THEOLOGY K VERSION 2.0:

I accept the role of the ballot and propose an alternative method for understanding the unique oppression and social death that confronts the black body. Only by ontologically identifying the oppressed body with the broken and crucified savior of Christ we move forward.

This involves interplay between understanding the Christ through the lens of the oppressed and understanding the worth of those oppressed through the lens of Christ. We need to see the relation between the Cross and the Lynching tree. Christ is not a God of the oppressor, he was the God who was oppressed. **CONE[[1]](#footnote-1):** The cross and the lynching tree are separated by nearly 2,000 years. One is the universal symbol of Christian faith; the [lynching tree] other is the quintessential symbol of black oppression in American. Though both are symbols of death, one represents a message of hope and salvation, while the other signifies he negation of that message by white supremacy. Despite the obvious similarities between Jesus’ death on a cross and the death of thousands of black men and women strung up to die on a lamppost or tree, relatively few people, apart from black poets, novelists, and other reality-seeing artist, have explored the symbolic connections. Yet, I believe this is a challenge we must face. What is at stake is the credibility and promise of the Christian gospel and the hope that we may heal the wounds of racial violence that continue to divide our churches and our society. In its heyday, the lynching [is] of black Americans was no secret. It was a public spectacle, often announced in advance in news-papers and over radios, attracting crowds of up to twenty thousand people. An unspeakable crime it is a memory that most white Americans would prefer to forget. For African Americans the memory of disfigured black bodies “swinging in the southern breeze” is so painful that they, too, try to keep these horrors buried deep down in their consciousness, until, like a dormant volcano, they erupt uncontrollably, causing profound agony and pain. But as with the evils of chattel slavery and Jim Crow segregation, blacks and whites and other Americans who want to understand the true meaning of the American experience need to remember lynching. To forget this atrocity leaves us with a fraudulent perspective of this society and of the meaning of the Christian gospel for this nation. While the lynching tree is seldom discussed or depicted, the cross is one of the most visible symbols of America’s Christian origins. Many Christians embrace the conviction that Jesus died on the cross to redeem humankind from sin. Taking our place, Jesus suffered on the cross and gave “his life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). We are “now justified by [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith” (Rom 3:24-25). The cross is the great symbol of the Christian narrative of salvation. Unfortunately, during the course of 2,000 years of Christian history, this symbol of salvation has been detached from any reference to the ongoing suffering and oppression of human beings—those whom Ignacio Ellacuria, the Salvadoran martyr, called “the crucified peoples of history.” The cross has been transformed into a harmless, non-offensive ornament that Christians wear around their necks. R[r]ather than reminding us of the “cost of discipleship,” it has become a form of “cheap grace,” an easy way to salvation that doesn’t force us to confront the power of Christ’s message and mission. Until we can see the cross and he lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a “re-crucified” black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy. I was born in Arkansas, a lynching state. During my childhood, white supremacy ruled supreme. White people were virtually free to do anything to blacks with impunity. The violent crosses of the Ku Klux Klan were a familiar reality, the white racists preached a dehumanizing segregated gospel in the name of Jesus’ cross every Sunday. And yet in rural black churches I head a different message, as preachers proclaimed the message of the suffering Jesus and the salvation accomplished in his death on the cross. I noticed how the passion and energy of the preacher increased whenever he talked about the cross, and the congregation responded with outburst of “Amen” and “Hallelujah” that equaled the intensity of the sermon oration. People shouted, clapped their hands, and stomped their feet, as if a powerful, living reality of God’s Spirit had transformed them from nobodies in white society to somebodies in the black church. This black religious experience, with all its tragedy and hope, was the reality in which I was born and raised. Its paradoxes and incongruities have shaped everything I have said and done. If I have anything to say to the Christian community in America and around the world, it is rooted in the tragic and hopeful reality that sustains and empowers black people to resist the forces that seem designed to destroy every ounce of dignity in their souls and bodies.

Thus, conceptualizing the intrinsic worth and dignity of all bodies needs to begin here. This is not the Christianity of systematic oppression utilized and employed by slavers. The two religious traditions are divided at the very start. **FRANKLIN:**[[2]](#footnote-2)

The characterization of Afro-American culture in the U.S. found in Slavery and Social Death is not far removed from these earlier statements. Where Genovese supports his own views of Afro-American "accommodations and moral com promises," Patterson quotes form Roll, Jordan, Roll (pp. 65, 94, 296). And despite the fact that lengthy critiques of Genovese's interpretation of slave religion have appeared by James Anderson (in the pages of this journal) Paul Escott, and Thomas Webber, which clearly demonstrated that all forms of resistance against enslave ment were sanctioned by the religious beliefs of the Afro-American slaves; Patterson totally accepts Genovese's depiction of slave religion. (Paul Escott, Slavery Remembered, 1979; Thomas Webber, Deep Like the Rivers, 1978) [Block Quote Started] I am in complete agreement with Genovese's penetrating interpretation of the role of religion in the slave South. Where I differ from him, and from others such as Lawrence W. Levine and Albert J. Raboteau who with equal skill and persuasion have emphasized the creative and positive side of religion for the slave, is in my interpretation of the specific means by which fundamentalist Christianity became at one and the same time a spiritual and social salvation for the slaves and an institutional support for the order of slavery (p. 74). [Block Quote Ended]In this instance, Patterson chooses to ignore the work of James Cone, Gayraud Wilmore, and other black and Latin American "liberation theologians" who have convincingly shown that the Christian theology of the enslaved and oppressed was (and is) completely different from that of the slavers. The dualism in Christian beliefs in the slave South can be traced directly back to the fundamental dualism found in Christian teachings from the time of St. Paul. Christianity is a two-edged sword that could be used to cut down the oppressors or to legitimize the subjugation of oppressed. The religion that served as the "spiritual and social salvation of the slaves" was not the same version of Christianity that served as the "institutional support for the order of slavery." (James Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, 1969; Gayraud Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, 1972)

It is not just that these traditions are different. They are inverted. Christianity is defined by paradox. POWER in weakness, BORN again through death. These inversion are critical if we want to do more than just declare the oppressed should become like the oppressors. **CONE (2):** The paradox of a crucified savior lies at the heart of the Christian story. That paradox was particularly evident in the first century when crucifixion was recognized as the particular form of execution reserved by the Roman Empire for insurrectionists and rebels. It was a public spectacle accompanied by torture and shame—one of the most humiliating and painful deaths ever devised by human beings. That Jesus died this way required special explanation. It made no rational or even spiritual sense to say that hope came out of “a place called Golgotha . . . a place of the skull.” For the Jews of Jesus’ time the punishment of crucifixion held special opprobrium, given their belief that “anyone hung on a tree is under Gods curse” (Deut 21:23). Thus, St. Paul said that the “word of the cross is foolishness” to the intellect and a stumbling block to established religion. The cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it *inverts* the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last. That God could “make a way out of no way” In Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk. Enslaved blacks who first heard the gospel message seized on the power of the cross. Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence *in* the contradictions of black life—that transcendent presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that *ultimately*, in God’s eschatological future, they would not be defeated by the “troubles of this world,” no matter how great and painful their suffering. Believing this paradox, this absurd claim of faith was only possible through God’s “amazing grace” ad the gift of faith, grounded in humility and repentance. There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others. The cross was God’s critique of power—white power—with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat.

This creates competition. Absent starting with value inversion of the K, the current power structure simply reasserts itself because strength wins over weakness. It is only in the Christian paradox that God’s weakness is stronger than human strength, and that it is when we are weak that we are strong, that there can be any final critique of white power through powerless love.

This is an empirical fact, it is though black churches that Black identity was meaningfully preserved. **CONE (3):** If the blues offered an affirmation of humanity, religion offered a way for black people to find hope. “Our churches are where we dip our tired bodies in cool springs of hope,” wrote Richard Wright in *Twelve Million Voices,* “where we retain our wholeness and humanity despite the blows of death. . . . “ On Sunday morning at church, black Christians spoke back in song, sermon, and prayer against the “faceless, merciless, apocalyptic vengefulness of the massed white mob,” to show that trouble and sorrow would not determine our final meaning. African Americans embraced history of Jesus, the crucified Christ, whose death they claimed paradoxically gave them life, just as God resurrected him in the life of the earliest Christian community. While the lynching tree symbolized white power and “black death, the cross symbolized divine power and black life”—God overcoming the power of sin and death. “It is only when we are within the walls of our churches that we can wholly be ourselves,” Wright correctly said, that we keep alive a sense of our personalities in relation to the total world in which we live, that we maintain a quiet and constant communion with all that is deepest in us.” At church black people sang of having “been in the storm so long,” “tossed and driv’n,” “buked an’ scorned,” and “talked about sho’s you bor,” “sometimes up,” “sometimes down,” and “sometimes almost level to the groun’.” “Our gong to church on Sunday is like placing our ear to another’s chest to hear the unquenchable murmur of the human heart.” African Americans sang of having traveled a “lonesome journey,” through slavery and segregation, often tired, hungry and homeless, “rambling and running,” not knowing where to “roam”—not knowing where to “make my getaway” to find a safe place, free of the “noise of the bloodhounds on my trail.” Blacks have been “tore down,” “broken-hearted,” “troubled in de mind,” “way down yonder” where “I coundn’t hear nobody pray,” I a valley so deep and dark where death is like “a hammer ringin’ on a coffin,” “a pale hose an’ rider,” “ a chariot swigin’ low,” and “a train blowin’ at the station.” In that era, the lynching tree joined the cross as the most emotionally charged symbols I the African American community—symbols that represented both death and the promise of redemption, judgment and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope. Both the cross and the lynching tree represented the worst in human being and at the same time “an unquenchable ontological thirst” for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning.

Next, the religious methodology is key to addressing social death. Social death is not a complete picture. The black slave while socially dead defined themself within a fractured picture. The religious paradigm is critical to providing that paradigm which fractures social death and soul murder. **MASON:**[[3]](#footnote-3) Patterson acknowledges that social death describes slavery in the ideal. Actually existing slavery was more complex, “laden with tension and contradiction in the dynamics of each of its constituent elements.” Reality was more complex than theory because most slaves refused to believe that they were dead, socially or otherwise. Most were, in Patterson’s words, “desperate for life.” Although slavery crushed some individual slaves, there is, he contends, “absolutely no evidence from the long and dismal annals of slavery to suggest that any *group* of slaves” internalized their masters’ way of seeing things. Like Aurora and Adonis, slaves evaded and resisted violence and fought to maintain ties of kinship and affection. Like them, slaves struggled to assert their human dignity. Patterson writes that because the slave’s “kin relations were illegitimate, they were all the more cherished. Because he was consider degraded, he was all the more infused with the yearning for dignity. Because of his formal isolation and liminality, he was acutely sensitive to the realities of community.” Slaves wanted nothing more than to become “legitimate members of society, to be socially born again.” They longed for social resurrection. I see social death as more a literary metaphor than a social theory. Metaphors are by nature inexact, both allusive and elusive, and are not to be taken literally. As a metaphor, social death powerfully evokes those aspects of the social order that did the most to shape and define the slaves’ outer lives. It has little to say, however, about the slaves’ inner lives, despite Patterson’s eloquent acknowledgment of slaves’ psychological autonomy. My understanding of the psychology of slavery draws inspiration from the writings of Nell Irvin Painter. Painter has insisted that a “fully loaded cost accounting” of slavery demand an examination of the psychology of slavery. She argues that the violence and sexual abuse that slaves endured, especially during childhood, had damaging psychological consequences. She cite modern studies of those who have suffered repeated beatings and sexual exploitation to show that victims experience “certain fairly predictable effects . . . feelings of degradation and humiliation . . . anger, hatred, and self-hatred.” Since “it is doubtful that slaves possessed an immunity that victims today lack,” they would have exhibited similar symptoms. This, she writes, constitutes “soul murder.” Painter takes the words *soul murder* literally, arguing that “the beating and raping of enslaved people was neither secret nor metaphorical.” While this was as true of the Cape as it was of the American South about which Painter writes, soul murder can equally well be paired with social death as a complementary metaphor. As with social death, soul murder was not absolute, and it was reversible. How closely the slaves’ psychological condition in a particular time and place approached soul murder depended on how well slaves and slave owners asserted their contradictory interests, as Painter admits. Southern slaves who were imbedded in networks of kin and fictive kin or who had been touched by religious faith survived slavery “in a human and humane manner.” This was sometimes the case at the Cape as well. Things generally turned out badly for the salves; such was the balance of power in slave societies. But things were rarely as bad as they might have been, because, like Aurora and Appollos, most slaves never ceased to fight for life in the face of soul murder and social death.

