PROLOGUE: THE ARGUMENT AT A GLANCE

… Modern racial discourse and practice have their genesis inside Christian theological discourse and missiological practice, which themselves were tied to the practice of empire in advance of Western civilization. pg. 3

*Race: A Theological Account* is an initial installment in filling this significant lacuna in modern knowledge about how the discourse of theology aided and abetted the processes by which “man” came to be viewed as a modern, racial being. pg. 3

My fundamental contention is that modernity’s racial imagination has its genesis in the theological problem of Christianity’s quest to sever itself from its Jewish roots. This severance was carried out in two distinct but integrated steps. First, Jews were cast as a race group in contrast to Western Christians, who with the important discourse of Christian theology and philosophy, were also subtly and simultaneously cast as a race group. The Jews were the mirror in which the European and eventually the Euro-American Occident could religiously and thus racially conceive itself through difference of Orientalism. In this way, Western culture began to articulate itself as Christian culture (and vice versa), but now—and this is the new moment—through the medium of a racial imagination. Second, having racialized Jews as a people of the Orient and thus Judaism as a “religion” of the East, Jews were then deemed inferior to Christians of the Occident or the West. Hence, the racial imagination (the first step) proved as well to be a racism imagination of white supremacy (the second step). Within the gulf enacted between Christianity and the Jews, the *racial*, which proves to be a *racist*, imagination was forged. pg. 4

For at the genealogical taproot of modern racial reasoning is the process by which Christ was abstracted from Jesus, and thus from his Jewish body, thereby severing Christianity from its Jewish roots. pg. 6

(It should already be clear by now, but it is nevertheless worth saying explicitly, that “white” and “race” and even “black” are in this text not merely signifiers of pigmentation. In other words, their referent is perhaps only secondarily to color. Rather, they signify a political economy, an *ordo* or a social arrangement, what Irenaeus calls an *oikonomia*. pg. 8
Prelude: On Christology and Race

Irenaeus understood his struggle against the ancient Gnostic movement, particularly in its Valentinian-Ptolemaic variant, as a struggle over the meaning of the body both individual and as sociopolitical arrangement—that is, as tied to or indicative of the body politic. pg. 11

As a central ideological component in constructing the modern world as we have come to know it, the racial imagination arose inside of, nurtured itself on, and even camouflaged itself within the discourse of theology. That is, it articulated itself in a Christian theological idiom. pg. 12

My ultimate interest are (1) the anthropology embedded in the Gnostic drama of redemption, (2) the bifurcation of the Christ of (Gnostic) faith (or heavenly Christ of the Pleroma) from the Jesus of history in the Gnostic system and this the “Christology” at work in Gnosticism, and (3) the function of scriptural exegesis to sustain the Gnostic outlook. pg. 15

Irenaeus insisted that Christ’s flesh disrupts an anthropological hierarchy of essences precisely in being tied to the history of Israel and thus to the history of God’s dealings with this people. pg. 22

Irenaeus imagines Christ’s covenantal flesh as disrupting the substantialist hierarchy of cosmological and anthropological essences that marked Ptolemaic-Gnostic thought. Irenaeus’s goal was not simply to defeat the Gnostic argument. His larger goal was to rescue theological discourse from what in Gnostic hands it was becoming: a discourse of death, the death of embodied life. pg. 23

Irenaeus is able in effect to explain the ongoing like between the Old Testament Mosaic Law, which the prophetic writings uphold, and the fourfold Gospel, which the Epistles elaborate. In so doing, he moves to overturn a key pillar of Gnostic theology and exegesis: namely, the inferiority of the God of Israel and the Old Testament Scriptures in which the story of this God in relationship to the people of Israel is told. Moreover, he is able to theologically reverse the Gnostic move to transcend YHWH and overthrow the Jewish Bible that is tied to YHWH. The Old Testament Law, he says, is recapitulated in Christ’s flesh. His body (politic) is a conspectus, a rhetorically potent and compacted reiteration, of the Law, that ratifies YHWH’s covenant with Israel and analogically with creation as a whole. pg. 26
… As he passes through all of the stages of life, from infancy through adolescence to adulthood and finally death itself, Christ recapitulates all of the generations of human existence across space and time, from Adam to himself and into the future. pg. 28

Antonio de Nebrija… “Language has always been the companion of empire.” pg. 29

… Language itself becomes the vehicle of conquest. In many ways, Columbus himself was clear about this. Again as Todrovo says, commenting on remarks Columbus makes in journals he kept during his first voyage: “When Columbus finally acknowledges the foreignness of [the] languages [of one of the groups of people he comes across], he insists… that it be also the foreignness of all the others; on the one side, then, there are the Latin languages, and on the other all foreign tongues.” What one sees here is Columbus arranging language within a hierarchy that situates the Latin languages, especially Spanish (Latin itself being the language of theological discourse), over all other languages. But precisely in doing this, Columbus enacts colonial conquest on the linguistic level. He enacts empire. pg. 29

Columbus and other conquistadors after him engage in colonial conquest, both linguistically and otherwise, inside Latin as the language of theological discourse. Theology starts to function in a new way precisely in this moment. pg. 28

One must speak of his humanity as an interhumanity that constitutes a new, intrahumanity. That is, Christ’s humanity is the historical display of an intradivine communion between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit that itself opens up, by the same motion of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s flesh, a new communion internal to human existence. In short, Christ’s flesh as Jewish, covenantal flesh is a social-political reality displayed across time and space into which the Gentiles are received in praise of the God of Israel. Given this, we must say that Christ’s flesh in its Jewish constitution is “mulatto” flesh. That is to say, in being Jewish flesh it is always already intersected by the covenant with YHWH and in being intersected it is always already intraracial (and not merely multiracial). Its purity is its “impurity,” which is the “impurity” of its being covenantally intersected by YHWH as its life-giving limit. Israel is the people that exists by virtue of being upheld in being by YHWH, and in so being upheld Israel witnesses to what it means to be a creature before the Creator. pg. 30

This people is an analogy of creation itself, for its existence testifies to the “contaminated” relationship between God and what God has created. The covenantal people of Israel witnesses to creation its own fruitful “contamination” before YHWH as its life-giving limit. And hence, this people cannot be superseded, for to supersede it represents the effort to establish fictive lines of purity within creation (is this not what
whiteness, and its production of racialized bodies, sought to do?) and thus supersede the Creator. In his interhumanity, which is an intrahumanity, Jesus as the Israel of God is the living reality of the covenantal promises of the God of Israel. pg. 30

In the specificity of his Jewish, covenantal flesh, he is creation’s life giving limit. He is the living reality of YHWH’s promises to Israel and thereby for the world. Jesus’ existence, which is covenantally Jewish, is therefore Pentecostal. pg. 30

And so to grasp the story of Israel is to grasp the story of creation. And finally again, in an effort to contain what yet appears to be too elongated a narrative filled with plot twists, reversals, and surprises, Christ himself “cuts short” the story of Israel into the resume of his own material body and historical life, only then to have this loop back to the story of creation, but now under the aspect of the second Eve. He is the biography of this people and as such is the biography of creation. But in so being, he proves to be God’s own autobiography, God’s writing of Godself. pg. 33

… White is a locution for the “modern/colonial” (Mignolo) “world-system” (Wallerstein). pg. 35

Chapter I: The Drama of Race

For my own part, I think the specific articulation of racism is within nationalism…. The fundamental problem therefore [has been] to produce the people. More exactly, it [has been] to make the people produce itself as a national community. -Etienne Balibar, pg. 39

Terms: Pseudotheological, see FN 1 pg. 385-386. Pseudotheology means a secularized and politicized Christian theology

Terms: Nation form, see FN 2. pg. 386.

