

David F. Watson (2010). *Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret.* Minneapolis: Fortress. See RBL reviews by Adam Winn (08/2011) and Jonathan A. Draper (10/2011).

Chapter 1. Watson examines the language and function of secrecy in the ancient world, demonstrating that neither plays a prominent role in the Markan “secrecy” passages. Hence Watson prefers to speak of the language of “concealment” rather than secrecy. Watson thus subverts and refutes Wrede’s classic study, showing that secrecy is peripheral to Mark’s main concerns. Jesus does not consistently conceal his miraculous healings but rather heals many publicly without any exhortation to caution. Rather Mark’s Jesus rejects the patron-broker-client values and practices of the ancient world, by which honor is ascribed and acquired.

Chapter 2. Watson analyzes five Markan “concealment” passages, utilizing the lens of the honor and shame value system, where Jesus resists *merited* honor (Mk 1:40-45; 5:21-24, 35-43; 7:31-37; 8:22-26). Thus, in the leper’s healing (1:40-45) Jesus acts as a kind patron with the leper as his client and the honor due is resisted with the command for silence. Watson then considers texts where Jesus resists *ascribed* honor expressed in honorific titles (Mk 1:23-28, 34; 3:12), which would have called for required reciprocation on Jesus’ part. Thus, in silencing the demon Jesus is not trying to keep secret his identity but rather resisting honor.

Chapter 3. Watson argues that Jesus does not reject the honor/shame system *in toto* but rather offers **a new vision of what is honorable and shameful**, substituting new markers (such as service, suffering, self-sacrifice and crucifixion) to replace the traditional ones (acts of power, benefaction, honorific titles). Relevant texts include the passion predictions (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33) and teaching on discipleship (8:34-38; 9:33-36; 10:13-16, 29-31, 35-45), where honor is due to the least, the suffering and servants, while the great and the powerful should be ashamed.

Chapters 4-5. Watson examines the many “publicity” texts, where Jesus’ honor is displayed but not concealed, in conflict/contradiction with the concealment texts, which Watson accepts as common in ancient literature. **Conclusion:** Watson argues that persecuted Christians in the ostracized Markan community would have been cut off from the honor of the wider culture. A Christian might be shamed by this culture but such shame actually brings honor in God’s eyes and those of one’s new fictive/metaphorical family/kinship group with its new values. This constitutes a “deconstruction of conventional notions of honor and shame and the construction of an alternative social universe” (Draper review). See, similarly, Paul in Romans 1:24-27, etc.