

# **The Atonement and the Problem of Shame**

**A Lecture Delivered by Professor Eleonor Stump  
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## *Introduction*

Natural theology is the attempt to understand the metaphysical foundation of reality by the use of reason alone, without the aid of anything contained in texts considered to be divinely revealed or the tradition of reflection on those texts. Typically, natural theology consists in an examination of questions about the existence and nature of God; and, like other areas of philosophical endeavor, it makes use of distinctions, analysis, and arguments. Philosophical theology, by contrast, is the attempt to use these same philosophical tools to investigate theological claims made by a particular religion, especially those claims put forward as revealed by God.

Philosophical theology shares the methods of natural theology broadly conceived, but it lifts natural theology's restriction on premises, accepting as assumptions claims supposed to be revealed or claims that are the result of reflection on putatively revealed claims. Claims taken as revealed or implied by putatively revealed claims include those that are supposed to be at least initially inaccessible to unaided reason. Philosophical theology tests the coherence of such doctrinal propositions, attempts explanations of them, uncovers their logical connections with other doctrinal propositions, and so on. One aim of philosophical theology is thus to see whether the theological claims that are considered revealed by a particular religion or that are implied by such putatively revealed claims are understandable and/or defensible. One of the enterprises of philosophical theology is therefore the employment of the techniques and devices of philosophy in analyzing, clarifying, extending, and debating the propositions that are supposed by a particular religion to have been revealed as among theology's starting points.

In this paper, I want to consider the distinctively Christian doctrine of the Atonement and ask whether, given the details and the available interpretations of this doctrine, it is possible for the Atonement to constitute a solution to the problem of shame in human life.

## *The problem of shame*

The Atonement has been traditionally understood to be a solution to the problems created by the human proneness to moral wrongdoing, and I will understand it in this way here. Every human person who does not die before the age of reason, whenever that might be, is not only prone to moral wrongdoing but has also actually done morally wrong actions of some sort. The result is that every human person past the age of reason suffers from guilt with regard to at least some past actions. But guilt is not the end of the problem as regards moral wrongdoing. There is also shame, which is part of the problem, too. No one doubts that guilt and shame are distinct, but there is considerable controversy over the nature of the distinction. In other work,<sup>1</sup> I have argued that, when guilt and shame are present and felt, the difference between shame and guilt can be understood in terms of the two desires of love, on a Thomistic account of love.<sup>2</sup> On this account, love consists in two mutually governing desires:

- (i) a desire for the good of the beloved,  
and
- (ii) a desire for union with the beloved.<sup>3</sup>

A person who is and feels shamed and a person who is and feels guilty each anticipate a repudiation, on the part of real or imagined others, of both of the desires of love as regards himself. But a person in the grip of guilt will tend to focus more on the first desire, and a person suffering from shame will tend to worry more about the second.

A guilty person anticipates anger on the part of real or imagined others; and so he is anxious about things others may be warranted in imposing on him which are punishments, in their view, and which are not for his good, in some sense of *good*, in his view. His concern is therefore that real or imagined others will be warranted in lacking for him the first desire of love, the desire for the good for him, as he sees it. By contrast, a shamed person anticipates warranted rejection and abandonment on the part of real or imagined others, and consequently he is anxious about marginalization or isolation. His anxiety is directed towards a distance, an absence of union, forced on him by others with whom he himself desires some kind of closeness.<sup>4</sup> His worry is therefore that real or imagined others will be warranted in lacking for him the second desire of love, the desire for union with him.<sup>5</sup>

The distinction between shame and guilt can also be seen by considering ordinary human reactions to genuine and thorough-going repentance on the part of a person who has engaged in serious moral wrongdoing. Consider, for example, John Newton, who was involved in the slave trade. A large percentage of the Africans transported on his ships died during the voyage; the suffering of those who survived was heart-breaking. A protracted religious conversion brought Newton to whole-hearted repentance. When he was wholly repentant, Newton's will and intellect were in the same condition as that of any morally decent person. And yet who would have wanted to be Newton, even in his repentant condition? One might pity him in his repentant state or have compassion on him, but who would have wanted to be friends with him? At the outset of his conversion,<sup>6</sup> would any of the Africans who had been on his boats have been happy at the prospect of having dinner with him, even if they had been persuaded of the depth of his repentance? In consequence of his morally horrible actions as a slave trader, some diminution, by standards of value virtually unanimously accepted, remained in Newton even after his repentance. There is shame for Newton in this diminution.