… race functions to support the coming-to-be and the sustaining of modern society at an inarticulate level. This inarticulate level is the level of what Fredric Jameson has called “the political unconscious.” pg. 40

Terms: Political unconscious, see FN 3 pg. 386-387.

To give voice to the politically unconscious level of modern social and political life is to give attention to the modern problem of race. But it is not only this; for to render articulate the modern political unconscious is to give attention to the problem of race
under the aspect of modern problem of religion. pg. 40

In asking the Jewish question [juddenfrage], modern intellectuals—from philosophers and statesmen to legal, orientalist, and biblical scholars—struggled to reckon with the theological and political significance of Jewish existence in light of a newly emerging, enlightened social arrangement within the Occident, an arrangement that they themselves promoted. It is this social arrangement that I refer to when I speak of modernity. pg. 40

I say theological and political (or theopolitical) to signal that my claim calls for analyses of the problem of race (and, relatedly, of the Jewish question) that explore the senses in which such a discourse is bound to the nature and practice of modern politics and thereby indelibly tied to what is religious about modernity and the way it parodies theology at the same time that it cloaks this fact. The discourse of race is critical to the cloaking process and thus function as a vital cog within modernity’s own religious and quasi-theological machinery, a machinery intent… on producing bodies and people that can populate an enlightened, global and cosmopolitan social order, the domain of civil society. The people produced is the modern citizenry; the body, that of the modern citizens and the social order enacted and perpetuated, that of the modern (nation-)state. Given this, the politics of race and the politics of the modern state are of a piece, for both are religious or pseudotheological in character. pg. 40

My objective is to probe how race and religion figured in the Aufklärer’s efforts to reimagine the meaning of public culture vis-a-vis an aesthetics and politics of autonomy and thereby to solve their crisis. pg. 41

… Kant’s vision of politics and his vision of public culture, and this what is at the heart of his vision of a reconstituted body politic, is his account of the human being as autonomous or as abstracted from the body, from materiality, and therefore from all worldly goods. The grand presumption that enabled the Kantian anthropological vision, however, was his ceding of ownership of the body and the goods of this world to the state. With the state’s ownership of the body as the palette on which the state publicly displayed its power, especially by calling bodies to wage war in the name of the body politic. pg. 41-42

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Naming the factors that have contributed to the silencing of black aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual equality and how it is that those factors conspired to “require the constitution of white supremacy” demands a procedure of analyzing them other than, but not to the exclusion of, history—at least, history as it typically functions as a way of making truth claims by simply delimiting the facts of what happened in the past. pg. 45

As regards the problem of race, a representationalist outlook supposes that there are stable and immutable ideas about race that correspond to and thus represent the empirical phenomena of the various races. pg. 46

… even the idea of race is historically situated and constituted. This, therefore, means that the idea of race, bounded by the flux of time and history, is under constant changes and negotiation. Under a representationalist gaze, to talk about race is to talk about the idea or the through of race… to interrogate race is to interrogate not so much thought about race, which expresses itself as a kind of metaphysical idealism that more or less essentializes races by having the idea of race or racial essences float about a racialized reality. Rather, to interrogate race is to interrogate our thinking about it, which is always already linked to embodied structures within which race, or what is often meant by it, is known only in the realities of life itself. pg. 46

Hence, a nonrepresentationalist approach to race commits us not just to coming to terms with how the idea of race evolves; it commits us to reckoning with both the changing cultures and historical sites within which ideas about race traffic and with the structure or rule-governed grammar, the micrologics, according to which racial ideas and practices shift and mutate. pg. 46

But the question as to the inevitability or contingency of the discursive emergence of modern racism remains, particularly because his [that is West’s] genealogy was billed as giving an account at the discursive level, which West problematically reduces to matters of epistemology, of why “the very structure of modern discourse at its inception… require[d] the constitution of the idea of white supremacy” as an expression of modern racism. This is precisely what has not been shown, however. West’s genealogy powerfully shows the epistemological, or what he calls the discursive, conditions that made possible the idea of white supremacy as an expression of modern racism, but it does not provide insight into the mechanisms of by those discursive factors interacted so that
modern racism and the idea of white supremacy moved beyond epistemic possibility and into discursive actuality. pg. 50

As Goldberg says, [There is a] relation between formally produced racialized knowledge, especially at the hands of social science, and the State. Etienne Balibar insists that the relationship to the Other at the heart of modern racism is necessarily mediated by State intervention. One of the basic modes this intervention assumes is concern over production of racialized knowledge. State conceptual mediation is as old as the category of race itself.²

Yes, the people operate to produce and define, to reproduce and redefine, themselves; and, yes, they do this by vesting themselves in and as the nation and this jurisprudentially in and as the nation-state, with the result that an identity in principle arises between the people ad the state, an identity that is itself productive of “peoplehood,” of nation. But the constitution or production of the people as nation happens over and against other external people, over and against other nations or nation-states. This “over against,” Foucault tells us, is the over and against of war. Stated differently, the people of the nation-state, the population, is produced in relation of bellicosity to “the other” that is external to the people. pg. 55

“Biopower,” therefore, “refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production of reproduction of life itself.” The biopolitical correlate of biopower is the problem of globalism or what Hardt and Negri have called “empire.” pg. 57

FN. 74, pg. 393-394. Carter interacts with Cavanaugh’s proposal that religion can be defined as “a set of beliefs… [as arising more or less out of] personal conviction and which can exist separately from one’s public loyalty to the state.” See William Cavanaugh’s The Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 31.

Power itself must be understood… as the multiplicity of force relations…; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses [those relations]; as the support which these force relations find in one another; … and lastly… the strategies in which they take effect… embodied in the state apparatuses, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.³ pg. 62-63

FN. 82, pg. 395. Foucault on disciple, sovereignty and an “inspecting gaze.”

² David Theo Goldberg, Racist Culture (Boston: Blackwell Press1993), 152.

³ Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, 92-93.
“Politics is the continuation of war by other means.”

[rather, that dazzling light of sovereign power] is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness. And the history or counterhistory that is born of the story that is born of the race struggle will of course speak from the side that is in darkness, from within the shadows. It will be the discourse of those who have no glory, or of those who have list it and who now find themselves perhaps for a time—but probably for a long time—in darkness and silence. Which means that the discourse… will be disruptive speech, an appeal.

Counterhistory, therefore, is an act of memory—to speak theologically, of anamnesis—of remembering in a certain way: counterhistory remembers how the unifying light of the present order of things presupposes and is sustained by group opposition.

… fields of knowledge such as the disciplinary practices of medicine, the biological science, the social sciences, and especially the discourse of history emerge to greatly expand knowledge, but with a view to assist in protecting “the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race”: that is, of the collective conceived racially.

Chapter II: The Great Drama of Religion

FN 1, pg 398. Nationalism and Religion resources.

It is my claim that modern theology’s problem must be seen in triangulated fashion rather than in terms of a polarity. That is, they must be situated within the interconnections between the modern problem of race, the modern problem of Jewish existence, and the question of modern statecraft of the nation-state.

Terms: Rassenfrage or “the race question.” See FN 2 pg 398, for a fuller explanation. Carter also briefly interacts with Yoder in this footnote as well.

Its [i.e. the Euro-American ethos] objective, more precisely, is to instantiate itself in the particularity of a perfect race group. Perfection here is to be understood in terms of an

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4 Michel Foucault, Society must be Defended, 15.

