

Honor All Men – For Real?

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17).

This appears to intimate a very important principle, that there is a respect due to every human being, and that it is our duty to cherish that respect and act accordingly. Can that be?

Depraved man:

What is the testimony of Him who knows what is in man? Every **imagination of the thoughts of his heart (is) only evil continually.** (Genesis 6:5). **They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. . . . They are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.** (Psalm 14:1, 3).

Here is a listing for you from Romans 1:29-31 – **Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection implacable, unmerciful[.]** Taking a look at just one of these – “despiteful” – Haldane tells us that word connotes *lacerating others by slanderous, abusive, passionate declarations. * * * This vice aims at attaching disgrace to its object; even in the injuries it commits on the body, it designs chiefly to wound the mind. It well applies to*

hootings, hissings, and pelting of a mob, in which, even when the most dignified persons are the object of attack, there is some mixture of contempt. That should sound familiar to you that are here today.

The prophet Jeremiah exclaimed that the human **heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?** (Jeremiah 17:9). Not to be outdone, the prophet Isaiah adds: **From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.** (Isaiah 1:6).

In his letter to the **beloved of God, called to be saints** in Rome (Romans 1:7) the Apostle Paul wrote concerning mankind: **Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known[.]** (Romans 3:13-17). Attest today's social media and the Confederate officer's letter to any Union soldier.

In that same epistle, Paul refers to the Jews' **hardness and impenitent heart.** (Romans 2:5). Haldane says this language signifies *the inflexible perversity of sinners* and denotes *an inclination to wickedness so strong and so rooted, that it has entire possession of the man and of all the powers of the soul, without his being able to undeceive himself, and to turn to God.*

This is what man has been since the fall, and is to this day. Yet we are to honor them? The foundation of any claim to such honor cannot possibly consist of their moral state as exemplified in their conduct as so described. Anybody in their right mind would view such with disapprobation and contempt on account of its wickedness.

So what does it mean when we are told we should honor all men? Are we to honor all men due to mankind's original state wherein he possessed a spiritual, rational, responsible and immortal nature superior to irrational animated beings or other inanimate matter that makes up the universe? These faculties form the native nobility of every human, and to think, and feel and act towards every human being as possessed of this nobility is to honor all men. Stated another way, recognizing that man was created by God with a conscience, a spirit, a soul, an intellect who, though fallen, is capable of pristine glory if one of God's chosen is, to some extent, honoring all men.

Were this honoring habitually undertaken, there would be no slavery, no murder, no wars, and so on. Would so many rich men have oppressed their poorer brethren, ground their faces and despised their cause? Would so many rulers have wrested judgment and crushed those whom they should have protected? Would so many kings and princes have spilled as if a sport the blood of millions and made the murder of mankind a game? Would so many tyrants have trampled on the neck of weaker nations? Stop to think what must be in the human mind to justify those crimes. Obviously, that

thinking is as far away from honoring your fellow man as the east is from the west.

Reverence for man is the great security for property, liberty and life; and just views of man, as a responsible and immortal being, are the foundation of this reverence. So, in this regard, the direction to honor all men is exceedingly wholesome. And, to some extent, this seems to capture the meaning of honoring all men. But methinks it falls short of the primary meaning of this admonition.

Christ honors all men:

God, the fountain of true honor -- the best judge of what is to be honored -- honors all men. He has honored them in making them in the possession of those capacities I just discussed. The eighth Psalm is striking proof that God honors men. Hear this from the Psalmist: **When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor, thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet[.]** (Psalm 8:3-6; see also Hebrews 2:6-8).

In the place God has assigned man among his creatures on this earth, and in the arrangements of his providences, he takes kind notice of the whole race. He makes his sun to shine and his rain to

descend on them all. (Matthew 5:25). God has **sealed up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.** (Job 37:7).

For reasons known only to himself, but most sufficient, God shows a respect to men which he did not show to angels. When men ruined themselves at the fall, he was kind to them. **But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared.** (Titus 3:4). He was gracious to them, and said **[d]eliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.** (Job 33:24). And their deliverer sent by him was not an angel, not the highest of angels, but his own Son. And God's deliverance is not a deliverance for men of particular nation or particular ranks, but for men of every rank, every nation, Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, male and female, bond and free. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11).

And Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of God, honors man. He has taken into union with his divinity man's nature. He never so honored angels. The Word of life **was made flesh, and dwelt among us.** (John 1:14). Moreover, forasmuch **then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same[.]** (Hebrews 2:14).

The Son of man - flesh - sits **on the right hand of the power of God.** (Luke 22:69). The man Jesus Christ **is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.** (1 Peter 3:22). He was **taken up to heaven.** (Acts 1:2). The two men **in white apparel . . . also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same**

Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:10, 11). And this: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name[.] (Philippians 2:9).