This is the kind of shame that attaches to a person in consequence of his own wrongdoing; but a different kind of shame can also afflict a person in consequence of the wrongdoing of others. Consider, for example, Sophie Scholl. She was arrested by the Nazis for her participation in a small student protest against the Nazi government. Shaming her publicly was part of the Nazi proceedings against her. She was made an example of at a show trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death; and very shortly afterwards, she was beheaded.

In addition, shame can have a source in the defects of nature, as when a person is shamed because of disease or bodily deformity. Joseph Merrick, the so-called Elephant Man, is as good an example as any of someone afflicted with this kind of shame. The dreadful distortions of his frame by his disease left him looking repulsive and fearful to others, who generally turned away from him. On traditional Christian doctrine, the depredations of nature are a consequence, even if an indirect one, of human sinfulness. On this view, there was no natural evil, and consequently no shame over defects of nature, before the sin resulting in the Fall. So, insofar as defects in nature are somehow thought to be a function of the post-Fall condition of the world, which is

itself a function of human sin, then this kind of shame is also a consequence of human sin, not of course on the part of sufferers such as Merrick, but on the part of the human race in its origins.

Finally, just as there is a pride in belonging to a certain family or a certain people or nation, so there is shame that attaches to a person because of the group to which he belongs. Some children of high-ranking Nazis, for example, felt shame in being a member of their family, because of the actions committed by one of their parents, although the children themselves bore no guilt for their parents' actions.<sup>7</sup> Analogously, as many thinkers have noted, there can be a kind of shame attaching to being a member of the human species, too.<sup>8</sup> There are the moral horrors that the human race has perpetrated, the unspeakable suffering it has inflicted on other animals, and the suicidal destruction it is perpetrating on the planet. Insofar as the sad and shaming record of humanity is also part of the story of the post-Fall human condition, it seems that this kind of shame also needs a remedy by anything that is to count as a solution to the problem of human sinfulness.

So it is possible to classify shame into four kinds: (1) shame resulting from one's own wrongdoing; (2) shame stemming from being a victim of someone else's wrongdoing; (3) shame following from some impairment or depredation of nature; and (4) shame attaching to being a member of the human race. Of these four, the first three are personal, and the fourth is communal. For each of the first three, a person is and feels shamed because he himself is and feels personally defective by some standard of value he accepts and which he expects real or imagined others to accept as well. For the fourth, a person is and feels shamed because his group – in this case, the human species – is defective by a standard of value that all people should and generally do accept.

Finally, although I began explaining the problem of shame by pointing to particular powerful examples of shame, it should be clear that the problem of shame affects every human being. It does so obviously with regard to the fourth kind of shame. But it does so equally with regard to the other three. Every human being has one degree of shame or another stemming from his own moral wrongdoing, his suffering at the hands of others, and his afflictions from the deficits of nature. Undoubtedly, some instances of shame are much harder to endure than others; but there is no human being who does not labor under all these kinds of shame at one time or another in his life. Although the problem of human proneness to moral wrongdoing, with its consequent guilt and liability to moral evil, is theologically more central to the doctrine of the Atonement, the problem of shame is something that the Atonement might be supposed to remedy as well if it is to be a complete antidote to the problems generated by human sinfulness.

So, if the Atonement is the solution to the problems generated by human sin, it is reasonable to suppose that it should also be the remedy for the problem of shame, in all its varieties. Is there something about the Atonement that can defeat the shame arising from the depredations of other persons, the failings of nature, and the post-Fall history of the human race, as well as the shame arising from a person's own wrongdoing?

### *Antidotes for shame*

To examine this issue, it is helpful first to consider what kinds of things *could* constitute a remedy for shame. On the face of it, shame is more intractable than guilt. We are accustomed to think of the antidote to guilt as repentance and forgiveness.<sup>9</sup> But what would remedy shame?