Your emphasis on the outer self, is philosophically competitive with the dual emphasis on the reclaiming the inner and outer person of my methodology. **MASON (2)** illustrates the principle by recounting the story of Valntryn Snitle in South Africa. The records tell us little about Valentyn Snitler, but we do know that he was impetuous and devout, a volatile combination in one both young and enslaved. One day in the spring of 1832, during a heated argument with his master, Jacobus Stephanus Vermaak, Snitler blurted out an eloquent and audacious statement of faith, for which his master beat him. A few days after the quarrel, having accompanied his master to town on an errand, he stole away to register a complaint with the protector of slaves in Uitenhage. Vermaak, Snitler told the protector, had whipped him unjustly. His master, he said, had given him ten stripes with a cat-o’-nine-tails, despite his please that he was too sick to work. When the protector learned that Vermaak was also in Uitenhage, he invited him to tell his side of the story. Vermaak said that insolence, not indisposition, provoked the beating. On the day in question, he had been unhappy with Snitler’s work. When he spoke to him about it, Snitler had answered “in a very impertinent manner that he was not well.” Vermaak said that he had then ordered him to take some medicine, and he had refused. Vermaak told him that his choices were to accept the medication or go back to work. At that, Vermaak continued, Snitler had “commenced to cursing and swearing, and holding his finger in [his] face said ‘We have been created by one God and I am as good as you.’” This had been too much for Vermaak, who had reached for the whip. Snitler, the protector reported, at first denied Vermaak’s version of events, but, when pressed, admitted that it was true. Others, he said, had encouraged him to press charges that he now acknowledged were false. On hearing this confession, Vermaak forgave his slave, bringing the case to a close. This story shares its basic plot with hundreds of others in the archives of the Cape Colony’s protectors of slaves. An exasperated slave spoke too directly to his master, who interpreted outrage as insolence and punished his slave accordingly. The slave complained about the beating to a protector of slaves, who conducted an investigation. The slave’s insubordination having been established, the slave dutifully acknowledged that he had been in the wrong and deserve his punishment. This story like the others, is about violence and degradation, soul murder and social death. It is also about the ambiguities of resistance. Snitler, like most slaves, found it impossibly fully to accept the ideologies and social practice of the slave system; and he found it equally difficult to completely to reject them. The notion that slaves were innately inferior to their owners and owned them unquestioning obedience was, like the whip, part of the fabric of daily lie. So, too, were the slaves’ anger and resentment. The result was often the sort of double consciousness that Snitler displayed. He recognized the injustice of slavery and his own inherent equality with his master; at the same time, circumstances forced him to concede that he owed his master some degree of deference and obedience. Two warring souls in one dark body. If the story’s plot is mundane, its details are not. Snitler’s stunning declaration of faith and assertion of equality direct our attention to the way religion shaped a particular slave’s ideas about the world and his place in it. Snitler was one of the thousands of slaves who had been exposed to one or both of the dominant religions of the Cape, Christianity and Islam. We cannot know whether the God that he invoked in his confrontation with Vemaak was the God of the Gospels or of the Quaran; nor can we know whether he was a formal convert to one of these faiths or simply a man who had somehow learned something about one of each of them. We do know that he had absorbed two of the central teachings upon which the faiths are built. He believed that there was but one God and that this creator God had made him, in some essential sense, Vermaak’s equal. These lessons supplied the ideas and the language that he used during his confrontation with his master. As Snitler saw it, God had not created inferior and superior orders of humankind, and Vermaak had no business acting as if God had. In refusing to submit to his master’s unreasonable command and in asserting his dignity as his master’s equal, he rejected social death and demonstrated that his soul was very much alive. Theology trumped ideology, if only for the moment.

This creates competition between methodological approaches in understanding social death. For Christianity it is not some faculty or position that gives humans worth. It is the fact that each body was created directly and lovingly in the image of God. In the image of that communal Trinitarian God which exists first and foremost in community with itself. Thus it is not a faculty we possess but the fact that God chooses to enter into special relationship with the oppressed that generates their unique and inviolable claim of self-worth. We need to start here. We cannot attempt liberation until we know what true life is liberated to.

**And**, only my advocacy can solve the pessimism-optimism paradox. Optimism requires blindness to truths of social death. It forces us to say the situation is really not as bad as it is, and so encourages us not to wash the world, but “white-wash” it[[4]](#footnote-4). However the pessimistic perspective removes all motivation in the fight for justice. It can do nothing but portray the world in all its hopeless current state. Christianity splits the dilemma and presents the way out. It works through the paradox to create space for liberatory acts. **CONE (4**): The more black people struggled against white supremacy, the more they found in the cross the spiritual power to resist the violence they so often suffered. They came to know, as the black historian Lerone Bennett wrote, “at the deepest level . . . what it was like to be crucified. . . . And more: that there were some things in this world that are worth being crucified for.” Just as Jesus did not deserve to suffer, they knew they did not deserve it; yet faith was the one thing white people could not control or take away. “In our collective outpourings of song and prayer, the fluid emotions of others make us felt h strength in ourselves. . . .” They shouted, danced, clapped their hands and stomped their feet as they bore witness to the power of Jesus’ cross which had given them an identity far more meaningful than the harm that white supremacy could do them. No matter whose songs they sang or what church they belonged to, they infused them with their own experience of suffering and transformed what they received into their own. “Jesus keep Me near the Cross,” “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?” and other white Protestant evangelical hymns did not sound or feel the same when blacks and whites sang them because their life experiences were so different. When black people were challenged by white supremacy, with the lynching tree staring down at them, where else could they turn for hope that their resistance would ultimately succeed? Penniless, landless, jobless, and with no political and social power in the society, what could black people do except to fight with cultural and religious power and pray that God would support them in their struggle for freedom? Black people “stretched their hands to God,” because they had nowhere else to turn. Because of their experience of arbitrary violence, the cross was and is a redeeming and comforting image for many black Christians. If the God of Jesus’ cross is found among the least, the crucified people of the world, then God is also found among those lynched in American history.

This is a radical solution that can maintained only within Christian faith. The supernatural element is necessary to fracture the assumption that social death is just all there is. Oppression may have always existed, nevertheless the oppression is utterly hostile to the way the world is meant to be. This must be the first move of any social movement. One cannot tack the K on after the fact, because the central thesis is that only the K can provide the critical impetus to even start moving in the right direction.

Lastly, the supernaturalism of Christianity alone opens up space for transcendence without abandoning embodiment. In the person of Christ the Transcedental is combined forever and finally with the body. **CONE (5):** Consumed by a passion to express myself about the liberating power of the black religious experience, I continued to write and speak about this spiritual revolution erupting in the cultural and political contexts of the African American community. This message of liberation was “something like a burning fire shut up in my bones,” to use the language of Jeremiah; “I [was] weary with holding it in, and I [could not]” (Jer. 20:9). All fo m work since that first book has involved an effort to relate the gospel and the black experience-the experience of oppression as well as the struggle to find liberation and meaning. Inevitably, it has led to these reflections on the cross and the lynching tree: the essential symbol of Christianity and the quintessential emblem of black suffering. To live meaningfully, we must see light beyond the darkness. As Micea Eliade put it, “Life is not possible without an opening towards the transcendent.” The lynching era was the Heart of Darkness for the African American community. It was a time when fragments of meaning were hard to find. Some found meaning in the blues and others in collective political resistance, but for many people it was religion that helped them to look beyond their tragic situation to a time when they would “cross the river of Jordan,” “lay down dat heavy load, and “walk in Jerusalem just like John.” The Christian gospel is God’s message of liberation in an unredeemed and tortured world. As such it is a transcendent reality that lifts our spirits to a world far removed from the suffering of this one. It is an eschatological vision, an experience of transfiguration, such as Jesus experienced at his baptism (Mk1:9-11) or on Mt. Tabor (Mk 9:2-8), just because he set out on the road to Jerusalem, the road that led to Calvary. Paul had such a vision—“a light from heaven”—as he traveled the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3). Malcolm X, while in prison, had a vision of God, and so too did Martin King hear God speaking to him in his kitchen at a moment of crisis during the Montgomery bus boycott. For all four, the revelatory moment in their lives helped to prepare them to face their deaths, sustained by the conviction that this was not the end but the beginning of a new life of meaning. To paraphrase Eliade, once contact with the transcendent is found, a new existence in the world becomes possible.

This does not ignore ethical imminence. Instead it allows a dialectic between transcendence and immanence that provides space for ultimate salvation. **CONE (6):** And so the transcendent and the immanent, heaven and earth, must be held together in critical, dialectical tension, each one correcting the limits of the other. The gospel is *in* the world, but it is not *of* the world; that is, it can be seen in the black freedom movement, but it is much more than what we see in our struggles for justice. God’s word is *paradoxical*, or ,as the old untutored black preacher used to say, “inscrutable,” a mystery that one can nether control nor fully understand. It is here and not here, revealed and hidden at the same time. “Turuly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Isa 45:15). Nowhere is that paradox, that “inscrutability,” more evident than in the cross. A symbol of death and defeat, God turned it into a sign of liberation and new life. The cross is the most empowering symbol of God’s loving solidarity with the “least of these,” the unwanted in society who suffer daily form great injustices. Christians must face the cross as the terrible tragedy it was and discover in it, through faith and repentance, the liberating joy of eternal salvation.

The symbol is empowering since God was physically eaten yet came up – best way to promote a liberation strategy since it encourages the inversion of all forms of value. God might have been divine or not, but that God could have his back to the wall is a boast for all insurgents forever. God is a rebel, not just a King.

Additionally prefer because: It is in the paradox of Christian religion that the intellectual resources exist to reverse the anti-black logic of western philosophy as encapsulated by the apollonairianism of Aristotle. Until we address this symbolism there can be no meaningful or full philosophic engagement. Only through a black process theology can we properly resituate ethical questions. We must address the symbolic connection between blackness and badness to ever have any hope of solving issues of racism. Any successful move if it is to interact with and critique the western system will require a progress oriented eschatological theology of paradox by which we recover the positive symbolism of darkness present in the mythic and religious pre-hellenistic world. **BALTAZAR:**[[5]](#footnote-5) While the practical orientation of this book is the understanding of the philosophic and religious roots of racism in the West, the importance of a theology of blackness goes beyond the problem of racism. It affects the very approach to theology itself. For the past two thousand years, Western rational theology influenced by the Hellenic philosophic ideal of lucidity, clarity of form, and explicit statement and definition has been fleeing from the mythical and mystical as being vague, inexact, undefinable and as being unsusceptible to formulation and systematization. It was a theology that attempted to be “scientific” instead of being “mystical.” In short, rational theology was a theology of light rather than a theology of darkness. Its analogue for knowledge is sight rather than hearing; its object is “form” rather than “symbol.” A theology of blackness attempts to show that knowledge in the scriptures is through hearing rather than sight. Its wisdom is not conventional wisdom or the wisdom of common sense which is what Hellenic philosophy provides. Its wisdom is foolishness to men, hence, it is appropriately symbolized as darkness. [For] White theology has translated the truths of scriptures in terms of the categories of conventional wisdom. God, for example, is presented as Being instead of non-Being, as Presence instead of a Deus Absconditus, as “I am who I am” instead of an “I will be who I will be.” The whole of conventional theology is built on conceptual reason as man’s highest faculty, hence, it is a rational theology, instead of on imagination which, from a different epistemological perspective, could be superior to reason, hence theology as mystery. In conventional wisdom, reason is symbolized as light (white) while imagination is symbolized as dark (black). But we need to adopt a new thought pattern to see that what common sense considers as negative could be positive. With a processive thought pattern it is hoped that modern theology can recover its roots in the darkness of mystery and myth and thus rescue itself from its rootlessness in rationalism and demythologization in its effort to become scientific and be in vogue. A theology of blackness symbolizes the Supreme Realty as Divine Darkness and Faith as a saving darkness. The Christian dialectic is from the light of reason (conventional wisdom) to the darkness of faith as mystery. But more of this later. The work is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the white theology2 of blackness. In the first chapter, the scriptural passages upon which the white theology of blackness is based are presented. Then a survey of the implication of this white theology of blackness in human relations is shown. First of all, the transference of the theological symbolism to skin color is described (chapter 2), then the secularization of the religious symbolism is noted (chapter 3), and finally the psychological effects of the Western symbolism of color on both whites and blacks brought up in Western culture are outlined. In the second part of the study a processive theology of blackness is attempted. As prelude to this second part, the [in the] efforts of some black religious thinkers to offset and counter-act the Western color symbolism is briefly noted. But in these efforts the dualistic thought pattern operative in white theology is also operative in black theology such that black is now made to symbolize the positive and white the negative which in effect is nothing but reverse symbolism and racism. The dualistic thought pattern is laid aside as inadequate and a new thought pattern which is processive is introduced. From this new thought pattern we propose a new symbolism for black and white which we believe to be more in conformity with the ambivalent values of black and white as found in various cultures (chapter 5), in mythic and ordinary experience (chapter 6), in philosophic thought as dynamic and evolutionary (chapter 7) and in the scriptures themselves (chapter 8). Finally, a processive theology of blackness or darkness is sketched in the last chapter. Darkness is the source of life and energy at all levels of being. As the source of green life is a dark soil and as the source of light energy is the dark center of the sun, so the source of life for theology is the darkness of mystery and myth and the source of the life of grace for Christians is the saving darkness of faith which hides the Divine Darkness. But both Western theology and the Christian life have undergone a bleaching process, driven by the fear of their respective dark centers. When theology has made peace with the positive darkness of mystery which is its inner depth, then it is able to exert power and influence in a world tending toward full-blown secularism. And when Christians begin to accept blackness as the unique symbol of the Christian life, then they could begin to exercise their vocation as peacemakers in the world. Without the acceptance of positive darkness there is only self-alienation and the projection of this alienation in the world. It is hoped that this work will help, albeit in a small way, toward peace in the world today.

