

Frontier Theologizing

# From Mozambique to Millennials: Shame, Frontier Peoples, and the Search for Open Atonement Paths

by Alan B. Howell and Logan T. Thompson

*“Sharing about how Jesus paid my sin debt with God won’t connect with them at all.”*

The realization that concepts of sin and guilt do not resonate strongly with our African neighbors marked the beginning of an important shift in my (Alan’s) thinking. Our mission team arrived in Mozambique in 2003 with the goal of encouraging a church-planting movement among the Makua-Metto people, a people group whose religious identity has been predominantly shaped by Islam and Animism. Because of their lack of exposure to the Bible, we initially used a chronological storytelling method to prepare the way for people to hear the story of Jesus. In those first villages, however, I was unsure of what path to take to talk about the atoning work of Christ in ways that made sense to rural Mozambicans. I remember one of them saying, “We hear this story you are telling us—but why is Jesus’ death so important?”

Rather than sin and guilt, they most desire a way to deal with fear and evil. I learned that Jesus as “Christus Victor”—seeing him as the Lord who defeated Satan and the demonic powers—was the message that best connects with a Makua-Metto audience.<sup>1</sup> That understanding changed me personally as I journeyed into a more robust picture of Christ’s work on the cross, recognizing that Jesus did not simply address our sin problem with his death, but he also addressed humanity’s other big enemies: Satan and Death itself.

In this article, we will begin by looking at how these three enemies of ours and how their corresponding emotional motivators fit with certain atonement metaphors. Because of globalization and other significant shifts within cultures, Christians who want to meaningfully engage their world must possess greater competency in multiple atonement theories. We will then show how recapitulation and theosis themes create open paths for explaining the meaning of the work of Christ in both the shame-influenced cultures of the Makua-Metto of Mozambique and in the culture of American youth.<sup>2</sup> Along the way, we will

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also briefly explore how competency in a variety of different atonement metaphors provides a more holistic, integrated, and ancient understanding of the doctrine.

***Guilt, Shame, and Fear: How Culture Shapes Atonement Perspectives***

Eugene Nida observes that there are three different types of cultures, each with its own “reactions to transgressions of religiously sanctioned codes: fear, shame, and guilt.”<sup>3</sup> Jayson Georges expands on this distinction to divide the world into three primary types of societies. See our chart below (figure 1).

- **Guilt-Innocence:** “individualistic societies (mostly Western), where people who break the laws are guilty and seek justice or forgiveness to rectify a wrong”
- **Shame-Honor:** “collectivistic cultures (common in the East), where people shamed for not fulfilling group expectations seek to restore their honor before the community”
- **Fear-Power:** “animistic contexts (typically tribal or African), where people afraid of evil and harm pursue power over the spirit world through magical rituals”<sup>4</sup>

Georges recognizes that cultures are “a blend of guilt, shame and fear,” but that most every culture has a single, primary orientation.<sup>5</sup> In order to communicate effectively in Mozambique, I (Alan) had to intentionally set aside the guilt palette<sup>6</sup> (the color set I grew up with in North America) and become comfortable teaching the message of Christ with themes and vocabulary that would

connect with our African friends who grew up in a fear-based culture. That does not imply, however, that I should completely jettison any language of guilt and shame. Even though each culture has a primary orientation, they are all still a hybrid of guilt, shame, and fear. Therefore, in order to communicate the gospel effectively, ministers will need to experiment and learn how to shape the message properly to help it resonate with their particular culture’s unique mixture.

These three categories correspond with different enemies facing humanity: Guilt-Sin, Shame-Death, Fear-Satan & Evil Forces. This unholy trio appears together in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3) and remains humanity’s antagonists throughout the story until the Creator finally brings them to an end (Rev. 20).<sup>8</sup> 1 John 3 shows how God, in Christ, addresses all three of these enemies.<sup>9</sup> So, Jesus’ death and resurrection saves us in three dimensions, not just one; Christ’s atonement effectively addresses our past, present, and future.<sup>10</sup>

As ministers present the story of Jesus in their contexts, they need to adapt the message to address the primary and secondary problems in that setting. Furthermore, cultures are not static; because of shifts and changes over time, they are moving targets. I (Logan) believe that American culture is shifting from a guilt-based to a more shame- and fear-influenced society. I (Alan) have come to realize that while fear is the primary motivator in Makua-Metto culture, the language of shame and honor is relevant as well and should shape the presentation of the atonement in Mozambique. In both of our ministry contexts, we have seen the

need for increased competency with multiple atonement metaphors. We foresee the forces of globalization resulting in one of two outcomes in cultures around the world. First, cultures may become more complex as they incorporate other colors into their palette, becoming more “three-dimensional.” Second, and adversely, cultures may retreat back into “their own corner” and become more entrenched in their primary color. Regardless of the outcome, all Christians would benefit from being prepared to walk down different presentation paths in order to speak effectively about the atonement.