A person who feels shame has a conviction that something about himself warrants real or imagined others in repudiating a desire for him.<sup>10</sup> In fact, thinking of shame in terms of the second desire of love taken as a desire for a person illuminates the connection commonly made between shame and ugliness. We are accustomed to think of what attracts us in another person as that person's beauty – the beauty of face and body or the beauty of the psyche. When a person strikes us as admirable, as distinct from worthy of shame, we tend to find *him*, and not just some characteristic or capacity of his, beautiful in one way or another. Or, to put the point the other way around, a person who feels ugly by some standard or scale of value will also expect others who accept that standard to turn away from him.<sup>11</sup> And, as I explained above, the anticipation that real or imagined others would be warranted in turning away from him is constitutive of shame in a person.<sup>12</sup>

Even if we think of shame, as some people do, in terms of weakness or powerlessness rather than ugliness, the point remains fundamentally the same. We are attracted to power, and there is a kind of ugliness about those without it. We refer to those who lack power or are fallen from it as the devalued, degraded, debased, defiled, despoiled. They are diminished somehow in social standing or cultural stature, and they lack attractiveness for us in consequence. And so a certain kind of vulnerability or helplessness is also a hallmark of shame.

This way of thinking about shame illuminates the antidote for shame. The natural remedy for shame is honor or admiration. A person who is honored or admired has something attractive about him, and those who are attracted to him have some desire for him. To the extent that others have a warranted desire for him, they have the second desire of love for him, namely, the desire for union (of one sort or another). And if others are drawn to him and desire union with him, the shamed person's shame is lifted.

It helps in this connection to notice that a shamed person can be thought seriously deficient by others on the basis of highly varying scales of value, ranging from moral or religious standards to standards of fashion current in a particular community. And it is possible for a person to be shamed on one set of standards and honored on another.

Joseph Merrick is as good an example here as any. When he was a child, Merrick suffered horribly from the disease that deformed him so monstrously and the shame that accrued to him from the disfigurement. By the end of his life, however, even Queen Alexandra was among those who publicly honored him. Frederick Treves, the doctor who rescued and befriended Merrick, plainly admired him. At Merrick's death, Treves said of Merrick:

“As a specimen of humanity, Merrick was ignoble and repulsive; but the spirit of Merrick, if it could be seen in the form of the living, would assume the figure of an upstanding and heroic man, smooth-browed and clean of limb, and with eyes that flashed undaunted courage.”<sup>13</sup>

So, for the first three kinds of shame, personal shame, a remedy for shame would consist in two things. First, the shamed person would be found to have something admirable or beautiful about him by a standard of value more important than the standard by which he is shamed. And, second, this admirable or beautiful element in the shamed person's life would defeat the shame. That is, it would be greater and more worth having than what is lost through the shame, and the defects that are the source of the shame would be somehow necessary for that greater good.

For the fourth kind of shame, the communal shame of the species, it would be enough if the species as a whole had something in its history that made the species lovely or admirable by some standard of significantly great value and that defeated the shame. Small-scale examples of this method for adding honor to something otherwise without it are commonplace. A not particularly noteworthy restaurant may carry a plaque that many years earlier a world-renowned artist regularly ate there. A family currently low-ranking in its community may boast that some centuries ago one of its members was part of the royal family then governing the nation. A country not generally able to hold its own on the world stage may announce in its public advertising that it had among its people a Nobel Prize laureate. And so on. Because the restaurant or family or country can count among its own something or someone very highly honored, the whole group gains in honor. And it makes sense that it should be so. If the whole (business, family, or nation) can be shamed by what some parts of the whole do (or don't do), then the whole can be also honored by the participation in it of some particularly admirable or lovely person or thing. And if somehow the shame has some intrinsic and essential relationship to the honor, then the honor not only outweighs the shame, it defeats it. And so, by means of this sort, it is possible for there to be a remedy for the fourth kind of shame also.

If there is a remedy for shame in the Atonement, then something about the Atonement ought somehow to provide a good that defeats the suffering of the shame, whatever kind of shame it is that accrues to a person. And there would be such a remedy in the Atonement if, on some deep or weighty standard of value,<sup>14</sup> something about the Atonement left a shamed person with honor or loveliness that is greater than his shame and for which his shame is somehow essential.

