesus experienced shame because he chose to follow God's will. PWDs suffer shame due to circumstances they would never have chosen for themselves. Nevertheless, shame is shame. Jesus would have the same negative "I-am-no-good" and painful feelings as those of PWDs.

Jesus fully felt what shame was like, he understood what it meant to be humiliated and rejected, so he can empathize with those experiencing shame. PWDs can draw deep comfort from knowing that Jesus' empathy for them, and their disability shame, is real, coming from his own personal experience of shame. At the same time, PWDs, more than those who do not suffer from disability shame, are able to empathize with Jesus' shame affliction. Being touched by the empathy of Jesus and touching Jesus' pain, draws PWDs closer to Jesus' heart. Increasing intimacy with Jesus means deepening spirituality.

TWDs have two religious and cultural experiences that are advantageous in developing an affinity with the ostracized Jesus. Most Tsinoy families still practice patriarchy set up like their ancestors from China. In this male-centered structure, the son plays a central leadership role in the family. He is responsible for the family's concerns and needs. When the father becomes incapacitated or passes away, the son who is of age (usually the eldest) takes over family decisions. Jesus is male in the family of God. That he took the lead and suffered ahead of his siblings speak much about his care for this household of God. TWDs, and their family members, through their patriarchal experiences, find it easier to relate to the protective and loving leadership of Jesus, and hence foster trust in him. They can develop confidence in the effective way Jesus handled shame, learn from him, depend on him, and hence grow spiritually.

Tsinoys live in the only Christian nation in Asia. They are among Christians who consist of at least 90%[101] of the 100.57 million people in the Philippines.[102] Also, 90% of the Tsinoys claim to be Christians.[103]

---

[101]In 2010, when the population of the Philippines was 93.3M, Christianity consists of 93%. These numbers are based on the study made by the US-based Pew Research Center. "Philippines Still Top Christian Country in Asia, 5th in the World," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Dec. 21, 2011, http://globalnation.inquirer.net/21233/philippines-still-top-christian-country-in-asia-5th-in-world (accessed July 18, 2017).

[102]This 2015 census of population is the most updated. "Population and Housing," Philippine Statistics Authority, https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/census/population-and-housing (accessed July 4, 2017). Based on the UN estimate, the population of the Philippines as of July 11, 2017 is 103,827,341, Worldometers, Philippine Population (Live), http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/philippines-population/ (accessed July 11, 2017).

[103]See footnote 33. The 2010 Christian affiliation by number can be found in Table 5.11 "Household Population by Religious Affiliation and by Sex: 2010," in *Demography: Philippine Yearbook 2013*, https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2013%20PY_ Demography.pdf (accessed July 11, 2017). Some of the Christian affiliation & their population are as follow: Roman Catholics, 74,211,896M; Evangelicals (under the Philippine Council of Evangelical Church) 2,469,957M; Iglesia ni Cristo, 2,251,941M; National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1,071,686M; Bible Baptist Church, 480,409; United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 449,028; Other Protestants, 287,734; Other Baptists, 154,686.

Tsinoy evangelical Christians, a group among Tsinoy Christians, generally believe that the prayers of pastors are more powerful than their own. So, they have a penchant for requesting pastors to lead prayers, forgetting about the priesthood of believers. How does this lopsided erroneous thinking help develop an affinity for the ostracized Jesus? TWD believers, with their trust in the effective prayers of pastors, can approach the Ultimate Pastor, the high priest Jesus. This high priest/pastor, who has passed through shame experiences, can conjure a comforting picture of an effectual mediator. Jesus, the understanding mediator, intercedes on behalf of TWDs, and brings their pain and shame to the Father, hence empowering TWDs in their spiritual walk.

So, found in one person is this Jesus who is not only for the TWDs and their families, the trustworthy male sibling who protectively leads, but he is also the greatest mediator who strengthens them. What a combination of positions and roles. As our role model and Jesus empowers TWDs to resolve disability shame!

Resolving Disability Shame: Learn from, and Lean on, Jesus

One prevailing measure of success in society is overcoming disabilities.[104] PWDs endeavor to fit into the nondisabled world, to measure up and even to fare better than the able bodied. Influenced by the Tsinoy's perfectionist tendency, TWDs may be even more pressured to excel. For example, a person who is blind may overcome his/her disadvantages by finishing a Master's Degree with honor. This triumphant manner of dealing with disability is praiseworthy. But the notion that achievement can erase one's disability is misleading. The "success" accorded by society for feats in the midst of disability challenges can help assuage, and even erase, the sense of shame. But the "achievement approach" to help ease disability shame is not viable for every TWD, since disability experiences vary extensively. So, it is not possible for all TWDs to overcome their disabilities, and correspondingly, their disability shame.

I propose a way of facing shame that is doable for most TWDs: Learn from, and lean on, Jesus. All of life should be one of following Jesus and depending on him. If we TWDs are able to healthily exert effort to overcome our disability, we are to do so, not with our limited wisdom nor with our insufficient strength, but with all energy and focus

[104]Steven E. Brown, *Movie Stars and Sensuous Scars: Essays on the Journey from Disability Shame to Disability Pride*, People with Disabilities Press Series, ed. Stanley D. Klein (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc, 2003), 71, http://www/google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7DL9mfh8ygQC&01=fnd&pg=PR13&dq=shame (accessed April 9, 2011).

on Jesus, our brother-priest/pastor. Jesus has already extended compassionate mercy towards our pain of shame. We take a further step to emulate how he faced shame and to garner strength from him.