1 Timothy Chapter 3, verse 16 is more support for the proposition that Jesus was taken up to heaven as flesh: **And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.** Consider also Ephesians 1:20-21 in this context: **Which he (i.e. God of our Lord Jesus Christ) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come[.]**

Today, at the very throne of the universe, the Son of man is glorified. (John 12:23). Jesus answered the high priest straight on: **Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. (Matthew 26:64). The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (Psalm 110:1). But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (man/flesh) for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9). And finally, this persuasive saying from Acts 17:31 - **Because he hath****

appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Human nature has become adorable as the true Shekinah, the everlasting palace of the supreme Majesty, wherein the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily - the most holy shrine of the Divinity, the orb of inaccessible light - as this, and more than all this, if more could be expressed, or, if we could explain that text, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' (Isaac Barrow).

Christ has dignified our humanity by assuming it; therefore we should not dishonor, but be considerate to and honor our common humanity, even in the very humblest. (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

Dishonoring man dishonors his maker (God):

Therefore, it seems obvious that we cannot treat disrespectfully or contumeliously (rude; arrogant; insolent; with contempt) any human being without dishonoring God and his Son. No lesser person than Solomon, driven by the Holy Spirit, confirms this when he, in sundry places, interprets acts of oppressing, mocking or otherwise despising our neighbors as being a reflection upon God leading to the contempt and dishonor of their Maker. **He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor.** (Proverbs 14:31). **Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth**

his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.
(Proverbs 17:5).

This simple directive - honor all men - is easy to utter but difficult to fully comprehend. As I have suggested, it is counterintuitive to the doctrine of total depravity. But like all portions of God's word, it is important to us and worth our energies in grasping. To conclude these efforts, I give you a brief portion of John Brown's observations from his extensive work on 1 Peter:

*There is indeed something revoltingly unnatural, something inconceivably mean and base, something grotesquely absurd, in a human being regarding with contempt any other human being. Surely the man who treats any man as a mean contemptible creature, should in a double sense be ashamed of himself; for what is HE but a man? **
** * * **

Few things are better fitted at once to stimulate and to guide in such noble enterprises, than enlightened, impressive views of the true grandeur of human nature. While humbled to the dust with the overwhelming evidence, without us, within us, and around us, of the fearful degradation of human nature by sin, let us never forget what that nature was when God made it, what it is still capable of, what it still is when God makes it anew on earth, what it will be when he completes the work of transformation in heaven. Human nature was a stately beautiful fabric as God reared it. It is majestic even in ruins, exciting in every right constituted mind awe as well as sorrow. As its desolations are repaired by the plastic powers of the divine Spirit,

symmetry and beauty are seen developing themselves; and when, in the heaven of heavens, man stands forth, nearest of all created beings to Him who sits on the right hand of the Divine Majesty, bearing the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, then will it be felt by all intelligent beings, that human nature is indeed one of the 'chief of the works of God' one of the most wonderful results of divine wisdom and power and love.

Indeed, we must honor all men. **Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.** (Romans 13:7). If we don't, we implicitly reject the depths of the total depravity doctrine, we overlook the fact that Christ himself honors mankind by taking on his very flesh, and we cast contempt on God himself, man's maker.

Honor; not worship:

None of this is to say we should worship mankind, the creature. We are to honor; not worship.

The original word in the Greek for "honor" in our text means to fix the value, revere, venerate. "Venerate" means to regard with great respect. "Revere" means to feel deep respect or admiration for something. These definitions fairly describe how we should look upon God's great creation - man.

That's far removed from worshipping the creation. **Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.** (Romans

1:25). The original word in the Greek for “worshipped” in this passage means “to fear, be afraid.”

For more understanding on “worship”, consider John 4:23-24: **But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.** The Greek word translated “worship” in that text means to kiss the hand, kneeling to do homage or make obeisance, to make supplication. This is behavior due God, not man.

So while we are duty-bound to honor all mankind, out of full respect for that creation of God, we simultaneously are required not to fear man but to fear (worship) God, the creator. **But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.** (Luke 12:5). Well may we say with Nehemiah, **[I]t is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?** (Nehemiah 5:9) or with Jeremiah, **Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.** (Jeremiah 10:6, 7).

Stated otherwise, worship God – not man. We worship God when we fear God, as also enjoined in our text. When scripture

instructs us to fear God the meaning is we are to cherish and maintain an awful sense of his infinite grandeur and excellence, corresponding to the revelation he has made of those attributes in his works and word, inducing a conviction in us that his favor is the greatest of all blessings, and his disapprobation or displeasure is the greatest of all evils. When we so fear God, we seek his favor as the chief good we can enjoy, and we avoid his disapproval as the most tremendous evil we can be subjected to.

Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen. (1 Peter 5:14).