### *The problem of shame and heroic action*

The example of Joseph Merrick's honor in his society at the end of his life might lead someone to suppose that, by means of the sort of heroic action exemplified in Merrick's life, a shamed person can himself provide the remedy that conquers shame, at least for the personal kinds of shame.

For example, although it is not possible for a person such as John Newton to return to innocence after such serious moral wrongdoing as engaging in the slave trade, it is possible for him to overcome his past by means of heroic action. After his religious conversion, Newton worked hard to help bring about the abolition of the slave trade in England; and he lived long enough to see his efforts victorious. The Slave Trade Act, which abolished the slave trade in England, was passed in 1807, shortly before he died. By the time the Act was passed, Newton was not only friends with abolitionists, he was held in honor by them. And it is not hard to see why. His passionate efforts on behalf of the abolition of the slave trade were successful in making him a different man from the man he had been. When in 1807 the great abolitionist William Wilberforce was friends with Newton, Wilberforce was friends not just with a repentant slave trader; he was friends with a powerful enemy of the slave trade.

There is no doubt that heroic action can surmount shame in these ways. But the problem of shame is not wholly remedied by such means, because even heroic action does not *defeat* shame. In Newton's case, his morally deplorable actions as a slave trader were not necessary for his working for the abolitionist cause. He might have done so even without that shaming wrongdoing. Analogous things can be said about the other cases as well. Heroic action that brings

widespread admiration is possible for anyone, even without his being subject to shame; and, generally speaking, even the character of the heroic action can remain largely intact without the suffering that is the source of the shame. Sophie Scholl might have gone on to heroic covert activities against the Nazis, for which she was never caught, but for which she became greatly honored later. Merrick's case is obviously the hardest here, but my claim applies also to such cases. For example, Merrick might have joined himself to a community of those revulsive in their disease (say, lepers in a leper colony) and have ministered to them in heroic ways. And then he would have been greatly admirable for his ability to endure revulsive suffering, even if he himself was not shamed by having it.

So since the shame is not essential for the heroic actions open to the shamed to undertake, the shame is not defeated by the heroism either. Consequently, the problem of shame remains, even with the possibility of heroic action that can overcome the past, as in the cases of Joseph Merrick, Sophie Scholl, and the others.

Is there, then, any way for the Atonement to serve as a remedy that defeats shame?

### *The Atonement and the fourth kind of shame*

On all its traditionally accepted formulations, the doctrine of the Atonement holds that atonement is the work of Christ; and the Chalcedonian formula specifies the orthodox understanding of the incarnate Christ: one divine person (the second Person of the Trinity) with one fully human nature and one fully divine nature.<sup>15</sup> On this understanding of the doctrine, it is true to say that God suffers and that God dies. But God suffers and dies in the human nature God has assumed. In his divine nature, God neither suffers nor dies, since neither suffering nor dying is compatible with the divine nature. In fact, on this understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement, at least one point of God's assuming a human nature was God's making it possible for God to suffer and die. Therefore, on the Chalcedonian formula, while it is true that God cannot suffer or die in his divine nature, it is not true that God cannot suffer or die. God can do both, in the human nature he assumed.

Given the Chalcedonian formula and this understanding of the doctrine of atonement, a remedy for the fourth kind of shame is not hard to find. In fact, some philosophers and theologians have thought that the Incarnation alone is sufficient as a remedy for the fourth kind of shame, the shame of humanity.<sup>16</sup> There is merit in this thought, although, in my view, reflection on the nature of shame shows that it cannot be right. God's joining human nature to himself does exalt human nature, in the same way that the Pope's visit to a prison elevates the prisoners in that prison above other prisoners in other prisons. But clearly it makes a difference what the Pope does when he visits the prison. If he simply visits, in his clean white papal clothes, and passes through, distant from the prisoners, then his visit serves largely to mark the difference between his status and theirs. While they are elevated as regards other prisoners in being signaled out by the Pope for a visit, their lamentable and shameful status as prisoners is left largely intact. That is because although the Pope visits them, he does not in any sense join them.