***Recapitulation, Theosis, and Athanasius: How Christ Addresses Shame and Death***

One model for understanding the atonement that we may be less familiar with (and one that historically has greatly influenced the Eastern Church) is called “recapitulation.” In recapitulation, Adam is the lens through which we see Jesus. Christ undoes death by becoming the second Adam and rising again.<sup>11</sup> By identifying with humanity in the incarnation,

Christ recapitulated, or “summed up in himself,” all of humanity, so that what humanity had lost in Adam (the perfect image of God) could be recovered in himself.<sup>12</sup>

Athanasius (Bishop of Alexandria) argued that

the Word takes on a human body capable of death so that he could die for all and enable all to be saved from corruption by the grace of the resurrection. By participation in his death and life, humanity has overcome death and received incorruption.<sup>13</sup>

*Figure 1. Cultural Orientations and Atonement Approaches*

Problem	Response (Culture Type)	Time Dimension	Atonement Approach
Sin	Guilt-Innocence	Past	Penal Substitution
Satan and Evil	Fear-Power	Present	Christus Victor
Death	Shame-Honor	Future	Recapitulation/Theosis <sup>7</sup>

The “companion doctrine” of recapitulation is known as theosis.<sup>14</sup> Theologians have defined theosis in a variety of ways,<sup>15</sup> but simply put, it refers to the process of human beings becoming like God.<sup>16</sup> Although he never uses the term, Athanasius is traditionally considered the champion of theosis. For him, recapitulation is “more or less taken over” by the doctrine of theosis.<sup>17</sup> He takes the thinking of Irenaeus further by stating, “[Christ] became man that we might be made God.”<sup>18</sup> Pugh, commenting on Athanasius, writes,

So then, Christ travels the path of the first Adam, with whom all humankind has been walking in inescapable solidarity. But Christ’s solidarity with Adam is transformative. By being obedient where Adam was disobedient, Christ opens up a new kind of solidarity, releases a “new ferment” into human nature. This new solidarity is forged by the Spirit through whom, out of their union with the new head of humanity, Christ’s image is imprinted on his people so that they begin to live his resurrected life.<sup>19</sup>

Athanasius describes humanity’s root problem (why recapitulation is necessary for theosis) as ultimately related to *death* and *shame*. Athanasius’s most famous quote—“God became man so that man might become God”—is surrounded by comments about both the enemy (the problem) and the emotion (the response) associated with it. This is an important, early example of the connection between recapitulation/theosis and shame/death.

As, then, he who desires to see God Who by nature is invisible and not to be beheld, may yet perceive and know Him through His works, so too let him who does not see Christ with his understanding at least consider Him in His bodily works and test whether they be of man or God. If they be of man, then let him scoff; but if they be of God, let him not mock at things which are no fit subject for scorn, but rather let him recognize the fact and marvel that things divine have been revealed to us by such humble means, *that through*

## **A** *thanasius’s path of theosis and recapitulation is well-suited for traditionally Eastern cultures where honor/shame is linked to death.*

*death deathlessness has been made known to us, and through the Incarnation of the Word the Mind whence all things proceed has been declared, and its Agent and Ordainer, the Word of God Himself. He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God. He manifested Himself by means of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality.* (emphasis mine)<sup>20</sup>

Athanasius’s approach outlines a path for theosis and recapitulation thinking that is well-suited for traditionally Eastern cultures where honor/shame is the primary issue and linked to the problem of death.<sup>21</sup> But this path for presenting the atonement also has value in other cultures where shame<sup>22</sup> is a less often recognized but nonetheless a powerful motivator.

In the following sections we will explore how the doctrines of recapitulation and theosis connect with shame/death elements in the frontier cultures of Mozambicans and Millennials. Since the language of “path” resonates with both American youth and the Animistic Makua-Metto people, that will be the frame we will use in our application sections for those contexts.

### ***Walking the Recapitulation/Theosis Path in Mozambique: Shame and the “Death Rituals”***

I (Alan) have found that fear is the primary motivator for the Makua-Metto people, but the rhetoric of shame also plays an important role.<sup>23</sup> The phrase *woona ihaya* shows up regularly in everyday language and literally means to “see shame.” Two key values of the Makua Metto people are *dependency* and *conformity*, and the language of shame is used to reinforce these values. This shaming speech is especially prevalent in what I group together as the

three major “death rituals” in Makua-Metto culture: funerals, initiations, and (for Christians) baptisms.