5 Ibid., 70.

6 Ibid., 81.
aesthetic (and thus an ethics) of balance over imbalance, of completeness over incompleteness. It is this perfection that was the destiny of whites as they made developmental progress toward becoming a race, and it is this perfection that was lost by other races, particularly by the black race. I say “particularly the black race” because it is in contrast to the Negro race that Kant is able to establish the uniqueness of white flesh. Here was see the work performed by the “self-evident” claim Kant makes earlier in the essay that “Negroes and whites are the base races.” If the white race exemplifies humanity on its way to perfection, the black race embodies the departure and failure to attain this perfection. In the Negro race, white flesh observes a race so mired in its particularity as never to be able to speak with universal force, and therefore, as never positioned to be an analogy or index of the universal. Black flesh lacks universal gravitas. It is trapped in its particularity in such a way that it always needs to justify its existence before universal white flesh. In short, the particularity of black flesh reflects an aesthetics, which for Kant is an ethics and a politics, of excess and imbalance—the excess of bodily particularity over rational universality: the imbalance between law and freedom. pg. 89-90.

[Says Kant], All the races will be stamped out [Alle racen werden ausgerottet werden…; they will undergo an inner rotting or decay leading to their utter eradication] (Americans and Negroes can’t rule themselves. They serve therefore only as slaves), but never that of whites. The stubbornness of the Indians in how they use things is at the root of their problem. This is the reason why they do not melt together with whites. It isn’t good that they are interbreeding [sich vermischen]. The Spaniards in Mexico. pg. 92

They [whites] are the exceptional race whose drives and talents are thoroughly balanced and thus are not subject to racial implosion or annihilation. Indeed, they are the race in which this balance of bodily drives and intellectual talents are progressing toward full maturation. It is here that we see the “now and not yet” structure of white racial perfection in the modern imagination. This now and not yet structure speaks to the fact that, in the white race, the perfection of the human race is historically present, though it is incomplete (because the white race has not yet fully instantiated itself in the white brunettes). They must yet work out their salvation with fear and trembling, as it were. What, in the end, are we left with? Kant deracializes the white race so that it can be the perfect bearer of perfect racial identity. pg. 93

For, the odd sentence structure of this note [see Kant’s comments on pg. 92 “All the races will be stamped out etc…] (“all… except whites” or, in my translation, “all… but never that of whites”) reveals the thought process of one for whom the destruction of “all races” is occurring through the same sociocultural and political mechanisms that are establishing and bringing to maturity another, not-yet-fully-raced group. This is the race of the whites.
The destruction of all races on the one hand and the nondestruction of whites on the other are imagined as a singular, intertwined sociocultural and political process of the advance of western civilization. This is evident in that, as Kant’s parenthetic claim regarding the fitness of Amerindians and persons of African descent for slavery strongly implies, white enslavement of the Negro race and the colonialist expansion of western Europe into the hemispheric south and west are vehicles by which the racial development, the maturing of whites, is in fact furthered. pg. 93

Racial or cultural intimacy—this is what is to be the most feared insofar as it could lead to what one theorist has recently called “wayward reproductions” within the species or, more specifically, the derailing of “the race of whites” from its destiny. Promiscuous relationships, therefore, must be policed and avoided at all costs. The possibility of the mulatto, of “impure” interracial existence, is the fear of all fears. pg. 94

Terms: Weltbürger or a “citizen of the world” pg. 99.

[Says Kant,] We are free and can establish rules legislating the natural world in an autonomous manner. In order to do so, we have to subscribe to the rules of civil society. Here we happily abrogate our right to intuitive happiness, as aimed at in a heteronomously legislated society. We willingly follow restrictions imposed on our empirical and material desires by obeying a strict ‘Mine-and-Yours’ ownership and property distinction. pg. 103

Pragmatic anthropology guides the human being into detachment from worldly goods in order to be a world citizen (Weltbürger) or one suited to occupy and thus own the entire world. In this regard, pragmatic anthropology seeks to assist the human being to make itself into an autonomous agent, one who, in detaching itself from “happiness” and thus from all worldly goods, cedes the body and all that is material to the state. Such is the precondition of autonomy: Kant envisions a situation, in which “the state… transforms the individual [indeed, the body itself] into an instrument for public display of state power.” It is in this way that the body articulated the body politic and its aspirations. pg. 103-104

What we see in Kant is the ideological use of Christianity…. In this articulation, Christianity is reimagined as “racially” severed from and ethnographically triumphant over its oriental Jewish roots. Functioning in the modern world as revitalized Gnosticism, or more specifically as a kind of neo-Marcionism… Christianity, reconstituted as the moral religion par excellence of reason, extols a Jesus who, rather than disclosing YHWH or the God of Israel as the ground of redemption for Jews and Gentiles alike, instead affirms what the human species “can or should make of itself.” pg. 107
The narrative that he [Kant] enacts is not in continuity with Israel’s covenantal history with YHWH. It is not a life that brings to crescendo the song of YHWH’s covenant with Israel, a song at whose crescendo the entirety of creation and all the nations “pentecostally” hum the melody and play along. Instead, Kant’s figuring of Christ as no longer Jewish at the level of morality and ethics, which for Kant is the level that counts, is the figuring of him as the urmoment in the coming to be of Western civilization. pg 117

Chapter III: Historicizing Race

Christianity proved crucial to slave assimilation and the transition from being African to becoming American. Through Christian images and the stories of the Bible, slaves and their progeny lived in light of a new symbol system and so arrived at a “new worldview,” one that, given the new situation, “gave meaning to life.” So on the question of origins, of whether the cultural and religious distinctiveness of diasporic African peoples resided in the persistence of certain African retentions, Frazier responds negatively. He argued that the precess of enslavement destroyed everything identifiably African about African people. pg. 129

The black intellectual cannot be an intellectual in the way others have been intellectuals, if for no other reason than that in modernity “black intellectual” has historically been an oxymoron. pg. 142

Quite the contrary, for while history may not be moved by religious faith, it is moved by faith—of some kind. This is evident in that “events do not speak for themselves”; they call for historians to speak on their behalf. pg. 143

Quoting Albert Raboteau… the dominant culture, academic as well as popular, ignored the presence or distorted the role of African-Americans in the nation’s history. Black Americans, if historians discussed them at all, figured prominently only in the story of slavery and in the topic of race relations. In both cases, they appeared not as actors in the national drama but as victims or problems. As an oppressed minority, they represented an unfortunate but minor exception to the main plot of American history: the gradual expansion of democracy to include all citizens. A few countervailing voices protested the inaccuracy of this consensus version of our history, but in the main, black people and their culture remained absent from courses in American history down to the 1960’s. We were, so to speak, invisible. And the results of invisibility were devastating. In the absence of black history, a myth of the American past developed, a myth that denied black people any past of significance. pg. 145
Indeed, religious faith has often aided and abetted history by validating the skewed, exclusionary plotline advanced as the history of America. Faith’s difference from history, however, is that it has promulgated the storyline of America in the idioms of religion. Yet, whether one speaks of history as functioning through a national myth of whiteness or through a Christian mythologization of whiteness, what has untied both religious faith and history is whiteness. pg. 145

What does “whiteness,” whether at work in the intellectual arena of history or in the domain of religious faith signify here in relationship to the plotline of America and the narrative construal of the Western, Euro-American reality? In my terms, terms consistent with the framework of post-Slave Religion Raboteau of “Praying the ABC’s,” whiteness is the “political unconscious” of false emplotment. Indeed, it is a religious-historical way of mythically construing reality. Or, to employ terms drawn from the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, whiteness names the activation of a certain set of dispositions. These dispositions cover the full panoply of reality. This, the activation of these dispositions creates the scholar (in this case, the historian), and, then once created, these same dispositions name the conditions under which the scholar intellectually labors or plies his craft and into which the scholar is habituated (habitus). The traditional construal of reality such that historians have been unable or unwilling to renarrate the story of America so as to make sense of black existence—and the existence of others as well—reflects the degree to which historians have activated and lived into the dispositions of the academic. Thus, to be a historian is to activate that set of dispositions that enables a certain form of storytelling while disabling others. pg. 146