Joining of one sort or another is crucial for the issue of shame, whose hallmark is the distance of unshamed others from the shamed person and his anxiety about that distance.<sup>17</sup> The Golden Adler in Innsbruck has a plaque on its wall letting all passersby know that Mozart ate there. But if Mozart ate there only because there was no other place to eat as he was traveling through

Innsbruck, so that the restaurant was necessary to him but hated by him, then his eating there does not bring any honor to the restaurant. The restaurant is honored only if Mozart chose to eat there because something about the restaurant attracted Mozart, so that in some sense it became *his* restaurant. The affinity between Mozart and the restaurant is what gives the restaurant any claim to honor by Mozart. And that is no doubt why Pope Francis knelt before the prisoners in the prison he visited and washed their feet. In stooping to them in this way, he joins his humanity to theirs. By being willing to touch their feet, and even to wash them, the Pope indicates his own identity with the humanity in the prisoners and his reverence for it. The Pope's joining the prisoners in this way brings honor to them.

When, voluntarily, out of love for humankind, Christ dies by torture naked on the cross, in the view of his friends and disciples, he joins the shame and suffering of humanity. By this means, he makes the shame of humanity something shared with the Deity, and that sharing is a great honor for the human race. It is one thing to be a member of the species that perpetrated the moral horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is another thing to be a member of the species of creature to which God joined himself in nature and shame and suffering.

And so it is not just Christ's Incarnation that heals the shame in humanity. The fourth kind of shame for human beings, the kind that attaches to the species as a whole, has a remedy in Christ's Passion and Death.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to conclude that this sharing defeats the shame attaching to the species itself. It is not hard to think of the good in question, namely, the honor of having God himself as part of the species and its suffering, as greater than the good lost, namely, the honor that the race lost in virtue of its deplorable history. But in addition it is arguable that, on Christian doctrine, God's sharing human nature and human suffering would not have occurred without post-Fall evils. There is a tradition, promoted by some medieval philosophers and theologians,<sup>18</sup> that God would have become incarnate even without the Fall; but the majority tradition for most of the Christian tradition is that Christ's Incarnation, Passion, and Death were a response to the Fall, with its consequent problems, including the problem of shame.<sup>19</sup> On this majority position, because Christ's sharing of human nature and human suffering would not have occurred without the Fall, Christ's being joined to human nature and human suffering does not just outweigh human shame; in fact, it defeats it.

### *The limitations of the remedy for the fourth kind of shame*

Someone might suppose that this remedy for shame is actually sufficient to cover all the kinds of shame and not just the fourth kind. If humankind is so honored by God himself that God adds their nature to his and joins in human shame and suffering, why wouldn't the resulting honor be sufficient to defeat all human shame? Why wouldn't God's Passion and Death be enough to remove the shame of people such as John Newton, Sophie Scholl, and Joseph Merrick?

The answer is that a sufficient remedy would have to defeat the shame. So, for example, for something to defeat the suffering of shame of Merrick's deformity, it would have to be the case both that the suffering caused by the deformity was essential to the good supposed to be the remedy for his shame and that that good was greater than the good Merrick lost through the deformity, on some standard of value Merrick himself accepts. And these conditions are not met by the honor Merrick had from his community later in his life. The force of this point can be

appreciated by imagining what Merrick would say if he were asked whether, given the choice, he would accept his disease and the place in society it led him to have, or whether he would chose to lose that place as long as he lost the disease with it. It is easy to imagine that Merrick would refuse the disease, even on these terms.

Mutatis mutandis, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the same conclusion would be reached if we were to ask Merrick about Christ's Passion and Death. Why think that honor accruing to humanity is sufficient, for Merrick or for us, to defeat Merrick's shame stemming from the disfigurement of his disease?

People who think that it is sufficient tend to suppose that the value of the Atonement is so great that it outweighs all bad things in the world.<sup>20</sup> But the evaluation by which a person feels himself shamed is typically relative to others who are better off than he is. An American child shamed because he has no shoes for school would not be consoled by being informed that virtually no Masai children in Kenya have shoes for school either, for example. A person shamed by the depredations of nature or of other human beings will feel his disadvantages by comparison with other human beings whose life stories seem to shine by comparison with his own.