“Many cultures intuitively associate . . . death with shame.”<sup>24</sup> And to understand the strong link between them in our Mozambican context, one must appreciate that death is “up close and personal.” Death is a part of everyday life and is not relegated to nursing homes, hospitals, or funeral parlors. People die in their homes if possible and want to be buried in their villages.<sup>25</sup> Funeral rituals and ceremonies among the Makua-Metto people are the main (or only) mechanism for grieving. In this context, both churches and mosques function like burial societies.<sup>26</sup> Funerals are significant for a number of reasons: Funerals bring honor;<sup>27</sup> Funerals change status;<sup>28</sup> Funerals have serious religious significance.<sup>29</sup> Worth noting here, however, are five aspects of how the concept of shame is woven through the preparations for burial and the funeral itself.

1. When news of a death is sent out and family and neighbors gather together, women will cry and tell the story of the death as a “wail song” inside the house, but men are *not* to cry. If a friend, relative, or neighbor does not go “to cry” and participate in the funeral activities, it is shameful, insulting, and seen as suspicious.<sup>30</sup>
2. The head of the family or king is in charge but typically does everything by consultation and in close collaboration with religious leaders. His task is to make sure the burial proceeds in a way that shame for the deceased and their family will be avoided.
3. While the grave is being dug, others prepare the body for burial by washing the body, drying it, and dressing the deceased in

their nicest clothes. There is a lot of discussion during these activities in order to make sure they are carried out in such a way that will not bring shame.

4. At the gravesite a small number of men will climb down into the grave. A sheet is extended over them so that their work of positioning the body will not be seen.
5. Traditionally, there are other funerary rituals on the third and fortieth day after the burial that involve beautifying the gravesite, and weak participation by the community is seen as shameful.

These are just a few of the connections between shame and the rituals surrounding death and burial in Makua-Metto culture. I have found that 2 Tim. 1:8–10, a passage that highlights the connection between shame and death, is a powerful preaching text for graveside sermons.<sup>31</sup> Verse 8 references the concepts of shame and suffering,<sup>32</sup> and the following verse talks about how God saves people not by merit but by mercy and grace (a helpful corrective to the popular presentation of following Islam's pillars in this context). Then in verse 10, we hear Paul's assertion that Christ saves us through his destruction of the weapon of death that Satan wields against us. This passage and its recapitulation/theosis themes have provided a helpful way of addressing the concepts of shame and death.

The funeral ritual in the Makua-Metto context is naturally the one most associated with shame and death, but it should be noted that shame language also appears at initiation and baptism. Makua-Metto adolescents (both boys and girls) traditionally go through an initiation ceremony around the time of puberty, and shame is woven through the rhetoric of that ritual. Initiates are instructed on how to live once their old way of life (childhood) is put to death and are exhorted—even shamed—into not going back to that former way of life. One of the harshest insults in the Makua-Metto language is to shame

an adult male who is acting immature by calling him *luukhu* (which means “uncircumcised” or “uninitiated”).

Since initiations are an important part of Makua-Metto culture, they are the most natural frame in which to present the concept of baptism. As a “death ritual” where the initiated buries his or her old life, it should not be surprising that the Makua-Metto use language of shame to instruct believers in the way they should now live and challenge those who have forgotten to walk that path. Beck's comments on the place of baptism fit well within this understanding:

Baptism is a renunciation of Satan, sin and the evil powers at work in our hearts and minds. But many have a



thin view of what this renunciation looks like—we tend to think of it as an act of willpower, as simply resisting cravings and temptations. [But]... the problem is much deeper and more pervasive. Sin... is less about hedonic *craving* than it is about our *slavery* and *bondage*. The issue isn't *temptation* as much as it is *identity* and how we ground our sense of self-definition and self-worth. So... our baptismal renunciations are less focused on willpower (i.e., saying “no” to temptation) and more concerned with a deep reconfiguration of our personhoods.<sup>33</sup>

Claiming our identity as baptized people who have passed through a “death ritual” into a new state of personhood allows Makua-Metto believers to respond differently to the

shame of death by following the path walked by Christ (recapitulation) and find their place in the life of God in his Kingdom (theosis).