Disability is Shameful. Let Us Face It!

Jesus acknowledged that his punishment, and the accompanying hostilities, was shameful in themselves. We too, are to recognize that the Tsinoy society considers disabilities as not normal, and therefore, are shameful. Both the socially imposed shame, and the internally developed shame, of TWDs have to be acknowledged and embraced before shame can be dealt with. We have to face the truth that disabilities can make us feel ashamed.

Discern between Real and False Shame

Shame—a means for harmony and a deterrent against disorder—can be beneficial in any group. How can TWDs respond to disability shame without undermining the reality and healthy aspects of shame?

Jesus knew that his Greco-Roman and Jewish world attributed shame to the cross. Yet, he saw the difference between this socially imposed shame and the shame that resulted from his choice to obey God. So, we, the TWDs are likewise to distinguish between real shame and false shame.

Real shame is God-sanctioned. Real shame comes from committing immorality. It is what is shameful in God's eyes. False shame stems from cultural values, attitudes and behavior that are not the same as God-sanctioned causes of disgrace. It stems from not living up to the cultural standard of success, status, and beauty. This false shame imposed on TWDs is unnecessary shame. And TWDs do not have to adhere to expectations that lead to unhealthy shame.

Real shame, according to Hebrews, occurs when one is not attentive to God's Word. It is not listening to Jesus, the Ultimate Message. It is not clinging hard to him, especially when it is most difficult to do so. It is abandoning him. These are real shame, which dishonors God. We TWDs are not to commit such dishonoring shame, but are to live according to God's Word. We must appreciate his grace, look up to Jesus, listen to him intently, and follow him devotedly and whole-heartedly, especially when the going gets hard.

Disability shame is not moral shame. How we react to our disability shame may spell moral shame. For example, if we, because of shame, lash out in bitter anger against people around us, then this detrimental anger distances us from people and displeases God. So, instead of

reacting sinfully because of disability shame, we can redirect our focus to learning the difference between real and false shame. By choosing Jesus, TWDs honor God and find healing from false and needless shame. When our baffled mind cannot think through what is honoring and dishonoring to God, when our fragile soul is unable to choose what honors God, the empowering priest-pastor steps in as our ever-present help.

Act with Jesus' Faith to Persevere through Disability and Its Shame

Acting on faith, Jesus was able to obey God and persevere through his crucifixion pain and shame. He trusted that the joy of vindication and exaltation would be his eventually. And his trust was rewarded.

Living with a disability—whether temporarily or for a lifetime—entails many challenges. It is no fun at all. We TWDs are to remember how Jesus acted with faith in order endure shame experiences, insults, put downs, and rejection. On the basis of this same faith, we TWDs bear disability and disability shame. On this same faith, we look forward to the future life of glory and honor (2:10). If we struggle with faith, there is the empowering Jesus to run to.

Be Empowered by the Priest/Pastor Jesus

Having disabilities help us recognize our inabilities and limitations. In our weakness, we are often forced to seek help. Sometimes TWDs seek help from the wrong people. When the going gets too difficult, then it is the best time to hang on tight to Jesus, our priest/pastor. By ourselves, we are unable to differentiate real from false shame. By ourselves, we would not be able to live with faith, believing that if we honor God, he will honor us. We TWDs can confidently seek the intercession of Jesus, our ever-living mediator before our Father. We trust that Jesus will grant us fortitude and tenacity in dealing with disability and disability shame.

Move from Disability Shame to Solidarity with the Shamed

TWDs who are managing their challenges and disability shame, because of their own spiritual walk with Christ through their shame, can come alongside those experiencing shame.

Some TWDs are ashamed to associate with other PWDs. Being with other PWDs somehow heightens one's disability identity and brings to the fore one's own shame feelings. Jesus is different. He fully identified with his shamed siblings. The shamed believers in Hebrews are exhorted

to walk with their shamed brothers and sisters. So, we TWDs need to be courageous and identify ourselves with other PWDs.

The fact is, all human beings experience, and suffer, shame. Shame is a universal experience. The sense of shame not exclusive to PWDs/TWDs. So, we TWDs, with our disability shame experiences, have the privilege to befriend non-disabled who are imprisoned in their shame. Our experiences of shame, and its ramifications, hopefully will have moved us to experience the empathy of Jesus. Thus, we will be sensitive, and compassionate, towards those who feel ashamed, including the non-disabled. And our spiritual growth through disability shame hopefully becomes models for the able-bodied in their walk with the Lord.

Disability Shame: Birthplace[105] of Spiritual Leadership!

Disability, with its shame, has an adverse impact in the lives of TWDs. But disability shame does not have to be lived through negatively. TWDs, with their shame, are afforded opportunities to savor the empathy of Jesus, to feel his sufferings, to emulate his valuation and responses to shame, and to be empowered by him. Ultimately the message is about using disability shame to appropriate Jesus' shame to nurture one's spirituality. It is about nurturing spirituality *via* disability shame. With this maturing spirituality, TWDs can henceforth lead those **without** disabilities in their own responses to shame. Disability shame, when placed in the hands of the shamed Jesus, can be a birthplace of spiritual leadership.

[105]Brené Brown, "The Power of Vulnerability," in TED, transcript at 12:29 minute, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability/transcript?language=en (accessed March 11, 2017).