And that relative disadvantage remains even if the race as a whole is honored. Since the honor done to humanity by Christ's Incarnation and his Passion and Death affect all human beings equally, that honor will not remedy the shame of those who are singled out, by what happens to them or is done to them, relative to more advantaged others. What elevates all equally is no help for those who feel themselves at a serious disadvantage with respect to others. John Newton's past had slave-trading in it, and the past of most other human beings does not. And that shaming difference between Newton and other human beings remains, even if all humankind is honored by what Christ does.

So the remedy for the fourth kind of shame is not sufficient to handle the other three kinds of shame. If there is a remedy for shame of those kinds, it must lie elsewhere.

### *Mutual indwelling*

The remedy for the fourth kind of shame will not help with the other kinds of shame just because it is a remedy for the shame of the whole race. What is needed as regards the other kinds of shame is something personal to each individual who suffers shame. If God's coming into humanity and joining himself to humankind's shame heals the shame of the race, then it seems as if what is wanted as remedy for the shame of a human person Jerome is Christ's coming into Jerome and joining himself to Jerome, if one can speak in this way.

And this is in fact what we find in orthodox interpretations of the doctrine of the Atonement.

To understand this part of the doctrine of the Atonement, consider first that, because in the Incarnation God takes on a human nature, God as incarnate can do things that he could not do in his divine nature, such as suffer and die. For similar reasons, Christ, as a divine person, can do some things in his human nature that merely human persons could not do. In particular, it is orthodox Christian doctrine that during his Passion, in his human nature Christ, who was always sinless, bore the sins of all human beings at once.



In the history of Christian thought, there are different interpretations of this claim. But one way to interpret it is to take it to mean that in his Passion and Death Christ opened himself up to the psyches of all other human beings, all at once, so that he somehow received in himself, in some kind of psychological union, the psyches of other human beings, in their sin and shame, without himself actually becoming guilty of a sin of his own.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, he bears the sins of all human persons in himself.<sup>22</sup>

Now union is something mutual. In union, one might say, each united person is somehow inside the other with whom he is united.<sup>23</sup> At any rate, there cannot be union unless the indwelling is mutual. So to say that, in his Passion, Christ opened himself to the psyches of all other human beings is in effect to say that Christ then did his part of what is needed for union between him and every individual human being.<sup>24</sup>

If Christ had not opened himself in this way to every human being, then by themselves alone individual human beings could not unite with Christ. But since Christ did his part of the uniting by letting each sinful human psyche indwell in him, what is missing for union between him and any other human person Jerome is just that Jerome have Christ indwelling in Jerome's psyche too.

For that possibility to be realized for Jerome, Jerome himself has to be willing to be open to Christ. If he were not so willing, then Christ's indwelling in Jerome would not be a union with Jerome but a controlling of him. So when Jerome is willing to be open to Christ, the other half of what is needed for union between Jerome and Christ takes place.

And so, just as in incarnation God comes into humanity, so it is possible through the Incarnation for God to come into a particular human person. Through his Passion and Death Christ does his part of what is needed for the mutual indwelling that is uniting between Christ and a particular human person Jerome. When Jerome does his part, by being open to Christ, then Christ comes to Jerome.

If there is a remedy for the shame of the race in having Christ share the shame of the race, then it seems that there could be a remedy for each of the three kinds of personal shame that afflict every person in having God himself come to join that person.

### *A last question*

A question still remains, however, whether this remedy can defeat the shame generated by relative standing. If everyone in grace is united to Christ, then what happens to the shame generated by relative standing? On the Christian story in the New Testament, all the Apostles received the indwelling Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but only Peter among them all betrayed Christ in his hour of need. If all are honored in the same way, then why would Peter's shame at being the only one who betrayed Christ not remain?

Furthermore, if every person in grace has the indwelling Holy Spirit, then it does not seem as if anything about the sources of the shame for a particular person is necessary for the Holy Spirit to indwell that person. And if what brings shame is not necessary to what brings honor, then it seems as if the shame is not defeated by the honor.

One way to handle both of these issues is to suppose that the good of the indwelling Holy Spirit is not an all-or-nothing matter but instead somehow comes in degrees, as in fact union in love

does.<sup>25</sup> With that supposition, if one could argue that there is an essential connection between the sources of a person's shame and the degree of the union of the indwelling Holy Spirit, then one could show that the Atonement is not only a remedy for shame of the personal kind but also defeats it.