### *Walking the Recapitulation/Theosis Path with Millennials: Shame and Social Media*

A defining development of the millennial generation<sup>34</sup> was the technological boom of the 1990s and 2000s and the rise of social media. The rapid development of millennials' adolescence was paralleled by the rapid advance in communication technology, particularly the internet and cellular phones.<sup>35</sup> It was during this time that using portable communication devices and staying connected to others online was no longer “seen as a subcultural practice [but instead] became normative.”<sup>36</sup> The rise of the internet, personal cell phone use, and social media has played a significant role in shifting the traditionally guilt-based worldview of the West to a more shame-based one, especially for those under the age of 30—a shift that continues with the youngest generation today.

Language is a primary indicator of cultural shifts. Georges provides vocabulary lists for the three dimensions of culture—guilt, shame, and fear—and even a cursory comparison yields great insight. Words associated with *guilt* include: rules, debt, judge, personal, penalty, pardon, commands, and sacrifice.<sup>37</sup> Words associated with *shame* include: worthy, identity, approval, face, inclusion, public, community, humiliation, and acceptance.<sup>38</sup> The latter set resonates much more than the former within the hearts of millennials whose participation in networked communities is an integral part of their daily lives. Learning how to avoid and address shame is of utmost importance for today's teenagers who strive to create impressive public profiles on Facebook, who quantify their self-worth by counting their “followers” on Twitter and Instagram, and who, at the end of the day, are simply “passionate about finding their place in society.”<sup>39</sup>

Establishing meaningful friendships and becoming part of a wider community is not a new phenomenon: it forms a vital component of any person's social well-being, no matter his or her age, and it is particularly important for the coming-of-age process. Boyd observes that for teenagers

social acceptance depends on the ability to socialize with one's peers at the "cool" place. Each cohort of teens has a different space that it decides is cool. It used to be the mall, but [now], social network sites... are the cool places.... Social media has enabled them to participate in and help create... *networked publics*. (emphasis hers)<sup>40</sup>

These communities, however, form in the midst of a larger culture that is almost entirely individualistic. The West (and particularly the United States) has placed heavy emphasis on the personal accomplishments of the individual, not on the achievements of society as a whole (e.g., climbing the corporate ladder).<sup>41</sup> The rise of social media and the increasing influence of networked publics, however, have brought communal dynamics closer to the forefront of the Western worldview, especially for millennials. According to Georges and Baker,

When social reputation is the basic foundation of life and identity, people's pursuit of respect, honor and status frames every facet of life.<sup>42</sup>

In short, the social change caused by the technological boom of the last twenty-five years is driving Western culture toward becoming more shame-based. As this cultural shift from guilt to shame relocates and reemphasizes a sense of emptiness, those who minister to millennials must become conversant in how the Gospel addresses the shame that they feel.

Guilt and shame are typical emotions experienced as a result of transgressions, especially those against the social or moral expectations of a community.<sup>43</sup> But, practically speaking, does shame function in a significantly different way

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than guilt? A recent study sought to investigate the effects of both guilt and shame on individuals, as well as how those two emotions did or did not motivate these individuals to change their lives.<sup>44</sup> Researchers found that the difference between guilt and shame is that guilt "arises when a person focuses on what specifically he or she did wrong," while shame "has a more dispositional focus in which people attend to negative aspects of the self."<sup>45</sup> That is, guilt can promote external change; whereas shame, at its best, calls for internal transformation.<sup>46</sup> Lickel et al. conclude that shame "is an important motivator of a desire to change oneself for the better"<sup>47</sup> and that it can "elicit stronger desire for lasting self-change than guilt."<sup>48</sup>

Having observed the cultural shift taking place in the millennial generation, it is clear that these findings are invaluable for those who minister to young people in the West today. Preaching and teaching the Gospel using guilt-based language and metaphor no longer connects like they once did for individuals in the West. The heart language of younger generations is now that of shame and our presentations of the gospel must reflect that shift, especially if shame has the potential to be a better catalyst for self-change than guilt. Pugh argues that recalibrating the way we preach and teach the atonement to highlight recapitulation and theosis could be helpful in reaching younger generations in North America. He writes:

When we speak of Christ's work to eighteen- to thirty-year-olds, it seems we should accent the representative corporate Christ as the hero of the piece and, perhaps, soft-pedal the substitutionary sin-bearer.... We should talk of the bigger picture of a new people of God reflecting his image into the world, and not harp on about the fulfillment of individual needs that we all

once found so compelling. Simply telling the story of the cross is as appealing to this generation as the previous one, but when we come to interpret and apply the story, it seems we should un-learn some of the familiar language and try a different emphasis.<sup>49</sup>

Christ's work on the cross is not only about changing external behaviors that cause guilt before God (though that is important). It is ultimately about transforming individuals more and more into the image of Christ through their union with him in his body, the church. The psychological and theological findings outlined above show that this latter aim of the Gospel—which will undoubtedly accomplish the former can best be achieved in members of the emergent shame-based culture through recapitulation and theosis.