[Continues] In the previous chapter we said that Western consciousness needs to go back to its primal beginnings, to recover the sense of myth and mysticism, in order to achieve an experience of black as positive. This experience early man had. But in the West this mystical or Dionysian experience atrophied and in its stead the Apollonian prevailed. The Apollonian dominance resulted in a flight from darkness, from the id or unconscious. This flight from darkness was reenforced by the Apollonian Christian symbolism of color in which black was the symbol of sin and evil and white of innocence and goodness. We suggested as the first step in the recovery of a positive experience of darkness the realization that ordinary experi-ences of light and darkness and black and white are am-bivalent and therefore cannot be properly grasped by the formal logic of noncontradiction. The next step is to formulate this experience of ambivalence in a philosophic way so that it is possible for Western [hu]man[ity] to go back to his [her] primal beginnings in Hellenic and Jewish thought and experience and grasp the original experience of black as a positive symbol. In this chapter, then, we need to have a philosophic frame of reference which is able to express black as a positive symbol of truth and reality. We need to restructure Western philosophy in such a way that the Dionysian dimension forms the basis of meaning and being, for the history of Western philosophy has been mainly Apollonian, hence not a valid frame of meaning within which to grasp the positive character of darkness. Darkness as a philosophic symbol in the Apollonian philosophic tradition is ignorance; light is knowledge. This symbolism goes all the way back to Plato, the most influential philosopher for the West. Indeed, Plato has the Dionysian dimension in his philosophy, for as F. M. Cornford has noted, Plato’s philosophy is rooted in Greek religion and mythology.1 But in the course of the historical development of Western philosophy, it was the Apollonian aspect of his philosophy—the theory of forms—that was most influential while the mythical parts of his philosophy were ignored. Even in comparatively recent Western philosophies, the Dionysian dimension survives. To mention but two philosophies considered to be the best exponents of the Apollonian dimension, hence, antimythical and antipoetic—the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce, the father of pragmatism, and of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the forerunner of linguistic analysis—the Dionysian dimension lives on, although it is hidden and attenuated. For example, Charles Peirce holds that it is not mechanism and chance, the twin bulwarks of the scientific enterprise, that fully explain the dynamism of the universe but evolutionary love, hence, ultimately mysticism.2 And Ludwig Wittgenstein in his Tractai us LogicoPhilosophicus admits the dimension of the mystical: Proposition 6.44 “It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists.” Proposition 6.522 “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.” While it is true that the Dionysian dimension of reality survives in many Western philosophies, it has not been articu-lated in such a way as to present darkness as a positive symbol of truth and reality. If at all, darkness is a symbol of nonbeing and falsehood. I therefore try to present in this chapter a philosophy of process3 which I believe is able to express the ambivalent symbolism of black and in so doing open up to Apollonian man the positive experience of darkness in his Hellenic and Christian past. Let us start by recalling the symbolism of black and white, light and dark in Apollonian Western philosophy. Thus, light or white symbolizes truth, while darkness or black symbolizes ignorance and untruth. Black is also used to signify the unreal. It signifies nonbeing and death; white on the other hand stands for being and life. At the psychological level, white stands for consciousness which is light; black for the unconscious region of the psyche which is dark. Darkness is also applied to the infrahuman levels of evolution which are in a state of unconsciousness— the mineral and plant kingdoms. They live in total darkness devoid of the light of the senses or of reason. The animal kingdom, on the other hand, has a degree of consciousness, for it has, at least in the higher forms of life, sense knowledge. But compared to human consciousness and knowledge, animal knowing is dark. By association, the philosophical and psychological symbolism of blackness is then transferred to peoples possessing dark skins. Thus, they have dark minds; they dwell in darkness. A black skin signifies a lower level in the hierarchy of evolutionary development, hence, less developed in intelligence. A[a]t the level of the unconscious, observes Frantz Fanon, “there is the firmly fixed image of the nigger-savage,” 4 The philosophic symbolism of black as connoting inferior being is implicit in the following passage: 5 You can dress a chimpanzee, housebreak him, and teach him to use a knife and fork, but it will take countless generations of evolutionary development, if ever, before you can convince him that a caterpillar or a cockroach is not a delicacy. Likewise, the social, political, economical, and religious preferences of the negro remain close to the caterpillar and the cockroach. This is not stated to ridicule or abuse the negro. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the caterpillar or the cockroach. It is merely a matter of taste. A cockroach or caterpillar remains proper food for a chimpanzee. And the philosophic symbolism of black as connoting inferior intellect is implicit in the following passage: 6 The way I look at it is this way: God didn’t put the different races here to all mix and mingle so you wouldn’t know them apart. He put them here as separate races and He meant for them to stay that way. I don’t say He put the Caucasians here to rule the world or anything like that. I don’t say He put them here to be the superior race; but since they have superior intellect and intelligences, I don’t think God would want them to mingle with inferior races and lose their superiority. You know the Negro race is inferior mentally, everyone knows that, and I don’t think God meant for a superior race like the Whites to blend with an inferior race and become mediocre. In the above passages, one can see black as a negative philosophic symbol of being and truth. Black is ignorance, is lesser being. White, on the other hand, is a symbol of truth and of superior being. White people are the elect, endowed with superior intellects, who must flee contamination from darkness. Now, to correct this one-sided symbolism, it is necessary to trace it to its philosophic source. As we noted earlier, the philosophic origin of the Western symbolism of color in which black is untruth and nonbeing while white is truth and being is traceable to the Christian followers of Plato’s philosophy who took only the rational and logical side of Plato’s philosophy. The mystical and allegorical writings of Plato were deemphasized and the root of Platonic philosophy in myth and religion was conveniently forgotten. The Christians who used Platonic philosophy as a frame-work for their theological formulations considered The Republic of Plato his greatest writing. In this work is contained the famous allegory of the cave which may be considered to sum up the symbolism of light and darkness in Plato’s philosophy. The cave represents this world which is dark; outside the cave is the bright light of the sun which represents the true and enduring world beyond this world, illumined by the beneficent rays of the Good. The dialectic in Plato is from darkness to light, that is, a departure from this present world into the other world beyond. This present world is the region of sin, error and mere opinion; the other world, in contrast, is the realm of truth and certainty, the real and the unchanging. The cave, too, represents the darkness of the human mind, ignorant and bereft of the knowledge of eternal forms, filled only with sense knowledge which furnishes one with mere opinion. The illuminated world outside the cave represents the state of the human mind il-lumined by the Divine Intellect and is therefore possessed of eternal forms. Darkness is thus equated with lack of awareness, with a state of unconsciousness, while light is equated with awareness and a state of consciousness. The philosophic basis for the cave allegory is Plato’s negative experience of time. Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus who represent the Apollonian strain of Greek thought saw time as negative rather than as positive. In other words, time as it moves forward into the future tends to death or nonbeing. For Plato, time is but a moving imitation of eternity.7 The world as under the control and power of time is therefore just an image, not the reality. The real is outside time in another world. Hence, the world as image is a shadow and is seen darkly just as time is a shadow of eternity. Time in its forward movement into the future is not creative of reality. It is destructive rather than constructive and preservative. It descends rather than ascends. Plotinus who followed his master Plato closely also saw time as negative. Time for Plotinus was a measure of the degradation or fall of the finite world from the One, that is, the Source of being.8 As the world and all in it move farther into the future, there is a greater degradation and also greater darkness since one is farther away from the One who is Being and Light. The absolute future is thus to be expressed symbolically as nonbeing or pure nothingness and absolute darkness. For Aristotle, too, time is seen as destructive rather than creative as it flows into the future. Thus, he says: “All change is by its nature an undoing. It is in time that all is engendered and destroyed. . . . One can see that time itself is the cause of destruction rather than generation. . . . For change itself is an undoing; it is only by accident a cause of generation and existence.” 9 He expresses the same idea in a more philo-sophic way: “For we are wont to say that time wears, that all things age in time, all is erased by time, but never that we have learnt or that we have grown young and handsome; for time in itself is more truly a cause of destruction, since time is the number of movement, and movement undoes that which is.” 10 In accordance with the foregoing idea of time as negative or dark, Plato sought to escape the darkness of time into the light of the eternal and immutable, into the other-worldly region of Pure Forms. Aristotle, however, saw the doctrine of pure forms as superfluous and therefore tried to get rid of the other-worldly realm by incarnating the pure forms, so to speak, into this world, making them the essences or natures of things. The real is now to be sought in this world, not in the past by reminiscence as in Plato, nor in the future which is not yet, but in the present. In spite of this change, the negative philosophical symbolism of darkness did not change. Darkness as negative still symbolized the nonbeing of the past and the not-yet-being of the future; light, on the other hand, symbolized the present as the region of being and truth. Even in the classical empirical phase of Western philosophy, that is, the age of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, the symbolism of light and darkness held. Like Aristotelian philosophy, the present was the place of being and truth, hence symbolized by light; the past and the future as nonbeing and therefore unknowable were symbolized by darkness. The difference between Aristotelian metaphysical philosophy and classical empiricism is in the conception of the real and of truth-in-the-present. For Aristotle, the real is the existing essence or nature behind phenomena or appearance and truth or knowledge is to know what the essence and nature of a given thing is. For empiricism, there is no substance or essence or nature behind phenomena. There are only phenömena. To know is to know an impression or an idea, that is, a phenomenon. From the point of view of process philosophy, however, both metaphysical and empirical philosophies are similar in locating being and truth in the present. The ultimate phil-osophic reason for locating being (ontological) and truth (epistemological) in the present is the negative view of time as nonevolutionary. If we were to illustrate diagrammatically the ontological structure of the real (being) based on this nonevolutionary view of time it would appear thus: past11 present future nonbeing being nonbeing In the above nonevolutionary view of time, only present time is real since the past and future being nonexistent are unreal. Accordingly, being or the real is located in the present. Since to have being is to have an essence or nature (Aristotle) or to have an appearance or a set of phenomena (empiricism) then truth as the objective possession of an essence or of a set of phenomena is likewise located in the present. Truth follows being. Where being is, there truth is also. Thus, diagrammatically, we have: past present future untruth truth untruth Since the past and the future are nonbeing, there is nothing to be known, hence there is no truth to be found there. The knowing subject can know only being, not nonbeing. Since being and objective truth are located in the present, knowl-edge or consciousness as the presence of forms (essence or phenomenon) in the mind can take place only in the di-mension of the present. In relation to the past and future, the conceptual mind (as opposed to memory and foresight) is unaware or is unknowing, hence, unconscious. Consciousness follows being and truth. Hence, diagrammatically, we have: past present future unconsciousness consciousness unconsciousness or lack of knowledge lack of knowledge Having described the ontological and epistemological structures of what I might call Apollonian philosophy (as opposed to the Dionysian) let us now see how these ontological and epistemological structures may be symbolized in terms of light and darkness. Consciousness is a light. We can see better this essential trait of consciousness if we use the term intellect whose der-ivation is from the term lux (light). The intellect is a seeing faculty. To have no intellect is to be blind, hence to be in darkness. By transference from the knowing faculty to the object known, truth itself which is the object of the intellect is called a light, while the absence of truth or ignorance is called darkness. Because of the convertibility of truth and being, the latter is also symbolized as light while nonbeing is symbolized as darkness. Again, the symbolism of light and darkness ultimately is based on the nonevolutionary view of time. This view may be symbolized in terms of light and darkness thus: past present future darkness light darkness In the diagram, we note that the present as the region of being, truth and consciousness is symbolized by light. In the present the intellect can see forms of objects. Just as we see forms of objects during the day because there is sunlight so we symbolize the present as the region of day or the region of the visible. The past and the future in contrast to the present are symbolized as the region of darkness because they are the region of nonbeing, of unconsciousness, of untruth. They are also symbolized as the region of night and of the invisible since the past and future are formless, that is, there are no forms of objects to be seen since the past and the future are in a state of nonbeing. Let us illustrate in a diagram how the symbolism of light and darkness is applied in the Apollonian ontological and epistemological views of being and truth: past present future ontological: nonbeing being nonbeing epistemological: untruth truth untruth ununconsciousness consciousness symbolism: darkness light darkness night day night invisible visible invisible One can observe from the above schema that Apollonian philosophy is dualistic. In terms of symbolism, light is wholly positive, darkness wholly negative. Light is equated with being, truth, consciousness; darkness with nonbeing, untruth and an inferior level of consciousness. This Apollonian philosophic symbolism of light and darkness is the frame of reference and meaning for Apollonian white theology and is the implicit basis of modern Apollonian Western culture and language. Imbued and conditioned by this philosophy, Apollonian Western [hu]man[ities]’s attitude toward darkness is one of flight, repulsion, hatred. If there is a darkness, a shadow, a cloud in our lives, we must flee from it, expel it. The ideal person is one in whom there is no darkness whatsoever. This means that he has the fullness of being, truth, and consciousness. The Apollonian philosophic attitude toward darkness is reenforced and confirmed by Apollonian Christian theology. Thus, the philosophic struggle against darkness is endowed with a religious dimension and with a holy zeal. Darkness now means a struggle against sin and the Devil, for God is the Light in whom there is no darkness. The attainment of God who is symbolized as the Light is philosophically expressed as the attainment of Being, Truth and Goodness. Because of the phenomenon of projection, which we noted in a previous chapter, the negative attitude toward darkness is projected into the outculture, in this case people with dark skins. One can see how the authority of philosophy and the-ology has given the Apollonian man a self-righteous attitude in his relation with dark-skinned peoples. We can see too how philosophic and theological racism are the root cause of economic racism. Because of this fact, even if the black man has obtained economic parity with the white man, he will still be considered inferior in the eyes of the white man because of philosophic and theological propositions that make white superior to black, light superior to darkness. Hence, there is need of counteracting racism at the philosophic and theological levels. Let us then show a different philosophic frame of reference in which darkness is an ambivalent value. Now, just as the ultimate philosophic basis for Apollonian philosophy was the negative experience of time, so the starting point of the process philosophy we present here is time except that the experience of it is a positive one. The positive experience of time is based on our awareness of evolution. Evolution implies that time is creative of novelty, of new being, as it moves for-ward, such that there is more in the end than at the be-ginning. In other words, the movement of time forward is a process of maturation and development. Now we do not deny that Aristotle had a notion of development, in the sense of the maturation of an individual from an infant to the adult. But Aristotle did not have a notion of evolution in the sense that biological species evolve from previous ones. For him species were fixed, eternal, universal. Today, we are aware of a macrocosmic or overall process of evolution which includes all things in time. The things we see in the world like minerals, plants, animals, men did not come into being all at once or simultaneously but sequentially and in a definite order measured by complexity of organization. First there was the evolution of matter, then the evolution of life, next the evolution of consciousness. To put it another way, first there was matter that was both nonliving and nonthinking (the atom), then there evolved matter that was living but was nonthinking (the cell), and finally, there was matter that was both living and thinking (animals and men). This view of evolution shows time as positive, that is, as not merely preserving what was originally there in the beginning or destroying them as they tended toward the future, but as producing more being as time moves forward. With this view of time, we are now in a position to sketch a processive view of reality.12 A processive world-view would put being in the future, becoming in the present, and germinal being or “nonbeing” in the past. Being in the processive world-view is equated with maturity or fullness of development. For any given thing then that is in process of evolution, being is future. Of course, in a sense, being as meaning present existence is located only in the present because the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist. But being in the sense of ability to survive or greater independence is not found in the existence of a presently developing thing, but in the state of maturity and fullness of development. Evolution shows that mortality is greatest or is most likely to occur at the early stages of development. A deeper and more abstract reflection on the reality of the present will show that the present does not really have any independent existence apart from the past and the future. Whatever reality the present has is owed to the past from which it evolved and to the future toward which it will evolve. It is an illusion to think of the present as having an existence of its own. Shear off the