When Christian faith functions nationally, it functions as a modulation within the dispositions of whiteness. pg. 146

I find it more compelling that the slaves and their late-nineteenth-century progeny came to understand the faulty historical foundations on which the plotline of American manifest destiny rested. They came to understand that it rested on the supersessionist claim of “the image of America as a New Israel. This myth of national identity depicts the European migration across the Atlantic from the old world to the new as an escape from Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land of milk and honey.”7 pg. 147

Black flesh comes to inhabit Israel’s covenantal story, which is nothing less than the story of creation itself. In this way, African Americans retold history so as to begin dissolving the hegemonic history of whiteness through a new religious orientation toward the

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7 Raboteau, Fire in the Bones, 4.
fragments of the events of the past. Black flesh, their claim was, must exit—hence, the insistence on the centrality of the Exodus story—the arrangement of whiteness (as must whites themselves), an arrangement in which they are “black,” by undergoing a political conversion. This is the conversion by which they entered into the body of Israel and into Israel’s covenant with YHWH as non-Jews (or Gentiles) through the Jew Jesus. In this way they imagine and live into a history of Exodus, a history of exiting the ways in which whiteness racializes all flesh. This history is nothing less than the history of YHWH-God.

Chapter IV: Theologizing Race

White Christianity does not entail concrete living, though it passes itself off as doing so. As such, white theology is neither a practice of reflecting on God’s concrete relationship to humans nor a concrete reflection on how humans relate to one another. Rather, white Christianity is an abstract mode of life, and white theology is an abstract mode of thought. pg. 160

First, concrete thinking is thinking in which Jesus Christ is central. …Knowledge of God sough through reason alone leads to abstraction; for God can be known only by and through God. Within the terms of Christianity, this means that the thought of God that would not be merely idolatrous thinking by the human being must coincide with God’s self disclosure in Jesus Christ: “We know who God is, not because we can move beyond our finiteness but because the transcendent God has become immanent in our history, transforming human events into divine events of liberation.” Christology, then, is not just one of many foci of systematic theological reflection. Rather, Christology is the sum and substance, the alpha and omega, the proton and eschaton, the capstone of Christian thought. It is that which keeps Christian thought from veering into the abstraction of natural theologies. pg. 162

Epistemologically, such theologies attempt to know God on the strength of unaided reason; ontologically and metaphysically, they assume an analogy and thus an equivalence between God and the creature. This necessarily leads to the construction of idols, which emerge when the creature takes itself to be concrete in itself, that is, apart from the concretissimum. Herein lies the fallacy at the ground of white theology ad its mode of thought. When it comes to the knowledge of God, Cone, following Barth, takes it that enlightened reason proves itself only to be benighted reason, whose misstep is to equate God and the human thought of God. Cone, once again following Barth, finds such an equation intolerable. The centrality of the theme of the “infinite qualitative distinction

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between God and man”⁹ comes into full view precisely at this point. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to the creature and, as such, reveals what it means to be a creature—indeed, what it means to be a human being. pg. 163

Thus second, Christ is not merely the summit of humanity’s religious ideals: Jesus Christ is the iconoclastic revelation of God against such religiously human ideals. …So to think concretely is to think in and from God’s revelation, the locus of which is Jesus Christ. He is the location of the truth about both God and the creature. pg. 163

[Two important points] The First point is this: for Cone, knowledge of God emerges only through encounter with God, the God who is disclosed as a human being in Jesus Christ. This means the creation itself and human existence in particular are wrapped up in the divine *taxis* or *ordo* by which God encounters and knows God. The divine nature thus expresses itself by impressing itself in creation in general, and in the human being in particular. Out of the dynamic of the divine *expressio* and *impressio* arises the meaning of human existence. …[The second point lies in] declaring that God is pure (or nonstatic) event and that therefore God is the concrete, living God, it follows that the abstract is that which is static and nonliving—indeed, that which tends toward death. As such abstraction stands in opposition to God. pg. 164-165

It follows from all of this for Cone that God’s being, divinity as such, can only be a being-in-liberation from what instigates death and nonlife inasmuch as they are abstractions from the life that is God. pg. 165

… The God of the oppressed comes into view in the struggle of the oppressed for liberation.” pg. 165

… Difference theologically understood arises from the positivity of the hypostatic distinctions within which the possibility and, according to the will of God, the actuality or concreteness of creation is located. It is precisely this understanding of difference—difference as witness to and participation within the Trinitarian hypostatic distinctions—that modern logics of race foreclose. pg. 167

Cone sees a problem, though. He is critical of any Christology that would unduly sever the relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Because the Christ of faith is only knowable through the Jesus of history, separating the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith is a sure sign that abstraction lurks nearby. Therefore, Cone insists that at no moment is the Christ of faith knowable apart from his concrete historical

⁹ James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, 37.
manifestation as Jesus of Nazareth. pg. 169

… The humanity that God assumes in Christ is specifically Jewish, which is to say, it is a humanity that performs YHWH’s covenant with Israel, is the tacit recognition that Jewish flesh, covenantally understood, is flesh in the way in which raced flesh is flesh. That is, it is not flesh that can only be itself by being violently arrayed against Gentile flesh. Again covenantally understood, Jewish flesh is flesh that receives those by “nature” not in its family to be in its family, to carry forward its bloodline. It is in this way that Israel is a nation and people unlike any other, a nation without analogy. pg. 169-170

Israel’s meaning and significance emerge, on the one hand, by its being flanked by and thus related to the God of Israel, who elects the Jews and so creates them ex nihilo to be YHWH’s people. Importantly, on the other hand, nations before whom the drama of the Jews’ election unfolds. The drama of Israel thus is not insular, for it unfolds in such a way as to enfold the nations into its drama and thereby into the theodramatic constitution of existence or creation as such. pg. 170

… Ancient Israel often persisted in infidelity to the Exodus event in that the people did not always side with the defenseless as it was their covenant duty to do. Ancient Israel was to be marked by care and hospitality, especially for those who God cares for and those to whom God is hospitable—that is, to those on the underside of history. Infidelity in this respect was infidelity to covenantal existence tout court. pg. 172

Thus [Cone] concludes that “although God is the intended subject of theology, God does not do theology. Human beings do theology.”10

The problem with dialectical thinking and related forms of philosophical thinking is that they begin from closure and then have to negotiate passage through an “ugly broad ditch” between things that are closed. pg. 191

The covenant witnesses to the fact that for God, and only because of God’s identity as God for us, there is no ditch to be crossed by us. God has from the first bound Godself to us in God’s communion with Israel as a communion for the world. This is the inner logic of the identity of Jesus, the inner logic by which Israel is always already a mulatto people precisely in being YHWH’s people, and by which therefore Jesus himself as the Israel of God is Mulatto. At the level of his identity, or who he is, Jesus carries forward, and does not supersede, Israel’s identity as partner to YHWH for the world. He is miscegenated, and out of that miscegenation discloses the God of Israel as the God of the Gentiles too.