When I present the significance of the Gospel to the teenagers in our congregation, my go-to text is the book of Romans. Many Christians consider the book of Romans—with its lengthy discussions on human culpability for sin (1:18–32; 3:22–23), justification (3:24–25; 5:1–9, 18–21), the law and grace (4:13–15; 6:13–14; 7:1–25; 8:2), and the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice (5:10–11; 6:1–4; 8:1, 34–39)—to be a robust presentation of a guilt-based Gospel.<sup>50</sup> But is this all there is to Paul's letter? Romans may not be a "compendium of Christian doctrine," but Gorman argues that there is more than meets the eye to this epistle, calling it "the first Christian treatise on *theosis*."<sup>51</sup> He writes,

The West's fixation on sin and guilt has sometimes hampered us from seeing how central to Paul's anthropology and soteriology are the themes of glory, life, and immortality—both their absence in Adam and their restored presence in Christ.<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned above, both recapitulation and theosis affirm that Christ redeems humanity by walking the path of Adam, who represents all of humanity. This idea is seen most clearly in Rom. 5:12–21. So, Christ’s work does not stop at justifying human beings and removing their guilt. Paul goes on to write in chapter eight, the concluding chapter to “the most majestic set piece [he] ever wrote,”<sup>53</sup> that through Jesus’ recapitulation, believers have received “adoption,” making them “children of God” and “fellow heirs with Christ” who will one day “be glorified with him” (vv. 15–17). All along, this was the final aim of the atonement. Paul writes in vv. 29–30,

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Through Christ’s recapitulation, believers now walk the same path, replacing their shame with his glory by becoming more and more like him.<sup>54</sup>

Although the West has experienced a recent shift from a guilt-based to a more shame-based context for teenagers, employing the metaphor of “life as a path” in order to cultivate spiritual growth in the lives of adolescents is nothing new. The language of this metaphor—seen repeatedly both in recapitulation and theosis—goes back to church fathers like Athanasius and Irenaeus, as well as the apostle Paul. Yet even they were not the first of God’s people to use the path metaphor as they taught and encouraged others along life’s journey. As Fox observes, this is the primary metaphor<sup>55</sup> used by the implied speaker in Prov. 1–9, a father whose “ostensive audience [is] a youth who is nearing adulthood and must choose his course of life.”<sup>56</sup> This is made clear in chapter two: if the son treasures up his father’s words (v. 2), he “will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous” (v. 20). What is true of teenagers today was true for adolescents

in the days of the sages as well. The decisions individuals make during their transition from childhood to adulthood have a lasting effect on the rest of their lives, and many of the paths available to them will surely lead to shame—both personal and public. It is ancient wisdom, repeated throughout the history of Israel and the church, that those who minister to adolescents are speaking to individuals who face a life-or-death decision.

Teenagers in all times and cultures need a guide who will point them toward the path that leads to life. But more than that, adolescents need to know that someone has walked this path before them, someone who has done so without guilt, fear, or shame and empowers them to do the same. This is none other than



Jesus Christ. Continuing the wisdom tradition of ancient Israel, Jesus also used path language in order to call his disciples to follow his lead.<sup>57</sup> By encouraging millennials to choose Jesus’ path of recapitulation and theosis, we are speaking to them about the atonement in a way that directly addresses the shame that they feel, pointing them toward the abundant life to be found in God’s Kingdom.

### ***Conclusion: Converging Paths and Atonement Metaphors***

From what we have explored above, one might gain the impression that all Christians, regardless of their particular cultural contexts, should stop speaking about fear and guilt with those in their

communities and instead speak only of shame and the salvation Jesus provides through the path of recapitulation and theosis. But that would miss the point. Instead, the more robust take-away is this: the resurgence of these Orthodox atonement theories are timely, given the inroads that the church is making among the Makua-Metto and the shifting heart language of millennials in the West; however, we must also remember that what God has done in Christ is much more than recapitulation or theosis alone can describe.

Like a mighty river that diverges into many smaller streams as it courses through a valley, the way that Christians have described the redemptive work of the one true Lord throughout history spreads in different directions as the Gospel traverses the vast, diverse terrains of human cultures. Human beings need these divergent streams because they contextualize the salvation event into specific times and places. But to focus exclusively on one stream can cause us to lose sight of the whole picture. A mature perspective on the atonement, therefore, holds on to an awareness of how atonement metaphors emerged from a common source and a knowledge that, in following them downstream, we can see how they converge again.