future from the present and the present ceases to exist. The only way the present can endure is for it to move forward. If there were no future to move forward to, the present would stop. It would cease to exist. The future then is the true being of the present. It is also the region of fullness, of maturation. Hence, in the processive world-view, being is located in the future. The future does not mean the cessation of activity. When that which is becoming or growing reaches its fullness in that line of growth, it attains being, in that line of becoming. But the attainment of being precisely means the attainment of adulthood compared to the infant stage. Adulthood means the possession of the fullness of one’s powers, hence, the fullness of activity. Let us diagram the ontological structure of a processive view of reality: Now, as being so truth, or as the ontology so the epistemology. So, we would have to locate truth also in the future. Perhaps a further reflection for this identification is necessary. We said that what is becoming is not yet being, that is, it has not yet attained the fullness of what it is. It is not yet fully evolved. But what is evolution but the differentiation of parts? In other words, what was merely there germinally, nonbeing or germinal undeveloped becoming being developing developed past present future or hidden is now manifested or revealed in the process of differentiation or development. Thus, we see that the attainment of the fullness of being is also accompanied by the full manifestation of what a thing is. For example, the seed is revealed to be an oak. We thus see what a thing really is. Its truth or true form is manifested. Consequently, when a thing attains its fullness of being, it also attains its fullness of truth. It is revealed unto itself. Truth then is future just as being is. By way of contrast, the region of the present and of the past are the region of half-truth and untruth respectively. Let us explain what we mean. Since the present is the region of becoming, it means that the given thing is not yet fully differentiated, hence, not fully revealed. There is much of it that is yet concealed. We might say that it is half-revealed, halfconcealed. Accordingly, as half-revealed, it is proper to de-scribe it as half-true. Truth, we said earlier, follows being. So what is half-being (undeveloped, becoming) is only halftrue. By comparison to the present, the past as the region of the germinal is relatively to be considered nonbeing, for it has not yet begun its process of becoming, much like a seed on the table which in the line of its own evolution has not started the process of its germination. Left on the table the seed shrivels up and dies. Because of this direction toward death it is proper to say that it is in a state of nonbeing. Again, as truth follows being, so, as the state of nonbeing of that which is not evolving, so it is untrue. The epistemological structure of evolving reality may be illustrated thus: past present future untruth half-truth fullness of truth absence of truth half-false absence of falsehood Let us now consider the ontological structure, that is, the reality of consciousness as process. Consciousness as a power of knowing develops and evolves like everything in evolutionary time. Its development is the process of growth of consciousness in a given individual while its evolution is the evolution of collective consciousness of which individual consciousness is a part. Whether individual or collective, consciousness has a stage of birth, a stage of becoming and a stage of maturation. Diagrammatically, we may illustrate the process of consciousness thus: past future present unconscious fully conscious half-conscious half-unconscious In the above diagram we observe that consciousness evolves from unconsciousness to consciousness. The midpoint of its evolution is occupied by our present historical consciousness whose structure is that of a half-evolved reality, hence, it is half-conscious. Having described what being, truth and consciousness are as processes, let us now see how they are symbolized in terms of light and darkness. Diagrammatically we have: past future present ontological: epistemological: symbol: nonbeing untruth unconscious darkness night invisible becoming half-truth half-conscious half-light half-darkness night and day half-visible full being full truth fully conscious light day full revelation You will notice in the above diagram that light is located in the future, darkness in the past and the region of night and day in the present or in historical time. But a very important observation here is that though the future is symbolized as light, our present historical consciousness does not experience the future as light. Rather, it experiences [the future] it as darkness. The reason for this is that the ontological structure of present historical consciousness is a state of half-consciousness. This means that it has darkness within itself since it is not fully conscious. It projects this darkness outward. Thus the future is dark, for it transcends the power and capacity of present historical consciousness. Being half-conscious, it is not able to comprehend fully what being and truth are. The experience of darkness by present historical consciousness in relation to the future is like the experience of the eyes being blinded by too much light as when they look directly at the sun. It is the present that is experienced as light because our present consciousness is adequate for knowing objects in the present. The past is experienced as darkness for things in the dim past are lost sight of. Now this experience of present historical consciousness seems similar to the experience of Apollonian consciousness which also experiences the past and future as darkness and the present as light. But upon closer inspection, there is a great difference. To Apollonian consciousness the future is experienced as negative darkness because the future is nonbeing and is untrue, but to a processive consciousness, the darkness of the future is a positive darkness because it is the region of the fullness of being and of truth. Thus to processive consciousness, being and truth are symbolized as positive darkness. We may illustrate the epistemological structure of historical consciousness in terms of light and darkness thus: past present future negative darkness light positive darkness Thus, from the point of view of consciousness-in-the-present, there are two levels of unknowing. The first is a negative unknowing or unconsciousness because it is based on what is germinal or undeveloped. There is nothing yet to be seen. But the other type of unconsciousness is really a higher dimension of consciousness or a superconsciousness toward which present consciousness is tending. In the processive view of reality, to tend toward being and truth is to tend toward positive darkness. In the Apollonian static and nonevolutionary view of reality, darkness is wholly negative, consequently, one endeavors to flee it, to expel it from one’s own being. The dialectic of fulfillment is for one to move from darkness to light. But in the processive view, the dialectic is from light to positive darkness, for what appears light does not always contain being and truth and what appears dark is not always an indication of nonbeing and absence of truth. Of course, the emotional reaction of the knower to darkness or to what is unknown or alien is fear and one flees from that which one fears. The fear of the child of the dark becomes in this case the fear of what is epistemologically dark or unknown. But the way to fulfillment in the processive world view is to embrace the dark as positive, as saving darkness, for the future as dark is the region of being and truth. There is risk involved, since dark-ness could also be negative. But to flee all darkness or all shadow from without and from within us is to be split, to be schizophrenic, and those who operate within the context in which darkness or shadow is wholly negative, be they white or black, are split in their beings, their egos. This split, in the case of whites is projected into the world outside as racism. Modern psychology corroborates the processive world view of the shadow or darkness in us as not only negative but positive. In man there is the dimension of consciousness but also the dimension of what is called the Unconscious. It is the dark side of man, the shadow. This region as darkness is both negative and positive. It could destroy one but it could also heal one. Thus, as Erich Neumann observes, “the shadow is the ‘guardian of the threshold’, across which the path leads into the nether realm of transformation and renewal. And so what first appears to the ego as a devil becomes a psycho-pomp, a guide of the soul, who leads the way into the under-world of the unconscious—which however includes hell as well as the realm of the Mothers.” 13 Thus, we see that the Unconscious, symbolized by the shadow, which is the dark side of man or of the soul is not only negative but also positive. It can be the source of death (hell) for the soul; it can be the source of life (transformation or rebirth). In either case, the shadow or darkness is the only path. It is, as Neumann notes, the guardian of the threshold. In Apollonian symbolism, the shadow or darkness cannot be a source of integration, rebirth and transformation because it is seen wholly as negative, destructive of self. Selfhood is identified with consciousness (light, white). As Alan Watts notes, Western thought identifies wisdom with conscious reason instead of with the Unconscious.14 Yet conscious rea-son is merely the surface of the psyche like the tip of an iceberg. Or to use another metaphor, the ground of reason is the unconscious. Apollonian thought defines man in terms of his conscious reason. He is defined as a rational animal. What is forgotten is that man is not yet rational. He is still very much irrational. Racism is a case in point. Man must achieve rationality, selfhood. But with the dualistic frame of reference which sees the unconscious as the opposite and enemy of the conscious, Western man has been fleeing from the true man. Western logic is static logic, the logic of Aristotle based on the principle of noncontradiction, namely, that the truth of A is in A, or A is A and could not also be non-A. Following this logic, the truth of conscious reason (represented by white culture and values) is in maintaining itself by fleeing from the realm of the unconscious seen as darkness (sin, evil, myth, etc.). It could not see by its logic that the truth of A is non-A, that is, that what appears to it as foreign, alien and negative is really in and for itself really positive—the truth of A, To conclude this chapter we note that darkness or black-ness at the philosophic and psychological levels is not a negative symbol only but also a positive one—the symbol of being and truth. In psychological terms, darkness is a symbol of the unconscious which, however, is ambivalent. In process thought, the region of the positive unconscious coincides with the absolute future, for, as we noted earlier, the future is experienced by present historical consciousness as a positive darkness, positive in that it is the source of its maturation and fulfillment, darkness in that the form and shape of this maturation is still unknown. In the light of the philosophy of process in which darkness has been shown to be an ambivalent value as opposed to the Aristotelian one in which darkness is a negative value only, we are now in a position to examine the scriptures for the ambivalent symbolism of darkness. n the previous chapter, we set the philosophic framework, that of a philosophy of process, whose logic is that of paradox, as the true frame of reference which will truly open our eyes to the true symbolism of color found in the scriptures. We maintain that because the Apollonian mind viewed the scriptures with Aristotelian spectacles, it failed to see the paradoxical symbolism of the color black. In accordance with Aristotelian logic, the Apollonian mind reasoned that if black is negative in symbolism, which seems to be the case based on the great number of passages in which the color black and its correlative terms are used in a negative sense, then it could not also symbolize the positive. Accordingly, it explained away the positive symbolism as an exception.1 As an aid to understanding the use of black as a positive symbol in the passages to be examined, the processive frame of reference outlined previously should be kept before our minds. Let us repeat the diagram here: 129 negative darkness light positive darkness a ß In the diagram, point a (alpha) represents nonbeing, untruth, hence, negative darkness; point o (omega) represents being and truth, hence positive darkness. It is at omega that Yahweh is situated for that is the region of the supremely real; there, too, revelation and faith as the fullness of truth are situated. In accordance with the above frame of reference, the proper symbol for Yahweh is darkness; he dwells in darkness; his abode is in the clouds, that is, hidden from view. God is a deus absconditus, that is, a hidden God. Therefore, if he dwells in darkness, the time for his revelation is at night, in dreams. Revelation and Faith are also symbolized as darkness for they transcend the power of present historical consciousness. The diagram will also help us to understand the negative use of black or darkness as a symbol. We recall in a previous chapter that black or darkness is used to symbolize sin, mis-fortune, the devil, hell, lack of faith and of truth, the absence of God and so on. Thus, in terms of the schema, we can place all these negative theological categories on the left side, that is, at point alpha which is symbolized by negative darkness. In the Apollonian-Aristotelian schema of white theology there are only two columns, one for darkness which is negative and the other for light which is positive. Therefore there is no place to put those scriptural passages in which darkness is used as a positive symbol. To save the schema, these passages are conveniently ignored. Let us now proceed to examine darkness as a positive symbol. First let us consider the symbolism of night. Recall what we noted in an earlier chapter of the negative symbolism of night. Night was a plague that punished the Egyptians; night was a symbol of moral evil as in the night of the soul; night is the symbol of Satan who plots his evil plans in the dark; night is the symbol of death, of Hades; night was the time Christ was betrayed, and so on. But night, paradoxically, is also the symbol of the presence of God and the time of his communications; it is the time chosen for redemption, and in a more profound sense, night is a saving darkness. The following passages show the association of night and God’s presence in dreams and apparitions: 2 If any man among you is a prophet I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream. Num. 12:6. God visited Abimelech in a dream at night.. . Gen. 20:3. At Gibeon Yahweh appeared in a dream to Solomon during the night... 3 Kings 3:5. That very night the word of Yahweh came to Nathan. 2 Kings 7:4. God came to Balaam during the night and said to him... Num. 22:20. God came by night in a dream to Laban the Aramean . . . Gen. 31:24. We might note here the similarity between the mode of com-munication of the Israelite and his God, Yahweh, through dreams and the mode of communication of the native mind in other cultures with the numinous through dreams. The frequency of this mode of divine communication suggests more than an accidental connection. To an Apollonian mind the association of nighttime and God’s presence is considered an exception for in his a priori view God is light, hence he is associated with the daytime not with the night. We shall put off till the next chapter a theological explanation for the positive connection between night and the divine presence. Suffice it to note here that in the scriptures night is positively associated with God’s presence and his communications. Nighttime is also associated with creativity, birth of new life and new being at both the physical and spiritual levels. Thus, it is during the night that life was conceived: This very evening, I [Raphael] promise, she will be given you as your wife. Then once you are in the bridal room, take the heart and liver of the fish and lay a little of it on the burning incense. . . . Then, before you sleep together, first stand up, both of you and pray. Ask the Lord of heaven to grant you his grace and protection. Do not be afraid; she was destined for you from the beginning, and it is you who will save her. She will follow you, and I will pledge my word, she will give you children who will be like brothers to you. Tobit 6:16-18. At the spiritual level, night was the time of redemption. Redemption in the wide sense of the term means the pres-ervation and continuation of life by buying it back. In this wide sense night is the appropriate time: In the middle of the night the man started up and looked about him; and there lying at his feet was a woman. “Who are you?” he said; and she replied, “I am Ruth, your maidservant. Spread the skirt of your cloak over your servant for you have the right of redemption over me.” Ruth 3:8-9. From the modern mind’s point of view, the two passages just cited do not seem to show any special theological significance to night as the time of redemption. And even at the secular level, night does not seem to have any special significance aside from the fact that it is at night that sexual union is normally performed. For the Israelites, however, there is no distinction between the religious and the secular, the super-natural and the natural. All of created reality and all of life are religious or supernatural. God is active in a supernatural way in all areas of created reality. Therefore the above passages are to be seen in the larger context of God’s redemptive plan. Within this larger context there is a positive meaning to evening or to night that is largely supernatural, hence acts associated with nighttime have religious meaning. Let us consider the larger context of God’s redemptive plan in which night has a special significance and symbolism. In the strict sense of redemption as salvation from death and from sin, night is the time of its occurrence: That night, the flesh is to be eaten, roasted over the fire; it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled, but roasted over the fire, head, feet and entrails. You must not leave any over till the morning; whatever is left till morning you are to burn. You shall eat it like this: with a girdle round your waist, sandals on your feet, a staff in your hand. You shall eat it hastily: it is a passover in honour of Yahweh. That night, I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, man and beast alike, and I shall deal out punishment to all the gods of Egypt, I am Yahweh! Ex. 11:8-13. The Passover was the highpoint of the Israelite’s conscious-ness of Yahweh’s redemptive action. It was this act of de liverance which gave fuller meaning to previous acts of de-liverance and redemption. In the Passover there was a definite association between night and redemption. Night was an ambivalent symbol. It was a blessed night for the Israelite; an accursed night for the Egyptians. The significance and symbolism of night here gave fuller meaning to night in the context of redemption taken in the wider sense. The Passover was also seen by the Israelite as the fullness and fulfillment of the first divine act of creation in which darkness hovered over the deep.4 Consequently, he saw the night of the Passover as the fulfillment and recapitulation of the “night” of the first creation. Let us cite the passage in Genesis which relates the first act of creation: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that light was good, and God divided light from darkness. God called light “day,” and darkness he called “night.” Gen. 1:1-5. Contrary to the popular theological view that darkness in the above account was exclusively the symbol of evil or of chaos (formlessness), the Genesis account sees darkness as ambivalent. There is the positive darkness that hovered over the deep, symbolic of the darkness of the watery womb. The imagery used to portray the act of creation is human con-ception and birth. Just as in human conception, the watery womb is vivified, given life or spirit, so God’s spirit hovers over the watery deep enveloped in darkness. Darkness in this case is a necessary condition for conception or creativity, hence positive.5 It precedes that which is created—light. Op-posed to light is darkness which in this case is negative, for it is opposed to creativity. There is thus a positive and a negative darkness. The Israelites saw the divine darkness that hovered over the deep as the same darkness that was salvific, liberating them from bondage and creating of them a new and chosen people. Traditional theology is unable to see the continuity between the first act of creation and the redemptive