But this is a large and difficult issue that cannot be handled properly in passing here. And so here it has to be left an open question whether the three personal kinds of shame have a complete defeat in the Atonement.

### *Conclusion*

Nonetheless, when the doctrine of the Atonement is sketched out, it is clear that what is needed for the remedy of the personal and individual kinds of shame is available through the Atonement, whether or not it constitutes a complete defeat of it. Not just humankind as a whole, but each individual person who will receive it has, as it were, God indwelling in him. If the great honor of having God sharing human nature and joining human shame is a remedy for the shame of the human race, an analogous remedy is available for the shame that is each particular person's own.

In taking on the sins of every person, Christ opens himself up to the psyches of every person. The suffering of each human psyche, including the suffering of shame, is thus also in him. Every person is therefore honored in virtue of having God himself joined to his suffering.

This kind of honor given to the shame of some person Jerome is analogous to the honor done to the whole species. But, in addition, each sufferer who will receive it has God indwelling in him. The resulting mutual indwelling unites Jerome to Christ in love. And so each human person, in all the kinds of shame that afflict human beings, is joined by Christ, who is present to him and with him. If God honors a person by his presence, and finds that person desirable enough to be united to him, then all the three kinds of shame are outweighed by the elevation and desirability consequent on Christ's union.

Furthermore, since, on the majority view I sketched above, God would not have become incarnate and suffered and died without the Fall, then the shame of the species is not only outweighed. It is also defeated.<sup>26</sup> It remains unclear whether the same thing can be said about the three personal kinds of shame, or whether something weaker has to be said. But, however that issue is resolved, what this exercise in philosophical theology has attempted to show is that, on the Christian doctrine of the Atonement, the suffering of all the kinds of shame consequent on the Fall have a remedy in Christ's Passion and Death. In this respect, then, the traditional claim that the Atonement constitutes a reversal for the bad effects of the Fall is defensible.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 7 of my *Wandering in Darkness. Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 5 of Stump 2010.

<sup>3</sup> For a defense of this claim, see my "Love, By All Accounts," *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 80, No. 2, November 2006, pp. 25-43. For a much more developed defense, see Chapter 5 of Stump 2010.