The ways that Christians speak about the atonement will no doubt be shaded by the heart language of the culture in which they find themselves—guilt, shame, or fear. Although people in various cultures may primarily recognize the need for Christ to deal with only one of these effects of sin, that does not mean that they do not need Jesus’ saving power to redeem them from the other two. Those in guilt- or fear-based cultures still need Jesus to bring them out of the shame of death, and those who have a fuller awareness of their shame do not live without the weight of guilt and fear upon their lives. In the midst of a rapidly-changing world where cultures have increasing influence on one another, missionaries, youth ministers,

and indeed all Christians must be willing to explore other paths of the atonement that may not be tinted with the particular hues with which they are most familiar. Through an awareness of cultural shifts and a fluency in other heart languages, Christians will be able to present the Gospel in such a way that allows those of all cultures to connect to its message and begin walking the true path to human flourishing, new life in Christ. **IJFM**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I argue that the Christus Victor metaphor helps contextualize presentations of the Atonement among the Makua-Metto people and is the one that best resonates with Animists in Howell, “Through the Kaleidoscope: Animism, Contextualization and the Atonement,” *IJFM* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2009).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the article we will use the following definitions of these doctrines. Recapitulation—the work of Christ to become the new head or captain of humanity. Theosis—the process of human beings becoming like God. We are certainly aware that recapitulation and theosis are much broader theological concepts with wider implications than addressing merely the atonement. But, for ease of use and clarity in this article we will use those terms as a shorthand to talk about their implications for the atonement.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 150. This idea was expanded by Roland Muller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures* (Timē Press, 2014), 10–11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Muller uses this idea of the color palette effectively. One can think of the three types “like the three basic colors from which artists create thousands of colors. How much of each color is used determines the final type of color that emerges” (14).

<sup>7</sup> With this chart we do not want to give the impression that the various atonement approaches are limited to a specific time dimension. This is merely to help us see that certain metaphors are better suited for different contexts (e.g., Recapitulation also suggests that Jesus has redeemed the shame of Adam’s past). Also, we are focusing on “objective” presentations of the atonement and we recognize that while the Moral Influence approach

can be helpful, it is outside the scope of this article. Weaver refers to Moral Influence as a subjective approach: “Jesus died as a demonstration of God’s love. And the change that results from that loving death is not in God but in the subjective consciousness of the sinners, who repent and cease their rebellion against God...It is this psychological or subjective influence worked on the mind of the sinner...” that brings about change. J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 18.

<sup>8</sup> Hendrix notes that, for Martin Luther, “Humanity was ruled by sin, death, and the devil—Luther’s unholy triumvirate—and their rule would persist, in Luther’s eyes, until the gospel weakened their hold and faith set people free.” Scott H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 83.

<sup>9</sup> In 1 John 3, we are told that Christ “appeared in order to take away sins” (v.5); that the “reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (v. 8); and that Christ’s love and example has facilitated our passing “out of death into life” (v. 14–16). Direct quotations from Scripture in this article will come from the ESV.

<sup>10</sup> One helpful way to think about this is to picture oneself in the driver’s seat of a car. Sin is in the rear-view mirror and Christ’s atonement deals with one’s guilt in the past. But the effects of Christ’s work exceed the forgiveness of sins—Christ also addresses Satan’s efforts to work evil in one’s current surroundings (present with you in the car). And finally, Christ also deals with the death we will experience down the road. A serious problem in guilt-based societies (like North American cultures) that focus on sin is that that perspective provides such a limited view. To use our car metaphor again, it is incredibly difficult to drive by looking primarily in the rearview mirror!

<sup>11</sup> Variations of this view “appear in the tradition of the Greek Fathers from Irenaeus (120–203) to John of Damascus (c. 675–c. 749).” Recapitulation terms and images occur in “Origen (185–254), Athanasius (296–373), Basil the Great (329–379), Cyril of Alexandria (376–444), Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315–386), Gregory of Nazianzus (325–389), Gregory of Nyssa (?–386), and John Chrysostom (c. 347–407).” R. Larry Shelton, *Cross & Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission* (Tyrona, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 165.

<sup>12</sup> Shelton, 162. Orthodox theologian David Bentley Hart defines recapitulation as “the restoration of the human image in Christ, the eternal image of the Father after whom humanity was created in the beginning...the

recovery of a concrete form...the restoration of an original beauty”; in David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 318.

<sup>13</sup> Shelton, 160.