act of the Passover, for it sees creation as a natural act while the Passover event was a redemptive (soteriological) act.6 For this reason it is unable to see the significance of the symbolism of night or darkness. But for the Israelites the first act of creation was redemptive. As Stanley notes: 7 The view of Deutero-Isaias is that Yahweh will work Israel’s definitive salvation as creator (Is 43:18-19; 48:6fï; cf. also Is 65:17fL), for the reason that God’s creation of the universe is thought of as pertaining to the same theological category as His covenant (Is 52:15-16; cf. also Is 66:22). This conception of the creation as a saving event is, I believe, the basis of the biblical view that the eschaton must correspond to the beginning, that eschatology, in other words, is determined by protology or ktisiology. The reason for the continuity between the first act of creation and the Passover is due to the similarity of symbolism. For example, the waters of the Red Sea that saved the Israelites point to the waters of the first creation that brought forth life and being. As the watery deep was the dark womb from which created reality was born, so the dark waters of the Red Sea was the womb from which the new-born people emerged. And as the universal darkness was creative of new being, so the night of the Passover was creative, and vice versa, as the Passover night was redemptive, so the darkness of the first creation. Just as the symbolism of night of the first creation was associated with sexual images (the Spirit fecundating the waters symbolizing the union of the Infinite with the finite), so the night of the Passover symbolized the covenant union of Yahweh and the fleeing Israelites resulting in the birth of a new people from the watery depth of the Red Sea.8 It was not only the events of dreams, of the first creation, of the Passover and other accounts such as that of Ruth meeting Boaz at night that gave to the Israelites the con-sciousness of night as positive, signifying the divine presence, but also the fact that Yahweh himself is associated with darkness. Thus, in the following passage, darkness itself is the secret place of Yahweh: He bent the heavens and came down, a dark cloud under his feet; he mounted a cherub and flew, and soared on the wings of the wind. Darkness he made a veil to surround him, his tent a watery darkness, a dense cloud; before him a flash enkindled hail and fiery embers. Ps. 18:9-12. Note in the foregoing passage that Yahweh’s tent is a watery darkness. This imagery seems to point to the watery darkness of the first creation and the watery darkness of the sea through which the Israelites crossed. The experience of the Israelites of Yahweh, their God, is expressed in the imagery of darkness and clouds. Thus: Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid; God has come to test you, so that your fear of him, being always in your mind, may keep you from sinning.” So the people kept their distance while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was. Ex. 20:20-21. Again, we have the following: Now when the priests came out of the sanctuary, the cloud filled the Temple of Yahweh, and because of the cloud the priests could no longer perform their duties: the glory of Yahweh filled Yahweh’s Temple. Then Solomon said: Yahweh has chosen to dwell in the thick cloud. Yes, I have built you a dwelling, a place for you to live for ever. 1 Kings 8:10-13. Yahweh is king! Let earth rejoice, the many isles be glad! Cloud and Darkness surround him, Righteousness and Justice support his throne. Ps. 97:1-2. Thus, darkness is spoken of as encompassing the presence of God, as that out of which he speaks—the envelope, as it were, of divine glory. For the Israelites, then, since darkness was symbolic of the divine presence itself, night was the appropriate time for his communications and his saving acts. The view of night as a positive symbol is had not only by the Old Testament but also by the New Testament. Thus, the night of the first creation and the night of the Passover are continued in the night of Mary’s visitation. With Mary’s fiat, the Holy Spirit —that same Spirit that hovered over the dark waters in the first creation, fecundating it—now fecundates the dark waters of Mary’s womb. There results a new creation, a new being, who is the definitive source of redemption and salva-tion. In Christ is a new covenant which continues and fulfills the first covenant of creation and the Mosaic covenant. Christ is a new creation, in the same line as the first creation and the creation of the Israelite people.0 Now, just as creativity in the Old Testament was associated with darkness, with night, so the coming of Christ took place at night —in Bethlehem, in the middle of the night, Christ came silently into the world. The blessed night of the Passover is fulfilled in the holy night of the Incarnation. The coming of Christ does not finish the redemptive process. Christ had a work to do. This redemptive work which was an act of creation—the creation of a new Qahal Yahweh (new Church) was finally accomplished at night— the night of the Last Supper, but also the night of Jesus’ arrest and betrayal. Thus, the ambivalence of darkness or night in the creation and Passover events is repeated here in the new Passover. It was not accidental that Christ chose the time of night for the final redemptive act. Night was the symbol of creativity, it was the time of union exemplified most of all by sexual union. Christ’s redemptive act was a new creation and this new creation was a spiritual union between God and man guaranteed by the formation of the New Covenant. Night is not merely a temporary symbol of creativity and redemption. It is a permanent symbol of the end or of the eschaton. Thus, from an eschatological perspective, the last judgment, at once a calamity and a victory will occur at night:10 Again we have the following passage: Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, “The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.” Mt. 25:1 -7. As we noted earlier, the eschaton corresponds to the begin-ning, hence, the night of the first creation corresponds to the night of the new creation. For the Christian, the night of the first creation is fulfilled in the night of the resurrection of Jesus from the darkness of the tomb. The Christian celebrates Christ’s death and resurrection as he was commanded to do by Christ himself. Just as the Jew celebrates the memory of the Passover, so the Christian celebrates Christ’s Passover. He performs the celebration at night and he sees this night as the same night of Christ’s resurrection, Last Supper, incarnation and as the same night of the first Passover. Permit us to quote at length from the Christian Liturgy to show the positive symbolism of night. Thus, in the liturgy for Holy Saturday, all the past events leading to the blessed night of Christ’s Last Supper are remembered and shown to point to this final event as to their fullness and fulfillment: For this is the Paschal solemnity, in which that true Lamb is slain, by whose blood the doorposts of the faithful are hallowed. This is the night in which Thou didst first cause our forefathers, the children of Egypt, to pass through the Red Sea with dry feet. This, therefore, is the night which purged away the darkness of sinners by the light of the pillar. This is the night which at this time throughout the world restores to grace and unites in sanctity those that believe in Christ, and are separated from the vices of the world and the darkness of sinners. This is the night in which, destroying the bonds of death, Christ arose victorious from the grave. . . . O truly blessed night, which alone deserved to know the time and hour in which Christ rose again from the grave! This is the night of which it is written: And the night shall be enlightened as the day; and the night is my light in my enjoyments. Therefore the holiness of this night drives away all wickedness, cleanses faults and restores innocence to the fallen, and gladness to the sorrowful. It puts to flight hatred, brings peace and humbles pride. O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Egyptians and enriched the Hebrews! A night in which heavenly things are united to those of earth, and things divine to those which are human. . . . Notice in the above passage the ambivalent symbolism of night. It is night in the positive sense that drives away the darkness of sinners. Notice too the belief of Christians that there is a continuity between the night of the Easter Vigil today and the night of Christ’s passion and resurrection, the night of the flight from Egypt and the night of the desert in the Exodus. There is an identification, as a matter of fact, between “this night,” that is, as celebrated today, and “those nights” in the past salvific history. Those nights are not just being remembered or memorialized, they are sacramentally present. The salvific acts of those nights are repeated, re-enacted this very night and are producing the same effects on the chosen people today as they did to the Israelites and to the followers of Jesus during his day. Hence, night or darkness is a permanent and abiding symbol of Christianity. The liturgical year tends toward and is centered upon the sacred and blessed night of the Easter Vigil. That night is our salvation, is our light, as the Holy Saturday preface reminds us. It is our hope of restoration from sin, the time when God is present, hence our hope of rebirth. It is the belief of Christians that the salvific acts done to the collective are reenacted and recapitulated in the life of the individual. Thus baptism and the act of faith are a re-enactment of the first creation, of the creation of Israel as a new people, of the creation of the Church at the night of the Last Supper, of the new creation which is the new Adam, Christ, at the night of Jesus’ resurrection, for baptism and faith are in themselves a new creation (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17). Hence, in the early Church liturgy, catechumens were baptized during the sacred night of the Easter Vigil and Christians renewed their faith and their baptismal vows. Because of the continuity of baptism and faith with the salvific acts of God in both the Old and New Testaments, there is also a continuity of symbolism. Hence the darkness of baptism and of faith is the same as the darkness over the watery deep of the first creation, as the night of the Exodus when the Israelites went down to the dark waters of the sea, as the night of the Last Supper and the night of the resur-rection of Jesus. Baptism is a going down to the watery darkness and coming forth a new being, a new Adam. The imagery used by none other than Christ himself is a being reborn, hence a going back to the darkness of the womb in a spiritual sense.11 Faith itself is a saving darkness, for we do not see. As Paul says, faith comes by hearing, not by sight (Rom. 10:17); and blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20:29). Again, Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), and faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Just as the Israelites had to have faith, trusting in the guidance of God through the night of the Exodus and the wanderings in the desert, so the Christian has to have faith for the Christian life is one long Exodus. It is a night of faith, but this night is salvific, hence, positive. So far we have been discussing the positive symbolism of night and darkness and we have found that they are a per-vading and primary symbol of the Old and New Testaments and of the Christian life as expressed in the Christian liturgy. Apollonian theology we might note has not sought to explain this pervading and positive symbolism of night and darkness. Instead it has used darkness or night as a wholly negative symbolism, hence unfaithful to its sources in the scriptures and the liturgy which are the norm of faith. Let us devote the remainder of the chapter to discussing some correlative terms of darkness and night to show their ambivalence. Let us take first the notion of cloud in associa-tion with the divine presence. In Apollonian theology, dark clouds are a sign of evil, misfortune and divine disfavor. God himself is symbolized as Light in whom there is no cloud and the ideal Christian life is one that is cloudless in the sense that there is no darkness of sin in one’s life. The Apollonian mind’s preconception of God’s manifestation is that of a superbrilliance that drives away all darkness. The imagery appropriate for God is that of a divine sun shining in a cloudless day. A reexamination of the scriptures gives us another picture and imagery of God’s manifestation.12 As we noted earlier, God is said to dwell in darkness and when he reveals himself, he does so in a cloud.13 Thus in the well-known revelation of God on Sinai it is said: The cloud covered the mountain, and the glory of Yahweh settled on the mountain of Sinai; for six days the cloud covered it, and on the seventh day Yahweh called to Moses from inside the cloud. Ex, 24:16-17. Again, the presence of Yahweh with the Israelites as they crossed the desert was in the form of a pillar of cloud: tv Yahweh went before them, by day in the form of a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in the form of a pillar of fire to give them light. Ex. 13:21. At the time of the dedication of the temple of Solomon the glory of Yahweh took the form of a cloud (3 Kings 8:11-12; 2 Par. 5:14); and Yahweh’s tent was a dense cloud (Ps. 18:11). This symbol of the divine presence is now transferred to symbolize also his love: This love of yours is like a morning cloud Hos. 6:4. The symbolism of the divine manifestation by clouds is not an isolated occurrence in the scriptures. As Maertens notes, “The cloud was a theme customary in the theophanies.” 14 The cloud, a sign of divine presence rested upon Mary, the new Jerusalem (Lk. 1:35). Just as night was the time for final or eschatological vic-tory, so the cloud was an apocalyptic sign of salvation. It was a sign of Christ’s return: 15 As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, “Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.” Acts 1:9-11. The foregoing passage seems to point back to an apocalyptic passage in the Old Testament: I gazed into the visions of night and I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. Dan. 7:13. Another symbol closely associated with clouds is that of the shadow or shade. Clouds provided shade, a symbol of divine protection and closeness to God.16 For example we have the following passage: He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.” Matt. 17:5. Negatively, the term shadow in the scriptures stands for transitoriness and for the unreality of man’s life, hence, life as a shadow. And Psalm 23 speaks of “the valley of the shadow of death.” But the negative symbolism of shadow has been overemphasized to the exclusion of the positive aspect of shadow in the scriptures. As Maertens observes, the shadow is an image to express the special protection of God over his people.17 Thus, just as one rests under a tree to recover one’s strength and to seek shelter from the oppressive heat of the sun’s rays, so the presence of God is considered to give a sacred “Shade” and we rest secure under the shadow of God. Maertens adds that it is in this sense that the shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament was sufficient to heal the sick.18 Maertens shows the various positive symbolisms of shadow in the following passages: The restful shade of trees (Mark 4:32; Job 12:2; 3 Kings 19:5; Jonas 4:5-6); this shadow is a gift of the gods whom men adored near trees (Os. 4:13). Royal persons, compared to trees, were thought to give shade to their people, that is, security and protection (Judges 9:15; Ezech. 31:2-16; Isa. 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20). Similarly, Israel is a people who, growing like a tree, will shelter all nations under its shadow (Ps, 79:11; Os. 14:8; Ezech. 17:23). It was God who took it upon himself to give the shadow of his protection to Israel. This shadow came from the cloud which rested over the place where God’s presence was found (Ex. 19:9-18; Wisd, 19:7; Isa. 4:5-6; 49:2; Ps. 16:8; 90:1; 120:5). The shadow of the new cloud, which is Christ, is in turn the place of divine protection for his people and the instrument of its healing (Mark 5:25-35; Acts 5:15; 19:11). The shadow consecrates by its presence the elect of God, Mary and the transfigured Christ, as if to show the special protection which they deserve because of their election (Luke 1:35; 9:34). The shadow which is a symbol of divine protection is imaged not only by trees and clouds but also by wings. Thus, “Hide me under the shadow of thy wings” (Ps. 17:8); “Because thou has been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice” (Ps. 63:7); “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1). Finally, let us consider the symbols of black and white in the scriptures. Already we showed the negative symbolism of black, namely, that it symbolizes sin, damnation, hell, suffering, punishment, etc., and the positive symbolism of white, namely, as a symbol of purity, sinlessness, grace, glory, etc. Now, let us show the reverse symbolism. Whiteness is also used in the scriptures to symbolize sin and punishment for sin. For example in the account of Naaman, the army commander to the king of Aram, who was cured of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha, the servant of the prophet named Gehazi, smitten by avarice decided to get for himself the gift from Naaman to Elisha which the prophet refused to accept. For this sin Gehazi was punished. Elisha pronounced the sentence of God upon him thus: “Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants for ever.” And Gehazi left his presence a leper, white as snow. 2 Kings 5:27. In the scriptures, leprosy which is a whiteness of skin was a biblical sign of uncleanness and of sin (Lev. 13:8; 14:2; cf. also 2 Kings 5:6; 2 Chron. 26:21). It was a sign of divine displeasure, punishment, damnation. Christ’s miracles and divine healing were especially demonstrated in the curing of lepers (Mk. 1:40; Lk. 7:22, 17:12; 5:13; 4:27; Mt. 8:3; 10:8; 11:5). Another Old Testament account of whitness of skin as a sign of punishment is given in Numbers. There, Miriam and Aaron reproached Moses for marrying a Cushite woman, an event which however was blessed by Yahweh. Miriam’s pun-ishment is related thus: Suddenly, Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron and Miriam, “Come, all three of you, to the Tent of Meeting.” They went, all three of them, and Yahweh came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tent. He called Aaron and Miriam and they both came forward. . . . How then have you dared to speak against my servant Moses? . , . The anger of Yahweh blazed out against them. He departed, and as soon as the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam a leper, white as snow! Aaron turned to look at her; she had become a leper. Numbers 12:4-10. It is in the context of the whiteness of skin taken as a negative symbol of punishment that we ought to interpret the passage in the Song of Songs in which the beauty of the bride is described as black and lovely (1:5). However, a different reading of the passage equates blackness of skin with a serious ordeal.19 But whatever be the reading, it does not offset the fact that whiteness in the scriptures is not always a positive symbol. We have shown sufficiently, we hope, that black and its correlative terms, night, darkness, shadow, cloud, are used not only as negative symbols but also as positive ones. Now, on the question as to which is the primary symbol of the positive, white or black, light or darkness, we answer that the question is a false one for it starts from the Aristotelian frame of reference that a term could have only one primary signification. All other meanings are secondary or metaphori-cal. With this a priori condition, white theology fixed the primary symbolism of black as negative and of white as positive. This position is supposedly supported by the greater number of passages in which white is used as a positive symbol rather than as a negative one and the greater number of passages in which black is used as a negative symbol compared to those in which it is used as a positive one. A quantitative and statistical comparison of passages ignores the true basis of symbolism, namely, the degree of reality of that which is symbolized. We have shown that night and darkness symbolize the Supreme Reality, Yahweh. In the consciousness of both the Old Testament and the New Testament writers and of the early Christians as manifested in their liturgy, night and darkness are pervading and primary symbols of the central event of the, Judeo-Christian religion, namely, the Passover. Unfortunately, Apollonian theology has not reflected this universal consciousness and experience of night or darkness as a positive and primary symbol. Hence our task now is to show how night or darkness could be a positive theological symbol.