10 James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation: Twentieth Anniversary Edition, xi,xix
What the covenant framework discloses, then, is this: Because YHWH is on both the creator and creaturely sides of the covenant holding it, a dialectical framework of I-Thou, while useful in some regards in responding to problems in the world, proves ultimately inadequate. Indeed, it is not radical enough. pg. 192

What is needed is a vision of Christian identity, then, that calls us to holy “impurity” and “promiscuity,” a vision that calls for race trading against the benefits of whiteness so as to enter into the miscegenized or mulattic existence of divinization (\textit{theōsis}). pg. 192

\textit{Chapter V: Signifying Race}

\textbf{Terms}: Wissenschaft or the scientific research pg. 196

\textbf{Terms}: Religionswissenschaft is a spiritual science or cultural studies pg. 197

\textbf{Terms}: Kulturprotestantismus (Adolf von Harnack) is a theology that focuses less on the church and more so on culture. Primary addressee of this theology was the “cultured individual.” The cultured individual was also extremely concerned with individuality, reason and, in a sense, faith. Kulturprotestantismus brought together two of the most treasured values: “the freedom of theology and the freedom of the individual to be, and remain, the final and authoritative arbiter.”\textsuperscript{11} pg. 426-427

… Christianity [as] “rational religion” was intent on suppressing, oppression, and ultimately stripping from Christianity what was Jewish about it. This suppression not only represents a troublesome from of Christian supersessionism against the Jews, it also represents a suppression of the positivity of the eternal Word’s relationship to the world’s religions as so many expressions of what it means to be human. In other words, there is a ling between supersessionism against the Jews that functioned at the European metropole and its replication with respect to non-Christian religions at the colonial outposts. pg. 201

Contact situations present the possibility of new beginnings and, thus, of renewal in what it means to be human. America represents just such a situation. Hence, “the enigma of America, the dilemma of my culture” is that it is a “hermeneutical situation,”\textsuperscript{12} a situation rendered intelligible only upon decoding America as (religious) symbol. In decoding America, one articulates, among other things, the meanings of American religion as the

\textsuperscript{11} Martin Rumscheidt, \textit{Adolf von Harnack: Liberal Theology at Its Height} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 41.

performance and articulation of human renewal. But in this hermeneutical situation, America as symbol cannot be strictly defined from the vantage of European setters and their colonizing efforts, for America was before the Mayflower and the slaves were before the New World. pg. 209

The result of placing “aboriginals and slaves within the context of a new time” is that time and, indeed, “history [function] as terror.”\textsuperscript{13} Long, against such a hermeneutics of terror and terrorism, seeks to articulate a different philosophy of language and a different hermeneutics of existence, both grounded in a notion of revalorization and an attendant hermeneutic ontology. Such a notion helps one see that the New World is something neither totally European nor fully Indian, neither totally American nor fully slave. The New World is not whole and thus should not be understood in terms of a linguistic monolith. pg. 210

The interpretation of religion in America, an interpretation that can be broadly called American theology, is not unlike its transatlantic counterpart… in that American theology tells of “the saga of the outward acts” of America. Thus American theology is part and parcel of an American mythological language of conquest, a language intent on maintaining the invisibility of the other. pg. 215

\textbf{[Charles H. Long argues that]} Theologies are specific modes of religious discourse that have become overwhelmingly predominant within the Christian church. Theologies are about power, the power of God, but equally about the power of specific forms of discourse about power. These discourses are about the hegemony of power—the distribution and economy of this power in heaven and on earth—whether in the ecclesiastical locus of a pope or, more generally since the modern period, the center of this power in the modern Western world. It is this kind of power which is attacked in the opaque theologies, for this power has justified and sanctified the oppression rendering vast numbers of persons and several cultures subject to economic-military oppression and transparent to the knowledge of the West.\textsuperscript{14} pg. 218

\section*{Interlude on Christology and Race}

If [the human being] is in the likeness of God, and rules the whole earth, and has been granted authority over everything on earth from God, who [can be] his buyer, tell me?

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 6.
\end{flushright}
who [can be] his seller? To God alone belongs this power; or rather, not even to God himself. For his gracious gifts, it says, are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). God would not therefore reduce the human race to slavery, since he himself, when we had been enslaved to sin, spontaneously recalled us to freedom. But if God does not enslave what is free, who is he that sets his own power above God’s? —Gregory of Nyssa, Homily IV on Ecclesiastes pg. 229

Thus, with the advent of modernity, the problem is no longer simply Constantinianism or even neo-Constantianism (as John Howard Yoder or others might say).¹ Rather, it is now the problem of what I would like to call the color of Constantinianism. To raise the issue of color or race in the constitution of modernity is to reckon with how modern political power came to articulate itself not merely in religious terms as if abstracted from the body. It is to reckon with how it does so precisely through the protocols of the body (politic), but now conceived as a body (politic) that bears race. That is, it does so through imagining certain bodies as obedient bodies and other bodies as bodies to be obeyed. The frame of obedient bodies in relationship to bodies to be obeyed, a frame which functions through analytics of race is the frame of the modern body politic. To reckon with this problem… is to reckon with the political economy of whiteness as the perennial, though increasingly invisible, theological problem of our times. pg. 230

“Even though one man be called master and another servant,” [Basil] says, “nevertheless, both in view of our mutual equality of rank and as chattels of our Creator, we are all fellow slaves.” Thus Basil employs a model of mastery and slavery to understand the relationship between the Creator and the creation. pg. 232

This presents a disturbing situation for those who advocate reading the Scriptures theologically, a situation that can no longer be evaded; namely, that one can read Scripture within the theological grammar of the Christian faith and yet do so in such a way as to read within and indeed theologically sanction, if not sanctify, as Michel Foucault says, “the order of things.” pg. 233

As Gregory argues in his Anti- rheticus against Apollinarius and reaffirmed in his Catechetical Orations, it is “the God revealed through the Cross” that is the subject of Christian theology. This God is revealed in the eternal Christ, wounded from the foundation of the world, which includes his temporal wounding, in the economy of redemption. pg. 234

Mediating the task of theologically contemplating the eternal Christ and the ascetical practice of spiritually contemplating the eternal Christ is the task of exegetically contemplating the eternal Christ. What this means is that through the mediation of exegesis, which is to say, through the scriptural contemplation of Christ—a task, mind
you, that comes into full bloom in the work of preaching and the ministry of the sacraments—theological contemplation (or the task of theology) and ascetical contemplation (or the task of sanctification, or living in the Holy Spirit) have, in the end, the same goal: namely, drawing the reader of the Scriptures more deeply into the unfathomable mystery of the eternal Christ. In being drawn into this mystery or in making increasing progress into Christ, the one engaged in theological contemplation and the one engaged in ascetical contemplation—the scholar on the one hand and the layperson on the other; pulpit and pew—are both engaged in the singular task of having their desires shaped and reshaped by the object of their affection. This is accomplished precisely by coming into deeper union with that object, namely, Christ. pg. 234

This new order is the Triune order as “the structure of supreme love.” One enters this new mode of existence (tropos te’s huparxeos), and so dons Christian identity, by entering into the person (hypostasis) of the eternal Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. This is the goal, Gregory contends, of both theology (that discourse that reflects on these matters) and the ascetical or spiritual disciplines as carried out in praktike, the life of Christian praxis. pg. 234

[Gregory’s] denunciation begins by calling into question the chief supposition of the slaveholding system: the anthropological distinction between superior and inferior that grounds the logic of mastery and slavery. Drawing perhaps on the argument of his elder brother Basil, Gregory invokes a doctrine of creation that levels all relations within the created order. Since only God is Lord and Master, and therefore everything is subject to God, there can be within the created order no such distinction between human beings as master and slave. What this means for Gregory is that with respect to itself or within the many relations constitutive of it, human nature is free. pg. 236

In employing these terms [eleutheros (free), autauxousios (self-determining)], Gregory points to human nature’s freedom from tyranny on all levels, both external and internal tyranny. This means that human nature evinces a sovereignty that itself is an image and likeness of the sovereign God, who is bound by no constraints, neither “external” in relationship to creation nor “internal” in relationship either to the Triune persons themselves or to the divine nature that the persons in their relations to each other enact. Thus, in the proper sense, God is free; while in the analogical sense, humans are free—that is, in “analogy” to God. This means that human freedom is an analogue of and as such participates in the divine freedom. pg. 237