<sup>14</sup> Ben Pugh, *Atonement Theories: A Way through the Maze* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 31. Although most modern Westerners are unfamiliar with the doctrine, Pugh notes, “It seems likely that something very like theosis was held to by a number of (early, pre-Schism) Western thinkers using different designations for it” (33). Theosis themes are found in the NT in John 10:34, 2 Cor. 5:21, and 2 Pet. 1:4.

<sup>15</sup> “[Christ] became what we are in order to make us what he is himself.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5, Preface); “Christ becomes what we are, that we through his death may become what he is” (Wilhelm Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis [London: Green, 1907], 110); “[Christ] became like human beings, so that we would be like him,” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 4 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001], 285); “Christ became what we are—*adam*—in order that we might share in what he is—namely the true image of God,” [Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 19]. See also Michael J. Gorman, “Romans: The First Christian Treatise on Theosis,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5.1 (2011): 13–14, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Russell describes theosis as “our restoration as persons to integrity and wholeness by participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit, in a process which is initiated in this world...and finds ultimate fulfillment in our union with the Father” [Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis*, Foundation Series, bk. 5 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009), 21]. The first person to use the term was Gregory of Nazianzus in 363 (*Oration* 4.71; see Russell, 22).

<sup>17</sup> Pugh, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise – De Incarnatione Verbi Dei by St. Athanasius*, trans. and ed. A. Religious of C. S. M. V. with an introduction by C. S. Lewis (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003, originally published 1944), p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> Pugh, 33.

<sup>20</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 54. In section 9, Athanasius beautifully connects honor/shame themes to the way Christ deals with the problem of death.

<sup>21</sup> In talking about the story of Adam and the Fall, Georges and Baker note,

“Death is the ultimate shame; humans return back to the lowly dust they come from.” Jayson Georges and Mark Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 69. One example of the connection between honor/shame and death in Scripture is from the story of the Philippian jailor who is stopped by Paul in his attempts to reclaim his honor and deal with his shame through killing himself (Acts 16). An example from eastern cultures in more recent times is that of a Japanese warrior who through a ritual death can deal with his shame and reclaim his honor. Jackson Wu uses this type of framework to argue that we could speak of Christ’s work on the cross as an “honor death,” not an “honor killing” as Jesus sacrificed himself for the sake of God’s honor (and ours). Jackson Wu, *Saving God’s Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena, CA: WCIU Press, 2012). In personal conversations with Gary Jackson, a longtime missionary in Russia and China, he noted that while this remains true in other Eastern societies (Japan, Taiwan and the Middle East), Chinese culture actually seems to be shifting away from honor and shame to a greater emphasis on guilt.

<sup>22</sup> In its broadest terms, shame simply means that others “think lowly of you and do not want to be with you” (Georges and Baker, 42). We will unpack the meaning of shame for Mozambicans and Millennials in the following sections.

<sup>23</sup> While fear and shame play a strong role, guilt is not a major motivator. There’s not a unique word for guilt in the Makua-Metto language (only derivatives of the word for sin or lie), so to even talk about that concept, people end up borrowing the word from Portuguese (Mozambique’s national language).

<sup>24</sup> Georges and Baker, 177. This connection between shame and death is also found throughout Scripture; see 1 Sam. 20:30–32; Job 11:13–20; Ps. 83:17; 89:45–49; Isa. 65:13–16; Jer. 9:19–21; 20:18; Ezek. 7:15–18; 32:24, 25, 30; Rom. 1:26–32; 6:21; Phil. 1:20; 3:19; 2 Tim. 1:8–12; Heb. 2:9–15; 12:2.

<sup>25</sup> Life expectancy in Mozambique is 51 years while the USA averages almost 79 years. Malaria and diarrhea are everyday realities (and people are very familiar with cholera, AIDS, tuberculosis, etc.). Although Mozambique has seen economic improvement in recent years, over 80% of the population still live on less than \$2 a day. In 2013, Mozambique was #178 out of 187 on the UN’s Human Development Index (Haiti and Afghanistan ranked #168 and #169 respectively). For

more on Poverty in Mozambique see, Howell “Recognizing Poverty Rules: Addressing the Causes and Patterns of Absolute Poverty Among the Makua-Metto People,” *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 6, no. 2 (August 2015).

<sup>26</sup> If a religious group does not bury people well, it will suffer the same fate as its adherents . . . it will not survive. For more on the funeral as a powerful time for the church to be a blessing, see: Howell, “Building a Better Bridge: The Quest for Blessing in an African Folk Islamic Context,” *IJFM* 32, no. 1 (Jan–Mar 2015), 50.