Empirically this symbolic transformation provides important critical impetus for liberation.

Hood[[6]](#footnote-6)

Even prior to the slave trade, blackness theologically represented cosmic chaos and disorder and culturally represented bestiality and paganism. Slavery only reinforced these beliefs. With the advent of the Enlightenment in the West, these traits were outranked by blackness as a sign of natural inferiority. The Enlightenment's philosophical premise that humanity is defined by natural reason, which therefore enables all persons to share a natural equality, did not extend to people with black complexions—although Haitians in the eighteenth century adopted this philosophical claim against their French overlords to launch their successful revolution. Much casuistry went on during the Enlightenment in Europe and in America in order to legitimize slavery in spite of the claim that all persons have inalienable natural rights and duties. As Montesquieu remarked: “It is impossible for us to suppose these [black] creatures to be men because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians” (see chap. 6, note 16 above). John Locke wrote that it was urgent that slaveowners retain absolute authority and power over their slaves regardless of natural rights and religion. This casuistry reminds us of George Orwell’s pigs in Animal Farm: All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others. The assumed natural inferiority of blacks played a strong role in American colonial thought and the legitimation of black bondage. Neither monogenists nor polygenists in their philosophical battles doubted the inferiority of blacks as a state of nature that could not be erased. New England Puritans and Virginia Anglicans were children of their times in this regard, including the author of the Declaration of Independence. Clergy in all churches North and South supported slavery for this same reason. Christian baptism might free blacks of the bondage of sin, but it did not absolve them of their bondage to whites. It was blacks themselves in the American colonies, particularly free and freed blacks, who challenged these claims. They negated their own negation on rational and religious grounds. First, they reinterpreted the doctrine of creation. Second, they initiated an ongoing dialogue between the Bible and their African religious tradition. Third, they established a new interpretation of God as an affirming and engaged God in the affairs and conditions of the oppressed and the enslaved. Blacks and whites are, "of one flesh . . . [with] the same sensations and endowed . . . with the same [rational] facilities,” wrote Benjamin Banneker in the late eighteenth century (see chap. 7, note 70 above). This negating of their own negation also motivated biblically grounded political and social action among the blacks, such as the revolts led by Denmark Vesey in South Carolina and Nat Turner in Virginia. Hence, from their perspective their blackness as a people who walked in darkness was taken into the godhead. Their civil condition or the negativity of blackness no longer negated them or reconciled them to their condition of bondage. Nor did it reconcile them to the primal myths about blackness and black complexions or to the interpretation of Christian teachings handed on to them by the churches and their slavemasters. As Absalom Jones proclaimed: “[T]hey were not forgotten by the God of their fathers, and the Father of the human race. . . . [H]e was not indifferent to their sufferings” (see chap. 7, note 72 above).

WEIGHING ARGUMENTS/EXTRA CARDS:

This is empirical solvency – my method has empirically helped those fighting against oppression. **CONE (6):** What was it that cast out black people’s fear of death and sent them flowing into the streets—defying mob violence? Many reasons certain, not all of them stemming from Christian faith. Secular activists like Robert Moses, James Forman, and Stokely Carmichael drew inspiration from other sources, like Albert Camus’ *The Rebel* and Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. With Camus, they said, “Better to die on one’s feet than to live on one’s knees.” But for poor southern blacks, who had little formal education in philosophy or political philosophy, it was religion that offered the only resource—and the language—to fight against segregation and lynching. Martin Luther King Jr. came to embody the faith, courage, and intelligence. His faith was derived from the black church; his courage originated from his faith; and his intelligence came from his intellectual discipline, deepened and expanded at Morehouse College, Crozer Seminary, and Boston University. What he learned in college and graduate school helped him to reflect critically on faith and to develop form it a method of social change that would transform race relations In the United States. When he accepted the invitation to become the leader of the Montgomery bus boycott, King knew he was risking his life. Other blacks knew it too. As he often put it, “Freedom is not free.” It is one thing to teach theology (like Niebuhr, Barth, Tillich and most theologians) in the safe environs of a classroom and quite another to live one’s theology in a situation that entails the risk of one’s life. King agreed fully with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Christian pastor hanged in 1945 by the Nazis for resisting Hitler: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Like Reinhold Niebuhr, whom he studied in graduate school, King believed that the cross was the defining heart of the Christian faith. Unlike Niebuhr, his understanding of the cross was inflected by his awareness of the lynching tree, and this was a significant difference. While the cross symbolized God’s supreme love for human life, the lynching tree was the most terrifying symbol of hate in America. King held these symbols together in a Hegelian dialectic, a contradiction of thesis and antithesis, yielding to a creative synthesis.

To sum up the methodology I advocate. That we oppose oppression and marginalization through an apophatic liberation theology existing in hermeneutic tension with the post-structualist insights of queer theory, in which we understand that God uniquely identifies with the oppressed and socially marginalized. Though this paradigm we collectively work to develop a method for opposing the problems of social death in a way that is existentially satisfying and within the larger meta paradigm of social and ultimate resurrection from death in the pattern of the unjustly killed Jesus Christ. This movement happens first. God is not something we tap on after the fact. Everything that exists in relation to this suffering God. The unjust crucifixion, resurrection and glorification of God presents the central picture though which we see and understand everything else. Conceptualize liberation of the black body through the inversion of values implied by Christianity, understanding the centrality and starting place of the cross. **GORMAN:** Michael J [the Raymond E. Brown Professor of Biblical Studies and Theology at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, where he has taught since 1991] . Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001. Print All other claims to or attempts at power are thereby rendered impotent. Hellenistic society, like perhaps all societies, was based on success. Yet Paul asserts that since Jesus, humankind is not intrinsically controlled by competition and success, superiority and inferiority, superordination and subordination. Rather, humanity is controlled by the mutual solidarity of a life born out of a common death. It is for this reason that Paul’s communities transcend gender, class, and racial barriers (Gal. 3:28): life in Christ is grounded in a power that makes somebodies out of nobodies and renders so-called somebodies no more or less significant than their “inferior.” Power in the Pauline communities is not to be found in social power but in social weakness, in those who are weak and despised, just as this power is grounded in the one who manifested God’s power as a weak and cursed “nobody” on a Roman cross. The cross “reveals the way God works now, not just the way he achieved salvation in the past. . . . He works *now* in conformity with the pattern seen then on the cross: it is the God of the cross with whom the Corinthians [and all believers] now have to deal.” Furthermore, this shared power is expressed in the Pauline communities in the possession and exercise of spiritual gifts, or gifts of grace (Greek *charismata*). Although there is a hierarchy to the gifts, based on their perceived ability to benefit the community (1 Cor. 12:28; ch. 14), everyone poses a gift, and each gift—and therefore each member of the community—is important and valued. Indeed, the socially inferior are the communally superior; status is not only transcended but reversed: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . . . . . [T]he members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable member do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members ay have the same care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:7, 22-25) While social distinctions remain in the Pauline communities (slaves—at least the salves of nonbelievers—are still slaves), the strongest forces experienced in these communities are not those that distinguish the socially inferior from the socially superior. Rather, these communities experience a power that transcends and reverses social status, a power known only in the cross and in communities shaped by it.

Inverting supremacy is the only way critique can solve. Pure radical critique or revolution reifies existing conditions – we can’t just tear things down. Rawls claimed he tore down assumptions of philosophy and then rebuilt liberal democracy. The Soviet Union thought to pull down the oppression of the bourgeoisie and simply reified the same type of oppression. Only a Christian doctrine has the power to liberate since I provide a fixed symbol upon which we can direct progress. **CHESTERTON[[7]](#footnote-7):** This, therefore, is our first requirement about the ideal towards which progress is directed; it must be fixed. Whistler used to make many rapid studies of a sitter; it did not matter if he tore up twenty portraits. But it would matter if he looked up twenty times, and each time saw a new person sitting placidly for his portrait. So it does not matter (comparatively speaking) how often humanity fails to imitate its ideal; for then all its old failures are fruitful. But it does frightfully matter how often humanity changes its ideal; for then all its old failures are fruitless. The question therefore becomes this: How can we keep the artist discontented with his pictures while preventing him from being vitally discontented with his art? How can we make a man always dissatisfied with his work, yet always satisfied with working? How can we make sure that the portrait painter will throw the portrait out of window instead of taking the natural and more human course of throwing the sitter out of window? A strict rule is not only necessary for ruling; it is also necessary for rebelling. This fixed and familiar ideal is necessary to any sort of revolution. Man will sometimes act slowly upon new ideas; but he will only act swiftly upon old ideas. If I am merely to float or fade or evolve, it may be towards something anarchic; but if I am to riot, it must be for something respectable. This is the whole weakness of certain schools of progress and moral evolution. They suggest that there has been a slow movement towards morality, with an imperceptible ethical change in every year or at every instant. There is only one great disadvantage in this theory. It talks of a slow movement towards justice; but it does not permit a swift movement. A person is not allowed to leap up and declare a certain state of things to be intrinsically intolerable. To make the matter clear, it is better to take a specific example. Certain of the idealistic vegetarians, such as Mr. Salt, say that the time has now come for eating no meat; by implication they assume that at one time it was right to eat meat, and they suggest (in words that could be quoted) that some day it may be wrong to eat milk and eggs. I do not discuss here the question of what is justice to animals. I only say that whatever is justice ought, under given conditions, to be prompt justice. If an animal is wronged, we ought to be able to rush to his rescue. But how can we rush if we are, perhaps, in advance of our time? How can we rush to catch a train which may not arrive for a few centuries? How can I denounce a man for skinning cats, if he is only now what I may possibly become in drinking a glass of milk? A splendid and insane Russian sect ran about taking all the cattle out of all the carts. How can I pluck up courage to take the horse out of my hansom-cab, when I do not know whether my evolutionary watch is only a little fast or the cabman's a little slow? Suppose I say to a sweater, "Slavery suited one stage of evolution." And suppose he answers, "And sweating suits this stage of evolution." How can I answer if there is no eternal test? If sweaters can be behind the current morality, why should not philanthropists be in front of it? [Otherwise] what on earth is the current morality, except in its literal sense—the morality that is always running away? Thus we may say that a permanent ideal is as necessary to the innovator as to the conservative; it is necessary whether we wish the king's orders to be promptly executed or whether we only wish the king to be promptly executed. The guillotine has many sins, but to do it justice there is nothing evolutionary about it. The favorite evolutionary argument finds its best answer in the axe. The Evolutionist says, "Where do you draw the line?" the Revolutionist answers, "I draw it HERE: exactly between your head and body." There must at any given moment be an abstract right and wrong if any blow is to be struck; there must be something eternal if there is to be anything sudden. Therefore for all intelligible human purposes, for altering things or for keeping things as they are, for founding a system for ever, as in China, or for altering it every month as in the early French Revolution, it is equally necessary that the vision should be a fixed vision. This is our first requirement.