Human nature and its worth are a mirror (speculum), and hence “a likeness,” of the infinite. pg. 239
Thus, though Gregory does not quite put it this way, one can say that to enter into Christ is to journey into YHWH’s covenantal guarantee of the freedom of Israel to be YHWH’s people and thus into the freedom of creation to belong to YHWH. pg. 240

It is his vision of Christ himself as the principle Image or Icon of God the Father, the Image in whom human beings have been fashioned to themselves be images of God, that gives him the vantage from which to offer his critique of the ancient practice of slavery. pg. 240

It can thus be said that all particular persons, in the unique and often tragic histories that constitute them as persons, by virtue of their residence in the prototype—or stated differently, by virtue of their histories being embraced from beyond themselves through the incarnation—are of eternal and salvific significance. Christ as prototype frees creation in its fullness—from persons and their histories, to the ecological order, to the animal kingdom—to be a symphonic expression of the freedom of God, for in him the opposition be- tween the universal and particular collapses inasmuch as he is the concrete universal (concretum universale), the One–Many, that sets all particularity free to exist beyond itself or “to be” in and for God. He is the tune—a jazz or blues tune of suffering divine things—that the symphony of creation, the many, plays. pg. 248

**The Birth of Christ**

1. One’s status as a Jew: one in relationship with YHWH by means of YHWH’s covenant with the people of Israel.

2. One’s status as a Gentile: one not in relationship with YHWH by the direct or unmediated means of YHWH’s covenant with the people of Israel.

3. One’s status as a Jewish Christian: one in relationship with YHWH by the unmediated means of YHWH’s covenant with the people of Israel with Jesus of Nazareth (Yeshua) as Messiah with YHWH’s covenant.

4. One’s status as a Gentile Christian: one in relationship with YHWH by means of YHWH’s covenant with the people of Israel but only through the mediation of one from among this covenantal people, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel who as such is head of the Church. pg. 261
Its accomplishment was one in which Western, mainly Gentile, Christians no longer had to interpret their existence inside another story—Israel’s. Rather, its accomplishment was to make Israel’s story a moment within understanding the story of Western civilization as the story of white accomplishment. In this sense, Israel’s story was made white: was made a moment within the mythical-poetic imagination of the West. Stated differently, whiteness is the accomplishment of interpreting the self simply by reference to oneself, and in this respect it is the uniquely “Christian” accomplishment of no longer having to understand Christian identity as unfolding within another reality, the reality of Israel’s covenantal story with YHWH. In other words, insofar as it is a distinctly “Christian” phenomenon, whiteness is the accomplishment of no longer having to leave behind a prior reality so as to enter into another one, although this is precisely what Abram, Hagar, Jacob, Ruth, and the Ethiopian Eunuch, to name just a few, had to do. pg. 262-263

The evangelical mission of Israel, by virtue of its form of life as the people of YHWH’s covenant, is to witness to this covenantal story, which is the story of creation. This is their special election. But it is an election that is not to the exclusion of the world; rather, it is for the inclusion of all, to bring all into relationship with YHWH.15

By contrast, the accomplishment of “Christian” whiteness is the accomplishment of staidness and closure—indeed, of enclosure and thus bondage to race—as the new ground of identity. It is the accomplishment of no longer leaving where you were and going to a place, as YHWH says to Abram, “that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1–4). Whiteness fully accomplishes itself in the violent processes of extending its accomplishment of racial enclosure to nonwhite flesh, such that they become (inferior) racial accomplishments as well, the lesser mirrors that reflect the accomplishments of whiteness back to itself. With regard to populations internal to a given body politic, the

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violent processes of extending the accomplishments of whiteness to nonwhite flesh and to immigrant groups is called assimilation.\textsuperscript{16} pg. 262

Augustine’s performance of autobiography in his Confessions challenges this, inasmuch as it tells the story of the self as the story by which Augustine gave up or exited the story of accomplishment as closure and entered into a different history of accomplishment. Such is his politics of conversion. pg. 262

Since the human being bears the image of God by being in the Image, and along with all created natures comes forth from God, human being is the parchment, as it were, on which God writes God’s own self through and in another. pg. 264

it is worth reiterating: the legislation or writing of the Father, the Father’s own autobiographical text, is the Son of the Trinity, who is eternally with the Father. The yoke between autobiographer and autobiography, between author and text—in short, between eternal Father and eternal Son—is the Holy Spirit, who ever “qualifies” the writing of the Son and the Father’s eternal understanding of himself, as it were, through the Son. pg. 265

In the divine economy is the creature’s existence, an existence that in speaking itself echoes God in whom, to speak apophatically, resides the supraessential fullness from which emerges all that can possibly be. This emergence of creatures, however, their creatio ex nihilo, is, in fact, a creatio ex Deo, because creation or being that is always becoming is a product of the will or energies, the un-fathomable expressivity, or beauty and wisdom, attending God’s esse, or better, God’s supra-esse. In biblical, rather than metaphysical, parlance, should there be creation, it will come to be through the Son: “All things were made through him.” pg. 266

\textbf{The Death of Christ}

As I argue throughout this book, whiteness is not an essence. It names the conclusion of a history, the history of an achievement. The “strength” by which whiteness became a fait accompli is the strength by which Christianity was quite violently severed from its Jewish roots and subsequently redeployed, again quite violently, as the ground of Western

civilization and white cultural nationalism. In short, modern Western civilization is, in the strictest sense of the term, a racial accomplishment, the accomplishment of whiteness. But this accomplishment is a distinctively modern “Christian” accomplishment, an accomplishment rooted in the refusal to understand Christian identity inside Jewish covenantal life. (It follows from this, then, that contrary to the ways in which “Orientalism” has accustomed us to thinking, Jewishness cannot be understood in racial terms either.) Alas, Christianity became the white man’s religion. pg. 285-286

[A myth is] a narrative that not only claims truth for itself but is also seen by a community as credible and authoritative. To hold that a narrative is credible means to understand it as being true, either literally, as is often the case, or in some sense, metaphorically. When the community sees a story as authoritative, the story is understood as setting a paradigm for human behavior. In other words, human beings point to the story to authorize (give authority to) their preferences, to justify or re-create their social patterns, or to guide their decision making. So, . . . stories achieve the status of myth among a given people by the way they are used. (Craig R. Prentiss, ed., Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity: An Introduction [New York: New York University Press, 2003], 5; italics original) pg. 443-444

Yet the articulacy of white existence is possible only by subjecting black life to a violent “hush” and distorting its speech into that of a harsh “scream.” . . . The implication is that violence is the deep structure, one might say, of the logic and practice of identity in America and in modernity. pg. 291