<sup>27</sup> At Christian funerals, it is often commented that “the day of death is better than the day of birth” (Eccl. 7:1).

<sup>28</sup> As my friend and missionary teammate, Chad Westerholm, has observed: “While a Westerner may view a funeral as a mere burial, to an African it is a major event where roles are radically altered.” They move from one type of status within the community to another.

<sup>29</sup> Both formal and folk religions provide answers to death, but the questions are different. Formal religion addresses where the dead have gone. Folk religions deal with questions of death that confront the living. Paul Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw and Tite Tié-nou, *Understanding Folk Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 78.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., “Could it be that the absent person was ashamed to come because they used witchcraft to murder the deceased?”

<sup>31</sup> Although it may seem strange to Westerners, our Makua-Metto friends think it is very appropriate for the funeral sermon at the burial site to be an evangelistic one. There is a captive, quiet audience, (remember the uninitiated are not allowed to be present so there are no crying or talking children) and we are standing around a powerful, visible sermon illustration of our own mortality.

<sup>32</sup> For more on “suffering” language in the Makua-Metto context see Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering” *IJFM* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Richard Beck, *The Slavery of Death* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 81.

<sup>34</sup> This generation, also known as “Generation Y,” is the demographic cohort born between the early 1980’s and the early 2000’s. One of the significant aspects of my (Logan) ministry is that I am a part of the same generation as those to whom I minister.

<sup>35</sup> Danah Boyd, *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Georges, 58.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Boyd, 8.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> According to Georges, Western philosophy has explained “a person’s essence apart from their relationships or community. Consequently, Western civilization dismisses communal dynamics (i.e., honor, shame, and face) in favor of guilt, innocence, and justice” (19).

<sup>42</sup> Georges and Baker, 15. For scientific evidence, see Naomi Eisenberger and Matthew Liberman, “Why it Hurts to be Left Out: The Neurocognitive Overlap Between Physical Pain and Social Pain,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8, no. 7 (2004): 294–300.

<sup>43</sup> Brian Lickel, Kostadin Kushlev, Victoria Savalei, Shashi Matta, and Toni Schmader “Shame and the Motivation to Change the Self,” *Emotion* 14, no. 6 (2014): 1050.

<sup>44</sup> Lickel et al., 1049–61. It is worth noting that the median age for their study was 20 years, and is particularly representative of millennials.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Examples of external reparations as a response to feeling guilt include apologizing for, attempting to fix, or trying to undo the social or moral transgression; internal reparations as a response to shame may include somehow distancing oneself from a situation and hiding from public view, attempting to cover up the transgression, or working to change one’s identity. See Lickel, et al., 1050; and June P. Tangney and Rowland S. Miller, “Are Shame, Guilt, and Embarrassment Distinct Emotions?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 6 (1996): 1256–1269. Some readers may question the validity of the claim that shame can lead to positive change. In his exploration of the use of shame and the criminal justice system, Braithwaite distinguishes between “disintegrative” shame (which makes one into a social outcast) and “reintegrative” shame (whose aim is to restore the individual back into the larger society). See John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>47</sup> Lickel et al., 1059.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1058. Lickel et al. theorize two reasons for their findings. First, “Guilt’s strong link to apology and reparation might, in some circumstances, moderate the extent to which people feel they need to change”; second, “Guilt is particularly likely to be evoked by behavioral appraisals (‘I did a bad thing’), whereas shame is linked to a dispositional appraisal (‘I am a bad person’)” (1058). For an exploration of how shifts in the use and

perception of honor and shame were used to bring about positive change (examples: dueling, Chinese foot binding, the Atlantic slave trade, and honor killing) see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: Norton, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Pugh, 40–1.

<sup>50</sup> See Richard N. Longenecker's discussion in *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 305–7.

<sup>51</sup> Gorman, 16; 13–34. As Gorman argues, this designation is *not* anachronistic; it is, instead, both “retrospectively appropriate [and] accurate” (18, emphasis his).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> N. T. Wright, referring to Rom. 5–8, in *The Resurrection of the Son of God, Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 48.

<sup>54</sup> One could argue that since Paul never writes that believers become like God he is only writing about “Christosis” and not theosis. As Gorman notes, however, “Paul avers that God’s eternal plan is to create a family of siblings who resemble the firstborn and definitive Son, namely, Jesus. What Paul does not state explicitly is the obvious: that the Son is like the Father and that the siblings will ultimately be like the Father because they are like the Son. Christosis, therefore, is ultimately *theosis*” (27).

<sup>55</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 128.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 92; 6–12. See esp. the lecture in Prov. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Matt. 7:13–14: “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

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