Only my methodology through negatively defining the state of human worth made in the image of an apophatic God can the two be reconciled. **DANIELS:**[[8]](#footnote-8)While neither Foucault nor Butler address liberation theology directly, the implications of their scholarship on the discipline is undeniable. In his book Beyond Ontological Blackness, Christian ethicist Victor Anderson relies on these insights to critique how ontology has operated within liberationist discourse to disconcerting ends. Anderson notes that, functioning as “the cult of European genius… ontological blackness signifies the blackness that whiteness created.”14 Operating within these ontological categories, Anderson’s analysis points out, not only reflects an embededness within a European, modernist framework, but also distorts the conditions of African American life and experience and keeps liberationist discourse trapped within a crisis of legitimation.15 Anderson interro gates how this has occurred within the scholarship of James Cone and other black liberation theologians.16 Anderson points out in this critique that …black theology constructs its new being on the dialectical structures that categorical racism and white racial ideology bequeathed to African American intellectuals (notwithstanding its claims for privileging black sources). However, the new being of black theology remains an alienated being whose mode of existence is determined by crisis, struggle, resistance, and survival—not thriving, flourishing, or fulfill ment…. I suggest that as long as black theology remains determined by ontological blackness, it remains not only a crisis theology but also a theology in a crisis of legitimation.17 Anderson’s intention, “to alert critics of the linguistic dangers of reifying the categories that govern their discourses in such a way as to mimic, represent, and mirror the discourses they want to reject,” reflects and builds upon the concerns raised by poststructuralists, adding a theological dimension.18 These critiques have called for a response from liberation theology, which has, in turn, complied in multivariate and diverse ways. Some strands of liberation theology have retorted with compelling responses and critiques of poststructuralism and the broader philosophical frame of postmodernism in which it is situ ated.19 Others have ceded to postmodern critiques and suggested that liberation theology is a failed project.20 Many, however, have sought a way to ‘have their cake and eat it to,’ and have attempted to explore how poststructuralism and liberation theology can coexist not only peacefully but constructively. While rooted firmly in the liberationist paradigm, the contributors of Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology by and large seek to explore and excavate the rich resources possible through conversation with poststructural philosophy. In her essay “Liberation Theology in the Twenty-First Century,” Kwok Pui-Lan names this desire to listen to the insights of postmodernism while also attending to the risks it poses, and seeks instead for “neither a wholesale rejection or an indiscriminate embrace” of its claims.21 In his essay that concludes the volume, “Theology and the Power of the Margins in a Postmodern World,” Joerg Rieger, the editor of the volume, echoes Pui-Lan’s assertion. On the one hand, he acknowledges the poststructuralist theoretical and theological critiques of liberation theology, pointing out that “post modern thinkers have made us aware of a broader range of factors—many of them more hidden—that shape who we are. This critique of identity offers a major challenge to those in power.”22 Moreover, he acknowledges not only the critiques, but the constructive potential, noting that “postmodern critiques of identity and of the modern middle-class self, as well as a sustained concern for otherness and difference, may be useful in developing new and more effective strategies of resistance.” 23 On the other hand however, Rieger, like Pui-Lan, questions the efficacy of a postmodern emphasis on difference and remains at least somewhat wary of how criticisms of “identity” can negatively impact attention to those on the margins. As both a critique and an invocation, Rieger asks, “does this postmodern revolution ever reach the margins?”24 Pui-Lan, Rieger, and the other contributors in Opting for the Margins all seek to take seriously the critiques and correctives proffered by poststructuralism while remaining, to varying degrees, skeptical about what post structuralism can offer in response to the material, embodied suffering of those on the margins. Part 2: Agency and Liberation? Materiality beyond Identity What might it mean to take seriously, on the one hand, poststructural criticisms of liberation theology, and, on the other hand, the material and psychic realities of the marginalized? While acknowledging the critiques raised by Rieger and others, in this section I suggest that poststructuralism, while assuredly sus ceptible to the aforementioned critiques, also has resources for responding to these concerns and offering a space for attending to the material and psychic well-being of marginalized people seriously—that , specifically as it is taken up by queer theory, poststructuralism can function as/in the service of liberation theology. Whereas the contributors of Opting for the Margins critique poststructuralism for what it perhaps does not attend to, it is my argument that it is precisely what is left unsaid that provides a framework to speak to, for, and with those on the margins. The apophaticism in and of queer theology is central to its liberative potential, and this section will begin to explore this claim through an analysis of Butler’s essay “Gender is Burning.” In Gender Trouble, Butler acknowledges these critiques of poststructuralist skepticisms of subjectivity. She explains that “it is no longer clear that feminist theory ought to try to settle the questions of primary identity in order to get on with the task of politics.”25 Instead, situating her analysis within a recognition of the potentially pernicious power of categories of identity, she seeks to ask, “what political possibilities are the consequence of a radical critique of the categories of identity.”26 In the preface to the 10th anniversary edition of the text, she emphasizes that the deconstructive and denaturalizing thrust of the text is in fact motivated by the political, that it “was done from a desire to live, to make life possible, and to rethink the possible as such.”27 Moreover, as I examined in the first section of this essay, it is precisely Butler’s point that it is only from within the structures themselves that the margins can be reached. While this is evidenced in the epigraph at the beginning of this essay, it is perhaps most clear in Butler’s work Bodies that Matter, a text that attends specifically to the significance of materiality in poststructuralist discourse and its political ramifications. In “Gender is Burning,” Butler extrapolates on the space (and contingency) of subversion through an analysis of Paris is Burning, the 1990 documentary that chronicles the culture surrounding drag ball competitions in New York City in the mid-80’s and the gay and transgender, as well as predominately African American and Latino, communities that were involved in the “balls.” Here, Butler raises questions about the totalizing critiques by bell hooks and Marilyn Frye of drag as misogynistic—that “there is nothing in the identification that is respectful or elevating.”28 While Butler acknowledges that, “there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion,” she argues that this ambivalence is precisely the space of resistance and resignification. “It is this constitutive failure of the performative, “ she explains, “this slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect, which provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience.”29 Relying on the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, she [Butler] notes that this ambivalence, this “relation of misrecognition,” offers space for rupture— that “Paris is Burning documents neither an efficacious insurrection nor a painful resubordination, but an unstable existence of both,” and thus functions as “an appropriation that seeks to make over the terms of domination, a making over which is itself a kind of agency…”30 Through the explication of the film, Butler expands on the claims of Gender Trouble and calls traditional feminist accounts of agency into question. Building again on Foucault, Butler points out that: There is no subject prior to its constructions, and neither is the subject determined by those constructions; it is always the nexus, the non-space of cultural collision, in which the demand to resignify or repeat the very terms which constitute the “we” cannot be summarily refused, but neither can they be followed in strict obedience.31 This, she suggests, is evidenced in as well as exposed through drag—evidenced in the narrative arch of the film itself, as well as in the actual events of drag balls and the lived realities of two key characters, Venus Xtravaganza and Octavia St. Laurent. Xtravaganza and St. Laurent, in their very bodies, point to this am bivalence. While Xtravaganza’s performance undeniably hyperbolizes heterosexual gender norms, this reiteration of norms in her particular body is also undeniably subversive—as it results in her murder—and elucidates and enacts through embodied performance Butler’s point that the “replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight not as copy is to original, but rather, as copy is to copy.”32 Again, while Butler cedes that there is a level of appropriation of the norms of a masculinist, heterosexist economy, it is precisely this appropriation that elucidates and enables subversion because the truth of the norm, a “constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations, ” is exposed—or, as she later puts it, the drag ball “contest (which we might read as a ‘contesting of realness’) involves the phantasmatic attempt to approximate realness, but it also exposes the norms of regular realness as themselves phantasmatically instituted and sustained.”33 Or again, when she explains that “the subject is the incoherent and mobilized imbrica tion of identifications; it is constituted in and through the iterability of its perfor mance, a repetition which works at once to legitimate and delegitimate the realness norms by which it is produced.”34 In short, through an analysis of Paris is Burning, Butler suggests that agency is exercised in and through the consolidation of norms, within particular bodies and contexts—that it is ambivalent, and contingent, and because of those things, it is potentially complicit, but it is also potentially subvert sive. The materiality of the body and the space of political agency are enabled, as opposed to foreclosed, within Butler’s poststructuralist frame. Part 3: A Potential Point of Convergence: Queer Theory and Apophati cism Systematic theology is a difficult enterprise to describe. Van A. Harvey, whose A Handbook of Theological Terms appears on many a seminary syllabi, especially on introductory courses in theological studies, writes that “systematic theology is, as the name suggests, the systematic organization and discussion of the problems that arise in Christian faith.”35 Liberation theology has, historically, both situated itself within systematic theological discourse, as well as pushed back against many of its attendant methodological and theoretical presuppositions— drawing attention to the contexts in which we construct meanings and seeking to ground theological reflection both in and from the place of the marginalized, of the poor.36 In this essay, I have highlighted the value of liberation theology to the discipline, but have also sought to ask how it might be more faithful to its aims in light of a poststructuralist critique. Using Butler, I have tried to demonstrate how poststructuralism might provide resources wherein one can envision liberative aims without reifying problematic ontological and epistemological regimes of knowledge-power. In this final section, then, I want to explore how another component of the theological tradition—that of apophaticism, of negative theology—might serve as a rich resource for doing theology that is simultaneously poststructuralist and liberationist. Apophatic theology, Via Negativa, is deeply embedded within the theological tradition, associated with the Cappadocian Fathers of the 4th century, Pseudo Dionysius, and Thomas Aquinas. This tradition of “theology by way of negation” stresses the ineffability of God, the inadequacy of human language and concepts to describe Divinity.37 As Mary Jane Rubenstein points out, “apophasis does not oppose cataphasis”—negation is not opposed to the organization and discussion of Christian faith, but rather, perhaps like liberation theology, provides a sort of epistemological frame through which to theologize.38 This epistemological emphasis on the inadequacy of human knowledge and language to describe God shapes also how we speak about ourselves, the human that is made in the imago dei. Thus, one can begin to see how a queer theoretical position is an apophatic one, through its deconstruction and eschewal of categorization and assertion of incoherent subjectivity. Butler’s account of subversion through an explication of Paris is Burning offers one example of political agency that is enabled by a poststructuralist account of power-knowledge discourse. If knowledge, as Foucault and Butler claim, is key to control and domination, through a production of subjectivity bound to particular categories— then it is perhaps through an unknowing, a silence, that space for political transformation can be envisioned. Boesel and Keller, in their edited volume Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality, echo Butler’s claim about epistemological imperialism and point out its theological inflections in their assertion that “mastery over divine mystery routinely results in a body count.”39 What might political agency, liberation, and transformation look like when envisioned through an apophatic register? Butler emphasizes this apophatic dimension of her approach to gendered bod ies in greater detail in a later text, aptly titled Undoing Gender. Here, Butler points out that it is precisely this notion of an autonomous identity that poststructuralism resists (a notion, I might add, that is shared by liberation theology) that is reflected in the body itself. The body does not reify autonomy but evidences its failure. It does not assume independence, but rather signifies dependence. She explains: Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re miss ing something. If this seems so clearly the case with grief, it is only because it was already the case with desire. One does not always stay intact. It may be that one wants to, or does, but it may also be that despite one’s best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel. And so when we speak about my sexuality or my gender, as we do (and as we must), we mean something complicated by it. Neither of these is precisely a possession, but both are to be understood as modes of being dispossessed, ways of being for another, or, indeed, by virtue of another.40 Butler demonstrates that the body evidences and speaks to an apophasis, an unknowing, a dispossession. Rather than being the place where liberative aims are abandoned, however, they evidence themselves to be the place where resistance and subversion, and thus liberation, are most accessible. Butler thus provides “an unsaying of the body in the name of the body.”41 In this way, a queer, apophatic account of the embodied self provided by post structuralism provides a liberative space that resists the mastery and control that pervades an Enlightenment ethos. This is a theme that Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller take up in depth. “Apophaticism,” Boesel and Keller explain, “does not ne gate bodies as such. Rather it targets our false knowledge, the idols formed in our confusion of the finite with the infinite.”42 What Butler’s oeuvre both implicitly and explicitly elucidates is how one can recognize and affirm the lived, material, embodied existence of the marginalized and pursue the political aims of justice and liberation without falling prey to the claims of knowledge and mastery that are bound up with modernist epistemologies. This does not, however, negate or resist the aims of liberation theology—rather, it offers a space in which they can be more fully realized.