This doctrine says that to rest in Christ is to receive one’s identity from him but through the covenantal mediation of Israel–Mary, . . . Indeed, Christian identity within the horizon of the Christological doctrine of the theotokos cuts against the grain of our modern social imaginary, for, read against the backdrop of modern racial reasoning, Christian identity is necessarily a “contaminated,” “impure” identity, for modernity’s racial logic functions from an analytics of purity. (“To be black,” to reason in modern racial terms, “is not to be white,” and so forth). Insofar as this is the case, Christian identity cannot be the identity of whiteness. It is closer or analogous to the “impurity” of interracial or Mulatto identity. It is in just this sense that the confession of Mary the mother of Jesus as theotokos or mother of God points toward the disruption of modern racial logics, indeed, the disruption of any self-constituting identity formation. Indeed, interpreted within the horizon of modern racial reasoning, Christ’s existence, being both divine and human, is mulattic or “interracial.” And therefore, to exist in him is to exist “interracially.” One need only look to Nazi Germany, to apartheid South Africa, and to nineteenth-century and twentieth-century U.S. miscegenation laws, with their insistence on maintaining the purity of racial blood, to see what a scandal Christianity so understood entails. Such an understanding of Christianity means entering into “interracial” proximity with Jesus the
Galilean-covenantal Jew. This very act—the act of being Christian—would be an apocalyptic act, an act of judgment on the racial construction of identity and of Christianity’s central role from the fifteenth century in constituting raciality as central to the modern world. But also, such an act would be an eschatological act. Indeed, it would be a sign of the “coming body” of redemption… What I am suggesting here also has a basis in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament in which Abram called by YHWH to leave Ur of the Chaldees and thereby to enter into the identity of Abraham is miscegenistic (cf. Gen. 12). This is because the coming to be of the people of Israel is grounded in Abram’s obedience to YHWH’s calling. With YHWH’s calling Abram’s life was disrupted, “contaminated” one might say, and inter-sected. The people of Israel are the product of YHWH’s inter-section with Abram-to-become-Abraham-to-later-become-Israel. They are not prior to the calling. Rather, the calling and Abram’s obedience and relationship to YHWH, the one who is to be the God of Israel, is what produces the people. Thus, Abram’s “interracial” relationship—and here I speak analogically, but it is a real analogy—with YHWH produces the “interracial” people of Israel. In short, the Jewish covenant is inter-communal. From the first, it defies every logic of purity, for it presupposes the coming together of YHWH as Creator and Israel as index of creation. Indeed, the “inter-raciality” of YHWH’s covenant with Israel and thereby with the world is born witness to in the genealogies recorded in the gospels of Matthew (1:1–17) and Luke (3:21–38) in which non-Jews like Tamar and Ruth are included in Jesus’ Jewish genealogy and thus reckoned as Jews. Insofar as the doctrine of the theotokos is meant to highlight the humanity of Jesus, it also highlights the Jewish-covenantal humanity of Jesus and points to overcoming, from the vantage point of the covenant of the tyranny of logics of purity, the quintessential modern expression of which is whiteness and the racial outlooks it produces to maintain itself. pg. 447-448

Thus, the American political economy… is an economy of sacrifice, indeed, an economy that is calibrated through and, for this reason, requires sacrifice to maintain its totality, its social order. pg. 305

eological discourse, Douglass’s indictment might be formulated as follows: Scripture and its theological significations have in actuality been made to function as the “immaterial” or “spiritual” superstructure that sanctions the “material” structures of power in the American social order and its political economy of slavery. pg. 305

Christian thought has tended to ventriloquize the American social order rather than witness to an alternative form of sociopolitical existence. pg. 307*

Modern theology’s fault, in other words, has often been in being a sounding brass and a clanging symbol with regard to how Christ relocates the world within God through his
obedient love in the Spirit for the one he called Father. Such is to be the new ground of
identity. pg. 308

This, however, begs the question of what it means to have an Easter identity, what it
means to exist “dispossessively” and not “powerfully.” I contend, following a Trinitarian
logic, it means living pentecostally or pneumatically. It means living in the Spirit. pg.
308*

A crucial sign of the coming of the Spirit, and therefore of conformity to the cross, is the
ability both to understand and to speak languages that are not one’s own. This sign
indicates the reversal of the judgment that descends on humankind in Genesis 11 whereby
God allows the various peoples of the world to remain trapped within their various self-
enclosures of political and cultural national-isms. Such was the divine judgment against
this way of being in the world. Pentecost indicates God’s reversal of this judgment. pg.
309

Through Christ, the seed of Abraham, the world in its entirety is conscripted into Israel’s
destiny, which turns out to be the world’s destiny. From this it becomes clear that Israel’s
destiny is not solipsistic; its election is to be itself precisely by being more than itself: that
is, by being for the world. It is to be a nonnationalistic nation, a different kind of people
—the people of YHWH. This nonsolipsistic destiny is brought to fruition in Christ, who
is at once child of Israel and Son of God/Son of man. … Such is the “pentecostalization”
of the world, its being drawn into his incarnate or “passionate” way of existence into a
new mode of speech and identity. pg. 309

To restate the point: what I gesture toward is a Christian theology of Israel and of the
nations that un-asks and then re-asks the question of identity by situating the question
within the horizon of creation’s destiny, as is said in Orthodox Christianity, to be
divinized. Such an understanding of identity, which has profound ethical consequences,
leads to an understanding of nationhood and peoplehood that is not grounded in the
politics of (political and cultural) nationalism. … Being thus enraptured, creation is
restored to its proper theological identity. This is signified by its ability by the grace of
the Spirit to speak a “foreign” or adopted language, the language of divine sonship, the
language of God, as its own. Nationalism, or identity as construed in binary terms and
therefore as self-enclosure, is broken. pg. 310

it can be said that contemporary approaches to the self and to the question of identity
often fail us because modern theology has in crucial ways failed us. It has failed us in that
it has too often been nothing more than a cultural discourse, the discourse of “white”
cultural-political nationalism that has had the privilege of not having to self-identify in
this way. … What I mean is that what makes “white” theology “white” is that it does not
do its work pentecostally; that is, it does not do it from within the distinctively Jewish-Christian horizon of the miracle of speech, the overturning of nationalism, the theological refounding of identity within the person of Jesus of Nazareth. pg. 311*

Zionism of the modern state of Israel. … is a species of modern nationalism and traffics in modern discourses of racial and cultural difference, as well as in discourses of Orientalism. It thus bears the marks of the contradictions and problems of modern identity formation. Zionism reflects, one might say following Foucault, the modern nationalist quest to police national borders by policing bios itself. The significance of this is that in Zionism Jewish identity comes to be understood as an ambiguous and even conflicted racial identity, an identity both white and nonwhite, of both the Occident and the Orient. Jewish identity is no longer understood principally as a theological identity tied to an understanding of covenant and election. Within this framework, Israel’s election is for the sake of YHWH’s love of all. Theologically understood, then, Israel is a nation without analogy; they are a nonnationalistic (particularly in the modern sense of the term) nation. pg. 451

…what sets the covenant of Zion apart from the covenant of Sinai is that, with the former, because of the faithfulness of David in adhering to the stipulations of the covenant of Sinai, the Mosaic covenant, YHWH binds himself to uphold the covenantal relationship with Israel even if Israel at any point is unfaithful to the stipulations of the covenant. Thus, what the covenant of Zion represents is this: YHWH’s relationship with Israel cannot be broken; the covenant is irrevocable inasmuch as YHWH himself swears to uphold it even if this entails YHWH’s suffering through it. pg. 315

Jesus is not the religio-moral exemplar of white accomplishment and of the supremacy and advance of Western civilization. pg. 315

“Indeed, for rabbinic culture, the sense of Scripture is never predetermined: rather, everything depends on creative readings of its inherent, God-given possibilities.”17 pg. 321

Understood as a phenomenon of the modern Christian West, the violence of modernity is calibrated to overcome, in the interests of constituting “the People” as nation, the residual Jewishness within Christianity. To overcome this Jewishness, as I discuss in part I of this book, is to constitute modern freedom, “[the] gage and emblem of [which] is [sovereignty or] the sovereign state.” It is to constitute Christianity as property of the West. pg. 324

Paul Gilroy, Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2000); and David Theo Goldberg, Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993). What Gilroy refers to as the “raciology” of rationality, Goldberg calls “racialized discourse.” What is important in Gilroy’s and Goldberg’s respective understandings of “raciological rationality” and “racialized discourse” is that whiteness functions by abstracting nonwhite flesh into its reality. This is the logic of mastery. By contrast, in Christ, YHWH as creator enters into a reality that “naturally” is not YHWH’s own. In this respect, in Christ, YHWH takes the form of the servant. pg. 453-454