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- <sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most famous case of someone anxious about rejection by a person he knows not to be among the living is Dante. As Dante writes the reunion between him and Beatrice in his *Purgatorio*, it opens with Beatrice excoriating Dante mercilessly for his faults. Even an entirely imaginary character can serve the same role. A person who never knew his father or anything about his father might have imagined a father for himself, and he could come to feel shamed in the eyes of this imaginary father.
- <sup>5</sup> These claims about what a guilty person or a shamed person anticipates may seem to imply that those who react as a guilty or shamed person anticipates, lack love for that person, in consequence of failing to have one of the two desires of love for that person. But drawing this conclusion from these claims would be an invalid inference. For the reasons why the inference is invalid, see the distinction between the hatred that is opposed to love and the hatred that is part of love in Chapter 5 of Stump 2010.
- <sup>6</sup> This caveat is necessary because, eventually, there were Africans who were more than glad to have dinner with Newton. In fact, there is a town in Africa named in honor of Newton. This part of Newton's story has to do with the effects of what medieval philosophers called 'making satisfaction'. For an account of satisfaction, see my "Personal Relations and Moral Residue," in *History of the Human Sciences: Theorizing from the Holocaust: What is to be Learned?*, Paul Roth & Mark S. Peacock (eds.), Vol. 17 No 2/3 (August 2004), pp. 33-57.
- <sup>7</sup> For a discussion of cases exemplifying this issue, see Gitta Sereny, *The Healing Wound* (New York: W.W.Norton, 2001).
- <sup>8</sup> Mark Twain is famous for black-spirited remarks indicating such a view. He is reported to have said, "God made man at the end of the week's work, when God was tired"; "if you were to cross a man with a cat, you would improve the man and deteriorate the cat"; "it often seems a pity that Noah didn't miss the boat"; "man is the only animal that blushes or needs to do so."
- <sup>9</sup> Or perhaps repentance, forgiveness, and penance. For a discussion of forgiveness, see Chapter 5 in Stump 2010. For a discussion of the role of penance in undoing the effects of moral wrongdoing, see my "Personal Relations and Moral Residue," in *History of the Human Sciences: Theorizing from the Holocaust: What is to be Learned?*
- <sup>10</sup> Or, to put it more precisely but more clumsily, in actively rejecting a desire for him.
- <sup>11</sup> The connection may also hold the other way around. If Paula refuses or repudiates a desire for Jerome, then, if Jerome finds Paula's reaction to him appropriate, he will be shamed by it, because he will see his own ugliness in her rejection of him.
- <sup>12</sup> It is not the only constituent, of course. Other parts might include other emotions, such as anxiety or sorrow, as well as painful memories, depression, nightmares, and so on.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in Ashley Montagu, *The Elephant Man: A Study in Human Dignity* (Lafayette, LA: Acadian House, 2001), 46.
- <sup>14</sup> For a discussion of different standards of value, see Chapters 7 and 14 in Stump 2010.
- <sup>15</sup> Some people might suppose that this description of Christ is incoherent and that philosophical reason can demonstrate that there could be nothing meeting this description. It is certainly true that the doctrine of the Incarnation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, counts as a Christian mystery. But elsewhere, using the methods of philosophical theology, I have examined the doctrine of the Incarnation and attempted to defend it against at least some of the major arguments meant to show its incoherence (see Chapter 14 of my *Aquinas*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2003)). Because this is not a paper on the doctrine of the Incarnation, I will just assume here the results of that earlier discussion; I will take for granted here that the doctrine of the Incarnation is intelligible and not demonstrably incoherent. The point of this paper is not to try to elucidate everything in Christian theology but only to examine the doctrine of the Atonement, as that doctrine is expressed in orthodox Christian theology, with regard to the problem of shame.
- <sup>16</sup> For a discussion of this issue, see Marilyn Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).
- <sup>17</sup> Someone might suppose that if a person is honored by others, there is distance between him and those others too. But *that* distance is one which others wish to cross, insofar as people desire to join themselves to the honored. So the distance from others inherent in being honored is not a distance of the kind concerned in shame.
- <sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this position, see Marilyn Adams, *Christ and Horrors. The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

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- <sup>19</sup> On the idea of the majority tradition, Christ's Incarnation is for the purpose of his Passion and Death, and the purpose of the Passion and Death is the remedy for human sinfulness. If there had been no human sinfulness, then, on this view, the Passion and Death of Christ have no purpose and so become unintelligible.
- <sup>20</sup> For an example of this kind of view, see Alvin Plantinga, "Supralapsarianism, or 'O Felix Culpa'," in *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), pp.1-25.
- <sup>21</sup> It is also part of orthodox Christian doctrine that Christ is impeccable.
- <sup>22</sup> For more discussion of this interpretation, see my "Atonement and the Cry of Dereliction from the Cross," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4.1 (Spring 2012), pp. 1-17.
- <sup>23</sup> For a discussion of the indwelling characteristic of union between human persons and the special case of indwelling involving Christ on the cross, see my "Love: Union and Indwelling", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- <sup>24</sup> Someone might wonder whether it was not possible for Christ to open himself up to every human being in this way without his Passion and Death. If it is, then the good of mutual indwelling is not intrinsically connected to the Atonement, in the way I am in the process of arguing that it is. In a forthcoming paper, I explore this issue in details. For present purposes, where the issue can be explored only briefly, it is worth considering that being open all at once to the morally troubled or wicked psyches of every human being is enough to make a severely traumatic suffering of psyche, for which crucifixion is an apt bodily analogue. It may also be that just as bodily death is the natural consequence of the suffering of crucifixion, so a kind of psychic death, expressed by the cry of dereliction, is the natural consequence of the psychic suffering.
- <sup>25</sup> For an argument for this claim, see Chapter 13 of Stump 2010.
- <sup>26</sup> No one should be confused into thinking that this conclusion provides a theodicy. A theodicy attempts to show a morally sufficient reason for God to allow suffering. To show the way in which the Atonement can defeat the shame of post-Fall human beings is not sufficient to show a reason why God is justified in allowing the suffering leading to that shame.