Paul’s view on homosexuality is incredibly progressive once understood in context. Paul is not critiquing homosexuality as it exist today. The specific homosexual practice Paul is critiquing is the utilization of children and slaves as objects of sexual humiliation to increase one’s own social masculinity. Ancient Greece had a strict divide between the active and passive sexual partner, the received of gay sex was considered radically emasculated and socially ostracized so that the active partner could demonstrate their power. Ruden[[9]](#footnote-9) Wouldn’t the Greco-Roman literature of homosexuality provide more insight and better terms for dialogue than Boswell does? This literature is the closest representation available of what people saw around them in polytheistic imperial cities like Rome, and what they thought of it. But a first pair of eyes to look through is, of course, Paul’s. For more than three hundred years before he was born, first the Greeks and then the Romans had ruled his home city of Tarsus and made it as similar to the cities of southern Europe as they could. But however much of the Greco-Roman worldview Paul might have adopted, what he heard at home and in the synagogue would not have led him to tolerate homosexuality. Jewish teaching was clear: homosexual acts were an abomination. But another teaching mandated circumcision for all males in God’s covenant. Paul put this aside; Judaism would not always hand down what Christianity would practice. Perhaps, in the matter of homosexuality, what he saw as a boy influenced him more than his tradition did. Among the female prostitutes on the streets, or in the windows or door ways of brothels, were males, on average a lot younger. At any slave auction he found himself watching, there might be attractive boys his own age (blond Scythians, red-haired Germans?) knocked down to local pimps at high prices, to the sound of jokes about how much they would have to endure during their brief careers in order to be worth it. A pious Jewish family, as Paul’s probably was, would not have condoned sexual abuse of any of its slaves, but he would know from his non-Jewish friends that household slaves normally were less respected as outlets for bodily functions than were the household toilets, and that a sanctioned role of slave boys was anal sex with free adults. Flagrant pedophiles might have pestered him and his friends on the way to and from school, offered friendship, offered tutoring, offered athletic training, offered money or gifts. But adults he trusted would have told him that even any flirting could ruin [a childs] his reputation, and at worst get him officially classed as a male prostitute, with the loss of all of his civic rights. After his conversion, as he preached what Jesus meant for human society, he wasn’t going to let anyone believe that it included any of this. Readers may think I am exaggerating, that the day-to-day culture of homosexuality could not have been so bad. They may have heard of Platonic homoerotic sublimity or festive or friendly couplings. None of the sources, objectively read, backs any of this up. The Roman poet Martial uses “to be cut to pieces” as the ordinary term for “to be the passive partner.” The Greeks and Romans thought that the active partner in homosexual inter course used, humiliated, and physically and morally damaged the passive one. Heterosexual penetration could be harm less in the Christian community, in marriage (see chap ter 4); homosexual penetration could be harmless nowhere. There were no gay households; there were in fact no gay institutions or gay culture at all, in the sense of times or places in which it was mutually safe for men to have anal sex with one another. [skips several pages] The reference to the island of Delos is about castration (the god Apollo, whose birthplace was thought to be there, was a sponsor of surgery), a workable analogy: both castrated men and cinaedi had lost their manhood to violence, either of the knife or of anal penetration. Both kinds of men were lower than women: there was no way to be a rare “good” cinaedus, or an attractive one—only quite fresh boys and youths had any charm for grown-up males.\* The only satisfying use of an adult passive homosexual was alleged to be oral or anal rape—the satisfaction needed to be violent, not erotic. Greek and Roman men, in public, would threaten bitter male enemies with rape. [Skip significant section] The active partner had no comeback from his callous and selfish behavior. There were no derogatory names for him. Except for some restraint to avoid conflict within his actual household, he positively strutted between his wife, his girl friends, female slaves and prostitutes, and males. Penetration, after all, signaled moral uprightness—sorry about the image. We get our word “virtue” from the Latin virtus, literally “manliness”; courage, honesty, and response bility were strongly linked to physical virility in the Greek and Roman minds. In fact, society pressured a man into sexual brutality toward other males. To keep it unmistakable that he had no sympathy with passive homosexuals, he would tout his attacks on vulnerable young males. Encolpius (Crotcher), the narrator in Petronius, who dramatizes his loathing of the cinaedus so memorably, is an unashamed and enthusiastic pederast (especially of a youngster he shows in the role of Lucretia, a chaste, raped heroine of legend), though he chases women too. Amy Richlin’s celebrated book The Garden of Priapus lays out the system of ethics that locked people into this cruel regime. The regime included the erotic oppression of women. While Paul may seem to mention lesbianism, this was such a rare or little-noticed phenomenon in the ancient world that it is likely he instead means anal penetration of women by men. That did happen often, but men valued it less than penetration of boys: women were made to be penetrated anyway; a real man needed to transform an at least potentially active and powerful creature into a weak and inferior one. [Skipped significant sections] PAUL COULD HAVE, like generations of Greek and Roman moralistic and satirical commentators, lit into passive homo sexuality, into the victims. But in Romans 1 he makes no dis tinction between active and passive: the whole transaction is wrong. This is crucially indicated by his use of the Greek word for “males,” arsenes, for everybody; he does not use the word for “men,” as the NRSV translation would have us believe. The Classical and New Testament word for a socially acceptable, sexually functional man is an¯er. In traditional parlance, this could mean an active but never a passive homo sexual. But Paul places on a par all the male participants in homosexual acts, emphasizing this in Romans 2:1 (see below) and clearly implying that they are all morally degraded and that they all become physically debilitated from the sex act with each other. Such effects were unheard of among the Greeks and Romans when it came to active homosexuals: these were thought only to draw their passive partners’ moral and physical integrity into themselves. According to all of the evidence, Paul’s revolutionary mes sage stuck. This may be in part because he told his audience a more resonant truth than that of sexual misconduct in itself. First look at what he immediately passes on to (Romans 1:28–2:1): 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. 29 They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, mal ice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 They know God’s decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them. 2Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. I picture Paul, flushed and sweating in his rage as he writes that everyone is responsible for what pederasty has made of society: especially those who, egging one another on in an insolent, boastful clique, damage others with active sodomy and then blame them. These acts are “the very same things,” no matter who is doing what to whom. Compare the list of horrors here to the one in Galatians that I discuss in chapter 2. This list has a special relationship to the Greco-Roman version of sexual abuse through these terms: 1. wickedness, evil, malice 2. covetousness, envy 3. deceit, craftiness, inventors of evil 4. gossips, slanderers 5. insolent, haughty, boastful 6. heartless, ruthless, God-haters Some terms here are rare or even unique, in the Bible if not in all the literature of the era: “inventors of evil,” “rebellious toward parents,” “gossips,” “slanderers,” and “God-haters.” I think that is because Paul was pioneering a general condem nation of pederasty in the West and needed special language to show how deeply, uniquely evil it was. “Inventors of evil”: It did not look as if God had created sodomy, but that humans had. In its Greco-Roman form it was, like the idolatry it is linked with in this passage, essen tially a worship of the self and its immediate desires, with all of the stupidity and cruelty that entailed. “Rebellious against parents”: This kind of rebellion was a parent’s worst nightmare, the drug epidemic of the time, apparently the biggest threat for losing control of a son and seeing him lost to decent society. “Gossips,” “slanderers”: The victims suffered and the per petrators got immunity because of crude gossip and the pos sibility of blackmail. “God-haters”: Those who practiced homosexuality showed a hatred of God—wait, what about that one? It’s a shocker. The Greeks had used the same compound word passively for “hated-by-god(s),” and some biblical translators deny that Paul makes the term active. I disagree, as all of the other words in the list denote acts or traits and not judgments pro voked. Where are we with the word, then? It is probably related to words Paul uses to lead into his blasting of homosexuality: 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. “Wickedness” sounds either comically old-fashioned or fairly vague to modern readers. But people of Paul’s time who were fluent in Greek, if they could time-travel and learn English, would translate the word as “injustice.” There is nothing vague about it. It is about hurting people. Paul pairs the word with “ungodliness” (more precisely, “failure in wor ship”), but he repeats “wickedness.” Hurting people really shows how much contempt you have for God. In the Greco-Roman as well as the Jewish tradition, out rageous cruelty or exploitation insulted divinity, which was roused to avenge the helpless. The Greeks and Romans didn’t have a thoroughly just god in their traditional pantheon to correct these imbalances in the universe; usually the Greek Zeus or the Roman Jupiter, as supreme ruler, would have to do. Sometimes the polytheists invoked an unnamed god, or a personification, Justice. Two or more deities might work together. But in any case, judgment was coming, and the arrogant and power-hungry were going to be sorry. Here is Hesiod from the seventh century b.c., the first identifiable Greek author: This fable is for rulers—and they’ll get it. High in the clouds, a hawk grasped in his talons A spotted nightingale, and spoke to her; Piteously she cried, pierced by his hooked claws. In his great arrogance, he only sneered: “Why are you squawking, fool? I’m so much stronger. I’ll take you where I want—though you’re a singer. I’ll make a meal of you, or let you go. Opposing power’s stupid. You can’t win, But only bring on shame as well as pain.” . . . Leaders, you must consider what you’re doing— Is it just? Nearby, among you, are immortals Who note how people wear each other down With crooked judgments\*—which the gods they scorn Will punish. Three times infinite on lush earth Are Zeus’s deathless watchmen over mortals. Covered in mist and ranging through the land, They keep a watch on evil acts and judgments. And Justice is a virgin, born of Zeus, Feared and revered by the Olympian gods. And when some twisted person blocks her, taunts her, Right then she sits by Kronian Zeus, her father, And tells of unjust men’s thoughts, till the people Pay for the crimes of leaders—evil-minded Twistings of judgments, verdicts launched askew. Leaders, bribe eaters, look to this! Pronounce The law straight, and forget your crooked judgments. The evil that you plot is for yourself. The concept did not change over the next six hundred years. Paul’s Roman audience knew what justice was, if only through missing it. They would have been surprised to hear that justice applied to homosexuality, of all things. But many of them—slaves, freedmen, the poor, the young—would have understood in the next instant. Christ, the only Son of God, gave his body to save [hu]mankind. What greater contrast could there be to the tradition of using a weaker body for selfish pleasure or a power trip? Among Christians, there would have been no quibbling about what to do: no one could have imagined homosexuality’s being different than it was; it would have to go. And tolerance for it did disappear from the church. All this leads to a feeling of mountainous irony. Paul takes a bold and effective swipe at the power structure. He chal lenges centuries of execrable practice in seeking a more just, more loving society. And he gets called a bigot. Well, it’s not a persecution that would have impressed him much.

While the church still has a long way to go, acceptance is now possible and is becoming easier and easier with each day. Blue **Telusma**. “Black Churches are Becoming more Gay-Friendly.” The Grio. September 11 2014. <http://thegrio.com/2014/09/11/black-churches-gays/> For years, there has been an unspoken but deeply prevalent “don’t ask, don’t” tell policy in the black church. But today, Duke University released data that show those days may be coming to an end. Their research has found: “Acceptance of homosexual members in black protestant churches has surged of late. The percentage of churches accepting of gay and lesbian members has risen from 44 percent in 2006 to 62 percent in 2012. Further, 22 percent of black churches reported being accepting of gays in volunteer leadership roles, up from 6.5 percent six years prior.” This isn’t the first time we’ve seen a spike in gay acceptance in the church. Just last year, Pope Francis made international news when he called on the Catholic Church to love gays and lesbians, who “must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.” Many applauded Francis for being so inclusive, but black congregations have historically been a lot more resistant to such progressive ideals — especially where homosexuality is concerned. Which begs the question: why have African-American churchgoers suddenly become so gay friendly? Filmmaker Yoruba Richen speculates: “What’s happening within the black church — and in the black community as a whole — is reflective of what’s happening in the country as a whole in terms of an opening to talking about sexuality and to supporting same-sex marriage. Barack Obama came out for same-sex marriage, which I think affected a lot of people’s willingness to be open to the idea. The NAACP came out after Barack Obama. Many black churches and leaders of black churches started to come out and support marriage equality, many of whom have a national presence.” Richen may be on to something, because Duke’s data came from the National Congregations Study, which in 2012 interviewed the leaders of 1,331 American churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and other houses of worship. 2012 is also the year President Obama “came out” in support of same sex marriage. Is that a coincidence? Perhaps not. Either way, these findings confirm what many LGBT Christians have started noticing around the country; generations of anti-gay prejudices within the black church are being dismantled.

1. James Cone [highly influential black theologian known for his work on black liberation theology]. The Cross and The Lynching Tree. Orbis Books. 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. V. P. Franklin [V.P Franklin, Ph.D., holds a University of California President's Chair and is a Distinguished Professor of History and Education. He is also the Editor of The Journal of African American History. Dr. Franklin has published over fifty scholarly articles on African American history and education and is the author of The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950 (1979), Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of African American Resistance (1984, 1992), Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths: Autobiography and the Making of the African American Intellectual Tradition (1996), and Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Biography (1998).] . Review of Slavery and Social Death by Orlando Patterson. The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring, 1983), pp. 212-216 The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring, 1983), pp. 212-216. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2717724 . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John Edwin Mason [PhD from Yale. Current Prof at UAV. teaches African history and the history of photography. He has written extensively on early nineteenth-century South Africa history, especially the history of slavery, South African popular culture, especially the Cape Town New Year's Carnival and jazz]. *Social death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa*. University of Virginia Press. 2003. ISBN 0-8139-2178-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The rhetoric of ‘white-wash’ is intentional. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Eulalio R. Baltazar [Teaches philosophy at the University of the District of Columbia, author of numerous books on process theology]. *The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness*. 1973. Paulist Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Robert E. Hood [The late director of the Center for African-American Studies at Adelphi University and an n Episcopal clergyman, theologian and a historian of religion, race and culture]. *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Black and Blackness*. Fortress Press. Minneapolis. 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. GK Chesterton. “Orthodoxy.” 1908. [modified for gendered language]. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Brandy Daniels. *A Poststructuralist Liberation Theology? Queer Theory & Apophaticism.* Union Seminary Quarterly Review. Volume 64: 2 & 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sarah Ruden [Sarah Ruden studied at the University of Michigan, Harvard, and the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars. She has taught classics and creative writing at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Her scholarship has concentrated on literary translation of the Greek and Roman classics: she has published translations of the Satyricon of Petronius (Hackett, 2000), Aristophanes’ Lysistrata (Hackett, 2003), the Homeric Hymns (Hackett, 2005), and Vergil’s Aeneid (Yale UP, 2008). She has been particularly concerned with making ancient literature clear, appealing, and informative for readers who have little or no background in ancient languages.] Paul Among the People. 2011. Kindle [↑](#footnote-ref-9)