[Jarena Lee asserts] For as unseemly as it may appear now-a-days for a woman to preach, it should be remembered that nothing is impossible with God [cf. Luke 1:36–38; italics mine]. And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper, for a woman to preach? seeing the Savior died for the woman as well as the man. If a man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of a half one? as those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear. Did not Mary first preach the risen Saviour [cf. Matt. 28:1–10; Mark 16:9–10; Luke 24:10; John 20:18], and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity—hangs not all our hopes on this, as argued by St. Paul? Then did not Mary, a woman, preach the gospel? for she preached the resurrection of the crucified Son of God. (Life, 36) pg. 339*

To enter into Christ’s flesh through the Holy Spirit’s pentecostal overshadowing is to exit the gendered economy and protocols of modern racial reasoning. pg. 340*

**Postlude on Christology and Race**


In such a schema, philautia functions as a substitute for a doctrine of creation inasmuch as the self-constituting I creates a reality and draws all else into it by making it utility or assigning it a use value in the world of the I. In this false doctrine of creation, the world is both one and many before the Triune God as God’s image gets distorted into a violent opposition between homogeneity and heterogeneity, unity and difference. Read in our twenty-first-century context, a context that is the offspring of the age of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, Ep. 2, it can be said, unmasks whiteness as that philautia that assigns use value to all else according to an analytics of race that tyrannically divides
creation. … In modernity, the enfleshing of Christ the Word has been in the interests of conquest or expansion and the forging of the Occident. \(^{18}\) pg. 345

At the level of the human, this means that human identity as Christ has instantiated it can be called an intrahuman identity. In such a theological understanding of human identity, human beings are most fully themselves only as they receive themselves from other human beings, for in receiving oneself from another—that is, in subsisting in another on the basis of shared humanity and thus on the basis of a shared, nonidolatrous status as creature in relationship to the Creator—one in fact receives God and thereby is most fully oneself. All human beings in this perspective become icons or bearers of God in their humanity. pg. 353

A new story of origins, or of birth, is in Christ’s flesh given to all. Hence, it is from inside Israel’s covenantal story, rather than from some general humanism or cosmopolitanism, that Christ in bringing Israel’s story to crescendo reintegrates the differences of creation into their intended one–many structure. The distinctive harmonics of Christ’s flesh therefore lies in Israel’s covenantal story. pg. 354

To be in Christ, both contend, is to be drawn out of tyrannical narratives of identity (and the social orders they uphold), such as modernity’s narrative of racial identity generally and the pseudo-theological narrative of whiteness particularly, and into the identity of Israel as performed in Christ’s Jewish flesh. pg. 355

God “leads” (anago*) Abram–Abraham to love humankind, but Abram–Abraham used to lead (ago*) others. Within its varied lexical range, the latter word, ago*, admits the sense of taking someone or something with one as one might do a captive, a slave, or the booty of war. It has the sense of leading someone or something forcibly away. This is how Abram–Abraham ordered his relationships before encountering YHWH. He related to others according to a distinction within humanity that placed him above others. By contrast, YHWH leads (anago*) Abram–Abraham to love humankind in such a way that in so doing he “restores him” at the level of his created human nature to his “original shape.” pg. 357

…in Christ material life, including bodies, is not done away with in the economy of redemption. Rather, it is transfigured. Bodies are placed within a new ordo, or social arrangement, the arrangement of Christ’s flesh, and thus are made to signify so as to disclose God’s glory. pg. 359

the transfiguration is about the transfiguration of history itself, suturing the gap that has arisen because of the sinful Fall of humankind between the visible, material, and corporeal and the invisible, nonsensible (or what Maximus calls the intelligible), and incorporeal. With the Fall and the economy of the sin it inaugurates, what is meant to be an icon in relation- ship to the divine image becomes idol, a surface on which gazes can be frozen in plays of power. The divine economy of the transfiguration is meant to transfigure the economy of the Fall and thereby open up a new history. This new divine history or economy is not held hostage to history but, rather, is one that “exceeds all historical circumstances in order to reveal the meaning of history itself” (48). pg. 464

Because the church does what God does, it is God’s image. … The church is the image of God because it participates in God’s translation of himself on the plane of creaturely material life. pg. 364

Rather, it overturns the tyrannical logic of racialization with its covenantal logic of identity, for Jewish flesh is covenantal flesh tied to the calling and promise of YHWH, a calling and promise that Christ instantiates and through him the world enters.29 To enter into Christ is to enter into YHWH’s covenant, and this entry entails leaving behind through feats of ascetical struggle racialized identity. It is to exit whiteness and the identities that whiteness creates. pg. 366

[Says Maximus.] Now nothing is either so fitting for justification or so apt for divinization, if I can speak thus, and nearness to God as mercy offered with pleasure and joy from the soul to those who stand in need. For if the Word has shown that the one who is in need of having good done to him is God—for as long, he tells us, as you did it for one of these least ones, you did it for me [cf. Matt. 25:31–46]—on God’s very word, then, he will much more show that the one who can do good and who does it is truly God by grace and participation because he has taken on in happy imitation the energy and characteristic of his own doing good. (CM 24; PG 91.713A–B; MCSW 211–12) pg. 367

The warrant, he says in effect, is God’s hominization or entry into poverty; it is in poverty and with the poor that God announces his presence. This is not merely a “preferential option for the poor,” as many theologians and religious scholars came to talk about these matters when liberation theology established itself as a discourse of modern academic theology in the 1960s and 1970s. It’s more radical than even they spoke of, for in Maximian theological terms, the poor man is God. Maximus makes this claim with a full Trinitarian and Christological discursive apparatus upholding it, an apparatus embedded in a spiritual or what he called a mystical theology:

And if the poor man is God [Kai ei theos ho ptoçchos], it is because of God’s condescension in becoming poor for us [dia te'n tou di' he'ma's ptoçcheusantos theou
sugkatabasiv] and in taking into himself [kai eis heauton] by means of his own suffering along with us [sumpathôs] the sufferings of each one [pathê hekastou] and “until the end of time,” always suffering out of goodness and by virtue of the divine mystery [aiei di’ agathote’ta paschontos mustikôs] in proportion to each one’s suffering [kata te’n analogian tou en hekastô pathous]. All the more reason, then, will that one be God or divinized who heals the hurts of those who suffer, doing so by his actions in loving men in imitation of God [kata mime’siv tou theou]. In this, the one who is divinized and thus heals the hurts of those who suffer shows that in his disposition—and while safeguarding the difference between he and God [kata analogian te’s so’tike’s pronoias]—he nevertheless has the same power of saving Providence that God has. (CM 24; PG 91.713A–B; MCSW 212). pg. 367-368

By entering into poverty—by having poverty articulate the wealth of divinity—the poverty–wealth binary and the class consciousness and racial sensibilities that function within this binary are broken down and re-ordered in Christ’s flesh. Thus, the sign that a new social ordo has dawned with the advent of Christ is that those who are being divinized unite themselves to the poor since that is where Christ is. Add to this Maximus’s comment that in healing the human condition, Christ emptied himself (kenosis) to take the form of the slave, and one is led to conclude that the site of God’s wealth is Jesus’ poor and enslaved flesh. Having taken on the form of poverty and the form of the slave, God in Christ is the impoverished slave. As such, God enters into the hurts of those who suffer so that from inside those hurts, being fully identified with them to the point of communicating his divinity through them, he heals them. It is the poor slave, one might say, who is closest to God and so reveals God. pg. 368*

… theology must rediscover itself as a suffering discourse and relinquish its identity as a discourse of possessive power through which class consciousness and racial sensibilities still work. pg. 369

Epilogue

Modernity/coloniality is quintessentially the product of an ideological usage of Jesus. pg. 372*

Theology must do its work no longer under the preconditions of the “forgetting of being.” Rather, it must do its work in company with and out of the disposition of those facing death, those with the barrel of a shotgun to their backs, for this is the disposition of the crucified Christ, who is the revelation of the triune God. pg. 377